



TROPICAL CYCLONE WINSTON RESPONSE, FIJI

After Action Review - Report

SEPTEMBER 2016



LIVE & LEARN
INTERNATIONAL

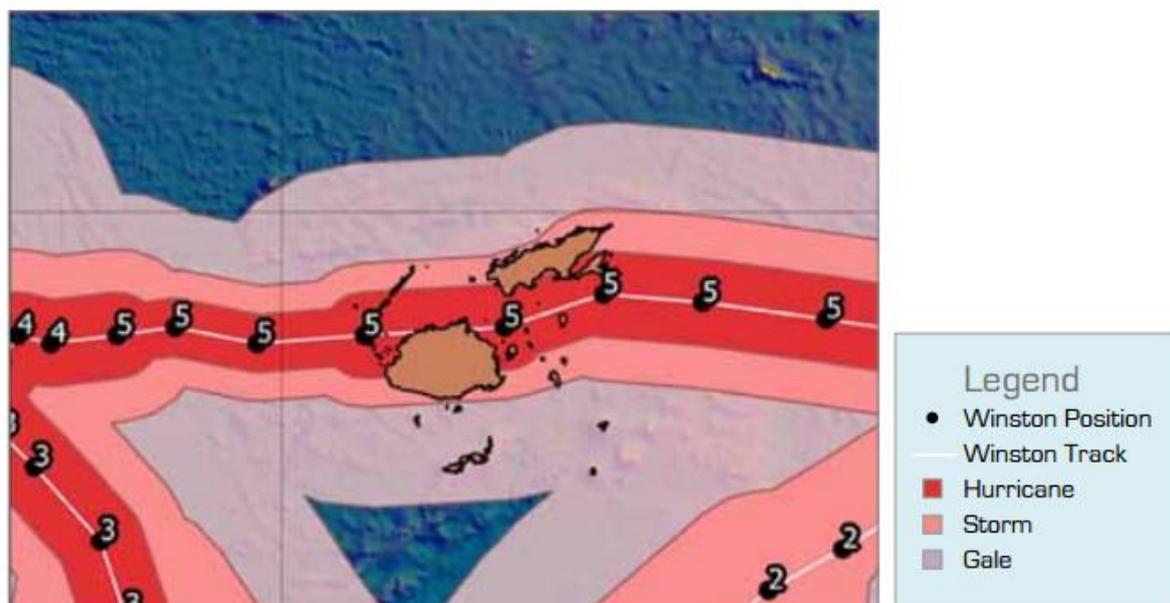


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Executive Summary

On the 20th and 21st February 2016, Category 5 Tropical Cyclone Winston (TCW) hit the Fiji Islands. TCW was the strongest cyclone to ever make landfall in the Pacific. Whole villages were destroyed on the hardest hit outer islands: 540,000 people (or 62 per cent of the population) were affected; 31,200 houses were damaged or destroyed; and 250,000 people were left without access to safe water.



Drawing on an existing regional partnership agreement, Live & Learn and CARE Australia (CA) implemented a joint humanitarian response (see Critical Events timeline). A two-day After Action Review (AAR) workshop was held on 19th–21st July 2016. The AAR set out to address two questions: first, what was achieved in Phase One of the response, and what course corrections are needed moving forward into the recovery phase? Second, how did the Live & Learn-CARE partnership add value to the response, and what are the implications for extending joint humanitarian action capacity across the Pacific?

I personally believe that the way forward for Live & Learn Fiji and Live & Learn in the Pacific is through establishing strategic partnerships – partnerships that are mutually beneficial, encourage a strength-based approach and are grounded on values such as respect for each other, honesty and commitment, to name a few... Since our establishment as a local NGO in the mid 90's, we have explored and engaged in numerous partnerships ...but none like this [one] ...with CARE Australia... where we actually opened doors to welcome another organisation to operate from within our physical space... this was a new experience. We suddenly had a partner in the house and had to deal with important aspects of partnership... Right from the beginning, we acknowledged that this partnership was going to present Live & Learn Fiji with some challenges, especially since we had very little – almost no experience – as emergency responders. But we had faith... that through these challenges, we would find opportunities for growth – growth at an individual and personal level, at a programming level and at an organisational level.

- Excerpt from AAR Opening Remarks made by Doris Susau, Country Manager, Live & Learn Fiji

The groundwork for a joint TCW response was laid through a regional partnership agreement (2013)¹ between Live & Learn International and CARE Australia, and preliminary discussions about emergency preparedness planning (EPP) and disaster resilience programming. The partnership combined Live & Learn Fiji's local knowledge, networks and long-term presence² with CARE's global emergency response resources and tools to assist in meeting the needs of those impacted by Cyclone Winston.

After a slow start in February-March, the response rapidly gathered momentum. The target of reaching 20,000 people with hygiene, food security and shelter assistance was significantly exceeded. By mid-June, the partnership reached 25,904 people: 7,397 men, 6,864 women, 6,099 boys and 5,544 girls. This was 7.4% of the total affected population and assistance reached 231 villages and settlements. This was an outstanding achievement and compared well with other actors in the same environment.

There were three key success factors: 1) formation and sustaining of a range of strategic partnerships, including with Vinaka Fiji and with the Fiji Red Cross; 2) the rapid development of an overall strategy for the response in an inclusive manner which guided choices of where to work and in what sectors; and 3) being clear up front about the commitment to gender and social inclusion and communicating this consistently to other stakeholders. A Rapid Gender Analysis (March 2016) was conducted and the results shared widely to influence the consideration of gender issues by other actors.

The following three areas remained challenging throughout the operation, and need to receive sustained attention: 1) Staff members called on to engage in an emergency response may also be personally affected by the emergency. It is important to remain vigilant to these stresses and address workload and psychosocial needs; 2) Ensuring timely recruitment of local staff; and 3) Ensuring coherence between the emergency response and existing development programs to support continuity and multiply the potential for cross learning.

During the AAR workshop participants benchmarked the response against the global Core Humanitarian Standard³ for Quality and Accountability. Scores averaged 3 out of 4, and the process facilitated reflection on achievements as well as areas for further progress. Overall the response was assessed as "gender sensitive" using the Gender Marker.

A number of recommendations to strengthen CARE-Live and Learn preparedness for future emergencies were identified. These included strengthening regional surge capacity, sharing the Operations Manual regionally, updating the Partnership agreement, and developing partnership protocols for information management and external communications. At CARE Australia Head Quarters level, several issues cutting across different units were identified, as well as the need for a preparedness protocol for response to emergencies in contexts where CARE is not present. These issues will feed in to the CA Emergency Preparedness Planning exercise later this year. The full set of recommendations is given in Annex III. Management responses to prioritised recommendations will be collected by CARE Australia's Humanitarian and Emergency Response Unit during September.

¹ CARE Australia and Live & Learn Partnership Agreement (October 2013)

² CARE Australia does not have a physical office presence in Fiji or an MOU with the Fijian Government

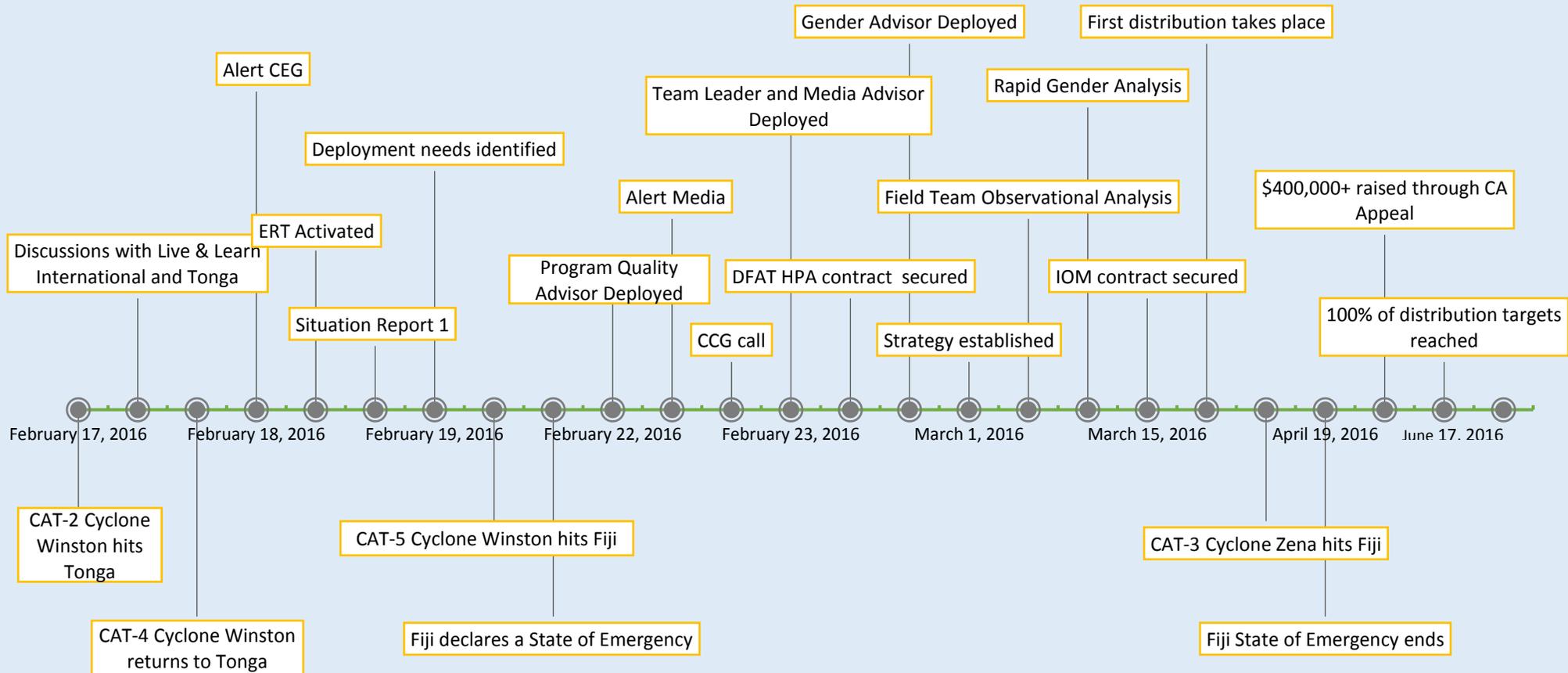
³ The CHS (<http://www.chsalliance.org/what-we-do/chs>) is the result of a sector-wide collaborative process. It is intended to inform communities affected by disasters, conflict or poverty about their rights, including their right to participate in the development of projects, and allows them to hold organisations to account. For AID workers, the CHS details what they need to do and what policies, processes and systems need to be in place to allow them to do their job effectively.



Fiji Tropical Cyclone Winston Emergency Response

CARE Australia in partnership with Live & Learn Fiji

Initial Response - Critical Events Timeline



The Live & Learn – CARE Partnership

The groundwork for a joint TCW response had been laid through a regional partnership agreement⁴ between Live & Learn International and CARE Australia; preliminary discussions about emergency preparedness planning (EPP) and disaster resilience programming; and a regional El Niño response program. The partnership was based on a shared vision and the recognition of complementary strengths. Live & Learn wanted to extend its development and humanitarian reach in the South Pacific region. CARE Australia sought to remain ‘light on the ground’ while delivering on its humanitarian and resilience mandate.

Live & Learn is a dynamic learning network of locally registered organisations operating in nine countries across South-East Asia, the Indian Ocean, and the Pacific. Live & Learn country offices are registered as local NGOs. Each office is locally managed and staffed and has its own set of country-specific partnership relations. A Live & Learn International office (in Melbourne, Australia) provides strategic and technical support to the Network, and ensures effectiveness and transparency as per the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) Code of Conduct. Live & Learn works with communities throughout Asia and the Pacific to design, implement and learn from context-specific, community-based development projects. Building local capacity, confidence, skills and partnership networks is a cornerstone of the organisation’s identity.

“The purpose of the partnership is to draw on the mutual programming strengths and experience of both agencies; and the comparative advantage of CARE in integrated DRR/ Climate Change, Gender & Emergency Preparedness/ Response, and of L&L’s extensive networks and community-based experience in the Pacific.”

CARE Australia and Live & Learn Partnership Agreement

CARE International is a development and humanitarian aid organisation fighting global poverty, with a special focus on empowering women and girls to provide lasting change to their communities. **CARE Australia** is one of 14 members that make up the CARE International Confederation. CARE’s programs seek to address the most significant development and humanitarian needs of a community, and to enhance local capacities towards achieving lasting social and economic improvement and environmental sustainability. CARE Australia implements long-term development projects in 21 countries, and responds to humanitarian emergencies around the world.

Challenges and Constraints to an Early Response

Timeliness of the response was an issue initially as the Snapshot of relief distributions overleaf shows. By early April only distributions of hygiene had commenced at significant scale. All agencies except the Fiji Red Cross faced challenges in securing government approval to commence distributions during February-March, but at this stage Live and Learn/ CARE were behind peer NGOs in their

⁴ CARE Australia and Live & Learn Partnership Agreement (October 2014)

implementation rates.

There were three challenges, which impacted on the capacity of the Partnership to deliver an early response (see also the Inception Report, Annex I). **First**, while Live & Learn and CARE already had a regional partnership agreement in place, it became apparent that the Partnership needed to be recalibrated to reflect the on-ground reality. Specifically, both CARE and Live & Learn had to align their systems and protocols to facilitate a partner-led response. Much of this work was time-consuming and could have been done in advance. **Secondly**, an over-reliance on second-hand assessments meant that the Live & Learn-CARE team made decisions to distribute to affected populations that had already been reached by other humanitarian responders. The team had to rethink its targeting strategy, and valuable time was lost. **Third**, the recruitment and induction of local response staff was slow off the ground, and it was some time before a fully functional team was in place. As a result, initial distributions were slower than those of peer agencies. Despite these constraints, the partnership was able to achieve reach and scale and to meet its Phase One targets.

Results Achieved

The partnership combined Live & Learn Fiji's local knowledge, networks and long-term presence⁵ with CARE's global emergency response resources and tools to assist in meeting the needs of those impacted by Cyclone Winston. The target in the Strategy for the operation was to reach a total population of **20,000** with hygiene, food security and shelter assistance. **This was significantly exceeded.**

In Phase One, the partnership reached **5054 households** from **231 villages and settlements**, representing a **total population of 25,904**, equivalent to **7.4% of the total affected population**.

7,397 men, 6,864 women, 6,099 boys and 5,544 girls were reached with:

4012 Hygiene Kits	4021 Shelter Kits
723 Toolkits	4083 start-up Seed Packs

A Rapid Gender Analysis (RGA) was conducted in March to ensure the emergency response could effectively meet the different needs of men, women, boys, and girls and vulnerable populations. Recommendations made in the RGA, along with those in CARE's sectoral "Gender in Briefs", informed the **Emergency Response Strategy**, and provided a lens to guide distributions and the design of recovery projects. The RGA was shared widely with government and UN agencies and local and international NGOs, and was taken up in Cluster meetings and other forums (see Annex I). Follow up is needed to assess where and how these inputs have translated into gender-responsive programming.

⁵ CARE Australia does not have a physical office presence in Fiji or an MOU with the Fijian government

Annex II assesses the Live & Learn-CARE Phase One response against CARE’s Gender Framework as “gender sensitive. However, the inability to recruit a Gender and Social Inclusion Officer to the TCW response team has been a key constraint and further progress will be hindered until this position is filled.

Despite consultations with District Government officers the, TCW team made decisions to distribute to affected communities that had already received distributions by the time TCW teams arrived. The team thereafter sought to coordinate and harmonise their response in conjunction with the Fiji Red Cross Society who, through their own assessments, identified overlooked locations for action. As a result, the TCW team was able to engage **informal communities and settlements**, arguably among the most vulnerable and difficult to reach. In the absence of formal governance structures, it was difficult to organise and conduct typical group distribution activities. Resourcing a costly and time-demanding door-to-door assessment and distribution exercise was not feasible. Hence, the TCW team **partnered with local-level government Advisory Councillors**, the government-authorised representatives for informal communities. The TCW team met with all the Advisory Councillors in three Regions (20 in Lautoka District, 27 in Ba Province, and 24 in Ra Province) to discuss the targeting of the most vulnerable households. The Councillors were asked to identify a given number of households within their settlements that met the vulnerability criteria identified in the RGA.⁶ After sample verifications had been made, household residents attended a central and accessible distribution site where awareness training was provided, kits were distributed and household registrations took place. The willingness to take on innovative targeting approach meant Live & Learn/CARE accessed the most vulnerable households in every settlement from South of Lautoka to East of Rakiraki.

Communities impacted by TC Winston required assistance across multiple sectors. Live & Learn/CARE implemented a **cross-sectoral distribution and financing approach** that integrated Shelter, WASH and Food Security & Livelihoods into the distributions and trainings. This meant communities and individuals were able to receive much needed supplies in a more-timely manner than would have otherwise been the case. This holistic approach allowed community members more time to concentrate on building back their communities and their own homes. Financing from multiple donors and cost-sharing across sector distributions contributed to a wider reach, extending distributions to locations that would have otherwise been too difficult to reach, such as those in Cakaudrove Province and Taveuni Island.

Given the partner-led response model adopted by the two agencies, CARE surge staff were embedded into Live & Learn’s organisational structure and processes. A “fit for purpose” Operations Manual has been developed that adapts these systems to a rapid-onset response. The revised manual will be activated in any subsequent emergency responses and will be adopted by other Live & Learn country offices.

⁶ Drawing on the RGA, vulnerable households were defined as: single-headed and child-headed households; households with orphans, people living with disabilities and the elderly; and households that had not received assistance and had partially or fully-damaged homes.

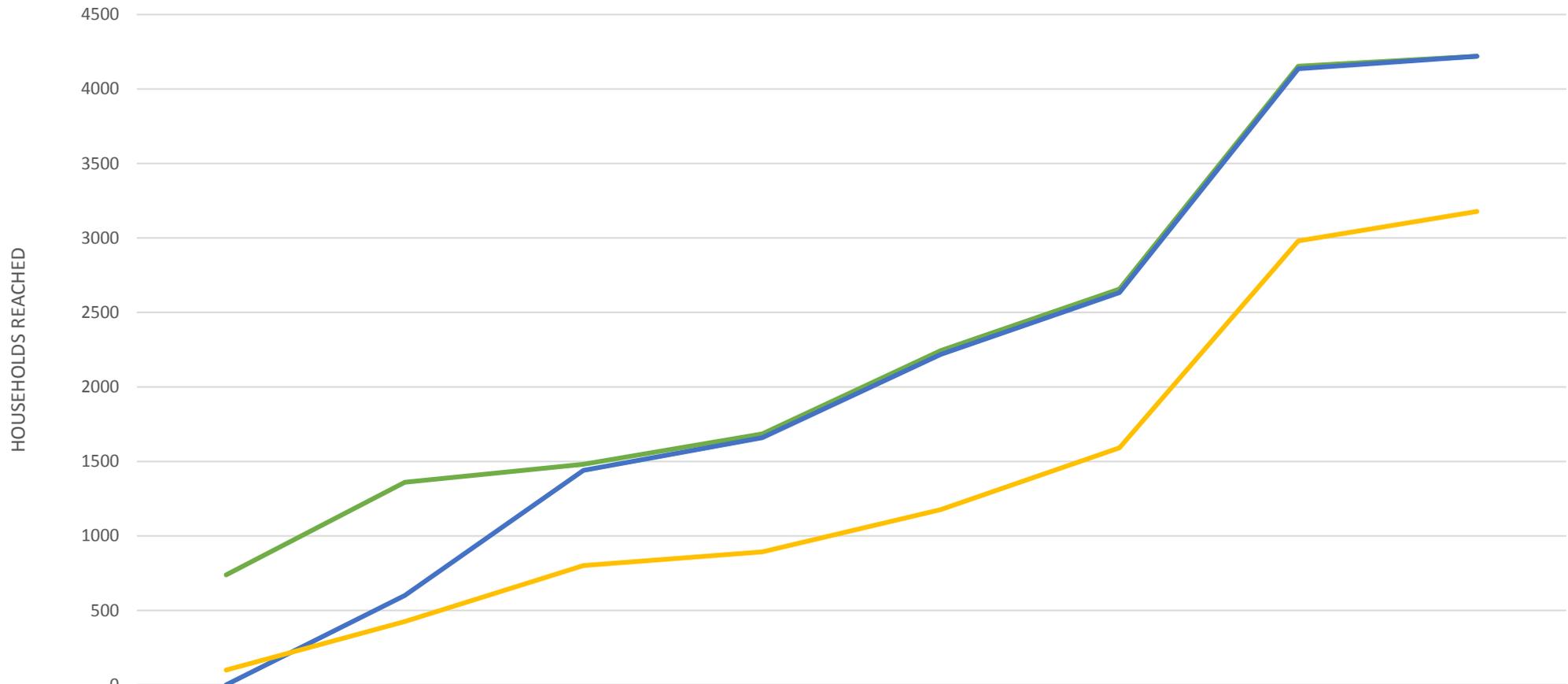


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4 MONTH SNAPSHOT: Households Reached Through Distributions (by Sector)



— WASH
— FSL
— SHELTER

PROGRESS OVER TIME

Recommended Actions

Recommended actions were identified during the workshop (see Annex III). They are summarised here:

(i) For the Fiji Operation

Strategic Partnerships

- Sustain the collaboration with the Fijian Red Cross; and stay engaged with, and contribute to, the viability of the clusters.
- Strengthen local Fiji networks, especially contacts with provincial, district and national government structures in support of disaster preparedness.

Who We Are and What We Stand For

- Promote the use of Gender & Social Inclusion Checklists in all clusters.
- Develop and communicate decision-making criteria for engaging in new and current target locations.
- Develop a 2-pager to equip staff and volunteers with consistent and accessible messages.
- Strengthen gender and social inclusion inputs in staff inductions and in the Code of Conduct, and maintain gender-balanced teams.

Coherence and Collaboration between Emergency and Development Teams

- Set up temporary duty placements to leverage the expertise, knowledge and connections of the development staff and normalise processes for joint reflection and learning.

Program Quality and Learning

- Recruit an in-house Program Quality staff member in Live & Learn Fiji to strengthen staff capacity to deliver on gender and social inclusion commitments; improve data collection and analysis; and develop evidence-based learning products.
- Ensure all recovery projects are consistent with the gender and social inclusion outcomes expressed in the operation's overarching MEAL framework.

Staff Well-Being

- Ensure that all team leaders are equipped with the skills to support staff and allocate resources for psychosocial support (e.g. through an external service provider).

(ii) For CARE-Live & Learn Preparedness and Partnership

Emergency Preparedness Planning

- Strengthen the Pacific surge deployment capacity of CARE and Live & Learn.

- Broaden emergency preparedness planning by incorporating disaster risk reduction and resilience strategies in all programs, and ensuring attention is given to operational areas (such as, recruitment, immigration and cultural awareness).
- Adopt and contextualise the best practice Operations Manual in all Live & Learn Pacific Offices.

Sustain the Live & Learn-CARE Partnership

- Review and update the Live & Learn-CARE Regional Partnership Agreement.
- Clarify decision-making and delegations of authority, and promote collaboration across all teams.
- Develop and/or update partnership protocols for information management and external communications, media, fund-raising and branding and the dignified representation of communities.

(iii) Cross-Departmental Issues for CARE Australia HQ

Annex 6 identifies four issues for further discussion across relevant units. These were drawn from review of individual unit/ departmental discussions and the cross-departmental discussion facilitated through the process:

- Surge staff Orientation and Induction in non-presence countries
- Information Technology and information management for surge staff in non-presence countries
- Discussion on media management between CARE and L&L
- Review legal registration in high-risk non-presence countries of Solomon Islands and Tonga

The need for a non-presence overarching preparedness protocol for CA Head Quarters was also identified. These issues will be taken up during the CARE Australia Emergency Preparedness Planning exercise later this year.

Management Response

CARE Australia's Humanitarian and Emergency Response Unit (HERU) will coordinate a process of management review by each entity involved. This will involve selection of the main recommendations, clarifying recommended actions and the responsibility holder/ timeframe. We expect this to be completed by end of September. HERU will offer to check in on progress in implementing these on a quarterly basis.

Lessons: Key Success Factors and Challenges

Key Success Factors

Strategic Partnerships

Forming and sustaining a range of strategic partnerships is key to an effective and timely response. This is the cornerstone of a localised⁷ approach. These can and should be developed and maintained pre- and during emergencies and span the public, and private sectors, UN agencies, faith-based and other community-based organisations and local and international NGOs.

The TCW response team drew on longstanding relationships between Live & Learn and government officials to access data on the situation and secure approval for programming. They also drew on assessment data collected by the Fiji Red Cross Society to identify overlooked vulnerable populations, a collaboration that opened up the potential for joint assessments. Working with VINAKA Fiji, a local community-based organisation, helped identify community volunteers who became the gatekeepers to support distributions in the Yasawa Islands. Engagement in the Clusters raised the Partnership's profile, ensured the response was aligned with the government's overall priorities, and complemented the work of other humanitarian responders.

Planning and Executing

Building a solid design framework (in the face of the pressure to "get out to the field") is key to an effective operation, allowing for timely, accurate, activity-based and costed planning.

In the TCW response, an overall strategy was developed early and, following on, a Monitoring Evaluation and Learning (MEAL) framework. A solid design provided overall coherence to the response: it was the basis for a rigorous MEAL framework and specific gender and vulnerability indicators. It informed clear communications with communities, government officials and sister NGOs. However operational planning for response programming was prioritised, and operational plans for delivery of the different sectoral interventions for emergency recovery were delayed until June and developed through June/July 2016.

Who We Are and Where We Stand

Core to the values that underpin the Live & Learn/CARE partnership is a commitment to gender and social inclusion. Being clear up front about "who we are" and "where we stand" raises our credibility and allows staff to better manage their interactions with communities and other stakeholders.

The TCW team engaged in discussions with the cluster forums, local officials, communities, new staff and other stakeholders about its gender and social inclusion commitments. The team also clarified

⁷ CARE is a signatory for the Charter4Change which commits international organisations to build the capacity of local actors to prepare, respond and recover from disasters

the Live & Learn-CARE partnership, acknowledging the complementarities and common purpose that enabled the partnership to deliver a joint response that could not have been achieved by each agency individually.

While all new staff received a rapid field induction, many lacked pre-existing knowledge about gender equality and inclusion and the special needs of women and children, people with disabilities or the cultural practices of different ethnic groups. It is important then to ensure each staff member has the confidence to clearly understand and apply gender and social inclusion criteria in their work.

Challenges

Three challenges for implementing an early response were noted above. The following three areas remained challenging throughout the operation. This is common in operations like the Fiji response. Comparison with the experiences of similar actors operating in the same environment was not part of the AAR process, but anecdotal conversations with other agencies suggest they faced similar challenges.

Staff Wellbeing

Staff members called on to engage in an emergency response may also be personally affected by the emergency – if not directly, then through extended family relations or interacting with affected populations in the field. It is important to remain vigilant to these stresses and address workload and psychosocial needs.

In the TCW response, team leaders conducted regular debrief sessions for staff engaged in fieldwork. Nevertheless, the AAR recognised that more structured psychosocial support services were needed.

Timely Recruitment of Local Staff

Getting the right team in place, and managing the influx of new staff, is critical to ensuring an effective response and building the capacity of local partners.

The TCW experience highlighted the need to prioritise and resource the recruitment and induction of local staff. Beyond the introduction of surge support, it is local staff who are responsible for accelerating and strengthening the quality of a partner-led response. Thus, timely recruitment is critical to securing strong candidates in a highly competitive market and to embed capacity for future humanitarian work into the partner organisation.

Bridging the Gap between Emergency Response and Development Programming

Ensuring coherence between the emergency response and existing development programs supports continuity and multiplies the potential for cross learning.

It is important to maintain development project implementation deadlines and relationships. It is also important to seek out opportunities to bring the strengths and expertise within the development projects into the response. This means (a) ensuring the response strategy is clearly understood by all; and (b) promoting an appetite for measured risk, e.g. getting permission from donors to temporarily suspend reporting requirements. Managers have a key role in encouraging team confidence by talking teams through the chaos, assuring them that effective work will follow (*we will reach a tipping point*) and encouraging them to contribute their skills and knowledge in support of the response.

Reflections for Future Responses

Strengthen Regional Preparedness and Resilience

The experience in Fiji underscores global learning that preparedness is key and that investment is required in a deliberate EPP process that strengthens leadership across the Pacific.

This implies putting in place a holistic Pacific Emergency Preparedness and Resilience Strategy that asks, first: what are the programmatic and organisational capabilities needed by Live & Learn to manage its transition to an organisation with a dual humanitarian action and development mandate? Second, what capabilities does CARE need to achieve a more visible and strategic Pacific presence? Third, what can be done to further strengthen localised Pacific humanitarian leadership and capacity?

Sustain the Live & Learn-CARE Partnership (see section 9 below)

Sustaining any partnership requires that we remain open to acknowledging our differences, recognise the diversity of interests, accountabilities and cultures; and work towards a common interest and a shared set of objectives. Partnerships that learn and change are the most effective.

Partnerships can involve high transaction costs, especially when the process is not well managed and individual agency interests negatively impact partnership priorities. Partners need (a) to believe in the power of collaborative effort: *what we can achieve together is greater than the sum of our parts*; (b) invest in the values of respect and trust, adaptability, transparency and accountability in action; and (c) see evidence of tangible impacts achieved in partnership. Paying attention to the partnership itself means defining what success means for the partnership; monitoring progress over time; and allocating time to take stock, identify and manage risks, and systematically capture and implement lessons as needed.

Assessing the Response against the Core Humanitarian Standard



In humanitarian disaster or conflict situations it is critical that aid workers deliver a quality response, while also being accountable to the communities they serve, in a sector characterised by high turnover, rapid deployments, steep learning curves, and the need for collaboration amongst multiple humanitarian actors.

The Core Humanitarian Standard⁸ on Quality and Accountability (CHS) sets out nine commitments that organisations and individuals can use to improve the quality and effectiveness of the humanitarian assistance they provide. Table 1 provides a *self-assessment* of the TCW Phase One response against each of the nine commitments.⁹ (The ratings ranged from 2 to 4 with an average of 3.)

⁸ The CHS (<http://www.chsalliance.org/what-we-do/chs>) is the result of a sector-wide collaborative process. It is intended to inform communities affected by disasters, conflict or poverty about their rights, including their right to participate in the development of projects, and allows them to hold organisations to account. For AID workers, the CHS details what they need to do and what policies, processes and systems need to be in place to allow them to do their job effectively.

⁹ An assessment of the response against the CI Emergency Response indicators outlined in the CI Response Performance Radar is not included, as latest advice from CEG is to measure responses against the CHS.

Table 1. Live & Learn-CARE Ratings against the Nine Commitments	1	2	3	4
1. Response is appropriate and relevant				
2. Response is effective and timely				
3. Response strengthens local capacity and avoids negative effects				
4. Response is based on communication, participation & feedback				
5. Complaints are welcomed and addressed				
6. Humanitarian response is coordinated & complementary				
7. Humanitarian actors continuously learn and improve				
8. Staff are supported to do their job effectively and treated fairly & equitably				
9. Resources are managed and used responsibly*				

- Not yet rated – data are available to support effective management of resources but not yet available to support how effectively these have been used.

Humanitarian Response is Appropriate and Relevant

The three sectors of the response – Food Security & Livelihoods, Shelter and WASH – are aligned with the priorities identified by the government. The TCW team initially drew on existing relationships to target communities where Live & Learn was already programming. Later on, the team reached out to new communities, though there were some challenges in balancing the assistance between new and old communities in the face of internal and external pressures.

Post Disaster Monitoring (PDM) visits are yielding positive anecdotal feedback from communities about the Partnership’s work in shelter and building back safer. Colleagues in the Shelter Cluster have echoed these impressions. Emphasis will be given in the next phase to validating and documenting this anecdotal feedback.

Humanitarian Response is Effective and Timely

Prior to the cyclone, the partnership had started talking through preparedness planning and surge capacity needs, though there had not been a systematic capacity assessment for either Live & Learn or CARE. That being said, within two days of opening the Fiji office after the cyclone hit, the TCW team had developed a winning bid to support Phase One operations (funded through the DFAT HPA mechanism). Phase One distribution targets were met on by early June in line with the schedule.

Early on the government of Fiji decided that it would lead on the needs assessment. A Pacific Humanitarian Team (PHT) After Action Review Report¹⁰ recognises the strong government leadership of the TCW response and the high level of capacity in country. It identifies coordination and information management as two areas requiring further attention, and noted that the PHT needs to “*work closely with Government to establish a coordinated approach and agreed protocols for assessments*”. Challenges were faced in terms of processing and aggregating that information for use by all partners to inform decision-making, because of the remote locations involved, disruptions to communication, and a need for improved information management infrastructure and capacity.

Early on it was recognised that Live & Learn Policies and Procedures were more attuned to compliance and control than to the collaboration and pace required of an emergency response. This slowed down the response. An Emergency Operations Manual has been produced that defines streamlined policies and procedures (for grant and financial management, recruitment and on-boarding processes, logistics and procurement and so on) to be activated in an emergency situation.

Humanitarian Response Strengthens Local Capacity and Avoids Negative Effects

The TCW response was the first time Live & Learn and CARE had ground tested their partnership at scale.¹¹ CARE was able to provide a prompt surge capacity. Recruitment of local staff to the TCW team started slowly. Existing Live & Learn Fiji staff “pitched in” and did whatever was needed to support the response. The Live & Learn Finance & Administration staff and existing program staff, for example, effectively doubled their workload in the wake of Cyclone Winston.

A decision was taken within Live & Learn to not put on hold the ongoing long-term programs (because of concerns related to delivering on pre-determined program and budget outcomes and associated relationship and reputational risks). This contributed to a sense of separation between the core development staff and the humanitarian response staff. Despite these challenges, the work prevailed, and the ambitious response targets (5.5% of the total affected population) catalysed positive change. Team reflections during the AAR acknowledged the challenges experienced, but both program and operations teams reported that the opportunity to learn through doing and the pressure to perform rapidly allowed them to develop confidence and new skills.

Humanitarian Response is Based on Communication, Participation and Feedback

Attention was given to the selection of safe and accessible distribution sites through: (a) encouraging gender-balanced participation across staff and beneficiaries; (b) interviewing both women and men prior to distributions (and conducting separate women and men focus groups discussions to encourage women’s voices); (c) providing staff with an “in-field checklist” prompt to assess

¹⁰ The PHT (comprising UN agencies, NGOs and the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement) activated a range of financial, technical and in-kind tools and mechanisms to support the Fijian Government, CSOs, national NGOs and affected communities to assist with immediate response and recovery efforts.

¹¹ The organisations did partner in the Cyclone Pam Response in Vanuatu, but the partnership was limited in scope.

distribution sites and make changes as required; (d) identifying and working with female local officials and women's groups.

Government agencies participated in a number of ways. The Ministry of Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development and National Disaster Management facilitated access into communities. District-level officers helped validate and/or identify vulnerable communities (data permitting) and made suggestions on how to distribute to settlement areas. Government staff in the Yasawa Islands joined the distribution team.

The initial response was focused on meeting urgent needs and did not consciously focus on the participation of women or vulnerable groups (though sex and age disaggregated data, SADD, were collected from the outset). Later on, the TCW team got better at informing community organisers that the focus of the response strategy was on women and vulnerable populations (including PLWD) and also at encouraging their participation in monitoring and feedback activities. Quantitative data collected during distributions and post-distribution monitoring visits are now being augmented with qualitative focus group data.

Complaints are Welcomed and Addressed

A “complaints and referral” mechanism was established, though it did not become fully functional until the third month. Information stickers identifying how and where to provide feedback were provided during distribution (though not initially). Two hotlines are now in place (with male and female-designated call-in numbers). When it became clear that not all affected populations had credit on their phones to call, the team advised communities to send a “missed call” and staff the called back.

During the AAR, the team recognised that complaint mechanisms would have been more effective (a) if they were made available across a variety of channels (visual print materials in Fijian and Hindi, toll-free phone lines and digital technologies, face-to-face feedback collected during monitoring visits); and (b) if it had provided clarity, early on, about the role of the team in addressing complaints. Actions have been defined to ensure complaints are validated and fed back into programming.

Managing expectations is not always easy. In the settlements, not all households were prioritised for distribution kits or WASH projects. Communities that had not been prioritised, spoke up about being missed out. New staff felt unprepared to deal with these tensions. Working with district officers and Advisory Councillors was key in helping to communicate about the vulnerability criteria and subsequent distributions lists.

Humanitarian Response is Coordinated and Complementary

Early coordination with the Food Security & Livelihoods, WASH and Shelter Clusters allowed for positive influence both within the clusters and at a cross-agency level and for alignment with agreed Cluster standards. Engagement drifted somewhat after the initial surge and with turnover of technical advisors.

The Ba Provincial Red Cross office became the centre for distributions to nearly 60% of informal settlements in the province. A relationship established with Habitat for Humanity provided additional funding to top up the distribution of shelter kits. Some District-level government offices were able to provide reliable lists of communities. Others were not.

Humanitarian Actors Continuously Learn and Improve

A review of compliance systems in June 2016 (led by CARE) made a timely contribution to the partnership.¹² The review (a) examined planned expenditures to the end of the project, in order to identify any variations that may be required; (b) reviewed the financial management arrangements between Live & Learn and CARE; and (c) reviewed operational systems and approaches. Specific recommendations were made, many of which have already been acted upon. The review found that Live & Learn and CARE Australia teams are fully compliant with child protection policies.

The Inception Report identified a number of areas for reviewing/updating operational protocols to ensure any timely and effective future response. Specific actions (reflected in the detailed actions in Annex III) relate to (a) grant management mechanisms and contractual agreements; (b) streamlined (fit for purpose) business processes; (c) information management protocols and technology agreements; (d) media and fund-raising efforts (and representation of affected communities and of the partner relations); and (e) co-agreements on the 'non negotiables' (e.g. Child Protection and the Inclusion of People with Disabilities, unified Safety & Security procedures and Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning).

In June 2016, the Fiji Disabled Peoples Federation (FDPF) conducted a training session for the TCW staff, with an emphasis on shaping Phase II projects for WASH and FSL Nurseries. Also in June, the International Federation of the Red Cross, with support from CARE, facilitated a gender and diversity workshop for representatives from ten Red Cross National Societies. Live & Learn will be encouraging cross-fertilisation across the Live & Learn Pacific. The lessons learned from this response and the partner-led model along with a Partnership Case Study (below) will be disseminated with CARE International. CARE Australia will focus its 2016 Headquarters preparedness planning process ensuring current protocols and processes are fit for supporting a partner-led response in the Pacific.

Staff are Supported to do their Job Effectively and Treated Fairly and Equitably

Many staff members were personally affected by the disaster, while also responding to the disaster. Some experienced secondary trauma from interacting with affected community groups. Debriefing sessions became a regular part of distribution and post-distribution monitoring visits. However, the AAR recognised the need to put in place peer and other support mechanisms that would allow staff to surface issues and seek guidance. The AAR also emphasised the need to ensure deployed technical advisors are fully focused on the values that underpin the partnership and committed to supporting local team members.

¹² CARE Australia Finance Monitoring Visit Report, prepared by Shan Southwell, Manager, Program Accounting and Compliance, CARE Australia (June 2016).

Resources are Managed and Used Responsibly

As noted above, recommendations made in a review of compliance systems are being acted upon. Additionally, careful attention is being given to the responsible management of resources. Systems are now in place to monitor expenditure against costed budgets and to manage the contraction of resources that will occur after the recovery phase is over.

Gender and Social Inclusion

A Rapid Gender Analysis (March 2016) was conducted to ensure the response would effectively meet the differing needs of men, women, boys, and girls of different groups, including people with disabilities. (Because of government restrictions on travel to affected areas, the analysis was not fully participatory.) Recommendations made in the RGA, along with CARE's sectoral 'Gender in Briefs' informed the TCW Response Strategy and identification of vulnerability criteria and shaped the sectoral strategies. Indicators were developed to carry forward the recommendations into the MEAL framework. The TCW team is monitoring and reporting on implementation of the RGA recommendations.

Externally, the RGA was shared with the Government of Fiji National Disaster Management Office (NDMO), DFAT, OCHA, UN Women and other UN agencies and complemented two UNW Gender Snapshots. The RGA recommendations have also been taken up in various forums, for example, the National Safety and Protection Cluster, the Pacific Humanitarian Protection Cluster (PHPC) and an Australian Defence Force Lessons Learned Workshop on Women, Peace & Security. The RGA and "Gender in Briefs" were also passed on to sister INGOs, including Save the Children and the Fiji Community Development Program (FCDP). In turn, they shared these documents with their local partners.

As noted in the previous section, attention was given to the selection of safe and accessible distribution sites and to ensure the participation of women and men and other vulnerable groups. The "in-field checklist" that staff used to assess each distribution site will also inform recovery activities.

Relevant sections of the RGA were socialised amongst staff and volunteers as part of their field inductions. These sessions also discussed how to address the increased risk of gender-based violence. However, many incoming staff lacked pre-existing knowledge about gender equality and inclusion and the special needs – for example – of young people, people with disabilities or minority ethnic groups. Follow-up gender and inclusion training will help to address these gaps. More emphasis should also be given to strengthening gender and social inclusion inputs into recruitment and induction processes.

As noted in the previous section, the initial distributions did collect SADD data, but the rationale for doing so was not fully understood. It was only in the latter part of Phase One that there were conscious efforts to promote participation of women and vulnerable groups and to engage gatekeepers in

discussions related to gender and social inclusion. The AAR recognised that there may be limitations in the disaggregated data collected thus far. Plans are underway to bring in technical support to review the data for consistency and also to provide staff and volunteers with training to enhance their application of gender and social inclusion, and child protection. Plans are also underway to reevaluate recovery planning against the RGA's recommendations and vulnerability criteria.

The RGA is an important tool for shaping response efforts, but one that relies on available secondary data and early qualitative data. The RGA is given weight by the Gender in Briefs, which provide best practice recommendations to shape sectoral strategies. The restrictions placed on travel in the immediate aftermath of the cyclone, meant the RGA was not developed in a consultative manner with communities. The TCW team needs to consider whether or not to conduct a more detailed gender and power analysis to inform the next phase of their operation.

See Annex II for an assessment of the Live & Learn/CARE Phase One response against CARE's Gender Marker. The overall assessment was that the response was "gender sensitive".

Assessing the Partnership

A case study is being developed that will describe in detail the Live & Learn-CARE partnership and the lessons for a localised Pacific humanitarian response.¹³

The Live & Learn-CARE regional partnership agreement speaks to the comparative advantages of each agency. However, the agreement does not explicitly outline how the partnership will build and support mutual capacities. For Live & Learn, this is with respect to their transition to a dual mandate organisation across the Pacific. Equally for CARE, there is a need to define its role in supporting this is capacity building in view of its broader Pacific strategy. The AAR participants recognised that in light of the TCW experience, it is timely to revisit the regional partnership agreement so as to clarify the mandates and expectations of each organisation; to explicitly link capacity development and emergency preparedness, and to unpack the assumptions and risks of working in partnership into the future.

The TCW experience has clearly shown that because each context is different, the regional partner agreement must be recalibrated to what is happening on the ground. Cyclone Winston did not pass directly over Suva. The government was operational and in control and able to mobilise the military. This was not the case for Vanuatu in 2015, when Cyclone Pam caused widespread damage in Port Vila. In that instance, the government was not fully functional, and OCHA and other UN agencies and international NGOs played an active role in staging and executing the response.

¹³ *Localisation in practice: A Case Study. What CARE Australia and local partner Live and Learn have learned from jointly responding to Cyclone Winston in Fiji.*

Given the differences in response capacity across the Pacific, the AAR recognised that a regional scenario planning exercise would test out the partnership assumptions and risks in each country. For example, what would a response look like if Suva were hit by a disaster? Is there sufficient in-house capacity to respond should two Pacific nations be simultaneously hit by a super-cyclone?

Responding to TCW was a new experience for both partners. For CARE, the situation was not a typical CARE-led partnership within a larger and practiced CARE International response structure. CARE needs to re-evaluate its response protocols in light of working alongside a local partner in a non-presence country. (This will be discussed further in a CARE EPP exercise, scheduled for later in the year). Live & Learn Fiji's prior engagement in a humanitarian response had been "*mostly about implementing components of others' strategies... and not from the beginning.*" For Live & Learn staff – new and old – it "*was a big exercise [that] happened quickly and shocked the whole system.*" The AAR participants recognised that "*the first three months were tough*", but they also recognised that they had been able to push through the barriers and now feel more confident and skilled. The comments below recognise the commitment and compassion that individual team members brought to their work:

I was given an opportunity to lead a team when we made field visits to the districts. No one has shown confidence in me before. I've really appreciated the teamwork and support that everyone gave. I feel stronger now (Female Team Leader).

I've had to rethink how I work... question if I am doing things without discrimination... In the monitoring visits, we have been listening to stories told by community members. Some have been traumatic, and I have been struggling personally. The driver who took us out to the field told me how he had lost his wife in the Cyclone, but he also said that standing in the background and listening to other's stories had been healing for him. I see now that the work is also transformational (MEAL team member).

Annexes:

- **Annex I: AAR Inception Report**
- **Annex II: Cyclone Winston Gender Marker Vetting Form**
- **Annex III: Recommended Actions**
- **Annex IV: AAR Workshop Annex**
- **Annex V: CARE Australia Departmental AAR Consultation Notes**
- **Annex VI: Cross-Departmental Protocol Issues**

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