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## The Ajinomoto Foundation, Sysmex, and NEC initiate a cross-industry co-creation project to improve maternal and child health and nutrition in the Republic of Ghana

- Contributing to Universal "Nutrition" Health Coverage -

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The Ajinomoto Foundation (located in Chuo-ku, Tokyo; Chair: Chiaki Nosaka; hereinafter referred to as "TAF"), Sysmex Corporation (headquartered in Kobe, Chairman and CEO: Hisashi Ietsugu; hereinafter referred to as "Sysmex"), and NEC Corporation (headquartered in Minato-ku, Tokyo; President and CEO: Takayuki Morita; hereinafter referred to as "NEC") are set to commence initiatives for a co-creation project (the "Project") to improve maternal and child health and nutrition in the Republic of Ghana.

This project is in line with the Memorandum of Collaboration concluded between Japan and Ghana for the implementation of the Universal Health Coverage (UHC)<sup>1</sup> Expansion and Africa Health and Wellbeing Initiative (AfHWIN)<sup>2</sup> proposed during the 7th Tokyo International Conference on African Development<sup>3</sup> (TICAD7) in August 2019. As a specific project of this initiative, we aim to promote public-private and private collaboration in both countries to improve maternal and child health and nutrition in Ghana.

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In Ghana, malnutrition and malaria<sup>4</sup> are some of the most severe health issues, and are considered the most significant risk factors for death and disability<sup>5</sup>. Malnutrition is a leading factor in stunting the growth of unborn children and infants and causes anaemia, which enhances the risk of severe malaria. Additionally, children under five and pregnant women are especially vulnerable<sup>6</sup> to malaria, making it particularly important to take an integrated approach to the prevention of malnutrition, anaemia and malaria.

Since 2019, World Food Programme (WFP) and TAF have implemented activities in cooperation with Ghana Health Service (GHS) to promote maternal behavior change and recommend the Nutritional Supplement KOKO Plus<sup>®7</sup> as a specific solution to improving nutrition. By further developing this project and combining high-quality testing with ICT from Japan, we will accelerate the activities aimed at improving maternal and child nutrition, and also aim to create a mechanism to contribute to promoting the health of Ghanaian mothers and children and hence sustainable and stable economic growth. The 8th Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD8), held in August 2022 in Tunisia, will be disseminated worldwide as an activity case and will be promoted to support non-governmental activities to improve maternal and child health in Africa.

Through public-private partnerships between Japan and Ghana, this project aims to achieve Goal 2 "Zero hunger" and Goal 3 "Good health and well-being" while practicing Goal 17 "Partnerships for the goals" among the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We will contribute to accelerate UHC expansion while co-creating greater value through cross-sectoral efforts to resolve social challenges in the public and private sectors.

See the following for the history and overview of this project.

## 1. History

- August, 2019: TICAD7 held and Yokohama Declaration 2019 was adopted. Launched Japan Business Council for Africa and concluded a memorandum of cooperation between Japan and Ghana.
- February, 2021: Suggested co-creation concept of Nutrition-Anemia-Malaria-ICT to Ghanaian governmental and health professionals at Ghana-Japan Healthcare Business Webinar sponsored by the Council of Secretary-Japan Business Council for Africa.
- October, 2021: Exchanging of Notes<sup>8</sup> on Grant Funding for Nutrition Improvement for the Republic of Ghana, the Universal “Nutrition” Health Coverage Plan (through WFP) through a sustainable system for nutrition improvement.
- March, 2022: Concluded a contract between the WFP Ghana office and KOKO Plus Foundation for the development of this project.
- March, 2022: Based on the contract between the WFP Ghana office and KOKO Plus Foundation, a contract was concluded among relevant personnel located in Japan and Ghana<sup>9</sup>.
- April, 2022: Held launch event of new Japan-Funded Nutrition Programme • Universal “Nutrition” Health Coverage through sustainable systems for nutrition improvement in Ghana.

## 2. Overview of this project

### 2-1. Purpose

By combining effective nutrition education for mothers and children in Ghana using ICT with business-based approaches such as supplement production by local private companies and marketing and infiltration activities by local NGOs to enable sustainability, we will make behavioral changes to healthcare and strengthen the health system through human resources’ development of healthcare professionals. Utilizing innovative ICT and clinical testing technologies originating in Japan, this will contribute to creating environments where pregnant women, breastfeeding women, caregivers, and children can enjoy high-quality nutrition and health services.

### 2-2. Participating organizations and companies

Japan: TAF, Sysmex, and NEC

Ghana: KOKO Plus Foundation (NGO), Sysmex West and Central Africa Ltd. (local affiliate)

### 2-3. Role

TAF/ KOKO Plus Foundation:

- Cooperation with WFP and management of the entire project
- Improving health and nutrition guidance capacity through training for staff in health centers in collaboration with Ghana Health Services
- Construction of a Supply Chain for Nutritional Supplement KOKO Plus<sup>®</sup> around health centers
- Providing experiences and networks in Ghana in the past decades as a platform

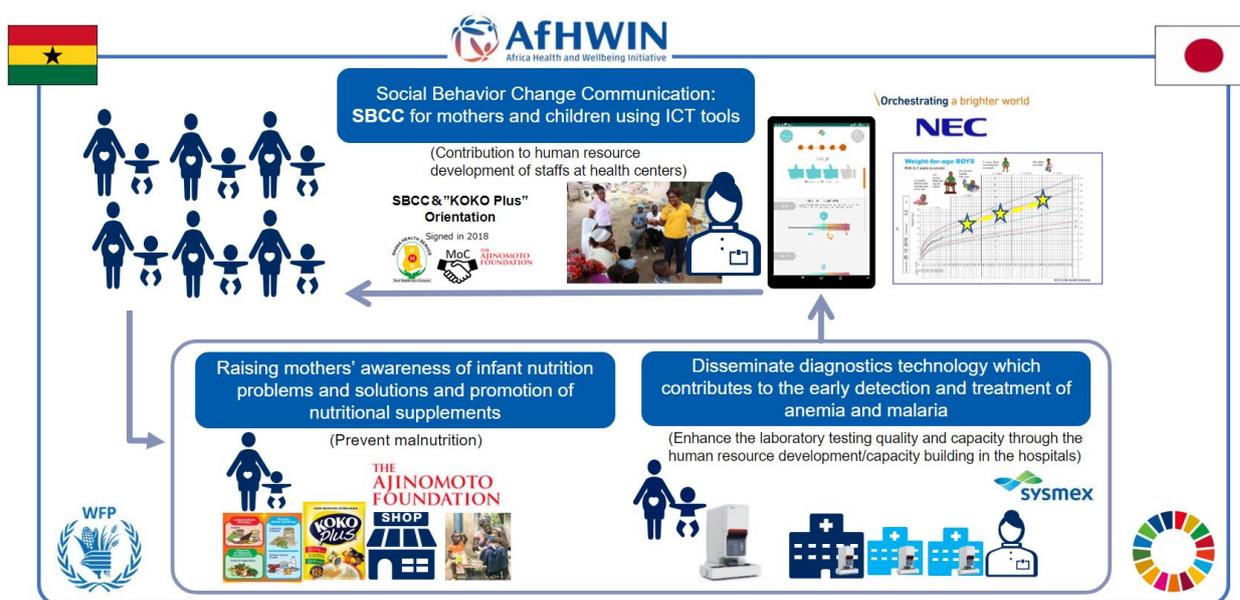
Sysmex/ Sysmex West and Central Africa Ltd.:

- Promote improved test quality and access through the introduction of malaria diagnostic medical devices
- Educational activities for medical professionals (clinical laboratory technicians and clinicians) leading to the early detection and treatment of anemia, malnutrition, and malaria through human resources development, academic symposium, etc.
- Collaboration with GHS and National Malaria Control Programme<sup>10</sup>

NEC:

- Application Development for support of health checkup and nutrition instructions
- Promoting behaviour change among mothers and children through the use of newly developed applications that help to deliver health checkup information, nutrition instructions, and recommendations for KOKO Plus® ingestion and/or additional testing at hospitals in which Sysmex clinical testing devices are installed
- Provide tablets and ICT training for staff at health centers

2-4. Project system (see the figure below)



Notes

- 1: Universal health coverage (UHC) means that all people have access to the health services they need, when and where they need them, without financial hardship. It includes the full range of essential health services, from health promotion to prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, and palliative care.
- 2: Memorandum of Cooperation in the Health Care and Health Fields between the Office of Health and Medical Strategies of the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare and the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Ghana

[https://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/kenkouiryou/pdf/20190820\\_ghana\\_hc.pdf](https://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/kenkouiryou/pdf/20190820_ghana_hc.pdf)

- 3: TICAD is an international conference on the topic of African development. Since 1993, it has been led by the Japanese government and held jointly with the United Nations, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank and the African Union Commission (AUC). The number of meetings is indicated as "TICAD7".
- 4: Malaria is one of the three major infectious diseases of the world defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) and is widely endemic mainly in tropical and subtropical regions of the world. A protozoal disease caused by Plasmodium as a mosquito-borne parasite that, when it enters the body, infects red blood cells in the blood after a certain incubation period, with symptoms such as high fever, headache, vomiting, and anemia. According to World malaria report 2021 in WHO, the number of people affected and total fatalities in 2020 was reported to be approximately 241 million and 627,000, respectively.  
<https://www.malarianomore.jp/archives/12598> (Japanese text)  
<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240040496>
- 5: The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME)  
<https://www.healthdata.org/ghana>
- 6: Children under five are particularly vulnerable to both malaria and malnutrition, and malaria may be more severe in malnourished children. Malaria also increases the risk of poor maternal and neonatal prognosis, including anemia and death in pregnant women, spontaneous abortion, stillbirth, prematurity, low birth weight infants, and neonatal and infant deaths.  
Nutrition and Malaria: Integrated approach for effective case management
- 7: Registered trade of TAF of Supplements to Improve Child Nutrition  
<http://www.theajinomotofoundation.org/kokoplus/>  
<https://endmalaria.org/related-material/malaria-and-nutrition-thematic-brief>
- 8: Exchange of Notes Regarding Grant Aid for Nutrition Improvement for the Republic of Ghana.  
[https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/press/release/press6\\_000941.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/press/release/press6_000941.html) (Japanese text)
- 9: This agreement is a contract between 5 parties: TAF and its Ghana-based implementation partner KOKO Plus Foundation, Sysmex and its local affiliate in Ghana, Sysmex West and Central Africa, and NEC
- 10: The organization in GHS that manages the malaria control in Ghana

### **About The Ajinomoto Foundation**

The Ajinomoto Foundation was established in 2017 for the purpose of contributing to solutions for crucial social issues, by conducting programs related to "nutritional improvement through food". We have 4 public interest programs that include the "Disaster reconstruction assistance project," "Ghana Nutrition Improvement Project (GNP)," "Food and Nutrition support project (AIN Program)" and "Dietitian project in low-income countries (VINEP)."

URL: <http://www.theajinomotofoundation.org/>

### **About Sysmex Corporation**

In line with its mission of "shaping the advancement of healthcare," which is defined in the "Sysmex Way," the corporate philosophy of the Sysmex Group, Sysmex works to contribute to the development of healthcare and the healthy lives of people. Sysmex conducts integrated R&D, manufacturing and sales, and provides support services for its instruments, reagents and software for in vitro testing of blood, urine and other bodily fluids. Sysmex supplies its products to medical institutions in more than 190 countries and regions throughout the world. Sysmex is working to improve access to proper healthcare so that as many people as possible may receive it. To that end, we are helping promote UHC in emerging countries and developing countries by making testing widely available.

URL: <https://www.sysmex.co.jp/en/index.html>

### **About NEC Corporation**

NEC Corporation has established itself as a leader in the integration of IT and network technologies while promoting the brand statement of "Orchestrating a brighter world." NEC enables businesses and communities to adapt to rapid changes taking place in both society and the market as it provides for the social values of safety, security, fairness and efficiency to promote a more sustainable world where everyone has the chance to reach their full potential. For more information, visit NEC at <http://www.nec.com>

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The information contained in this press release is current as of the date of the announcement but may be subject to change without prior notice.