

PRESS RELEASE

Japan Supports UNFPA's Efforts to Confront Zika Virus in Latin America

UNITED NATIONS, Panama 31 April 2016 – The Government of Japan has announced a contribution of \$250,000 to UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, to purchase contraceptives and other reproductive health supplies for use in the poorest and most disadvantaged areas at risk of the Zika virus in Brazil, Honduras and Suriname. The contribution was in response to an urgent appeal by UNFPA for funds to accelerate health risk communications and procure contraceptives in response to the Zika epidemic.

“We are grateful to the Government of Japan for its quick response to our appeal,” said Esteban Caballero, Director of the UNFPA Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Office. “This contribution comes at a time when we must move quickly to provide information and access to voluntary family planning and prenatal care.”

Mounting evidence indicates that the Zika virus is highly likely to be a cause of microcephaly, Guillain-Barré syndrome and other neurological disorders, the World Health Organization reports. The Zika virus transmission has been reported in 34 countries and territories in the Americas since it was first detected in 2014.

Concerned by the potential impact of Zika-related health effects on women and their families, UNFPA strongly urges governments and other partners to provide access to voluntary family planning information, services and supplies as a critical strategy to prevent unwanted pregnancy. In addition to modern contraceptives, condoms should be provided to prevent potential spread of the virus through sexual contact.

UNFPA advises women of childbearing age and pregnant women to avoid exposure to mosquito bites, use insecticide-treated mosquito nets and apply insect repellents approved for use by pregnant women. Women who want to avoid or delay pregnancy are urged to use a modern method of contraception. Women who are pregnant or planning to become pregnant are urged to seek prenatal care to receive information and monitoring of their pregnancy and to follow their doctor's recommendations.

In the region, UNFPA is responding to the crisis through three main activities: (1) Upscaling contraceptive security in the most-affected countries and areas; (2) Implementing and supporting risk communications initiatives; and (3) Strengthening network of trained providers for counselling and services.

“The new Japanese contribution will go a long way in providing services that will help women to make informed decisions about their reproductive health,” said Mr. Caballero. “This, in turn, will allow many individuals to protect themselves from the infection.”

As the world’s leading agency on sexual and reproductive health and the biggest public sector procurer of contraceptives, including condoms, UNFPA works with countries around the world to scale up access to voluntary family planning and maternal health services for everyone who needs them.

UNFPA works to deliver a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person’s potential is fulfilled.

For more information or interview requests, please contact:

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