

## **HANDOVER CEREMONY OF TWO MODIFIED MINIBUSES FOR THE TRANSPORTATION OF LEARNERS AT THE JOHANNESBURG HOSPITAL SCHOOL for AUTISM.**

On the 29<sup>th</sup> of June 2017, the Embassy of Japan in South Africa visited the Johannesburg Hospital School for Autism for the handover of two Nissan *Impendulo* minibuses. These vehicles, which were donated to the school, were modified according to the expressed needs of the school, in order to accommodate the transportation requirements of the learners. The project was funded by the Embassy of Japan through the Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects (GGP) Programme. The gesture and material donations were well-received.

In attendance at the ceremony were, Mr. Vuyani Mpofu (Deputy Director General: Gauteng Department of Education); Ms. Elsie Simbine (Chief Education Specialist for Inclusion and Special Schools at the Head Office of the Gauteng Department of Education); Mr. Masayuki WAKU (First Secretary, Culture and Information Section at the Embassy of Japan in South Africa); Ms. Ronel Van Biljon (School Principal); Ms. Catherine Smetherham-Holtzhausen (Business Developer for the Johannesburg School for Autism); the media; as well as the school's teachers and learners.

### **Assistance to Organisation:**

**The Johannesburg Hospital School for Autism** was started in 1923, when volunteers who came across ailing children in the wards realised a need for those children to continue and complete their education. Currently, the school is the only government institution of its kind in the greater Johannesburg area – a place that specialises in assisting Autistic children and their families with their education. A large proportion of the parents of the learners who attend the school depend on social grants for income, however. For this reason the school needs all the help it can get.

The total number of registered learners is 336, and their ages range from 3 - 20 years old. Since the school is entirely dependent on donor and government funding, the two minibuses supplied by the Japanese Government through the GGP Programme will go a long way to help with the learners' education.

The Japanese Embassy's GGP Programme was approached by the school with a request of funds to the tune of **R668,532.00**. This was for the procurement and modifications of these minibuses. While the vehicles themselves are adequate as a means of transport, the modifications added to them are to make them safe and appropriate for the kind of learners they are to transport. Perhaps a little more background is necessary here: Parents of children living with Autism tend to struggle with the management of their children's lives if they are not assisted. That is because activities and chores that may seem basic to so many people, are not ordinary for learners living with Autism. People with this disorder may find it difficult behaving in common situations such as buying groceries, doing banking chores, taking public transport, or eating out at a restaurant. This assistance enables such learners to broaden their world. If students learn in school about doing groceries, for example, it does not follow that they will be able to go grocery shopping in the future; NOT UNLESS they have had a chance of learning this particular activity during an outing with the school.

The Education sector, and the economic empowerment of grassroots beneficiaries within this sector, is of much importance to the Government of Japan when it comes to administering its assistance to South Africa through the GGP Programme. In a broader sense, the programme is intended to assist NGOs and local authorities in addressing their development needs in an immediate and complete manner in areas such as Education, Health, Water Supply, Climate Change, as well as a variety of other needs. The GGP scheme was first introduced in 1989, and prioritises human security for vulnerable people within South African society. Since the year 1990, more than 600 GGP projects have been implemented in South Africa. In the Japanese Fiscal Year 2016 (April 2016–March 2017), the Embassy of Japan extended GGP assistance to 11 projects, amounting to approximately R15 million.

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Mr. Masayuki WAKU (First Secretary, Culture and Information Section at the Embassy of Japan in South Africa) shakes the hand of Ms. Elsie Simbine (Chief Education Specialist for Inclusion and Special Schools at the Head Office of the Gauteng Department of Education) after delivering his speech.



Some of the learners of the Johannesburg Hospital School for Autism gather for the handover ceremony.



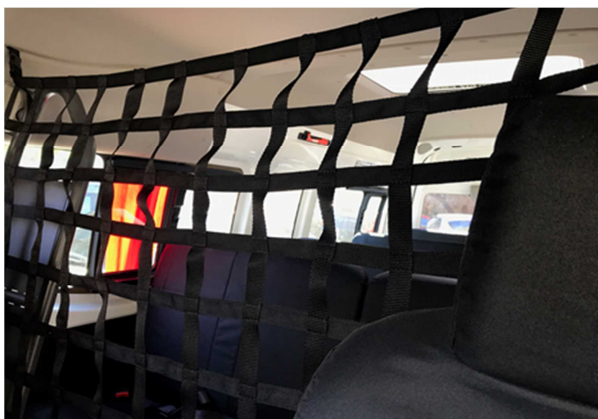
Ms. Ronel Van Biljon (School Principal at the Johannesburg Hospital School for Autism) accepts the keys of the vehicles from Mr Masayuki WAKU (First Secretary, Culture and Information Section at the Embassy of Japan in South Africa).



Appreciation with a capital A. Ms. Catherine Smetherham-Holtzhausen (Business Developer for the Johannesburg School for Autism) gives Mr. Masayuki WAKU (First Secretary, Culture and Information Section at the Embassy of Japan in South Africa) a gift made by the learners of the school.



Mr. Masayuki WAKU (First Secretary, Culture and Information Section at the Embassy of Japan in South Africa) shares some words with the learners of the Johannesburg Hospital School for Autism.



The protective netting with which the vehicles have been modified to keep a safe barrier between the learners and the driver.



**Pulled back: The protective seat covers designed for the safety of the students and the vehicles' interiors.**



**Posing with the donated vehicles. From Left to Right: Ms. Ronel Van Biljon (School Principal at the Johannesburg Hospital School 4 Autism); Ms. Elsie Simbine (Chief Education Specialist for Inclusion and Special Schools at the Head Office of the Gauteng Department of Education); Mr. Vuyani Mpofu (Deputy Director General: Gauteng Department of Education); Ms. Catherine Smetherham-Holtzhausen (Business Developer for the Johannesburg School 4 Autism); and Mr. Masayuki WAKU (First Secretary, Culture and Information Section at the Embassy of Japan in South Africa) shares some words with the students of the Johannesburg Hospital School for Autism.**