

# Micronesia Red Cross Society – Engaging young people through inter-school First Aid Competition

**LOCATION:** Pohnpei, the capital city of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) is where the Headquarters of the Micronesia Red Cross Society (MRCS) is located. The FSM has 4 states [ Chuuk, Yap, Kosrae and Pohnpei] and these states are separated by the ocean.

Pohnpei is divided into 11 municipalities and has a population of about 35,000. It has its own shares of disasters such as floodings and therefore the need to make the population be prepared is a priority.



## THE ISSUES:

- (1)** There is no school Red Cross Youth in MRCS.
- (2)** The Department of Education has sponsored the training of 2 teachers in each school of Pohnpei. The Department would like to ensure that First Aid knowledge is cascaded to the schoolchildren.
- (3)** MRCS has an increasing number of volunteers in Pohnpei but the HQ has limited opportunities to engage volunteers in Red Cross activities.
- (4)** MRCS needs to raise resources in order to sustain the organization.

## ACTIONS TAKEN:

MRCS decided to organize an inter-school First Aid Competition and organized it in such a way that the following objectives are met: **[1]** empower young people with life-saving skills and promote camaraderie amongst youth. **[2]** provide opportunity for certified First Aider teachers to pass on the skills to their students; **[3]** provide platform for volunteering; **[4]** raise funds for MRCS.



## VOLUNTEERS' ENGAGEMENT:

More than 50 volunteers were mobilized by MRCS in organizing the events. The volunteers led various committees and sub-committees, both for the competition and the fundraising, guided by MRCS HQ staff.

## OUTCOMES

- A total of 165 pupils coached by 22 teachers representing 11 schools participated.
- Around 50 volunteers were mobilized.
- Raised about USD 7,000 for MRCS.
- FA competition toolkit developed and the experience of organizing the event in a low cost way inspired Kosrae and Chuuk Chapter to conduct the event in their chapters.
- Peer support and peer learning facilitated with Marshall Islands Red Cross senior First Aid instructor serving as Deputy Chief Judge.
- This is the first public event of this magnitude organized by MRCS. It has caught the interest of the public and became a topic in the community.





## HOW DID THEY DO IT?:

- a) MRCS Health Focal person discussed with the Department of Education (DoE) in charge of training about the proposal to conduct First Aid Competition. He proposed that the coaches of each school will be the two teachers trained on First Aid, sponsored by the DoE. He proposed that each school competing team will have 15 members, both boys and girls. It was agreed that the whole of Pohnpei should be represented thus it was aimed to have at least 1 representative school per municipality.
- b) The Department of education developed the criteria for selecting the schools based on the education system of school classification.
- c) Each school was given the responsibility of selecting their members. Generally, each school selected a combination of students from different levels, to ensure that some members of the team could continue representing the school when other members graduate.
- d) MRCS called for a general meeting of all volunteers. Around 40 came. They chose where to focus their volunteering: [1] competition event; or, [2] fundraising. Committees were formed and chairs were elected and members selected.
- e) MRCS offered a one-day refreshers course to all schools to ensure that all First Aid skills are updated and correct.
- f) Marshall Islands Red Cross Society sent a senior First Aid instructor to support the event, learn from it, and thereafter lead the same in MIRCS.



- g) IFRC supported the development of technical materials for the event e.g. Quiz questions and First Aid station scenarios. Technical meetings for the Judges and working committees were held several times to ensure that everyone is clear on their roles and responsibilities.
- h) The event venue was public and free.
- i) The competing teams shall be organized as the core Junior RC councils in their respective schools and shall be supported by MRCS for further development and engagement.

## Fundraising component of the competition

The Fundraising Committee organized a Raffle Ticket with each ticket costing USD20. Volunteers and the MRCS Board actively sold these tickets and raised USD7,000. There were also significant in-kind donations such as drinking water and printing. Some expressed to support next year's event.



## REFLECTIONS

It was good to see parents, teachers, friends, health workers, government leaders, Red Cross volunteers, board members and staff coming together to support the first time ever First Aid competition among elementary school in Pohnpei. It was a great success as many were commenting on the idea that Red Cross is doing. They see this activity benefitting the students, the school and their community. I am very pleased and happy with the staff and volunteers who put together and implemented this event. This will become a regular MRCS activity in the FSM. *[Diaz Joseph, President, Micronesia Red Cross]*

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