



CASE STUDY

Local Projects, Local Workers

By Julian Tung + Elissa Webster

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Engaging communities is a fundamental step in achieving lasting development. CARE International in Vanuatu partners with communities throughout each stage of our WASH program to help foster community ownership of projects and build local knowledge and skills. With the support of UNICEF and others, CARE has rehabilitated or upgraded water and sanitation infrastructure in 19 communities across Tafea province, working alongside community volunteers to build latrines, handwashing stations, rainwater harvesting systems, piped water supply systems and other infrastructure needed in each community.

Community volunteers learning skills for life

Having an idea is one thing, but making it a reality is another – but in the water and sanitation infrastructure projects that CARE has helped communities in Tafea province to construct, community members have been front and centre in bringing the projects to life.

Water and sanitation projects carried out by CARE are done in partnership with the communities. Community members participate in planning, provide volunteers to help with labour, and supply raw materials (like sand, gravel and timber) for construction. Communities are supported to take responsibility for maintaining and repairing the completed facilities through a Water Users Committee. As well as helping to make sure communities have ownership of the projects, integrating communities' participation throughout the process also builds community members' skills and knowledge across a range of areas, like plumbing, construction, project management, communication, administration, and gender and social inclusion awareness and response.

"I wanted to learn skills in plumbing and construction so I could do this work in future," explains Vivianne Wolu, one of CARE's community volunteers in Dillion's Bay in Erromango.

Community volunteers receive one week of plumbing training from CARE staff along with a copy of the plumber's handbook produced by Vanuatu Department of Water. After the training, CARE staff work with the



Vivianne is gaining valuable work experience while helping provide her community with important infrastructure. © Julian Tung/CARE

volunteers to construct new infrastructure in their communities. Each community receives a set of tools for maintaining and operating their water supplies into the future. These are managed by the Water Users Committee and used by volunteers during the construction phase.

In Dillon's Bay, 22-year-old Vivianne volunteered to help with the construction projects after hearing there was an opportunity for training. Vivianne completed her schooling in Erromango but afterwards was unable to find further training or employment opportunities in Dillon's Bay. She attended plumbers' training with CARE in February 2017, learning the principles and basic skills of managing community water supplies and sanitation. Following the basic training, Vivianne worked with CARE on a range of different projects, including tiling the maternity ward of the local health clinic, joining pipelines, connecting water storage tanks and constructing tap stands. When construction started on the water and sanitation facilities at the school in Dillon's Bay, Vivianne also had the chance to learn how to build Ventilated Improved Pit (VIP) latrines and helped with the construction of the toilets, shower and handwashing taps.

"After I learned how to build a toilet at the school with the CARE team, I made a toilet at my house for my mother," grins Vivianne. "I also know how to repair leaks on water pipes and build tap stands. I like that I can show other people the skills that I have learned. The work that I have done is good for the community and good for my home."

"I like that I can show other people the skills that I have learned. The work that I have done is good for the community and good for my home."

As in all elements of the project, CARE staff encourage communities to make sure there is gender balance among the volunteers who receive plumbers' training so that women have equal opportunities for learning new skills and subsequently holding decision making positions. This is evident in Dillon's Bay, where a woman currently holds the position of chairperson of the Water Users Committee.

According to Vivianne, CARE's WASH program is helping lots of people think about gender differently by giving women the chance to learn and demonstrate new skills. "It is good for women to work with the technical team because they need to know how to manage water supplies as well as men. Community leaders now think it is a good idea to have girls working with boys doing construction work in the community."