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PRESS RELEASE

Japan, Zimbabwe, and UN Agencies unite to strengthen Zimbabwe's health systems and boost food security

Harare, Zimbabwe – The Government of Japan, in partnership with the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the World Health Organization (WHO), and the World Food Programme (WFP), is supporting the Government and people of the Republic of Zimbabwe through four transformative projects under the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) through Japan's 2025 Supplementary Budget (JSB).

The aim of the projects is to strengthen Zimbabwe's health systems by improving infection prevention and control in health facilities, responding to the ongoing malaria outbreak by enhancing rapid malaria diagnosis and treatment, and boosting food security by supporting youth-led innovations designed to address gaps in market access for farmers. Collectively, the projects will either directly or indirectly benefit over two million people, reaching many more through digital platforms, technology-enabled advisory services, and life-saving public health messaging.

Japanese Ambassador Maekawa to Zimbabwe says: "We are pleased to support the valuable work of the United Nations agencies in addressing critical development, health, and food security challenges in the country. Japan has provided a total of approximately USD 2 million in funding to the participating UN agencies. In support of their planned activities, available funding has been allocated to three UN agencies, with UNOPS receiving USD 1.1 million, WFP USD 834,000, and WHO USD 87,000. Japan is confident that these initiatives will contribute meaningfully to accelerating progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), strengthening national systems, and improving the health, nutrition, and well-being of communities across Zimbabwe."

This support comes as Zimbabwe faces a sharp rise in malaria cases since April 2025, driven by climate-related shocks, disruptions to routine health services, and increasing pressure on the public health system, while also contending with ongoing challenges to food and nutrition security. The surge in malaria has strained health facilities, particularly in rural areas, and persistent transmission of infectious and waterborne diseases continues to pose serious risks. At the same time, limited access to markets, technology, and advisory services affects smallholder farmers and youth-led agritech initiatives.

UNOPS will implement two projects focused on strengthening infection prevention and control in health facilities. The interventions include the procurement and installation of modern hospital laundry and disinfection equipment to improve hygiene standards and reduce hospital-acquired infections, as well as the deployment of patient transfer ambulances and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) equipment to rural health centres in high-burden malaria districts. A notable aspect is the project's introduction of state-of-the-art Japanese ambulances for malaria patient transport, highlighting how Japan's advanced technology contributes to enhancing healthcare delivery. These efforts are expected to enhance service delivery, protect patients and healthcare workers, and build long-term technical and



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operational capacity through training, coordination with the Ministry of Health and Child Care, and technology transfer, benefiting over 1.5 million patients and approximately 2,500 healthcare workers.

WFP will strengthen food and nutrition security in Zimbabwe by supporting transformative, youth-led digital innovations designed to tackle persistent gaps in market access for farmers, advisory services, mechanisation, and disease surveillance. The project empowers 12 youth-led teams and innovators to design scalable, home-grown solutions. Examples include Boneka, a digital marketplace that addresses weak and fragmented market linkages for small-scale producers and Zagri-Boost, an AI-powered tool, which provides early detection for crop and livestock diseases. These technologies are expected to benefit 1,200 smallholder farmers by improving access to markets, reducing losses, enabling early disease detection, and lowering the cost and inefficiency of value-chain operations, ultimately driving resilience, inclusion, and the modernisation of Zimbabwe's food systems. Importantly, the project involves collaboration with leading Japanese AI companies, whose advanced technologies help develop the skills of Zimbabwean youth. Through this partnership with WFP, young innovators gain digital expertise that supports sustainable food security. Japan's AI technology thus strengthens Zimbabwe's food systems while promoting local economic growth and job creation.

WHO will support health authorities in Zimbabwe to urgently respond to the ongoing malaria outbreak in high-burden districts. The project aims to reduce malaria-related morbidity and mortality, particularly among children under five, pregnant women, and remote communities, by strengthening health facility and community capacities, ensuring rapid diagnosis and treatment, and integrating mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) for patients into emergency health services. Through this intervention, up to 231,320 people in targeted districts are expected to gain timely access to malaria services, while health workers are trained and supported in malaria case management, surveillance, rapid response, and MHPSS delivery.

These collaborative efforts reflect Japan's continued leadership in strengthening health systems, promoting food and nutrition security, advancing youth-led innovation, and enhancing resilience against public health and food system challenges, as well as its longstanding partnership with the United Nations system to address both urgent humanitarian needs and long-term development priorities. Japan has consistently supported Zimbabwe through humanitarian and development assistance, including during the COVID-19 pandemic, in health infrastructure strengthening, food security initiatives, and programs aimed at improving the well-being and resilience of communities across the country.

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