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## BIT-project researches antibiotic resistance in the tropics

**A problem like antibiotic resistance cannot only be handled in the laboratory. It requires a multidisciplinary approach — which is exactly what ITM is doing with the BIT-project, at least until 2020.**

Antibiotic resistance is increasing throughout the world. Western countries are also battling this problem, even though in our country you can only obtain antibiotics by prescription and patients with resistant bacteria are treated separately. The countries of the South often don't have the resources to halt resistance. Antibiotics are frequently available for sale without a prescription in these countries. When people have a fever in the tropics, the standard diagnosis is often malaria, they are prescribed a variety of broad-spectrum antibiotics at the same time or they go buy their 'wonder drug' without a prescription. In other cases, it may be difficult to convince people that they have to keep taking their medication even though they no longer have symptoms. All of this contributes to increased resistance.

Prof. Stijn Deborggraeve

Antibiotic resistance therefore requires a multidisciplinary approach. ITM has such a diverse team: BIT — which stands for 'Bacterial Infections in the Tropics'. The bacteriologist, specialists in tropical laboratory medicine and medical anthropologists of BIT have already set up cooperative ventures in their own country, Cambodia, Burkina Faso, Ecuador, Peru, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda.

In the spring of 2015, the BIT team received EUR 1.35 million from the Baillet Latour Foundation. Thanks to these funds the three ITM researchers can study antibiotic resistance until the year 2020. In the meantime, pharmacologist Stijn Deborggraeve has set up a new bacteriology lab, internist Janneke Cox is researching antibiotic resistance in regions with limited resources and anthropologist Koen Peeters is studying the influence of sociocultural factors on antibiotic resistance.