

HIGHLIGHTS IN THE PRESS

IOM Launches Japan Funded Immigration and Border Management Project in Micronesia

IOM, UNDP Study Outlines the Limits to Climate Change Adaptation in the Pacific Region

IOM Launches Second Japan-Funded Project in Micronesia in 2023

Fighting Against Time and Tropical Cyclones: the Struggle of Coastal Communities in the Pacific



Simulation exercise participants discuss opportunities and challenges of emergency procedures for agriculture and livelihoods. Photo: IOM 2023/Haimanot Abebe

Preparing for Climate Emergencies, a Non-negotiable for Pacific Communities

Chuuk, the most populous State in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), is home to 49,000 residents (2010). To put the geographical area into context, the State comprises a circular lagoon and close to 24 outer island atolls spread across a vast ocean area of approximately 466,191 sq km (180,000 sq mi). In times of disaster, it's easy to imagine the difficulties in delivering assistance to reach these islands, some as remote as 300 km (190 mi) from the main island, Weno, and 740 kms (460 mi) from Pohnpei, FSM's main State and emergency operations centre.

Historically, this North Pacific Island State has been vulnerable to typhoons, king tides and droughts caused by changing weather patterns. Although the Government of FSM and partner agencies have supported preparedness and response efforts, there remains a pressing need to strengthen the institutions and infrastructures on which people rely for safety when disaster strikes.

In every State of FSM, IOM works in close collaboration with the Department of Environment, Climate Change, and Emergency Management (DECEM) and State Disaster Coordinating Offices (DCOs). With

support from the United States Agency for International Development, IOM facilitates exercises with frontline responders to simulate emergency situations and ensure actors are able to mobilize rapidly during a climate-induced emergency.

At a simulation exercise held in Chuuk State in June, participants from key sectors, including transport, health, agriculture, weather services and commerce were presented with emergency scenarios for which they must generate a response plan. As the tabletop began, some frontline responders who had experienced first-hand the difficulties of keeping their communities safe in the face of super typhoons shared their experiences. Their frustrations were palpable.

"We need to be prepared first in the office in order to be functional. If we cannot function in the office, we cannot function in the field."

"If we can follow a more concrete response plan, we will be able to minimize the damage and the waiting until help arrives," stated Stephen Kama, Emergency Operating Coordinator for Chuuk State DCO.

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Food Security and Resilience-Building in Kosrae: the Malem Community Seed Fair

In Kosrae, as in many parts of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), communities experience food security risks owing to the adverse impacts of natural disasters and climate change. FSM's geography and the isolation of its remote islands further exacerbate communities' vulnerability considering the time and cost required to deliver food assistance during hazard events. It is essential for communities to have the necessary tools, capacity and resources, therefore, to actively engage in their own disaster preparedness efforts.

Under the United States Agency for International Development-funded Inclusive Mitigation and Preparedness in Action (IMPACT) project, IOM is building the capacity of eight communities in FSM to adapt to climate change and build resilience to disasters. Through consultations with

community members, the project identifies gaps and capacities to withstand disaster events and climate change. Based on the responses of the community and their preferred support, the project then implements small-scale interventions including in food security, water security and enhancement of emergency shelters.

During the community consultation held in March 2023 in Malem Municipality, Kosrae, the community identified food security as a major need. They indicated that king tides, drought and flooding regularly damaged their land and crops, and that they had limited access to store bought goods. Consequently, the community opted for a homestead gardening intervention.

To support this effort, IOM, in close collaboration with the Malem Farmer's Association (MFA), agreed to support 30 households by providing seeds, trainings and gardening equipment and to assist in the construction of greenhouses for households and the Malem Elementary School.

The Malem Seed Fair, held on 8 June 2023, was the first of its kind in Kosrae. Organized by IOM and MFA, the fair brought together men and women farmers, community members and partners who received seedlings of resilient varieties of vegetables. During the event, community members learned about hand farming techniques, composting, and pest control through a training session hosted by the Department of Resources, Environment and Agriculture (DREA). Farmers at the event also brought and sold local produce to interested buyers. Additionally, IOM donated three shredders to support mulch production.

Availability of locally grown produce not only contributes to improved food security but also reduces the communities' dependencies on food imports, which can be severely disrupted in times of disasters. In the coming months, IOM will continue to work with MFA to mentor the communities and assess their progress, documenting lessons and best practices to share with partners and expand successful approaches to more communities.



Seedlings provided to community members at Malem Community Seed Fair in Kosrae. Photo: IOM 2023/Harut Sarian

In Chuuk, as in all the States in FSM, every Government agency has Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) outlining the actions their agencies are expected to take within 24, 48, and 72 hours of a disaster event. According to the experiences of some participants, however, only a handful of sectors are well-informed of their departments' emergency procedures, making it challenging to coordinate a cohesive response when needed.

First step: ensure participants are well informed about their roles and responsibilities in an emergency

During the tabletop exercise, participants were separated into four clusters, 1) Assessment, 2) Social Support, 3) Infrastructure and 4) Livelihood, and tasked with reviewing their department procedures. *What resources have their departments allocated? Who do they need to communicate with when disaster hits? What gaps do they observe?*

Some among several needs identified included: preparing evacuation shelters, such as schools and churches, in times of peace rather than during an impending hazard; ensuring inter-agency data-sharing; regulating private sectors to avoid price gouging; and mandating construction standards for government infrastructures.

Step two: simulate an emergency situation

Situation: *Typhoon Tirow has made landfall.*

Extreme winds have damaged houses and vegetation. Salt spray contamination has resulted in limited access to fresh water. Many are sick. Few are being treated....

Participants illustrated through role play the actions they would take during the *watch*, *alert*, *onset*, and *impact* cycle of the emergency, beginning with receiving an advisory from the weather services. Response activities included filling out initial damage assessments, drawing up action plans, and budgeting for the response.

The exercise revealed several gaps in Chuuk State's disaster preparedness. Firstly, capacity to assess a post-disaster situation and provide rapid and real-time data on indicators, such as population demographics, severity of damage and wellbeing of populations, was limited. This results in delayed support reaching affected populations and additional time and resources for third party assessments to be completed.

Secondly, there is a gap in communication capacity. As one participant explained, "Our reach in the outer islands is limited. We cannot access target audiences to disseminate information through VHF radio or internet because some islands have connectivity but not others." Strengthening emergency communications, including through trainings for community focal points and equipment, will go a long way in transmitting critical information timely, mobilizing emergency response and minimizing loss of lives and livelihoods.

Thirdly, from population size, to geographic location, to availability of emergency shelters, outer islands have unique characteristics and their needs vary accordingly. The need for municipalities to have respective disaster response plans was underlined by multiple agencies.

So, what is beyond this simulation exercise?

The simulation revealed the pressing need for more regular meetings with the State's Disaster Coordination team as well as the active involvement of Municipal leaders, the most proximal unit of government to communities. In the coming months, IOM will support Chuuk State DCO and partner agencies to facilitate more regular engagement and capacity building training to help first responders develop contingency plans, stay abreast of needs at the community level and ensure emergency supplies are stocked for rapid mobilization in times of disaster. Meanwhile, IOM will further support the development of improved information management systems to enable community-level damage assessments.

In collaboration with the DECEM and Chuuk State DCO, the outcomes of the exercise will be compiled and actioned through an improvement plan and recommendations made to update the Chuuk State Disaster Response Plan and SOP.



Simulation exercise participants present gaps in existing Standard Operating Procedures and areas that require improvement in Weno, Chuuk. Photo: IOM 2023/Haimanot Abebe

RESILIENCE

Disaster Resilience in the Compact Nations Project

PROGRESS TO DATE



About the project

The objective of the RESILIENCE project is to enhance the local capacity of the Governments of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) to prepare for, respond to, and reconstruct after natural disasters. Under the RESILIENCE project, IOM aims to enhance the provision of life-saving and early recovery assistance and to ensure the Governments of the FSM and RMI and local communities demonstrate increased and sustainable disaster management capacity. Through mobilization of affected communities and under the leadership of the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Emergency Management and the State Disaster Coordinating Offices, IOM further implements reconstruction assistance in Chuuk, Pohnpei and Yap States.

NEW HOUSE CONSTRUCTION

Reconstruction



69%

of houses

damaged or destroyed by typhoon completed and handed over to communities in Chuuk Lagoon, Mortlocks region and Northwest region

PUBLIC FACILITIES & MANPOWER

Reconstruction



495

COMMUNITY WORKING GROUP

members trained and equipped to support construction



8 of 34

public infrastructures renovated and 4 in progress

CAPACITY BUILDING

Preparedness

Essentials of Humanitarian Assistance Training



45 personnel

trained on humanitarian assistance concepts including evacuation center management, gender and security, and post-assessments of disaster events

Simulation Exercises



12 tabletop

exercises conducted in RMI and FSM for 540 personnel to simulate emergency situations and strengthen emergency preparedness and response

Migration Governance Profile Launched for the Republic of the Marshall Islands

The [Migration Governance Profile](#) for the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) was launched on 29 June 2023. The profile aims to advance the socio-economic well-being of migrants, address the movement of people as it relates to crises such as natural hazards, and ensure the safe, orderly, and dignified movement of people.

“This is a big milestone for the Marshall Islands, a nation of unique migration-related characteristics which present their own set of opportunities and challenges,”

said Angela Saunders, IOM Head of Sub Office in RMI. She added, “the Migration Governance Profile sheds light on areas

which may have been overlooked, but, if improved, could yield beneficial results both for Marshallese citizens at home and abroad, as well as for foreign nationals residing in RMI, their extended families, governments and beyond.”

Based on 98 migration governance indicators and a rigorous review process involving the RMI Government and partner agencies, the Migration Governance Indicators report presents strengths and key areas for improvement in RMI’s migration governance policies and frameworks. The report indicates that while RMI provides access to government-funded education and healthcare schemes for migrants, supports migrant communities in times of disasters, and has criminalized Trafficking in Persons through the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons Act (2017), the nation lacks a comprehensive governing body or inter-ministerial working group to oversee migration governance strategies. It further highlights that disaster response plans

designed specifically for migrants are currently absent.

Additionally, the report denotes the significance of the upcoming regional Pacific Climate Mobility Framework, which is currently under development through a consortium of organizations, including the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), IOM and other United Nations agencies. The framework aims to address the mobility needs of communities in the face of extreme weather events and changing climate patterns and to ensure citizens have viable options for relocation.

The Migration Governance Profile has been shared with the Office of the Chief Secretary, heads of departments and stakeholders that are engaged throughout the process. IOM remains committed to supporting the Government of RMI and partners in strengthening migration governance initiatives to ensure safe and well-managed movement of all people.



Athletic games at 2023 Belau Games. Photo: Tornoe Sungino, Bibbie Kumangai, Sumch Lina, Darvin Inabo and Palau Sports Media

IOM and PNOC Partner to Promote Gender Equity in Sports at 2023 Belau Games

The Belau Games is a major sporting event held in Koror, Republic of Palau. Each year, the occasion gathers men and women of all ages to compete in a variety of sports such as archery, basketball, spear fishing and more.

This year, IOM and the Palau National Olympic Committee (PNOC) partnered to host the tournament and advocate for gender equity, diversity, and inclusion in sports. Through the partnership, IOM and PNOC emphasized the need to ensure all athletes, regardless of their gender, nationality or disability, have access to resources, facilities, training, and competition opportunities in sports.

Baclai T emengil, Secretary General of the PNOC, underlined the need to work towards eliminating all forms of discrimination, prejudice and bias based on gender, gender identity, nationality or disability. Temengil explained,

Sporting cultures that are diverse and inclusive translate into better performances on the court and in the field.”

The 14th Belau Games, which kicked off on 30 June 2023, was attended by more than 1500 athletes from all sixteen states of Palau.

With funding from the Embassy of the United States in Palau, IOM supported live television coverage of the games and promoted

gender-equity messaging throughout the event.

“The continued and increased participation of women and girls in athletics events like the Belau Games will go a long way in empowering female athletes, showcasing their talents and supporting their physical and mental well-being,” stated Yohan Senarath, IOM Head of Sub-office in Palau. He reaffirmed IOM’s support for diversity among young athletes engaging in this sports event and beyond.

In addition to its advocacy work, IOM has surveyed athletes on gender norms in sports and will use this knowledge towards future programming on gender equity in the athletics arena.