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25 March 2025

## **Re:Urgent Call for Transparency and Immediate Action on the TB Crisis in Ecuadorian Prisons**

[Women4GlobalFund \(W4GF\)](#) is a global network of 350 advocates from 75 countries, primarily based in the Global South, dedicated to promoting gender equality and equity. We are a global movement of women and girls in all of our diversity, including women living with and affected by HIV, TB, and malaria, and from key and vulnerable populations, who are committed to ensuring that Global Fund processes and health policies are rights-based, gender-transformative, and inclusive.

Together with the [Global Tuberculosis Community Advisory Board \(TB CAB\)](#), we advocate for the full participation of affected communities in health decision-making spaces, and for investments that reflect the realities and priorities of those most impacted. The TB CAB is a group of research-literate community activists from HIV and TB networks around the world that works to ensure TB research is driven by the needs and priorities of communities affected by TB and that the resulting innovations and interventions are accessible to everyone, everywhere.

As World TB Day is commemorated, we express grave concern over the uncontrolled tuberculosis (TB) outbreak in Ecuador's prison system. Reports from Fundación IO, The Permanent Committee for the Defense of Women Rights (CDH in Spanish), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), and national human rights organizations confirm that Ecuadorian prisons face severe overcrowding, medical neglect, and lack of TB treatment access, creating a serious human rights crisis.

### **Key Facts on the TB Crisis in Ecuador's Prisons**

- The incidence of TB in prison is approximately 123 times higher than in the general population of Ecuador. Prisoners living with TB-HIV face greater risks of unsuccessful treatment outcomes, highlighting the urgent need for coordination between the Ministries of Health and Justice to ensure the proper implementation of health protocols and national TB strategies.<sup>1</sup>
- At least 1,115 cases of tuberculosis have been reported in 12 out of Ecuador's 35 prisons. Of these, 567 cases are concentrated in the Litoral Penitentiary prison in Guayaquil.<sup>2</sup>
- Prison conditions in Ecuador — including overcrowding, restricted access to basic services like water and electricity, malnutrition, lack of medical attention for TB symptoms, and limited access

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<sup>1</sup>*Baja captación y éxito en el tratamiento para la tuberculosis en una cárcel de Ecuador* [Low detection and treatment success for tuberculosis in an Ecuadorian prison], *Pan American Journal of Public Health*, 2024. Available at: <https://journal.paho.org/es/articulos/baja-captacion-exito-tratamiento-para-tuberculosis-carcel-ecuador>

<sup>2</sup>*Fundación IO, Brote de tuberculosis en cárceles de Ecuador* [Tuberculosis outbreak in Ecuadorian prisons], March 2025. Available at: <https://fundacionio.com/brote-de-tuberculosis-en-carceles-de-ecuador/>

to essential medications for illnesses such as HIV and TB — have turned the situation into an urgent public health and human rights crisis.<sup>3</sup>

- The incarceration of transgender women in male prison wards is considered a form of detention that violates dignity.<sup>4</sup> This practice exposes them to high levels of violence, discrimination, and institutional neglect, contravening international human rights standards.

## Ecuador's Constitutional & International Commitments and Obligations

As a signatory to international human rights treaties and a member of the World Health Organization (WHO), Ecuador is mandated to ensure transparency, accountability, and equitable healthcare. Additionally, the Constitution of Ecuador establishes:

- **Article 32:** The right to health is a fundamental right that the State must guarantee through universal and equitable access to quality services.<sup>5</sup>
- **Article 35:** Elderly persons, children and adolescents, pregnant women, people with disabilities, persons deprived of liberty, and those suffering from catastrophic or complex illnesses shall receive priority and specialized care in both public and private sectors.<sup>6</sup>
- **Article 51, Paragraph 4:** Persons deprived of liberty have the right to access the necessary human and material resources to ensure comprehensive health care within detention centres.<sup>7</sup>
- **Article 51, Paragraph 6:** Persons deprived of liberty have the right to receive preferential and specialized treatment in the case of pregnant and breastfeeding women, adolescents, elderly persons, and those who are ill or have disabilities.<sup>8</sup>
- **Article 201:** The social rehabilitation system shall aim to ensure the comprehensive rehabilitation of persons sentenced under criminal law in order to reintegrate them into society, as well as to protect persons deprived of liberty and guarantee their rights.<sup>9</sup>

## Our Urgent Requests to the Ecuadorian Government

1. Publish updated and disaggregated data on TB situation, (at the level of prison, by sex, gender, and age group), TB total cases, incidence and population data per prison (including overcrowding rates), rates of comorbidities and health status that aggravate TB symptoms, and death risk (such as diabetes, HIV, etc) We request information on treatment success rates, and TB-caused mortality in prisons, ensuring transparency in public health reporting.
2. Immediately implement emergency TB interventions to guarantee access to integrated, non-discriminatory TB services, along with effective monitoring of treatment adherence in prisons.

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<sup>3</sup> Comité Permanente por la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos (CDH), *Monitoreo sobre la situación de crisis carcelaria en el Ecuador en el contexto de conflicto armado interno declarado por el Gobierno Nacional [Monitoring of the prison crisis in Ecuador in the context of the internal armed conflict declared by the national government]*, January 2023. Available at:

<https://www.cdh.org.ec/informes/622-monitoreo-de-carceles-ocupadas-por-militares-21-22-enero-2023.html>

<sup>4</sup> Comité Permanente por la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos (CDH), *Monitoreo sobre la situación de crisis carcelaria en el Ecuador en el contexto de conflicto armado interno declarado por el Gobierno Nacional [Monitoring of the prison crisis in Ecuador in the context of the internal armed conflict declared by the national government]*, January 2023. Available at:

<https://www.cdh.org.ec/informes/622-monitoreo-de-carceles-ocupadas-por-militares-21-22-enero-2023.html>

<sup>5</sup> *Constitución de la República del Ecuador*, 2008, Article 32.

<sup>6</sup> *Constitución de la República del Ecuador*, 2008, Article 35, paragraph 2.

<sup>7</sup> *Constitución de la República del Ecuador*, 2008, Article 51, paragraph 4.

<sup>8</sup> *Constitución de la República del Ecuador*, 2008, Article 51, paragraph 6.

<sup>9</sup> *Constitución de la República del Ecuador*, 2008, Article 201.

3. Ensure a human rights-based response, prioritizing gender-responsive healthcare for all incarcerated individuals.
4. Convene a national working group with civil society, international health organizations, medical experts, and affected communities to strengthen TB prevention and control in Ecuador's prisons.
5. Report a detailed list of actions and timeline that the Government of Ecuador is going to implement to solve the health crises related to TB in prisons and how (and when) results will be measured.

Failure to act will lead to preventable deaths and further human rights violations. We urge the Ecuadorian Government and the Ministry of Public Health to take immediate action to prevent further harm.

Sincerely,



Ángela León Cáceres  
Global Coordinator  
Women4GlobalFund (W4GF)



Ani Herna Sari  
Chair  
TB CAB

W4GF is a dynamic global platform of women and gender equality advocates who share a deep commitment to ensuring that Global Fund programmes are gender-transformative to meet the rights and priorities of women and girls in all our diversity. For more information, contact Ángela León Cáceres, [angela@women4gf.org](mailto:angela@women4gf.org), Global Coordinator, Women4GlobalFund (W4GF) [EMAIL](#) | [WEB](#) | [IG](#) | [X](#)