



# World Vision's response to Cyclone Pam in Vanuatu



Case Study

The meeting place in Yakel village on the island of Tanna.



## Disaster risk reduction in Vanuatu

Vanuatu is one of the world's most disaster-prone countries, ranking first among 171 countries covered by the World Risk Index 2015. It is vulnerable to rising sea levels, soil erosion, heavy rainfall and high winds, salinisation of ground water and soil, cyclones, earthquakes, landslides and tsunamis.

Through our work in disaster risk reduction, we help communities to prepare for potential disasters and mitigate their impact. This is critical to development, protecting lives and livelihoods so people can break free from poverty.

# Cyclone Pam and the Humanitarian Partnership Agreement

Linkae points out the tarpaulin used to restore shelter to his family's sleeping hut.

# Tropical Cyclone Pam, which occurred in March 2015, is regarded as one of the worst natural disasters in Vanuatu's history.

In partnership with the Government of Vanuatu, World Vision launched response efforts in multiple provinces. We accessed funding through a range of mechanisms, including private funds and institutional donors.

With DFAT funding through the Humanitarian Partnership Agreement (HPA), we reached communities with essential humanitarian relief and support. This was combined with private funding from the Australian public to assist as many people as possible.

Since 2011, the HPA was the primary humanitarian funding mechanism for Australian non-government organisations.

It brought DFAT together with six selected organisations – World Vision Australia, Care, Caritas, Oxfam, Plan International and Save the Children – to strengthen strategic humanitarian partnership; support efforts to foster community resilience and preparedness in the Pacific; and enable rapid and coordinated humanitarian responses.

In June 2017 the HPA was succeeded by the Australian Humanitarian Partnership, under which we will continue partnering with DFAT. This also enables us to preposition supplies in preparation for future disasters.



# A family's story of survival

Linkae and Lynet with their baby Mary.

Linkae and his wife Lynet live in Yakel village on the island of Tanna, in Tafea Province. The approximately 200 members of this small community proudly maintain a kastom lifestyle, living in thatched huts, wearing handmade clothes sourced from local materials and upholding traditions of oral storytelling.

On 13 March 2015, Tanna was hit by the category five Cyclone Pam – the worst cyclone in Vanuatu's history. All but four houses in Yakel were destroyed.

Lynet explained that the “standing pole” in the middle of one house saved her family. The adults held onto the pole, and the children held onto them. Lynet tried to comfort her children, but she herself was terrified and crying. The noise and power of the cyclone was unlike anything they'd ever experienced.

**World Vision reached Yakel with DFAT-funded non-food items, including tarpaulins, blankets, hygiene kits and tools. World Vision also supported the Government of Vanuatu and the World Food Programme to distribute emergency food aid.**

The villagers say that without this support, they would not have survived. “All the fruit trees were blown down and in the gardens, cassava and taro were uprooted,” Linkae said. “So, we had no hope that we could survive after.”

Linkae and Lynet used the tarpaulin to restore much-needed shelter for their hut. They used the knife and spade to re-establish their gardens and plant new crops, which they rely on for subsistence farming.

“I would like to thank all the people from Australia and the government for the assistance. I don't know who they are but I really want to thank them for the assistance they have provided. It helps to sustain our lives and our children. We can survive until today,” Linkae said.

“I am very happy and we appreciate and acknowledge the assistance provided during the cyclone for myself and my children,” added Lynet.

In the wake of Cyclone Donna, the strongest off-season South Pacific tropical cyclone on record during the month of May, the family was joining other villagers in responding to an appeal from the provincial government to assist affected communities. They were sending taro to Torba, Vanuatu's hardest-hit province.

“I'm happy to help assist since they have experienced the same situation,” Linkae said. “We know they'd face the same consequences as we did.”



Linkae with one of the gardening tools his family received after Cyclone Pam.