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# 2nd Annual Anti-Human Trafficking Conference addresses whole community prevention & response to Human Trafficking

FSM Information Services

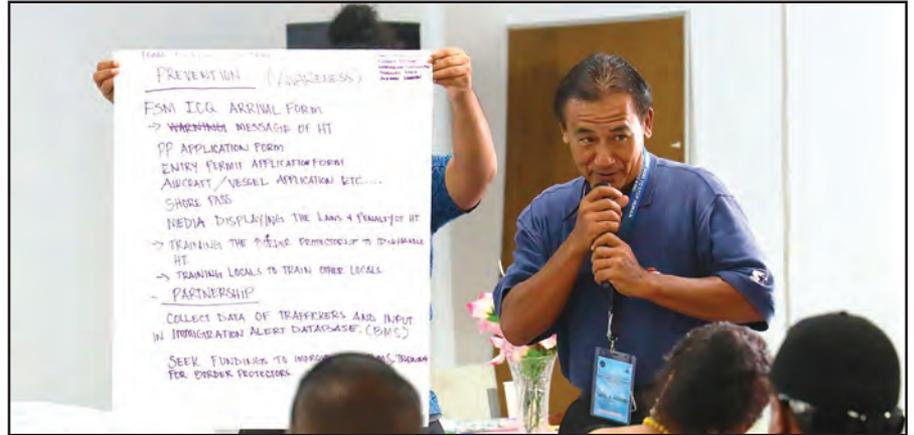
**PALIKIR, Pohnpei**—From September 28th to October 1st, 2020, the Department of Justice of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), in a whole-of-community collaboration with partners such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Kolonia Elementary School, Pohnpei State Government, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation



schoolteacher, mapping a referral network for human trafficking cases, and the development of action plans.

Highlights from the workshop included a view on human trafficking in the FSM from the perspective of the FSM Supreme Court, human trafficking from the perspective of a public classroom

The administration of His Excellency David W. Panuelo, President of the FSM, and the Honorable Yosiwo P. George, Vice President of the FSM, take the issue of human trafficking seriously, as evidenced



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by the September 2019 restructuring of the Department of Justice to include a new Division of Anti-Human Trafficking. Fiscal Year 2021 in particular includes

a range of programming complete with financial support from the 21st See "Trafficking Conference" on page 4

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## FSM Government files charges against Norleen Oliver for blocking road to First Lady's family home

By **Bill Jaynes**  
 The Kaselehlie Press

October 2, 2020

**FSM**—On September 18, 2020 Norleen Oliver parked her vehicle on the driveway on her land in Tamworohi, Sokehs and walked away. The driveway also leads to a property owned and sometimes occupied by Patricia Edwin. Edwin claims that Oliver's car blocked access to her land. Before the end of the day, Edwin's attorney had filed a civil action against Oliver at Pohnpei Supreme Court. She is claiming that the action is a "breach of contract, torts interference with a contract."

It is also a "declaratory complaint for relief of easement by necessity and/or easement by prescription."

The Court has issued a temporary restraining order barring Oliver from blocking the driveway again. Oliver's attorney has filed her response to the civil action denying most causes of action and has also filed a counter-claim. The court has also enjoined Edwin from taking any action on the driveway in question, though Congress has provided \$40,000 to pave the driveway to her property.

The injunction means that project also cannot go forward.

The FSM Department of Justice (DOJ) felt that the situation rose to the level of criminality and on October 2, an Assistant Attorney General filed criminal charges against Norleen Oliver in the FSM Supreme Court. During this calendar year, the DOJ had previously filed only three other sets of criminal charges against other defendants. The

See "Charges" on page 7

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# UNICEF and MRCS to distribute essential supplies to schools in the FSM

Micronesia Red Cross Society

**Kolonia, POHNPEI** -- The Micronesia Red Cross Society (MRCS) and UNICEF are collaborating with the Department of Education to begin distributing critical supplies to schools in the Federated States of Micronesia as part of on-going efforts to prevent the spread of COVID-19 pandemic while promoting health and hygiene practice.

The supplies include infrared thermometers for regular checking of temperatures, soaps, and water buckets to be placed at vantage locations for promoting frequent handwashing practices in schools. In addition, schools will be provided disinfectants, gloves, and boots for regular cleaning of school lavatories to ensure healthy and safe school environment.

According to Mr. Marson Rosario, Communication Officer for FSM MRCS, volunteers and partners will begin distributing the supplies to all the 31 schools, both public and private, on the main island of Pohnpei from September 22, and then expand the distribution to cover the outer Islands and Islets. He further indicated that they have developed a similarly detailed distribution plan to ensure all other schools in the remaining three States: Chuuk, Yap and Kosrae are fully covered.

Thanks to the generous contributions of donors like USAID and Government of Japan, the provision of these essential supplies by UNICEF to the over 180 schools in FSM is expected to further strengthen the preparedness and resilience levels of schools within the context of COVID-19 response.



# Safety at sea workshop held in Pohnpei

On September 4th, a jointly hosted daylong Safety at Sea Workshop for local fishermen at the Tuna Commission was held. The Lieutenant Governor, Feliciano Perman, provided welcoming remarks and the Executive Director of NORMA, Eugene Pangelinan, outlined the need for the training and additional safety protocols for boats.

During the workshop, presentations were made by the Department of Public Safety, Pohnpei Port Authority, Office of Fisheries and Aquaculture, the US Coast Guard, Pohnpei Surf Club, Pohnpei Fishing Club Members, NORMA and the Tuna Commission.

To highlight some of the important discussion in the meeting, the Pohnpei Fishing Club wanted to highlight some of the important issues that were raised during the meeting,

1. All local boats, regardless of size, need to take safety as a high priority. Boats going out need to make sure they have spare fuel, a way to communicate with someone on land, safety equipment, spare water in case of an emergency and enough food to increase their chances of survival and return home.
2. During an emergency, all government departments and agencies need to communicate effectively to ensure the best possible outcome for those who may be lost at sea or in need of help. At the moment, the public emergency channel 16 maintained by the Pohnpei State government is not working correctly as the repeaters that allow for communicating further at sea are not all functioning. The public emergency channel 16 needs to urgently be tested and expanded to allow boats to effectively communicate during an emergency and possible rescue,

especially operations that take place over a wide area. The Pohnpei Fishing Club has many boats and members are often out fishing when a distress call in is made but cannot effectively communicate with the Department of Public Safety as their radios operate on a private radio channel.

3. The state government and non-governmental organizations need to work on establishing a set standard for what safety equipment should be on a boat when they go outside of the reef. One of the top items, besides a life jacket, was a location beacons which is also commonly called an Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB). When activated, an EPIRB will inform the Coast Guard via satellite of a boat's location so that rescue boats can quickly locate a boat in distress. In addition to the EPIRB, the safety equipment should include a radio, basic tools, flashlight, whistle, and a mirror. The participants in the meeting agreed to develop a standard list of safety equipment that should be on all boats.

4. The 2G phone network needs to be maintained by FSM Telecom. While the 3G/4G networks provide better service when near a cell phone tower, the 2G network's signal goes almost twice as far. Disabling the 2G phone network would severely limit fishermen's ability to communicate both when they may need to be rescued or when there is a search for a fisherman in distress.

It was agreed by those presenting and participating in the meeting that more work needs to be done regarding safety at sea. The club would like to thank all those who participated in the meeting, especially NORMA and its Executive Director, for progressing this issue of making fishing safer for everyone.

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Bill Jaynes  
Managing Editor

# POPA conducts training on police integrity

*Pohnpei Office of the Public Auditor*

**Kolonia, Pohnpei: September 9, 2020,** the Pohnpei Office of the Public Auditor (POPA), Compliance Investigation Division (CID) conducted workshops on integrity, fraud and corruption for the 2020 Pohnpei Police Academy at the Pohnpei State Department of Public Safety (DPS). The invitation was sent from the Director of DPS, Patrick Carl for POPA to conduct a class instruction on corruption and fraud to the police academy trainees so they may have a better understanding and knowledge in the subject when they are conducting their duties on a daily basis.

Since majority of the police officers are entry level trainees, the workshop was geared in two phases: The first part was for them to learn the impacts of fraud and how to prevent it by leading and instilling integrity, accountability and ethical conduct in their daily work activities. The other phase was focusing on how to detect and investigate fraud.

The law enforcement and police agencies had been commonly viewed as one of the most vulnerable and exposed public agencies to the risk of fraud and corruption. Police Officers are the first responders to crimes occurred in the Pohnpei State jurisdiction. They should be upholding the law and ensuring that they

strive to do the right thing in all situations to keep the public a safer place which also include discouragement of fraud. They should be leading by example to increase the public confidence and trust in their work. The training went well with active participation from the attendees.

POPA and DPS along with the Office of the Attorney General currently has a signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in place to collaborate and joint forces in combating fraud and corruption.

POPA Investigative Advisor, Sophia Pretrick and staff investigators Trinia Eliou and Derek Dainard of the CID conducted the workshop.



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# FSM citizen repatriation efforts to begin with COVID-19 free jurisdictions

*FSM Information Services*

**PALIKIR, Pohnpei**—On September 22nd, 2020, His Excellency David W. Panuelo—President of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM)—and the Honorable Yosiwo P. George, Vice President of the FSM, after several days of fruitful and in-depth engagements with the FSM COVID-19 Task Force, announced that the Nation’s repatriation efforts will begin with FSM citizens stranded in COVID-19 free jurisdictions. The President instructed the Chair of the COVID-19 Task Force and Secretary of the Department of Health & Social Affairs, the Honorable Livingston A. Taulung, to proceed with focusing all repatriation-related efforts on bringing home FSM citizens stranded in the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

The President described that the repatriation of citizens from COVID-19 free jurisdictions, such as the Marshall Islands, would be the ultimate test in assessing the Nation’s capacity to implement repatriation from COVID-19 affected jurisdictions, such as the U.S. Territory of Guam. By treating the Marshall Islands as a COVID-19 affected jurisdiction for repatriation purposes, the President explained, the FSM will be able to fully play out a live and genuine return-scenario, but without the actual threat of COVID-19 arriving into the Nation. Thus, if there are any more gaps or weaknesses in the adopted standard operating procedures, they would be identified and fixed without the risk of exposure to COVID-19.

“This Pandemic has been an extended hardship—emotionally, mentally, and financially—for our citizens stranded abroad and for our citizens at home,” the President said in a statement. “I appreciate and recognize that our citizens in the FSM support maintaining the closure of our border until such a time that the Pandemic is no longer a threat. I also recognize that our citizens stranded abroad are desperate to return home. I remain committed

towards accomplishing the dual goals of preventing COVID-19’s entry into the FSM while ensuring the safe return of our citizens genuinely stranded abroad.”

“I appreciate and understand the sacrifices our citizens abroad in Guam and Hawaii have been making, either in the process of waiting to come home or by helping friends, family, and even strangers who are stranded. The Government continues to support citizens stranded abroad in multiple forms, totaling more than \$800,000 of assistance, whether it’s through per diem and lodging provided by MiCare to medical patients, financial support to students, or the Stranded Citizens financial package, which has helped more than 250 of our citizens. We remain committed to exploring additional means of support where possible.”

“With the rising cases of COVID-19 in Guam and around the world, with nearly one million deaths globally, and more than 200,000 in the United States, 35 of which are in Guam, FSM citizens deserve the absolute best system in place to keep them safe from the virus. There’s no better test than real life, no better practice than the real thing, and I am confident that repatriation of our citizens stranded in the Marshall Islands will demonstrate, without any shadow of a doubt, on whether or not we are truly ready to begin the repatriation of our citizens stranded in COVID-19 affected countries and territories.”

To the knowledge of the FSM National Government, approximately 40 FSM citizens are stranded in the Marshall Islands, the bulk of whom are residents of Pohnpei State and Chuuk State. For comparison, it is to the knowledge of the FSM National Government that approximately 297 citizens are genuinely stranded on Guam, of whom 134 are residents of Pohnpei State, 120 are residents of Chuuk State, 13 are residents of Kosrae State, and 30 are residents of Yap State.

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Friday, October 16, 2020**

# Knight wins the day at 13th Annual Blue Nile Fishing tournament

By Pohnpei Fishing Club

September 26, 2020

**Pohnpei**—Members of the Pohnpei Fishing Club braved the blazingly, sunshiny day today for the 13th annual Blue Nile fishing tournament. “It was good to have a tournament even if the fish are socially distancing from our boats,” commented Steve Finnen, the Club’s Secretary. This was the club’s first tournament this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic arrangements.

Sponsors for the tournament were Blue Nile, Ocean View West Wing, Arnold’s, and David Panuelo. Ambros Inc./Budweiser provided a 12 pack of Budweiser to each boat that weighed in at the end of the tournament.

Chris Knight won the \$600 top prize for biggest fish overall, a beautiful 87 pound Yellow Fin Tuna.

Joseph W. Ferdinand landed the second biggest fish, a 24 pound Yellow Fin,

winning \$400 and a \$25 Ocean View gift certificate. Marvey Spencer landed a 23.5 pound Yellow Fin for third place of \$300 cash and a \$25 Ocean View gift certificate. Oliver Hawley nabbed a 22.5 pound wahoo for fourth prize of \$200 and a \$50 Arnold’s gift certificate. Dicklet Paul landed yet another Yellow Fin Tuna. At 21.5 pounds, it was enough to land him the fifth place prize of \$125 and a \$50 Arnold’s gift certificate.

All anglers who won species prizes were awarded \$100 cash and \$25 Blue Nile gift certificates. Franklino Barnabas and Kenty Spencer caught twin 20 pound Yellow Fins and so had to split the cash for the first prize. Each still received a gift certificate. Sabino Youngstrom caught a 16 pound wahoo winning second prize. Third was Patricia Edwin for her 13 pound Skipjack tuna. Fourth place was Michelle San Nicolas for her nine pound Barracuda.

Two top prizes were awarded to the top lady anglers. Each received \$50 gift

certificates and cash prizes. Michelle San Nicolas caught a 21 pound Wahoo for the first place cash prize of \$150. Trishia Panuelo’s Wahoo was 14 pounds earning her the second prize of \$100.

Dave Spencer, Jr took first and second place prizes in the junior angler category, taking home a total of \$150 cash and \$50 in Blue Nile gift certificates. Both of his fish were Yellow Fin. One was 21.5 pounds and the other was 18.5 pounds.

The Pohnpei Library sold hot dogs and hamburgers to help them buy more books. Check out their revamped kid’s section which also received a nice donation from the U.S. Embassy. Thanks to Uta, Cheryl and Mahbel for helping out.

Also we want to thank Bill, Virginia, Cel and all our volunteers on the dock and in the boom truck. Additionally thanks to Mangrove Bay for hosting us. We appreciate the use of the facility.

The club is trying to schedule one or



two more tournaments this year. Details on those will be released as information becomes available. Remember a membership to the Fishing Club this year is good for 2021 also.

## ...Trafficking Conference

Continued from front page

FSM Congress, including \$125,000 for Anti-Human Trafficking Enforcement, Campaigning, and Investigation; \$100,000 for Victim Shelter Services; \$50,000 for the Victim Shelter in Chuuk State; and \$150,000 for the construction of Anti-Trafficking Shelters in Pohnpei, Yap, and Kosrae.

Upon the closing of the 2nd Annual Anti-Human Trafficking Conference, President Panuelo made the following remarks: “My fellow Micronesians—so long as human trafficking exists in any form in this Paradise in Our Backyards we will be unable to authoritatively say that we epitomize the Pacific Way of respect for others. I want us all to think sincerely about these following questions. How many of us in Pohnpei know someone who has been taken to a boat in Dekehtik? How many of us have laughed at a joke about bananas? How many of us understand that, when there is a joke about bananas, it is not at all a reference to the fruit, but a reference to behavior, frequently one done under some form of duress, including economic hardship, that harms our family and neighbors, predominantly women?”

“It is so often considered to be a taboo

for Micronesians to explicitly talk about sensitive matters. We do not talk about sex or sexual relations, in nearly any form, including the difference between a healthy relationship and an abusive relationship, or the distinction between consent and force. The fact I have said these words at all will shock some of you, despite the fact that our large families are evidence we all know romantic relationships exist, and despite the fact that we have entire vernacular dedicated to joking about it indirectly. One of the first things a child learns in a healthy family is trust. What does it mean for our society if someone cannot trust that their feelings and experiences are mentionable, as well as manageable?”

“I don’t say this to be shocking. I say this so as to point out that the elephant in our proverbial room is that human trafficking, in the form of prostitution, as well as in the forms of child labor and wage slavery, are genuinely real in our islands—and we know it is true, even if it is deeply uncomfortable to acknowledge it, because to say so is to confront it. But such confrontation is crucial in order to overcome these evils and transform our Nation into the Paradise it so deserves to be.”

“My fellow Micronesians, I reject the notion that a topic is so taboo that we forego talking about it if it means that our own family and community members are

hurt. Feelings are mentionable.

Experiences are mentionable. It is by mentioning our feelings and mentioning our experiences that we can manage them, that we can demonstrate that a victim of human trafficking is not broken or damaged or wrong for having been exploited. It is also by being steadfast in our commitment to the truth, whether it’s scientific truth, historical truth, or personal truth, that we can identify cases of human trafficking in our communities, and protect victims and prosecute perpetrators to the fullest extent of the law.”

“To be extraordinarily clear: our FSM Department of Justice has the full and

total support of Vice President George and I to ensure justice is served for all who call the FSM their home. I appreciate very much that this 2nd Annual Anti-Human Trafficking Conference has brought the whole of our community together to discuss this issue. I encourage us all to maintain our activeness in tackling human trafficking, because we need to work together to demonstrate a total rejection of this evil. Let us demonstrate the Pacific Way by showing that respect for others means protecting and serving our families and our communities, that no woman or child will be exploited, and that every person who seeks to minimize the value of another human being by exploiting their body will be given their due justice.”





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# Congress again debating bill to transfer ownership of Pohnpei spur of HANTRU-1 fiber optic line

## FSMTC again objects to the move calling it unconstitutional

By *Bill Jaynes*  
The Kaselehlie Press

October 3, 2020

**FSM**—In August of this year, FSM President David Panuelo transmitted a bill to the FSM Congress that among other things seeks to transfer ownership of the Pohnpei Spur from the HANTRU-1 fiber optic line from FSM Telecommunications Corporation (FSMTC or Telecom) to FSM Telecommunications Cable Corporation (FSMT Cable).

It's not a new idea and many of FSMTC's objections to the proposal are similar to when the concept was raised before. Despite objections and claims to the contrary, FSMTC's CEO Fredy Perman says that it is not opposed to competition. "Competition is coming," he said. "That's a fact and we're okay with that but it should be fair competition.

He says that if the bill passes it would amount to an unconstitutional seizure by the National Government of its assets that essentially "disenfranchises all of the (FSM) States" each of which is a stakeholder in FSMTC.

Perman says that the plan to transfer ownership of the Pohnpei spur makes an assumption that has not been verified that the United States Rural Utility Service (RUS) would be willing to transfer FSMTC's debt for the Pohnpei spur of the HANTRU-1 to FSMT Cable. As did his predecessor in the previous FSM Administration, FSM Secretary for Transportation, Communication, and Infrastructure (TC&I) Carl Apis testified in front of the Congress Committee for TC&I that the US had indicated its willingness to transfer the balance of FSMTC's loan for the Pohnpei spur to FSMT Cable which would take Telecom off the hook for the \$12 million RUS loan it took for the Pohnpei spur in 2009. Perman asked for written documentation of the assertion. He said that the answer was only that they "have their sources".

To date Telecom has paid nearly \$10 million dollars to RUS on the loan for the Pohnpei spur since 2009. The loan matures in February 2032. Nearly \$4 million of the amount paid has applied to the principal. \$6 million was for interest. The balance is currently over \$8 million. Perman says that the bill before Congress makes no effort to reimburse FSMTC any portion of the \$10 million in amortization it has already paid on the loan. Further, he

claims that removing FSMTC's ownership stake means that FSMTC will end up having to pay more than it already does for cable access on an asset that it already has an interest stake in to a corporation that offers no added value.

Congress established FSMT Cable in response to requirements of the grant from the World Bank which paid for lines to connect Yap and Chuuk. FSMT Cable serves as an Open Access Entity ostensibly to provide a mechanism for competition for telecommunications services to exist in the FSM in line with World Bank's requirements. FSMTC would pay FSMT Cable for bandwidth access on the lines as would any potential competitor. At least in theory, since 2014 the FSM has been open to telecommunications competitors but until recently no competitors have made any advances into the FSM's difficult market leaving FSM as the sole customer of FSMT Cable since it came into existence.

Within the last year, however, TRA, the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority that was also established by Congress, has issued licenses to two potential competitors. A company called Boom applied for a license to operate only in Yap but has not yet established a presence there. That company would utilize the fiber optic line that connects Yap to the rest of the world in order to provide its services. If they do get started in Yap, the company would be required to pay access fees to FSMT Cable because FSMT Cable owns the Yap line.

TRA also issued a license to Kacific which is already providing satellite based service in Pohnpei. Due to the narrow beam of the satellite service they provide, it has the capacity to provide service only to Pohnpei, Kosrae, and Chuuk and not to Yap. Because Kacific will be using its own satellite and not the fiber optic line, it will not have to pay any fees to FSMT Cable.

Perman says that when all of the negotiating happened that ended with the establishment of FSMT Cable and TRA, FSMTC was told that no entrant would be allowed to "cherry pick" FSM's telecommunications market. But he says that TRA's first two licenses already allow the new competitors to serve small segments of the market while FSMTC is still required to offer services to all aspects of FSM's market at an equitable rate whether or not a small segment of the market can actually pay for itself.

"Through a January 2019 binding

agreement called an Indefeasible Rights of Use (IRU) deed, the FSM National Government, FSMT Cable, and FSMTC agreed that FSMTC would retain ownership of the HANTRU-1 Pohnpei spur but FSMT Cable would retain usage rights," the press release from the Office of the President on the transmittal of the proposed bill said. Two paragraphs later the press release quotes from the President's letter to FSM Congress Speaker Wesley Simina. "The refusal to act in accordance with the terms of the IRU Deed undermines the telecommunications sector, and puts at risk the [EMC] project which will provide a cable connection to Kosrae."

The transfer of ownership of the Pohnpei spur of the HANTRU-1 line to FSMT Cable would violate the IRU as it was described in the President's press release. What the President proposes to do with his proposed package of legislation is to change the agreement to one more palatable to the World Bank and not to correct some current violation of the terms of the existing IRU Deed.

"As this agreement is increasingly challenged by various stakeholders internally, and increasingly recognized by the World Bank (the primary donor behind the Digital FSM project) as a potential setback, the Panuelo-George administration has taken the view that transferring legal ownership of the HANTRU-1 Pohnpei spur to FSMT Cable is required for the State of Kosrae to eventually receive improved internet infrastructure via the EMC... It also undermines the development of a free and open competitive and customer-oriented telecommunications market, and ongoing World Bank grants for the Fiber to the Home project."

The EMC, the East Micronesia Cable is intended to connect the Republic of Kiribati to Pohnpei with a spur to the State of Kosrae and a spur to the Republic of Nauru that would complete the connection of all FSM States to a fiber optic line for telecommunication.

Perman says that Congress shouldn't be overly anxious to give away the FSM's sovereignty over its telecommunications. He says that they should carefully consider whether in the long run scrambling to take free money will ultimately cost the FSM, its States and its customers more and whether it could also end in the collapse of FSM's own operator—sort of like throwing away the bird in the hand for the two potentially better ones in the bush and losing them all

in the process.

The COVID-19 pandemic is already wreaking havoc on FSMTC revenue streams. In a March letter to President Panuelo, Perman told the President that in the previous year FSMTC has earned \$1.2 million in roaming fees which were entirely generated by travelers to the FSM. With the FSM travel restrictions, that market completely dried up leaving Telecom scrambling to pay its bills. Perman wrote that he has already asked RUS to consider debt relief on its two loans to FSMTC or at least forgiveness of interest during the pandemic shut down. He told the President that the Telecom board had also decided that it would not pay FSMT Cable for access fees during the crisis. He also asked the President to consider a hiatus on GRT payments. FSMTC paid more the \$400,000 for that tax in the previous fiscal year.

In a separate interview, Perman said that the FSM seemed to think that the revenue lost in roaming charges would be made up as customers made a move toward online meetings instead of traveling. But he said they found out that the Internet service they were already paying for was sufficient for the online meetings. Big customers have not had to ramp up their bandwidth so no additional revenue has been realized there.

At the same time, FSMTC has presented invoices for promised payments to FSMT Cable Corporation in the amount of nearly a million dollars. The biggest portion of that bill was an invoice in May for a promised payment of nearly \$830,000 as a 50 percent share of Pohnpei spur amortization from March 2018 to April 2020. FSMT Cable has not paid that bill either.

The two entities took their payment grievances to TRA which is the regulator. But TRA told them that it has no jurisdiction in the matter and suggested that the two companies take their issues to the FSM Supreme Court.

That may well be the next step.

The TC&I Committee of the 21st FSM Congress, chaired by Senator Victor Goulard has held several hearings since President Panuelo transmitted the bill in August. As of this writing, no recommendation has yet been made for consideration on the floor.

# ...Charges

Continued from front page

charges claim that when she “willfully” blocked the “road” it obstructed the free movement and enjoyment of the other residents to access their home and amounts to the crime of “Deprivation of Rights” which is punishable by imprisonment for not more than 10 years. DOJ also charged her with the crime of “Obstructing administration of law or other government function” because the car allegedly obstructed the First Lady of the FSM, Patricia Edwin from discharging her official duty which is punishable by imprisonment of not more than one year.

Oliver’s initial hearing is scheduled at the FSM Supreme Court at 11:00 on Monday morning. She is innocent unless the court, after a fair hearing rules that she is guilty.

The affidavit that accompanied the DOJ’s criminal charges said that National Police responded to the scene at just before 1:00 in the afternoon. The responding officers said that they found Norleen Oliver’s car to be blocking the driveway that allows access to the First Lady’s family residence. They reported that they spoke to Oliver’s husband who

said that Oliver had parked the vehicle where it was in order to block planned road construction on the driveway that crosses her land. When officers returned to the office, Acting Chief of Police Johnny Santos directed them to remove and impound the vehicle on instructions from Attorney General Joses Gallen.

When officers returned to take care of that task they found that Norleen Oliver was at home. They asked her to remove the vehicle but she told them that where she had parked the car was her land. When the officers told her that her vehicle was blocking the First Lady’s access to her family land she said that her family told her that Edwin had driven around her vehicle earlier and was able to access her land.

The officers told her that she would have to move her vehicle or they would have to impound it. She refused and at 8 PM “she allowed the officers to remove her vehicle from where it was parked.”

The vehicle is still in the possession of the FSM National Government.

On the same day that the First Lady’s attorney filed the civil action against Norleen Oliver, he also filed a motion for a Temporary Restraining Order, asking the Court to bar Oliver from again obstructing access to Edwin’s property. In it he asked the Court to waive bond on the TRO because the First Lady is “indigent”.

In a letter to Pohnpei Director of the Department of Public Safety Patrick Carl sent also to the Governor, the Speaker of the Pohnpei Legislature, and the Chairman of the Legislature’s Committee on Judicial and Governmental Operations, the First Lady complained of the actions of the Pohnpei State Police in the matter. She particularly complained that Acting Police Chief John Augustine had not acted to arrest Norleen Oliver for obstructing the road and had told her that Oliver had broken no laws. She claimed in the letter that State Police Officers instead “were standing guard at the access road to make sure that no one interferes with Ms. Oliver’s blocking vehicle.” She wrote that Augustine, who is related to Oliver told her that she needed to stop calling police and “to fend myself and my family (wia ahi koahiek)...I felt that the Acting Chief of Police wanted me to resolve the matter personally with Ms. Oliver which given the options during the time of the week (a Friday), was for me to physically fight Norleen so the car blocking the road to my family could be opened again.”

“I believe that Mr. Augustine needs to be reminded to mind his job with fairness and to be mindful of the many that could be hurt due to bad decisions,” she wrote. “I am able to hire an expensive attorney but this luxury is not available to most Pohnpei residents.”

On the First Lady’s civil action, Norleen Oliver’s attorney filed a counter claim. It claims that Oliver wrote President Panuelo asking him to consult with her family before executing pavement project on her land because of fears that it would pose a risk to the only drinking water source that the family has. It claims that the President did not respond and instead wrote a hand written note to the FSM Attorney General saying that “We will proceed with the project as land belonging to Trish/First Lady is landlocked.”

The counter claim says that FSM National Police confiscated her vehicle without any search or arrest warrants.

The first cause of action in the counter claim at the Pohnpei Supreme Court is for Trespass since the road and its planned expansion is allegedly mostly contained within the boundaries of Norleen Oliver’s property.

The second cause of action in the counter claim is Abuse of Public Power. It claims that the First Lady “has used the Office of the President of the Federated States of Micronesia to intimidate and harass the Defendant/Counter-Plaintiff even to the point of having the Defendant/Counter-Plaintiff’s car unlawfully removed from her own property without a warrant.”

In her civil action, Edwin claimed that there exists either a contract between her family and the Oliver family that allows the road to go through the Oliver land or an easement of prescription. She said that she is having her attorney search for the agreement.

Edwin’s attorney responded that there is no contract and that Pohnpei has no laws allowing for easements without compensation.

# Citing COVID-19 exposure, FSM Consulate in Guam moves to remote work only

FSM Information Services

**HARMON, Guam**—On September 25th, 2020, the Consulate of the Federated States of Micronesia in the U.S. Territory of Guam announced that, despite the Government of Guam’s recent laxation on some components of its lockdown, it will be moving towards providing all citizen services remotely.

The Honorable Teresa Filepin, Consul General of the FSM to Guam, requested permission from the FSM Department of Foreign Affairs for the closure of in-person services due to multiple direct contacts with COVID-19 infected individuals and/or their immediate family members who reside with them.

Even when the Government instituted a total lockdown, the Consulate continued to provide citizens with crucial assistance ranging from passport applications to inquiries regarding FSM financial assistance. Other services, such as certificates of identity, notary public, public unemployment assistance, delivery of supplies, mails, payments, ground arrangements for repatriation, and assistance to Members of Congress for their attendance in Congressional Sessions, were ongoing.

“Although our main service windows were closed to the general public since the first week of lockdown,” Consul General Filepin said, “In practice we were still assisting on average 25 visitors a day through our back and side doors.”

The Consulate advised that, on September 23rd, 2020, a minimum of four (4) individuals, either with a confirmed case of COVID-19, and/or a direct household member of an individual with COVID-19, interacted with Consulate staff.

“I cannot, in good conscience, continue to subject my staff to this type of hazardous environment,” the Consul General said. “We will divert calls to our mobile phones again and work remotely from home.”

His Excellency David W. Panuelo, President of the FSM, praised Consul General Filepin and her staff for their continued support to the stranded citizens in Guam, in addition to ongoing services to the FSM community at large. “I thoroughly endorse the Consul General’s request to shutdown the Consulate until such a time that it can be confirmed that the Consulate is clean from COVID-19, and that all staff have been tested for the virus. I appreciate that the decision to close down the Consulate at this time will not be popular with our citizens abroad, but I trust everyone will understand that the decision is predicated on the need to keep our citizens safe from the virus.”



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# Japan officially hands over equipment it donated to Pohnpei government in ceremony

By *Bill Jaynes*  
The Kaselehlie Press

September 23, 2020

**Pohnpei**—This morning, Pohnpei Governor Reed Oliver, his cabinet members, and Lt. Governor Feliciano Perman met with Ambassador of Japan to the Federated States of Micronesia Sobashima Hidenobu for a handover ceremony of equipment donated by the Government of Japan under its Economic and Social Development Program of 2016.

The donated equipment began to arrive in Pohnpei in July of this year and much of it has already begun to be put to use. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, individual hand-over ceremonies were not held for each piece of donated equipment. The total amount Japan committed to the FSM was 350 million Japanese Yen, approximately \$3.2 million US dollars. Approximately 80 million Yen or \$740,000 was allocated for use in each of the four FSM States.

The donations included one biological

coagulation analyzer for use by the Department of Health Services. The analyzer can quickly provide measurement of blood platelet levels for a variety of medical uses at the hospital.

The donations also included two water tank trucks for use by the Department of Public Safety. The Departments of Resources and Development and the Environmental Protection Agency each received a wood chipper. The Pohnpei Transportation Authority also received two dump trucks and four excavators.

During the handover ceremony, slides of each piece of machinery were displayed rather than having each item of equipment at the site of the ceremony which has previously been done.

“We understand that the 4 excavators have already been mobilized to construct quarantine facilities in preparation for receiving the Pohnpei citizens and residents from abroad for the first time since March this year, and we are glad that Japan’s cooperation is effectively and efficiently utilized to counter COVID-19, said Ambassador Hidenobu. “I hope that



the equipment procured from Japan will contribute to sustainable economic and social development of Pohnpei State,” he concluded.

Governor Reed Oliver profusely thanked the government of Japan for its continuous assistance to the people of Pohnpei.

After the ceremony, Chief of Staff Suzanne Lowe Gallen said that it is important to note that the new equipment is not intended to supplant equipment already owned and operated by the private sector but to increase capacity.

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# Diverse support behind Yap’s innovative reading program

*Habele*

**Colonia, Yap-** Starting this fall, “Young Island Readers” offers all children born on Yap one, new, age-appropriate book each month until their fifth birthday. Books are mailed, individually wrapped, to the family’s post office box.

This is possible through a partnership between Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library and Habele. The Imagination Library offers children free, home-delivered books through collaborations with local nonprofits. In Micronesia, Habele is that local partner. In 2020, the program will be piloted in Yap with the vision to expand across all FSM States in the coming years.

To raise its share of the costs of books and postage, Habele began fundraising in mid-summer. The response was unprecedented. At the head of the line was Roger Gale who served as the Director of Friends of Micronesia in the mid 1970s. The group fought tirelessly for the United States to grant the people of the TTPI the opportunity for self-determination. Five decades later, Gale remains a committed supporter of the people of Micronesia.

When he learned about Young Island Readers Gale pledged to personally match all donations in 2020. This generosity came as no surprise to Micronesians who know Gale well.

“Many present and past leaders in the Micronesian region—Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of the Marshall Islands, and Republic of Palau and RMI—owe a considerable debt of gratitude to Professor Roger Gale for training, shaping their political minds, and augmenting their political careers.” explained Hon. Asterio R Takesy, former Micronesian Ambassador to the United States, and a student of Professor Gale’s in the early 1970s.

“I’ve come to respect him even more for continuing to support Micronesians in their search for a place in the sun,” continued Ambassador Takesy, who now leads the FSM’s Joint Committee on Compact Review and Planning.

Habele’s individual donors -mostly former Peace Corps volunteers and other Americans with a personal connection to the islands- stepped up to the challenge of Gale’s generous matching offer. So did the Matson Foundation, the philanthropic arm of the Hawaii-based shipping company that serves ports throughout Micronesia and across the Pacific.

Young Island Readers is also generating investment and advocacy closer to home. The College of Micronesia-

FSM recognized the direct, innovative and efficient model of the universal program with a \$15,000 contribution.

“These young readers are COM-FSM’s class of 2035,” explained Caroline Kocel, Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness and Quality Assurance. “This is a direct, high yield investment in our future students by the college, and a manifestation of its commitment to the success of the FSM as embodied in its mission.”

With investments in the program made, and a partnership with Yap Catholic High School to help sign up newborns across Yap secured, Young Island Readers aims to serve as a direct, efficient, and empowering model for developing early literacy across the FSM.



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# TUNE IN TO POHNPEI'S #1 RADIO



## The FSM National Government's FY 2021 budget slimmer than previous

*FSM Information Services*

**PALIKIR, Pohnpei**—On September 29th, 2020, His Excellency David W. Panuelo—President of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM)—signed into Public Law the budget for Fiscal Year (FY) 2021, which began on October 1st, 2020. Due to the economic uncertainty posed by the COVID-19 Pandemic, the FY 2021 budget reflects a concerted effort to maintain the Nation's capacity to provide essential services whilst ensuring that bureaucratic bloat is eliminated. Thus, while the FSM National Government's FY 2021 budget is \$63,760,476 (compared to \$71,808,353 for FY 2020), FSM citizens will only see an increase in services through the retention of all contemporary Government programming and the development and implementation of the Office of Veterans Affairs.



International Organization for Migration (IOM)  
The UN Migration Agency

Position Title **National Programme Officer (DRR)**  
Duty Station **Pohnpei, FSM**  
Classification **National Officer Staff, NOA Step 1**  
Contract **Special Short Term, Nine months with possibility of extension**  
Start **ASAP**  
Closing **October 30 2020**

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IOM is committed to a diverse and inclusive environment.

### Context:

Under the overall supervision of the Chief of Mission and the direct supervision of the DRR Programme Coordinator, the successful candidate will assist in implementing programme activities, coordinating with local stakeholders, developing programme Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials tailored to the local context, facilitating community events and trainings, and overseeing community mitigation projects in the areas of food security, WASH, and emergency shelter.

### Core Functions / Responsibilities:

1. Assist the PM in the coordination, implementation, monitoring and timely reporting of activities
2. Liaise and coordinate with government counterparts, community leaders and partner organizations
3. Collect and verify documents
4. Plan, organize and conduct workshops, trainings and focus group discussions
5. Assist in producing and translating public information

### Required Education:

- Masters degree in relevant field (education, communication, public health, etc.) OR
- University degree in relevant field with at least two years of relevant professional experience

### Experience:

- Disaster Risk Reduction or Emergency management
- Communication, coordination, facilitation of meetings, community outreach
- Public information, education or training is advantageous
- Data collection, office software packages

### Language:

Fluent in English and Pohnpeian

### Values and competencies:

- Inclusion and respect for diversity
- Integrity, transparency, professionalism
- Teamwork, communication
- Delivering results, accountability
- Leadership, strategic thinking

### Other information:

Any offer made to the candidate in relation to this vacancy notice is subject to funding confirmation.

Appointment will be subject to certification that the candidate is medically fit for appointment and verification of residency, visa and authorizations by the concerned Government, where applicable.

Only candidates residing in either the country of the duty station or from a location in a neighbouring country that is within commuting distance of the duty station will be considered. In all cases, a prerequisite for taking up the position is legal residency in the country of the duty station, or in the neighbouring country located within commuting distance, and work permit, as applicable.

### How to Apply:

- Electronic application to HR [micronesia@iom.int](mailto:micronesia@iom.int) OR in person drop-off at Pohnpei Office by October 30
- Cover letter (1 page), CV, school credentials, 3 references

For the COMPLETE application and more information, please visit our Facebook @IOMMicronesia and search "VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT IN FSM, POHNPEI"

The FSM National Government's FY 2021 budget is \$63,760,467. The Executive Branch's FY 2021 budget includes \$22,664,212 for its operations, which is approximately one and a half million dollars lower than the FY 2020 budget of \$24,115,623. The Legislative Branch includes \$5,745,625 for its operations, which is nearly two million dollars lower than the FY 2020 budget of \$7,675,860. The Judicial Branch's FY 2021 budget includes \$1,549,969 for its operations, which is nearly two hundred thousand dollars lower than the FY 2020 budget of \$1,724,023.

While the great bulk of the budget remains consistent with previous fiscal years to provide essential services to the Nation's citizens, differences include funding the Office of Personnel (previously under the Department of Finance & Administration and the Office of the President respectively) as a separate standalone entity, so as to better empower the office to fulfill its mandate, as well as the development of a new Office of Veterans Affairs.

Other highlights in the budget include the appropriation of \$13,823,696 for capital improvements, development programs, and human resources development. Beyond ongoing support to the College of Micronesia-FSM and the FSM Fisheries & Maritime Institute, the FY 2021 budget includes \$661,713 for developing and implementing a National Social Indicators Survey, as well as \$320,812 for the Localization of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals in the FSM, and \$112,740 for "Assessment & Research to revive the [National Minimum Competency Test]", historically the Nation's primary means of meaningfully comparing primary and secondary school student performance in areas such as English and Mathematics.

In addition to the formal FY 2021 budget's appropriation of resources for essential services, social protection programs which began during the COVID-19 Pandemic, such as the \$16,000,000 FSM Economic Stimulus Package (i.e. the Tourism Sector Mitigation Fund), the \$800,000 FSM Stranded Citizens Relief Fund, and the \$36,000,000 Pandemic Unemployment Assistance Program, remain ongoing. Citizens affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic are encouraged to learn more about these social protection programs at <https://dofa.gov.fm/>

# President Panuelo questions FSM remaining in the Pacific Island Forum if the Micronesia subregion not given fair opportunity to lead

FSM Information Services

**PALIKIR, Pohnpei**—On October 2nd, 2020, His Excellency David W. Panuelo—President of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM)—virtually joined His Excellency Thomas E. Remengesau Jr., President of the Republic of Palau, His Excellency David Kabua, President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, His Excellency Lionel Aingimea, President of the Republic of Nauru, and His Excellency Taneti Maamau, President of the Republic of Kiribati, for the Special Meeting of the Micronesian Presidents’ Summit. This release will cover some of the highlights from the Joint Communique, but will primarily focus on the Micronesian subregion’s unified effort to ensure that the rightful candidate to the position of Secretary-General of the Pacific

Islands Forum (PIF), His Excellency Gerald Zackios, is upheld per the PIF’s Gentleman’s Agreement of rotating leadership on a regional basis.

Citizens unfamiliar with the politics of the PIF may appreciate the following summary. Analogous to the European Union or the African Union, while the MPS is the subregional gathering of Micronesian Presidents, the PIF is the regional entity representing the Pacific Island regions of Micronesia, Melanesia, and Polynesia, and historically has been used to promote regional solidarity



President Panuelo, joined by Secretary Elieisar, describes his views on a topic of import

for sub-regional rotation. Our solidarity and integrity in the PIF are strengthened by this agreement, and to me this issue is non-negotiable. I don’t want this to lead to fragmentation of our PIF, but it might do that. The Micronesian subregion is as much a part of the Pacific as Polynesia or Melanesia, and if they are unable to adhere to the Pacific Way of respect for others, including respect for our Gentleman’s Agreement, then the consequence is that we simply don’t engage with them or allow ourselves to be pushed around by people with ulterior motives in the

PIF Secretariat. If this agreement is not honored, I see no benefit to remaining in the PIF.”

The language in the Joint Communique reads as: “Presidents discussed the selection process and appointment of the next PIF Secretary-General and reiterated their firm commitment to the appointment of Micronesia’s candidate, Ambassador Gerald M. Zackios, in line with the Gentlemen’s Agreement for sub-regional rotation. Presidents agreed that the solidarity and integrity of the PIF is strengthened by the Gentleman’s Agreement, that this issue is one of respect and Pacific Unity, and that it is non-negotiable for Member States. Presidents agreed that in the Pacific Way, a Gentleman’s Agreement is an agreement, and if this agreement is not honored, then the Presidents would see no benefit to remaining in the PIF.”

Amongst the other topics discussed were with regards to regional shipping and airline services, the COVID-19 Pandemic and response thereof, and tackling illegal, unregulated, and unreported fishing, among others. Presidents enthusiastically agreed that the current member states of the Micronesian Shipping Commission (MSC), the FSM, Palau, and Marshall Islands, will extend an invitation to Nauru and Kiribati. President Panuelo advised that he has approved the extraction of the Sea Dragon aerial surveillance vehicle and is working with partners to see the issue swiftly resolved.

to include emphasizing the Pacific’s stance on issues of import at the United Nations. PIF Leaders agreed that the Secretary-General position shall be determined on a rotational basis, yet the last five Secretary-Generals have served from Papua New Guinea, Australia, Samoa, Tuvalu (in an acting capacity), and Papua New Guinea once more, with Micronesia being in the role only once. Per the Gentleman’s Agreement of rotational leadership, it is the Micronesian subregion’s turn, and the MPS submitted their candidate to the PIF in September 2019. The Micronesian candidate is H.E. Gerald Zackios, contemporary Ambassador of the Republic of the Marshall Islands to the United States of America, and former Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The Micronesian Presidents broadly rejected the submission of candidates submitted past the formal deadline, and view the aspiration of any other nominee as one in a series of slights against the Micronesian subregion, such as the Micronesian subregion’s shock and confusion in August 2019 when the only CROP Agency in the North Pacific, the Pacific Island Development Program/ East-West Center, which the Micronesian subregion broadly endorses, and which the FSM specifically views as essential to its development, was threatened to lose its status as a CROP Agency.

“It would be awful if our unity doesn’t materialize into the successful bid for Gerald Zackios,” President Panuelo said at the Leaders Retreat. “Ambassador Zackios is the proper choice per our Gentleman’s Agreement

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devices, and drones; computer hardware and software platforms featuring interactive displays, control systems, and control devices, warning systems, connectivity, onboard computers, and GPS for vehicles, connected vehicles, autonomous, and driverless vehicles; multi camera systems for use in vehicles; GPS navigation and guidance, GPS location tracking, GPS map-displaying and route-calculating device, video-recording, and wireless communication network devices for data or image transmission for vehicles; computer software applications for digital virtual agents, predictive systems, machine learning, cognitive process automation, pattern recognition, character recognition, visual computing applications, knowledge virtualisation, robotics, drones, and unmanned vehicles; computer software and hardware applications for automatic vehicle driving control; computer software and hardware applications for automatic vehicle driving control, autonomous control, navigation, assisted driving of vehicles, and self-driving of vehicles; Vehicle tracking devices comprised of computer software and computer hardware, sensors, transmitters, receivers and global positioning satellite receivers, all for use in connection with vehicle tracking and vehicle monitoring.

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# 3rd Annual My Life, My Responsibility Fishing Tournament is the biggest tournament yet hosted by the conservation community in Pohnpei

September 23, 2020

The Conservation Society of Pohnpei, Pohnpei Menin Katengensed Fish Market, Rare Micronesia, The Nature Conservancy, and Micronesia Conservation Trust hosted the 3rd annual My Life, My Responsibility Fishing Tournament on September 19, 2020. This year's event was the biggest yet with nearly 30 boats and over 70 individuals registered and participated. Congratulations to all the anglers who won prizes with their catch:

The Pohnpei State Coral Reef Monitoring team consisting of Office of Fisheries and

Category	Place	Boat Name	Captain/Angler
Most Species Variety	1 <sup>st</sup>	Ghost Lady	Kostan Cosmas
Giant trevally (oarong)	1 <sup>st</sup>	Tie:	Kostan Cosmas Samuel Thomas
	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Ghost Lady Family Boat	
	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Poahwoahwoah	Welper David
Yellow fin (karangahp)	1 <sup>st</sup>	Hakuna Matata	Dicklet Paul
	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Switson	Ioanis Mihkel
	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Tie:	Melner Isaac Darrel Poll
Skip jack (kasuo)	1 <sup>st</sup>	Loahmehj 28	Dave Mathias
	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Tie:	Dicklet Paul Kostan Cosmas
	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Hakuna Matata Ghost Lady	
Rainbow runner (mwuhnseik)	1 <sup>st</sup>	Ghost Lady	Kostan Cosmas
	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Poahwoahwoa	Welper David
	3 <sup>rd</sup>	NA	NA
Wahoo (ahl)	1 <sup>st</sup>	Reel Addict	Rodney Phillip
	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Reel Addict	Rodney Phillip
	3 <sup>rd</sup>	NA	NA
Mahi mahi (kohko)	1 <sup>st</sup>	Boat	Nelson Bartolome
	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Ghost Lady	Kostan Cosmas
	3 <sup>rd</sup>	NA	NA

Aquaculture, Department of Resources and Development, and Conservation Society of Pohnpei collect fish and coral reef data annually which shows a continual decline in reef fish populations around Pohnpei, with overfishing as one of the major factors. Consequently, over the past three years the conservation community in Pohnpei has hosted fishing tournaments to promote the Ahi Mour, Ahi Pwukoah (My Life, My Responsibility) campaign with a specific focus on reducing pressure on the coastal fisheries by choosing to fish for pelagic fish. The theme for the tournament this year is "Laid Keneinei, Laid Poatoapoot" which aims to relay the message that fishing smart or fishing responsibly will lead to the sustainability of local fisheries.

The hosts for the 3rd annual My Life, My Responsibility Fishing Tournament express their sincere gratitude to all parties that sponsored the event: Congressman Esmond Moses, Caroline Fisheries Corporation, FSM Telecommunication, Pohnpei LP Gas Distributing Company, Marcela Foundation, Pohnpei Utilities Corporation, FSM Vital, and FSM Ridge to Reef Project. Special thanks to all the individuals that registered and participated in the event.



## Opinion Editorial

### Remain true to the original aspiration and press ahead shoulder to shoulder

*Message by H.E. Ambassador Huang Zheng on the 71st Anniversary of the Founding of the People's Republic of China & the 31st Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between China and the FSM*

*October 1st is the National Day of the People's Republic of China.*

71 years ago, the Chinese people wiped out "the hundred year's humiliation" through a heroic and arduous struggle and became the real master of our country by founding the New China, the People's Republic of China. For the past 71 years, especially since the Reform and Opening Up 40 some years ago, huge changes have taken place in China, recording unprecedented rapid development and long-term stability in the history of mankind. China's comprehensive national strength and international influence have been significantly elevated and the Chinese nation has made historic leaps from standing up, growing rich to becoming strong, leading the Socialism with Chinese Characteristics into a new era. China's GDP has increased from 367.9 billion RMB (54.18 billion USD) in 1978 to nearly 100 trillion RMB (14.73 trillion USD) in 2019, with the income per capita raised 25 times and more than 850 million people lifted out of poverty. Though a poor and backward country from the beginning, China has developed to be the world's second largest economy and ranked No.1 in industrialization, trade in goods and foreign exchange reserve among all countries around the globe. In this historical process, the Chinese people's sense of gain, happiness and security has been continuously bolstered. China's human rights conditions have never been better before.

While devoted to the development of herself, China also endeavors to play the role of a builder of global peace, a contributor to global development and a defender of international order.

We have consistently pursued an independent foreign policy of peace and advanced the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence as the fundamental rule of international relations. China has constantly advocated for peaceful resolution to international disputes and equal status of all countries regardless of their differences in size and strength. China's veto power in the United Nations Security Council has always played an important part in

constraining some countries' impulse to go to war and rejecting the logic of power politics. China has become the United Nation's second largest financial donor and the largest contributor to UN Peacekeeping Operations in terms of military among the Five Permanent Members of the UN Security Council, with a total of more than 40,000 officers and soldiers dispatched to participate in 25 peace-keeping operations.

We have firmly adopted the win-win strategy of opening-up and is fostering a new dual-cycle development architecture at home, with the domestic cycle as the mainstay and with domestic and international development reinforcing each other. Being a major engine of global economic growth, China has contributed over 30% of the GDP increase of the entire world every year since 2019, far more than the second largest contributor. China has become the largest trading partner of 130 some countries and regions around the globe and provides a huge market with maximum potential for enterprises of all countries. We advocates joint pursuit of the Belt and Road Initiative and have signed relevant cooperation agreements with more than 170 countries and international organizations, including the FSM, which introduced a new platform for international cooperation and blazed new trails for economic globalization.

We have staunchly supported the UN in playing its central role in international affairs, adhered to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and widely participated the efforts in resolving global hot-spot issues. China directly took part in the design and establishment of the current international order and international system, being the first country to sign the UN Charter. China is committed to building a new type of international relations featuring mutual respect, fairness, justice and win-win cooperation. China is actively involved in global governance, taking responsibility in and making important contribution to, as a major country, the such areas as non-proliferation, addressing climate change, trade liberalization and facilitation, human rights protection and promotion, achievement of UN Millennium Development Goals. The Chinese leaders have always held true to our solemn promise that China will never seek hegemony, expansion, or sphere of influence. China is a determined guardian of multilateralism, democratization of international relations and free trade and opposer to unilateral bullying, power politics and protectionism. We want to join hands with all countries in the world to uphold the values of peace, development, equity, justice, democracy and freedom shared by the whole human race.

The fundamental reason for the spectacular achievements of the New China both in national development and international affairs we've seen ever since its founding 71 years ago is the strong leadership of the Communist Party of China. The leadership status of the CPC is a right choice by history and the Chinese people. Led by the CPC, the Chinese people has found and embarked on a development path of socialism with Chinese characteristics, which conforms to China's national conditions and requirements of the time. On the great journey for the cause of building socialism with Chinese characteristics, the CPC members remain true to our original aspiration and keep our mission firmly in mind, unswervingly seeking happiness for the Chinese people and rejuvenation for the Chinese nation and at the same time contributing wisdom and strength to the mankind's noble cause of peace, development and progress. The world today is going through changes of a kind unseen in a century, faced with ever mounting instability and uncertainties. The CPC keeps standing on the right side of history by, while consolidating and leading the Chinese people to manage well our own business, implementing in depth Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy to work toward building a Community with Shared Future for Humanity, for the uncompromising purpose of safeguarding world peace and promoting common development.

The latest perfect depiction of the CPC members remaining true to our original aspiration and keeping our mission firmly in mind is the great struggle against COVID-19 pandemic. Under the personal command and planning of CPC General Secretary Xi Jinping, by putting people's lives and interests first, with the people all over China united as one, we had curbed the pandemic's initial momentum within a little over one month. Within about three months, we had achieved decisive results in eliminating the virus in Wuhan City and Hubei Province, the once epicenter, securing major strategic victories in the national fight against the pandemic. Now, by coordinating efforts in pandemic prevention and control and in economic and social development, hastening the recovery of production activities and restoring people's normal life pattern, China became the first major economy to return to growth since the outbreak, whose GDP had stabilized and, after a period of decrease, grown by 3.2 percent in the second quarter. It is forecast that China's GDP will increase by 2% for year 2020, which highlights China's role as an important driver of the world growth and the global market confidence. In the mean time, China has been vigorous in fulfilling international responsibilities and advancing the building of a global community of health for all. We have engaged in cooperation

and exchanges with the international community against the pandemic in an open, transparent, and responsible manner and shared the knowledge about the virus and the experience in containing its spread, doing all we can to provide humanitarian aid in support of the global endeavors to stem the pandemic. China has announced twice to provide cash donation to the World Health Organization in the total amount of 50 million USD. Chinese medical experts have had 70 some exchange programs of pandemic control and prevention with counterparts from many countries and international organizations. China has dispatched 34 medical expert teams to 32 countries, sent 283 shipments of assistance to more than 150 countries and 4 international organizations, and provided and exported protective materials to more than 200 countries and regions. China will continue to take a series of measures to press ahead international cooperation against the pandemic, including living up to our words that COVID-19 vaccine development and deployment in China, when available, will be made a global public good. We will take priority in providing the vaccines to developing countries like the FSM through various means, including donation and assistance.

On September 11th, 2020, the 31st anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the PRC and the FSM, Chinese President Xi Jinping and FSM President David W. Panuelo exchanged warm-hearted congratulatory messages. Both heads of state reiterated their important consensus reached during President Panuelo's historic state visit to China last December, which is to develop in length and depth the China-FSM Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and to consolidate our "Great Friendship" on the fundamental bedrock of the One-China Principle. China and the FSM will make concerted efforts to further increase exchanges between our administrative and legislative branches of government, expand cooperation in the areas of trade, investment, agriculture, fishery, infrastructure and tourism within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative, promote people-to-people and sub-national exchanges, and strengthen coordination and mutual support on major international and regional issues. The Chinese side will continue to help the FSM people embark on the path of sustainable development to the best of our ability and make concerted efforts with the FSM side toward overcoming the pandemic, as well as to pursuing the Belt and Road Initiative and building a Community with Shared Future for Humanity, which ultimately leads to an open, inclusive, clean, and beautiful world that enjoys lasting peace, universal security, and common prosperity.

## Opinion Editorial

### A transformative future in the making: World Contraception Day in the Pacific #WCD2020

#### What does a healthy and happy life look like?

For some people, it includes abundant, fresh food. For others, it features economic prosperity that will give them greater opportunities or security. For almost all, it involves love, in some form or other.

Love is one of the characteristics that connects all of humanity. And the ability to let that love translate into a lifetime of milestones – such as finding your soulmate and starting a family – is informed by the universal human right to decide whether, when, where and under what conditions one decides to have children.

The 26th of September marked World Contraception Day. It is a day of education, awareness and celebration, where we highlight available contraceptive methods and encourage every person – and especially young people – to make informed choices regarding their sexual and reproductive health.

The Sustainable Development Goals highlight the importance of universal access to sexual and reproductive health, including family planning and contraceptive choices, as a key driver for poverty reduction and sustainable development. However, across the world, only 76% of women now have their need for family planning satisfied by modern methods. In the Pacific, the reality is far worse: just one in four women have their need for family planning met, which is the lowest rate in the world.

Just as meeting the need for family planning can reduce poverty and facilitate sustainable development, failure to meet these targets undermines our collective efforts to raise the Pacific's standing in terms of health and wellbeing. The issues, and the solutions, lie in understanding two important areas: adolescent fertility rates and sexually-transmitted infections.

A country or region measures adolescent fertility (also known as 'adolescent pregnancy' or 'teenage pregnancy') by calculating the number of births annually per 1,000 adolescents between the ages of 15 and 19. This is also referred to as the adolescent birth rate (ABR). Ideally,

the adolescent birth rate would decrease a little more each year as understanding of family planning and contraceptive access improves among adolescents, but in the Pacific, the adolescent birth rate has actually been increasing over the last 10 years. Today, it stands at 35 births per 1,000 adolescents each year – significantly higher than neighbouring countries like Australia (12 per 1,000), New Zealand (16 per 1,000) or Malaysia (11.5 per 1,000).

Adolescent pregnancy is a serious issue, and one that most people agree must be reduced. Few will agree more fervently than girls themselves, and yet, in the Pacific, nine out of ten sexually active adolescent girls are unable to access the contraceptive services they need. The impact this has on the lives of daughters, sisters, friends and loved ones is serious. When a girl faces the prospect of becoming a mother while still a child herself, she is doing so in a body that is not physiologically developed enough for pregnancy and childbirth. Consequently, she faces a number of heightened pregnancy-related risks, including dying in childbirth, compared to if her experience of pregnancy and childbirth had been delayed until she'd reached adulthood. Furthermore, her baby is also at higher risk of adverse health outcomes including low birth weight and preterm delivery.

Beyond the potential for physical harm, the social stigma faced by pregnant adolescent girls can be long-lasting and severe. A pregnant girl is expected to face the judgment of her family, peers and community, but her pregnancy – or the way people react to her pregnancy – also inhibits her access to education and healthcare. A pregnant girl is much more likely to drop out of school, which dramatically reduces the professional and personal opportunities available in her future, and in the health system, she is likely to face increased risks due to reduced access to respectful prenatal, delivery and postpartum care.

Thankfully, the leadership of governments across the Pacific, in partnership with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the government of Australia, is helping this reality to change through the regional programme, A Transformative Agenda for Women, Adolescents and Youth in the Pacific: Towards Zero Unmet Need for Family Planning, which focuses on achieving 'the three zeros': zero preventable maternal deaths, zero unmet need for family planning, and zero gender-based violence, including all harmful practices. Similarly, a United Nations Pacific Strategy partnership

supported by the government of New Zealand has dedicated funding to ensure young people continue to access sexual reproductive health services, as well as comprehensive sexuality education, also referred to as Family Life Education, within the COVID-19 context in three Pacific countries.

It will be no easy feat to achieve the three zeroes, but Pacific governments have stepped up to the challenge. At the Nairobi Summit of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in 2019, seven Pacific countries – Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Tonga and Samoa – made measurable and action-oriented commitments to improving the lives of women and girls. The positive impact of these commitments can already be identified in the community, just one year later.

Today, over half of women aged 15-49 years in Kiribati who are currently married or in a union have their family planning needs satisfied with modern contraceptive methods – a remarkable improvement from the 2009 level of 35.8%, and one that has been bolstered by the Nairobi Summit commitments. The Solomon Islands government's commitment to strengthen the National Family Planning programme has led to an increasing trend in the utilisation of family planning services, including among young people. Compared to 2018, in 2019 there was a 31% increase in the total number of women currently using modern contraception, and a 34% increase among those under 20 years of age. The success of the programme is also highlighted by the increase in the number of new users of contraception by 21% during the same period, which shows that when access to and education about contraception is available, women will actively seek it.

The benefits of investing in contraceptive services and information extend beyond the purview of adolescent pregnancy – or pregnancy at all, for that matter. When people have access to, and are educated about, contraceptives, the spread of sexually transmitted infections is markedly reduced. This is vital for the health and wellbeing of people across the Pacific, where the prevalence of sexually transmitted infections among youth has been on the rise for the last 10 years.

This highlights the need for accessible, well-resourced and youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services, as well as comprehensive sexuality education that will empower people of all ages to make informed choices regarding their

own health and wellbeing. The evidence is consistent: these strategies are the most effective mechanisms to prevent unintended pregnancy, HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. We must redouble our efforts to change this trajectory.

In these unprecedented times, we must be resolute in our commitment to achieve the three zeroes. COVID-19 is an unprecedented disruption to conventional ways of working, but the Pacific's characteristic resilience in the face of natural disasters and climate change evidences how our region is well-positioned to adapt and overcome in the face of the unexpected. The COVID-19 pandemic has majorly disrupted hospital services globally, and fear of contracting COVID-19 has reduced service utilisation. Projections in Fiji, for example, suggest that if access to short-acting contraceptive methods is reduced by 20% due to COVID-19, this has the potential to lead to 14 additional maternal deaths and 10,449 additional unintended pregnancies. We must sustain uninterrupted distribution of contraceptives across the Pacific to ensure family planning needs are fulfilled by all who want them.

The Pacific's decisive leadership on this issue has the power to plant seeds that will blossom for generations to come. It is already beginning to take place in the positioning of contraceptives and the increased training of health providers. It is reinforced through the development of timely and age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education curricula which empower young people to make informed decisions about their own health and wellbeing. This education, coupled with greater access to family health services, will enable today's adolescent girls to learn, work, and thrive, without the practical and social pressures that come with unintended pregnancy.

The result? Girls and boys alike will mature into adults, who, when they have the time, resources and inclination, can start their families at the right stage in life. And, at last, a new generation of babies is brought into the world... happy, healthy, and wanted.

UNFPA's Pacific Sub-Regional Office supports women and girls in the Pacific to have access to family planning services and modern contraceptive methods through partnership with governments to procure and distribute contraceptives to the last mile and ensure every individual can choose, use and obtain the contraceptive methods they desire to ensure prevention of unintended pregnancies.

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