

OXFAM IN VANUATU: CYCLONE PAM RESPONSE



13 JUNE 2015

Thanks to the generosity of donors and supporters from across the globe, Oxfam's response to Tropical Cyclone Pam has reached more than 21,000 people in the first three months.



WHAT OXFAM IS DOING



Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) — providing clean water, rehabilitating water sources, distributing hygiene kits and carrying out hygiene education activities.



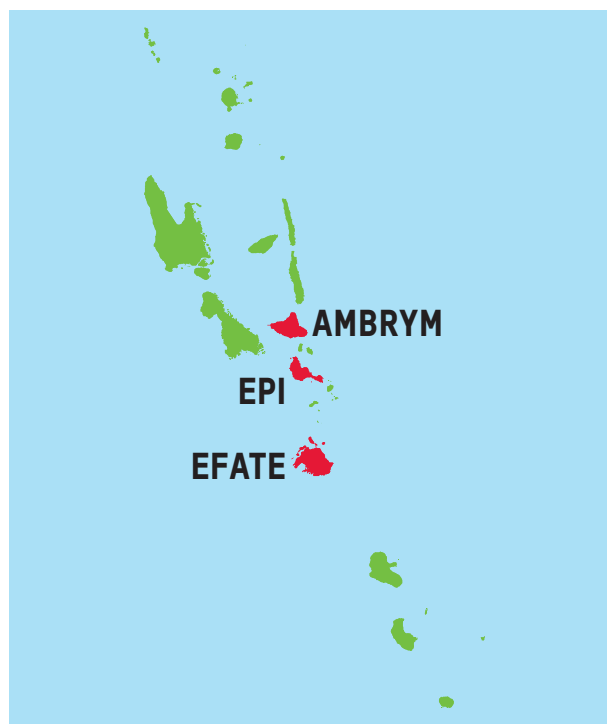
Emergency food security and vulnerable livelihoods (EFSVL) — supporting livelihoods recovery in target communities, both now and long-term.



Gender and protection — ensuring that community members, especially women, young people and people with disabilities, participate in and influence safe and equitable recovery programs.



Coordination — leading and coordinating the Vanuatu Humanitarian Team (VHT), representing humanitarian agencies in Vanuatu and providing support to the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO).



RESPONSE IN NUMBERS

Oxfam has reached 21,278 people in more than 50 communities on three islands, since Tropical Cyclone Pam struck on 13 March 2015.

OVERVIEW

Saturday 13 June will mark three months since Tropical Cyclone Pam struck Vanuatu. Tropical Cyclone Pam caused widespread destruction across the eastern and south-eastern islands of the country. The eye of the Category 5 cyclone passed close to Efate Island — where Vanuatu's capital, Port Vila, is located — affecting about 188,000 people across 22 islands. An estimated 15,000 homes were damaged or destroyed, about 96% of food stocks were decimated and the water supply of 110,000 people was disrupted, destroyed or contaminated.

The response to Tropical Cyclone Pam began immediately after the storm left Vanuatu's borders. In the three months since the event, more than 50 organisations, both local and international, have worked together under the lead of the Vanuatu Government to ensure relief efforts are coordinated and aid is getting those who need it most.

Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)

Oxfam's WASH response to date has focused on both immediate water supply and rehabilitation of water sources for the longer term. This approach ensured people were provided with clean water when they urgently needed it after the cyclone. It also ensures they have ongoing access to clean water following these emergency provisions. When the life-saving phase of the emergency response passes, it's critical that communities are provided with sustainable solutions that will help them recover and, importantly, be better prepared for the next cyclone. In line with this, Oxfam has recently been working to install water tanks and extend water piping networks in areas previously not reached by the system. We have also surveyed community latrines and gravity fed water systems to shape the focus of future programming in target areas.

Oxfam has been distributing hygiene kits to families on Ambrym, Epi and Efate islands to provide them with basic essentials for maintaining good hygiene and personal health. The kits include items such as a toothbrush, toothpaste, soap, a hair brush, washing powder, towels, a plastic basin, sanitary pads, a bucket for storing water and cloth.

We are also working with long-term partner Wan Smolbag Theatre to present plays promoting good hygiene and health promotion to communities in which hygiene kit distribution and other WASH activities are being carried out. Educational materials about good sanitation practices are handed out at the performances.



DONATIONS IN ACTION:

- 265,800 litres of clean water delivered to 3,474 beneficiaries through water trucking activities on Efate Island.
- 10,305 people accessing clean water through water system rehabilitation.
- 16,797 people on Efate, Epi and Ambrym islands receiving hygiene kits.
- 3,406 people have learned good hygiene practices through watching a theatrical performance by Oxfam's partner Wan SmolBag.

Emergency food security and vulnerable livelihoods (EFSVL)

Assessments carried out in the weeks following Tropical Cyclone Pam identified food supply and income generation as two priority areas for affected communities. The cyclone destroyed the majority of food crops, including those that many communities rely on as cash crops (those they grow to sell for income). Our response has focused on reinvigorating the local economy, and providing supplies and support for communities to increase food production and availability.



“AFTER WE CLEANED THE AREA AND REPAIRED THE MARKET, EVERYBODY WAS SMILING ... IT FEELS LIKE COMING BACK AGAIN TO NORMAL LIFE.”

– John Mael, cash-for-work participant, Freshwater, Vanuatu.

Oxfam has been working with different local networks to implement cash-for-work projects throughout the urban and peri-urban Port Vila area, on Efate Island. This program provides a way for families, who may be experiencing severe income stress after the disaster, to earn money in the short term. While it is important the work done through the project contributes to the community, the main aim is to provide participants with some short-term support to pay for extraordinary expenses in the wake of the cyclone. Cash-for-work program participants have been working in and around Port Vila clearing debris and rehabilitating community gardens.

To help affected families recover their livelihoods and lost assets, Oxfam has implemented a voucher project. Families in target communities are receiving vouchers, which they can exchange at local suppliers for farming and building materials, or for general goods they need.

We are also working in partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organisation to distribute seeds to communities on Efate and Epi islands to help kick-start their gardens and diversify the local market. Along with seeds, Oxfam has been working to provide livelihoods kits to people in target communities. These kits include tools for gardening and maintenance to support the rehabilitation of small-scale food gardens and crops.

In addition to Oxfam’s work directly supporting communities, we are also supporting key local partners. For example, we are providing funds to Farm Support Association to rehabilitate semi-commercial household agro-enterprises by providing resources such as tools, chickens, seeds and materials, and mentoring to help people restart their businesses.

DONATIONS IN ACTION:

- 3,743 people have received vouchers to exchange for tools, equipment and other goods.
- 479 have taken part in cash-for-work programs.
- 1,505 people have received seeds and livelihood kits.

Gender and protection

Government-led assessments have highlighted a range of protection issues that humanitarian agencies need to be aware of throughout the response — some that have been caused by Tropical Cyclone Pam and some that have been exacerbated by it. Assessments found that female-headed households were most affected by the cyclone, as well as people with disabilities and older people. Gender-based violence is a pre-existing issue that has the potential to be intensified due to the stresses brought on by the cyclone. Damage to key infrastructure has meant that, in many places, women now have to travel long distances to access water and healthcare.

As a member of the Vanuatu Civil Society Disability Network, Oxfam has been advocating for the inclusion of disability-sensitive programming across the response, in the following ways:

- special needs of people with disabilities are included in response plans;
- people with disabilities are part of assessments; and
- buildings being rebuilt have access for people with disabilities.



Oxfam continues to support the Women's Information Centres in three locations on Efate Island. The Women's Information Centres are safe spaces for women affected by Tropical Cyclone Pam to access information on the support that is available, including referrals to local services such as health, counselling, shelter and livelihoods support.

Oxfam has undertaken an in-depth assessment and analysis of the gender and protection context, and how our WASH and EFSVL programs are integrating these areas. The results and recommendations from this assessment have informed our methods for working with communities through our WASH and EFSVL responses, as well as contributing to the broader response through Oxfam's role in the gender and protection cluster group.

Oxfam's gender and protection team have been working on various islands to conduct gender assessments and support community registration for distributions. This has helped us to ensure there is a gender balance in distribution committees, and that all beneficiaries are accounted for equally.

Oxfam is collaborating with Care International and United Nations Women on a two-day Inclusive Recovery Forum to be held in Port Vila in June. The forum will highlight the experiences and lessons of women, young women and women with disability in the cyclone response and identify priorities for inclusive recovery. The lessons and recommendations will feed into the National Tropical Cyclone Pam lessons learned workshop later in June.

Coordination and Vanuatu Humanitarian Team (VHT)

Oxfam has been coordinating the Vanuatu Humanitarian Team since its inception in 2011, supporting humanitarian coordination for both disaster preparedness and response. The VHT is a coordination mechanism of 11 humanitarian agencies based in Vanuatu, including UN agencies and the Red Cross. It supports the Vanuatu Government and the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO), as well as seven government-lead clusters in a co-leadership role. However, the number of organisations actively supporting or implementing the humanitarian response has grown to more than 50 since Tropical Cyclone Pam.

As VHT coordinator, Oxfam has been working with all members and the sub-cluster groups to plan and coordinate the work of the myriad of agencies across the country. The VHT has worked to provide relief items and services in the following areas (clusters): WASH, food security and agriculture, health and nutrition, gender and protection, shelter, education.



Photo: Vlad Sokhin/OxfamAUS

Oxfam has taken a lead role through the VHT to support the NDMO to mobilise a team of 113 people, deployed to 23 Islands across four provinces, for multi-sectoral needs assessments. The NDMO and cluster members then analysed assessment data to determine the areas of greatest need to be targeted.

VHT members provided relief to 48 evacuation centres, and coordinated agencies to agree on standards and provide services following the cyclone. Currently there are more than 800 humanitarian relief activities happening across 32 islands coordinated with the clusters, VHT and the NDMO.



WORKING WITH PARTNERS

Oxfam in Vanuatu has a long history of working with partners to both support our own programs and build the capacity of local organisations. As part of the response to Tropical Cyclone Pam, Oxfam is supporting our partners Wan SmolBag, Farmers Support Association (FSA), and Vanuatu Society for Disabled People.

Through these partnerships we're ensuring that our response program is timely, sustainable and contextually appropriate.

Photo: Rodney Dekker/OxfamNZ