Marshall Islands

Population: 56,000  
Schools: 103 schools  
ICT Access: Low/Moderate  
Approximately 50% have PC access  
Approximately 10% have Internet access

Background
The small population of the Marshall Islands is dispersed over an area of 1.9 million square kilometres of the Pacific, which creates challenging conditions with respect to infrastructure and the delivery of education services. Only the two main urban areas (Majuro and Ebeye) have telecommunications services, and there is an abiding perception that poor student-teacher ratios and unqualified teachers, combined with declining literacy and school performance are problem areas. The Ministry of Education has been targeting primary-level learning to help address these issues. RMI’s close association with the US helps to provide some services and infrastructure, but the country is only now forming a new policy on ICT in parts of the curriculum. This is taking place through feedback and consultation with teachers, as well as drawing from other countries’ experiences, eg Guam’s, Samoa’s and Tonga’s.

Policy
ICT has not been formally incorporated into the curriculum but the Ministry of Education has been working towards developing and utilising ICT to improve its internal administrative efficiency, and is beginning to use databases to centralise its data collection system on students, programmes and development initiatives. The focus has been on training new teachers and providing support to primary schools. The National Telecommunications Authority has aimed to keep the cost of access to the Internet low for schools, but the cost of hardware and equipment, combined with the heat and general lack of air conditioning in computer labs, puts schools under budgetary pressure. Most computer labs have multiple computers sharing a dialup line. With the assistance of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), many schools on Majuro have at least some access to the Internet. Currently, most schools in Majuro and Ebeye have access to computers in. Two high schools on the outer islands, Jaluit and Wotje, also have limited access.

Challenges
- Funding for ICT infrastructure
- Rural isolation
- Ministry of Education capacity
- High student population combined with lack of qualified teachers
Recommendations

- Conduct an ICT skills inventory and a needs analysis for policy implementation
- Review of ICT curriculum development
- Support new teachers entering the system to gain ICT schools
- Conduct pilot development programmes in selected schools
- Assignment by MOE of skilled experts