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AQUACULTURE COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH SUPPORT PROGRAM

## RESEARCH REPORTS

Sustainable Aquaculture for a Secure Future

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**Title:** A Comparative Study of Community-based Sea Turtle Management in Palau: Key Factors for Successful Implementation

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**Abstract:** This article investigates social, political and cultural aspects of sea turtle management led by the Tobian community at Helen Reef in the Republic of Palau. We use participant observation, unstructured interviews and examination of community-based natural resource management literature to compare and contrast the Tobian community with several other communities in Palau in order to identify some of the underlying factors that we believe contributed to the successful implementation of the Tobian community-based programme. These factors include: robust structure of local and extra-local partnerships; remote location of the resource and small scale of the managing community; realised community benefits in terms of jobs and improved capacity to monitor and manage natural resources; adaptive capacity and autonomy in decision-making; and strong connections to traditional natural resource management systems. Sea turtle conservation and management is a large scale issue; preventing further decline of endangered sea turtles will require management at multiple scales. For the Tobian community, success may be attributable to several key factors that come together to produce a decentralised community-based programme that operates with an adaptive, collaborative and bottom-up structure. This model may be applicable to comparable communities; it is, however, important to recognise that diverse societies will have a variety of formulas for success.

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