

Statement by the Americas' Civil Society for the TB, UHC, PPP&R UN Multi-Stakeholders Hearing New York, May 8-9, 2023

The following statement is a result of several consultations with Civil Society (CS), affected communities and parliamentarians from the Americas throughout January to May 2023. These consultations, which were supported by PAHO, have highlighted:

1. The Americas is the most unequal region in the world, dramatically affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. The Region has stopped receiving support from international cooperation justified by the argument that it only accounts for 3% of the global TB burden. Despite the considerable progress observed in some countries of the region, there is still a lack of political will to include community participation in the processes of building public policies and specific services to strengthen them as key actors in the response to TB. Governments and other entities still view CS with reservations and suspicion. This perception limits the ability of communities to participate meaningfully in the TB response, including monitoring and evaluation by community-based organizations.
2. For this reason, CS in our region continues to be underfunded and undervalued. Civil Society Organizations (CSO) express their demand for access to consistent financing mechanisms to strengthen the communities in order to guarantee relevant participation in the definition of health policies and in the provision of health services. In addition, CSO require a guarantee of direct support from SC representatives who act as community health agents, technicians, and community specialists.
3. TB still needs to be prioritized in the health agendas of our countries within the framework of Human Rights, with a gender perspective and cultural relevance, with special attention to the populations most socially vulnerable to the disease, such as: indigenous communities, migrants, prisoners, people with HIV, diabetes, leprosy, contacts of people with or deceased from TB, children, women, health professionals, sex workers, LGTBIQ+ population, street dwellers, tobacco, drug and alcohol users and other groups.
4. Affected communities and CS demand recognition and endorsement of their effective participation as protagonists in national TB planning, implementation and monitoring. This framework of active participation and multi-sectoral responsibility benefits society, governments, transparency and the good use of public resources.
5. We CS demand that the governments of the Americas region rapidly update their guidelines and implement international recommendations for TB care and remove administrative barriers to imports and intellectual property to ensure access to

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diagnostic tests, drugs, supplies and vaccines for all people and constantly invest in research, knowledge management and development and implementation of new technologies, with the participation of the community from conception to implementation, as a key strategy to achieve the objectives of the End of TB in the coming years.

6. TB is a disease fueled by poverty and inequity. Social disparities are growing in the Americas, generating stigma and discrimination for those most affected, and jeopardizing progress in the fight against TB. Without universal health coverage & access, and comprehensive social protection measures we will continue with unjustifiable deaths and suffering from TB. The threat we do not reach the End TB targets is very real.

7. We urge our governments and international cooperation agencies to prioritize the Region of the Americas. With political will, significant investment and community participation, the Americas could be the first region in the world to put an end to TB.

8. Finally, we urge the United Nations to name a special rapporteur for the elimination of discrimination against persons affected by TB and other syndemics to monitor the accomplishment of the UN High Level Meeting TB Declaration, and the strategic points delivered here.