



EU – NORTH PACIFIC – READINESS FOR EL NIÑO (RENI) PROJECT

**RENI Planning Consultation, Marshall Islands Resort,
Majuro, Republic of Marshall Islands,
Monday 4th December, 2017**



1. INTRODUCTION TO THE RENI PROJECT

The European Union – North Pacific – Readiness for El Niño (RENI) project is about communities working together to secure food and water resources ahead of drought.

The project is funded with €4.5 million from the European Union (EU) and implemented by the Pacific Community (SPC) in collaboration with the governments and peoples of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI) and Palau. The implementation period for the RENI project is from 6th July 2017 to 30th October 2020.

RMI has selected food security as the focus for the RENI project and has identified six atolls particularly vulnerable to drought, listed in priority order: Ailuk, Mejit, Wotho, Utrik, Santo-Kwajalein, and Enewetak.

2. OBJECTIVES AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE CONSULTATION

The objectives of the one-day consultation on 4th December 2017 were: to (i) to share information on food security and drought responses in Ailuk, Mejit, Wotho, Utrik, Santo-Kwajalein and Enewetak, and (ii) to begin preliminary planning activities for the RENI project in these atolls. The agenda is presented as Annex 1.

There were 22 participants (8 female, 14 male), including representatives of government agencies, development partners, non-governmental organizations and representatives from four atolls: Wotho, Utrik, Kwajalein and Enewetak. The list of participants is presented as Annex 2.

3. INFORMATION SHARING

Benjamin Graham, Chief Secretary opened the Consultation. In his remarks, he emphasised:

- Droughts are becoming more prevalent in RMI and adversely impacting the atolls. The 2016 Post Disaster Needs Assessment estimated the 2016 drought resulted in USD 2 million agricultural and livestock losses (excluding copra).
- Since the drought there has been significant work done on water security but less on food security, so the government decided to focus RENI activities on food security.
- A draft report by UNICEF (2017) surveyed 580 households in RMI and found that 40% of households had some level of food insecurity and 20% had severe levels of food insecurity.

Gillian Cambers, Project Manager of RENI, SPC, outlined the scope of the project and in particular:

- RENI is part of a Special Measure, developed by the EU, and covering 22 countries to assist populations affected by the 2015-2016 El Niño drought.
- The implementation period is from July 2017 to October 2020.
- The RENI project will include consultation, training and capacity building, on-the-ground measures to promote food security, and planning and technical measures.
- The other two countries involved in the RENI project, DSM and Palau, have selected water security as the focus.
- (See power point presentation 1)

Henry Capelle, Chief of Agriculture and Quarantine, Ministry of Natural Resources and Commerce (MNRC) described food security issues and activities in RMI:

- The Food Security Policy and the Biosecurity Policy guide the work of MNRC.

- The four inter-related elements of food security are availability, access, utilisation and stability.
- Several ongoing and planned projects in food security were outlined, including a government proposal to recruit extension officers for each atoll to support work in nursery management, compost training, cooking demonstrations, quarantine training, distribution of seeds and seedlings, home and school gardening, piggeries and forest inventory analysis.
- (See power point presentation 2).
- There was discussion after the presentation on whether to include marine resources in the RENI project. Terrestrial and land resources were confirmed as the focus..

Ron Libby, USAID Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), outlined some of the USAID responses to the 2013 and 2016 droughts, implemented through the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Red Cross.

Poasa Nauluvula, SPC Land and Resources Division, outlined several planning and technical measures to support food security:

- The measures included water saving (he proposed use of the term “sweet water”); drought tolerant crop varieties; crop protection e.g. shade and shelter using agroforestry practices; seed saving; and food preservation. Several examples were shown.
- The use of traditional practices was recommended, e.g. using local and indigenous varieties of crops and livestock breeds.
- (See power point presentation 3).

Gibson Susumu, SPC Land and Resources Division, outlined some of SPC’s work in food security:

- This includes the establishment of seed centres, improving animal health and production, plant health and biosecurity, and the scaling of technologies.
- (See power point presentation 4).
- Discussion centred around the containment of the rhinoceros beetle, which is presently in Guam and the importance of implementing national and regional biosecurity plans.

Angela Saunders, International Organization for Migration (IOM) briefly outlined IOM’s work:

- View the word “migration” in the organization’s title as “mobility” and their goal is helping people be more resilient and stay in their home environments.
- According to Article 10 of the Compact Agreement, if a natural disaster exceeds a certain threshold, as happened in the 2013 and 2016 droughts in RMI, IOM is the main implementation partner for USAID.
- IOM works closely with local organizations in drought responses and focuses on the holistic aspects of drought, including social aspects such as household stress and how this impacts women.
- Discussion points included the need for RENI to work closely with local systems and assessment methods e.g. Reimaanlok.

Jack Niedenthal, RMI Red Cross Society

- The Red Cross has more than 25 first aid instructors who can train others. A personal story illustrated the importance of first aid training – saving one life makes all the work worthwhile.
- The Red Cross has volunteers available and ready to help.
- The RMI Red Cross Society will likely receive accreditation early next year.

Karness Kusto, Marshall Islands Organic Farmers Association (MIOFA) described the organization's role in supporting government's efforts towards food security:

- MIOFA was established in January 2016 and works with other partners to promote food security.
- Activities to date include training in organic agriculture especially composting techniques, provision and use of organic foods at meetings and gatherings, and marketing of organic produce.
- (See power point presentation 5).
- Discussion points centred on how to change peoples' eating habits, especially among youth.

4. PLANNING OF ACTIVITIES FOR THE RENI PROJECT

In small groups, participants reviewed some background information on population statistics, drought losses during the 2016 drought, and drought response activities in the six atolls.

Participants completed three activities:

- (a) Make recommendations on which atolls should be targeted first in the RENI project, noting the following:
 - The National Disaster Committee recommended six atolls, which are most affected and vulnerable to drought, in prioritised order: 1. Ailuk, 2. Mejit, 3. Wotho, 4. Utrik, 5. Santo (Kwajalein), 6. Enewetak.
 - The RENI project has a very short timeframe and limited budget.
 - Suggested criteria include: (1) Number of beneficiaries; (2) Accessibility; (3) Ongoing and planned drought response activities in the atoll; (4) local knowledge about vulnerability and need in each atoll.
- (b) What opportunities are there to combine RENI project activities with ongoing and planned interventions by other agencies/NGOs?
- (c) Keeping the focus on food security in the six identified atolls, recommend up to five activities to include in the RENI project.

Whilst there was no consensus among the groups on the prioritisation of the atolls, there was consensus on the following characteristics:

Ailuk: Model atoll for food security, accessible and vulnerable

Mejit: Has a unique "single" island formation, and several other projects are ongoing in Mejit.

Wotho: Poor soil, other projects (fisheries) are ongoing, and it is very remote.

Utrik: Soil contamination from the nuclear testing is an issue.

Santo – Kwajalein: there was lack of clarity as to why Santo was included in the list and not other Kwajalein islands; it has the potential to be a secondary hub.

Enewetak: Soil contamination from the nuclear testing is an issue.

Potential partners included Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Coastal Management Advisory Council (CMAC), IOM, Local Early Action Plan (LEAP), Ministry of Internal Affairs, MNRC, National Disaster Management Office (NDMO), Red Cross Society, US Department of Agriculture (USDA), Women United Together of the Marshall Islands (WUTMI).

Proposed activities included:

- Capacity building involving men, women and vulnerable groups
- Activities such as:
 - Nurseries,
 - Water storage
 - Soil management & composting
 - Combatting pests and diseases
 - Home and school gardens
- Assessments
 - Terrestrial assessments
 - Local area action plans
 - Local disaster management plans

5. EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

The Consultation was evaluated by 13 participants,(3 female and 10 male), see results in Annex 3.

Overall, the group discussions and the information shared by the panellists and presenters were the main highlights with many responses mentioning positively their appreciation of the opportunities for everyone to participate and share ideas in the group discussions. More representatives should have been included, especially from the atolls, and it was noted that the atoll representatives could have played a more active role in the discussions. The venue and facilities was ranked as 9 on a scale of one to ten. One participant noted *“This meeting is very fruitful for us, especially to the mayors and others who are new to this meeting.”*

Thanks were extended to all the participants and the meeting was concluded.

Annex 1 Agenda



Pacific
Community
Communauté
du Pacifique

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AGENDA

0900 – 0915	Welcome and Introductions Benjamin Graham, Chief Secretary
FOOD SECURITY AND DROUGHT RESPONSE: INFORMATION SHARING	
0915 – 0945	Presentation on the RENI Project and Discussion Objectives of this Consultation and outline of the RENI project Gillian Cambers, SPC
0945 – 1015	Presentation and Discussion: Ministry of Natural Resources and Commerce (MNRC) Outline of ongoing and planned food security activities in RMI Henry Capelle, MNRC.
1015 – 1045	Panel Presentation and Discussion: Development Partners Outline of ongoing and planned food security support activities in RMI and the Pacific Ron Libby, Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, (OFDA), USAID; Gibson Susumu and Poasa Nauluvula, SPC, Land and Resources Division
1045 – 1100	Morning Tea
1100 – 1145	Panel Presentation and Discussion: NGOs Civil Society's perspective on food security activities in RMI International Organization for Migration (IOM): Angela Saunders; RMI Red Cross Society: Jack Niedenthal; Marshall Islands Organic Farmers Association (MIOFA): Karness Kusto.
FOOD SECURITY AND DROUGHT RESPONSE: PLANNING ACTIVITIES FOR THE RENI PROJECT	
1145 – 1315	Small Group Discussions Planning activities for the RENI project
1315 – 1415	Lunch
1415 – 1515	Feedback and sharing of ideas from small group session
1515 – 1530	Next steps for the RENI project
1530 – 1600	Closing and evaluation of Consultation

Annex 2 Participant List

Participant Name	Organization	Email address	Telephone
Ron Libby	OFDA/USAID	relibby@ofda.gov	692 455 0093
Angela Saunders	International Organization for Migration (IOM) Head of Office Majuro	aksaunders@iom.int	456 7604
Ben Graham	Chief Secretary	graham.benjamin@gmail.com	625 5150
Kino S. Kabua	Deputy Chief Secretary	kinokabua@gmail.com	455 0667
Jabulga Aikno	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	jabulga1959@gmail.com	455 5800
Karness Kusto	Marshall Islands Organic Farmers Association (MIOFA)	kustokarness@gmail.com	455 3925
Jack Niedenthal	Marshall Islands Red Cross Society	Jack.niedenthal@rmiredcross.org	455 3177, 625 0340
Halston DeBrum	Majuro Water and Sewerage Company	Wq.mwsco@gmail.com	456 3736
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Tatios Anjolak	Wotho Atoll	Anjolak_t@hotmail.com	455 5565
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Yetta Aliven	National Disaster Management Office (NDMO)	Yetta.aliven@gmail.com	625 5150
Doreen Debrum	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade	doreendebrum@gmail.com	629 3181/3012
Henry Capelle	Ministry of Natural Resources and Commerce (MNRC)	kikurto@yahoo.com	455 4920
Stephen Lepton	Ministry of Natural Resources and Commerce (MNRC)	Stephenllepton5519@gmail.com	455 1190
Neil Flores	Enewetak Government	Ntflores1@yahoo.com	456 2869
Candida Kaious	Women United Together Marshall Islands (WUTMI)	Wutmi26@gmail.com	625 4296
Gibson Susumu	Pacific Community (SPC)	gibsons@spc.int	
Poasa Nauluvula	Pacific Community (SPC)	poasan@spc.int	
Gillian Cambers	Pacific Community (SPC)	gillianc@spc.int	+679 805 7277

Annex 3 Evaluation of the Consultation

13 participants evaluated the Consultation (3 female, 10 male).

1. Things liked about the consultation

- Group discussions and opportunities for everyone to participate and share ideas (7)
- Information shared by panellists (6)
- Clear information for the group discussions (2)
- Informal and lively atmosphere (2)
- Information from RMI side and SPC/RENI side
- Relevance of the panellists
- Short and to the point
- Opportunity to contribute to project design
- Understanding of the weakness of our current situation in terms of sustainable development

2. Suggested improvements for future consultations

- Include other representatives (5)
- More representation from the atolls (4)
- More participation in the discussion by the atoll representatives (3)
- Clarity on the government's choice of atolls (2)
- Longer duration – 2 days (2)
- Better advance notification
- More information on the targeted atolls
- Guidelines for partners' inputs
- Stakeholders should stay for the entire consultation
- An overall endorsement of activities and atoll selection
- Guidelines on desired standard of living in the atolls

3. Ranking of venue and arrangements on a scale of 1-10

- Average was 9, although at least 3 participants noted the room was hot.

4. Other comments

- Several "Thank you's"
- Thank you for giving us the opportunity from the outer islands
- This meeting is very fruitful for us, especially to the mayors and others who are new to this meeting