

## **Republic of the Marshall Islands.**

### **Submission of views on ways and means to improve gender balance and in turn, inform more effective and gender-sensitive climate policy.**

The Republic of the Marshall Islands supports Decision 23 from COP 18 entitled “Promoting gender balance and improving the participation of women in UNFCCC negotiations and in the representation of Parties in bodies established pursuant to the Convention or the Kyoto Protocol.” The goal of improving gender balance in UNFCCC negotiations and in representation of Parties in bodies established pursuant to the Convention or the Kyoto Protocol is one that the R.M.I. identifies as vital based on its own experiences with gender and climate change.

The RMI recognizes that women bear a disproportionate burden of poverty and hardship arising from the lack of access to information and opportunities among many others, which are being exacerbated by the impacts of climate change. Traditionally, Marshallese women played a variety of functional roles including the gathering of food and water, ensuring that the household is adequately provided for. The impacts of climate change variability, including droughts, sea-level rise events and heavy rainfalls can make it nearly impossible for women to provide for these needs of their families and increases the hardship that comes with executing these duties. Economic barriers also play a limiting factor in the coping mechanisms women need to ensure a healthy household for most women in rural communities. This too is exacerbated by climate impacts through the loss of land, food crops, plants used to create handicrafts, and decrease in safe clean potable water. Opportunities are lost with the loss of land, plant materials, and crops. Climate impacts on natural resources take away the prospects of women to provide wealth and enjoy benefits that alleviate poverty and hardship in the rural communities.

Traditionally women are recognized as leaders in their households and in their respective communities. In today’s societal norms, the recognition of women’s roles as agents of change has been distorted as a direct result of foreign influence on the tradition and culture of the Marshall Islands. Foreign social Patriarchal systems and new systems of social organizations were introduced beginning in pre-World War I era through various occupiers of the Marshall Islands to replace the matrilineal system and distorted the original cultural norms of the people of the Marshall Islands. This brought about many changes, not just in the weakening of the traditional governing systems, but in the traditional roles that women played in their society. It is understood that women traditionally are more knowledgeable when it comes to natural resources, and the surrounding environment. Marshallese women possess vital information and knowledge necessary to advocate and bring forth change.

These vulnerabilities are magnified for women with disabilities. Women with disabilities (WWD) are a sub-group of women who are particularly disadvantaged by both their gender and their disability. Greater gender equality in UNFCCC processes will help ensure that gender and climate change issues are properly addressed, decreasing the vulnerability that all women face as climate change effects are felt. The RMI recalls the COP Decision 23/ CP. 18 paragraph four and also recognized that there is a need for women to be represented in all aspect of the UNFCCC process including through membership of their national delegations and the chairing and facilitation of formal and informal negotiation groups, in order to inform gender-responsive climate policy.

In recognizing the importance of Decision 23/CP. 18, the RMI also notes the significance of providing information on the Marshallese experience of gender and climate change so that as we move forward in incorporating gender equality into UNFCCC activities, it is with a full understanding of the intersection of gender and climate change from around the world. As a country that is extremely vulnerable to the effects of climate change, the R.M.I. understands that any adaptation measures undertaken must lead to addressing the threats. With this understanding, the R.M.I. enthusiastically takes part in an effort to achieve gender equality in UNFCCC processes.

1. Practice: What actions have you taken to implement gender equality in your national climate change policy and practice?
  - Incorporated gender into National Climate Change Policy Framework.
  - Incorporated climate change into draft National Gender Policy.
  - Addressed climate change at annual women's conference.
  - Community outreach in the outer islands using Reimaanlok and Integrated Household Resource Management (IHRM) approach.
  
2. Challenges and Best Practices: What challenges have you faced in implementing gender-sensitive climate policy and in pursuing gender balance in the UNFCCC regime? What has worked well in integrating women's and men's unique positions, needs and capacities?
  - Isolated outer islands.
  - Lack of funding to consult on and implement National Climate Change Policy Framework and Gender Policy.
  - Success found in bringing together male and female representatives from around the country to discuss climate change issues and develop solutions
  - Involving traditional, CSO and government, youths, women and church leaders at all time
  
3. Needs: What tools, resources, or training would be most valuable to better support and facilitate your progress towards gender-sensitive climate policy?
  - Resources to better engage rural and outer island communities in gender-sensitive climate policy development and implementation.
  - Trainings with communities and develop training manual
  - Technical Assistance to provide a situation analysis and develop data baseline and monitoring
  - Quality communication system to install in gender and development office to reach outer island communities at all time for reporting, monitoring and related matters.