Building resilience, responding to emergencies

An estimated 9.2 million people in the Pacific region have been affected by extreme events since 1950. The results of disasters are devastating—death, injury, illness and the destruction of homes, infrastructure and livelihoods. In the Pacific, climate change is already exacerbating the impact of disasters. But these impacts don’t affect everyone equally—women and children generally face greater impacts, especially where there are high levels of existing gender inequality.

CARE has been working in the Pacific for almost three decades to build communities’ resilience to disasters and climate shocks, helping them to prepare, adapt, respond and recover. CARE works through country offices and with local partners, both on humanitarian response and recovery in emergencies and on long-term development programming to strengthen community resilience. We put gender equality at the heart of all of our work.

CARE provided emergency relief after Tropical Cyclone Pam in Vanuatu in 2015, Tropical Cyclone Winston in Fiji in 2016, and the El Nino drought in Papua New Guinea in 2015-16. We work long-term with communities in Vanuatu and PNG to build resilience through disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation programs and with local partners in Fiji, Solomon Islands and Tonga to build emergency preparedness. To strengthen capacity in locally led initiatives, we partner with local organisations, including the Pacific NGO Live & Learn, the Pacific Red Cross Societies and MORDI Tonga Trust. CARE is committed to strengthening focus and knowledge on gender in emergencies throughout the Pacific and has developed gender tools and training used across the region. CARE is also a member of the Vanuatu and PNG Protection Clusters and the Pacific Humanitarian Cluster.
Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation

Through community-based resilience programming in PNG and Vanuatu, CARE is strengthening people’s ability to absorb and adapt to shocks, manage increasing risk and address the underlying causes of vulnerability.

We work with communities to prepare, respond and recover from disasters, establishing and training Community Disaster and Climate Change Committees as frontline responders and building food security with new drought-resistant crops and improved agricultural and pest management techniques.

CARE’s resilience work is grounded in promoting gender equality, including developing women’s economic empowerment groups, increasing women’s voice in decision making and leadership in disaster risk management at all levels, and engaging men and boys, community leaders and government partners to foster change.

Emergency Response

CARE has decades of experience, expansive global reach and a robust network of partners to enable a fast, effective and sustainable humanitarian response in emergencies. In the last three years, CARE has responded to disasters in Vanuatu, Fiji and PNG, helping communities to rebuild their lives and livelihoods.

We partner with local groups to provide immediate, localised water, food and shelter assistance and strengthen local capacity. CARE’s gender focus and community-based disaster risk reduction work carries through to our emergency response, with our gender-inclusive tools and approaches designed to build resilience to future disasters.

Capacity Strengthening

CARE is committed to promoting gender awareness and inclusion as an integral part of emergency response, as well as supporting local organisations to take the lead in responding.

CARE has developed a series of Gender in Emergencies tools and has partnered with the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent to strengthen the capacity of national Red Cross Societies in the Pacific to address gender and diversity. CARE also works alongside local partners in the Solomon Islands and Tonga to build skills on gender inclusion throughout emergency preparedness planning and response and is part of the Gender and Protection Clusters in Vanuatu and PNG.

Adapting to drought in PNG

“For many years, we thought, ‘This is a really long drought’,” says Joyceanne Bonnie. “It was only when CARE came to Pinepal that we understood what was happening: climate change.”

With CARE’s help, Jocelyn and others from all three villages on the island set up an island nursery where the members learned and practiced techniques such as mulching, and nurtured seedlings used to set up kitchen gardens.

“Today, almost everybody has a kitchen garden and uses mulch,” she says with a smile.

Responding to disaster in Fiji

CARE worked in partnership with Live & Learn Fiji to launch a joint response to Tropical Cyclone Winston in 2016. The response reached almost 26,000 people in 231 communities with hygiene, seed and shelter kits to meet immediate needs, as well as reconstruction of water and sanitation infrastructure and agricultural training to help communities rebuild stronger.

Strengthening clusters in Vanuatu

“One of the main challenges for us is mainstreaming gender and protection in all the different sectors,” explains Vanuatu’s Gender and Protection Cluster coordinator at the Department of Women’s Affairs Rothina Ilo.

As cluster co-lead, CARE works alongside Rothina and other responders to tackle this challenge, providing technical advice and practical support.

“CARE helps us respond effectively in communities,” says Rothina.