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, representing 1,188 individuals and organizations from around the world, 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 (AMR). 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 prevention, preparedness, and response (PPPR) against existing and emerging infectious diseases, and contribute to the global AMR response and attainment of Universal Health Coverage (UHC).

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.

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✉️ wqnv@iavi.org
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 agendas on PPPR, AMR, and UHC 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
Organizations and institutions

1. Action for Health Initiatives Inc., Philippines
2. ACTION Global Health Advocacy Partnership, USA
3. Advocacy Coalition for Health Research & Development (CHRReAD), Kenya
4. Advocacy Network Africa (AdNetA)
5. Advocates for Prevention of HIV in Africa (APHA), South Africa
6. AFEW, The Kyrgyz Republic
7. Africa Biodynamic Centre, Ghana
8. Africa Health Research Organization, United Kingdom
9. African Institute for Development Policy, Malawi
10. African Network of Adolescents & Young Persons Development (ANAYD), Nigeria
11. AfricOx Development Foundation, Uganda
12. Atries Health Optonet Association (AHOA), Nigeria
13. Afro Global Alliance (SCORETB), Ghana
14. AGUISOC-TB, Guinée
15. Ahmadu Bello University Medical Students Association (ABUMSA), Nigeria
16. Aide Internationale pour le Développement Durable (AIDD), Côte d’Ivoire
17. AIDS Healthcare Foundation - India Cares, India
18. AIDS Healthcare Foundation, USA
19. AIDS-Fondet, Denmark
20. Aidspan, Kenya
21. Ajuđa de Desenvolvimento do Povo para Povo (ADPP), Mozambique
22. Albergue Las Memorias, México
23. Alliance Burundais pour la Lutte Contre la Tuberculose, Burundi
25. Alliance Myanmar
26. Alliance Nationale des Communautés pour la Santé (ANCS), Sénégal
27. All-Ukrainian Association of People Who Recover from Tuberculosis “Stronger than TB”, Ukraine
28. Americas TB Coalition, USA
29. Amref Health Africa in Kenya
30. Amsterdam Institute for Global Health & Development (AIGHD), Netherlands
31. APCOM Foundation, Thailand
32. Apoyo Positivo, España
33. AQUITY Global Inc., USA
34. Ark Development Organization, Ghana
35. Armauer Hansen Research Institute, Ethiopia
36. Ashwasti, India
37. Asia Lanka Social Development Co-operation (ALSDC), Sri Lanka
38. Asia Pacific Network of People Living with HIV (APN+), Thailand
39. Asia Pacific Network of Young Key Populations (Youth LEAD), Thailand
40. Asia-Pacific Regional Civil Society Network Organisation (APCASO), Thailand
41. ASPAT International, Perú
42. Association ComuSuans, Mozambique
43. Association dos Mineiros Moçambicanos (AMIMO), Mozambique
44. Association Bomoï, République du Congo
45. Association Burkinabé d’Action Communautaire (ABAC-ONG), Burkina Faso
46. Association de Développement Intégré des Jeunes du Burkina Faso (ADJI-BF)
47. Association des Anciens Patients Tuberculeux du Bénin (ASSAP-TB/BENIN)
48. Association des Jeunes pour la Lutte Contre la Tuberculose (AJLTB), Tchad
49. Association for Promotion Sustainable Development, India
50. Association Mauritanienne de Lutte contre la Tuberculose et le SIDA (AMALUTS), Mauritanie
51. Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations, USA
52. Association of Persons with Disabilities Living with HIV (ADPHA), Uganda
53. Aurum Institute, South Africa
54. AVAC, USA
55. BenBeck Marriage & Divorce Foundation, Ghana
56. Bengali Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS, India
57. Bethel Viva Foundation, Nigeria
58. BIO Foundation, Ghana
59. Birat Nepal Medical Trust, Nepal
60. Blossom Trust, India
61. Blue Diamond Society, Nepal
62. BM Trust Foundation, Ghana
63. Bolo Didi, India
64. Botswana Network on Ethics, Law & HIV/AIDS (BONELA)
65. BRAC, Bangladesh
66. Bureau d’Appui Santé et Environnement (BASE), Tchad
67. CAAN Communities, Alliances & Networks, Canada
68. Campaigns in Global Health, United Kingdom
69. Cape Bio Pharmas, South Africa
70. Caribbean Vulnerable Communities (CVC), Jamaica
71. Caritas Tajikistan, Tajikistan
72. Center for Development of Community Health Initiatives (CHI), Vietnam
73. Center for Health Policies & Studies (PAS Center), Moldova
74. Centre for Support Community Development Initiatives (SCDII), Vietnam
75. Centre for Community & Rural Development (CENCORD), Ghana
76. Centre for Community Livelihood Development (CCLD), Ghana
77. Centre for Development Partnership & Innovations, Ghana
78. Centre for Environment, Human Rights & Development Forum (CEHRDF), Bangladesh
79. CharitéCentre for Global Health, Germany
80. Chimba Sanaa Group, Tanzania
81. Christian Fellowship & Care Foundation, Nigeria
82. Cleannation Foundation, Nigeria
83. Club des Amis Damien (CAD), République démocratique du Congo
84. Coalition des OSC du Bénin pour la Couverture Universelle en Santé (COBCUS), Bénin
85. Coalition of Women Living with HIV & AIDS, Malawi
86. Colectivo Cero Desastasto, México
87. Collectif des Organisations de Lutte contre la Tuberculose et les Maladies Respiratoires en CI (COLTMR CI), Côte d’Ivoire
88. Community & Family Aid Foundation, Ghana
89. Community Oriented Resors Exchange (CORE)
90. Compañeros en Salud, México
91. Coordinadora Estatal de VIH/SIDA (CESIDA), España
92. CSYM Huduma Christian Spiritual Youth Ministry YLO, Tanzania
93. Curarse en Salud, México
94. Cytespace Africa Laboratories, South Africa
95. Debriche Health Development Centre, Nigeria
96. Dek, Kenya
97. Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevölkerung (DSW), Belgium
98. Development Aid from People to People, Zambias
99. Disability Peoples Forum Uganda
100. Diversity & Solidarity Trust, Sri Lanka
101. Divine Favour Agency, Ghana
102. Dopasi Foundation, Pakistan
103. Dr Uzo Adirieje Foundation (DUZAFOUND), Nigeria
104. DRAF TB, Cameroon
105. Eden Spring of Hope, Ghana
106. Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation, USA
107. Emmanuel Light Association, Ghana
108. Espoir pour les Familles Vulnerables, Côte d’Ivoire
109. Estonian Network PLWIV (EHPV), Estonia
110. Estrela+ Timor-Leste, Timor-Leste
111. European & Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP), Netherlands
112. European Respiratory Society, Switzerland
113. European Vaccine Initiative, Germany
114. Facilitating Learning of Women in Emerging Regions, Ghana
115. Facilitators of Community Transformation, Malawi
116. Family Welfare Foundation, Tanzania
117. Favours Lowcost Healthcare Foundation (FALCOH), Cameroon
118. FIND, Switzerland
119. Focus Droits et Acces, République démocratique du Congo
120. Fondation Femme Plus, République démocratique du Congo
121. Foundation Joseph The Worker Structure Lazarienne, Bénin
122. Foreign Health in Navarra, España
123. Foundation for Integrated Care (FIC), Nigeria
124. Foundation for Sustainable Development in Africa, Ghana
125. Fundación de la Unidad d’Investigación en Tuberculosis de Barcelona (fuTB), España
126. Gays & Transgender Advocates (GATA), Zimbabwe
127. Georgia AIDS Coalition, USA
128. Ghana National TB Voice Network
129. Ghana TB Voice Network
130. GIGI, Kenya
131. Global Action for Women Empowerment (GLOWA), Ghana
132. Global Alliance For Human Rights, United Kingdom
133. Global Coalition of TB Advocates (GCTA), India
134. Global Health Advocates, France
135. Global Health Technologies Coalition (GHTC), USA
136. Global TB Community Advisory Board, Côte d’Ivoire
137. GNP+, South Africa
138. GRAN, Canada
139. Groupe d’Action de Paix et de Formation pour la Transformation (GAPAFO), République centrafricaine
140. Grupo de Amigos con VIH AC, México
141. Grupo de Apoyo Este Amor, República Dominicana
142. Grupo de Ativistas em Tratamentos (GAT), Portugal
143. Happy to Help Foundation, India
144. HEADP-Nepal, Nepal
145. Health Your Wealth, Ghana
146. HEED Bangladesh, Bangladesh
147. Holy City Foundation, Ghana
148. HOMES Fountain, Ghana
149. Hope for Future Generations, Ghana
150. Human Care & Maintenance Foundation (HUCAM), Ghana
151. IAVI, Global
152. Ilia Centre for Global Liberty, Bangladesh
153. Impact Medical, México
154. India Working Group for Health Advocacy, India
155. Innovations for Development (I4DEV), Uganda
156. Institute of Allergy & Clinical Immunology of Bangladesh (IACIB)
157. Integrated Development in Focus, Ghana
158. International Generic & Biosimilar Medicines Association (IGBA), Switzerland
159. International Treatment Preparedness Coalition (ITPC) Global, South Africa
160. International Union Against Tuberculosis & Lung Disease
161. International Vaccine Institute (IVI), South Korea
162. International Youth Council-Yemen (IYCY), Yemen
163. ISGlobal, España
164. Jaringan Indonesia Positif, Indonesia
165. JSI, USA
166. KANCO, Kenya
167. Kenya Progressive Nurses Association, Kenya
168. Khmer HIV/AIDS NGO Alliance (KHANA), Cambodia
169. Khulna Mukti Seba Sangstha (KMSS), Bangladesh
170. Kikac ltd, Rwanda
171. Kitron Green Solutions, Nigeria
172. KNCD TB Plus, Netherlands
173. Konsorsium Penabulu-STPI, Indonesia
174. KSPHCA KANO, Nigeria
175. Kuboresha-Africa Limited, Uganda
176. La Llave del Armario, España
177. La Sociedad Española de Neumología y Cirugía Torácica (SEPAR), España
178. Lawyers Alert Nigeria
179. Lhak-SAm (BNP+), Bhutan
180. LHL International TB Foundation, Norway
181. Life Concern, Malawi
182. Ligue Nationale Antituberculeuse et Antituberculose du Congo, République démocratique du Congo
183. Long Distance Drivers & Conductors Association (LoDDCA), Kenya
184. MANERELA+, Malawi
185. Masaka Association of Persons with Disabilities living with HIV, Uganda
186. Mbuonet Mtandao Coalitions TZ East Africa, Tanzania
187. Medical Impact, México
188. Meera Foundation, India
189. Member League People Living with HIV & AIDS (CRONIA), Moldova
190. Mihosho International, Ghana
191. Mocare, South Africa
192. Moldova National Association of Tuberculosis Patients (SMIT), Moldova
193. Mongolian Anti-TB Coalition, Mongolia
194. Movimiento CUS de México a.c
195. Muchos Caminos AC, México
196. Muhammadiyah-Aisiyiyah, Indonesia
197. Mukikute, Tanzania
198. Multi-dimensional Resource Centre (MRC) Nepal
199. Myanmar Community Health Society
200. Nari Maitree, Bangladesh
201. National Association of Kaduna State Medical Students (NAKAMS), Nigeria
202. National Coalition of PLHIV in India
203. National Ex-miners & Allied Workers Association of Zambia
204. National Organization of Peer Educators (NOPE), Kenya
205. National Tuberculosis Controllers Association (NTCA), USA
206. National Tuberculosis Programme, Tchad
207. Nelson Mandela TB HIV Information CBO, Kenya
208. Network of Asian People who Use Drugs (NAPUD), Thailand
209. Network of PLHAs Kenya (NEPHAK)
210. Network of TB Champions Kenya
211. NGO KeA, Kosovo
212. Nigeria Centre for Disease Control & Prevention (NCDC), Nigeria
213. Nigerian Medical Students’ Association, Nigeria
215. Northwest Coalition for Responsible Investment, USA
216. Nurse Where Are You Foundation, Ghana
217. Nuthanaturst, India
218. Nyabende Support Programmes CBO, Kenya
219. Nyamira post HIV Test CBO, Kenya
220. Observatorio Social de Tuberculosis México
221. Organization of Environment & Children Rights Preservation (OECRP), Sri Lanka
222. Pamoja TB Group, Kenya
223. Paneer HIV Positive Women Trust, India
224. Pantura Plus Indonesia
225. Partnership Network Association, Kyrgyzstan
226. Pastoral Activities & Services for People with AIDS Dar es Salaam Archdiocese (PASADA), Tanzania
227. PATH, USA
228. Pathfinders Outreach Ministry, Ghana
229. Patients Friend Foundation, Ghana
230. Persatuan Karya Dharma Kesehatan Indonesia (PERDHAKI)
231. Persaudaraan Korban Napza Indonesia (PKNI)
232. Philomera Hope Center Foundation, Uganda
233. Pinnacle Health Foundation, Ghana
234. Pledgers of Children & Elderly People at Risk (PEPA), République démocratique du Congo
235. POP TB Indonesia
236. Positive Women Network, India
237. Powerful light mission, Ghana
238. Prakruthi Social Service Society, India
239. Princess of Africa Foundation, South Africa
240. Progressive Excellence Youth Organization (PEYORG), Ghana
242. Quest Bangladesh
243. Rain Healthy Health Care, Ghana
244. Rainbow TB, India
245. RAS+TOGO, Togo
246. Red contra la Tuberculosis y por la Solidaridad (Red TBS-Stop Epidemias), España
247. Red Grupos de Investigación para America y Africa Latinas (GRAAL), México
248. Rekut Peduli Indonesia Foundation
249. Representative office NGO “Partners in Health” of Kazakhstan
250. Réseau d’Accès aux Médicaments Essentiels (RAME), Burkina Faso
251. Réseau National d’Organisations à Assises Communautaire (RNOAC), République démocratique du Congo
252. Réseau National des Associations des Positifs du Congo (RENAPC), République du Congo
253. Resource Group for Education & Advocacy for Community Health (REACH), India
254. Results Canada
255. Results International (Australia)
256. RESULTS UK
257. Results, USA
258. Roots Link Africa, Ghana
259. Rosana Empowerment Foundation (REF), Nigeria
260. Royals Health Organisation, Ghana
261. Rula Life Association, Ghana
262. Rural Watch Ghana
263. Sacred Heart Community, India
264. SAF-Teso, Uganda
265. Sahel Activistes Niger
266. Sankalp Rehabilitation Trust, India
267. Servicio de Medicinas Pro-Vida, Perú
268. Seventh Generation Interfaith Coalition for Responsible Investments, USA
269. Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, USA
270. Sociedad Española de Infectología Pediátrica (SEIP), España
271. Society for Conservation & Sustainability of Energy & Environment in Nigeria (SOCSEEN)
272. Solidarité pour l’Encrassement et Lutte Contre la Pauvreté, République démocratique du Congo
273. SORAK Development Agency, Uganda
274. SOS Santé et Développement Paalga (ASD Paalga), Burkina Faso
275. South African Health & Technology Advocacy Coalition, South Africa
276. South African Miners Association (SAM), Eswatini
277. South African Tuberculosis Vaccine Initiative (SATVI)
278. Southern African Programme on Access to Diagnostics & Medicines (SAPAM), South Africa
279. Sportsmen/women Fighting HIV/AID & TB in Kenya (SPOFA)
280. Standard Organisation for Katsina State Youth Development (SOKDE), Nigeria
281. Stop TB Partnership
282. Stop TB Partnership Canada
283. Stop TB Partnership Ghana
284. Stop TB Partnership Indonesia
285. Stop TB Partnership Kenya
286. Stop TB Partnership New Diagnostics Working Group (NDWG)
287. Stop TB Partnership Tanzania
288. Stop TB Partnership Ukraine
289. Stop TB Partnership Working Group on New TB Drugs
290. Stop TB Partnership Working Group on New TB Vaccines
291. Stop TB Partnership Zimbabwe
292. Stop TB USA
293. STOPAIDS, United Kingdom
294. Strategic Poverty Alleviation Systems (SPAS), Kenya
295. Sukaa Welfare Organization, Pakistan
296. Sustain-able Social Enterprise, United Kingdom
297. Sustainable World Initiative for All (SUWOFIA), Tanzania
298. Synergie des Organisations de la Société Civile pour la Promotion des Droits Humains et de l’Environnement, République démocratique du Congo
299. Tajaf Foundation, Ghana
300. Tanzania Better Health
301. Tanzania Community Support Organization (TCS)
302. Tanzania TB Community Network (TTCN)
303. TASK, South Africa
304. TB Alliance, USA
305. TB Europe Coalition, Netherlands
306. TB HIV Care, South Africa
307. TB Proof, South Africa
308. TB Vaccine Advocacy Roadmap (TB Vax ARM)
309. TB Women Global, Kenya
310. TBpeople Global
311. TBpeople Kyrgyzstan
312. TBpeople Nepal
313. TBpeople Nigeria
314. TBpeople Pakistan
315. TBpeople Philippines
316. TBpeople Uganda
317. TBpeople Ukraine
318. TBPPM Learning Network, Canada
319. The Indonesian Association Against Tuberculosis (PPTI)
320. The LovLife Project for Health & Environment Inc., Philippines
321. The Reformed Drug & Substance Abuse Initiative, Nigeria
322. The TB Centre, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, United Kingdom
323. The Ukrainians Against Tuberculosis Foundation
324. Tim Africa Aid Ghana (TAAG), Ghana
325. Tiwaa Health for Wealth Foundation, Ghana
326. Toto Centre Initiative, Kenya
327. Treatment Action Group, USA
328. Trust Five Self-Help Support Group, Kenya
329. TuBerculosis Vaccine Initiative (TBVI), Netherlands
330. Tuko kazi, Kenya
331. UK Academics & Professionals to End TB, United Kingdom
332. Universidad de Zaragoza, España
333. University for Development Studies, Ghana
334. Vighanaharta Sai Hospital, Pune, India
335. Vision Makers, Kenya
336. WACI Health, Kenya
337. We Are TB, USA
338. West Africa AIDS Foundation, Ghana
339. Women Together Edu-Cultural Center, Kenya
340. Women4GlobalFund, Global
341. Wote Youth Development Project, Kenya
342. Yahintara, Indonesia
343. Yayasan Menara Agung Pengharapar Internasional (MAP Internasional), Indonesia
344. Young Health Advocates Ghana
345. Youth & Women for Opportunities Uganda (YWOU)
346. Youth Foundation of Bangladesh
347. ZMQ Global, Canada
348. ELIPS, Ukraine
Individuals

Organizational affiliations are for informational purposes and do not represent an endorsement of this letter unless the organization is listed above.

349. A. A. Voets, IAVI, Netherlands
350. Aaron Nyakubaya, Calamred
   Occupational Health Services, Zimbabwe
351. Abdqianni Hassan Ahmed, Ministry of Health, Somalia
352. Abdulbasit S. Mikail, Youth Opportunities & Transformation in Africa, Nigeria
353. Abdullahid Saidu Lugga, National Association of Kasisna State Medical Students, Nigeria
354. Abdullahi Yahaya, Kano State Primary Health Care Management Board (KSPHCMDA), Nigeria
355. Abdulssalam Ibraheem Sheu, Ahmadu Bello University, Nigeria
356. Abhijith Njarattil Parameswaran, Andhra Pradesh Residential Educational Institutions Society (APREIS), India
357. Abraham Gebremedhih, Armauer Hansen Institutions Society (APREIS), India
358. Abdussalam Ibraheem Sheu, Ahmadu Bello University, Nigeria
359. Abubakar Yaro, Africa Health Research Organization, United Kingdom
360. Adagia Guy Damien, Programme National de Lutte contre la Tuberculose (PNLT), Côte d’Ivoire
361. Adam Kuma, Ligue Sénégalaise de Lutte Antituberculose, Sénégal
362. Adetou Mustapha, Nigerian Institute of Medical Research, Nigeria
363. Adrián Sánchez-Montalvá, Vall de Hebron Campus Hospital Barcelona, España
364. Adrienne Shapiro, University of Washington, Fred Hutch Cancer Center, USA
365. Afolabi Yinka, KNCV TB Plus, Nigeria
366. Afrika Krishartanto, Indonesia
367. Abgermanon Koukou Elié, Programme de Lutte contre la Tuberculose et VIH, Togo
368. Abghenyang Samey, Programme National de Lutte contre la Tuberculose, Togo
369. Agnes Okose, TB Champion, Kenya
370. Ahmad Hudu Abdullahi, Nigeria
371. Ahmad Muktah, Nigeria
372. Ahmad Tijaniy, Nigeria
373. Ahmed Bedru Omer, KNCV TB Plus, Ethiopia
374. Ainhoa Lucía, Spain
375. Aisha Narmirembe, SORAK Development Agency, Uganda
376. Aiyana Masla, USA
377. Alabi Faithful Emmanuel, Nigeria
378. Alao Mustapha, Nigeria
379. Alberto Colorado, Americas TB Coalition; Regional TB Social Observatory, USA
380. Alberto Manuel Dominguez Lázaro, Ministerio de Política Territorial, España
381. Aleksandr Shilo, TBpeople, Kyrgyzstan
382. Alex Mohapatra, University of California, San Francisco, USA
383. Alex Runswick, RESULTS UK, United Kingdom
384. Alfred Langat, TB Program, Ministry of Health, Kenya
385. Alyg Cassamo, Ajuda de Desenvolvimento de Povo para Povo (ADPP), Mozambique
386. Ali Kawser Chowdhury, Bangladesh
387. Aican Yesiltepe, Netherlands
388. Alicia Vielma Gaspar, México
389. Alida E. Briel, South African Tuberculosis Vaccine Institute (SATVI), South Africa
390. Alison Best, South Africa
391. Alissa Rothchild, University of Massachusetts Amherst, USA
392. Allison Portnoy, USA
393. Alphres Rasekhala, South Africa
394. Alva Juan, Yayasan KNCV Indonesia, Indonesia
395. Alvaro Borges, Statens Serum Institut, Denmark
396. Alvaro Schwalb, School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), Perú
397. Aiwi Shinta Hadiyanti, Indonesia
398. Aman Shukla, India Working Group for Health Advocacy (IWG), India
399. Amanor Emmanuel, BIO Foundation, Ghana
400. Aminu Muhammad Said, Nigeria
401. Amit Singhal, A*STAR ID Labs, Singapore
402. Amy Mccorville, TB Action Group, United Kingdom
403. Amy Warren
404. Anesa Cespedes, IAVI, USA
405. Ana Cristina Flores Grimaldo, Movimiento CUS, México
406. Ana Laura Rodriguez Vázquez, Compañeros en Salud, México
407. Anar Singh, WHO, India
408. Anastasiya Abdullaeva, Uzbekistan
409. Andile Kula, TASK Foundation, South Africa
410. Andrea Cabibbe, IRCCS San Raffaele Scientific Institute, Italy
411. Andreas Kupz, James Cook University, Australia
412. Andres Castañeda Prado, México
413. Andrew Auruku, Youth & Women for Opportunities Uganda (YWOU), Uganda
414. Andrew Nunn, MRC Clinical Trials Unit at UCL, United Kingdom
415. Andy Katompa, République démocratique du Congo
416. Anele Gela, University of Cape Town, South Africa
417. Ángela León Cáceres, Women4GlobalFund, Ecuador
418. Angela Lombardo, USA
419. Angela Onyechi, Nigeria
420. Ani Herna Sari, Rekat Peduli Indonesia
421. Aniku David, Uganda
422. Dr. Anima Sharma, Ashwasti, India
423. Animesh Sinha, India
424. Anja van der Westhuizen, IAVI, South Africa
425. Anjali Priya, Indian Institute of Technology Delhi, India
426. Ann Wambui, Keny, Kenya
427. Anna Sutayagina, Germany
428. Anna Turkova, MRC Clinical Trials Unit at UCL, United Kingdom
429. Annamari Candler, The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis & Malaria, Switzerland
430. Anne Nordstoga, Norway
431. Anne Wangwe, IAVI, Kenya
432. Anoushka Sethi, India
433. Ansinalyne Snaitang, India
434. Antonio Almajane, Ajuda de Desenvolvimento de Povo para Povo (ADPP), Mozambique
435. Antonio Kwaku Gomado, Stop TB Partnership Ghana, Ghana
436. Antonio Marti Torres, La Llave del Armario, España
437. Anu Singh, India
438. Arafat Abdulganiyu, Ahmadu Bello University, Nigeria
439. Arafat Yasin, Ahmadu Bello University, Nigeria
440. Archana Oinam, Global Coalition of TB Advocates (GCTA), India
441. Arne Von Delft, TB Proof; University of Cape Town, South Africa
442. Arrie van der Merwe, IAVI, South Africa
443. Arshi Saifi, Resource Group for Education and Advocacy for Community Health (REACH), India
444. Arshi Safi, Resource Group for Education and Advocacy for Community Health (REACH), India
445. Arti Singh, Touchad by TB, India
446. Arun Kumar Jha, India
447. Ashie Charles, Christ Soldiers Foundation, Ghana
448. Ashley Veldsmans, South African Tuberculosis Vaccine Institute (SATVI), South Africa
449. Ashu Balhara
450. Assani Musafiri, Burundi
451. Atique Saleem, Netherlands
452. Atul Vashist, Translational Health Science & Technology Institute, India
453. Augustine Gwamadzi, Ministry of Health, Malawi
453. Augustine Maria, KNCV TB Plus, Nigeria
454. Dr. Aung Than Oo, PATH, Myanmar
455. Aytoune Okelana, Cleannation Foundation, Nigeria
456. Aysenur Kiliç, United Kingdom
457. Azhree Akinrin, TBPPM Learning Network, Nigeria
458. Azibadighi Walter, Ministry of Health, Nigeria
459. Baba Gana Adam, Society for the Prevention B& Eradicat of Tuberculosis in Nigeria (SPEPBN), Nigeria
460. Bagalwa Cangaboba Dieudonné, République démocratique du Congo
461. Bakul Piplani, Indian Institute of Technology Delhi, India
462. Bakyt Myrzaliev, KNCV TB Plus, Kyrgyzstan
463. Baraka Onjare, KNCV TB Plus, Tanzania
464. Barend Mynhartd, Setshaba Research Centre, South Africa
465. Barry Mohamed, Guinea
466. Bazra Tsopt, Mongolian Anti-TB Coalition, Mongolia
467. Beatrice Kabuguy, Sautiskika, Kenya
468. Beatrice Rix, United Kingdom
469. Beatriz Fiestas, ISGlobal, España
470. Beauty Ukazu, Nigeria
471. Belo Abdussalam, Ahmadu Bello University, Nigeria
472. Bello Bolyam, The Reformed Drug & Substance Abuse Initiative, Nigeria
473. Benjamín Ansah, Patients Friend Foundation (PFF), Ghana
474. Berthe Stenberg, LHL International Tuberculosis Foundation, Norway
475. Bethanye Zelt
476. Bethseba Siddondo, IAVI, Kenya
477. Bhaskar Chatterjee, University of Michigan, USA
478. Bianca Tasca, KNCV TB Plus, Netherlands
479. Bibi Chendi, Stellenbosch University, South Africa
480. Bikram Kumar Singh, Institute of Medicine, Nepal
481. Blanca Estela Rodriguez Jaramillo, México
482. Blessing Ayaji, Nigeria
483. Blessing Mangale, South Africa
484. Bobby Mauoane, Equity Health Innovations, South Africa
485. Bonface Ose, Wote Youth Development Project, Kenya
486. Breli Bonheure Ngouama, Fondation Congoïste pour la Recherche Médicale, République du Congo
487. Bridgette Connell, IAVI, Netherlands
488. Bright Owusu, Youth AID Initiative Ghana
489. Bulelwa Mboyi, Facilitators of Community Transformation South Africa (FACT SA), South Africa
490. Bundy-Nurhyeal Audu, Ahmadu Bello University, Nigeria
491. Caren Kiarie, Nyabende Support Programmes CBO, Kenya
492. Carene Ndong Sima, South Africa
493. Carlos Martin, Universidad de Zaragoza, España
494. Carolina Oelofse, Stellenbosch University, Namibia
495. Caryn Upton, TASK Foundation, South Africa
496. Catherine Kirtane, IAVI, USA
497. Cathy Rowan, USA
498. Celestino Colon-Galletti, IAVI, USA
499. Cesar Ugarte-Gil, Universidad Peruana Cayetano Heredia, Perú
500. Charlton Muchemwa, Pngaabe Zimbabwe AIDS Trust, Zimbabwe
501. Chepkemoi Mercy, Network of TB Champions, Kenya
502. Chetan Seshadri, University of Washington, USA
503. Chinelo O., Nigeria
504. Chizoba Nzeakor, The Zoba Advisory, Nigeria
505. Chris Buri, We Are TB, USA
506. Chris Dell, United Kingdom
507. Chris Semancik
508. Christine Sammy, Wote Youth Development Project, Kenya
509. Christopher Kelly, University of Cape Town, South Africa
510. Ciza François, Burundi
511. Clasmenio Sulate, Mozambique Local TB Response, Mozambique
512. Clotilde Rodonne Siribi, Groupe d’Action de Paix et de Formation pour la Transformation (GAPAFOT), République centrafricaine
513. Colette Kibungou, Groupe d’Action de Paix et de Formation pour la Transformation (GAPAFOT), République centrafricaine
514. Colleen Pero, TB Alliance, USA
515. Collins Kinyuru, Pamoja TB Group, Kenya
516. Collins Waweru, IAVI, Kenya
517. Comfort Amos, Nigeria
518. Concepcion Ros Castells Carrillo, Departamento de Salud, Gobierno Vasco, España
519. Conde Isa
520. Crisaldo Pablo, The LoveLife Project for Health & Environment Inc, Philippines
521. Cristina Calvo, Sociedad Española de Infectología Pediátrica (SEIP), España
522. Cristina Celan, Center for Health Policies & Studies, Moldova
523. Cynthia Tardivel, Canada
524. Damian Facciolo, Results International (Australia), Australia
525. Daniel Bomba, Mozambique
526. Daniel Craig, IAVI, United Kingdom
527. Dannielle Kenny, Stellenbosch University, South Africa
528. David Bogdan, IAVI, USA
529. David Bragan, Treatment Action Group (TAG), USA
530. David Daisy, World Vision India, India
531. David Edington, United Kingdom
532. David Kwesi Afreh, Stop TB Partnership Ghana, Ghana
533. David Lewisohn, Stop TB Partnership Working Group on New TB Vaccines, USA
534. David Moskowitz, Stop TB USA, USA
535. David Mutabari, University of Nairobi, Kenya
536. David Vivar Torres, Servicio de Medicinas PRO-VIDA, Perú
537. Deborah Dzifa Gavi, HOMES Fountain, Ghana
538. Deepi Chavan, Survivors Against TB, India
539. Denys Nazarov, AIDS Healthcare Foundation, USA
540. Desire Aggor, Stop TB Partnership, Ghana
541. Devin Columbus, IAVI, USA
542. Dezai Kemonean Delphin, ONG EFAV, Côte d’Ivoire
543. Dheeraj Tumu, WHO, India
544. Dickson Njogu, Network of TB Champions, Kenya
545. Dipentu Bhattacharya, Survivors Against TB, India
546. Diya Sharma Arora
547. Doh Gilbert Ndeh, Stellenbosch university, South Africa
548. Domahet Hermann, RAS, Côte d’Ivoire
549. Dominik Zenner, Queen Mary University London, United Kingdom
550. Donata Sizemore, USA
551. Donna Hope Wegener, National Tuberculosis Controllers Association (NTCA), USA
552. Doris Loromie Domor, Hope For Future Generation, Ghana
553. Durga Dhanalakshmi Gowra, India
554. Eden Tamang, Eden Tamang TBC, India
555. Edhaly Covarrubias Martine, México
556. Edna Tembo, Coalition of Women Living with HIV & AIDS, Malawi
557. Edwarado Patac, TBpeople Philippines, Philippines
558. Efua Wilson, Wilson Efua, Nigeria
559. Eileen Foy, USA
560. Ekatha Ann John, Results Canada, Canada
561. Elana van Brakel, IAVI, South Africa
562. Elena Baciu
563. Elena Shastina, Russia
564. Elena Stylianou, University of Oxford, United Kingdom
565. Eli Dearden, Vrije Universiteit, Netherlands
566. Elsa Nemes, University of Cape Town, South Africa
567. Elizabeth Lee, Stop TB Partnership, Switzerland
568. Elizabeth Lovinger, Treatment Action Group (TAG), USA
569. Elizabeth Mutinda, Kenya
570. Elizabeth Rea, Canada
571. Elizabeth T.
572. Elya Shamshkhou, University of Washington, USA
608. Flora Mae Cavan, PMDT Warriors, Philippines

609. Emma Douma, Tilburg University, Netherlands

610. Folashade Idowu, National TB & Leprosy Control Programme (NTBLCP), Nigeria

611. Francesca Belli, Focus Equality, Italy

612. Francis Joseph, Network of Asian People who Use Drugs (NAPUD), Thailand

613. Frank Cobelens, Amsterdam University Medical Centers, Netherlands

614. Franklin Greer, USA

615. Frida Roma Hidalgo, México

616. Frouke Proeece, GGD Amsterdam, Netherlands

617. Fwangshak Ishaku, Nigeria

618. Gabriel Lekartiwa, Kenya

619. Gabriel Mbarga, For Impact in Social Health, Cameroon

620. Gabriela Gomez, IAVI, Netherlands

621. Gabriella Quintard, IAVI, USA

622. Gaby Chaiban, IAVI, USA

623. Gagandeep Singh, Indian Institute of Technology Delhi, India

624. Ganzorig Munkhjargal, Mongolian Anti-TB Coalition, Mongolia

625. Dr. Garima Khare, University of Delhi South Campus, India

626. Gavin Reid, Switzerland

627. Gavin Lomboy, SALT, Philippines

628. Gayathri Vasudevan, IAVI, USA

629. Gcobisa Ndlangalavu, Stellenbosch University, South Africa

630. Geeta Sethi, India

631. George Amemba, IAVI, Kenya

632. Ghanashyam Sharma, Health, Environment and Agriculture Development Program (HEADP)-Nepal, Nepal


634. Giorgio Franyuti, Medical Impact, México

635. Giovanni Ghelmetti, Stellenbosch University, South Africa

636. Giridharan P, India

637. Girma Zewdie Delelegn, National Veterinary Institute (NVI), Ethiopia

638. Gisèle Takaléa, Collectif des Organisations de Lutte contre la Tuberculose et les Maladies Respiratoires en CI (COLTMR CI), Côte d’Ivoire

639. Gizachew Taddesse Akalu, St. Paul’s Maladies Respiratoires en CI (COLTMR CI), Côte d’Ivoire

640. Gloria Ishaya, Nigeria

641. Gloriah Moses, Kenya

642. Glory Kalobo, République démocratique du Congo

643. Godfrey Kigozi, Rakai Health Sciences Program, Uganda

644. Godfrey Wekha, Makerere University College of Health Sciences, Uganda

645. Golden Yalenga, 5fm Radio Zambia, Zambia

646. Greg Paton, Stop TB Partnership, Switzerland

647. Gugulethu Mahlwana, Stellenbosch University, South Africa

648. Guillermo Guibovich, Perú

649. Guus Eskens, VSO; Healthnet TPO, Netherlands

650. Gwen Knight, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), United Kingdom

651. Hafsat Umar, Nigeria

652. Hamisi Dzole, Toto Centre Initiative, Kenya

653. Harold Kacheipatsonga, Malawi Network of Religious Leaders Living with or Personally Affected by HIV & AIDS (MANERELA+), Malawi

654. Harriet Park, IAVI, USA

655. Harry Prabowo, Asia Pacific Network of People Living with HIV (APN+), Thailand

656. Harshita Mittal, India

657. Hassan Haghparast Bidxgoli, University College London (UCL), United Kingdom

658. Hauwa Sayuti Yahaya, Nigeria

659. Heather Arendt, USA

660. Heather Elliott, Canada

661. Heather Siefers, IAVI, USA

662. Heather Teixeira, IAVI, USA

663. Hector Javier Sanchez Perez, México

664. Hedvig Amdal, LHL International, Norway

665. Helen Nash, United Kingdom

666. Helena Ntoba-Boadi, Tiwaa Health for Wealth Foundation, Ghana

667. Heny Akhmad, Consitrium Penabula-STPI, Indonesia

668. Hester Kuipers, IAVI, Netherlands

669. Hira Aslam, Provincial Tuberculosis Program, Pakistan

670. Hoa Vu, Centre for Supporting Community Development Initiatives, Vietnam

671. Hyacinthe Koffi Yao, Centre Solidarité Action Sociale, Côte d’Ivoire

672. Ian Copley, United Kingdom

673. Ibrahim Abdussalam, Nigeria

674. Ibrahim Makau, Network of TB Champions, Kenya

675. Ibrahim Musa, Breakthrough Action Nigeria, Nigeria

676. Ida Savadogo, Réseau d’Accès aux Médicaments Essentiels (RAME), Burkina Faso

677. Idrées Daoud, Nigeria

678. Idris Muhammad, University of Maiduguri Association of Radiography Students, Nigeria

679. Ifeanyi Emmanuel Abali, Nigeria Centre for Disease Control & Prevention, Nigeria

680. Ihor Skalko, Ukraine

681. Ilze Willemse, South Africa

682. Imam Nurjaya, Indonesia

683. Indrani V., National TB Elimination Programme (NTEP) Ballari, India

684. Ineke Huitema, KNCV TB Plus, Netherlands
806. Lorraine Nzaywa, Harley’s Limited, Kenya
807. Louis Schwartz, USA
808. Loyiso Tshetsha, Facilitators of Community Transformation South Africa (FACT-SA), South Africa
809. Lucas Fondo, VSO-Kenya, Kenya
810. Lucica Ditiu, Stop TB Partnership, Switzerland
811. Lucky Taderera, Zimbabwe
812. Luis Ortiz Padilla, México
813. Lungisani Ngodwana, South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC)-VERULAM, South Africa
814. Luz M. Lopez-Marin, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), México
815. Lydia Nyangireki, Uganda
816. Lynn Fourie, TB Alliance, South Africa
817. Maddy Featherstone, USA
818. Madhukar Pai, McGill International TB Centre, Canada
819. Magdalene Adjei, Stellenbosch University, South Africa
820. Maggy Ngombi, We Are TB, USA
821. Mahamud Ahammad, Institute of Allergy & Clinical Immunology of Bangladesh (IACIB), Bangladesh
822. Mahlet Worku, Organic Health Care Service, Ethiopia
823. Mahmood Abdullahi, National Association of Kaduna State Medical Students (NAKAMS), Nigeria
824. Maigan Ratangee, South Africa
825. Maite Suarez, IAVI, Netherlands
826. Mamad Maramov, Caritas Tajikistan, Tajikistan
827. Mandeep Sandhu, South Africa
828. Manisha Dhakal, Blue Diamond Society, India
829. Marifat Oliftaeva, Caritas Tajikistan, Tajikistan
830. Mariana Resende, Portugal
831. Marc Lipman, University College London, United Kingdom
832. Marcel Stal, Netherlands
833. Maria Del Rosario Leon Rhandomy, Perú
834. Maria Elena Alvarez Cuevas, México
835. Mariam Anja Abdulmumuni, Nigeria
836. Mariana Resende, Portugal
837. Marifat Oliftaeva, Caritas Tajikistan, Tajikistan
838. Mariia Sergeeva, Smorodintsev Research Institute of Influenza, Russia
839. Marina Stukova, Smorodintsev Research Institute of Influenza, Russia
840. Marion Gruber, IAVI, USA
841. Marisa Russell, IAVI, South Africa
842. Marisa Shields, IAVI, USA
843. Mark Hatherhill, South African Tuberculosis Vaccine Institute (SATVI), South Africa
844. Marlo Moller, Stellenbosch University, South Africa
845. Martha Inirida Guerrero, Hospital Universitario Centro Dermatologico Federico Ileras Acosta, Colombia
846. Marwou De Kock, South African Tuberculosis Vaccine Institute (SATVI), South Africa
847. Mary Magaya, Training & Research Unit of Excellence, Malawi
848. Mary Muia, WEMA CBO, Kenya
849. Mary Rose Rilie, ChillLungs TB Support Community, Philippines
850. Mary Simpkins, USA
851. Maryam Morenikeji, Nigeria
852. Massouda Kaskar, South African Tuberculosis Vaccine Institute (SATVI), South Africa
853. Massougou Thiaudourn, Alliance Nationale des Communautés pour la Santé (ANCS), Sénégal
854. Matt Price, IAVI, USA
855. Maureen Awuor, Amref Health Africa in Kenya, Kenya
856. Maurice Okello, Kenya
857. Maxime Lunga, Club des Amis Damien République démocratique du Congo
858. Mayema Anatole Mayema, Ministry of Health, Lesotho
859. Mbali Mkhonza, Stellenbosch University, South Africa
860. Md. Ilias Miah, Centre for Environment, Human Rights & Development Forum (CEHRDF), Bangladesh
861. Md. Siddiqui Islam, Institute of Allergy & Clinical Immunology of Bangladesh (IACIB), Bangladesh
862. Meera Yadav, India
863. Megan Finnegan, IAVI, USA
864. Melanie Swift, MD, USA
865. Meleciyo Mayta, ASPAT International, Perú
866. Melissa Anne Schreoter, IAVI, USA
867. Mercy Annapoorni, Blossom Trust, India
868. Michael Anguria, SAF-Teso, Uganda
869. Michael Makanza, Global TB Vaccine Partnership (GTVP), Netherlands
870. Micheal Ajayii, Nigeria
871. Michele Tameris, South African Tuberculosis Vaccine Institute (SATVI), South Africa
872. Michelle Helinski, European & Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP), Netherlands
873. Mihaly Koltai, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), United Kingdom
874. Mike Frick, Treatment Action Group (TAG), USA
875. Minal Khaniya, India
876. Miranda Zary, Canada
878. Miriam Arago, Medecins sans Frontieres, España
879. Mitchell Warren, AVAC, USA
880. Mmathabo Rangoshe, ManthRan Consultancy, South Africa
881. Moagi Shaku, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa
882. Professor Dr. Moazzem Hossain, Institute of Allergy & Clinical Immunology of Bangladesh (IACIB), Bangladesh
883. Mohammad Wajid Ali, CDC, Pakistan
884. Mohammad Shafi Shaiakh, IVI, South Korea
885. Mohammed Sani Abulkadir, UN-Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) Youth, Nigeria
886. Moises Sandoare Uamussie, Association des Mineiros Moçambicanos (AMIMO), Mozambique
887. Mukohlohe Thulare, South Africa
888. Mona Balani, Association of TB People India, India
889. Mona Drage, Norway
890. Moussa Conde, National Référence Laboratory of Mycobacteria, Guinea
891. Mphatso Phiri, Malawi-Liverpool-Wellcome Clinical Research Programme, Malawi
892. Muazu Munzali, Nigeria
893. Mubarak Idris, Nigeria
894. Muchinga Mutambo, Copper Rose, Zambia
895. Muhammad Aliyu, Youth Initiative for Good Governance, Peace & Justice (YIGPEJ), Nigeria
896. Musa Fatika, Nigeria
897. Musinguzi Francis, Uganda
898. Mustapha Eniola, Nigeria
899. Munende Mutisya, GIGI, Kenya
900. Nagesh S., Maduraiamaraj University, India
901. Nana Gleeson, Botswana Network on Ethics, Law & HIV/AIDS, Botswana
902. Nandini Konar
903. Naomi Fuller, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), United Kingdom
904. Naomi Okugbeni, Stellenbosch University, South Africa
905. Nargis Khan, University of Calgary, Canada
906. Natasha Kriel, Stellenbosch University, South Africa
907. Naayab Ali, Transgender Rights Consultants Pakistan, Pakistan
908. Nazar Nifraz, Sri Lanka
909. Neetha Morar, South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC), South Africa
910. Negeho Duressa, Ethiopia
911. Neil Stoker, UCL-TB, University College London, United Kingdom
912. Nelson Tolero Jr., Philippines
913. Nercio Machele, Manhiça Health Research Center, Mozambique
914. Nevena Ciric, AID+, Serbia
915. Nicodemus Siayi Soko, Huduma Christian Spiritual Younth Ministry YLO, Tanzania