



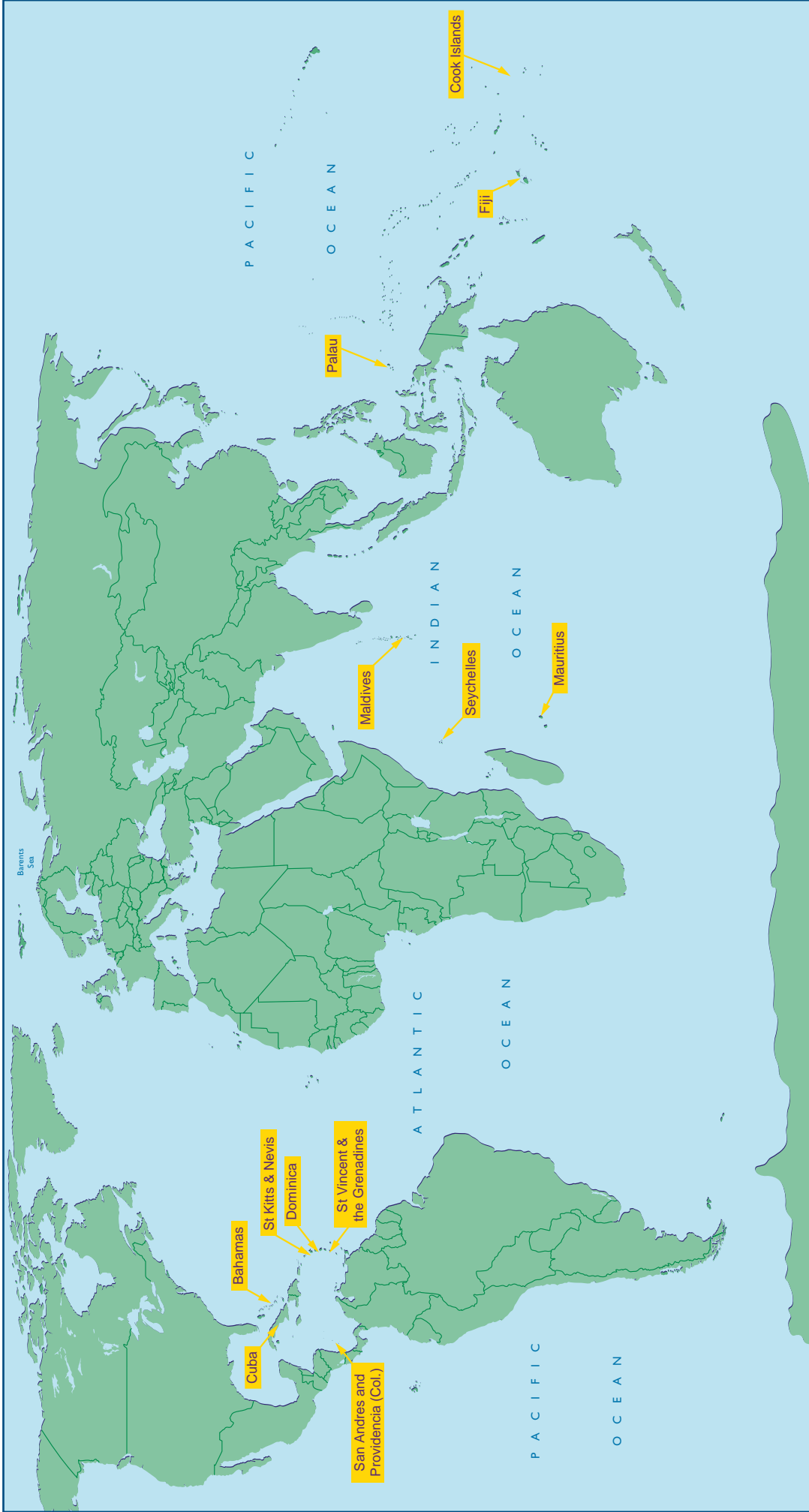
# SMALL ISLANDS VOICE



*Voices in a changing world*



Small Islands Voice focuses on small island developing states and islands with Caribbean, Indian Ocean and Pacific regions. This initiative aims to promote the effective participation of these islands in global and regional development processes.



Island states/territories undertaking national activities within the Small Islands Voice project, as at July 2004. Many additional islands are participating in the project through the global fora.

# SMALL ISLANDS VOICE

## *Voices in a changing world*



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*Opposite page:* Fishermen in Basseterre, St Kitts.



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# F Foreword

**P**eople living in small islands are concerned about the state of the economy, about the security of their jobs, health care for their families and educational opportunities for their children, about rising crime rates and personal safety – everyday issues that also worry people in many other countries around the world. These were the findings of Small Islands Voice, an initiative of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, which set out at the beginning of 2002 to engage islanders in debate about environment and development issues.

For more than a decade now, small islands have been making the case in the world arena that they require special treatment, based on factors such as their small size and relative isolation, their vulnerability to natural disasters and global economic crises, and their limited human resources. While the issues that concern the general public are not specific to small islands, they take on magnified dimensions in the small island context. For instance, when a law-abiding young man is murdered in front of a busload of passengers – everyone in the island is touched because everyone has connections to him. Similarly, when a major hurricane or cyclone strikes, the economy of an island often comes to a standstill for weeks or even months as infrastructure is rebuilt and basic services are restored. There is also a sense of solidarity among islands – when people have to evacuate an island due to a volcano erupting, neighbouring islands are quick to offer help and shelter to the displaced islanders.

It is this sense of being distinct and separate, yet also connected and united, that makes small islands unique, special places to live and visit, and deserving of special treatment by the world community. And as small island representatives meet with the international community in Mauritius in 2005 to review their achievements in sustainable island development over the past ten years and to chart a course for the way ahead, it is these special characteristics that will stand them in good stead.

This present publication describes, in the words of islanders themselves, the issues that concern them, the changes they have seen in their lifetimes and their hopes for the future. The challenge, now that the issues have been defined, is to seek a balance between rapid development and preserving the island ambience and way of life. This is no easy task, especially given the wide range of issues, and the likelihood that the necessary adjustments

will be unique to each island. Small Islands Voice will continue to facilitate the exchanges and debates as well as specific actions on the ground. One of the most promising initiatives is 'Island Visioning,' a process whereby communities and youth envision how their specific localities and islands will look in the future, and then work with their governments to shape that vision and make it a reality.

Credit for the content of *Voices in a changing world* goes to the national co-ordinators and committee members, volunteers, participants in the internet forums, teachers, students, and other islanders who have taken the time to get involved in Small Islands Voice. Recognition and thanks for hosting and maintaining the internet discussion forums goes to Scotland On Line. ■

# A Avant-propos

**L**es habitants des petites îles sont préoccupés par la conjoncture économique, la sécurité de leur emploi, les services de santé pour leurs familles et les moyens d'éduquer leurs enfants, la montée de la criminalité, la sécurité des personnes – toutes choses qui posent également problème aux habitants de bien d'autres parties du monde. Telles sont les conclusions auxquelles est parvenue «La Voix des petites îles», initiative de l'Organisation des Nations Unies pour l'éducation, la science et la culture qui, depuis le début de l'an 2002, engage les îliens à débattre de leurs problèmes concernant l'environnement et le développement.

Voilà plus de dix ans que les petites îles défendent sur la scène mondiale la cause de leur aspiration à être traitées de manière particulière en raison, notamment, de leurs petites dimensions, de leur isolement relatif, de leur vulnérabilité vis-à-vis des catastrophes naturelles et des crises économiques mondiales, de la faiblesse de leurs ressources humaines. Si ces préoccupations ne sont pas spécifiques aux petites îles, elles prennent des proportions démesurées dans le contexte qui leur est propre. Par exemple, lorsqu'un jeune homme respectueux des lois est assassiné sous les yeux des voyageurs d'un autocar, c'est toute l'île qui en est affectée, car tout le monde est lié, d'une manière ou d'une autre, au jeune homme. De même, lorsqu'un ouragan ou un cyclone se déclenche, l'économie de l'île reste souvent paralysée pendant des semaines, voire des mois avant que l'infrastructure ne soit réparée et les services indispensables rétablis. Il existe en outre un lien de solidarité entre les îles : lorsqu'une île doit être évacuée après l'éruption d'un volcan, les îles voisines s'empressent d'offrir assistance et abris aux personnes déplacées.

C'est ce sentiment d'être distinctes et séparées, mais liées et unies qui fait des îles des lieux à part, spéciaux, pour leurs habitants ou leurs visiteurs, et les rend dignes d'un traitement particulier de la part de la communauté internationale. Au moment où les représentants des petites îles rencontreront la communauté internationale à Maurice en 2005 afin de prendre la mesure des progrès effectués en dix années pour mettre en valeur leurs terres de façon viable et planifier l'avenir, ce sont ces caractéristiques si particulières qu'elles pourront faire valoir.

La présente publication illustre, dans les termes mêmes employés par les insulaires, les questions qui les préoccupent, les changements que leur génération a connus et leurs espoirs pour l'avenir. Dès lors que les problèmes ont été définis, il reste à trouver un juste équilibre



entre la rapidité du développement et la préservation de l'ambiance et du mode de vie propres aux îles. La tâche n'est pas simple, étant donné surtout la multiplicité des enjeux et la probable nécessité d'ajuster ces enjeux à chacune des îles. La Voix des petites îles poursuivra ses efforts pour faciliter l'échange des points de vue et les discussions, ainsi que l'adoption d'actions précises sur le terrain. L'une des initiatives les plus prometteuses est celle de «La Vision des îles», processus qui invite les communautés et les jeunes à imaginer à quoi ressembleront leurs lieux de vie et leurs îles, à l'avenir, pour œuvrer ensuite avec leurs gouvernements à façonner la réalité au plus près de leur vision.

La publication *Voices in a changing world* (Des Voix dans un monde en évolution) n'a pu voir le jour que grâce aux coordonnateurs nationaux, aux membres des communautés, aux volontaires, participants aux forums d'Internet, enseignants, élèves, étudiants et autres îliens qui ont pris sur leur temps pour collaborer à La Voix des petites îles. Notre reconnaissance et nos remerciements vont à Scotland On Line pour l'hébergement et la maintenance des forums de discussions sur l'Internet. ■

# P

## Prólogo

**L**os habitantes de las pequeñas islas se preocupan por el estado de la economía, por la seguridad laboral, por el sistema de salud para sus familias y las oportunidades en la educación de sus hijos, por la creciente tasa de criminalidad y por su seguridad personal – situaciones cotidianas que son también motivo de preocupación de los ciudadanos de muchos otros países del mundo. Estos fueron las conclusiones de «La Voz de las Pequeñas Islas», una iniciativa de la Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura (UNESCO), que a comienzos de 2002 lanzó un debate entre isleños en torno a problemas de medio ambiente y desarrollo.

Hace ya más de una década que las pequeñas islas han hecho eco en el ruedo mundial, de su causa a favor de un tratamiento especial, basado en factores tales como su pequeño tamaño y relativo aislamiento, su vulnerabilidad ante las catástrofes naturales y las crisis económicas mundiales, y sus limitados recursos humanos. Mientras que los problemas que preocupan al público en general no son necesariamente específicos de las pequeñas islas, es en el contexto de las pequeñas islas que tales problemas toman dimensiones más pronunciadas. Por ejemplo, cuando un joven respetuoso de la ley es asesinado en presencia de un autobús lleno de pasajeros – todos los habitantes de la isla están conmocionados porque todos están relacionados de alguna manera con él. De manera similar, cuando un huracán o ciclón azota la región, la economía de una isla a menudo disminuye drásticamente o hasta se paraliza durante semanas o meses, mientras se reconstruyen las infraestructuras y se restablecen los servicios básicos. Existe también un sentido de solidaridad entre las islas – cuando los habitantes deben evacuar una isla debido a la erupción de un volcán, las islas vecinas se apresuran a ofrecer ayuda y refugio a los isleños desplazados.

Es esta peculiaridad de ser distintos y aparte, y sin embargo conectados y unidos, que hacen de las pequeñas islas sitios únicos, lugares especiales para vivir y conocer, mereciendo un tratamiento especial de parte de la comunidad mundial. Con ocasión de la reunión programada en las Islas Mauricio en 2005, los representantes de las pequeñas islas harán una reseña de sus logros en la búsqueda de un desarrollo sostenible en sus islas en el curso de los últimos diez años y delinearán el camino a seguir, siendo las características especiales el marco adecuado de tal tarea.

Este documento describe, en las propias palabras de los isleños, las cuestiones que les preocupan, los cambios que han presenciado en sus existencias y sus esperanzas para el futuro. El reto, ahora que se han identificado los tópicos a tratar, es buscar el equilibrio entre un desarrollo acelerado y preservar el ambiente y manera de vivir isleña. Esta no es tarea fácil, particularmente en vista de la amplia gama de asuntos a tratar, y la posibilidad de que los ajustes necesarios serán específicos de cada isla. La Voz de la Pequeñas Islas continuará a facilitar los intercambios y debates, además de acciones específicas en el terreno. Una de las iniciativas más prometedoras es «Visiones de Futuro de las Islas», un proceso por el cual las comunidades y la juventud plantean, imaginan y preveen qué aspecto tendrán sus localidades e islas en el futuro, para luego trabajar con sus gobiernos para dar forma a dicha visión y hacerla realidad.

El mérito del contenido de *Voces en un Mundo en Transformación* corresponde a los coordinadores nacionales, y a los miembros del comité, voluntarios, participantes en foros a través del Internet, docentes, estudiantes, y otros isleños que han dedicado su tiempo para involucrarse en La Voz de las Pequeñas Islas. Reconocimientos y agradecimientos a Scotland On Line por acoger y mantener los fora de discusión. ■

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# E

## Executive summary

**S**mall islands often appear caught between two worlds, trying to hold on to their traditions, while at the same time striving to develop and improve the quality of life for their residents. As small islands review their 1994 Programme of Action for Sustainable Development, together with the international community, the Small Islands Voice initiative of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, has, since the beginning of 2002, encouraged the general public to become actively involved in the review process by exchanging their views on environment and development issues.

Eleven island countries and territories in the Caribbean, Indian Ocean and Pacific regions are involved in Small Islands Voice. By utilizing new communication and information technology as a virtual bridge between the islands, many more are taking part through the internet discussion forums.

The first activity for most of the participating islands was to conduct a representative interview survey of the general public to find out, in a quantitative manner, the main issues. The key concerns for the general public proved very similar amongst islanders in the three regions. Listed in order of priority, they are: (i) economic concerns: high cost of living, high taxes, foreign debt, (ii) employment: lack of jobs, little job security, (iii) inadequate health care, (iv) education needs, (v) further new infrastructure requirements: roads, houses, airports, and (vi) environmental deterioration: waste disposal, pollution, deforestation. Other important issues identified are tourism, decline in moral and/or traditional values, increased crime and violence especially among young people, and good governance.

These issues have been further discussed in meetings, workshops and conferences; in newspaper articles, radio call-in programmes and television shows; and also in the internet discussion forums. This publication documents the concerns, through the words of islanders themselves as they participated in Small Islands Voice activities in-country and online. The issues have also contributed to the review of the Programme of Action.

The discussions highlight the importance of island cultural heritage and how it provides people with a sense of continuity, giving them a sense of belonging and identity. The erosion of traditions and customs, the loss of local languages, and the decline of traditional leadership

(especially in the Pacific islands) are viewed with concern by many islanders, including youth. Among the social issues, increasing crime and violence, especially among youth, is alarming many islanders. Economic issues, foreign investment, tourism, inward and outward migration, and environmental deterioration are also of concern. Furthermore, outer islands of archipelagos such as Cook Islands, Maldives and The Bahamas, are often left out of the mainstream of development.

‘Island visioning’ – a concept whereby islanders determine how they want their communities and islands to develop – is emerging as a future key activity for Small Islands Voice. With an emphasis on turning talk into action, Small Islands Voice aims to assist islanders, where necessary, with making their vision become reality. Future island-visioning activities will focus on communities and youth, with particular attention being given to those living in outer islands, and to utilizing new and emerging innovations in information and communication technology to spread the word among islands. ■

# R

## Résumé analytique

Il semble que, bien souvent, les petites îles soient prises entre deux tentations : rester fidèles à leurs traditions, tout en s'efforçant de relever et d'améliorer la qualité de vie de leurs populations. Au moment où elles révisent, avec l'ensemble de la communauté internationale, leur Programme d'action de 1994 en vue du développement durable, l'Organisation des Nations Unies pour l'éducation, la science et la culture encourage le grand public, depuis le début de l'an 2002, par le biais de l'initiative intitulée «La Voix des petites îles», à participer activement au processus de révision et à échanger des expériences sur les questions d'environnement et de développement.

Onze pays et territoires insulaires des Caraïbes, de l'océan Indien et du Pacifique collaborent à La Voix des petites îles. En exploitant la nouvelle technologie de la communication et de l'information comme un pont virtuel entre elles, c'est un nombre bien plus grand d'îles qui prennent part aux forums de discussion.

La plupart des îles concernées ont commencé par effectuer une enquête d'opinion par interviews auprès du grand public afin de déterminer les principaux enjeux, d'un point de vue quantitatif. Ceux-ci se sont avérés être très semblables chez les îliens des trois régions. Ce sont, par ordre de priorité : (1) les enjeux économiques : cherté de la vie, poids des impôts, dette extérieure ; (2) l'emploi : faiblesse de l'offre, précarité ; (3) l'insuffisance des services de santé ; (4) les besoins éducatifs; (5) le besoin de moderniser les infrastructures : routes, logements, aéroports et (6) la dégradation du milieu : évacuation des déchets, pollution, déboisement. Il reste encore d'autres enjeux, comme le tourisme et ses effets induits, la perte des valeurs morales et/ou traditionnelles, la montée de la criminalité et de la violence, notamment chez les jeunes, et la nécessité d'une bonne gouvernance.

La discussion de ces questions s'est ensuite approfondie grâce à des réunions, des ateliers et des conférences, des articles de presse, des émissions de radio et de télévision ouvertes au public, ainsi que des forums sur Internet. La présente publication fait le point sur ces enjeux, dans les termes mêmes employés par les îliens ayant participé aux activités de La Voix des petites îles – dans le pays aussi bien qu'en ligne. Ces échanges de vues ont également été pris en compte dans la révision du Programme d'action.



Se concentrant sur les points précis identifiés dans les enquêtes par interviews, le débat a souligné l'importance du patrimoine culturel insulaire et montré à quel point les résidents en retirent un sentiment de continuité, d'appartenance et d'identité. L'érosion des traditions et des coutumes, la perte des langues locales et le déclin de l'autorité des chefs traditionnels (surtout dans les îles du Pacifique) inquiètent beaucoup d'îliens, notamment parmi la jeunesse. Au plan social, ce qui inquiète la population c'est la montée de la criminalité et de la violence, surtout chez les jeunes. Au plan économique ce sont les investissements étrangers, le tourisme, les migrations internes, l'émigration et la détérioration de l'environnement. Sans compter que des îles et des archipels très isolés, comme les îles Cook, les Maldives ou les Bahamas sont souvent les oubliées du développement.

«La Vision des îles», concept selon lequel les communautés décident comment elles souhaitent voir se développer leurs territoires et leurs îles, apparaît désormais comme la formule privilégiée de l'action de La Voix des petites îles. Décidée à passer de la parole à l'action, La Voix des petites îles vise à aider les îliens, en cas de besoin, à transposer leur vision dans la réalité. Ses activités s'adresseront désormais en priorité aux communautés et à la jeunesse en ciblant les habitants des îles lointaines et l'utilisation des innovations en matière de technologie de l'information et de communication, qu'elles soient déjà disponibles ou en préparation, pour relier les îles entre elles. ■

# R Resumen ejecutivo

**L**as pequeñas islas a menudo dan la impresión de estar presas entre dos mundos, tratando de mantener sus tradiciones, al mismo tiempo que esforzándose a desarrollar y mejorar las condiciones de vida de sus habitantes. Con ocasión de la reseña y evaluación previstas por las pequeñas islas de su Programa de Acción para el Desarrollo Sostenible de 1994, a la par de la comunidad internacional, la iniciativa «La Voz de las Pequeñas Islas» de la Organización de Naciones Unidas para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura (UNESCO) ha, desde comienzos de 2002, estimulado al público en general a involucrarse activamente en el proceso de reseña y evaluación por medio del intercambio de ideas y puntos de vista sobre problemas el medio ambiente y el desarrollo.

Once países y territorios en las regiones del Caribe, del Océano Índico y del Pacífico participan en La Voz de las Pequeñas Islas. Utilizando nuevas tecnologías de comunicación e información como puentes virtuales entre las islas, muchas más personas pueden ahora participar en foros de discusión a través del Internet.

La primera actividad en la mayoría de las islas participantes en esta iniciativa, fué la de llevar a cabo una encuesta de tipo entrevista entre el público en general para determinar, en forma cuantitativa, los problemas prioritarios. Las preocupaciones principales para el público en general resultaron ser muy similares entre los isleños en las tres regiones. Estas son, en orden de prioridad: (i) problemas económicos: alto costo de vida, altos impuestos, deuda externa; (ii) problemas laborales: falta de empleos, poca seguridad en el empleo; (iii) servicios de salud inadecuados; (iv) necesidades en el sistema de educación; (v) necesidad de nuevas infraestructuras: caminos, viviendas, aeropuertos, (iv) deterioro ambiental: manejo de residuos, contaminación, deforestación. Se identificaron otras situaciones importantes tales como: el turismo y sus impactos, la decadencia de los valores morales y/o tradicionales, el aumento de la delincuencia y la criminalidad, notablemente entre los jóvenes, y la necesidad de buen gobierno.

Se ha continuado a discutir los problemas identificados en reuniones, talleres y conferencias, en artículos de prensa, en programas de radio y de televisión con participación telefónica y también en foros de discusión a través del Internet. Esta publicación ha documentado las preocupaciones e inquietudes, a través de la palabra de los mismos isleños a medida que estos participaban en las actividades de La Voz de las Pequeñas Islas en el terreno o en línea. Las situaciones identificadas han contribuido también a la reseña y evaluación del Programa de Acción.

Las discusiones han contribuido a profundizar las inquietudes identificadas en las encuestas por entrevistas. Estas ponen en relieve la importancia del patrimonio cultural de las islas y como este proporciona a los habitantes un sentido de continuidad, de pertenencia y de identidad. Muchos isleños, incluyendo los jóvenes, presencian alarmados la degradación de tradiciones y costumbres, la pérdida de los idiomas y dialectos locales, y el declive del liderazgo tradicional (en especial en las islas del Pacífico). Entre los aspectos sociales, la creciente criminalidad y la violencia, en especial entre los jóvenes, preocupan a numerosos isleños. Del lado económico, las inversiones del exterior, el turismo, la inmigración y la emigración y el deterioro ambiental son también motivos de inquietud. Además, las islas más remotas de los archipiélagos, tales como las Islas Cook, las Maldivas y las Bahamas, a menudo quedan fuera de la corriente dominante del desarrollo.

«Las Visiones de Futuro de las Islas» – un concepto por el cual los isleños determinan cómo les gustaría que sus islas y sus comunidades se desarrollen – está revelándose como una importante actividad para La Voz de las Pequeñas Islas. Poniendo el acento sobre la necesidad de pasar de la palabra a la acción, La Voz de las Pequeñas Islas intenta ayudar a los isleños, donde fuere necesario, a que su visión de futuro se haga realidad. Las actividades previstas en el marco de las Visiones de Futuro de las Islas, se concentran en las comunidades y los jóvenes, prestando especial atención a aquellos que viven en las islas más remotas, y en la utilización de innovaciones emergentes en la tecnología de la información y la comunicación para conectar las islas entre sí. ■



Transporting goods with a handcart against a background of modern government buildings, Male, Maldives, December 2002.



Replica of traditional men's meeting house (bai) next to a modern statue, Koror, Palau, July 2002.

# 1 Introduction

## **Unchaffed Hands**

BY MAKIUTI TONGIA

*We dance the old dances  
in neon lights  
sing the pagan songs  
in Christian robes*

*We scream and shout  
make love  
in super dollars*

*We live today  
in new tapa\*  
Japanese-made.  
Fly in kites  
that carry our songs*

*We travel the seas  
in unchaffed hands  
with oars and paddles  
in museum cases*

*Our food comes from  
the portable umu\*\*  
Our hope comes  
from abroad*

*\*tapa – traditional bark-cloth costume*

*\*\*umu – oven, traditionally a ground oven*

The world's small island nations and territories are special places providing unique lifestyles for their residents and exotic destinations for many tourists. Caught up in a world where small is beautiful, but small is also marginalized, they face many problems. As they try to hold on to the old traditions, while at the same time striving to develop and provide better lifestyles for their populations, they appear as if caught between two worlds, the old and the new. The adjacent poem 'Unchaffed Hands' from Cook Islands in the Pacific sums up their dilemma.

While every island is unique in its own way, small island nations have come to realize that strength lies in solidarity and that by forming alliances among themselves, they have an important role to play on the world's stage.

## **S** Small islands working together

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, as the world's nations prepared for the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (or the Earth Summit as it is also known), the similarities among small island states became apparent. Island nations share several characteristics including: small size; remoteness and isolation; susceptibility to natural disasters and environmental change; limited economic diversification and access to external capital; poverty; income volatility; and limited human capacity (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2000). The island nations recognized that their strength and international lobbying power lies in working together and the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) was established in 1990. This is a coalition of small island and low-lying coastal countries that share similar environmental challenges and environmental concerns, especially their vulnerability to the adverse effects of global climate change. The Alliance has played a central role in shaping international policy on climate change. The 40 countries making up AOSIS are mainly small island developing States, and there are two observer countries<sup>1</sup>. AOSIS functions primarily as an ad hoc lobby and a negotiating voice for small island developing States within the United Nations system, where it makes up 19% of the world organization's total membership. Member States of AOSIS work together primarily through their diplomatic missions to the United Nations based in New York.

While the Alliance is still working on the preparation of a formal charter, one of its most important founding principles is a commitment to a global reduction in the emission of greenhouse gases that affect climate, particularly carbon dioxide emitted by the combustion of coal, oil and natural gas. AOSIS countries have played very little part in the production of these gases that now threaten their survival. By working together, these small and relatively powerless (in real economic and population terms) developing states have managed to exert a profound and continuing impact on global climate policy. One of the most significant factors

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<sup>1</sup> The member countries of AOSIS are: Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Cape Verde, Comoros, Cook Islands, Cuba, Cyprus, Dominica, Fiji, Federated States of Micronesia, Grenada, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Kiribati, Maldives, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Sao Tome and Principe, Seychelles, Singapore, Solomon Islands, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu. Observer countries of AOSIS are Netherlands Antilles and US Virgin Islands.



Low lying coral atolls such as Vilingilli in the Maldives, above, are particularly vulnerable to rising sea levels; the island of Male, right, capital of the Maldives, is completely protected with sea defences; April 2003.



Almost every year a cyclone or hurricane severely damages one or more small islands, as seen here at Maunday's Bay in Anguilla after Hurricane Lenny in 1999.



Water resources are often limited in small islands and it is particularly important to monitor their use – here the flow of the Layou River in Dominica is being measured, 1987.

affecting the emergence of AOSIS as the powerful and widely heeded conscience of the international community on climate policy, has been the recognition of the truth and justice of its cause by the rest of the world (Davis, 1996). The issue of environmental justice and the moral power of the Alliance's position are extremely important.

During the Earth Summit in 1992, the world community adopted Agenda 21. This represents a global consensus and political commitment at the highest level on development and environment cooperation. Following on in 1994, the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, held in Barbados, attempted to translate Agenda 21 into specific policies, actions and measures to be taken at the national, regional and international level. The resulting Declaration of Barbados and the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States lists 15 priority areas for specific action.<sup>2</sup>

This list was further refined at the Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York in 1999 (Barbados + 5), when six problem areas were identified as being in need of priority attention for the next five years, specifically:

<sup>2</sup> The 15 priority areas for specific action identified in the Barbados Programme of Action are: climate change and sea level rise; natural and environmental disasters; management of wastes; coastal and marine resources; freshwater resources; land resources; energy resources; tourism resources; biodiversity resources; national institutions and administrative capacity; regional institutions and technical cooperation; transport and communication; science and technology; human resource development; implementation, monitoring and review.



Small islands have established marine protected areas to conserve their marine resources, as seen by the above sign in Rarotonga, Cook Islands, November 2003.

- climate change – adapting to climate change and rising sea levels, which could submerge some low-lying island nations;
- natural and environmental disasters and climate variability – improving preparedness for and recovery from natural and environmental disasters;
- freshwater resources – preventing worsening shortages of freshwater as demand grows;
- coastal and marine resources – protecting coastal ecosystems and coral reefs from pollution and overfishing;
- energy – developing solar and renewable energy to lessen dependence on expensive imported oil;
- tourism – managing tourism growth to protect the environment and cultural integrity.

At the fifty-seventh session of the United Nations General Assembly in December 2002, a decision was taken to convene an international meeting in 2004 (rescheduled to January 2005) with a high-level segment, to undertake a full and comprehensive review of the implementation of the Programme of Action.

During 2003, small island developing States began to prepare for the review of the Programme of Action by compiling national assessment reports and taking part in regional preparatory meetings. As this process progressed, it became increasingly clear that the populations of small island nations had not adopted, in any comprehensive manner, the Programme of Action as their own. This may be due to a lack of information, a lack of interest, or an absence of a concerted effort to get the general public involved.

## **S** Small Islands Voice

Early in 2002, the ‘Small Islands Voice’ initiative was started by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). One of the main objectives of this initiative is to encourage people in small islands to take part in the small island developing States’ Programme of Action and other regional and inter-regional initiatives. Another important objective is to encourage people in small islands to exchange their views on environment and development using different forms of communication ranging from the tried and tested methods, such as community meetings, to the newer internet-based modes. Within the scope of this initiative, environment has been defined in a very wide sense to include the natural, social, cultural and economic environment. And finally, Small Islands Voice encourages people in small islands to work together to solve their problems.

Indigenous Carib Indian (right) explains the craftsmanship of basket-making to visitors, Dominica, July 2001.



Preserving historical heritage, as seen here at the Cabrits National Park in Dominica, is an important part of sustainable tourism, July 2003.



The number of internet cafes in small islands is growing; these range from new modern facilities in Male, Maldives to more modest facilities in Basseterre, St Kitts and Nevis, as seen above in 2003.

This is an inter-regional initiative involving in the first instance islands in the Caribbean, Indian Ocean and Pacific regions. It started off on a small scale with activities on the ground in just one island in each region, but has since expanded to include eleven small island territories. Furthermore, a much larger number of islands are involved through internet discussions. Table 1 shows a list of the islands involved.

Since one of the main objectives is to encourage people to take part in the small island developing States' Programme of Action, a starting point for Small Islands Voice was to find out what issues people in small islands are concerned about and whether these relate to those in the Programme of Action. For whatever the outcome of the 2005 review of the Programme of Action, its future advancement will be dependent on how widely it is adopted by island populations.

This publication discusses the issues that concern islanders through their own words. Chapter 2 describes the methods used to determine the issues, while Chapters 3–7 discuss key issues. One of the key characteristics of islanders, whether young or old, is the pride they have in their island home (Chapter 3). This appears to be a universal trait, even among islanders who have lived abroad for decades. The changing structure of island society is discussed in Chapter 4, and here there are unfortunately many negative features such as declining moral and traditional values, increases in crime and violence, and a loss of that 'sense of community' that is so much a characteristic of island living. The improvement of lifestyles brought about by new infrastructure such as roads, hospitals and schools is balanced by worries about the economy and jobs (Chapter 5). Environmental changes are the subject of Chapter 6, while Chapter 7 concludes with some ideas on ways to support sustainable island living.



Public meetings are one way of finding out about issues and exchanging views, St Kitts and Nevis, April 2002.



**TABLE 1. ISLAND TERRITORIES INVOLVED IN SMALL ISLANDS VOICE**

***Caribbean Sea***

*Islands with activities on the ground and also taking part in the internet discussions:*

Bahamas, Dominica, St Kitts and Nevis, St Vincent and the Grenadines, San Andres Archipelago (Colombia)

*Islands taking part in the internet discussions:*

Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, Barbados, British Virgin Islands, Cuba, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, Netherlands Antilles, St Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos Islands

***Indian Ocean***

*Islands with activities on the ground and also taking part in the internet discussions:*

Maldives, Mauritius, Seychelles

*Islands taking part in the internet discussions:* Chumbe Island (Tanzania), Rodrigues

*Other islands from the AIMS (Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Sea) region taking part in the internet discussions:* Ascension Island, Azores, Cape Verde Islands

***Pacific Ocean***

*Islands with activities on the ground and also taking part in the internet discussions:*

Cook Islands, Fiji, Palau

*Islands taking part in the internet discussions:*

American Samoa, Federated States of Micronesia, Hawaii, Kiribati, Kosrae, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu



'Give a Voice' is the Small Islands Voice slogan in St Kitts and Nevis, as portrayed in this colourful folder.

## 2 Finding out the issues

The general public living in small islands is the focus for Small Islands Voice activities. Everyone is a member of the general public, young and old, employed and unemployed. Some members of the general public are well organized into specific groups, e.g. community groups, women's organizations, trade unions or church groups. But there are also some individuals who might not fall into a specific, easy-to-access group. In addition, there are differences between islands, for example the definition of youth in Palau is anyone up to the age of 40 years, while in many other islands the cut-off age is around 30 years. So it is inevitable, that opinions will vary widely on a given topic making the identification of issues a difficult task.

Various methods were employed by Small Islands Voice to determine the issues. The first activity for most islands was to conduct a representative interview survey of the general public to find out, in a quantitative manner, the issues about which they were concerned. Once identified, these issues became the subject of further discussions through meetings and workshops; through newspaper articles, radio call-in shows and television programmes; and also through internet discussion forums.

### Opinion surveys

During 2002 and 2003, opinion surveys were conducted in Cook Islands and Palau in the Pacific; Maldives and Seychelles in the Indian Ocean; and St Kitts and Nevis and St Vincent and the Grenadines in the Caribbean, using similar methodologies. In most of the islands young



people were trained to conduct the interview surveys and thereby benefited from the experience. The individual survey forms, as well as the detailed results and summarized highlights are available on the Small Islands Voice website ([www.smallislandsvoice.org](http://www.smallislandsvoice.org)), and the direct links to each island's survey are listed in Annex I. Similar methodologies were used in each of the three regions, although each island adapted the survey slightly to further their own specific needs and goals.



General public respondents were appreciative of new infrastructure such as wide new roads, seen here in Port Louis in Mauritius (April 2003) and Charlestown in Nevis (February 2002).

Instead of starting with the areas defined in the Programme of Action, a 'blank sheet' approach was adopted, and sample populations were asked about (i) changes they had observed in the past decade, (ii) changes they would like to see in the coming decade, and (iii) the issues about which they were most concerned. In some islands too, respondents were asked whether the public participates enough in planning the future development of their island.

One per cent of each territory's population was sampled. (In the Maldives, one island was selected, Baa Eydhafushi, and 10% of the population was sampled; in the Cook Islands, 2% of the population was sampled in Rarotonga and in five Outer Islands). Efforts were made to ensure the sample populations were representative in terms of geography, gender, age and social status. The logistics regarding the opinion surveys are listed in Annex 1.

Yet, they also wanted to see the historical architecture preserved, such as cobbled passageways in Port Louis, Mauritius (April 2003).



### *Summarized results of the opinion surveys*

As mentioned above, most of the sampled islands adapted the survey questionnaire form to further their own objectives and goals. However, in all the islands, respondents were asked to list the three main issues about which they were most concerned. The issues identified have been prioritized based on the quantitative responses. One of the most interesting results is the similarity of the key issues among the sampled islands in the three regions. The issues, in order of priority, are:

1. Economy
2. Employment
3. Health care
4. Education
5. New infrastructure
6. Environment



The Cook Islands News, above, have played an important role in publicizing Small Islands Voice activities and hosting a Small Islands Voice Youth Page every Saturday, November 2003.

Radio Fiji, April 2003.



Street sign promoting good governance in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, October 2003.

Other important issues, which were not common to all sampled islands in the three regions, but may have been at the top of the priority list for specific islands are:

7. Tourism
8. Decline in moral and/or traditional values
9. Increased crime and violence
10. Need for good governance

Table 2 provides further details about the specific issues raised.

## M Meetings, workshops and conferences

Following the opinion surveys, activities were conducted in all the Small Islands Voice islands to find out more about these issues. These activities included public meetings and national events, workshops and conferences, radio and television programmes, newspaper and magazine articles.

In St Kitts and Nevis, the Small Islands Voice coordinating committee commissioned a local high school's woodworking class to construct a moveable display board that could be used at national events to (i) provide information about particular issues, and (ii) gather opinions about those issues through a suggestion box. The board was displayed at events such as the SCIMATECH (Science, Mathematics and Technology) Fair and Emancipation Day celebrations, as well as at the Caribbean Tourism Organization Conference, which was held in St Kitts and Nevis in September 2003.



Small Islands Voice display board in use at the Caribbean Tourism Conference, St Kitts and Nevis, September 2003.

**TABLE 2. PRIORITIZED LIST OF ISSUES**

**Issues common to all sampled islands in the Caribbean, Indian Ocean and Pacific regions**

1. *Economy*: high cost of living, high taxes, less spending power, increased poverty, sluggish economy, economic stress, national debt, economic stability, economic downturns, shortage of foreign exchange, foreign investment, need for banking services;
2. *Employment*: lack of jobs, job security, low wages/salaries, unfair hiring practices, increased number of foreign workers;
3. *Health care*: insufficient public health facilities, mental health, health care services, HIV/AIDS;
4. *Education*: improvements in school infrastructure and facilities, educational opportunities, tertiary education, vocational training, education for special groups such as teenage mothers, loss of qualified people (brain drain);
5. *New infrastructure*: recent construction of houses, roads, hospitals, airport/seaport, telecommunications, solid and liquid waste disposal systems much appreciated, but further similar development required;
6. *Environment*: waste management, pollution, deforestation, drainage, beach erosion, global warming.

**Issues common to some of the sampled islands in the Caribbean, Indian Ocean and Pacific regions**

7. *Tourism*: new tourism development and improvement of tourism facilities seen as positive changes, but concern about control of tourism and over-dependence on tourism;
8. *Decline in moral and/or traditional values*: breakdown in moral fabric of society, decline in moral values, bad behaviour among young people, lack of respect for elders, eroding traditional values and customs, decline in traditional leadership, lack of community spirit and collaboration – in part due to people being resettled from adjacent islands;
9. *Increased crime and violence*: increased crime rates especially violent crime and crime among youth, public safety, revised penalties for criminals, more crime as a result of increased drug abuse;
10. *Good governance*: political corruption, political greed, political victimization and a desire for international peace.

During a workshop with youth workers in Seychelles in September 2002, participants had the opportunity to brainstorm about 'What are the main issues facing youth today?' In Palau, communities are taking part in a visioning exercise in which they are asked to envisage how they want their communities to look in ten years time. In Bequia, one of the islands of St Vincent and the Grenadines, youth had the opportunity, in August 2003, to present their opinions on environment and development issues to the Hotel and Tourism Association.

The slogan 'Communities at their best' (English translation) has been adopted for the Palau community visioning project.

Young people from the San Andres Archipelago presented their projects and activities at the First Youth World Summit on Experiences and Initiatives in Sustainable Development, in Cartagena, Colombia, in August 2003.

'For me it was a great experience to participate in the First Youth World Summit and exchange experiences and initiatives for sustainable development. I got to meet people from other parts of our country and also from other parts of the world. We also got to exchange ideas and opinions about sustainable development, and to learn about some environmental projects. I would like to see more students assisting in these kinds of programs so that we could have more representatives of our island in a future summit.'

*Camille Jackson, San Andres, August 2003*

Youth in San Andres are also producing their own radio programmes, and a programme called 'Back Chat' in St Kitts and Nevis is providing young people with the opportunity to discuss their views. In the Outer Islands of the Cook Islands, community television is providing the opportunity for young people to develop television broadcasting skills, and for older community members to enjoy local news coverage.

In January 2004, youth in The Bahamas had the opportunity to discuss three main themes relating to sustainable development:

- *Life and love in islands* – island lifestyles and cultures
- *My island home* – safeguarding island environments
- *Money in my pocket* – economic and employment opportunities

They presented the outcome of their consultations, in the form of a manifesto (Ministry of Education and UNESCO, 2004) to the inter-regional preparatory meeting on the review of the Programme of Action for small island developing States. The youth consultation laid the groundwork for a visioning process whereby young islanders can articulate how they want their islands to develop in the future and how they plan to help make this happen.

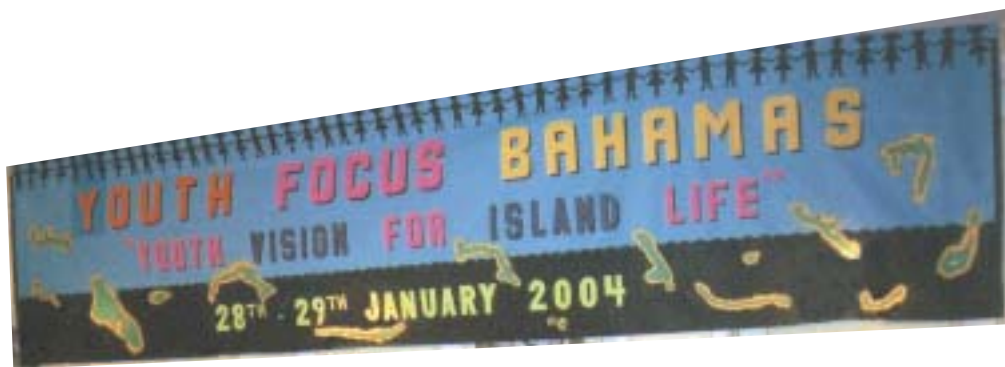


The Cook Islands produced their own Small Islands Voice newsletter, November 2002.

The Back Chat programme, launched in St Kitts and Nevis in March 2004, allows youth to 'backchat' (in a respectful manner) about their concerns.



St Kitts and Nevis have developed their own logo and slogan for Small Islands Voice.



Banner proclaiming the 'Youth Focus Bahamas' event, January 2004.

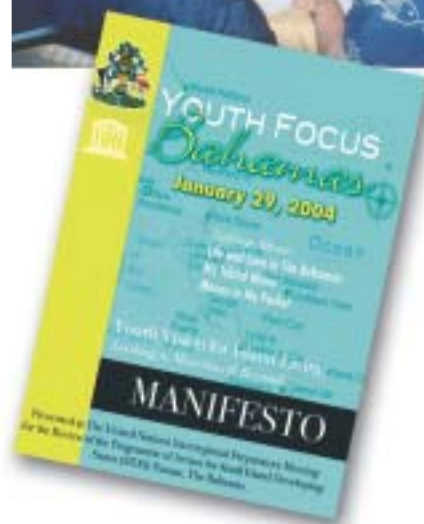
While many of these activities centre on youth, other age groups are also included. In Fiji, community consultations have been held to focus on local issues and in October 2003, representatives of civil society in the Indian Ocean met in Mauritius to discuss key items in the Programme of Action and to devise a way forward for making their voices heard (Calodyne Sur Mer Declaration, 2003).

International conferences have also been used as an opportunity to gather opinions and feedback. A representative of Seychelles attended the Islands of the World VII International Conference in Prince Edward Island in June 2002 (De Comarmond, 2002), and representatives from Mauritius, Palau and St Vincent and the Grenadines participated in the Oceans, Coasts and Islands Conference in Paris in November 2003 (Belmar, 2003 and Chellapermal, 2003).

Inter-regional island workshops provide an opportunity to exchange views and learn about islands in other regions. The Small Islands Voice inter-regional workshop held in Palau in November 2002 provided one such opportunity (UNESCO, 2003).

Another inter-regional workshop, held in Dominica in July 2003, brought together students and teachers working on the Sandwatch project, and provided an opportunity to brainstorm about their concerns and the issues. (The Sandwatch project is an inter-regional one, focusing on monitoring and caring for island beaches.)

Drugs and teenage pregnancy were the most important concerns for youth at the Sandwatch workshop, Dominica, July 2003.



Bahamian youth work on preparing their manifesto, presented at the Inter-regional preparatory meeting, January 2004.



The activities described above are just a 'snapshot' providing a picture of some of the ways in which the Small Islands Voice initiative has been trying to find out the issues concerning people living in small islands. More detailed and specific information relating to individual island activities is available on the website ([www.smallislandsvoice.org](http://www.smallislandsvoice.org)).

## **G**lobal internet discussions

### *General public*

In September 2002, a global internet-based discussion was started among members of the general public to further discuss some of these issues. A particular issue was selected and a one-page article was prepared, often based on a local newspaper item. The first issue selected was road development in Palau. Here a new road is being constructed to circumvent the largest island, Babeldaob. The one-page article was posted on an internet site ([www.sivglobal.org](http://www.sivglobal.org)) and was also sent as an e-mail message to members of the general public in small islands with a request for responses. The substantive replies were summarized and combined by a moderator into a follow-up response, which was posted on the website and sent out by e-mail two weeks later. This process continued until the responses stopped, after which a summary of the entire discussion, together with a compilation of all the responses (in full) was posted on the Small Islands Voice website. Then the discussion moved on to a new topic in a different island and a different region. At the beginning of 2004, the list of persons to whom the articles and responses were sent via e-mail totalled 15,000. Table 3 lists the issues that have been discussed up to the beginning of 2004.

**TABLE 3. ISSUES DISCUSSED ON THE SMALL ISLANDS VOICE GLOBAL INTERNET FORUM**

<b>ISSUE</b>	<b>NUMBER OF SUBSTANTIVE RESPONSES</b>	<b>PERIOD OF DISCUSSION</b>
1. Road construction in Palau, Pacific	45	Oct–Nov 2002
2. Beach access in Tobago, Caribbean	31	Nov '02 – Feb '03
3. Tourism policy in Seychelles, Indian Ocean	27	Feb–May 2003
4. Foreign investment in Cook Islands, Pacific	20	May–Jul 2003
5. Increased youth crime and violence, Caribbean	26	Jul–Sep 2003
6. Export of freshwater, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Caribbean	27	Sep–Dec 2003
7. Airport development, Aitutaki, Cook Islands, Pacific	20	Jan–Mar 2004
<i>The forum can be accessed at: <a href="http://www.sivglobal.org">www.sivglobal.org</a></i>		



Table 4 shows the summary of the discussion about one of the issues – tourism policy in Seychelles. Summaries relating to the other issues are available in Annex 3. In addition all the summaries, as well as the complete compilations of all the responses received on each issue, are available on the Small Islands Voice website.

#### **TABLE 4. SUMMARY OF RESULTS OF INTERNET DISCUSSION ON TOURISM POLICY IN SEYCHELLES, 2003**

##### **SMALL ISLANDS VOICE GLOBAL INTERNET-BASED FORUM**

[WWW.SIVGLOBAL.ORG](http://WWW.SIVGLOBAL.ORG)

##### **Summary of discussion on tourism policy in Seychelles, Indian Ocean**

Date of discussions: Feb–May 2003

Number of persons on distribution list: 10,000

Number of substantive responses: 27

##### **Main issue**

Should up-market resorts be the main thrust of a national tourism policy in Seychelles?

##### **48% of the respondents support the idea that a tourism policy based mainly on up-market resorts is misguided.**

- An emphasis on large resorts cuts out many local players and may cause social problems.
- Large foreign-owned establishments often result in profits leaving the island.
- Small establishments provide more benefit to local people, and to the local economy, especially if they are well marketed.
- Government policy in some islands favours large investors; such a policy may have human-rights implications.

##### **4% of the respondents support the concept that an up-market tourism policy provides many unique benefits.**

- Benefits include increased spending power, a market for special services, limited environmental impact.

##### **19% of the respondents support the view that a good tourism policy requires cooperation from all societal sectors.**

- Dialogue and active involvement of government agencies, NGOs, the private sector and communities is essential for an effective tourism policy that is beneficial to the island.
- Tourism needs to provide for the development of local people as well as supplying foreign exchange.
- In view of the vulnerability of the tourism industry to global events, a diversified economy is sounder than one based purely on tourism.

##### **29% of the respondents discussed other issues.**

- People need to take action.
- Governments need to implement laws.
- This forum needs to be more interactive.
- Long-distance air travel is damaging to the environment.

While it is difficult to know how many people actually read the articles and the responses, some of the feedback from respondents is encouraging.

**'I think the best thing happening to our country is the good flow of dialogue from various parties and stakeholders of tourism in Samoa. I wish all the contributors to this forum, best wishes upon your struggle to save the small islands of the world.'**

*High Chief Vaasiliifiti Moelagi Jackson, Savaii Island, Samoa  
(Global forum, February 2003)*

**'I thank you for the forum as I think it gives a great insight into the concerns and grief of us all in small island territories.'**

*Anthony Garland, Turks and Caicos Islands (Global forum, May 2003)*

In some islands, newspaper editors have contacted the moderators of the Small Islands Voice internet forum asking to place some of the articles and responses in local newspapers; permission has always been granted since this is another way of widening the scope of the discussion to those who do not have access to the internet.

Articles from the global forum are sometimes reproduced in local newspapers, Tia Belau, November 2002.

**'Thanks so much for sending us this article and feel free to send more in the future...we'll publish it in our paper.'**

*Editor, Diario Belau, Palau (Global forum, October 2002)*

**'I write from the BVI StandPoint newspaper, a weekly paper in the British Virgin Islands. Earlier this month we started receiving your e-mails regarding Small Islands Voice. I went to the website, and was impressed with the idea, since we on small islands often feel like no one understands our problems. I would like to know whether you would allow us to run your e-mail newsletters from time to time, so we could share with our readers what other islanders are thinking about.'**

*Susanna Henighan, British Virgin Islands (Global forum, October 2002)*



However, having English as the language for discussion brings with it obvious limitations:

**'I was born in and still live in a small island archipelago in the Atlantic Ocean, the Republic of the Cape Verde Islands. We have so many problems, and we would like to talk about them with others who have identical problems. The problem is the language; we speak Portuguese and so it is not easy to communicate in English. But we try our best.'**

*Ludgero, Cape Verde Islands (Global forum, October 2002)*

Discussion items have been used for different purposes, e.g. trying to influence local politicians about a particular course of action and for use in public hearings.

**'I thought this might come in handy for next week's public hearing on the two issues, it talks about development and changes that will inevitably affect Palau's future.'**

*Brenda Tarimel, Palau (Global forum, November 2002)*

Discussions on particular issues may benefit other islands facing similar problems. In the latter part of 2003, the forum discussed the advantages and disadvantages of a proposed spring-water bottling plant in St Vincent and the Grenadines in the Caribbean. A response from Kosrae in the Pacific reads as follows:

**'This forum is quite timely as Kosrae State in the Federated States of Micronesia is scrutinizing a foreign investment proposal for a water-bottling project proposed to be established here. Kosrae is a small volcanic island, only 42 sq. miles in size with a growing population. The water consumption and use at the local community level is increasing every year. I totally agree with Temaki Tebano's comments on this issue. Our water resource is a gift from God for our use, not for foreign investors who are constantly looking for opportunities to exploit our resources and make lots of money from them. Who will benefit from foreign investment project like this one in Kosrae in the long run? Local resource owners may benefit a little and so might our economy, but certainly foreign investors will be richer and much of the project income will be theirs to enjoy.'**

*A. S. George, Kosrae (Global forum, October 2003)*

One of the most important benefits of the forum is how it can really assist islanders around the world in exchanging information and lessons learnt.

While the internet discussion provides a useful picture of public opinion on several key issues, it only represents a percentage of island populations given the still limited internet penetration in small island households. Nevertheless the potential of the internet especially for regional and inter-regional discussion is enormous.

## **Youth**

Starting in September 2002, an internet-based youth discussion forum was launched involving students in secondary schools from five island countries: Cook Islands and Palau in the Pacific, Seychelles in the Indian Ocean, St Kitts and Nevis and St Vincent and the Grenadines in the Caribbean. Based on informal feedback and a formal assessment (see website), this was extremely successful.

**'I really liked the Small Islands Voice internet-based youth forum because it gave students of different cultures and nationalities the opportunity to learn more about everyday life and the disadvantages/advantages of a small island. It also enabled us to develop our different points of view and ideas about the future of our islands. Through Small Islands Voice, I have also had the opportunity to communicate with students from islands in the Caribbean and the Pacific and discovered that they share some of our best things like culture, sports and language.'**

*Thyra Faure, Anse Royale Secondary School, Seychelles (December 2002)*

Students in Bequia use a local internet café to access the Small Islands Voice youth forum, November 2003.



In 2003, the youth forum entered a second phase involving more schools and allowing more flexibility. Schools in eleven island countries were involved (see Annex 2) and the discussions took place over the period March to November 2003.

This un-moderated discussion forum is password protected for students' use. However, for viewing the articles and responses, the forum can be accessed at [www.sivoyouth.org](http://www.sivoyouth.org) with username *view* and password *only*. Students choose their own topics for discussion, a new article is posted every two weeks, and then participants have a two-week period to respond, ask questions, and make suggestions. A glance at the titles of the articles (see Table 5) shows the variety of the subjects covered.

Following the opening of a Small Islands Voice internet centre in St Kitts and Nevis, a student visits the youth forum for the first time, July 2003.



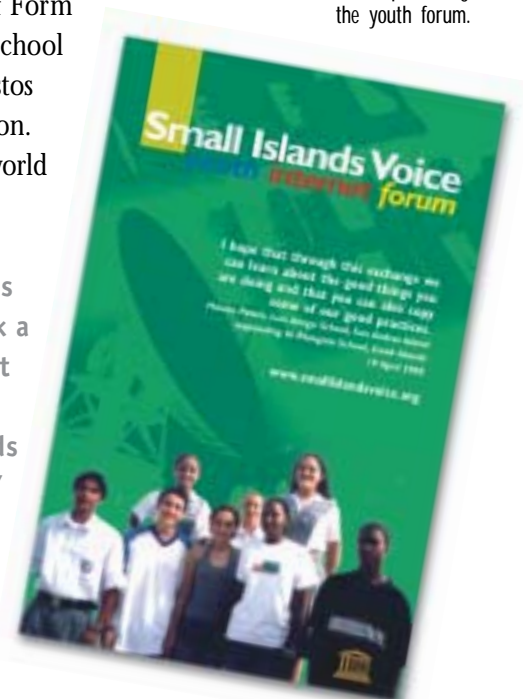
One very interesting topic discussed on the forum concerned an article prepared by the students of Form 2, Nikao Maori School

Poster promoting the youth forum.

in Rarotonga, Cook Islands. They described the removal of an asbestos roof from one of their school buildings when students were in session. Some of the responses from other young people from around the world follow:

**'It was interesting reading your article on asbestos roof removal and its hazards. We would like to ask a question to the education administrators who first thought of having these asbestos roofs, whether they knew about the consequences and the hazards that asbestos roofing would create for our health.'**

*Small Islands Voice volunteers, Araura College, Aitutaki, Cook Islands (Youth forum, July 2003)*



**TABLE 5. TOPICS DISCUSSED DURING PHASE 2 OF THE SMALL ISLANDS VOICE INTERNET-BASED YOUTH FORUM**

NAME OF ARTICLE	DATE POSTED	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
<i>Agriculture (Tu anga Tanutanu)</i> Form 4T, Nukutere College, Cook Islands	11.03.03	20
<i>Our island traditions</i> 4th Form, Bequia Community High School, St Vincent and the Grenadines	25.03.03	15
<i>Island heritage: pride in uniqueness of our island home</i> Senior 2, Mangaia School, Cook Islands	08.04.03	48
<i>Need for recycling in view of increased dumping, littering and garbage</i> S4 students, Praslin Secondary School, Seychelles	22.04.03	22
<i>Education on Aitutaki</i> Araura College Students, Aitutaki, Cook Islands	06.05.03	8
<i>Palauan traditions</i> Gavin Sugiyama, Mindzenty High School, Palau	20.05.03	11
<i>Drug abuse</i> B. Johnson, M. Rubena, H. Ngairinga, M. Tawake, Form 2, Avarua Primary School, Cook Islands	03.06.03	17
<i>The asbestos issue in our school</i> Tereapii, Lisa, Metua, Makara, Jonathan, Terepai, Form 2, Nikao Maori School, Cook Islands	17.06.03	7
<i>The problems affecting drinking water quality in Rakiraki (and associated health effects)</i> Sandeep, Sachindra, Lavenia, Ratu Buatavatava, Rakiraki Public High School, Rakiraki District, Fiji	09.09.03	7
<i>Health issues in Mauritius</i> Hishaam Jambocus, Sookdeo Bissondoyal, Form VI College, Mauritius	23.09.03	5
<i>Lack of jobs for school leavers and limited choice of jobs</i> Baa Atoll Education Centre, Baa Atoll, Maldives	07.10.03	5
<i>Gang violence</i> Marigot Secondary School, Dominica	21.10.03	4
<i>Alternative use of fish</i> Frank Mitchell, Centro de Educación Media Diversificada, San Andres Island	04.11.03	5
<i>Living in a small island – boon or bane?</i> Fathmath Waheedha, 9F, Gaafu Dhaalu Atoll Education Center, Republic of Maldives	18.11.03	10



Students and their teacher from Anse Royale Secondary School, Seychelles, who were sufficiently concerned about the asbestos article to do their own research, July 2003.

**'Sorry for the delay in not responding sooner. After much research and contact with the authorities we have found out that asbestos is also found in Seychelles but in very small proportions. According to them it is found in water pipes close to our school, a few industries and at certain homes. Your article raised a lot of concern here to make sure that students and other people are safe from asbestos. Thanks for the article which has helped raise a lot of questions.'**

*Students, Anse Royale Secondary School, Seychelles (Youth forum, July 2003)*

The article posted by Mangaia School, Cook Islands, on island heritage is also noteworthy because the school did not have internet connections at that time. Instead, all the responses were faxed by the Small Islands Voice coordinator in Rarotonga to the students in Mangaia (a separate island), who then, by fax back to the coordinator, answered questions and made further responses as appropriate. (Late in 2003, the school was connected to the internet.) In responding to Mangaia School's article, a student from San Andres Island, Colombia, summarizes some of the benefits of the forum:

**'It is really nice reading about your heritage. It is when we observe the similarities of island life. Islanders have many things in common and I hope we can continue sharing these and contribute through this exchange to learn good things you are doing and that we could copy; just the same you can also copy some of our good practices. We know that the way we do things on islands is very different to continental areas and we need to get together and collaborate with each other to improve our livelihoods.'**

*Hauke Peters, Luis Amigó School, San Andres Island, Colombia (Youth forum, April 2003)*



Nikao Maori School in Rarotonga, Cook Islands, a beautiful location, and some of its students who submitted an article to the youth forum about the use of asbestos in their school building, July 2003.

The success of the internet-based youth forum is particularly significant in view of the difficulties many schools and many islands have with internet access. Most of the schools involved in the forum have only one computer connected to the internet, and often connection and usage costs are high. Although it should be noted that, in some islands such as Cook Islands, special rates have been negotiated for the Small Islands Voice forum. In other islands, problems exist because of outdated equipment.

**'The Marigot Secondary School (Dominica) has been so happy and grateful to be part of the Small Islands Voice forum, and the students are so excited to be participating in the forum. However, in mid-October due to persistent lightning and thunder, the school lost both its modems and its phone line. Also other contributing factors, i.e. the system becoming overheated and the corrosion of the main board due to sea salt, have restricted our participation in the forum and have negatively affected the functioning of our computer sciences classes. Unfortunately we cannot proceed until this equipment has been repaired.'**

*Mr Marie, ICT Teacher, Marigot Secondary School (December 2003)*

## **C** Concluding comments

The internet, while providing a wonderful form of communication and means of sharing information, cannot replace face-to-face dialogue and discussion. Being able to argue a point with another person, to see the impact in the expression in his/her eyes and to get an instant retort cannot yet be replaced by the internet. In addition, many island societies, especially in the Pacific, have an oral tradition. So while Small Islands Voice will continue to use tools such as the internet for communication and discussion, it will also continue to use other means such as face-to-face dialogue, meetings and workshops, activities and events, newspaper, radio and television to gather opinions and exchange ideas about island issues.



Port Elizabeth, Bequia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, March 1999.



Pollution is a problem many islands share, as seen here in the discarded oil bottles and other solid waste that has collected in a small inlet near the airport in Bequia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, March 1999.

# 3 Island heritage

*'Bequia is one of the most exquisitely enchanted and the largest of the Grenadine Islands. Bequia is well known for its warm tropical climate, white and sometimes golden sandy beaches, accompanied by our ravishing sapphire seas, which surround our beautiful and peaceful island. Bequia is located in the Windward Islands at 13° North, 60° West and nine miles south of mainland St Vincent in the Caribbean Sea. Our island has a large percentage of lush vegetation mostly between the months of May and September, which are considered by our older folks as the rainy season. The people of Bequia, with our friendly, angelic and radiant smiles and behaviour can do a lot to encourage our tourists to relax and really enjoy their stay.*

*We are well known for our fishing boat races and whale catching which expresses our culture and it shows how the people of our island are innovative and very interested in their local festivals. One of the most participative festivals is the Easter Regatta. There are more advantages of living on Bequia. Some of which I will now list here. First of all with a very small population there is a lower percentage of violence. In Bequia the landscape is so small that it is almost impossible to get lost and everyone will be known to you. The fewer the people and houses being built, the more land there is to construct tourist attractions such as wildlife sanctuaries, tourist departments and local exhibitions, and also less deforestation taking place. People have turned away from the land and cultivation of peas, corn and cassava is not as popular with the younger generation as with their grand and great grand*



parents. Also with the coming of electricity, charcoal isn't burnt as often as it was in the past generations. In Bequia our small population means fewer mouths to feed, so that would increase the percentage of the marine life due to fewer fishermen. All these natural resources, kind hearted people and our cultural packages are what help to attract tourists to our beautiful island.

There are also some disadvantages of living on a small island, but the biggest and most important one of all I think is the lack of jobs. More hotels, restaurants, fisheries, boutiques and supermarkets need to be built to provide more jobs. With our small population we are at a very high risk of contracting diseases and there might be a lot of incestuous relationships taking place. There is another disadvantage that often has our island appear to be corrupt, it is the fact that there always seems to be gossip from one person to another about someone else which sometimes isn't really true. Another disadvantage is that we are not as highly developed as our neighbouring countries.

Due to our small amount of local export goods and the high prices of imported products from foreign countries, our finances are declining. The last disadvantage, which is considered a worry to us, is the fact that there are not enough opportunities for young people to expand themselves. When students finish their college and secondary education they can only be involved in the hotel industry, fishing industry or some just end up being taxi or mini bus drivers. These disadvantages should be looked into carefully by our surrounding communities and the government.

There are three major things that should be changed in Bequia, such as the health facilities. They should be cleaned at all times, rebuilt and have qualified doctors who can use new medical devices. All tools should be new and sterilized. Another thing that should be enforced is the introduction of garbage disposal rules, a new process such as recycling should be looked into. As an example, using broken glass bottles, mixed with sand and cement to make benches for schools, is what our school is currently doing. The last thing to be changed is a better and more organized police force and coast guard. One of the most important factors is that right now the big coast guard boats are on dock for repairs and there is only a little dingy boat for use. There should also be a stronger means of communication to locate lost boats.

*Bequia can be whatever we want it to be, all we have to do is make progress in developing our island.'*

*Tammy Williams, Trachia Simmmons, Ugo Davis, Bequia Community High School, Bequia, St Vincent and the Grenadines (Youth forum, September 2002)*



Anse Georgette in Praslin is among Seychelles' most beautiful beaches, March 2003.



St Vincent's mountainous interior provides a scenic backdrop for the port of Kingstown, June 2002.

This article by students from Bequia Community High School and entitled 'Advantages and disadvantages of living in a small island' launched the first phase of the Small Islands Voice internet-based youth forum on 16 September 2002 and provides a framework for the key issues discussed in this publication. The students are obviously proud of their island's beauty and their traditions and they perceive their small size as an advantage; yet they recognize the disadvantages of island life such as few job opportunities and are willing to talk about subjects that are often kept hidden, such as incest and gossip. The enthusiasm to effect change for the better is clearly stated in the last two paragraphs '*Bequia can be whatever we want it to be*'.

Island heritage and culture are important in many ways, and especially because they provide people with a sense of continuity, giving them a sense of belonging to a particular place, and becoming a part of their identity. The youth taking part in the internet discussion forum show an immense pride in their respective islands, and want to display this aspect of island life to the rest of the world. They were happy to discuss this topic over and over again. Older island residents exhibit the same pride in their heritage, although perhaps in a more reserved manner. Thus this chapter focuses, for the most part, on youth's perception of island heritage.

## Natural beauty of islands

Young people and adults alike recognize the beauty of their islands and often heated debates break out as to which island has the best beaches or the most exciting carnival.

**'In Seychelles we have over 500 beautiful beaches. We are lucky in the sense that if one is restricted there is always another one to go to ... Seychellois love to picnic, it is a great Sunday pastime. We do not have huge movie halls or shopping complexes to keep us busy on the weekends. We have our Nature, our beaches, the sea and our mountains.'**

*Nathalie Savy, Seychelles (Global forum, February 2003)*

'Mangaia is a beautiful island and it has friendly and beautiful people. The best thing about our island is freedom. It is a safe secure place. You can go anywhere you want, anytime you want. Our paradise is a wonderful and peaceful island. This is especially important to us at this time because the world is not at peace; there are wars and conflicts in big countries and small islands.'

*Students from Mangaia School Senior Class, Cook Islands  
(Youth forum, April 2003)*

Presentations of dance, music and national costumes are much appreciated at important events, as seen here at the Sandwatch workshop, Dominica, July 2003.

## T Traditions, culture and language

Traditions and culture are also an important part of island life, and range from cooking methods to music, and from dance to language. These aspects of daily life are cherished by young and old alike as seen in the following extracts from the Small Islands Voice internet-based youth forum.

'Of all the positive aspects of living in St Kitts, the one that we found most significant to us is our culture. Just like Bequians, Kittitians love to express themselves and display their culture through dance, drama and music. Many people have formed dance, drama and musical groups which perform traditional African dances like those done by the masquerades, clown, bull and the mock jumbies; latin dances; contemporary American; rap style dancing and singing; and Jamaican reggae dancehall style dancing and singing. However, the dance style that young Kittitians (and some old ones too) are best known for is what we call "wuk-up". "Wuk-up" is a circular whining and gyrating movement of the hips and buttocks to a blend of soca and fast rhythm or what we call "wilders/wilers" because of the frenzy it puts listeners into.'

*Students from Verchilds High School, St Kitts  
(Youth forum, September 2002)*

'Our festivals celebrate our culture. We are just over two hundred years old. Our ancestors came from Europe, Africa and Asia. This makes us a real multi-cultural society and perhaps another advantage of being a Seychellois. We have three national languages and we only hear about the issue of race on television. So, we have what we call a "Creole Week".



Explaining the symbolism of each island's flag was an important part of the Sandwatch workshop, Dominica, July 2003. Here Ms Jeanette Larue describes the Seychelles' flag.

During a Caribbean regional civil society consultation in Trinidad and Tobago, Mr Shango Abayomi puts some of the discussions to music, October 2003.





Punanga Nui Cultural Market, Rarotonga, Cook Islands, November 2003.

During this festive week, we celebrate our traditions, which originate from the three continents, plus those that we have gathered in the most recent decades.'

*Tyra Faure and Juliette Elizabeth, Anse Royale Secondary School, Seychelles (Youth forum, September 2002)*

Visitors are treated to a traditional feast served in palm leaves at Sataoa village, Samoa, December 2000.



'We too keep our tradition in agriculture. We use a calendar called "Ara Po". It's what our ancestors used and it's very useful. It tells us when and what to plant and what will happen. We also have a traditional way of cooking that we still use. This is called an "Umu" which is an underground oven and we put in many different types of food. When we have an "umu kai" we also use traditional plates made out of "kikau" palm leaves. In the Cook Islands we too keep our traditions and are very proud of them.'

*Students from Nukutere College, Rarotonga, Cook Islands (Youth forum, April 2003)*



Taro patch, Rarotonga, Cook Islands, June 2002.

Language is another important part of island life. Students from St Lucia in the Caribbean and from Seychelles in the Indian Ocean were excited to learn that they both spoke Creole (spelt Kweyol in Seychelles). The importance of language as part of island identity cannot be overstressed:

'As for language it's very important. In Palau we speak Palauan and English. Most of the old women know some Japanese because of the war and all that. Without language, then who are you? I think that it's very unique. Never lose your language.'

*Student from Mindzenty High School, Palau (Youth forum, April 2003)*

Ms Maarametua Murare (right), youth representative from Cook Islands, presents a black pearl, one of her country's products, to Hon. Sandra Pierantozzi, Vice-President of Palau, during the Small Islands Voice First Inter-regional workshop, Koror, Palau, November 2002.



## Loss of cultural heritage

Young people expressed concern that their traditions are disappearing and their culture is being lost. This can be seen clearly in the following two descriptions of Nine Mornings, a tradition in Bequia in St Vincent and the Grenadines.



Preserving architectural heritage is an important concern in Charlestown, Nevis, February 2002.

**'We are the only nation in the world that keeps the tradition of Nine Mornings – it is unique to us. Nine Mornings was first celebrated in the days of slavery when the slave masters carried the slaves to church with them in the early hours of the mornings leading up to Christmas. After church, the planters socialized with a breakfast feast while the slaves had their own form of merriment – drumming and dancing before the day's work began. Our Nine Mornings takes place from 15–24 December every year. Festivities last from midnight to 6:00 am. Our festivities include: cultural packages, village light-up, fetes, ethnic fashion shows, food displays and indoor games such as cards and dominoes.'**

*Student from Bequia Community High School  
(Youth forum, March 2003)*

**'In Bequia there are a lot of international traditions that are taking off in our small society and changing the traditions of our local people and our ancestors. It shows in our Nine Mornings, which long ago was a period of time when people went house to house singing and serenading, but over the past years the young generations have turned it into a party, where people jump and wine until morning, forgetting all about the essence of Christmas.'**

*Student from Bequia Community High School  
(Youth forum, May 2003)*



Religion is an important part of life for many islanders; the place of worship may vary from a church (Rarotonga, Cook Islands) to a mosque (Male, Maldives).

This concern that traditions are disappearing is also borne out by young people in the San Andres Archipelago. This is a group of islands in the Caribbean belonging to Colombia. The islanders are descendants of African slaves and English settlers, and thus have strong cultural links with many other Caribbean islands. However, during the 20th century there were attempts by the Colombian government to replace their native language and religion with those



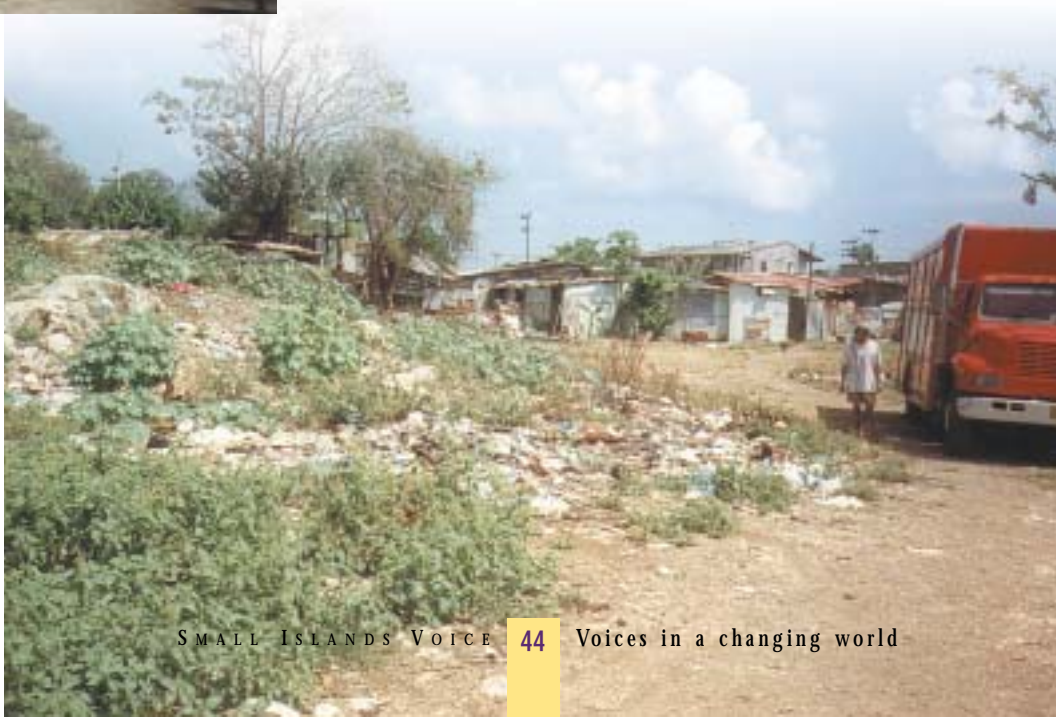
of the Colombian mainland. Combined with the establishment of a free port in the 1950s, the development of tourism, and extensive migration from mainland Colombia to the archipelago, much of the islanders' cultural identity has been lost.

'In our Archipelago, traditions are falling every day deeper and deeper into a hole. Since the immigration to our archipelago during the 1960s, our native culture has begun to lose importance to our native people. The main topic was commerce and all other themes were less important. Unfortunately, we forgot about preserving our traditions and now, when we realize what we have done, it is too late: our native language is not our main language anymore, our native music is not preferred by our people and all traditions have been pushed down from the first place and replaced by the culture that the immigrants brought with them. Today, there are many people who do not even know about what we were before and what we used to do, there are natives who do not even speak our traditional language... It is getting worse every day and if we do not stand up and recover our traditions the time will come when all hope will be gone and our traditions will be lost forever in history.

As an alternative to recover and preserve our traditions we have to start educating our future generations; today's generation is too old and the only way you can make sure people will learn something for life is at school, that is why I think all problems can be solved by giving a good education to the children and young people who in the future will have this archipelago in



Poor quality 'shanty towns' with few facilities have spread in San Andres, right, as a result of the large influx of people from mainland Colombia, April 1999. The main urban area of San Andres, above, is by contrast well organized, April 1999.



their hands. If you do not learn when you are young, you will never learn. If this works out well, the second step will be to practice the things we have learned and allow our culture to stay alive; passing on from one generation to the other. If one says, we cannot preserve our culture because of globalization... then I say, if we establish a purpose and commit ourselves to do it, if we work hard for it to come true, then it is possible.'

*Hauke Peters, Luis Amigó School, San Andres (Youth forum, July 2003)*

San Andres is not alone in seeing changes creep into island lifestyles, although it is perhaps a very extreme example of an island losing its cultural heritage. Similar changes are taking place in other islands.

'Since years have passed, Palau is slowly changing into a new life style. New languages have been born and English is starting to have a strong effect on the Palauan language. Also, new technologies have been introduced and Palauans are slowly forgetting their own culture. Palauans are starting to dance with new kinds of music instead of their own style of singing and dancing. There are few Palauans at this time who harvest and hunt their own food. Instead, they buy food and drinks from grocery stores. Americans have introduced new things that have a strong effect in our island. Americans have brought new laws that did not concern us in the past. And since new technologies and American life styles have already been introduced, we are struggling hard to keep our Palauan tradition alive.'

*Gavin Sugiyama, Mindzenty High School, Palau (Youth forum, May 2003)*

## **C** Concluding comments

This desire among young people to keep their island traditions alive is one of the most significant issues emerging from Small IslandsVoice and could well become a major direction for the initiative in the future.



'Silence is the nature of my island',  
beach scene, Vlingilli, Maldives, April 2003.



'Dancing' coconut  
trees, Manchineel Bay,  
Providencia, San Andres  
Archipelago, May 2003.

# 4 Changing structure of island society

*'Nature is an eternal storehouse of great mysteries and enchanting beauties. She is a sincere friend who embalms man when his heart is wounded. She is a great philosopher who answers many a question of men. So spell bound the men become by her overall beauties that he finds tongues in trees, books in brooks, sermons in stones and good in everything. Nature is a thing of beauty and being in the company of Nature means a joy forever.'*

*Maldives is one such country blessed by Mother Nature. The Maldivian islands are a group of beautiful islands located in the Indian Ocean. We are becoming more and more exposed to tourists – mainly from Italy and Germany. For this all our thanks goes to our beautiful sandy beaches and wonderful lagoons with their rich variety of fishes and marine life.*

*All that I see, sense, breathe, feel and adore is my own small island – Thinadhoo. Thinadhoo is a greenish lagoon that measures a diameter of 2 km. It is isolated from the capital of Maldives, Male. Therefore we have our own unique set of advantages and disadvantages.*

*Our life in a small island is generally associated with life in the lap of nature. My island people indeed lead a very simple life. There is no nerve breaking hustle and bustle. There are no straining hurries and worries. Rather we people*



*believe in simple living. We love a sense of belongingness and share each other's joys and sorrows.*

*We celebrate various festivals together, with a healthy spirit of give and take. Our youth actively involve themselves and embrace the rich cultural heritage of the Maldivian islands. The singing and dancing not only help to entertain our tourists but also goes a long way to keep our culture alive.*

*We are free from artificiality of the present modern life. We have no clubs, even no cinema to divert our attention from work. Rather we have our own simple ways of recreation. After a tiring day, the men and women sit under a shady breadfruit tree, gossip among themselves and feel as free as a bird. At times, our elders arrange recreational programs. The youngsters (boys and girls) enliven the whole gathering.*

*Life in a small island, no doubt, has its darker side also. Pollution is beginning to have an effect on our prestigious beaches. The range and quality of marine life around our island and in our lagoons is beginning to suffer as a consequence of pollution. The reef systems around the islands are relatively fragile and if we are not careful about overfishing and pollution, the very existence of the islands would be in doubt.*

*A large number of islanders leave the islands every year to find work and a better lifestyle overseas. Many of them never return to reside. The key to technical and skilled jobs lies fundamentally in the educational system; people have to be brought in from overseas to play these roles. Industries and factories are lacking, so every consumer good is imported, and therefore tends to be very expensive.*

*Our government ensures that enough resources are made available to help the islanders. A large portion of the revenue is used to upgrade and to improve the schools and education. A substantial amount of money is spent on educational programs to increase awareness concerning pollution and other environmental issues. This is helping our islanders to be more informed and to create a better understanding.*

*Even though we lack a lot of things, we are blessed with an enchanting nature. The fresh morning breeze, the ripples in the reef and the dancing coconut trees – all have beauty on their own. Whenever I see strong waves I get great courage to fight the modern world and whenever I am sad the dancing coconut trees bring cheer to my heart. I wish this beauty that I have found in culture, tradition and nature would be evergreen. Though I have a lot of things to say, I go silent here because silence is the nature of my island.'*

*Fathmath Waheedha, Gaafu Dhaalu Atoll Education Center, Maldives  
(Youth forum, November 2003)*

The life described above by Fathmath Waheedha is in many ways an idyllic one, which is fast disappearing from many islands, if not already gone. For instance in the Caribbean, with its proximity to North and South America, it would be hard to find an island with no form of evening entertainment available. While change is inevitable, it is how islanders adapt to change that is the key to a better life. This chapter will examine some of the traditional aspects of island society, and will then discuss some of the main societal changes such as migration, influx of foreign workers, lack of jobs for school leavers, increases in crime and violence.

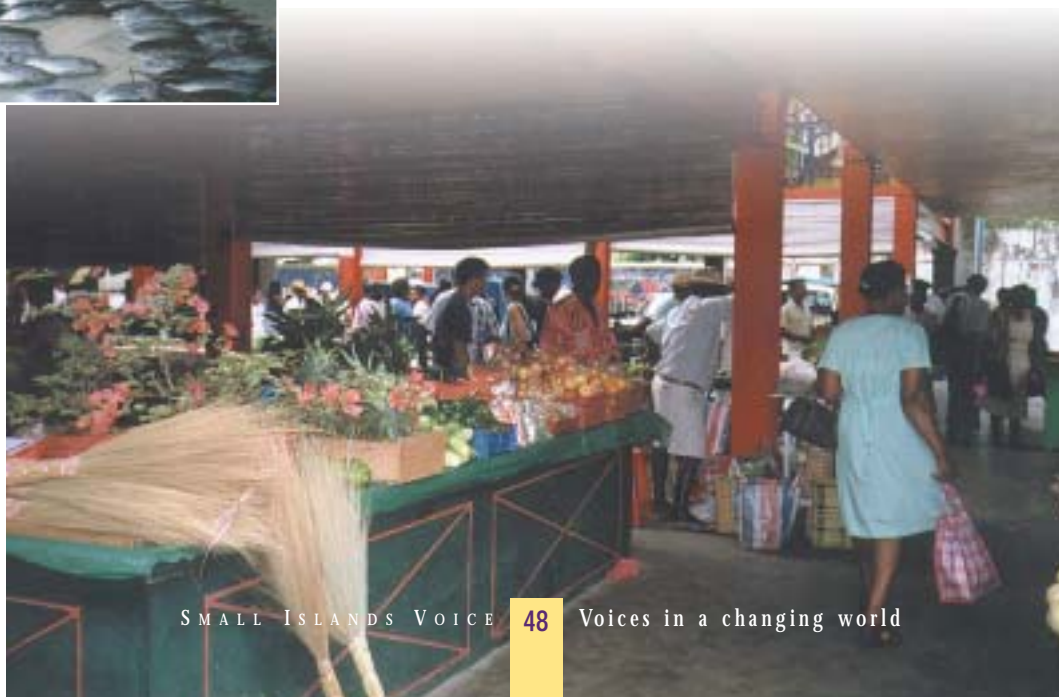
## **T**raditional leadership

In many of the Pacific islands, traditional leadership plays an important role in the social hierarchy. For instance in Palau, there is a network of state, village and clan chiefs, with the chiefly titles generally held by men, who play an important role in local decision-making, land and resource management. While the people of Palau may appear to be among the most westernized of all Micronesians with their casual clothing and well-spoken English, many traditional customs have been retained over the years, such as those for a first-born child, marriage, house-building and funerals. Palau is also well known for its strong matrilineal culture, with family wealth and titles passed through female lineage and women playing a strong role in family and village decision-making as well as local politics (Holm, 2003).

In a Small Islands Voice opinion survey covering all age groups and sectors of society in Palau in 2003 (Holm, 2003), participants were asked to name three issues that concerned them the most. The top three issues in order of priority were (1) the economy, (2) eroding traditional values and leadership, and (3) high number of foreign workers. Economic concerns were at the forefront of most islands surveyed, but Palau was alone in ranking the decline of traditional values and leadership so high and only time will tell whether the decline can be halted. However, there is hope in that many island



Markets are a traditional aspect of island life; a fish market in Male, Maldives, April 2003; a general market, Victoria, Seychelles, March 2002.



governments, civil society groups and others are working to conserve and retain their traditions and practices. As was discussed in the preceding chapter (and below), there is one positive sign in that young people living in islands appear to want to retain many of these traditions, which they see as part of their identity.

**'In the Republic of Palau, the act of "Respect" is very important. It is shown or applied to both young and old people. Respect or "omengull" in the Palauan language, is practised everywhere in Palau. Small gestures such as bending over or crouching when walking through crowded places, moving to the sidewalk to let an older person pass by, to whisper when speaking in a Bai or when a meeting is held in a Bai with the council of Chiefs, are acts of respect that Palauans practise. When a Palauan does these acts of respect, he/she is considered a true Palauan who was brought up with a positive view of being a good Palauan.'**

*Student from Mindzenty High School, Palau (Youth forum, April 2003)*



Traditional men's meeting house (bai), Palau, February 2002.



Islands sometimes show a very cosmopolitan side, as seen here in Koror, Palau, February 2002, and Port Louis Mauritius, April 2003.

## M Migration

Islands have historically been a 'melting pot' for human society, with people of different races and origins arriving, blending in and departing, sometimes as part of major explorations and colonizations, or even forced migrations as seen in the days of the slave trade. The migrations continue to the present day, sometimes as slow trickles and sometime as a major exodus. For example, every year hundreds of people from the Dominican Republic take to flimsy boats and try to cross the Mona Passage to reach what they hope will be a better life in Puerto Rico. Unfortunately, some of these migrants drown when their small boats encounter rough seas en route.



### Cook Islands

In the Cook Islands, in recent decades, there has been a continual movement of people from the Outer Islands to Rarotonga, the most populated island, and from there to New Zealand and Australia. In 1996, an economic stabilization programme was introduced in the Cook Islands, resulting in a 50% reduction in government departments and ministries and a reduction in pay

for all government workers. About 2,000 public workers lost their jobs, which in a country of 20,000 inhabitants was a significant proportion of the working population. Many people had no alternative but to leave the country and search for jobs elsewhere, usually in New Zealand, where they have the legal right to live and work (Keller and Wheeler, 1998). Inevitably, this has changed the face of society in the Cook Islands:

**'I used to be a regular visitor to the Cook Islands early in the 1970s and the 1980s. However, during a recent visit I was a bit disappointed to see less smiles and the absence of young people. They all seem to be running away to jobs in New Zealand or around the Pacific. The friendly feeling that used to exist is no longer in place. A few people are struggling to hold on and keep the authenticity of the place but for what – when the young people are no longer there. To put this in short, I am brave enough to say that if the Cook Islands are not careful, their identity as Cook Islanders will be overrun by the tourists, investors or the imported labour force.'**

*Vaasilifiti Moelani Jackson, Samoa (Global forum, July 2003)*

## **Maldives**

In the Maldives, there is great variation in population density between the various atolls, ranging from 443 persons/ha in Hinnavaru, Faadhippolhi Atoll to 2 persons/ha in Maafilaafushi in the same atoll (UNEP, 2002). A Population and Development Consolidation Programme has been implemented which aims to maximize economies of scale in the provision of socio-economic services, by promoting economically viable population concentrations on large islands. The programme encourages inhabitants of small and remote islands to voluntarily move to larger islands where socio-economic services and employment opportunities are in place and they can therefore attain a better standard of living (Ministry of Planning and National Development, 2002).

**'Many small islands face the threat of losing their identity as they are overrun by tourists, investors and foreign workers.' Here, tourists visit the Punanga Nui Cultural Market, and wait for the launch to take them back to the cruise ship, Rarotonga, Cook Islands, November 2003.**





Many of the people working to build Palau's Compact Road are foreign workers, February 2002.

While this programme has obvious economic benefits for individuals and the country, some social impacts have also resulted. During a Small Islands Voice opinion survey in July 2003, which covered 10% of the population in Eydhafushi Island of Baa Atoll, several social issues were identified. The most often identified issues were conflicts within the community and inadequate community collaboration. This latter issue was felt to be at the root of many other social problems and conflicts. The main reason identified was the fact that the present Eydhafushi community is made up of a mix of communities resettled from various nearby islands in the past, so there is little community spirit. It may take generations for the communities to 'blend' together. While this may not have been considered an issue in the past, increasing population and pressure on land and other resources were noted as resultant problems. The limited opportunities for social and entertainment activities were also noted as causing social problems within the community.

## **I** Influx of foreign workers

As tourism and other service industries develop, some islands are seeing an influx of foreign workers and this too is changing the face of island society. This is another aspect of migration. For instance in Palau:

**'Whereas 20 years ago there were few foreign residents in Palau, now most jobs are taken by foreigners. Of the 13,300 people on the main island (where most people live) by 2000 less than half (6,243) were indigenous. Because the immigrants are almost all working age adults and the Palauans include many children and old people, most jobs were held by foreigners. (4,885 were Filipino or other Southeast Asian, 1,349 Chinese, 253 Japanese, 223 Bangladeshis, 347 Americans and Europeans including many Russians).'**

*Crocombe, 2002*

And in another part of Micronesia:

‘In the Northern Mariana Islands, the belief that foreign investment would benefit everyone had some truth for a time when people wanted jobs. No longer. Whereas almost everyone in the Northern Marianas used to be Chamorro or other Micronesian, now two out of three people there are Asian or other non-indigenous. They have about the same indigenous population as the Cook Islands, but the World Health Organization recently estimated that there were 3,000 prostitutes in the Northern Marianas, servicing tourists, factory workers and others. As in Guam and Palau, unemployment among Micronesians is high, and many emigrate, but it is low among immigrants (excluding refugees)’.

*Crocombe 2002*

Ron Crocombe goes on to argue in the newspaper article that once full employment is achieved, the benefits of foreign investment go down and the costs and problems go up. This issue was also discussed on the Small Islands Voice global internet forum where 65% of the 20 respondents agreed with his concept.

The issue of foreign labour is not restricted to the Pacific islands, it was also an issue mentioned in the global discussions and opinion surveys in the islands of the Indian Ocean and the Caribbean.

## **L**ack of jobs for school leavers

The lack of jobs for school leavers was one of the issues discussed by the Maldives in the Small Islands Voice internet-based discussion forum, and mention was made of expatriates being preferred for the more sought-after professional and white-collar jobs.

‘With regard to job opportunities, I have to mention that school leavers – especially at lower secondary level and even at higher secondary level – find it difficult to get jobs anywhere. Every year more than 7,000 students complete their secondary education and enter into the job market while not more than 250 job opportunities are created. Even though there are more than 70 tourist resorts, locals find it difficult to get jobs from the resorts. These resorts are disproportionately staffed by expatriates. While the government encourages the private sector, especially the tourism sector, to provide job opportunities to the locals, resort managers rely more on the expatriates because they are brought under a contract and there is a guarantee that these

expatriates will remain there. Moreover, locals have more family commitments; sometimes leaving the workstation without giving prior notice to the management. The number of school leavers from day to day is increasing, but job opportunities are limited. Locals at professional levels are few. For instance, expatriate doctors and secondary school teachers dominate the service industry. Moreover, in resorts too, people at decision level are foreigners.'

*Students from Baa Atoll Education Centre, Baa Atoll, Maldives  
(Youth forum, October 2003)*

Similar situations exist in islands in the Pacific and Caribbean, as can be seen by the following responses.

'The Cook Islands is a country consisting of fifteen small islands in the Pacific Ocean, thirteen of which are inhabited. It has a population of around 16,000 people and is slowly declining. One problem is the declining situation of job opportunities. There are many jobs vacant, but most locals leave the country for overseas to further their education, and level of qualification, and for the higher income and better recognition of their work. School-leavers usually get work at supermarkets, cafés, resorts etc. Some school-leavers leave school because of their inability to pass exams due to misunderstanding or laziness. Students resident in Rarotonga, the capital island, seeking higher secondary level education, usually migrate with or without family to New Zealand or Australia.'

*Mercedes Makiuti, Nukutere College, Rarotonga, Cook Islands  
(Youth forum, November 2003)*

'The same can be said about the Commonwealth of Dominica. It can be very frustrating when a school leaver cannot find a job or ends up doing something he/she does not like or was not prepared for. Some school leavers wait for a year before finding employment. Other school leavers simply migrate to the USA to live with relatives while a few go off to study. Many migrate to the neighbouring islands. Those remaining here on island may get employment because someone in a company or business knows the individual or his/her parents. In concluding, I must say Dominicans are hard-working people, therefore they most time create employment for themselves.'

*Students from Marigot Secondary School, Dominica  
(Youth forum, October 2003)*

'Well, we would like to comment on this topic because in Bequia we are suffering from the same problem. Many of our students who leave secondary school are finding it hard to find jobs. Others who dropped out of school would be found getting into delinquent behaviour because they cannot find jobs to suit their standard of living. In St Vincent where we live, the government has started up a "yes programme" for students who have left school with qualifications and can't find jobs. They are employed as helpers in government offices and given a minimal wage until they could find jobs.'

*Students from Bequia Community High School (Youth forum, November 2003)*

## **I** Increase in crime and violence

The students from Bequia mention delinquent behaviour among youth, and this is a very real problem in small islands, as well as in larger countries. It may partly be fuelled by a lack of jobs, few opportunities and a loss of hope. But it is an extremely complex and serious problem, and is manifest in an increase in crime and violence, especially among youth. This has been one of the topics highlighted and discussed by islanders in opinion surveys and discussions over the past two years.

In an opinion survey of the general public conducted in St Kitts and Nevis in 2002 (Lake and Byron, 2002), the main concern was the escalation of crime and violence among young people. The breakdown of moral values was another related issue cited by many of the respondents. In St Vincent and the Grenadines, a survey among young people indicated violence in the community was one of the main areas of concern; the nature of this violence included gang rapes, violence in sports, gossip and profane language (Youth concerns in Bequia, 2002). Increased crime and violence is not just a Caribbean concern; in Fiji it is a frequent topic in island media and in Palau the issue, together with drugs, featured high on the list of priority concerns during an opinion survey of island residents (Holm, 2003).

A newspaper article from the Caribbean discussed at length in the Small Islands Voice global forum, featured a violent incident in a Caribbean island which took place in 2003 when a gang of young men forced the driver and passengers off a minibus and preceded to attack two young men, one of whom they killed. The young man who died was a decent, hard-working member of society and it may have been a case of mistaken identity. The discussion featured ways to stop the cycle of crime and violence and included:

- emphasis should be placed on ethical, moral and spiritual values; and education needs to take place within the family, the community and school system: *'it takes a village to raise a child'*;
- violent television programmes and movies have a bad influence and should be controlled;
- there is a need for harsher penalties for certain crimes;
- *listening* to young people is very important;
- guns should be restricted and controlled.





Stories about increasing crime and violence regularly make the headlines in island newspapers.

'In summary – there are influences inside and outside the island community that promote harmony and violence. To understand what those influences are and to act constructively to bring more peace and less disruption to the community requires everyone's cooperation – top to bottom. Focus has to be on that which is in your control. The village needs to reinforce the foundations of moral behaviour in the family, the schools, and in its own honest behaviour – for no generation will follow the rules of a hypocritical role model. The young are influenced more by what you do than what you say.'

*Brian Mommsen (Global forum, September 2003)*

An article on gang violence posted on the Small Islands Voice youth forum by students from Marigot Secondary School provides some insight on how young people see these problems:

'There is a lack of employment opportunities available to the youth. Hence, the inevitable result of stress and depression leading to gang-related crimes, theft, rape, murder, just to name a few. The abuse of alcohol is becoming a culture, more so during festive times among the youth. A few weeks ago an incident occurred at a popular shopping centre, where one man was killed by a gang. All this happens due to a lack of socialization among family members, youth and society. In view of this, we suggest that more activities should be planned for the youths, such as sports (e.g. basketball, cricket) and cultural activities (e.g. calypso, queen shows).'

*Students from Marigot Secondary School, Dominica (Youth forum, October 2003)*

During a workshop in Dominica in July 2003, involving 12 Caribbean territories, two Pacific territories and one Indian Ocean territory, the main priority concern was identified as a group of social issues comprising drug abuse, crime, violence and especially gang violence, and unemployment. Participants felt that it was impossible to separate these issues (Report on Second Sandwatch workshop, 2003).

## **C** Concluding comments

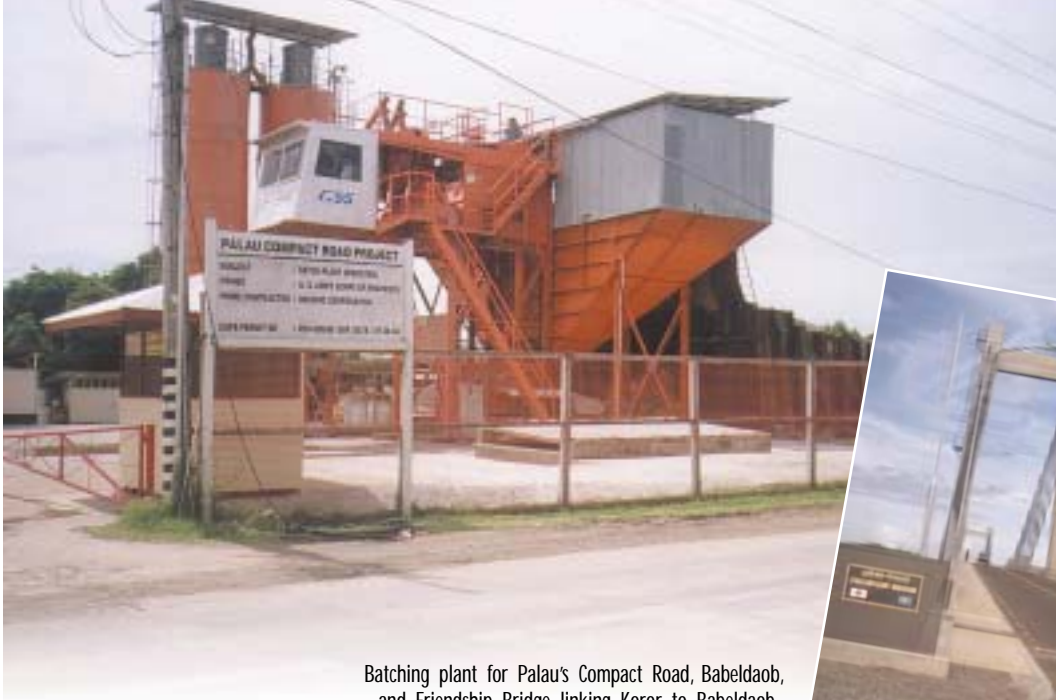
As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, change is inevitable, and it is how people adapt to and manage change that is most important. Based on the activities undertaken within Small Islands Voice, and especially seen in the internet discussions, there is a desire among islanders to learn about events and conditions in other islands and to help each other. In the internet-based youth forum, young people learnt about islands they had previously never heard about.

**'Thank you for taking the time and effort to reply to our article. It is great hearing from people from other parts of the world. We had not heard of Dominica until we received the Small Islands Voice replies to our article. Thank you.'**

*Students from Mangaia School, Cook Islands (Youth forum, April 2003)*

Similarly, in the Small Islands Voice global internet discussion on crime and violence, there was a desire among the respondents to search out the cause of the problems, to discuss different situations, and to learn from each other as to possible solutions. In this respect, the internet is proving to be a practical tool, allowing islanders from the Pacific, at the touch of a button, to exchange their ideas with islanders in the Indian Ocean and Caribbean regions. It was also enlightening to see that islanders accepted that problems such as crime and violence among youth were a result of deficiencies in their own community structure and society, and therefore these problems were theirs to solve – not something to be blamed on the government or outside parties.





Batching plant for Palau's Compact Road, Babeldaob, and Friendship Bridge linking Koror to Babeldaob, Palau, February 2002.



# 5 Changing island infrastructure

*'Uro Ikesakes started fishing in Airai Bay when he was a teenager, swimming side by side with his family and friends, spearing fish after fish from a bustling coral reef. Fishing in the bay was a way of life in the village. Things are different now, more than 50 years later, but not because he is any less of a fisherman. His aqua-blue bay, once home to a healthy coral reef, is now mud-red and home to almost nothing but algae. After a full day of fishing, his cooler is maybe half full. "We don't fish there anymore" said the 68 year-old subsistence fisherman, his crow's-feet framing his wistful stare.*

*His is an unusual story for Palau, a small Pacific island nation with a population of under 20,000, known the world over for its natural beauty and its abundance of fish. But his is a story some officials fear could become all too common if leaders don't plan well for the future. The cause of their alarm is a multimillion dollar road project on the pristine island of Babeldaob that they say has brought Palau to a monumental environmental and cultural crossroad.*

*Babeldaob is the largest island in Palau. But for years, the centre of the government and population has been the much smaller island of Koror where modern infrastructure exists. The road will change that. In about two years, contracted workers are expected to lay 53 miles of asphalt to circle Babeldaob and*

*create an enormous potential for modern development such as hotels, golf courses and new homes. For perspective, Palau's roads currently total only 83 miles.*

*In Airai State, development has already begun. Along with the work for the road, parcels have been cleared for homes, for farms and for a golf course. As the land is cleared, the vegetation, which naturally holds back the dirt, is destroyed. The dirt is then washed into the rivers and streams, which carry it down to the sea. So the bountiful reef, where Ikesakes once fished, is being buried by this dirt, killing the coral and leaving the bay nearly barren of fish. Airai State is a good example of what will happen on the rest of the island if Palauans do not plan ahead, said Noah Idechong, a Palau Delegate and world-renowned environmentalist. It's high time for people to decide how the island should be developed and how much should be developed, he said. At stake is Palauan culture and the identity of its people who have so long lived in harmony with the sea and land. Without the reefs, so much is lost. "There is no time. We need to decide what we want our island to be", Idechong said. "Because if the road goes in and we haven't decided, all hell will break loose."*

*But to be clear, the US\$125 million road project is something the Palauans asked for. The island nation made it a condition of the compact agreement signed with the United States in 1994 when Palau gained its independence. Federal and local officials call it the Compact Road. "The road is our economic bloodline", said Kione Isechal, an engineer with the Palauan President's Office acting as a liaison with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as the project moves forward. "The road will be very useful for opening our island for economic development", Isechal said. "We are confident that, with proper planning, development will be done right." But Idechong points out "If you build the hotels, people will come. That's true. But how many millions is enough money for 15,000 people?" This is the vital question for Palauans because in reality a tropical island can only bear so much before the environment is severely harmed and culture lost. People also need to put a price tag on the worth of subsistence fishing and the value of culture and family bonding. "We need to start a dialogue, to start talking about what we want for Palau."*

*If Palau does not, the race for money and development will have no boundaries. The economy will grow, and more foreign labour will have to be brought in to meet the demand. "There are a lot of contradictions in Palau. Some people don't think that there have to be sacrifices", Idechong said. "But you can't have everything." '*

*Scott Radway, March 2002*

This article describes some of the advantages and possible disadvantages of new development and emphasizes the need for public dialogue and debate prior to infrastructural development. One of the most unanimous outcomes of the opinion surveys was the overall appreciation for new infrastructural development. Almost equally widespread was the concern about economic issues such as high taxation and foreign debt. Yet very few survey respondents made the link between new infrastructure and increased foreign debt. This chapter discusses these issues as well as impacts of the vitally important tourism industry.

## **N** New infrastructure and environmental degradation

The article by Radway 2002, on the implications of building the Compact Road in Palau, opened the Small Islands Voice global forum in September 2002 and generated much debate, not just in Palau, but in islands around the world. With just a few exceptions, the respondents thought that the Compact Road was a good thing for Palau. However, most also noted the need to take into account environmental concerns.

**'I think that no matter how much we discuss the issue about the road, it will still be built. Change is inevitable, just as development is unavoidable. What needs to be done is to try and prevent as much damage to the environment as possible.'**

*Sina Lui, (Global forum, November 2002)*

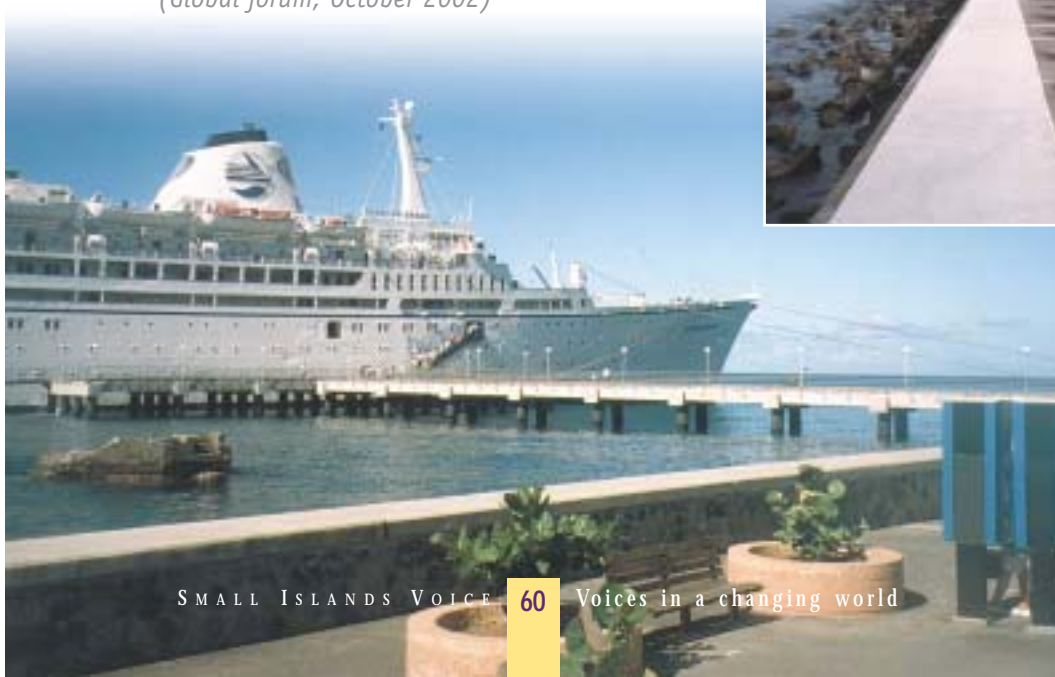
Many of the responses to the article recognized that responsibility for environmental degradation lies with native islanders (Palauans in this case).

**'A road can be a treasure as well as a nightmare. If a country is prepared with the necessary mitigative and precautionary measures, a road need not be a nightmare. Small islands appear to have an aversion to regulatory measures; we do not appreciate any form of constraint. Palau is not alone in this respect.'**

*Lillith Richards, Nevis*

*(Global forum, October 2002)*

In Roseau, Dominica:  
new waterfront  
development, far right,  
August 1995, and  
cruise ship facilities,  
January 1996.





Some of the negative impacts of development, such as bumper to bumper traffic, have also reached small islands, Victoria, Seychelles, July 2003.



Recent radio liberalization in Mauritius has resulted in private FM radio stations starting up, such as Radio One (R1), which have interactive programmes and a wide listener-ship, April 2003.

**'Yes, we are very concerned about the environmental degradation from the Compact Road. However, let us not close our eyes to the very fact that some of the worst environmental degraders are Palauans themselves!! I just returned today from the inauguration at Ngarchelong. On the way, I could see damages to the environment such as the rock quarries and coral dredging. Some of these activities are not directly related to the road project, and they are also being conducted by our own local people. Sometimes it is so easy to point fingers at others, but if the people of Palau do not wish to have their land destroyed, they should be the first to protect it, not exploit it.'**

*Sandra S. Pierantozzi, Palau (Global forum, November 2002)*

## **N** Need for new infrastructure

The appreciation for new island infrastructure was echoed in almost all the opinion surveys. When asked to name the positive changes they had seen in their island in the past 10 years, most respondents named new infrastructure as items on their list, e.g. in St Kitts and Nevis, new houses, roads, airport and hospital were named; new airport, housing, roads and reclamation were noted in Seychelles; and other islands surveyed had similar observations. Generally also, islanders wanted to see more infrastructural developments in the future, and discussion on the youth forum in particular indicated a need for the improvement of basic services.

**'On Bequia we only have clinics and one small hospital that only deals with minor casualties such as influenza, common cold, other minor problems and uncomplicated deliveries. If there are any emergencies then our national coastguard will transport the sick over to mainland (St Vincent) to get medical attention.'**

*Students of Bequia Community High School (Youth forum, November 2002)*

**'Our hospital here in Palau only deals with minor casualties too.'**

*Students from Mindzenty High School, Palau (Youth forum, November 2002)*

However, as always, islands are at different stages when it comes to the provision of basic services such as health care. In some of the larger islands, the situation is different:

**'With the reforms introduced in the Mauritian health sector, we are confident that our health sector is progressing. This is very important since a healthy nation depends on a healthy population and this does not exist without a good health sector.'**

*Hishaam Jambocus, Sookdeo Bissondoyal Form VI College, Mauritius  
(Youth forum, September 2003)*

## **E**conomic issues

Against this background of appreciating and wanting new infrastructure, it is interesting to see that the major concern noted in all the islands surveyed was the economy. This included a variety of specific concerns: high cost of living, high taxes, less spending power, increased poverty, sluggish economy, economic stress, national debt, economic instability and foreign investment. In addition, there were a number of island-specific economic concerns, e.g. declining 'Compact of Free Association funds,' which are a major part of Palau's income and scheduled to stop in 2009 after the agreement with the USA finishes; economic downturns, especially after the Economic Stabilization Programme was introduced in the Cook Islands in 1996; shortage of foreign exchange in Seychelles; and the need for banking services in Eydhafushi Island of Baa Atoll, Maldives. The general public's priority needs are for full employment, good salaries and job security. Unfortunately these needs cannot be assured in small islands in the foreseeable future.

### *Economic downturns*

The Cook Islands are not alone in experiencing an economic downturn in recent years. In the Caribbean, Dominica is among islands experiencing severe economic hardships in the beginning of the 21st century as banana exports fall, tourism income remains stationary and residents are called on to make severe economic sacrifices.

Often these events are caused by external changes. In the Cook Islands in 1996, the economic downturn was due in the main to New Zealand deciding it had to reduce the amount of aid it gave to the Cook Islands. In Dominica's case, the downturn was due, at least in part, to the loss of its preferential banana market.

Events such as the attacks on the World Trade Center in 2001 seriously impacted the 2001/2002 winter tourism season for the Caribbean, since fewer North American visitors travelled outside their country. Similarly the Iraq war in 2003 resulted in a tourism downturn in the Indian Ocean islands. Small islands with their limited, non-diversified economies are especially vulnerable to external shocks.





Oil importation is a major financial drain for small islands as they seek to become competitive, Rarotonga, Cook Islands, November 2003.

**'Here in St Kitts, many persons are employed in factories which mainly export goods to the U.S. markets. After the September 11 catastrophe in New York, a major factory closed operations and over 250 persons lost their jobs. In a larger and more populous country, this may have been insignificant. However, because of our small size it was a major blow to our economy and society.'**

*Students from Verchilds High School, St Kitts and Nevis  
(Youth forum, September 2002)*

**'After the incident of 9/11 our economy has suffered a decline in the number of tourists coming to our small island and also freezing of wages due to the drop of finances in our island.'**

*Students from Bequia Community High School  
(Youth forum, September 2002)*

**'Hawaii has over 4 million visitors a year. Since 9/11 Hawaii's economy has been hit hard with over 10,000 jobs lost. The majority of our hotels are never at full capacity; in fact they fluctuate between 20-80% capacity, with the 80% usually falling on major holidays and events. The rental car companies sold off much of their fleets due to the decrease in visitors. Stores are closing, beaches are empty, and companies are losing money. With war on the brink, the tourism industry again is suffering. Are you ready for the roller-coaster ride?'**

*Kuulei Maunupau, Hawaii  
(Global forum, March 2003)*

After two major cyclones in 1990 and 1991, Samoa's capital, Apia was protected with massive sea defences, December 2000.



External shocks can also include natural events such as Cyclone Heta, a category 5 cyclone which in January 2004 destroyed much of the infrastructure on Niue, and also impacted Cook Islands, American Samoa, Samoa and Tonga.

With so many small islands increasingly depending on tourism for their growth, economic uncertainty is likely to continue in the future. It would appear that islands with a more diversified economy – such as Mauritius with its five economic pillars of agriculture, tourism, textiles, financial services, and information and communication technology industry – may be better equipped to absorb external shocks and changes.

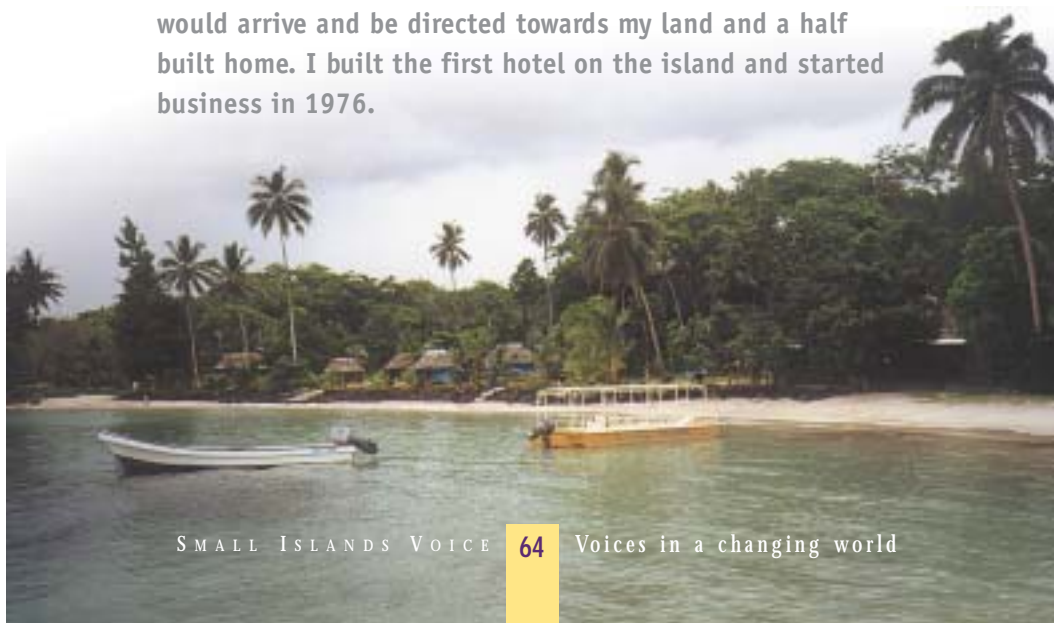
## T Tourism

Small islands with their idyllic settings, pleasant climates and individual assets are ideal tourism destinations. Most small islands have vibrant tourism industries and tourism is likely to be an important part of island living for years to come. Yet the discussions and debates about tourism continue covering topics such as sustainability and the long term future of tourism, local versus foreign-owned properties, the benefits of exclusive five-star resorts compared to those of smaller properties. These and other issues have been extensively debated by the general public on the Small Islands Voice global forum. While there are many examples of individual success stories, Samoa stand out as an island where a successful tourism strategy has been implemented.

**'I am High Chief Vaasiliifiti Moelagi Jackson. I was born and brought up on the biggest island of the Samoan group, Savaii. I left the island at the age of 16 for educational reasons, and later worked on the capital island of Samoa, Upolu. In 1974, I moved with my husband to live in New Zealand with the children. After two months I found my heart was left in Savaii, so I came back with my children.**

**Coming to Savaii in 1974 after a gap of 16 years, I found the island was so backward and our people were living in peace and harmony with nature. There were shops but with limited supply. There was little electricity, and no water system for over 80% of the island. There was no sealed road, although the island was beautiful and peaceful for me. There was not a single hotel on the island except one guesthouse casually run by one family. Every now and then a tourist would arrive and be directed towards my land and a half built home. I built the first hotel on the island and started business in 1976.**

A tourism resort in Samoa in keeping with its surroundings, December 2000.



On the other island there were four hotels and a couple of guesthouses. Now tourism is one of our country's main revenue earners. Still 95% of the tourism industry is locally owned. Our government is encouraging investors to the island, however, we locals have worked hand-in-hand with government to lay down the rules which result in low-key development which is handled locally. Still 81% of our land is traditionally owned with the rest either owned privately or by government.

A lot of the control is to do with having two organizational structures working hand in hand. Firstly there is our traditional structure, the Matai System or Chiefly System selected traditionally by individual families, and secondly our democratic government selected by the people. Therefore the system has an internal workable control. Please do not make a mistake to think that we have no problems. Our main problem is to voice our concern and see that the government listens to us.'

*(Global forum, April 2003)*



Tourism is a major industry in many small islands, Reduit Beach, St Lucia, April 1998.

By contrast, another writer to the same forum described a different picture.

'Here in St Vincent and the Grenadines we had a problem when the former government leased three quarters of one of our islands to a large company who said that they would spend 450 million dollars to develop that part of the island. A resort was developed that provided work for some of our people, but by far the company profited the most. The government collected about US\$ 4,000 a year for the lease. There was trouble and local inhabitants were stopped from going on beaches when the hotel guests were there and sometimes even when they were not there. Visitors were made to feel unwelcome. The hotel hired security guards from Europe, court cases were filed, roads were blocked and no one benefited. The project is now (March 2003) at a halt for 14 months. Our governments must be more responsible to their people on whose behalf they make decisions.'

*Peter Jacobs, Mustique, St Vincent and the Grenadines, (Global forum, April 2003)*



At times, island residents feel uncomfortable on their own beaches, Reduit Beach, St Lucia, May 2001.

Tourism covers all facets of island life. While the industry certainly provides jobs for islanders, the more sought-after professional and white-collar jobs often go to expatriates (see Chapter 4). One of the dilemmas many islands face is – how much tourism is enough? And who benefits from tourism? One of the discussion themes on the Small Islands Voice global

forum 'Foreign investment in Cook Islands' focused on this very issue and proposed that once full employment is achieved, the benefits of foreign investment go down and the costs and problems go up. Some islands have established upper limits for tourism development, but how often are these targets adhered to? These questions and more are discussed by a contributor to the global forum:

'Our problems in the Turks and Caicos Islands are similar to those in the Cook Islands. Our beaches have become congested with million dollar condominiums, built by foreign workers (since we don't have enough people to provide the necessary labour force) for the foreign rich. Meanwhile our schools have become over populated with the kids of those brought in to build these so-called major developments, and it becomes the Government, i.e. the locals, who has to bear the cost of maintaining these schools.



Large scale, modern tourism development, Providenciales, Turks and Caicos Islands, July 2001.

These developers are given duty-free concession, when our roads and other infrastructure are in a deplorable state and our Government is forced to borrow money at market rates to repair and replace the dilapidated state of our infrastructure.

The critical question is who benefits from the so-called progress? How is it justified that those wealthy few who could afford to pay the import duties, land taxes, etc., get tax exemptions when the locals have to face constant increases.

Here in the Turks and Caicos Islands, land prices have gone from around US\$7,000 for a land lot to now US\$20,000 a lot in most areas; of course, forget beachfront properties at an average price of a million dollars an acre. Prices in the food stores have grown astronomically in the last five years. At the same time, salaries (forget minimum wages which have never made sense at US\$4.50 per hour) increase by less than 10%. How is the average local single mother of two to take care of her children when she has to pay rent and shop at the foreign-owned supermarket at these ridiculous prices?

I'm truly of the belief that we as a country should revisit these development plans, mindful that several are under construction and in planning stages. There should be a clear policy of having these developers set aside funds for the maintenance of our schools, infrastructure and of course the

burdens these immigrants place on our social services. We should discontinue the granting of duty free exemptions and concessions, as we have already reached the point of diminishing returns. There should be business opportunities for locals and funds available to borrow for assisting in establishing these businesses. There should be a limited number of work permits that will be granted to any one employer and in any category. There should be a clear policy for locals to be given equal opportunities to compete at a white-collar level for all job opportunities in the country.

Then and only then should we be boasting of the success and growth of our country as we would be able to identify locals who are products of the system, designed to foster development where it truly matters.'

*Anthony Garland, Turks and Caicos Islands (Global forum, June 2003)*

The majority of contributors to the global forum agreed that particularly in outer islands, small scale, locally owned tourism development is to be preferred. Examples were discussed from the Family Islands of The Bahamas (Abaco), the Outer Islands of Cook Islands (Aitutaki), and the San Andres Archipelago. One contributor proposed some fundamental principles for development in small islands:

'An asset exists, either nature or buildings, which could be used to generate incomes to sustain island life. But how can that be done without destroying island life? I would propose three fundamental principles:

- Keep all businesses and all infrastructure owned by locals.
- Be only what you are. Do not try to be something else to match external expectations.
- Be honest with visitors about what they get.'

*Ilan Kelman (Global forum February 2004)*

## C Concluding comments

Undoubtedly there is much more to be said on these topics in small islands and the above only represents a snapshot of the general public's perspectives. However, it is important to keep in mind that economic concerns are the most important issues for people living in small islands and will likely continue to dominate the stage for years to come.



Small scale, traditional style tourism development, Grand Turk, Turks and Caicos Islands, November 1999.



Young people working to reshape some groynes in order to conserve their beaches, Playa Mayabeque, Cuba, February 2004.



Making an easy path to the sea for baby Hawksbill turtles when they emerge from the nest, Anse Kerlan, Praslin, Seychelles, March 2002.

# 6 Environmental changes

*'The demands for a small island developing state to participate actively in developing wise practices to cope with environmental issues are not just a part of the review of the Barbados Programme of Action, but a way of survival. In St Vincent and the Grenadines, students of the Bequia Community High School have practically taken the "bull by the horns" as they attacked some of the issues affecting them, as the inheritors of the society we have created for them.*

*We have held numerous classroom and informal discussions and have short-listed some of the issues, which include erosion, pollution, garbage disposal, teenage sexual problems (including incest), beach protection and access, and violence among youths. With a hands-on approach we have taken measures to address some of these problems, and have had public-awareness meetings on others in seeking the public's cooperation.*

*On the Park Bay area, students bent their backs and contoured the hillside overlooking the small beach that supports the Hawksbill Turtle Sanctuary. Erecting stone barriers and planting cactus reduced siltation from the runoff that was rapidly killing the coral reef. Salt-resistant grass and vines were planted to trap the sand and encourage dunes, and whelk and crabs were reintroduced to the reef to help control algae. The adjacent landowner has since learnt from us, and has constructed similar contours and planted grass, further reducing erosion. It is hoped that in twenty years some of the released turtles would have a beach on which to lay their eggs when they return. Students have attacked the growing problem of broken glass on the playing field, school compound, drains and beaches, by not only doing cleanups, but by undertaking*

*a glass recycling programme. They have expanded this project to incorporate their families and their community. The school is now a drop-off point for unwanted bottles. These, our students break into small pieces and mix with cement and reinforced steel to produce park benches for their school yard and, soon, community areas. Some of the benches use logs salvaged from cleared building lots as seats and backs. The environment is now a safer place as a result of their efforts.*

*The beaches are our major concern as we take into account the need to keep them for posterity. User impact, access, erosion and accretion, debris and water quality have become our preoccupation as we utilize our spare moments, public holidays and after-school hours, learning and exploring these areas. We have monitored the beaches since January 2000 and become resource persons on the issue of beach erosion and existing conditions on most of our beaches. It is no wonder that the Ministry of the Environment sometimes consults us. Among the environmentally conscious citizens, we are considered custodians of the beaches.*

*To name two recent examples, in July 2003 an unwise individual thought it fit to clear a section of our best beach of its trees, to afford a better view of the water. The phones rang off the hook to find out what we were doing to stop it, and indeed we did by calling the right authorities. Also in mid-September of 2003, a new foreign beachfront developer thought it best for his development and profiteering plans to bulldoze a section of another beach, and erected a seawall of huge boulders, and proposed building a jetty. The first channel for complaint was my home and the Sandwatch students. Meeting with the developers, fishermen, community activists, and several protest letters to the Physical Planning and Development Board and the highest ranks of Government has halted the project, with instructions to restore the beach to as near its former status as possible.*

*Our students take pleasure in conducting beach cleanups, as even the 6th graders understand that their pleasures and the economic well being of their families depend greatly on the marine environment for the tourist dollar. They also understand the importance of the unpolluted near-shore sea grass beds that serve as nurseries for marine organisms.*

*With this same enthusiasm, they don Scuba gear, armed only with piercing eyes and a camera to study the correlation between the coral reef, beaches and the survival of the dive tourism and fishing industry.*

*In August of 2003 we attended a meeting with the St Vincent and the Grenadines Hotel and Tourism authorities and have been given the opportunity to share our experiences on the Sandwatch programme and to interact on issues affecting tourism such as creating a safer environment for tourism and enforcing the laws in cases of harassment. Cooperation in policing the Admiralty Bay to make it safer was pledged by both sides.' (Belmar 2003)*



Through inter-regional initiatives such as Small Islands Voice and Sandwatch, beach measurement activities have spread from the Caribbean islands to Seychelles in the Indian Ocean (July 2003) and Palau in the Pacific (July 2002).

Young people generally are concerned about the world in which they live and their islands in particular. Environmental issues as described in the article above can mobilize youth. Throughout the Small Islands Voice initiative, it has been seen that young people are very proactive, certain of their capacity to effect positive change, and most of all willing and keen to take action. It is vital to maximize this potential. By contrast older members of society are slower to accept change and sometimes more comfortable with talking about the issues.

## B Beach issues

One of the activities of the Adopt-a-beach programme in the San Andres Archipelago is to keep the beaches clean and provide litter receptacles, South East Bay, Providencia, May 2003.

This is one area where activities are underway in many islands, as national, regional and Small Islands Voice initiatives. In the Cook Islands a system of Environmental Rangers and an Adopt-a-beach programme provides a framework for beach environmental activities. A similar Adopt-a-beach programme exists in the San Andres Archipelago where youth, public service and church groups adopt a length of coast or beach and carry out various activities to enhance and care for the site. Most of the islands involved in Small Islands Voice participate in an inter-regional Sandwatch project whereby school students conduct scientific monitoring of changes in beaches near to their schools and then work with their communities to enhance these beaches. This project has been operational since 2001 and is supported by UNESCO's Associated Schools Project Network and the Coastal Regions and Small Islands platform.

An article on the global forum related to beach access in Tobago, where a private developer had restricted access to a public beach. The writer of the article proposed a 'People's Pocket Protest' targeting the business activities of the developer:

'If our proposals (to restore public access) are ignored, then we suggest a 'People's Pocket Protest'. We can select a different brand of beer, shop in another store, read an alternative newspaper and use a different insurance company. No time off is required from our regular work and other activities, no marching in the rain and sun, no



Herman Belmar sitting on one of the park benches made by young people, using broken glass mixed with cement, and salvaged logs, Bequia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, June 2003.





exposure to tear gas, no fear of victimization. All that is required is for a sufficient number of concerned persons to quietly exercise our option not to buy from those who use our money against us.'

*Emile Louis, Trinidad and Tobago (Global forum, November 2002)*

This article on beach access resulted in a heated and emotional debate, with almost all respondents supporting the need to keep beach accesses open to all. Similar attempts to restrict beach access were presented from Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada and Bequia. The need to consider such issues in an open framework was emphasized.

'The problem here is complex, because people have conflicting emotional and economic motivations (within and between opposing groups). But with people on both sides of an issue being able to recognize the primary need to protect and share such resources (i.e. beaches), then regulations can be developed in an open environment that everyone can live with. An open environment allows enough time and encourages the free exchange of information and knowledge needed to become informed about options and to show reasonable (as opposed to reactionary) support for the right decisions. Put in the simplest terms: the beaches must be (1) protected from abuse, (2) shared by all, (3) regulated by laws promulgated by both the citizens and government working together.'

*Brian Mommsen (Global forum, February 2003)*



## **P**ollution and water issues

The students of Rakiraki High School in Fiji wrote about their water problems on the youth forum.

'The problem of drinking water has been on the increase since the past few years and it has been proved to be persistent. Some problems that affect drinking water include: (1) contamination by faeces riddled with bacteria, viruses and parasites, (2) drinking water sources are used as dumping sites of rubbish, and (3) blockages in the river system.

As beachfront lands become increasingly developed with tourist hotels and private residences, beach access for the general public becomes increasingly difficult, as seen above on the south coast of Grenada (2000).

Polluted river mouth at Rose Place Beach in St Vincent and the Grenadines, January 2000.



To begin with, the contamination of drinking water is determined by floating faeces, which impact all villages along the watercourse. Disposing of human waste in a manner which does not contaminate the environment and which further limits the likelihood of transmission of diseases from person to person is a fundamental requirement. Illnesses such as diarrhoea can occur in areas where there is inadequate disposal of faeces. It is the deadliest killer of children under five in developing countries. We (students of Rakiraki High School) performed a coliform test and it turned out to be positive, which shows that faeces are present in the drinking water.



Dumping of garbage continues on this river bank despite a warning sign, St Vincent and the Grenadines, January 2000.

Sometimes the water is not treated properly, and residents get dirty water to consume and are charged with very high water bills. At least 40–50% of people in Rakiraki receive dirty water daily. Some health effects derived from this are skin diseases such as scabies which is very quick to spread. Another problem is that villagers often wash their clothes in the river, which flows towards the water pump. For the past few weeks a body of a dead man was found decaying and floating in the same river. After two days we came to know that we actually have drunk that water.

To conclude it can be said that the government, private water utilities, international agencies must give priority and resources to reform institutions and improve the quality of

the water that is consumed by the people of Rakiraki. It is really filthy and very disgusting to know that the water we consume is full of faeces. We seek advice and ideas on how we can raise awareness on this problem. Hopefully there will come a time when we get clean and safe water to drink.'

*Students of Rakiraki High School, Fiji (Youth forum, September 2003)*

The provision of good quality, clean drinking water is one of the many environmental problems facing small islands as their populations grow and the numbers of visitors increase. Ironically, Fiji also has a booming export industry of bottled water, the famous 'Fiji water'.

Young people from other islands responded to the students of Rakiraki with practical suggestions based on their own island experiences. Their responses emphasize the fact that the provision of safe, clean drinking water is a major problem for many small islands.

Everyday there is less available drinking water on our island and everyday more people who need water because our population is growing. It is ironic: I live on an island, surrounded by water, but I do not have any water to drink. I think that the best solution in my island would be: first, stop using wells and control the flow of pollutants and specially sewage to the aquifer. Second, purchase a desalination system; the advantages of this method of obtaining drinking water is that sea water is abundant. The costs of desalinating water may be, however, very high and too expensive for our increasingly poor inhabitants.

*Hauke Peters, Luis Amigó School, San Andrés Island (Youth forum, September 2003)*



'The water system in Bequia is not very complex. The main idea of our water system is when we build our homes, the foundation is dug deeper than usual so that we can build a tank out of cement blocks, construction iron and concrete. Our roofs are equipped so that rainwater is led down pipes into the tank. Our water is always clean for it comes from the clouds. The biggest problem is when there is drought and we have to turn to our reservoirs. Recently we had a problem with locals placing poisons (Gramazone). Even though we have troubles ourselves, I still can give some pointers to you. One thing that I think that you should do is get containers and collect drinking water or have sterilizing equipment to clean the water.'

*Students from Bequia Community High School (Youth forum, September 2003)*

Hopefully this future scenario for San Andrés Island will not come true (360 Degrees, 2001).

**'Here are some possible solutions to help keep the water clean and pure:**

- **Keep animals away from streams;**
- **Establish a law that declares you cannot leave animals by the stream;**
- **Organize weekly voluntary groups to clean up the stream**
- **Use filters;**
- **Always boil your drinking water;**
- **Give warnings if the stream is not suitable for drinking.'**

*Students of Nukutere College, Rarotonga, Cook Islands  
(Youth forum, October 2003)*

**'Our advice to you is that until you are 100% sure that the water you drink is safe it is always better to boil your water first, this helps to kill the bacteria. Otherwise you the youth can join together and help to clean your water system and in doing so it will encourage others to join in and give a helping hand. You can make posters with messages about how precious water is, and how you can help to keep the water system clean. This will help in the sensitization of the people. You should not feel bad about your problem. Every country faces it but through hard work and joint effort things will improve for the best.'**

*Students from Anse Royale Secondary School, Seychelles  
(Youth forum, October 2003)*

The subject of water was further discussed on the global forum following an article from St Vincent and the Grenadines discussing a proposal to export spring water. Examples of successful water bottling initiatives from Fiji and proposals for water bottling plants in Kosrae were discussed. Further examples of water woes were described:

**'Now, reflect what has been happening in Fiji where I currently work – water is a major problem. People living on the outskirts of the major cities and towns are crying out for water, schools are closed, meetings postponed, farms and farmers are affected etc., and, even worse, people living outside of the main island are using seawater for bathing. Water is being rationed and water cut-offs for the main towns are being considered.'**

*Temakei Tebano, (Global forum, October 2003)*

**'Bottling the scarce water may be an issue in some places, but probably it involves only a small volume. What concerns me is to see thousands of gallons of water being sprayed on golf courses for the benefit of tourists while the working people do without any water for the better part of the day.'**

*Peter Wiese, Mexico (Global Forum, November 2003)*



Signs such as this one in Providencia, San Andres Archipelago, urge residents to care for their mangroves and wetlands, May 2003.

Islanders did not see the water issue as a simple case of supply and demand, they were also concerned about wider issues such as the need to protect water sources and wetlands as well as to control logging operations, which in some islands have destroyed the rain forest and in so doing have affected local climate and rainfall. The disposal of plastic water containers in the limited landfill space available in small islands was another issue discussed.

The inadequacy of water distribution systems in many islands was noted and an innovative proposal put forward:

**'National needs should be fulfilled before considering non-national needs. We will all agree that water is indeed a scarce resource and its scarceness is increased by weak, poorly maintained distribution systems. How much of the tapped water is lost through leakage? I wish to suggest that if the bottled water is exported and the financial profit is used to develop and improve water production and distribution systems for nationals, then it may not be a bad idea.'**

*Charmaine Gomes, Trinidad and Tobago  
(Global forum, November 2003)*

In many of the Pacific islands, water is not just a resource, but also has a spiritual meaning. For instance in Papua New Guinea:

**'In Keakalo philosophy, land is mother, water is father, and sky is an enclosure of spiritual beings from our ancestors, the guardians of land and water. Land and water are not goods for sale. Land is life-bearing, while water is life-giving and both are under the sky. All the living things including humanity are controlled by the spirit of the dead.'**

*Mali Voi, Samoa (Global forum, November 2003)*

Mosaic depicting cultural traditions, Parliament House, Papua New Guinea, December 2000.





Domestic waste collection yard, Male, Maldives, April 2003.



Aluminum recycling has recently started in Rarotonga, Cook Islands, November 2003.

## Waste disposal

This is one of the most serious problems facing many islands, and concerns solid, liquid and toxic waste. The disposal of solid waste was the environmental concern most often noted during the opinion surveys. But other types of waste also pose problems.

This issue of littering was discussed on the youth forum:

‘Littering is quite an issue at Praslin Secondary School and it has proved to be very persistent. Different clubs and groups have made it their number one priority to improve the school environment. They have racked their brains to come up with different ways to try to encourage students to keep the school environment clean. Posters, talks, an increase in garbage bins and even fines have been experimented with, but none so far have proved to be successful.

The reason behind all of this litter relates to the increase in effort for healthy eating. School canteens have been encouraged to sell juice instead of lemonades, and other nutritional products which happen to be sold in carton boxes, plastic bags and napkins.

When lemonades were being sold everyone hurried back to the tuck shop to claim their one rupee refund fee and that led to a less littered environment. Sadly this fascination has been short lived with the introduction of the juice cartons.

Our school has only one gardener who struggles enormously to keep up with the mountains of litter. Sadly at the end of the day he does not even have enough time to work on other tasks, which require his attention. Half of the time, our flowers and fruit trees end up being ignored. We can sadly conclude that the school has already exhausted all of its solutions but one, recycling, the oldest trick in the book!

*Students of Praslin Secondary School, Seychelles  
(Youth forum, April 2003)*

This article led to considerable debate about other methods that had worked in islands.

'With only a population of 700 our island has managed to form a group of young volunteers that cleans our roadsides and beaches. For this reason our island is clean. This achievement is mainly through the good work of our volunteers, the Environmental Rangers called Mangaia Tangae'o Rangers. These volunteers are putting a great effort into cleaning our environment by planting trees and keeping our island litter free and through their recycling project. They also record what they collect and show it on the local television so that those responsible will feel ashamed.'

*Students from Mangaia School, Cook Islands (Youth forum, May 2003)*

'Littering is a world wide problem that has been around for decades. Solutions that have been tried with various degrees of success include:

- Wardens with the ability to fine abusers;
- Employment of staff to pick up litter;
- Education to stop people littering;
- Placement of rubbish containers in convenient areas;
- Punish offenders.



The Maldives is making a special effort with their waste disposal management systems, April 2003.

All of the above have had various degrees of success and are successful, depending on the circumstances. One can say that there is no sure way, a lot depends on education. Education starts in the home. If parents drop cans and nappies at beach there is very little hope for children to have role models. For a school, one suggestion is to form teams who take turns to pick up rubbish. This relies on

peer pressure, each team telling the others not to litter to achieve results. Here in the Cook Islands we have two groups that help in our littering; they are the "Rangers" and "Girl Guides". The Girl Guides noticed that plastic bags were a problem so they decided to make bags out of material and sold them in stores. They used left-over material to make mats and other things. The Rangers are a group of volunteers who go around the island picking up litter.'

*Students from Nukutere College, Rarotonga, Cook Islands (Youth forum, May 2003)*

The students from Praslin Secondary School were not content to just discuss the issue on the internet forum. With the help of their teacher they organized an exchange visit with students from the Madhrasathul Ahmadhiyya School in Male, Maldives in January 2004, and then both schools worked on a joint 'Zero tolerance for littering' project.



Students from Seychelles visited their counterparts in the Maldives and developed a project on 'Zero tolerance for littering' (January 2004)

Indeed young people can make a difference in this issue of littering. As part of their Sandwatch project activities, students aged 8–11 years from Dublanc Primary School in Dominica monitored the types of beach debris found on their beach. They then interviewed members of the community, some of whom admitted they left their litter on the beach. They then conducted a march through their village and stopped at areas where people were gathered such as the restaurant and the Health Centre to discuss their concerns. The next day community members voluntarily cleaned the beach (Hilton, 2003).

Disposal of other types of waste material has also been discussed with Small Islands Voice. Many islands in the Caribbean have been concerned and have made representations to various bodies including the United Nations about the shipment of toxic waste by France and Japan through the Caribbean Sea. Despite the concerns raised about the impacts of any potential accident, the shipments continue. Another interesting aspect of this problem relates to the disposal of toxic waste in small islands.

Students from Dublanc Primary School telling the Sandwatch workshop participants about their march for a clean beach environment, Dominica, July 2003.





'Recently Cook Islands News (10 Dec. 2002) reported on a plan to ship 100 tonnes of toxic waste from 10 Pacific islands including the Cook Islands, to Queensland, Australia. According to news reports, the toxic waste will be shipped from the islands, trucked through Brisbane to a plant at Narengba north of Brisbane. This plan, financed as part of an AusAid package, has caused much community protest and outrage amongst Australia's residents. They question why their health should be threatened? And ask what if something goes wrong? What if just one of the trucks has an accident and the waste spills out?

Many Pacific island countries like the Cook Islands oppose the shipping of nuclear waste through international ocean waters just in case an accident should occur. They say the waste should be treated and buried in the country that made the waste. That same question is now being asked by people in Queensland about waste from the Cook Islands. Accidents do occur be they on the ocean or on land. And in the event of an accident who will be responsible and who will pay? People and the natural environment will both be at risk.

The question is not one that is easily answered as the voice of protest and concern over toxic waste rises from small islands and bigger ones. For, in the case of toxic waste, none of us are isolated from the risks involved.'

*(Cook Islands News, 2003)*

## **C** Concluding comments

The environmental issues discussed in this chapter are just a selection from a long list of concerns, but their discussion serves to illustrate that there is a keen awareness about these matters in the general public's mind. At least in a general sense, islanders are aware of the limited extent of their natural resources and therefore the need for careful and wise management. However, it is in the actual details of how to manage a specific resource where there is often disagreement.

The willingness of young people to tackle some of these environmental problems is also significant, and needs to be fully exploited in a way that their efforts provide lasting benefit. For instance, beach clean-ups need to be combined with long-term projects to try and change people's attitudes to the disposal of litter, or else the young people may quickly become disheartened.



People living in small islands are already taking important decisions about their future, as seen here at Playa Rosario on the south coast of Havana Province, Cuba, where residents have decided to abandon their village and move inland as a result of coastal erosion, February 2004.

## 7 Concluding remarks

**T**his publication has attempted to present an overview of the issues that concern people living in small islands as they are perceived at the beginning of the 21st century and conveyed through the words of islanders themselves. The overview may not be totally comprehensive; nevertheless it represents the outcome of two years of dedicated work in representative island territories in the Caribbean, Indian Ocean and Pacific regions to determine which issues concern the general public.

As seen from the preceding chapters, the most critical issues concern jobs and economic prosperity, basic services such as health and education, new infrastructure and environmental issues, as well as a host of social issues ranging from a decline in traditional values to an increase in crime and violence.

Another issue identified in the opinion surveys was the need for good governance. The statement by the Caribbean Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to the Caribbean Regional Governmental Meeting to review the Programme of Action for small island developing States, held in Trinidad in October 2003, addressed this issue:

**'We recognize that there are constraints to the implementation of the Programme of Action but we believe that the fundamental issue is that of governance – inclusion. We know that we can resolve this issue of governance now. We can strengthen our institutional and**

**administrative capacity, make the management of our human and financial resources more efficient by putting people at the centre of development.'**

*Statement by Caribbean NGOs (6 October 2003)*

A similar statement was made by NGO representatives from the islands of the Indian Ocean following a consultation facilitated by Small Islands Voice. The Calodyne Sur Mer declaration, 5 October 2003, stated:

**'We request governments to acknowledge the civil society consultation process initiated at this workshop and to maintain the dialogue and consultation beyond January 2005 on issues pertaining to sustainable development for the benefit and welfare of the populations in small island developing States.'**

All of the issues identified have been integrated into the review of the Small Island Developing States Programme of Action, through national submissions and during the regional and inter-regional meetings that took place in 2003 and 2004.

The Small Islands Voice initiative recognizes that people are at the centre of development. For instance, one of the ongoing activities relates to community visioning in Palau. This concept calls for each community to participate in preparing plans for the type of development they want to see in their area (or state) in the future. The visioning exercise will lead to master land-use plans in each state that are meaningful to, agreed upon, and supported by the entire state community. These plans need to be formally endorsed by each state, and then implemented. Community visioning shifts decision-making to members of the community, while still including policy makers and expert planners. Starting in 2003, and with the support of Small Islands Voice, there has been a renewed interest in community visioning in Palau. A community awareness campaign is being conducted and two states are participating in more in-depth activities involving community meetings and the preparation of photographic murals depicting how they want their futures to evolve. These murals will be displayed in the communities. Much interest has been expressed by other islands in the community visioning process.

Furthermore, as islands prepare for the meeting in Mauritius from 10–14 January 2005 to discuss their future strategy regarding the Programme of Action, youth are being mobilized to participate in a 'Youth Visioning for Island Living' initiative. This has three main phases: firstly, there will be preparatory activities among island youth to discuss the three themes that have been identified:

- *Life and love in islands* – island lifestyles and cultures
- *My island home* – safeguarding island environments
- *Money in my pocket* – economic and employment opportunities.

Secondly, youth participants from island countries will meet in Mauritius for a period of five days from 7–12 January 2005, to discuss concerns, share information about activities, and shape their vision. They will then present their vision backed up by proposals to the main United Nations meeting. Thirdly, after the meeting in Mauritius, island youth will prioritize actions at a local and national level, and begin implementation. The third stage – the implementation of activities – is seen as the most testing and the most important stage.

During a preliminary youth visioning exercise in The Bahamas as the inter-regional preparatory meeting on the Programme of Action took place, Bahamian youth prepared their own vision and in their manifesto they called on their leaders to assist in implementation:

**'We, the youth of The Bahamas, are convinced that we are catalysts of change and we invite your participation to assist with the execution of these resolutions.'**

*(Ministry of Education and UNESCO, 2004)*

Island visioning is emerging as a key focus for Small Islands Voice, as the initiative seeks to assist islanders in determining how they want to see their islands develop, and helping them make their vision become reality. Future island visioning activities will focus on communities as well as youth; in addition, the residents of outer islands, who in many cases represent a special group of islanders, merit special attention.

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# Annex 1

## Opinion survey logistics

ISLAND	DATE OF SURVEY	NUMBER OF PEOPLE SURVEYED	SAMPLED POPULATION
<p><b>St Kitts and Nevis, Caribbean</b></p> <p>Trial survey Results available at: <a href="http://www.unesco.org/csi/smis/siv/Caribbean/caropinion.htm">www.unesco.org/csi/smis/siv/Caribbean/caropinion.htm</a></p> <p>Full survey Results available at: <a href="http://www.unesco.org/csi/smis/siv/Caribbean/StKitts-Nevis_opinionsurvey.rtf">www.unesco.org/csi/smis/siv/Caribbean/StKitts-Nevis_opinionsurvey.rtf</a></p>	<p>Feb '02</p> <p>Oct–Nov '02</p>	<p>93</p> <p>424</p>	<p>all society</p> <p>all society</p>
<p><b>St Vincent and the Grenadines, Caribbean</b></p> <p>School survey Results available at: <a href="http://www.unesco.org/csi/smis/siv/Caribbean/svg-youth.htm">www.unesco.org/csi/smis/siv/Caribbean/svg-youth.htm</a></p>	<p>Oct '02</p>	<p>60</p>	<p>youth</p>
<p><b>Maldives, Indian Ocean</b></p> <p>Full survey of Baa Eydhafushi Results available at: <a href="http://www.unesco.org/csi/smis/siv/IndianOcean/Mald_survrep.rtf">www.unesco.org/csi/smis/siv/IndianOcean/Mald_survrep.rtf</a></p>	<p>Jul '03</p>	<p>284</p>	<p>all society</p>
<p><b>Seychelles, Indian Ocean</b></p> <p>Trial survey Results available at: <a href="http://www.unesco.org/csi/smis/siv/IndianOcean/ioopinion.htm">www.unesco.org/csi/smis/siv/IndianOcean/ioopinion.htm</a></p> <p>Full survey Results available at: <a href="http://www.unesco.org/csi/smis/siv/IndianOcean/seyopsurv-rep.htm">www.unesco.org/csi/smis/siv/IndianOcean/seyopsurv-rep.htm</a></p>	<p>Mar '02</p> <p>Oct '02</p>	<p>22</p> <p>800</p>	<p>all society</p> <p>all society</p>
<p><b>Cook Islands, Pacific</b></p> <p>Survey of mainly youth – Rarotonga and Aitutaki Results available at: <a href="http://www.unesco.org/csi/smis/siv/Pacific/CookIslandssurveyreport.rtf">www.unesco.org/csi/smis/siv/Pacific/CookIslandssurveyreport.rtf</a></p> <p>Survey of all society – Rarotonga, Mitiaro, Mauke, Pukapuka, Manihiki Results available at: <a href="http://www.unesco.org/csi/smis/siv/Pacific/Cooks-finalsurvrep.rtf">www.unesco.org/csi/smis/siv/Pacific/Cooks-finalsurvrep.rtf</a></p>	<p>Jul '02</p> <p>Sep–Dec '02</p>	<p>146</p> <p>246</p>	<p>youth (mainly)</p> <p>all society</p>
<p><b>Palau, Pacific</b></p> <p>Full survey Results available at: <a href="http://www.unesco.org/csi/smis/siv/Pacific/Palau-OpSurvRep.rtf">www.unesco.org/csi/smis/siv/Pacific/Palau-OpSurvRep.rtf</a></p>	<p>Jan–Apr '03</p>	<p>154</p>	<p>all society</p>

# Annex 2

## Schools involved in the Small Islands Voice internet-based youth forum (Phase 2, 2003)

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### CARIBBEAN

#### **Bahamas**

Hopetown Primary School, Abaco

#### **Dominica**

Marigot Secondary School

Portsmouth Secondary School

#### **St Vincent and the Grenadines**

Bequia Community High School

Bequia Seventh Day Adventist

Secondary School

Union Island Secondary School

Barrouallie Secondary School

#### **San Andres Archipelago**

Brooks Hill Bilingual School

Colegio Luis Amigo

Colegio Sagrada Familia

Centro de Educación Media Diversificada

### INDIAN OCEAN

#### **Maldives**

Ahmadiyya School

Baa Atoll Education Centre

Gaafu Dhaalu Atoll Education Centre

#### **Mauritius**

Sookdeo Bissoondoyal Sixth Form College

Gujadhur Raycoomar State Secondary

School

#### **Seychelles**

Anse Royale Secondary School

Belonie Secondary School

La Digue Secondary School

Praslin Secondary School

### PACIFIC OCEAN

#### **Cook Islands**

Araura College

Avarua Primary School

Mangaia College

Nikao Maori School

Nukutere College

#### **Fiji**

A.G. High School

Nadi Muslim College

Rakiraki Public High School

#### **Palau**

Mindzenty High School



# Annex 3

## Quantitative summaries of Small Islands Voice internet-based global forum

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### SMALL ISLANDS VOICE

### GLOBAL INTERNET-BASED FORUM

WWW.SIVGLOBAL.ORG

#### Summary of discussion on road construction in Palau, Pacific

Date of discussions: Oct–Nov 2002

Number of persons on distribution list: 7,000

Number of substantive responses: 45

#### Main issue

Will the construction of a major new road in Palau bring economic benefits at the expense of the natural environment?

#### 27% said development is inevitable

- development is going to happen anyway
- economic development versus environmental preservation
- young people need development
- public awareness and education is important
- a spiritual base is needed for sound development

#### 27% said environmental concerns need to be included in development

- ensure island residents care for their environment
- conduct environmental impact assessments and monitor development
- establish local and global standards for development
- enforce environmental laws
- designate protected areas

#### 11% said development should be planned in phases

- a master plan is needed with development properly phased
- community planning is important

#### 9% said stop this type of development

- fight all development
- large organizations exploit the environmental resources of small islands

#### 4% emphasized the need for good governance and transferability

#### 22% of the correspondents had separate ideas

- ranging from the influence of foreign television on young people to the importance of democracy

**SMALL ISLANDS VOICE**  
**GLOBAL INTERNET-BASED FORUM**  
**WWW.SIVGLOBAL.ORG**

**Summary of discussion on beach access in Trinidad and Tobago, Caribbean**

Date of discussions: Nov 2002 – Feb 2003  
Number of persons on distribution list: 9,000  
Number of substantive responses: 31

**Main issue**

Should a developer in Trinidad and Tobago be allowed to restrict access to the beach?

**77% support unrestricted public access to all beaches**

- public beach access is a right of all islanders
- there needs to be access *to* the beach and *along* the beach, as discussed in an ongoing controversy in Bequia
- legislation and development plans should reflect that beaches are important public resources (equivalent to public parks) and need to be protected and shared
- fully utilize the media and petitions to solve beach access problems
- even non-violent actions opposing beach access restrictions may result in court cases
- beach fences have had to be physically removed in some islands (e.g. Barbuda, Grenada)

**10% support unrestricted public access to most beaches**

- in some islands it may be acceptable for some upscale tourism resorts to restrict public beach access
- such restrictions should be a collective decision involving all people living on the island
- public access to entire islands may be restricted

**3% support unrestricted public access for recreational purposes (not fishing) to all beaches**

- in some Pacific islands traditional land tenure customs exist which may restrict outsiders from enjoying recreation and fishing at some beaches

**10% discussed other issues**

- land ownership by foreigners
- wise practices in very remote islands

**SMALL ISLANDS VOICE**  
**GLOBAL INTERNET-BASED FORUM**  
**WWW.SIVGLOBAL.ORG**

**Summary of discussion on tourism policy in Seychelles, Indian Ocean**

Date of discussions: Feb–May 2003

Number of persons on distribution list: 10,000

Number of substantive responses: 27

**Main issue**

Should upmarket resorts be the main thrust of a national tourism policy in Seychelles?

**48% support the idea that a tourism policy based mainly on upmarket resorts is misguided**

- an emphasis on large resorts cuts out many local players and may cause social problems
- large foreign-owned establishments often result in profits leaving the island
- small establishments provide more benefit to local people, and to the local economy, especially if they are well marketed
- government policy in some islands favours large investors; such a policy may have human-rights implications

**4% support the concept that an upmarket tourism policy provides many unique benefits**

- benefits include increased spending power, a market for special services, limited environmental impact

**19% support the view that a good tourism policy requires cooperation from all societal sectors**

- dialogue and active involvement of government agencies, NGOs, the private sector and communities is essential for an effective tourism policy that is beneficial to the island
- tourism needs to provide for the development of local people as well as supplying foreign exchange
- in view of the vulnerability of the tourism industry to global events, a diversified economy is sounder than one based purely on tourism

**29% discussed other issues**

- people need to take action
- governments need to implement laws
- this forum needs to be more interactive
- long-distance air travel is damaging to the environment

**SMALL ISLANDS VOICE**  
**GLOBAL INTERNET-BASED FORUM**  
**WWW.SIVGLOBAL.ORG**

**Summary of discussion on foreign investment in Cook Islands, Pacific**

Date of discussions: May–Jul 2003

Number of persons on distribution list: 12,000

Number of substantive responses: 20

**Main issue**

Does large-scale foreign investment benefit small islands?

**65% support the idea that large-scale foreign investment does not benefit small islands**

- governments have too free a hand to negotiate away a country's property, and to issue development permits
- countries need to revisit their development plans and encourage only those investments that promote the full involvement of local residents
- foreign investment is only a symptom of the problems faced by small islands, the root causes are overpopulation and corrupt leaders
- Cook Islands stand to lose their unique identity due to the foreign investment and importation of foreign labour

**5% support the concept that large-scale foreign investment does benefit small islands**

- foreign investment fuels the construction industry and creates more jobs

**30% discussed related issues namely political corruption, trade policies and education**

- paying a reduced number of politicians a generous salary will lessen corruption
- political corruption is a fact of life in all countries, and there is a need to accept this and find ways to work around it
- products from less developed countries, such as small islands, do not receive a fair market price, thereby leading to further inequalities between the rich and the poor
- young people have insufficient drive and work ethic to achieve their goals
- part of the solution to creating good leaders and responsible members of society among the young lies in creating bridges between home, school and communities

## **SMALL ISLANDS VOICE**

### **GLOBAL INTERNET-BASED FORUM**

WWW.SIVGLOBAL.ORG

#### **Summary of discussion on increased youth crime and violence in Caribbean islands**

Date of discussions: Jul–Sep 2003

Number of persons on distribution list: 14,000

Number of substantive responses: 26

#### **Main issue**

What is the solution to the increased rate of crime and violence among young people?

**46% supported the view that harsher penalties are not the answer to increased crime and violence, instead there is a need to focus on education; child upbringing; strengthening family, Christian and spiritual values; improving communication and listening to young people**

- USA has the highest imprisonment rate in the world and is still a very violent society
- take out the guns from small island society
- economic materialism and drug trafficking are major factors in increased violence

**4% supported the view that harsher penalties are the answer to increased crime and violence**

**12% felt that violent television programmes and videos are a major cause of youth violence**

**12% felt that violent television programmes and videos are not a major cause of youth violence**

- such videos only reflect existing human violence
- there is a need to develop good programmes and set standards

#### **26% discussed other issues**

- small islands need to promote and develop a culture of peace
- discussion is very timely because of recent violence
- there is a need to highlight good stories on this forum
- rehabilitation of criminals in small islands is very difficult

## **SMALL ISLANDS VOICE**

### **GLOBAL INTERNET-BASED FORUM**

WWW.SIVGLOBAL.ORG

#### **Summary of discussion on the export of spring water from St Vincent and the Grenadines, Caribbean**

Date of discussions: Sep–Nov 2003

Number of persons on distribution list: 14,000

Number of substantive responses: 27

#### **Main issue**

Should spring water from a small island (St Vincent and the Grenadines) be bottled and exported?

#### **44% of the responses supported the view that a small island should export its water resources provided local needs are met first and there is full consultation with resource owners**

Related points included:

- cost benefit analysis should be conducted to ensure the country benefits in the long term
- resource owners and investors have different expectations
- profits from water export be used for improving national water distribution systems
- need to protect water sources

#### **22% of the responses were of the view that a small island should not export its water resources**

Related points included:

- water is a priceless commodity and needed for the future
- export provides more benefit for foreign investors than host country
- small island reservoirs are too small to consider export

#### **34% of the responses discussed other issues, which included:**

- support for exporting to those who do not have water resources
- spiritual and traditional view of land and water resources
- use of island water resources for tourism purposes while local residents are deprived of water
- need to conserve water reserves such as wetlands
- ways to reduce water usage
- lack of political will to manage water resources
- plastic bottles filling up landfills
- islands have the option to sell their natural resources for profit

**SMALL ISLANDS VOICE**  
**GLOBAL INTERNET-BASED FORUM**  
**WWW.SIVGLOBAL.ORG**

**Summary of discussion on the 'right' type of tourism development for Aitutaki, Cook Islands, Pacific**

Date of discussions: Jan–Mar 2004

Number of persons on distribution list: 15,000

Number of substantive responses: 20

**Main issue**

Should future tourism development on a small outer island (Aitutaki in Cook Islands) be small scale or large scale?

**50% of the responses supported the view that small-scale tourism development, based on simple island lifestyles, was most appropriate for outer islands**

Related points included:

- three principles suggested for successful small-scale tourism development were: local ownership, being honest with visitors about services provided, and remaining true to your island by not trying to match external expectations
- visitors appreciate being treated as individuals and as part of a family
- large-scale development in small islands is often not sustainable and creates many environmental problems
- new information and communication technologies can benefit small-scale properties in their marketing strategy

**5% of the responses supported the view that large-scale tourism development was preferable for outer islands**

Related points included:

- quality is better than quantity and everyone in a small island benefits from the trickle-down effect of a large resort

**45% of the responses discussed other issues, which included:**

- sharing experiences and solutions through this forum is very beneficial for those living in small islands
- in Pacific islands there is a need for more truth in tourism advertising and a shift in service attitudes
- some small outer islands are already over-developed and suffering various pollution problems

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