



Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

Country Profile

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Prepared by SPC Strategic Engagement, Policy and Planning Facility

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Country Facts¹	
Country or territory official name	Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI)
Location	13.48°N, 144.45°E in the Western Pacific.
Capital city	Saipan
Government and legal status	Self-governing US Territory with its own Constitution of 1978. US President is Head of State with locally elected officials- elected governor, lieutenant governor and legislature
Head of state	President Barack H Obama
Head of government	Governor Benigno R. Fitial
Land area	14 islands with a total land mass of 457 square kilometres
Exclusive economic zone (EEZ)	777,000 square kilometres
Population (mid-2008 estimate)	63,000
Population density (mid-2004 estimate)	138 persons per square kilometre
Annual intercensal population growth rate	3.3 per cent
GDP (2005)	USD949 million
GDP per capita (2005)	USD12,638
Real GDP growth	
CPI annual change (2007)	2.1 per cent
Exports (2006)	USD486 million
Imports (2004)	USD664 million
Trade balance (2004)	USD162 million
Crude birth rate per 1,000	17.3
Crude death rate per 1,000	2.8
Total fertility rate	1.6 children per woman
Infant mortality rate per 1,000	6.5
Male life expectancy at birth	73.5 years
Female life expectancy at birth	77.1 years
Urban population	90 per cent
Dependency ratio (15-64)	46
Median age	29.7 years
Youth (15-24)	16.3 per cent
Labour force participation rate (2002)	75.9 per cent
Religions	Roman Catholic, other Christian
Languages	Philippine languages, Chinese, Chamorro, English, other Pacific island languages
Official currency	United States dollar (USD)

¹ Principal source: SPC Statistics and Demography Programme (and its Pacific Regional Information System – PRISM <http://www.spc.int/prism>)

Introduction to the Country Profile

SPC country profiles document the nature and extent the organisation's services to individual members.

This country profile presents basic country facts and a synopsis of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) development background and a narrative summary of the Secretariat's assistance during the period 2006-2008. Annexes include specific country activities and human resource development activities in 2008, and a financial summary of assistance during the period 2006 to 2008.

Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) Development Background

The first European exploration of the Mariana Islands area occurred during the sixteenth century, when Ferdinand Magellan claimed the islands for Spain. After the Spanish-American War of 1898, Spain ceded the portion of the islands comprising present-day Guam to the United States and sold the remainder to Germany. After the First World War, the Northern Marianas came under Japanese occupation. With the surrender of Japan at the conclusion of the Second World War, the Northern Marianas became part of the United Nations Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, administered by the United States. During the 1970s, the people of the Northern Marianas decided not to seek independence but, rather, forge closer links with the US. A covenant to establish a self-governing commonwealth in political union with the US came into force in 1976. A new government and constitution were put into effect in 1978. Unlike Guam and American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) does not have a non-voting delegate in the US Congress.

While the amount has been declining in recent years, CNMI continues to benefit substantially from US financial assistance. Tourism, mostly originating from Japan, employs around 50 per cent of the workforce and accounts for about one-quarter of GDP. During the 1980s, CNMI successfully exploited its status as a free trade area with the US (while not being subject to the same labour or immigration laws) to establish a garment manufacturing industry whose products could be labelled "Made in USA". At its peak, the industry had some 15,000 employees, many of whom were immigrants from China. However, China's accession to the World Trade Organisation, and the consequent lifting of restrictions on Chinese imports into the US, as well as the passing of the Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2007 by the US Congress, put the industry under severe pressure, leading to some factory closures. The future of the industry now seems at best uncertain.



Agricultural production, which includes tapioca, cattle, coconuts, breadfruit, tomatoes and melons, plays a relatively small part in the economy at present. Current environmental issues include contamination of groundwater on Saipan, cleaning up of landfill sites, and the conflict between development requirements and protection of endangered species.

Summary of SPC Assistance to Northern Mariana Islands 2006-2008

This section provides an overview of SPC assistance to the Northern Mariana Islands by division and programme for the period 2006-2008. A more detailed listing can be found in Annex 1.

Land Resources

LRD's assistance to CNMI have been mainly in improving agricultural and forestry productivity, both at policy and project level. This assistance has been via technical assistance, funding support to attend workshops and trainings, and funding/supporting research works. Some initiatives have included nationwide information/awareness & dissemination exercises (eg Learning-tool posters translated into 10 languages, including Chamorro and Carolinian for CNMI). Other key works have included Virus indexing work where two consignments of tissue culture plants have been sent to CNMI (the first since 1992).

In Agroforestry, workshops have been held to look at traditional agroforestry systems and the use of new technologies, techniques and species to enhance the productivity of these systems. An assessment of the capacity of animal health laboratories in the region was undertaken. The strategy developed as a result focuses on networking with international laboratories, capacity building of technical staff, and appropriate International Aviation Transport Association (IATA) certification training for animal health personnel. IATA Certification trainings have been held in 2008 covering both animal health and human health officials. A total of 31 officials, including those from CNMI, successfully completed the certification programme. In 2008, notable activities have included the participation of CNMI nationals in a one-week training course at the University of Guam along with other newly recruited quarantine and customs officers from the northern Pacific. Another key initiative has been the SPC link established with the USDA-APIS office in Guam who are responsible for American Samoa, CNMI and Guam, to progress LRDs work with the US territories.

Marine Resources

Over the last three years, SPC's Coastal Fisheries Programme (CFP) has been assisting CNMI mainly through the funding of participants to conferences and workshops. There is ongoing interest from CNMI for capacity building in a range of areas, plus technical assistance in small-scale fishing techniques for tunas, especially around fish aggregating devices (FADs). SPC supports CNMI in coastal fisheries development although most assistance in this area is provided by US departments.

The Oceanic Fisheries Programme (OFP) provided approximately USD5,000 in assistance to CNMI during 2006-2008. This assistance mainly comprised funding for the participation of a CNMI representative in a tuna stock assessment training workshop. Note that there is little demand in CNMI for the tuna fisheries data management and fisheries monitoring services typically provided by OFP to SPC members, as these services are provided in CNMI by the US National Marine Fisheries Service. However, the OFP can continue to provide support for tuna fisheries research and management in CNMI on a request basis.

Social Resources

The Social Resources Division through three of its programmes has undertaken significant work for CNMI. For example, the Human Development Programme funded the participation of the CNMI delegation to attend the 10th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women in 2007, bringing together decision-makers within Governments, development partners, academics and non-governmental organisations to ensure more rapid progress to advancing gender equality in our region.

The Public Health programme has supported in-country surveillance activities (a diagnostic lab test for dengue and leptospirosis has been provided). Under the PRIPPP and CDC there was procurement of antiviral and supplies for Rapid Containment; and Orientation to planning process and planned testing exercises processes. Other support has included funding support for participants to health sector meetings and training workshops. Future work stems around ensuring more initiatives undertaken at the country level through technical assistance and financial inputs, to address the capacity constraints.

The Statistics and Demography programme fielded a short technical assistance and training needs assessment mission to CNMI in 2007 and a technical assistance mission to assist the Bureau of Commerce in progressing the analysis of its household income expenditure survey in 2008. The programme also conducted a four-week data analysis and report writing workshop in August-September 2008, for staff representing various government agencies.

Other Assistance, human resources development and financial highlights.

SPC's assistance to the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) over the past two years to date has amounted to some USD870,000. Some additional USD400,000 worth of assistance are already programme for the period 2009-2012 for the following sectors: coastal fisheries, human development, land resources, oceanic fisheries, public health and statistics and demography. An SPC joint country strategy mission to CNMI, scheduled to take place in 2009, will pave the way for a more cohesive and country needs mechanism to enhance service delivery, assistance and support for CNMI.

In 2008, twenty four CNMI nationals were trained in marine resources, HIV Care and statistical analysis (a four-week in-country workshop data Analysis and report writing). Another key HRD activity was the International Aviation Transport Association (IATA) certification training for animal and human health officials. Supported by SPC, CNMI officials also participated in a one-week training course at the University of Guam along with other newly recruited quarantine and customs officers from the northern Pacific.

Annex 3 highlights the assistance to CNMI from the various programmes, totalling some USD867,000 the period 2006 to date. This assistance includes technical assistance support, funding support for attendance to meetings and workshops, direct financial grants (which is the case of CNMI has only been in the health sector) and for training activity support such as funding of attachments. Coastal Fisheries has directed the most funding support to CNMI at an amount of USD572,130 for 2006 to 2008; followed by Health at some USD152,572.

**ANNEX 1: 2008 Notable Activities in the Northern Mariana Islands
by SPC Programmes**

Programme	Notable Activity
Land Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * An assessment of the capacity of animal health laboratories in the region was undertaken. The strategy developed as a result focuses on networking with international laboratories, capacity building of technical staff, and appropriate International Aviation Transport Association (IATA) certification training for animal health personnel. In 2008, IATA certification training has been held for both animal health and human health officials. CNMI officials attended and successfully completed the certification programme. * Participants in one-week training course at the University of Guam along with other newly recruited quarantine and customs officers from the northern Pacific. * Link established with the USDA-APIS office in Guam (responsible for American Samoa, CNMI and Guam)
Marine Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Work of regional maritime associations: RMP maintains the Secretariat for four maritime associations, namely the Pacific Islands Maritime Association (PacMA), Pacific International Maritime Law Association (PIMLA), Pacific Countries Ports Association (PCPA) and Pacific Women in Maritime Association (PacWIMA). During the 2007/2008 period, annual general meetings were held for members of PacMA, PCPA and PIMLA * Presented Apia Policy on Coastal Fisheries Management to US Western Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Council membership in CNMI * Took regular part in the Scientific and Statistical Committee of the Western Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Council, which manages the EEZ fisheries of American Samoa, Northern Marianas Islands and Guam.
Social Resources	
Public Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Diagnostic lab tests for dengue and/or leptospirosis * PRIPP – procurement of antiviral and supplies for rapid containment * Orientation to planning process and planned testing exercises processes
Statistics & Demography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Four-week workshop conducted in Data Analysis and report writing in CNMI.

ANNEX 2: 2008 SPC Human Resource Development Activities for CNMI

SPC Programme/ Section	Training subject area (or course title)	Month	Year	Duration	Type: Workshop (course) Attachment at SPC or On-the-job (in-country)	Location (city/town, country)	Number CNMI Participants	Male	Female	Number person days
SRD - HIV & STI	HIV Care Assessment	January	2008	2	Training	Guam	1	1	0	2
SRD - Statistics & Demography Programme	Data analysis & Report Writing	August	2008	20	Workshop	CNMI	8	5	3	160
LRD – Animal Health	IATA Certification Training		2008	5	Workshop	CNMI	1	1	0	5
LRD – Animal Health	Quarantine Training		2008	5	Training	Guam	1	1	0	5
MRD - Coastal Fisheries Management Section	Training for Heads of Fisheries on Fisheries Policy		2008		Training	tbd	2	2	0	
MRD - Coastal Fisheries Management Section	Training on fisheries statistics and stock assessment – phase 2		2008		Training	tbd	11	11	0	
						Totals	24	21	3	172

ANNEX 3: Summary of SPC Assistance to CNMI for the period 2006-2008

Sector/Type of Assistance	2006	2007	2008	Total cost (USD)
Coastal Fisheries				
Technical assistance	288,110	450	3,300	291,860
Participation at meetings, workshops, etc.	4,500	266,770	9,000	280,270
Sector Total	292,610	267,220	12,300	572,130
Human Development				
Participation at meetings, workshops, etc.	0	5,590	0	5,590
Sector Total	0	5,590	0	5,590
Land Resources				
Technical assistance	2,000	4,000	27,643	33,643
Training activities (national, regional and attachments)	0	5,000	11,000	16,000
Research activities	0	3,490	0	3,490
Direct financial grants	0	0	0	0
Participation at meetings, workshops, etc.	21,812	31,812	8,865	62,489
Sector Total	23,812	44,302	47,508	115,622
Oceanic Fisheries				
Training activities (national, regional and attachments)	0	0	0	0
Participation at meetings, workshops, etc.	0	0	5,000	5,000
Sector Total	0	0	5,000	5,000
Public Health				
Technical assistance	0	2,500	12,500	15,000
Training activities (national, regional and attachments)	2,500	0	5,000	7,500
Research activities	87,000	0	0	87,000
Direct financial grants	0	0	22,500	22,500
Participation at meetings, workshops, etc.	3,067	9,310	8,195	20,572
Sector Total	92,567	11,810	48,195	152,572
Statistics & Demography				
Technical assistance	0	2,900	5,459	8,359
Training activities (national, regional and attachments)	0	0	7,500	7,500
Participation at meetings, workshops, etc.	0	0	0	0
Sector Total	0	2,900	12,959	15,859
GRAND TOTAL	408,989	331,822	125,962	866,773