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**** For Immediate Release ****

New HF Radios to improve communications after disaster



Caption: Minister for Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management Hon. Inia Seruiratu with the Embassy of Japan in Fiji's Chargé d'Affaires Mr. Hada Tsuguyoshi inside the Radio Room based at the Northern Division's Emergency Operations Center at Macuata House after the launch of the 9 High Frequency Radios funded by the Japanese Government.

LABASA – Communications to nine remote districts emergency operation centers (EOCs) within the Northern Division have been boosted with the launch of the nine newly launch High Frequency (HF) Radios today.

The provision of the HF Radios was made possible through funding support from the Japanese Government under its Grass Roots Grant initiative.

The HF Radios have been installed across at EOCs in Labasa, Seqaqa, Lekutu, Kubulau, Nabouwalu, Saqani, Tukavesi, Savusavu and Taveuni.

In officially launching the improved communication system at Macuata House in Labasa earlier today, Minister for Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management Hon. Inia Seruiratu said the assistance was timely, noting that we were into the second month of the 2021-2022 Cyclone Season.

“I would like to sincerely thank the Japanese Government for your ongoing support to the Ministry through the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) in ensuring communication in the aftermath of a disaster is not affected and with these newly installed radios, it will now be of the past here in the Northern Division,” Hon. Seruiratu said.

“As most of us are well aware during the recent Tropical Cyclone (TC) Yasa – major communication infrastructures were also affected making it difficult to communicate with our locals and even our operation centers.”

However, with the installation of the new communications system, this would be a thing of the past for EOCs in the Northern Division.

“Communication is a crucial element of disaster management operations, and is a vital component for response and recovery. The role of communication technology has been recognised as integral to disaster management for a long time. Effective communication connects first responders, support systems, and family members with the communities and individuals immersed in the disaster and for this – we are indebted to the Japanese Government for supporting us in ensuring that what we experienced with TC Yasa will not happen again.”

The interoperability of the 9 HF radios entails the ability to not only transmit voice but also internet data.

With the availability of such capabilities, EOCs can also send emails through the HF radios making it the first of its kind in the Northern Division.

“Without information, it can be difficult to do a lot of things. Data is essential throughout a critical incident's duration for several reasons. First, it validates what you already know, enables target assistance to be delivered on time and most importantly allows the NDMO to plan accurately and advise decision makers on actions to be taken to save lives.”

Minister Seruiratu also acknowledged the support by the Australian Government through the contribution by Live and Learn Fiji under the Australian Humanitarian Partners. This support included the provision of desktops to complement the 9 HF Radios.

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The Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management is responsible for implementing development strategies that bring Fijians living in rural and maritime regions the same level of access to essential services and economic opportunities as anywhere else in the country. We coordinate and implement the Fijian Government's rural and maritime development initiatives with a mission to empower Fiji's rural sector. We also spearhead disaster risk reduction initiatives at national and sub-national level including disaster preparedness, response, and recovery. We have offices for each of Fiji's 14 provinces including Rotuma, leading the Fijian Government's rural development and disaster risk management operations.

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