

Embarking on **Mauritius Strategy** *implementation*



In January 2005, a high-level United Nations (UN) meeting was convened in Mauritius to review the implementation of and refine the 1994 Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Together with governments, civil society, regional bodies and other international organizations, UNESCO has been urged by the UN General Assembly to take timely actions to ensure effective implementation of the updated Programme of Action.

UNESCO has contributed distinctively to the forward-planning process associated with the review of the 1994 Barbados Programme of Action (BPOA) for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and to the International UN Meeting in Mauritius (10-14 January 2005), through events that highlighted the role of culture, youth visioning for island living, communities in action, ocean and coastal management, and a civil society forum. This contribution is underpinned by a resolution (32 C/Res.48) adopted by the UNESCO General Conference in 2003.

The principal negotiated outputs of the Mauritius International Meeting – a strategy document and a political declaration – call for action in many fields related to UNESCO's concerns, programmes and priorities. The Mauritius Strategy builds on and reassesses the original BPOA areas. But it also highlights several new priorities and emerging issues, such as HIV/AIDS, information and communication technologies, culture, trade, security.

In March 2005, an Intersectoral Information Meeting for Permanent Delegates and Observers provided an occasion within UNESCO to exchange views on the Mauritius International Meeting and its immediate follow-up. Among the points raised was that small islands, because of their scale and diversity, represent rapid-response-to-change examples that may be instructive for larger, continental countries. While SIDS form a geopolitical grouping, there is mutual value in linking with other island territories, as has been done in such initiatives as Youth Visioning for Island Living and Small Islands Voice. Moreover, activities in such fields as sustainable tourism and renewable energy are among the domains of special interest to small islands that are also of broader concern.

Subsequently, on 14 July, the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 59/311 on the follow-up to the International Meeting in Mauritius, including the role of the United Nations agencies in the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy.

In terms of future UNESCO action, a two-pronged approach is being followed: firstly, mainstreaming the needs of SIDS in all the Organization's activities; and secondly, stepping up the holistic, integrated approach to sustainable island living and development, through **intersectoral** action with an **intergenerational** perspective at the **interregional** level. Particular attention is being given to often marginalized dimensions such as culture, indigenous knowledge, youth and outer islands.

This booklet provides glimpses of the Organization's initial activities during 2005 in support of the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy, with particular emphasis on those carried out and supported by Field Offices.

Mauritius Strategy Chapters

- I Climate change and sea-level rise
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- XIII Trade: globalization and trade liberalization
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- XVI National and regional enabling environments
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- XIX Culture
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Involving young people in cultural heritage tourism in 'de heart uh' (central uplands) of Barbados – one of the YouthPATH projects in the Caribbean.

We have heard much about the special vulnerabilities of Small Island Developing States and the particular challenges that they face. At the same time, there is also need to stress the very special positive characteristics and strengths of small island nations and communities: their extraordinary capacity for adaptation and innovation; their proven determination and capability to overcome many adversities; their role as one of the world's front-line zones for addressing the challenges of sustainable development and sustainable living; and the recognized importance of maintaining solidarity among themselves while treasuring their diversity.

UNESCO Director-General Koichiro Matsuura, in his plenary address to the Mauritius International Meeting, 13 January 2005.

Nukunonu

New Georgia

Haiti

Aitutaki

Atafu

Pompei

Cyprus

Utwe

Singapore

Ambae

Praslin

San Andrés

Gan

Thulhadhoo

Eydhafushi

Gozo

Poverty alleviation

Among projects contributing to the Millennium Development Goals is YouthPATH (Youth Poverty Alleviation through Tourism and Heritage). The objective is to train young people to utilize innovative skills for sustainable employment in the area of heritage tourism, environmental conservation and preservation of heritage areas. Sites in six Caribbean island countries have been established, including villages settled by freed Africans rescued from ships engaged in illegal slave trading, historic sugar plantation buildings, and Amerindian villages with a nesting sea turtle beach.



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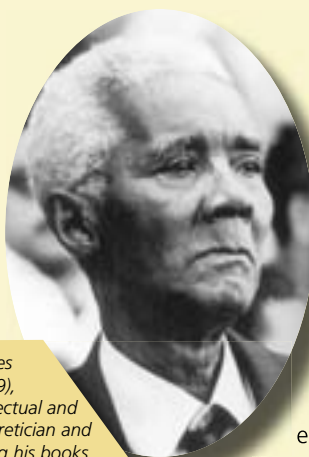
Communicating and informing

Access to and use of new information and communication technologies and the development of community multimedia centres are two actions in the Mauritius Strategy that are already reflected in the Organization's programmes and projects. High connectivity costs and distribution problems for print media are among the obstacles faced by small islands.

The International Programme for the Development of Communications plays a major role in media development. In 2005, 19 new media projects were approved for SIDS, totalling US\$497,000. Examples include media law reform in Cape Verde, support to Grenada Community Multimedia Centre in Grenada and upgrading the technical quality of the television documentary programme 'The Pacific Way'.

Addressing HIV/AIDS

In the Caribbean, the UNESCO Office in Kingston (Jamaica) is playing a leadership role in promoting a stronger response by the region's educational sector to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, in close partnership with the University of the West Indies and other regional institutions. As part of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, a web-based discussion and learning portal has been created by and for Caribbean young people. Representatives of youth organizations from eight Caribbean countries met in Trinidad & Tobago in April to design the site. A partnership agreement has been established with the German Technical Cooperation Agency to provide continuing support for the portal. Further information on education and HIV/AIDS is included in a quarterly report produced by the Kingston Office.

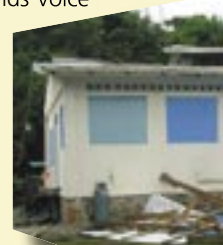


C.L.R. James (1901–1989), writer, intellectual and political theoretician and activist. Among his books, an influential historical study of the Haitian Revolution and a seminal work on the sport of cricket ('Beyond a Boundary').

Photo: National Library of Jamaica, from Volume 5 ('The Caribbean in the Twentieth Century', 2004) in the UNESCO General History of the Caribbean series.

Islanders voicing their concerns...

Among UNESCO's cross-cutting projects, Small Islands Voice provides the general public in islands with 'a space to speak'. Every two weeks, over 40,000 islanders and other people concerned with island affairs share their experiences about issues spanning environment, development, society, economy and culture via an on-line forum (hosted by Scotland On Line). Recent discussions have addressed community planning in a post-tsunami world, water supply and conservation, saving for the future, and alternatives to rising oil prices.



Roof of Small Islands Voice meeting venue, Bequia, blown away by Hurricane Emily on 14 July.

... and taking action

Beyond the inter-regional internet discussions, Small Islands Voice supports sustainable development activities at the local level through 'Communities in Action'. Partnerships are encouraged and activities promoted in fields ranging from community visioning and planning in Palau and San Andrés, to waste management in Dominica, Fiji, Maldives and Seychelles. Small Islands Voice supports islands in their efforts to implement the Mauritius Strategy. An inter-regional meeting was held in July in Bequia (St Vincent & the Grenadines) to further plan relevant activities.

... with youth often leading the way


Following the Youth Visioning for Island Living special event in Mauritius (9-13 January 2005), where 94 young islanders met to discuss their perspectives on sustainable development (with the support of the Lighthouse Foundation and other partners), young people in 37 small-island nations and territories are working to design and implement projects ranging from inter-generational exchange to strengthening local languages, and from environmental awareness to youth entrepreneurship.

Registering the Memory of the World

In June 2005, the 'Fondo José Martí Pérez' inscription from Cuba and the C.L.R. James Collection from Trinidad & Tobago were among the documentary collections added to UNESCO's Memory of the World Register, following recommendations made by an international advisory committee. The Memory of the World Programme and Register were established to preserve and raise awareness of documentary heritage, the memory of the world, which reflects the diversity of languages, peoples and cultures. The programme was born of the realization that this memory is fragile and that important documentary material is lost every day.



Culture



Worldwide, there is increasing recognition of the intrinsic importance of local culture underlying the whole development process. In respect to small islands, this was reflected in the convening of a UNESCO-facilitated plenary panel on the 'Role of Culture in the Sustainable Development of SIDS' at the Mauritius International Meeting.

In contributing to the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy, the Organization is drawing on the set of standard-setting instruments that it has developed: in promoting cultural pluralism and intercultural dialogue, the protection of the world's tangible and intangible cultural heritage, and the setting-up of cultural enterprises.

Small island countries are being encouraged to ratify the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (Mauritius, Seychelles and Dominica are among the Member States that have ratified). As part of this process, two regional meetings were held in February 2005, for the Pacific States and the Caribbean States. Also noteworthy is that the first two Proclamations of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity include Masterpieces in Cuba, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Tonga and Vanuatu.

Support is being given to the development of cultural policies, such as an ongoing project in Comoros, and museum partnerships are being developed among Indian Ocean island countries, through the UNESCO Office in Dar-es-Salaam (Tanzania).

The travelling exhibition 'Lest We Forget: The Triumph over Slavery' continues to be displayed in 2005, in Cape Verde, Mauritius, Jamaica and Barbados.

Preparatory assistance is being provided for the development of a potential transboundary site among Indian Ocean islands linked to the Slave Route. An educational resource kit on 'Our Pacific Heritage' has been designed to introduce World Heritage education into classroom teaching. During its 29th session in July, the World Heritage Committee approved a special programme for reinforcing World Heritage activities and projects in SIDS. As part of this initiative, a regional workshop in Port Vila (Vanuatu) in September examined serial and transboundary cultural heritage themes and sites in the Pacific.

Cultural industries (cinema, music, publishing, etc.) are being strengthened through the Global Alliance for Cultural Diversity, by promoting respect for intellectual property rights and encouraging public-private partnerships. 'Poverty reduction through job creation' projects are underway in Fiji and Trinidad & Tobago (in cooperation with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the International Labour Organization), with related projects in Cuba, Haiti and Jamaica.

On Island Cultures


We develop consumer postures because we have not recognized as productive the areas of our own creation. And so we still cannot recognize cultural industries as a viable alternative to failing traditional industries. Yet, our weakest citizens can create the strongest cultural products based on their identity and traditional knowledge systems that can compete anywhere globally. The smallest Jamaican or Caribbean child can compete against even Whitney Houston and equip him/herself well, because in culture we are definitely not 'third world'. We have even failed to recognize the 'informal' systems created by our people in their quest to survive and do not include them in the knowledge systems we inherit from abroad and enshrine in our education systems.

Sydney Bartley, Director of Culture in the Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture of Jamaica, during his presentation at the Plenary Panel on the 'Role of Culture in the Sustainable Development of SIDS' at the Mauritius International Meeting, 11 January 2005.



Traditional knowledge

Local and indigenous knowledge is an important part of many island cultures. Ongoing projects in the Pacific include the finalization of a CD-ROM and learning pack on exploring and sharing traditional navigational knowledge ('The Canoe is the People'), the development of a model law on community-held knowledge, and a pilot scheme to incorporate local knowledge in primary and secondary school curricula in Palau, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. Recent (2005) publications include a bilingual encyclopedia of the local knowledge of the coral reef and rainforest environments in the Marovo Lagoon in the Solomon Islands. Among newly launched projects is that on women's knowledge of medicinal plants and traditional medicine in Mauritius, Réunion, Rodrigues and other Indian Ocean islands. This work is pioneered through the cross-cutting project on Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems.



Book cover of
Knowledges of Nature 1.

Responding to the Indian Ocean tsunami

In the mid-1960s, UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) was centrally involved in the setting-up of the International Tsunami Information Center, located in Hawaii, with a view to improving tsunami preparedness for all Pacific Ocean nations. Experience gained in the Pacific has helped shape the plans for a somewhat similar mechanism for the Indian Ocean, after the catastrophic impacts of the tsunami that occurred on 26 December 2004.

Following informal and formal discussions in 2005 among countries of the region, regional and international organizations and other partners, the Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System was formally initiated in June with the establishment of an Intergovernmental Coordination Group by the 23rd IOC Assembly. In August, the technical and scientific requirements were discussed at the Group's first meeting, held in Perth (Australia). There, technical plans were assessed for such aspects as the collection and exchange of seismic data, measurements of sea level and deep-sea pressure, tsunami modelling and prediction, scenario development, warnings and alerts, technology transfer and sustainability. The Coordination Group will further examine the national capacity of Indian Ocean countries to deal with tsunamis at its second meeting in Hyderabad (India) in December. The System, which is expected to be fully operational by July 2006, will consist of a coordinated network of national systems, whose assets will be owned and operated by the Member States hosting or otherwise taking responsibility for them.



Tsunami detection instrumentation.

At a broader geographic scale, the 23rd IOC Assembly adopted resolutions for establishing somewhat analogous warning systems for tsunamis and other coastal hazards for the Caribbean and adjacent regions as well as the North-Eastern Atlantic, the Mediterranean and connected seas.

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Freshwater resources

UNESCO's contribution to the development of integrated approaches for sound water management in SIDS is primarily through the International Hydrological Programme, with particular emphasis on field research and training operations. In the Pacific, in close partnership with regional bodies and donor agencies, activities through the UNESCO Office in Apia (Samoa) are focused on engaging local and indigenous communities in water resources management and monitoring partnerships and on contributing to a three-year regional training programme for water resource managers. Information on progress and plans is given in a periodic newsletter ('Pacific Partnership Initiative on Sustainable Water Management') produced by the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC). For instance, the August 2005 issue reports on a three-week training course for hydrological technicians from 13 Pacific island countries held in Fiji in April, on surface and groundwater hydrology. The Third Inter-American Dialogue on Integrated Water Management will take place in Montego Bay (Jamaica) in October, with UNESCO inputs channelled through the Office in Montevideo (Uruguay).

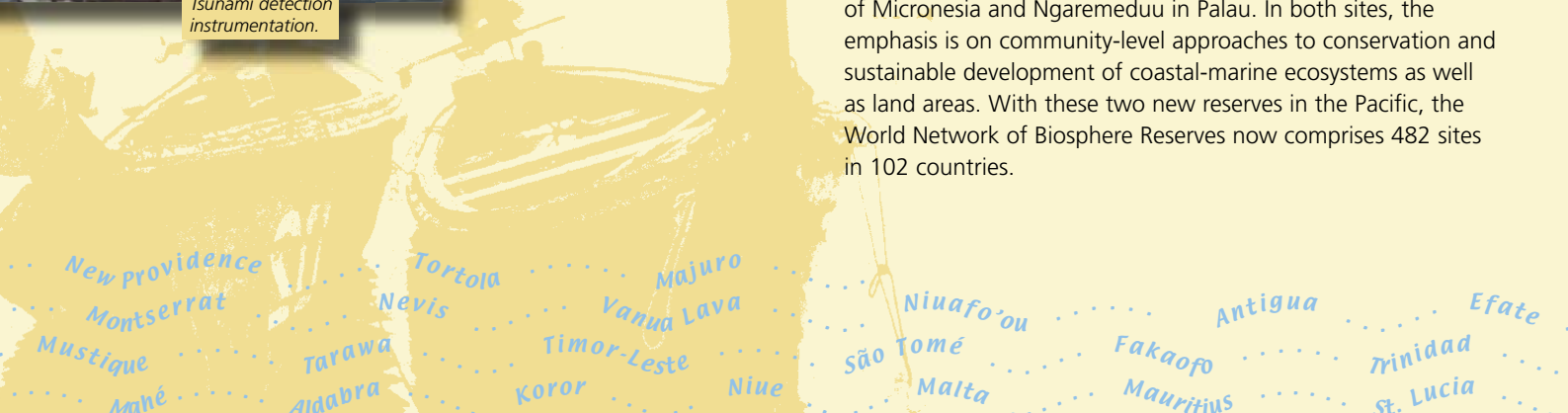


Measuring water quality within the Sandwatch project.

© Gillian Cambers, UNESCO-SIV

Biodiversity resources

The first two biosphere reserves in Pacific island countries were approved in June 2005 by the Bureau of the Man and the Biosphere Programme: Utwe in the Federated States of Micronesia and Ngaremeduu in Palau. In both sites, the emphasis is on community-level approaches to conservation and sustainable development of coastal-marine ecosystems as well as land areas. With these two new reserves in the Pacific, the World Network of Biosphere Reserves now comprises 482 sites in 102 countries.



Building capacities

SIDS have a special role in the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, as outlined in one of a series of information briefs. This role includes the contribution that SIDS can make to the global community in demonstrating sustainable island living – ways of living in a manner consistent with the notion of sustainability. An Education for Sustainable Development strategy has been elaborated for the Asia-Pacific region, with a situational analysis for 15 Pacific SIDS, released by the UNESCO Office in Bangkok (Thailand) in June. A consultation and conference for the Caribbean region will take place in October, organized by the Kingston Office along with other partners.

Other contributions to building capacities in SIDS regions include initiatives such as Education for All, cooperation with the recently launched SIDS University Consortium, and the Associated Schools Project Network (ASPNet) and its Slave Trade Education, Sandwatch and 'All Equal in Diversity' projects. Sandwatch is an ASPNet/Small Islands Voice initiative that was started some years ago in the Caribbean region. It encourages school students in the islands, with the help of teachers and local communities, to critically evaluate the problems and conflicts facing their beach environments and to develop sustainable approaches to address these issues. With a strong field measuring and monitoring component, Sandwatch aims to 'make science live', yet remains interdisciplinary with applications ranging from biology to woodwork and from poetry to mathematics. 'Introduction to Sandwatch: an educational tool for sustainable development' was published in September.

A programme for building capacities for statistics collection and reporting in the Pacific region has been launched by the UNESCO Institute of Statistics. The work of the Organization's Educational Institutes and Centres includes intensive group training, such as that in St Lucia in September on the reform and governance of technical and vocational education and training, under the aegis of the International Institute for Educational Planning.

Participation Programme

UNESCO's Participation Programme provides direct assistance (including for emergencies) to initiatives undertaken by Member States and Associate Members, in line with priorities determined by the countries themselves. Though the levels of funds for individual projects are modest in international terms, they prove important and useful in small countries. During the 2004-2005 biennium, over US\$3.7 million has been made available to more than 200 projects in SIDS. As an ensemble, Participation Programme projects touch on many topics addressed in the SIDS Programme of Action. It can be expected that many future proposals from small island countries within the Participation Programme will relate to actions in support of the Mauritius Strategy.

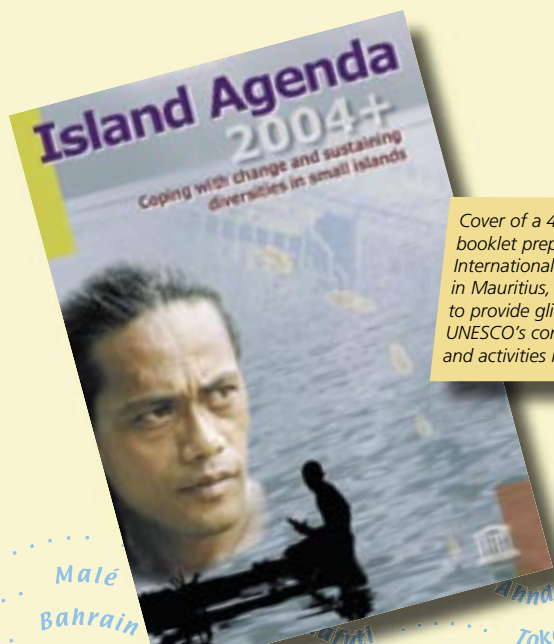
SAMPLING OF PROJECTS UNDERWAY IN SIDS IN 2005

- Aruba.** 'Buki di Referencia' series of reference books for children
- Bahamas.** Exhibitions at Pompey Museum of Slavery and Emancipation
- Bahrain.** Teaching and training policies in commercial education
- Barbados.** Training in the monitoring and management of coral reefs
- British Virgin Islands.** Education in law certification
- Cape Verde.** Digitizing radio transmission
- Comoros.** Travelling heritage exhibit
- Cook Islands.** Oral heritage preservation project
- Cuba.** Creation of multi-media unit for applying new information technologies
- Cyprus.** Establishment and operation of Open University
- Dominica.** Youth mobilization in disaster management and water security
- Dominican Republic.** Interactive game on Planet Earth for children's museum
- East Timor.** Training programme in radio documentary production
- Fiji.** Capacity building for science teachers
- Grenada.** Development of Duquesne beach and surrounding heritage sites
- Haiti.** Emergency assistance for educational infrastructures after flooding
- Jamaica.** Skills training for high-school drop-outs and slow learners
- Malta.** Roman Domus conservation project
- Marshall Islands.** Vocational skills training for at-risk youth
- Mauritius.** Foundation course for trade certification
- Micronesia (Federated States of).** Publication of 'Mehj, Mehj: The Mwoakilloa Book'
- Netherlands Antilles.** Social skills and personal development for teenagers
- Niue.** Enhancement of culture and language resources
- Palau.** Establishing the Palau Herbarium
- Papua New Guinea.** South Simbu community radio station
- Samoa.** Bilingual books for Samoan schools
- Seychelles.** Emergency assistance for reconstruction work at Mahé
- Solomon Islands.** Language revitalization project
- St Kitts & Nevis.** Fostering responsible citizenship among children
- St Lucia.** Training workshop for Caribbean documentalists
- St Vincent & the Grenadines.** Promoting life-long learning
- Tokelau.** Feasibility study on internet connectivity and distance education
- Tonga.** Natural disaster preparedness for primary school children
- Trinidad & Tobago.** Assessment of watershed aquifer systems
- Tuvalu.** Development of cultural policy
- Vanuatu.** Documentation of indigenous languages.

Front-cover:

Portrait of Cuban poet and liberator José Martí Pérez (1853-1895), whose legacy of writings and papers was added to the Memory of the World Register in June 2005.

Canoe silhouette, Vanuatu. © Francis Hickey.



Cover of a 48-page booklet prepared for the International Meeting in Mauritius, designed to provide glimpses of UNESCO's concerns and activities in SIDS.

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