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Photo Courtesy of American Red Cross



Planting Seeds for Disaster Resilience in Micronesia

Low-lying Pacific island nations like the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) are particularly vulnerable to natural hazards, such as typhoons and storm surges.

In recent years, severe degradation of the coastal environment in FSM—including the cutting of mangroves, which can help reduce the effects of storm surges—has increased the vulnerability of the country’s coastal communities. When Typhoon Maysak struck FSM in 2015, the storm destroyed hundreds of homes and 90 percent of crops and fruit trees in affected areas of Chuuk and Yap states, risking the lives and livelihoods of local residents dependent on agriculture, according to a 2015 U.S. Government damage assessment.

To reduce the impact of natural hazards, USAID’s Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) supports the American Red Cross and its partner the Micronesia Red Cross Society to implement the Micronesia Community Resilience and Capacity Development (CRCD) project, which includes community preparedness and coastal restoration activities in Chuuk.

In addition to supporting communities in FSM to develop early warning systems and disaster contingency plans, the American Red Cross mobilizes community groups to raise local awareness of the risks of environmental

degradation, establish locally managed nurseries, and carry out regular tree-planting activities to reduce those risks. Restoration of mangroves along Chuuk’s coastline is an important activity identified by the community to better minimize the impacts of future typhoons or storm surges.

Since CRCD activities began in 2016, community members like Myuri Simi, a volunteer from a local women’s group in Chuuk, have successfully established seven nurseries and planted more than 11,650 coconut, mangrove, and pandanus tree seedlings, beginning the restoration of the critical coastal green belt.

USAID/OFDA support for community engagement ensures FSM will be better prepared for future disasters by giving individuals the knowledge and opportunity to take action and build disaster resilience.

“Now I realize that as community members, we can do something for our island and our people,” said Myuri. “We can plant mangroves.”

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