Tropical Cyclone Gita Response Program Evaluation

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Contents

Abbreviations

BBS   Build Back Safer

DFAT   Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

ECHO   Europe Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

FGD   focus group discussion

FSL   Food Security and Livelihoods

IFAD   International Fund for Agriculture Development

MFAT   New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade

NEMO   National Emergency Management Organisation

NGO   Non-government organisation

SADD   Sex, age and disability disaggregated data

TC   Tropical Cyclone

UNICEF   United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

WASH   Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Executive Summary

Tropical Cyclone (TC) Gita, a Category 4 cyclone, struck Tonga in February 2018. CARE, Live and Learn, and MORDI ('the partnership') responded to the immediate needs of communities on Tongatapu and 'Eua islands, delivering emergency shelter and hygiene kits. In the recovery phase the partnership supported communities with shelter, repairs to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) infrastructure, and food security and livelihood recovery efforts, including a specific project focused on the recovery priorities of seven women's groups on 'Eua island.

CARE commissioned this evaluation to assess the assistance provided through the response and recovery program in the first six months (February – August 2018). The evaluation focused on four main areas of enquiry: the partnership, the response, gender and inclusion, and localisation.

This report documents the findings from the evaluation and provides forward-looking recommendations for the partnership and for preparedness and future emergency response in Tonga.

Findings and recommendations

A. The Partnership

The partnership facilitated a response at reach, scale and impact that would not have been possible as individual agencies. The effectiveness of the partnership, especially between CARE and MORDI, resulted from a common objective to deliver the best possible response. With this shared sense of purpose, the partnership overcame challenges and was open to mutual learning. It will be important for the partnership to define shared objectives beyond the response and to ensure that staff at all levels in both organisations are involved in creating a sustainable partnership.

- **Finding 1**: The partnership was underpinned by mutual respect and trust largely fostered at the leadership level.

- **Finding 2**: The partnership was adaptable to challenges within the response and demonstrated openness to learning.

- **Finding 3**: The partnership rationale and objectives are not clearly articulated or understood beyond the leadership teams.

- **Finding 4**: A strong culture of accountability was developed between MORDI and CARE.

- **Finding 5**: The partnership was able to deliver a response that was greater than the sum of its parts.

The partnership has the potential to grow and strengthen, which would inevitably place it in an ideal position to take a strong leadership role in any future emergency responses. The following recommendation proposes a way of taking the partnership forward.

Recommendation 1: Invest in jointly identifying the rationale and objectives for the partnership outside a response and recovery operation. Ideally, this process would include staff beyond the leadership level to enable broader ownership and engagement in the partnership.

B. The response

The response was well aligned with Tongan government priorities and with the needs of the affected communities. The partnership used resources efficiently and achieved impressive speed and coverage by leveraging networks and logistics capacity in country. The response impact was impressive, supporting a

total of 10,570 individuals (4,946 men and 5,624 women). A summary of the partnership's response achievements is provided in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Summary of response achievements

- **Finding 6**: The partnership response and recovery program was highly relevant and appropriate to the needs of the affected communities in the aftermath of TC Gita.

- **Finding 7**: The partnership response used time and resources efficiently by drawing on complementary skill sets and accessing networks.

- **Finding 8**: The partnership could improve efficiencies through further devolved decision-making.

- **Finding 9**: The response was effective at meeting the broad needs of the community but could have played a role in more effective targeting of assistance to those most in need.

- **Finding 10**: Communication with communities was not consistently strong.

- **Finding 11**: The partnership set up a feedback mechanism that addressed some community concerns. Awareness of the mechanism was limited and more vulnerable community members were unlikely to provide feedback.

- **Finding 12**: The partnership contributed to improved living conditions and recovery in the aftermath of TC Gita.

- **Finding 13**: The food security and livelihoods component of the project was very well linked into other civil society and community initiatives that promote sustainability.

There are several ways in which the partnership can prepare for future responses and improve their effectiveness. However, most importantly, the partnership should continue the many areas of best practice highlighted in the findings and maintain the quality and efficiencies that were achieved in the TC Gita response. The following recommendations include areas proposed in the after-action review by the partnership staff.

Recommendation 2: *As part of preparedness and planning processes*, the partnership should focus on improved accountability to affected populations in future responses. This may include sharing resources and capacity strengthening in relation to Core Humanitarian Standard 4 – *humanitarian response is based on communication, participation and feedback*.

Recommendation 3: *As part of preparedness and planning processes*, the partnership should identify how it can engage in, and positively influence, national and local humanitarian systems, structures and approaches. This could involve agreement about the role that the partnership can play in supporting the voice of community members, and especially the most vulnerable, in a response.

Recommendation 4: *In response operations*, the partnership could consider ways to devolve decision-making to promote efficiencies and more effective engagement with communities. Concrete suggestions include involvement of field-based staff in design processes, and providing staff with authority to resolve issues as they arise in the field.

Recommendation 5: *In response operations*, the partnership should consider how to work constructively with Town Officers to ensure more effective targeting of response programming.

Recommendation 6: *In response operations*, the partnership should consider establishing and adequately funding appropriate community feedback mechanisms that the community can easily understand and access, including the most vulnerable community members.

C. Gender and inclusion

The promotion of gender equality and social inclusion is a core part of how CARE works everywhere.[1] In Tonga, specific circumstances made gender and inclusion work particularly interesting. CARE was working with a relatively new partner (MORDI) that had not traditionally had a strong gender focus; in addition, the Tongan context provides specific challenges to implementing gender and inclusion initiatives. Given these constraints and a very short time frame, a lot was achieved with respect to mutual learning.

- **Finding 14**: The partnership made efforts to include gender and inclusion considerations in the design and implementation of the response.

- **Finding 15**: Addressing gender and inclusion through mainstream national actors and traditional assistance modes is likely to achieve more transformative change in the Tongan context.

- **Finding 16**: Staff across the partnership did not consistently understand the linkages between gender-inclusive programming and improved program outcomes.

- **Finding 17**: The main impact in relation to gender and inclusion was in incremental shifts in partnership practices and associated indications that this strengthens community engagement.

The partnership has created a really constructive space for further discussion and learning with respect to gender and inclusion. There is value for CARE in continuing to work with MORDI, a mainstream operational agency in country with enormous reach and potential transformative impact. Conversely, here is value for MORDI in continuing to work with CARE, as a technical partner with gender expertise that can extend the reach and impact of MORDI programs. The following recommendations suggest ways to build on the established foundation of trust and openness.

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[1] CARE, Gender Equality and Women's Voice Guidance Note, 2016

Recommendation 7: *As part of preparedness and planning processes*, the partnership should discuss and agree on ideal gender and inclusion outcomes in a response. This should include an agreement about the best ways to achieve those outcomes as a basis for rapid program design in the event of an emergency response.

Recommendation 8: *As part of preparedness and planning processes*, the partnership should identify gender and inclusion capacity-strengthening opportunities that focus on national expertise, terminology and approaches.

Recommendation 9: *In response operations*, the partnership should ensure that gender and inclusion are central components of the response (in line with agreed approaches in preparedness processes) in order to extend the effectiveness, impact and reach of response and recovery programs.

D. Localisation

The partnership supported significant national actor engagement and leadership in the response by providing substantial funding and capacity support to MORDI as a national NGO. The evaluation found very positive localisation practices that provide concrete approaches to international and national actor complementarity.

- **Finding 18**: The funding allocation to MORDI represented significant support to local actor engagement in the response.

- **Finding 19**: Overhead allocations reflected local partner preferences.

- **Finding 20**: Internal and external stakeholders consider MORDI, as the local partner, better placed to lead in a future response as a result of the partnership.

- **Finding 21**: There are opportunities to adapt capacity-strengthening approaches to better reflect local partner preferences.

- **Finding 22**: The decision-making role of the national partner was well respected and the approach to providing options to enable decisions was very effective.

- **Finding 23**: There are opportunities to better include national partners in formal review processes of international staff deployed into country.

- **Finding 24**: MORDI, CARE and Live and Learn all felt well represented in media and external communications, in spite of inherent bias towards greater international organisation visibility in legal and marketing processes.

As localisation was a significant focus for the evaluation, in addition to the recommendations listed below, the report highlights localisation learnings throughout the report.

Recommendation 10: *As part of preparedness and planning processes*, discuss how budget allocations will be determined in the partnership and ensure that local partners understand the options with respect to overhead cost recovery.

Recommendation 11: *As part of preparedness and planning processes*, continue the positive focus on mutual capacity strengthening. In addition, consider two-way capacity assessment processes and a focus on approaches that reflect local learning preferences and utilise national expertise and language.

Recommendation 12: *As part of preparedness and planning processes*, review human resources, legal and marketing processes to identify inherent biases towards international actor ownership and profile and, where possible, take corrective action.

Introduction

Tropical Cyclone (TC) Gita, a Category 4 cyclone, struck Tonga on Monday 12 February 2018. It passed directly over 'Eua island and Tongatapu, affecting 80,000 men, women, boys and girls (about 70% of the entire population). The Government of Tonga declared a state of emergency and coordinated rapid assessments and emergency assistance to affected communities.

CARE, Live and Learn, and MORDI ('the partnership') responded to the immediate needs on both 'Eua and Tongatapu, and undertook emergency distributions to smaller affected islands at the request of the government. The partnership went on to provide shelter; water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services; and livelihood and food security assistance across 'Eua and Tongatapu. The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), the Start network, Europe Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) and the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) supported the response program, enabling the partnership to deliver a comprehensive program with wide coverage.

About the partnership

CARE's existing formal partnership with the wider Live and Learn Network started in 2012, covering emergency preparedness and response in the Pacific region.

Since 2017,[2] CARE has been working with Live and Learn and its partner, MORDI, in Tonga on emergency preparedness planning. In August 2017 the partnership held a preparedness exercise in Tonga with key in-country actors, including the National Emergency Management Organisation (NEMO). When TC Gita struck Tonga, the tripartite in-country partnership was relatively new. The partnership evolved during the response to TC Gita, whereby CARE formed a direct contractual agreement to work with MORDI, supported by Live and Learn.

CARE commissioned this evaluation to assess the assistance provided though the response program during the first six months (February – August 2018). The evaluation focused on four main areas of enquiry:

- **The partnership**: the strengths and weaknesses of the partnership between CARE, MORDI and Live and Learn.

- **The response**: the appropriateness, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the response to TC Gita by the partnership.

- **Gender and Inclusion**: the extent to which the program was gender responsive and inclusive of people with disabilities and other socially marginalised groups.

- **Localisation**: the extent to which the partnership and the response align with localisation objectives.

This report documents the findings from the evaluation and provides forward-looking recommendations for the partnership and for preparedness and future emergency response in Tonga.

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[2] Under DFAT's Australian Humanitarian Partnership Bridge Funding

Methodology

The evaluation used a mixed methods approach, combining stakeholder interviews, document review and focus group discussions (FGDs). Data collection engaged a broad range of stakeholders: staff of all the partner organisations, and some external stakeholders, including government representatives and other NGOs that responded to TC Gita. The evaluation team undertook two community visits to 'Eua and Tongatapu, where the perspectives of the affected population were captured in FGDs and household visits. An overview of the evaluation data collection process is provided in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Summary of data collection process

Evaluation data was coded into themes to identify emerging findings. All emerging findings were triangulated to ensure that they were verified across three data sources (three stakeholders and/or across three data collection processes). The evaluation matrix, including key questions and sources of data, is contained in Appendix 1.

The findings in the report are based on the coding and triangulation process. All recommendations are drawn from suggestions that arose in the evaluation process or from best practice guidance.

Findings and analysis: The partnership

CARE's overarching reason for working in partnership is to increase impact.[3] In Tonga, CARE had a longstanding partnership with Live and Learn and its local implementing partner, MORDI. In response to TC Gita, the tripartite partnership was maintained but MORDI was the main implementing partner and CARE had a direct contractual relationship, and by extension partnership, with MORDI. This shift to partnering directly with MORDI was highly appropriate, because MORDI had the operational presence and competence to deliver the best response outcomes.[4]

The partnership was evaluated against the CARE Partnership Policy principles.[5] The partnership was highly effective and managed to achieve much greater impact as a result of working together and working to their relative strengths.

Mutual respect and trust

The partnership involved high levels of respect, supported by a strong understanding of the complementary skill sets of the partners. Appreciation of the different contributions and the interdependence of the partners was evident.[6] CARE provided technical support (across humanitarian response, shelter, finance, logistics, gender and inclusion) and access to funding opportunities.[7] MORDI provided in-country experience and networks, and large operational capacity.[8] Live and Learn initially provided support with personnel for assessment and cluster representation.[9] A CARE staff member reflected "We would not have been able to do what we did with MORDI at scale or as effectively or efficiently [on our own]."[10] Together, the partnership was considered greater than the sum of its parts and able to achieve an impressive response operation.[11]

Respect was also supported by the absence of significant power imbalance in the partnership. Contrary to the typical partnership dynamic, neither partner was financially dependent on the other.[12] MORDI has a robust project pipeline that is entirely separate from the response activation, and therefore was not reliant on CARE for its sustainability. This created space for more honest conversations and the inability for either organisation to use money as a bargaining tool.

Localisation learning: If the shift to localisation becomes a reality over the coming years, national and local organisations will be increasingly financially independent. The ability of international organisations to use funding as an incentive for partners to meet international compliance and standards will decrease. CARE used respect and trust as the basis for introducing concepts such as a Code of Conduct or prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse.

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[3] CA Partnership Policy page 2
[4] Live and Learn had no operational presence after the first three months of the response when the in-country staff member left the organisation. As a result, the evaluation findings on partnership relate largely to the partnership between CARE and MORDI.
[5] CA Partnership Policy page 2
[6] Interviews 10 and 20
[7] Interview 20
[8] Interview 10
[9] Interview 16
[10] Interview 20
[11] Interviews 9 and 22
[12] Interview 20

Trust was evident at an individual level but was less embedded in the organisational partnership. There was less commitment to the 'partnership' beyond its utility in delivering a response. As a result, in situations when different opinions arose and trust was undermined, the option of walking away from the partnership was very present.[13]

- **Finding 1**: The partnership was underpinned by mutual respect and trust largely fostered at the leadership level.

Adaptability

Live and Learn and CARE have had a long partnership that is based on mutual learning and improvement. There are structured review and learning processes in place.[14] The partnership between MORDI, Live and Learn and CARE is more recent and was focused almost entirely on the successful implementation of cyclone response activities.[15] There were no specific partnership objectives. Learning and adaptability was evident, however, in the way CARE and MORDI worked on the response; the approach to gender is a good example of this adaptability by both organisations, as detailed in the gender and inclusion section. The openness and adaptability of MORDI to new approaches and ideas was also evident in logistics, where the organisation embraced a range of systems and tools to improve logistics that will be useful in future responses, whether with CARE or other partners.[16] At the same time, CARE was open to adapting their standard approaches, for example to finance, and finding solutions that would work in context.

"CARE became more flexible to doing [things] in different ways." (MORDI staff member)[17]

The partnership also conducted an after-action review, demonstrating commitment to ongoing learning and improvement for future responses.

Finding 2: The partnership was adaptable to challenges within the response and demonstrated openness to learning.

Transparency

The partnership and its outcomes were openly discussed and understood at management levels. At the operational levels there was less understanding in country about CARE and the objectives for the partnership with MORDI.[18] This is a reflection of the short time frame in which the relationship between MORDI and CARE was forged. Greater understanding across both organisations has been building over time, but there is still value in intentionally bringing more staff into partnership conversations and further sharing the responsibility and interest in the partnership's success.[19] Strong interpersonal relationships between individuals within the two organisations have been great enablers of transparent and open communication.[20]

"I felt that the channel of communication was clear between MORDI – CARE but it was only with those higher up"[21]

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[13] Interviews 20 and 17
[14] Interview 4
[15] Interview 19
[16] Interviews 21 and 22
[17] Interview 21
[18] FGD 3
[19] Interview 19
[20] Interview 6
[21] FGD 3

- **Finding 3**: The partnership rationale and objectives are not consistently articulated or understood beyond the leadership teams.

Accountability

There was good understanding between the partners with respect to their contribution and roles at the initiation of the response. Within the CARE and MORDI partnership, roles and responsibilities were reinforced as each delivered on commitments and increasingly trusted each other. CARE and MORDI developed a strong culture of mutual accountability. The partnership with Live and Learn struggled once the in-country staff member was no longer available to uphold their role in the partnership, especially as it related to external representation and support for the gender and inclusion components of the project.[22]

From a programming perspective, appreciation of the importance of accountability standards also grew during the response, and in particular an appreciation of the support that CARE was able to provide to organisational systems and processes.[23] Training and support in areas of accountability such as child protection and the Code of Conduct were particularly appreciated. Staff noted that they really appreciated clear guidance to inform staff behaviour, and had been able to utilise the training almost immediately. One MORDI team leader described how he had dismissed a staff member during the response for breaking the Code of Conduct, which he had not had the guidance or resources to do previously.[24]

"One thing I liked about working with CARE was the emphasis on the Code of Conduct…. When we are working with the communities it helps us to control the reputation, when you go to field you are not going as [an individual], you are going as the whole organisation…. in the field you have to safe guard reputation and achieve [the] objectives for being here." (MORDI staff member)[25]

- **Finding 4**: A strong culture of accountability developed between MORDI and CARE.

Impact

Internal and external stakeholders reported that the partnership had delivered a response that was greater than the sum of its parts. Reasons given included increased effectiveness in a partnership with complementary skill sets that could achieve both reach and quality;[26] ability to work at speed with the combination of mobilised funding and mobilised staff and community networks;[27] and reduced siloing by actors working together.[28] The partnership has also established a reputation that gives it a seat at the table and will enable it to increase its impact and influence.[29] The fact that MORDI and CARE are interested in maintaining a relationship in the absence of a response program is testament to the effectiveness of the relationship and the evident value-add for both parties.[30]

- **Finding 5**: The partnership was able to deliver a response that was greater than the sum of its parts.

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[22] Interviews 6, 17, 20 and 21
[23] Interview 17
[24] Interview 19
[25] Interview 19
[26] Interviews 9 and 12
[27] Interview 10
[28] Interview 2
[29] Interviews 8 and 15
[30] FGD 3

Findings and analysis: The response

The partnership response and recovery program for TC Gita reached 10,570 individuals across two main islands of Tonga. This section outlines the analysis of and findings for the response and recovery program in the areas of relevance and appropriateness, efficiency, effectiveness, accountability to affected populations and impact and sustainability.

Relevance and appropriateness

The partnership response program was highly relevant to the needs of the Government of Tonga, the affected communities and donor governments.[31] TC Gita damaged two main islands (Tongatapu and 'Eua) badly, and the partnership response prioritised communities on these islands and responded to specific government requests to reach smaller islands that needed immediate distributions.

The partnership focused on the provision of WASH, shelter, and food security and livelihoods (FSL) that were identified in initial assessments as priorities.[32] The program activities (i.e. the way sector needs were met) were considered appropriate; as a concrete example, households had the opportunity to select the most appropriate shelter tools and materials from a list of options.[33] The focus on build back safer (BBS) techniques was also very important for a country that is likely to experience more cyclones in coming years. FSL assistance, as well as the women's leadership program, aligned closely with the government's objective of ensuring a quick recovery of livelihoods with a particular focus on women.[34]

Figure 3: Sector breakdown of the program across all donors

Food security and livelihoods   Shelter   WASH   Gender

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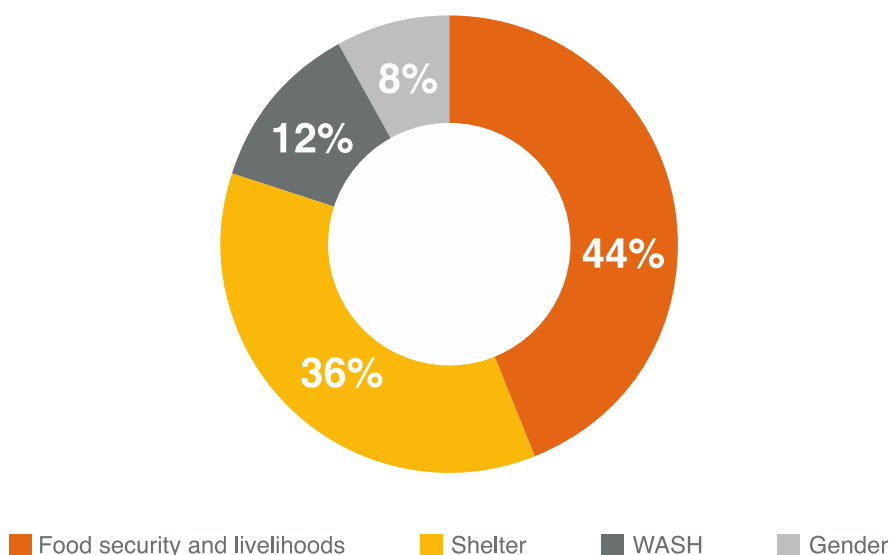
[31] Interviews 9, 13, 14 and 16
[32] National Emergency Management Committee and partners, Tropical Cyclone Gita Immediate Response Plan, February 2018
[33] Interviews 10 and 20
[34] National Emergency Management Committee and partners, Tropical Cyclone Gita Immediate Response Plan, February 2018, page 8

Women's leadership program

This pilot program supported seven new or revitalised women's groups on 'Eua to discuss and agree on their recovery priorities that were funded by the partnership. This included activities such as women's gardens or establishing equipment loan schemes.

Emele Latu with the 'Eua District Officer and Town Officer from 'Ohonua looking at a vegetable garden and produce grown by one of the seven women's groups. *Image: Kate Sutton*

Strong coordination with other actors working in the same sectors strengthened the appropriateness of the response as a whole. Similar activities were undertaken and materials distributed by agencies working in different geographic areas. This contributed to a sense of coordinated response and avoided conflict associated with communities receiving completely different support packages.[35]

The immediate response distributions were very timely.[36] This enabled the partnership to meet needs when they were most acute. The initial distributions of emergency shelter and hygiene kits all took place in the first two to three weeks after the cyclone struck.[37] For shelter and WASH programming in the recovery phase, there was some community feedback that assistance did not arrive quickly enough; in some cases families had household items damaged by weather over the course of the months that they had to wait for roofing. This was largely the result of the partnership working with government processes and the response sectoral clusters to determine beneficiary lists.[38] Some delays may have been due to internal factors within the partnership; logistics processes were being established and staff needed time for training on shelter (as a new sector focus for MORDI).[39]

- **Finding 6:** The partnership response and recovery program was highly relevant and appropriate to address the needs of the affected communities in the aftermath of TC Gita.

Efficiency

The program very efficiently reached a lot of people, totalling 10,570 individuals (4,946 men and 5,624 women) at a cost of 1.4 million AUD.[40] Several stakeholders reflected on the volume of work achieved in a small period of time with this budget supporting a partnership of three organisations.[41] This is reflected in Figure 4 below, which provides a timeline of program activities.

"[It is] amazing what the partnership has achieved and [I am] surprised by how much support we have been able to provide within constraints of budget."[42]

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[35] Interviews 11, 12 and 15
[36] Interviews 2, 10, 12 and 17; FGD 1
[37] Interview 17
[38] Interview 17
[39] FGD 1; Interview 22
[40] Interview 20
[41] Interviews 8 and 20; FGD 1
[42] Interview 20

Figure 4: Time line of program activities

The response's funding, involving six sources, also promoted cost efficiencies. Administrative and logistic time and resources were saved by having donors contribute into a coherent response package that facilitated bulk purchasing and consolidated monitoring and reporting processes. Donors perceived that this gave greater impact for their investment.[43]

MORDI's pre-existing networks with government and the private sector, as well as a good understanding of the local market, made the procurement processes very cost-efficient. MORDI often negotiated to obtain lower prices on goods, and was able to buy in bulk with credit to keep prices down due to their established reputation in country. Through government networks, MORDI accessed resources at no cost, such as the NEMO truck for distributions.[44]

"MORDI is run like a business – they know where to find cheapest [options] and will negotiate. MORDI are efficient in that way because they have a business mind."[45]

Localisation learning: Local actors can significantly contribute to efficiencies in a response operation. In this partnership, MORDI was able to reduce supplier costs and distribution costs by accessing networks and relationships that international actors could not. A CARE staff member reflected, "If it had just been us we would have just paid the quotes – but because we were with MORDI they negotiated and got lower prices."[46]

A lot of the preparedness work and existing reach and networks with community also made the start-up of the response program more efficient. MORDI had worked with the communities in Tongatapu for many years, and had built up community trust and engagement that allowed programming to take place quickly. Time and resources that would normally be allocated to the start-up phase of community consultation and introducing the organisation

[43] Interview 9
[44] Interview 13; FGD 2
[45] Interview 20
[46] Interview 20

Time line of program activities
2018

February
🌀 **12th** Tropical Cyclone Gita (Cat 4)
 14th First distributions on Tongatapu
 15th Assessment in 'Eua
 16th First distribution in 'Eua reaching 391 HH
 27th Rapid Gender Assessment
 28th Shelter team begins shelter distribution

March
- **3,518** people reached with **1,600** relief items
- Distribution of tarps and hygiene kits to **15** communities in Eua
- Distribution of tarps and hygiene kits to **6** communities on Tongatapu
- **32** people supported at Alonga Centre - home and disabled peoples organisation in Pea village

April
- Nursery building in MORDI compound

May
- BBS Training in 'Eua with Roving Team
- Cutting trees for timber and clearing land in 'Eua
- Monitoring visits to assess damaged homes
- Commence discussions with Tonga Skills

June
- Ploughing the land in 'Eua
- Repairing damaged homes in Eua
- Seven women's groups established in Eua
- Planting women's vegetable gardens
- Start BBS training for roving team in Tongatapu

July
- Community feedback processes reviewed and strengthened
- Distribution of HH seedlings in 'Eua and Tongatapu
- Distribution of vegetables for women's groups
- WASH and Shelter distributions and construction
- Most shelter programming ends and shift to livelihoods

August
- Meetings with the women's groups on Eua
- Distribution of tools for women's groups in Eua
- **18** transitional shelters installed on Tongatapu
- ECHO monitoring visit

September
- Completion of cyclone houses on Tongatapu
- **10** transitional shelters being installed in 'Eua
- Program evaluation

15

were not required.[47] CARE also contributed through its established relationships with advisors within NEMO and with donors.

Efficiency was clearly a strength of the partnership, but in future it could be further improved through devolved decision-making. From an administrative and operations perspective, decisions were very centralised, which sometimes slowed down programming.[48] There were also instances of field-based staff lacking the authority or understanding of the program objectives that would empower them to make decisions. As a result, staff were required to refer back to head offices, slowing the response process. Both within the partnership and within MORDI, greater understanding of the overarching program objectives and devolved authority to make decisions would have improved efficiency.

- **Finding 7**: The partnership response was very efficient with time and resources by drawing on complementary skill sets and accessing networks.

- **Finding 8**: The partnership could improve efficiencies through further devolved decision-making.

Effectiveness

The response met the immediate needs of the affected population and the initial distribution was very effective. The recovery work in shelter, WASH and FSL was largely effective, with some aspects of targeting that could be strengthened. A summary of key achievements is provided below in Figure 5.

Shelter

3,518 people (**1,769** men & **1,749** women) provided with immediate emergency materials

3,044 people (**1,528** women & **1,516** men) provided with shelter materials

50 vulnerable households received additional support with rebuilding shelters

3,614 community members in **33** communities trained in building back safer techniques

and WASH

Food Security

3,263 (**1462** men & **1801** women) provided with seedlings and cuttings to enhance food security

33 communities in Eua (**15**) and Tongatapu (**18**) supported by **2** plant nurseries

190 acres of land prepared for community gardens across **33** communities in 'Eua and Tongatapu

7 women's groups in 'Eua provided with specific livelihoods support

and Livelihoods

The shelter program effectively provided high-quality materials and information. The houses that had been repaired were in good condition and there was evidence of the BBS messaging being used; in particular, the reinforced nailing of the iron sheets to timber frames was evident on many buildings. The information about BBS was high quality (meeting shelter cluster standards) and was provided in a

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[47] Interview 16
[48] Interviews 20, 22 and 23

translated brochure. BBS training was provided to roving teams and community representatives, and the plan was also to share messaging during individual household visits.

Some households had not commenced rebuilding their homes because they were waiting for additional resources. In one community, several women were waiting for the pay-out on their group saving scheme to supplement the supplies provided by MORDI. In other cases, rebuilding had commenced but the BBS approaches were not being applied (approximately 50% of the 12 houses visited). This seemed to result from a lack of awareness of the messaging on the part of house owners or the builders contracted to rebuild; the post-distribution monitoring found that 65% of households were aware of BBS messaging.[49] This suggests that there may have been more effective ways to disseminate and reinforce BBS messaging, including use of different communication media; better targeting of messages; or more follow-up and accompaniment by roving teams and Town Officers.[50]

Shelter was a new sector for MORDI.[51] The team felt less prepared to deliver an effective shelter program than the FSL component of the response. This may have reduced the quality of BBS advice they provided, and may also have resulted in reduced focus on the safety equipment and approaches that some internal and external stakeholders noted.[52]

"There were many basic skills that MORDI staff didn't have: they hadn't done building before, reconstruction or hammering nails etc." [53]

Food security and livelihoods is MORDI's area of expertise, and the quality of the seedlings and agricultural advice it delivered was evident. Many households benefited from the distributions and had taken good care of the gardens. Some households were providing produce to the broader community.

Targeting of assistance was not always effective.[54] Households in some of the communities visited by the evaluation team had visible unaddressed shelter needs. It was also observed that some of the FSL program beneficiaries were relatively wealthy community representatives. This may have resulted from government requirements; for example, NGOs were only permitted to support households not qualifying for the Government Shelter TOP 3,000 cash payment.[55] However, there were also challenges associated with working with Town Officers to identify shelter and FSL program recipients. In communities with less active Town Officers, nepotism and inadequate community engagement resulted in some households not receiving support.

"The problem was when town officers did their own findings they didn't have the criteria and in my opinion there was some bias from town officers because they are part of the village."[56]

The partnership recognised the challenge of reaching those most in need in the after-action review (held in country in September 2018). The review identified concrete steps to make improvements in future responses. Suggestions included: meeting with local communities and Town Officers *before* providing assistance to clarify who should be receiving assistance; ensuring that Town Officers provide the same

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[49] CARE, Post Distribution Monitoring Report, October 2018
[50] Interview 10
[51] Interview 19
[52] FGD 1, interviews 9 and 14
[53] FGD 1
[54] FGD 1; interviews 3, 17 and 19
[55] The Government of Tonga identified the households that were most impacted by the cyclone and took responsibility for providing cash grants to them. The Government of Tonga asked NGOs to remove these households from their own beneficiary lists.
[56] Interview 19

messages as operational staff to communities; and ensuring that program staff have been trained in the appropriate skill sets to communicate and engage with communities.[57]

Some external stakeholders felt that the partnership could have played a stronger role in supporting community voice and positively influencing existing response actors, systems and structures.[58] This could have included working more closely to hold Town Officers accountable for the way they identified recipients and supporting communities to raise issues and questions.

"We don't see enough advocacy from the partnership on community empowerment." [59]

Some stakeholders would also have welcomed the partnership – and especially MORDI as the local partner – engaging more consistently in the cluster meetings and inter-agency forums. The partnership is well respected, and therefore in future it is in a position to influence the effectiveness of preparedness and response activities.[60]

- **Finding 9**: The response was effective at meeting the broad needs of the community but could have played a role in more effective targeting of assistance to those most in need.

Accountability to the affected population

A. Community participation and engagement

MORDI undertook needs assessments via household surveys with the guidance of Town Officers. This enabled every household to have input into the process and to select items to address particular needs from a list of options.[61] The extent to which the assessments reached every household, and consulted all members of the household, was largely determined by the Town Officer. As a result, community engagement in the process was varied.

The programs were largely designed by CARE in consultation with MORDI and Live and Learn senior staff. CARE personnel's leading role in proposal development was appropriate in the context of their expertise and the tight time frames required by donors. However, the impact of relatively little MORDI team engagement in the process was that few field-based staff had a strong understanding of the objectives of the program (versus the activities).[62] This limited the ability of the field teams to engage communities in design and planning processes and to respond to community questions and concerns.

"That information for me [the program design], I wanted to know it in the beginning because there were questions in the community that I had no idea about. That information was not clear from the beginning." (MORDI staff member)[63]

Localisation learning: if local partners and communities are to be involved in design processes for humanitarian programming, there needs to be more flexibility with initial proposals. This could involve allowing more time for submissions or allowing the content of the proposal to be higher level, with the detailed content being finalised in the period after the initial funding has been disbursed.

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[57] After-action review report (internal)
[58] Interviews 2 and 4
[59] Interview 2
[60] Interviews 2, 4, 8 and 15
[61] Interviews 10 and 20
[62] After-action review notes; interviews 19–21
[63] Interview 19

Communication with communities was not consistently strong.[64] Communities reported that requests for meetings by the partnership often occurred at the last minute and changed frequently, making engagement confusing and ad hoc. Many of the community members were unclear about what to expect from the partnership and their rights and entitlements.[65] As a result, some communities were reluctant to engage and were reportedly angry with changed meeting times.[66]

" [The partnership] needs to give more time to inform us about meetings. They should meet the community one week and then conduct the activity the following week. They expect it to happen too quickly." [67]

The after-action review identified the need for further training for the partnership on community engagement to ensure positive interactions with community members. This could involve providing agreements or written information at a household level that outlines the type of support that will be received, by when and delivered by whom to ensure the community has clear expectations.[68]

- **Finding 10**: Communication with communities was not consistently strong.

B. Feedback Mechanisms

The partnership established a basic feedback mechanism at the start of the response that was reviewed and strengthened in the recovery phase.[69] A phone line was set up and the number was distributed on small cards during household visits.[70] Individual agency contact details were also provided with the BBS messaging.[71] There is evidence that the feedback mechanism was used on Tongatapu: 162 households provided feedback to MORDI.[72] There was no evidence of the feedback mechanism being used on 'Eua, although this may have been because there were fewer complaints associated with an improved system of MORDI distributing and providing construction support simultaneously that allowed its staff to address any issues in real time.[73]

Despite the efforts to share information about the feedback mechanism, on both islands there was little awareness of the mechanism among the households visited and in FGDs.[74] Some community members and representatives felt confident to reach out to partnership staff directly with feedback. Community leaders in particular mentioned that they provided feedback directly to MORDI staff when they were in the community.[75] Despite having concerns, other groups (particularly more vulnerable members of the community) were afraid to provide verbal feedback and had not reached out to partnership staff.[76]

When feedback was received it was acted on quickly.[77] However, some feedback was considered valid and relevant to the partnership program but the resources to respond were not available.[78] For some households, this led to reduced levels of confidence in the feedback system because it was unable to deliver a satisfactory solution.

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[64] Interviews 4, 14 and 18; FGD 4; household interviews 1 and 3
[65] FGD 4; Interview 23; household interview 1
[66] Interviews 1 and 14
[67] Interview 1
[68] Interview 3; Interview 23
[69] Interview 23
[70] Interview 19
[71] ECHO Briefing Paper August 2018
[72] ECHO Briefing Paper August 2018, page 26
[73] Interview 19; Interview 17
[74] Interview 1; FGD 4; HH interview 1
[75] Interview 1
[76] HH / 1; FGD 4
[77] Interview 20; Interview 6
[78] Interview 21

> **Localisation learning**: there can be an assumption in working with local partners that existing community networks automatically translate into effective informal and formal feedback mechanisms. Whilst the guidance of the local partner is critical for working out the best way to establish a mechanism, there is an important role for international actors. This includes sharing best practice and learning about feedback mechanisms; ensuring funding is available for adequate follow-up; and providing an independent role if power dynamics and existing relationships might hinder the effective flow of feedback to a national partner.

There is scope and willingness in the partnership to strengthen accountability to affected populations. MORDI's commitment in the design of its current International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD) grant to use a feedback mechanism is an indication that they recognise the value of accountability. There is an opportunity to share resources and build capacity with respect to the Core Humanitarian Standard, and in particular standard 4 – humanitarian response is based on communication, participation and feedback – as a strong basis for preparedness for a future response. There was also a suggestion that the partners could consider sharing the accountability role, whereby the main implementation partner does not handle the feedback mechanism, providing some distance and independence in complaints management.[79] This would also provide alternative avenues for community feedback.[80]

- **Finding 11**: The partnership set up a feedback mechanism that addressed some community concerns. Awareness of the mechanism was limited and more vulnerable community members were unlikely to provide feedback to field-based staff.

Impact and sustainability

The project reached 10,570 people, providing improved living conditions (shelter, FSL and WASH) in the immediate aftermath of the cyclone. Some of the reported positive impacts include better shelter for families, community cohesion achieved through women's groups working together to support cyclone recovery, more healthy eating options in communities from the garden produce, and increased incomes for women who save on vegetables and can use the tools they received for income generation.[81] Communities noted that the speedy response had a positive psychosocial impact on the people of 'Eua, who had assumed they had been forgotten.[82]

"The reason the project is so good is because it has changed our habits and the way we are eating. We are starting to eat healthily and cutting down the costs of buying things from the shops. In the past we would go to market in Tongatapu and get vegetables for the week and once they ran out they were finished but now we can have them all week." (Community representative)[83]

The response was effectively linked into existing relationships and other initiatives which will support the sustainability of project outcomes.[84] The close relationship with the government throughout the response has translated into an active government interest in supporting the projects. A concrete example is the local government employing women's groups on 'Eua to clear areas of public land using equipment purchased as part of the partnership recovery project. NEMO is interested in continuing to engage with the partnership in preparedness activities to maintain the strong relationship.

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[79] Interview 1
[80] FGD 4
[81] FGD 1; interview 1
[82] Interviews 1 and 20; FGD 4
[83] Interview 1
[84] Interview 17

"Partnership does much for sustainability." [85]

MORDI's multiyear IFAD-funded project (TRIP II) commenced in September 2018. It is focused on livelihoods and will reach most islands and communities in Tonga. The development focus of this project will link into the response interventions, providing follow-up support for established plant nurseries, individual gardens and livelihoods projects. The partnership has also developed links with the ongoing Tonga Skills program that provides training and support to the established women's groups on 'Eua. [86]

Community engagement in aspects of the project will also support sustainability. This has been most evident in the livelihoods interventions and the women's leadership project. It is too early to determine the sustainability of the women's leadership project, but in the short term there is concrete evidence of buy-in and ownership, including women setting up income-generating approaches to tool and equipment maintenance, such as hiring out the lawn mower and being paid to clear government land. [87]

"Because we know it is a good project [the women's project] we want to keep it going. It motivates us." (Community representative) [88]

The shelter aspect of the project may be less sustainable, with no concrete linkages into other initiatives and more limited uptake of BBS messaging. Due to the limitations of funding, in some cases only small areas of roofs were repaired and in the event of another cyclone, those houses that did not adopt BBS approaches are likely to be damaged badly again.

- **Finding 12**: The partnership contributed to improved living conditions and recovery in the aftermath of TC Gita.

- **Finding 13**: The food security and livelihoods component of the project was very well linked into other civil society and community initiatives that will promote sustainability.

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[85] Interview 5
[86] Interview 20
[87] Interviews 14 and 20
[88] Interview 1

Findings and analysis: Gender and inclusion

The partnership has evolved substantially with respect to gender and inclusion. In a challenging context and in a very short time frame, much mutual learning has been achieved. This section outlines the activities undertaken and their impact, whilst also explaining the approach and lessons learned.

Activities

Gender and protection issues were included in the needs assessment and design of the program primarily prioritised by CARE. A rapid gender analysis identified the specific needs of women, men, boys and girls in the response and highlighted concrete steps for the partnership to enact gender transformation.[89] CARE also supported an assessment for the protection cluster that was used as a resource for the broader response and in particular identified appropriate actions and initiatives.[90]

Localisation learning: Respecting and recognising the role of national and local government requires international NGOs to invest resources into processes that may not necessarily promote their own brand. CARE engaged with the protection cluster in a way that was perceived as beneficial for the whole response and supported the government representatives leading the protection cluster. "CARE supported with report writing in a 'neutral' way, not pushing a CARE agenda. [I] felt supported and respected by CARE. [It is] a good example of support and complementarity."[91] CARE stepped back from a visible role in the protection cluster as soon as UN Women arrived in country to take on its formal role as cluster co-lead.

During needs assessments, sex age and disability disaggregated data (SADD) was collected.[92] This was used to ensure the response program included specific and targeted assistance and budget lines for specific groups. Beyond the SADD data informing the initial design, there was little evidence of it influencing other aspects of programming and implementation.[93]

Implementation of the program and its support to women, people with disabilities and other groups has been less consistent.[94] The partnership did prioritise vulnerable households in the shelter program based on vulnerability criteria (elderly, female-headed household, disability) and reached a total of 50 households (27 on Tongatapu and 23 on 'Eua) addressing the needs of 288 individuals.[95]

The partnership also made efforts to understand and adapt activities to the needs of different groups in the community. Roving teams included representatives from the community across age and gender groups to facilitate better understanding of needs. However, there are significant challenges to implementing gender initiatives in Tonga, and within the partnership there were different levels of knowledge and attitudes towards gender and inclusion. The result was that the staff teams and the roving teams, whilst attempting to have gender equity, were in fact largely dominated by young men.

- **Finding 14**: The partnership made efforts to include gender and inclusion considerations in the design and implementation of the response.

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[89] CARE Tonga, Rapid gender analysis, Feb: Interview 20
[90] Interview 2
[91] Interview 2
[92] Interviews 17 and 20
[93] Interviews 17 and 20
[94] Interview 9
[95] ECHO Briefing report, August 2018, page 18

The approach

CARE provided the technical expertise in relation to gender and inclusion and was the driving force behind much of the gender-sensitive assessment design and program implementation. Working in partnership with MORDI as the implementing partner, versus through a country program, meant that CARE's approach to gender and inclusion was necessarily different. MORDI had previously taken a whole-of-community approach to programming rather than having an explicit focus on different needs in the community, but importantly was receptive and open to new approaches.[96] Gender-sensitive and inclusive programming was a new approach. As a result, there was a large focus in the program on building the capacity of the partnership, including training on gender, deployment of gender expertise and budget allocation for national gender staff positions within the response teams. There was also a stand-alone women's leadership in emergencies project that CARE implemented with support from MORDI.

The partnership approach to address gender and inclusion through mainstream actors and traditional assistance modes was welcomed by many stakeholders.[97] The opportunity to partner with an organisation (MORDI) focused on livelihoods and shelter and introduce gender-sensitive programming was considered to be potentially transformative. This was in contrast to the alternative approach to work on gender aspects of the program separately with existing women's organisations that are perceived to have more limited reach.[98] Taking the more challenging approach of working in partnership on a new and emerging area of mutual learning had its strengths and weaknesses.

"If we don't work with mainstream actors then we won't influence change. If we only work with converted then we won't make congregation bigger. MORDI have a lot of credibility so influencing them is much more strategic." [99]

There is evidence that the training and broader capacity development approach to gender and inclusion has had a positive impact on the way MORDI works. However, the approach to gender capacity development could be improved. The focus on training led primarily by international staff could have been redirected into more mentoring, in particular by national staff or representatives that understand the gender issues in context. Stakeholders suggested that support could have addressed more issues and ideas that resonated with MORDI,[100] and (critically) training should have been in Tongan language. Some stakeholders also suggested that capacity strengthening on gender and inclusion should not take place in the midst of a response.[101]

"During a disaster is not the time [for gender training]; preparedness is the time." [102]

There is also a growing appreciation that in order to achieve significant progress on gender and inclusion there needs to be a jointly defined outcome and partnership-wide agreement on the means of achieving the outcome.[103] In the context of the rapid response to TC Gita, it was difficult to get agreement on realistic gender-related outcomes and activities. As a result, some of the proposed activities – in particular the commitment to gender-balanced roving teams for the shelter program– ended up being quite divisive, in part because of the engagement of roving teams in construction activities that are not considered

[96] Interview 10
[97] Interviews 2 and 20
[98] Interview 2
[99] Interview 20
[100] Interviews 2 and 5
[101] Interviews 2 and 20
[102] Interview 20
[103] interview 16

appropriate for women.[104] Within MORDI, there was a concern that some of the suggested approaches might undermine their relationships and reputation within communities and with key stakeholders.[105]

- **Finding 15**: Addressing gender and inclusion through mainstream national actors and traditional assistance modes is likely to achieve more transformative change.

- **Finding 16**: Staff across the partnership did not consistently understand the links between gender-inclusive programming and improved program outcomes.

The impact

Shifts in the way both CARE and MORDI conceptualised and approached gender during the course of the project provide a useful basis for a longer and more sustainable conversation. CARE has nuanced its discussion of gender and increasingly approaches it without using the term, which can be divisive and unhelpful in this context.[106] MORDI has also reflected on some of the advantages of having more meaningful engagement with both men and women in communities.[107]

External stakeholders reflected on the changes they perceive in MORDI's work, including recruitment of more female staff and more engagement with women and girls in communities.[108] The changes reflect a real willingness to engage with gender and inclusion, and whilst there are ongoing challenges, there are several examples of MORDI staff taking action when issues are highlighted. A practical example is the very quick construction of an enclosed toilet area to provide suitable facilities for female staff when it was highlighted that working from a tent with no private bathroom facilities was problematic.[109]

"In the response they [MORDI] came to women and children but they hadn't done that before, in past they had given it [assistance] to everyone but this time they were more focused on women, elderly and children." (Community representative)[110]

Individual MORDI staff members made personal shifts in understanding and approach. Staff broadened their appreciation of the different groups that make up a community and the importance of reaching everyone. One staff advocated for BBS messaging during household visits when he realised that many community members couldn't make it to awareness-raising sessions in community halls due to access problems or caring commitments.[111]

"We only saw the big picture before (dealing with the numbers) we never really saw that there are different people, we didn't really see them." (MORDI staff member)[112]

At the community level, there is some evidence that the small shifts in partnership practice made a difference to community engagement. When staff and roving teams did include some women representatives, there was reportedly improved engagement with the community. For example, some women in households noted that they were able to discuss their specific needs because there were women on the roving teams.[113] Conversely, when teams (MORDI teams or community roving teams) were not gender balanced, there was feedback that women were not engaged or able to provide their

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[104] Interviews 16 and 19; FGD 1
[105] Interview 19
[106] Interview 20
[107] Interview 19
[108] Interviews 1, 2 and 18
[109] Interview 10
[110] Interview 1
[111] Interview 19
[112] Interview 19
[113] FGD 1

input. In some cases, women felt threatened by the presence of an all-male team engaging with them when there were no men present in the house.

"They should bring a woman and man, especially when it is all women household. It is not comfortable when the men come and there are no men in the house." [114]

One hundred and fifty-one people with disabilities were provided with specific assistance.[115] The partnership also provided support to two homes for people with disabilities in Tongatapu. However, engagement and communication with people with disabilities to identify their specific needs was limited. In some households assistance had been received, but because there hadn't been direct discussion with the person with disabilities their needs were not taken into account (e.g. despite having a wheelchair, no ramp was provided in a new home).

The women's leadership project on 'Eua is very recently launched but there are some indications that it has already achieved impact. Seven women's groups were provided with specific livelihood support that has reportedly enhanced community cohesion and generated income for families. There is also some evidence of the project having a more transformative role from the perspective of the women themselves.

"[We are] very happy because they [the men] started to recognise that women can do something. Women asked men to help with making the fence around the vegetable garden and then men saw that they were doing something new. …. Women and children are very happy not having to rely on men completely." (Community representative)[116]

- **Finding 17**: The main impact has been the incremental shifts in partnership practices in relation to gender and inclusion and associated indications that this strengthens community engagement.

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[114] FGD 4
[115] CARE, Tonga TC Gita mid-term progress report to DFAT, October 2018
[116] Interview 18

Findings and analysis: Localisation

The partnership response to TC Gita strongly reflects some localisation principles and best practice approaches. CARE's decision to support a local organisation in the response rather than have an operational presence is strongly aligned with the localisation intent 'as local as possible and as international as necessary', and was welcomed in country.[117] The approach provides some interesting examples of complementarity, whilst also providing some lessons and recommendations for localisation practice (in addition to those highlighted as localisation learnings throughout the report).

Funding

29%

2%

69%

■ Funding for MORDI   ■ CARE   ■ L&L
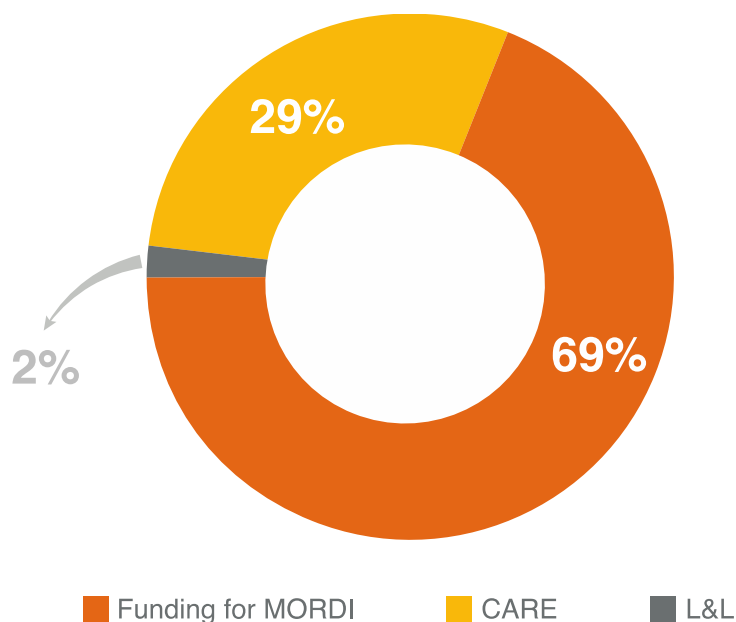
The funding breakdown (Figure 6) reflects the roles of the three partners in the response. The largest overall funding allocation to MORDI reflects their primary implementation role in the partnership.

The funding represents a significant allocation to a local partner (992,209 AUD). Although the funding was channelled through CARE Australia, this enabled greater local actor engagement in the response because MORDI were unlikely to have secured this amount of funding without the CARE partnership.

There was no unallocated overhead funding for MORDI, but approximately 64,000 AUD was allocated to cover MORDI office costs (rent, vehicles, office supplies, etc.) – approximately 4% of the total budget.[118] There were also budget lines included to cover organisational roles in MORDI, such as the finance and HR coordinator and administration and finance officers. The CARE overhead allocation of approximately 85,000 AUD equated to about 6% of the total budget.

This balance of program funding and overhead costs may reflect the real costs of running the three organisations and relevant programs. However, there is some evidence that a transparent conversation about the allocations could have supported better understanding, reallocations, and greater alignment with localisation best practice.[119] In the midst of a response with the time pressures to submit proposals and budgets it is more challenging to have these conversations, but there is potential to explore this in disaster preparedness and planning.

The decision to withhold unallocated overhead funding from the local partner was driven by MORDI. MORDI specifically requested allocated budget lines to ensure that its associated management costs

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[117] Interviews 5 and 16
[118] Global Budget TC Gita 20180606
[119] Interviews 10, 13 and 16

were being covered. In this sense, the financial allocations reflect a localised approach – that is, alignment with the wishes of the local partner.[120]

- **Finding 18**: Funding allocation to MORDI represents significant support to local actor engagement in the response.

- **Finding 19**: Overhead allocations reflected local partner preferences.

Capacity

There was a strong sense of shared capacity strengthening in the partnership. There was a much clearer articulation of the capacity-strengthening goals for MORDI, which had been explored and articulated in an informal capacity assessment in 2017; there was no formal process for MORDI and Live and Learn to assess CARE's capacity, although this may also have happened informally. The capacity-strengthening achievements for Live and Learn, CARE and MORDI were identified as part of the after-action review and will strengthen the way they all work together in future.[121]

From a localisation point of view, the greatest impact was the increased capacity of MORDI to take on leadership of a future response. To this end, CARE provided substantial capacity strengthening and technical support to MORDI in the operational response. The deployment of technical support is detailed in the timeline on capacity development in Figure 6. The result of the investment was substantial. Across the board, internally and externally, there was recognition that MORDI's capacity to lead and deliver in a future humanitarian response had been increased.[122] Within MORDI, there was also recognition that staff members were much better prepared for a future response.[123]

"[our] skills were recognised, pushed and excelled"[124]

Figure 7 Time line of capacity strengthening

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[120] Interview 6
[121] Interviews 9 and 10; FGD 1
[122] Interviews 4, 9, 12, 17, 22 and 23
[123] FGD1; interviews 18 and 21
[124] FGD 3

Time line of capacity strengthening

2015-2017

- First Regional CARE-L&L Preparedness Planning Exercise in Suva, Fiji, including L&L Tonga
- After Action Review for TC Winston, including L&L Tonga
- CARE - L&L Preparedness Planning Exercise
- CARE, Live and Learn, MORDI and NEMO emergency planning workshop in Tonga

2018

February

12th – Tropical Cyclone Gita (Cat 4) / National State of Emergency declared

- **14th** – **16th** - CARE staff deployed (Response team leader / shelter advisor / finance advisor / gender advisor)
- Build Back Safer training

March

- Code of Conduct and compliance training for MORDI staff
- Fraud and Child Protection training
- Build Back Safer training and Training of Trainers
- Gender Equality and Social Inclusion training

April

- Gender training with MORDI staff
- Build Back Safer training with MORDI Staff
- CARE Shelter advisor deployed

May

- Chain saw training of MORDI staff
- CARE Response Team Leader/Gender Advisor deployed

June

- CARE Program Quality Advisory deployed
- Code of Conduct/ PSEA/ Gender training for MORDI staff
- Sawmill training for MORDI staff

July

- CARE Logistics Advisor deployed

September

- CARE monitoring visits (program management, finance and gender)

The approach to capacity strengthening was largely positively received. The perceived value of technical deployees was evidenced in the requests from MORDI for return visits and the shift in MORDI's attitudes to offers of support.[125] Initially, capacity support offers were accepted in order to meet CARE's requirements, but increasingly MORDI began to identify its own capacity requirements and requested support across areas ranging from policy development to finance mentoring.[126]

There was a heavy focus on training workshops in the capacity-strengthening process, and there is scope in the future to reflect as a partnership on alternatives such as mentoring or shadowing approaches.[127] There was also significant feedback about the importance of facilitation and workshops reflecting local partner learning preferences and taking place in the local language. Many staff felt that their learning was hindered by the use of English without always having translators available.[128]

- **Finding 20**: Internal and external stakeholders consider MORDI, as the local partner, better placed to lead in a future response as a result of the partnership.

- **Finding 21**: There are opportunities to adapt capacity-strengthening processes and approaches to better reflect local partner preferences.

Decision-making

The partners took joint decisions on the design of the response and recovery program, although CARE did much of the proposal writing. The staff of MORDI, the local implementing partner, mostly felt that their opinions and decisions related to field operations were sought and respected.

"CARE provided us with the means of getting the job done but it was mainly us who decided on what to do and how to do it" [129]

CARE intentionally took on the role of providing options and enabling decisions. The enabling role of sharing networks, ideas and options was very much appreciated within the partnership, and clearly aligned with the objective of supporting locally led decision-making.[130]

"[CARE] proposes ways of doing things. [They have] the knowledge of the network of partners and sources of resources and expertise. It was not something they kept to themselves – they provided options."[131]

CARE took proactive steps to engage MORDI in decisions about technical personnel deployments.[132] Potential deployees were discussed with MORDI and their opinions respected. Performance reviews of deployed staff, however, were still largely undertaken by CARE Australia-based staff. Whilst the opinions of MORDI staff were sometimes sought, MORDI could increase its engagement and leadership in the review of staff deployed to its offices.[133]

- **Finding 22**: The decision-making role of the national partner was well respected and the approach to providing options to enable decisions was very effective.

- **Finding 23**: There are opportunities to better include national partners in formal review processes of international staff deployed into country.

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[125] Interview 17
[126] Interview 6; FGD 2
[127] Interview 13
[128] FGDs 1 and 3
[129] FGD 3
[130] Interviews 16 and 20
[131] Interview 16
[132] Interview 20
[133] Interviews 16 and 20

Visibility and voice

There was a formal agreement that partners would consult each other in relation to any publicity of relevance to the partnership activities. This was largely respected, and on the occasions when it was not it was an oversight and a product of entrenched communications and marketing processes rather than an intentional omission by operational staff. MORDI staff felt that they were well represented, and equally importantly, felt very comfortable to raise it on the rare occasions that they didn't.

"In all the reports to media MORDI was well represented… MORDI works on the philosophy that the work speaks for itself, but CARE did a good job in representing us." (MORDI staff member)[134]

The contractual arrangements between MORDI and CARE clearly preferences the reputation and branding requirements of CARE. As an example, in one funding agreement there is a clause that requires MORDI to ensure that CARE is not associated with any adverse comments about the Government of Tonga. The clause is not reciprocal, despite damage to MORDI's reputation in country potentially being far more serious.[135] Whilst this was not raised by any partner in the evaluation, the document review exposes inherent bias in the way that legal and marketing processes are set up.

- **Finding 24**: MORDI, CARE and Live and Learn all felt well represented in media and external communications, despite inherent bias towards international organisation visibility in legal and marketing processes.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The CARE, MORDI and Live and Learn response to TC Gita was highly appropriate, efficient and effective. The partnership approach, with its inherent focus on supporting and strengthening the role of MORDI as the national partner, was key to the success of the response program. The learning from this evaluation forms the basis of the following recommendations for replicating and further embedding best practice and improving practice in the key areas of accountability to affected populations, gender, inclusion and localisation. They also provide some suggested next steps for the partnership.

A. The partnership

Recommendation 1: Invest in jointly identifying the rationale and objectives, including mutual benefits, for the partnership outside a response and recovery operation. This process should include staff beyond the leadership level to enable broader ownership and engagement in the partnership.

B. The response

Recommendation 2: *As part of preparedness and planning processes*, the partnership focuses on how to improve accountability to affected populations, including communication with communities, in future responses. This may include sharing resources and capacity strengthening in relation to Core Humanitarian Standard 4, which outlines that humanitarian response is based on communication, participation and feedback.

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[134] Interview 21
[135] CARE Australia Funding Agreement, ECHO TC Gita Response, TON001 TO004, 14 February 2018-13 August 2018, p. 4.

Recommendation 3: *As part of preparedness and planning processes*, the partnership should identify how it can engage in, and positively influence, national and local humanitarian systems, structures and approaches. This could involve an agreement on the role that the partnership can play in supporting the voice of community members, and especially the most vulnerable, in a response.

Recommendation 4: *In response operations*, the partnership considers ways to devolve decision-making to promote efficiencies and promote more effective engagement with communities. Concrete suggestions include involvement of field-based staff in design processes and providing staff with authority to resolve issues as they arise in the field.

Recommendation 5: *In response operations*, the partnership should consider how to work constructively with Town Officers to ensure more effective targeting of response programming.

Recommendation 6: *In response operations*, the partnership considers establishing and adequately funding appropriate community feedback mechanisms that are easily understood and accessed by the community, including the most vulnerable community members.

C. Gender and inclusion

Recommendation 7: *As part of preparedness and planning processes*, the partnership should discuss and agree on appropriate gender and inclusion outcomes in a response. This should include an agreement about the most effective ways to achieve those outcomes as a basis for rapid program design in the event of an emergency response.

Recommendation 8: *As part of preparedness and planning processes*, the partnership should identify gender and inclusion capacity-strengthening opportunities that focus on national expertise, language, terminology and approaches.

Recommendation 9: *In response operations*, the partnership should ensure that gender and inclusion are a central component of the response (in line with agreed approaches in preparedness processes) in order to extend the effectiveness, impact and reach of response and recovery programs.

D. Localisation

Recommendation 10: *As part of preparedness and planning processes*, discuss how budget allocations will be determined in the partnership and ensure that local partners understand the options with respect to overhead cost recovery.

Recommendation 11: *As part of preparedness and planning processes*, continue the positive focus on mutual capacity strengthening. In addition, consider two-way capacity assessment processes and a focus on approaches that reflect local learning preferences (including a reduced focus on training workshops) and utilise national expertise and language.

Recommendation 12: *As part of preparedness and planning processes*, review human resources, legal and marketing processes to identify inherent biases towards international actor ownership and profile and, where possible, take corrective action.

Annexes

Key evaluation questions	Data source	Collection method	Tool
1. Relevance and Appropriateness: 1. Was the assistance provided by the partnership to the TC Gita response appropriate and relevant?			
a) Did the interventions respond to and meet identified needs of the affected population particularly in shelter, Water and Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) and Food Security and Livelihoods (FSL) (within scope of available project funding)?	affected population, external stakeholders	Focus Group Discussion (FGD) / Key Informant Interview (KII)	FGD guide / KII guide
b) To what extent, and how, did the affected population participate in the assessment of needs and design of interventions?	affected population, partners	FGD, KII	FGD guide / KII guide
c) Did the partnership have feedback or complaints handling procedures in place to gauge satisfaction and enhance accountability to affected populations and how effective were they? How did the feedback receive impact programming?	affected population, partners	FGD, KII	FGD guide / KII guide
d) To what extent did interventions align with humanitarian standards (e.g. Sphere and the Common Humanitarian Standard)?	affected population, partners	FGD, KII	FGD guide / KII guide
2. Effectiveness and Efficiency: Was the assistance provided effective and efficient?			
a) Were the intended outputs and outcomes for the response program clearly defined? To what extent were intended outputs and outcomes achieved?	Partners	After Action Review (AAR), Document review (DR), KII	KII guide
b) What were the most significant achievements of the partnership response to TC Gita?	Partners	After Action Review (AAR), Document review (DR), KII	KII guide

c) Did the programming adequately respond to changing needs and context over time?	affected population, partners	After Action Review (AAR), FGD, KII	FGD guide / KII guide
d) Did the partnership coordinate and collaborate with other stakeholders in designing and implementing response activities?	partners, external stakeholders	KII	KII guide
e) To what extent were partnership (CARE and MORDI) financial, HR and other resources used economically and efficiently (representing value for money)?	partners, external stakeholders	KII	KII guide
3. Impact and sustainability: What was the impact and likely sustainability of the response program?			
a) What was the reported impact of the response program from the perspective of the partners and affected population?	affected population, partners	FGD, KII	FGD guide / KII guide
b) To what extent were response interventions sustainable? What measures were put in place to support sustainability?	affected population, partners	FGD, KII	FGD guide / KII guide
c) Were there any unintended consequences and impacts (positive or negative) as a result of the assistance provided?	affected population, partners	FGD, KII	FGD guide / KII guide
4. Gender and inclusion: To what extent was the assistance provided gender responsive, and inclusive of people with disabilities and other marginalised groups?			
a) To what extent were gender, disability and protection considered in assessing needs and designing, implementing and monitoring interventions?	affected population, partners	FGD, KII	FGD guide / KII guide
b) To what extent, and how, did women, people with disabilities and other marginalised groups participate in the assessment of needs, design and implementation of interventions?	affected population, partners	FGD, KII	FGD guide / KII guide
c) What did the assistance provided by the partnership achieve in promoting gender transformation and addressing barriers to inclusion including for people with disabilities and other marginalised groups?	affected population, partners, external stakeholders	FGD, KII	FGD guide / KII guide

5.	Partnership: To what extent was/is the partnership approach fit-for-purpose and effective?			
a)	To what extent did the partnership produce results (that could not otherwise have been achieved as individual organisations)?	partners, external stakeholders	After Action Review (AAR), Document review (DR), KII	KII guide
b)	To what extent did the partnership function efficiently?	partners, external stakeholders	After Action Review (AAR), KII	KII guide
c)	To what extent did the partnership function as an equitable and collaborative partnership?	partners	After Action Review (AAR), KII	KII guide
d)	To what extent did the partnership reflect principles of complementarity (recognising and drawing on the relative strengths and skills of both partners)?	partners, external stakeholders	After Action Review (AAR), KII	KII guide
6.	Localisation: To what extent did the partnership promote local leadership of humanitarian action?			
a)	To what extent did the partnership support and enhance MORDI's capacity to take a leadership role in future responses (across areas including organisational, programming, visibility and reputation)?	partners, external stakeholders	KII	KII guide
b)	To what extent did the partnership recognise, respect and build on existing processes, tools and approaches (rather than replace or undermine them)?	partners	KII	KII guide
c)	To what extent was the visible role of MORDI in humanitarian action enhanced and supported?	partners, external stakeholders	KII	KII guide

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About CARE

CARE works with poor communities in developing countries to end extreme poverty and injustice.

Our long-term aid programs provide food, clean water,basic healthcare and education and create opportunities for people to build a better future for themselves.

We also deliver emergency aid to survivors of natural disasters and conflict, and help people rebuild their lives.

We have 70 years' experience in successfully fighting poverty, and last year we helped change the lives of 72 million people around the world.