Connecting Our Islands for Learning:
A Program of Work for Culturally Relevant, Climate Resilient Systems Transformation in the Republic of the Marshall Islands

SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION GRANT APPLICATION

PROGRAM DOCUMENT

Republic of the Marshall Islands
Ministry of Education, Sports and Training
Public School System

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Tell Them– (Excerpt) by Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner, Marshallese poet and climate activist

…they're from the Marshall Islands

show them where it is on a map

tell them we are a proud people

toasted dark brown as the carved ribs

of a tree stump

tell them we are descendants

of the finest navigators in the world

tell them our islands were dropped

from a basket

carried by a giant

tell them we are the hollow hulls

of canoes as fast as the wind

slicing through the pacific sea…

tell them we are sweet harmonies

of grandmothers mothers aunties and sisters

songs late into night…

a crown of fuchsia flowers encircling

aunty Mary's white sea foam hair

tell them we are styrofoam cups of koolaid red

waiting patiently for the ilomij

tell them we are papaya golden sunsets bleeding

into a glittering open sea

we are skies uncluttered

majestic in their sweeping landscape

we are the ocean

terrifying and regal in its power

tell them we are dusty rubber slippers

swiped

from concrete doorsteps

we are the ripped seams

and the broken door handles of taxis

we are sweaty hands shaking another sweaty hand in heat

tell them

we are days

and nights hotter

than anything you can imagine

tell them we only have one road…

and after all this

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tell them about the water

how we have seen it rising

flooding across our cemeteries

gushing over the sea walls

and crashing against our homes

tell them what it's like

to see the entire ocean__level__with the land

tell them

we are afraid

tell them we don't know

of the politics

or the science

but tell them we see

what is in our own backyard

tell them that some of us

are old fishermen who believe that God

made us a promise

some of us

are more skeptical of God

but most importantly tell them

we don't want to leave

we've never wanted to leave

and that we

are nothing without our islands\

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
CLLC	Customary Law and Language Commission
COFA	Compact of Free Association
CMI	College of the Marshall Islands
EC	Executive Committee (of the Public School System)
ECE	Early Childhood Education
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
EFA	Enabling Factor Analysis
EPP	Education Partnership Pact (Partnership Compact)
ESSP	Education and Skills Strengthening Project
ESP	Education Sector Plan
ESA	Education Sector Analysis
GER	Gross Enrollment Rate
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
ITAP	Independent Technical Advisory Panel
ITU	International Telecommunications Union
IQBE	Improving the Quality of Basic Education
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
LEG	Local Education Group
MEC	Marshalls Energy Company
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MIEMIS	Marshall Islands Education Management Information System
MISAT	Marshall Islands Standards Assessment Test
MISGLB	Marshall Islands Scholarship, Grant and Loan Board
MOEST	Ministry of Education, Sports and Training

NAP	National Adaptation Plan
NBOE	National Board of Education
NER	Net Enrollment Rate
NTA	National Telecommunications Authority
NTC	National Training Council
NSP	National Strategic Plan
PacREF	Pacific Regional Education Framework
PCA	Program Cooperation Agreement
PD	Professional Development
PREL	Pacific Resources for Education and Learning
PSEA	Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
PSEAH	Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment
PSS	Public School System
RMI	Republic of the Marshall Islands
SCG	Systems Capacity Grant
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SEA	Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
SH	Sexual Harassment
SPED	Special Education
STG	System Transformation Grant
ToR	Terms of Reference
TSLB	Teacher Standards and Licensing Board
TTPI	Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
USA	United States of America
USP	University of the South Pacific

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Introduction

For thousands of years, the people of Aelōñ Kein Ad (the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI)) have used expert navigation techniques to traverse and unify a vast network of 24 inhabited atolls and 5 islands under one unified language and culture. This deep-rooted legacy of building connections across open waters now guides the nation's ambitious effort to strengthen links across schools, communities, and the central Public School System (PSS) under a new form of navigation: digital connectivity. Through the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) System Transformation Grant (STG) proposal, titled "Connecting Our Islands for Learning," RMI is poised to harness its ancestral strengths to shape a more resilient and culturally grounded education system.

Bringing schools, islands, and communities closer together, this initiative aims to strengthen teacher capacity and connections, expand learner access to inclusive, culturally and linguistically relevant resources, and enhance the quality of learning environments. Central to this vision is a significant expansion of digital infrastructure, ensuring that even the most remote island schools can integrate seamlessly into a unified educational framework. Like the resourceful navigators of the past, today's educators and learners will chart new pathways—this time through technology—to share knowledge, build school-to-school connections and create adaptive, equitable learning spaces for all.

A key priority of the proposed program is weaving RMI's unique cultural and linguistic heritage into resources and materials. While English continues to dominate current curricula, this project will leverage the Marshallese language and cultural traditions to make education more engaging, relevant, and empowering. Through the digitization and creation of high-quality inclusive resources that are linguistically and culturally relevant, learners will access curriculum that tangibly reflects their heritage, environment and daily life.

In tandem, the proposal addresses the pressing realities of climate change, outmigration, and the need for adaptable learning environments that can withstand disruption. By strengthening digital connectivity, schools will gain the capacity to deliver continuous, uninterrupted education—even in times of crisis or during disruptions to learning. Ultimately, the "Connecting Our Islands for Learning" proposal commits RMI to an education system that draws on

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ancestral wisdom, anticipates the challenges of a changing world, and inspires every child to carry forward the Marshallese legacy with pride and resilience.

Through the support of the GPE System Transformation Grant, RMI is determined to forge strong and lasting connections between its schools, communities, and central education leaders—an echo of the seafaring tradition that has bound these islands for millennia. In doing so, the nation not only safeguards its cultural heritage but also ensures its youth gain the skills, knowledge, and confidence they need to thrive in a rapidly evolving world.

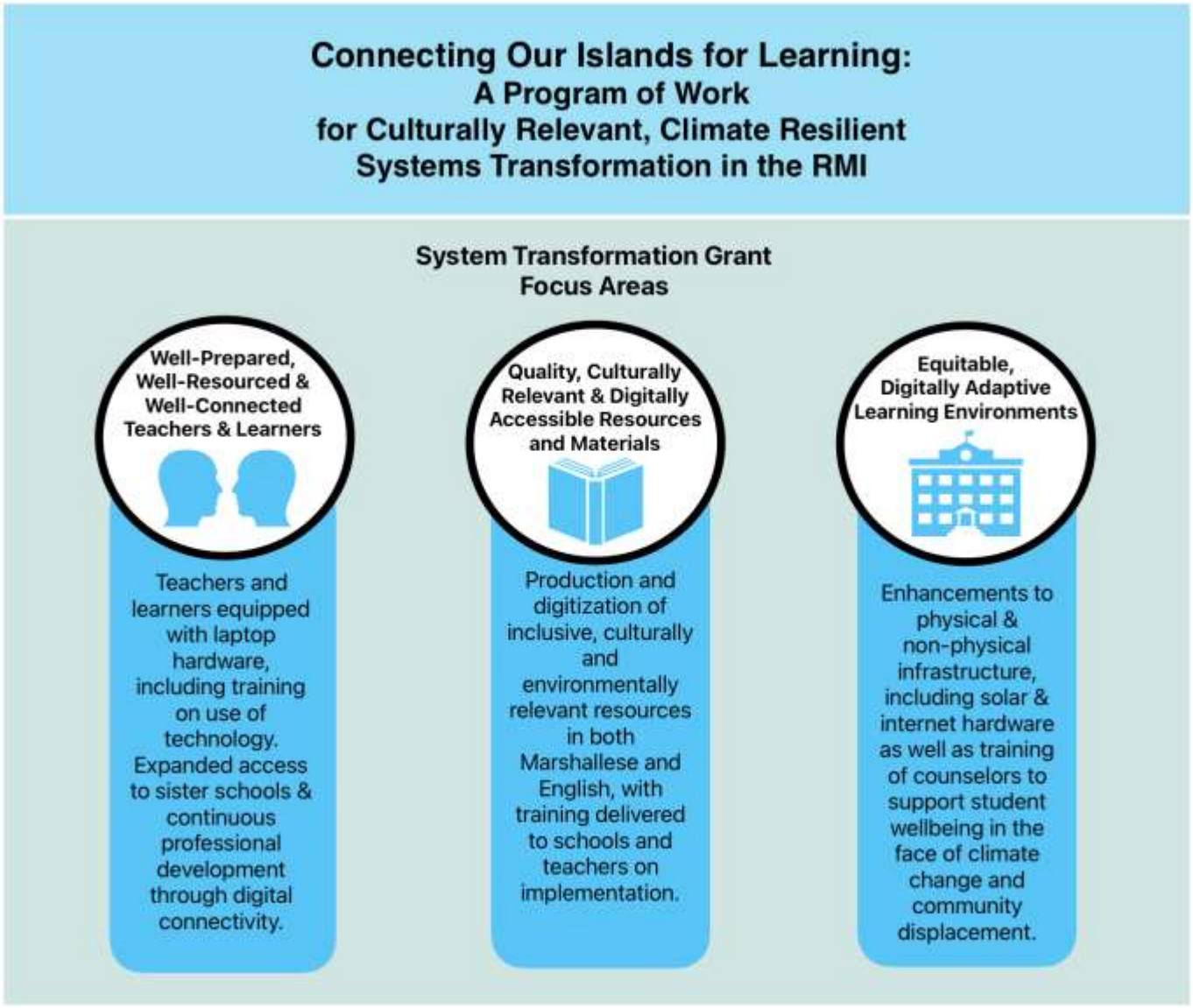
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The program of work outlined in this document, entitled Connecting our Islands for Learning, represents a collective vision for transformative education, informed by community and sector wide consultations. This initiative focuses on three interconnected pillars, aligned with the RMI Education Partnership Pact (EPP):

1. Well-prepared, well-resourced and well-connected teachers and learners
2. Quality, relevant curriculum and digitally accessible resources and materials
3. Equitable, digitally adaptive learning environments

This transformation aims to address the unique challenges faced by RMI's education system, including climate vulnerability, geographic dispersion, and the need to preserve traditional knowledge while preparing students for a digitally connected future.



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Grant Eligibility

In 2020, The Republic of the Marshall Islands joined the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) under the Pacific Regional Education Framework (PacREF) 2018-2030: Moving Towards Education 2030. Through PacREF, a transformative regional education agenda has been outlined aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The framework strives to promote equitable access to high quality education for all children across the Pacific with an aim of enabling Pacific countries to effectively face the development challenges encountered by the region. This program document is designed in line with the Framework's vision to improve the quality of student learning outcomes at all levels in safe, climate-resistant learning environments.

While RMI formally joined GPE in 2020, the partnership between institutions spans nearly a decade with a series of grants aimed at enhancing the national educational landscape. These grants, dating back to 2016, have focused on various areas, including sector planning, program development, system capacity building, and emergency response. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, a $750,000 grant was utilized to ensure the continuity of education during the crisis. Recent funding initiatives include the System Capacity and Program Development Grants, both facilitated by UNICEF as grant agent. The collaborative efforts working with partners and stakeholders across RMI underscore the nation's commitment to education system advancement.

Grant Type	Years	Allocation (US$)	Utilization (US$)	Grant Agent
Sector Plan Development	2016-2017	138,441	138,441	ADB
Sector Plan Development	2017-2018	195,102	195,102	ADB
Sector Plan Development	2018-2020	225,237	225,237	ADB
Program Development	2020-2021	389,875	389,875	ADB
COVID-19 Response	2020-2022	750,000	749,974	UNICEF
System Capacity	2023-2026	999,960	565,021.33	UNICEF
Program Development	2024-2025	199,289	87,770.55	UNICEF

Source: https://www.globalpartnership.org/where-we-work/marshall-islands

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This document presents the application for the GPE System Transformation Grant (STG) for the Republic of the Marshall Islands. In February 2024, The GPE Board of Directors invited RMI to submit an application for a System Transformation Grant, with a maximum allocation of USD 2.5 million, and in accordance with the strategic parameters for GPE support. These parameters include prioritized focus areas for GPE funding, developed under the Education Partnership Pact (EPP), specifically supporting: a) capable, motivated teachers b) suitable learning environments and the c) development of foundational skills. The proposed program has been designed in alignment with the RMI EPP, SDG4 and PacREF vision, and builds off the mission of national strategic documents including the RMI National Strategic Plan (NSP), Agenda 2030 and National Adaptation Plan (NAP).

In the aim of expanding delivery of high-quality education to all neighboring island schools, the MOEST is also exploring potential project partnerships to support the transformative priorities of the Education Partnership Pact (EPP) and will submit an Expression of Interest for the Multiplier Grant if and when such funding becomes available.

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Process for Developing the Program Document

The development of the program document builds upon RMI's continued engagement with the Global Partnership for Education under its GPE 2025 funding model. The model, in support of partner country ambitions, requires that participating nations elaborate plans to achieve system transformation and hardwire the incorporation of gender and equity issues into education policymaking.

To access GPE resources, the funding model also requires that countries create a Partnership Compact, identifying key policy priorities for achieving system transformation, major challenges and enabling factors that may impact the achievement of outlined goals, and the proposed use of requested resources.

To date, RMI has completed an Enabling Factors Analysis (EFA), Independent Technical Advisory Panel (ITAP) assessment, Education Partnership Pact (EPP),[1] and successfully applied for its full allocation of the System Capacity Grant (SCG). This year, the country is in the finalization stage of its Education Sector Analysis (ESA) will draft its next Education Sector Plan (ESP). The STG program document takes into consideration strengths and challenges identified across these documents and addresses them in specific alignment with key priority focus areas outlined in the EPP.

From August to November 2024, a series of consultations and workshops were held with stakeholder groups in the development of the Education Sector Analysis and, in parallel, the STG programmatic focus areas. Over 150 individuals in the Marshall Islands were consulted, ranging from policy leaders, government specialists and staff, to private sector representatives, community-based organizations, donor partner project teams, principals, teachers, students, parents and members of the community in both Majuro and Kwajalein Atolls. These consultations, focus groups and workshops directly informed the development of the program document, shaping the focus areas and prioritized activities. While technical assistance was offered in workshop delivery and draft compiling, this document reflects the voice and vision of the

[1] The RMI Education Partnership Pact (EPP) constitutes the "Partnership Compact" for GPE purposes.

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RMI Ministry of Education, Sports and Training and its subcomponent organizations, spearheaded by the Public School System (PSS).

The program document draft was developed with ongoing input, feedback and guidance from PSS staff and specialists, with final approval by the PSS Executive Committee (EC). An STG Validation Workshop was held on February 17th, 2025, with PSS and UNICEF representatives in attendance. The final program application package has been reviewed and endorsed by both the PSS EC and the RMI LEG members (represented by the RMI National Board of Education). The minutes of LEG member endorsement can be found in the Annexes.

Country Context

The Republic of the Marshall Islands consists of over 1,200 individual islands and islets, made up of 29 coral atolls (24 inhabited) and 5 islands in the North Pacific. Set between the Philippines and Hawai'i, the country includes 70 square miles of land spanning 770,000 square miles of ocean. Its atolls are divided into two chains: the eastern Ratak (Sunrise) and the western Ralik (Sunset) chains. The unique geography grants RMI a vast Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) but also exposes it to vulnerabilities like climate related disasters and sea level rise, with over 99% of its population of 42,418 people (as of 2021) living along coastlines at an average elevation of just 2 meters above sea level.

Urban centers, Majuro (the capital) and Ebeye, accommodate approximately 78% of the population. The dispersion of the remaining population across remote atolls complicates the delivery of public services and heightens their cost. RMI's population has decreased by 20% since 2011, a decline largely due to emigration to the United States, facilitated by the Compact of Free Association (COFA), which allows unrestricted entry and residence for Marshallese. This trend has led to a scenario where more citizens reside in the diaspora than in the islands themselves.

Historically, the Marshall Islands were settled over 3,000 years ago by migrants from the New Hebrides. It has undergone periods of foreign occupation—by Spain, Germany, and Japan—and was a site for 67 US nuclear tests from 1946 to 1958 under the United Nations Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (TTPI)

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arrangement, which caused significant displacement, environmental destruction, and long-term health issues still unresolved today.

Since adopting its constitution in 1979 and establishing a parliamentary government, RMI has engaged deeply with the US through the COFA, which was first signed in 1986. This agreement has provided the islands with financial support, access to US Federal programs, and open migration rights for RMI and US citizens. Compact agreements have evolved, with the most recent renewal in 2023 extending US support for 20 more years, promising continued economic aid aimed at bolstering RMI's infrastructure, education, and healthcare sectors, as well as enhancing climate resilience through the fiscal year 2043.

Education Sector Context

The education sector is overseen by the Ministry of Education, Sports and Training (MOEST). MOEST comprises a variety of component organizations, including the Public School System (PSS) which is responsible for the administration of public primary and secondary education in the country. PSS is governed by the National Board of Education (NBOE) and informed by the Customary Language and Law Commission (CLLC).

The MOEST component organizations and related Commission include:

(i) The Public School System (PSS);
(ii) Teacher Standard and Licensing Board (TSLB);
(iii) Marshall Islands Scholarship, Grant and Loan Board (MISGLB);
(iv) National Training Council (NTC);
(v) Customary Law and Language Commission (CLLC);
(vi) College of the Marshall Islands (CMI); and
(vii) University of the South Pacific (USP) Marshall Islands Campus.

Education in the Marshall Islands is compulsory for all children from 5 to 18 years old and follows an American-style system. Preschool programming is available for children aged 4 with expanding but not yet universal access. The four levels of the education system, as organized by the Marshall Islands Education Management Information System (MIEMIS), include: Early Childhood

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Education (ECE) (Preschool, age 4 & Kindergarten, age 5); Primary Education (ages 6 -13, Grades 1 – 8); Secondary Education (ages 14-18, Grades 9-12); and Post-Secondary Education (ages 18+, including degree, technical and vocational, and certificate level programs).

Education sector priorities and plans are shaped by national guiding documents, including the National Strategic Plan (NSP), Agenda 2020–2030 and the National Adaptation Plan (NAP). Collectively, these documents call for continued investment in the quality of education services and reinforcement of an education system that is resilient and responsive to changing climate, country and student needs. Sector planning is further informed by international commitments, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4) and the Pacific Regional Education Framework (PacREF), which prioritize equitable access to quality education for all students. In 2023, MOEST developed the RMI Education Partnership Pact (EPP), in collaboration with the Local Education Group (LEG) and under Global Partnership for Education (GPE) guidelines. The Pact, in alignment with PacREF, outlines priority reform sub-areas, specifically investment in capable and motivated teachers, suitable learning environments and foundational skills as key goals. Education sector planning is currently underway, funded by GPE, with the latest Education Sector Analysis (ESA) and Sector Plan (ESP) set for completion in spring and summer 2025.

Sector Outcome Areas

Preschool and Kindergarten

Access to preschool for children aged 4 is steadily improving, with enrollment expanded to public schools on all neighboring islands at the start of the 2024-2025 school year. As of the previous school year (2023-2024) enrollment at both public and private schools totaled 380 students (216 males and 164 females). Gross and Net Enrollment Rates (GER and NER) show room for improvement in participation, with a GER of 43% and NER of 30% for children aged four as of 2024.[2]

[2] The quality of enrollment rate data is impacted by limited population and migration estimates. Rising outmigration, near-universally to the United States under the Compact of Free Association, is linked to rapid population decline. In the 10 years between the 2011 and 2021 Censuses, the RMI country population declined by 20 percent. While decline is visible in annual student enrollment decreases, gross and net enrollment rate (GER & NER) calculations are based on population data captured in the 2021 Census. As of 2025, 2021 population counts may fail to reflect the annually shifting status on the ground.

With the understanding that preschool is a new and expanding offering in RMI, efforts are underway to boost family involvement and child participation, including a cash transfer initiative for families of young children supported by a USD $27 million Early Childhood Development (ECD) project launched by the World Bank in 2022.[3] As of 2024, digital Marshallese learning and phonics resources have been developed for teachers in collaboration with donor partners.[4] Continued resource development and expanded access to Marshallese-language materials across schools would help to ensure equitable quality of education for all children in the foundational years.

Kindergarten is free and compulsory for all children aged 5 and is incorporated into both public and private primary schools. As of 2024, 930 children were enrolled in kindergarten (461 males and 469 females), achieving a Gross Enrollment Rate (GER) of 98% and Net Enrollment Rate (NER) of 62%, though the reliability of these rates is limited by the frequency of updates to population data. Most students (63%) are 5 years old, 12% are younger, and 25% are older, ranging from ages six to nine. Kindergarten shares educational priorities with Preschool, including the need for age-appropriate early learning classroom resources, materials in students' mother tongue, and improved supports for inclusive and multigrade teaching. Given the range of ages enrolled, individualized supplemental supports such as computer-based learning apps for children could help teachers to meet varied student needs across ages and learning levels.

Primary Education

Grades 1-8 (primary education) have a near-universal Gross Enrollment Rate of 96% as of 2024, demonstrating a strong commitment to foundational education. However, the Net Enrollment Rate is considerably lower at 56%. In total, 7452 students are enrolled at the primary level including 3796 males and 3656 females. On average, one third of students at the primary level are overage (33%). Overage enrollment can occur for several reasons, including late school entry, grade repetition[5], or interruptions in education—such as

[3] World Bank, 2022. Retrieved from: https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/06/06/-healthy-educated-and-ready-to-thrive-a-boost-for-early-childhood-development-in-marshall-islands

[4] PSS, 2024. *2024 PSS Annual Report.*

[5] The average Grade 1-8 repetition rate was less than 4% in 2024, making this a small contributing factor.

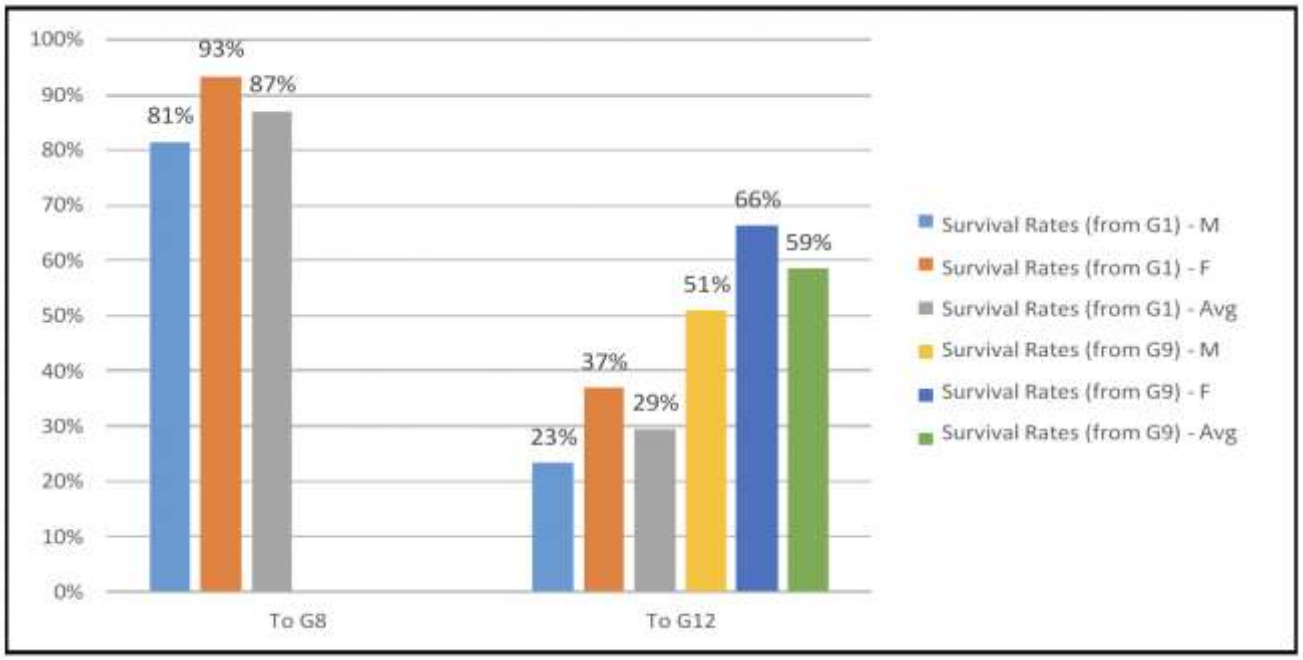
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family issues, illnesses, or economic necessity—causing students to leave school temporarily and return at an older age. Qualitative studies and surveys into out-of-school children, overage learners and links to family financial hardship are recommended to help to shed light on the causes of this common phenomenon. Like younger learners, Grade 1-8 students and classrooms need increased culturally and linguistically relevant resources, equitable access to safe learning environments (including weather-resistant infrastructure, electricity and internet) and supports to teacher professional development to enrich their practice.

Secondary Education

There are 2926 students enrolled at the secondary (high school) level, including 1417 male and 1509 female students. Retention and completion rates through transitional (Grade 8 - 9) and high school grades (Grade 9 – 12) are of concern. While the average survival rate for students from Grade 1 to Grade 8 is 87%, less than a third of all students (29%) are expected to survive from Grade 1 to Grade 12. Survival rates are lower for students on neighboring islands and for boys. Less than one quarter of boys (23%) are expected to survive from Grade 1-12.

Figure 1: RMI School Survival rates by gender[6]



[6] PSS, 2024. *2023 PSS Education Data Digest.*

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Several factors contribute to the precipitous drop-off in secondary school enrollment and completion for both genders. When the first high school was introduced to the Marshall Islands in the 1960s during RMI's time as a US Trust Territory, there were not enough seats to allow universal access.[7] To determine who would attend, an entrance exam was introduced, with those who passed being eligible to enter high school. Even as additional high schools were built, there was still not enough space for all students, resulting in the introduction of Grade Pre-9. Pre-9 was created to offer an extra year of schooling to those who struggled in English and Math and was considered the first step toward universal enrollment as all students could continue in their education.

Until the 2024-2025 school year, the national high school entrance exam determined who would enter high school and who would be routed to Grade Pre-9. In the 2023-2024 school year, 222 students were enrolled in Pre-9, 63% of which were 13-14 years old (target age for 9th Grade) while 37% were overage (15 to 18). As of Fall 2024, the cutoff score for Grade 9 entry was effectively removed, allowing all students to transition into high school. This decision has the potential to result in long-term positive impacts on school retention and secondary graduation rates and will be important to track going forward.

Delayed or denied high school entry to a subset of students over decades may have had long-term impacts on student motivation and family views on the necessity and importance of attaining a high school degree, particularly for communities on rural neighboring islands. Today, other factors affect retention rates, including outmigration, as student relocation abroad is difficult to distinguish from dropouts. Marshallese students also face other broad barriers to retention, including language. The language policy at schools transitions all students to full-time English instruction at the high school level, where they are taught by majority expatriate teachers who may lack fluency in Marshallese. This policy has continued despite data showing limited fluency in languages beyond Marshallese for the majority of the country population at all ages.[8] Improved access to Marshallese language materials at all learner levels and tailored supplemental learning options for those who may need remedial supports could help to improve student retention.

[7] Education Sector Analysis (ESA) Consultations, 2024.
[8] SPC, 2024; EPPSO, 2011.

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Boys at the secondary level drop out at higher rates than girls, with two thirds of girls (66%) surviving from Grade 9 to 12 compared to about half of boys (51%). This is striking, as there are more males than females enrolled at the Early Childhood Education (Preschool and Kindergarten; 677 males and 633 females) and primary level (Grades 1-8; 3796 males and 3656 females). There is a notable enrollment drop-off of both genders after primary school, and a reversal of the gender trend starting in secondary school (1417 males and 1509 females).[9]

Figure 2: Enrollment by Age, Education Level and Gender, 2024

	Early Childhood			Primary			Secondary		
Age	**Total**	**Male**	**Female**	**Total**	**Male**	**Female**	**Total**	**Male**	**Female**
1–5	427	240	187	5	4	1	0	0	0
6–10	882	437	445	3232	1625	1607	0	0	0
11–15	1	0	1	4013	2046	1967	511	239	272
16–20	0	0	0	202	121	81	2334	1132	1202
21–25	0	0	0	0	0	0	81	46	35
26–30	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	**1310**	**677**	**633**	**7452**	**3796**	**3656**	**2926**	**1417**	**1509**

Source: MIEMIS Data Portal, 2024.

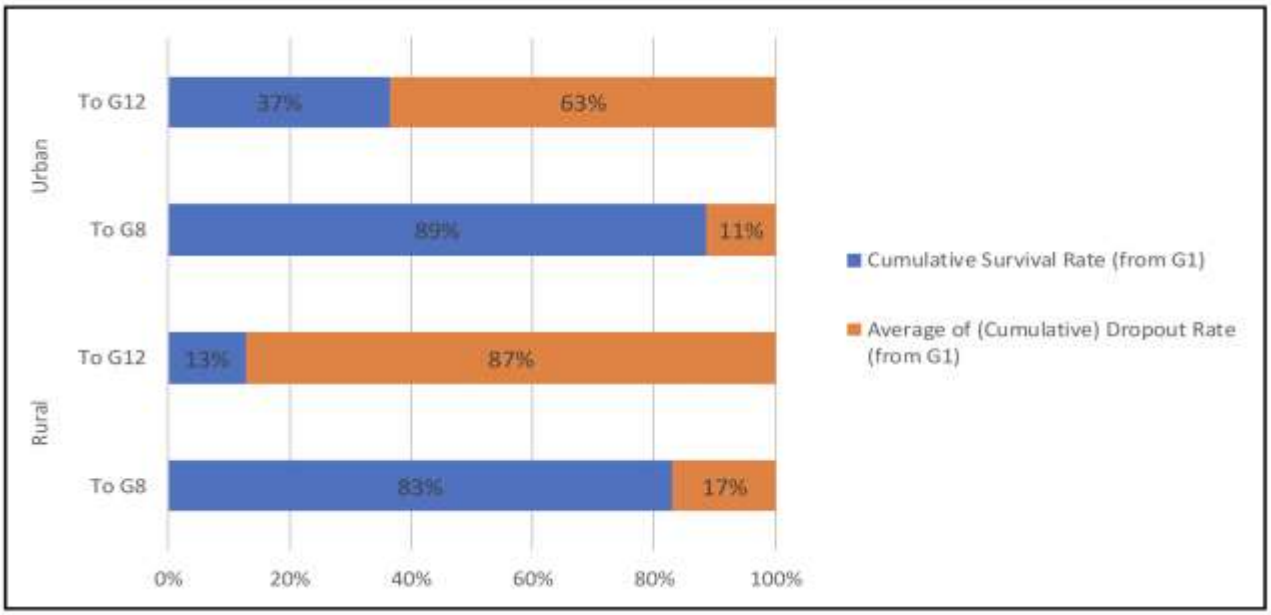
The secondary school enrollment and dropout disparity is exacerbated on neighboring islands. A strongly related factor is the financial incentive and often necessity for boys to support their families through physical labor, particularly on neighboring islands where households are on average lower income and experience higher rates of financial hardship.[10] Adolescent boys on neighboring islands may be pulled out of school to help with fishing, taro farming (more common on southern atolls which have more topsoil) and to take part in the local copra industry.[11] Links between dropouts and participation

[9] Marshall Islands Education Management Information System (MIEMIS), 2024. *Enrollment by Age, Education Level & Gender.*
[10] SPC, 2024
[11] Government subsidy payments for *copra* (dried coconut flesh used to produce coconut oil) is a critical source of income on neighboring islands. Though not financially lucrative for the country, the subsidy program functions as a form of social support or safety net for communities on neighboring islands. The subsidy rate for copra in RMI has increased in recent years, while rates of secondary school enrollment, particularly for boys, have decreased. Although empirical studies have not been conducted, the relationship between copra harvesting, financial hardship and male dropout on neighboring islands is worth further exploration. Source: ESA Consultations, 2024.

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of underage males in the informal workforce warrant further investigation to reinforce qualitative findings from consultations.

Figure 3 Cumulative Survival and Dropout Rates by region



Rural students on average have lower retention and survival rates than those in urban zones, with a cumulative survival rate from Grade 1 to Grade 12 of 13% for students on neighboring islands, compared to 37% for their urban counterparts. Barriers for rural students include a lack of resources, outdated and often dilapidated school infrastructure, inconsistent access to power, internet and clean, functional bathroom facilities, as well as less qualified teachers on average, and under-resourced multi-grade learning environments. At home, rural families on average receive lower annual income than urban families and may be subject to increased financial hardship.[12] Children in rural areas were less likely to report speaking a language other than Marshallese than their urban counterparts.[13] Most strikingly, many students in rural areas are forced to leave their home islands at the age of 13-14 to relocate to boarding schools to complete their education. This can be an isolating experience, separating minors from their family and community of origin, and some children, once home for school breaks, often choose to stay.

[12] SPC. 2024. 2021 Census Report.

[13] Ibid.

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Exploring alternative instructional models for students, including options to continue education on their home islands and to gain high school diplomas, technical and traditional skill certifications remotely could help to better support this population. Strengthening existing school-based supports such as counseling, sports, extracurricular, and school-community connections could help to address retention issues specific to boys and neighboring island students while improving student well-being. Note, girls and students with special needs also experience unique equity issues, detailed on pages 20-21.

Learning Outcomes

Curriculum resources and learning materials in RMI are predominantly in English and externally sourced, missing a key opportunity to leverage children's native language and culture as a learning resource. By committing to investment in the production of contextually relevant Marshallese language resources, MOEST can support students and teachers across learning levels to thrive. While student outcomes on the Marshall Islands Standards Assessment Test (MISAT) show challenges at all assessed grade levels, this highlights an opportunity to introduce locally relevant, language-appropriate materials and tailored teacher trainings to make education more relevant and accessible.

Table 5.1: 2023 MISAT Performance by Grade and Proficiency Level

	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced	Total Proficiency	Below Proficiency
Reading Grade 6 - English	27%	47%	16%	10%	**26%**	**74%**
Reading Grade 6 - Marshallese	20%	38%	31%	12%	**43%**	**57%**
Math Grade 6 - Form A	22%	59%	18%	1%	**19%**	**81%**
High School Entrance Test Grade 8	10%	56%	33%	1%	**34%**	**66%**

In 2023, Grade 6 students demonstrated proficiency in just 19% of tested mathematics benchmarks, while reading outcomes were slightly higher with 43% of Marshallese Language Arts and 26% of English Language Arts benchmarks proficiently met. At Grade 8, students failed to meet minimum proficiency on 66% of benchmarks of the secondary school entrance exam. The exam's structure and reporting, focus on benchmarks rather than student performance, make it difficult for families and students to interpret. Teachers

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and administrators alike question the efficacy and validity of the MISAT exams, as test results have been persistently low with stagnant change for years.[14]

Results on the 2021 Pacific Islands Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (PILNA) show that students in RMI in Grades 5 and 7 performed lower than the regional average in numeracy, reading and writing. Girls scored higher on average than boys in all assessed areas. PILNA recommendations encouraged MOEST to support students in reading, with a suggestion that, "all schools have a program where all students drop everything and read." Recommendations also suggested making "every effort to strengthen the supply of books to schools." Strengthening access to high quality Marshallese and English resources at all levels could help to address struggling student performance.

Teacher Development

Although teacher training initiatives have expanded, over one-third of educators remain under-qualified and "provisionally certified," while trainings are not always relevant for all settings. Female teachers, those in rural areas and teachers below the secondary level are more likely to be underqualified. These teachers may face added barriers, including a lack of formalized childcare options and potentially limited ability to relocate or travel to continue their educations. Teachers of different levels and in different locations also have unique professional development (PD) needs. Neighboring island teachers, for example, are more likely to manage multigrade classrooms supporting children across learning levels. Such teachers would benefit from specialized trainings and differentiated lesson plans to support their practice. Increasing investment in continuous PD, including online blended learning options for teachers in cohorts, and producing new curriculum resources designed with Marshallese culture, language, and environment in mind, are critical next steps.

Equity and Inclusion

Equity and inclusion remain critical priorities, as disparities persist across gender, disability, and geographic lines.

[14] ESA Consultations, 2024.

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Gender

While gender parity has been achieved in primary education, disparities exist at the secondary level. Boys have lower enrollment and significantly higher dropout rates in secondary education, highlighting the need for targeted interventions. Boys' participation in the informal workforce, often supporting their families by contributing to fishing, taro farming, and the local copra industry contributes to decreasing enrollment rates across adolescent years and heightened rates of drop-out for boys by Grade 12. It is essential that flexible education pathways are introduced, including self-paced learning options adaptable to the reality of life and family demands on neighboring islands. Expanding degree attainment options, as well as certifications for traditional skills and technical and vocational education and training (TVET) programs on all islands, will equip students, particularly boys, with the tools necessary to continue their educations and to validate experience they may be gaining outside the classroom. Strengthening school-based programs, including academic and psychosocial counseling can help to better support at-risk youth, while introducing more sports and extracurricular programming, and strengthening school and community connections, could help to improve the overall student learning environment and retention specifically of boys.

While girls persist through education at higher rates, they face challenges at the secondary, tertiary and workforce levels related to inadequate WASH resources, cultural taboos around menstruation, and limited formal childcare and family supports. The Marshall Islands has the second highest rate of teen pregnancy in the Pacific.[15] High incidences of teen pregnancy, coupled with insufficient maternity leave policies (affecting both female students and teachers),[16] and a lack of appropriate school infrastructure, including hygienic functional bathrooms, further disrupt girls' educational journeys. Increasing family life education—as is already underway— training of counselors in gender-specific needs and upgrading school and community facilities can help to deliver targeted supports. In particular, the introduction of formal

[15] Johnson, Giff. 2022. *Marshalls teen pregnancy rate second highest in Pacific.* Radio New Zealand.

[16] All students are allowed 10 excused and 10 unexcused absences in a school year, with no exceptions outlined for maternity leave. US government restrictions on RMI Compact funds for teacher salaries only permit 10 days of sick leave and 3 days of Annual Leave per year, including for maternity leave, meaning that in practice, female teachers can either attend their prenatal appointments or spend two weeks with their babies after birth, but not both. These policies result in inequities for both female students and teachers.

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childcare offerings would deliver transformative change for gender equity, as currently no formal early childhood or childcare centers for children 0-3 exist.

Geography

Rural students experience significantly lower retention and survival rates compared to those in urban areas. From Grade 1 through Grade 12, just 13% of students on neighboring islands remain in school, in contrast to 37% of their urban peers. Contributing factors include limited resources, outdated or poorly maintained school buildings, unreliable electricity and internet, lower access to qualified teachers, and multi-grade classrooms that lack sufficient teaching supports. Outside the classroom, rural families on average earn less than urban families, which can create additional financial strain. To continue their education, most rural students must leave their home islands—including family, friends, and communities—at the ages of 13 to 14 to attend boarding school. This separation can be isolating, often leading to homesickness and critically high rates of dropout. For students on neighboring islands, re-envisioning alternatives to traditional education and upgrading technological access at learning sites will open new doors to education continuity.

Special Needs

Approximately 3% of the population over age 5 in RMI has a documented disability, with “Specific Learning Disability” being the top category recognized in the Special Education program. This is defined as "a disorder in one or more of the basic learning processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest in significant difficulties affecting the ability to listen, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematics." Children with disabilities face systemic barriers, including a lack of accessible facilities, specialized resources, and trained professionals capable of conducting diagnostics and delivering inclusive instruction on their islands. Less than 70% of school-age individuals with a reported disability attend school. The reach of the Special Education Program, though vital, is limited, particularly in rural areas. There is a need for increased capacity building, resources, and education on supports to children with special needs, particularly those on the autism spectrum. Addressing these challenges will require expanded teacher training, infrastructure upgrades, and the implementation of existing policies like the Disability Policy and Action Plan. Expanded technology will help children

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with unique learning needs, by delivering trained specialists, telehealth assessments and check-ins remotely, co-facilitated by a local trained professional.[17] Adaptive equipment in the classroom will also ensure that students with special needs and disabilities are able to equitably take part in digital learning activities. By addressing the unique barriers faced by males, females, students on neighboring islands, and those with special needs, RMI can build a more inclusive and equitable education system that supports all learners in achieving their full potential.

[17] A project partnership currently under negotiation between the University of Hawaii Center for Disabilities Studies and PSS would support the implementation of new student tele-assessments. Should PSS schools have the connectivity necessary to partake, this could be a game changer for delivering assessments and supports to students with special needs across neighboring islands.

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Program Design

Problem Identification and Prioritization

Geographic Dispersion and Digital Divide

With 80 percent of the country population living in the urban hubs of Majuro and Ebeye, equitable education service delivery to students and communities on rural neighboring islands and atolls remains a challenge.[18] Just Majuro, Ebeye, Wotje and Jaluit have established power grids, leaving neighboring islands with inconsistent access to electricity via off-grid solutions including home solar and mini-grid systems. With a lack of access to new equipment and resources for repairs, hardware on neighboring islands is difficult to maintain. Even when funding is available, procurement can involve long delays due to challenges in shipping and transportation logistics. Procured materials, including food and education supplies, must be delivered via boat or plane, which are expensive and experience unpredictable delays. Without consistent power, nearly all neighboring islands lack reliable access to the internet, including at schools. Schools rely on cell phones or boat transportation to communicate with the PSS central office, though cell service availability and transport delays limit the speed and efficacy of delivering news, supports and responding to crisis. This poses serious challenges to PSS monitoring and support to remote schools, both in day-to-day reporting and during emergencies.

Limited communication, transport and connectivity between islands also impact teacher professional development, shared learning and practice. Although teacher training initiatives have expanded, most trainings are offered during brief periods over summer. This leaves teachers, about a third of whom hold just a high school diploma, with inconsistent supports to refining their professional practice throughout the year. A lack of uniform educational preparation for teachers puts children at risk of inequitable service delivery and learning in their foundational years.

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[18] SPC, 2024. Republic of the Marshall Islands 2021 Census on Population and Housing Analytical Report; United States Census Bureau, 2020. Retrieved from: https://data.census.gov/table/DECENNIALDDHCA2020.T01001?t=3901;

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Research demonstrates that participation in high quality early learning opportunities yields higher performance outcomes for students in later years.[19] Investment in strengthened professional development, teacher connections, and high-quality classroom resources and materials, particularly at the ECE and primary level, are therefore critical to improving learning outcomes. Students on neighboring islands already experience inequitable access to educational resources, a lack of up-to-date facilities, and must often leave their home islands to pursue a high school degree, placing them at an increased disadvantage for learning continuity. Expanded connectivity presents an opportunity to bridge these divides.

Climate Change and Environmental Pressures

Climate change and environmental pressures are increasingly undermining the stability of school infrastructure across the Marshall Islands. The country's low-lying atolls are particularly exposed to risks such as rising sea levels, intensified flooding from king tides, and severe weather events like typhoons. These conditions not only damage buildings and disrupt essential services like power and clean water but also compromise the safety and functionality of learning environments. As remote schools face prolonged delays in receiving climate-resilient upgrades—often due to logistical challenges and limited resources—it is imperative that education delivery systems be redesigned with resilience in mind. This means integrating proactive disaster preparedness, robust infrastructure improvements, and innovative, adaptive learning solutions to ensure that education remains uninterrupted, even in the face of escalating environmental threats or other disruptions to learning.

Learning Outcomes and Cultural Preservation

Improving learning outcomes, for both boys and girls, while preserving Marshallese cultural identity requires a transformative shift in curriculum and resource development. Currently, much of the educational content in RMI is

[19] Davis Schoch, A., Simons Gerson, C., Halle, T., & Bredeson, M. (2023). Children's learning and development benefits from high-quality early care and education: A summary of the evidence. OPRE Report #2023-226. Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; Suna, H.E., Ozer, M. Medium- and long-term outcomes of early childhood education: experiences from Turkish large-scale assessments. Humanit Soc Sci Commun 11, 853 (2024). https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-024-03241-9

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based on the American system and delivered primarily in English, covering topics such as US history, government, and even subjects like snow and seasonal variations that bear little relevance to local contexts. Broadly, there is a lack of inclusive resources and availability of materials in accessible mediums for students with special needs. This disconnect not only diminishes student engagement—potentially impacting those on rural neighboring islands, boys and students with special needs most—but also sidelines the rich cultural heritage of the Marshall Islands. The scarcity of teaching materials in Marshallese and the lack of content that reflects Marshallese daily life and environmental realities further exacerbate this challenge. To address these issues, there is a critical need to invest in and develop culturally, linguistically, and environmentally relevant curricula and resources that honor local traditions and adaptively meet the unique needs of Marshallese learners, thereby fostering a more inclusive and effective educational experience.

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Theory of Change

If we provide:

- Expanded resources and connections for teachers and learners
- Culturally grounded, inclusive, digitally accessible curriculum
- Improvements to physical and nonphysical school infrastructure

Broadly supported by the expansion of digital connectivity at schools

Then we will achieve:

- Enhanced teacher capacity and collaboration
- Improved access to quality Marshallese learning resources
- Strengthened student engagement, outcomes and well-being

Leading to: Students receiving high-quality, culturally rich education that prepares them for both local and global opportunities.

Projected Impacts for Children, Teachers and Community

By implementation of the proposed priority program and related activities under the System Transformation Grant,

Our children will…

a. be engaged in high-quality learning and instruction.
b. be able to see themselves and their lives reflected in their learning materials.
c. receive instruction & content relevant to their age & tailored to their learning level.
d. feel improved self-image through representation of their culture and traditions.
e. collaborate and learn from peers in other grades and other locations.
f. be prepared to enter the next grade level, higher education, and future workforce.
g. connect with their families living off-island or abroad.
h. increase their literacy, numeracy, science, technology, & traditional knowledge skills.
i. become happy and adventurous learners.
j. feel greater excitement and motivation to attend school.
k. be taught by well-equipped and motivated teachers.

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Our teachers will…

a. feel confident, qualified and well-connected to a wider teaching community.
b. be well-trained in curriculum, student emotional support, & resource development.
c. be able to share resources, strategies and approaches to teaching across schools.
d. be better supported in multigrade settings and able to experience the benefits rather than deficits of a multigrade teaching approach.
e. feel well-prepared and provided with continuous opportunities to learn new strategies for the classroom without having to travel off island.
f. have increased access to trainers, mentors and peers year-round via online learning and blended professional communities.
g. connect to parents and the wider community to collaborate in supporting students.
h. feel motivated to continue working in more remote neighboring island settings.
i. Have more autonomy in designing engaging lesson plans & activities for students.
j. author resources that will be shared and help other schools.
k. be more supported, connected & motivated in their professional teaching practice.
l. have the capacity to flexibly adapt to shifting student populations and learner locations in the face of outmigration.

"Our teachers will be well qualified, connected, supported, and equipped with resources and knowledge" – PSS breakout group, STG Workshop

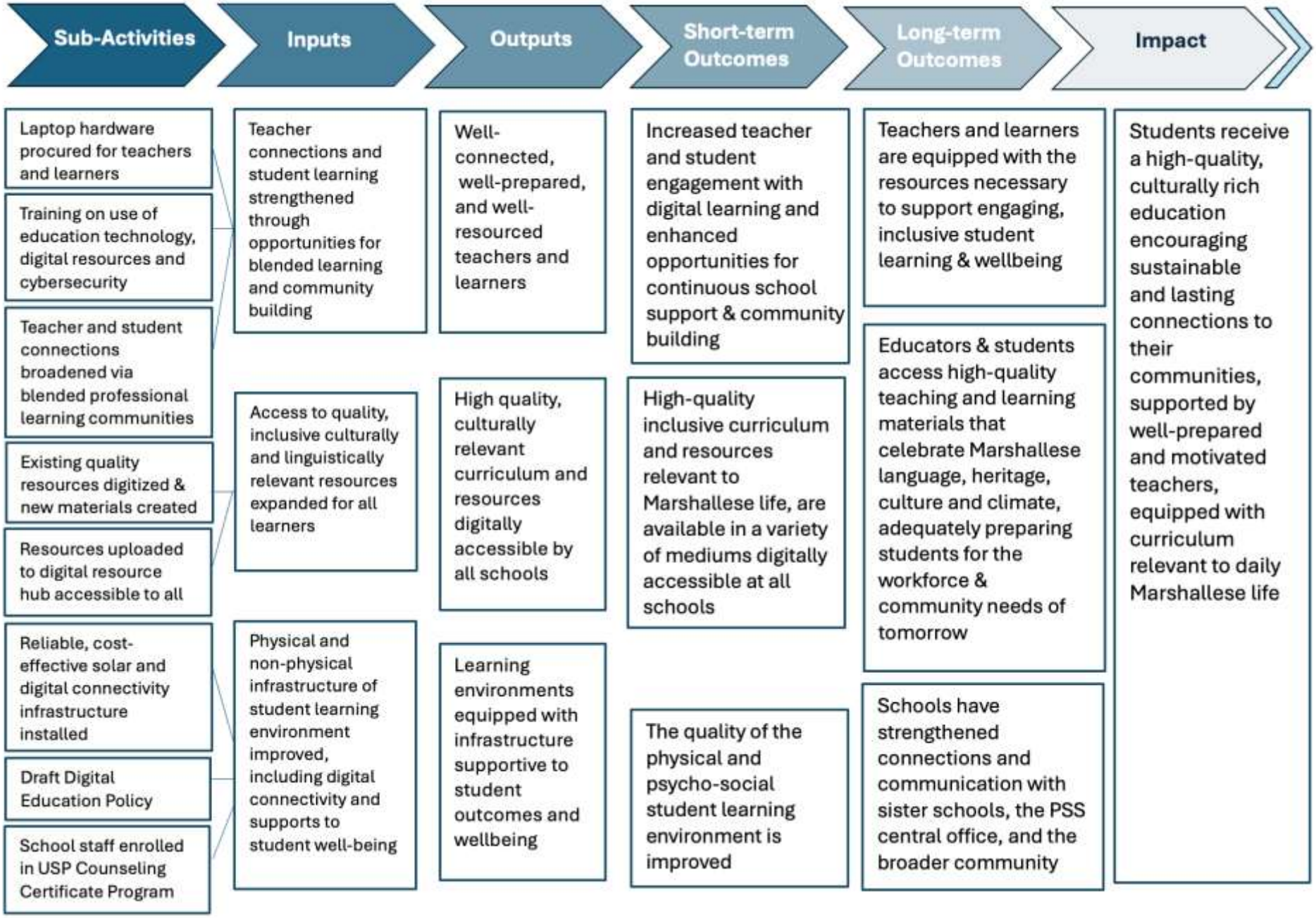
Our communities will…

a. be well-informed about school events & priorities through social media & emails.
b. feel confident in the quality of schools across the country.
c. be able to see results of student learning, in student outcomes and the workforce.
d. feel connected and invested in schools as collaborators, aligning efforts and priorities across home & the classroom.
e. have a sense of ownership and connection to their child's learning.
f. be better connected to their students and school environments, regardless of physical distance.
g. have critical communications access during emergencies, with schools serving as emergency evacuation shelters and school sites likely offering the only internet connection on most islands.

Through this initiative, "by 2029, our schools will be well connected to serve the needs of our students, teachers and communities, to improve student outcomes and mental, physical and socioemotional wellbeing, with learning materials and resources rooted in Marshallese culture and traditions." - PSS breakout group, STG workshop

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CONNECTING OUR ISLANDS FOR LEARNING – THEORY OF CHANGE



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Impact and Objectives

The program focuses on three priority areas:

Component 1: Well-Connected, Well-Prepared, & Well-Resourced Teachers & Learners

- **Subcomponent 1.1:** Procure hardware for teachers and learners, ensuring equitable access by schools on neighboring islands, boys and girls, and including assistive technology for students with special needs.

- **Subcomponent 1.2**: Deliver training on use of education technology, digital resources and cybersecurity for all schools.

- **Subcomponent 1.3:** Broaden teacher and student connections by establishing blended professional learning communities through Digital Sister Schools.

  Intermediate outcomes: Increased teacher and student engagement with digital learning, enhanced opportunities for continuous school support and community building.

Component 2: Quality, Relevant & Digitally Accessible Resources

- **Subcomponent 2.1:** Digitize high quality resources and materials, contributing to online resource repository accessible by all schools and teachers. Leverage Waka Moana Learning Hub and Google Drive, as needed.

- **Subcomponent 2.2:** Develop new digitally accessible, inclusive and locally relevant materials, available in a variety of formats.

  Intermediate outcomes: High quality inclusive learning resources relevant to Marshallese life are available in a variety of mediums and digitally accessible, in both English and Marshallese.

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Component 3: Equitable, Digitally Adaptive Student Learning Environments

- **Subcomponent 3.1:** Reliable, cost-effective digital connectivity and solar infrastructure installed at all schools in need.

- **Subcomponent 3.2:** Establish PSS Digital Education Policy to ensure safe and appropriate standards for digital access and use by schools, teachers and students

- **Subcomponent 3.3:** Teachers and school staff enrolled in USP Certificate Program to expand psychosocial and academic supports for students.

  Intermediate outcomes: The quality of the physical and psycho-social student learning environment is improved.

The execution of the three proposed program components will deliver improved equity and access to quality education resources, supports and connections for all schools, with equitable inclusion of students on neighboring islands, boys and girls, and students with special needs.

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Activities under the Grant

Output I: Well-Prepared, Well-Resourced & Well-Connected Teachers & Learners

Aligned with Education Partnership Pact Focus Area: Capable, Motivated Teachers (CMT)

1. Procure laptop hardware for teachers and learners, including assistive technology for students with special needs	1. Procure **laptops and adaptive learning equipment** for classroom use by teachers and learners, including assistive technology for students with special needs. Leveraging this technology, the University of Hawai'i Center for Disabilities Studies will deliver tele-assessments to students with special needs. The World Bank will provide an autism education specialist to support PSS and to procure teleassessment services. 2. Procurement to include built-in costs for hardware repairs and replacement as well as partner supports for installation and maintenance..
2. Deliver training on education technology, use of digital resources, & cybersecurity for all schools	1. Trainings delivered on a. **effective use of technology** in the classroom b. **access and use of digital resources** c. **cybersecurity and internet safety** for all schools within four years. The International Telecommunications Union (ITU) will provide cybersecurity/digital literacy content designed for students as a partner contribution.
3. Broaden teacher & student connections via blended professional learning communities (digital sister schools)	1. Introduce blended professional learning communities and school-to-school connections through the introduction of **digital sister schools**.

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Output II: Quality, Relevant and Digitally Accessible Curriculum & Resources

Aligned with Education Partnership Pact Focus Area: Foundational Skills (FS) 

1. Digitize and expand access to high quality resources and materials	Expand access to culturally relevant, place-based, digitally accessible curriculum materials for all teachers: a) **Compile & digitize high quality resources**: Identify and digitize existing high-quality curriculum and lesson plans for use by teachers across RMI, with included resources specific to Marshallese culture, language, climate, environment and special needs. b) **Contribute to existing resource repository:** i. Upload resources and materials organized by grade level and subject to resource repository, with the opportunity to leverage Waka Moana Learning Hub and Google Drive, as needed. Dependent on PSS preference. ii. Partner contributions to expanded digital resources: IXL Learning to offer pilot access to 1200 learner accounts with Marshallese content translations. Rosetta Stone to offer pilot access to 1200 accounts for language learning.
2. Develop new digitally accessible, locally relevant materials	a) **Implement content creation workshops** on the development of new resources, leveraging teachers as writers supported by facilitator guidance and partner assistance with translations offered by the RMI Customary Law and Language Commission (CLLC).

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Output III: Equitable, Digitally Adaptive Student Learning Environments 

Aligned with Education Partnership Pact Focus Area: Suitable Learning Environments (SLE)

1. Install reliable, cost-effective digital connectivity and solar infrastructure at all schools in need	a) Over a staggered roll-out, **procure and install**: **i. Digital connectivity hardware** **ii. Cost-effective internet subscriptions** **a.** In partnership with existing initiatives, including World Bank Education and Skills Strengthening Project (ESSP) which has procured hardware for all PSS high schools, and in alignment with national intent to expand affordable connectivity. **iii. basic electrical maintenance and solar installation** where necessary to expand wireless internet access to all PSS primary schools. b) Embed **maintenance and sustainability** into budget, including costs for hardware maintenance and repair and partnership agreement with the Marshalls Energy Company (MEC) to leverage their staff time to carry out annual hardware maintenance to island schools.
2. Establish PSS Digital Education Policy	a) Formulate and disseminate a **PSS digital education policy**, outlining expectations for best practices and equitable use and access to technology for school leaders, teachers and students.
3. Certificate Program in Counseling	a) **USP Certificate Program in Counseling:** USP-Majuro campus to deliver training of counselors supporting student academic and psychosocial wellbeing. i. USP program supported via World Bank grant will fund 30 participants.

Through widespread expansion of digital connectivity, PSS will be able to deliver strengthened capacity and connection-building for teachers and learners, expanded access to relevant, high-quality digitized curriculum and resources, and upgrades to the quality and wellbeing of student learning environments.

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Equity at the Heart of Design

Considerations of gender and geographic equity and social inclusion have been built into the implementation of each proposed program component, detailed below:

Output 1: Well-Prepared, Well-Resourced & Well-Connected Teachers & Learners

Delivering educational equity nationwide: Under Output 1, laptop hardware will be procured for teachers and learners, teachers will receive training on the use of education technology, digital resources and cybersecurity, and digital sister school communities will be established. Together, these initiatives will build student and teacher engagement with digital learning, enhance opportunities for continuous school support and expand community building. Today, inequitable access to power, internet connectivity, hardware and digital resources impacts student learning, particularly for rural neighboring islands. This initiative will introduce universal access to power, internet, and digital learning opportunities for all schools and students for the first time in history.

Equitable distribution to teachers: Education technology will be equitably distributed, with laptop procurement at a 1:1 ratio of laptop to teacher for all teachers, both male and female, at all island schools, including ECE teachers. Teachers, both male and female across rural and urban islands, will receive training on the use of education technology, digital resources (including digital accessibility and inclusion supports for students with special needs) and on cybersecurity to ensure safe and effective use at the school level. Training will include specialized digital resources for teachers working with students with special needs.

Equitable access by students: Laptops for students will be procured at a 1:4 ratio, with the intent to provide a rotating computer lab at each of the 79 public elementary schools in the country, including all neighboring island schools. Procurement will be needs-based and sufficient to allow all classrooms to participate in digital learning opportunities each week, including access for all boys and girls beginning in Grade 4 and spanning Grade 8. Laptops will be

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introduced at lower ratios for multi-age classes in micro-enrollment schools to ensure equity of access regardless of school and class size. Through the hardware procurement, this expansion works in conjunction with an existing project sponsored by the World Bank, which has expanded digital connectivity to all high schools in the Marshall Islands beginning at Grade 9. A Digital Education Policy will be developed by PSS, detailed in Component 3, paired with cybersecurity training and centralized PSS office control of internet access at all schools to ensure safety and security of children's internet experience. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) will offer cybersecurity/digital literacy training content for students as a partner contribution.

To ensure inclusive access for students with special needs or disabilities, assistive technology, including adaptive large-key keyboards to assist students with vision and motor-skill related needs, and classroom headphone sets, to ensure a personalized level of sensory stimulation and disruption free work time, will also be procured. Adaptive keyboards, including enlarged color-coded keys and optional braille stickers, will be procured at a ratio of one device per school, with two devices for larger schools. Headphones will be procured at a 1:1 ratio to laptops to ensure all students have access during digital learning time. Leveraging this technology, the University of Hawai'i Center for Disabilities Studies will offer tele-assessments to PSS students with special needs. This will begin with 25 tele-assessments conducted in the first year of implementation. In addition, the World Bank will be providing an autism education specialist to support PSS and procure tele-assessment services for use with students with special needs.

Potential Impacts: The expansion of digital connectivity for all teachers and learners lays a pathway to address both immediate and longer-term inequities. In the short-term, all students and teachers will be better connected, able to access quality resources (detailed in Output 2) and will have the ability to receive individualized inclusive digital learning supports. In the longer-term, digital expansion lays a foundation to address longstanding challenges, including disparities in drop-out rates for students on neighboring islands and boys in high school. With expanded power and connectivity on islands, PSS has the potential to explore alternative learning options, both for teachers and students. This will contribute to transformative education systems change, with

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digital pathways for education continuity, personalized supports to special needs, and alternative degree attainment for both students and teachers.

Output 2: Quality, Relevant and Digitally Accessible Curriculum & Resources

Delivering equitable access to resources for all: Under Output 2, schools and students will receive universal access to existing and new high-quality resources available in a variety of formats. Teachers and students on neighboring islands and in urban areas alike currently lack access to culturally relevant, inclusive, Marshallese language resources reflective of their environment. By digitizing high-quality resources and expanding access on a free digital platform for all, schools will for the first time have open and equitable access to quality learning resources across islands.

Equitable authorship and content design: In the writing process, equitable gender representation will be ensured by the selection of both male and female authors. In content development, emphasis will be placed on the diverse representation of main characters and illustrations, inclusive of both genders, gender roles, geography, special needs and disability in the storytelling and illustrations. Content will be uploaded and available for dissemination in a variety of formats, including audiobooks, print and digital content that can be adaptively adjusted for viewer needs. Resources will be available in both Marshallese and English and will include content addressing gender equality, family life education, and social inclusion, to the extent possible. Target grade level, subject matter, and gender of authors will be monitored for reporting.

Potential Impacts: The development and expansion of content that is relevant to children's daily lives and lived experience cannot be overstated. Today, much of the resources in Marshallese classrooms is written from a United States context and lacks adaptations or relevance for Marshallese culture, climate, language and traditions. By enriching learning resources with the life of the Marshall Islands, this initiative has the potential to boost learner engagement, motivation, resilience and knowledge. Importantly, it will also allow students, teachers and communities to see their identities reflected in published formal content on a mass scale for perhaps the first time.

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Output 3: Equitable, Digitally Adaptive Student Learning Environments

Connecting our islands for learning: Under Output 3, all public elementary schools will receive essential solar and connectivity infrastructure necessary to establish a digitally connected public school network for the first time in RMI history. For many, this will be the first consistent access to power and to digital connectivity at their schools in their lifetimes. With established power grids on just four atolls, most neighboring islands have inconsistent access to electricity and almost no access to internet. This expansion will therefore be transformative, touching all schools, equitably bridging geographic gaps, and ensuring equitable access to quality education for all children. Procurement of solar and internet infrastructure will be needs-based, with emphasis on expansion to remote neighboring islands schools first. Data collection has been conducted assessing status and needs at all schools for solar and connectivity, which has guided the procurement budget.

Such a vast new expansion requires delicate care and attention to safety for effective implementation. For this reason, a PSS Digital Education Policy will be established outlining safe usage and guidelines for internet access at all schools. In addition, each internet hardware kit installed will include software enabling central PSS office control of accessible websites and usage. Beyond this, all schools will receive cybersecurity training with content on gender-specific safety and risks. Project partners, including the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), have offered to share additional cyber-safety training content for students at no cost. With equitable access to maintenance in mind, PSS is in the process of securing a partnership agreement with the Marshalls Energy Company (MEC), to leverage staff time to carry out solar maintenance at all PSS schools in exchange for payment for staff travel.

With equitable sustainability in mind, the proposed program has also built annual incidental and hardware replacement costs into the budget for all schools for the duration of the project, to be carried on by PSS and incorporated into PSS budget following 2029. This plan shows promising future support from newly launched partner projects, including the World Bank Digital RMI initiative, which while nascent in its implementation, has the intent of investing in

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continued digital connectivity for all neighboring island hospitals and schools. This support, coupled with recent approval by the RMI President's Cabinet for the topic of Starlink entry at reduced cost to be voted on by the Nitijela in an upcoming congressional session, demonstrates RMI's national commitment to advancing expanded connectivity for all.

Under Output 3, the University of the South Pacific-Majuro Campus will implement a Counseling Certificate Program delivered to teachers and staff at PSS schools. This program will result in expanded academic and psychosocial supports across school sites where the presence of counselors remains limited.

Potential Impacts: With targeted training on gender-specific needs of at-risk youth, challenges for rural students, and supports for students with disabilities, the expanded presence of counselors has the potential to support the retention of groups at high-risk of dropout, particularly boys and students on neighboring islands. Expanded connectivity and counseling supports will also improve access to remote telehealth and professional specialist sessions for those with special needs. Broadly, the installation of solar and digital hardware across all islands will deliver transformative education change for RMI, allowing for adaptive learning environments that can flexibly meet changing student and country needs.

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Alignment with the Education Partnership Pact:

1. **Well-prepared, well-resourced, and well-connected teachers and learners:**
The RMI recognizes the critical role that educators play in shaping the future resilience of its youth. By prioritizing the development of well-prepared, well-resourced, and well-connected teachers, this initiative directly supports the Education Partnership Pact's focus on enhancing teacher capabilities and access to resources. Teachers will be equipped with the necessary tools and training to deliver culturally relevant and environmentally responsive education. This includes provisioning updated digital tools and creating robust professional development networks that bridge the geographical divides between islands.

2. Quality, relevant, and digitally accessible curriculum and resources:
In alignment with the Education Partnership Pact, the proposed project seeks to overhaul and enhance learning resources and materials by making them culturally and environmentally relevant to the RMI context. This involves the digitization of existing materials that reflect the unique cultural narratives, environment and language of the Marshallese people. By creating a repository of high-quality, accessible digital resources, the initiative ensures that all students and teachers, regardless of their physical location, have access to the learning tools necessary to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

3. **Equitable, adaptive student learning environments:**
The initiative proposes the development of equitable, climate-resistant learning environments, which is a cornerstone of the Education Partnership Pact's strategy to create suitable learning conditions for all children. This entails upgrading educational facility infrastructure to ensure consistent access to solar power and internet connectivity, the establishment of a digital learning policy and cyber security trainings, and the training of counselors at school sites to better support children and families facing the impacts of climate related weather events and potential displacement. These efforts will ensure that schools remain safe havens for learning, even in the face of increasing climate volatility.

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Through this grant, the RMI aims to create an educational system that is not only resilient but also deeply rooted in the Marshallese culture and equipped to handle the challenges posed by climate change and technological evolution. The support of the GPE will be instrumental in transforming these aspirations into reality, ensuring that Marshallese students are well-prepared to contribute to and navigate the complexities of the 21st century. This transformative initiative promises to safeguard, enrich, and empower the next generation of RMI citizens, fostering a sustainable and prosperous future for all.

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Budget and Financing

Total STG allocation: $2.5 million USD

Component breakdown:

1. **Component 1: Well-Prepared, Well-Resourced & Well-Connected Teachers & Learners: 29.6%**
   -Supported by partner contributions: International Telecommunications Union (ITU) to provide cybersecurity/digital literacy content for students ($60,000.00); University of Hawaii Center for Disabilities Studies to provide tele-assessments for students with special needs ($99,600.00); World Bank to provide an autism education specialist to support PSS special education division and procure tele-assessment service ($200,000.00).

2. **Component 2: Quality, Relevant & Digitally Accessible Resources: 11.6%**
   -Supported by partner contributions: RMI Customary Law and Language Commission (CLLC) to share their time to support content translations ($10,000); IXL Learning to offer pilot access to 1200 learner accounts with Marshallese translations ($11,800.00); Rosetta Stone to offer pilot access to 1200 language learner accounts ($210,240.00).

3. **Component 3: Equitable, Digitally Adaptive Student Learning Environments: 47.7%**
   -Supported by partner contributions: Marshalls Energy Company (MEC) to carry out maintenance and repair visits to neighboring island schools ($64,000.00); University of the South Pacific – Majuro Campus to offer Counseling Certificate program ($80,000.00)

Grant Agent Implementation Support Costs: **11%**

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Connecting Our Islands for Learning: System Transformation Grant Budget Summary

	Year 1 (2025)	Year 2 (2026)	Year 3 (2027)	Year 4 (2028)	TOTALS
Component 1: Well-Connected, Well-Prepared, & Well-Resourced Teachers & Learners	639,064.33	33,793.33	33,793.33	33,793.33	740,444.32
Subcomponent 1.1 Procure laptops and hardware for teachers and learners, including assistive technology for students with learning disabilities	522,100.00	11,760.00	11,760.00	11,760.00	557,380.00
Subcomponent 1.2: Deliver training on use of technology, digital resources and cyber security for all schools	108,631.00	13,700.00	13,700.00	13,700.00	149,731.00
Subcomponent 1.3: Broaden teacher connections via blended professional learning communities	-	-	-	-	-
Program Technical Assistance	8,333.33	8,333.33	8,333.33	8,333.33	33,333.32
Component 2: Quality, Relevant and Digitally Accessible Curriculum & Resources	88,882.92	66,732.92	66,732.92	66,982.92	289,331.68
Subcomponent 2.1: Digitize and expand access to high quality resources and materials, leveraging existing resource hub	3,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,250.00	6,250.00
Subcomponent 2.2: Develop new digitally accessible, locally relevant materials	27,550.00	7,400.00	7,400.00	7,400.00	49,750.00
Program Management and Technical Assistance UNICEF	58,332.92	58,332.92	58,332.92	58,332.92	233,331.68
Component 3: Equitable, Digitally Adaptive Student Learning Environments	765,064.33	149,981.33	139,391.33	139,391.33	1,193,828.32
Subcomponent 3.1: Procure internet connectivity & necessary physical equipment to expand digital connectivity at schools	756,731.00	128,148.00	131,058.00	131,058.00	1,146,995.00
Subcomponent 3.2: Formulate and disseminate a PSS digital education policy	-	13,500.00	-	-	13,500.00
Subcomponent 3.3: Enroll Teachers in Certificate Program in Counseling	-	-	-	-	-
Program Technical Assistance	8,333.33	8,333.33	8,333.33	8,333.33	33,332.32

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GRANT AGENT'S IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT COSTS	68,999.92	68,999.92	68,999.92	68,999.92	275,999.68
Partner Contributions					
University of Hawaii, Center for Disabilities Studies (provision of tele-assessments for students with special needs)	24,900.00	24,900.00	24,900.00	24,900.00	99,600.00
World Bank (provision of an autism education specialist to support MOEST PSS & procure tele-assessment service)	50,000.00	50,000.00	50,000.00	50,000.00	200,000.00
International Telecommunications Union (ITU) (provision of cybersecurity training content for students)	15,000.00	15,000.00	15,000.00	15,000.00	60,000.00
IXL Learning (provision of 1200 pilot accounts for PSS teacher & staff use - 4-month pilot with Marshallese language translation)	11,800.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	11,800.00
Rosetta Stone (provision of 1200 pilot accounts at estimated value of 10.95/month per person for PSS use - 16-month pilot)	210,240.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	210,240.00
RMI Customary Law and Language Commission (CLLC) (translation services for newly developed learning content)	2,500.00	2,500.00	2,500.00	2,500.00	10,000.00
Marshalls Energy Company (MEC) (provision of staff time to install and annually maintain hardware)	16,000.00	16,000.00	16,000.00	16,000.00	64,000.00
University of the South Pacific (USP-Majuro Campus) (grant funding for Counseling Certificate Program for school staff)	80,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	80,000.00
TOTAL	1,562,011.50	319,507.50	308,917.50	309,167.50	
GRAND TOTAL					**2,499,604.00**
TOTAL INCLUDING PARTNER CONTRIBUTIONS					$3,235,244.00

Over the years, UNICEF and PSS have formed a shared understanding of each other's procedures through continued collaboration, including the use of GPE grants. The UNICEF North Pacific Office is familiar with the fiduciary and administrative structures in RMI and has effectively worked with PSS to strengthen financial management capacities among program and budget personnel. Together, they have identified mutually beneficial methods for program implementation, leveraging RMI government systems and in-country

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resources wherever possible, yet leaving open the option to use UNICEF's procurement and technical services when necessary.

While the proposed project involves substantial procurement in two key areas (computer hardware and digital connectivity equipment), UNICEF has successfully managed comparable procurements in other Pacific countries. UNICEF can assist PSS by preparing RFQs that guarantee items and services are appropriate, sustainable in the local setting, and offer strong value for money. Decisions about whether procurement takes place locally, regionally, or globally will be made in consultation with all relevant parties, ensuring cost-effectiveness and ongoing support for PSS.

UNICEF may also establish cooperation agreements with recognized PSS partners who are expected to contribute significantly to program implementation. Through these Program Cooperation Agreements (PCAs), UNICEF can directly transfer funds to an NGO or CSO partner working with PSS, which can then oversee the components outlined in the program's outcome-level agreements between PSS, UNICEF, and the partner. PSS already collaborates with a few local organizations such as PREL and with the USP Institute of Education. These entities are acknowledged for their specialized knowledge and proven experience in the areas this proposal focuses on.

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Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

The Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) framework for the RMI STG program is designed to ensure that the program's objectives are achieved effectively and efficiently. The MEL framework provides a structured approach to tracking progress, assessing outcomes, and facilitating continuous learning and adaptation throughout the program's implementation. Baselines for key indicators related to infrastructure improvement, hardware distribution and teacher capacity building will be established during the program's inception phase in the first year. These baselines will serve as reference points, enabling the program to measure progress and evaluate impact over time.

The framework was developed with recognition of the limited timeframe for implementation and the existing bandwidth of PSS staff to sustainably manage concurrent data collection and varied projects. With this in mind, the framework has been designed to leverage data already collected by MOEST in alignment with SDG4, PacREF and EPP targets, and includes indicators that PSS already measures to ensure that this work can be easily integrated into existing data collection processes.

At a core outcomes level, existing indicators captured by the Marshall Islands Education Management Information System (MIEMIS) have been selected. Data will be disaggregated by both gender and geography (including urban versus rural locations (neighboring islands)), with the aim of closing gaps in student promotion rates, survival rates, and teacher degree attainment by both metrics.

To evaluate the program more holistically and provide a fuller picture of its impacts, we have incorporated qualitative data collection through the implementation of a digital survey for teachers and students. Capturing school level experiences will help shed light and iteratively inform improvements to program implementation over the span of the four project years and beyond. Collection of success stories and lessons learned will help to inform both the priority program and future initiatives led by PSS, and the country, as it continues its endeavor of expanding digital connectivity nationwide.

Equity will be included front and center in monitoring, with gender parity documented in access and outcomes, along with geographic access in service delivery, and inclusion and reach to students with disabilities.

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System Transformation Grant – Proposed Indicators

To monitor the program, we propose indicators developed in alignment with the EPP:

Outcome Indicators				
Outcome Level Indicators track impacts resulting from completed program outputs and activities. These include EMIS-level data and qualitative surveys.				
Proposed Indicator		**Disaggregation**	**Method of Data Collection/Verification**	**Frequency**
Assessment Level Data				
1A	**Transition Rate** Gr 8 => 9 with a focus on closing the urban v. rural and gender gap in transition rates.	i) Gender ii) Geography (Urban and Rural)	MIEMIS	Annual
1B	**Teacher Degree Attainment** with a focus on closing the urban v. rural and gender gap in teacher degree attainment.	iii) Education level taught iv) Gender v) Geography	MIEMIS	Annual
Qualitative Data				
1D	**Teachers:** Percentage of teachers reporting a) increased use of technology in the classroom and b) increased confidence in implementation compared to baseline	i) Grade level taught ii) Teacher Gender iii) Geography	Digital Teacher Survey	Annual
1E	**Students:** Percentage of surveyed students reporting increased access to digital resources in the classroom	i) Grade level (Gr 8) ii) Gender iii) Geography	Digital Learner Survey (Gr 8)	Annual

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Output Indicators				
Output Level Indicators track the completion of identified STG program activities and are drafted in alignment with the Education Partnership Pact (EPP).				
OP1: Teachers and Learners				
Proposed Output Indicator		**Disaggregation**	**Method of Data Collection/Verification**	**Frequency**
1.1	#Laptops distributed to teachers	i) Level of education taught ii) Gender iii) Geography	Register of resources sent to schools	Annual
1.2	#laptops distributed for student computer lab use	i) Geography	-Register of resources sent to schools	Annual
1.3	#assistive technology units distributed	i) Geography	Register of resources sent to schools & enrollment data	Annual
1.4	#teachers trained on use of technology, digital resources and cybersecurity	ii) Level of education taught iii) Gender iv) Geography	Workshop logs	Annual
1.5	#digital sister schools established	i) Level of education taught ii) Gender Geography	Sister school meeting logs and/or sign-in sheets	Annual
OP2: Curriculum and Resources				
Proposed Output Indicator		**Disaggregation**	**Method of Data Collection/Verification**	**Frequency**
2.1	#high-quality inclusive resources digitized (existing)	i) Target level of education ii) Modality (print, online, video etc.)	Register of resources uploaded to resource hub	Annual
2.2	#high-quality inclusive resources developed (new)	i) Target level of education ii) Modality (print, online, video etc.)	Register of resources uploaded to resource hub	Annual
2.3	#content creation workshops held	i) Level of education taught ii) Gender iii) Geography	Workshop logs and sign-in sheets	Annual

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OP3: Learning Environment				
3.1	#Starlink units installed	i) Geography	Register of resources sent to schools	Annual
3.2	#Electrical/solar hardware installed	i) Geography	Register of resources sent to schools	Annual
3.4	#counselors trained 3.4.1 #total counselors at schools	i) School level ii) Participant Gender iii) Geography	USP certificate program outcomes 3.3.1 Digital School Survey	Annual

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Implementation Arrangements

The program will be carried out under the leadership of the Ministry of Education, Sports, and Training (MoEST) Public School System (PSS), with oversight from the PSS Executive Committee (EC) and National Board of Education (NBOE). The Local Education Group (LEG) will serve as a coordination body to strengthen alignment and harmonization of efforts among key education sector partners. UNICEF will serve as the Grant Agent, while Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL) will act as the Coordinating Agency for the grant.

Readiness for Implementation

The RMI Local Education Group (LEG) is an established coordination mechanism designed to strengthen cooperation among the Ministry's divisions and key education stakeholders. Since the implementation of the STG program falls under MoEST's mandate, with PSS leading execution, coordination, and monitoring, LEG will support decision-making, with PSS and the NBOE having final authority.

Under the Minister of Education's leadership, PSS will oversee program implementation, planning, and monitoring, with UNICEF providing grant management and PREL facilitating coordination. The PSS Executive Committee will conduct planning and review meetings to assess grant performance and financial management with the STG program coordinator. The program coordinator, embedded within PSS, will lead and oversee the implementation, planning, and reporting of the GPE program, regularly updating LEG and senior PSS leadership, including the PSS Executive Committee. LEG will make key implementation decisions in consultation with the Commissioner of PSS.

Grant Agent

UNICEF serves as the Grant Agent, responsible for receiving and managing GPE funds in accordance with the STG application, as agreed upon by MoEST PSS and endorsed by LEG. In this role, UNICEF ensures quality control over GPE-funded consultancy deliverables and oversees their implementation.

Multiple UNICEF personnel will support the System Transformation Grant's execution, including the UNICEF North Pacific Chief of Field Office, who will oversee daily operations, and the Education Specialist and Education Officer from the Field Office, who will provide technical, logistical, and oversight support for program implementation. Additional technical expertise will be available from the UNICEF Pacific Education team, offering guidance and active engagement throughout the process. The UNICEF Pacific Chief of Education will approve all contractual deliverables, and other UNICEF program staff may contribute as needed.

UNICEF enters into annual work agreements with the RMI government, which serve as the foundation for direct cash transfers (DCT) to relevant government entities for the GPE-funded program. The grant will be managed using UNICEF's global financial and programmatic procedures, covering the procurement of services, technical assistance, supply acquisitions, and direct payments where necessary.

With approval from RMI authorities, UNICEF may collaborate with regional partners possessing specialized technical expertise to support the implementation of STG activities. Based on the project timeline, Terms of Reference (ToR) and budgets will be co-developed by UNICEF and PSS, incorporating input from in-country stakeholders and broader education partners. These elements will be integrated into the annual work plan to maintain implementation momentum. The proposal also accounts for PSS's capacity to effectively manage program delivery.

Coordinating Agency

Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL) is the designated Coordinating Agency for the GPE program in RMI. Working alongside MoEST PSS and LEG members, the agency plays a critical role in maintaining transparency, accountability, and harmonized collaboration among stakeholders.

As outlined in the GPE accountability matrix, PREL will support policy dialogue, enhance sector coordination, and ensure effective communication between the government and development partners. Having previously served as the

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Coordinating Agency for other GPE grants, PREL brings extensive experience in managing education sector coordination in RMI.

Safeguarding, Key Risks, & Mitigation Measures

Child Safeguarding

Ensuring children's safety and protection is a top priority for PSS. The program will build upon existing child safeguarding initiatives in the education sector, including those implemented through past and current GPE-funded projects such as the COVID-19 response and early childhood education (ECE) initiatives.

As the Grant Agent, UNICEF has extensive experience in child safeguarding and will reinforce these efforts to ensure that schools, communities, and program partners provide a secure environment for children. Any concerns raised will be addressed swiftly and appropriately, with all UNICEF partners required to comply with UNICEF's child safeguarding policy.

Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment (PSEAH)

The program will adopt a zero-tolerance stance on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) and Sexual Harassment (SH). UNICEF prioritizes safeguarding measures to mitigate SEA risks in all its field operations, particularly in vulnerable communities.

UNICEF conducts routine PSEA capacity risk assessments as part of due diligence with its implementing partners. If gaps are identified, immediate measures will be taken to strengthen partner knowledge and compliance. All subcontractors and partners involved in the program will be briefed on and expected to adhere to UNICEF's PSEA guidelines.

Additionally, the following table outlines key risks and corresponding mitigation measures identified during stakeholder consultations.

Safeguarding and Risk Mitigation

The program has identified key risks and corresponding mitigation measures:

Key Risks and Mitigation Measures

#	Risks	Probability	Impact on Program	Mitigation Measures
1	Climate related disasters and environmental risks may interrupt service delivery or delay project implementation.	High	High	Procurement and installation of solar and digital connectivity hardware will be overseen and advised on by a UNICEF structural engineer, who in partnership with the PSS Associate Commissioner of Facilities will ensure climate-resilient infrastructure standards are met. Backup systems for digital resources and data will be established, including procurement of laptops with sufficient memory to access and store documents in offline mode. Alternative power sources for connectivity infrastructure will be procured, including solar panels and solar generators to extend access to connectivity in the absence of traditional power, which is the norm on most neighboring islands.
2	Lack of capacity to maintain, repair and replace procured hardware on neighboring islands.	Medium	High	PSS is in the process of securing a partnership agreement with the Marshalls Energy Company (MEC) to provide for annual maintenance visits by their staff to all neighboring island schools to conduct maintenance and repairs as needed on procured solar hardware in exchange for funding for their staff travel. In addition, PSS IT staff have been trained on the configuration and needs for Starlink internet setup at both large and small schools and have developed a guide detailing all necessary equipment, which will be used to guide repair and replacement. The PSS IT team will configure all Starlink kits before distribution so that they do not need to be set up by local untrained staff on neighboring islands. Beyond this, a budget has been built in for the replacement of hardware (including laptops and solar kit equipment) as well as a budget for incidental costs (including wires) at each school.

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#	Risks	Probability	Impact on Program	Mitigation Measures
				Teachers from all schools will receive training on the use of education technology, digital resources and cybersecurity. Phased implementation will prioritize remote neighboring island schools.
3	Risk of financial sustainability to continue the project following completion	Low	Medium	The RMI National Government has demonstrated a commitment to expand affordable connectivity for all, with the President's Cabinet voting to approve consideration of a bill that would allow Starlink entry at reduced business and residential costs nationwide. This bill will be voted on by the Nitijela (Congress) in spring of 2025. In addition, donor partners have shown keen interest in this area, including the World Bank Digital RMI project. While early in its implementation, the project has conducted country consultations with all ministries and outlined a plan to expand digital connectivity reliably with a prioritized focus on supports to neighboring island hospitals and schools. These commitments and partnerships demonstrate RMI's level of dedication to this initiative. The World Bank's Education and Skills Strengthening Project (ESSP) has already successfully expanded digital connectivity to all RMI secondary schools. This STG initiative therefore builds on a foundation of country- and external-partner level commitments. Under the STG proposed program, sustainability and maintenance costs have been built into the proposed budget, including annual replacement for hardware and maintenance delivered in partnership with MEC. PSS is posed to continue the upkeep of acquired hardware by incorporating a maintenance and repair budget into its annual US Compact funding allocation, which is a committed stream of funding for the next 20 years.

#	Risks	Probability	Impact on Program	Mitigation Measures
4	Social and cultural risks of exposure to internet for the first time, including risks of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) or sexual harassment (SH)	Medium	Medium	Safeguarding protocols will be put into place for online learning and cybersecurity for school communities. This will be implemented by the creation of the PSS Digital Education Policy and reinforced by cybersecurity trainings delivered to all schools. Internet access will be limited to educational use and centrally controlled by the PSS central office IT team in Majuro, leveraging Ubiquity and Starlink software to manage all device access remotely. Non-educational, unsafe and inappropriate sites will be blocked from access. In addition, the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), has offered to share additional cyber-safety training content for students at no cost. New digitized learning content will be designed by local educators, including content on sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and sexual harassment (SH) with cultural sensitivity in mind. Appropriate protocols will also be included in the Counseling Certificate program offered by the University of the South Pacific – Majuro Campus to existing schoolteachers. The course will include safety protocols and training on interacting with children in 1-1 settings and the discussion of vulnerable topics, including reporting requirements related to harassment and abuse.

Sustainability and Aid Effectiveness

The program sustainability is ensured through:

Leveraging existing resources available in country to execute STG program activities. There are existing resources that can be leveraged to deliver efficient, effective and culturally relevant supports under the priority program. This includes selecting local teachers to serve as authors of digital resources, getting support in translations and language refinement by the RMI Customary Language and Law Commission (CLLC), implementing periodic teacher trainings in education technology using existing PSS staff. and turning to in-country institutions for expertise and education, including the USP-Majuro Campus in its leadership of the Counseling Certificate program. A key factor to sustainability, particularly in geographically disparate settings, is the use of existing human and material resources, building capacity where necessary and complimenting existing available skills.

Alignment of program activities to core activities of PSS and the school system. This includes organizing teacher workshops within the regular schedule of the PSS summer training calendar. The intent here is to purposefully incorporate project activities into existing timelines and initiatives, to streamline efforts, reduce costs and share resources.

Countrywide commitment to digital expansion. Financial sustainability is reinforced by the RMI National Government's commitment to equitable expansion of digital connectivity for all. In February 2025, the President's Cabinet voted to approve congressional consideration of a bill that would allow Starlink entry at reduced business and residential costs nationwide in partnership with the country's national telecommunications provider, the National Telecommunications Authority (NTA). This bill will be voted on by the Nitijela (Congress) in spring of 2025. Government support comes in alignment with the rise of donor programs, including the World Bank's Digital RMI project. Though early in its implementation, the Digital RMI initiative is committed to a) expanding access to the internet b) promoting private sector investment in climate resilient infrastructure and c) establishing the critical foundations for digital government services and a digital economy in the RMI. A key component

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of the project is triggering new private sector-led investment in expanded internet coverage, improved service quality and lowered price. The recent endorsement by the RMI government of a plan to allow private-sector service delivery to enter the country via Starlink comes in part as a result of Digital RMI's efforts. These combined government and donor partner efforts align well with the STG priority program and will support long-term sustainability of digital expansion in the RMI.

Maintenance and replacement plans have been put into place and incorporated into the program budget, in partnership with external partners to support longevity. PSS has entered early stages of a partnership agreement with the Marshalls Energy Company to provide annual check-up and maintenance visits to neighboring islands for solar hardware. In addition, costs for annual replacement of parts and hardware have been built into the program budget, with PSS committed to taking on maintenance costs going forward, supported by US Compact funding and in partnership with expanding government and donor partner opportunities for cost-sharing. The PSS IT team has been trained on internet kit configuration and troubleshooting and is poised to deliver local support as needed.

Sector wide ownership of the proposal and vision. The STG priority program proposal's development has been done through wide consultation at a national level. Key in country education stakeholders have been part of the proposal development and planned to be key partners in the implementation of the STG.

Aid Effectiveness

Government ownership: The STG program document is based on the Education Partnership Pact (EPP or Partnership Compact for GPE purposes) and fully reflects the agreed priorities of PSS stakeholders in previous consultations and commitment statements. Its development was consultative and is fully owned by RMI.

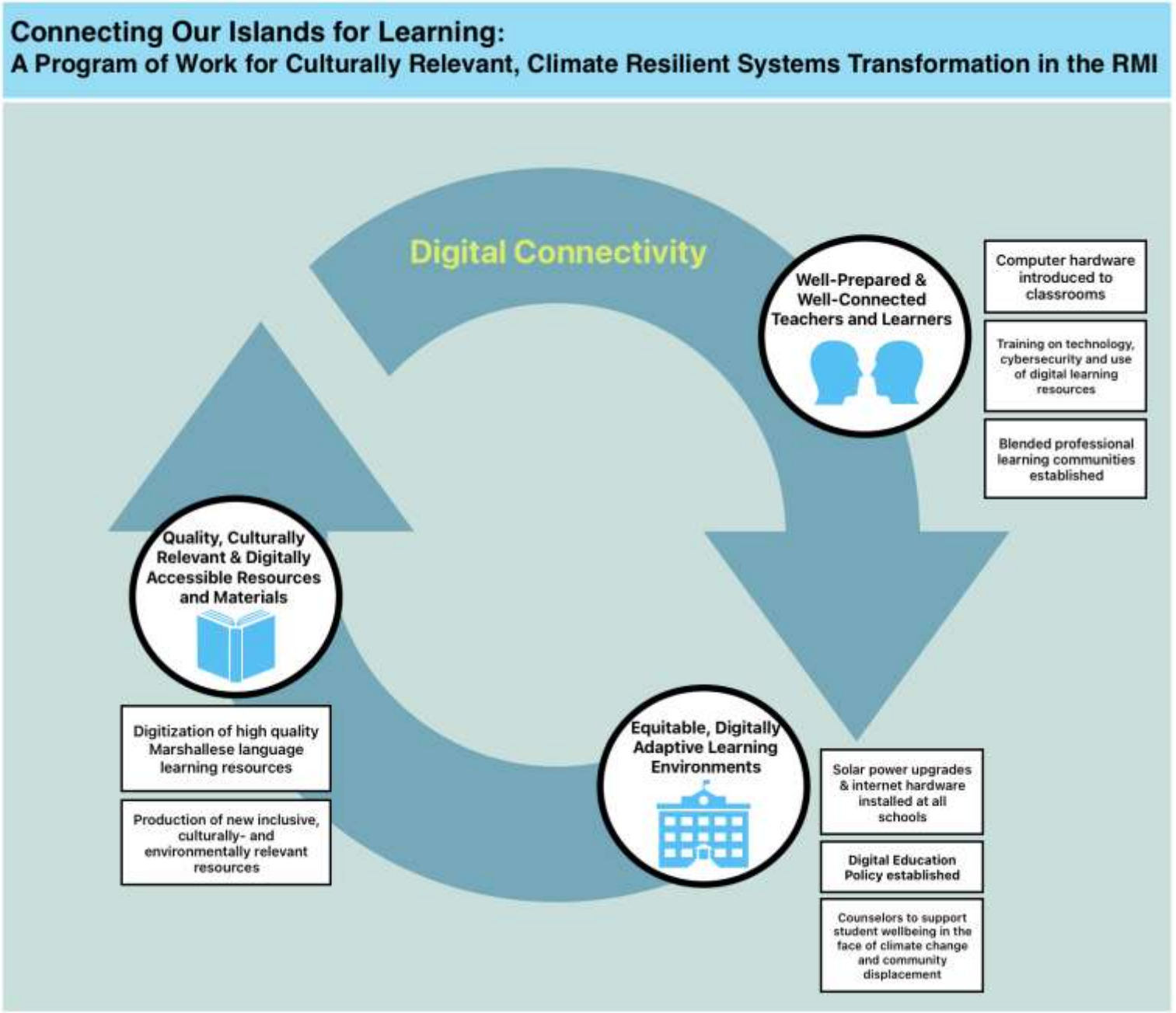
Alignment and complementarity: The STG program has been designed in the early stages of the consultations for a new Education Sector Analysis (ESA) and

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Education Sector Plan (ESP) for RMI. This creates a significant opportunity for alignment and has allowed for extensive cross-sharing of takeaways from consultations. In total, over 150 individuals have been consulted in the development of the Education Sector Analysis and STG programming, including interviews, focus groups and workshops with teachers, principals, students, parents, non-profit organizations, and private sector representatives across Majuro and Kwajalein Atolls. The program has been designed to complement and leverage other donor-funded initiatives and build on identified education sector priorities.

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Annex A: STG Workshop – Visual Outcome of Group Discussions



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Annex B: Policy Alignment & Strategic Linkages

National Strategic Plan 2020-2030

This program directly supports the seven objectives established for MoEST:

1. Improved early childhood development
2. Increased learning and student achievement in primary and secondary schools
3. Enhanced post-secondary and continuing education opportunities with in-country access to obtain qualifications such as certificates, diplomas, undergraduate and postgraduate degrees
4. Enhanced skills and attributes necessary for a dynamic workforce and resilient economy
5. Ensure schools are well equipped with facilities, resources and quality teachers to foster a more effective learning environment
6. Incorporate sports as an important component of the school system
7. Address TVET and workforce development issues through the NTC and STEM program

Digital connectivity expansion through this program will specifically support these objectives by:

- Enabling blended learning opportunities for technical and vocational skills development
- Supporting teacher professional development through digital platforms
- Providing access to varied curriculum and resources
- Improving support to teacher development through expanded connectivity

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Transforming Education Summit 2022 Commitments

The program implements RMI's National Commitment Statement priorities:

1. Well-trained and well-supported Teachers:
    - Recognizing and enabling cultural ways of learning to support student learning and achievement
    - Exploring partner options to secure research and education networks, technologies and power sources especially for schools in the outer islands
    - Supporting revised and innovative teaching practices including activity-based, group and critical thinking exercises
    - Revising salary structures for educators with clearly articulated expectations
2. Digital Learning and Transformation:
    - Leveraging education-driven technologies to optimize online learning resources and ICT-competent graduates
    - Supporting cost-effective and extensive networks for digital content access
    - Exploring assistive technologies for students with disabilities
    - Collaborating with telecommunications sector for efficient internet services
3. Inclusive, Equitable, Safe and Healthy Schools:
    - Strengthening intentional focus on students with disabilities through system-wide collaboration
    - Creating and disseminating national disaster plans for each school
    - Developing policies defining 'gender equality, equal opportunities' and 'inclusive education'
    - Ensuring right types and levels of resources are standard from pre-school through college

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Pacific Regional Education Framework (PacREF)

The program advances PacREF priorities through:

- Using the PacREF Waka Moana Learning Hub as an online repository for teaching and learning resources
- Addressing PILNA 2021 recommendations:
    1. Interventions to improve reading performance
    2. Development and utilization of formative assessment practices
- Supporting opportunities for research and learning at regional levels

Education Partnership Pact Connections

The program implements key EPP focus areas:

1. Capable Motivated Teachers:
    - Digital technology skills for instructional purposes
    - ICT for professional development
    - Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) established face-to-face and online
    - Hardware provision and resource website development

2. Suitable Learning Environment:
    - Physical infrastructure improvements including solar initiatives
    - Connectivity hardware for online connections
    - Development of health and psychosocial environments
    - Digital education policy including hardware and software policies
    - Cyber-safety course development

3. Foundational Skills Development:
    - Strengthening curriculum and resources for literacy
    - Supporting Marshallese language and cultural literacy
    - Developing eco-literacy on conservation and climate adaptation
    - Enhancing culturally relevant numeracy and science

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Annex C: MEL Results Framework

Program Outcome:

Students and teachers have improved access to inclusive, quality education through digital transformation.

Category	Indicator	Definition	Baseline	Target	Data Source	Frequency	Data Owner	Coordinator
Student Transition & Retention	Transition Rate Gr 8 => 9	Percentage of students transitioning from Grade 8 to Grade 9, disaggregated by gender and geography (urban v. rural).	F: 60% M: 56% Urban: 71% Rural: 26% Source: 2023 Education Data Digest	F: 65% M:61% [Increase of 5% for males and females by Year 4; 1.25% increase per year.] Urban: 75% Rural: 41% [Increase of 4% for urban and 15% for rural students by Year 4; 1% & 3.75% increase per year respectively.]	MIEMIS data	Annual	PSS Data Team	STG Program Coordinator
Teacher Quality	Teacher Degree Attainment	Percentage of teachers with degree qualifications (% of "qualified teachers"), disaggregated by education level taught, gender, and geography.	*Level Taught & Gender*: ECE F: 64% M: 67% Primary F: 63% M: 71% Secondary F: 78% M: 82%	*Level Taught & Gender*: ECE F: 74% M: 77% Primary F: 73% M: 81% [Increase of 10% for ECE & Primary teachers; 2.5% increase per year] Secondary F: 83% M: 87%	MIEMIS data	Annual	PSS Data Team	STG Program Coordinator

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			Geography: % of rural teachers with an AA/AS or higher: 59% % of urban teachers with an AA/AS or higher: 76% Source: 2023 Education Data Digest (Figure 4.5 & Table 4.2)	[Increase of 5% for Secondary teachers; 1.25% increase per year.] *Geography*: % of rural teachers with an AA/AS or higher: 69% % of urban teachers with an AA/AS or higher: 80% [Increase of 10% for rural and 4% for urban teachers; 2.5% & 1% increase per year respectively.]				
Digital Pedagogy	Percentage of teachers reporting increased use of technology and confidence in implementation	Proportion of teachers reporting (a) increased classroom tech use and (b) increased confidence from baseline.	TBD (Baseline survey Year 1)	Minimum of 80%, by Year 4 (20% target increase annually)	Digital Teacher Survey	Annual	PSS Data team / STG Program Coordinator	STG Program Coordinator
Student Experience	Percentage of surveyed students reporting increased access to digital resources in the classroom	Proportion of Grade 8 students reporting improved access to digital resources, disaggregated by gender and geography.	TBD (Baseline survey Year 1)	Minimum of 80%, by Year 4 (20% target increase annually)	Digital Learner Survey	Annual	PSS Data team / STG Program Coordinator	STG Program Coordinator

Output 1: Well-connected, well-prepared and well-resourced teachers and learners:

Teachers & learners have increased access to digital learning tools, & enhanced opportunities for school-to-school connections.

Category	Indicator	Definition	Baseline	Target	Data Source	Frequency	Data Owner	Coordinator
Digital Access	# Laptops distributed to teachers	Number of laptops distributed to teachers, disaggregated by education level taught, gender, and geography.	0	100% of target (596) by end of Year 2	Distribution register	Annual	PSS IT Team / STG Program Coordinator	STG Program Coordinator
Digital Access	# Laptops distributed for student computer lab use	Number of laptops distributed to schools for student use.	0	100% of target (650) by end of Year 2	Distribution register & enrollment data	Annual	PSS IT Team / STG Program Coordinator	STG Program Coordinator
Assistive Technology	# Assistive technology units distributed	Number of assistive technology devices distributed to schools to support SpEd students, by grade, gender, geography.	0	100% of target (110 assistive keyboards and 700 sets of headphones) by Year 2	Distribution register & enrollment data	Annual	PSS IT Team / STG Program Coordinator	STG Program Coordinator
Capacity Building	# Teachers trained on use of technology, digital resources, & cybersecurity	Number of teachers trained in using digital tools, cyber safety, and inclusive pedagogies.	0	65% of teachers trained by Year 3 (387 of 596 total); (129 trained per year)	Workshop logs	Annual	STG Program Coordinator	STG Program Coordinator
Teacher Connections	# Digital sister schools established	Number of digital partnerships established between schools to share resources and practices.	0	30 schools engaged by Year 3	Sister school logs & sign-in sheets	Annual	STG Program Coordinator	STG Program Coordinator

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Output 2: Quality, relevant and digitally accessible resources:

High quality inclusive curriculum and resources relevant to Marshallese life are available in a variety of mediums.

Category	Indicator	Definition	Baseline	Target	Data Source	Frequency	Data Owner	Coordinator
Resource Digitization	# High-quality inclusive resources digitized (existing)	Number of existing resources digitized and uploaded, disaggregated by target education level and modality.	0	20 digitized resources by Year 3	Resource Hub register	Annual	PSS Curriculum Teams / STG Program Coordinator	STG Program Coordinator
Resource Development	# High-quality inclusive resources developed (new)	Number of newly developed inclusive resources for different modalities.	0	8 newly developed resources by Year 3	Resource Hub register	Annual	PSS Curriculum Teams / STG Program Coordinator	STG Program Coordinator
Capacity Building	# Content creation workshops held	Number of workshops held to develop digital content, disaggregated by level taught, gender, & geography.	0	5 workshops by Year 3	Workshop logs and sign-in sheets	Annual	PSS Curriculum Teams / STG Program Coordinator	STG Program Coordinator

Output 3: Equitable, Digitally Adaptive Student Learning Environments:

Learning environments are equipped to support digital learning and student wellbeing.

Category	Indicator	Definition	Baseline	Target	Data Source	Frequency	Data Owner	Coordinator
Infrastructure	# Starlink units installed	Number of schools with new Starlink units installed to provide internet access.	0	80% of target (79 schools) by Year 3	Installation register	Annual	PSS IT & Facilities Team / STG Program Coordinator	STG Program Coordinator
Infrastructure	# Electrical/ solar hardware installed	Number of schools with new electrical or solar power hardware installed to support ICT infrastructure.	0	80% of target (69 schools) by Year 3	Installation register	Annual	PSS Facilities Team / STG Program Coordinator	STG Program Coordinator
Student Support	# Counselors trained	Number of counselors trained to support student wellbeing, disaggregated by school level, participant gender, geography.	0	30 counselors trained by Year 3	USP Certificate outcomes	Annual	USP-Majuro Campus / STG Program Coordinator	STG Program Coordinator

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Notes:

- **Baselines and Targets** are linked to existing MIEMIS data & expected procurement outlined in the proposed budget.
- **Data Owners** reflect responsible units/departments based on indicator content.
- The **STG Program Coordinator** oversees the data collection and reporting for all indicators.

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