

OXFAM IN VANUATU: CYCLONE PAM RESPONSE



13 MARCH 2016

Thanks to the generosity of donors and supporters from across the globe, Oxfam's response to Tropical Cyclone Pam has reached close to 25,000 people in the year since the cyclone struck Vanuatu.

WHAT OXFAM IS DOING



Water, sanitation and hygiene — providing clean water, rehabilitating water sources, constructing groundwater wells, distributing hygiene kits, carrying out hygiene awareness activities, and running workshops and activities that help communities protect their crops and ability to earn an income during droughts caused by El Niño.



Emergency food security and vulnerable livelihoods — supporting both immediate and medium-term livelihoods recovery in target communities through seed distribution, cash vouchers, cash for work programs and by identifying opportunities for income generation.



Gender and protection — ensuring community members, especially women, young people and people with disabilities, are safe and have access to services, promoting women's empowerment, and making sure there is equal decision-making between women and men.



Coordination — leading and coordinating the Vanuatu Humanitarian Team, representing humanitarian agencies in Vanuatu, and providing support to the National Disaster Management Office.



RESPONSE IN NUMBERS

Oxfam has reached at least 24,910 people (12,477 men and 12,433 women) in more than 60 communities on four islands — Efate, Emae, Epi and Ambrym — since Tropical Cyclone Pam struck on 13 March 2015.

OVERVIEW

Sunday 13 March 2016 will mark one year since Tropical Cyclone Pam struck Vanuatu. Tropical Cyclone Pam caused widespread destruction across the eastern and south-eastern islands of the country. The eye of the Category 5 cyclone passed close to Efate Island — the location of Vanuatu's capital Port Vila — affecting about 188,000 people across 22 islands. An estimated 15,000 homes were damaged or destroyed, about 96% of food stocks decimated, and the water supply of 110,000 people was disrupted, destroyed or contaminated.

The response to Tropical Cyclone Pam began immediately after the storm left Vanuatu's borders. In the 12 months since the event, more than 50 organisations, both local and international, have worked together under the lead of the Vanuatu Government to ensure relief efforts are coordinated and aid is getting to those who need it most. Humanitarian activities have now moved from the response phase into the recovery phase, and Oxfam's programming for the next period will reflect this shift in focus, as well as the predicted impacts of El Niño on weather patterns.

While Vanuatu remains in the process of recovering from the impact of Tropical Cyclone Pam, the country is also experiencing its worst drought in 20 years due to impacts of El Niño. Oxfam has integrated its El Niño response plan into the Tropical Cyclone Pam recovery program, particularly in relation to water, sanitation and hygiene, livelihoods recovery, and gender and protection. Oxfam will continue putting its efforts into the same targeted communities and beneficiaries for its El Niño response as with the Tropical Cyclone Pam response — this way we can leverage our ability to deliver services and relationship with the communities and stakeholders. Oxfam will also continue to work with United Nations clusters and the National Disaster Management Organisation to ensure the El Niño response gets prioritised and integrated into the current Tropical Cyclone Pam recovery mechanisms.

WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE (WASH)

Since finalising its Tropical Cyclone Pam emergency relief phase activities, Oxfam’s water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) team initiated a full-scale WASH rehabilitation and recovery program in Shefa province. Communities on the islands of Efate (north and east), Epi (south and west), and Emae (west) were, and continue to be, the main focus areas for this work, comprising more than 80 communities and 30 schools. Detailed WASH assessments and community consultations were conducted in all these areas to identify the level of WASH assistance required in schools, communities and health centres. This information was used to develop Oxfam’s recovery phase WASH program, including:

- community workshops to develop action plans that are implemented via community-led WASH rehabilitation busy bees;
- distributions of essential sanitation materials; and
- construction or rehabilitation of community and school hand-dug wells, rainwater catchments and water supply systems (gravity fed and solar pumped).

Oxfam is now a sector and country leader in conducting community Drinking Water Safety and Security Planning (DWSSP) workshops, a new participatory initiative endorsed by the Vanuatu Government, World Health Organization, and UNICEF. These sessions are designed to encourage local water committees to be proactive about water quality (safety) and water quantity (security), while also mobilising community-led water and sanitation system rehabilitation works.

DWSSP participants, both men and women, have responded with eagerness and positive feedback. Feby, a participant who is now an active member of the Takara Community WASH Committee in Efate, said that “I now understand how my water system works, and know how to repair and maintain it”. Kalo, another DWSSP participant and community plumber from Epule in Efate, said that after mapping the community water supplies “I can see now how it all works”. These workshops have been particularly valuable during the El Niño drought, which is forecast to continue impacting the region throughout 2016.

DONATIONS IN ACTION:

- 265,800 litres of clean water was water trucked to 3,474 people on Efate Island.
- 13,809 people now have access to clean water through water system rehabilitation.
- 20,928 people on Efate, Epi and Ambrym islands received hygiene kits.
- 17 DWSSP workshops were held and 37 participating communities now have a WASH resilience action plan.
- 10,453 people have learned good hygiene practices through watching a theatrical performance by Oxfam’s partner, Wan SmolBag.
- 2,489 people in 10 communities and four schools were provided with large-scale gravity-fed water supply system reconstructions.
- Infrastructure such as new toilets, hand washing stations and rainwater catchments were installed for 2,077 students in 28 schools and kindergartens.
- 13,292 people attended hygiene awareness sessions and received information, education and communication materials.

Oxfam will continue to support communities to get through El Niño and recover following Tropical Cyclone Pam in 2016 by expanding its geographic scope to include Buninga Island, Tongariki Island, Tongoa Island, North Epi, additional vulnerable communities in Efate, and potentially other islands in the region.



Tongoa Island, Vanuatu: Loui Kalo exports chickens and eggs from his niece Alexine's poultry farm. Due to Tropical Cyclone Pam, Alexine lost most of her crop and chickens and thought she would need to move back to the city to find alternate work. But with the help of Oxfam vouchers, she was able to stay and rebuild her farm. Photo: Arlene Bax/OxfamAUS.

EMERGENCY FOOD SECURITY AND VULNERABLE LIVELIHOODS

During the first six months following Tropical Cyclone Pam, the Oxfam Emergency Food Security and Vulnerable Livelihoods (EFSVL) team responded to the immediate and early recovery needs of 3,357 households (12,287 affected people) on Epi and Efate islands. Emergency and early recovery responses included seeds and livelihoods kits distributed to 1,627 households (5,955 people); cash vouchers to 1,251 households (4,579 people); and cash-for-work to 479 households (1,753 people).

Following the emergency response phase, which lasted up to six months, EFSVL activities have focused on rehabilitating affected communities and helping 612 households (at least 2,241 people) to find new ways to earn an income. This includes 210 households (at least 779 people) on income-generating activities (IGA), 51 households (at least 187 people) on peanuts processing, and 351 households (at least 1,285 people) on peanut production, providing them with seeds and hand tools.

Oxfam supports 26 IGA groups (15 in Efate and 11 in Epi) comprising of 210 households. Business opportunities include sewing, baking, poultry, fishing, peanut processing and selling, cooperatives stores, and concrete block-making. Oxfam's support of IGAs involves activities such as identifying business opportunities; establishing IGA groups and supporting them with governance; running business and technical skills training; assisting with business plan development and appraisal; providing start-up cash and materials; overseeing product quality development; and providing marketing support. Oxfam works in partnership with Vanuatu Cooperatives and Business Development Office to provide business, marketing and related skills trainings and technical support.

Alongside EFSVL, Oxfam provided funds for two local partners — Farm Support Association (FSA) and Youth Challenge Vanuatu (YCV) — to rehabilitate agro-enterprises. Our partners provide people with the resources and mentoring needed to restart their businesses, undertake commercial trading activities and earn an income. For example, FSA is supporting 100 poultry and 100 vegetable enterprises by providing resources such as tools, chickens, seeds and materials, and mentoring business operators through the process of restarting their businesses on Efate, Tanna and Paama islands. YCV is currently conducting a small business feasibility study in urban and peri-urban areas of Efate, to develop a business model and select 15 micro-enterprises to support young business operators.

With households decreasing their own agricultural production due to cyclones and El Niño-induced drought, helping people to find new and diverse ways to earn an income is believed to be a successful response in helping them recover and thrive. In times of hardship, income becomes fundamental in helping families to access food and non-food items from the local markets.

This work has created opportunities for women, youth and other marginalised groups to take part in Oxfam's business and technical skills training, receive business start-ups, and actively participate in decision-making processes. For example,

out of 210 IGA participants, women and youth made up 46% (98 people) and 20% (44 people) respectively. These people are engaged in sewing, poultry, baking, block-making, cooperatives stores and peanut processing. Three IGA groups (two sewing and one chips and rice selling) are now fully run by women.

DONATIONS IN ACTION:

- Oxfam distributed seeds to at least 5,218 people on Efate and Epi islands.
- 5,955 people received kits containing tools and gardening supplies.
- Oxfam distributed vouchers for people to exchange for tools, equipment and other goods, benefitting at least 4,579 individuals.
- 1,753 people have taken part in cash-for-work programs.
- 769 people received IGA training.
- 1,285 people received peanut seed in Epi islands.

CASE STUDY: ANNY JAMES

On the night Cyclone Pam hit, Anny James was taking shelter inside her home in Epau village with her parents and three children. They listened in horror as scraps of corrugated iron and tree branches flew around outside, crashing into their neighbours' homes and battering their small shelter.

Suddenly, Anny's front door was ripped right off its hinges.

"We took our kitchen cupboard and pushed it up to the doorway," she says. "I told my children that we have to go under the bed. We have just one bed — one single bed — so we squeezed ourselves under."

The next morning, when the wind died down and everything was quiet, the family walked outside to find total destruction.

"It felt like we were on another world," Anny says. "There [was] a big cry on Saturday morning. Families were crying, because most of us lost everything; all our belongings."

The storm damaged or destroyed around 15,000 homes across Vanuatu that night and decimated more than 90% of food stocks in some communities. However, through the tremendous work of our country team in Vanuatu's capital, Port Vila, Oxfam was one of the first agencies to reach communities desperately in need of humanitarian assistance in the days and weeks following the cyclone.

"We are so lucky because Oxfam [gave] vouchers for us," Anny says. "Most of the community went to buy tools so they could start gardening again. We also bought seeds."

"Oxfam helped the community, [especially] the widows, single mothers and orphans," Anny says. "They helped clean up the village and replant trees around the coastal areas."



Photo: Arlene Bax/OxfamAUS



Eton, Vanuatu: Bryna Palmer is a Vanuatu Oxfam staff member on the WASH team. Bryna is breaking the gender moulds of her culture by working installing toilets in communities around Vanuatu. Photo: Arlene Bax/OxfamAUS.

GENDER AND PROTECTION

Oxfam's focus on gender and protection in the Tropical Cyclone Pam response has been to safely address the basic needs of all community members — including women, young people and people with disabilities — to promote women's empowerment and equal decision-making between women and men. We also seek to strengthen our own ability to promote the rights of women, young people and people with disability in our programs and those of our partners.

Oxfam's rapid gender analysis after the cyclone highlighted the abilities of women to lead a disaster response and recovery, and the disadvantage that women, girls and people with disability can face from blanket programs that do not account for their particular needs. Oxfam has implemented initiatives such as constructing accessible toilets, providing menstrual hygiene materials and information, supporting women to earn an income, and offering vouchers that are tailored to meet the needs of women and girls. We are learning from our activities to identify the best ways to safely support women to access resources after emergencies. We are sharing these lessons with partners and other organisations working in Vanuatu.

Oxfam is also promoting women's leadership and empowerment as being a key factor in helping Vanuatu to rebuild. Women have been supported to gain new skills, for example, in community sanitation planning, toilet construction, business planning and technical aspects of water safety and security management. Oxfam has worked with women, men and male leaders to promote shared responsibilities, build awareness of gender inequalities and support women's roles and leadership in community committees.

At the national level, Oxfam has helped to amplify the voices and priorities of women, young women and women and men with a disability to inform post-cyclone plans and practice. Oxfam partnered with the Department of Women's Affairs, CARE International, UN Women and others to hold a two-day forum on Women in Emergency Response and Recovery. More than 140 participants attended from communities across Vanuatu, including members of women's organisations, disability organisations and humanitarian agencies. Lessons and recommendations were shared with government and non-government agencies and Oxfam will continue to promote these internally and with other organisations.

In partnership with the Disability Promotion and Advocacy Association, the Vanuatu Society for Disabled People and the Government of Vanuatu, Oxfam is working to improve the inclusion of people with disability in disaster management. This is through piloting an assessment approach, strengthening community-based disabled peoples' organisations and committees, raising community awareness of disability inclusion in disaster management and enhancing the networks, referral systems and capabilities of disability service providers to link cyclone recovery support to people with disabilities.

COORDINATION AND VANUATU HUMANITARIAN TEAM

Oxfam has been coordinating the Vanuatu Humanitarian Team (VHT) since its inception in 2011, supporting humanitarian coordination for both disaster preparedness and response. The VHT is a coordination of 11 humanitarian agencies based in Vanuatu, including UN agencies and the Red Cross. It supports the Vanuatu Government and the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO), as well as seven government-lead clusters in a co-leadership role. However, the number of organisations actively supporting or implementing the humanitarian response has grown to more than 50 since Tropical Cyclone Pam.

As VHT coordinator, Oxfam has been working with all members and the sub-cluster groups to plan and coordinate the work of all agencies across the country. The VHT has worked to provide relief items and services in the following areas (clusters): water, sanitation and hygiene; food security and agriculture; health and nutrition; gender and protection; shelter; and education. The VHT also supported the NDMO and clusters to monitor and report on the progress of humanitarian activities during this time.

More than 500 humanitarian relief activities are close to finalisation in 38 islands coordinated with the clusters, VHT and the NDMO. The VHT has taken valuable lessons from this emergency response and is currently improving and updating coordination arrangements in the event of a large-scale disaster, in advance of the upcoming cyclone season.

VHT continue supporting NDMO in the Tropical Cyclone Pam recovery program in terms of coordinating the humanitarian agency and respective clusters. To improve overall humanitarian coordination in the event of a large-scale emergency, VHT also supports NDMO to develop their five year strategic plan.

In addition to this, Oxfam is managing an AUD \$3 million Australian Government-funded agreement as part of the Tropical Cyclone Pam response, coordinating projects of Oxfam and three major international NGOs.

WORKING WITH PARTNERS

Oxfam in Vanuatu has a long history of working with partners to both support our own programs and build the ability of local organizations to deliver services. As part of the response to Tropical Cyclone Pam, Oxfam is supporting our partners Wan Smolbag, Farm Support Association (FSA), and Vanuatu Society for Disabled People. Through these partnerships, we're ensuring that our response is timely, sustainable and contextually appropriate. Highlights of our partners work are:

- 43, 323 lunches were provided to individuals from Wan Smolbag, at an average of 515 meals per day.
- 175 households across 10 communities received seeds for fast-yielding plants (2–3 months) from Wan Smolbag.
- 1,602 people over the course of 2,232 appointments have been treated at Wan Smolbag's health clinic on Efate.
- 160 agro-enterprises received tools, materials and mentoring from FSA on Efate, Tanna and Paama islands.

LEARNING FROM PROJECT EVALUATIONS

A real-time evaluation (RTE) was conducted in May 2015, based on peer-review. The evaluation was meant to be an opportunity for staff to stop and reflect on the program and to make changes either to the current program or for the future.

As a result of the RTE, Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning has been further resourced and prioritised by the Oxfam in Vanuatu office, demonstrated by the recruitment of additional staff to the Program Quality team. This team has been able to action several of the recommendations from the RTE report, including refining and improving Oxfam's monitoring frameworks, tools and plans. The team has been able to focus on identified gaps in program quality, and prioritise needs for 2016. Additional trainings have been delivered for staff on designing effective and achievable program logic frameworks in an emergency response context, partnership management in a humanitarian context, and data analysis through using the KoBo toolbox, which is a set of data collection instruments. Monthly reflection days were created to give staff the space and time to reflect as a team on output tracking and progress towards change and outcomes.

Communication during and in the aftermath of an emergency response has also been improved as a result of the RTE recommendations. There is a commitment and allocation of resources to building "community notice boards" so that information can be shared with communities and so that there is a more formal means of communication upwards, downwards and sideways within the communities where we work. A final project evaluation is scheduled for May 2016; the recommendations from this evaluation will be disseminated broadly to make sure that lessons learned are incorporated globally, into all of Oxfam's humanitarian programming.

CASE STUDY: NENETH GARAE

Neneth Garae was appointed as a Food Security and Livelihoods Officer soon after Tropical Cyclone Pam hit Vanuatu. “I work with Oxfam because I know it works with the communities and the families to recover from the impact of Cyclone Pam,” she explains.

The biggest challenges for Vanuatu after Tropical Cyclone Pam were “access to water, food availability and rebuilding livelihoods,” says Neneth. “Villagers couldn’t get food: gardens were destroyed, crops were destroyed. Many families also depend on coconuts: the leaves and trunks are used in housing, and the fruit is eaten or sold at markets to make an income. But Vanuatu lost many coconut palms during the cyclone.”

In the aftermath of Tropical Cyclone Pam, Oxfam has played a key role in getting communities back on their feet. It provided vouchers that were redeemable for food or materials to repair houses and gardens, but also a cash-for-work program that targeted some of the communities’ most vulnerable members, including single mothers and people with a disability.

The difficulty in growing or accessing food after Tropical Cyclone Pam was worsened by reduced rainfalls associated with a super El Niño. This continues to affect Vanuatu and hamper the pace of the country’s recovery.

“Most people didn’t have enough water,” Neneth says. “That’s why Oxfam’s water, sanitation and hygiene programming (known as WASH) has been so important. WASH has improved access to water; helping people maintain hygiene and prepare food with little water.” WASH has also helped villagers to re-establish and improve access to clean water sources that were damaged or contaminated during the cyclone.

Neneth is speaking about Oxfam’s response to Tropical Cyclone Pam from an experimental garden near Eratap village on the island of Efate. Set up by Oxfam and local partners, she explains how the garden is testing and making available new crops: “We implemented this activity with the community to improve ways of planting vegetables and find out which varieties provide greater yields ... It is another way Oxfam has been working with local communities to broaden access to food and livelihoods.

“The feedback we have from communities is that Oxfam is doing very good work because it targets the most vulnerable people in the communities. The communities appreciate it.”



Photo: Arlene Bax/OxfamAUS