



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

**FAO In Action**  
IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

*FAO and partners help restore  
nutrition and agricultural livelihoods in the Pacific Islands*



VANUATU

**P**ort Vila, Vanuatu – Melina Lamai is an urban subsistence farmer from Port Vila, Vanuatu. When Cyclone Pam, a Category 5 tropical storm, struck Vanuatu in March 2015, communities were flattened, gardens demolished, access to clean water affected and livelihoods shattered. With over 80 percent of the population dependent on agriculture, including Lamai’s family, the losses were devastating as they relied on food from their garden to feed their families.

“I was proud of my garden and also proud of agriculture for helping me to have such a productive garden,” said Lamai, adding that the losses from Cyclone Pam were both serious and personal.

Lamai lives with her husband, two children and six grandchildren. Her busy lifestyle means she spends most days at home meeting the needs of the three generations in the household; with home gardening one of the highest priorities to meet the nutritional needs of the family. Hence the destruction of Lamai’s garden was a huge setback for her family of ten. The majority of her crops were lost and her family began to rely on emergency food rations which included rice, packet noodles and tinned fish.

**Replanting, regenerating, rebuilding**

Initial assessments conducted across all six provinces showed that the cyclone’s damage to agriculture had been severe, extending to all aspects from cash crops to subsistence level farming. As part of the disaster response, FAO consulted with the Food Security and Agriculture Cluster (FSAC) to identify households in need of urgent assistance and targeted them as priorities for seed distribution.

*“I was proud of my garden and also proud of agriculture for helping me to have such a productive garden,” - Melina Lamai, urban subsistence farmer*

FAO and the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) then launched the ‘Emergency Support to Re-establish Food Security in Communities by Tropical Cyclone Pam Project’ to help families like Lamai’s become food self-sufficient once again.



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As part of the project’s implementation, FAO collaborated with the NGOs Oxfam and Act for Peace to reach more remote communities in the provinces, while working with the Department of Agriculture & Rural Development (DARD) in the capital, Port Vila, to distribute seeds and leaflets for garden restoration. In total, nearly 50,000 individuals were assisted across the country – including Lamai and her family.

*With over 80 percent of the population dependent on agriculture, including Lamai's family, the losses were devastating as they relied on food from their garden to feed their families*



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Lamai received five types of seeds to rebuild her garden: dwarf beans, pumpkin, sweet corn, papaya and watermelon. These crops start producing after one month of planting (dwarf beans) to three months (sweet corn/pumpkin/watermelon) and six months (papaya). She had already harvested the dwarf beans and was eagerly waiting for the other crops to ripen.

Overall, the garden's benefit is twofold. First, Lamai uses the garden to support her family's diet, producing healthy crops for cooking. She uses the excess vegetables to sell at the market where she earns a small income to help further provide for her family.

*"I am really glad to have received the seeds. Now my garden is better than it was before the cyclone," said a smiling and confident Lamai*

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## Lessons learned

Urban life can be difficult in Vanuatu's capital. A disaster further compounds existing and underlying issues such as unemployment and high living costs. Without home grown produce many urban households would struggle to get by and would need to rely on store-bought foods rather than their own nutritious fresh produce. Lamai and her family are examples of how small agricultural inputs can greatly improve nutrition, livelihoods and resilience.

Support for these communities is ongoing with FAO committed to assisting Ni-Vanuatu in this recovery process.

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## ACHIEVING FAO'S STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Increasing the resilience of livelihoods to disasters and enabling inclusive and efficient agricultural and food systems are two of FAO's strategic objectives in achieving a food-secure world.

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