



Island NW of Kia-Anarvon MCA survey, ICLARM Aquaculture Center, Solomon Islands.

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Purple sponges growing on Pomas, Lingsacan Island, Philippines. © Chen and Louie Mencias

Biodiversity hotspots

Islands are important stepping stones in maintaining global populations and reef diversity and support a large number of unique species.



Bleached coral at North Manna Island, reef at low tide. © Ray Berkelmans

Threats to coral reefs of SIDS

Some areas of the Indian Ocean lost up to 90% of their corals in the 1998 El Niño event, which pushed the temperature of the sea too high for the corals, resulting in bleaching.

CORAL REEFS AND SIDS

There are inextricable links between coral reefs and Small Island Developing States (SIDS). The economies, cultures and the very existence of 37 of the 47 SIDS listed by the United Nations depend on coral reefs. These reefs account for more than one fifth (21%) of the world's coral reefs and cover a total area of 60,000 km². In most cases, neither reef nor island would continue to survive one without the other.

Isolated by large deep oceans, islands and coral reefs have evolved together for millions of years. SIDS demonstrate many examples of the complex, fragile relationships between species and how man relates to the environment in terms of achieving livelihoods and in cultural heritage.

Island flora and fauna on land and underwater shows a high degree of uniqueness and despite limited space the variety of species on coral reefs is higher around islands than it is along the much longer continental coast lines.

<http://coral.unep.ch>



The starfish *Choriaster granulatus* on a rock mound surrounded by crinoids. © Eric T.J.T. Kwint

Supporting SIDS

Coral reefs are the key component in maintaining the environment, economy, social and cultural balance of SIDS.



Harbour development, Aruba.

© James Oliver

Coastal Development

Land is a limited resource for SIDS. Inappropriate coastal development may compromise the ability of the coral reefs to play their role in coastal protection, such as this port development in the Caribbean.