

Canada makes landmark investment to put an end to blindness due to trachoma in the Americas

The Government of Canada announces \$15 million to eliminate trachoma in the Americas at the 78th UN General Assembly in New York

OTTAWA, CANADA, September 22, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Thanks to a significant investment by Canada announced yesterday, over 5.6 million people will be free from the risk of visual impairment or blindness due to trachoma, a leading cause of infectious blindness globally, and a further 4 million people will receive the support needed to prevent trachoma infection in the future.



On September 21, 2023, at the 78th United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), the Government of Canada announced \$15 million to eliminate trachoma as a public health problem in the Americas as part of its aim to accelerate progress and support ambitious international action on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

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The Honourable Senator Stan Kutcher

The Government of Canada in partnership with the Pan American Health Organization (Regional Office of the World Health Organization for the Americas), supports this initiative to improve the health of communities, women, and children, through the elimination of trachoma as a public health problem in 10 prioritized countries of the Americas (Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Mexico, Peru, and Venezuela). Trachoma (one of 20 neglected tropical diseases or NTDs)

disproportionately affects children and women; globally, an estimated 125 million people live in

areas at risk of vision loss due to trachoma.

In response to the funding announcement, The Honourable Senator Stan Kutcher from Nova Scotia said, "I have long supported increased Canadian investment in neglected tropical diseases and so I am pleased to see our government has come through with this important investment to end trachoma in the Americas Region."

The Canadian Network for Neglected Tropical Diseases, representing 230 individual and 13 organizational members, also welcomed this new investment as an important step towards ending the neglect of NTDs and reaching the World Health Organization's 2030 NTD Roadmap goals. Dr. Alison Krentel, Chair of the Canadian Network for Neglected Tropical Diseases, remarked, "This is an exciting announcement from Canada. As a network, we are delighted to see this significant investment in trachoma to help these 10 countries as well as the Region reach the ultimate goal of elimination of trachoma as a public health problem. This will save millions of boys and girls, women, and men from the risk of blindness."

To achieve this long-term outcome in the Americas, the Canadian-supported project proposes to increase access to and demand for SAFE interventions for populations living in vulnerable conditions, including women, children, indigenous populations, and those that are difficult to access. SAFE is an evidence-based strategy recommended by PAHO/WHO to eliminate trachoma as a public health problem and consists of an integrated package of interventions that includes (S) surgery to prevent visual impairment and eventual blindness, (A) antibiotics to prevent and treat the bacterial infection caused by *Chlamydia trachomatis*, (F) facial cleanliness to prevent infection, and (E) environmental improvement to reduce transmission of infection.

This initiative will support countries to focus efforts on populations affected by trachoma and living in vulnerable conditions, including women, children, and hard-to-reach Indigenous Populations who are frequently excluded from access to health care. Technical cooperation will be provided to improve health providers and staff capacities to tailor and deliver SAFE interventions with gender inclusive and intercultural approaches to community health. It will also support actions in countries thought to have populations affected by trachoma to declare the entire Region free of the disease, not only in the selected countries. To sustain the results of this initiative, the project will support surveillance actions in the post-elimination of trachoma, to reinforce capacities to prevent and detect disease re-emergence.

This investment is the first in support of Canada's endorsement of the Kigali Declaration on NTDs, made on June 23rd, 2022. This international declaration is tasked with mobilizing the commitments and contributions needed to achieve the WHO NTD Roadmap 2030 goals. This year marked a key milestone of 50 countries eliminating at least 1 NTD, indicating the half-way mark in achieving at least 1 NTD eliminated in 100 countries by 2030. Preventing and treating NTDs directly contributes towards the achievement of the SDGs, particularly in meeting the right to health for all.

For more information about the announcement:

<https://www.pm.gc.ca/en/news/backgrounders/2023/09/21/canada-supports-strong-ambitious-international-action-78th-session>

Link to the PAHO press release: <https://bit.ly/PAHOCANENDtrachoma>

To learn more about the Canadian Network for NTDs, please visit : <https://cnntd.org/>

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This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/657162424>

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