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GOVERNMENT OF JAPAN PROVIDES US\$5.6 MILLION TO HEALTH PROGRAMMES IN SUDAN

Partnership with UNICEF and national health authorities will tackle infectious diseases amongst women and children

Khartoum, 29 July 2009 – The Government of Japan will sign a new agreement with UNICEF tomorrow, making available US\$ 5.6 million (¥ 533 million or SDG 13.5 million) in support of health programmes that will benefit up to 5 million people in the coming year.

The contribution will be used to fund a number of life-saving health activities in both north and Southern Sudan including:

- Provision of vaccines for routine immunization activities as well as polio and measles immunization campaigns.
- Provision of solar refrigerators for vaccine storage facilities
- Provision of malaria diagnosis and testing equipment and drugs
- Provision of primary health centre kits containing essential drugs and medicines for 12 months
- Provision of long-lasting insecticide-treated bed nets to protect against malaria
- Training of health workers and local vaccinators.

Announcing the contribution, His Excellency Yuichi Ishii, Ambassador of Japan to Sudan underlined the commitment of his country to fighting infectious diseases throughout Sudan.

“Improving quality of and access to basic health services is one of the priority areas for Japan’s assistance to Sudan. Infectious disease prevention for children is Japan’s major contribution to the health sector in Sudan and the Government of Japan has been supporting this programme since 2000 and will extensively support the continued efforts by UNICEF and the Government of the Sudan in preventing infectious diseases in Sudan,” Ambassador Ishii said.

Mr. Kenichi Shishido, Resident Representative of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Sudan Office, commented that “In 2008 JICA started a ‘Mother Nile Project,’ a three-year project of US\$ 2.5 million, focusing on the empowerment of village midwives (VMWs) in Sennar State. This unique project supports the “One Village One VMW” policy of the Federal Ministry of Health, in the areas of policy-making training and management of maternity health services.”

Acknowledging the importance of Japan’s continued support to health programmes in Sudan, acting UNICEF Representative Per Engebak said “This contribution is another tangible demonstration of Japan’s commitment to tackling preventable diseases in Sudan, and to give children the best chance of a healthy start to life.”

“While we have seen notable reductions in the incidence of infectious diseases in Sudan – for example in Southern Sudan, the number of measles cases fell from 671 in 2007 to 383 in 2008 – the re-emergence of polio in the last two years has reminded us that we cannot afford to relax in the fight against infectious diseases,” he added.

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Sudan has recorded significant progress in protecting children's health since prior to the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement; under-five mortality rates in Sudan fell from 156 deaths per 1,000 live births prior to 2005 to 112 according to the 2006 Sudan Household Health Survey.

However, to reach the Millennium Development Goal target of an under-five mortality rate of 62 deaths per 1,000 live births, continued efforts to improve child survival and development are required.

In 2008, UNICEF and its partners including the Government of National Unity, the Government of Southern Sudan and the World Health Organization took further steps towards that goal through the Sudan Accelerated Child Survival Initiative and other health activities that saw almost 9 million children immunized against polio, more than 3 million immunized against measles, and 1 million children vaccinated against diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough, while nearly 2.5 million insecticide-treated bed nets to protect against malaria were distributed to families across Sudan.

“Consolidation of peace” is one of the main pillars of Japan's foreign policy to Africa. It is, therefore, a basic principle of Japan's assistance to Sudan, which is a high-priority country in Africa for Japan's peace building programme. Since signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, the Government of Japan has been committed to accelerating consolidation of peace in Sudan and its grant assistance to Sudan since 2005 amounts to approximately US\$390 million.

The new contribution from Japan will be officially marked at a special ceremony hosted at the Minister of Health's office in Khartoum on **Thursday 30 July, starting at 09.15 a.m.** The event will be attended by the Japanese Ambassador to Sudan His Excellency Yuichi Ishii, UNICEF acting Representative Per Engebak, JICA Resident Representative Kenichi Shishido and His Excellency Professor Hassan Abu Asha, State Minister of Health.

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