

JAPANESE FUNDED COUNSELLING AND CARE CENTRE FOR MUSASA PROJECT OFFICIALLY OPENED



The Ambassador of Japan to Zimbabwe, H.E. Mr Yonezo Fukuda today handed over the Counselling and Care Centre for Survivors of Gender Based Violence (GBV). The Centre is situated at Musasa Project's office in Harare's Avenues area. The Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development, delegations from local partners and international agencies, were invited to attend.

The project was made possible by a grant of \$120,424 (one hundred twenty thousand, four hundred and twenty-four dollars) that the Embassy of Japan extended to Musasa Project some two years ago. The Embassy previously assisted Musasa Project with a grant of \$91,161 in 2001, for the construction of a halfway house for battered women located in one of Harare's suburbs.

The Centre comprises counseling rooms, waiting space, a training room, and other basic facilities. It allows GBV victims to receive a more comprehensive package of services. It also enhances Musasa Project's capacity to cater for the responses of approximately 100 women per week, as opposed to the previous 25. The reported cases of GBV have increased in the past years, largely driven by negative socio-economic conditions, according to the director of Musasa Project Ms. Musanhu.

Speaking at the occasion, Mr. Fukuda noted that the protection of vulnerable groups, including women and children, was an issue that the Embassy of Japan took very seriously. He also referred to Japanese

Prime Minister's statement at last year's UN General Assembly, expressing the need to protect human security and promote women's rights.

Established as a local NGO in 1988, Musasa Project operates in Harare, Bulawayo and Gweru. It provides counselling and consultation services on legal issues, and runs temporary shelter for vulnerable women. It has played a pivotal role in the annual international campaign of 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence held between 25th November and 10th December.

Musasa Project also closely collaborates with other local partners such as Childline which provides care for abused children. An emergency call centre in Harare, and drop-in centres in Gweru, Mutare and Chiredzi, are currently being constructed with support from the Embassy of Japan.

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