



European Union



Pacific
Community
Communauté
du Pacifique

The European Union – North Pacific – Readiness for El Niño (RENI) project in Marshall Islands

Outer island communities in RMI securing food resources ahead of drought



Project amount



€ 4.5 million (for RMI, FSM, & Palau)
funded by the European Union

Project timeframe



6 July 2017 - 31 October 2020

Implementing agencies



Ministry of Natural Resources &
Commerce
National Disaster Management Office
Ministry of Culture and Internal Affairs
The Pacific Community (SPC)

Beneficiaries



Direct benefit: **1,059 persons**

Indirect benefit: **1,605 persons**

Marshall Islands is vulnerable to the adverse effects of disaster and climate change. Together with Palau and FSM, it is part of the RENI project.

About the RENI project

The European Union (EU) – North Pacific – Readiness for El Niño (RENI) project is about communities working to secure food and water resources ahead of drought. The three-year (2017 - 2020) project is funded with € 4.5 million from the European Union and is implemented by the Pacific Community (SPC) in collaboration with the governments and peoples of FSM, Marshall Islands and Palau.

The overall objective of the EU – North Pacific – Readiness for El Niño (RENI) project is to enhance the resilience of the people of the FSM, Marshall Islands and Palau to the shocks and insecurities resulting from extreme El Niño events.

Drought in the Marshall Islands

The 2015-2016 drought in RMI is estimated to have had an economic impact of approximately USD 4.9 million, with the agriculture sector the most severely impacted. Coconut plays a central role, as the primary outer island cash income source (through copra sales), as a source of foreign exchange (through coconut oil exports) and as an important food.

The northern atolls in RMI are historically the most vulnerable to drought and are classified as RMI's Drought Zone 1. In addition, these atolls are the furthest from the capital, Majuro, and getting emergency supplies to these atolls during periods of extended drought is extremely challenging because of the distances involved.

ADDRESSING DISASTER AND CLIMATE RISK IN MARSHALL ISLANDS



RENI project in the Marshall Islands

The RENI project in RMI will focus on food security, recognising that this will involve also addressing some aspects of water security. Emphasis will be placed on trialing new food security measures to increase the availability of local food crops, expand the use of drought resistant crop varieties, improve soil management practices, and establish nurseries. The project will link the food security activities with the health activities being implemented by the Wellness Centre and the Public School Nutrition Programme to influence a behavioural change towards healthier lifestyles and the use of local crops and fruits.

The project puts people at the centre of development and incorporates a multi-sector, participatory and community-led approach throughout the design and implementation with a particular emphasis on applying a gender-sensitive/rights-based approach throughout.

The RMI government is using the opportunities provided by the RENI project to trial the re-establishment of agricultural activities in the northern atolls. In the past subsistence agriculture was an important activity in the outer atolls, but has declined in recent years as a result of a general trend away from agriculture to other forms of employment and the availability of convenient processed food. RENI will provide an opportunity to gain knowledge and experience about enhancing food security in RMI.

The government has selected two atolls for focus in the RENI project: Ailuk, with a population of 352 persons and a rural environment, and Santo-Kwajalein, with a population of 707 persons and a semi-urban environment. The project will also share experiences learnt with four other northern atolls: Enewetek, Mejit, Wothe and Utrik.

Key Highlights

Influencing community behaviours



- Community consultations were held in 2018 in Ailuk and Santo, using a gender sensitive/rights-based approach, to listen and learn about the drought-related issues faced in the local areas and to receive the communities' input on project design. Training has commenced in governance and women's rights.
- Responding to the 2017 UNICEF survey that showed one in three RMI children is stunted, the RENI project will build on the RMI Public School Nutrition programme and the Wellness Centre, especially with residents in Ailuk and Santo to apply behavioural changes methods that promote healthy lifestyles. This will contribute to the sustainability of the RENI food security measures after the project is completed.
- Empowering Women United Together Marshall Islands (WUTMI's) Chapters to investigate crop pests in the northern atolls.
- Among the communications activities, a short video on experiences and lessons learnt from the 2013 and 2016 droughts in RMI has been prepared, to be followed soon by a video highlighting the RENI project experiences.

Enhancing food security



- Assisting the government re-establish a system of agricultural extension officers in each atoll.
- Increase the availability of food crops by establishing a nursery and replacing senile food bearing trees with new trees and crops.
- Training in composting methods, soil improvement, nursery maintenance, production of seedlings, water saving techniques and household wastewater use.
- Introduce women's home gardening together with training in: maintenance, preparation and cooking of local and newly-introduced crops as well as in food preservation techniques.
- Refurbish and expand communal water catchment systems to assist with the food security measures.
- Share experiences and lessons with farmers from the other four atolls at an event in 2020 which will also combine health and wellness activities.

Planning to prepare for future droughts



- Island-specific, 'living' disaster risk management plans for Ailuk and Santo.
- Based on the plans for Ailuk and Santo, a model island specific disaster risk management plan will be prepared for application in the other atolls in the future.
- Partnering with non-government organisations, e.g. WUTMI, Marshall Islands Organic Farmers Association (MIOFA), the Taiwan Technical Mission and the Wellness Centre provides for sustainability of the activities and their continuation after the project.

Activities contributes to the SDG's:

