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JICA to support Ghana to initiate a new project to improve Continuum of Care for mothers and children through the introduction of Combined Maternal and Child Health Record Book

27th October, 2017, Accra Ghana – The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to support Ghana to improve Continuum of Care through introduction of combined Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Record Book.

The signing of an official agreement between the Governments of Ghana and JICA was organized at the Ministry of Health (MoH) Accra to support the development and national rollout of a combined Maternal and Child Health Record Book.

Ghana has made good progress in recent years in many social development indicators including health. However, despite making significant progress in the reduction of maternal and child mortality, it did not achieve the MDGs 4 and 5 by 2015 – according to the 2014 Ghana Demographic and Health Survey, under-five mortality rate was 60 per 1,000 live births whilst neonatal mortality rate had stagnated at 29 per 1,000 live births. According to the UN estimates in 2015, Ghana's maternal mortality ratio remains high at 319 per 100,000 live births. Furthermore, there are still significant variations in health and nutrition status across wealth quintiles and geographic regions.

The Honorable Minister of Health, Mr. Kwaku Agyeman-Manu said: “The Ministry of Health has been committed and made a lot of efforts to improve the maternal and child health status in the country and the Government of Japan has always been very supportive. We believe that this new project with support from the Government of Japan through JICA will definitely contribute to existing efforts. The draft version of new booklet has more information on essential maternal and child health services and health education messages in the form that can be easily understood by mothers and family members. Furthermore, the move to integrate several existing booklets into one is also targeted at reducing the cost of production, and also enhancing the supply and rights issues regarding the use of the booklet.”

He added that: “The project will also seek to address procurement, legal frameworks and guidelines that will ensure the sustainability of this support.”

According to the Director General of the Ghana Health Service (GHS), Dr. Anthony Nsiah-Asare: “The aim of integrating several existing Maternal and Child Health Record books is to improve the maternal and child health service delivery and outcomes by ensuring continuum of care and proper recording of the mother and child health care. The book is designed to link the health records of mother to her child from pregnancy till the child attains the age of five. It also addresses issues such as nutrition, growth monitoring and promotion, and health education in a more focused and illustrative way.”

The Chief Representative of JICA Ghana, Mr. Hirofumi Hoshi said that: “JICA has always committed to working with the Ministry of Health and the Ghana Health Service to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in the health sector, and JICA will continue its support for the process of developing the booklet and training stakeholders on its roll-out.” Mr. Hoshi reiterated: “The new booklet when introduced will ensure provision of integrated care for mothers and children at the right time and also help reduce workload and improve efficiency and safety of the MCH services.”

JICA will support MoH and GHS for the next 3 years to develop the book as well as guidelines for the effective use of book and support training to enable health workers to provide quality health care services by using it. It will include all the relevant information and data concerning mother's progress during her pregnancy, state of her delivery, immunization records and health checkup records for her child. The design of the booklet has also been strategically made to empower women, engender family support, especially male involvement in maternal and child healthcare and also make recording by health workers more efficient. The initiative will also seek to improve the nutrition behaviors and status of mothers and children through nutrition counselling by using the book. According to MoH and GHS, the combined book will be launched in January 2018 and nation-wide rollout will commence afterwards.

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