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PRESS RELEASE

MoHW Strengthens National Cold Chain System through Collaboration with Government of Japan and UNICEF

Belmopan, December 13, 2022

On December 12, 2022, the Ministry of Health & Wellness received cold chain equipment from the Government of Japan and UNICEF at the National Vaccine Storage Facility in Belmopan. His Excellency Kazuhiro Iryu, Ambassador of the Embassy of Japan in Belize, and Alison Parker, UNICEF Representative to Belize, presented the equipment to Hon. Kevin Bernard, Minister of Health & Wellness.

In March, the Government of Japan provided UNICEF Belize with a grant of US\$900,000 intended as a “Last One Mile Support” and investment in Belize’s primary health care system to accelerate COVID-19 vaccination, strengthen the national cold chain facilities and build capacities for cold chain and vaccine management. This partnership between the Government of Japan and UNICEF has been addressing the needs of the ministry to improve the national vaccination rates that have decreased since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. It has also supported the MoHW in providing capacity-building opportunities for approximately 420 community health workers, epidemiologists, nurses and laboratory staff to receive continued hands-on training for quality improvement, operation and maintenance with 57 health facilities across the country.

This donation continues that support with 10 Ice Line freezers, 10 Main Powered Vaccine refrigerators and 30 remote temperature monitoring systems to be used to improve vaccine storage and management. In addition to these, the ministry will receive a walk-in cooler that will arrive in the country later this month. This state-of-the-art equipment meets industry standards and enhances the efficient storage and management of the critical vaccines required to provide optimal health services to families and children across

communities in Belize. The equipment will be installed in health facilities in the most vulnerable communities.

Speaking at the ceremony, Minister Bernard said, “We welcome this critical donation of cold chain equipment which is used to keep vaccines at an optimum temperature range. With the grant aid, the Ministry has strengthened the quality improvement of health services, through the establishment of a quality improvement unit composed of one medical officer per hospital dedicated full-time to oversee the implementation of quality improvement plans. On behalf of the people and Government of Belize, we are very grateful for the high-quality, continuous assistance received.”

“Dedicated investment in strengthening the national capacity of health care workers and maintaining a resilient and high-quality cold chain system, allows health workers to have the skills and tools to deliver life-saving vaccines to every child, and is pivotal to national development. UNICEF, with the support of partners such as the Government and people of Japan, is committed to continually support the Government of Belize to build back better, especially at the community level, to ensure we leave no child behind,” stated Alison Parker.

“It is important to ensure and promote equitable access to vaccines throughout the world in order to overcome COVID-19. In this respect, it is my sincere hope that this project in partnership with UNICEF, with funding of US\$900,000 grant assistance by Japan, for strengthening institutional capacity combined with procuring COVID-19 vaccines cold chain equipment help synergistically in reinforcing the healthcare system countrywide, improving the quality of life of families in Belize,” stated Ambassador Iryu.

In partnership with the Government of Japan, UNICEF reaffirms its commitment to ensuring all children are healthy and have access to the highest standards of health care.

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