



Federated States of Micronesia

First Voluntary National Review on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Responses to questions at the 2020 HLPF:
Question and Answer Session

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Question 1

SDG 14 is about the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources. As a small island developing state, FSM faces several challenges in the area of sustainable development. Highlight some of the initiatives taken by FSM to address this issue.

FSM attaches importance to the ocean and its resources. With vast ocean space in the Western and Central Pacific, FSM is itself in the center of fishing activities in the Pacific Region. Given that FSM depends on the Ocean resources for its livelihood and as a major national revenue source, FSM establishes national agency that regulates fisheries resources with a special mandate to regulate the exploitation, conservation and sustainable use of migratory fish stocks

Among the important initiatives of FSM is the Blue Prosperity Micronesia in partnership with the Waitt Foundation and the Blue Prosperity Coalition. This initiative seeks to conserve 30% of the marine areas of FSM, utilizing marine spatial planning in supporting sustainable fisheries and other development priorities that will balance economic development and environmental protection. This is important for the future generations of FSM citizens.

The FSM has been a major force in implementing the Micronesia Challenge along with the Republic of Palau and the Republic of the Marshall Islands, to conserve 30% of the marine areas of the region, and 20% of terrestrial ecosystems. To achieve this, the FSM has established the national Protected Area Network (PAN) law and framework that establishes guidelines and financing for its states to establish, regulate and monitor marine protected areas (MPAs) throughout the nation.

FSM also secured its maritime zones through the protection under the Law of the Sea Convention. Last year, it successfully deposited its maritime boundary information with the UN DOALOS [Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea]. The information consists of: 1. Four bilateral treaties of maritime boundary, 2. National Baselines, 3. Coordinates and data sets defining the several polygons of the national EEZ, Territorial Waters and Contiguous Zone, and 4. Illustrative maps depicting the relevant maritime zones.

It is noted that while the Law of the Sea Convention and the UN Charter are requiring these deposits with the UN Secretariat, yet, domestic regulations must be in place and in effect to ensure that the maritime boundaries become legally binding and enforceable in the real and practical sense.

Our national authorities such as NORMA are transmitting the maritime boundary information, officially, to the FFA and the SPC in an effort to make permanent the maritime boundaries of FSM used in fishing treaties.

FSM attaches importance to the “stability” and “permanence” of our national boundaries. In this regard, another avenue that FSM is using is the engagement with the International Law Commission (ILC) to explore the issue of Sea Level Rise in the context of general international law. FSM invites other nations to join in this effort.

Questions from the Republic of Marshal Islands

Question 2

FSM’s “main messages” notes 89 targets and corresponding indicators which relate to FSM’s Strategic Development Plan. This document also notes likely impacts from any disruption to the Amended Compact of Free Association treaty financial provisions, in particular to infrastructure and core socio-economic sectors. In what ways does this Compact programming take into account SDG targets and indicators as goals or benchmarks, and does it do so directly?

The Amended Compact between the Federated States of Micronesia and the United States is a testament of the special relationship between the two sovereign states. It is a treaty of cooperation between the two nations in order to achieve mutually agreed goals supporting broad economic and social development, defense and security, and environmental protection. The Compact of Free Association came into effect in 1986, and its amendment took effect in 2004. In the same year, the FSM’s Strategic Development Plan (SDP) was developed for the whole nation.

The SDP is a prioritization of key sectors in the FSM, namely: Health, Education, Agriculture, Fisheries, Private Sector Development, Transportation, Communication, and Crosscutting Sector of Energy. These priority areas reflect the nationwide aspiration towards the general development of the entire nation, noting that each FSM State has development plans that are updated from time to time to address specific situation and needs at the state level.

The SDP and the SDGs are linked directly. In addition, the respective State Development Plans also have integrated the SDGs into their social, economic and environmental planning processes and frameworks.

Being a principal source of revenue, the Compact financing is very useful in providing funds to support the FSM’s SDP development priorities, which also covers the SDGs. This process is reflected in the annual budget procedures. The budget draws on the SDP for direction and is being informed by the identified strategic goals and policies.

Revenue flows from the United States Compact financial provisions cover the major sectors of Education, Health, Infrastructure, Environment, Public Sector and Private Sector, and the main economic drivers of Agriculture, Tourism, Fisheries and Energy. Bolstering this are the multitude of US Federal Grants also available to the State targeting the priority sectors. This forms a significant source of financing towards achieving the SDGs.

There have been efforts to align recent Sector Plans and strategies which are financed by the Compact, to the SDGs. Examples are as follows: the Education Sector Strategic Development Plan (ESSDP), Health sector strategic development plan, Strategy for the development of Statistics, 2016 – 2025, and

Infrastructure Development Plan. An assessment of the indicator availability undertaken in 2017 shows that there is a strong correlation in the SDG indicators and what the FSM Government collects and reports in the areas of health and education.

Question 3

FSM consists of four states. Through what means do these different state focal points take into account SDG targets and indicators? Are there variations in capacities and priorities between states, and if so, how is this addressed through the SDG working group or otherwise?

The SDP is a national priority that includes the states. The FSM States do have their individual characteristics, needs and priorities but they abide by the SDP as the overall guide in addressing their needs and aspirations. Indeed, the SDP is a reflection of the national strategy of development for the whole nation, which was formulated through consultations between and among the national and state leaderships and stakeholders.

The four states have priorities referenced by the individual State action plans given the geographic, population, and development capacities.

The FSM SDG WG has taken actions to support the states create synergies and state coordination mechanisms, namely:

- continued information sharing and mobilizing stakeholders at the state level around the SDGs;
- raising awareness;
- convening state consultation meetings to identify state priorities;
- Technical support; and
- Accessibility and Data Sharing.

FSM has highlighted as part of its next steps and actions plans to develop programs deliver the decade of action including improving the coordination mechanisms at the national level and with the States, development partners, civil society, private sector and other philanthropic organizations

Question 4

In addition to climate-specific targets, how do projected and ongoing climate-driven impacts impair SDG targets and indicators on a cross-cutting basis? Keeping in mind data capacity challenges, can this be quantified, and would it demonstrate that upfront investment in climate resilience would yield later economic benefits?

Projected and ongoing climate driven impacts impair SDG targets and indicators on a cross-cutting basis. Global warming is already causing negative impacts on human and natural systems and thus slowing FSM's progress toward meeting its SDG targets. Sea level rise causes salt water intrusion,

inundation affecting food, water, infrastructure, health, practically survival of low lying islands and coastal communities. Other hazards from climate change such as frequent and intense storms, typhoons, storm surges, droughts also impair or delay FSM's progress on achieving SDG targets and indicators. FSM's National Communications assess FSM's impacts of climate change and can show linkages across sectors relating to the SDGs.

Quantification of impacts is challenging for FSM. However, FSM has undertaken a Climate Change and Disaster Risk Finance Assessment that looked at quantifying specific responses/resiliency investments that are done within the limited resources we have. The nation is committed to making climate finance an enabler to build resilience and achieve its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) goals and the Sustainable Development Goals. Additionally, FSM also developed Joint State Action Plans on Disaster Management and Climate Change for each of its four States, with costed activities to implement these plans.

FSM has done some modeling on projected impacts, looking at spatial modeling and data from IPCC guidelines on sea level rise. With these spatial modeling, FSM can determine the extend of inundation but has yet to quantify this fully. Quantifying such projected impacts may be possible, but difficult or challenging with limited capacities and resources.

The costs of impacts across sectors and putting in programs or having data to demonstrate that investments now (e.g. climate proofing of infrastructure) will yield economic benefits later on.

Best case scenario is staying within 1.5 degrees celsius to minimize impacts which FSM continues to advocate.

Question 5

Regarding the global pandemic, FSM'S report highlights the swift action taken by the FSM government to secure lives and livelihoods of citizens including through an economic stimulus package to tourism, retail and fisheries sectors. The report also indicates that COVID 19 will likely erode some of the gains made towards Sustainable Development in certain areas. Has the government assessed the full socioeconomic impact of COVID 19 to inform its intervention, and is there a plan to reach all affected sectors and groups, including the most vulnerable? How is FSM coordinating with development partners to ensure that the full socioeconomic impacts are known and inform policy actions? What is the role of the SDG Working Group and how is it working with states and stakeholders to address negative impacts.

The COVID-19 pandemic is thus the single disruptive and catastrophic health outbreak facing the world today. FSM is not insulated from the ongoing disruptions. Just like many other countries, its limited resources had been redirected in order to address the ongoing pandemic, which is subjecting the nation into a lot of financial stresses.

Presently, FSM is closing its border in order to prevent the disease from infecting the local population. While this is a temporary measure, it is certainly impacting the economy.

The role of the SDG working group; given its multi-sectoral composition, the working group is well placed to work with the national task force on COVID-19 socioeconomic assessment/related activities. Similarly, the SDG working group is coordinating with development partners to ensure sustainable development gains are not eroded. Among the Development partners that have worked with the FSM are the Asian Development Bank, World Bank, International Organizations and bilateral partners such as the United States, European Union, and the Peoples Republic of China.

The experience of the FSM during the COVID-19 pandemic is one of strengthening partnerships and collaborations. In country, the National and State emergency task forces work together to be able implement emergency and temporary measures that complement each other in order to secure the national border. These measures mostly involve movement of goods and people. So, FSM has kept itself free from the virus through these efforts.

But the challenges posed by the pandemic are uncertain as to how long they would last. Businesses have suffered losses, especially in the areas of travels and tourism. In this regard, the national government is implementing financial stimulus program to help businesses stay afloat and survive the pandemic. Moreover, people who lost their jobs because of the pandemic need the government assistance during this time. The US Government is extending the pandemic unemployment assistance to FSM citizens, for which the FSM Government is profoundly appreciative.

At this time, many FSM citizens are stranded abroad, especially in Guam and in Honolulu, waiting to be repatriated back to the home country. There are ongoing effort to build the quarantine and health facilities and capacities in order to receive these stranded citizens.

FSM Government has not assessed the full socioeconomic impact of COVID-19, including the most vulnerable; however, there is an upcoming World Bank project to assist FSM with a vulnerability assessment impact of COVID-19. As part of our ongoing preparedness and response to COVID-19, our health, social protection, risk communication, and WASH sectors/clusters have drafted plans and strategies for delivery of essential health and social services to our population and communities, including the most vulnerable (old, young, women, immune-compromised, etc). Education sector is underway with State and school plans to reopen schools and ensure the safety of students. Work has also commenced or will commence soon in other sectors/clusters, e.g., food security, communication, etc. FSM has endorsed the Pacific Humanitarian Plan for COVID-19 and is working closely with our Partners in planning and implementation of preparedness and response activities at National, State and community level.

Question 6

FSM consists of four states. We understand that schools in two States have been closed since your Emergency Declaration. We also understand that UNICEF is working with the government on an Educational Contingency Plan - are there variations in capacities and priorities between states, and if so, how is this addressed through the SDG working group or otherwise?

There is a lot of uncertainty about the ongoing pandemic. Although FSM manages to avoid the virus from reaching its shores, there is no guarantee that this situation will remain. And the overwhelming stresses experienced by the economy and the local businesses are still ongoing.

It is unclear at this stage whether schools would continue. A lot would depend on developments on finding a cure or vaccine for the virus.

At the moment, schools in Kosrae and Yap are open. But whether this will remain so would depend on the status of the pandemic. In the event that a COVID-19 case appears in the FSM, all schools will automatically close down.

The main efforts of FSM at this time concentrate on building the isolation and quarantine facilities, enhancing its health services and capacities including the procurement of medical supplies and equipment.

The SDG Working Group is an internal coordination mechanism which draws from Departments and associated agencies within the government soliciting input from civil society actors and the chambers of commerce. A critical component of the SDG WG is the establishment of State Focal Points (SFPs) for effective implementation and reporting.

The Department of education is a member of the SDG Working group and is working with the state counterparts as well as development partners to develop a contingency plan.

The National Education Department is reviewing emergency plans from the State Education that will guide the action of the FSM States in addressing the risks of COVID-19. These plans are reflective of levels of capacities of the FSM States and their readiness to implement the emergency measures. Refer to Annex 1 demonstrating the states' task force recommendation in the area of education.

MGOS RESPONSE AND QUESTIONS FROM THE CSOs IN THE FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA (FSM) TO THE VNR OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA (FSM)

We welcome the Federated States of Micronesia VNR 2020, however the challenges highlighted in the report are of great concern specifically in the areas of education, data and civil society engagement.

The principle of leaving no one behind and the whole of society approach should mandated the Government to establish an institutional mechanism for engaging civil society organisations in the implementation of the SDGs beyond VNR and its highly **recommended** from FSM Civil Society Organisations. The report recognized data gaps to inform the Government's implementation of the SDGs and collaboration with CSOs could improve data collection especially from community levels. The FSM Government must realize that collaboration with all stakeholders (private sector and civil society) will assist in compiling actual data needed for the indicators.

The recorded data of 35% of FSM population is children below 15 years old with a medium population age younger than 21. Education is fundamental in the human socio-economic development for a well-being progressive future of youth, however the decline enrolment rate of final year in high school is a concern to the future labour force of the Country.

The negative impact of Climate Change and sea level rising on people's livelihoods specifically on agriculture and fisheries further challenged security of quality education for their children.

The financial investment of the Government in education is heavily reliant on ODA, specifically on the Compact of Free Association with the United States that is currently negotiated for extension beyond 2023.

Question 7:

What is the Government alternative policy directions and plan of actions in response to interruption in the flow ODA that currently supports education and skills development for the future labour force of a youthful population due to COVID19.

The FSM Education is finalizing its Strategic Development Plan and with this plan it should be able to show us what financial needs the nation will need to continue to support and provide the necessary education services to its youth. With this in place, the department can easily utilize it to request local funding from congress given that ODAs are interrupted especially Compact money from US. Currently we are also working with other international partner agency to identify sources of funding that can support education in light of the pandemic "

Question 8:

Why does the Government opt to have pre-recorded video and not have Live Q&A as it hinders meaningful participation from the CSOs and defeats the whole principles of leaving no one behind and creating enabling environments for inclusive engagement of CSOs.

"The intention was to have an inclusive and interactive session that would allow all stakeholders to be part of the presentation and review of the government's implementation of the SDGs. The government had to opt for a pre-recorded session due to logistical challenges experienced by the State of Pohnpei in the months leading up to the scheduled VNR report presentation".

Annex 1

Yap State:

Task Force Recommendation 1 Schools must implement measures to prevent entry and spread of COVID-19 in the school setting. These can be broadly divided into:

- Engineering controls isolate people from the hazard. This includes measures designed into the facility to remove the hazard at its source or to improve compliance with infection control procedures. These measures can be highly effective but generally have higher initial cost.
- Administrative controls change the way people work. This include protocols or changes to work practices, policies, or procedures to keep students or staff separated from the hazard as well as providing staff with information, training, and supervision for these measures.

Task Force Recommendation 2 Schools should plan ahead and develop school emergency and contingency plan to determine which set of mitigation strategies may be most appropriate for their current situation.

- Plan A: No case on the island
- Plan B: Case/s identified but well-contained and no evidence of community spread
- Plan C: Substantial community spread

Task Force Recommendation 3: As with other respiratory infections like flu or the common cold, public health measures are critical to slow the spread of illnesses. Public health measures are everyday preventive actions that include:

- Staying home when sick
- Cough etiquette
- Hand hygiene
- Cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces

Task Force Recommendation 4: Schools should promote positive hygiene behaviors and supervise staff and students on proper and regular hand washing and cough etiquette.

- Staff must be trained properly on basic preventive measures.

- Build and maintain accessible permanent and/or temporary hand washing stations inside and/or outside the classrooms.
- Ensure 1:15 ratio of hand washing stations per number of students. • Reinforce the 5 easy steps to proper hand washing.
- All staff and students will be required to do proper hand washing before entering classrooms.
- Schools must provide soap and safe water to hand washing stations.
- Schools may opt to provide hand sanitizers in classrooms and offices if available.
- Post signs encouraging good hand and respiratory hygiene practices.
- Schools may opt to provide paper towels and tissues for hand drying and proper coughing and sneezing.
- Ensure adequate, clean and separate toilets for girls and boys. • Ensure availability of trash bins and proper disposal daily.

Task Force Recommendation 5: Schools should maintain good ventilation inside rooms. Precautions regarding infections spread by fecal-oral route should also be implemented.

- Increase air flow and ventilation when climate allows (opening outside doors and windows).
- Sharing of food should be actively monitored and discouraged.

Task Force Recommendation 6: Schools must implement social distancing practices. • Avoid mixing students in common areas.

- Consider having teachers come to classrooms.
- Rearrange student desks to maximize the space between students as much as possible.
- Cancel extracurricular group activities such as assemblies, field days, athletic events and other events that create crowded conditions.
- Consider using videoconferencing or teleconferencing when possible for work-related meetings. If not possible, hold meetings in open, well-ventilated spaces.
- Discourage hand shaking. Encourage the use of other noncontact methods of greeting.

- Discourage children from gathering in other public places while school is dismissed.

Task Force Recommendation 7: Schools must establish procedures if staff or students become sick. School must immediately separate sick staff and students from those who are well. Emphasis should be given to advising staff and students to stay at home if sick.

- Assign or build an isolation room - an area where sick students or staff can be separated from well students. Inform parents/relatives of the sick person's condition and the need to bring them home or to transfer them to the hospital.
- Staff and students with fever, cough, colds, fatigue, shortness of breath or other signs and symptoms compatible with COVID-19 should not be allowed to enter the school premises.

- Sick students or staff may need to be referred directly to a health facility. If showing signs and symptoms of COVID-19, call hospital for instructions and proper triaging.

- Sick people should not return to school until the criteria to discontinue isolation are met, in consultation with their healthcare providers and the public health officials.

- Monitor school attendance. Alert local health authorities about large increases in student and staff absenteeism due to respiratory illnesses.

- Develop flexible attendance and sick leave policies that encourages students and staff to stay home when sick or when caring for sick family members.

Task Force Recommendation 8 Schools should implement regular cleaning and disinfection of buildings, rooms, and frequently touched surfaces. Ensure proper handling, storage and disposal of waste.

- Clean and disinfect school buildings, classrooms, and restrooms according to public health guidance at least once a day, particularly surfaces that are touched by many people.

- Discourage staff and students from using other people's phones, desks, offices, or other working tools and equipment, when possible. If necessary, clean and disinfect them before and after use.

Task Force Recommendation 9 School administrators must promote teacher and student education about COVID-19 which must be relevant, age-appropriate, up-to-date and from reliable sources.

- Teachers should spend the first 10 minutes of every first period class to teach basic information about COVID-19, especially its mode of transmission and signs and symptoms of the illness. Use child friendly materials such as posters.
- Students should be encouraged to discuss their questions and concerns. Address misinformation.

Task Force Recommendation 10 Establish information sharing system between the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Services. • YDOE will comply with all recommendations of the ICS-DHS in the event situations regarding COVID19 change.

- School principals must communicate to YDOE about large increases in student and staff absenteeism due to respiratory illness. Reports must be submitted on a weekly basis.
- YDOE will report to DHS on a weekly basis regarding school absenteeism due to respiratory illnesses. If an unusual rise in respiratory illness among students and staff has been recorded and reaches a certain threshold, YDOE must alert DHS as soon as possible.
- The Infection Control and Prevention subcommittee and Environmental Health subcommittee of the ICS-DHS will conduct assessment and inspection of schools prior to reopening and during the whole duration of school opening for their preparedness and compliance with the DHS guidelines.
- Share changes in procedures with staff, parents and students in a timely manner.

Task Force Recommendation 11 School administrators should plan for continuity of learning and possible academic calendar changes particularly in relation to examinations and graduations in case of temporary school closure. Examples are:

- Training teachers how to use digital or distance learning
- Assigning reading and exercises (home packages) for home
- Assigning teachers to conduct remote daily or weekly follow up with students

Pohnpei State:

The intention of this Action Plan primarily serves two purposes: the safety of our students and the learning of our students via new, yet safer instructional methods (On-site Learning, Distance-Learning/ Homeschooling) that would build a much more reliable and stronger collaboration between students, parents, teachers and school administrators. With the continued threat of this COVID-19 pandemic, the Pohnpei Department of Education (PDOE) intends to take all COVID-19 precautionary measures seriously to ensure that the safety of our students is undoubtedly, second to none. Similarly, PDOE also aims to uphold all requirements of the FSM Accreditation, while proactively maintaining the provisions of the National and State laws and school policies and regulations. Ideally, On-site Learning, with integrated preventative practices is the initial option recommended followed by Distance-Learning / Homeschooling, should circumstances worsen. Furthermore, PDOE is determined to provide the learning needs of all students by all means necessary, be it on-site or at home. PDOE staff and school principals will ensure that contents of Student Learning Packages are properly filled to ascertain that there is consistency, uniformity and regularity in lesson plan delivery, school wide. Although the practical aspect of Distance Learning is still foreign in the public-school system in Pohnpei, the department is more resolute than ever to have it materialized, should it be the only viable solution.

Hence, for this Action Plan to work, a stronger collaborative effort of all role players in the Education Arena, including service providers, communities, school administrators, parents, students, teachers and PDOE are highly sought for.

Long Term Plan: To prepare, set, and introduce new ways of delivering instructions, following all safety precautions, in the state of Pohnpei during this COVID-19 Pandemic.

Goals:

1) Teachers will engage in regular delivery of instructions with learning packages available but with minimum number of students to abide by COVID 19 regulations following Class schedules and instructional time proposed

a. Objective: By May 29, 2020 all lessons will be edited, revised and reviewed with worksheets and assessments.

b. Objective: By May 29, 2020 all proposed plans, teacher assignments, schedules and instructional hours will be in place.

2) Teachers will engage in (Distance learning/ Homeschooling) with learning packages available to send instructions via parents, teachers or use of internet.

a. By July 31, 2020 all needed resources will be provided/purchased and installed at school sites or at homes.

b. By May 29, 2020 all schools will have learning packages prepared and ready for distribution.

The FSM established the SDG Working Group (WG) as an internal coordination mechanism which draws from Departments and associated agencies within the government soliciting input from civil

society actors and the chambers of commerce. A critical component of the SDG WG is the establishment of State Focal Points (SFPs) for effective implementation and reporting.

The Department of education is a member of the SDG Working group and is working with the state counterparts as well as development partners to develop a contingency plan.