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WHO and FIND formalize strategic collaboration to drive universal access to essential diagnostics

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To formalize a strategic collaboration that will strengthen diagnosis in resource-poor countries



The World Health Organization (WHO) and the Foundation for Innovative New Diagnostics (FIND) announced today that a memorandum of understanding has been signed by the two organizations to formalize a strategic collaboration that will strengthen diagnosis in resource-poor countries by closing major diagnostic gaps at country level and bolstering disease surveillance that will inform public health initiatives and enhance outbreak preparedness and response.

“This collaboration is an inspiring development that will take us a long way towards ensuring access to diagnostics to all who need them,” said Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization. “Global health challenges such as the ongoing novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) outbreak demonstrates that without these essential elements of health systems, we cannot hope to promote health, keep the world safe, and serve the vulnerable. I look forward to working closely with FIND to determine what countries need and to forge a path to deliver these innovations so that no one is left behind.”

Diagnosis is a driver of patient, financial and health systems impact, and a critical enabler of universal health coverage, but it is also the weakest link in the care cascade. This is especially true in primary healthcare settings in low- and middle-income countries. A unique and unprecedented opportunity exists to expand the role and impact of diagnostics to fully realize their potential to address major health security threats and evolving disease burdens through technological and digital advances.

FIND has been an active partner with WHO since 2008 and a WHO Collaborating Centre since 2014, acting in the areas of laboratory strengthening and diagnostic technology evaluation. This expanded collaboration will put in place the building blocks necessary to enable transformative change in a move toward a country-led diagnostics alliance. Initial workstreams will focus on demand-driven access to essential diagnostics and the development of national Essential Diagnostics Lists, alongside collection of data that assist the scale up of diagnostics to support low- and middle-income countries on their paths to universal health coverage.

“Each and every person has the right to a quality, timely diagnosis,” said Catharina Boehme, CEO of FIND. “Comprehensive diagnostic services underpin functional and efficient health systems not only to manage day-to-day healthcare needs, but also to ensure new disease outbreaks can be spotted and contained quickly. Working closely with WHO as part of a country-led alliance, we will strive to ensure that low- and middle-income countries have what they need to develop their own comprehensive, data-driven diagnostic strategies that enable universal health coverage and empower disease surveillance. Our ambition is that all patients, providers and decision-makers have access to the diagnostic solutions needed for optimal health outcomes.”