

# **REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS**

## **EDUCATION FOR ALL**

### **National Action Plan 2002 – 2005**

**Working Draft**



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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The Republic of the Marshall Islands' Education For All National Action Plan was produced, initially by the former EFA Coordinator, Mr. Kanchi Hosia, and revised and edited by the current EFA Coordinator, Ms. Emi Chutaro, under the leadership of the Ministry of Education.

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## **FORWARD**

After the Education for All Declaration at the World Conference for All in 1990, the development of the National Action Plans began.

The Education for All Action Plan compliments the Marshall Islands Education Strategic Plan 2000 already established. There are similarities in both plans but the common goal of providing quality education to all people in the Marshall Islands is most important.

Education for All provides a wider scope for the Marshall Islands to include Civil Society which encompasses everyone outside the Public Service.

The Strategy for the Education for All Action Plan highlights the area most needed developments and resources. It assists to bring out the aspects of education as they truly are. Critical assessment of needs in terms of teacher development, education management and provision of education for all children and adults in the Marshall Islands require immediate attention.

This National Education for All Action Plan is the outcome of collective discussion and deliberation of various sectors with the Government and the non-Government community. It outlines the current situation of Education in the Marshall Islands under each Priority Goal. The recommendations and proposals provided represent the collective wishes and aspirations of the Government and Civil Society.

The contribution of all stakeholders is vital to the implementation progress of this Education for All Action Plan. The stakeholders must be fully aware that the successful implementation of this plan depends largely on their contribution.

This report was prepared by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with UNESCO Office on behalf of the Government of the Marshall Islands. I wish to acknowledge the tireless effort of the working group at the inception stage of this enormous task. Special acknowledgement is given to the other Government Ministries and Civil Society for their valuable time and effort. Your contribution made it possible to produce this report.

Kommol tata,

Wilfred I. Kendall  
Minister of Education

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

NB: To be completed at completion of final draft

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#### **List of Acronyms**

**ADB** = Asian Development Bank  
**ASP Net** = Associated Schools Project Network  
**EFA** = Education For All  
**EU** = European Union  
**FBEAP** = Forum Basic Education Action Plan  
**FRESH** = Focusing Resources on Effective School Health  
**MOE** = Ministry of Education  
**PPA** = Participatory Poverty Assessment  
**PRIDE** = Pacific Resource Initiatives for the Delivery of Basic Education  
**PSC** = Public Service Commission  
**RMI** = Republic of the Marshall Islands  
**SPR** = Strategies for Poverty Reduction  
**UNESCO** = United Nations Education, Social, and Cultural Organization

## **CHAPTER 1: THE CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND**

### **I. Education For All: The Global Context**

In response to the growing global education crisis in third-world countries, a global conference on world education outcomes and strategies for addressing the crisis was called. In 1990, the World Conference for Education For All (EFA) in Jomtien, Thailand was organized by the UN to address the global education crisis. A World Declaration on Education For All was drafted and approved, pledging a global commitment to achieve primary education for every child and a massive reduction in adult illiteracy by the year 2000. In addition, a Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs was approved that detailed targets and strategies for reaching these goals by the year 2000. A Consultative Forum on Education For All was created with a mandate that called for periodic review of progress towards these goals, including a major ten-year appraisal.

At the conclusion of the ten-year cycle, an Education For All 2000 Assessment was undertaken to evaluate global education outcomes and to highlight the gains and shortfalls in educational provision drafted by the Jomtien Conference. Its purpose was to pinpoint problem areas and to identify those stakeholders who had not been adequately targeted and/or reached. Its findings would serve as a base of comparison from which to formulate and implement more appropriate any future action. Results from the Assessment would help governments and other agencies determine to what extent objectives had been met towards achievement of the EFA goals. The findings would also serve to help governments identify and develop more effective strategies in meeting EFA goals and stated objectives and outputs.

The findings of the EFA 2000 Assessment determined that global expectations in achieving the Jomtien EFA goals were set too high. It was found that for all of the gains, the overall goal of achieving universal basic education by the year 2000 had not been met. Despite overall increase in primary enrollment in most of the countries, some 113 million children were still out of school, gender disparities in education attainment were still not resolved, and nearly a billion adults were still illiterate (UNESCO, 2001). The major limiting factors to achieving EFA goals were the lack of qualified teachers and availability of learning resources. The disparities in quality ensured that

EFA goals were not being universally met. In addition, the state of the various education systems had not been fully examined as potential risk factors. During the assessment, it was seen that most of the schools targeted were “over-conservative” and “out of touch with young people’s needs” (UNESCO, 2001:2), compounding the difficulties in achieving universal goals.

However, one of the major limiting factors in achieving the Jomtien EFA goals was due the lack of donor and country commitment to earmark a percent of their GNPs for education purposes. Though some countries were allocating nearly 6% of their GNPs to education, a majority of the countries allocated more funds towards debt relief strategies. In addition, global donor aid from the DAC member countries had fallen from 28 to 23 percent from 1987-1997, reflecting the overall global trend in the decline of foreign/development aid. As such, the UN target of 0.7 percent of GNP for aid allocation was not followed through, resulting in a decline in overall aid outputs for developing countries (UNDESA, Preliminary Report to the Division of Social Policy and Development).

The Dakar Framework For Action, adopted at the close of the World Education Forum held in Dakar, 26 - 28 April, 2000 was largely based on and motivated by these findings of the 2000 Assessment. A significant reduction of the global education crisis still had yet to be accomplished. As such, the Dakar Framework re-affirmed the vision set out in the World Declaration on Education For All in Jomtien. It expressed the international community's collective commitment to follow a broad-based strategy ensuring that the basic learning needs of every child. It emphasized that governments still have an obligation to ensure that EFA goals and targets are achieved and are sustainable through a concerted effort to allocate sufficient funds towards the achievement of EFA goals; and for international donors to continue to meet the target goal of 0.7 percent of GNP towards development aid. The Dakar Framework urged governments to establish broad-based partnerships with civil society to give the ensuing national action plans the strongest political and community support possible. In addition, it urged “governments to link debt relief and anti-poverty strategies and to ensure that overall national fiscal targets reflect requirements for achieving the 2015 goals for basic education” (ibid.:8). Lastly, it underlined the need for international donors to follow through on specific and clearly defined resource commitments.



The underlying belief of EFA was and continues to be that education is a fundamental human right and the basic learning needs of all can and must be met when appropriate measures are initiated, developed, and implemented; and when stated commitments are acted upon.

## **II. Education For All Goals 2000-2015: The Dakar Framework For Action**

Drawing upon the lessons learned from the successes and failures of the objectives of the Jomtien Conference in 1990, the Dakar World Education Forum in 2000 was more reserved in its global benchmarks for the achievement of education outcomes and development of indicators by 2015. The Dakar Forum re-affirmed the basic tenants of the Jomtien Conference in 1990, but with some vital alterations to the overall goals and strategies for achieving global education benchmarks and outcomes. Six priority areas were identified as necessary actions which would ensure greater achievement of education for all outcomes. The six priority areas are the following:

1. Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.
2. Ensuring that by 2015 all children, with special emphasis on girls and children in difficult circumstances have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality
3. Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning, life skills and citizenship programs.
4. Achieving a 50 % improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.
5. Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.
6. Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all, so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

These six priority areas are to be achieved through the following general strategies:

1. Mobilization of national and international political commitment for EFA through the development of national action plans and enhancement of investments into basic education
2. Promotion of EFA policies within sustainable and well-integrated sector framework clearly linked to poverty elimination and development strategies
3. Ensuring engagement and participation of civil society in formulation, implementation, and monitoring of strategies for education development
4. Developing responsive, participatory, and accountable systems of education, governance, and management
5. Meeting educational needs during conflicts and crisis
6. Implementing integrated strategies for gender equality in education and recognizing the need for change in attitudes, values, and practices
7. Implementing HIV/AIDS prevention and education programs
8. Creating safe, healthy, inclusive, and equitably-resourced education environments conducive to excellence in learning with clearly defined levels of achievement
9. Enhancing status, morale, and professionalism of teachers
10. Harnessing of new information and communication technologies to achieve EFA goals
11. Systematic monitoring of the progress of EFA goals
12. Building of existing mechanisms to accelerate the progress of EFA

In addition, the Dakar Forum called for budget prioritization of EFA goals through:

1. Increasing external financing for education, especially basic education
2. Ensuring greater predictability in the flow of external assistance
3. Facilitating more effective donor coordinating
4. Strengthening sector-wide approaches
5. Providing earlier, more extensive and broader debt relief and/or debt cancellation for poverty reduction, with strong commitment to basic education
6. Understanding more effective and regular monitoring of progress towards EFA goals and targets with periodic assessment

From this framework, it was hoped that various countries will be able to effectively achieve relevant and appropriate national goals and strategies to achieve education for all. The

framework is deliberately general and broad-based to ensure ownership by each country and its associated partners to formulate their own specific strategies and policy frameworks within which to achieve national and global EFA goals.

### **III. Millennium Development Goals**

Poverty of opportunity has been identified as the main characteristic of poverty within the Pacific region. Absolute poverty, in its formal definition, is not widely seen. Here, poverty of opportunity relates two key perspectives: 1) inadequate levels of physical, economic, and social development which equates to a lack of available opportunities for people to actively participate in and contribute to the overall development of their communities and countries, and 2) lack of educational training and skill-building opportunities that will ensure that individuals and communities have the capacity to participate and to contribute to the development of the communities in the first place.

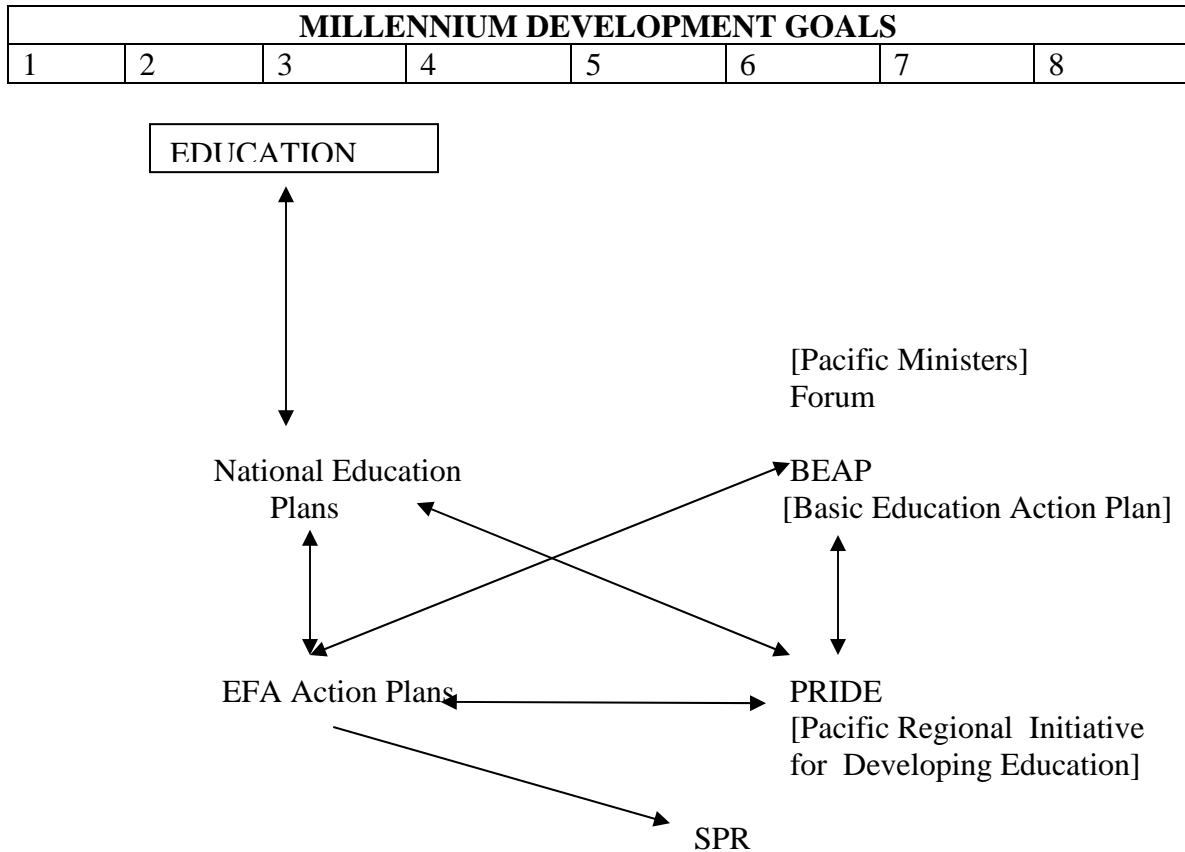
Due to these two factors, Pacific Islanders find themselves unable to actively participate in the development processes of their nations and communities. As such, many Pacific Islanders find themselves isolated from opportunities that would enhance their capacities to improve their quality of life.

It is within this context that Strategies for Poverty Reduction, as set and defined within the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) framework, that the EFA Action Plans for the Pacific can be firmly integrated into. The global EFA goals call for prioritizing of areas within the educational field aimed specifically at increasing peoples' and countries' capacities to tackle the issue of poverty of opportunity; both in terms of initiating development strategies as well as sustaining them.

Within the context of the Dakar Framework for Action, there is one contribution toward Strategies of Poverty Reduction (SPR) in the Pacific where poverty of opportunity is a key concern. The Pacific Education Ministers met in 2001 and developed the Forum Basic Education Plan, which reaffirms the region's commitment to the six EFA goals. The vision of the Action Plan is the following:

*“Basic Education as the fundamental building block for society should engender the broader life skills that lead to social cohesion and provide the foundations for vocational callings, higher education and life long learning.”*

**Figure 1: Pacific Education Plans & Millennium Development Goals**



## **CHAPTER 2: REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS**

### **I. Country Profile**

**Figure 2: Map of the Marshall Islands**



### **A. Brief History**

The Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) consists of 29 atolls and 5 low islands, with a total area of only 180 square kilometers. This is scattered over 2 million square kilometers of ocean in the Central Pacific, midway between Hawaii and the Philippines.

The region has a long history of occupation and control by foreign powers. Spain claimed the region in 1686. Germany declared a protectorate over the islands in 1885. Japan occupied the territory between the two world wars in the early twentieth century up until 1945, when the Americans defeated the Japanese Empire in the Pacific region. A UN mandate was approved which allowed the United States to govern and administer the region as part of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands from 1947. The country became an independent republic in 1986, separating itself from the rest of Micronesia.

However, the RMI still remains strongly connected to the United States through the Compacts of Free Association (1986-2001 and 2001-15). In these compacts, the US is responsible for the

military protection of the islands. In addition, the compact agreements allow for a strong American economic presence in the RMI. US currency is the national currency. Marshallese have access to many benefits US citizens enjoy, such as the US welfare system (when residing in the US), open immigration status, access to the US Supreme Court system, eligibility for US federal grants, loans, and scholarships, and many others. As such, Marshallese citizens have largely 'benefited' from their free access to the US in terms of access to new technologies and infrastructure development. Its association with the US has made investment from countries like the Republic of China (ROC) a more lucrative prospect; both in terms of political recognition in the Pacific region, as well as economic expansion into the Pacific Island economies.

The RMI has a unique aid relationship with the US. Kwajalein Atoll, the largest atoll in the world, is also the headquarters for the U.S. Army Kwajalein Atoll (USAKA) and is the primary site for the development of the U.S. Star Wars anti-missile system and testing program. A large portion of the US aid package has included the rental agreement of the atoll for this purpose. Politically, this has been an area of contention for the RMI government. The rental payments are paid directly to the displaced landowners of Kwajalein, and the money is not being disseminated for the benefit of the rest of the Marshalls. As such, the RMI has repeatedly argued that US aid packages are not reflective of true levels of aid due to their inclusion of Kwajalein rental payments as part of their aid calculations.

In addition, from 1946 to 1955, the US military conducted nuclear tests on Bikini and Enewetak Atolls. The largest, above-ground nuclear detonations in the world occurred on these atolls. During this period, an incident occurred which has largely shaped the profile of the relationship between the RMI and the US. In 1954, the US conducted the infamous Bravo test series on Bikini Atoll. The test obliterated forever, several islets within the atoll chain. However, during this time, the wind shifted and nuclear fallout fell on the inhabited islands of Utrik and Rongelap, resulting in significant health complications and deaths due to radiation poisoning. To this day, the people of these islands have the largest concentration of congenital deformities and cancer such as thyroid cancer and leukemia within the Pacific region. Furthermore, Bikini, Enewetak, Rongelap, and Utrik atolls will continue to be radioactively contaminated for thousands of years. Intensive clean-up activities have been funded by the US government to make the atolls habitable and safe, but the islands still remain contaminated. Radioactive cesium is still cycling into the food chains of all the atolls, ensuring that future Marshallese are unable to utilize the natural resources and produce of the atolls. As Marshallese identity is directly linked to land rights, the

loss of land essentially equates to a loss identity within the larger framework of Marshallese society; creating a section of Marshallese society within a very short time period that can longer function as it once did.

**Figure 3: Nuclear Detonation on Bikini Atoll, 1946**



Courtesy of the RMI Nuclear Studies Archives

As a result, several key characteristics of development within the Marshall Islands have occurred. First, a displaced society has been created within the social fabric of the islands who will forever be economically and socially dependent on aid to some degree. Second, a ‘victim mentality’ has been created within the overall social perception of the Marshallese people, which has generated a general attitude that the US is forever obligated to ‘care’ for the Marshallese. And third, this same attitude has translated to a growing dependency on other foreign aid sources, and a certain political ‘savvy’ at using the islands’ victim status as a means to gain international sympathy and support. Lastly, it has created a society whose global economic and political role is undermined by its continued dependence on US foreign aid, and therefore US influence on the overall development outlook of the RMI.

This is true to a smaller extent for other foreign aid that has been pouring into the RMI, whereby the RMI’s ability to interact and thrive within the global political and economic scene as a fully independent and sovereign nation is undermined by the foreign policy priorities of donor countries, often in contrast to the actual needs of the people of the Marshall Islands, and resulting

in the distorted/uneven development of the islands.<sup>1</sup> As such, social development indicators are poor despite the heavy influx of US and other foreign aid. For example, the rate of underweight children under the age of 5 is 17% (RMI Census, 1999), a significant percentage given that the level of infrastructural development in the RMI is higher than in most countries of the Pacific region.

This is also paradoxical considering the Marshall Islands has one of the highest rates of diabetes and heart problems in the Pacific due to over-nutrition or over-consumption of canned/processed goods. Overall crime rates have steadily increased over the past decade, particularly amongst the youth. 18 and 19 year-olds composed 41.3% of those who were arrested for crimes in 2001 on the island of Majuro alone; with females of this same age group composing 83% of all crimes committed by females (OPS, 2002). A vast majority of these crimes were related to alcohol use. Suicide rates have also skyrocketed in the past five years. This has been widely attributed to the break-up of family units due to the increasing level of social problems occurring in the urban centers, and the lack of employment and other opportunities for people to improve their standards of living. These types of indicators are thus true reflections of the extent to which positive social development in the RMI has not been fully realized.

Education, therefore plays a vital role in mitigating and alleviating the negative impacts of the distorted/uneven level of socio-economic development in the RMI. As such, the EFA framework will play a crucial and vital role in ensuring that overall social development moves in a more positive and appropriate direction for the young people of the Marshall Islands. Education will not only ensure that the RMI has a sound human resource base from which to further develop and sustain its overall development goals, but will also ensure the ability of Marshallese to adapt to the many changes that are affecting Marshallese society. Globalization and its accompanying urbanization is a reality that Marshallese society is as yet fully able to transition into.

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<sup>1</sup> Uneven and/or distorted development occurs when the level of inputs being put towards development initiatives does not bring about the expected outcomes. In some cases, social indicators like literacy, unemployment, educational attainment, etc. are shown to be falling behind international norms, and sometimes follow a negative trend despite an increase in inputs (i.e. financial assistance). Countries who are identified as having uneven and/or distorted development are often characterized as having the following generalized profiles: high level of corruption, poor fiscal accountability, lack of social safety nets, poor or lack of social indicators, low educational achievement, poor access to public services, high unemployment rates, low levels of industrial development, misallocation of and management of available resources, and high debt repayments in relation to GDP.



## **B. Government**

The RMI government legislature is modeled on the British parliamentary system with some unique differences. The *Nitijela* (parliament) is elected every 4 years. The *Nitijela* is divided into two main houses; the *Nitijela* and the Council of *Iroij* (chiefs). The *Nitijela* is the only legislative body with authority over the formulation and approval of all legislation. Its members are composed of elected senators, each representing the 29 atoll groups of the RMI. This body is responsible for the election of the president through majority vote. The President then appoints members of the *Nitijela* to sit on the Cabinet. These appointees will become ministers of the various ministries. These ministries constitute the following; Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Health and Environment, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Resources and Development, Ministry of Transportation and Communication, and the Ministry of Justice. Although the ministers of each of the ministries hold considerable political clout and are the final body of approval within each of the ministries, the secretaries of each of the ministries are ultimately the true authority in terms of the daily operation of the ministries, and are ultimately responsible for the formulation and implementation of all relevant policies within the ministries. Each minister is responsible for appointing a secretary at the start of each new term.

The Council of *Iroij* is a political body that has no legislative power. However, it plays a vital and influential role in Marshallese politics. The Council of *Iroij* is essentially a forum of debate and discussion on any rulings or policies that lie in the realm of traditional rights and policies. As the RMI is still strongly traditional in its political outlook, the overall influence of the Council of *Iroij* in swaying political decisions and policy formulation cannot be underplayed.

In terms of the public sector, the RMI government has gone through some significant structural adjustment, spear-headed by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and US. Most have been in terms of downsizing the civil service employment sector, reforming the budget proceedings of the government to that of performance-based budgeting, and some re-shifting of the organizational structure of some of the ministries. Since this is still on-going, the positive effects have as yet to be fully realized, though some progress has been made.

## **C. People**

## **1. Demographic Profile**

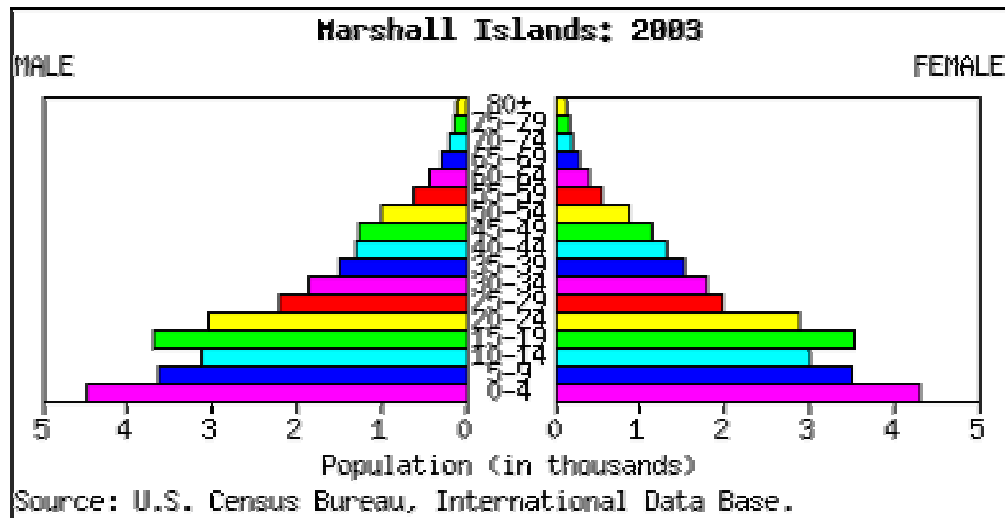
From the 1999 Census, the population of the Marshall Islands is 50,840. The annual rate of growth is estimated at 1.5%. Majuro Atoll, the capital, is the largest population center with 23,676 people, and Kwajalein Atoll (Ebeye Island) is the next largest with 10,902 people. For Majuro alone, the population density is 3,200 persons per square mile, primarily concentrated in the Darrit-Uliga-Delap (DUD) section of Majuro. On Ebeye, the population density is 66,750 per square mile (RMI Census, 1999). These two urban centers combined constitute 70% of the total population. The remainder of the population is spread over a large area in the rural outer islands. The geographic isolation of these outer islands has posed a significant barrier for the government to evenly implement development strategies. The issue of access is a key problem for all the outer islands in all respects; education, food and clothing supplies, electricity, running water, sanitation facilities, transportation etc. Out of all the 29 inhabited atolls, only four have a constant source of electricity.

Marshallese and English are the official languages. English, encouraged by early missionaries and further encouraged by the U.S. administration under the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (TTPI), is widely spoken and is the language of instruction from grade six. The Marshall Islands, culturally, is largely homogenous with ethnic Marshallese forming the bulk of those living in the islands. There is a slight dialect difference between the islands of the Ralik (Sunset) and Ratak (Sunrise) chains, but almost all Marshallese are fluent in both dialects.

The population profile of the RMI is young. From the 1999 RMI Census, the median age of the RMI population is 17.8 years. Those 15 years and under compose 55% of the population. The population pyramid for the Marshall Islands provides a good visualization of the structure of the population (See figure 4).

From this profile, it is not surprising then that social indicators are often an indication of the state of the RMI's young people rather than of its population as whole. This is true especially for indicators such as for unemployment, crime rates, suicide rates, malnutrition, low-birth-weight babies, and infant mortality rates (often related to those babies born to teenage mothers/parents), low and/or poor educational attainment, poor skill levels, etc. Furthermore, as education statistics will indicate later in this document, these statistics are often indications of the state of young people in the RMI who do not attend school.

**Figure 4: RMI Population Pyramid**



The socio-economic impact of this bottom-heavy population profile will have major implications on health, education, and employment service provision within the next couple of decades as this young population matures and will produce families of their own; requiring more government and community resources to be put into services that do not see immediate social and private returns. Immigration to the rest of the Pacific and the US has alleviated some current strains on provision of social services and employment opportunities, but it is becoming increasingly clear that this upcoming generation will not have the social and financial resources, as well as the educational and training skills required, to be able to leave the Marshall Islands and to lead productive lives outside of the islands.

## 2. Participatory Poverty Assessment<sup>2</sup>

In October to November of 2002, the RMI, in consultation with the ADB, completed a Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA). The PPA was conducted to provide qualitative guidelines to assist in the development of a poverty reduction strategy and relevant policies in the RMI. The primary targets of the study were those who were identified as disadvantaged and/or

<sup>2</sup> This section is a summary of the following source:  
Asian Development Bank (2002). **Precis of Participatory Poverty Assessment: October – November 2002**. Marshall Islands: ADB Publication #ADB TA 6002-REG, December.

poor. Participants were gathered from both the urban and rural areas, in addition to sector-wide consultations with various government and non-government organizations.

The objectives of the assessment were to:

- Identify people suffering from poverty and hardship in the community
- Determine community perceptions of poverty and hardship
- Identify local definitions of poverty and hardship, including their characteristics and causes in the RMI context
- Identify community perceptions of poverty and hardship trends in the last 5 years
- Determine community issues and priorities to improve the standard of living

Through a series of community-level fieldwork (personal interviews, surveys, questionnaires, group discussions, case studies, and observations), the overall findings of the report showed that in the outer islands, poverty/hardship was seen to be a shared experience as everyone was seen to be poor. The isolation of the rural islands due to a decline in fieldtrips (boat transport) meant both a decline in and a reflection of the decline in the copra trade that is the economic mainstay of most outer-islanders; further stagnating an already contracted local economy. The outer islands also lacked access to basic modern conveniences such as running water, electricity, and essential food and clothing supplies. The lack of boat fieldtrips to the outer-islands compounds the problem of lack of supplies and ensuring that basic conveniences cannot be fully developed and implemented. Outer-islanders further identified that the lack of quality schools and health dispensaries, low cost of copra, high cost of supplies, and lack of alternative employment opportunities were the major causes of poverty and hardship in their communities. Outer-island women reported spending more time doing handicrafts and producing more copra to supplement their incomes and to compensate for the decline in copra prices.

For the urban areas, poverty was seen as a more individual/family condition as there was more economic stratification due to the increased availability of opportunities (but which did not necessarily equate to equal access to these opportunities). Additionally, the major causes of poverty and hardship were perceived to be due to large extended families with only one/two wage earners, lack of space and overcrowding, poor water and power supply, lack of employment opportunities, lack of care and attention to children and youth, and high rates of children not attending school or dropping out.

For both the urban and rural areas, some of the common causes of poverty and hardship were thus identified as being caused by the following key reasons:

- Lack of health and education support for children
- Lack of basic service provision (water and electricity)
- Overcrowding and lack of quality housing in the urban areas
- Isolation of outer islands
- Lack of employment/income-generating opportunities
- Poor educational attainment of youth due to poor quality of education
- Lack of skills training opportunities for youth
- Increasing rates of social problems such as teen pregnancy, gang violence, school drop-outs, alcohol abuse, unemployment, etc.
- Increasing stress on gender relations with women increasingly becoming the main breadwinners

It was further, commonly identified that children, youth, and women were the most vulnerable groups to be negatively impacted by these problems. Children and youth, in particular, were most adversely affected by the lack of educational attainment both in term of the quality of the education attained, but also in regards to a complete lack of educational attainment (school-drop). Women, due the increasing rate of alcohol abuse amongst the male population, are increasingly having to take care of their families without the help of their respective partners. As such, the quality of family care and cohesiveness is slowly deteriorating. Again, this adversely affects the environment in which children and youth are nurtured within. Increasingly, children and youth are left to their own devices without adequate adult supervision. As extended families are quite large (7 or more members within a nuclear family), the parent(s) is(are) often overwhelmed financially and socially. A cycle of social deterioration is increasingly becoming a reality that is adversely affecting Marshallese society as a whole.

From this study, it was recommended that several key areas be addressed to ensure that this cycle is prevented or minimized. First, the education system has to be improved in regards to addressing issues of teacher shortages, teacher absenteeism, lack of school supplies, teacher qualification, and transportation. Second, basic education and training opportunities need to be expanded for youth and school drop-outs who wish to re-enter the education system. Third, develop a range of youth services and facilities such as after-school programs and sports activities. Fourth, expand basic health service provision, especially to the outer-island health dispensaries. Fifth, expand public/private (and disseminate information on) funding opportunities to communities to enable them to do self-improvement projects on their homes or to develop income-generating activities. Sixth, expand telecommunications, postal, and transportation services to the outer-islands. Seventh, provide women with equitable participation in vocational training and post-secondary education. And lastly, develop community-level activities, supported

by the government that would ensure the active participation and empowerment of communities and individuals in the improvement of their quality of life.

Education therefore plays an integral part in alleviating poverty and hardship within the Marshall Islands. From the participatory poverty assessment, it is clear that the lack of education and training opportunities is limiting people's abilities to adapt to the socio-economic changes brought on by the introduction of a westernized money economy. The quality of education is also a key issue that underlines the overall lack of education attainment in the islands. Active development of and implementation of plans towards education expansion and teacher qualification are thus important to ensure equitable access to quality education and skills training opportunities. This will be one of the fundamental approaches to alleviate/minimize poverty and hardship within the Marshall Islands.

## **II. Economy**

### **A. Economic Overview**

The economy is largely dependent upon and dictated by US funding. The Compact of Free Association sets forth a unique relationship between the RMI and the United States where financial and other assistance is made in exchange for certain defense-related benefits. The Compact has provided US\$53 million from 1987-1991, US \$49 million from 1992–1996, and US\$46 million from 1997-2001. In terms of the national budget, US federal grants and aid packages, on average, account for 45% of the overall budget revenue for the RMI. Other foreign grants account for, on average, another 13%, resulting in an average total of 58% of the national budget revenue coming from foreign grants (ADB, 2001:22). As a result, the overall operation of the RMI is highly dependent on foreign aid sources.

Current GDP per capita is estimated at US\$1,900. Though 50% higher than in the mid-1980s, when adjusted in real terms, this amount is approximately the same as in 1987-88 (ADB, 2001:18). Real economic growth, therefore, has remained fairly stagnant within the last decade, with the composition of estimated GDP still remaining essentially the same in this same period. These include government services, airline, utilities, trading, transportation, and primary production and manufacturing. Copra processing, one of the main means of income-generation

for the outer-islands, is heavily subsidized by the government, and is making a negative contribution to total GDP.

Overall, despite a heavy influx of US and other foreign aid/grants, which makes up over half of the national budget, sustainable development has not been achieved in the Marshall Islands. This is largely due to the fact that national and local mechanisms of management and implementation have not been appropriately developed in conjunction with the actual needs and requirements of the RMI, and with a realistic view of the current capacities of the various stakeholders. It is also due to a limited capacity within the government ministries and local communities to understand these mechanisms, limiting their ability to develop relevant policies and strategies that will ensure positive production and growth outputs; and to support local entrepreneurial initiatives.

The RMI economy is primarily government-led and influenced, resulting in a stifling environment for private sector development and growth. The existing private sector is characterized by the existence of monopolies in each of the various production/service sectors. Small, family-owned businesses struggle to compete and often fail within a relatively short time-frame. Today, many of these family businesses have been sold to immigrant Chinese and Korean businessmen who have been steadily immigrating into the Marshall Islands.

The enforcement of rules and regulations pertaining to, and monitoring of revenue outlets like the collection of taxes, price-fixing by trans-national corporations operating within the Marshalls, collection of import duties, and application and collection of fines to fishing vessels that illegally fish RMI waters or dump their waste into the lagoons, are sporadic processes at best. Again, this is largely due to a lack of capacity in terms of numbers and skills to follow through on the rules and regulations and monitoring procedures. It is estimated that the RMI is losing millions of US dollars due to its inability, for example, to monitor foreign fishing vessels who fish its waters; resulting in both a loss of national revenue and increase damage to the ocean ecosystem.

Currently, the utilization of the RMI's only internationally viable natural resource, the ocean, is being used to great profit by outside companies; mainly Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Russian fishing vessels. In 2000-1, the RMI government attempted to develop its own fishing fleet. Within months, the project failed. Again, the same pattern emerged. The RMI did not and still does not have the trained human resource base, nor the financial resources available to sustain this type of enterprise for the long term. The main reasons for failure were the RMI's lack of

appropriate forecasting of skilled labor requirements (especially trained mechanics and ship operators), prior assessment of the availability of these skilled workers (not enough Marshallese with these types of skills), and forecasting of associated, long-term operational costs (fuel).

In regards to the overall outlook of the Marshall Islands economy, several key factors therefore have had significant impact on its sustainability. First, there is the government's inability to appropriately develop and implement strategic policies regarding economic development. Second, there is the government's inability to incorporate the local communities in the development process, and to give them more free reign to participate in, implement, and monitor development projects. Third, the level of private sector growth is often limited by the lack of a local skilled human resource in which to sustain private sector initiatives, resulting in many companies having to hire expensive, expatriate workers to fill key administrative and skilled positions. And lastly, the formal and non-formal education system is not providing adequate and quality skills-training opportunities to those of employable age, further compounding the problem of a lack of a skilled human resource base to support overall economic growth.

## **B. Employment**

The employment sector reflects the poor level of economic growth within the Marshall Islands. In terms of the labor market, employment opportunities fall primarily in the public service sector. As noted earlier, private sector growth in terms of industrial development and availability of new employment opportunities has remained stagnant in the last decade. As such, any restructuring of the public sector has a large impact on the available number of employment opportunities. Currently, the total unemployment rate is 30.9%. The male unemployment rate is 27.6% and the female unemployment rate is higher at 37.3%. The unemployment rate for young Marshallese aged 15-19 is much higher at 55% (OPS, 2002). Employment growth has therefore remained stagnant in relation to population growth. Current research reveals that overall employment levels are the same as in 1988.

Today, the RMI government is still going through a process of structural adjustment, spearheaded by the ADB with the backing of the US government. Primarily this has meant a downsizing of the overall numbers within the civil service sector, and restructuring of the organization structures of the various ministries. Though seen as a positive move needed to improve the overall efficiency of the RMI government, this downsizing will have an impact on the total number of available job opportunities within the country. When government



restructuring and downsizing is complete, the unemployment figures stated above are likely to increase considerably as most job opportunities fell within the public sector. This will be the case unless within the next decade, private sector development and growth matches and is able to absorb those who are left behind, as well as those graduating from the education system.

Adult vocational skills training is primarily handled by the National Training Council (NTC) under the supervision of the Ministry of Education. At this point, the NTC has not been producing the numbers or quality of skilled tradesmen required within the private and public sectors. However, some success has been made through the provision of financial support for skills training/certification for potential pilots and seamen in training centers abroad. A Fisheries and Nautical Training Center (FNTC) has also been recently developed concentrating on maritime skills certification. The College of the Marshall Islands also offers adult education courses in Basic Accounting, English, and Computer Skills Enhancement.

The success of these programs, as measured by the employability of their graduates at home or abroad, is not fully known. No formal studies have been conducted on measuring the success rates of these programs. Thus, at the core of the employment profile of the RMI, is its ability and capacity to produce a sustainable skilled human resource base. It appears that the negative employment profile of the RMI is negatively impacted from both sides. On the one hand, the education system does not produce the basic skills required to support private sector and overall development growth. On the other hand, there are few opportunities to train in particular skills outside of the formal school system. As a result, many Marshallese of employable age simply do not have the skills to find productive employment. Jobs requiring a particular level of skills are primarily occupied by outsiders, who are often actively recruited by many of the larger companies within the Marshall Islands.

### **III. Education System**

#### **A. Early Childhood, Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary**

Established in 1981, the Ministry of Education is responsible for the administration of the education system. Its goal is to foster a policy environment in which teachers can operate effectively and students can participate and achieve to a high standard. Its primary responsibility

is to ensure that the education system is able to respond quickly and effectively to social, economic, political issues as they emerge, and can meet the diverse needs of different communities, employers and the wider society. Legislation states that education is compulsory for all children between the ages of 6 and 14 inclusive.

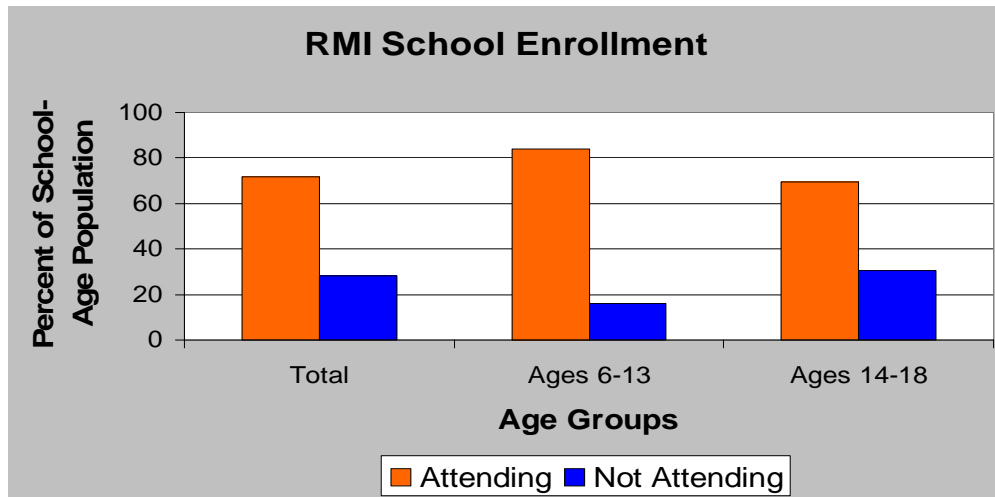
Though public school tuition is free, many schools charge a minimal registration fee. In addition, all associated school materials such as uniforms and personal school items such as pens and notebooks, for example, are the sole financial responsibility of the child and/or his/her guardian(s). As such, the RMI does not provide free universal primary education.

The present structure of the education system is based on the US model of 8 years of elementary school followed by 4 years of high school. There are 103 primary schools, including 77 public and 26 private primary schools, and 16 secondary schools, including 3 public and 13 private secondary schools. Of the 103 primary schools, 19 are in Majuro and 9 are on Kwajelein Atoll (the two urban centers). The remaining 76 primary schools are scattered throughout the rural, outer-islands. Of the 16 secondary schools, 8 are located on Majuro, and 5 are located on Kwajelein Atoll – Ebeye (ADB, 2001:53). The other three secondary schools are located in the rural, outer-islands. The two post-secondary institutions, the College of the Marshall Islands and the University of the South Pacific-Majuro Extension, are both located on Majuro. From these figures, it is clear that access to secondary and post-secondary education is largely limited to the two urban centers, with Majuro having better access than Kwajelein-Ebeye. 1999/2000 calculations show that the overall student-to-teacher ratio for the public primary school level is 20. The student-to-teach ratio for the private public elementary school level is 19 (ADB, 2001:60). Figures are not available for the secondary level.

In regards to access to technology and physical facilities, not much formal information is available. A current EU study is being undertaken to collect data on this very same question. However, it can be stated that all the schools located on the islands of Majuro and Ebeye have access to telephones, fax, photocopy machines, and the internet. The only schools in the outer-islands that have access to electricity are Jaluit and Wotje High Schools. All other schools in the rural areas do not have access to electricity and so therefore do not have any of the associated technology. Communication between the MOE and the rural, outer-island schools takes place via the use of a CB radio system. In terms of classroom space, most of the schools only have one or two large multi-class/level classrooms from which to teach all grade levels.

Early childhood education is provided almost exclusively through the Head Start program, funded by an annual US Federal Grant of approximately \$2 million per annum (with the exception of FY2003 where it has gone down to \$800,000). In program year 2002-2003, approximately 1,260 children are enrolled in 48 centers throughout the country. 649 of these are males and 611 are females (Head Start, 2003). This translates to only approximately 20% of children, aged 3-5 years, who are able to access early childhood education. Again, a majority of these centers are concentrated in the urban centers. However, some private schools also provide early childhood education at the kindergarten level.

**Figure 5: School Attendance Profile 2002**



Source: MOE, 2002

In 2001, elementary schools enrolled a total of 11,739 students. Approximately 49% of these students were female. At the secondary level, total enrollment was 2,586, with males and females equally represented up until the last two years of high school where males, on average, slightly outnumber the females.<sup>3</sup> Looking at the figure 5 above, at the primary and secondary school levels, 16% percent of children aged 6-13, and 30% of the youth aged 14-18, do not attend school. 67.1% of those aged 19-21 years do not attend school of any kind (OPS, 2002:11). A

<sup>3</sup> It is theorized that this is due primarily two things: 1) family pressures that require the females to stay at home and look after the affairs of the family, and 2) teen pregnancy. Teenage pregnancy is formally documented to be approximately 21% (OPS, 2002:10) based on hospital records. Other informal sources quote figures to be as high as 30%, especially for the outer-islands where births often take place in the home, rather than the health dispensaries. This may indicate that actual teen pregnancy rates amongst young women, particularly those in school, is under-reported.

High School Entrance Test at Grade 8 is used to select students for entry into secondary school. This is due to the fact that there are limited spaces for secondary school placement. 35%-40% of primary school leavers do not enter into the secondary due to this lack of space. Of those who do not enter secondary school after completing primary school, approximately 60% are females.

Despite an overall increase in total enrollment since 1988 at all levels, the figures show that from the 1998/99 to 1999/2000 school years, total enrollment decreased. It is a trend that is still reflected in preliminary enrollment data collected since 2000. Out-migration of young families has accounted for a small percentage of this decrease, but calculations show that it does not account for the majority of those who no longer attend school. Further studies have to be made by the MOE to more fully understand the causes underlying this declining trend in overall school enrollment figures. In addition, another worrying trend is that overall female enrollment in the schools, both at the primary and secondary levels, appears to be declining over time. Again, the reasons for this are not very clear (see footnote 2).

One possible explanation for this decline in enrollment may be explained by people's lack of trust in the value of the RMI education system (identified in the ADB PPA précis) in providing children with skills that are useful once outside of the education system. In other words, the poor quality of education outputs here in the RMI is reinforcing community perceptions that their children will be no better off if they did not attend school in the first place.

One indication of this is increasing enrollment into the Graduate Education Degree (GED) program. It is a secondary school level equivalency program targeted at those students who, for various reasons, did not complete secondary school. The program is a year-long program which prepares them to take a secondary-level equivalency exam. If the exam is passed, the student receives a high school equivalency diploma. In other words, one year can take care of all four years of high school. As such, many students have seen it as the easier option, and will quit high school altogether, and wait till they qualify to enter the GED program. The outcome in terms of ability to enter CMI is the same for those who enter with a high school diploma as with a GED diploma. The actual academic skills acquired are the same; reinforcing people's beliefs that it is more beneficial in terms of time, money, and academic preparation to do it all in one year, rather than in four.

In regards to school retention rates, the drop-out rates are particularly high. Quoting from the Meto2000, it is stated that: “Of the students enrolled in elementary [primary] school Grades 1 – 7 in 1997/98 about 2% (about 210) students were no longer in school in 1998/99. In the secondary schools of those enrolled in Grades 9 – 11 in 1997/98, about 20% 422 students) were no longer in school in 1998/99. Of the Grade 9 cohort of 879 student attending secondary school during 1995/96, just 57% (498 students) reached Grade 12 in 1998/99” (ADB, 2001:56). This statement has remained generally the same since 1999, with the same retention/drop-out patterns emerging from year to year. In other words, retention rates at the secondary school level are quite low, running approximately around the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile range (no absolute figures are available) from start to finish.

When looking at the tertiary level, access to post-secondary education is limited to CMI and the USP Extension Program. CMI offers Associate of Arts and Science degrees in Business and Accounting, Computer Studies, Liberal Arts, Education, and Nursing. In addition, it provides some continuing education (adult) and vocational-oriented programs through partnerships with the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and other US federal programs. In the fall of 2003, CMI registered 701 students. By the spring semester of 2003, the net enrollment figure went down slightly to 644. Of these, 376 (58%) were male and 268 (42%) were female. 416 were enrolled in credit-level courses, while 227 were in remedial training courses in English and Maths (Developmental Program). 1 student was auditing courses (CMI, 2003).

The Marshall Islands Center of the University of the South Pacific is another provider of post-secondary education. Like CMI, it also provides some vocational certificate and foundation programs, in addition to diploma and full degree programs. Most of its full degree programs are accessed via the USPNET. As of 2003, total enrollment for the USP Project is 72 (preliminary and foundation courses only). Of these 72 students, 34 are males and 38 are females. For the USP Center (degree/certificate/diploma courses only), total enrollment is 53, with 21 males and 32 females (USP, 2003).

In regards to accessing the quality of education students receive from these two institutions, no formal studies have been initiated to measure their success rates; either in terms of employability or in the ability of its graduates to continue and graduate from advanced degree programs outside of the Marshall Islands. The general perception is that given the poor level of academic preparation most of the students who enter CMI and US, these two institutions have done very well in ensuring that their students attain much higher academic standards than expected. The

issue that is underlined, however, is that these two institutions have to spend most of their resources on remedial and foundation programs before even allowing students access to full degree programs.

## **B. Vocational**

Vocational education in the RMI is still very much in the developmental stage. At the secondary level, pre-vocational education is offered through the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), a two-year program concentrating primarily in life-skills (computer studies) and English/math proficiency. It is essentially a school enhancement program meant to provide those who failed the High School Entrance Test with another education alternative. Upon graduation from the program, the students have a choice of re-taking the High Entrance Exam and finishing their secondary school education through the normal route if they pass. The reason for this type of 'vocational' program is that the chief complaint of all the local businesses of their employees is their inability to speak English and to have basic literacy and numeracy skills. As such, the program has concentrated most of its efforts on English and numeracy skill enhancement for preparation into further education or the workplace. Some vocational courses are offered at the public high schools; traditional skills, sewing, and basic mechanical engineering and construction. None of these lead to a trade certification/diploma.

A National Training Institute, targeted at secondary school drop-outs and school leavers is currently being developed and implemented under the direction of the Asian Development Bank. However, no conclusive study or survey has been made as yet to set up a system of measurements and performance indicators that would monitor the success of these programs.

If the students are still unable to enter the formal secondary school route, they may enter into other vocational programs offered. These programs include the Fisheries and Nautical Training Center, the National Training Institute, and the National Training Center. As mentioned previously, the success rates of these programs in producing tangible outputs is not clear. No formal studies have been made by the MOE, nor by the programs themselves. This is an area within the MOE that needs to be seriously reconsidered and re-developed in order to produce skills that are needed within the RMI and which provide high quality and international standard skill attainment.

The main problem facing these programs is their inability to find, hire, and retain qualified staff with international standard skill certifications who can teach particular trades and/or skills. Those who are hired have to be brought in from the outside. The demand for higher salaries and the provision of housing and living allowances, has made hiring of expatriate staff in the vocational field very expensive and unsustainable. In addition, the high cost of instructional equipment, lack of training space, lack of qualified local teaching staff, and high cost of maintenance has ensured that such programs are not sustainable at this moment in time. As such, more investment has gone into providing selected trainees with scholarships/financial support to get training in programs outside of the RMI. The cost-benefit ratio rate of this is very low as the number of graduates who return are still insufficient to make any marked returns in investment.

Furthermore, the selection of trainees for various outside programs has proven to be an ad hoc and uncoordinated process. As such, no systematic training mechanism is truly in place to ensure that all vocational programs coordinate with each other to produce skilled workers who are needed for further public and private sector development and growth. Vocational education is therefore an area where the MOE must make future investments into if it is to ensure a wide range of educational and life-skills training opportunities for the Marshallese people. The issue of a sound human resource base, as mentioned before, is critical to the overall positive development of the RMI to mitigate current problems arising from uneven/distorted development.

In the non-formal education sector, there are two NGOs that are fulfilling the vocational training capacity to a certain degree. The first is a program called Wāān Aelōn in Majōl (WAM), which is a program aimed at training young people in traditional canoe-building and sailing skills and modern boat repair. It will soon have a trade certificate program in Fiberglass Boat Building/Repair and Woodworking, which it is developing in conjunction with the College of the Marshall Islands. Its primary objective is to target at-risk youth and provide them with skills that are relevant to the needs of the islands. It also provides remedial courses in basic English and numeracy to ensure that its graduates are more employable at an international level. In addition, the program works closely with the Outrigger Hotel and Marshall Islands Visitor's Authority to support and provide tourism-related activities.

The second program is called Jōdrikdrik Ñān Jōdrikdrik Ilo Ejmour (Youth to Youth in Health – YTYIH). It is a program aimed at out-of-school and in-school youth between the ages of 14 and 25, inclusive. The program trains these youth in health issues such as STDs, contraceptive use,

HIV/AIDS, family planning, teen pregnancy, substance abuse, physical and sexual abuse, First Aid, CPR, universal health precautions, environmental sanitation/pollution, and suicide. In addition the program provides training in basic counseling skills, health outreach techniques through the development and production of audio-visual and song/drama programs, development of health IEC materials, and training in some traditional skills such as building thatch roof houses and handicrafts. Lastly, a small number of trained youth are selected and are provided advanced training in basic management and office skills. Though no formal certificate is given, the program has been successful in enabling its former youth members to obtain employment in the public and private sectors, particularly in the health and education fields.

Both of these NGOs are small, and are not able to produce the number of skilled labor required in the Marshall Islands. However, their success in training those that do go through their programs is apparent. It has only been recently that these kinds of programs have been actively supported and recognized by the local communities and national government, and it will only be a matter of time before programs like this will spread throughout the Marshall Islands. Today, these two programs are primarily concentrated on the island of Majuro. Though both have plans to expand to the outer-islands, limited financial and human resources are preventing them from doing so. Though national and local government support is increasing, it is still insufficient for these programs to expand in conjunction with increasing needs in the vocational education field.

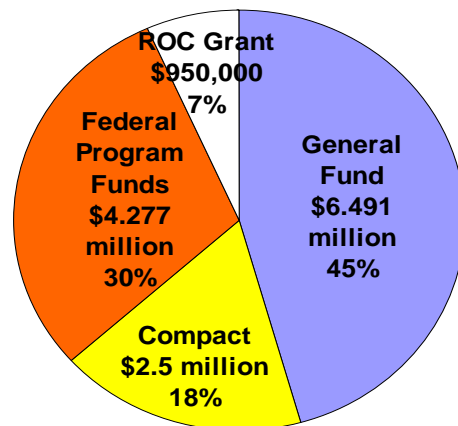
### **C. Education Expenditures**

The financial profile of the RMI education system is that of high dependency on foreign grants. A 2001 assessment of the impact of US federal education programs indicated that nearly 63% of all funds being allocated for education spending stem from some form of US financial assistance, primarily in the form of specific US federal programs like Special Education, 21<sup>st</sup> Century, and Health Education (RMI MOE, 2001).

The following pie graph illustrates the source of funding for the MOE in FY 2002. It is important to note that the RMI General Fund is heavily subsidized by further Compact money from the US government, with approximately 40% of national general fund revenue coming from compact-tied assistance (ADB, 2001).



**Figure 6: Ministry of Education Source of Funds 2002**



Source: MOE, 2002

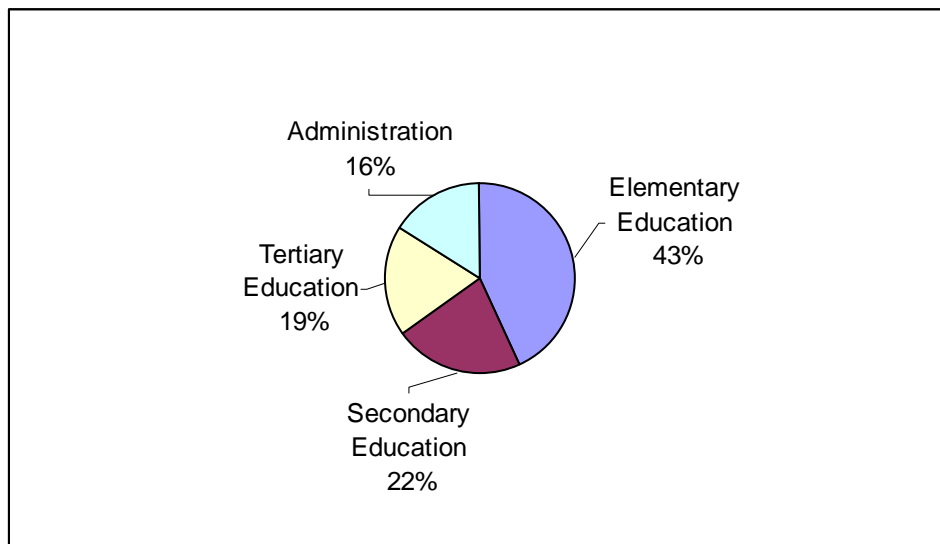
The reliance on Republic of China (ROC-Taiwan) and other foreign grants is steadily increasing over time as Compact money is steadily decreasing. Currently, ROC funds are largely targeted for capital improvement projects at the various schools. A certain pattern, however, may be emerging. Here, as US funding is steadily scaled down over the life of the new Compact of Free Association (ends 2015), the RMI MOE is having to look elsewhere for foreign grants. However, the main issues of sustainability and appropriate resource management are still not being addressed. Intra-national and internal MOE mechanisms for the effective and efficient use and allocation of limited financial and manpower resources are not being fully developed and implemented, which would aid the MOE in finding and funding more self-sustaining education alternatives. Heavy reliance on foreign grants will be a risk factor to the MOE's ability to build capacity to coordinate appropriate initiatives to address education problems internally. Foreign grants largely have their own policy motivations which may or may not be in keeping with the goals and objectives of the MOE, nor may be sensitive enough to the actual needs and requirements of the Marshallese people.

In terms of the national budgetary allocation of funds to the education sector, 2000 estimates indicate that education expenditure is approximately 16% of the total national expenditure or 9.4% of total GDP. In terms of the total national public expenditure, education takes up approximately 30% (OPS 2000 and ADB, 2000:74). These proportions are not dissimilar to other country allocations to the education sector. However, when the total national budget, on average, is approximately US \$98 million, 16% of that amount (usually between \$14 – 15 million for any

given fiscal year) is significantly smaller than the profit margins of most international corporations. Yet, considering the small size and population of the Marshall Islands, an equally valid argument can be made that available funding resources are not being used as effectively and efficiently as they could be. As such, the potential positive impacts of the current structural adjustment of the ministries, including the MOE, cannot be fully discounted as in theory, this would mean more financial resources available for the education system.

Since 1999, the calculated average MOE budget has been approximately US \$15 million. Figure 7 below illustrates the average allocation of MOE funds to the various education sectors. It is important to note that the private primary and secondary schools also get some financial assistance from the RMI MOE (data on this is not very accurate). It is also not clear whether MOE assistance to the private school sector is actually improving overall education outputs, and some debate has arisen in terms of cutting all assistance to this sector.

**Figure 7: Allocation of General and Compact Funds to Education, 2000**



Source: Developing a Strategy Plan for the Ministry of Education: Final Report, 2000

As far as sector allocation goes, these figures are not dissimilar to international averages. Primary education receives a bulk of MOE funding, with secondary education receiving the second largest bulk. It is clear though that secondary education funding will have to increase if the question of secondary school access is to be adequately addressed. The question of financial resources then becomes an issue of concern; particularly when tertiary education is becoming

increasing politically popular and more supported by the communities. The secondary education sector stakeholders will have to make a considerable push to promote and gain political support for the expansion of secondary schools. They will have to prove that they can produce the positive results that the tertiary sector seems to be able to take over. Tertiary education expenditures appear to be expanding at an incredible rate in comparison to the comparatively and relatively low expenditures to secondary education. This is an issue that will have to be addressed if, again, secondary education is to be improved in the RMI.

#### **IV. Key Challenges and Role of Education**

As indicated in the above sections, several key challenges thus face the RMI education system. These major challenges include the following:

- Decreasing net enrollment rates in the elementary and secondary levels
- Poor retention rates, especially for females at the secondary level
- Poor quality of education outputs
- Lack of qualified teaching staff
- Insufficient number of schools at the primary and secondary levels to meet population demands
- Insufficient number of early childhood learning centers
- Isolation of outer-island schools from the MOE support and monitoring network
- Lack of financial resources for supplies and maintenance
- Poor community involvement in the improvement of schools and educational achievement of the children
- Poor levels of accountability of the local schools in ensuring that educational benchmarks are achieved and that available resources are effectively utilized
- Lack of access to skills training alternatives and/or vocational training
- Poor management of available resources

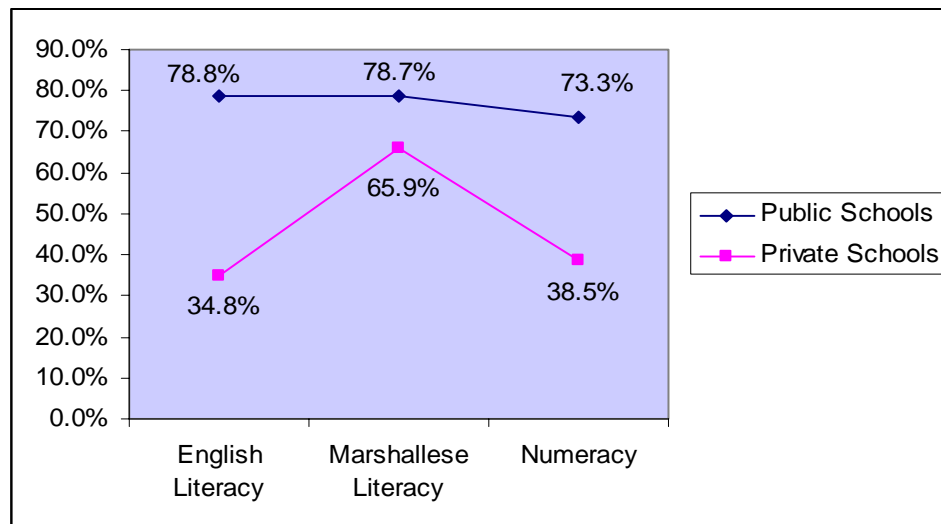
Many of these key challenges are currently being addressed to some degree by the MOE and the RMI government through various national and community-level initiatives and strategies. One the main differences in the education system since 1988, is the inclusion of non-formal education and training programs via local NGOs and community organizations in addressing some of these issues. In the past, the MOE and the RMI government saw NGOs as threats to the integrity of the RMI. Today, as both national and international trends indicate, NGOs and civil society initiatives do have major positive outcomes in achieving various target goals, and the RMI government is now supportive of local NGOs and civil society participation in the development process. However, though these organizations address the educational issues of access, community

participation, and effective use of limited resources, they still do not address the key issue of quality.

The quality of education in the RMI is poor, and is a major area of concern for the Ministry of Education. A standardized test used across the Pacific Islands, called the Pacific Islands Language and Literacy Test (PILL), ranks approximately 70% of the Grade 4 population of the Marshall Islands in the “at-risk” category. In other words, these students are below standard in basic numeracy and English and Marshallese literacy and comprehension (see figures 8 and 9).

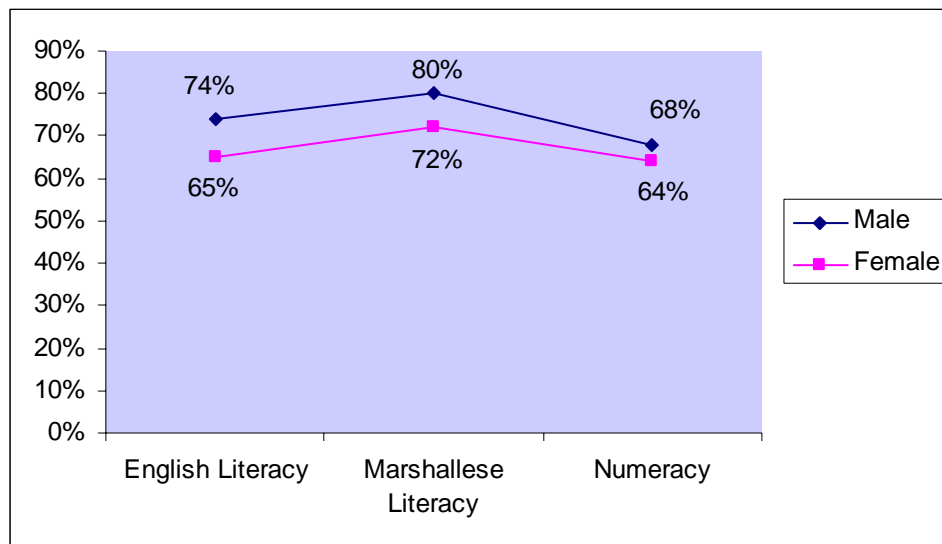
When compared with the rest of the Pacific region, RMI test results are one of the lowest. This has prompted major changes within the education system to address the issue of quality education. One of these has been the major endorsement, support, and financing of teacher education and certification programs at the College of the Marshall Islands and the University of the South Pacific – Majuro Extension Center. These programs are geared towards both pre- and in-service training of teachers. Furthermore, the MOE has stipulated that current teachers, if they have not already done, must go through the teacher training programs if they lack the relevant teacher qualifications.

**Figure 8: Percentage of Students “At-Risk”: Public and Private Schools, 1998**



Source: A Digest of Marshall Islands Education Data, MOE 1999

**Figure 9: Percentage “At-Risk” by Gender, 1998**



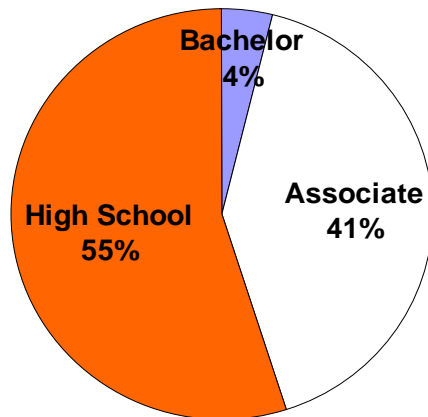
Source: A Digest of Marshall Islands Education Data, MOE 1999

Another indicator of the low quality of education is when secondary school leavers attempt to enter the tertiary level. At the College of the Marshall Islands (CMI), on average, only approximately 30% qualify for college-level courses. The rest have to go through a special, intensive remedial training program in English and Math. The failure rate at this level is quite high, and only a few are able to move on to the credit level. Once in credit level, most continue to struggle and again, the failure rate is high. Three semesters of intensive remedial training is simply not enough to compensate for nearly ten years of poor academic preparation. Taking these factors into account, it is therefore surprising that the adult literacy rate is as high as 74% (measured in terms of the ability of an adult to read and write a simple sentence). Clearly, the education system has not enabled students to be able to adequately survive in an environment which requires them to think critically and comprehensively.

At the core of the problem is the quality and qualification level of the teaching staff throughout the Marshall Islands. Teacher qualifications require attention as nearly half of the teachers in the Marshall Islands have a High School diploma as their highest degree qualification; most have little or no formal teacher qualification training and/or certificates (see figure 10). In essence, the poor quality of education outputs in the RMI largely stem from the lack of qualified, appropriately trained teachers. This is particularly true for the rural, outer-islands where the Ministry of Education has little contact with the rural schools in terms of monitoring and

evaluating teacher progress and achievement of national education benchmarks. The isolation also makes it difficult for the MOE to hold local principles accountable for the achievement of educational benchmarks. The lack of teaching resources and lack of communication (and communication technology) further compounds the problem.

**Figure 10: Teacher Degree Qualifications in 2002**



Source: MOE, 2002

As such, one of the number one priorities for the MOE is to improve the quality of education through the improvement of teacher qualifications (described earlier) and the improvement of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms at all levels.

The second major challenge is access. Better access to early childhood education, primary, and secondary education, are especially needed. To address this issue, more school facilities will have to be built, in addition to hiring more associated staff. Furthermore, more civil society participation in the development and implementation of strategies and initiatives will have to be actively supported by the MOE and the RMI government to relinquish some of the burden of increasing access from the MOE. The geographic isolation of the outer-island rural communities is an especially challenging factor in appropriately and adequately addressing the issue of access. Coordination of transportation and telecommunications developments at the national level will have to be more carefully done if access is to increase significantly for the outer-island communities.

The third major challenge is the lack of a strong vocational and life skills-oriented education system. At the moment, pure academic preparation is the main focus of the education system,

with little attention being paid to providing basic trade skills that are translatable into the employment sector. Combined with a poor quality output, this primary focus has resulted in the various communities having an overall negative perception of the value of education. As a result, more and more parents do not push their children to go to school as they can be of more use in the home and in helping the family generate income through various agricultural and marine income-generating activities, and through general employment. Some of the high drop-out rates, especially at the secondary level can be explained by this negative perception due to the inappropriate focus of the education system in preparing “western academics” rather than skilled blue and white-collar employees. The education system’s inability to coordinate with and take into consideration the economic aspect of people’s lives has reinforced its irrelevancy to the needs and requirements of the Marshallese people.

The benefits of education should include the following:

- Knowledge, skills, and attitudes which promote social and economic development
- Individual development through gaining knowledge, skills, and understanding of how the world interacts and inter-relates
- Development of attitudes and values that promote social cohesion and stability

Education should deliver substantial social and economic benefits to students, their families and communities, and to the Republic of the Marshall Islands as a whole. Education should be able to strengthen people’s abilities to become self-reliant and strengthen communities abilities to work together cohesively and productively. In this sense the RMI education system, has largely failed in its primary duties.

In 1999/2000, when a very real socio-economic and political crisis hit the islands, the people of the Marshall Islands for the first time ever, voiced their concerns about the direction in which the government and the nation were moving towards. For the first time, the people were beginning to think as a civil society with a social consciousness that was realizing that if problems were allowed to escalate, it would mean major, possibly irrevocable problems in the future for all concerned. The 1999 elections therefore saw a radical change in the perceptions and the philosophical outlook of the government, as well as a whole new guard of newly-elected politicians who seemed to have a clearer vision and understanding of the socio-economic problems of the islands, and how they were inter-related.

In 1999, the MOE also saw its chance to change old attitudes and perceptions of education service delivery and sustainability. Between November 1999 and April 2000, Change Consulting of New Zealand researched and prepared two documents to guide and direct efforts to improve the quality of education in the RMI: “The Strategic Plan for the Ministry of Education, Republic of the Marshall Islands”, and an accompanying technical reference document titled “Developing a Strategic Plan for the Ministry of Education: Final Report”. The Strategic Plan identified 36 major objectives with which the RMI Ministry of Education, as well as other stakeholders, should focus in its efforts to strengthen the nation’s education system. Both reports were a collaborative effort with the Asian Development Bank.

To complement these documents, in June of 2000 the RMI Minister of Education requested assistance from the Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL) in developing a companion document to the Strategic Plan that would provide detailed guidance to educators about how to implement the Strategic Plan. The resulting report is the document titled “Implementing Guidelines for the 2000 Strategic Education Plan”. It is a document that specifically outlines the various objectives, inputs, and outputs of the education system, and how each will be systematically dealt with by different community and MOE entities. For the first time, the MOE had a series of documents which systematically and coherently detail a series of steps and developments the MOE has to take in order for it to meet its target goals and objectives. In addition, it is the first time the MOE has had a series of documents from which to use as a base of comparison to allow for the development of a true monitoring and evaluation mechanism. More and more, schools and communities are being held accountable for the achievement of national benchmarks and overall education goals; something quite new in the development process of the RMI education system.

The different documents that have been developed to assist the Ministry of Education in improving the nation’s education system consistently identify and emphasize two relevant strategies for the improvement of the RMI quality of Education. First, they emphasize the need to strengthen and propose a philosophy and goal for the Ministry of Education to follow in establishing an educational system for a nation aiming at *self-reliance*. Secondly, they emphasize that improving education in the Marshall Islands is contingent on the Marshallese people’s understanding of the critical role they play in the development process. Schools belong to the *community* and the community is accountable for their performance.



As such, the MOE is now making a concerted effort to rectify the education problems that had arisen in the past. It is also making a concerted effort to develop and implement programs which involve the communities, and which empowers community organizations and local NGOs to assist the MOE in meeting its various goals and objectives. Though still in its infancy, these bold steps on part of the MOE has already begun to reap positive outcomes, especially in regards to access and vocational skills training, and increased community awareness and participation. These are key first steps for the MOE in improving the overall outlook of the RMI education system. Though the problems are still considerable at this stage, the positive and realistic attitude the RMI MOE is now taking in revamping the education system is a step in the right direction.

One of the major systematic steps the MOE is taking is to transfer its current budgeting system to that of performance-based budgeting. In this case, the goals, objectives, inputs, and outputs of the education system are clearly outlined and linked to budgetary allocations and expenditures; something that was never done in the past. This system, it is hoped, will ensure that specific targets are met within a specific time frame, and that when outputs are not achieved, it will be clearer why they were not achieved in the first place; allowing the MOE to more easily identify and therefore take the appropriate steps to rectify the problem on a timely basis. The benefits of education will take many decades to achieve, but the first appropriate steps are now being taken to build a firm foundation upon which the RMI education system can firmly stand upon.

The RMI's involvement in the development of an Education for All (EFA) Action Plan is a further crucial step in redefining the MOE's role in improving the education outlook of the RMI. Development of the plan has further strengthened and supported the MOE's efforts and goals. The priority goals of EFA are not only consistent with the needs and goals of the RMI education system, but its planning and implementation framework is reflective of the current capacities and initiatives of the MOE. As such, the RMI's involvement in the Pacific regional EFA planning and development processes will also serve to increase the MOE's capacity to make added improvements to its overall national strategies. The government's investment in this EFA initiative will contribute to the further access to basic education in terms of building better classrooms and providing more resources to primary schools and early childhood education centers. It will also strengthened adult education throughout the nation, nationally and at the grassroots level, enabling the MOE to reduce adult illiteracy by 2015.

The EFA philosophy and planning framework is very much reflective of global needs and requirements, let alone that of the Marshall Islands. Yet, it serves to bring together Pacific island entities and allows a forum of discussion, comparison, and learning to take place. The RMI, since its involvement with the EFA planning process in 2000, has benefited in terms of increasing its capacity to develop education strategies, and in terms of having a global base of support for national strategies. The EFA process, by its very global nature, has given many small island entities like the Marshall Islands, much needed international recognition and clout, which will assist entities like the RMI MOE to hold national governments and communities accountable for the achievement of education improvement objectives and initiatives.

## **CHAPTER 3: RMI EFA NATIONAL ACTION PLAN**

### **I. RMI EFA Re-Affirmation of Basic Human Rights**

Within the context of education attainment, human rights in the Pacific should include the following key beliefs:

- All young people and adults have the right to access to equitable, quality, compulsory, affordable, and alternative choices in primary and secondary education both in the formal and non-formal education sectors.
- All young people and adults have a right to high standards of training in literacy, numeracy, and life skills that ensure their ability to make informed and objective choices in their lives; and to increase their capacity to attain employment and/or any means to maintain a good quality of life.
- Young people have a right to medical and nutrition services and programs that ensure proper cognitive and physical development.
- Young people have a right to safe physical and emotional environments that are conducive to learning and which are sensitive to a child's learning requirements and needs, especially those with learning and/or physical disabilities.
- All teachers have the right to fair pay as appropriate to their level of experience and qualification. They have the right to employment benefits as per contractual agreements and to work in a safe physical and supportive environment conducive to the enrichment of teaching methodologies.
- Teachers have the right to access to continuing teacher education enhancement programs to improve their professional development.
- Teachers have a right to the ownership of their curriculum and the conduct and discipline of the classroom as per education policy guidelines and regulations.
- Parents have the right to all information on available education alternatives to ensure that they and their children make an informed choice on appropriate education decisions.
- Parents have the right to participate in parent-teacher-student programs to ensure that they are knowledgeable of the quality and level of their child's educational progress and attainment. Parents have the right to change their child's school if they feel that the quality of schooling is not adequate.
- Parents have the right to hold the schools, Ministry of Education (MOE), and local governments accountable for the enforcing of education standards and ensuring that their child's educational needs are being met given the state of resources available.

- Parents and young people have the right to information and access to alternative funding mechanisms that will ensure the continuity of education attainment (i.e. education grants and scholarships), if and when available.
- The MOE has the right to set policies, rules and regulations, and framework governing the development, implementation, enforcement of education goals and strategies in order to ensure that national education objectives and outcomes are achieved in an efficient, effective, and appropriate manner. The MOE has the right to get support for and training in monitoring and evaluation mechanisms so as to effectively measure all education outcomes and objectives.
- The MOE has the right to continued staff development to maintain a level of professional standard, and the right to petition the Public Service Commission to hire and fire those staff and teacher members, having shown just cause.
- Civil society has the right to participate in and access funding for alternative, non-formal education activities that address the education needs of the RMI. Civil society has the right to hold the MOE and the national and local governments accountable for the support of non-government initiatives in education, especially in the areas of at-risk and out-of-school youth and in adult literacy programs.

These human rights declarations are in keeping with the national policies and beliefs of the RMI government. Limited resources and implementing capacities make it unrealistic, at times, to follow through on all these rights, but it is the firm belief of the RMI MOE and national government that reforms must be made at all levels in order to ensure the complete adherence to these rights, and to ensure overall accountability. Much progress has been made since 1999 in this regard, and will continue to progress so long as there is a sustained commitment to make key fundamental changes in the management and implementation of local and national initiatives and policies.

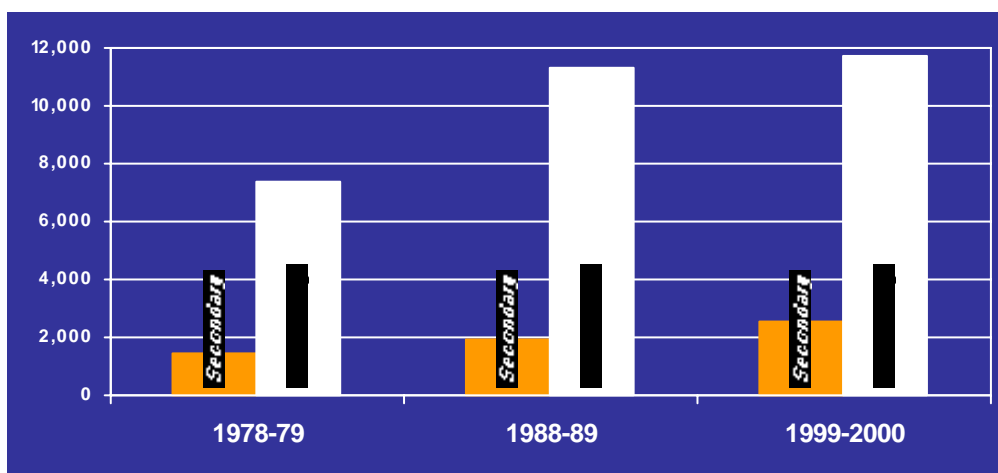
The vision of the RMI is of a future where every child has a positive first learning experience. Young children are to be encouraged to participate in early childhood learning activities regardless of their background, and to gain confidence and achieve success. Schools are to be welcoming and inclusive, and parents are to be encouraged to participate in the life of the school and support their children in their learning. Principals are to be regarded as leaders in their communities, rather than as subservient civil servants. Teaching is to be a dynamic and respected profession within all communities. Opportunities for continuing education are to be available through the College of the Marshall Islands, or through other local and regional tertiary education providers. All students are to have a desire for lifelong learning and self-improvement and/or enhancement. People in the Marshall Islands are to value education, and to trust the ability of the education system to provide quality education that is affordable and accessible to all, and which

provides all members skills that lead to a better quality of life. The citizens of the Marshall Islands are to realize that good quality education is the key to positive socio-economic development, as well as a means for the islands to effectively survive in an increasingly globalized and politicized economy.

## **II. EFA Assessment 2000**

The Marshall Island participated in the EFA Assessment 2000 and found it a very worthwhile exercise as it runs parallel to the Strategic Plan for the Ministry of Education. The results so far have seen some improvement for the Marshall Islands. Since 1988 and through comparisons with the findings of the EFA Assessment 2000, there has been a marked expansion in the education system in terms of total numbers of physical facilities, total enrollment figures (see figure 11), number of teachers, and access to alternate skills training programs (usually in the form of scholarships/grants to training programs abroad). Access to technology has also increased significantly, especially for the schools on Majuro and Ebeye, and to a smaller extent for the schools on Jaluit, and Wotje. Though still small, increasing numbers of Marshallese are graduating with tertiary-level degrees, certificates, and/or diplomas. Furthermore, there has been a marked increase in civil society participation in providing educational alternatives through the participation of local NGOs.

**Figure 11: Total Enrollment Figures from 1978-2000**



Source: MOE, 2002

The EFA plan's overall intent is therefore being realized in Marshall Islands through the Implementing Guidelines for the 2000 Strategic Plan where some of the six priority goals are already being dealt with to some degree. However, there is still a great need for assistance from both national and international stakeholders to improve the quality of and access to education in the Marshall Islands through this new EFA initiative.

The EFA initiatives, however, will need to involve firm financial commitments by donor agencies to assist the Ministry of Education in its efforts to implement the current EFA National Action Plan. Already the government of the Marshall Islands has increased its education budget over the last two years to allow for expansion of pre-school programs, development of student-teacher resource materials and facilities, and improvement of classroom facilities. However, such an increase cannot sufficiently cater for all individual requirements, particularly for those students with disabilities and special learning needs.

There therefore exists a great need for foreign assistance to enable the people of Marshall Islands to benefit from the Education For All National Action Plan, and to enable the MOE to have the financial resources available to implement it. Current resources are already strained despite concerted efforts to restructure the management of education funds within the MOE. The achievement of universal primary education, for example, simply cannot be achieved with the current financial resources available to the RMI government and the MOE.

### **III. Establishment of the Working Group and National EFA Forum**

In May 2001, the Minister of Education, Wilfred I. Kendall, appointed the Assistant Secretary for Curriculum and Instruction to oversee the development of the EFA Plan for the Marshall Islands. Under the guidance of the Secretary of Education, Mrs. Biram Stege, a Working Group consisting of Program Managers and Education Specialists was established to assist in the development of the EFA Action Plan while the Republic of the Marshall Islands Forum is being re-established.

In July 2001, two UNESCO staff, visited the Marshall Islands to meet with the Working Group and to start putting together the first draft of the EFA RMI National Action Plan. The members of the EFA Working Group met several times to analyze the six EFA goals based on the needs of the RMI children and those identified in the Strategic Plans for the Ministry of Education.

Since 2001, the RMI Action Plan has gone through several revisions and additions, with the latest submission being submitted to the UNESCO office in Apia, Samoa in June of 2003. Furthermore, since that time, the membership of the EFA Working Group has been changed several times to ensure that the plan is appropriately developed to mirror the current needs and requirements of the RMI education system.

With the signing of the new Compact of Free Association as of May of 2003, the financial situation of the education system is likely to change significantly in some areas; particularly in the RMI's eligibility to specific federal education grant programs. New compact funds promise to focus primarily in the health and education sectors, with large amounts of funds allocated to infrastructure development and improvement, particularly in the outer islands. As final budgetary translations of the Compact articles are still being disseminated to the various government ministries, it is not clear at the time of this submission (June 2003), what this will exactly entail for the MOE and how they will impact overall achievement of education goals and outputs; in addition to the implementation of the RMI EFA National Action Plan.

#### **IV. Policy Context**

The Strategic Plan for the Ministry of Education (2000-2005) identifies five broad areas that need improvement in order to raise standards and reduce disparities in access to and quality of education. The five areas are: 1) to improve national educational outcomes; 2) to develop a policy setting and implementation unit; 3) to improve resource delivery, monitoring, and accountability; 4) to increase local empowerment; and 5) to increase internal public-private sector partnership. The government of the Marshall Islands values quality education and therefore ranks it as a top priority.

In practical terms, the increased budgetary allocation in recent years reflects the government's commitment to the improvement of quality education in the Marshall Islands. Vision 2015, which is the current national policy for the government, also reconfirms government's support for the successful implementation of the Strategic Plan for the Ministry of Education. It is within this spirit of national support that the Education For All National Plan of Action is being formulated and implemented.

A completely new approach is now being taken to involve other government sectors and non-state actors to include their views, concerns, and abilities to implement the RMI's EFA National Action Plan. The involvement of all sectors in the education process is now believed to be crucial to the achievement of the goals and objectives of EFA and national education goals.

Key internal reforms are being initiated within the MOE to increase its effectiveness and efficiency in developing, implementing, and evaluating education goals and outputs. Reforms are taking place within all national government agencies. As explained earlier, the shifting of the current budget system to that of performance-based budgeting is seen as one of the key reforms that formulates an integral policy and implementation framework that will increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the MOE and therefore, of the entire educational system.

In addition, the Education Act of 1992, which outlines the MOE's responsibilities and target areas in the education field, is currently under review and revision. This is to ensure that future national legislation will be reflective of current needs and global trends in education attainment, and to ensure that the MOE and schools are held accountable for their actions.

As such, the policy framework of the RMI MOE is consistent and compatible with the goals of EFA. From another perspective, the MOE's policy framework is already supportive of initiatives and actions inherent in the EFA Dakar Framework For Action.

## **V. Risk Assessment**

However, before moving on, there are several key risk factors that need to be taken into account before formulating an implementation framework for the RMI EFA Action Plan. If these factors need to be taken into consideration to ensure that the plan achieves the expected levels of impact and outcomes intended. The following are general descriptions of the key risk factors that may impact upon the ability of the EFA Action Plan to fully accomplish its expected outcomes:

### **1. Social Factors**

The lack of community participation and involvement in the education process has been identified as one of the key problems in improving overall education outputs. As identified in the PPA, parents and communities as a general rule do not see value in the education system, and



therefore do not push their children to go to school or to achieve to a high standard while in school. It was not identified whether this was a result of the lack of quality education and facilities and resources available at the schools, or whether this was a general social perception born out of the fact that a majority of the parents were themselves largely uneducated and therefore did not fully realize the positive impacts of education attainment.

Notwithstanding the reasoning behind this perception, the impact of such a perception is clear. If children are unable to receive support within their homes, their level of education attainment may be negatively affected. As such, in conjunction with implementing the EFA Action Plan, community-based empowerment programs need to be developed and integrated into the communities to increase parental and community participation in the education process.

The MOE is now currently developing a planning and policy framework to address this specific issue. In addition, the Education Act of 1992 will also be addressing this issue if agreed upon by the education act evaluators. At the school level, increasing numbers of private and public schools are developing and strengthening their Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA) to address this issue as well. The integration of these efforts to the EFA Action Plan framework is crucial to ensuring overall success of the attainment of all six of the EFA priority goals.

However, there still remains a need for wider community involvement in the education process. This is especially the case for the outer-island, rural communities who are often isolated from the MOE and national government support, and who often do not benefit from the education activities that often take place only on the urban islands of Majuro and Ebeye.

## **2. Economic Factors**

The expansion of schools in reality proves to be a double-edged sword. On the one hand, expansion of schools will mean that there is greater access to education and learning enhancement opportunities. On the other hand, it also entails a larger financial commitment to find more financial and human resources to staff, maintain, and pay for all the added operational and recurrent costs associated with increasing classroom space and facilities; both of which are a premium here in the Marshall Islands. The poor level of general national economic growth entails that the government cannot significantly increase overall budgetary allocations to the

education sector within the foreseeable future, nor are there enough employment opportunities to attract qualified Marshallese to stay in the Marshall Islands.

The poor quality of education adds a further complication. There is much debate as to which to tackle first; access or quality? To do both is economically not feasible given the financial constraints of the MOE. If they are both to be addressed, then the MOE will have to make an even more concerted effort to identify and utilize funding sources outside of the Marshall Islands besides those it already enjoys a working relationship with (US, Japan, Australia, Republic of China, ADB, and the EU). Current financial assistance patterns and trends suggest that these funding sources are not likely to deviate significantly in their financial and technical assistance to the RMI anytime in the near future. This also includes the government's patterns of fund allocation to the education sector.

As such, the developmental framework of the EFA plan will have to be such that the most cost-effective methods are identified and appropriately implemented, utilizing to the maximum extent possible local financial and human resources available. There is a tendency amongst education planners to concentrate on infrastructural development of highly technical and sophisticated buildings that are expensive to build and require large amounts of skilled labor. Other islands in the Pacific who use available natural resources to build schools (.e.g. thatch-roof schools) have proven that good education outcomes can be attained without high levels of infrastructure expenditures; allowing for more resources to be directed towards teacher training, while simultaneously increasing educational access. It is a lesson that needs to be applied here in the Marshall Islands if both the issues of quality education and access to educational opportunities are to be addressed together.

### **3. Political Factors**

The Marshall Islands political system is highly centralized. This has resulted in a political system riddled with bureaucracy, which to a large extent, protects elected politicians from punitive measures that would normally be in place to curb blatant abuses of power. In other words, the system is set up in such a manner as to make it difficult to hold politicians accountable for problems that arise in any situation. This has resulted in an atmosphere where politicians often do not feel pressured to support and/or initiate changes required to improve overall efficiency and fairness within their local communities and/or the national government. The lack of 'political

will' for drastic reformation of the public sector is therefore inevitable. The health and education sectors are often the two public sectors that benefit the least from this type of political in-activism.

Since the implementation of the EFA Action Plan and the MOE's own strategic plan will require a certain degree of internal and national changes in the way the public service sector is operated, the lack of 'political will' to support, advocate, and lobby for changes can determine whether certain actions are feasible or not.

An example is the MOE's relationship with the Public Service Commission (PSC). Currently, the PSC is responsible for all the hiring/firing of all education sector employees, including teachers. This has resulted in several significant problems; first, this has disempowered the school principles from holding teachers accountable for the achievement of national benchmarks. The problem is most acute in the outer-islands where principles are much less likely to communicate with the PSC than they are to communicate with the MOE. As a result, teachers who fall behind national standards, and/or do not follow MOE rules and regulations often fall by the way-side, and are thus left to their own devices. Those who are nearest them and who can do something to hold them accountable (the principles) are not able to appropriately apply punitive and/or regulative measures to ensure that national standards of education are followed through.

The same constraints are plaguing the MOE and its ability to function efficiently and effectively. The Secretary of Education does not have the authority to hire/fire those employees that service the MOE and its various departments. This disempowerment has led to a distinct environment of ambivalence within the ministry towards change and internal improvement.

The PSC, on numerous occasions has hired education employees without the consultation of the Secretary and Minister of Education, and/or those who do not have the necessary degree qualifications. To reverse such decisions would require enormous amounts of political pressure that often does not exist, or there is a lack of concerted political effort to support the MOE's complaints. The MOE is therefore often forced to operate with one hand tied behind its back.

Currently, a very strong force is growing within the MOE and other government agencies against the apparent autocracy of the PSC. Proposals are currently being drafted to petition the government to pass legislation in favor of allowing the MOE and other government agencies to

have more authority over, at least, the hiring/firing of certain key employees. For the MOE, this primarily means the teachers and principles of all the public schools. This will enable the MOE and the school principles to have the authority to monitor and evaluate the abilities of its teachers to perform to required standards. The likelihood of the current government in passing this legislation is quite high, and the MOE is confident that in the near future, it will have gained authority over the hiring/firing of teachers and school principles.

#### **4. Human Resources and Capacity**

The real capacity of the government and local communities in developing, managing, and monitoring activities, projects, etc. is also a key issue. The lack of real capacity is evident at all levels and sectors.

.....more on this.....

### **VI. Prioritization of the Six EFA Goals**

Taking everything into account, a consensus was reached by the RMI EFA Working Group that the six EFA goals are to be prioritized according to the immediate needs of the people of the Marshall Islands and the MOE's policy framework as described in Chapters 1 and 2 and previous sections. Hence, the establishment of the six national EFA goals for the Marshall Islands is as follows:

- ❑ Priority 1 (EFA Goal 6) - Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all, so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.
- ❑ Priority 2 (EFA Goal 1) - Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children
- ❑ Priority 3 (EFA Goal 3) - Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning, life skills and citizenship programs.
- ❑ Priority 4 (EFA Goal 2) - Ensuring that by 2015 all children, with special

emphasis on girls and children in difficult circumstances have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality.

- ❑ Priority 5 (EFA Goal 4) - Achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.
- ❑ Priority 6 (EFA Goal 5) - Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.

NB: Each priority goal will be explained in more detail in Chapter 4.

## **VII. Implementation Framework of RMI EFA Priority Goals**

### **A. Formal Education Sector**

### **B. Non-Formal Education Sector: Role of Civil Society**

### **C. Integration of International and Regional Initiatives**

- 1. Focusing Resources on Effective School Health (FRESH) and Health Promoting Schools**
- 2. Pacific Regional Initiatives For the Delivery of Basic Education (PRIDE)**
- 3. Forum Basic Education Action Plan (FBEAP)**
- 4. Associated Schools Project Network (ASP Net)**

## **VIII. Monitoring and Evaluation Procedures**

Monitoring and evaluating teacher progress and performance, and measuring the success rates of specific education attainment indicators has been a core problem for the Ministry of Education and its schools in understanding how to improve the quality of and access to education and other educational alternatives.

This problem is currently being dealt with through the MOE's transference to performance-based budgeting. However, the philosophy of performance-based budgeting will not stop in the realm of financial accountability. This philosophy will also be transferred to facilitate the MOE's and the local schools' abilities to develop and implement specific actions to achieve specified educational goals and outputs. This performance-based system will also form a framework from which the MOE can develop a system of performance indicators to accurately measure the abilities of non-formal education programs in achieving overall educational goals and outputs. At the micro level, this system will also be applied to each of the individual public schools for the development and implementation of their own internal control mechanisms.

The issue of the PSC will also be addressed. When legislation is passed that will transfer control of the hiring/firing of key employees within the MOE and local schools to the MOE, this will ensure that the MOE and local principles have the ability to enforce the achievement of outputs dictated within the performance-based budget and ensuing plan of action. These new changes will support the efforts of the other, and thus enable the MOE to follow through on proposed initiatives and expected goals and outcomes more efficiently and effectively.

Lastly, the RMI EFA Working Group will be strengthened within the implementation framework of the RMI EFA Action Plan to give this body some authority in overseeing and monitoring/evaluating the progress of the EFA implementation process. At this point in time, this is not the case, and as such will need to be addressed in the near future as the EFA Action Plan is developed further.

#### **Chapter 4: RMI EFA Priority Goal Implementation Matrices**

The following chapter will outline each of the RMI's EFA priority goals in greater detail; identifying problems and solutions specific to each goal within the RMI context. Each priority goal will include a budget-goal matrix and timeline as discussed within the RMI Working Group. It is important to note that this section is still in the revision and discussion process until internal reforms are completed.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

EFA strategies must be linked with poverty reduction strategies if the sustainability of EFA goals are to be met within the RMI education. It is this very reason that EFA goals must incorporate civil society and non-government entities in achieving overall EFA national strategies. Vocational and life skills must also be integrated into the EFA national plans as they provide a tangible link between the education system, the economy, and therefore people's livelihoods to achieve a certain level of sustainable development.

The RMI EFA Action Plan makes a concerted effort to expand primary school access to all Marshallese citizens and increase the quality of education, as the first steps to achieving universal primary education and basic life skills (numeracy and literacy) that will enhance a young person's and a community's ability to have a good quality of life.

Much still has as yet to be developed, implemented, and achieved. However, taking into account the major limitations and constraints the MOE and the RMI educational system face, the RMI, as a whole has made major educational improvements and changes in the last four years since 1999. More improvements will be made, bringing the RMI steps closer to achieving both its own educational goals and that of EFA.



**EFA GOAL PRIORITY 1 (EFA Goal 6): Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and the essential skills.**

**Human Rights Declaration:** All young people and adults have the right to quality education opportunities both in the formal and non-formal education sectors. Here, quality education is defined in terms of appropriate and well-developed curriculum and learning opportunities that ensure a high level attainment of basic literacy (English and Marshallese), numeracy, and life skills. It is further defined in terms of a high level of exposure to technology and associated life skills. In addition, it is defined in terms of highly trained and qualified teachers who are required to continuously improve their skills and knowledge. Lastly, quality education is defined in terms of appropriate and enforced accountability and management procedures to ensure effectiveness and efficiency at all levels.

**RMI Brief:** The Marshall Islands has the potential to improve all aspects of education in the current system, but lacks basic resources and capacity required for achievement of quality education. A reference is made to this criteria under the heading, “Restructuring the Ministry of Education,” page 6 of the Strategic Education Plan 2000.

**Problems:**

- (a) Incomplete national curriculum framework, benchmarks, and inconsistent integration between the different levels
- (b) Inadequately trained and qualified staff
  - 1. Lack of teacher training (pre- and in-service)
- (c) Inadequate resources
  - 1. Lack of adequate school buildings, support facilities, and maintenance
  - 2. Lack of school materials
  - 3. Lack of financial resources
- (d) Lack of accountability of administrative management processes
- (g) Lack of a comprehensive assessment framework in terms of:
  - 1. Performance of teachers
  - 2. Performance of education outcomes
  - 3. Performance of training outputs

## **Description of Problems**

### **(a) Incomplete national curriculum framework and standards (inadequate curriculum)**

In spite of the fact that there has been some major progress in the reviewing of our national curriculum under the ADB and FASEGP assistance, it is still felt that the curriculum structure and content is disjointed. There is still a pressing need to develop a credible framework. A goal in the Education Strategic Plan is "to renew and reform the curriculum at all levels so that pre-school, primary, and secondary courses are given appropriate prominence". This represents a priority.

### **(b) Inadequate trained and qualified staff**

It has been noted that there is a significant level of untrained teachers in the primary service. The successful maintenance of quality education at all level relies on the quality of the teacher. The current level of untrained teachers in the system is a major concern. Based on the latest statistics of the number of untrained staff the figures are: Pre-school 29%, Primary 50%, and Secondary 7% (May 2001).

### **(c) Inadequate resources**

The prompt and efficient supply of appropriate school supplies is important to the efficient operation of the schools. A systematic approach is needed to meet this goal. Despite the fact that education gets the most of the national annual budget the demand of each individual school for quality authentic resources for teaching and learning usually exceeds and exhausts education's recurrent budget.

### **(d) Lack of adequate school buildings and support facilities**

School buildings and support facilities range from basic furniture (shelves in classrooms, desks, chairs, etc). On the outer islands, school buildings are old battered, with roofs leaking and windows missing, thus creating an unhealthy environment for children. Most schools lack necessary school support facilities (staff housings, toilets, water catchments, storage, etc.). Currently the primary level starts from grades 1 to 8 or ages 6 to 14. The Ministry plans to start primary earlier adding pre-school or age 5 to the primary level and moving Headstart enrollment down to ages 3 and 4. This will involve building one or more additional classroom in each of the 87 school buildings to accommodate the pre-school intake (school identified by name and location – see appendix 4)

(e) **Lack of a school building maintenance program to keep facilities last longer**

There has been a poor practice of building school facilities without a sound maintenance program to fix minor problems and prevent school building from falling apart. There has also been a lack of community ownership of school facilities thus leaving the monitoring and upgrading of school structures to the central office staff and school mentors.

(f) **Lack of follow up on in-service training sessions to match what is being taught in the classrooms**

The call for better teacher management has been increasingly voiced not only with a view to ensuring optimal utilization of the human resources available, but also in connection with the growing concern about improving pupil achievement and the quality of education in general. Teaching-learning processes and eventually pupil achievement are not up to the expected standards because teachers do not show the required level of professional competence and commitment. This problem is largely due to the serious inadequate training for teachers in curriculum areas and professional development. There is also a lack of on site follow up to ensure what teachers learn in in-service and curriculum training is carried out in the classrooms.

(g) **Lack of a sound assessment instrument to measure students achievements at each cluster level (grade 3, 6, and 8)**

Currently there is no Assessment Board within the Education System to coordinate assessment of the progress, performance and achievement made. This is vital to providing constant feedback to the management and policymakers in regard to areas that are of urgent attention. At the moment, there is only one examination director with two staff members who focuses specifically on preparing national examination papers. There is an urgent need to provide additional assistance to the staff to relieve the workload and free up the assessment director to do more work on test analysis and evaluation of student progress.

## **Proposed Reforms**

(a) **Inadequate completion of a national curriculum**

On a national basis, a national curriculum structure/framework is essential. For preschools, an appropriate curricula/activities program structure is needed. At primary school level, the completion of standards and the implementation of current curriculum development initiatives, and the establishment and maintenance of a valid assessment regime; for pre-school, primary and secondary levels, development of a cohesive curriculum structure with prominence being given to the Marshallese culture and technical/vocational subjects to operate alongside the existing academic stream, lastly, developments in subjects in the technical and vocational areas are all needed.

(b) **Inadequately trained and qualified staff**

The Ministry Rules and Regulation needs to be revised to include the Certification requirement for teachers at the three levels so that all primary pre-school, primary, and secondary schools be staffed with quality and competent staff through continuous pre-service training programs.

(c) **Inadequate resources**

Increase government's annual allocation to education. Commission the operation of fans, proper lighting and computers for both teachers and students to improve staff and students' comfort and work efficiency. Teaching and learning resources especially in the language areas (reading and writing) need to be made available too.

(d) **Lack of adequate school buildings and support facilities**

Building of new standard conventional schools and classrooms for outer island schools; minimum of 68 additional classrooms for pre-school, 65 school buildings (4 to 8 classrooms) for primary, and three schools complex (to accommodate up to 600 enrollment) for secondary schools, at a rate of 10 schools each calendar year. Also to build multi-purpose hall using local building materials (to accommodate 100-200 students) as part of the primary school structures (see appendix 5).

(e) **Revise National Assessment Instrument**

Develop national assessment guidelines and goals

Revise the Marshall Island Standard Achievement Test (MISAT) to match the newly revised curriculum standards

Training of management staff at the Ministry of Education on assessment guidelines and proctor protocol

(f) **Training for staff**

Staff development programs through in-country training workshops and short-term attachments abroad in Guam, CNMI and Hawaii, at least one overseas attachment per teacher, for every two years.

<b>Actions required for reform</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Person Responsible</b>	<b>Monitoring</b>	<b>Progress Indicator</b>
<b>Reform (a)</b> (i) Complete national curriculum framework (ii) Develop standards for subject areas	Q3/2003	Asst. Secretary- Curriculum and Instruction	MOE	A completed national CF and ready to be endorsed by the Minister and Cabinet members
	Q3/2003	Curr & Inst. Division Curriculum Specialists	MOE	Completed all 8 subject areas
<b>Reform (b)</b> Pre-service Training to continue for teacher training qualification	Q1/2003 – 2005	MOE – Teacher Training Coordinator	MOE	Approximate number of 20 more qualified teachers should be in the force.
<b>Reform (c)</b> Increase Government allocation to education resources by 25% National Budget.	Beginning Financial Year 2004 - 2006	Minister/Secretary Ministry of education	MOE	All schools should be renovated and equipped with quality teaching/learning/ resources.
<b>Reform (d)</b> Construction of ten primary schools and multi-purpose halls, on an annual basis.  Provision of schools with appropriate furniture, etc.	Thirty (30) schools to be completed within 2004 - 2006	Secretary of Education	MOE	Thirty (30) classrooms completed by the end of 2005.
	Before the end Q4/2004 - 2005	Asst. Secretary Curr & Inst., School Mentors	MOE	By 2005 all schools should be fully equipped with chairs/tables.

<b>Reform (e)</b> Revise national Assessment Framework and Guideline  Procurement of support equipment/resources for Assessment Unit  Capacity training of Assessment Unit Staff.	Before end of Q1/2003	Asst. Secretary Curr & Inst., School Mentors	Ministry of Education	A completed and endorsed policy on Assessment Framework and Guidelines.
	Commence Q1/2003 to Q4/2005	Ministry of Education Director, Evaluation and Assessment Division  Secretary of Education	Ministry of Education	Assessment Unit should be well equipped with needed assessment tools.
	Commence Q1/2003 – Q4/2005		Ministry of Education	One trained staff every year
<b>Reform (f)</b> Teachers professional development on national basis and short term attachments abroad	Commence Q1/2003- Q4/2005	Secretary of Education	Ministry of Education	Twenty teachers received In-Service Training (IST) every year.

Budget for Reform Actions for Problem A									
Source	FY02	FY03	FY04	FY05	FY06	FY07	FY08	FY09	FY10
<b>Complete national curriculum framework and develop standards for subject areas</b>									
Donor	0	-	9,000	9,000	9,000	9,000	9,000	9,000	9,000
Local	18,000	9,000	9,000	9,000	9,000	9,000	9,000	9,000	9,000

<b>Pre-service Training to continue for teacher training qualification</b>									
Donor	0	20,000	25,000	30,000	30,000	30,000	25,000	20,000	20,000
Local	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000
<b>Increase Government allocation to education resources by 25% National Budget.</b>									
Donor	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Local	9,350,000	9,350,000	9,350,000	9,350,000	9,350,000	9,350,000	9,350,000	9,350,000	9,350,000
<b>Construction of ten primary schools and multi-purpose halls, on an annual basis. Provision of schools with appropriate furniture, etc.</b>									
Donor									
Local									
<b>Revise national Assessment Framework and Guideline</b>									
Donor									
Local									
<b>Procurement of support equipment/resources for Assessment Unit</b>									
Donor									
Local									
<b>Capacity training of Assessment Unit Staff</b>									
Donor									
Local									
<b>Teachers professional development on national basis and short term attachments abroad</b>									
Donor									
Local									
<b>Total Donor and Local</b>									
Donor									
Local									
<b>Total Budget</b>									

**EFA GOAL PRIORITY 2 (EFA Goal 1): Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children**

**Human Rights Declaration:** All children have the right to equitable, fair, and affordable access to ECE opportunities. As such, children have the right to be exposed to appropriate cognitive development/learning environments, and to participate in various mental and physical activities to promote good health and learning habits. Within the ECE framework, children have the right to access free medical, nutrition, and disability screening services to ensure proper cognitive and physical development; and to ensure that special needs are recognized and met early. Children have the right to a safe physical and emotional environment, and to have access to basic levels of life skills attainment (e.g. anger management and conflict resolution). Children with disabilities have the right to access free specialized services to meet their individual needs and requirements, and to participate in all activities offered when possible. Children have the right to have trained teachers who are specially trained in Early Childhood Development. Parents have the right to be involved in their child's education program through active participation in the development, implementation, and monitoring of ECE education outputs. Parents and children alike have the right to access funding support alternatives in order to ensure continuity of educational progress.

**RMI Brief:** While there have been some provisions made to improve the current status of Early Childhood Education in the Marshall Islands, there is still a great need for improvement in the quality of education provided and a comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness of the programs and the use of resources. A reference is made to this criteria under the heading, "Pre-school Education," (Education Strategic Plan, p. 10).

**Problems:**

- (a) Lack of assessment of the efficiency and effectiveness of current level of ECE resources
- (b) Lack of assessment on the effectiveness of the current program on learning outcomes
- (c) Inadequate of number of pre-school buildings
- (d) Inadequate targeting of eligible students
- (e) The need to improve the Early Childhood curriculum in order to cater to children with special education needs (screening)



**Description of problem:****(a) Inadequate pre-school facilities (school building/classroom)**

Even though a few buildings have been put in place for some pre-schools (Headstart Programs), a large number of pre-schools still have no proper building to enable them to carry out their educational programs successfully. For those who have proper buildings in place, there is still a need for proper equipment and instructional materials to be installed/acquired such as early reading and writing programs, teacher resources, student tables and chairs, and other resources. Out of the 48 Headstart Centers (children ages 3-5) on 23 atoll in the country, there is still a need to build additional classrooms on existing school building to serve as pre-school centers serving children who are five years old and are not in the Headstart program.

**(b) Inadequate training**

There is a need to provide training for young mothers in the care of babies and young children. Most pre-school teachers are untrained. Of the 126 teachers serving in the Headstart program, only 86 are trained teachers of this level. Although there are preschool Certificate and diplomas programs available at the USP Center in Majuro, only a few aspiring pre-school teacher trainees are currently enrolled. The main constraint has been the funding and the perceived unattractive teachers salaries and conditions.

**(c) Inadequate resources**

Funding of pre-school programs has been provided by the US federal grants through Headstart centers. There is an urgent need to provide additional financial assistance from the RMI government to supplement the federal support for this important education sector.

**(d) Revision of national curriculum for pre-schools completion of curriculum for the disabled**

At the moment, each of the Headstart Centers operates on an ad hoc curriculum either borrowed or designed to meet their own perceived goals. There is also an urgent need to develop national curriculums for early childhood education and care to streamline all early childhood activities to reflect the educational needs of early childhood pupils.

**(e) Limited direct financial grant for operation of pre-schools**

Although there has been an appropriation of \$200,00 (FY 2002) by the government to finance pre-schools to enable them to run effective educational programs for pre-school children, this amount has been insufficient to begin the establishment of pre-school programs as part of the school system.

**Proposed reforms:**

- (a) Provide classrooms for the rest of the Early Childhood Education & Disability Education (ECE & DE) schools.
- (b) Provide adequate teacher training
- (c) Provide funding for ECE and DE learning resources
- (d) Develop comprehensive national curriculums for ECE and DE
- (e) **Government assistance to provide Financial grant to assist ECE and DE**

<b>Action/Activities</b>	<b>Time frame</b>	<b>Person Responsible</b>	<b>Monitoring</b>	<b>Progress indicator</b>
<b>Reform (a)</b> Construct classrooms for Pre-Schools	2003-2005	Secretary of Education and Early Childhood Education Coordinator	Ministry of Education	Ten completed classrooms every year
<b>Reform (b)</b> Pre- service and In-service Training for Early childhood Education and Disability education.	From Q1/2003- Q4/2005	Secretary of education w/ DEUC and ECE Coordinators	Ministry of Education	Ten trained ECE teachers, 5 ECE staff, and 10 DEU teachers and 5 staff every year
<b>Reform (c)</b> Procure Resources Cabinet to approve recurrent funding for ECE & DEU resources.	Q1/2003	Secretary of Education	Ministry of Education	Ministry's cabinet paper submitted for consideration by April 2002.
Department of Education to provide budget line for ECE & DEU in the Budget submission for 2003.	2003	Secretary of Education	Ministry of Education	Budget submission by June 2002
Budget approval distributed to all providers of ECE & DEU for the first time	2003	Asst. Secretary, Admin. Services and Logistic	Ministry of Education	ECE & DEU providers to acknowledge receiving money
<b>Reform (d)</b> Develop National ECE Curriculum	Q1/2003 – Q4/2005	ECE Coordinator	Ministry of Education	A completed an approved curriculum frameworks for ECE
<b>Reform (e)</b> Government to provide financial grant to assist ECE and DE	Beginning FY 2003	Secretary of Education	Ministry of Education	1. Submission of ECE and DEU budget 2. Approval of ECE and DEU budget

<b>Budget \$US (000)</b>	<b>2002</b>		<b>2003</b>		<b>2004</b>		<b>2005</b>		<b>2006</b>		<b>2007</b>		<b>2008</b>		<b>2009</b>		<b>2010</b>	
	<b>Donor</b>	<b>Local</b>	<b>Donor</b>	<b>Local</b>	<b>Donor</b>	<b>Local</b>	<b>Donor</b>	<b>Local</b>	<b>Donor</b>	<b>Local</b>	<b>Donor</b>	<b>Local</b>	<b>Donor</b>	<b>Local</b>	<b>Donor</b>	<b>Local</b>	<b>Donor</b>	<b>Local</b>
Action 1			20	10	20	10	20	10	5	2	5	2	10	5	10	5	5	2
Action 2			10	6	10	6	10	6	10	6	10	6	10	6	10	6	10	6
Action 3	2	1	5	2	5	2	5	2	5	3	5	3	5	3	5	4	5	4
Action 4			5	20	5	20	5	20	5	20	5	20	5	20	5	20	5	20
Action 5			5	10	5	10	5	10	5	10	2	1	2	1	2	1	10	15
Action 6					5	10	5	10	5	10	5	10	5	10	5	10	5	10
Action 7			10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10

**EFA GOAL PRIORITY 3 (EFA Goal 3): Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programs**

**Human Rights Declaration:** All young people and adults have the right to equitable, affordable, and fair access to educational opportunities both in the formal and non-formal sectors to improve their individual academic and professional status; including, but not limited to exposure to health prevention programs that ensure positive habits and disease prevention. All young people and adults with disabilities have the right to educational and life skills opportunities that suit their needs and requirements. All young people and adults have the right to educational attainment within a safe physical and supportive environment and quality standards of instruction. All have the right to access information and alternative funding alternatives to ensure that all are able to both attain and continue on an education path. Civil society and NGOs have the right to develop and implement education, health education, and life skills-oriented programs to ensure access to a wider variety of learners; and to have access to international and national financial support to ensure their continuity and further development. The local communities have the right to hold the local governments, schools, and MOE accountable in providing appropriate number of schools and alternative learning and skills-based (also includes traditional skills) programs, as available resources permit, to ensure greater accessibility. The MOE has the right to ensure that the national budget and strategies implement those actions that provide for greater number of schools and supporting staff, and alternative learning programs; including, but not limited to, the funding provision for civil society and NGO programs that provide learning and training options. Local communities and parents have the right to petition the MOE and national government to provide more schools and alternative learning opportunities.

**RMI Brief:** Priority 3 comes in two parts: first, the RMI education system needs to address the issue of providing appropriate life skills training, both in the formal and non-formal education sectors. Second, the RMI education system needs to address the issue of health, including HIV/AIDS, by integrating them into the national curriculum; as well as including programs conducted by NGOs and civil society. A reference is made to this criteria under the heading, “Post Secondary Education,” (Strategic Education Plan 2000, p.34).

**Problems:**

- (a) Lack of coordination and integration of vocational and life skills training programs, both formal and non-formal
  - 1. Lack of a needs assessment of skills sought-after in the labor market
  - 2. Lack of skills assessment as measurement of employability of education/skill-level attained
- (b) Lack of integration of NGOs and civil society organizations in the development and delivery of vocational and life skills programs, traditional and trade-oriented

- (c) Lack of trained instructors in vocational training fields
- (d) Lack of long-term coordination of priorities for vocational skills training (i.e. integration of pre-vocational education at the secondary level with post-secondary vocational training )
- (e) Lack of adult, post-secondary training centers
- (f) Lack of training facilities and associated resources

### **Description of problems:**

#### **(a) No central government coordination of all training programs for young people and adults**

At present there are fragmented continuing education courses conducted by departments, ministries and Non-Governmental organizations in the country. There is no central record to register the type of continuing education courses that people have attended in order to monitor who would need further training and areas they should focus on. Often there is duplication of courses and donors have no way of knowing whether a similar course (or courses) has been conducted for potential recipients of their project funding. A central coordinating body would have proper records for identifying target groups of young people and adults for training as well as for monitoring the progress of such programs to ensure that resources do not get wasted because of unnecessary repetition of programs for the same target groups.

#### **(b) Inadequate training for teachers, school administrators, and parent groups on the HIV-AIDS program**

The Ministry of Education, through a small grant from Center for Disease Control, developed HIV/AIDS policies during the last cycle of the grant (FY 2001) and has conducted some training on these policies to public schools students, teachers and administrators. A trained cadre of four health educators from the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health had received training on the comprehensive school health program and has provided training on HIV/AIDS policies. Budget constraints, however, have limited the training to the center and sub-center islands while distant areas are yet to be reached. Parents, especially young adults, and the general public have not received any training on the HIV-AIDS policies. Yet, the young adults are the ones most likely to be infected with HIV-AIDS, and parents are in the best position to assist their children with HIV-AIDS preventive measures.

#### **(c) Inadequate institutions for learning needs of young people and adults**

There are many young people and adults in the Marshall Islands whose learning needs are not catered for by our current education system. There are only two registered institutions of capacities ranging from ten to thirty students each: one provides basic automotive,

mechanical, and air-condition training; the other provides basic book-keeping and accounting training skills training. The problem with these institutions is that they are discriminatory. Their intakes are based on the ability of students to pay their fees. Only the economically better off young people and adults can benefit from these learning institutions. There is a need to expand the role of the National Training Council to provide more free and non-fee paying continuing education programs for all young people and adults based on their needs rather than their ability to pay the going fees of such institutions.

(d) **Lack of sufficient skills-based activities in classroom instruction to promote healthy living and prevention of important health problems**

The curriculum standards for health and physical education need to be reexamined to insure more skill-based activities that promote healthy living and prevention of important health problems are included. Skill-based education also needs to be offered to parents and school-community partners as part of awareness and involvement activities in the schools.

(e) **No National Accreditation Board/Authority**

All of the vocational education institutions in the country offer certificates when their courses are completed. The problem is that holders of their certificates cannot claim any special recognition of their qualifications for accreditation or for salary remuneration purposes. Therefore, if the training for these people is meant to be meaningful, it should be recognized. The National Training Council should be able to overcome this problem.

**Proposed reforms:**

- (a) Expand the Continuing Education Unit at the College of the Marshall Islands to address the training needs of youth and adults.
- (b) Review and refine current HIV-AIDS policies and implement health-related policies.
- (c) Provide training and learning opportunities for the following target groups:
  - disadvantaged young people and adults
  - Training Cadre and ministry policymaker on HIV-AIDS policies and procedures.
  - students and staff, parent groups, young adults and the general public on health-related school policies, including HIV-AIDS
- (d) Extensive training in the area of health and physical education for teachers to carry out activities that will prevent the acquisition of important health problems and promote healthy living
- (e) Revive the National Training Council.

Action/Activities	Time frame	Person Responsible	Monitoring	Progress indicator
<b>Reform (a)</b> Strengthen and expand the role of the National Training Council training unit to cater for the needs of youth groups, young adults, and the general public on topics not address by the National Training Council.  Recruit experienced and qualified person to staff the EFA central training unit under NTC to work on EFA priorities  Establish a Continuing Education Policy for all RMI citizens to be implement in CY2004	Q1/2003 – 2005	Secretary for Education	Ministry of Education	Well equipped unit with computer/tables/chairs/fax/ Copier and information procures, pamphlets, and catalogs.
	Q1/2003	Secretary of Education	Ministry of Education	A well qualified staff working in the NTC Center
	Q1/2004	Secretary of Education NTC Director PSC Chairman	Ministry of Education	Completed policy for continuing education ready and submitted for Cabinet approval
<b>Reform (b)</b> Refine current HIV-AIDS policies and implement health-related school policies  Provide training to training cadre and ministry policymaker  Conduct training on policies to students, staff, parent groups, and the general public	Q1/2003	Assistant Secretary for Curr. & Instruction	Ministry of Education	Training agenda and training report on file
	Q2/2003	Assistant Secretary for Curr. & Instruction	Ministry of Education	Training agenda and training report on file
	Q3/2003	Assistant Secretary for Curr. & Instruction	Ministry of Education	Training agenda and training report on file
Ministry of Education to reactivate the National Board of Education to also address health related programs	Q2/2003 - 2005	Secretary of Education and the National Board of Education chairman	Ministry of Education	An active Forum
<b>Reform c)</b>	Q3/2003	Secretary of Education	Ministry of Education	Detailed report of the study.



Conduct a feasibility study on the learning needs disadvantaged young people and adults.		and the National Board of Education chairman		
Department to make findings or report of survey available for the vocational education providers for the National Board of Education for appropriate action.	Q4/2003	Secretary of Education and the National Board of Education chairman	Ministry of Education	A documented report detailing the action to be taken.
Design and develop an action plan to meet learning needs of the study	2003	Secretary of Education and OSC Coordinator	Ministry of Education	A well thought-out plan to meet the learning need of the disadvantage young people.
<b>Reform (d)</b> Acquire the “Get Real About Aids” prevention program and implement it in the RMI classrooms	2003	Asst. Sec. for Cuur & Instruction	Secretary of Education	A “Get Real About Aids” kit in every school
<b>Reform (e)</b> The Marshall Islands Govt to revive the National Training Council. Recruit Officer to oversee the training need of RMI citizens	2003	Secretary of Education and OSC Coordinator	Ministry of Education	A well qualified person recruited
The Govt to provide office space & facility for the Examination Unit.	2003- 2005	Secretary of Education and OSC Coordinator	DOE	An established office with equipment, computers, fax, copier and tables and chairs.

Budget \$US (000)	2002		2003		2004		2005		2006		2007		2008		2009		2010	
	Donor	Local	Donor	Local	Donor	Local	Donor	Local	Donor	Local	Donor	Local	Donor	Local	Donor	Local	Donor	Local

<b>Action 1</b>			5	3	2	1	3	2	3	2	2	1	2	1	3	2	3	2
<b>Action 2</b>			3	3	3	3	3	4	3	4	3	4	3	5	3	5	3	5
<b>Action 3</b>			5	1	5	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	1	-	-	-	-
<b>Action 4</b>					5	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	1	-	-	5	1
<b>Action 5</b>			1	-	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0
<b>Action B</b>					3	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	-
<b>Action B-2</b>					0	0.5	-	-	0	0.5	-	-	0	0.5	-	-	-	-
<b>Action B-3</b>					2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	-			
<b>Action C-1</b>			-	-	1	6	1	6	1	7	1	7	1	8	1	8	1	9
<b>Action C-2</b>			-	-	10	1	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	1	-	-

**EFA GOAL PRIORITY 4 (EFA Goal 2): Ensuring by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality.**

**Human Rights Declaration:** All children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances, and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have the right to affordable and equitable primary education of good quality. Local governments, civil society, and the MOE have the right to petition the government to ensure that the national budget makes provision for the building of primary education facilities and qualified relevant staff to ensure greater access; and that the MOE actively seeks external funding sources to supplement existing finances to upgrade and maintain current school facilities.

**RMI Brief:** The issue of access is a crucial topic that needs to be addressed by the RMI. At present, a large portion of school-age children are not attending school simply because there are not enough spaces. In some cases, particularly in the urban centers of Majuro and Ebeye where the problem is more obvious, schools have resorted to ‘split sessions’, whereby schools divide their school hours in half so as to accommodate more students in the next half. This has resulted in a greatly reduced quality of education attainment and overload on certain teachers and schools already limited by insufficient resources and plagued by poor administrative management (Strategic Education Plan 2000, p. ?).

**Problems:**

- (a) Lack of adequate numbers of schools
- (b) Lack of appropriate alternative learning opportunities
- (c) Lack of access to and information on funding support mechanisms that ensure continuity of individual education attainment
- (d) Lack of budgetary allocation for the construction of new schools and hiring of appropriate, qualified staff

**Description of Problems:**

- (a) **Incomplete comprehensive curriculum**

The expectation of the Government of the Marshall Islands for a quality education system is yet to be realized in practice. Neither the desire for relevancy in education nor for the expectations of the community (including the students) has been met since the major changes occurred with the introduction of the Strategic Plan for the Ministry of Education. In spite of curriculum renewal in most subjects in the Primary sector under the ADB sponsored Education Loan and USDOE's Freely Associated States Education Grant Program it is still felt that the national educational standards are still at a decline. The curriculum needs to be completed with standards and benchmarks, scope and sequences, and be comprehensive enough to include unit plans for teachers to follow. Curriculum currently in place is very academic, and need to be expanded to incorporate basic life skill opportunities for all.

**(b) Lack of teacher and of trained teaching staff**

Although there has been some significant progress in the last few years in training programs in most of our sectors, attaining the prime goal to staff all schools with qualified trained staff, Marshall Islands still lacks trained teachers in specialized areas; those who could teach students with special needs, language problems, school counseling, etc. In view of the increasing number of students with special learning needs and decreasing assistance from federal grants, there is a great need for this area of concern to be addressed.

**(c) Inadequate resources**

The most striking problem is the inadequacy of resources (reading books, equipment, paper, school furniture, cabinets, etc.) required to teach young people in the primary school environment. Currently primary schools' physical facilities vary considerably. There is limited equipment and resources for indoor and outdoor activities. This has been caused by the limited funding assistance by Government to schools over the years.

**(d) Lack of proper assessment and monitoring methodologies**

There is still a concern (by Government and the community) with the decline in educational standards, especially when students reached secondary school level. The number of students failing to meet the minimum entry requirement to the higher levels in the secondary school is on the increase. The Pills tests conducted in the mid-1990s showed low level of literacy and numeracy achievement at Year 4 of Primary Education.

**Proposed Reforms:**

**(a) Inadequate curriculum**

Marshall Islands needs the establishment of a cohesive and inter-related curriculum framework linking pre-schooling with primary schooling, primary schooling with secondary education and training and secondary education and training with further education and training and with community in both paid and unpaid occupations. Development of identified priority subject areas that have not been addressed under the Education Strategic Plan is also needed. The provision of required equipments and resources to support the above activities is essential.

**(b) Lack of trained staff (teachers)**

Target that 100% of all training requirements for teachers as stipulated under the Ministry of Education Certification process be met. Continue upgrading of teachers to higher level beyond the minimum certification requirement.

**(c) Inadequate resources**

There is a great need for an increase in the allocation of learning and teaching resources to individual schools. There is a need to increase the use of local materials to develop teaching and learning tools. The government needs to provide greater support toward acquisition of teaching and learning resources i.e. increasing subsidy to schools.

**(d) Lack of proper assessment and monitoring methodologies**

An assessment/examination system should be established which provides adequate assessment points within the system and has direct relevance to the Marshall Islands education system and needs.

Action required for Reforms	Time Frame	Person Responsible	Monitoring	Progress Indicator
<b>Reform (a)</b> Develop national curriculum framework for special education	2003	Secretary of Education	Ministry of Education	National curriculum for special education in place and endorsed by Minister and Cabinet.
Develop curriculum standards for each area of special education.	2003	Asst. Secretary for Curriculum & Instruction	Ministry of Education	By 2003 curriculum for each special education area

				completed.
<b>Reform (b)</b> Pre-service Training on special education for primary level	First lot commence Q1/2003 – 2005	Secretary of Education Asst. Secretary for Curriculum & Instruction	Ministry of Education	35 teachers trained every year.
<b>Reform (c)</b> Increase funding for procure resources for schools  Increase use of local materials to create teaching tools.	Q1/2003	Asst. Secretary for Curriculum & Instruction  Special Ed. Director	Ministry of Education	By 2004 all schools should be fully equipped with their teaching resources.
<b>Reform (d)</b> Strengthening of an efficient and reliable Examination Unit  Capacity Building for MOE staff  Procurement of appropriate support resources	Before Q4/2003 in place required personnel  Training 2003-2005 (short and long term) Commence Q2/2003 and steadily up to 2005	Secretary of Education  Assessment & Evaluation Director	Ministry of Education  Ministry of Education	An effective Assessment Unit responding to the needs of the majority of students and emphasize participation as well as achievement

Budget \$US (000)	2002		2003		2004		2005		2006		2007		2008		2009		2010	
	Donor	Local	Donor	Local	Donor	Local	Donor	Local	Donor	Local	Donor	Local	Donor	Local	Donor	Local	Donor	Local
<b>Action 1</b> Establsih	2	25	2	30	3	40	3	40	3	40	4	50	4	50	4	50	45	50

inter-related Curric. Frame-Work																		
<b>Action 2</b> Pre-service training																		
<b>Action 3</b> Procure resources for schools	30	150	40	150	40	150	40	150	40	170	45	175	45	200	45	200	50	250
<b>Action 4</b> Strengthening Examination Unit DoE, through staff devp. And Resourcing	20	150	40	200	40	200	40	200	40	200	60	300	60	300	60	300	60	300

**EFA GOAL PRIORITY 5 (EFA Goal 4): Achieving a 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults**

**Human Rights Declaration:** All adults have the right to high quality, affordable, equitable, and accessible opportunities in continuing education, both in the formal and non-formal sectors. Local governments, NGOs, and the national government have the right to form and strengthen partnerships, and to hold each other accountable for the implementation, enforcement, and monitoring of educational goals and objectives, in order to ensure that good quality and appropriate learning opportunities are available, and which address the issue of adult literacy as a priority topic. All adults have the right to access information on and to receive funding support to ensure their attendance and/or continuation in a particular program.

**RMI Brief:** Adult literacy is currently measured at 74%. Due to the nature of defining literacy, this figure may or may not reflect the true nature of illiteracy in the Marshall Islands. As such, it is vital that the RMI address this issue as a way to ensure that all economically-productive young people and adults have sufficient literacy skills to ensure their viability in the labor market and to ensure a passing of knowledge to the next generations through improved education attainment. A reference is made to this criteria under the heading, “Post-Secondary Education” (Strategic Education Plan 2000, p.34).

**Problems:**

- (a) Lack of integration of data collection procedures within existing programs to reflect the true level of illiteracy
- (b) Limited alternatives in and number of adult literacy programs
- (c) Lack of access to continuing adult education programs
- (d) Lack of a coordinating body for continuing education courses for adults, especially women
- (e) Lack of RMI definition of literacy and associated development and implementation of standards for testing and measuring

**Description of Problems:**

- (a) **Lack of data to reflect the true figure of illiteracy**

According to data collected in the last census in 1999, about 91% of the population is literate and 9% is illiterate. However there is concern that the method applied to assess the literacy level of the population is not reliable. As such, the 91% literacy level professed is unreliable and there is a possibility that the illiteracy level could be higher or lesser than the figure stated. Based on the uncertainty



reflected, there is a great need for the literacy level of the population to be assessed accordingly in the next census in 2009. This would involve applying a reliable method such as a small text with questions.

**(b) Limited adult literacy program**

Currently there are limited literacy programs being offered by the College of the Marshall Islands for only those individuals living on the centers of Majuro and Ebeye. The Marshall Islands christen churches also plays a vital role in providing literacy programs for youths, children and adults on an ad hoc basis. These literacy programs focus a lot on biblical readings and other religious matters for the enforcement of religious understanding rather than for the purpose of building the literacy understanding of the people.

**(c) Lack of non-credit (non-formal) courses or programs**

It is noted that there is a lack of non credit (non formal) courses or programs for men and women in the current Education System in the Marshall Islands. This is important for those who could not or those who would not be interested in taking up credit courses or programs, the less academic or the arts people. Such groups' interest and needs should be recognized and courses provided for them.

**(d) Lack of free access to continuing education (non-credit) and lack of a coordinating body for continuing education courses for adults, and especially women**

Although CMI and the USP Extension Center in the Marshall Islands are providing continuing education services, women and men who have less access to financial resources find it difficult to participate in many courses or programs offered by these centers. Likewise the absence of non-credit courses offered at these local centers has made life quite difficult for those who are not interested in academic and technical skills to secure appropriate skills that they could build on to enable them to maximize for their own survival. These problems are somehow perpetuated by the absence of a coordination body for continuing education in the current Education system.

**Proposed Reforms:**

- (a) Establish a Research Unit in the Education system
- (b) Expand the literacy programs to remote outer island communities
- (c) Develop non-formal courses in collaboration with results of the study in goal 4.
- (d) Support and strengthen continuing education unit and design policies to empower the disadvantage

Action required for Reforms	Time Frame	Person Responsible	Monitoring	Progress Indicator
<b>Reform (a)</b> 1. Establish a Research Unit at the Ministry of Education  2. Set up office space and recruit qualified personnel  3. Capacity building of staff  4. Conduct literacy survey	June 2002  June 2002  Sept- December 2002/Open  December 2002	Sec of Education  Sec of Education  Sec of Education  Sec of Education	Ministry of Education  Ministry of Education  Ministry of Education  Ministry of Education	Establishment of the Research Unit.  1. Set up well equipped office with 2 computers, tables/chairs/copier and fax 2. Appointment of 2 qualified staff for the research unit.  Record of training on file  Completed literacy survey
<b>Reform (b)</b> Expand the literacy programs to outer island communities	2003	Sec of Education	Ministry of Education	A complete literacy program
<b>Reform (c)</b> Develop non-formal courses in collaboration with results of the study in goal 4	2004	Sec of Education	Ministry of Education	By 2005 six informal courses have been developed.
<b>Reform (d)</b> Support and strengthen continuing education unit and design policies to empower the disadvantaged	2004	Sec of Education and Asst Sec Curr & Isnt	Ministry of Education	A policy in place to provide and cater for disadvantaged by access to non-formal education.

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Budget \$US (000)	2002		2003		2004		2005		2006		2007		2008		2009		2010	
	Don or	Loca l	Don or	Loc al	Dono r	Local	Dono r	Local	Dono r	Local	Dono r	Local	Dono r	Local	Dono r	Local	Dono r	Local
<b>Reform a</b> Action 1	0.2	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Action 2	-	-	3	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Action 3	-	-	-	5	2	-	-	-	-	6	4	-	-	-	6	4	-	-
Action 4	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Reform b</b> Action 1					10	5	5	2	2	1	-	-	-	-	3	2	2	1
<b>Reform c</b> Action 1					20	10	10	5	10	5	10	5	10	5	10	5	10	5
<b>Reform d</b> Action 1					4	2	4	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	2	4	2



**EFA GOAL PRIORITY 6 (EFA Goal 5): Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.**

**Human Rights Declaration:** All members of Marshallese society have the right to access any form of educational opportunities in both the formal and non-formal education/training sectors, regardless of gender. This is especially true at the primary and secondary levels. Both boys and girls have the right to equal and fair access to various educational opportunities and programs, and access to support funding mechanisms to ensure equitable gender composition in all schools and programs.

**RMI Brief:** The issue of gender, traditionally, was not much of a consideration. However, in recent times, the gender issue has become more prominent. It is becoming clear that enrollment trends, for example, reveal that female enrollment is following a declining trend, particularly at the secondary school level. As gender does not exist as a topic of consideration within the Strategic Plan 2000, it is important that this issue be discussed within the framework of EFA as a priority area to be integrated into future education plans for the RMI. Social transitions within the traditional family network is no longer as strong as before, resulting in young females, especially, to get involved in negative activities that affect their ability to finish school (i.e. teen pregnancy and substance abuse).

Problems involving this priority pertain to good quality of basic education and equal access to and achievement in basic education; but these problems, which do not exist among female only but among all students regardless of gender, are being addressed elsewhere in this plan.

**Problems:**

- (a) Lack of consistent and continuous statistical analysis of potential gender discrepancies with the education system
- (b) Insufficient acknowledgement of significantly higher female drop-out rates at the secondary school level
- (c) Lack of programs which deal with adolescent health and social issues
- (d) Lack of community-level programs (i.e. civil society and NGOs) to address women's and family issues, both in and out of the school system
- (e) Lack of teacher involvement in mitigating student problems (teachers over-loaded with other responsibilities)
- (f) Lack of counseling services within the school system to deal with adolescent issues

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