

FSM President Simina addresses the FSM to announce U.S. signing of "Compact 3" funding law

By **Bill Jaynes**
The Kaselehlie Press

March 10, 2024

Federated States of Micronesia—FSM President Wesley W. Simina addressed the nation today to announce the signing of the Compact Amendments Act of 2023, popularly known as Compact 3, by U.S. President Joe Biden after passage in both the House of Representatives and the United States Senate.

"This officially opens an important next chapter in our enduring partnership with the United States through the Compact of Free Association," President Simina

said. "As many of you know, the path to this day has been longer than expected, and a challenging road that raised concerns about if and when the updated Compact agreements would enter into force. This understandably raised doubt and uncertainty. But in this you can be certain, at the end of the day, the FSM and the U.S. reached an agreement on an outcome that I am confident will benefit both our nations and contribute to greater peace and prosperity for our peoples and to greater security and stability for the Indo-Pacific region and the world."

Acknowledging the contributions of numerous individuals and entities,

President Simina expressed gratitude to the FSM's Joint Committee on Compact Review and Planning (JCRP), the FSM Congress, State governments, and departments, as well as past and present ambassadors, and the U.S. negotiating team. He honored the memory of those who played pivotal roles but are no longer with us, emphasizing the collective effort that led to the historic achievement.

President Simina outlined key provisions of the new agreement saying that the FSM will receive mandatory appropriations of \$140 million annually for sector grants for 20 years beginning with fiscal year 2024. These funds

will bolster various sectors crucial for the FSM's development, including education, healthcare, private sector development, and infrastructure. Moreover, additional mechanisms have been incorporated to address the pressing challenges posed by climate change, ensuring access to emergency assistance and adaptation funding.

The United States will additionally make a total contribution of \$500 million to the FSM Trust Fund.

"The changes made will provide the FSM greater autonomy and control of

[Click here for continuation on page 5](#)

FSM Supreme Court upholds seating of Yoslyn G. Sigrah in FSM Congress

By **Bill Jaynes**
The Kaselehlie Press

March 15, 2024

Pohnpei—As of late this afternoon, it appears that all legal obstacles to the seating of Yoslyn G. Sigrah as Kosrae's At-Large representative to the FSM Congress have been removed. The appeals panel of the FSM Supreme Court made its final ruling this afternoon upholding the trial division's November 2, 2023, declaratory judgment and its November 17, 2023, order granting injunctive relief in Sigrah's cases.

The November 2 ruling said that the FSM Congress violated the Constitution when it refused to seat Yoslyn G. Sigrah as Kosrae's duly elected representative. It also declared that Congress must seat Sigrah at the next session of Congress. The November 17 injunction barred the National Election Director from holding a special election to fill Sigrah's seat after Congress rejected her membership to the body.

[Click here for continuation on page 5](#)



Photo by SPC

International Women's Day INSIDE



POPA management report reveals serious payroll irregularities in Kolonia Town Government

By *Bill Jaynes*
The Kaselehlie Press

March 15, 2024

Kolonia, Pohnpei—The Pohnpei Office of the Public Auditor (POPA) has unearthed serious discrepancies in Kolonia Town government's payroll activities spanning fiscal years 2021 through 2023. POPA, in Management Advisory Report 01-2024, has recommended to the new Kolonia Town government officials that they should "explore all possible avenues available to recover all public funds paid or wrongfully disbursed to employees involved under this illegal scheme, including by any legal means available."

Auditors discovered instances where certain employees were requesting, self-certifying, approving, and disbursing

their own payroll claims during the review period. They noted a lack of evidence of management oversight, review, and monitoring of payroll activities during that time. Several Kolonia Town Government employees were paid salaries exceeding the amount allocated by law for their positions. Fifteen employees received more than 26 biweekly payroll checks each year. Additionally, employees' Social Security and Salaries and Wages taxes were found to be underreported and underpaid during the three-year review period.

The audit presented a table of employees, redacting names and instead labeling them "A" through "O". The table listed the number of paychecks each employee was supposed to receive during the audit period, the actual number of paychecks

received, total salaries paid, amount budgeted for their positions, and the amounts by which the employees exceeded the budget.

For instance, Employee A was supposed to receive 78 paychecks totaling \$31,410 over the three years reviewed. However, Employee A received 300 paychecks amounting to \$77,742.21 during that time, exceeding the rightful amount by \$46,332.21. The smallest overage among the listed employees was an employee due 26 paychecks but received 28, resulting in a total overpayment of \$245.04.

Only three of the 15 employees listed on the chart showed excess salaries of only three digits, while five received amounts five figures higher than they were due. The

remaining employees displayed four-figure overages in pay that were illegally received.

During the three-year period, the Kolonia Town Government had budgeted \$318,607.26 for employee salaries. However, it actually disbursed \$467,011.78, exceeding the legally approved budget by \$148,404.52.

Hollywood producer John Duffy visits Yap High School

Yap Department of Youth and Civic Affairs

March 05, 2024

Toraq, Yap—Chanel Hudson, a student at Yap High School (YHS), expressed her final remarks to Mr. Duffy, stating "I am gonna be more confident," in response to his seminar.

On Tuesday afternoon, March 5th, 2024, Hollywood producer Mr. John Duffy, accompanied by the Department of Youth and Civic Affairs (DYCA) team, visited students at Yap High

School to deliver a motivational seminar. The purpose of his visit was to inspire students to dream big, live courageously, and seize opportunities.

DYCA Director Alex Gilfiley delivered opening remarks, highlighting his bond with Mr. John Duffy and the DYCA team's upcoming documentary film project about Yaps culture, history, and traditions with Mr. Duffy's assistance in sharing his knowledge and expertise in film production.

Throughout the seminar, Mr. Duffy

shared his personal story of growing up, overcoming challenges (e.g. public speaking), and emphasizing the importance of taking advantage of every opportunity (e.g. Agreeing to come to Yap and work on a documentary film). Additionally, he provided insights from his experiences as a film producer in Hollywood and discussed the steps he took to achieve his dream, aiming to inspire students to pursue their aspirations



**the Village
Travel**

**Serving the Islands and
abroad since 1980!**

**Providing your domestic and
international flight arrangements**

**Call us now
for your next trip**

**Tel: (691) 320-2777
921-2777**

Fax: (691) 320-5375

**email: villagetravel@mail.fm
Villagetravel2@gmail.com**

**P.O Box 339
Pohnpei, FM 96941**

Office Hours:

Monday - Friday 8:30am - 4:30pm

The Kaselehlie Press

Your Newspaper for Today and Tomorrow

P.O. Box 2222 Pohnpei, FM 96941
phone: (691) 320-6547
email: Kpress@mail.fm

Bill Jaynes
Managing Editor

**THE NEXT ISSUE OF
THE KASELEHLIE PRESS
WILL BE RELEASED ON:**

April 03, 2024

**Deadline for submission of articles or
advertisements for this issue is the end
of working hours on:**

Monday, April 1, 2024

Governor Joseph addresses state of emergency and financial opportunities in first State of the State Message

By *Bill Jaynes*
The Kaselehlie Press

March 7, 2024

Pohnpei—In his inaugural State of the State address delivered on Thursday, March 7, 2024, at the Pohnpei State Legislature Chamber, Governor Stevenson A. Joseph highlighted both the challenges and



opportunities facing the state. With a focus on recent crises and the state's improved financial outlook, Governor Joseph outlined his administration's priorities and plans for the future.

Acknowledging the severe drought that struck Pohnpei State, Governor Joseph detailed the immediate actions taken to address the crisis. He declared a State of Emergency on January 12, 2024, as the drought escalated, impacting potable water supplies across the region. Additionally, a fire at the Dekehtik dumpsite exacerbated the situation, threatening vital infrastructure and prompting heroic efforts to contain the blaze.

The state faced further challenges as sea-level rise caused damage to coastal regions and outer islands. However, swift assistance from various organizations and countries helped mitigate the effects on affected communities.

Transitioning to governance matters, Governor Joseph emphasized the importance of assembling a capable administration to serve the people effectively. He highlighted the ongoing appointment process for department directors and office administrators, urging legislative support for nominees to ensure seamless operations.

Discussing the state's improved financial prospects, Governor Joseph attributed the

transformation to recent developments, including the renegotiation of the Compact of Free Association and amendments to the FSM Constitution. These changes resulted in a significant increase in financial resources available to Pohnpei State, enabling substantial budgetary growth.

Addressing the impact of increased funding, Governor Joseph stressed the need for accountability and improved performance across government sectors. He underscored the importance of prudent resource allocation and transparent governance to maximize the benefits for the people of Pohnpei.

Looking ahead, Governor Joseph outlined

key priorities, including enhancing food security, reassessing educational policies, and investing in critical infrastructure. He called for collaborative efforts among government stakeholders to realize these objectives and urged a transparent approach to financial management to foster public trust and confidence.

In conclusion, Governor Joseph expressed gratitude to the legislative body for the opportunity to address the state's challenges and opportunities. He invoked blessings for the people of Pohnpei State and emphasized the collective responsibility of leaders to make possible what is necessary for the state's progress and prosperity.

Local entrepreneurs share sustainable business venture with Governor Joseph

Pohnpei Public Information

March 13, 2024

Pohnpei—Local entrepreneurs Mr. Westcott Panuelo, Mr. Aspen Apis, and Mr. Enlet Enlet Jr. paid a courtesy visit to Governor Joseph to introduce their innovative business venture, North Pacific Aqua Trading. The trio shared their vision of establishing a sustainable enterprise centered around the sale of sea cucumbers, harnessing the rich natural resources of our ocean.

North Pacific Aqua Trading aims to leverage the support of COM Land Grants Nursery and technical expertise on sea cucumbers to create a thriving business that aligns with environmental sustainability. The entrepreneurs expressed their commitment to

responsible resource utilization and their desire to contribute positively to the local economy.

During the meeting, the entrepreneurs requested a follow-up session to elaborate further on their business concept and discuss potential collaborations with the Pohnpei State Government. Governor Joseph congratulated the trio for their entrepreneurial spirit, commended their dedication to sustainability, and assured them of his full support.

Governor Joseph shared insights from a prior meeting with COM Land Grant Executive Director Stanley Lorrenij, who hinted at exciting project collaborations on the horizon. The Governor supported the idea of

key personnel from the Pohnpei State Government joining the entrepreneurs' presentation to foster collaboration and

enhance the success of North Pacific Aqua Trading.



Empowering Women: Pohnpei's week of activities for International Women's Day

By *Bill Jaynes*
The Kaselehlie Press

March 8, 2024

Pohnpei—As has become tradition, women's groups in Pohnpei celebrated International Women's Day, not just with a public celebration on March 8 but with a week's worth of activities. This year, the women had even more to celebrate when FSM President Wesley Simina proclaimed March 8 of each year to be a National Holiday for women.

The theme of this year's celebrations was "Invest in Women—Accelerate Progress".

On March 1, the women met for the International World Day of Prayer at Nohnno en Mwomwodiso en Pohnpei Church. That afternoon, they visited the Pohnpei State Hospital where they presented donations of sheets and other important supplies for the hospital. They also visited patients at Genesis Hospital and inmates at the Pohnpei State Jail on that day.

On March 2, the women met at the Kolonia Town Gymnasium for a promotion of inspirational women with displays of traditional knowledge, local cooking, weaving, handicraft making, lei making, and displays of local medicinal herbs. Groups were judged by participation, local ingredients, and local materials used.

March 3 marked the beginning of four days of conferences at the "Tuna Commission" conference room where speakers, including Governor Stevenson A. Joseph, Senator Merlynn Abello-Alfonso, US Ambassador Jennifer Johnson, and Australian Ambassador Jo Cowley addressed the women on a variety of topics. Topics were not confined just to issues that would affect only women, but speakers did lean toward the value of their topics specifically to women's issues.

On the first day, the women heard presentations on people with disabilities, safety and security on domestic violence responses, and victim support from the Department of Public Safety. They heard presentations from the FSM Supreme Court on access to Justice. SPC spoke on the topic of ending violence against women and girls. The first day ended with a presentation on natural disasters

and particularly tsunamis by the FSM weather bureau.

The second day began with a presentation by Dannaly Daniel of the Micronesia Legal Services Corporation on community outreach on gender-based violence. FSM Department of Justice presented on the topics of gender-based violence and human trafficking. Early Childhood Development was the topic of a presentation by FSM Health and Social Affairs. UNICEF gave a presentation on "emotional quotient-intelligence". Pohnpei Social Affairs presented on the topic of reducing family violence. UNDP presented on women's empowerment, and the US Embassy presented on the topics of IOM and inspiring women's advancement through collective action.

FSM MiCare presented on health coverage options to start day three of the seminars. Pohnpei Social Affairs presented on technology gender-based violence. Micronesia Conservation Trust and The Nature Conservancy presented on the topic "Overview of Building Community and Ecosystem Resilience through Gender-Focused, Nature-Based Solutions". In the afternoon, the women heard progress reports from the many women's organizations.

Day four started with a presentation on transshipment activities on the high seas by the "Tuna Commission". It continued with a Pohnpei Health Services presentation on the broad topic of health. FSM Development Banks CEO presented on lending opportunities and financing for women. The Australian Embassy presented on the Australia Awards Scholarship program. The World Bank and the Asian Development bank presented on gender equality in the FSM, and Lucille Apis-Overhoff closed the presentations with a review of the Pohnpei Women's Club Action Plan.

Many people who are not in the know consider the public speeches and dances on the date of the actual International Women's Day to be all that the day is about. But, of course, that day is just the public-facing day for women to celebrate who they are and their achievements over the past year. The day is really just the tip of the iceberg for the organized week of activities and

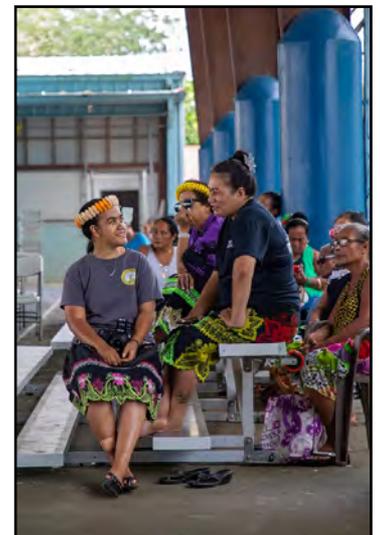
the many, many activities and projects the women are involved in during the rest of the year.

Several speakers gave remarks in the morning, including Kuhmer Biza, Mayor of Kolonia Town, and Marvin T. Yamaguchi, Speaker of the 11th Pohnpei State Legislature. An unannounced speaker also presented during the Friday event, First Lady of the FSM Ancelly Simina. During her presentation, she announced a donation of \$10,000 to the

Pohnpei Women's Club ([see President's press release on her presentation](#)).

The Pohnpei Women's Club announced Sensilynn Kanichy as Ms. Pohnpei International Women's Day Inspirational Woman 2024. Ms. Pohnpei IWD 2023, Lucille Apis-Overhoff, passed the mantle as "Queen" to Kanichy.

After a lunch break, 24 women's groups danced for the hundreds of people in attendance at the event.





...Sigrah

Continued from front page

Esmond Moses, Speaker of the 23rd FSM Congress, filed an appeal of the declaratory judgment, and Ausen Lambert filed an appeal of the injunction putting a stop to the special election to fill Sigrah's seat.

The Supreme Court Appeals panel consisted of FSM Supreme Court Associate Justice Larry Wentworth, and Specially Assigned Justices of the FSM Supreme Court, Cyprian Manmaw, and Jayson Robert.

The appeals justices ruled that while Congress does have the power to add further qualifications other than what are prescribed under the FSM Constitution, it must do so by statute

by passing legislation through the usual process required to pass a new law. "It may not add new qualifications, such as fitness and character, when judging the qualifications of certified winning candidates unless those new qualifications are enacted into law (prescribed) by statute before the candidate's election," a legal opinion of the ruling said.

"Congress, acting as the sole judge, found that Sigrah had been elected to

Congress from Kosrae and that she had the qualifications to be a Congress member that were expressed in the Constitution and that were added by statute but that, when ascertaining Sigrah's character and fitness, based on a detailed list of incidents of misconduct, found her unqualified to be a Congress member," the ruling said. By doing so, Congress violated the FSM Constitution. The Appeals Panel found no errors of law in the November 2, 2023, ruling and therefore upheld it.

...Compact

Continued from front page

its use of Compact funding", President Simina said.

The new U.S. statute provides programs and services beyond the sector grants. President Simina said that FSM

eligibility will continue for education programs including Pell Grants, IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act), and competitive grants through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the Carl Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, and the Higher Education Act. The President also announced that the new agreement restores FSM eligibility for federal supplemental education opportunity grants, federal work study programs,

and Head Start. Additionally, the Secretary of Veteran's Affairs will have new discretion to furnish hospital and medical care for FSM citizens who have served in the United States military, a long-desired outcome.

President Simina stressed the importance of collective responsibility in maximizing the benefits of the new compact, urging citizens to stay informed and engaged. He emphasized

the role of unity in steering the FSM towards becoming a beacon of peace, prosperity, and stability in the Indo-Pacific region.

In closing, President Simina expressed gratitude to the citizens for their patience, trust, and resilience, invoking blessings upon them and the Federated States of Micronesia.

Fueling change: Micronesian Productions completes CFLI grant-backed climate awareness project

Micronesian Productions

March 13, 2024

Pohnpei, FSM - Micronesian Productions, a cornerstone of the FSM's media landscape, proudly announces the completion of its innovative project, supported by a prestigious grant from the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI). This endeavor, aimed at raising awareness and fostering community resilience in response to climate change challenges, marks another significant milestone in Micronesian Productions' commitment to amplifying voices, promoting social causes, and driving positive change.

As part of the CFLI grant, Micronesian Productions embarked on a transformative journey that took them to diverse islands across Micronesia, including Mwokill and Pingelap islands, Kosrae State, and Chuuk State. This immersive experience provided the team with invaluable insights through climate change consultations, video acquisitions, and meaningful interactions with local communities.

The project's creative endeavors included the production of engaging short social media videos and a captivating documentary-style film. These multimedia resources serve as powerful educational tools, shedding light on pressing environmental issues and inspiring actionable responses within the community. Additionally, the project encompassed a strategic dissemination strategy, leveraging social media platforms and a digital billboard campaign in Pohnpei State to amplify the reach and impact of the message.

"This project has been a creative learning experience for the Micronesian Productions team, enabling us to not only showcase the beauty of our islands but also highlight the urgent need for climate action," shared Nigel Jaynes, Executive Director for Micronesian Productions.

To view the compelling short videos created during this project, see the following links:

[Video 1](#), [Video 2](#), [Video 3](#), [Video 4](#), [Video 5](#), [Video 6](#), [Video 7](#), [Video 8](#)



For an in-depth exploration of the region's climate challenges and community responses, the full-length documentary can be accessed [HERE](#).

The initiative's outcomes have been truly remarkable, with a significant number of individuals—women, men, youth, elderly, and disabled—benefiting from increased climate change awareness and practical solutions. Communities in remote outer islands of Pohnpei have already started implementing innovative measures, such as combining wells and water catchments, to enhance their resilience in the face of environmental uncertainties.

Moreover, the project's advocacy efforts have garnered widespread



recognition, with media mentions highlighting Canada's valuable contribution and the transformative impact achieved in empowering local communities. By amplifying the voices of the people and catalyzing government support for climate action, Micronesian Productions continues to drive positive change across Micronesia.

Of the work that Micronesian Productions has been doing under the CFLI umbrella, Mark Glauser, High Commissioner of Canada in Australia said, "Canada is committed to fighting climate change and ensuring a sustainable and green future, including through our Indo Pacific strategy. Our climate initiatives are wide ranging, from advancing the Global Carbon Pricing Challenge to supporting local communities taking grassroots action.



Through the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives, we are proud to support Micronesian Productions as they capture the stories of how climate change is affecting communities in some of the most remote places in the world. We look forward to working with Micronesian Productions to spread this message far and wide"

For more information on Micronesian Productions and their initiatives, please visit: www.micronesianproductions.com or email to micronesianproductions@gmail.com





College of Micronesia-FSM

Yap | Chuuk | Pohnpei | Kosrae

Follow us online:



Female Students in the Field of Electronics

On this International Women’s Day, we celebrate the inspiring achievements of female students who are breaking barriers in the field of electronics. These young women are defying stereotypes and demonstrating exceptional talent for working with circuits, coding, and building the technology of tomorrow. Their dedication to pursuing careers in electronics is not only a testament to their own drive and intelligence, but also a powerful message that shatters outdated notions about who can excel in this dynamic field. We recognize the challenges they may have faced – classrooms with a historical gender imbalance, or societal pressures to choose different paths. But these students are forging their own way, fueled by a passion for innovation and a desire to make their mark on the world. This coming Women’s Day, let’s commit to supporting these rising stars. Let’s provide them with mentorship, resources, and a welcoming environment where their talents can truly flourish.



EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Education Instructor (Yap)

Teaching 12 to 15 contact hours per week with one to four preparations of education content and method courses in math, science and social studies to both in-service and pre-service students with one to four preparations. Teaching classes in accordance with the goals and objectives of the course as described in the course outline. Maintaining accurate records of student attendance and student learning outcomes/grades, in accordance with COM-FSM regulations. Submitting records to Instructional Coordinator after the end of the semester/session. Keeping at least 5 office hours per week. Participating in one standing committee; may be asked to participate in adhoc committees. Advising students. Participating in special College functions such as graduation. Participating in instructional activities. This includes meetings, curriculum development and developing procedures for improving current classes. Participating in assessment activities. Participating in professional development. Attending to additional needs of the College or the community as agreed upon by the faculty member in consultation with their supervisor.

Security & Safety Officer I (CTEC)

Under the college’s department of enrollment management and student services through the vice president for instructional affairs and the campus dean, and immediate supervisor of the campus’ student services coordinator (or designee), the campus security and safety officer is responsible for ensuring and maintaining a safe and secure environment for students, faculty and staff, and the guest of the college while protecting or safeguarding the college’s facilities and assets.

ACE Mentor-English (CTEC)

Provide or recommend relevant support to resolve questions/problems related to curriculum

**The College of Micronesia - FSM is an equal opportunity employer.
FSM Citizens are encouraged to apply**

Serious inquiries can be made to the Human Resources Office at email address hro@comfsm.fm and telephone number (691) 320-2482 extension numbers 179, 180, 181
VISIT US AT:
<http://www.comfsm.fm>
<http://www.comfsm.fm/?q=hr-jobs>

National Campus
P.O. Box 159
Kolonias Pohnpei, FM 96941
Phone: (691)320-2480
Fax: (691)320-2479
E-Mail: national@comfsm.fm

Chuuk Campus
P.O. Box 879
Chuuk, FM 96942
Phone: (691)330-2689
Fax: (691)330-2740
E-Mail: chuuk@comfsm.fm

FSM-FMI
P.O. Box 1056
Colonia Yap, FM 96943
Phone: (691)350-5244
Fax: (691)350-5245
E-Mail: fmi@comfsm.fm

Kosrae Campus
P.O. Box 37
Tofol Kosrae, FM 96944
Phone: (691)370-3191
Fax: (691)370-3193
E-Mail: kosrae@comfsm.fm

Pohnpei Campus
P.O. Box 614
Kolonias Pohnpei, FM 96941
Phone: (691)320-3795
Fax: (691)320-3799
E-Mail: pohnpei@comfsm.fm

Yap Campus
P.O. Box 286
Colonia Yap, FM 96943
Phone: (691)350-2296/5149
Fax: (691)350-5150
E-Mail: yap@comfsm.fm

Grow your savings,
boost your future

5.01% APY*

Limited time offer.

BOOST

S A V I N G S

Make a smart money move by growing your savings with a high-yield account.

At 5.01% APY, your money will work for you.

OPEN AN ACCOUNT** TODAY

bankofguam.com



Member FDIC

*Annual Percentage Yield. **This account must be funded within 5 banking days of opening or March 31, 2024, whichever comes first. The annual percentage yield (APY) listed is accurate as of 1/10/2024 and is subject to change at any time without notice. There is a minimum of \$10,000 to open the account and obtain the APY. An early closure charge may be assessed, and forfeiture of all interest may be imposed if withdrawal occurs before maturity. Interest will be credited at maturity on January 31, 2025. Fees could reduce earnings on the account. A new or existing Bank of Guam deposit account is required for this promotional savings account. Restrictions apply. Offer valid for a limited time.

PSDI launches New Gender-Inclusive Private Sector Framework for the Pacific

Pacific Private Sector Development Initiative

15 March 2024

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA—There is growing awareness that promoting women’s economic empowerment makes good business sense. Yet legal, regulatory, and policy barriers persist that prevent women’s full and equal participation in the private sector in the Pacific, according to a new report and framework from the Asian Development Bank’s Pacific Private Sector Development Initiative (PSDI).

The Gender-Inclusive Private Sector (GIPS) Framework is designed to promote gender inclusivity in the private sector in the Pacific, by offering governments a comprehensive roadmap to assess and improve progress towards supporting a gender inclusive private sector enabling environment.

“For governments and other institutions, the Gender-Inclusive Private Sector framework serves as a really practical

checklist to measure and address the ongoing constraints to women’s participation in the private sector,” says author Sarah Boxall, PSDI’s Economic Empowerment of Women Expert. “The framework offers clear benchmarks and pathways to support the development of more gender-inclusive private sectors, which can foster more resilient and equal economies in the region.”

The framework and country assessments for Fiji, Solomon Islands, and Tonga were launched on March 14, 2024 at a side event of the 68th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68) at the United Nations. The event, held in partnership with the Government of Fiji, Ministry of Women, Children and Social Protection, featured speakers from the governments of Fiji, Solomon Islands, and Tonga, as well as representatives of the Asian Development Bank.

“I would like to congratulate ADB’s Pacific Private Sector Development Initiative (PSDI) for leading the global launch of the innovative Gender-

Inclusive Private Sector Framework for the Pacific,” said Hon. Lynda Tabuya, Fiji’s Minister for Women, Children and Social Protection, in remarks recorded for the event. “This framework that can serve as a critical platform for exploring how governments and stakeholders can catalyze economic empowerment for women in all their diversity, thereby driving broader economic development.”

The framework assesses gender-inclusivity in the private sector across seven dimensions, including:

- the foundational aspects of a gender equality context, such as constitution, legislation and policy, and international commitments;
- the workplace conditions that support decent work for women in the formal sector and the informal economy;
- the business enabling environment that supports women’s formal and informal businesses;
- financial inclusion and access to capital;

- women’s participation in key economic sectors;
- digital technologies and women’s preparedness for the future of work; and
- the promotion of women’s leadership and voice in the private sector and consumer rights.

PSDI is an Asian Development Bank (ADB) technical assistance program in partnership with the governments of Australia and New Zealand. It supports ADB’s 14 Pacific DMCs to improve the enabling environment for business and to achieve inclusive, private sector-led economic growth, including through reforms designed to enhance the



enabling environment for investment.

vital
Energy for life

www.vitalenergy.fm



FSM DEVELOPMENT BANK
CORPORATE OFFICE
P.O. BOX M
KOLONIA, POHNPEI FM 96941
(691) 320-2840/2419/5300/5223/2624 Fax: (691) 320-2842
Email: info@fsmdb.fm Website: www.fsmdb.fm

POSITION ANNOUNCEMENT NO. 2024-002

It is the policy of the FSM Development Bank that FSM citizens be given first priority for employment consideration, with other Micronesians, U.S. citizens, and other nationals utilized in positions for which no qualified citizens are available.

POSITION: GENDER SPECIALIST

LOCATION: FSM Development Bank Headquarters- Kolonia, Pohnpei

SALARY: Minimum \$40,000.00 per annum, higher salary may be considered depending on qualifications

GENERAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES (Illustrative only):

1. Accountability for the incorporation of the bank's Gender Policy and Gender Strategy into bank operations and activities.
2. The provision of policy guidance on gender equality issues including the integration of gender equality into relevant policy documents.
3. Integrate gender equality into the appraisal of lending projects.
4. Supervision of the institutional aspects of gender equality on all assigned projects, including responsibility for enlarging awareness, knowledge and competencies of the bank staff on the gender issues within the bank's operations.
5. Lead the implementation of the bank's Gender Policy and Gender Strategic Plan and promote knowledge of, and accountability for, gender mainstreaming internally and within the bank's operations.
6. Lead the development of strategies and initiatives to reduce gender inequality and support the capacity building of all genders as agents for change in the project cycle.
7. Provide inputs and advice on gender equality as appropriate in the preparation, appraisal and supervision of assigned projects.
8. Provide analytical and sector work, including monitoring the outcomes of the Bank's gender-responsive institutional strategies and financial operations.
9. Lead in the development of knowledge products, tools and knowledge building activities on gender equality, in order to enlarge the knowledge and competencies of internal staff and external stakeholders.
10. Develop and build client/partner relations at technical/professional and senior levels, paying particular attention to the establishment and maintenance of strong working relations with regional and international development partners working in the FSM.
11. Stay abreast of advances in relevant subject areas, promote knowledge sharing and support research and knowledge management on gender issues within the Bank.

QUALIFICATIONS: To perform this job successfully, the individual must be able to perform each essential duty satisfactorily. The requirements below are representative of the knowledge, skill, and/or ability required.

COMPETENCIES/SKILLS: Knowledge and ability to identify gender issues and provide gender-responsive resolutions. Knowledge of challenges in relation to women's financial inclusion. Knowledge of the cultural environment and ability to work and deal sensitively within the culture. Competent skills and ability to do reports in Microsoft Tools including Excel, Word, and PowerPoint Presentations. Competent ability to review and provide analytical commentaries and subject matter inputs on reports. Ability to build effective working relationships with colleagues and clients.

EDUCATION and EXPERIENCE: Minimum Bachelor's degree in Social Science (Gender Studies, Development Studies), Women's Studies, or related fields; Minimum of 5 years specific experience in gender-related work and minimum of 5 years general experience in project management. Experience in working with banking sector projects is a plus.

LANGUAGE SKILLS: Ability to read,

analyze, and interpret project proposals, technical procedures required for financial analysis. Ability to write reports, business correspondence, and procedure manuals. Ability to speak and understand any of the FSM languages is preferable.

MATHEMATICAL SKILLS: Ability to work with mathematical concepts such as probability and statistical inference. Ability to apply concepts such as fractions, percentages, ratios, and proportions to practical situations.

REASONING ABILITY: Ability to define problems, collect data, establish facts, analyze and interpret data and draw valid conclusions.

Filing Instructions: All applications, curriculum vitae, and at least three (3) letters of reference shall be

completed and submitted to: FSMDB Corporate Office in Kolonia, Pohnpei, or any of the FSMDB Branch

offices in Chuuk, Kosrae and Yap State; or, mail to: FSM Development Bank HQ, P.O. Box M, Kolonia, Pohnpei FM 96941; or, fax to 320-2842; or, send by email to: info@fsmdb.fm on or before April 12, 2024. Application forms are available at any of the FSMDB offices and website: www.fsmdb.fm

The FSM Development Bank is an equal opportunity employer, provider and lender. For discrimination complaints, please write to: Chairman of the Board of Directors, P.O. Box M, Kolonia, Pohnpei FM 96941
Telephone: (691) 320-2840/5300/2419; Fax: (691) 2842/2056; E-mail: info@fsmdb.fm

Kosrae and Pohnpei organizations secure Australian Grants for Women's Empowerment

By *Bill Jaynes*
The Kaselehlie Press

March 8, 2024
FSM—

Australia has announced the initial recipients of the FSM Women's Community Grants, a program aimed at advancing gender equality. Utwe Youth Group in Kosrae and the US Veterans of Pohnpei Association (USVPA) have been selected to receive grants of up to USD20,000 each.



These organizations will utilize the funding over the next two years to support initiatives promoting women's economic empowerment and addressing domestic violence issues within their communities.

The grants stem from the FSM National Women's Conference, held in Kosrae from 27 November to 1 December 2023, and are intended to further the conference's objectives.

More updates regarding grant recipients from other States are forthcoming.

Australian government backs FSM athletes for Paris 2024 Olympics

Australian Embassy to the FSM

March 1, 2024

Pohnpei—Ambassador Cowley met Senator the Hon. Aurelio Joab, President of the FSM National Olympic Committee (NOC), to extend best wishes as FSM prepares for the 2024 Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The Australian Government, through PacificAus Sports, is supporting over 250 athletes from 13 Pacific nations, including the FSM, by providing financial support to each Pacific NOC to facilitate their athletes' preparations and participation in qualifying events.



USAID investment empowers Pohnpei communities for coastal resilience—“Our Fish Our Future” kicks off



By **Bill Jaynes**
The Kaselehlie Press

March 14, 2024

Pohnpei—This morning at Gonzaga Hall in Pohnpei, a small group of conservationists and representatives of the Madolenihmw government joined together to kick off a working group for the fledgling "Our Fish Our Future" project.

The "Our Fish Our Future" project is funded by USAID. The first year's funding for the project, which will ultimately benefit all of Pohnpei over the next five years, is \$130,000. Partners in the project include The University of Rhode Island Graduate School of Oceanography, the Conservation Society of Pohnpei (CSP), the Nature Conservancy, LMMA Network (Locally Managed Marine Area Network, based in Fiji), and for the first phase of the project, the Madolenihmw Government.

The goals of the project are to enhance locally led ecosystem-based coastal resource management and

to develop municipal-wide resilient plans to promote the strengthening of financial, employment, and cultural benefits for Pohnpei communities tied to successful resource management.

The Madolenihmw municipality is the first municipality to participate in the project. The workshop, which ran for two days, aimed for participants to develop a work plan to meet the goals of the project in Madolenihmw by the end of 2024.

The objectives this year are to support the Madolenihmw municipality and local communities to locally manage natural heritage; to aid in community-led resource monitoring; to strengthen social cohesion around stewardship; and to explore and assist with municipal-wide sustainable financing opportunities to support local government and communities.

The Mayor of Madolenihmw addressed the small assembled group, as did Eugene Joseph of CSP, and Roger Garner, USAID Country Director.

"Today, we gather here not just as individuals, but as collective experts united by a common vision to foster community-based resource management and enhance risk-free resilience in Madolenihmw Municipality," Joseph said in his address covering the history and purpose of the project. "This workshop marks the beginning of an ambitious journey, one that is crucial for the well-being of our communities and the preservation of our precious ecosystem, sacred historical sites, and customary practices that keep our five-



point culture alive."

Joseph said that CSP was approached 10 years ago to develop a Municipal Wildlife Conservation Action Plan, a plan that would guide the local government in facilitating community-based resource management. He intimated that CSP did the work with honor but due to a local government change in administration, it fell to the wayside. In 2023, interest in the idea was revived, and now the partners are ready to move forward.

He said that developing a municipal-wide plan at an intersection of climate adaptation with security and biodiversity is more than just a project. "It is a true testament to our commitment to ecosystem-based solutions and empowerment of local communities in shaping their future, particularly in times of climate crisis. As we dive deeper into this workshop, let us remember that the four values that brought us here, collaboration, sustainability, and respect for the intricate balance of nature as a state. These values gain even greater importance as we work together to find solutions that are both effective and considerate for our current challenges."

Before the Madolenihmw working group started its session, USAID Country Director Rodger Garner

addressed the crowd. "In my career, I've had the opportunity to go up to the US Congress and to talk to the appropriators and they ask me the same question. 'Roger, what will this money do to help the people independently when you're working? Will it change their lives? Will it improve their quality?' They're asking the same questions that we're asking up here. So, that's one of the reasons we're here today, to work on what are you going to do with these project resources. How are we going to spend it? Will it benefit you, your families, and your communities? Is this project going to help you fish more successfully, increase your income, or help you do it more safely?"

"In my job, I've had to read lots of project reports over the many years I've been in this business," he said. "And I'll tell you, the things that I hate the most to read are we did another study. We had some meetings. Really? That's all you did? What I want to read in these reports what is the project doing to help you in your communities."

"So, I'll say to you, very directly from USAID, we want this project to help you and your community. If it doesn't, we want to hear about it," he said. "We want you to not be shy, to work with our friends and our neighbors and CSPs and PFCs, help these project resources make a difference in the world, and I wish you every success."

The workshop continued for two days with stakeholders hashing out goals and details, including a budget for the Madolenihmw portion of the project.



Banking, SIMPLIFIED.



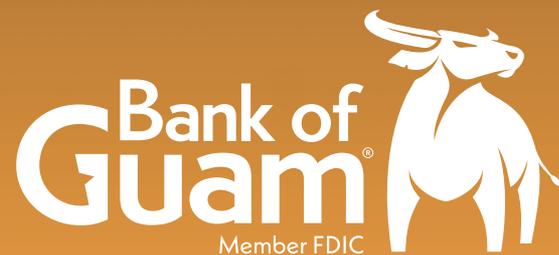
3:13

Your phone becomes a personal teller.

Bank of Guam's enhanced voice banking

- Check balances
- Transfer funds
- Review transactions

Dial into the future by calling (671) 472-5300



KEEP BANKING. KEEP MOVING. DON'T STOP.

First Lady of the Federated States of Micronesia presents donation on International Women’s Day

FSM Information Services

March 8, 2024

KOLONIA, Pohnpei—The First Lady of the Federated States of Micronesia, Mrs. Ancelly Simina, was happy to join Pohnpei State’s International Women’s Day Celebration, where she announced and presented a donation of \$10,000 to the Pohnpei Women’s Council on behalf of the FSM national government.

The presentation of this donation sums up the last of donations from the Simina-Palik administration to each of the primary women’s organizations in each of the states, as committed during the administration’s first round of state visits.

In First Lady Simina’s remarks she said, “Today is a celebration of the strength, resilience, and achievements of women from all over the world. And here in our own corner of the world, I would like to pay special tribute to the women’s groups around our nation whose efforts work tirelessly to ensure that our

women are protected, represented, and elevated. Your efforts play a critical role in our society and have undoubtedly played a direct role in the progress our young nation has made in advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment. With that said, I also recognize the challenges that still lie ahead.

So often a part of that challenge is being able to access the resources you need to enable you to carry out your work and do what you do.

“So, it is a privilege to be here to announce that, on behalf of the FSM national government, I will be presenting a donation of \$10,000 for the Pohnpei Women’s Council. Let this be a token of appreciation and support for the important work that you do and a reminder that today and everyday we stand by you, and your national government stands by you.

“Congratulations and Happy International Women’s Day.”

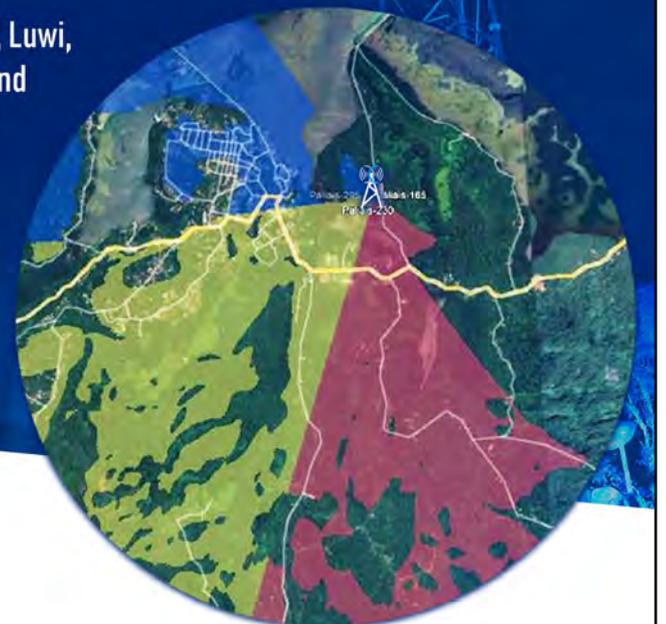
The check was accepted by the officers of the Pohnpei Women’s Council, Likend Madolenihmw and the First Lady of Pohnpei State Dr. Aina Garstang.



FSMTC HAS SUCCESSFULLY COMMISSIONED PALIAIS CELL TOWER.

Coverage for Paliais Cell Tower is based on three sectorized antennas.

- > Sector 1, Red: Coverage to Kahmar (Doweneu, Nett Municipal Govt offices, Nantehlik area) and to some part of Meitik.
- > Sector 2, Yellow: Coverage to Nett School, Pohnpei State and Genesis Hospital, Black Sand, Luwi, Bank of Guam, Etscheit’s and Adam’s Compound, Nanpepper, PICS High School, SDA school and some parts of Dolonier.
- > Sector 3, Blue: Coverage to the Public Market Street and all of Pahmi area, Causeway to Airport, some areas on Sokehs Rock and Kolonia, and all of Danpei.



FSM Telecommunications Corporation
Kaselehlie Street, P.O. Box 1210, Pohnpei FM 96941
p: 691-320-2740 | e: customerservice@fsmtc.fm

President Simina declares State of Emergency amid drought

FSM Information Services

March 12, 2024

PALIKIR, Pohnpei—H.E. President Wesley W. Simina has issued Emergency Declaration No. 2024-001 in response to severe drought conditions being faced throughout the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM).

Through the Declaration of Emergency, President Simina has directed the following:

- Committing the resources of the National Government to supplement available resources through foreign assistance and domestic resources as needed.
- Establishment of a National Emergency Task Force, headed by the Secretary of the Department of Environment, Climate Change, and Emergency Management, to develop and implement immediate relief efforts and monitor vulnerable populations, especially in the outer islands.
- Activation of disaster relief funds to support national and state relief efforts, including waivers for competitive bidding and import

taxes for emergency-related procurements.

- Coordination with state authorities to ensure a cohesive and effective emergency response.
- Allocation of \$1,288,824 into the Disaster Relief Fund to support relief efforts, with the potential for additional funds to be decreed as necessary.

The full declaration can be viewed at: <https://gov.fm/.../784-presidential-emergency-declaration>.

The Declaration has been transmitted to the FSM Congress for its review, and according to Article X, Section 9 (c), it is expected that Congress will convene to consider revocation, amendment or extension of this emergency declaration.

“We are committed to taking all necessary steps to mitigate the adverse effects of this emergency and ensure the safety and well-being of all our citizens, especially the most vulnerable,” President Simina said. “Unfortunately these intensified events are the realities of climate change that we know all too well, but we are a resilient people and we will get through this.”

For further information and updates, citizens and residents may contact the Department of Environment, Climate Change, and Emergency Management (DECCEM) at (691) 320-8815 or by emailing decem@decem.gov.fm

The Free bi-weekly publication
KASELEHLIE PRESS

Are you looking to advertise with the Kaselehlie Press?

We have over 20 years of experience serving the FSM, with readers around the globe. Let us serve you!

Contact us today at kpress@mail.fm



FSMTC HAS SUCCESSFULLY COMMISSIONED AWAK NANMATOU CELL TOWER.

This site will support 2G, 3G and 4G services.

The Coverage for the Awak Nanmatou Tower is based on four sectorized antenna. Sector 1 (red) is pointing northeasterly to western & southwestern part of Mwand. Sector 2 (yellow) is pointing southeasterly to Awak Pah & the Catholic Church & to all of Metipw. Sector 3 (blue) is pointing southwesterly to Nanwelin Awak. Sector 4 (pink) is pointing northwesterly to Parem & Lenger.

Pohnpei gets a trade boost with new Customs Management System

15 March 2024

Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia – Exciting news for Pohnpei's trading community! In a significant leap toward modernizing customs management and enhancing trade facilitation, the Department of Finance and Administration, through the Customs and Tax Division (CTA), is launching its new customs management system called ASYCUDAWorld.

The modern system will be fully operational from Wednesday, March 27, 2024.

Vice President Aren B. Palik underscored the importance of ASYCUDAWorld, stating that "it represents a significant milestone for our trading community, offering unprecedented benefits such as reduced clearance times, improved accuracy, and enhanced transparency. This Initiative is a great example of the coming FSM digital transformation and a clear indication of our efforts to support the business community,

ensuring that Pohnpei, and soon after Yap, Chuuk and Kosrae, remain competitive in the global market."

The digital platform is a cornerstone of the European Union-funded Improving Pacific Island Customs and Trade (IMPACT) project implemented by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and aims to enhance regional and international trade in the Pacific by standardizing and simplifying customs operations.

ASYCUDAWorld will enable the CTA to apply streamlined customs legislation at all levels, facilitate collection of customs duties, increase government revenue, and eliminate any fraud and corruption.

What is ASYCUDAWorld?

ASYCUDAWorld is an efficient digital platform that supports the enhancement of customs operational capacity in line with international standards and best practices. The system brings revolution to the country's customs operations by automates processes including manifest



management, customs declarations, accounting transactions, and suspense procedures.

The implementation of the ASYCUDAWorld system aligns to the global trend as over the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) becomes 14th Pacific Island Country and among the 103 countries and territories across the globe to implement the system. are that are benefiting from its capabilities. The system offers improved in customs revenue, reliable trade statistics, and reduced times and costs associated with customs clearance processes.

Benefits for Pohnpei's Businesses:

- **Faster Trade:** Say goodbye to lengthy procedures! ASYCUDAWorld will significantly reduce clearance times, allowing businesses to import and export goods quickly.
- **Improved Accuracy:** The automated system minimizes errors, ensuring smoother transactions and less paperwork.
- **Enhanced Transparency:** Businesses will have access to reliable trade data, providing valuable insights for informed decision-making.
- **Modernization:** ASYCUDAWorld marks a significant step towards modernizing Pohnpei's customs procedures, aligning them with international standards.

Getting Started with ASYCUDAWorld:

The platform is accessible online at <https://fsm.asycuda.org/>, where businesses intending to import regularly will be required to complete a registration form available on the system's web portal. To ensure a smooth transition, the old PC Trade system will remain operational for payment processing until April 26th, 2024, after which all unpaid declarations must be resubmitted in ASYCUDAWorld.

Important Dates:

- March 27th, 2024: ASYCUDAWorld goes live in Pohnpei State.
- April 26th, 2024: This is the deadline for declarations submitted using the old PC Trade system.

Ready to experience the trade revolution?

To facilitate the transition, comprehensive support, including assistance, guidance, forms, and operating procedures, is available on the ASYCUDA website portal. Customs staff will also be available at the Pohnpei CTA Office to assist importers with completing their declarations. For further information, the ASYCUDA administration team can contact 320 2826 / 320 5508 or via email at cta@dofa.gov.fm.

This initiative signifies a milestone for Pohnpei and represents a crucial step forward for the Federated States of Micronesia in the broader spectrum of regional harmonization and modernization of customs practices. The IMPACT project and the introduction of ASYCUDAWorld are set to guide in a new era of efficient, reliable, and streamlined customs management, promising substantial benefits for the trading community and the economies of the Pacific Island countries.

ASYCUDA will be launched in the Yap, Chuuk, and Kosrae States over the following two months. The ASYCUDA system will be further enhanced later in the year with an online payments portal becoming available for users to be able to make payments online.

Together, let's make Pohnpei a leader in efficient and modern trade!

Courtesy Call of Mr. Shigeie, President of APIC and Mr. Hamano, Chargé d'Affaires on President Simina

Embassy of Japan to the FSM

February 26, 2024

Palikir—On February 26, the delegation from the Association for Promotion of International Cooperation (APIC), headed by Mr. Shigeie, President of APIC, as well as Dr. Ori and Dr. MacDonald, professors from Sophia University Graduate School of Global Environmental Studies, together with Mr. Hamano, Chargé d'Affaires paid courtesy call on H.E. Wesley W. Simina, President

of the FSM, and T.H. Lorin S. Robert, Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the FSM.

President Simina and Secretary Robert welcomed the delegation warmly and expressed their appreciation for APIC's contribution which has been made to the FSM, especially the scholarship program conducted with Sophia University.

They visited the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) from February 23 to 28, 2024.





BANKGUAM HOLDING COMPANY

P.O. Box BW • Hagåtña, Guam 96932

Tel: (671) 472-5273

BANKGUAM HOLDING COMPANY AND SUBSIDIARIES

UNAUDITED CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF CONDITION (Year ended December 31, 2023; in 000's US Dollars)

Assets		Liabilities and Stockholders' Equity	
Cash and due from banks	\$ 32,043	Deposits:	
Interest bearing deposits in banks	57,553	Non-interest bearing	\$ 863,797
Total cash and cash equivalents	<u>89,596</u>	Interest bearing	1,459,658
Restricted cash	150	Total deposits	<u>2,323,455</u>
Investment securities available-for-sale, at fair value	446,616	Accrued interest payable	31
Investment securities held-to-maturity, at amortized cost	314,906	Subordinated debt, net	34,537
Federal Home Loan Bank stock, at cost	1,524	Other liabilities	44,032
Loans, net of allowance for credit losses	1,557,652	Total Liabilities	<u>2,402,055</u>
Accrued interest receivable	9,281	Commitments and contingencies	
Premises and equipment, net	19,276	Stockholders' equity:	
Goodwill	13,014	Common stock	2,034
Intangible assets	9,240	Preferred stock	980
Other assets	114,445	Additional paid-in capital, Common stock	24,989
Total Assets	<u>\$ 2,575,700</u>	Additional paid-in capital, Preferred stock	8,803
		Retained earnings	198,170
		Accumulated other comprehensive loss	(59,320)
		Non-controlling interest	7,347
		Common stock in treasury, at cost	(9,358)
		Total stockholders' equity	<u>173,645</u>
		Total Liabilities and Stockholders' Equity	<u>\$ 2,575,700</u>

UNAUDITED CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF INCOME (Year ended December 31, 2023; in 000's US Dollars)

Interest income	\$ 119,282
Interest expense	<u>2,732</u>
Net interest income	116,550
Provision for credit losses	<u>7,493</u>
Net interest income, after provision for credit losses	109,057
Non-interest income	37,623
Non-interest expense	<u>107,678</u>
Income before income taxes	39,002
Income tax expense	7,547
Net Income	<u>\$ 31,455</u>

BANK OF GUAM FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA BRANCHES

UNAUDITED STATEMENT OF CONDITION (Year ended December 31, 2023; in 000's US Dollars)

Assets		Liabilities and Stockholders' Equity	
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 2,648	Deposits:	
Loans, net of allowance for credit losses	22,948	Non-interest bearing	\$ 88,798
Premises and equipment, net	455	Interest bearing	149,528
Accrued interest receivable	26	Total deposits	<u>238,326</u>
Other assets	1,011	Accrued interest payable	2
Due from the Parent	212,488	Other liabilities	1,248
Total Assets	<u>\$ 239,576</u>	Total Liabilities	<u>\$ 239,576</u>

UNAUDITED STATEMENT OF INCOME (Year ended December 31, 2023; in 000's US Dollars)

Interest income	\$ 13,672
Interest expense	91
Net interest income	13,581
Provision for credit losses	<u>206</u>
Net interest income, after provision for credit losses	13,375
Non-interest income	1,352
Non-interest expense	<u>2,548</u>
Income before income taxes	12,179
Income tax expense	-
Net Income	<u>\$ 12,179</u>

Congratulations! Spring 2024 SCHOLARSHIPS



Samuel Rocco
MBA - General Business Management Program
Walden University



Eric Defan
MBA - General Business Management Program
Walden University



Berny Araceley
MBA - Accounting Program
Chaminade University



Ivan Blanco
Bachelor's in Business Administration Program
University of Guam



Ian Perman
Bachelor's in Political Science Program
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa



Martha Aten
Bachelor's in Business Administration Program
University of Hawai'i at Hilo



Cordny Abraham
Bachelor's in Cybersecurity Program
Eastern Oregon University

THE FSMDB SCHOLARSHIP IS NOW AVAILABLE FOR FALL SEMESTER 2024. APPLY TODAY! DEADLINE IS ON AUGUST 31, 2024.



Transforming Lives
FSM Development Bank
P.O. Box M
Kolonias, Pohnpei, FSM 96941
+691 320-2840
Yap Branch
P.O. Box 786
Colonias, Yap, FSM 96943
+691 350-2165
Chuuk Branch
P.O. Box 786
Weno, Chuuk, FSM 96942
+691 330-2760
Kosrae Branch
P.O. Box 104
Tolol, Kosrae, FSM 96944
+691 370-3070

THE FSM DEVELOPMENT BANK WISHES TO CONGRATULATE THE RECIPIENTS OF THE SPRING 2024 FSMDB SCHOLARSHIPS. WE TAKE GREAT PRIDE IN SUPPORTING THE FSM'S BRIGHTEST SCHOLARS IN THEIR PURSUIT OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE, AS WE ANTICIPATE THEIR RESPECTIVE ENTRIES INTO THEIR ROLES IN LEADING OUR NATION FORWARD!

Visit www.fsmdb.fm/about/fsmdb/scholarships/ for more information on our Scholarship Program.

Islands in Micronesia tackle drought amidst El Niño phenomenon

International Organization for Migration

Kolonia - Following the El Niño event which began in Fall 2023, drought is affecting parts of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI).

According to the United States Drought Monitor, as of 5 March, 16 atolls and islands in the North Pacific have experienced varying degrees of dry weather, ranging from abnormally dry conditions to severe drought, with twelve of these islands situated in FSM and RMI.

Over the past months, Pingelap in Pohnpei has encountered extreme drought conditions drying up wells and making it increasingly difficult for its 258 residents to access water for basic household use. Meanwhile, on the main island of Pohnpei, water restrictions have been put in place from mid-January to preserve diminishing water resources.

A State of Emergency was declared in FSM on 11 March 2024.

Likewise, in Wotje and Kwajalein, two outer islands of RMI, severe drought conditions drag on, as observed in the US Drought Monitor report. In the past three months, more than 4,000 residents have been affected by the drought in RMI according to a National Disaster Management Office.

The FSM Department of Environment, Climate Change & Emergency (DECCEM) Secretary, Andrew Yatilman, noted the gravity of the situation, underlining the need to ensure water and sanitation availability, especially

in schools and health dispensaries, to avoid further risks to vulnerable populations.

"The FSM State and National Government are working closely with partners to alleviate the challenges at hand," he said, emphasizing the commitment for continued collaboration to ensure support is available to vulnerable communities throughout the FSM.

As reported by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) on 29 February, the Micronesia sub-region is expected to experience improved precipitation as of April 2024. However, the impact of drought on agriculture and water supplies will still require intermediate and long-term interventions to be normalized.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM), with funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), has been effectively strengthening drought preparedness and response efforts in FSM and RMI.

In close coordination with the FSM DECEM, State Disaster Coordinating Offices and RMI's National Disaster Management Office, IOM has deployed Reverse Osmosis (RO) units with the capacity to desalinate up to 360 litres of sea water per day to the outer islands of Arno, Namu, Santo, Mejatto and Ebadon atolls of RMI, as well as to Mwokilloa and Pingelap of FSM. The interventions are aimed to support access to clean water for over 2,000 community members.

Additionally, IOM's response has included deploying water and sanitation materials, such as hygiene kits and jerry cans, reaching approximately 700 community members in Polowot, Tamatam, Houk and Pollap in Chuuk, as well as Mwokilloa, Pingelap, Kapingamarangi and Sapwufik in Pohnpei.

Salvatore Sortino, IOM Micronesia Chief of Mission, explained that a key component of preparedness and response is supporting first responders, so they can assess the impacts and respond in the most effective way

possible.

"This is an ongoing process," he said. "It relies on continued collaboration with the Governments and first responders to build solid preparedness capacity and identify mitigation opportunities before and during crisis."

Following reports of water shortages, IOM organized six Initial Damage Assessment trainings in the outer islands of Pohnpei and Yap States. More trainings will be provided in affected outer islands to strengthen local capacities to determine the severity and magnitude of the drought and inform preparedness and response. IOM remains committed to monitoring the drought situation and collaborating with the State and National Governments of FSM and RMI to strengthen assistance through in-kind and capacity-building support. More remains to be done to

reach locations potentially affected by drought conditions and residents with limited access to water who are at risk of the compounding effects of drought, including health and socioeconomic impacts.



27th February 2024 BID INVITATION for

Design and Construction of Yap High School,
Colonia, Yap

NOTICE

The Office of Planning and Budget (OPB), of the Yap State Government of the Federated States of Micronesia is hereby issuing this Bid Invitation Notice to qualified contractors for the **Design and Construction of Yap High School, Colonia, Yap**.

Further information on this Invitation to Bid (ITB) may be obtained by submitting a written request for details to:

Director,
Office of Planning and Budget Project Management Office YCA Complex,
P.O. Box 970
Colonia, Yap
FM 96943 at email yapstatepmo.bids@gmail.com with the subject heading:

"Design and Construction of Yap High School, Colonia, Yap"

The bidding documents, including the instructions to bidders, scope of work, bills of quantities, technical specifications and conditions of contract may also be directly obtained from the Department's website: <https://tci.gov.fm/>.

The closing date for the submission of bids is:

Date: April 11, 2024

Time: 10:00 am Yap local time, FSM

Director
Office of Planning and Budget Yap State Government



Pacific Sub-Regional Office

Title: Programme Finance Associate, Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia [16953]

***This post is only open for the Nationals of Federated States of Micronesia ***

Call to Action

- Are you result driven and can you work well in teams?
- Do you have a keen eye for detail and can you ensure high quality and accuracy of work?
- Can you multi-task, prioritize and manage programme outcomes?

If so, this might be the job for you.

How You Can Make a Difference:

UNFPA is the lead UN agency for delivering a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person's potential is fulfilled. UNFPA is seeking candidates that transform, inspire and deliver high impact and sustained results; we need staff who are transparent, exceptional in how they manage the resources entrusted to them and who commit to deliver excellence in programme results.

Job Purpose:

The post of Programme Finance Associate is located in one of the field offices of the UNFPA Pacific Sub-Regional Office (Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu) and reports directly to the Programme Specialist. S/He provides financial and programmatic support to strengthen programme delivery and management. S/he also works in close collaboration with the Program and Operations in Suva team to ensure timely support to the programme implementation.

Qualification and Experience:

Your Education

- Completed secondary level education required.
- First level University (Bachelor) degree in Public/Business Administration, Finance, Commerce, Accountancy/Chartered Accountancy, and related field is preferred.

Your Experience

- Minimum of six (6) years of relevant experience in programme, administration, finance or office management;
- Some experience in research assistance and general understanding of programme support, monitoring and evaluation is desirable;
- Good writing and communication skills with the ability to draft correspondence in a clear, accurate and concise manner;
- Previous experience and knowledge of protocol in the United Nations is an advantage,
- Good interpersonal, planning, organizational and multi-tasking skills;
- Ability to work independently and harmoniously in a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic team environment maintaining tact and discretion in all dealings;
- Computer literacy – Proficiency in the use of MS Office Packages and the Internet;
- Good knowledge of Atlas/PeopleSoft is an asset.

Full job description of the position and instructions on how to apply can be accessed on: <https://pacific.unfpa.org/en/vacancies>

Closing Date: Saturday, 13th April 2024. The selected individual should be prepared to assume the post within one (1) month.

Notice: UNFPA does not charge any application, processing, training, interviewing, testing or other fee in connection with the application or recruitment process. UNFPA is committed to achieving workforce diversity in terms of gender, nationality, and culture. Individuals from minority groups, indigenous groups and persons with disabilities are equally encouraged to apply. All applications will be treated with the strictest confidence. UNFPA does not tolerate sexual exploitation and abuse, any kind of harassment, including sexual harassment, abuse of authority and discrimination. All selected candidates will, therefore, undergo rigorous referenc

Governor Joseph and Lt. Governor Ioanis set tone for transparency and collaboration in inaugural cabinet meeting

Pohnpei Public Information

March 12, 2024

Kolonia, Pohnpei—Governor Stevenson A. Joseph and Lt. Governor Francisco L. Ioanis presided over their first cabinet meeting, assembling the first confirmed cabinet members and acting heads of Departments/Offices. The gathering, held at the Lt. Governor's Office, laid the foundation for an administration centered on communication, transparency, and collaborative governance.



Those in attendance included confirmed cabinet members:

- Belsipa Mikel-Isom, Attorney General
- Stanley Etse, Director of the Department of Education
- Luciano Abraham, Director of the Department of Land
- Daniel Isaac, Administrator of Transportation and Infrastructure

and Acting Department Heads:

- Dr. Marcelle Gallen, Acting Director of Health Services
- Kehper Joel, Acting Director of Public Safety
- Clay Hedson, Acting Administrator, OFA
- Reynold Bardellas, Acting Commissioner, PTA
- Eugene Eperiam, Acting Director, R&D
- Alperina Donre, Acting Election Commissioner

Also in attendance were Public Affairs Officer, Peteriko Hairens, Commissioner of Pohnpei Public Broadcasting Corporation, Peterson Sam, Executive Officer of EPA Francisco Celestine, Overseas Development Assistance Unit Coordinator Shirley Ligohr, and Chief of Finance Judy Rodriguez.

In his opening remarks, Governor Joseph articulated the importance of checks and balances within the governmental system, emphasizing the need for regular updates on work plans and supplemental budget requests. He underscored the crucial role of open communication, urging cabinet members to keep him and Lt. Governor Ioanis informed at all times.

Governor Joseph emphasized the shared responsibility of the cabinet, asserting that Department Heads are tasked with implementing the agenda set by the Executive Leadership. Emphasizing the administration's commitment to teamwork, he shared, "Any wins or victories are ours, but any failure is mine," reinforcing the shared responsibility among the members of the administration. The Governor also looked forward to fostering a positive working relationship with the Legislature, advising all stakeholders to collaborate effectively for the benefit of the state.

Addressing the acting cabinet members, Lt. Governor Ioanis assured them of their full authority as the heads of their respective departments/agencies, empowering them to make decisions that propel their initiatives forward. This directive aligns with the administration's commitment to efficient and responsive governance.

To ensure transparency and dissemination of the administration's vision, Chief of Staff Kapilly Capelle distributed copies of Governor Joseph's first State of the State message to all cabinet members and acting cabinet members.

The inaugural cabinet meeting serves as a testament to Governor Joseph and Lt. Governor Ioanis's commitment to an open, collaborative, and accountable administration. The administration eagerly anticipates working hand-in-hand with the Legislature and other stakeholders to achieve the collective goals set forth for the betterment of Pohnpei.

FSM National Anti-Corruption Strategy Workshop & Anti-Corruption Investigations Training concludes in Pohnpei

FSM Information Services

March 6, 2024

PALIKIR, Pohnpei—From February 27 to March 1st 2024, the FSM Department of Justice partnered with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in gathering Integrity stakeholders from the national level and the four states of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) for the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) Review Follow-Up and Implementation Workshop. The key component of the discussions was to

translate proposed strategies into concrete measures that can be implemented effectively in the FSM. This shift towards actionable outcomes underscores the commitment of the FSM to drive substantive change in anti-corruption efforts. Through collaborative efforts and proactive engagement, stakeholders aim to propel initiatives forward, ensuring they have a meaningful impact on strengthening integrity within the governance framework.

Integrity stakeholders from the national government level and from the four states of the FSM gathered for the full week workshop last week with focus on anti-corruption. The week marked a significant step forward in fulfilling the commitments made by the FSM, starting first with the "Empowering Action: FSM National Anti-Corruption Strategy Workshop" and followed by an Anti-Corruption Investigations training.

Assistant Attorney General Ms. Josephine Joseph Silem from the FSM Department of Justice stressed in her welcoming remarks that in terms of corruption "there is no one-size-fits-all solution to apply". She also emphasized that the FSM Government is implementing its ambitious sustainable development plan aimed at improving the living standards and wellbeing of all citizens. She further emphasized that education plays a crucial role in combating corruption as a long-term sustainable solution.

Throughout the first session, the discussion focused on translating



the 2019 National Anti-Corruption Strategy into tangible action. Participants were composed of national and state government representatives of the Police, Customs & Tax, Public Auditor's office, Attorney General's Office. The participants recommended establishing an FSM Anti-corruption Task Force, consisting of key players from both national and state level Integrity agencies, which would be the driving force behind the implementation of anti-corruption initiatives. The Task Force would be tasked with the implementation of the Anti-Corruption Strategy and provide recommendations for its improvement. An additional example that was raised was the establishment of the Office of the Independent Prosecutor through constitutional reform via the constitutional convention of last year. The Independent Prosecutor will be appointed by the President for a term of six (6) years and will operate with full autonomy.

Ms. Marie Pegie Cauchois, O/C UNODC Office and Regional Anti-Corruption Advisor highlighted that "this workshop emphasized the importance of sustained commitment and accountability in the implementation of the anti-corruption initiatives." She underscored the alignment of these efforts with the Pacific Unity Against Corruption initiative as encapsulated in the Teieniwa Vision:

https://www.unodc.org/.../Teieniwa_Vision_PUAC_post

The second part of the session was devoted to an anti-corruption

investigation training which was led by UNODC representatives Ms. Marie Pegie Cauchois and Sophia H. Pretrick, the UNODC Micronesia focal point based Pohnpei. The course focused on different aspects of anti-corruption, equipping the participants with the knowledge, skills, and tools necessary to detect, prevent, and address instances of corruption effectively.

The training began by examining the impact of corruption on society, highlighting the importance of a proactive and resolute approach to tackling the issue. It then explored how to frame an investigation plan and considered ways of collecting and analyzing financial evidence, acknowledging the indispensable role of financial trails in unraveling corruption schemes. Acting Attorney General Leonito Bacalando, Jr. encouraged participants of the training to work together and build synergies among relevant agencies and partners. He gave a presentation on Anti-Money Laundering laws of FSM and urged

for the strengthening of the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) in the country. Recognizing the increasing complexity of corruption cases, the training also addressed the critical link between anti-corruption efforts and the fight against transnational organized crime. Participants gained insight into how corrupt practices often facilitate the operations of criminal networks, and how a coordinated, multi-disciplinary approach is necessary to dismantle these illicit activities.

The training concluded with an immersive case study which combined various corruption related offenses, such as violation of public procurement procedures, abuse of office, forgery, bribery and money laundering. Through the analysis of case studies, participants were tasked with applying the acquired knowledge and skills to respond to real-life situations. This practical application reinforced the importance of cooperation and coordination across different jurisdictions in effectively combating corruption.





Pacific Sub-Regional Office

Title: Programme Analyst, NOB, Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia [16801]

***This post is only open for the Nationals of Federated States of Micronesia ***

Call to Action

- Are you result driven and can you work well in teams?
- Do you have a keen eye for detail and can you ensure high quality and accuracy of work?
- Can you multi-task, prioritize and manage programme outcomes?
If so, this might be the job for you.

How You Can Make a Difference:

UNFPA is the lead UN agency for delivering a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person's potential is fulfilled. UNFPA is seeking candidates that transform, inspire and deliver high impact and sustained results; we need staff who are transparent, exceptional in how they manage the resources entrusted to them and who commit to deliver excellence in programme results.

Job Purpose:

The post of Programme Analyst is located in one of the field offices of the UNFPA Pacific Sub-Regional Office (Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu) and reports directly to the Programme Specialist. S/he receives input from the Programme Management Team on the overall programme strategy to effectively deliver the Transformative Agenda interventions.

Qualification and Experience:

Your Education

- An Undergraduate University Degree (Bachelors) in Management, International Development, Sociology, Economics, Demography, International Relations, Public Administration, Public Health, Medicine or related field is required.

Your Experience

- Minimum of four (4) years of progressive responsible professional experience in a programme and national capacity development environment and/or international development is required;
- Experience in advocacy and knowledge management in the duty station and in international cooperation;
- Proven track record of team-work and ability to coordinate inter-agency collaboration;
- Sound knowledge of the social and cultural realities of the region and skills in interpersonal and cultural relationships;
- Strong research and analytical skills with field experience is an asset;
- Substantive knowledge and practical experience in population, reproductive and sexual health programming is strongly desired;
- Computer Literacy: Knowledge of MS Office packages and the Internet.
- Previous experience with UN is an asset

Full job description of the position and instructions on how to apply can be accessed on: <https://pacific.unfpa.org/en/vacancies>

CLOSING DATE: Sunday, 31st March 2024

Notice: UNFPA does not charge any application, processing, training, interviewing, testing or other fee in connection with the application or recruitment process. UNFPA is committed to achieving workforce diversity in terms of gender, nationality, and culture. Individuals from minority groups, indigenous groups and persons with disabilities are equally encouraged to apply. All applications will be treated with the strictest confidence. UNFPA does not tolerate sexual exploitation and abuse, any kind of harassment, including sexual harassment, abuse of authority and discrimination. All selected candidates will, therefore, undergo rigorous reference and background checks. Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted for the next phase of the selection process.

Governor Joseph celebrates historic Compact of Free Association passage at the office of the president

Pohnpei Public Information

March 12, 2024

Palikir, Pohnpei– Governor Stevenson A. Joseph joined His Excellency Wesley A. Simina, President of the Federated States of Micronesia, in a celebration at the Office of the President to mark the signing of the amended Compact of Free Association by U.S. President Joseph Biden on March 9, 2024. The informal gathering, hosted by President Simina, was attended by esteemed leaders, including the Governor of Chuuk, T.H. Alexander Narruhn, and virtually by T.H. Charles Chieng, Governor of Yap, T.H. Tulensa Palik, Governor of Kosrae, and T.H. Francis Itimai, Lt. Governor of Yap.

President Simina expressed heartfelt thanks to all attendees for their presence at the informal gathering, emphasizing the significance of the compact signing. A celebratory toast was made in honor of this historic event, marking a milestone in the ongoing partnership between the Federated States of Micronesia and the United States of America.

During the gathering, President Simina distributed copies of an Emergency Declaration, responding to the El Nino weather conditions and the State's declarations. Discussions were centered around the upcoming months, with a particular focus on an update on compact funding presented by Mr. Kemsy Sigrah from the Compact Management Unit office. Additionally, preparations for Strategic Development Plans were outlined, setting the stage for future regional growth and progress.

Governor Joseph expressed his sincere congratulations and gratitude for the successful signing of the Compact. He appreciated the opportunity for an informal meeting with fellow leaders, emphasizing the importance of collaboration in addressing regional challenges. Governor Joseph extended deep gratitude for the National Government's assistance in response to Pohnpei State's emergency declaration, with plans to submit a comprehensive closeout report on the recent outer island damage assessment.

Governor Joseph also shared insights into the ongoing preparations for a Strategic Development Plan for Pohnpei, assuring that action plans would be collaboratively developed and shared with the National Government to contribute to the overall advancement of the region.

The gathering underscored the shared commitment to mutual prosperity and strengthened relationships among the leaders of the Federated States of Micronesia.

Also in attendance were: the Secretary of the Department of Finance and Administration, Rose Nakanaga, Acting Secretary of the Department of Justice, Leonito Bacalando, President's Chief of Staff Jane Chigyal, Special Assistant for State Affairs Jack Harris, Special Assistant to the President Khandi Elieisar, FSM Public Information Officer Yolanda Joab Mori, Special Assistant to Chuuk Governor Roger Mori, Economist to Chuuk Governor Mr. Roger Arnold.



Invasive Species Task Force of Pohnpei (ISTOP) courtesy call: Governor Joseph commends impressive eradication results

Pohnpei Public Information

March 7, 2024

Kolonia, Pohnpei—The Invasive Species Task Force of Pohnpei (ISTOP), led by Mr. Roseo Marquez from Micronesia Conservation Trust and Mr. Eugene Joseph from the Conservation Society of Pohnpei (CSP), paid a courtesy call to Governor Joseph to share updates on their groundbreaking work in eradicating invasive species on the island.

Mr. Marquez presented an overview of ISTOP's comprehensive efforts, which include collaboration with representatives from State and FSM R&D, COM Land Grant, and FSM Quarantine. He highlighted the success of ISTOP's training component and awareness initiatives, including an upcoming island ecology course scheduled for July, focused on combating invasive species.

The task force has successfully conducted symposiums at the municipal level, effectively engaging communities in the development of invasive species work plans. As a result, four invasive species have been completely eradicated from Pohnpei, with another four potentially eradicated

by July 2024.

Governor Joseph welcomed Mr. Marquez, Mr. Joseph, and the entire ISTOP team, acknowledging the impressive results achieved in invasive species eradication. He expressed strong support for the ongoing efforts of ISTOP and emphasized the need for collaborative partnerships, especially with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) at the grassroots level.

In line with his vision of collaborating with NGOs to enhance governmental efforts, Governor Joseph recognized Mr. Konrad Englberger's 26 years of dedicated work with ISTOP. Mr. Englberger's contributions in training local technical experts were acknowledged, and the Governor thanked him for his significant role in helping Pohnpei combat invasive species.

Mr. Eugene Joseph also extended recognition to other individuals supporting the ISTOP initiative, including Deacon Adelino Lorens, Mr. Herson Anson, and Mr. Bill Raynor. He expressed gratitude for their contributions and emphasized the importance of political support in advancing the eradication efforts.

Mr. Joseph highlighted the imminent threat of the Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle (CRB), already present in RMI and Palau, and stressed the need for swift action to counter the potential invasion of Pohnpei's shores.

ISTOP shared specific updates with Governor Joseph, detailing successful eradication efforts, including Octopus Tree, Honolulu Rose, Feral Pigeons, and Myrna Bird. The task force aims to build on these achievements and continues to seek political support for its vital mission.

The collaboration between ISTOP and the Pohnpei government marks a significant step forward in the battle against invasive species, demonstrating the effectiveness of collective efforts in preserving Pohnpei's unique ecological balance.

Also present during the courtesy call: Mr. Eugene Eperiam, Acting Director of Pohnpei State R&D, Mark Kostka FSM R&D, JayDee Carl FSM Quarantine, Renwick Weilbacher FSM Quarantine, Jorg Anson Pohnpei State EPA, and Ikina Riggins from COM Land Grant.



Leaders of local insurance industry advocate for mandatory auto insurance in courtesy call on Governor Stevenson A. Joseph

Pohnpei Public Information

March 11, 2024

Kolonia, Pohnpei—In a proactive move towards enhancing road safety and securing the well-being of Pohnpei's residents, Mr. Resio S. Moses, Jr., Owner and Manager of Moses Insurance Executives, and Mr. Melner Isaac, Manager of the Pohnpei branch of Moylans Insurance Underwriters, recently held a courtesy call with Governor Stevenson A. Joseph.

The primary agenda of the meeting was to address the absence of a mandatory third-party liability auto insurance framework for personally owned registered vehicles under Pohnpei State law or the Pohnpei State code. Currently, there is no requirement for

such insurance coverage, a gap in regulations that the insurance leaders aim to rectify.

Governor Joseph, acknowledging a previous unsuccessful attempt to draft legislation during his tenure at the Legislature, recommended consulting with the State Attorney General to explore the possibility of drafting a new bill or amending the existing section in the Pohnpei State code related to vehicle registration.

While insurance requirements for commercially owned vehicles are already established in the Pohnpei State Code, discussions during the courtesy call delved into potential coverage and limits to ensure fairness. The leaders also explored strategies to attract additional insurance vendors to the market, aiming to drive down the cost of automobile insurance for Pohnpei residents.

Governor Joseph assured Mr. Moses and Mr. Isaac that he is committed to addressing this pressing issue and will keep them informed as discussions progress with the State Attorney General. The proposed framework for basic third-party liability auto insurance is a crucial step toward promoting responsible driving practices and safeguarding the interests of the community.



Pacific Islands Forum-US Treasury sign Correspondent Banking Relationships MOU



Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat

March 15, 2024

Suva, Fiji—The Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) this week signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Correspondent Banking Relationships with the United States Department of the Treasury (U.S Treasury).

This historic agreement marks a significant milestone in enhancing financial cooperation and collaboration between the PIFS and the U.S. Treasury and is a key bridge towards an inaugural Pacific Banking forum planned for mid-2024.

The MOU aims to address the decline of correspondent banking relationships in Pacific Island countries in recent years, which is posing significant stress on economic development in the region.

Speaking at the signing event in the US, Pacific Islands Forum Secretary General Henry Puna emphasized the importance of the collaboration.

“This collaborative effort underscores the shared commitment to promoting economic resilience and prosperity in the Pacific region, key priority areas of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent,” said SG Puna.

The MOU on Correspondent Banking Relationships between PIFS and U.S Treasury comes in the wake of recommendations endorsed by Forum Economic Ministers in 2023. Correspondent Banking challenges and recommendations were noted in the Pacific Islands Forum Diagnostic 2023 Report. ([link](#))

The support provided by U.S. Treasury should facilitate discussions between PIF members and U.S correspondent banks including U.S Banking and Financial regulators regarding anti-money laundering and combatting the financing of terrorism (AML/CFT) standards.

The partnership seeks to address challenges in correspondent banking relationships that are vital for cross-border payments that facilitates investments, trade, and remittances.

The signing ceremony was attended by representatives from the U.S Treasury, PIF Secretariat, the Cook Islands and Tonga.

11th Pohnpei Legislature Overrides Governor’s Vetoes, Repasses State Law 11L-02-24

Pohnpei Public Information

March 15, 2024

Kolonia, Pohnpei—The 11th Pohnpei Legislature has repassed State Law 11L-02-24, overriding line-item vetoes issued by Governor Stevenson A. Joseph. In an official communication, Speaker Yamaguchi informed Governor Joseph that the 11th Pohnpei Legislature had repassed State Law 11L-02-24, thereby providing for the override of the line-item vetoes.

Governor Joseph exercised his authority by vetoing specific line items in State Law 11L-02-24, including allocations for the Pohnpei Sports Commission personnel, immediate rehabilitation of the Spanish Wall softball field, Standing Committees of the Legislature, travel under the Office of the Speaker, and the remaining two items: Participation in the Asia Pacific Association Fiduciary Studies, and funds for the Christmas and Farewell Party which have already been expended.

In his official transmittal to veto line items to Speaker Yamaguchi, Governor Joseph noted \$63, 372 for new items and \$121,023.00 for increases. Legislature Standing Committee Report No. 15-24 notes “funds proposed in L.B. No 14-24, L.D.1 which was signed into law as S.L. 11L-02-24 is \$77,000 of which \$61,000 is new money and \$16,000 is reshuffled funds. The rest are previous appropriations.”

Governor Joseph's vetoes, as noted in his transmittal to Speaker Yamaguchi, were guided by a “commitment to fiscal responsibility and the absence of an accompanying Standing Report validating urgency and justifying needs.” It also reflected the fluidity of Pohnpei State's position due to the unresolved status of sector grants under Compact III. With President Biden's recent signing of the Compact agreements, these concerns have been addressed, providing greater certainty and stability for Pohnpei State.

The differences in approach between the Executive and Legislative branches highlight the democratic process at work, where divergent viewpoints converge to serve the best interests of the community. Through collaboration and cooperation, both branches strive to ensure that the people of Pohnpei receive their government's utmost benefit and support.

The Office of Governor Stevenson A. Joseph remains committed to working alongside the Legislature to address the challenges and opportunities facing Pohnpei State. Together, we will continue to pursue policies and initiatives that enhance the well-being and prosperity of all residents.

Pohnpei Legislature overrides Governor’s budget veto for second time

Pohnpei Public Information

March 18, 2024

Pohnpei—For the second time, the Pohnpei State Legislature has overridden Governor Joseph’s line-item vetoes on budget bills.

Governor Joseph had exercised his veto power over several line items identified in Bill 01-24 LD.1, LD2, amending S.L. No 10L-139-23 (the Comprehensive Budget Act for FY2024) and signed into law as S.L. No. 11L-03-24. In a letter addressed to Speaker Yamaguchi, Governor Joseph underscored the importance of transparency and accountability in serving the people, asserting that fiscal priorities must be carefully considered even in the presence of available funds.

The first line item vetoed, amounting to \$35,248.00 designated for travel for Early Childhood Education (ECE), was challenged due to competing priorities within ECE, particularly concerning facilities and instructional support. Similarly, a \$10,000 allocation for travel to the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) lacked adequate justification, prompting its veto.

Governor Joseph vetoed a \$250,000 supplemental request intended to retain Pohnpei Transportation Authority (PTA) employees, citing insufficient information about the allocation's purpose. However, he expressed commitment to supporting PTA's essential work and pledged to collaborate closely to address their operational needs for the remainder of the fiscal year through a supplemental budget.

Furthermore, an \$11,000 allocation for the North Pacific Regional Championship Tennis was vetoed lacking justification from the Pohnpei Sports Commission, emphasizing the necessity for accountability in allocating state funds for longstanding activities.

Lastly, Governor Joseph vetoed \$20,000 earmarked for Satellite Internet Services for the Outer Islands of Pohnpei due to inadequate details and sustainability concerns. He highlighted ongoing efforts by the FSM Digitization Project, funded by the World Bank, which plans to connect all outer islands at no cost to state and municipal governments.

The Legislature disagreed and overrode the vetoes passing the bill as submitted into law.

FSM swimming shines at the World Aquatics Championships in Doha, Qatar



FSM Swimming

March 2, 2024

Doha, Qatar--FSM Swimming left an indelible mark at the World Aquatics Championships hosted in Doha, Qatar, from February 11-18, 2024, demonstrating outstanding talent and achieving notable milestones for the Federated States of Micronesia. The team, comprised of four outstanding swimmers – Tasi Limtiaco, Taeyanna Adams, Kestra Kihleng, and Katerson Moya – delivered stellar performances throughout the competition.

Tasi Limtiaco, FSM's esteemed Olympian from the 2021 Tokyo Olympics, competed in the 50 Meter Breaststroke and the 100 Meter Breaststroke events. Limtiaco, a dedicated athlete who trains at the Coronado Swim Club in San Diego on an Olympic Solidarity Scholarship, is currently FSM's top-ranking swimmer. With his sights set on the upcoming Paris Olympics later this year, Limtiaco continues to be a source of inspiration for aspiring swimmers.

Taeyanna Adams, a seasoned competitor who also represented the FSM at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021, participated in the 50 Meter Breaststroke and the 100 Meter Breaststroke, achieving a personal best time of 1:24.70 in the latter event. Adams is currently training at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill on an Olympic Solidarity Scholarship.

Kestra Kihleng made her mark by setting new FSM National Records in both the 50 Meter Freestyle (28.94) and the 100 Meter Freestyle (1:04.93) events. Kihleng, training on a World Aquatics Scholarship at the Thanyapura Sports & Health Resort in Thailand, continues to

elevate her performance and contribute to the success of FSM Swimming.

Katerson Moya, age 16 and the youngest member of the team, made his World Championships debut at this competition. Moya, who currently trains at the Pohnpei Swimming Club in Pohnpei, FSM, competed in the 50 Meter Freestyle and the 50 Meter Butterfly, achieving a personal best time of 25.80 in the 50 Meter Freestyle. Moya's debut performance reflects the promising future of FSM Swimming.

In addition to individual achievements, Team FSM excelled in the relay events, particularly the 4x100 Meter Mixed Medley Relay, where they set a new FSM National Record. The collective efforts of the team, led by FSM Head Coach Derik Daniel, underscored FSM's growing presence in international swimming competitions.

Looking ahead, these exceptional athletes, alongside other FSM representatives, are gearing up for the Oceania Swimming Championships in Gold Coast, Australia, scheduled for April. This event serves as the final Olympic qualifier for FSM Swimming, providing another opportunity for the athletes to secure their places at the highest level of competition.

FSM Swimming extends heartfelt gratitude to the FSM National Olympic Committee for their unwavering support. The NOC's financial assistance, assisting with airfare, accommodations, and travel allowances for each team member, played a crucial role in facilitating the team's participation and success at the World Aquatics Championships.

Opinion Editorial

2024 International Women's Day Statement by PIF Secretary General, Henry Puna

Pacific Island Forum Secretariat

March 8, 2024

Suva, Fiji—As the world celebrates International Women's Day on March 8, our nations of the Blue Pacific continent join the global recognition of the steps forward for equality.

We also remember the challenges of breaking the barriers that continue to impede progress toward a more equal, free, and peaceful region.

This year's Invest in Women theme reminds us that investing in women brings balance to the resource scales. Investing in women is also the smart thing to do. The benefits and impacts are felt across our communities when we invest in women. The exponential gains and progress we make as communities, island nations, and one Blue continent are key factors ensuring we secure the Pacific future we all dream of.

Across our region, women and girls continue to bear the brunt of family violence and societal and cultural bias. The rates of gender-based violence against women and girls continue to be the highest in the world, while globally, our rates of political representation correspond to the lowest in the world.

This must change. And the change begins with each one of us. There must

be attitudinal and cultural change. There must be strong political commitment to ensure investment in women meets her aspirations, her needs and realities — and is sustainable.

We must resource the work of gender equality and social inclusion with more of our own dollars and less reliance on development dollars.

We must support organizations and programs that provide safety, access and support for women and girls escaping the scourge of violence in their homes.

We must strengthen what works and actively seek out new partnerships across our region that support inclusion for women and investments in women-led initiatives seeking safer lives for all.

We must all do more to urgently increase the number of Pacific women leading the way for our Pacific 2050 tomorrow — in politics, education, health, finance, technology, and all areas of life.

When we invest in women, we accelerate progress. When we invest in women and girls in all their diversity, everyone wins.

We can all do more to walk the talk we have been talking for so many decades. We can do it by learning from the past, looking to the future, and starting now.



Opinion Editorial

We were overjoyed to celebrate with the citizens of Micronesia last week when the U.S. Congress approved the Compact legislation and President Biden signed it into law on March 9. This week I am accompanying President Simina and his delegation to Washington, DC, where we will formally exchange diplomatic notes to “enter into force” the signed agreements. We are thrilled to deepen our close partnership with the FSM as we embark on the next two decades of Compact of Free Association (COFA) together. I sincerely want to recognize and thank everyone who made this possible – from the outstanding negotiating teams to former and current leaders to all those who advocated for its passage – THANK YOU.



The passage of the Compact of Free Association Amendments Act of 2024 represents a key milestone in our relationship with the Federated States of Micronesia. This is a historic moment, and one worth celebrating. Strong ties between the United States and the Pacific Islands, individually and collectively, form the foundation of our engagement and presence in the Pacific. The successful passage of legislation on the new Compact-related agreements underscores the resolve of the United States to deliver for our Pacific partners.

FSM will receive \$3.3 billion in mandatory funding over the next 20 years through Compact assistance. The Compact will provide \$500 million to the Compact trust fund and annual funding of \$140 million. That money will go towards the priorities identified by FSM leadership – health, education, private sector development, the environment, public sector capacity building, infrastructure, and enhanced reporting and accountability.

Under this Compact, FSM will have increased autonomy in budgeting decisions and equal representation on the Joint Economic Management and Trust Fund Committees.

Stability and prosperity are also extended to those who choose to

live and go to school in the United States under the COFA through the reinstatement of federal benefits for Freely Associated States communities living in the United States. On education, public universities in U.S. States and Territories will now be required to provide FAS students in-state tuition as a condition of receiving several types of federal education assistance. FSM will retain eligibility for Pell Grants and other grants and will be newly able to access Federal Work Study and some Head Start programs.

I am ecstatic to share that the renewed Compact strengthens veterans’ support for FSM citizens who serve in all branches of the U.S. Armed Forces. Ensuring U.S. veterans get the proper treatments they deserve is essential, and a top priority for both me and the Administration. The Department of Veterans Affairs is required to work with the FSM government to assess options for the delivery of care and to facilitate telehealth services and the delivery of pharmaceuticals by mail.

Some significant items will not change in the new Compact. FSM citizens will still be eligible to live, work, and study in the United States without visas. FSM citizens will continue to be able to serve in the armed forces. The United States will continue to have the responsibility for the security and defense of the Federated States of Micronesia—a commitment we take seriously. Other key U.S. government programs –Postal Services, Weather Services, Civil Aviation support and Disaster assistance – will continue unabated.

We believe the economic assistance contained in these agreements will play a vital role in building a brighter, more prosperous future for all, and we look forward to putting the new COFA to work for the people of the FSM. Thank you again to everyone that made this exceptional Compact possible.

**Ambassador Jennifer Johnson,
U.S. Embassy Kolonia**

President Biden Proposes \$119.1 million in the FY 2025 Budget for U.S. Territories and the Freely Associated States

U.S. Department of the Interior

March 11, 2024

WASHINGTON – The Biden-Harris administration today released the President’s Budget for Fiscal Year (FY) 2025. The President’s budget includes \$119.1 million in current appropriations for the U.S. Department of the Interior’s Office of Insular Affairs (OIA). The proposal would fund initiatives benefitting fellow Americans in the U.S. territories of American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The FY 2025 budget also supports assistance needed to bring the Compact of Free Association Amendment Act of 2024 into force for the three freely associated states of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), and the Republic of Palau.

“President Biden has proposed a budget that strengthens our territories and complements the authorization of mandatory funding in the FY 2024 Consolidated Appropriations Act to secure our Compact of Free Association relationships for decades to come,” said Assistant Secretary – Insular and International Affairs Carmen G. Cantor. “OIA’s 2025 budget request will provide for investments in infrastructure, energy resiliency, and security and will promote equity in underserved communities allowing Interior to fulfill its responsibilities to the U.S. territories in the Pacific and the Caribbean.”

The FY 2025 budget proposal for OIA includes \$119 million in current appropriations and \$2 billion in permanent funding.

The budget request for current appropriations contains a total of \$4.0 million in proposed increases from the FY 2024

Annualized Continuing Resolution level, including \$1.0 million to support critical infrastructure needs in the Territories, \$1.0 million for compliance with the Insular Areas Act (Public Law (P.L.) 112-149) related to groundwater monitoring of Runit Dome, and \$700,000 to address additional conservation needs for the Insular Areas.

For more information on the President’s FY 2025 budget, please visit: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/>.

For the Department of the Interior’s FY 2025 Budget in Brief, please visit: <https://www.doi.gov/budget/appropriations/2024>

The Assistant Secretary – Insular and International Affairs and the Office of Insular Affairs (OIA) carry out the Secretary of the Interior’s responsibilities for the U.S. territories of American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Additionally, OIA administers and oversees federal assistance under the Compacts of Free Association to the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau. OIA also administers a discretionary assistance program for all the Insular Areas. Find information about OIA and its work on www.doi.gov/oia, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.

Rich countries attain record human development, but half of the poorest have gone backwards, finds UN Development Programme

Rising political polarization and distrust results in gridlock on global challenges

United Nations Development Programme

March 13, 2024

New York– Uneven development progress is leaving the poorest behind, exacerbating inequality, and stoking political polarization on a global scale. The result is a dangerous gridlock that must be urgently tackled through collective action, according to a new report released today by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The 2023/24 Human Development Report (HDR), titled “Breaking the Gridlock: Reimagining cooperation in a polarized world”, reveals a troubling trend: the rebound in the global Human Development Index (HDI) – a summary measure reflecting a country’s Gross National Income (GNI) per capita, education, and life expectancy – has been partial, incomplete, and unequal.

The HDI is projected to reach record highs in 2023 after steep declines during 2020 and 2021. But this progress is deeply uneven. Rich countries are experiencing record-high levels of human development while half of the world’s poorest countries remain below their pre-crisis level of progress.

Following an unprecedented dip due to the COVID-19 pandemic and economic turmoil, the HDI in Asia and the Pacific rebounded to pre-pandemic values in 2022, but this should not be interpreted as a complete recovery. The latest HDI value remains well below what it could have been if there had not been a crisis. Fourteen countries are still below the 2019 level and some countries like Afghanistan, Timor-Leste, and Samoa are seeing a worrying regression in HDI.

East Asia managed to minimize the disruptions of the pandemic particularly well, and the HDI data reveals that this subregion barely registered a blip. Other subregions saw marked volatility. In 2022, South Asia bounced back significantly, surpassing pre-pandemic levels. South-East Asia remains below the HDI level before the pandemic. While the Pacific rebounded above 2019 values, health and education remain critical concerns. Viewed over a longer period, Asia-Pacific continues to stand out as the region with the most rapid progress in

human development. Between 1990 and 2022, the HDI increased by 20 percentage points – the highest increase in the world.

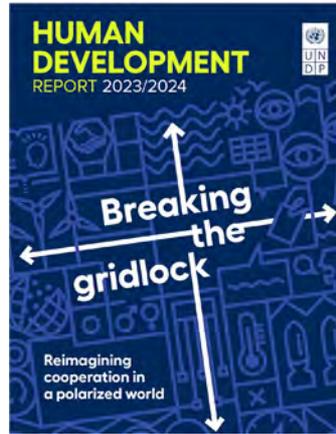
However, inequality within countries continued to be a worrying trend. South Asia’s loss in the HDI due to inequality is among the highest in the world (after sub-Saharan Africa), followed by the Pacific.

Globally inequalities are compounded by substantial economic concentration. As referenced in the report, almost 40 percent of global trade in goods is concentrated in three or fewer countries; and in 2021 the market capitalization of each of the three largest tech companies in the world surpassed the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of more than 90 percent of countries that year.

“The widening human development gap revealed by the report shows that the two-decade trend of steadily reducing inequalities between wealthy and poor nations is now in reverse.

Despite our deeply interconnected global societies, we are falling short. We must leverage our interdependence as well as our capacities to address our shared and existential challenges and ensure people’s aspirations are met,” said Achim Steiner, head of the UN Development Programme. “This gridlock carries a significant human toll. The failure of collective action to advance action on climate change, digitalization or poverty and inequality not only hinders human development but also worsens polarization and further erodes trust in people and institutions worldwide.”

The report argues that advancing international collective action is hindered by an emerging ‘democracy paradox’: while 9 in 10 people worldwide endorse democracy, over half of global survey respondents express support for leaders that may undermine it by bypassing fundamental rules of the democratic process, as per data analysed in the report. Half of people surveyed worldwide report having no or limited control over



their lives, and over two-thirds believe they have little influence on their government’s decisions.

Political polarization is also a growing concern with global repercussions. Along with a sense of powerlessness, report authors say, it is fuelling inward-turning policy approaches – starkly at odds with the global cooperation

needed to address urgent issues like the decarbonization of our economies, misuse of digital technologies, and conflict. This is particularly alarming in light of 2023’s record-breaking temperatures, which emphasize the immediate need for united action to tackle the climate crisis, or in the advent of artificial intelligence as a new and fast-evolving technological frontier with little or no regulatory guard rails.

The report highlights that deglobalization is neither feasible nor realistic in today’s world and that economic interdependence remains high. It points out that no region is close to self-sufficiency, as all rely on imports from other regions of 25 percent or more of at least one major type of goods and services.

“In a world marked by increasing polarization and division, neglecting to invest in each other poses a serious threat to our wellbeing and security. Protectionist approaches cannot address the complex, interconnected challenges we face, including pandemic prevention, climate change, and digital regulation,” Steiner added. “Our problems are intertwined, requiring equally interconnected solutions. By adopting an opportunity-driven agenda that emphasizes the benefits of the energy transition and of artificial intelligence for human development, we have a chance to break through the current deadlock and reignite a commitment to a shared future.”

The report emphasizes how global interdependence is being reconfigured and calls for a new generation of global public goods. It proposes four areas for immediate action:

- planetary public goods, for climate stability, as we confront the unprecedented challenges of the Anthropocene;

- digital global public goods, for greater equity in harnessing new technologies for equitable human development;

- new and expanded financial mechanisms, including a novel track in international cooperation that complements humanitarian assistance and traditional development aid to low-income countries; and

- dialling down political polarization through new governance approaches focused on enhancing people’s voices in deliberation and tackling misinformation.

In this context, multilateralism plays a fundamental role, the report argues, because bilateral engagements are not able to address the irreducibly planetary nature of the provision of global public goods.

More key data from the report

- In 2023, all 38 countries that are members of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) achieved higher Human Development Index (HDI) scores compared to their levels in 2019.

- Among the 35 least developed countries (LDCs) that experienced a decline in their HDI in 2020 and/or 2021, more than half (18 countries) have not yet recovered to their human development levels of 2019.

- All developing regions have not met their anticipated HDI levels based on the trend before 2019. It appears they have shifted to a lower HDI trajectory, indicating potential permanent setbacks in future human development progress.

- The impact of human development losses is in sharp focus in Afghanistan and Ukraine. Afghanistan’s HDI has been knocked back by a staggering ten years, while Ukraine’s HDI dropped to its lowest level since 2004.

- The report cites research indicating that countries with populist governments have lower GDP- growth rates. Fifteen years after a populist government assumes office, the GDP per capita is found to be 10 percent lower than it might under a non-populist government scenario.

To view the full report, visit <https://hdr.undp.org/human-development-report-2023-24>

Award winning academic duo step closer to achieving equity for Pacific peoples

Pacific Media Adviser

Two award winning Pacific academics are hopeful that a \$US75K Spencer Foundation Vision grant will lead to future generations of Pacific peoples having greater achievement in Higher Education.

Waipapa Taumata Rau, University of Auckland academics, Sociologist Dr Sereana Naepi (Fiji, Aotearoa) and Historian



Dr Marcia Leenen-Young (Sāmoa, Aotearoa) were among the newly announced 15 Vision Grant winners from four hundred international submissions. The US based Spencer Foundation focuses on transforming educational systems toward greater equity.

Euphoric about their success, the pair say being awarded a Vision Grant provides the opportunity to redress decades of the Aotearoa tertiary sector underserving Pacific peoples. Over the next 12 months the scholars will build their team of Pacific researchers, public policy workers and the community, to collaborate and design their research project - Strengthening the Vaka: Achieving Equity in Higher Education for Pacific Peoples.

As a Rutherford Discovery Fellow Dr Naepi is a Research Impact Award recipient for her work that seeks to address inequity and racism, experienced by Pacific people. Dr Leenen-Young has been recognized nationally for teaching in tertiary education, receiving a Te Whatu Kairangi – Aotearoa Tertiary Educator Award with a Pacific endorsement for work with Pacific tertiary students in 2022.

With their latest award, the pair are also eligible to apply for the much-touted Spencer Foundation \$US3.5M Transformative Research Grant, a win having the potential to enact real and impactful change.

“This grant allows us to build our

vision of what we think is possible.” Dr Naepi says referring to research demonstrating Pacific peoples as underserved, underpaid, and under-represented. Yet despite significant government investment into policies to redress sector inequity, the implementation and delivery of policy across the country’s eight universities continues to be problematic.

“To bring us together to design a dream... the dream is not just with policymakers, not just with community and not just with researchers, but all [of us] in the same space, having a conversation and trying to make it make something that lets us fulfil those aspirations,” says Dr Naepi.

The duo believes the solution lies in bringing together key stakeholders from the sector to build a research project for rapid change and delivery, taking aim at key government policy directives that address inequity for Pacific peoples.

“This project seizes a moment where both the sector and our Pacific researchers have the willingness, capacity and capability to take on a national transformation project towards Pacific equity,” says Dr Leenen-Young. The long-time collaborators (and good friends) are also excited that part of the award includes traveling to Chicago together. “We get to go to Chicago to meet other international academics who are interested in changing the education system in big ways... I’m excited to meet other equity education academics,” Dr Naepi.

U.S. Navy Seabees return to renovate Saladak Dispensary in U

U.S. Embassy Kolonia

On Thursday March 14th U.S. Navy Seabees completed renovations on the Saladak Dispensary in the Municipality of U. After building the dispensary to expand public health outreach in 2019, Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 4 (NMCB-4), known as the "Fabulous Four", returned earlier this year to make repairs. The team painted the roofs, repaired gutters, and installed new plumbing, all of which will increase water capture and transfer to USAID-provided water catchment tanks, greatly improving resilience against current and future

drought conditions. Additional repairs included HVAC installation, electrical improvements, and interior repainting. Their work is part of the ongoing Pacific Partnership’s engineering line of effort.

Jason Neal, Senior Defense Official and Defense Attaché for the U.S. Embassy Kolonia said “Seabee teams have partnered with the FSM community for decades. We appreciate their professionalism, hard work, and dedication to constructing, renovating, and repairing important community infrastructure throughout the FSM.”



USCGC Frederick Hatch supports partners in the Federated States of Micronesia and Republic of Palau under Operation Rematau

Story by Chief Warrant Officer Sara Muir
U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia / Sector Guam

March 14, 2024

Santa Rita, Guam—The crew of the USCGC Frederick Hatch (WPC 1143) completed a significant operational patrol under Operation Rematau from Feb. 15 to March 4, 2024, reinforcing the U.S. Coast Guard's commitment to maritime safety, security, and environmental stewardship in the Pacific region.



"Frederick Hatch marked an important milestone in the U.S. Coast Guard's relationship with our friends in Palau by pioneering the use of the recently signed enhanced bilateral agreement,

and we look forward to deepening our ties with Palau's Marine Law division going forward. The cutter's first-ever visit to Tinian and participation in Yap Day were both very enjoyable ways to learn about the cultures of our neighboring islands while reflecting our commitment to communities across the Pacific," said Lt. Patrick Dreiss, commanding officer of USCGC Frederick Hatch.



The Frederick Hatch crew proudly represented the U.S. Coast Guard at the annual Pika Fest Celebration on Tinian, Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands, and Yap Day in Colonia, Yap State, the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM).

Supporting local needs, they transported 1,500 lbs. of non-perishable food, 1,200 lbs. of water, and essential supplies, including fishing gear and tools, to Ulithi Atoll, FSM, during a state-declared emergency drought. The crew renewed the meaningful connection with the local community, engaging in direct support and sharing in the generosity and warmth of the island's

residents.

"The opportunity to contribute to the enduring partnership between the Ulithi community and the U.S. Coast Guard, rooted in World War II and grown throughout decades of collaboration, was a special experience for myself and the crew. Thank you to the local non-profit organizations we worked alongside, as the experience of supporting and visiting the people of Ulithi is one of the highlights of my career," said Dreiss.

Further showcasing the spirit of cooperation and support, the Hatch's crew organized a donation drive prior to sailing, collecting 40 bags of school supplies and clothing from the U.S. Coast Guard community in Guam and collaborated with the Ayuda Foundation and the Ulithi-based One People One Reef research foundation to facilitate these critical donations to the island.

"Today exemplifies the spirit of teamwork and camaraderie that we hold dear here in Ulithi. It warms our hearts to hear that your short

visit to our island was enjoyable, and we're delighted that you appreciated the coconuts, bananas, and flowers. Knowing that the bananas are adorning your ship's canopy, and the flowers are being proudly worn by your crew fills us with immense joy," said Ulithi Mayor John Rulmal.

Yap Day, observed annually on March 1, is a significant cultural and legal holiday in Yap State, one of the four states of the FSM. Established in 1968 and renamed in 1979, it celebrates Yapese culture, highlighting traditional skills and competitions, such as tattooing, fresh produce contests, and traditional games. The U.S. Coast Guard regularly attends, and the 2024 celebration was particularly special as Petty Officer 2nd Class Eugene Halishlius, a native of Yap currently stationed in Guam, returned home aboard Frederick Hatch for the first time in years to participate, further symbolizing the deep connections between the U.S. Coast Guard and the Pacific communities served.



"Returning to Yap, I'm

Continued on next page

...USCGC

Continued from previous page

reminded of the values instilled in me: respect, humility, and the identity of being an islander. Coming from a family of navigators, we believe in the power of knowing your waypoints, a principle that guides us to success. Inspired by my brother Ken Raigeluw, who is also serving and driven by our service's unique opportunities and missions, this journey not only contributes to our collective mission but also my personal growth and family legacy," said Halishlius.

The Frederick Hatch crew responded to a request from the government of Yap State for a U.S. Coast Guard presence near Ngulu Atoll to deter illegal sea cucumber poaching, demonstrating a commitment to protecting the region's marine resources and aiding partners. This patrol also marked the first-ever boarding under the Palau enhanced bilateral agreement, signed in August 2023, authorizing U.S. Coast Guard boarding officers to conduct boardings in Palau's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) on the country's behalf without a Palauan officer present. While the crew found everything compliant with international and Palauan requirements, the action set a precedent for further regional maritime law enforcement cooperation. It reinforces the trust and confidence of partners in the U.S. Coast Guard's role to ensure compliance with fishing regulations within partner EEZs.

The patrol also emphasized the need for continued vigilance in the Western Pacific. Not for the first time, the Frederick Hatch crew identified areas of concern for illegal fishing activities and non-compliance with maritime regulations wherein fishing vessels were observed not transmitting on AIS or VMS near the Palau EEZ border with the high seas.

"These efforts not only affirm our dedication to preserving the region's marine biodiversity but also reinforce the strong and enduring partnerships we have, particularly in support of our Compact of Free Association partners addressing shared security challenges and advancing mutual interests in the Blue Pacific," said Capt. Nick Simmons, commander of U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam. "Our partnership with local non-profits and the community in Guam exemplifies a holistic approach to strengthening the fabric of trust and mutual respect we've built over decades with Pacific Island communities and beyond as we face future challenges and opportunities together."



The APIL 63rd Board of Directors adopts Resolutions

Yap Department of Youth and Civic Affairs

March 05, 2024

Colonia, Yap - The second session of the 63rd Association of Pacific Islands Legislature (APIL) Board of Directors meeting, held at the Yap State Legislature on February 27th, 2024, focused on the selection of proposed APIL Resolutions Number 62 Binding Operational Directives (BOD). Out of 17 total proposed resolutions, 16 were adopted. The following adopted resolutions are as follows:

- APIL Resolution No.63-BOD-01: "Expressing gratitude and appreciation to former Speaker Kenneth A. Kedi for his invaluable service and dedication for sixteen years as a Board Member and Officer of the APIL, representing the Nitijela of the Republic of the Marshall Islands."
- APIL Resolution No.63-BOD-02: "Urging the United States Congress to pass legislation for compact funding."
- APIL Resolution No.63-BOD-03, CD1: "Expressing support for the sharing of Information amongst APIL Members relative to cybersecurity threats through the creation of the 'APIL Cybersecurity

Working Group'."

- APIL Resolution No.63-BOD-04, CD1: "Relative to urging the U.S. Department of State grant requests from American Samoa, Guam and the CNMI to be admitted as voting members of the Pacific Islands Forum."
- APIL Resolution No.63-BOD-05: "Expressing the profound congratulations of the APIL Board of Directors to the Pacific Islands Development Bank (PIDB), its management, its staff, its customers and its benefactors, for thirty-five years of dedicated services in meeting the financial and developmental needs of the APIL Pacific."
- APIL Resolution No.63-BOD-06: "Expressing the Association of the Pacific Island Legislatures' genuine congratulations to Mrs. Yoslyn George Sigrah on becoming Kosraean's first woman to be elected to the Congress of the Federated States of Micronesia."
- APIL Resolution No.63-BOD-07: "To extend our sincere condolences and sympathies to the family of the late Honorable Felicidad Taman Ogumoro and to acknowledge and pay tribute to her lifelong service and countless contributions to the people of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and the Blue

Continent."

- APIL Resolution No.63-BOD-08: "Expressing utmost sympathy and extending sincerest condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of the late Honorable Senator Florencio Singkoro Harper for his untimely passing."
- APIL Resolution No.63-BOD-09: "Calling on the Board of Directors to create a temporary ad hoc committee from members of the APIL for the purpose of reviewing and prioritizing the resolutions adopted in the previous Board of the Directors meetings and General assemblies of the APIL."
- APIL Resolution No.63-BOD-10: "Commending Nauru Airlines for uniting the Pacific Community, and respectfully requesting Nauru Airlines to extend its services to the FSM States of Chuuk, Kosrae and Yap, connecting the islands and bringing people together."
- APIL Resolution No.63-BOD-11: "Expressing the profound gratitude of the Board of Directors of the APIL to The Nature Conservancy, the Micronesia Conservation Trust and the Micronesia Challenge for their continuous efforts and successes in preserving and protecting the many varied and threatened components of

our natural environments."

- APIL Resolution No.63-BOD-12, CD1: "Respectfully Requesting the General Assembly to Amend Section 1 of Article XI of the By-Laws of the APIL relative to Membership dues."
- APIL Resolution No.63-BOD-13: "Requesting the Government of Guam assist in providing easier and faster procedures for COFA travelers through Guam."
- APIL Resolution No.63-BOD-14: "Expressing utmost sympathy and extending sincerest condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of the late Honorable Senator Esly Kanto for his untimely passing."
- APIL Resolution No.63-BOD-16: "Expressing the Association of the Pacific Island Legislatures utmost gratitude and appreciation to the Yap State Legislature for hosting of the 63rd Board of Directors Meeting and for the use of its facilities and staff support during the meeting."
- APIL Resolution No.63-BOD-17: "Expressing the Association of the Pacific Island Legislature's utmost respect, honor, and acknowledgment of the life and commitment of the late Senator Paliknoa K. Welly and conveying deepest condolences to his wife Shru, families and friends."

Australia names Jenny Grant-Curnow as new Ambassador to the FSM

*By Bill Jaynes
The Kaselehlie Press*

March 10, 2024

FSM—Australia has appointed Ms. Jenny Grant-Curnow as its next Ambassador to the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), as announced in a media release by the Australian Embassy on March 10, 2024.

"Australia looks forward to deepening this partnership and working alongside the Federated States of Micronesia to promote economic development, enhance security cooperation and address climate change impacts, amongst other Pacific priorities," said Australian's Foreign Minister Penny Wong.

Australia and FSM share a vision of a strong and united Pacific region, advocating for Pacific sovereignty under the guidance of the Pacific

Islands Forum and the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, she said.

Ms. Jenny Grant-Curnow brings a wealth of experience to her new role as Australia's Ambassador to FSM. A career officer with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, she previously served as Acting Assistant Secretary in the Office of the Pacific, overseeing key sectors. Her overseas postings include Head of the Representative Office to the Occupied Palestinian Territories in Ramallah, Political Counsellor in New Delhi, and various short-term missions in countries such as Tuvalu, Nepal, and Qatar. Additionally, Ms. Grant-Curnow has contributed to peacekeeping operations for the United Nations.

The announcement also marks the conclusion of Ambassador Jo Cowley's tenure, who has served since 2020, and acknowledges her contributions to advancing Australia's interests in FSM during her tenure.

DYCA team with exclusive filmmaking workshop by Hollywood Producer John Duffy

Yap Department of Youth and Civic Affairs

March 7, 2024

Colonia Yap - Last week, on March 6 and 7, 2024, the DYCA Team embarked on a two-day training workshop led by Hollywood producer John Duffy. The workshop went into various aspects of the film industry, providing invaluable insights into video and audio production, equipment selection for diverse projects, indoor and outdoor lighting techniques, and exposure to the captivating world of filmmaking and documentaries.

Attended by members of the DYCA team, including representatives from the Yap Historic Preservation Office (HPO), State Website Office, and Division of Youth Services and Media, the workshop aimed to equip local talents with fundamental skills essential for maintaining higher standards in filmmaking. The comprehensive training not only prepared them for potential documentary film projects but also empowered them in archiving video and audio content for educational and future use.

DYCA aspires to elevate its personnel to greater heights in the field of filming, fostering a culture of excellence within its department. The diverse range of skills acquired during the workshop better positions the team for upcoming projects and ensures the production of content that meets industry standards.

Interior Department applauds renewed economic assistance for Compacts of Free Association

US Department of the Interior

March 12, 2024

Washington D.C.—The Department of the Interior today celebrated the finalization of amendments to the Compacts of Free Association, which would provide 20 years of new economic assistance. The \$6.5 billion of assistance is critical for economic stability and quality of life for the people of the freely associated states (FAS): the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), and the Republic of Palau.

“Strong ties between the United States and the Pacific Islands form the foundation of our engagement and presence in the Pacific. The provision of 20 years of new economic assistance sends a clear signal of the United States’ commitment to the long, historical relationships we have held

with the freely associated states,” said Secretary Deb Haaland. “This critical funding will continue to support the governments of the Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of the Marshall Islands, and Republic of Palau on their path to long-term economic self-sufficiency across key sectors, including the environment, health, education, private sector development, and infrastructure.

The Compact of Free Association packages will provide economic assistance of \$3.3 billion to the FSM, \$2.3 billion to the RMI, and \$889 million to Palau over the span of 20 years through 2043. The funding will provide support for basic public service delivery, such as health and education, improve infrastructure, and bolster the health of the Compact trust funds previously established for each of the FAS. Congress also included \$634 million over the next 20 years

to ensure the continued provision of U.S. postal service to the FAS.

“With their passage, the U.S. Congress has recognized the importance of our Compacts of Free Association relationships by providing the resources necessary to move towards bringing the economic assistance provisions of the amended agreements with the freely associated states into force,” said Assistant Secretary for Insular and International Affairs Carmen G. Cantor. “This law provides critical support to our friends and allies in the Pacific and bolsters both the commitments we have made in the past and relationships we want to keep in the future.”

In its passage, Congress also addressed long-standing challenges for citizens of each of these FAS who choose to reside lawfully in the United States, as provided for under

the Compact agreements. The law restores eligibility for key federal public benefit programs for FAS individuals while they are lawfully present in the United States – an important long-term solution to the financial impacts that some FAS communities may have on U.S. state and territorial governments. Restoring access to federal public benefits will address gaps in needed social services for families and have a significant impact on the communities where they reside. The law also ensures that the federal government provides, without significant additional administrative costs, a significant portion of the financial burden currently being borne by state and territorial governments of the FAS. Benefits and compensation from the federal government will be available to FAS individuals in whichever state or territory within the United States that they reside.

R&D Team: growing together by uniting Yaps’ agricultural community through the establishment of new Yap Farmers Associations

Yap Department of Youth and Civic Affairs

March 11, 2024

Colonia Yap - The Department of Resources and Development, in collaboration with the Green Climate Fund(GCF) Food Security Livelihood(FSL) Project, held a workshop on the establishment of the Farmers Association of Yap on Friday, March 8th, 2024, at the Small Business Development Center(SBDC) Conference building from 10 AM to 1 PM. The meeting, open to all interested farming groups, women's and men's groups, youth groups, and community groups engaged in gardening and farming activities, highlighted the importance of fostering collaboration and enhancing agricultural practices in the State of Yap.

Key topics discussed during the meeting included the review and approval of drafted by-laws, confirmation of association members, and the election of officers. Whereas, the by-laws had been unanimously approved by the farmers’ group, leading to the establishment of the State-level Farmers’ Association, named the Farmers Association of Yap. Elected officers include Mr. James Choay as President, Ms. Mercedes Tiningmow as Vice President, Ms. Genista Kadanngeed as Treasurer, and Ms. Emily Mugyan as Secretary.

The next step for the newly elected officers is scheduled to meet next week to finalize the Article of Incorporation and other necessary documents for the NGO registration into the state registry. This underscores the commitment to promoting sustainable agriculture, addressing climate change impacts, and fostering community resilience in Yap.

Former President of the Federated States of Micronesia David W. Panuelo joins the Atlantic Council as a distinguished fellow

The Atlantic Council

March 11, 2024

Washington D.C.-- The Atlantic Council announced today that David W. Panuelo, former president of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), will join the Atlantic Council’s Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security as a nonresident distinguished fellow affiliated with its Indo-Pacific Security Initiative (IPSI).

Panuelo served as president of the FSM from May 2019 to May 2023. His expertise will be instrumental in informing the Council’s work on US-Pacific Islands relations, countering China’s influence in the Pacific, and on a wide range of other strategic policy issues in the region.

“President Panuelo is one of the world’s leading voices advocating for international cooperation to ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific,” said Markus Garlauskas, director of the Indo-Pacific Security Initiative. “He brings a unique perspective as the former top leader of a Pacific Island country. He has been a strong, courageous advocate for the FSM, and the Pacific Islands in general, to work with the United States and its allies and partners to advance common values and interests in freedom, security, and prosperity.”

Prior to his term as president, Panuelo served in various roles in FSM national and state government, and as a leader in key positions outside of government, for more than

thirty years. He began his career serving abroad as a Foreign Service Officer in the FSM Department of Foreign Affairs, after which he served as deputy chief of mission to Fiji and, later, to the United Nations. After returning home to serve in the cabinet of his home state of Pohnpei, he worked outside of government as a business leader and established the nonprofit Care Micronesia Foundation. In 2011, Panuelo returned to government with his election to the FSM Congress, where he served until elected by the 21st Congress of the FSM to serve as the nation’s ninth President in May 2019. Since departing office in May 2023, he has continued to advocate for a close relationship between the United States and the FSM and warn of Chinese “political warfare” in the Pacific Islands.

“President Panuelo’s emphasis on championing freedom and democracy in the Indo-Pacific aligns closely with the values and mission of the Atlantic Council,” said Matthew Kroenig, vice president and senior director of the Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security. “We are delighted to welcome him to the Scowcroft Center.”

Pacific Island governments take a step forward in building early childhood education systems

UNICEF

March 12, 2024

Nadi, Fiji—Today, government heads of education systems from 15 Pacific Island countries, together with UNICEF and as part of the Pacific Regional Education Framework (PacREF) partnership, launched a new Status Report on Pacific Early Childhood Education Systems in the region at a four-day conference in Nadi, Fiji.

Speaking at the opening of the conference Tuvalu's CEO of Education and Chair of PacREF Dr Tufoua Panapa said the launch of the Status Report underscored the commitment to transparency, accountability and shared learning.

"Together we will craft a Pacific regional call to action that resonates with the unique settings of our region ensuring that no child is left behind," said Dr Panapa. "This conference will serve as a platform to capture our regional and national visions and priorities for ECE under PacREF."

Over the next four days the CEOs and permanent secretaries of education will be dissecting the findings of the new status report and sharing their successes and lessons learnt with each other. The discussions from the conference will enable the CEOs and permanent secretaries to work with their governments to address the gaps and create better early childhood learning for children in the region.

This will be supported by the formation of an early-learning taskforce responsible for providing leadership on early childhood education to Pacific governments and stakeholders.

Speaking at the launch of the report UNICEF Pacific Deputy Representative Ms Roshni Basu emphasized the importance of strong and resilient ECE systems that extend from robust policies to increased investments in quality and contextualised early childhood teaching and learning in classrooms and communities.

"Early childhood education is vital to ensure that every child has the opportunity to begin with a strong foundation on the path of learning and education," said Ms Basu. "It is imperative that strategies aiming to improve learning outcomes and *skills development*

focus on the criticality of investments in early childhood."

In 2017, UNICEF, in partnership with the then Pacific Regional Council for Early Childhood Care and Education (PRC4ECCE), compiled the first Pacific ECCE Status Report, which highlighted critical national efforts of 15 Pacific Island countries needed to secure the best development of young children for ECE.

Now, seven years after that report, the status report highlights progress, as well as new achievements and challenges. Some of these achievements include improved overall access to ECE and improved attention to ECE in education legislation.

The report was developed under the guidance of ECE focal points from each of the 15 countries and has benefitted from support from partners under the Pacific Regional Education Framework (PacREF). Country representatives and regional partners have again come together at the ECE conference this week to discuss what has been done to support the full realization of ECE, the challenges faced, as well as plan changes needed to make further progress on ECE.

Meanwhile PacREF Coordinator, Mr Filipe Jitoko, said regional heads of education understand the importance of ECE in a child's learning journey and the four-day workshop has accelerated this progress further.

"PacREF is delighted to see the strides towards ensuring every child has access to ECE. However, there are challenges which governments face in this endeavor, and we are here to find solutions to these obstacles as one Pacific family," said Mr Jitoko.

The 15 Pacific Island Countries leading the Report and the Conference are Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tokelau, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

UNICEF is hosting the conference as part of the PacREF Partnership. The conference will end on Friday with the formation of an Early Learning Taskforce responsible for providing leadership on early childhood education to Pacific governments and stakeholders.

Sailing from South America into the Yap Day Celebration

Yap Department of Youth and Civic Affairs

March 05, 2024

Yap, FSM – "We wish more people know about Yap!"

"For a very long time, I've been hearing about Yap, about the stone money, about the culture, and how the traditions are very strong here, and the people are keeping up the traditions. Wherever we travel to, we like to see that," said Travis Holub as his reason for traveling around the Pacific Ocean and making a stop to the island of Yap.

There was a total of six yachts anchored in the Yap Colonia lagoon on February 29th, 2024. The Department of Youth and Civic Affairs had interviewed a couple, originally from California, who had docked their yacht named "Euphoria" to experience the cultures and lifestyle in the State of Yap.

Adventurers Kelly Baez and Travis Holub recently made a stop in the State of Yap, as part of their journey through the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM). The couple, who had traveled to approximately 80 countries, departed Yap on March 5th, 2024 as the last stop within the FSM before heading to the Philippines.

The purpose of their visit to Yap was based on many things, such as authentic experiences and escape from the generic (e.g. McDonald's). Attending Yap Day made the trip more "favorable", allowing them to immerse themselves in the rich culture and traditions of the island of Yap.

Kelly and Travis addressed that the reason for traveling to different countries is to seek unique cultural encounters around the world, such as embracing the local produce and livelihood of various communities.

DYCA Team Collabs with Attorney General Office: Yap State Court, "Consumer Protection Act of 1990"

Yap Department of Youth and Civic Affairs

March 14, 2024

Yap—Under the provisions of Yap State Code Title 15, Chapter 11, known as the Consumer Protection Act of 1990, informs all residents and businesses within the jurisdiction of the State of Yap in commercial exploitation and fosters a conducive economic climate that supports growth and prosperity in the State of Yap. This initiative, supported by the Department of Youth and Civic Affairs (DYCA) and Attorney General Joses Gallen.

Key provisions include definitions of terms like "commerce" and "person," prohibitions on unfair competition such as deceptive practices and false advertising, exemptions for government actions, and enforcement mechanisms including civil actions and injunctions by the Attorney General (A.G.).

The following are unfair methods, acts, or practices conducted in any trade or commerce in § 1104, "Unlawful acts":

- "Causing likelihood of confusion or of misunderstanding as to the source, sponsorship, approval or certification of goods or services"; For example, a company produces counterfeit products (e.i. Nike and Gucci) that closely resemble those of a well-known brand, causing consumers to mistakenly believe they are purchasing genuine goods endorsed by the brand.
- "Causing likelihood of confusion or of misunderstanding as to the affiliation, connection or association with, or certification by, another"; for example, a person falsely claims to be a certified expert in a particular field, leading others

Continued on next page

United Nations and Federated States of Micronesia continue building common ground for digital transformation

United Nations Micronesia

5 March 2024

Pohnpei, Micronesia, - To support the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM)'s ongoing digital transformation journey, the United Nations in Micronesia yesterday engaged in a productive dialogue with the FSM Digital Transformation Committee. The meeting sought to integrate the UN's collective strengths and resources into Micronesia's digital advancement efforts, catalyzing actions that accelerate the Pacific nations's development momentum.

As a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), the geographic characteristics of FSM with widely dispersed populations create fundamental challenges to securing affordable ICT connectivity in the country. Despite progress in strengthening digital infrastructure, significant gaps remain in the access to reliable, affordable, high-speed and high-capacity broadband Internet.

To tackle these challenges, the FSM Digital Transformation Committee was established under the chairmanship of Carl Apis, Secretary of the Department of Transportation, Communications and Infrastructure (TC&I), convening key figures including the Acting Secretary Leonito Bacalando Jr. of the Department of Justice, Secretary Marcus Samo of the Department of Health & Social Affairs, Executive Director Takuro Akinaga of Telecom Regulatory Authority (TRA), alongside national cabinet members and state representatives.

Echoing the government's efforts, the UN in Micronesia is implementing the "Joint Programme on Accelerating SDG Achievement through Digital Transformation to Strengthen Community Resilience in Micronesia" (Joint Programme). This initiative, led by ITU and managed by UNOPS, draws on the technical expertise of FAO, ILO, UNESCO, UNICEF, and UNODC. Together, the agencies are working to support digital transformation initiatives, solutions, and policy framework developments that align with FSM's developmental aspirations.

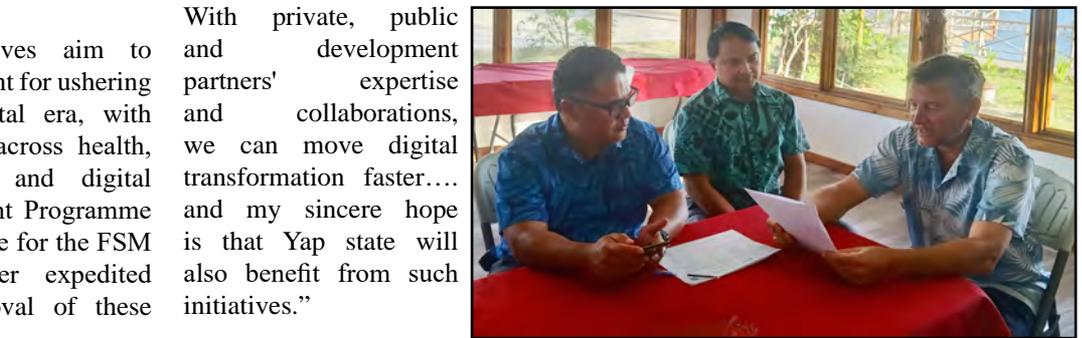
During the meeting, UNOPS Project Manager Rior Santos presented an

overview of the UN's ongoing collaborative efforts through the Joint Programme. The discussion explored the draft Digital Transformation Strategy developed in partnership with ITU, the nomination of Tonowas as a pilot for the Smart Island initiative, and the launch of the Digital Readiness Assessment to evaluate FSM's preparedness for embracing digital transformation. These three proposed initiatives aim to establish a robust blueprint for ushering Micronesia into a digital era, with transformative benefits across health, education, agriculture, and digital finance sectors. The Joint Programme team expressed their hope for the FSM government to consider expedited endorsement and approval of these proposals.

Secretary Carlson Apis of TC&I has pledged commitment to collaborating with Chuuk state for the necessary endorsements for Tonowas to serve as the pilot Smart Island, "With the backing of Chuuk state, we will collaboratively endeavour to transform Tonowas into a model Smart Island. This initiative will create a replicable blueprint that can be extended to other islands, leveraging the support of diverse development partners."

In his remarks, the UN Resident Coordinator in Micronesia Jaap van Hierden emphasized the synergy between the Joint Programme and FSM's national agenda, "This partnership is crucial for accelerating the digital transformation agenda in the FSM. Let us take this opportunity to shape a future that ensures that no one is left behind and no island is left behind."

The FSM Digital Transformation Committee expressed its excitement to work closely with the United Nations and leverage its collective expertise to advance the digital transformation agenda in FSM. Lieutenant Governor Francis Itimai of Yap welcomed the initiative, "This is a great initiative and example of inclusive collaborations.



With private, public and development partners' expertise and collaborations, we can move digital transformation faster... and my sincere hope is that Yap state will also benefit from such initiatives."

This meeting marks a constructive step forward in the collaboration between the United Nations and the Federated States of Micronesia, laying a foundation for future enhancements in the nation's digital capabilities. The outcomes and recommendations of this meeting

will inform FSM's preparations for the forthcoming 4th International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS4), with proposals to host interactive side events showcasing Micronesia's distinctive approach to digital transformation.

...Yap

Continued from previous page

to believe they have credentials or affiliations that they do not possess.

- "Representing that goods are of a particular standard, quality or grade or that goods are of a particular style or model if they are of another"; for example, a car dealership misrepresented the mileage of a used vehicle, leading to potential confusion for buyers regarding the true condition of the car.

- "Failing to reveal any known defect in or damage to any items entered in commerce, unless the item is stated to be as entered on as 'as is' or similar basis"; for example, a car dealer neglected to disclose a known mechanical issue with the transmission of a vehicle being sold.

- "Failing to make reasonable

clear all materials terms and conditions included in those contracts which initiate commerce and trade in goods and services." for example, the car dealer neglected to disclose the significant damage to the windshield, violating consumer protection laws by failing to make the condition of the vehicle clear before finalizing the transaction.

Private actions are allowed for individuals who suffer losses due to unlawful practices, with provisions for damages and injunctions. The A.G. is empowered to investigate violations, issue subpoenas, and administer oaths, with penalties for non-compliance. Violators may face civil or criminal penalties, forfeiture of corporate franchise, or other enforcement actions by the Attorney General.