19 August 2011 In coinciding with the launch and hand-over of five hundred copies of five illustrated children's books on oral health care and nutrition, a team of dental experts and hygienists are currently in Tonga to conduct school visits under the ‘Malimali Program’, to promote the importance of oral health care.

The Malimali Program movement was first initiated by the Mr. and Mrs. Kawamura in 1998. In 2006, the program then became known as the Malimali Program.

For over 13 years now, the program has achieved significant improvement of oral health among active participants of the program from May 2006 to March 2009 under JICA's support.

In November 2009, the Ministry of Health together with the Ministry of Education, Women Affairs and Culture and in collaboration with SPMT under JICA Partnership Program signed the Minutes of Meeting to continue the strengthening the school-based oral health in the Kingdom of Tonga.

This year, on 4 August, WHO Director and University Professor Murray Thompson and Dr Sayuri Kawamura, Dr Seigo Kobayasi (Professor of public and dental Health in Nihon University); Dr Reiri Takeuchi (Dentist Pharmacology); Dr Mami Endo; Dr Nobuko Nihei and a Medical Dr Kazunori Uchino arrived in Tonga to hold a workshop at Vaiola Hospital as well as making kindergarten and primary school visits.
Malimali program continues to improve school-based oral health in Tonga

Sunday, 21 August 2011 00:00 - Last Updated Wednesday, 19 December 2012 10:32

The Malimali team also visited the Alonga Center, health centers in Ha'apai and primary schools in 'Atata.

The program also involved much-needed parents and teachers' consultations, who both play a major role in encouraging young children to brush teeth regularly, reduce sweets food and drink intake and the teaching of proper brushing habits and dental treatments.

Health and Education are main priority areas in Japan's Official Development Assistance programs in Tonga.

The Government of Japan, through JICA, approved to continue assistance in promoting Oral Health Activity programs for school children and lower age groups around four islands groups.

The Malimali Program is to promote oral health care throughout kindergartens and primary schools in Tongatapu, Vava'u, Ha'apai and 'Eua until March 2012.

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