

# peacemail

VOLUME 6 • ISSUE 3

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AUSTRALIA

**act for peace**  
reduce poverty | protect refugees  
prevent conflicts | empower communities



Act for Peace is working with the Australian Government to reduce the risks associated with natural disasters such as tsunamis and cyclones in the Pacific Region. We are also assisting community planning to adapt to climate change. The Pacific Community-focused Integrated Disaster Risk Reduction (PCIDRR) Project is being implemented by faith-based networks in cooperation with government disaster management bodies and other stakeholders in the Solomon Islands, Fiji, Vanuatu and Tonga.

Field Project Officers travel to remote areas and spend up to ten days in each targeted village helping form and train a Community Disaster Management Committee (CDMC) and guiding their work as the Committee develops its own Community Disaster Plan (CDP).

The cost to establish a Committee of 10 local people so they can develop their own CDP is about \$200 per member. This amount includes salaries of two Field Project Officers and materials and equipment to produce the CDP. This investment in prevention and preparedness really pays off as communities face the life-threatening hazards as well as serious problems due to the effects of climate change.

Act for Peace is the international aid agency of the National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA).

**actalliance**



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**THANK YOU Partners** for your commitment to Act for Peace through your prayers and regular gifts. Through your generosity, we are making a real and lasting difference to the lives of many people affected by conflict or extreme poverty.

If you would like to upgrade your regular gift, simply free call Howard or Sarah on **1800 025 101** or email [hgraham@ncca.org.au](mailto:hgraham@ncca.org.au). Also, all feedback and suggestions are welcome, as we love to hear from you and to pass on comments to project partners.

On the other hand, if you are not yet an Act for Peace Partner and would like to be, or would just like to help this project, your call or email will be welcomed! *All gifts of \$2 or more are tax deductible.*

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## Pacific Islanders Face Natural Disasters and Rising Sea Levels with Confidence

*Dear Act for Peace Partner,*

My name is James and I live with my wife and five children in a small coastal village on the Island of Malaita in the Solomon Islands. I am the third generation to grow up here. We built our home in a mangrove swamp, the only land available, using coral and stones for the foundation.

I am a fisherman and I sell my catch and shell products in the market for a living and to provide for our children's education. I have been a committed Christian for more than 12 years and now act as a volunteer Village Pastor.

We want the best for our children, to make sure that they have a good education and things to do, such as sport to keep them and all the village children out of mischief. I love my home, the village people, my friends and family and our unique culture. I dream that one day our village will solve the problems of rising sea levels and finding fresh water.

That's why I became Chairman of the Village Community Disaster Management Committee. Field Project Officers visited and told us about the initiative to help us understand and plan to reduce the impact from environmental risks that have previously caused havoc in coastal villages. By learning helpful techniques, we have analysed potential hazards and are taking action to reduce them. We also have a plan to minimise damage and loss of life when disasters strike.

Right now, our village is drowning and if we do not act soon, many homes will be lost. Recent cyclones in other parts of the Solomon Islands remind us of Cyclone Ida, which struck our village in 1955. Many people died and the land mass that had always protected us from cyclones and storm surges was completely destroyed. Since then we have been extremely vulnerable to bad weather conditions.

In addition, we have a problem with fresh water. Every two or three days, our men travel across the bay in canoes to purchase fresh water for cooking and drinking. This is costly and time consuming. Fresh water is a major issue for our 500 residents.

We have explored the option of relocating our village to a safer place. There are many difficulties in negotiating suitable land for the whole village, as land ownership is a major issue in the Solomon Islands. We are also reluctant to leave our homeland. Our culture is unique and tied to the land that we have been living on for generations. For us, adaptation to climate change is the only real option.

Our Community Disaster Plan (CDP) has identified priorities we are fixing now, but also includes initiatives that will take a lot of time and money:

- Raising sea walls to protect homes and gardens from sea water inundation
- Fitting guttering on iron roofs, such as the Evacuation Centre and church, and building water tanks to collect fresh drinking water
- Planting more mangroves to protect us from storm surges and rising sea levels
- Planting special salt resistant seeds for improved food security
- Purchasing a fibreglass boat and outboard motor to assist in search and rescue

Thank you for sending the Field Officers who empowered us to take action. We feel much more confident and ready to survive the worst conditions.

### Partner's Prayer Points:

***Give thanks for the faith of Village Pastors and Leaders as they work with their communities to overcome environmental hazards.***

***Pray for guidance and strength for those who impart lifesaving skills and for courage and safety of villagers as they put plans into action when disasters threaten.***



*The Mao Family*

*James Mao*



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