



# POU and Miri

learn to tackle climate change

SPC/GIZ Coping with Climate Change in the Pacific Island Region Programme

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# **Pou and Miri**

## **learn to tackle climate change**

Story and illustrations by Dom Sansom  
Edited by Christine Fung

Secretariat of the Pacific Community  
Suva, Fiji, 2011

Big Tree: where they find Miri's mother

Big forest

the mangroves

Where Pou and Miri meet Priti

Where Pou and Miri meet Skippy

# Iteni Island

Pou's school

Black smoke from the bus

Where Pou finds Miri

Pou's home

Follow Pou's journey





## learn to tackle climate change

Hello boys and girls

Climate change is the most talked about topic all over the world. This is because it will affect the lives of everyone, including all who live in our Pacific Islands. Scientists say that climate change might cause longer dry seasons and more rainfall during the wet season. They also say that our days may get hotter, our oceans warmer, and our sea levels higher.

Our environment plays a big role in helping us tackle climate change. We can all play a part in helping reduce the impacts of climate change on our islands by taking care of our forests, our land, our mangroves and our reefs. By doing this we also help look after all the wonderful birds, animals, and fish that surround us.

We hope this booklet will help show you some ways you can help tackle climate change.

Now join Pou and Miri on their adventure. Happy reading!

Dr Wulf Killmann, Programme Director, SPC/GIZ Coping with Climate Change in the Pacific Island Region Programme



This is Pou. Pou is a very happy boy.


He loves to play and swim and run and he loves animals.

Pou lives in a small village on the beautiful Pacific island of Iteni.

Iteni Island is blessed with lots of sun and lots of rain.

Everything grows well and there are plenty of fish in the sea.





One morning, Pou was walking to town when he suddenly stopped. Where were the trees? Where were the fruit bats he always looked at as they slept in the branches? He was shocked to see that the trees had been cut down, and the bats were flying away. He felt sad.

Pou heard a squeaking sound coming from under a log.  
It was a tiny fruit bat trapped by the fallen branches.  
Can you see her?

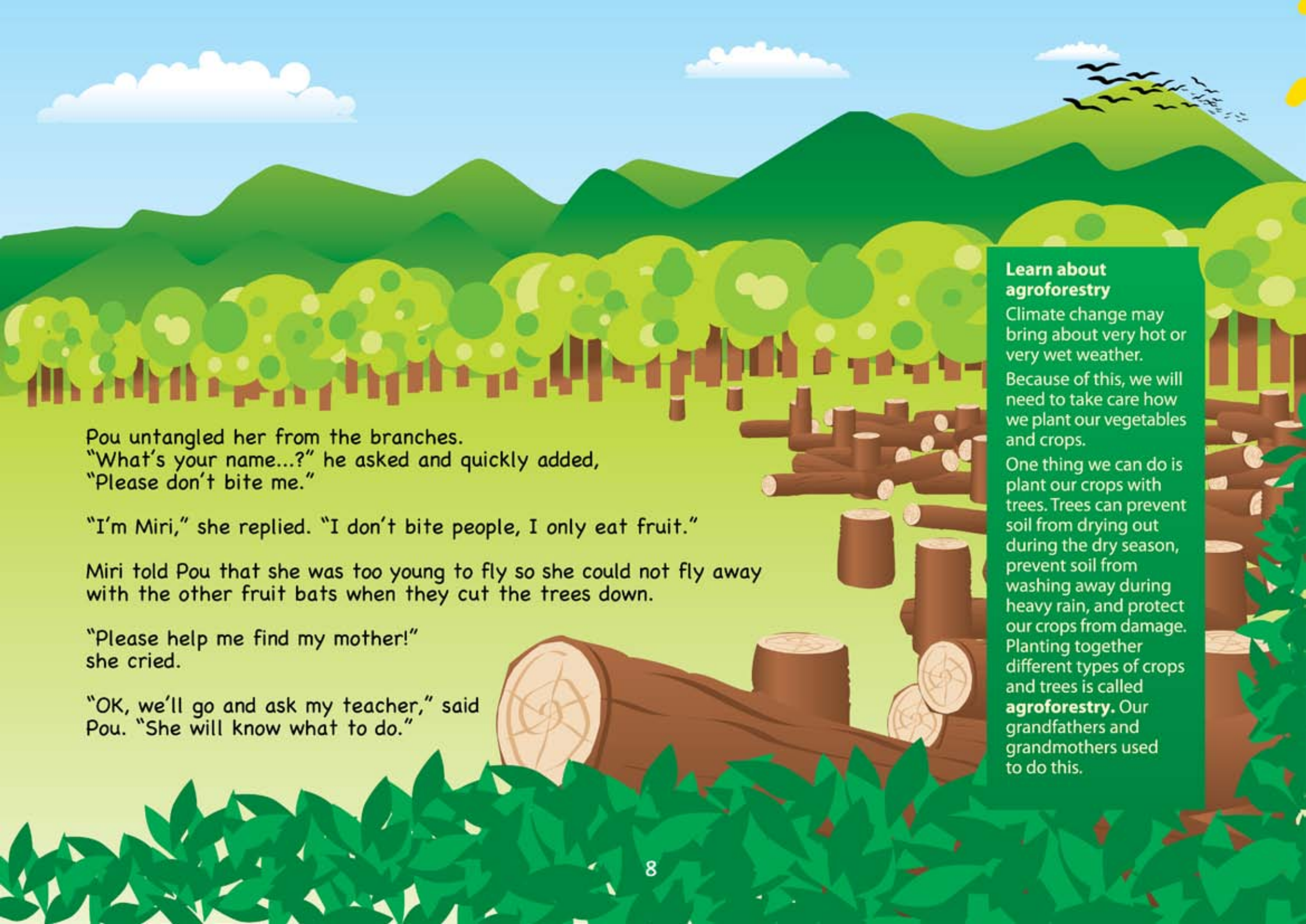
#### **Learn about forests & climate change**

Forests and trees keep the soil healthy, the water clean and provide shelter, food and breeding grounds for many types of birds and animals, including bats.

Forests also help fight climate change by storing carbon and removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Carbon dioxide is a greenhouse gas. When trees are cut down, carbon is released and this increases the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. If there were fewer trees, less carbon dioxide would be taken out of the atmosphere. (Learn more about greenhouse gases on page 13)







Pou untangled her from the branches.  
"What's your name...?" he asked and quickly added,  
"Please don't bite me."

"I'm Miri," she replied. "I don't bite people, I only eat fruit."

Miri told Pou that she was too young to fly so she could not fly away with the other fruit bats when they cut the trees down.

"Please help me find my mother!"  
she cried.

"OK, we'll go and ask my teacher," said  
Pou. "She will know what to do."


### Learn about agroforestry

Climate change may bring about very hot or very wet weather.

Because of this, we will need to take care how we plant our vegetables and crops.

One thing we can do is plant our crops with trees. Trees can prevent soil from drying out during the dry season, prevent soil from washing away during heavy rain, and protect our crops from damage. Planting together different types of crops and trees is called **agroforestry**. Our grandfathers and grandmothers used to do this.





While they were walking together along the road they heard a terrible, frightening noise.

They turned to see a cloud of black smoke speeding down the road towards them.

Pou and Miri quickly jumped out of the way into the bushes.

They coughed and spluttered as a bus, belching out thick, black, diesel soot, roared past.

Pou said that there was a lot of development on Iteni Island and they were going to build a new road for buses and cars and trucks.

"I think that is why they cut down your trees," he said, "to make the new road so that people don't have to walk to town."

"Lazy people," Miri muttered.

Pou laughed and agreed that sometimes people can be very lazy.

Pou decided to go to the school and ask his teacher about the trees and the bus. He knew she would be there, preparing lessons for next week.





Pou and Miri arrived at the school and Pou introduced her to his teacher, Miss Tui.

Pou told Miss Tui about Miri's home and the trees being cut down and about the smoking bus.

Miss Tui told them that smoke from vehicles and cutting down trees are two of the causes of climate change. Miss Tui said that progress is good but we should take care of our environment.

Pou and Miri asked her where they could find Miri's mother and she told them about a path through the mangroves that would take them to the biggest tree on Iteni Island.



"Lots of bats live in that tree. You might find your mother there," said Miss Tui.

reduce  
reuse  
recycle

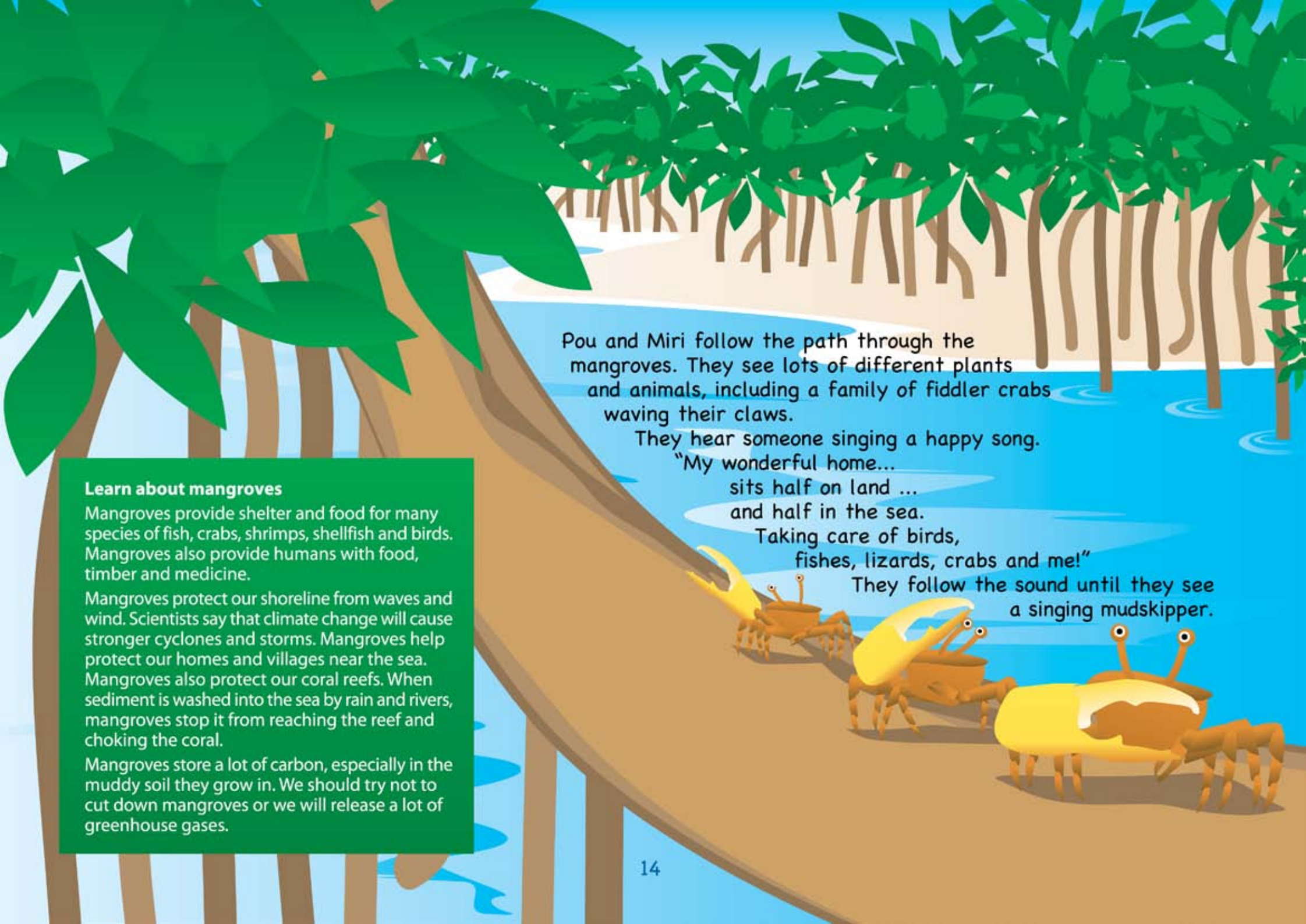
**Learn about Greenhouse Gases**  
Our planet, Earth, is getting warmer and this is causing climate change. The temperature is rising because of an increase in greenhouse gases in our atmosphere. Greenhouse gases are gases that trap heat and keep it in our atmosphere. When we use fuel for our cars, factories and machines, greenhouse gases are released. The main greenhouse gas is carbon dioxide. A lot of carbon dioxide is released when we cut down forests.

**SEA LEVEL RISING**

**climate change**  
**YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

**Fishes**  
by Pou





Pou and Miri follow the path through the mangroves. They see lots of different plants and animals, including a family of fiddler crabs waving their claws.

They hear someone singing a happy song.

"My wonderful home...

sits half on land ...

and half in the sea.

Taking care of birds,

fishes, lizards, crabs and me!"

They follow the sound until they see a singing mudskipper.

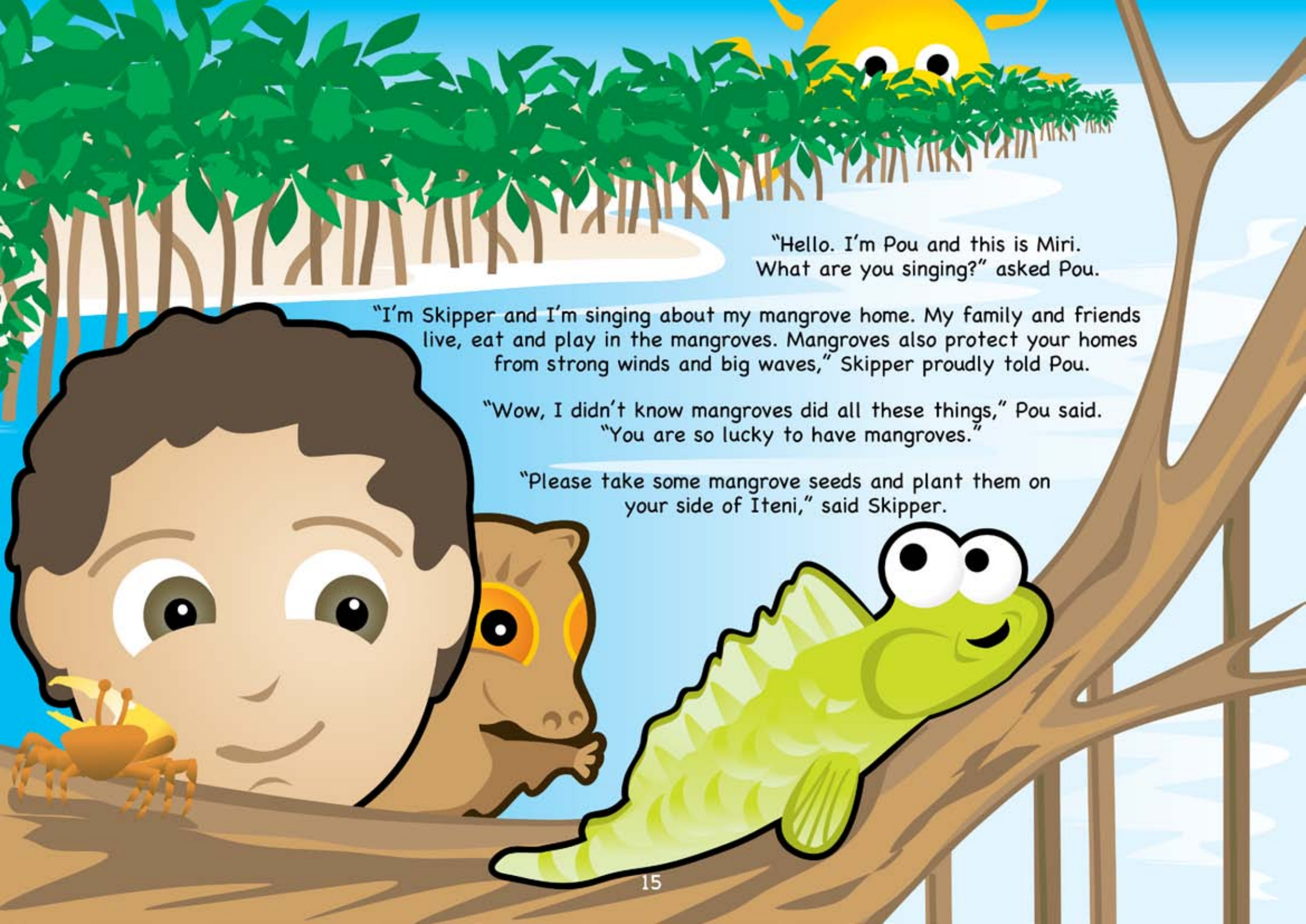
### Learn about mangroves

Mangroves provide shelter and food for many species of fish, crabs, shrimps, shellfish and birds. Mangroves also provide humans with food, timber and medicine.

Mangroves protect our shoreline from waves and wind. Scientists say that climate change will cause stronger cyclones and storms. Mangroves help protect our homes and villages near the sea. Mangroves also protect our coral reefs. When sediment is washed into the sea by rain and rivers, mangroves stop it from reaching the reef and choking the coral.

Mangroves store a lot of carbon, especially in the muddy soil they grow in. We should try not to cut down mangroves or we will release a lot of greenhouse gases.





"Hello. I'm Pou and this is Miri. What are you singing?" asked Pou.

"I'm Skipper and I'm singing about my mangrove home. My family and friends live, eat and play in the mangroves. Mangroves also protect your homes from strong winds and big waves," Skipper proudly told Pou.

"Wow, I didn't know mangroves did all these things," Pou said.  
"You are so lucky to have mangroves."

"Please take some mangrove seeds and plant them on your side of Iteni," said Skipper.

They waved goodbye to Skipper and thanked him for the mangrove seeds.

"I promise I'll plant them as soon as I get back to my village," said Pou.

Leaving the mangroves Pou and Miri come to the lagoon. They heard something splashing in a pool and saw a colourful fish swimming in the shallow water. They put her back into the deep water of the lagoon.

"Thank you s o o o o much for saving me," said the fish. "I'm Priti Kalafuli. I'm a parrotfish and it's a pleasure to meet you."

Miri asked her why she was in shallow water. "I have lost my way," said Priti. "A boat came with a big net and tried to catch me and my friends when we were playing near our coral reef home. I swam away as fast as I could."

"There aren't many of us left," she said worriedly. "Soon there won't be enough of us left to eat the seaweed and stop it covering our beautiful coral reef. The coral won't be able to breathe! Please tell the fishermen not to catch too many parrotfish. We stop seaweed from covering the coral and keep the reefs healthy. Did you know coral reefs protect your beaches, shores, and mangroves from strong waves and currents?"

Pou and Miri promised to tell everyone.

"But first we have to find Miri's mother," said Pou. "Can you help us?"

"Oh! I saw lots of bats flying into the biggest tree just over there," said Priti and she pointed to the big tree.

"Thank you," they said and continued their journey.



### Learn about keeping coral reefs healthy


Coral reefs provide shelter and food for several hundred thousand marine species. The reefs are known as "the rainforests of the sea".

Coral reefs are under threat from algae (seaweed) growth. Poor land use practices that pour nutrients (from agriculture fertiliser and waste) into the sea cause algae to grow very fast. These cover coral reefs and do not allow the corals to get sunlight for their food. Fortunately, fish like parrotfish and rabbitfish eat algae and help control algal growth.

Climate change will bring more threats to our coral, such as rising sea surface temperatures. If we keep our reefs healthy, they can cope better with these threats. To keep our reefs healthy we need to reduce sediment and nutrient pollution, reduce mining of sand, and not overfish.







Miri was so happy to see the big tree and when they reached it, she called, "Mummy! MUMMY!" But the tree was very high and her mother could not hear her.

Pou said the only way to get up was to fly.

"I haven't learnt to fly yet," said Miri.

Pou encouraged her to try. "I never thought I could ride my bike but I tried and tried and I did it. Now it's easy," he said.

So Miri tried and tried and each time she flew higher and higher until she reached the top of the tree and her mother. Her mother was overjoyed to see her.

"How did you find us?" she asked, giving Miri a big hug.

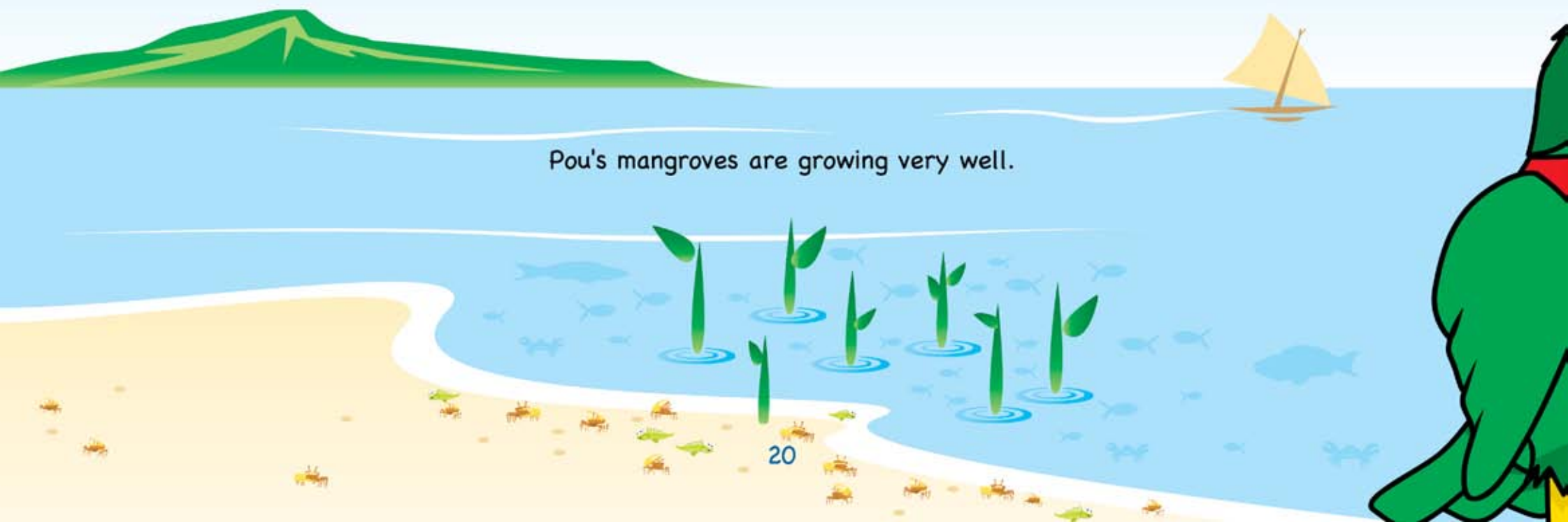
Miri told her about Pou and their journey.

Miri's mother called down, with tears in her eyes. "Thank you! Thank you! Thank you... little Pou for bringing my precious Miri back to me. I'll bring you fresh fruit to eat every day so you can grow up to be strong and healthy."

Pou returned to his village and told his mother and father about his adventure. "If we take better care of our island and our reefs we can help protect ourselves from the changes that climate change will bring," he said.

Miri comes to play with Pou and all his animal friends every day... and she always brings him fruit from her mother.

Pou's mangroves are growing very well.





## Pou's tips to fight against climate change



Reduce the cutting down of forests.



Stop burning forests and bushland.



Walk or cycle instead of travelling  
in a car or bus.





Practice agroforestry.



Keep soil covered with trees and vegetation, especially on slopes.



Look after and protect our mangroves.



Keep our coral reefs healthy.

Here are some questions about tackling climate change.

Hint: You will find the answers in the story.

1. How do trees help fight against climate change?
2. Climate change may bring about long dry seasons and a lot of rainfall. How can we protect our crops from these very dry or very wet seasons?
3. Greenhouse gases capture heat and keep it in our atmosphere. This is causing Earth to get warmer. How can we reduce the release of greenhouse gases?
4. Why are mangroves useful?
5. Why is it important to not overfish our parrotfish?

You can help Pou and Miri by telling all your friends and family how to tackle climate change!





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