

# To Save Mothers and Children: Cameroon's action to promote Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Handbook

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## TO COPE WITH HIGH MATERNAL AND CHILD MORTALITY

In Cameroon, maternal mortality rates increased from 699 per 100,000 live births (LBs) in 2004 to 782 per 100,000LBs, while under five mortality ameliorated from 144 to 122 per 1000LBs respectively during the same period. Recently, the 2014 Multiple Indicator Clusters Surveys (MICS) revealed marked improvements of some figures: under-five mortality rate at 103 per 1000LBs from 122 in 2011, vaccination coverage from 50.2% to 64.4%, early post-natal consultation from 37% to 65% for maternal, from 37% to 65% for child health, and so on.

Considering the urgent need to reduce child mortality and improve maternal health, a pilot project was developed to introduce the MCH Handbook. The MCH Handbook was introduced in Cameroon in May 2010, in two pilot Health Districts (HDs). Findings in these pilot sites revealed increased rate of MCH service use, marked improvement of MCH indicators such as vaccination uptake rate, contraceptive use, malaria morbidity and under-five mortality, all in correlation to the number of copies of MCH Handbook issued.

Cameroon hosted the 9th International conference on MCH Handbook from 15th to 17th September 2015. There were 77 international participants from 19 countries, of total 287 participants. Among the major outcomes of the conference, there was the adoption of the "Yaounde Declaration" by 19 countries which called on every country in the world to



acknowledge and enable the use of the MCH Handbook as a tool to optimize maternal and child health. There was also an engagement by the Minister of Public Health of Cameroon, Hon André MAMA FOUA, to promote nationwide use of the MCH Handbook; he called on Health officials to adhere to the new indispensable tool in the hope to reduce maternal and child mortality rates that remain high in Cameroon.

## THE ROLE THAT JAPAN SHOULD PLAY IN THE FUTURE

The Japanese Government through JICA has been providing Official Development Assistance to countries in the domain of MCH and especially in promoting the use of the MCH Handbook of which Cameroon had also

benefitted. As regards the scaling-up of nationwide use of the MCH Handbook in Cameroon, JICA intends to support the printing of MCH Handbook copies as well as provide technical support through Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers to promote community sensitization in two target Health Districts.

Following the recent launch of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the new Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health, motivated by the resolutions taken during the 9th International conference on MCH Handbook, I am quite optimistic that the collaboration between JICA and governments shall be sustained to improve the health of populations worldwide.

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**Cover:**  
A smiling girl with a Maternal and Child  
Health Handbook distributed in the  
Palestinian refugee camp.  
(Photo: Kenshiro Imamura)

**Photo on pages 2-3:**  
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