



## **Japan supports Zimbabwe's COVID-19 response through maternal health equipment and cold chain equipment**

Today the handover ceremony of Japan-funded medical equipment to support Zimbabwe's COVID-19 response was held by the Ministry of Health and Child Care. The equipment was provided through two projects implemented by UNFPA and UNICEF. The ceremony was attended by Ambassador Tanaka; the Deputy Minister of Health and Child Care, Dr John Mangwiro; the UNFPA Representative in Zimbabwe, Dr Esther Muia; the UNICEF Representative in Zimbabwe, Dr Tajudeen Oyewale; and Ministry officials.

Zimbabwe is currently experiencing a humanitarian crisis caused by multiple factors, including recurring droughts and a dire economic situation. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this crisis by further straining an already weakened health system. The two projects funded by Japan aim to alleviate the crisis in the health system by preventing maternal and perinatal deaths, and allowing COVID-19 vaccines to be delivered around the country.

First, the project named "Strengthening Comprehensive Emergency Obstetric and Neonatal Care in COVID-19 Hotspots in Zimbabwe" was funded with US\$ 1.3 million and implemented by UNFPA. It is expected to improve the provision of maternal healthcare services. It includes the procurement of medical equipment and expendable supplies to manage obstetric emergencies and prevent and control infection, including PPE. It also includes the provision of eight new ambulances to decrease delays in transportation of expectant mothers, as well as the training of maternity care providers.

Second, the project titled "Cold Chain Equipment Support for Smooth Deployment of COVID-19 Vaccines" was funded with US\$ 665,000 and implemented by UNICEF. This project is expected to reinforce the country's cold chain system and ensure that COVID-19 vaccines reach down to the last person as "Last One Mile Support". It includes the provision of cold chain equipment, such as ice-lined and solar-driven refrigerators, as well as vaccine carriers and cold boxes, at provincial and district centres around the country. As well as COVID-19 vaccines, the new equipment will allow routine immunization programmes to protect children against childhood diseases. An important part of both projects is the training of health workers on the operation and maintenance of the equipment, to ensure the effective and long-lasting use of the equipment.

On accepting the equipment on behalf of the Ministry of Health, Dr Manjiro thanked the Government of Japan and said that the "the medical equipment and ambulances will help to strengthen health service delivery for pregnant women, and the cold chain equipment will allow vaccines to reach all eligible people anywhere in the country".

Ambassador Tanaka said that "I hope that Japan's support will contribute to ensuring universal health coverage in Zimbabwe, and a health system that is robust enough to withstand future crises, so that children, mothers, families, and communities across Zimbabwe will be protected".

"We are very grateful for the support from the Government of Japan which has already begun making a difference in the lives of women; this support will certainly be the difference between life and death for women giving life", said Dr Muia.

Dr Oyewale said, "With the ongoing commitment of the Government, the solid availability of vaccine doses, and the support of stakeholders such as the Government of Japan, Zimbabwe will demonstrate what it takes to achieve the targeted immunity against COVID-19."

Supporting the country's health system to achieve universal health coverage and "leave no one behind" is one of the pillars of Japan's cooperation with Zimbabwe. Japan has also recently provided Grant Aid of US\$ 3.8 million to upgrade the medical and hospital equipment of 12 central and provincial hospitals around the country.



**Ambassador's speech**



**Speech by Deputy Minister of Health and Child Care, Hon. Dr Manjiro**



**Speech by UNFPA Representative, Dr Muia**



**Speech by UNICEF Representative, Dr Oyewale**



**Handover of cold boxes**



**Handover of solar-driven refrigerators**



**Handover of medical and PPE equipment for maternal health**



**Handover of ambulances**



**Eight ambulances were handed over**