
Speech by H.E Mr. KAWAKAMI Fumihiko, Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of Fiji, at the Grant Contract Signing Ceremony for Habitat for Humanity Fiji, Medical Services Pacific, and Spinal Injury Association of Fiji.

11, March 2021, 11:00 am, at the Ambassador's official residence, Tamavua Suva.

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Ms. Ashna Shaleen, Country Director for Medical Services Pacific,

チョペ キカウ
Mr. Jope Kikau, President of Spinal Injury Association,

Media Partners, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Yadra Vinaka, Namaste and very Good Morning to you all.

I warmly welcome you all to my residence and I also thank you for your time in joining us for this occasion today.

On behalf of the Government and people of Japan, today I am honored to have formalized our grant assistance to four recipient organizations namely, Habitat for Humanity Fiji, Medical Services Pacific, and Spinal Injury Association. The collective funding that Japan has committed to provide the recipients is worth two hundred

eighty seven thousand US Dollars (USD \$278,000) which is approximately five hundred fifty two thousand Fiji Dollars (FJD \$552,000).

I now wish to highlight the respective project funding we are awarding to each recipient in recognition of both, the important work they are doing as well as the challenges they are facing in discharging their duties. We will provide;

1) Japan will provide one hundred twenty two thousand US dollars (USD 122,000) for “The Project for Water Supply to Vuaki Village and Somolevu Catholic School” to Habitat for Humanity Fiji. The project is expected to benefit more than 400 people through improving their water supply and sanitation standards further enabling the upkeep of more hygienic toilet facilities. I would like to acknowledge the close working partnership that the Embassy of Japan has established with Habitat for Humanity Fiji over the past decade, which has materialized in the implementation of 8 projects for 22 rural communities.

2) Moving on to the next recipient, Japan will provide Ninety five thousand US dollars (US\$ 95,000) for the “Project for Provision of Vehicles to Medical Services Pacific (MSP)”. The work of Medical Services Pacific has greatly benefitted women and girls in accessing free cancer screening, family planning services as well as counseling and social welfare services. However, the lack of vehicular access to rural and remote areas of Fiji is affecting its ability to serve women and girls in such regions. Japan’s strong commitment towards improving health care in Fiji formed the basis for our decision to award this funding which will greatly benefit the women and girls in the rural and remote communities.

3) To the final recipient today, namely, Spinal Injury Association, Japan will provide Sixty thousand US dollars (USD 60,000) for “The Project for Provision of a Wheelchair Accessible Van”. The beneficiaries of this project include not only people with spinal injuries but also those that need mobility assistance. It is the only organization in Fiji that provides free mobility devices, equipment

and services such as wheel chairs and free repairs. This project will enhance the broader outreach capability of the Association as well as dignify the commute of wheel chair dependent persons, enabling them to access treatments and services.

It gives me great joy to see that these projects will help address issues such as access to healthcare and mobility services for people with special needs, access to health care for women and girls in rural and remote areas, as well as access to regular supply of clean water and better sanitation. This will certainly improve the living standards of the communities and ultimately contribute to the socio-economic development of the nation.

These projects are in line with the Fijian Government's 5 year and 20 year National Development Plans which are collectively geared towards achieving Sustainable Development Goals namely;

SDG 3- Good Health and Wellbeing

SDG 5- Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

SDG 6- Clean water and Sanitation and

SDG 10: Reduce inequalities by empowering and promoting the social, economic and political inclusion of all, including persons with **“disabilities”**.

Pertaining to SDG 3, I am very pleased to mention that despite the COVID-19 pandemic since the beginning of 2020, Fiji has achieved massive success through its Nationwide COVID-19 Vaccination Campaign. As a result, it has become one of the most vaccinated countries in the world, and was able to open its borders on 1st December last year. Based on the compliance of Fijians to COVID-19 protocols and their growing resilience against the pandemic, Fiji significantly eased its restrictions towards COVID-19 on 6th February this year.

Though the threat of the virus has not faded away, Fiji is one of the most successful countries in responding to the COVID 19 pandemic and recovering economic and social activities. I commend the leadership of the Fiji government and the efforts of the people, for having made great achievements against the pandemic.

These projects are being implemented through Japan’s "Grassroots Grant Assistance scheme “or GGP in short. I wish to take this

opportunity to highlight that since 1990, Japan has implemented 414 GGP projects, which are collectively worth about US\$31 million, to assist grassroots communities of Fiji.

I wish to urge the distinguished recipient representatives present here today to ensure the timely and successful completion of your respective projects.

I am sure the facilities and equipment will serve the recipients and their stakeholder communities for many years to come through proper up keeping and maintenance.

I conclude with confidence that these projects will further strengthen friendship between the governments and peoples of Japan and Fiji.

Thank You, Vinaka Vakalevu, Dhanyavaadh.

The End.