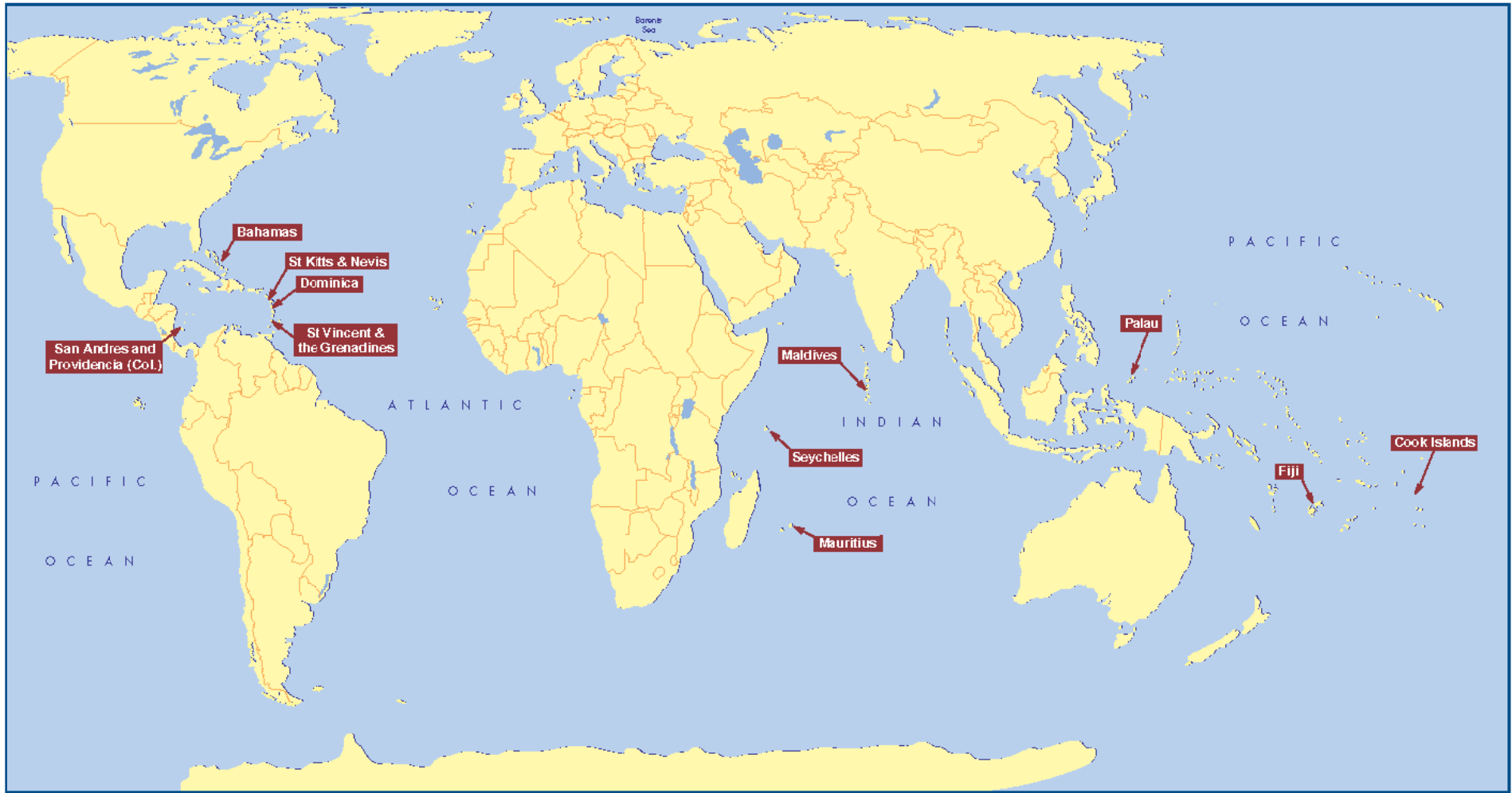




SMALL ISLANDS VOICE

Laying the foundation





Island states/territories undertaking national activities within the Small Islands Voice project, as at May 2003. Many additional islands are participating in the project through the global fora.

Small Islands Voice



Laying the foundation

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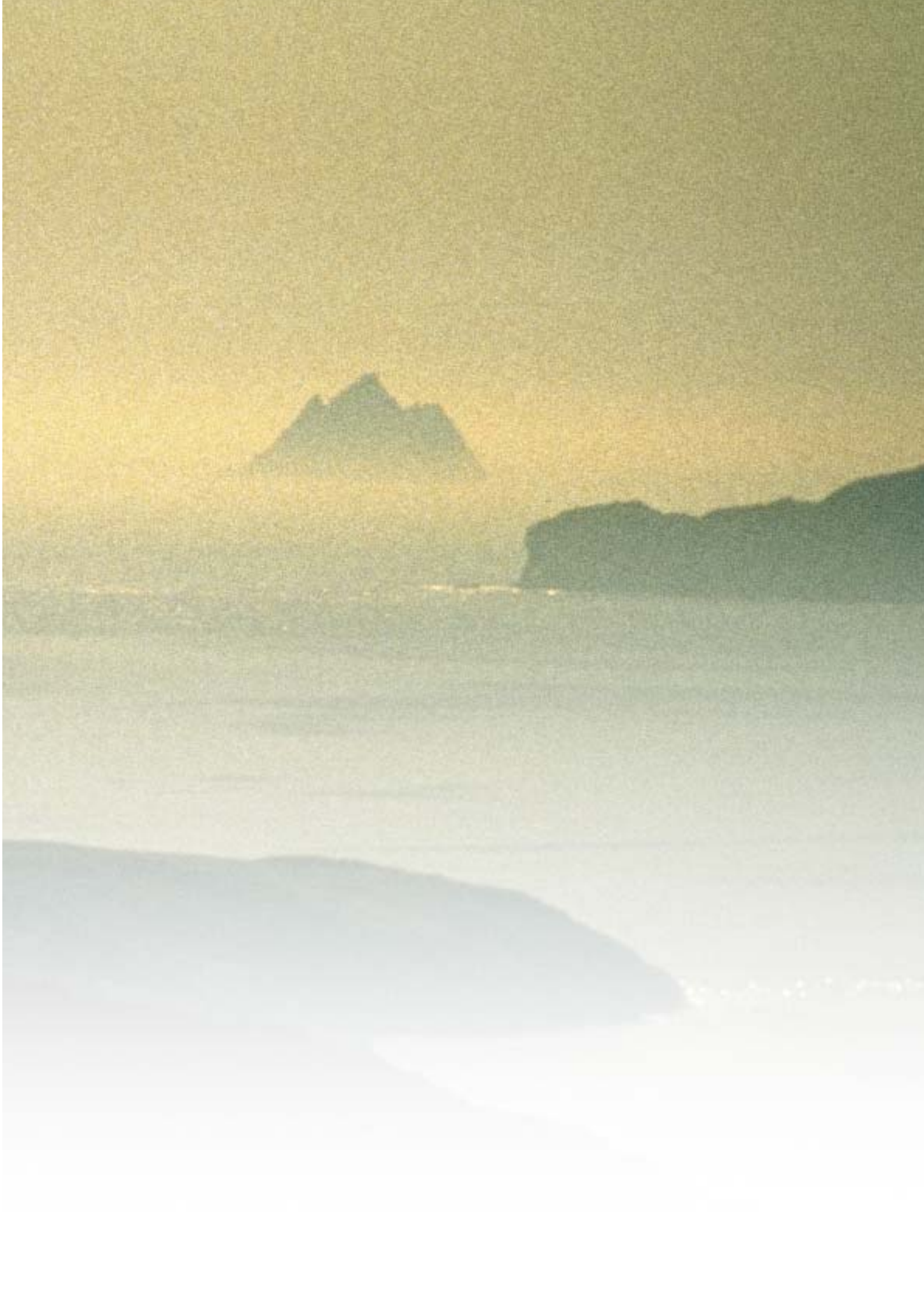
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F Foreword

Small islands face a myriad of problems not limited to their small size or relative isolation. Scattered as they are across the oceans and seas of the globe, they are often dwarfed by larger countries. For more than a decade now they have successfully profiled themselves as a special group within the world community.

Against this background, Small Islands Voice was started in 2002 on the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) platform for Environment and Development in Coastal Regions and in Small Islands. Seeking to assist small islands in playing an effective role in the 'information age,' Small Islands Voice is strengthening local capacity in existing media and new communication technologies. Specifically it is promoting the effective participation of the general public in sustainable island development, and in the 2004 review of the Small Island Developing States Programme of Action. The initiative is one of UNESCO's cross-cutting projects and endeavours to bring together the Organization's sectors for natural and basic sciences, culture, social and human sciences, communication and information, and education, in an integrated approach to improving the quality of life for people living in small islands.

One of the characteristics of small islands is their limited population size. This often necessitates certain individuals holding several different positions at the same time, making for long hours and arduous work loads. This also means that islands have limited capacity to take on new projects and activities. With this in mind, and keeping the principles of sustainability and capacity building at the forefront, a special effort has been made to lay a firm foundation for Small Islands Voice, by having islands advance the initiative within their own national framework and at their own pace.

Small Islands Voice started in a small way, focusing on one island in each of the three target regions: St Kitts and Nevis in the Caribbean Sea, Seychelles in the Indian Ocean, and Palau in the Pacific Ocean. Over the course of the first year, other islands in the three regions became involved, including Cook Islands, and St Vincent and the Grenadines. Initial activities concentrated on establishing a sound basis for the initiative in each island: introducing the concept, setting up national coordinating committees, liaising with and gaining support from the media, conducting public opinion surveys to identify the general public's issues of concern in the environment and development arena. Internet-based discussion fora, one for the general public and one for youth, have been started as a means

to link islanders together across the regions. These and other activities are the subject of this publication.

A foundation has been laid so that as the project progresses the general public can debate and discuss their concerns widely using a variety of communication modes ranging from village meetings to internet debates. One of the most important challenges lying ahead is to ensure that these island voices are heard in the international arena, especially as the world's small islands prepare for the 2004 review of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

In future years as the focus of the initiative turns from talk to action, Small Islands Voice will continue to help strengthening the combined use of traditional media and new communication technologies, so that the voice of the general public is heard and listened to, both at the local level in small islands and in the international arena.

Credit for laying the foundation of Small Islands Voice goes to the national co-ordinators and committee members, volunteers, teachers, students and others in the islands. We thank Scotland On Line for their assistance with the internet-based discussion fora. ■

Avant-propos

Les petites îles sont exposées à d'innombrables difficultés, qui ne proviennent pas en totalité de leur petite taille ou de leur isolement relatif. Éparpillées à la surface des océans et des mers du globe, elles font souvent figure de naines à côté des grands pays. Cependant, depuis une dizaine d'années elles ont enfin réussi à imposer leur spécificité devant la communauté mondiale.

C'est dans ce contexte qu'est née en 2002 la "Voix des petites îles", à l'initiative de la plateforme de l'UNESCO (Organisation des Nations unies pour l'éducation, la science et la culture) pour l'environnement et le développement dans les régions côtières et les petites îles. Pour aider les petites îles à jouer un rôle efficace, à l'"ère de l'information", la Voix des petites îles s'emploie à renforcer les capacités locales dans le domaine des médias existants et des nouvelles technologies de la communication. Elle encourage le grand public à participer concrètement au développement durable des îles ainsi qu'à la révision, qui sera effectuée en 2004, du Programme d'action des petits États insulaires en développement. Cette initiative, qui relève des projets transversaux de l'UNESCO, vise à unir les efforts des secteurs des sciences exactes et naturelles, de la culture, des sciences sociales et humaines, de la communication et de l'information, et de l'éducation, dans une approche intégrée pour l'amélioration de la qualité de vie des habitants des petites îles.

L'une des particularités des petites îles est le faible effectif de leur population. Cela oblige souvent certaines personnes à cumuler plusieurs fonctions, au prix de longues heures de travail et de très lourdes tâches. Cela signifie également que les îles ont peu de disponibilité pour entreprendre de nouveaux projets ou de nouvelles activités. Compte tenu de cette contingence d'une part et du souci primordial de se conformer aux impératifs de la viabilité et du renforcement des capacités, un effort particulier a été consenti pour établir sur des bases solides la Voix des petites îles, en faisant en sorte que celles-ci soutiennent l'initiative dans le cadre de leurs propres institutions nationales, et à leur propre rythme.

La Voix des petites îles a commencé de façon modeste, en s'adressant à une seule île dans chacune des trois régions ciblées : Saint Kitts et Nevis dans la mer des Antilles, les Seychelles dans l'océan Indien et Palau dans le Pacifique. Dans les trois régions, d'autres îles s'y sont intéressées dès la première année, telles les îles Cook et Saint Vincent et les Grenadines. Les toutes premières activités visaient à jeter des bases solides d'action dans chaque île : faire connaître ce concept, établir des comités nationaux de coordination, créer des relais dans les médias pour obtenir leur appui, effectuer des enquêtes d'opinion afin de découvrir les

préoccupations du grand public en matière d'environnement et de développement. Des forums de discussion sur l'Internet – l'un pour le public en général, l'autre pour les jeunes – ont été mis en place afin de relier les insulaires d'une région du monde à l'autre. La présente publication traite de ce sujet ainsi que d'autres activités.

Les bases sont jetées, et au fur et à mesure des progrès du projet, le grand public peut débattre de ses problèmes et en discuter sur une grande échelle, en utilisant toute une gamme de modes de communication allant des réunions de village aux débats sur l'Internet. L'un des plus grands défis à relever à l'avenir est de faire en sorte que la voix de ces îles arrive à se faire entendre sur la scène internationale, notamment au moment où les petites îles du monde se préparent à réviser, en 2004, le Programme d'action pour le développement durable des petits États insulaires en développement.

Au cours des prochaines années, avec le passage du stade de la réflexion à celui de l'action, la Voix des petites îles poursuivra sa mission pour renforcer le recours combiné aux médias traditionnels et aux nouvelles technologies, afin que la voix du grand public se fasse entendre et écouter, tant au niveau local des petites îles que sur la scène internationale.

Le mérite d'avoir jeté les bases de la Voix des petites îles revient aux coordonnateurs nationaux, aux membres des comités, aux volontaires, enseignants, étudiants et autres personnes habitant les îles. Notre reconnaissance va à Scotland On Line pour son appui aux forums de discussion sur l'Internet. ■

Prólogo

Las pequeñas islas confrontan miles de problemas, los cuales no están ocasionados solamente por su tamaño o relativo aislamiento. Desperdigadas como lo están en los mares y océanos del globo, se ven a menudo eclipsadas por países más grandes. Sin embargo, desde hace más de una década las pequeñas islas han llegado a hacerse distinguir como un grupo especial en la comunidad mundial.

Ante este escenario, nació “La Voz de las Pequeñas Islas” en 2002 en la plataforma para el Medio Ambiente y Desarrollo en Regiones Costeras y Pequeñas Islas en la UNESCO (Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura). Con vistas a asistir a las pequeñas islas en jugar un papel efectivo en la “era de la información”, La Voz de las Pequeñas Islas busca reforzar la capacidad local en aspectos de medios de comunicación de masa y nuevas tecnologías de comunicación. Específicamente se trata de promover la participación efectiva del público en general en el desarrollo sostenible de las islas, y en la reseña de 2004 del Programa de Acción para los Pequeños Estados Insulares en Desarrollo. Esta iniciativa es uno de los proyectos transversales de la UNESCO y trata de juntar los sectores de las ciencias básicas y naturales, la cultura, las ciencias sociales y humanas, la comunicación y la información, y la educación, en un enfoque integrado orientado a mejorar las condiciones de vida de la gente que vive en pequeñas islas.

Una de las características de las pequeñas islas es su limitada población. Esto requiere que ciertos individuos ejerzan diferentes funciones al mismo tiempo, resultando en largas horas de duro trabajo. Significa también que las islas tienen una capacidad limitada de incorporar nuevos proyectos y actividades. Con esta situación en mente, y manteniendo la sostenibilidad y la capacitación como principios esenciales, se ha hecho un esfuerzo especial para establecer una firme base para La Voz de las Pequeñas Islas, haciendo que las islas tomen la iniciativa dentro de sus propias estructuras nacionales y a su propio ritmo.

La Voz de las Pequeñas Islas comenzó modestamente, con una isla en cada una de las regiones seleccionadas: St Kitts y Nevis en el Mar Caribe; las Seychelles en el Océano Índico; y Palau en el Océano Pacífico. Durante el primer año, se incorporaron otras islas en las tres regiones, incluyendo las Islas Cook en la Polinesia (Pacífico Sud), y San Vicente y las Granadinas (Antillas inglesas). Las actividades iniciales se concentraron en establecer una sólida base para la iniciativa de cada isla, introduciendo el concepto de la iniciativa, organizando comités nacionales de coordinación, vinculándose y obteniendo apoyo de los medios de comunicación de masa, realizando encuestas de opinión pública para identificar las

inquietudes del público en relación con el medio ambiente y el desarrollo. Se comenzó a organizar foros de discusión por el Internet, uno para el público en general y otro para la juventud, a fin de vincular los isleños entre las distintas regiones. Estas y otras actividades constituyen el tema de esta publicación.

Se han establecido las bases que permitan al público en general involucrarse en debates y discusiones en relación con sus preocupaciones, a medida que el proyecto progresa, haciendo amplio uso de modos de comunicación, desde reuniones en las aldeas hasta debates por el Internet. Uno de los desafíos más importantes que se enfrenta, es que se puedan escuchar las voces de los isleños en la esfera internacional, y especialmente en la preparación de la reseña de 2004 del Programa de Acción para los Pequeños Estados Insulares en Desarrollo.

En años futuros, cuando la iniciativa pase del diálogo a la acción, La Voz de las Pequeñas Islas continuará a contribuir a reforzar el uso combinado de medios de comunicación tradicionales y nuevas tecnologías de comunicación, de tal manera que la voz del público en general se escuche y se oiga, tanto a nivel local en las pequeñas islas como en la esfera internacional.

El mérito de establecer los fundamentos de La Voz de las Pequeñas Islas pertenece a los coordinadores nacionales y miembros de comités, voluntarios, enseñantes, estudiantes y otros actores en las islas. Queremos agradecer a Scotland On Line por su ayuda con los foros de discusión por el Internet. ■

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List of acronyms

AOSIS	Alliance of Small Island States
AIDS	Acquired immune deficiency system
CORALINA	Corporation for the Sustainable Development of the Archipelago of San Andres, Old Providence and Santa Catalina
CROP	Council of Regional Agencies in the Pacific
CSI	Environment and Development in Coastal Regions and in Small Islands (UNESCO)
NGO	Non-governmental organization
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SIDSNet	Small Island Developing States Network
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WiCoP	Wise coastal practices for sustainable human development (forum)

Executive summary

Small Islands Voice focuses on small island developing states and islands with other affiliations in the Caribbean, Indian Ocean and Pacific regions. This initiative, started in 2002, aims to combine new information and communication technologies with print, radio, television and other media, in order to promote the effective participation of the general public in sustainable island development and in the 2004 review of the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Programme of Action and its follow-up.

Six islands played an active role in Small Islands Voice in 2002: St Kitts and Nevis, St Vincent and the Grenadines, San Andres Archipelago in the Caribbean; Seychelles in the Indian Ocean; Cook Islands and Palau in the Pacific. Activities in the islands include opinion surveys, meetings and workshops, debates, radio talk shows, interactive displays, and newsletters. Inter-regional activities include two internet-based discussion fora, one for the general public and one for youth, inter-regional conference calls, and an inter-regional workshop held in Palau in November 2002.

The internet is being used to link the regions together. An internet-based forum was developed to connect the general public in the three regions in a discussion on key issues in the environment-development arena. This internet-based forum links up with local newspapers so the debate can reach a wider audience; and the potential exists to further extend the reach of this forum using community radio and television. A similar forum focusing on secondary school students is proving successful and has potential as a distance learning tool. Limited and costly internet access in small islands is a serious constraint to such initiatives; however, the islands involved are developing innovative ways of overcoming these constraints, such as negotiating special rates with internet service providers and at internet cafes.

The general public's concerns, emerging from the activities in the islands and the internet-based fora, range from an increase in crime and violence in St Kitts and Nevis to the tension resulting from large numbers of foreign workers in Seychelles and Palau. While work has just started, it appears that the general public's concerns relate, for the most part, to social, cultural and economic topics and to a lesser extent to natural environmental issues. This is interesting since the six priority actions adopted by SIDS in 1999 relate mainly to climate change, natural disasters and natural resources.

Future plans focus on two main areas. Firstly, the debate taking place in the islands will be expanded and intensified as capacity and infrastructure in new communication technologies and traditional media are strengthened. This will involve national and inter-regional activities. Secondly the concerns of the general public will be channelled towards the international level, particularly the review of the SIDS Programme of Action, which will culminate in a meeting in Mauritius in 2004. Preliminary plans for 2004–2005 focus on turning the talk into action, so that civil society, including youth, play a vocal and effective role in ensuring small island sustainable development. ■



Résumé analytique

La Voix des petites îles est au service des petits États insulaires en développement et des îles rattachées à des États, dans les régions des Antilles, de l’océan Indien et du Pacifique. Lancée en 2002, cette initiative a pour objectif de conjuguer les moyens des technologies nouvelles de l’information et de la communication avec ceux de l’écrit, de la radio, de la télévision et des autres médias, afin d’encourager le grand public à participer réellement au développement durable des îles et à la révision, en 2004, du Programme d’action des petits États insulaires en développement, ainsi que de son suivi.

En 2002, six îles ont joué un rôle positif dans la Voix des petites îles ; ce sont, aux Antilles : Saint Kitts et Nevis, Saint Vincent et les Grenadines, l’archipel de San Andres ; dans l’océan Indien : les Seychelles ; dans le Pacifique : Cook et Palau. Les activités y prennent la forme d’enquêtes d’opinion, de réunions et d’ateliers, de débats, de discussions radiophoniques, d’expositions interactives et de bulletins d’information. Au plan interrégional, les activités comprennent, entre autres, deux forums de discussion sur l’Internet – l’un pour le grand public, l’autre pour les jeunes –, des téléconférences et un atelier qui s’est tenu à Palau en novembre 2002.

L’Internet sert à relier les régions entre elles. Un forum sur l’Internet a été créé pour amener le grand public des trois régions à discuter des problèmes principaux qui se présentent sur la scène de l’environnement-développement. Ce forum sur l’Internet est relayé par les journaux locaux, de telle sorte que le débat puisse toucher un public plus large, et il reste encore la possibilité d’étendre la portée du forum sur les ondes des radios et des télévisions communautaires. Un forum similaire axé sur les élèves de l’enseignement secondaire donne déjà des signes de réussite. Il pourrait devenir un outil d’enseignement à distance. Le faible nombre et le coût élevé des branchements à l’Internet dans les petites îles restreignent sérieusement le développement de ces initiatives, mais les îles concernées mettent en place des moyens novateurs pour surmonter ces obstacles, en négociant par exemple des tarifs de faveur avec les fournisseurs d’accès à l’Internet et avec les cyber-cafés.

Les préoccupations du grand public, telles qu’elles se dégagent des recherches menées dans les îles et des forums sur l’Internet vont de la montée de la criminalité et de la violence à Saint Kitts et Nevis jusqu’à la tension provoquée par le grand nombre de travailleurs étrangers aux Seychelles et à Palau. En ce début du programme, il semble que les soucis du grand public concernent, pour l’essentiel, des questions sociales, culturelles et économiques et, à un moindre degré, des questions relatives au milieu naturel. C’est un point intéressant,

car les six actions prioritaires qui avaient été retenues en 1999 par les petits États insulaires en développement avaient surtout trait aux changements climatiques, aux catastrophes naturelles et aux ressources naturelles.

Pour l'avenir, les prévisions se concentrent sur deux domaines. Premièrement le débat qui se déroule dans les îles sera élargi et intensifié avec le renforcement progressif des moyens humains et institutionnels en matière de nouvelles technologies de communication et de médias traditionnels. Cela se fera par des actions nationales et interrégionales. En second lieu, les préoccupations du grand public seront traitées au niveau international, notamment la révision du Programme d'action des petits États insulaires en développement, qui culminera avec la réunion de Maurice en 2004. Les projets provisoires pour 2004–2005 visent à passer du stade des préparatifs à celui de l'action, de telle sorte que la société civile, y compris la jeunesse, joue un rôle audible et réel dans la recherche du développement durable des petites îles. ■

Resumen ejecutivo

La Voz de las Pequeñas Islas centra su atención en pequeños estados insulares en desarrollo e islas con otras afiliaciones en las regiones del Caribe, del Océano Indico y del Pacífico. Esta iniciativa, que se lanzó en 2002, tiene como objetivo combinar nuevas tecnologías de información y comunicación con medios de comunicación de masa tales como la prensa, la radio, la televisión y otros, a fin de promover la participación efectiva del público en general en el desarrollo sostenible de islas y en la reseña de 2004 del Programa de Acción de los Pequeños Estados Insulares en Desarrollo (SIDS) y su seguimiento.

Seis islas han jugado un papel activo en Las Voz de las Pequeñas Islas en 2002: St Kitts y Nevis, San Vicente y las Granadinas, y el Archipiélago de San Andrés en el Caribe; las Seychelles en el Océano Indico; y las Islas Cook y Palau en el Pacífico. Las actividades emprendidas en las islas incluyen sondeos de opinión, reuniones y talleres, debates, programas de radio, muestras interactivas y boletines. Las actividades interregionales incluyen dos foros de discusión basados en el Internet, uno para el público en general y el otro para la juventud, comunicaciones en conferencia interregionales, y un taller, también interregional, realizado en Palau en noviembre del 2002.

Las regiones comunican entre ellas a través del Internet. Se ha desarrollado un foro basado en el Internet para conectar al público en general en las tres regiones en una discusión sobre problemas clave en la relación medio ambiente–desarrollo. Este foro basado en el Internet se vincula con periódicos locales de modo que el debate pueda alcanzar a una audiencia más amplia. Existe también el potencial de extender el alcance de este foro a través de la radio y la televisión comunitarias. Un foro similar que concentra su atención sobre los estudiantes de escuelas secundarias está mostrando éxito y tiene potencial como útil de enseñanza a distancia. El limitado y costoso acceso al Internet en las pequeñas islas representa un serio factor limitante a tales iniciativas. Sin embargo, las islas involucradas están desarrollando formas innovadoras de superar estas limitaciones, tales como negociar tarifas preferenciales con los proveedores de servicios del Internet y en cafés Internet (cybercafés).

Las inquietudes del público en general, que emergen de las actividades en las islas y de los foros basados en el Internet, van del aumento de la criminalidad, la delincuencia y la violencia en St Kitts y Nevis, a la tensión resultante del gran número de trabajadores extranjeros en las Seychelles y Palau. Aunque recién comienza esta labor, pareciera que las preocupaciones del público en general se relaciona, en su mayoría, con temas sociales, culturales y económicos y en menor grado con aspectos ambientales. Esto resulta interesante

puesto que las seis acciones prioritarias adoptadas por los Pequeños Estados Insulares en Desarrollo (SIDS) en 1999, se refieren principalmente al cambio climático, los desastres naturales y los recursos naturales.

Los planes futuros se concentran en dos áreas de acción principales. Primero, el debate que se está llevando a cabo en las islas será ampliado y intensificado a medida que se refuercen las capacidades y las infraestructuras en nuevas tecnologías de comunicación y en los medios de comunicación tradicionales. Esto involucrará actividades a nivel nacional e interregional. Segundo, las inquietudes del público en general serán canalizadas hacia el nivel internacional, y en particular la reseña del Programa de Acción de los Pequeños Estados Insulares en Desarrollo (SIDS), que culminará con una reunión en las Islas Mauricio en 2004. Los planes preliminares 2004–2005 se concentrarán en la campaña para transformar la palabra en acción, de tal manera que la sociedad civil, incluyendo la juventud, juegue un papel vocal y efectivo en asegurar un desarrollo sostenible en las pequeñas islas. ■



Carvings at the Market Place, Avarua, Rarotonga, Cook Islands, 2002.



New building construction in Male, Maldives, 2003.

I 1. Introduction

*Kia Orana
We smile our airport smiles
Kia Orana
Welcome to the Cook Islands*

*Then we serve tourists
With rented cars
Expensive hotels
And imported cuisine*

*Our taro rots in the swamp
Our kuru falls on the ground
We shop imported food*

*In the mornings
We sweep after them
The coca-cans on the beach*

*And the next day
We smile our airport smiles again
Kia Orana
Welcome to our land*

Source: Arnell, D. et al, 1993.
(Kia Orana – Welcome; taro – root crop; kuru – breadfruit)



Stream emptying its load of plastic bags and debris into Basseterre Bay, St Kitts, 1999.



Eroded tree roots and stumps, Rock Islands, Palau, 2002.

Background

The vista of small tropical islands encircled by an aquamarine sea presents an idyllic picture. It is impossible to deny the beauty of these places especially when viewed from afar. However, as those who live in them will tell you, life in small islands is not an ideal existence.

Close up the vista changes and the contrasts are everywhere, the plastic bottles washed into the drains, the stumps of dead trees on the eroded beach, the local youths with nowhere to go sitting all day in front of the rum shop, the market women selling their wares, and the tourists driving by to their expensive home-away-from-home; all this under a hot tropical sun with light breezes moving the air, and just an occasional interruption by the catastrophic winds of a hurricane or cyclone.

Small islands are a 'different world', sometimes with total populations equal only to a small town of a larger country, and whose residents always maintain an intense pride in their island homes. Two youth representatives at the Small Islands Voice inter-regional workshop (November 2002), when asked whether they had ever thought to leave Palau permanently replied:

'Sure, we have thought about it, but since we have Palauan blood we will always want to come back. If we all leave, then Palau would no longer be the same. Would you want to visit an island where the people have no belonging, but simply live there?'

Patricia Black and Jesse Mangham, Palau, November 2002.

These small microcosms with their own government buildings and monuments, their own flags and identity, their residents and their visitors, provide unique challenges in a world undergoing rapid globalization. The challenges facing small islands have been documented by others (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2000) and include:

- *Remoteness and isolation:* many small islands and multi-island states are located far from major markets;
- *Openness to the rest of the world:* economies are heavily exposed to events in global markets;

Jesse Mangham (right) and Patricia Black explain their views during the Small Islands Voice inter-regional workshop, November 2002.



Government buildings, Rarotonga, Cook Islands, 2002.



National flag in front of the Government buildings, Malé, Maldives, 2002.

- *Susceptibility to natural disasters and environmental change*: hurricanes/cyclones, drought and volcanic eruptions typically affect the entire population and economy;
- *Limited diversification*: small domestic markets with low production levels and relatively un-diversified distribution;
- *Poverty*: income distribution is often very uneven;
- *Limited capacity*: smallness of size results in weakness in both public and private sector capacity.

As small islands, both independent states and islands affiliated to larger countries, work to find effective and efficient ways to deal with these problems, many of the answers and solutions they arrive at are also relevant to communities in larger countries.

On their own, small islands run the risk of remaining forever isolated and out of the economic mainstream, sometimes serving a particular niche as a tourism destination, sometimes seeing their visitors move on to other more 'exotic' destinations. In order to build their own countries and achieve sustainable development and a viable quality of life for all their residents, small islands have to bond together. Collectively their voice is significant. In the build-up to the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, 80% of the approximately 300,000 population of the Maldives signed a petition expressing their concerns about sea-level rise. Similar initiatives from other islands in the tropical seas and oceans of the world created a groundswell which eventually led to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which was opened for signature at the 1992 Earth Summit – an important milestone.

Maldivians demonstrate their feelings about sea-level rise and the need to protect their coral reef environment, November 1989. (Photo in CSI archives by unknown photographer)



In order to reduce the effects of isolation, islanders need to be able to take part in the information age and share in the wealth of knowledge, international debate and programmes, and even the important social validation that comes from sharing similar experiences and learning from others. Otherwise, the tendency is to continue in the downward spiral of environmental degradation and growing poverty.

S Small Islands Voice initiative

It was against this background, and in an effort to overcome the constraints imposed by isolation and small size, that the Small Islands Voice initiative was started by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2002. This cross-cutting project, designed to integrate all five programme sectors of the Organization – natural and basic sciences, culture, social and human sciences, communication and information, and education – aims to promote the effective participation of civil society, including young people, in sustainable island development and in the 2004 review of the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Programme of Action.

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

- Obtaining the views of the general public in small islands on environment and development issues at the local level through meetings, opinion surveys, talk shows and other activities, supported by radio, television and print media;
- Debating these views regionally and globally through internet-based discussions;
- Encouraging young islanders to discuss environment and development issues among themselves using new technologies;
- Identifying key issues emerging from these debates and channelling them back for appropriate action at the local level, and at the global level, especially towards international programmes dealing with sustainable development of small islands, e.g. the 2004 review of the Programme of Action for SIDS.

In this initiative, environment is defined in the widest sense of the word and includes the natural, social, cultural and economic environment. While SIDS have developed their own prioritized programme of action, Small Islands Voice has adopted a 'blank sheet' approach in determining islanders' concerns. Furthermore, the Small Islands Voice initiative is not confined to SIDS, but includes small islands in the Caribbean, Indian Ocean and Pacific that have other affiliations, e.g. to a larger country or a former colonial power.

Specific activities started early in 2002, in one island country in each of the three regions: St Kitts and Nevis in the Caribbean, Seychelles in the Indian Ocean, and Palau in the Pacific. These activities included opinion surveys, meetings and workshops, debates, radio talk shows, newsletters, and discussion of issues at key events such as exhibitions and island celebrations. Other islands came onboard during 2002 including the Cook Islands in the Pacific and St Vincent and the Grenadines in the Caribbean, while several others expressed their interest in doing the same.

Saturday market, Victoria, Mahé, Seychelles, 2002.



Tourists purchasing local merchandise, Victoria, Mahé, Seychelles, 2002.

Linking islanders across the three regions has been another important component of the initiative. This has been achieved through different activities. Regular inter-regional telephone conference calls are held, linking islands in the Caribbean, Indian Ocean and Pacific regions together at one time, when islanders discuss and update each other on their respective Small Islands Voice activities. Other actions include a global internet-based discussion forum for the general public in small islands, focusing on environment and development issues; a youth internet-based forum where school students talk to each other about their island homes and the advantages and disadvantages of living there; and inter-regional meetings and workshops.

This report describes the activities and achievements of Small Islands Voice in 2002, as follows:

Chapter 2 – Utilizing mass media for dialogue and debate

Chapter 3 – Exploring the internet to link islands

Chapter 4 – Emerging environment and development issues

Chapter 5 – Future directions for Small Islands Voice

Chapter 6 – Concluding remarks

S Small Islands Voice first inter-regional workshop

The end of 2002, a midway point in the first two years of the initiative, appeared an opportune time to bring the participating islands together at a workshop to discuss progress and plan future activities. Thus the first Small Islands Voice inter-regional workshop was held from 18–22 November 2002 and Palau graciously agreed to host the event.

The objectives of the workshop were to:

- promote direct interaction and linkages between island territories in the three regions (Pacific, Indian Ocean and Caribbean);
- discuss and further advance specific activities for Small Islands Voice, nationally, regionally and inter-regionally;
- start discussions on specific issues emerging from Small Islands Voice, which will be presented to the 2004 review of the Programme of Action for SIDS.

Islanders came from the Cook Islands and Palau in the Pacific; Seychelles in the Indian Ocean; and St Kitts and Nevis, St Vincent and the Grenadines and the San Andres Archipelago in the Caribbean. In the case of the islands directly involved in Small Islands Voice, representatives from government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and youth participated in the workshop. The map on the inside front cover shows the location of the islands represented at the workshop as well as islands that have become actively involved since the workshop. Other participants came from Australia and Puerto Rico, and from UNESCO offices in France and Samoa. The full list of participants is contained in Annex 1. Representatives from each island prepared a paper



Palau's Rock Islands, 2002.



Visitors to Palau's famous Jellyfish Lake, 2002.

prior to the workshop; the titles are listed in Annex II and the full papers are available at: <http://www.unesco.org/csi/pub/papers2/sivp.htm>

Prior to the start of the workshop proper, the participants had an opportunity to visit Palau's famous Rock Islands and the Jellyfish Lake. This proved a useful way of getting to know one another in an informal and beautiful setting. The visit to the Rock Islands also provided an opportunity to observe and discuss the management arrangements for what is undoubtedly Palau's main tourist attraction. Observations made on the Rock Islands visit provided inspiration and material for discussions throughout the week. Annex III contains the full workshop programme.

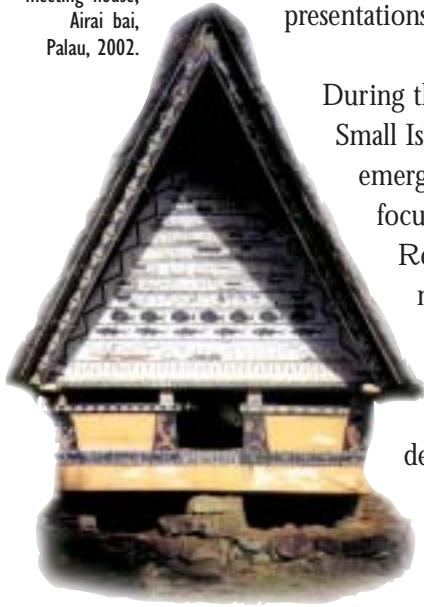
During the opening ceremony, participants listened to a chant by Ms Merii Ngracheluolul of Palau. They were welcomed by Mr Dwight Alexander, Secretary-General of the Palau National Commission for UNESCO, who pledged the support of the National Commission for the Small Islands Voice initiative. Mr Dirk Troost, Chief of UNESCO's Environment and Development in Coastal Regions and in Small Islands platform (CSI), described previous small island workshops in Samoa in 2000 (UNESCO, 2001) and Dominica in 2001 (UNESCO, 2002a) and emphasized ways in which small islands, by working together, could reduce the disadvantages of smallness and isolation. The Director of the Palau International Coral Reef Center, Mr Francis Matsutaro, commended Small Islands Voice for its inter-regional efforts in bringing a united voice to small islands. He emphasized the need to begin with a 'village voice' and then work up through the state, at national, regional and inter-regional levels. He invited Small Islands Voice to assist Palau in building trust and confidence at the community level with sustainable partnerships and community visioning. The opening ceremony concluded with a rap poem performed by Mr Samal Duggins of St Kitts and Nevis.



Workshop participants from Seychelles, San Andres Archipelago and Cook Islands getting to know each other in the Rock Islands, November 2002. (From left to right: Sabrina Marie, Seychelles; Maara Murare and Bruce Gray, Cook Islands; June-Marie Mow, San Andres Archipelago; Alain De Comarmond and Matthew Servina, Seychelles.

The first formal day of the workshop was devoted to sharing experiences and information about the islands. Highlights from the first day's presentations included a rendition of St Kitts

Traditional men's meeting house, Airai bai, Palau, 2002.



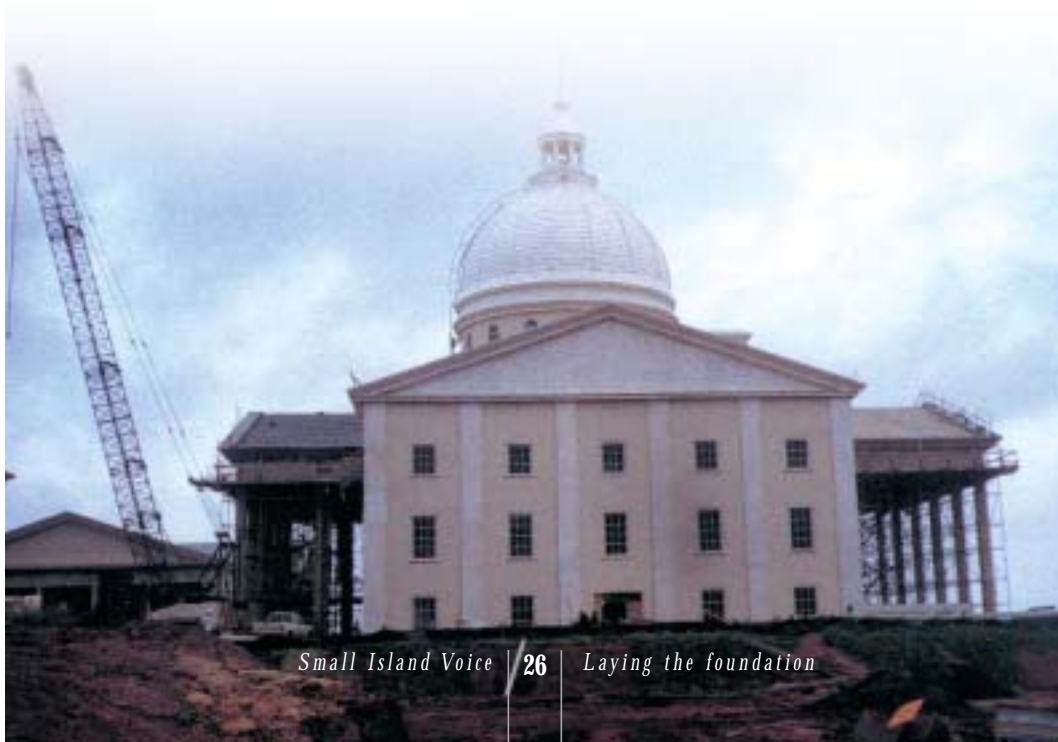
and Nevis' national anthem by Ms Lornette Hanley of St Kitts and Nevis, and video presentations from all the islands.

During the second day of the workshop there were intensive discussions on the Small Islands Voice internet-based youth forum and about the issues beginning to emerge from the opinion surveys. A field trip to the island of Babeldaob was the focus of the third day. Participants had a chance to travel on the Compact Road, to see this controversial development and to discuss the positive and negative aspects of the road with those involved in its planning and construction. This was followed by a trip to the Capitol Relocation Project in the State of Melekeok, where again participants had a chance to visit this impressive building and discuss its construction with developers. The participants visited the traditional men's meeting house (*bai*) in Melekeok and heard about the role of the bai in Palauan society. The trip concluded at the beach where participants viewed a traditional canoe that had recently been reconstructed and learned about the role of such vessels in traditional Palauan society.

During the fourth day, participants had a chance to listen to and question local media practitioners and experts about their experiences in print, radio, video and theatre, and then to work with them in small group sessions to see how their knowledge could be incorporated into activities in other islands. Several panel discussions followed, focusing on various aspects of environment and development in Palau, including natural resources, economy, community health and good governance.

At the start of the final day, Hon. Sandra Pierantozzi, Vice-President of the Republic of Palau, visited the workshop and shared some of her views about tourism, youth and the responsibility of residents to look after their islands. She also emphasized the need for islands to combine their efforts.

Palau's new Capitol building in the State of Melekeok, 2002.



Joe Aitaro describing the construction of a traditional 30-man outrigger canoe at Melekeok, 2002.



The recently built outrigger canoe at Melekeok, 2002.

'I am proud that we have come together as small islands at this meeting. I have often thought that at United Nations meetings, small islands do not have a chance to be heard. What we need to do in small islands is to put our brains together and be able to meet everyone else on an equal footing'.

Sandra Pierantozzi, Palau, November 2002.

The final workshop sessions focused on intense discussions on ways to ensure that the general public's voice is heard in the 2004 review of the Programme of Action for SIDS, planning future activities for Small Islands Voice, and how to deal with difficult issues such as reaching the youth at risk. ■



Damage at Pinney's Beach, Nevis, after Hurricane Luis in 1995.

Nevis Peak, Nevis, 2002.

2. Utilizing mass media for dialogue and debate

During the first year of Small Islands Voice, the start-up countries used the mass media in their islands, first of all to tell the general public about the initiative, and then to begin the debate about the issues. While Small Islands Voice seeks to determine issues of concern to the general public and to promote the use of new information and communication technology in this process, given the reality of the small island context, the need to fully utilize traditional media forms is of utmost importance. One of the preliminary activities of Small Islands Voice was to conduct a media survey in each of the islands (Cook Islands, Palau, St Kitts and Nevis, and Seychelles). These surveys covered newspapers, magazines, radio, television and internet service providers and are available on the Small Islands Voice website (<http://www.smallislandsvoice.org>).

The inter-regional workshop provided participants with the opportunity to liaise directly with media representatives in Palau, to learn from their experiences through presentations, discussions and small group sessions, and thereby to improve on their own national utilization of the media to further the debate.

Key considerations relating to effective utilization of the media are:

- understanding your goal;
- maintaining the integrity of the message;
- understanding the driving force behind the message;
- knowing the target audience;
- providing for strategic dissemination;

Mother Earth's Dying Cries
by Samal Duggins, St Kitts and Nevis

(Chorus)

*Last night Mother Earth came to talk to me
She was crying... she said...
Help me please I'm dying
But I thought I'm just a man... what could I do?
She took time out and showed me everything that's happening
Take a look at all the pain and suffering
And I just couldn't neglect them had to show them to you*

Verse one

*Now as I looked in her eyes I saw the world through a different light
Wish the leaders would see and all pose a different fight
Cause the tanks and bombs, they only shorten the time
Sometimes I wonder if they losing their minds
Cause as I see it they only quest for only money and power
Yet people die by the hour, see them wither like flowers
They're dying from hunger, no water for miles
And the suffering and pains only darken their smiles
Polluting the sea removing the trees
How would we eat, how would we breath, how would we live?
Ah, without the Earth here tell me where would we be?
And I'm talking to you ma she's talking to me*

(Chorus)

Verse Two

*Now I've accepted the challenge to help ma through her pains
And I'm challenging everyone to do the same
Cause even though it's not an easy task
The more we pull together more strength on mass
The more you keep thinking of what you can do
The further we progress the more we make it through
But if we keep trying to ignore her cries of death
Then the more we constructing our downward steps
And this trend can't forever last... confusion, pollution, corruption
She predicted destruction
But if we all take the time to think
This world could be extinct in fact we're on the brink...*

- considering visual interpretation;
- maintaining cultural sensitivity and respect;
- keeping in mind the globalization trend and the marketing of culture.

Against the background of the workshop deliberations, this chapter discusses how the various media forms – print, radio, television, theatre and drama – can be effectively utilized by Small Islands Voice in the various islands.

Print media

The media surveys in the start-up islands covered the published newspapers, and recorded the names, editors, publishers, price, type of content and circulation numbers. Each of these islands has several newspapers, which are published daily, twice-weekly, or weekly. The scope of these publications varies from covering local news only, to including regional and global pages. Some of the newspapers are independent, while governments and political parties have a controlling interest in others.

As was described during the inter-regional workshop, some of these newspapers went through a stormy development process before becoming established. Moses Uludong, the publisher of the Palauan newspaper ‘Tia Belau’, described how he started out as an activist with a propaganda sheet advocating independence and environmental responsibility. As the newspaper evolved, it was often difficult for it to survive financially especially before printing facilities were available in Palau.

‘As good Palauans and Micronesians we were not supposed to speak out against our elders or to protest. We thought a good way to ensure attention to issues such as the rights of indigenous people was through publishing’.

Moses Uludong, Palau, November 2002.

Many forms of media started off in Palau on an anti-establishment platform, and this can be frightening for some villagers who may not have a real understanding of what a newspaper does. In Palauan (and Micronesian) society, people are not meant to speak against or challenge their elders. During the workshop, Mr Moses Uludong described how he and his property have been physically attacked for some of the stories he has run in his newspaper.

Interaction between the community and newspapers is very important, and the voice of the people can be instrumental in influencing national events. For example, in the Cook Islands in mid-2002, a controversial environment bill was scheduled at short notice for a reading in parliament. This bill was opposed by the NGO community and the announcement of the bill’s reading galvanized them into holding a series of public meetings and consultations. The synthesis of these meetings was compiled into a newspaper spreadsheet, the ‘Viewpoint’, which was distributed freely in all the islands (Viewpoint, May 2002, Issue 1). The ‘Viewpoint’ newspaper, together with a petition of 2,000 signatures opposing the bill was





A 'Did you know?' notice board at the public library in Victoria, Mahé, Seychelles, is one way to provide interaction between the community and newspapers, 2002.

submitted to parliament. As a result the bill was placed on hold while the government reconsidered it. Several further issues of the 'Viewpoint' newspaper have since been published dealing with other matters.

The question of language is critical. In Palau, where the native language is Palauan, the print media writes in English for 85–90%. As a result an elite group has emerged in Palau which consists of educated Paluans and many foreigners who discuss issues of the day in English, but this discussion does not

filter down to the village level. Palauan is first and foremost an oral language and now there is much controversy over Palauan spelling, which is causing difficulties for the media. Some feel that the local media should prioritize the country's communities first and foremost and that therefore the local language should be used for the most part in newspapers. However, this would not solve the inherent problems of a written Palauan language, which the villagers would also not be used to reading. The same problem exists in Samoa where everyone speaks an informal indigenous language, but most have great trouble translating this into a standardized written version.

Others in Palau feel it is necessary to have the newspapers in English, because like it or not, Palau is now a multi-cultural society.

However, people advocating this view also emphasize the importance of using and retaining the native language because it is part of the Palauan identity. Reference can be made to Guam and Saipan where the local language and culture have almost disappeared.

A weekly Palauan language newspaper is scheduled to start in 2003 so that information on issues such as environment and development can filter through to the local community level. A regular column will be made available for environmental issues.



The local language as well as English is used in Palau to convey important messages, 2002.



The situation in Seychelles is different. Here English, French and Creole are the languages and most of the print media mix the three languages. Some issues, which are strictly local,

Monument in Victoria, Mahé, Seychelles, symbolizing the African, Asian and European origin of the Seychellois, 2002.



are often written only in the local Creole language, while issues of global concern may be written in a common language such as English so that everyone can read about them.

Because Palauans traditionally have a tendency to listen more to the spoken word than read the facts, newspaper circulation numbers are fairly low. If the print media wishes to improve its standing with the community in general, then it must use pictures and action photos. These are one way to capture the attention of readers, especially with environment and development stories. In St Vincent and the Grenadines some of the newspapers use contrasting pictures showing before and after situations and the good and the bad sides of development, with no text. Comic strips are another way of conveying a message in pictures.



A mural painted on a fence by schoolchildren in Victoria, Mahé, Seychelles, is one way to gain attention, 2002.

Another issue relates to the way stories are reported. Journalists often have to be instant experts translating complex topics into language and format that is understandable to the general public. It is the journalist's responsibility to know and understand their readership and to produce information in a style and at a level that readers can easily

understand. There is a need to use simple English, so that ordinary people do not need a dictionary to read the newspaper. Fairness is essential and the reporter is duty bound to be objective, to record both sides of the story, and to continually cross-check facts and stories. Letters to the editor are another tool that the community can use to respond to issues or highlight new ones, and they also provide newspaper editors with direct feedback from their readers.

However, many newspapers have their own agendas and essentially serve as propaganda machines, using sensation as a tool to sell newspapers. Thus the media not only opens the minds of people but can also close their minds. Nevertheless, perhaps an element of sensationalism needs to be injected into Small Islands Voice to attract attention.

'In our country and around the world, sensationalism works, it sells. How can we add an element of this to Small Islands Voice while staying honest and fair?'

Herman Belmar, St Vincent and the Grenadines, November 2002.

Editors are often biased and have their own interests. Sometimes it is hard to find positive stories; the negative ones are fast, visible and easy to focus on. While happy perspectives are good in the family context, the media needs controversy, for often this is what people want to read.

R Radio

The media survey conducted in the start-up islands also covered radio stations. Most of the islands have AM and FM stations, both government-sponsored and private ones. In some regions, particularly the Caribbean where at least some of the islands are fairly close together, the national stations reach adjacent countries, for instance VON Radio in Nevis (Voice of Nevis) is widely listened to in neighbouring islands. In other archipelagos, particularly in the Pacific, and Cook Islands is an example, the islands are so widely dispersed and distances so great that the radio signal is not picked up in the far-flung outer islands, leading to a real sense of isolation.

Some of the radio stations in Palau, like the newspapers, had quite a difficult time getting started. Mr Alphonso Diaz who runs a radio station WWFM, described during the workshop how his car was firebombed and he was physically attacked when he started the radio station. However, now his radio station has a very wide audience in Palau as well as abroad through a live web broadcast and features a daily one to two-hour talk and call-in show called 'Express yourself'. This call-in show is conducted mainly in Palauan, with some translation between Palauan and English where necessary. It was viewed as very controversial at the beginning, but now Congressmen sometimes request to have certain issues discussed on the show. Mr Diaz's activities are now acknowledged as having been a positive force for change in Palauan radio. The 'Express yourself' call-in show has been used to address a number of controversial issues such as AIDS, drugs, suicide, and has targeted special groups such as youth and women. It also has a positive thrust, working with organizations, such as the Palau High School and the Police Academy, to help them achieve their goals.



Sign at the entrance to VON radio in Nevis, 2002.



Sign at the entrance of the WWFM radio station in Palau, 2002.

The absence of media training in Palau is a serious drawback. There is no journalism programme at the Palau Community College and as a result the newspapers often have to recruit reporters from the Philippines. However, an offer was made by Mr Diaz to give youth groups air time on his programme to discuss environment and development issues and to teach them how to operate a radio station. Still Mr Diaz stressed that this would need careful planning and the issues would have to be thoroughly researched.

Having a sound factual basis is very important when discussing issues on radio and other forms of media. Radio has the advantage that it is verbal, and unless taped, leaves no permanent record of what is said. Conversely with print, there is a permanent record.

The daily rush-hour traffic in Koror is a good time to target radio-listeners, Palau 2002.



Talk-back radio promises to be a very effective medium for Small Islands Voice. Live round-table or panel discussions with open lines for callers can help initiate and develop the debate. The anonymity of radio is also useful especially for sensitive topics, e.g. teenage pregnancy. Radio can be listened to everywhere – driving in the car, working on the taro patch – in contrast to television which requires a passive audience. Radio can also reach the isolated through community radio stations which are managed and run by communities themselves.

Radio is also a very important tool for education. However, in order to relay a message or information, it is necessary to create a picture in the listener's mind. Music and appropriate sound effects are ways of doing this, such as in the Cook Islands, where multiplication tables are broadcast to music for children in the mornings. Using famous athletes, stars and media personalities for public service announcements is a way of strengthening the message. Private sector support for radio advertising time can reduce the cost. This has been used effectively in the Cook Islands where Anchor Milk and Mobil Oil have sponsored time for environmental messages prepared by the Rarotonga Environmental Awareness Programme. However, to achieve their full impact, radio messages have to be repeated frequently over a short period of time.

T Television

Many of the islands involved in Small Islands Voice receive satellite television from the USA and other countries. This is the case in the Caribbean islands and also in Palau. In St Vincent and the Grenadines, youth are strongly influenced by this dominance of foreign cultures, and in particular the US Black Entertainment Television channel has changed youth culture, e.g. young females have become very aggressive. In Palau, 15 American channels, most of them from the San Francisco area with a six-day delay, can be received.

All the countries presently involved in Small Islands Voice have at least one local television channel, although the quality and content varies. For instance in Palau the local channel features only tele-text of announcements and advertisements, while in Seychelles, the local television station produces its own programmes featuring news, documentaries and dramas, supplemented with some foreign programmes. Locally produced programmes featuring island content generate considerable interest. For instance, Palauan students visited the Ngardmau State Capitol in October 2002 and took part in a mock congress, which was taped and broadcast on local cable TV with considerable impact.

In the Cook Islands, many of the more isolated outer islands have until very recently not had any radio or television channels. As a result, videos have become very popular. In 2002, satellite television from Tahiti became available to the outer islands with a choice of four foreign channels, although only one at a time can be broadcast locally. This opens



Satellite facilities at the telecommunications provider in Rarotonga, Cook Islands, 2002.

up a new world for people living in these isolated islands, and allows Small Islands Voice the opportunity in the future to assist these islands with developing some community television programming.

Theatre and drama

The Belau Theatre Group in Palau produces local drama and video. The potential exists to attract youth to a more active life, away from the sedentary passive pastime of watching television, by involving them in locally produced drama, discussions and debates. The community theatre group in Vanuatu 'Wan Smolbag' has visited Palau and is well known throughout the region. In St Kitts and Nevis, local theatre and music groups are organized to try and keep young men off the streets. Mr Samal Duggins' performance on 21 November 2002 of the Small Islands Voice rap poem 'Mother Earth's Dying Cries' was well received by Palau's Mindzenty High School students, and is a good example of what can be achieved by island youth.

Mr Samal Duggins performing the rap poem 'Mother Earth's Dying Cries' at the Small Islands Voice inter-regional workshop, Palau, 2002.



WAN SMOLBAG THEATRE GROUP, VANUATU

Community theatre brings plays to the people, plays about environment, health, social and human rights. The Wan Smolbag Theatre writes and produces a large number of plays, drama sketches, and participatory drama workshops for government agencies, NGOs and development programmes. They have plays with science messages like the life cycle of turtles, how the body works, and

immunization and they have animated drama sketches with health messages and information involving audience participation. They perform their pieces throughout Vanuatu and the Pacific islands, and train groups from all over the Pacific islands in creating and performing participatory community theatre.

(Wan Smolbag Theatre Group, 2002)

RARE CENTER FOR TROPICAL CONSERVATION

Serial Drama Broadcasts

Conservation and Family Planning Messages in Micronesia

What does a subsistence farmer from the Micronesian islands of Yap have in common with a high-rise dweller in Guam? They have different languages, faiths and cultural traditions. Yet they share a region fraught with environmental pressures and, like islanders around the world, population growth is near the top of the list. The populations of the Federated States of Micronesia and Guam are predicted to double in just over 25 years; in the Marshall Islands, a scant 19 years. (Contrast these with 120 years for the United States and over 600 for England.)

To help address this challenge, RARE has partnered with public health and environment officials from Palau, Guam, Saipan, the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia. Working together, we are developing our third radio serial drama, using the 'education-entertainment' method that has proven successful in the Caribbean.

The key to the programme's success is careful research. The common themes for islanders throughout the region – dealing with family planning, environmental and social equity issues – are emerging through painstaking surveys, focus groups, and collaboration from partners throughout the region.

'Despite being half a world away, with vastly different languages and cultures, the core issues are very much the same as in the Caribbean,' explains Alleyne Regis, RARE's associate director for the Population and Environment Program.

Palau's Belau Theatre Company, the writing and production team, will recruit actors from diverse ethnic backgrounds to give the show a broad regional appeal. The programme will rely on the Micronesian dialect of English, a common second language among the island's young people, who study it in school and master it through radio and TV.

By mid-2002, when the programme goes on the air, we hope the subsistence farmer in Yap and Guam's high-rise dweller will have something more in common: a love for a certain radio show that airs twice weekly on their local stations. 'Many of [our] members work in public health or conservation and we are looking forward to making a positive impact on our communities with this programme,' says Jane Olsudong, a Belau Theatre Company actor and writer.

(RARE Center for Tropical Conservation, 2002)

Locally-produced radio and television drama is a very important way to explore and preserve local culture. Such local television dramas are very popular in Seychelles. Following a successful radio drama series produced in the Caribbean in the 1990s, a new series is being produced and broadcast throughout the islands of Micronesia in the Pacific. More than 100 episodes are planned which are being written, directed and produced in Palau. This series is supported by the RARE Center for Tropical Conservation. Each episode lasts about 15 minutes and the scripts in the drama include topical and educational issues relevant to the islands of Micronesia, e.g. one character has diabetes, a common health problem in the region, and current issues such as police enforcement are built into the scripts. The series is broadcast on the government radio station which is free, at 7.30 am in the morning when many people are in their cars going to work. This initiative is also allowing Palauans to be trained in the media as actors, technicians, producers, and hopefully some of them will want to take this up as a career, thereby filling the local capacity void previously discussed. The series also has potential for adaptation to classroom discussions.

Final remarks

In Palau everyone wants to see local news, but very few people want to report it. People have seen what has happened to those who have started newspapers and radio stations, and in the communities there is still some fear and concern about the passion of the media. Taking an inter-regional perspective, there are significant differences between the regions; for instance, customary social structures and governance traditions in the Pacific rely on methods for debate and conflict resolution that typically do not encourage individuals to express their views publicly. As a result, many Pacific islanders are somewhat shy and not used to speaking out, while in the Caribbean, people are more open and extrovert and used to speaking their views. In all three regions, Small IslandsVoice can play a key role in getting people to present the stories that exist in small island communities and bring these to the attention of the media. This will result in better coverage and political, social and economic benefits. ■



Port Elizabeth, Bequia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, 2000.

3. Exploring the internet to link islands

Our petite seven square-mile territory (Bequia in St Vincent and the Grenadines) does not in any way isolate us from the world, as all the modern communications, fashions, sports, visitors and modes of education seem to reach us the day after they are developed on the other side of the world. These changes and growth in technology and development come at a cost, especially in education and their impact on young vulnerable minds.

Like most developed and undeveloped countries, the youth are seen as the future and one of our greatest assets. Developing these assets is an expensive undertaking and a challenge to any government, especially those of small island states such as ours.

The Small Islands Voice youth forum must be commended as a forerunner for youth expression in this field, as it offers our youth the place and time for venting the issues that are closest to them, using the available technology of cyberspace. The very cyber connection that has made the world a global village and our living rooms part of the global stock market has made our youth more familiar with what is right and wrong, what is hype and what is boring, and as such they speak out with voices unheard of a decade ago.

Herman Belmar, St Vincent and the Grenadines (UNESCO, 2003)

One of the main objectives of Small Islands Voice is to explore the potential of new information and communication technologies to generate debate and dialogue in the environment and development domain among small islands and to enhance their capacity to take part in the information age. New information and communication technology offers a whole range of promising opportunities for developing countries, especially small islands where development is hampered by dispersed populations and isolation. Technology creates new possibilities for improving health and nutrition, accessing information and expanding knowledge, stimulating economic growth and sustainable development, and empowering people to participate in activities beyond their immediate communities.

However, accessibility to this new technology is still limited, and questions have been raised as to whether the new information and communication technology will preserve the previous world order, or will offer new possibilities for those regions, particularly developing countries, that were previously marginalized.

In the case of small islands, there is limited local capacity to fully develop traditional media forms, as was seen in the preceding chapter; not surprisingly, this limitation also extends to new technology. A survey of internet use in the Pacific islands commissioned by the UNESCO Apia Office (Zwimpfer Communications Ltd, 2002) highlights many of these limitations, namely:

- less than 25% of the population of most Pacific islands have access to the internet;
- bandwidth and cost are major barriers preventing more widespread use of the internet;
- prices vary from US\$ 10 to \$ 50 for ten hours of connectivity;
- specific constraints identified include high cost of computers and other equipment, slow internet connections, monopoly of telecommunication services.

Despite these constraints, the report found that there was widespread interest among Pacific islands in seeking to enhance internet infrastructure, and that many organizations in the islands were finding ways to establish websites. While this report refers specifically to the Pacific islands, the limitations described above also refer to the scenario on islands in the Caribbean and the Indian Ocean.



Signs advertising computer and internet services, such as this one in Rarotonga, Cook Islands, are apparent in most small islands, 2002.

In the first year of the initiative, Small Islands Voice has sought to utilize the power of the internet to connect small islands inter-regionally through two internet-based discussion fora, one for the general public and one for youth. These fora were started in the second half of 2002, and the initial results were discussed in depth during the inter-regional workshop. In addition, a website was constructed and went online in April 2002. This website is updated monthly to reflect new material and activities.

Internet-based global discussion forum

Since 1999, UNESCO-CSI has been running a global forum called 'Wise coastal practices for sustainable human development' (WiCoP forum). This forum, which now has more than 13,000 people connected, provided vital experience when setting up the Small Islands Voice global forum. The software used in the WiCoP forum was adapted for the Small Islands Voice forum with the assistance of Scotland On Line.

During the first half of 2002, three messages describing Small Islands Voice and announcing the start of a new forum (see titles and addresses of these messages in Annex IV) were sent out to all the participants of the WiCoP forum. A number of people responded that they would like to be a part of the new forum. In addition, e-mail addresses were obtained during specific visits to the Cook Islands, Palau, St Kitts and Nevis, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Seychelles, and from the Small Islands Voice national coordinators in each country. The main audience for this forum is the general public, so special efforts have been made to include the bank manager and the watersports operator, the car mechanic and the health care worker, to name but a few examples. Thus the forum's audiences includes the private sector, interested individuals, NGOs and community-based organizations, and of course governments.

The goal of this internet-based forum is to engage the general public in small islands in an online debate on issues relating to environment and development. The forum is moderated and is conducted in English only. Since the participants are the general public, a special effort is made to keep the language and format very clear and understandable.

How the forum works

Key issues are aired on the Small Islands Voice forum; these are carefully selected with the help of the national coordinators in each country. For instance, the first issue discussed was adapted from a Pacific newspaper article. The key issue is then posted on the forum, and is automatically sent out by e-mail to all the addresses on the list. People send their responses on this issue to the moderator. All the responses are carefully read. Then highlights from these responses are compiled and posted on the forum, at two-week intervals, as well as being sent out to the e-mail addresses on the list. At the beginning of 2003 there were more than 8,000 addresses on the list and this number is growing. Thus the participants receive the messages by e-mail, and they can also go to the forum on the web and read all the messages at a glance. Since the forum has already generated so many responses, and some of them very detailed, the full text of all the responses is also available on the Small Islands Voice website.



A section of the Compact Road under construction in Babeldaob, Palau, 2002.



Mangrove destruction related to the Compact Road construction, Babeldaob, Palau, 2002.

This global forum is available at <http://www.sivglobal.org> (with username *siv* and password *global*). All articles – both key issues and responses – are kept short, to around 500 words (about one page long).

By the beginning of 2003, two issues had been discussed on this forum, one relating to the construction of the Compact Road in Palau, and the second on beach access in Tobago. Annex IV lists all the messages on the Small Islands Voice global forum dealing with these two key issues.

When the discussion relating to a particular issue is finished, a quantitative summary of the discussion is prepared. The first discussion focused on the construction of a new road encircling the largest Palauan island of Babeldaob, and the impact of the construction on the environment, e.g. some resource users described the run-off of sediment-laden waters into the sea, the subsequent decline in water clarity and the reduction in fish catches. It is interesting to note from the responses that less than 10% of the forum respondents were against the road development itself, and that while the majority saw the road development as being inevitable, a significant proportion (27%) felt that environmental concerns must be incorporated into the planning and construction of the road.

Summary of discussion on road construction in Palau, Pacific

Number of substantive responses = 45

27% said development is inevitable.

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

11% said development should be planned in phases.

9% said this type of development should be stopped.

4% emphasized the need for good governance and transferability.

22% had separate ideas ranging from the influence of foreign television on young people to the importance of democracy.

Public perception of the forum in the islands

The Small Islands Voice national coordinator in Palau received a lot of positive feedback to the discussion on the Compact Road. The forum also initiated further discussions on another e-mail list targeting Palauans living abroad (*The Bridge* list).

PALAU'S BRIDGE LIST

This is a very active e-mail discussion group that has run for eight years and has 500 participants including Palauans both inside the country and abroad. Publishers, politicians and others contribute to the list, and issues under discussion are often followed through by the local media. The site is controlled by rotating moderators. There are between 2 and 20 messages per

day and often two or three topics are discussed at the same time. Anonymous messages are not permitted. The Bridge is interesting in that Micronesians generally have no history of criticizing their leaders in public but are now taking advantage of the opportunities offered by The Bridge to be more critical.

Furthermore the internet discussion on the Palau road reached a wider audience than just those who have internet access, since each forum article has been published by a local newspaper 'Tia Belau'. This link with the news media is an interesting one, because it is one way of getting round the limited internet penetration in small islands. Indeed a special effort has been made to include the contacts for local newspapers on the Small Islands Voice forum e-mail list. In the case of 'Tia Belau', the newspaper asked the forum moderators if they could publish the articles, and permission was given. Newspapers in other islands including the British Virgin Islands, St Kitts and Nevis, Samoa and Seychelles have also requested permission and have published some of the forum contributions. This greatly expands the reach of the debate and can also be a two-way process when newspaper editors forward responses from their readers to the global forum moderators.

In isolated outer islands of the Cook Islands, there is no internet access, and newspapers are delivered by air and boat several weeks late. However, the Small Islands Voice coordinator in the Cook Islands is exploring ideas to involve some of these isolated islands, perhaps by acting as an interface and faxing printouts of the discussions to them. Other ways being developed to bring the internet to isolated communities include community multimedia centres and radio browsing.

COMMUNITY MULTIMEDIA CENTRES AND RADIO BROWSING

A *community multimedia centre* combines community radio, organized by local people in local languages, with community telecentre facilities, such as computers with internet and e-mail, phone, fax and photocopying services. The radio, which is low-cost and easy to operate, informs, educates and entertains the community. It also gives a strong public voice to the voiceless and so encourages greater accountability in public affairs. The walk-in community telecentre offering internet access allows even the most remote village to communicate and exchange information with the rest of the world. With training, communities can locally access, manage, produce and communicate information for development.

In *radio browsing programmes* the presenters search the web in response to listeners' queries and discuss the contents of pre-selected websites on air with studio guests. This formula offers indirect but mass access to cyberspace. It overcomes language barriers when the presenters explain the contents of, say, an English-language webpage in their national language. It raises awareness of the value of online information and encourages listeners to come in and use the computers themselves. It bridges the generation gap by ensuring that people of all ages, whether they go online themselves or not, understand how cyberspace works.

(UNESCO, 2002b)

In the San Andres Archipelago (Colombia), the government agency, the Corporation for the Sustainable Development of the Archipelago of San Andres, Old Providence and Santa Catalina (CORALINA), prints out and redistributes the global forum articles, and also discusses them among themselves. In Seychelles, people have suggested that the Small Islands Voice forum is a way to discuss and debate local issues with a larger, global audience of islanders.

'The start of the Small Islands Voice forum coincided with local discussion about a controversial reclamation project. A few of the people who found out about the forum said that it was a way for us to let the world know about projects such as this'.

Matthew Servina, Seychelles, November 2002.



Land reclamation, as seen here at Baie Ste Anne, Praslin, Seychelles, provides flat land for housing and other development, 2002.

At the inter-regional workshop, there was some debate about whether questions should be added at the bottom of each article to direct people on how to respond, since several members of the public in the islands had mentioned to national coordinators that they had received the articles but did not know what to do about them. However, after some discussion, it was agreed that people should be left to think about the issues and how to respond for themselves.

I **Internet-based youth discussion forum**

A trial internet-based youth forum was started in mid-September and ran until December 2002. Secondary schools from five countries were invited to take part in the forum by identifying one or more class of 13 to 15-year-olds to participate. The following schools were involved in the forum:

- Anse Royale Secondary School, Mahé, Seychelles
- Bequia Community High School, Bequia, St Vincent and the Grenadines
- Gingerland Secondary School, Nevis, St Kitts and Nevis
- Mindzenty High School, Koror, Palau
- Nukutere College, Rarotonga, Cook Islands
- Verchilds High School, St Kitts, St Kitts and Nevis

The goals of this trial internet-based forum were to:

- find out the views of youth (in this case 13 to 15-year-olds) on living in small islands;
- promote direct interaction between youth in different islands and different regions;
- test the potential of an un-moderated internet-based forum among schools.

This is an un-moderated forum protected with a special username and password for the students taking part. However, other persons can see the forum, but not take part, at <http://www.sivoyouth.org> (with username *view* and password *only*).

How the youth forum works

Several themes were selected to form the basis of this trial forum:

- advantages and disadvantages of living in my island;
- life after school in my island;
- drug and alcohol use among youth in my island;
- sports and recreation in my island;
- the future for my island.

In selecting these issues for discussion, an effort was made to choose subjects that would be of direct interest to young people, rather than specific environment-development topics. It was hoped that in the course of discussion, environment-development issues would emerge. This did in fact happen. For instance, the first article and subsequent discussion on the 'Advantages and disadvantages of living in my island' covered subjects such as conservation, solid waste disposal, tourism development and whaling.



Each school was asked to prepare a short article (500–700 words) on an assigned theme and a schedule was prepared, such that the schools knew when to post their article. These articles were posted on the forum at two-week intervals, and after each article there was an interactive exchange among the six participating schools relating to the article's subject matter. In the case of Palau, because of the very limited internet access available at the school, a special arrangement was made with a local internet café for the students to access the internet there on a twice-weekly basis.



Students from Nukutere College, Cook Islands, prepare their article for the youth forum, 2003.

Assessment of the youth forum

The forum was successful and an assessment was conducted by the students and teachers involved. The full assessment is available on the Small Islands Voice website. While all the schools were invited to take part in the assessment, three schools responded to the invitation: these were from the Cook Islands, Bequia (St Vincent and the Grenadines) and Seychelles. The students found the forum a new activity and they enjoyed finding out about the lives and cultures of other islands, and sharing information on sports and languages. They liked the interaction and discovered many similarities despite the distance separating them. The fact that in many cases only one school computer was connected to the internet was a drawback, and many students wanted to see pictures of the other islands. A few students were concerned about some of the negative aspects of small-island living reported on the forum. Several students said they would like to have an opportunity to meet with youth from the other islands involved. They also commented on specific aspects of the forum, such as having more choice regarding the selection of themes, more time to compose their articles, and more instantaneous dialogue.

'The forum is really interesting, it gives us a chance to express ourselves and to use the internet which is not available at school. This is a great opportunity to voice our opinions and to know that there are people who care about what we think and about what goes on in our island'.

Mr Ben Miko, Mindzenty High School, Palau, November 2002.

In their assessment, the teachers noted that students from English classes took part in the forum, although sometimes social studies and computer class time was used. The number of students involved varied from 20–35 in each island. As noted above, students in each school only had access to one internet-connected computer; this proved a formidable constraint and resulted in long queues. In almost all cases, the theme article was prepared as a classroom exercise, and responses put together and posted on the forum as group efforts or individually. The teachers felt that the forum provided many advantages for their students: (i) giving them a perspective on small-island living elsewhere in the world, (ii) helping them to understand that the issues they faced were similar in other small islands, (iii) expanding their understanding of geography and other cultures, (iv) building national pride and self-confidence and (v) improving their writing, computer and internet-surfing skills. The main disadvantage was the limited internet access at the schools. All the islands were very enthusiastic about taking part in future phases of the youth forum.

Discussion of the youth forum at the inter-regional workshop

Workshop participants from the Cook Islands and St Vincent and the Grenadines noted that the forum had helped their students become aware of other islands and contexts.

'For the first time, Bequian students now feel part of a community with students in other countries. The Small Islands Voice youth forum is a step in the right direction in exposing youth to global communication'.

Herman Belmar, St Vincent and the Grenadines, November 2002.

The forum could be made more interesting with music and pictures; however, this would make the site too complicated and the pages too slow to download. An alternative to adding images and sound to the website is to use other search engines to access this type of information. The idea of using chat rooms was also proposed, but this might detract from the educational value of the forum.

Islands define youth in different ways. In Palau, for instance, it includes persons up to the age of 40 years and in Samoa, the term is often used to refer to 'untitled' individuals. For the purposes of the Small Islands Voice youth forum, the term is used to include individuals from the ages of 12–20 years.

Several workshop participants felt the need to include more than one school in each country, as well as to expand the forum to include other island countries. In the San Andres Archipelago, ongoing youth activities include information gathering and youth reporters which are very compatible with the activities of the forum. The age restriction also needs to be considered for future phases of the forum. The cost of internet access varies considerably across the regions. In the Caribbean, the picture is quite positive; in Bequia (St Vincent and the Grenadines), the internet service provider gives the school five hours of free access per day, and in St Kitts and Nevis, there is also free access for the schools during school hours. This contrasts with the Cook Islands where the first month's participation in the youth forum cost US\$ 250, although subsequently, more cost effective access methods were adopted. In Palau, a discounted rate was obtained from the internet

Sabrina Marie and Maara Murare (standing) share ideas with youth from the Palau Community College during the Small Islands Voice inter-regional workshop, 2002.



café, where the students had the additional advantage of participating in the forum in a voluntary and relaxed atmosphere. For the countries where internet access is very expensive, it is recommended that national coordinators approach their internet service providers to see if special rates can be negotiated for schools taking part in the youth forum.

In all three regions, teachers often have a hard job dealing with all the compulsory items that have to be included in the curriculum. In addition, many schools are very examination-orientated and the youth forum is not part of the curriculum. However, many of the issues discussed in the forum are relevant all across the curriculum and the task now is to find ways to integrate the issues discussed in the forum into the curriculum. One possibility that will be explored is the preparation of educational materials based on the forum.

‘Small island nations like us often have to use materials produced by people from other countries, generally Britain in the case of Seychelles, while we have a wealth of unexploited materials around us. I see the articles produced in this forum as a rich source of authentic materials, which can be exploited and used in language classes as well as in cross-curricular activities’

Marvelle Estrale, Seychelles, November 2002.

Some of the issues discussed in the forum are thought provoking and controversial. For instance, in the article prepared by the Bequia Community High School, ‘Advantages and disadvantages of living in my island’, mention was made of incest and traditional whaling. In the exchange that followed, one student noted that there was no incest in Seychelles. Unfortunately, this is not the case and it indicates the need to make young people aware about such serious issues. Another controversial issue related to the traditional practice of whaling in Bequia. During the exchange, a student from Seychelles, a country which advocates conservation of whales, simply rejected all forms of whaling – including forms practised by indigenous populations using traditional methods – as being wrong. Such a strong small islands marine conservation stance has proved positive in the Pacific debate on this issue. The exchange on the forum also points to the need to develop respect among the youth for other traditions and cultures.

Future phases for the youth forum

The foregoing discussion has been taken into account in the design of the next phase of the youth forum, in which more schools and countries will participate. The idea of national fora is another way of involving more schools in a country and moving from talk to action on the ground. However, it will be necessary to maintain links between national fora and the inter-regional forum. The potential exists to connect with other youth fora, e.g. the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) ‘Voices of Youth Online Journal,’ which is open to youth up to 18 years.

S Small Islands Voice website

The Small Islands Voice website was designed and constructed to provide up-to-date, easily accessible information on the varied activities and their outcome. The website (<http://www.smallislandsvoice.org>) went online in April 2002 and it is updated monthly. The site has seven main sections:

- *About* – a general introduction to Small Islands Voice including a brochure, a project document and summary;
- *Inter-regional* – activities linking the three regions, the inter-regional workshop, inter-regional conference calls, preparations for the 2004 review of the SIDS Programme of Action;
- *Global forum* – the internet-based global discussion forum;
- *Caribbean* – Small Islands Voice activities in specific islands in the Caribbean;
- *Indian Ocean* – Small Islands Voice activities in specific islands in the Indian Ocean;
- *Pacific* – Small Islands Voice activities in specific islands in the Pacific;
- *Young islanders* – specific activities undertaken by young islanders and the youth internet-based forum.

The regular updating of the website is very important in providing an information source for interested individuals around the world. In addition, the regular updates keep each island informed about the activities taking place in other islands. In this respect the website supplements the regular inter-regional conference calls. During these calls, which are scheduled every one to two months, the national coordinators from all the participating islands discuss ongoing activities with each other according to a pre-arranged agenda.

F Final remarks

The full potential of both the internet-based global forum and the youth forum is as yet unexplored. Linking the global forum with radio browsing and community television are avenues to be followed, as are linking the youth forum with curriculum development and distance learning education. Small Islands Voice can assist island countries to further advance in one or all of these directions and to break down the barriers of isolation and fully participate in the information age. ■



House in the island of San Andres, Colombia, 2002.



Rubbish dump in San Andres, 2002.

4. Emerging environment and development issues

The islanders [of the San Andres Archipelago] are descendants of English settlers and the slaves they brought with them from Jamaica. In addition there have been more recent migrations from nearby islands such as Cayman Islands.

This is why the inhabitants of these islands proudly preserve their Afro-Caribbean identity, which differentiates them from Colombia's other black communities and which is expressed in their language, religious beliefs, oral tradition, cuisine, kinship, music, a special approach to analysing reality through dreams, and in general a different way of relating to the world around them.

Since the end of the 18th century there has been a cultural and religious conflict which continues to this day, because Spain, and then Colombia, have tried to convert a culture with strong Afro-Anglo-Protestant roots into a Spanish and Catholic one. For the islanders, government attempts to eliminate their native language and replace their religion have always been regarded as an attack on their culture, and only now, with new constitutional rights on religious freedom and respect for cultural diversity, do they feel they can be Colombian without losing the Afro-Anglo-Caribbean identity.

(Gloria Triana, 1995)

One of the main objectives of Small Islands Voice is to find out the general public's concerns in the environment-development arena in small islands. In this initiative, environment is defined in a wide sense and includes the natural, social, cultural and economic environment. While SIDS have developed their own prioritized programme of action, which will be discussed further in the next chapter, Small Islands Voice has adopted a 'blank sheet' approach in determining islanders' concerns. Thus activities and surveys are being conducted with this in mind.

Surveys and activities

Various capacity-building activities have been undertaken in 2002 which have laid a solid foundation for Small Islands Voice. These have included the establishment of national coordinating committees encompassing a broad range of civil society. Islands have adopted different approaches, some with large formal committees and others adopting a more informal, low-key approach. The committees then design, organize and implement various activities.

In all the start-up islands, opinion surveys have been conducted to interview islanders and find out their concerns. The idea of the surveys is that they should cover a representative 1% of the country's population, and focus, through open-ended questions, on past changes, future changes, major issues of concern and how the general public sees its role in decision-making on environment and development issues. During the first quarter of 2002, a sample survey form was developed and tested in St Kitts and Nevis and in Seychelles. Based on the findings and results of this trial survey, islands developed their own survey questions. These are all available on the Small Islands Voice website, together with details on how the surveys were conducted and the outcomes. The survey form used in St Kitts and Nevis is included as an example in Annex V. In general, people responded positively to the surveys.

'Feedback from survey workers suggested that more people could have been interviewed (the sample population was limited to 1% of the population); several persons indicated they would have liked to take part but were not asked.'

Alain De Comarmond, Seychelles, November 2002.



Interview in progress in St Kitts, 2002.

The survey was conducted in whatever language people felt most comfortable with; in Seychelles it was Creole, and in some of the outer islands of the Cook Islands it was Cook Island Maori. Results and reports have been documented in English, so that everyone can share in the findings.

In the case of St Kitts and Nevis, Seychelles and Palau, the survey concentrated on civil society in general. In the Cook Islands, a first survey focused on youth in Rarotonga and Aitutaki, and a second survey covered youth and communities in the outer islands. In St Vincent and the Grenadines, the survey focused on youth. Table 1 contains the logistical details concerning the surveys in each island.

TABLE 1 LOGISTICS FOR OPINION SURVEYS IN THE ISLANDS			
ISLAND	DATE OF SURVEY	NUMBER OF PEOPLE SURVEYED	SAMPLED POPULATION
<p>St Kitts and Nevis, Caribbean</p> <p>Trial survey Results available at: www.unesco.org/csi/smis/siv/Caribbean/caropinion.htm</p> <p>Full survey Results available at: www.unesco.org/csi/smis/siv/Caribbean/StKitts-Nevis_opinionsurvey.rtf</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>St Vincent and the Grenadines, Caribbean</p> <p>School survey Results available at: www.unesco.org/csi/smis/siv/Caribbean/svg-youth.htm</p>	<p>Oct '02</p>	<p>60</p>	<p>youth</p>
<p>Seychelles, Indian Ocean</p> <p>Trial survey Results available at: www.unesco.org/csi/smis/siv/IndianOcean/ioopinion.htm</p> <p>Full survey Results available at: www.unesco.org/csi/smis/siv/IndianOcean/sej-opinresults.rtf</p>	<p>Mar '02</p> <p>Oct '02</p>	<p>22</p> <p>800</p>	<p>all society</p> <p>all society</p>
<p>Cook Islands, Pacific</p> <p>School survey – Rarotonga and Aitutaki Results available at: www.unesco.org/csi/smis/siv/Pacific/CookIslandssurveyreport.rtf</p> <p>School and community survey – outer islands Results available at: www.unesco.org/csi/smis/siv/Pacific/ci-opinresults.rtf</p>	<p>Jul '02</p> <p>Sep–Oct '02</p>	<p>152</p> <p>250</p>	<p>youth</p> <p>all society</p>
<p>Palau, Pacific, outer islands</p> <p>Full survey Results available at: www.unesco.org/csi/smis/siv/Pacific/pal-opinresults.rtf</p>	<p>Jan '03</p>		<p>all society</p>

Other activities are also being undertaken to determine the general public's views. For instance in the Cook Islands, a Small Islands Voice Newsletter is published and circulated free to schools in the country. The first two issues published in 2002 focused on informing young people about Small Islands Voice, and future issues will concentrate on feedback and views from youth and communities especially in the outer islands. In St Kitts and Nevis, a mobile display board has been constructed which is exhibited at national events, e.g. the inter-school Science Fair, Emancipation Day celebrations, to provide information about specific issues. The general public then comment on these issues via suggestion boxes. In Seychelles, meetings and workshops have been held to determine the concerns of specific target groups, e.g. youth workers.

The activities described above are just the start of a wider effort, which will require the full support of local media, in order to discuss, debate and determine the views and concerns of the general public on environment and development issues.

I Issues of concern to civil society

Based on the opinion surveys and other activities in specific islands, and discussions at the workshop, several issues of concern to the general public can be identified. These are listed below in no prioritized order, and reflect only a first impression. Once the full results of all the surveys are obtained, it is anticipated that the list will require substantial revision.

- foreign labour
- employment
- migration and depopulation
- crime and violence
- erosion of culture and values
- health
- tourism growth
- educational development



Official launch of the Small Islands Voice Project in St Kitts and Nevis, 2002 (left to right: Mr Halstead Byron, Hon. Dr Timothy Harris, Mrs Hélène Gosselin, Ms Dauna Manchester).



Ms Dauna Manchester viewing the display board set up at the public library in St Kitts, 2002.

- rising cost of living
- good governance
- waste management
- climate change and global warming
- deforestation
- land reclamation

The importance and relevance of many of these issues differs from island to island and from country to country.

Foreign labour, employment and migration

The importation of foreign labour creates a variety of problems. There are more than 4,000 foreign workers in Palau, out of a total population of 20,000. Many businesses prefer foreign workers who can work longer hours and who do not have the same traditional obligations as Palauans. Similarly, in Seychelles, many foreign workers from Africa, India, China and the Philippines are employed in construction and the fish canning industry, and these foreign migrants cause conflicts. Foreign workers often do not have citizenship rights and are excluded from most or all benefits. They work for very low salaries, and are highly vulnerable to abuse, as the threat of termination and repatriation can be made at any time.

'People are concerned about unemployment. Sometimes people don't want to work, but they see migrants as displacing their job opportunities.'

Sabrina Marie, Seychelles, November 2002.

The San Andres Archipelago, a district of Colombia, experiences related problems. Migration from the Colombian mainland to the islands started in the 1950s when a free port was created, and has resulted in the marginalization of the native community, especially in San Andres itself where mainland Colombians outnumber the native population by 3 to 1.

'Nowadays the hotels and tourism sector prefer to hire people from outside the islands as they are thought to work harder. Initiatives are now underway to limit such hiring practices, and CORALINA tries to ensure stakeholders are involved in the decision-making process.'

June-Marie Mow, San Andres, November 2002.

A different but related issue concerns migration and the 'brain drain'. Outward migration has been experienced in the Cook Islands since the 1970s, and the population has decreased by 30% since the severe economic crisis in 1996. Cook Islanders migrate to New Zealand where they have the right to live and work as citizens. There is a process of migration, first of all from the outer islands to Rarotonga and then from Rarotonga to New Zealand. When asked whether the 60,000 Cook Islanders living in New Zealand and Australia might return, Bruce Gray replied:

'We have the space but not the facilities for them. But they won't come back. Youth want to explore the world and the elderly want medical care, which as Cook Islanders they are entitled to in New Zealand.'

Bruce Gray, Cook Islands, November 2002.

Young people in particular need a reason to stay in the outer Cook Islands or the communities will disappear over time. One of the issues related to migration is the need for a measure of autonomy in the outer islands so that they can determine their own future. This is being achieved to some extent; for instance the Island Council in Aitutaki has been effective in blocking unwanted coastal development. Life in the outer islands has its own pace.

'Life in Mitiaro is very traditional, very Polynesian. The population is 238 and there is just one guesthouse. Respect is very important and local customs such as going to church on Sundays must be followed.'

Maarametua Murare, Cook Islands, November 2002.

Autonomy is also an issue in other regions and other islands, e.g. St Kitts and Nevis, where there is a movement in Nevis to gain independence from the Federation of St Kitts and Nevis.

Recruitment of professionals, especially nurses and teachers by countries such as the USA, is a small but growing problem in St Kitts and Nevis, and also regionally. When better salaries and conditions are offered abroad, it is very difficult for small islands to compete. In many of the Caribbean islands, unemployment rates are high, generating a growing concern about jobs and job security, especially in view of the high cost of living. In Seychelles, there was concern about the shortage of foreign exchange.

Increased crime and erosion of culture

The general public in St Kitts and Nevis are most concerned about the increase in crime and violence experienced in their communities. During the St Kitts and Nevis opinion survey, conducted in October/November 2002, members of the public made reference to increased theft, gang violence, drug use and a breakdown in the moral fibre of society (Lake and Byron, 2002).

In the Pacific countries represented at the workshop, issues arise as a result of a shift to western and more materialistic values which tend to erode traditional systems and practices. As an example:

'Only Palauans can own land, and now we see fights breaking out between family members because foreign developers promise large amounts of cash to Palauan individuals.'

Joe Chilton, Palau, November 2002.



The expansion of tourism brings its own problems as condominiums cover the hillside at South Frigate Bay, St Kitts, 1995...



...and hotels line the shoreline, North Frigate Bay, St Kitts, 1999.

Cruise ships bring increasing numbers of tourists to many islands on a daily basis: Cruise ship at Basseterre, St Kitts, 2002.



Changes can be seen too in Pacific islanders' eating habits. As a result of foreign advertising and food importation, many Palauans now have an American style diet and suffer from diabetes and other diseases. The decline of Palauan agriculture has contributed to this; and there is a common perception that agriculture and gardening is women's work. Changes in traditional family dynamics have led to an increase in suicide. In the high schools, there is less and less art and Palauans are losing their creativity even as they become more technologically advanced.

Growth of tourism

The growth of tourism is another issue identified by the islands as being of concern. Here the contrasts are most marked, ranging from Mitiaro in the Cook Islands which welcomes just 13 tourists a month and the benefits are shared among all the families, to San Andres which receives 350,000 package tourists per year from the Colombian mainland and is seeing many of its resources depleted (e.g. freshwater supplies), and its facilities over-used (e.g. solid waste disposal sites).



Cruise ship visitors at the Botanical Gardens, Seychelles, 2002.

Education and governance

There is a need to improve education so it addresses islanders' needs, both youth and other sectors of society.

'When we talk of education, we must not think only of children and youth, but also those who would guide and help them.'

Matthew Servina Seychelles, November 2002.

Good governance was another issue that workshop participants discussed in some detail, particularly the traditional system of government that exists in many of the Pacific islands. And while most Pacific islands also have elected, democratic governments, the traditional

system which is related very much to place of origin plays an important role. Some Caribbean islanders expressed the wish for such a system in their region.

'In the Pacific, we do have traditional governments in the islands. This makes a huge difference in comparison to western countries. We have a 'fourth wing' of government that often has more impact at the community level than does the elected government'.

Tiare Holm, Palau, November 2002.

'Palau has maintained a system of 'checks and balances' for three thousand years. Palauan culture is a living organism which has to evolve and develop. Thankfully, the core values of Palau have been retained even in the face of very persistent outside influence'.

Joe Aitaro, Palau, November 2002.

Palau, although a new and fairly small nation, formed an Ethics Commission two years ago. One of the key reasons for passing the Ethics Act was to limit the foreign influence on the country and to ensure that the government system was not abused. Due to its proximity to Asia, Palau is perhaps more vulnerable to the influence of large neighbouring nations than are other more remote Pacific island countries.



The National Legislature in Palau (Olbiil Era Kelulau), 2002.

Solid waste management and natural environmental issues

Various environmental issues were identified, and while many of these varied from island to island, solid waste management was common to all and some interesting solutions were discussed.

'When involved in projects dealing with landfills and recycling, we cannot allow ourselves to be profit-driven in the small island context. We recycle aluminium, plastic and glass in the Cook Islands; the aluminium is sent to New Zealand and brings in a small income. It took us two years to put the programme together. We worked from the community level up'.

Bruce Gray, Cook Islands, November 2002.

Climate change and global warming were also mentioned as issues. These are particularly a concern in the flat, low-lying islands, which are especially vulnerable to sea level rise and to storms. Other natural environmental concerns included deforestation and land reclamation in Seychelles, invasive plant species in Palau, beach erosion in the Cook Islands.

Proposals to address issues of concern

During the inter-regional workshop, participants worked in small groups to develop activities which would address some of the concerns discussed. Their proposals were as follows:

Present a unified front for small islands

Small islands need to present a strong, unified front with a shared voice, whilst also respecting differences and diversity.

Implement good governance

Good governance requires a shared vision and a framework for collaborative decision-making involving government and civil society. This will include educating and empowering women, youth and children to participate fully in the process.

Promote self-sufficiency

In order to ensure development is sustainable in a world undergoing globalization, promote an overall ethic for self-sufficiency by implementing wise practices in population growth, economic consumption and energy use.

Strengthen social responsibilities and ethical codes

Halt the decline in the moral and social fabric of society which creates a weakening of values and increased crime and violence, by developing, strengthening and enforcing social responsibilities, codes of conduct, and codes of ethics.

Preserve traditions and culture

Maintain, and in some cases restore, identity, dignity and self-esteem, by ensuring traditions and culture are preserved and citizenship is respected.

Improve education systems

Reverse the trend of current education systems which produce individuals with limited aspirations and opportunities, by improving and strengthening job training modules, job placement programmes, mentoring, career guidance programmes, and school curricula.

Prepare for climate change at a local and global level

Since climate change is a local and global responsibility, ensure island populations are fully informed about the factors influencing climate change; include climate change as an integral part of national development plans; and hold governments around the globe, particularly in high income nations, responsible for their activities that impact climate change.

Issues of concern to youth

Obviously, youth are a very important part of civil society, and for this reason their views have been separated out from those of the general public. Based on the discussions at the workshop, as well as national surveys and workshops targeting youth in the Cook Islands,

Seychelles and St Vincent and the Grenadines, preliminary issues identified as being of concern to youth are listed below, although not in any prioritized order:

- teenage pregnancy
- health issues, especially HIV-AIDS
- young males at risk
- violence in the community
- substance abuse (alcohol, smoking, drugs)
- unemployment
- education
- lack of entertainment and sport facilities
- solid waste disposal

Teenage pregnancy and health issues

Teenage pregnancy is a serious concern to youth in all the islands.

'If you have a 14-year-old mother, what can she teach her child? Only what she knows at 14. When this mother reaches 18 and finds a new boyfriend, the child is often forgotten and neglected.'

Lornette Hanley, St Kitts and Nevis, November 2002.

Early sexual activity is often seen as prestigious for young men and this exposes them to serious health risks. HIV-AIDS is a serious concern in all the islands.

'In Palau, teenage pregnancies are almost a tradition – the kids are then raised by the grandparents. This has to change, starting with the (grand)parents.'

Jonathan Isechal, Palau, November 2002.

Other aspects of sexual behaviour which are of concern include incest, molestation, common prejudices with regard to homosexuality, indecent dress and a rise in prostitution among schoolgirls.

The islands are attempting to tackle these problems in a variety of ways through youth activities, education and family life programmes. For instance, in Seychelles, the government provides some measure of support to girls after having their first baby so that they can continue their school studies.

Young males at risk

Another issue that figured prominently in the discussions and in many of the surveys too was that young males are particularly at risk and are more likely to drop out of the education system. In some of the archipelagos, e.g. Palau and Cook Islands, where the outer islands have no secondary schools, the dropout rate amongst males and females may be very high. It was generally agreed that it is much harder to keep boys in the school system after the age of about 14 years.

'In St Kitts and Nevis, and in other Caribbean islands also, parenting leaves much to be desired. Parents often focus on protecting girls and they leave boys to their own devices; young men are lured to drugs by promises of money and material goods.'

Dauna Manchester, St Kitts and Nevis, November 2002.

Various efforts are being made to target males at risk, but with limited success. This is due to the fact that often the males who abandon the school system do not take part in organized youth activities, programmes or sports. Technical and vocational courses, special skills training, acting and music groups are all being tried in an effort to address this problem.

Community violence, substance abuse and employment

Closely linked to this issue of young males at risk are other issues of community violence and unemployment, again prevalent in all the islands. Specific concerns about violence were expressed by the youth in St Vincent and the Grenadines and included gang rapes, violence in sports, profanity, gossip and peer pressure. Increased violence is also closely linked to the drug culture that is emerging in many islands. Other issues include child abuse, which is of concern but often not talked about openly. Youth need to see good role models in their communities and it is up to every individual to take action to save their societies.

Several youth employment programmes exist in the islands. In Seychelles, a programme exists to place youth on a six-month internship with an employer for skills development, after which the individual may be employed permanently. There are also national youth centres in Seychelles which provide trained staff, counselling, information and computer facilities for youth. St Kitts and Nevis has a youth skills programme where young people are trained for the job market and six-week internships are offered. However, the job market is extremely limited in small islands.

Lack of sporting facilities

One issue identified as contributing to many of the youth's concerns was the lack of entertainment and sports facilities in many of the islands.

'Many sports are popular in St Kitts and Nevis; however, the full potential of our youth is not realized due to a poverty of opportunities and facilities. Hurricane Georges destroyed many sports facilities.'

Samal Duggins, St Kitts and Nevis, November 2002.

'There is not much to do at weekends and youth need alternatives to parties and drinking.'

Patricia Black and Jesse Mangham, Palau, November 2002.



Signs such as these in Nevis (left) and Anguilla (top) show evidence of efforts to solve the littering problem, 2002.

Natural environmental issues

Among the environmental issues identified by youth, particularly in the Cook Islands and St Vincent and the Grenadines, was the problem of littering and solid waste disposal. Ironically, participants attending the inter-regional workshop in Palau were reminded of this issue every day as they had to pass Palau's main dumpsite, the M-Dock dump, on their way to the workshop venue.



M-Dock dumpsite, Koror, Palau, 2002.

Proposals to address issues of concern to youth

Youth participants at the inter-regional workshop developed a list of activities to assist in solving many of the problems discussed above with a particular focus on youth at risk:

- conduct a survey covering all schools at the national level, to determine the extent of the 'drop-out' problem;
- involve youth themselves, parents, counsellors and health educators in devising solutions;
- conduct a community outreach programme to meet the youth at risk in their own environment;
- support and enhance sports, recreational and educational activities;
- foster partnerships with the private sector, government, NGOs and people in the community;
- strengthen skills training programmes, distance education and internships;
- involve the media in all these activities.

Final remarks

The six areas that were prioritized for immediate attention by SIDS in 1999 relate to climate change, natural disasters, freshwater, coastal and marine resources, energy and tourism. (These are discussed further in the next chapter.) For the most part, they focus on natural environmental issues. It is therefore especially interesting to see that the preliminary list of issues of concern to island residents, based at least in part on opinion surveys of island residents, focus primarily on social concerns, governance and education. It will be interesting to follow the debates and discussions in the islands in the future, to see if this emphasis is maintained. ■



Palau's famous Rock Islands, 2002.

Truck dumping rubbish,
San Andres, 2002.

5. Future directions for Small Islands Voice

'There is a perception that life in small islands is very idyllic, not much to do, only rest in the sun. But on small islands everyone is touched by everything that happens in the island. Living in Honolulu, I never went to a funeral. Now, living in Palau, I attend funerals once a month, always someone I have a link to and a loss I feel. When a murder is committed, everyone is touched. We deal with these issues on a magnified scale. Last year, a Palauan woman who had never been in the country was shot and killed in Las Vegas. The entire country mourned, we all had connections to her.'

Tiare Holm, Palau, November 2002.

Small Islands Voice seeks to identify issues in environment and development at the local level and to discuss these concerns nationally, regionally and inter-regionally. The outcome of these debates will then be channelled in two different directions: (i) back to the local level for action on the ground, and (ii) towards the global level, especially international programmes dealing with sustainable development of small islands.

Furthering the discussion

While an important start in discussion and identification of issues has been made, this is only a beginning. The coming years will see a much wider and more intense debate taking place in the islands, as well as the strengthening of infrastructure and capacity in traditional and new communication technologies. Once this is achieved, the stage is set to begin to turn the talk to action.

All the islands represented at the workshop emphasized the need for action on the ground.

'We need to work locally, produce something on the ground, make a difference'

Bruce Gray, Cook Islands, November 2002.

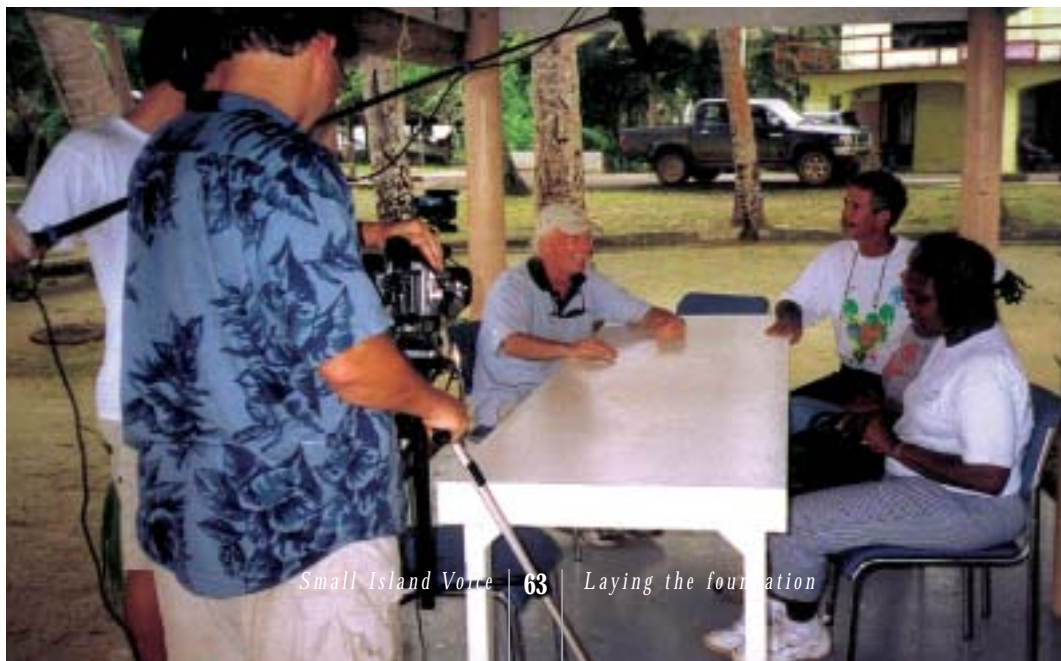
This is among the long-term goals of Small Islands Voice, namely to promote the effective participation of civil society, including young people, in sustainable island development. Thus it is envisaged that effective action on the ground will be the focus during 2004–5, provided additional funding is obtained for Small Islands Voice.

One of the unique aspects of Small Islands Voice, and one that differentiates it from many other projects and programmes is the inter-regional aspect. Bringing islands together from the three regions, Caribbean, Indian Ocean and Pacific, provides an exciting dimension not yet fully explored. This is already beginning to be seen in the Small Islands Voice global and youth fora and in the workshop discussions.

During the workshop, the participants discussed future plans and proposals in an inter-regional setting. Several opportunities emerged for linking the regions.

Proposals for linking the regions

The global internet-based forum is an important way to link the regions. Efforts will be made to expand the number of recipients who receive the Small Islands Voice forum contributions by e-mail. Linking the forum with other media, such as newspapers, radio and possibly community television, will also widen the forum's readership and impact.



Filming of a discussion between Caribbean and Pacific islanders for a future video production, Palau, 2002.

Developing an online Small Islands Voice newsletter is another way to keep the participating islands in contact with each other and informed about activities elsewhere. For instance, Palau is proposing to restart a community visioning process, which is of interest to the other islands. An online newsletter will be one way to keep the other islands informed of progress with community visioning. Other potential activities include linking islands with common or similar languages and cultures, e.g. Seychelles with its Creole culture with some of the Creole-speaking Caribbean islands.

One of the issues common to all the islands is solid waste disposal. Finding ways to share the Cook Islands' successful experiences with recycling in the small island context provides another opportunity to link the regions.

Other inter-regional proposals relate to young islanders. Student exchanges between the regions have tremendous potential in the fields of culture, education and ambassadorship among others, not only for the individual students involved, but also for their schools, communities and possibly entire islands. Initial discussions are in progress between Mitiaro in the Cook Islands and Bequia in St Vincent and the Grenadines, thus linking the Pacific and the Caribbean in the first instance.

Expanding the scope of the internet-based youth forum is another way of strengthening inter-regional linkages. Expansion was proposed in terms of adding further schools in the participating islands as well as inviting 'new' islands to take part. Issues already discussed on the forum can be developed in more depth and eventually individual islands might wish to move to establish their own national internet-based youth fora, whilst still maintaining links to the inter-regional forum. The national fora represent a step towards developing action plans and implementing specific activities on the ground. The potential of the youth forum to become a distance learning tool with the added development of specific educational materials was also recognized and will be explored further.

Providing opportunities for some of the youth taking part in the forum to meet face to face is another way of strengthening inter-regional bonds. Planned regional activities may be one way to achieve this goal. For instance, in the Caribbean there is a regional project for schools called Sandwatch, developed within the framework of UNESCO's Associated Schools Project network. Sandwatch seeks to provide students with practical skills in environmental sciences by monitoring various aspects of beaches, such as erosion, water quality, human use, and then assisting the students with designing and implementing projects to improve their country's beaches. A regional Caribbean Sandwatch meeting scheduled for mid-2003 would

Students role-playing in order to explain beach conflicts, Sandwatch Project workshop, St Lucia, 2001.



provide an opportunity to invite students and teachers from Small Islands Voice countries in the Indian Ocean and Pacific regions, to experience the project and to see if they might want to develop similar initiatives in their regions.

Proposals for national activities

For the most part, new national activities will concentrate on expanding and intensifying the debate and discussion. In addition, other islands will be encouraged to get involved in Small Islands Voice.

In the Caribbean, St Kitts and Nevis plan to use all forms of media to further debate the issues already identified. They also intend to ensure that the phrase 'Small Islands Voice' becomes known to every resident. Free internet facilities will be provided for the public to take part in the global Small Islands Voice discussion fora, and an audio-visual centre is being planned. The potential for a sub-regional internet discussion forum will also be explored.

The Cook Islands plan to explore the potential of community television, particularly in the outer islands where television has just recently become available. They also plan to strengthen the communication facilities in the outer islands.

In all the regions, other ways to bring the internet to isolated communities will be explored. These will include community multimedia centres and radio browsing in collaboration with UNESCO colleagues in the Communication and Information Sector.

In the Indian Ocean, Seychelles plan to ensure the full and active involvement of the non-governmental community in Small Islands Voice, as well as widen the debate and discussion. Activities are also underway to involve the Maldives in the Small Islands Voice initiative.

A proposal by Palau relates to community visioning, which is designed to provide for community involvement in planning and managing each state's future development. (Palau is a federation of 17 autonomous and very small states; these are synonymous with what would elsewhere be called communities.) The 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 which are 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. The community visioning process started in Palau in 2000, but stalled after a while since there was no clear time line. Palau has proposed re-starting this activity as a part of Small Islands Voice. The other Small Islands Voice countries have expressed interest in the concept of community visioning.

Efforts to fully involve young islanders will be continued in all the islands. St Vincent and the Grenadines plan to maintain their focus on youth and in particular to integrate their Sandwatch project activities with Small Islands Voice. San Andres also propose to focus on generating debate among youth and also specific groups such as resource users and

communities. A Small Islands Voice youth newsletter will be a particular focus in the Cook Islands. Palau, with the support of the Vice-President's Office, proposes to establish a youth group which will play an active role in environmental and community issues. Another idea being explored is to establish a Youth Conservation Corps to conduct environmental monitoring in each state, which will assist communities in monitoring and managing their own resources. The potential exists to link this activity with the Cook Islands Environmental Ranger Youth Programme which started in May 1998, and has implemented a number of projects in all the islands of the archipelago. The programme has been named recipient of the Commonwealth Youth Award for the South Pacific for three years in succession.

Having a voice in international programmes

Contributing the general public's concerns to the global level, especially international programmes dealing with sustainable development of small islands, is another goal of Small Islands Voice. In particular, 2004 will see a review of the Programme of Action for SIDS.

Background to recent international programmes

In 1992, at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, the world community adopted Agenda 21 (UN, 1992). This represents a global consensus and political commitment at the highest level on development and environment co-operation. 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 inter-regional level. The resulting Declaration of Barbados and the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States listed 15 priority areas for specific attention (SIDS, 1994). These were as follows:

1. Climate change and sea level rise
2. Natural and environmental disasters
3. Management of wastes
4. Coastal and marine resources
5. Freshwater resources
6. Land resources
7. Energy resources
8. Tourism resources
9. Biodiversity resources
10. National institutions and administrative capacity
11. Regional institutions and technical co-operation
12. Transportation and communication
13. Science and technology
14. Human resource development
15. Implementation, monitoring and review

Within each priority area, actions for implementation were developed at the national, regional and inter-regional levels.

In 1999, a Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly was held to assess progress and boost support for the islands. During this meeting, six of the 15 problem areas were identified as being in need of priority attention for the next five years:

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

In September 2002, at the United Nations Millennium Summit, world leaders agreed to set a series of time-bound and measurable goals and targets for combating poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation and discrimination against women. These are called the eight Millennium Development Goals (see Table 2). Number eight, which deals with developing a global partnership for development, specifically mentions SIDS.

In December 2002, at its 57th Session, the UN General Assembly decided to convene an international meeting in 2004, which will include a summit segment, to undertake a full and comprehensive review of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of SIDS, and accepted the offer of the Government of Mauritius to host the international meeting.

While at the time of writing (March 2003), timetables for preparations for the meeting in Mauritius in August 2004 are being developed; there will be two main types of activities taking place in 2003: (i) the preparation of national reports on the implementation of the Programme of Action, and (ii) a series of regional and inter-regional meetings to develop a common ground.

TABLE 2. MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

- 1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger**
 - Reduce by half the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day;
 - Reduce by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.
- 2. Achieve universal primary education**
 - Ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling.
- 3. Promote gender equality and empower women**
 - Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015.
- 4. Reduce child mortality**
 - Reduce by two thirds the mortality rate among children under five.
- 5. Improve maternal health**
 - Reduce by three quarters the maternal mortality ratio.
- 6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases**
 - Halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS;
 - Halt and begin to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases.
- 7. Ensure environmental sustainability**
 - Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes, reverse loss of environmental resources;
 - Reduce by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water;
 - Achieve significant improvement in lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020.
- 8. Develop a global partnership for development**
 - Develop further an open trading and financial system that is rule-based, predictable and non-discriminatory – includes a commitment to good governance, development and poverty reduction, nationally and internationally;
 - Address the least developed countries' special needs - this includes tariff- and quota-free access for their exports; enhanced debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries; cancellation of official bilateral debt; and more generous official development assistance for countries committed to poverty reduction;
 - Address the special needs of landlocked and small island developing States;
 - Deal comprehensively with developing countries' debt problems through national and international measures, to make debt sustainable in the long term;
 - In co-operation with the developing countries, develop decent and productive work for youth;
 - In co-operation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries;
 - In co-operation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies – especially information and communications technologies.

During initial discussions at the end of December 2002, in preparation for the plenary meeting of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), it was proposed that there should also be an opportunity for a Youth Forum and a Civil Society Forum to give direct input to the Mauritius meeting and that this be supported by UNESCO and the United Nations Environment Programme.

Other important international meetings related to Small Islands Voice are the World Summit on the Information Society to be held in Geneva in 2003 and in Tunis in 2005.

Proposals for input to the preparations for 2004

During the workshop, there was considerable discussion and debate on how to ensure that the work of Small Islands Voice plays a significant role in the preparations for the 2004 meeting in Mauritius. Concern was expressed that often the voice of civil society gets lost in the bureaucratic build-up to such international events.

'When small island issues are presented in international fora, they take on a glossy, non-urgent character. They don't have the same impact anymore. I am hoping that Small Islands Voice can help take us back to basics.'

Lolita Gibbons, Palau, November 2002.

However, it was noted that changes are taking place, for instance the European Union now makes it a requirement for countries to include civil society in their projects and programmes. Notwithstanding the above-mentioned constraint, it was agreed that efforts to contribute to the 2004 meeting have to be made at the national, regional and inter-regional levels.

At the national level, Small Islands Voice coordinators must work to ensure that the results of their surveys and other activities are made available, in as many different ways as possible, to the persons and agencies involved in preparing their country's national reports. Thus this might require meetings, workshops, radio talk shows and a media blitz. UNESCO can possibly assist at this level by reminding governments of the activities ongoing within Small Islands Voice.

It will also be necessary to work with regional organizations, starting early in 2003, to make sure that they are fully aware and up to date with the activities and outcomes of Small Islands Voice. For instance in the Indian Ocean region, the Organization of African Unity takes up many issues on behalf of the islands in the Indian Ocean; island countries like Seychelles and Mauritius are very involved in such international discussions and preparatory meetings. Other organizations play a similar role in the other regions, e.g. the Caribbean Community in the Caribbean, the Council of Regional Agencies in the Pacific (CROP).

At the inter-regional level, participants emphasized the importance of small islands speaking with a unified voice. UNESCO can play an important role at the inter-regional level, ensuring that organizations like AOSIS and the United Nations Department of Economic

and Social Affairs, where the Small Island Developing States Unit and Network (SIDSNet) are housed, are kept fully updated with the results and outcomes of Small Islands Voice. The biennial General Conference of UNESCO is another platform to be considered by island member countries. Internet discussions and global fora, such as the Small Islands Voice global forum and the Wise Coastal Practices for Sustainable Human Development forum, can also play a role, reaching, as they do, thousands of people around the world.

F Final remarks

Small Islands Voice has to focus simultaneously at the local/national level and the regional/inter-regional level. This will be especially testing as time and resources are limited. However, the firm foundation laid in 2002 make this an exciting, albeit ambitious challenge. ■



Anse Georgette, Praslin, Seychelles, 2002.

6. Concluding remarks

The poem 'Us islanders' was written by Marvelle Estrale, an enthusiastic teacher in Seychelles, who is playing a key role in the Small Islands Voice youth forum. Hers is one of many voices from small islands around the world – people who are getting involved and exploring the potential of the Small Islands Voice initiative. Started by UNESCO in 2002, as one of the organization's cross-cutting initiatives, Small Islands Voice has the potential to become whatever islanders want of it. If there is only passing interest, the initiative will blossom and then fade. If, as appears likely from this review of the first year's activities, islanders enthusiastically take it on board, then it has limitless potential.

At the end of the inter-regional workshop held in Palau in November 2002, the participants prepared and signed a declaration, the Rock Islands Declaration, which recognizes and emphasizes their roles, and those of UNESCO, in furthering Small Islands Voice. There are many aspects of this declaration that are important, the sustainability component, the recognition of the similarities among small islands, the involvement of all sectors of society, the need to preserve cultures and traditions and to respect each other's differences.

The problems facing small islands are numerous, as has been clearly demonstrated. But one of the advantages of being small is that these problems are manageable and not totally overwhelming. Thus the solutions are attainable, and it is up to islanders to embrace them in totality. Their strong sense of identity gives islanders a clear advantage.

The Cook Islands Vision Statement can be adapted to summarize a long-term vision for Small Islands Voice:

To assist small islands to enjoy a quality of life consistent with the aspirations of their people, in harmony with and showing respect for their culture and environment.

Us Islanders

by Marvella Estrale, Seychelles

*Rarotonga is the capital of the Cook Islands
Saint Lucia's of the Castries
And Victoria the Seychelles.
Rarotongan's speak Maori and English
Saint Lucians English and Kweyol
And Seychelles Creole, English and French.
So we have something in common.*

*Rarotongan's love their sports
Soccer and rugby are the most popular
The beaches, the lagoon, the ocean
And the mountains all beckon
Guided inland tramping and tours
Snorkelling and fishing, and sailing too.
Saint Lucians add more to sports
Cricket and Carifta Games
Boys don't play netball
But they do basketball.*

*And Seychellois cannot escape the sea
Canoeing, surfing and swimming especially.
Indeed, all like Rarotongan's and Saint Lucians
Except we've never heard of a vaka.
So we have more than something in common.*

*Rarotongan's fly over their islands in microlights
Seychellois do it by helicopter
While Saint Lucians dance to the calypso.
Seychellois love the calypso too.
We didn't know what it was all about
But now we do.
Saint Lucians enjoy a Creole Day
And Seychellois week.
Lots of dancing in the streets
Creole food and music too.
If we could all get together
It'd be just FUN, FUN, and FUN!
Indeed we do have
A lot more than something in common.*

SMALL ISLANDS VOICE
THE ROCK ISLANDS DECLARATION
KOROR, NOVEMBER 2002

We, the participants and representatives of the people of our small islands, attending the UNESCO Smalls Islands Voice Inter-regional Workshop, held in the Republic of Palau during the period 18–22 November 2002,

Recognizing the need for and value of this forum and further

Recognizing the following:

- Similarity of needs and wishes of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and other small islands;
- The common goals, desires and aspirations of our individual societies;
- Respecting the different cultures and traditions of our peoples;
- The contribution of the children and youth to these cultures and traditions;
- The need to preserve and further enrich the cultures and traditions and at the same time moving forward in the global world; and
- To improve the quality of life of today's generations and generations to come.

We do hereby declare:

- That we are responsible to our respective islands and their peoples, especially their children and youth;
- That this programme must continue beyond its stated expiration date of 2004; and
- That UNESCO, as the mother of the programme, has the responsibility to ensure its sustainability as long as there is a need for such as expressed by the participating islands and their peoples.

(Signed original at www.unesco.org/csi/smis/siv/RIdeclaration.pdf)

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ANNEX 1 – LIST OF PARTICIPANTS AT THE SMALL ISLANDS VOICE INTER-REGIONAL WORKSHOP, PALAU, 18–22 NOVEMBER 2002

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ANNEX II – LIST OF PAPERS PREPARED FOR THE SMALL ISLANDS VOICE INTER-REGIONAL WORKSHOP, PALAU, 18–22 NOVEMBER 2002

Belmar, H. 2002. Small Islands Voice – the Bequian view.

Cambers, G., Green, C. 2002. Small Islands Voice youth forum proposals for 2003.

De Comarmond, A., Payet, P. 2002. Seychelles project progress report Small Islands Voice.

Gray, B. 2002. Small Islands Voice – Cook Islands.

Holm, Tiare, Chilton, J., Holm, T., Aitaro, J. 2002. Small Islands Voice inter-regional workshop preparation document – Palau.

Malone, K. 2002. Providing a voice: the importance of participation.

Manchester, D. 2002. UNESCO Small Islands Voice preparatory project report.

Mow, J. M. 2002. Proposal for Small Islands Voice in the San Andres Archipelago in 2003.

ANNEX III – PROGRAMME FOR THE SMALL ISLANDS VOICE INTER-REGIONAL WORKSHOP, PALAU, 18–22 NOVEMBER 2002

SATURDAY 16 NOVEMBER 2002

Participants arrive in Palau

SUNDAY 17 NOVEMBER 2002

1000–1630 Visit to the Rock Islands and the Jellyfish Lake

MONDAY 18 NOVEMBER 2002

- 0830–0930 *Workshop opening*
Facilitator – Mr Joe Tutii Chilton, UNESCO National Commission
Invocation
Opening chant – by Ms Merii Ngiracheluolul, Miss Koror 2002
Welcoming remarks – by Mr Dwight Alexander, Secretary-General,
Palau National Commission for UNESCO
Welcoming remarks – by Mr Dirk Troost, Chief, Environment and
Development in Coastal Regions and in Small Islands, UNESCO
Opening remarks – by Mr Francis Matsutaro, Director, Palau International
Coral Reef Center
'Mother Earth's Dying Cries', rap poem – by Mr Samal Duggins, St Kitts
and Nevis
- 0930–1000 Coffee break
- Sharing information and experiences about our islands**
- 1000–1100 '*About Seychelles*' presentation and discussion
1100–1200 '*About St Kitts and Nevis*' presentation and discussion
- 1200–1300 Lunch break
- 1300–1330 '*About St Vincent and the Grenadines*' presentation and discussion
1330–1400 '*About the San Andres Archipelago*' presentation and discussion
1400–1500 '*About Cook Islands*' presentation and discussion
- 1500–1515 Coffee break
- 1515–1615 '*About Palau*' presentation and discussion
- 1615–1630 Review and wrap-up of the day's session

TUESDAY 19 NOVEMBER 2002

Small Islands Voice activities

- 0830–1000 *Small Islands Voice internet-based youth forum*
Experiences, results, assessment and future proposals
Short presentations from participating islands and discussions
- 1000–1030 Coffee break
- 1030–1200 *Opinion surveys – experiences and results*
Short presentations from participating islands and discussions
- 1200–1300 Lunch break
- 1300–1500 *Issues emerging from the opinion surveys*
Small group discussion sessions followed by presentations to the plenary group
- 1500–1515 Coffee break
- 1515–1615 *On-the-ground activities*
Short presentations from participating islands and discussions
- 1615–1630 Review and wrap-up of day's session
- 1630–1700 Field trip outline and arrangements

WEDNESDAY 20TH NOVEMBER 2002

- 0830–1630 **Field trip to Babeldaob**
Drive on the Palau Compact Road to the State of Melekeok and discussions with local professionals and community members on the issues related to this road.
Visit to the Capitol Relocation Project in the State of Melekeok, and discussions with local professionals.
Visit to the Melekeok traditional men's meeting house (Abai) and discussions with community members.
Visit the recently built traditional 30-man outrigger canoe (Kabekl) and discussions with the master canoe builder.

THURSDAY 21 NOVEMBER 2000

Working with the media

0830–1000 Panel on *‘Working with print media’*
Panelists – Mr Dave Mendoza, Print Zone; Ms Agnes Abrau, Palau Horizon;
Mr Moses Uludong, Tia Belau
Discussion

Panel on *‘Working with radio’*
Panelist – Mr Alfonzo Diaz, WWFM
Discussion

1000–1030 Coffee break

1030–1200 Panel on *‘Working with film and theatre’*
Panelists – Mr Jeff Barabe, Roll’Em; Ms Dilmei Olkeriil, Belau Theatre
Discussion

Small group discussion sessions focusing on media strategies followed by
presentation to the plenary group

1200–1300 Lunch break

Focus on Palau

1300–1500 Panel on *‘Natural resource management’*
Panelists – Mr Adalbert Eledui, Koror State Rangers; Mr Marhence
Madranchar, Environmental Quality Protection Board; Mr David Hinchley,
The Nature Conservancy; Ms Lolita Gibbons, Palau Conservation Society
Discussion

Panel on *‘Economy and environment’*
Panelists – Ms Ann Kitalong, Environment Inc.; Mr Ric Manghan, Capitol
Improvement Project
Discussion

1500–1515 Coffee break

1515–1700 Panel on *‘Community health’*
Panelists – Mr Steven Kuartei, Public Health; Ms Debbie Toribiong,
Substance Abuse Prevention
Discussion

Panel on *‘Good governance’*
Panelists – Mr Basilio Deltang, Ethics Commission; Ms Mechesil Belau,
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Discussion

FRIDAY 22 NOVEMBER 2002

Small Islands Voice – the way forward

- 0830–0850 Remarks by Ms Sandra Pierantozzi, Vice-President, Republic of Palau
- 0850–0930 *Preparations for the 2004 review of the Programme of Action for Small Island Developing States*
Presentation by Mr Dirk Troost and discussion
- 0930–1015 *Small Islands Voice global internet-based forum*
Initial results and discussion
- 1015–1030 Coffee break
- 1030–1200 Small group discussion sessions on
1. *How to reach the youth at risk*
2. *Future directions for the Small Islands Voice internet-based youth forum*
3. *Formulation and refinement of the issues emerging from the 2002 activities*
followed by presentations to the plenary group
- 1200–1300 Lunch break
- 1300–1500 Small group discussion sessions on
National, regional and inter-regional plans for Small Islands Voice in 2003
followed by presentations to the plenary group
- 1500–1515 Coffee break
- 1515–1630 Review of workshop's findings and progress, general discussion
Workshop closing

SATURDAY 23 NOVEMBER 2002

Participants depart Palau

ANNEX IV – LIST OF POSTINGS ON THE SMALL ISLANDS VOICE GLOBAL FORUM – [HTTP://WWW.SIVGLOBAL.ORG](http://www.sivglobal.org) (WITH USER NAME *SIV* AND PASSWORD *GLOBAL*)

Postings on road construction in Palau, Pacific

Development at any cost? by Scott Radway
(<http://www.sivglobal.org/?read=1>), 9 October 2002

Balancing development and environment, by Donna Bartram, Robert Heinin, Rasack Nayamuth, Jacky Silvers (<http://www.sivglobal.org/?read=6>), 29 October 2002

Controlling development, by H. Belmar, T. Isamu, J. Johnson, N. Pilcher, L. Richards, Rod, R. Szyjan (<http://www.sivglobal.org/?read=7>), 31 October 2002

Further views on the Palau road, by Santy Asanuma, Bob Conrich, Carol Emaurois, Robert Iroga and a writer from Tuvalu (<http://www.sivglobal.org/?read=9>), 14 November 2002

Postings on beach access in Tobago, Caribbean

Beaches for all: let the people decide, by Emile Louis
(<http://www.sivglobal.org/?read=12>), 28 November 2002

Support from around the world for keeping beaches open to the public, by G. Gosling, G. Grant, Marjorie, Maureen, J. Moore, J. McKinnon, J. Tariipo
(<http://www.sivglobal.org/?read=15>), 12th December 2002

Providing public access to the beach, by T. Alphonse, B. Conrich, B. Potter, T. Rongo, F. Zaandam
(<http://www.sivglobal.org/?read=16>), 7 January 2003

Safeguarding freedom of choice, by Emile Louis
(<http://www.sivglobal.org/?read=18>), 21 January 2003

Sharing beach resources, by H. Belmar, P. Jacobs, A. Kemper, Michelle, B. Mommsen, N. Savy
(<http://www.sivglobal.org/?read=19>), 5 February 2003

Announcements concerning Small Islands Voice on the ‘Wise Coastal Practices for Sustainable Human Development’ forum

<http://www.csiwisepractices.org> (with username *csi* and password *wise*)

Small Islands Voice 2004 / La Voix des Petites Iles / La Voz de las Islas pequeñas, by Claire Green and Gillian Cambers (<http://www.csiwisepractices.org/?read=408>), 12 February 2002

Start-up activities for the Small Islands Voice initiative (+ Français) (+ Español), by Gillian Cambers and Claire Green (<http://www.csiwisepractices.org/?read=418>), 25 April 2002

Announcement of a trial global discussion forum for Small Islands Voice (+ Français) (+ Español), by G. Cambers, C. Green, L. Gomez, A. Ibrahim, A. James, L. Leonardi, N. Shah, A. Tu'ivanuavou Vaea (<http://www.csiwisepractices.org/?read=438>), 18 July 2002

ANNEX V – ST KITTS [NEVIS] SMALL ISLANDS VOICE OPINION SURVEY

Introductory remarks:

'Hello, I'm working on a project focused on small islands in the Caribbean, Indian Ocean and Pacific regions, and I would be grateful if you would answer a few quick questions'.

1. What main changes have you seen in St Kitts [Nevis] in the last 10 years?
Name two.

1a. Are these changes:
 good
 bad

2. What main changes would you like to see in St Kitts [Nevis] in the next 10 years?
These can be local-level or national improvements. Name two.

3. Do you think the public participates enough in planning the future development of St Kitts [Nevis]?

Not at all

Slightly

Fully

Why do you say this?

4. What are the three main issues you are most concerned about?

A few questions about yourself:

5. What is your occupation?

6. What is your age group? 12–20, 21–40, 41–60, 61+ years

7. How long have you lived in St Kitts [Nevis]? (*Please state number of years*)

8. Circle the gender of the interviewee: male female

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