



# Cook Islands Small Islands Voice

A UNESCO Project

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## **Welcome to Small Islands Voice,**

Small Islands Voice, supported by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), is an inter-regional initiative bringing together islanders from the Pacific, Indian Ocean and Caribbean regions to find out their concerns and development issues. These concerns and issues will be compiled to contribute to the review of the Programme of Action for Small Island Developing States (2004), and will also be channelled back to the local level for specific action on the ground.

Activities have commenced in Palau and Cook Islands in the Pacific, Seychelles in the Indian Ocean, and St. Kitts and Nevis and Bequia (St. Vincent and the Grenadines) in the Caribbean. These include opinion surveys, meetings and internet based discussions, among others, all designed to find out people's views and concerns. REAP has been selected by UNESCO as co-ordinator for the Cook Islands.

Small islands are, by their very nature, limited in size and relatively isolated. They are also particularly vulnerable to natural disasters and global economic events, making the problems they confront especially challenging.

Despite these constraints, small islands can contribute to and benefit from the "information age", which may provide a means to battle environmental degradation and growing poverty at home, and serve as an example to the rest of the world.

### **STOP THE PRESS**

**CONGRATULATIONS TO MANGAIA TANGA'EO  
ENVIRONMENTAL RANGERS**

The Commonwealth Secretariat has just named Mangaia's Tanga'eo Environmental Rangers as recipients of the Commonwealth Youth Programme Year 2002 Award for the South Pacific.

## **The People's Voice**

Small Islands Voice seeks to overcome the isolation of small islands by building capacity and strengthening local, regional and inter-regional communication by:

- Ø Obtaining islanders views on environment and development issues at the local level
- Ø Identifying the key issues and channelling them back to the local level for action on the ground, towards the global level especially international programmes dealing with sustainable development of small islands.
- Ø Encouraging young islanders to discuss environment and development issues among themselves.
- Ø Debating these views regionally and globally through Internet based discussions.

This is what Small Islands Voice is all about. Your opportunity to comment on issues relating to development and the environment. Small Islands Voice will publish excerpts from these findings along with other items relating to the environment and development. Many are written by the youth of the Cook Islands - the future of this country.

*Mitiaro Itiki Environmental Rangers  
Maire Track Project*



## **My Island Home Coastal Clean-Up**

REAP's third annual Cook Islands Coastal Clean-Up was definitely the largest all-volunteer environmental clean-up effort ever held in the Cook Islands.

Not only was it big with the number of volunteers involved – over 3700 – but also from the amount and litter and debris collected from Cook Islands beaches, foreshores and lagoons. About 8 1/2 tonnes of rubbish was collected along more than 200 kilometres of coastline. Items collected ranged from cigarette butts, nappies, aluminium cans, plastic and glass to pigs heads, refrigerators, car batteries, tarpaulines, fishing lines, roofing iron and household furniture. You name it – it was there.

REAP's Bruce Gray said credit for the clean-up effort goes to the hundreds of volunteers, especially the young school students and their teachers, who along with the Cook Islands Environmental Rangers, spear-headed the effort. Schools on every island got involved. Furthermore, they have all committed to Adopting-A-Beach section to clean and monitor on a regular basis. Special thanks go to Mobil Oil, the main sponsor of this year's clean-up effort and co-sponsor with REAP of the Adopt-A-Beach Programme.

We also want to give a big thank you to Anchor Milk/NZ for providing free flavoured milk to the students for their effort and to CITC/Coca-Cola for assisting with the media awareness campaign. Thank you also to all the visitors joining in to make this a true community effort to help keep our islands clean and litter free for all the world to see.

The following comments are by young people highlighting the importance of the environment in their young lives and to their future. What do you think?

*Paradise is here. If we keep our environment clean our island will turn into paradise with turtles and whales swimming in our environment.*

O.M.

*I love my island and its beauty. It is so clean because our ancestors have looked after it very well and passed this culture on from generation to*

*generation.*

*Here on Mauke is the paradise with clean water, green grass and trees all bundled into one under the blue sky. Oh how I love Mauke, my Paradise and my Home.*

K.W.T.

*Pollution is a very big problem on Rarotonga, please help stop it. If we bury any plastic, tins, vehicle engines with oil leaking through it, in a few years time the dumped and over used agricultural chemicals will blend into the soil and contaminate our drinking water which causes diseases. It will also pollute our streams and our wonderful ocean. We need to save our beaches so we can enjoy them as well as tourists.*

T.P.

*Please, please just stop throwing rubbish on our island and look after our paradise.*

*Recycling is bad for the lazy person but good for the environment.*

T.S.

What do you think?



## **2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Cook Islands Jingle Bell Fun Run**

They came covered in aluminium cans, paper and plastic—and apart from raising funds in aid of people with disabilities in the outer islands they made up one heck of a parade through Avarua town.

The first Jingle Bell Fun Run was an overwhelming success. The community response was tremendous, with over 60 business sponsored teams and over 350 participants.

“It was great to see how the people’s concern for their environment and the importance of recycling was in costuming and singing,” says Roz Gray.

Hundreds of toys were donated and packed for distribution to the outer islands disabled children.

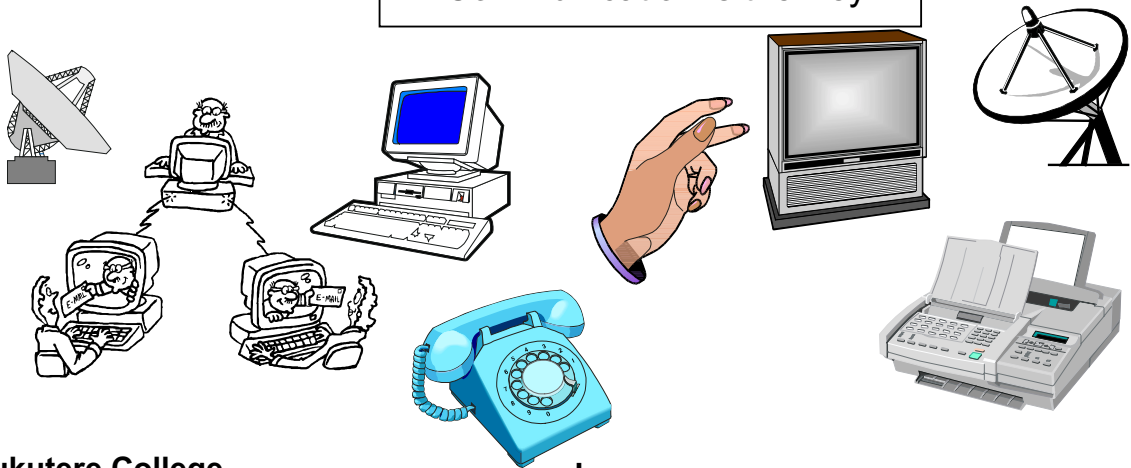
With Christmas just around the corner plans are well underway to make this year’s Jingle Bell Fun Run a really spectacular Christmas celebration for the whole family.

Plans call for a Christmas street fair featuring Father Christmas, food and entertainment along with the special feature of the costumed fun run participants.

12 December is the day-- Grand prize this year is two return airfares from Rarotonga to Honolulu, Hawaii on Aloha Airlines.

Aloha Airlines is a major sponsor of the original Honolulu Jingle Bell Run and now also the Cook Islands Jingle Bell Fun Run.

## Communication is the Key



### Nukutere College

Nukutere College is the Cook Islands participant in the Small Islands Voice -- Youth Internet Forum - exchanging ideas and views on the environment and development through the internet with students from schools spread across the Caribbean, Indian Ocean and Pacific Regions.

Each school has a different theme to write about and on which other schools will comment as to how it relates to happenings on their island. Nukutere's theme is "Sports and Recreation on My Island."

While you may or may not agree with all the comments made, the important thing is that these are the views and concerns of real people, Cook Islanders just like you. It is important that everyone's views be respected.

Through the process of open discussions and free exchange of ideas we can all work together to make our island and our nation a better place – a better place to live and to visit. For the soul of our society to be enriched we must first understand who we are. Through this willingness to comment freely and without fear of retribution our natural culture is not only enriched, it becomes more durable.

### Language

Language is considered one of the abilities that distinguishes humans from all other animals. While there is no doubt that animals use sounds to attract mates, protect their territory and defend their brood, their vocalisations are primitive in comparison to human speech. The debate on how language developed continues to this day.

An Auckland University psychologist, Professor Michael Corballis believes that language originated not with animal sounds but with gestures.

One of the strongest arguments in support of this idea is that researchers have spent years trying to teach chimpanzees to talk with very limited success. However, while the chimps never uttered more than grunts and gurgles, they quickly adopted a sign language, communicating articulately with hand gestures and facial expressions.

Another argument is that deaf people throughout the world have developed sign languages that are as complex as any spoken language. In every society, no matter what the language, Communication is the Key.