

# POPA audit cites misuse of hospital supplies fund by former leadership; CID investigation launched

By **Bill Jaynes**  
The Kaselehlie Press

September 6, 2025

**Kolonia, Pohnpei** — An inspection of the Pohnpei Department of Health and Social Services' (DOHSS) Medical Supplies Revolving Fund has uncovered systemic weaknesses in financial management, leading to unallowable expenditures, unauthorized transfers, and even a temporary negative fund balance. The audit, conducted by the Office of the Public Auditor (OPA) at the request of the Pohnpei Legislature, covered transactions from October 1, 2022, to December 31, 2024.

Importantly, the report clarifies that its findings concern practices under the previous administration and not the current Director of

DOHSS, Stuard H. Penias.

The inspection revealed that the Revolving Fund was operated without formalized policies, adequate oversight, or a proper authorization process for financial transfers. In several cases, money was transferred to the state's General Fund without written approval from the Director of DOHSS. Some transactions were carried out based only on verbal instructions, leaving no paper trail and eroding transparency.

Among the most serious concerns, auditors identified the following:

- Unauthorized transfers totaling over \$2.7 million to the General Fund, including more

*Click here for continuation on page 5*



# Trump Executive Order halts parcel shipments from FSM to the United States and beyond

## FSM Postal Services notices warned of a U.S. ban, but international parcels are caught too

By **Bill Jaynes**  
The Kaselehlie Press

September 8, 2025

**Pohnpei** — U.S. President Donald Trump's executive order ending duty-free treatment for low-value imports has prompted the U.S. Postal Service to order the FSM Postal Service to stop accepting parcels to the United States. Only flats such as letters and magazines, along with diplomatic and military mail,

are still permitted.

Notices posted in FSM Post Offices earlier this month informed the public of the U.S. ban. What those notices did not say, however, was that parcels bound for other countries are also caught up in the suspension, since every package leaving the FSM must first pass through a U.S. Postal Service hub.

FSM Postmaster Epel Ilon sat for an interview on September 8 to explain the situation, the

reasoning behind it, and the uncertainty now facing FSM residents who rely on international mail

### How the Ban Began

On August 29, 2025, Ilon said his office received an email from Honolulu—the FSM's liaison point with the U.S. Postal Service—instructing them to “immediately stop mailing of parcels to Honolulu.” Because all international parcels from the FSM must be routed through either Guam or Honolulu, this effectively shut down package shipments to the United States and potentially to

*Click here for continuation on page 4*



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## Ambassador Johnson attends ribbon-cutting ceremony for renovated facilities at Kolonia Elementary School

By U.S. Embassy to the FSM

September 8, 2025

Pohnpei - U.S. Ambassador Jennifer Johnson joined the Kolonia Elementary School community to celebrate the completion of newly renovated facilities on September 8. The ribbon-cutting ceremony was attended by Director Stanley Etse of the Pohnpei Department of Education, Principal Jimmy Gallen, members of the U.S. Navy Seabees, school leadership, teachers, and students.

The renovation of the school's restroom facilities represents a significant improvement in the daily lives of students, teachers, and staff. The project was completed by a team of 13 U.S. Navy Seabees, who have a long-standing tradition of delivering impactful community service projects across the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM).

Ambassador Johnson commended

the Seabees, the Department of Education, and the Kolonia School community for their collaboration and dedication to the project. She emphasized the broader significance of U.S.-funded infrastructure initiatives in the FSM, stating that this new facility is a testament to the unique partnership and close ties between the FSM and the United States. "We are bettering the lives of our children, helping schools to educate the next generation will then continue the work of improving the world around us," she said.

Ambassador Johnson also highlighted the Seabees' contributions over the years to similar projects in Chuuk, Kosrae, and Yap, underscoring their commitment to enhancing communities throughout the FSM.

Director Etse expressed his gratitude to the U.S. Government and the Navy Seabees for their dedication and

excellence, which have left a lasting impact on the school community.

"What you've built here is more than just infrastructure," he remarked. "This project is a shining example of what can be achieved when communities and partners come together with a shared purpose. It reflects a relationship rooted not only in assistance but in mutual respect and friendship."

The presence of students at the ceremony underscored the importance of the project to the school community. The completion of this initiative is a source of pride for all involved, particularly the students who will directly benefit from the improved facilities.

The U.S. Embassy extends its gratitude to all partners who contributed to the success of this project, which stands as a symbol of the enduring friendship between the FSM and the United States.



## The Kaselehlie Press

Your Newspaper for Today and Tomorrow

P.O. Box 2222 Pohnpei, FM 96941

phone: (691) 320-6547

email: [Kpress@mail.fm](mailto:Kpress@mail.fm)

Bill Jaynes  
Managing Editor

**THE NEXT ISSUE OF  
THE KASELEHLIE PRESS  
WILL BE RELEASED ON:  
September 24, 2025**

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

**Monday, September 22, 2025**

# Public Auditor calls for stronger controls at FSM collection field offices in Yap

By **Bill Jaynes**  
The Kaselehlie Press

September 6, 2025

**Palikir, Pohnpei** — On August 6, the Office of the National Public Auditor (ONPA) released a report detailing widespread noncompliance with financial laws and regulations by Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) government collection agencies in Yap State. The audit uncovered failures in cash collection, reporting, and safeguarding procedures that expose government revenues to significant risks of theft, fraud, and loss. It did not find any examples of actual fraud.

The inspection was initiated after the Department of Finance and Administration (DoFA) requested ONPA to conduct cash counts and internal control reviews at Treasury and other designated collection agencies nationwide. The Yap inspection follows similar reviews in Pohnpei and Chuuk, with Kosrae scheduled next.

The audit covered January to March 2025 and focused on four Yap offices authorized to collect FSM revenues: the Division of Customs and Tax Administration (CTA), the National Treasury Division (NTD), the Quarantine Office under the Department of Resources and Development (R&D), and the FSM Postal Services Yap branch

Under FSM law and the Financial Management Regulations (FMR), these agencies are required to deposit daily revenues into approved bank accounts or the National Treasury no later than the next business day. They must also implement safeguards such as safes, lockable money pouches, and controlled receipt books to prevent theft and irregularities.

## Weak Controls and Delayed Deposits

The inspection revealed two major categories of noncompliance:

### 1. Customs and Tax Administration's Failures

The Yap CTA office was found to be in breach of cash collection and deposit rules. Auditors discovered that one customs officer held \$4,433.18 in

government collections for an entire week—from February 3 to 7, 2025—before depositing the funds on February 10. This delay violated daily deposit requirements and left government money at risk.

When interviewed, the officer admitted to the late deposit, while the field office manager claimed he was unaware of the situation. ONPA concluded that the manager failed in his oversight duties, as he should have monitored daily reconciliations and ensured deposits were made on time.

Additionally, the February 10 reconciliation revealed a \$39.20 overage that was deposited but never recorded in the daily report. While immaterial in amount, ONPA stressed that such lapses indicate weak internal controls that could allow larger discrepancies or fraud to go unnoticed

### 2. Lack of Safeguarding of Cash and Receipts

Beyond Customs, the inspection found that all Yap collection agencies lacked adequate safeguards for cash and receipts.

The audit said that CTA Field office possesses a safe but does not use it; officers instead store cash in unsecured money pouches. It said that Postal Services does not provide money pouches for safe handling of collections. The Quarantine Office has neither a safe nor money pouches. Staff keep cash in open conditions and do not perform physical inspections of outbound cargo, relying only on customer declarations and item weight. Lastly it said that Treasury uses a small safe for some deposits, but receipts are kept in unlockable drawers or an oversized safe that cannot be secured

ONPA concluded that these weaknesses increase risks of theft, fraud, and undeclared or prohibited goods moving in and out of the FSM.

## Causes and Risks

The audit cited two primary causes for these failures:

- Lack of awareness and training among newly hired customs

officers about collection and deposit requirements.

- Negligence and weak oversight by managers responsible for ensuring compliance with FSM laws.

The risks are significant. Delayed deposits and unsecured funds expose government revenues to theft. Weak quarantine enforcement may allow harmful or undeclared items to enter or leave the FSM. Over time, ONPA warned, these weaknesses could lead to substantial financial losses and erosion of public trust

## Recommendations for Reform

To address the problems, ONPA gave several recommendations:

DoFA should provide training and awareness programs for new customs staff to ensure compliance with cash collection and deposit rules.

Secretaries of DoFA and R&D, along with the Postmaster General, must enforce strict safeguarding standards, requiring lockable safes, money pouches, and compliance reviews.

The Quarantine Office should implement documented procedures for physical inspections of cargo and baggage, provide officer training, and conduct regular compliance monitoring.

ONPA further referred the issue of

the delayed \$4,433.18 deposit to its Compliance Investigation Division for deeper review

## Management Responses

In their official responses, DoFA, R&D, and the FSM Postal Services generally agreed with the findings and pledged to take corrective action. However, ONPA clarified that while CTA management argued that money pouches were secure enough, the audit team disagreed, noting that pouches used were not tamper-proof. This left funds vulnerable to theft during handling

## Next Steps and Public Accountability

National Public Auditor Haser H. Hainrick expressed appreciation to the agencies involved for cooperating with the inspection but stressed that ONPA will follow up to ensure recommendations are implemented.

The report has been formally submitted to President Wesley W. Simina, Members of the 24th FSM Congress, and is publicly available through ONPA's website.

“The unfamiliarity of staff and negligence of managers cannot be allowed to continue,” the report concludes. “Without proper controls, the FSM government remains at risk of losing significant revenues and undermining public confidence”



## ...Executive Order

### *Immediate Impact Worldwide*

*Continued from front page*

all other countries as well

“The notice that went up at our Post Offices talked only about parcels to the U.S.,” Ilon explained. “But until we get clarification, we can’t accept parcels to Japan, the Philippines, or anywhere else, because everything has to go through USPS.”

Only flats—letters, magazines, postcards—and packages sent through military or diplomatic channels are unaffected.

### *The Role of Trump’s Executive Order*

The root of the problem lies in Executive Order 14271, signed by President Trump on July 30, 2025, titled “Suspending Duty-Free De Minimis Treatment for All Countries.” The order ended the long-standing “de minimis” rule that allowed shipments valued at \$800 or less to enter the United States duty-free and with minimal customs paperwork.

For decades, the U.S. had maintained one of the world’s most generous de minimis thresholds. Originally set at \$200, it was raised to \$800 in 2016, facilitating a boom in e-commerce. Under the rule, a customer could order goods online from abroad—whether a single shirt or a box of electronics—and if the shipment was under \$800 in value, it would be delivered without tariffs.

Trump’s order suspended that privilege for all countries effective August 29, 2025. The White House justified the move as a matter of economic fairness and national security, pointing to three stated motivations:

- Curbing abuse by foreign companies that ship low-cost goods directly to U.S. consumers. Chinese platforms such as Shein and Temu were often cited as examples.
- Protecting U.S. retailers from being undercut by duty-free imports.
- Fighting illicit trade, including fentanyl trafficking, which officials claimed exploited the de minimis loophole.

In announcing the change, Trump called the de minimis exemption “a scam” and labeled its elimination one of his “beautiful tariff” measures to force trading partners to “pay their fair share.”

The suspension created chaos across global postal networks. Shipments that had once passed seamlessly were suddenly held up for tariff collection. To ease the transition, the executive order created a temporary system for postal parcels: instead of standard customs processing, they would be assessed either a flat fee (ranging from \$80 to \$200 depending on origin) or a percentage duty aligned with tariffs set under Trump’s broader trade policy.

Even so, the policy caused widespread disruption. By early September, international postal traffic to the United States had dropped by more than 80 percent. Several major postal operators, including those in Germany, Japan, Mexico, and Australia, suspended U.S.-bound shipments entirely until new systems could be put in place.

### *Fallout in the FSM*

For the FSM, the ban is absolute. Unlike larger postal systems that can route packages through multiple hubs, every FSM parcel must go first to Guam or Honolulu—both U.S. Postal Service facilities. That means until USPS provides clarification, no outbound parcels can be accepted, regardless of destination.

Ilon said the impact was already being felt. “The Weather Service had equipment in Chuuk that needed to be sent for repair overseas, and they couldn’t. People trying to send packages abroad are told it’s not possible,” he explained

The asymmetry is striking. FSM residents living in the United States can still send parcels home, but those in the FSM cannot send anything back. “It’s very, very difficult for us,” Ilon said. “And of course, the public looks at us as if we are not doing our job.” The reality is that this decision came from Washington.”

### *Private Couriers and the DHL Exit*

The postal ban comes on top of changes in the private courier industry. DHL announced in August that it would no longer ship parcels to the U.S. from outside the country, citing the de minimis changes. That leaves only FedEx and UPS as alternatives in the FSM—but at prices far beyond the reach of most personal senders.

Sending packages by private carriers is not cheap making it practical only for businesses or urgent shipments. With DHL’s withdrawal from U.S.-bound

service, FSM shippers are left with two other non U.S. shippers of packages in the FSM

### *Tariffs and the FSM*

Trump’s trade policy also introduced a blanket 10 percent tariff on all imports into the United States beginning in April 2025, followed by higher “reciprocal tariffs” on selected trading partners. FSM was not singled out for those higher duties, but any package that could be shipped from FSM would still face the baseline 10 percent tariff.

In practice, FSM exports to the United States are negligible, so the direct economic effect is minimal country wide is minimal. But for individuals and families, the tariffs add to the burden.

### *Waiting for Clarification*

Ilon stressed that FSM has written to Honolulu for clarification, particularly on whether parcels bound for non-U.S. destinations can resume. “They don’t tell us, and we ask if this means other destinations, and they haven’t answered,” he said. “So, we are just following the full stop order.”

Until then, the only certainty is uncertainty. The FSM Post Office continues to accept flats, diplomatic mail, and military parcels. Everything else is rejected until clarification is made.

U.S. domestic trade policy reverberates across the globe. For larger countries, Trump’s executive order meant headaches and higher costs. For the FSM, it meant the complete collapse of outbound parcel service.

“The U.S. is the one responsible for mail service between us and the U.S. and other destinations,” Ilon said. “We handle internal. This is very, very difficult for us to deal with.”

Until clarification arrives from Honolulu or Washington, FSM’s families, businesses, and institutions remain unable to send parcels abroad—cut off by a tariff war in which they had little part despite the country’s close relationship to the United States.

## U.S. Strengthens Compact partnerships with FSM and RMI at Annual Economic Meetings

### *U.S. Department of the Interior*

*September 5, 2025*

**Honolulu** — The Department of the Interior chaired annual economic management meetings with the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) on August 27-28. Deputy Assistant Secretary for Insular and International Affairs Angel Demapan, appointed by Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum, led the U.S. delegations.

The Joint Economic Management Committee (JEMCO) with the FSM and the Joint Economic Management and Financial Accountability Committee (JEMFAC) with the RMI oversee the use of more than \$4.5 billion in Compact of Free Association economic assistance over 20 years. The FSM receives about \$140 million annually and the RMI about \$80 million.

Discussions focused on completing overdue audits, implementing infrastructure and development plans, and finalizing the Fiscal Year 2026 Annual Implementation Plans. Both sides emphasized accountability, mutual respect, and advancing strong economic partnerships. The next in-person meetings will be held in spring 2026.

These efforts reflect the Trump administration’s commitment to strengthening national security, securing U.S. interests in the Indo-Pacific, and ensuring American taxpayer dollars are used in a responsible manner. Through these Compact agreements, the United States advances economic growth, promotes self-sufficiency in the freely associated states, and reinforces alliances that support a free and open Indo-Pacific.

The meetings included participation from senior U.S. officials across the Departments of State, the Treasury, and the Interior, alongside ambassadors to both nations. Leaders from the FSM and the RMI also joined, including cabinet members, Governors, Lt. Governors, and education and health officials. Their involvement underscored the importance of cooperative planning and transparency in how Compact funds are managed. The Department of the Interior reaffirmed that oversight of these resources will remain steadfast, ensuring that investments drive accountability, infrastructure growth, and improved public services for the people of the FSM and the RMI.

# ...POPA

Continued from front page

than \$1.2 million used for replenishment, \$573,309 for payroll, and \$500,000 for a sector grant.

- Use of funds for prior-year obligations, with \$1,120,673 of the fund used to pay invoices from a previous fiscal year—a practice prohibited unless specifically authorized by the Legislature.
- Payroll-related transfers, including \$396,177 paid to the FSM Social Security Administration, which auditors flagged as outside the scope of the fund.
- Unsupported transactions, notably a \$500,000 transfer with no justification or documentation, later reversed.

Because of these issues, the Public Auditor referred two matters to the OPA's Compliance Investigation Division (CID) for deeper investigation: the use of funds for prior-year obligations and the payroll-related transfer. CID's role is to determine whether laws were violated and, if so, provide a basis for referral to the Attorney General's Office for potential prosecution.

The audit emphasized that these practices led to a temporary negative balance in the fund as of September 2024, a condition that

risked disrupting the procurement of essential medical supplies. Such a shortfall, auditors warned, could compromise patient care and undermine public trust in the Department's stewardship of critical health resources.

Without formal guidelines, the fund was vulnerable to mismanagement, misuse, or even abuse. The report concluded that immediate corrective measures are necessary to restore the fund's integrity, including:

- Development and enforcement of written policies and procedures.
- Establishment of clear approval thresholds for transfers and disbursements.
- Regular monitoring, reporting, and internal reviews.
- Training of staff in financial controls and accountability.

In its written response, included in the audit as an appendix, the Department of Health and Social Services accepted the findings and pledged immediate corrective action. DOHSS emphasized that many of the issues identified had roots going back nearly two decades, predating the current administration.

"The Department extends its sincere appreciation to the Office of the Public Auditor for conducting a thorough investigation. This audit has provided valuable insights

into issues that have persisted for years," the response stated.

The department outlined a series of planned reforms, including:

- Formal authorization procedures requiring written approval for all fund transfers.
- Mandatory documentation for every transaction, including request forms and justifications.
- A secure transaction log to track inflows and outflows in real time.
- A structured workflow between DOHSS and Treasury to ensure transparency.
- Capacity-building training for staff involved in fund management.
- Internal and joint oversight committees to review non-routine transactions.
- Periodic compliance reviews to ensure policies remain effective.

DOHSS also strongly recommended that the OPA further investigate certain unauthorized transfers identified in the audit, some of which, it said, "appear to have been executed without the Director's knowledge or approval." The department suggested that appropriate legal measures should be considered to ensure accountability for past actions.

"DOHSS is committed to restoring full

compliance, protecting the integrity of this account, and ensuring that such irregularities never recur. These measures reflect our unwavering commitment to transparency, accountability, and, above all, the health and safety of the people of Pohnpei," Director Penias wrote in the response.

Under Pohnpei State law, DOHSS must now submit monthly progress reports to the Public Auditor outlining corrective measures taken to address the audit's findings. These reports will continue until all deficiencies are resolved, a process that cannot exceed one year. The first report is due by September 27, 2025.

POPA noted that successful implementation of its recommendations, along with the department's corrective plan, would strengthen the financial management of the Revolving Fund.

This inspection was the first formal audit of the Medical Supplies Revolving Fund since its creation under State Law No. 3L-100-95. The fund was originally intended to ensure a steady supply of life-saving medical equipment and medicines by dedicating patient fees and insurance payments to this purpose. Instead, the audit revealed years of informal practices and insufficient oversight that put those essential supplies at risk.

**With Our Deepest Sympathy**

It is with deep sadness that the COM-FSM Board of Regents and the wider College community mourn the passing of Regent Lyndon L. Cornelius. Regent Cornelius faithfully represented the State of Kosrae on the COM-FSM Board of Regents, bringing with him a lifetime of service, wisdom, and integrity.

His distinguished career included serving as Chief Justice of the Kosrae State Court, holding key leadership roles within the Kosrae Department of Education, and guiding vital institutions as Chairman of the Kosrae Special Education Board and Vice Chairman of the Kosrae Port Authority. His breadth of experience and steadfast dedication to education and public service made him a highly respected leader whose contributions to both his state and our nation will be remembered with gratitude.

The COM-FSM Board of Regents and the College extend their deepest condolences to Regent Cornelius' family, friends, colleagues, and the people of Kosrae. His legacy of service, leadership, and commitment to education will continue to inspire us all.

May he rest in peace.

Suzanne L. Gallen  
Chairperson  
COM-FSM Board of Regents.

Joshua 1:9: "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."



Capitol Suites and Offices, Department of Health and Social Affairs, Suite 201, Palikir, Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia. Tel # +691 320-8804, 320-8032, website: <https://www.who.int/micronesia> email - [wpfsmclo@who.int](mailto:wpfsmclo@who.int).

## Invitation to Submit Sealed Bids for IT Equipment (Sold "Where Is – As Is")

The World Health Organization (WHO) Micronesia Office invites interested parties to submit sealed bids for the purchase of various IT equipment offered on a "where is – as is" basis.

Items Available (in varying condition/some damaged) for bidding Include:

- (1) iPhone 8
- (2) Dell LCD monitors
- (8) Dell laptops
- (2) Dell Desktops
- (1) Dell server

### Equipment Inspection:

Prospective bidders may inspect the items from 10 September 2025 at the WHO Office located at Capitol Suites, Palikir, Pohnpei.

### Bid Submission:

- All bids must be sealed and clearly addressed to:  
Ms Ella Krystle Robson  
Operations Support Officer  
WHO Office in Northern Micronesia
- The deadline for submission is no later than 4:00 PM on Friday, 19 September 2025.

### Inquiries:

For further information or to request clarification, please contact:

Ms Ella Krystle Robson  
Email: [robstone@who.int](mailto:robstone@who.int)  
Phone: 320 8804

### Additional Notes:

- WHO reserves the right to cancel or withdraw any part of the bidding process at its discretion.
- All items are sold as is, and no returns or exchanges will be accepted once the sale is finalized.

# China medical team launches 9-day program at Kosrae State Hospital

*Embassy of China to the FSM*

*August 25, 2025*

**Kosrae** - On August 21, 2025, with the strong support of the FSM Department of Health and Social Affairs, the China Medical Team in the Federated States of Micronesia arrived smoothly in Kosrae State and officially launched a 9-day free medical service.

The Kosrae State Hospital attached great importance to the free medical services provided by the China Medical Team and made thorough preparations in advance. During the event, the China Medical Team will offer comprehensive services to the local residents through free consultations, ward rounds, multi-

disciplinary team (MDT) consultations, and academic lectures.

The China Medical Team also met with Mr. Tulensa W. Palik, governor of Kosrae State, and Mr. Moses E. Pretrick, Assistant Secretary of Health, FSM Department of Health and Social Affairs.

In addition, the China Medical Team donated some medical supplies. The China Medical Team stated that they would do their utmost to make positive contributions to enhancing the friendship between the people of People's Republic of China and the Federated States of Micronesia.





# EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES AND STRENGTHENING SUPPORT: KEY UPDATES FROM THE COM-FSM CHUUK COMMUNITY MEETING

The College of Micronesia-FSM Community Meeting on August 28, 2025, focused on advancing both student and employee welfare while addressing key operational challenges. A major highlight was the Board of Regents’ active pursuit of land in Chuuk, supported by top government officials, to establish a new campus—an essential step in securing a long-term and stable educational infrastructure. The meeting covered expanding course offerings guided by our accreditation standards, managing student financial obligations through promissory notes and payment plans, and tackling critical staffing shortages, especially in nursing. Tuition policies were reviewed with an emphasis on maintaining open admission associate degree fees at \$145 per credit, alongside considerations for faculty salary adjustments amid budget constraints.

For employees, the College reinforced its commitment to support by implementing cost-of-living salary adjustments and increasing the minimum housing allowance, despite limited budget growth since 2023.



*Chuuk campus community during the All campus meeting.*

Discussions highlighted the need for clear and fair policies on faculty salary deductions and introduced plans for performance management initiatives to align educational programs with FSM workforce needs.

Additional efforts focused on resolving staffing issues, enhancing extra curricular activities funding, and improving work-study opportunities, all contributing to a supportive academic and work environment. These initiatives collectively aim to strengthen the College community and facilitate growth, particularly through the new Chuuk campus development.

<b>National Campus</b> P.O. Box 159 Colonia Pohnpei, FM 96941 Phone: (691)320-2480 Fax: (691)320-2479 E-Mail: national@comfsm.fm	<b>Chuuk Campus</b> P.O. Box 879 Chuuk, FM 96942 Phone: (691)330-2689 Fax: (691)330-2740 E-Mail: chuuk@comfsm.fm	<b>FSM-FMI</b> P.O. Box 1056 Colonia Yap, FM 96943 Phone: (691)350-5244 Fax: (691)350-5245 E-Mail: fmi@comfsm.fm	<b>Kosrae Campus</b> P.O. Box 37 Tofol Kosrae, FM 96944 Phone: (691)370-3191 Fax: (691)370-3193 E-Mail: kosrae@comfsm.fm	<b>CTEC Campus</b> P.O. Box 614 Colonia Pohnpei, FM 96941 Phone: (691)320-3795 Fax: (691)320-3799 E-Mail: pohnpei@comfsm.fm	<b>Yap Campus</b> P.O. Box 286 Colonia Yap, FM 96943 Phone: (691)350-2296/5149 Fax: (691)350-5150 E-Mail: yap@comfsm.fm
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**REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST  
(INDIVIDUAL CONSULTING SERVICES)  
(Open/National)**

**Country:** Federated States of Micronesia  
**Project:** Pacific Islands Regional Oceanscape Program – Economic Resilience (PROPER)  
**Grant No.:** IDA-E371-FM  
**Assignment Title:** Contracts Administrator  
**Reference No.** FM-NORMA-508021-CS-INDV

The National Government of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) has applied for financing from the World Bank toward the cost of the Pacific Island Oceanscape Program – Second Phase for Economic Resilience and intends to apply part of the proceeds for consulting services.

The consulting services (“the Services”) include ensuring sound end-to-end contract administration in planning, implementation, and monitoring of project contracts for the successful implementation of the PROPER Project in FSM. The Contract Administrator will be responsible for day-to-day contractual activities and will work closely with the Project Team under the supervision of the Project Manager in developing, drafting, negotiating, and administering contracts. The detailed Terms of Reference (TOR) for the assignment can be found on the DOFA website at dofa.gov.fm or at the NORMA website at norma.fm.

The FSM National Oceanic Resource Management Authority (NORMA) now invites eligible individuals (“Consultants”) to indicate their interest in providing the Services. Interested Consultants should provide information demonstrating that they have the required qualifications and relevant experience to perform the Services (attach curriculum vitae with description of experience in similar assignments, similar conditions, and copies of degree(s) and relevant certificates).

**The criteria for selecting the Consultant are:**

Required experience and educational background:

- Bachelor’s degree in law, business administration or related field.
- At least five years of experience with demonstrative effectiveness in providing technical support on contract administration.
- Demonstrated professional experience in the interpretation of contractual documents.
- Extensive knowledge of related FSM national laws and regulations.
- Fluent in written and spoken English.

**Desirable skills:**

- FSM National Government or States experience
- Passed FSM Bar
- Experience drafting or reviewing donor-funded projects contracts.

The attention of interested Consultants (including firms) is drawn to paragraph 3.14, 3.16 and 3.17 of the World Bank’s Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers dated February 2025 (“the Regulations”), setting forth the World Bank’s policy on conflict of interest.

Further information can be obtained at the address below during office hours 0800 to 1700 hours Pohnpei local time.

Expressions of interest must be delivered in a written form to the address below (in person, by mail, or by e-mail) preferably by September 22, 2025.

FSM National Oceanic Resource Management Authority  
Attn: Mr. OKean Ehmes, PROPER Project Manager  
PO Box PS 12  
Pohnpei, FM 96941  
Federated States of Micronesia  
Telephone: (691) 320-2700/5181  
E-mail: okean.ehmes@norma.fm and copy to valerie.hawley@norma.fm

**The Pohnpei Soccer Association Kids Club is proud to announce the successful conclusion of the first-ever Liberation Day U14 Tournament—a historic milestone for youth football in Pohnpei**

**PSACK**

**August 31, 2025**

**Pohnpei** – PSAKC extends its heartfelt gratitude to all players, coaches, referees, and linemen whose dedication and effort made this tournament possible. Although it was not budgeted, we are deeply thankful to the Sport Commission for its support in bringing this event to life.

This inaugural tournament has proven that youth football—especially the U14 division—is the true foundation for tomorrow’s champions. It is between the kick of a ball, the sliding in the mud, and the cheerful laughter that friendships are forged, and boys and girls grow into confident, happy young men and women.

Shaped by the scorching sun and relentless rains of Pohnpei, these children have shown both pride in their municipalities and deep sportsmanship toward their opponents. The association will continue to care for its players,

support their personal growth, and shield them from negative influences—whether in victory, draw, or defeat.

PSAKC also emphasizes that children should never be pressured to compare themselves to adults, nor compete directly alongside them in physically demanding sports. We encourage our players to explore and enjoy other disciplines during the Liberation Day celebrations, confident that the skills, discipline, and joy learned here will carry into everything they do.

**Winners :**

APERTURA Tournament Champion: Madolenihmw

CLAUSURA Tournament Champion: Kolonia

Outstanding Performances

Madolenihmw: Angelo Silbanuz, Heron Gallen

Kolonia: Castiel Kersey, Stephanie Alonso



**Pohnpei Soccer Association Kids Club (PSAKC)**

**Official Statement**

September 2, 2025

The Board of the Pohnpei Soccer Association Kids Club (PSAKC), having duly convened in accordance with the Association’s constitution and by-laws, hereby announces that **Mr. Alex Panuelo** has been duly elected as the new President of PSAKC.

This election was conducted in line with the governance procedures of the Association, following the resolution of September 2, 2025, which had temporarily vested the presidential functions in the Vice President. With this election, the leadership of the Association is now regularized, and Mr. Panuelo assumes the full powers, duties, and responsibilities of the office of President, with immediate effect.

The PSAKC expresses its confidence in President Panuelo’s ability to uphold the values of the Association, ensure transparent governance, and further advance the mission of promoting youth football, inclusivity, and civic education in Pohnpei.

**For official communications, please contact:**

Pohnpei Soccer Association Kids Club (PSAKC)

Email: psa.kidsclub@gmail.com

# Governor Stevenson A. Joseph meets with Pohnpeian community in Maui ahead of Liberation Day Games

## Pohnpei Public Information

September 4, 2025

**Maui, Hawai'i** – Governor Stevenson A. Joseph joined members of the Pohnpeian community in Maui for an early fellowship gathering ahead of the official opening of the Liberation Day Games this Friday.

The Governor was officially invited by the community last year but could not attend.

This year, he accepted the invitation to personally meet with Pohnpeians in Hawai'i, share updates on ongoing initiatives in Pohnpei, and answer questions from the community.

Governor Joseph emphasized the importance of identity, reminding the community that “you are all Pohnpeians first”—especially the children who carry the responsibility of passing on culture, language, and traditions to future generations. He shared ongoing and forthcoming indigenous learning initiatives, including vocational programs, designed to strengthen

cultural and educational opportunities from the FSM level down to the schools in Pohnpei.

The Governor also highlighted the historic support of allies and friends, including former Hawai'i Senator Kalani English, who has been a strong advocate for Micronesian communities in Hawai'i. He encouraged the community to continue “changing the narrative” by showing resilience, respect, and contribution to their host communities.

Reflecting on history, Governor Joseph



noted the ties between Micronesians and Hawai'i dating back to Queen Emma's royal invitation, reminding the community that they are guests in the Hawaiian Islands and must always remember to honor and respect the land and people of Hawai'i. “Even after all these years, wahu—respect—remains with you,” he said.

The Governor will continue to meet with community members throughout the week and will take part in the Liberation Day Games official opening on Friday.

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# SOON TO RISE WAPAR CELL-TOWER

**Predicted Coverage for Wapar Cell Tower is based on three sectorized antennas.**

› Sector 1, **Red**:  
Coverage will be pointing to Enipoas & Para Nuii area.

› Sector 2, **Yellow**:  
Coverage will be pointing to Wapar Church area.

› Sector 3, **Blue**:  
Coverage will be pointing to Lohd Pah area.



FSM Telecommunications Corporation  
Kaselehlie Street, P.O. Box 1210, Pohnpei FM 96941  
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**Title: Programme Analyst, NOB, Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia [27315]**

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

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**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, 14th September 2025

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.

# FSM builds capacity against transnational crime with Australia's help

By *Bill Jaynes*  
*The Kaselehlie Press*

September 6, 2025

**Palikir, Pohnpei** — The Australian Embassy in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) joined local police for a recent Police Intelligence Training coordinated by the Pacific Transnational Crime Coordination Centre (PTCCC).

Deputy Head of Mission Sarah McCarthy and Embassy staff attended as analysts from Australia and New Zealand delivered the course. The program focused on improving the collection, analysis, and sharing of intelligence to counter cross-border crime.

The Embassy said the effort reflects Australia's commitment to regional security and capacity building, praising FSM's officers and the PTCCC for strengthening intelligence capabilities that help keep the Pacific safe.

The PTCCC, based in Apia, Samoa, oversees the Pacific Transnational Crime Network (PTCN), which links 29 Transnational Crime Units (TCUs) in 21 Pacific countries. The Australian Federal Police (AFP) supports the center with funding and technical expertise, ensuring that small island states can share information quickly and act together when criminal groups move across borders.

FSM has been part of the network for more than 15 years. In 2008, the Micronesia Regional Transnational Crime Unit opened in Pohnpei with support from the AFP and the U.S. Joint Interagency Task Force West,

providing training, equipment, and an AFP advisor.

That partnership deepened in 2018, when FSM, the Marshall Islands, and Palau signed an agreement to create the Micronesia Regional Transnational Crime Unit (MTCU), pooling intelligence and resources to address shared threats.

This week's training builds on an established foundation, adding new skills to officers already connected to the PTCCC system.

A United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) report in 2024 warned that the Pacific faces growing pressure from organized crime, including methamphetamine and cocaine trafficking, money laundering, cybercrime, and illegal fishing.

FSM's location — spread across vast waters along key shipping routes — makes it vulnerable to these threats. Intelligence-led policing and regional cooperation allow FSM to act more effectively despite its limited resources.

Australia's role in policing in the Pacific extends beyond intelligence work. The AFP provides specialist training, equipment, and education programs across the region. In 2024, FSM also launched its national Police Academy, strengthening local training efforts.

Courses like the PTCCC program complement that academy, ensuring FSM officers are equipped with both local skills and regional networks to respond to organized crime.



# Chuuk State strengthens typhoon preparedness through simulation exercise and enhanced disaster management tools

*International Organization for Migration*

August 28, 2025

**Chuuk, FSM** – The International Organization for Migration (IOM), in partnership with the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Emergency Management (DECCEM) and Chuuk Disaster Coordination Office (DCO), facilitated a three-day table-top exercise in Chuuk State from 25–27 August to simulate a typhoon disaster.

Typhoons are a common and formidable threat, frequently bringing destructive winds, torrential rains and widespread flooding with devastating damage to infrastructure, and place immense strain on local resources. Strengthening preparedness is therefore critical, given the country's high vulnerability to severe impacts of typhoons.

The exercise assessed Chuuk State's readiness and identified gaps and challenges in preparing for and responding to typhoons and other emergency events.

In his opening remarks, Lieutenant Governor Mekioshi William underscored the importance of strengthening collaboration among state and national actors and ensuring inclusion of remote outer islands in disaster preparedness and response efforts.

Abigail Lambert, DECCEM Assistant Secretary, emphasized the need for "continuous learning, investment in community preparedness efforts and closer collaboration among stakeholders to enhance the Federated States of Micronesia's (FSM) disaster preparedness."

A similar exercise was conducted in Chuuk in June 2023, which informed updates to the Chuuk State Disaster Management Plan and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

"Disaster Management Plan and SOPs are typically revised every two years. The latest revisions include digitalization of initial damage assessments (IDAs), inclusion of an Information Management System (IMS), and the development of a drought response strategy for the FSM," explained Mohammed Ahmadi, IOM Micronesia Resilience Programme Chief of Party.

The exercise brought together municipal mayors, community members, key state departments with disaster response roles, as well as stakeholders from the United Nations, non-governmental organizations and weather services

from Chuuk and Guam to simulate a typhoon scenario.

The simulation involved a series of typhoon-related weather updates from the Chuuk and Guam Weather Service, which indicate the growing complexity and direction of the typhoon. Groups of participants representing national, state, municipal and humanitarian response agencies then enacted a response using the updated Disaster Management Plan and SOPs.

IOM showcased progress on a newly developed information management system, designed to digitalize critical disaster information. This platform will serve as a repository for a wide range of disaster related data which will be accessible to key responder departments. Additionally, IOM introduced a KOBO-based initial damage assessment tool, which will enable frontline responders to capture key data within the first 24 hours of a disaster.

Following this simulation, IOM will support implementation of the improvement plan developed after the after-action review.

This critical national exercise was made possible with support from the Government of United States, in line with commitments under the Compact of Free Association Agreement.



# Australia remains committed to work with the FSM on attaining gender equality and advancing the human rights of women and girls

*Australian Embassy to the FSM*

for all.

August 29, 2025

**FSM** - As part of Australia's flagship regional gender investment, Pacific Women Lead, consultant Anna Cowley recently visited all four states in the FSM, engaging with government officials, development partners and civil society in a review of the new Gender Policy and accompanying state action plans.

Australia recognizes the importance of empowering women and girls when it comes to building resilient communities and driving sustainable development. Together with the FSM and partners we work to ensure that every voice is heard and that equal opportunities are fostered

In a recent Gender Roundtable hosted by the FSM Department of Health and Social Affairs, Ambassador Jenny Grant reiterated that "Gender equality is a matter of fairness and opportunity for everyone. When women and girls can participate fully in society, along with men and boys, families flourish, communities grow stronger, and nations become more peaceful and prosperous."



# Library renovations and storytelling bring Koa Moana 25 closer to Pohnpei community

by 1st Lt. Emily Zito  
1st Marine Logistics Group

September 3, 2025

**Pohnpei** - U.S. Marines and sailors with Koa Moana 25 worked closely with the Pohnpeian community to deliver a series of impactful projects during their time on the island.



At Pohnpei Public Library, KM 25 engineers worked diligently to revitalize the property through repairs, maintenance, and beautification efforts. Concurrently, their fellow Marines and sailors forged lasting connections with the community by engaging in youth outreach initiatives designed to promote cultural exchange and advance literacy.

“We were honored to work alongside our Pohnpeian partners, to share skills, and ensure the library remains a functioning and welcoming place for its patrons,” said 1st. Lt. Justin McBeth, an engineer officer who led the library renovation effort. “This project was about more than just a library renovation — it was about a collective commitment towards making the heart of this community more resilient for all those who cherish it.”

Engineering Marines assigned to Combat Logistics Battalion 15 replaced deteriorating support beams, corrected electrical issues, repaired sections of the facility’s perimeter fence, and repainted the outdoor pavilion and parking lot spaces. U.S. Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 4, who maintains a more robust presence on Pohnpei, worked in support of KM 25, providing the sailors and equipment needed to complete the job. This joint effort ensured the reparations would be both lasting and practical additions for the library and community at large.

As the engineers labored outside, other Marines and sailors were making an equally meaningful impact inside the library. The Koa Moana team hosted weekly storytelling sessions for local children, reading books aloud, answering questions, and sharing

perspective on life in the U.S. military. The sessions allowed children a unique opportunity to hear their favorite stories and interact with Marines and sailors, providing a fun, engaging way to connect, inspire curiosity, and build positive relationships.

“We will remember not only the fences you secured, the benches you painted, and the lights you strung, but also the laughter, stories, and connections you shared with us,” read a statement from the Board of Pohnpei Public Library and staff. “You are now part of our library family, and your legacy will live on every time a child sits on the freshly painted bench with a book in hand, or family gathers for another night of community fun. Kalahngan Koa Moana 25, your service has truly made waves here in Pohnpei and we are better for it.”

The library renovations represent just one of several projects by Koa Moana 25 across the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of Palau. By addressing infrastructure needs while engaging directly with the community, the Marines and sailors continue to demonstrate the United States’ enduring commitment to the security, development, and resilience of its Pacific partners.

Koa Moana 25 is an annual partnership in the Indo-Pacific region that strengthens established relationships, bolsters theater security cooperation, and enhances the resilience of our allies and partners through community outreach, medical and civic assistance, infrastructure improvement projects, and key leader exchanges.



PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM

Ratu Sukuna Road, Nasese, Suva, Fiji  
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## Opportunity in the Region

### The Pacific Islands Forum

The Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) is an Employer of Choice in the region, aiming to recruit and employ staff based on merit and organisational needs. The Forum seeks to ensure that its employment selection upholds its values and commitment to the Forum membership, gender balance, and building a diverse and inclusive organisation. Our workforce is currently over 50% female, and we have representatives from fifteen of the eighteen Forum member countries.

To achieve greater workforce representation from our member countries we strongly encourage applicants from the following countries to apply: Federated States of Micronesia, French Polynesia, and Niue.

### The Opportunity – Regional ICT Adviser

Applications are invited to fill the vacant international position of Regional ICT Adviser. The role seeks to strengthen regional ICT cooperation and coordination and to drive the implementation of the Forum’s regional technology and connectivity priorities under the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent. Reporting to the Director Policy the responsibilities of the position will broadly include, but are not limited to:

- Lead effective and efficient implementation of regional ICT priorities through Forum processes
- Project and programme management support
- Develop and maintain professional partnership and relationships
- Production of policy advice and analysis in regional technology and connectivity

Applicants should have an advanced University degree (Master’s degree or equivalent) in Information Technology/ICT Systems/Telecommunications or a related field, with broad experience (at least 8+ years of professional including 3+ years in senior roles) working in the Pacific in the areas of technology and connectivity, and with government Officials and Ministers in direct reporting, liaison, and coordination roles.

### The Package

The position carries a competitive and attractive remuneration and benefits package including allowances for housing and education; and medical, accident and life insurance coverage. This position is based on Band 12 of the PIFS salary scale. The starting salary for the position is SDR 45,113 per annum, which is equivalent to FJD 136,789 based on 1 May 2025 foreign exchange rate.

### How to apply

Interested applicants are encouraged to apply through the PIFS website: [www.forumsec.org](http://www.forumsec.org) where an information package containing the position description and full remuneration details are available. Candidates must include in either their application or Curriculum Vitae the full contact details of three referees.

To be eligible for the position, applicants must be nationals of Forum member countries. The Forum Secretariat is an Equal Opportunity Employer. The deadline for applications is Friday 26 September, 5pm (Fiji Time).

**\*Member States of the Pacific Islands Forum: Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.**

**OFFICE OF THE NATIONAL PUBLIC  
AUDITOR**

**Request for Proposal (RFP)**

**Qualified Auditors to Perform Annual Single  
Audits of the Federated States of Micronesia  
Fiscal Years ending September 30, 2025 & 2026**

The Office of the National Public Auditor for the Federated States of Micronesia is hereby extending the due date to submit written bid proposals by interested professional accounting firms to conduct the annual single audits of the National and Four State Governments of the Federated States of Micronesia for fiscal years ending September 30, 2025 & 2026.

The single audits will include financial and compliance audits of the Federated States of Micronesia pursuant to the Single Audit Act of 1984, as amended, OMB Circular A-133, OMB Super Circular, and the Amended Compact of Free Association between the Federated States of Micronesia and the United States of America, for Fiscal Years 2025 & 2026.

The audits will cover each reporting entity of the Government of the Federated States of Micronesia as defined by U.S. Public Law 99-239 TITLE FOUR, Article VI, Section 461 (d). The audits will be performed in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America, provisions of the Amended Compact of Free Association between the Federated States of Micronesia and the United States of America and its related agreement for Implementation of Economic Assistance Programs and Services, and Federal auditing standards in the United States, including the Government Auditing Standards, issued by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO); the Single Audit Act of 1984 (P.L. 98-502), as amended; Circular A-133, Audits of States, Local Governments and Non-Profit Organizations; and Super Circular, OMB Uniform Guidance: Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards, issued by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

In addition, the auditor will be expected to follow the recommendations of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) State and Local Government Committee as set forth in the accounting guide, Audits of State and Local Governmental Units, Revised Edition.

Proposals must be submitted by hand delivery or via email and the due date to submit is no later than October 15, 2025, which is extended out from September 5, 2025, at 5pm Pohnpei time.

A full version of the RFP document can be accessed at [www.fsmopa.fm](http://www.fsmopa.fm), or by contacting:

**Mr. Haser Hainrick, Public Auditor  
Office of the National Public Auditor  
Federated States of Micronesia  
P.O. Box PS-05**

**Palikir, Pohnpei 96941**

**Phone : (691) 320-2862/2863**

**Fax : (691) 320-5482**

**E-mail : [hhainrick@fsmopa.fm](mailto:hhainrick@fsmopa.fm) & [info@fsmopa.fm](mailto:info@fsmopa.fm)**

## From Guam to Honiara: Aviles strengthens Pacific fight for sustainable fisheries

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

September 8, 2025

**Santa Rita, Guam** — Petty Officer 2nd Class Nathalie Aviles from U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam played a pivotal role in the success of Operation Island Chief 2025 (OPIC25), a multinational maritime surveillance operation conducted from Aug. 4-15, to combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing across the Pacific and maritime security.

Deployed temporarily at the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency's (FFA) Regional Fisheries Surveillance Centre (RFSC) in Honiara, Solomon Islands, Aviles' contributions underscored the strength of Pacific unity while aligning with U.S. Coast Guard priorities including defense readiness and homeland security.

### A Human Anchor in Regional Collaboration

Aviles brought her expertise to the RFSC, where she worked alongside 32 secondees and partners from 13 FFA Member nations—Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Republic of Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Tonga, and Vanuatu—as well as Pacific Quadrilateral partners (Australia, New Zealand, France, and the United States). Her role involved analyzing intelligence and developing actionable products that guided surface and air assets in conducting 100 boardings (53 in port, 47 at sea) and identifying 12 vessels of interest. She also participated in a Royal Australian Air Force C-27J Spartan flight.

"I valued the opportunity to work with such a multinational group," Aviles shared. "Seeing the impact of our combined analysis and the detailed products we provided to the forces on the ground and at sea was incredibly rewarding."

Her work directly supported priorities by fostering interoperability among regional partners. The collaborative environment at the RFSC enabled the integration of advanced satellite detection, data analysis from partners like Global Fishing Watch, and aerial surveillance from assets like the Royal Australian Air Force C-27J Spartan. Aviles' efforts ensured that actionable intelligence reached operational units, enhancing the region's ability to monitor vast Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) and the high seas. This in turn strengthens U.S. defense readiness by equipping Pacific nations with the tools and coordination needed to protect their marine resources, a critical component of regional stability and security.

### Building Networks and Bridging Perspectives

Beyond her technical contributions, Aviles embraced the human element of Pacific unity. "I enjoyed seeing various perspectives and building

a network with professionals from across the Pacific," she noted. Her engagement with counterparts from different nations and organizations fostered mutual understanding and trust. This network-building aligns with U.S. homeland security efforts by reinforcing partnerships that deter threats to Pacific economies and food security, which depend heavily on sustainable tuna fisheries.

### Impact and Legacy

Aviles' contributions to OPIC25 exemplify the U.S. Coast Guard's commitment to Pacific partnerships. Her intelligence analysis supported the operation's deterrence effect, with four historic cases closed in Kiribati and several high seas transshipments flagged for further investigation. By helping to safeguard the region's tuna fisheries, she played a vital role in ensuring economic and food security for Pacific nations. "Operation Island Chief demonstrates what we can achieve when we work together," Aviles reflected. "It's about protecting a shared resource, with consideration for future generations."

Lt. Erik Bertulaitis, a pilot from Coast Guard Sector San Diego, also assisted with aviation surveillance, coordinating patrols by assets like the Royal Australian Air Force C-27J Spartan aircraft. This aircraft captured images of maritime activities for review, extending surveillance over pertinent exclusive economic zones and high seas.

The U.S. Coast Guard maintains a longstanding commitment to Forum Fisheries Agency operations. In past years, the service deployed cutters as available for at-sea enforcement and routinely sends intelligence specialists from U.S. Coast Guard Oceania District to support counter-illegal fishing missions. Aviles marked her first visit to Honiara, yet she and her Guam-based counterpart previously deployed for similar operations to the Freely Associated States over the last two years.

FFA Director-General Noan David Pakop praised the collective approach in a release from FFA. "Operation Island Chief demonstrates the value of collective regional action," he said.

This ongoing partnership underscores Pacific unity, as nations and allies combine strengths to combat threats that transcend borders. The U.S. Coast Guard's involvement helps foster sustained vigilance and stability across the region.

For more about Operation Island Chief 2025 please visit: <https://www.ffa.int/2025/08/operation-island-chief-reinforces-pacific-unity-against-illegal-fishing>



# Governor Stevenson A. Joseph attends opening of Pohnpei Liberation Day in Maui

## Pohnpei Public Information

September 5, 2025

**Maui, Hawai'i** – The Pohnpeian community in Maui formally opened its Liberation Day celebrations at the Hali'imaile Park Center, with Governor of Pohnpei Stevenson A. Joseph attending as the guest of honor. The ceremony brought together local and state leaders, faith representatives, and community organizations to celebrate Pohnpei's resilience and to honor the deep connections between Hawai'i and Pohnpei.

Official representatives of the Hawai'i State Government, the Maui Mayor's Office, and the Maui County Council joined in the celebration. Ms. Cynthia Lalloo delivered remarks on behalf of Maui Mayor Richard Bissen, highlighting the shared history of sacrifice and resilience that connects Pohnpei and Hawai'i, noting that just as December 7, 1941, marked a turning point for Hawai'i, so too did the events of World War II shape the destiny of the people of Pohnpei.

Mr. Leon Bolosan, representing Hawai'i Governor Josh Green, M.D., and Maui Councilwoman Tasha Kama both noted the resilience of the Pohnpeian community and commended their contributions to Maui. Councilwoman Kama, a strong advocate for Micronesians in Maui, emphasized her continued support for the rights and opportunities of Pohnpeians and all Pacific Islanders living in Hawai'i.

Pastor Lauren Medina offered prayers and reflections, grounding the gathering in faith and gratitude. Community organizers, including Latina leader and advocate Ms. Mendoza, acknowledged the importance of rights, inclusion, and the support of grants and partnerships that sustain the Pohnpeian community in Maui.

Mr. Ignacio Primo, President of the Pohnpeian community organization in Maui, welcomed guests and expressed gratitude to the sponsors and partners who made this year's celebration possible, noting that Liberation Day continues to unite generations of Pohnpeians both in Hawai'i and back home.

In his remarks, Governor Joseph shared: "Today's Liberation Day games remind us of our shared history, but also of our shared future. These games are not only about competition—they are about unity, resilience, and identity. They remind our children that no matter where they are, they carry with them the proud heritage of Pohnpei."

Governor Joseph expressed his sincere gratitude and appreciation to the Governor of Hawaii, Mayor of Maui and all leaders in the community who have supported and cared for the Pohnpeian community.

The opening also featured a youth speech contest on the importance of Liberation Day. Participants included Lorleen Dikoi, Austin Primo, Neilida John, and Sanamei William. Shantel Ligorio was awarded first place for her inspiring address, earning praise for her thoughtful reflection on the meaning of Liberation Day for young Pohnpeians both at home and abroad.

The event was made possible through the support of sponsors from both Hawai'i and Pohnpei, a reflection of the close ties and shared values that unite the two island communities.

The Liberation Day celebrations will continue throughout the weekend, featuring fellowship, sports, cultural presentations, and community gatherings.



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## U.S. and FSM hold first meeting of new JEMCO Board

*U.S. Embassy to the FSM*

*August 29, 2025*

**Honolulu** - On August 27, the U.S.-FSM Joint Economic Management Committee (JEMCO) held its 2025 annual meeting in Honolulu following the recent appointment of three new U.S. members.

U.S. attendees included JEMCO members Deputy Assistant Secretary Angel Demapan (Chair, Department of the Interior), Director Tony Greubel (Department of State), and Director Jerrod Mason (Department of the Treasury); DOI Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary William Hague; and Ambassador Jennifer Johnson.

FSM attendees included JEMCO members Chief Leo Falcam, Jr., Secretary Andrew Yatilman, and Special Assistant Yvonne Johnny; Ambassador Jackson Soram; and state representatives Governor Alexander Narruhn (Chuuk), Lieutenant Governor Arthy Nena (Kosrae), Lieutenant Governor Herolyn Movick (Pohnpei), and Director Thomas Tun (Yap).

The JEMCO members held

productive talks on effective oversight and implementation of the FSM's \$140 million in annual Compact funds under the themes of collaboration, cooperation, and mutual respect.

Specific topics of discussion included catching up on single audits, the Strategic Development Plan (SDP), Infrastructure Development Plan (IDP), FY26 Annual Implementation Plan (AIP), and draft bonding policy. The United States welcomes closer, deeper JEMCO conversations to make progress on issues of concern together.

The next in-person meeting: spring 2026 in FSM.



## Japan Mine Action Service (JMAS) pays a courtesy call on Ambassador Kagomiya

*Embassy of Japan to the FSM*

*August 29, 2025*

**Pohnpei** - On August 21, 2025, Mr. Uchiyama, the representative of chuuk office, and Mr. Fukuyama of the Japan Mine Action Service (JMAS) paid a courtesy call on Ambassador Kagomiya. JMAS is implementing the Oil Leak Countermeasures Project for Sunken Warships in Chuuk State. This project aims to mitigate the risk of oil leakage by thoroughly assessing the current condition of Japanese warships sunken during the WWII that have corroded and deteriorated, efficiently and safely recovering the oil, and preventing adverse environmental impacts within Chuuk State's Truk Atoll.

During the meeting, the Ambassador received an interim progress report on the project of this year and exchanged information on challenges in advancing the project.

Ambassador noted the Federated States of Micronesia government's high

expectations for this project, showed appreciation for the achievements so far, and stated that he hopes the project would continue to proceed while considering safety.



## Governor Stevenson A. Joseph welcomes resident Australian Ambassador to FSM, H.E. Jenny Grant

*Pohnpei Public Information*

*September 4, 2025*

**Kolonia, Pohnpei** - Governor Stevenson A. Joseph was honored to welcome the resident Ambassador of the Australian Embassy in the Federated States of Micronesia, Her Excellency Jenny Grant, during her courtesy visit to the Governor's Office this week.

Accompanying Ambassador Grant were Ms. Kathleen T. Kostka, Senior Program Manager, and Mr. Josh Critchley-Evans, Second Secretary and Consul at the Australian Embassy. Their presence underscored Australia's ongoing commitment to strengthening partnerships and cooperation with the State of Pohnpei and the FSM as a whole.

During the meeting, Governor Joseph

was briefed on opportunities that the Australian Government offers through the Australian Volunteers International Program, the Direct Aid Program, and an upcoming development project to electrify the island of Pingelap. Ambassador Grant also highlighted additional opportunities, including scholarships, that continue to support the development and capacity building of Pohnpeians.

Governor Joseph expressed keen interest in the Australian Volunteers Program as a valuable opportunity to strengthen capacity in key sectors across Pohnpei. He also noted that he had already shared his formal concurrence with the Pingelap Electrification Project, recognizing its importance for improving quality of life and advancing renewable energy access in the outer islands.

The Governor received the Ambassador and her staff positively and expressed his sincere appreciation to Ambassador Grant and the Government of Australia for their continuing support to Pohnpei State and the FSM.

For more information on these opportunities, including scholarships, please visit the Australian Embassy website: <https://fsm.embassy.gov.au/>



The Pohnpei State Government extends its warm thanks to Ambassador Grant, Ms. Kostka, and Mr. Critchley-Evans for their visit, and looks forward to continued collaboration with the Government and people of Australia.

# PICRC provides crucial data to guide Koror's Southern Lagoon Coastal Fisheries Management Plan

**PICRC**

**August 27, 2025**

**Koror, Palau** - Reef fish and other marine organisms are vital economic resources in Palau. Fishing provides the primary source of protein for the local population and remains a cornerstone of local culture. Recently, however, concerns have grown over the status of several targeted reef species, raising potential risks for both the local economy and the health of local ecosystems.

As the most populated state, Koror faces higher fishing pressure than other states. Several studies have found declines in fish biomass in Koror State's waters, and local fishers have reported fewer and smaller catches of certain species. In response to these concerns, and in line with Palau's tradition of sustainable management, the Koror State Government (KSG)—through the Resilient Reef Initiative (RRI)—developed a Sustainable Fisheries Management sub-project to provide the baseline data needed to implement the Koror Southern Lagoon Coastal Fisheries Management Plan (KSLCFMP). The plan, which is not yet in effect, introduces new marine protected areas and fishing regulations, including seasonal closures and minimum size limits for certain species.

To support informed decision-making, the KSG commissioned the Palau

International Coral Reef Center (PICRC) to conduct several studies assessing key aspects such as reef fish stocks, spawning aggregations of commercially important species, and the status of several fishery-relevant organisms in areas proposed for protection. Some of these studies involved Koror State Rangers, helping to build local capacity for future fisheries monitoring.

After sampling 90 sites in Koror State's waters, one of these studies concluded that 76% were overfished, based on comparisons of their fish biomass with projected values for unfished reefs from a previous study in Palau. It also found that larger humpback red snappers (keremlal), a popular food species, may have been overfished, as most surveyed were below the size of maturity. These findings align with another study, which analyzed catch sizes at the JR5 Fish Market and concluded that populations of many popular species—such as groupers, emperors, and parrotfish—may be overexploited and therefore at risk.

Another study highlighted the importance of properly protecting the sites and timing of spawning aggregations of commercial fish species, such as the longnose emperor (melangmud), to allow their populations to recover. Finally, an assessment identified Btil a Uel, an area proposed for protection under

the KSLCFMP, as appropriate for sea cucumber recovery, while Ngcheludel Kldeu was considered suitable for giant clam restoration. However, the absence of sea urchins in Butelchades—another area proposed for protection—was notable, as they are traditionally known to inhabit the area. The Koror State Rangers assisted in both the sea urchin and sea cucumber surveys, gaining valuable hands-on experience that will enable them to apply these methodologies independently in the future.

The report recommends taking the status of fish stocks and new information on maturation sizes into account in the management plan and emphasizes the importance of continuing to monitor the populations of key food species and those in protected areas.

These results were recently presented to the Koror State Government and the Koror State Legislature, in gatherings that proved informative and enriching for all attendees. The reports are also available in the Publications section of the PICRC website ([picrc.org](http://picrc.org)).



# Japanese Ambassador participates in JICA project (Project For Pacific Co-Learning Towards Resilient Health System: ResPACT)

**Embassy of Japan to the FSM**

**August 28, 2025**

**FSM**—On August 20, 2025, Ambassador Kagomiya visited the JICA training program for trainers aimed at providing health services during emergencies, which was conducted as part of JICA's Project for Pacific Co-Learning Towards Resilient Health System (ResPACT).

The Ambassador received an explanation of the training program's content and observed active case studies conducted in small groups.

In his remarks, the Ambassador noted that emergencies like the COVID-19 pandemic could occur at any time, and while digitalization is one solution, the most important factor is human knowledge and skills.

The Ambassador also expressed his hope for the success of the training program



# Australia supports vegetable farming by Kosrae home gardeners project by Lelu Farmers Association

*Australian Embassy to the FSM*

*August 30, 2025*

**Kosrae**—Through the Australia Direct Aid Program (DAP), families in Kosrae are expanding their capacity to grow healthy and nutritious food. Six mini-greenhouses have been built for retirees, people with disabilities and low-income head of the families, and starting kits were delivered through each household. Lelu Farmers Association (LFA) tirelessly works their best to be able to reach the organization's target of 15 households by mid-2026.

The Chairman of LFA, Mr Robert Sigrah and the rest of the officers have been sharing their knowledge by mentoring on soil mixing, grow bags, and other sustainable farming practices, helping to strengthen food security and resilience in the community.

"Australia is proud to support local initiatives that promote sustainable livelihood in Kosrae and across the FSM." said Chargé d'affaires Sarah McCarthy.



# FSM Secretary for TC&I joins Pacific Infrastructure Conference in Brisbane

*By Bill Jaynes  
The Kaselehlie Press*

*August 27, 2025*

**Brisbane, Australia** — A social media post from the Australian Embassy to the Federated States of Micronesia reports that Secretary for Transportation, Communications and Infrastructure (TC&I) attended the Pacific Infrastructure Conference 2025, held in Brisbane from 18–20 August.

The conference brought together Pacific leaders, development partners, and business representatives to discuss regional infrastructure priorities. According to the Embassy's post, the FSM Secretary delivered a keynote address, focusing on the importance of investment in aviation, digital connectivity, and infrastructure to support development and regional cooperation.

The Embassy also outlined Australia's ongoing support for projects in the Pacific through the Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific (AIFFP) and the climate partnership program including:

- Digital connectivity — extending high-speed internet in FSM, Kiribati, and Nauru through the East Micronesia Cable submarine project.
- Electrification in outer islands — installing solar

mini-grids with battery storage, wiring homes, and providing power for schools, dispensaries, churches, and community centers.

The post described the conference as an opportunity to share perspectives on how infrastructure investment can contribute to long-term growth, stronger partnerships, and greater resilience across the Pacific.



# JICA Waste Management expert team pays courtesy call on Ambassador Kagomiya

*Embassy of Japan to the FSM*

**August 29, 2025**

On August 20, 2025, Dr. Yoko Onuma and other members for the JICA expert team for the Japanese Technical Cooperation Project for Promotion of Initiative on Solid Waste Management in Pacific Island Countries (J-PRISM) paid a courtesy call visit to Ambassador. Ambassador Kagomiya.

J-PRISM was launched in 2011 with the aim of strengthening human resources and institutional frameworks for solid waste management in Pacific Island Countries and is currently in Phase 3 (2023–2028). Each phase lasts five years, and Phase 3 sets the project goal as “strengthening autonomous mechanisms for solid waste management and the 3Rs plus return.”

The project is active in nine Pacific Island countries: Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Republic of Palau, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Independent State of Papua New Guinea, Republic of Solomon Islands, Republic of Vanuatu, Republic of Fiji, Kingdom of Tonga, Independent state of Samoa. During the meeting, the expert team provided an overview of the project's activities and efforts in the FSM, and discussions were held on the current state of waste management in the FSM.

The Ambassador expressed his respect towards the expert team's long-standing and persevering efforts and expressed hope for the project's success and the team's continued contributions in the future.



# 6PAC+ prepares IMO submissions, demands just transition

*Micronesian Center for Sustainable Transport*

**September 3, 2025**

**London** - “We want to ensure the International Maritime Organization is in alignment with principles of international environmental law, and advances a just and equitable transition in the decarbonization of international shipping.”

That’s the message from Maria Sahib, Co-Director of the Micronesian Center for Sustainable Transport (MCST), as Pacific nations prepare key submissions to the International Maritime Organization this week.

Sahib says the Pacific is drawing strength from recent international court rulings that clearly state greenhouse gas emissions are pollution under international law.

“6PAC+ nations have a series of submissions that are being finalized with our scientific and legal experts to make sure that our countries, which bear the brunt of climate impacts, are not left behind in maritime transition by developed nations.”

The 6PAC+ alliance includes Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.

The submissions are due this Friday, 5 September, ahead of decisive

negotiations in October. At that meeting in London, IMO member states will be asked to adopt the much-anticipated Net Zero Framework, a package of measures to slash emissions from global shipping — one of the world’s biggest polluting sectors.

At stake is whether the Net Zero Framework sets a genuine pathway for shipping to align with the Paris Agreement’s 1.5-degree target — and whether the revenues from a new Net Zero Fund will be governed in ways that deliver for SIDS and Least Developed Countries, not just for richer economies.

The Secretary-General of the IMO, Arsenio Domínguez, reinforced the Pacific’s importance when he visited Suva last month to open the organization’s first ever Regional Presence Office in the Pacific. Speaking at the inauguration, he told delegates: “The Pacific may be distant from London, but your commitment is clear. This office reflects IMO’s commitment to working with you.”

After Friday’s deadline, countries have until 12 September to co-sponsor submissions. From there, the proposals will be compiled for discussion at the intersessional working group later next month, before a full report is tabled at the next Marine Environment Protection Committee in early 2026.

# Fast facts: Five million people in the Pacific still lack access to basic drinking water services – WHO, UNICEF

*World Health Organization*

**August 30, 2025**

**New York/Geneva/Fiji** – Despite progress over the last decade, billions of people around the world, including the Pacific, still lack access to essential water, sanitation, and hygiene services, putting them at risk of disease and deeper social exclusion.

A new report: Progress on Household Drinking Water and Sanitation 2000–2024: special focus on inequalities – launched by WHO and UNICEF during World Water Week 2025 – reveals that,

while some progress has been made, major gaps persist. People living in low-income countries, fragile contexts, rural communities, children, and minority ethnic and indigenous groups face the greatest disparities.

Ten Pacific\* key facts from the report:

- Between 2020-2025, urban population in the Pacific with safely managed drinking water\*\* nearly doubled from 715,000 to 1.2 million.
- Rural gains: Rural communities saw a major leap in basic drinking water access, rising from 2.1 million to 5.7

- million.
- Still left behind: Despite progress, five million people still lack basic drinking water services.
- Falling short of 2030 goals: To achieve universal access by 2030, the region needs a 40 per cent point increase. At the current pace, coverage will only reach 64 per cent, far below the target.
- Sanitation crisis: Nine million people still live without basic sanitation services.
- Stalled progress: Current trends suggest only 33 per cent coverage of basic sanitation by 2030 unless urgent action is taken.
- Hygiene gaps: Basic hygiene services cover only 42 per cent of the population - far from the 100 per cent target set by the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Deep inequalities: Rural areas and low-income communities face the greatest disparities in access.
- Climate threats: Cyclones, droughts, and other threats continue to disrupt progress and worsen vulnerabilities.
- Urgent call to action: Without accelerated investment and bold action, the Pacific will fall far short of its 2030 WASH commitments.

# Micronesia unites for sustainable development in the first ever Sustainable Development Dialogues

## United Nations Multi-Country Office Micronesia

FSM Government  
UN RCO

September 4, 2025

FSM - The Sustainable Development Dialogues I, co-hosted by the Government of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and the United Nations Multi-Country Resident Coordinator's Office (UN RCO) Micronesia, unfolded on 21 August 2025, bringing together a diverse gathering of leaders and grassroots actors from across Micronesia. Under the theme "Empowering Partnerships for SDGs 1, 2 and 3: United for Eradicating Poverty, Ensuring Food Security and Improving Health and Well-being," the event took place at the FSM National Convention Center, with parallel sessions connected virtually to Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, and Palau. It was a historic milestone for to hold this important regional dialogue at this esteemed venue for the very first time, underscoring the valued partnership between the FSM Government and the UN.

### Working together with partners to ensure no one is left behind in achieving Sustainable Development

Recognizing the unique challenges posed by geographic isolation, climate change, and limited resources, the dialogue mobilized cross-country solidarity in addressing persistent gaps in poverty eradication, food security, and health outcomes. The forum was notable for its inclusive format, drawing government officials at national and subnational levels, civil society representatives, healthcare providers, educators, youth, private sectors, and development partners into a robust regional conversation.

This way, the FSM Government and the UN are ensuring that all voices within society are represented, thereby guaranteeing that no one is left behind on the shared path towards sustainable development.

### A Dynamic and Diverse Programme

The historic half-day event opened with prayers and welcoming remarks from Herman Semes, Jr, Assistant Secretary for Multilateral and European Affairs in the FSM Department of Foreign



Affairs.

"This dialogue offers a critical platform for us to openly exchange ideas, share best practices, and set actionable pathways that are context-sensitive and regionally relevant. Our joint efforts today will forge stronger cross-country partnerships spanning governments, development agencies, the private sector, civil society, and community leaders — an essential foundation for sustainable progress." said Assistant Secretary Semes, Jr.

A keynote address delivered by Mr. Tapan Mishra, United Nations Resident Coordinator ad interim Micronesia, set the tone for the day's dialogue, highlighting both progress and enduring challenges on the path toward SDGs 1, 2, and 3.

Breakout sessions throughout the morning allowed delegates to engage in thematic and country-specific discussions. Groups ranged from traditional leaders and clergy to CSOs, government sectors, and specialized national groups for Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, and Palau. The aim was clear: to share best practices, pinpoint context-sensitive strategies, and foster actionable regional partnerships.

### Advancing People, Planet, Prosperity, and Peace

The forum strongly underscored the region's commitment to the strategic priorities of people, planet, prosperity, and peace. Through inclusive dialogue and concrete action planning, the Dialogues sought to ensure that uplifting communities, protecting natural resources, fostering broad-based prosperity, and building peaceful, resilient societies remain at the center of Micronesia's sustainable development journey.

### Key Outcomes and Path Forward

The synthesis session, moderated by Mr. Mishra, served as a platform for group rapporteurs to report discussion highlights and surface practical recommendations. By the close of the event, participants had achieved:

- A shared regional understanding of SDG progress, roadblocks, and opportunities.
- Country-specific and cross-country policy recommendations and partnership models.
- Renewed commitments from all stakeholder groups to pursue collaborative, follow-up action.
- Consensus on preparing a comprehensive regional summary report and launching a Micronesia SDG Working Group for ongoing coordination.

Closing remarks were delivered by Mr. Tapan Mishra, emphasizing the importance of translating dialogue into concrete outcomes on the ground. Participants reconvened over lunch to



Mrs. Lucille Apis-Overhoff, presenting on behalf of Transformers Team



continue discussions and planning the way forward.

### A Lasting Legacy of Collaboration

In keeping with its "Action through Partnership" ethos, the Sustainable Development Dialogues I set a new standard for inclusive regional coordination in Micronesia. This was the first of a series of dialogues focusing on specific national development goals, which will be continued across the Micronesian region. In the spirit of the "all-of society" approach, we encourage our partners to suggest SDGs focus areas and further action in this space.

With strong engagement from all sectors and clear mechanisms for follow-up, the Dialogues have positioned the Micronesian region as a leader in grassroots-driven, partnership-based approaches to the Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework.

# Latter-day Saint volunteers bring sight to Chuuk children

Deseret News

September 4, 2025

**Chuuk** - In classrooms, chapels and community centers across Chuuk, Federated States of Micronesia, smiles spread as blurry shapes came into focus — an experience made possible by donated glasses and the hands of devoted volunteers.

Bright Eyes, Bright Future, a nonprofit founded in 2017 by Dr. Ray Hardy and his wife, Krissy Hardy, traveled with 17 volunteers to Chuuk this summer to provide free eye-care clinics. The organization, though not affiliated with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, has strong ties to the Church community — every optometrist who volunteered is a Brigham Young University alumnus, and Latter-day Saint missionaries assisted with translation and logistics, reported the Church's Guam/Micronesia Newsroom.

The owners explained that the first clinic they held was in Peru in 2018. From that point, they felt “hooked” to this type of humanitarian work. They shared that it’s incredible to watch someone smile as they see the world clearly through their first pair of glasses.

Working with local leaders, the group held five clinics in five days on the islands of Romanum, Weno, Tol and Udot in June. Locations included schools, the hospital on Weno, the community center of the Chuuk Women’s Council — and even the Romanum Branch chapel.

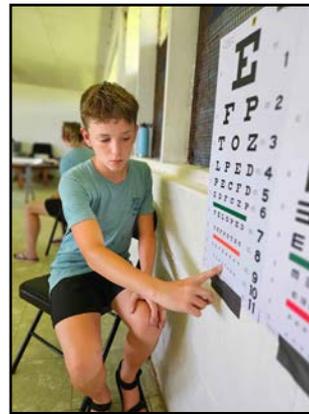
By the end of the trip, 480 people received eye exams, 290 patients were fitted with prescription glasses, and 400 pairs of sunglasses were distributed.

For many, the impact was immediate and life-changing. “Bright Eyes coming to Chuuk was the best thing that happened in our community,” said Achlynn Engichy, a local mother whose 8-year-old son was



helped. “Getting his glasses was the happiest day for him. He was able to see, finally.”

Volunteers, too, said their lives were changed. “Even more amazing than the miracle of helping people see was the chance to connect with people,” said Kate Hardy of Redmond, Oregon, adding: “Being able to connect with them through smiles, laughs and simple Chuukese phrases reminded me that the most important things in our lives are the people around us and the connections we have with them.”



Canadian volunteer Marlan Harris reflected on the islanders’ generosity: “Even though the people said that they had nothing to offer us but their thanks, they gave us so much more than that. They gave us their love, their warm welcome to their beautiful islands, and the humble sincerity of their hearts.”

Bright Eyes, Bright Future plans to return to Chuuk and hopes their work will inspire others to serve locally and abroad. “Volunteers of all ages have joined the clinics. When teens volunteer, it can impact their lives as well as those they serve,” said Krissy Hardy.



For the Hardys and their team, the effort is about more than medicine. “We want to support children in our own communities,” she said. “Letting others know about the work we do is important to us.”

Harris shared that visiting the Chuukese people changed his life, “They are a wonderfully happy people from a magical place, and a piece of my heart will remain there forever.”



## USP graduation highlights bold vision for the Pacific

*University of the South Pacific*

*5 September 2025*

**Fiji** - The University of the South Pacific (USP) celebrated a transformative milestone during its recent graduation ceremonies at the Laucala Campus in Suva, Fiji, underscoring the University's enduring role in shaping Pacific leadership and regional development.

Graduation is always a moment of profound significance, and this year's ceremony carried added meaning. The occasion honoured not only the achievements of graduates, but also the steadfast support of families, communities, and cultures that have guided them along the way.

In his graduation address, Pro-Chancellor and Chair of Council, Siosua Tuitelukua Tupou Utoikamanu, highlighted the dual significance of the day: celebrating student success while signalling a pivotal moment for the University itself.

"USP was born out of Pacific leadership, regional unity, and a shared belief in the transformative power of education. Today, we are not simply resetting – we are resetting with purpose. Guided by ancestral wisdom, contemporary knowledge, and the lived realities of our region, we are charting a course that is more student-centred, digitally capable, connected across the region, and financially resilient," he said.

"We do not mark this transition with hesitation, but with clarity and purpose. The University stands at a pivotal moment – one that calls for transformation, not just redirection. A

time to reflect on the journey so far, but more importantly, to reimagine the road ahead."

Graduates were reminded that with academic achievement comes a responsibility to the Pacific region.

USP's bold and forward-looking Investment Plan for 2025–2027 was also highlighted, reinforcing the University's commitment to regional collaboration, and equipping graduates to tackle challenges such as climate change, economic fragility, and social disruption.

The plan sets priorities that are ambitious yet grounded in reality, ensuring USP graduates are equipped to navigate pressing regional challenges such as climate change, economic fragility, and social disruption.

With close to 70, 000 alumni across the Pacific and beyond, USP continues to cultivate leaders who will shape the region's future.

The Pro-Chancellor commended the graduates and added they were entering a Pacific that was both challenging and full of promise.

"We honour you. We believe in you. Your journey is only beginning, and our great Ocean is wide with possibilities."

"Your journey is only beginning. And our great Ocean is wide with possibilities."

"As we celebrate your success, we also affirm our collective direction. The University is resetting – and we are resetting with clarity."



## Heads of the Pacific's government audit offices gather in New Caledonia for PASAI's 26th Congress



*PASAI*

*September 2, 2025*

**Nouméa, New Caledonia** - More than 60 people from countries across the Pacific and as far afield as Austria, Norway South Africa and the United States of America attended the 26th Congress of the Pacific Association of Supreme Audit Institutions (PASAI), attracting the presence of the President of New Caledonia, Alcide Ponga, and the French Ambassador to the Pacific, Véronique Roger-Lacan.

Representatives of 24 PASAI member offices attended the 4-day meeting hosted by the Territorial Chamber of Accounts from 26 to 29 August 2025 in Nouméa, New Caledonia.

The theme of the Congress was, "Audit impact for improved accountability and transparency."

In his opening address, President Ponga expressed his view that in carrying out the fundamental tasks of transparency, responsibility and independent control, government audit offices drive the improvement of public services and are essential for functional political systems.

Ambassador Roger-Lacan spoke of the maturation of good governance models and that citizens have increasingly higher expectations of public accountability and transparency.

In a keynote address by the Deputy Director-General of the Pacific Community (SPC), Maria Fuata said that sustainable development is not possible without accountability and that in the Pacific, we must pursue the best value for every public program, initiative and service.

With an appointment that began on 3

July 2025, the Controller and Auditor-General of New Zealand, Grant Taylor, in his capacity as the Secretary-General of PASAI, spoke of gaining a strong sense of collaboration and unified commitment to audit quality among members at the Congress event.

"We all work to create a tension that influences legislatures to direct public expenditure to where it is needed most," Mr Taylor said.

Auditors general, public auditors and others in similar roles from Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Island sub-regions of Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia, as well as PASAI Secretariat staff and other stakeholders with an interest in national integrity and public financial management systems discussed a range of issues during the gathering.

Through a series of panel discussions, Congress attendees reflected on matters related to adhering to international auditing standards in small island developing states, enhancing audit quality through regional collaboration and strengthening collaborative work with legislatures.

Preceding Congress on 25 August 2025, PASAI's Governing Board held its 43rd meeting and agreed on recommendations for the approval of Congress.

PASAI released a detailed communiqué following the event and looks forward to the next Congress to be hosted by the Nauru Department of Audit.

PASAI acknowledges the support of the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) and the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).