

Written by Zarin Khan

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Palau is accessing climate change and disaster risk finance, but faces capacity challenges that currently make it difficult to implement larger-scale, multi-sector climate and disaster risk related initiatives. These were some of the issues discussed recently during a follow-up mission to present and validate the preliminary findings and recommendations of Palau's climate change and disaster risk finance assessment.

At the request of the Government of Palau, a multi-agency team led by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, and including the Pacific Community (SPC) and the USAID/SPC Institutional Strengthening in Pacific Islands Countries to Adapt to Climate Change (ISACC) Project, visited Koror in February 2017 to consult with the National Government, State Government officials, NGOs, donors and private sector, guided by the Pacific Climate Change Finance Assessment Framework. To date, eight Pacific Island Countries have completed national climate change finance assessments.

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Casmir Remengesau, Director of the Bureau of Budget and Planning, Ministry of Finance thanked the team for their efforts in undertaking the assessment and providing the preliminary findings for validation. He acknowledged that the findings captured the current efforts of Palau in progressing and strengthening their climate change work. A briefing was also provided to Mr. Elbuchel Sadang, Minister of Finance who reiterated that “climate change is one of the top issues for Palau and the assistance the assessment can provide in highlighting this at the national level is much appreciated.”

The preliminary findings show that Palau has accessed considerable grant funding over the past eight years for climate change and disaster risk management initiatives, but is at the lower range of what other Pacific Island Countries are accessing. The support is largely project-based with the majority being small-sized grants. Most external support for climate change and disaster risk activities comes from bilateral sources, with a focus on climate change adaptation. A significant portion of the funds accessed is outside of the direct purview of the national budget.

Palau has been a vocal and active participant in the regional and international climate change and disaster risk management fora and the recently adopted national Climate Change Policy provides the overarching policy framework for national climate change action.

However, like other Small Island States, human capacity is a major challenge for Palau, with implications for effective implementation. Embedding a capacity building component in all future project proposals to be implemented in Palau may present one opportunity for addressing this issue. Palau also has an opportunity to build on policies and programs that focus on culture, youth, elderly, people with disabilities and gender mainstreaming to strengthen its social sector capacity and its reach to climate change and disaster risk management.

There has been widespread support for this assessment with government, civil society, private sector and development partners working closely together. The final report and associated recommendations will assist the Government in strengthening access to international and domestic finance resources to facilitate climate change and disaster risk reduction programmes and initiatives.

The USAID/SPC ISACC Project, as well as other partners including the USAID Climate Ready Project, will support the implementation of the assessment’s findings in Palau. The final report will be presented to the Republic of Palau Government in June 2017.

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