



Chuuk Advisory Group on Education Reform

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Chuuk Advisory Group on Education Reform confirms progress on education reform and facilitates breakthrough to accelerate education infrastructure improvements

Weno, Chuuk, Federated States of Micronesia—November 8, 2013—The Chuuk Advisory Group on Education Reform focused on the issue of improving education infrastructure in Chuuk during its Fourth Quarterly Meeting in Weno, Chuuk, during the week of November 4, 2013. The Advisory Group is assisting the Chuuk State Board of Education and the Department of Education to follow through on reform commitments that were made at the High Level Meeting on Education Reform held in November of 2012, with representatives from the FSM National Government, the U.S. Government and the Chuuk State Government.

Thomas Bussanich, the Director of the Division of Budget and Grants Management in the Office of Insular Affairs within the United States Department of the Interior and Patrick Tellei, the President of Palau Community College attended the meeting. Francis X. Hezel, a Jesuit Priest and the founder of the Micronesian Seminar was unable to attend this particular meeting.

While the Advisory Group discussed a broad range of issues with Chuuk Leaders and educators, the focus of this visit was on breaking through barriers and accelerating the improvement of education infrastructure in Chuuk. Since the beginning of the Amended Compact in 2004, only one high school has been constructed in Chuuk despite the availability of significant available funding for infrastructure. An estimated \$140 million remains available for Chuuk State to improve infrastructure over the next ten years, and all parties agreed education must be a priority going forward.

To assist in moving forward on the construction of school buildings, a one day meeting was held on Thursday, November 7th between Chuuk State Leadership and the Advisory Group, along with the Infrastructure Grants Manager for the Department of Interior's Office of Insular Affairs, Steve Savage and the head of the FSM national government's project management unit, Mr. Bruce Howell, PE. The meeting fully achieved its expected outcomes of: (i) a clear understanding of the challenges and obstacles that have stalled action on education infrastructure in Chuuk to date, together with a clear articulation of workable solutions; (ii) a clear and workable "model" for project preparation, modular school design, and construction management that meets Chuuk's specific needs; (iii) a clear and specific list of projects/school sites that will be used for initial site assessments; and (iv) a clear understanding of timeline and tasks to be completed, as soon as practicable, to move forward on major renovations and new construction at school sites.

During the meeting, a revised list of 25 prioritized public school sites in all five regions of the state were agreed upon to move forward with professional engineering work and other necessary assessments to determine their appropriateness for major renovation and/or new

construction. It was agreed by all parties that this process will require outside engineering contractors and at least one full time project manager.

Through this close partnership and planning effort by Chuuk State, the National Government through the Project Management Unit and the Office of Insular Affairs, with the assistance of the Advisory Group, it is hoped to begin project construction on a shortened list of schools prior to the next school year.

According to Tom Bussanich, “we feel that with this high level meeting, we have moved significantly forward in our efforts to overcome a variety of obstacles to building and improving schools here in Chuuk. It is our hope that these efforts will result in the construction of numerous schools next school year to the benefit of students, teachers and the broader community.”

The Advisory Group also continued to discuss a broad variety of other issues directed at improving educational performance in Chuuk’s primary and secondary schools. The Board of Education and the Advisory Group agreed on a revised list of school consolidations that will be completed by December 31, 2013. The Board of Education also agreed that they would finalize comprehensive plans, with the assistance of consultants, for teacher and professional educator contracts, school attendance monitoring, Board Training, a Primary School Pilot Project, WorldTeach volunteer utilization, basic school standards, and procurement, distribution and warehousing of supplies.

During its one week of meetings in Chuuk, the Advisory Group once again held separate and joint meetings with the Chuuk State Governor, the Legislature, the Board of Education and Department of Education to discuss the on-going progress of ten High Level commitments made at the High Level event as well as additional recommendations made by the Advisory Group during its first three quarterly meetings. The AG and the Board have developed a productive working relationship as they partner to ensure implementation of needed reforms.

The Advisory Group will return to Chuuk for its next quarterly meeting on or about the last week of February 2014.

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

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