

**THE IMPACT OF THE COMPACT MIGRATION
FOR THE FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA
AND THE REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS**

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**A Summary of Interviews with Key Representatives from
the Compact Freely Associated States**

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ABSTRACT. Little research has been conducted to assess the impact of the Compacts of Free Association between the United States and the Federated States of Micronesia(FSM) and the Republic of the Marshall Islands(RMI), particularly from the point of view of various Micronesian leaders during this early stage of Compact implementation. This study focuses specifically on what effect if any the agreement regarding immigration has had on local and regional life, problem solving, and planning. A sample of 43 Micronesian leaders were interviewed. The results indicate that overall, Micronesian leaders saw both positive and negative effects of the migration generated by the Compact. While the free immigration policy has created new income earning opportunities for individuals who were struggling in their local economies, it has also left visible voids in once vital communities, and contributed to the dwindling numbers of individuals from Micronesia completing college and post-graduate training. Follow-up suggestions include: strengthening local data collecting strategies, organizing orientation for those individuals choosing to migrate, and carrying out future studies to better understand what is occurring in the FSM and the RMI as a result of the many aspects of the Compact.

It is not uncommon for planners and policy makers to find themselves deep within the implementation stage of a plan confronted with additional sets of unanticipated circumstances. Sovereign nationhood in Micronesia as a political status is a relatively new phenomenon. Control of one's destiny is complex particularly when countries are newly formed, culturally and linguistically diverse, small, regionally interdependent, and have collectively shared a long history of outside domination and administration. A seemingly simple change in policy can often have far reaching consequences that are difficult to assess, monitor and control, especially when resources are limited.

In 1986, at the prescribed time for the dissolution of the U.S. Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) entered into Compacts of Free Association with the United States. Contained in their respective compacts were specific provisions which allowed for the unrestricted movement of FSM and RMI citizens between their countries and the United States and all U.S. territories. As a result, citizens