



## Chagas disease in the Americas

Substantial progress has been made in reducing the burden of Chagas' disease in the Americas. However, not all countries have succeeded in meeting proposed targets, and new challenges have emerged, including the propagation of the disease to non-endemic countries through migration. In 2010, several countries in the region failed to meet their control targets. Chief obstacles include the failure to place priority on Chagas' disease in health agendas, limited resource allocation, problems in the relationship between national and local health systems, and emerging health events competing for resources.

### Key facts

- Chagas' disease affects an estimated 8-10 million people and claims some 12,000 lives each year in the 21 Latin American countries where it is endemic.
- Chagas is a disease of poverty. People become infected through the parasite *Trypanosoma cruzi*, carried by insects that live in thatched roofs and adobe walls typically associated with poor-quality housing.
- Transmission of Chagas can also occur through blood transfusions, congenitally or orally.
- Worldwide, the estimated number of annual deaths from Chagas fell from 45,000 in the 1980s to about 12,000 in 2008.
- The estimated number of people infected worldwide declined from 30 million in 1990 to 8 million in 2006.
- In those 16 years, the annual incidence fell from 700,000 to 56,000, and the burden of the disease decreased from 2.8 million disability-adjusted life years to under 500,000.

### Milestones

- Insect transmission of Chagas has been eliminated nationally or in significant parts of Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay.
- The main species of triatomine insects have been eliminated in Costa Rica, El Salvador and two states of Mexico.
- Universal screening of blood donors for Chagas' disease has been achieved in 19 of 21 endemic countries in Latin America.
- Diagnosis and treatment for Chagas have been expanded and improved throughout the region.
- On May 2011, an international commission confirmed that transmission of Chagas' disease by insects had been halted in Bolivia's most populous department, La Paz. (Bolivia is now working to halt infestation and transmission in the departments of Cochabamba and Potosí.)

### Key goals

PAHO member countries are committed to achieving the following goals:

- *Interruption of vector-borne domestic transmission and transmission via transfusion and organ transplants by 2015, and prevention of transmission of T. cruzi through other channels, such as contaminated food and laboratory accidents.*
- *Provision of diagnosis, treatment and care of people infected with T. cruzi.*
- *Implementation of secondary prevention of congenital Chagas' disease.*
- *Carrying out technology research and innovation, with emphasis on developing new and better diagnostic tools as well as drugs for treatment of Chagas.*

