

GUATEMALA

Initiative for the Elimination of Trachoma in the Americas

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

Guatemala is close to eliminating trachoma as a public health problem

Guatemala is one of the countries closest to eliminating trachoma as a public health problem in the Region of the Americas. To achieve validation by the World Health Organization (WHO) and contribute to the regional elimination goal, Guatemala has updated its epidemiological data, conducted active case finding, identified and treated people with eye damage caused by trachoma, carried out local capacity-building for the implementation of water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) interventions and made progress in compiling information for validation of its national elimination dossier, among other actions.

Ocular trachoma is the leading infectious cause of blindness worldwide. In the Americas, Mexico eliminated the disease as a public health problem in 2017, followed by El Salvador in July 2026. Guatemala and Paraguay are the countries closest to validating the elimination of the disease, which remains a public health problem in Brazil, Colombia, and Peru.

Other countries, such as Bolivia and Venezuela, have communities that may require interventions. Meanwhile, the disease is suspected to be present in Ecuador, Guyana, and Panama. It is important to implement surveillance measures in these countries to confirm whether or not the condition is a public health problem.

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, and demonstrate the value of international cooperation in achieving more resilient health systems and a better future for all.

The initiative is aligned with PAHO's efforts to eliminate more than 30 diseases and related conditions by 2030, through an integrated and sustainable approach that promotes collaboration across sectors and within health systems.



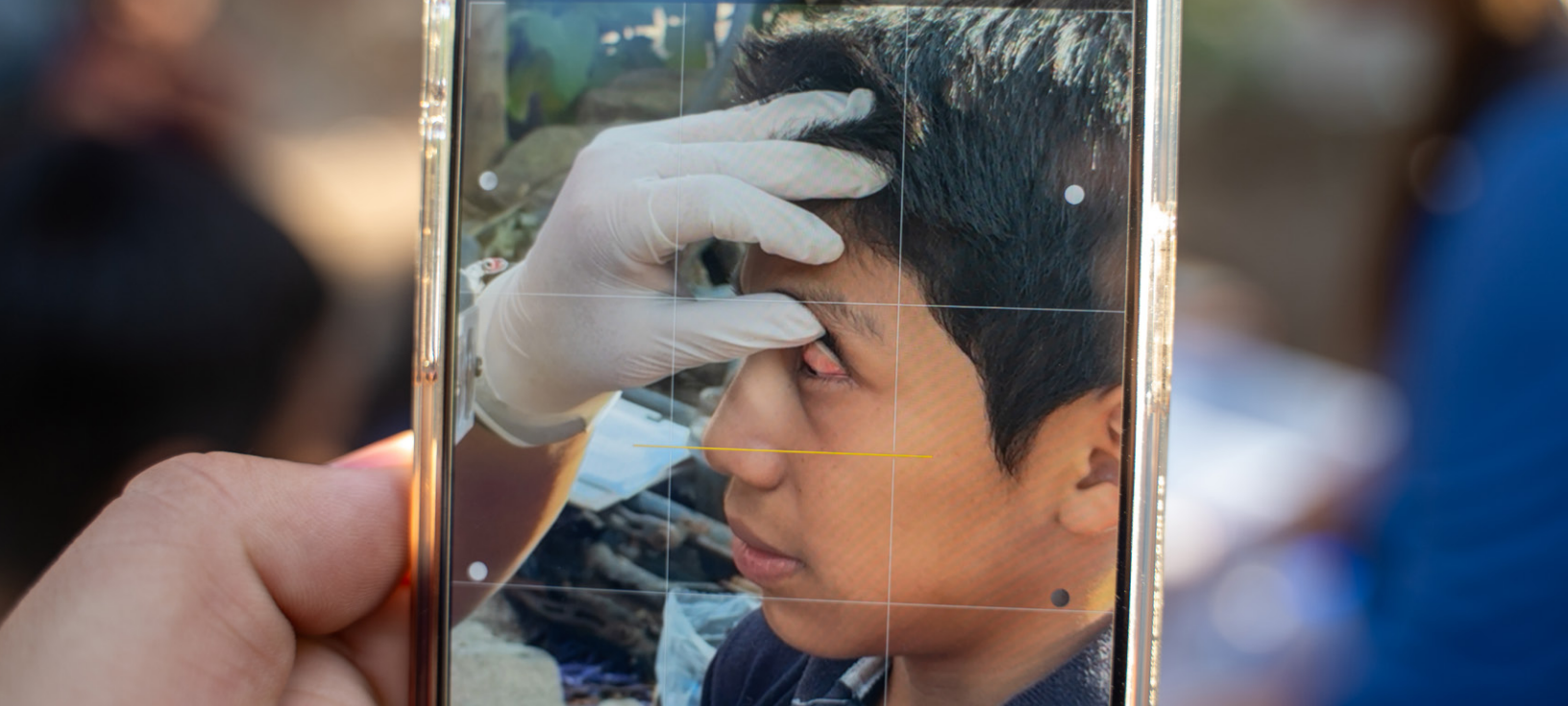
What are Guatemala's main advances toward the elimination of trachoma?

Within the framework of the partnership and collaboration between the Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance (MSPAS) of Guatemala, the Government of Canada, and PAHO, the country has implemented the SAFE strategy (surgery for advanced cases, antibiotic treatment, promotion of facial hygiene, and improved access to water and sanitation), as recommended by WHO.

In 2025 and 2026, surveillance activities were carried out, including: rapid trachoma assessments and population-based prevalence surveys in six priority districts. These studies include three components: clinical examination for trachoma, polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing of ocular samples, and serological testing to identify evidence of past transmission. The results will help determine whether trachoma remains a public health problem in areas where it was previously present and whether transmission is occurring in other areas where the disease had not been previously detected.

Guatemala has achieved the following:

- **Territorial approach:** Implementation of surveillance activities in six priority districts: El Quetzal, in the department of San Marcos; Chicacao, in Suchitepéquez; San Lucas Tolimán, Xejuyup, Guineales, and La Ceiba, in Sololá.
- **National and local capacity-building for WASH interventions:**
 - More than 30 people completed an online course entitled “Water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) and health: Working together.”
- Implementation of nine workshops on water quality and management, good hygiene practices in schools and households, solid waste management, and the cleaning of community spaces, aimed at primary health care workers, community leaders who are members of the Community Development Councils, and principals and teachers from primary schools in the villages of Xejuyup and Guineales, department of Sololá.
- Installation of child-sized sinks in 30 schools, including training for staff and committees on their installation, use, and maintenance.
- **Comprehensive care:** The platform of the Initiative for the Elimination of Trachoma in the Americas was leveraged to increase access to healthcare services among priority populations.
- **Cultural exchange:** Knowledge dialogues and intercultural meetings have been held with traditional midwives, Maya healers, ancestral leaders, and members of the target communities to discuss facial hygiene practices adapted to the local environment.
- **Coordinated actions:** Interagency coordination between MSPAS, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of the Environment to implement relevant and sustainable actions.
- **Communication for health:** Development and mass distribution of infographics, posters, games, and children's videos for trachoma prevention, through the promotion of hand and face washing.

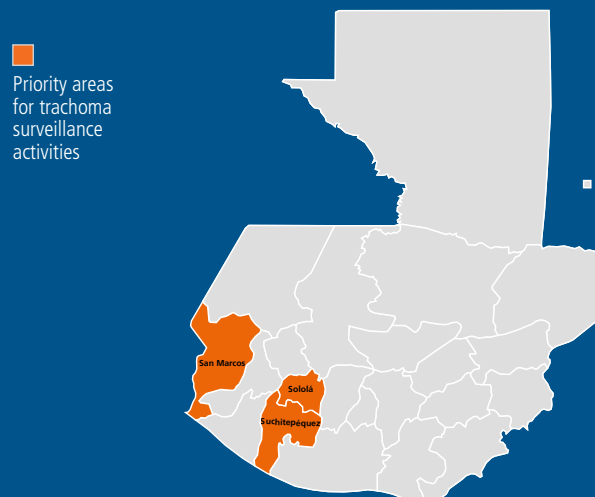


What key actions will Guatemala take to accelerate trachoma elimination?

With support from PAHO and funding from the Government of Canada, Guatemala is committed to moving toward the elimination of trachoma through the following actions:

- **Follow-up of advanced trachoma cases:** Enhance monitoring of any identified advanced trachoma cases (trachomatous trichiasis).
- **Launch of the 2032 elimination plan:** High-level advocacy for the elimination of other diseases in accordance with national policies and PAHO's disease elimination initiative.
- **Trachoma surveillance and comprehensive care:** Consolidate and analyze data from trachoma surveillance surveys and integrated health activities, including vaccination campaigns, in priority districts.
- **Continue promoting the WASH strategy:** Implementation of water, sanitation, and hygiene strategy actions in the municipalities of Xejuyup and Guineales, with a gender and intercultural approach, supported by the Knowledge Dialogues Methodology.

- **Compilation of the dossier containing evidence of trachoma elimination:** Collection of historical, epidemiological, and intervention data from the country's efforts to validate elimination.
- **Progress toward the regional and global goal:** Strengthen the actions needed to validate the elimination of trachoma as a public health problem in Guatemala.



Scan the QR code to learn more about the actions Guatemala has implemented to move toward the elimination of trachoma
[From training to action: Guatemala strengthens trachoma surveillance](#)

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