





CHAPTER

3

Kolonia and Weno,
Federated States
of Micronesia

3

Chapter Three: Kolonia and Weno, Federated States of Micronesia

3.1 Introduction

This Urban Centre Case Study discusses youth crime and violence in Kolonia, Pohnpei and Weno, Chuuk. The research team conducted focus groups discussions and interviews in Kolonia and Weno. Consultations included young people, government actors and civil society organizations which provided the main basis for the findings. Additionally, a desk review of available reports and statistics was conducted. This case study includes a set of specific national recommendations for consideration by policy-makers, as well as community stakeholders and the donor community.

Just as the nation itself is young, having emerged from United States trusteeship to independence in 1986, the population of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) is also young with an average age of 18.9 years old.²⁹ The *National Youth Policy 2004-2010* defines young people as between 15 and 34 years of age.³⁰ In the formal justice system, juveniles are defined as young people aged 17 and younger. Within the community context, a more flexible definition is often used; youth are considered to be young people who are not married and are still financially dependent, with no clearly set age limit.

In FSM cultural and societal changes in family structures, insufficient education and employment opportunities, limited access to community activities and the easy access to alcohol and/or drugs have all combined to create an environment that can at times put young people at risk. The lifestyle choices and environment that young people face today are very different from those of just two generations ago. The society as a whole has shifted from a reliance on subsistence agriculture and fishing to a cash economy where the biggest formal sector employer is the Government. Social and family structures have also changed leaving young people with less support than previous generations.

Despite the range of challenges many young people are grappling with, it is encouraging that most young people continue to contribute positively to their communities. Nonetheless, some young people are still struggling to adapt and a minority, in particular young men, have become involved in crime. Serious crime is not common, but misdemeanours that are frequently committed by young people include theft, vandalism, drunk and disorderly conduct, and breaking and entering. Of concern is the fact that many young men and women are also exposed to violence, whether in the public or domestic sphere. This interaction between young people and violence undermines their capacity to effectively contribute to their communities and to grow into healthy, engaged and contributing citizens.

3.2 National Context

FSM comprises four states, each with its own language and culture and each presenting youth with a unique setting. FSM is ranked as a Medium Human Development country at number 103 out of 169 countries according to UNDP's 2010 Human Development Index.³¹ FSM's human development ranking has not risen since 2005, despite a seven percent rise in the regional index over the same period, indicating persistent stagnancy in development.³² However, poverty is not pervasive in FSM and there is debate about the applicability of the term itself. 'Hardship', is the term used in local development circles in FSM as it implies inadequate access to basic services, opportunities to participate in socio-economic life, and to meet basic needs. In this sense, hardship is relatively widespread.³³

²⁹ SBOC 2008.

³⁰ HSA 2005.

³¹ UNDP 2010a.

³² UNDP 2010b. Regional index refers to East Asia and the Pacific.

³³ SBOC 2008 and UNDP 2010.

The last National Census, which was undertaken in 2000, found that the total population of FSM is 107,000³⁴ of which 38 percent (or 41,000 people) fall within the FSM definition of youth (Figure 3.1).³⁵ The FSM population is young, with an average age of just 18.9 years. The annual growth rate has slowed to approximately 0.3 percent as of 2000.³⁶ High birth rates are countered by high out-migration rates, resulting in a minimal growth rate. Approximately, over half the total population live in the State of Chuuk and one third in the State of Pohnpei.³⁷ Chuuk is by far the most densely populated state with 1,094 persons per square mile.³⁸

“Us Chuukese love our families, we want a better life for everyone in our family, it is our way”

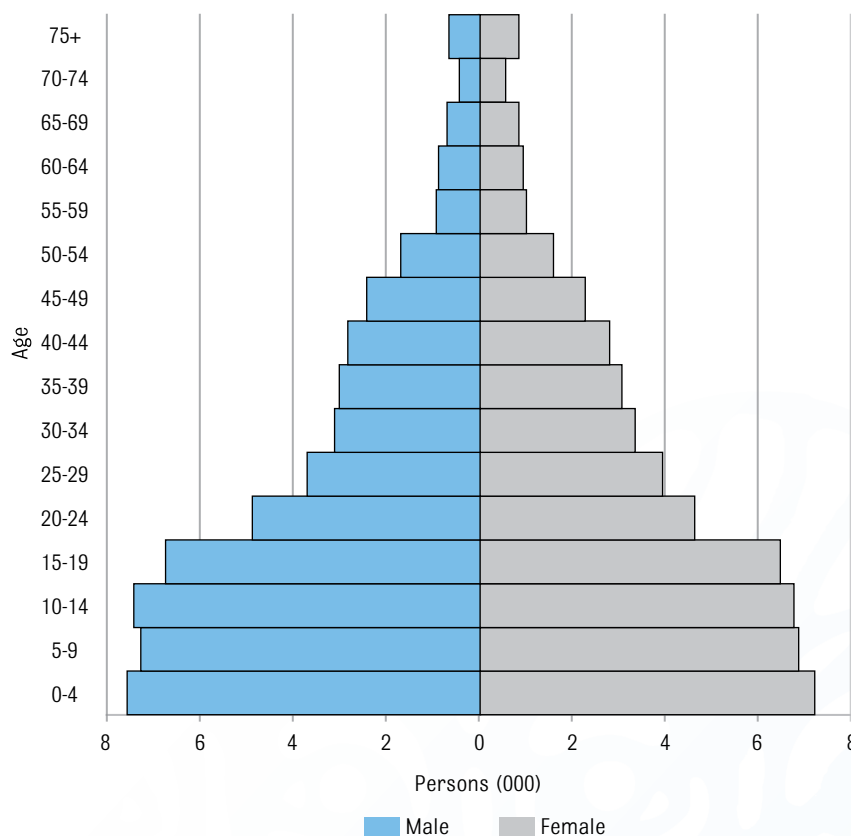
Young woman

In 2000, the FSM primary school enrolment rate was 92 percent and the literacy rate for young people aged between 15 and 24 was 95 percent, with gender parity across both figures. Compulsory education is up to grade eight (age 14); with grades nine to twelve non-compulsory and competitive testing required to advance. High school enrolment was 72 percent, but Pohnpei’s enrolment was the lowest at only 58 percent. The female high school enrolment rate at 77 percent was eight percent higher than the male rate.³⁹

There are relatively high proportions of young people in Pohnpei and Chuuk who are sexually active. However, the low levels of condom use and numerous partners put young people at risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unplanned pregnancies⁴⁰. Statistics from 2002 showed that 19 percent of all births were by teenage mothers in Pohnpei, followed by 13 percent in Yap, and 10 percent in Chuuk.⁴¹ This trend of high teenage pregnancies impacts on many young people’s options, in particular young women who end their formal education to the detriment of future employment options.

The rates of youth suicide in Pohnpei and Chuuk are a serious concern. According to a 2002 study on ‘Youth Suicide and Social Change in Micronesia’, suicide rates in Micronesia are generally high - mainly men in the age group of 15 to 24 years. Out of the four states, Chuuk has the highest incidence of suicide, with 1 in 40 Chuukese young men committing suicide.⁴² During the period of 2008-2009 there were 31 suicide cases of which 11 were attempted suicide and 20 were successful.⁴³

Figure 3.1: FSM Population Pyramid



Source: SB0C 2008

34. SB0C 2008.

35. HSA 2005.

36. SB0C 2008.

37. Government of the FSM 2010b.

38. SB0C 2008.

39. SB0C 2000.

40. UNFPA 2007.

41. Johnson 2002.

42. Rubinstein 2002.

43. SAMHP 2010.

There is no formal or cultural discrimination against women entering the workforce. The number of women employed in the formal sector almost doubled between 1996 and 2000. On average women's incomes are 87 percent of men's incomes across all sectors. An equal number of men and women are employed in the informal sector.⁴⁴ Domestic violence is believed to be widespread and a growing social problem. In 2009, FSM adopted a National Policy on Disability to increase awareness and social inclusion of persons with disabilities. Young people living with disabilities, particularly young women and girls who are often exposed to greater risks of physical and sexual exploitation will see this national policy as supporting their needs.⁴⁵

3.3 Young People as Victims and Perpetrators

Young people have massive potential to contribute to society and this needs to be harnessed for the benefit of national social, economic and cultural development. However, young men and women face a range of challenges in accessing support and services – from government, their communities and at times, their families. Better support and services would empower them to achieve their potential and effectively engage in society as productive and engaged community members.

One of the most pervasive and problematic challenges facing young people is the effect of crime and violence on their development. Both as perpetrators of crimes such as assault, theft and vandalism and at the same time as victims of crime, in particular, violence both inside and outside the home.

Common Crimes

For both Pohnpei and Chuuk misdemeanours such as petty theft, breaking and entering, vandalism, drunk and disorderly behavior and possession of illegal substances are the most common crimes committed by young people according to government sources. The FSM Census (2000), showed 316 crimes committed by juveniles aged 17 years or younger, unfortunately this was not disaggregated by sex.⁴⁶ Justice officials stated that most thefts were for cash to obtain alcohol and/or other substances and/or luxury items such as electronics. Usually the young offender was under the influence of alcohol when arrested.

During consultations participants expressed that Weno (Chuuk) was regarded as having greater challenges than Kolonia (Pohnpei) in terms of young people and their involvement with crime and/or violence. However, limited statistics around crimes committed and prosecuted makes it difficult to quantitatively determine which of the states has higher challenges with young people and their involvement in crime and violence.

Assaults

During consultations participants, particularly young people, reported their awareness of assaults committed by and against young people. Assaults varied in their degree of physical harm and young people generally did not consider pinching, slapping, verbal threats, pushing/pulling as assault. On the other hand, punching, kicking, stomping, and using a

"I want to go to work in the U.S. for a few years to see how it is. I might then come back once I have lots of money"

Young man

"There is not much to do around here on the weekends. We know that drinking is bad but we drink to have fun"

Young man

⁴⁴ Government of the FSM 2004.

⁴⁵ HSA 2006.

⁴⁶ SB0C 2001.



weapon such as a knife or makeshift weapons such as a wooden stick were considered assault by young people. However, it should be noted that both of the above definitions inflict physical and psychological harm on young people and should constitute assault.

Young women reported their knowledge of assaults both perpetrated by and upon other women. Feedback indicated that behaviours that would result in one woman physically assaulting another woman could arise from land tenure disputes, adulterous behaviour with a husband/partner, slander of their children and/or family and other forms of perceived improper behaviours. It was reported that cases involving women did not usually attract police attention. Anecdotal feedback indicates that even where law enforcement officials are called, they will usually request senior family members to mediate. Young men reported similar behaviours that resulted in physical assault but also added that intoxication caused by alcohol and/or other substance contributed to their involvement.

"I don't like the gang culture in the U.S. It's too violent. There are sometimes fights here but it is a peaceful place most of the time."

Young man

Assaults were reported to be most violent in Chuuk where between July 1999 and July 2005, 353 people were treated in the Chuuk State Hospital for impalement injuries from metal darts. The darts are six to eight inch modified nails that are propelled by a slingshot or a forked piece of wood to which an elastic tube is attached. Locally, they are called Filipin. At least three fatalities occurred during this period. The age range of people treated was from 18 to 42 with a median age of 32 putting most of them under the FSM definition of youth.⁴⁷ This is an alarmingly high figure amongst a total population of 54,000 people in Chuuk. Under current Chuuk State Criminal Code a person can be charged with possession of a Filipin slingshot. Currently, it is understood that law enforcement agencies in Chuuk are trying to obtain funds to undertake preventative and awareness raising workshops for communities to address the use of slingshots. A justice official claimed that recently slingshots are also appearing in Kolonia and other parts of Pohnpei.

⁴⁷ Arsenal et al. 2005.

In Kolonia, youth reported fights between neighbourhood groups or clans, but there were no US-style gangs operating. That said, a number of government officials and donors expressed concern about the possibility of gangs forming in Pohnpei and cited the influx of criminal deportees from the United States as well as prevalent exposure to US culture as a possible cause of gang proliferation. Gangs styled on US gangs such as “Bloods” and “Crips” were reported to be already in existence in Chuuk.⁴⁸

Drug Related Crimes

Knowingly possessing an illegal substance constitutes a criminal act in Pohnpei and Chuuk States. Justice officials reported that possession of marijuana is the most common type of drug charge for young people in FSM. Although illegal, marijuana is grown and consumed locally throughout FSM. Recent quantitative data is unavailable with the latest studies done in 1997 (Hezel) and 2001 (UNICEF, for Pohnpei only). According to these studies, the highest usage of marijuana is in Chuuk, with young males usage of marijuana 15 times greater than young female usage. In 1997, 27 percent of men in Chuuk and 19 percent in Pohnpei in their twenties had used marijuana in the previous twelve months.⁴⁹ In 2001 one third of in-school youth and half of out-of-school youth had used marijuana at least once.⁵⁰ As with alcohol, both studies clearly show that out-of-school youth are more likely to use marijuana than in-school youth.

“During high school I was a group leader and we had an event. I was supposed to bring a case of soda so I asked my parents for some money but they said they didn’t have any. Later when I came back they were having a sakau party with their friends. I asked them where they got the money for the sakau and they got so angry that they chased me out of the house. But parents need to think about their children’s life as well. I was really disappointed by this experience. What is the use of custom and culture like this?”

Young man

Domestic and Sexual Violence Crime

During consultations for this report, violence in the home was frequently cited to be a serious problem by a range of interviewees. However, officials in the justice system advised that domestic violence is often seen as “part of the culture that just stays quietly within the home.” In interviews spousal violence between young men and women was the most commonly mentioned type of domestic violence. However, violence committed by parents on children is also an issue. During consultations, civil society leaders and government officials stated that instances of domestic violence are under-reported and there is limited information to understand the frequency or the seriousness of the issue. It was noted that young people were often direct victims and/or witnesses of violence in the home. A number of respondents said that such youth were more likely to drop out of school or to try to solve their own problems through violence.

A 2001 quantitative study by UNICEF showed that almost 60 percent of high school students had been deliberately injured in the previous twelve months. A median of approximately 26 percent of students had been deliberately injured by their father or mother and one in four by their boyfriend or girlfriend, supporting the analysis that young people are both victims and perpetrators of violence. Eight percent of high school students had been deliberately injured by a teacher and seven percent by police (Figure 3.2). The study also showed that

⁴⁸ Magna Systems Incorporated 2009.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ UNICEF 2001.

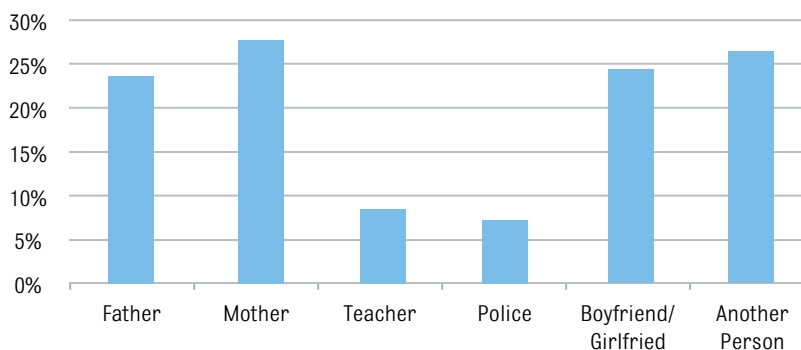
out-of-school youth were more likely to have been deliberately injured than high school students of the same age.⁵¹

Currently, there are no specific laws in Chuuk or Pohnpei which directly address domestic violence. Cases are treated under the Criminal Code as battery or assault. A draft National Domestic Violence Policy was considered at the '2010 National Women's Conference' and is expected to go to Cabinet in 2011. It is not clear however, whether this policy

specifically identified issues relevant to young people, including the special vulnerability and need for protection of young men and women in domestic violence from their parents and/or young people involved in abusive intimate-relationships. As of November 2010, a bill was under consideration by the Pohnpei Legislature emphasizing the importance of family, which would add a whole new chapter on family violence to the state legal code.⁵² Awareness of the issue was reported to be rising, albeit slowly, in communities in Pohnpei. In 2010 Chuuk State held the 'Conference on Domestic Violence' supported by the U.S National District Attorney Association alongside the Attorney General Office, Chuuk Women's Council and a number of other stakeholders to address the impact of violence on victims and the community and the importance of collaboration between law enforcement, the legal system and the community.

During consultations, justice officials also identified sexually-based offences as an issue specifically impacting on young men and women, both as victims and perpetrators. The 2001 UNICEF study showed that 45 percent of high school students had been pressured to have sex, with slightly more girls than boys.⁵³ The offences ranged from sexual coercion through authority, incest and rape. In a submission made to the Human Rights Council for the FSM Universal Periodic Review⁵⁴ it was reported that sexual abuse, especially child sexual abuse, was "grossly underreported" and surrounded by a "culture of silence and stigma."⁵⁵ Teachers sexually abusing students were also reported as "silent crimes."⁵⁶

Figure 3.2: Percentage of High Schools Students Deliberately Injured by Perpetrator



Source: UNICEF 2001

3.4 Institutional Responses in Support of Youth

At National and State level some initiatives are already in place which attempt to address the range of needs and challenges facing young people. The governments of Pohnpei and Chuuk have some policies and laws in place, but there are still major gaps which continue to impact on the ability of youth issues to be effectively tackled and youth to be supported to achieve their full potential.

⁵¹ UNICEF 2001.

⁵² Human Rights Council 2010a, 'No-drop' policy means that if a case of domestic violence is reported to authorities, it must be pursued through to court even if the victim requests the case to be dropped.

⁵³ UNICEF 2001.

⁵⁴ The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a process which involves a review of the human rights records of all 192 UN Member States once every four years. It provides an opportunity for all States to declare what actions they have taken to improve the human rights situations in their countries and to overcome challenges to the enjoyment of human rights. From OHCHR 2008.

⁵⁵ Human Rights Council 2010b.

⁵⁶ Angrelik 2010.



Political Institutions' Engagement with Youth

FSM has a national congress of 14 members. It also has state legislatures. Although the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) prioritizes women's political participation, both the legislative and executive branches of government are dominated by men. Since independence there have been no female members of the national congress,⁵⁷ and currently only one out of eight department heads is a woman.⁵⁸ In 2008, only four percent of seats in state governments were held by women. Currently, there is a legislative bill pending in Congress to reserve an additional four seats for women in the National Congress.⁵⁹

During consultations, young participants specifically expressed their concern that young people needed to be more actively engaged in the development of their communities and be part of decision-making processes. The need for more opportunities for dialogue between young people and decision makers was identified, so that positive contributions can be made and young people feel that they are a resource in the community rather than a burden. However, although legislatures are the foremost forums for discussing and addressing political issues, including youth issues, to date there has been limited engagement between legislators and young people. Culturally, older men and women have stronger political influence within modern and traditional leadership. In this context, it is notable that although women have long played a central role in traditional Micronesian society, men still dominate politics and decision-making over resources in current times. For younger women, the lack of political voice of women is limited by their sex and age. Even young men have limited opportunities to engage in political life.

Government Youth Policies

The *National Strategic Development Plan 2004-2023* is the key planning document for the nation and focuses on four key areas: (i) stability and security; (ii) improved enabling environment for economic growth; (iii) improved education and health status; and, (iv) assured self-reliance and sustainability. The Plan is aligned to the current Compact of Free Association from 2004 to 2023, during which period the US Government will provide an estimated USD 1.5 billion in funding. Although there is no specific section in the Plan which addresses youth, young people are mentioned as a group in need of support for the good of the nation throughout the document and there is a special section in the recommendations regarding youth.⁶⁰ While the recommendations are useful, it is imperative that youth issues are meaningfully mainstreamed into national and state development planning, and that a range of Ministries – including Health, Education, Finance, Trade and Sport – prioritize youth issues and mainstream them in their programmes. The inclusion of youth issues in the Plan is commendable, but in practice, stagnant national development has severely limited the number of new opportunities for young people once they leave school.

The *FSM National Youth Policy 2004-2010* is the current policy guiding youth development activities throughout the nation. The process for the Policy began in 2001 at the '9th Annual Youth Leadership

57 Human Rights Council 2010b.

58 Government of FSM 2010c.

59 Government of the FSM 2010b.

60 Government of the FSM 2004.

Conference' in Yap and was only finalized in 2005 when it was ratified by the National Congress, paving the way for actual implementation.⁶¹ The policy expired at the end of 2010. It is unfortunate that sufficient preparatory work was not undertaken to enable a seamless transition to the next *National Youth Policy*. However, it is understood that work is underway to review progress and update the Policy.

The current Policy covers nine key goals that were developed in consultations with a range of key stakeholder (Table 3.1). For each key area there are clear strategies, intended outcomes and responsible agencies listed. There are target groups of “at-risk” youth including; school drop-outs, substance abusers, and youth in hardship and violent households, juvenile offenders and victims of crime.

Table 3.1 Key Issues and Actions in National Youth Policy

Key Issue	Action
Youth and Education	Promote more suitable non-formal and informal educational initiatives.
Youth and Health	Strengthen health education and promotional programs aimed at addressing youth health.
Youth in Economic Development	Create and maintain structural solutions to promote the participation of young people in the development of the economy through the development of more youth training programs to foster self-employment and income-generation activities.
Youth with Strong Cultural Identities	Develop and foster cultural appreciation
Youth and Spirituality	Strengthen and promote spiritual development
Youth and the Environment	Widen environmental education and promote practical initiatives
Youth and Justice	Create a system of justice administration that recognizes the special requirements of youth and responds in a manner that appropriately supports the needs of the community and of the juvenile
Youth with National Pride	Provide a wide range of public and leisure activities for young people that will foster the development of healthy self-esteem and a sense of community spirit
Institutional Strengthening, Capacity Building and Coordination	Improve the coordination of youth programs and activities at national, state and local levels and to strengthen national and local youth organizations and networks

An annual evaluation and bi-annual policy review mechanism is outlined in the policy. The first *Report on Implementation* was completed in 2006. The implementation report outlines activities taken and status, implementing agencies, and impacts on youth under each strategic heading. There was an impressive list of activities, but it is not clear if these were the most strategic interventions. Notably, under key issue number seven, “Youth and Justice”,

61 HSA 2005 and FSM National Congress 2005 .Note that according to the National Youth Policy document itself Resolution 14-6 was not ratified until November 2005 as resolution 14-6. The congress website says May 2005.

no activities were reported at all. There were also no activities reported for strategies under “Youth and Health” for substance abuse counselling and child abuse.⁶²

Youth Institutions and Key Organizations

At the national level, the Department of Health and Social Affairs (HSA) is responsible for youth issues and development. Within HSA the National Youth Office aims to coordinate and implement youth programmes and organizes National Youth Summits. However, the position of National Youth Officer has been vacant, which has limited progress in implementing these activities. As an immediate priority, it is imperative that the National Youth Office is provided with qualified personnel and sufficient funding to effectively discharge its mandate.

“Many young people come to the center – they spend time together and at the same time we can talk to them about some issues they can have”

Youth worker

The National Youth Office has the responsibility for coordinating support to young people at both national and state levels. In total 37 government, non-government agencies and faith based organizations are listed as partners of HSA. It is positive that efforts have been made to develop partnerships in support of youth and this needs to continue for maximum impact.

In particular, the National Youth Office works closely with the FSM National Youth Council, and State Youth Councils (FSMYC), however, financial assistance from Government to the Councils is not available. The FSMYC through its by-laws is an incorporated body. It is made up of executive members who are elected from the four FSM states youth organizations. FSMYC aims to empower young people by providing youth specific activities and conducting educational awareness raising programmes on issues that are affecting young Micronesians. They are currently receiving capacity building assistance from the Pacific Youth Council to strengthen their institutional capabilities and better communicate with young people and other youth groups.

Justice Institutions and Policies

This study focuses specifically on the impact of crime and violence on young people. In that context, justice sector agencies, including the Department of Justice, Public Prosecutor and Defender and Correctional Services have a special importance. In 2006, the Department of Justice developed a *Justice Sector Children’s Handbook* which was intended to provide guidance to state justice agencies on a range of issues relating to children. The Handbook provided specific guidance on the development of juvenile justice acts by states. It is understood that draft bills have been prepared by Pohnpei and Chuuk which are intended to ensure more appropriate juvenile justice, but these bills have not yet been passed by state legislatures.

Currently, cases involving juveniles are covered under the ordinary state criminal codes. For misdemeanours such as minor theft, drunk and disorderly conduct, and vandalism, juveniles are often given a warning by police. For more serious crimes, they are brought to the police station where they are held until a parent or guardian arrives with the expectation that parents/guardians will discipline their children. Trials for juveniles are mostly closed, with parents present but no information made public. A juvenile may be sentenced to probation

⁶² HSA 2006.

or serve time in jail. For serious felonies, such as sexual assault, manslaughter and multiple offending, juveniles are tried as adults. Part of the sentence may include restitution to the victims.

Most juvenile offenders are put on probation and assigned a probation officer to work with them. The probation officer may assist the parolee to find work or do farming to pay back any restitution. Juvenile offenders must report once or twice a week to the probation office and are often put under a curfew. During consultations, justice officials reported that there are no special correctional facilities for juveniles, but that they are segregated from the adult population within the correctional facilities in Chuuk and Pohnpei. Despite this, it is understood that there is some contact between adults and juveniles within the facilities, particularly during recreational times.

FSM still maintains a traditional informal justice system for youth offenders that is activated in combination with the formal justice system. The traditional system is based on dialogue, reconciliation, harmony and forgiveness between the families of the perpetrator and victim. However, the effectiveness and the appropriate measures undertaken during the traditional system continues to require further research and understanding. Finally, Pohnpei police also reported a new community policing programme that promotes cooperation between police and the community for preventing crime and providing better services. Young people are encouraged to assist in preventing crime by participating in community patrols and other activities.

3.5 Supporting Young People: Reducing Risk and Increasing Resilience

As noted in the Introduction, youth are exposed to many risk and resilience factors which influence their probability of becoming involved in crime and violence. This section seeks to identify the most significant risk and resilience factors which exist in Kolonia and Weno with a view to assist policy-makers and other stakeholders to identify priority strategies to address youth issues, in particular, in order to tackle issues relating to crime and violence.

Growing the Employment Opportunities for Youth

The Government employs over half of the country's workers and government services make up 40 percent of GDP. Unemployment is stated at 22 percent, although subsistence agriculture is still prevalent, especially outside of urban centres, and employs about ten percent of the full-time workforce. The fishing industry is vital and the tourism industry attracts over 20,000 visitors per year and has been identified by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) as having high potential for growth.⁶³ Unemployment for 15 to 24 year olds in 2000 was 35 percent overall, though it went as high as 50 percent in Chuuk. Slightly more young women than young men are unemployed.⁶⁴

During consultations, lack of employment and other meaningful activities were reported by participants as common reasons for becoming involved in crime and violence. The youth population far outnumbers the total formal sector positions available and the potential for informal sector employment, even if supported through technical and vocational education

⁶³ U.S. Department of State 2010.

⁶⁴ SBOC 2000.

and training (see below sub-section for more detail), is yet to be fully realized. Support for employment in the agricultural sector through subsistence farming or other activities may be an option and a number of stakeholders throughout the consultations mentioned the possibility of growing this sector to involve more young people.

Greater provision of employment opportunities for young people is imperative for keeping them occupied, building self-esteem, increasing productivity and revitalizing the economy. This was also supported by young people, in particular by young men participating in consultations.

Improving the Quality and Relevance of Education

Quality and relevance of education is a major issue. In 2010, poor teacher attendance rates and the low number of teachers with teaching credentials were highlighted as key problems in a Department of Education report.⁶⁵ This was illustrated by the fact that only 31 percent of grade six students met or exceeded the minimum competency standard. Education is one of the four sectors identified in the *National Development Plan* and identified for priority US Compact funding. There is great emphasis on enhancing basic education to increase indicators such as literacy rates. It is imperative that the Government prioritizes improvements to the education sector, to ensure young people are given every opportunity to become educated citizens capable of contributing to society.

Noting the limited employment opportunities available in the formal sector in FSM, it is important that education opportunities are offered which up-skill young people in areas where there are actual employment opportunities. Many young people aspire to work in nearby Guam, Hawaii or the US mainland for the greater financial rewards and more opportunities. The education system is currently too orientated towards salaried professional work, despite the very limited number of job openings and the insufficient number of skilled trades people such as electricians and plumbers. Civil society stakeholders reported that migrant workers are brought in from abroad to work in the construction industry due to a lack of local skilled workers. The limited facilities to learn vocational skills was a source of frustration expressed by a number of young men and women. Government officials acknowledged the need for greater preparation of the workforce and admitted the lack of promotion by the government of vocational trades as a valid and rewarding career path.

The College of Micronesia in Pohnpei offers TVET. A 2008 ADB report stated several recommendations for improving TVET services in FSM including improving quality, responsiveness to market needs, and flexibility in curriculum. The quality and relevance of education impacts greatly on the employability of young people once they leave school both locally and abroad. Unfortunately however, there is social stigma towards technical and vocational trades in FSM. During consultations, government and civil society interviewees explained that most parents want their children to pursue sales, clerical or managerial jobs within government or the private sector.

Micronesia Bound, an NGO based in Pohnpei, runs limited courses combining life and vocational skills, but due to insufficient funding it is under pressure. It was reported by education officials that previously an initiative entitled Trades, Training and Testing Program (T3) was being implemented. The T3 Program involved training around 300 young people a year in construction, electrical and mechanical trades with basic, intermediate and

⁶⁵ National Department of Education 2010.

advanced courses. Graduates also received an internationally recognized ILO certificate. The reason for closure of the T3 program was not made clear.

Finally, young people who had dropped out from the formal school sector and could not access or did not engage in vocational trade training opportunities were identified by government and civil society as the most likely group to engage in crime and violence. They were seen to be unemployable and this led them to being exposed to other risk factors, such as substance abuse.

Tackling Substance Abuse

Substance abuse,⁶⁶ mainly alcohol and marijuana, was regarded by most participants to be a major factor in youth involvement in crime and violence.

Participants widely acknowledged the damage that substance abuse was causing in young people's lives, particularly in their physical and mental health, but also as a catalyst for crime and violence.

Anecdotally it was reported by justice officials that 80 to 90 percent of youth crimes were committed when young people were under the influence of alcohol or another substance and/or the crime committed was to obtain more alcohol or other drugs. The easy availability of alcohol, even to those below the legal drinking age of 21 years old, was identified as a factor in alcohol use and abuse according to government and civil society leaders.

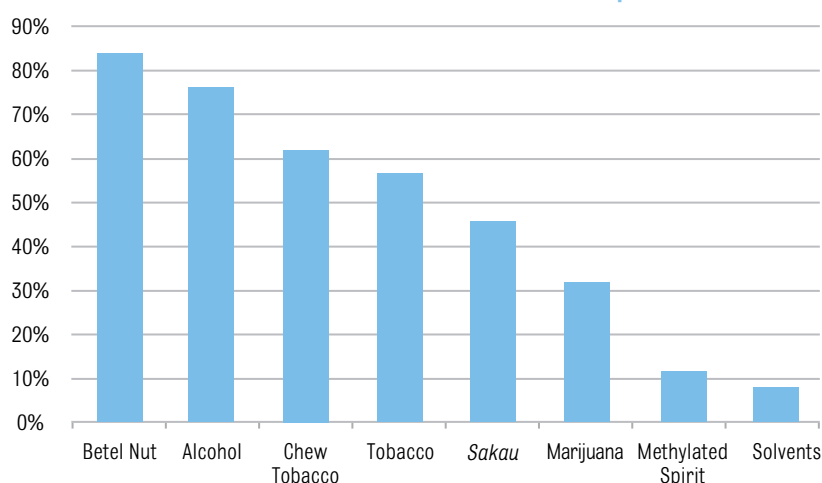
Apparently, enforcement of liquor licensing laws by the police is variable. The 2001 *Health Behavior and Lifestyle of Pacific Youth Survey* stated that of 1,516 in-school students in Pohnpei aged between 14 and 17 years 76 percent of students had used alcohol at least once in the past (Figure 3.3). One in five reported to have been drunk more than ten times in the past.⁶⁷ A study in FSM showed a strong correlation between alcohol use and enrolment in school. Across the board, out-of-school young people aged between 10 and 19 were more likely to consume alcohol than in-school young people. In Chuuk, the difference was five-fold and Pohnpei three-fold (Figure 3.4).⁶⁸

This rate of alcohol consumption amongst young people was also described during consultations in terms of a 'social activity'.

"Most of my friends understand my effort to not drink alcohol. I want to show them how it can be done first so that they will try to"

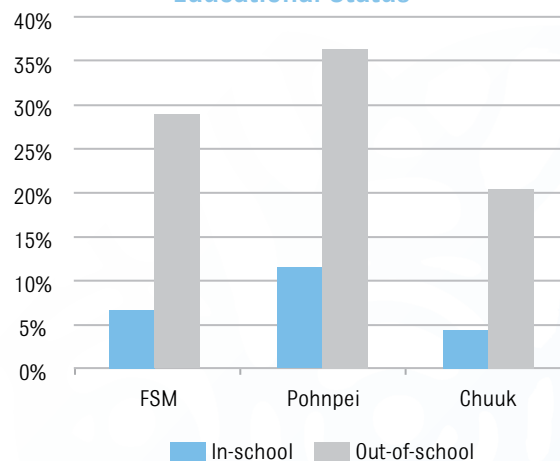
Young man

Figure 3.3: Percentage of High School Students by Substances Ever Used in Pohnpei



Source: UNICEF 2001

Figure 3.4: Percentage of Young People (Aged 10-19) who are Users of Alcohol by Educational Status



Source: Hezel 1997

⁶⁶ Substance abuse covers: alcohol, tobacco, inhalants, betel nut, sakau, marijuana amongst others.

⁶⁷ UNICEF 2001.

⁶⁸ Hezel 1997.

Young people described drinking alcohol and getting drunk as an activity to pass time. It was also stated that alcohol was often seen as a vehicle for greater uninhibited expression that would not be culturally permitted when sober. Young people related how alcohol made some of their friends “lose control” and easily “get in to fights and break things.”

In terms of drugs use, marijuana was described during consultations to be the drug of choice amongst users; however, marijuana was regarded to be less of a cause of violence than alcohol. However, justice officials and young people cited marijuana as being a cause of crime, especially theft. During consultations, betel nut, tobacco, chewing tobacco and *sakau* were not seen by participants to increase the likelihood of involvement in crime and/or violence, although some people thought it affected the motivation levels of young people to be active. All agreed on the negative affects these substances had on health. Finally, glue and solvent sniffing was reported to be used by young people; methamphetamine and hallucinogens were not reported during the course of this study.

In-Focus 4.2: Youth to Youth in Health

‘Youth to Youth in Health’ is an SPC and UNFPA joint project. It has adolescent health clinic staffed by a nurse attached to a multi-purpose youth centre. The centre employs a team of peer educators to raise awareness of adolescent health issues, such as reproductive health, diet and nutrition, teenage pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, family planning, self-esteem and equality. To do all this, they visit schools and give talks, produce dramas and videos, create songs, and talk to their friends. Their main motivation is to help other people. The multi-purpose youth centre has facilities such as karaoke, a library, gym, computers and musical instruments. It is a supervised and substance free place where youth can socialize and enjoy themselves.

Opportunities for Meaningful Activity

Noting the inter-relatedness of risk factors such as substance abuse and lack of employment, it is also notable that young people expressed their frustration at the limited sporting facilities and formal competitions available to keep them active. Other young people also expressed their desire to be engaged in the arts, for example, through singing and other creative activities. Young

people specifically identified the lack of meaningful activities that they can engage in as a major problem and identified this as one of the main risks to young people getting involved in violence. At a basic level, in Chuuk, young people noted that limited transportation made it difficult for them to get around and attend youth gatherings and participate in community activities.

There are a number of initiatives that exist throughout FSM which are aimed at providing opportunities for young people to engage in meaningful activities, but they are scattered and not necessarily coordinated for maximum community impact. Examples include:

- Sports programmes, including community basketball leagues, the Youth Educators Promoting Olympic Values and other outreach programmes in sports. These programmes offer meaningful sports activities and positive lifestyle choices where tobacco, alcohol, other substances and violence are specifically discouraged. Conversely, however a number of youth interviewed during consultations were unaware of the Multi-purpose Youth Centre in Kolonia which provides sporting facilities.
- Micronesia Bound, a well established NGO in Kolonia, works with out-of-school and at-risk youth. Its *Aramas Kapw* or “New People” programme started in 1976 and aims to “instill trust, self-confidence and self-esteem” as well as build self-understanding and self-responsibility in young people. The basic concepts are based on similar programmes abroad, but it uses local and culturally appropriate approaches for implementation. Participants receive training in surviving skills in nature, physical fitness, nutrition, substance abuse prevention, traditional fishing and farming, and community service work. However, Micronesia Bound continues to require adequate funding to continue the activities.

- Programmes in the area of traditional and cultural activities run by church groups and other community groups are also being undertaken. These include traditional dancing, singing and crafts. Young people expressed pride and commented that cultural activities enhanced their cultural awareness and at the same time promoted the cultural diversity of FSM. However, these activities were often seen as sporadic and need to be further supported to be continuous.
- Programmes run by faith-based organizations to foster spiritual development of young people were also available. These activities develop young people's religious values, but at the same time include youth specific activities that use their talents such as singing, playing musical instruments and participating in other religious activities.

According to young people who participated in the study – it was perceived that young people who were active in programmes were found to be more positive in their outlook on life. Many had been able to change former negative behaviour patterns such as cutting down or quitting drinking. They also had goals to aspire to, and stayed away from crime and violence. Programmes supporting youth were often perceived by the participants as effective and provided young people with new skills, guidance and a boost in self-esteem.

Other organizations that are involved in youth issues but not directly tackling crime and violence include the Red Cross, Salvation Army, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Rotary Club and the Nature Conservancy.

Family Challenges

One of the uniting features of FSM is the importance of family, especially the extended family. Assisting one's family is a fundamental value as it provides security and a sense of self-worth. It was expressed in consultations that the structure of the extended family in particular has changed over a short period of time this was having a negative impact on young people. Formerly, young people could turn to a number of trusted relatives such as uncles, aunts or grandparents for advice and a sympathetic ear without confronting their parents with awkward topics. Similarly, parents with many obligations could get assistance with child-care from relatives living in the same house or in the same compound. Raising children was not just the responsibility of the nuclear family, but involved a network of relatives and community members.

"Parents could do better by talking to their children about sex and other issues that are difficult for us. Forget about culture. Help us. We look up to our parents so they are key to our future"

Young woman

During consultations, however, participants stated that parents are increasingly feeling a greater individual responsibility to look after and discipline their own children, and at the same time have a great range of cultural, religious and community obligations to fulfill.⁶⁹ Parents appear to be feeling the strain of new family and society structures. At the same time, during the consultations a number of young people expressed their concern that their parents were busy not only with church and cultural obligations such as funerals, but also were often at *sakau* parties or drinking alcohol with friends which is why they had little time or inclination to provide guidance to their children. In general young people consulted felt that they wanted their parents to be more open and to be able to talk to them about issues that affect their health and well-being.

⁶⁹ Hezel 1989.



Government officials and civil society members also expressed concerns relating to the lack of proper supervision and guidance of young people. They identified problems due to both parents working (including many parents working abroad) and therefore needing to leave young people at home to care for themselves or with a relative who did not have the authority or the will to discipline the child and provide guidance. This left young people with reduced supervision and more likely to seek out their peers for guidance, many of whom were themselves looking for advice.

Despite the upheavals in family structure over the last generation, many young people and their parents reported that they are still able to enjoy good relations with family members. Guidance, love and support from family were key for many young people consulted. Having someone within the immediate or extended family with whom young people could discuss problems and seek advice from was seen as helpful for a number of young people consulted. Also support and encouragement by family to succeed in school and other activities decreased the risk of involvement in negative behaviour. In the absence of a close confidante within the family; mentors at school, work, in youth groups or church were reported to be important for proper guidance and keeping young people positive.

Societal Challenges

Traditional knowledge of the roles and responsibility of community members is an integral part of community life and the provision of necessary skills for young people in FSM. Stakeholders reported that this traditional knowledge was being lost particularly in the areas of crafts, dance and languages. It was stated during consultations that many of the issues that young people now face was due to the weakening of their cultural ties. In an attempt to address this challenge, the *FSM National Youth Policy* specifically identifies the promotion of respect and appreciation of cultural heritage as a key empowerment tool for young people in their communities.

The continued migration of families and young people to the urban centers of Weno and Kolonia is also creating new urban societal challenges. Overcrowded and poor quality housing has led to the social pressures that create tensions amongst people competing for employment and social infrastructure. Traditional social structures that provided families' safety nets in time of difficulties have begun to deteriorate and the overall weakening provides and environment for crime and/or violence.

Finally, the issue of criminal deportees was raised as an issue by a number of government officials and donor agencies. It was stated that criminal deportees brought to FSM a new level of sophistication in crime. Unlike the criminal deportee situation in Samoa and Tonga where many of the deportees are returned due to immigration breeches, because of the Compact Agreement with the United States, all deportees to FSM are criminal deportees. Young people consulted generally did not admire deportees because they thought they had wasted a great opportunity to live and work in the United States which would suggest that their influence is limited.

3.6 Conclusions and Recommendations

Given the large and expanding population of young people, the government and donors need to tackle youth issues more vigorously. The future cost of not providing support and opportunities to the current generation of youth as they transition into adulthood will have much higher consequences than if concrete and sincere policies and programmes are put in place now. Please note that a number of the recommendations in the Pacific Overview and Regional Recommendations chapter are relevant to Kolonia and Weno as well.

Recommendations

- Revise and update the *National Youth Policy* through a consultative, participatory process, and ensure specific attention is paid to mainstreaming youth issues throughout government processes/programmes.
- Recruit a qualified national youth officer to run the HSA National Youth Office, and ensure over time that the officer is provided with sufficient qualified personnel and funding to effectively discharge its mandate.
- Expand places for vocational training and align training to emerging needs.
- Support to the reintegration and resettlement of criminal deportees.
- Develop and enact legislation for juvenile justice.
- Formalize links between the formal legal system and traditional justice mechanisms.

References

- Angrelik. 2010. "Silent Crimes." *Micronesia Seminar*. http://www.micsem.org/forum/comments.php?DiscussionID=7457&page=1#Item_0. Accessed 20 November 2010.
- Arsenal, JC, Remit, K, and Yichiro, O. 2005. "Cardiac Tamponade from Slingshot Metal Darts in Chuuk: A Retrospective Review of Cases." *Health Palau and Micronesia* 12(1).
- FSM National Congress. 2005. "Resolution 14-6 on the National Youth Policy." [http://www.fsmcongress.fm/14congress/14th congress resolutions.htm](http://www.fsmcongress.fm/14congress/14th%20congress%20resolutions.htm). Accessed 19 November 2010.
- Congress of the Federated States of Micronesia. 2010. "Congressmen." <http://www.fsmcongress.fm/Congressmen.htm>. Accessed 16 November 2010.
- Government of the Federated States of Micronesia. 2004. *Strategic Development Plan 2004-2023. Volume 1: Policies and Strategies for Development*. National Government.
- Government of the Federated States of Micronesia. 2010a. "National Government." <http://www.fsmgov.org/ngovt.html>. Accessed 16 November, 2010
- . 2010b. *National Report submitted in accordance with paragraph 15 (a) of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 5/1*. Geneva: Human Rights Council
- . 2010c. *National women's conference in Kosrae adopts gender based resolutions*, FSM Information Services, Pohnpei. Press Release, August 3.
- HSA (Department of Health and Social Affairs). 2006. *Report on the Implementation of the FSM National Youth Policy April 2005-June 2006*. Pohnpei
- . 2005. *National Youth Policy 2004-2010*. Pohnpei
- Hezel, Francis X. 1989. "What Can We Do to Prevent Youth Suicide?" *Journal of the Pacific Society*, Vol. 12 No. 2, July.
- . 1997. "Alcohol and Drug Use in the FSM." *Micronesia Seminar*. <http://micsem.org/pubs/articles/alcodrug/alcfsm/frames/alcfsmfr.htm>. Accessed 13 November 2010.
- Human Rights Council. 2010a. *Draft Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Federated States of Micronesia*. Geneva: United Nations General Assembly.
- . 2010b. *Summary Prepared by the Officer of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in accordance with paragraph 15 (c) of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 5/1: Federated States of Micronesia*. Geneva: United Nations General Assembly.
- Johnson, G. 2002. "Teen Birth Rate High in Micronesia." <http://www.fsmgov.org/press/nw081202.htm>. Accessed 31 October 2010.
- Magna Systems Incorporated. 2009. *Needs Assessment of Youth Violence, Bullying, and Suicide in Pacific Islander Communities: Final Report*. Los Angeles.
- Micronesia Bound. c. 2010. *What is Micronesia Bound, Inc?* Pohnpei. Information Booklet.
- National Department of Education. 2010. *FSM National JEMCO 20 Education Indicators Report*. Pohnpei.
- Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. 2008. "Basic Facts about the UPR." <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/PAGES/BasicFacts.aspx>. Accessed 14 November 2010.
- Pryor, J. 2007. *Qualitative Adolescent Health & Development Study in Pohnpei and Chuuk States, Federated States of Micronesia*. Suva: UNFPA.
- Rubinstein, DH. 2002. *Youth Suicide and Social Change in Micronesia*. Honolulu: Kagoshima University Research Center for the Pacific Islands.
- SBOC (Office of Statistics, Budget & Economic Management, Overseas Development Assistance & Compact Management). 2008. *Statistical Yearbook: Federated States of Micronesia 2008*. Pohnpei: National Government.

- .2007. *Household Income and Expenditure Survey Analysis Report 2005*. Pohnpei: National Government.
- .2001. "Social Statistics-Crime Statistics." 2010 http://www.spc.int/prism/Country/FM/stats/Social/Poverty_Tenure_Crime/Crime_new.htm. Accessed 14 November 2010.
- .2000. "Census Results." <http://www.spc.int/prism/Country/FM/stats/Census%20%20Surveys/census-index.htm>. Accessed 14 November 2010.
- SBOC & UNDP Pacific Centre. 2008. *Analysis of the 2005 Household Income and Expenditure Survey: Federated States of Micronesia*. Suva: UNDP Pacific Centre.
- SAMHP (States Substance Abuse and Mental Health Programs). 2010. *Suicides*. Chuuk State, FSM.
- Taxi-Womw. 2008. "For Better Marksmanship: Chuuk Public Safety Needs Everybody's Prayers." discussion board post, Micronesia Seminar, June 23. <http://www.micsem.org/forum/comments.php?DiscussionID=2748&page=1>. Accessed 20 November 2010.
- UNDP (United Nations Development Programme). 2010a. *Human Development Report 2010*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- .2010b. "International Human Development Indicators: Micronesia (Federated States of Micronesia)." <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/FSM.html>. Accessed 16 November 2010.
- UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund). 2007. *Qualitative Adolescent Health & Development Study in Pohnpei and Chuuk States Federated States of Micronesia*. Pohnpei.
- UNICEF (United Nations Fund for Children). 2001. *The State of Health Behaviour and Lifestyle of Pacific Youth: Pohnpei State, Federated States of Micronesia Report 2001*. Suva.
- U.S. Department of State. 2010. "Background Note: Micronesia." <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/1839.htm>. Accessed 11 November 2010.