

GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY ENABLING ACTIVITY PROPOSAL

Country	Republic of the Marshall Islands
Title	National Biodiversity Conservation Strategy, Action Plan and Report to the CBD
GEF Focal Area	Biodiversity
Country Eligibility:	CBD Ratification 1992
GEF Financing:	US \$ 230,000
Government Contribution:	US \$ 35,000 (in kind)
GEF Implementing agency	UNDP
National Executing agency	Ministry of Resources & Development
GEF Operational Focal Point	None Designated
CBD Focal Point	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Project Duration:	11 months
Estimated Starting date:	April 1997

Background

1. The Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) is composed of 29 atolls and five low-elevation islands located in the north-central Pacific Ocean. Twenty-two of the atolls and four of the islands are inhabited. The atolls and islands are widely scattered in an archipelago consisting of two roughly parallel chains, the western "Ralik" (sunset) and the eastern "Ratak" (sunrise) chains. The combined lagoon area totals 6,511 square km (the lagoon at Kwajalien is the largest in the world) and the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) encompasses over 1.2 million square km.

2. Six atolls and one island are currently unoccupied; of these Taongi and Bikar were identified as sites of special conservation significance. A total of 49 genera or subgenera of major stony corals have been reported in the Marshall Islands (Thomas et al, 1989) and a total of 817 species in 338 genera and 92 families including all reef, shore and epipelagic fishes are known from the Marshall Islands (Randall and Randall, 1987). 95 species of vascular plants are listed from the Marshall Islands and uncertainty exists in the classification of many species as endemic or introduced (Fosberg, F.R., 1988). Several of these plants play a significant role in the Marshallese culture, medicinal practice and tradition. Seagrass species are few and the

marine algal vegetation types remain to be studied and defined in recognizable terms. 31 species of seabirds have been recorded from the Marshalls and 12 are known solely from the Marshalls. All five species of sea turtles have been observed in Marshallese waters, two of these, the hawksbill and green turtle are listed as endangered by the IUCN.

3. Among the major development trends that affect the marine and coastal environment are the rapidly increasing population (annual rate of increase of 4.2 percent) and urbanization. Approximately two thirds of the nation's population lives in one of two urban centers - 45% on Majuro, and 21% on Ebeye. Combined, the two urban centers cover 11.4% of the total land area. Rapid population growth and in-migration have resulted in high urban population densities and over-crowding. A four-fold increase in population has been predicted over the period 1991 - 2030 (OPS, 1994). These demographic trends have disturbing implications for both environmental management and economic development activities.

4. An important consideration and usually over-riding issue in the Marshall Islands is the traditional system of land and sea tenure or ownership. The ownership system presents opportunities and obstacles to the implementation of conservation regimes. Virtually all of the land and by extension areas of the nearshore is held in traditional ownership and any legislation plans, priorities must make provision for strong landowner involvement or support for protected area or biodiversity management. Existing environmental legislation, although not specifically concerning protected areas or biodiversity, is not enforceable to an extent because of the inability to reconcile traditional ownership and "modern" regulatory schemes.

5. The large geographic range of the atolls, isolation from continental areas, traditional ownership systems, the costs & difficulty of communication and inter-island or international transport, relatively low availability of scientific-skilled human resources, rapidly increasing population pressure on resource usage and a diminished awareness of the value of natural resources may be cited as other difficulties in the management of biodiversity in the Marshall Islands.

6. Recognizing that resource and environmental management are keys to the long-term economic development of the nation, RMI actively participated in the formulation of a National Environmental Management Strategy (NEMS), in the context of preparation for the UNCED conference. One of the primary recommendations of the NEMS is the establishment of a network of protected areas; however, currently no marine or terrestrial protected areas of special scientific, or scenic importance have been established. National legislation and, in some atolls, local ordinances aimed at protecting biological resources, such as *Trochus*, and the export of ornamental reef fishes have been enacted, but are rarely enforced.

Project Objectives and Short Description

7. The objective of this EA is to formulate, through a participatory and analytical process, the strategies and actions necessary for the protection and sustainable use of the biodiversity in the RMI and, to prepare a formal plan for their implementation. The primary output will be a National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (BSAP). A National Report to the Conference of the Parties shall be the second output.

8. The salient activities of this project will be to:
- conduct a comprehensive assessment of the existing information, including the existing legislation, institutional arrangements, on biodiversity in the Marshall Islands.
 - conduct an inventory of past & present biodiversity resource use practices and recommend arrangements for implementing biodiversity protection;
 - enhance individual and institutional capacity to implement this project by providing familiarization with methodologies necessary for biodiversity planning.
 - implement a participatory, strategic planning process and develop priorities for action in protecting the biodiversity in the Marshall Islands;
 - prepare a BSAP and the first National Report for submission to CBD-COP.
9. The Enabling Activity will be executed by the Ministry of Resources and Development which will appoint a national project coordinator/planner and establish a National Steering Group¹. The Steering Group will meet as and when necessary to: provide policy guidance, ensure the participation of relevant stakeholders and establish a workplan.
10. The project coordinator will organize and head a planning group consisting of 3 representatives from the Fisheries, Interior and non-government sectors. With the assistance of one junior national consultant and a regional consultant², this group will carry out the range of activities necessary to prepare the BSAP. In view of the limited in-country capability in participatory biodiversity planning methodologies, the planning group, project coordinator and junior consultant will be familiarized by the regional consultant. Familiarization will be provided in strategic analysis and planning for biodiversity management, participatory methods, the use of the WRI/TUCN/UNEP guidelines. Guidance will also be provided to facilitate stocktaking and assessment of existing information by in-country experts.
11. The planning group and consultants will carry out an assessment of the information on biodiversity and a inventory of resource use practices. Further, the indigenous knowledge related to biodiversity management will be selectively assessed. Threats and pressures facing biodiversity will be identified and the root causes analyzed, special attention will be given to biodiversity areas under great threat (for example, biodiversity areas near urban centers).
12. The results of the assessment and inventory will be condensed into reports and analyzed with the Steering Group. Subsequently, this material will be presented to stakeholders via 4 field workshops on selected atolls. Since all atolls cannot be visited because of transport and high inter-island travel cost considerations, representatives of the local governments, atoll development organizations, local communities/resource users, private sector and NGOs will be invited to the field workshops.

¹ Steering group members will be selected to reflect the full range of stakeholders in biodiversity conservation. Participants could possibly be drawn from central and local govt. ministries and agencies, private sector, local communities and NGOs and possibly regional and donor institutions.

² For technical assistance, a consultant will be drawn from the South Pacific region, possibly from the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme located in Samoa.

13. These workshops will form the backbone of the participatory process leading towards the BSAP. Initially, workshop participants will be sensitized with biodiversity, its functions, values and the implications from its loss. Through participatory discussions they will then analyze the results of the stocktaking to identify issues and priorities for action and help develop local strategies and actions for dealing with these issues.

14. The planning group and consultants will formulate reports based on the field workshops. These reports will be synthesized into a draft version of the national strategy and plan which will be reviewed by the Steering Group. A national workshop bringing together representatives of the atoll communities which participated in the regional consultations will then be conducted to discuss the draft BSAP. If necessary new options will be developed but a broad consensus among the participants will be achieved prior to finalization of the details of the BSAP.

15. Upon approval by the Steering group, the BSAP will be presented to the Cabinet of RMI for endorsement. The first national report to the CBD will be completed by the planning group and regional consultant during the last stage of the project and approved by the steering committee.

Coverage without duplication

16. Presently, no duplicative efforts are being undertaken regarding biodiversity planning and management in the RMI. Biodiversity management has not been approached in an overarching national perspective. The stocktaking and assessment will draw upon data from studies undertaken in the past. Existing information will be compiled from a national perspective and analyses considered necessary to promote decision-making concerning biodiversity management will be undertaken (e.g., overall inventory of biodiversity, valuation of biodiversity, economic benefits etc.).

17. The RMI has not developed atoll-based biodiversity conservation programs that are supported by the South Pacific Biodiversity Conservation Programme (SPBCP) of the GEF and therefore lacks a national biodiversity initiative and general awareness of biodiversity issues. The participatory planning and consultative workshops related to biodiversity management will be a first for the RMI which unlike other countries has not initiated measures towards this activity. The consultative process is time-consuming and its costs are high in the RMI due to expensive inter-island travel.

18. The integration of biodiversity issues into other sectoral plans is in its infancy. Presently, a national fisheries policy is being drafted through technical assistance by the Asian Development Bank. The policy emphasizes development of pelagic and nearshore fisheries; however, it provides little attention towards the inclusion of biodiversity issues into atoll fisheries development projects.

National legislation related to conservation, management and utilization of biological resources includes:

19. The 1988 *Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority Act (MIMRA)* led to the establishment of the Marshall Islands Marine Resource Authority, to coordinate and regulate

Project Financing

Activity	Product	Process	Total (US\$)
<i>Stock taking and Inventory of Information</i>	23,600		23,600
2 national consultants	12,000		12,000
Documentation, travel, misc.	11,600		11,600
<i>Identification and Analysis of Options</i>	14,000	107,400	121,400
regional consultant	5,000	20,000	25,000
2 national consultants	8,000	16,000	24,000
familiarization		12,000	12,000
atoll based workshops ³		50,000	50,000
travel, misc.		9,400	9,400
Steering group meetings	1,000		1,000
<i>Preparation of Strategy & Action Plan</i>	16,500	43,500	60,000
regional consultant	2,500	2,500	5,000
national consultants	6,000	6,000	12,000
steering group meetings	2,000		2,000
national workshop		25,000	25,000
travel, misc.		5,000	5,000
dissemination		5,000	5,000
publication/translation	6,000		6,000
<i>Preparation of First National Report</i>	10,000	4,000	14,000
preparation	5,000		5,000
publication/translation	5,000		5,000
promotion		4,000	4,000
<i>Coordination and management</i>	3,205	7,795	11,000
TOTAL	67,305	162,695	230,000

Notes

1) This project's process and product activities will entail extensive consensus building which is necessary to achieve linkages between the land tenure and ownership patterns and biodiversity conservation and management. The success of any conservation plan will hinge upon the "buying into" the plan by the atoll communities.

³ \$ 12,500 has been budgeted for each field workshop. 50 participants will be invited to each workshop for a total of 200 participants. Travel and DSA per participant has been averaged at \$ 250. These field level workshops will bring together stakeholders from priority biodiversity areas as well as state and national level decision makers

2) Project implementation requires the familiarizing of the planning group and 2 national consultants (including project coordinator) for project management and participatory planning. A low cost regional consultant working for a significant duration of the project has been requested by the RMI government for this purpose.

3) The RMI uses the US dollar as its currency. Costs of living and therefore, remuneration in the RMI are well above those for most Pacific island nations. Costs for inter-island travel, accommodation and for communication are also high.

4) The activities proposed in this project are the only initiatives related to biodiversity conservation and protection. Local or internationally supported programs addressing biodiversity are not underway in the RMI, therefore there is a limited base of biodiversity, information, policy and expertise.

5) Government Contribution : The Marshall Islands government shall make in-kind contribution towards the execution of the project. Government shall supply appropriate office facilities, logistical support, coordination of outer island travel, consultations and accommodation, it shall waive fees and taxes concomitant with the project; it shall assign staff to the planning group, the Steering Group and shall recruit the project coordinator. The estimated value of staff time, facilities etc. is US\$ 35,000 over the period of the project.

Deviations from Criteria and Norms

None

Institutional Framework Project Implementation

24. The Ministry of Resources and Development (R&D) which includes responsibilities for resource management, development, agriculture, conservation and tourism development within its diverse functions shall administer the project. The Minister for R&D and the Secretary for R&D are members of the Board of Directors of the Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority (MIMRA) which is an ad hoc agency with responsibilities for the development and management of coastal and marine fisheries and biological resources. Representatives from the Ministry of R&D, MIMRA, the Ministry of Interior (Outer island affairs), the EPA, a women's organization, local communities, NGOs and the private sector will form the Steering Group.

25. A regional consultant will provide the technical expertise for project and will familiarize 2 national consultants and a 3 member planning group. The planning group will be responsible for the day to day project activities, the discussion, analysis and coordination of the national strategy and plan. The planning group will be led by the project coordinator who will be recruited as a national consultant.

26. At the atoll level, representatives from the local government, communities, NGOs, private sector or development associations will participate in the regional workshops. Based on the results of these workshops a national strategy will be prepared and reviewed at a national

level workshop. In addition to national participants, representatives from regional environmental and donor institutions will be invited to the national level workshop.

References:

Fosberg, F.R. 1988 A Review of the Natural History of the Marshall Islands. Honolulu, Hawaii.

National Task Force on Environmental Management with Martha Crawford. 1992. National Environmental Management Strategy, Vol 1 and 2. South Pacific Regional Environment Programme, Apia, W. Samoa.

Office of Planning and Statistics. 1994. Statistical Abstracts of the Marshall Islands. Ministry of Finance, Majuro. RMI.

Thomas, P.E.J. et al. 1989. Report of the Northern Marshall Islands Natural Diversity and Protected Areas Survey. South Pacific Commission, New Caledonia, and East West Center, Honolulu, Hawaii

Initial biodiversity Enabling Activity proposal prepared by South Sea Marine Co. Majuro, MH.

ANNEX A ACTIVITY MATRIX

Enabling Activity	Output	Capacity Building		Public Participation	Comments
Commitment	Planning, Execution	Institutional Strength.	Training		
<i>Stocktaking and Assessment, based on Existing Information</i>					
- biodiversity and biological resources	x				1
- cross-sectoral issues	x				2
- policy and regulatory framework	x				3
- institutional and human capacity	x				
- analysis of root causes of BD loss	x				
- technologies for conservation and sustainable use	x				
- activities with adverse impacts	x				
- existing measures and programs	x				
- preliminary statement of objectives	x				
- identification of gaps	x				
- assessment of existing needs	x				
<i>Identification and Analysis of Options to Meet the Objectives of the CBD</i>					
- strategies for conservation	x	x	x	x	4
- strategies for sustainable use	x	x	x	x	4
- strategies for benefit sharing	x	x	x	x	4
<i>Planning and Preparation of a Strategy and Plan</i>					
- national strategy	x	x	x	x	
- national action plan	x	x	x	x	
<i>Preparation of First Country Report</i>					
- interim report	x				
- first country report	x			x	

Footnotes:

1. Disparate scientific research conducted in the Marshall Islands since World War II and recent qualitative inventories contain data relevant to the assessment of biological diversity. However, no overall assessment of existing information on RMI's biological diversity has been done.

2. The NEMS & draft National Fisheries Policy are two existing strategies related to conservation and sustainable development. Together they recognize biodiversity conservation and the sustainable use of marine resources, however, no overarching strategy or action plan for biodiversity management has been developed through these two frameworks. The agricultural sector has not undertaken a national management plan. Moreover, biodiversity in and of itself has not been an issue that has been considered in other sectoral plans.

3. Conservation regulations have not been enacted by MIMRA. The exploitation of living resources is addressed by the MIMRA Act, but regulation is ad hoc. The project will assess the policy and regulatory framework based on the current reality of resource exploitation and the status of biodiversity.
4. The BSAP will be the first attempt of the Marshall Islands to outline strategies for biodiversity conservation, sustainable use and benefit sharing. Although a NEMS exists its strategies are restricted to protected area establishment and management. The BSAP will be the start of a process of factoring in biodiversity concerns and management into sectoral strategies and plans.

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MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS
MAJURO, MARSHALL ISLANDS 96961

January 31, 1997

To: Nileema Noble, GEF/EA Coordinator
Bureau for Asia Pacific
GEF/UNDP,
New York, New York

Fax: 212-906-5898/ 5825

From: Undersecretary, UN Affairs

RE: GEF/EA proposal letter to New York

RECEIVED	
REAP REGISTRY	
JAN 31 1997	
<input type="checkbox"/> ACTION	<input type="checkbox"/> INFORMATION
TO	
<i>Nileema Noble</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> ACTION COMPLETED	
<input type="checkbox"/> ACKNOWLEDGE	
<input type="checkbox"/> NO ACTION REQ'D.	
INITIALS	

As you requested, we are attaching the endorsement letter signed by the RMI's GEF Political Focal Point, Ambassador Barry deBrum & a letter from the designated national executing agency, Ministry of Resources & Development, to GEF in support of the proposal. I look forward to receiving a favorable reply to the RMI's proposed EA project.

Thank you

Sincerely yours,

Raynard Gideon



cc: Somnay Norindr, Resident Representative, UNDP, Suva, Fiji
Fax 679-301-718
attn: Shashikant Nair

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TEL: 212 906 6998

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**MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS**REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS
MAJURO, MARSHALL ISLANDS 96960

January 29, 1997

Nileema Noble
Coordinator
Bureau for Asia Pacific
GEF-LINDP
New York, New York 20017

Dear Ms. Noble:

RE: GEF /EA activities RMI proposal

In my capacity as GEF Political Focal Point, on behalf of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, I am pleased to submit to your office the GEF Enabling Activity project proposal.

The Embassy of the Republic of the Marshall Islands in Washington, D.C. will be coordinating with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and with the designated national executing agency, the Ministry of Resources and Development to facilitate this project. Please take note of the attached copy of the letter of endorsement from the Ministry of Resources and Development.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have other questions. Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

Benny de Brum
Ambassador to the United States
Embassy of the RMI in Washington, D.C.



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TEL: 212 906 6998

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TEL: 212-906-5825

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REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS
MINISTRY OF RESOURCES & DEVELOPMENT
 P. O. BOX 1727 • MAJURO, MARSHALL ISLANDS • MK 96960
 Fax: (692) 625-3218

November 25, 1996

Nileema Noble
 GEF Coordinator
 Bureau for Asia Pacific
 UNDP, New York

Dear Ms. Noble:

RE: GEF Enabling Activities Proposal / Marshall Islands

The Ministry of Resources and Development (R&D) of the Republic of the Marshall Islands views the opportunity to initiate a national biodiversity strategy, action plan and report to the Conference of Parties/Convention on Biological Diversity on a timely manner.

The RMI Government has considered the Ministry of R&D to be the most appropriate executing agency for this project. I am glad that we shall be able to address the development of biodiversity conservation strategies and mechanisms. Be assured that there is adequate in-country capacity in the public and private sectors from which this project can draw assistance. The project is concomitant with the Ministry's responsibility to promote sustainable development and would receive our full support.

I look forward to a favorable consideration of the project proposal and towards its initiation.

Sincerely yours,

Robert Muller
 Secretary

xc: Somasey Norindr, Resident Representative, UNDP, Suva
 Jiba B. Kabua, Secretary of Foreign Affairs, RMI