

## Japanese GHIT Fund to include diagnostics and drugs for leishmaniasis

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The Global Health Innovative Technology Fund (GHIT Fund) of Japan, which in the last two years has funded almost \$32 million for innovative tools to tackle global infectious diseases, will undertake additional investments of nearly \$11 million that bring its portfolio to approximately \$43 million.

Launched in April 2013, GHIT Fund is a unique public health partnership that brings Japanese know-how and investment to the global fight against infectious diseases. GHIT Fund is a public-private partnership between six Japanese pharmaceutical companies, the Japanese Government and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

GHIT Fund is expanding its technology scope to include diagnostic tests, its disease portfolio to include leishmaniasis, and its Screening Platform to include four additional Japanese companies and their unique chemical compound libraries.

GHIT Fund will invest in the development of a new point-of-care test for the diagnosis of schistosomiasis. Concurrently, GHIT will further invest in the continued development and registration of a pediatric formulation of praziquantel, the gold standard treatment for schistosomiasis. These two investments combined make the GHIT pipeline in schistosomiasis one of the most robust in the world.

Other investments include new funding for a new visceral leishmaniasis (VL) drug and the expansion of GHIT's Screening Platform for malaria and tuberculosis to include four new Japanese entities: Daiichi Sankyo RD Novare Co., Ltd., Dainippon Sumitomo, Mitsubishi Tanabe Pharma, and Op Bio Factory Co., Ltd. of Okinawa.

GHIT is investing in four Japanese-, Philippines-, and US-based organizations to develop a faster and more effective test to detect schistosomiasis. The new point-of-care test, which would be the first of its kind to use recombinant proteins in diagnosing schistosomiasis, would be available for use in remote areas, allowing patients to be treated more quickly. This is expected to replace the traditional microscopic examination of stool to detect the worms' eggs for schistosomiasis diagnosis, which is time-consuming and labour-intensive.

GHIT is investing \$4 million into a partnership with the Geneva-based Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative (DNDi) and the Tokyo-based Takeda Pharmaceutical Company Limited to develop a new visceral leishmaniasis (VL) drug based on a novel series of aminopyrazoles, which recently demonstrated a proof of concept in an animal model.

GHIT also welcomed four additional companies to its unique Screening Platform. GHIT has provided two investments of \$150,000 each for the New York-based Global Alliance for TB Drug Development (TB Alliance) to screen the libraries of Op Bio Factory Co., Ltd. of Okinawa and Daiichi Sankyo RD Novare Co., Ltd. of Tokyo for compounds that show potential to treat tuberculosis.

GHIT has made two other investments for Geneva's MMV to screen the libraries of the Osaka-based Mitsubishi Tanabe Pharma (\$150,000) and Sumitomo Dainippon Pharma Co., Ltd. (\$110,000) for new drug candidates for malaria.