

Concluding Remarks by NAITO Yasushi, Ambassador of Japan to Malawi
During his visit to SOS Children's Villages Malawi (5 August)

Mr. Hopes Msosa, National Director of SOS Children's Villages Malawi,
Ms. Maggie Mphwiyo, Principal, SOS Employment and Entrepreneurship Centre
(Vocational Training Centre),
All the staff and teachers at the training centre,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for inviting me to SOS Children's Villages Malawi. I feel humbled that you took the time to show us your activities and explain the value of protecting and supporting children and youth in Malawi who are facing various serious challenges.

As I understand, SOS Children's Villages was originally founded in Austria in the post-World War II era, when Europe was rebuilding. Over the past 80 years, it has supported millions of children and young people in over 130 countries, including Malawi. As you explained to me, SOS Children's Villages Malawi started its activities in 1991 and has been supporting children and young people without parental care, or at risk of losing it.

It has been seven months since I was posted as Ambassador of Japan to Malawi. I am humbled that Japan and Malawi have enjoyed a good relationship through many years of development cooperation in various areas, including the world's highest number of dispatched JICA Overseas Cooperation Volunteers.

Today, I was impressed to see the SOS training centre here in the Wakawaka area, which is making a positive impact on the economic and social lives of people in Malawi. The training includes horticulture, welding, electrical engineering, tailoring, and the hospitality industry. The training is practical, and we were amazed to hear that a high percentage (60–95%) of graduates successfully attain employment within four months of completing their training.

Before being posted as Ambassador of Japan to Malawi, I worked as a diplomat in South Africa for a total of 22 years over four postings, in Kenya for two years, and I also worked for JICA Africa.

In South Africa, I had close interaction with SOS Children's Village in Mamelodi, near Pretoria, the capital of South Africa. Thirty-five years ago, I was able to facilitate "a bridge"

that led to foster parent support by a Japanese lady for an orphan girl introduced to me by a public relations officer at SOS in Mamelodi.

Twenty-five years later, when I was posted to South Africa again, I learned that the student had become a successful businesswoman, and the SOS officer who introduced the girl to me had become the Mayor of Pretoria. It is always a great moment when I learn that a goodwill bridge you facilitated has evolved into a successful achievement.

Today's visit has been very useful to me and to Japan. I will keep this experience in mind, and whenever I see an opportunity for Japan to contribute to SOS, or an opportunity to connect with Japanese institutions, schools, or businesspeople, I would love to build another "bridge."

Zikomo Kwambiri.

Thank you very much.

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