



**From
the People of Japan**

Japan extending support for the construction of counselling centre for youth

Gaborone, 1st March 2022 - The Government of Japan and Stepping Stones International signed the Grant Contract amounting to 91,457 USD for the construction of a counselling centre through a grant scheme called the Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects (GGP)*. The counselling centre will be constructed in the compound of Stepping Stones International support centre located in Mochudi.

In Botswana, there have been many cases recorded of neglect, physical and psychological abuse amongst children and youths including GBV issues. This was further exacerbated due to the lockdowns and closure of schools caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to overcome such challenges, Japan decided to extend assistance to such vulnerable children and youths through Stepping Stones International, one of the leading civil society members in Botswana, who has been helping them through various means such as counselling and motivational training over 15 years.

HOSHIYAMA Takashi, Ambassador of Japan said, “The impact of empowering vulnerable children and youths is multifaceted. It will not only protect them but also ultimately can lead to reduced crime and increasing employment in the future. I am delighted that the Government of Japan is supporting this project in 2022 when the 8th Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) is to be held. The importance of “Human security” – the concept to advance the nation and community building through empowerment and protection of individuals to live happily and in dignity, free from fear and want – was affirmed during the TICAD 4 (September, 2003). Since then it has been at the core of TICAD, and this project is an example of the manifestation of the concept.”

TICAD is a multilateral and open forum that was initiated in 1993, in cooperation with the United Nations, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), World Bank and the African Union Commission (AUC). It is an open forum where not only African countries but also international organizations, private companies and civil society organizations participate. The 8th TICAD will be held on 28th and 29th August preceded by Ministerial meeting to be held on the 26th and 27th March 2022.

Through the GGP scheme, Japan has supported over 60 projects in Botswana that address human security issues. This is in line with the Botswana Government's aspiration, envisaged in Vision 2036, particularly under the pillar of Human and Social Development, to achieve a moral, tolerant and inclusive society that provides opportunity for all.

Ms. Jamu, Executive Director of Stepping Stones International stated that "Our mental health, psychological, social and emotional well-being, influences how we move through life and interact with people and our environment. It is extremely comforting and appreciated that the Japanese government highly regards the provision of psychosocial support to young people who are experiencing mental health issues and social instability. Stepping Stones International wants to say arigato gozaimasu (Thank you very much) to the Japanese for providing us with funds to support the building and provision of psychosocial support center that will help the young people of Botswana heal. The government of Japan and Stepping Stones International are collaborating to uphold a well-known Japanese saying, Akenai yoru wa nai. (There is always light behind the clouds.)"

*GGP is a grant scheme which supports projects addressing social challenges and/or aiming at community development at grass-roots level and supports people-centred development projects which have a direct and immediate impact on the well-being of disadvantaged communities. In Botswana, from 1997 to date, 63 GGP projects have been approved, some of which are currently ongoing. These projects include rural developments such as the construction of pre-schools, classrooms for students with disabilities and vocational training institutions.

