

Audit demands investigation into missing pandemic equipment in Pohnpei

By *Bill Jaynes*
The Kaselehlie Press

March 3, 2025

Pohnpei— The Pohnpei Office of the Public Auditor (POPA) has released an audit of COVID-19 assets acquired by the Pohnpei Department of Health and Social Services (DOHSS) between 2020 and 2023. The audit uncovered substantial losses of what it called “other assets,” including \$66,000 worth of missing inventory items that were documented. Auditors noted that even more assets were missing but, due to the lack of acquisition dates or values, they were not included in the official list of missing items. However, the audit did include an appendix with photos of some of the unaccounted-for items.



Auditors stated that the giveaway of the Lieutenant Governor during of modular housing units, referred the previous administration. The to as ensuite accommodations, to an audit asserted that the giveaway unnamed private individual was facilitated by the Office

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Telecommunications cable landing station installed in Pohnpei

Australian Embassy to the FSM

February 19, 2025

Pohnpei—Faster, high quality and more reliable internet is one step closer for communities in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), following the installation of an undersea cable landing station in Pohnpei.

project to deliver a 2,250-kilometre-long undersea cable and supporting infrastructure connecting Tarawa in Kiribati, Nauru and Kosrae in FSM to the existing HANTRU-1 cable landing point located in Pohnpei.

Once in service, the cable is expected

[Click here for continuation on page 6](#)

The cable landing station forms part of the East Micronesia Cable project, funded by Australia, Japan and the United States, which will improve connectivity across FSM, Kiribati and Nauru. Local partners are delivering the project, which in FSM include the Department of Transportation, Communications and Infrastructure, Telecommunications Regulations Authority and FSM Telecommunications Cable Corporation.

The cable landing station’s installation is an important milestone towards increased economic growth and development, with the



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Pohnpei State Government receives over \$80,800 in medications and medical supplies from China Medical Team

Pohnpei Public Information

February 26, 2025

Pohnpei—The Pohnpei State Government has received a generous donation of medications and medical supplies valued at over 570,000 RMB (approximately USD 80,800) from the China Medical Team, facilitated by the FSM National Government and the Embassy of the People’s Republic of China. The official handover ceremony marked yet another milestone in the ongoing partnership between the Federated States of Micronesia and the People’s Republic of China in strengthening healthcare services in the state.

His Excellency Wu Wei, Ambassador of the People’s Republic of China to the Federated States of Micronesia, emphasized the longstanding cooperation between the two nations, highlighting that the Chinese Medical Team is a legacy in the friendship between the people of China and Micronesia. He noted that China has

been sending medical teams abroad since 1963 and has extended its medical assistance to over 180 countries, fostering a global community of health. “Our two nations share the same pursuit of health and happiness,” Ambassador Wu Wei stated.

Governor Stevenson A. Joseph was present at the event to witness the official handover of the donation and to extend his heartfelt gratitude to His Excellency Wu Wei, the Chinese Medical Team, and the FSM National Government. In his remarks, Governor Joseph praised the

invaluable contributions of the Chinese Medical Team in enhancing Pohnpei’s healthcare system.

“We are especially grateful for the skilled professionals you have brought to our hospital, providing much-needed services in urology, gastroenterology, ENT (ear, nose, and throat), and Traditional Medicine. These specialties have had a profound impact on our healthcare system, allowing us to diagnose and treat conditions that

would otherwise require referrals abroad. Your presence has eased the burden on our local medical staff and, most importantly, has brought healing and relief to many in our community,” Governor Joseph stated.

Senator Tendy Liwy, Vice Chairman of the Standing Committee on Health in the 11th Pohnpei Legislature, also expressed deep appreciation for the continued support from the Chinese Medical Team, the Chinese Embassy, and the FSM National Government. He acknowledged the positive impact these contributions have had on the state’s healthcare services, ensuring better treatment options and improved medical care for the people of Pohnpei.

FSM Secretary of Health, Marcus Samo, joined in expressing gratitude on behalf of the FSM National Government, underscoring the importance of international partnerships in advancing healthcare services in the FSM. He reaffirmed the government’s commitment to fostering these relationships to enhance medical care and provide the necessary resources for the well-being of all FSM citizens.

The Pohnpei State Government extends its deepest appreciation to the People’s Republic of China, the FSM National Government, and the dedicated professionals of the China Medical Team for their unwavering commitment to improving healthcare services in Pohnpei. This donation will play a crucial role in ensuring the continued delivery of quality medical care to the people of Pohnpei.




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Bill Jaynes
Managing Editor

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March 19, 2025

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Monday, March 17, 2025

FSM charges two for alleged theft of grant funds

By **Bill Jaynes**
The Kaselehlie Press

March 2, 2025

Pohnpei— On February 13, 2025, the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) filed criminal charges against Stuard Penias and Linda Amor for the alleged theft of grant funds under the Sexual Risk Avoidance Education (SRAE) grant administered by the FSM government. The two are jointly named in 12 counts of theft and one count of unsworn falsification to authorities. Penias is additionally charged with two separate counts of theft and one count of conflict of interest. The alleged crimes took place in 2018 and 2019.

The group received \$47,492 for the projects in both 2018 and 2019. While much of the funding was documented and not questioned by FSM auditors, concerns arose regarding expenditures for events that appeared never to have taken place. The criminal charges stem from an audit referral to the Compliance Investigation Division, which subsequently referred the case to

the FSM Department of Justice.

Penias was the President of the Pohnpei Drug-Free Association (PDFA), a local nonprofit entity, while Amor served as its Secretary. According to the criminal charges, Penias and Amor were the sole signatories for the PDFA bank account. The charges detail several large cash withdrawals made by either Penias or Amor, purportedly to cover expenses for outreach presentations at local high schools.

Amor submitted a report claiming that outreach presentations were conducted at Madolenihmw High School on November 16–17, 2018, and at Pohnpei Islands Central School (PICS) on November 28, 2018. She attached a list of students who allegedly attended. However, Madolenihmw High School Principal Humover Penias, who has served in that role since 2015, told investigators he did not recall PDFA conducting any such outreach events. He further stated that the school maintains records of outreach activities, and there was no written

record of PDFA ever conducting one.

Additionally, several students listed on Amor’s report for the PICS High School outreach informed investigators that they had not attended any such event and had no knowledge of it.

The 12 joint charges of theft correspond to 12 separate cash withdrawals for events that investigators concluded never took place.

Penias faces two additional counts of alleged theft related to funds received from the Chinese Embassy in 2019. One charge concerns a discrepancy between the \$1,900 donated by the Embassy for a National Youth Conference dinner and the \$1,617.25 that was actually paid for the event. The charges suggest that Penias deposited the funds into his personal checking account and paid for the event with a personal check, leaving \$282.75 unaccounted for. The second charge involves a \$2,000 cash donation from the Embassy, also in 2019, which was allegedly deposited into his personal account.

Penias is also separately charged with conflict of interest. Prosecutors allege that this charge stems from his role as the National Youth and Disability Program Manager at the FSM Department of Health and Social Affairs while simultaneously serving as President of PDFA. They claim that he directly controlled and benefited from the PDFA savings account where funds were deposited.

The final charge of unsworn falsification to authorities is based on the alleged submission of fraudulent documents to the FSM Department of Finance and Administration for events that investigators believe never occurred.

The two defendants had their initial hearing at the FSM Supreme Court on February 24, 2025. Both Penias and Amor are presumed innocent unless sufficient evidence is presented in the nation’s highest court to prove otherwise.

Wone Elementary to get new water well with Japanese assistance



By **Bill Jaynes**
The Kaselehlie Press

February 21, 2025

Pohnpei—This morning, Japanese Ambassador KAGOMIYA Nabuo officially handed over grant funds totaling \$99,859 to the Wone Elementary School Parent-Teacher Association for the installation of a well at the school.

“This project is aimed at improving the sanitary environment at this school,” said Ambassador Kagomiya during his brief speech. “You know, Pohnpei is full of rainwater, but still, I have to say that proper water management remains a challenge. We face water shortages when there are consecutive dry days, especially during the dry season. Another

issue is water quality, as waterborne diseases spread easily where proper water management systems are not developed. I hope this project will contribute to providing safe, high-quality water to the students and teachers through the construction of a well at the Wone School premises.”

He also highlighted Japan’s past and ongoing contributions to infrastructure projects. “We have supported projects in areas like education and waste management,” he said. “I hope this project proceeds smoothly and helps improve the school environment at Wone Elementary School, where around 100 students study.”

Director of Education Stanley Etse spoke on behalf of Governor Stevenson Joseph.

“We are very grateful to be here this morning to accept another generous contribution from the Government of Japan for the development of a water system at Wone Elementary School,” said Director Etse. “This project will have a profound impact not just on the students



but also on the entire Wone community.”

“As you mentioned, Honorable Ambassador, Pohnpei has an abundance of water, but some communities still struggle with water distribution due to a lack of resources to install proper piping or distribution systems,” he continued. “Today, I am very pleased to learn that the Government of Japan will be assisting our Department of Education, specifically Wone Elementary School, with a water system project worth nearly \$100,000. This will greatly improve conditions at the school.

“Currently, we face issues where water is not always available at the school.

The principal frequently calls because the students need water, but there is none. At times, we have to ask PUC to deliver water to the school.

“Sometimes, their water system is turned off due to circumstances beyond their control. But with this project, I am confident that life on campus will be much better because there will be

a continuous flow of water. On behalf of the Government of Pohnpei and the Department of Education, I sincerely thank you for all the assistance you have provided to us,” he said, concluding his remarks by mentioning the nearly completed Japanese-funded gymnasium at Saladak Elementary School.

Present at the signing ceremony were Phillis Silbanuz, Chairwoman of the Board of Education; Charles Amusten, Principal of Wone School; Marson Rosario, President of the Wone School PTA, who also served as the Master of Ceremonies; and Raynard Martin, Vice President of the Wone PTA.

Community voices shape road improvements in FSM: Beneficiary survey underway

*Ms. Sonia Kephas
Gender Transport Project Manager
FSM Department of TC&I*

February 14, 2025

Pohnpei, FSM—14th of February 2025 – The FSM Department of Transportation, Communication and Infrastructure (FSM DTC&I), in collaboration with Finnish Overseas Consultants (FinnOC) Ltd., has launched a Beneficiary Survey to assess the socio-economic impact of the World Bank-funded Prioritized Road Investment and Management Enhancements (PRIME) and Strategic Climate-Oriented Road Enhancements (SCORE) projects.

This initiative aims to gather community insights to ensure that infrastructure improvements address the mobility and safety needs of all road users, with a particular focus on empowering women and assisting people with disabilities.

Following successful data collection efforts in Kosrae, Yap, and Chuuk, the survey has now reached Pohnpei. The research team has engaged in in-depth discussions with local government officials, public safety authorities, and representatives from women's and disability rights organizations to capture a

diverse range of perspectives.

A key component of the survey is the involvement of local organizations in the data collection process. In Pohnpei, the Pohnpei Women's Council has played a vital role by mobilizing a dedicated field team. The trained surveyors are currently visiting homes along key road corridors, gathering firsthand accounts of mobility challenges and transportation barriers faced by the community.

"We appreciate the cooperation of all selected households in providing valuable information," said Emy Musrasrik-Carl from the Pohnpei Women's Association. "This survey is an important step in ensuring that road upgrades under PRIME and SCORE truly reflect the needs of the people who rely on them every day."

Stakeholders emphasize the significance of inclusive infrastructure planning. FinnOC Representative, Simone Schotte highlighted, "By understanding the specific challenges faced by women and people with disabilities, we can contribute to creating a more accessible and equitable transportation system for all."

The survey findings will inform future road infrastructure improvements, ensuring that they not only enhance connectivity but also promote safety and resilience. With community feedback at its core, the PRIME and SCORE projects are committed to addressing the needs of vulnerable and underserved groups, fostering greater mobility and economic opportunities across FSM.



...COVID Audit

Continued from front page

of government assets to a private individual violated established government asset management policies and procedures. The total valuation of the missing ensuite units is \$9,740.

The audit report detailed missing items from DOHSS inventory:

- Of 40 televisions purchased for the ensuite accommodations, only one could be accounted for; 39 are missing, valued at \$10,138.
- Of 41 air conditioners purchased, 37 are missing, totaling \$20,455 in value.
- Seven computers or laptops were purchased, but only three remain. The four missing computers had a purchase value of \$4,087.
- DOHSS purchased 10 radios, of which seven are missing, valued at \$2,700.

- One of three printers purchased is missing, valued at \$1,185.
- Of 40 mini refrigerators purchased for the ensuite accommodations, 36 have disappeared, with a total value of \$15,300.
- One monitor, valued at \$300, is missing from the two purchased.
- Three "Fingertec Premier" fingerprint time clock systems, used for monitoring employee working hours, were purchased, but all three are missing, valued at \$2,226.

"Our review also revealed even more assets that were in the DOHSS listing but were not reflected in the Department of Treasury and Administration (DOTA) listing," the audit stated. "These assets include beds and bedframes, water dispensers, telephones, lockers, water bottles, tables, chairs, sinks, and others. Due to a lack of pertinent information such as cost, we did not include them in the table above. However, we observed that most of these assets were missing

or no longer with DOHSS."

Current DOHSS Director Stuard Penias requested the audit to evaluate the accountability and management of assets after the pandemic response. His official response to the audit stated that DOHSS is working on standard operating procedures to prevent future losses. He also agreed with the auditors, stating, "The DOHSS recommends the initiation of an investigation by the Office of the Attorney General on these findings,



as indicated in Citation 001." Citation 001 in the audit is the listing of missing and unaccounted-for items.



Australian Ambassador hosts morning tea for Australian Volunteers in FSM

Australian Embassy to the FSM

February 27, 2025

Pohnpei—Australian Ambassador to the Federated States of Micronesia, Joanna Grant-Curnow, recently hosted a morning tea to recognize the efforts of Australian Volunteers International (AVI) team members working in the region.

The gathering provided an opportunity for volunteers to share experiences, reflect on their work, and discuss the impact of their efforts in the North Pacific. Ambassador Grant-Curnow expressed her appreciation for the volunteers' dedication to fostering strong ties between Australia and the communities they serve.

AVI Regional Director Apai Rokotuni and Program Manager Kenye Rikin helped organize the event and were

commended for their commitment to managing the Australian Volunteers Program (AVP) in the North Pacific. The AVP, funded through Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), aims to support equitable development by building collaborative relationships between Australian volunteers and local communities.

More information about the program's work in the region can be found on the AVP website: www.australianvolunteers.com.



FSM Telecommunications Corporation (FSMTC) is pleased to welcome its newest Board member, Mr. Smithy Clark, as the representative of Pohnpei State. Clark is currently the Mayor of Pingelap, an atoll located east of Pohnpei island. He has a broad background in the telecom sector, having worked for FSMTC for 19 years as an Outside Plant (OSP) Specialist, assisting with the planning and designing of the outside plant network and leading a team in the installation and maintenance of the copper and fiber network. Clark's career as an OSP technician started in 1992 and ended in 2011, when he resigned to pursue a life of public service. Congratulations Smithy Clark and FSMTC wishes you much success in your journey to help innovate, improve and build a better and stronger FSM.

Australian Embassy donates recording equipment to Yap and Pohnpei broadcasters

Australian Embassy to the FSM

February 25, 2025

Pohnpei—The Australian Embassy in the Federated States of Micronesia has provided high-quality recording studio equipment to Yap Radio and Pohnpei Broadcasting Corporation, enhancing their ability to produce clear and professional audio for their audiences.

Australian Ambassador Joanna Grant-Curnow handed over the equipment, highlighting Australia's commitment to strengthening media capabilities in the region. Broadcasters also received hands-on training to ensure seamless integration of the new recording gear

into their daily operations.

“This upgrade will help local broadcasters improve sound quality and better serve their listeners,” Ambassador Grant-Curnow said.

While this initial donation was made to Yap and Pohnpei, the Australian government has expressed its commitment to extending similar support to Chuuk and Kosrae in the future.

The initiative was made possible with the support of ABC International Development, whose team, led by Kate Seymour, played a key role in facilitating the project.



Governor Stevenson A. Joseph welcomes Lt. Governor of Kosrae for interstate dialogue

Pohnpei Public Information

February 26, 2025

Pohnpei—Governor Stevenson A. Joseph warmly welcomed the Honorable Lt. Governor of Kosrae, Arthy Nena, during his courtesy visit to the Pohnpei State Government. Lt. Governor Nena was accompanied by the Second Lady of Kosrae, Governor Joseph was joined by Chief of Staff, Benjamin Rodriguez and their discussions highlighted key challenges and opportunities for interstate collaboration.

During their brief but productive meeting, Governor Joseph and Lt. Governor Nena exchanged insights on shared challenges, particularly in power generation and healthcare

services. Both leaders acknowledged the importance of strengthening cooperation to address these critical areas effectively.

The meeting concluded with a strong commitment to enhancing interstate communication and collaboration between Pohnpei and Kosrae. Governor Joseph reaffirmed Pohnpei’s willingness to work closely with Kosrae in areas of mutual interest, ensuring continued progress and development for both states.

The visit underscored the enduring ties between the two FSM states and the shared vision of their leaders in fostering unity and cooperation for the benefit of their citizens.



...Cable landing

Continued from front page

to provide more than 100,000 people across the three countries with more reliable internet, increasing the availability of digital government services and enabling increased trade and employment opportunities.

The project will also strengthen FSM's resilience to climate change, assisting governments with disaster and climate change preparedness and reducing the chances of an outage in the event of adverse weather events.

Australia is supporting the AUD135

million project via the Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific (AIFFP), with a grant of AUD60 million.

The AIFFP is committed to principles of quality infrastructure delivery, with the project delivering local labour and job opportunities.

“The East Micronesia Cable project will connect families and communities – to each other and opportunities – across atolls and the region,” Australia’s Ambassador to FSM, Ms Jenny Grant-Curnow said.

“Australia is proud to invest in critical infrastructure that will have a real impact for the people of FSM.” The Kosrae cable landing station is expected to be installed in May, ahead of a ready for service date of December 2025.

For more information about the project, visit the AIFFP

website or the East Micronesia Cable website, which provides information in English, Gilbertese, Kosraean and Nauruan.





College of Micronesia-FSM

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Rotary Club of Pohnpei Donates Reusable Feminine Kits to COM-FSM Students

The Pohnpei Rotary Club has made a significant contribution to the well-being of students at the College of Micronesia-FSM (COM-FSM) National Campus, donating reusable feminine kits to address a critical need.

Representatives from the Rotary Club presented the donation to COM-FSM leadership, including President and CEO Dr. Theresa Koroivulaono, Vice President for Instructional Affairs Delihna Ehmes, and Vice President for Administrative Services Steven Young-Uhk.

Debrah Mori Retuyan, a representative of the Rotary Club, highlighted the importance of the donation,

citing the challenges faced by female students in accessing sanitary products. "In some high schools on the island, if a female student goes to the nurse's office requesting a sanitary pad, and the school doesn't have any, which is often the case, the student is simply sent home," Retuyan explained, underscoring the impact of this issue on students' education.

Dr. Koroivulaono expressed deep gratitude to the Pohnpei Rotary Club for their generous donation, emphasizing its significant benefit to students residing in the dormitories. "This donation is a big help to the students in the dormitories," Dr. Koroivulaono said.



She also took the opportunity to recognize the Rotary Club's ongoing commitment to the college and the wider Pohnpei community, acknowledging their numerous

impactful projects.

This donation reflects the Pohnpei Rotary Club's dedication to supporting education and addressing essential needs within the community, ensuring that students have the resources necessary to succeed.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Project Assistant, UNICEF Grant (Pohnpei)

The Project assistant is under the supervision of the Project manager for the Inclusive Early Childhood Education (ECE) Teacher Training Program for the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM). This project is managed under the Vice President for Instructional Affairs office. The project assistant is to provide a variety of administrative services to support the project manager including the following:

- Plan, organize and carry out a broad range of secretarial and clerical functions.
- Develop, verify and submit time sheets in a timely manner
- Perform duties as delegated with minimum or no supervision
- Oversee purchase and maintain sufficient inventory of supplies and equipment for the Inclusive Early Childhood Education (ECE) Teacher Training Program for the Federate States of Micronesia (FSM)
- Oversee payments or reimbursement of workshops throughout the project for the Inclusive Early Childhood Education (ECE) Teacher Training Program for the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM)
- Communicate with state representatives on setting up workshops or any other inquiries
- Serve as a liaison between COM-FSM, UNICEF, National Department of Education and State Department of Education to ensure uninterrupted daily operation
- Coordinate and help Project manager set up meetings with the National Department of Education and State Department of Education
- Receive, organize and review documents for the program or from the project manager
- Maintain files for the Inclusive Early Childhood Education (ECE) Teacher Training Program for the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM)

Serious inquiries can be made to the Human Resources Office at email address hro@comfsm.fm and telephone number (691) 320-2482 extension numbers 179, 180, 181

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Pohnpei State endorses landmark Food Security Policy to strengthen local food systems

Pohnpei Public Information

February 28, 2025

Pohnpei—Governor Stevenson A. Joseph and Lt. Governor Ioanis proudly announce the official endorsement and release of the Pohnpei State Food Security Policy, a groundbreaking initiative that will guide the state toward a more resilient and self-sustaining food system. The policy, initiated under the Oliver/Ioanis administration and recently endorsed by the 11th Pohnpei Legislature, was developed in collaboration with the Rutgers University Food Systems team and is the first of its kind in the Federated States of Micronesia.

Governor Joseph, in his forward to this pivotal document, underscored its importance, stating: "Pohnpei State has enormous potential to strengthen our economy, improve our overall health and nutrition, and build upon our culture through the production of local food. This Food Security Policy serves as a living document to guide us as we take urgent, targeted steps to strengthen our local food system. There is much we can do together to incentivize and stimulate local food production for

the benefit of our people."

Currently, Pohnpeian families spend over 50% of their income on imported foods such as rice, wheat flour, vegetable cooking oil, cow's milk, cane sugar, potato chips, and imported meats like pork and chicken. Much of these food items could be replaced with locally produced alternatives, reducing reliance on foreign imports and creating food production jobs within the state. Governor Joseph highlighted the economic opportunity presented by investing in local agriculture, stating: "With each purchase of imported food, Pohnpeians are in fact paying for food production and processing jobs in other countries. We have become reliant on food grown and processed overseas that is then transported thousands of miles to us by cargo ship. This is food production and processing work that should be done in Pohnpei State to support local jobs and build our own resilient food system."

The newly endorsed policy provides a roadmap for increasing local food production and processing capacity. This includes stabilizing inputs such as poultry and pig feed, which can be locally sourced to support the production of affordable and reliable chicken, eggs, and pork.

Governor Joseph also emphasized the role of policymakers in supporting the initiative, stating: "We should consider requiring that food prepared for government functions, hospitals, and school meals be primarily made from locally produced ingredients. This would create a market for our farmers and fishers and would also inspire our people to creatively imagine new ways of preparing local



foods as import substitutions."

The Pohnpei State Government acknowledges the significant contributions of the previous Oliver/Ioanis administration and former Director of Resources and Development Hubert Yamada for laying the foundation for this policy. Governor Joseph reaffirmed his administration's commitment to implementing the Food Production Master Plan 2025 and achieving the ambitious goal of increasing local food production by 50% within the next five years.

With this endorsement, the Pohnpei State Government takes a bold step toward a future where local food systems are strengthened, economic opportunities are expanded, and the health and well-being of all Pohnpeians are prioritized. The full 2025 Pohnpei Food Security Policy and Food Production Master Plan submitted

Germany commits €3 Million disaster preparedness support to 15 countries

Secretariat of the Pacific Community

February 27, 2025

Pacific—A €3 million grant agreement will strengthen disaster preparedness across 15 countries by establishing a network of humanitarian supply warehouses for rapid emergency response.

This two-year funding from the Government of Germany to the Pacific Community (SPC) will specifically support the Pacific Humanitarian Warehousing Program (PHWP). PHWP will work with Government counterparts in the respective National Disaster Risk Management Offices to enhance their ability to respond rapidly to disasters by supporting the establishment and management of humanitarian supply warehouses pre-positioned with supplies across Pacific Island Countries and Timor-Leste.

"This partnership with Germany represents a significant step forward in building Pacific-led humanitarian response capabilities," said Dr. Paula Vivili, SPC's Deputy Director General, Science and Capability.

"The funding will help ensure our Pacific nations can respond swiftly and independently in the critical first 48 hours following a disaster."

"The Pacific region faces unique challenges from climate-related disasters, and rapid response in the crucial first 48 hours can make all the difference. This €3 million investment in the PHWP represents Germany's confidence in regional cooperation and Pacific-led solutions," said German Ambassador to Fiji and Special Envoy for the Pacific Islands Region, Dr. Andreas Prothmann.

He added, "By working alongside 15 Pacific nations to establish humanitarian warehouses, we are supporting a robust network that will enhance disaster preparedness across the entire region. This partnership with the Pacific Community exemplifies how international collaboration can strengthen local resilience."

The German-grant will support two key interventions:

Establishing effective national and regional planning processes through an integrated approach aligning with key policy frameworks including a dedicated Program Management Office
Enhancing program effectiveness and strategic direction through country consultations to identify priority activities to inform Country Implementation Plans.

The programme will co-design

interventions alongside Pacific nations, including Cook Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu.

"With the Pacific region increasingly impacted by climate-related disasters, this investment in strengthening preparedness and local response capability is crucial," added Dr. Vivili. "We thank the German Government for their commitment to supporting Pacific resilience."

The funding complements existing support from other development partners, including Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom, demonstrating strong international backing for Pacific-led disaster preparedness initiatives.



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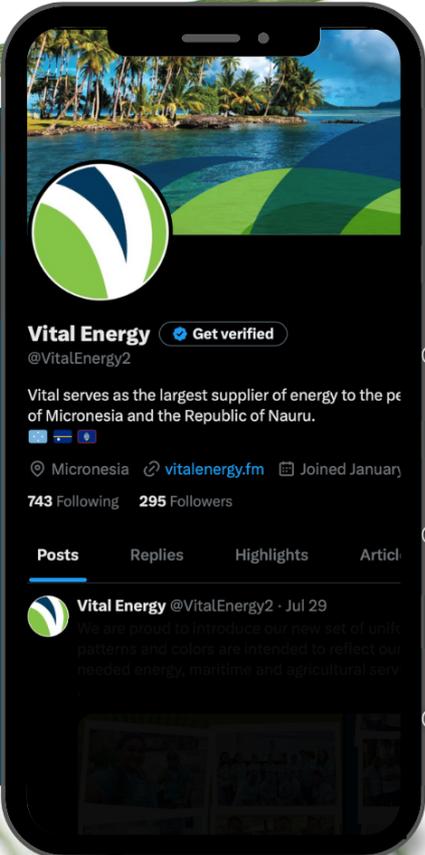
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President Simina engages with FSM Citizens in Saipan and Guam, reaffirming commitment to overseas communities

FSM Information Services

February 11, 2025

FSM—As part of the Simina-Palik administration’s ongoing unity-building efforts, His Excellency Wesley W. Simina, President of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), conducted a series of citizens’ outreach meetings during official visits to Saipan and Guam, reaffirming the administration’s commitment to FSM citizens residing abroad and strengthening ties with overseas communities.

On February 7th, President Simina met with leaders of FSM state associations in Saipan over lunch at The Sushi Spot, a locally owned restaurant operated by the FSM’s very own Shane Hawley of Pohnpei State. Representatives from Pohnpei, Chuuk, Kosrae, and Yap gathered to discuss community development, access to essential services, and maintaining strong ties with the homeland. During the meeting, the President committed to participating in the 2025 FSM Independence Day celebration in Saipan, which will be hosted by the FSM Association on November 3, underscoring his support for efforts to bring FSM citizens together abroad.

The President continued his outreach with a community meeting in Saipan on February 8th where he engaged with the Chuukese community. A similar gathering followed on February 9 in Guam at the Dededo Sports Complex, allowing the President to hear directly

from citizens about their concerns and on-the-ground realities.

On February 10th, President Simina met with officers of the FSM Association in Guam to further strengthen collaboration between the national government and FSM’s overseas communities. During the meeting, he encouraged the association to formalize its group as a registered non-profit or non-governmental organization, noting that doing so could open up more doors and opportunities for the community.

While in Guam, the President also met with the CEO of Bank of Guam, Mr. Joaquin P. Cook and the Chief Operating Officer Ms. Maria Leon Guerrero, to discuss ways to improve banking services for the FSM. The discussion focused on enhancing financial accessibility, expanding banking options, and addressing challenges faced by FSM citizens in Guam and across the region.

Concluding his engagements, the President sat for an interview with KUAM News on February 11th, where he addressed key issues raised by FSM citizens, including matters related to the new U.S. administration. He reaffirmed the FSM’s strong and enduring partnership with the United States and assured listeners that the government is proactively engaged with our partners and monitoring this fluid situation as it evolves. The President also encouraged citizens to ensure that their documents, such as valid passports and I-94 forms, are in order to avoid any potential issues. Additionally, the President emphasized that the government is issuing regular advisory bulletins through the FSM Embassy in DC to keep citizens informed and up to date on any developments.

These engagements highlight the Simina-Palik administration’s ongoing efforts to remain connected with FSM citizens no matter where they reside, ensuring that their voices are heard and contribute to national policy making.



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Never miss an appointment with the Public Health! Sign up to the SMS reminder system and stay alert!

Pohnpei and Chuuk States Public Health

Between January 24th and 31st January, FSM Pohnpei and Chuuk State Public Health conducted a workshop to deploy a SMS-based reminder system for public health programs. With technical support from UNICEF and funding by the Government of Japan, the SMS-based reminder system targets public health clients, including caregivers of children under two years old and pregnant women who receive prompts about their next ante-natal care clinic visit as well as getting important tips on health and nutrition.

In Pohnpei State, this SMS reminder system aims to improve the coverage of Maternal and Child Health (MCH) services like antenatal care visits by pregnant women, Well Baby Clinic and child routine immunization. Other services include family planning and Rheumatic Heart Disease (RHD).

In Chuuk state, the Public Health team plans to cover wider programs in addition to MCH, Immunization of children including those with special health needs, Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD), HIV and other STs.

Public health clients in Pohnpei State who wish to benefit from the SMS reminder system can inquire at the Public Health Clinic or call 320-6613 or 320-3144. Similarly, preparations for the launch of the Chuuk State SMS system are underway, and the date will be communicated in due course. For more information, please call Chuuk State Public Health on 330-2577/3945.

Here is how you can enroll in the SMS system.

- Send a text message with any of the following key words in caps (ANC for antenatal care, BABY for Well Baby Clinic and immunization, WOMAN for family planning, and RHD for Rheumatic Heart Disease) to the number 407.
- The SMS is free!



Pohnpei State Public Health team and UNICEF technical team during the SMS reminder system design workshop in Pohnpei



Chuuk State Public Health team and UNICEF technical assistance team during the SMS reminder system design workshop in Weno, Chuuk

It takes a village to raise a child: Boosting regional investment in child protection and well-being

Joint Press Release:
By Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and UNICEF

February 23, 2025

The Pacific is prioritising strengthening child protection systems by hosting the inaugural Pacific Child Wellbeing Summit in Suva, Fiji.

Aligned with the aspirations Pacific Islands Forum Leaders and the priorities set out in the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent (2050 Strategy), the Pacific Island Forum (PIF) Secretariat and UNICEF, have partnered to convene the Summit from 24 to 26 February at the PIF Secretariat in Suva, Fiji.

The Summit brings together Ministers and senior officials representing seventeen (17) Pacific Islands countries, key stakeholders, and experts to advance holistic approaches to child wellbeing across the Pacific. It aims to foster regional collaboration and collective action to ensure that all children are protected from violence,

abuse, and neglect while enabling them to thrive and reach their full potential.

“The future of the Blue Pacific continent are our children; our Pacific Islands Forum Leaders have been quite clear that the future of our region cannot be left to chance. Investing in our youngest citizens is central to achieving the region’s 2050 vision. It is critical that existing mechanisms are strengthened to protect our children and their well-being. I look forward to the productive discussions between our member countries, experts, and stakeholders to forge a way forward to guarantee a safe, inclusive, equal and enabling environment for our children” said PIF Secretary General, Baron Waqa.

This Summit underscores the Blue Pacific Continent’s collective commitment to invest in its youngest members, by ensuring they are supported, protected, and empowered to achieve their full potential. The discussions will shape interventions

to ensure that children’s wellbeing continues to be embedded across all priorities and within the context of the 2050 Strategy.

Dialogue will take place between high-level officials and key partners, including policymakers, CROP agencies, faith-based organizations, civil society, academic institutions, and development partners. It will conclude with a report that will translate discussions into tangible steps for implementation at both regional and national level.

While progress has been made in important areas of child development in the region, there are serious issues to address including neglect, violence and abuse of children that remain among the highest in the world, according to multiple research projects in many Pacific Island countries.

“Investing to protect children is not only the right thing, but also the smart thing to do, given the impact it has on a country’s potential for economic and

social development,” said UNICEF Pacific’s Representative, Jonathan Veitch. “Creating that umbrella of protection cannot be achieved in isolation, so we are pleased to have this whole-of-Pacific approach and ownership by the Pacific Islands Forum, governments and partners, to move this vital agenda forward.”

The Summit discussions and report will inform regional forums, including the upcoming Pacific Regional Council for Early Childhood Development Forum in May this year, and contribute towards overall implementation of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent.

The 17 Pacific Island Countries participating in the Summit include Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tokelau, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and New Zealand.

15,000th book mailed to young child on Yap

Habele

March 1, 2025

Yap—Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library (DPIL) is a community-based program providing children with free, home-delivered books from birth to their 5th birthday. The Imagination Library was founded and created by beloved American songwriter, musician, actress, author and business-woman, Dolly Parton, in her hometown of Sevierville, Tennessee in 1996. The home library encourages reading at home between parents, caregivers, grandparents, siblings and the child.

Habele is the partner, or “local champion” for Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library (DPIL) in Micronesia. Established by former Peace Corps Volunteers, Habele is a US-based nonprofit, invested in the future and potential of Micronesian students since 2006.

Starting in 2021, Habele began to sign up newborns in Yap to participate in the program, known colloquially on-island as “Young Island Readers.” Through partnership with the Yap State Hospital and Yap’s Community Health Centers, word of the reading program began to spread. Two years later, with the generous support of the Neighboring Island Coordinators at the Yap State Department of Education, and the pilots of Pacific Mission



Aviation (PMA), the effort began to reach into Yap’s Outer Islands.

In early 2025, the Young Island Readers book-a-month program reached a major milestone: the 15,000th book was sent to a child in Yap State.

Participation in Yap State is now over 750 children. In other words, based on FSM Census data, over 70 percent of all children across Yap State are receiving high quality age-appropriate books of their own over the course of the year.

In October, DPIL itself reached a significant milestone with 3 million children under five registered worldwide, distributing over 3 million books each month. In the United States, 1 in 7 children under the age of 5 are receiving a Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library book each month.

“We hope to foster a lifelong love of learning and literacy by introducing small children to the joys of reading in their own homes and villages,” explained Neil Mellen, Habele’s founder, and a former Peace Corps Volunteer. “We are tremendously grateful to the kindness and hard work on the part of Dolly Parton, all those at her Imagination Library, and the countless number of people, agencies and organizations in Yap who help make it happen.”

Vice President Palik attends Nauru’s Independence celebrations

FSM Information Services

February 19, 2025

Yaren, Nauru—Vice President of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), T.H. Aren B. Palik, recently joined the celebrations marking Nauru’s 57th Independence Day and as well as the 79th anniversary of the Returnees from Chuuk State from January 31st to February 7th 2025. His visit underscored the deep historical ties and strong partnership between FSM and Nauru.

Vice President Palik participated in official ceremonies alongside Nauru’s President, H.E. David Adeang, and other senior officials. The visit served as an opportunity to strengthen collaboration on key regional issues, including climate change, connectivity and economic development.

The celebrations featured cultural performances, community gatherings, and moments of reflection, honoring Nauru’s history and progress. Vice President Palik also met with H.E. Taneti Maamau, President of Kiribati, and Pacific Islands Forum Secretary General Mr. Baron Waqa, discussing shared regional priorities.

During his stay, Vice President Palik visited Nauru’s memorial shrine dedicated to those who returned from Chuuk after World War II and also engaged with members of the FSM-Nauru community.

The Vice President was accompanied by Second Lady Adelita Palik and officials from the FSM Department of Foreign Affairs. The FSM Government congratulates and thanks the people and government of Nauru for reaching this important milestone and for their gracious hospitality.



PICRC launches 2025 reef fish stock surveys across Palau

Palau International Coral Reef Center (PICRC)

February 19, 2025

This February, the Palau International Coral Reef Center (PICRC) began its nationwide reef fish stock surveys. These crucial efforts are conducted every two years to monitor populations of protected and commercially important fish species and help inform national fisheries management recommendations.

PICRC research team is surveying 94 sites across the country, covering different marine habitats. At each site, reef fish populations are assessed at two depth ranges: shallow reefs (5-10

meters) and deeper reefs (15-20 meters). These surveys provide a long-term record of fish populations, helping scientists evaluate the effectiveness of marine protection measures and detect trends that may require management attention. By comparing current findings with previous assessments, researchers can identify shifts in fish abundance and diversity, offering a clear picture of the health of Palau’s fisheries.

“These surveys are essential to ensure the sustainability of our marine resources. By continuously monitoring reef fish stocks, we can make informed decisions that support both conservation and the livelihoods of our communities,” said Geraldine Rengiil, Research Director at PICRC.

With fieldwork ongoing through the summer, PICRC research team will continue collecting and analyzing data needed to provide valuable insights into the state of Palau’s fish stocks and marine conservation efforts.

For more information about the project, contact Dr. Piera Biondi at 488-6950 ext. 243.



Visit of Pacific Community (SPC) Delegation to discuss human rights initiatives in FSM

Pohnpei Public Information

February 25, 2025

Pohnpei—The Pohnpei State Government welcomed a delegation from the Pacific Community (SPC) for a brief yet productive meeting on key human rights initiatives in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM). The delegation included Ms. Kate Alliott, Human Rights Advisor, Mr. George Isom, Country Focal Officer, and Ms. Lululeen Santos, Country Focal Officer representing SPC.

During their courtesy visit, the delegation engaged in discussions

concerning the establishment of a National Human Rights Institute in FSM, among other relevant human rights issues. The exchange highlighted the importance of strengthening FSM's institutional framework for human rights protection and promotion in alignment with regional and international commitments.

Governor Stevenson A. Joseph expressed appreciation for the visit, emphasizing the Pohnpei State Government's commitment to upholding human rights principles and working collaboratively with regional partners to enhance advocacy and policy development in this area.

The Pohnpei State Government remains committed to working closely with SPC and other stakeholders to advance these efforts.

For further inquiries, please contact the Office of the Governor, Pohnpei State Government.



Starlink Gateway System now live in Kosrae

Digital FSM Project

February 27, 2025

Kosrae—FSMT Cable Corp has successfully installed the Starlink Gateway System on Kosrae Island, now operational as of February 21, 2025! The commissioning was led by the Honorable Vice President of the FSM, Aren Palik, and the Honorable Governor of Kosrae, Tulensa Palik.

With FSM Telecom Kosrae now connected to the system, the people of Kosrae can benefit from improved connectivity. This project was made possible through World Bank funding, and the FSM and the State of Kosrae extend their gratitude for this valuable contribution.



New generator will keep power flowing to students at OLMCHS

Habele

February 20, 2025

Pohnpei—In early 2025, leaders at Our Lady of Mercy Catholic High School reached out to Habele, a US-nonprofit established by former Peace Corps Volunteers who lived and taught in Micronesia.

The school sought assistance in addressing an urgent need caused by the ongoing, 28-days power-sharing measures announced by the Pohnpei Utilities Corporation (PUC). These measures had significantly impacted teachers' ability to deliver quality education, particularly as teachers and students heavily rely on technology for their daily lessons and activities.

The declared state of emergency by the Pohnpei State Governor underscored the critical nature of the power crisis residents of the Island have been facing. To mitigate the disruptions to OLMCHS instructional programs, the school requested Habele's support to purchase a portable generator. This generator would ensure that the high school could continue to operate essential educational technology, including laptops, projectors, and online platforms crucial for

our students' success.

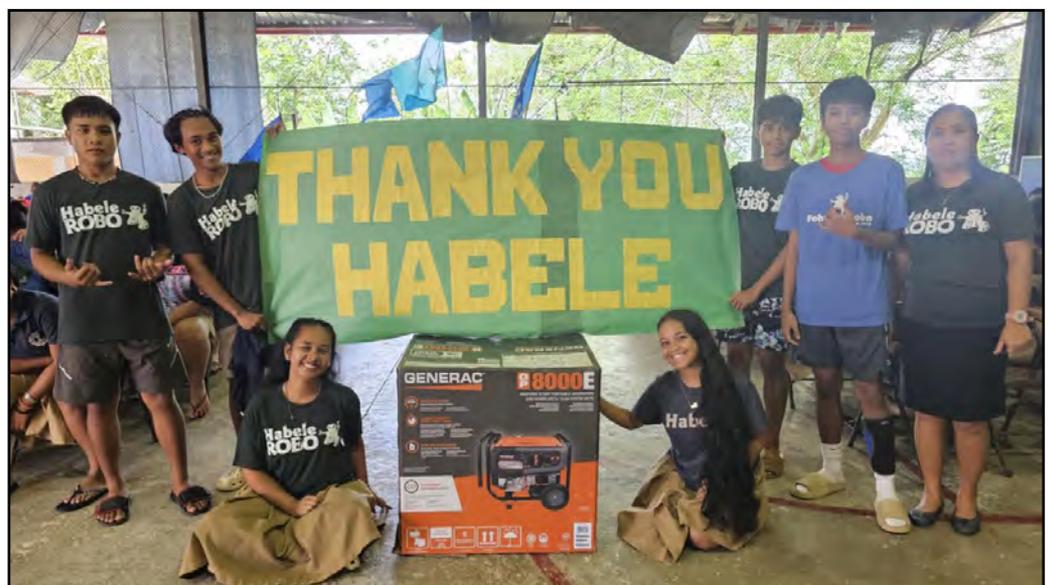
Habele immediately responded, issuing a grant for \$2,000 to the school. This covered the cost of a portable generator; related electrical wires and circuit breakers; housing for the generator, and labor costs for installation and setup.

While the power-sharing measures were initially expected to last for 28 days, the portable generator will remain a valuable asset for the school well into the future. It will serve as a reliable backup power source during any future outages, ensuring comfort, security, and uninterrupted activities. This investment will also help us maintain uninterrupted access to our online College Prep sessions held twice a week with our US-based College

Counselor. Additionally, it will provide a reliable power source for our teachers who depend on technology to deliver interactive and engaging lessons.

"We are happy that Habele could make a very modest contribution to help the staff and students cope with the ongoing power crisis," explained Habele's Founder Neil Mellen.

Mellen went on to observe that schools on the main islands of Chuuk and Yap don't face similar power interruptions. Public utilities in Chuuk and Yap are allowed to set user rates at a level that covers their operational and capital costs. This ensures the financial stability and sustainability of the utility, keeping the lights on for residents consistently over the long term.



A handover ceremony of water supply equipment at Pohnlangas Elementary School

Embassy of Japan to the FSM

February 19, 2025

Pohnpei—On February 14, 2025, Ambassador Kagomiya participated in a handover ceremony of water supply equipment including tanks, pipes, and faucets at Pohnlangas Elementary School.

The equipment provision is a part of the ‘Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)’ project, which has been implemented by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) with the financial support from the Government of Japan.

The Ambassador extended his sincere gratitude to warm welcome by the

children and teachers of the school, and emphasized the importance of regular maintenance of the equipment and habit of washing hands in his remark.

Mr. Jeffrey Ing and other UNICEF staff, Mr. Peter Ramirez, Chief of Primary Education of Pohnpei State Government, and Ms. Mary Mudong, the Principal of the school, also participated in the ceremony.

After the ceremony, the Ambassador and UNICEF staffs made a site visit at Madolenihmw High School to witness similar water supply equipment under the WASH project.



Signing ceremony with JMAS

Embassy of Japan to the FSM

February 25, 2025

Chuuk—On February 18, 2025, Ambassador Kagomiya and Mr. Masahiro Takagi, Representative of Japan Mine Action Service (JMAS) Chuuk Office, signed the contract to enable JMAS to continue its project for collecting oil from wrecked former Japanese wartime ships in

Chuuk Lagoon in order to protect the environment there.

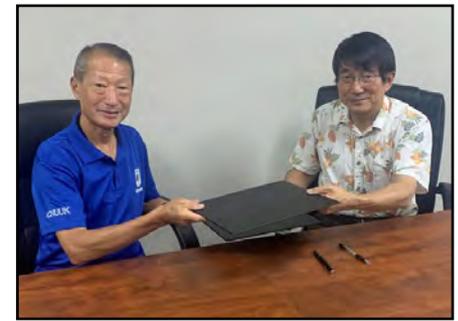
On this occasion, Mr. Takagi explained the progress of the project.

Among others, thanks to the improvement of collecting method, efficiency of oil collection has risen so that much more oil has been collected than expected before.

On the other hand, Mr. Takagi also mentioned some problems and obstacles of their work including the delay of the competent actors’ work to dispose collected oils.

Ambassador extended his sincere gratitude to JMAS’s activity and praised persevering and diligent contribution to the very difficult task of collecting oil from wrecked

ships by the JMAS members.



Embassy of Japan hosts Emperor’s birthday reception

Embassy of Japan to the FSM

February 20, 2025

Pohnpei—On February 20, 2025, Ambassador Kagomiya hosted Emperor’s Birthday Reception at his residence.

At the beginning of his address, Ambassador Kagomiya celebrated the birthday of His Majesty the Emperor, who is going to turn 65 years old on February 23, 2025. Having emphasized close historical ties between Japan and the FSM, which share common values such as Freedom, the Rule of Law, Democracy, Human Rights, and Peace, he expressed his desire to strengthen the friendship between the two countries furthermore. He also described various development of bilateral relations between Japan and the FSM that have taken place over the past year since last year’s reception,

including PALM10 Summit Meeting held in Tokyo, various ODA projects such as Pohnpei Port Expansion Project and Japan/IOM/UNICEF collaboration project to improve safe water supply, and expanded activities

by JICA volunteers.

On behalf of the FSM government, Mr. Ricky Cantero, Deputy Secretary of Foreign Affairs, representing President Simina and Vice President Palik, who

were off island, wished the Emperor a happy birthday and expressed his desire to further strengthen ties with Japan under the “kizuna” between the two countries.



Ambassador Kagomiya hands over WASH facilities in Yap

Embassy of Japan to the FSM

February 27, 2025

Yap—On February 27, Ambassador Kagomiya, who is visiting Yap State, attended a handover ceremony for the provision of WASH facilities (toilets, handwashing stations, and other facilities necessary for infection prevention) to the Yap State Hospital, which is supported by Japan.

This assistance was implemented through UNICEF, resulting in the repair of 34 toilets and 8 handwashing stations. The ceremony was also attended by Mr. Francis Itimai, the Lieutenant Governor of Yap State, who expressed his gratitude for Japanese people's support.



Signing for Japan /IOM/UNICEF Water Supply Project

Embassy of Japan to the FSM

February 25, 2025

Pohnpei—February 19, 2025, Ambassador Kagomiya and Mr. Salvatore Sortino, Chief of Mission of International Organization for Migration (IOM) Micronesia, signed the contract for a new Japan /IOM/ UNICEF collaboration project to enhance water supply system in the FSM and the RMI. With \$4 million financial aid from Japan, this project focuses on low-lying islands, which have faced severe water shortage

particularly in drought season, and will help the establishment of rainwater harvesting system, development and rehabilitation of wells and related equipment, development of national drought preparedness plans, and promotion of safe hygiene behaviours of water usage.

In his remark, Ambassador Kagomiya recalled the FSM national declaration of emergency due to the drought in January last year and expressed his hope that this project will help island countries people to overcome

their fragile situation and disadvantage.

Mr. Sortino, Mr. Cromwell Bacareza, Chief of Field Office, UNICEF, Senator Perpetua Konman, and Senator Merlynn Abello-Alfonso also made remarks in the ceremony.

More detailed information about this project and signing ceremony can be found in the following URL: <https://roasiapacific.iom.int/.../iom-unicef-launch-japan...>



Ambassador Kagomiya visits Tokai University Educational Cruise ship in Pohnpei

Embassy of Japan to the FSM

February 23, 2025

Pohnpei—On February 23, 2025, Ambassador Kagomiya visited Bosei-maru, a Tokai University's Overseas Educational Cruise' ship which arrived at Pohnpei with 16 students from the School of Marine Science and Technology and 93 students from various other faculties as well as 10 university staffs and 26 crews(altogether 145 persons).

They left Shimizu port, Japan, on February 11, visited the Ogasawara Island, a World Natural Heritage of

Japan, and Pohnpei, then will visit Koror (Palau), and return to Shimizu on March 14.

Ambassador made a short explanation about the FSM, Japan-FSM relations, and our Embassy's tasks for the students, and visited the Bridge of the vessel.

Ambassador sincerely hopes these students will learn quite a lot from the nature, culture, and, among others, peoples of the FSM and other sites of visit and wish their safe journey.



Pacific leaders discuss regional fisheries cooperation at Honiara Summit

By Bill Jaynes
The Kaselehlie Press

February 25, 2025

Honiara, Solomon Islands—Pacific Island leaders gathered at the Honiara Summit to discuss the East New Britain Initiative (ENBi), a regional effort aimed at enhancing cooperation in the tuna fisheries sector. Papua New Guinea’s Minister for Fisheries and Marine Resources, Hon. Jelta Wong, addressed the forum, emphasizing the importance of unity among Pacific nations to maximize the economic benefits of their rich tuna resources.

Minister Wong highlighted the challenges Pacific Island countries face in retaining value from their tuna catch, including high operational costs, inadequate infrastructure, and limited market access. He stressed that addressing these issues requires a shift from isolated national efforts to a coordinated regional approach.

“The essence of our Pacific way of life is at stake if we allow external forces to dictate global prices,” said Wong. “We must unite as a cohesive region rather than being picked off one by one.”

The ENBi platform seeks to foster partnerships among Pacific nations, distant water fishing states, and

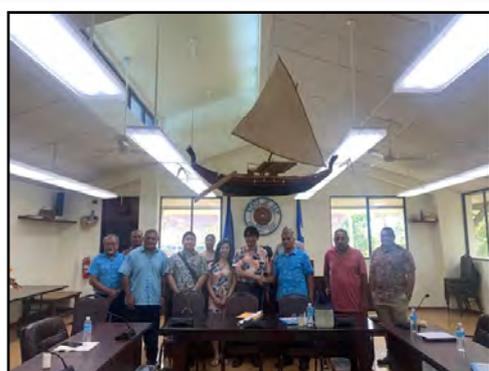
major seafood traders to create sustainable business opportunities. Minister Wong pointed to the Republic of the Marshall Islands’ collaboration with Walmart on MSC-certified tuna as a model for future initiatives. He also underscored Papua New Guinea’s role as a regional processing hub, with six processing plants and plans to establish Fisheries Special Economic Zones to attract investment.

Papua New Guinea has committed \$500,000 to support ENBi through the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA). Additionally, Minister Wong urged regional organizations and development partners, including the European Union, to assist in establishing a Regional Fisheries Development Fund.

“ENBi is not just about fish,” Wong stated. “It’s about economic empowerment, labor mobility, regional migration, social justice, and gender equality.”

He called on Pacific nations to actively engage with the initiative and emphasized that the region must take control of its future. “Together, we can realize the vision of maximizing the value of our region’s tuna resources for the benefit of all Pacific nations.”

The initiative has received strong endorsements from Pacific Islands Forum leaders and Fisheries Ministers, signaling regional commitment to a more collaborative and self-sufficient fisheries sector.



On February 26, Ambassador Kagomiya paid a courtesy call on Leaders of Yap state, including T.H. Charles Chieng, Governor of the state of Yap, and T.H. Nicholas Figirlaawon, Speaker of the Yap state legislature. Ambassador Kagomiya is visiting Yap from February 26 to March 2.



On February 26, Ambassador Kagomiya, who is visiting Yap State, visited the FSM Fisheries and Maritime Institute of the college of Micronesia and inspected the expansion work of the school buildings and dormitories supported by Japan. He also exchanged opinions with school officials.

USCGC Myrtle Hazard patrol enhances maritime border security in U.S. territorial EEZ

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

February 28, 2025

Santa Rita, Guam—The crew of USCGC Myrtle Hazard (WPC 1139) completed a multi-mission patrol from Feb. 3 to Feb. 24, 2025, strengthening maritime border security across the U.S. exclusive economic zone (EEZ) surrounding Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), and the approaches to our ports from the high seas.



Covering nearly 1,700 nautical miles, the crew provided critical presence, enforced federal laws, and responded to search and rescue cases under Operation Blue Pacific and Operation Rematau.

"I couldn't be prouder of this crew's performance during our patrol," said Lt. Emma Saunders, commanding officer of USCGC Myrtle Hazard. "They executed critical security boardings, responded to multiple search and rescue cases, and upheld our commitment to safeguarding U.S. borders and our communities. Their professionalism and dedication ensure we remain ready to respond at a moment's notice, strengthening our regional maritime security and protecting those who depend on the sea."

Throughout the patrol, the crew executed 140 hours of Ports, Waterways, and Coastal Security operations and dedicated 56 hours to search and rescue. They conducted three security boardings on commercial vessels, completed gunnery and pyrotechnic training exercises, and advanced operational readiness by qualifying multiple members in key roles, including a new small boat coxswain, three boat crew members, and a boarding officer.

Myrtle Hazard's crew responded to five search and rescue cases, including a disabled vessel near Ritidian Point, Guam. The crew attempted repairs before transferring the tow to a Station Apra Harbor 45-foot Response Boat-Medium crew, who safely delivered the two mariners and their vessel to the harbor in Hagåtña. They also conducted extensive searches in Tumon Bay and Hagåtña Bay off Guam and Tank Beach off Saipan for potentially distressed people in the water, demonstrating the U.S. Coast Guard's ongoing commitment to ensuring the safety of life at sea.

All waterway users are encouraged to watch the weather and heed warnings from the National Weather Service and first responders. Advisories for high surf with large breaking waves of 8 to 11 feet, a high risk of rip currents, and dangers to small craft with seas of 8 to 12 feet for the Marianas are currently in effect.

The U.S. Coast Guard remains steadfast in defending the nation's maritime interests, securing vital shipping lanes, and safeguarding the region's waters. Myrtle Hazard's patrol underscores the Service's enduring role in enforcing U.S. sovereignty and laws, deterring illicit activity, and ensuring the safety of all mariners and waterway users.

PICRC receives \$346,350 award from TNC to support its coral restoration work

On January 13, 2025, Palau International Coral Reef Center (PICRC) signed a subaward agreement with The Nature Conservancy for \$346,650.00 to support its work on coral restoration. The funding will be used to build capacity in PICRC and local communities for coral restoration, forming restoration teams, identifying heat-tolerant corals, and using this knowledge to inform coral reef management. The subaward agreement is set to run through August 2027.

The subaward agreement comes under a grant from the Coral Research and Development Accelerator Platform (CORDAP) that TNC, in partnership with PICRC, Stanford University, Marshall Island Conservation Society and Conservation Society of Pohnpei was awarded. One of the main outcomes of the CORDAP grant is to establish the new initiative called the Coral Futures Academy, aimed at advancing coral restoration efforts. The Coral Futures Academy has been created to tackle three key challenges: identifying, protecting, and restoring

corals capable of withstanding climate impacts; scaling up reef restoration efforts while lowering costs and improving the capacity to identify heat-resistant corals; and involving local researchers and community members in the design and implementation of projects. This initiative will establish a team of locally-based experts from Palau, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia to lead restoration efforts across the region. The methods will focus on using accessible, affordable materials that can be scaled up. At the same time, the project will kick off with its first Coral Futures Academy workshop in Palau later this month.

Dr. Yimnang Golbuu, Coral Resilience Director at The Nature Conservancy, Micronesia and Polynesia, and TNC's project manager for the subaward stated, "We are excited to continue and expand our collaboration with PICRC. We just recently signed an award of \$20,000 to support PICRC's monitoring program and now, with this \$346,650, we will expand our support and

collaboration to include coral restoration. We are excited to work with PICRC and our other partners to support and scale up coral restoration, not only here in Palau but across the Micronesian region'.

At the end of 2023, PICRC and TNC formalized their partnership with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The partnership involves supporting Palau's ocean conservation and management. Areas of collaboration include coral reef monitoring and research, coral restoration, aquaculture, capacity building, and training.

"With the Coral Futures Academy, we are excited to strengthen our partnership with TNC, Stanford, and the other project collaborators, combining their expertise with ours. Coral reefs are essential to Palau, and



this restoration project will be pivotal in safeguarding our reef ecosystems from the impacts of climate change," stated Imade Tellei, Director of PICRC's Outreach Department and PICRC's Project Manager for the coral restoration award.

In reacting to the award from TNC, Roxanne Sual Blesam, PICRC's Chief Executive Officer, stated "We are truly grateful to TNC for their support on our coral restoration efforts, as well as their support for the Center's various initiatives."

Opinion Editorial

The spirit of Ramadhan in Pohnpei: A time for faith and community

Ramadhan, the holiest month in the Islamic calendar, has begun, and Muslims around the world, from bustling cities to remote islands, have embraced this sacred time of devotion, reflection, and self-discipline. Even here in Pohnpei, the small but dedicated Muslim community observes Ramadhan with the sighting of the moon.

Ramadhan is a time of spiritual rejuvenation, where Muslims seek to strengthen their connection with God through fasting, prayer, and acts of kindness. Fasting during Ramadhan is not merely an act of abstaining from food and drink from dawn until sunset—it is a practice of self-restraint, gratitude, and increased consciousness of the struggles faced by those less fortunate.

The Quran, the holy book of Islam, describes fasting as a means to attain righteousness and self-discipline:

"O you who have believed, fasting has been prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may become righteous." (Quran 2:184)

By fasting, Muslims develop empathy for the poor, appreciate the blessings they have, and purify their hearts through sincere devotion. It is a time for reflection, seeking forgiveness, and making efforts to improve oneself both spiritually and morally.

Though the Muslim community in Pohnpei is small, its members come together to observe Ramadhan. Just as Muslims worldwide gather for pre-dawn meals (Suhour) and break their fast at sunset (Iftar), so too do the Muslims in Pohnpei. Iftar, the meal to break the fast, often begins with dates and water, followed by a nourishing meal shared in

a spirit of brotherhood and unity.

Ramadhan is not just about personal worship; it is also a time for spreading love, peace, and harmony. It is an opportunity for Muslims to engage in acts of charity and goodwill, helping those in need regardless of their faith or background. The spirit of Ramadhan is one of generosity, kindness, and respect for all.

For our friends in Pohnpei who may be unfamiliar with Ramadhan, this month is an invitation to learn about the values of patience, gratitude, and community. The beauty of this sacred time is in its universal lessons—lessons that go beyond religious boundaries and inspire all to seek peace, self-improvement, and care for one another.

As the crescent moon marks the



beginning and the end of this sacred month, we, the Muslims of Pohnpei, extend our warmest greetings to all. May this month be a time of enlightenment and unity for everyone, and may it inspire greater understanding between people of all backgrounds.

Ramadhan Mubarak!

*By Faheem Arshad,
Imam of the Ahmadiyya Muslim
Community FSM*

Pacific leaders urged to prioritize child wellbeing at regional summit

By **Bill Jaynes**
The Kaselehlie Press

February 26, 2025
Suva, Fiji—Acting Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum, Desna Solofa, has called on regional leaders to strengthen their commitment to child wellbeing, emphasizing that the future of the Blue Pacific depends on investing in the youngest generation. Solofa delivered her remarks at the Pacific Child Wellbeing Summit in Suva, Fiji, highlighting the evolving challenges

faced by Pacific children and the need for collective action.

“Pacific children now face new opportunities and challenges, from navigating the digital age to confronting the increased impacts of climate change and grappling with significant mental health issues and violence,” Solofa stated. “These shifting dynamics require us to adapt how we approach children’s education, health, safeguards, and well-being.”

Solofa underscored the Pacific Islands Forum’s 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent as a long-term vision for securing the region’s future. She urged governments to work together to provide children with safe environments, education, and opportunities to reach their full potential.

“The children of our Blue Pacific are the future. We must invest in them to ensure a resilient region of peace, harmony, security, and prosperity,” she said.

The summit brought together ministers, diplomats, and experts to discuss strategies for improving child welfare across the Pacific. Solofa expressed confidence in their commitment to ensuring every child has the best start in life and wished them success in their discussions.

The Pacific Child Wellbeing Summit is part of ongoing regional efforts to address social inclusion, education, and health policies that impact children across Pacific Island nations.

PSA Kids Club hosts successful car wash and bake sale to fund first official jerseys

Pohnpei Soccer Association

March 1, 2025
Pohnpei, FSM—More than 40 children and their families gathered at the Pohnpei Public Library on February 22, 2025, to raise funds for their first official soccer jerseys. The Pohnpei Soccer Association (PSA) Kids Club, along with the children’s families, organized a Car Wash and Bake Sale, which drew strong community support.

Sponsors had pledged donations in advance for each vehicle washed, while vehicle owners could either contribute a donation or receive a free car wash. As the kids eagerly scrubbed cars, family members and supporters worked in the

kitchen, preparing a diverse selection of baked goods and hot meals. The Bake Sale featured cuisines from the Pacific, the Caribbean, Southeast Asia, and Europe, with all proceeds going toward the jersey fund.

By the end of the event, PSA Kids Club had washed an impressive 133 vehicles. While the car wash was free, many vehicle owners generously donated. The Bake Sale was equally successful, with items selling out quickly both on-site and through online contributions. Donations also came from visitors from other FSM states and around the world.

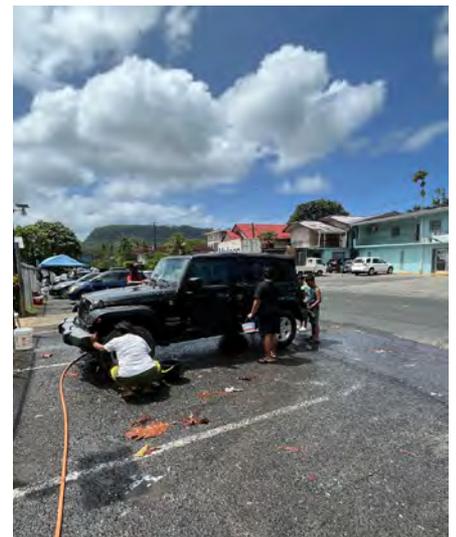
The PSA Kids Club expressed its heartfelt gratitude to everyone who

contributed to the fundraiser, including the Pohnpei Sports Commission Office, Pohnpei Public Library, and key community supporters. The funds raised will go toward purchasing the club’s first official jerseys, each personalized with the name and number of the participating children.

As the team prepares for the upcoming Kosrae-Pohnpei Soccer Exchange in April 2025 and future competitions, the new jerseys will serve as a symbol of their dedication and teamwork.

For more information about PSA Kids Club activities, the public is invited to join training sessions at the PICS track and field on Tuesdays and Thursdays

from 5:30 PM to 6:45 PM or contact pohnpeisoccerassociation@gmail.com.



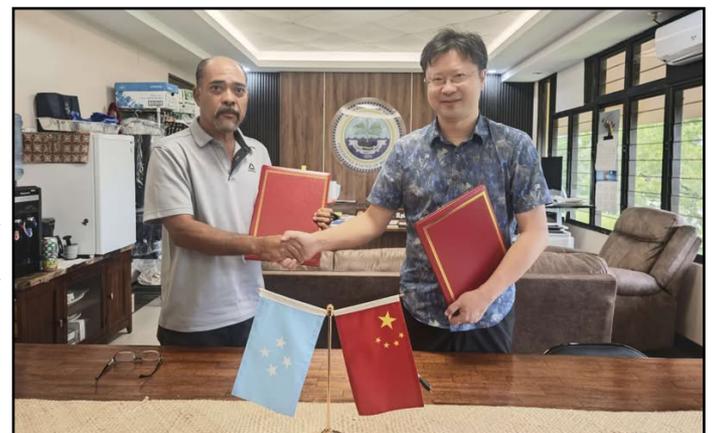
Ambassador WU Wei presents feasibility study on Chuuk and Pohnpei infrastructure projects

Embassy of China to the FSM

February 28, 2025
Pohnpei—On February 28, 2025, Chinese Ambassador H.E. Wu Wei signed the Minutes of Discussion on the Feasibility Study of China-aid Project of Upgrading Road in Chuuk State and Reconstructing Bridges in Pohnpei State, with T.H. Dickson Wichep, Assistant Secretary of Department of Transportation, Communications and Infrastructure of the FSM. Mr. Sohses Ehmes, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Department of Foreign Affairs attended the event.

Ambassador Wu extended sincere appreciation to H.E. President Simina, T.H. Alexander R. Narruhn, Governor of Chuuk and T.H. Stevenson Joseph, Governor of Pohnpei for their commitment, care and support to this project. He highlighted that promoting the project is a concrete action to implement the important consensus reached by H.E. President Xi Jinping and H.E. President Simina. He noted that signing the Minutes of Discussion is a big stride toward the implementation of the road upgrading and bridges reconstruction project. China is willing to work closely with the FSM to promote cooperation related to the Belt and Road Initiative and Global Development Initiative, and implement relevant practical cooperation projects including the infrastructure projects with high efficiency and high quality to better benefit our two peoples.

Assistant Secretary Wichep expressed gratitude to Chinese Government for its long-term support and looked forward to the project being implemented at an early date.



Report shows gaps in access to medical oxygen causing widespread suffering and death

The University of Auckland

February 20, 2025

New Zealand - Six out of every ten people globally lack access to safe medical oxygen, resulting in hundreds of thousands of preventable deaths each year and reducing quality of life for millions more, an international report co-authored by the University of Auckland has found.

Associate Professor Stephen Howie from the University's Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences (FMHS) was an adviser to the Lancet Global Health Commission on Medical Oxygen Security and co-author of its report *Reducing global inequities in medical oxygen access* released 18 February.

A key finding shows global access to medical oxygen is highly inequitable. Five billion people, mostly from low and middle-income countries don't have access to safe, quality, affordable medical oxygen.

Associate Professor Howie, child health researcher and a specialist paediatrician says he hopes further lives will be saved because of this work, and that children and adults will not only survive but thrive.

The Auckland University team are leading the field to improve access to medical oxygen. Howie recently gave a plenary address at the World Lung Health Conference in Bali, spelling out the challenges and opportunities to tackle the global issue.

"I have been working in the area of oxygen treatment for oxygen-starved (hypoxic) illnesses for two decades, particularly in Africa and the Pacific. My first priority was children (naturally, as a paediatrician) but we learnt soon enough that solving the problem has to involve catering for all ages.

"It is such an obvious need. I saw it at the hospitals I worked at in Africa where needless death from diseases like pneumonia happened because oxygen supplies were short, and this hit families and staff very hard. It was at that time that we made it our goal that 'no child should die for lack of oxygen' and this applies to adults too."

Fiji was particularly hard hit when the

first waves of the COVID-19 pandemic arrived, at one point it had the highest rate of COVID-19 in the world. A close partnership between the Fiji Ministry of Health, the University of Auckland, Cure Kids and Fiji National University, funded by New Zealand MFAT and other donors, played an important role in supporting the pandemic response says Howie.

On the ground during that time was Dr Sainimere Boladuadua, a public health medicine specialist, now a doctoral student at the University of Auckland and currently undertaking a Fulbright fellowship at John Hopkins University in Baltimore.

Boladuadua (Somosomo, Cakaudrove, vasu i Levuka-i-Yale, Kadavu/Fiji) also has the honour of being the Lancet Commission's Western Pacific Region ambassador and will spearhead advocacy for improving access to medical oxygen in the region.

"I remember those days. The adrenalin was pumping and it was scary. It was very difficult before the vaccine arrived. We had very little sleep trying to get everything set up," she says recalling the period of the country organising itself and the national response which included setting up field hospitals.

Boladuadua met Howie in Fiji where he helped to lead the Fiji Oxygen Project, supporting the vital work of health leaders like Dr Luke Nasedra and Dr Eric Rafai.

"The project was just doing exactly this, trying to improve and ensure that all the health facilities had access to medical oxygen, facilities to deliver them. That no child or adult should die for lack of oxygen, and it's such a simple medical therapy that you expect to be available but often it isn't, says Boladuadua.

"The reality was rural health facilities sometimes had to ration the oxygen. You have a limited supply, the cylinders that come in every month you have your quota, and if you run out then sometimes you have to prioritize who gets it, who doesn't. Which is just so heartbreaking."

The Fiji Ministry of Health, supported by the project, was in the midst of

covering those gaps when COVID hit, and Boladuadua says the one silver lining was that it shone a light on the gaps, putting the issue on the radar.

"You saw the images around the world, hospitals running out of oxygen in India, family members hauling oxygen cylinders on motorcycles. I guess that made it really come up to the forefront."

This was the entry point for Boladuadua to start work on her doctoral studies at the University with Howie as her primary academic supervisor, and unsurprisingly her PhD has a focus closely related to her previous work.

"My research question is how to improve access to care for children with acute respiratory infections in Fiji and obviously links to the supply of oxygen as well."

She says respiratory conditions are rising and pneumonia is still one of the leading causes of death and disease particularly in under five year-olds across the Pacific and even in New Zealand.

"Within New Zealand, our Pacific children experience a larger acute respiratory burden than children of any other ethnic group."

Boladuadua says she's grateful to Professor Cameron Grant, Head of Paediatrics, Child & Youth Health at FMHS who encouraged her to apply for the Fulbright Scholarship. As well as support from her friends, doctoral candidates Alehandrea Manuel (who has since completed her PhD) and Ashlea Gillon.

"Professor Grant was a Fulbright scholar 30 years ago and he said it would be life changing, and it has been in so many ways," she says of working closely with the team at John Hopkins and the opportunities presented such as the lecture she's been asked to present next month at the School of Public Health: 'Decolonising Global Health – a Pacific perspective'.

"What appealed to me was they

had a Centre for Indigenous Health that worked very closely with Native American communities. And although John Hopkins is in Baltimore, their work is very much within the communities themselves, in the tribal lands of the Navajo and White Mountain Apache peoples in the Southwest of the US.

"They've got sites in all these communities and the staff - data collectors, researchers, the research nurses and everyone in those teams, the majority are Native American. So, it's about responding to their health needs and also building local capacity."

Learning how the Indian Health System has accommodated traditional medicine has inspired Boladuadua and she's brimming with ideas that she's eager to bring back to Aotearoa later this year when she returns.

"I wanted to see how you can use traditional knowledge and practices with western knowledge, I wanted to learn how that happened. They're just doing it so beautifully here. I am learning so much and it has been life changing with all the different perspectives, exposure and the incredible people I'm able to work with."



Pacific Islands Forum Secretary General addresses Honiara Summit on Sustainable Fisheries

By *Bill Jaynes*
The Kaselehlie Press

February 27, 2025

Honiara, Solomon Islands—Pacific Islands Forum Secretary General Baron Divavesi Waqa addressed leaders at the Honiara Summit, emphasizing the importance of regional cooperation in sustainable fisheries management under Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14.4.

Waqa emphasized the deep economic, cultural, and existential ties between Pacific Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and their marine resources. "Over 80% of government revenue in some Pacific states is derived from tuna fisheries," he noted. "In 2022 alone, the fisheries sector contributed approximately USD 3.2 billion to the GDP of Pacific Island nations."

The Secretary General praised the efforts of regional organizations such

as the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), and the Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA) for their contributions to global benchmarks in fisheries sustainability. However, he stressed that emerging challenges, such as climate change and illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, demand even greater collaboration among Pacific nations.

"The 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific outlines our collective responsibility to safeguard our ocean resources, uphold sovereignty over maritime zones, and ensure sustainable management of fisheries," Waqa said. He reaffirmed the need for regional solidarity, noting that coordinated action has strengthened the Pacific's negotiating power on the global stage.



Discussing ongoing threats, Waqa pointed out that climate change is altering tuna migration patterns, impacting the economic stability of Pacific nations. He also warned that harmful subsidies enabling overfishing remain a significant challenge. "Studies show that USD 35.4 billion were provided as subsidies to private fishing enterprises, increasing capacity and exacerbating the depletion of fish stocks," he stated, urging all World

Trade Organization (WTO) Forum Members to support the completion of negotiations on fisheries subsidies.

Calling for greater commitment from regional and international stakeholders, Waqa urged Forum Members, distant water fishing nations, and global institutions to reinforce their dedication to sustainable fisheries management. "By strengthening cooperation, sharing knowledge, and implementing SDG 14.4, we can secure a prosperous Blue Pacific for all."

He concluded with a call to action: "Let us work hand in hand to ensure that our fisheries remain a source of sustenance and prosperity for generations to come."

The Honiara Summit continues this week with discussions on sustainable fisheries development and regional economic strategies.

Three key challenges for Pacific Island Energy in 2025 – and how Pacific Island Renewables is addressing them

Pacific Islands Renewables

February 18, 2025

Koror, Palau—As Pacific Island nations continue to grapple with the dual challenges of climate change and energy security, Pacific Island Renewables is at the forefront of delivering innovative solutions to ensure a sustainable energy future. Drawing on the expertise of Palau Solar and Utelligence, the company is tackling three critical energy challenges facing the region in 2025: energy affordability, grid resilience, and workforce development.

Energy Affordability: Reducing Reliance on Costly Diesel Generators

Pacific Island nations have long depended on diesel generators for power, a costly and unsustainable solution that strains household budgets and national economies. In 2025, the rising cost of fossil fuels and the urgent need to reduce carbon emissions will make this challenge even more pressing.

How Pacific Island Renewables is Addressing It:

- **Solar, Wind, Battery and Hydrogen Energy Solutions:** By deploying cost-effective renewable energy systems, Pacific

Island Renewables is helping communities transition away from diesel dependency. For example, the company's successful installation of over 400 commercial & domestic solar systems in Palau has significantly reduced energy costs for participating households.

- **Government-Backed Financing:** Through partnerships with organizations like the Asian Development Bank, low-interest loans for renewable energy projects can make clean energy accessible and affordable for consumers and communities.

Grid Resilience: Modernizing Infrastructure for Renewable Integration

Many Pacific Island nations face managing and running an outdated grid infrastructure, which is ill-equipped to handle the integration of multiple renewable energy sources like solar and wind. This creates challenges in maintaining stable and reliable power supplies, especially as the region moves toward low-carbon energy systems.

How Pacific Island Renewables is Addressing It:

- **Grid Modernization and Storage Solutions:** The company specializes

in modernizing grid infrastructure and integrating smarter controls & battery energy storage systems to ensure a stable and resilient power supply. Their work on grid consultancy and design helps local operators transition smoothly from diesel generators to renewable energy without compromising grid stability.

- **Tailored Energy Solutions:** Recognizing the unique challenges of island nations, Pacific Island Renewables designs customized solutions that address specific infrastructure needs, such as microgrids and hybrid energy systems.

Workforce Development: Building Local Capacity for Long-Term Sustainability

A skilled local workforce is essential for the long-term success of renewable energy projects in the Pacific. Rather than the associated cost of bringing in skilled experts from mainland countries, a local workforce with the technical expertise needed to install, maintain, and manage these systems not only promotes local economic growth, but also helps accelerate sustainable energy adoption.

How Pacific Island Renewables is Addressing It:

- **Local Workforce Training:** Pacific Island Renewables prioritizes local employment and skills development, ensuring that communities benefit from renewable energy projects. In Palau, the company has trained a local workforce in renewable engineering, enabling them to handle site surveys, system design, installation, and maintenance.

- **Regional Partnerships:** Through its regional hub, Pacific Island Renewables fosters strong local partnerships, empowering communities to take ownership of their energy future and build self-reliance.

A Vision for the Future

"The Pacific Islands are at the forefront of the global energy transition, but they face unique challenges that require innovative and localized solutions," said Ross Waddington, CEO at Pacific Island Renewables. "Our work in Palau and across the region demonstrates that renewable energy is not only possible but also transformative for communities. By addressing energy affordability, grid resilience, and workforce development, we are paving the way for a sustainable and prosperous future."

14 Pacific Island countries receive a major grant to manage one third of the world's tuna in the face of the climate crisis

Secretariat of the Pacific Community

February 20, 2025

Suva, Fiji—A transformative US\$107 million grant has been secured by Conservation International and the Pacific Community (SPC) to support 14 Pacific Island countries to safeguard the economic and social benefits they receive from tuna against the impacts of climate change. The historic Green Climate Fund (GCF) grant – which represents one of the largest climate funding grants ever to the Pacific region – has also attracted US\$49.3 million in co-finance. The total value of the programme is US\$156.8 million and supports these countries in adapting to the impacts of ocean warming on the tuna stocks that underpin Pacific economies and enable tuna fisheries to make greater contributions to local food security.

The Cook Islands, Fiji, the Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu are custodians of one third of the world's tuna catch and have managed this resource sustainably for decades.

“This landmark funding ensures our communities can continue relying on tuna as an essential source of food, revenue, and cultural value,” said Niue’s Minister for Natural Resources and Pacific Political Climate Change Champion on Gender, Equity and Social Inclusion, the Hon. Mona AINU’U. “By adapting now, we can protect our people’s livelihoods and strengthen our resilience to climate change.”

Tuna is critical for both food and economic security in Small Island Developing States in the Pacific. Collectively, the tuna industry supports tens of thousands of jobs in the region and, for nine of these countries, fees associated with tuna-fishing access alone provide an average of 34% of government revenue. Due to declines in coastal fish production—caused by environmental changes such as coral bleaching—Pacific communities will increasingly need to depend on tuna

to obtain the protein they require for food security.

Research by SPC and Conservation International shows an increasing risk that ocean warming will push tuna stocks away from the islands’ respective maritime zones and into international waters, potentially limiting the economic benefits that these 14 island nations currently derive from tuna fishing.

The research suggests that climate-driven tuna redistribution could reduce the average catch from Pacific Island waters by 10–30% by 2050, amounting to a collective loss of US\$40–140 million annually. This economic loss represents 8–17% of government revenue per year for individual tuna-dependent economies.

“Since the 1970s, SPC has been working alongside our Pacific Island members to advance the scientific understanding of tuna fisheries and ensure their sustainable management. This ongoing work supports long-term sustainable tuna supplies, benefiting not only Pacific communities and families but also the entire world,” said Dr Stuart Minchin, Director-General of the Pacific Community (SPC).

The GCF-funded programme will provide the necessary tools to develop and support adaptations by Pacific Island nations that maintain the economic benefits they receive from tuna today. It is based on more than 50 years of science, research, and evidence-based decision-making led by Pacific Island countries and territories.

“Knowing when and to what extent ocean warming will change the distribution of tuna stocks will enable Pacific Island nations to identify solutions, together with the international community, to minimise the consequences of climate change on their economies,” said Johann Bell, Senior Director for Tuna Fisheries at Conservation International.

The GCF funding will also assist Pacific communities in using Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) more



frequently and establishing them as part of their national infrastructure supporting food security.

“Fish Aggregating Devices not only improve the chances that communities will catch more tuna, but they also reduce fuel use because boats do not have to keep following fast-moving tuna,” said Ian Bertram, SPC Principal Fisheries Adviser, Coastal Fisheries Management and Livelihoods. “They also improve safety at sea by providing known destinations for fishing trips and can broaden fisheries livelihood opportunities.”

“This is the world’s largest ocean climate adaptation initiative, and it started with science. Modelling by SPC indicates that tuna will move progressively into the high seas from Pacific nations’ waters. These countries are least responsible for climate change, and they have long stewarded this vital resource with great care. Now they have the financing to continue doing so,” said Jack Kittinger, Senior Vice President, Center for Sustainable Lands and Waters at Conservation International.

Further, Kittinger stated, “This investment will secure the region’s position as a leader in tuna fisheries management while highlighting the urgency of global climate action.”

Over the coming months, Pacific Island governments will finalise implementation plans for each activity supported by the GCF

grant—activities designed to sustain tuna stocks and secure coastal livelihoods as the climate continues to change.

Dr Stuart Minchin, Director-General of SPC, also acknowledged the importance of a NZ\$25 million grant to SPC from the New Zealand Government’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade to prepare the region for this project. The preparatory work undertaken over the last three years means the region has the infrastructure and capacity to commence implementing adaptation actions immediately.

Additionally, Dr Minchin acknowledged the US\$1.9 million contribution from the Minderoo Foundation, which assisted Conservation International and SPC in preparing the GCF proposal.

The Regional Tuna Programme will be implemented by SPC with regional partners, including the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) and Australia’s Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO).

Henry Gonzalez, Chief Investment Officer of the Green Climate Fund (GCF), said: ‘Greater food security is a critical part of adaptation support to communities on the frontline of the climate crisis. GCF investment in this landmark regional project will positively impact communities across the Pacific region.’

IOM, UNICEF launch Japan-supported project to enhance water security in FSM and RMI

UNICEF

February 19, 2025

FSM—A joint initiative to build sustainable water systems, enhance disaster preparedness and address the critical need for water security and safe hygiene practices in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) was launched this week (19/02).

The two-year water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) project, funded by Japan, will be implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) in collaboration with the Governments of the FSM and the RMI.

The project focuses on addressing the critical challenges posed by droughts and climate variability, particularly El Niño-induced water shortages that severely affect low-lying island nations. In early 2024, severe drought conditions impacted communities in

FSM and RMI, leaving thousands without adequate access to safe drinking water and highlighting the urgent need for action.

Through this initiative, new rainwater harvesting systems will be established, and existing water catchments and groundwater wells will be rehabilitated to provide sustainable water sources for community members. The program also emphasizes capacity-building for government agencies to enhance disaster preparedness, specifically in developing and implementing drought contingency plans. Targeted training will ensure the proper maintenance of water infrastructure, safeguarding access to clean water even during prolonged dry spells.

In addition to infrastructure development, the project prioritizes community engagement, raising awareness about safe hygiene practices and building local capacity to adopt safe hygiene behaviours.

The integration of innovative climate-resilient WASH technologies, such as air-to-water systems and low-cost water treatment solutions, will further enhance the resilience of FSM and RMI to climate-related challenges.

“Low-lying islands like those in FSM and RMI are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of El Niño, with limited groundwater sources and reliance on rainwater catchment systems,” said Nobuo Kagomiya, Japanese Ambassador to FSM, at the project launch ceremony. “This project reflects Japan’s commitment to supporting climate resilience and disaster preparedness in the Pacific region.”

IOM Micronesia Chief of Mission, Salvatore Sortino, expressed gratitude for Japan’s generous support, stating, “This initiative is a critical step toward ensuring that communities in FSM and RMI have access to safe water. Collaboration across governments, communities, and partners is key to achieving long-term resilience.”

IOM will work closely with the FSM Department of Environment, Climate Change and Emergency Management (DECEM) as well as other relevant Government entities at the national, state and municipality levels.

In RMI, key partners include the Ministry of Environment, National Disaster Management Office (NDMO), WASH Cluster, Ministry of Health (MoH), Ministry of Education (MoE), and the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA).

This joint effort underlines the importance of collaborative efforts and evidence-based interventions in addressing water security challenges in the North Pacific, ensuring resilience of vulnerable communities.

For more information, please contact Haimanot Abebe ADERA, Media and Communications Officer, IOM Micronesia, Email: haabebe@iom.int.



Pacific Island Nations unite to strengthen Hydrological Services and Water Security

Secretariat of the Pacific Community

February 19, 2025

Fiji—Representatives from 16 Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs) have concluded a pivotal Regional Hydrological Services Forum, co-hosted by the Fiji Meteorological and Hydrological Service Government and the Pacific Community (SPC). The forum focused on developing a regional strategy approach to bolster hydrological services, crucial for addressing water security challenges exacerbated by climate change.

The forum, supported by the Australian Water Partnership, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), and UNESCO, brought together Directors and senior representatives of National Hydrological Services, key national stakeholders, donors, development partners, and experts from regional and international organisations. Discussions centred on enhancing data collection, monitoring, and forecasting capabilities, as well

as strengthening regional and national coordination.

A significant emphasis was placed on recognising the vital role women play in hydrology and identifying targeted actions to increase their participation and leadership in the sector. Participants also explored opportunities to leverage funding and align existing initiatives related to surface and groundwater hydrology.

The forum culminated in a concrete work plan to guide the development of a comprehensive regional strategy and supporting national strategies. These strategies will be instrumental in assisting PICTs in achieving their national goals related to climate resilience, disaster risk reduction, and sustainable economic development.

Key Outcomes:

A detailed work plan for the development of a regional hydrological



services strategy and national strategies. Identification of priority areas for investment and capacity building in hydrological services.

A renewed commitment to regional collaboration and knowledge sharing. Stronger recognition of the importance of gender equality and women's leadership in hydrology.

Key Quotes:

"A coordinated regional approach to strengthening national hydrological services—through improved coordination and capacity will enhance Fiji's resilience to climate and disaster risks given its relevance to the developmental agenda." Paula Cirikiyasawa, Permanent Secretary for Lands and Mineral Resources

"SPC is pleased to partner with key regional and international organisations to bring together experts from across the Pacific, including government officials and partner representatives, to foster collaborative dialogue and collective action to strengthen hydrological services in the region. The Forum in Suva this week builds on existing regional arrangements and provides space for Pacific hydrologists to engage with their counterparts in other related sectors and regional and international organisations. The insights and recommendations shared by countries and partners will help shape a regional strategic framework to guide support for national hydrological services in the Pacific." Exsley Taloiburi, Deputy Director - Disaster & Community Resilience Programme, Pacific Community (SPC)

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