

Official Launch of Rerai Umntwana Parenting Application

On 13 February, Deputy Head of Mission Ms. Kaoru Yokotani attended the official launch of the Rerai Umntwana Parenting Application under Project RISE (Registration, Innovation, Support, Empowerment): Leveraging Japanese Innovation for Digital Transformation in Child and Maternal Health and Parenting Support. Project RISE is supported by US\$ 2 million in funding from the Government and people of Japan and is implemented in partnership with UNICEF under the leadership of the Republic of Zimbabwe's Ministry of Health and Child Care.

Zimbabwe has approximately two million children under five years old, 76.2 % of whom live in poverty. National data shows that 23.8 % of children are stunted, 4.3 % are wasted, 4 % are overweight, and 25 % experience severe food insecurity, often consuming food from two or fewer food groups daily. In response to these challenges, Zimbabwe, in collaboration with Japan and UNICEF, has become the first country in Africa to roll out the Rerai Umntwana digital parenting solution.

Adapted to the Zimbabwean context from the UNICEF-developed Bebbu mobile application with AI-enabled features developed by the Japanese company NEC, Rerai Umntwana provides evidence-based information and interactive services for parents and caregivers of children aged 0–6 years. The application covers early learning, health, nutrition and breastfeeding, responsive parenting, child protection and safety, and parental well-being. Its name combines Shona and Ndebele languages that means “Nurture the Child.”

The launch event was held at Glenview Polyclinic in Harare and was attended by the Deputy Minister for Health and Child Care, Honourable Sleiman Timios Kwidini; Mayor of Harare, Mr. Jacob Mafume; UNICEF Zimbabwe Representative Ms. Etona Ekole; and the Deputy Head of Mission Ms. Kaoru Yokotani, along with healthcare professionals and members of the Glenview community. The project is expected to benefit approximately 20,000 people in urban and peri-urban communities during its initial phase, including parents, caregivers, and frontline healthcare workers.



The scene from the official launch



Deputy Head of Mission Yokotani giving a remarks



Pregnant and postpartum women participating in the launch



Commemorative photo with the Deputy Minister for Health and Child Care



App explanation banners, etc.

