

MEDIA RELEASE

Chuuk Women's Council Officially Launches FSM's First Violence Against Women Counselling Centre

Monday 9 March 2020 (Chuuk State, FSM): The Chuuk Women's Council is today officially launching its new "Tongen Inepwineu Counselling Centre," which translated means "Love of the Family Counselling Centre".

The Tongen Inepwineu Counselling Centre is the first crisis support centre for survivors of violence against women in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM). The Centre provides free, confidential and non-judgmental counselling and trained "safe counsellors" that provides counselling and support to survivors of domestic violence, rape, sexual harassment and child sexual abuse.

To develop its crisis counselling project, Chuuk Women's Council (CWC) has received funding and extensive on-going technical support from the Australian Government through Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development (Pacific Women).

In his opening remarks, the Lieutenant Governor, Mr Mark Mailo said it is unfortunate that FSM has high rates of violence against women where it is estimated that one in every three women in FSM have experienced physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner. "Chuuk State has the highest rate of violence against women compared to the other FSM States. This plague of violence in families is against our culture and our human rights values".

The Chuuk Women's Council project has taken ten years to complete and includes the renovation of the Centre's building to meet the required standards for a counselling service facility along with ongoing professional development and training of its counsellors ready for full service.

Christina Stinnett (better known as "Kiki") is President of the Chuuk Women's Council, which is an umbrella organization of more than 60 women's organisations in Chuuk State and more than 1000 women members.

"I believe that all women should live a life free from all forms of violence and discrimination. But it is essential that all women in Chuuk are made aware that there is a service available for survivors of violence against women. We had our Market Day on February 28, 2020 and a woman said and I quote, "Why now! You should have provided this service long time ago. This is good that we have this in Chuuk now as we need this!" I agree with this woman, if we don't do it now, then when and who will do it"!

"Tongen Inepwineu Counseling Centre envisions a Chuuk State that is free from all forms of violence and discrimination against women. All its activities are survivor or women centred which means we do not blame the women for the domestic violence, rape and sexual harassment that she has experienced or is experiencing. It is never the woman's fault. The perpetrator is responsible for his violent behaviour! The more we give excuses for his violent

behaviour, the more we are allowing the perpetrator to continue with his criminal act. As we all know, all forms of violence against women is a crime in Chuuk”!

“We would like to express our sincere "Kinisou Chapur", or thank you, to the Australian Government and its Pacific Women team who have tirelessly supported us to make this dream a reality in funding the Federated States of Micronesia’s first Counseling Centre for survivors of violence against women here in Chuuk State”.