



CASE STUDY

Together We Are Stronger

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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

In all program areas, CARE International in Vanuatu works to equip people to bring about change in their own community. A key part of CARE's community-based approach is helping people to form local committees to decide what their own community needs and drive projects to make the community stronger. CARE has been working with communities across all five islands in Tafea province to set up Water Users Committees, School WASH Committees and PHAST Committees who will make sure water, sanitation and hygiene remains a priority long after CARE's program has finished.

Community committees that lead the way forward

Around the world, almost 900 children die every day from diarrhoeal diseases caused by dirty water and poor sanitation¹. Research suggests that if everyone everywhere practiced good hygiene, the number of diarrhoeal deaths would be cut by 23%, and that if everyone everywhere had clean water, the number of diarrhoeal deaths would be cut by 34%². But in rural Vanuatu, almost 12% of people do not have access to improved drinking water sources and 45% don't have access to improved sanitation facilities³. Equipping communities to develop and carry out their own plans to improve their water, sanitation and hygiene situation can save lives – now and for the future.

CARE is working with more than 20 communities across Tanna, Erromango, Aniwa and Futuna to help provide the skills, knowledge and infrastructure they need to make sure they have a clean water source, adequate latrines, handwashing facilities, other sanitation, and knowledge about why good hygiene is important and how to practice it. As well as facilitating Participatory Hygiene and Sanitation Transformation (PHAST) workshops and Drinking Water Safety and Security Planning (DWSSP) training, CARE has provided technical management, coordination and support to construct water and sanitation systems. CARE also works with communities to form water users committees to ensure communities have the skills, tools and institutional capacity to operate and maintain their water supply systems sustainably.

Formed during workshops, Water Users Committees, School WASH Committees and PHAST Committees then work with CARE staff to assess the community's needs and issues, prioritise which will be addressed, and create an action plan. These action plans map out



Community committee members – both men and women, from a number of committees – are working together to get the job done. © Elissa Webster/CARE

activities that the committee will put in place in their community, ranging from relocating rubbish pits and building new toilets in the PHAST Action Plan to constructing concrete slabs around water taps and cleaning gutters that drain to rainwater tanks in the Water Action Plan. CARE then supports communities to carry out these projects based on their needs. In some communities, this has involved demonstrating how to construct Ventilated Improved Pit (VIP) latrines, in others, rehabilitating water systems.

“Now we are starting to build our own toilets,” says Roline, from the community of Ieneula, Tanna, where CARE ran PHAST training and constructed latrines at the local school. “We are helping other people to raise money to build toilets when they can’t afford it by cooking and selling food to other people in the community. If anyone wants the toilets, we will build them. CARE taught us how to build the toilets and now we do.”

While the technical construction advice is important, CARE has found that supporting the committees to become a strong and trusted community institutions is also vital to make sure they function effectively as a voice for change in the long term. CARE follows up the initial training with governance training for committee members, covering topics like roles and responsibilities of elected members, election processes, conflict resolution, recording and reporting, and goal setting. To help build connections between committees, CARE also hosted a series of committee exchange workshops in east Tanna in January 2017. A total of 27 Water, PHAST and Community Disaster and Climate Change (from CARE’s Resilience program) Committees from several communities joined together in a series of workshops to share ideas and learn from each other’s experience.

“Our committee works alongside the School WASH Committee,” explains Daisy Nalpini, a member of the Community Water Committee in Loweipeng in Tanna. “We share information and learn from each other, and that helps both of us do a better job.”

In Imaio in Tanna, Community Disaster and Climate Change Committee member Julie Amon says the whole community now works together to get things done. “All the committees work together on community projects like toilets, using the skills we have learned from different training.”

In building the capacity of the committees, CARE also focuses on gender and social inclusion, making sure that committees understand why including women and other marginalised members of the community is important and recommending they take action to do it. All committees are encouraged to have equal numbers of men and women members, with equal representation of men and women in leadership positions.

“Having women on the committee is good,” says George Nawry, the PHAST Committee chair in Ikwarmanu in Tanna. “They already understand how water is used in the home and what households need, so they come to the committee with ideas from the house to share.”

Daisy from Loweipeng agrees. “The women members help to represent the ideas of our community’s women at the committee meetings. Having women on the committee means we all work together – men and women. After we all talk about the work, then we all work together to do it.”

¹ WASH Watch

² Prüss-Ustün A, Bartram J, Clasen T et al, 2014.

³ UNICEF, 2011