

# FSM National Gender Equality Policy



Government of the Federated States of Micronesia



*The President*  
*Palikir, Pohnpei*  
*Federated States of Micronesia*

FORWARD

This updated FSM National Gender Equality Policy (2025-2030) reaffirms the Federated States of Micronesia's enduring, whole-of-society commitment to gender equality and inclusive development. It acknowledges and celebrates our diverse customs and traditions across Pohnpei, Chuuk, Yap, and Kosrae, while striving to create a more equitable future for all. It was created with support from the Australian Government through the Pacific Women Lead program.

Building upon the foundation laid by the 2018 Policy and informed by state-led actions and the lived experiences of women, men, girls, boys, in all their diversity – including persons with disabilities and those in the outer islands, this policy addresses persistent challenges and emerging opportunities. This policy also aligns with our national development priorities, regional commitments, and international obligations.

We recognize that achieving true gender equality requires a collaborative effort. We invite all stakeholders to join us in this vital endeavor to build a unified, resilient, and prosperous FSM where everyone can reach their full potentials.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Wesley W. Simina".

Wesley W. Simina  
President  
Federated States of Micronesia



Figure 1. Detail from the 2025 FSM National Women's Conference.

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## List of acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
BPA	Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CROP	Council of Regional Organizations of the Pacific
CWC	Chuuk Women’s Council
DECEM	Department of Environment, Climate Change and Emergency Management
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australian Government)
DHSA	National Department of Health and Social Affairs
DV	Domestic Violence
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
EVAWG	Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls
FBO	Faith-Based Organizations
FSM	Federated States of Micronesia
FSMDB	FSM Development Bank
GDU	Gender Development Unit
GEDSI	Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion
IDP	Infrastructure Development Plan
KWA	Kosrae Women’s Association
MGEF	Micronesia Gender Equality Framework
ODA	Office of Development Assistance
OPD	Organization of Persons with Disabilities
PIO	Public Information Office
PLGED	Revised Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration
PPA	Pacific Platform for Action on Gender Equality and Women’s Human Rights
PSEAH	Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment
PWC	Pohnpei Women’s Council
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SDP	Strategic Development Plan
SOGI	Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity
SPC	Pacific Community
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population and Development
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
YWA	Yap Women’s Association



## Glossary of terms

- Gender** The norms, expectations and beliefs about the roles, relations and values attributed to girls and boys, and women and men, e.g. men plant taro and women care for children. These norms are socially constructed as they are learned from families and friends, schools, communities, the media, government and religious organizations. They vary between cultures, change over time and are seen as normal but can and do change. Gender and sex are often used interchangeably but they are not the same. Sex is the term used to describe biological differences, e.g. women give birth to children and boys' voices break at puberty.
- Gender analysis** A systematic process that provides the data needed to integrate a gender perspective into policies, programs and projects. Gender analysis identifies the differences between and among women and men in terms of their position in society, and the distribution of resources, opportunities, constraints and power in a given context. It is the starting point for gender mainstreaming. Gender analysis allows for the development of interventions that address gender inequalities and meet the different needs of women and men.
- Gender budgeting** The process of analyzing budgets from a gender perspective to promote gender equality by understanding the different impacts of government spending and revenue collection on men, women and other groups. It aims to make budgets more gender-sensitive, identify gender gaps and re-allocate public resources to achieve equitable outcomes for women and men.
- Gender equality and Gender equity** Gender equality is the end goal, meaning that women, men and gender-diverse people have equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities, irrespective of their sex or gender. Gender equity is the process or the approach used to achieve gender equality, which involves providing tailored support and resources to address historical and social disadvantages, ensuring that everyone has what they need to reach the same outcomes.
- Social inclusion** Social inclusion is a process that ensures people of all backgrounds have equal opportunities, resources, and capabilities to participate fully in society, access public services and shape their lives, fostering a sense of belonging, empowerment and dignity. It aims to overcome barriers related to identity such as gender, age, location, disability and sexual orientation.
- Gender mainstreaming** Gender mainstreaming involves systematically integrating a gender equality perspective into all phases of policy development, implementation, and evaluation across all sectors. The goal is to recognize and address the different needs and experiences of women and men in all their diversity to ensure that all policies and programs benefit everyone equally.



**Gender-based violence**

The terms gender-based violence and violence against women are frequently used interchangeably. However, gender-based violence refers to an act of force or abuse of power and control, that does harm to a person, is committed against their will, without their informed consent based on their gender. While most gender-based violence affects women and girls, men and boys can also be affected.

**Sexual harassment**

Any kind of sexual conduct that is unwelcome and uninvited. It includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, physical and online harassment of a sexual nature. Sexual harassment can be subtle or direct, and a single act or an on-going pattern of behavior.

**Intersectionality**

Analytical framework for understanding how identities like race, gender, class, and sexuality combine to create overlapping systems of discrimination and privilege.

**Violence Against Women and Girls**

Refers to any act of violence or abuse that mainly affects women and girls. It is a term that encompasses many forms of violence including rape, domestic abuse, stalking, sexual harassment, and online abuse. VAWG occurs in both the public and private spheres of women's lives. It is a public health crisis and a violation of human rights, often linked to women's inequality and identities of women.



# 1. Introduction

## Rationale for a National Gender Equality Policy

The Federated States of Micronesia is a relatively young country, having gained independence in 1979. It 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 three million square kilometers, making it one of the largest in the Pacific. FSM's geography creates unique service delivery and protection challenges.

The population of FSM is currently around 100,000 and 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 religious denominations are Roman Catholic and Protestant.

Culture and faith institutions play central roles in community life. Gender roles are deeply shaped by tradition, and women and girls (and some men and boys) face barriers to safety, health, education, economic opportunity, and leadership. Climate change, disaster risks, migration, and the high cost of logistics to reach remote atolls intensify vulnerabilities. Data on gender equality disaggregated by disability, age, and location remains limited, making evidence-based planning difficult.

This updated Policy aims to:

1. harmonize national and state efforts;
2. strengthen laws and protections consistent with FSM's Constitution and international commitments;
3. improve participation and leadership in decision-making;
4. strengthen prevention and the response to EVAWG;
5. expand women's economic participation;
6. promote equitable access to quality health and education;
7. strengthen climate-resilience; and
8. embed GEDSI in public finance and program delivery across all sectors.

The Policy aligns with key international, regional, sub-regional and national frameworks as outlined in Figure 2 (overleaf).

## Alignment with international, regional and national frameworks

### International

- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)
- UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)
- Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
- Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security

### Regional

- Revitalized Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration
- Pacific Platform for Action on Gender Equality and Women's Human Rights 2018–2030

### Sub-regional

- Micronesia Gender Equality Framework 2025-2030

### National

- FSM Strategic Development Plan (SDP) 2024-2043
- FSM Nationwide Integrated Disaster Risk Management and Climate Change Policy 2013
- Framework for Sustainable Health Development in the FSM 2024-2034
- Education Sector Strategic Development Plan 2020-2024
- FSM Infrastructure Development Plan 2025-2034

Figure 2. Alignment with international, regional and national frameworks



## Gender equality in Federated States of Micronesia

Gender equality persists in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and while some progress has been made in political representation, education and labor force participation, challenges remain. They include limited access to resources, gender-based violence (GBV) and persistent social barriers that hinder women's advancement.

The **policy commitment** for gender equality in the FSM is strong, with a national FSM Gender Policy (2018-2023) and integration of gender equality into sectoral policies and frameworks. FSM is party to the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPA) and, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Pacific Platform for Action (PPA) on Gender Equality and Women's Human Rights, the Revitalized Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration (PLGED) and the Micronesian Gender Equality Framework MGEF).

The **FSM Constitution** guarantees men and women equal protection under the law but there is no comprehensive gender equality legislation, i.e. special measures across society and substantive equality. The **legislative context** is complex as national and state laws have separate jurisdictional mandates, are connected to different customary law systems and move at different rates to address gender equality.

Women's **political representation** has progressed but is still limited. There are currently three women out of the 14 members of the national congress; while the number of women in state level legislatures varies – with two women across the four state legislatures as well as the FSM's first woman Lieutenant Governor in Pohnpei state. Although there are initiatives to facilitate involvement of women in political and economic affairs, traditional roles and expectations have been identified as a limiting factor in women's participation in power and decision making.

The **national women's machinery** is the Gender Development Unit (GDU) in the Department of Health and Social Affairs (DHSA). The GDU is responsible for coordinating and monitoring gender mainstreaming and improving the status of women across all government sectors; in addition to coordination of the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) Policy. Pohnpei, Yap, Kosrae and Chuuk states have officers with similar responsibilities. All states have women's councils or associations, however, coordination is weak at all levels. The FSM National Women's conference is a key mechanism for prioritizing actions to advance gender equality.

**Gender mainstreaming** is a goal of the current national gender policy, however, progress across government is slow. There is political will at the national level, but not enough action. This is changing, with a growing commitment to integrate gender equality across the work of government and development. For example, the fisheries and energy sectors have gender components within their policies. Overall, levels of understanding vary, technical capacity is limited and resourcing for gender mainstreaming is inadequate. In addition, current **data on gender equality** is limited.

**Violence against women and girls** is a serious issue with almost one in three ever-partnered women in the FSM (32.8%) experiencing physical and/or sexual violence by a partner at least once in their life. A 2017 assessment of EVAW services found that FSM generally, and Pohnpei State and Chuuk State individually, have made some progress in addressing violence against women and children but generally lack quality essential services. This is especially the case for women and children with disabilities, and in



vulnerable communities and remote areas. GBV prevention and response mechanisms are increasingly addressing child protection and human trafficking.

**Women's health** faces significant challenges related to GBV and access to quality health care. A substantial percentage of women have an unmet need for family planning. Geographical barriers and cultural stigma can limit access to healthcare services. Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) including cancer, maternal and child health issues are priorities for the health sector, but data on the prevalence of NCDs among women is limited.

Women are achieving significant progress in **education**, often outperforming men at all levels of schooling, especially among the younger generation. Women are now present in all levels of schooling at or above the levels of males. Education has empowered women to enter industries and occupations that were not traditionally available to females. In regard to Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), there are low levels of entry of both girls and boys and still fewer girls graduating with STEM qualifications.

**Women's labor force participation** has surged (UNDP) with increasing employment in public administration and sectors traditionally dominated by men such as in management and professional roles. More women are engaging in the cash economy, a notable shift. While positive, along with recent legislative reforms to provide for maternity leave, the majority of private sector workers operate outside of the social security system and do not have parental or sick leave benefits.

Participation and benefits are increasing for **women in the digital economy**. Work is being undertaken to bridge the digital divide focused on digital literacy, financial inclusion and addressing gender-based violence in online spaces. Young women are leaders in developing digital solutions to gender equality issues, climate change, reproductive health and rights and GBV.

FSM is vulnerable to climate change due to its geographical location and low-lying lands. **Climate and disaster resilience efforts exist in a context of high levels of gender inequality and social exclusion.** The 2013 Nationwide Integrated Disaster Risk Management and Climate Change Policy calls for special attention to be given to gender issues.

There is limited information on **the involvement of men in programs and initiatives to address gender inequality** and progress the advancement of women in FSM.

## Review of the FSM Gender Policy 2018-2023

In January 2018 the Government of the Federated States of Micronesia adopted the FSM Gender Policy (2018-2023) to implement commitments set out in the 2004-2023 Strategic Development Plan, CEDAW, and PLGED. The policy was developed in consultation with representatives of government, women's councils, civil society and development partners at national and state level and endorsed at the 2016 FSM Women's Conference. The policy has six goals:

1. Better representation of women in decision-making
2. Elimination of gender-based violence
3. Improved education outcomes

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4. Address barriers facing women in the workforce
  5. Women have better health care and improved choices over their fertility
  6. FSM and State Governments mainstream gender

Consultations were held in August 2025 to review the policy, assess its relevance and effectiveness and based on findings, develop an updated policy that provides a strategic framework for progressing gender equality with clear objectives, strategies and a results-based framework for implementation. Key findings of the review that influenced the policy revision and update include:

- Policy strengths are that it established a national framework for action to progress gender equality and empower women; catalyzed dialogue and services to address GBV in some states; and initiated partnerships with civil society including faith and traditional leaders.
- All the policy goals continue to be relevant.
- Progress towards achievement of all six goals is uneven and slow with most advancements made in the areas of better representation of women in decision-making, improved education outcomes for women, and women's participation in the labor force.
- Gender mainstreaming and improved health outcomes for women have made the least progress.
- Additional concerns include: gender equality in climate and disaster resilience efforts and the digital economy; the need to engage men and integrate respect for the cultural context of FSM in all efforts to address gender inequality and empower women, and improved data and statistics.
- While legislative and policy reforms have progressed, implementation is limited, particularly in the area of elimination of VAWG.
- Policy gaps were identified in the governance, management and coordination of implementation at various levels and across various groups; monitoring, reporting and review; and resourcing the policy both in terms of the allocation of financial and human resources and technical capability.
- Additional legal policy gaps are in the areas of child protection, inheritance, workplace equality and PSEAH.
- A key lesson learnt from the experience of COVID-19 is that working at community level and providing support to communities is a successful implementation strategy.

Building on these findings, this 2025-2030 FSM National Gender Equality Policy serves as an updated version of the 2018-2023 policy. While acknowledging FSM's international and regional commitments to gender equality, its foundation is the unique social and cultural context of this nation. It is focused on continuing to build on and strengthen the conditions for both men and women in FSM in all their diversity, to benefit equally from development outcomes at national and state level, so that they, in turn, can equally contribute to the FSM's progress.

## Policy development process

The process for developing the Policy followed the steps below:

- **Consultations:** in Pohnpei, Chuuk, Yap, and Kosrae with state agencies, legislatures, traditional leaders, church councils, youth, elders, women’s organizations (PWC, CWC, YWA, KWA), organizations of persons with disabilities, and private sector representatives.
- **Evidence gathering:** Information was collected from government policies and statistics, development partner reports, and stakeholder mapping.
- **Drafting and validation:** There was a validation workshop with key stakeholders for feedback on the draft policy.
- **Approval:** The policy received national endorsement with state concurrence.

## Policy vision

In the Federated States of Micronesia, women and men in all their diversity are respected, valued and empowered, and can reach their full potential in an equitable and resilient society, fostering sustainable development and economic growth.



Figure 3. Images from the development of the FSM National Gender Policy.

## Cultural values

The cultural values identified during state consultations for the SDP 2024-2043 provide the foundation for the guiding principles of the FSM Gender Policy.

YAP: *Tarag* - a navigating term on the idea that sailors plan before setting sail

CHUUK: *Fairo* - deep respect for our surroundings including the consciousness, people, environment and spiritual realm

KOSRAE: *Lulalfongi* - belief in and respect for a higher power

POHNPEI: *Kairoir ehute* - a unified voice or vision

## Guiding principles

**Rights-based approach** grounded in international human rights standards and the FSM constitution;

**Cultural sensitivity** respecting traditions and cultural heritage while challenging harmful norms and practices that perpetuate inequality;

**Equity and fairness** recognizing that different groups including women with disabilities, youth, women in the outer islands, people of diverse gender identities and other marginalized groups require tailored support to achieve equal outcomes;

**Inclusion and participation** ensuring meaningful engagement of women and men in all sectors of governance, development and community life;

**Do no harm and safeguarding** to ensure that women and marginalized groups involved in activities are protected from exploitation, abuse and other negative impacts; and

**Intersectionality** addressing overlapping disadvantages experienced by women with disabilities, youth, women in the outer islands, people of diverse gender identities and other marginalized groups.

## Policy goal, outcomes and objectives

The **goal** of the FSM national gender equality policy is to ensure equal opportunities and rights for all women and men to participate in the economic, social, political and cultural development of our country to ensure the vision of a “**unified, resilient and prosperous FSM.**”

The **outcomes** expected to be achieved through the Policy include:

1. Better representation of women in decision making.
2. Elimination of violence against women and girls.
3. Increased participation of women in the economy.
4. Improved education and health outcomes for women and girls in all their diversity.

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5. Meaningful engagement of women and girls in actions to address the impacts of climate change and build climate resilience.
  6. Strengthened national and state systems to promote and mainstream gender equality and social inclusion.

To achieve these outcomes, specific **objectives** are to:

1. Advance women's leadership and participation in decision-making at all levels.
2. Eliminate all forms of VAWG and provide the best services to support and protect survivors.
3. Create equal opportunities for women to be economically empowered and financially secure.
4. Ensure women and girls have access to essential, inclusive, and appropriate education and quality health services.
5. Support the engagement of women and girls in all activities to strengthen climate resilience.
6. To systematically integrate gender equality into all national, state and municipal agencies, budgets, policies, programs, and services.

## Implementation of the Policy

The implementation of the FSM Gender Equality Policy is a responsibility to be shared across all national and state government departments, state-owned institutions, and local municipalities. Each department at national and state level is responsible for integrating a gender perspective through its planning and budgeting processes and delivering sectoral programs and services that mainstream gender equality into all of their activities. While several departments already address gender equality in their sectoral policy documents and plans, implementation will build on these commitments and work with these agencies to fulfil their sectoral gender equality policy commitments.

The Gender Development Unit (GDU) in the Department of Health and Social Affairs (DHSA) is responsible for coordination of policy implementation. Their role is to promote gender and development issues through key programs and services including: i) advancing women's rights and gender equality; ii) serving as technical partner to the FSM National Women's Council; iii) implementing gender mainstreaming across government sectors; iv) acting as a focal point for national, regional and international gender equality issues; and v) monitoring FSM's compliance with CEDAW. These responsibilities include working with civil society and private sectors stakeholders to ensure consideration of the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination faced by marginalized groups such as women with disabilities, youth, women in the outer islands and people of diverse gender identities; and also working with development partners to ensure their involvement in policy implementation. Development partners include: United Nations agencies including UN Women, UNFPA; CROP agencies including SPC, SPREP; bilateral donors including Australia, Japan; and international financing institutions including ADB, and World Bank.



A framework for progressing policy implementation has been developed to operationalize the policy, outlining actions and measures to be taken to progress policy objectives. The framework recognizes capacity and data constraints; the need for improved coordination from government to state level, and across departments and sectors, and with development partners; the need for improved analysis and dissemination of information on gender equality issues; and the need to tailor national level objectives to state level priorities and needs. This will involve the GDU working with state counterparts to socialize the Policy at state level and to develop state action plans which will become part of the overall policy implementation process.

A Gender Sub-Committee will be set up under the Human Rights and SDG Taskforce established by Presidential Order in 2022, to support the implementation and monitoring of the Policy. Its membership will consist of representatives of key implementing partners from: national, state and municipal government agencies; state-owned enterprises and the private sector; national and state women's councils and associations; traditional leaders; and civil society and faith-based organizations (FBOs). The Sub-Committee will meet on a six-monthly basis to review progress on implementation. Development partners may participate by invitation. GDU will act as Secretariat and among other responsibilities ensure that regular updates on policy implementation are provided to all stakeholders including development partners. This will include through meetings such as the FSM National Women's Conference and other relevant convenings and roundtables.

# 2. Framework for progressing gender equality in FSM

## 2025-2030

The following framework sets out a guide for policy implementation. It emphasizes a coordinated approach across national and state governments working closely with civil society, faith-based organizations, traditional leaders and development partners. Outputs, actions and implementing partners are suggested for each objective.

### Outcome 1: Better representation of women in decision-making

Although there have been significant achievements for women as leaders and decision-makers within FSM’s public and private sector, women remain underrepresented in governance bodies and decision-making. Consultations identified the need to strengthen mechanisms and processes for women to advance in this area including quotas for state legislatures and the FSM Congress to ensure the inclusion of a critical mass of women; the need to conduct public awareness on the benefits of gender equality and the importance of women’s leadership; training for women to become leaders, including young women; and engaging men and traditional leaders in all of these efforts.

Objective	Outputs	Actions	Key implementing partners
<b>To advance women’s leadership and participation in decision-making at all levels</b>	<p>Increased participation of women in decision-making positions.</p> <p>Knowledge and understanding of cultural roles of women as leaders and innovators is revived.</p> <p>Senators, government officials and traditional leaders are aware of the benefits and promote women in leadership and decision-making roles.</p>	<p>Establish mechanisms for increasing the participation of women in leadership and decision-making, e.g. quotas.</p> <p>Implement programs to encourage and support women’s leadership and advancement in decision-making positions, e.g. leadership training for women in all sectors.</p> <p>Provide opportunities for training young women leaders.</p> <p>Conduct research into the cultural history of women’s leadership in FSM.</p> <p>Conduct public awareness campaigns on the benefits of investing in gender equality and the promotion of women in leadership and decision-making.</p>	<p>FSM DHSA and state equivalents</p> <p>National and state women’s councils and associations</p> <p>National and state Public Information Offices</p> <p>Civil society organizations</p> <p>National Congress and State Legislatures</p> <p>Traditional leaders</p> <p>College of Micronesia, FSM</p> <p>Development partners</p>

## Outcome 2: Elimination of violence against women and girls

VAWG is a serious issue in FSM with almost one in three ever-partnered women in the FSM (32.8%) experiencing physical and/or sexual violence by a partner at least once in their life. A 2017 assessment of EVAWG services found that FSM generally, and Pohnpei State and Chuuk State individually, have made progress in addressing violence against women and children. However, there is still a lack of quality essential services including those for women with disabilities. There is a National EVAWG Policy and state EVAWG action plans. The achievement of this outcome area is dependent on alignment with the national EVAWG policy and state EVAWG action plans. It must involve a whole of family approach which includes a focus on men as partners.

Objectives	Outputs	Actions	Key implementing partners
<b>To eliminate all forms of VAWG and provide effective services to support and protect survivors.</b>	Coordination between service providers is strengthened.	Establish and operationalize the national EVAWG committee.	FSM Department of Health and Social Affairs
	GBV legislation is socialized, enacted and fully implemented in all states.	Establish and operationalize all state DV taskforces including through existing mechanisms such as referral pathways.	FSM Department of Justice
	Increased awareness of the harmful impacts of GBV, including technology-facilitated GBV.	Identify GBV legislative gaps and identify measures to address them.	FSM Department of Education
	Improved survivor-centered services.	Conduct public awareness campaigns - targeting specific groups including out-of-school youth, traditional leaders and policy - on the harmful impacts of VAWG, and the importance of men's roles in preventing violence.	National and state Public Information Offices
	GBV data is improved and disseminated.	Identify opportunities for professional development and training for service providers, including counsellors.	Relevant state agencies e.g. state courts, AG's Office, Public Safety, Social Affairs/Social Services/Civic Affairs
		Establish and strengthen mechanisms for data collection and dissemination.	Civil society organizations

### Outcome 3: To create equal opportunities for women to be economically empowered and financially secure

Economic empowerment is a critical pathway for women, including vulnerable women and women with disabilities, to reach their potential and advance their well-being. In addition, women are more likely than men to invest their income in their children, families and communities. Economies also miss out when they do not benefit fully from women’s innovation, financial management skills and hard work. It is important to recognize that women’s ability to participate in the workforce is impacted by other areas of their lives – culture, reproductive and domestic responsibilities, access to health services, VAWG etc. In FSM, women’s participation in the workforce has surged, with increasing employment in public administration and sectors traditionally dominated by men such as in management and professional roles. More women are engaging in the cash economy. Recent legislative reforms to provide for maternity leave are positive but unequal pay is still an issue, and the majority of private sector workers operate outside of the social security system and do not have parental or sick leave benefits.

Objective	Outputs	Actions	Key Implementing Partners
<b>To create opportunities for women to be economically empowered and financially secure.</b>	Women have greater access to productive assets including financial and digital literacies and services, equipment and technology (incl. digital technology) to develop income generating activities.  Employment conditions take into account safety, parental needs, special needs and women’s workload.	Develop a women’s economic empowerment strategy.  Identify and provide business training opportunities for women including through the College of Micronesia, FSM.  Improve women’s financial literacy, credit access and tax benefits.  Improve women’s access to technology, including digital technology for income generation in addition to improving their understanding of potential risks.  Promote women’s employment and income generation in sectors, e.g., renewable energy, sustainable fisheries and agriculture, and culture and arts.  Enact, enforce and implement national and state legislation on maternity and parental leave, workplace protections against discrimination and harassment.	FSM DHSA  FSM Dept of Environment, Climate Change and Emergency Management  FSM Department of Education  FSM Department of Finance and Administration  FSM Department of Resources and Development  Chambers of Commerce  State economic planning committees  State-owned enterprises, e.g. Telecom and FSM TCC  COM, FSM  FSM Development Bank, Bank of the FSM, Bank of Guam  Development partners

## Outcome 4: Improved education and health outcomes for women and girls in all their diversity

Health outcomes for women, girls and vulnerable groups in FSM have worsened over time driven by shifts away from traditionally nutritious diets and increased work load. This has resulted in widespread malnutrition and a surge in non-communicable diseases (NCDs). Moreover, evolving lifestyles and gender roles coupled with increased participation in the workforce have doubled women’s workloads. Challenges to progressing women’s health are GBV and access to quality health care. Geographical barriers and cultural stigma can also limit access to healthcare services. Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), NCDs including cancer, HPV vaccination, maternal and child health ailments, and mental health are priorities for the health sector but disaggregated data is limited.

Women are integral agents of change in the fight against non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and have a key role in prevention and control efforts. Recognizing and supporting their role is essential for creating a healthier, more equitable society. Empowering women to participate actively in decisions on nutritious foods and health-related behaviors not only promotes gender equality but also enhances the effectiveness of NCD prevention strategies.



Figure 4. Delegates at the 2025 FSM National Women's Conference.

Women are achieving significant progress in education, often outperforming men at all levels of schooling, especially among the younger generation. Women are now present in all levels of schooling at or above the levels of males. Education has empowered women to enter industries and occupations that were not traditionally available to females. In regard to Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), there are low entry levels of both girls and boys and still fewer girls graduating with STEM qualifications.

Many women in FSM migrate seeking better education, family ties, health care and employment opportunities. Improvements in health and education can be achieved through lifelong learning, a safe and supportive education environment, family life education and a progressive curriculum that promotes gender equality and social inclusion.

Objective	Outputs	Actions	Key implementing partners
<p><b>Ensure women and girls have access to essential, inclusive, and appropriate education and quality health services.</b></p>	<p>The education curriculum includes a focus on family life and citizenship.</p> <p>Health services are accessible and address the particular health needs of women throughout their lifecycle.</p> <p>Women and girls are aware of and have strengthened capacity to address their sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR).</p>	<p>Strengthen the school curriculum to address:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Comprehensive sexuality education;</li> <li>- Menstrual Health Management; and</li> <li>- Social Citizenship Education.</li> </ul> <p>Promote health through sports activities.</p> <p>Conduct outreach activities on SRHR for youth who are not in school.</p> <p>Provide capacity building on SRHR for service providers.</p> <p>Promote investment in STEM education for women and girls.</p> <p>Establish or strengthen mechanisms for coordination and sharing of information on education and health outcomes between education and health agencies.</p>	<p>FSM DHSA</p> <p>FSM Department of Health</p> <p>FSM Department of Education</p> <p>Sports associations</p> <p>Public Safety</p> <p>Civil society organizations</p> <p>COM, FSM</p> <p>Development partners</p>

## Outcome 5: Meaningful engagement of women and girls in actions to address the impacts of climate change and build climate resilience

It is well documented that in the Pacific, women and girls are disproportionately affected by climate change impacts due to underlying gender inequality and socio-economic disadvantages. Climate change related disasters can increase women’s additional unpaid work because they will be required to restore their homes and gardens, fetch water, and take care of children, the elderly and other family members, including those with disabilities. For women actively engaged in paid work, this can translate to losing some of their earnings. Women are important agents of change therefore improved capacity, can concretely help tackle climate change issues. Section 8 of the FSM Constitution recognizes the right of the people to a healthy environment. This is consistent with the International Court of Justice (ICJ) landmark advisory opinion on the obligations of States to take effective action to address climate change. Women are already contributing to climate change adaptation in FSM by adapting traditional knowledge and designing new technology to meet their needs, e.g. in Chuuk women are relying on traditional practices for managing drought, including drying and fermenting breadfruit to support food security.

Objective	Outputs	Actions	Key implementing partners
<b>To support the engagement of women and girls in all activities to strengthen climate resilience.</b>	The DECEM Gender Action Plan is implemented.	Support implementation of the DECEM Gender Action Plan and the FSM national adaptation plan.	FSM Department of Environment, Climate Change and Emergency Management (DECEM)
	Women’s organizations strengthened in their efforts to mitigate against climate change and collaborate with other stakeholders.	Ensure that women’s organizations are included in all climate resilience and disaster response capacity building and training initiatives.	FSM DHSA State disaster response and climate resilience project partners
	Stronger coordination and working relationships between DHSA and DECEM.	Establish or strengthen mechanisms for coordination and sharing of information on the engagement of women in climate resilience efforts, including disaster response.	National and state Infrastructure departments Public Safety Municipalities of outer islands
	A Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion Action Plan for strengthened resilience across all Infrastructure Development Plan (IDP) projects.	Strengthen capacity of national and state Infrastructure departments to incorporate GEDSI within infrastructure for resilience projects.	FSM Women’s Council State Women’s Councils/Associations Civil society including FBOs and organizations of people with disabilities (OPDs) Traditional leaders SPC, SPREP Development Partners

## Outcome 6: Strengthened national and state systems to promote and mainstream gender equality and social inclusion

Gender mainstreaming is interconnected with international law and is a core strategy for achieving gender equality within international legal frameworks, such as CEDAW. There is political will at the national level but progress across government is slow. This is changing, with a growing commitment to integrate gender equality dimensions across the work of government and development. For example, DECEM has a gender action plan. Overall, levels of understanding vary, technical capacity is limited, there is little awareness across national, state and municipal government agencies about existing legal and policy frameworks for gender equality, the national women’s machinery is weak, and resourcing for gender mainstreaming is inadequate. Further, the production of sex disaggregated data on gender equality and its use is limited and, in many cases, unavailable.

Objective	Outputs	Actions	Key implementing partners
<b>To systematically integrate gender equality into all national, state and municipal agencies, budgets, policies, programs, and services.</b>	Increased awareness and understanding of gender equity, equality and human rights issues.	Strengthen the capacity of DHSA to coordinate and monitor implementation of gender equality commitments and provide an annual report to Congress.	DHSA
	Strengthened legal and policy frameworks in alignment with CEDAW principles and obligations.	Produce and socialize a national gender equity profile on a biennial basis.	FSM Department of Finance
	Government agencies integrate gender equality and social inclusion into all aspects of their work.	Produce and use sex-disaggregated data and gender analysis to inform government legislation, policies and programs.	FSM Dept of Justice and state justice agencies
	Gender-inclusive governmental policies and programs promoting equal access and opportunities are implemented in all sectors.	Socialize the National Gender Equality Policy across national, state, municipal agencies and outer islands in the context of FSM culture and values.	All national, state and municipal government agencies
	Annual reports from national and state government agencies provide information on their initiatives to implement the national gender policy.	Build the capacity of Government officials and traditional leaders to enhance their understanding of gender issues and promote gender equality through their roles, including the establishment of mechanisms and processes for gender mainstreaming.	National and state Public Information Offices
		Promote gender-related research across all sectors.	Civil society
			Traditional and faith-based leaders



### 3. Monitoring of the Policy

The policy will be monitored through the existing mechanism of the Human Rights and SDGs Taskforce established by Presidential Order in 2022.

A Gender Sub-Committee will be set up under the Human Rights and SDG Taskforce to support the implementation and monitoring of the Policy. Its membership will consist of representatives of key implementing partners from: national, state and municipal agencies; state-owned enterprises and the private sector; national and state women's councils and associations; traditional leaders; and civil society and faith-based organizations. The Sub-Committee will meet on a six-monthly basis to review progress on implementation. Development partners may participate by invitation. GDU will act as Secretariat to the Sub-Committee and among other responsibilities ensure that regular updates on policy implementation are provided to all stakeholders including development partners. This will include through meetings such as the National Women's Conference and other relevant convenings and roundtables.

A MERL framework to be developed in the first six months after Policy endorsement will facilitate policy monitoring. The framework will be used to track progress, identify areas for improvement, inform decision-making on the allocation and use of resources and strategies for gender mainstreaming, and promote transparency and accountability in implementation. It will detail processes for monitoring, evaluation and reporting, including for internal annual policy and budget reporting to Congress.



## 4. Resourcing the Policy

This section outlines the strategies for securing resources to effectively implement the FSM National Gender Equality Policy in collaboration with the FSM Department of Finance and Administration and the Office for Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) at national and state levels.

### **Institutional responsibility for budget allocations for policy implementation**

National and state departments including municipal governments are responsible for mainstreaming gender equality actions into their programs and services. By implication this requires allocation of resources to ensure that activities are implemented. This will involve national and state agencies working together to develop costed gender action plans on annual basis that can be submitted to State Legislatures and Congress respectively, for funding approval. All governments at national, state and municipal level are encouraged to ensure that financial and technical support provided by development partners in their sector also reflect government commitments to gender equality made through this policy.

### **Development partner support**

The Gender Development Unit is responsible for establishing partnerships with development partners to encourage their support for policy implementation. Currently, the Government of Australia is the main donor of activities working through United Nations agencies, and the Pacific Community. Civil society as key partners actively work to mobilize resources to support policy related activities, however, they are not always aware of available sources of funding and technical support. The GDU will coordinate and share information on policy implementation among development partners on a regular basis.

## 5. Conclusion

The 2025-2030 FSM National Gender Equality Policy serves as an updated version of the 2018-2023 FSM National Gender policy. While acknowledging FSM's international and regional commitments to gender equality, its foundation is the unique social and cultural context of this nation. It is focused on continuing to build on and strengthen the conditions for both men and women in FSM in all their diversity, to benefit equally from development outcomes at national and state level, so that they, in turn, can equally contribute to FSM's progress.



## Annex 1

MERL Framework (to be developed).