



Japan and UNICEF enhance capacity to distribute quality vaccines safely in Cameroon



With the delivery of a brand-new refrigerated truck, the Expanded Programme of Immunisation (EPI) enhances safe vaccine distribution from the capital Yaoundé to the 10 regional depots in the country.

YAOUNDE, 25 August 2023 – A refrigerated truck designed to preserve the quality of vaccines and transport them safely around the country was handed over to the Ministry of Public Health of Cameroon today. The truck was procured by UNICEF with funds provided by the Government of Japan

The vehicle is a component of the COVAX facility that the Government of Japan made available to Cameroon during the response to the COVID – 19 outbreak. It is a new addition to the country's vaccination programme, and it comes strengthen capacity to stock and distribute vaccines around the country. From the capital, Yaounde, the Expanded Programme of Immunisation (EPI) regularly distributes vaccines to all of its ten regional depots.

This refrigerated truck is equipped with a 5 cubic-metre loading compartment, and it is thermally insulated. The mechanical refrigeration system on the truck makes it safe to transport vaccines by road. It has two sensors monitoring the storage temperature of vaccines while on the road, and they ensure that the temperature remains within the optimal range of +2 and +8° C.

Malaouda Malachie, Minister for Public Health said that the country is “in the process of increasing capacity in the execution of our operations, in line with the country's ambitions; and that is to reach not 90% but all 100% of Cameroonians in terms of immunisation. This refrigerated truck we just received will enable us to cover the last mile in order to boost the vaccination coverage of our people”

This donation from the government and people of Japan cost USD 60,118 US dollars, which is about 36 million CFA francs. It is intended to continue the efforts of Japan and UNICEF to assist the Government of Cameroon

to increase access to vaccination around the country. More importantly, it will ensure the proper storage and preservation conditions for the vaccines in order to guarantee safe and quality vaccination.

It will be recalled that in the bid to increase routine vaccination coverage and respond to the COVID-19 emergency, the Government of Japan delivered 68,600 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccines to Cameroon. This truck was procured thanks to an additional grant of one million dollars (US\$1M) from Japan through UNICEF to help set up a cold chain system of international standard for the COVID-19 response and beyond.

"The support we are providing aims to achieve the universal health coverage that Cameroon desires. This is why we are pleased to contribute to the strengthening both the operational and professional capacities of the EPI. That way, every citizen everywhere in this country will have access to the vaccine," said the Japanese Ambassador to Cameroon.

The provision of cold chain equipment with sufficient storage capacity at all levels is huge challenge for the country. In fact, one out of two health facilities does not yet have optimal facilities for storing vaccines. UNICEF has been providing technical and financial support to the Expanded Immunization Program (EPI) and to the staff of health institutions. The COVID-19 pandemic impacted vaccination coverage among children and led to a decline across the country. With the down grade of the COVID-19 pandemic status, this truck alongside other pieces of equipment, will help with the optimal preservation of vaccines as efforts are being made to improve vaccine access and coverage.

"Japan has been a close and long-standing partner of UNICEF in the work we do in Cameroon to strengthen the health system. The support of the government of Japan, is making it possible to prevent and manage epidemic outbreaks. More so, it provides vaccines more equitably to women and children, so that no one is left behind", said Nadine Perrault, UNICEF Representative.

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