

ADDRESSING DISASTER AND CLIMATE RISK IN PALAU



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

Securing water resources ahead of drought in Palau



Project amount



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

Project timeframe



6 July 2017 - 31 October 2020

Implementing agencies



National Emergency Management Office
Bureau of Public Works
Palau Public Utilities Corporation
The Pacific Community

Beneficiaries



Direct benefit: **282 persons**

Indirect benefit: **11,444 persons**

Palau is vulnerable to the adverse effects of disaster and climate change. Together with RMI 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 Federated States of Micronesia (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 Palau

A rainfall total of 17.65 ins (448 mm) over 4-month period, November 2015 to February 2016, was the lowest recorded in Palau since 1951. This resulted in low water flows, which were inadequate to meet the needs of Palau's population and impacted negatively on people's health. Providing water for anticipated tourist arrivals was another factor causing concern. A State of Emergency was declared in March 2016 and continued for 20 days. During that period, special measures were put in place and included the establishment of water refill stations in communities, home delivery to the elderly and persons with disabilities, as well as other rationing and conservation measures.

Following the drought, a 2017 Drought Action Plan was prepared, which included (i) public awareness and educational activities and (ii) operational measures including investigations into new wells, exploration of new surface water sources, and acquisition of further assets including vehicles, tanks and trucks. This plan informed the design of the RENI project.

ADDRESSING DISASTER AND CLIMATE RISK IN PALAU



RENI project in Palau

The RENI project in Palau focuses on water security. Applying the lessons learnt from the 2015-2016 drought, the RENI Project Steering Committee (assigned by the National Emergency Committee) wanted to provide improved water security to as many residents as possible. Recognising that around two thirds of Palau's residents live in Koror, potential surface water sources in the southern states of Babeldaob (within a 30-minutes' drive from Koror) were investigated.

Two surface water catchments that did not run dry during the 2015-2016 drought were investigated and hydrological assessments of their minimum flow during drought conditions were completed. The results showed that the Tabecheding River in Ngatpang State was a suitable source for water extraction during low flow conditions.

During the 2015-2016 drought, water had to be transported to many remote communities, and also to households where people, such as the elderly and those with disabilities, could not access the communal water distribution centres. The RENI Project Steering Committee also determined that additional water tanker trucks would greatly facilitate the distribution of water to these groups during future droughts.

Key Highlights

Influencing community behaviours



- Community consultations have been conducted in Ngatpang State to listen to the views of the communities on the proposed water storage measures and learn about the particular drought related issues in their State.
- A RENI Project Steering Committee has been established with representatives from eleven government and non-governmental agencies, including the Palau Red Cross and the Palau Chamber of Commerce. This provides a wide range of expertise and experience guiding the project's activities.
- Awareness and educational activities to promote water conservation and drought readiness have been implemented as part of Palau's Disaster Preparedness Month – September 2018 and 2019.

Enhancing water security



- A 30,000 water storage system will be designed and constructed beside the Tabecheding River alongside the Compact Road. This water will be available to residents of Ngatpang State as well as to the public. The site is only 30-minutes' drive from the main population centres in Koror and Airaii, and so is easily accessible to the public during drought.
- The water storage system will be maintained by the Palau Public Utilities Corporation.
- Two water tanker trucks will be purchased and these will be available for use by the Palau Public Utilities Corporation to transport water to residents during times of water shortages and drought.

Research and planning to prepare for future droughts



- Hydrological assessments of the Tabecheding and Ngerderar watersheds have been completed to determine their potential suitability for water extraction during drought.
- An environmental assessment has been conducted into the Tabecheding Watershed to ensure that any potential environmental issues are fully addressed in the design of the water storage system.

Activities contribute to the SDG's:

