

Global Coral Reef Alliance™

Dedicated to the Growth and Management of Coral Reefs Around the World

Children to Children Program

Overview

The Global Coral Reef's Children to Children program educates Kuna Indian children in Panama to care for the coral reefs they live from. The results and photographs of the program to date are shown below.

Please support this program by:

1) Helping to collect used masks, fins, and snorkels from North American schoolchildren to be donated for education and projects by Kuna schoolchildren. All collected materials should be sent to:

Marina Goreau,
Children to Children Program
Global Coral Reef Alliance
(Until July 2002) 324 Bedford Road, Chappaqua, NY 10514
(After July 2002) 37 Pleasant Street, Cambridge, MA 02139

2) Donating funds for the collection and shipping of used snorkeling gear to Panama, and for preparation and circulation of videos and brochures about the program. Donations can be made out to:

The Global Coral Reef Alliance
324 Bedford Road, Chappaqua NY 10514 (until July 2002)
37 Pleasant Street, Cambridge MA 02139 (after July 2002)

The Global Coral Reef Alliance is a 501(c)3 tax-exempt non-profit organization that specializes in pioneering methods of reef conservation and management.

Children to Children Program

The Global Coral Reef Alliance's Children to Children program was first proposed by Marina Goreau, at the age of 6 years. Her idea was to recycle used masks, fins, and snorkels from North American schoolchildren who have outgrown them, and send them to Kuna Indian children in Panama who cannot afford such equipment, as part of a program to educate children at both ends in the importance of saving coral reefs.

The program began in late 2001 in the schools of Ukupseni (known in Spanish as Playon Chico). Ukupseni has over 3,000 people, nearly half of them children of school age, on an island only a few hundred meters across. The Kuna are the most extraordinary native people of the Americas. Panamanian citizens, were never conquered so their culture, laws, and political institutions are intact. Their country can only be reached by boat or airplane. They do not allow roads to

be built to the rest of Panama, because this would allow outsiders to come in and steal their land, burn the forest, and destroy the soil fertility with cattle ranching, as has happened to all other native peoples throughout the Americas. The Kuna are also exceptional because they value education and learning more than almost any people on earth, and many Kuna have gone to Panama City and abroad for university education.

The Kuna land, Kuna Yala, includes the entire eastern third of the Caribbean coast of Panama, and extends from the reefs right up to the top of the mountain range that divides the Atlantic from the Pacific. The Kuna live by fishing and farming, with most villages on small offshore islands. 50 islands are inhabited, each with an average of 1-2,000 people, and there are over 300 uninhabited islands. These islands are small sandbanks on top of the coral reef, less than a meter above high tide. All are threatened by coastal erosion.

Due to a very rapidly expanding population, almost all inhabited islands are severely overcrowded. All sewage and garbage goes straight into the sea. Because of the lack of land for houses, inhabited islands are systematically built out by mining corals from the reef and piling them around the islands. Because of this mining and pollution, all inhabited islands are surrounded by algae-overgrown dead reefs, while the reefs around the uninhabited islands are still full of beautiful corals, fish, lobsters, and crabs. But, as pollution from a growing population accumulates in the water, even those are starting to suffer.

The Global Coral Reef Alliance and the Asociacion Oceanica de Panama spent four days showing videos and giving talks about coral reef protection to Ukupseni schoolchildren from all grades. These talks were translated into Spanish for the older students and into Dule for the younger students. Students participated eagerly with excellent questions, and then participated in the construction and deployment of a solar powered lobster nursery in a shallow seagrass bed next to the mangroves adjacent to the school. The older children also helped to build and deploy a 20 foot dome shaped coral nursery in a reef next to a nearby island. All Kuna children swim from an early age, and they were fully aware of how nice it was to swim around the uninhabited islands, and how everything around the inhabited islands was polluted and dead. Their awareness of this difference was clear even though they have never been able to see the corals and fish clearly as they lack masks.

The GCRA Children to Children program is designed to recycle masks fins and snorkels from North American children who have outgrown them, and send them to be used for environmental education programs in Kuna Yala. In North America, many children buy snorkeling gear on their winter vacations and then later throw them away. GCRA will seek funds to set up collection boxes for such equipment in schools in North America, and send them to Panama to be used in school-based environmental programs in Kuna Yala. Videos will be prepared about the program to show in North American schools.

Kuna children will use the donated snorkeling gear to study healthy and damaged coral reefs and to participate in coral reef restoration and mariculture programs that the Global Coral Reef Alliance and the Asociacion Oceanica de Panama are conducting with Kuna communities. This program has the

enthusiastic support of the community. After Marina Goreau explained her ideas to the Ukupseni village chiefs, they insisted that she personally present it to the schoolchildren as an initiative being taken by someone their own age.

Photographs by Marina Goreau, Tom Goreau, Wolf Hilbertz, Gabriel Despaigne



Kuna Yala beach



Fish school next to beach



Kuna cayuca (hollow log canoe) and mountains across the lagoon



Ukupseni village, home to more than 3000 Kuna



Iskardup Island with coral nursery team in cayuca



Inside Sapibenega Eco Lodge on Iskardup Island



Children to children. Madalen and Marina on Iskardup



Lifting the dome-shaped Akuabiski Galu coral nursery on Iskardup



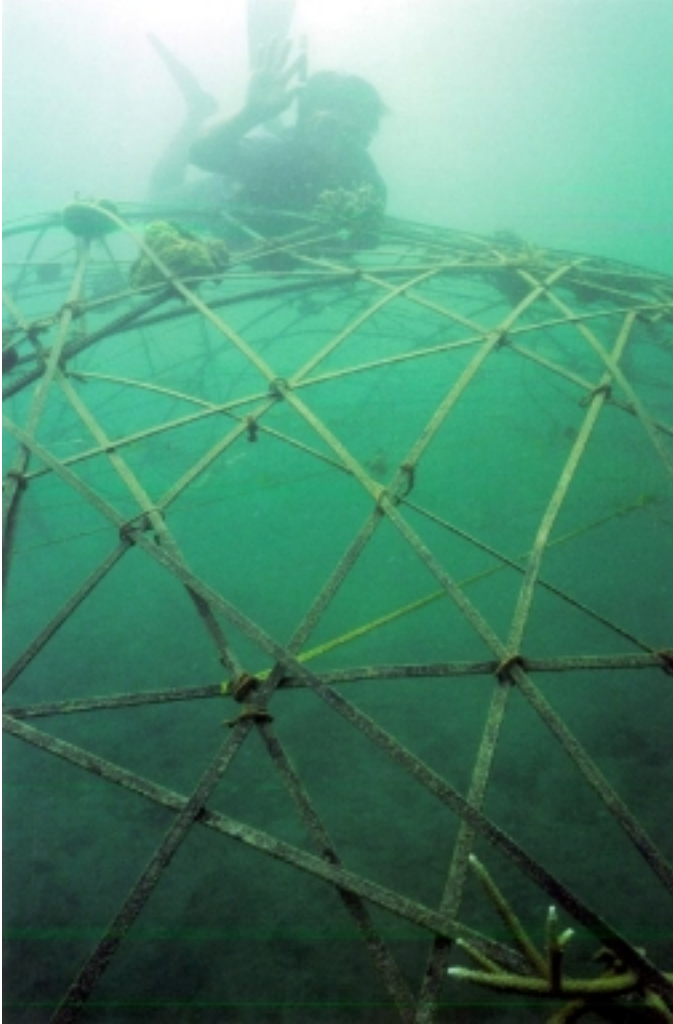
Carrying the dome to the sea



The dome enters the sea



Attaching corals to the nursery



Akuabiski Galu Coral nursery



Newly attached corals and six months later (next)



Solar panels power the coral nursery



Dulup Galu Lobster nursery under Construction at the village school, with Mangroves and bay where it will go.



Schoolchildren help assemble solar panels



Preparing solar panel wiring



Carrying the panels to the shore



Akaubiski Nan 6 month old lobster and coral nursery at Iskardup

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