Namdrik Atoll Development Association (NADA)

PROJECT SNAPSHOT

GRANT TITLE
Namdrik Atoll Pearl Farming: Linking Adaptation and Livelihoods

OBJECTIVES
To reduce the vulnerabilities associated with climate change faced by the Namdrik Atoll's coastal community through income-generating, sustainable small-scale aquaculture ventures; lagoon management capacity building; and resiliency improvement.

LOCATION
Namdrik Atoll, Marshall Islands

GRANT AMOUNT
$375,980

DURATION
24 months

KEY PARTNERS
- Namdrik Atoll Local Resource Committee
- Namdrik Atoll Local Government and Leadership
- College of the Marshall Islands
- University of Hawaii at Hilo
- Marine and Environmental Research Institute of Pohnpei
- Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority
- Marshall Islands Conservation Society
- RMI Coastal Management Advisory Council

PROJECT SUMMARY

Namdrik Atoll, located 270 miles from the capital island of Majuro, faces challenges common to remote island communities. Its population of 700 people depends heavily on imported goods, while export potential is limited due to the high costs of transport and shipping. Low-lying atolls such as Namdrik are also the most vulnerable areas to the impacts of climate change. According to the IPCC, rates of sea level rise in the Western Pacific are three times higher than the global average of 3 mm per year. Seawater intrusion in Namdrik has already contaminated groundwater tables and threatened production of its most important agricultural crops, bananas and taro.

With a grant from the Pacific-American Climate Fund, the Namdrik Atoll Development Association (NADA) will expand pearl farming as a sustainable alternative livelihood for the Namdrik community. Working with an existing pearl farm, NADA will increase oyster capacity from 3,000 to 20,000 seeded pearl oysters, the minimum amount required to generate positive cash flow over five years.
NADA will also train farm workers and other community members to produce high-grade pearls which take at least four years of precision culture. The income from expanded pearl farming will be managed by a community pearl farming cooperative and used to support reinvestment or other climate change adaptation initiatives. Women in Namdrik will be involved in all aspects of pearl farming activities, as well as in jewelry manufacture and pearl sales. Further, NADA will align farming efforts with a plan to protect the lagoon ecosystem, which is a Wetland of International Importance under the RAMSAR Convention. As a result of this USAID support, Namdrik will become more resilient to climate change impacts with improved alternative livelihoods, lagoon conservation, and community governance.

**PROJECT ACTIVITIES**

1. Train personnel on methods to collect pearl oyster juveniles (also called “spat”).
2. Harvest and transfer spat into nurseries.
3. Increase the number of pearl oysters being grafted each year to 20,000.
4. Build capacity of local residents to graft pearl oysters, make jewelry, and conduct pearl sales.
5. Develop a marketing plan to expand international market for Namdrik pearls.
6. Train community members on pearl farm management.
7. Revise lagoon resource management plan.
8. Raise awareness on climate change impacts facing Namdrik and the potential adaptation options.

**EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

1. Increased the pearl farm’s operational efficiency and sustainability.
2. Strengthened livelihoods and increased capacity of local community to adapt to the impacts of climate change.
3. Improved the technical and governance capacity of the community.
4. Lagoon resource management plan that more fully encompasses pearl farming activities.