



PACMAS

Pacific Media Assistance Scheme

Republic of Palau

STATE OF MEDIA &
COMMUNICATION
REPORT
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International
Development

Australian Broadcasting Corporation





Media training participants doing video interviews as part of their field work. Photo by Oceanic Television (OTV).

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Any opinions represented in this report are those of the authors and research participants and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Government or the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

The findings are presented in three sections:

1. Country Context
2. State of Media and Communications
 - Media and Communications Platforms
 - Media and Communications Landscape
3. Summary of Findings

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Palau Country Context

The Republic of Palau is an independent country in Micronesia, located south-east of the Philippines. Comprised of 340 islands (eight of which are inhabited), Palau's most populous islands are Angaur, Babeldaob (or Babelthuap), Koror, Malakai and Peleliu. About two-thirds of the population live on Koror. Palau, like the other two Micronesian states of FSM and Marshall Islands, has been in a Compact Free Association (COFA) with the United States since 1982. It uses the US Dollar as currency and relies on the US military for its defense. The economy depends heavily on tourism, services, agriculture, fishing and aid funding. The government is the largest employer (almost 31 per cent of workers). Palau passed legislation in 1998 to establish Palau as an 'off-shore' financial centre. Palau is recognised for having one of the Pacific Islands' higher standards of living. An important aspect of Palauan society is that it follows a matrilineal system and matrilineal practices are seen in Palauan traditions (i.e. funeral, marriage, inheritance and inheritance of traditional titles). Women and men are part of the traditional chiefdom governing system.

Key Insights

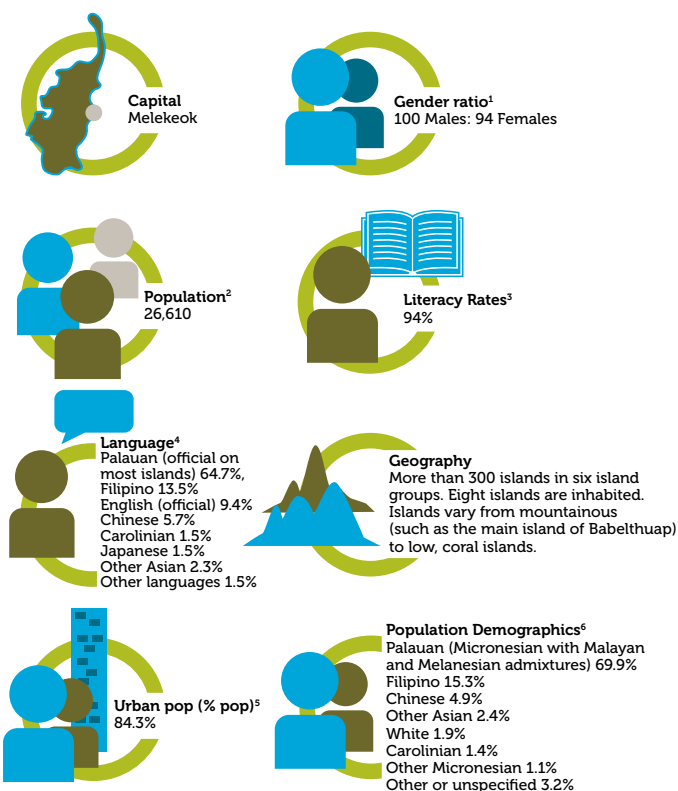
Highest ICT Penetration Rates in the Pacific

Palau stands out for its telecommunication environment that includes the National ICT Policy 2011-2014. Palau has among the highest ICT penetration rates across the Pacific⁷. This includes fixed line and mobile users per 100 inhabitants, and internet penetration rates (though internet users are concentrated in the urban centre). Despite these statistics, however, interviewees note a significant cost disparity between broadband and other options such as pre-paid dial-up, *'Internet access in this country is prohibitively expensive unless you use the home version which is prepaid. And so I'll do that when I'm not at work... or... I go home and look something up [only] if it's important and I just need to go do it right away.'* (PALAU07).

A State of Emergency for the NCD Epidemic

In response to the high death rate (74 per cent) related to Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs), the Palau Government has declared a State of Emergency, an unusual move to deal with a chronic problem. Palau is also one of the leading advocates in the international community working on a framework for prevention of tobacco use, with strict laws on smoking in public places, and anti-smoking campaigns running on television and radio. The Ministry of Health has estimated that 55 per cent of the health budget

Table h. 1 Basic Country Data



1 Republic of Palau. 2003. Population and Environment Survey. <http://www.palau.gov.net/stats/PalauStats/Publication/RARE.pdf> Accessed 23 April 2013
 2 The World Bank. 2013. Country Data Report. <http://data.worldbank.org/country/palau> Accessed 23 April 2013
 3 The World Bank. 2013. Country Data Report. <http://data.worldbank.org/country/palau> Accessed 23 April 2013
 4 CIA World Factbook 2013 Palau. <http://www.palau.gov.net/stats/PalauStats/Publication/Monograph2000III.pdf> Accessed 29 April 2013
 5 UNDATA 2010 Palau. <http://data.un.org/CountryProfile.aspx?crName=Palau> Accessed April 29 2013
 6 CIA World Factbook. 2013. Palau <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ps.html> Accessed 29 April 2013
 7 Pacific Island Forum Secretariat. 2010. Final report for the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat Review of Pacific Regional Digital Strategy Part A: Technological Capacity http://www.forumsec.org.fj/resources/uploads/attachments/documents/Review%20of%20Digital%20Strategy_PartA.pdf Accessed 29 April 2013

is spent on treating NCDs, and is projected to rise to 80 per cent by 2020 if no preventative measures are taken. While the declaration of a State of Emergency has increased awareness, interviewees suggested this hasn't led to changes in health-related behaviours. One research participant thinks that the type of information communicated in the media hasn't been in an appropriate form, saying *'It's just information. It's sort of like an analysis, this is what happened and this is now what they're doing, but not in a way that people understand what's going on and what ... ever since the State of Emergency on the epidemic of NCDs, there hasn't been that type of media.'* (PALAU06)

The Challenges of Effective Climate Change Awareness

Perhaps due to limited environmental degradation, Palau is slow to take up climate change policy information, and does not have a National Adaptation Plan. Access to climate change information on outer remote atolls is limited. Recognised problems include access to drinking water, effects of salinity on taro crops in low-lying areas, and diminishing fish populations. Palau recently implemented progressive eco-policies, most notably a shark sanctuary. Climate change issues are included in news updates and in a weekly TV spot on OTV. However, there are suggestions that the audience is experiencing information fatigue. The overall perception is that the full potential of this information is being missed due to the inability to translate concepts into local language and relatable experiences.

State of Media and Communications

Media and Communications Platforms

The media industry is small but remains diverse. It includes two major newspapers, several radio stations and three TV channels. Most media professionals in Palau work part-time and have a second career. The educational backgrounds of media staff are as diverse as law and politics, and science and health. As one interviewee explains, *'There isn't anybody that I know who's actually writing for a newspaper or writing for television that their education was in journalism. Some of them have been educated in areas that you could say have an overlap, you know, in English or writing'* (PALAU03). Language skills are also an area of contention, with some media outlets reporting that they hire foreign (often Filipino) staff due to their superior command of English, while others lament the loss of the Palauan language among young people and are working to promote the indigenous language in the media. An interesting phenomenon worth noting in regards to the Palau media scene, is radio and newspaper ownership by local politicians (i.e. *Island Times* and *Diaz Station*).

Television

ICTV, operated by the Palau National Communication Corporation, provides cable television channels such as CNN, Nickelodeon and Discovery Channel etc. A more recent addition to the TV offerings is the Oceania TV Network (OTV). Oceania TV is owned by Roll'em Productions Inc, which has both local and foreign owners. This TV network has plans to expand its coverage to other countries in Micronesia. It broadcasts news, educational and cultural content from around the Pacific, and claims that 85 per cent of households watch its network during primetime. Roll'em Productions also operates a local channel, OTV Er Kid. OTV Er Kid is the only TV station in Palau producing local news, programs, sports and entertainment in the local language.

Table h.2 Media and Communication Platforms: Television

Platform	Organisation	Ownership/ Funding	Language/ Content	Sector
Television	ICTV	Operated by Palau National Communications Corporation (PNCC),	No local news is produced predominantly US Cable TV channels such as CNN, Discovery Channel	Semi-Government
	Oceania TV Network	Owned by Roll'em Productions Inc. a foreign Investment corporation with both foreign and Palau owners.	Broadcasts news, educational and cultural content from around the Pacific. Claims that 85% of households watch primetime. Also airs in Marshall Islands and Federated States of Micronesia	Commercial
	OTV Er Kid	Owned by Roll'em Productions Inc. a foreign Investment corporation with both foreign and Palau owners.	Local Palau station, the only TV channel with local news, programs, sports and entertainment. Broadcasts in the local language	Commercial

Radio

The Bureau of Domestic Affairs operates two frequencies, T8AA AM and Eco Paradise FM, although the content is the same on both channels. Alfonso Diaz, a political figure in Palau, operates WWFM (or Diaz Station), and there are two other music stations. There are two religious groups who operate shortwave radio stations, the High Adventure Ministries and the Seventh Day Adventists. Few details on these stations were available.

Table h.3 Media and Communication Platforms: Radio

Platform	Organisation	Ownership/ Funding	Language/ Content	Sector
Radio	T8AA AM	Operated by Bureau of Domestic Affairs, owned by government	Runs same content as Eco Paradise FM. Reaches 80% of the population, local news, some talkback, local music	Government
	WPRK Island Rhythm 88.5FM	Rudimich Enterprises	Palauan English mix - top 40 Commercial contemporary	Commercial
	Palau WAVE - PWFM 89.9FM	Salvador Telemes	Mostly Palauan – Adult Contemporary	Commercial
	Eco Paradise FM	Operated by Bureau of Domestic Affairs, owned by government	Runs same content as Eco Paradise FM. Reaches 80% of the population (est), local news, some talkback, local music	Government
	WWFM (Diaz Station) 89.5FM	Owned by Alfonso Diaz		Commercial
	Name unknown	The High Adventure Ministries	Shortwave radio station on the island of Aimeliik	Church
	Name unknown	Seventh Day Adventist		Church

Newspaper and Newsletters

The *Tia Belau* is the oldest newspaper in Palau. Given the government links of the other newspapers, it is also the most independent news source in Palau. MYU Publications has also intermittently published the *Meluich* which has a social focus and a lower print-run. The government produces The *Palau Gazette* although it's only published intermittently. A senator and a governor own the *Island Times*. The *Palau Horizon* closed in 2010 due to the falling economy.

Table h.4 Media and Communication Platforms: Newspaper and Newsletters

Platform	Organisation	Ownership/ Funding	Language/ Content	Sector
Newspaper	Tia Belau	Owned by MYU Publications	Published in English, on Mondays and Thursdays	Commercial
	Palau Gazette	Government publication (responsible ministry unknown)	Published irregularly	Government
	Meluich	Owned by MYU Publications	Smaller print-run than the Tia Balau, focused on social and community news. Has only published occasionally since 2004	Commercial
	Island Times	Owned by Senator Phillip Reklai Governor Lelani Reklai	Publishes mostly government press-releases and soft stories	Commercial

Online and Mobile Media

Despite its remoteness, Palau is one of the Pacific's most successful small islands for telecommunications connectivity. In 2010 it had one of the highest penetration rates for landlines and mobile phones (80 per cent)⁸. Internet access though is slow and expensive, and usage is not widespread beyond the urban centre, and is at 6 per cent but growing⁹. Several mainstream media outlets have news websites that replicate their news content from other platforms. Facebook user rates are relatively high for Palau in comparison to most other Pacific countries.

8 http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/asp/CMS/Events/2012/pacific-bb/S3_Palau.pdf

9 http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/asp/CMS/Events/2012/pacific-bb/S3_Palau.pdf

Table h.5 Media and Communication Platforms: Online and Mobile Media

Platform	Organisation	Ownership/ Funding	Language/ Content	Sector
Online and email	Oceania Television Network	Owned by Roll'em Productions Inc. a foreign Investment corporation with both foreign and Palau owners.	www.Oceaniatv.com	Commercial
Online	Tia Belau	Owned by MYU Publication	http://www.tiabelaunews.com/	Commercial
	Island Times	Owned by Senator Phillip Reklai Governor Lelani Reklai	www.islandtimes.us	Commercial
	Palau WAVE	Salvador Telemes	http://www.palauwaveradio.com/	Commercial
	Facebook	N/A	31.93% of the population are Facebook users 54% female, 46% male ¹⁰	Commercial ownership, Community uses
	WUTMI	NGO	Has a basic website http://www.wutmirmi.org/ plus a Facebook page and uploads YouTube videos	Community

Other Communication Platforms

Palau has a series of clans and kinship lineages that continue to structure social life in the villages (beluu) and in the urbanised centers of Palau. In villages, the community meeting house (bai) is a space for gathering for the Council of Chiefs who govern the village; men and women are members of their own separate Councils. In urban areas and villages, a weekly exchange of rice, taro, fish, pork and store-bought food takes place between kin, classmates and workmates. This is an extension of earlier forms of exchange within Palauan kin groups that often occurred at funerals, to commemorate the birth of a woman's first child, and other celebrations. Another practice that is unique to Palau is chanting, which involves the singing of stories based on ceremonial and historical events, and often conveys information such as a moral or life-lesson. It is common during dance performances, ceremonies and other events.

Table h.6 Media and Communication Platforms: Other Communication Platforms

Platform	Organisation	Ownership/ Funding	Language/ Content	Sector
Community meetinghouse (bai)	Council of Chiefs	Clans	Palauan	Community
Villages (beluu)	Ceremonial and religious leaders	Clans and community	Palauan, chanting songs during dance performances	Community
Food and Clan exchanges	Exchange networks	Community	Palauan, exchange of food and sociality	Community

Media and Communications Landscape

This section of the report focuses on Palau's media and communication sector across four key areas: policy and legislation, media systems, capacity building and content. It provides an overview of the state of media across these four Pacific Media Assistance Scheme (PACMAS) program components, as explored through the six PACMAS strategic activities: Technicians, Pacific Emergency Broadcast Systems, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVETs), Media Associations, Climate Change and NCDs. Media Systems includes a focus on Technicians and Pacific Emergency Broadcast Systems (PEBS); Capacity Building includes TVETs and Media Associations; and Content looks at Climate Change and NCDs. It provides an overview of media and communication across these areas and aligns them with the PACMAS program components.

Policy and Legislation

The Division of Communications under the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Industries and Commerce is responsible for licensing, monitoring and dealing with complaints and violations. The primary legislation for

¹⁰ Socialbakers.com. 2012. Facebook Statistics by Country. <http://www.socialbakers.com/facebook-statistics/palau>, Accessed November 15, 2012

licensing and regulation of the media industry is PNC Title 6.

The Palau Government privatised the Palau National Communication Corporation (PNCC) in 1982 but maintains financial interests in the company. The board of the PNCC is appointed by the President and approved by the Senate. The PNCC does not receive any government funding. It provides telecommunications services including fixed-line, mobile phone, and internet, as well as cable TV.

Freedom of the media is guaranteed in the constitution, and this protection is broadly based on the fourth estate principles of the US Constitution. The government reportedly rarely challenges these principles. There have been some conflicts, however. One involved a death threat against a media manager by a senator. In a second case, a journalist was deported after challenging an immigration law. Legislation is in place that restricts the broadcasting or publication of material against public order, and state legislation prevents the broadcast or publication of election coverage on Election Day. In recent years the government has proposed a bill that was intended to restrict media, but it did not pass. There is no locally developed Code of Ethics specific to the media industry, but government media staff are obliged to follow a general Code of Ethics for all public servants.

The Telecommunication Act of 1982¹¹ established the Palau National Communications Corporation (PNCC)¹², which currently has a monopoly on fixed line services, and provides the majority of GSM mobile and other ICT services. Palau Mobile Corporation (PMC) offers mobile services (including the only mobile data services), and Palau Telecoms provides internet and broadband services. Foreign investment in telecommunications requires a specific license. Telecommunications legislation is being reviewed by a range of stakeholders seeking to open up the perceived monopoly of the PNCC.

Media Systems

Media systems take into consideration technical skills, support and infrastructure. It also explores emergency broadcast systems and experience from past disasters and crises in Palau.

PACMAS Strategic Activity: Technicians

Technical assistance is limited in Palau and most technicians need to be skilled across a variety of equipment. The limited technical expertise locally results in some cases in offshore repairs, which are costly; replacement is often cheaper than repair. There is no technical training available in Palau.

PACMAS Strategic Activity: Emergency Broadcast System

'There's a national emergency management office called NEMO. They do exist. They're not very effective unfortunately. In the last disaster that we had here, where the last warning ... was for the tsunami, the national and emergency office put on the sirens that are basically to warn people. However, the sirens are located at the high points so even our organisation which is located down on the coastline didn't know there was a tsunami till we got a phone call from the United States embassy. So they're not effective in their ability. I think they've been training mostly for airport disasters, and kind of like bio outbreaks, which is kind of funded by the United States government.'
(PALAU03)

Palau recently updated its National Disaster Risk Management Framework (NDRM), which makes clear the responsibilities for information management in emergencies within the National Emergency Management Office (NEMO). The National Disaster Coordinator screens all messages before they are broadcast in order to make sure that only accurate and relevant information is being disseminated. Typhoon messages from the National Weather Service are excluded from this stipulation. No current plan for tsunami evacuation exists.

It is the responsibility of media staff to liaise with the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) Public Information Officer for updated reports. The public receives information via radio or television. Radio is described as the crucial communication channel and updates and warnings are to be broadcast free of charge as a public

11 Various referred to as "Telecommunications Act 1982" or "Palau National Communication Corporation Act 1982"

12 Industry reports available online give very different accounts of the telecommunications environment. This report is based on information provided by the Panel of Expertise Member. Other reports describe the PNCC as a government owned monopoly. See http://www.forumsec.org.fj/resources/uploads/attachments/documents/Review%20of%20Digital%20Strategy_PartA.pdf

service. In some cases, the Governor may decide to call each household or send someone to every single household to relay the message: *'because some states are small enough... they can do that'. Also in storms 'the power automatically dies - so then television and radio don't work ... effectively'* (PALAU01).

The Hyogo Framework for Action progress report¹³ finds that disaster response management is quite good in Palau but notes some problems with Early Warning Systems (EWS), especially as they relate to tsunamis and other events. In effect, there is little warning and a convoluted process of information authorisation may lead to delays in dissemination. For example, they do not have a 24 hour a day plan as radio stations are closed after midnight. In addition, delays can occur, as NEMO is required to consult with the NEC Chair before disseminating warnings. The outlying islands communication systems also do not operate 24 hours a day and none of the three broadcast stations dependably covers the south-west islands or all the villages in the north. Palau does not currently use bulk SMS to disseminate warnings. The effectiveness of NEMO generally is a source of debate in Palau.

Capacity Building

Capacity building includes an understanding of the level of qualifications among existing media and communication practitioners, training and capacity building support and organisations providing such support. It also takes into consideration media associations and TVETs in Palau.

Capacity building of media professionals (including technicians) in Palau is severely affected by a lack of available funds. Privately owned stations cannot afford to allow staff to be absent to undertake two to three month courses, and online courses are difficult due to slow internet speed.

Estimates of the number of journalists with degree level qualifications in Palau are low, with less than 10 per cent of journalists in the government and community media outlets and less than 30 per cent for commercial media journalists having relevant qualifications according to members of the Panel of Expertise. Journalists with formal qualifications have studied in a variety of locations including Guam, Hawaii (US), the Philippines and at the University of the South Pacific. Accounts from interviewees describe employment in the media industry as only a part time, even secondary job for most journalists, who usually have another profession.

The Palau Community College does not offer journalism or media courses. There have been attempts to include journalism in the secondary school curriculum and to provide internships with businesses to increase interest in the profession, as it has not traditionally been an attractive option for young people. Commonly, Palauan youth see joining the US army as the easiest way off the island, as one research participant observes: *"I know I've seen a lot of talented students, I just need to find more ways to get to them before ... they decide to join the army and leave altogether."* (PALAU07).

A local media manager is currently developing a curriculum but comments that there is no support and if he/she does not personally *'push the course, they just toss it out of the classes'* (PALAU08).

PACMAS Strategic Activity: Media Associations

Currently, there is no media association in Palau, with one interviewee noting that *'we're on our own'* (PALAU10). Another interviewee noted that a media association for the Micronesia Region was initiated in 2011, and that a meeting of the Pacific Federation of Media Professionals was planned to take place in the Marshall Islands in December 2012. At the time of interview, details and possible attendance remained unknown.

PACMAS Strategic Activity: TVETS

The Palau Community College does not offer media training. Their focus is mechanics, outboard repair, basic computer skills and hotel management. As one interviewee summarised: *'There is no art course, there is no editing, filming, journalism, nothing like that'* (PALAU03).

Content

Media content focuses on communication platforms and programs and ways to address issues related to climate change and NCDs. Climate change and NCDs are two strategic activities of the PACMAS program.

¹³ Prevention Web. 2012. Palau National Progress Report on the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2011-2013 http://www.preventionweb.net/files/28740_plw_NationalHFAprogress_2011-13.pdf Accessed 29 April 2013

PACMAS Strategic Activity: Climate change

'I think that we've got government officials who are famous for taking trips around the world for this conference and all this which produce a lot of good information but getting that information to translate them into our language into our education level so that people will be aware. I think that's a weakness.'
(PALAU08)

Palau is well known as having recently implemented some progressive eco-policies (most notably the shark sanctuary). Yet Palau does not have a Climate Change Policy, a Joint National Action Plan (which brings together DRM and Climate Change), or a National Adaptation Plan. Palau is involved with SPREP's PACC (Pacific Adaptation to Climate Change) projects and has produced a project proposal¹⁴ around a 'land and sea' framework, which provides a holistic approach to projects to consider the integration of all ecosystems. Some projects listed include strengthening taro production capacities by using salt-resistant varieties and aquaculture adaptations. There is a PACC Communication Strategic Plan¹⁵, which includes some references to two-way communication, but which mainly includes one way media strategies in the PR-styled plan.

In addition, Palau Conservation Society has undertaken pilot projects with PACC on salt intrusion and food security. A key form of communication is face-to-face with communities, to try to address climate change issues as much as possible at the grassroots. Society members have performed puppet shows on climate change and coordinated a junior program that teaches children methods of sustainable fishing in conjunction with the Palau Sports Fishing Association. Palau Conservation Society has a well designed website and a Facebook page.

A number of climate change issues are included in news updates and a weekly TV spot on OTV, which is becoming a focal point for media. However, there are suggestions that the information is not being conveyed to its full potential and the audience is experiencing information fatigue. One of the interviewees describes the challenges of climate change reporting, which include the need to keep generating interesting news that brings new information from different perspectives: *"[...] the fundamental style of news is that it's new. And it's hard to get, it's hard to make climate change new and interesting. I mean we've been hearing about it for so long, that we need ... some kind of a source that's providing us with new angle stories that we can kind of make into a local story"*. (PALAU03) Representatives from the media note that they find it difficult to obtain information, particularly about the progress of climate change initiatives in Palau.

PACMAS Strategic Activity: NCDs

'It is one thing to know and it's another thing to take action and be diligent in health.'
(PALAU07)

The core NCD issues facing Palau include oral cancers from the combined use of betel nut and tobacco chewing, obesity, poor nutrition, lack of physical exercise, and high blood pressure. The Ministry of Health has estimated that 55 per cent of the health budget is spent on NCDs. WHO estimates that 74 per cent of all deaths in Palau are related to NCDs; however, Palau has not completed the standard WHO survey (STEPS), so comparable NCD data is not as available. In response to this situation, the Palau Government has declared a State of Emergency, an unusual move to deal with chronic problems (a State of Emergency is usually declared in acute emergencies). The Declaration of State of Emergency document, however, does not include any mention of media, communication, education or awareness programs.

A number of programs are in place to address NCDs. They include encouraging lifestyle changes, such as purchasing fresh food rather than imported food. Palauans have access to regular health check-ups provided free by the Ministry of Health. There are also door-to-door campaigns that focus on vulnerable communities and rural areas. In addition, the Ministry of Health produces brochures and some print material, although it is noted that this information is not reliable or easy to access for health Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) and other organisations.

14 Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment. n.d. Pacific Adaptation to Climate Change: Palau Project Proposal <http://www.sprep.org/att/IRC/eCOPIES/Countries/Palau/45.pdf> Accessed April 29 2013

15 Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment. 2012. Palau Pacific Adaptation to Climate Change Project "Communication Strategic Plan" http://www.sprep.org/attachments/Climate_Change/Palau_CommunicationPlan.pdf Accessed 29 April 2013

Several impediments to effective communication about NCDs were identified. The connection between the NGO sector and the media sector is weak. NGOs exhibit a general lack of knowledge about working with the media, and the media do not know how to tap into the NGOs' knowledge on NCDs. NGO representatives believe that more use could be made of the media and communication plans: *'For NGOs, health NGOs, we get some health information, but not always. It's very difficult because they themselves don't understand the role of media. So it's very hard. We have to sort of connect the dots ourselves. Instead of them reaching out to us, we have to reach out to them'* (PALAU06).



Figure 1: Reporting on Climate Change at Palau's Rock Islands. Photo by OTV, 2012

Other issues relate to inconsistent promotion and communication, particularly about changes and progress over time. One participant laments the ad hoc and sporadic nature of the media reporting on NCDs, and describes the situation as follows:

'a grant will come ... either through the hospital or through an NGO. And there will be a short media blitz or one, two, three on a particular subject. And then it fades away. And then it's quiet for a period of time. So there might be a thing for tobacco for a few months. And then next year there will be a thing about obesity for a few months. But there is no standard regular information given out to keep putting it out in people's minds' (PALAU03).



Figure 2: Ben Bohane, Director of Media Communications at PiPP talking to PACMAS and OTV's media training participants about photography. Photo by OTV.

Others suggest a problem with the type and accessibility of coverage, which is often dry and events-based. Most agree that the State of Emergency declaration has served to increase awareness.


Cross-Cutting Issues: Disability, Gender and Youth

The cross-cutting issues explore how gender, youth and disability engage with and are represented within the media and communication environment in Palau.

There is little to no information on the National Policy on Disability that was introduced recently. Interviewees did not perceive disability to be a prevalent issue and interviewees did not report coverage of disability in the media¹⁶.

Little mention is made regarding gender issues in the strategic areas. Within the media industry interviewees a larger percentage of interviews were conducted with women in the media and communication industry compared to other countries. Another participant noted the difficulty of retaining young men who are often enticed to join the army as it provides an avenue for mobility outside of Palau. There are indications that attention to gender will increase over the next few years. For example, the Ministry of Health is undertaking a nationwide

¹⁶ This does not mean disability does not exist as a prominent issue, but does reflect the observations of those who took part in this research, who work in key media and other relevant organisations, as detailed in other parts of this report.



survey looking at NCD risk factors (e.g. hypertension and diabetes); the study is designed to take into account gender differences, ethnicity and divisions between rural and urban populations. Policies and outreach programs will then be designed around these activities.

The Palau Conservation Society undertakes a number of projects with school age children, including climate change education. In addition, organisations working to develop NCD campaigns have been working with schools on school gardening, physical education, healthy snacks policies, walking (rather than taking the bus) to school. One school has started weighing school children every month. They were discouraged because even with all the activities obesity was still 40 per cent. As a result, with the support of parents and the PTA, children are encouraged to engage in 60 minutes of physical activity outside of school and keep a logbook.

Summary of Findings

The media and communication environment in Palau is diverse and dynamic relative to its size, with considerable opportunities to support and grow systems and capacities across the component areas. The main findings across the four areas of policy and legislation, media systems, capacity building and content are summarised below.

Policy and Legislation

- The Communications Division within the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Industries and Commerce is responsible for licensing and regulation of the communications industry, including licensing and handling complaints.
- Freedom of media is guaranteed in the constitution and is generally respected in practice.
- Media outlets use a range of international codes of ethics.
- Telecommunications is open to local investment; foreign investment is more regulated.

Media Systems

- Local technical capacity is limited.
- Palau has an updated National Disaster Risk Management Framework.
- Several problems were noted in relation to the current procedures for the early warning system which lead to uneven and delayed distributions of emergency information.

Capacity Building

- There are currently no local training institutions offering media and communications courses.
- Most journalists in Palau work part-time in other professions. Few have qualifications in media and communications.
- Interviewees stated a preference for basic training in journalism, rather than issues-specific training.
- There is no local media association.

Content

- Palau has not yet developed key climate change policies and plans.
- Interviewees suggest there is some information fatigue in relation to climate change issues.
- The identified challenges to climate change reporting are finding new ways to report on the issue, and its inaccessibility to the population due to difficulties with translating key terms.
- Palau has declared a State of Emergency in relation to the NCD epidemic.
- The key challenges to NCD reporting are weak links between media and health agencies, dry reporting formats, and irregular coverage which usually follows funding allocations.





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<http://www.pacmas.org/>
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