

# Coral Reef Management in Republic of Palau

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## Problem Statement

Palau contains more than 500 small islands and has remarkable reef systems – the extensive barrier reef on the western coast and surrounding fringing reefs on the east coast. As with other Pacific islands, however, a wave of development is seen falling on the corals. Tourism, overfishing, poaching also pose threats to the corals.

The history of Palau as an independent nation is not long and traditional and modern ways of managing natural resources are mixed. Several conflicts, however, exist in the three major socio-political units, the national government, the state governments, and local villages, which make it difficult to establish a firm management base for natural resources, such as coral reefs.

## Research Objectives

With this as background, this case study aims at;

- Identifying key concepts shaping up the traditional and modern coral reef management systems in Palau
- Defining the two management systems using the conceptual categories
- Contextualizing the two management systems against the socio-economic, political, legal and cultural backgrounds in Palau
- Finding potential management improvements using the analytical view of common pool resource management

## Tools and Techniques

This study is exploratory in nature and the overall framework of the research design is based on a simplified version of the Grounded Theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1988), where the two systems are defined by conceptual categories that characterize variations of key “concepts” and “properties” of the systems. The list of concepts serve as indicator of the variations and is comprised of “reef-use”, “reef-users”, “resource knowledge”, “rights”, “values and beliefs”, and “use of science”.

Observations will be done in three villages that differ in their coral reef management – one with traditional management, one with modern management, and one with some mixture of the two.

The characteristics of the two systems are then used to compare the two management systems with “critical conditions” for successful common pool resource management (Agrawal, 2002).

## Policy Implications

Documentation and distinction of the two management systems can be used to 1) organize future management systems more beneficial both to coral reefs and resource users, 2) suggest a transition path in management that takes care of the strength and weakness of each system, 2) inform policy-makers of aspects of the systems that should be enhanced or supplemented by change in policies, 3) facilitate understandings between policy-makers and stakeholders in each system who are affected differently by policies of coral reef management system.

## Definitions

Concept – an abstract representation of an event, object, or action/interaction that a research identifies as being significant in the data (Strauss and Corbin, 1998)

Property – a characteristic or an attribute of a concept that varies. When a property assumes different values among units of analysis or when it varies, it is a variable



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