

# Our high island adventure



PACIFIC CLIMATE READERS

Level  
**3**



**Our  
high island  
adventure**

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## Introduction

Climate change is a global threat and the greatest challenge to human wellbeing and survival. The Pacific Islands are especially vulnerable to its impacts, which have become visible in people's daily lives. Climate change education and adaptation are essential to Pacific Islanders and should become a topic of discussion in every classroom and every home. Helping people of all ages to understand climate change is important, because without the right knowledge, we cannot imagine the best solutions.

Along with other books in the **Pacific Climate Readers** series, this book aims to build the foundational knowledge required for understanding climate change impacts and adaptation options in different Pacific Island settings. By exploring island ecology, health, hygiene, and traditional knowledge within the diverse and dynamic contexts of Pacific communities, this series of readers helps children interpret and navigate the complexities of a changing world.

This series was made possible by the Australian Government's **Australia Pacific Climate Partnership (APCP)** working with **Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)** on a programme called **Accelerating Climate Education (ACE)** for the Pacific. The goal of this initiative is to empower through knowledge and to inspire educators and students throughout the Pacific to lead meaningful climate action within their own schools, homes, and communities. Working together is the best way to move forward with hope for a safe, healthy, and sustainable future.





## How to use this book

Like other books in this series, this climate reader has several parts to support the learning of the reader.

- a) The informational narrative (story): Children can read the story by themselves, take turns to read as a small group, and/or listen to it being read by an older child, parent, educator, or another adult.
- b) **Learning outcomes**: This is what the reader should be able to know and do after reading the book.
- c) **Interactive prompts** for deeper discussions on topics raised in the narrative: These help parents and educators encourage children to think more about the story and research more about it, especially by talking to elders and local experts in the community.
- d) **Facts and tips** related to the topic: These help parents and educators create projects, assignments, outdoor activities, and other educational opportunities in which children will take on roles similar to the story characters and follow practical advice to engage in learning through play.

My name is Sera and this is my island. I have climbed on a hill above my village to give you a nice look at it.





High up on this hill, I can see  
very far.

I am looking out for the boat  
that is bringing my cousin,  
Samu, for a visit.

Samu comes from a small coral  
island.





I carefully make my way down the hill  
just as the boat is being tied to the dock.  
This is Samu's first visit to my island. I  
am excited to see and welcome him.

I greet my cousin by putting around his  
neck a garland I made of beautiful and  
fragrant flowers. That is how we always  
welcome guests to our island.



My family welcomes Samu at our home. We have a nice meal of local foods. We eat breadfruit, fish, and bananas, and drink coconut water. I notice that Samu is curiously looking around.

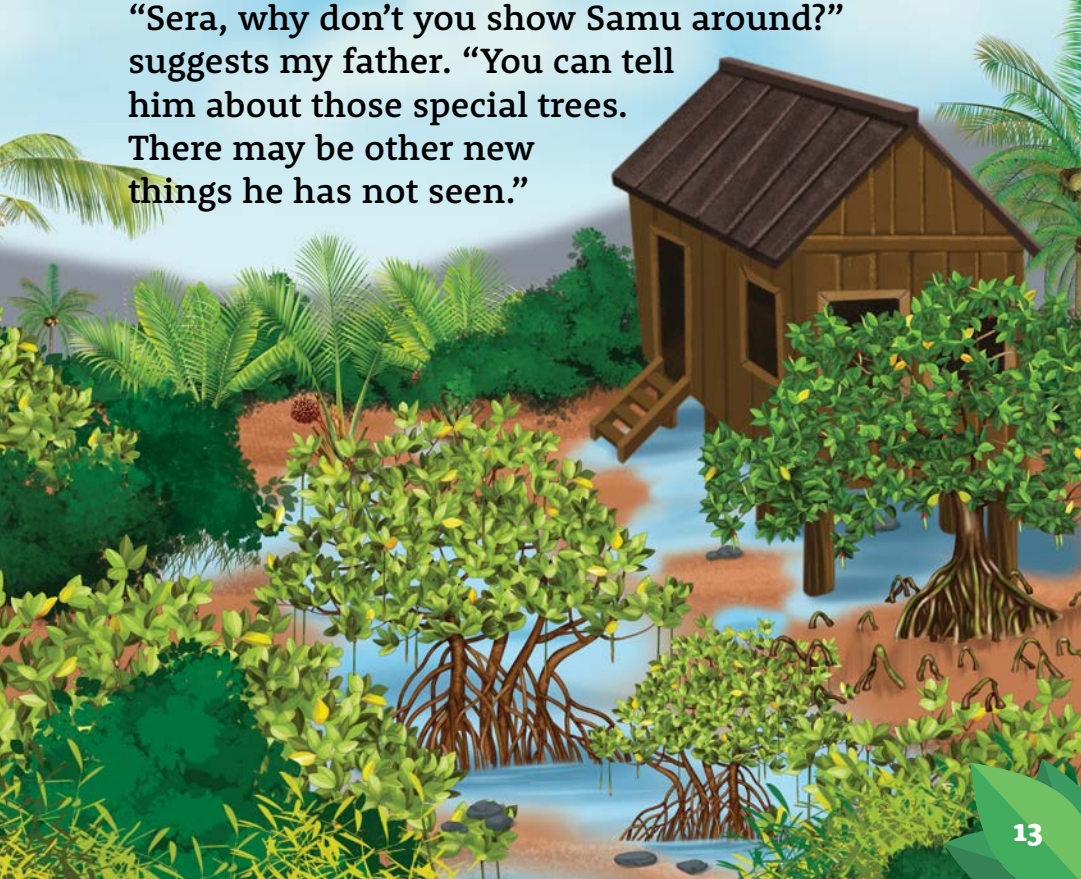
“Do you see something interesting?” I ask.



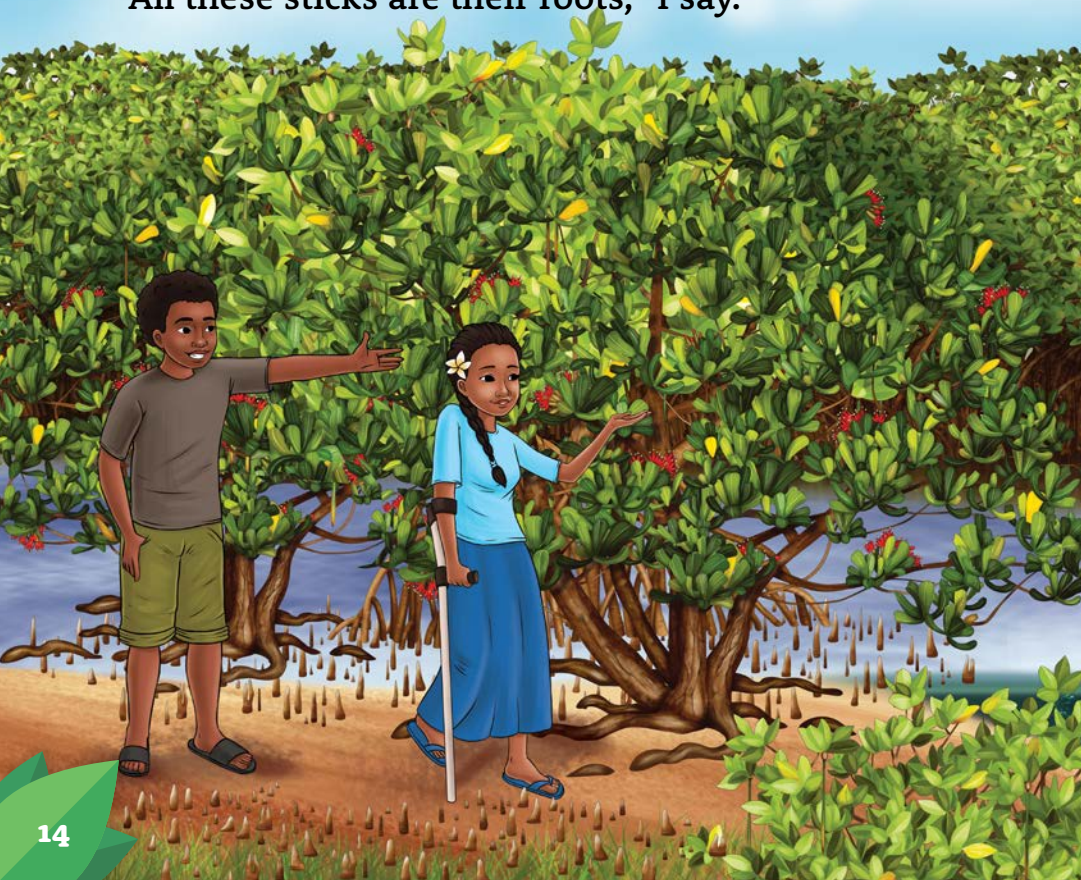


**“I have never seen trees like those, growing right out of the water,” Samu points.**

**“Sera, why don’t you show Samu around?” suggests my father. “You can tell him about those special trees. There may be other new things he has not seen.”**

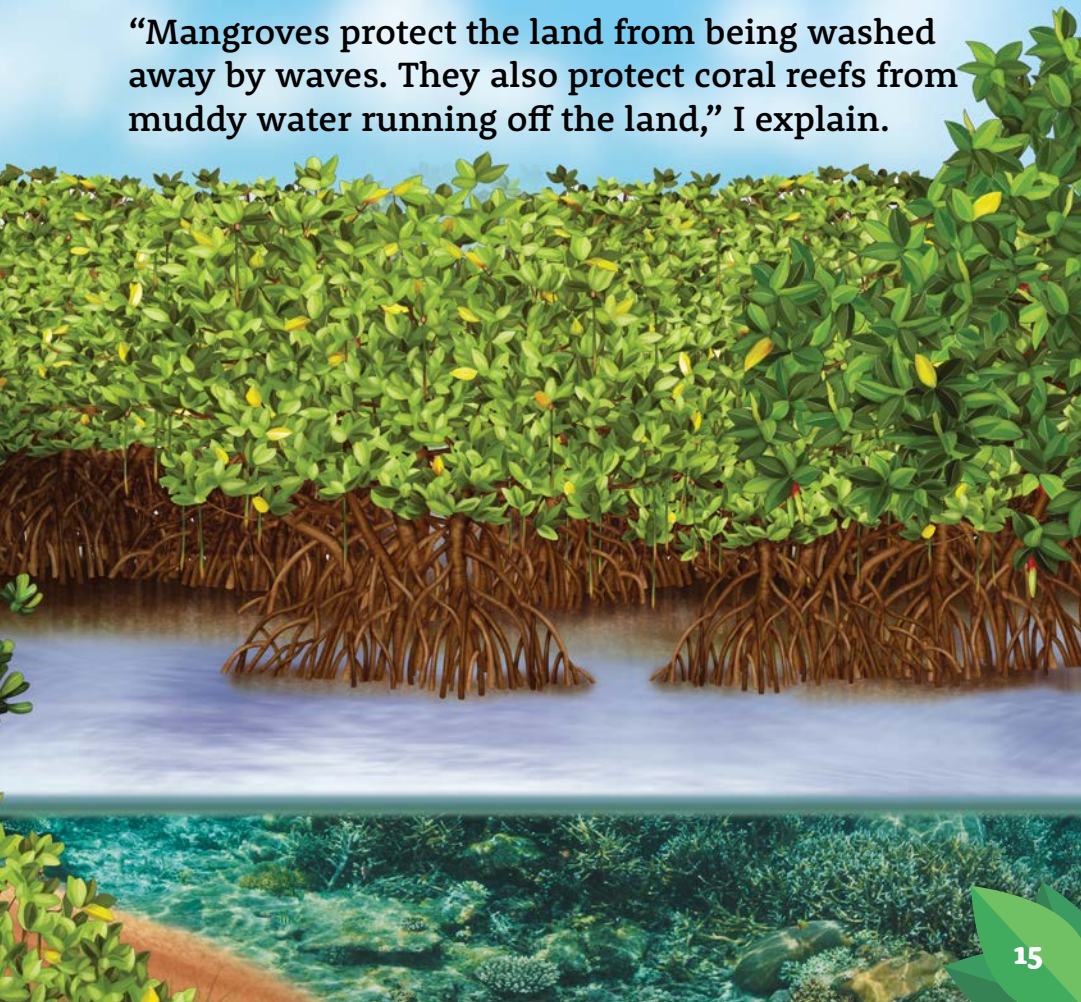


We start on our walk through a mangrove swamp.  
Samu is amazed. “These trees are called mangroves.  
All these sticks are their roots,” I say.





**“Mangroves protect the land from being washed away by waves. They also protect coral reefs from muddy water running off the land,” I explain.**



We continue walking around the mangroves and see my uncle in the water.

“Uncle, can you tell Samu what you are doing?” I ask.

“I have never seen mangroves before,” Samu says.

“Welcome to our island!” my uncle replies. “I am looking for small fish and crabs for dinner. Many animals live here. Mangroves provide nurseries for many fish and other living things. Young fish and other sea animals hide among the mangroves’ complex roots and stay safe from predators.”







Sadly, there is also rubbish floating among the mangrove roots. Since we now know how important mangroves are, we decide to do our part. We pick up what we can and put the rubbish in a bag to take with us.

We say goodbye to Uncle and continue our walk.

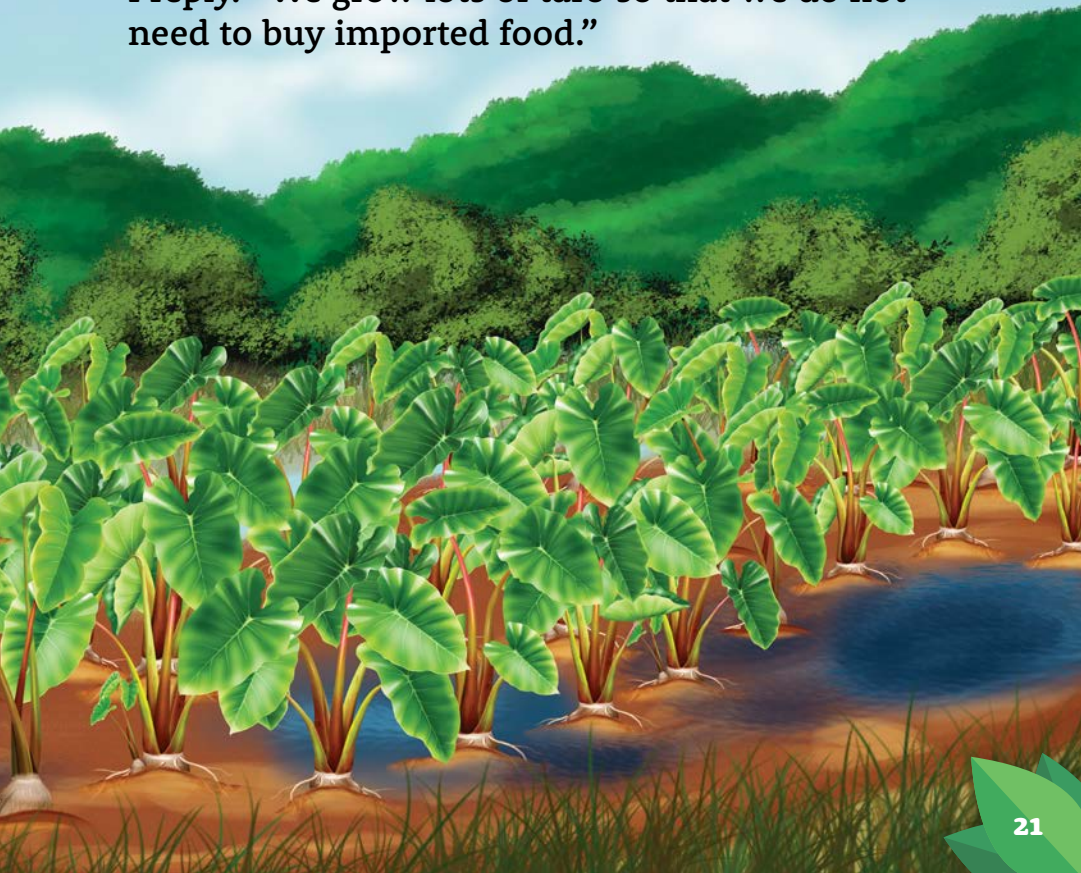
“Look, Samu! There is a taro patch,” I point.  
“Taro is my favourite food. I like to eat the leaves with coconut milk.”

“I like to eat taro too, but I think that the underground part is the most delicious,” Samu adds.





**“My mother says that taro patches are one of the most important food sources for our island,” I reply. “We grow lots of taro so that we do not need to buy imported food.”**



We meet a farmer busily  
working in the taro patch. She  
is mulching with leaves and  
coconut fronds around the taro.

“Aunty, this is my cousin,  
Samu. This is his first time on  
our island,” I say.







“This taro looks a little different from the ones on my small coral island,” Samu observes.

“Good observation!” the farmer says. “We may have different kinds of taro but we have the same problems. The sea level is rising due to climate change and it is making the ground salty. Mulching with leaves and coconut fronds stops too much salt from building up in the soil.”

We stay and help her mulch the taro patch.



We thank the farmer, and keep going. We enter an area with many fruit trees, vegetable crops, and herbs. Samu is surprised by such diversity.





“This beautiful place is called an agroforest. It is a forest created by people. People take care of it and grow here all kinds of useful plants together.”

A woman is working with the vegetables. We go up to her, and she smiles and gives us bananas.



I introduce them. “Aunty, this is my cousin, Samu.”

“This is my first time on your island,” Samu quickly adds. “Please tell me about this place.”

“This is my family’s land,” she replies. “We grow trees, fruits, vegetables, and herbs, all together. The herbs protect the vegetables from pests. The trees provide food and shade, and act as a windbreak. Because I grow so many different plants, even when it gets too hot or too dry, some plants do better than others. This helps my family always have food to eat.”







She continues, “But today I am not picking food. I am removing the plants that do not belong here. Some people call them invasive species. These plants spread very quickly and take over.”

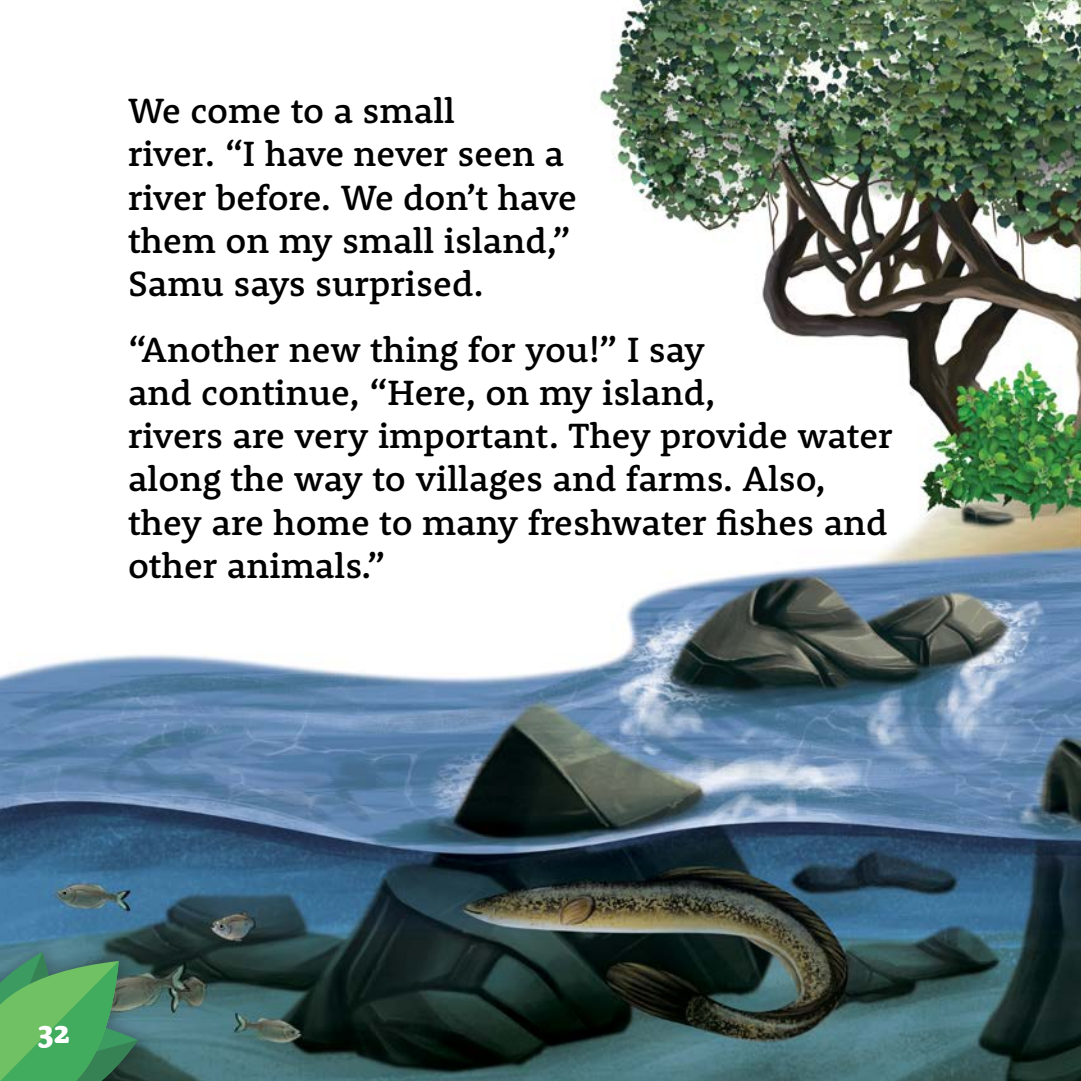
She shows us which plants are the invasive ones. We stay to help her pull them out.

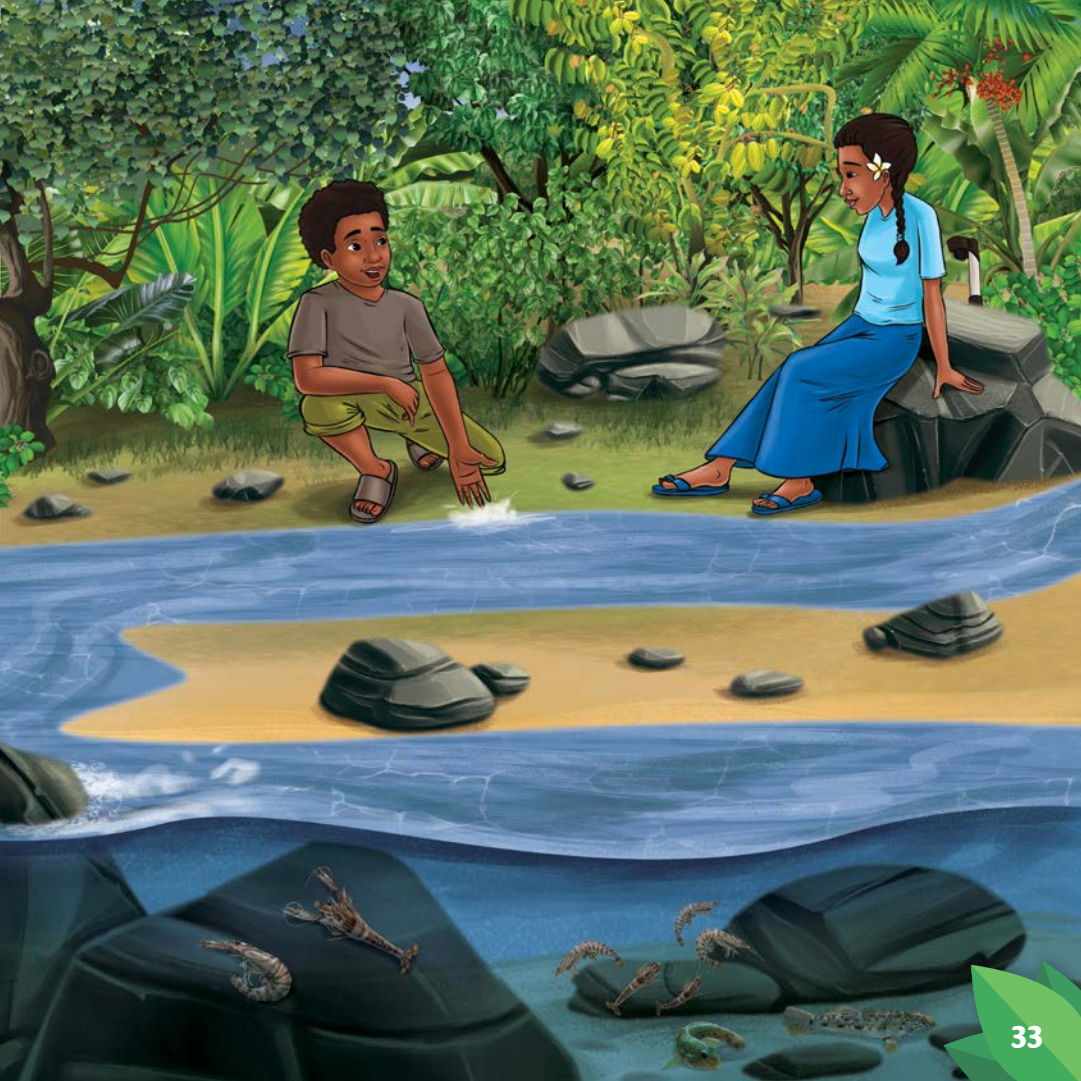
We feel proud after helping her. She hands us more bananas and we continue.



We come to a small river. “I have never seen a river before. We don’t have them on my small island,” Samu says surprised.

“Another new thing for you!” I say and continue, “Here, on my island, rivers are very important. They provide water along the way to villages and farms. Also, they are home to many freshwater fishes and other animals.”









We continue walking up the river and reach a smaller stream.

“The colour of the water in this stream is brownish, not like the blue ocean,” Samu notices.

In the distance we see an elder. He seems to be collecting something. We go up to him and offer him a banana.

“Thank you, children,” he says. “I am up here to collect medicinal plants and seeds. And what are you doing here?”

“My cousin, Samu, has never been to such a big island as ours. I am showing him around and learning new things with him,” I explain.

“What do you do with the seeds you collect?” Samu asks.

“Let me show you,” says the elder. He opens a box full of small plants growing out of cups. “I raised these plants from seeds I collected up here in the forest. I grew them in a nursery by my house down in the village. Come with me, and I will show you where and why I plant them.”







We follow him through a beautiful forest, full of huge, old trees. The forest is dark and the ground is moist.





Moss and ferns cover the tree trunks and hang from the branches. The air smells woody and is filled with the sounds of birds and insects.

As we walk, the elder points out different plants and their many uses.

“One of the most important things that trees and plants do is to hold soil in with their roots,” he shares. “Sadly, big trees that were common in the past are now hard to find. It is their seeds that I like to collect the most.”

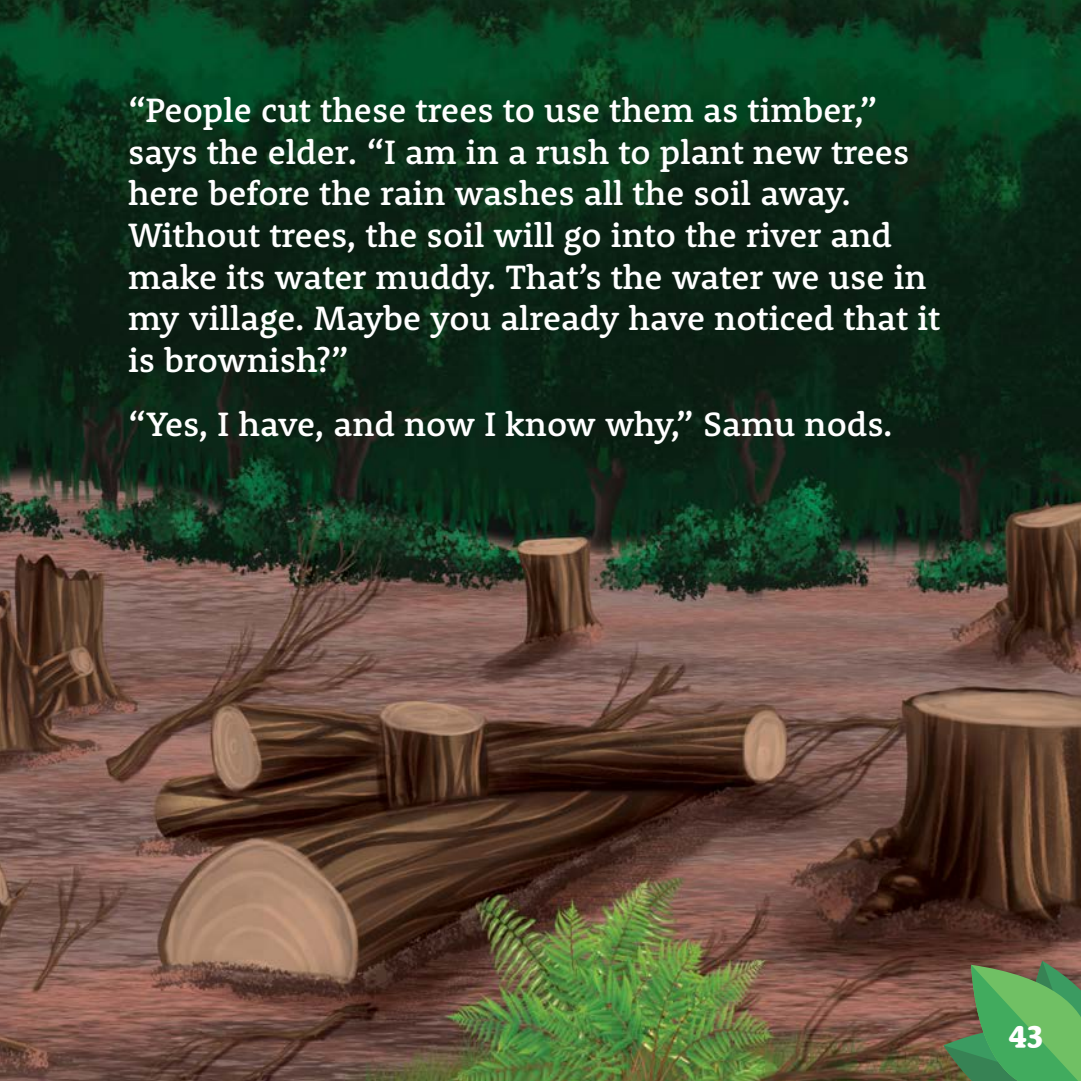




We see light shining between the trees ahead of us. We come upon an open area with many scattered tree stumps.

“Oh no! What happened here?” I ask.





“People cut these trees to use them as timber,” says the elder. “I am in a rush to plant new trees here before the rain washes all the soil away. Without trees, the soil will go into the river and make its water muddy. That’s the water we use in my village. Maybe you already have noticed that it is brownish?”

“Yes, I have, and now I know why,” Samu nods.

We help the elder plant the young trees. They are small and delicate. As we gently put them in the ground, we imagine that they will grow big and strong. Some day, this clearing will be a forest again.









“Children! Where are you?” my father shouts, walking out of the forest.

“Father! Here!” I respond. “Look at what we are doing.”

“Wonderful! Children, you’ve done something important for our island,” says father. He turns to the elder. “Thank you for teaching the children. Please come down with us to the village and share a meal at our home.”

We retrace our path in the forest, along the river, through the agroforest, and past the taro patch. We get to our home at the edge of the mangroves.

“Samu, I am so glad we came on this adventure together. I got to show you many places I took for granted. I love my island even more now. I also learned a lot about protecting my island and keeping it healthy and safe. Thank you for visiting me!” I smile.

“Thank you, Sera, for this wonderful adventure. I hope we will have many more together. Hey, I know, let’s go on an adventure on my island next!” Samu grins.



## Learning outcomes

In this story, Sera welcomes her cousin, Samu, for his first visit to her island. Sera takes Samu on a journey through several ecosystems found on high islands in the Pacific. In each ecosystem, Sera and Samu meet someone who is engaging in some activity there and learn new things from them. Together, they learn how different parts of the island are being impacted by various threats and what they can do to help.

Pacific Islands are threatened by climate change and many associated problems, including sea level rise, coastal erosion, soil salinisation, pollution, deforestation, and damage to coastal environments. To best address these challenges now and in the future, it is important that we understand how different ecosystems are connected and how they relate to each other, and how each is important to the health of our islands and our way of life as Pacific Islanders.



After reading this book, children will be able to:

- 1.** Identify different types of ecosystems found on high islands and learn to recognise them in their own surroundings,
- 2.** Recognise how different ecosystems are interconnected,
- 3.** Identify different resources that each ecosystem provides,
- 4.** Describe actions for resource conservation and protection from climate change, and
- 5.** Understand the need to protect and conserve island ecosystems to increase the capacity to adapt to climate change.

## Interactive prompts

Educators, caregivers, and parents can use these guiding questions to kick off discussions with students. The discussions are intended to support the students' deeper understanding of the story by helping them reflect on what they read, and by encouraging them to find out more.

1. Sera and Samu walked through different ecosystems on the island. Can you name some of them? How are these ecosystems similar to those on your island? How are they different?
2. Sera and Samu learn about changes in ecosystems on their island. Are there signs of impacts of climate change on ecosystems on your island? If yes, what measures has the community taken to protect the ecosystem?
3. If you could join Sera and Samu on their trip around the island, which ecosystem would you want to explore most and why?
4. Think about the ecosystems on your own island. Can you name them? What activities can you do in these ecosystems?

5. Mangroves naturally break waves and wind. Their roots trap sediment and prevent it from spreading out too far into the ocean. If there are mangroves on your island, find out more about them by asking elders or community members. Discuss where they are located and why they grow in those areas. Ask the elders for the local names of mangroves. Find out how they use mangroves in their daily lives and if they are noticing any impacts of climate change on mangroves?
6. Taro and other root crops, such as cassava, yams, and sweet potato, are important staple foods for Pacific Islanders. What local root crops do you and your family consume? How do you cook or preserve these foods? Ask an elder about the different varieties of these crops. Ask them if they have noticed any changes in growing these crops over the past ten years. If so, did they need to modify the growing times and practices to adapt to those changes?
7. What are some of the practices Sera and Samu learned from the farmers they met on the way that helped with food security? What are some of the practices that the farmers used to adapt to climate change? Ask an elder or community member if they know other practices that can improve food security and assist in adapting to changing climate.

## Tips

Actions that help protect the land and environment on high islands:

***Practise conservation and prevent clearing of forests.*** Many Pacific islands used to be covered with beautiful and dense forests that have largely been cut down. Large, ancient forests usually survive only in high parts of the island, far from coastal areas and villages. Those upland forests have tall, old trees, and many smaller plants. They are habitats for insects, birds, bats, and other animals. Some organisms that live only in upland forests are endemic – they are not found anywhere else in the world.

***Protect mangroves.*** Many coastal areas in the Pacific have mangrove swamps that connect the land and the sea. The mangroves protect the land from storms, waves, and floods. They make the shore more resistant to erosion. The mangroves protect the sea from sediments and pollution that may run off from the land. They improve water quality and keep coral reefs safe. Mangroves are important habitat and nursery areas for many animals, including reef fish. They also act as carbon sinks, which means that they help against climate change.



***Prevent pollution.*** People do not think about where their rubbish goes. Rubbish sometimes ends up in pristine ecosystems where an animal that does not know what it is eats the rubbish. Chemicals from the rubbish end up seeping into the ground or going into the ocean. Some rubbish ends up on the coral reef, covering and killing the corals. Think about how you can reduce the amount of rubbish by reusing or recycling more of the things you have.

***Eat locally grown and harvested foods.*** High islands have such a diversity of ecosystems and therefore can sustain many kinds of plants for food, drink, and medicine. Planting protects the soil and reduces impacts of climate change. Eating locally grown food makes you less dependent on imported food and is much better for you. Locally grown food is fresher, healthier, and supports a resilient food system.

## About this book

This book is a part of the **Pacific Climate Readers**, a series of early readers created specifically for children in the Pacific Islands. The place-based focus on Pacific Island landscapes, local flora and fauna, and the island way of life helps students to explore new concepts within familiar contexts. While providing engaging and relatable literacy materials that children and educators can use to promote reading and comprehension skills, these books' Pacific Island focus on themes such as ecology, communities, health, and hygiene also allows students to develop fundamentals of climate literacy and refine their critical thinking, problem solving, and understanding of adaptive solutions.

The individual titles in the series are interrelated and grouped in three levels, with higher level books building on the lower level ones. To date, the Pacific Climate Readers include:

- ***How I take care of myself and others*** looks at ways to take care of oneself and others including steps and resources used while promoting drinking clean water and eating healthy local food.
- ***Welcome to our garden*** cultivates understanding of the need to maintain local agriculture and food security even during changing climate.
- ***Teamwork in my community*** highlights the importance of working together as a community to build climate resilience.

- ***Our high island adventure*** explores high islands in the Pacific, their key habitats, how they are interconnected, and what challenges they face.
- ***Our atoll adventure*** explores atolls and other low-lying islands, reiterating the interconnection of different habitats and promoting the need to protect and conserve island resources.

This series was made possible by the Australian Government's **Accelerating Climate Education (ACE)** for the Pacific programme, an initiative of the **Australia Pacific Climate Partnership (APCP)** implemented in partnership with **Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)**.

## About the publisher

**Island Research & Education Initiative (iREi)** is a non-profit organisation dedicated to upholding the unique environmental and cultural legacies of islands and island peoples. We are based in Micronesia, but our work spans the entire Pacific. Our core activity is to assist educational authorities in creating locally relevant school resources, particularly in indigenous languages. That grants the children of Pacific Islands place-based tools they can relate to and positively reinforces their adventures in the world of learning. iREi can be contacted at [irei@islandresearch.org](mailto:irei@islandresearch.org)



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The production of these climate readers is supported by the **Australian Government**. The perspectives and recommendations expressed in this book are those of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the **Australian Government** nor **GIZ International Service** as implementing partner.





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