

Health Impacts of Environmental Shocks and Shifts in Geographically Isolated Contexts: Lessons from the Marshall Islands

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Who am I?



Framing

Vulnerability as social calculus

Research Question: How do the major types and drivers of health vulnerability in the Marshall Islands differ between outer islands and the main island?



Marshall Islands Context



Methods and Partnerships



Heath Vulnerability on Outer Islands



Outer Islands: Greater Access to Local Foods

We weren't hungry (on outer islands) even if we ran out of bread or rice, and we don't need money for everything. Most of our needs were met there, even if there was no flour or rice. (Middle-aged woman from Wotje)

Outer Islands: Imported Foods Support Adaptation (But with Health Risks)

The government came and brought us food (after a storm), and I was so grateful to the government at the time because had they not come we wouldn't have had food. All of the plants were destroyed. (Middle-aged woman from Ebon)

My dad would call and be like, "we don't have any food here," and I'm like, "what do you mean you don't have any food." And he'll be like, "there's no rice, there's no meat." And I'm like, "come on, go fish dad." (Middle-aged woman from Likiep)

Outer Islands: Cultures of Giving Support Food Security

*All of the breadfruit and pandanus and bananas fell so food ran out eventually. So people from other islands had to bring us food and water.
(Older woman from Ailinglapalap)*

Outer Islands: Access to Care

There are clinics there (on Namu), but they don't have enough supplies or services. (Middle-aged woman from Namu)

There is only one health assistant on every outer island, and they can't cure a lot of patients. (Middle-aged woman from Ailinglaplap)

Health Vulnerability on Majuro



Majuro: The Cash Economy Drives Food Insecurity

In Majuro, when we eat we need, you know, green like green paper. When we drink, green paper again. (Young woman from Ailinglaplap)

I don't like it (having to buy local foods in Majuro)...I grew up with local foods (on the outer island), and sometimes I'd want to eat local foods (on Majuro), but then we'd have to buy them. I grew tired of the imported foods. (Young man from Ebon)

Majuro: Consequences of Limited Food Access

There are some times when the family doesn't have anything to eat. There are times when there isn't enough money to buy food. (Middle-aged woman from Namu)

When I first moved out here, we couldn't get the things we need because we didn't have enough money. And things have gotten worse since I've been here. Compared to Maloelap, it's harder to get food out here. When we don't have money, we just starve. (Middle-aged woman from Maloelap)


Majuro: Other Health Risks

Greater Infectious Disease Risks:

I fear getting sick more here (on Majuro). I feel like there is more sickness out here. (Older woman from Ailinglaplap)

Inaccessible Care for Poorer Residents:

Many times we have been sick, but if we do not have money we cannot go see the doctor...(on outer islands) you just pay 25 cents to see the doctor, and sometimes you don't. If there is no money, you don't pay. But in Majuro, you have to pay \$5. And if you do not have \$5, you won't see the doctor...Even though we were very sick, we stayed home...there have been many times we couldn't see the doctor (on Majuro, because could not afford the \$5). (Young woman from Ailinglaplap)



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