

# Japan's Support for the Pacific Island Countries



# 1 The Unique Features, History and Special Characteristics of the Pacific Island Countries

## What are the Pacific Island Countries?

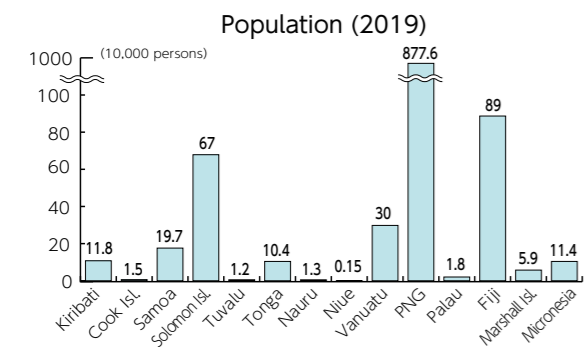
The "Pacific Island Countries" are 14 countries located in the Pacific Ocean: The Cook Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Independent State of Papua New Guinea, the Independent State of Samoa, the Kingdom of Tonga, Niue, the Republic of Fiji, the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Republic of Nauru, the Republic of Palau, the Republic of Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands, and Tuvalu. There are considerable differences among these countries. For example, in terms of population, Papua New Guinea has a population of nearly 9 million people, whereas Niue has only around 1,500 people.

## Special characteristics of the Pacific Island Countries

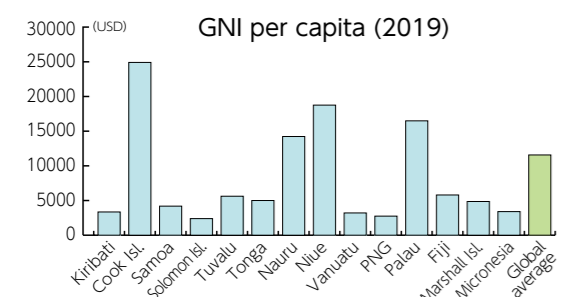
The Pacific Island Countries are facing numerous challenges that have made it difficult for them to achieve economic growth. They tend to have a small land area, with a single country often consisting of many separate islands scattered across a large area of ocean. Individual countries are often very distant from neighboring countries, which makes travel and communication difficult. The Pacific Island Countries are also vulnerable to natural disasters and climate change, including cyclones, earthquakes and tsunamis, and the effects of global warming.

With regard to population, Papua New Guinea has by far the largest population of any country in the region, at just under 9 million people, but in global terms this only gives it the 98th largest population in the world (according to World Bank data for 2019). As regards gross national income (GNI) per capita, while some countries such as Palau and Nauru have GNI per capita exceeding 10,000 USD, for many Pacific Island Countries GNI per capita is less than 5,000 USD. Furthermore, the Pacific Island Countries suffer from a high risk of natural disasters; in a global ranking showing which of the world's countries are most at risk from natural disasters, the Pacific Island Countries held six of the top twenty countries.

On the other hand, the Pacific Island Countries have extensive maritime resources, from which they are expected to benefit. For example, they tend to have large exclusive economic zones (EEZs) (the area of ocean in which a country is entitled to engage in fishing and other activities without interference from other countries); in the case of Kiribati, while the country's land area is only around the same size as the island of Tsushima in Nagasaki Prefecture, its EEZ is around 4,000 times larger than this.



(Notes) 1. Compiled using World Bank data, and Pacific Community data (for the Cook Islands and Niue).  
2. Data for the Cook Islands and Niue are in 2020.



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2. Data for the Marshall Islands and Micronesia are in 2018.  
3. Data for the Cook Islands and Niue are GDP per capita (2020).

### World Risk Index

1	Vanuatu
2	Antigua and Barbuda
3	Tonga
4	Solomon Islands
5	Guinea
6	Papua New Guinea
7	Brunei Darussalam
8	Guatemala
9	Philippines
10	Bangladesh
11	Cabo Verde
12	Fiji
13	Costa Rica
14	Djibouti
15	Timor-Leste
16	Haiti
17	Cambodia
18	El Salvador
19	Kiribati
20	Comoros

(Notes) Compiled using the World Risk Report 2019.

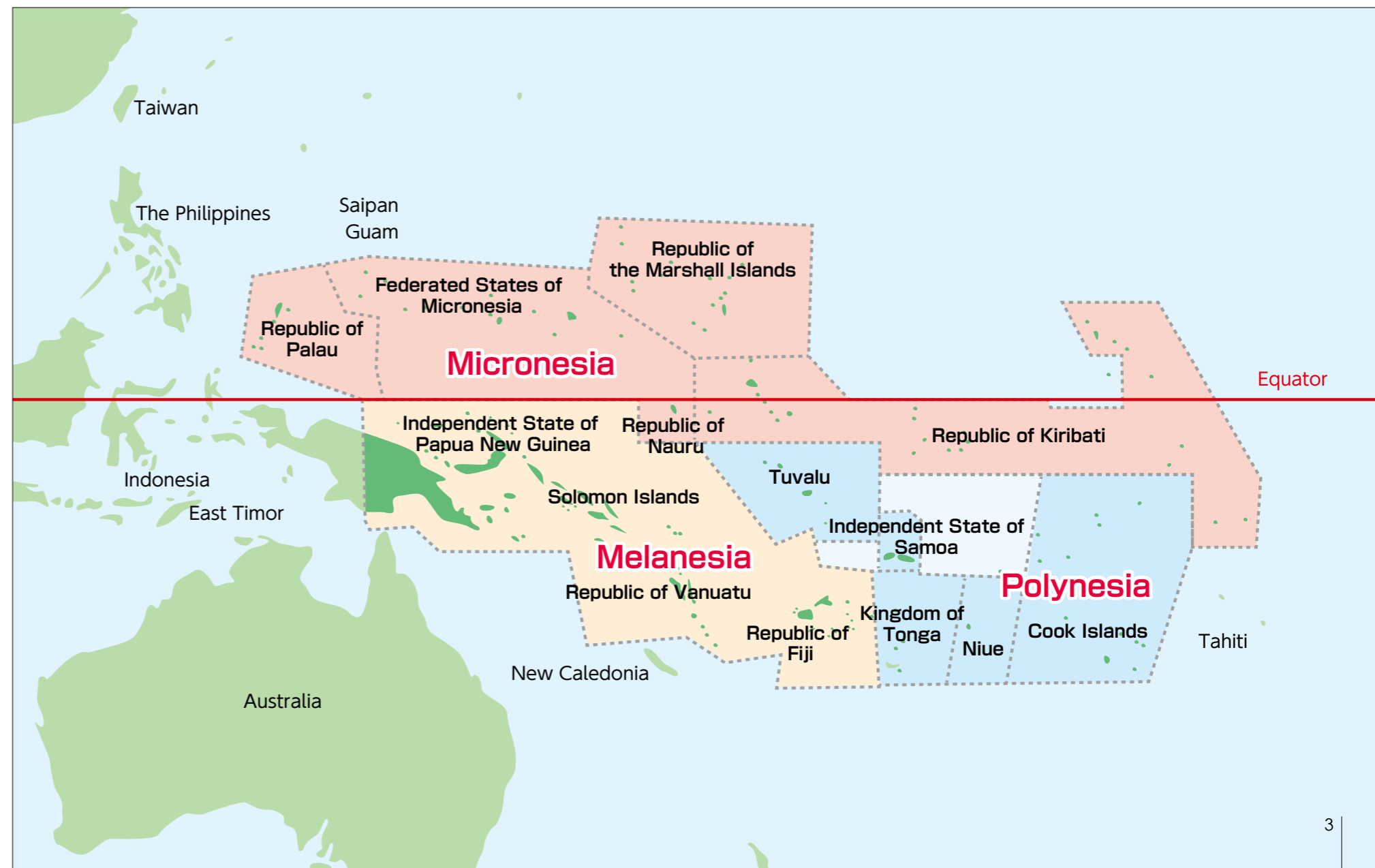
## Relationship with Japan

Not only are the Pacific Island Countries and Japan all located in the Pacific Ocean, these countries also have a shared history with Japan. Starting in the Meiji Era (i.e., the late 19th century and early 20th century), the large number of Japanese people traveled to what are now the Pacific Island Countries as migrant workers. The Micronesia region in particular, which experienced being governed by Japan under a League of Nations Mandate, adopted many aspects of Japanese culture and Japanese words. Japanese words such as *yakyu* (baseball) and *denki* (electricity), were absorbed into local languages and are still used to this day.

The Pacific Island Countries are also important sources of food and natural resources for Japan. For example, around 40 percent of the bonito and tuna consumed in Japan is caught in the EEZs of Pacific Island Countries. The bonito is mainly used as the raw material for making dried bonito shavings, which play an important role in Japanese cuisine.

The areas of ocean where the Pacific Island Countries are located also constitute an important maritime transport route for Japan's imports and exports.

For these reasons, it is important for Japan to strive for a further improvement of the friendly relations with the Pacific Island Countries. As part of Japan's efforts to strengthen relations with these nations, Japan provides aid, tailored to the specific circumstances of each country, to help them overcome the difficulties and issues that affect them.



# 2 Japan's Support Initiatives with Respect to the Pacific Island Countries

## Health

The healthcare systems of the Pacific Island Countries (PICs) are very fragile; for example, the number of physicians per person and number of hospital beds per person are low compared to the global average. Over the years, Japan has provided support to help enhance the healthcare system in the PICs, including the establishment and expansion of hospitals, which constitute a key part of national infrastructure. The weakness of the healthcare systems means that, once there is a case of infectious disease, it can spread rapidly. For example, in late 2019 Samoa was affected by a measles outbreak; by January 2020, over 5,000 people (around three percent of the population) had been infected, with 83 deaths.

In response to the rapid spread of the COVID-19 pandemic across the world, the PICs acted quickly to close their borders, and as a result, as of January 2021, the number of COVID-19 cases in these countries is still relatively low. Nevertheless, with the aim of helping prevent the spread of the pandemic, Japan has provided the PICs with healthcare and medical equipment worth around 4 billion yen, as well as technical cooperation support, etc. In order to provide support for economic recovery, Japan also decided to provide Papua New Guinea, Fiji and the Solomon Islands with financial assistance loans (i.e., loans to provide financial support to the governments of the countries concerned) totaling 42.5 billion yen.



### Solomon Islands Gizo Hospital

(Exchange of Notes\* in 2009 for grant aid totaling 1.9 billion yen)

Gizo Hospital is the largest hospital in the Western Province of the Solomon Islands. It suffered serious damage from a tsunami accompanying an earthquake with a magnitude of 8.1 which struck the area in April 2007. With support from Japan, a new hospital building was constructed which can withstand earthquakes and tsunamis equivalent to those of 2007.



Photo Credit : Nihon Sekkei, Inc.



### Republic of the Marshall Islands Medical ship

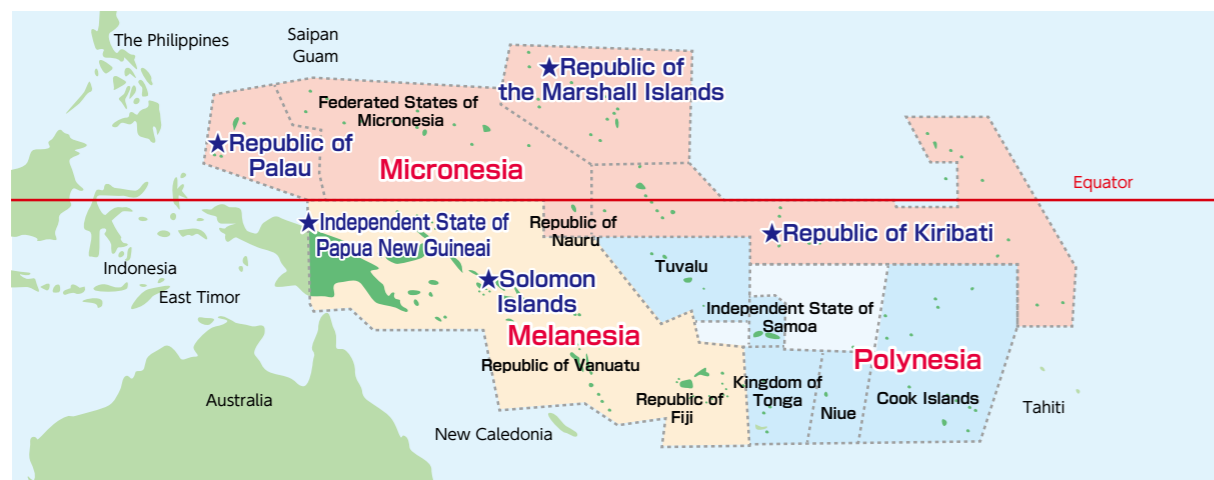
(Exchange of Notes in 2019 for grant aid totaling 550 million yen)

The Marshall Islands is a country that consists of 29 atolls (circular coral reefs). For outlying islands that have no doctors or nurses permanently stationed there a ship equipped with medical facilities makes periodic visits to provide medical services. In order to safeguard the health of the country's citizens, it is important that every atoll is visited at least twice a year, but because the Marshall Islands only had one medical ship, it was barely able to manage one visit to each atoll per year. By providing a medical ship, and relevant equipment, Japan has contributed toward enhancing the provision of medical services in the Marshall Islands.



Signing ceremony for Medical ship  
Photo Credit: Embassy of Japan in the Marshall Islands

\* An Exchange of Notes (E/N) is a means of formalizing an agreement between two or more countries and/or international organizations through the exchange of official documents.



## Infrastructure

Roads, bridges, ports, airports, power plants, etc. constitute important infrastructure that is vital for economic growth, and which supports both industry and people's daily lives. Japan has used its advanced technology to support the improvement of infrastructure in the Pacific Island Countries. Some infrastructure in these countries include "Japan" in the name as a mark of gratitude from the country's people.



### Republic of Kiribati Nippon Causeway

(Exchange of Notes in 2016 for grant aid totaling 3,805 million yen) (previous Exchanges of Notes in 1986 and 1985 were for 189 million yen and 939 million yen respectively)

In Tarawa Atoll, where the capital of Kiribati is located, the Nippon Causeway links the island of Betio, where the international port is situated, with Bairiki via a chain of small islands; this causeway is the only road link between the islands. Building a road on a coral atoll was a very challenging task but the causeway was successfully constructed thanks to advanced Japanese technology. In recent years, the causeway had started to deteriorate due to aging and because of erosion resulting from high tides caused by climate change; however, the causeway has now been completely rebuilt.



Photo Credit : JICA



### Republic of Palau The Japan-Palau Friendship Bridge

(Exchange of Notes in 1999 for grant aid totaling 3,102 million yen)

The bridge linking the island of Koror, where most of Palau's people live, with the island of Babeldaob, where the capital and international airport are located, collapsed suddenly in 1997. Japan provided support for the construction of the new bridge (which has a total length of 412 meters, and is ten meters wide; the central support is 41 meters high) and its access road. The new bridge was completed in January 2002. Palau issued commemorative stamps to mark both the completion of the Japan-Palau Friendship Bridge and the tenth anniversary of its opening; the bridge has become a symbol of the friendly relations between Japan and Palau.



Photo Credit : JICA



### Independent State of Papua New Guinea Access to electric power

(Exchange of Notes in 2013 for bilateral government loans totaling 8.34 billion yen) (Exchange of Notes in 2021 for grant aid totaling 1.0 billion yen)

Sometimes, achieving a big objective requires collaborative support involving several donor countries.

As of 2018, only around 13 percent of Papua New Guinea's population had reliable access to electricity. The PNG government set itself the target of raising this figure to 70 percent by 2030. However, there are also problems in ensuring the stable supply of electricity, because of aging facilities, low generating and transmission capacity. Japan has been working together with Australia, New Zealand and the U.S. to provide support Papua New Guinea's objective for electrification. More specifically, with regard to the transmission network connected to the Ramu hydroelectric power station (constructed with Japanese assistance in the 1970s), which supplies power to the Lae region, where Japanese business enterprises are operating, Japan has provided support to upgrade the existing transmission lines to dual transmission lines, so that if there is a problem with one line, it will still be possible to supply power using another line, thereby ensuring a more stable supply of electricity for the region.



Signing ceremony for the Project for Rural Electrification with Extension of Power Supply Network  
Photo Credit : Embassy of Japan in the Republic of Papua New Guinea

## Climate change and disaster prevention

Adaptation and enhancing resilience to climate change are a common agenda for the Pacific Island Countries. Although the Pacific Island Countries have been adopting renewable energy such as solar power, currently they are still mainly reliant on thermal power generation to ensure a stable supply of electric power. However, because the fuel used for thermal power generation has to be imported, these countries are vulnerable to fluctuations in international market prices, and thermal power generation is also a source of greenhouse gas emissions. Each Pacific Island Country has a target to raise renewable energy's share of total power generation. Japan has been providing support to contribute towards the goals in the Pacific Island Countries.



### Kingdom of Tonga Tiltable wind turbine system

(Exchange of Notes in 2017 for grant aid totaling 2.1 billion yen)

On the island of Tongatapu where Tonga's capital is located, Japan installed a wind power generation system with five tiltable wind-power turbines, using an advanced technology developed in Okinawa, Japan. Like Tonga, Okinawa experiences a lot of typhoons. When a tropical cyclone is forecast to hit the island, the wind turbines are tilted to avoid damage. Using this technology, the wind power system has never been damaged, not even when Cyclone Harold (a Category 4 cyclone, the second most severe category) hit Tongatapu in April 2020.



Photo Credit : JICA



### Independent State of Samoa The Pacific Climate Change Center

(Exchange of Notes in 2017 for grant aid totaling 962 million yen)  
(Record of Discussions signed in 2018 for a 350-million-yen technical cooperation project)

PCCC is a center for capacity development in response to climate change in the region, operating in collaboration with the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), an international organization whose head office is in Samoa. Japan has supported the construction of PCCC's facilities, as well as capacity development for the center's training function. The Center is helping to drive capacity building in the Pacific region.



Photo Credit : JICA



### Republic of Fiji Improvement of Equipment for Disaster Risk Management

(Exchange of Notes in 2012 for grant aid totaling 300 million yen)

In Fiji, disasters caused by natural hazards such as tropical cyclones and floods are becoming a major threat year by year. Japan has provided support for the installation of meteorological observation equipment and tide gauges and contributes to disaster mitigation through the early warning against meteorological disasters and tsunamis.



Photo Credit : JICA

## Maritime Issues

Although the Pacific Island Countries generally have a small land area, many of them have large EEZs. While this should enable them to gain full benefit from the sea's bounty, managing large areas of ocean requires both personnel and equipment. At the same time, because these countries consist of multiple islands spread over a vast expanse of ocean, it is very important to construct harbors etc. in order to facilitate the smooth flow of people and goods between them.

### Oceania as a whole

#### Controlling Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing

The term illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing is used to refer to fishing activity that does not abide by national or international fisheries regulations. In the Pacific Ocean, the total amount of tuna caught in IUU fishing each year is estimated to be worth around 70 billion yen. To put that in perspective, all of the fish imported into Japan from the Pacific Island Countries annually is worth around 14 billion yen (according to Ministry of Finance Trade Statistics for 2019).

In 2018, representatives of 12 Pacific Island Countries visited Japan to learn about Japan's policy on IUU fishing and the measures being taken to address the issue. Representatives of five Pacific Island Countries made a similar visit in 2019.



Training in responding to IUU fishing (a visit by a vessel belonging to Japan's Fisheries Agency, engaged in counter-IUU operations)  
Photo Credit : JICA



### Republic of Vanuatu Port Vila Lapetasi International Multi-purpose Wharf Development Project

(Exchange of Notes in 2012 for bilateral government loans totaling 4,945 million yen, and in 2015 for bilateral government loans totaling 4,598 million yen)

Port Vila harbor plays a key role in Vanuatu's international trade. As the economy has grown, there has been a dramatic increase in the amount of international cargo being dealt with at the port, and its cargo handling capacity was barely able to cope with demand. Japan assisted with the building of a second international wharf, which has made a significant contribution towards improving logistics.



Photo Credit: Embassy of Japan in the Republic of Fiji

## Human resources development and people to people exchange

Japan helps other countries realize autonomy and achieve development by transferring technologies, skills and knowledge. Human resources development is a core element of Japan's official development assistance (ODA).

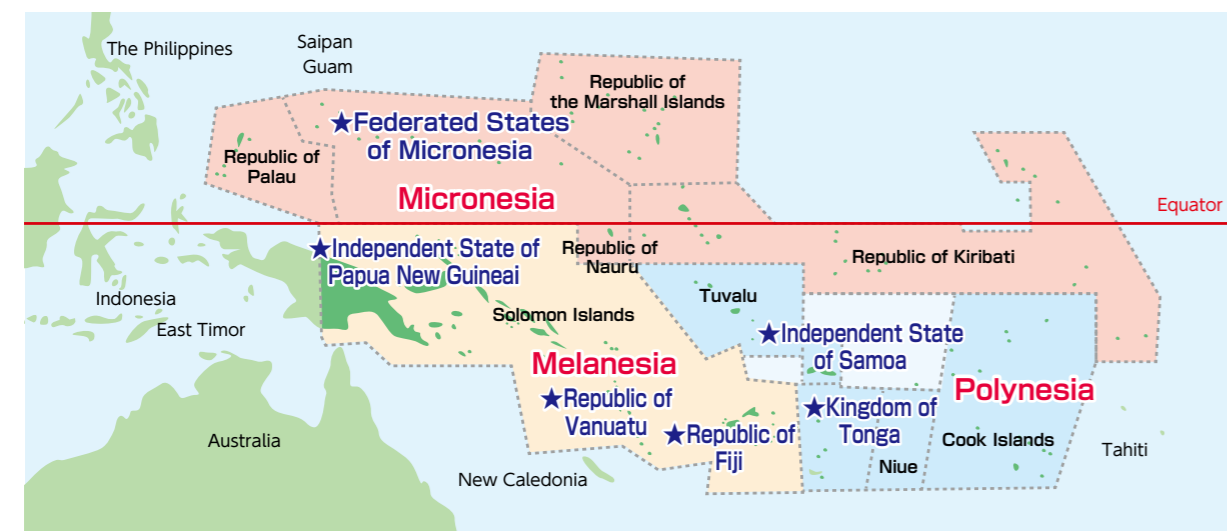


### Independent State of Papua New Guinea Improving the quality of mathematics and science education in Papua New Guinea

Japan provided support for the development of mathematics and science textbooks and supporting teachers' guides for third to sixth year elementary school students in Papua New Guinea. These textbooks and teachers' guides have been used by approximately 17,000 elementary school teachers and around 675,000 elementary school students (per year).



Photo Credit : JICA



### Column



#### Federated States of Micronesia Construction of a gymnasium

(Grant contract signed in 2013 for grant aid totaling 13.66 million yen)

Japan supported the building of a gymnasium for a secondary school (high school) in Pohnpei State, using the Grant Assistance for Grass-Roots Human Security Projects Programme. On the island of Pohnpei, it rains more than 300 days a year, and it was often impossible for students to exercise or play sports during physical education class, during breaks or after school. The new gymnasium has enabled schoolchildren to enjoy a wider range of activities.



Photo Credit : Embassy of Japan in the Federated States of Micronesia

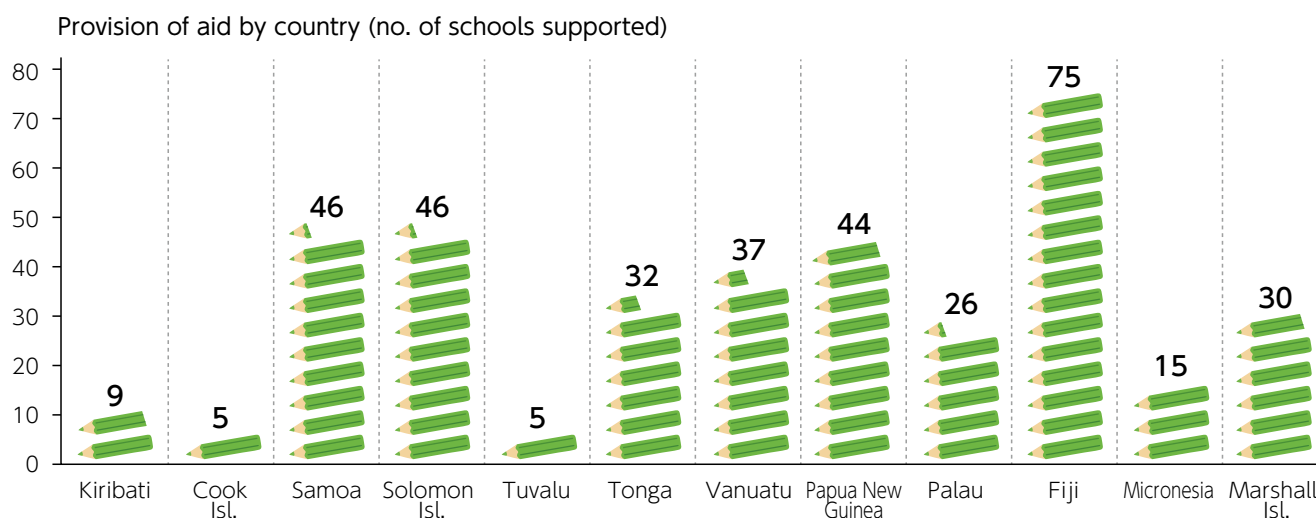


## 3 Japanese Aid in Figures

Let us take a look at some figures showing the aid that Japan has provided for the Pacific Island Countries.

### ● Schools

Japan has provided support for a large number of schools in the Pacific Island Countries through the Grant Assistance for Grass-Roots Human Security Projects Programme. Over the ten-year period from 2010 to 2019, Japan supported more than 360 schools



(Notes) For the purposes of this chart, “schools” include vocational training schools and vocational colleges.

### ● Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCVs)

The Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCVs) are dispatched to ten Pacific Island Countries to provide assistance in the fields of education, healthcare and the environment, etc. Over the past ten years, a total of more than 1,300 volunteers worked in this region.

### ● JICA training programs (issue-specific training and country-specific training)

Japan receives trainees across a wide range of fields, including education, healthcare and the environment. Over the past ten years, a total of more than 4,900 people from Pacific Island Countries took training in Japan.

### ● Cumulative ODA provision

(Gross disbursement basis, in million USD;  
figures given are cumulative totals as of 2019)

Grant aid	2,463.22
Loan aid	1,013.72
Technical cooperation	1,598.81
Total ODA disbursement	5,075.75

## 4 The 9th Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM9)

Since 1997, Japan has hosted the Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM) once every three years, to facilitate the provision of support to address the various issues affecting the Pacific Island Countries. The 9th Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM9) will be held in 2021.