

**FSM National Review of progress of the  
Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)**

**(2024)**

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## Section One: Highlights

### **The context of FSM**

The Federated States of Micronesia is a relatively young country. It gained its independence as a sovereign national in 1979. The island national is located in the western Pacific Ocean and consists of four autonomous states, Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei and Yap, spread out over 607 islands with a combined land mass of 702 square kilometers. The Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of FSM covers a vast sea area of over 3 million square kilometers making it one of the largest in the Pacific. The EEZ is rich in marine resources and is a significant part of FSM's economy with purse seine and long-line fisheries targeting mainly skipjack, yellowfin, and bigeye tuna.

The population of FSM is currently less than 100,000 (2024) predominantly Micronesians. English is the official language, but states have regional languages including Chuukese, Pohnpeian, Kosraean and Yapese. There are varied dialects and other languages between the islands. The two biggest religions are Roman Catholic and Protestant.

The FSM is a state party to CRC (1993), CEDAW (2004) and the CRPD (2016). The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Sustainable Development Goals, and the Climate Change Gender Action Plan are key frameworks for FSM to progress to achieving gender equality.

The country-level review process was a timely process for a cross-sectoral analysis of the progress of gender goals in FSM. Gender equality is integrated in the key government policy frameworks of FSM including the FSM Strategic Development Plan (2004 – 2023), and the FSM Gender Equality Policy (2019 – 2023). In addition to the BPfA, regional and Micronesian subregional commitments for gender for the FSM Government include the Pacific Platform for Action (PPA) (2018-2030), the Revitalized Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration (2023), and the An Towepo Declaration (2024). FSM is a member of the Micronesian Islands Forum (MIF) which agreed in 2019 to establish a Gender Equality Committee. In 2023 and 2024 MIF Leaders mandated the Gender Equality Committee to develop the Gender Equality Framework following consultations in the member states.

The National Government has committed to establishing a stand-alone department for social affairs which will ensure increased programs and budget for gender and social inclusion. This is to respond to challenges that FSM continues to face is inadequate resources and capacity to sustain the momentum to advance gender.

The review is informed by ongoing engagement and dialogue with the national government and states on various platforms including the National Women's Forum (November 2023), the Micronesian Ministers for Women Conference with the outcome being the An Towepo Declaration (April 2024), and the FSM National Health Summit (May 2024) setting out the National Health Development Framework (2024 – 2034).

The Gender Development Unit within the Social Affairs Division of the Department of Health and Social Affairs coordinated the development of this review. The FSM Government has a mechanism responsible for reporting and implementation of international treaties and commitments for human rights, gender and SDG reporting and promotion, the National Human Rights and SDG Taskforce. The Taskforce was established by a Presidential Executive Order in

2022. The Taskforce membership consists of representatives of national government departments. State representatives, CSOs and development partners can be members by invitation.

The Review was led by representatives from different government departments including the National Department of Justice, the Department of Resource and Development, Department of Environment, Climate Change and Emergency Management, the Department of Education, and the Department of Health and Social Affairs and development partners.

FSM's commitment to gender equality is evident through legislative and policy frameworks for gender equality. The key national policies that entrench gender as a development goal and government priority include the National Strategic Development Plan (2004-2023), National Gender Equality Policy (2018-2023), National Eliminating Violence Against Women Policy and National Plan of Action (2021 – 2025), National Disability Policy (2009-2016), and National Youth Policy (2017-2023). Most of the policies are currently being reviewed, an opportunity for strengthened strategies for FSM to address its development priorities and mainstream gender through a whole-of-government approach.

FSM has specific sectoral gender policies for climate change, fisheries, energy, ICT, transportation and infrastructure, and agriculture.

The FSM Government through the Social Affairs Division of the Department of Health and Social Affairs, in partnership with the FSM National Council of Women coordinates an FSM National Women's Conference every two years. The outcomes from the Conference are also important indicators of priority gender areas for FSM. The Conference is a critical platform for the National and States governments to engage and dialogue with women in all their diversity in FSM.

### **Access to data**

Despite ongoing challenges, FSM strives to collect data for planning and development purposes. Currently the government is conducting three national surveys. The National Social Indicators Survey will commence in the last quarter of 2024 and the findings are scheduled to be published in March 2025. The consultations to inform the National Strategic Development Plan, is a stock take of all departments and programs at the national and state level. The government has also been working to validate the process and indicators for a national survey. Once this process is completed, a national survey will be carried out.

The FSM Government has strengthened its institutional and operational capacity through the gender development program, establishing positions for a Gender Development Officer, EVAWG Coordinator, Women's Economic Empowerment Coordinator and Gender Digital Project Coordinator. There is also a Family Protection specialist attached to the program. Other staff in the Social Affairs Division work on human rights, youth support services, disability and elderly services, child protection services, and social development and sports.

There is state commitment to advancing gender equality, and progress is ongoing with strengthening of legislative and policy frameworks however, ongoing challenges include lack of human resources and limited funding for programs for capacity building, policy strengthening,

data collection and analysis, and strengthened and sustained partnerships with development partners.

## Section Two: Priorities, achievements, challenges and setbacks

### **Achievements, challenges and setbacks in progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women?**

The FSM National Gender Equality Policy has been the foundation for increased awareness on gender as a key factor for development, and progress of gender equality laws, policies and programs. The policy was key to the endorsement of the National Eliminating Violence Against Women (EVAWG) Policy. The policy has specific action areas for the national government and each of the states. There was a delay with implementation of the policy due to covid, but the Gender Development Unit is carrying out dissemination and monitoring of implementation of the policy at the national and state levels. All four states will be reached by the end of 2024. Of the four states of the country, two states, Pohnpei and Kosrae have family protection and domestic violence laws, and Yap and Chuuk state have draft laws. Trafficking is also a key EVAWG concern in FSM and laws and programs have been strengthened to address this issue.

Women are employed in various sectors including agriculture, fisheries, tourism and public service. The participation of women in employment is lower than men.

Trends in education data in FSM show that there is an improvement in enrollment in primary education for girls. While there is an increase in the number of female college graduates, there are still lower number of girls graduating with qualifications in STEM. There are ongoing efforts by the FSM Government to ensure women have equal opportunities as boys in all levels of education from primary to tertiary education.

The healthcare system in FSM consists of a mix of public and private services being primarily provided by the government. Non-communicable diseases and maternal and child health issues remain priorities for the health sector. For women, the key barriers to access the health care system is geographical barriers for those in remote islands, and cultural stigma and gender responsibilities.

While there is steady increase of participation of women in leadership positions, there is ongoing work to progress advancements for women empowerment and leadership in FSM. In the FSM cultural context, women traditionally assume domestic responsibilities that shape the gender relations and have influence women's experience in life. Although these responsibilities are traditionally designed and are complementary to the men's role in ways of power-sharing, colonization and imported value systems have contributed to the roles being manifested to systems and practices that marginalize and disempower women. Despite commitments to address prevailing gender equality challenges, limited resources and capacities within the FSM Department of Health Services & Social Affairs impact efforts to advance gender equality and equity goals.

The current FSM Congress members serving from 2022 consisted of 3 women which accounts for 21%. Representation of women in the Congress played a significant role in advocating the need of

gender equality and women empowerment in FSM and at international meetings. FSM currently has the highest number of women in Congress. Out of the fourteen seats in Congress, three are women. Pohnpei State also has a female Senator. Of the five governments in the country, the Chief of Staff of the President’s Office is a woman, and the Chief of Staff of the Governors of Kosrae and Chuuk are women. Although there have been significant achievements for women as leaders, women are still viewed as minorities in the cultural context of FSM. Men are always a priority, and there is still inequality in the labor force participation and women still have a way to go to enjoy equal participation in sports.

Fig. FSM National Government Members of Congress:

Gender	Pohnpei	Chuuk		Kosrae	Yap	<b>Total</b>	Percentage
Male	3	5		1	2	<b>11</b>	78%
Female	1	1		1	0	<b>3</b>	21%
Total	4	6		2	2	<b>14</b>	

### **Top five priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls in FSM through laws, policies and/or programmes?**

The right to equal protection by the law is set out in the Constitution of FSM. Article 4 of the Constitution sets out that everyone has a right to equal protection regardless of sex, race, national origin or social status. Priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls in FSM is set out in the National Gender Equality Policy. The Gender Policy is aligned to the strategic goals for FSM as set out in the National Strategic Development Plan 2004 – 2023. The priorities for FSM include greater financial independence for greater and inclusive participation in economic, political and social life. There has been focus and improvement in education and women in management positions. Gender mainstreaming is also a key priority to ensure that there are systematic approaches for sustainable development. Climate change and disaster programs can exacerbate the hardships that women already face, and the government has called for greater inclusion for women, girls, women with disabilities, older women and girls in projects on the environment, climate change and disaster response. The other key areas that are set out as goals in the FSM Gender Equality Policy include:

- Better representation of women in decision-making
- Elimination of gender-based violence
- Equitable education outcomes
- Barriers facing women in the workforce
- Better healthcare and improved choices over fertility, and

- Gender mainstreaming.

Having national frameworks and mechanisms to advance gender priorities including the Social Affairs Division, the National and States Women Councils and Associations and the FSM two-yearly National Women's Conference ensures maintained momentum to address gender in FSM. Commitments to international gender frameworks such as CEDAW and the BPfA Declaration also sets out a parallel system for monitoring and guidance of measures to address gender. The top five priorities for the FSM Government to accelerate progress of women and girls is as follows:

### 1. Strengthening Legal Frameworks for Gender Equality

FSM is progressing by ensuring clear and explicit provisions in its laws and policies that address gender equality and non-discrimination. Laws and policies on specific areas where women have experienced unequal access to legal protection and discrimination passed by FSM include the cyber bullying law (S.L No 10L-57-21) in Pohnpei, the National EVAWG Policy (2021 – 2025), and maternity leave. There are continuing efforts to strengthen policy frameworks for domestic violence laws in Pohnpei and Kosrae State and enact domestic violence laws in Chuuk and Yap State. The whole-of-government approach of FSM is to also ensure that gender is integrated into laws and policies for all sectors including ICT, and Climate Change and Energy.

### 2. Improving Access to Healthcare Services

The Federated States of Micronesia hosted its ten-yearly Health Summit in April 2024, which culminated in a 10-year Strategic Framework for Sustainable Health Development for the Federated States of Micronesia from 2024 - 2034. Gender equality and women's health were fundamental components of the Framework. We integrated gender equality as a key strategic action for the priority area on Leadership, Governance and Management, setting out that FSM will 'establish and strengthen a partnership policy that will provide a framework that outlines governing bodies to address...gender equality.' Another priority area in the Framework is Social and Environment Determinants of Health where FSM has entrenched a strategic direction to strengthen its gender programs.

Two key developments in the past five years are the use of technology to address access to reproductive health care for women includes the FSM Telehealth Project and the Telepathology Program. In the Telehealth program, patients in remote areas and outer islands have their electronic health records (HER) sent from dispensaries to health professionals in a hospital in another location. The Telepathology Program targets women. The Telepathology Program connects the FSM histopathology laboratory to a volunteered pathologist in Japan to assess pap smears for abnormalities and provide reports. This telepathology system consists of high-powered resolution lenses that capture images of pap smears which are transmitted to Japan for telediagnosis.

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Programs for early detection of cancer are also piloted in FSM. In the State of Yap, the burden of cervical cancer in Yap is significant at 33.7/100,000 women and is the top reproductive cancer among Yap women. The pilot project facilitated self-collection sampling by women themselves to be the norm ensuring that all eligible women can get a cervical screen at least once in their lifetime and those found with any of the high-risk HPV types that cause cervical cancer will be able to be tracked, triaged and treated if needed by ablative therapy on island. One hundred percentage HPV vaccination coverage also remains a priority for FSM to achieve improved maternal health outcomes, reduced maternal mortality rates, and better reproductive health services for women and girls.

### 3. Enhancing Economic Opportunities for Women

Enhancing economic opportunities for women in FSM involves a range of strategies and initiatives ranging from targeted educational pathway to increase women's participation in business, STEM, leadership position. Targeted policies and programs to enable women to access credit, loans, and microfinancing is an area FSM has continued to strengthen to provide financial services tailored to women's needs. FSM is at a time when it has the highest number of women in Congress. Representation of women in decision-making positions within both local and national government increases the guarantee of women's needs and perspectives considered in economic policies and programs.

### 4. Addressing Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

The Eliminating Violence Against Women and Girls Policy (2021 – 2025) sets out action plans for the five governments of FSM to address GBV. The actions plan set out comprehensive targets to strengthen governance and response activities, coordination between service providers and availability of survivor-centered GBV services, evidence informed interventions to address harmful social norms, attitudes and beliefs, resource mobilization for response and prevention activities strengthening of the national gender machinery to empower women and mainstream gender through a whole-of-government approach.

FSM is about to embark on a Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) which will provide updated data of the wellbeing of children and women. The survey also has GBV indicators. There has been legislative and policy reform to address GBV. Laws have been passed, are being developed or scoping undertaken to address domestic violence, human trafficking, cyberbullying and technology-facilitated violence. Standard operating procedures are in place for departments health, and the government is committed to carrying out prevention programs in communities. Two states with legislation, Kosrae and Pohnpei, are developing or strengthening coordinated and holistic approaches through implementation plans for their legislation. Chuuk has a counselling service for GBV, and all the states are scoping for the establishment of referral pathways including the establishment or strengthening of counselling services.

### 5. Climate change, food and water security.

In 2023, FSM hosted its 9<sup>th</sup> National Women's Conference highlighting the impacts of climate change on food and water security as an eminent threat. In March 2024, the President declared a

state of emergency due to severe drought conditions. The government then immediately took steps to ensure distribution of facilities for equitable access to water including water tanks to remote and outer island communities, support with communities for improved sanitation standards, and engagement with communities to monitor the drought conditions, water supply and agricultural impacts.

### **Specific actions to prevent discrimination and promote the rights of marginalized groups of women and girls**

FSM has addressed discrimination experienced by women and girls by the following:

1. Strengthening of laws and policies: there has been laws passed to address violence against women which is a form of discrimination. This includes laws on domestic violence and human trafficking. A National Violence Against Women Policy and the Gender Equality Policy also set out measures to address discrimination.
2. The FSM National Women's Conference is a two-yearly platform for dialogue between women's groups both in government and civil society groups to engage with government on their current issues and make recommendations on how government can be more inclusive and address areas in which do not have equal opportunities and access to government services and programs.
3. The FSM National Gender Policy is the key government policy that sets out a whole-of-government approach to mainstreaming gender across various government sectors. State administrations and government departments also have gender integrated into their policies and programs.

### **The impact of crisis in the past five years in FSM.**

- **Covid 19**

Unlike other pandemics like measles outbreak, chikungunya, dengue fever, the COVID-19 pandemic had long lasting impacts in the FSM. From the gender perspective, women were impacted by these pandemics due the reduction of economic opportunities, access to reproductive and maternal health care. Although comparatively FSM has low infection and mortality rates compared to other countries, the health system faced challenges to respond and manage cases. The impact on the private sector, especially small business, was catastrophic with many businesses closed or having to operate at reduced operations. There was an increase in people migrating to the United States for employment opportunities as a result and FSM continues to face challenges with a reduced workforce.

A lesson that FSM drew from the pandemic which worked was community support. Although there were social distancing rules and border control, which were successful because FSM was one of the last countries in the world to have community transmission, as soon as the population realized that they were getting infected in their homes, they reached out and supported each other to ensure everyone in the community had food, water, and care. While there are heart wrenching losses for FSM, there was a heightened sense of community resilience. There is a continuing need

for strengthening of the health system for robust and adaptive response strategies for future pandemics and an ongoing need to strengthen digital access for education and other services. There is a need for investment to support recovery and resilience.

- **Climate crisis**

The impacts of climate change in FSM include sea-level rise, drought, unpredictable weather patterns, and coastal inundation. This heightens the risks to health and safety for women and girls, and more so for women and girls with disabilities, and those in remote outer islands. And consequentially this also leads to health risks and social, cultural, economic and political issues including water borne diseases, increased risk of GBV, and economic hardship.

### Section Three: Progress across the 12 critical areas of concern

This section covers progress across the 12 critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action. To facilitate the analysis, the 12 critical areas of concern have been clustered into six overarching dimensions that highlight the alignment of the BPfA with the 2030 Agenda. This approach is aimed at facilitating reflections about the implementation of both frameworks in a mutually reinforcing manner to accelerate progress for all women and girls.

#### **Inclusive development, shared prosperity and decent work**

- **Actions to advance gender equality in the world of work (including informal and non-standard employment as well as entrepreneurship)**

The Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) has undertaken several key initiatives in the past five years to advance gender equality in the workplace, encompassing formal, informal, and non-standard employment, as well as entrepreneurship. These actions demonstrate a commitment to improving the status of women in the workforce. A significant step was the amendment to FSM's maternity leave laws, extending the paid leave to eight consecutive weeks for all FSM personnel, regardless of employment status or whether they are in permanent positions or probationary periods. This expansion, achieved through Public Law 22-61, significantly enhances protection for working mothers.

Further progress is evidenced in Kosrae, where State Law 12/286 provides for up to 90 days of paid maternity leave for all government employees, again irrespective of employment status. This inclusive legislation reflects a collaborative effort between the government and the Utwe Women's Organization, highlighting a concerted approach to advancing women's rights.

Pohnpei has also strengthened its provisions, with State Law No. 10L-85-22 offering three months of maternity leave and two weeks of paternity leave. Additionally, a 45% pay increase has been implemented across Pohnpei State, contributing to improved minimum wages for all workers, and thus benefiting women proportionally.

These legislative changes, along with the ongoing focus on the inclusion of informal and non-standard employment considerations underscore the reform efforts of FSM.

- **Digital Gender.**

FSM has made concerted efforts to reduce the gender digital divide and address the increasing occurrence of digital safety which disproportionately impacts women.

The National Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and Telecommunications Policy is the key policy that addresses ICT and national development. Goal 1 of the Policy is to achieve accessible, secure and affordable broadband communications for all and objective 1 of this goal is to ensure that mechanisms are in place access to be non-discriminatory considering gender, economic status, education, age and persons with disabilities. The policy also explicitly sets out that work to implement the policy must be carried in collaboration with women.

A Digital Gender Coordinator in the National Gender Development Unit is pioneering work on digital gender through legislative and policies, data collection and monitoring to track progress of women's increased access to technology, pilot programs on the synergy between technology and women's safety, women's economic empowerment, and women's health care and reproductive rights and the connection between the new digital age and changing cultural norms.

For the next 5-years, one of the objectives of the FSM Government is to increase participation in the digital economy on a gender informed basis, including policy development, research, monitoring and evaluation, citizen engagement and outreach activities relating to digital literacy and digital entrepreneurship. Assessments have shown major challenges to address toward women's progress in the society. To mitigate the challenges of restoring women's position of full and equal participation in the social, economic and political sphere, the Gender Digital Infrastructure is taking a 2-step approaches: 1. Minimum 'do no harm' standards to minimize any risks and mitigate any negative impacts and 2. Maximize opportunities for impact through targeted activities to improve equality, empowerment and participation.

Women and men access the internet and use digital services at similar rates in FSM.

Globally, women are far less connected digitally and this gender gap is growing—the global Internet user gender gap grew from 11 percent in 2013 to 12 percent in 2016, according to data from the ITU. The gender gap is even larger in the world's Least Developed Countries (LDCs) at 31 percent. However, there is no evidence of a gender gap in FSM for access to the internet or digital services. Available evidence suggests that the increased availability of ICT services in FSM has been equally shared by men and women. While gender-disaggregated data is unavailable for mobile phone and internet subscriptions, 2019 data on the advertising audience for social media platforms in FSM offers a strong insight into the gendered nature of ICT uptake more broadly and indicates a relatively equal distribution of accounts between men and women.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, extensive stakeholder and community consultations carried out in the four States during 2019, including surveys of women's groups and school children, identified poverty and age, rather than

gender, as key factors behind access, with poorer and older people accessing the internet at significantly lower rates than wealthier and younger people.

Safety online is a major concern in FSM, particularly for women. Women experience the internet differently to men. International studies have found that women are more concerned about privacy risks online than men. Women are more likely to keep their profiles private and delete unwanted contacts. Women also represent most victims of stalking and cyberstalking, are far more likely to be sexually harassed online and more likely to describe these interactions as extremely upsetting. Younger women are acutely vulnerable to sexual coercion and trafficking, which may present an additional vulnerability online. Stakeholder, citizen engagement and community consultations during 2019 confirmed the relevance of these issues in FSM. Consultations found high rates of community concerns regarding the digital circulation of sexually degrading images and videos, often without consent and including girls below the age of consent. Furthermore, focus group discussions highlighted the enduring shame and stigma that these instances had on women and girls compared with their male counterparts. Safety online is a key issue for women and policy priority in FSM. Policies and legislative responses to regulate harmful digital content are important to ensure that women feel safe online and are not discouraged (whether from personal experience or community pressure) from participating online.

Persistent inequalities in labor force participation, health and education, and participation in leadership roles, as well as violence against women and girls, pose risks to the ability of women to take full advantage of digital services.

Policies are needed to help ensure that the digital transformation offers opportunities and benefits to men and women equitably—and that any adverse impacts are mitigated effectively. At the global level, World Economic Forum data indicates that digital services, robotics and artificial intelligence (AI) will lead to job losses of about 5 million across the top 15 world economies and that the impact of these job losses will differ by gender. Men will get one new job out of the three jobs they lose; whereas women, on the other hand, will get only one job out of the five jobs they are losing. Strategies are needed to ensure that a digital access gap does not develop in FSM, particularly citizen engagement, digital literacy, digital entrepreneurship and other strategies to increase awareness around digital skills and digital opportunities for women. Digital literacy training is critical to help users transition from paper-based transactions to the digital government operating environment.

Gender issues need to be considered as part of the basic design and rollout of digital services.

Currently, gender mainstreaming commitments are housed with the Gender Development Office within DOHSA which is responsible for ensuring the development of gender informed policies in FSM. However, this work is constrained by a lack of resources, poor collaboration with other required government institutions—particularly limited sharing of statistical information—and coordination challenges with counterparts from the states.<sup>7</sup> The Gender Development Office needs substantial additional resources for it to engage effectively throughout the policy development and

implementation phases. A core priority for the Gender Development Office is to provide guidance to decision makers on the actions needed to ensure that men and women share in the benefits and opportunities created by digital services, and to help ensure the collection of gender disaggregated data to help track these benefits. The focus areas identified by the gender policy strategy currently under preparation by the National Government are expected to align with the FSM National Strategic Development Plan (SDP)—that includes: (a) better representation of women in decision-making; (b) elimination of gender-based violence; (c) better access to education and transition to work for both girls and boys; (d) addressing barriers facing women in the workforce; (e) women controlling their fertility and spacing their children; and (f) gender mainstreaming.

- **Macroeconomic policies**

The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of FSM is approximately \$360 million, primarily driven by government services, agriculture, fishing and significant external financial assistance from development partners, particularly the United States through the Compact of Free Association (COFA). The COFA is a relationship between FSM and the United States for economic aid and access to services and security arrangements. The current COFA commenced in 2024 and will be for a twenty-year period.

The fiscal policy of FSM is shaped by its relationship with the United States under the COPA and unique economic and governance structure. The national government and the four states, Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei and Yap have distinct responsibilities and revenue sources including taxes and fees. In 2023 there was an increase in allocation of fishing fees with 50% of the total value of fishing fees allocated to the states. The budget is subject to approval by the National FSM Congress.

The macroeconomic policy of FSM prioritizes sustained economic development, economic development and self-reliance. Like many countries, FSM's economy was affected by the Covid-19 pandemic with disruptions to local businesses. Recovery strategies have been and are being developed to stimulate growth and resilience. The FSM Strategic Development Plan and the FSM Gender Equality Policy are the overarching gender frameworks that facilitate inclusion and equal participation of women with economic development programs and benefits. Training and capacity building initiatives have been implemented in 2019 and 2023 to enhance understanding of gender-responsive budgeting among government officers and CSOs.

FSM is currently reviewing its Strategic Development Plan, and it is an opportunity to articulate specific targets for greater access for women's access to financial resources and technical assistance. The FSM government is implementing programs with allocation of small grants targeting women's economic activities.

The 2019 (pre-Covid) estimates are that unemployment in FSM is around 20%. The job market in FSM is largely the public sector and there are limited opportunities in the private sector. The covid-19 pandemic significantly impacted unemployment rates with job losses and economic disruptions in various sectors. The COFA also sets out work rights for FSM citizens in the United States and a significant number of FSM nationals move to the states to seek employment. Remittances sent back to families in FSM constitutes as important source of income for many households. A considerable number of women in FSM work in education and healthcare and in informal employment or small to medium businesses with markets, cooking, sewing and crafts. While this work allows flexibility, there are limitations with formal job security and benefits including retirement benefit and health insurance.

FSM has experienced fluctuations in inflation influenced by various factors including global economic conditions, supply chain issues, reliance on imported goods, increased cost of living including with essential goods such food, fuel and healthcare. With increased costs, women carry

a higher burden with stretching their earnings with the decrease in purchasing power, Women are also likely to pull back on their own personal health expenditure to support their families with the reduced ability to afford healthcare.

Currently there is lower participation of women in business enterprises at 48% compared to 68% for men. The FSM Government prioritizes greater involvement of women in economic activities, and it has partnered with development partners to implement programs for allocation of small grants for women's economic empowerment.

## **Poverty eradication, social protection and social services**

- **Poverty among women and girls**

FSM has increasingly ensured that projects for poverty reduction supported by development partners integrate gender in their designs, implementation and data collection. FSM has also taken steps to ensure that women have greater access to economic empowerment programs in both formal and informal settings. The 8<sup>th</sup> FSM National Women's Conference (2023) defined economic empowerment to include increase in women's access to and control over productive resources including finance and land, decent work, increased voice, agency and meaningful participation in economic decision-making, preservation of cultural skills, development and engagement in local trade, work life balance, revenue-earning enterprises, leadership, workforce participation and career advancement. FSM recognizes that traditional knowledge and practices and women's cultural identity are fundamental for women's economic advancement with access to land and clan rights.

There have been efforts undertaken to eradicate poverty through strengthening women's access to economic activities and eradicate poverty. FSM Association of Chambers of Commerce provides opportunities for women for information sharing, networking, training, and sharing of funding opportunities. Financial institutions are also integrating gender in their programs with loan packages for women, although there is room for targeted measures for women for larger loan packages. The Micronesian Conservation Trust, Chuuk Public Utility Corporation and the College of Micronesia embed gender equality and equity strategies in their organizational structures with women making up 50% or more of leadership positions. During COVID, the National FSM Government established programs to subsidize utilities for senior citizens and low-income families.

- **Social protection for women and girls**

To better organize the national gender machinery and ensure that all gender and protection concerns are addressed under one umbrella, the FSM Social Protection cluster working group was established in the year 2020 (with ongoing activities at both National and Pohnpei State level) and revived in various iterations 2022 and 2023. In 2024, there was a meeting to reestablish the social protection working group under the National Human Rights Taskforce addressing the scope, membership and technical support that will be provided to revive the social protection cluster working group at the national level. State-level social service offices are needed as well to support

and assist, implementing the activities in each respective State and reporting to the national machinery. Coordination between the governments will ensure that gender and protection concern and issues of the Federated States of Micronesia and its' states are addressed as effectively as possible with one official working group or machinery supporting the reporting of international agreements.

- **Health outcomes for women and girls**

The FSM National and State Governments recently endorsed a ten-year strategy and one of the key actions for the strategy is to strengthen and improve age, gender, youth, child protection and disability programs. The FSM 2024 – 2034 Health Strategy has seven overarching priorities:

- Leadership, Governance & Management,
- Human Resources for Health,
- Health Service Delivery,
- Health Information, Planning and Surveillance,
- Health through the Life Course (from womb to tomb),
- Social and Environmental Determinants of Health (which included gender), and
- Health Financing.

The prevalent health issues for women in FSM includes NCD, cancers, spikes in gynecological health issues, and access to health care services, specialist referrals, consultations, diagnostics and appropriate treatment.

FSM reemphasized a collective consensus at the National Women's Conference in 2023 that realization of women's right to health is fundamental for the wellbeing of society. There is a need for continued commitment to advocate and support key state institutions to take measures to actively improve the health and wellbeing of women and their families. Screening or regular health checks are primary tools to detect disease conditions for early treatment and prevention.

1 in 3 women have NCD according to FSM dataset, and NCDs account for 75% of deaths with indications that NCD-related mortality and morbidity are increasing despite NCD programs awareness and education to the public to promote and seek NCD interventions.

Health programs in schools are also a critical area. FSM is in the process of finalizing its National Early Childhood Policy. In consultations for the policies, related issues were identified including access to water, a need for improved sanitation, access to health dispensaries and needs of children with disabilities. These issues are experienced in all the states of FSM.

There remains a need for technical support to scope and develop specific policies on inclusive education for children with disabilities, particularly children with visual, speech and hearing impairment.

## **Freedom from violence, stigma and stereotypes**

- **Gender-based violence**

FSM has focused on family violence, trafficking and violence against women and girls facilitated by technology as priorities for action on gender-based violence. These are priority areas identified because of their high prevalence in FSM. The Family Health and Safety Study (2024) of FSM found that almost one in three women (32.8%) of women ever-partnered experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a partner at least once in their lifetime. While there is no comprehensive study on trafficking there has been anecdotal evidence and reported cases that indicate that there is trafficking, and violence facilitated by technology in FSM.

FSM has prioritized enacting laws setting out offences, penalties and civil remedies to address family violence, trafficking and violence facilitated by technology.

On 5th of August 2021, the Pohnpei State Legislature passed S.L No. 10L-57-21 to address violence against women and girls facilitated by technology. This law prohibits online harassment, online stalking and non-consensual sharing of images, audio clips, video clips or written description by telephone, the internet or other communication device.

FSM has four states. Pohnpei state and Kosrae state have passed Domestic Violence Laws. Chuuk State has a draft law, and Yap is the only state that does not have a specific domestic violence law. All the States have criminal laws that set out sexual abuse offences. FSM has also taken steps to address trafficking with a national anti-trafficking law that prohibits all forms of trafficking. The law sets out a heavier penalty for children trafficking with a maximum sentence of 30 years and 15 years for adult victims. Fines range from USD \$5,000 to \$50,000. All four states of FSM also have laws that criminalize trafficking crimes. There is still room for improvement with investigation, prosecution, resources for protection services, state level implementation and monitoring of action plans.

On June 8th, 2023, the Governor of Pohnpei State amended the Pohnpei Executive Order Establishing the composition and role of the Pohnpei Domestic Violence Taskforce Act to advise on the implementation of the Domestic Violence Act (2017).

Domestic violence laws implementation plans are frameworks that ensure clear allocation of duties and responsibilities of service providers to implement their role under domestic violence laws. This includes direct responsibilities such as arresting offenders and indirect instrumental measures such as the establishment of referral pathways and response protocols.

Pohnpei State held a Domestic Violence Plan Implementation workshop in April 2024 and identified gaps and challenges that their DV Task force needs to address for the effective operationalization of the DV Act (2017) and implementation of the Act generally.

The FSM National Eliminating Violence Against Women Policy (2021 – 2025) sets out the framework for priorities to address VAWG. Coordination structures exist in all four states of FSM with varying degrees of formality and inclusiveness and the EVAWG policy mandates states and the national government to expand or create groups to support its implementation. This includes the responsibility to develop, review and finalize strategic action plans for the EVAWG policy.

The clear direction for measures to address EVAWG through governance and institutional mechanisms and in community program is positive progress.

- **Strategies to prevent gender-based violence**

The key strategies used to prevent gender-based violence are dissemination of information about the harmful impacts of gender-based violence in communities, and the development of laws and policies as a deterrent for perpetrators. There is also a focus on advancing gender equality across all government programs and in all development project to empower communities to be inclusive and value women and men equally. The government is also about to embark on a media prevention campaign and to strengthen its data, scope policy and develop targeted strategies for economic empowerment of women.

The FSM also National Eliminating Violence Against Women Policy (2021 – 2025). The policy sets out the framework for four priority areas:

1. Strengthened governance and coordination of EVAWG prevention and response activities.
2. Multi-sectoral, survivor-centered essential GBV services.
3. Evidence-informed interventions to prevent VAWG and promote positive and respectful community activities.
4. Advancement of gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls through a whole-of-government approach.

- **Resourcing of women’s organizations working to prevent and respond to GBV?**

FSM has partnered with development partners for technical and funding resources for programs to prevent and response to GBV. The Chuuk Council of Women launched the Tongen Inepwineu Counselling Center in 2020, the first crisis support center for women in FSM. The Center continues to empower women in Chuuk playing a crucial role to ensuring needed support is provided for the well-being of survivors. In Yap State, the Digital Gender Project will support the initial stages of scoping for a counselling center with the Yap Women’s Council. There are ongoing discussions with women’s groups in Pohnpei on a safe space where information can be disseminated to survivors and counselling services will also be developed from this platform. The government is also working to set up frameworks and mechanisms to respond to GBV including implementation plans for current family protection laws and strengthening of referral pathways in all other states working with women’s councils and associations.

- **National women’s machinery**

The FSM Department of Health and Social Affairs through the Gender Development Unit (GDU) has the mandate for implementing the National Gender Policy and coordinating and monitoring gender mainstreaming and improving the status of women across all government sectors. The Division also coordinates the Eliminating Violence Against Women Policy.

Pohnpei State, Yap State and Kosrae have specific officers with a mandate for implementing gender mainstreaming priorities. In Chuuk State, the government recognizes the work of Chuuk Women’s Council as the key gender organization. All states also have women’s councils or

associations that work together and separately from government to advance gender equality and advocate for women's issues.

Every two years, the FSM Social Affairs Division, the FSM National Women's Council, the gender and women's officers and coordinators at the state level and women councils and associations host the FSM National Women's Conference. The 9<sup>th</sup> FSM National Women's Conference was held in Kosrae State in 2023. The Conference was opened by the President and there was participation by high level government officials including congress members, Governors, Senators, women's organization representatives including faith based and community representatives, young women, and development partners. The discussions and recommendations from the Conference are set out in an Outcomes Document. The recommendations influence the government gender priorities to improve the status of women in FSM.

### **National human rights institution**

FSM has completed a scoping report on models for a national human rights institution and one of the responsibilities of the FSM Social Affairs Division is to continue to advocate for legislative and policy frameworks for the establishment of an NHRI.

## Section Four: National institutions and processes

### **National strategy or action plan for gender equality**

The FSM National Gender Policy (2018 – 2023) articulates a comprehensive approach to promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women, recognizing the critical role they play in national development. The six goals of the policy are:

1. Better representation of women in decision-making
2. Elimination of gender-based violence
3. Equitable education outcomes
4. Address barriers facing women in the workforce,
5. Women's better health care and improved choices over their fertility, and
6. Gender mainstreaming.

The policy aims to create an enabling environment where women and men can thrive equally, ultimately contributing to the sustainable development of FSM. The policy is set for review for the development of a new policy in 2024.

### **Formal mechanisms are in place for different stakeholders to participate in the implementation and monitoring of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

FSM has several formal mechanisms to participate in the implementation of international and Pacific regional commitments for gender and women's rights. The FSM Strategic Development Plan 2004 and 2023 is currently going through a national review and a new plan is projected to be completed in March 2024. The National Gender Policy (2018 – 2023) is currently will be reviewed and a new policy will be completed in 2024 as well.

The National Department of Health and Social Affairs has the mandate to coordinate implementation of gender policies at the national level. The States of FSM are also key to implementation of gender priorities set out under the BPfA.

Key regional mechanisms that FSM has committed to include the Pacific Island Forum Leaders Gender Equality Declaration and outcomes for gender meetings including the SPC Triennial Conference of Pacific Women, the Pacific Women Leaders Meeting and the Pacific Islands Forum Women Leaders Meeting.

FSM became a state party to CEDAW in 2004 and is also a state party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (ratified in 1993) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (ratified in 2011). The government is committed to implementing the principles and standards of the treaties.

## Section Five: Data and statistics

### Progress with gender statistics at the national level.

FSM completed the Population and Household Census in 2023, the preliminary results will be available after the validation with the Pacific Community (SPC). The data results of this census could be re-processed to produce more disaggregated and /or new gender statistics

FSM NSIS is currently in the preparation stage of conducting a National Social Indicator Survey, using the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS7) tools and getting technical and partial financial support from UNICEF. This survey included gender-based violence. In the MICS tool, a set of questionnaires for the Domestic Violence (DVD) based on the questionnaire from MICS6 in the Women questionnaire modules. In the MICS7, there are complementary questionnaires for Time Use asked of age group 10-14 in the Questionnaire for 5-17 years of age and 15-17 in Women’s questionnaire. The Survey was put on hold due to Covid 19, but the collection/fieldwork has now started. Discussions are also underway for the development of a centralized dashboard for gender statistics.

FSM is working on a publication with The Pacific Community (SPC) titled: “Where Do We Stand?” using the Gender Statistics Framework. FSM established a technical working group (TWG) for Gender to work on the gender statistics framework. The TWG currently comprises the National Government core team (Department of Health & Social Affairs (DH&SA), Education (NDOE) and Resources & Development (FSM R&D) and The Pacific Community (SPC). The framework will be used as the base for administrative data collection.

### Gender-specific indicators<sup>1</sup> prioritized for monitoring progress on the SDGs

Priority based on the localization in 2017

SDG5: Gender Equality	Other Targets
5.2.1 Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● No Poverty: 1.2.1, 1.4.2</li><li>● Zero hunger: 2.3.2</li><li>● Good health &amp; wellbeing: 3.7.2, 3.8.2</li><li>● Quality Education: 4.1.1, 4.2.2, 4.3.1, 4.6.1, 4.7.1, 4.a.1</li></ul>

<sup>1</sup> The term ‘gender-specific indicators’ is used to refer to indicators that explicitly call for disaggregation by sex and/or refer to gender equality as the underlying objective. For example, SDG indicator 5.c.1 captures the percentage of countries with systems to track public allocations that are directed towards policies and programmes that promote gender equality—the underlying objective is the promotion of gender equality. The term is also used for indicators where women and girls are specified within the indicator as the targeted population (see UN Women. 2018. *Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. New York).

previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age	
5.2.2 Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by age and place of occurrence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Decent work: 8.5.1, 8.5.2, 8.7.1, 8.9.2,</li> <li>● Sustainable cities: 11.7.2</li> </ul>
5.3.1 Proportion of women aged 20-24 years who were married or in a union before age 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Climate action: 13.b.1</li> </ul>
5.5.1 Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments and local governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Peace, justice, and strong institutions: 16.1.1, 16.1.3, 16.2.1, 16.2.2, 16.2.3</li> </ul>
5.5.2 Proportion of women in managerial positions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Partnerships for the goals: 17.18</li> </ul>
5.b.1 Proportion of individuals who own a mobile telephone, by sex	

**Data disaggregations<sup>2</sup> routinely provided by major surveys**

In Statistic’s surveys, collection at household level covers the following disaggregation:

- Geographic location: surveys are usually done in domains or states and that is because of the geographic location and government set up.
- Income covered surveys are from household Income and expenditure survey and census.
- Sex/gender; age, education, marital status, race ethnicity, migratory status, Disability (using the Washington group), & religion.

**Section 6: Conclusion and next steps**

The Beijing review process for FSM was an opportunity for several achievements. Firstly, the FSM Review was collated and submitted to contribute to the global analysis of progress of the critical areas of concern. The FSM Human Rights and SDG Taskforce continues to fulfill its mandate to ensure compliance to reporting requirements, undertaking human rights and gender analysis of how FSM is progressing with its commitments to advance gender and human rights. The BPfA +30 national level review for FSM was also an opportunity for FSM to do a stock take of how it has progressed in the areas of concern. The areas of concern largely reflect gender priorities for FSM at the national level, and goals and standards to enhance gender equality through

<sup>2</sup> As specified in A/RES/70/1, with the addition of education, marital status, religion and sexual orientation.

commitments to SDG 5, CEDAW, and the Human Rights Council through the Universal Periodic Review Report.

The information from the FSM BPfA+30 Review was invaluable to inform and strengthen policy frameworks for human rights and gender including the FSM Strategic Development Plan (SDP) which is currently being reviewed, and the FSM Gender Equality Policy (2019 - 2023) which will be reviewed and revised in 2024. FSM hosts a National Women's Forum every two years, and the discussions on women's issues inform the FSM National Government and the States on current gender priorities and implementation strategies. The BPfA provides an in-depth analysis of the progress and priorities for FSM on gender for planning for programs such as the FSM National Women's Forum.

The challenges observed during the compilation of the report include lack of access to comprehensive, accessible and updated data, competing priorities for members of the FSM Human Right and SDG Taskforce who have government duties with drafting of human rights and gender reports being an additional ad hoc activity, and a need for improved scheduling with adequate time for the drafting of the review. Despite these challenges, there was unwavering commitment by very capable government and stakeholder partner representatives who were part of the Taskforce to share resources and information and submit the FSM BPfA National Review.

Priority actions to accelerate the implementation of the BPfa and the 2030 Agenda include continued strengthening of policy and legislative frameworks, a commitment for gender mainstreaming across all sectors with gender inclusive planning and design, disaggregated data, gender mainstreaming strategies and targeted actions for inclusion of women in all their diversity in all development processes, the FSM Human Rights and SDG Taskforce set up as the responsible agency for monitoring and reporting on implementation of human rights and gender commitments, and the Social Affairs Division of the FSM Department of Health and Social Affairs continuing to coordinate implementation of FSM gender priorities across all sectors.

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