

# ECUADOR

*An Opportunity to Improve the Health of Communities, Women, and Children in the Americas*

## **PARTNERSHIP TO ELIMINATE TRACHOMA AS A PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM**

**Ecuador joins regional efforts to eliminate trachoma, the leading cause of infectious blindness in the world.**

Ecuador will be searching for trachoma in prioritized communities as part of a regional initiative to eliminate this disease, promoted by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO).

This initiative is aligned with PAHO's policy and initiative for the elimination of communicable diseases and related conditions, which aims to eliminate more than 30 diseases by 2030, with a common, integrated, and sustainable approach, promoting linkages and synergies, within the health system and with other sectors.

Trachoma is the leading cause of infectious blindness in the world. It affects people living in vulnerable conditions, especially women and children. In the Americas, Mexico eliminated trachoma in 2017; in Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala, and Peru, about 5.6 million people are at risk of the disease.

As part of the initiative to declare the Americas free of trachoma, actions have been taken to determine whether more populations are affected by the disease beyond those countries. Ecuador is one of the countries where rapid assessments will be conducted for this purpose.

**#EndTrachoma**

## What is ocular trachoma?

Ocular trachoma is an eye infection transmitted by direct contact with people infected with *Chlamydia trachomatis* bacteria.



Recurrent infections in children living in communities with poor access to health services, water, and basic sanitation can lead to **chronic damage**, such as the eyelashes turning inwards. This causes pain and, if left untreated, can lead to visual impairment and blindness in adulthood.

## What actions will be taken in Ecuador to step up efforts to eliminate trachoma?

Through the partnership and collaboration between the Ministry of Health of Ecuador, the Government of Canada, and the Pan American Health Organization, the following actions will be taken over five years, starting in 2023:

- ▶ Trachoma surveillance in communities living in conditions in which this disease is suspected to be a public health problem. Trachoma surveillance will be used to monitor other diseases of interest in the prioritized populations.
- ▶ Integrated actions on water, sanitation, and hygiene to prevent communicable diseases, including trachoma. Trachoma surveillance will be an opportunity to move towards the elimination of communicable diseases in populations living in conditions of vulnerability.

## What are the expected results of the partnership?

Confirm the presence or absence of trachoma in prioritized communities. Based on this evidence, it will be determined what actions need to be implemented.

Identify other diseases of public health interest that are affecting the communities where trachoma surveillance will be carried out.

National and subnational capacities will have been strengthened to provide health services with a gender and intercultural approaches.

This partnership to eliminate trachoma, in cooperation with the PAHO office in Ecuador, is aligned with Ecuador's 10-Year Health Plan for 2022–2031, which promotes health prevention strategies, among other actions.



● Prioritized areas for trachoma assessments

MORE INFORMATION

