

# BRAZIL

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

## PARTNERSHIP TO ELIMINATE TRACHOMA AS A PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM

### Brazil is accelerating efforts to eliminate trachoma as a public health problem

For decades, the Ministry of Health of Brazil has led integrated actions to eliminate trachoma, with large domestic investments, strengthening national and local capacities to combat this disease, and efforts to determine the current extent of the problem in Brazil.

To assess the epidemiological situation of the disease and monitor the elimination of trachoma as a public health problem in the country, the Ministry of Health has carried out several trachoma surveys in non-indigenous and Indigenous Populations since 2018.

Based on the results of the most recent evaluations, it is very likely that Brazil is close to eliminating trachoma as a public health problem. However, there are some challenges to overcome, especially guaranteeing the local capacity to detect, manage, and monitor cases with chronic eye damage and to carry out post-elimination surveillance.

### 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.

In the Americas, **5.6 million people are at risk of trachoma in four countries (Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala, and Peru)**. The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) is promoting efforts to determine whether trachoma is a health problem in other countries in the Region.

## How has the problem been tackled in Brazil?

Brazil has developed integrated actions to eliminate trachoma over several decades based on the SAFE strategy, which includes surgery to correct the eye chronic damage, antibiotics to treat infection, facial cleanliness and personal hygiene, and improvement of environmental conditions including access to safe water and sanitation to prevent infection and interrupt transmission. The main interventions implemented in Brazil are the following:

- ▶ **Screening and treatment** of children with trachoma, including their school and household contacts. In addition, mass treatment with antibiotics in communities with a high prevalence of infection.
- ▶ **Management and surgery** of cases with eye chronic damage caused by the disease to prevent visual impairment and blindness.
- ▶ **Actions to prevent** infection, such as campaigns to increase facial cleanliness, especially in school-age children through schools.
- ▶ **Increase of domestic funding** to improve access to water and sanitation in municipalities with populations affected by trachoma. These initiatives have been integrated with governmental poverty reduction initiatives.



## What actions will be taken in Brazil to accelerate trachoma elimination efforts?

Through the alliance and collaboration between the Brazilian Ministry of Health, the Government of Canada, and PAHO, the following actions will be implemented over five years, starting in 2023:

- Reinforce local capacity to identify and manage cases of trachoma-related eye damage.
- Increase the capacity to provide integrated and people-centered health services for populations affected by trachoma including eye health services and elimination of other communicable diseases, among others.
- Reinforce actions to promote face and hand washing, as well as personal hygiene to prevent trachoma and other diseases.
- Implement actions with gender and intercultural approaches to reduce inequalities and accelerate trachoma elimination efforts.
- Complete trachoma assessments and compile evidence to confirm that trachoma is no longer a public health problem in the country.

This initiative is aligned with PAHO's 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.

## What results are expected from the alliance?

Completed the compilation of information to confirm Brazil has eliminated trachoma as a public health problem.

Strengthened national and sub-national capacities to provide health services with gender and intercultural approaches.

Brazil has been validated by PAHO and the World Health Organization as a country free of trachoma as a public health problem.



MORE INFORMATION

