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WHO and Gilead Sciences to enhance access to treatment for visceral leishmaniasis

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Donated medicines and funding support will benefit the expansion and strengthening of leishmaniasis surveillance and control



The World Health Organisation (WHO) and US-based biopharmaceutical firm Gilead Sciences have signed a new agreement for the donation of 304,700 vials of AmBisome (liposomal amphotericin B for injection), for the treatment of visceral leishmaniasis (VL) in countries most impacted by the disease, extending their previous agreement to 2025.

The new three-year collaboration (2023-2025), estimated at $11.3 million also includes financial assistance that will support improved coverage and access to diagnosis and treatment for affected communities due to visceral leishmaniasis.

The product donation will benefit affected populations in high-burden countries such as Bangladesh, Ethiopia, India, Kenya, Nepal, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, and Uganda along with expansion to include Eritrea, and Yemen as new recipients to treat severe and complicated cases.

Gilead Science's financial assistance will support WHO's global efforts to prevent, control, and eliminate visceral leishmaniasis and its impact on the disadvantaged and vulnerable populations in many endemic countries.

Visceral leishmaniasis also known as kala-azar, is endemic in 80 countries worldwide. It is the most serious form of leishmaniasis as it is fatal without treatment. The disease is highly endemic in Brazil, the Indian subcontinent, and East Africa.

As a result of this longstanding collaboration, VL morbidity in South East Asia was reduced by more than 82 percent and the case fatality decreased by 95 percent. An estimated 50,000–90,000 new cases occur worldwide each year. Over 90 percent of new cases are reported from seven countries: Brazil, Ethiopia, India, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, and Sudan. However, just six years ago, case estimates ranged up to 300,000 cases per year.