and enabling caregivers and other stakeholders to have a wider understanding of research information on nutrition as communicated in SIGHT AND LIFE Magazine. With this in mind, Ndola Nutrition Group submitted a request to be supplied with fortified biscuits and copies of SIGHT AND LIFE Magazine.

SIGHT AND LIFE granted both requests in overwhelming terms. The cost of clearing the biscuits was beyond the Ndola Nutrition Group’s capacity to pay, but SIGHT AND LIFE generously came to our aid by paying all the clearing expenses.

There was jubilation when it was heard that the fortified biscuits had arrived. These were initially intended to benefit 100 malnourished children. However, this number increased to 210 malnourished children from 80 households of Kaloko and Mushili compounds.

Living at least normal lives

A hundred boxes were received, each containing 200 biscuits. Ndola Nutrition Group devised a two-week plan to distribute these to all the beneficiaries. Concluded in December 2009, this really helped our children to at least live normal lives during this period. The caregivers are also happy. We would like to express our sincere gratitude to SIGHT and LIFE.

Copies of SIGHT AND LIFE Magazine were distributed to the caregivers and stakeholders during coordination meetings. We hope to continue this partnership until all nutrition deficiencies are overcome in Zambia and indeed the world. We also look forward to the MNP project.

‘Go Local’ in Micronesia: Promoting the ‘CHEEF’ Benefits of Local Foods

Our newest Go Local project, ‘Grow and Eat Local Food for Decreasing Micronutrient Deficiency and Non-communicable Diseases’ was carried out in 2009 in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM). It was implemented by the Island Food Community of Pohnpei and partners from the island with the support of SIGHT AND LIFE.

Drastic shift in patterns of food consumption

In recent years FSM has experienced a drastic shift towards the consumption of imported white rice and other micronutrient-poor processed foods. This has been accompanied by neglect of traditional food systems, lifestyle changes, and decreased physical activity attributable to the effects of modernization. Problems of micronutrient deficiency (e.g. vitamin A deficiency, anemia) have emerged, along with diabetes and other non-communicable diseases (heart disease, cancers) on an epidemic scale. The recent STEPS study by WHO on Pohnpei showed that 32% of Pohnpei adults have Type 2 diabetes.¹
Previous work identified local island foods that could help alleviate vitamin A deficiency and anemia. These include Karat and other varieties of yellow/orange-fleshed banana, giant swamp taro, pandanus, and other foods. These are rich in β-carotene, the most important of the provitamin A carotenoids, as well as other carotenoids. Carotenoid-rich foods can help protect against diabetes, heart disease and certain cancers. These foods are also rich in other essential vitamins, minerals, and fiber, providing important health benefits.

Promoting local foods and improving health

Through the implementation of the Pohnpei case study – which was carried out as part of a global health project led by the Center for Indigenous Peoples’ Nutrition and Environment (CINE) – an approach was developed for promoting local foods and improving health. This two-year project was implemented from 2005 to 2007 in a rural community numbering approximately 500 people. It was successful in achieving increased consumption of two major local staple foods (banana and giant swamp taro), increased dietary diversity, and improved community attitudes toward local food. The challenge to expand this work to benefit other communities has now been taken on.

The SIGHT AND LIFE project spanned an eight-month period from January to August 2009. Lessons learned in the Pohnpei case study project with CINE were put into practice. These included an inter-agency, community-based approach with multiple methods, slogans, social marketing, conservation of rare varieties by means of a ‘gene bank’ field collection, and the involvement of adults and young people.

Rich nutrient content

The ‘Let’s Go Local’ slogan was first used in Pohnpei by Bermin Weilbacher in the 1980s. In 2005, it was agreed to revive this slogan. It was also decided to share the new findings of rich nutrient content in Pohnpei foods and to promote increased production and consumption of these foods, particularly the neglected nutrient-rich varieties. The ‘Go Local’ concept generated great interest and was promoted via T-shirts, billboards, posters, newspaper articles, radio releases, video (Going Yellow) (see SIGHT AND LIFE 1/2006, pp 31–33), an email network, recipes, brochures, pens and pencils, postcards, and workshops.

Another slogan was developed to help tell why it is important to ‘Go Local’. This was ‘CHEEF’. This acronym refers to the ‘CHEEF’ benefits of local foods: Culture, Health, Environment, Economy, and Food security. Along with preserving the traditional food system, culture is preserved and health benefits can be achieved. When local foods are used, the solid waste problem (tins, plastic, and other wastes) is reduced, leading to a cleaner environment. Fossil fuel use for bringing imported foods from distant places is likewise reduced, helping to combat climate change. Consumption of local foods uses local resources and is a stimulus for the local economy. Food security is improved, along with self-reliance and a greater ability to survive in the case of disturbances overseas.

Young singers and new songs

High school students became involved in the campaign and formed the ‘Let’s Go Local High School Club’. They gave talks on the value of local foods and sang the ‘Let’s Go Local’ song as well as teaching the accompanying movements. One club member composed the CHEEF song (see next page).

Emphasizing the message

A farmers’ workshop was held to gather information on the crop varieties available, so that progress could later be measured. Local high school and college students came...
on board as interns, and helped in the workshop presentations. As part of their Master’s degree programs, students from Emory University, the University of Arizona and Johns Hopkins University carried out field work in Pohnpei during the summer of 2009, collaborating in IFCP research projects and assisting in the ‘Go Local’ campaign.

The ‘Let’s Go Local’ T-shirts became popular. Groups promoting island foods wore these, further emphasizing the message. Promotional pens and pencils were developed with the messages ‘Grow and Eat Yellow Varieties’ and ‘Be Happy – Eat a Banana,’ again using the yellow color to help get the message across.

Traditional food means traditional culture

Another step forward for Pohnpei was the publication of a book entitled *Ethnobotany of Pohnpei: Plants, People and Island Cultures,* in which IFCP was also involved. It included chapters documenting rare micronutrient-rich varieties of banana, taro, breadfruit and yam, and other foods which have been neglected. The book is thus a roadmap for the re introduction of older cultivars and a guide to traditional cultivation methods. It is hoped that the collation of this information on local plants, including food crops, will help to stimulate interest in these foods and varieties, and will also help address Pohnpei’s epidemic of nutrition-related diseases.
‘Go Local’ spreads throughout FSM

What enthusiasm there has been for ‘Go Local’! The activities have started spreading from Pohnpei (the seat of the national capital) to the other three island states of the country: Chuuk, Yap and Kosrae. New groups have been formed or revived, including the Island Food Community of Kosrae, the Chuuk Local Food Community, and the Yap Inter-agency Nutrition Education Council. Workshops have helped to spread the message of ‘Go Local’ and ‘CHEEF’ benefits.

The challenges are still there, but there is much to be happy and hopeful about. People are offering their time to be a part of the movement. They regularly express themselves in email exchanges, including stories of how communities are slowly turning back to an increased use of their local foods.

We warmly thank SIGHT AND LIFE for supporting this project. Let’s go local!!

Further acknowledgements

Warm thanks are extended to our partner communities and agencies including the Pohnpei Office of Economic Affairs; Pohnpei Department of Health; Pohnpei Department of Education; Pohnpei Department of Land and Natural Resources; College of Micronesia-FSM Cooperative Extension Services; Conservation Society of Pohnpei; IFCP board members and other partners including Bermin Weilbacher and Gibson Santos; and our 2009 summer team comprising Kaleigh Emerson, Kim Del Guercio, Clinton Sears (Emory University), Alyssa Bittenbender (University of Arizona), Sueko Matsumura (Johns Hopkins University), and our local Pohnpei interns, Mary Lorens, McKean Allen Peter, and Maylance Ladore.

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“Moving Towards a Healthy and Sustainable Nutrition for All”

Second World Congress of Public Health Nutrition to be held in September

From September 23–25, 2010, the II World Congress of Public Health Nutrition (I Latin-American Congress of Community Nutrition) will present the most recent advances in human nutrition and discuss their intimate relationships to global health and well-being.

“Moving towards a healthy and sustainable nutrition for all” is the theme of the congress, which is to be held in Porto, Portugal. The scientific program is being prepared by the world’s leading specialists in public health nutrition. Each session will be organized with a view to capturing viewpoints on food and nutrition from both global and local perspectives. Topics will include: Climatic changes and public health nutrition, nutrition and aging, public health and nutrigenomics, dietary guidelines and nutrition education, and international cooperation.

The deadline for early registration and abstract submission is April 30, 2010. For further information, please contact:

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