

## Improving diagnosis and surveillance of infectious diseases in Timor-Leste

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A new initiative has been developed to help improve diagnosis and surveillance of infectious diseases in Timor-Leste.

MATCH TL, which stands for malaria, TB, COVID-19, and HIV diagnosis and surveillance in Timor-Leste, will be led by Menzies School of Health Research (Menzies) building on existing partnerships with the Timor-Leste Ministry of Health, in particular Timor-Leste's National Health Laboratory (NHL) and the Timor-Leste Disease Control Department.

The MATCH TL project will work closely alongside the Timor-Leste Ministry of Health to improve access to, and quality of, laboratory diagnostic testing for malaria, TB, COVID-19 and HIV in Timor-Leste.

Co-lead of Menzies Timor-Leste projects, Dr Josh Francis, says that MATCH TL will help address the high burden of morbidity and mortality from endemic infectious diseases in Timor-Leste.

"Public health responses to malaria, TB, COVID-19 and HIV have encountered many challenges, including access to laboratory testing," Dr Francis said.

"This new initiative will help improve disease control and strengthen health systems in Timor-Leste."

Timor-Leste's NHL Executive Director Endang da Silva says that collaboration with Menzies through MATCH TL will enable them to continue to strengthen their capacity.

"Through the support and collaboration from our health partners, NHL has been able to overcome challenges that we face, and we trust that Menzies investment will strengthen the capacity of NHL to be more prepared in the future to provide services that Timor-Leste needs," said Ms da Silva.

The funding for this collaboration is part of Australia's \$242 million commitment to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. The focus of this work was developed in partnership between Australia and the Global Fund and will maximise the impact of related Global Fund investments.

"The grant is designed to increase the impact of Global Fund's work in our region through lab strengthening of countries to carry out the critical task of testing and diagnosis," said Australia's Ambassador for Regional Health Security Dr Stephanie Williams.

"It will also continue to strengthen technical partnerships between experts in Australia's world-class institutions and their regional counterparts."

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**Menzies School of Health Research**

Menzies is one of Australia's leading medical research institutes dedicated to improving the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, and a leader in global and tropical research into life-threatening illnesses, Menzies continues to translate research into effective partnerships and programs in communities across Australia and the Asia-Pacific region.