



## Republic of the Marshall Islands

# Environmental Awareness Campaign for Sustainable Coral Reefs



### Background

In the Marshall Islands, 100% of the population lives within sight of the ocean, and the easily accessible coral reefs contribute over 3/4 of the total fish catch for daily consumption, sustaining islanders, and nourishing domestic animals which supply secondary food sources.

There is a deficiency of public awareness and education materials in the local Marshallese language. The resulting limitations in understanding of the environment has led to the destructive use of coral reefs, farming of domestic animals in lagoon areas, and poor waste management practices, all of which have undermined the health of local coral reefs.

### Objectives

This project seeks to revitalise traditional management practices, and use multimedia environmental education as the key to enable communities, traditional leaders and policy makers, to understand and appropriately adapt to their rapidly changing environment, and where possible, help to mitigate their impacts on the reef system.

### Outputs

**Educational Resource Development** - Mission Pacific, in collaboration with Jean-Michel Cousteau's Ocean Futures Society, and the C.A.R.E Program, will revisit materials generated through the Sustainable Reefs campaign, to produce a culturally minded video, and cartoon comic book in the local Marshallese language, to engage the local community.

The materials will highlight the value of coral reefs and illustrate the connections between coral reefs and people, and the potential roles of communities in coral reef protection. In addition, the local focus to the materials will assist communities to identify the fading aspects of their culture such as the indigenous language vocabulary associated with the marine species they observe, and the complex life cycles of the ocean.

**Government Support** - The Ministry of Education will assist in the development and translation of the materials to ensure that they adhere to national educational standards, and are suitable for inclusion in curricula, and will work alongside the Office of Environmental Planning & Policy Coordination's (OEPPC)

International Waters Project (IWP), to facilitate the dissemination of the video and comic book to schools throughout the Marshall Islands.

**Support to Educators** - The efforts of local educators will be reinforced and improved through the provision of new tools and captivating materials with which to teach environmental subjects. It is hoped that this will help to mobilise interest in students and communities to participate in environmental action programmes, that it will promote dialogue in the home, allowing elders to share their knowledge with younger generations, and that ultimately it will challenge local communities to find creative solutions to the new problems and change destructive habits.

**Support to Conservation** - Building awareness and support within community groups may help to foster collaborations and partnerships, and reinforce the efforts of local conservation organisations, to create a more powerful voice in decision making processes related to the environment with a synergistic effect on sustainable resource management.

**Outreach and Dissemination** - Radio programming reaches every atoll in the Marshall Islands and 80% of the population have access to cable programming or VCR's. Broadcasts will be made via the local cable company, and recorded as trailers before movies to ensure wide dissemination.

**Community Involvement** - A meeting of key traditional landowners and community leaders will be convened to appoint a Community Steering Committee (CSC) for the campaign. The primary objective of the CSC will be to devise and motivate traditional management practices to assist in the education of the local community about the preservation of coral reefs.

The CSC will review recommendations made by related projects to formulate collaborative conclusions integral to the development of the script and content for the video sequence and the comic book. They will also select actors and narrators for the project to ensure the effective communication of messages at a local level. The CSC will provide directional assistance to the development of a new coral atoll focussed segment of the video, insuring the involvement and participation of the landowners and local leaders.