



**From  
the People of Japan**

## **Japan extends support for the Construction of a Counselling Centre for Young People in Kgatleng District**

**Gaborone, 15th March 2023** - The Government of Japan and Stepping Stones International celebrated the successful handover of a counselling centre at Mochudi in the Kgatleng District through Japan's Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects (GGP). The centre was constructed following a grant contract signing agreement between the two organizations in March 2022, when Stepping Stones International received an amount of **USD 91,457** from the Government of Japan through its Embassy in Botswana.

Stepping Stones International embraces four main services including youth empowerment, family nurturing, strengthening youth service providers, advocacy for gender equality and child protection. With the support of the Government of Japan, the centre now has a new facility comprising of four counselling rooms. This will enable the centre to provide counselling services in a conducive environment.

Ms. Lisa Jamu, the Executive Director for Stepping Stones International highlighted that, "the energy of the mind is the essence of life. Therefore there is a need to take care of the mental health as it is the foundation of life". Ms. Jamu further highlighted that Stepping Stones International intends on making a difference in the lives of the youth in Mochudi and the community at large.

In delivering his keynote speech, Honourable Mr. Mabuse Mopati Pule, Assistant Minister of Local Government and Rural Development said that, "the gesture by the Government of Japan aligns well with Botswana's Vision 2036 and the Reset and Reclaim Agenda which aims to create an inclusive environment for all people where no one is left behind". Mr. Pule further highlighted that, "the construction of the centre by the Embassy will provide counselling support to gender based violence victims and the community at large".

In delivering the handover speech, H.E. Mr. OHMORI Setsuo, Ambassador of Japan to Botswana, commended Stepping Stones International for having completed the project within the 1 year period as per the GGP contract. Additionally, Mr. OHMORI said that, “there is a need for the Government of Japan and Stepping Stones International to engage in partnerships and exchange programs to help the youth achieve their full potential”.

Bakgatla Regent, Kgosi Bana Sekai, extended his gratitude to the Government of Japan. He highlighted that the counselling centre will assist the village at large and reduce the crime rate in Mochudi. Kgosi Sekai further highlighted that the community should also play a role to ensure that the efforts made by Stepping Stones International do not go in vain.

Through the GGP scheme, Japan has supported about 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.

\*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, 65 GGP projects in total have been approved, some of which are currently on-going. These projects include rural developments such as the construction of pre-schools, classrooms for students with disabilities and vocational training institutions.



**Ms. Jamu, Executive Director for Stepping Stones International, Mr. OHMORI, Ambassador of Japan to Botswana, Mr. Pule, Assistant Minister of Local Government and Rural Development and, Kgosi Bana Sekai**



**Ambassador of Japan to Botswana, Mr. OHMORI delivering his handover speech**



**Official Opening of the Counselling Centre**



**Some of the guests at the handover ceremony**



**JUDO Performance choreographed by a Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteer (JOCV), based at Stepping Stones International**



**The newly constructed waiting room for counselling**