



World Health  
Organization

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR Europe

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION in  
**TURKMENISTAN**





## Welcome from the Regional Director

Welcome to WHO. Health is our most precious asset. WHO's goal is to ensure better health for everyone, everywhere. We touch people's lives – making sure the air we breathe, and the food and water we consume is safe; ensuring all have access to effective health systems; safeguarding the quality of medicines and vaccines; combating diseases and protecting people from health threats. WHO works with governments, organizations, communities and individuals to promote health throughout our lives. We all benefit socially, economically and environmentally from a world that seeks health for all and nowhere is our work more critical than at country level. We look forward to working with you to make this our common goal.

Dr Zsuzsanna Jakab  
WHO Regional Director for Europe



## Who we are

The World Health Organization (WHO) is the global authority on public health within the United Nations. Founded in 1948, we collaborate with the governments of 194 Member States to ensure the highest attainable level of health for all. Currently, more than 7000 people work in 150 country offices, 6 regional offices and at the headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. The Organization's work is guided by the principle that health is a human right, and we seek to extend universal health coverage, protect people from health emergencies, and ensure that all people enjoy better health and well-being.

Turkmenistan is part of the WHO European Region, which comprises 53 countries: this Region covers a vast geographical area reaching from the Atlantic to the Pacific oceans. WHO staff in the Region are public health, scientific and technical experts, based in the Regional Office in Copenhagen, Denmark, in five technical centres and in country offices in 30 Member States.

Turkmenistan became a member of WHO on 2 July 1992. Following signature of the Basic Agreement between WHO and the Government of Turkmenistan in 1995, WHO opened a liaison office in Ashgabat. In 2007, this became the WHO Country Office in Turkmenistan. We endeavour to build a better, healthier future for the people of Turkmenistan.

# How we work

As part of the United Nations system, WHO's core function is to direct, coordinate and provide leadership on international health. We articulate ethical and evidence-based policy options, and set norms and standards, promoting and monitoring their implementation. WHO also stimulates the generation, translation and dissemination of knowledge, builds sustainable institutional capacity and monitors and assesses health trends. One of our core functions is to support emergency preparedness and response.

Working in countries, WHO plays an important role in advocating for health at the highest political level, communicating about important health issues and motivating actors across sectors to take action for better health. We bring partners together and lead among United Nations agencies working towards attaining the health-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In Turkmenistan, the country team draws on the technical expertise of all three levels of the Organization. Our strong presence and capacity at country level ensures that our support is relevant and effective. WHO's global network also enables other countries to learn and benefit from the experiences and expertise in Turkmenistan.

## Partnerships and collaborations

As part of our role to direct and coordinate international health work, WHO promotes collaboration, mobilizes partnerships and galvanizes the efforts of different health actors to respond to national and global health challenges.

In Turkmenistan, our primary partner is the Ministry of Health and Medical Industry. WHO is also an active member of the United Nations Country Team, and collaborates closely with national authorities and stakeholders as well as civil society, health workers, foundations, academic institutions and international organizations.



# Turkmenistan in brief




Population size

**5.7 million**

**39.1%**  
living in urban areas

Average life  
expectancy

 **68**

 **74**

**Early neonatal  
deaths**

**7.3**

per 1 000 live births

**Top three health  
challenges in the country:**

- 1** Addressing NCDs and their risk factors.
- 2** Strengthening human resource capacity in the health sector and ensuring access to medical services for vulnerable groups.
- 3** Tackling the major health threat posed by tuberculosis (TB).

**Noncommunicable  
diseases (NCDs)**  
account for

**76%**

of all deaths

# Message from the WHO Representative

In my role as WHO Representative in Turkmenistan, I coordinate the work of the WHO Country Office to support policy-making for sustainable health development, looking at every aspect of the health system and how it impacts and is affected by other sectors. This includes providing guidance, building local relationships to implement technical cooperation, supporting the uptake of standards and agreements, and ensuring that public health measures are coordinated and in place during crises. Our work is guided by the principles of the SDGs and Health 2020, the European health policy framework.

Turkmenistan is taking significant steps to address its health challenges and is strongly committed to improving the health of the whole population. To address the burden of NCDs by targeting risk factors, the country has, for example, established a far-reaching tobacco control programme that has led to a significant reduction in smoking levels. WHO fully supports Turkmenistan's ambitious goal to become tobacco-free by 2025. The 2013 Ashgabat Declaration on the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases in the Context of Health 2020 has guided this work.

WHO is also committed to working together with the Government and health partners to further strengthen the country's health system and ensure universal health coverage for all, with fair protection mechanisms for the population.

Significant progress in tuberculosis (TB) control, including in the area of multidrug-resistant TB (MDR-TB), illustrates that the support WHO and partners are providing to this priority country is leading to results. In addition, Turkmenistan has made significant progress in combating other communicable diseases. It maintains polio-free status, is malaria-free and has eradicated dracunculiasis. Together, we are working extensively on pandemic preparedness and on tackling antimicrobial resistance and viral hepatitis.

A remaining challenge in Turkmenistan is the need to strengthen the collection of data and evidence for better policy-making, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

I am committed to working with the Government of Turkmenistan to further improve the health of the whole Turkmen population.

## **Dr Paulina Karwowska**

WHO Representative in Turkmenistan



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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paulina Karwowska". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a dark color.

# WHO – saving lives and ensuring health for all



## Towards sustainable TB control

TB control is a top priority for Turkmenistan. The country's national TB control programme, supported by WHO and partners, has led to positive epidemiological changes: both the TB notification rate and the TB death rate have fallen since 2000. Between 2000 and 2016, the number of new TB cases fell by nearly half. Annually, the rate of new cases fell by 6% on average, with the fastest decrease occurring after 2013, when MDR-TB management was introduced.

The TB control programme seeks to ensure universal access to TB diagnostics, including drug susceptibility testing. The treatment success rate in the 2016 patient cohort was 84% among new cases and relapses, and 83% among retreatment cases. High drug resistance rates, which are estimated to be 14% among new and 38% among previously treated TB cases, remain a challenge for the programme.

Currently, most of the second-line anti-TB medicines are being procured by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, a long-standing partner to WHO. However, as Turkmenistan graduates from Global Fund recipient status the Government is gradually taking over the procurement of anti-TB drugs, and plans to cover the country's entire needs in 2020.

WHO has provided continuous support to Turkmenistan in developing national guidelines on the management of MDR-TB, extensively drug-resistant TB and rifampicin-resistant TB, as well as drug safety monitoring and the use of new drugs and treatment regimens to treat TB. Through these measures, WHO has helped to ensure sustainable, systematic changes with the introduction of new life-saving treatment options.

## Making tobacco a thing of the past

Tobacco remains one of the greatest public health challenges in the WHO European Region and globally. In December 2013, during the WHO European Ministerial Conference on the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases in the Context of Health 2020, held in Turkmenistan, ministers of health agreed through the Ashgabat Declaration to accelerate actions to protect present and future generations from the devastating consequences of tobacco. Member States confirmed their commitment to accelerate efforts to achieve full implementation of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC). They also shared the joint ambition to work towards a tobacco-free Region and to make the global voluntary target on tobacco use by 2025 a reality in all countries of the Region.

Subsequently, the WHO Regional Office for Europe together with the Government of Turkmenistan launched the project “Implementation of the Ashgabat Declaration: towards a tobacco-free European Region”. During this 4-year project, the Regional Office provided technical support in tobacco control, with a view to using Turkmenistan as a model country and centre of excellence in tobacco control. This support covered areas including strengthening national cessation

services, improving the enforcement of tobacco policies and analysing taxation mechanisms.

As a result, Turkmenistan has strengthened its tobacco control legislation and accelerated its implementation, introduced pictorial health warnings, and increased prices on tobacco products. Turkmenistan is committed to reducing tobacco usage in the country still further.

In Turkmenistan, the STEPwise approach to surveillance (STEPS) study, a national survey on the prevalence of major NCD risk factors in the country's population aged 18–69 years, has been conducted twice: initially in 2013 and again in March–April 2018. According to the 2018 results, the smoking rate is 3.4%, making Turkmenistan a leader among countries in the Region for the lowest rate of smoking.

The WHO European High-level Conference on Noncommunicable Diseases in April 2019 is another important milestone in addressing NCDs in the Region. It offers an opportunity to review the progress made and decide on the next steps for achieving the SDGs by 2030.



# Making our work possible

As Turkmenistan works towards achieving the SDGs, investing in WHO will help protect and promote the health of the poorest and most disadvantaged.

In addition to WHO's regular budget, based on contributions from Member States, our work in Turkmenistan is made possible thanks to contributions from the Government of Turkmenistan, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, and the KNCV Tuberculosis Foundation. Funding is also gratefully received from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to support TB control, as well as from Germany and the Netherlands.

As the development landscape evolves in Turkmenistan, WHO requires additional resources to continue supporting health improvements in the country. Several **funding gaps** exist for long-term health priorities, including:

- strengthening health and health information systems;
- addressing NCDs, including mental health; and
- tackling communicable diseases.

Globally, WHO is transforming to make the Organization more effective and efficient, placing country work even more at its centre. Predictable and flexible funding from our partners for global, regional and country-level priorities will be crucially important to our success. A full breakdown of the financing and implementation progress in Turkmenistan can be found on the WHO Programme Budget Portal:

<http://open.who.int/2018-19/home>



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