

Navigating change for women in Micronesia

Republic Of The Marshall Islands [Enhancing Agency](#)

December 18, 2019

*This Story of Change was originally published in the [Pacific Women Annual Progress Report 2017–2018](#). All values are consistent with that reporting period.

Project name: Support to the Micronesian Women’s Conference, August 2017

Total funding: \$40,000

Funding timeframe: 2017

The inaugural Micronesian Women’s Conference was held in August 2017 in RMI with the theme ‘Navigating Change’. Participants identified opportunities and challenges in progressing gender equality and the empowerment of women in Micronesia in the areas of economic empowerment, eliminating violence, health, climate change and leadership.



Participants of the Micronesian Women’s Conference in August 2017. Photo credit: RMI Government.

Initiated by Her Excellency Dr Hilda Heine, President of RMI, the conference was organised by the RMI Government in partnership with local non-government organisation WUTMI, with funding from Pacific Women and other development partners.

In her opening speech, Dr Heine addressed women leaders and representatives from RMI, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Nauru, Palau and Guam. 'Navigating change is about steering our canoe, our walap and our vakas, towards gender equality across all sectors,' Dr Heine said. 'It calls for political will and commitment at the highest level.'

'Our theme calls for enhanced coordination and collaboration at national and regional levels and across all sectors,' she said. 'It requires the creation of innovative partnerships for sustainable development that respond to the needs at the country level while leveraging regional support. It is about strengthening the voice of civil society in the women's movement and engaging the private sector and the business community to enhance outcomes for women and girls. And finally, it requires strengthened partnerships between men and women at all levels as navigating change begins with ourselves and with our families and communities.'

In Marshallese custom, the expression jined kiped refers to the mother being the rudder of a family. The conference's agreed Jined Kiped Declaration includes recommendations for accelerating progress towards gender equality, with an emphasis on climate change and women and girls with disabilities. 'The conference declarations provide a roadmap for Micronesian governments to progress gender equality and empower women,' said Leituala Kuiniselani Toelupe Tago-Elisara, Director of the Pacific Community's Social Development Program.

Conference delegates committed to use the recommendations in the Declaration to advocate for change in their home countries, encouraged by Dr Heine's words: 'There has been a lot of talk, but now is the time for substantive action.'