

# Pacific Partnership to End Violence Against Women and Girls (Pacific Partnership)



## REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS COUNTRY SUMMARY

*Updated June 2022*

The Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) is a focus country of the Pacific Partnership to End Violence Against Women and Girls (Pacific Partnership) programme.

Violence against women and girls is recognised worldwide as a social, political, and public health problem as well as a fundamental violation of human rights. In RMI, 48 percent of ever-partnered women reported experiencing physical violence in their lifetime.<sup>1</sup>

The Pacific Partnership programme brings together governments, civil society organisations, communities and other partners to promote gender equality, prevent violence against women and girls (VAWG), and increase access to quality response services for survivors.

### Pacific Partnership Priorities in RMI

There are two key outcomes prioritised for RMI under the programme:

#### 1. Integrating human rights, gender equality and ending violence against women and girls in formal education (led by SPC HRSD Division)

The Pacific Community (SPC) Human Rights and Social Development (HRSD) Division is implementing its Social Citizenship Education (SCE) programme, through Pacific Partnership. SCE emphasises those social rights and obligations necessary to be part of, and enjoy equal opportunities, benefits and status in, a community.

It refers to active, informed and responsible citizens who know their human rights and responsibilities, practice gender equality, non-discrimination and inclusion, prevent violence, are concerned about the welfare of others, and are willing to contribute to the development of the country.

SPC HRSD partners with the public school system under RMI's Ministry of Education to progress the integration of SCE concepts into the school curricula for Grades 5-12.

#### ABOUT PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP

The Pacific Partnership is funded primarily by the European Union, and the Governments of Australia and New Zealand, and UN Women, and is led by the Pacific Community (SPC), UN Women and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat.

In RMI, two of the three coordinating agencies have Pacific Partnership activities: SPC HRSD and PIFS.

In addition to RMI, other countries and territories in the Pacific region benefiting from the five-year programme include, but are not limited to Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.





## 2022-2023 initiatives supported by SPC HRSD include:

### Supporting development of learning resources and training roll-out

- Supporting the public school system in the development and production of teaching and learning resources on SCE.
- Supporting the public school system in the development and rollout of pre-service and in-service training to teachers, teacher trainers, education officials and school heads that aims to:
  - » Relate nuclear legacy issues, customary rights, traditional rights, responsibilities and internationally recognised human rights, including the rights of the child, teacher and student expectations and behaviour in the classroom;
  - » Assist schools to apply knowledge of social inclusion to address bullying, stereotypes and disruptive behaviour in order to adapt curriculum and develop learning and teaching strategies; and
  - » Assist teachers to teach in a way that promotes equitable outcomes for all students.
- Supporting community facilitators on Wotje, Jaluit and Majuro with training and resources to conduct outreach sessions in communities to raise awareness of human rights, gender equality and ending violence against women.

### Supporting review and development of inclusive policies

- Supporting the public school system to review and further develop school-specific policies, and implementation plans:
  - » On social inclusion, school governance, anti-discrimination, sexual harassment, violence against women and girls, and positive discipline;
  - » To guide the roll-out of the work in the informal education sector through platforms such as school clubs, parents' clubs and youth clubs.
- This approach aims to ensure synergy between the changes to the curricula and teaching learning resources, and the broader policies and programmes of the Ministry of Education.

## Strengthening evidence to prevent violence against women and girls

- Collecting baseline information from 340 school leaders, teachers, students and community members from six schools across two islands. Through this exercise SPC has a better understanding of people's knowledge, attitudes and practices in relation to human rights, gender equality and gender-based violence. This information shows SPC where to focus its training and curriculum content. An evaluation at the end of the project will show change that can be attributed to the project.
- SPC, under the Pacific Partnership, and in collaboration with UN Women has also developed a 'Work Works' paper that documents the learnings of the implementation of the SCE programme in 152 schools across Kiribati, the Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI), Tuvalu and Vanuatu .

## 2. Monitoring and reporting government commitments to gender equality and ending violence against women and girls (led by PIFS)

### 2022-23 initiatives targeting non-state actors supported by PIFS include:

RMI non-state actors (NSAs), including civil society organisations and women's groups, also benefit from Pacific Partnership through **strategic engagement, capacity development for monitoring the implementation of national commitments on gender equality, and projects support through small grants**. The PIFS' NSA component of the Pacific Partnership programme works in close concert with agencies on the following key areas (with overall approaches supported by UN Women):

- Encouraging CSO partners to participate in upcoming PIFS consultative mechanisms including the Annual Regional CSO Forum; the Forum Economic Ministers' Meeting (FEMM); and the CROP Heads and NSA Executive Meetings
- 2022 Gender Economic and Financial Workshop
- 2022/2023 Consultations for the revitalized Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration
- 2023 Young People's Mock Forum



## BACKGROUND

In the Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI), the national Family Health and Safety prevalence study shows 69 percent of women report having experienced some form of gender-based violence in their lifetime.<sup>ii</sup> Approximately 48 percent of ever-partnered women reported having experienced physical violence in their lifetime, with 16 percent having experienced physical violence in the 12 months preceding this study.<sup>iii</sup> Results for current physical violence by age of the respondent show that this type of violence starts early in a relationship, with 38 percent of respondents aged 15–24 having already experienced partner violence in their lifetimes. There is some variation between the urban areas (Majuro and Ebeye) and the outer islands, most significantly, prevalence of women who experienced lifetime physical violence is higher on the outer islands than the urban centres.

The national study addresses the need to better understand the nature, prevalence and impact of violence against women in RMI, with overall survey results showing a high level of violence against women, and this demands urgent action.

Overall, there is strong political will to address violence against women and girls in RMI. The former President Hilda Heine was elected as the first female president in 2016 and has been actively involved in promoting women's rights and condemning domestic violence.

The national Domestic Violence Prevention and Protection Act came into force in 2011 and provides protection orders to assist those that are affected by family violence and ensures their safety. It defines and criminalises domestic violence, namely physical, sexual, psychological or economic abuse against family members and calls for a multisectoral response to domestic violence.

<sup>i</sup>Republic of the Marshall Islands National Study on Family Health and Safety, March 2014, with support from UNFPA and the Australian Government. The FHSS was initiated through the RMI Ministry of Internal Affairs and conducted by Women United Together Marshall Islands (WUTMI).

<sup>ii</sup>Social Citizenship Education in Schools – What Works to Promote Human and Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls (2021) – commissioned by UN Women, and co-developed by SPC, UN Women and the Equality Institute: <https://hrsd.spc.int/node/1010>

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*Imagery inspired by empowering female-specific tattoo motifs used in the Pacific region.*

