



CASE STUDY

What a garden can grow

By Millie Greaves + Elissa Webster

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

CARE International in Vanuatu has been working in Tanna, south Vanuatu since 2013. Currently, CARE's WASH, Resilience and Gender programs are working with communities across the island. Mary is one person who has been impacted by these programs.

Meet Mary

In Enarawia, Mary Harry's community in East Tanna, people have always been independent, and proudly so. Cultural traditions are strong and people follow the kastom ways. Many don't send their children to school, and kastom ceremonies like boys circumcision, celebrating girls' first menstruation and paying bride prices are closely observed. For as long as Mary can remember, women have walked an hour every Monday and Friday to the road-side market to sell root crops and cabbages to make money for their families. Life isn't always easy for the women, but they have always found a way to keep going. And mostly, they have found it on their own.

Then in March 2015, Tropical Cycle Pam hit Vanuatu, devastating much of the southern Tafea province – including Enarawia. People's homes were swept away and crops were torn out of the ground. The women of Enarawia wondered how they would ever keep going this time.

"Before CARE came to our community, Enarawia didn't have a community women's group that came together; we didn't share ideas and work together," Mary says. "We always had challenges, but Cyclone Pam made living day to day even harder."

Mary is 40 years old and completed Year Two at school. She has seven children, three boys and four girls. When CARE came to Enarawia as part of their Tropical Cyclone Pam response, Mary was keen to find out what they could do to help.

CARE's first step was to work with the women to establish a Women's Seeds and



Mary has become a leader in the Women's Seeds and Tools Bank and the community. © Millie Greaves/CARE

Tool Bank and a poultry project. These projects reinforced good gardening practices handed down through generations, which Mary says “gave us a sense of empowerment and pride in traditional and local knowledge”. The training then extended on these traditional practices, introducing new skills in farming, soil management and conflict management – important knowledge for communities like Enarawia to have to enable them to adapt their farming practices to the changing climate. The project also gave the community access to gardening tools and planting materials.

But one of the most important outcomes of CARE’s work in Enarawia had nothing to do with gardening. When CARE first arrived in Enarawia, the community was disjointed and was not work as a collective – each household looked after themselves. The women were very hesitant to take up leadership in the group because traditionally women are not leaders in Enarawia, and the women were shy and afraid to change what had always been done. While CARE provided tools, equipment and seeds for the women to be able to make a garden, it was the training they received in leadership, governance and collaborative work that had the most impact on the community.

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Today, Enarawia’s Women’s Seeds and Tool Bank is a successful collaborative group, independent, sustainable and gaining financial independence. The women come together every Thursday for group work in the community garden. After group work, the women cook and eat lunch together, with a small payment of 20vt each for lunch going towards their collective women’s saving basket. On Monday and Tuesday, they help each other in their individual gardens and if they have time, they work in other people’s gardens in return for a wage. Mary is one of the women leading the group, which now works closely together, sharing their challenges and how to cope with them.

“We women still face challenges. Some are overcome, some not”, Mary says. “But now we work together to overcome them.”