

# GUATEMALA

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

## PARTNERSHIP TO ELIMINATE TRACHOMA AS A PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM

**Guatemala is the country closest to eliminating trachoma in the Americas**

More than 95 000 people in two districts of the department of Sololá require interventions to eliminate trachoma. Most of them are in indigenous Maya Kiché populations.

Since 2011, national and local health authorities have implemented integrated actions to eliminate trachoma, achieving elimination levels in children. However, challenges remain in reducing chronic damage in adults and completing final evaluations to confirm trachoma elimination.



### 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.

#EndTrachoma

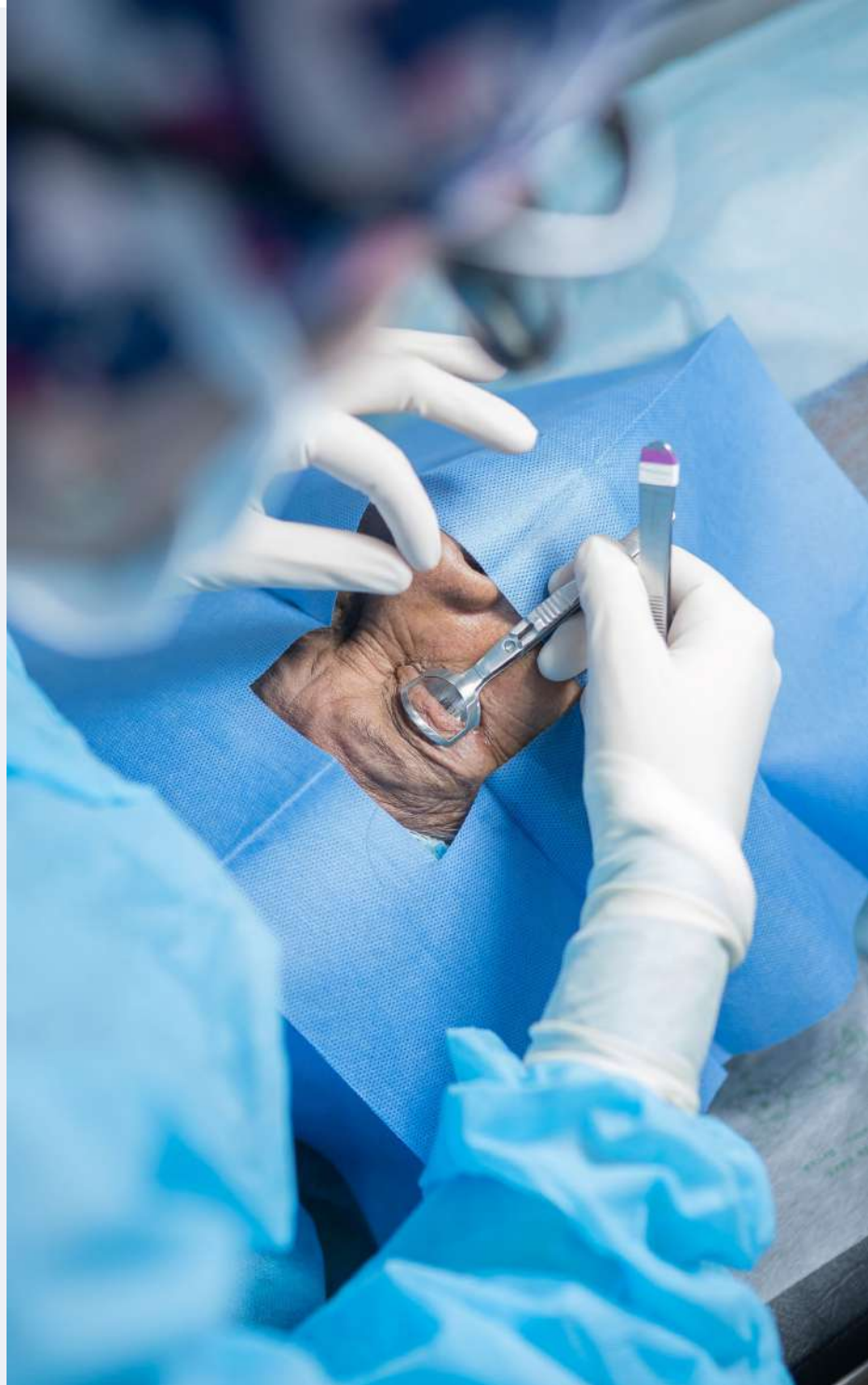
In the Americas, 5.6 million people are at risk of trachoma in four countries (Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala, and Peru). The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) is promoting efforts to determine whether trachoma is a health problem in other countries in the Region.

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## How has the problem been addressed in Guatemala?

Using a set of integrated interventions known as the SAFE strategy—which includes surgery to correct eye damage, antibiotics to treat infection, face and hand washing, and improved environmental conditions to prevent infection and interrupt transmission—the country has achieved the following:

- ▶ Antibiotic treatment for **75 000 people** in **95 affected communities** in Sololá, completed in 2014.
- ▶ Surgery and other interventions to manage eye damage caused by trachoma in **more than 100 people**, between **2019** and **2022**.
- ▶ Promoting face and hand washing, as well as increased access to clean water and basic sanitation in **more than 90 communities** in Sololá.



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

Through the partnership and collaboration between the Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance of Guatemala, the Government of Canada, and PAHO, the following actions will be carried out over five years, starting in 2023:

- Identify and treat people with eye damage due to trachoma, in order to prevent visual impairment and maintain this capacity in the post-elimination phase.
- Integrate visual health actions with care for other infectious diseases that affect the same populations.
- Strengthen actions to promote face and hand washing to prevent trachoma infection and other diseases.
- Implement actions with gender and intercultural approaches to reduce inequities and accelerate elimination efforts.
- Complete assessments and collect 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.

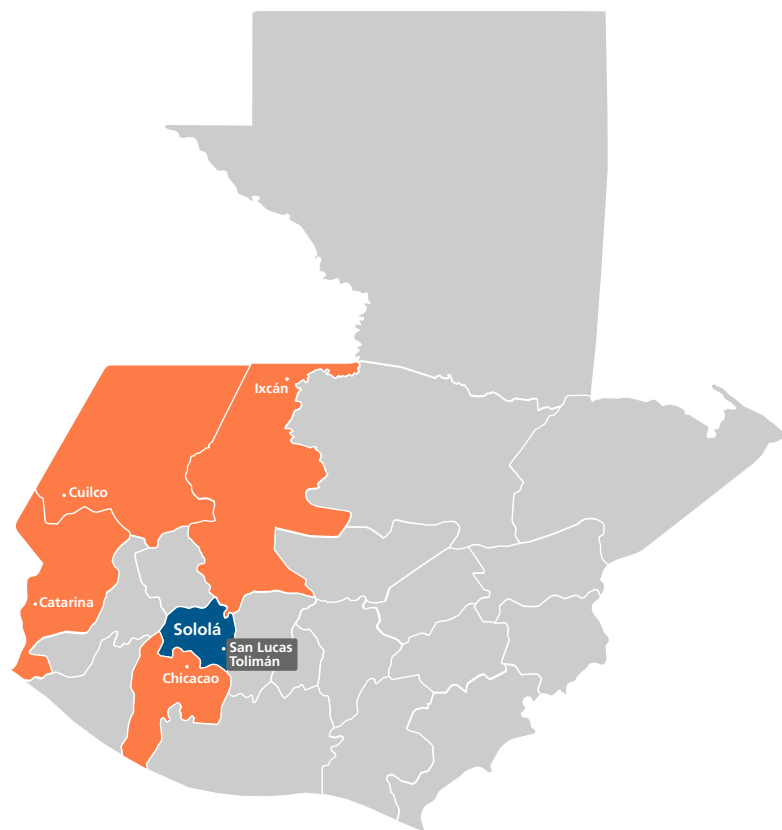
## What are the expected results of the partnership?

97 000 people in the endemic area of Sololá will no longer be at risk of eye damage caused by trachoma.

Rapid evaluations will be completed in six other departments of the country with a population of 510 000, to rule out the presence of trachoma outside the known endemic area.

National and subnational capacity to provide health services with gender and intercultural approaches will be strengthened.

Guatemala will receive PAHO and World Health Organization validation as a trachoma-free country.



MORE INFORMATION

