

Remarks by H. E. Mr. Akio Egawa, Ambassador Japan to Zambia
On the Occasion of the Exchange of Notes for
The Project for Expansion of the Cold Chain
Lusaka, 19th July, 2013

Honourable Dr. Joseph Katema, M.P., Minister of Community Development,
Mother and Child Health,

Dr. Iyorlumum J. Uhaa, UNICEF Country Representative for Zambia,

Dr. Elwyn Choma, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Community
Development, Mother and Child Health,

Mr. Yoshihide Teranishi, Resident Representative, JICA Zambia Office,
Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to be here today on behalf of the Government of Japan at the signing ceremony for the Exchange of Notes for the Project for Expansion of the Cold Chain.

This Project is aimed at promotion of child health through improved access to quality and effective immunization against Vaccine Preventable Diseases (VPDs). The grant amount is 221 million Japanese Yen, equivalent approximately to 2.2 million US dollars or 10 million Zambian Kwacha. Implementation of the Project will be entrusted to UNICEF. The Project will include provision of refrigerators and cold boxes and transfer of skills in their maintenance. It is envisaged that the capacity of health centres to immunize children will be strengthened significantly through the Project.

To promote child health, it is imperative to ensure full immunization coverage for children aged under five. Although the Government of Zambia is making efforts to expand child immunization, it is faced with challenges in the cold chain system in terms of the quantity of vaccine storage facilities and equipment amidst the growing number of health centres in the country. Quite a number of refrigerators and cold boxes for vaccine storage have become too antiquated to function well and inadequate number of trained staff are struggling to maintain them.

Honourable Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Under this Project, a total of 570 refrigerators will be procured: 520 will be supplied to the health facility level and 50 to the district level. In addition, 500 cold boxes will be provided to the health facility level.

In order to strengthen the capacity for the maintenance of the cold chain system, workshops will be held for the technical staff at the district level under the Project.

As a result of this expansion of the cold chain system, 550,000 newly born children will be vaccinated and protected against VPDs annually by 2015. I am certain that this Project will make a significant contribution to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 4, that is, reduction of child mortality in Zambia.

Honourable Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Japan is not new in assisting in the cold chain and immunization. In 2001 and 2006, Japan provided grant aid for the procurement of 830 refrigerators and 560 cold boxes in total. In 2007 and 2008, Japan, in cooperation with WHO, assisted in the training of medical and technical staff of the Ministry of Health as well as Provincial and District Health Offices in cold chain management and maintenance.

With regard to vaccines, Japan assisted in the supply of BCG vaccines for more than 2 million people over 5 years from 2006. Currently, a JICA project is underway to strengthen community-based child health in Lusaka and other urban areas whereby child immunization coverage has been expanded.

Honourable Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Ministry of Community Development, Mother and Child Health and UNICEF will be work together in this Project. I am confident the Project is in good hands. Japan and UNICEF have successfully partnered in numerous child health projects worldwide and UNICEF has a very good track record in assisting in the previous cold chain expansions in Zambia. The Ministry also has a key role to play, especially in ensuring the sustainability of the cold chain system.

In closing, I would like to express my sincere hope that with this tripartite partnership, the Project will successfully improve child health in Zambia. Children are the hope for the future of Zambia. To enhance child health is to promote the future growth and development of the country. I also hope that the Project will further strengthen the cordial friendship existing between Japan and Zambia.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.

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