

The Republic of the Marshall Islands and the United States of America



— Marshall Islands and the U.S.A. —

Women Giving Back to RMI

Kathryn Relang is Executive Director of Women United Together Marshall Islands (WUTMI) in Majuro. Established several decades ago, the organization works to protect and promote women's rights and ensure their lives are free of violence, all while honoring traditional Marshallese culture.

"A survey in 2000 showed that many women and young girls experience violence at the hands of loved ones, which led to a support service for victims," she explained.

Indeed, Kathryn is particularly proud of their Violence Against Women and Girls program. She also feels strongly about the Parents as Teachers project.

"We support parents to ensure they give the proper nurturing and care for their children, from the womb through five years of age. The results tell us it is working!"

The organization has profoundly affected the Republic of the Marshall Islands by promoting the role of modern women versus their cultural role, which caused some initial backlash from the government. Now, however, they help fund the group.

"Today, women run for government offices here," Kathryn said. "That is what we do—raise awareness, address sensitive topics, and influence policies."

She and other women have much to offer their communities. At the age of nine, her family left the RMI, and she later attended the University of Hawaii at Hilo on scholarship before returning home.

"I was away a long time but I felt a connection to this place and my heritage," she continued. "In college, I worked to learn about the RMI and came back to look for a job. There was a position at WUTMI and I took it. Women want to give back to their people."

Kathryn said funding from the U.S.A. helps the organization—and ultimately, all Marshallese.

"I hope the United States and the RMI continue initiatives to help our residents understand their rights, whether living in the United States or RMI so they can be successful, contributing citizens."

WUTMI consists of 26 chapters located across the atolls. One group developed a park that provides space where people walk, exercise, and play to combat the non-communicable disease epidemic, thanks in part to U.S. funding. Similar support helps with conferences that tackle issues such as adoption and human trafficking, early childhood development and education, and women and adolescent health. To learn more, about Women United Together Marshall Islands go to www.wutmi.com.

To learn more about the relationship between the Marshall Islands and the U.S.A. go to <https://mh.usembassy.gov/our-relationship/progress-through-partnership/>.