



# CASE STUDY

## The power of poultry (+ people)

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### PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Through the Leftemap Sista program, CARE International in Vanuatu is working with the people of Tafea Province to help empower women and girls through economic empowerment and build communities' resilience to disasters.

### Meet Lobu

It's fair to say that Lokaim has had more than its share of troubles.

Home to 136 people, Lokaim in West Tanna was hit hard by Tropical Cyclone Pam in March 2015, with 94% of houses seriously damaged or destroyed, crops lost and water systems damaged. Then came the El Nino-triggered drought. Crops that had survived Pam failed as the water dried up and food and water supplies became even more precious. On top of that, Lokaim sits just downwind from Vanuatu's continuously active volcano, Mount Yasur. Severe ash and sulphur winds often sweep across the village, making it hard for the communities to grow vegetable crops, or some days, to even breathe outside. All of these challenges have combined to make finding enough food to feed a family each day the biggest challenge of all.

Lobu is 38 years old. Together with her husband, she has seven children and seven grandchildren. Before Pam, Lobu and her family made a living sell taro and ready-made kava in Port Vila. When Pam destroyed all crops, Lobu sold the family chickens and pigs so that her younger children could stay in school. Her neighbours took similar action. Each family faced the cyclone alone - they weren't in the habit of working together.

CARE first started working in Lokaim in February 2016, one year after Pam, when the people of Tanna were still recovering from the compounded devastation of the cyclone and the drought. Recognising the immediate need for food security as well as income generation, CARE worked with Lokaim to start a community chicken project. CARE provided materials for secure housing of chickens and a fenced off yard, six months of feed and 103 baby chicks. CARE also talked to the community about how both women and men could work together on this project so the whole community could benefit.



Lobu is the "keeper of the keys" to Lokaim's chicken project. © Megan Chisholm/CARE

“CARE really helped us understand how to look after the chickens,” explains Lobu. “We made a roster and every day one woman and one man from the community take a turn go to feed the chickens.”

Although it is a community project where everyone takes part, Lobu plays a lead role in the chicken project as the “keeper of the key” – she is the main person responsible for the welfare of the chickens and selling the eggs. Eggs are collected twice a day and taken to Lobu’s house, where she cleans them and packs them in tray. Some eggs are sold straight to local bungalows, then Lobu and her daughters take the remainder to the store on the main road in Kings Cross, a 30-minute walk away, where they sell them and return all sales to the community basket.

While the chicken project has impacted the Lokaim in lots of ways, Lobu says the biggest change is that the community is working together.

“Before everyone had their own businesses, but this project has brought the community together.”

According to Lobu, the women of Lokaim have always “talked plenty”, but this community initiative has helped the women join forces and have a say in the decision-making process, giving them a forum to be active participants in decision-making on a wider scale. Encouraging both men and women to work together on the project has also provided an opportunity for men and women to come together and talk about issues in their community – something that did not happen much in the past.

The women of Lokaim are now spreading their wings even further. With support from CARE, Lobu’s daughter-in-law Soki went to the provincial capital to represent Lokaim in CARE’s women farmers’ forum, where women received training on gender equality, economic development and business planning – skills that she can put to good use helping the community with egg business expansion plans. CARE also partnered with TVET Skills for Economic Growth to provide poultry raising training, which was attended by five members of the Lokaim egg project as well as 12 people from neighbouring communities.

In just a few months of the chickens laying eggs, the community has managed to save over AUD2000, a small fortune in Vanuatu. With the money the community has saved, Lobu says they plan to expand their project – more chickens mean more eggs, and there is high demand for eggs, for both local people and visiting tourists. The Lokaim community are the only egg business on their side of the island, so their eggs are also an important source of protein for neighbouring communities. Seeing the benefits the egg business have brought to Lokaim, some of their neighbours have even begun to try chicken farming themselves.

Lokaim now has a safety net – the eggs have given the community both a food source and savings. Putting a meal on the table is no longer the challenge it once was, and visitors to Lokaim can count on a bountiful plate of local fare, with eggs as the star of the dish!

“This project has brought the community together.”