



SPC
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Community

Addressing water sector climate change vulnerabilities in the outlying island states of Palau



Focusing on the specific water issues experienced by residents in remote island communities – climate change adaptation in Palau.

Project amount

€ 0.5 million (approx. USD 0.66 million) funded by the European Union

Project period

31 July 2013 to 30 June 2015

Implementing agencies

Office of Environmental Response and Coordination; Palau Public Utilities Corporation Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC)

Partners

Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (Water for Life project)

Project synopsis

The 'Addressing water sector climate change vulnerabilities in the outlying island states of Palau' project is improving water infrastructure in Palau's five outlying island states - Angaur, Hatohebei, Kayangel, Peleliu and Sonsorol. Rainwater catchment systems in Hatohebei and Sonsorol are being repaired and replaced, and groundwater pumping, storage and distribution systems will be upgraded in the other three states. The project is also conducting hydrological assessments; expanding water systems monitoring and maintenance regimes; and providing water conservation education.

How does this project assist climate change adaptation in Palau?

Water security has been identified as a key challenge for Palau. This is a conclusion drawn from vulnerability and adaptation assessments conducted in-country by both government and non-governmental organisations. The problem is considered particularly acute among the more remote outlying islands.

Climate change is exacerbating problems in the water sector because (i) air temperatures are projected to continue rising, affecting evaporation rates and the availability of good quality water; (ii) changes in precipitation and extreme weather events will contribute to water scarcity; and (iii) the sea level will continue to rise, which can further stress the availability and quality of groundwater supply in small, low-lying islands.

Responding to the priority needs identified in Palau, this project is improving water infrastructure and increasing the resilience of Palauan communities to negative climate change impacts.

Key highlights of the project

- It is the first national project to address water issues among all of the outlying island states.
- Project components focus on the specific water issues experienced by residents in

remote island communities. There has been a need for flexibility as the project progresses. For example, Typhoon Haiyan in 2013 affected Kayangel, Palau's northernmost island state, creating the need to reassess and redesign local project implementation.

- The Palau Public Utilities Corporation infrastructure has been significantly enhanced. For example, major leak detection and repairs have taken place on Peleliu and Angaur; an emergency back-up well is being operationalised in Angaur; and improvements have been made to household and communal water systems in other islands.
- Innovative partnerships have addressed the challenges faced in implementing project activities in extremely remote communities. For example, the project partnered with the US Civil Action Team to repair the water cisterns in Sonsorol.
- Extraction of water from the underground freshwater lens is an important part of the water supply for these outlying island states, but is generally not suitable to drink. The project is contributing to the understanding of sustainable extraction rates from these lenses.

The project's focus was determined by the Government of Palau and included widespread consultation. Palau is responsible for the project's implementation.



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The Global Climate Change Alliance: Pacific Small Island States project in Palau



Palau is vulnerable to extreme events such as typhoons (left). Partnerships in Palau are helping build climate change resilience (right).

The Global Climate Change Alliance: Pacific Small Island States (GCCA: PSIS) project is a four-year € 11.4 million initiative funded by the European Union. It is implemented regionally by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community and involves national climate change adaptation projects in nine Pacific Island countries – Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Tonga and Tuvalu.

The overall objective of the GCCA: PSIS project is to support the governments of the nine Pacific small island states in their efforts to tackle the adverse effects of climate change.

The Government of Palau is implementing a national climate change adaptation project (see reverse side for more information) with € 0.5 million provided by the European Union.

In addition to this project funding, Palau can access specialised technical assistance and training provided through a pooled resource allocation in the regional GCCA: PSIS umbrella project. This mechanism is providing the following in Palau.

Training

Country participation in training for:

- proposal preparation, project design and budgeting, monitoring and evaluation;
- media training, conveying information on climate change to the public using radio, television and print media; and
- utilising the Pacific Climate Change Portal, a regional gateway to information about climate change and related activities in the Pacific region.

National climate change mainstreaming

Mainstreaming refers to the process of embedding climate change planning in the spectrum of government ministries, sectoral plans and activities. Relevant GCCA: PSIS activities are given below.

- A review of the extent of climate change mainstreaming in national strategic plans, policies and budgets in Palau. This was conducted to inform an assessment of the country's readiness to receive international climate finance through budget support mechanisms.

- Providing technical assistance to the National Development Bank of Palau to design, promote and trial a water conservation incentives programme. Subsidies will be offered through home and commercial loan packages to encourage new construction, building renovation, and improvement projects to incorporate water catchment and conservation measures. The incentives programme is being modelled on a successful energy efficiency subsidy programme.
- Assisting Palau to develop a national climate change policy framework supported by a prioritised action plan. The policy work is progressing through consultations with all societal sectors to build a coordinated national framework through which strategic and prioritised actions can be taken to build the resilience of Palau to climate change.

Documentary

A short video on lessons learnt about climate change adaptation in Palau will be available in 2015.