

## STATEMENT

DNDi welcomes the progress report on this agenda item and would like to raise the point that training of healthcare workers to diagnose and treat or refer patients suffering from neglected tropical diseases, such as leishmaniasis, is essential for improving early detection and treatment in affected communities.

As disease prevalence decreases, the expertise of healthcare professionals may also decline, increasing the risk of misdiagnosis in patients suffering from visceral leishmaniasis (VL). This highlights the importance of continuous training for healthcare workers to ensure that the progress made is sustained. Moreover, the more complicated forms arising from relapse of VL and Post-kala-azar dermal leishmaniasis, are prone to misdiagnosis and often require invasive diagnostic procedures like bone marrow aspiration and skin biopsy. PKDL diagnosis and treatment is important as they are known to act as reservoirs of the disease. Therefore, hands-on training for doctors and lab technicians is crucial.

DNDi, in collaboration with the National Centre for Vector Borne Disease Control, the Bihar Health Department, and the Rajendra Memorial Research Institute of Medical Sciences (RMRIMS), has established a [Centre of Excellence \(CoE\) for leishmaniasis](#). This facility serves as both a treatment center and a reference and training hub. To date, about 250 health workers have received hands-on training, including invasive diagnostic procedures, while more than 2,600 frontline workers have been trained to identify and refer suspected cases. Similar centers have been established in Bangladesh and Nepal, in partnership with DGHS Bangladesh and EDCD Nepal, to reduce the burden of NTDs and improve patient care.

Additionally, training healthcare workers in community engagement strategies is essential, as NTDs disproportionately affect underserved populations. Building trust within these communities is vital to encourage early healthcare-seeking behavior and improve health outcomes.