



# Japan's International Cooperation for Global Health

Japan has put forward global health as a priority agenda at G7 summits for many years.

Health is an essential basis for people's lives, social stability, and economic development. And yet, all over the world, there are still many people with no access to adequate health services. Given this situation, the Government of Japan has long promoted global health as a priority area for further global cooperation. The G7 Summit scheduled this May in Hiroshima is also expected to focus on global health as one of the main themes.

At the G8 Okinawa-Kyushu Summit held in 2000, the Government of Japan, in the presidency, raised the issue of infectious diseases as one of the main areas and member countries agreed to strengthen cooperation toward combating infectious diseases. Subsequently, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis (TB) and Malaria was established in 2002. The Global Fund, to which the Government of Japan is one of the largest donors, provides cooperation and financing to fight against HIV/AIDS, TB and malaria and to help build health systems in developing countries. Thus far, it is estimated to have reduced the combined death rate from the three dis-

eases by more than half, saving the lives of more than 50 million people as of the end of 2021.

Another focus of the Japanese Government's efforts is universal health coverage (UHC)<sup>i</sup>, which is also one of the targets under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Japan has achieved UHC through the development of a universal health insurance coverage system and healthcare, and this is considered one of the reasons why Japan has one of the highest life expectancies in the world. To assist more countries to achieve UHC, the Government of Japan raised UHC as one of the main topics at the G7 Ise-Shima Summit held in May 2016, and the G7 Ise-Shima Vision for Global Health, one of the outcome documents, clearly specified a goal to strengthen the health system toward UHC. Furthermore, at the Sixth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD VI)<sup>ii</sup> held in August of the same year, Japan, the World Bank, WHO, and other organizations jointly announced "UHC in Africa," as a common framework for action for African countries and partners to be the basis for formulating specific national policies. At the G20 Osaka Summit held in June 2019, the Government of Japan raised UHC financing in developing countries as one of the main agenda items and hosted a first-ever G20 Joint Session of Finance and Health Ministers. Such efforts to mainstream UHC also led to a UN High-Level Meeting (UN HLM) on UHC held in September 2019 during the United Nations General Assembly.

In addition to such efforts to build international momentum for global health through summits and meetings, the Government of Japan has also pro-



Leaders at the G7 Ise-Shima Summit held in Mie Prefecture in May 2016

Photo: Courtesy of Cabinet Public Affairs Office

vided support for developing countries in the health sector, including financial contributions to international organizations and the development of human resources through technical and financial cooperation by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). For example, during the spread of COVID-19 since 2020, JICA launched the Initiative for Global Health and Medicine and supported the strengthening of therapeutics and diagnostic systems through expanding hospitals for the benefit of approximately 200 million people in 22 countries as well as the provision of remote training in intensive care to more than 2,500 medical personnel. Moreover, in the global fight against COVID-19, Japan has provided approximately 5 billion USD to developing countries.

Especially in its initiatives to ensure equitable access to vaccine, in addition to financial contributions of up to 1.5 billion USD to the COVAX Facility, and vaccine donations, Japan has led global efforts to ensure the delivery of vaccines, supporting cold chain system development, improving vaccination capacity of healthcare providers and providing other assistance to 78 countries and regions



Prime Minister Kishida Fumio participates online at TICAD8, held in Tunisia in August 2022

Photo: Courtesy of Cabinet Public Affairs Office

## Researchers working in the new research building in Ghana constructed through JICA's "Project for the Construction of Advanced Research Center for Infectious Diseases at the Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research"

Photo: Courtesy of MOFA



to the tune of 18.5 billion JPY. Furthermore, Japan has committed to provide up to 10.8 billion JPY to assist developing countries in their economic and social revitalization and the resumption of cross-border travel. In August 2022, Japan also announced that it will contribute up to 1.08 billion USD to the Global Fund over the coming three years to support measures against the three major infectious diseases and health system strengthening.

Based also on the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of Japan formulated its "Global Health Strategy"<sup>iii</sup> in May 2022, which aims to

contribute to developing resilient Global Health Architecture for global health security and strengthening PPR (Prevention, Preparedness, and Response) for public health crises as well as to accelerating the efforts to achieve more resilient, equitable, and sustainable UHC in the post-COVID era to realize human security<sup>iv</sup>. Specific actions include promoting bilateral cooperation and collaboration with diverse stakeholders such as international organizations, public-private partnership funds, the private sector, the civil society, universities and regional organizations including the ASEAN Centre for Public Health Emer-

gencies and Emerging Diseases. The Japanese Government also established the study group on impact investments<sup>v</sup> to study ways to measure the impact of the investment, and identify and share good practices with an eye to further encouraging private-sector investment in global health. 

### Promotion of Health and Wellbeing Initiatives

The Japanese government is implementing two initiatives, called the "Asia Health and Wellbeing Initiative (AHWIN)<sup>vi</sup>" and "Africa Health and Wellbeing Initiative (AfHWIN)<sup>vii</sup>," with a goal of realizing healthy longevity societies in these regions. Under these initiatives, Japan has deepened international cooperation in the healthcare sector and signed Memoranda of Cooperation (MOCs) with 12 countries as of the end of 2022. Under each MOC, Japan has continued dialogues and cooperation with each signatory country, sometimes involving consultations in Healthcare Joint Committee Meetings.

Public and private sectors are working together to implement the initiatives. For example, the Japanese government has dispatched public-private joint missions to introduce products and services offered by Japanese corporations. Japan has also demonstrated many superior medical devices to the signatory countries. A number of Japanese corporations have already contributed to the health services in various countries by launching projects to develop human resources in Asia and improving nutrition for children in Africa. On the strength of these achievements, in 2022 the Cabinet Secretariat compiled booklets<sup>viii</sup> introducing some of the projects under the Health and Wellbeing Initiatives. An officer of the Cabinet Secretariat says, "We would like doctors, medical personnel

and health ministry officials in each country to know about Japan's services and medical devices. We want to meet the health and wellbeing needs in each country through the joint efforts of public and private sectors."

Actually, healthcare needs are diverse. Every country's situation is different. Different health policies are required depending on different rates of population growth, aging and infant mortality. In recent years, COVID-19 developments have tended to attract most attention and yet, for some countries and people, other infectious diseases or non-communicable diseases (NCDs) pose the biggest or a more long-term threat. In some cases, a cross-sectional approach including the development of infrastructure is more effective to solve healthcare problems.

To promote AHWIN and AfHWIN, Japan is expected to implement projects based on the specific needs of each country based on its technologies and experience in an aging society in Japan.

Japan will continue to promote interactions with the ministries of health, medical institutions and healthcare industries of each country. It is not an easy task, but the work is invaluable. Japan will keep on taking further steps to promote societies of health and longevity around the world.

**Note:** This article has been created with the consent of the Cabinet Secretariat and on the basis of materials published by the Cabinet Secretariat.

- i UHC means that everyone has access to effective, high-quality health service without financial hardship.
- ii The Government of Japan has been leading the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) since 1993, co-hosted by United Nations, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), World Bank and African Union Commission (AUC). <https://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/kenkouiryou/en/index.html>
- iii <https://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/kenkouiryou/en/index.html>
- iv Human security is a concept that encourages sustainable, individual self-reliance and social development through protection and empowerment. It focuses on each and every human being and aims to protect people from the wide-ranging and serious threats to their lives, livelihoods, and dignity, in order for them to achieve the full potential that they each possess. <https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/oda/sector/security/index.html>
- v Impact investments are investments aiming to generate positive social impact alongside a financial return.
- vi The Basic Principles of the Asia Health and Wellbeing Initiative were approved by the Headquarters for Healthcare Policy in 2016 and revised in 2018.
- vii The Basic Principles of the Africa Health and Wellbeing Initiative were approved by the Headquarters for Healthcare Policy in 2019 and presented at TICAD 7 in August 2019.
- viii AHWIN(Asia Health and Wellbeing initiative)/AfHWIN(Africa Health and Wellbeing initiative) Introduction of Initiatives <https://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/kenkouiryou/en/torikumi/index.html>