

Signing of New Grassroots Project

The Project for Construction of a Sign Language College for the Deaf and Interpreters in Harare

Japan is funding a new grassroots project to construct a Sign Language College for the Deaf and interpreters with the amount of US\$ 89,994. The grant agreement was signed today by H.E. Mr Satoshi Tanaka, Ambassador of Japan to Zimbabwe, and Ms Sitambeni Manduna, Board Chairperson of the implementing NGO, Zimbabwe National Association of the Deaf (ZIMNAD). The project is being funded through the Grant Assistance for Grassroots Humanitarian Projects Assistance (GGP) scheme.

Although the Constitution of Zimbabwe includes Sign Language as an official language of Zimbabwe, most of the Deaf have not learned Sign Language and it has been found that over 95% of parents and guardians cannot communicate with their deaf children. Within the school system, too, there is an insufficient number of teachers trained in Sign Language. This has resulted in poor language development for deaf children that has negative consequences for their future learning. In addition, the Deaf face language barriers when accessing healthcare, legal justice, and in everyday life.

The aim of this project is to help to give Sign Language the prominence that it deserves. It will construct a new Sign Language College, including three furnished classrooms, offices, toilets and a solar-powered borehole. The College will provide Sing Language classes for the Deaf, parents and guardians of deaf children, as well as teachers of deaf children. It is hoped that it will ensure that more students who are deaf or hard of hearing can fully enjoy their right to freedom of expression, and improve academic outcomes. It is also hoped that it will encourage more Sign Language in all communications, whether on the news, websites, television as well as other communication and information platforms.

Over the years, communities around Zimbabwe have benefitted from the support provided by the Government of Japan under the GGP scheme. It provides support to improve social and economic conditions at the local level, in the fields of education, health, food and nutrition security, WASH, and support for vulnerable groups. It was launched in Zimbabwe in 1989, and 141 projects have been implemented so far throughout the country, with total funding amounting to over US\$ 13.5 million.

(See photos below)



Signing of Grant Contract



Members of Zimbabwe National Association of the Deaf (ZIMNAD)



Group Photo with Embassy staff