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ASIA EDITION

Japan's GHIT Fund invests $4 M to advance diagnostics and treatments for NTDs and malaria

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GHIT's first investment in the development of diagnostics for Trachoma



Japan-based Global Health Innovative Technology (GHIT) Fund has announced a total investment of approximately JPY 578 million ($4 million) in four projects for the development of new diagnostics and drugs for neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) and malaria.

Trachoma, caused by infection of the conjunctiva (upper inner eyelid) by the bacterium *Chlamydia trachomatis*, is a neglected tropical disease (NTD) prevalent primarily in areas with poor sanitation. As the disease progresses, it eventually leads to blindness. Trachoma remains a public health issue in 39 countries, with over 103 million people at risk of infection.

In order to overcome this situation, the GHIT Fund has decided to invest approximately JPY 280 million ($2 million) in a project led by US-based non-profit organisation Drugs & Diagnostics for Tropical Diseases (DDTD), in collaboration with Medical & Biological Laboratories (MBL) in Japan, The Carter Center (TCC, USA), and Big Eye Diagnostics, Inc. (BEDx, USA), with active support from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), to develop a Rapid Diagnostic Test (RDT) kit for trachoma.

This is the first time for the GHIT Fund to support product development targeting trachoma. The project is expected to enable early detection and appropriate treatment for over 100 million people at risk of blindness and vision loss, significantly advancing the global goal of eliminating trachoma.

In addition, the GHIT Fund has decided to invest in three product development projects targeting malaria and Chagas disease. The investments include approximately JPY 150 million ($1 million) in an antimalarial drug discovery project involving a partnership of Nagasaki University, The University of Tokyo, Shionogi & Co., and Medicines for Malaria Venture (MMV); approximately JPY 70 million ($0.49 million) in a rapid diagnostic test development project for Chagas disease involving Nagasaki University, Tulane University, and the Barcelona Institute for Global Health (ISGlobal); and approximately JPY 70 million ($0.48 million) in a malaria drug discovery project involving The University of Tokyo, MMV, the University of Oxford,

and the University of Dundee.