



PRESS RELEASE

Japan pledges \$821,000 fighting COVID-19 in South Sudan

JUBA, SOUTH SUDAN, 2 JUNE 2020- The Government of Japan has pledged approximately USD 821,000 to UNICEF in support to the fight against COVID-19 in South Sudan. Over the last month, the number of confirmed cases has increased rapidly and the need to intensify prevention efforts is evident.

Over half of the funding from Japan will be spent on increasing access to clean water and hygiene, allowing more people to practice safe handwashing as a mean to protect themselves against COVID-19. 60 per cent of the population does not have access to clean water and many can't afford soap – one of the only currently available most powerful weapons against the Coronavirus.

His Excellency Mr. Seiji Okada, the Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of South Sudan said: "The most important and effective tactic against COVID-19 is the prevention in terms of widespread hygiene practices and awareness raising among communities."

The funding from the people of Japan will also be spent on strengthening risk communication and community engagement, including digital engagement and rumour monitoring, to ensure people are aware of how to avoid the spread of the virus and protect themselves against the disease.

"In these unprecedented times we need brotherhood more than ever. The people of Japan has showed that they are standing shoulder to shoulder with the people of South Sudan and for that we are grateful, said the South Sudan Minister of Health Hon Elizabeth Achuei. "Since there is no vaccine nor cure for COVID-19, the funding will help boost the only weapon against this disease, namely prevention."

Despite intensive communication efforts from the Ministry of Health, UNICEF and partners, misconceptions about the disease are common in South Sudan. This is closely linked to poor access to information including high illiteracy rates. Only 14.5 per cent of women and 35 per cent of men can read and write. Understanding more of these dynamics will also be supported by allocating part of the funding to a Knowledge, Attitude and Practices (KAP) study.

While the country at large is focused on the virus itself, women's vulnerability in crisis like these are often forgotten. Reports and anecdotal evidence suggest that gender-based violence (GBV) has increased in South Sudan during the lockdown. More time spent at home combined with desperation due to loss of livelihood and other constraints makes girls and women even more vulnerable. Funding from Japan will be spent on sustaining GBV services during these trying times.

“We must make sure the virus is not making us blind to the human rights and child rights violations the new context is conducive of,” said Dr Mohamed Ag Ayoya, the UNICEF South Sudan Representative. “While important efforts are made to halt transmission of the virus, we must simultaneously address other issues arising from the pandemic. As a society, we would have failed if fundamental rights are sacrificed on the COVID-19 alter.”

The people of Japan have supported the people of South Sudan since the country gained its independence. UNICEF is thankful for Japan showing commitment to women and children of South Sudan also during these unprecedented times.

For more information, please contact:

Mary Obat, Ministry of Health, Tel: Tel: +211 954 627 139/ +211 914 909 643
mobat43@gmail.com

Helene Sandbu Ryeng, UNICEF South Sudan. Tel: +211 921615824
hsryeng@unicef.org