

## Japan commits US\$ 8.6 million to support vulnerable people most affected by humanitarian crisis in Zimbabwe

The Government of Japan has committed a total of more than US\$ 8.6 million in emergency funding to support vulnerable people who have been most affected by the humanitarian crisis in Zimbabwe. There are currently an estimated 5.6 million people who are severely food insecure, both in rural and urban areas, as a result of consecutive droughts and a dire economic situation which has been exacerbated by COVID-19. The support will be provided through four different international organisations, namely the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC).

Zimbabwe is currently experiencing one of its worst humanitarian crises. Three successive years of drought have caused failed harvests and critical levels of food insecurity in a country where 70% of the population depend on agriculture as the primary source of livelihood. This has been coupled with rising costs and inflation which has put the cost of basic services, including food, health and education, beyond the reach of the majority. The crisis has been compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic. The nationwide lockdowns have meant that many people, who depend on petty trading and informal activities to survive, have lost their sources of income, and the pandemic has further stretched an already weakened health system. The latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) assessment estimates that 3.4 million people, or more than a third of the rural population, are facing "crisis" or "emergency" levels of hunger. Meanwhile, in urban areas, it is estimated by the Government that about half of all urban dwellers—or roughly 2.2 million people—go to bed hungry.

The Government of Japan has responded to this crisis by committing a total of over US\$ 8.6 million in funding for five different projects seeking to address the basic needs of the most vulnerable. Firstly, US\$ 4.5 million in funding will provide emergency food assistance to the food insecure households in urban areas, through WFP. It will especially focus on women-led households, people with disabilities, and people living with HIV, in order to ensure that they are able to meet their basic food and nutrition needs. The funding will cover the urgent food needs of 56,000 people, who will receive monthly electronic vouchers (e-vouchers) for food valued at US\$ 12 per person.

In another emergency project implemented through WFP, Japan will provide funding of US\$ 1.25 million to support communities in Mount Darwin and Matobo Districts with immediate food assistance while at the same time they construct productive assets, such as weir dams and nutrition gardens, to increase their resilience to drought and thus ensure their food security in the future. This project is expected to assist 11,080 vulnerable people.

The COVID-19 pandemic has seen a rise in neonatal and maternal mortality. Japan will provide funding of US\$ 1.3 million to improve the delivery of emergency and neonatal care for women at health institutions in Harare and Bulawayo, in a project implemented by UNFPA. The project will include provision of essential equipment, including PPE and new ambulances to decrease delays in transportation of expectant mothers, as well as strengthening infection prevention and control measures. An estimated 60,000 women will be reached through the interventions.

Further funding of US\$ 1,078,372 will provide a comprehensive set of life-saving nutrition, health, HIV/AIDS, gender-based violence (GBV) and education interventions to vulnerable women and children in 32 districts of Zimbabwe, through UNICEF. It will include the screening and treating young children for acute malnutrition, the training of health workers on care for patients with HIV, support for victims of GBV, and provision of home-learning materials for vulnerable learners.

Finally, Japan has committed US\$ 500,427 to improve food security, safe water access and health care for vulnerable communities in Gokwe South and Gokwe North districts, in a project implemented by IFRC. The project will provide solar-powered boreholes, establish nutrition gardens, and provide seeds and agricultural inputs benefitting 4,000 households.

Given the severity of the current humanitarian crisis affecting Zimbabwe, Japan has greatly increased its emergency funding. In 2020, Japan also provided emergency funding to support the most vulnerable people affected by the humanitarian crisis of over US\$ 15.3 million. It is hoped that the assistance by Japan to respond to the humanitarian crisis will go a long way towards alleviating hunger of the most vulnerable people, and ensuring that their basic needs are met.