Our Work in Africa

Novartis has a long-standing relationship and commitment to Africa, with decades of experience on the ground, particularly through its commitment to provide malaria treatment on a not-for-profit basis to the public sector in malaria endemic countries. Today, Novartis is the third-largest multinational healthcare company on the continent, and we aim to become the leading healthcare company by 2020.

Go Africa initiative

To define our overall vision and strategy in Africa, Novartis established the cross-divisional Go Africa initiative in 2012, which is governed by the Go Africa Steering Committee.

As part of this initiative, in early 2015 we formed the Novartis Africa Health Alliance (NAHA) to strengthen both our commitment to building health systems in Africa, and long-term business growth. NAHA evaluates and helps prioritize new and existing initiatives in Africa to ensure we are addressing unmet medical needs and positioned for long-term success. In 2015, a USD 1 million Health Education & Capabilities Fund was established to help finance internal projects focused on health education, disease awareness and capability building, primarily in Africa.

Building scientific and clinical capabilities

We are contributing to building scientific and clinical capabilities in emerging countries through the Novartis Next-Generation Scientist (NGS) and Visiting Scholar (VS) programs. Each year, 20 NGS interns and as many as 10 VS from across the developing world are selected to carry out research projects using state-of-the-art techniques and equipment that can also be implemented within their local infrastructure. Since 2010, 135 young scientists and clinicians from 21 countries across Africa, Asia and Latin America participated in these programs. The programs have contributed to peer-reviewed publications, presentations at international conferences, the advancement of local healthcare infrastructure, and the creation of an international network of scientific and clinical leaders in emerging countries.

In Ethiopia, Sandoz collaborated with local authorities in East African countries to set up the first regional bioequivalence center, providing capital and technical support. The center
ascertains the bioequivalence of generic drug products against those of the brand/innovator products as per the specifications of the World Health Organization. It provides laboratory and clinical research skills training to local communities, and helps strengthen health policy controls in the long term.

**Partnering with the first drug discovery center on the African continent**

Supported by The Novartis Research Foundation, Novartis has entered a research partnership with H3-D, the first fully integrated drug discovery and development center on the African continent, affiliated with the University of Cape Town in South Africa. The goal of the center is to educate the next generation of African scientists and to work on diseases that affect people on the African continent. The partnership between Novartis and H3-D involves research collaborations in TB and malaria, support with the set-up of a clinical study site at H3-D, scientific exchange programs and infrastructure support.

**Improving maternal and child health**

In Ethiopia, the second most populous country in Africa, most women give birth in their homes – and if a problem arises during pregnancy or birth, local health centers are the first point of contact. Unfortunately, many health centers lack necessary medical supplies, and healthcare workers often do not have the medical expertise needed to help women with pregnancy complications. In 2015, as part of our work to strengthen health systems and with the support of NAHA and the HECF, Sandoz launched a new program in Ethiopia called New Life & New Hope to improve maternal and child health and to reduce mortality associated with childbirth. They sponsored four Basic Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care trainings for 80 midwives, impacting the care of approximately 40 000 pregnant women in the Addis Ababa area.

Sandoz further expanded New Life & New Hope in 2016, supporting a second wave of training for another 100 midwives in three new regions where the highest need to improve delivery skills was identified.