

Japan supports education of vulnerable children in Lupane

Today, a handover ceremony was held in Lupane, Matabeleland North province, to officially commission two newly constructed classroom blocks and a teachers' house, providing vital educational infrastructure for both children and teachers 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) scheme with the amount of US\$ 71,999 and was completed by Hand in Hand Zimbabwe, a local Non-Governmental Organization (NGO).

Lupane is a rural district in Matabeleland North, Zimbabwe. In particular, ward 8 has long faced challenges due to the limited number of schools. Prior to this project, the nearest governmental school was located approximately 10 km away, making it difficult for many children to access education consistently. Recognising the need, a village leader and guardians, with government support, established Gobakhulu Primary School in 2022. However, the school initially had only 2 classrooms, which limited enrolment to students up to grade 3. As a result, approximately one hundred (100) students continued to travel long distances to attend schools outside their community. Furthermore, the rural setting posed challenges in retaining teachers, impacting the delivery of quality education.

The completion of this project has significantly improved the learning environment at Gobakhulu Primary School. The additional classroom blocks now accommodate those 100 students, ensuring they no longer have to travel long distances and can attend school regularly. The provision of a teachers' house also enhances the ability to retain teaching staff, allowing educators to reside near the school and focus on delivering consistent, quality education.

Speaking at the handover ceremony, Ambassador Yamanaka commended Hand in Hand Zimbabwe for successfully completing the project and expressed his excitement over the new classroom blocks and the teachers' house. He urged the organisation and the community members "to continue working together so that Gobakhulu Primary School children 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.