# DREF Operation

## Drought in Republic of Marshall Islands 2024

The barren beach reflects the typical landscape situation of the islands, which heavily relies on rainwater for its daily water needs. Image taken from previous operation. (Photo: IFRC)

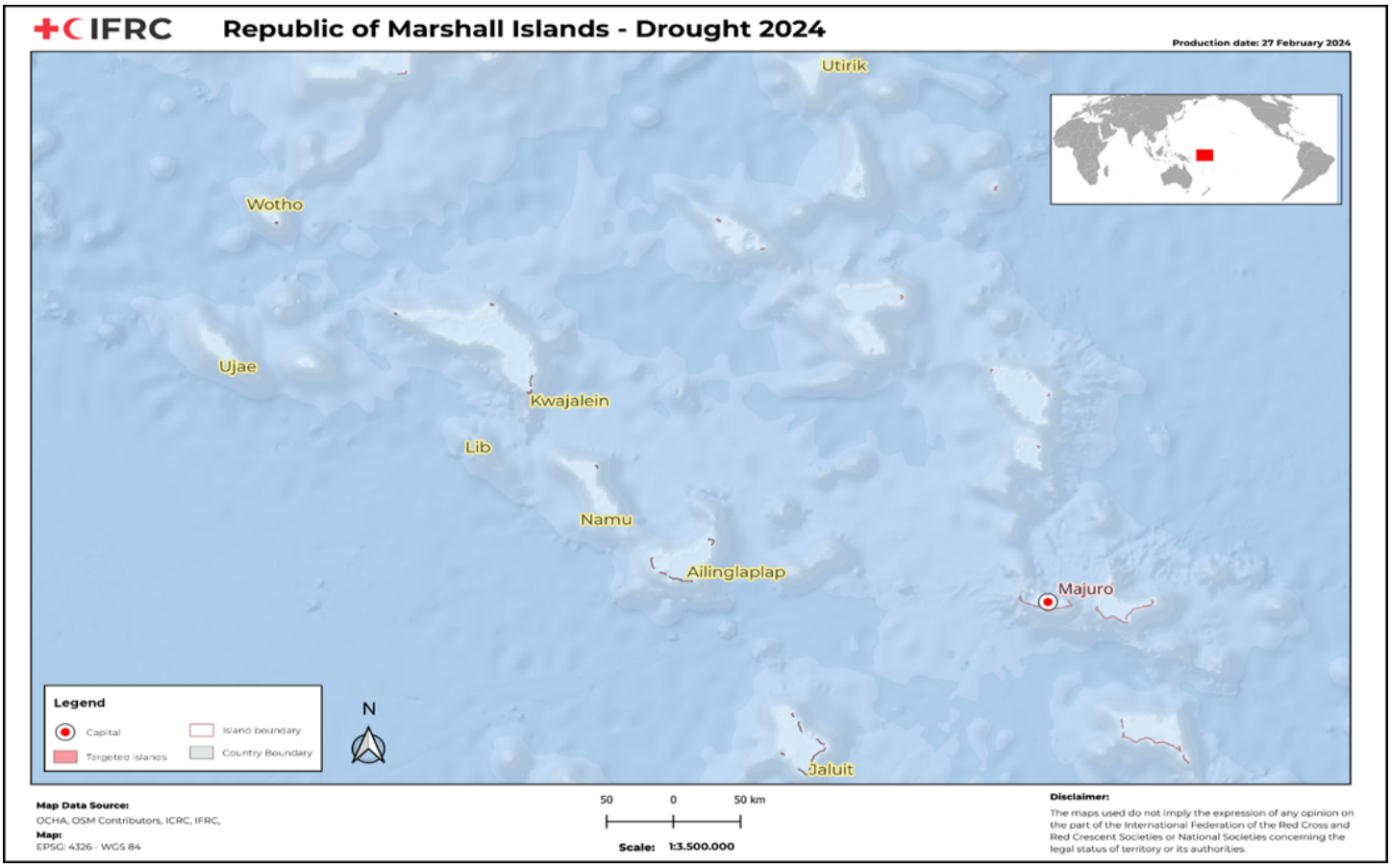
| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Appeal:<br>**MDRMH004** | Country:<br>**Marshall Islands** | Hazard:<br>**Drought** | Type of DREF:<br>**Response** |
| Crisis Category:<br>Yellow | Event Onset:<br>**Slow** | DREF Allocation:<br>**CHF 201,811** | |
| Glide Number:<br>**2024-000016** | People Affected:<br>**13,924 people** | People Targeted:<br>**5,000 people** | |
| Operation Start Date:<br>**2024-03-08** | Operation Timeframe:<br>**5 months** | Operation End Date:<br>**31-08-2024** | DREF Published:<br>**11-03-2024** |

Targeted Areas: **Ratak Chain, Ralik Chain**

# Description of the Event

## Date when the trigger was met

2024-02-27




Map of Marshall Island (Photo: IFRC)

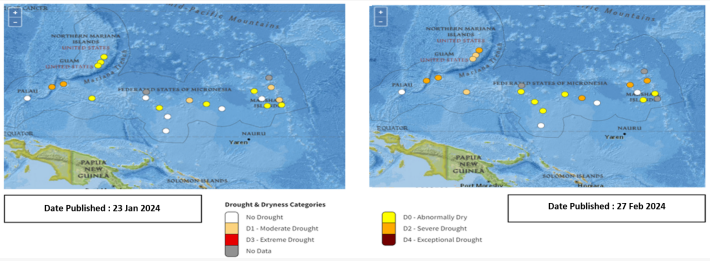
## What happened, where and when?

The Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), located just north of the Equator, encompasses 1,200 islands, islets, and atolls, covering a land area of 180 square kilometres. Like many countries in the region, RMI is increasingly facing challenges from climate change, particularly the threat of natural hazard-related disasters such as droughts.

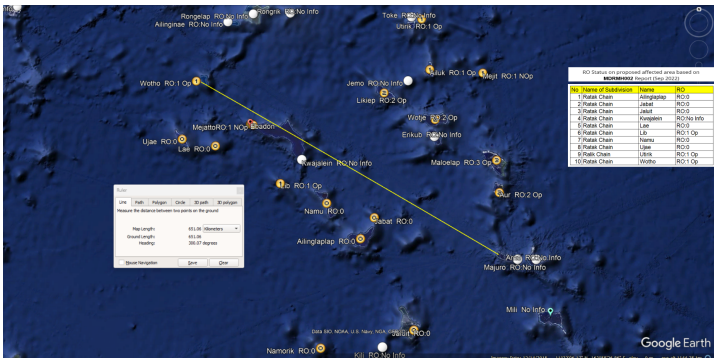
Over last three months, the ten atolls and Islands, home to 13,924 people, have not experienced any rainfall. Within these atolls, the conditions vary, with some islands not receiving rain for the past 3 to 6 months. The latest updates from the US Drought Monitoring Report dated 27 February 2024, indicate a deteriorating drought situation since January 2024. Specifically, the drought category for Kwajalein Atoll and Watje Atoll has escalated abnormally dry to Severe Drought. Additionally, Majuro and Jaluit have been included in abnormally dry category.

A drought monitoring map published on 27 February 2024 by US Drought Monitor can be found here (source : https://www.drought.gov/states/us-affiliated-pacific-islands), which is a follow up development starting from 5 Jan 2024 (https://forecast.weather.gov/product.php?issuedby=GUM&product=DGT&site=nws&format=txt).

Following discussions between the Marshall Islands Red Cross Society (MIRCS) and community leaders on5 March 2024, it has been identified that in Utrik, one out of two Reverse Osmosis (RO) units is currently non-operational, requiring a power supply unit for restoration. Similarly, in Likiep, one unit is down due to inadequate power supply. Presently, residents are compelled to utilize shallow water wells, despite contamination concerns, as alternative water sources are lacking. Concerningly, individuals from Namo and Likiep have opted to migrate to Ebeye and Majuro respectively, primarily due to health-related reasons. MIRCS staff have reported that out of Namo's population, exceeding 500, approximately 200 individuals have relocated to Ebeye.




27 February 2024 US Drought Monitor




Google Earth Map for RO location and distances of location from Majuro

## Scope and Scale

There are early reports of water shortages and no rainfall for a long time from some of the Islands atolls since few weeks. Based on the information received through MRCS coordination with elected leaders of the Islands, following is the list of the Islands that have confirmed the water shortages and some of the Islands have not even received rains over three months. It is estimated that the population affected by the drought within these 10 islands according to the MIRCS is 13,924 people (refer table below).

| No | Islands / Atoll | Population |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Ailinglaplap | 1,175 |
| 2 | Jabat | 75 |
| 3 | Jaliut | 1,409 |
| 4 | Kwajalein | 9,789 |
| 5 | Lae | 133 |
| 6 | Lib | 156 |
| 7 | Namu | 525 |
| 8 | Ujae | 310 |
| 9 | Utirik | 264 |
| 10 | Wotho | 88 |
| Total | | 13,924 |

As informed by the communities leaders, communities' rainwater catchments are now drying up and for some already empty. This will lead to poor household sanitation as people start limiting the usage of water for personal and domestic hygiene and prioritizing water usage for drinking and cooking. The water quality used for cooking and drinking is eventually deteriorating which have lower quality standard as compared to the quality of water available before drought. As experienced in the past, water-borne illnesses and illnesses due poor hygiene will eventually increase.

The most recent forecasts and expert assessment suggest a high likelihood of continued warming in the central-eastern equatorial Pacific for at least the next four overlapping 3-month seasons: November-January, December-February, January-March, and February-April 2024 .(source : https://wmo.int/news/media-centre/el-nino-expected-last-least-until-april-2024 ). This indicates that the effects of the current weather, which have already brought suffering to the population, will continue at least until April 2024.

Though El Nino is likely peak as strong event in Nov 2023-Jan 2024 and the effects expected to be lessened after April 2024, the current impact of the drought condition will continue for several months for the most drought-affected atolls/islands. It will take months for aquifers sources to be refill, quality of water to be improve, and lost crops that water dependent to be replanted and harvested. Worthy of note, although RMI can have a large amount of rainfall annually, storage capacity owned by community and people is limited; thus, supplies from groundwater are limited which may cause by the small size pocket of aquifers. This complicated by the high evaporation rate were estimated only 50 per cent of the rain falling on the island, using Majuro as on example, can be counted to contributes to recharging the freshwater aquifer.

The three-month rainfall outlook (February to April 2024) is very similar to the February outlook, but with the below normal rainfall region being stronger and extending further to northern and central RMI. (Source : https://library.sprep.org/content/cosppac-montlhy-bulletin-january-2024 page 16 Paragraph 2).

The intensity of drought and dryness of Kwajalein and Wotje atoll along with nearby islands is as follows:

- Kwajalein and nearby Islands: Up to 1 inch rainfall was measured through late February in Kwajalein and nearby Islands, and this is

likely to lead to worsening drought, particularly the remote islets of Kwajalein atoll. According to the latest drought statement issued by NOAA, Kwajalein, and nearby Islands are already facing moderate drought intensity.

- Wotje and nearby Islands: Mainly dry trade-wind weather is expected over several weeks. Weather Services have recorded around 0.5 inches of rainfall through late February in Wotje and nearby Islands. The low rainfall is leading to worsening drought conditions. NOAA drought statement has confirmed that the Wotje and nearby Islands are facing the severe drought situation. (https://library.sprep.org/content/cosppac-montlhy-bulletin-january-2024)

The coordination with NOAA following the drought monitoring since 23 Jan 2024 has shown an increase intensity in drought situation. Extreme drought condition has been seen in the Wotje island, particularly on the northern part, and forecast to remain that way.

Based on the Climate Security Risk Assessment on Republic of Marshall Islands by UNDP, The Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), much like other low-lying atoll nations, faces extreme scarcity of freshwater resources. As noted by the World Bank in 2009, the country does not have conventional sources such as rivers, streams, or lakes, and even small surface ponds are exceedingly rare. Consequently, rainwater harvesting is critical for the Marshallese, with a significant 79 per cent of households on neighboring islands depending on it for drinking water, according to a 2020 report by the Pacific Community (SPC). In contrast, only 9 per cent rely on groundwater. The vulnerability of these water supplies is heightened by climatic events like king tides and storm surges that can cause saltwater intrusion into the fragile aquifer, a concern highlighted by the Green Climate Fund.

The island communities which heavily reliant on rainwater for their daily water needs will have a significant impact due to this development. Other water source from shallow well which only hold thin layer of freshwater just a few inches beneath will soon be insufficient due to the rising temperatures and increased usage, in other instances, this freshwater resource gradually becomes saline. In the case of islands affected by recent inundation, the freshwater aquifer has already been compromised, resulting in highly saline underground water which makes the water undrinkable.

The other reliable alternative water source is Reverse Osmosis Desalination water purification units which are owned by some islands as well as the IOM and NDMO. MIRCS drought IFRC-DREF response operation 2022 included a table showing the locations of the reverse osmosis water purification units on various Islands along with the information on their repairs status. In the attached Google map the locations of these RO units are shown. The map location along with the status of the RO units will be used as reference and baseline of identifications. However the table needs to be updated through a detailed assessment.

The Reverse Osmosis Desalination process operates by utilizing pressure to push water molecules through a semipermeable membrane, effectively separating and discarding contaminants, including salt, to produce potable water. This method relies on high-pressure conditions and necessitates periodic replacement of various components, such as the reverse osmosis filter, pump parts, power supply, piping infrastructure, and, for some systems, generator fuel and lubricant. Consequently, these systems require routine operational and maintenance costs. Challenges such as a lack of management knowledge, the corrosive nature of the environment, and insufficient maintenance have rendered numerous units non-functional. Despite the significant maintenance and operational costs associated with RO units, they are deemed a crucial solution for supplying drinking water during the dry season, especially in coral atoll regions.

Lack of water also significantly impacts the livelihoods. The plants dries leaving the island with barren situation. People end up spending more time, efforts and resources on collecting water and can not devote required time on their regular income generation activities. As reported in the Marshall Island Drought DREF 2022 (MDRMH002), much of the land is unsuitable for farming, limiting the types of crops that can be grown. The few crops that can survive in the harsh atoll environment, such as coconut, breadfruit, bananas, and pandanus fruit trees, are likely to wither and become inedible due to the drought and the increasing salinity in the soil (https://www.preventionweb.net/news/sea-level-rise-threatens-existence-marshall-islands). The income of the atoll population heavily relies on fishing and the sale of local produce. According to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification report (https://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/sap/docs/Marshall%20Islands.pdf) the outer islands have even fewer options for livelihood activities, exacerbating the challenges faced by those affected by the drought. This is particularly distressing as people are being diverted from their livelihoods to provide water or are forced to relocate from their island to different ones, as reported by the Marshall Islands Red Cross Society (MIRCS) through coordination with the Sub-Office, North Pacific Country Delegation, Marshall Islands.

## Source Information

| Source Name | Source Link |
|---|---|
| 1. Drought Information Statement Issued by NWS Tiyan, Guam | https://forecast.weather.gov/product.php?issuedby=GUM&product=DGT&site=nws&format=txt |

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|---|---|
| 2. www.worldometers.info | https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/marshall-islands-population/?tblang=persian |
| 3. World Meteorological Organization Weather Climate Water | https://wmo.int/news/media-centre/el-nino-expected-last-least-until-april-2024 |
| 4. COSPPAC Monthly Bulletin January 2024 page 16 Paragraph 2 | https://library.sprep.org/content/cosppac-montlhy-bulletin-january-2024 |
| 5. Drought.gov | https://www.drought.gov/states/us-affiliated-pacific-islands |

# Previous Operations

| | |
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| Has a similar event affected the same area(s) in the last 3 years? | **Yes** |
| Did it affect the same population group? | **Yes** |
| Did the National Society respond? | **Yes** |
| Did the National Society request funding form DREF for that event(s) | **Yes** |
| If yes, please specify which operation | MDRMH002, 2022 |

**If you have answered yes to all questions above, justify why the use of DREF for a recurrent event, or how this event should not be considered recurrent:**

Recurrent event due to climate change which change the weather pattern and increase the sea water level that affecting aquifer of the island.

**Lessons learned:**

1. Some area may lack access to print IEC materials, this IEC material needs to be printed in main island.
2. Establishing the communication strategy is essential before any disaster response, adopting a whole-of-NS approach, and standardizing options into an SOP for disaster response. MIRCS will exploring other way of information dissemination such as mobile phone / internet and radio FM/AM.
3. Notifying and booking community hall / meeting venue for trip to outer island before departure will significantly improve activity efficiency.
4. More effort is needed for digital assessment forms and integrating disaggregated data collection, emphasizing this to all staff and volunteers. The data collection will record GPS coordinate and pictures for better reporting and analysis material.
5. MIRCS will include introduction training for MIRCS personnel to understand for mobile data collection, which include data analysis, and visualization as well as data protection.
6. Key volunteers should be selected and trained to capture videos of all aspects of operations, reducing dependency on service providers.
7. MIRCS will prioritize to involve active volunteer in this project to ensure volunteers capacity building and retention.
8. CEA training and approach need to be refocused, potentially redistributing the responsibility of championing CEA under the communications portfolio and establishing a systematic feedback mechanism.
9. Resolving prior financial management issues is crucial, and the relationship with vendors and suppliers may need attention from senior management.

# Current National Society Actions

## Start date of National Society actions

2024-02-23

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|---|---|
| **Water, Sanitation And Hygiene** | MIRCS with the small grant support of the Japanese Red Cross responded to the situation in Ebeye by conducting water distributions. |
| **Coordination** | MIRCS is actively coordinating with the communities' representatives to seek the information required. MIRCS is an active member of the National Disaster Committee (NDC) and will continue to coordinate its efforts under the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) leadership in partnership with local governments for further logistical support. The government will continue to provide coordination support through its technical WASH Cluster Lead EPA and NDMO in areas the MIRCS needs assistance. |

# IFRC Network Actions Related To The Current Event

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|---|---|
| **Secretariat** | The IFRC, via its Country Cluster Delegation in Suva (CCD Suva), operates a North Pacific Sub Delegation hosted by the Marshall Islands Red Cross. This delegation provides support to three national societies, namely, the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and Palau. The IFRC has developed a five-step methodology for drought risk assessment to assist the national societies in evaluating drought conditions in the Marshall Islands. Staff from the IFRC's Suva and North Pacific offices collaborate closely with the Marshall Islands Red Cross Society to oversee the developing drought scenario and provide technical assistance for crafting operational strategies. In the final quarter of 2023, the IFRC facilitated the Marshall Islands Red Cross Society's (MIRCS) procurement of a small grant from the Japanese Red Cross, aimed at addressing water scarcity on Ebeye and its surrounding islands. The IFRC's longstanding partnership with the national society encompasses various programs and initiatives designed to enhance response capabilities, including the pre-positioning of disaster preparedness supplies and strengthening the resilience of at-risk communities. |
| **Participating National Societies** | Currently, there are no Partner National Societies (PNS) within the country. IFRC is coordinating with the Australian Red Cross in exploring further opportunities to access El Niño Flexi Fund. This collaboration is foreseen to complement the DREF, which is primarily to support on procuring reverse osmosis units, as well as exploring potential medium to long-term solutions. |

# ICRC Actions Related To The Current Event

No ICRC presence in Marshall Island

# Other Actors Actions Related To The Current Event

| | |
|---|---|
| **Government has requested international assistance** | No |
| **National authorities** | Government has deployed the RO units to Lib and Likiep Islands to address water shortages.<br><br>The NDMO continued receiving Drought Situation Overviews (DSOs) from neighboring atolls, and has agreed to operationalize the RO units as an urgent action in response to the intensified drought in the country. In February 2024, the drought is reported to have affected over 4000 people in the 10 RMI-reported atolls/islands. Based on the DSO assessments done by NDMO Outer Islands Focal Points from these atolls, the RMI Government estimates over 10% of the RMI total population (RMI Census 2021) has experienced limited to no rain in the past two to three months. |

| | |
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| UN or other actors | IOM and NDMO are working closely to facilitate the deployment of the RO units to the drought-affected Islands. It has been reported that the technicians are deployed to operationalize the RO units. In 2013, USAID through IOM dispatched ships with 125 cases of water as well as 100 jerry cans. The shipment included one five-gallon jerry can for each of the 64 households and 36 five-gallon jerry cans for the local health clinic. IOM mobilized 13 solar-powered Reverse Osmosis machines that can produce 360 gallons of water per day. |

**Are there major coordination mechanism in place?**

The coordination managed by the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) leadership in partnership with local governments. MIRCS is an active member of the National Disaster Committee (NDC) and continue to coordinate its efforts under this forum. MIRCS will seek assistance and coordination support from EPA, technical WASH Cluster Lead, and NDMO as needed.

# Needs (Gaps) Identified

## Livelihoods And Basic Needs

Severe water shortages are critically impacting food security due to crop failures. The naturally poor fertility of the soil on atolls limits agricultural activities to a few crops like coconuts, breadfruit, bananas, and pandanus fruit trees, which struggle to survive under the extreme conditions of atoll environments. These crops are influenced by the harsh climate, often withering and becoming inedible. The inhabitants of atolls depend significantly on fishing and the sale of locally grown produce for their livelihoods. As these sources become unreliable, there's an increased dependency on canned and imported food items, elevating the risk of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) among the population.

While multipurpose cash grants are recognized as a viable option for emergency response, the readiness of the national society to implement such interventions is crucial for ensuring their effective and timely delivery to those in need. Currently, MIRCS has not achieved this level of cash readiness. Achieving cash readiness requires long-term programmes that would enable MIRCS to effectively deliver interventions like multipurpose cash grants, and cash-for-work assistance, and conduct market assessments and value chain analyses as part of a comprehensive response strategy.

It is important to note that water for consumption, a critical necessity during the drought situation affecting the atolls, is not regarded as a market commodity for Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) intervention on remote islands. This is because the RO Desalination Units operated at the community level primarily serve non-commercial purposes on the remote Islands.

In the outer islands, livelihoods are particularly reliant on crops such as breadfruit and coconut, which are vulnerable to increased groundwater salinity. This salinity, exacerbated by a severe lack of rain and heightened evaporation rates, can lead to the drying out of these vital trees. The effects of the drought on agriculture will become progressively evident as water evaporates and no rainfall occurs, leading to the dropping of leaves. In instances of island inundation, the leaves of the breadfruit trees can fail within just a week. Currently, at the early stages of drought, the full impact on crops is yet to be observed but will likely become more apparent and severe if the conditions persist or deteriorate.

Reports from local government units and the government indicate that some individuals are adopting coping mechanisms, such as migrating to other islands due to the absence of water. This outlined the importance of implementing RO systems and other measures to support reducing negative coping strategies and address the critical need for potable water, thereby supporting the resilience and sustainability of island communities.

## Health

Health consequences arise from the absence of access to safe water. Outbreaks, leading to the proliferation of disease are commonly seen. A lack of safe drinking water and insufficient water for adequate hygiene and sanitation practices can lead to diarrhoeal illness, skin and eye infections/irritations, particularly when hygiene standards decline and access to clean water for consumption and sanitation diminishes. Instances of diarrhoeal and illnesses associated with improper waste management may surge, elevating health hazards and environmental harm. Additionally, the uncertainty and insecurity brought on by drought conditions can cause psychological distress to the affected populations, and caused by drought and the ensuing uncertainty can exacerbate existing mental health issues among affected individuals.

During water shortage, health issues such as outbreaks of conjunctivitis (pink eye) and gastro-intestinal problems (diarrhoeal illness) are common in the atolls and islands in RMI. These become more prevalent and can be increasingly serious at times of water scarcity. Dehydration is a major a problem and can be especially dangerous for those who are very young, very old or who have existing medical conditions. Access to healthcare is limited in many of the affected atolls and islands, further exacerbating the problem during drought periods.

## Water, Sanitation And Hygiene

The immediate and paramount need in the affected regions is access to potable and safe water for consumption and domestic use and ensuring adequate hygiene and sanitation. This situation is exacerbated by the diminishing rainwater collected in storage tanks, which traditionally serve as the primary freshwater source for people living on atolls and islands. Additionally, the underground freshwater lens, already limited, is becoming saline or brackish, with no immediate prospects for recovery due to the lack of expected substantial rainfall.

As the drought situation evolves, identifying specific needs and gaps has become critical. A forthcoming detailed assessment, as part of the DREF intervention, aims to assess these areas more clearly, especially noting that the severity of drought extends to the outer islands.

A gap has been identified in the technical capacity necessary to adequately assess and respond to the water scarcity issue. The Red Cross Red Crescent (RCRC) plans to deploy technical experts to conduct assessments and to provide training for volunteers in Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) practices. This training is essential to support the response capabilities of volunteers on the ground.

Furthermore, the urgent need to repair and maintain RO units has been recognized as a crucial step in addressing the immediate water scarcity. Previous responses, including the deployment of RO units by USAID through IOM, highlight the importance of functional water purification systems to mitigate the effects of drought.

The NDMO is actively encouraging to practice of water conservation among the public in response to the critical water shortage. This includes the upkeep and efficient use of water harvesting systems and the careful rationing of the limited rainfall, underlining the importance of a coordinated approach to manage the water crisis effectively.

There is an urgent requirement for access to clean water, the need for technical expertise and volunteer training in WASH practices, and the importance of community engagement in water conservation efforts to navigate through the current drought challenges.

## Protection, Gender And Inclusion

In the context of drought situations, integrating PGI considerations is crucial for many reasons. Drought exacerbates existing vulnerabilities, disproportionately affecting women, children, elderly and marginalized groups. Integrating PGI helps to identify and address these vulnerabilities effectively.

Women and marginalized groups often face barriers to accessing essential resources during drought. By considering gender dynamics and ensuring inclusivity in assessments, communities can build resilience more effectively. PGI integration in WASH and community health intervention is needed along with the advocacy for accessible and safe services ensuring that the needs of all affected population are considered in the planning and services are offered in a dignified manner.

## Community Engagement And Accountability

CEA is an approach which the Red Cross uses to empower the communities to be involved and engaged to increase the accountability of the project implementation. CEA will be mainstreamed across the different phases of the project, and it helps to create more community ownership, trust, and accountability through transparent and participative community needs and gaps analysis and through transparent beneficiary targeting and registration for the target population.

Available Communication channels: MIRCS benefits from its experience in communication, with backing from ICRC and the IFRC communications. The National Society has invested in training communication volunteers to assist in gathering evidence and narratives from the response. Internet and phone connectivity, including 2G and 4G networks, are readily available on the main island. However, based on the experience from 2022 drought response, in Kwajalein and Ebeye, where most of the outer islands are affected by drought, internet access is limited, and the 2G network is sporadic.

## Any identified gaps/limitations in the assessment

Addressing the water shortages in the Marshall Islands involves overcoming significant transportation challenges, particularly in deploying people and equipment necessary for training as well as repairing and installing additional reverse osmosis units. The logistics of navigating the open ocean to reach these islands are often faced with difficulties. Unpredictable weather conditions, the high cost of fuel, and the inherent risks of traveling in small boats further contribute to the challenges. Moreover, the timing for such trips is critically constrained by tidal patterns, requiring precise planning to ensure safe passage through the reefs both to and from the islands within a limited timeframe.

Compounding these logistical hurdles is the limitation in data availability regarding the populations of the affected islands. Accurate and up-to-date information on the number of residents needing assistance is crucial for effective planning and deployment of resources. However, this data is often scarce or outdated, posing further challenges to the accurate assessment of needs and the efficient allocation of resources. This combination of transportation, access challenges, and limited data availability contributes to the complexity of responding to the situation in the Marshall Islands, highlighting the need for innovative solutions and coordinated efforts to address these barriers.

# Operational Strategy

## Overall objective of the operation

The operation aims to support 5,000 people affected by the drought, focusing on providing access to clean water, water storage solutions, and conducting health and hygiene awareness and training in selected communities across Ailinglaplap, Jabat, Jaliut, Kwajalein, Lae, Lib, Namu, Ujae, Utirik, and Wotho over five months.

To effectively meet the needs of the targeted populations, the operation plans to roll out several key activities and supports:

- Develop and adapt a needs assessment tool tailored to the specific requirements of the drought response efforts throughout this operation.
- Leveraging on existing community and partners' Reverse Osmosis water purification systems to ensure the provision of safe drinking water.
- Ensuring the efficient distribution of drinking water to targeted areas.
- Providing essential WASH items to targeted community.
- Enhancing community awareness on hygiene and health practices to mitigate drought-related health risks.
- Strengthening the skills and technical knowledge of volunteers through ongoing training and support.

By implementing these measures, the operation aims to significantly improve access to clean water for the targeted populations, enhancing community and individual health practices, and supporting the operational capacity of MIRCS staff and volunteers in implementing the operation. The timeframe has been considered, taking into account the logistical considerations of procurement, the geographical proximity of the islands which may affect the required timeframe for response, and the need for efficient coordination and consolidation of reports.

## Operation strategy rationale

Addressing the water shortage is paramount, requiring a comprehensive approach. Evaluation and repair of existing RO units on affected islands will be prioritized, with damaged parts replaced to restore functionality. The National Society will coordinate with partners to deploy RO water purification units, ensuring clean water reaches impacted communities. Procurement of additional water purification units is underway with donor support. This DREF operation will fund operations, consumables, and maintenance for RO units during the response phase. In cases of critical necessity, the National Society will procure packaged water for immediate distribution, providing temporary relief while long-term solutions are sought.

In previous instances of water scarcity, the prevalence of diseases like pink eye and diarrhoeal surged. MIRCS, working in partnership with the Ministry of Health, will distribute vital information on disease prevention and control. Leveraging diverse media channels, MIRCS will ensure these key messages reach vulnerable communities effectively.

Ensuring household water treatment and safe storage practices is paramount, particularly during periods of water scarcity within communities. MIRCS will actively engage with vulnerable communities, advocating for the enhancement and preservation of water quality through a range of methods and techniques. Additionally, raising awareness about good hygiene practices will be a significant focus of our outreach efforts.

CEA integration will be pivotal in the interventions outlined above. A diverse communication strategy will be used, including using variety of communication channels to distribute awareness messages, ease hardships, and empower communities to confront future challenges effectively.

The national society will mobilize and distribute jerry cans from its disaster preparedness stocks. These jerry cans will enable the safe transportation of water in small quantities. The IFRC-DREF operation will replenish these jerry cans as needed.

The National Society will prioritize the visibility and safety of its staff and volunteers throughout the operation. Red Cross visibility T-shirts or vests, as well as life jackets, will be procured and supplied to the staff and volunteers through the IFRC-DREF.

# Targeting Strategy

## Who will be targeted through this operation?

The targeting strategy for this operation is designed to prioritize the needs of the most vulnerable populations within drought-affected areas, ensuring equitable access to resources and support. The focus is on residents of identified atolls and islands that are experiencing water shortages, based on the field reports and confirmed through engagements with local elected representatives. Special attention is given to vulnerable groups such as women, children, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities, who face heightened risks including health issues, food insecurity, and limited access to clean water due to the drought. This approach is designed to reduce the direct effects of drought on health and well-being and tackle the inequalities that increase vulnerability to environmental challenges. This includes communities on several islands in the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) that have been hit by winter storms, leading to even more water shortages because their main sources of freshwater underground have been damaged. This strategy outlined the operation's focus on reaching and supporting those who need it the most, addressing the unique challenges they face due to the drought and recent storms.

This will further be identified through the detailed assessment.

## Explain the selection criteria for the targeted population

The rationale for targeting specific groups in this operation is based on the need to support those most at risk from environmental crises, focusing on women, children, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities due to their increased vulnerability. the response activities will be designed to provide support to overall communities while also including other vulnerable groups such as Women and children, who generally face heightened challenges during droughts, affecting safety, hygiene, and health. The elderly and those with disabilities may encounter barriers in accessing resources. Targeting these groups ensures relief efforts are equitable and tailored, aiming to address specific needs and vulnerabilities, thereby enhancing the intervention's effectiveness. By prioritizing these vulnerable populations, the strategy aims not only to provide immediate aid but also to build resilience and improve long-term recovery prospects, ensuring all individuals have access to necessary support and are equipped to withstand future environmental challenges.

# Total Targeted Population

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Women | 2,450 | Rural | 21.5% |
| Girls (under 18) | 922 | Urban | 78.5% |
| Men | 2,550 | People with disabilities (estimated) | - |
| Boys (under 18) | 957 | | |
| Total targeted population | 5,000 | | |

# Risk and Security Considerations

**Please indicate about potential operation risk for this operations and mitigation actions**

| Risk | Mitigation action |
|---|---|

| | |
|---|---|
| In Pacific countries like RMI, there are limited economic resources, infrastructure, and capacity for disaster preparedness, response, and recovery. Working within resource-constrained environments may require innovative approaches, collaboration with local partners, and strategic resource allocation. | Prioritize capacity-building initiatives to strengthen volunteers' capacities, local institutions, and community resilience.<br>Foster partnerships with governments, INGOs, NGOs, UN, and private sector entities to leverage resources and expertise.<br>Innovate and adapt programming to maximize impact with limited resources. |
| The Marshall Islands is prone to natural disasters such as drought, Winter storm surge, and King tides. These events can cause significant damage to infrastructure, disrupt operations, and pose risks to the safety and well-being of staff, volunteers, and communities. | Establish communication protocols to alert staff and communities of impending disasters.<br>Collaborate with local authorities and communities to strengthen the preparedness of staff, volunteers, and communities engaged in the operation. |
| Many islands of RMI are remote and isolated, making logistics and transportation challenging. Limited access to resources, medical facilities, and communication infrastructure can impact the effectiveness and efficiency of operations. | Utilize the existing partnerships with government departments and local authorities to identify effective transportation and logistics solutions. |

### Please indicate any security and safety concerns for this operation

Sea transportation will have direct risk for the safety of equipment and personnel from different aspects; weather, vessel, in adequate safety equipment, and lack of security regulation for the travel

Sea transportation inter island must follow proper procedures including schedules, training on wearing the proper equipment, volunteer insurance, limit of boat passenger and observe the weather

Water scare may lead people to take unpredicted actions with the intention to secure water for their family. Discussion with community leader for the security situation before visiting the island.

The National Society's security framework will apply throughout the duration of the operation to their staff and volunteers. In case of need for deployment for personnel under IFRC security's responsibility, including surge support and integrated PNS, the existing IFRC country security framework will apply, and rapid security assessments and analysis will be carried out. All IFRC must, and RC/RC staff and volunteers are encouraged, to complete the IFRC Stay Safe 2.0 e-learning courses. Staff and volunteers to be aware of the security status and briefed on reactions in emergency.

**Has the child safeguarding risk analysis assessment been completed?**

No

# Planned Intervention

## Health

**Budget:** CHF 13,845
**Targeted Persons:** 5,000

### Indicators

| Title | Target |
|---|---|
| # of people reached with health promotion as a response to an emergency by community-based volunteers | 5,000 |

## Priority Actions

1. Conduct health related assessment
2. Disseminate key messaging to increase awareness.

# Water, Sanitation And Hygiene

**Budget:** CHF 118,726
**Targeted Persons:** 5,000

## Indicators

| Title | Target |
|---|---|
| # of target communities / sites with WASH situation assessments conducted at least once | 2 |
| # of people reached by WASH assistance | 5,000 |
| # of WASH situation assessments conducted in total | 1 |
| # of people who have been supplied by RCRC with an improved protected source of drinking water (according to WHO and Sphere standards | 5,000 |
| # of people (and households) reached by hygiene promotion activities in the response | 5,000 |

## Priority Actions

1. Evaluate and Repair Existing RO Units:
- Assess the condition of RO units on affected islands including information of the operators.
- Prioritize repair or replacement of damaged parts to restore functionality.
- Ensure operational readiness of existing RO units
- Provide training for mobile / portable RO team for RO unit and maintenance.

2. Coordinate Deployment of RO Water Purification Units:
- Collaborate with partners to deploy RO water purification units.
- Monitor and adjust deployment as needed based on community needs.

3. RO Unit Operations:
- Support operations, consumables, and maintenance for RO units.

4. Procure Packaged Water for Immediate Distribution:
- Assess areas with critical water shortages where RO units may not meet immediate needs.
- Procure packaged water for immediate distribution to affected communities.
- Organize distribution logistics to ensure timely delivery

5. Assess the Current Situation of household water treatment and safe storage:
- Evaluate the extent of the water shortage and its impact on communities.
- Assess existing household water treatment and storage practices, as well as hygiene practices, within vulnerable communities.

6. Develop educational materials on HHWT:
- Create educational materials (such as leaflets, posters, and audio/video messages) explaining the importance of household water treatment and safe storage by adapting IFRC HHWT manual.
- Include information on various methods and practices for improving and preserving water quality.
- Emphasize the link between water quality and good hygiene practices.

7. Conduct Outreach Activities:
- Organize community meetings, and outreach events to disseminate educational materials and messages.

- Use various communication channels, including radio broadcasts, and social media to reach a wider audience.
- Tailor messaging to address specific concerns and cultural considerations as needed.

8. Promote Good Hygiene Practices:
- Integrate messages about good hygiene practices (such as handwashing with soap) into the awareness campaign.
- Highlight the importance of hygiene in preventing waterborne diseases and maintaining overall health.
- Provide training to volunteers to ensure effective delivery of messages

9. Distribution of Jerry cans and replenishment:
- Organize distribution efforts to deliver the jerry cans to the identified communities in need, prioritizing areas with the most critical water shortages.
- Replenish jerry can stocks as needed to maintain readiness for future water scarcity situations.

## Protection, Gender And Inclusion

**Budget:** CHF 0
**Targeted Persons:** -

### Indicators

| Title | Target |
|---|---|
| # of volunteers trained/oriented on PGI min standards | 30 |
| # of child safeguarding risk analysis assessment conducted | 1 |

### Priority Actions

1. Ensure inclusion of PGI into multisectoral assessment and sectoral implementation.
2. Collect SADD data for the operation for comprehensive analysis (aligning min PGI min standard)

## Community Engagement And Accountability

**Budget:** CHF 7,455
**Targeted Persons:** 5,000

### Indicators

| Title | Target |
|---|---|
| # communication strategy tailored to cultural norms and preferences | 1 |
| # of feedback mechanisms established | 1 |
| # and percentage of complaints or feedback about the RCRC operation which receive a response through established community communication | 50 |

### Priority Actions

1. Development of communication strategies:
- Develop tailored communication strategies that resonate with the cultural norms, preferences, and languages of the target communities.
- Identify and utilize appropriate communication channels such as community meetings, radio broadcasts, social media, and mobile messaging platforms.

2. Facilitation of two-way communication:

- Encourage open dialogue and feedback mechanisms to allow community members to voice their concerns, suggestions, and feedback.
- Establish channels for receiving and responding to community inquiries, complaints, and suggestions in a timely manner.

## Secretariat Services

**Budget:** CHF 37,488
**Targeted Persons:** 100

### Indicators

| Title | Target |
|---|---|
| # of rapid response personnel support the operation | 2 |
| % of financial reporting respecting IFRC procedures | 100 |
| # of surge missions or deployments | 2 |
| % of volunteers involved in response who are insured | 100 |

### Priority Actions

1. Plan the deployment of the PMER and WASH technical surge personnel, including determining roles, responsibilities, and logistics for deployment to the Marshall Islands.
2. Deployment the surge personnel to provide on-the-ground technical assistance and support the implementation of the operation.
3. Guide and monitor the surge team members to ensure that the deployment objectives are met.
4. Provide technical support to ensure IFRC financial reporting standards and procedures are met.

## National Society Strengthening

**Budget:** CHF 24,297
**Targeted Persons:** 100

### Indicators

| Title | Target |
|---|---|
| # of volunteers involved in the response operation that have increased their skills in response and management of operations | 30 |
| # of volunteers provided with equipment for protection, safety and support (e.g. PSS) appropriate to the emergency | 30 |
| # of lessons learned workshop conducted | 1 |

### Priority Actions

1. Ensure red cross personnel visibility is in place at all times during response.
2. Ensure red cross personnel safety and well-being during deployment.
3. Procure RC visibility (-shirts/vests and life jackets).
4. Ensure volunteers insurance is in place.
5. Conduct lesson learnt for the operation and provide recommendation to improve.

# About Support Services

## How many staff and volunteers will be involved in this operation. Briefly describe their role.

The national Society has seven staff and a few volunteers who are manning the office on day-to-day basis will be engaged in this operation. The 93 volunteers of the national society will join this operation at various stages to implement activities. The national society has three branches in Wotje, Jaluit and Ebeye. These branches will coordinate the implementation of the operation on the main Islands as well as on the nearby Islands.

## Will surge personnel be deployed? Please provide the role profile needed.

Yes, WASH and PMER surge coordinators will be deployed who will be responsible for providing the technical support for the operation as well as training and orienting MIRCS staff and volunteers. The initial deployment for these two profiles are targeted for a duration of three months to provide technical assistance to the Marshall Islands Red Cross Society in implementing the DREF operation.

## If there is procurement, will it be done by National Society or IFRC?

Procurement for distribution is currently being planned taking into consideration on the lead time and availabilities in IFRC warehouse in Kuala Lumpur and Brisbane. Based on items and availabilities in the country, NS will take the lead for local procurement in close coordination with the IFRC to ensure compliance. Currently, the NS is mobilising existing number of 640 jerry can stocks for the operation on need basis.

## How will this operation be monitored?

Given the logistical challenges, MIRCS will have to rely on the verbal communication over phone to coordinate and monitor activities. The staff from headquarters will be deployed to the field as and when needed while the activities from the branches will be coordinated by the branch coordinators. Various evidences of the implementation such as pictures and reports will be used to monitor the progress.

IFRC will assist the national society through the deployment of WASH and PMER surge to provide technical support on ground and also to monitor the progress and quality of the intervention.

## Please briefly explain the National Societies communication strategy for this operation

In liaison with MIRCS, IFRC will provide technical support towards the communication of this operation. The MIRCS comms person will cover the operation through social media presence in different platforms, interviews, and target population stories. The coordination platform will also be used for frequent communication internally and externally with partners involved.

# Budget Overview

IFRC

## DREF OPERATION

**MDRMH004 - Marshall Islands Red Cross Society**
**Marshall Islands Drought Relief Operation**

Operating Budget

| | |
|---|---|
| **Planned Operations** | **140,026** |
| Shelter and Basic Household Items | 0 |
| Livelihoods | 0 |
| Multi-purpose Cash | 0 |
| Health | 13,845 |
| Water, Sanitation & Hygiene | 118,726 |
| Protection, Gender and Inclusion | 0 |
| Education | 0 |
| Migration | 0 |
| Risk Reduction, Climate Adaptation and Recovery | 0 |
| Community Engagement and Accountability | 7,455 |
| Environmental Sustainability | 0 |
| **Enabling Approaches** | **61,784** |
| Coordination and Partnerships | 0 |
| Secretariat Services | 37,488 |
| National Society Strengthening | 24,296 |
| **TOTAL BUDGET** | **201,811** |

*all amounts in Swiss Francs (CHF)*



Click here to download the budget file

# Contact Information

For further information, specifically related to this operation please contact:


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Click here for the reference