Japan’s global health R&D

Japan invests in global health R&D through the national Global Health Innovative Technology (GHIT) Fund

Japan was the tenth-largest public funder of global health research and development (R&D) in 2017. It provided US$17.6 million for research and development (R&D) on poverty-related and neglected diseases (PRNDs), referred to as ‘global health R&D’ in this profile. This is an increase from 2016, when Japan spent US$16.9 million. These figures are based on the G-FINDER survey conducted by Policy Cures Research.

Japan has channeled almost all its global health R&D funding through the Global Health Innovative Technology (GHIT) Fund. In 2017, the government directed 91% of its health R&D spending (US$16 million) towards the institution. The remaining funds (US$1.6 million) went to the Japanese National Institute of Infectious Diseases (NIID), for research into an HIV vaccination. These figures may differ from the trend numbers presented in the chart due to changes in the scope of the G-FINDER survey from year to year.

The GHIT Fund is an intermediary that supports and finances product development but does not have its own product portfolio. By facilitating cooperation between the public, private, and civil society sectors, the fund aims to respond to market failures in the development of drugs, vaccines, and diagnostics for neglected tropical diseases (NTDs), which have little commercial value.

The fund mainly targets HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis (TB), and NTDs. For funding, it requires that the drugs developed will be affordable in low- and middle-income countries and that patents must be made available through royalty-free licenses to low-income countries and least-developed countries.

GHIT was launched with an initial joint commitment of US$100 million, pledged by the Japanese government, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and pharmaceutical companies, for a period of five years. In May 2016, during its G7 presidency, Japan committed an additional US$130 million to the fund. Since 2013, the GHIT Fund has invested US$170 million, with most of this funding going to drug development and pre-clinical projects. 47% of the portfolio (US$80 million) has been dedicated to NTDs, and 39% (US$67 million) to malaria-related projects. The remaining funding goes to TB research (14%, US$23 million).

The Japanese government also supports health R&D outside of PRNDs. While not reported to the G-FINDER due to the focus on different types of health R&D, the Japanese Agency for Medical Research and Development (AMED), which is funded and overseen by the government, had a budget of ¥640 million (US$6 million) for R&D on emerging infectious diseases. One of AMED’s important initiatives is the ‘Japan Initiative for Global Research Network on Infectious Diseases’ (J-GRID).

The ‘Science and Technology Research Partnership for Sustainable Development’ (SATREPS) is a collaboration between AMED, the Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST), and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). The goal is for knowledge sharing between domestic research activities, led by JST, and activities in partner countries, led by JICA.

The Ministry of Health and the MOFA make funding decisions for global health R&D

The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) are the most relevant actors for global health R&D policymaking. AMED consolidates budgets from different ministries and unifies the process for allocation of research funding. Within the GHIT Fund, the Selection Committee evaluates investment proposals and reports from the project partners and makes funding recommendations to the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors approves the funding recommendations.

Further information: G-FINDER

G-FINDER is a data source developed by Policy Cures Research that provides information on global investments into R&D for neglected diseases. Figures in this section are based on the G-FINDER survey, which covers basic research and product-related R&D (drugs, vaccines, and diagnostics) for a select group of diseases. The G-FINDER scope has been defined by an expert committee, in line with three criteria: the disease disproportionately affects people in developing countries, there is a need for new products, and the commercial incentives are insufficient to attract R&D from private industry.

For more information: www.policycuresresearch.org
JAPAN'S R&D FUNDING FOR NEGLECTED DISEASES
US$ millions; in 2017 prices

Policy Cures Research, G-FINDER Public Search tool