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Japan's GHIT invests $11.4 M for treatment of neglected tropical diseases

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Investment into projects to develop new diagnostics for schistosomiasis



Japan's Global Health Innovative Technology (GHIT) Fund has announced a total investment of approximately JPY 1.7 billion ($11.4 million) in five projects for the development of schistosomiasis diagnostics and drugs for neglected tropical diseases (NTDs).

The GHIT Fund has decided to invest approximately JPY 780 million ($5.2 million) in two projects to develop new diagnostics for schistosomiasis led by Drugs & Diagnostics for Tropical Diseases, a nonprofit organization based in San Diego, California, US, in collaboration with Medical & Biological Laboratories Co., a Japanese manufacturer of clinical diagnostic kits and reagents, Nagasaki University Institute of Tropical Medicine, the Kenya Medical Research Institute, and the Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research.

The project will advance the development of a rapid diagnostic test (RDT) for *Schistosoma mansoni*, leveraging previous research findings and evaluating the diagnostic performance of the candidate RDT in endemic regions of Africa.

In addition, the project team will develop a new serological RDT for *Schistosoma haematobium*. These tests are expected to be used as a low-cost, easy-to-use point-of-care (POC) diagnostic to support decision-making for Interruption of Transmission/Stopping Mass Drug Administration (MDA) and for subsequent surveillance of the disease.

In addition, the GHIT Fund will invest in three R&D projects for a total amount of approximately JPY 932 million ($6.2 million)-
1) Phase I clinical trial project for dengue vaccine by VLP Therapeutics, Inc. and Nagasaki University.
2) Screening project against chikungunya by Medicines for Malaria Venture (MMV) and Eisai Co.
3) Screening project against Chagas disease by Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative (DNDi) and Shionogi & Co.