

Health and Wellness Activities in RMI



Canvasback Wellness Centre garden at Majuro Hospital

Background

In the past subsistence agriculture was an important activity in the outer atolls of RMI but has declined in recent years as a result of a general trend away from farming to other forms of employment and the availability of convenient imported processed food. Rice, canned beef, spam and noodles are standard fare in the outer atolls with very little fruit or vegetables, resulting in growth problems particularly for children.

It was recognised early in project planning that the growing of vegetables and fruits would not necessarily result in a behavioural change. A collaborative approach was adopted with partners in RMI, to promote the cooking, preservation and eating of fruit and vegetables together with regular exercise.

Planning Phase

In 2018 consultations were held with the Canvasback Wellness Centre and the RMI School Nutrition Program to discuss ways the RENI project could support their activities.

It was decided to start with the re-establishment of agricultural activities in Ailuk and once these were well underway in 2019 to start with the exercise, nutrition and education activities supported by local organisations.

Unfortunately, these plans were interrupted by the dengue fever travel ban which lasted from August to December 2019. The health education, wellness, exercise and nutrition activities were conducted between January and August 2020.

Implementation Phase

Three visits were conducted to Ailuk by the Canvasback Wellness Centre team: in January, April and August 2020.

During these visits various activities were conducted separately with the men, women and children. The following activities were conducted:

- Nutrition and health classes using the A NEWSTART (Nutrition, Exercise, Water, Sunshine, Temperance, Air, Rest, and Trust in God) programme
- Cooking classes using the local fruits and vegetables from the nursery and the home gardens
- Exercise classes and walking/sport activities
- Health checks were conducted together with island's health assistant



Cooking and exercise class at the Ailuk nursery

The activities were very well received by all groups although attendance was much better for the women and the children who were very enthusiastic.