
Speech by Mr. Kenichiro Tanaka ,Counselor and Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of Japan to the Republic of Fiji, at the Handover Ceremony for the Project Spinal Injury Association.

11, May 2023, 3pm, at the NCPD Complex, 3 Brown Street, Suva.

Mrs. Dilitiana Baleinabuli, the Acting Director for Social Welfare,
Mr. Lemeki Cagialau, the Director for National Council for Persons with Disability

Mr. Epeli Tiloko, the President of Spinal Injury Association

Dr. Gyan Prasad, the Representative of Fiji program Facility Fund

Board members of Spinal Injury Association

Government Officials

Invited Guests

Spinal Injury Association Members,

And Media Partners

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

First, I would like to thank you for the warm hospitality accorded to my colleagues and I this morning and we appreciate everyone's effort in attending this very auspicious occasion.

On behalf of the Government and people of Japan, I am honored to hand over a new wheelchair accessible van worth One hundred and nineteen thousand Fiji dollars (FJ\$119,986) to the Acting Director for Social Welfare, Ms. Dilitiana Baleinabuli, on behalf of the Spinal Injury Association.

The Embassy formalized the project funding with the Association in March 2022 and I am pleased that I am now able to hand over the wheelchair accessible van itself. I express my gratitude to the Association for their efforts in ensuring the timely completion of this project.

This new van furnished with advance equipment to accommodate wheelchairs will minimize boarding, disembarking and overall transportation difficulties faced by the association while transporting those in need of mobility assistance. In addition, this project will also enhance the broader outreach capability of the Association to the rural areas as well as dignify the commuting of wheelchair users, enabling

them to access treatments and services in hospitals and health centres when they need to.

This project is possible through the Government of Japan's Grassroots Grant Assistance Scheme. Since 1990, we have funded 421 Grassroots Grant projects for the sustainable development of Fiji, which are collectively worth more than 32 million US dollars.

On that note I am proud to say that since the Grant for Grass Root projects began in Fiji, the People and Government of Japan has assisted the Disability sector with over 16 projects across organizations and special schools with an estimated value of over nine hundred thousand US Dollars (946,886 USD).

Supporting this project is an integral part of our continued partnership with the Fiji Government and its people to help achieve Sustainable Development Goal 3, '*Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages*' and it is in line with Fiji's Twenty Year Development

Plan 2017-2036, under one of its key approaches namely, “Social Inclusion and Empowerment’.

Mrs. Baleinabuli, I take this time to applaud your work in social services through the Department of Social Welfare for more than a decade. I look forward to the continued efforts by your office in spearheading the Fiji Government’s commitment towards ensuring that assistance is equally distributed amongst all Fijians to build a better resilience nation.

I would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm that the Government of Japan will continue to support Fiji in the future.

I conclude with confidence that this project is an added milestone in Japan’s partnership with the Fiji Government and in addition further strengthen friendship between the Governments and peoples of Japan and Fiji.

Thank You, Vinaka Vakalevu, and Arigato Gozaimasu.

END