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PEOPLE, POVERTY AND REEFS

In more than 80 developing countries, countless communities rely heavily on coral reefs for income security and nutritional sustenance. 20% percent of the world's population relies mainly on coral reefs for food. Maintaining healthy reefs is therefore critical to sustaining these communities, but human activities are taking their toll.

Coral reefs and related marine life are often the only natural assets for many people living on tropical islands and coastlines, and reef decline means the loss of economic prospects and an increase in the level of poverty. When communities face such challenges they sometimes resort to unsustainable and destructive fishing methods to increase their catch.

In Indonesia, overfishing and blast fishing are estimated to result in a net loss of more than US\$1.3 billion over the next twenty years. Communities that are then unable to sustain themselves through fishing are subsequently forced to produce or import other food - decreasing local employment opportunities further.



Blast fishing by illegal fishers has been reduced from 3 blasts per week to 1, or often none as a result of ranger patrols ©Mr. Modest A. Kiwia, Marine Parks and Reserves, Tanzania

The Reality of Unsustainable Coral Reefs

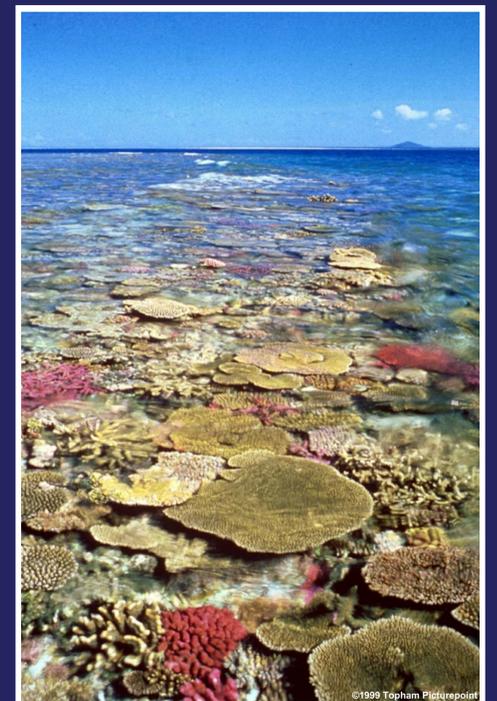
Around the world damage to marine environments is increasing poverty levels at an alarming rate. Destruction of reefs results in the loss of habitat, natural sand supply to beaches and the loss of a natural breakwater to protect coastlines from storm waves.



© James Oliver, Local Dive Shop on south coast of Suva, Fiji

Income Generation

Healthy reefs can also provide economic opportunities far beyond the fish and aquaria trades. Their captivating beauty can sustain a growing tourism market that has the power to generate alternative incomes and create employment opportunities.



Economic Benefits of Healthy Corals

Healthy coral reefs offer relief from hunger and environmental degradation and have significant economic value. In Indonesia healthy coral reefs have an estimated annual value of US\$1.6 billion. When other coral reef services such as tourism, the aquarium trade and shoreline protection are included the economic potential of coral reefs can be enormous.

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