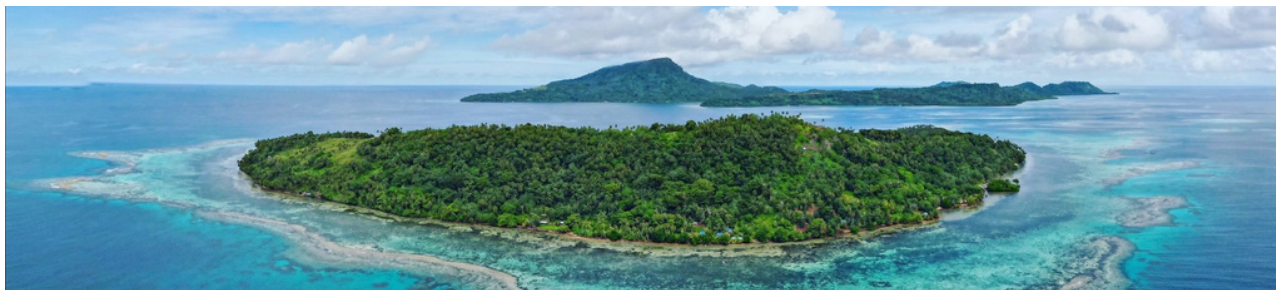


NEWSLETTER

IOM Micronesia

Federated States of Micronesia • Republic of the Marshall Islands • Republic of Palau





IN THE PRESS



IOM Asia-Pacific Regional Director Re-Affirms IOM's Commitment to Support Countries in the North Pacific



Women Leaders Shed Light on Gender and Governance in Palau at Meeting Supported by IOM



IOM, Government of Japan Enhance Palau's Immigration and Border Management Capacity



IOM and US Embassy Host Colourful Festival to Promote Gender Empowerment and Diversity

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IOM Supports the Government of RMI to Launch Emergency Communications Project

In the face of increasingly extreme weather disturbances and hazards, the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) requires greater investment in disaster risk reduction and emergency communications efforts. In the past decade alone, the RMI has experienced drought in 2013, 2016 and 2017, as well as an extra dry season in 2019. Coupled with the logistical difficulty of reaching some of the RMI's low-lying atolls dispersed over a vast ocean space (1,900,000 km²), efficient communications infrastructure is key to acting quickly and minimize loss when natural disasters hit.

Two-way communications systems are particularly essential during hazard events, both for first responders to operate effectively and for community members to be informed and take necessary mitigation measures.

Salvatore Sortino, IOM Micronesia Chief of Mission explains "the RMI has taken steps to improve its emergency communications capabilities across national and local levels, including with the introduction of the National Disaster Risk Management Bill. Through this partnership, we look forward to building on these efforts to ensure the Marshallese can be better prepared for extreme events and disasters."

In June 2023, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) supported the Government to launch a new project, funded by the World Bank, to strengthen emergency communications in the RMI by ensuring communities have the capacity to receive and relay emergency messages, especially during extreme weather events. The USD 1 million Installation of Emergency Communications Network

program is part of a larger World Bank-funded Pacific Resilience Project (PREPII) that works to address community-based disaster risk management and emergency communications in the RMI.

In close partnership with the RMI's emergency department, the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) and National Telecommunications Authority (NTA), IOM will focus on storing, transporting and installing radio towers, as well as equipping radio stations with high frequency radios in all 24 atolls of the RMI. IOM will also support equal access to emergency communications, including installation of alarms and strobe lights to alert persons with disabilities. The project comprises a strong capacity-building component, including technical trainings for radio operators and community members on how to use and maintain the communications equipment.



Building Community Resilience through Aō Kapijuknen, First Women-led Tourism Programme in the Marshall Islands

From its pristine waters and abundant sea life to its coconut palm islands, vibrant traditions and warm hospitality, the coral atolls of the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) draw visitors from near and far. Many travel from Majuro, RMI's capital, to nearby smaller islets to enjoy quality time with family and friends, or venture further to the outer islands such as Arno or Kwajalein to visit family or attend major events.

Whatever the occasion, given good weather and access to transportation, the demand for goods and services in these island destinations is on the rise.

Aō Kapijuknen, or “Our Home,” is a women-led tourism programme in the RMI supported by the IOM Development Fund (IDF) and implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in close collaboration with the RMI



Office of Commerce, Investment and Tourism (OCIT), among other partners. The programme aims to meet the growing demand for domestic and international tourism facilities and services in the country, empowering women entrepreneurs by awarding them seed fund grants and equipping them with the

technical skills and marketing opportunities they need to start and grow their own businesses in tourism. A major priority of the programme is also to build the capacity of the OCIT to lead and manage Aō Kapijuknen, developing domestic tourism in the country and supporting women-led businesses.



IOM visits the business site of Estella Matthew in Rongrong, Majuro. IOM (2023)

Angela Saunders, IOM Micronesia Head of Sub-office in the RMI explains that “investing in livelihoods programmes that are established and managed through local capacity contributes to reducing the growing rural-urban migration trend evident in the RMI. This further aligns with IOM’s Global Compact for Migration, as well as the RMI’s National Strategic Plan 2030.”

Estella Matthew is an entrepreneur whose family land is located in Rongrong Island in Majuro Atoll, 27 km north-west of Majuro city. Under the programme, Estella received start-up funds of USD 15,000 which she is using to build a bungalow nestled in a grove of coconut trees on her family’s coastal property. Estella plans to rent her bungalow out to travelers who would like to visit Rongrong, either for a day trip to enjoy a picnic and swimming or for those who wish to stay overnight and relish the spectacular private beach and reef.

Meanwhile, in Arno Atoll located 46 km east of Majuro, Chessika Jim is building a

similar bungalow for rent. She is eager to grow her business and foster tourism in the atoll by promoting handicrafts sales made by women in the community and advancing other displays of Marshallese heritage.

“I want to grow Arno and invite tourists, so they can learn about our culture and our little community.”

Chessika Jim, Beneficiary

I want to grow Arno and invite tourists, so they can learn about our culture and our little community,” she says.

Under the project, aspiring entrepreneurs like Estella and Chessika got a chance to learn critical skills, including how to develop their own business plan and how to work with vendors and business owners in the tourism industry.

“It is imperative that we support women to establish critical business skills and ensure they are able to maintain and grow their businesses in the industry,” commented Mr. Carlos Domnick, Chief Executive Officer of OCIT. “Skill-building will be one of OCIT’s main focus areas because this will have an impact on all aspects of the tourism sector,”

In the coming months, through the Aō Kapijuknen programme, OCIT and IOM will be going through a selection process to award five new grants of USD 15,000 each to women entrepreneurs to bridge critical gaps in the tourism market and support women to become the next sector leaders on the island.



RESILIENCE

Disaster Resilience in the Compact Nations Project

PROGRESS TO DATE

Community working group members mobilize water tank to be installed in newly constructed home in Chuuk outer islands. IOM (2023)

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Extreme weather events in the North Pacific can cause immense damage to coastal settlements, infrastructure, farming lands and many other elements that disrupt the lives and livelihoods of communities. In Chuuk State of the FSM, IOM is reconstructing houses destroyed by typhoon and renovating public facilities damaged by storms such as schools and clinics. Under the RESILIENCE project supported by USAID, IOM also strives to strengthen the disaster management capacities of the Governments of the FSM and RMI and enhance the provision of life-saving and early recovery assistance.



96 new houses

constructed for disaster-affected households



8 public facilities

renovated and serving communities



17 beneficiaries

supported with cash-based assistance to renovate their homes



692 community

members trained and equipped to support construction



14 simulation exercises

conducted to strengthen emergency preparedness and response



67 personnel

trained on principles of fair and humane assistance to address needs of vulnerable populations



Strengthening Gender Equality in Micronesia

Ahead of the Federated States of Micronesia's (FSM) Women's Conference to be held in November 2023 in Kosrae State, the FSM Department of Health and Social Affairs, supported by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), launched a planning workshop on 2 August 2023 to strategize on priority gender themes.

The three-day workshop convened Women's Council members from all four States in the FSM, as well as Government, civil society and community representatives.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Dionis Saimon, Acting Secretary Health and Social Affairs, recognized the importance of the FSM Women's Conference in shedding light on pertinent gender-related topics in the nation and laying the groundwork for policies and frameworks that address gender inequalities and promote better opportunities for women

and girls. "We continue to face a lot of challenges when it comes to gender equality and women's rights. It is important that we work together to address these challenges," he said.

Yelena Gyulkhandanyan, IOM Micronesia Programme Coordinator, expressed IOM's commitment to supporting its partners in assessing needs and implementing interventions to promote gender equity and social inclusion. "While there is much work to be done, we congratulate our partners in the FSM on their inspiring achievements and look forward to the road ahead," she said.

During the workshop, Women's Council representatives from Pohnpei, Chuuk, Yap and Kosrae States presented challenges faced by women and girls, highlighting the urgent need to address gender disparities in their respective states, as well as the achievements and their ongoing work. The presentations

and discussion with workshop participants gave rise to four main agenda items to be included in the FSM Women's Conference, namely, Gender-Based Violence, Health, Climate Change and Economic Development.

IOM's gender focal point, Pushpi Weerakoon, further facilitated a session on Gender, Leadership and Psychosocial First Aid. The discussion highlighted strategic methods of responding to gender inequalities at home and in the workplace, while underlining the importance of fostering more women empowerment initiatives.

In the coming weeks, IOM will continue to work with the Department of Health and Social Services, Women's Councils and stakeholder agencies to finalize the agenda and support partners in the planning of the conference.



Simulation Exercise Supports Readiness to Withstand Disaster Events in Pohnpei, FSM

Emergency response agencies in Pohnpei, the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), convened in September 2023 at a tabletop exercise to simulate a hazard event and test the readiness and response capabilities of agencies, ensuring Pohnpei State is better prepared to withstand climate shocks.

effectively assess the impact, mobilize resources and minimize loss. The exercise highlighted the needs for municipal-level Disaster Preparedness Plans, capacity-building to better assess impacts and mobilize resources, as well as improved communications from community to State and National levels.



The three-day workshop, led by the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Emergency (DECEM) and the Pohnpei State Disaster Coordinating Office (DCO) with support from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), involved directors and frontline responders from 19 State and National Government and Civil Society Organizations.

Key recommendations that emanated from the exercise included ensuring all preparedness-response initiatives and capacity-building activities are community-centered and inclusive of remote outer islands.

Hon. Francisco Ioanis, Pohnpei State Acting Governor, welcomed participants by noting that climate action and emergency response are priority areas of the Government of the FSM.

IOM, DCO and DECEM will compile the findings of the exercise and recommendations raised during the tabletop to inform the Pohnpei State Standard Operating Procedures and State Emergency Response Plans. Gul Ahmadi, IOM Deputy Chief of Party for the Disaster Resilience in the Compact Nations (RESILIENCE) project, acknowledged areas for continued collaboration with partner agencies. "It is important to continue to work collectively, not only to update the State's plans and procedures, but to further devise comprehensive frameworks that are continuously updated and effectively put into use," he said.

In his opening remarks, Hon. Ricky Carl, Acting Speaker of Pohnpei Legislature, further emphasized the importance of working collectively to safeguard communities. "As public servants, we have that shared goal in exercises like this, that is to take the lead and think together and work together, ensuring we deliver the vital services we are charged to implement on behalf of the people that we serve."

The tabletop exercise is a capacity-building initiative supported by the United States Agency for International Development under the RESILIENCE program. IOM has conducted five tabletop exercises in Pohnpei, Chuuk and Yap States of the FSM since 2022. A similar exercise will be organized in Kosrae in October 2023.

Participants enacted a typhoon scenario and carried out a series of response activities focusing on decision-making, communication and coordination among departments to

