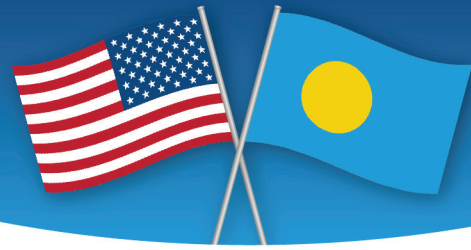


# Palau and the United States of America



## Partnership Aids Palau's Pristine Natural Resources

Charlene Mersai said her ability to travel freely between Palau and the United States to get an education is paying big dividends to Palau residents—and their natural resources.

Charlene was able to come and go while working for her bachelor's degree in biology and anthropology from the University of Hawaii-Hilo, a master's degree in education from San Diego State University, and a post-graduate diploma on ocean resources management from the University of the South Pacific. She is now the National Environment Coordinator for the National Environmental Protection Council of Palau.

"Sometimes people aren't ready for college," she said. "We may go attend, and then move home awhile before returning to finish school. I did that, but I didn't fully realize how lucky we are to have the freedom to go back and forth until after I graduated." That freedom of access also lets Charlene tap into her American colleagues' resources and expertise when needed—expertise that may not be available in Palau.

"Colleagues from the United States can also come and see what it's like here or see what we need," she explained. "That is a benefit we don't often think about."

The payoff for Palau residents, of course, is having someone like Charlene in their corner. Her passion for the people is matched only by her passion for protecting the area's resources. The country's pristine environment sees the biggest benefit of her ability to travel freely—thanks to a decision made decades ago.

"My education and career would not be possible without our current U.S. partnership," she said, "and partnerships like that have long-term benefits. When developing the Palauan National Climate Change Policy, we needed help from the U.S. government, which they provided. It was a small grant—just one salary for one person and some operations—but it helped us ultimately create the first climate change policy."

That was Charlene's first exposure to the lasting impact of decisions and the importance of such a relationship.

"Being an independent nation, we're always going to need external support, especially to compete in a global arena," she added. "Whether we need funding, expertise, or technology, we have a special relationship with the United States that we don't have with other countries. Confidence in American support lets Palau plan for the future."

For more information, please go to [www.usembassy.gov/our-relationship/progress-through-partnership/](http://www.usembassy.gov/our-relationship/progress-through-partnership/).