

www.ifrc.org
Saving lives,
changing minds.

Emergency appeal operation update Republic of the Marshall Islands/Pacific Drought

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Emergency appeal n° MDRMH001
GLIDE n° DR-2013-000053-MHL
Operation update n°1
31 August 2013

Period covered by this Ops Update: 19 June to 30 August 2013

Appeal target (current): CHF 803,347.

Appeal coverage: 13 per cent [<click here to go directly to the updated donor response report, or here to link to contact details>](#)

Appeal history:

This Emergency Appeal was initially launched on 19 June 2013 for CHF 803,347; cash, in-kind, or services to support the Government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) to assist 3,409 drought-affected beneficiaries across six atolls/islands of the 15 affected for a period of six months.

To accommodate for the changing situation and the current available funding the operational budget (based on the current funding status) has been adjusted, with further revisions to the Emergency Appeal budget likely, following the completion of the detailed assessment process and subject to additional funding.

While the overall target population and the majority of activities remain the same, some operational and staffing adjustments have been made. Consequently the current operational plan and budget is prioritizing the needs of 1,529 beneficiaries in three atolls for up to six months, with the needs of an additional 1,880 beneficiaries in a further three atolls addressed if further funding is available.

The International Federation of Red Cross Red Crescent Societies would like to express its sincere thanks to the following partners who have made a contribution to this Emergency Appeal: DG-ECHO, New Zealand Red Cross, Red Cross Society of China, Japanese Red Cross and Red Cross of Monaco.

Summary

On 18 April 2013, the Government of Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), a country which spans two archipelagic island chains in the North Pacific Ocean, declared a state of emergency in a number of outlying atolls due to an extended dry period. In May this was followed by a declaration of a state of disaster for 13 atolls/islands whose communities were severely affected by the drought and faced potential health, environmental, social and economic hardship. The drought is now reported to be affecting some 6,400 people across 15 atolls/islands north of the capital Majuro.



IFRC Admin/Finance Officer, Hemina Nysta, together with community representatives, conducting household surveys in Majkin, on Namu Atoll. Photo cred: IFRC

Following the deployment of an UNDAC team and the activation of the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) of four clusters to manage sector specific interventions in water and sanitation, health, food security and logistics, the RMI government developed an “Immediate and Near-term Drought Response Plan” which consolidated the activities of the various partners.

In the absence of a Red Cross National Society, the IFRC responded to a request of the National Volunteers Group (NVG) for the establishment of the Red Cross (NVG), with the full support of the RMI government. This resulted in the deployment of initial response teams from IFRC and New Zealand Red Cross and the launch of an Emergency Appeal in June.

The **overall goal** of this emergency operation is to enable drought-affected people in the six atolls/ islands of Ailuk, Likiep, Maloelap, Mejit, Namu and Wotje to recover following the drought and develop greater resilience to future droughts through:

- increased community capacity to collect, store and use water efficiently, by repairing and improving water supply schemes (catchments, tanks, gutters, etc)
- increased community participation in recording weather patterns, well water quantity/quality assessments and community education
- increased and equitable access to and involvement in identification and promotion of good sanitation and hygiene practices.

The **overall strategy** for the operation is to:

- address the humanitarian needs resulting from this drought
- further build partnerships with RMI government and other international and local humanitarian actors
- develop linkages between the operation and the longer term formation activities of an RMI National Society
- utilize the expertise of other Pacific National Societies, importantly their understanding of small island contexts
- contribute to and support national coordination for disaster response and preparedness through participation in the national cluster system
- work closely with local government, schools, health centres and other community organizations on the targeted atolls/islands to ensure they are active in all aspects of the operation
- work with the RMI government and NVG to ensure effective beneficiary communications and community feedback procedures are in place.

Thus far, funding for this operation has been slow, necessitating the prioritization of three atolls/islands (Namu, Likiep and Mejit), as well as a reduction of planned activities and staff, until additional funding is received. Since the launch of this Emergency Appeal, the following key progress has been made:

- **Establishment of IFRC Operations Office and deployment of staff**, with the team so far comprising an operations manager, watsan/early recovery delegate and a national admin/finance/logistics officer. Recruitment of additional watsan and logistics personnel is in progress. Management and monitoring systems are also in development including a plan to ensure transparency and two-way feedback/communication with the target communities.
- **Coordination** and close collaboration with the RMI government, clusters and major implementing partners is ongoing with active participation in ongoing coordination meetings and inter-agency planning. On 29 August, the IFRC and NVG hosted a briefing on the progress of the IFRC operation for key government stakeholders, WASH cluster partners and NVG members, which was greatly appreciated by the participants.
- **Consultations and household surveys** have been undertaken in Namu, the first of the three priority atolls/islands, using the jointly developed community and household survey form agreed by the WASH cluster, and taking into account the IFRC approach of ensure community participation, resilience and sustainability. The completion of the surveys on all three priority atolls/islands will then provide the basis for the further development and implementation of the detailed operational plan and budget.
- **Capacity building and organizational development activities** have been undertaken in support of the future establishment of a National Society in RMI. This has included dissemination about the Red Cross Red Crescent (RC/RC) Movement, discussions and planning with the National Volunteer

Group as how best to maximize this opportunity to develop a stronger volunteer base and disaster management skills within RMI.

- **Communications** planning is underway but already greater visibility and understanding of the Red Cross has been achieved by capitalizing on local and international media interest. The upcoming Pacific Islands Forum, to be hosted by the RMI provides a further opportunity to engage with governments and other organizations within and beyond the Pacific region.

Aside from funding, which remains a significant obstacle to delivering on the original operational plan, the greatest challenge of this operation is logistics. The lack of regular, timely and cost effective transport to and from the outer atolls and islands is a major impediment for assessments and programme implementation. Air transport is often limited to weekly or fortnightly flights, which are often cancelled or diverted without notice. Many locations are only reachable by boat, which can involve several days of travel and is highly dependent upon weather conditions, and teams must bring their own supplies of fuel, food and water. It is hoped these challenges will be mitigated to some extent through close collaboration with government, IOM and commercial businesses to find the most cost effective solutions and to opportunistically pre-position materials in the operational areas whenever possible.

The situation

Located in the North Pacific Ocean, about half-way between Hawaii and Australia, the Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI) is made up of two archipelagic island chains with the population of 69,747 (2013 est.) spread out over 34 low-lying coral atolls, comprising 1,156 individual islands and islets. RMI, like most of the countries in the region, increasingly faces challenges from climate change and natural disasters.

Due to an extended dry period, the RMI government declared a state of emergency in the northern areas of the RMI on 19 April 2013, which was followed by a declaration of a state of disaster on 8 May for 13 atolls/ islands. Preliminary disaster assessments undertaken identified that communities in these northern atolls/islands were being severely affected by the drought and faced potential health, environmental, social and economic hardship, due to the persistent dry weather. The drought is now reported to be affecting some 6,400 people across 15 atolls/islands north of Majuro.

The affected atolls and islands are challenging to reach due to the lack of availability and high cost of transport by boat and aircraft. As a result, these communities depend upon locally grown crops such as coconuts, pandanus, breadfruit and bananas for their staple diet, which have been badly damaged by the drought, creating the threat of serious food shortages. Much of the water supply is generated by reverse osmosis (RO) units as well as community/household level rain water catchments, however these facilities have proven to be in limited supply or are poorly maintained, resulting in serious water shortages, with the potential for significant health and hygiene problems.

Specifically, initial assessment indicated that drought-affected communities are experiencing a range of issues listed below:

- the majority of household water tanks are empty
- water in wells is significantly reduced and the majority of wells are contaminated with salinity
- there are insufficient numbers of RO units within drought-affected atolls/islands and there is declining water production output from the RO units in place due to maintenance issues
- insufficient supply of food in the communities is a growing concern. Local food crops, such as breadfruits and bananas, are severely damaged as trees are dying
- health issues associated with the drought and affected water sources, such as diarrhea, conjunctivitis (commonly known as pink eye), and scabies have been reported.

Coordination and partnerships

In response to the worsening situation, the RMI government initiated the National Disaster Committee (NDC) which then led to the activation of the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) in the capital, Majuro. The EOC is the critical platform for coordination with key government entity representatives and cluster leads based in Majuro. With the support of the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) team, the RMI established four clusters to manage sector specific

interventions in water and sanitation, health, food security and logistics. An UNDAC team was leading the support to the RMI government in developing the Humanitarian Action Plan (HAP) as well as the individual cluster plans. This appeal was drafted in close coordination with the national and regional stakeholders involved in this response to avoid gaps and ensure that all needs are covered.

In May, the RMI government developed an “Immediate and Near-term Drought Response Plan” which consolidated the activities of the various partners. In addition to IFRC and Red Cross societies, these partners include: UNDAC, Asian Development Bank (ADB), AusAID, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), International Organization for Migration (IOM), New Zealand Aid Programme, World Health Organization (WHO), Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Regional Office for the Pacific (ROP), Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), UNICEF, U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), USAID/Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), and the Embassy of Japan.

Initial response activities included:

- initial assessments carried out by the RMI government together with representatives from SOPAC and USAID
- distribution of bottled water, water purification tablets and the deployment of RO units
- distribution of medical teams, medical test kits and pharmaceutical supplies
- distribution of food rations
- chartering of boats and aircraft to establish air sea bridges facilitate the assessments and distribution process.

In June the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) announced that federal disaster assistance has been made available to the Government of RMI under the Compact of Free Association between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of RMI. Funding is being channelled through USAID and the activities implemented by IOM. IOM has also received a contribution of USD\$1.0 million through the Central Emergency Response Funds (CERF) to provide safe drinking water and to support the logistics effort to reach the most vulnerable.

Following the establishment of air and sea bridges, IOM have since delivered an estimated 45 metric tons (100,000 pounds) of food to 677 households on islands over 400 miles (640 km) from the RMI capital Majuro. A second distribution was completed on 9 August of a further 80 metric tons (176,367 pounds) as well as 11 metric tons (24,582 pounds) of RMI government food items. Further distributions are also planned for the coming month, which may be extended as per operational requirements.

The WASH cluster, including the IFRC, has worked to develop community and household survey forms to monitor water systems and enable the more specific targeting of water catchment needs. Local teams have been formed, trained and deployed to commence the assessment process. IOM has also chartered an additional plane as of 21 August for a period of two weeks to support the surveying and RO Unit technical assistance.

The EOC is continuing to convene cluster and inter-cluster meetings to enable the ongoing coordination of response efforts, with participation from the IFRC Operations team.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Overview

There is currently no established Red Cross National Society in RMI. A National Volunteer Group (NVG) has been working on the drafting of the Red Cross Act to establish a Red Cross National Society, and has strong support from the RMI Government. The NVG, with the agreement of the RMI government, requested support from the IFRC to support those affected by drought and is also seen as an important opportunity to further develop the knowledge and capacity of the NVG.

Prior to the launch of the Emergency Appeal, an IFRC team consisting of a team leader, a water and sanitation delegate, and a Pacific Regional Disaster Response Team (RDRT) member were deployed to RMI. Four water and sanitation short-term delegates were provided by New Zealand Red Cross, each for a period of two weeks. These delegates (accompanied by RMI government counterparts from the

Majuro Water and Sewerage Company) were deployed to atolls/islands to operate temporary RO units. In addition to water production and distribution, the teams also carried out community messaging on effective water resource management, safe water and good hygiene practices. An additional short-term delegate was deployed (three-week mission) with support of the Australian Red Cross to assist IFRC with the deployment of additional RO units which have been loaned to the RMI government by USAID through IOM.

On 19 June the IFRC launched an Emergency Appeal for CHF 803,347 to assist people across six atolls/islands of the 15 affected for a period of six months. This covers 3,409 drought-affected beneficiaries, representing the entire population of each of the six atolls/islands.

The criteria to select atolls/islands was based upon identified needs from the government assessments, including:

- drinking water access and capacity
- rain water harvesting capability
- food security
- lower level of support from other agencies (not included in the '177 agreement' ¹)
- number of beneficiaries (larger communities or grouping of communities in proximity)
- known level of current sanitation and hygiene practices (insights provided by local health services)
- increased isolation because of the remote geographical location, further limited by the lack of availability of sea and air transportation.

In consultation with the RMI government and cluster leads, the six identified locations are as follows:

1. **Ailuk Atoll** (est. population: 339; households: 63)
2. **Likiep Atoll** (est. population: 401; households: 78)
3. **Maloelap Atoll** (est. population: 682; households: 125)
4. **Mejit Island** (est. population: 348; households: 64)
5. **Namu Atoll** (est. population: 780; households: 187)
6. **Wotje Atoll** (est. population: 859; households: 133)

Adjusted goal and strategy

The Emergency Appeal initially included the procurement and distribution of two RO units, solar batteries, spare parts and fittings, with two large bladders to use in water distributions. However it has since been recognized that sufficient RO units are in place, but need active local engagement to ensure they are maintained and used effectively. Consequently this component has been removed from the current plan and budget. The other outputs remain unchanged. The monitoring, evaluation and communications approaches also remain unchanged.

DG-ECHO has committed support to the Appeal with an amount of EUR 150,000 (approximately CHF 185,000) and contributions have also been received from New Zealand Red Cross, Japanese Red Cross, the Red Cross Society of China, and the Red Cross of Monaco. However the slow response for additional funding requirements has necessitated the prioritization of the atolls/islands to be supported by this Emergency Appeal. The team will liaise with in-country parties and international partners to seek for further support.

Meanwhile, the first phase of the operation will target Namu, Likiep and Mejit as priorities based on the availability of specific data from the recent RMI government-led assessments and based on current funding availability. Should further sufficient funding be received, the operation will target Ailuk, Meloelap and Wotje, for which only estimated data is currently available.

A further revision of the detailed Plan of Action and budget is envisaged once detailed household assessments have been completed, which is expected by mid-October.

¹ 177 is an ongoing agreement with USA Govt for the provision of additional assistance

The current goal and strategy for this operation are as follows:

Current goal of the operation:

Drought-affected people in six atolls/ islands will recover following the drought and develop greater resilience to future droughts through:

- increased community capacity to collect, store and use water efficiently, by repairing and improving water supply schemes (catchments, tanks, gutters, etc)
- increased community participation in recording weather patterns, well water quantity/quality assessments and community education
- increased and equitable access to and involvement in identification and promotion of good sanitation and hygiene practices.

Current overall strategy for the operation

The **overall strategy** for the operation is to:

- address the humanitarian needs resulting from this drought
- further build partnerships with RMI government and other international and local humanitarian actors
- develop linkages between the operation and the longer term formation activities of an RMI National Society
- utilize the expertise of other Pacific National Societies, importantly their understanding of small island contexts
- contribute to and support national coordination for disaster response and preparedness through participation in the national cluster system
- work closely with local government, schools, health centres and other community organizations on the targeted atolls/islands to ensure they are active in all aspects of the operation
- work with the RMI government and NVG to ensure effective beneficiary communications and community feedback procedures are in place.

Current operational outcomes, outputs and activities

Water, sanitation, and hygiene promotion	
Outcome: Immediate risk of waterborne and water related diseases has been reduced through the provision of safe water and hygiene messaging to 1,529 beneficiaries in 3 atolls for up to 6 months, with the needs of an additional 1,880 beneficiaries in a further 3 atolls addressed if further funding is available.	
Outputs (expected results)	Activities planned
1. Continuous assessment and up-to-date collection of data on the water supply, sanitation, and hygiene situation is carried out in six atolls	<p>Collect further WASH-specific information is to refine and meet immediate needs, building on RMI government and WHO assessments. Specifically, with the help of RMI government and MWSC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conduct training for NVG and community volunteers on carrying out water, sanitation and hygiene assessments and monitoring • continuously monitor the water, sanitation and hygiene situation in targeted communities • identify of other WASH stakeholders • coordinate with other WASH/WatSan actors on target group needs and appropriate response.

Water, sanitation, and hygiene promotion	
2. Improved household and community access to and use of adequate rain water harvesting	<p>Provide a platform for early recovery from the effects of the drought with regards to continuous access to safe water, supporting the work of MWSC through the following activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establish sound community engagement practices to ensure beneficiaries are involved in constructing and installing tanks and guttering to increase water collection capacity • with community participation, procure and distribute tanks /guttering and repair of catchments across the initial three nominated atolls/ islands, as well as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - provide new tanks and rain harvesting systems for households with insufficient harvesting capacities - repair damaged and inadequate guttering, plumbing, water tanks and associated rain water harvesting systems
3. Communities in the affected atolls increase knowledge and ability to change practices regarding water collection and storage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disseminate effective household water collection practices storage practices, maximizing water availability and preventing transmission of water borne diseases. • Provide sanitation messaging to alleviate water borne diseases and health issues. • Train communities in maintenance of water catchment systems with awareness on better water harvesting techniques and managing usage to promote more sustainable water availability. • Conduct integrated baseline survey to further determine gaps in infrastructure, social structure and behaviors for longer term resilience.

Capacity building and organizational development	
Outcome: The quality of the operation is supported, through protecting and promoting the emerging national society's development, domestic capacities and future sustainability.	
Outputs (expected results)	Activities planned
Emergency response planning is a collaborative effort by the emerging national society (NVG) leadership and the IFRC team.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close communication (daily) between the IFRC team leader and focal person for NVG. • Regular meetings with NVG with discussions documented. • Regular meetings with the RMI government with discussions documented. • Develop consensus among the NVG on the role of emerging national society in the operation. • Identify the potential roles for NVG members in the operation. • Map existing skill sets within the NVG. • Advise, support and train NVG members. • Recruit three lead volunteers to travel to atolls/islands with IFRC team members to support work with affected communities.
IFRC partners base their support on the requests and advice of the NVG in close cooperation with RMI Government.	
Increased experience and skills of NVG members in drought relief and early recovery activities.	
In kind and cash donations to the NVG are transparently managed.	
Strong balanced relationship established with the Government of RMI.	
Capacity building activities under the relief operation are closely coordinated with the longer term support provided to the NVG by the IFRC and ICRC regional teams (in Suva) and the Kuala Lumpur Zone Office.	

Capacity of the IFRC

The IFRC Pacific Regional Office in Suva is responsible for managing the implementation of the response and providing operations support (in monitoring, reporting, financial management, communications, etc.) while the IFRC Asia Pacific Zone in Kuala Lumpur is responsible for coordinating international assistance and technical support.

The funding situation has required an adjustment to the planned in-country personnel for this operation. Whereas the Emergency Appeal proposed a team of four delegates and four local staff, the personnel plan has been revised as follows:

Delegates

- 1 x Operations Manager (6 months)
- 1 x WatSan/Early Recovery Delegate (6 months)
- 1 x Logistics Delegate (3 months) – fully funded candidate only

Local Staff

To be recruited within RMI to work alongside the delegates to support the operation:

- 1 x Admin/Finance Officer (5 months)
- 1 x Water and Sanitation/Early Recovery Officer (5 months)

Progress towards outcomes

1. Establishment of IFRC Operations Office and staff

A Cooperation Agreement was signed with the RMI Government on 20 June 2013 which defines the roles and responsibilities of the RMI Government and IFRC with respect to the drought operation. This agreement allows the IFRC to operate legally in RMI in the absence of a Legal Status Agreement.

The Pacific Regional Office has established an IFRC country presence in RMI with a basic office located in the Marshall Islands Resort Hotel in the capital Majuro and the recruitment and deployment of:

Operations Manager (6 months)

- Lead the IFRC Emergency and early recovery operation in close coordination with the NVG.
- Work with the Ministry of Resources and Development, other national/international actors and the NVG in supporting relief and recovery efforts under the existing coordination system (clusters: food security, logistics, WASH).
- Engage with the NVG to develop its profile and build its involvement in drought relief and early recovery activities.
- Assist the NVG to develop future directions and develop a plan moving forward.
- Improve the understanding role of Red Cross in disasters and early recovery, volunteer recruitment processes, collection of donated goods and cash donations, accountability and distribution processes.

Watsan and Recovery Delegate (6 months)

- Under the supervision of the Operations Manager and with the emerging national society work in supporting the identified early recovery and longer term WASH activities.
- Using tools such as basic hygiene promotion IEC material to provide community education and training on RO units (or other technologies as appropriate), disseminate effective household water collection and storage practices, maximizing water availability and preventing transmission of water borne diseases.
- Establishing sound community engagement practices to ensure beneficiaries are involved in constructing and installing tanks and guttering to increase their household water collection capacity.
- Provide mentoring to counterparts within NVG and MWSC to develop/enhance their

- skills in carrying out the above activities.
- Distribute tanks and guttering across the initial three targeted atolls/ islands.

National Admin/Finance officer (5 months)

- Support the establishment and implementation of office administration and finance procedures.
- Support the day to day admin and finance requirements of the operation.

The recruitment of a national watsan officer is in progress and plans for the deployment of additional logistics support are under discussion, which will require a fully funded candidate.

Management and monitoring systems are currently being put in place to ensure the operation adheres to all applicable IFRC and international standards of management and accountability. This also includes a plan to ensure transparency and two-way feedback/communication with the target communities.

A specific personnel plan for each of the operational atolls is also in preparation, with an emphasis on the mobilisation of volunteers from each of the respective communities.

1 Coordination

The IFRC Emergency Appeal and objectives were developed based on the RMI government's "Immediate and Near-term Drought Response Plan" and in consultation with other implementing partners.

The IFRC continues to play an active role in the coordination mechanisms established for this operation, in particular the activities of the RMI government's EOC and the WASH cluster which meets on a weekly basis. With the establishment of the Operations Office in Majuro, the IFRC will be able to ensure ongoing visibility and engagement with key partners on a more frequent basis.

In particular, the in-country team has been coordinating closely with IOM, the implementing partner of the US government, to ensure that the common components of our response are compatible and that we are making the most effective use of resources in particular for transport/logistics, which, as described further below, is one of the major challenges of this operation.

On 29 August, the IFRC and NVG hosted a briefing on the progress of the IFRC Operation for key government stakeholders, WASH cluster partners and NVG members, to provide a general overview of the IFRC approach, goals and current operational plan, as well as key findings from the recent visit to Namu Atoll, which was greatly appreciated by the participants.

2 Consultations and household surveys

The WASH cluster, with input from IFRC, has developed a common survey form for use in the conduct of community and household level surveys in preparation for the development of more detailed plans to support the water and sanitation component of the drought response. The survey covers details of existing water supply, harvesting methods and water use, as well as documenting and recent support/training received. A sample of the survey form is attached to this update.

Both IOM and IFRC will be commencing the household surveys during August/September on all of the affected atolls, with IFRC giving initial priority to Namu, Likiep and Mejit, until such time as further funding is received. In preparation for this, the IFRC team has met with the Mayors of the respective atolls/islands (mostly based in Majuro).

While the survey forms and overall approach are shared with the WASH cluster partners, the IFRC will be conducting the surveys with a number of specific objectives in mind:

- To assess each and every household individually, to ensure they receive adequate support for accessing sufficient water supply, tailored their specific location, needs and circumstances.
- To raise awareness of the need for personal and community responsibility for managing and maintaining good water use and harvesting systems, as part of longer term risk reduction efforts.
- To ensure the active engagement of the local community in the assessment process and implementation of the operational plan.
- To disseminate the principles and values of the Red Cross Movement with a view to identifying the future membership and volunteer based of the RMI Red Cross National Society currently in formation.

This approach will require a slightly longer time period for the assessment and implementation process than other partners, however it considered essential to ensure that the investments of funding and time for this operation and maximized and the results will be more sustainable.

Between 20-27 August, the Watsan/Early Recovery delegate and Admin/Finance officer were conducted the first visit to Namu Atoll. The purpose of this visit was to meet with the community as a preliminary introduction to the Red Cross and to determine the best approach for engaging community members for the household assessments and operation implementation. A testing of the Household Survey form was also undertaken in two communities within the Atoll. The initial findings from this visit include the following:

- The communities of Majkin and Namu are have shown that they are embracing the community based approach of IFRC, demonstrated by their active interest and involvement during this visit and also through participation in other recent projects that have been undertaken, such as a water tank for the school.
- The main priority for the communities of Namu and Majkin, as confirmed during discussions with the Acting Mayor and during the closing meeting in Island Namu, is improving existing household rainwater harvesting system. The second priority is providing communal rainwater storage.
- In Namu Island, there were found to be 51 houses, instead of 28, as indicated by the 2011 census. In future, allowance in the programme should be made for discrepancies with existing data.

3 Capacity building and organizational development

A key objective of this operation is to support the further development of the emerging RMI Red Cross Society, represented by the NVG, which has been involved in all aspects of this plan. The wider IFRC team has participated in the regular meetings of the NVG, which included discussions about the broader International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, as well as the IFRC's structure, systems and disaster management role, as well as the current drought operation. In particular discussions have focused on how the present operation can support the NVG to disseminate information about the Red Cross and develop a future volunteer base.

In this regard, the IFRC and NVG are working on the development of a personnel policy to further promote and clarify the Red Cross Principle of Voluntary Service and to distinguish between different categories of personnel, including paid staff, community mobilisers and volunteers. This is seen as especially important in the Marshallese context where the concept of volunteering without remuneration is not practiced widely by humanitarian and non-government organizations, which could lead to unrealistic expectations on the National Society once it is established.

4 Communications – Advocacy and Public Information

Since their arrival in-country, the IFRC team has been responding to several requests for interviews from local and international media. The office location and visibility materials have also helped to raise public awareness of the newly established presence and a broader communications plan will be developed in the coming weeks.

In particular preparations are underway for the upcoming Pacific Island Forum, which will bring together governments within and beyond the Pacific to discuss key issues affecting the region, among which is the issue of climate change. The IFRC is working on the development of key messages of relevance to National Societies in the region as well as taking the opportunity to generate further awareness about the current RMI drought operation.

Challenges and opportunities

Limited funding for this Appeal remains a major obstacle to the full implementation of this operation. Already the planned activities and locations have been scaled back until such time and further funding is received, requiring the careful management of expectations of key partners and the communities themselves. It is hoped that further funding can be mobilized within the coming weeks.

The most significant operational challenge continues to be logistics. The lack of regular, timely and cost effective transport to and from the outer atolls and islands is a major impediment for assessments and programme implementation. Air transport is often limited to weekly or fortnightly flights, which are often cancelled or diverted without notice. Many locations are only reachable by boat, which can involve several days travel and is highly dependent upon weather conditions. For the delivery of heavy or bulky items such as tanks and other water harvesting materials, the transport possibilities are even further restricted. Moreover, facilities on the outer atoll/islands are also limited, requiring the teams to travel fully self-sufficient (fuel, water and food) for the expected duration of their visit. This also has also impacted on the logistics costs for this operation.

It is hoped these challenges will be mitigated to some extent through close collaboration with government, IOM and commercial businesses to find the most cost effective solutions and to opportunistically pre-position materials in the operational areas whenever possible.

More positively however, the IFRC operation and the resulting increased profile of the Red Cross in RMI have been warmly welcomed by government and the wider public. This presents a unique opportunity to mobilize further support for the establishment of the National Society and generate interest among future members, volunteers and institutional partners. It is hoped the Red Cross Act will be adopted in the near future, paving the way for the longer term future of the Red Cross in RMI.

Contact information

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

- **IFRC Operations Office, Republic of the Marshall Islands**
 - Victoria Bannon, operations manager; mobile: + 692 456 3140, e-mail: victoria.bannon@ifrc.org.
- **IFRC Pacific Regional Office, Fiji**
 - Aurelia Balpe, Head of Regional Office; Mobile: +679 999 2485 , Email: aurelia.balpe@ifrc.org.
 - Ysabeau Rycx, regional disaster management coordinator; Mobile : +679 999 2509, email: ysabeau.rycx@ifrc.org.
- **IFRC Asia Pacific Zone Office, Malaysia**
 - Al Panico, head of operations; phone: +603 9207 5704; email: al.panico@ifrc.org.
 - Christine Strater, operations coordinator; office phone: +603 9207 5729; email: Christine.strater@ifrc.org.



Click here

1. Click [here](#) to return to the title page
-

How we work

All IFRC assistance seeks to adhere to the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) in Disaster Relief and the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (Sphere) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

The IFRC's vision is to inspire, encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities by National Societies, with a view to preventing and alleviating human suffering, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.



The IFRC's work is guided by Strategy 2020 which puts forward three strategic aims:

1. Save lives, protect livelihoods, and strengthen recovery from disaster and crises.
 2. Enable healthy and safe living.
 3. Promote social inclusion and a culture of non-violence and peace.
-