



In Search of Better Health

KEMRI BULLETIN

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New Tools Offer Hope in the fight against Malaria

Tokyo Seeks Africa Partnership as TICAD-9 comes to a close in Japan

Priority Areas included sustainable health financing, data & diagnostic capacities, integrated and digitalized, primary and preventive care, co-led Research & Technology innovation as well as Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness and Response (PPPR) & health system resilience.



Japan Prime Minister Ishiba Shigeru addressing the TICAD-9 delegates



Editorial Advisor:
Prof. Elijah Songok

Editor in Chief:
Davis Mkoji

Editor:
Wodera James

Revise Editors:
Dr. Sammy Baya
Stella Njung'e

Editorial Team:
Lisper Mokaya
Stella Njung'e
Gladys Mathenge
Gideon Kirui
Natasha Mionjia
Jaffar Dida

Photography:
Stella Njung'e
Gladys Mathenge
Lisper Mokaya
Gideon Kirui

Design & Layout:
Isaboke Duke
David Kamau

Circulation:
Beatrice Sitonik

TICAD 9, the ninth Tokyo International Conference on African Development, came to a close on Friday, 22nd August 2025 in Pacifico Yokohama in Yokohama City, Japan as Japanese Prime Minister Ishiba Shigeru seeks to redefine Japanese presence on the continent through Afro-Japan Partnership. **“Japan believes in the future of Africa and will promote investment in Africa,”** Ishiba said.

The conference which was also attended by representatives from 49 African countries including 33 heads of state and government, as well as representatives from international organizations, the private sector, and civil society among them, President William Ruto and South Africa's Cyril Ramaphosa held several partnership dialogues and engagement with Japanese government and private organization in Japan.

...Continued

The President was accompanied by Prime Cabinet Secretary, Musalia Mudavadi, Cabinet Secretary, MoH, Hon. Aden Duale, PS, Health Mary Muthoni, DG Health Dr. Patrick Amoth, Dr. James Nyikal- Chair Health Committee National Assembly,

Other dignitaries included the Chairman KEMRI Board Dr. Abdullahi Ali, Ag. DG, KEMRI Prof Elijah Songok, Dr. Daniel Mwai, Presidential Advisor on Health Systems, Dr. Stephen Muleshe- Senior Deputy Director, International Health Relations, Dr. Ayub Manyo- Senior Deputy Director, Health Care Financing, Digital Health, Policy, Research & Innovation, Dr. Martin Bundi Ag. Director, Research Capacity Building among other senior government officials.

Addressing the meeting, President Ruto acknowledged the strong ties between Kenya and Japan and noted that, **“Our relationship is strong and steady though we need to balance between trade our two countries”**.

The Prime Cabinet Secretary Musalia Mudavadi and the Cabinet Secretary Health Hon. Aden Duale led Kenyan delegations in various bilateral dialogues and engagements at Yokohama.

Among them Bilateral Meetings with Hon. Minoru Kiuchi, Minister of State for Health Care Policy, Japan on Enhanced Bilateral Collaboration between the Two Countries in Health. As well as thematic event on Africa

Health and Wellbeing Initiative Co-Creating the future of Healthcare and Economy: Japan-Africa-Public Private-Partnerships at the Forefront, Tackling Africa’s Malaria Crisis: Innovative Solutions Powered by Japanese Technology in Africa amid declining ODA, Sustainable Health Financing in Africa: From Commitments to Action, panel discussion focusing on the role of Public Financial Management (PFM) systems in securing sustainable health financing Africa-Japan Common Vision on Health: Co -Creating Health Security and Sustainable Growth among others.

PS, Health, Mary Muthoni led Kenyan Ministry of Health delegates on Tuesday with a Pre-TICAD9 Roundtable with Japanese Parliamentarians **“Fighting the Good Fight: Sustaining Health Programs for Infectious Diseases in Africa”** as well as a special Breakfast Meeting on Bridging Innovation, Opening Futures: Exploring Japan’s Health in Global Health while The Director General Health Dr. Patrick Amoth presented on strategic partnership to accelerate progress towards achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) by 2030 and beyond through resilient, equitable and sustainable health systems. KEMRI leadership contributed insights on research, innovation, and capacity building, reinforcing Kenya’s central role in Africa-Japan health collaboration.



Heads of states, Japanese Government Officials and dignitaries during The 9th Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD 9) official opening ceremony

This strategic vision which culminates the TICAD9 Health Sector approach to Africa -Japan partnership has several principles based on respectful and equitable partnerships, long term commitment and trust, co-creation & shared responsibility, mutual learning and growth as well as inclusive and accountable governance. Priority Areas included sustainable health financing, data & diagnostic capacities, integrated and digitalized, primary and preventive care, co-led Research & Technology innovation as well as pandemic preparedness and response & health system resilience.

TICAD 9 conference is held every three years and serves as a platform for discussing and collaborating on African development with a focus on co-creation of solutions for challenges facing Africa and the international community.

In addition, TICAD aims to strengthen cooperation with Africa, recognizing its growing global presence, and to enhance inclusive and responsible global governance.

The conference addressed challenges facing Africa, including the aftermath of the pandemic, global inflation, growing food insecurity, and political instability. It focused on co-creation of solutions for these issues, with a cross-cutting approach emphasizing youth, women, collectivity, and public-private partnerships. It brings together African countries, Japan, co-organizers (the United Nations, UNDP, World Bank, African Union Commission), and a wide range of stakeholders and is co-hosted by the Government of Japan alongside the UN, UNDP, World Bank, and the African Union Commission.



President, H.E William Ruto at TICAD9



Prime CS, Hon. Musalia Mudavadi and Health CS, Hon. Aden Duale



Philanthropist Bill Gates shakes hands with Ag. DG Prof. Elijah Songok. Looking on is PS, MoH, Ms. Mary Muthoni and Board Chair, Dr. Abdullahi Ali among other officials at the sidelines of the TICAD 9 Convention

Japan's Renewed Vision for Africa's Future Development in Health and Economic growth



Mr. Davis Mkoji

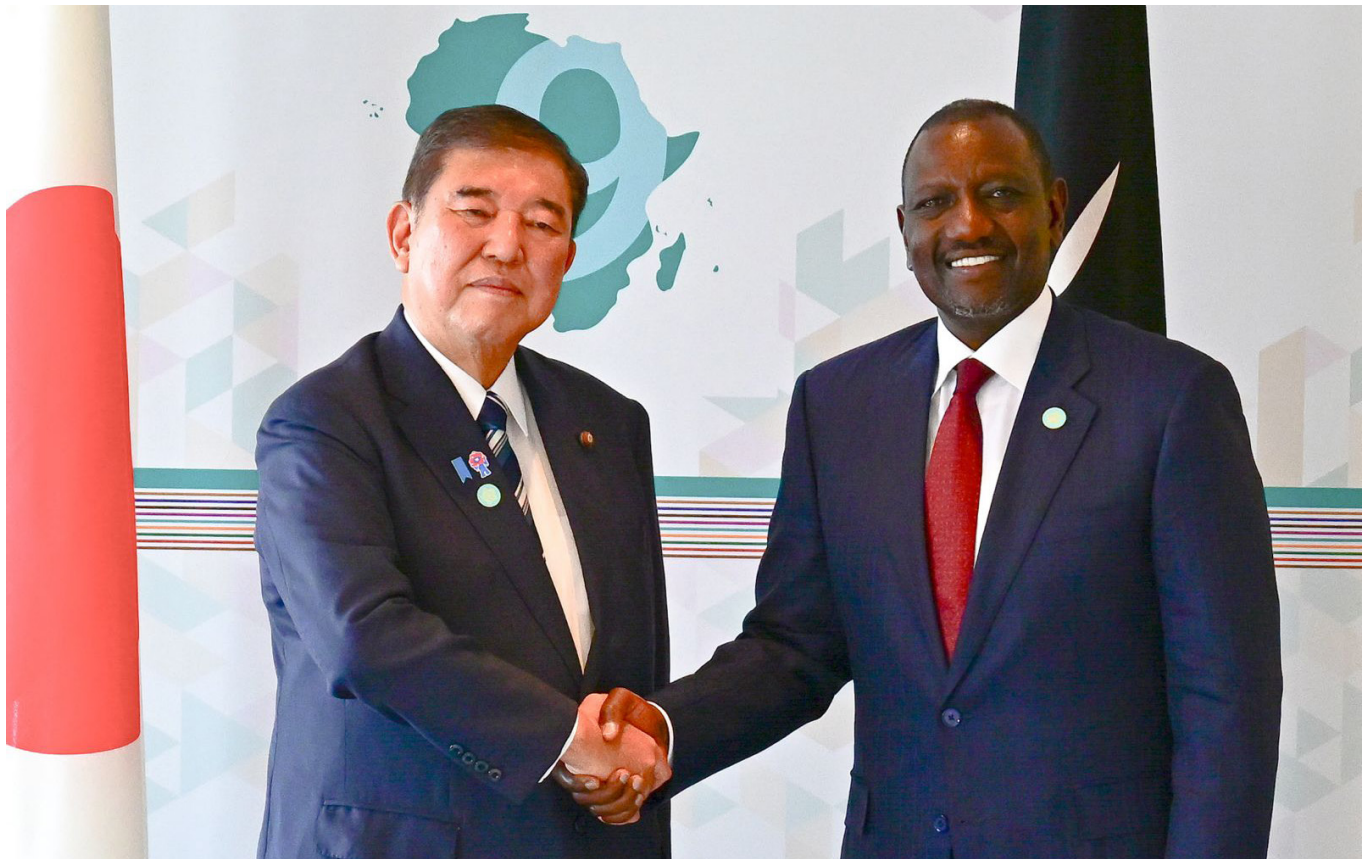
The ninth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD 9) may have ended, but its dialogue and commitments continue to reverberate across Africa and Japan. This year's summit came at a defining moment for Tokyo, as it seeks to deepen its global influence particularly in Africa by demonstrating that it is prepared to match rhetoric with resources.

In his official opening remarks the Prime Minister Ishiba SHIGERU, reinforced his commitment towards advancing Japan-Africa-Public-Private Partnerships for stronger health systems and economic growth. Japan, he said, is ready to reposition itself on the continent not simply as a donor, but as a long-term partner investing in Africa's future, even as global powers compete for influence.

At the heart of TICAD 9 was economics. Despite Africa receiving just 0.5 percent of Japan's global foreign direct investment, according to Japan's Ministry of Finance, Tokyo believes it can reverse this trend. The summit unveiled new financing mechanisms and public-private frameworks aimed at lowering investment risks for Japanese firms while promoting large-scale ventures in infrastructure, health, technology, and industrial development.

Japan is therefore seeking projects with long-term social and economic benefits, such as health systems, education, local manufacturing, and environmental stewardship, a unique approach that resonates with African leadership aiming to build resilience and autonomy in resource constrained continent that is marred by conflict and war as well as ravaged by disease burden.

On the flip side, Africa- Japan partnership offers transformative potential. Africa brings youthful demographics, expanding markets, and self-reliance



Japan Prime Minister Ishiba SHIGERU with Kenyan President Hon. William Samoei Ruto

while Japan brings technology, research excellence and the UHC experience, while to Japan, it opens new markets, revitalizes its innovation ecosystem and strengthens its Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness and Response (PPPR) through collaboration with Africa's dynamic health systems, and the equation and motivation is complete. This resonates with Africa's aspirations to strengthen health systems through evidence and innovation.

But we hope this will not be another rhetorics but serious solution-oriented approach to lasting growth and transformation for this Afro-Japan pact that offers accelerated efforts in achieving UHC and SDGs by 2030 which is build on co-creation and mutual trust.

The Afro-Japan renewed partnership/vision is based on five (5) Priority areas namely: sustainable health financing, data & diagnostic capacities, integrated and digitalized

primary and preventive care, research and technology innovations as well as pandemic preparedness & response and health systems resilience.

To those of us in the health sector, this is no doubt a bold and actionable framework for redefining health as a cornerstone of mutual growth, health security and sustainable development. Hence the two giants Africa and Japan are poised to set a new benchmark for international health cooperation. But only time will tell. For Africa, the task now is to translate this renewed partnership into concrete action.

We can never be more optimistic than now. The time is now, and the tides are here. Africa take the challenge and run with it.



Ag. Director General Prof. Elijah Songok in a photo with Scientists from Nagasaki University including Biomedical researcher from Nagasaki University, Professor SATOSHI Kaneko and Dr. Raita Tamaki.

TICAD9 focuses on African-led development including Research and Vaccine Development.

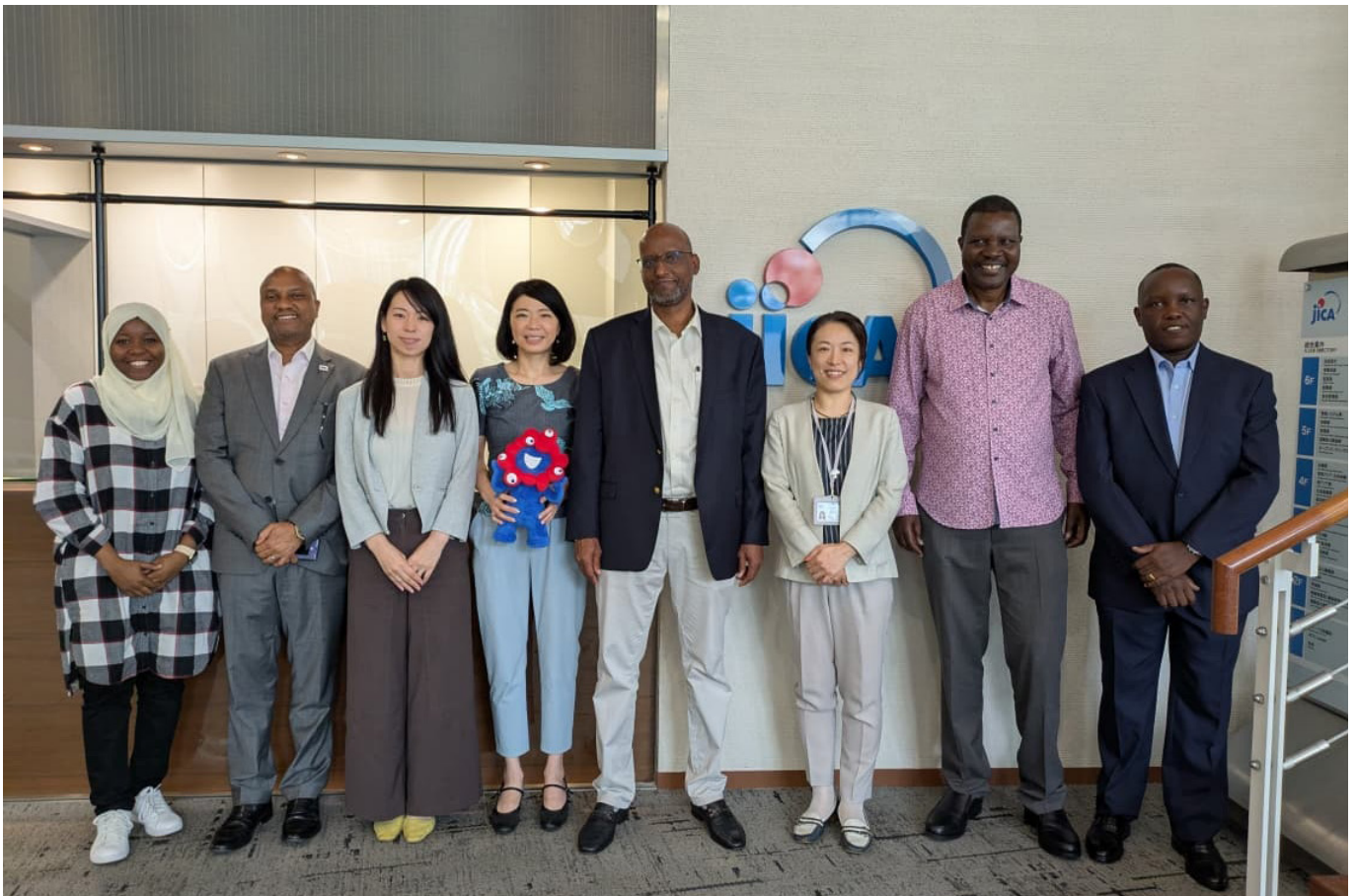
TICAD 9 will continue the tradition of focusing on African-led development, with a new approach that emphasizes co-creation of solutions. Co-creation with Africa means transitioning from a traditional aid model to partnerships built on mutual learning, research, innovation, and African ownership.

In addition, it focuses on multilateralism in shifting global context, strengthening ties between Japan and African nations—especially in areas like investment, research, innovations, infrastructure, technology, green growth, peace & security, and education among others.

TICAD9 that came to a close on Friday 22nd August 2025 in Pacifico Yokohama City in Japan, greatly emphasized on youth engagement and startup ecosystems, particularly in digital health, agriculture, and vocational innovation.

KEMRI engaged with leading Japanese pharmaceutical and technology firms, exploring collaborations in vaccine development and diagnostics. Among organizations in Japan that have shown interest in actively engaging with KEMRI include Sysmex, SHIONOGI, SORA Technologies, GAVI, EIKEN, SARAYA, Casio among others.

This TICAD 9 marks a 30 plus years legacy of sustained Japan-Africa cooperation via TICAD since 1993 and it offers a multisectoral platform that includes governments, civil society, private sector, academia, and youth—promoting shared responsibility and ownership. It also seeks tangible outcomes in terms of startups, healthcare systems, green infrastructure, skills training, trade linkages, with follow-through beyond the summit.



The KEMRI Delegation at JICA Headquarters

KEMRI Leadership Engages with Japanese Parliamentarians

KEMRI leadership engaged with global health research leaders and Japanese Members of Parliament at a Pre-TICAD RoundTable meeting held in Tokyo, Japan on Tuesday, August 19th, 2025.

KEMRI's Board Chair Dr. Abdullahi Ali & Director General, Prof. Elijah Songok joined Principal Secretary Ministry of Health Mary Muthoni, Director General, Health, Dr. Patrick Amoth & Gates Foundation Chairman Mr. Bill Gates for pre-TICAD talks with Japanese MP led by Hon. Ichiro AISAWA and attended by more than eight MPs and three Members of House of Councilors. They engaged on co-creating solutions for Africa's development during a session dubbed **"Fighting a Good Fight: Sustaining Health Programs for Infectious Diseases in Africa"**. The Session was also attended by among others; South Africa Deputy Minister of Health Mathume Joseph PHAAHLA, Ambassador for Global Health Diplomacy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Japan, Nobuharu IMANISHI, Executive Director, The Global Fund to fight AIDS, TB and Malaria, Prof. Peter SANDS among others.

The Members of Japanese House of Representatives (MPs) who were present during the roundtable meeting with Kenyan delegation included Hon. Ayano KUNIMITSU, Hon. Yoichi FUKAZAWA, Hon. Tomoaki SHIMADA, Hon. Karen MAKISHIMA, Hon. Maria TAKAGI, Hon. Toru FUKUTA, Hon. Motohisa FURUKAWA. Others were Members House of Councilors Hon. Kazuhiro FUJII, Hon. Kozo ONO and Hon. Maria TAKAGI.

During the meeting organized by the Friends of the Global Fund (FGFJ) and Japan Centre for international Exchange (JCIE) in collaboration with the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria and Save the Children Japan, the parliamentarians pledged to increase their support for Kenya Health Agenda in resource allocation and in practical solutions for continental development in all sectors of the economy.



Group photo after the Pre-TICAD9 round table meeting with global health research leaders and Japanese members of parliament held in Tokyo, Japan on Tuesday, August 19th, 2025.

Meanwhile at a side meeting, Director of the Institute of Tropical Medicine, Nagasaki University, Prof. Satoshi Kaneko, moderated presentation on **“Bridging Innovation, Policy, Youth and Action to End Neglected Tropical Diseases”** during the Co-Creating with Africa to End NTDs, TICAD 9 symposium. The session was attended by Japanese MP Ayano KUNIMITSU, Member of the House of Representatives, Secretary- General of the Parliamentary League for NTDs, the Chair Board of KEMRI Dr. Abdullahi Ali, Director General, KEMRI, Prof. Elija Songok and DNDI Executive Director, Dr. Luis Pizarro.



Dr. Abdullahi Ali and Dr. Martin Bundi at TICAD 9 Conference



Round Table meeting with global health research leaders and Japanese members of parliament

Kenya Delegation held several Strategic Partnership Meetings with Global Health Leaders in Yokohama.

Cabinet Secretary for Health, Hon. Aden Duale, together with the Kenyan delegation, held a series of high-level bilateral dialogues and thematic engagements in Yokohama during TICAD 9. The sessions covered a wide range of critical issues, including the Africa Health and Wellbeing Initiative: Co-Creating the Future of Healthcare and Economy, Japan–Africa Public-Private Partnerships at the Forefront, Tackling Africa’s Malaria Crisis through Innovative Japanese Technology amid Declining ODA, and Sustainable Health Financing in Africa: From Commitments to Action. The delegation also participated in a panel discussion on the pivotal role of Public Financial Management (PFM) systems in securing sustainable health financing.

In the session on Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs), KEMRI joined partners including Prof. Satoshi Kaneko of Nagasaki University and Japanese MP Hon. Ayano

KUNIMITSU, to explore collaborative research and innovation to tackle NTDs. KEMRI’s presence at TICAD9 underscores its central role in shaping Africa’s health research and partnerships for a healthier future.

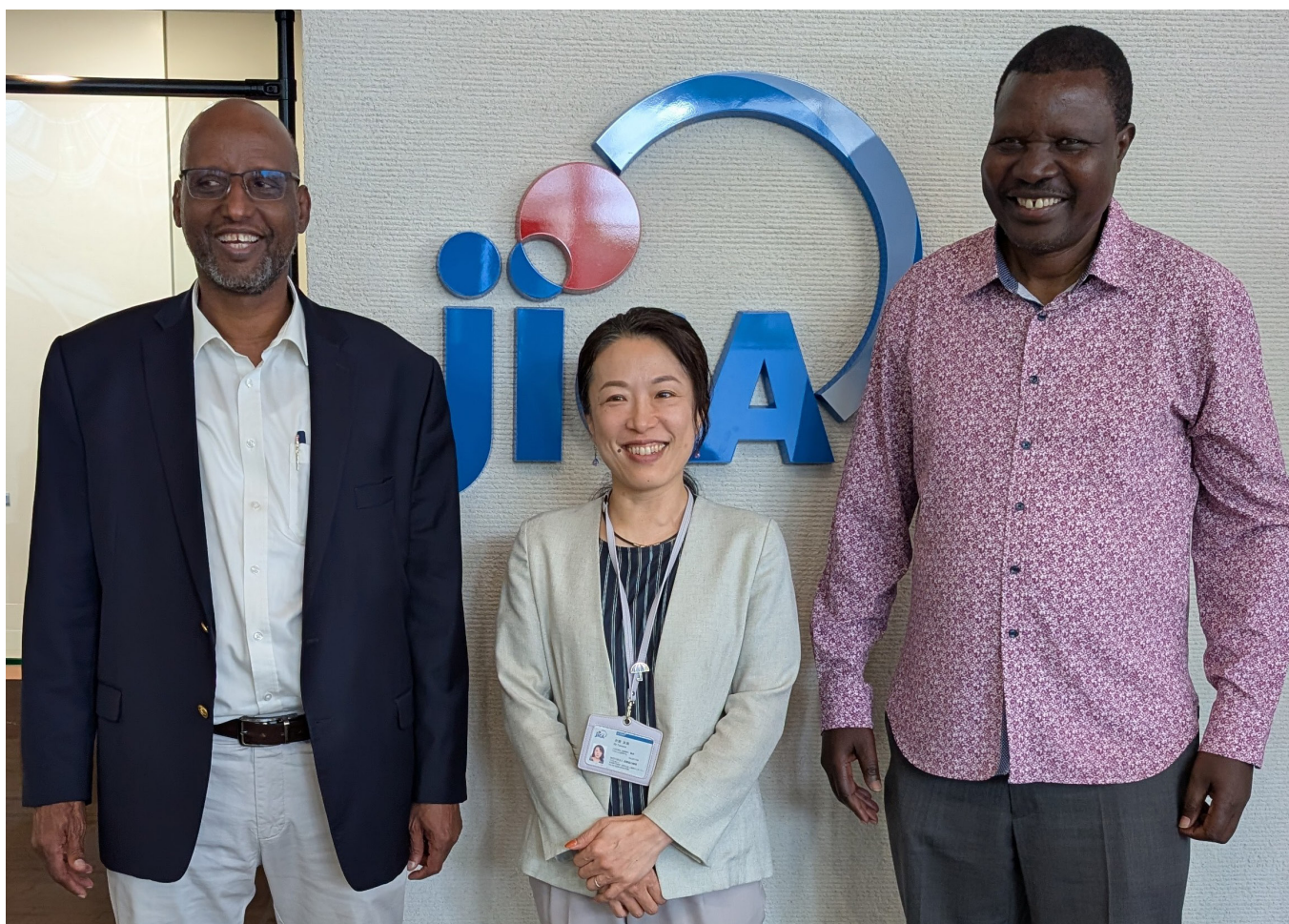
Others were Sessions organized by Malaria No More Japan and Co-hosted by Malaria No More (US), African Leaders Malaria Alliance (ALMA), RBM. Partnership to End Malaria. Malaria No More, African Leaders Malaria Alliance: Sustainable Health Financing in Africa: From Commitments to Action. The Cabinet Secretary also held Bilateral Meetings with Hon. Minoru Kiuchi, Minister of State for Health Care Policy, Japan as well GAVI hosted a special Reception entitled “**Africa’s Leadership in Health Advancements Towards the Next Generation**”.



Hon. Aden Duale, Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Health making a point



Panel Discussions at the TICAD9 side event



KEMRI Board Chairman, Dr. Abdullahi Ali and KEMRI Ag. DG Prof. Elijah Songok with Ms. IBI Tomomi, JICA's Deputy Director General, Human Development when they paid a courtesy call on her at the JICA Headquarters in Tokyo.

THE YOKOHAMA DECLARATION:

- **THE INDIAN OCEAN-AFRICA ECONOMIC ZONE INITIATIVE.**
- **OVER 300,000 AFRICANS WILL RECEIVE TRAINING SUPPORTED BY JAPAN AND AN ADDITIONAL 30,000 TO RECEIVE AI-RELATED TRAINING IN AFRICA IN THE NEXT 3 YEARS.**

Prime Minister ISHIBA Shigeru announced his new economic zone plan to view Africa and the Indian-Ocean region as a single economic zone as 300,000 Africans poised to receive Japanese supported training over the next three years.

He said **“Today, in conjunction with TICAD 9, I would like to propose the Indian Ocean-Africa Economic Zone Initiative. To contribute to the development of Africa. Japan will work together with the people of the region to achieve this goal”**

He said that the government the People and Government of Japan will provide training for 300,000 people over the next three years. Through initiatives promoting economic growth in Africa and the development of artificial intelligence and data science human resources, the government will provide AI-related training to 30,000 industrial personnel in Africa.

The Prime Minister Ishiba spoke on the importance of co-creating innovative solutions for challenges facing Africa and the world, in his opening remarks at the ninth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD 9) on Wednesday in Yokohama. **“Japan believes in the future of Africa and will promote investment in Africa,”** Ishiba said.

During the opening ceremony, U.N. Secretary General Antonio Guterres said, **“With the world’s youngest population, abundant natural resources, and a vibrant entrepreneurial spirit, Africa is poised for progress.”**

In his remarks, the Prime Minister said that the government and its partners will focus on three key areas: sustainable growth in the private sector; youth and women; and regional integration and connectivity within and outside



Heads of states and dignitaries at the TICAD Business Expo and Conference

the region. In the area of sustainable growth in the private sector, Ishiba said that the government will promote initiatives for African startups and Japanese companies to jointly develop industries.

He made reference to drones being used to deliver medicines to remote islands in Nagasaki Prefecture. He said that experimental flights of the drones were conducted in Rwanda. **“Japan faces many challenges, and we would like to borrow the wisdom and strength of Africa to solve them,”** the Prime Minister Ishiba said.

In the area of youth and women, Ishiba said that the key to Africa becoming the world’s next growth center is to promote capacity building and employment for young people and women. The Prime Minister said that in addition to strengthening industrial capabilities, it is necessary to enhance cross-border regional integration and connectivity to achieve further growth in African countries.

To strengthen regional integration in Africa, Ishiba said that the government will promote the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). A committee consisting of representatives from industry, academia and government from both Japan and Africa will be established to discuss strengthening economic ties between Japan and Africa.

At TICAD, several agreements on economic cooperation were signed between the Japanese government, private companies, and African countries. Prime Minister Ishiba held talks with more than 30 leaders, with a view to strengthening relations between Africa and Japan.

For Africa, the initiative presents opportunities not just in skills training, but in advancing partnerships that integrate innovation, trade, and health research.



Dr. Ali, Prof. Songok and other attendees listening to the Panel Discussions at TICAD 9

DNDi awarded the prestigious Hideyo Noguchi Africa Prize for developing new treatments for neglected diseases

BY KEMRI BULLETIN REPORTER

Co-founded by the Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI), DNDi has been recognized for its role in delivering new treatments for neglected diseases in Africa, especially human African trypanosomiasis, also known as sleeping sickness.

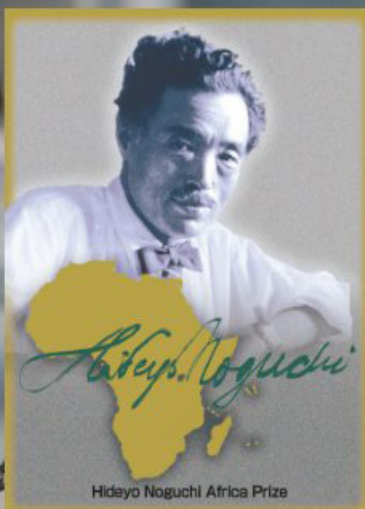
The global not-for-profit medical research organization Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative (DNDi) has been awarded the fifth Hideyo Noguchi Africa Prize in the medical services category in a ceremony held on 22nd, August 2025 in Tokyo in the presence of Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress of Japan, and hosted by Ishiba Shigeru, Prime Minister of Japan.

This prestigious prize, awarded every three years, is the highest medical honour from the Government of Japan. It was established in honour of the medical scientist Dr

Hideyo Noguchi (1876-1928), who devoted his life to bacteriological research and died while studying yellow fever in Africa. DNDi has been recognized for its work in developing and delivering new treatments for neglected diseases.

“This recognition is proof of the power of a model for medical innovation driven purely by patients” needs, where African scientists are leading the charge against diseases that have long burdened our communities,’ said Prof Samuel Kariuki, DNDi Continental Lead Africa, and Eastern Africa Director. **“DNDi was founded with the vision that Africa should not have to wait for others to solve our health challenges. We remain committed to ensuring that no disease is overlooked simply because it affects the poorest and most vulnerable.”**

Hideyo Noguchi Africa Prize in the medical services category



DNDi was co-founded in 2003 by the Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI) and other global partners. Over the past 22 years, it has become a model for African-led health innovation, developing 13 new treatments for six deadly diseases, 9 of which were delivered from Africa.

DNDi's work spans the continent, with clinical trials conducted with partners in countries including Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Guinea, Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, and Uganda. It delivered fexinidazole, the first-ever all-oral treatment for both the gambiense and rhodesiense forms of sleeping sickness. It has also conducted the world's first randomized clinical trial for mycetoma, carried out numerous clinical studies for improved leishmaniasis treatments, and developed new treatments for children with HIV.

“As one of DNDi’s founding partners, KEMRI is immensely proud to see DNDi recognized for its outstanding contributions, and for our shared commitment to addressing neglected diseases,” said Prof Elijah Songok, Director General, KEMRI. **“It demonstrates that when African institutions lead research initiatives, we achieve global impact. This prize validates the critical role African research institutions play in advancing global health equity.”**

We congratulate the DNDi for this recognition and their commitment to advancing medical innovation and improving the lives of the world’s most neglected patients.



Chinese Biotech Firm Eyes Partnership with KEMRI

BY GIDEON KIRUI

The Institute has opened talks with Chinese firm Hightop Biotech Limited in a move that could strengthen research collaboration and laboratory capacity in Kenya.

Last Tuesday on 19th August 2025, a three-member delegation from Hightop Biotech paid a courtesy call at KEMRI Headquarters in Nairobi, signalling growing momentum in international partnerships for public health research.

The team was led by the Chairman of the Shandong Chamber of Commerce in Kenya, Mr. Zhan Dong alongside Africa Sales Director, Mr. Steven Zhang, and Mr. Mei Liqi, a PhD student at the University of Nairobi. They were hosted by KEMRI's Deputy Director in the Department of Epidemiology Statistics and Informatics, Prof. Wallace Bulimo (DESI) and welcomed by Director of Corporate Services, Mr. Jones Otuke representing Ag. Director General Prof. Elijah Songok.

The visit provided a platform to discuss cooperation in diagnostics, knowledge exchange, and joint training initiatives. Plans include a proposed exchange visit by KEMRI scientists to the Chinese Centre for Disease Control in Shandong Province for firsthand exposure to advanced laboratory systems.

Prof. Bulimo highlighted the urgency of collaboration in tackling African swine fever, noting KEMRI's interest in leveraging China's extensive experience in livestock vaccine development. **"This is just the initial contact. Engagements such as this one allow us to explore practical ways of combining expertise and resources for mutual benefit,"** he said.

Hightop Biotech, based in Qingdao, Shandong Province, is a global supplier of laboratory instruments, diagnostic kits, and biotech solutions. The firm has been expanding its footprint in Africa, seeking to tailor products to local contexts.



Director, Corporate Services, Mr. Jones Otuke in a discussion as the visiting delegation listens

“This is only the beginning of what we hope will be a meaningful and impactful collaboration,” said Mr. Zhan. **“We believe partnerships between our two countries can bring tangible benefits in health research and ultimately improve lives.”**

Mr. Zhang emphasized that aligning with KEMRI would help Hightop design technologies suited to African health institutions, while Mr. Liqi’s participation underscored the role of young researchers in bridging Kenya–China scientific cooperation.

Mr. Otuke welcomed the initiative, noting: **“This is our opportunity to expand collaboration to that part of the world. We look forward to identifying common areas of interest and living up to our motto—to make an impact on people’s health and well-being.”**

The courtesy call came at a time when global health actors are prioritizing collaboration, innovation, and capacity building to strengthen health systems. For KEMRI, such partnerships can provide access to cutting-edge tools and expertise to complement its pioneering work in malaria, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and emerging epidemics.

While exploratory, the discussions laid the groundwork for structured engagement, including laboratory strengthening, joint projects, and capacity-building initiatives. Both sides expressed optimism that the partnership will translate into concrete outcomes anchored in trust, shared goals, and mutual respect.



PIC 1: Director, Corporate Services, Mr. Jones Otuke who represented Ag. DG Prof. Elijah Songok during the meeting

PIC 2: Ag. Deputy Director, DESI, Prof. Wallace Bulimo (R) introduces the delegation while Mr. Mei Liqi (L) takes notes

PIC 3: Mr. Steven Zhang (L) engages Mr. Otuke as Prof. Bulimo (Centre) and Mr. Mei Liqi (R) follow Steven Zhang (L) makes notes

New Tools Offer Hope in the fight Against Malaria

BY STELLA NJUNG'E

As the world marked World Mosquito Day on 20th August, global health experts struck a balance of optimism and caution. Breakthrough tools are emerging that could accelerate the fight against malaria, but challenges including funding gaps, drug and insecticide resistance, and misinformation continue to threaten hard-won progress.

One of the most pressing concerns is the growing resistance of malaria mosquitoes to pyrethroids, the primary insecticide used in most bed nets. This resistance undermines the effectiveness of one of the world's most relied-upon interventions.

At the State of Malaria Innovation Expert Briefing, researchers from the Gates Foundation and African institutions including KEMRI's Dr. Eric Ochomo, Dr. Corinne Ngufor of the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), and Dr. Krystal Birungi

of Target Malaria Uganda, outlined three promising innovations including dual active-ingredient (AI) bed nets, spatial repellents, and gene drive technology genetically modified insects.

"Malaria continues to evolve, and so must our approaches," said Dr. Jennifer Gardy, Deputy Director, Malaria Surveillance, Data, and Epidemiology at the Gates Foundation, who co-moderated the session.

KEMRI's Dr. Ochomo presented findings from a study in Busia, Kenya, where spatial repellents reduced malaria transmission by 33 percent despite near-universal bed net coverage. Unlike nets, spatial repellents release vapors that deter mosquitoes, offering protection indoors and outdoors including schools, markets, and refugee camps. With Mosquitos becoming stronger, this innovation carries great promise in the fight against malaria even in outdoor settings such as schools and refugee camps.

In Search of Better Health



MOSQUITO-BORNE DISEASES INCLUDE
**MALARIA, DENGUE FEVER, WEST NILE VIRUS, YELLOW FEVER,
 CHIKUNGUNYA, AND ZIKA VIRUS.**

Just last week, the World Health Organization (WHO) endorsed spatial repellents for malaria control. **“This recommendation shows our work has real public health value,”** said Dr. Ochomo. **“With clear policy guidance, this technology can now be scaled up in outdoor settings where nets cannot be deployed.”** He stressed, however, that repellents must complement, not replace, existing tools.

Dr. Ngufor shared results from multi-site African trials showing dual AI nets treated with two insecticides from different classes—reduced malaria incidence by about 50 percent compared to standard pyrethroid-only nets.

“Due to insecticide resistance, standard nets are losing punch because mosquitoes have become smarter,” Dr. Ngufor said. “These nets restore protection for the most vulnerable.”

Progress has also been recorded in gene drive technology, a genetic approach that aims to reduce mosquito fertility over generations. While making her presentation, Target Malaria Uganda Entomologist, Dr. Krystal Birungi explained how genetically altering mosquito populations to reduce their ability to spread malaria, offers a long-term, systems-independent solution effective in various settings and conditions. Current work in this area focuses on containment trials, phased evaluation, and intensive community engagement.

Dr. Birungi emphasized that community co-development, multilingual risk communication and careful phased evaluation are prerequisites for impactful scientific work as they help communities understand preventing misinformation. **“Misinformation is the biggest challenge to our work, and that is why community**

involvement is critical,” said Dr. Birungi. **“While we’ve made great progress on this, no genetically modified mosquito has been released, they remain under strict containment. Based on current projections, the earliest possible release would be around 2030, and even then, it would only be on a small scale.”**

Recommendations from the briefing included, continuous resistance monitoring and R&D for new interventions, rapid development of national guidelines for spatial repellent deployment across malaria endemic regions, robust community-driven engagement strategies that bridge the gap between science and society for acceptability and to curb misinformation.

The panel concluded that no one tool can work alone, to win the fight these tools must complement each other dual-AI nets, repellents, gene drive and future innovations is essential to reverse the decade-long stall in malaria progress and deliver measurable reductions in cases and deaths. **“No single tool will end malaria. It’s about combining innovations, policy, and community trust to make a measurable impact,”** emphasised Dr. Gardy.

Additionally, it was noted that policy action and financing play a crucial role in sustaining the fight against malaria. Dr. Ochomo emphasized the importance of adaptability to keep surveillance efforts on track. **“With funding for malaria constantly shrinking, we’ve had to pivot,”** he said. **“In the Kenyan context, we have trained and empowered Community Health Promoters (CHPs) to support surveillance, a critical component that informs policy and guides research. As a team, we must pursue scalable solutions while lobbying for support from both local governments and international partners,”** he concluded.



Bridging Science and Society (Part 3):: Real Stories of Science Saving Lives

BY DR. SAMMY BAYA

In earlier parts of this series, we talked about the importance of making research simple and easy for the public to understand, and the challenges scientists face when doing that. Now in Part 3, we look at the real impact of research communication, how scientific knowledge is already improving lives across Kenya.

1. Bringing Health Talks to the Community

Instead of waiting for people to come to health facilities, KEMRI works with counties and community leaders to bring health information directly to the people, right where they are. These talks happen in local settings like markets, churches, mosques, schools, and chief's barazas.

For example, in Kisumu County, KEMRI supported community forums to explain how to prevent malaria. Using demonstrations and simple language, the sessions helped locals understand how to properly use mosquito nets and why some mosquitoes are no longer affected by certain sprays.

2. Health Messages on Local Radio

Radio remains one of the most trusted sources of information, especially in rural areas. KEMRI has partnered with local radio stations in counties such as Kilifi to share research findings in local languages.

3. Training Health Workers and Journalists

KEMRI trains community health volunteers (CHVs), local leaders, and journalists to help spread accurate health information.

4. Using Pictures and Videos to Explain Science

Scientific data can be complex. KEMRI is increasingly using infographics, short videos, and animations to explain topics like disease prevention in simple and visual ways.



5. Partnering with Trusted Community Voices

People are more likely to trust familiar and respected figures within their communities, such as local leaders, religious figures, and educators. In one health awareness initiative, KEMRI collaborated with faith leaders who shared key messages during services. This partnership led to a noticeable increase in women seeking health screenings at local clinics.

6. Youth Leading the Conversation

Young people can be powerful messengers, especially when they use creative approaches on platforms their peers are already engaged with. Example, during the COVID-19 period, university students ran a TikTok initiative to dispel myths. Their engaging, locally relevant videos reached a larger audience than traditional posters, demonstrating that when youth lead, their peers are more likely to listen.

7. Listening to the Community

Health communication should be a two-way conversation. Many KEMRI projects now involve communities from the beginning. Community members are asked for their views early, making sure the final message is not only accurate but also relevant.

8. Linking Research to Local Policies

KEMRI research has helped inform county decisions on health priorities. In some counties, findings on waterborne diseases and maternal health have been used to shift budgets toward clean water and better clinics.

9. Sending Health Tips by Mobile Phone

Through mobile platforms, health organizations and their partners are sending SMS alerts about vaccinations, maternal health, and HIV testing. With over 61% of Kenyans using mobile phones, this approach provides a fast and cost-effective way to reach a large audience.

10. Community Participation in Research

In some parts of western Kenya, community volunteers are using mobile apps to report mosquito breeding areas or malaria symptoms. This helps researchers act quickly and gives communities a sense of ownership in disease prevention.

11. Science Clubs in Schools

KEMRI has partnered with schools to promote health education. In one initiative, students participated in a "Malaria Challenge," where they created skits and posters. These young champions then shared their newfound knowledge with their families, helping to spread awareness in their communities.

12. Respecting Cultural Beliefs

In collaboration with traditional birth attendants and healers, health organizations have worked to promote safe childbirth practices while respecting cultural customs. This approach has contributed to improved maternal health outcomes by fostering community acceptance and reducing resistance.

13. Measuring Communication Impact

To improve future communication efforts, health organizations now track how many people respond to messages, such as checking if clinic visits increase after a radio show or using surveys to measure public understanding.

14. Partnering for Greater Reach

Health organizations collaborate with telecom companies, NGOs, and tech startups to reach a wider audience. In one initiative, health flyers were shared through M-Pesa transaction messages, effectively reaching users during their daily mobile activities.

15. Supporting Vulnerable Populations

Health organizations tailor messages for often overlooked groups, such as people with disabilities, the elderly, and nomadic communities. In one initiative, teams used audio messages in local dialects to reach pastoralists living far from towns.

What's Next?

To continue bridging science and society, we need:

- More funding for public health communication
- Better internet access in rural areas
- Stronger science education in schools
- A national system to coordinate health messaging across counties

Final Word: Making Science Matter

At KEMRI, we believe science should go beyond labs and reach every Kenyan. By working with communities, listening more, and sharing research in clear ways, we help save lives.





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