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Fourth cycle Universal Periodic Review Of the Federal States of Micronesia



Joint Submission of the UN Country Team

Introduction

1. The United Nations Multi-Country Office Micronesia, based in Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), was established in the last quarter of 2021. It oversees and supports UN's engagements in the North Pacific, including the FSM. UN agencies based in FSM include ESCAP, FAO, IOM, UN Human Rights, UN Women, UNCTAD, UNCDF, UNDP, UNDSS, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNOPS, RCO and WHO. Other UN entities cover FSM as non-resident, i.e. IFAD, ITC, ITU, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNEP, UNHCR, UN Habitat, UNODC, WFP and WMO.

2. The UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2023 - 2027¹ is a five-year strategic framework that outlines the collective response of the UN system to the development priorities in 14 Pacific Island countries and territories, including FSM, and supports governments and peoples in the Pacific to implement the Sustainable Development Goals.

1. BACKGROUND AND FRAMEWORK

A. Treaty ratification, reporting and cooperation with UN human rights mechanisms

3. Since the end of the 3rd cycle of the UPR, FSM has not ratified any further core human right treaties. FSM has only ratified three core human rights conventions: The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1993; the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 2004; and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), in 2016. It has also ratified two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, i.e. the Optional Protocol on the sale of children child prostitution and child pornography (CRC-OP-SC), in 2012; and Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict (CRC-OP-AC), in 2015.

4. FSM is not a State Party to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees or the Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees (together, the Refugee Convention). FSM is also not a signatory to either the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons or the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness (the Statelessness Conventions).

5. FSM has acceded in 2011 to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

6. In 2024, FSM has submitted its National Review of progress of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995).¹ In it, CEDAW for providing “parallel system for monitoring and guidance of measures to address gender”. CRPD and CRC are also referenced in the document.

7. The establishment in 2024 of a Permanent Mission of FSM to the UN in Geneva has expanded opportunities for engagement with human rights mechanisms.

8. From 5 to 9 May, FSM hosted the first scoping mission of the newly established Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Hub of the UN Human Rights Office (ESCR Hub). During this scoping mission, the ESCR Hub facilitated two workshops one directed to lawyers

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<https://www.asiapacificgender.org/sites/default/files/2024-11/Micronesia%20National%20Review%20for%20Implementation%20of%20the%20Beijing%20Platform%20for%20Action%20%282024%29.pdf>

and court officials and another to government officials and civil society. During the workshop for lawyers and court officials, participants demonstrated interest in applying international human rights standards on economic, social and cultural rights on petitions and judicial decisions, including the “availability, accessibility, acceptability and quality” framework. During the workshop for government officials and civil society, many participants were favorable for the FSM to ratify the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).

9. From 2 to 13 June 2025, the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights conducted the first ever country-visit of a special procedure mandate holder to the FSM.² The visit featured as the cover page of the only biweekly newspaper in the country.³

Recommendations:

- a. Consider acceding to other core human rights instruments, particularly the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
- b. Consider issuing a standing invitation to special procedures of the Human Rights Council.
- c. Consider acceding to the Refugee Convention and the Statelessness Conventions, in consultation with UNHCR.

B. Constitutional, legislative and policy framework on human rights

10. Article IV of the Constitution of FSM is entitled “Declaration of Rights”. Article V includes a provision safeguarding traditional rights. “If challenged as violative of Article IV, Micronesian tradition shall be considered a compelling social purpose warranting such governmental action”.

11. The Compact of Free Association with the United States of America (USA) allow FSM citizens to live and work in the USA without visa requirements. This, coupled FSM’s development challenges, has increased migration to the USA for employment opportunities, family reunification, and higher education pursuits. Whereas migration presents significant opportunities for economic development and uplifting the standard of living of migrants and the communities, it brings implications of multi-dimensional nature to FSM, such as the reduction of workforce, the rising number of deportees back to the country, and challenges to the transmission of traditions to younger generations. With technical support of International Organization for Migration (IOM), the FSM national migration taskforce chaired by Department of Justice is currently developing a National Migration Policy informed by national, regional and international standards and based on inclusive multi-sectoral consultations.

12. FSM has not received many asylum seeker arrivals in recent years and lacks a national legal framework for their treatment. Establishing laws, policies, and procedures would ensure consistent adherence to international protection standards, including the principle of non-refoulement. Domestic legislation should also grant basic rights (work, education, health) to asylum seekers and refugees to support self-reliance and adequate living standards.

Recommendations:

- a. Continue to protect cultural rights in accordance to article V of the constitution.
- b. Finalize and implement the National Migration Policy by 2027, to ensure that the country can fully harness the potential of migration and protect people on the move.

² <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/culturalrights/statements/20250612-eom-micronesia-sr-cultural-rights.pdf>

³ https://issuu.com/kpressfsm/docs/kpress_vol25_iss_14_-_25_jun_25?fr=sODlhMDgzOTg5Mjk

- c. Incorporate the customary international law principle of non-refoulement into domestic law. Establish national laws, regulations and policies to govern the treatment of asylum-seekers and refugees, in consultation with UNHCR and in line with the Refugee Convention.
- d. Establish operational-level procedures for the identification and referral of asylum seekers, in consultation with UNHCR.

C. National Human Rights Institution and National Institution for Implementation, Reporting and Follow-up

13. Since the publishing of the 2019 scoping study by the Pacific Community (SPC) and the Asia-Pacific Forum on National Human Rights Institutions, no concrete steps were taken for the establishment of a National Human Rights Institution.⁴ A Presidential Executive Order of 2022 established National Human Rights and Sustainable Development Goals taskforce that acts as a National Mechanism for Implementation, Reporting and Follow-Up and also elaborates the Voluntary National Review to the High Level Political Forum. In May 2025, during a workshop held by UN Human Rights' ESCR Hub, participants discussed ways to integrate drafting of the national report of the UPR and for the Voluntary National Review, which was instrumental in the drafting of both the VNR and the ongoing preparations for the UPR national report.

Recommendations:

- a. Take steps to establish a Paris Principles-compliant National Human Rights Institution.
- b. Build capacity of the Human Rights and SDG taskforce, including through the participation of its members in the Human Rights Council's LDC/SIDS Trust Fund.

2. IMPLEMENTATION OF INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS OBLIGATIONS

A. Equality and non-discrimination

14. The right to non-discrimination for asylum-seekers and refugees is not embedded within law or policy. Doing so would ensure that forcibly displaced people are provided protection regardless of their individual personal characteristics and not denied rights by virtue of their status.

15. The Constitution of FSM contains some significant provisions on equality, particularly in Article IV, Section 4, which establishes that "Equal protection of the laws may not be denied or impaired on account of sex, race, ancestry, national origin, language, or social status." While Article IV Section 4 provides important equal protection language, the Constitution does not explicitly mandate the creation of comprehensive anti-discrimination laws or address how discrimination complaints should be handled, which leaves room for gaps in legal protections. Many modern anti-discrimination frameworks cover additional grounds such as disability, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

⁴ https://spccfpstore1.blob.core.windows.net/digitallibrary-docs/files/27/272e562a2da534b991bf0c680af954d4.pdf?sv=2015-12-11&sr=b&sig=Dm2fJclgsvvLWskc3ERpGHKdBq%2BobAPGsbp4ZFwLRA%3D&se=2025-10-07T19%3A50%3A51Z&sp=r&rsc=public%2C%20max-age%3D864000%2C%20max-stale%3D86400&rsct=application%2Fpdf&rscd=inline%3B%20filename%3D%22SPC_FSM_NHRI_Scoping_Report_Revised_on_6_May_2020.pdf%22

16. Traditional or customary law is an important aspect of FSM's legal system, as recognized in Article V of the Constitution. This recognizes traditional practices and social hierarchies practiced in the different States.

Recommendations:

- a. Ensure a broad interpretation and application of FSM's anti-discrimination laws, including for the benefit of forcibly displaced persons.
- b. Enact a comprehensive anti-discrimination framework which addresses the gaps in existing legislation to cover additional grounds such as disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, multiple and intersectional discrimination.
- c. Engage traditional leaders and communities in general on how to preserve cultural practices while ensuring equality and non-discrimination.

B. Gender equality and human rights of women and girls

17. The Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) has shown commitment to gender equality and the human rights of women and girls through legislative and policy frameworks. Gender equality is integrated in the FSM Strategic Development Plans, and key policies such as the National Gender Equality Policy (2018-2023). The biennial National Women's Conference fosters dialogue between government and diverse women's groups, identifying priority gender issues.

18. The National Policy to Eliminate Violence Against Women and Girls (2021-2025) highlight efforts to address gender-based violence (GBV) and promote social inclusion. Since the adoption of the End Violence Against Women, four states endorsed related action plans, and domestic violence and family protection legislation was strengthened in Kosrae and Pohnpei resulting in higher rates of prosecution in those states. The Chuuk Women's Council provides counseling and psycho-social support for survivors. Legislative protection from GBV varies across states. Survivors in Outer Islands have limited access to all services. The national government has yet to commit to adequately financing the implementation of the national strategy, including capacity building, policy and system strengthening, as well as data collection and analysis. This has slowed progress and prevented a coordinated approach across states. Marital rape has not been criminalized and there is no prohibition of sexual harassment.

19. UNFPA is supporting the policy development, implementation and the national's government coordination role on ending violence against women and girls', with further assistance of SPC. UNFPA has also supported standard operating procedures (SOPs) for GBV response in the health sector of all states, in line with WHO standards and accompanied by training. Staff in the Department of Health and Social Affairs received training through the UNFPA data programme to strengthen the state's capacity for GBV data collection and use. In 2024, Pohnpei state accelerated its efforts to implement its action plan with the support of UNICEF and UNFPA. In 2025, UNFPA and UNICEF trained frontline service providers from four states on safe referral processes. A national hotline and safe shelter services are in place for trafficking survivors with technical support and in partnership with IOM, but these same types of services are not accessible to survivors of Intimate Partner Violence, which is the most prevalent form of GBV.

20. In July 2025, during consultations with women and girls organized by the UN Human Rights Office, parents and guardians said they were unaware of laws on age of consent. Some reported reluctantly allowing their daughters to enter relationships due to financial hardship, contributing to a cycle of poverty and increased school dropout rates.

21. Progress on women participation in positions of power the public sector is limited. In FSM, each of the four states has a State Congress, with a total of 85 senators and

representatives. Currently, four of the Senators are women (4.7%). This is a slight decrease from 5.9% prior to the last election cycle. At the national level, the unicameral Congress has 14 members, of which three are women (21.4%). As of 2022 there were nine women elected to local municipal councils, with women therefore holding 1% of seats in local government. The recent election of a woman as lieutenant governor for Pohnpei marked the first time a woman was elected to one of the top executive offices in the state or national level in the country. FSM identified “better representation of women in decision-making” as a key priority in their Beijing +30 national review, however, temporary special measures have not been adopted at state or national level.

22. IOM is currently contributing to the sustainable economic inclusion of women through support to women-owned and women-staffed MSMEs equipped with enhanced business management skills and strategies.

23. FSM law does not prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or sex characteristics; nor does it recognize LGBTQI+ individuals, couples, and their families. LGBTQI+ and male survivors of sexual violence face barriers to receiving care.

Recommendations:

- a. Strengthen women-led MSMEs through capacity-building in business management, climate resilience, and market systems to boost economic participation.
- b. Implement temporary special measures for women in politics, starting with leadership training, awareness campaigns, and measures to address harassment, discrimination and other forms of violence against women in politics.
- c. Include sexual assault and sexual abuse perpetrated in marriage or de facto relationships within the classification of rape under national and state laws by 2027 for all individuals regardless of gender, race and sexual orientation.
- d. Adopt legislation and policy to prohibit and prevent sexual harassment by 2027 for all individuals regardless of gender, race and sexual orientation.
- e. By 2026 review and adopt a successor policy to the current policy on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls, mandating budget allocation and high-level monitoring, including by Parliament, to ensure full and timely implementation for greater access to prevention and response services.
- f. Ensure availability of gender, age and disability-disaggregated data to enable evidence-based policy and decision-making processes, reflecting diverse needs of different population groups.

C. Rights of the child

24. FSM has a young population with 36% under 18 years, yet critical gaps remain in child health, education, and protection.

25. Child mortality remains high with under-5 mortality at 23 per 1,000 live births in 2024, with more than 91% dying in their first year of life. Immunization coverage is critically low at 76% for DTP3 and only 60% for second dose measles, well below the 95% target needed for herd immunity. Children remain vulnerable to vaccine-preventable diseases. Challenge exists in nutrition data, with no available information on stunting, wasting, or exclusive breastfeeding rates, hindering evidence-based interventions.

26. While elementary enrolment reaches 72%, it drops dramatically to 49% at secondary level, with completion rates of 48% for upper secondary. This educational concern is compounded by gender disparities and inadequate learning outcomes, with only 35% of Grade

5 students meeting minimum reading standards.

27. Data gaps affect child protection efforts, with no available statistics on violent discipline, child marriage, or child labour. The minimum marriage age is set at 18, but anecdotal evidence suggests child marriage exists. Birth registration data is unavailable, potentially affecting children's access to basic services and rights.

28. Only 7% of children receive social protection benefits despite 41.2% national poverty rates, indicating a lack of safety nets for vulnerable children.

29. As a small island developing state, FSM children face heightened climate risks affecting access to water, education, and health services, with 77% living in rural areas particularly vulnerable to climate impacts.

Recommendations:

- a. Conduct a preliminary study on Child, Early and Forced marriage to understand prevalence, drivers and measures needed to address this issue by 2027.
- b. Conduct a comprehensive Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey to establish baseline data on child nutrition, protection, and wellbeing indicators to inform evidence-based programming and policy development.
- c. Establish comprehensive birth registration systems in all states to ensure universal coverage and children's access to basic rights and services.
- d. Strengthen immunization systems to achieve 95% coverage for all vaccines through improved cold chain management, community engagement, and integration with routine health services by 2028.
- e. Implement school feeding programs and nutrition interventions targeting the critical 1,000-day window to address malnutrition and support educational outcomes.
- f. Develop and implement a National Action Plan on Child Protection that addresses violence against children, child marriage, and child labor with adequate resource allocation and monitoring mechanisms.
- g. Expand access to quality early childhood development programs, particularly in outer islands, to improve school readiness and learning outcomes.

D. Rights of persons with disabilities

30. In March 2024, the FSM National Government Disability Office, in partnership with the Pacific Disability Forum and organizations of persons with disabilities, convened a stakeholder dialogue reaffirming the ratification of the CRPD and showcased state-level legal advancements: Pohnpei passed a disability act in 2019, Kosrae in 2021, and Chuuk in 2022. Alongside these legislative steps, Pohnpei State introduced accessible parking cards, and work commenced on a national building code aimed at improving physical accessibility.

31. Despite these positive developments, FSM lacks a comprehensive national strategy for habilitation and rehabilitation services. Persons with disabilities, especially in outer islands, often face barriers to healthcare, education, and social services. Many public buildings are not accessible by wheelchair and there are no functioning elevators in the country. The premises hosting the UN Resident Coordinator's Office and other UN entities in Pohnpei are themselves not accessible by wheelchair. Limited data availability hinders comprehensive understanding of disability prevalence and needs, particularly affecting policy development and service provision. Women and girls with disabilities have limited access to sexual and reproductive health and rights services. Children with disabilities face substantial barriers accessing

educational services, particularly in remote outer islands where infrastructure and specialized services are limited. Inclusive education remains underdeveloped with inadequate trained teachers and accessible facilities.

Recommendations:

- a. Promote and implement disability-inclusive data collection systems, including Washington Group Questions in national surveys, disaggregated data, to inform evidence-based policies and programming.
- b. Support the active, free and meaningful participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities in decision-making processes related public policies, including on development planning and participation in elections.
- c. Ensure access to sexual and reproductive health and rights for persons with disabilities, including tailored information and services that are accessible and address their specific needs. This includes ensuring informed consent and respect for their autonomy.
- d. Develop inclusive education policies and train teachers on disability-inclusive pedagogies to ensure children with disabilities can access quality education alongside their peers.
- e. Establish rehabilitation services and assistive technology programs throughout the country to support children and adults with disabilities in achieving independence and participation.

E. Administration of justice, participation in public affairs, good governance and the rule of law

32. In community dialogues organized by the UN Human Rights Office with communities of the four States during July 2024, participants noted limited access to information on public policies and human rights, and called for greater transparency and accountability by national and state governments. Older persons faced even greater barriers due to limited internet access and digital literacy, hindering their participation in

33. The 2025 gubernatorial elections in Chuuk State were marked by conflicting rulings from electoral commissions and courts, concerns over ballot handling, and post-election unrest, including warrantless arrests and political violence. A State of Emergency was declared. The situation sparked public debate on inviting international observers to monitor future elections..

Recommendations:

- a. Promote awareness campaigns on means of participation in public policies and on human rights in general.
- b. Promote training for law enforcement officials and judges on international human rights law standards.
- c. Consider inviting international observers to monitor elections in the country, including with a mandate to monitor human rights during elections.

F. Rights to freedom of opinion and expression, association, and assembly

34. FSM upholds constitutional rights to freedom of expression, association, and assembly, which are largely respected in practice, including academic freedom and cultural events. However, limited internet access—especially in outer islands—hampers the full exercise of these rights. The UN’s Smart Island Joint Project in Tonoas, Chuuk, supports efforts to

improve connectivity and digital literacy.

35. Media presence is limited. There is only one independent media organization with a biweekly newspaper, the Kaselehlie Press. There are eight radio stations, four of them owned by each of the states.⁵

Recommendations:

- a. Improve structural capacity in the outer islands to address the limited internet access
- b. Promote a culture of robust media diversity.

G. Measures against forced labour, slavery, trafficking

36. FSM has made significant efforts to do eliminate human trafficking, including the update and adoption of the SOPs for Victim Identification, Referral and Prosecution, establishment of the shelters for Victim of trafficking, and trainings for law enforcement stakeholders. IOM has supported the government efforts to raise awareness on countering exploitative practices within the fishing sector. The fishing industry, a major economic driver in FSM's Exclusive Economic Zone, remains a high-risk sector for both forced labor and sexual exploitation.

Recommendations:

- a. Finalize and ensure wide dissemination and funding for the National Action Plan on Trafficking in Persons and enhance Trafficking in Persons (TIP) awareness through culturally sensitive Information, Education and Communication materials, available in the languages spoken by migrants' communities and actively engaging migrant communities in awareness campaigns.
- b. Consider training relevant stakeholders on the newly adopted SOPs for the victim identification, referral, investigation and prosecution of TIP cases.
- c. In coordination with relevant stakeholders, explore possibilities for offering pre-departure orientation training to nationals migrating overseas, with consideration to fishers seeking employment on foreign flagged fishing vessels.
- d. Provide regular training for service providers, CSO partners, and law enforcement officials on case management, trauma-informed victim-centred services, and proactive trafficking investigations. Additionally, train prosecutors and judges on handling trafficking cases, including addressing evidential challenges in prosecution and adjudication.
- e. Consider conducting regular, unannounced lab or inspections proactively, rather than only in response to worker complaints, and develop protocols and monitoring tools for inspections aboard fishing vessels.
- f. In partnership with the National Oceanic Resource Management Authority and the Labour Division, develop legislative provisions to allow for labour inspections to be conducted on board fishing vessels and for fisheries officials to support monitoring labour standards.
- g. In coordination with development partners and civil society, explore ways in which to increase victims' access to comprehensive support services, including psychosocial assistance, across the country.

⁵ <https://live-production.wcms.abc-cdn.net.au/0b84d5008d31884de305c579e8da8792>

- h. In coordination with development partners and civil society, explore ways in which to connect victims of trafficking to financial/livelihood support and re/integration services.
- i. In consultation with UN agencies including UNHCR, develop and integrate effective coordination mechanisms for the identification, referral and protection of asylum-seekers and refugees, including in the context of overlapping vulnerabilities such as victims of trafficking.

H. Adequate standard of living and right to development

37. Recent prolonged droughts and the El Niño declaration in September 2023 have intensified concerns over water security in FSM, particularly on low-lying islands reliant on rainwater and shallow wells. With rainfall declining and catchments drying up, the risk of severe water shortages is high. IOM is supporting FSM's drought preparedness through enhanced early warning systems, distribution of essential supplies, solar-powered desalination units, and improved community water management.

38. Significant gaps persist in school WASH services where only 86% have basic drinking water, 79% basic sanitation, and 82% basic hygiene services. These gaps disproportionately affect children's learning outcomes, health, and dignity, particularly for girls during menstruation.

39. A social protection working group was formed during the COVID-19 preparedness and response stage, but has stopped functioning over time.

40. Data availability to inform development policy and planning has improved. The Census was completed (although data is not yet released). MICS data collection in 2025 will enhance availability of data for development.

41. Asylum-seekers are not granted social protection, including work, education and health which would enable them to meet their basic needs and avoid dependency.

Recommendations:

- a. Ensure that Drinking Water Safety and Security Plans are developed, implemented, and linked to the National Drought Preparedness Plans.
- b. Continuing strengthening hygiene practices through hygiene promotion and community engagement are improved.
- c. Improve climate resilient water services, especially in remote/outer islands, by primarily focusing on drought water security and policy systems strengthening initiatives.
- d. Reinvigorate coordination and planning mechanisms to increase access and effectiveness of social protection programmes by 2027.
- e. Continue to invest in data capabilities to enhance implementation of national development goals.
- f. Achieve 100% coverage of basic WASH services in all schools with climate-resilient infrastructure designed to meet children's specific needs.
- g. Implement hygiene education programs in schools to promote behavioral change and reduce preventable diseases among children.

I. Right to work and just and favourable conditions of work

42. The minimum wage is different for the private and public sectors, and also according to each state. Chuuk and Yap do not have a minimum wage for the private sector. Labour rights are not extensively regulated, and the existing norms are often not enforced.

43. FSM is currently considering becoming a member of the International Labour Organization.

44. FSM has recently considered celebrating bilateral agreements on labour mobility schemes to attract qualified workers to the country. National legislation does not provide for the right to work to asylum-seekers, though such provision could have positive outcomes for asylum-seekers and the local communities.

Recommendations:

- a. Consider adopting a national minimum wage that would be a floor for states minimum wages and for the private sector.
- b. Consider favourably the accession to the International Labour Organization and take steps to confirm labour law to ILO Conventions.
- c. Facilitate procedures on right to work to migrants, through bilateral agreements with other Member States, and asylum-seekers.

J. Right to health

45. The FSM Strategic Health Framework (2024-2034)⁶ prioritizes achievement of Universal Health Care by the year 2034.

46. FSM updated its Family Planning Guidelines to align with global standards and trained its health work force to have at least one health worker available and skilled in youth friendly and disability inclusive family planning service provision, in line with its new Adolescent and Youth Friendly Guidelines.

47. While skilled birth attendance reaches 100%, only 87% of deliveries occur in health facilities, indicating access barriers particularly in outer islands. The absence of antenatal care data highlights monitoring weaknesses in maternal and newborn care continuum. Health service integration remains limited, affecting comprehensive care delivery for children and families. Abortion is criminalized in FSM, penalizing the provider, the woman and anyone who assists, except to save a mother's life. This can potentially lead to unsafe abortions and preventable maternal morbidity and mortality. It disproportionately affects marginalized women who may lack resources for safe alternatives.

48. FSM faces significant challenges related to non-communicable diseases (NCDs), which are often linked to lifestyle and reproductive health. Addressing these comprehensively requires integrated approaches.

49. The adolescent suicide rate of 30 per 100,000 (39 for males, 21 for females) represents a critical mental health challenge requiring urgent attention, particularly given limited access to age-appropriate mental health services.

50. In February 2025, the Board of Directors of the Association of Pacific Island Legislatures requested the President of the Association to work with other stakeholders to obtain an impact assessment on the residents of the downwind islands of Micronesia resulting

⁶ <https://hsa.gov.fm/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Framework-for-Sustainable-Health-Development-in-the-FSM-1.pdf>

from atmospheric nuclear testing in the Western Pacific.⁷ This would potentially include the states of the FSM, given their relative proximity to the testing sites in the Marshall Islands.

Recommendations:

- a. Continue to take steps to establish universal healthcare in the earliest possible date.
- b. Strengthen primary healthcare systems to ensure comprehensive maternal, newborn, and child health services are accessible across all islands, with focus on improving facility-based deliveries and antenatal care coverage.
- c. Develop integrated adolescent health services including mental health support, particularly targeting suicide prevention among young males.
- d. Continue to expand access to information and services for sexual and reproductive health and rights, promoting access to contraception, maternal health services, and post-abortion care, and review and amend laws to decriminalise abortion.
- e. Cooperate with international partners in understanding the possible impacts of nuclear weapons to the health and environment of FSM.

K. Right to education

51. FSM faces an education challenge with dramatic enrollment decline from 72% in elementary to 49% in secondary education, indicating systemic barriers to educational progression. Learning outcomes remain a concern, with only 35% of Grade 5 students meeting minimum reading standards and 55% meeting numeracy standards, below international benchmarks.

52. Early childhood education enrollment stands at only 47%, limiting school readiness. Out-of-school rates are particularly high for secondary-age children at 43%, with gender disparities evident as upper secondary completion rates show 51% for girls versus 46% for boys. Geographic disparities compound these challenges, with outer islands facing greater barriers to quality education access.

53. Educational attainment data reveal systemic quality issues, with Grade 7 outcomes showing minimal improvement (47% reading, 56% numeracy), indicating insufficient learning progression. Teacher training, curriculum relevance, and pedagogical approaches require strengthening to improve learning outcomes.

54. High “not in employment, education or training” rates of 29% among 15–19-year-olds (34% for females, 24% for males) demonstrate poor education-to-employment transitions, with youth unemployment at 19% reflecting inadequate skills development and limited economic opportunities.

55. Pohnpei state rolled out a Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) curriculum, referred to as Family Life Education, targeting both in-school and out-of-school youth, supported by UNFPA. Chuuk state is in the process of adopting a similar educational curriculum.

Recommendations:

- a. Support the implementation and monitoring of the Pohnpei FLE curriculum, sharing lessons learned and promising practices for implementation across all

⁷ [https://www.apilpacific.com/files/64thBODMeeting/64-BOD-06\[34\].pdf](https://www.apilpacific.com/files/64thBODMeeting/64-BOD-06[34].pdf)

- states and to expand to more grade levels and communities by 2028.
- b. Strengthen foundational learning through improved teacher training, curriculum reform, and evidence-based pedagogical approaches to achieve minimum learning standards for all children by 2030.
 - c. Expand early childhood development programs to achieve universal access, particularly in outer islands, to improve school readiness and long-term learning outcomes.
 - d. Implement targeted interventions to reduce out-of-school rates and address gender disparities, including conditional cash transfers and community engagement programs.
 - e. Develop technical and vocational education programs aligned with local economic opportunities to improve youth employment prospects and reduce NEET rates.

L. Right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment and climate change

56. FSM faces severe climate change impacts, including sea-level rise, typhoons, erosion, and prolonged droughts. From December 2023 to July 2024, El Niño-induced drought affected over 22,700 residents, especially in remote islands. IOM supported emergency response efforts while also helping strengthen government preparedness, disaster response, and community resilience.

57. Climate change impacts, such as sea-level rise, extreme weather events, and resource scarcity, exacerbate existing vulnerabilities and inequalities, especially for women, girls, and marginalized populations. These impacts increase the risk of GBV, disrupt access to all health services and decrease economic and educational opportunities, leading to increased vulnerabilities.

58. Climate impacts in FSM disproportionately affect children, disrupting school attendance and compromising access to health and WASH services. Children in outer islands face heightened vulnerabilities due to limited infrastructure and emergency response capacity.

59. In 2024, FSM engaged with UNICEF and UNFPA in its first GBV risk mitigation training, with disaster management staff, CSOs and UN agencies oriented on strategies to reduce potential harms from programme interventions and to improve access, availability, acceptability and quality of services in emergencies, as well as for development interventions in the context of FSM as significantly impacted by climate change.

60. FSM is advancing adaptation and mitigation efforts in line with national policies like the Nation-Wide Integrated Disaster Risk Management and Climate Change Policy and National Disaster Response Plan. The country promotes greenhouse gas reduction and seeks international support to meet adaptation goals. It has adopted a national standardized risk and vulnerability assessment framework that includes gender, social and cultural indicators to strengthen priority-setting. FSM aligns its Nationally Determined Contributions with National Gender Policy.

61. Pollution poses many challenges to the enjoyment of human rights in FSM. Overwhelmed dump sites and weak waste management threaten the health and environment in the main islands of each state. Heavy metals from abandoned vehicles leak into the lagoons, threatening human health through the consumption of animals in higher levels of the food chain. Oil spill from Second World War shipwrecks in Chuuk lagoon and more recent wrecks in other states threaten the environment and livelihoods of fisheries-dependent communities.

62. Invasive species have already caused the loss of biodiversity of animals and plants that were important for the enjoyment of cultural rights, the right to food and for livelihoods from

tourism.

Recommendations:

- a. Finalize updating and adopt the National Disaster Management Plan and FSM National SOP for Emergency and Disaster Response.
- b. Enhance the provision of life-saving and early recovery assistance through the maintenance of pre-positioned assets and strengthening of operational, logistical and multi-sectoral assessment capacity.
- c. Build capacity and maintain operational bases and warehouses in strategic locations throughout FSM to rapidly dispatch emergency assistance to respond to emergency situations.
- d. Finalize the design information management system that enables state and national governments to maintain information on Public Infrastructure and consolidate and share information on post-hazard damage assessments.
- e. Create and regularly update a roster of disaster management network members and support regular meetings.
- f. Promote the participation of women and girls and person with disabilities in disaster risk management and climate change decision-making processes at all levels
- g. Integrate GBV into disaster management policies and contingency plans and train front-line responders in MISP and minimum standards for addressing GBV in Emergencies by 2028.
- h. Build natural defences such as mangrove reforestation and coral reef protection to reduce erosion and storm surge impacts.
- i. Implement coastal zoning regulations to limit development in high-risk areas.
- j. Introduce water-efficient practices and technologies, especially in agriculture and enhance rainwater harvesting system.
- k. Build capacity in environmental and climate planning at all government levels with enhanced coordination among national, state, and community stakeholders.
- l. Integrate climate resilience into school infrastructure and emergency preparedness plans that prioritize children's needs and safety.
- m. Strengthen environmental education in schools to build children's awareness and adaptive capacity.