

# PALAU



## A SITUATION ANALYSIS OF CHILDREN, YOUTH & WOMEN

GOVERNMENT OF PALAU

with the assistance of UNICEF

2008



A Situation Analysis of Children, Youth and Women in Palau  
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- A national consultation to produce the first draft of the report also held in 2006;
- Youth Rally 2008 involving young people themselves in the process;
- A National Symposium on the Situation of Children, Youth, and Women (2008) that involved a broad cross-section of the community.

The overall theme for this report “Between Two Worlds” was originally proposed by Ms. Benita Decherong in her presentation before the National Symposium on Children, Youth, and Women (2008) entitled “Cultural and Spiritual Well-being of Women and Children.”

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# Acronyms and Abbreviations

<b>ADB</b>	Asian Development Bank
<b>CEDAW</b>	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
<b>COFA</b>	Compact of Free Association
<b>CNMI</b>	Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
<b>Convention</b>	Convention on the Rights of the Child
<b>CoPopChi</b>	(Palau National) Committee on Population and Children
<b>FSM</b>	Federated States of Micronesia
<b>FY</b>	Financial Year
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>GED</b>	General Education Development (diploma)
<b>GPA</b>	Grade Point Average
<b>GenNow</b>	Generation Now (healthy lifestyles campaign)
<b>HIES</b>	Household Income Expenditure Survey
<b>HPI</b>	Human Poverty Index
<b>m</b>	Million
<b>MDG</b>	Millennium Development Goals
<b>MOE</b>	Ministry of Education
<b>MOH</b>	Ministry of Health
<b>NPA</b>	National Plan of Action (for children)
<b>OPS</b>	Office of Planning and Statistics
<b>PCC</b>	Palau Community College
<b>PINZ</b>	Polytechnics International New Zealand
<b>PNC</b>	Palau National (legal) Code
<b>PNSB</b>	Palau National Scholarship Board
<b>RMI</b>	Republic of the Marshall Islands
<b>ROP</b>	Republic of Palau
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>VOCA</b>	Victims of Crime Assistance (program)
<b>YRBS</b>	Youth Risk Behavior Survey

# Executive Summary

UNICEF supports the production of situation analyses as part of its mandate to advocate for the rights and well-being of children, youth, and women. This is the second situation analysis for Palau and expands upon the first analysis produced in 1998 by the Palau National Committee on Population and Children. Unlike the first report that focused exclusively on children (persons 0-17 years of age), the 2008 report incorporates analyses on youth and women.

## A Society in Transition

Like many Pacific Island nations, Palau is in the midst of rapid social, economic, and environmental change. These changes have profound impacts on children, women, and families leading many to feel they are caught “between two worlds.” Finding a middle road that blends these two worlds represents a fundamental challenge for children coming of age in the first decades of the 21st century.

Palau is no longer an isolated enclave. Cable television beams dozens of foreign channels and two local channels into even remote households. The internet has arrived in most communities, and over ninety percent of households can access from their homes fast, reliable, and relatively cheap international telecommunications. Local and global news now travels fast, no longer dependent on the “coconut wireless.” Instant communications are a “double-edged” sword enriching lives with knowledge, bringing scattered families together but also introducing new influences that can undermine the Palauan culture and the rich oral tradition.

A generation ago, travel from rural villages to Koror represented a major journey. Travel to Guam or Saipan was a life altering event that required a major gathering of the clan to bid farewell to the wayfarer. Today, daily air flights whisk Palauans to the far corners of the globe in the space of only a few hours. Although Palauans have traveled abroad in significant numbers since World War II, it was not until independence in 1994 that they began to enjoy unrestricted access to the United States. Many take advantage of this privilege and opportunities it affords to study, work or serve in the U.S. military some for a short time and others for a lifetime. The planes that take citizens away also return them with new knowledge, skills, ideas, values, and lifestyles.

But Palauans do not need to travel to be exposed to world. Tourists flock to Palau, drawn by its rich undersea wonders. The annual ratio of tourists to Palauan residents now approaches 4:1. To fuel the economy, Palau imports workers mostly from neighboring countries the Philippines and South Asia and also from many more “exotic” destinations as well. Over one-quarter of residents are foreigners.

Exposure to the world changes the islands and the people. Palauan values of inter-dependence, cooperation, respect, and subservience of an individual to the larger familial group compete with countervailing “western” values of individualism, competition, conquest, and impersonality. Time and money have become important commodities. Nuclear families have become the norm. While the extended family and clan provide a buffer during times of trouble, in daily life many households are on their own. Adults torn between competing demands from work, custom, family, and community increasingly turn to foreign domestic helpers to manage the household and care for the children. Women who now hold paid jobs no longer have time to go to the taro patch so they import (male) foreign farm laborers. As a result of what has been coined the “busy parent-busy child” syndrome, children are no longer reared with a clear Palauan identity and no longer imbued with traditional values and life skills.

With the majority of adults both men and women working in formal jobs, household incomes have risen and living standards greatly improved. Incomes, however, have not kept pace with the cost of living and changing aspirations resulting in a growing sense of impoverishment. One quarter of households and thirty-one percent of children live below the Palau poverty line.

## Achievements in Health

While change can bring challenge, it also brings many benefits. High quality health services are available through a nationwide network of community health centers and dispensaries. All pregnant women receive at least some prenatal care and deliver in the hospital under the supervision of a nurse or physician. Virtually all infants complete their basic childhood immunization series and most children’s illnesses respond well to the ministrations of local health workers. Infant and child mortality have plummeted. In 2006 and 2007, only two children under the age of five died in each year all in the first week of life as the result of congenital defects. The health of infants and young children, however, would be improved by higher rates of breastfeeding exclusive breastfeeding during the first six months of life and breastfeeding continuing with food through the second year. Better food choices and more physically active lifestyles, starting from the toddler years, would establish healthier foundations to help combat the epidemic of non-communicable diseases that threaten hard won gains in life expectancy.

## Achievements in Education

Palauan children enjoy twelve years of free public education but also have the option of enrolling at several private church-run schools. Palau has virtually achieved universal elementary education and though the dropout rate from high school remains far too high, dropout rates appear to be declining as more children and parents recognize that education is vital in the modern world. Most high school graduates go on to post-secondary education either locally or overseas, many with partial subsidies in the form of public loans or scholarships awarded through the Palau National Scholarship Board or in the form of PELL grants from the U.S. government.

## Psycho-Social Challenges

As children enter their teenage and young adult years, they face many psycho-social challenges. Despite education, social marketing, law enforcement, and environmental interventions, use of alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana remain pervasive in the community. Aggressive behaviors - bullying among younger teens and physical aggression among older teens - adversely affect large numbers of youth. Many teens choose to disregard messages about abstinence and “safe” sex. Large numbers of teens suffer from depression or entertain ideas of suicide. Parents and other adult family members are busy and often at loss to address the concerns of today’s teens that are alien from their own experiences just a generation ago. It has fallen largely to government to create social support services to assist teens and to offer empathetic listening ears. The Ministries of Health and Education have formed an Adolescent Cooperative to pool their resources to address the psycho-social concerns of youth. The Ministry of Justice is also playing a role with initiatives that include a school busing service for students living in Babeldaob but attending Koror schools, an after-school drop-in center, a mentoring program, and a character-building program (Law Enforcement Explorers’ Program or LEEP) in the elementary schools. Several special programs (Talent Search and Upward Bound at Palau Community College and Gear-Up in the Ministry of Education) identify children and teens at educational risk and provide enrichment and social support services to help them succeed. Koror State and Airai State governments also do their part by providing a varied program of community-based youth activities. Having adopted the youth development approach, these agencies strive to empower youth to take positive actions to address issues of concern to themselves and their peers.

## Children with Special Needs

The approximately 300 children living with disabilities have access to a seamless network of health, education, and social services beginning from birth through to the age of 21. There are, however,

relatively fewer services available to assist youth with disabilities to transition to adulthood and almost no specialized services for adults with disabilities outside of a small government stipend (\$50 per month) for the totally disabled.

In a typical year, 40-45 children are referred for investigation and/or intervention to address issues of abuse and/or neglect. There is only one investigator (Office of the Attorney General) and one social worker (Ministry of Health) to manage these cases together with other cases of domestic violence and family breakdown coming before authorities. There is no “safe house” to provide temporary respite for abused or neglected children (or other victims of domestic violence) while cases are investigated. Under Palauan tradition, the maternal uncle is responsible for caring for children in times of crisis. While this system works well in most cases, it does not reach every child in need. For children who “fall through the cracks”, there are very few social services to render assistance.

Every effort is made to keep children in conflict with the law out of the court system. Many potential cases are dealt with informally by family, friends, and responding police officers. For repeated offenders or children involved in more serious transgressions (but not felonies), the Ministry of Justice has pioneered a three-step alternative sentencing program involving apology by the perpetrator, restitution, and community service.

Non-Palauan children who are dependents of foreign “guest” workers enjoy the same rights as citizen children although their families pay higher health care charges (70 percent of the actual cost of care regardless of income). Non-Palauan children adopted by Palauans enjoy the same rights and privileges as citizen children but experience special challenges upon reaching adulthood. They are not eligible for Palauan passports, cannot own or inherit land, and have limited rights to residency. There is spirited public debate about the best approach for balancing the rights of these children and their families with the constitutional right of Palau citizens to remain supreme in their own land.

## Situation of Women

Palau is a matriarchal, matrilineal society where women have always held positions of power and respect in a spirit of equality with their male counterparts. Although the roles and responsibilities of men and women differ, these are not the differences of a dominant subordinate relationship but rather a duality in which each gender depends upon the other. Traditionally strong and equal, Palauan women lost ground during the first half of the 20th century as paternalistic colonizers undermined their authority, revoked their property rights, and relegated them to subordinate positions in modern institutions. Beginning in the 1950's, Palauan women began to reassert themselves and to re-claim their former equity, respect, and prominence in decision-making while simultaneously addressing the challenges they face in life “between two worlds.”

Contemporary Palauan women are better educated and enjoy better health than their male counterparts. While less likely to participate in the formal labor force than men, when employed, women earn, on average, significantly more than men. Women are guaranteed equality of opportunity under the Palau Constitution, have equitable access to capital, and assume an active role in economic and social life. In public life, women dominate the Judiciary but are under-represented in the national congress, the cabinet, and the top echelon of the civil service. In the recently concluded general election and by the time this report went to press, two women had been elected to the Senate.

While women leaders are concerned about the invisible barriers that have thus far kept them out of top leadership positions, ordinary women are more concerned about the daily stresses they face in juggling multiple demands as wives, mothers, sisters, daughters, daughters-in-law, employees (or employers), farmers, fisherwomen, volunteers, neighbors, and friends. As women struggle to fulfill their many responsibilities, they are disproportionately affected by stagnating incomes and rising prices, the changing family structure, and the scarcity of supportive social services.

## Future Directions

The final Part of the situation analysis summarizes recommendations for addressing the needs of children, youth, and women that have emanated from the consultative process.

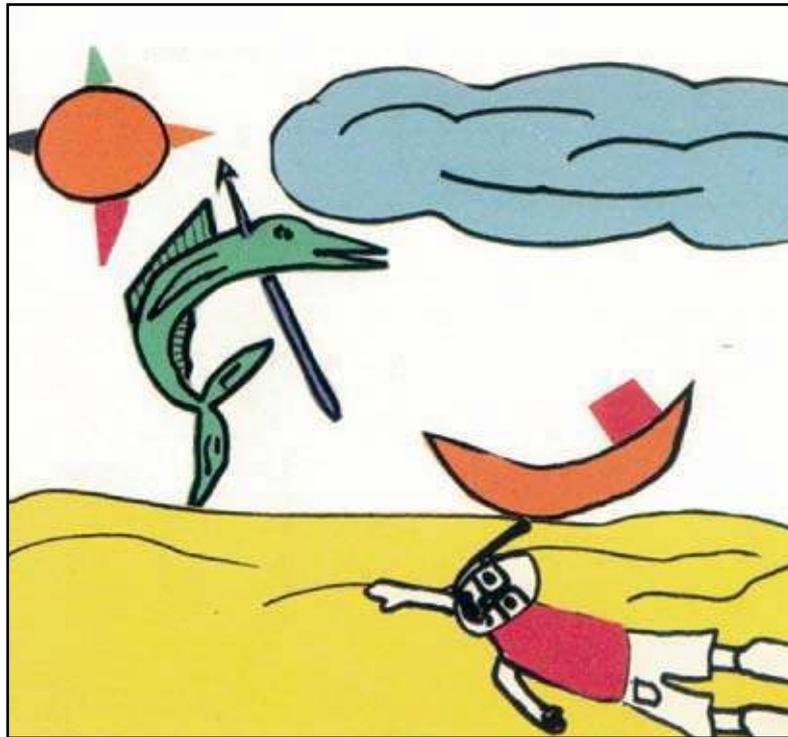
- Create a new institutional structure to monitor implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and to advocate for children, individually and collectively.
- Strengthen parent-child partnerships to address the adverse impact of “busy parent-busy child” syndrome.
- Strengthen traditional mechanisms that promote the best interests of the child together with core traditional values of *omengull* (respect), *omelengmes* (consideration), and *omelangesmad* (sensitivity).
- Push forward with law reforms to better protect children and to revoke laws discriminatory against women.
- Research the sensitive and controversial topic of customary adoption by gathering factual information to help determine the extent to which this practice promotes the best interests of children.
- Improve child health by improving the health of mothers, extending breastfeeding, improving diets, increasing physical activity, and eliminating tobacco use, underaged drinking, and other substance abuse.
- Enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of Palau's education system; achieve universal high school graduation; and better prepare students for the world of work.
- Sustain the alternative sentencing system pioneered by the Ministry of Justice and support the Judiciary by appointing an ombudsman to provide impartial advice regarding the best interests of children.
- Strengthen the youth development approach and respond to specific requests from youth (for peer counseling, crisis hotline, prevention and remediation of bullying, and better information about available services and resources).
- Assist mothers in the workplace with mandatory maternity leave, protection from discrimination due to pregnancy, and flexible work scheduling.
- Strengthen support services, especially child care for working families.
- Ratify the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women.



Women as well as children and youth live between two worlds of the US dollar on the one hand and *uloud er Belau* (ceramic bead money) and *toluk* (turtle shell money) on the other. (Photo by Senator Caleb Otto)

# PART 1

## INTRODUCTION



## 1.1. The Situation Analysis

As part of the country programming process, UNICEF assists governments to analyze the situation of children, youth, and women. The ensuing reports shape national programs of action for children, UNICEF's own programs of assistance, and the work of domestic organizations and external development partners. The first Situation Analysis of Palau's Children was produced in 1998 by the Palau National Committee on Population and Children (CoPopChi). This 2008 report is produced by UNICEF in consultation with a national working group and participants at two national consultations held in March 2008:

- Youth Rally involving young people aged 13-21 and youth service providers; and
- National Symposium on children, women, and families involving a cross section of the Palau community – children and youth, parents, service providers, traditional leaders, elected officials, and elders.

Unlike the first report that focused exclusively on children (persons 0-17 years of age), the 2008 report incorporates analyses on youth and women.

## 1.2. Palau in the Global Community

Upon independence (October 1, 1994), the first international treaty ratified by the Government of Palau was the Convention on the Rights of the Child (hereinafter referred to as “the Convention”). Subsequently, Palau has taken an active role in regional and global forums on children and social development. Palau has endorsed the Beijing Declaration, the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), and World Fit for Children goals at the highest policy levels and uses these documents to guide national development (see Annex A for progress against World Fit for Children goals). While some of these international goals are challenging, others have already been achieved so that Palau is now able to turn attention to more ambitious targets.

It is, however, the Convention, with its holistic focus on progressive improvement of survival, development, protection, and participation rights that has proven the most useful “road map” for Palau's child advocates. While the concept of “rights” for children when first introduced in the 1990's was somewhat contentious, over time most Palauans have come to accept it. The Palauan term used to convey “rights” is actually a phrase “*ulekerreuil 'a llemtel 'era klechad er ngalek,*” (literal translation “nurturing of the rights of humanity in the child”).

## 1.3. A Decade of Progress

Following ratification of the Convention on August 1, 1995, the President designated CoPopChi as the body responsible for preparing Palau's initial report on the status of children. CoPopChi was a multi-sector body comprised of government, non-government, and community representatives with a dual mandate to draft a national population policy and to advocate for children. Under its mandate for children, CoPopChi produced two reports. The first, “*Ulekerreuil 'a llemtel a Klechad 'era Ngalek:* The International Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Children of Palau,” fulfilled Palau's obligation under the Convention to report to the International Committee on the Rights of the Child (see Annex B for a summary of the Committee's response). The second report, “A Situation Analysis of Children,” was produced in cooperation with UNICEF and designed for a domestic audience.

As part of the Situation Analysis, CoPopChi also produced a National Program of Action for Children. In the 1998 report, CoPopChi concluded that the overall situation of children in Palau was good. CoPopChi noted:

- Palau's cultural traditions give high priority to children and echo the principles that underlie the Convention;
- Health and education services of good quality are universally accessible;
- The standard of living is good and progressively improving;
- Many opportunities exist for children to participate in community life.

CoPopChi did, however, identify several issues requiring further attention including: law reform; adoption; nutrition; health promotion; school dropouts; and cultural continuity. These issues and the further development of CoPopChi to serve as the focal point for child and family advocacy were addressed in the National Plan of Action (NPA) for Children.

Over the past decade, there has been significant progress in implementing the NPA in the areas of health, nutrition, and education. This reflects the dedication of hundreds of health and education professionals led by the respective ministries, and supported by community based organizations and civil society. There has been less progress in achieving recommended legal reforms while ongoing social change continues to undermine traditional values and institutions beneficial to children. The issue of adoption and the special situation of non-Palauan children, especially those adopted by Palauans, has become more complex. Instead of becoming stronger, CoPopChi has disintegrated and a replacement body has not yet emerged to continue the work of monitoring and advocating for children.

## 1.4. A Decade of Challenge

A typical Palauan child born at the dawn of the new millennium is now eight years old and a student in the third grade of a local elementary school. The quality of education is good by standards of many developing nations but falls short of the expectations of many parents who want Palau schools to achieve standards equivalent to U.S. schools. Our typical child is probably more interested in the social opportunities afforded by school than by the educational opportunities and probably does not show the same level of deference to and respect for the teacher as did children of past generations. Our child's parents are probably quite happy to leave the job of motivating the child to study to the teacher. Our child enjoys good health but prefers store-bought imported foods over local produce and soft drinks over coconuts, preferences that fit the family budget since many imported foods are cheaper than local equivalents in the marketplace. These food preferences and the cultural propensity for preparing food in excessive quantities, combined with too many hours in front of the television or playing video games are taking a toll on our child's health. Even while still in elementary school, our typical child is at risk of becoming overweight and experiencing elevated blood pressure.

Our child lives in a Western-style house with indoor plumbing, running water, electricity, and at least a few labor-saving appliances. The household is probably comprised of three generations but the adults all work during the week and are occupied by “custom” during the weekend leaving our child to his or her own devices for extended periods of time. Fishing, hunting, gardening, and similar activities that in the past were weekly, if not daily events, with participation expected as part of the child's overall responsibilities, are now reserved for special occasions their memories carefully preserved and warmly treasured. Especially if living in Koror, many of the household maintenance tasks, including those formerly reserved for children, may be performed by a foreign domestic helper. Although the extended family is still the first line of defense in times of crisis, on a day-to-day basis, the household is largely independent. Family members are scattered, not only across Palau but across the Pacific Region and the U.S. mainland. Our child knows some, but certainly not all of his or her relatives. The child will undoubtedly have tried chewing betel nut and though not yet a habitual user of tobacco or alcohol, will probably become a habitual user before reaching adulthood.

Our child's household is probably under economic stress. While not exactly impoverished, money does not go as far as it used to, luxuries are fewer, and a big chunk of the biweekly wage goes to pay loans from banks or private money lenders taken to underwrite contributions to “custom”. The nation is also under economic stress especially in the education sector hard hit by budget reductions over the last decade. If living in Koror, the child's family may have been looking forward to moving back to ancestral lands in Babeldaob upon completion of the Compact Road. Unfortunately, escalating fuel costs may force postponement of this plan.

While the ocean is still blue and the forests still green, there are stressors on the environment as well as the economy. It is no longer so easy to supplement the family income by reef gleaning or fishing

unless the family can afford a boat and fuel. Although the typical child is probably totally unaware of larger global issues outside of Palau, the specter of global warming looms on the horizon. This typical child born at the dawn of the new millennium can expect to live until 2066 (if a boy) and 2072 (if a girl), but long before he or she reaches middle age, Palau will be seriously affected by rising sea levels, extreme weather conditions, and emerging new diseases caused by global warming.

The Ministry of Education speaks for most Palauans with the vision “our students will be successful in the Palauan society and the world” but as Palau approaches the second decade of the new millennium, increasingly children, women, and families find themselves caught “between two worlds.”

## Framework for the Situation Analysis

### Convention on the Rights of the Child

- International treaty adopted by the United Nations in 1989.
- Ratified by all but two of the world’s nations.
- Fifty-four articles.
- Child is defined as all persons under the age of 18 years.
- Three fundamental principles:
  1. The child is a human being with inherent rights, some shared with all people while others reflect unique age-related developmental needs of children;
  2. In all matters pertaining to the child or to children, the best interests of the child must be the standard for decision making;
  3. Rights belong to all children everywhere regardless of nationality, gender, or socio-economic status;
- Five categories of rights:
  1. Basic rights - name, nationality, identity, freedom from discrimination;
  2. Survival rights - life, adequate standard of living, health care;
  3. Developmental rights - education, play and leisure, cultural activities, access to information, freedom of thought, conscience, and religion;
  4. Participation rights - to take an active role in community life, to form and express opinions, to have a say in matters affecting his or herself, to join associations and to meet with other children;
  5. Protection rights - to be safeguarded against violence, abuse, and exploitation and to be given special consideration in the justice system, the workplace, and in times of war. Children with special needs have the right to special care.

### Millennium Development Goals

- Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.
- Achieve universal primary education.
- Promote gender equality and empower women.
- Reduce child mortality.
- Improve maternal health.
- Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases.
- Ensure environmental sustainability.
- Forge a global partnership for development.

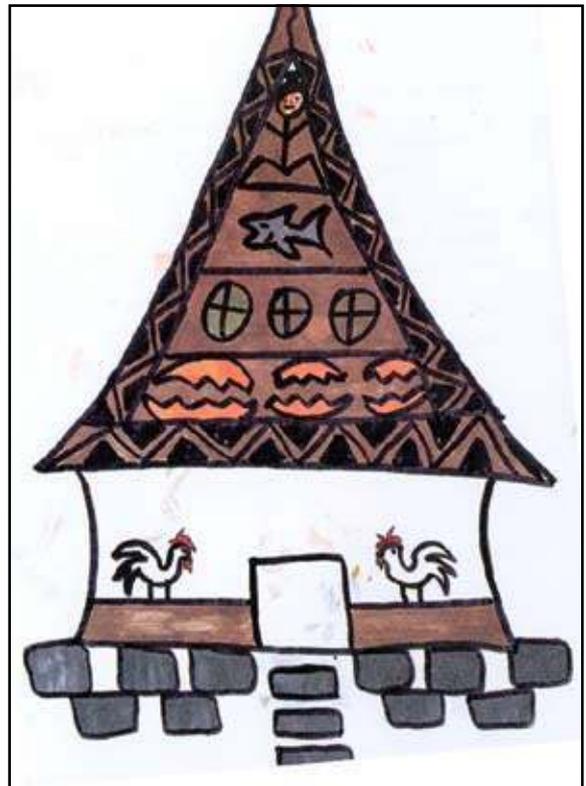


Palau leaders at ground-breaking for the access road that links Airai State to the Babeldaob Compact Road. (Photo by Senator Caleb Otto)

# PART 2

## DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

*“BETWEEN TWO WORLDS”*



## 2.1. Country Overview

### Introduction

The Republic of Palau comprises the western-most group of the Caroline Islands in Micronesia, lying almost equidistant from the Philippines to the west, Papua New Guinea to the south, and Guam to the northeast (see Map below). Comprised of over 340 islands, Palau has a total land mass of 188 square miles and a maritime Exclusive Economic Zone of 237,830 square miles.

The population in 2005 was 19,907 persons, of whom 14,685 (74 percent) were ethnic Palauans<sup>1</sup> and 5,272 (26 percent) were non-Palauans (Census 2005). Most non-Palauan residents (81 percent) were “guest workers” from the Philippines and other Asian countries.

There are two indigenous languages spoken in Palau: Palauan, spoken on the main islands, and Sonso-rolse-Tobian, spoken in the Southwest Islands. English is spoken by many people with both English and Palauan being the official languages of government.

The Christian religion was introduced by Spanish missionaries in the early years of European contact. Today 99 percent of residents are affiliated with an organized religion, including: the Catholic Church (49 percent); the Protestant Church (23 percent); the Modekngel religion (9 percent); the Seventh Day Adventist Church (5 percent); and several smaller denominations.

### Map of Palau



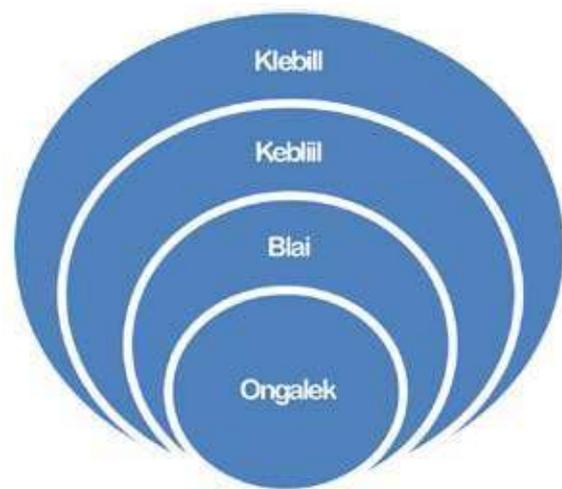
### Social Structure

According to tradition, Palau was a closed, complete universe that ended just beyond the horizon. Legends state that gods from the sea brought knowledge of the Palauan universe and of agriculture, family life, politics, and childbirth. Knowledge of the “proper” ways of doing things were gifts from the gods, guarded by the elders and carefully passed to younger generations. Specialized knowledge (e.g. construction, navigation, medicine, and other healing arts) was only given to certain families who were meant to keep these things privately. To Palauans, culture is not a borrowed set of practices but a distinctly Palauan way of life (Ministry of Education, 1994).

<sup>1</sup> This number includes persons from the Southwest Islanders classified in recent census tables as “Carolineans”.

Traditionally, and continuing in large measure today, kinship comprises the core of social relations in Palau (Force & Force, 1972). Social status and expectations are based in large measure on clan affiliation, age, and gender. A complex system of adoption provides one mechanism by which an individual can advance in social rank beyond his/her birth position. An alternate mechanism open to a woman is hard work in service to her husband’s family by which she earns money for her clan and thereby enhances her own prestige and that of her children. Other traditional mechanisms for social advancement have been described by the Palau Society of Historians (Hereditry, Status, and Strength, 1998). While many of these mechanisms are still practiced, formal education, hard work, and exemplary service to family and community are now the main strategies for social advancement.

The basic unit of Palauan social structure is the “ongalek” (an ancestral group comprised of a mother and her children). Several of these basic units descending from a specific woman form a family and several families form a clan. An individual is thus born into four concentric social organizations: the *ongalek* (ancestral kin group); *blai* or *telungalek* (family); *keblil* (clan), and *kebill* (federation of related clans from around the country).



Palauan social and family life is governed by a complex system of mutual aid, obligations, and customary exchanges between family and clan members and between clans affiliated through marriage. The most important customs surround important passages in life pregnancy and childbirth, marriage, taking of a title, death, and allocation of inheritance. These customs are accompanied by exchanges of food and money that represent the outward manifestations of respect and mutual obligations that bind individuals, families, clans, and villages together. Although some traditional practices have been abandoned and new practices have been added, these exchanges collectively referred to as “*siukang*” (a Japanese word loosely translated as “custom”) remain a dominant (some would argue *THE* dominant) force in Palauan social and economic life. Hard work allows an individual to contribute generously to customary exchanges thereby advancing his or her social status. Customary exchanges are one mechanism for acquiring wealth since, over time, what is given is returned to the giver in multiples of the original contribution. Although both men and women are expected to work hard and participate in “custom”, it is women who bear a larger share of the responsibility as it is through the woman that wealth enters the clan.

Inter-dependence, cooperation, respect, and subservience of the individual to the larger familial group are among the most highly esteemed Palauan values. These and other core values are described in Annex C together with their countervailing contemporary (“Western”) values. Modern Palauan society is characterized by continuing tension between these sometimes contradictory sets of values, with the greatest tensions resulting from privatization of land, consumerism, individualism, and the intrusion of “clock time” and “dollar value” into daily life. The result is a strong sense of stress, especially among women who bear triple burdens as bread winners, homemakers, and repositories of cultural tradition and as a result feel most acutely the pull of life “between two worlds.”

## History

The first recorded contact between Palauans and Europeans occurred in 1563 but it was another 200 years before regular interaction began. Beginning in the late 1700's, the British, French, German, Russian, Japanese, and Americans all competed for political dominance in Palau. Although establishing no permanent presence, these early visitors triggered massive social change in Palauan society as introduced diseases decimated the population and firearms intensified inter-village rivalry.

The Spanish were the first to establish a formal political presence in Palau; their short stay (1891-1899) introduced the Catholic religion. Following the Spanish-American War, Spanish Palau became German Palau. Germany established a colonial government, built an economy based on copra production and bauxite mining, and imposed "reforms" on traditional society. German administrators burned village club-houses, outlawed warfare, discouraged tattooing, and limited the authority of chiefs. By creating an economy based on Western money rather than the traditional currencies of "*udond er Belau*" (ceramic bead money) and "*toluk*" (turtle shell money), opportunities were created for lower ranking individuals to obtain wealth and prestige, thus indirectly beginning erosion of the traditional hierarchical systems.

In 1914, at the outbreak of the First World War, the Japanese military took possession of Palau. At the end of the war, the League of Nations gave Japan a continuing mandate to govern. The Japanese rule ushered in an era of tumultuous change as Japanese administrators set about remaking Palau in the image of Japan with the goal of permanently integrating Palau within the Greater Japanese Empire. Thousands of Japanese colonialists settled in Palau and rapid economic development ensued. To develop the human resources needed in the "new" Palau, formal schooling was introduced three years of basic instruction for all Palauan children followed by two additional years of vocational training for the most able boys.

Much of the physical legacy of the Japanese era was obliterated in the bitter fighting of World War II. Upon assuming control of Palau in 1944, the American Naval Administration was challenged to respond to the urgent needs of a people on the brink of mass starvation. Development began a new virtually from scratch. In 1947, the United Nations established the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands consisting of what are today the Republics of Palau and the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Administered by the United States, the early years of the Trusteeship were characterized by limited resources and a much slower pace of development than Palauans had been accustomed to during the Japanese era.

As the Cold War intensified in the 1960's, Palau gained strategic military value to the United States and its allies. The budget for governing the far flung Micronesian region grew at a phenomenal pace and social development rapidly accelerated. Hundreds of Micronesians were sent abroad for schooling while increasingly sophisticated health care was made available in the islands. The implicit goal was to create within Micronesia a standard of living equivalent to that of a rural American community. Social development, however, outpaced economic development and the standard of living came to exceed that which Palauans could realistically pay for from domestic resources thus setting the stage for an ongoing clash of expectations and economics that continues to this day.

Negotiations on post-Trusteeship political status started in the 1970's, and after a tumultuous and occasionally violent process, culminated at 1 P.M. on October 1, 1994, with the birth of the new nation of Palau. Subsequent relations between Palau and the United States have been governed by the Compact of Free Association (COFA). Under COFA, Palau receives financial aid and infrastructure development support over a period of fifteen years in exchange for military land use options for fifty years. The financial aid package includes a trust fund, budgetary support, access to specialized "federal" grants especially for health and education, and certain public services (e.g. postal, weather, and emergency assistance). The infrastructure package includes the "Compact Road," a fifty-three mile two-land sealed road circumnavigating Babeldaob. The first fifteen years under COFA ends on October 1, 2009. Palau and U.S. negotiators began review of COFA in March 2008. While the review is comprehensive, it is the financial

provisions that are under most intense scrutiny. Although Palau has made significant progress toward economic self-sufficiency, domestic revenues still fall short of those needed to sustain the standard of living and standard of government services people have come to expect. Palau goes to the review table hoping for an agreement to extend revenue in-flows through the second fifteen years (2009-2024) to allow more time for the domestic economy to develop.

## Government

Palau has a democratic form of government patterned after that of the United States. The Executive Branch is headed by a popularly elected President, assisted by a Vice-President and seven cabinet ministers.<sup>2</sup> The Olbiil Era Kelulau (OEK) is the legislative branch of government and has two houses. The Senate is comprised of thirteen members elected at large. The House of Delegates is comprised of sixteen members, each elected by their respective states. The Judiciary is the third branch of government comprised of the Supreme Court, the National Court, the Court of Common Pleas, and the Land Court.

Palau is divided into sixteen states each with its own constitution, governor, and legislature. Under the national constitution, states have special responsibilities for environmental protection, land use planning, health and welfare.

## Economy

Tourism and public administration are the dominant sectors in the economy supported by fisheries and agriculture and a fledgling aquaculture industry. The GDP in FY 2007 totaled \$167,029,000 (about \$8,000 per capita), but over one-quarter of this sum originated offshore from COFA revenues and other external development assistance.<sup>3</sup> The high level of dependency on external funding makes Palau vulnerable to external shocks as demonstrated by the uneven economic growth experienced since independence as the economy has weathered crises such as "9/11," the Asian economic downturn, the SARS outbreak, and now, the 2008 global financial crisis.

A National Master Plan for Development ("Palau 2020") was prepared in 1996 with a twenty-five year outlook. The overarching vision set out in the plan is to "substantially enhance the quality of life of Palauans and future generations of Palauans." There are three priority goals:

1. To increase real economic growth on a sustained basis;
2. To share the benefits of economic growth on an equitable basis;
3. To enrich and enhance confidence in the Palauan culture, raise national consciousness, and protect the natural environment.

In October 2007, Palau, assisted by the Asian Development Bank, began to review and update "Palau 2020." Although this work is still in progress, the draft projects a five-year period of economic adjustment equivalent to 25 percent of current government operating expenditures to bring government spending in line with revenues while accelerating private sector growth. Half of the projected adjustment will come from increased revenues (e.g. tax reform) and half from reduced public sector expenditure.

## Palau and the World

Palau has been an active participant in the global community since independence. Palau ratified the International Convention on the Rights of the Child in August 1995 and submitted its initial implementation report to the International Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2000 but has not yet prepared its second report (due in 2005). To date, Palau has not ratified any of the optional protocols to the Convention, not because the leadership opposes the protocols but because the topics addressed by the protocols are not pressing domestic priorities.<sup>4</sup> Although Palau is a matriarchal and matrilineal

<sup>2</sup>Under the Constitution, the Vice-President holds dual offices as Vice President and as a minister with portfolio.

<sup>3</sup>28.9% of GDP originated from off-shore sources in FY 2007 of which 6.5% was Compact revenue, 8.7% was revenue from other U.S. grants, and 13.8% was third-nation revenue (Ministry of Finance).

<sup>4</sup>Optional protocols address (1) recruitment of children into the military and (2) sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography. The protocols were approved by the Senate in April 2008 but have not yet been approved by the House of Delegates.

society in which women enjoy high social status, Palau has not yet ratified CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women). Recently (February 2008), the Senate approved a resolution to ratify CEDAW that is (at this writing) pending before the House of Delegates.

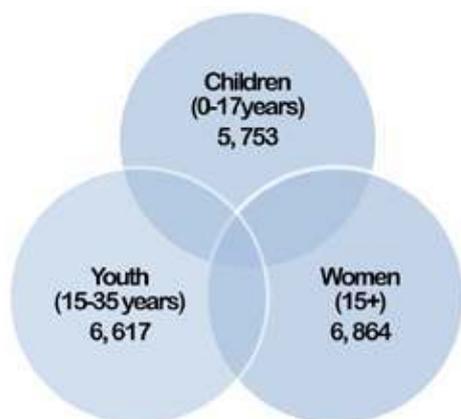
## 2.2. Changing Times

Since the 1970's, Palau has undergone many changes that contribute to a sense of life "between two worlds." Out-migration by Palauans to the United States, in-migration by Asians, the influx of tourists, and globalization of transportation and communications are transforming language, culture, values, music, fashion, and customs. Respect, the dominant Palauan cultural value, is often trampled by clans and families bickering over land, titles, and inheritances; by politicians personalizing policy differences; by developers opting for money over environment and culture; and by children whose lack of respect for teachers and parents often appal their elders.

Nuclear households now outnumber extended families by a margin of four-to-one. Both men and women have entered the formal labor force in record numbers as the traditional subsistence economy dwindles in economic importance. To meet the ensuing need for domestic labor, many households turn to foreign domestic helpers and farm workers. As parents struggle to meet myriad obligations at work, in the community, and at "customs," children often fall between the cracks. "Busy parent" syndrome results in children alienated from their Palauan roots. Customary exchanges now require cash money and store-bought food in addition to local produce forcing many households to go into debt to meet their obligations. While household incomes have risen over the years in nominal terms, so too have expenses. Instead of a sense of economic well-being, there is a growing sense of hardship as families struggle to make ends meet, especially in the face of skyrocketing oil prices that fuel unprecedented inflation. During the first six months of 2008, the price of staple foods increased by 24 percent, the price of gasoline by 32 percent (Ministry of Agriculture) and the price of electricity by as much as 57 percent (Palau Public Utilities Corporation).

With the end of the initial fifteen years of the Compact looming, Palauans face the future with growing unease - will the financial provisions of the Compact be renewed on favorable terms or will Palau face a period of adjustment and hardship perhaps even severe hardship as it is forced to move quickly to bring public expenditures in alignment with domestic revenues?

## Demography



In 2005, Palau's population included 5,753 children aged 0-17,<sup>5</sup> 6,617 youth aged 15-34,<sup>6</sup> and 6,864 women aged 15 years and older (Census 2005).

<sup>5</sup> The Census contains only one table showing population by single year ages for the country as a whole and for each of the states. All other tables report data in five year aggregates. Hence, it is possible to get an undifferentiated count of "children," as defined by the Convention, but not possible to use census data to describe this group without also considering persons aged 18 and 19 years of age.

<sup>6</sup> Ages 15-34 is the official definition of "youth" based on the Palau National Youth Policy.

During the 1980's, Palau's overall population growth was low (under 0.9 percent) because of declining fertility and out-migration by youth. In the 1990's, population growth accelerated to over 2 percent as a result of foreign in-migration. Growth rates once more declined during the first decade of the new century and are projected to stabilize at around 1 percent as the demand for foreign labor stabilizes and fertility continues to drop. Overall, Palau's population is characterized by: (a) low and declining fertility; (b) stable or slightly increasing mortality; (c) changing migration patterns by Palauans; (d) changing migration patterns by foreign "guest workers;" and (e) changing domestic distribution patterns.

**Fertility.** In 2005, the average ethnic Palauan woman aged 45-49 had given birth to three children (Census 2005). This completed fertility rate has dropped dramatically from 1973 (8 births) and 1990 (4.5 births).<sup>7</sup> As is true in many other countries, fertility is inversely associated with education and labor force participation by women. More highly educated women and women in the labor force have fewer children than their less educated, non-working counterparts.

- Women with only elementary schooling have an average of 3.8 children; women with a high school education have an average of 2.7 children; while women with a college education have an average of 2.5 children (Census 2005);
- Women in the labor force have an average of 2.7 children; women not in the labor force have an average of 3.3 children (Census 2005).<sup>8</sup>

Considering the long-term trend toward progressively higher levels of education, higher labor force participation, and a more difficult economic climate, it has been predicted that completed fertility will decline to around 2 children per woman by 2015 and stabilize thereafter<sup>9</sup> (CoPopChi, 1997).

**Mortality.** Although economically developing, Palau's mortality profile more closely resembles that of industrialized countries than its developing neighbors in the Asia-Pacific region. On average, 50% of deaths occur among persons aged 65 and older and another 26% occur in the 45-64 age range. These deaths are primarily the result of cancer and cardiovascular diseases. Accidents are the leading cause of deaths among persons aged 1-44 while congenital conditions are the leading cause of death during the first year of life. In recent years, all infant deaths (children under the age of 12 months) have occurred in the first month of life, the result of congenital conditions.

While mortality rates have declined among children and youth, mortality in the 45-64 age group has increased while life expectancy has declined. This is the result of a widening epidemic of non-communicable diseases rooted in changing lifestyles. While Palauan women continue to outlive men by nearly six years (Census 2005), women's life expectancy has dropped by nearly five years since 1995 while men's life expectancy has dropped by less than one year over the same period (Table 1, opposite page). This underscores changing mortality patterns among women at increasing risk from the non-communicable diseases that formerly targeted men.

**Palauan Migration.** Out-migration to the United States that began as a trickle in the 1950's gradually accelerated over the years until becoming a flood in 1994-1995 on the heels of the COFA with its reciprocal entry and work provisions. Today, Palauans can be found in virtually every state of the United States and scattered around the globe as well. The Micronesian Seminar estimated there were 7,000 Palauans abroad in 1995, about one-third of the total population. Subsequently migration slowed but anecdotal evidence suggests may be on the upswing again as the economic climate in Palau becomes increasingly difficult.

<sup>7</sup> Fertility rates cited here are slightly lower than those cited in other publications (OPS, 2006, 44-49) because these figures consider only births to ethnic Palauan women. This introduces a slight error in calculation of Palauan births because births to non-Palauan women married to Palauan men are excluded even though their children are Palauan.

<sup>8</sup> Breakdown of fertility by education and labor force status is for all resident women. Census tables do not support disaggregation of these data by ethnicity or citizenship.

<sup>9</sup> This rate is somewhat higher than that predicted by the Office of Planning and Statistics (Census Monograph 2005, 131) because it considers only the fertility history of Palauan women. OPS projected fertility refers to all women; resident non-Palauan women have lower fertility rates than do resident Palauan women.

	Men	Women
Year 1990	63.44	74.98
Year 1995	67.03	76.90
Year 2000	66.64	74.10
Year 2005	66.27	72.10

Source: Office of Planning and Statistics, Census Monograph 2005, p. 56.

**Foreign In-Migration.** The non-Palauan population has fluctuated over the years. Before World War II, Japanese colonialists outnumbered Palauans but those who survived the war were forcibly repatriated afterwards. During most of the American administration, the non-Palauan population consisted of a small number of American professionals medical workers, educators, and government administrators. In 1973, there were only 566 non-TTPI citizens resident in Palau (comprising 4 percent of the population). As economic and social development accelerated in the 1980's, the number of non-Palauans residents increased as service workers and unskilled laborers from Asia<sup>10</sup> were imported to fill the labor shortage caused by Palauan out-migration.

Today, the majority of non-Palauan residents are workers (81 percent, 2005 census) or dependents of workers (6 percent, 2005 census). While most are concentrated in Koror, as the rural economy expands, the number outside of Koror has also increased. By 2005, nine of the sixteen states had non-Palauan populations in excess of ten percent of total residents: Airai (41 percent); Ngaraard (34 per cent); Koror (27 percent); Aimeliik (20 percent); Melekeok (18 percent); Ngatpang (17 percent); Ngchesar (15 percent); Ngarchelong (11 percent), and Ngardmau (11 percent).

Although non-Palauan labor has built the infrastructure that everyone now enjoys and boosted economic productivity, with one-in-four residents non-Palauan, it is widely acknowledged that along with the benefits have come some negative economic, social, and cultural impacts. The labor force has become stratified. Palauans dominate the public sector and managerial jobs in the private sector while non-Palauans provide the unskilled and technical labor that runs the private economy. For many young Palauans, certain jobs, especially entry level and manual labor positions, have become unpalatable. Agriculture, formerly the domain of Palauan women, is increasingly dominated by male "guest workers." Children, whose upbringing used to be a family and even village affair, are now cared for by Asian domestic workers<sup>11</sup> resulting in growing distance between the generations that impedes transfer of core Palauan values and traditional arts. Although the crime rate in Palau is low and actually declining, the large number of non-Palauans creates an aura of insecurity as people may no longer know their neighbors.

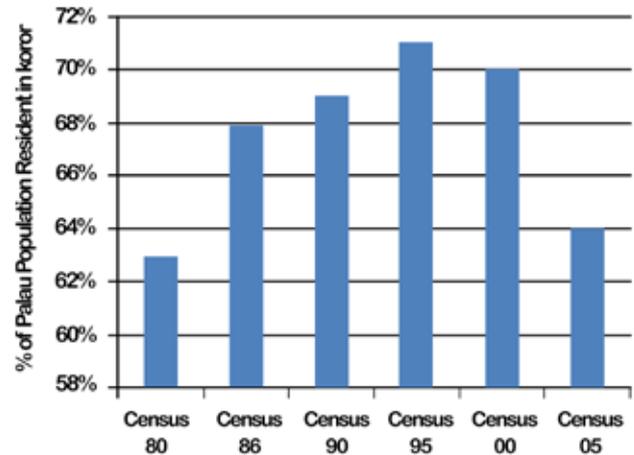
Government has taken some measures to address these issues. Labor laws now make it more difficult for "guest" workers to bring their dependents to Palau and to extend their stays indefinitely. While there have been calls to limit the number of "guest" worker visas issued and to create economic incentives to reduce the number of low-skilled domestic and farm workers (CoPopChi, 1997), it is reasonable to say that there is still no nation-wide consensus about a population policy. The Medium Term Development strategy proposes a uniform foreign worker fee and use of fees to manage the number of foreign workers but does not suggest an actual target number. This number will still need to be arrived at through the political process.

<sup>10</sup>The terms "Palauan" and "non-Palauan" can be defined on the basis of (a) citizenship; (b) ethnicity; (c) place of birth; or (d) legal residence in Palau. Unless otherwise stated, in this report the terms are based on ethnic origin with "Palauan" defined as having at least one parent who is full or part-Palauan.

<sup>11</sup>The 2005 census enumerated 803 Asian household service workers; most of these are domestic helpers whose jobs include primary care-giving for children.

**Internal Migration.** Historically the movement of population within Palau was from rural areas to Koror. This movement peaked in the mid-1990's. Subsequently, while the total number of persons resident in Koror continues to increase, Koror's share of the population has declined (Figure 1). This trend will probably accelerate following opening of the new Capitol complex in Melekeok (2006) and completion of the Compact Road (2007). Internal population dynamics have significant implications for the social services. The Ministry of Health has responded to population movement with a revitalized community health program while the Ministry of Education contemplates consolidation of Babeldaob schools to enhance efficiency.

**Figure 1. Koror's Share of Population  
Census Reports 1980-2005**



## Home and Family

**Household Composition.** Traditionally the extended family was the norm in Palau. Families were large and grew larger as sons brought their wives and later their children into the paternal household until they were sufficiently well established economically and socially to build their own houses. Today, extended families, while still common, no longer constitute the dominant residential pattern. Only one-in-five Palauan headed household has a relative outside the nuclear family in residence (2005 census). Household size has also dropped. The average Palauan-headed household in 1990 had five members, but by 2005 the average was down to 3.9 a decline of 22 percent. The number of children per household has also dropped dramatically from 3.6 in 1970 to 1.1 in 2005. One-quarter of households are headed by women without a husband present, (20 percent in 1990; 25 percent in 1995; and 26 percent in 2005, census data).

Census data reveal some other important and potentially disturbing statistics about children. Just over half (54 percent) of Palauan children live with both parents. An additional seven percent live with one parent while 39 percent live with relatives other than parents. This pattern of children living with relatives other than their parents is a characteristic of traditional Palauan society in which the extended family has been described as a "house with many rooms" (Force & Force, 1972).

In contemporary society, children live with relatives other than their parents for many different reasons. Some live with relatives in town for schooling while their parents stay in the village; others stay in the village while their parents work in town or overseas. Sometimes elderly relatives need someone younger to help out. In some cases these residential patterns are formalized as customary adoptions recognized by clan and community. In most cases, these are more informal arrangements. Although these are customary practices, it is clear from discussions with young people as well as adults that the practice has increasingly become a source of conflict in part because of new ways of thinking about relationships, obligations, and individual prerogatives and in part because in a cash economy "extra" children may pose an economic burden instead of an economic asset. Children who live with relatives other than parents frequently report they do not feel they are truly part of their residential family. Teachers frequently identify these children as under-achievers or troublemakers. Recently, in a petition to government, teachers at Palau High School called for formal legal

guardianship arrangements for children not residing with their parents in order to ensure that all parties are clear about their authorities and obligations. This call is serious evidence of the “two worlds” occupied by Palauan children and families today.

**Family Relations.** The real changes in Palau family life are not easily measured by statistics but are widely recognized in the community. It is increasingly difficult to support a household by subsistence production or even with one regular wage. Both mothers and fathers feel they are economically forced to work and since “custom” occupies the weekends of most adults, children may not receive the attention they need and want. In the past, if parents were absent, whether temporarily or permanently, or otherwise unable to fulfill their responsibilities, the role of surrogate parent fell to other adults in the extended family. Traditionally, this role was most often filled by a maternal uncle or the head of the maternal clan but today, these elders are also working, live apart in their own nuclear household, and may not have a personal relationship with the children of their relatives. “Community parenting” or the tradition by which any member of the community has not just the right but the obligation to provide guidance, supervision, and discipline for children has largely faded away. Today, only close family members are recognized as having the right to intercede with children and even their authority may be questioned by both children and parents.

With many families employing foreign domestic helpers, child rearing and nurturing tasks may be delegated a practice that can undermine transfer of culture, values, and language. Because discipline is seldom delegated, children raised by domestic helper may not learn limits and may see themselves as the “boss” of the adult. This creates huge problems when the child goes to school and tries to “boss” the teacher. Household tasks that were formerly the domain of children have been assumed by domestic helpers. Children no longer have a clear role in the home; this undermines their sense of responsibility, esteem, and self-confidence. It also gives children a lot of free time, time that without guidance and supervision from caring adults can lead to trouble.

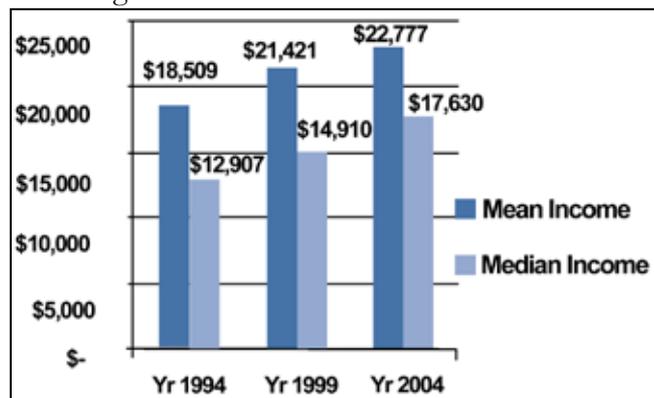
“Students treat teachers just like domestic helpers. To students, teachers are nothing more than servants.”  
*A disillusioned high school teacher*

As households become more nuclear, people rely more on themselves and less on their relatives. This creates social distance between family members who in the past moved between households in a continuous flow of mutual dependence and support. Sedentary recreational activities, television, computers, and video games have become pervasive. These pastimes erode language and culture while contributing to physical inactivity and overweight. Television has replaced story-telling as a dominant form of entertainment for the family, thus endangering Palau’s oral tradition.

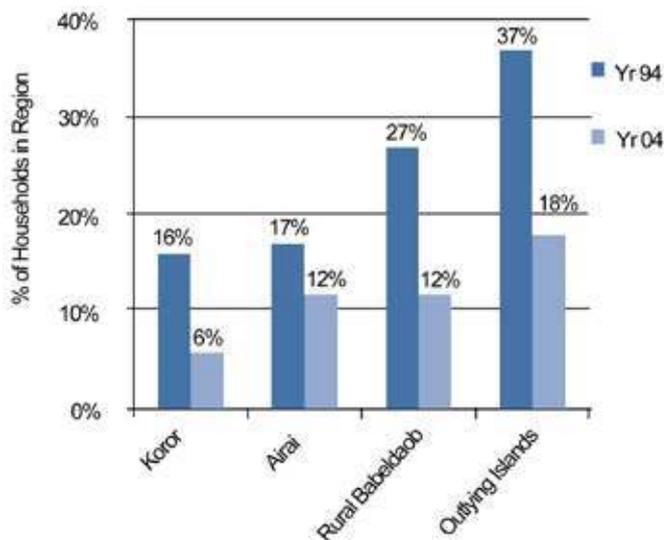
**Household Economics.** There are two sources of data about household economics. The census provides trend data but assesses poverty only in terms of the U.S. poverty line, not a Palau-specific poverty line. Household Income and Expenditure Surveys (HIES) conducted in 1994, 1997, and 2006 provide Palau-specific information but only the 2005 HIES survey has been analyzed from a poverty perspective.

Census data (Figures 2 and 3) suggest that the economic status of Palau households has improved. Household incomes rose steadily between 1994 and 2004. The proportion of low income households (earning less than \$5,000 per year) declined as did inequity between rural and urban areas.

**Figure 2.** Household Income Legal Palau Residents - Census Data



**Figure 3.** Percent of Households Earning < \$5,000 per Year Households Headed by Legal Palau Residents-Census Reports



Rising incomes have bought more modern, healthful, and comfortable housing. Today, ninety-eight percent of households have piped water, a flush toilet, and electricity (2005 census). Virtually all new homes are “modern”, use modern building materials, modern designs, and have indoor toilets, showers, and kitchens. Most homes have at least some labor-saving conveniences and a vehicle (Table 2, opposite page).

	Year	
	1990	2005
Median # of rooms	4.3	5.0
Housing unit less than 10 years old	42.3%	27.0%
Complete plumbing	49.0%	57.1%
Piped water	87.9%	97.8%
Flush toilet	46.3%	99.4%
Complete kitchen	64.9%	89.3%
Electric power *	87.5%	98.9%
Television *	63.7%	86.6%
Cell phone	N/Av	45.4%
Microwave *	0.6%	34.7%
Computer *	N/Av	18.5%
Average # vehicles	0.7	1.2

Source: Census data.

Note: Data on owner occupied housing are used here as a proxy for Palauan-headed households since few foreigners own their own homes in Palau. An \* indicates data reported only for all occupied housing units.

Despite these positive indicators, there is a general perception that times are hard. Analysis of the 2006 HIES finds one-in-five households and one-in-four individuals live below the basic needs poverty line (Table 3), a level similar to other Pacific Island countries that are generally considered to have high levels of development (e.g. Tonga, Samoa, Cook Islands).

	Households	Individuals
National average	18.4%	24.9%
Urban (Koror-Airai)	19.2%	26.2%
Rural (all other)	29.8%	28.9%

Source: Abbott, 2008.

The rate of poverty varies according to place of residence, gender, and age.

- Although the Koror-Airai urban area has the largest number of poor residents, the rate of poverty is higher in rural areas than in urban areas (Table 3).
- The rate of rural poverty is 6-7 times higher in Kayangel, Angaur, and the West Coast of Ba-beldaob than in Peleliu, and the East Coast of Babeldaob.
- Households headed by persons over the age of 60 are 50 percent more likely to live in poverty than households headed by younger persons.
- Households headed by women are somewhat more likely to be living in poverty than households headed by men, although the differential is relatively modest.
- Forty percent of children live in poverty.

In addition to the general perception of encroaching economic hardship, vulnerability is also high. Home produced food accounts for only 13 percent of household food consumption thus underscoring a significant degree of food insecurity (Abbott, 2008). Many households have high levels of indebtedness and low levels of personal savings. A long-standing pattern of chronic deficit spending is bridged by formal loans from banks and commercial lenders and by private transfers. This suggests that many (maybe most) households have low

resilience to external economic shocks. Most analysts predict an impending period of economic fiscal adjustment triggered by declining transfer payments from the United States during the second phase of COFA. This may result in a smaller government work force with civil servants civil servants being forced into the private sector. The private sector now depends on imported labor and given a general perception that “guest” workers are more productive and cheaper than Palauans, the prospect for transitioning large numbers of redundant civil servants to the private sector are marginal unless labor policies ensure preferential treatment for citizens.

### **“Changing Times” - Prevailing Public Perception on Economic Well-being**

The \$2.87 minimum wage for government employees is just too low for anyone to support a family, especially when the price of basic commodities continues to rise. Workers have been priced out of the market because salaries have remained the same for years while the cost of living has risen drastically... A young couple both work for the government. They rush home each day after work to the farm, get up at dawn the next morning to prepare their produce to sell in the stores or market before they dash to work again. This is necessary to supplement their government income so they can support their family of four or five. By contrast, a similar size family of 20 years ago was considered well-to-do if one parent worked for the government. Times have changed... (Island Times, Friday, June 1, 2007).

While landlessness is not currently an issue, it could become an issue within the decade as people now living on leased or customary land are forced off their land to make way for economic development. At present, there are no government agencies mandated to assist displaced families with resettlement nor legislation requiring developers to provide compensation for the value of unmovable fixed assets.

Over the long-term, climate change and accompanying sea level rise constitute the greatest sources of vulnerability in Palau. Over this century, climate change experts predict that Palau will begin to experience environmental nomadism as some outlying islands and portions of the main islands become uninhabitable due to sea level rise (Office of Environmental Response and Coordination, 2002). It is also anticipated that climate change will render both the land and sea less productive and death of corals could imperil the tourism industry. Climate change over the century has the potential to significantly increase poverty while reducing the resiliency that comes from being able to fall back onto the natural environment for livelihood if other options are closed. In anticipation of climate change, a program of adaptation has been proposed by government (OERC, 2002, 76-82) but implementation will undoubtedly prove challenging since it is hard for most people to conceive of the massive changes that this century may bring.

### **Macro-Economy**

**Overview.** The Palauan economy has grown steadily since independence, (Figure 4) and on a per capita basis, Palau is one of the wealthier Pacific nations. Nevertheless, despite a decade of reform efforts, the economy continues to be dominated by the public sector with private sector development and foreign investment falling short of expectations. As a result, economic self-sufficiency has proven to be elusive. In particular, the education, health, and social sectors – those public services that of greatest importance to children – face fiscal challenges and vulnerability.

**Education.** As a nation, Palau values education, invests heavily in education, and has developed an extensive education infrastructure. As a sector, education represents the single largest expenditure in the national budget outside of general public administration. In Financial Year (FY) 2007, sector-wide expenditures totaled \$19.1m, 91 percent from public funds. This was equivalent to 11 percent of GDP or about twice the global average. (The global average expenditure for education is 4.9 percent of GDP).<sup>12</sup> On a per student basis, expenditures average around \$3,000 across all levels schooling (pre-school to community college).

<sup>12</sup>Source of comparative data <http://www.nationmaster.com> (most recently available statistics).

## Poverty in Palau

Palau does not have an official definition of poverty or poverty line. Nevertheless, poverty prevention and alleviation are inter-woven through many policy documents. The Constitution contains several elements of a pro-poor policy by:

- Prohibiting alienation of land to non-Palauans;
- Prohibiting land taxes as a further safeguard against alienation;
- Providing for free public education for children of all citizens;
- Providing for free or subsidized health care for all citizens.

In 1998, CoPopChi and Palau Community Action Agency in cooperation with UNDP conducted formative research on poverty involving a series of focus group discussions to explore the social and cultural dimensions of poverty (Otto, 2000, unpublished papers). It was found that the Palauan concept of poverty (*“chelebuul”*) integrates four elements of well-being:

- Interpersonal and clan relationships;
- Perseverance or personal drive;
- Traditional social status (right to inherit a title);
- Access to land.

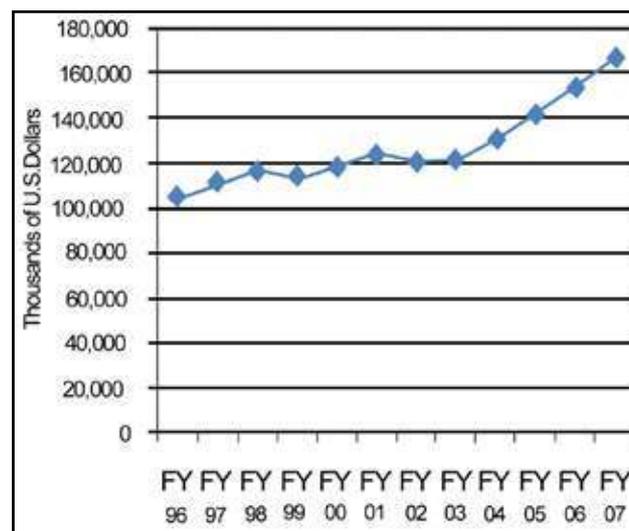
There was an overwhelming consensus among study participants that *“chelebuul”* refers not to a person’s money or material goods but to his/her interpersonal relationships within the extended family and clan. A person who suffers from poverty or *“chelebuul”* either does not have an extensive network of kin or is estranged from family and clan. In view of this concept, poverty alleviation at the individual level requires nurturing of interpersonal and inter-clan relationships and at the societal level, requires attention to cultural preservation or what academics refer to as *“building social capital.”*

Despite the focus on the social aspects of poverty, there is a recognized link between resources and social networks. Palauans try to accumulate resources (traditionally Palauan money and food and to-day the U.S. dollar) not so much for themselves but as contributions to the social network through complex webs of customary exchanges. In one analysis:

“Wealth is important and crucial to the livelihood of the Palauan people. The balance in having wealth, keeping relationship nurtured and alive, and knowing one’s roots is the essence of Palauan life and culture.... Relationships and wealth define and redefine Palauan communities and their social organizational structures. Palau’s culture revolves around acquisition, distribution, and re-distribution of wealth. Childbirth, marriage, death, transfer of knowledge and properties, relationships and many other aspects of the culture are tightened, loosened, and broken with the flow of money (specifically Palauan money), wealth, and other valuables such as land, food and *toluk* (women’s money). Transfer of money and other valuables has been and continues to be an important part of all activities...” (Palau Resources Institute, 1998).

Or, stated more succinctly by Paramount Chief Ibedul Gibbons in a recent speech, *“Traditionally, money making is in our blood”* (Economic Symposium, 2007).

**Figure 4. Gross Domestic Product**  
Ministry of Finance Data

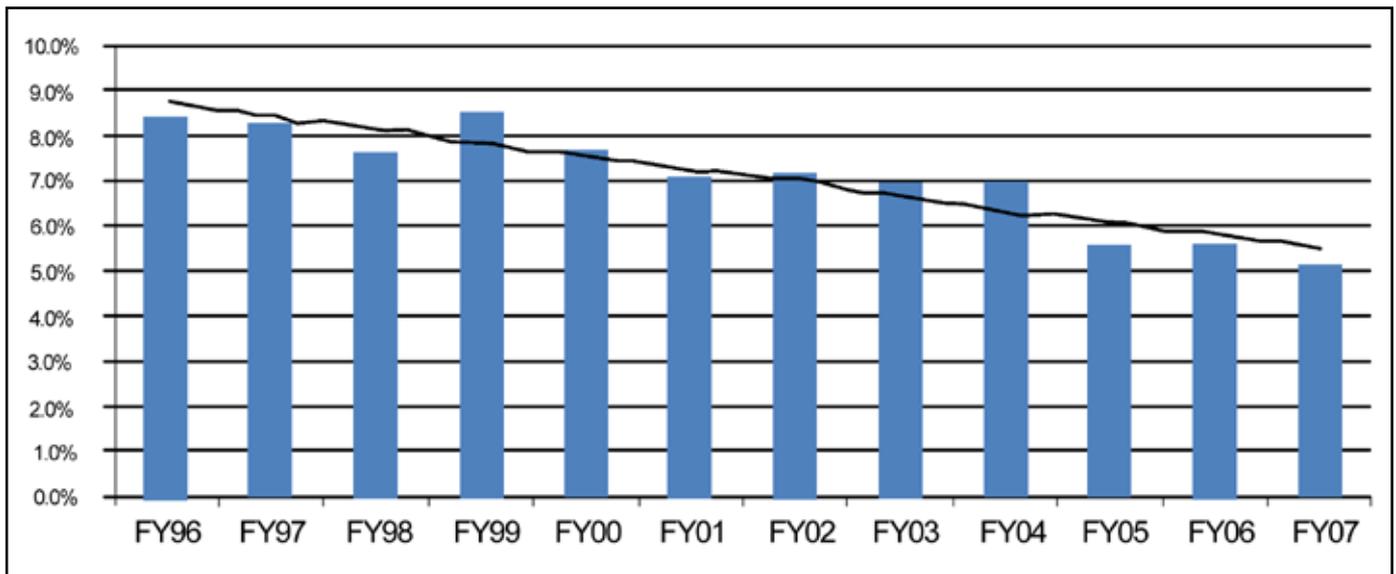


Despite the overall high level of expenditure, spending for public schools has declined in both nominal terms and in relation to GDP since independence (Figure 5, opposite page). Spending for pre-primary and tertiary education, while holding constant in nominal dollars has also declined in relation to GDP although not as precipitously as have expenditures for public schools grades 1-12 (ADB-PINZ, 2008b).

The Ministry of Education identifies an urgent need for \$1m additional spending for public schools to upgrade teacher training, certification, and remuneration, modernize facilities, expand technology, and strengthen vocational-technical instruction. A second public high school proposed to be built on Babeldaob will add \$325,000-\$375,000 to the operating budget. These new financial needs are identified at a time of increasing economic uncertainty. First under the Trust Territory and now under COFA, Palau has been eligible for U.S. Federal grants for education (Annex D). While theoretically supplemental awards, in reality these grants fund essential services including:

- Teacher training (98-99 percent of funds);
- Educational technology (98-99 percent);
- Services for children with special needs (98-99 percent);
- Vocational training (98-99 percent);
- Outreach services for at-risk children (90 percent);
- Textbooks and instructional materials (33 percent);
- Early childhood education (90 percent);
- Post-secondary education at Palau Community College (80 percent);
- Scholarships and loans for students enrolled at Palau Community College or eligible colleges in the United States.

**Figure 5. Ministry of Education Expenditures as % of GDP**  
Ministry of Finance Data



In the event that COFA negotiations result in significant reduction or termination of Federal grants for education, the pre-primary and post-secondary sub-sectors would be crippled and public schools severely undermined. It is generally recognized that many of the services funded by Federal grants should be absorbed into the regular appropriation to the sector from the Ministry of Education. There is, however, little prospect for this to happen in the short-term so it is the Ministry's hope that COFA Phase II will extend eligibility for the Federal program and that over the upcoming fifteen years, the domestic economy will grow to the point that the services can be absorbed into the regular national appropriation.

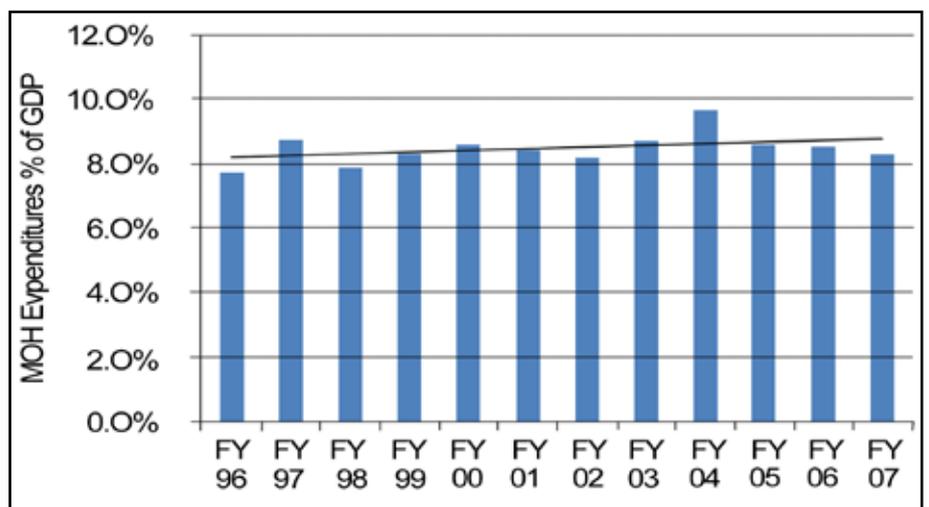
**Health.** In FY 2007, health expenditures totaled \$15.6m, 90 percent (\$14m) expended through the Ministry of Health and 10 percent (\$1.6m) expended through the private sector (comprised of two clinics and one pharmacy-optical service).<sup>13</sup> This was equivalent to \$775 per resident and 8.3 percent of GDP. Financially, the health sector has fared much better in the post-independence era than has education. Nominal expenditures by the Ministry of Health have nearly doubled increasing from \$7.6m (FY 1995) to \$13.9m (FY 2007). In nominal

terms, this represents an average annual increase of 7 percent although only a modest 0.5 percent in relation to GDP (Figure 6).

Approximately 40 percent of Ministry of Health expenditures derive from U.S. Federal grants that are concentrated in public health (Annex D). Most primary care programs of special benefit to women and children are Federally funded including: community outreach; maternal and child health; school health; family planning; HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment; and substance abuse prevention. Like education, U.S. Federal grants for health are potentially vulnerable to change as part of the COFA review process.

**Other Social Services.** Outside of the health and education sectors, Palau has a limited number of other social sector programs including those managed by the Ministry of Justice (juvenile justice prevention activities) and the Ministry of Community and Cultural Affairs (women, youth, and senior citizen programs). In FY 2007, expenditures for these other social services totaled \$490,000 in local revenues (Annex D). Unlike many other countries, the non-government and faith based sectors, while active in social advocacy, deliver very few actual services.

**Figure 6. Ministry of Health Expenditures**  
As % of GDP, Ministry of Finance Data



<sup>13</sup>Expenditure data derive from the Ministry of Finance. Ministry of Health expenditures are based on Budget Office data. Expenditures for the private sector are estimated by the Tax Office based on Gross Receipts Tax returns.



Photo by Senator Caleb Otto

# PART 3

## SITUATION OF CHILDREN



### 3.1. Children and Society

Under Palauan custom, a child holds primary membership in his/her maternal clan, which bears the primary responsibility for child rearing. Exceptions occur, however, when the mother is not Palauan or in certain customary adoptions in which primary responsibility is transferred to the paternal clan.

During infancy and early childhood, a child traditionally enjoyed warm and indulgent upbringing in which she/he was showered with love and physical attention by members of both maternal and paternal clans. The child's relationship with his/her parents while close and loving were tempered by respect and mutual obligations which Western observers sometimes misinterpreted as emotional distance. There came a time, however, that parents began to emotionally withdraw from the child to strengthen him/her in preparation for adult life.

#### Growing Up in Palauan Tradition

“There came a time when parents began to withdraw from the overt manifestations of love and affection shown to the infant and toddler and began to interact with the child from a position of more emotional detachment. There would be refusals of pleas to be held, carried, fed, cuddled, and amused. For at time, at least initially, there would be a violent struggle on the part of the child to revert to an earlier phase of greater emotional openness. Sometimes mothers would stoically “hold their ground.” More often, in the beginning, they would relent and attempt to console the child, whom they loved dearly. For whatever the means and whatever the lapses, social norms dictated that children must grow away from their parents, not cling to them. Sooner or later, the child must learn not to expect the indulgent and warm attachments of earlier years....”

*Children and Palauan Custom Working Group  
National Symposium on the Palauan Child  
November 29, 1997*

In the past, children, especially boys, had a great deal of freedom in the village, but at the same time, both boys and girls had clearly defined responsibilities in the family. Collecting firewood, grass cutting, sweeping pathways, running errands, and assisting adults with fishing, farming, and harvesting were part of the child's everyday life.

Today, child rearing is a mixture of Western and traditional practices. Some families, especially in rural communities, continue to follow traditional practices with multi-generational households and child rearing a community responsibility with lots of interaction and emotional attachment between the child and a host of family members whose roles are “parent-like”. For many children, especially those living in urban Koror and Airai, their residential family is nuclear with wide variation in the strength and frequency of interactions with the extended family. One young professional woman had this to say:

*“I prefer to live on my own because I became used to having privacy and personal space while in college in the United States. Still, every morning before work, I take my son to my mother's house as she is his primary caregiver during the work week. The Palauan extended family is still very strong, only its form has changed (paraphrase).”*

For other young families, both form and structure have changed. The extended family provides a buffer in times of serious misfortune, but on day-to-day matters, parents are responsible for their own children and the emotional bond connecting children to aunts, uncles, and cousins is weaker than in the past. In still other cases, the extended family may not provide a buffer even in times of serious misfortune. Service providers agonize over how to help children and women in crisis when their extended family turns them away. While such situations are by no means the norm, providers report they do arise far more often than in the past and far more often than most laypersons realize.

With labor saving devices and the presence in many households of domestic helpers, children today have fewer household responsibilities and a great deal more free time. For many children, sports fill much of their free time; 50-to-60 percent of high school students play on sports teams (Youth Risk Behavior Survey or YRBS, 2007). Television also

fills a lot of free time; more than a third of school children spend three or more hours per day watching television (YRBS, 2007).

#### Coming of Age

In traditional society, children were expected to put aside the carefree days of childhood at puberty. Puberty ushered in a period of stricter segregation of the sexes and heightened expectations about the contribution of children to the family, clan, and community. As childhood gave way to adulthood and young people began to demonstrate responsibility and wisdom, they were granted greater personal autonomy and a voice in decision-making. A man, however, was not considered to be fully mature until he had married and had built a house independent of his father (or father-in-law). This could not happen until he had “paid his dues” to the female members of his maternal clan for it is they who were (and in some cases are still today) primarily responsible for collecting the money to pay for his house. Typically then, a young man did not assume full maturity until his 40's. For women, motherhood and marriage represented a dividing line between adolescence and adulthood. A married woman traditionally (and today) has strictly prescribed obligations to her own clan and to her husband's clan. Although a woman's social status is closely linked with that of her husband's, her service to her husband's clan helps to advance her own status as well as her husband's.

Today, coming of age represents a mixture of traditional and Western customs. Sexes are no longer segregated, although public dating or displays of affection are still frowned upon. Dating occurs but is generally “kept in the shadows.” High school graduation, typically occurring around the 18th birthday, represents something of a demarcation between childhood and adulthood. In recent years, graduation has marked the child's entry into the labor force with a concurrent degree of economic independence. Today, most youth postpone work to pursue higher education so that high school graduation ushers in a fuzzy period of “quasi-adulthood” during which young people are economically dependent on their families but enjoy far greater personal autonomy than that permitted in traditional society. Within society however, it is still parenthood and marriage that denote sharp changes in social expectations. After marriage, men and women are expected to make regular contributions of food, money, and time to “custom” and to begin the slow progression up the social ladder.

#### Children under the Law

The evolving progression from childhood to full maturity is recognized in the Palau National Youth Policy that defines youth as persons aged 15-34 years. The law too recognizes the gradually evolving capacity of the child-youth. The law (PNC 21.105) states that an individual recognizes the age of majority on his or her 18th birthday. Eighteen is also used as the demarcation between childhood and adulthood in three other sections of the legal code:

- National Child Abuse and Neglect Act (PNC 21.6);
- Delinquent Child Act (PNC 34.6105); and
- Voting rights (PNC 23).

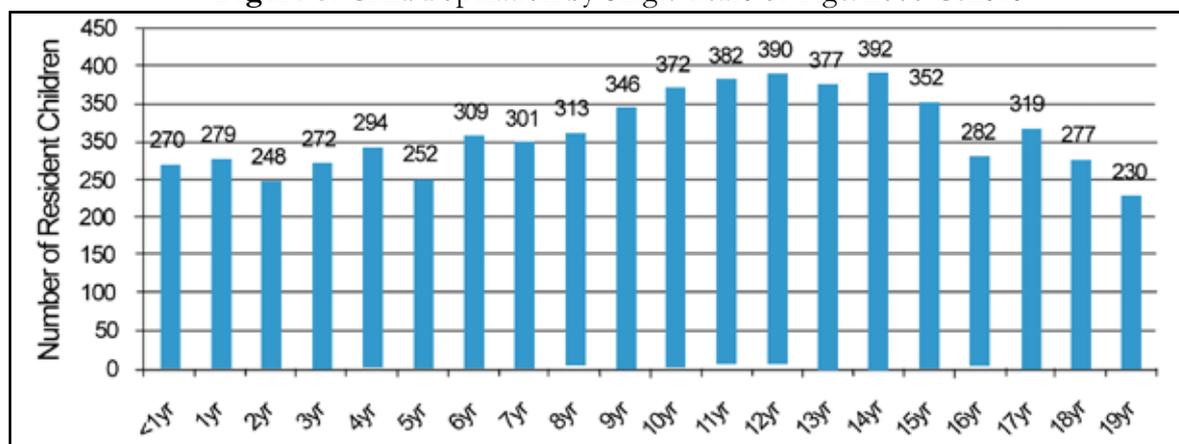
In other sections of the code, the term “minor” is used with varying definitions. Essentially the law recognizes evolving capacity beginning at about the age of 14 and extending until the age of 21. (See Annex E for a detailed inventory of the legal minimum age for different purposes).

### 3.2. Enumerating Children

**Children 0-17 Years of Age.** The 2005 census found 5,753 children (ages 0-17) resident in Palau (Figure 7, next page). This represents 29 percent of the total population a much lower proportion than in many other Pacific Island nations. Most of these children reside in the Koror-Airai urban area (4,241 or 74 percent of the total). Nineteen percent (1,083) live in rural Babeldaob and 7 percent (429) live in the outlying islands.

Since 1990, the child population has grown slowly (0.9 percent per annum). If this rate holds constant, the child population in the year 2015 will be 6,018 and 6,295 in 2020. A head count of children using the definition of the Convention is the only fact that can be ascertained

**Figure 7. Child Population by Single Years of Age. 2006 Census**



from the census. For all other statistics, the census and similar surveys, report information only about the children and youth aged 0-19 years.

**Children and Youth Ages 0-19 Years of Age.** In 2005, there were 6,260 resident children and youth aged 0-19 years. This population has been growing even more slowly than the 0-17 age group (average 0.2 percent per annum) due to the large-scale exodus of youth to the United States immediately after high school. In 2005, 10 percent of these child-youth were non-Palauan.<sup>14</sup> Most non-Palauan child-youth while others are students from neighboring island nations. Emmaus and Bethania High Schools and Palau Community College all actively recruit students from the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

### 3.3. Children and Health

#### National Health Profile

As noted in Part 2, Palau's health profile has more similarity with that of industrialized countries than to developing countries in the Asia-Pacific Region. The convergence of improved standards of living and good health services has led to effective management of many communicable diseases, which in turn has raised life expectancy and reduced infant and child mortality. Changing lifestyles, however, have spawned an epidemic of non-communicable diseases. The Ministry of Health estimates that two-thirds of health expenditures are used to treat non-communicable diseases and related complications, including \$1.2m spent annually on hemodialysis.<sup>15</sup> The cost in terms of years of life lost is also high. Non-communicable diseases account for eight of the ten leading causes of death including: cancer; heart diseases; injury; stroke and hypertension; cirrhosis, alcohol abuse, and associated liver diseases; diabetes; chronic obstructive lung diseases; kidney disease and associated renal failure.

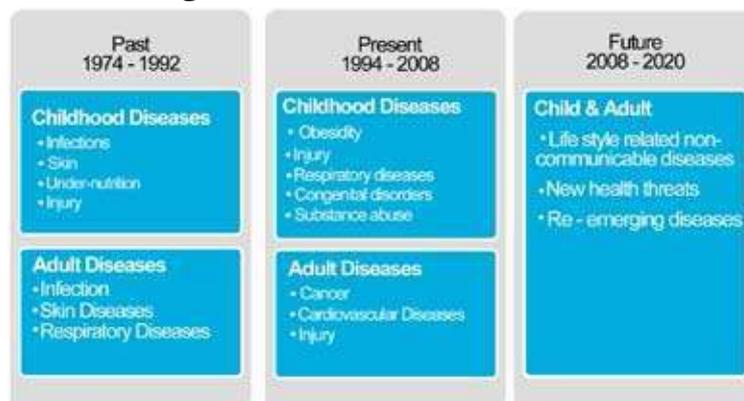
While genetic predisposition contributes to non-communicable diseases, the triggers that turn genetic predisposition into illness are largely behavioral and environmental. The Bureau of Public Health identifies four risk factors associated with non-communicable diseases in Palau:

- Obesity – 62 percent of adult females and 58 percent of adult males are obese; Palau has the dubious distinction of being ranked by the World Health Organization in 2007 as number seven on the list of “world's fattest countries” (data from WHO);
- Sedentary lifestyles – 24 percent of school children (YRBS, 2007) and 55 percent of adults (MOH, 2003) do not engage in any significant physical activity;
- Tobacco use – while relatively few Palauans smoke tobacco, children and adults alike chew tobacco with betel nut beginning in the elementary school years (and sometimes younger);

- Alcohol abuse – Alcohol abuse, especially binge drinking, is the major cause of car crashes and other injuries and accounts for 30% of emergency room visits (Gordon, 2008).

Simultaneous with the epidemic of non-communicable diseases, Palau is experiencing new health threats (e.g. avian influenza, SARS, HIV/AIDS, and terrorism-related threats) as well as re-emergence in more virulent or drug resistant forms of “old” diseases (e.g. drug resistant tuberculosis and STDs, and dengue fever). These new or re-emerging threats result in part from globalization and the associated blurring of borders. Climate change is predicted to further exacerbate these threats in coming years.

**Figure 8. Palau's Health Transition**



Source: Dr. S. Kuartei (Director of Public Health), Compact Review Commission Presentation, 2006.

#### Health in the Perinatal Period

**Prenatal.** While all pregnant women receive some prenatal care, many (82 percent in 2006) do not receive what the Ministry of Health defines as adequate care. (“Adequate” is defined as prenatal visits starting visits during the first trimester of pregnancy and continuing throughout the pregnancy according to the patient-specific visit schedule Table 4, next page).

Other pregnancy risk factors include maternal weight and use of tobacco and/or betel nut. Sixty percent of prenatal or postpartum women surveyed in 2002-03 were overweight or obese at the time they became pregnant and 70 percent admitted to use of tobacco during pregnancy (Family Health Unit, PRAMS-like Survey, 2002-2003). These risk factors together with associated non-communicable diseases have resulted in a sharp escalation in the number of caesarian births about one-third of births now are by caesarian section (Ministry of Health data).

<sup>14</sup>In this text, the term “Palauan” includes Carolineans (from the Southwest Islands) and part-Palauans when part-Palauans are tabulated separate from other ethnic groups.

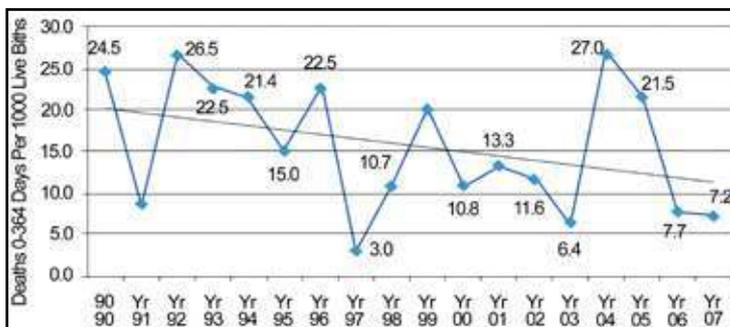
<sup>15</sup>Sources: Watson-Moon, B. Healthy Palau Annual Report 2006. Palau Ministry of Health, page 7 and Ngemas, D. Report to the National Economic Symposium, 2007.

Initiation of Prenatal Visits	Percent of Prenatal Visits Compared to Recommendations				Row Total
	Under 50%	50-79%	80-109%	110%+	
7-9 month	29	9	9	5	52
5-6 month	15	26	7	12	60
3-4 month	12	31	32	6	81
1-2 month	5	27	30	4	66
<b>Total</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>259</b>
	<b>Inadequate – Care began after 4<sup>th</sup> month or less than 50% of recommended visits.</b>				
	<b>Intermediate – Care began by the 4<sup>th</sup> month; 50-79% of recommended visits.</b>				
	<b>Adequate – Care began by 4<sup>th</sup> month; 80-110% of recommended visits</b>				
	<b>Adequate Plus – Care began by 4<sup>th</sup> month; 110% or more of recommended visits</b>				

Source: Moon-Watson, B. Healthy Palau Annual Report, 2006 (page 17).

**Neonatal Period.** For many years, all infants in Palau have been delivered in health facilities under professional supervision. On average, 11 percent of infants are born too early (before 37 weeks gestation) and 10 percent have low birth weight (under 2,500 grams). Very low birth weight (under 1500 grams) is rare. Infant mortality rates have declined over the years rapidly during the 1970's and 1980's and more slowly in recent years. In 2006 and 2007, two infants died thus yielding an infant mortality rate (deaths per 1,000 live births) of 7.7 (Figure 9). Since 2001, virtually all infant deaths have occurred in the first week of life and resulted from congenital conditions.

**Figure 9. Infant Mortality Rate 1990 - 2007**  
Source: OPS 1990 - 1998; MOH - BPH 1999 - 2007



Although infant mortality rates are still higher than for many industrialized nations, Palau health officials believe there is limited scope for further sustained reduction given the small number of births and substantial investment in technology required were the deaths that do occur to be averted. Instead of investing in technology, the Ministry prefers to invest in preventing adverse birth outcomes by promoting healthy lifestyles for women and healthy childbearing (right time, right number, right care).

### Health of Infants and Preschoolers

Children in the post-neonatal and preschool years are generally free of serious health problems although feeding patterns during this period lay the foundation for health problems in later life.

**Infant Feeding.** There is an extensive body of research literature from around the world that confirms the importance of breastfeeding. Breastfed infants are at lower risk of death and illness, have lower rates of asthma and allergies, have lower prevalence of overweight and obesity, and some studies suggest may even do better in school. These

benefits are not transient they continue throughout childhood and possibly into adulthood as well. The World Health Organization, UNICEF and most International Pediatric groups concur that infants should be exclusively breastfed (no supplemental food or liquids given) from birth until 6 months of age and continue to receive breastmilk with food through at least the second year of life.<sup>16</sup>

Breastfeeding was obviously the traditional practice in Palau but in pursuit of modernity, Palauan women in the 1970's and 1980's began to embrace formula feeding. For nearly twenty years, the Ministry of Health has struggled to promote breastfeeding and in the 1990's adopted a "no formula" policy on the maternity ward. Due to this policy, 100 percent of mothers commence breastfeeding but drop-off rates are high. Almost one-half of mothers stop breastfeeding by three months post-partum and less than one-third are still breastfeeding at one year (Table 5).

WHO and UNICEF encourage maternity units to seek international certification as "Baby Friendly Hospitals." The Palau National Hospital meets most of the requirements for certification except one - community-based support group(s) to promote breastfeeding and support women needing assistance. Several efforts have been made to start such a group but have not been sustained. Although statistics chart breastfeeding rates, additional information would be helpful in designing breastfeeding support policies (e.g. information about attitudes of women and their families toward breastfeeding and barriers to breastfeeding in the community and workplaces).

	Yr 2001	Yr 2002	Yr 2003	Yr 2004	Yr 2005
Exclusive breastfeeding at discharge	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Exclusive breastfeeding at 3 months	55%	65%	53%	47%	53.1%
Exclusive breastfeeding at 6 months	59%	69%	57%	NAv	37.5%
Breastfeeding with food at 9 months	Data not available				38.4%
Breastfeeding with food at 12 months	Data not available				29.6%

Source: Ministry of Health. Maternal and Child Health Grant Application, 2007.

**Immunization.** All children have good access to preventive and primary health care services either at the national hospital, community health centers, dispensaries, or through community and school outreach clinics. By the age of twenty-four months, 86 percent of children have completed the basic immunization series that in Palau consists of four doses of diphtheria-pertussis-tetanus, three doses of polio, two doses of measles-mumps-rubella and three doses of hepatitis B. By

<sup>16</sup> There are exceptions to this recommendation as for example when mothers do not produce enough breast milk (a rare situation) and women undergoing certain kinds of medical treatment. It is recommended that individualized recommendations be made to women positive for HIV; generally if there are safe alternatives, the recommendation is to avoid breastfeeding. Medical counter-indications to breastfeeding are rare in Palau; to date, there has only been one case of an HIV-positive pregnant woman who gave birth to a healthy infant due to availability of retroviral drug therapy.

thirty-six months of age, 97 percent of children have completed the required immunizations (MOH, MCH Grant Application, 2007; EPI program data, 2008).

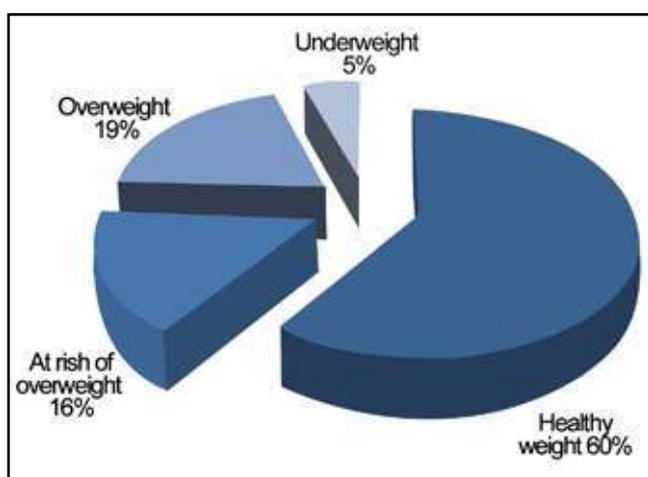
**Illness and Death.** The most common sicknesses of early childhood – upper respiratory infections, otitis media, acute gastroenteritis, bronchiolitis-bronchitis, viral infections, and asthma – are well managed by the health care system. Under-nutrition is rare and the few cases that do arise reflect social problems, not scarcity of food. In 2007, only one seriously underweight child was identified by the Ministry of Health. Deaths among children aged 1-4 years are likewise rare on the average there is one death among children in this age group every two years most often due to injury.<sup>17</sup>

## Health of Elementary School Children

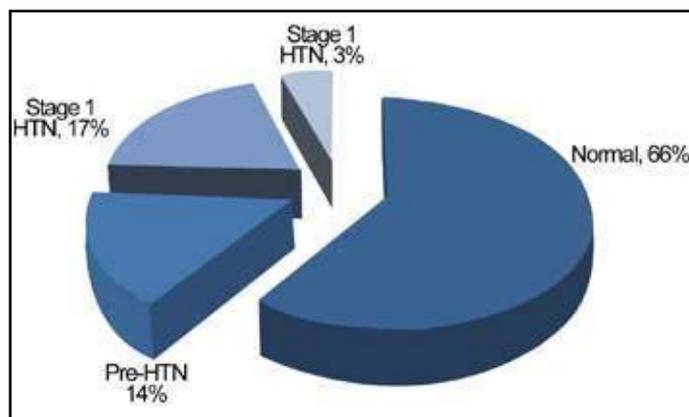
**Common Illnesses.** Elementary school aged children (6-13 years) are generally healthy. When children in this age group do become ill, the most common conditions are respiratory infections, viral syndrome, and gastroenteritis. The most common chronic health condition is asthma (15.6 percent prevalence based on YRBS self-reports). Most illnesses are successfully managed in primary care settings; there are less than fifty hospital admissions a year for children in this age group.

**Diet-Activity-Weight.** Behavioral factors that contribute to ill-health in later life are being laid down from infancy. It is in the elementary school years, however, that behavioral health issues start becoming visible. Almost a quarter of children (24 percent) are inactive in part because of excessive television viewing.<sup>18</sup> Many also exhibit unhealthy eating habits. In the 2006 school health survey, only 9 percent of school children recalled eating fruits or vegetables in the seven days before the survey. Inactivity and diet are strongly correlated with overweight. Nineteen percent of school aged children are already overweight (at or above the 95th percentile of BMI adjusted for age and sex) and another 16 percent are at risk of being overweight (between the 85th and 95th percentile of adjusted BMI) (Figure 10). Overweight in turn is strongly associated with elevated blood pressure detected in 34% of school children surveyed in 2006 (Figure 11). (Using logical regression analysis, the Ministry of Health has determined that overweight children are 3.4 times more likely to have elevated blood pressure than children of normal weight). Even at this very young age, a large number of children are already on the road to non-communicable diseases and diet-activity-weight associated ill-health.

**Figure 10. Weight Status of School Children School Health Survey 2006 - MOH**



**Figure 11. Blood Pressure, School Children, 2006 School Health Survey, MOH**



**Betel Nut.**<sup>19</sup> It is not just diet and inactivity that put children at risk. Betel nut use is pervasive; at least 75 percent of Palauan adults are regular users. Traditionally, children did not chew betel nut. Chewing was an “adult” activity for persons of sufficient maturity to tend their own betel nut trees or purchase their own “quid”. In the 1970’s chewing became associated with cultural identity. Younger and younger ages adopted the habit with tacit community acceptance. Somewhere along the way, to-bacco began to be added and gradually became a ubiquitous part of the quid almost on par with the lime or the leaf. While smoking is widely recognized as a health hazard, chewing tobacco is generally considered to be a lesser threat. 52 percent of students (mistakenly) consider chewing betel nut with tobacco to be less harmful than smoking (Youth Tobacco Survey, 2005).

**Betel Nut and Tobacco.** The 2005 Youth Tobacco Survey found high rates of betel nut and tobacco use among Palau high school and middle school students (Figure 12, next page), although rates were slightly lower than in the 2001 survey. Cigarette smoking had increased and exceeded U.S. student smoking rates. Use of smokeless tobacco (without betel nut) had more than doubled.<sup>20</sup> The age of initiation for all products is also dropping.

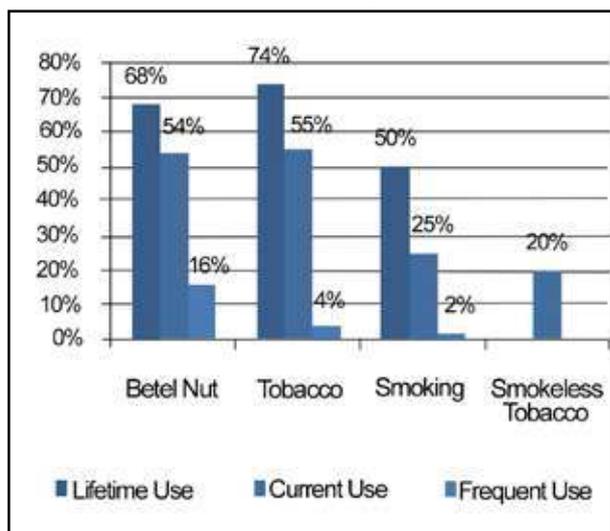
<sup>19</sup>Data sources for behavioral and social health issues: There are several data sources but results are not directly comparable due to differences in survey populations and methods. The Tobacco Survey of 2001 and 2005 was a confidential population-wide survey of students in grades 6-12 in public and private schools. The School Health Survey is conducted every two years by the Ministry of Health for selected grade levels in all schools. It combines non-confidential self-reported information with physical examinations and laboratory analyses. The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) relies only on confidential self-reports. The YRBS was designed by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and is used in all U.S. states, territories, and freely associated nations. Its strength is that it is a regular survey series so it is possible to examine data for trends and that it is confidential. Its weakness is that in Palau, it includes only children attending public schools. Students in private schools and out-of-school youth are not surveyed. To the extent that these omitted populations differ in behaviors from public school students, the survey does not accurately reflect a national picture. Available data are good for identifying priorities and within limits, for charting trends. For the wealth of statistics available, however, Palau still does not have a complete picture of the health and behavior patterns of the total population of children and youth.

<sup>20</sup>Youth Tobacco Survey asks about smokeless tobacco use WITHOUT betel nut; YRBS asks about smokeless tobacco use without mention of the presence or absence of betel nut.

<sup>17</sup>The Under 5 Mortality Rate (U5MR) in 2006 was 7.7 deaths per 1,000 live births and for 2007 was 7.2. Although U5MR demonstrates a clear downward trend, the small population results in wide annual fluctuations. (Ministry of Health data).

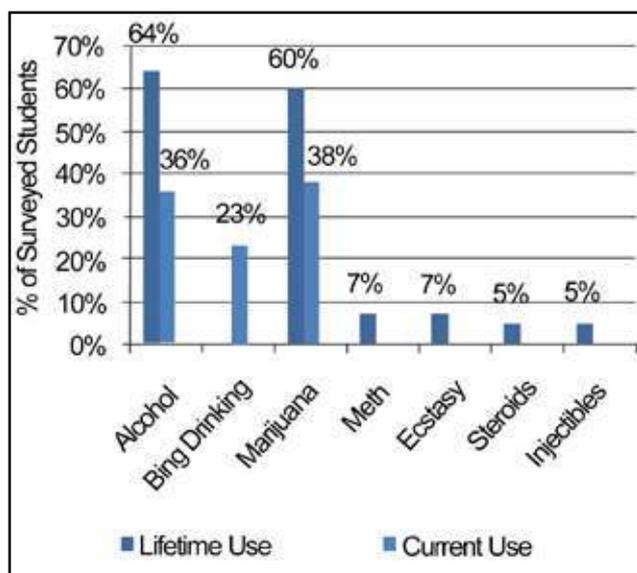
<sup>18</sup>30 percent of middle school students watch 3+ hours of television on the average school day (YRBS 2007).

**Figure 12.** Betel Nut & Tobacco Use, Middle School Students Youth Tobacco Survey 2005 MOH



**Alcohol and Drugs.** The best source of data on alcohol and drug use among students is the Youth Risk Behavior Survey series. Administered to Palau High School students biennially since 1999, and to public middle (grades 6-8) school students since 2003, the survey supports trend analysis. Results document high rates of alcohol and marijuana use (Figure 13) and alarming levels of use of other illicit drugs (Table 6). Although reported alcohol use has dropped since 2003, alcohol remains a contributing factor in most motor vehicle crashes, injuries, and criminal offenses involving juveniles. Among middle school students, 46% have used alcohol; 35% have used marijuana; and 5% have used a cocaine product. Alcohol use appears to be declining modestly while marijuana use is increasing. There are no clear trends evident for use of cocaine products.

**Figure 13.** Alcohol & Drug Use, Palau High School Students 2007 Youth Risk Behavior Survey



**Suicide.** Although there has only been one suicide in a middle-school aged child (14 years of age or younger) recorded in recent years, the YRBS finds a very high rate of suicide ideation and suicide attempts. While many attempts may not be serious (since self-reported attempts exceed the number of persons treated for attempted suicide in health facilities), the fact that so many children are even thinking about suicide is cause for alarm.

**Health of High School Students.**<sup>21</sup> The health situation among high school students is similar to that of elementary school students. Although generally healthy with relatively few episodes of serious physical illness, behavioral health issues predominate.

Most high school students do not get a lot of physical activity and have poor dietary habits leading to relatively high rates of overweight. Betel nut use with tobacco is pervasive and over one-third of students smoke cigarettes. Most students have drunk alcohol and over one-third are current drinkers (drank alcohol in the 30 days prior to the YRBS survey). Binge drinking is common (almost one-quarter of students reported at least one episode of binge drinking (5 or more drinks at one sitting) in the 30 days prior to the survey. Marijuana use is also common.

Domestic violence among teens is a serious concern. Fourteen percent of students report having been physically assaulted by their girlfriend or boyfriend (YRBS, 2007). Twenty-one percent of student report having been physically forced to submit to sexual intercourse (YRBS, 2007). While the rate of physical assault reported has remained constant since 1999, there was a sharp upsurge in forced sexual intercourse reported in 2007.

A significant proportion of high school students (37 percent, 2007) report symptoms of depression. Twenty-nine percent of student have considered suicide and 10 percent report actual suicide attempts. Unfortunately some attempts are successful as this age group has a high incidence of suicide (10 suicides reported in the 1999-2005 period). In secondary research, the Ministry of Health has found that suicide ideation, especially for girls, is strongly correlated with early sexual intercourse. This finding has intensified efforts to promote abstinence as the preferred method of responsible sexuality for teens. YRBS data suggest these efforts are beginning to pay off. Fewer students are reporting sexual intercourse (29.4 percent in 2007 down from 48 percent in 2001). Condom use, however, remains low among those students who are sexually active.

### Health Services for Children and Teens

Primary care services are available five days a week and after-hours for emergencies at: Belau National Hospital; Community Health Centers (Melekeok, Ngarchelong, Ngaremlengui, and Peleliu); and dispensaries (Kayangel, Angaour, Hatohobei, and Sonsorol). Inpatient care, including obstetric services, is available only at Belau National Hospital. Although the hospital has a specialized obstetric ward, it does not have a pediatric ward. Pediatric patients are integrated with adult patients in the medical and surgical wards. This is not an ideal arrangement but there are no alternatives within the current configuration of the facility. Services that are provided free include: immunizations; student physical examinations; and school dental services. Other services are provided according to the sliding fee schedule based on household income and size.<sup>22</sup>

In addition to general primary care services, the Family Health Unit of the Bureau of Public Health, in collaboration with other agencies, NGOs, and community groups, provides a number of specialized services for children and youth. Through an Adolescent Health Collaborative involving the Ministries of Health and Education and the private schools, satellite clinics have been established at Palau Community College, Palau High School and George B. Harris Elementary School. Health screenings are held annually in all the schools for children in grades 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, and 11. Social workers from the Ministry of Health assist with screenings and provide outreach to schools. A specialized HIV/AIDS/STD program works closely with Family Health Unit staff to provide education about sexually transmitted diseases and to promote abstinence and responsible sexuality. Although the HIV/AIDS/STD program has a community-wide focus, children and youth are the priority target.

<sup>21</sup>Data used for this section is derived from the YRBS series. This data set includes only students at Palau High School. Private school students and out-of-school youth are not surveyed.

<sup>22</sup>Palauan children (including non-Palauan children adopted by Palauans) are charged according to the sliding fee scale. Charges for non-Palauan children are assessed at 70 percent of prevailing charges. The law does not allow any person (citizen or non-citizen) to be denied service due to inability to pay.

<b>Table 6. Selected Health Behaviors of Palau High School Students</b>					
YRBS Series					
% of Students Who...	YRBS 99	YRBS 01	YRBS 03	YRBS 05	YRBS 07
<b>Physical Activity and Weight</b>					
Were physically active for at least 60 minutes on 5 of the past 7 days				27.9	36
Watched 3 or more hours of TV on an average school day	37.3	36.2	31.9	29.6	31.9
Participated in PE class at least once a week	46.3	36.5	41.7	40.1	45.4
Reported being at-risk of overweight	12.2	14.6	14.9	11.1	15.4
Reported being overweight	9.7	15.5	15.5	10.6	11.3
<b>Tobacco, Alcohol, and Illegal Drugs</b>					
Smoked during past 30 days	Nav	38.6	38.6	37.0	37.6
Used chewing tobacco, snuff, dip in past 30 days	49.3	40.8	40.9	41.1	37.3
Reported ever having drunk alcohol	71.5	73.3	74.1	62.2	64.3
Drank during past 30 days	39.3	47.8	51.2	40.1	38.0
Engaged in binge drank during past 30 days	23.2	30.4	34.0	26.5	23.3
Used marijuana in past 30 days	32.7	25.3	33.9	28.1	38.5
Reported lifetime use of methamphetamines	10.1	13.9	8.9	9.2	7.1
Reported lifetime use of ecstasy	NAv	NAv	3.7	6.5	6.9
Reported lifetime use of steroids	4.9	7.5	4.7	6.7	5.3
Reported lifetime use of illegal drugs by injection	3.0	6.8	3.6	5.6	5.1
<b>Injury and Violence</b>					
Drove with someone who had been drinking in past 30 days	43.0	52.4	53.2	50.2	49.8
Drove while drinking	12.9	20.8	19.6	14.7	16.1
Were in a physical fight in past 12 months	31.3	29.7	29.6	28.0	27.0
Physical assault by boyfriend or girlfriend in past 12 months	14.8	11.9	11.2	12.7	13.7
Physically forced to have sex against their will	NAv	10.8	14.2	14.8	21.0
<b>Depression, Suicide, and Sexuality</b>					
Reported symptoms of depression	43.8	43.5	43.6	40.5	37.1
Considered suicide in past 12 months	27.3	29.3	27.3	30.4	28.9
Attempted suicide in past 12 months	3.9	5.8	5.5	8.8	10.2
Have had sexual intercourse	45.4	47.6	41.6	43.8	39.4
Had sexual intercourse in past 3 months	30.2	28.7	35.5	30.0	36.3
Used a condom at last intercourse	51.9	35.8	44.6	52.3	49.4



Youth at Youth Rally 2008. (Photo by Judy Otto)

The Division of Behavioral Health is closely involved in children's health care with a focus on psycho-social health. Specialized units of the Division of Behavioral Health focus on tobacco and alcohol substance abuse control. The Division of Oral Health is also a close partner in children's health services. Clients seen in the prenatal and well-child clinics are routinely referred to the Division of Oral Health for screening, treatment, and prophylaxis (fluoride tablets for young children and dental sealants for elementary school aged children). Oral Health also conducts annual site visits to Head Start (preschool centers) and elementary schools where preventive and primary dental services are provided free of charge.

### Oral Health

Oral Health in Children: Comprehensive dental surveys were conducted for all elementary schools (grades 1-8) in 1993 and 1999. The results showed significant improvement in oral health although Palau children in 1999 still had three times the dental disease of comparable U.S. populations.

By 2006, the rate of untreated caries in elementary students had dropped to 19 percent (MOH School Health Survey). While still high, this marks great improvement (Table 7).

Oral Health, Mothers, and Infants. 68 percent of women (2005) received oral health care during their last pregnancy. While a positive indicator, tobacco use among women remains high with 71 percent of mothers admitting to use of tobacco (smoking or chewing with betel nut) during their last pregnancy. Baby bottle misuse is also common. 39 percent of mothers admit to giving their babies a bottle of formula to put them to sleep and 30 percent of mothers do not clean their child's teeth or gums daily. These practices place children at increased risk of dental disease. This risk is further heightened by the pervasive practice of chewing betel nut and tobacco beginning at very young ages. (Section adapted from Division of Oral Health, Oral Health in Palau: Disease Burden and Plan, March 2006).

### Summary of Child Health Issues

Although infant and child mortality rates are low, there is still work to be done to improve the health of neonates and infants. The priority is to reduce risk factors associated with pregnancy maternal overweight, and tobacco use while at the same time, increasing compliance with recommendations for prenatal care. During infancy, it is important to extend the duration of breastfeeding and ensure that parents and other caregivers are knowledgeable about other health promoting practices such as the optimal sleep position for infants, avoidance of "baby bottle" tooth decay, and care of infants' teeth and gums. (These were identified as issues in the 2002-2003 PRAMS-like survey by the Ministry of Health). During the school years, behavioral and psycho-social health predominates with priority issues including: diet; physical activity; substance use (tobacco, alcohol, and marijuana), and interpersonal relationships with friends and family. Key strategies for addressing these behavioral health issues are: (a) creating health promoting environments in which "healthy choices are the only choices;" and (b) developing supportive inter-personal support mechanisms to ensure that children and youth have caring mentors to guide them through the complexities of adolescence.



Photo by Senator Caleb Otto

**Table 7. Oral Health Indicators – Palau Children**

(Source: MOH, Division of Oral Health)

Oral Health Indicator	1993	1999
Average number of decayed, missing, or filled permanent teeth	2.9	1.15
Average number of decayed or filled primary teeth	8.4	5.5
Children with untreated caries (elementary school)	99.0%	79.0%
Children with untreated caries (Head Start)*	99.0%	86.7%
Children (8 years of age) with dental sealants **	14.0%	81.0%

Note (1): By 2003, the percent of Head Start students with untreated caries had been reduced to 74%. Note (2): The percent of children with dental sealants was 80-85 percent in 2005.

## 3.4. Children and Schooling

### Historic Context

Long before formal schools were established by colonial powers, acquisition of knowledge was highly valued in Palauan society. The first departure from traditional non-formal education came with Spanish priests (1885-1899) who introduced catechism classes for instruction in Catholicism. German missionaries (1900-1914) expanded religious education, produced a written language, and printed the first books in the Palauan language. German administrators established the first formal secular school to train Palauan policemen. Widespread “modern” education began during the Japanese era. Two systems of schooling were established. The Japanese system offered eight years of instruction for Japanese citizens. The Palauan system offered three years of basic literacy, numeracy, language, and moral instruction for all students followed by two additional years of vocational training for a small number of select boys. School attendance was voluntary but Palauans instinctively recognized education as a key to progression in the “new” society. A 1927 survey found 86% of Palauan children enrolled in school, a participation rate almost twice that of neighboring Micronesian islands.

The Japanese schools did not survive the chaos of World War II. In the post-war era, the U.S. Naval Administration sent young Palauans to Guam to train as teachers and health workers, assisted communities to re-build elementary schools, and founded a government-run intermediate school in Koror (the forerunner of Palau High School). In the immediate postwar era, education was the responsibility of communities. Only nominal financial support was provided by the central government. In the 1960's, Palau and its Micronesian neighbors became strategically important as American outposts in the Cold War. New monies poured into education as well as health and other social services. Ownership and control of schools transferred from communities to the Trust Territory Government headquartered in Saipan. The Government built the schools, hired the teachers, and set the policies. During 1980-1994, the period when Palau operated as a non-independent constitutional government, control of education gradually shifted from Saipan back to Koror. The first Palau master plan for education was released in 1985; a second in 1995; a third in 2006-2016 (see summary in Annex F).

### Contemporary Education

The importance that Palau as a modern nation places on education is underscored in the constitution. Article VI entrusts the national government with responsibility for education and mandates that public education be provided free for citizens. Title 22 of the Palau National Code (Education Act) regulates education, establishes educational institutions (a Board of Education, the Ministry of Education, the Palau National Scholarship Board, and Palau Community College) and identifies three distinct and equal purposes for education betterment of the individual, society, and the economy.

“It is hereby declared and found to be the policy of the national government to provide for an educational system which shall enable the citizens of Palau to participate fully in the progressive development of the Republic as well as to gain knowledge in all areas. To this end, the purposes of education in the Republic are to increase citizen participation in economic and social development, to unify the Republic by giving the people the knowledge of their is-lands, economy, government, and world, and to provide citizens of the Republic with the knowledge and skills required for self-development and development of the Republic. These skills include professional and vocational, as well as social and political abilities” (22 PNC 101).

Palau's education system is modeled after that of the United States and is comprised of pre-elementary (preschools and kindergartens), elementary (grades 1-8), high school (grades 9-12), and post-secondary (vocational-technical programs and academic degree programs). School participation is mandatory for children aged 6-17 although enforcement is sporadic. While the Ministry of Education has an important leadership role in education, it focuses on public schools grades 1-12. The Ministry shares sector leadership with other autonomous and semi-autonomous institutions that focus on other

domains. Annex F also lists the main institutional players in the education sector.

### Preschools and Kindergartens

Pre-primary education is provided by the private and quasi-government sectors. Participation is voluntary. The Master Plan for Education 1996-2006 (“Palau 2000”) proposed a publically funded network of public kindergartens attached to elementary schools with mandatory participation for 5-year old children. Funding constraints, however, prevented this proposal from being implemented and it has been deleted from the current Master Plan for Education 2006-2016.

There are six pre-primary programs serving children aged 3-5 years:

- Early childhood consortium, a community-based education initiative that targets parents and guardians of pre-school aged children; this is a multi-partner program led by the Ministry of Health and funded by U.S. Federal grants;
- Palau Community College Childcare Center, a subsidized day care facility serving the college and the community; the center is a partnership initiative of the college, the Ministry of Health, and the Palau Community Action Agency; it is Palau's only formal day care;
- Gospel Kindergarten, a preschool operated by the Koror Evangelical Church serving children 3-5 years of age;
- Kindergartens operated by the Seventh Day Adventist Church and the Catholic Mission that pre-prepare 5 year old children to enter the elementary schools operated by these churches;
- Head Start, a network of 14 community-based pre-school centers serving children 3-5 years of age in Koror, Airai, and eight rural states.

Combined, the preschools, kindergartens, and Head Start centers serve 614 children (SY 2007-2008) in 17 locations. This represents approximately 75 percent of the preschool population. Issues in pre-primary education include:

- Lingering perception by some people that pre-primary education is less important than “higher” levels of schooling when research actually shows the opposite – economic returns on investment at pre-primary levels significantly exceed returns at other levels;
- Relatively high costs as a result of small, scattered populations, the comprehensive nature of the Head Start model, and mandatory application of U.S. standards;
- High level of dependency on a single U.S. “Head Start” Federal grant;
- Less than universal participation which undermines the potential system-wide efficiencies that would result from universal coverage;
- Ongoing struggle to identify, train, and retain highly qualified teachers;
- Lack of a child tracking system and Palau-specific data to chart the impact of pre-primary education on individual children and society as a whole; this information would help to guide policy and strengthen advocacy for early childhood education.

The pre-primary sub-sector is highly vulnerable to changes in the macro-economic environment. Services to preschool children are not included under the constitutional mandate for free publicly-financed education. Ninety percent of funding for pre-primary comes from U.S. Federal grants, an additional 8 percent from OEK appropriations, and only 2 percent from private tuition. In the event that U.S. Federal funds were substantially reduced or eliminated, this sub-sector would collapse in the absence of new funding. The minimum cost of a network of public kindergartens serving 5-year olds only has been estimated at \$0.63m (ADB-PINZ, 2008b). If this sub-sector were left to private initiatives, it is probable there would be a gradual expansion of private facilities over a multi-year period but no realistic possibility of achieving universal participation in the foreseeable future.

## Overview – Elementary and Secondary

There are 26 elementary and high schools in Palau, 19 public and 7 private schools. The private schools are owned by religious groups and operated as non-profit corporations.<sup>23</sup> Public education is centralized within the Ministry of Education headed by a Minister appointed by the President. Private schools operate along “charter school” lines with schools licensed by the Ministry and a modest public subsidy provided. Private schools enjoy wide latitude in designing and managing their own programs provided these meet standards set by the Ministry for instruction days, graduation credits, and content of core courses.

**Enrollment Rates.** It is generally believed that Palau has virtually achieved universal elementary school enrollment while succeeding in progressively increasing high school (secondary) participation. Unfortunately it is difficult to document actual school participation rates using available statistics. At the elementary level, gross enrollment rates have been historically high, averaging 112 percent for SY 1995-96 through SY 2004 - 05. Gross enrollment, however, dropped sharply for SY 2005-06 and subsequent years (Table 8). While the reasons for this apparent decline require further investigation, errors in data collection are possible as are distortions in interpretation due to frequent movement of children between schools within Palau and between Palau and neighboring jurisdictions. Transition (survival) rates for Grades 1 to 8 have been calculated by the Ministry of Education:

School Year 2004-2005	93.0%
School Year 2005-2006	82.5%
School Year 2006-2007	98.8%
School Year 2007-2008	89.1%

Again, inter-year fluctuations have not been definitively explained. At the secondary level, gross enrollment averages 92 percent with no clear trends evident.

Net enrollment, a more sensitive indicator of school participation, is available only for three school years (Table 9). Net enrollment data for two of these three years data confirm near universal primary school participation but for the third year, (SY 2005-06), data show the same precipitous decline as exhibited by gross enrollment statistics. For all three years, net enrollment for secondary schools is significantly lower than gross enrollment although this is not unexpected given that by the high school years, accrued repetition in the lower grade levels causes many students to be over-age and thus excluded from net enrollment statistics.

**Table9. Net Enrollment Rate**

	Primary	Secondary
SY 03-04	96%	51%
SY 04-05	93%	62%
SY 05-06	85%	66%

*Source: Ministry of Education (net enrollment); extrapolations from 2000 and 2005 censuses (population).*

**Table 8. Gross Enrollment – Palau Schools**

School Year	Elementary School			High School		
	Population 6-13 Yrs.	Enrollment (Grades 1-8)	Gross Enrollment Rate	Population 14-17	Enrollment (Grades 9-12)	Gross Enrollment Rate
95-96	2431	2735	113%	1134	976	86%
96-97	2467	2692	109%	1158	1032	89%
97-98	2503	2818	113%	1182	1121	95%
98-99	2539	2913	115%	1207	1163	96%
99-00	2578	2912	113%	1234	1152	93%
00-01	2619	3011	115%	1256	1179	94%
01-02	2661	3033	114%	1278	1168	91%
02-03	2703	3046	113%	1300	1228	94%
03-04	2746	2989	109%	1323	1139	86%
04-05	2791	2890	104%	1347	1218	90%
05-06	2835	2842	100%	1371	1283	94%
06-07	2880	2683	93%	1395	1309	94%
07-08	2926	2584	88%	1419	1389	98%

*Source: (1) Enrollment - Ministry of Education; (2) Population - Census SY 94-95, 99-2000; 04-05 extrapolation based on  $P2-P1 \times Xrt$  where P1 is the base census population; P2 is subsequent census population  
t is the time between censuses; and r is the rate of inter-censal growth.*

<sup>23</sup>Palau tax laws contribute to a vibrant private education sector. Under the law, donations to non-profit corporations are eligible for tax rebates of up to 10 percent of the total tax paid on earnings. Tuition and fees paid to private schools qualify for rebate. This represents an indirect government subsidy to private schools.

Table 10 shows dropout and repetition rates for SY 2004-05 and SY 2005-06. Included among dropouts are students more appropriately described as “push-outs” students suspended or expelled who do not return to school after their period of punishment has expired. Palau has no alternative education program for these or other marginalized students. The alternative programs that do exist the Ministry of Education GED (General Education Development Diploma) program and Palau Community College’s Adult High School require enrollees to be at least 18 years of age and out of school for one year. Besides the issue of cost of alternative programs, senior education officials have expressed concern that creating alternative programs could encourage students, otherwise capable of completing the regular course, to dropout of in favor of the alternative (personal communications).

Between SY 2004-05 and SY 2005-06, dropouts rates declined by half although rates remain high in Grade 9, the first year of high school suggesting that many students are poorly prepared for the transition from elementary school. Dropout rates in public schools are consistently higher than private schools and dropout rates for male students exceed those for females. The male-female differential in SY 2005-2006 was 1:2 (35 percent female; 65 percent male). This statistic is one of several that suggests male students are at higher educational risk than females, a situation that has led some policy makers to call for a new approach to educating boys (S. Kuartei, 2007).

There is reason, however, to question the accuracy of official dropout statistics. It is well established that every year about 300 students enter Palau High School as freshmen and about 150 graduate four years later (Table 11, next page). While this completion rate varies from 50-67 percent across recent cohorts, the number of “missing” Palau High School students is substantially higher than the number of official dropouts shown in Table 10.



School boys – Ngiwal State. (Photo by Senator Caleb Otto)

**Table 10. Official Dropout and Repetition Rates, 2004-2006**  
MOE Data, Public and Private Schools

Grade	Dropouts				Repeaters			
	SY 2004-05		SY 2005-06		SY 2004-2005		SY 2005-2006	
	#	% of Enrollees	#	% of Enrollees	#	% of Enrollees	#	% of Enrollees
1 <sup>st</sup>	52	8.1	7	2.4	19	3.0	11	3.8
2 <sup>nd</sup>	27	4.9	1	0.3	16	2.9	9	2.7
3 <sup>rd</sup>	9	2.2	0	0.0	9	2.2	7	1.9
4 <sup>th</sup>	1	0.3	1	0.3	10	2.7	12	3.7
5 <sup>th</sup>	1	0.3	1	0.3	16	4.4	1	0.3
6 <sup>th</sup>	5	1.2	3	0.8	17	3.9	12	3.1
7 <sup>th</sup>	2	0.6	6	1.4	16	4.4	6	1.4
8 <sup>th</sup>	2	0.5	3	0.8	11	3.0	3	0.8
9 <sup>th</sup>	15	3.8	14	3.4	42	10.7	84	20.5
10 <sup>th</sup>	7	2.2	11	3.3	32	10.3	44	13.3
11 <sup>th</sup>	8	2.9	8	2.8	12	4.3	36	12.5
12 <sup>th</sup>	1	0.4	2	0.9	7	3.0	6	2.4
All Grades	130	2.8	57	1.4	207	4.4	231	5.6

Source: Ministry of Education, Annual Statistical Reports, 2005 and 2006. Dropouts are defined as children who leave schools for more than 15 days without requesting transcripts or transfer letters.

Graduation Year	Graduates #	Cohort Enrollment (Grade 9)	%
2004	148	236	62.7%
2005	141	280	50.4%
2006	144	214	67.3%

*Source: Palau High School. Self-Study Report: Focus on Learning, SY 2005-2006.*

**Student Performance.** Student academic performance is closely related to dropout and push-out rates. High performing students are generally at low risk of dropping out of school. Figure 14 shows student performance at Palau High School for the fall semester 2006. Sixteen percent of students were failing and another 10 percent were performing below an acceptable standard (“D” grades).

**Figure 14.** Palau High School GPA 1st quarter 2006, PHS Self-Assessment, 2006

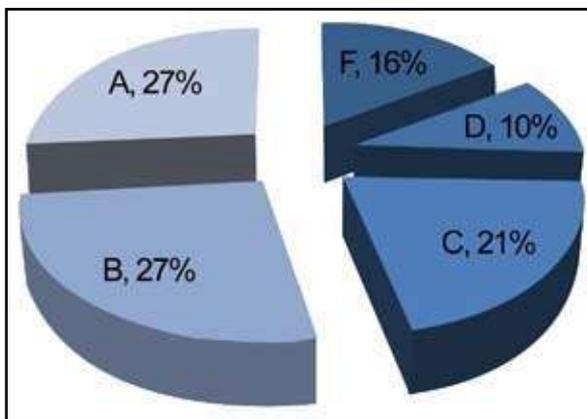


Table 11 (previous page) shows repetition rates. Repetition is very high in the 9th and 10th grades. In part this reflects inadequate preparation at elementary levels but it also correlates with an upsurge in behavioral health issues, especially alcohol, marijuana, and tobacco usage. Students at this age need a lot of motivation, discipline, and mentoring. There is a general consensus among educators that too few students are getting the necessary support.

### Underlying Issues

There is no recent information on reasons that students dropout or otherwise fail to perform adequately in school. The most recent study of dropouts (Gordon, 1996) found that the immediate reasons given by students who had left school were: laziness (19 percent); housing (15 percent); pregnancy (10 percent); and a variety of other social or behavioral problems. Ninety percent of parents were unhappy about their child’s decision but few had taken concrete steps to help students identify and overcome the problem(s) leading to withdrawal from school. Most parents felt helpless to assist their children. In the same study, teachers were asked for their opinion. Teachers cited reasons for student dropouts as: lack of parental support (27 percent); housing and financial difficulties (24 percent); lack of motivation (23 percent); lack of discipline (15 percent) and absenteeism (12 percent). Irrespective of the immediate factor, an overwhelming majority of teachers (80 percent) felt that lack of parental support was the main contributing factor.

Housing for high school students from rural areas in Koror has been a long standing issue. Students stay with relatives, and although this is the traditional practice, it creates tensions in contemporary society. Following the opening of the Compact Road, the Ministry of Justice has started a bus service so that Babeldaob students can live at home and commute to school.<sup>24</sup> Now only a small number of students from outlying islands must board with relatives, thus eliminating one reason for students to drop out.

The problem of ineffectual parent support, however, remains. Parents tend to be involved in their child’s education through the elementary school years. For many children, progression to high school signals a sharp decline in parent involvement. Both public and private schools report that many parents do not pick up their child’s report card. PTA meetings and school events involving parents tend to be poorly attended. Many children are not motivated to learn, as reflected in a large number of students with low grades and high repetition rates. Disciplinary problems abound in most schools, public and private. At the same time teachers have little guidance on how to approach discipline. A recent law suit (ROP vs Osima) in which a teacher was accused (and convicted) of child abuse following an exchange with a misbehaving student has shaken the teaching force. Below is an extract from a recent petition signed by 45 out of 65 Palau High School teachers addressed to the Ministry of Education and the political leadership:

*“... Delinquent behaviors appearing to have their roots from home are contributing greatly to students’ apathetic attitude toward school and blatant mischievous and belligerent behaviors and actions against other students and school staff. Teachers are overwhelmed with (the) need to deal with behavioral problems (so) that less and less concrete learning occurs in classrooms. Delinquent behaviors easily exhaust teachers... What does the government and the general public want us to do with students caught smoking, intoxicated, doped with marijuana, engaging in sexual intimacy, engaging in assault and battery or chronically skip-ping classes and going off-campus during school hours? What does the government and the general public say regarding students promoted to freshmen but their reading, writing, and comprehension... skills are lower than grade nine? What does the government and the general public want us to do with students whose parents are too busy or ignorant of their parental responsibilities that they fail to provide necessary parental support to enable their children to attain learning?...”* (PHS teacher petition, April 2008).

There are several programs that strive to address issues of student performance and motivation. These include four Federally funded supplementary education programs (Talent Search, Upward Bound, Upward Bound Math and Science, and Gear-Up) that identify at risk students and provide them with academic enrichment, counseling, and other support to increase their chances of success. Through partnership between the Ministries of Health and Education, counseling services in the schools have been expanded. The Ministry of Justice has developed the *Omengull ma Okurulel Kle-chad* (“OOK”) Program that includes LEEP (Law Enforcement Explorer’s Program) in elementary schools (focus on discipline and ethical behavior), an after-school drop-in center in Koror, and a student mentoring program. Sports federations offer a variety of athletic programs for students and youth. Youth are being mobilized in their hamlets to fight alcohol, drugs, and tobacco while promoting healthy lifestyles. And the list goes on. Many of the programs have been positively evaluated and have generated many clear-cut successes, but if anything, the problems seem to be worsening. Certainly the various programs help but it may be they are not hitting at the root of the problem which seem to lay in parenting styles, family and societal relations, and social change. Unless these issues are effectively addressed, hard won gains in educational attainment over many years are in danger of erosion even as globalization forces young Palauans into an increasingly competitive job market.

<sup>24</sup>This bus service represents the personal initiative of the current Minister of Justice who provides the buses, volunteers who drive the buses and the Ministry of Education that provides the fuel. Attention needs to be given to ensuring the long-term sustainability of this important service.

## Educational Attainment - Adults

As might be expected given Palau's high school enrollment rates, adult literacy rates are also high. Using 4 years of elementary schooling as a proxy measure of literacy, the literacy rate for young adults (ages 15-24) has been estimated at 99.7 percent (OPS, 2005 census, unpublished data tables). The literacy rate for adults 25 years of age and older was 93 percent in 2005, up from 87 per-cent in 1990 (census data).

Adults with at least a high school degree have likewise increased from 51 percent (1990 census) to 63 percent. Census data confirm that Palauan residents of Hawaii, CNMI, and Guam have higher levels of education than Palauans at home.

## Other Issues in Education

**Cost.** Palau has 17 preschool facilities including three private and fourteen quasi-public Head Start Centers, 20 elementary schools, six high schools, and one community college. The small and scattered student population and large number of schools results in high per-student costs (Table 12).

With resources for education stagnant or declining, it is imperative that actions be taken to reduce cost while continuing to increase student participation rates and improve quality of instruction.

**Facilities.** There are two primary issues with respect to facilities. First, high schools are nearing capacity. If 100 percent participation is to be achieved, it will be necessary to expand the number of spaces over the coming decade. There is a plan to build a new public high school in Ngchesar to serve Babeldaob. Implementation, however, is contingent on identifying aid funds for construction. Annual operating costs of a new high school have been estimated at \$325,000-\$375,000 (ADB-PINZ, 2008). This is money that the Republic will be hard-pressed to find in the current macro-economic climate.

The second issue is the large number of elementary schools, many with very small student populations. This is a historic legacy from the postwar era when each community built and operated its own school. This made sense then because village populations were larger and there was no reliable transportation between villages. The Compact Road has revolutionized inter-village access; travel time from the Southern tip of Airai to the Northern tip of Ngarchelong is little more than an hour via an all-weather road. It is no longer necessary to maintain small community schools that are expensive to operate<sup>25</sup> and that limit the educational experience of students. In anticipation of the road, an official plan for school consolidation was approved by the OEK in

1999. The plan has been partially implemented reducing the number of schools from 22 to the current 18. If fully implemented, there would be 14 public elementary schools. Moving forward with the plan, however, is challenging due to community opposition.

There appear to be two main reasons for the community opposition to consolidation. One, many parents express reluctance to allow their young children to be bused outside the village. Two, the school is a symbol of the community's identity. In recent discussions, it has been proposed to modify the consolidation plan in favor of a regionalization plan (ADB-PINZ, 2008). Under regionalization, the lower grades (grades 1-4) will remain in the village. Upper grades will be consolidated into three schools (East Coast, West Coast, and North) and administration and support staff regionalized at these schools to serve the village schools. Pre-schools (Head Start centers) now located adjacent to many elementary schools could be amalgamated within the village school. This regional scheme has not yet been taken to communities for feedback nor has it been officially endorsed by any stakeholder group. It is, however, receiving serious consideration by the MOE.

**Personnel.** Although there are ambitious plans to raise minimum standards for teachers (from an associate to a bachelor degree) and require teachers to sit a proficiency test for certification, the reality is that simply staffing the classrooms is a challenge. Salaries are low in comparison to other government positions that have similar prerequisite qualifications and less responsibility. Two recent (2008) lawsuits against teachers in their professional capacity are unlikely to enhance the attractiveness of teaching as a profession. Partially because of salaries and partially because of the large number of career opportunities now open to Palauan post-secondary students outside of the teaching profession, only a small number of scholarship-loan recipients have or are majoring in education (24 out of 759 recipients or 3 percent since 1996).

Table 13 (next page) shows the number of teachers employed in Palau's schools and their level of qualification. The large number of high school graduates currently employed is due to the mandatory retirement law that forces teachers out of the workforce at 30 years of service or 60 years of age (whichever comes first).<sup>26</sup> When mandatory retirement came into effect in 2002, the Ministry was left with little choice but to hire high school graduates, armed with a summer "crash" course in education. Subsequently, the Ministry has provided financial assistance (from U.S. Federal grants) to these teachers to pursue an associate degree in education at Palau Community College. When teachers finish their associate degree, they can pursue a bachelor's degree through a distance education program operated by Palau Community College in cooperation with San Diego State University (in California).

**Table 12. Schools, Students, Cost Per Student, SY2007-08**

	Public			Private		
	Schools	Students	Cost Per Student	Schools	Students	Cost Per Student
• Preschools	14	463	\$ 3,056	3	151	\$ 963
• Elementary	18	2,118	\$ 2,961	2	476	\$ 1,291
• High Schools	1	808	\$ 2,841	5	504	\$ 2,072

*Note:* There is one additional public elementary school on Hatohobei that operates when there are children on the island; it was not operational for SY 2007-08.

*Sources:* Number of schools and students (public) based on the MOE data base as of December 7, 2007. Students (private) based on telephone survey (March 2007). Costs estimated from data provided by MOE, Head Start, and private schools (ADB-PINZ, 2008).

<sup>25</sup> In the smallest schools, cost per student exceeds \$6,000 per year (analysis by author based on MOE data).

<sup>26</sup> An amendment to the law allows the Ministry to extend the employment of teachers for five additional years on a case-by-case basis. Due to the teacher shortage, most teachers receive this extension.

	Qualifications					Total Teachers
	Not in MOE Data Base	High School	Associate Degree	Bachelor Degree	Master Degree	
Public Elementary	20	78	61	29	0	188
Public High School	7	8	20	26	6	67
Private Elementary	19	10	7	5	1	42
Private High School	4	5	4	29	6	48
<b>Total All Schools</b>	<b>50</b> (14.5%)	<b>101</b> (29.3%)	<b>92</b> (26.7%)	<b>89</b> (25.8%)	<b>13</b> (3.8%)	<b>345</b>

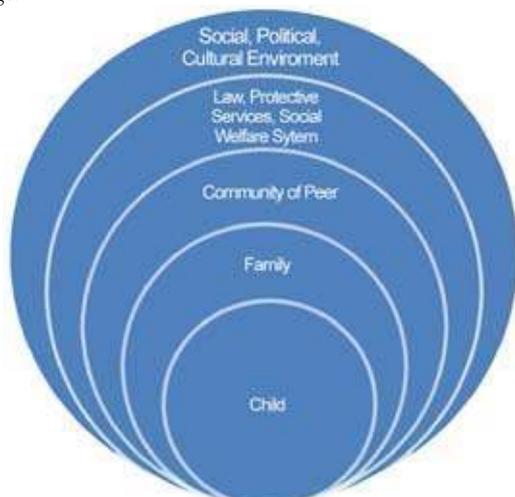
**Sustainability.** A major issue in education, as in health, is the challenge of sustaining current levels of service in the face of dwindling resources. The Ministry of Education has steadily lost funding since independence in 1994 (see Part 2). It has dealt with the funding situation by reducing non-core services, freezing positions, reorganizing, and consolidating some schools. Still other strategies have recently been identified to enable the Ministry to further economize in order to better fund core services while improving quality of instruction (ADB-PINZ, 2008). If, however, further cuts materialize, the sector has few options remaining to further economize without radical reorganization and retrenchment.

### 3.5. Children and Family

The family is the primary nurturer of the child. The family in turn is nurtured and supported by the community of peers, neighbors, friends, church members, and other social contacts. The family and community are in turn supported by institutions of the broader society including legal, regulatory, and social welfare systems. These systems, in turn, are supported and shaped by social, economic, political, and cultural systems, beliefs, and practices.

#### Tradition

In traditional Palauan society, the extended family constituted the “safety net” for both the child and his/her parents. Father provided money, shelter, meat or fish. Mother managed the children, cooked, gardened, and cleaned the home, compound, and village pathways. Grandparents supervised the household and ensured the family worked together as a team. They made decisions, maintained tranquility, and instilled in children the essential values that constituted their cultural heritage.



Although children commonly resided with their paternal clan, their primary family affiliation was to their maternal clan. Accordingly, the maternal uncle had a special role in their upbringing. He was responsible for providing for children in times of need, for intervening when extraordinary disciplinary measures were required, for managing their financial affairs, and often assumed special responsibilities for schooling his nephews in livelihood skills. Traditionally, Palauans recognized that children learn best by the example of elders and second, through explanations interspersed with opportunities for active learning. Considerable effort was expended by the entire clan and the community in raising children for children’s behavior reflected on the family. Serious misdeeds could taint a family’s reputation for a generation or more. If the accounts of early ethnographers are accurate, intra-family violence was virtually unknown and physical discipline of children was rare.<sup>27</sup>

#### Customary Adoption

While the special bond between a child and his/her biological family is recognized, customary adoption is a traditional practice that remains common today.<sup>28</sup> In some cases, adoption advances the interests of the child by providing care when biological parents are unable to do so, advancing the child’s social status, or improving the child’s prospects for inheritance. In other cases, adoption advances the interests of the clan by bringing branches of a family/clan closer or providing assistance to family members in need. In researching customary adoption with elders, CoPopChi in 1998 was able to identify fourteen types of adoption each of which infers different rights and responsibilities on the parties depending on the relationship between the child, the birth parents, and the adoptive parents and the reason(s) for the adoption (see text box on opposite page).

Irrespective of the reason for adoption, customary adoption does not sever the ties between child’s and his/her biological parents but rather expands his/her ties through a complex system of mutual obligations linking the child, his/her birth parents and birth clans, and his/her adoptive parents and adoptive clans. Under Palau law, customary

<sup>27</sup> Palau Society of Historians. “Rechuodel: Traditional Culture and Lifeways Long Ago in Palau.” Ministry of Community and Cultural Affairs, Koror, Palau, 1995.

<sup>28</sup> Customary adoption refers to the social process whereby responsibility for the rearing of a child is shared by the birth parents with non-birth parents. While, customary adoption generally entails a change in the primary residence of the child, it does not sever the ties between the child and his/her birth parents. Most commonly, customary adoption takes place within extended families or clans but it may also extend across clans. By definition, customary adoption is managed by the elders, not the government. Palau law recognizes and respects customary adoption when carried out in accordance with recognized

## Customary Adoption

In Palauan customary adoption, there are many different adoptive relationships each having implications for the rights and power granted to the adopted person. Rights and power in turn dictate living arrangements, land use, title acquisition, inheritance, and participation in decision-making. Factors that influence the rights and power of the adopted person include: (a) how the person came to be adopted; (b) the blood relationship between the biological and adoptive families; (c) gender with an adopted female or an adopted person descended from the maternal line given greater power than a male or person descended from the paternal line; and (d) contribution of the adopted person to his/her adoptive family. Of these, the most important is the contribution of the adopted person to his/her adoptive family. During consultations held in 1998, CoPopChi identified fourteen different terms which translate into English as “adoption.” These terms are listed here in the order of the relative power they confer on the adopted person.

- “*Omerodel*” is a general term referring to any child who is not conceived and born of the parents who call the child their own.
- “*Ngalekulao!*” (literally “child of the floor”) refers to a child of a family member raised by his/her maternal uncle.
- “*Uldenekel !Ngalek*” refers to a child of a male member of the family/clan raised by the matri-arch or other female family members. (Alternate terms with similar meaning include “*rirot eb chil a ourrot*” or “*ulebell el mirrodel*”).
- “*Mlodars a Keai*” refers to a child adopted by parents who have no relationship to the biological parents. (In the old days, the “*keai*” – base of the leaf of the betel nut tree – was the container used to hold small babies. The term describes how the child came to be adopted – the adoptive parents held the “*keai*” toward the biological parents to beg them for the child. Such a child is generally considered very special).
- “*Cheltekel!el a Chebechii!*” refers to a child brought into a marriage by either a wife or husband. (Alternate terms are “*Cheltekel!el a Demal*” or “*Cheltekel!el a Delal*”).
- “*Ngka !Ngalek a diak !Ulechelle!*” refers to a child not fathered by the husband which means a child brought into the home by the wife.
- “*Ulechel Bai*” refers to a child of a concubine. There are no more of these children today.
- “*Rreb !Ngalek*” refers to a child conceived out of wedlock but later brought by the mother into a marriage.
- “*Ultechak!*” (literally to be “stuck” to a beach, against a dock or rock, etc) refers to a child who wandered into the adoptive family. The blood relations between the biological and adoptive families would be either non-existent or very distant.
- “*Rruao!*” refers to a person who became a member of a family by wandering into the compound. In the old days, an adoption of this type occurred when a person was lost (at sea or in the forest) before wandering into a family compound and eventually becoming part of the family. Today the terms usually refers to people of Japanese, Okinawan, or Korean ancestry left behind after World War II.

adoption is the responsibility of family and clan. Government, through the Judiciary, becomes involved only when it is necessary to legally confirm an adoption,<sup>29</sup> settle disputes arising from adoption, or regulate adoptions involving non-citizens. In carrying out its responsibilities, the court is constrained by the absence of a designated office or person to independently investigate cases. The court issues rulings based on the information presented but does not have the benefit of home studies or other impartial “expert” assessments.

Under custom, adopted children have the right to inherit from both their biological and the adoptive families, with the precise rights granted to any individual based on the child’s service to the family, blood relationship, and type of adoption. These dual rights are recognized by statute (21 PNC 401). While this statute technically refers only to children formally adopted in court, the courts have generally extended the dual rights of inheritance to children of customary adoptions. Recently though it has been reported that some people are developing new ideas calling for adoptive children to return to their birth families on the death of their adoptive parents and taking their inheritance from the biological family rather than the adoptive family. This has spawned legal challenges to the inheritance rights of some adoptive children, and according to court sources, it is becoming more difficult for adoptive child to prove their claims in court since there is no procedure for registering customary adoptions (personal communications).

Adoption in Palau is very common. It is, however, emotionally laden. Proponents of customary adoption argue that the practice is an integral part of the safety net that society extends to the child. Opponents argue that adoption too often serves the interest of adults rather than those of the child. The International Committee on the Rights of the Child, in commenting on Palau’s initial report on the Convention, identified adoption as an area in which Palau does not comply with the Convention since the practice generally takes place without judicial supervision and is not subject to the “best interests of the child” decision-making standard.

While acknowledging the viewpoint of the International Committee, CoPopChi recommended that research be conducted to separate fact from opinion before changes are recommended in current practices. Research questions include the number of adoptions by type, trends in adoption practices, and the extent to which adoptions advance the

interest of the children involved. The recommended research has not been conducted although participants in the 2008 Symposium on Children, Youth, and Women concluded that customary adoption most often promotes the well-being of children and accordingly should not be restricted or subjected to government regulation. Many participants did suggest, however, that there be some voluntary system for registering customary adoptions thus ensuring that the rights of all parties are protected.

**Adoption of Non-Palauan Children.** Adoption of non-Palauans by Palauans may occur when a Palauan couple adopts a child from overseas, or when a couple adopts a non-Palauan child locally, or in the case of a mixed marriage, when the Palauan spouse adopts the children of the non-Palauan partner. As Palauans struggle to retain their cultural identity in the face of global pressures, adoption of non-Palauan children has become increasingly contentious. Under the Palau Constitution and law, children without Palauan blood do not have rights to citizenship, passports, or inheritance of land. After the age of 18, they do not even have a legal right to reside and work in Palau unless they register with the Labor Office as a foreign worker. When the 1998 situation analysis was undertaken, it was anticipated that problems would arise over the status of these children. Now those problems are blossoming as an increasing number of children and young adults find themselves in legal limbo.

The 2005 Constitutional Convention proposed that children adopted before 3 years of age be allowed naturalization (subject to approval by the OEK). This proposal will go before the voters for ratification in November 2008. It has, however, been widely criticized and it remains to be seen whether it will be ratified. While most Palauans are sympathetic to the problems of non-Palauan children and their adoptive families, many people believe there are other legal measures short of full citizenship that the OEK can apply to remedy these issues. It appears there are three main reasons for opposition to this measure.

- One, adoption carries different meanings under Palauan custom and Western jurisprudence. For Palauans, adoption adds to the adoptive person’s familial heritage, while in the West, adoption exchanges one heritage for another.
- Two, there is concern that if children without Palauan blood are accepted as full Palauan citizens with all the rights conferred by citizenship (e.g. land ownership and standing for elected office), there is nothing to stop these children from adopting still other non-Palauan children until eventually blood-Palauans become minorities in their own land.

<sup>29</sup>The court becomes involved in customary adoption mainly when legal confirmation of adoption is required by foreign authorities (e.g. for immigration, off-island schooling, and similar purposes).

- Three, there is also concern that some unscrupulous foreigners may marry a Palauan for the primary purpose of having their child adopted and in due course, gain control of land and other inheritance through the child.

The fact that adoption in the recent past has been subjected to apparent abuse heightens distrust of the proposal to allow naturalization of non-Palauan adoptive children. In 1994, legislation was passed to restrict the number of non-Palauan residents by allowing only guest workers earning \$15,000 a year or more to bring dependents into Palau. In an effort to help long-term employees, some Palauans petitioned the court for adoption so that their employees' children could enter or remain in Palau. Some of these petitions were initially approved by the court, although the practice was halted once the court recognized that the true purpose was to circumvent the law. Now, the court only considers (on a case-by-case basis) petitions for guardianship by Palauans of non-Palauan children whose biological parents are present and active in their lives.

**Psycho-Social Issues.** Psycho-social issues have been previously alluded to in this report. Some parents delegate child rearing to domestic helpers or other caregivers and take little direct role themselves. This creates emotional distance between child and parents and can create disciplinary problems. At the same time, teachers report that many parents are "overprotective", as for example, resisting busing of young children to attend Head Start or even elementary school out of their community. Behavioral health workers talk about over-protectiveness that leads to "lack of resilience" children who are so sheltered from the psycho-social traumas that come with growing up so they do not learn physical and emotional coping skills for dealing with the vagrancies of life.

Overall, it seems many parents are quick to respond when they believe their child has been wronged; they may be quick to make accusations against domestic helpers, coaches, teachers and schools. At the same time, however, many parents are not very involved in the day-to-day affairs of their children. Some children and youth charge that parents try to buy them with money or material things but do not spend time with them. Some parents complain their child pushes them away so that it becomes hard to find an appropriate middle ground between parental oversight and respect for the evolving independence of the child (Youth Rally, 2008).

This current situation has been characterized as "busy parent and busy child syndrome" (Mesebeluu, 2008). Parents work full-time and attend to their customary obligations and their own personal needs. Children go to school full-time, have scheduled activities educational programs, church, sports and activities with their friends. Some families lack traditions about regularly spending time together. This "busy parent – busy child" syndrome results in lack of communication, supervision, understanding, and support. Children come to feel they do not belong, they are not important to their parents, and their feelings are not important. Ultimately, there is stress and tension in the family and children "get into trouble" just to gain attention.

The theme of Youth Rally 2008 was "Parent and Child Partnership." These issues were highlighted throughout the deliberations. Youth participants, aged 14-20, requested that parents:

- Spend quality time with their children;
- Be more understanding, more respectful, and less judgmental;
- Strengthen communications with children through active and empathetic listening, being a good role model, and helping children with their problems;
- Encourage children in school and take an active role in school activities;
- Teach children the three pillars of Palauan ethical behavior omengull (respect), omelengmes (consideration), and omelanngesmad (sensitivity to others).

Beyond the actions of individuals, as a society, there is also need to support healthy family relationships. More social events need to be planned to involve the whole family. Customary observances need to explicitly identify roles for children and encourage their active participation alongside their parents and elders. Workplaces also need to be more family friendly providing maternity leave benefits,

supporting breastfeeding, allowing for family leave to manage family emergencies, and allowing flexible scheduling to allow parents to participate in school programs.

**Social Support.** But what about situations where the family is not able to meet children's needs when the family itself needs support? Palau has good people working in social services and some excellent programs, but overall the social service system is disjointed and under resourced. There are, however, some positive recent developments, although potential cutbacks in U.S. Federal grants during the second phase of COFA could undermine this progress.

At the very start of life, workers in the maternal and child health unit try to identify at-risk clients and refer them to social workers, the behavioral health unit, or other community resources as appropriate. The Ministry of Health employs eight social workers scattered across several service units and service sites. Besides their roles as counselors, brokers, and advocates to clients of the health service, they also work closely with the Ministry of Education. Through agreement with MOW, each social worker is assigned responsibility for one or more public schools. The Ministry of Education itself employs only one psycho-social counselor based at Meyuns Elementary School and four academic counselors based at Palau High School. For children with disabilities, there are additional services available through the Ministry of Health's Children with Special Health Care Needs clinic and also through the Special Education unit. Special Education provides full-service educational support for disabled children from birth to 21 years of age with a strong emphasis on early identification and aggressive case management.

The OOK program within the Ministry of Justice provides a safe after-school drop-in site where school children can come and do homework and just "hang out" until their parents are finished with work. OOK also coordinates the LEEP program, an extracurricular character-building initiative in the schools, and a Big Brother-Big Sister mentoring program. None of these Ministry of Justice programs have any line-item funding but are funded piecemeal from the Ministry's general allocation and through voluntary contributions by staff and communities.

There are several programs that provide academic support for low-income or otherwise at-risk kids. These programs include Upward Bound, Upward Bound Math & Science, Talent Search, and Gear-Up. Each of these programs has its own particular strength but all share similar goals to encourage children to stay in school and get a college education. For children who are actually being abused or neglected or children in conflict with the law, there are other specialized services provided through the Victims of Crime Assistance (VOCA) program within the Ministry of Health (see section 3.6).

The Palau National Olympic Committee and the fourteen chartered national sports federations provide many programs that promote physical and character development in schools and communities. The Youth Development programs of the Ministry of Community and Cultural Affairs, Koror and Airai State governments, and individual community groups focus on positive youth development promoting youth leadership, scouting, and other character building activities. The HIV-AIDS youth development program also focuses on positive youth development in addition to HIV-AIDS awareness education and prevention.

The social service network is disjointed but still there have been some efforts recently to improve co-ordination and cooperation. Within the Ministry of Health, social workers are collaborating more. There is a proposal to create a Social and Spiritual Health unit that will bring all social workers together in one office to improve coordination of services and encourage creative new programming to address the root causes of psycho-social health problems. Through the Adolescent Health Collaborative, social workers from the Ministry of Health and educators in both public and private schools are working more closely to identify at risk teens and jointly plan interventions.

In general, government social service programs tend to fall into one of two categories: (1) relatively well resourced but almost wholly dependent on U.S. Federal grants; or (2) under resourced with local funds covering salaries but not much else. Probably the only exceptions to this dichotomy are the Koror State Youth Program that is relatively well

resourced from state appropriations and the the Palau National Olympic Committee that has local funds at its core but receives substantial extra-budgetary support from the International Olympic Committee and voluntary donations. Because of funding issues, many programs are limited in what they offer many offer little besides counseling, with very little in the way of concrete assistance for children or their families. There is for example no “safe house” for children who are being abused. The only income support program is limited to the severely disabled and pays only \$50 per month. There is a job placement service but it is very limited in what it provides, serving more as a “bulletin board” than a full service job placement program. There is some workforce training assistance through the WIA (Workforce Investment Act) but it too is limited.

Palau has a rich heritage of community based organizations traditional women, men, and youth groups that provide social support to their members and material assistance in times of need. The strength of these organizations varies widely and there is no data on membership or benefits derived. Other than the Red Cross that provides material assistance for victims of disaster and Omult that provides counseling services, the non-government sector is not active in social services. In contrast to many other Pacific Islands, Palauan churches are only sporadically involved in social services.

### 3.6. Children with Special Needs

#### Children with Disabilities

Children with special care needs are defined as persons between the ages of 0 and 21 years<sup>30</sup> of age who need health, education, and related services beyond those required by most other children due to long term physical, developmental, behavioral or emotional conditions. This includes children with physical, mental, learning and emotional disabilities. There are approximately 300 children currently on the registry of services in the health department, 189 of whom also receive special education services. Of children served by Special Education, 15 are severely disabled requiring either service in their home or in a specialized education facility.

Services for children with disabilities are coordinated by an Interagency Task Force headed by the Ministry of Health with membership from: Special Education; Head Start; Behavioral Health; Vocational Rehabilitation; Physical Therapy; Outpatient Clinic; and Palau Parent Network.<sup>31</sup> The purpose of the Task Force is to provide seamless child-centered services extending from birth to adulthood.

Palauans are particularly proud of the tremendous strides made in the care and nurture of children with disabilities over the last half century. In past generations, the physical needs of these children were met but there was little attempt to fully integrate them into family and community life, develop their talents, or promote self-reliance. Today, families are fully aware that children with disabilities have the same rights as those enjoyed by all children and the potential to achieve high levels of self-reliance and social integration.

Under the Constitution (Article 5), persons with disabilities (including children) are designated as a vulnerable group entitled to special consideration by government. The Handicapped Children’s Act of 1989 (PNC 22.4) requires the national government to:

“...provide education services to all children to enable them to live fulfilling and productive lives... (and) to provide full educational opportunities and necessary support services to each handicapped child in order that the child acquires the skills and knowledge necessary to lead a fulfilling and productive life as a citizen of the Republic“ (PNC 22.4).

The Act also: (a) designates “mainstreaming” as the strategy of choice for delivering services to the disabled; (b) establishes the Interagency Task Force on Children with Special Needs;” (c) guarantees that if Federal funds for special education services phase out, the OEK will appropriate replacement funds from local revenues which are at least

equivalent to those of the previously year’s allocation or will increase in the same proportion as the budget for the entire Ministry of Education. Current funding available for services to children with special care needs is \$1.234 million from three U.S. Federal Grants: Special Education (\$1.0 million); Special Health Services (\$140,000) and Interagency Task Force (\$95,000). This is about \$4,000 per registered child. Except for in-kind matching, no local funds are specifically allocated for services to disabled children.

There are several issues with respect to services for persons with disabilities. The paramount issue is long-term sustainability in the event that U.S. Federal grants are reduced or terminated. Although PNC 22 commits the OEK to replace Federal funds for Special Education on a dollar-for-dollar basis, the reality is that in a financial “crunch” it may be difficult for government to live up to this pledge. There is no comparable pledge to guarantee funding for special health services. The other big issue involves transitioning disabled children into adult life. Even in the current service environment with funding not a significant constraint, there is a shortage of vocationally oriented training opportunities for children with serious disabilities that prepare them to live independently as adults. Providers recognize the need for some type of sheltered workshop to serve older children, youth, and adults but this is a “gap” area in the current configuration of services.

Closely related to the issue of vocational training is the lack of special services for persons over the age of 21. Prior to independence, Palau was eligible for U.S. Federal grants for Vocational Rehabilitation to serve adults with disabilities. This grant was phased-out when COFA came into force so that now there are no special services for adults with disabilities except for some limited services for those with mental disabilities offered through the MOH Behavioral Health Division.

#### Child Victims of Abuse

Statistics are available to record the number of child abuse and neglect cases reported to government authorities. Research studies that “go beyond the numbers” by describing the correlates and causes of abuse and neglect were conducted in 1991, 1992, and 1996 (see text box, next page). These studies may, however, be of dubious value given the tumultuous social change that has occurred in intervening years.

Palau’s Child Abuse Law (21 PNC 601-6): (a) defines abuse and neglect; (b) requires designated health and education personnel mandated to report suspected cases to the Director of Public Safety; (c) requires police investigation within 48 hours following a complaint; (d) suspends the normal privileges of communications between spouses and doctors clients in matters relating to abuse; and (e) provides for criminal penalties upon conviction ranging from fines of \$500-\$5,000 and/or imprisonment of up to five years.

#### Child Abuse and Neglect Research Findings

There have been three research studies that investigated child abuse and neglect in Palau. The first study was carried out in 1991 by the Ministry of Health and Palau Community Action Agency. It identified an emerging problem of sexual and physical abuse but sampling methods prevented researchers from estimating prevalence in the community (MOH & PCAA, 1991). A study in 1992 by the Micronesian Seminar did not try to estimate prevalence but to understand the situations that put children at risk. The study found that adopted children and step-children were at greatest risk although the risk seemed to arise primarily when the residential family came under stress as a result of death, divorce, or severe economic hardship (Micronesian Seminar, 1992). A 1996 study aimed to derive a community definition of abuse and neglect. The study found that most Palauans believed physical discipline was acceptable but not if it resulted in injury or served as an outlet for the anger of the adult. In responding to scenarios, Palauans defined severe abuse as “abuse” in similar proportions to other cultural groups but there was less consensus about what constituted mild or moderate abuse (Futterman, 1997).

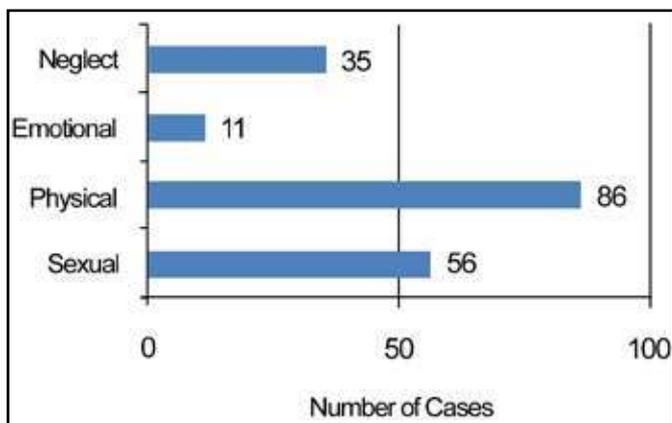
<sup>30</sup>Special education services may extend past the age of 21 if the client is still in school.

<sup>31</sup>Palau Parent Network is a registered NGO organized by parents of children with special needs. The Network provides social support to parents, provides advisory services to service providers, and advocates for the rights of children with special needs.

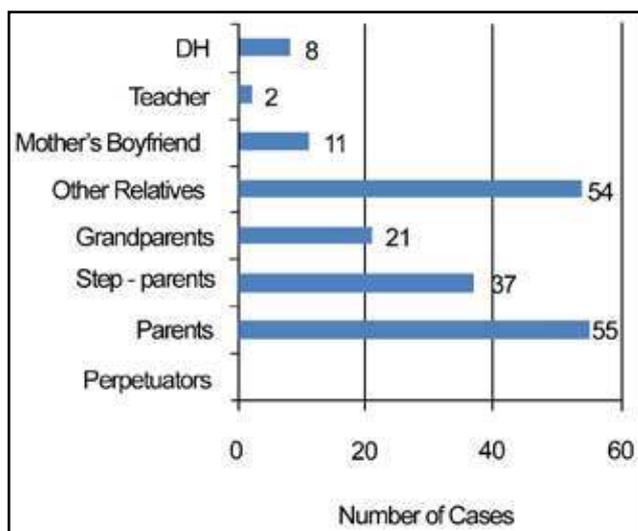
There are three government agencies responsible for intervening in suspected cases of abuse or neglect: (1) Public Safety, the agency that receives and acts on initial reports; (2) the Office of the Attorney General that investigates alleged cases to determine if there is sufficient evidence to bring charges; and (3) VOCA (Victims of Crime Assistance) within the Ministry of Health that provides social work and counseling services to remediate the situation. Although the law makes reporting of suspected cases as mandatory for certain categories of professionals (including health workers and educators), based on recent discussions, it appears there is still a reluctance even on the part of these designated people to report cases (personal communications). This is not surprising in a close knit society in which everyone is interrelated and confidentiality is suspect.

In recent years, there has been an average of 40-45 cases of suspected child abuse and neglect reported to VOCA each year of which 94-100 percent of reports are typically substantiated on investigation (Figures 15 and 16). Physical abuse is the most common form of abuse, followed by sexual abuse. Overwhelmingly, perpetrators are resident in the child's immediate household (64 percent) or are other close relatives (29 percent). Although sexual abuse is included under the child abuse statute, other statutes may also apply, some of which carry higher penalties including laws on rape, sodomy, carnal knowledge, and indecent assault (17 PNC 2802-2806). Amendments to the Child Abuse law have been proposed to strengthen penalties.

**Figure 15. Child Abuse Substantiated Cases by Type VOCAFY**



**Figure 16. Perpetrators of Child Abuse VOCAFY 2002 - 2005**



Over the past year (2007-2008) there have been several particularly horrific cases of sexual abuse reported in the press. These reports lead many residents to wonder if social change is resulting in an actual increase in the number of cases or if the apparent increase is an artifact of reporting. Most service providers appear to believe that the apparent increase in cases is an artifact of reporting. With greater awareness of children's rights and the law, more people are willing to report cases to authorities rather than deal with them through customary means as in the past.<sup>32</sup>

**Issues in Child Abuse and Neglect.** First, most adjudicated cases are serious cases for which penalties under the current law are weak. Second, the lack of a community consensus on what constitutes abuse and neglect is starting to create problems in determining whether cases should be defined and judged under Palauan tradition or under western standards. A recent case involving a Palau High School teacher has brought this issue to the forefront of attention. Her colleagues at the school have emphasized how this case highlights the challenge of living "between two worlds":

*"Legal issues concerning appropriate customary practices need to be addressed to avoid a customary discipline carried out appropriately and in good faith by a school staff from becoming a ground for lawsuit. At a cross road, which way or what new compromise should we take? A typical Palauan teacher will most likely behave, act and respond to a situation as a Palauan. To simply adopt a western philosophy and legal outlook without considering our heritage and cultural values create ... problems ... which ... are very destructive. A teacher cornered on both sides (will) likely find the safest position even if this means ignoring a student in need or telling him/her to "get out of my class..." (PHS Teachers in a petition to government, April 7, 2008).*

Third, the system of protecting children (and women) victims is weak. The courts can issue a restraining order prohibiting contact between the child and the alleged abuser while an investigation is in progress but this is widely perceived as inadequate. Service providers recognize that there is need for a safe temporary shelter for these children while more permanent arrangements are made. While the cultural system requires the maternal uncle, and failing his intervention, the clan leader, to intervene and provide protection, as discussed in other sections of this report, these traditional remedies are not always available today.<sup>33</sup> In addition, multi-generational abuse is a recognized phenomenon in Palau as well as internationally. This makes it even more imperative that measures be taken to insure the best interests of the child are given precedence in creating new residential arrangements whether temporary or permanent.

The Ministry of Health (VOCA and Behavioral Health) did obtain a U.S. Federal grant in the 1990's to establish a shelter but the shelter did not survive the demise of that particular grant. While most service providers focus on need for a Ministry of Health run free standing shelter, given the expense and small number of cases, a network of volunteers trained and willing to take children (and battered women with children) into their homes for a temporary period (say 48-72 hours) while social workers and the courts figure out a more permanent arrangement has the potential to meet the critical need at substantially less cost.

## Exploitation of Children

The Convention requires governments to protect for children from many types of exploitation including harmful labor, sexual exploitation, sale or trafficking, and exposure to illicit drugs, pornography, or other harmful substances.

**Labor Force.** There are only two laws in the Palau National Code that specifically refer to children. Persons under the age of 16 are prohibited from employment on foreign trading vessels except when operated by a single family (7 PNC 16). Persons under the age of

<sup>32</sup> Customary resolution usually involved an apology and payment by the perpetrator to a significant male in the victim's family (father, maternal uncle, or head of the clan) who accepted the restitution on behalf of the victim.

<sup>33</sup> Service providers report a small but growing number of cases in which the extended family has refused to help or has told the victim (in cases of spouse abuse) to "go back and be a good wife."

21 are prohibited from working in premises where alcohol is sold or consumed. In addition, by regulation, the Ministry of Commerce and Trade does not issue foreign labor permits to persons under 21 years of age.

Although child labor is not specifically regulated, exploitation of children in the labor market is not considered to be a pressing concern. It appears that most Palauans believe that children should be either in school or assisting their families, clans, or community instead of in the formal labor force. Through the school-to-work initiative, the Ministry of Education is increasing children's exposure to the labor force. For Palau High School students, the senior year (Grade 12) culminates in a part-time attachment to a place of business; the ultimate goal of this experience is to graduate students who are work-force ready.

Child labor was discussed at the 2008 Symposium on the Situation of Children, Youth, and Women. Youth participants called for more part-time job opportunities to encourage responsibility. Recognizing that Palau's occupational health and safety laws are underdeveloped and that society is changing rapidly, participants agreed, however, that some safeguards are needed to ensure children are employed in safe environments with work not prejudicial to their primary responsibilities as students. Forging specific recommendations, however, will require more extensive consultations.

**Sexual Exploitation.** With the exception of a new statute on prostitution (17 PNC 3601-3), the legal situation with respect to children and sexual exploitation remains as described in the 1998 Situation Analysis. The laws that protect children include:

- Sexually related activities “for the purpose of sexual gratification, pleasure or profit by any person with a child under the age of 16 who is not the spouse of the perpetrator” are defined as sexual abuse and subject to a five-year prison term and/or a fine of \$5,000 under the Child Abuse Act (21 PNC 602e).
- Sodomy, defined as “unlawful and voluntary sexual relations of an unnatural manner with a member of the same sex or the other sex or carnal connection with a beast” is subject to a ten-year prison term (17 PNC 2803).
- Carnal knowledge of any female under the age of 15 who is not the wife of the perpetrator is a crime subject to a ten year prison term (17 PNC 2804).
- Indecent assault or the taking of “indecent and improper liberties with the person of a child under the age of 14 years without committing or intending to commit a crime of rape or carnal knowledge” is subject to a five-year prison term (17 PNC 2806).
- Rape, defined as forceful intercourse against a female who is not the wife of the perpetrator, is subject to a twenty-five year prison term (17 PNC 2802).
- Prostitution, defined as engaging in or offering sexual services in return for money, property, or other things of value, is subject to a range of fines and prison terms imposed on prostitutes, persons who advance prostitution, or persons who pay for sexual services. Any person who advances prostitution involving a minor is subject to fines of \$10,000-\$100,000 and a three-year prison term (17 PNC 3601-3603).

Unmarried girls under sixteen years of age enjoy reasonable legal protection against sexual exploitation. Boys and married girls/women have less protection. It is generally agreed that the Legal Code needs to be updated to eliminate bias on the basis of gender and marital status (CoPopChi, 1998; Symposium on Children, Youth, Women, 2008). The required amendments have already been incorporated into a comprehensive revision of the Criminal Code but this legislation has been stalled in the OEK for several years because it is so comprehensive that it is difficult to forge a consensus on the whole document. Participants in the 2008 Symposium concluded that while a comprehensive approach to legislation is generally preferred, in this case, a piecemeal approach is more likely to result in enactment of the necessary amendments.

There is no legislation that specifically addresses exploitation of children via sexually explicit videos, movies, photos, and electronic images. There are anecdotal reports of children being exploited

through payment for posing for sexually explicit imaging but these reports could not be substantiated for this analysis. It is unclear if these reports are valid or simply “urban legends.” Irrespective, there have been enough cases in other Pacific Island jurisdictions to suggest there is urgency in adding an appropriate statute to Palau's legal code.

**Sale, Trafficking, and Abduction.** Kidnapping is a crime subject to a ten-year prison term (17 PNC 1801). This statute defines kidnapping to be the forcible, fraudulent, or deceitful imprisonment, seizure, or detention of any person (excluding one's own minor children).

In 2005, Palau enacted the Anti-People Smuggling and Trafficking Act (RPPL 7-5) that includes provisions specific to children.

“Every person who knowingly or recklessly recruits, transports, transfers, harbors, or receives a child by any means for the purposes of exploitation shall be guilty of trafficking in children and upon conviction thereof, shall be fined not more than \$500,000 or imprisoned for not more than 50 years or both.”

This penalty is double that which applies to trafficking in adults. While there has been one case involving people trafficking of adult women for purposes of prostitution, there have been no cases to date involving children.

Profiting from the adoption of children is not specifically addressed by the law although there are no known cases. Because of the small number of births and still close-knit family ties, adoption of Palauan children to non-resident, non-Palauans occurs very rarely. Despite the absence of documented local cases, CoPopChi recommended in 1998 that legislation be enacted to explicitly outlaw the transfer of children for money but action has not yet been taken.

Exploitation from Alcohol, Tobacco, and Illicit Drugs. The sale of tobacco to persons under 19 years of age is unlawful. The sale, possession, or use of alcohol is also unlawful for persons under the age of 21 (PNC 11.1085).

“No person .... shall offer to sell, give, or otherwise distribute alcoholic beverages to mi-nors.... No minor shall purchase, possess, receive, or consume any alcoholic beverage...” (11 PNC 1068 and 1085).

As demonstrated by YRBS data, the laws against underage tobacco sales and underage alcohol sale and use are not particularly effective since both practices are widespread. Palau, however, may be approaching the “tipping point” with respect to tobacco use (author's personal observation). Aggressive youth oriented anti-tobacco advertisements, education, and advocacy measures have begun to change the public mindset about tobacco use in general and about children and tobacco specifically. The President's Council of Substance Abuse Prevention (affiliated with the Ministry of Health Behavioral Health Division) is striving to reach a similar “tipping point” with alcohol. A year long “Gen Now” campaign tried to popularize the alcohol and drug free lifestyle and now community groups are being organized to continue the fight using traditional mechanisms (see text box, next page).

Palau has strict legislation against most illicit drugs with mandatory sentences of 25 years upon conviction. The exception is marijuana which is illegal but carries a lesser sentence. Marijuana is widely cultivated and used as documented by YRBS data.

**Children in Conflict with the Law.** All the basic legal rights set out in the Convention pertaining to children in conflict with the law are enjoyed by every person in Palau irrespective of age (Constitution Article 4, 1 PNC Title 4 and 18 PNC 1-12). These rights include:

- Protection against prosecution under *ex post facto* laws; protection from prosecution except under written law of Palau or recognized local customary law not in conflict with the written law (1 PNC 303); however, the penalty for any act which is a crime only under customary law is limited to a fine of no more than \$100 and/or imprisonment for a maximum of six months (17 PNC 108);

## Under-Aged Drinking: A Community-Based Approach

The Ministry of Health has two overarching strategies: (1) creating health-promoting environments; and (2) “communitizing” health (or giving responsibility for health back to communities). Both of these approaches are epitomized by an ongoing initiative by the Council on Substance Abuse Prevention to use the traditional “*bul*” in the fight against under-aged drinking. A “*bul*” is an element of traditional law whereby a chief notifies the public that prohibitions are in effect for certain actions. Most often used to signify that certain natural resources are not to be harvested, the “*bul*” has recently been invoked by the chiefs to declare that under-aged drinking will not be tolerated and to impose a 9 P.M. curfew on children and youth. The “*bul*” is signified by the placement of traditionally decorated bamboo poles topped with coconut fronds in strategic locations and the ringing of church bells three times a day for the first three days to inform the community that a “*bul*” is in effect. The “*bul*” is enforced by the Chief and officers he appoints. First offenders will be warned. Repeat offenders will be subject to traditional punishment including fines, public censure, and sentences of community service. (Adapted from Palau Horizon, July 6-9, 2007 edition).

- Protection against unreasonable search and seizure in the absence of a warrant based on probable cause;
- Protection from excessive bail;
- Protection against double jeopardy and self-incrimination;
- Right to a speedy trial;
- Right to be informed of the nature and cause of charges;
- Right to be confronted by witnesses against the accused;
- Right to have compulsory processes for obtaining favorable witnesses;
- Right to legal counsel;
- Prohibition on capital punishment.

Additional rights and special protections under Palau law include:

- Presumption of innocence if the accused was insane at the time of the offense (17 PNC 105);
- Presumption of innocence for children under the age of 10; partial presumption of innocence for children aged 10-14 years (17 PNC 106);<sup>34</sup>
- Three year statute of limitations except for the crimes of first and second degree murder (17 PNC 107).

The legal code directs the courts to adopt flexible procedures for handling juvenile offenders based on the practices used in juvenile courts in the United States (34 PNC 6102). Judgment against a child is to take into consideration “the best interests of the child” (34 PNC 6102). Under the Constitution, the law, and Public Safety Regulations, juveniles are to be segregated from the general prison population (Constitution Article 4.7 and PNC Title 4). Because there is no separate facility for juvenile offenders, the courts remand children to prison only when there is no other reasonable recourse and prison officials make reasonable efforts to keep juveniles apart from the general population. Strict segregation, however, is impossible given the existing configuration of the facility.

Public safety regulations emphasize that “juvenile offenders are not intended to be (handled as) criminal in nature, rather they are intended to be civil in nature and their goal is to guide and rehabilitate rather than to punish.” Accordingly, the regulations require that juvenile detainees be accorded special protections including:

- Immediate notification of a parent or guardian when the child is detained;
- Detention in an area separate from adult offenders;
- Immediate release into parental custody except when arrested on a serious felony charge;

<sup>34</sup> In their comments on Palau’s initial report on the Convention, the International Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed concern about Palau’s presumption of innocence applied only to children under the age of 10 years. The Committee felt that the age level should be raised.

- Presence of a parent during questioning;
- Withholding of names from the police blotter.

In reality, every effort is made to find ways to guide juvenile offenders along a “right path” using a variety of informal interventions before a juvenile is formally charged and brought before the court. For repeated offenders and those charged with more serious transgressions (but not felonies), an alternative sentencing procedure is available. For these cases, in lieu of a criminal charge, the juvenile offender and the victim are brought together. The juvenile offers an apology and an appropriate non-custodial sentence is developed. This may involve community service, restitution to the victim, or some type of mentoring arrangement. If the juvenile successfully completes the sentence, the case is dismissed. Based on feedback from those involved, the system seems to be working well although it has not been formally evaluated. The problem is that this is an informal system developed by the current Minister of Justice (2005-2008 term). It is therefore subject to change when the Minister changes. It would be advantageous in the remaining days of the present administration if a statutory provision were enacted to ensure continuation of the program and to include at least a nominal budget for this and other preventive programs of the Ministry of Justice.

**Non-Palauan Children.** There are two categories of non-Palauan children, each having slightly different rights related issues: (a) non-Palauan children who are dependents of “guest” workers; and (b) non-Palauan children who have been adopted by Palauan parent(s).

Only “guest workers” making more than \$15,000 per year have the right to bring their children to Palau. These children are afforded some of the rights accorded to Palauan children but not all. They have equal rights to education, although a bill was introduced into the OEK in 2008 that would have required non-Palauan children enrolled in public schools to pay tuition; due to lack of support, this proposal has subsequently been tabled.<sup>35</sup> As non-Palauans they are charged 70% of the prevailing medical fee schedule and have access to some but not all of the free preventive services offered to Palauan children.

The number of non-Palauan children adopted by Palauans is not known, although the number is certainly small. In a departure from the situation that prevailed in 1998, these children have gradually been afforded a wider array of rights; they enjoy the right to free education and the same level of free or subsidized health care as citizen children.<sup>36</sup> They are, however, unable to obtain a Palauan passport or citizenship, and upon turning 18, have no automatic rights to residency. For the families involved, this is creating serious difficulties as in some cases the child is stateless and in other cases, the child is a “citizen” of a country he/she has never visited and knows little or nothing about. This is a huge rights issue that is only now becoming evident as more cases are brought to the attention of the public. So far, there has been no arrangement proposed that is satisfactory to those who want to retain Palauan citizenship strictly to persons of Palauan blood and those who want to expand the range of rights accorded to adoptees.

**Refugees and Child Victims of Armed Conflict.** Because of Palau’s location and small size, it has very limited (recent) experience with refugees or with armed conflict although there have been occasional cases of child laborers aboard foreign fishing boats “arrested” for violation of Palau’s Exclusive Economic Zone. The procedure for handling these children while arrangements are made for repatriation has proven problematic. As children, they should not be detained in the jail but other options are limited.

Palau does not have a statutory framework that specifically addresses child refugees. Palau does, however, have an evolving emergency response capacity that will enable it to deal with the health and basic needs of refugees of all ages provided the international community follows quickly with material support.

<sup>35</sup> Opponents of the measure cited the Convention as one of the reasons that the bill should not be approved.

<sup>36</sup> In amendments to the Medical Fees regulations of 2006, adopted children and spouses of Palauans are charged the same rate on the sliding medical fee schedule as their parent/spouse irrespective of their citizenship.

### 3.7. Children's Participation

The Palau Constitution and the Palau legal code grant to all persons, including children, a range of basic freedoms and participatory rights, including freedom of information, expression, thought, conscience, religion and association. Status and privilege in Palauan society, however, are accorded on the basis of social rank which correlates with age.

Because of a child's subordinate role in society, although s/he may enjoy the same basic legal rights as adults, the manner, time, and place for exercising those rights is subject to family, clan, and in some cases, government constraints. Although attitudes vary from family to family and according to individual circumstances, society in general would not consider the participatory rights of children to be of equal importance to those of adults. Despite these limitations, children and youth do participate in community life in a number of ways, including:

- School clubs and student body associations;
- Culture and the arts;
- Sports teams and sporting federations;

- Speech and essay competitions featured in conjunction with various community events;
- Child-oriented columns and pages in the local newspaper;
- Youth-oriented radio and television broadcasting, including the recently organized Oceania Television Network;
- Annual Youth Rally and other state and community activities associated with National Youth Day (public holiday held on March 15th each year);
- Membership in some boards (e.g. student trustee at Palau Community College, youth representative on the board of Palau Swimming Association, youth representative on the board of Berkel Be-lau Theatre).

Youth Service Providers in Palau have adopted a "youth development" approach that emphasizes the assets of young people rather than their problems and identifies the primary role of providers to be catalysts for independent youth action to address issues of importance to themselves. This approach however, is still new as evidenced by a survey conducted in preparation for the 2008 Youth Rally (see Part 4 for further discussion).

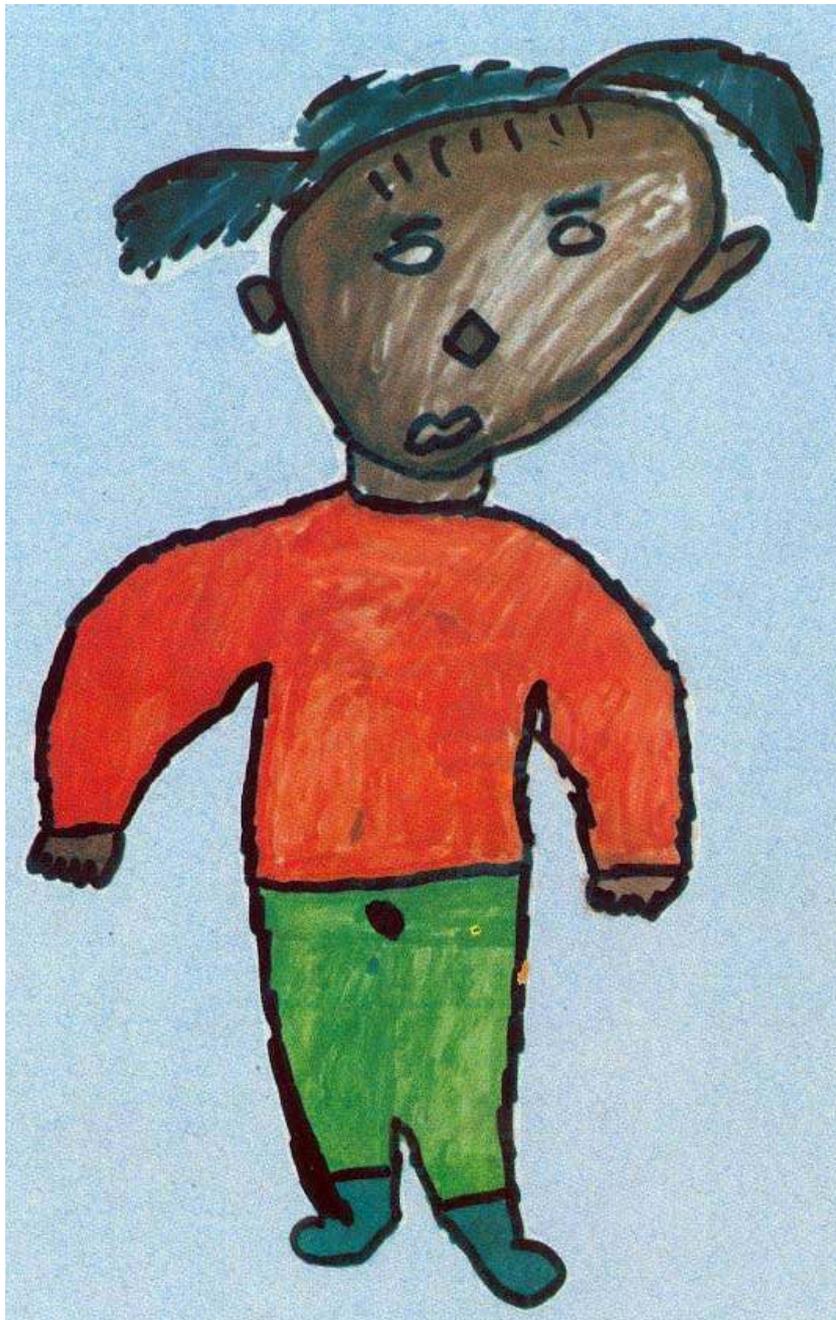
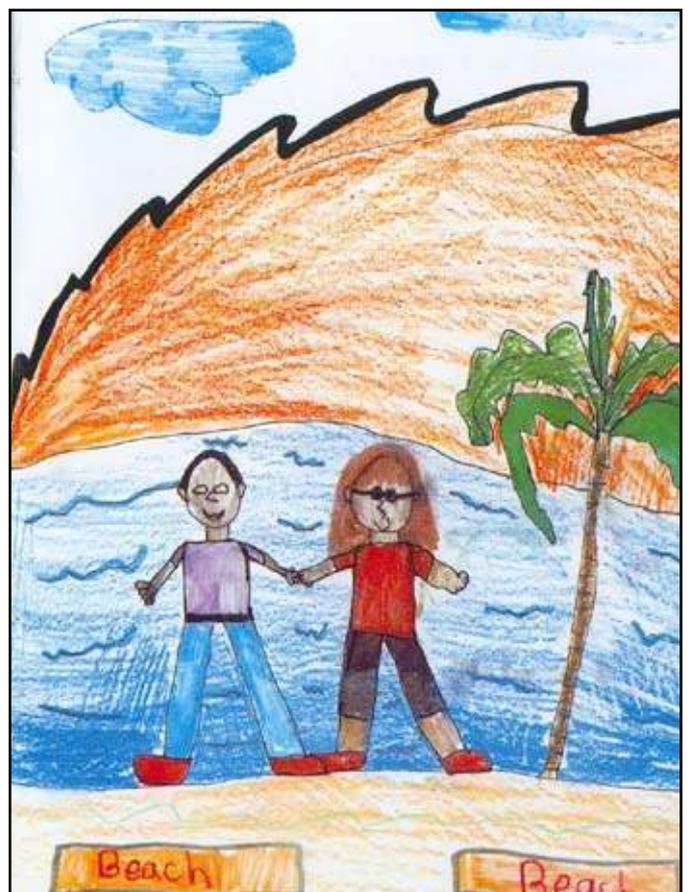




Photo by Judy Otto

# PART 4

## SITUATION OF YOUTH



## 4.1. Introduction

In many “Western” societies, the term “youth” encompasses a period beginning at puberty (13-15 years of age) and ending in the mid-twenties when most young adults have finished post-secondary school, entered into the labor force, and established family units independent of their parents. In similar fashion, Pacific societies define “youth” as beginning at puberty and ending at the time that young adults have typically established their own independent family units. Because the period of transition in Pacific societies tends to be longer than in the West, the definition of “youth” while beginning at puberty often extends into middle age. (Recall that in traditional Palauan society, a young man may not be in a position economically or socially to build his own house until his mid-30’s or even 40’s).

Previously, the Palau government’s official definition of “youth” was 15-44. Recognizing that society is changing and many young adults aspire to earlier independence, the most recent youth policy (approved by the OEK in 2005) defines “youth” as 15-34. Even this reduced age spectrum poses challenges in the context of the Situation Analysis:

- First, there is overlap between older children and youth;
- Second, the age range and life circumstances of persons aged 15-34 is highly diverse; and
- Third, the age range is wider than what UNICEF and other international development agencies normally consider as constituting “youth.”

Accordingly, this Part of the Situation Analysis will acknowledge the official definition of youth but focus on the situation of younger youth persons 15-24 years of age.

## 4.2. Enumerating Youth

In 2005, there were 6,167 youth resident in Palau equivalent to 31% of the resident population (Table 14). The youth population was more concentrated in the urban Koror-Airai area (82%) than was the general population (72%). Thirteen percent of youth lived in rural Babeldaob and five percent lived in the outlying islands.

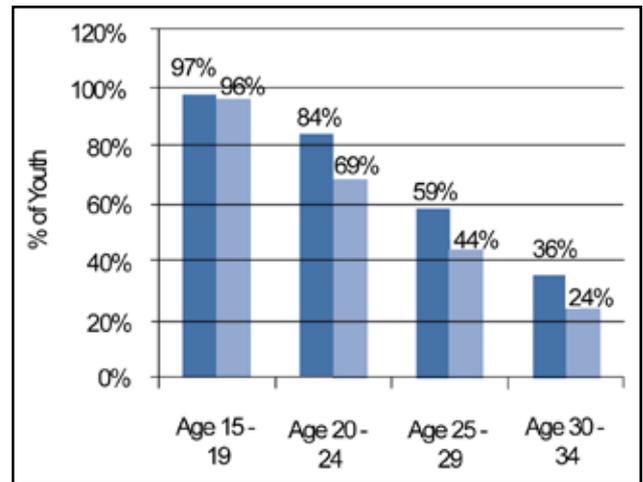
Age Group	Male		Female		Both Sexes		Total
	Palauan <sup>37</sup>	Non-Palauan	Palauan	Non-Palauan	Palauan	Non-Palauan	
15-19	665	50	620	127	1285	177	1462
20-24	433	279	380	174	813	453	1266
25-29	478	464	381	260	859	724	1583
30-34	512	560	489	295	1001	855	1856
Total	2088	1353	1870	856	3958	2209	6167

Source: 2005 Census Report, Table 59.

There has been an 8 percent decline in the number of Palauan youth since 1990, while the number of non-Palauan youth has increased by 77 percent, a reflection of the youthfulness of Palau’s “guest” worker population. Although speculative, the sharp decline in Palauan youth in 1995 probably reflects the exodus that immediately followed independence which heralded the lifting of immigration restrictions for Palauans in the U.S.

**Marital and Household Status.** Figure 17 shows the percent of youth by age who have not yet married. As shown, the majority of women marry in their late 20’s while the majority of men marry in their early 30’s. With only 3 percent of males and 4 percent of females in the 15-19 year age group married, excessively early marriage is not a significant social issue.

Figure 17. Never Married Youth, 2005 Census



Seventeen percent of households are headed by youth (Figure 18). These households tend to be economically marginalized. While the median income in 2004 for all households was \$15,107, median income for households headed by youth, especially younger youth, was significantly less (Figure 19).

Figure 18. Youth Households 2005 Census

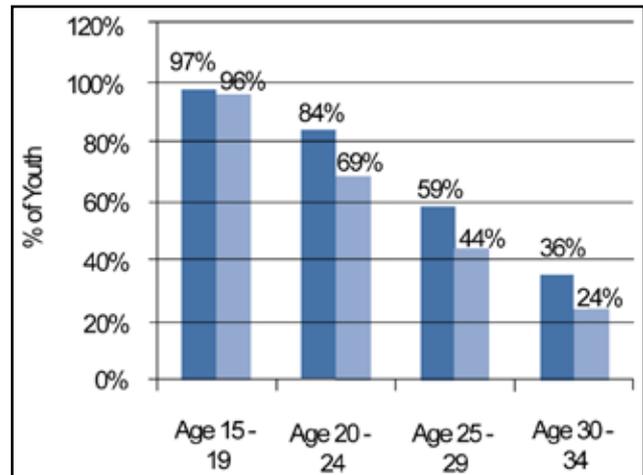
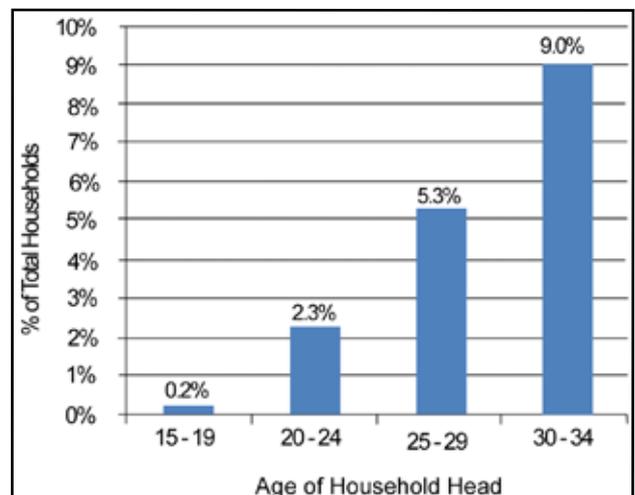


Figure 19. Median Income Youth-Headed Households, 2005 Census



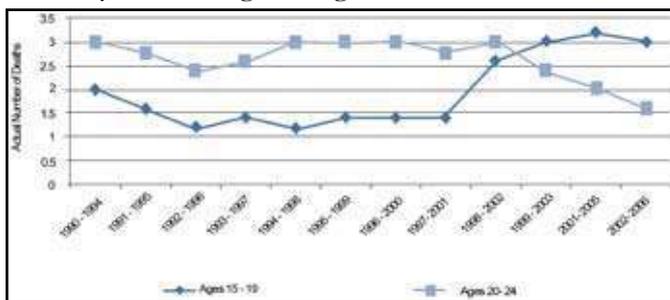
<sup>37</sup>“Palauan” includes Palauans and Carolinians.

### 4.3. Youth and Health

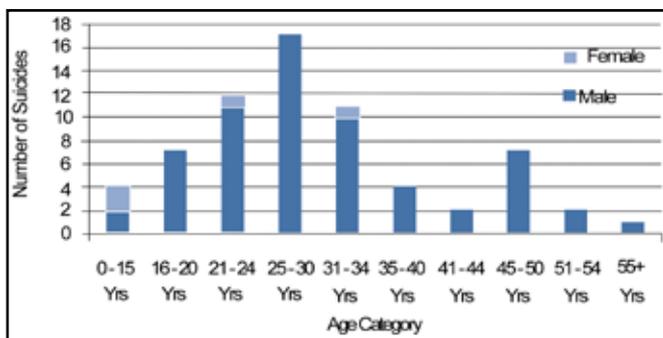
The wide age range incorporated under the official definition of “youth” encompasses diverse health indicators. Younger youth (ages 15-24) experience relatively few serious health problems although as noted in Part 3, the behavioral antecedents of chronic diseases are in evidence tobacco use, alcohol abuse, sedentary lifestyle, and poor diet. By the later youth period, ill health in the form of non-communicable diseases is becoming more visible.

In an average year, there are 2-3 deaths among the youngest youth (aged 15-19) and 1-2 deaths among youth aged 20-24 years (Figure 20). Although the figure suggests a trend toward increasing deaths among teens and declining deaths among young adults in their twenties, no valid interpretation of these data are possible due to the small population and small number of deaths. Most deaths in these younger age groups result from alcohol related injuries. Male youth aged 21-34 are also at heightened risk of suicide (Figure 21).

**Figure 20.** Deaths Among Youth Ages 15 - 24  
5 - year Moving Average, Source: MOH Data

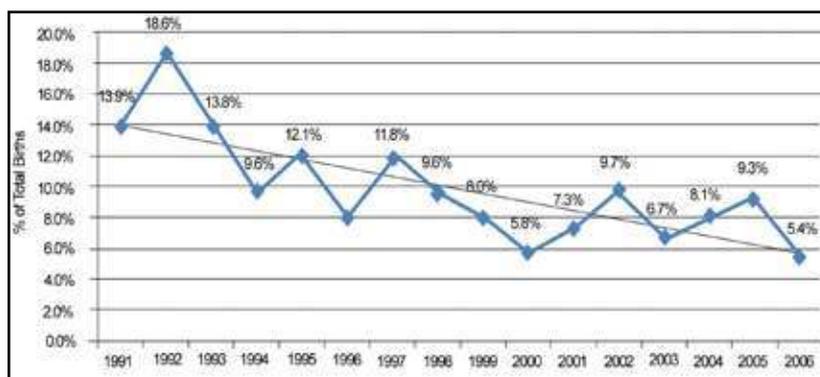


**Figure 21.** Suicide by Age, 1999 - 2004 Data, MOH - Behavioral Division



**Fertility.** For many years teenage pregnancy was a significant social and health issue. In the 1980's and early 1990's, 18-20 percent of births were to teen mothers, including many younger teens (17 years of age and younger). This has changed dramatically. In recent years 5-8 percent of births are to teen mothers, most older teens 18-19 years of age (Figure 22).

**Figure 22.** Percent of Births to Teen Mothers, 1991 - 2006 MOH Data



**HIV and STDs.** HIV testing and surveillance were initiated in Palau in 1989. Between 1993 and 2000, two cases were identified, both late stage AIDS among Palauans who acquired the infection abroad. In 2000, the first locally acquired HIV infection was detected followed by a second case identified through contact tracing. In 2004, another late stage AIDS case was detected with two more cases found through contact tracing. Although the number of cases is low, the case rate is 15/100,000, comparable to that of other Pacific Island nations. To date, all seven confirmed HIV-AIDS cases have been among ethnic Palauans. Based on studies elsewhere, the Ministry of Health estimates there may be 5-6 additional HIV positive cases resident in Palau that are as yet undetected (HIV-AIDS Program, 2005).

Palau's first and to date only population wide survey of sexual risk behaviors was conducted in 1991. The survey found high levels of risky behaviors including multiple sexual partners (28 percent of men and 10 percent of women), frequent off island sex especially by men, and negligible condom use. Second generation surveys were conducted in 2005 and 2006 among antenatal clinic patients and police officers. These surveys provided the first major update of sexual behaviors among the general population since 1991. The surveys found:

- Over 90 percent of respondents had been exposed to HIV-AIDS education resulting in good knowledge of HIV prevention but lingering misconceptions about transmission including: a significant number of respondents believing HIV is transmitted via mosquitoes; confusion about mother-child transmission; and reluctance on the part of male participants to socialize with HIV-positive persons.
- The prevalence of multiple sex partners was similar to that described in 1991. Among women, 9 percent reported multiple partners during the 12 months preceding the survey. The rate among men was much higher - 32 percent.
- Among respondents with multiple partners, occasional condom use was much higher than that reported in 1991 but of respondents with multiple partners, none of the women and only 20 percent of the men reported consistent condom use during every encounter.

Second generation survey data is not specific to youth although over half of the female and 40 percent of the male participants were youth (15-34 years of age). Youth specific information is available through the YRBS series although the survey population is limited to Palau High School students. As noted in Part 3, the YRBS series finds high, albeit declining levels of sexual activity. 39 percent of students reported having had sexual intercourse (2007) down from 47 percent (2001) but condom use among sexually active students remained below 50 percent despite virtually all students reporting exposure to HIV-AIDS prevention education.

Gonorrhea and Chlamydia trachomatis are the most common sexually transmitted diseases. Syphilis is much less common (average one to two cases per year except for a spike in 2004). The second generation HIV studies documented Chlamydia trachomatis prevalence of 11 percent among pregnant women and 4.5 percent among males. This rate for pregnant women is similar to that of many other Pacific nations but twice the rates reported in most Asian, African and European populations and five times the rate of the United States (Gold, 2008). Based on routine reporting from health clinics, Chlamydia infection shows an upward trend. Youth aged 15-29 are at highest risk of infection (HIV-AIDS Program, 2005). In most years, gonorrhea infection rates average around 200 cases per 100,000 population but for some years have spiked sharply. In 1998 and again in 2004, infection rates rose to 1000/100,000 and 900/100,000 respectively. Both of these spikes coincided with major regional events hosted by Palau (the Micro-Games in 1998 and the Festival of Arts in 2004). These patterns further indicate that risky sexual behaviors remain common in the community.

**Psycho-social Health.** The YRBS (Youth Risk Behavior Survey) series provides a great deal of in-formation about psycho-social health issues affecting students at Palau High School (see Part 3). There is very little known about psycho-social issues affecting youth attending private schools, out-of-school youth and older youth.

## Profile: HIV-AIDS-STD Program

The HIV-AIDS pattern in Palau is classified by WHO as a “concentrated/low-level” epidemic (when HIV is not well established in the general population and the prevalence of HIV in sentinel antenatal clinics is below 1%). This is similar to the epidemiological profile of most Pacific Island countries (Gold, 2008). Although the earliest cases affected Palauans resident overseas who returned home in the later stages of infection, subsequent cases have circulated locally through heterosexual contact. Heterosexual transmission is expected to remain the dominate mode of transmission.

The HIV-AIDS program in Palau focuses on awareness, education, screening, and prevention (promotion of abstinence and condom use). There is an aggressive outreach and education program for youth with an office located on the campus of Palau Community College. A network of peer mentors have been trained (and continue to be trained) for work with high school and college students as well as out-of-school youth. A drama team carries awareness messages to communities and the media is used aggressively to reach the general population.

One of the messages of the awareness program is the importance of testing. Free, confidential voluntary testing services are available at Belau National Hospital. Testing is mandatory for blood donors and strongly encouraged for all pregnant women, STD clinic attendees, prisoners, and other groups deemed to be at-risk. Although the number of tests performed continues to increase each year, the Ministry of Health recognizes that it reaches only a fraction of persons at highest risk including persons engaging in casual sex with multiple partners, sex workers and their clients, and the MSM (men who have sex with men) population.

For persons who test positive for HIV, HAART (anti-retroviral drug therapy) is available at no cost through a U.S. Federal Grant (the Ryan White CARE Act) although only one of Palau’s seven cases accepted therapy. To date, Palau has had only one pregnant woman test positive for HIV. Due to the availability of anti-retroviral drug therapy, her baby was born free of HIV infection (HIV-AIDS Program 2005 & Ngruchelbad, J. (2008), personal communications.).

## Bullying

Bullying has been defined as “repeated oppression, either physical or psychological, of a less powerful person by a more powerful person or group” (Pacific Resources for Education and Learning, undated). Bullying takes many forms verbal abuse such as teasing, taunting, and threatening; physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, spitting, stealing, and malicious pranks; and social abuse systematic exclusion of the victim from his/her society of peers. In the Pacific Islands, bullying is often perceived as a “Western” problem (PREL, undated). It has been thought to be a rare occurrence and one that is quickly suppressed by students themselves and failing this, by adults. One Palauan leader had this to say on the subject in 1999:

*“If a student is teased or oppressed by another, that student’s friends will come to his or her rescue.... If bullying occurs in schools, adults are quick to notice and take correction actions so that it never lasts.”*

Given this background, many Palauan adults do not take bullying seriously and are surprised to learn that students take it very seriously. The 2006 school health survey found that one quarter of students reported having experienced bullying at school making this the most common social problem identified by students (MOH, 2006) and one possibly implicated in Palau’s high adolescent depression and suicide ideation statistics. Because of the pervasiveness of the problem, student members of the Youth Rally 2008 planning committee included a session on bullying in the agenda for that conference. From that session came the clear message “TAKE BULLYING SERIOUSLY!” together with the following recommendations:

For Youth -

- Encourage unity among youth;
- Organize a youth organization or team to address bullying;
- Conduct an anti-bullying campaign;
- Set a good example by not engaging in bullying.

For parents -

- Create a parent organization that teaches parents about bullying and its prevention;
- Encourage open communications between parents and children so children are comfortable reporting incidences of bullying to parents;
- Parents to set good role models by not engaging in bullying themselves;
- Teach children about bullying and its effects.

For teachers and other service providers -

- Strive to develop trust among youth;
- Ensure social services are available at all schools so that victims will have someone to talk with;
- Advise students to “do the right thing” by not engaging in bullying behaviors;
- Take a more active role in student activities;
- (Teachers) give equal attention to all students; avoid favoritism.

The Adolescent Health Cooperative is taking bullying seriously by conducting workshops on bullying in the schools and expanding social support services at all schools. It appears that bullying is just another example of social change in Palau and life “between two worlds.”

**Health Services Targeting Youth.** The Ministry of Health has formed a multi-agency Adolescent Health Collaborative to improve the delivery of services to in school youth. The collaborative conducts regular school health screenings, supervises the YRBS, and strives to improve outreach to schools. A school health clinic has been established at Palau High School and every public school in Palau has been assigned a Ministry of Health social worker who visits regularly to provide ongoing support services to children and staff. The Ministry of Health and school principals are working to identify a teacher or staff at each school who can be trained in basic counseling techniques in order to improve continuity of services.

#### 4.4. Education

Based on 2005 census data, 77 percent of resident youth aged 25-34 are high school graduates and 7 percent are college graduates (with bachelor's degrees).<sup>38</sup> Females have higher levels of educational attainment than males. Eighty-three percent of females have at least a high school diploma compared with only 72 percent of males.

As noted in Part 3, youth who do not complete high school have limited options until they reach 18 years of age. After turning 18, they can choose between two on-island adult education programs – one operated by the Ministry of Education and one by Palau Community College, the apprenticeship program operated by the U.S. military in cooperation with Palau Community Action Agency, or the U.S. Job Corps. The total number of places available in these programs is limited; demand for admission, especially in the apprenticeship and Job Corps programs, far outstrips available places.

Following high school graduation (or earning a GED), youth have a variety of options. They can enter the workforce either in Palau or the United States, join the U.S. military, enroll in post-secondary vocational or academic education at Palau Community College, apply for one of the vocational training programs, or apply for off-island study with the possibility of partial financial support (grants, loans, and/or scholarships) through the Palau National Scholarship Board.

Because Palau high schools do not yet have a student tracking data base (work in progress), there is no definitive data about the choices Palau's students are making. Given, however, the number of applications processed each year by the Scholarship Board and the number of new admissions to Palau Community College, it seems the vast majority of high school graduates do progress to post-secondary schooling. Dropout rates are high, however, resulting in relatively low post-secondary graduation rates.

**Palau Community College (PCC).** On-island post-secondary education is available at PCC, an institution that traces its roots back to 1927 and the Japanese vocational school then established to teach carpentry skills to Palauan boys. Today, PCC is an accredited post-secondary educational institution that offers:

- Life-long learning for students of all ages;
- Certificate and degree level education;
- Preparation for students intending to transfer to four-year colleges;
- Development of Palau's workforce.

To meet these objectives, PCC offers a number of educational options including certificate level training, career-specific diplomas, and two-year associate degree programs supplemented by specialized non-degree courses:

- Continuing education courses according to community demand;
- Adult high school targeting high school dropouts;
- Small business development courses for aspiring entrepreneurs; and
- Supplemental programs for high school students to prepare low-income or academically at-risk students for college (Upward Bound, Upward Bound Math & Science, and Talent Search).

**Palau National Scholarship Board (PNSB).** The PNSB was established by Title 22 of the Palau National Code for the purpose of administering public funds (loans and scholarships) appropriated to assist Palau citizens pursue postsecondary education at home and abroad. Although the primary mandate of the Board is to administer public funds, the Board is also administers non-public funds upon request by donor(s). The purposes of public financial assistance for post-secondary education are both social and developmental (PNC Title 22).

“From a social perspective, Government has determined that public funds should be used to provide financial assistance to citizens pursuing postsecondary education and training. From a developmental perspective, Government determines that priority assistance is warranted to students in medicine, law, and engineering”.

To the extent that funding is provided to students studying at or through Palau Community College, public scholarships and loans also help to develop and finance the domestic post-secondary education sub-sector. This purpose is, however, incidental to the stated purposes under current law.

Because post-secondary education is expensive and funds limited, the law recognizes that students and their families are primarily responsible for financing postsecondary education. Students are encouraged to seek financial assistance from a multiple sources including those U.S. Federal grants, loans for which they are eligible. Since 1995, the OEK has allocated \$1.2m annually for student scholarships and loans and \$70,000 annually for operation of the Board of Trustees, twice the level of funding appropriated prior to Independence, although the real value of funding has eroded due to inflation in the post-secondary education sector of the United States, destination for most Palau students. Annex G presents data from the PNSB program.

Funding for postsecondary education not originating with the Palau Government but administered by the PNSB was valued at \$281,000 for the 2007-2008 academic year and originated with twelve donors. While most non-Palau government grants are small (\$500-2,000), several provide 100 percent multi-year financing for studies at selected institutions (e.g. scholarships awarded under the Overseas Development Aid programs of Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and Taiwan). Private donors set their own criteria. PNSB awards include grants (undergraduates), scholarships (junior and senior years only), and loans (available to all students including those enrolled in graduate programs). Loan recipients are expected to repay their loans either in cash or through community service upon returning to Palau. Students receiving scholarships must repay the funds if they choose not to work in Palau for a minimum of three years following completion of schooling. Collection rates, however, are low due to difficulty in tracking students in the United States, and the low incomes of most guarantors at home.

#### Apprenticeship Training: A Success Story

One popular and very successful vocational-technical training program is the apprenticeship program operated by the U.S. military Civic Action Team (“CAT”). This program is funded in part by a \$250,000 allocation each year from the OEK and administered by the Palau Community Action Agency. The twelve month program accepts 14 students each year in 12 fields of study. The program is very popular with 231 recorded enrollments. Based on PCAA records, the program has a high graduation rate (91 percent) and high retention rate in Palau (83 percent of living graduates who can be located are working in Palau). Most graduates are employed in their field of study or a closely related field. Although a number of graduates have or are continuing their education at PCC, the program is not articulated with PCC nor does it qualify graduates for entry into formal U.S. apprenticeship programs. Its explicit purpose is to train Palauans to work in Palau. (Information courtesy of PCAA).

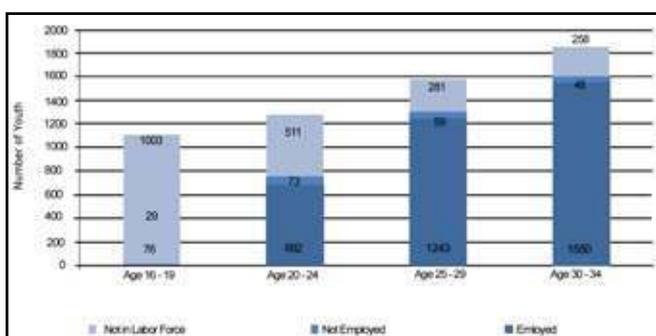
<sup>38</sup>These data include all residents without distinguishing between ethnic or citizenship groups.

To make more efficient use of relatively scarce public funds available for education, it has been proposed that a testing program be initiated to screen students who apply for public post-secondary financial assistance (ADB-PINZ, 2008b). Students who fail the test would have an option of remedial classes through PCC and a second chance at application. In this way only students academically prepared to succeed in postsecondary education would be awarded public financial assistance. Other proposals to enhance the cost-effectiveness of postsecondary financial aid include: (a) limit first and second year awards to study at Palau Community College; and (b) explore options for channeling more students to educational institutions in Asia (ADB-PINZ, 2008).

#### 4.5. Youth and Work

Based on 2005 census data, 61 percent of youth are employed, 4 percent are unemployed, and 35 percent are not in the labor force. These rates vary widely with age (Figure 23). Female youth are less likely to be employed (57 percent) than male youth (67 percent). Because labor statistics include both Palauans and non-Palauans, they mask the true level of unemployment and under-employment among Palauan youth, especially Palauan males.

**Figure 23. Labour Force Status of Youth by Age 2005 Census Data**



Palau’s labor force is highly stratified with public sector and managerial positions in the private sector dominated by Palauans while non-Palauans dominate the private sector labor force. As a result, many young Palauans do not aspire to entry level positions, especially those involving manual labor. At the same time, labor policies make the importation of foreign labor easy and in many cases cheaper than hiring Palauans. The result is a large number of youth opting out of the labor force or opting for emigration often taking positions off-island similar to those they rejected at home albeit at much higher wages. At present, the general consensus in the community is that it is difficult for young Palauans to gain entry into the local labor force at a living wage. Two strategies have been proposed to (in part) redress this problem: (a) legislation has been introduced into the Senate to amend Palau’s minimum wage act to cover all workers; at present the minimum wage only covers Palauan workers, a provision widely believed to encourage employers to hire off-island; and (2) the National Medium-Term Development Strategy proposes a system of uniform labor fees with fees used to control the number of “guest workers;” currently Palauans and Palauan-owned businesses and certain categories of workers (including farm workers and domestic helpers) are subject to lower fees than other employers/workers.

Eleven percent of youth have no income. This ranges from 25 percent of 15-19 year olds to 0.2 percent of 30-34 year olds. Median incomes (for those who have income) also vary with age. Females have higher median incomes than males across all age categories (Table 15).

	Age 15-19	Age 20-24	Age 25-29	Age 30-34
Males	\$ 856	\$ 3,509	\$ 4,070	\$ 4,984
Females	\$ 874	\$ 3,560	\$ 4,385	\$ 5,875

#### 4.6. Youth Programming

At the national level, youth affairs are the responsibility of the Bureau of Community Services within the Ministry of Community and Cultural Affairs. In past years, this Division provided staff support to the Palau National Youth Congress, comprised of youth representatives appointed by the governors of each of the sixteen states. The Congress was responsible for planning programs that responded to the needs of state constituents and coordinating with line ministries and offices for program implementation. Although still a recognized statutory body, no funds are currently allocated for the Youth Congress and the Congress is non-functional in part because of lack of budget and in part because Governors have not responded to requests to nominate state representatives. At the state level, most governors have designated an officer to oversee youth affairs, but only Koror and Airai have developed and professionally staffed youth development divisions.

The Palau National Olympic Committee is a semi-government body charged with promoting sports. It operates in close partnership with fourteen sports federations. Although the mandate of PNOC is to promote sports across the entire population, much of its work focuses on youth development for fitness and competition, sports management, and coaching.

All of the youth programs reflect a youth development approach in which the focus is on developing the capacity of youth to address youth-related issues. In preparation for the 2008 Youth Rally, a survey was undertaken to determine priorities and challenges for younger youth (ages 14-21). The results of the survey are presented in the text box (opposite page). The survey demonstrates that more work is needed to fully “sell” the Youth Development approach to young people themselves.

#### 4.7. Palau National Youth Policy

In 2005, the Ministry of Community and Cultural Affairs, assisted by a Youth Policy committee, prepared a National Youth Policy subsequently endorsed by the OEK. The policy emphasizes both the responsibilities and rights of youth and has two goals and ten policy principals (Table 16, next page). Implementation of the policy is the responsibility of the various line ministries and departments. Coordination and monitoring of implementation is the responsibility of the Youth Affairs Office within the Bureau of Community Services (Ministry of Community and Cultural Affairs). In reality the Youth Office has limited capacity to oversee the policy. The office has two staff, one of whom is fully tasked with managing applications for the U.S. Job Corps program. The Youth Service Coordinator has no staff support, no advisory committee (formally the National Youth Congress), and no funding apart from her salary.



Youth Choir from St. Joseph’s Church lead the national anthem during the opening of Youth Rally 2008. (Photo by Judy Otto)

Table 16. Youth Policy 2005	
<b>Goals</b>	
1.	Youth must be empowered to become productive and contributing members of the community.
2.	Maximize the rights of young Palauans to access quality public services and to share in national resources.
<b>Guiding Principles</b>	
1.	The nation shall establish programs to promote the spirit of nationalism and patriotism.
2.	The nation shall ensure "safe, healthy, and enjoyable passage" through the youth period by developing strategies to maximize spiritual, physical, and mental health.
3.	The nation shall ensure that every young person graduating from high school has the ability to pursue further academic studies or to be gainfully employed.
4.	The nation will seek to maximize employability of young people and to maximize their economic contributions in all sectors.
5.	The nation shall strengthen programs for crime prevention and rehabilitation of incarcerated youth.
6.	The nation shall develop and promote programs in sports and recreation.
7.	The nation shall contribute to create and/or provide an environment conducive for and opportunities for youth to benefit from national development.
8.	The nation shall ensure that young people's voices are heard on all matters that concern them including development of and sharing in national resources.
9.	The nation shall ensure active participation of youth in decisions regarding resource appropriations.
10.	The nation shall develop programs to promote culture and fine art.

## 4.8. Summary and Conclusions

The official definition of "youth" encompasses a wide range of life circumstances. Based on the Youth Rally 2008, partnership with parents is an overwhelming concern for younger youth (ages 14-20), followed by the closely linked issues of education and psycho-social health. Youth may "push" adults away but down deep they crave parental attention and involvement in their lives. This involvement will, in turn, facilitate success in school, improve psycho-social health,

and promote culture. While it is individuals and families that have the main responsibility to reach out to children and youth, civil society can also help by constantly reminding adults and youth of the importance of partnership across generations while creating opportunities for whole family involvement in cultural and community affairs. This overwhelming need on the part of youth is captured in the theme song for Youth Rally 2008, "Ka Bo Dedak" by local songwriter, Edward Anastacio.

### ***Ka Bo Dedak***

English Translation (By Edward Anastacio)

#### **Chorus:**

Let us unite together  
 We parents (fathers and mothers),  
 The youth and the students,  
 And help each other.  
 Let us take a step forward  
 Into the future  
 With a grateful heart  
 And respect for each other  
 Let's help and hear each other out.

#### **Verse 1**

Through unity we can accomplish much  
 And learn a lot from each other  
 You and I know too well  
 That we live in a complicated world  
 So let's unite and help each other  
 Overcome the problems that we are facing.  
 Let's be cautious about everything we say  
 And everything we do  
 'cause learning takes place everywhere  
 Beginning at our homes to the school even in the streets  
 Let the "words and actions" be modeled out  
 And be practical in our daily interactions everywhere.

#### **First Narration Rap:**

Grandpa, Grandma, Mom and Dad  
 Uncle, Aunt and You – my special friend  
 Sometimes (which is really a lot of times)  
 I would face many overwhelming problems  
 That I just couldn't share  
 I would hide and cry myself out  
 I wish it would be possible  
 That somebody who understands would come out and help me  
 'Cause I'm hurt, lonely, and in pain  
 And still need to be taught many of life's lessons.

#### **Second Narration Rap:**

Oh! I have so many problems  
 Including boys and girls who are my enemies  
 I turn to smoking marijuana  
 And consuming alcohol  
 And call in sick, as to skip school classes  
 'Cause of all the headaches and heartaches  
 But.... What I really need  
 Is love, your love to carry me on.

## Youth Survey Results, 2008

To gain insight into the priorities of younger youth (14-20 years of age), in preparation for Youth Rally 2008, a four-question, self-administered survey was distributed to schools (8th grade through Pa-lau Community College level). The questions were:

1. What are your top two priorities in life RIGHT NOW?
2. What are your top two challenges in life RIGHT NOW?
3. To address challenges, what do you think should be done by adults?
4. To address these challenges, what do you think should be done by youth?

143 surveys were returned. While a low response rate, there were some clear findings.

1. 98% of respondents listed school or education as their top priority. Second for younger youth (those in school) came family and third, came friends. Work (getting a job or balancing work and school) was the 2nd priority for many PCC students.
2. 97% of respondents listed school or education as their major challenge. After school, there was considerable diversity. For many respondents, family, friends and peer pressures were challenges. For others, challenges were more internal becoming a better person, developing self-discipline, being a positive role model. Students at church schools frequently mentioned growing closer to God as a challenge. While few Koror respondents mentioned substance use (alcohol, drugs, tobacco, betel nut) as a challenge, virtually every Babeldaob respondent mentioned one or more of these things.
3. Younger respondents generally wanted more adult attention in the form of specific help for social or school problems, listening, guidance and advice, or just plan TIME. Among PCC respondents, students overwhelmingly called on adults to initiate more programs and activities suggesting a passivity that is at variance with the youth development approach.
4. Regarding youth actions, responses varied widely. Most common responses dealt with school complete an education, study hard and other variations. Responsible behavior (a category including a long list of specific measures to avoid harm and promote health) was also a common response. Also common were exhortations for peers to work harder, be more responsible, focus more, and in general, take more initiative. Although there were scattered calls for youth to be more proactive in programming, there was little awareness that youth have the ability to take action.

While the strength of conclusions is limited by low survey response rates, the focus on education was clear the message that adults have been sending to children and youth for over a generation “education first” has clearly been internalized by young people. The hunger on the part of younger youth for more adult time and support was further re-enforced by Youth Rally proceedings. This theme parent involvement actually came through much more clearly in the Rally than in the pre-rally survey. The apparent low capacity for self-initiation needs further investigation. The youth development approach in which youth are valued as assets and providers serve mainly as facilitators (rather than as initiators), has been adopted by Palau in the National Youth Policy but it seems there is a way to go before it becomes internalized in the minds of young people themselves. A marketing campaign to “sell” youth development and a targeted focus on this theme in a future rally may be beneficial.

Youth Rally 2008  
Organizing Committee



Youth, being pulled, need adult assistance. (Photo by Senator Caleb Otto)

# PART 5

## SITUATION OF WOMEN



## 5.1. Overview

The situation of Palauan women differs greatly from that of women in many other nations. Palau is a matriarchal and matrilineal society in which women have traditionally held positions of power and respect in a spirit of equality with their male counterparts. Although the roles and responsibilities of women and men differ, these are not the differences of a dominant subordinate relationship but rather a duality in which each gender supports and cooperates with the other. Traditionally strong and equal, Palauan women lost ground during the first half of the 20th century as paternalistic colonizers undermined their authority, revoked their property rights, and relegated them to subordinate positions in modern institutions. Beginning in the 1950s Palauan women began to reassert themselves and to reclaim their former equity, respect, and prominence in decision-making while simultaneously addressing the challenges they faced in living “between two worlds.”

Contemporary Palauan women are better educated and enjoy better health than their male counterparts. While less likely to participate in the formal labor force than men, when employed in the formal sector, women earn, on the average, significantly more than men. Women are guaranteed equality of opportunity under the Palau Constitution, have equitable access to capital, and assume an active role in economic and social life. In public life, women dominate the Judiciary but are under-represented in the OEK, the cabinet, and the top echelon of the civil service.

While women leaders are concerned about the invisible barriers that keep them out of top leadership positions, ordinary women are more concerned about the daily stresses they encounter in struggling to “hold up the sky” in the face of multiple roles as wives, mothers, sisters, daughters, daughters-in-law, employees (or employers), farmers, fisherwomen, volunteers, neighbors, and friends. As women struggle to fulfill their many responsibilities, they are disproportionately affected by stagnating incomes and rising prices, the changing family structure, and the scarcity of supportive social services.

### Gender Relations in Palau

Gender relations in Palau are characterized by the Palauan idiom, “*Bital taoch ma bital taoch.*” The literal translations (“other channel, other channel” or sometimes “left leg, right leg”) symbolizes the duality of gender relations in which each gender has unique roles and responsibilities but are inextricably linked to one another in a spirit of unity and equality.

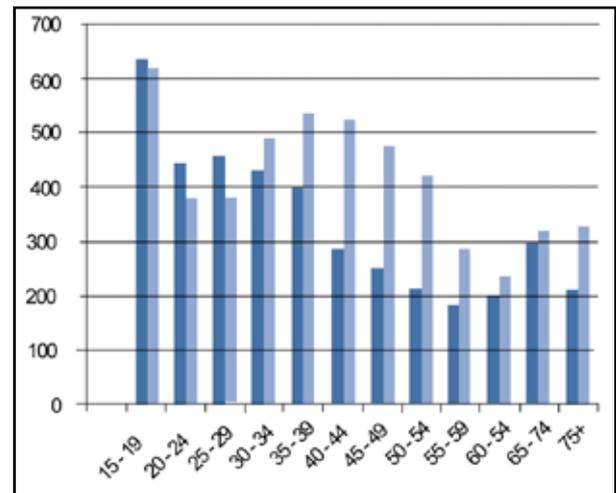
## 5.2. Enumerating Women

In 2005, there were 6,864 women over the age of 15 residing in Palau. The growth rate (1990-2005) averaged 2.4 percent per annum, slightly higher than that of the total population (1.8 percent) but fueled by high rates of growth in the non-Palauan female population (6 percent per annum).

Figure 24 compares the distribution of ethnic Palauan women by age for 1990 and 2005. In both years, there was a sharp drop in the population of young women (20-24 years of age) reflecting high out migration by youth shortly after finishing high school (or Palau Community College).

Thereafter the demographic pattern diverges. In 1990, women continued to leave throughout their reproductive and economically productive years with a small reverse migration occurring only in the retirement years. By 2005, reverse migration was happening much earlier as women entered their thirties. It was not until ages 55-65 that there was another drop in the female population suggesting a second wave of outmigration in the immediate post-retirement years. Although there are no definitive data, it is known that many women go overseas for a time after retirement to spend time with children and grandchildren in the States. This may account for a portion of this population decline.

Figure 24. Palauan Women by Age  
1990 and 2005 Census Data



For the non-Palauan population, the census provides information about their purpose for coming to Palau. Not surprisingly the vast majority come for employment (83 percent) or as dependents of employees (6 percent). The balance are temporary visitors (8 percent), students (3 percent), missionaries (2 percent) or present for miscellaneous purposes.

## 5.3. Women in the Family

Traditionally and in large measure today, the most important and enduring family ties are between brothers and sisters. Sisters were (and are) responsible for earning money through their labor in their husband’s family which benefits their brothers during customary observances such as the *ocheraol* (an exchange during which a man’s female relatives collect money to pay for his house). Traditionally, marriages were arranged by families or clans and had more to do with “business” than emotion. Marriage alliances were crafted to enhance the power and wealth of the clans and to ensure that children had strong blood lines. There was no single event in Palauan tradition equivalent to the Western marriage ceremony. Marriage was solemnized through a series of inter-clan exchanges of food and money. Initially the groom would reside in the home of his bride’s parents but after the marriage was fully recognized, the couple would typically move to the home of the groom’s parents. There they would stay for a decade or more until the groom had fully “paid his dues” to his clan and was able to ask his female relatives for financial help to build his own house.

In her husband’s family, the wife was expected to work hard producing and preparing food for her husband, children, and extended family. As reward for this work, her husband’s family provided her with food and Palauan money (*udoud er Belau* or *toluk*) when her own blood family had customary needs. In this way, it is said that wealth enters the family through the woman. Unlike other cultures, in Palau the birth of a female is greatly celebrated for the girl will increase the family’s wealth as a woman.

Pregnancy was recognized as a dangerous time for the mother-to-be and her family took great care to ensure a safe outcome. Upon discovering her pregnancy, the woman would first inform her mother (or maternal aunt) who would advise her on the rules of pregnancy. The pregnant woman had to avoid hard work. Her family would appoint a male relative (generally her uncle or brother) to provide her with special foods, pigeons, turtle, eggs, and pork which she would eat from a special basket. From about the fourth or fifth month of pregnancy, the woman would leave her husband’s family and return to her mother’s home where her uncle would hang a pregnancy *udoud er Belau* around her neck. This was a special money, round in shape, called *omebael* (literal translation “one that molds or shapes”), worn to ensure the healthy development of the baby and in particular, to ensure that the baby’s head would be round. At about this time, the husband’s clan provided money to the clan of the mother-to-be. This donation was believed to help ease delivery and ensure that the baby would have a pleasant personality.

Some Traditional Rules Governing Pregnancy	
Taboo	Result of Breaking Taboo
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid standing in the evening sun just before sunset</li> <li>• Avoid breaking a spider web</li> <li>• Avoid walking by sacred places</li> <li>• Avoid being startled or frightened by an unusual sight</li> <li>• Avoid covering another's belongings or taking something belonging to another</li> <li>• Avoid eating fruit/leaf</li> <li>• Avoid crying out during labor or delivery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baby will be bothered by the sun and will cry much of the time</li> <li>• Labor pains will come slowly</li> <li>• Baby will be born with an abnormality</li> <li>• Baby will be born with the frightening image imprinted on his/her body</li> <li>• Baby will grow to be a thief</li> <li>• Placenta will be retained during delivery</li> <li>• Will result in the mother's death</li> </ul>

Palau Society of Historians, "Wockuodil: Traditional Culture and Livings Long Ago in Palau," Ministry of Community and Cultural Affairs, Koror, Palau, 1996

The mother's own mother or her sister attended to the delivery during and immediately after which rituals would be performed to instill desirable traits in the infant. The bamboo used to cut the umbilical cord was pressed against the back of the baby's tongue to prevent the baby from becoming a gossip. The placenta was wrapped in a *keai* frond (leaf of the betel nut tree) and buried underneath a plant. When the baby's naval cord fell off, if a boy, it was placed at the base of two coconut fronds to signify that he would become a skilled hunter and fisherman. If a girl, the cord was placed between the leaves of a taro to signify that she would become a good farmer and skilled in all other womanly arts.

In the period immediately following delivery, the new mother was cared for by female relatives while her male relatives continued to provide delicacies for her to eat. This was done to help the new mother regain her strength and to demonstrate the family's love and thankfulness for their daughter's safe delivery. If the baby was the woman's first, she would undergo a period of hot baths (*omesurech*) and steaming accompanied by consumption of medicinal herbs. This was believed to strengthen the mother so she would be able to work hard in the hot sun without ill effect. This process extended over several days and was conducted by a specialist hired by the mother's clan. The duration and specific rituals were prescribed by the clan's tradition - the higher the clan, the more elaborate, lengthy, and expensive was the *omesurech*.

At the end of the *omesurech* period, there was an important and elaborate first baby ceremony or *ngasech* (literal translation "ascension" so named because traditionally the new mother ascended upon an elevated platform for the ceremony; this is now practiced only on the southern island of Angaur). During the *ngasech*, the new mother and her infant were presented to the husband and his clan accompanied by an exchange of food, gifts, and money. Following the *ngasech*, the mother and her infant remained with her mother's clan for a period of several months. For a high ranking clan this postpartum period was about ten months; for a lower ranking clan, about five. During this period, the mother continued to follow certain taboos such as: refraining from sexual relations, eating of fatty foods, eating of foods with strong odor, eating of pounded taro, and strenuous work. Failure to maintain these taboos was thought to cause illness. Another less elaborate ceremony marked the end of the postpartum period for the mother. At that time as well, the baby was given a special protective bath. After these rituals, the mother and child resumed residence in the home of the husband/father.

The *ngasech* is a very important social and psychological event in the life of a young Palauan woman. After a *ngasech* has been held in a community, it is common to see young girls role playing the ceremony much like young American girls may role play weddings.

During subsequent pregnancies, similar customs were followed except that the woman was not presented at the *ngasech*. An unmarried woman experiencing a first pregnancy was treated in the same manner as a married woman except that she was not publicly presented at a *ngasech*.

Today, arranged marriages are no longer common, although marriage is still seen as involving two clans rather than just two individuals. The presentation of money (cash and *adoud*) by the groom's family to the bride's family still marks the formal engagement while the presentation of the wife at the *ngasech* is often the formal recognition of the marriage union, though some couples do opt for a formal "Western" marriage ceremony. After marriage, it is still common for young people to live with the parents of one of the partners for an extended time

although which set of parents is now determined more by practical considerations than by custom. Childbirth takes place in the hospital and the *ome-surech* and *ngasech* commence only after the six weeks post-partum check-up. While many women will return to reside in their birth home for a period immediately after delivery but this is no longer a strictly prescribed rule. Taboos surrounding pregnancy and the postpartum period are largely those of modern medicine instead of tradition. Instead of five-to-ten months of postpartum rest, the new mother today gets four-to-six weeks before she returns to work. Modern family planning has replaced post-partum marital separation as the method of birth spacing.

## 5.4. Women and Society

Traditionally, every able-bodied adult Palauan belonged to an age-graded village organization, women to the *cheldebecheldi'* and men to the *cheldebechel sechal*. These groups cared for the welfare of the village as well as their individual members. The roles of women included: cleaning; gardening; caring for the taro patches; buying houses; food preparation; contributing money to their brothers and clan; and deciding on matters relating to titles and land, and organizing festivals.

Depending on population, the ideal village had six men's and six women's organizations, two for youth, two for the middle-aged, and two for elders. Different status and prestige was associated with the age of the various groups, with the highest status accorded to the oldest group. Every person had an obligation to be a member of the group and to participate in its activities even when these ran counter to family demands. These organizations exerted strong influence over their members and provided social control within the village. As a result of colonial influence, de-population and urbanization, the power and influence of the *chel-debechel* dwindled in the first half of the 20th century. Following World War II, the groups were revitalized and for the first time in recorded history the women's groups met together in the First Palau Women's Conference held in 1955, ushering in a dynamic period of development for women in the community and in national and international affairs. In the 1970's and 1980's, Palauan women assumed prominent roles in national, regional, and global movements for decolonization, peace and denuclearization, and domestically for cultural preservation.

Nearly forty years elapsed between the First and the Second Palau Women's Conferences. The Second Conference (1994) was a watershed as women sought to come to grips with the role of Palauan custom in contemporary life. During this conference, women agreed to certain limitations on customary observances that were aimed at reducing the financial and time burden of customs. They also addressed issues such as the environment, casinos, prostitution, land tenure, health, and education.

Since 1994, women's conferences have been held every year. Although organized primarily by traditional women leaders, they provide a forum whereby all women can come together to address issues affecting themselves and society. Decisions by the women's conference on tradition carry a strong weight almost equivalent to a law. Recommendations by the women's conference on non-traditional matters are given careful consideration in legislative and administrative proceedings.

## 5.5. Women and the Law

**Laws that Promote the Rights of Women.** The Palau Constitution and Title 1 of the Palau National Code guarantee women equality under the law.

*Every person shall be equal under the law and shall be entitled to equal protection. The government shall take no action to discriminate against any person on the basis of SEX, race, place of origin, language, religion or belief, social status or clan affiliation, except for the preferential treatment of citizens .... (Palau National Constitution, Section IV.5).*

*No laws shall be enacted ... which discriminate against any person on account of race, sex, language, or religion, nor shall the equal protection of the law be denied (1 PNC 407).*

**Laws that Discriminate Against Women.** Despite the constitutional protections, two laws have been identified that discriminate against married women – one with respect to rape and the other with respect to inheritance.

*Every person who shall unlawfully have sexual intercourse with a female, NOT HIS WIFE, by force or against her will, shall be guilty of rape, and upon conviction thereof shall be imprisoned for a period of not more than 25 years (17 PNC 2802, emphasis added).*

*In the absence (of a will) ... lands held in fee simple ... shall, upon the death of the owner, be inherited by the owner's oldest legitimate living male child of sound mind, natural or adopted, or if male heirs are lacking, the oldest legitimate living female child... (25 PNC 301).*

In the first instance, the law does not extend to married women the same level of protection against coerced sex as it extends to an unmarried woman. In the second, the law discriminates against a wife whose rights to inherit property acquired during a marriage are not recognized. It also discriminates against female children whose rights to inherit are recognized only if there are no surviving male children. Both laws were identified during the 2008 Symposium on Children, Youth, and Women as requiring immediate amendment.

**Other Laws of Special Interest to Women.** Other laws that are of special relevance to women deal with abortion:

*Every person who shall unlawfully cause the miscarriage or premature delivery of a woman, with the intent to do so, shall be guilty of abortion and upon conviction thereof shall be imprisoned for a period of not more than five years (17 PNC 201) (except that the courts have ruled a woman cannot be charged for the act of a self-induced abortion).*

with incest:

*Every person who shall unlawfully engage in sexual intercourse with another of such a close blood relationship or affinity that marriage between the two who so engage is prohibited by law or custom, shall be guilty of incest, and upon conviction thereof shall be imprisoned for a period of not more than five years; provided, however, that the burden of proof of such a relationship or affinity shall rest with the prosecution (17 PNC 2801).<sup>39</sup>*

with prostitution:

*Any person who commits the offense of prostitution shall be guilty of a felony, and upon conviction thereof shall be fined not less than \$2,500 nor more than \$10,000, imprisoned for one year and one day, or both (17 PNC 3603).*

with people smuggling and trafficking:

*The Anti People Smuggling and Trafficking Act provides "criminal penalties for smuggling people and trafficking people in accordance with the Republic of Palau's international commitments, including the Nasonini Declaration, the Protocol Against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea, and Air, and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime" (RPPL 7-5, 2005).*

and with breastfeeding:

*the "Promotion of Optimal Infant and Young Child Nutrition Act of 2006" strives to promote breastfeeding and prevent exploitation of women and infants by the manufacturers, wholesalers, and retailers of infant formula (RPPL 7-23).*

<sup>39</sup>Dr. Stevenson Kuartei has addressed some of the issues raised by 17 PNC 2801. He notes that the statute makes reference to relationships prohibited by law when in fact 17 PNC 2801 is the only statute in the legal code that speaks about marriage or sexual relations between relatives. He also notes that the statute references customary law which: (a) prohibits marriage across a much wider span of relationships than are normally addressed under western law or considered necessary on the basis of medical-genetic grounds; (b) varies from clan to clan, and (c) distinguishes between what is absolutely forbidden (relations between 1st degree cousins, father-daughter, mother-son, uncle-niece, aunt-nephew) from what is conditionally forbidden (relations between more distance relatives of the same clan that can be tolerated under some circumstances) (Kuartei, Stevenson, 2006. "Incest in Palau: "Delemumuu Undressed," Health in Palau and Micronesia, 12:1).

In addition, court rule 412 prohibits in most circumstances the sexual history of the victim from being introduced into a court case involving alleged sexual misconduct. While this rule is gender-neutral, it has the effect of providing special protection to women whose sexual history is more often used as a defense by males charged in such cases.

**Gaps in the Law.** Palau has no statute that specifically addresses domestic violence, a needed legal reform repeatedly identified for nearly two decades. Remedial action has yet to be taken to enact such a law despite circulation in legal circles of recommended "best practice" model legislation.

There are no legal entitlements to maternity leave for working women. By regulation, women employed in the civil service are entitled to thirty days of paid maternity leave that can be divided between prenatal and postnatal leave at the discretion of the woman. Women in the private sector have no statutory right to paid maternity leave. In practice, most employers allow for maternity leave but do not provide additional paid benefits beyond whatever normal sick leave or annual leave benefits employees may have. Although under labor regulations, pregnancy is not an allowable ground for dismissal, women advocates report cases whereby women, especially "guest" workers, have been dismissed ostensibly for other reasons as a mask for dismissal on account of pregnancy.

**Palauan Women and CEDAW.** Given the overall favorable situation of women in Palau, it would seem logical that early action would have been taken to ratify CEDAW (International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women). The reality is quite different. Discussions about CEDAW have been protracted and contentious. There appear to be three grounds on which objections are based:

- *Argument:* Palauan women enjoy equality and status and do not need special provisions.  
*Counter-argument:* Because Palauan women enjoy rights not held by many of their sisters in other countries, ratification of CEDAW is an act of solidarity with women worldwide.
- *Argument:* Ratification of CEDAW may undermine some of the traditions that provide special benefits to women.  
*Counter-argument:* CEDAW ensures rights and protections for women, not gender equality. Laws or practices that provide special benefits to women are not affected by CEDAW.
- *Argument:* Ratification of CEDAW will require acceptance of same-sex relationships, which are especially abhorrent to some deeply religious women.  
*Counter-argument:* There is nothing in CEDAW that addresses issues of sexual orientation although the general principles of human rights and equality before the law embedded in CEDAW and the Palau national code would preclude legal discrimination on the basis of sexual preference.

After many years of debate, a resolution to ratify the CEDAW was passed by the Senate in early 2008 and is now before the House of Delegates.

## 5.6. Women's Health

Palauan women enjoy good access to health services and in general, good health as reflected by low fertility, low maternal mortality, and long life expectancy. Unfortunately there is evidence that this favorable health status is beginning to erode as a result of modern lifestyles that give rise to increasing rates of non-communicable diseases (see Part 2).

**Access to Health Care.** Palau has developed a good primary health care system designed to balance access with efficiency. There are three primary health care centers on Babeldaob and one each in Kayangel, Angaur, Peleliu, Sonsorol, and Hatohobei. Since completion of the Compact Road that circumnavigates Babeldaob, access to health care has been greatly enhanced. Only a very small number of people - residents on the outlying islands of Hatohobei State - do not have continuous access to basic primary care services.

Services of special importance to women include family planning, maternity services, cancer screening, and mammography. The contraceptive prevalence rate for young women (15-19 years of age) at risk of pregnancy is 66 percent (Ministry of Health, 2006) and for all women of reproductive age (15-44) 21 percent (MOH data for 2006 reported in 2008). Despite this apparent low contraceptive prevalence rate, fertility rates are low and declining (Table 17). In 2006, for women experiencing a second or subsequent delivering, the average interval between births was 4 year with 77 percent having a birth interval greater than the recommended minimum of 2 years (MOH, 2006).

Census Year	Palauan Women	Non-Palauan Women
Year 1990	4.8	3.4
Year 1995	3.8	2.3
Year 2000	3.4	1.5
Year 2005	3.0	2.5

All pregnant women receive some prenatal care and all deliveries are in the hospital with a physician or nurse in attendance (see Part 3). Maternal mortality is rare; the most recent maternal death occurred in 1993.

The leading cancers among women are of the cervix and breast (Table 18) but many women still do not comply with cancer screening recommendations. Of women surveyed nationwide in 2003, 45 percent had not had a pap smear in the previous two years and 42 percent (of women over age 50) had not had a mammogram in the previous two years (MOH-CAP, 2003).

Five Leading Cancer Sites		
Women	Men	All Persons
Cervix	Lung & Bronchus	Lung
Breast	Prostate	Cervix
Thyroid	Liver	Breast
Lung & Bronchus	Pancreas	Liver
Oral Cavity & Pharynx	Oral Cavity & Pharynx	Prostate

The Palau Constitution mandates the national government to provide free or subsidized health care for all citizens. Essential preventive services are provided free or at very low cost while treatment services are relatively more expensive. Services provided by health centers are charged at a lower rate than hospital services, and non-emergency services provided in the hospital emergency room are charged at even higher rates. Actual charges are assessed based on a sliding fee scale that takes into account household income and size. Charges range from 5 percent (senior citizens, permanently disabled, and prisoners) to 70% for the highest income earners and non-Palauans. The law stipulates that no one can be denied care because of inability to pay nor can anyone receive differential care based on the ability to pay. To date, only a small number of people have health care insurance although efforts are underway to develop a national health insurance program that will generate new revenues for health while insuring universal care. A bill to establish a national health savings plan modeled after that of Singapore was introduced into the Senate in July 2006 and passed in January 2008. It is now before the House of Delegates.

In a 2003 household survey, 32 percent of households reported some difficulties in accessing health care (MOH-CAP, 2003). Cost of health care was the main impediment (22 percent), followed by geography and transportation (12 percent), language (4 percent), and other mainly social issues (7 per-cent).<sup>40</sup> The number of households experiencing geography or transportation impediments to access has undoubtedly declined due to road development while the number experiencing financial impediments has probably increased and may continue to increase at least until national health insurance becomes a reality.<sup>41</sup>

**Non-Communicable Diseases.** Women are at increasing risk of non-communicable diseases closely linked to diet, physical activity, and weight. The Ministry of Health reports that 62 percent of women are obese, a rate four points higher than that for men. One result of the growing burden of non-communicable diseases is skyrocketing caesarian section rates; one-third of births now are by caesarian section due mainly to NCD and weight related risks (Dr. D. Ngemaes, Chief of Medical Staff, personal communication, 2007). Another result is declining life expectancy. Although women still outlive men, since 1995, women have lost almost four years of life reflecting the growing burden of NCDs.

**Communicable Diseases.** The most common sexually transmitted disease among women is Chlamydia infection. Data from the antenatal clinic (2005 and 2006) found an 11 percent prevalence, a moderate rate for Pacific Island populations but a very high rate by international standards. Three of the seven HIV and AIDS cases recorded to date have occurred among women. Health care providers report that Palauan women are especially vulnerable to STDs, HIV and AIDS due to a cultural tolerance for male extramarital relations, especially when the wife is pregnant (National Strategic Plan for HIV and AIDS, 2000).

“I got this disease from my husband who travels a lot on his job. I was aware that he was having casual sex when not with me, but I was to ashamed to ask him to take precautions. My advice to young women, don’t wait, speak out....”.

Palauan Female HIV-AIDS Patient

**Psycho-Social Health.** Good quality data on psycho-social health issues are available only for Palau High School students (Parts 3 and 4). Of the available data for adult women:

- Surveys find that nearly 70 percent of women use tobacco and over half continue to use tobacco during pregnancy (MOH-FHU, 2006);
- Although only 25 percent of women surveyed in 2003 admitted to use of alcohol (compared to 51 percent of men), among those who drink, a significant number admit to high-risk drinking behavior; 36 percent admitted to consuming 5 or more drinks in a day (lower than for men but still reflecting a high level of risk) (MOH-CAP Community Assessment, 2003);
- Despite women’s high social status, women are frequently victims of domestic violence. On the average 90 cases of adult domestic violence are reported each year to the VOCA program, 90 percent of these reports involve assaults against women by domestic partners. The YRBS also reports high levels of violence between school aged partners as well as high levels of coerced sex. This suggests that the need for domestic violence services both preventive and remedial is likely to increase as today’s teens move into adulthood.

<sup>40</sup>The sum of the percentages add to more than the total (32 percent) because some households reported more than one impediment.

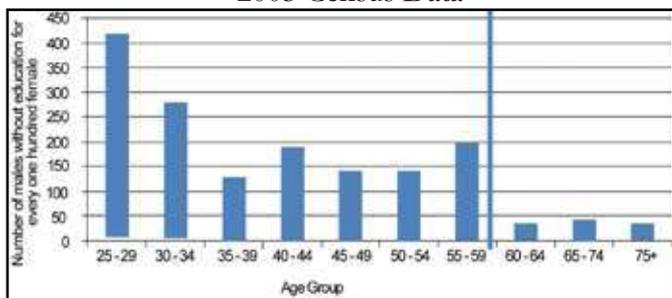
<sup>41</sup>In 2006, the MOH fee schedule was modified. Charges for a small number of services increased while charges for inpatient services actually decreased. The number of charge categories was also expanded. The major change was that the Ministry began to verify self-reported income information with the Social Security Administration. Verification of income resulted in some people being charged more for health care.

**New Initiative.** A new women’s health initiative has recently been launched to bring reproductive health services, including cancer screening, closer to women in the community through regular Women’s Health Clinics in the dispensaries and a free “walk-in” clinic in Koror managed by a female nurse practitioner. Data, however, clearly indicate more needs to be done to surround women, especially young women, with health promoting environments that will help make “healthy choices the only choices.”

## 5.7. Women’s Education

Women have access to the same education opportunities as men at every level of schooling. Although there is evidence of a historic gender bias (among women over the age of 60), there is no evidence of current gender bias among younger women (Figure 25). Most indicators actually suggest that younger women are outpacing men in education leading some to call for an affirmative action strategy to help boys-men (Kuardei, 2007). Evidence of the educational bias in favor of women, especially young women, includes equitable enrollment rates at every level of schooling and higher success rates for female students (e.g. lower repetition and dropout rates).<sup>42</sup>

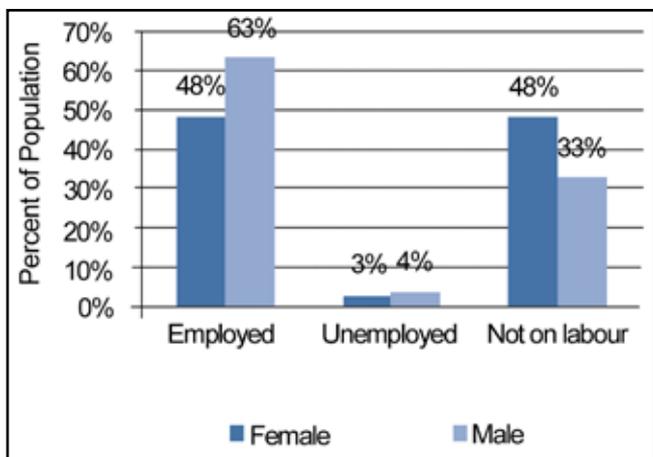
**Figure 25. Residents without Formal Education Ratio of Males to Every 100 Females, 2005 Census Data**



## 5.8. Women and Work

The 2005 census reports that 67 percent of males (Palauan citizens only) were active in the formal sector labor force compared to 51 percent of females (Palauan citizens only). Figure 26 shows labor force statistics by gender for citizens, while Figure 27 (on next page) shows labor force participation by gender and educational attainment. The gender gap is very large at lower levels of education but virtually disappears at higher levels. This suggests that employment options for poorly educated women are limited but that options for more highly educated women are comparable with those of men.

**Figure 26. Labour Force Status of Citizens By Gender, 2005 Census**



<sup>42</sup> Data to definitely assess gender bias in education need to differentiate between Palauan (or citizen) and non-Palauan and to further differentiate by age since there are known differences in education by ethnicity/citizenship and by age (gender bias for residents over the age of 60 is clearly evident in the data). These data are not reported in the census.

The median income for all legally resident women is lower than for all legally resident males. Further analysis of the data, however, shows that women who work full-time earn more than men who work full-time:

- Male (full time employees) \$8,417
- Female (full time employees) \$9,740

This differential holds true in 14 of Palau’s 16 states. Only in Aimeliik and Ngaremlengui do fulltime employed resident women earn less than men (Census 2005).

Women are disproportionately employed in the service, finance, and trade industries while men are disproportionately represented in public administration, transportation, communications, utilities, and construction industries (Figure 28, opposite page).

## 5.9. Women in Leadership

In traditional and customary governance, Palauan women hold powers that are almost unequalled by women elsewhere. Women choose the (male) head of the clan and can dismiss him if he fails to perform his duties in a satisfactory manner. In each clan there is a female counterpart to the clan head who commands respect from both genders and wields authority in the female spheres of influence (allocation of money, land, titles, and food). Within families, women have the dominant role in decision making on protocols and procedures especially with regards to family gatherings and customary observances. Despite this traditional strength and matriarchal heritage, surprisingly, women have not yet achieved equity in leadership positions in modern governance.

**Constitutional Convention.** Two women were members of the original Constitutional Convention. In the recent (2005) convention to review the constitution (required to be held every twenty years), only one woman was elected.

**Executive and Legislative Branch.** In the 28 years of Palau’s constitutional government:

- Two women have held three cabinet-level positions;<sup>43</sup>
- One woman has held the position of Vice-President;
- One woman has served in the Senate;
- One woman has served in the House of Delegates;
- One woman has served as Ambassador.

While women have generally fared better in the civil service than in elected office, only one woman at present holds the position of director of an Executive branch bureau. Women, however, are equitably represented and assume leadership roles on the boards of public and semi-public agencies (e.g. Palau Community College, Palau National Communications Corporation, and others). In education and health, women dominate professional positions including positions as school principals and physicians.

**Judiciary.** In the Judiciary, women have excelled. At present out of nine judicial positions, six are held by women including:

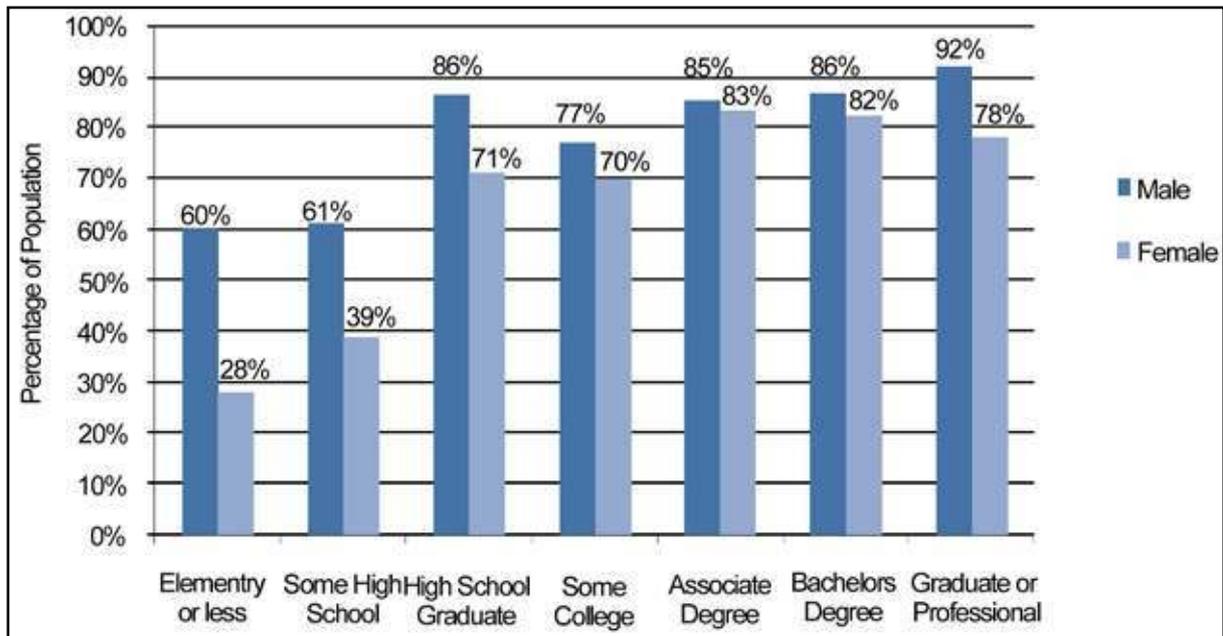
- Three out of four positions on the Supreme Court;
- The senior judge on the Court of Common Pleas;
- One out of four land court judges (two out of four positions until the recent resignation of the fe-male Senior Land Court Judge).

**State Government.** In the political arena, women have done some what better at the state level.

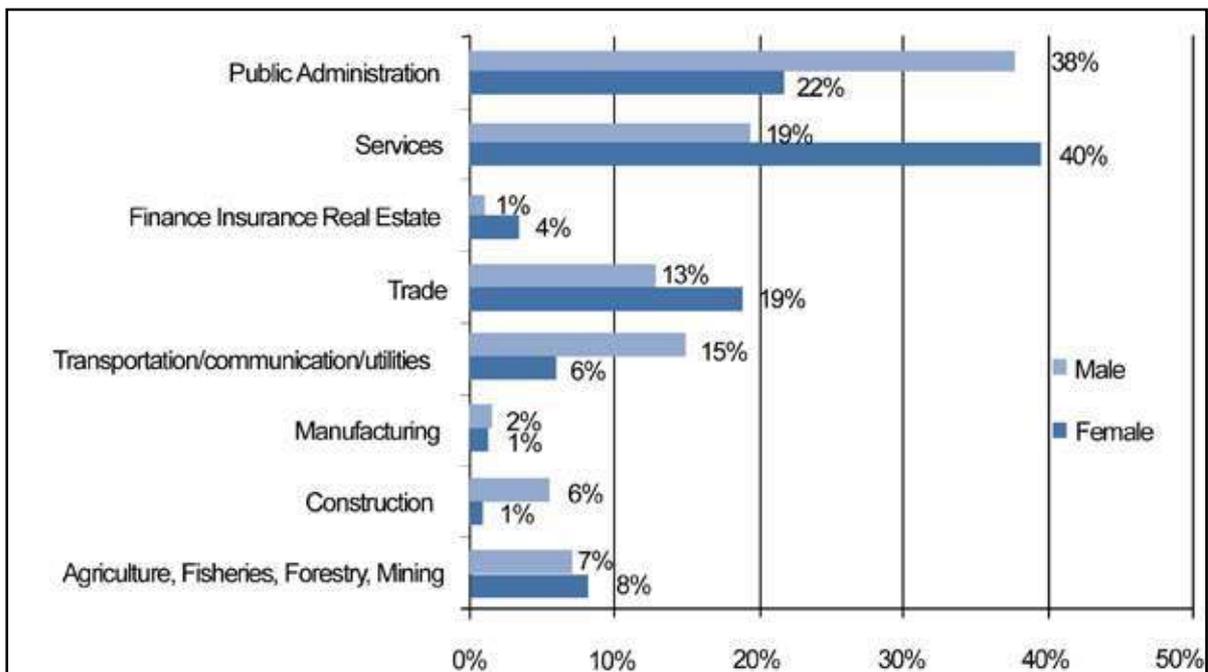
- There have been four female governors, including two currently in-office; and
- Forty female legislators.

<sup>43</sup> Sandra Pierantozzi accounts for most of the high level positions held by women. She was a member of the original constitutional convention and the 2005 Constitution Review, served as Vice-President, Minister of Administration and Minister of Health and is the only woman to-date elected to the Senate.

**Figure 27.** Labour Force Participation by Gender and Highest level of Education Completed, 2005 Census



**Figure 28.** Employment of Legal Residents Industry and Gender 2005 Census (%)



**Why inequity in the political arena?** The thoughts of women leaders who participated in the 2008 National Symposium on Children, Youth, and Women are summarized in the text box opposite.

There are indications that the gender imbalance in public office may be changing. For the November 2008 elections, an unprecedented number of women declared their candidacy. There were 7 women running for Senate and three running for the House of Delegates. At the time this report went to press, two women had been elected to the Senate. This success and the large field of candidates suggest that the era of male dominance in the political arena may soon become obsolete.

## 5.10. Looking Towards the Future

A special session of the National Economic Symposium (2007) addressed the aspirations and needs of women (ADB, 2007). Sandra Pierantozzi, former Senator and Vice-President and prominent business person, noted that women are already active in the economy and own many businesses. In looking toward the future, she said that women's priorities are Palau's priorities. Women want:

- Stable, environmentally friendly businesses that create reliable jobs with good income;
- Access to capital for entrepreneurship;
- Good quality health care and health insurance;
- Return to traditional values of caring for families and neighbors;
- Good education and equity of opportunity;
- Clean, healthy environments including good water, clean air, and clean oceans;
- Parks for relaxation and recreation;
- Good communications with the rest of the world;
- Modern laws fairly enforced;
- Resolution of land disputes that threaten to tear the social fabric of many families and clans;
- Equitable sharing in the benefits of development.

"As partners, we walk together, side by side; we ask not to walk in front or behind you but beside you so that together we can share the burdens and the joys of life."

*S. Pierantozzi, February 2007*

## Women and Leadership

Thoughts of Women Leaders at the Symposium on Children, Youth, and Women 2008

Why inequity in political leadership?

1. Women continue to see their primary responsibility to be caring for family and children.
2. There is an ingrained attitude that politics is for men.
3. Women tend to follow “family lines” when voting.
4. Many men are not employed; women end up supporting the family and are too busy to take on new responsibilities in the political arena.
5. Men do not support women for positions of leadership.

What should be done to promote equity in political leadership?

1. Women should unite together to elect women because they know their own needs as well as those of their community.
2. There should be strong women’s groups that support and advocate for women in leadership positions in government and community.
3. Women need further assistance to boost their earning power; this will facilitate more women entering the political arena.
4. Men and women need to take equal responsibilities for care of family and children.
5. Women must take care to elect persons (both male and female) who will support women for leadership positions.

Who should provide leadership for women in achieving equity?

1. Traditional and non-traditional women’s groups.
2. The Mechesil Belau (National Women’s Group).
3. Traditional and non-traditional men’s groups.
4. OEK members and the President.
5. Every Palauan woman.

Leilani Ngirturong, businesswoman and now Governor of Aimeliik State, echoed the call for better access to financial capital, education, and training. She also called for more support (financial and technical) for small business development and improved child care services.

“Ultimately it is in Palau’s best interest to create policies that expand the capacity and capability of women and to fully maximize the potential of the female population.

*Governor Leilani Ngirturong  
February 2007*

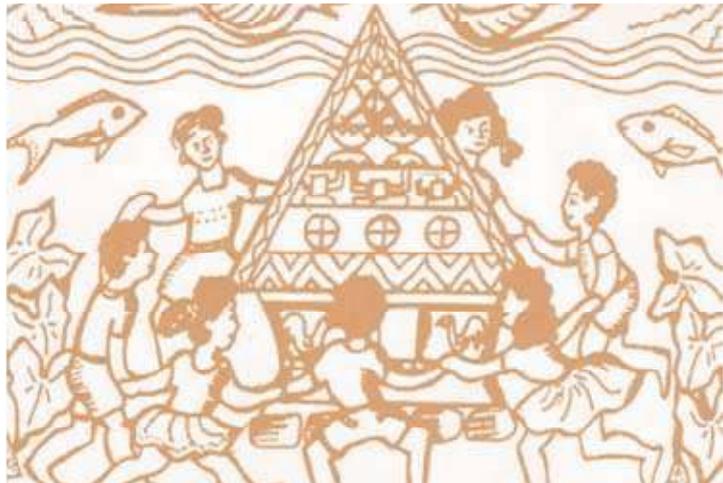
In view of current social and economic trends, it is clear that women will continue to excel in education, business, and in due time, national politics. While striving for money, power, and prestige, it is important that women give more attention to their own health not just reproductive health which is already well addressed but comprehensive health. Women need to support women by creating environments at home, school, and the workplace that promote health, reduce stress, and ease the burden of non-communicable diseases that threaten women’s health, lives, and productivity.



Governor Akiko Sugiyama (Ngardmau State) and Governor Vicky Kanai (Airai State) inspecting an agricultural development project in Ngirwal State. (Photo by Senator Caleb Otto)

# PART 6

## FUTURE DIRECTIONS



In Parts 2-5, the salient issues facing children, youth, and women were identified and discussed. This final concluding Part focuses on measures that might be taken to address issues and bring Palau closer to full compliance with the “spirit” of the Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as that of CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women).

## 6.1. Cross Cutting Issues

### Institutional structure for child advocacy

**Discussion.** After reviewing Palau’s initial report on Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the International Committee recommended:

- CoPopChi be strengthened by allocation of a budget and secretariat support;
- An Office of Child and Family Support be established within government as a focal point for child and family support activities; and
- An ombudsman, independent of CoPopChi and the proposed Office of Child and Family Support, be appointed to advocate for individual children.

None of these recommendations have been acted upon and CoPopChi, the focal point for child-related advocacy in the late 1990’s has disbanded. Subsequently, actions on behalf of children falling under the jurisdiction of line ministries have moved forward but actions outside of ministerial prerogatives have languished. It is important to recognize, however, that certain responsibilities under the Convention on the Rights of the Child (e.g. monitoring and reporting) are borne by government and cannot be delegated.

**Recommendations.** The need for an independent advocate for children is clear. One option is that members of the informal working group on children who organized the 2008 Youth Rally and Symposium form a non-government organization with advocacy at the heart of its primary mission. Women, who already have their own advocacy group the Mechesiil Belau would be an important ally for the Children’s NGO.

The need for a government-appointed body a National Committee on Children is also clear. The role of this committee would be to fulfill those responsibilities that are the legal prerogative of government including periodic reporting to the International Committee on the Rights of the Child. Creating the committee through statute would enhance sustainability since its membership, functions, and budget would require both Executive and OEK oversight. Recently, the Senate has passed a bill to create a ten member Child Welfare Committee to oversee implementation of the Convention and to advocate for children. This bill is now pending in the House of Delegates.

### Parent-Child Partnerships

**Discussion.** Social change has negatively affected the relationship between parents and children with the current situation characterized by participants in the 2008 Youth Rally and Symposium as “busy parent-busy child” syndrome. This has significant implications for all elements of children’s wellbeing including health, education, discipline, and transmission of core cultural values.

**Recommendations.** It is civil society, families, and individual parents who must take primary responsibility for addressing parent-child partnerships. Families and parents must create their own traditions of “family time” and avoid over scheduling to everyone’s detriment, a recommendation admittedly easier made than implemented in a small closely knit community with many obligations. Specific recommendations made to parents by participants in the 2008 Youth Rally and Symposium include:

- Schedule quality family time with children on a regular basis;
- Demonstrate understanding and respect in dealing with children; be less judgmental;
- Strengthen communications with children through active and empathetic listening, being a good role model, and helping children with their problems;

- Instill in children *omengull* (respect), *omelengmes* (consideration), and *omelangesmad* (sensitivity to others);
- Encourage children in school and take an active role in school activities.

Civil society, however, has an important role in supporting families and parents and in creating new social norms about family-wide participation in community activities and customs. For their part, children and youth need to recognize the need for parental involvement in their lives and to be accepting of their partnership.

### Strengthen Traditional Palauan Values

**Discussion.** In Palauan tradition, respect is the paramount value that guides relations between individuals and clans and between man and nature. Social change has undermined this value, a factor that contributes to disciplinary, behavioral, and educational problems that adversely affect children.

**Recommendations.** Palauan tradition recognizes that children learn best by example. Consequently, there is need to reembrace the value of respect at every level of society in order that children will learn from this example and become more respectful of themselves, their peers, their elders, and their society.

### Strengthen Traditional Mechanisms that Promote Children’s Best Interests

**Discussion.** Palauan tradition recognizes that it “takes a community and nation to raise a child” and there are a number of cultural mechanisms which ensure every child is nurtured in both good times and bad times.

**Recommendation.** Government and civil society need to collaborate to strengthen traditional mechanisms and structures that promote the best interests of the child. The “Healthy Islands” vision of the Pacific Ministers of Health should be embraced and efforts made to fully realize this vision.

#### Healthy Islands – Palauan Version

Healthy islands are places where: -  
 Children are nurtured in body, mind, and soul;  
 The environments invite learning and leisure;  
 People work and age with dignity;  
 Ecological balance is a source of pride;  
 Individuals, families, and communities are free from substance use and abuse, including tobacco;  
 Women have access and opportunities equal to men in all aspects of society;  
 Persons with disabilities have respect and dignity;  
 Economic development is healthy and sustainable;  
 The ocean continues to sustain our lives and is respected, protected, and sustained in return;  
 Relationships among kin and friends are treasured and nurtured.

Note: the first five phrases comprise the original Pacific Regional definition of “healthy islands.” The additional phrases have been added by the Palau Ministry of Health.

## 6.2. Law Reform

**Discussion.** There are several areas in which Palau law deviates from the Convention and for which there is already a consensus among child advocates about the needed reforms.

**Recommendations.**

- The Convention cannot easily be invoked before the courts unless relevant articles have been enacted into the Palau Legal Code. Domestic legislation is therefore needed to give direct effect to the Convention. (Recommended made in 2000 by the International Committee on the Rights of the Child; measure introduced in and passed by the Senate in 2008, now pending in the House of Delegates).

- The child abuse law requires amendment to more clearly identify actions that constitute abuse and to increase penalties for severe abuse. (Action recommended in the 1998 National Plan of Action for Children and subsequently in many other forums including the Micronesia Youth Service Network meeting of 2007).
- Labor laws need to incorporate specific provisions for children in the workplace that will ensure protection from unsafe conditions or employment detrimental to children's primary responsibilities at school. (Action recommended in the 1998 NPA, by the International Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2000, and by participants in the 2008 Symposium).
- The criminal code on sexual misconduct needs amendment to remove gender bias and to ensure equitable protection for married girls and women. (Action recommended in the 1998 NPA, the proposed revisions to the Criminal Code, and the 2008 Symposium).
- New legislation is needed that specifically addresses exploitation of children via sexually explicit videos, movies, photos, and electronic images. (Action recommended in the 1998 NPA and the 2008 Symposium).
- Legislation needs to be enacted by the OEK to address the unique situation of non-Palauan children adopted by Palauans that will: (a) provide for internationally recognized travel documents for children who do not have citizenship rights in other countries; and (b) provide for residency with the right to work of these children upon their reaching adulthood.
- Optional protocols to the Convention that address (a) children in armed conflict and (b) sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography should be ratified in the first case as an expression of solidarity for oppressed children worldwide and in the second case, in recognition that sexual exploitation of children has become a global phenomena. As such, children of Palau are potentially vulnerable to exploitation even though no local cases have yet been documented. (Recommendation made by UNICEF; protocols introduced in and passed by the Senate; now pending in the House of Delegates).

### 6.3. Adoption

**Discussion.** Even among child advocates, there is no consensus about reforms, if any, needed with respect to customary adoption practices. In 1998, CoPopChi concluded that there was inadequate information to guide policy decisions and recommended that further research be undertaken.

More recently, there have been concerns expressed about children who live with relatives other than their biological parents in relationships that are not recognized as constituting customary adoptions. Teachers at Palau High School, for example, have called on the Ministry of Education to require legal guardianship of such children enrolled in school as a way to address some of the disciplinary issues that have arisen.

**Recommendation.** A research study should be designed and conducted, preferably by a Palauan researcher(s), to determine how customary adoption (as practiced today) supports or undermines the best interests of the children involved. This study should also examine the situation of children who live with persons other than their biological parents but in relationships not recognized as "adoptive." This research will provide guidance to government and civil society on laws, policies, and best practices relating to these arrangements.

### 6.4. Health

**Discussion.** Progressive improvements in the standard of living and a good health care system, have resulted in the control of most communicable diseases, declining infant and child mortality, and increasing life expectancy. Health of infants and young children, however, will be enhanced by improving maternal health and promoting breastfeeding through the second year of life. Health throughout the life span will be further enhanced by actions to improve diet, increase physical activity, eliminate tobacco use, eliminate under-aged drinking, and improve psycho-social health of children and adolescents.

### Recommendations.

- The health of infants will be enhanced by improved maternal health, especially weight management, management of non-communicable diseases, avoidance of tobacco use, and avoidance of alcohol and betel nut use during pregnancy. The health of infants will be further enhanced if women make full use of available prenatal services beginning in the first trimester of pregnancy.
- Breastfeeding rates need to be increased in line with international recommendations. To achieve this: (a) more information is needed about knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes on the part of women and their families regarding infant feeding and impediments to breastfeeding experienced by women; (b) community support groups need to be created to promote breastfeeding and assist mothers who experience difficulties with feeding; and (c) family friendly workplace policies are needed, including but not limited to mandatory maternity leave benefits for all working women.
- Health promoting environments are needed to encourage children and their parents to choose healthy foods, live active lives, and minimize sedentary behaviors. To this end, greater attention should be given to community designs that promote walking, gardening, fishing, sports, and other elements of an active lifestyle. Physical education should be a mandatory part of the school curriculum at all grade levels.
- Efforts to create a tobacco free society should continue including tobacco education and promotion of tobacco-free lifestyles and enactment of Comprehensive Tobacco Control legislation. Tobacco cessation programs specifically geared to the needs of children and teens should be developed and offered in school and community settings.
- Efforts to create zero-tolerance for under-aged drinking should continue including education, promotion of alcohol free lifestyles, and law enforcement.
- Further actions are needed to redress the high rates of depression and suicide ideation among youth. (See also Section 6.9).
- Impediments to use of available health services need to be identified and redressed. Cost of health care has previously been identified as an impediment (MOH-CAP, 2005); development of universal national health insurance will address a major barrier to care.

### 6.5. Education

**Discussion.** The effectiveness and efficiency of Palau's education system needs to be further enhanced to achieve universal completion of a high school education that adequately prepares children for work or higher level schooling.

### Recommendations.

- Preschool education needs to expand to provide universal coverage for all children. International research has found that investment in preschool education generates returns of \$7-\$17 for every dollar invested in the form of improved educational efficiency and reduced social welfare costs.
- Classroom instruction needs to be improved by increasing the supply of well qualified, high performing teachers. In particular, there needs to be a nation-wide "push" to strengthen education in math and the sciences.
- The school-to-work program needs to be progressively improved, expanded, and articulated with post-high school vocational training opportunities. Labor policies need to provide incentives for employment of Palauans first, especially young Palauans just entering the labor market.
- Alternative educational programs need to be established to meet the needs of children who cannot or will not succeed in the traditional classroom environment. While some students may need to be removed from the traditional classroom setting for their own benefit or that of classmates, no child should be expelled from the learning environment as the law requires that children, without exception, be in school from the age of 6-to-17 years and the Convention stipulates that a basic education is an inherent right of every child.

- For disabled children, there needs to be greater attention to “transition” planning as they near adulthood, a greater number of Palauan employers willing to hire the disabled, sheltered workshops for those unable to live and work independently, and greater continuity of support for the chronically disabled throughout their lifespan.

## 6.6. Justice for Children

**Discussion.** On children’s issues, the Ministry of Justice and Palau’s judiciary are progressive. The Ministry of Justice has pioneered an alternative sentencing system for juveniles and has instituted a number of programs designed to prevent juvenile delinquency. Judges strive to ensure that the rights of children are protected but are hampered in their work by lack of information on which to make judgments and lack of sentencing options in the community to meet children’s needs.

### Recommendations.

- The alternative sentencing program for juveniles accused of misdemeanors and minor crimes pioneered by the Ministry of Justice should be formally recognized by statute enacted by the OEK to ensure continuity of this program through changes of administrations and personnel. Budgetary provisions should be included for this and other juvenile justice programs within the budget of the Ministry.
- Facilities should be created within the existing jail for housing juveniles and women separate from the general population of (male) inmates.
- Courts that deal with children and families should have the benefit of impartial expert advice from an ombudsman charged with protecting the children’s interests.
- The feasibility of creating a Family Court should be critically assessed. If created the overwhelming focus of this court should be to protect the best interests of children and to guide children in conflict with the law along the “right path.”

## 6.7. Non-Discrimination

**Discussion.** A fundamental principle underlying the Convention is the universality of basic rights. Article 2 states:

“States parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each and every child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child’s or his or her parent’s or legal guardian’s race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.”

and

“States parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions, or beliefs of the child’s parents, guardians, or family members.”

### Recommendations.

- Public awareness about the Convention and the universality of its provisions for all child residents needs to be heightened. Accordingly, administrative or legislative provisions that restrict access of non-Palauan children to basic services covered under the Convention should be removed.
- Legislation needs to be enacted to minimize discrimination against non-Palauan children adopted by Palauans to the extent possible under the Constitution.

## 6.8. Youth Development

**Discussion.** Although many issues affecting youth have been addressed in previous sections of these recommendations, additional issues and recommendations were put forth by youth participating in the 2008 Youth Rally. In general these recommendations strengthen the capacity of youth to take action on issues affecting their own lives (see Ministry of Community and Cultural Affairs, Report on Youth Rally 2008).

### Recommendations.

- Youth endorsed the concept of peer counseling and asked for adult assistance in expanding peer counseling networks and training youth counselors. Youth also endorsed other youth-to-youth programs such as the “Gear-Up” workshops.
- Youth asked that the crisis hotline be re-established.
- Youth asked that the role of Student Body Associations be expanded to include information and education on a range of youth issues and direct action on some of the social issues facing students in the school setting.
- Youth reiterated previous survey results that identified bullying as a significant problem in Palau schools. Youth asked that adults take the problem seriously, provide support and education to students on how to cope with bullying, and take aggressive action to stop bullying when it occurs.
- Youth asked for adult assistance in establishing more positive youth programs, especially involving younger youth who are often left-out of activities geared toward older youth or young adults.
- Youth asked service providers to increase the flow of information about available programs, services, and resources. Development of youth oriented websites was one mechanism that was specifically recommended. Providers were asked to consider that younger youth have restrictions on their independent movement. As a consequence, services need to be brought to youth in their neighborhoods and schools rather than expecting youth to come to the services.

## 6.9. Promoting Women

**Discussion.** Palau is a matriarchal and matrilineal society in which women traditionally enjoy high status and positions of respect. Contemporary women, however, are under stress as they strive to fulfill multiple roles in traditional society, the family, the workplace, the private voluntary sector, and contemporary political arena.

### Recommendations.

- Although Palauan law is generally non-discriminatory, two discriminatory measures have been identified and recommended for remediation: (a) provisions under 17 PNC 2802 that deny equal protection against sexual violence and exploitation for married women; and (b) provisions under 15 PNC 301 that deny women the right to inherit property from their spouse if he dies without a will and that further discriminate against girl children.
- Legislation is needed to provide: (a) maternity leave for employed women; (b) protection from discrimination in the workplace as a result of pregnancy; and (c) flexible work scheduling following maternity leave to support continuation of breastfeeding.
- Domestic violence legislation should be enacted.
- There needs to be more support for working families, especially through more options with respect to child care. Child care is an area conducive to women owned small businesses. Small business development support should be made available for women seeking to develop either center-based or home-based child care services. At the same time, the Early Childhood Consortium should propose minimum standards for formal child care services operated as businesses.
- Within civil society, men should be encouraged to assume equitable responsibility for the support and maintenance of the family thus helping to alleviate some of the stress now borne by women in juggling multiple roles.
- The Palau Government should move to ratify CEDAW as an expression of solidarity with oppressed women worldwide. In the event that there are provisions within CEDAW that are genuinely prejudicial to the well-being of Palauan women and the special status that they occupy in society, this issue can be addressed through a “reservation” included in the articles of ratification.



# ANNEXES



## Annex A: World Fit for Children Key Indicators

	Description	Base Year	Indicator	Most Recent Year	Indicator	Data Source
<b>HEALTH SECTOR</b>						
<b>WFFC Goal - Reduce child mortality:</b> Reduce infant and under five mortality rate by two thirds by 2015.						
Infant mortality rate	Deaths during first year of life per 1,000 live births	2000	10.8	2007	7.2	MOH – Family Health Unit
Under 5 mortality rate	Deaths among children under 5 years of age per 1,000 live births	2000	14.4	2007	7.2	MOH – Family Health Unit
Newborns with low birth weight (%)	Infants weighing < 2500 grams at birth	1996	9.8%	2005	6%	MOH – Family Health Unit
Two year olds immunized against measles (%) <sup>44</sup>		2000	MMR1=93% MMR2=93%	2007	MMR1=95% MMR2=86%	MOH – EPI Program
<b>WFFC Goal - Reduce maternal mortality:</b> Reduce maternal mortality ratio by three-quarters by 2015.						
Maternal mortality ratio	Pregnancy or childbirth related deaths among women within 48 days before or after delivery per 100,000 live-births	2000	0.0	2007	0.0	MOH – Family Health Unit
Births attended by skilled health personnel (%)	Births attended by physical, nurse, or midwife	2000	100%	2007	100%	MOH Family Health Unit
Facilities providing comprehensive essential obstetric care		2000	1	2007	1	MOH – Family Health Unit

<sup>44</sup>Palau follows U.S. Centers for Disease Control immunization guidelines under which two doses of MMR (mumps-measles-rubella) vaccine are administered during the 2nd year of life.

Pregnant women with 1 antenatal visit	Attendance at antenatal clinic 1 or more times	2000	100%	2007	100%	MOH – Family Health Unit
<b>WFFC Goal - Reduce child malnutrition:</b> Reduce child malnutrition among children under 5 by at least 1/3, with special attention to children under 2 years, and reduce rate of low birth weight by one-third.						
% children <18 years with anaemia		1997	1.2%	2007	NAv.	MOH- Family Health Unit
Prevalence of underweight in children < five years of age (%)	% of children < 5 who are <= 80% WHO/NCHS weight standard	1999	1.4%	2007	NAv.	MOH – Family Health Unit
Infants < 4 months (120 days) of age exclusively breastfed (%)	Exclusive breastfeeding means no food, formula, or supplemental drinks given	2001	55%	2005	53%	MOH – Family Health Unit
Infants < 6 months who are exclusively breastfed (%)		1996	36%	2005	37.5%	MOH – Family Health Unit
Infants 6 - 9 months who receive breastmilk and complementary food (%)		1996	37%	2005	38.4%	MOH – Family Health Unit
Overweight (school aged children)		Baseline not available	NAV	2006	19%	School health survey 2006
Stunting or wasting		Not public health issues in Palau; no monitoring of these indicators				MOH
Vitamin A & iodine deficiency		Not public health issues in Palau; no monitoring of these indicators				MOH – Family Health Unit
<b>WFFC Goal - Enlarge the access to hygienic sanitation facilities and affordable and safe drinking water:</b> Reduction in the proportion of households without access to hygienic sanitation facilities and affordable and safe drinking water by at least 1/3						
Access to improved water source	% of total households	2000	96.2%	2005	99%	2000 & 2005 census
Access to improved sanitation	% of total households	2000	98.8%	2005	99%	2000 & 2005 census

## EDUCATION SECTOR

**WFFC Goal - Expand early childhood care & education for children** Expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education, for girls and boys, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged.

Children 36 - 59 months attending early childhood education programs	Figure shown is gross enrollment (number enrolled divided by children ages 3-5 years of age)	2004	77.4%	2006	70.9%	Ministry of Education
Primary school net enrolment ratio (%)	Children enrolled in grades 1-6 of appropriate age divided by number children 6-13 yrs	2004	85.4%	2006	88.3%	Ministry of Education
Ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary, tertiary education	Primary = Grades 1-8; Secondary = Grades 9-12	SY 2000-01	Primary: 0.93 Secondary: 1.0 Tertiary – Not Available.	SY 2007-8	Primary: 0.86 Secondary: 0.98 Tertiary – Not Available	Ministry of Education
Primary completion rate (%)	Students entering grade 1 expected to complete 8 years of schooling	SY 2005	83%	SY 2008	89%	Ministry of Education
Secondary school net enrolment ratio (%)	Students enrolled in Grades 9-12 who are of appropriate age divided by number children 14-17 yrs	SY 2004	70%	SY 2006	78%	Ministry of Education
Proportion of trained teachers in the primary education (%)	Teachers with at least associate degree (with or without degree in education); private and public schools		100 (late 1990s)	2006	52.3%	Ministry of Education

Years of education that is compulsory to attend (years)			6-17 years of age	2007	6-17 years of age	
Years of education that is free from charge		Grades 1-12				
<b>WFFC Goal - Eliminate illiteracy amongst adults</b> Achieve a 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women						
Adult literacy (%) <sup>45</sup>	Adult (legal resident) Palauans with at least 4 years of education	2000	15 years of age & over = 95%; 15-24 years of age = 99%	2005	15 years of age & over = 96%; 15-24 years of age = 99.7%	Ministry of Education analysis of 2000 & 2005 census
<b>Abuse, Exploitation, Violence</b>						
<b>WFFC Goal: Protect against abuse, exploitation, and violence</b>						
CRC ratification	Palau ratified the CRC in 1995 and submitted the initial report in 1998. The initial report was reviewed by the CRC in 2000 with comments received in 2001; 2005 report not yet submitted.					
NACC	There are no provisions under the law for a child to be forcibly removed by the Government from his/her parents or family although a person (including a parent) accused of child abuse or neglect will be ordered to have no contact with that child until the case is resolved and if convicted will be removed from the child by virtue of a prison sentence. When warranted, judicial restraining orders can be used to ensure no-contact.					
Measure to protect children from abuse, exploitation & violence	100% of children are registered at birth (Ministry of Health; Office of Planning & Statistics).					
<b>WFFC Goal - Protect children from the impact of armed conflict</b>						
Optional Protocol to CRC	Palau has not signed the Optional Protocol on CRC on the involvement of children in Armed Conflict.					
Legislative environment to protect the children in armed conflict	Palau is not involved in armed conflict and has no armed forces. Were Palau's security to be threatened, defense is the responsibility of the United States under the terms of the Compact of Free Association. Palauans are eligible for voluntary service in the United States Armed Forces; the minimum requirement for enlistment is to be 18 years of age and be a high school graduate.					
<b>WFFC Goal - Fight against sexual exploitation</b>						
Optional Protocol to CRC	Palau has not signed the Optional Protocol to CRC on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.					

<sup>45</sup> Defined as adults (ethnic Palauans) 25+ who completed at least 4 years of education; excludes non-citizens on temporary visas.

<p>Optional Protocol to CRC</p> <p>CEDAW</p> <p>Measure taken to protect children from sexual abuse</p>	<p>Palau has not signed the Optional Protocol to CRC on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.</p> <p>Palau has not ratified CEDAW.</p> <p>Sexual abuse is covered under the Palau National Code. The Victims of Crime Assistance Program within the Ministry of Health investigates and provides assistance to children who have been victims of sexual abuse in cooperation with the office of the Attorney General, the police, and judiciary.</p>
<p><b>WFFC Goal 4 - Eliminate child labour</b></p>	
<p>ILO convention ratification status</p>	<p>Only two labour laws specifically refer to children: (a) persons under the age of 16 are prohibited from employment on foreign trading vessels except if operated by a single family (PNC 7.16); and (b) persons under the age of 21 are prohibited from employment in premises used for serving or consuming alcohol (PNC 11.1064). By regulation of the Ministry of Commerce and Trade, no person under the age of 21 years is allowed to obtain a foreign labour permit.</p> <p>The necessary amendments to the statute to provide for minimum ages and conditions of employment for children can be incorporated in due course into a proposed Uniform Labour Law.</p> <p>There is no information on child labour available. Employment of children in ways that are prejudicial to their health, development, or education is not considered to be a problem in Palau. There are no street children in Palau.</p>
<p><b>WFFC Goal - Improve the plight of millions of children who live under especially difficult circumstances</b></p>	
<p>Improve the plight of children who live under especially difficult Circumstances</p> <p>Adopted children</p> <p>Children with special needs</p>	<p>As used in international circles, Palau has no children that live under "especially difficult circumstances." (This term normally refers to street children, children living in deep poverty, refugees, or other victims of extreme circumstances).</p> <p>Palauan family law provides for legal adoption by any person who is not the child's biological parent. The judicial standard in Palau is to ensure that adoptions are in the best interests of the child. Children over the age of 12 must consent in order for an adoption to be approved. There are also no special safeguards in place that govern adoption by non-citizens and/or non-residents.</p> <p>While customary adoptions are legally recognized when carried out in accordance with recognized custom, there is no requirement for court concurrence or for registration. Customary adoptions generally come under the jurisdiction of the court only if there is an externally imposed reason for court involvement such as a dispute about custody or inheritance or the need for an adoption certificate to be issued to satisfy formalities imposed by foreign Governments (e.g. for immigration purposes). Adoption in Palau is a complicated cultural issue but there is no indication that children are systematically disadvantaged by adoption</p> <p>An Inter Agency Team exists in Palau to provide comprehensive services in health, education and social support towards children and their families with special needs . 342 children aged 0-21 years were listed on the registry in 2007 as having special care needs (MCH).</p>

### HIV-AIDS

**WFFC Goal - Reduce HIV vertical transmission** By 2005, reduce the proportion of infants infected with HIV by 20% and by 50% by 2010, by: ensuring that 80% of pregnant women accessing antenatal care have information, counseling and other HIV prevention services available to them; increasing access for HIV infected women and babies to effective treatment to reduce mother-to-child transmission of HIV, as well as through effective interventions for HIV infected women, including VCCT; access to treatment, especially ART and, where appropriate, breast milk substitutes and the provision of a continuum of care.

Mother to child transmission	Absolute number of cases	2002	0	2007	0 <sup>46</sup>	MOH – HIV/AIDS Program
Status of PMTCT policy		2002	No PMTCT policy set	2007	No PMTCT policy set	
Access to ART & where appropriate, breast milk substitutes; provision of a continuum of care		2002	100% access to drugs & care; no breast-feeding policy	2007	100% access to drugs & care; no breastfeeding policy	MOH – HIV/AIDS Program
Pregnant women counseled on PMTCT service in the past year.		2002	Baseline not available	2006	100% counseled; 95% accept screening	MOH – HIV/AIDS Program
Number of VCCT facilities (number)		2001	1 (Belau National Hospital)	2007	1 (Belau National Hospital)	MOH – HIV/AIDS Program

<sup>46</sup>One infant has been born to an HIV positive mother but the mother received drug therapy and the infant was born free of HIV.

## Annex B: Summary of Recommendations by the International Committee on the Rights of the Child to the Republic of Palau (26th Session, January 2001)

Positive Aspects
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The report submitted to the Committee was of good quality and was developed in</li> <li>2. collaboration with the Council of Chiefs, civil society, and the general public.</li> <li>3. An institutional focal point has been established (CoPopChi) to monitor implementation of the CRC.</li> <li>4. The CRC has been translated into Palauan and widely distributed.</li> <li>5. A National Plan of Action for Children has been developed.</li> <li>6. A focal point for responding to child abuse and domestic violence has been established in the form of the Victims of Crime Assistance (VOCA).</li> <li>7. Compulsory education has been enacted for all children 6-17 years of age.</li> </ol>
Factors and difficulties impeding implementation of the CRC
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Serving children in the remote outer islands (Southwest Islands) is difficult.</li> <li>2. Recruiting and retaining skilled human resources in the areas of health, education, and social services is difficult.</li> <li>3. Much of the funding available for services that benefit children derives from transfer payments from the United States under COFA. Dependency on foreign funding introduces a serious element of unsustainability into the situation of children.</li> <li>4. The National Master Development Plan does not explicitly address the needs of children.</li> </ol>
Concerns and recommendations
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Legal status of the CRC</b> The CRC may not be invoked before the courts unless relevant articles have been enacted into the Palau Code. The Committee recommends that Palau enact domestic legislation to give direct effect to the CRC.</li> <li>2. <b>Legal status of children</b> Although CoPopChi has reported on the legal status of children vis-à-vis the CRC, actions have not been taken to address inconsistencies between the CRC and domestic law. The Committee recommends that Palau address inconsistencies between the CRC and domestic law and consider enacting a comprehensive legal code for children.</li> <li>3. <b>Other human rights instruments</b> The Committee notes that Palau has not acceded to the six main international human rights instruments including the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Their Families. The Committee recommends that Palau accede to all international human rights instruments to which it is not yet a party.</li> <li>4. <b>Capacity of CoPopChi</b> While formation of CoPopChi is a positive step, CoPopChi does not have designated human or financial resources to carry out its functions. The Committee recommends that additional human and financial resources be allocated to CoPopChi.</li> <li>5. <b>Focal point for children and families</b> The National Plan of Action for Children recommends that an Office of Child and Family Support be established as a focal point for child and family focused support activities. The Committee endorses this recommendation.</li> <li>6. <b>Data collection</b> The Committee is concerned that data systems do not allow systematic disaggregation of data for children and especially for children who are particularly vulnerable – migrant children, non-Palauan children, children with special needs, etc.</li> <li>7. <b>Independent monitoring structure</b> The Committee recommends that an independent ombudsperson be established to monitor the situation of children vis-à-vis the CRC and that this function NOT be assigned to the proposed Office of Child and Family Support.</li> <li>8. <b>Resources for education and social services</b> The Committee notes that resources for education have been declining and there is virtually no social service system outside of health and education. The Committee recommends that adequate budgetary support be provided for children's programs and that efforts be made to enhance the sustainability of these resources by reducing dependency on COFA transfer payments.</li> </ol>

**9. Public information about children's rights**

The Committee recommends continuing efforts to ensure that information about children's rights and the CRC is widely disseminated and is integrated into the curricula of the education system.

**10. Criminal law**

The Committee is concerned that children as young as 10 years may be held responsible for criminal behavior under Palau law and that there is no legislation establishing the minimum age for sexual consent for boys or minimum age for employment of children. The committee recommends that these deficiencies in the law be addressed.

**11. Youth**

The Committee notes that the official definition of youth is 15-35. The Committee recommends that the definition be changed to conform to the CRC definition of "child".

**12. General principles**

The Committee recommends that general principles of the CRC be integrated into law, judicial and administrative proceedings, and programs that impact on children. These general principles include: non-discrimination (Article 2), best interests of the child (Article 3), survival and development (Article 6), and respect for the views of the child (Article 12).

**13. Non-discrimination**

The Committee expresses concern about the situation of vulnerable children including non-Palauans, migrants, and (inter-country) adopted children. The Committee recommends that Palau take all appropriate measures, including legal reforms, to afford all children equal access to services that they need. The Committee further recommends that the legal minimum age of marriage be increased for girls to be equivalent to that for boys (age 18).

**14. Best interests of the child**

The Committee notes that the standard of judicial and administrative decisions is "best interests of all concerned". The Committee recommends action to change this standard to reflect "best interests of the child" as mandated by the CRC.

**15. Respect for the views of the child**

The Committee notes that progress has been made in allowing the voice of children to be heard but recommends that further action be taken to implement this principle. Further, the Committee recommends that Palau consider establishing a children's parliament or other institutions that will facilitate participation by children in society.

**16. Children deprived of a family environment**

The Committee recommends that a special review be undertaken of the situation of female-headed households and that measures be taken to strengthen the family.

**17. Adoption and foster care**

The Committee is concerned that children who are adopted inter-country by Palauans are deprived of their basic rights including the right to the Palauan nationality, to own land, and to benefit from "free" services available to national children. The Committee recommends actions be taken to protect the rights of these children.

**18. Children with disabilities**

The Committee recommends that Palau strengthen its programs and services to meet the needs of disabled children, include mental illness as a "disabling condition," and increase emphasis on a policy of inclusion, especially in the schools.

**19. Education**

The Committee recommends that measures be taken to address: declining financial resources for education; high dropout rates; inadequate performance of children in school; and support for teachers in small rural schools. The Committee also recommends that physical education be integrated into the school curriculum and that instruction in the Palauan language and culture be strengthened.

**20. Economic exploitation**

The Committee recommends that Palau ratify the ILO Convention Number 138 (minimum age for admission to employment) and ILO Convention Number 182 (elimination of the worst forms of child labor).

**21. Drug abuse**

The Committee recommends intensified efforts to protect children from the illicit use of alcohol, narcotics, and psychotropic substances (including betel nut).

**22. Sexual exploitation and abuse**

The Committee recommends further actions to protect children (especially boys who are not given equal protection under the law) from sexual exploitation and abuse.

**23. Juvenile justice**

The Committee recommends that measures be taken to bring Palau into conformity with Articles 37, 40, and 39 of the CRC as well as other international standards: UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (the Beijing rules); the UN Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (the Riyadh Guidelines); and the UN Rules for Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty.

**24. Optional protocols**

The Committee recommends that Palau ratify the optional protocols to the CRC regarding (a) children in armed conflict and (b) sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography.

**25. Dissemination of the Committee's recommendations**

The Committee recommends that its findings and recommendations on the rights of children be widely circulated within Palau.

## Annex C: Traditional Versus Contemporary Values

Traditional Values	Contemporary Values
<b>Respect</b> for all things living and non-living.	Erosion of the ethic of <b>respect</b> leads to social problems and environmental degradation.
Interdependence and primacy of <b>the group over the individual</b> .	<b>Individualism</b> exemplified by competition for land and individual wealth.
Customary exchanges and continuous acts of sharing bonded individuals and clans together in a complex web of reciprocity which is <b>wealth</b> .	Contemporary "custom" preserves the structure of sharing but many people now associate custom with <b>hardship</b> rather than wealth.
<b>Sense of place and social continuity</b> rooted in attachment to one's ancestral village and a familial continuum extending from past to future.	Families are now <b>dispersed</b> across Palau and the world. Children reared in Koror or overseas no longer identify with their ancestral villages or know many of their relatives.
<b>Duality</b> is the concept of force and counterforce in which one's actions are tied to those of another giving rise to the concept of " <b>different but equal</b> ."	Duality, which has no western equivalent, is eroded by encroaching westernization with its hierarchical orientation encouraging <b>competition for positions of supremacy</b> .
<b>Intimacy</b> of interpersonal relations with everyone knowing one another and one's kinship ties.	<b>Impersonality</b> arising from out-migration of Palauans and in-migration of foreigners.
Despite the value placed on inter-dependence, Palauans also value <b>self-sufficiency and self-reliance</b> ; individuals are expected to provide for self and family through hard work that amasses surplus for exchange.	Loosening of self-reliance creates <b>dependence</b> on family, government, and other social institutions.
In a subsistence lifestyle there are limits to what a person can use, thus the conservation ethic "take only what you can use."	With commercialism, there are few limits on what can be sold thus the emerging ethic - "take what you can."
People care for their own kin, especially the elderly and disabled and through <b>mutual caring</b> , secure their own future.	<b>Individualism</b> limits one's responsibilities to a smaller group of kin; there is less faith that sacrifices today will be rewarded tomorrow.
Traditionally, culture was <b>constantly changing</b> in response to evolving circumstances and changing interpretations in an oral society whose truths were subjected to changing memory.	The written word results in <b>rigid</b> interpretation of social relations through contracts and policies. No longer does a person's word suffice for agreement. Courts interpret customary law and issue opinions about titles and lands instead of the traditional leaders customarily responsible for resolving disputes.

## Annex D: U.S. Federal Grant Programs for Education and Health in Palau, and Federal and Other Funding for Social Services (Circa FY 2007)

Table 19. U.S. Federal Grant Programs for Education in Palau (Circa FY 2007)		
Ministry of Education Grants	Palau Community College Grants	Other Grants
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gear-Up Project - \$262,435</li> <li>• Adult Education – \$47,831</li> <li>• Career Resource Network - \$70,000</li> <li>• HIV School Prevention - \$97,000</li> <li>• R.C. Byrd Honors Scholarship - \$12,000</li> <li>• Special Education - \$1,001,283</li> <li>• Teacher Quality Enhancement - \$154,000</li> <li>• Territories &amp; Freely Associated States Grant - \$629,982</li> <li>• Vocational Education - \$358,000</li> <li>• Close-up Foundation - \$2,000</li> <li>• Library and Technical Services - \$40,000</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student Support Services – (\$182,819)</li> <li>• Talent Search – (\$203,054)</li> <li>• Upward Bound (\$359,618)</li> <li>• Upward Bound Math &amp; Science (\$207,487)</li> <li>• Minority Science (\$87,899)</li> <li>• Area Health Education Center (\$198,255)</li> <li>• U.S. Department of Education financial aid to low income students (PELL, Supplemental Education Opportunity Grant, College-Work Study) – (\$2,356,708)</li> <li>• U.S. Department of Agriculture (\$6,610)</li> <li>• U.S. Department of the Interior COFA Section 221 (\$2,000,000)</li> <li>• U.S. Department of the Interior Special training (\$51,922)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Head Start - \$1,300,000</li> <li>• Small Business Development Center (non-formal)</li> <li>• Workforce Investment Act (non-formal)</li> </ul>
Total \$2,684,531	Total \$5,654,372	
Sources: MOE Statistical Yearbook 2005; PCC Audit Report for 2006 (expenditures for FY 2006)		

**Table 20. U.S. Federal Grants for Health – Expenditures FY 2007**

(Ministry of Finance Data)

<b>Functional Area</b>	<b>Federal Grant</b>	<b>Allocation FY 2007</b>
HIV-AIDS	School HIV-Aids Prevention	\$101,738
	HIV Prevention	\$214,983
	HIV Care (Ryan White)	\$40,865
	HIV Surveillance	\$22,429
	STD Prevention	\$53,228
Behavioral Health	Mental Health Data Information	\$87,430
	Tobacco Use Prevention	\$153,159
	State Incentive Program (alcohol abuse prevention)	\$389,379
	Substance Abuse Prevention	\$118,807
	Behavioral Health	\$49,143
	Olmstead Project	\$7,648
Dental Health	Oral Disease Prevention	\$150,194
	Children's Oral Health	\$25,625
Maternal & Child Health	CISS-SECCS	\$130,102
	Newborn Screening	\$70,609
	Children with Special Needs (Interagency)	\$82,701
	Breast & Cervical Cancer Prevention & Screening	\$772,928
	Family Planning	\$206,704
	Immunization (Vaccine Supply)	\$173,402
	Maternal & Child Health	\$150,653
	Rape Prevention & Education	\$5,007
Environmental Health	Environmental Health	\$134,334
	Environmental Health PHCI	\$106,297
	Environmental Health PHCI	\$1,737
Community Health	Community Health Centers	\$678,294
Prevention	Tuberculosis Prevention & Treatment	\$149,692
	Diabetes Prevention	\$76,675
	Epidemiology & Laboratory Capacity Development	\$60,976
	Pandemic Flu	\$109,179
	Prevention (General)	\$22,791
	Bioterrorism	Bioterrorism Hospital Preparedness
	Bioterrorism	\$503,705
	<b>TOTAL Federal Grant Expenditures for Health</b>	<b>\$5,169,927</b>

**Table 21. Social Services**  
*(Excluding those in the health and education sectors)*

Target Population	Ministry & Office	Services	OEK Funding	Federal & Other Funding Circa FY 07	
				Program	Dollars
Adults with disabilities	MC&CA Disability Fund	Disability allowance	\$200,000	Nil	\$0
Youth	Ministry of Justice OOK Program	School transportation (Babeldaob to Koror), mentoring, after-school drop-in center, LEEP program in elementary schools	\$3,000	Nil	\$0
	MC&CA Youth Services	Monitoring of Youth Policy Implementation; special projects; Job Corps applications	\$34,000	Nil	\$0
Women	MC&CA Women's Information Office	Special projects	\$23,000	Nil	\$0
Senior Citizens	MC&CA Administration on Aging	Senior centers, meals, transportation, employment, craft outlet, special projects	\$230,000	Nil	\$0
Low income persons	MOH Sliding Fee Scale	Health care subsidy	Not Available	Nil	0
Public utility subsidy	Basic services	In FY 2007 subsidies were applied across the board; value of subsidies that benefit low income households cannot be determined	Not Available	Nil	0
<b>Grand Total</b>			<b>\$490,000</b>		<b>0</b>

## Annex E: Legal Minimum Age for Various Purposes

Purpose	Legal Minimum Age	PNC Reference
Legal counsel	No legal minimum. Under the criminal code, any person (without regard to age) charged with a crime is entitled to independent counsel and will be assigned a lawyer if unable to afford a private attorney.	
Medical care	No legal minimum. Services funded by U.S. Federal grants (e.g. family planning) require parent consent if a child is under 18. However, such services can be charged to a domestic account if, in the professional opinion of the attending physician or nurse, the provision of services without parental consent is in the best interest of the child. Minors receiving services will be counseled to involve parents in their future care decisions.	
Leave school	Age 17 of high school graduation.	PNC 22
Employment	Persons under 16 are prohibited from employment on foreign trading vessels (unless the vessel is operated by a family unit). Persons under 21 are prohibited from employment on premises where alcohol is consumed.	PNC 7.16 & PNC 11
Sexual consent	Age 15 (PNC 28.4); PNC 28.6 makes it a crime to indecently assault any person under the age of 14 without rape or intention to commit rape; PNC 17.28 protects females under the age of 15 from sexual exploitation. Similar protection is not extended to males except via the law against sodomy (PNC 17.28).	As referenced
Marriage	Age 18 for males and 16 for females (with parent consent) when a government-issued marriage license is required. A marriage license is required to legalize a marriage only when one of the parties is a non-citizen. If both parties are citizens, customary marriages are legally binding. In practice, child marriages are virtually non-existent today.	PNC 21
Military service	Palau has no armed forces although Palauans are eligible to serve in the U.S. military which requires enlistees to be 18 and a high school graduate.	
Testify in court	No legal minimum; admission of a child's testimony is at the discretion of the presiding judge. In practice, the Attorney General and the courts make every effort to avoid requiring a child to give testimony in court.	
Seek redress before a court	The law prohibits a minor (under age 18) from filing a civil action. A minor, however, can file a civil action within two years after reaching the age of majority. There have, however, been exceptional cases in which the court has permitted a minor to pursue independent legal action (e.g. personal injury cases).	PNC 14.406
Criminal liability	Children under the age of 10 are "conclusively presumed" to be incapable of committing a crime. Children 10-14 years are conclusively presumed to be incapable of committing any crime except murder and rape in which case the presumption is rebuttable.	PNC 17
Participation in judicial proceedings concerning the child	In adoption cases, the child irrespective of age must appear before the court and if over the age of 12, must give consent to adoption (PNC 21.404). In matters involving criminal law, the child irrespective of age has the right to appear in court and to testify on his/her own behalf but may not be compelled to do so. In other civil matters, the participation of the child is at the discretion of the judge.	
Prosecution as a "delinquent" child	Under the age of 18	PNC 34.61

Imprisonment	Subject only to restrictions against criminal liability as set forth in PNC 17. In practice, the courts sentence children to prison only as a measure of last resort.	
Capital punishment	Constitutionally prohibited for any offender.	
Life imprisonment without parole	Life imprisonment can be imposed only for homicide; children convicted of homicide can be sentenced to life imprisonment without parole.	PNC 17.17
Alcohol and controlled substances	Age 21 for possession, purchase, or use of alcohol. Age 19 for purchase of tobacco.	PNC 11
Consent to change identity	A minor child over the age of 12 must consent to court-supervised adoption. Most adoptions, however, are handled within the family where practices will vary with respect to consultation with and consideration of the wishes of the child.	PNC 21.404
Access to information concerning biological family	Except for juvenile records, all court records are open to the public. Birth certificates, which may contain information about biological parents, are not sealed; copies can be obtained by any person with the \$3 filing fee. Because families may not always inform children that they have been adopted, this creates problems for the court. The court normally contacts the adoptive parents and asks for guidance.	
Legal capacity to inherit and to enter into property transactions	The right to inheritance is recognized legally and customarily even before birth. Upon death of a parent, a clan gathering is convened called the " <i>cheldecheduch</i> ." The purpose of this gathering is to bestow upon the spouse of the deceased and the children (irrespective of age) their share of the property of the deceased. This may take the form of monetary payments; use of certain clan lands; and/or individual ownership of lands. Clan decisions are given full legal recognition. In the case of inheritance by a minor or young adult, the maternal uncle will often act as trustee for the child.	
Create or join associations	To form a legally recognized corporation (whether non-profit or for-profit), the principals (officers and directors) must be at least 18 years of age. Criterion for membership is determined by the by-laws. Although many organizations admit minors to membership, they may restrict their rights to vote or hold office.	
Choose a religion	No legal minimum; religion is not regulated by law or the courts.	
Other purposes	Voting – age 18 (PNC 23, Constitution Article 7); operate a motor vehicle – 16 (PNC 42); operate a boat (not regulated); hold public office in the OEK – 25 (PNC 23); hold the office of President or Vice-President – 35 (PNC 23); make a will – 18 (PNC 23); petition for naturalization – 18	As state

## Annex F: Master Plan for Education 2006-2012 and main Institutional Players in the Education Sector

<b>Table 22. Priorities of the Master Plan for Education, 2006-2016</b>	
<p><b>Vision:</b> Our students will be successful in the Palauan society and the world.  <b>Mission:</b> In partnership with students, parents, and the community, ensure student success through effective curriculum and instruction delivered in an environment conducive to learning.</p>	
<b>Focal Area</b>	<b>Specific Actions</b>
Governance & Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a board of education</li> <li>• Designate education as a national priority and increase funding</li> <li>• Improve management and accountability systems</li> <li>• Develop and implement policy manuals</li> </ul>
Curriculum & Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve curriculum frameworks</li> <li>• Increase literacy, numeracy, Palauan knowledge, &amp; life skills</li> <li>• Integrate technology into curriculum; enhance public access to school-based technology resources</li> <li>• Strengthen and expand career academies (to being at 5<sup>th</sup> grade)</li> <li>• Improve student assessment (testing) systems</li> <li>• Improve and expand extracurricular activities</li> </ul>
School operations & management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resolve land disputes involving schools</li> <li>• Consolidate schools; strive for school populations of about 150</li> <li>• Require all teachers to have bachelor's degrees (by 2016) and all principals to have master's degree (by 2016)</li> <li>• Accredite public schools</li> <li>• Strengthen and increase school-community partnership</li> </ul>
Personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve quality of personnel</li> <li>• Allow teachers to continue working for up to 10 years past retirement (30 years of service or 60 years of age)</li> <li>• Implement teacher and administrator certification systems</li> </ul>
Facilities & Support Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve facilities and support services</li> <li>• Provide safe, healthy and conducive learning environments</li> <li>• Improve and expand counseling and health services</li> <li>• Increase access to technology</li> <li>• Establish and implement transportation policies</li> <li>• Subsidize lunch with possible privatization.</li> </ul>

**Table 23. Institutional Players in the Education Sector**

<b>Sub-Sector</b>	<b>Public and Semi-Public Entities</b>	<b>Private Entities</b>
Pre-Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ministry of Health (Early Childhood Consortium)</li> <li>Child Care Center at Palau Community College</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Palau Community Action Agency (Head Start Program)</li> <li>Gospel Preschool (Koror Evangelical Church)</li> <li>Maris Stella Kindergarten (Catholic Mission)</li> <li>SDA Kindergarten (Seventh Day Adventist Church)</li> </ul>
Grades 1-12: Primary (1-8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ministry of Education (19 public schools)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maris Stella School (Catholic Mission)</li> <li>SDA Elementary School (SDA Church)</li> </ul>
Grades 1-12: Secondary (9-12)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ministry of Education (1 public high school)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mindszenty High School (Catholic Mission)</li> <li>Emmaus and Bethania High Schools (Palau Evangelical Church)</li> <li>Palau Mission Academy (SDA Church)</li> <li>Belau Modengkei School (Modengkei Religion)</li> </ul>
Post-Secondary: Vocational-Technical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Palau Community College</li> <li>Apprenticeship program of the Civil Action Team of the U.S. Navy and Air Force</li> <li>U.S. Job Corps</li> <li>Workforce Investment (WIA)</li> <li>Small Business Development Programs at PCC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Palau Community Action (manager for apprenticeship program)</li> <li>Palau Community Action Small Business Development Program</li> </ul>
Post-Secondary: Academic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Palau National Scholarship Board</li> <li>Palau Community College</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Various private scholarship providers</li> </ul>

## Annex G: Programs at Palau Community College, Scholarships and Loans Administered by PNSB, and Scholarship, Grant, and Loan Recipients, 2000-2006

Table 24. Programs at Palau Community College			
Associate of Applied Science (AAS)	Associate or Science or Arts (AS or AA)	Both AAS and AS/AA Degrees	Other Programs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Air conditioning &amp; refrigeration</li> <li>• Auto mechanics</li> <li>• Construction</li> <li>• Electrical</li> <li>• Office administration</li> <li>• Small engine and outboard marine technology</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business accounting</li> <li>• Business administration</li> <li>• Criminal justice</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Environmental or marine science</li> <li>• Information technology</li> <li>• Liberal arts</li> <li>• Science, technology, and engineering and math discipline</li> <li>• Architectural drafting and design</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agriculture science</li> <li>• General electronics</li> <li>• Library and information services</li> <li>• Nursing</li> <li>• Hospitality-tourism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skill-specific certificates of completion</li> <li>• Technical studies (music, arts, physical education, Palauan studies)</li> <li>• Bachelor degree in education (with San Diego State University)</li> <li>• Continuing education (non-degree)</li> <li>• Adult high school</li> <li>• Upward Bound &amp; Talent Search</li> <li>• Specialized programs with partners (U.S. DOI; Ministry of Health, Small Business Development, etc.)</li> </ul>
<i>Source: PCC Annual Report for FY 2006.</i>			

**Table 25. Scholarships and Loans Administered by PNSB**

ROP-Funded	Non-ROP Funded
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Congressional Scholarship (one-time \$5,000 award to the top 10 graduates from Palau's high schools each year)</li> <li>• Palau grant</li> <li>• Palau scholarship (juniors &amp; seniors only)</li> <li>• Palau student loan</li> <li>• Scholarships for non-traditional college programs (e.g. distance learning)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shell Palau Scholarship</li> <li>• Bank of Hawaii Scholarship</li> <li>• Speaker Tadao Ngotel Scholarship</li> <li>• Kayangel State Scholarship</li> <li>• Rotary 'David Williams' Scholarship</li> <li>• Palau Shipping Scholarship</li> <li>• Didil Belau (female juniors or seniors)</li> <li>• Monbusho (Japan) (professional training, undergraduate, and post-graduate scholarships)</li> <li>• Australia Scholarship (undergraduate and post-graduate studies at Pacific colleges)</li> <li>• New Zealand Scholarship (undergraduate and post-graduate)</li> <li>• Taiwan Pacific Islands Forum Scholarships (undergraduate and post-graduate)</li> <li>• Taiwan Government Scholarship (undergraduate only)</li> </ul>
<p>Source: Palau National Scholarship Board Performance Report, for FY 2007.</p>	

**Table 26. Scholarship, Grant, and Loan Recipients, 2000-2006**

School Year	Applicants	Recipients	Approval Rate	Value of Average Award	Total Graduates	Graduation Rate	Degree				Graduate Location		Graduates Residing Out of Palau		
							Certificate or Associate	Bachelor	Master	Ph.D. or Professional	In Palau	Outside	Student	Employment	
<b>Statistics for Scholarships and Grants</b>															
2006-2007	239	161	67%	\$2,500	Unavailable at time of publication										
2005-2006	273	189	69%	\$2,099	5	4%	3	2	0	0	3	2	1	1	
2004-2005	225	134	60%	\$3,500	10	5%	2	5	3	0	3	7	4	3	
2003-2004	326	192	59%	\$3,429	24	12%	13	10	0	1	10	14	12	2	
2002-2003	330	202	60%	\$3,385	7	3%	2	3	2	0	4	3	3	0	
2001-2002	324	201	62%	\$4,970	30	9%	11	15	4	0	24	6	6	0	
2000-2001	362	177	51%	\$5,840	24	7%	10	10	4	0	19	5	5	0	
1999-2000	439	280	63%	\$2,360	37	10%	30	7	0	0	30	7	2	5	
TOTAL	2518	1536	61%	\$3,510	137	9%	71	52	13	1	93	44	33	11	
<b>Statistics for Loans</b>															
2006	220	116	51%	\$2,631	5	4%	3	2	0	0	3	2	1	1	
2005	220	112	51%	\$2,651	11	8%	1	7	3	0	6	5	4	1	
2004	234	120	51%	\$2,112	33	28%	8	23	2	0	20	13	9	4	
2003	165	91	55%	\$3,436	21	23%	7	10	4	0	17	4	2	2	
2002	174	102	57%	\$3,727	31	30%	11	17	3	0	21	10	8	2	
2001	196	78	40%	\$3,063	34	44%	14	18	2	0	27	7	5	2	
2000	270	95	35%	\$2,813	57	61%	37	12	6	2	47	10	7	3	
Total	1479	718	48%	\$2,919	192	27%	81	89	20	2	141	51	36	15	

Source: Palau National Scholarship Board Annual Report, 2007

Notes: In 2004-2005 application forms were consolidated into one form; information on applicants, recipients, and approval rate are comparable only for 2004-5, 2005-6, & 2006-7. Prior to this, each form of assistance required a separate application form and thus many applicants and/or awardees are double counted.

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