

## **Japan supports education of vulnerable children in Hwedza.**

Today, a handover ceremony was held in Hwedza district, Mashonaland East province, to officially commission two (2) newly constructed classroom blocks and one (1) ablution block, providing vital educational infrastructure for children in need. The Ambassador of Japan to Zimbabwe, H.E. Mr. Shinichi Yamanaka, attended the handover ceremony to mark the completion of the project. The project was funded through the Grant Assistance for Grassroots Humanitarian Projects (GGP) programme with the amount of US\$ 72,000 and was completed by SOS Children's Villages in Zimbabwe, an international non-governmental organization (NGO).

Ward 14 in the district has long faced challenges due to a lack of schools. As early as 2001, there were no schools in the ward, and the nearest governmental school was located approximately 14 km away, making it difficult for many children to access education consistently. In response to this need, the village leader and guardians established Vamba Primary School in the following year. However, the community's growing educational need remained unmet with the limited number of classrooms. Before this GGP project, some children walked several hours daily to attend school, while others had to live apart from their families to study.

In addition, Vamba Primary School lacked a suitable learning environment for children. The learners were housed in a former tobacco warehouse built in 1920s, not only was the building dark with few windows for natural light but had some holes in the ceilings as it was clearly well over its functional lifespan. Ablution blocks had only three toilets per gender for over three hundred (300) students, posing a serious hygiene concern.

The completion of this project has significantly improved both the learning environment and hygiene conditions at the school. The additional classroom blocks ensure that all 371 enrolled students, including forty-one (41) newly admitted pupils, have access to quality education in a safe and conducive setting. The construction of modern ablution facilities with a water flushing system has also greatly enhanced sanitary conditions, particularly supporting girls in maintaining menstrual hygiene.

Speaking at the handover ceremony, Ambassador Yamanaka commended SOS Children's Villages in Zimbabwe for successfully completing the project and expressed his excitement over the new classroom blocks and the ablution block. He urged the organisation and the community members "to continue working together so that the children at Vamba Primary School, with the beginning of the new era, will have quality education".

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 162 projects have been implemented so far throughout the country, with total funding of over US\$ 16.5 million.