



IOM discusses Migration Governance Indicators project with key representatives of the Government of the Republic of Palau. Photo: IOM 2023/Portia Franz

Government of Palau to Develop First Ever Migration Governance Profile Supported by IOM

On 1 February 2023, the President of the Republic of Palau, HE Surangel S. Whipps Jr., Vice President Uduch Sengebau Senior and six Ministers endorsed the roll out of the Migration Governance Indicators (MGI) project in Palau which aims to assess migration governance gaps and opportunities in the country and inform migration programming.

Through its MGI Project funded by the United States Department of State, IOM Development Fund and the Economist Group, in 2023, IOM will work closely with Government of Palau partners to assess the country's migration governance status by collecting data against the 98 indicators that constitute the MGI.

The indicators will encompass six dimensions including migrants' rights, mobility dimensions of crises, and safe, orderly, and dignified migration.

"We welcome the launch of the Migration Governance Indicators project by IOM, as it will help us enhance our migration management systems. This initiative will serve as a valuable

tool in assessing the effectiveness of our policies and programs and guide us towards the development of more inclusive and sustainable migration policies." (Gustav Aitaro, Minister of State of the Republic of Palau)

Over the last ten years, Palau has welcomed an average of 125,000 people through its borders annually according to the Palau Visitor's Authority, excluding a decrease in movements due to COVID-19 since 2020. Additionally, the [2020 Census of Population and Housing](#) indicates that close to one third of Palau's population consists of migrants from diverse ethnic backgrounds, underlining the increasing need for migration policies, frameworks and programs to ensure movements are well managed and beneficial to all.

The MGI process will help strengthen the evidence base and bolster Palau's efforts to combat human trafficking, facilitate well-regulated inbound labor migration, address climate change induced displacement and advance the protection and wellbeing of Palauans abroad.

Once endorsed by the Government of Palau, the MGIs will give rise to a Migration Governance Profile in line with IOM's [Migration Governance Framework](#) to guide national and local level migration policies, strategies, and institutional frameworks.

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Community members engage in a water security training, Peidie, Pohnpei. Photo: IOM 2023/Harut Sarian

Improving Water Security in the Federated States of Micronesia

In parts of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), access to safe water can be limited in the aftermath of extreme weather events, such as high tides and floods, which contaminate fresh water supplies. Drought conditions, too, exhaust water reserves in some parts of the country pushing communities to consume groundwater sources and increasing their chances of contracting waterborne illnesses.

In the Oaloapal community, 21 miles (34 km) from Pohnpei's main town, Kolonia, IOM is utilizing the area's abundant natural water sources and mountainous terrain to connect an untapped water source to 17 households through a gravity-fed piping system. Community members who previously did not have access to a water source now have water piped directly to their homes and with adequate water pressure, saving them time and resources.

The piping network has also been connected to the larger community grid, which will increase water pressure and supply to all communities in the network.

In Pohnpei, where annual rainfall is close to 190 inches (4,826 mm) ([World Bank, 2021](#)), rainwater catchments can significantly increase access to water for many households. In the community of Peidie in Pohnpei, IOM, established a Community Working Group (CWG) to construct three rainwater catchments each with the capacity to store 3,000 gal of water. IOM coordinated with the Pohnpei State Transportation & Infrastructure Office to provide technical support.

A similar catchment system was completed in the community of Tafunsak in Kosrae where a 3,000 gal rainwater catchment was constructed in March and another is underway in Yap's Towway community expected to be finalized in the coming months.

To ensure the WASH infrastructures are well constructed and maintained and

communities practice good hygiene and sanitation and are able to conserve water, IOM supports capacity building activities amongst municipal WASH personnel, community working groups, and community members.

Together with the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Emergency Management (DECEM), IOM is currently constructing a 12-tank rainwater catchment system capable of storing 15,000 gallons of water on the remote outer island of Kapingamarangi. The outer island located 464 miles (747 km) southwest of Pohnpei is particularly vulnerable to the El Nino effect and regularly experiences drought. In March, IOM delivered materials to Kapingamarangi to begin construction work.

The Inclusive Mitigation and Preparedness in Action (IMPACT) project, funded by USAID is supporting the capacity of local communities to access water for sustaining livelihoods, human well-being, socio-economic development and for ensuring protection against water-related disasters.



RESILIENCE PROJECT

DISASTER RESILIENCE IN THE COMPACT NATIONS
CONSTRUCTION PROGRESS



368 community members trained and actively supporting construction work

IOM provides on-the-job training to community working groups (CWGs) on construction techniques and safety standards.

CWGs significantly contribute to the sustainability of reconstruction activities, as beneficiaries are empowered to take ownership over the process and are provided with life-long construction skills.



66 new houses

constructed and handed over to community members in Chuuk Lagoon and the Mortlocks Region



3 public facilities

including health center, school and community center renovated



17 beneficiaries

reconstructed their homes supported by package of voucher assistance



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Community-centered Disaster Response Committees Established in RMI with support from IOM and the World Bank

With a population of over 42,000 (World Bank, 2021), the communities and infrastructure of the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) are concentrated along the coasts of four small, low-lying islands and 20 atolls where any rise in sea level, changes in weather patterns or extreme weather events pose significant risks to the livelihoods, coastal settlements, infrastructure, ecosystems, and economic stability of the nation.

As the geography of RMI's remote islands, some as remote as 650 km from the nation's capital, Majuro, make it difficult to reach communities in times of extreme weather events, support from government or international partners can be significantly delayed. Communities themselves are, therefore, the first line of defense during disaster events.

"It is imperative that communities actively engage in their own

disaster preparedness and mitigation efforts, and have the tools, capacity and resources to do so." (Salvatore Sortino, Chief of Mission, IOM Micronesia)

In previous years, RMI's National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) appointed one community focal point per atoll to support disaster preparedness and response activities, with the aim of expanding to fully inclusive community-based disaster committees in the future.

Under the Community Disaster Risk Management and Emergency Communications Training (CDRM-ECT) project, funded by the World Bank, IOM supports the establishment of community-based disaster committees comprised of up to 15 men, women, youth, and persons with disabilities per local government jurisdiction. The project has established the committees in 17 locations throughout RMI thus far, three of which were established within the last quarter.

The committees are subdivided into teams designated to specific tasks including Evacuation and Shelter Management, Emergency Communications, Search and Rescue, and Assessment teams, and are responsible for developing and testing action plans for multiple types of hazards such as

typhoons, droughts, and king tides. The action plans include Emergency Communications to ensure all community members, no matter how distant, receive emergency messages.

In addition to the establishment of community-based disaster committees, the CDRM-ECT:

- Facilitates community drills to test the action plans developed by the committee and ensure that the community is informed on what actions to take in the event of an emergency. Three of the 17 drills were conducted earlier in 2023.
- With High Frequency (HF) radio being an important method of emergency communications in the neighboring atolls, IOM trains the disaster committee on HF radio operation in partnership with the local radio club (Ralik Ratak Radio Club).
- Conducts mapping of evacuation shelters, community agriculture, infrastructure and other key areas for 20 locations in neighboring atoll communities to ensure first responders have a better idea of community hazards, vulnerabilities and capacities. Mapping has been piloted in five locations in 2023. The project is currently working to avail the mapping results on the NDMO website.



Collection of photos showcasing community-based disaster risk reduction activities including capacity building and emergency communications assistance in RMI. Photo: IOM 2022

Palau's Anti-Human Trafficking Working Group Marks Milestones One Year On

One year since its formation on January 20, 2022, the Palauan Anti-Human Trafficking Working Group marks its achievements in coordinating efforts to counter human trafficking and paving the way for increased programming in the island nation. With 14 ministries, agencies, and civil society organizations represented, and closely supported by IOM, since its formation, the working group has conducted more than 40 anti-human trafficking outreach events, adopted procedures to improve identification and referral of victims and potential victims of trafficking as well as investigation of trafficking cases, and trained more than 120 law enforcement officials, prosecutors and public health officials on human trafficking and Standard Operating Procedures.

Lori Williams, IOM's Counter Trafficking expert in Palau, explains the importance of ensuring anti-human trafficking is multidisciplinary in nature and that it requires a coordinated response.

“As we embark on this effort to ensure Palau has strong frameworks to combat the crime

that is human trafficking, and the country is better able to provide critical support to victims of trafficking (VOTs), it is imperative we engage government, civil society and the public at large.”

“The inter-agency working group brings together representatives from a range of sectors that have their specific as well as shared roles in countering human trafficking. This will ensure crimes are better detected and victims receive better, collaborated support,” Williams says.



Training of 28th Police Academy in Koror, Palau, on anti-human trafficking. Photo: IOM 2022/Lee Perez

In 2023, the Working Group, chaired by Honorable J. Uduch Sengebau Senior, Vice

President and Minister of Justice, led the endorsement of memoranda of understanding with the Ministries of Justice, Health and Human Services, and the Ministry of Finance to assist trafficking victims. The agreements will enable coordination between the Anti-Human Trafficking Unit and the Victims of Crime Advocate Office through knowledge and data sharing to strengthen assistance for VOTs. Further, they will establish coordination between Border Control and Protection and the monitoring, control, and surveillance of Palau's maritime borders.

In line with recommendations prioritized in the 2022 US Department of State's [Trafficking in Person's Report: Palau](#), IOM will continue to support the Government of Palau to enhance identification of vulnerable populations such as migrants, deliver tailored support for victims of trafficking, and strengthen prevention activities through community awareness.

Ms. Lori Williams currently leads two projects to strengthen human trafficking protection and improve access to support services for vulnerable migrants in Palau. She has played an instrumental role in the establishment of Palau's Anti-Human Trafficking Working Group. Ms. Williams previously served as an Assistant Attorney General for the FSM Department of Justice and as Chairperson of the Human Trafficking Inter-Agency Task Force with the Pohnpei State Attorney General's Office.

Raising Awareness through Art

Students and local artists in RMI, FSM and Palau competed in an art contest to express their views on gender equity. The thought-provoking pieces use symbolism to portray such themes as gender-based violence, heroic women in history, and celebrating diversity. The competition was supported by the “Inspiring Women's Advancement through Collective Action” project funded through the United States Embassies in Kolonia, Koror, and Majuro.

