



Chuuk Advisory Group on Education Reform

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Second Quarterly Meetings of the Chuuk Advisory Group on Education Reform

Weno, Chuuk, Federated States of Micronesia—May 3, 2013—The Chuuk Advisory Group on Education Reform (AG) held its second set of meetings in Weno, Chuuk, from April 29th through May 3rd. The Advisory Group is tasked with assisting the Chuuk State Board of Education in monitoring and implementing Chuuk State Education Reforms. The Advisory Group was established as an agreed outcome of high level meetings held by the United States Government, FSM National Government and Chuuk State Government in November of 2012. This Advisory Group held its first meeting in January of this year.

Members of the Advisory Group include three eminent friends of Chuuk State: Thomas Bussanich, Director of the Division of Budget and Grants Management in the Office of Insular Affairs within the United States Department of Interior; Patrick Tellei, President of Palau Community College; and Francis X. Hezel, a Jesuit Priest and founder of the Micronesian Seminar.

During their stay in Weno, the Advisory Group met with the Governor, the leadership of the Legislature, the Board of Education, the Director of Education and Department of Education staff on multiple occasions. At this round of Meetings, the AG worked with the Chuuk Board of Education to finalize the selection of three consultants who will provide expert advice to the Board and the AG in the implementation of the reform process. The consultants are expected to be on the ground and working in Chuuk within 4 to 6 weeks.

In addition to the selection of the consultants, the AG focused on fine-tuning a set of anticipated deliverables from the existing reform program. This included the development of a list of priority projects for the consultants to begin supporting within the Education Department, continued work on the Chuuk High School Pilot Program, acceleration of community involvement, implementation of recommended Facilities Master Plan projects, including the completion of a number of primary school consolidations, the development of a contract system for Chuuk school teachers and the creation of a comprehensive school monitoring system to insure the attendance of principals, teachers and students on a daily basis.

In their meetings, the Advisory Group once again confirmed their simple and overriding concerns that 1) students must have safe and sanitary learning environments, 2) classrooms must have qualified teachers, 3) classrooms must have the necessary school supplies, 4) principals, teachers and students must be present for class and 5) learning must take place. Advisory Group member Patrick Tellei indicated that “if we are successful in increasing the levels of attendance, we will see an immediate improvement in performance.”

With regard to community involvement in this process, Father Francis Hezel, SJ, stressed that “communities must be held accountable for their own schools, and if they are not willing to do so, funding must instead go to those communities that support the improvement of their schools through direct community involvement.”

The Advisory Group will meet again sometime in early August, prior to the Joint Economic Management Committee meetings, when the Chuuk budget will be reviewed along with the entire budget for the Federated States of Micronesia. According to Tom Bussanich, “it is time that we tie our very limited resources under the Compact of Free Association to programs and projects that provide the greatest benefit to the people of Chuuk State and the Federated States of Micronesia. To date, the education programs in Chuuk State have not met these criteria. I am very hopeful that the work of the Board of Education, with the assistance of the Advisory Group on the Chuuk State Education Reform, will correct this long-standing problem.”

For additional information on background documents, meeting proceedings, correspondence and Advisory Group reports, visit <http://www.pitiviti.org/chuuk>.

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