



Gender and Human Rights Analysis:

Ensuring a gender-responsive National Adaptation Plan in the Republic of the Marshall Islands

October 2021



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About the NAP Global Network

The NAP Global Network was established in 2014 to support developing countries in advancing their NAP processes and to help accelerate climate change adaptation efforts around the world. To this end, the Network facilitates sustained learning and exchanges among countries of the South, supports national efforts to develop and implement National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), and strengthens bilateral support for adaptation and climate-sensitive sectors by coordinating donor contributions. The Network comprises representatives from over 140 countries involved in the development and implementation of NAPs, together with 11 bilateral donors. Its activities are supported financially by Germany, Austria, Canada, and the United States. Its Secretariat is hosted by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD). For more information, please visit www.napglobalnetwork.org.

Why this report?

The Government of The Republic of the Marshall Islands, through the NDC Partnership Cross Cutting Working Group, requested support to enhance attention to gender and human rights considerations in the development of the National Adaptation Plan and within the landscape of associated climate change adaptation policies. The Cross Cutting Working Group operates under the Tile Tile Eo Structure for Coordination and Integration of RMI climate and resilience related activities, approved in May 2019. Financed by the Government of Canada, the NAP Global Network conducted a gender and human rights analysis of the policy and planning mechanisms that guide work on climate adaptation in the country, between April 2020 and August 2021, to identify the strengths and challenges, and to put forward a set of recommendations to inform the development of a gender-responsive NAP.



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1.0 Introduction

“If a garden is going to die, why continue to tend it? I think something we overlook is how much of a mental toll [climate change] has on the community.”

Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner, Climate Change Envoy for the Republic of the Marshall Islands

This report explores ways in which the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) could advance its gender equality and human rights objectives through its efforts on climate change adaptation. It also looks at concrete ways these objectives may be incorporated in the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) that it is developing at the time of writing this report (August 2021). While support for both gender equality and human rights is espoused by Marshallese institutions, their incorporation into the nation’s efforts to adapt to climate change is a complex task often requiring new ways of thinking, collaborating, and governing. The NAP’s development offers a timely opportunity to explore these new ways.

In developing this report, we sought to understand the achievements attained and the challenges encountered thus far by both state and non-state actors in adapting to climate change in a way that is gender responsive and protects and promotes human rights. The report reviews the existing coordination systems, assessing whether they are adequately equipped to support gender responsiveness and human rights protection in the design and implementation of adaptation and mitigation processes.

In recent years, RMI has consolidated its strategies, plans, and policies addressing gender, human rights, and climate change. Importantly, these documents recognise the relevance and interrelation of the topics, such as the fact that climate change impacts women and men differently or that responses to adapt to a changing climate have important implications for justice and human rights. RMI’s 2050 Tile Til Eo (Lighting the Way) Climate Strategy, published in 2018, affirms the government’s intention to pursue gender responsiveness and human rights principles in all its climate efforts.

Ensuring that these expressed intentions are reflected in actions, in the advancement of women’s rights, and in the improvement of people’s lives is the ultimate test. Indeed, gender equality and human rights indicators will be important determinants of whether RMI’s climate policies and strategies deliver their intended outcomes. Moving from theory to practice—from strategy to action—requires a structured approach that must be facilitated by both governance and institutional arrangements that are collaborative. To this end, the Tile Til Eo coordination mechanisms represent initial steps to ensuring a holistic approach to climate change impacts in RMI. This report assesses what is required from these structural conditions to deliver the strategy’s objectives.

Adapting to the impacts of climate change is important to every country in the world. To Small Island Developing States, including RMI's 29 low-lying atolls, adaptation has, furthermore, become an existential issue. Sea level rise, flooding and coastal erosion, more intense and frequent rainfall and drought episodes, and increased air and ocean water temperatures are all climate change-related hazards faced by RMI. The direct and indirect impacts of these hazards are many, including damage to the built environment (including the electricity grid, with resulting power outages); a shortage of fresh water; reduced agricultural yields; coral bleaching and the deterioration of marine habitats, resulting in reduced fish catch, jeopardised fishing and agriculture-based livelihoods, and subsequent impacts on food security; and increased risk to health from more prevalent water- and vector-borne diseases (RMI Adaptation Communication, 2020).

By 2035, it is estimated that some of the Marshall Islands will be underwater, and aquifers on other islands will have become polluted by the intrusion of seawater. Outmigration may be, for some Marshallese, an inescapable reality (Bordner & Ferguson, 2020).

Actors pushing adaptation action would do well to recognise that some climate impacts are more visible than others and address both. This is particularly important in the context of pursuing human rights, women's rights, and gender equality. To illustrate, climate change is likely to negatively affect sexual and reproductive health and rights, both jeopardising women's and girls' opportunities to build their (adaptive) capacities and increasing the incidence of gender-based violence (GBV) (NAP Global Network & Women Deliver, 2020). Understanding why gender equality and human rights considerations should be central to adaptation efforts—and how to accomplish these important objectives—is essential for the Marshallese people and their government to effectively respond to the climate crisis.

This report explores why a gender equality and human rights lens is important in adaptation planning and implementation (Section 3); examines the policy and institutional state of play in RMI in the context of adaptation and how the existing arrangement may be supporting and/or hindering progress (Section 4); draws recommendations for the RMI government and other stakeholders to ensure that their policies—and the upcoming NAP—are gender responsive and observant of human rights (Section 5); and, finally, offers concluding remarks.

2.0 Methodology

This report is largely based on a review of strategies, plans, and policies adopted by RMI since 2015, which themselves refer to older official documents. The findings of this report are also informed by interviews with a small number of government representatives held in March 2021 (except for one that was conducted in May 2021), by published literature on the subject, and by a validation workshop held virtually on 19 March 2021. The process also consisted of a collaboration with the Tile Til Eo Oversight Committee's (TTEC's) Cross Cutting Working Group, aimed at grounding and validating the analysis, as well as building that group's capacity to continue advancing the strategy's objectives.

The original methodology for this report had contemplated undertaking face-to-face interviews and workshops with stakeholders, both in Majuro and in the nation's Outer Islands. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, these elements had to be cancelled. Whereas interviews with Marshallese stakeholders were indeed arranged, virtually as well as face-to-face (the latter conducted by the RMI government's NAP Coordination team), interviews with non-governmental organisations and civil society organisations (CSOs) working on the subjects could not be scheduled—despite repeated attempts. This is an important limitation of the findings of the report, as we have not been able to incorporate, first-hand, the voices of these stakeholders, except during the validation workshop.

On the other hand, we have had the opportunity to contribute to the stakeholder consultation framework led by the University of Melbourne, which will serve to collect inputs on the impacts and responses to climate change from communities across the country. We contributed a gender lens to the methodology and to the proposed questions of the assessment framework. We hope that when the findings of that consultation are available, they will be used alongside this report to inform the integration of gender and human rights concerns into the NAP process.

3.0 Why a Gender and Human Rights Analysis?

It is widely recognised that making climate action gender responsive leads to more effective outcomes. Ensuring the participation of stakeholders from government sectors and civil society in prioritising, designing, and implementing adaptation-related initiatives is, furthermore, a crucial way for RMI to pursue its gender equality- and human rights-based approach to climate action and development.

What Is a Gender-Responsive Approach?

It is an approach that carefully considers how gender norms and roles affect women, men, girls, and boys and addresses the inequalities they have created. It pursues gender equality and does not stop short at just examining the challenges.

Gender-responsive work is reflected in policies, strategies, and plans. But that is just the start. It also needs to be reflected concretely in adaptation actions at both community and national levels.

Source: NAP Global Network & United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), 2019.

Climate change affects people differently, depending on the person's gender, age, health condition (and whether they have any disabilities), level of education/knowledge, economic status, ethnicity, and many other factors (Mbow et al., 2019; Pearse, 2017; UNFCCC, 2019). The combination of these factors is what is known as "intersectionality," and intersectional forms of discrimination influence people's vulnerability and their capacity to respond to climate change. Therefore, recognising the socially differentiated impacts of climate hazards is tremendously important for the effective design and implementation of adaptation actions.

Gender has a considerable weight in the equation of intersectionality. Understanding why this is the case—and how to recognise and analyse it—will ensure pertinent adaptation responses, for example, by incorporating a gender lens in the consultation framework developed for RMI by the University of Melbourne or by undertaking vulnerability and capacity assessments that recognise gender as a key element and women as central stakeholders (see, e.g., Morchain et al., 2015).

A rationale for developing gender-responsive NAPs is described in four principles in a toolkit jointly developed by the NAP Global Network, the UNFCCC's Least Developed Countries Expert Group and the Adaptation Committee (2019). These are: (i) gender equality is a universal human right; (ii) the UNFCCC strongly supports a gender-responsive approach to climate policy and action; (iii) linking climate action and gender equality contributes to making adaptation actions

more effective; and (iv) adaptation planning processes can help address gender dimensions in the context of climate change.

Figure 1. Elements of a gender-responsive NAP process



Source: NAP Global Network & UNFCCC, 2019.

Furthermore, as Figure 1 indicates, a gender-responsive NAP is characterised by:

- The recognition that gender differences are important when it comes to adaptation needs, opportunities, and capacities.
- Equitable participation and influence by women and men in adaptation decision-making processes.
- Equitable access to financial resources and other benefits resulting from investments in adaptation between women and men.

RMI's policy and institutional setting strategically combines gender- and human rights-based approaches, which work to mutually reinforce the numerous common objectives that exist between them. These include the principle of equality and of non-discrimination of people based on their gender, race, and sexual identity, among other characteristics; the participation of individuals, especially those who may be disenfranchised or least represented in governance; and the accountability of duty bearers. Centring the discussion on the ongoing NAP process, we now turn to understanding how the nation's policies and institutional arrangements support—or hinder—the development and implementation of RMI's gender-responsive and human rights-based adaptation action.

4.0 Policy and Institutional Setting in RMI

The RMI already has a strong set of strategies, plans, and policies addressing the challenges posed by climate change. Its policies on gender equality and human rights, likewise, often recognise the mutual relevance between their objectives and those of climate action (both adaptation and mitigation). The existence of the Tile Til Eo Coordination mechanism, approved in 2019, is likewise an important signal that indicates the government's awareness of the importance of linking climate action to principles of equality and justice, within a framing of self-determination. **A strong policy setup, though, needs to be accompanied by similarly robust governance and implementation mechanisms, as well as institutional arrangements conducive to representation and equal participation.**

Understanding gender-based inequalities and responses is not new to RMI decision-makers. Indeed, there are examples of “differentiated impact” thinking, for instance, in the health and education sectors (see, e.g., RMI's 2018 report titled *Gender Equality – Where Do We Stand?*). **Expanding this thinking to climate-related analyses and vulnerability and capacity assessments would considerably strengthen RMI stakeholders' ability to address adaptation challenges** more effectively and appropriately from both gender equality and human rights perspectives.

At the time of writing this report (August 2021), the institutional arrangements that influence climate thinking and policy—notably the structure for coordinating climate action in RMI and the TTEC's role and mandate within it—are being reconsidered, with the aim of strengthening the link between high-ranking national-level stakeholders, on one hand, and operational and technical experts dealing with on-the-ground climate, gender, and human rights agendas, on the other. The latter is composed of existing official working groups (WGs) (e.g., Gender/Human Rights WG, Adaptation WG, Mitigation WG, Nationally Determined Contribution Partnership (NDCP) WG; see Appendix). The Cross Cutting WG, concretely, mobilises funds and technical assistance through the NDC Partnership Plan to implement climate change priorities, including the incorporation of gender and human rights considerations in adaptation and mitigation policies and actions.

From interviews conducted, we learned that key government stakeholders believe progress is being made—albeit slowly—to promote gender equality and human rights and to make more direct links between these and climate impacts/climate adaptation (T. Elbon & J. Ishiguro, personal communication, March 2021). At the same time, there is concern that the integration of these areas may in some cases be a symbolic tick-box exercise, whereas a more comprehensive effort is needed to effectively promote sustainable development and justice (A. Saunders, & K. Jeñtil-Kijiner, personal communication, March 2021).

Overall, there are strikingly divergent perspectives between interviewed stakeholders around how much integration of gender and human rights in policies has been achieved and to what

extent things need to be done differently in the future. This may suggest there are differences between RMI government stakeholders regarding the ultimate objectives pursued and the degree of transformations required to get there.

At the end of 2020, RMI published its Adaptation Communication, providing an updated understanding of the national policy and institutional landscape. As a complement to that document, this section summarises key existing climate plans, policies, strategies, and steering documents. The Appendix further explores the key elements, strengths, and weaknesses of each of these documents.

- *National Gender Mainstreaming Policy* (Republic of the Marshall Islands, 2015): This document addresses capacity gaps to deliver gender-responsive programs and reduce GBV while promoting an equitable participation of women in decision making. It acknowledges prejudices against women and their disproportionately small role in civic life.
- *Gender Equality – Where Do We Stand?* (Republic of the Marshall Islands, 2018a): This document identifies official priorities for action on gender equality: Teenage pregnancy, violence against women and girls, vulnerable employment conditions, unemployment, and limited access to justice and protection.
- *Tile Til Eo 2050 Climate Strategy “Lighting the Way”* (Republic of the Marshall Islands, 2018c): This is a key document setting out RMI’s mid- to long-term climate ambition, explicitly making gender responsiveness and human rights foundational elements of climate action. In doing so, the strategy promotes bottom-up approaches and an increasing role for women in decision making.
- Updated Nationally Determined Contribution (Republic of the Marshall Islands, 2018b): Three important elements of RMI’s updated NDCs are its commitment to “a gender-responsive and human rights-based approach in all NDC-related planning, programming and implementation” (p. 8), the production of a NAP, and the ambition to be carbon neutral by 2050.
- Gender Equality Act (Republic of the Marshall Islands, 2019): Frames gender equality as a legal, human right and promotes the mainstreaming of gender across all climate-related policies. It seeks to give women equal opportunity in the design and implementation of policies and initiatives in the areas of climate, environment, and disaster management.

At the operational level, the *2019–2021 NDC Partnership Plan* (last updated in February 2021) overseen by the TTEC, is a key document that can help guide and track climate action in the short to mid terms. It aligns well with the framing set forth by the documents discussed above. The plan’s second outcome is focused on adaptation, highlighting the development of a NAP document attentive to gender-differentiated impacts and human rights, as well as to the creation of a centre of excellence. This is particularly important for a country that has encountered challenges in developing and maintaining climate-related expertise: Increasing and retaining knowledge in RMI will be essential for a sustained approach to risk management and adaptation. The plan’s Outcome 3 centres around the integration of gender and human rights considerations in climate action, with key outputs like the costing of the Gender Action Plan and gender-sensitive climate budgeting.

In addition to the implementation of the NDC Partnership Plan, which to date nonetheless faces considerable delays, it is hoped that the NAP (under development in 2021) will help solidify RMI’s

efforts to link gender and human rights to climate action and that the NAP will incorporate specific initiatives that show its gender-responsive nature. The development of this gender and human rights analysis piece aims to support the thinking and framing of gender within the ongoing NAP process.

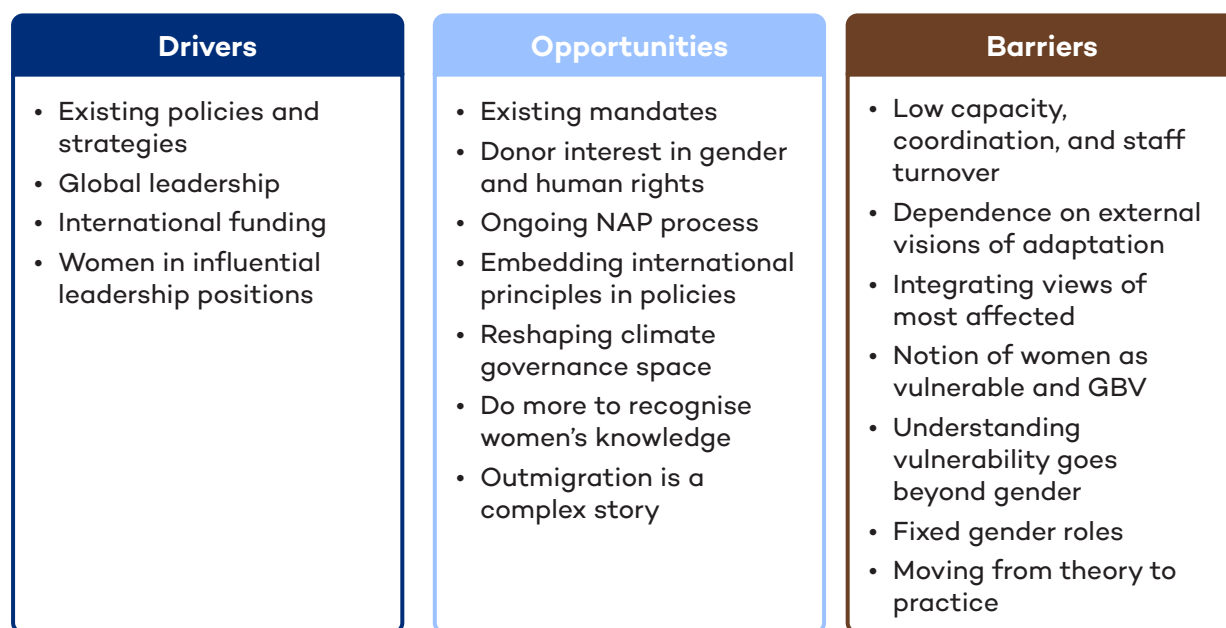
The next section explores how these official positions, together with other factors, may be helping or hindering the development of gender-responsive climate change adaptation efforts in RMI.

5.0 Analysis: Drivers, opportunities, and barriers encountered

This section explores the identified drivers, opportunities, and barriers for integrating gender equality and human rights principles in climate change adaptation policy and practice in RMI. The existing institutional arrangements and mandates (e.g., the leadership role played by the TTEC) are a strong basis under which to build and implement concrete adaptation measures that are gender responsive and that protect human rights.

These drivers, opportunities, and barriers encountered are summarised in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Drivers, opportunities, and barriers for integrating gender equality and human rights principles in climate change adaptation policy and practice in the RMI



Source: Author diagram.

Drivers

- **The 2050 climate strategy and related plans and policies, all of which underscore the value and relevance of integrating gender equality and human rights**, have helped develop a narrative that builds shared ownership of climate adaptation efforts. This shows progressive political positioning and sets the ground for making climate change adaptation effective, just, and gender responsive. The ongoing development of the country's NAP should add to the coherence of these instruments.

-
- **The active engagement of RMI in multilateral climate negotiation processes** has granted it, among several other countries, a de facto global leadership role, making its climate ambitions well known both domestically and internationally.
 - **Ample funding is being allocated by Global North governments** to undertake climate action in RMI, with gender and human rights often listed as key criteria. This is partly a reflection of RMI's high profile in global climate circles. On the other hand, the complex, bureaucratic processes of accessing these funds, as well as of managing them, challenges implementation for many Small Island Developing States and least-developed countries, including RMI.
 - Although there is limited experience on gender and climate change in RMI, **the few women in leadership positions may help open the space for others** to become influential figures. They can provide female perspectives in policy discussions and mentorship for women in junior roles, as several people interviewed suggested.

Opportunities

- **The existing strong policy architecture is a robust base from which to translate gender and human rights priorities into institutional mandates.** Beyond establishing these mandates on paper, coordinating agencies should ensure that governance structures enable their implementation.
- The TTEC direct reporting line to cabinet shows the prominence of the 2050 strategy, the NDCs, and the future NAP. But leadership has been volatile, and coordination has been challenging—including due to staff turnover, insufficient capacities on gender, and a crowded institutional climate governance space that can stymie timely action. Nevertheless, **an ongoing reshaping of the role and composition of the TTEC** (which is expected to update the structure approved in 2019) may help overcome the challenges encountered thus far.
- The upcoming NAP is a step toward RMI's demonstrated commitment to climate action, both globally and at home. One of its aims should be to **comprehensively reflect a holistic vision of gender equality and human rights**, as described in existing policies, but also—particularly—further elaborated through consultations with community stakeholders.
- The present drive to undertake climate adaptation action can prompt an examination of **how and to what extent the principles of international treaties have been reflected or incorporated in policies and in climate-related practices** in RMI (e.g., the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the 2019 Gender Equality Act), and propose ways to expedite their implementation.
- **Gender equality and women's rights have been key criteria for multilateral organisations and donor governments financing climate-related adaptation for years.** This aligns international funding opportunities with RMI's vision for adaptation. Enhancing RMI's knowledge and expertise on gender, generating sex-disaggregated data as standard practice, and conducting/updating gender and human rights analyses would signal to donors RMI's genuine commitment to gender equality and its capacity to absorb and deploy resources targeted at gender-responsive climate action.

- Providing more opportunities to women in consultation processes would help incorporate their visions of a desirable future—and not just men’s—into the narrative that decision-makers subsequently use to understand communities’ needs and priorities. This, in turn, may inform decisions about the selection of adaptation investments by government, **better incorporating the voice of key stakeholders: women with diverse characteristics and lived experiences.**
- Outmigration, often to the United States, can provide opportunities for personal and professional growth for some, as well as additional income through remittances for the members of a household remaining in RMI. However, **outmigration is a complex process** that also generates challenges for individuals, households (potentially affecting gender dynamics), and the country, which can be affected by the loss of highly skilled nationals. More research is needed to understand the gender-related implications of the increasing outmigration trends and whether these constitute opportunities, challenges, or both from gender and human rights perspectives.

Barriers

- Although several RMI policies addressing climate change and gender do refer to women as agents of change, **the notion of women as vulnerable and in need of support is a leading narrative**, sometimes explicitly, often implicitly. **The high incidence of GBV** in RMI, and the depth to which it has been embedded in the idea of what is acceptable in marital relations, may be both cause and consequence of the way women are perceived when it comes to their limited participation in developmental and climate-related action.
- **Historically fixed gender-specific roles, which characterise men as strong, occupying dominant positions, can be a barrier to the widespread acceptance of gender equality in climate action.** It is evidenced through the limited number of women in high-level political positions: 1 out of 33 in the lower house (Nitijela), and 3 out of 12 in the upper house (Council of Iroij) (UN Women, 2021).
- Addressing gender inequalities through climate policies and action is a positive step. But more is needed. This is because **inequalities are not exclusive to gender. They also manifest through other intersectional characteristics, like age, level of education and income, marital status, or access to land.** Land rights, and the existing difficulty in acquiring land by citizens who do not already possess it, may, for instance, be preventing or slowing down agriculture-related adaptation objectives.
- Policies and actions should be informed by all citizens, especially those most affected by climate change and with lower adaptive capacity. To date, there seems to be **room for improvement in widening representation and in digging deeper in relation to gender and human rights issues.** The NAP process must ensure that consultations with these citizens, including those living in the Outer Islands, are conducted in a timely fashion and in a way that gender and human rights aspects are drawn out, thus helping inform adaptation decisions. Methodologies conducive to assessing adaptive capacity, vulnerability, and differentiated impacts should be utilised.
- Interviews with officials in RMI reveal **considerable structural barriers to advancing gender equality and human rights in the context of climate action.** These include insufficient knowledge and capacities about gender; staffing shortages and turnover; lack of standard collection of sex-disaggregated and other gender-relevant data; shortage of technical

capacity; insufficient coordination among government agencies; and, in some cases, limited institutional support.

- The lack of gender-related capacities has largely been addressed with an overreliance on external consultants. The nation's prevailing model to advance its climate agenda based largely on receiving technical support from overseas companies and consultants has not resulted in the development of needed capacities for Marshallese nationals. **This knowledge gap could jeopardise the mid-/long-term implementation of gender- and climate-related policies in RMI.**
- While a robust high-level climate strategy exists, as do policies linking climate action to gender equality and human rights, **there is not enough clarity regarding what or how to implement these guidelines through specific actions.** Recognising existing challenges in cross-sectoral collaborations (McIver et al., 2015), attention should be paid to understanding how well cross-sectoral/thematic working groups are functioning and how to promote collaboration and cross fertilisation.

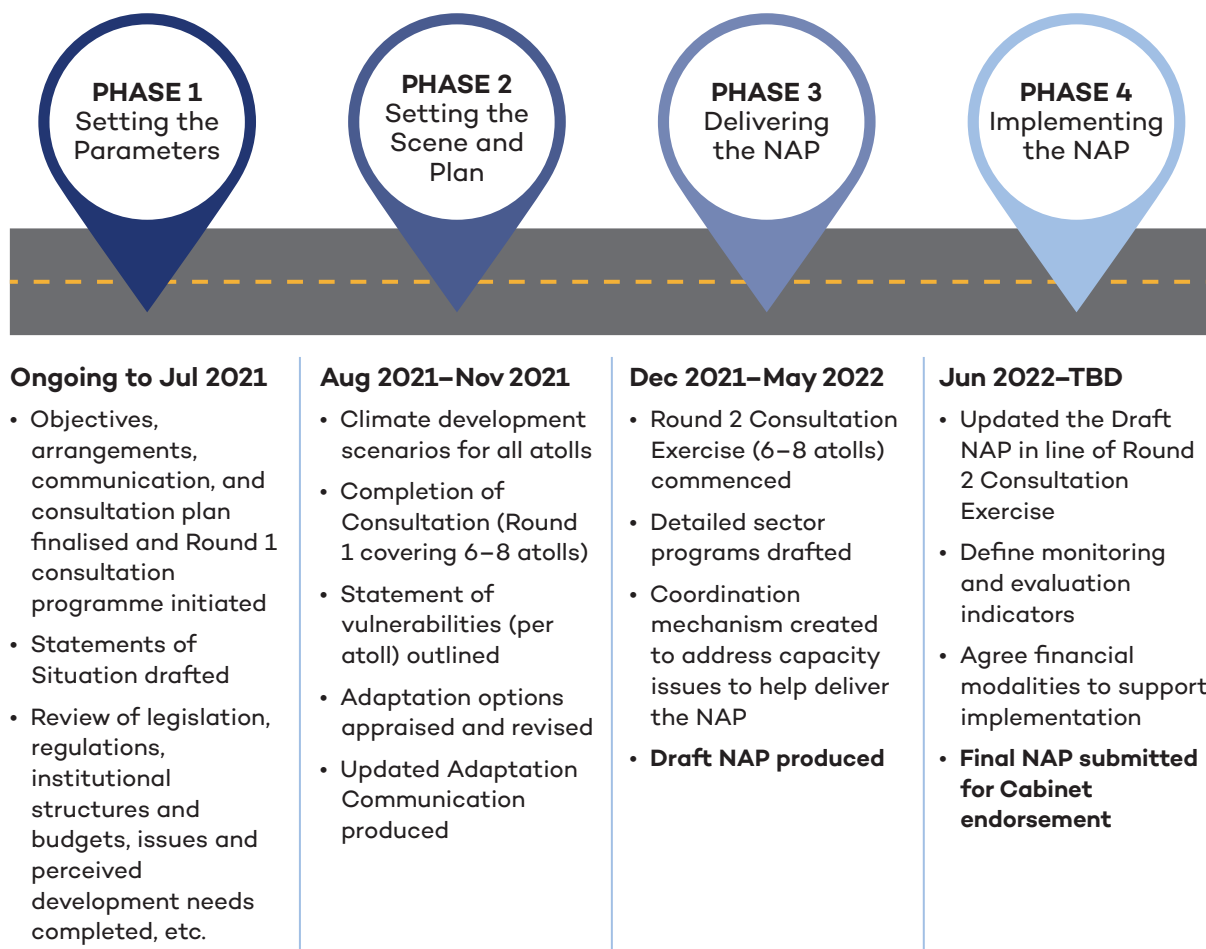
6.0 Implications and Recommendations for RMI's NAP Process

“If we are saying that [the NAP] is our survival plan, let’s get everyone to weigh in their thoughts on it.”

Teri Elbon, Foreign Services Officer for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Robinson and Shine (2018, p. 568) rightfully argue that “much of what is required to respect human rights in climate action is already established as good practice, if not universally implemented—access to information, the right to participation, gender equality, respect for indigenous peoples’ rights—and will have to become the norm in planning and implementing climate action.” In other words, the idea that human rights and gender equality are pillars of effective climate adaptation should be recognised as a default element of adaptation action.

Figure 3. NAP Roadmap phases



Source: Proposal by NAP lead consultant, Jonathan McCue, 2021.

Below we present recommendations for making the RMI's NAP process gender responsive. The recommendations have sought to be aligned with the four phases of the NAP development as described in Figure 3. Each recommendation is accompanied by an explanation of its relevance (its justification), a description of what implementing this recommendation might look like in practice, and a list of questions or issues to be considered when addressing each recommendation.

Table 1. Phase 1. Setting the parameters

| Recommendation | Justification | What it looks like in practice | Questions and issues to address |
|--|--|---|--|
| <p>In determining the situational baseline, use climate risk assessment methodologies that explicitly address gender and human rights and help make adaptation measures more gender responsive and human rights compliant.</p> | <p>Gender and vulnerability analyses undertaken at local levels in collaboration with community members help better understand capacities and limitations, as well as adaptation needs. These methodologies prioritise gender equality and human rights both in <i>process</i> (inclusiveness in participation, with people of all genders, races, ages, religions) and <i>content</i> (addressing gender-related barriers to adaptation and to exercising human rights).</p> <p>Having women-only and men-only groups in discussions is an example of a simple, valuable good practice.</p> | <p>The <i>Toolkit for a Gender-Responsive Process to Formulate and Implement NAPs</i> can assist government actors in coordinating the whole of the NAP process. Entry points one and two: Launching the NAP (p. 23) and Stocktaking (p. 25) are relevant for Phase 1.</p> <p>People-centred vulnerability assessments help achieve representation of social groups in the NAP. Examples of these are IISD's integrated vulnerability assessment (Dumaru, 2019) and Oxfam's vulnerability and risk assessment.</p> <p>In conducting assessments, avoid simply extracting data from participants; rather invite them to help identify, prioritise, and design actions.</p> | <p>Does the information available to build the NAP (including from vulnerability and risk assessments) differentiate impacts by gender and other identity-related aspects? How can gaps be filled?</p> <p>Do methodologies use gender and human rights considerations to inform the design of actions?</p> <p>Can gaps in the consultation framework be filled before implementation?</p> <p>Do Round 1 consultations cover all geographic areas and/or represent all minority groups, particularly from a gender perspective?</p> |

| Recommendation | Justification | What it looks like in practice | Questions and issues to address |
|---|--|--|---|
| Build the NAP on solid ground by critically developing and reviewing sectoral situational reports and existing regulations, assessing whether gender and human rights have been well represented in both. | People-centred methodologies can help decision-makers build an accurate, nuanced understanding of the full implications of climate change on people. This should be reflected in the sectoral situational reports, a key input to the NAP. | Enhance the presence and influence of women's rights organisations and human rights advocacy groups in the identification of areas of concerns in sectoral reports and legislation (e.g., through workshops). Adaptation, mitigation and Gender/Human Rights WGs regularly provide inputs to NAP process leads: data from consultations, changes in governance structures, set up meetings with CSOs. | What mechanisms can be put in place to ensure that gender and human rights are key elements in sectoral adaptation plans? Will institutional mandates and the allocation of budgets enable the collaboration between gender/human rights groups and planning/implementation divisions? |

Table 2. Phase 2. Setting the scene and plan

| Recommendation | Justification | What it looks like in practice | Questions and issues to address |
|---|---|---|--|
| Use the information collected from Round 1 consultations to better understand the gender dynamics and inform the climate development scenarios, the statement of vulnerabilities, and the adaptation options appraised. Furthermore, identify and flag to decision-makers, through WGs, the existing information gaps to determine how climate change affects people based on their gender and other intersectional characteristics, as well as the capacity gaps to turn this information into knowledge. | There is insufficient data on how climate change affects different groups of people and social systems (e.g., intra-household gender dynamics). At the same time, in some cases, national institutions lack the capacity to absorb this information and turn it into knowledge as inputs for policies and actions. | Build the capacity of WGs to highlight knowledge gaps and work with national and international actors to commission research that fills knowledge gaps that are hindering the NAP's contribution to gender equality and human rights. Broaden the diversity of questions asked when discussing gender and human rights in the context of climate change (e.g., what is the impact of soil salinisation on women in the Outer Islands?), thus helping stakeholders recognise the less-obvious links between climate change and gender/human rights. | What can help increase knowledge in WGs? Would the addition of non-state stakeholders offer new insights? What actions would help to better understand the implications of significant outmigration trends on adaptation, gender dimensions, and human rights goals (regardless of links between outmigration and climate change)? Would setting up a climate adaptation knowledge management platform that puts gender and human rights at the heart of climate action be an effective way to advance these agendas? |

| Recommendation | Justification | What it looks like in practice | Questions and issues to address |
|---|---|---|--|
| <p>Frame the NAP process as a “climate action–gender equality–human rights” nexus by which gender responsiveness makes efforts more effective and better aligned with RMI’s vision.</p> | <p>Recognition of these links by state and non-state actors must be promoted. The NAP process can help raise awareness about this and call for the strengthening of capacities of staff and institutions that are key to the implementation of the 2050 climate strategy.</p> | <p>Training sessions on gender are good ways to increase the capacity of WGs that are active in the development of the NAP, and in climate action more broadly. Creating a fund for the training of Marshallese officials, e.g., at a master’s level or through internships in overseas organisations, may bear fruit in the medium term.</p> <p>Making capacity strengthening of RMI actors a standard requirement in climate adaptation-related collaborations with external organisations may reduce the country’s dependence and build its own expertise.</p> | <p>Presenting NAP initiatives as integral, reinforcing components of RMI’s strategic development objectives is key to making gender and human rights a sustained component of climate responses. How can this nexus be presented?</p> <p>What models are best suited to RMI for embedding gender and human rights in its thinking and operations (e.g., by having gender experts embedded in government offices; by expanding its regional networks and collaborations with other Pacific Island nations; etc.?)</p> |
| <p>In the selection of activities to be listed in the NAP, insert criteria that ensure the inclusion of gender equality and human rights considerations.</p> | <p>It helps to develop a set of guiding questions that assists in determining, on a case-by-case basis, what makes a given adaptation action gender responsive. This, indeed, could be an effective and rather simple approach to advance gender equality and human rights agendas in the context of the NAP process.</p> | <p>If activities listed in the NAP have been carefully considered for their positive and negative impacts on people of all genders—e.g., by asking if resources are allocated to promote women’s empowerment within this initiative or if this activity promotes the recognition of the rights of ethnic minorities—then their implementation should contribute to RMI’s goals on these priorities.</p> <p>Analyse the differentiated impacts of adaptation actions on various socially and gender-diverse groups, and subsequently address the shortcomings by revising the actions to ensure positive impacts, especially for groups most affected.</p> | <p>Considering that projects and activities are often implemented by sectors, what incentives must be built into the system so that sectoral stakeholders see the incorporation of gender and human rights as a win-win situation and not as an added burden?</p> |

Table 3. Phase 3. Delivering the NAP

| Recommendation | Justification | What it looks like in practice | Questions and issues to address |
|---|---|---|---|
| <p>The NAP’s proposed approach to stakeholder engagement can critically revisit and suggest updates to the existing one, aiming to empower stakeholders—especially women, minorities, and disempowered groups—to more actively contribute to shaping the agenda on climate adaptation and human rights.</p> | <p>RMI’s 2050 strategy states: “Utilize participatory community-led, bottom-up approaches to identify challenges and best practices with stakeholders and beneficiaries” (p. 57).</p> <p>The perspectives of local governments, women, men, and youth living on different islands should be central to adaptation and human resource policy. They face unique challenges requiring targeted responses.</p> <p>Citizens and CSOs working on women’s rights, gender equality, and human rights are best placed to describe the invisible factors that drive vulnerability, e.g., unequal social norms and intra-household dynamics.</p> | <p>Round 2 Consultation could be designed with a specific objective of identifying how to make adaptation options gender responsive and targeted to the needs of people with varying circumstances. This approach would help make gender equality and human rights two determining factors in climate adaptation goals and actions.</p> <p>Seek high-level political support for the upcoming stakeholder consultation process, and staff the team with gender experts so that its findings are robust enough that they can inform the design of gender-responsive activities in the NAP.</p> | <p>What gender- and human rights-related expertise exists in sectors that can support the design of activities in the NAP? In cases of insufficient expertise, what partner can provide support to ensure sectoral activities are gender responsive?</p> <p>Are insights from local-level authorities and institutions being reflected in the information available to develop the NAP (e.g., were they properly captured through Rounds 1 and 2 of consultations)?</p> |
| <p>Where gender equality and/or human rights issues have historically struggled to gain traction, use the NAP platform as an entry point to advance the discussion on these topics, even beyond the domain of climate change impacts.</p> | <p>In cases where influential (possibly non-state) actors’ views clash with gender equality principles, climate action can be a pragmatic, alternative entry point to enable a conversation.</p> <p>Showing climate wins and increased household/community well-being as a result of adaptation actions that challenge social norms may be an acceptable entry point for influential actors who are otherwise resistant to change. This progress may be a worthwhile initial strategy to consider and a way to use the NAP as a more widely influential vehicle.</p> | <p>Identify local, but also international, institutions that can help the NAP development team ensure the gender responsiveness of its proposed approach and activities—and flesh out the climate and development wins beyond those that impact gender equality and human rights.</p> <p>Highlight the benefits of a gender-responsive approach to climate action, by focusing on the wins: increased effectiveness of actions, potential for increased household income and leisure time for men, for example.</p> | <p>To what extent do existing de facto social norms and gender roles, as well as regulations, enable or block gender equality goals?</p> <p>How can the NAP and its cross-sectoral, multistakeholder coalition contribute to reducing the obstacles generated by these positions—turning “foes” into “friends”; “naysayers” into “champions”?</p> |

| Recommendation | Justification | What it looks like in practice | Questions and issues to address |
|--|--|---|--|
| <p>Recognise the need to include capacity-strengthening measures in the NAP, focusing on the climate–gender–human rights nexus in state and non-state actors as a prerequisite for sustained progress.</p> | <p>The development of RMI’s 2050 climate strategy, policies, and the NAP, have relied significantly on external support. To ensure that all these plans move ahead successfully, it is necessary to strengthen capacities of Marshallese actors in these fields and in understanding and applying the climate–gender–human rights nexus.</p> | <p>Identify from Rounds 1 and 2 of consultations a list of capacity gaps that need filling.</p> <p>Design activities that encourage collaboration between local and international actors (as opposed to the fly-in consultant approach) and that include capacity-strengthening components.</p> | <p>How can the NAP encourage the growth and sustainability of capacities of Marshallese actors, both at national and sub-national levels, as well as of non-state actors, like women’s rights organisations?</p> |

Table 4. Phase 4. NAP implementation

| Recommendation | Justification | What it looks like in practice | Questions and issues to address |
|---|---|---|---|
| <p>Use the NAP as a vehicle to boost the influence of institutional actors that support gender equality and human rights in the climate governance space.</p> | <p>Promoting a gender- and human rights-based approach requires assigning positions of power to actors that advocate for it. These principles must go beyond headlines or visions and be actionable in the design and implementation of adaptation actions.</p> | <p>Appropriately staff the Gender/Human Rights WG and provide sustained funding for its operation.</p> <p>Secure a seat for state and non-state actors driving gender and human rights agendas at the institutions mandated to advance climate change adaptation.</p> | <p>What has, thus far, complicated the long-term stability of the Gender/Human Rights WG (e.g., staffing, capacities, political, funding issues)?</p> <p>What barriers or backlash may a more influential Gender/ Human Rights stakeholder encounter in advancing its agenda?</p> <p>(How) Can gender and human rights advocates contribute to supporting a fair allocation of adaptation resources at the local level?</p> |

| Recommendation | Justification | What it looks like in practice | Questions and issues to address |
|--|--|---|--|
| <p>Establish strong monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) protocols that help understand if and how individual activities and policies are contributing to gender-equitable, effective climate action.</p> | <p>This is important considering RMI's limited technical capacities and its heavy reliance on outsourced knowledge. MEL systems whose indicators tie success to the advancement of women's rights—e.g., through gender-responsive budgeting, participation of women in specific adaptation decision making, among many others—make a strong, explicit argument in support of the government's commitment to this agenda.</p> | <p>In cross-sectoral workshops in the context of NAP development, explore existing MEL systems and their indicators, and encourage their redesign to align with the climate-gender-human rights nexus.</p> <p>Reflecting gender and human rights criteria in MEL indicators and in the theory of change of sectoral plans is a powerful step in framing MEL efforts in tune with principles of just, effective climate action and the 2050 climate strategy.</p> | <p>Aside from the further development of sectoral MEL systems, would the creation of a meta system that provides information and facilitates interaction between adaptation stakeholders—like a clearinghouse—help advance RMI's efforts on assessing progress on climate action?</p> <p>Do indicators explore both the traditional aspects of vulnerability (e.g., the impact of reduced agricultural yields or fish stocks on livelihoods) and also newly recognised aspects, like mental health and well-being?</p> |
| <p>Use the content of gender and human rights policies and treaties signed and ratified by RMI but not yet enshrined in legislation—e.g., the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women treaty or the 2019 Gender Equality Act—as guidance to design activities in the NAP.</p> | <p>Gender equality and human rights principles need to be enshrined in legislation so that the government's ongoing efforts are long-lived. This will also indicate to state and non-state actors a committed, long-term official position on gender and human rights.</p> <p>Raising lawmakers' awareness of the links between climate change, gender, and human rights (as well as GBV and sexual and reproductive health) can accelerate the process of enshrining these key elements into law.</p> | <p>Consider each activity's "contribution to gender equality" as a standard criterion for designing and prioritising the NAP's list of adaptation measures (NAP Global Network & UNFCCC, 2019).</p> <p>Organise a workshop with the national institutions overseeing the advance of gender and human rights objectives (including the Gender/ Human Rights WG) and with CSOs to define and propose how legal principles and treaty objectives may be transformed into components of adaptation actions.</p> | <p>How will criteria for designing and prioritising adaptation actions be set?</p> <p>In what ways will the process of defining MEL priorities and indicators, and finalising the list of adaptation actions engage stakeholders—especially women, minorities, and disempowered groups?</p> |

| Recommendation | Justification | What it looks like in practice | Questions and issues to address |
|--|--|---|--|
| <p>Making adaptation actions in the NAP supportive of gender equality and human rights objectives has the added benefit of likely attracting international donor interest.</p> | <p>The financial ability to implement RMI's adaptation strategy largely hinges on sustained interest from international donors. Although problematic, this is the case for most Global South countries. Addressing priority areas of donor governments on gender equality and human rights can help ensure long-standing commitments.</p> <p>This notwithstanding, it should always be the Marshallese people and the country's government who set the country's agenda and its priorities, not international donor governments.</p> | <p>For each activity in the NAP, explicitly indicate its expected contribution to gender equality and human rights goals.</p> <p>Ensure that the Gender/Human Rights WG—and ideally women's rights organisations—have a seat at the table when sectors define their adaptation actions to be included in the NAP, providing an opportunity to shape adaptation actions around these objectives.</p> | <p>The 2050 climate strategy points to the need for “innovative financing” to achieve the strategy's goals. What national actors does the NAP team have to work with to help align the climate–gender–human rights nexus with the notion of innovative financing (i.e., so that innovative financing includes elements of gender equality and human rights)?</p> |

7.0 Conclusions

As RMI embarks on the development of its NAP, it can and should draw from the numerous existing national strategies and policies that have been developed throughout the second half of the 2010s. These mandate the implementation of climate change adaptation (and mitigation) actions that are both gender responsive and protect human rights. However, operationalising these official positions through concrete measures and sound institutional arrangements is a persistent challenge arising from limited staff capacities, rigid gender roles, and a notion of women as passive, vulnerable actors, among others.

The NAP process will benefit from whole-of-society consultations and a growing national awareness of the importance of integrating gender and human rights considerations in climate action and in wider development efforts. As such, the NAP represents an opportunity for the RMI government to move forward with adaptation actions that are inclusive of the views of all its citizens and that incorporate gender and human rights as markers of progress.

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Appendix

Overview of Key Policies, Plans, and Strategies in RMI

The overview presented below serves as a preamble to the opportunities, drivers, and barriers for integrating gender equality and human rights principles in climate change adaptation policy and practice, elaborated on in the following section of the report.

The five documents analysed are:

- *National Gender Mainstreaming Policy of the Republic of the Marshall Islands* (2015)
- *Gender Equality – Where Do We Stand?* (2018)
- *Tile Til Eo 2050 Climate Strategy “Lighting the Way”* (2018)
- *Updated Nationally Determined Contribution* (2018)
- *Gender Equality Act* (2019)

National Gender Mainstreaming Policy of the Republic of the Marshall Islands Adopted 2015

Objectives

The policy aims to:

- Strengthen capacity across government to deliver gender-responsive programs and services
 - Secure family well-being
 - Eliminate GBV and protect and care for survivors
 - Create an enabling environment for equitable participation in, and benefit from, economic development
 - Enable equitable participation of women and men in decision making.
- It defines priorities for empowering women, creating an enabling environment, aligning national plans to facilitate the implementation of international commitments in a culturally appropriate manner, engaging men in this process, and defining mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation.
- It aims to systematically collect sex-disaggregated data and conduct gender analyses to inform policy-making, build capacity of stakeholders, make government accountable for gender mainstreaming, promote inclusivity in governance, and value and make use of local knowledge.

Important components/facts

- Recognises existing prejudices against women, such as the prevailing idea that “their place is the home”
- Gives special consideration to women in the Outer Islands and prioritises “women facing greater disadvantages”

- Looks beyond gender as a differentiator, recognising the wider idea of intersectionality.
- Describes the tragic prevalence of GBV, indicating that 48% of every partnered woman reported having experienced physical violence in their lifetime and 21% having experienced at least one act of sexual violence (2013–2014 survey).

Opportunities/gaps/potential for attaining adaptation, gender equality, and human rights objectives

- The policy “acknowledges gender equality as an issue affecting all development priorities that needs to be considered and integrated into the five main sectors: Social development; environment, climate change and resilience; infrastructure development; sustainable economic development; good governance.”
- Nevertheless, the policy refers to a 2010 stocktake report that indicated that “gender issues were rarely mentioned in high-level discussions; very few sectors were using sex-disaggregated data; gender analysis was not used in the policy and program development process,” recognising there is considerable room for improvement.
- The policy points to the minuscule role that women represent with regards to seats in the legislature (1 of 33 seats) and in the Council of Iroij.

Gender Equality – Where Do We Stand?

May 2018

Objectives

- This report identifies the government’s priorities for action on gender equality: teen pregnancy, violence against women and girls, vulnerable employment conditions, unemployment, and limited access to justice and protection.

Important components/facts

- In 2011, the average annual household income for female-led households was 41% lower than for male-led ones.
- In 2017, 94% of rural women and 79% of urban women reported problems in accessing health care, regardless of age, number of children, level of education, or wealth.
- The report mentions the dire situation around GBV, similarly highlighted in the *National Gender Mainstreaming Policy*.

Opportunities/gaps/potential for attaining adaptation, gender equality, and human rights objectives

- The 2015–2016 drought compromised women’s incomes, livelihoods, and food security, and exacerbated malnutrition, notably in the Outer Islands. Extreme climate events have resulted in internally displaced people.
- Land rights are passed down from mother to daughters. However, these traditional beliefs and women’s customary rights coexist with dissonant gender stereotypes, rigid gender roles, and inequality. Most decision-making and leadership positions, in reality, tend to fall on the males of the household.

Tile Til Eo 2050 Climate Strategy “Lighting the Way”

September 2018

Objectives

- Commits “to a gender-responsive and human rights-based approach in all NDC-related planning, programming, and implementation.”
- Indicates that “social considerations—including the differentiated impacts of climate change and the response initiatives on women, men, and youth—should be systematically integrated into all climate change policy, planning, and implementation.”
- Recommends promoting bottom-up approaches and building capacity of citizens to address gender inequalities.
- Suggests conducting a legislative review on the mainstreaming of gender equality and human rights in climate-related official documents.
- Suggests looking into increasing representation of women in national and local climate change decision making.

Important components/facts

- Sees the development of a NAP as an urgent priority to accelerate gender-responsive actions and investments to boost adaptation and transition to climate resilience.
- Calls for increased research on gender dynamics and human rights, as well as for capacity strengthening of RMI actors.
- Suggests incorporating recommendations arising from the UNFCCC’s Gender Action Plan into RMI strategies, plans, and policies.

Opportunities/gaps/potential for attaining adaptation, gender equality, and human rights objectives

- Recognises that shifting national climate action efforts from mitigation to adaptation is essential.
- Most adaptation efforts in RMI have to date focused on drought. This strategy recognises the need to frame adaptation more broadly (including around coastal resilience).
- Despite indicating that “women will be a critical partner in recovery and resilience,” the strategy largely depicts women as a vulnerable group.
- Efforts to promote gender equality are often framed as “to be mainstreamed,” suggesting that deeper thinking and planning is needed on how this can realistically be accomplished.
- Points to a lack of existing reliable data.

RMI Nationally Determined Contributions

Updated November 2018

- “Commits to a gender-responsive and human rights-based approach in all NDC-related planning, programming, and implementation.”
- Reaffirms the nation's aspiration to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 at the latest.
- Commits to producing a NAP by 2019. (NAP preparation is ongoing in 2021.)

Gender Equality Act 2019

Objectives

- Gender equality is placed at the level of human rights and fundamental freedoms, under a legal framework.
- Seeks effective mainstreaming of gender equality across all policies, planning, programming and budgets at all levels and in all sectors (sect. 104-3-e), including equality in economic empowerment.
- This act is intended to fulfil RMI's obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

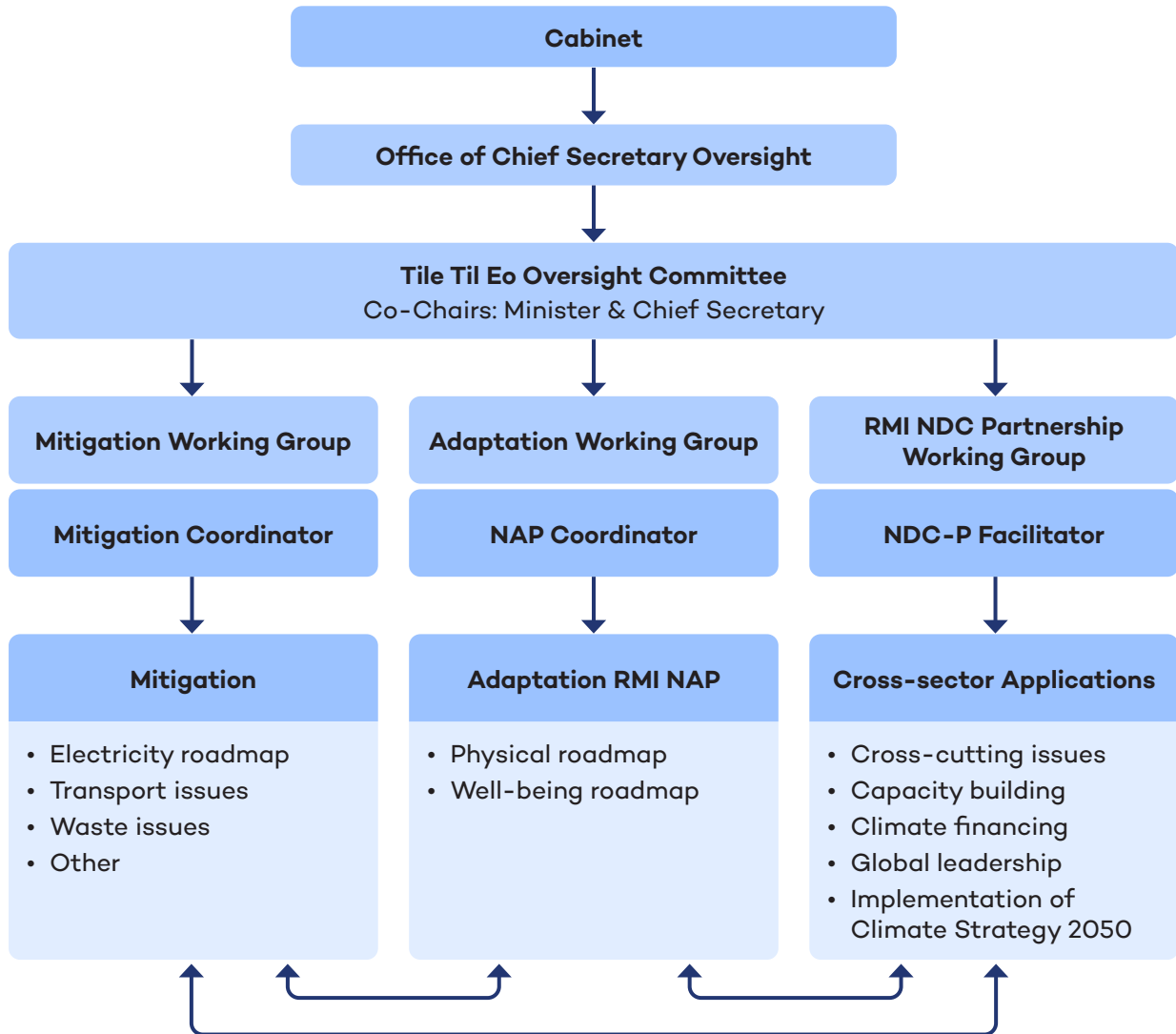
Important components/facts

- Gender discrimination is prohibited across all areas (sect. 106).
- The government commits to collecting sex-disaggregated data in all areas and identify inequalities, underrepresentation, or disadvantages faced by women (sect. 108-1).

Opportunities/gaps/potential for attaining adaptation, gender equality, and human rights objectives

- In the area of environment, climate change, and natural disasters, the bill ensures equal opportunities for women to participate, engage, design, develop, implement, and monitor activities; the inclusion of gender perspective in all policies, plans, programs; equal access to finance; and training opportunities in climate dialogues and negotiations (sect. 117).

Organogram of Climate Adaptation Governance Arrangements in RMI



Stakeholders Interviewed

| Interviewee | Job Title |
|----------------------|---|
| Angeline Heine | Director, National Energy Office |
| Teri Elbon | Foreign Services Officer for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, former gender and human rights officer for the Ministry of Culture and Internal Affairs |
| Angela Saunders | Head of International Organization for Migration Sub Regional Office, Majuro base |
| Mie Ishiguro | Youth Services Bureau Coordinator for the Ministry of Culture and Internal Affairs |
| Dolores Kattil | Director for the Marshall Islands Conservation Society |
| Kathryn Relang | Country Focal Officer, SPC, Human Rights and Social Development Division at the Ministry of Culture and Internal Affairs |
| Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner | Climate Change Envoy for the RMI and Director for non-profit Climate and Youth Organization Jo-Jikum based at the Climate Change Directorate, Ministry of Environment |
| Jane Ishiguro | NDC-P In-Country Facilitator and UNDP Deep Dive Project Manager based at the Climate Change Directorate, Ministry of Environment |
| Kilom Ishiguro | Landowner |

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