



H.E. Ken Okaniwa, Ambassador of Japan to Somalia and WHO Representative Dr Mamunur Rahman Malik

Nairobi, 22 February 2023 – The World Health Organization (WHO) Somalia Country Office and the Government of Japan have joined hands and officially launched a drought emergency response project that aims to reach over 2.7 million people across 29 drought-affected districts with critical health interventions.

The project, entitled “Expanding access to essential and emergency health care for the drought-affected communities living in hard-to-reach areas in Somalia”, will not only contribute to improving access to critical and life-saving health and nutrition services, it will also build resilience of primary health care system in the country towards achieving universal health coverage (UHC). The launch ceremony was hosted by H.E. Ken Okaniwa, Ambassador of Japan to Somalia, in the presence of the WHO Representative to Somalia Dr Mamunur Rahman Malik.

This funding from the Government of Japan, under the Japanese supplementary budget for 2023, is coming at an important time as Somalia is experiencing one of the worst droughts in its

history. More than 7.8 million people have been affected by the worsening drought conditions, and an estimated 1.8 million children face severe acute malnutrition. Indeed, this support will enable WHO, as well as Federal and State-level Ministries of Health to reach the most vulnerable populations with emergency health care services, including those who are internally displaced and severely impacted by the drought.

“The people and Government of Japan remain committed to supporting the people of Somalia, especially at a time when more than 70% of the population are not only facing severe food insecurity, but the lives of more than half of the country’s children under 5 years of age are at stake owing to the possibility of disease outbreak, malnutrition and famine. We are confident that our partnership with WHO will help to avert this situation, while simultaneously helping to strengthen Somalia’s health system and progress towards UHC,” said H.E. Ken Okaniwa, Ambassador of Japan to Somalia.

Over a one-year period, this project will help to expand community-based and integrated health and nutrition interventions (especially to children, pregnant and lactating women, and internally displaced persons), strengthen disease surveillance, improve service delivery at the district level by equipping health care units, and establish referral linkages between communities and primary healthcare facilities for enhanced quality and continuity of care, thereby helping to reduce preventable morbidity and mortality among vulnerable communities. WHO will achieve this by deploying over 2100 community health workers and establishing 148 mobile outreach teams to increase access to life-saving services at the community level, as well as by establishing and supporting 64 stabilization centres at health facilities to treat children with severe acute malnutrition with medical complications, 9 cholera treatment centres and 280 primary health care centres in drought-affected districts. As a result of these interventions, WHO will provide critical health services to millions of people in need, including in remote and hard-to-reach areas.

The WHO Representative to Somalia Dr Mamunur Rahman Malik, in his welcome address mentioned that, “WHO has been struggling to keep pace with the acute and overwhelming demand for health care for the vulnerable populations severely impacted by the ongoing drought”. He continued, “thanks to this very timely and much-needed support from the Government of Japan, WHO will be able to sustain its critical and life-saving health interventions in the affected areas. I also take this opportunity to urge all donors and partners working in Somalia to support scaling up our humanitarian efforts to keep the health impacts of the drought to a bare minimum that is acceptable to us”.

This support from the Government of Japan will thus be instrumental in helping to improve the

lives and well-being of Somalis, as it will contribute to reducing preventable mortality and morbidity, as well as advance UHC through enhanced service delivery. With this support, WHO Somalia will continue to save lives and improve the health outcomes of people in need. WHO takes this opportunity to express its appreciation to the Government and people of Japan for this critical contribution.





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