



Typhoon Assistance to Micronesia Tops US\$10 Million

Over US\$10 million – the lion’s share from USAID - has been allocated to support some of the most remote and delicate communities on the planet, in the far-flung Federated States of Micronesia (FSM.)

Typhoon Maysak hit the northern Pacific earlier this year, causing millions of dollars in damage and claiming four lives. As USAID’s primary implementing partner, IOM has delivered emergency food, water, sanitation equipment and shelter materials to the worst-affected areas, and is now embarking on an ambitious reconstruction plan.

Other contributions from the governments of Australia, New Zealand and Japan, have also allowed practical assistance and technical help to reach these critically isolated communities. The USAID funding will enable IOM to rebuild and repair over 600 homes and at least 100 key infrastructure projects such as schools and clinics in the affected communities over the next 18 months.

IOM is also providing USAID-funded tents to ensure that the disaster doesn’t interrupt the education of children in remote outer islands, while their schools are reconstructed.

In tandem with these recovery-focused activities, IOM will work with affected populations to develop community-led disaster preparedness plans that reflect their experiences during the storm – thereby increasing their resilience and safety before the next disaster.

“While the death toll in Maysak was not sufficiently serious to garner major media attention, the ferocity of the storm serves as a strong reminder that weather patterns are changing and becoming more violent,” said IOM’s Chief of Mission in the FSM, Stuart Simpson.

Dr Muhammad Khan, USAID Team Leader for Pacific Projects, noted that IOM and the US Government have a fruitful history of collaboration on disaster response and mitigation in the Pacific region, having successfully worked to relieve the worst effects of a drought in the neighbouring Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI).

“We are greatly concerned about the effect that more frequent and intense disasters are having on these fragile ecosystems,” he said. “Decades of development can be wiped out in a few hours. Emergency aid, backed up by locally-driven mitigation programmes are the right way to go, and we are pleased to be able to call on IOM to work with us on improving life for these unique and endangered communities.”

Typhoon Maysak Response Efforts





Welcome to IOM Micronesia's first update. This publication covers our activities alongside our community, donor and government partners in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI).

Since arriving in the Micronesia region eight months ago I have been struck by the amount that is going on in both countries to tackle the challenges posed by geography, climate, social factors and history.

Migration, primarily to the USA, remains an option relied upon by many to improve their incomes, provide for their families or experience life in other countries. I am hearing many stories of people who are using the opportunity to go the US and complete their educations, gain new skills, and generally make use of the "brain gain" that is available. New technologies mean that this generation of migrants can remain in contact with their families back home, and that isolated communities can participate in the discussions which shape their communities.

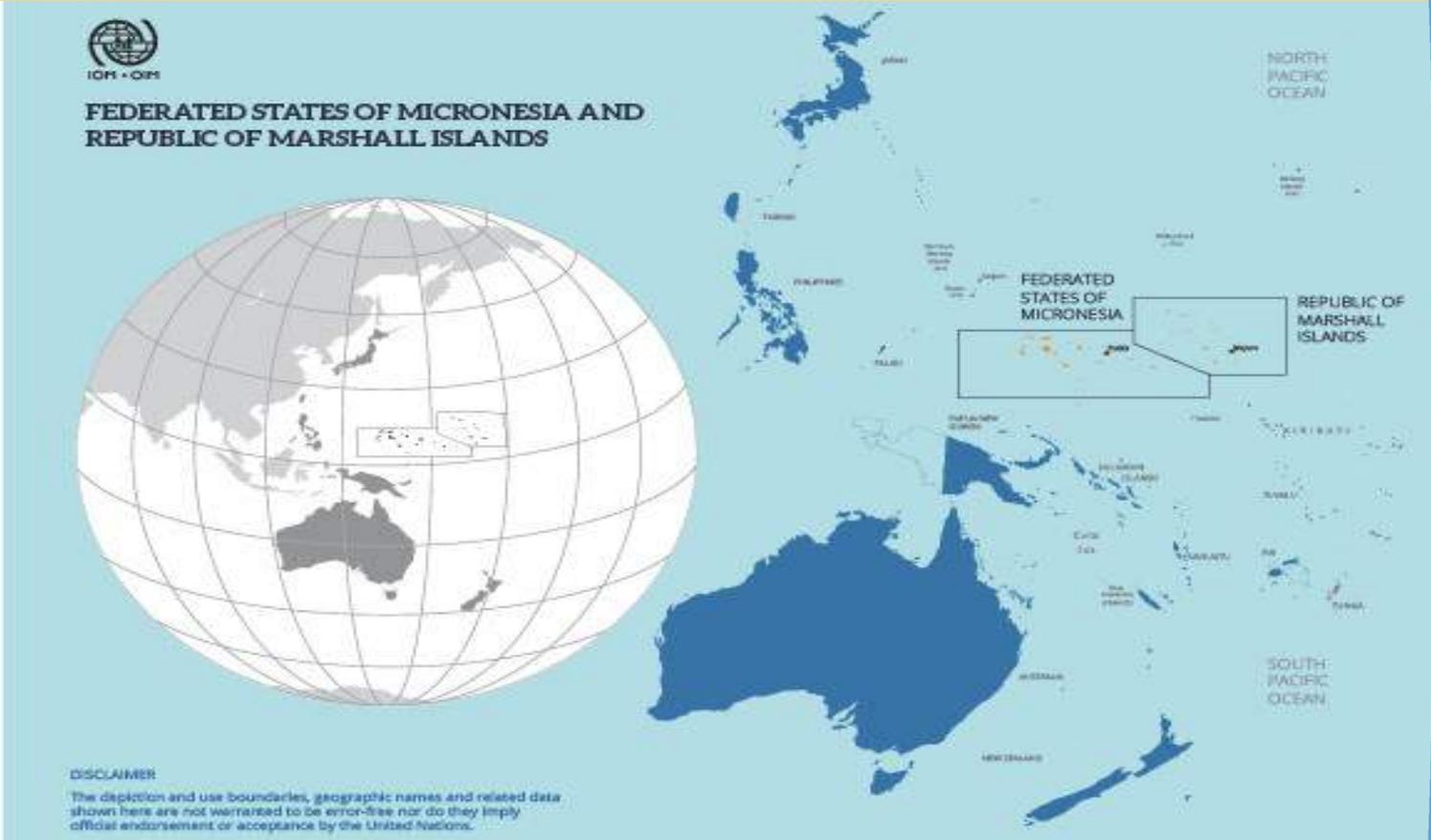
While this is a time of great opportunity for the FSM and RMI, there are also deep threats which imperil the developmental strides being taken. Climate change, more frequent and severe storms, coastal erosion and the upcoming El Nino phenomenon are now topics of daily conversation and real concern.

As we finalise this update, we are also finalizing the long-awaited Migration Profile for the FSM. This extensive document will detail, in one place, all the work being done, and needing to be done around migration: the root causes, the changing trends, legislation and the impact on society.

We look forward to telling you more about in our next update. For now, we hope you enjoy reading about the progress made under the PREPARE programme, the response to Typhoon Maysak, our efforts to help the fight against human trafficking, and important initiatives taken in the RMI and FSM under our climate adaptation programme.

We are often asked "where is Micronesia?"

Spanning 2700 kilometres from Kiribati in the east to Palau in the west, Micronesia is a chain of approximately 2100 small islands divided politically into sovereign states. One of these is the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), which is sometimes shortened to "Micronesia." In addition to the FSM, the Micronesia region encompasses four other sovereign, independent nations—Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, and Palau—as well as three U.S. territories—Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, and Wake Island.



IOM recognises the generous support that we receive from:



Under the Compacts of Free Association between the United States Government and the Governments of the RMI and FSM, USAID provides supplementary assistance to disaster management and reconstruction efforts.

USAID's five-year Disaster Preparedness for Effective Response program (the loose acronym is PREPARE) follows the Disaster Mitigation, Relief, and Reconstruction Program (DMRRP), under which IOM established an operational and logistics presence in five locations in the two countries.

Since 2013, PREPARE has focused on coordination and capacity enhancement. Program staff engage local and national authorities, first responders, civil society, and the Red Cross Societies to update and test preparedness procedures. The goal is to have harmonized roles within disaster responses, so that even remote islands have plans that are linked to national – and, when required, international – relief efforts. PREPARE has trained emergency first responders, convened workshops to enhance emergency preparedness plans in outer islands, and facilitated tabletop simulations with national-level disaster committees. Contingency plans for a variety of context-specific hazards have been created and are regularly updated – for instance, to accommodate for the anticipated impacts of the El Nino phenomenon currently forecast for the region.

From Words to Deeds— PREPARE Saves Lives

BEFORE



AFTER



On March 16, IOM/Micronesia PREPARE staff visited the Chief and community members in Falalop, Ulithi – an outer island of Yap state – to discuss disaster preparedness. Community members conveyed their interest in IOM holding a workshop to cover pre- and post-event communications, evacuation plans, and initial needs assessments. The end result would be the community-led drafting of an emergency preparedness plan.

But just two weeks later, before the workshop could take place, Typhoon Maysak devastated the four islands of Ulithi with wind speeds approximating 200 miles per hour, destroying houses, crops and key infrastructure. The typhoon struck other islands in Yap, and outer islands in Chuuk, the most populous of the four FSM states – affecting more than 27,000 people.

Loss of life was minimized – just four people perished. On Yap, no one was injured: a testament to the value the preparedness measures IOM and partners are helping communities to put in place. The three steps that the community took were cutting trees around homes/structures; taking shelter in three of the strongest buildings on the island; and, preparing lists of people in order for them to be easily accounted for.

In the days following the disaster – with the support of Micronesia Registration Advisors, USAID's Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance, and the Australian Government – IOM began providing food, clean water, shelter and hygiene materials to affected populations.

A key preparedness component under PREPARE was also actualized: the deployment of pre-positioned, USAID-funded relief items stored and maintained by IOM in warehouses within FSM and RMI. Key relief items that were unavailable in local markets were quickly readied: large rolls of plastic sheeting for shelter, reverse osmosis water filtration machines, high-capacity water bladders, water distribution stands, and sealable water containers.

Some 6,000 gallons of water per day are now being provided from the reverse osmosis unit, and residents transport it to their homes using a combination of the prepositioned and airlifted water containers.

To date, IOM has provided more than 1097 metric tons of supplementary food assistance to affected areas of Chuuk, and more than 117 metric tons to Yap. Due to the unique arrangements under the Compacts of Free Association, IOM will soon utilize the existing logistics operation for an additional purpose: movement of the personnel and supplies necessary for the USAID-funded reconstruction of public and private infrastructure.

IOM Warehouses



IOM maintains warehouses of pre-positioned supplies for post-disaster response in both the FSM and RMI, including hygiene, shelter, and water related materials. These supplies can only be released in coordination with USAID following a US Presidential decree, as happened during Typhoon Maysak. IOM is in the process of opening a warehouse in Chuuk state of the FSM in preparation for future events.

A key member PREPARE team member on the visit to Ulithi was a USAID-funded reconstruction specialist, Mr Chris Oakes, who was assessing outer-island construction types and had spent the first part of the year developing a reconstruction contingency plan. The coordination that took place prior to the event – including community engagement regarding housing designs, engagement with local and regional suppliers regarding availability of durable materials, consultations with state and national authorities – served to expedite the reconstruction assistance provided.



Radio Report

In the first half of this year, an IOM consultant visited the FSM and RMI to conduct a survey of all the radio stations. He determined the areas that could be reached by each radio station based on the radio infrastructure at each transmitter as well as the capability to receive transmission based on quality of available radio receivers. A detailed report on his findings was recently finalized and hard copies are available upon request. This information will be used as the basis for a radio drama and disaster risk reduction education in the near future.

In early 2015, PREPARE began an assessment of the capacities and reach of AM/FM radio stations in both countries. Armed with the knowledge of each stations' reach, PREPARE is now deploying radio specialists to help ensure that early warning messages are quickly and effectively conveyed from the main to outer islands.

These radio specialists will help create locally-appropriate preparedness messaging to improve disaster readiness. A key step will be listening to and learning from that same community in Ulithi who experienced such high wind speeds but who were able to prevent loss of life, and disseminating these messages throughout the region.

Emergency Preparedness Training for 15 Remote Communities in RMI



Representatives from USAID, IOM, the Marshall Islands Red Cross, and the RMI Government pose with Mayors and Outer Islands Focal Points at the close of the workshop.

IOM Micronesia works closely with the RMI National Disaster Management Office to strengthen disaster preparedness. Supported by USAID and United States Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), IOM conducted an Outer Island Focal Point Workshop, partnered by the Marshall Islands Red Cross.

From February 23 to 27, representatives from 15 islands and atolls discussed the disaster management cycle, surveyed key rainwater harvesting maintenance techniques, and highlighted critical components of early warning system.

Highlight:

A small but significant highlight was the training under CADRE of three volunteer teachers who will support students with hearing impairments students in Majuro and Ebeye.



Teacher in Pohnpei receives laminated copy of new science



IOM staff member Malyia Rudolf conducting a KAP survey on Rong Rong in the Marshall Islands

With support from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs, IOM Micronesia has continued to build disaster resilience through schools and communities in the two countries.

To date over 10,000 students have participated in emergency while 4,000 students have completed the two-week CADRE module and 400 teachers have received CADRE teacher training. The national curriculum is FSM was formally revised in 2014; IOM and the Pacific Islands Climate Education Partnership have distributed the curricular changes to science teachers.

The CADRE program commenced with household surveys to form a baseline of Knowledge, Attitude, and Practices (KAP). The IOM Data Protection policy was followed and all adults surveyed gave prior and informed consent. Key results in the Marshall Islands included increase in knowledge via accurate explanation of the cause of climate (from 15% in the baseline administration to 49%). In both countries two thirds of adults reported talking about climate change with their family.

CADRE focuses on schools as community spaces of learning, where community members feel their children are safe, as evacuation centres in times of disaster and as gathering points. In addition to teaching students about climate change and disaster preparedness, CADRE focuses on school safety and preparedness. To date, over 200 school personnel have been certified as Emergency First Responders and 50 medical kits have been pre-positioned in schools. Recent survey data provided evidence of grassroots level: respondents indicated that they had saved three lives by using the training they had received through the programme.

Over 5,000 school children have benefited from other awareness raising events. Recent events include: interactive sessions in partnership with Peace Corps volunteers for Camp Boyz II Men in April and Camp Girls Leading Our World (GLOW) in May. Along with the University of the South Pacific Marshall Islands an applied science camp was held in July 6 to July 17. Teams from all the public high schools in the Marshall Islands pitched ideas for small projects to improve waste management at their school sites to the Global Environment Fund Small Grant Program.

In February the RMI's National Disaster Committee convened a review of the current National Disaster Management Plan and Standard Operation Procedures (SOPs) through a table top exercise which elaborated next steps to ensure both the community and national level are prepared for the next climate induced event.



10,000+
trained



In response to environmental challenges, IOM Micronesia has supported 45 vulnerable communities to develop Early Action Plans benefiting some 17,000 community members in the RMI and 27,112 community members in the FSM.

IOM Micronesia has also facilitated 15 climate adaptation and disaster mitigation projects under CADRE. Among the key achievements is the capture of more than 50,000 gallons of water across 12 schools benefitting over 8,000 people. Solar installations in Chuuk and Ebeye have led to 8,460 watts of power being produced in schools and communities benefitting almost 3,500 people. A project at Sansrik Elementary School in Kosrae included installation of a two-hundred fifty foot gabion seawall and cleaning of the existing school septic tank.

In early June 2015, the Australian government extended the CADRE programme for an additional 14 months and increased the budget by AUD 600,000. The extension will enable IOM to facilitate an additional three climate adaptation and disaster mitigation projects in Majuro, Rong Rong, and Wotje in the Marshall Islands.

Reaching out to church networks

On 25 July IOM staff member Canita Rilometo-Swigert engaged over 100 church leaders from across the Marshall Islands and US hubs for the Marshallese diaspora, such as Arkansas, Hawaii, and Washington state. She provided an overview of IOM activities in the Marshall Islands and sensitization concerning the CADRE+ program and its efforts to provide support to church leaders in their efforts to manage displaced populations seeking emergency shelter in church facilities.



Protecting the Coast



Ground breaking ceremony in Awak.

The Coastal Protection as a Hazard Mitigation Measure in Pohnpei, targeting Awak community, is funded by the European Union through the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) managed Building Safety and Resilience in the Pacific (BSRP) project. The project commenced in February 2015 and aims to complete the existing coastal protection at Awak elementary school.

Awak School is located on the lagoon side and exposed to the ocean. There is an incomplete seawall in place and the threats of sea level rise and coastal erosion is a major concern in the community major vulnerabilities.

With support to of the European Union IOM awarded ZJ Construction Company with the contract to construct a double layer gabion seawall. The estimated completion date is 30 November 2015.

A similar project, funded by the Australian Government, was completed in July at Sansrik Elementary School, Kosrae, FSM.



Completed seawall project at Sansrik Elementary



IOM Micronesia's Ms Emeliana Musrasrik addressing the APIL General Assembly

IOM Micronesia participated in the Association of Pacific Island Legislatures (APIL) 34th General Assembly Conference on July in Pohnpei.

The APIL General Assembly is one of the largest gatherings of Pacific policymakers, who seek to solve some of the problems faced by legislatures.

The theme of the 34th General Assembly was "MEMBER Entity's Perspectives: Social, Economic and Political Relationships with the United States."

During the Assembly, IOM had an opportunity to present its work in Micronesia, including the establishment of Migrant Resource Centres in Pohnpei, Chuuk and RMI, and also showcased orientation trainings for migrants from Micronesia. IOM also presented the draft Migration Profile and highlighted IOM's efforts to support the FSM government to tackle human trafficking.

Protecting Victims of Trafficking

IOM is contributing to efforts to combat all forms of Trafficking in Persons (TIP), by facilitating the implementation of a comprehensive protection framework featuring:

- awareness raising;
- boosting capacity of law enforcement on victim identification and the need for victim-centered protection;
- establishment of national referral mechanisms.

RMI serves as an origin and destination country for trafficking in persons. Concerns focus around forced labor, particularly in the fishing industry, and commercial sexual exploitation. RMI is also a transit point for victims who are taken to other countries in the vicinity for exploitation. IOM have facilitated a series of workshops and roundtable meetings with the RMI National Taskforce on Human Trafficking members.

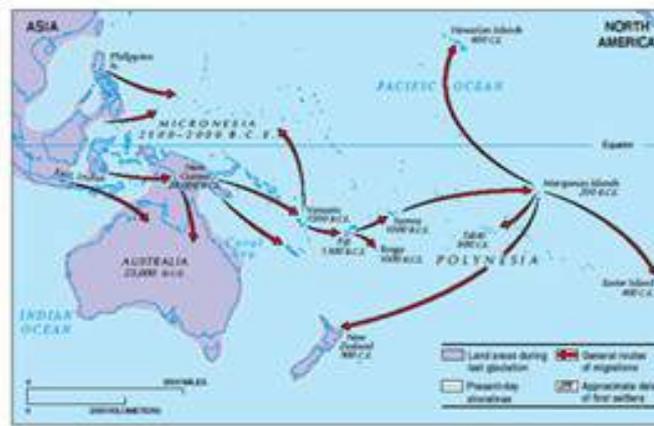
In March A group of 35 officials, mainly from law enforcement agencies, the judiciary, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, were provided with tailored training and detailed information on TIP. Training topics included recognizing the crime, protecting victims, investigating the crime, and prosecuting of traffickers and their associates. This workshop followed the establishment of the National Taskforce on Human. The training complements IOM's two year J/TIP program focused the protection of victims or potential victims of human trafficking in Micronesia.

IOM's Migrant Resource Centres play a large role, passing on information in trafficking to almost 7,000 people - high school and college students, members of the local non-governmental organizations, women groups, government officials, police and members of the civil society These efforts helped improve the FSM's standing under the US Department of State's Trafficking in Persons report of June 2014, from Tier 2 Watch List to Tier 2. The work of the MRC was singled out for praise by the national President, and January 22 has been proclaimed the national day to combat Human Trafficking.



Profiling Migration in FSM

IOM is working with key government officials and civil society groups in FSM to prepare a Migration Profile. The comprehensive publication will include an in-depth assessment of the institutional and policy framework governing migration and cover a range of statistics and data related to national migration policy including labour migration, tourism, student migration, irregular migration, brain drain and remittances.



IOM Micronesia promotes international cooperation on migration issues, to assist in the search for practical solutions to migration problems and to provide humanitarian assistance to migrants and the wider community. IOM Micronesia has established four Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs) in Pohnpei, Chuuk, Kosrae and Majuro in the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI).

MRCs provide a range of services including pre-departure training (PDT) and anti-human awareness raising. These workshops are held periodically and are open to the general public.

A migration survey conducted in 2012 indicated that 49,840 Micronesian nationals currently reside in the United States and its territories; almost a third of the total Micronesian population. Apart from the declining population, high emigration has been attributable to adverse impacts on the countries of origin and destination, including poor integration of Micronesian nationals into U.S. culture and lifestyle, increased risk of human trafficking, poorly managed systems of deportation, and concerns over health screening for communicable diseases.



Internal Affairs Minister Hon. David Kabua at MRC Opening

IOM Micronesia Facilitates Repatriation of 111 Vietnamese Fishermen



Boarding flight on July 7, 2015



Fishermen in Vietnam on July 7, 2015



Attending medical checks in Yap State

On 7 July 2015, after more than eight months of negotiations, International Organization for Migration (IOM) Micronesia facilitated the repatriation of 111 Vietnamese fishermen with generous support from the Australian Government.

Since November 2014, IOM Micronesia had been supporting the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) as they deal with the cases of Vietnamese fishermen who were detained in Micronesia for illegal fishing.

Boats and training provided by the Australian Government under the Pacific Patrol Boat Program played an instrumental role in the apprehension of the illegal boats when they were detected in FSM waters.

IOM Micronesia Repatriates PNG Nationals after Pacific Odyssey



Arrival in Pohnpei, FSM

Two Papua New Guinean men were picked up drifting in the Pacific after their planned 60-kilometre journey turned into an epic 16 week tale of survival on some of the world's remotest waters. Michael Bolong and Ambrose Wavut arrived in Pohnpei, the capital of Micronesia on November 29th, 2014, after being picked up by a Micronesian tuna-fishing boat.

After a brief stay in hospital, IOM, together with local groups including the Salvation Army, Pohnpei State Hospital staff, the Pohnpei Fishing Club and the Australian Embassy, found them temporary housing, food, and enabled them to phone home.

Bolong and Wavut, together with Wavut's father-in-law Francis Dimansol, who died three weeks before their rescue, set out from Tanga Island, in a remote archipelago off the north coast of Papua New Guinea on August 15.

They were headed for Litir Island, which is visible from their home island. Their small boat, carrying building supplies, was caught up in a storm. The seamen soon became disorientated and their craft ran out of fuel. Twice they came close to rescue, but were missed by two passing fishing boats.

They survived on some rice and flour they had brought with them, which they cooked using the sun's heat. That lasted for two weeks, after which they survived on fish, turtles and coconuts. The tin roofing materials on board were used to capture rain water and dry the fish and turtle meat.

Although primary responsibility for the repatriation of stranded migrants rests with national governments, there are many instances where additional assistance is required. IOM Micronesia facilitated the repatriation of these stranded migrants through a special fund which allows IOM to respond globally as a provider of last resort to urgent requests from national governments to assist with the repatriation of stranded migrants.