

Progressing gender equality amongst semi-autonomous states

Federated States Of Micronesia Enhancing Agency

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Project Name: Progressing Gender Equality in the Pacific

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Norleen Oliver, National Gender Development Officer (left) with Ruby Awa, Family Protection Adviser – Federated States of Micronesia

The four states of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) span nearly 2,700 km of ocean. In her work to progress the adoption of a national gender policy, Ms Norleen Oliver knows first-hand the challenges – and rewards – of working in an environment of geographically spread, semi-autonomous states.

Ms Oliver is the FSM National Gender Development Officer and Chief of the Social Affairs Unit in the FSM Department of Health and Social Affairs. She oversees the implementation of the gender matrix from the National Strategic Plan on Gender Development and Human Rights and coordinates human rights convention reporting for FSM.

Pacific Women's support to the Pacific Community's Progressing Gender Equality in the Pacific program assisted with consultations to develop a gender policy for FSM.

'The consultations that I was part of was not only informative, but provided an opportunity for capacity building to be able to conduct these consultations in the future should the need to update arises,' explains Ms Oliver.

However, it is not always easy to undertake consultations like this in an environment of semi-autonomous states.

'This is very difficult and costly. The national government is the body that makes commitments at the regional and international level on behalf of the whole of the country in which the FSM states are the ones to implement. Then it is up to the national programs like my program to work with the states counterparts to get their support to comply with the proposed activities to meet the regional and international commitments.

This needs close collaboration with the states to either travel to the FSM states or to fund their [representatives'] travel to a national meeting in one agreed location, which is very costly, but required.

The main challenges in my role is bringing the national mandates to the state level for their buy-in and to coordinate the needs and requirements of the four states into one national goal, compounded with my lack of budget / resources from the national government.'

Despite these challenges, the work to progress women's empowerment in FSM has resulted in many achievements so far.

'We have completed the gender policy consultations, scoping mission on human rights, institution interviews, FSM Women Conference 2016 in Yap, consultations on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and many others... These are some of our humble achievements, but with rich experiences to move our quest of gender equality in the nation.'

** This Story of Change was originally published in the Pacific Women Annual Progress Report 2016 – 2017. All values are consistent with that reporting period. For the most up-to-date value of activities, visit our [interactive map](#).*