

REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS – DROUGHT

FACT SHEET #1, FISCAL YEAR (FY) 2013

MAY 16, 2013

NUMBERS AT A GLANCE

5,756

People living in drought-affected atolls
GoRMI – May 2013

11,000

People experiencing less severe drought conditions
GoRMI – May 2013

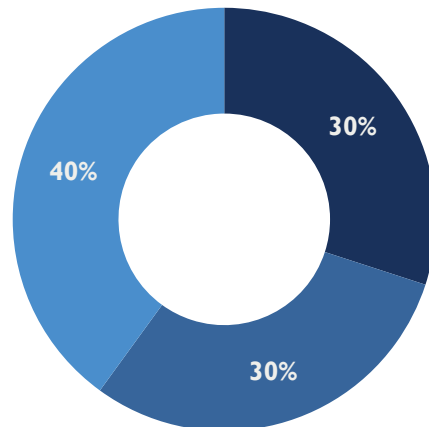
69,747

Estimated total population of the RMI
USG – 2013

1,200

Islands, islets, and atolls that compose the RMI
U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs – May 2013

USAID/OFDA¹ FUNDING BY SECTOR IN FY 2013



- Water, Sanitation, & Hygiene (WASH)
- Logistics & Relief Commodities
- Preliminary Damage Assessment Support Costs

HIGHLIGHTS

- Prolonged dry weather has triggered significant drought in northern Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI)
- A U.S. Government (USG) preliminary damage assessment team is scheduled to begin assessments of drought-affected areas in the coming days
- To date, USAID has responded with reverse osmosis machines and other pre-positioned relief supplies

HUMANITARIAN FUNDING TO THE RMI TO DATE IN FY 2013

USAID/OFDA² \$166,655

\$166,655

TOTAL USAID ASSISTANCE TO RMI

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

- Drier-than-normal weather conditions since late 2012 have resulted in severe drought conditions in the RMI, particularly in the northern atolls, and led to critical shortages of safe drinking water and damages to food crops. On April 19, the Government of RMI (GoRMI) declared a state of emergency for the drought.
- On May 3, U.S. Ambassador Thomas Hart Armbruster issued a disaster declaration due to humanitarian needs resulting from the drought in the RMI. In response, USAID/OFDA provided an initial \$100,000 through USAID/Philippines to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to distribute emergency relief commodities, such as water containers and hygiene kits, from a USAID-funded warehouse in the RMI capital of Majuro.
- The GoRMI elevated the April state of emergency to a state of disaster on May 7 due to deteriorating conditions related to the drought in the northern atolls. A state of disaster signifies imminent threat to life, according to GoRMI authorities.
- On May 9, the GoRMI requested that the USG conduct a preliminary damage assessment (PDA). The USG interagency team, along with GoRMI counterparts, plan to begin assessments of drought-affected areas in the coming days.

¹ USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA)

² This funding figure does not include the cost of USAID/OFDA pre-positioned relief commodities distributed in response to RMI drought conditions.

CURRENT SITUATION

- On May 14, a drought information statement issued by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) National Weather Service stated that very dry weather will likely persist across the RMI's northern atolls into at least early June. Atolls from Majuro southward will receive sufficient rainfall, according to the statement.
 - Months of drought conditions have depleted water tanks and rendered groundwater unsafe for human consumption due to high salinity levels in several affected atolls, according to the GoRMI. In addition to critical shortages of safe drinking water, the drought has damaged food crops, such as banana, taro, and breadfruit, and local populations are relying on fish, crabs, and other coastal food resources. The GoRMI has also noted an increase in the reported cases of waterborne diseases, including diarrhea. Several months of normal rainfall are needed to replenish groundwater, dilute salty aquifers, and restore food crops.
 - Drought-affected northern areas of RMI include Lib and Mejit islands and Ailinglaplap, Ailuk, Aur, Enewetak, Lae, Likiep, Kwajalein, Maloelap, Namu, Rongelap, Ujae, Utirik, Wotho, and Wotje atolls, according to GoRMI.
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GoRMI RESPONSE

- Following the April 19 GoRMI state of emergency declaration, the U.S. Embassy in Majuro approved the RMI government's request to withdraw \$100,000 from the Disaster Assistance Emergency Fund (DAEF). The GoRMI has been using the funding to assess and address drought conditions in northern atolls. [Note: Under the Compact of Free Association, the GoRMI is authorized to utilize the DAEF, which is jointly funded by the USG and GoRMI, during a disaster if a state of emergency is declared. End Note.]
 - In late April and early May, the GoRMI National Disaster Committee organized three assessment trips to drought-affected areas of northern RMI. Assessment team members included GoRMI technical specialists, such as reverse osmosis technicians, agricultural specialists, and water monitoring and quality experts. The assessment teams have reported that most reverse osmosis machines present in affected areas are operating well below maximum capacity or are inoperable due to a lack of required spare parts and maintenance.
 - In recent weeks, the GoRMI has transported cases of safe drinking water and food baskets, which include rice, flour, canned meats, canned vegetables, and oil, to affected atolls via two government ships. Several privately owned vessels with on-board reverse osmosis units also have been deployed to affected areas.
 - On May 9, the GoRMI established an Emergency Operations Center to coordinate GoRMI and international response activities.
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USG RESPONSE

Emergency Relief Commodities

- With the \$100,000 from USAID/OFDA, IOM organized the delivery of emergency relief commodities from a USAID-funded warehouse in Majuro during the week of May 8, complementing ongoing GoRMI activities conducted with DAEF funds. Two GoRMI ships transported the relief supplies, including hygiene kits and water containers filled with safe drinking water, to nearly 570 households in the most-affected communities. With USAID/OFDA support, IOM is continuing deliveries of safe drinking water to affected areas.
- In late 2012 and early 2013, as signs of the worsening drought-caused conditions emerged, USAID/OFDA provided seven reverse osmosis machines to the GoRMI to enhance drought response capability in the country. The machines, which can each produce between 250 and 350 gallons of safe drinking water per day, are operational in Lib and Mejit islands and Ailuk, Lae, Likiep, Namu, and Wotho atolls. An additional 10 USAID/OFDA-provided mobile reverse osmosis units capable of producing 350 gallons of safe drinking water daily arrived in Majuro on May 14.

PDA

- Coordinated jointly by USAID/OFDA and the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the PDA will verify the magnitude of the disaster and inform potential USG response options. PDA team members include two representatives from FEMA; one staff member from USAID/Philippines; four counterparts from the GoRMI; a WASH expert and a logistician, as well as other team support staff, from USAID/OFDA; and an agriculture and food security specialist seconded to USAID/OFDA from the U.S. Forest Service. The team is scheduled to begin drought assessments in several drought-affected atolls in the coming days.

OTHER HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

- As of May 9, a three-person U.N. Disaster Assessment and Coordination team had arrived in the RMI to assist with response coordination, assessments, and information management for an initial two-week period.
- The U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is providing an emergency cash grant of \$50,000 to the GoRMI to assist with immediate response efforts.
- The Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) is contributing four reverse osmosis machines and spare parts—at a cost of \$100,000—to assist with the drought response. This contribution will help repair the reverse osmosis units already deployed to affected areas that are not operating at full capacity.
- With support from the Government of New Zealand, the New Zealand Red Cross has deployed a response team comprising two water engineers and one distribution expert, along with two portable reverse osmosis units.
- The Government of Japan has provided two reverse osmosis units that are operational in two of the affected atolls.

CONTEXT

- In November 2008, USAID assumed responsibility for disaster response and reconstruction in the RMI and the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) from FEMA, reflecting the transition of FSM and RMI from U.S.-administered trust territories to independent countries. USAID and FEMA developed an Operational Blueprint to provide a framework for USG disaster response and reconstruction in the two nations, under which USAID maintains FEMA's previous commitment to supplement host government efforts as necessary to provide humanitarian assistance in the aftermath of significant disasters. USAID/OFDA collaborates closely with FEMA, as well as with USAID/Philippines and USAID's Asia Bureau, to implement programs in FSM and RMI.
- USAID also maintains a full-time presence in FSM and RMI through a Disaster Assistance Coordinator (DAC). Located in Majuro and working as a member of the U.S. Embassy country teams in FSM and RMI, the DAC serves as a liaison to host governments and coordinates USG relief activities in FSM and RMI. USAID recently established a position for a Reconstruction Assistance Coordinator based in USAID/Philippines, who helps USAID fulfill the reconstruction component of its mandate as specified in the Operational Blueprint.

USAID HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO THE RMI PROVIDED IN FY 2013¹

IMPLEMENTING PARTNER	ACTIVITY	LOCATION	AMOUNT
USAID/OFDA²			
IOM	Logistics and Relief Commodities; WASH	Affected Areas	\$100,000
	PDA Support Costs		\$66,655
TOTAL USAID/OFDA ASSISTANCE			\$166,655
TOTAL USAID HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO THE RMI IN FY 2013			\$166,655

¹ Year of funding indicates the date of commitment or obligation, not appropriation, of funds.

² USAID/OFDA funding represents actual or obligated amounts as of May 16, 2013.

PUBLIC DONATION INFORMATION

- The most effective way people can assist relief efforts is by making cash contributions to humanitarian organizations that are conducting relief operations. A list of humanitarian organizations that are accepting cash donations for response efforts in the RMI may be found at www.interaction.org.
- USAID encourages cash donations because they allow aid professionals to procure the exact items needed (often in the affected region); reduce the burden on scarce resources (such as transportation routes, staff time, and warehouse space); can be transferred very quickly and without transportation costs; support the economy of the disaster-stricken region; and ensure culturally, dietary, and environmentally appropriate assistance.
- More information can be found at:
 - The Center for International Disaster Information: www.cidi.org or +1.202.821.1999.
 - Information on relief activities of the humanitarian community can be found at www.reliefweb.int.

USAID/OFDA bulletins appear on the USAID website at
<http://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/working-crises-and-conflict/responding-times-crisis/where-we-work>