

Youth empowerment critical

By Legolo Tebogo

MOLEPOLOLE - Barclays Bank of Botswana and United Nations Children's Education Fund (UNICEF) have been commended for supporting government in reaching out to children.

That is made possible through the use of a comprehensive, technically sound skills development and empowerment programme dubbed

'Banking On Brighter Futures', Minister of Youth, Sports and Culture Mr Shaw Kgathi said during the launch of Barclays/UNICEF partnership programme at Bana ba Keletso Centre in Molepolole.

The programme is aimed at providing entrepreneurial skills training to children and youth who are marginalised and vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, abuse and exploitation.

Apart from giving them a shot at

earning a livelihood, the programme is also expected to protect the children from falling prey to risky behaviour and give them a chance to enjoy their rights to meaningfully participate in decisions that affect their lives.

Mr Kgathi also said government remains steadfastly committed to the course of ensuring that all children and youth of Botswana are protected, nurtured and given a platform to grow and develop to their full potential.

He said the investment by Barclays and UNICEF in this programme is a bold step that is not primarily driven by short term gains, but by the reality that the young people are potential future investors.

The minister also acknowledged the cordial partnership that the government has with UNICEF and the unwavering support that the fund continues to give on different levels which include, children's rights,

children's welfare and protection.

He said this kind of support gives the government confidence that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) could be realised.

The managing director of Barclays Bank Botswana, Mr Thuli Johnson said investing in young people in this way reduced their vulnerability and helps them achieve a sustainable livelihood for themselves, their families and the community.

He said his bank is proud that it is making a direct contribution to the future of this country by investing in youth.

He added that young people are dreamers and have passion in what they do, adding that if their energy is propelled in the right direction, it can benefit the economy.

Mr Johnson said Barclays has a responsibility to ensure that it includes working with the communities in which it operates to ensure their long-term development and sustainability.

Dr Doreen Mulenga, UNICEF representative, said their partnership with Barclays demonstrates how development sector organisations could partner with private business sector organisation and their focus based on the only investment, which will guarantee the possibility of infinite returns, which are children and young people.

Dr Mulenga said the implementation of the project began with a pilot phase in 2009 where approximately 600 marginalised children and youth from Molepolole, Serowe, Francistown, Maun, Ghanzi and Kasane were trained and acquired entrepreneurial skills and HIV/AIDS prevention strategies and that this year the programme will train 1 400 youth.

She said that their implementing partner is Junior Achievement Botswana (JAB) and their role is to provide the actual training of the selected young people, adding that those young people will also receive mentoring from Barclays employees in their respective districts.

She also called on private business enterprises to emulate Barclays Bank to help Botswana realise her Vision 2016 goals and the MDGs.

One of the young people who had a chance to benefit from this programme last year, Ms Lebang Leungonyana said attending this programme has helped her to grow her curtain making business and dresses as well as gardening.

She said she was able to conduct market research and she is happy that she is her own boss.

However, she said there are challenges in becoming an entrepreneur while one is still young because some parents are not supportive and there is lack of finance to boost the business.

She however encouraged the youth to be focused so that they could achieve their desired goals. **BOPA**

Vocational skills lacking in Botswana

By Mmadiofa Pilara

Gaborone - Botswana has been found to have a shortage of citizens with vocational skills.

The Vocational Training Fund (VTF), a reform put in place by government, emanated from these findings.

This was said by the workplace support coordinator at Botswana Training Authority (BOTA), Mr Kelesitse Maikaelelo, during a breakfast briefing organised by BOTA in conjunction with the Institute of Human Resource Management (IHRM) in Gaborone on Friday.

"The fund was set up to support cost sharing in skills development in Botswana and equal sharing between enterprises in financing training activities," he said.

Mr Maikaelelo specified that the fund does not cover academic courses such as Bachelor's degrees and Masters, but only covers vocational training from institutions that are BOTA accredited.

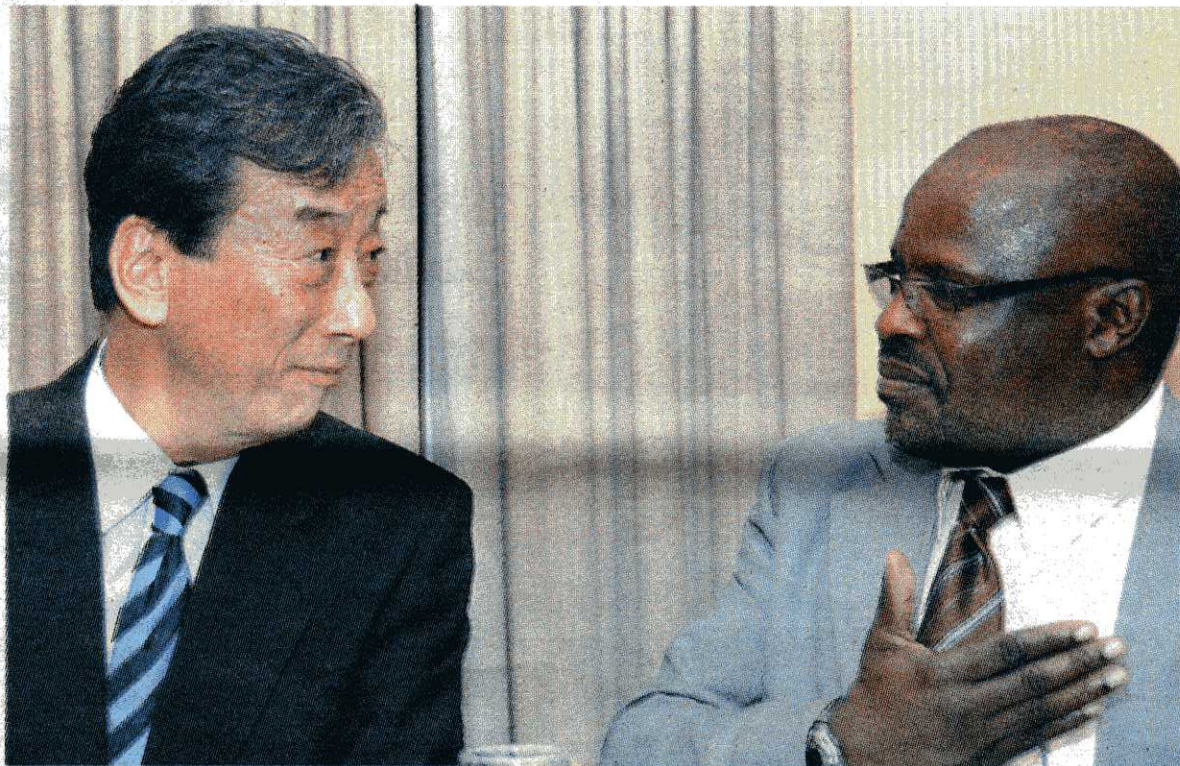
For those that study abroad, evidence of the training provider's accreditation in that respective country must be presented.

Explaining how the training levy is paid, Mr Moremedi Kooneilwe of BOTA cited that, 'it is paid by the employer when they pay value added tax (VAT) at Botswana United Revenue Service (BURS)'.

He said the VAT form that they fill includes a section for the training levy, thus enabling them to pay the tax and levy through one cheque. Thereafter, BURS pays the levy to BOTA.

The amount paid towards the levy is based on the employer's yearly turnover. BOTA's workplace support coordinator informed the participants that companies that send their employees for training get reimbursed upon presenting a quantified claim to BOTA with recipes and invoices.

The Vocational Training Fund was devised to benefit citizens of Botswana, thus, training of non-citizens is not claimable except for special cases that must be stated in training needs assessment. **BOPA**



Prof Kurokawa and Mr Morupisi at a reception hosted for the visiting team in Gaborone on Thursday. The Japanese experts are in the country to assist in the revision of the science and technology policy. Photo: Godfrey Mpuse

Govt promotes ICT-based economy

By Benjamin Shapi

GABORONE - Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Infrastructure, Science and Technology, Mr Carter Morupisi is optimistic that Botswana will tap a lot of technological skills from the visiting Japanese experts.

Speaking during a reception he hosted in honour of the Japanese experts, who have been invited to advise on the areas of research, science and technology, Mr Morupisi said the country was privileged to host high caliber experts dedicating their time for a good course.

He told his audience that the experts have come to assist Botswana to finalise the revised Science and Technology Policy, which will help transform the economy into a knowledge-based economy.

Mr Morupisi proudly noted that his ministry had made an undertaking to drive economic diversification and enhance the lives of Botswana by promoting the use and application of science and technology in all the sectors of the economy.

He said developed nations leveraged on science and technology in their advancement and they continue to enjoy growing economies through

continuous research, development and innovation.

In view of this, Mr Morupisi said Botswana aspires to attain that status, adding that he was confident their collaboration with the Japanese will go a long way in ensuring that such rewards are realised.

Mr Morupisi anticipated that this visit will also help the Japanese experts understand the investment climate in Botswana better, which will enable them to identify the opportunities for collaboration between Japan and Botswana investors in science and technology.

He however regretted that although Botswana has conducive environment for promoting the development of science and technology, its implementation remains a challenge.

He therefore said the visit of the Japanese gives hope that this time around they are preparing well in time for success.

For his part, the leader of the Japanese delegate, Prof. Kiyoshi Kurokawa from the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies, said Botswana is centrally located in Southern Africa and should therefore use its strategic location to be the hub in technology.

He said the fact that the country has a low population does not matter as long as it can push and realize its dream.

Prof. Kurokawa noted that while his country is widely known for its high technology and innovation across the globe, it does not mean that Botswana can not achieve at the end of the day, particularly that Botswana has a good education system.

He however said he had observed that the public service in Botswana is driving the economy of this country and as such called on the private sector to be more innovative and take a lead in the development and nurturing of the country's economic drive.

Prof. Kurokawa, however, admitted that there was room for Japan-Africa trade, particularly in the field on science and technology and therefore said more still needs to be done, especially in the field of research.

In her vote of thanks, the director of Research in Science and Technology, Ms Lesego Motoma noted that currently Botswana, like many other countries, enjoys and buys hi-tech goods from Japan and therefore it was appropriate that Botswana solicited their advice in this regard.

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