

# ADDRESSING DISASTER AND CLIMATE RISK IN MARSHALL ISLANDS



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**

*An integrated approach was adopted in RMI, combining food security measures with health and wellness activities.*

### 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 affected. In the outer islands, coconut plays a central role in agriculture and is an important food. Copra sales are the primary source of cash income in the outer islands and coconut oil exports are an important source of foreign exchange.

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.

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## RENI project in the Marshall Islands

The RENI project in RMI focuses on food security in the northern atolls. The RMI government used 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 had declined in recent years. RENI was opportunity to gain knowledge and experience about enhancing food security in RMI.

The government selected two atolls for 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.

An integrated approach was adopted combining food security measures with healthy lifestyles and focusing on the most vulnerable people: women and youth. Using a multi-sector, participatory and community-led approach, the project put people at the centre of development.

With the help of local and national partners, the availability of local food crops has been increased, plant nurseries and home gardens established, and training provided in soil management practices and pest control. A “garden to plate” concept has been introduced combined with regular exercise and health checks to enhance overall wellness.

A local area disaster management plan for Ailuk has been prepared together with a model plan for use by the other atolls.

## Key Highlights

### Influencing community behaviours



- Community consultations in Ailuk and Santo guided the project design.
- Training was conducted in governance and human rights in Ailuk.
- Canvasback Wellness Centre undertook health checks, started exercise groups and gave cooking classes in Ailuk and established the link between healthy eating, exercise and wellness. This integrated model contributes to the sustainability of the atoll agriculture and home gardens after the project ends.
- Different Chapters of Women United Together Marshall Islands (WUTMI) have been trained on how to identify crop pests and to treat them with biological controls.
- Among the communications activities, two videos have been prepared: “Experiences with the 2013 and 2016 droughts in RMI” and “Communities securing food resources and adopting healthy lifestyles: Marshall Islands”.

### Enhancing food security



- Working with local partners including the Marshall Islands Organic Farmers Association (MIOFA) and the Taiwan Technical Mission (TTM), farmers were trained in atoll agriculture.
- Assisting the government re-establish a system of atoll agriculture extension officers.
- Increasing the availability of food crops by establishing two plant nurseries, replacing senile food bearing trees, establishing home gardens and training farmers in soil management practices and pest control.
- Sharing new technologies such as wicking irrigation systems, which save water.
- Refurbish and expand six community water catchment systems in Ailuk.
- Publishing easy-to-use guides in English and Marshallese: “Guide to growing vegetables in RMI”, “Guide to cooking vegetables in RMI” and “Homemade remedies for pest control in RMI”.

### Planning to prepare for future droughts



- A disaster risk management plan was prepared for Ailuk and emergency drills conducted together with supporting awareness materials.
- A model disaster management plan was prepared, for customisation by the other atolls.
- Partnering with government and NGOs, e.g. WUTMI, MIOFA, TTM and the Wellness Centre provides for sustainability of the activities and their continuation after the project.

### Activities contribute to the SDG's:

