

Launch of a financing programme for women's cancers in the Indo-Pacific region



A new US\$50 million Technical Assistance Facility (TAF) for non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and women's cancers will begin by supporting the elimination of cervical cancer in Indonesia. The initiative was launched by the Women's Health and Economic Empowerment Network (WHEN) and the Elimination Partnership in the Indo-Pacific for Cervical Cancer (EPICC) on Sept 24, 2025, in New York, NY, USA, at the sidelines of the UN General Assembly. "Cervical cancer elimination is a 'best buy' in NCD control. Globally, our research team with WHO and collaborators have shown that we could save 62 million lives in low-income and middle-income countries over the century by eliminating cervical cancer", said Karen Canfell, a Professor and Director of the Cancer Elimination Collaboration at the University of Sydney (Darlington, NSW, Australia), and programme lead of the EPICC consortium.

In partnership with the Indonesian Government, the TAF will deploy financing and technical solutions to strengthen the country's health system and eliminate cervical cancer. The idea is to scale effective strategies across the Indo-Pacific. At the TAF launch, partners were invited to join the regional effort. The International Atomic Energy Agency, which cooperates in nuclear fields including radiotherapy, has already joined to provide technical assistance to countries. Experts welcomed the initiative. Kirstie Graham, Director of Capacity Building at the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC), comments that the TAF "represents a timely effort to pursue and secure new financing for cancer control in the Indo-Pacific, which remains one of the most critical barriers to progress. We are encouraged by its broader scope—beginning with cervical cancer but encompassing women's cancers and NCDs in the longer-term."

The TAF will enable governments to access targeted technical expertise, financing solutions, and policy support to strengthen their own health systems. It will address systemic delivery gaps across prevention, diagnostics, treatment, infrastructure, workforce capacity, digital platforms, and local manufacturing. "The TAF is a practical, country-led mechanism that turns global commitments into concrete actions, helping governments strengthen their health systems in a lasting way. It's designed to be adaptable and scalable, so lessons learned in one country can benefit others in the region", said Ted Trimble, Co-Chair of WHEN.

Over the next 2 years, WHEN hopes that the TAF will establish scalable models for women's cancer care, build sustainable local capacity, and bring improvements in early detection, treatment access, and health outcomes. "Our goal is to show that investments in women's health, when combined with sustainable systems and local production, can deliver measurable results and lasting impact. This is about creating health systems that can continuously improve and respond to new challenges over time", explained Joanne Manrique, WHEN Co-Chair.

Working with in-country partners and supporting national and local leadership will be a key part of the TAF. Canfell said: "Technical assistance facilities are being developed differently in different settings, synergising local knowledge with technical expertise and developing tailored solutions. Everything is co-designed and led locally and informed by networks of advisory groups. These include senior government officials, leaders from civil society groups, health professionals and communities. Guided by in-country leaders, our collaborations are developing registries, data analysis tools and systems, training local staff and other activities to build sustainable

models while saving as many lives as possible."

Indonesia is the first country in the region to benefit from the TAF as it has one of the world's highest burdens of cervical cancer and a strong government commitment to implementing cervical cancer control. "Indonesia's leadership, under Minister Budi Gunadi Sadikin and the Ministry of Health, has been instrumental in shaping priorities that are both ambitious and achievable. Our partnership is built on shared commitment to advance women's health and build sustainable financing systems that will benefit the region for years to come", said Trimble.

In Indonesia, the TAF will collaborate with the Ministry of Health to ensure that interventions are tailored to meet community needs. The Government has already identified its key priorities for cervical and breast cancer control, including strengthening screening for cancer, enhancing electronic health records and health data systems, and scaling supportive health infrastructure such as reliable power to secure the supply chain and cold chain.

The need for long-term action and proven solutions presents a challenge for the TAF. UICC's Graham commented: "The challenge lies in ensuring continued and effective collaboration that requires time and sustained effort, and in the practical demonstration of viable models that can be adapted and scaled across diverse country contexts, different health systems, and political landscapes. Finding effective models to finance cancer control, at scale for the region and globally, and for long-term sustainability, is fundamental." Graham added that success would "depend on embedding cervical cancer efforts within a broader approach to women's health, universal health coverage, and NCD strategies".

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For more on the **Women's Health and Economic Empowerment Network** see <https://when-worldwide.com/>

For more on the **Elimination Partnership in the Indo-Pacific for Cervical Cancer** see <https://acpcc.org.au/acpcc-global/epicc/>