

EL SALVADOR

Initiative for the Elimination of Trachoma in the Americas

A platform to bring comprehensive health care to the most vulnerable communities

El Salvador has become the first country in Central America to eliminate trachoma

El Salvador has achieved WHO validation of the elimination of trachoma – the world's leading infectious cause of blindness – as a public health problem, becoming the first country in Central America and the second in the Americas to do so. The validation, granted in July 2026, recognizes the sustained efforts of the Ministry of Health (MINSAL) of El Salvador, with technical support from the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and financial backing from the Government of Canada, to document the country's epidemiological situation, strengthen surveillance systems, and promote comprehensive eye health initiatives, as well as interventions aimed at addressing the social and environmental determinants of health.

This achievement contributes to PAHO's Disease Elimination Initiative, which seeks to eliminate more than 30 communicable diseases and related conditions in the Americas by 2030, and reflects El Salvador's commitment to health equity and access to services for the most vulnerable populations.

A partnership between the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the Government of Canada aims not only to eliminate trachoma but also, through the integration of activities, to strengthen primary healthcare services in the most vulnerable communities, build the capacity of Ministry of Health workers in the 12 participating countries (Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guyana, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Venezuela), and demonstrate the value of international cooperation in achieving more resilient health systems and a better future for all.

What actions enabled El Salvador to certify trachoma elimination?

In 2023, El Salvador joined the Initiative for the elimination of trachoma in the Americas and has since been actively engaged in implementing surveillance activities in 38 priority communities across 5 departments of the country. The target communities were selected based on conditions of vulnerability that give rise to the concern that trachoma may be a public health problem.



What key actions will El Salvador take to maintain trachoma elimination?

Achieving the elimination of trachoma as a public health problem represents a significant achievement, but further work is needed. In this new phase, El Salvador is committed to implementing the surveillance and sustainability measures required after elimination to maintain the progress achieved:

- **Health worker training:** Ongoing training of health workers to maintain surveillance and control of trachoma.
- **Strengthening comprehensive health initiatives:** Strengthening comprehensive care in communities in situations of vulnerability, including interventions aimed at moving toward the elimination of diseases such as soil-transmitted helminthiasis, hepatitis B, and Chagas disease.
- **Maintaining initiatives to promote eye health:** Development of an eye health strategy for a comprehensive approach at the primary care level.
- **Promotion of the WASH Strategy:** Implementation of WASH initiatives in primary healthcare facilities in communities in priority municipalities.
- **Progress toward the regional and global goal:** Maintain the validation of the elimination of trachoma as a public health problem in El Salvador and advance the National Elimination Plan 30+.

Between 2024 and 2025, rapid trachoma assessments were conducted in the priority areas within the departments of Ahuachapán, Chalatenango, Morazán, San Miguel, and Usulután. The results confirmed the absence of active transmission of the disease and of cases of trachomatous trichiasis (chronic damage to the eyelids) in the areas assessed, demonstrating that trachoma does not constitute a public health problem in the country.

Once this evidence was presented, El Salvador received WHO validation of the elimination of trachoma as a public health problem in 2026. In addition to this milestone, the country's participation in the Initiative for the Elimination of Trachoma in the Americas has led to the following achievements:

- **National and local capacity-building:** Local multidisciplinary teams (doctors, health promoters, and registered nurses) were trained according to international standards to conduct rapid trachoma assessments in priority communities.
- **Comprehensive health care:** The Initiative for the Elimination of Trachoma in the Americas served as a platform to bring health care and health promotion to the target communities, including visual acuity assessments, vaccination, and vector control for the prevention of dengue and other diseases.
- **Promotion and integration of the WASH strategy into health services:** Implementation of the WASH Facility Improvement Tool (FIT) to improve water and sanitation in health facilities, and capacity-building for health teams, and completion of an online course entitled "Water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) and health: Working together" by 250 people.
- **Strengthening health communication strategies:** Communication materials developed to improve the dissemination of key messages and promote greater community ownership of the interventions.

Learn more details about the actions that enabled El Salvador to eliminate trachoma by visiting the website.

<https://www.paho.org/en/salvador-eliminates-trachoma-public-health-problem>

For more information, see: <https://www.paho.org/en/topics/trachoma>

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