

May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021

To: The Diet Task Force for Eliminating Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs)

Chairperson: Honorable Yasuhisa Shiozaki

Secretary General: Honorable Kozo Akino

# Proposal

Commitments by the Government of Japan during  
the “Global Summit on Malaria and Neglected Tropical Diseases (Kigali Summit)”

Certified Specified Non-profit Organization SDGs Promise Japan

Specified non-profit organization DNDi Japan

Japan Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association

Japan Alliance on Neglected Tropical Diseases Alliance

## Background

The Global Summit on Malaria and Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs, "Kigali Summit") will be held in June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2021, in Kigali, Rwanda. This Summit is hosted by the Government of Rwanda, and convenes global leaders to gather their support for the control of NTDs. In 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) launched the NTD roadmap until 2030. Cooperation from developed countries is essential to achieve this roadmap's goals. In the spirit of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that addresses global health disparities to realize the philosophy of "no one left behind," we would like the members of the Diet Task Force for Eliminating NTDs to support the Government of Japan, so that Japan can show leadership at the Kigali Summit.

For Japan to continue being a global health leader, contributing to NTDs is critical. The Government of Japan called for the "strengthening of mutual cooperation on infectious diseases and parasites" (the "Hashimoto Initiative") at the 1998 G8 Birmingham Summit, and at the 7<sup>th</sup> Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD 7) in 2019, government representatives discussed the importance of controlling infectious diseases, including NTDs. Some outcomes are expected to be observed by TICAD 8, which is to be held in Tunisia in 2022. Japan is also promoting Africa Health Initiatives and is equipped with a strong policy platform in order to exercise leadership in the field of NTDs.

NTDs are currently heavily affecting the world's poor. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, NTD control efforts have decreased in priority at both the global and local levels, posing negative impacts on many people affected by NTDs. Without advancing the control of NTDs, it is neither possible to improve access to basic health services, to expand primary health care, nor to build resilient and inclusive health systems. In other words, universal health coverage (UHC) cannot be achieved without controlling NTDs. Advancing NTD control eases the poverty-driven "want" of medical services and directly contributes to realizing "human security," which is the basic philosophy of Japan's global health cooperation. In addition, addressing NTDs in areas where access to medical care is limited will strengthen the basis of public health, enabling us to respond more quickly to the next pandemic that may occur in such remote areas. These proposals are in line with the recommendations made by the "Special Committee for Considering ODA in the Health Sector" chaired by Honorable Yasuhisa Shiozaki. Controlling NTDs is indispensable in embodying Japan's global health policies.

This document proposes potential commitments that the Government of Japan can express at the Kigali Summit, in order to showcase Japan's contributions to the international community and build a cooperative system for the next 10 years for NTDs. Although the summit also addresses malaria, our proposal is focused on NTDs.

Below are the potential commitments that could be expressed at the Kigali Summit (in no particular order).

**Proposal 1. Expand investment in the Global Health Innovative Technology Fund (GHIT Fund)**

The Government of Japan (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare) has funded the Global Health Innovative Technology Fund (GHIT Fund) to support research and development of drugs for malaria, tuberculosis and NTDs, and this reflects TICAD 7's Yokohama Action Plan 2019. As of March 31, 2021, 57 projects (30 targeted / exploratory studies, 20 nonclinical studies, 7 clinical trials) are underway, with a cumulative investment of approximately 25.1 billion yen. By expanding investment in the GHIT Fund, we can increase the possibility that the technologies and products of Japanese health companies will be used internationally. Utilizing Japanese technology in drug development is easy to understand from other countries, and it can solidify a high reputation for the GHIT Fund as a novel public-private partnership. In addition, we would like the government to support the GHIT Fund in order to actively contribute to building a platform in the field of access to health products alongside drug development.

**Proposal 2. Increase the number of NTDs projects supported by Japan's official development assistance (ODA)**

The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the implementing agency of Japan's official development assistance (ODA), is focusing on achieving UHC in developing countries and strengthening the health system necessary for that purpose. With this trend, we propose to use NTDs as an entry point in constructing "a strong and inclusive health system" worldwide. This will enable us to deliver health services to areas and people who previously had no access to medical care, and create a resilient health system that can respond to new outbreaks in remote areas of developing countries. JICA has accumulated know-how for this which should be leveraged.

**Proposal 3. Expand funding and support for the Expanded Special Project for Elimination of Neglected Tropical Diseases (ESPEN)**

Since the fiscal year 2019, the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare has contributed a total of 200 million yen to the Expanded Special Project for Elimination of Neglected Tropical Diseases (ESPEN\*), an NTD project by the World Health Organization's Africa Regional Office. The United States, United Kingdom, Germany, South Korea, Qatar and others have supported ESPEN, and thus continued funding and active involvement from the Government of Japan will be highly appreciated internationally. Strengthening multilateral cooperation is also specified in the proposal by the "Special Committee for Considering ODA in the Health Sector," and the Global Health Command Tower, which was recently established in the Cabinet Office, can aid to increase Japan's relations with ESPEN and demonstrate Japan's leadership.

\* A project of the WHO Africa Regional Office aiming to accelerate control of five NTDs (onchocerciasis, filariasis, schistosomiasis, soil-transmitted helminthiasis, trachoma) through technical and financial support to African countries.

**Proposal 4. Lead the movement towards the establishment of a "Global Fund" for NTDs**

In the field of NTDs, there is no global mechanism for pooling the funds, procuring and purchasing medicines, and delivering them to people in developing countries. Currently, NTD programs largely rely on the donation of drugs from pharmaceutical companies, but this model has limitations. It is therefore necessary to find an alternative solution to sustainably supply NTD drugs that Japanese industry, government, and academia may have contributed to finding and producing. In expanding NTD programs in the future, it is extremely important to create a system similar to that of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (Global Fund). Japan had

led the establishment of the Global Fund since the 2000 G8 Kyushu-Okinawa Summit. The Government of Japan can leverage this experience to show leadership in establishing a "Global Fund" for NTDs.

**Proposal 5. Increase support for civil society organizations involved in NTD control**

In countries where NTDs are endemic, such as across Africa, it is often difficult for the local government alone to provide health services needed to combat NTDs. In such situations, health services can be effectively provided through civil society organizations (CSOs). Increasing support for civil society organizations is an indispensable approach for advancing NTD control programs. It is therefore very effective and critical for Japan to support NTD control through Japanese CSOs in order to reach every corner of developing countries and ensure that no one is left behind.