



On World Tuberculosis Day, PAHO calls for increased investments in TB services

TB deaths in the Americas increased by an estimated 3,000 in 2020 compared to 2019 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Around 18,300 children live with the disease in the region, with limited access to diagnosis and treatment

Washington, D.C., March 23, 2022 (WHO)- On [World Tuberculosis Day](#), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) calls for urgent investment in resources, support, care and information for the fight against tuberculosis (TB), as the COVID-19 pandemic reverses gains made against one of the world's deadliest infections.

Every day, more than 70 people die and 800 fall ill from TB in the Americas. While efforts to combat the disease have saved more than 1.2 million lives in the region since 2000, yearly deaths have increased by an estimated 3,000 in 2020 due to interruptions in essential services.

"People with TB are among the most marginalized and vulnerable in society, and face barriers to accessing life-saving care," said Marcos Espinal, Director for Communicable Diseases and Environmental Determinants of Health at PAHO. "All necessary steps must be taken to fully restore TB services disrupted by the pandemic, especially for the most vulnerable. Investing more in TB will save millions of lives, including children."

An estimated 18,300 children aged 15 years and under live with TB in the Americas, yet more than half lack access to diagnosis and treatment services. COVID-19 has also had a disproportionate impact on children and adolescents with TB, leading to increased transmission in the household, a reduction in active surveillance, lack of access to health services, and limited follow-up treatment.

This week, the World Health Organization (WHO) released updated guidelines for the management of TB in children and adolescents. They include recommendations for expanded diagnostic testing and treatment, medicines to treat drug resistant-TB in children, and new models of decentralized and integrated care to improve access to care and preventive treatment closer to home.

“Children and adolescents with TB are lagging behind adults in access to prevention and care,” said Dr Tereza Kasaeva, Director of WHO’s Global TB Programme. “The WHO guidelines are a gamechanger for children and adolescents, helping them access diagnosis and care sooner, leading to better outcomes and cutting transmission.”

Although 66 million lives around the world have been saved since 2000, TB deaths increased in 2020 for the first time in over a decade. Ongoing conflicts across Eastern Europe, Africa and the Middle East have further exacerbated the situation for vulnerable populations.

Increased investment in TB services and research would accelerate the recovery of gains against the disease. Global spending on TB diagnostics, treatment, and prevention in 2020 were less than half of the global target of US\$ 13 billion annually by 2022. According to WHO, an additional US\$ 1.1 billion per year is needed for research and development.

World Tuberculosis Day

[World Tuberculosis Day](#) is observed on 24 March each year to raise awareness of one of the world’s top infectious killers and catalyze action to address its devastating health, social, and economic impact around the world. The theme of World TB Day 2022 – ‘Invest to End TB. Save Lives.’ – conveys the urgent need to invest in financial, human and technological resources to ramp up the fight against TB and achieve the commitments to end TB made by global leaders.

Links

[World Tuberculosis Day](#)

[WHO Press Release: On World TB day WHO calls for increased investments into TB services and research](#)

MEDIA CONTACTS

Luciana Viegas: + 1 202 981-8455

Ashley Baldwin: + 1 202 340-4025

Sebastian Oliel: +1 202 316-5679

mediateam@paho.org

www.paho.org

The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) works with the countries of the Americas to improve the health and quality of life of its population. Founded in 1902, it is the world’s oldest international public health agency. It serves as the Regional Office of WHO for the Americas and is the specialized health agency of the Inter-American system.