

Portraits of Resilience



Portraits of Resilience is a photography project that works with youth and schools in the Arctic and Small Island Developing States to document the effects of climate change in their local communities. These geographically distant societies share characteristics of vulnerability and resilience, and are amongst the first to feel the effects of climate change.

Portraits of Resilience illustrates the ethical dimension of climate change, helping to bring personal stories about its impacts to the attention of decision-makers and people around the world. It shows that the people of these regions are not helpless victims of climate change and that their youth have a profound sense of place and a strong desire to see their cultures and communities survive and thrive.

Portraits of Resilience has worked with young people in the Arctic communities of Shishmaref (Alaska), Unjargga (Norway), Pangnirtung (Nunavut, Canada), and Ummannaq (Greenland), as well as the island states of Seychelles and in the Pacific Islands of Fiji, Tuvalu, the Marshall Islands, Samoa and Kiribati.

Portraits of Resilience is part of the Many Strong Voices (MSV) programme which links people in the Arctic and Small Island Developing States to work together on climate change adaptation and mitigation. MSV is jointly co-ordinated by UNEP/GRID-Arendal and CICERO in Oslo.



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Tuvalu

Climate Change in Tuvalu

Tuvalu is only one example of the price that has been paid in exchange for an industrialized world. Years ago, according to the elders, the ocean would never surpass the naturally formed levee by the beach. As years passed, floods began to be common.

Tuvalu is after all a small country and we cannot survive the effects of climate change on our own. We Tuvaluans can join in the [UNFCCC] talks to exchange ideas as to how the sinking of Tuvalu can be postponed, or perhaps completely avoided.

Many organizations are currently conducting research in Tuvalu. At Funafala, mangroves are planted at the beachside. Although progress is slow, there are some hopeful results – perhaps one day, mangroves can be used to ease beach erosion.

We all inhabit this planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our child's future. And we are all mortal. Let us reshape our future and preserve the world as one.

– John Tseng



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Shishmaref, Alaska

The Old Sea Wall

When I was a small child, my friends and I used to go on top of the sea wall and play. Our parents didn't want us to go out there but we would rather play there than be at home.

The sea wall was made out of cement blocks. They were one-foot by one-foot square. The blocks were laid against the shore in an attempt to keep the ocean from washing the sand out from under our houses. Since our land is made of three layers – permafrost, loose sand and sod – it is very dangerous when the sand washes away.

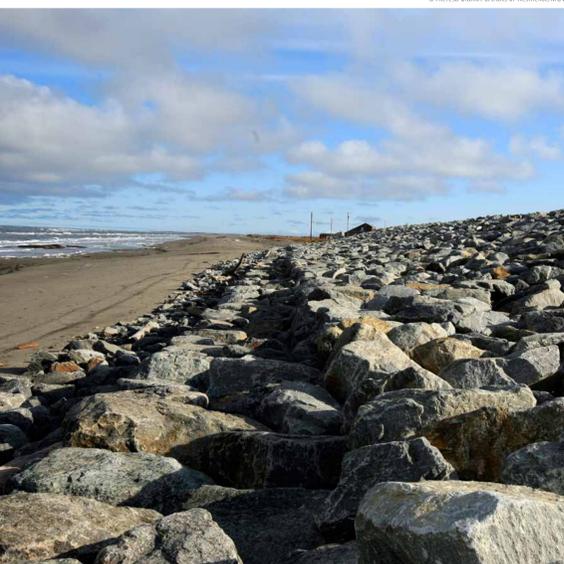
The sea wall I played on as a child was the second such wall used to stop the erosion. Recently, I tried to go see where I played as a child. Unfortunately, that sea wall is no longer there, it is 15 feet out into the ocean behind the current sea wall and 10 feet below the surface layer we walk on. At low tide, if I stand on the new seawall, I can still see some bricks sticking up out of the water.

Hopefully, this new seawall made of large rocks will stand.

– Heather "Anunuk" Sinnok



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