

THE RECEIPT

JUNE 2021

TACKLING
COVID-19
WITH CASH

BUILDING ON
SUCCESS

MANAGING
RISK IN PAPUA
NEW GUINEA

MEET THE TEAM



Tackling COVID-19 with cash

A mum and daughter received digital cash transfers to support them through the pandemic.

Photo: Nicholas Rabuku/Save the Children Fiji

In March this year, Save the Children with partner Vodafone Fiji, reached household number 14,000 with a digital cash transfer.

The mother from the home who received this payment didn't quite understand why she was so special to us, but ultimately this payment meant that we had reached the number of people we had set out to support in communities devastated by COVID-19.

And it felt great.

In recent weeks we have seen the Government of Fiji acting quickly to contain potential COVID-19 outbreaks, but Fiji has, until now, gone relatively unscathed by the health impacts of the virus. What we have seen is entire

communities suffering as a result of closed borders and the subsequent economic impact.

"Many people from Australia and New Zealand already know what a wonderful country Fiji is to holiday in, so they would understand that the pandemic has crippled our economy which is normally buoyed by tourism," said Shairana Ali, CEO of Save the Children Fiji. "But closed borders have also impacted households, as remittance received from family members working overseas, at last count made up 5.2% of Fiji's GDP. It's an additional blow, that many people around the world don't know about."



Father of three Penaia worked in hospitality but like many others across Fiji, lost his job as borders closed due to the pandemic, and he has not been able to secure work since. Penaia was selected to be included in our digital cash transfer program and has so far received \$300 FJD, which he used to buy children's lunches and bus fares to schools, and pay electricity and water bills.

Photo: Nicholas Rabuku/Save the Children Fiji

Children will always be our number one priority. But when we started working with partners Fijian Council of Social Services and their District Councils of Social Services, to unearth the people who were the most vulnerable to the economic effects of COVID-19, we discovered that the most vulnerable people came from many different communities and age groups.

"We had established a vulnerability criterion which helped us to determine who would receive these payments, yet we were surprised at how diverse our list grew," Ms. Ali said. "But because we are aiming to strengthen the broader economy, we know that money spent within communities is ultimately going to help children across the country."

On Vanua Levu, one of the areas that was identified to be in desperate need was a small community made up of families of mixed ethnicities from Fiji and other countries across the Pacific. Most of the residents are unable to own land in Fiji.

We partnered with the local council to ensure the cash voucher program was reaching the right people here. "We assisted people with disabilities, elderly, single headed households, and those who were directly impacted by COVID-19," explained Mr Tabaileau, Advisory Councillor for the village and settlement. "Watching them lining up to receive the cash assistance was one of the proudest moments of my life. I know those who were really in need were assisted through this cash project."

"The assistance covered 38 families who were in need at such trying times. I'm happy to see that the assistance covers everyone despite their ethnicity as this is one of the challenges we face where officers in charge tend to serve their kinds better than other ethnicity groups. I'm grateful for the assistance offered by Save the Children to the members of the community I serve."

While this community was in an area needing urgent support, we recognise that all Fijian communities have been impacted. So we travelled all over the country to identify some of the worst-hit households.

Tourism industry operators were also in very visible need. Mrs Kawa was one of the people who was directly impacted by the pandemic, as she lost her job soon after the borders closed. "The drastic impact of COVID-19 spared no one as everyone felt its impact through the country. I worked as a hotelier at a resort. When COVID-19 came, we were sent home as borders has been closed and we had no guests at all in the resort," she said.

"The moment when we were informed that we will be excused from work was one of the most painful moments...I was the sole breadwinner for my family."

Mrs Kawa and her husband had managed to just make ends meet, but the additional support the cash assistance provided them came as a huge relief. "Ever since I was laid off, my husband and I go ...*continued page 4.*

Building on Success



The Solomon Islands Cash Working Group brings together staff from Oxfam, SI Red Cross, ADRA, SI Post Office, NDMO, Tongs, SI Chamber of Commerce and SI Central Bank as national cash working group in the Solomon Islands.

Photo: Save the Children

As part of the Australian Humanitarian Partnership's (AHP) Performance and Partnerships Fund, Disaster READY partners were offered additional funding to build on existing, well-performing programs.

In the Solomon Islands, one priority for Save the Children is a greater investment in supporting the national Cash Working Group (CWG) which was established in July 2020. Chaired by the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) and co-chaired by the Save the Children, the group brings together humanitarian actors, banks, wholesalers, and government services, to meaningfully draw from one another's expertise.

Veronica from wholesaler Tongs, said she had gained "a new foundation of knowledge and concept which will enable the transformation of the humanitarian practice in our country... communities affected by disaster or crisis are empowered to make decisions for their own lives." ■



Managing risk in Papua New Guinea

Save the Children staff conducting key informant interviews as part of a Feasibility Risk Assessment.

Photo: Rachel Tarsan/Save the Children

Save the Children in Papua New Guinea has conducted Feasibility Risk Assessments in seven provinces — Eastern Highlands, Morobe, Western, East Sepik, Autonomous Region of Bougainville, Central and Jiwaka provinces. Around the world, Save the Children uses these assessments to decide whether or not cash assistance is a viable and safe way to best support communities.

Kara Jackson is Save the Children's CVA Project Coordinator in Papua New Guinea. He explained that conducting assessments like this are crucial for a robust program, "Feasibility Risk Assessments are the first step in seeing whether the project is an appropriate response and how it can be delivered to beneficiaries," he said. "Once the data has been compiled and analysed we will be in a position to begin bringing together key

stakeholders at national and local level to form working group committee and running scoping assessments."

The Feasibility Risk Assessments covered households, Focus Group Discussions, and Key Informant Interviews, and were completed in coordination with local-level Governments, Government agencies, financial service providers and agents, along with market actors, humanitarian agencies, and donors. Over 1,000 people were surveyed, and over 100 Key Informant Interviews took place.

This Cash Voucher Assistance Program is part of Disaster READY, supported by the Australian Government and implemented through the Australian Humanitarian Partnership. ■



Mrs Gara discusses the difficulties her community has faced during the pandemic.

Photo: Save the Children

From page 2... out fishing to sustain us and we sell some to help us buy other things. I am fortunate to be assisted by Save the Children through their cash assistance project.”

“The assistance was timely and it’s a big help for us as we invested it in fuel for our boat to enable us to fish more and generate income for our household. Part of the money assisted us in sending our children back to school with a full set of school stationery and uniforms.”

In addition to the registering households for the one payment, Save the Children allocated funds dedicated to people we met who required immediate assistance. Through a referral from our partner Fiji Council of

Social Services and its 15 sub-national District Council of Social Services, we identified Mrs Gara* as someone eligible for to access this Special Needs Fund.

Mrs Gara described the difficulties she was already facing before the pandemic exacerbated her problems. “Life is a struggle and COVID-19 makes things worse,” Mrs Gara explained. “I sometimes want to give up as I’m aging so quickly with no support. I live with my brother-in-law who is physically challenged ... I

also take care of my two grandchildren whose parents got divorced recently.”

Save the Children and our partners understand that there are many households in Fiji that would have met our vulnerability criterion. But we simply could not reach everyone. “We have received a number of queries from the general public asking how to register for the cash assistance,” Ms Ali explained. “It is heartbreaking to tell them that we were not able to reach everyone at this time, but I also explain that this entire project was designed to not only help the households receiving the cash, but also their communities as the money is spent locally. We are really excited to follow up in the weeks to come and find out how this ripple effect is helping children and communities in Fiji.” ■

* **Name changed**

Get in touch

To find out more about new innovations in cash and voucher assistance please contact one of our Cash Leads:

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Nash facilitating a workshop in Fiji as part of the AHP's Disaster READY program

Photo: Chris Latif/Save the Children

Around the world, one of Save the Children's key strengths is the rich and diverse experience of our technical staff.

Meet Nash. Save the Children's Senior Regional Cash Technical Advisor.

"Before I started working in the cash field, I was the Food Security and Livelihood focal person for Action Against Hunger Philippines. In 2016 I went to Turkey as Livelihood Cash Expert. It's here I began exploring cash transfers as we had received an excess amount of in-kind donations from NGOs and UN agencies, so we had extra budget. As a livelihood person, I had wanted to use cash to support the local economy which meant we could provide fresh food to the internally displaced

Nash stands with a woman thrilled to receive a digital cash transfer payment.

Photo: Chris Latif/Save the Children



persons. It was a really successful program, and I often think about that when faced with challenges rolling out cash programming in new markets.

In 2017, I joined DanChurchAid Cambodia as the Cash and Innovation Coordinator. I learnt a lot from my peers as I led the Cash Working Group which was really useful while I developed a cash preparedness plan and beneficiary management system for cash transfer using mobile money. And finally in 2019, I joined Save the Children Australia as the Regional Technical Cash Advisor for cash preparedness projects in the Pacific.

Cash work is exciting and there are constantly new innovative ways that it can be used to best support the context. The use of cash and vouchers as a modality is not new; however, in humanitarian settings it is still in its infancy and this makes me excited to explore a new concept. I believe that cash and voucher preparedness is fast becoming the new normal in humanitarian response.

Because Pacific island countries are largely new and emerging economies that use cash for the exchange of goods and services, cash programming works incredibly well in both the context of larger urban hubs as well as smaller remote communities.

In the Pacific, geography and access are the most obvious challenges, followed by the misunderstanding or mistrust of cash programming, but we are working with community leaders, Civil Society Organisations to dispel any persistent rumours." ■



A mother shows evidence of her cash payment that will help her and her family through this difficult time in Fiji.

Photo: Save the Children

Save the Children's cash programs are reaching some of the most vulnerable families in the Pacific.

We are proud to be working with National Governments and agencies, civil society organisations, NGO partners, and the private sector to deliver this life-changing work. We would like to acknowledge the Australian Humanitarian Partnership and fellow Disaster READY members across the Pacific: Care, Caritas, Oxfam, Plan International, World Vision, as well as the following partners on a national level:

Fiji: we would like to thank the Fijian Government, the Fiji Council of Social Services, Medical Services Fiji, and Rainbow Pride.

Papua New Guinea: Digicel PNG, Telikom PNG, Ministry of Community Development, Climate Change, BSP PNG, and Local Government.

Solomon Islands: Solomon Post EZi Pei, and the National Cash Working Group

Vanuatu: Oxfam in the Pacific, the National Cash Working Group, and Digicel Vanuatu.

Donors: The Australian Government via the Australian Humanitarian Partnership, CapitalLand, The New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and other generous donors.