

# Republic of the Marshall Islands



**Location:** Central Pacific Ocean between 4 degrees and 14 degrees North and 160 degrees and 173 degrees East.

**Geography:** 1,225 atolls and islands with total land area 181 km<sup>2</sup>, total sea area approximately 1.94 million km<sup>2</sup>.

**Population:** 1999 50,840, 68% in the urban centres of Majuro and Kwajalein. Annual rate of population growth 1.5% (1988-99). Male life expectancy 65.7, female 69.4. 43% of the population is aged under 14 years and 64% below 25 years.

**Government:** bi-cameral legislature, President of the Cabinet, the judiciary and the public service. Two legislative bodies are the Council of the *Iroij* (the Upper House, 12 members) and the *Nitijela* (the Lower House, 33 members).

**Culture and Social Structure:** matrilineal society where family ties, extended system of family and mutual reciprocity are very strong.

**Economy:** currency is US dollar. Public and private investment is low, with the latter improving. Heavily dependent on funds from US, ADB and other bilateral assistance. 2001 GDP (provisional) estimated at USD ('000) 99,173.8, an increase of 0.2% from 2000 with GDP at USD 1,817 per capita. Balance of trade in 2000 USD ('000) -45,600. Annual rate of inflation for 2003 2.5% (average of quarters). Unemployment 1999 30.9%.

## Introduction

In-country MDG activities in the Marshall Islands began with an awareness raising workshop for Government and Civil Service Organisations (CSOs) in late May 2004. At the conclusion of the workshop it was decided to convene a national MDG Working Group which would meet before the end of June and no less than twice a year after that with representatives from key government agencies and the national umbrella CSO. The secretariat for the Working Group is to be provided by the Economic Policy, Planning and Statistics Office (EPPSO) where it is anticipated that there will be a staff member responsible for MDG monitoring as well as the human development report (the position is funded by UNDP). The EPPSO has a serious staff shortage and associated HRD weaknesses which should be addressed by filling this position as well as three others which the Government has committed to create.

EPPSO plan to integrate MDG data collection and target monitoring with the quarterly reporting requirements to the US Government under the Compact of Free Association reporting. It is anticipated that the annual 'Compact' report will form the vehicle for wider dissemination of MDG related information and form the basis for public awareness and advocacy campaigns.

## National context

National Vision:

“to become a country within an inter-dependent world, with an enhanced socio-economic self-reliance, an educated, healthy, productive, law-abiding and God-loving people in which individual freedom and fundamental human rights are protected and culture and traditions are respected and development and environmental sustainability are in harmony”

*Vision 2018, The Strategic Development Plan Framework 2003-2018, SEDP Project Office, Ministry of Finance, Government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, p 2*

“Nation building requires visioning, patience, understanding and perseverance. The process takes time especially since we need to change our attitudes. Our beloved country has lived through immense experience and transition from structures that evolved during our pre-colonial and colonial times, and up to now, we are still experience the aftermath of post-colonial evolving relationships and balances of power and wealth.”

*IBID, p 2*

“The remoteness, strategic location and extraordinary colonial history of the RMI – four different colonial regimes and the Pacific War in five generations – have powerfully shaped its social and economic condition. In the last 40 years, financial inflows arising from civilian injuries from US nuclear testing and the continued military importance of the Kwajalein base have given the RMI a uniquely dependent psychological and economic relationship with the US. This is characterized by relatively high personal incomes, diminished community self-reliance and accountability of traditional leaders, an inefficient public sector, weak fiscal management, and low domestic and external regard for the RMI’s financial and economic governance.”

*Marshall Islands Meto2000 Economic Report and Statement of Development Strategies, Asian Development Bank 2001 page xiv*

## **Development strategies relevant to the MDGs**

### **Meto2000**

Equitable Distribution: eliminate deprivation and poverty in the Marshall Islands. Strategies:

- mobilize anti-poverty forces
- community action on deprivation
- outer islands development programme
- redistribute the burden of taxation

Improved public health. Strategies:

- Self-awareness
- Improve onshore treatment facilities
- Align health funding with strategic priorities

International competitiveness

- Raise awareness of the need and the scope for being internationally competitive
- Drive down input costs to competitive levels
- Raise education standards
- Optimize the use of training resources

Environmental sustainability

- Revival of EPA
- Implementation of NEMS
- Policy integration
- Remedial measures

*From Marshall Islands Meto2000 Economic Report and Statement of Development Strategies, Asian Development Bank 2001, pp153-155*

### **Vision 2018 pp 31-35**

Goal 2 Enhanced socio-economic reliance ... Food security: to attain food security for all people at all times and to substitute imports to the best extent possible and develop exports. Infrastructure: Having developed a level of infrastructure services that is operated smoothly, and maintained regularly, that adequately services

the needs of sustainable development and enhancement of self-reliance with minimum adverse impact on the environment

Goal 3 An educated people. Establishing a knowledge-based economy by equipping Marshallese citizens with internationally competitive skills, qualities and positive attitudes to work and society.

Goal 4 A healthy people. Build capacity for each community, family and individual to care for their own health through quality primary health care program and to provide high quality, effective, affordable and efficient health services to Marshallese.

Goal 5 A productive people. Enabling Marshallese within their capacity and capability to develop a sense of purpose, take initiative, participate and contribute in the sustainable development of our nation.

Goal 10 Environmental sustainability. Developing a regulatory system that can be enforced with a high degree of compliance at all levels, in order to achieve the sustainable development of our national resources, while protecting our environment from many adverse impacts. Strengthening the relevant institutions and improve procedural mechanisms, so as to be able to secure the optimum support from both international and regional efforts, in minimizing the adverse impact of Climate Change.

**Environment Protection Authority** Strategic Plan 2004-2007 has seven strategic programme areas:

**Environmental Health and Water Quality:** improved health of the community through increased access to safe drinking water and safe food; a clean marine environment safe for humans and marine life

**Coastal and Land Conservation and Management:** to conserve the environmental value of the Coastal Zones of the Marshall Islands by minimizing environmental degradation; to regulate and control development activities in order to balance social and economic development with environmental conservation; and to facilitate better decision-making and policy development.

**Biodiversity:** to conserve, and ensure sustainable use and equitable benefits from the biodiversity of the Marshall Islands; conserve biodiversity- endemic or indigenous; prevent to loss of species through overexploitation or impact of developments or accidents

**Waste and Pollutants:** a reduction in environmental impact from waste and pollutants; and the community is aware of, and takes responsibility for waste and pollutants.

**Education and Awareness:** a community that takes responsibility and works together in actively caring for the environment and public health issues; EPA has credibility and respect in the community.

**Information Management:** To enable the EPA to develop policy and make informed decisions due to improved information management.

**Planning and Human Resource Management:** the EPA staff is focused on achieving the goals of the organization; the EPA is an effective and proactive organization; the EPA is an employer of choice due to the high motivation and job satisfaction of staff; the EPA regularly achieves its objectives.

## ***Progress***

### **Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger**

- The challenge is to develop a national indicator for deprivation or poverty which is accepted by the whole community.

**Target 1:** Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day

1. Proportion of population below \$1 (PPP) per day 1999: 20% (1999 ADB MDG Goals in the Pacific)
2. Poverty gap ratio (PGR) [incidence x depth of poverty]
3. Share of poorest quintile (20%) in national consumption 1999: 1.59% 2002: 3.32% (2002 HIES sample data only)
  - The share of the poorest quintile in national consumption in the Marshall Islands is increasing, an encouraging trend.

**Target 2:** Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger

4. Prevalence of underweight children under-five years of age 1991: 19% 1999: 27%
  - The Marshall Islands is not on track to achieve the target. Major challenges are increasing levels of fertility, particularly for younger women
5. Proportion of population below minimum level of dietary energy consumption

### **Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education**

- The challenge is to ensure that children on all islands and atolls have access to quality education at all levels.

**Target 3:** Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling

6. Net enrolment ratio in primary education 1988: 89.69% 1999: 84.14%
  - While in the Marshall Islands enrolment rates in primary education are high, there is a concerning trend for children not to attend primary school (based on Census results)
7. Proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach grade 5 1988-99: 94% (a 'cohort' analysis approach)
  - While in the Marshall Islands rates for attending primary school are high there are concerns that fewer children are completing the basic level of education
8. Literacy rate of 15-24 year-olds
  - While there have been questions on literacy in the population and housing censuses; there are concerns about the quality and the information is not considered accurate enough to include here

### **Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women**

- The challenge is to integrate gender issues across all sectors and involve women in the development process.

**Target 4:** Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005 and to all levels of education no later than 2015

9. Ratios of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education
 

Ratio of girls to boys in primary school 1988: 0.85 02-03: 0.83

  - There are slightly more boys enrolled in primary school than girls, however this is because there are more boys than girls of school age

Ratio of girls to boys in secondary school 1988: 0.91 2002-03: 1.04

  - The ratio of girls to boys in secondary school is high and improving

Ratio of girls to boys in tertiary education 2002-03: 0.91
10. Ratio of literate females to males of 15-24 year-olds
  - While there have been questions on literacy in the population and housing censuses; there are concerns about the quality and the information is not considered accurate enough to include here

11. Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector 1988 33.53% 1999: 35.95%

- In an economy characterized by a 'dominant' public sector, with a small but growing private sector, there is an increasing trend for women employed in the formal sector to be employed in sectors outside agriculture

12. Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament 1983 0.03 2003 0.03

- There are 33 seats in the Marshall Islands senate, and of those one woman has held a seat, although women are better represented in local government

#### **Goal 4: Reduce child mortality**

- The challenge is to increase planned parenting including birth timing, birth spacing and completion of child bearing through effective public health.

**Target 5:** Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate

13. Under-five mortality rate (CMR) 1988: 93 1999: 48

- When Census data is used there is a clear trend that the CMR is decreasing well within the MDG target, however when Ministry of Health data the trend is less apparent, implying a data quality problem, but the decreasing trend is the same

14. Infant mortality rate (IMR) 1988: 63 2002: 29

- When Census data is used there is a clear trend that the IMR is decreasing within the MDG target, however when Ministry of Health data the trend is less apparent, implying a data quality problem, but the decreasing trend is the same.

15. Proportion of 1 year-old children immunized against measles, percent 1998: 70% 2001: 80%

- Immunization rates are improving, with a dedicated effort in primary health care from the Ministry of Health, with their target to increase the immunization rate to 90% by 2015

#### **Goal 5: Improve maternal health**

- The challenge is to increase planned parenting including birth timing, birth spacing and completion of child bearing through effective public health.

**Target 6:** Reduce by three-quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio

16. Maternal mortality ratio per 100,000 live births 1991: 0 2002: 73.80

- One maternal death in 2002 had a dramatic effect on the maternal mortality ratio. Most births in the Marshall Islands occur in hospitals, health clinics or in homes with skilled nurses in attendance,

17. Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel

#### **Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases**

- The challenge is to control the incidence of TB, leprosy and other diseases such as cholera and influenza through effective public and curative health.

**Target 7:** Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS

18. HIV prevalence among 15-24 year old pregnant women

19. Condom use rate of the contraceptive prevalence rate 1996: 25% 2001: 37% (ADB MDG Goals in the Pacific)

- In a culture where family planning is relatively unpracticed, there is an increasing trend for condoms to be used in sexual unions

20. Number of children orphaned by HIV/AIDS

**Target 8:** Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases

21. Prevalence and death rates associated with malaria

- Malaria is not prevalent in the Marshall Islands

22. Proportion of population in malaria risk areas using effective malaria prevention and treatment measures

23. Prevalence and death rates associated with tuberculosis (**MoH to confirm**)

TB incidence rate per 100,000 population 1992: 120.9 2001: 133.7 (2001: 91 WHO)

- There is a trend for the incidence of tuberculosis to be increasing in the Marshall Islands

TB death rate per 100,000 population 1998: 675 2001: 808

- There is a trend for the death rate from tuberculosis to be increasing in the Marshall Islands, with 34 more deaths in 2001 compared with 1998

24. Proportion of tuberculosis cases detected and cured under directly observed treatment short course (DOTS) (**MoH to confirm**)

Tuberculosis, DOTS detection rate, per cent total population 1998: 52% 2002: 100%

Tuberculosis, DOTS treatment success, per cent total population 1988: 83% 2002: 86%

- With DOTS introduced into the Marshall Islands in **1998**, progress in detection and treatment rates is yet to be seen

### **Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability**

- The challenge is to conserve and manage the marine and land environments of the Marshall Islands.

**Target 9:** Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources

25. Proportion of land area covered by forest 1991: 60.00%

- The Marshall islands has approximately 2,000 acres of coconut palm 'forests'

26. Ratio of area protected to maintain biological diversity to surface area

27. Energy use (kg oil equivalent) per \$1 GDP (PPP)

28. Carbon dioxide emissions (per capita) and consumption of ozone-depleting CFCs (ODP tons)

29. Proportion of households using solid fuels 1988: 13.81% 1999: 29.87%

- From Census data there is a concerning trend for households to use solid fuels rather than other alternatives

**Target 10:** Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water

30. Proportion of households with sustainable access to an improved water source, urban and rural

Proportion of households with sustainable access to an improved water source, urban 1988: 96.73% 1999: 88.89%

Proportion of households with sustainable access to an improved water source, rural 1988: 84.81% 1999: 77.72%

- Although most households in rural and urban areas have access to improved water sources, there is a trend for this to be decreasing. Concerns in the Marshall islands about the quality of water with 70% of the catchments (tanks) tested in 1999 being contaminated

**Target 11** By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers

31. Proportion of urban households with access to improved sanitation 1988: 79.42% 1999: 96.22%

- Considerable progress has been made in improving sanitation facilities in the Marshall Islands (type of toilet facility used here)

32. Proportion of households with access to secure tenure (owned or rented) 1988: 1999: 96.23%

- Secure tenure is not an issue in the Marshall Islands

### **Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development**

- The challenge is to develop a sound macro economic framework to decrease dependence on international support and increase self reliance and productivity.

**Target 12** Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system.

33. Net ODA, total and to LDCs, as percentage of OECD/DAC donors' gross national income

34. Proportion of total bilateral, sector-allocable ODA of OECD/DAC donors to basic social services

**Target 13** Address the special needs of the least developed countries

35. Proportion of bilateral ODA of OECD/DAC donors that is untied

38. Proportion of total developed country imports (by value and excluding arms) from developing countries and LDCs, admitted free of duties

39. Average tariffs imposed by developed countries on agricultural products and textiles and clothing from developing countries

41. Proportion of ODA provided to help build trade capacity

**Target 14** Address the special needs of small island developing States

37. ODA received in small island developing States as proportion of their GNIs 1993: 36.16

**Target 15** Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries

44. Debt service as a percentage of exports of goods and services

**Target 16** In co-operation with developing countries, develop and implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth

45. Unemployment rate of 15-24 year-olds, each sex and total

Unemployment rate of 15-24 year-olds, female 1988 3: 1.62 1999: 67.01

Unemployment rate of 15-24 year-olds, male 1988: 27.53 1999: 59.81

Unemployment rate of 15-24 year-olds, total 1988: 28.72 1999: 62.64

- The Marshall Islands statistics on unemployment, from the population census, depict a high rate compared with other PICs because subsistence activities not included in labour force. There is a high proportion of youth who are not working for 'pay or profit' who are looking for such employment.

**Target 17:** In co-operation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable, essential drugs in developing countries

46. Proportion of population with access to affordable essential drugs on a sustainable basis

**Target 18:** In co-operation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications

47. Telephone lines and cellular subscribers per 100 population

Telephone lines per 100 population 1995: 6.08 2001: 6.80

Cellular telephone subscribers per 100 population 1998: 0.70 2001: 1.00

- It is difficult to assess access to communications given that the information has only recently been collected, however it seems that the number of telephone lines per 100 population has increased from 6 to 7 over the six years 1995 – 2001. **What is the RMI telephone network?**

48. Personal computers in use per 100 population and Internet users per 100 population

Personal computers in use per 100 population 2002: 2.05

Internet users per 100 population 1998: 0.53 2001: 0.86

- Once again the innovations of this technology make it difficult to make comparisons over time, but internet users are increasing. **Who in the RMI has internet access – which outer islands?**