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When Disaster Strikes: C-CAP Helps Communities Prepare for the Worst

The warnings from the National Disaster Management Office in Vanuatu on the morning of March 12, 2015, were clear—all residents of the country were urged to move to emergency evacuation centers—a tropical storm that had started forming earlier in the week had been upgraded to Category 5 severe tropical cyclone status was due to hit Vanuatu the next day. As residents spent the day stocking up on essential supplies, and headed to shelters, the winds rapidly picked up to peak speeds of 150 miles per hour with accompanying pounding rains and storm surges. By the time Cyclone Pam weakened and moved south on March 14, it had become one of the worst natural disasters in history for Vanuatu and had also wreaked havoc on Tuvalu, Kiribati, and the Solomon Islands.

Thankfully, for USAID/C-CAP partner communities in Vanuatu's Shefa province, while there was significant property damage, there was no loss of life, in part because of the early warnings provided to the communities by C-CAP's Country Mobilizer (CM), and by community



ANIMAL RESCUE: Villagers on Nui Island, Tuvalu, rescuing livestock.
Photo by C-CAP

members following the steps they had learned during Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Response Planning workshops facilitated by C-CAP in August 2014. As the storm neared Vanuatu, CM Yvette Tari (see interview on Page 2) called each village's Social Mobilizer (SM) on their mobile phone to warn of the impending cyclone. She reminded villagers of the procedures recently established in the C-CAP Disaster response workshops, allowing enough time to gather essential supplies and to move everyone,

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including the disabled, women, children, and the elderly, to predetermined evacuation centers. The SMs continued to monitor the storm's progress via radio announcements and, after the danger subsided, issued post-cyclone warnings to boil drinking water and avoid eating food and fruits scattered during the storm. As a result of their C-CAP DRR training, these leaders were able to mobilize their communities to respond quickly and to safely weather the storm. C-CAP CMs in Kiribati and Tuvalu, in the path of Cyclone Pam, took similar steps to alert and remind C-CAP communities to take action based on their plans and preparedness program.

While CM Yvette Tari and the C-CAP team had only recently begun training and community work on DRR and disaster response in Vanuatu, this successful real-life test of the C-CAP DRR-Response planning underscores the importance of this component of the C-CAP program. Cyclone Pam was just the worst and most recent climate change impact to hit the South Pacific islands—record storm surges in February caused flooding and infrastructure damage in Kiribati and Tuvalu, while flash flooding in the Solomon Islands in April 2014 left 23 people dead and nearly half the population temporarily homeless. These types of events are predicted to become more frequent and more severe as a result of climate change.

The USAID/C-CAP program helps prepare communities to respond to such disasters by delivery of DRR-Response Planning for at-risk communities. The C-CAP methodology helps communities identify actions and resources needed to reduce

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Interview with Vanuatu Country Mobilizer Yvette Tari

Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) plans had never been more significant to local communities in the Pacific than recently during natural disasters such as Tropical Cyclone Pam and the excessive flooding from king tides. In an interview, C-CAP Vanuatu Country Mobilizer Yvette Tari recalls the events that took place before and after Pam. Njlyty Tari was part of the team that conducted and completed the DRR plans with U`hY` C-CAP sites in Vanuatu.

Q How did you receive warnings of Tropical Cyclone Pam, and what was your reaction?

I started receiving the first warnings that the cyclone was approaching Vanuatu from my colleagues on March 11. The first thing I did was starting calling all the social mobilizers and passing the same information to them, alerting them and telling to inform their respective Disaster Committees.

Q What kind of damage did Pam cause in Vanuatu?

Pam hit Vanuatu on March 15. By then, I had already passed on the warnings and regularly updated the SMs and the Disaster Committees, hoping they would all make it safely through. By the morning of the 16th, the power was cut. Shops,

offices, schools...everything was closed, roofs were flown off the buildings. In the villages, houses and food, gardens, and all water sources were destroyed.

Q As C-CAP implementer of the DRR plans, how, do you think they have helped the communities?

Fortunately, we completed all the DRR plans for all our sites before Cyclone Pam. However, we were planning and making preparations to carry out the disaster simulation exercise which would be our next

step. Six hours before Pam hit the country, I received updates from the SMs that everyone in their communities were accounted for and they had necessary materials, such as tracking maps, torches, mobile phones, radio, blankets, food, and water. After Pam, when I was able to speak to the SMs, most of them said that the communities failed to recognize evacuations centers as an important priority, but now that they've seen the impacts of climate change intensified cyclones, they are serious about adding cyclone proofing among their priorities. They reported that despite the damage, there were no deaths and this they attributed to the awareness received on climate change impacts through working with C-CAP.

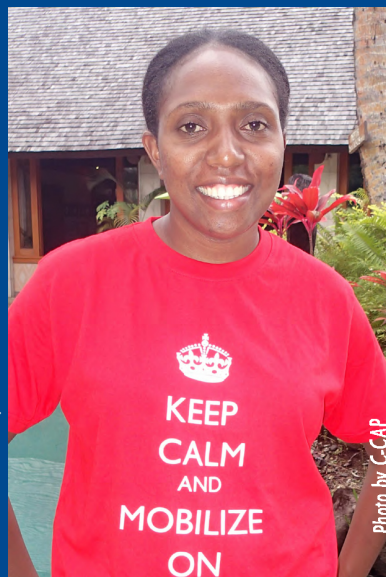


Photo by C-CAP

DISASTER from Page 2...

the impacts of these events in the future and to ensure they are better prepared for disasters in the short term. The plans assist communities to identify gaps and opportunities to reduce their vulnerability and be much better prepared for disasters in the short and long term.

After completing risk mapping and infrastructure prioritization exercises, partner communities establish Disaster Management Committees to catalogue existing disaster management and response mechanisms already in place at the community level, identify, and map disaster risks in the community, and prioritize their importance and potential impact to the members of the community given future climate

COLOR CODE	PRIORITY ACTION	DISASTER RESPONSE		SOURCE OF RESOURCES		FINANCIAL	TIME FRAME
		PERSON IN CHARGE	CHAIN OF COMMAND	HUMAN	MATERIAL		
STRONG WIND BLUE	Preparation Food/Water - First Aid - Center - Blankets/Torches - Loud hailer - Stretcher	Mayor/Head Community Leader	Councillor - Committee - Community leaders	Parents - Youth leaders - Guardians	First Aid Kit - Wheel Chair - Wheel Barrow - Blankets - Torches - Loud hailer - Stretcher	Community Fund - Provincial Govt - Donor Agencies	2-3 hours
YELLOW	Start Hearing to Evacuation Center	Village Councillor	✓	Community as a Whole	✓	✓	✓
RED	Shelter in the Evac. Centre	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Depends on the duration of Disaster 3-4 days maybe more
White	Inspection of the community Area of Disaster Members	✓	Selected Committee Members	Stationary - Check list - Torch	✓	✓	

PLANNING FOR PAM: Disaster Response Plan for Tubuseria, Papua New Guinea. Photo by C-CAP

forecasts. The hazard mapping provides the community with details of past events such as high tide marks and previous tidal surges on their island which will assist them in their own planning and siting of community assets. Once the planning stage is completed, C-CAP

coordinates with local and national disaster response groups such as the Red Cross and National Disaster Management Offices, to carry out simulated disaster response drills with the communities. In this process the community develops easy to follow protocols that can be used in the event of a natural disaster. The simulation exercise is coordinated with the national disaster management agencies in each country

to ensure that the drills follow existing protocols mandated by each government entity. For example, C-CAP staff in Samoa, PNG, Fiji, and Kiribati have shared plans with relevant government departments and NGOs to ensure these plans and C-CAP methodologies are in line with national programs and priorities.

In addition, the DRR-Response process includes development of posters, fliers, and signs posted in central locations and distributed to leaders in the communities. For example, disaster color code signs explaining the escalating levels of threat will be posted at all designated assembly points and provide a list of priority actions for each code to ensure communities are well prepared for future disasters. These products will include information on locally tailored disaster risks depending on the type of disaster most likely to affect the community.

C-CAP has already completed the initial DRR-Response planning in 38 communities in six of eight countries, with completion in the remaining 31 communities expected by May 2015. The simulated exercise drill days for all current 67 communities are scheduled and expected to be completed by the end of the year.

GABAGABA VILLAGE ASSEMBLY AREA

Section 2B

Evacuation Shelter: COMMUNITY HALL

-DISASTER WARNING SYSTEM-

Blue	PREPARE: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Essential Items (water, tinned food, etc.) Assemble in designated Areas – take Head Count Identify/assist vulnerable persons
Yellow	EVACUATE: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Movement to Evacuation Center Provide assistance to vulnerable persons
Red	DISASTER: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shelter in Evacuation Center Register Individuals in Center
White	RECOVERY: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct Damage Assessment Attend to damages within community ability

“Safety is a Community Concern – Help your family, your neighbor and yourself to be safe when disaster strikes!”
Councillor: Donald Agarobe Disaster Committee Chair: Ronnie Nou

SAFETY: Color code chart developed by Gabagaba community in Papua New Guinea.



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Around the Pacific

USAID assistance in the Pacific region supports programs that mitigate the negative impacts of global climate change and environmental degradation. This regular feature of the C-CAP Newsletter captures some additional highlights from USAID's growing portfolio of climate change projects to provide readers a broad perspective of how USAID is supporting healthy environments and addressing climate change needs in the region.

Scenario Modeling for Green Growth Strategies in Madang, Papua New Guinea

More than 25 representatives of government, academia, and civil society recently gathered in Madang, Papua New Guinea, to advance the province's efforts to develop policies that balance economic growth with sustainable environmental management. The meeting, held March 20, 2015, built on a number of trainings, studies, and pilot projects supported by USAID Lowering Emissions in Asia's Forests (LEAF), and aimed to provide input to the planned final recommendations to the Provincial Government on Low Emissions Land Use Planning as a Tool to Support REDD+ and

Green Growth in Madang Province. Key to USAID LEAF's work to date in Madang has been the focus on Local Level Land Use Planning (LELUP), carried out in cooperation with The Nature Conservancy (TNC). Theresa Kas, head of TNC in Madang, said: "We have had great success institutionalizing community-based land use planning at the local level based on traditional clan governance, which, among other benefits, gives the people who own the land some say over how it is used. We are now in the process of replicating that at the provincial level."

Kas noted that there are real champions in the provincial government who are now advocating for type of planning be used all the way up to the national level. "It's a great bottom-up story—what works in our communities across Papua New Guinea can be scaled and replicated for the benefit of the entire nation," she said.

LELUPs being developed in Madang take into account economic, environmental, and social aspects of land use. Participants examined five key sectors where growth in Madang is expected—logging, infrastructure, oil palm, mining, and community land use—and developed scenarios based on doing business as usual, implementing strict environmental controls, and creating a regulatory framework that balances environmental conservation with economic growth. Consensus evolved around a balanced approach. A key next step will be to

"I am really proud to be a Papua New Guinean today. Here in this room there are so many people with so much commitment to promoting economic growth while preserving this country's incredible natural resources, and we have a provincial government in place that is very supportive of promoting green growth. It is my sincere hope that our government leaders take action on the recommendations we put forward."

— Dr. Lowong Balun, Senior Lecturer, Biology Department, UPNG
(pictured below at left)



TOGETHER: Key to USAID LEAF's work in Madang has been the focus on Local Level Land Use Planning, carried out with The Nature Conservancy. Photo by LEAF

provide policy recommendations for the government to act upon.

Recognizing many of these areas of economic growth are driven by national and foreign investments, participants examined ways the private sector can be engaged to provide financial support to activities that have a positive impact on climate change efforts in PNG. Over the coming months, USAID LEAF will be working to engage the private sector to take an active role in the province to mitigate potential negative impacts of new infrastructure, plantations, mines, and other development projects.

For more on USAID LEAF, contact USAID Asia: info-rdma@usaid.gov or leaf_info@leafasia.org

ADAPTATION IN MOTION

CHECKING WITH C-CAP COMMUNITIES: FIJI, PAPUA NEW GUINEA, KIRIBATI, SAMOA, AND SOLOMON ISLANDS

In this periodic series, the C-CAP team checks in on partner communities that are navigating long-term climate change adaptation.

In Fiji... USAID/C-CAP continued construction and refurbishing damaged floodgates for partner communities of Daku and Vunisnu/Nalase. These floodgates will greatly assist the communities in controlling flooding during the rainy season and high tides. At the same time, the Buretu community saw initial work begin on installation of an innovative “Reno Mattress” technology, which will help reinforce the Buretu river bank and protect the community against flood inundation of homes and buildings.



PROTECTION: Experts from the MNRE explain where to put the coast plant species along the Manase beachfront.

Photo by C-CAP

In Papua New Guinea... Members of the USAID/C-CAP engineering team completed compliance monitoring of Rainwater Catchment structures at four sites in the Central Province, a final step before project turnover to the community. Also this month, a C-CAP team traveled to New Ireland Province to facilitate preparation of Disaster Risk Reduction plans in five communities. Thanks to USAID assistance and partnering with the PNG Red Cross and the Office of Climate Change and Development, the DRR plans will assist the communities to be more responsive in preparation for disasters and in addressing climate change issues in the province.

In Kiribati... USAID/C-CAP completed workshops with three partner communities in Abaiang to help them develop their Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) plans. Working with the Kiribati Red Cross, these plans ensure that the communities have established disaster warning systems and evacuation plans for all members of the communities. This process helps communities better understand the impacts of climate change and strengthen their resilience to these impacts such as cyclones and high tides.

In Samoa... The highlight of the month was the launching of the Manase Project—a beach protection project utilizing the innovative Elcorock technology. Joining the U.S. Chargé-d’Affaires for this ribbon

cutting and tree planting event were representatives from the Samoan Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Ministry of Women and Community Social Development, and the Samoan Tourism Authority. As a result of the generosity of the American people, the Manase community is now better equipped to protect its sandy beach from the effects of storm surge and sea level rise.



INSPECTION: C-CAP engineers ensure quality through regular inspections. This inspection is of the Reno mattress on Buretu river-bank.

Photo by C-CAP

In Solomon Islands... USAID/C-CAP has helped communities in 10 sites across the Solomon Islands to complete Vulnerability and Adaptation assessments—an exercise that assists the communities to identify their strengths and vulnerabilities and to select the most appropriate adaptation projects to climate change impacts. Several of the C-CAP partner communities were hit by Cyclone Pam, which destroyed food gardens, but thankfully did not result in loss of life.