

## **I. Introduction:**

Hello, I am Keyuri Bhanushali, a TB survivor and TB advocate. This year I also got the opportunity to be part of the TB vaccine advocacy fellowship in 2023. During this programme, we drafted an open letter to the world's leaders, asking them to abide by their commitment to increase funding for TB vaccine research and development. And bring the dream of an **effective novel TB vaccine to life.**

## **II. Open letter to world leaders**

Our letter is out there, seeking support from the global TB community, requesting their sign of support on it. I am sharing a link to the letter in this chat box.

(<https://newtbvaccines.org/take-action/call-world-leaders-increase-investment-tb-vaccine/>)

This letter will be open to sign till April 26. And later, we will be presenting it in front of world leaders at the **United Nations high level meeting on TB** taking place on **22 September 2023.**

I would request all of you to spread the word, gather more signatures. Unite for the cause. And bring change.

## **III. Talk Begins**

Today, after listening to our experts, I know that change is around the corner. And I am really thrilled that this decade will witness a NEW Effective TB VACCINE.

It is a really great step towards tackling this scary disease, which has haunted humanity since antiquity.

Being myself a MDR-TB survivor, I can't emphasize enough how dreadful this disease is. It confuses experts who have spent decades studying this disease. In such a scenario, just imagine the emotional state of those afflicted by this disease.

I believe that tuberculosis causes significant disruption, therefore it's **more effective to prevent it early rather than attempting to control it later on.**

I believe prevention should be part of the care. We must invest in proactive measures rather than zeroing in on reactive measures.

Kindly allow me to give an example on this...

Imagine we all live on a cliff without a fence, and people keep falling off. We have an ambulance, but it's not enough to save everyone. Putting up a fence would have prevented the falls, and we wouldn't need so many ambulances.

Similarly, in our fight against TB, we're focusing on reactive measures like diagnosis, treatment and awareness campaigns, but we're forgetting to speed up investments in proactive measures like vaccines.

I am not saying reactive measures are not needed. They are necessary to manage this disease. But proactive measures can reduce the socio-economic burden of the disease.

In conclusion, I would say investment in TB vaccine R&D should be on steroids for these prime reasons...

1. Creating an effective **TB vaccine can stop infections** from happening, which saves money for healthcare systems and families.
2. TB is a major **global health issue** because it spreads through the air. The disease doesn't stay in one place and can easily affect people worldwide. That's why an effective TB vaccine is crucial in the fight to eliminate the disease on a global scale.
3. The current **TB treatments are far from perfect**. To reduce the need for long and toxic treatments, it's important to develop a vaccine that prevents TB infections. Such vaccines can also prevent the emergence of drug-resistant strains that are a leading cause of death due to antimicrobial resistance.
4. **Vulnerable populations are at higher risk of TB**. Developing a vaccine can prevent TB from spreading among these groups, which include those in poverty, people with HIV, and those living in crowded conditions.

5. Investing in TB vaccine research is crucial and has far-reaching implications. It will **advance the field of vaccinology**, and the development of a TB vaccine can help prevent other infectious diseases. This can pave the way for more effective vaccines in the future.

So **let's make TB history. Let's beat TB with new, effective vaccines.** Thank you for listening and please sign and share word about our open letter emphasizing on increased investment in TB research R & D. It will be presented before world leaders at the **United Nations high level meeting on TB** taking place on **22 September 2023**

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