



**BROKEN  
CHALK**

Submission to the Universal Periodic Review of the United  
Nations Human Rights Council 4<sup>th</sup> Cycle – 51st Session

## **Right to Education**

### **Country Review: Micronesia**

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**Submitting Organisation: BROKEN CHALK**

**June 2025**

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**Broken Chalk** is an Amsterdam-based NGO established in 2020 that monitors and minimises worldwide human rights violations in education. We aim to promote universal and equal access to education for all.

We encourage and support achieving societal peace with our international sponsors and partners by advocating for intercultural tolerance, preventing radicalism and polarisation, and tackling educational inequalities.

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## Introduction

1. Broken Chalk has drafted the following report as a stakeholder in contribution to the fourth cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) for Micronesia. As Broken Chalk's focus is on combating human rights violations within the educational sphere, the contents of this report and the following recommendations will primarily focus on the Right to Education.
2. Micronesia is an amalgamation of around 2000 islands in the Oceania region. It mainly consists of four archipelagos, administered by various countries, including the United States, the Republic of Palau, the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the sovereign islands. The Federated States of Micronesia has a status as a UN member state, which serves as the identity of the entire Micronesia.<sup>i</sup>
3. Central level is administered by the National Department of Education, dealing with setting national standards for school accreditation. Whereas, at the Regional level, by their respective State departments of Education. Concerning Tertiary Education, the Congress of FSM holds responsibility in cooperation with the National Department of Education. Division of duties is still a recurring issue.<sup>ii</sup>
4. 3 Types of schools include state-run, Private, and Home schooling. State-run schools have a maximum share of 88%, whereas 12% are non-state educational institutions. Central governments not only fully contribute to State-run schools but also partially fund non-state institutions.<sup>iii</sup>
5. As per the estimation, Gross Enrolment Ratio at the Primary level stands at 96.8%. Similarly, 83.3% at the Lower Secondary Level, citing measures taken by the government regarding compulsory education for 8 years. However, Early Childhood Education is not included in mandatory schooling. According to estimated data, the number of schools catering to Early Childhood Education is 24, whereas enrollment is only close to 60%.<sup>iv</sup>
6. This data appears promising, yet hidden statistics showcase another side of the coin. A significant proportion of 29.9 per cent of females and 28.7 per cent of males, over the age of 21 years, failed to advance to higher levels of education from Primary levels.<sup>v</sup>
7. To assimilate the student to the outer world, the Primary Level curriculum includes social studies as a significant subject. At the Intermediate level, two types of tracks are available, one for vocational Training and another for general Education. Some privileged students are granted permission to undergo General Education. Students undergoing general education are offered further opportunities to attain Secondary Education. The demand for general education has been greater than that for Vocational Training, thus reducing the importance of vocational education.<sup>vi</sup>
8. The curriculum adopted at the Secondary Level contains advanced topics more closely framed in line with the US education system. High dependence on the US resulted in a lack of understanding of local culture, geography, and national aspects.<sup>vii</sup>
9. Tertiary Level fails to replicate exact figures as the Gross Enrolment Ratio of Primary and Secondary Level, as figures are as low as 14.1%. Attaining tertiary education is a dream for many due to the lack of institutions at that level, as students primarily pursue higher education in foreign locations. Due to the high cost of infrastructure, the FSM spent a share of 12.46 per cent of its GDP, while developed countries spent around 4.99 per cent of their GDP (UNESCO<sup>viii</sup>).

10. Micronesia has accomplished the task of achieving gender parity. On the contrary, the share of the population with no schooling contributes to a larger figure of 12.3 per cent. However, No-schooling figures have shown improvement from 24.8 per cent of the population in 1980<sup>x</sup>. Various policies against discrimination are in place.<sup>x</sup>

## Brief overview of the last UN-UPR cycle

11. The 3rd cycle of review for Micronesia was conducted in 2020. Out of 154 recommendations, 141 were supported by the country. This marks a 123.80% increase compared to the second cycle. Recommendations primarily focused on SDGs under Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, Gender Equality, Decent Work and Economic Growth, Reduced Inequalities, Good Health and Well-being<sup>xi</sup>.
12. According to the National report submitted by the Federation of Micronesia at the 37th session of the Working Group on the UPR under the Human Rights Council, New national and state legislation has been brought up to be in line with the purpose of the Human Rights Council. Family Protection Law for Kosrae, Domestic Violence Law for Pohnpei, Age of Consent Law, Pohnpei Disabilities Act of 2019 are to name a few.<sup>xii</sup>
13. As per the recommendations in the field of Human Rights Education and training, the need for including women and children's aspects in the educational curriculum arises. Additionally, human rights awareness campaigns for students and teacher training should be conducted to ensure student safety and help them build healthy relationships, thereby promoting gender equity.<sup>xiii</sup>
14. Regarding overall economic development, the national Strategic Development Plan (2004-2023) is ongoing. It focuses on sector-wise planning matrices. The FSM National Gender Policy is outlined to demonstrate the commitment to the ratified international treaties, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration (PLGED). SOPs are provided to health workers to sensitise them towards the clinical management of rape and assault.<sup>xiv</sup>
15. The FSM strategic development plan consists of 5 goals for the education sector. They target quality education, quality teaching, performance monitoring, data-driven decision-making, and increasing participation and accountability within the education system. Thus, ensuring quality education for all.<sup>xv</sup>
16. FSM has also developed a kindergarten curriculum to increase the reading and numeracy abilities of young kids. This will enhance the Early Childhood curriculum to meet national benchmarks.<sup>xvi</sup>

## Access to Education

17. Micronesia (Federated States) is politically divided into four states, containing more than 600 islands. The country spans a vast area of approximately 2,600,000 square kilometres. Given its enormous geographic location on the Pacific Ocean, connectivity and logistical challenges are evident.<sup>xvii</sup>
18. A few islands are connected through small planes, but most of the islands are connected only through ships. Connectivity has always been a point of concern in the Education sector. This is evident in the strength of the students in the respective schools. According to the statistics,

74 schools have fewer than 100 students, and 43 schools have fewer than 50 students. Remote locations and Outer Island schools have fewer students.<sup>xviii</sup>

19. Not only are distant location and connectivity points of concern, but the lack of basic amenities is also a hindrance. According to statistics, only 37.6% of the schools have access to electricity. Schools in FSM do not have uniform electrical power, and even accessibility from state centres leads to reduced personal development, thus decreasing the ability to provide technical assistance at the school level.<sup>xix</sup>
20. Internet connectivity is even harder to achieve in such a fragmented geography. As per most international standards, Internet connections across the country are extremely slow. Most of the government relies on satellite-based connections, which are proven to be slow and unreliable. FSM's rate of internet access lags at 35%, being one of the slowest rates of access in the Pacific Ocean.<sup>xx</sup>
21. World Bank, with funding from the Asian Development Bank, has already been working on the Pacific Regional Connectivity Project concerning the Federated States of Micronesia, to build internet infrastructure over the Pacific Ocean.<sup>xxi</sup>
22. Higher Education needs a vast improvement. Only one higher education institute is available in Pohnpei, namely the College of Micronesia. It offers associate's degrees and a 3-year education program. The University of Guam in Micronesia offers advanced degrees. This highlights the unavailability of basic educational institutions and underscores the difficulty in accessing education in this distant location.<sup>xxii</sup>

## Learning and Skill Gap

23. According to the figures, the school enrolment rate is 73% at the elementary level and drops to 47% at the secondary level. This cites that half of the children are not being enrolled on secondary education. The percentage of children dropping out of school is 31%, 18%, and 43% at the Pre-Primary, Primary, and Secondary Levels, respectively.<sup>xxiii</sup>
24. There can be ample reasons for such figures of enrolment and dropout, like connectivity, standard of education, and incidences of non-communicable disease. Thus, posing a risk to learning and even hampering the lives of children. In FSM, half of the children's population is suffering from obesity during their adolescence. This indicates diets with lower nutritional value, which can lead to anaemia.<sup>xxiv</sup>
25. As per the World Bank, the learning-adjusted period of education among children in FSM is merely 7.2 years. At the same time, the years of actual schooling at the primary and secondary levels stand at 13 years. This indicates that a child is not capable of completing 13 years of basic education at the primary and secondary levels of education. This poses a risk to child health and survival rates.<sup>xxv</sup>
26. A massive gap in learning can also be gauged through the parameters of Numeracy ability and Reading ability. According to data from UNICEF, the Numeracy ability for Grade 7 stands at 56%, while reading ability lags at 47% for the same grade. At a lower grade, this percentage reduced even more. At Grade 5, Numeracy ability stands at 55% and reading ability lags at only 35%.

27. The effect of these stats can be observed in the Labour market. The labour force participation rate stands at 57%, with 68% for males and 46% for females. Similarly, the Youth employment rate stands at a vast 19%, with female and male youth unemployment rates of 30% and 10%, respectively. This highlights the dire need to focus not only on providing education but also on ensuring the quality of education meets the required international standards. Otherwise, the country will continue to fall into a vicious cycle of limited learning ability, leading to unemployment and, consequently, reduced economic growth, as well as an increasing inability of the government to provide for education, healthcare, connectivity, and infrastructure.<sup>xxvi</sup>

## Financial Constraints

28. The Federated States of Micronesia fall under the category of lower-middle-income countries. Approximately 41% of the population in the FSM lives below the national poverty line.<sup>xxvii</sup>
29. This, in turn, reduces the ability of the state to invest in primary sectors like health and education. When it comes to the education sector, it is primarily provided through State compact funds. A specific portion of the fund comes from the U.S., under the U.S. Federal Education program. This amounts to a significant portion of the overall educational Budget.<sup>xxviii</sup>
30. Some discrepancies are visible in the approval system for fund allocation. For these programs, the National Department of Education is considered the state Education Agency. State education agencies from multiple countries are represented on the Board of Directors. However, the SEA of FSM is not represented on the Board of Directors of the Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL). This reduces the country's ability to influence decisions in these significant projects.<sup>xxix</sup>

## Language and Cultural Disconnect

31. FSM is an amalgamation of various groups of islands. Every island resonates with different cultures and different enriching languages. Still, English is unofficially an official language of the FSM. It is used for all governmental and business purposes across the different states of the FSM. However, less than 2% of the FSM student use English as their first language. Most of the students lack English Proficiency.<sup>xxx</sup>
32. FSM is based on the American Education system, where free education is provided until 15 years of age or until the completion of 8th grade. Attendance in high school is not made mandatory.<sup>xxxi</sup>
33. To assimilate students with the English language, every FSM state is tasked with developing a curriculum which is equally relevant in both the local language and English. Not only are instructional materials being created, but work on developing grammars and dictionaries is also in progress. However, the development is progressing at a slower pace.<sup>xxxii</sup>
34. Lack of training for teachers and students in English proficiency also raises a concern. A greater emphasis on foreign languages has undermined students' ability to comprehend the curriculum, and a lack of local language sources has made them distant from their roots, as

reflected in cultural stories. This has even reduced the desirability in the labour force market internationally and nationally.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

## Recommendations

- 35.** The primary focus for a country with such a fragmented geography is connectivity. In terms of Physical connectivity through air services, there is an increasing number of commercial sources through the ocean. As recommended by Broken Chalk, to increase virtual connectivity, Internet Projects conducted by the World Bank should aim to be completed sooner. The dependency on satellite communications should be reduced by creating infrastructure for sea cable link systems.
- 36.** Broken Chalk emphasises basic amenities like electricity, hygienic facilities for schools as a focus point. To provide for higher education, a greater number of prestigious institutes need to be established in all four states of the Federated States of Micronesia. This would not only increase the strength of students in Higher Education institutions but also increase the accessibility of education to students from every state.
- 37.** More allocations of funds need to be made to provide for health, especially against non-communicable and preventable diseases. This would enhance the students' learning ability.
- 38.** More standardisation of the curriculum is needed, with an emphasis on both the local and English languages. By giving less emphasis to regional languages, the problem of an identity crisis is likely to emerge in the future. Thus creating a gap between people and their cultural roots. But for uniformity, the English language should also be in focus.
- 39.** Broken chalk also emphasises increasing participation by NGOs and local communities in assimilating students with the educational curriculum, especially concerning the English language.
- 40.** Training opportunities should be provided for both teachers and students in English and the local language. To increase school enrolment, more efficient rules regarding mandatory high school education should be in place.
- 41.** Broken Chalk focuses on increasing the number of educational institutions at both primary, high school and further higher levels of education. This would reduce commuting time and cost, and increase enrollment of students at all levels.
- 42.** An increase in the efficiency of the education system would increase the desirability of FSM people in the international labour market. Emphasis should be placed on expanding employment opportunities at the national level. This would increase the country's financial resources.
- 43.** Broken Chalk encourages FSM to also focus on being a part of the Board of Directors at prestigious projects at international levels regarding fund allocation for educational sectors.

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