

Pacific Resources for Education and Learning

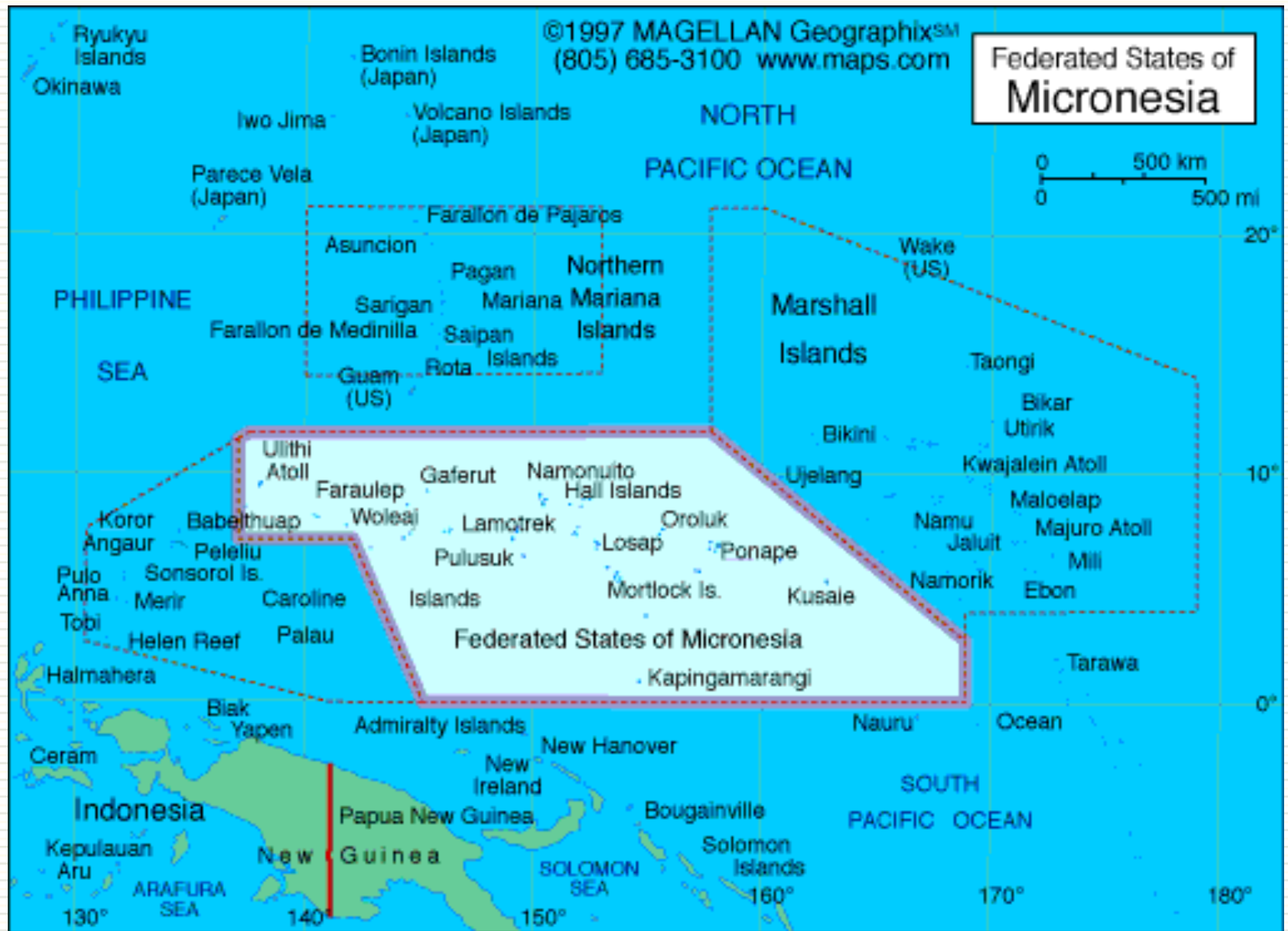
Building Capacity Through Education

Preventing violence against women in the Marshall Islands

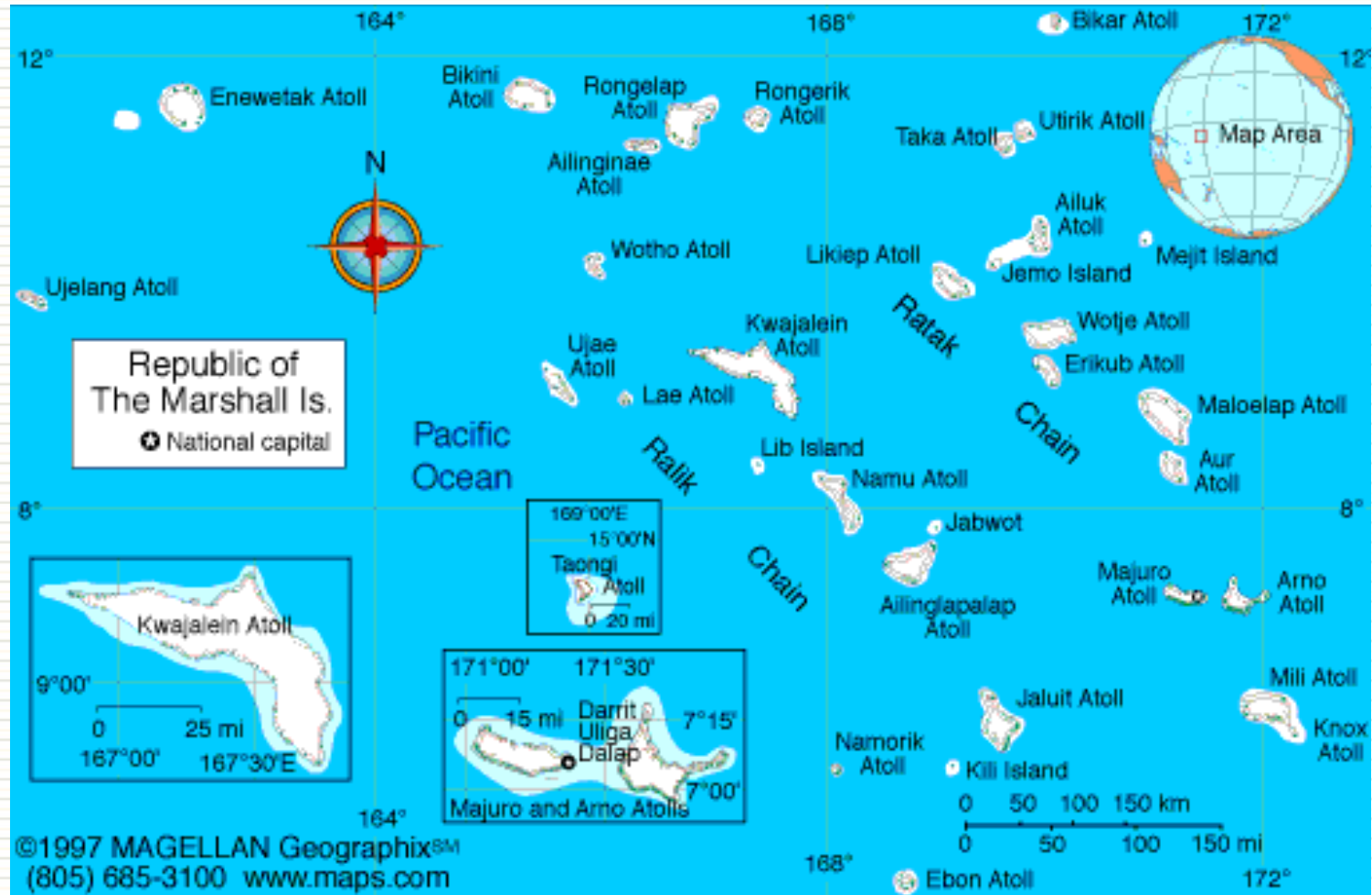
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Not all Micronesians are alike...



Republic of the Marshall Islands



Land Area - 180 sq km: 5 islands and 29 atolls

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rm.html>

Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI)

After four decades under US administration Marshall Islands attained independence in 1986 under a Compact of Free Association.

Between 1946 and 1958 the U.S. Joint Task Force exploded a total of 67 nuclear bombs in the Marshall Islands.



Marshallese demographics

- With a very high rate of population increase, the Marshall Islands has changed rapidly from 43,380 people in 1988 to a projected population of 68,480 (July 2011 est.)
- -5.1 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2011 est.)
- Large out-migration of Marshallese in the U.S., who are located primarily in Hawaii, Oregon, California, and Arkansas

Capital-Majuro
(pop. 30,000*)



Ebeye (pop.
12,000*)

*(in 2008)

Marshallese government

- Citizens of the Marshall Islands live with a relatively new democratic political system combined with a hierarchical traditional culture. Five of the country's six presidents have been chiefs
- The legislative branch of the government consists of the Nitijela (parliament) with an advisory council of high chiefs.

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is a widespread issue in the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI).

A national survey revealed that: **87% of women interviewed had been abused at least 10 times in the last 2 years**

The most widely accepted reason for violence against a women was **neglecting the children, followed by arguing with her husband.**

Community Response

Women United Together Marshall Islands (WUTMI) launched the “Initiative for a Better Response to Address Violence Everywhere” (iBRAVE) project which was funded by the United Nations Trust Fund in 2010.

WUTMI is a chartered nongovernment women’s organization serving the RMI.

Objectives

- 1) Increased public awareness about the high prevalence of domestic violence and the need to reduce and prevent it
- 2) The adoption and implementation of multi-sectoral national action plans
- 3) The adoption and enforcement of national laws to address and punish domestic violence.

Target Audience

The campaign targets women and men, also garnering support from traditional leaders*, church leaders and legislators to support policy and legislation.

Marshallese society was/is stratified into three general classes:
Iroij (chiefs)
Alap (clan heads)
and Rijeibal (workers).



Outreach

Over 14,000 awareness materials were distributed among the major atolls.

Most importantly, hundreds of workshops were conducted islandwide.

After the first year of the project, approximately 70% of a random population survey (n=150) had heard of the campaign message.

Reaching the target audience

In one year, more than 50 workshops reached over 2,000 participants in the villages throughout Majuro, Ebeye, Jaluit, Ailinglaplap, and Wotje.

- Participants include various public and private school groups, including PTA parents, sports leagues, community groups, the Salvation Army, church groups, and men's and women's groups.

Effectiveness

After the first year of the project, approximately 70% of a random population survey (n=150) had heard of the campaign message.

During that time, 74% believed that domestic violence was an important concern that needed to be addressed.

Attitudes about women

Challenges encountered include dealing with resistance to this effort, such as the sentiment:



“it’ s our culture to control our women”

Anecdotal comment after workshop: “I once used to think that *kammo* (controlling) is a sign of love, but now I know and understand that it is not. Love is to trust; not abuse.”

Community Outreach



Community outreach often involved an intricate process of getting permission to present in various settings, securing buy-in from traditional leaders and landowners.



Outer island presentations were quite different from what would typically happen in Majuro. “Everyone (all age groups) attends and stays for the entire time,” explained Hemrina Hanerc, one of WUTMI’s community educators.

Community Outreach

- “On Arno, they were so happy we came, that we talked until about 1 or 2 am!”
- For example, in Jaluit, a woman who was afraid to talk to anyone in her family or church shared her particular problems -because they were already discussing a topic that few discussed in public.

A critical event



**August 24, 2010
WUTMI and
supporters
march to
Courthouse in
honor of Emson
Makroro, a
victim of
domestic abuse**

An off-duty police officer found Morton Makroro, 54, covered in blood inside his house Saturday a few feet from where his wife, Emson Makroro, lay dead from multiple stab wounds with a kitchen knife embedded in her chest.

Gaining momentum

The Bill gained a lot of momentum after a woman was murdered by her husband the year prior.

When people said:

- “We have our own culture to take care of things.”

The response after the murder was:

- “Where was our culture when the woman was killed?”

Legislation

In September 2011, the project succeeded in lobbying for and passing the Domestic Violence Prevention and Protection Act (DVPPA).

“It was well drafted,” said Senator Jeblan Riklon, “all the consultations including the UN organization were considered.”

Project activities



Awareness / education
for first responders
(police and health care
providers), and the
development and
implementation of
response protocols.

Challenges ahead

The complexity of enforcement and follow up, and the lack of infrastructure to deal with offenders and victims.



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Building Capacity Through Education

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The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors, and do not necessarily represent the views of the UN Trust Fund or UN Women.

