

CASE STUDY

You gave us all that we needed

WORDS: Arlene Bax



TC Harold made landfall as a Category 5 storm with winds of more than 200km/hour and tore through Sanma, Malampa and Penama provinces. Some 123,000 people have been severely impacted by the cyclone, with food crops, water systems, homes, health centres and schools across the three provinces damaged or destroyed. The European Union Humanitarian Aid partnered with CARE Vanuatu to respond to the needs of survivors of Tropical Cyclone Harold in Pentecost, providing essential information and emergency supplies for more than 9,000 people through the crisis.

“We were scared the wall would fall in and injure someone,” Shelley explains. “We hid our children under the bed.”

The remains of the house in her village of Hotwota where she and several neighbours tried to shelter from Tropical Cyclone (TC) Harold stand as a testament to the ordeal.

“The men said, ‘We must hold on tight so the wind does not blow it away – otherwise the wind will fill the inside of the house and everyone will fly away’,” says Shelley. But the men were lifted off the ground with each gust of wind and eventually had to let go. The roof peeled away and the rest of the house was torn piece by piece into debris around them.



Shelley and her son Locklin in the damaged house where they attempted to take refuge from the cyclone.

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As the eye of the storm passed directly over South Pentecost on April 6 night, Shelley’s group, took shelter in her small kitchen house, which was still standing. A piece of flying roof sheeting broke

through one of the walls and the rain flew in, but Shelley and her neighbours worked through the night to hold the shelter together.

“We held tightly for hours,” says Shelley “The wind was strong. I said, ‘All of you hold on tight to the house, the wind should not beat us – because there is only one place to hide, every house has fallen down already’.”

“In the morning, when we opened the door, it was devastating. We came outside but you couldn’t see any houses,” says Shelley.

The neighbours worked together to make rebuilding plans and shared salvaged items, clothing and cooking spaces until help could arrive.

Joining forces

As the neighbours joined forces in the communities, EU Humanitarian Aid worked together with CARE Vanuatu, committing essential funding to distribute information, training and essential disaster relief items like tarpaulins, ropes, tool kits and hygiene kits, reaching 9,007 people.

“Thank you so much to you who have come and helped us – we were here with no food, no houses, all our things gone,” says Shelley. “We started to repair our houses, but we only had broken thatching from the cyclone. When the tarpaulins came, we could put it over the top.”

Shelley, like many other families, were still sleeping under temporarily repaired, leaking roofs until the delivery of tarpaulins and ropes. Together with the supply of community tool kits, the emergency supplies meant families all over Pentecost could finally have a dry night’s sleep and properly repair their homes or build new shelters.



Community members receive shelter kits, community tools and other humanitarian aid to help rebuild.

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Prioritising the vulnerable

Throughout the distributions, the needs of women were a special consideration, with solar lights provided for safety in moving around at night and underwear and reusable menstrual hygiene pads included in the hygiene kits.



Shelley says her children are still excited to use the new cups and crockery from the kitchen kit they received.

PHOTO: ©CARE/Arlene Bax



Shelley says the hygiene kit has been very useful and the soap is her favourite item because she can use it to keep her family clean and healthy. PHOTO: ©CARE/Arlene Bax

EU Humanitarian Aid also supported CARE's partnership with Vanuatu Society for People with Disability (VSPD) to ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable were cared for. Training and the Community Disaster and Climate Change Committee (CDCCC) focal points ensured that the vulnerable received priority assistance during the first phase of distributions, and that community assistance was given to erect tarpaulins or assist in shelter repairs for vulnerable people.

Susan is the CDCCC focal point in Vatsari village. As part of her role, she was the key point of contact for assessing the needs and helping to distribute donations in her community during the cyclone response. During the first phase of distributions, Susan helped distribute the first delivery of 35 tarpaulins.



Susan is the CDCCC focal point for Vatsari community and assisted in ensuring the needs of the most vulnerable were met during the response, prioritising the needs of widows and people with disability.

PHOTO: ©CARE/Arlene Bax

“People with a disability, they got them first, and the widows.” As more aid items arrived at her village, Susan continued to assist in allocating the supplies, ensuring that all the needs of the most vulnerable were met.

“We are so happy that you have come and helped our village after the cyclone,” says Shelley. “It is much easier now we don’t need to think about the things we don’t have.” Shelley, and the others in her community, can now focus their attention on getting their lives back on track.