

"This scheme is commonly referred to as 'Kusanone' in Japanese as 'Kusa' means 'grass' and 'Ne' means 'roots' in Japanese.

As the name indicates, he said they had been trying to address pressing needs at 'grass-roots' level throughout this country and to date, they had provided funding for over 55 projects.

He noted that there was currently no primary school in Mohembo Village and children walked 12 kilometres to the nearest school at Kauxwi, which he said, was sad as walking long distances makes it very difficult for the children to concentrate on their studies.

Mr Takeda noted that Bana Ba Letsatsi Rehabilitation Centre provided comprehensive services to orphans and vulnerable children in various forms such as counselling, education and skills training, adding that children who need such services were large in number.

"One of the concerns we learnt was that the centre has to conduct education sessions for different levels of pupils in one class room due to the limited space," he said.

He said that an improved education environment, through construction of the primary school

Mr Thuso said the Japanese scheme had benefited the North West District Council before, as in 2016, Tlhale Primary School in Gumare was assisted to the tune of P845 453 for the construction of a preschool, within the premises of the main primary school, which was handed over in 2018.

"As the government of Botswana ascribes to a knowledge based economy, it is our considered view that the programme will go a long way in realising this commitment for a brighter future of our children," he said.

He said the Japanese's generous assistance was a clear demonstration of the cordial bilateral relations between Japan and Botswana.

Bana Ba Letsatsi Rehabilitation Centre Executive coordinator, Ms Taboka Rotsi thanked the government of Japan, emphasising that education played a paramount role in the early lives of children.

She revealed that she and her team were pushed to open the centre by children who were roaming the streets of Maun.

Ms Rotsi said they strived for the betterment of the lives of the less fortunate and orphaned young children. **BOPA**

# Japan learners on cultural exchange tour in Maun

By Kedirebofe Pelontle

**MAUN** - Learners have been encouraged to use the cultural exchange programme between Maun Senior Secondary School (Maun SSS) and Ritsumeikan Keisho High School from Japan to develop relations that will continue even after completion of high schooling.

That was said by Mr Ponatshegelo Katholo, an artist from Poetavango movement at the Maun SSS cultural event where they hosted their Japanese counterpart on Friday.

He encouraged learners to equally learn from both the negative and positive history of both countries without prejudice.

The relations forged, he said should also open future business opportunities for them in their respective countries.

"The world is now moving to

producing young people who are entrepreneurs who can manage to create jobs," he said.

Arts and crafts, he said were some of the areas that can be developed by young people with viable opportunities in both countries.

Further, he cautioned pupils against abandoning their respective cultures as they embraced each other's cultures.

"Be proud of your culture, appreciate other cultures but do not lose your own culture," he said.

The cultural exchange coordinator from Maun SSS, Ms Neo Mafunye observed that the programme was on its third year.

Ms Mafunye noted that the Ritsumeikan Keisho High School had been sending a batch of students annually since the beginning of the cultural exchange.

However, Ms Mafunye said it

was unfortunate that the local school was unable to send pupils to Ritsumeikan Keisho High School in Japan due to lack of funds.

She therefore appealed to companies and stakeholders to help Maun SSS learners so they would be able to visit their Japanese counterparts in order to fully benefit from the cultural exchange.

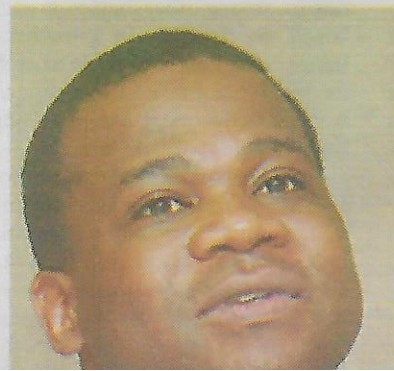
Ms Mafunye observed that students participated in traditional games, sport and discussions on various topics that affected young people and common issues that affected their countries during the annual visit by Japan.

She said the cultural exchange was set for five years.

Ritsumeikan Keisho High School headboy, Yoh Natsuizaka said their visit was meant to appreciate the Botswana culture and nature as well as interact with their fellow learners. **BOPA**

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# Mental health practitioner calls for suicide prevention strategy



By Jeremiah Sejabosigo

**LOBATSE** - Botswana Psychiatric Association (BPA) president has called on government to develop a national strategy on suicide prevention.

Speaking at the World Mental Health Day commemoration in Lobatse recently, Dr Mpho Thula said it was important to have a national strategy providing guidance on how to reduce the

mental disorders, which would lead to a reduction in suicide cases," he said.

Dr Thula pointed that an average of 312 people committed suicide annually in Botswana, adding over the past 10 years 3 170 people had committed suicide in the country.

He indicated that more than 80 per cent of people who committed suicide in Botswana were men.

Dr Thula said the World Health

suicide at national level," he said.

He said the biggest concern was that many of the suicide cases affected the youth between 15 and 29 years.

He pointed that the youth were the country's future, which is why it was important to address the issue of suicide and mental health.

Dr Thula said suicide deaths would reduce significantly if people with mental health problems were assisted on time.

in this country that would make it difficult for people to buy things which they would use to commit suicide, such as poisonous substances and large quantities of drugs. There should also be a law which compel railways to be secured by fences to prevent people from committing suicide by jumping in front of moving trains," he said.

He added that teaching children about mental health issues in