

## Making “Mahr” to Combat Food Security Issues in Pohnpei in the Face of COVID-19

June 22, 2020



Image 1. Mr. Inos Primo kneading fermented breadfruit to prepare for baking.

MCT launched a small-scale food security project with several communities in Pohnpei to support community-level preparations to deal with the economic effects of COVID-19 should cases arise in the FSM. Given that it is breadfruit season and the importance of the food source to island culture, the project focuses on *mahr* (Pohnpeian for fermented breadfruit). Traditionally, the process of making *mahr* involves an entire village and requires a high amount of resources, energy and time. However in this modern age, breadfruit is fermented in pales/barrels, which consumes less time and energy and enables an individual to make *mahr* without requiring the hands of a whole community as opposed to the old method of fermenting breadfruit underground. “In addition to being less demanding, fermenting breadfruit in pales is more sanitary,” said Mr. Inos Primo, one of the individuals working with MCT on this project, whose *mahr* is often sought out in Pohnpei.

This project targeted families that possess the knowledge and skills to make *mahr* in order to document the entire process. MCT donated pales and bags to the families and is working on creating a pamphlet that outlines the method. The pamphlet will be shared with the wider public so that the knowledge is retained, and families may have another source of stable food. “If you prepare *mahr* correctly and take care of it, you will have food all year long,” said Mr. Primo. The importance of this project is that it may not only add another food source for communities, but families could also learn to make *mahr* for sale, generating an alternative source of income.