

COMMUNITY BASED TOURISM WORKSHOP FOR WOTJE ATOLL



On August 12, 2024, the Office of Commerce, Investment & Tourism collaborated with Mr. Hideyuki Shiozawa who is the Director, Division of Island Nations, Ocean Policy Research Institute at the Sasakawa Peace Foundation in Japan, to host a workshop focusing on community-based tourism in the Jokutaak Area at the RRE Hotel. Fourteen participants, aged between 19 and 23, from the Wotje Community took part in this event.

The workshop aimed to train participants in recognizing potential tourism assets/activities through a phenology calendar. The phenology calendar also helped the participants study patterns of events in nature, especially in the weather and in the behavior of plants and animals, to see when is the best time of the year to promote tourism activities on Wotje Atoll. The potential tourism resources/activities were then carefully chosen and developed into a detailed tour plan, connected by a central theme and storyline. Each tailored itinerary in the training program was designed for specific markets, focusing primarily on the United States and Japan. During the session, participants shared insights on weather patterns and discussed the effects of climate change on the natural environment and food processing in Wotje Atoll.

Wotje was chosen as one of the atolls highlighted in the tourism strategic plans for the upcoming years to enhance tourism in the neighboring islands. Subsequent workshops will involve other selected atolls in the future.

RMI SUSTAINABLE TOURISM HIGH LEVEL POLICY AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY WORKSHOP



The Office of Commerce, Investment & Tourism (OCIT), in partnership with the Asian Development Bank's Pacific Private Sector Development Initiative (PSDI) organized a week-long series of workshops and stakeholder engagements regarding the RMI Sustainable Tourism High Level Policy and Development Strategy 2025-2030. PSDI consultant, Tracy Johnston, visited RMI between August 27th and September 6th to gather feedback and insights from tourism partners, government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and other key stakeholders to inform the strategy.

A total of 80+ participants were consulted during the course of the engagement. The workshops and stakeholder engagements were designed to gather collaborative insights to inform the development of tourism in response to the RMI National Strategic Plan 2020-2030 and the GRMI Agenda 2030. And also to ensure that the policy/strategy is in alignment with the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Policy Framework which the RMI signed in 2023.

Participants engaged in open dialogues, voicing concerns about local communities' limited understanding of tourism within the RMI. When deliberating on strategies to foster sustainable growth in visitor numbers, suggestions emphasized the importance of enhancing air travel accessibility, improving visitor amenities, providing affordable accommodation choices, and advancing product offerings, among other key considerations. Furthermore, recommendations included establishing a dedicated committee to uphold the cleanliness of the islands, with an emphasis on involving landowners and traditional leaders. The notion of establishing a specialized tourism task force emerged during discussions, alongside the proposal to incorporate tourism-related subjects into the RMI's education system.

The RMI Sustainable Tourism High Level Policy and Development Strategy is expected to be finalized and launched later this year.

About OCIT:

OCIT has wide-ranging functions and powers designed to make it a catalyst for economic and social development. Its primary function is to "develop and implement social and economic development programs and projects" for the betterment of the economic and social conditions of the inhabitants of the Republic. Its functions combine the roles of a promotion agency and a government investment corporation, i.e., to encourage and develop investments and operate business enterprises on behalf of the government. It is empowered to perform its functions alone or in conjunction with other government agencies and private enterprises.

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For further information please contact:
OCIT
Ph: +692 625-4624
E: outreach@ocit.org
Web: <https://www.miocit.org/>

About PSDI

PSDI is an Asian Development Bank technical assistance program in partnership with the governments of Australia and New Zealand. It supports ADB's 14 Pacific member countries to improve the enabling environment for business and to achieve inclusive, private sector-led economic growth, including through reforms designed to support a sustainable tourism sector.



RESTORING CULTURE AND HISTORICAL TREASURES

This year's Manit (Culture) Day coincides with World Tourism Day. OCIT capitalized on this occasion to promote awareness of tourism within the islands, highlighting its importance to our local communities and encouraging their involvement in its development.

A video was created by the staff to launch a challenge, inviting the community to share their perspectives on tourism and their potential contributions. Additionally, a photo booth centered around the theme of tourism and peace was set up as part of the awareness celebrations.



The Office of Commerce, Investment & Tourism (OCIT) collaborated with the Alele Museum and Public Library this year for a week-long celebration of culture, language, traditions, and history during the Lutok Kobban Alele (LKA). This year's agenda featured a historical revival of legends and traditions through engaging cultural games. Additionally, focusing on restoring traditional skills and folklore through songs and dances.

As one of the key organizers for this year's Lutok Kobban Alele, OCIT played a crucial role in planning and coordinating the activities for the week-long event. This included elevating the entertainment experience of the battle of the bands and traditional dance competition. Their contributions included crafting scripts throughout the week for each performance, which seamlessly wove together historical and cultural elements, as well as traditional riddles. In addition, they provided daily updates on media and public relations through social media and radio channels, ensuring that the public remained informed about the LKA week activities. These planning and coordination efforts were in line with the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Policy Framework, with a particular focus on Goal 3 - Visible and Valued Culture.

Through the collaboration between OCIT and Alele Staff, there has been a strong focus on capacity building in marketing by leveraging historical and cultural insights from the museum's collections. Furthermore, strategies for sharing and revitalizing historical and cultural knowledge through events and social media platforms were thoroughly explored.

The successful week-long event greatly boosted Alele's visibility, highlighting its significance to locals and international visitors, as well as audiences across the country and online.

If you would like to know more about the event follow Alele Museum and Public Library and Visit Marshall Islands Facebook Pages.

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OCIT
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E: ourteam@miocit.org
Web: <https://www.miocit.org/>



CELEBRATING WORLD FOOD DAY & THE REVIVAL OF THE BOB (PANDANUS) FESTIVAL



OCIT worked alongside the Ministry of Natural Resources and Commerce over several months to plan the World Food Day Celebration activities. This year's theme, "Right to Foods for a Better Life and a Better Future," served as a guiding principle for the events, aiming to empower the community to strengthen their farming and fishing skills to ensure food security.

The activities not only focused on food security but also highlighted the economic advantages of their efforts. The three-day celebration consisted of a Jaki Ed Auction (traditional fine weaving), official program and a full day of activities, and a fishing tournament. The final day included the announcement of winners from the various competitions held throughout the week.

A significant highlight of the celebrations was the revival of the Bob (Pandanus) festival. This event, steeped in cultural importance, underscored the necessity of preserving traditional practices and honoring the heritage linked to pandanus.

OCIT was instrumental in organizing the float parade, which beautifully captured the essence of World Food Day alongside the Pandanus Festival. This vibrant showcase of cultural pride featured eight floats, predominantly from various school districts.

Each float illustrated a variety of cultural elements, emphasizing traditional food preparation, legends, skills, and values. This creative exhibition not only celebrated the rich diversity of our cultural heritage but also educated and inspired attendees about the significance of sustaining these practices for generations to come.

Through this collaboration, OCIT has significantly highlighted and promoted pandanus-related products, local traditions, and the rich culture of the Marshall Islands. Through a series of carefully curated events, we were able to not only showcase these unique cultural elements but also align our efforts with the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Policy Framework. Specifically, our initiatives supported Goal 2: Thriving and Inclusive Communities, and Goal 3: Visible and Valued Culture.

It is clear that these events have made a meaningful impact in fostering community engagement and cultural appreciation. This collaboration has set a precedent for future projects aimed at promoting sustainable tourism and cultural heritage.

If you would like to know more about the event, follow RMI-Ministry of Natural Resources & Commerce, Marshall Island National Telecommunications Authority, V7AB Radio, and Visit Marshall Islands Facebook Pages.

