

## ADB, World Bank Support High-Speed Internet for Micronesia

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The Asian Development Bank's (ADB) Board of Directors has approved a total of \$36.6 million in grants to help fund the delivery of low-cost, high quality internet service in Kosrae in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM); Tarawa and Kiritimati Island in Kiribati; and Nauru, which will benefit around 75,000 people.

The assistance, comprised of a \$21.6 million grant to Kiribati and a \$15 million grant to Nauru, is part of the Improving Internet Connectivity for

Micronesia Project supported by ADB. The project will help install a submarine cable connection between Kiritimati Island to a proposed transpacific cable system connecting Australia and Hawaii, while financing Nauru's share of the East Micronesia Cable (EMC) System. The EMC system will be cofinanced by the World Bank and ADB.

"The project will complement the ongoing and existing cable systems connecting all the major islands in the North Pacific region," said Emma Veve, Director in ADB's Pacific Department. "The cable project will connect the Micronesian subregion to the rest of the world and provide the potential for faster, more affordable internet."

In all three participating countries, internet service is relatively weak, although the demand for cellular phones—the primary form of internet connection—is strong and growing.

Until recently, the vast distance of Kiribati and Nauru from the nearest internet hub had been a major cost constraint for these countries when they explored the installation and operation of independent submarine cable systems for their limited demand. A regional approach connecting Kosrae in the FSM, Tarawa in Kiribati, and Nauru was a technical solution which will help the countries share the capital and operational costs.

The project will deliver faster, better quality internet, which could facilitate education and training for the labor force, raise the efficiency of the delivery of basic public services, and open new business opportunities.

Supporting inclusive growth and investment in the information and communications technology sector are key focus areas of ADB's Pacific Approach, which guides ADB's operational focus in the region.

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