PRESS RELEASE

Japan convenes global leaders in malaria research and development to strengthen partnerships for innovative prevention and treatment tools

- Global and Japanese stakeholders gathered in Tokyo to share advances across the malaria pipeline that are accelerating progress towards control, elimination and eradication.
- Japan supports global R&D partnerships to develop new treatments that tackle drug resistance as well as long-acting malaria prevention tools.
- Antimalarial drug resistance, climate change and fragile health systems reinforce the need for Japan's scientific expertise and investment in global health security.

Tokyo, Japan, 21 July 2026 — Leading researchers, policymakers, funders and industry partners from Japan and around the world convened today in Tokyo for a scientific event, the Japan symposium on malaria research and development (R&D), highlighting Japan's instrumental role in advancing new tools to tackle one of the world's deadliest infectious diseases.

Co-hosted by the Global Health Innovative Technology (GHIT) Fund and Medicines for Malaria Venture (MMV) with support from the Gates Foundation, the 1-day event brought together stakeholders to share progress across the malaria R&D pipeline and explore how Japan's scientific and pharmaceutical strengths can further accelerate efforts towards improved global health security, malaria control and elimination, and eventually, eradication. Participants included experts from Eisai, the Japan Institute for Health Security (JIHS), LPIXEL, Nagasaki University, Shionogi, Tanabe Pharma and the University of Tokyo.

Japanese investment in malaria elimination

Since 2013, MMV has worked closely with Japanese partners through the GHIT Fund, connecting global malaria priorities with Japan's drug discovery, medicinal chemistry and translational science expertise. The GHIT Fund has supported over 100 R&D investments in malaria with Japanese and global partners, amounting to approximately JPY 20 billion (USD 125.5 million). [1] These investments span drugs, vaccines, and diagnostics—from early scientific discovery and preclinical development through to 14 clinical-stage projects,[2] with around half of this funding dedicated to joint projects between MMV and Japanese partners.

MMV's GHIT Fund-supported projects include long-acting malaria prevention tools currently being developed in separate projects with Tanabe Pharma, Eisai and Shionogi, as well as the development of a triple artemisinin-based combination therapy (TACT) to extend efficacy of an existing medicine. Earlier clinical studies have shown that this TACT, currently in Phase 3 clinical trials, is highly efficacious, even in areas of high artemisinin resistance. This exceptional track record reflects Japan's expanding contribution to the global malaria innovation ecosystem, driving progress from product development to access-oriented partnerships.

"Japan is uniquely positioned to spearhead the next generation of malaria innovation, where scientific prowess meets global implementation," said Dr Osamu Kunii, CEO and Executive Director of the GHIT

[1] The approximate exchange rate on 29 May 2026 was USD 1 to JPY 160.

[2] This figure includes investments in projects that have since been discontinued or completed.

Fund. “We bridge the gap between Japan’s world-class R&D capabilities and the critical, unmet needs of malaria-endemic regions. We drive high-impact partnerships that transform breakthrough research into life-saving solutions—spanning vaccines, drugs, and diagnostics—ensuring that the latest advancements reach those who need them most.”

The Japan symposium on malaria R&D

Reflecting the breadth of Japan's contribution to malaria R&D, the symposium highlighted scientific advances spanning drug discovery and product development. Discussions provided insights into cutting-edge collaborations, including drug development projects for long-acting malaria prevention tools, cell painting and innovations in vector control. Participants also explored R&D innovations for malaria prevention led by Shionogi and Ehime University, alongside strategic insights on vector control for malaria elimination from Eiken Chemical, JIHS and Mitsui Chemicals Crop & Life Solutions.

The symposium agenda covered the full spectrum of malaria R&D, from early-stage discovery and screening through to next-generation treatments. Sessions highlighted Japanese-led innovation in target identification, novel screening approaches and academic drug discovery, alongside MMV partnership drug development programmes and successes in translating science into products that reach patients.

“Malaria is evolving, and our response must evolve with it,” said Dr Martin Fitchet, CEO of MMV. “From long-acting injections to single-dose cures, the pipeline today reflects what’s possible when global collaboration meets scientific excellence. Japan has become an increasingly important part of that ecosystem, and this meeting is about strengthening those connections so innovation can move faster and further.”

The event concluded with a call for continued collaboration across academia, industry, product development partnerships, funders and governments to sustain momentum, inspire the next generation of scientists, and accelerate progress towards malaria elimination.

Eliminating malaria: a global health priority

Malaria is a serious infectious disease that affects over 280 million people and claims approximately 610,000 lives worldwide each year. While Japan eliminated malaria in 1962, it remains one of the world’s "big three" infectious diseases,[3] making the fight against it a global health priority.

“In the 1940s, Japan faced a severe threat of malaria, yet we achieved elimination through a persistent, unified effort between the public and private sectors. Today, as we strive towards universal health coverage, malaria elimination remains a mission of paramount importance for Japan. We are committed to tackling this global challenge by aligning with our partners and fostering strong, integrated collaboration across industry, government and academia," said Dr Satoshi Ezoe, Senior Assistant Minister for Global Health, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare.

Despite significant advancement in the first 2 decades of the century, malaria progress has stalled due to emerging threats such as antimalarial drug resistance, climate pressures and fragile health systems, underscoring the urgent need for sustained innovation and stronger global collaboration. If the malaria community is to achieve the World Health Organization’s targets of reducing malaria incidence and mortality by 90% by 2030 despite these challenges, leveraging Japan’s longstanding excellence in pharmaceutical innovation, academic research and global health leadership will be critical.

[3] In addition to tuberculosis and HIV.

About the GHIT Fund

The GHIT Fund is a Japan-based international public-private partnership (PPP) fund that was formed between the Government of Japan, multiple pharmaceutical companies, the Gates Foundation, Wellcome, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The GHIT Fund invests in and manages an R&D portfolio of development partnerships aimed at addressing neglected diseases, such as malaria, tuberculosis, and neglected tropical diseases, which afflict the world's vulnerable and underserved populations. In collaboration with global partners, the GHIT Fund mobilizes Japanese industry, academia, and research institutes to create new drugs, vaccines, and diagnostics for malaria, tuberculosis, and neglected tropical diseases.

For more information, visit http://ghitfund.org/.

About MMV

MMV is a not-for-profit product development partnership working to discover, develop and deliver medicines to treat, prevent and eliminate malaria. Since 1999, over 1.48 billion people have benefited from our co-developed medicines. With over 600,000 malaria deaths every year, we unite partners to close remaining antimalarial access and innovation gaps.

For more information, visit www.mmv.org.

Follow MMV on social media: X | LinkedIn | YouTube | Facebook

MMV Disclaimer

This document contains certain forward-looking statements that may be identified by words such as 'believes', 'expects', 'anticipates', 'projects', 'intends', 'should', 'seeks', 'estimates', 'future' or similar expressions, or by discussion of, among other things, vision, strategy, goals, plans, or intentions. It contains hypothetical future product target profiles, development timelines and approval/launch dates, positioning statements, claims and actions for which the relevant data may still have to be established. Stated or implied strategies and action items may be implemented only upon receipt of approvals including, but not limited to, local institutional review board approvals, local regulatory approvals, and following local laws and regulations. Thus, actual results, performances or events may differ from those expressed or implied by such statements.

We ask you not rely unduly on these statements. Such forward-looking statements reflect the current views of Medicines for Malaria Venture (MMV) and its partner(s) regarding future events, and involve known and unknown risks and uncertainties.

MMV accepts no liability for the information presented here, nor for the consequences of any actions taken on the basis of this information. Furthermore, MMV accepts no liability for the decisions made by its pharmaceutical partner(s), the impact of any of their decisions, their earnings and their financial status.