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PRESS RELEASE: **JAPAN GRASSROOTS FUND BENEFITS THE COMMUNITY**

Earlier this week, the Development Coordination Division of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Management met with First Secretary Mr. Reki Kataora from the Embassy of Japan in New Zealand. Mr. Kataora was in country to assess applications submitted to Japan's Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Project (GGP) fund.

Japan and the Cook Islands established diplomatic relationships in 2011. The funding relationship the Cook Islands has with Japan is through Japan's community grant assistance, human resource capability building programmes, technical assistance to the Cook Islands.

Since 2011, the Government of Japan has provided NZ$1.5M in community grant assistance. About 5% of the Cook Islands ODA budget is from the Japan Government for the period 2015-18.

For 2016, community grants approvals were for Tei Muri Motia Volunteer Fire Rescue Brigade Charitable Trust to build a rescue and fire station for the Vaka Takitumu. In addition a NZ$113,000 grant was made to Te Kainga O Pa Taunga Mental Health organisation for the construction of similar facilities in Aitutaki. Handover ceremonies were held in March for the newly renovated Apii Te Uki Ou Primary School. *"... We would like to offer our heartfelt thanks to everyone involved in the project, particularly the government and people of Japan for their generous financial assistance"* said Apii Te Uki Ou at its Facebook page. The students and teachers are very excited to be learning in this awesome new space. Other handover projects for this year were for the establishment of Water Tanks on Atiu and the development of a sustainable taro planting irrigation system in Mangaia with total project costs at over NZ$ $320,000.

The Cook Islands Government is most grateful for this support at the grass roots level and its continued economic and social relationship with the Government of Japan.

For further information on the Japan GGP fund or past and present projects visit the MFEM website at this link: Japan - Grant Assistance of Grassroots Human Security Project (GGP)

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10 June 2016