

The FSM way: reducing family violence through laws and service delivery

Federated States Of Micronesia

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Solomon Islander Ruby Awa is relishing the opportunity to move north to the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) to help reduce family violence.

With support from the Australian Government-funded Pacific Women program, she's assisting the roll out of new laws protecting women and children from violence.



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

‘My role as Family Protection Adviser is an exciting one,’ Ruby said from her new base in Pohnpei. ‘In FSM, we’ve seen a concerted drive by women, youth, church groups and governments to address domestic violence.’

A veteran human rights defender of over 10 years with the Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT) and with a background in international law, Ruby says the assignment is not an easy one. The latest FSM Family Health and Safety Study estimated one in three women in relationships experience

physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime. In some areas, more than every second woman will experience partner-related violence.

‘Two states in FSM have put in place domestic violence laws—first in Kosrae in 2014 and recently in Pohnpei, with anticipation of Chuuk and Yap soon following suit. There are developments across the nation to strengthen support services for victims of domestic violence.’

Ruby will be working closely with Norleen Oliver, the FSM National Gender Development Officer, as well as government, civil society and development partners like the United Nations, to support the strengthening of referral pathways and services for victims of violence.

‘The Domestic Violence Act recently passed in Pohnpei, so I’m going to be working with partners and colleagues to support the implementation of the new law,’ she said. ‘It’s a great opportunity to provide support to a Pacific effort to eliminate family violence – through both legislation and service delivery.’