

# **CORAL REEFS ARE VERY IMPORTANT!**

The skeletons of corals break down to rubble and eventually to sand which helps build up shoreline and beaches. Coral reefs also protect coastlines and coastal villages from large ocean waves created by storms and cyclones.



Reefs form sheltered lagoons where more delicate plants and animals can live and where people can safely fishing. Coral reefs create a place where animals such as crabs, lobsters, clams and reef fishes can live and provide food for nearby villages.

Without coral reefs many coastal areas in PNG would be without protection from the sea and without such a large variety of seafood.

## **HOW ARE CORAL REEFS DAMAGED?**

Coral have few natural enemies. Some fish, such as parrotfish have jaws strong enough to break off pieces of coral. Other fish, such as some butterfly fish, have mouths adapted to suck up coral polyps. Some animals burrow into the coral for food or shelter. A few plants and animals, such as the sponge can grow over the coral and smother it.

**But the activities of people present the greatest threat to corals and coral reefs. People can damage the coral reefs by:**

- a) Collecting coral as building blocks or as souvenirs for sale to tourists.
- b) Damaging live coral by anchoring or landing boats - corals can take a long time to grow back.
- c) Overfishing or taking too many animals of one type from the reef-this affect the delicate balance between living things on the reef ecosystem.
- d) Using destructive methods of fishing such as explosives and poisons - these methods kill not only fish but also coral polyps.
- e) Allowing pollution from factories and oil from ships to be released into the water.
- f) Dredging harbors coastal building projects and forestry - these activities release still pollution into the water which blocks off sunlight or smother the coral polyps.

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