Republic of the Marshall Islands
Country Report
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Programme Title: Out-of-School Girls: Basic Literacy/ Numeracy an Life Skills Development

Implementing Organization: National Training Council (NTC) and Juren Ae Club

Context

Teen pregnancy continues to be a major issue in the Republic of the Marshall Islands. Majority of the young girls dropping out of schools are a result of pregnancy. Most of these girls are single mothers and have very limited means to support themselves and their babies. A number of organizations are engaged in collaborative efforts to curb this problem. The government is also fully aware that these young girls represent the future of the Republic of the Marshall Islands. The government contracted the National Training Council (NTC) to work on the development of the out-of-school youths’ skills and potential through various training opportunities that will help them to find jobs, or go back to school and thus secure better conditions for their future. The Republic of the Marshall Islands is a Maternal Society so women play a very important role in the development of the country as they are the ones that inherit the land. They are also the ones to hold the families together.

Programme

In 2006, the women’s group call JUREN AE (the word juren ae is the name of the big paddle in a canoe that is usually used when sailing through rough seas, literally juren ae stands for strength and power) started a training project to help the out-of-school young women to have a second chance to either go back to school or find job. The program has been successfully running since then up to now. Many of the graduates of the program have gone back to school and others have jobs. Some of the graduates or alumni have become role model for the new groups. They are involved in the Training of Trainers (TOT).

The Juren Ae wanted to help move the country forward by investing in the young women that are out-of-school through capacity building, self-confidence, contributing knowledge and counselling.

With funding from NTC, they developed a three to six-month training course on handicraft making and sewing. Through partnership with WAM (canoes of the Marshall Islands), the
Japanese Volunteer Program, and the Organization of the Mary Knoll Sisters, they also developed a basic literacy and numeracy skills course to teach. The literacy and numeracy courses are taught by volunteers from these organizations and whoever they can recruit from the community. With handicraft making and sewing, women from the community who are highly skilled are recruited to teach these skills. The programme is targeting young women between these ages, 16 to 24.

At the end of the programme, the graduates can either set the General Education Development (GED) or find job. Some of them become self-employee. They use the skills they acquired in sewing and handicraft making and sell their own products. Some of these girls are very skilful that they become trainers themselves.

Objectives

Development of the basic literacy and numeracy skills for the out-of-school is aim to help them with the necessary skills that are needed to cope with our complex technological world. Also to help widening their learning experiences and allowing them to move forward in their future lives as responsible citizens and professionals. Woven into the framework is the traditional skills and the knowledge and values of the Marshallese. Looking at how changes in our modern world affect the culture and how to cope with the changes but maintaining the culture.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Evaluation of the literacy and numeracy skills is through quizzes and tests. The products from their sewing and handcraft class are also another way of evaluating their performances. Through surveys they are able to monitor where the graduates are at.

The women’s organization elects their officers to run the programme to take charge of the budget, resources and other needs. They have their by-laws and guidelines to follow. At the end of training, they have an open house to display and sell the products made from the training. The money collected from selling the products is again used to buy materials for training.

Challenges
One of the major constrains, is lack of parental support. The young women are often blamed for not finishing schools. So they come with very low self-esteem. They also run into problem of not having someone to look after their babies. The other constrain is limited space.

**Positive Aspects**

The young women that have come out of the programme have grown and become matured. They utilize the graduates to become recruiters and trainer of trainer (TOT). There is demand from the community to expand and have cooking class as well. There are boys who want to join as well as working mothers. Demand to have evening classes to accommodate the working mothers.

**Lessons Learned**

It has been proven that given a second chance to the out-of-school youths can really help to move them forward, if they are recognized as people with potentials.