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TRUST TERRITORY OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

Office of the District Administrator
Marshalls

To : District Administrator's Representative, Kwajalein 7/19/72
 Thru : District Administrator, Marshalls
 From : Community Development Advisor, Marshalls
 Subject : Ebeye-Kwajalein Report
 Reference : Report of the Joint Committee on Program and Budget Planning of the Congress of Micronesia, March 1972

File: CDO 2-4

The above committee asked the Distad Marshalls "to prepare a report indicating the nature and severity of the existing problems on Ebeye, projected problems that are anticipated through 1978, and possible alternative solutions to those problems."

In response to your request to Distad Marshalls I made a survey of the Ebeye situation in order to furnish your office with the information requested by the Congress of Micronesia Committee.

The period 6/29.72-7/14/72 was spent on Kwajalein and Ebeye. A large number of individuals, both American and Marshallese were interviewed informally and pertinent information was obtained. A short trip was made to Ebadon Island with you to ascertain the situation there.

I have also drawn upon my past experiences and observations of the Ebeye-Kwajalein situation in order to evaluate and analyze the current situation.

Your cooperation and assistance to me while I was on Kwajalein are greatly appreciated.

Jack A. Tobin

cc: DFA, Marshalls
CDO, Marshalls

Attach. Maps of Kwajalein and Ebeye

Logged

EBEYE REPORT - JULY 1972

This report was made at the request of the Joint Committee on Program and Budget Planning of the Congress of Micronesia, March 1972.

During a trip to the Marshall Islands District to study the problems of the Bikini Rehabilitation Program, the Committee learned of serious social, health and sanitation problems which exist on Ebeye Island in the Kwajalein Atoll. The Committee asked the District Administrator, Marshall Islands District, to prepare a report indicating the nature and severity of the existing problems on Ebeye, projected problems that are anticipated through 1978, and possible alternative solutions to these problems. The Committee recommended that the report be submitted prior to the hearings on the FY 1974 budget.

Background

The location

Ebeye Island is one of the approximately 97 islands and islets of Kwajalein atoll. Kwajalein (Kwajlen) is located in the north central Marshalls, in the Relik Chain of the archipelago. It is the largest atoll in the world with a lagoon area of about 900 square miles. The land area however is only approximately 6.5 square miles. Ebeye is located on the southeastern sector of the atoll, only two miles from the main island of Kwajalein. Kwajalein Atoll is 235 miles northwest of the district center at Rujuro.

History of Ebeye Village

In early 1944, after the U.S. armed forces had captured Kwajalein Atoll from the Japanese forces who were strongly entrenched there, a tremendous task of clearing off the battle ravaged and bomb scarred main island of Kwajalein to make it usable for American military operations faced the victors. A huge labor force was needed to accomplish this herculean task. Several hundred Marshallese and Ponapeans were recruited and the work of reconstructing air strips and building aircraft hangers, warehouses, repair shops, barracks and other military facilities proceeded as the debris of battle was disposed of.

Housing and messing facilities were of course necessary, and a workers' camp was set up on Kwajalein Island itself. After the initial phase of rehabilitation, wives, children, and other dependents joined their menfolk on Kwajalein. The Ponapean laborers were sent home, and a Marshallese community, albeit atypical and in an alien setting, came into being. This community was known as the Kwajalein Labor Camp.

Relocation of the Kwajalein Labor Camp

The Kwajalein Labor Camp population had swollen to 559 people by January 1950 and presented a squalid, shanty-town appearance, contrasting sharply with the spic-and-span buildings of the adjacent military establishment. It was decided at this time to relocate the Labor Camp on Ebeye Island, close to Kwajalein, and orders to that effect were promulgated. The new camp was planned to accommodate 370 people. The new camp was completed and most of the inhabitants of the Kwajalein Labor Camp were moved to the new location on Ebeye in January of 1951. The Kwajalein Labor Camp was then torn down.

History of Ebeye Island

Ebeye Island (U.S. Navy orthography), known as Ebeje to the Marshallese, was occupied in 1940 by Japanese forces who constructed a seaplane ramp and other military installations. No compensation was made to the owners of Ebeye for land used and occupied. The U.S. Navy later utilized Ebeye, and a Coast Guard Loran station was established on the southern end of the island. The station is still in commission and a small Coast Guard unit is stationed there.

The Marshallese land owners were not compensated for use of their land until after final negotiations and agreement were completed in 1964. They are not satisfied with the amount received, currently \$8.50 per acre per month. In fact one of the alab (s) or lineage heads has refused to accept any of the money tendered by the government because he feels it is insufficient.

The Ebeye "problem" had its origin in the Labor Camp on Kwajalein and became exacerbated when the camp was moved to Ebeye Island. The conditions of overcrowding and overpopulation increased tremendously and rapidly in the new location. The Navy had constructed 79 simple frame dwelling houses, cook houses, bath houses and benjos. These were soon hemmed in by additional buildings constructed by the Marshallese themselves. Additional structures made of scrap wood and salvage sheet metal, most of which were nothing but "shanties" barely providing adequate shelter from the elements, were later erected as more people moved to Ebeye.

A census made by the Marshalls District Anthropologist in February 1954, a little over four years after the move to Ebeye, revealed a population of 981 only 226 of whom were employed on the naval base on Kwajalein. The primary problem then, as now, was that of over population. Ebeye is less than one-quarter of a square mile in extent. Only a little over 64 acres are available for housing and other community functions. The current population is over 5,500. This is obviously a considerable increase from the 1954 population of less than one thousand. About 600 people are now employed on Kwajalein by KBR. There are 139 Micronesian employees of the Trust Territory on Ebeye. The Ebeye population fluctuates during the year as Ebeye is an important economic and social center. The huge missile base on Kwajalein (KBR) attracts job seekers from all over the Marshalls, and from other districts as well.

Most of the permanent residents, and relatives and friends who visit them, are housed in 77 fairly new American style multi-family units which were constructed by the military about five years ago. The design of these units leaves much to be desired in terms of Marshallese living, and adaptation to the island environment. However they are a great improvement over the old housing. Unfortunately utilization of the limited land area was not maximized in the siting of these buildings.

These "one family units" are crowded with 15-20 people on the average according to Dr. Tregar Ishoda. Although designed for nuclear families after the American pattern they are occupied by extended families after the Micronesian pattern. In a number of cases more than one family occupy a unit. Overcrowding is the rule with concomitant health and sanitation problems.

The rest of the Ebeye people live in what remains of the original housing which is in very poor condition, and in the houses which individuals have built over the years. Some of the latter are in good condition but most of them are not.

A number of retail stores, two restaurants, and three bars provide services to the population. A Protestant, and a Catholic Church and Seventh Day Adventist, and Assembly of God, and Jehovah Witness missions handle their spiritual needs.

Ebeye today is an overcrowded and unattractive place. It is essentially a huge labor camp, an adjunct to the Kwajalein Missile Range.

The Basic Problem as has been indicated, is overpopulation. There are just too many people for the small land area and the facilities available to handle their needs. The major problems of Ebeye stem from this fact. With a ratio of six live births to one death and with a continual influx of people, the implications for the future are obvious.

Perhaps 75% of the people on Ebeye are from other atolls in the Marshalls. Included are people from other districts, mainly Kusaies. A significant number of Americans employed on Kwajalein and Ebeye live on Ebeye with their Marshallese wives. Most of the Kwajalein Atoll people live on Ebeye although other land, mostly in the northern part of the atoll is available to them. A certain amount of friction exists between the Kwajalein Atoll people and the "outsiders." This has created socio-political problems.

There are a number of reasons for people moving to Ebeye. Those who work on Kwajalein, and Ebeye, prefer this to making a living from copra production and subsistence farming. Some of them work to make money for school expenses for their children who are attending school on Mejuro or on Ponape, Palau, Guam, Hawaii or on the Mainland U.S. Others work to accumulate capital to establish businesses on their own home atolls or to build homes there. Other reasons to come to Ebeye and to remain there include the lure of bright lights, excitement, recreation, seeing new faces; being able to patronize bars. People come to the tiny overcrowded island to be with their children attending school on Ebeye, a better school, they believe, than those on the outer islands. They also are there to receive medical treatment which is superior to that available on the home island, and to be with their sick relatives. Access to a usually reliable supply of imported foods and other consumer goods is another attraction.

People also take advantage of Marshallese customs of familial obligation and hospitality and live off of their relatives who are employed on Kwajalein or Ebeye. This of course works a serious hardship on those employed and creates pressure on the existing housing. Overcrowded conditions become much worse.

Economic factors weigh heavily in this situation. Employees of MRR and of private American individuals on Kwajalein are paid U.S. minimum wages. Ebeye has the highest per capita income of any community in the Trust Territory. The total gross income from all sources (wages) for Micronesians on Kwajalein Atoll is over three million dollars per year. (See attached statistical table for details).

Ebeye is another example, indeed a prime example, of the process of urbanization that has been happening all over the world. The port towns and administrative centers in Micronesia and in other parts of the Pacific are also undergoing rapid change. Overpopulation and concomitant problems which exist on Ebeye are found in these places as well. Ebeye is highly concentrated and highly visible and is perhaps the area of the most intense culture change and acculturation in all of Micronesia. The life style, actions, and attitudes of the residents of Ebeye reflect this.

It should be emphasized that there are no "solutions" to the problem of Ebeye. As long as the United States maintains a military installation on Kwajalein there will be an Ebeye problem. People will continue to move to Ebeye and to proliferate there. They will continue to be reluctant to return to life on the outer islands and atolls. If, and when the United States closes down KIR the population of Ebeye will return from whence they came and the problems of Ebeye will become very minor ones.

There are however possible ways to ameliorate or to alleviate the situation and problems of Ebeye. The Administration has addressed itself to some of these problems, and conditions should improve in these areas in the near future. Salient problems and action that is being taken, or can be taken to alleviate them are as follows:

Public Health and Sanitation

Hospital

The hospital on Ebeye is a disgrace. The barn-like wooden building has deteriorated and is overcrowded and inadequate for the needs of the large Ebeye population. It is, in a word, a mess. This is no reflection on the staff. It has been worse in the past in fact. Ebeye hospital, if one can dignify it by this term, is in sharp contrast to the modern, well equipped hospital on Kwajalein which serves the Americans attached to KIR.

A new hospital is under construction. The steel framework is up. However Dr. Tregar states that it is not adequate. He claims that a larger bed hospital is needed. If this is indeed the case, perhaps more monies could be appropriated for expansion.

Sewage Disposal

A sewage treatment and disposal plant is badly needed. Extensions are needed on the sewage effluent outfalls to eliminate contamination to beach and lagoon. The outfalls should extend far enough out so that tide and currents will sweep the materials away. A new sewage treatment plant is planned for Ebeye. It will be located on the northern tip of the island. This should greatly improve the problems of environmental health and sanitation on Ebeye. Garbage disposal is another problem to which the Administration has addressed itself. Improvements in this area will also improve the public health situation.

Toilet Facilities

The toilet facilities on Ebeye are very inadequate. Benjos are still being built. They are found all over the island and foul odors are emitted from them. When the wind is blowing from the direction of the benjos the odor

is sometimes overpowering. The plan is to eliminate all benjos eventually and replace them with flush toilets, with which the government housing units are equipped.

Funds have been allocated from the Kwajalein Atoll Development Fund to construct a large number of flush toilets on Ebeye. The Mitijela has allocated \$10,000 for sanitary facilities on the island as well.

Water Supply

The supply of potable water has been a problem in the past especially during the months when rainfall is scanty. The water supply system is a vast improvement over that of a few years ago. However it is still necessary to barge water in from Kwajalein Island during times of shortage. The problem will of course intensify as the population increases on Ebeye. Additional water catchment and storage units will be necessary.

Construction of additional fresh water storage units is projected for FY 1975 and a fresh water distillation plant is projected for FY 1978.

Educational Facilities

As of June 30, 1972 there were 1,066 students in the elementary school on Ebeye. The ages range from six to sixteen. There were also 206 children in the kindergarten. (The enrollment in the school operated by the Protestant Church was 190.) District Director of Education Kinja Andrike stated that the school facilities on Ebeye are inadequate. Additional school rooms and teachers are needed to handle the increased number of school age children.

Eight additional class rooms are budgeted for Ebeye for FY 1972. A one class room building was funded in FY 71 for Ebadon Island, in the northwest part of the atoll, as was one for Enebuoj Island (Carlson) across the lagoon from Ebeye. Salaries for teachers needed to man these class rooms and new schools will be made available as well.

Recreation Facilities

There is a definite need for wholesome recreation for the young people of Ebeye who make up a very large percentage of the population. An interesting and wholesome alternative to drinking, sitting around and boredom is needed. While the recreation program on Kwajalein in which some of the older males participate takes care of part of this need, the small children and other youths and young girls have no recreation except that provided on Ebeye.

The ongoing program on Ebeye was funded by a Grant-in-aid a few years ago. An athletic field with facilities has been constructed and is being improved. Basket ball and volleyball leagues have been run and the program continues. A Peace Corps Volunteer has been the leading force in the program. We must have a paid Micronesian Recreation Director in order to have continuity in the needed program. An adequate operating budget is also needed to purchase supplies, equipment, and other necessities. Juvenile delinquency has reportedly declined markedly since the recreation program has been in operation. We want this positive trend to continue in the future.

We are in the process of recruiting a Marshallese to run this program. The position is funded by the Community Development Office. However additional funds are needed for operation of the program in the future.

A community center was created through a Grant-in-Aid several years ago. It was well planned and well executed. However after it was turned over to the control of the Ebeye Council it rapidly deteriorated. Many of its activities ceased. These included a youth center with a young people's canteen. This center can be revived and expanded under the leadership of the recreation director and with adequate funding. This will also serve an important need in the community, especially among the young people.

Other Islands in The Kwajalein Atoll

As stated previously, there are other islands in the Kwajalein Atoll on which Kwajalein people now on Ebeye can live. This would alleviate the population pressure to some extent, providing they would move there. These islands, chiefly in the northern sector of the atoll are sparsely populated if at all.

A number of the larger islands such as Kwajalein, Roi-Namur (Ruot-Minur), Heik, Koliikellen, Bikelj, Lojeiak, and Enelapkan are being used by MIA. A large sector of the atoll, known as the Mid-Corridor, has been restricted against Marshallese habitation. People cannot live on the islands of this sector permanently because they are in the path of incoming missiles during test operations. However the islands that are available for permanent habitation are considerable.

The largest of these is Ebadon in the northwest of the atoll about 80 miles from Ebeye. The island has an area of 0.52 square miles or 332.8 acres. The area including the adjacent islands is 0.75 square miles. This is about three times the size of Ebeye. The total land available in the northern part of the atoll is 1.75 square miles or 1120 acres. Ebadon is a very fertile island with an abundant supply of breadfruit, coconut, and pandanus as well as banana, arrowroot, and taro plants. The surrounding reef complex teems with marine life. The permanent population is only ten people. The island could obviously support a great many more than this. This is true for the other islands in this area as well.

A school and dispensary are planned for Ebadon. It is hoped that the provision of these essential services will induce people to move back to the area. This will be of some help in alleviating the population problem on Ebeye.

The only island in the atoll outside of Ebeye with a sizeable Marshallese population is Enelap in the northeast part of the atoll across the lagoon from Ebadon. There are 190 Marshallese there now. They are employees of the adjacent military installation on Roi-Namur (Ruot-Minur) and their families. Theirs is a viable, well integrated community and is not overcrowded. However the population is on the increase and may present a problem in the future.

In the southern sector of the atoll Enebuoj (Carlson) Island could serve to alleviate population pressure. It is fairly large, 0.23 square miles or 147 acres, slightly larger than Ebeye. The island has good agricultural potential, and its location is favorable for development in relation to Ebeye. It is only 3.7 miles across the lagoon from Ebeye and 2.1 miles to the northwest of Kwajalein Island. Only 22 people are living on Enebuoj now.

A school has been budgeted for the island and plans have been made to rehabilitate it. A piggery and a chicken farm have been planned. It is also planned to replant the island in breadfruit, coconuts, pandanus, bananas and other food producing trees and plants. These products can all be marketed on Ebeye where they will upgrade the nutrition of the people living there. This will provide a reliable cash income for the Enebuoj people who return to their island.

The basic goals of the Enebuoj (Carlson) Island Rehabilitation Project are sound. They are desirable from a social and economic point of view in themselves and in relation to the problems of Ebeye and the rest of Kwajalein Atoll.

Development of the Outer Islands, and the Ebeye Problem

It is possible that economic and social development of the outer islands and atolls of the Marshalls might keep people at home, or induce them to return. It is certain that the amenities for which people come to Ebeye, and to the District Center at Majuro, do not exist on the outer islands. Or if they do exist they are in attenuated forms.

If life were more meaningful and more rewarding on these islands perhaps people would be content to remain there.

The establishment of sub-district centers on Jabwor Island on Jaluit Atoll in the Southern Marshalls and on Wotje Island on Wotje Atoll in the Northeastern Marshalls should do much to alleviate the problem of migration to Ebeye and Majuro. The planned high schools, super-dispensaries (the one on Jaluit is nearly completed), and other facilities will attract people who might otherwise move to Ebeye or Majuro. Development of the local economy could provide jobs and a sound economic basis which would enable people to live on these islands.

The decentralization of facilities and concomitant dispersal of population should ameliorate the situation, should check migration to Ebeye and Majuro. However realization of the plan is in the future.

The Low-Cost Housing Program, and the Ebeye Problem

It has been argued that improvement of housing on the outer islands of the district will check migration significantly. That it will keep people home and lessen movement to and congestion of population in the urban centers. This is questionable, but it certainly should not be dismissed out of hand. It is planned to allocate a percentage of the Low-Cost Housing Program funds to outer island construction. Perhaps it will help alleviate the problem of overcrowding on Ebeye and Majuro and make life more satisfying on the outer islands. It is certainly worth trying.

Conclusion

To recapitulate, there is no "solution" to the Ebeye problem, only alleviation. The only possible solution, and one which will not happen in the foreseeable future, is to close down Kwajalein Missile Range. Then the surplus population would be forced to return to their home atolls and islands. There would be nothing for them to do on Ebeye and elsewhere where military operations exist. The Kwajalein Atoll people could live quite comfortably with the reduced population that would result. Things would be chaotic at first but would eventually settle down. The move would be traumatic but the Marshallese are a very adeptable and resilient people and would be able to adjust to the new situation.

Another means to control the population, not discussed earlier because it does not seem feasible is that of strict immigration control. That is, to strictly enforce the existing immigration laws. This, to my knowledge has never been done. Perhaps it cannot be done by local law enforcement personnel because of the force of Marshallese custom and the widespread network of kinship ties that exists in the Marshalls. It would, admittedly be a formidable task. Perhaps impossible without the use of a military type of organization to enforce it. Even then it would be difficult and would create serious problems. The question also arises whether this is not counter to the Bill of Rights' guarantee of freedom of movement. Could sanitary and public health conditions justify this strict measure? Can immigration be controlled for any appreciable and meaningful length of time for these reasons?

I believe that no matter how many houses are built to relieve the population pressure and the overcrowding, people will crowd into Ebeye as they are crowding into urban centers throughout the world, and for much the same reasons. Ebeye is not an isolated case. There are many "Ebeyes" in this world.

Jack A. Tobin
7/19/72

ADDENDA

STATISTICAL TABLE

Population

Total Population Kwajalein Atoll: 5,931 Estimated
Excluding U.S. Personnel other than
on Ebeye (a few).

Ebeye 5,583

Enebor 190
Ebadon 10
Enelapkan
(Carlos) 74
Arbwe 18
Enebuoj
(Carlson) 22

KMR Employees (Micronesian)

Working on Kwajalein Island: 490

Roi-Mamur (the vast majority),
and Meik, Illigini, and Enelapkan
(Carlos) Islands: 62

T.T.

Ebeye (T.T. employees) Micro: 139

Employed by private businesses: 90

Kwajalein-Domestic

Housemaids, privately employed: 145

Yard Men, " " 10

(Above not on Global payroll)

Payroll KMR (Micronesians only) Kwajalein-Roi-Mamur: \$2,366,000.00 p/a

Payroll Housemaids and Yardmen, Kwajalein (estim.) 201,500.00 "

Payroll TT (Micronesian) Ebeye: 334,565.00 "

Private Businesses on Ebeye : 224,804.00 "

Total Gross Income of Micronesian from wages: \$ 3,127,369.00 "

Non-Micronesians Living on Ebeye

U.S. - 39 (28 work on Kwajalein and 11 work on Ebeye for Marshallese)

Japanese - 4 (Employed in Marshallese businesses on Ebeye)

Non-Marshallese: 504 Kosaiens plus lesser numbers of people from other districts.

Note: 13 of the above U.S. citizens live in the government housing with their Marshallese wives.

Enrolled Elementary School students-School year ending June 30, 1972

Ebeye: 1,066

Enebor: 53

Enelapkan (Carlos): 10

1,135 (Ages 6-16)

Total Enrolled Gov't School: 1,341

Kindergarten (Ebeye) 206

Protestant Church

School (Ebeye) 190 Total: 1,531

Total Enrolled Student Ebeye: 1,531

