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## Engaging Youth for Disaster Risk Reduction in the Marshall Islands

Communities in the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) remain highly vulnerable to the impacts of extreme weather events and natural hazards, including cyclones, droughts, and floods. Individuals younger than 25 years of age make up more than half of the population in RMI and play a pivotal role in shaping the future of disaster risk reduction (DRR) policies for the health and safety of their communities.

With support from USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (USAID/BHA) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the Marshall Islands Red Cross Society (MIRCS) is strengthening its Emergency Response Teams (ERTs), supporting youth engagement in DRR programs, and partnering with local governments and community leaders to raise awareness of disaster response activities.

In July 2019, MIRCS—in coordination with the Micronesia Red Cross Society and Palau Red Cross Society—hosted a North Pacific Youth Leadership Super Camp in the Federated States of Micronesia's Pohnpei Island. Nearly 50 teenagers attended the Super Camp, where participants learned about the causes and effects of climatic shocks, mapped extreme weather events, explored the contribution of ecosystems to human well-being, and drafted action plans for locally-relevant adaptation activities in their communities. By engaging RMI youth in workshops on climate risk assessments and developing contextually relevant solutions to the risks identified, the



Photo courtesy of the IFRC

Super Camp helped to increase the youth volunteer base of MIRCS, as well as strengthen local ownership and implementation of ERT activities, enhancing disaster preparedness and community safety.

First-aid training has also been a key focus area for MIRCS. With USAID/BHA funding, MIRCS has engaged youth volunteers and held first-aid trainings across RMI. Such activities have helped to save lives. For example, during the first week of training, one volunteer used the first-aid skills he learned during the workshop to resuscitate a child who was drowning.

Since the Super Camp and first-aid trainings took place, the youth volunteer base of MIRCS has increased from 100 ERT volunteers recruited since the establishment of MIRCS to 400 volunteers across three locations: RMI's capital city of Majuro, Jaluit Atoll, and Ebeye Island. Such activities are key to increasing youth engagement in Red Cross programs across RMI and strengthening RMI's ERTs. By supporting the involvement and training of youth, MIRCS fosters the development of contextually relevant climate adaptation activities and disaster response, prompting more sustainable and locally owned solutions to DRR challenges for years to come.