



Community members unload relief items from a boat in Sapwafik outer island of Pohnpei, FSM. © IOM 2024

AFFECTED POPULATIONS

 22,733 IN FSM
 15,000 IN RMI

 604

Household reached with non-food items

 7,228

Community members reached with access to water

 125

Community members trained on Initial Damage Assessment

SITUATION OVERVIEW

The Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) and the Republic of Palau are currently grappling with drought conditions exacerbated by the impact of El Niño, resulting in notably reduced precipitation levels. Weekly rainfall totals have persisted below the minimum threshold since December of 2023 in RMI and FSM, whilst Palau had remained clear of drought. As of March 2024, Palau also began to experience abnormal dryness, with water reservoir levels decreasing due to insufficient rainfall.

According to the United States Drought Monitor, as of 2 April, 14 atolls and islands in Micronesia have experienced varying degrees of dry weather and water scarcity, 11 of which are situated in FSM, RMI and Palau. Pohnpei, Chuuk and Yap States in FSM and Wotje, Majuro and Kwajalein in RMI, have been particularly affected, with moderate to severe drought conditions intermittently impacting more than 22,700 residents according to the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Emergency Management (DECEM).

Additionally, in RMI, 18 atolls were impacted by inundation on 20 January 2024 as well as on 9 and 10 March. The drought and recent inundation events have now been reported to affect close to 15,000 people (about 35% of the population) across 23 atolls and islands, based on the RMI Response Plan for Drought and Inundation (RPDI) 2024.

Recognizing the severity of the situation and following emergency declarations from Pohnpei, Yap, and Chuuk states, the Government of FSM declared a national emergency on March 11, 2024, mobilizing resources to effectively address needs. Moreover, the Government of

RMI has earmarked \$1.8 million to bolster the response efforts. The RMI Cabinet is monitoring the situation and will potentially enact an emergency declaration if reservoir levels decrease below the threshold. In Palau, starting 26 March 2024, the National Emergency Committee placed the country under Stage 1 of the country's Drought Action Plan.

International Organization for Migration (IOM), with funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and in close coordination with FSM DECEM, State Disaster Coordinating Offices (DCOs) and RMI National Disaster Management Office (NDMO), has been actively involved in strengthening drought preparedness and response efforts in FSM and RMI through the provision of essential items as well as capacity building for Government entities and community disaster management committee focal points. In Palau, IOM is working closely with the Ministry of Education, in coordination with the National Emergency Management Office (NEMO) about the possibility of supporting the rehabilitation of water catchment systems in schools that have been affected.

This situation is anticipated to deteriorate in the coming months, causing depletion of rain catchment and river systems throughout the affected islands. The RMI RPDI cautions that even if rainfall were to resume by the end of April or early May, the repercussions of the drought would linger for several months, with the replenishment of water sources expected to take many months. This decline poses substantial risks to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and public health, particularly in remote outer islands.

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NFI NON-FOOD ITEMS

To address the drought situation, IOM responded with the provision of non-food items to reach outer island communities. Since January 2024, IOM has provided hygiene kits and jerry cans reaching approximately 604 households in 10 outer islands of Chuuk, Yap and Pohnpei. The kits include buckets, laundry and body soap, bleach, and other hygiene items to ensure available water sources can be used safely and to reduce the spread of waterborne diseases and minimize risks to public health.

In partnership with the FSM Government, IOM has further strategically positioned hygiene kits, WASH supplies, tarpaulins, and water testing kits in Weno, the capital of Chuuk, to ensure swift access to essential supplies in drought and other disaster-prone areas. This prepositioning facilitates rapid mobilization of emergency relief efforts.

ACCESS TO WATER

Drought conditions in the outer islands, particularly those in the D1 and D2 categories (moderate and severe drought respectively) have resulted in the depletion of wells and drying out of rivers on which some local communities heavily rely for household use.

IOM has delivered 12,080 litres of potable water to communities in 10 islands of Pohnpei, Chuuk and Yap States of FSM. In the coming month, IOM will dispatch an additional 26,200 litres of water to the remaining islands of the Northwest Region in Chuuk and to Yap State.



IOM teams assemble reverse osmosis unit in Pingelap, Pohnpei, FSM. ©IOM 2024

IOM's provision has also included delivery of solar-powered Reverse Osmosis (RO) units, filtration devices used to desalinate up to 360 litres of sea water per day. Seven RO units have been deployed to Namu, Mejatto, Ailuk and Aur atolls of RMI and to Pingelap outer island of Pohnpei, FSM. IOM teams on the ground further supported NDMO with the installation and maintenance of existing RO units in five islands of RMI to ensure these were operational and could be used by Municipal Governments. The RO units will provide clean water for up to 3000 people daily.

Reverse Osmosis units are planned to be deployed to four islands in Yap State. IOM is further prepared to deploy seven additional RO units as needs are identified.



IOM teams and Government partners mobilize water and non-food items from IOM warehouse for shipping to outer islands of Chuuk. © IOM 2024



CAPACITY BUILDING

Conducting effective assessments of the drought situation and the extent to which water sources, crops, livelihoods and the well-being of residents have been impacted is key to delivering timely and appropriate relief assistance. After receiving reports of water shortages, IOM conducted 16 Initial Damage Assessment trainings participated by 125 community disaster management committee members in the outer islands of Pohnpei and Chuuk States to

ensure Municipal Leaders and disaster management focal points are able to accurately identify and report gaps.

In February and March 2024, IOM in partnership with DECEM and DCOs in Pohnpei, Chuuk and Yap further supported drought assessment in Mwokil, Pingelap, Kapinga, and Sapwaufik of Pohnpei, Northwest and Mortlocks of Chuuk and outer islands of Yap. The assessment results are being analyzed and will guide relief efforts. Additional sessions will be conducted in affected outer islands to enhance local capacities.

DROUGHT AFFECTED AREAS IN THE NORTH PACIFIC



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Map of affected areas and severity of drought. IOM is supporting relief efforts in the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of the Marshall Islands. Source: US Drought Monitor, 2 April 2024

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