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International Year of Biodiversity - Alofa Tuvalu plunges into the water!

Global warming affects Tuvaluan marine life as surely as sea-level rise threatens this South Pacific micro-nation with disappearance within the next few decades. As the main source of protein to the Tuvaluan people, the ocean that surrounds the archipelago is home to a vital marine biodiversity whose size and nature is still largely unknown. For 3 years, the French and Tuvaluan NGO, Alofa Tuvalu, has been leading « Tuvalu Marine Life », an extensive study and documentation project aimed at reinforcing Tuvalu's capacities to survey, monitor and manage its marine resources, along with increasing its local and scientific knowledge of them.

In 2009, the project's first phase consisted of summarizing existing data and identifying gaps in knowledge. After consultations with the project's stakeholders, 3 out of 9 islands of Tuvalu have been chosen to host the needed remaining investigations : Funafuti (the capital atoll, at the center of the archipelago), Nanumea (to the north) and Nukulaelae (to the south).

Alofa Tuvalu's experts in marine biodiversity, Sandrine Job, Daniela Ceccarelli, Semese Alefaio, are carrying out this second phase in partnership with Tuvalu fisheries (Tupulaga Poulasi and Nikolasi Apinelu), the environment office, local governments, the NBSAP program (National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan), New Zealand Aid, University of South Pacific and others.

Data will be analyzed and shared with other existing networks. Communication tools will then be produced : a reference and patrimonial book about Tuvalu's biodiversity and traditional knowledge, along with useful materials for local communities.

Implemented under the aegis of Unesco, the Tuvalu Marine Life project is supported by the Total Foundation for Entreprise and CRISP (Coral Initiative for the Pacific, French Agency for Development).

**The project is an integral part of the « Small is Beautiful » plan : helping Tuvalu -- the first sovereign nation threatened to be wiped off the map due to the effects of climate change -- survive as a nation and to preserve its identity and culture. These goals are addressed via a range of concrete, reproducible actions (biodiversity, energy, waste) in Tuvalu and their promotion elsewhere in the world.*

More details about the project :

http://www.alofatuvalu.tv/US/05_a_tuvalu/page_05_us.html#tuvalumarinlife

Bibliography survey : http://www.alofatuvalu.tv/US/05_a_tuvalu/05_sandr_juillet09.pdf