

MARINE MANAGED AREAS WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT?

SETTING UP OF A MARINE MANAGED AREA IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE OF THE SOCIAL, CULTURAL, ECONOMIC AND ECOLOGICAL BENEFITS IT CAN PROVIDE TO LOCAL COMMUNITIES. HERE ARE A FEW EXAMPLES THAT HAVE BEEN DISCOVERED:

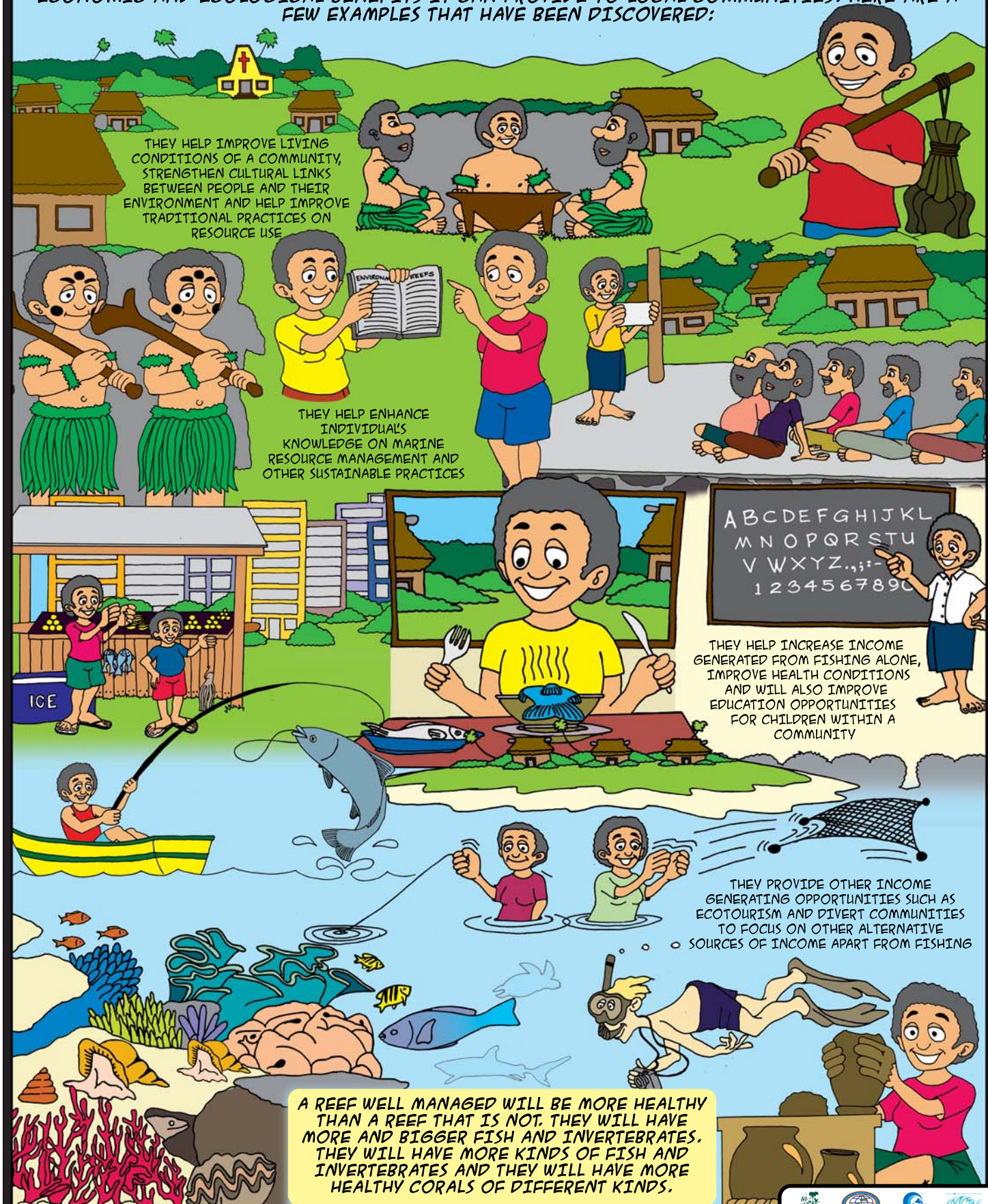
THEY HELP IMPROVE LIVING CONDITIONS OF A COMMUNITY, STRENGTHEN CULTURAL LINKS BETWEEN PEOPLE AND THEIR ENVIRONMENT AND HELP IMPROVE TRADITIONAL PRACTICES ON RESOURCE USE

THEY HELP ENHANCE INDIVIDUAL'S KNOWLEDGE ON MARINE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND OTHER SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES

THEY HELP INCREASE INCOME GENERATED FROM FISHING ALONE, IMPROVE HEALTH CONDITIONS AND WILL ALSO IMPROVE EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN WITHIN A COMMUNITY

THEY PROVIDE OTHER INCOME GENERATING OPPORTUNITIES SUCH AS ECOTOURISM AND DIVERT COMMUNITIES TO FOCUS ON OTHER ALTERNATIVE SOURCES OF INCOME APART FROM FISHING

A REEF WELL MANAGED WILL BE MORE HEALTHY THAN A REEF THAT IS NOT. THEY WILL HAVE MORE AND BIGGER FISH AND INVERTEBRATES. THEY WILL HAVE MORE KINDS OF FISH AND INVERTEBRATES AND THEY WILL HAVE MORE HEALTHY CORALS OF DIFFERENT KINDS.



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Our marine environment is often threatened by human activities. To protect it, we need to manage the way in which we use it for the continuous provisions of its many resources and services. Setting up a marine managed area can be a beneficial tool in attempting to have a sustainable ecosystem. When we protect our marine environment, not only are we protecting our natural resources, we are also helping our communities to enjoy it.

The advantages of setting up a marine managed area are many and here are few of the key ones proven:

1. Environmental Benefits

A reef that is well managed has been proven to be more healthy than a reef that is not. This is because in a managed area the resources are protected from threats caused by overfishing and overharvesting. As a result, fish and invertebrates will increase in numbers, sizes and types. The high density of adult fish/invertebrate creates more opportunities for reproduction leading to an increase in population numbers.

The same will be for corals – a marine managed area will allow corals the opportunity to grow big and healthy providing more food and shelter for the marine life.

Not only should reefs be protected but we should also protect other critical habits such as mangroves, seagrass beds, sandy bottom, and channels for marine life to feed, spawn and breed during their life cycle.

2. Socio-economic Benefits

A large part of our local population live near the coast and rely heavily on the marine environment as their main source of food and income. Setting up a marine managed area will result in an increase in household income, improved livelihood and will also generate income opportunities such as eco-tourism.

Studies have shown that those communities with improved income generated from marine managed areas are able to afford education for their children. Their quality of living within a community has also improved because of better facilities and services provided to them which they are able to afford. These communities have also become knowledgeable on issues about their marine environment; they are able to share the good news with others and express strong values on the suitable use of their resources in practices that are safe and beneficial to the environment. Most importantly these communities have shown that the increase consumption of fish and invertebrates contributes to the high intake of protein thus leading to a more healthy population.

3. Cultural Benefits

Because of our cultural and traditional links to the marine environment passed on over generations, it is critical that we protect our marine resources from their current level of use and threatened state. Communities that have well managed marine areas are strengthening resource management practices such as the declaration of no take areas as a measure to improve productivity.

Through this process, there is a communal agreement amongst community members as to how they can use their marine resources while also protecting it. The setting up of a marine managed area aids in strengthening the traditional connections local communities have to their natural resources and the empowerment to acquire more responsibility to undertake the management activities that are now critical for the marine resources and environment as well for the culture and future of the communities themselves. After all resource management is about organising human activities and culture is a critical component of that.