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# A 'Night at the museum' in Yap

Yap Visitors Bureau

December 23, 2020

**COLONIA, YAP** - It was literally a brighter Christmas in Yap this year with an epic Christmas light display at the Yap Living History Museum in Colonia. Yap has remained COVID free, so masks and social distancing is not required. This has never been done before and so the locals were in awe in admiration. The display was the brainchild of Leo Pugram, a local tattoo artist, and supported by the Yap Visitors Bureau, an internet "Go fund me drive" the Bank of Guam, FSM Development Bank, and other local businesses. The outdoor museum grounds came alive at sunset with thousands of lights, a large Christmas tree, and numerous lights displays on the Yapese traditional buildings, decorated palm trees, the Nativity Scene, and Reindeer. There was even a personal appearance by Santa Claus. "I just thought this would be a fun thing to do to brighten up Christmas on Yap, especially for the children. I was really shocked at how popular it was and the number of people who crowded into the grounds to see it." said Leo Pugram who partnered with the Yap Visitors Bureau to organize the event.



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## FSM National Government begins COVID-19 vaccination campaign for frontline workers

FSM Information Services

**PALIKIR, Pohnpei**—The Government of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), through its Enduring Partnership with the United States of America, has began its COVID-19 vaccination campaign. Following the arrival of the first 1,600 doses of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine on December 28th, 2020, the Government informally launched the campaign on December 31st, 2020 with the rollout proper to begin the week of January 4th, 2021 in the State of Pohnpei and the rest of the FSM the following week.

The FSM National Government expects another 8,200 doses of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine to arrive on or around Saturday, January 9th, 2021; it is the intention of the National Government to then ship the vaccines to Kosrae,

See "COVID-19 Vaccine" on page 4



President Panuelo receives the COVID-19 vaccine

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# Audit of FSM Trust Fund lists several action steps in order to achieve Trust Fund goals

By **Bill Jaynes**  
The Kaselehlie Press

January 4, 2021

**FSM**—A recently released audit of the FSM Trust Fund conducted by the FSM Office of the Public Auditor concludes that “actions are required to effectively and efficiently achieve the goals of the FSM Trust Fund.” The FSM Trust Fund is a separate Trust Fund account from the trust fund established under the Compact of Free Association. It is entirely under the control of the FSM government.

The balance of the FSM trust fund at the end of the audit period, which covered only fiscal years 2015-2019, was \$266.9 million. During the audit period balance has gone as high as \$285.01 million, which was the balance in December of 2019 but, though outside of the audit scope, auditors point at that due to the economic impact of COVID-19, Fund investments lost \$40.6

million during the period from January 2020 to March 31, 2020. However, there was a significant recovery during the next two quarters so that by the end of the 2020 fiscal year, the balance was \$307.3 million.

According to the Investment Advisors’ report for March 2020, “Volatility is expected to remain elevated until the terminal impact of the virus can be measured accurately—a feat that remains out of grasp for the time being”.

Contributions to the Fund are mainly through appropriations by the FSM Congress. For the FY2015 to FY2019 a total amount of \$174.7 million was appropriated. The Administrator through the Division of Investment and International Finance (IIF) would identify the source of funding either from Fishing Fees or Corporate Tax, which should be equivalent to the amount appropriated by Congress. All funds for the Fund were deposited at a bank custodian which currently is the Bank of

New York (BNY).

The current investment manager for the fund is Wilshire Associates, an investment firm based in Santa Monica, California. Currently there are twelve money managers who are responsible for buying and selling underlying investment securities. The Investment Advisor closely monitors the overall performance and other responsibilities of the money managers, and makes recommendations on their appointment and termination.

The audit concluded that the FSM Secretary for the Department of Finance and Administration and the Board of Trustees should:

- (i) Improve its governance process by ensuring that Chapter 12 of Title 55 of the FSM Code reflect appropriately and sufficiently all issues relating to management, benefits and demise of the Fund;
- (ii) Improve its internal controls processes by developing and operationalizing procedures manuals;
- (iii) Improve its risk management process in order to be abreast with any uncertainty in the financial markets; and
- (iv) Improve its operations by ensuring that Strategic Plan and Action Plans together with their milestones are developed, operationalized, monitored and teamwork

environment is fostered; and improved capacity building for the management and members of the Board of Trustees in order to enable them to carry out their roles effectively and efficiently.

The first finding was that the main objective of establishing the trust fund may not be achieved in the next ten years at the current pace.

“Between fiscal years 2015 to 2018 total recurrent expenditures for the FSM Government ranged from \$161.6 million to \$207.9 million, while foreign contribution to the total expenditures was between \$80.9 million to \$109.6 million annually. Based on the highest foreign grants given during the period, \$109.6 million, it is obvious that in the event of 100% cessation of foreign grants to FSM budget, the current available funds in the Fund could suffice to fill the gap for a period of 2 to 4-fiscal years if the expenditures are maintained at the same level. However, if cessation will be at 50%, the same could suffice to fill the void for about 5-fiscal years. [assuming all economic and social factors remain the same].”

The audit says that appropriations have been low and with no pre-determined pattern. It

See “FSM Trust Fund” on page 6

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Bill Jaynes  
Managing Editor

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## Recover with Integrity

**KOLONIA, POHNPEI**- On December 9, 2020, Pohnpei joins the rest of the world in the celebration of the International Anti-Corruption Day at the Youth4-Change center. The event was jointly coordinated by the US Embassy, Youth-4-Change and the UN Joint Presence Office. This year's theme is, "Recover with Integrity." This is inclusive to the Covid-19 pandemic crisis we're facing today.

Ms. Sophia Pretrick who delivered the keynote message emphasized that integrity is the key to rapid response and recovery. Sophia is currently on detail assignment at the FSM Office of the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (OPUA) under the FSM National Government Department of Finance and Administration, to assist in creating and maintaining integrity within OPUA through prevention, detection investigation and recovery of unemployment overpayment. Sophia further highlighted the importance of the government to work together with civil societies, NGO's, private entities, youth groups, church and traditional groups including the public in anti-corruption activities. Working together in maintaining integrity is very important even in this unprecedented and difficult time. Although we are in an emergency crisis, we must make sure that no one is taking advantage of the system.

We should always do the right thing, the truthful way in everything we do regardless of who we are, where we are, what we do, we have the responsibility to be vigilant and on the look-out for fraud and corruption.

The US Embassy and Youth-4-Change did essay competitions and poetry contest for the youth members in their perception of what can you do to stop corruption?

Also present on that day was US Acting Chief of Missions, Somer Bessire-Brier, UN representative, Suzanne Lowe Gallen, Youth-4-Change President Diaz Joseph, Pohnpei Office of the Public Auditor staff and Youth-4-Change youth members.



## The Micronesia Conservation Trust congratulates 2020 BRMC graduate

### Micronesia Conservation Trust

**December 30, 2020**

The Micronesia Conservation Trust and partners of the Micronesia Challenge (MC) are proud to congratulate, Lincy Lee Marino, for completing her graduate program as a recipient of the Bill Raynor Micronesia Challenge (BRMC) Scholarship.

The Bill Raynor Micronesia Challenge (BRMC) Scholarship Program was inspired by William (Bill) Charles Raynor (Feb. 22nd, 1957-Sept. 1st, 2015), one of Micronesia's lead conservation pioneers. He engaged in significant and meaningful conservation work in Micronesia for over 30 years. He helped to establish/strengthen several non-governmental organizations that are now leading conservation and

sustainable development efforts in Micronesia. He supported and mentored emerging environmental leaders who have the passion and the potential to continue the conservation initiatives and maintain the Micronesia Challenge commitment, which he was instrumental in establishing. His initial contributions to the BRMC now allows two students from the region each year to be supported in their graduate education. The scholarship fund aims to contribute to the development of effective conservation of Micronesia's biodiversity and the promotion of sustainable livelihoods across the region.

In 2019, Lincy Lee Marino, the sixth graduate of the BRMC, from Palau, was one amongst the 3 students awarded the Scholarship. In the Fall of 2020, she completed her Master's in Sustainable

## Pacific tuna fishery protections in place for 2021

*Forum Fisheries Agency*

**21 December, 2020**

**HONIARA**- Pacific Island countries have worked with fishing nations to secure crucial protection measures next year for an industry worth over US\$1 billion to local economies and employing around 24,000 following global meetings last week.

Pacific Island Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) Director General, Dr Manu Tupou-Roosen said the virtual meeting of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission\* (WCPFC) had ensured key management measures were rolled over to secure the fishery for the coming year.

"FFA Member countries went into this virtual meeting with a clear set of priorities. The most important was ensuring we rolled over the flagship Tropical Tuna Measure for another year to ensure there was not a management vacuum while a new measure is negotiated in 2021," said Dr Tupou-Roosen.

"Our current measure expires in February 2021. Tuna fisheries are the social and economic lifeblood of many of our Pacific countries and we needed to ensure we had certainty. It was essential to the sustainable management of our tuna stocks that we avoided an outcome similar to recent meetings of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), who failed to reach a consensus on regulations, leaving their fishery unmanaged next year," she said.

"We are really pleased that we were able to secure this outcome for the Western Pacific region."

The Tropical Tuna Measure regulates the

tuna catch in the region and puts in place measures to ensure the amount of fishing effort and catch is kept at sustainable levels.

Forum Fisheries Committee Chair Eugene Pangelinan said virtual meetings were particularly challenging for Pacific members and in-person negotiations were a much more successful option for complex discussions.

"Pacific nations often struggle with poor internet connectivity and to make matters worse, we frequently must contend with tropical cyclones at this time of year that cause significant disruption to communications.. Trying to successfully complete sensitive negotiations under COVID conditions was always going to be more difficult," said Mr Pangelinan.

"We managed to get key fishing nations to pull back a bit on the horns and accept the fact that this virtual commission meeting is not the time to talk about new measures which may increase bigeye tuna catch or adding fishing days to high-seas purse-seine effort limits," he said.

"We've obviously got a lot of work to do now for 2021. In addition to negotiating a comprehensive tropical tuna measure, we will be looking at measures to ensure best practice approaches to observer safety and to address crew labour conditions and human rights issues at sea. It will be a busy year, but we are confident that this will be achievable, especially if face-to-face meetings can resume at some point next year."

Pacific-caught fish contribute significantly to the diets of people in other parts of the world, with the Western and Central Pacific Ocean accounting for almost 60 percent of the global tuna catch, of which more than half is taken in the waters of FFA member countries.

better economic standing. Thus, she sees a greater need to integrate sustainable management practices to preserve the environment along with Palau's cultures and traditions.

Management from the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay. Over the course of her academic year, she successfully balanced her full-time job as a researcher at the Palau International Coral Reef Center (PICRC) with being a full-time graduate student. She also serves as Palau's core member to the Micronesia Challenge Socioeconomic (SEM) measure's group.

After graduating, Ms. Marino will continue to carry her roles as a researcher at PICRC and as a core member of the Micronesia Challenge SEM team. She is passionate about ensuring that Palau does not endanger their pristine environment in exchange for



## COVID-19 Vaccine

*Continued from front page*

Chuuk, and Yap, via Caroline Islands Air and Pacific Mission Aviation, with the State Governments shortly following with the vaccine rollout in their jurisdiction.

The first priority group to receive the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine are frontline workers—such as healthcare workers and border control workers—followed by the elderly, and individuals with underlying medical conditions, which is the standard recommendation for prioritization from the U.S. CDC and the World Health Organization (WHO). Citizens should not expect that they will have access to the COVID-19 vaccine until such a time that all frontline workers have had the opportunity to receive it.

There is no live virus in the approved COVID-19 vaccines, and by extension any side effects do not mean that a patient has contracted COVID-19. Some acute side effects have been seen, including injection site soreness and a short-term fever that is gone in under 48 hours.

On December 31st, 2020, ten (10) individuals joined the launch event for the FSM's COVID-19 vaccination campaign,

including His Excellency David W. Panuelo, President of the FSM, who took the vaccine on video to build public trust and confidence in its effectiveness.

President Panuelo has not reported any side effects. “No pain at the injection site—no side effects at all, I feel great and normal,” the President said in a January 4th, 2021 statement. Conversely, FSM Immunization Program Manager Carter Apaisam reported that the injection site was painful. “It is a painful injection,” Mr. Apaisam said in a statement, “But it’s consistent with other efficacious vaccines, such as the influenza [flu] vaccine.”

As of January 4th, 2021, the FSM National Government has not stated an intention to make the COVID-19 vaccine mandatory, although both the Executive and Legislative Branches have fielded intra-governmental queries to this effect regarding whether such a mandatory requirement would be beneficial to the Nation and its citizens. President Panuelo has repeated that it is the goal of the Panuelo-George administration to seek a 100% vaccination rate.

Although the COVID-19 vaccine provides scientifically measurable and significant protection to individuals who receive it, it is not a “magic bullet”, it is not “literally a cure”, and it is not “a replacement for social distancing,” as some citizens



*FSM National & Pohnpei State first responders pose at the conclusion of the COVID-19 vaccination launch event*

have suggested through social media and radio programming. The FSM National Government continues to encourage the public to practice best preventive practices such as handwashing, mask wearing, and physical distancing between individuals, and such measures will become mandatory if and when COVID-19 arrives into the FSM.

It is the intention of the FSM National Government to continue cooperating with U.S. and other friends, allies, and

development partners to ensure that all citizens who eventually wish to receive the COVID-19 vaccine may do so. In the spirit of this cooperation, the FSM Department of Health & Social Affairs has stated that the National Government expects to receive additional freezers and generators for the States of Yap, Chuuk, Pohnpei, and Kosrae, donated by the U.S. Government.

As of January 4th, 2021, the FSM remains COVID-19 free.

## 246 earn degrees at UOG commencement

*University of Guam*

The University of Guam today conferred degrees to 246 graduates at its Fanuchanan 2020 Commencement Ceremony. With 85 receiving master's degrees, it was the largest number of master's degrees ever conferred by the university in a semester, more than half of which were in education specializations. Bachelor's degrees totaled 161, the majority coming from the School of Business and Public Administration.

The ceremony took place virtually and will remain accessible for viewing on the UOG Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/UniversityofGuam](http://www.facebook.com/UniversityofGuam).

“I don't have to tell this audience that these are unprecedented times and that we're all living through a historic challenge,” said UOG President Thomas W. Krise. “But this class of graduates of the University of Guam has been resilient and flexible and supportive in the spirit of the CHamoru values of chinchule' and inafa'maolek.”

**Valedictorian expresses importance of belonging**

Class valedictorian Maya D. Nanpei expressed how she found a sense of belonging and support at UOG that helped her overcome the ADHD she had struggled

with in high school.

“I hope that we leave our time at UOG feeling like we belonged to something outside of ourselves and use that feeling to inspire us in future endeavors,” she said.

She said graduating during a pandemic was a challenge “in a league of its own.” As an English literature major, she said she hopes that her fellow graduates are able to find words to keep them connected with the people who matter most.

“... My time as a Triton, specifically in the English program, has taught me that words are truly what bind people together. This is especially true in our current situation, as the only way to safely express our love for one another is through words.”

**Keynote hopes grads ‘claim a seat at the table’**

The keynote speech was delivered by Dr. Edison P. Manaloto, a two-time UOG alumnus and the 2006 UOG valedictorian who this year returned to Guam as a medical doctor at Guam Regional Medical City.

As an undergraduate, he said he proclaimed in one class that in five years, he would hold a bachelor's degree, a master's degree, and

become a Certified Public Accountant, but he remembers some of his classmates were not dreaming as big.

“The problem was not a lack of talent or skill – that is abundant – but an inherent fear to dream and to dream big. Looking back, I realized a false sense of insecurity that surrounds many of our island's youth growing up. ... Many fail to see their own uniqueness and talents. They fail to claim what is rightfully theirs, which is a seat at the table.”

Manaloto earned his bachelor's in accounting in 2006, a master's in public administration in 2007, both from the University of Guam, and became a Certified Public Accountant in 2008 as well as a Certified Governmental Financial Manager. Later, seeing the pressing need for medical professionals in Guam, he applied for medical school at De La Salle Health Sciences Institute in the Philippines and became a Doctor of Medicine in 2015 and completed his residency at the University of Hawaii this past June.

**Two earn honorary degrees**

The ceremony also recognized two honorary degree recipients, awarded by the UOG Board of Regents.

“Receiving an honorary degree shows that these individuals have not only become experts in their fields, but have earned the respect of our community and made long-lasting contributions to society,” Krise said.

Rosalia Fejeran Mateo, a master traditional healer — or Yo'ãnte — for 64 years and one of the few remaining indigenous experts in her field, received the honorary degree of Master of Micronesian Traditional Knowledge. Better known as “Mama Chai,” she has healed thousands of clients through herbal medicine and massage and was instrumental in opening Guam's first Traditional Healing Center at Sagan Kotturan Chamorro in 2016.

Rlene S. Steffy was awarded an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree. Steffy is a mass communications specialist of 42 years with a diverse career as a writer, journalist, talk show host, and documentarian. She has come to be considered one of the leading oral-history practitioners in the region, capturing the experiences of war survivors, community leaders, and traditional knowledge experts throughout Micronesia.

For complete details, visit <https://url.uog.edu/commencement>.



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# Oliver argues First Lady not government official and charges of “obstruction of governmental function” do not apply

By *Bill Jaynes*  
The Kaselehlie Press

January 2, 2021

**Pohnpei**—The attorney for Norleen Oliver filed a motion at the FSM Supreme Court to dismiss the one remaining criminal charge against her client. The court had earlier dismissed one of the criminal charges filed against her, “Deprivation of Rights”. One misdemeanor criminal charge remains—“Obstructing Administration of Law or Other Governmental Function”, which carries a penalty of not more than one year.

The FSM Department of Justice filed the charges against Oliver after Oliver admittedly parked her vehicle on a private road on land she has custody of, allegedly blocking access to First Lady Patricia Edwin to Edwin’s family land at the end of that private road.

Oliver argues that the term “First Lady” is not an official title, but only a ceremonial one and that therefore, the First Lady is not a public official. She argues that a plain reading of the law shows that since the First Lady was not “elected, appointed, or employed” to perform a governmental function, she is not a public official.

She quotes the FSM Supreme Court in its ruling in the matter of Janet Semes Panuelo v. the FSM Government et., al in Civil Action 2019-025. In that matter, the FSM Supreme Court held that:

“The ‘office’ of the First Lady is not a Constitutional Office. Nor is it an office created by statute. It is an office for which a writ of quo warranto will lie to determine the right to hold the office. It is a title that is, or has been customarily bestowed on or used to honor the President’s wife, who is then expected to perform varied social and diplomatic functions on the President or the nation’s behalf.”

Oliver claims that the court’s own previous ruling acknowledges that the office of the First Lady is not established by constitution nor statute and therefore is not a public office. Therefore, the Court cannot rule that any action Oliver may have taken was

obstruction of a public official to carry out official duties.

In its reply to the Defendant’s motion to dismiss, the FSM Department of Justice (DOJ) cites no previous Supreme Court rulings on the matter of whether or not the position of First Lady makes her a public official. However, it argued a different reading of the Supreme Court ruling quoted in Oliver’s motion to dismiss. In what was probably a typographical error since DOJ represents the FSM Government as Plaintiff in the criminal matter, DOJ wrote, “The Defendant respectfully submits that if the First Lady is expected or has been to conducting diplomatic functions as diplomatic representative which are traditionally regarded as falling within the scope of consular functions then they are considered as official agent of the Government.”

DOJ also argued that FSM President David Panuelo issued a Presidential Order “to develop an office space for the First Lady to promote and advocate on important issues such as the strengthening of the FSM’s implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Act...and other humanitarian initiatives. These are official duties assigned to the First Lady,” the DOJ claimed.

Oliver went on to argue that if the position of “First Lady” is not included in the definition of “public official” or “public servant” the FSM Supreme Court does not have jurisdiction to prosecute the matter since it is therefore not an offense under the definition of FSM law.

Oliver additionally argues that even if the Court were to find that the definition of public official “somehow covers the First Lady’s ceremonial role, there was no allegation that the First Lady was engaged in or attempting to engage in any official duty at the time of the alleged conduct on 18 September 2020.” She argues that “there was no official duty being discharged because the First Lady was merely visiting her private land on her own time.”

DOJ argued in its response that, “The First Lady is the First Lady 24/7 or 24

hours 7 days a week or at all times. The First Lady is never just the First Lady while attending an official function but the First Lady at all times. The official function does not make the First Lady in her official capacity but the First Lady is in her official capacity at all times. The Defendant interfered with, delayed, or obstructed the First Lady in her official capacity when she intentionally blocked the road leading to the First Lady’s residence in Ipwal, Sokehs.”

Oliver’s attorney argued that it is the burden of the government to show or to prove that she knew that the First Lady was attempting to carry out an official duty but that Oliver was intent to prevent her from doing so. She claims that since it was a private road upon which she could not have reasonably believed anyone would be attempting to carry out any official duty, the question arises as to whether there is a requisite allegation of “willfulness”. She quoted a previous ruling from 1998 in which the court held that criminal contempt requires a specific intent to consciously disregard an order of the court, and that willfulness does not exist where a defendant pursues in good faith a plausible though mistaken alternative.

DOJ argued that at the “probable cause hearing on October 3, 2020, the Defendant stated in her testimony that, after returning from town around midday on September 18, 2020, she was informed that the First Lady could not access the road because her vehicle... was causing an obstruction. She made no attempt to remove her vehicle until on or about 8pm the same day when she allowed the FSM National Police officers to remove her vehicle from the spot.” DOJ argues that fact and others demonstrate “willfulness”.

The defendant’s motion to dismiss and the plaintive response to that motion are preliminary matters to the remaining criminal charge to be heard by the FSM Supreme Court. While the Court has already ruled to dismiss the criminal charge of deprivation of rights against Oliver, it has not yet had opportunity to rule on the most recent preliminary filings.

## ...FSM Trust Fund

*Continued from page 2*

wasn’t until fiscal year 2018 (the FSM Trust Fund has been in existence since 1999) that “Congress took a bold decision to enact a law (Public Law N. 20-130) that guaranteed specific percentage from identified sources of fund to be set aside for investment. Implementation of PL 20-130 started during the fiscal year 2019 whereby 20% of fishing fees and 50% of the tax on all premiums collected from captive insurance companies were transferred to the Fund: a total of \$42.8 million.”

Finding two was that there was a lack of governance and risk management activities and that failure to appropriately manage investment risk could lead to losses for the FSM Trust Fund.

Auditors also found that capacity building of the board and management of the Trust fund needs to be strengthened. “The Board of Trustees and staff overseeing the Fund are continually dealing with experts in the field who are either fund managers or fund custodians and thus a need to provide them specific capacity building on investment, in order to somehow match with these experts.” It says that the Congress-approved budget does not show a commitment to capacity building activities and that there was no planned capacity building for the staff and members of the Board.

The audit found that the FSM Trust Fund lacked effective and efficient management. It said that during the audit they found that there was a poor filing system, an absence of an operations manual, that reconciliations are only performed when transactions from bank statements are recorded in the books of accounts of the Fund and the same records are used for reconciliation, and that journal vouchers prepared by the Division of Treasury had only vague descriptions to the purpose of the transactions.

The audit found that sub-accounts of the FSM Trust Fund were co-mingled in the Financial Management Information System (FMIS). Auditors found that there is no separate account for the States’ sub-accounts as required by law. The National Treasury division does not maintain subsidiary ledgers in the FMIS for the Fund as to reflect the sub-accounts presented in the bank statements.

Auditors also concluded that the FSM Trust Fund Management and Department of Finance and Administration did not implement all audit recommendations issued in the previous audit of the Trust Fund activities.

The full audit can be found at [www.fsmopa.fm](http://www.fsmopa.fm).

# In Memoriam: Bethwel Henry

## FSM Information Services

**PALIKIR, Pohnpei**—On December 16th, 2020, the Honorable Bethwel Henry, the first Speaker of the FSM Congress, and later the Postmaster General from 1988 to 2007, passed away.

Born March 3rd, 1934, on Mwoakilloa Atoll, Bethwel Henry was a personified demonstration of public service. His decades of dedication to the Congress of Micronesia under the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, to the FSM Congress as its first Speaker, and to the FSM Postal Services, allowed for our Nation to emerge from a dream to a reality, and for our young Government to enjoy continuity. Bethwel Henry's helpful demeanor ensured that the work of the Legislative Branch was always executed in an exemplary manner, and his commitment to public service ensured that our Postal Services were reliable. In fact, of the bottomless list of accomplishments one can attribute to Bethwel Henry, one that has had a real-life effect on every FSM citizen was his assistance in ensuring FSM postal rates are the same as U.S. domestic destinations.

The FSM National Government has been remarkably fortunate to have been blessed with Bethwel Henry's service to the Nation

and its citizens, for he represented the virtues that the Nation stands for and believes in. Bethwel Henry spent every day of his life extending peace, friendship, cooperation, and love in our common humanity to everyone he encountered.

The Government thanks Bethwel Henry for his many and noble deeds, and sends its deepest condolences to all of his friends and family in this time of mourning, and asks that the citizens of the Nation recall his good character, and reflect on his outstanding service to the people.

His Excellency David W. Panuelo, President of the FSM, has proclaimed an official period of mourning. The Presidential Proclamation is available here: [https://gov.fm/files/2020\\_December\\_17-PROCLAMATION\\_LATE\\_SPEAKER\\_THE\\_HONORABLE\\_BETHWEL\\_HENRY.pdf](https://gov.fm/files/2020_December_17-PROCLAMATION_LATE_SPEAKER_THE_HONORABLE_BETHWEL_HENRY.pdf)

On December 21, The FSM National Government held a State Funeral for the Honorable Bethwel Henry at the FSM Congress Chamber where Henry served as the first speaker after which a service was held at his church in Kepinle. He was laid to rest on December 22.



*The late Honorable Bethwel Henry, First Speaker of the Congress of the FSM, on November 3rd, 2019; Thank you for your service, Speaker, Postmaster, Father, Husband, Friend, & Public Servant, and Rest in Peace*



*Bethwel Henry speaks at the groundbreaking of a Congress of Micronesia project in Palau*

## New JICA Technical Cooperation for Fisheries and Maritime Institute-COM aims at maritime education and training capacity enhancement

### JICA

On December 7, 2020, Karen Simion, Interim President of the College of Micronesia-FSM and Keiichi Muraoka, Resident Representative of JICA Micronesia signed the Record of Discussions (hereinafter referred to as R/D) between the two parties setting in motion "The Project for Maritime Education and Training Capacity Enhancement on Fisheries and Maritime Institute". The Project duration will be three years from its commencement that is scheduled in April 2021. Due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, Project Team was unable to visit the FSM to conduct the detailed planning survey of the project. However, various virtual discussion successfully concluded the survey along with the execution of electronic signing procedure of the R/D as agreed between both parties.

This Project will aim at improving maritime education and training courses at FMI-COM in Yap as the main site. The main outputs of this project includes the improvement of current class 5 courses and developing new class 4 courses with materials and contents, as well as improvement of employment supports. Capacity development for instructors will be explored through accepting trainings from other organization or governments from neighboring regions such as Palau and Republic Of Marshall Islands.

JICA has collaborated with FMI-COM since 2000-2005 with a project that aimed to develop the curriculum and leaning materials and to carry out teacher's training in FSM-FMI. With this new project, JICA continues its support in contributing to capacity development of fisheries and maritime in FSM. JICA recognizes this sector as a priority issue in the FSM and will continue cooperating with FMI-COM and provide continuous support in this area.




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## Christmas Message 2020

Wesley W. Simina  
Speaker of the 21st Congress of the  
Federated States of Micronesia

*May the God of hope fill you with peace and joy  
as you trust in him so that you may overflow with hope.  
Romans 15:13*

Vice Speaker Esmond B. Moses, Floor Leader Florencio "Singkoro" Harper, Members of the 21st Congress, along with our families and staff join me in extending our best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you, the people of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM).

2020 has truly been a trying year for the world as the COVID-19 pandemic encircled the globe within months of surfacing and wreaking havoc on what we hold dear: family, community, culture, economy and stable governments.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted our shared fragility, it has also given the world a pause for self-reflection and reassessment of its priorities in the realization of how everything and everyone are truly connected in our common humanity.

The pandemic has reset our realities and ways of life forever.

It has also directly and indirectly impacted our lives, especially our citizens who live abroad. Yet those of us in the FSM have been spared much of the harsh realities of the COVID-19 world to date, and for this we shall always be grateful to our Lord.

So, as we gather across the Nation this Holiday Season with our families and friends in celebration of Christmas - that Holy Birth in Bethlehem long ago, let us also take time to take stock of and appreciate our blessings as individuals and as a Nation. As we celebrate Christmas this year, may we be reminded of its eternal message of love, compassion and hope. Let us also pray for the health and safety of our citizens abroad and our world at large.

In that spirit of love, compassion and hope we, Members of the 21st Congress along with our families and staff extend our best wishes for a very Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year to the people of the FSM and all our friends who have also made FSM their home.

Again, may the God of hope fill you with peace and joy as you trust in him so that you may overflow with hope.

Be safe and have a Happy Holiday Season!

# Yap's premier dive resort announces grand re-opening specials

**Colonia, Yap-** Falling backwards from the side of a boat into pristine, warm ocean waters is undoubtedly a recurring dream for divers around the world. The award-winning Manta Ray Bay Resort and Yap Divers on the remote Micronesian island of Yap is preparing to make those dreams come true once again.

“We’re offering not-to-be-missed packages for the moment when the island’s borders open up to welcome visitors back again,” announced Texas-born and bred Bill Acker, CEO and founder of Manta Ray. In one of only eleven countries that are free of the COVID-19 virus, Yap’s premier resort is on the bucket list of divers around the world. And now it’s more affordable than ever.

“Although we don’t yet know when Yap’s borders will be opened, we want to be among the first to welcome divers back to the sport we all love,” said Bill. “That’s why we’re offering these great deals.”

Manta Ray’s Grand Re-opening Special offers for 2021 and 2022 include, for individual bookings for one to seven

divers, three free nights when booking 7 nights/15 dives, 10 nights/24 dives, or 14 nights/33 dives. For groups of eight or more, get eight free spots for every 8 paid divers. “That’s right,” said Bill, “that’s not a typo. Pay for eight divers and come with 16!”

With over 9,000 dives in the waters of Yap, Bill is a member of the original class of SSI Platinum Pro Divers. As a PADI instructor, he remains active in exploring new dive sites and teaching the sport to people interested in sharing his love for the ocean environment.

“It’s been hard having to close our family-run resort for the last year, but we’re ready and anxious when the border opens to welcome visitors back to this beautiful island,” he said. “I’ve

been having fun diving with my kids, but we all miss taking our guests out to plunge into the clear waters and magical canyons that surround Yap that this Texas Longhorn boy first discovered more than forty years ago.”

For more information, visit <https://www.mantaray.com/grand-re-opening-special-offers/>, follow Bill’s blog at <https://www.mantaray.com/blog/> or go to @mantaraybay on Facebook.



Visit us online at [www.vitalenergy.fm](http://www.vitalenergy.fm) for the latest Vital News, Position Announcements, Requests for Quotations, and more.

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## President Panuelo delivers Keynote Address reinforcing the nation's commitment to human rights, differently abled persons, & children

### FSM Information Services

**PALIKIR, Pohnpei**—On December 11th, 2020, His Excellency David W. Panuelo—President of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM)—delivered an address for International Human Rights Day.

Immediately prior to the address, the President received members of the FSM's community of persons with disabilities wherein he recognized their efforts to take actions today for our Nation's prosperity tomorrow.

Human Rights Day celebrates the 1948 signing of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights; that everyone has the right to life, liberty, and security of person; all human beings are equal before the law, and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law."

President Panuelo spoke at length about the relationship between how human rights as an abstract philosophical concept are concretized through specific actions that societies take, noting for example that the right to a secure environment is translated into effective action towards environmental stewardship and protection. In this respect, the President described the World's success at removing hydrofluorocarbons from the atmosphere through the Montreal Protocol on Ozone Depleting Substances, and expressed the Nation's collective thanks to U.S. President-Elect Joseph R. Biden Jr. for his commitment to rejoin the Paris Agreement in the first days of his administration.

The bulk of the President's address focused on differently abled persons and children.

"Because a person is defined by what they can control, such as their character, their attitude, and their actions," the President said, "and not what they cannot control, such as their gender, their ethnicity, or whether they were born with disabilities or not, it is important that society treats all people fairly. People with different needs are, first and foremost, people—and as such they deserve our love and respect. For this purpose, in the context of the FSM National Government, I am instructing all of our line departments and agencies to designate handicap parking spaces reserved exclusively for persons with disabilities."

The President noted that more than ten percent (10%) of the Nation's student population has some form of disability, and that the funding the FSM receives through the U.S. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is insufficient for this purpose, and must be supplemented by National and State funding and programmatic support. "Per the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child," President Panuelo said, "Our Nation is in the process of drafting relevant child protection policy and legislation. Our partners at the [United Nation's Children's Fund/UNICEF] are fully committed to support us in this work...and our National and State Departments of Education are working together to determine how we can increase both the number of activities for students in special education programs, as well as how to ensure that special education students are not left behind."

Prior to the public address on human rights, President Panuelo received members of the FSM's community of differently abled citizens. The purpose of the meeting was for the President to formally show the Government's recognition of the hardships facing this community, and to congratulate them for their continued contributions towards taking actions today for our Nation's prosperity tomorrow.

In the meeting with differently abled citizens, President Panuelo received advice that the FSM National Government may find it useful to subsidize scholarship programs specifically focused on training teachers with an emphasis on children with special needs. The President has since instructed the FSM Department of Education to explore this.



President Panuelo describes the FSM's commitment to human rights



President Panuelo poses with a valuable member of the FSM's community of differently abled citizens

## United States Congress votes to restore Medicaid eligibility for FSM Citizens lawfully residing in the U.S.

### FSM Information Services

**PALIKIR, Pohnpei**—On December 21st, 2020, the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate passed the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 (H.R. 133), which includes the Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 omnibus spending package. Of crucial import to citizens of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) is that the legislation includes a provision that would restore Medicaid eligibility for Freely Associated States (FAS) citizens who are lawfully residing in the U.S.

The provision contained in the relief package mirrors the stand alone legislation, Covering our FAS Allies Act (H.R. 4821/S.2218), which was introduced by Representative Tony Cárdenas (D-CA) and Senator Mazie Hirono (D-HI). This provision will restore a crucial benefit to FSM citizens that was lost as part of a 1996 welfare reform package.

Prior to 1996, FAS citizens residing in the U.S. were eligible for federal benefits, including Medicaid. However, when Congress passed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act in 1996, it inadvertently removed FAS citizens' eligibility for Medicaid. Specifically, the law excluded FAS citizens from the list of legally present non-citizens that are eligible to qualify for certain federal benefits. Unfortunately, this gap in coverage has persisted for over two decades.

"On behalf of the People and Government of the FSM," His Excellency David W. Panuelo, President of the FSM, said in a statement, "I would like to thank our American brothers and sisters for this demonstration of love and solidarity between our two Nations. Between the forthcoming arrival of the COVID-19 vaccines, first for our frontline responders, and now the expansion of Medicaid coverage to our citizens abroad, this is

heartwarming and wonderful news at the end of a year that has otherwise been renowned for its challenges."

FSM citizens residing in the U.S. are encouraged to contact the FSM Embassy in Washington, D.C., with any queries they may have regarding the restoration of Medicaid eligibility for FSM citizens lawfully residing in the U.S. The Embassy can be called +1-202-223-4383 or citizens can submit a query via the contact form here: <http://www.fsmembassydc.org/webform/contact-us>

The FSM National Government deeply appreciates the many congressional champions of this crucial Medicaid fix and applauds the leadership who helped to build strong support to restore Medicaid for our citizens. His Excellency Donald J. Trump, President of the United States, is expected to sign the measure into law later this week.

# President Panuelo develops & expands \$14,000,000 of COVID-19 related social protection programming

*FSM Information Services*

**PALIKIR, Pohnpei**—His Excellency David W. Panuelo, President of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), and the Honorable Yosiwo P. George, Vice President of the FSM, have implemented new social protection programming designed to safeguard the FSM’s citizens against the detrimental economic impact resulting from the COVID-19 Pandemic. Among these programs include a cash transfer grant to approximately 4,500 low-income households outside of the formal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance Program funded by the U.S. Department of Labor, a food security program for community groups and low-income households to enhance subsistence-living food production, community-based grants to strengthen awareness and prevention of COVID-19, financial assistance to vulnerable groups such as the elderly, persons with disabilities, and survivors of gender-based violence, and a second one-time payment to FSM citizens stranded abroad.

The cash transfer program to approximately 4,500 low-income households is intended to provide temporary cash relief for households outside of the formal labor sector, such as subsistence farmers and fishermen, and specifically such laborers who do not qualify for the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance Program. Approximately six million dollars (\$6,000,000) is scheduled for this purpose, and expected to provide a one-time assistance of \$1,000 to each low-income household. Households are encouraged to use this assistance to enhance COVID-19 readiness by buying facemasks, sanitary needs, and other COVID-19 preventive items. The Government intends to begin rolling out this social protection program by January 2021.

The food security program for community groups and low-income households is intended to provide subsistence livelihood training, and an equitable distribution of seeds, planting, and fishing materials, to vulnerable citizens at no cost. Approximately two million dollars (\$2,000,000) is scheduled for this purpose, and it is the intention of the Government to begin rolling out this social protection program by January 2021.

The community-based COVID-19 awareness grant is intended to strengthen awareness of COVID-19, inclusive of education on handwashing and social distancing, distribution of soaps, masks, and informational materials, and piloting a gender-based violence hotline in Pohnpei State.

Approximately two million dollars (\$2,000,000) is scheduled for this purpose, and it is the intention of the Government to begin rolling out this social protection program by January 2021.

The financial assistance program to vulnerable groups such as the elderly, persons with disabilities, and survivors of gender-based violence is intended to provide temporary waivers of medical expenses not included under funding from the Compact of Free Association, as Amended, electricity subsidies to an estimated 2,000 low-income households with dependents who have disabilities, distribution of solar lamps to an estimated 5,000 households on remote outer islands, and clinical management of rape and intimate partner violence kits and consultation options for survivors of gender-based violence. Approximately one million dollars (\$1,000,000) is scheduled for this purpose, and it is the intention of the Government to begin rolling out this social protection program by January 2021.

More than 423 stranded citizens have received \$1,000 per person, or \$1,500 per family application, in financial assistance. Recognizing the deleterious effect of the COVID-19 Pandemic on FSM citizens stranded abroad, His Excellency David W. Panuelo and the Honorable Yosiwo P. George have authorized a second one-time payment to stranded citizens, to begin occurring approximately before Christmas.

“It’s vital that stranded citizens receive this second round of assistance before Christmas,” President Panuelo said in a statement. “Too many of our stranded citizens are having trouble paying for housing, food, and essential medications. I have instructed our Department of Finance & Administration to prioritize this effort.

Stranded citizens who have already received the first payment will receive



*His Excellency David W. Panuelo shakes hands with the Honorable Eugene Amor*

the second payment through the payment method they selected in the first round of applications.

Stranded citizens who have not already applied for assistance are encouraged to do so. Information on how to apply is available here: <https://dofa.gov.fm/assistance-to-stranded-citizen/>

The Department of Finance & Administration is currently finalizing the applications forms, and implementation plans, for the FSM COVID-19 Social Relief Programs; these will be shared when the application process is ready to begin in January 2021.

The bulk of these expanded social protection programs are funded in part by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), through ADB’s COVID-19 Pandemic Response Option (CPRO) under the ADB’s Countercyclical Support Facility. The Secretary of Finance, the Honorable Eugene Amor, signed

the grant agreement with the ADB on November 25th, 2020, providing the \$14,000,000 in COVID-19 assistance to the FSM for this purpose.

“I would first like to extend, on behalf of Vice President George and the People of the FSM,” President Panuelo said in a statement, “our most sincere, humble, and profound appreciation to ADB, for their financial support to our social protection programs; and I would also like to extend our appreciation to Secretary Amor and all the dedicated public servants at the Department of Finance & Administration, who are the ones who have truly developed these programs.”

“These social protection programs will help mitigate the economic effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on our most vulnerable citizens, by decreasing familial poverty, increasing food security, and helping our stranded citizens abroad.”

## ‘Education is the key to success’: Teacher from conflict zone instructs on public health and disaster risk reduction

*Interview with Ethelyn Ankiambom Chia, written by Kalika Kastein*

On the northeastern part of the island of Weno in Chuuk State sits a combined community center and school near the shore. Ethelyn Ankiambom Chia, or “Ankia,” walks up the painted white staircase every weekday at Akoyikoyi Elementary and prepares to teach her energetic students, passing by the school’s motto “Awakening Opportunities” posted near the entrance.

Ankia stayed in her role despite being over 15,000 kilometers away from her family in Cameroon and is one of the few international teachers to do so despite border closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic. She taught second-grade last year, but because of staff departures related to the pandemic, she has been teaching third and seventh grade this year.

Born to Chia Marcus Chia and Angeline Funduma in the lush, mountainous Northwest region of Cameroon, Ankia is part of an ethnolinguistic group of Anglophones in a majority Francophone country, a native speaker of both English and her local dialect of Itanjikom. She was cared for by her older siblings after the death of her parents during her childhood. “Losing my parents at an early age, I have been raised by older siblings with a little support from extended family and a few people with goodwill.”

Her upbringing shaped her beliefs on community service and support. As a sixteen-year-old, she began assisting and contributing to volunteer-led community projects with her aunt and uncle who were community hosts and counterparts with the Peace Corps in Cameroon. She later connected to former Peace Corps volunteer Clark Graham in Chuuk State and was hired to teach at the charter school he founded: Akoyikoyi Elementary.

Her move from Cameroon to Micronesia and from public health to teaching was motivated by her first-hand experiences in conflict zones and a belief in education as a way to prevent violence. There has been a violent conflict in her home country since 2016 targeting members of her ethnolinguistic group. In 2016, Cameroon’s predominantly Anglophone Northwest and Southwest regions protested

against the Francophone-dominated education and legal systems. This protest from the English-speaking minority resulted in swift government reaction. This spun off a number of armed separatist groups that met these acts of violence with their own. During her time in Cameroon, Ankia provided humanitarian relief and psychological support in her role as a public health worker.

“Conflicts most often result in increases in disease spread and deterioration of health systems which makes disease prevention and control very difficult and such death rate is higher in conflict areas, not only from the massacre but also from preventable/curable diseases that lack attention,” she said.

Women and children, in particular, have been affected by the ongoing violence in Cameroon. For women, rates of gender-based violence have increased. Women have taken to the streets in protest to call for an end to the fighting between the rebels and the government with signs demanding peace and advocating for children. Once frustrated by the manner in which education was being administered by the government, Anglophone civilians, including a large number of women, now take to the streets with signs urging the government and separatists to consider “Peace: War is costly, but peace is priceless” and “We need pens not guns.”

As recently as October, thirteen school children from Ankia’s ethnolinguistic group in Cameroon were critically injured and seven were killed. With both government and separatists engaged in a conflict that both threatens and destroys homes, public property, and life, manipulating civilians through kidnappings and killings has become a violent tactic. Children, especially those in the Anglophone region, now risk their lives to attend school. Education has been used by both

the government and separatist fighters as a tool of control, a fact which motivated Ankia’s decision to advocate for students and their education by becoming a teacher.

Ankia herself was finishing her schooling when the conflict started, and witnessed how difficult and risky the conflict made her studies. “The crisis has negatively affected many of my peers and even younger girls, most have been sexually assaulted resulting in unwanted pregnancies, crude abortion, and death,” Ankia said. She sees herself as part of the movement of women within her country calling for peace, not just within Cameroon, but also on a global scale.

“I believe education is the key to success and a very important tool in conflict resolution. Because the younger generation in my home country has been denied access to education by the unrest, I think investing in educating other children in any part of the globe, such as Chuuk, builds leaders of tomorrow who will eventually foster world peace.”

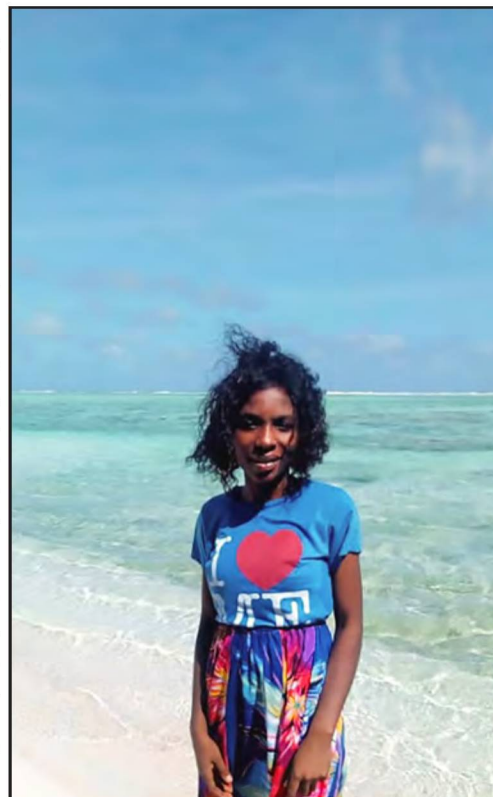
Today, Ankia has been working on public health initiatives for her school, such as constructing

a tippy-tap (a handwashing device) and talking to students about disease prevention.

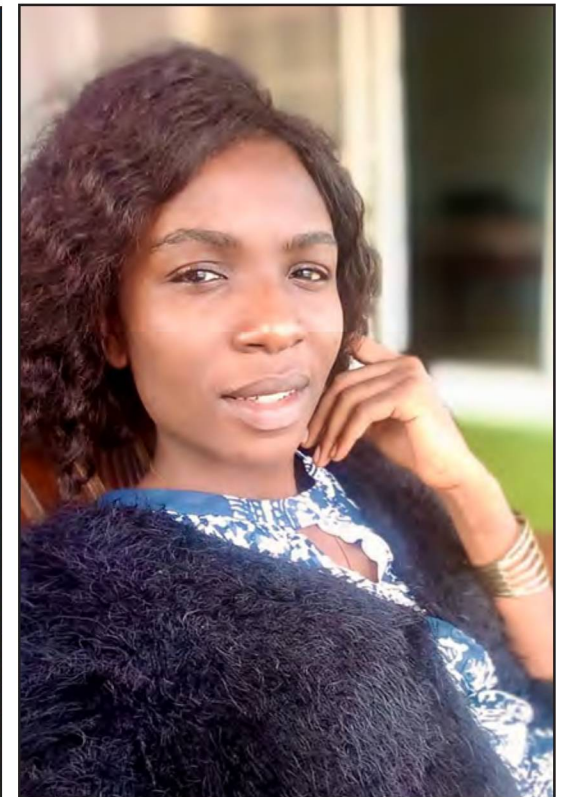
“I used the science classes to teach basic hygiene to students. I also taught proper handwashing in November 2019, and this turned out to have been very useful following the COVID-19 outbreak. Students had already been talking about and practising proper handwashing at their homes and in school which made it easier for them to adapt to other measures to prevent the spread of the virus.”

Her interest in “prevention” rather than “response” in the field of public health also sparked her curiosity on prevention methods in the context of natural and man-made disasters. She was recently accepted to an online professional development course from the United Nations Institute for Training and Research on disaster risk reduction, specifically focusing on the impact of disasters on small island nations, like Micronesia. She has joined the training as a participant from the education sector and looks forward to sharing some of the knowledge learned during the course with her young students at Akoyikoyi Elementary.

To read more or support community and youth-centered education around public health, peace, and disaster risk reduction at Akoyikoyi School in Weno, please visit <https://www.ship-hoops.org/akoyikoyi-school/>.



*Ankia on the shore in Weno, Chuuk.*



*Ankiambom Chia pictured outside Xavier High School. Ankia is a teacher at Akoyikoyi Elementary.*

## Opinion Editorial

# Vaccine only part of the cure for resumption of Pacific travel: World Bank report

**Recent analysis advises that a phased approach to re-opening would allow for safer economic recovery in the largely COVID-free region**

*World Bank*

*December 22, 2020*

**SYDNEY** – With COVID-19 vaccine distribution now in its early stages, early steps toward the resumption of labour migration in the Pacific region underway, and hopes for an international travel ‘bubble’ between Australia and New Zealand, questions are now arising as to what additional measures will be needed before international tourism returns to the Pacific region. In this context, World Bank analysis, *How Could the Pacific Restore International Travel?*, has recommended that Pacific Island countries and Papua New Guinea (PNG) take a phased approach to resuming international travel to the region in order to safeguard against COVID-19 outbreaks and ensure a steady economic recovery.

Pacific countries have, so far, managed to largely protect citizens from COVID-19 through international border closures. Yet, the economic impacts of the pandemic in the region have been significant. Recent economic modeling by the World Bank

shows that all Pacific economies are estimated to have contracted in 2020—particularly those reliant on tourism. Fiji, for example, is estimated to have seen a reduction in GDP of close to 20% in 2020. While a modest recovery is expected in 2021, output levels are not expected to reach pre-COVID19 levels until 2022 or later.

“We want to assist policy makers in the Pacific and PNG to make informed decisions about the risks, and benefits, of when and how they choose to re-open to international travel,” explained Michel Kerf, World Bank Country Director for Papua New Guinea and the Pacific Islands of the motivation behind producing the report.

“Due to weak health systems, any large COVID-19 outbreaks could have devastating consequences for the region. Recent World Bank surveys show that the pandemic’s economic impacts and closed borders are forcing families to make tough choices, like going without food or withdrawing children from schooling, and these can have harmful consequences for years to

come.”

The report proposes that re-opening travel to the Pacific should be done in phases, but it cautions that relaxing strict border policies alone will not immediately deliver economic benefits.

The three phases are:

Phase 1 beginning between January and July 2021: Pre-approved travel for specific groups (more temporary workers, students etc.) Strong testing and quarantine measures would be the foundation for any travel bubble.

Phase 2 beginning between June 2021 and May 2022: A ‘travel bubble’ with commercial flights for business and tourism. This would require sustained COVID-19 containment, improved testing and tracing, and initial roll-out of vaccinations.

Phase 3 beginning between October 2021 and October 2022: A ‘new normal’. Longer term general international travel requiring wide distribution of COVID-19 vaccines and treatment with vastly improved testing and tracing.

“The ‘triple win’ of labor mobility – for the individual worker, for Australian and New Zealand businesses, and for PNG and Pacific economies - means we highly recommend it be prioritized in phase 1,” said Andrew Blackman, author of the report.

“Tourism is also central to several

Pacific economies, with many flow-on effects for domestic supply chains and benefits for both genders. Not many other industries deliver the same economic and social benefits but opening up to tourists represents a big health risk and so must be planned carefully. The World Bank is committed to supporting our partner countries across the region as they determine the best course of action,” continued Mr. Blackman.

The report warns that Pacific governments and their partners will have to invest significantly in testing and tracing capabilities at every phase of re-opening, and each country will have to weigh this financial burden with the potential benefits of resuming international travel. Assuming that wide distribution of the current COVID-19 vaccines will take months, any ‘new-normal’ travel arrangements are unlikely to be in place before late 2021.

Based on this proposed timeline, economic activity across the Pacific could remain depressed for another 9-18 months. To help address this, the World Bank’s second phase of COVID-19 support to the region will focus on helping countries address the economic and social impacts of the pandemic, support businesses, safeguard jobs, and advance the reforms needed to speed recovery towards broad-based and sustainable growth.

# WCPFC needs to move towards precautionary science-based harvest strategies

*Leah Wiser  
Pew Charitable Trusts*

The Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission ended its annual meeting with management in place for tropical tuna fisheries, but little progress on a much-needed move towards precautionary, science-based harvest strategies.

While rolling over its existing rules for bigeye, skipjack, and yellowfin tunas averts a management crisis like the one that transpired at the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission’s annual meeting more than a week ago, these annual negotiations demonstrate that a modernized approach is urgently needed.

Glen Holmes, an officer for Pew’s international fisheries work said the following:

“The Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission took a good first step in extending its current management of tropical tunas through 2021. This will provide basic safeguards for fisheries worth more than US\$19 billion.

“This decision adds to pressure on the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission to adopt a management measure for eastern Pacific tropical tunas at its special session next week. Just over a week ago, IATTC failed to agree to a critical management measure, leaving these fisheries in a huge area of

ocean completely unregulated. Although WCPFC’s action is important, the entire Pacific deserves—and needs—comprehensive rules for tuna fishing.

“And while WCPFC should be commended for not reaching a stalemate, the time-consuming nature of annual negotiations and the massive costs if consensus is not reached, highlight the urgent need for a predictable, stable approach to management. If a harvest strategy had already been in place, quota-setting for tropical tunas would have been automated, leaving managers time to discuss pressing improvements that could safeguard the stocks and reduce risks to seafood buyers, such as improving oversight of transshipment activity,

finalizing rules for electronic monitoring onboard vessels, and combating illegal fishing. Disappointingly, the Commission had little time to discuss these issues, and could not even agree to hold a meeting next year for scientists and managers to come together to discuss how to progress harvest strategies.

“It is time for WCPFC to step up and modernize its approach. Governments must fully commit to harvest strategies instead of continually delaying the process. It is the only way to break the cycle of inefficient and ineffective quota negotiations and ensure the future health and sustainability of western and central Pacific fisheries.”

## President Trump Signs three important oceans-related bills passed by Congress

### Complements Interior Ocean Program Work and U.S. Efforts in Ocean Research, Education, Technology, and Marine Debris Removal

*Office of the Assistant Secretary  
Insular and International Affairs*

**WASHINGTON** – U.S. Department of the Interior Assistant Secretary, Insular and International Affairs, Douglas W. Domenech today applauded President Donald J. Trump for signing three important oceans-related bills passed by Congress: the National Sea Grant College Program Amendments Act of 2020, the Digital Coast Act, and the Save Our Seas 2.0 Act.

“These three pieces of legislation are the latest actions by President Trump to support ocean health and technology,” said Assistant Secretary Domenech, “all of which are critical to and complement the work that we do at the Department of the Interior with other federal partners in support of ocean, coastal, and marine resources health for the benefit of all Americans.”

On December 18, 2020, President Trump signed all three bills into law as follows:

- The S. 910, National Sea Grant College Program Amendments Act of 2020, now Public Law 116-221, reauthorized the National Sea Grant College Program through fiscal year 2024, through which the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) supports university-based programs that

focus on studying, conserving, and effectively using U.S. coastal resources. It also modified the Dean John A. Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship Program.

- The S.1069, Digital Coast Act, now Public Law No. 116-223, revised the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Digital Coast program for critical coastal management and data tracking for the ocean and the Great Lakes coasts.
- The S.1982, Save Our Seas 2.0 Act, now Public Law No. 116-224, established a nongovernmental Marine Debris Foundation and a prize competition for the "Genius Prize for Save Our Seas Innovation"; increases efforts to engage, cooperate, and coordinate with other governmental and nongovernmental entities to raise international awareness of plastic waste and combat marine debris; and creates infrastructure grant programs to be administered by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Assistant Secretary Domenech serves as member of the White House Ocean Policy Committee and Co-Chair of the White House Ocean Resource Management Sub-committee. Domenech is also the Co-Chair of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force.

## President Panuelo virtually receives Her Excellency Jo Cowley, Ambassador of Australia to the FSM

*FSM Information Services*

**PALIKIR, Pohnpei**—On December 22nd, 2020, His Excellency David W. Panuelo, President of the Federated States of Micronesia, virtually received Her Excellency Jo Cowley, Ambassador of Australia, for a Presentation of Credentials ceremony and follow-up courtesy call.

After the acceptance of Ambassador Cowley's credentials and confirmation to the FSM as the Ambassador of Australia, the Ambassador spoke about the close relationship and friendship between our two countries. The Ambassador described the FSM's and Australia's mutual interest in prosperity, regional security, sovereignty, and sustainability, and shared values of respect and partnership.

Ambassador Cowley, in her remarks, described at length the deep friendship between the FSM and Australia, demonstrated in the beginnings of 2020 by the FSM's donation to Australia to assist in the recovery from the extreme bushfires event, and continuing through Australia's assistance in COVID-19 prevention and mitigation efforts through the provision of critical medical supplies, test kits, and training. The Ambassador described how Australia has provided eighty million dollars (\$80,000,000) in COVID-19 vaccine support to Pacific countries, Australia's commitment to the Paris

Agreement as recently demonstrated by a five hundred-million-dollar (\$500,000,000) commitment to renewable energy projects in Pacific countries, and that the FSM can expect receipt of the two Guardian-class patrol boats in February and July, 2022.

President Panuelo, in his remarks, described the FSM's close friendship with Australia, including the Nation's ongoing appreciation for Australia's role in maintaining regional security. The President described at length the FSM's interests in developing crucial infrastructure, such as climate resilient roads, in developing innovative ways of partnering with Australia to tackle the existential threat of Climate Change, and in seeing Micronesian representation at the highest levels of leadership in the Pacific Island Forum (PIF). The President also noted the Government's continued intention to open an Embassy in Canberra.

The FSM and Australia have had diplomatic relations since July 6th, 1988.



## People's Republic of China donates \$50,000 of COVID-19 assistance to the FSM

*FSM Information Services*

**PALIKIR, Pohnpei**—Through the Great Friendship between the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and the People's Republic of China (China), on December 10th, 2020, the Honorable Livingston A. Taulung, Secretary of the Department of Health & Social Affairs and Chairman of the FSM COVID-19 Task Force, received His Excellency Huang Zheng, Ambassador of China, in a handover ceremony for an additional fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) of assistance to aid the Nation's COVID-19 preparation, mitigation, and adaptation efforts.

“On behalf of the People and Government of the FSM, I extend our continued appreciation to the People and Government of China for their support to our Nation during the time of this COVID-19 Pandemic,” Secretary Taulung said. “China has donated hundreds of thousands of dollars, personal protection equipment, and the thirty containerized isolation rooms, all of which have dramatically increased our medical capacity. Like all Chinese assistance, this humanitarian help comes without any sort of caveat—it's just genuine help from a genuine partner, and we appreciate it so very much.”



*Secretary Taulung & Ambassador Huang sign the documentation confirming the FSM's receipt of the \$50,000*

**REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST (CONSULTING SERVICES— FIRMS SELECTION)**

**COUNTRY:**

Federated States of Micronesia

**NAME OF PROJECT:** Federated States of Micronesia Maritime Investment Project (P163922)

**ASSIGNMENT TITLE:** Individual Ports Strategic Development Plans and Chuuk Lagoon Maritime Access

**REFERENCE NO.:**

FM-DOTCI-206001-CS-QCBS

The Federated States of Micronesia has received financing from the World Bank toward the cost of Maritime Investment Project, and intends to apply part of the proceeds for consulting services.

The consulting services (“the Services”) include:

- Preparation of Ports Strategic Development Plans (PSDP) for the main international ports in the states of Chuuk, Yap, Kosrae, and Pohnpei.
- Preparation of the Chuuk Lagoon Maritime Access Concept Plan (CLMACP), which is a proposed conceptual model for organized intra-lagoon maritime transportation services within the 2,130 sq. km. Chuuk Lagoon.

The PSDP will provide a clear strategic direction to improve the efficiency, productivity, safety and profitability of maritime infrastructure and port operations in FSM. The CLMACP is intended as a vital first step to realizing a viable matrix of passenger and vehicle ferry services, along with inter-island maritime freight service that will catalyze mobility among the Chuuk Lagoon Islands. The ultimate goal is to stimulate development that will lead to an increase in economic activity within the Chuuk Lagoon. The assignment objective will be achieved through the following outputs:

- Output 1: Updated demand assessment and 25-year forecast
- Output 2: Review and optimization of existing port facilities and operations
- Output 3: Institutional, financial, and sustainability assessment for each State’s Port Entity
- Output 4: Updated Port Vision and Strategy, 20-Year Investment Plan and 5-year Implementation Plans
- Output 5: Chuuk Lagoon Maritime Access Concept Plan for Weno, Tonoas, Fefan, Faichuk, Udot, and Uman.

It is expected that this assignment will take twelve months to complete and will require a total of sixteen (16) person-months input by key experts to complete.

The detailed Terms of Reference (TOR) for the assignment are attached to this Request for Expressions of Interest (REoI).

The Department of Transportation, Communication and Infrastructure (DoTC&I) now invites eligible consulting firms (“Consultants”) to indicate their interest in providing the Services. Interested Consultants should provide information demonstrating that they have the required qualifications and relevant experience to perform the Services. The shortlisting criteria are:

- Experience in the preparation of Ports Strategic Development Plans (PSDP) and that of conceptual models for organized inter-island, or other types of, scheduled maritime transportation services (a minimum of 10 years’ experience will be required).
- Experience on similar assignments as per the Terms of Reference (at least 3 similar assignments over the past 10 years).
- Proof of technical, managerial and financial capacity of the firm.
- Experience in developing countries, particularly in the Pacific or other similar environments will be an advantage.

The attention of interested Consultants is drawn to Section III, paragraphs, 3.14, 3.16, and 3.17 of the World Bank’s “Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers” July 2016 revised November 2017 and August 2018 (“Procurement Regulations”), setting forth the World Bank’s policy on conflict of interest.

Consultants may associate with other firms to enhance their qualifications, but should indicate clearly whether the association is in the form of a joint venture and/or a sub-consultancy. In the case of a joint venture, all the partners in the joint venture shall be jointly and severally liable for the entire contract, if selected.

A Consultant will be selected in accordance with the Quality and Cost Based Selection Method (QCBS) set out in the Procurement Regulations.

Further information can be obtained at the address below during office hours 0900 to 1700 Pohnpei Time (Local Time). Expressions of interest must be delivered in a written form to the address below (in person, or by mail, or by fax, or by e-mail) by Friday, January 22, 2021.

Gerard Osborne,  
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And cc to:  
ciu.fmip@gov.fm  
Central Implementation Unit

# Donated Library books head from Pearl Harbor to remote Micronesian Atoll

*Habele Outer Island Education Fund*

captains.

December 17, 2020

**Yap, FSM**—Hundreds of small islands are scattered across the vast Western Pacific Ocean. They are home to some of the most remote students on the planet.

Diverse in culture and language, these far-flung picturesque islands are strategically situated. The Federated States of Micronesia are the geopolitical crossroads of the Pacific. The islands’ dramatic role in centuries of global politics obscures persistent challenges of isolation, dispersion, and limited resources.

Schools across Micronesia need books for their school-based libraries, which serve both students and members of the community at large. The need is especially great in the remote outer islands which are strung between the larger population centers and state capitals. Staff and students at Pearl Harbor Elementary School resolved to help.

Eauripik is one such atoll, in the Micronesian State of Yap. Eauripik is home to 114 people living on less than a tenth of a square mile of land. The atoll is visited by cargo ships only a few times a year. It lies 390 miles southeast of Yap Proper and 480 miles south of the US Territory of Guam. Despite its small size and isolation, the Island has a reputation within Micronesia for having hardworking, academically minded people. Tiny Eauripik was home to the nation’s second president, the first native born Micronesian Catholic priest, and one of the nation’s most renowned ship

The Pearl Harbor Elementary School, on Moanalua Ridge near Pearl Harbor, has donated books to help the readers of Eauripik. In November they began working with John Yoshimori, a volunteer with the nonprofit “Habele.”

Forty-six boxes of high quality, age appropriate, used books were packed for donation. Habele, a nonprofit established by former Peace Corps who taught in Micronesian public schools, coordinated the donation with educators on Eauripik and Pam Legdesog, Director of the Yap State Department of Education.

For this and other donations, Habele pairs individuals and groups who have books with educators in the FSM who are seeking them. Donors simply pack their box, weigh and measure the box, and send Habele the weight and dimensions. Habele then sends the donor an envelope with pre-paid postage, mailing labels, and completed customs paperwork. Finally, donors apply the stickers and take the box their local post office.

“In curating our school library and classroom collections, we had books we no longer needed but which would be of great value and interest to students and educators who might not have the resources we enjoy” explained Denise Sumida the Pearl Harbor Elementary School Librarian. “We were thrilled to be able to share these with a school in Micronesia where the books will be read and enjoyed”



*John Yoshimori, Habele Volunteer; Denise Sumida the Pearl Harbor Elementary School Librarian; and Mr. Glenn Agusen, SSC office assistant.*



College of Micronesia-FSM  
*Student Success is our Success*

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# Spring Registration 2021

**The Spring Regular Registration is January 6 - January 8, 2021**

- **Registration is the process of officially enrolling in the College, selecting a program of study, and paying all tuition and fees. Assistance will be given by the counselors and other staff members when registering, but final responsibility for completing the registration requirements rests with the student.**

For more information visit:  
[www.comfsm.fm](http://www.comfsm.fm)



## Did You Know??

**COM-FSM Yap Campus** is located on the island of Yap. It about 210 students each semester and about 18 – 200 students during summer. The campus offers Associate of Science (AS) degree in Teacher Education– Elementary, Associate of Applied Science (AAS) Degrees in Telecommunications Technology, Electronics Technology, and Building Technology. Certificate of Achievement programs offered are: General Studies, Health Assistant/Community Health Sciences, Preschool Teacher Education, Trial Counselors, Construction Electricity, Electronics Engineering, and Telecommunications Engineering.

In addition to credited courses, Yap Campus has the flexibility and capability to offer tailored non-credit trainings/ courses to address expressed needs in the communities. It hosts several sponsored programs: Cooperative Research & Extension (CRE), Upward Bound, and Peer Counseling Center. Campus facilities to support student learning include a research lab, a fully equipped laboratory, Learning Resources Center, Computer Lab with internet connectivity, Voc Ed Computer Lab with specialized equipment, shops for voc ed programs, and 4 classrooms. Facilities to be constructed within the year include a student center and a classroom building.



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