

## Act Now: An Open Letter to World Leaders to Increase Investment in TB Vaccine R&D

Dear world leaders,

As concerned tuberculosis (TB) survivors, advocates, and researchers, we write to you on behalf of millions of people affected by this deadly disease each year. TB is one of the world's deadliest infectious diseases. Each day, nearly [29,000 people fall ill with TB and almost 4,400 people die](#) from this preventable and curable disease. New and effective vaccines are essential to tackle this global health crisis.

We urge you to prioritize investment in TB vaccine research and development (R&D).

TB is a matter of social and economic justice. This disease disproportionately affects the poor and marginalized communities, leading to major consequences such as social isolation, stigma, job loss, catastrophic household costs, and mental distress. TB reduces worker productivity and exhausts national health budgets, undermining global development. But this doesn't have to be the case – if we have effective TB vaccines.

We need new TB vaccines to end TB, mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on the global TB response, and control the [spread of drug-resistant TB](#), a key driver of antimicrobial resistance. Yet, the only available TB vaccine is the century-old Bacillus Calmette-Guérin (BCG) which is [largely ineffective in adolescents and adults](#), who are most at risk for developing and spreading TB.

With [five promising vaccine candidates](#) currently in phase 3 trials, new TB vaccines can be developed and deployed this decade. However, we need greatly increased support to make this possible.

Failure to act now would result in immense human suffering. New and effective TB vaccines can help achieve the [2030 End TB goals](#), which could prevent up to [23.8 million deaths and US\\$13.1 trillion in economic losses by 2050](#). In fact, every \$1 invested in a TB vaccine for adolescents and adults could generate [\\$7 of economic returns](#) over the next 25 years.

The rapid development and roll-out of multiple COVID-19 vaccines contributed significantly to controlling the pandemic. We require a similar response to end TB. Importantly, investing in TB vaccine R&D can also fortify pandemic preparedness and response against existing and emerging infectious diseases.

At the [2018 United National High Level Meeting \(UNHLM\) on TB](#), governments pledged to invest \$2 billion annually in TB R&D over five-years, including \$550 million for TB vaccines. By 2021, only [30% of the pledged amount](#) had been invested, with TB vaccine R&D receiving only 15% of its target.



The [Global Plan to End TB 2023-30](#) now estimates that an annual investment of \$1.25 billion in TB vaccine R&D is needed to achieve the 2030 End TB goals. Cutting corners will have major repercussions on the global TB response and world economy.

World leaders will convene at the [UNHLM on TB](#) on September 22, 2023, to set the global TB response agenda for the coming years – new TB vaccines must be a central component of this.

We call on you as world leaders to take immediate action and prioritize TB vaccine R&D, through:

1. Increasing and sustaining investments in TB vaccine R&D in line with the Global Plan targets;
2. Strengthening partnerships between governments, research institutions, private and multilateral organizations, and pharmaceutical companies for coordinated TB vaccine development;
3. Ensuring TB vaccines are universally available and accessible as soon as they are ready, especially to those most vulnerable to developing TB disease;
4. Including TB R&D as a central element of pandemic preparedness and response agendas to improve global public health.

Investing in TB vaccine R&D can help end the TB pandemic, reduce needless suffering, and save millions of lives. Let us work together to create a healthier, more equitable, and TB free world!

Sincerely,

The undersigned

