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WHO announces plans to establish TB Vaccine Accelerator council

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An important opportunity to correct setbacks in the TB response



Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organisation (WHO) has announced plans to establish a new Tuberculosis (TB) Vaccine Accelerator Council.

The Council will facilitate the licensing and use of effective novel TB vaccines catalysing high-level alignment between funders, global agencies, governments and end users in identifying and overcoming barriers to TB vaccine development.

Despite countries making bold commitments to end TB by 2030, in the Sustainable Development Goals, the WHO End TB Strategy and the 2018 political declaration on the fight against TB, the epidemic shows no sign of slowing down. In 2021, approximately 10.6 million people fell sick with TB, and 1.6 million died. Drug-resistance continues to be a major problem with close to half a million people developing drug-resistant TB every year.

BCG is currently the only licensed TB vaccine. While it provides moderate efficacy in preventing severe forms of TB in infants and young children, it does not adequately protect adolescents and adults, who account for close to 90% of TB transmissions globally.

A recent WHO commissioned study, An investment case for new tuberculosis (TB) vaccines estimates that, over 25 years, a vaccine that is 50% effective in preventing disease among adolescents and adults could avert up to 76 million new TB cases, 8.5 million deaths, 42 million courses of antibiotic treatment and US$ 6.5 billion in costs faced by TB affected households, especially for the poorest and most vulnerable.

A vaccine that is 75% effective could avert up to 110 million new TB cases and 12.3 million deaths. The study further suggests that every $1 invested in a 50% effective vaccine could generate an economic return of $7 in terms of averted health costs and increased productivity.