



PSA-020-Coastal Protection-Palau

How do we save coral reefs?

Vic Ferguson

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The Palau delegation working with their local counterparts

SPC and EU support Tonga and Palau partnership

Suva, FIJI-February 13: 12.40pm (SPC): The first Palau-Tonga exchange to share lessons learnt about coastal protection measures began this week.

The exchange involves a seven-member delegation of legislators and government officials from the Republic of Palau, including densely populated Koror State, visiting Tonga to learn about methods to enhance the resilience to climate change of coastal communities in eastern Tongatapu.



“This exchange is opening up our eyes to options for coastal protection other than the familiar sea wall and mangrove responses,” the Associate Climate Change Coordinator, Office of Environmental Response and Coordination, Government of Palau, Xavier Matsutaro, said.

“It’s encouraging us to look outside-the-box to find solutions for our government and coastal landowners who are facing serious erosion issues,” Mr Matsutaro added.

The South-South cooperation was initiated by the Government of Palau who co-funded the exchange visit with the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and the European Union through the Global Climate Change Alliance: Pacific Small Island States project.

The site visit includes meeting with the local communities involved in the project to understand their views and needs.

During the exchange, the delegation is visiting several of the project sites in Tonga, where two different types of coastal protection measures are being constructed.

“Through the exchange we are able to openly discuss many climate change adaptation options, including relocation,” the Director and Engineer, Public Works and Capital Improvement Program of the Government of Palau, Brian Melaire, said.



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“This is also an issue in Palau, for example the national hospital of Palau is located only 15 feet (5 meters) above sea level, and the government is facing the challenge of whether to renovate and expand or relocate,” he said.

The Palauan delegation also met with the Chief Executive Officer and key staff from Tonga’s Ministry of Meteorology, Energy, Information, Disaster Management, Environment, Climate Change and Communication to discuss their respective processes for designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating coastal protection projects.

“It’s very useful to have this unique experience to exchange our national procedures and find out how other countries are accessing funding and developing relationships with development partners,” the GCCA: PSIS Project Coordinator, Department of Climate Change, Government of Tonga, Mr Manu Manuofetoa, said.

On return next week, the Palauan delegation will present a coastal protection action plan developed during the exchange to key partners and stakeholders, based on the lessons learnt in Tonga.

Yesterday, SPC also launched the first of a series of nine country-specific climate change adaptation videos produced for the Pacific Small Island states project.

Entitled Buying time with better coastal management in Tonga, this compelling video highlights the experiences and lessons learnt in Tonga through the coastal protection project, including personal accounts of some of the 3,300 local residents who are benefitting from efforts to advance the coastline seaward by creating optimal conditions for sediment build-up.

This action will “buy time” for six coastal villages in eastern Tongatapu, prioritized under Tonga’s Joint National Action Plan for Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management 2010 – 2015, as planning for the projected impacts of climate change progresses.

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