

ABSTRACT

The stories contained in this publication represents the personal recollections of project beneficiaries about their experiences during and after Tropical Cyclone Harold. Their stories of pain, suffering and hopelessness has turned into stories of hope and triumph due to the support received from the TC Harold Activation ProjectThe stories contained in this publication represents the personal recollections of project beneficiaries about their experiences during and after Tropical Cyclone Harold. Their stories of pain, suffering have become a beacon of hope acknowledging the support received from DFAT under the AHP TC Harold Fiji Activation

ACKNOWLEGEMENT

We, the Australian Humanitarian Partnership (AHP) partners would like to extend our sincere appreciation to our donor, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) for its funding support that enabled us to reach those people and communities that were disproportionately affected by the devastating impacts of Tropical Cyclone Harold in April 2020.

In addition, we would like to thank the Government of Fiji for supporting the AHP Fiji partners to provide humanitarian response and recovery support to the Tropical Cyclone Harold affected communities.

Additionally Moreover, we acknowledge the contribution of our local partners and their corresponding Australian partners; CAN DO, and ADRA Australia and ADRA Fiji, Live and Learn Environmental Education & CAREare Australia, Empower Pacific & Rainbow Pride Foundation under the Child Fund Australia, Field Ready, Fiji Disabled Peoples Federation & Pacific Partners in Communities Development Fund Fiji under Plan International Australia, Habitat for Humanity Fiji, Habitat for Humanity Australia under the World Vision Australia and finally Save the Children Fiji under Save the Children Australia.

Similarly, we also wish to acknowledge other local NGO partners that supported this Activation namely Fiji Council of Social Services and OXFAM in the Pacific.

The stories contained in this booklet reflects the impacts of the joint collaboration under the TC Harold Activation.

Last but not the least, a big "Thank you, & Vinaka Vakalevu, dhanyavad, fai'akse'ea" to our project beneficiaries agreeing to share their personal stories with us.

Disclaimer

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Case Study One



www.pcdf.org.fj

DETAILS

Implementation Area: Nabukelevu-ira, Kadavu

Component: WASH/SANITATION

Relief in A Time of Crisis

The coronavirus pandemic, earlier this year, sent the world in a spiral. Many countries and economies reeled at its impact; Fiji was no exception. Upon the announcement of Fiji's first COVID-19 case on March 19th, Lautoka was sent on a 14-day lockdown (this was later extended), a curfew was imposed, all unnecessary movements were restricted and social distancing was emphasized.

Two weeks later and as the number of cases increased, the capital city of Suva followed suit. The city was sent on a 14-day lockdown from Delainavesi to Nausori (bridge) on April 3rd. Fiji began to close its borders; children were sent home as schools were closed; social gatherings were prohibited; hundreds of people lost (and continue to) their jobs with the tourism and travel industry being the worst impacted and the government and relevant ministries began to regulate curfews, restrictions and laws to address and minimise the impacts of this pandemic.

While Fiji reeled at the impact of COVID-19, another disaster struck. A category 4 cyclone (TC Harold) with average speed of up to 195km/ hour with gusts up to 275km/hour slammed the country on the 8th of April. The cyclone caused major structural damages and mass flooding in most parts of the country while Kadavu and southern Lau felt the full brunt of the cyclone. According to reports given by the Minister of National Disaster Management, 186,000 Fijians were affected and the cost of damages were estimated at \$100million.



Figure 1. Panapasa Tagica of Natumua village, Kadavu with relief supplies inside his damaged house. Photo: Taina Naivalu.

TC Harold struck just two days before the Easter weekend, an occasion many Christians in Fiji look forward to. However, the circumstances had many picking up the pieces in the aftermath of TC Harold



and the restrictions regulated as per COVID-19 impact had many pondering on their future, about the pandemic and commemorating the Easter holiday from their own homes if not at all. Being an organisation that promotes disaster preparedness and response, PCDF acted upon initial damage assessment reports received from the Commissioner Central's office. On the Good Friday holiday, all PCDF

A week later, PCDF organized yet another transfer of the same basic relief supplies to be sent to Kadavu, the worst affected by the cyclone. Taina was amongst the response team led by NDMO and included, Fiji Red Cross, the provincial office,





Figure 3. Lute Naiyaloniceva of Natumua village with her family's relief supplies inside her damaged house. Photo: Taina Naivalu

government reps and military personnel who were conducting initial damage assessments as well as the distribution of basic relief supplies.

PCDF was able to assist 19 villages, 2 settlements and 1 primary school. 566 individuals (inclusive of men, women, children and people living with disability) from 130 households (please verify) through this relief work. The relief package included a basic hygiene kit, blankets and basic kitchen utensils.

Through this relief efforts and PCDF's quick response, more assistance have been received for the organisation to further disaster response work for Kadavu island.

Case Study Two



www.pcdf.org.fj

DETAILS

Implementation Area: Nabukelevu-ira, Kadavu

Component: WASH/SANITATION

TC Harold Activation Project

The devastation caused by TC Harold on April 8, 2021 affected many people in Fiji, particularly in Kadavu, where the Category 4 cyclone made a landfall.

No lives were lost but it left people on the island struggling for months. While Food security and livelihoods were badly affected throughout the island, WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene), was also identified as a setback.

In a rural setting such as Nabukelevu-ira village in the district of Nabukelevu, toilet facilities located outdoor were destroyed and their water supply was affected causing a major concern for proper sanitation.

But thanks to the immediate intervention by the Australian Humanitarian Partnership (AHP) through Partner in Community Development Fiji (PCDF), the people of Nabukelevu-ira were able to have proper access to sanitation and clean drinking water. This is part of the AUD\$1m given by Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) under the AHP partners to response to TC Harold in affected areas in Fiji.



Figure 4: Nabukelevu-ira community health worker Veniana Velo infront of a newly constructed flush toilet facility.

The construction of new facilities due to the cyclone was also a blessing in disguise for the people. Carting water daily from the tap to the toilets, which was often located at a distance, no longer became a problem with an upgrade from water seal to flush toilets.

Carting water for sanitary purposes was a tiring job and were additional task to the daily chores of the women.

"Majority still had access to water seal toilets and most of these toilets were blown away and destroyed by the cyclone. We are grateful to PCDF for constructing new flush toilet facilities . As a health worker I'm always concerned about hygiene and having access to flush toilets helps maintain good hygiene practices," Community



Health Worker Veniana Vole said.

A total of 55 new toilet facilities was constructed in Nabukelevu-ira and their water supply was repaired. Although 50 toilets were supposed to be constructed, PCDF saw the need to add 5 more taking into consideration people living with a disability and the elderly in the community.

"What a blessing to have clean flush toilets which are close by for easy access. Before we have to struggle to get to the toilet, most of us had our toilets located right down the village because of the smell and also to get easy water access but that is no longer a problem for an old lady like me," 67 year-old Sainiana Naveilagalaga said. It was revealed that water seal toilets are mostly constructed with left over building materials, roofing iron poorly done.

".Whenever, there was a cyclone, they were the first one to be blown away and it took time for the men to build one because the pit was usually filled with rain water. Now, we have been provided with everything and they are of good quality. They cemented the base to secure it. I am also thankful that they provided new pipes for our water and now we are now enjoying drinking from our new taps," Keni Soro, 30, said.

Case Study Three

DETAILS

Implementation Area: Ba

Component: WASH/SANITATION

CAN DO supports Government's COVID-19 Fight in Ba

For community-based projects to become successful, implementers need the support from members of the community and stakeholders on the ground. Alliance and partnership have proven to improve the social impact of projects implemented as their corporations complement each other.

Through such collaborations, the Adventist Development Relief Agency (ADRA) Fiji, a humanitarian organisation, has been achieving its deliverables in reaching out to help those living in vulnerable communities.

Mosese Koroi, the Sub-Divisional Health Inspector in Ba, have worked with ADRA Fiji in the Western Division with their Resilience Project for the past 3 years and have collaborated closely for sustainable health aspects of the livelihood support to the communities in the Ba Province.

The collaboration continued when COVID-19 hit Fiji. Mosese once again played a key role in ADRA Fiji's COVID-19 Activation Response Project which focused on the disseminating of messages to help in the prevention and mitigation of the pandemic. The project comes under the Church Agency Network Disaster Operations (CAN DO), funded by Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade through the Australian Humanitarian Partnership (AHP). CAN DO aims to save lives, alleviate suffering and enhance human dignity during and in aftermath of conflict, disasters and other humanitarian crises.

"After the first case of COVID-19 in Fiji following the peak in misinformation and anxieties with communities, Ministry of Health and Medical Services were preparing for a surge of health issues to be addressed within our health centres and communities. We did not envision that during the height of the new hype we had another cyclone TC Harold ravaging through Fiji," he said.

According to Mosese, he was confident in the partnership to reach out to ADRA for assistance in the Post TC Harold COVID 19-Lepstopiarosis, Typhoid, Dengue and Diarrhoea (LTDD) Outreach to communities.

He revealed that the urgent health risks to affected communities was quite high with the Ba Emergency Operation Centre quite inundated and short staffed to cover the vast sporadic population in the Ba Province.

"As a Health Inspector you have to work within your budget and this is usually more focussed to regular Public Health and Clinical services- the experience of COVID 19 onto our Health sector has pushed the resources to the limit and the compounding demands and the need to ensure the health services of both normal activities and the COVID Screening and Awareness further emergent needs after TC Harold was just too much to be addressed by the Health sector alone.

Mosese said the add value support through ADRA and CAN DO was quite timely during the height of the COVID-LTDD Awareness in the support of vehicles and drivers, community health volunteers, recharge cards for over 20 teams provided much needed relief for the teams to be able to communicate and liaise with community leaders in order for the operation to be completed on time.

This ongoing partnership with CAN DO Project led to the successful Nalotawa community Water Safety Training Plan in the Post COVID 19 Empowerment Strategy for Ba Province. "I believe that this way of working, long standing strong partnerships that focusses on community needs, preparedness and responding timely is what we can count on to ensure communities are informed and be better prepared for disasters and the newest experience on pandemic such as COVID 19," Mosese said.

Covid 19 Activation AHP project Manager Christine Lemau has applauded the work carried out by Mosese and the collaboration with his health team in Ba which has resulted in the successful implementation of the project in the area.

"Humanitarian actors, NGO and CSO interventions must complement efforts with state actors such as vital partners as the Ministry of Health and Medical services, to ensure that project implementers do duplicate and compete with target areas-as the vulnerable and affected population do not care who is helping them, but rather the most vulnerable and hard to reach are receiving the timely help and access to life saving informationote

Case Study Four

DETAILS

Implementation Area: Solovola Village; Nasegai

Component:

Agricultural Kits Assistance

Rupeni Moqili of Solovola village in the district of Nasegai was thankful to have been assisted with agricultural kits consisting of a Post hole spade, cane knife and file. His family was amongst the 663 households that benefited from kits in 17 communities.

"After the cyclone we were completely lost. There were a lot of work to be done for us to recover but we had the feeling of hopelessness. The distribution of agricultural kits was a motivation for us to stand up and work on the land to rebuild our lives," Mogili said.

"We were given the basics – they were exactly what we needed to start over. Even so, some of us did not have these tools before and we used to borrow from others but thanks to CAN DO, we were able to own one."

Moqili said that since then, he has planted cassava, dalo, kumala and vegetables in his farm, some of which have already been harvested. He has also planted yaqona – the main source of income for his family.

"One thing I learned after the cyclone is the importance of planting right. In the village, we

have decided to plant kumala more as this will not be affected in any cyclone. Unlike cassava, what's left after the cyclone could not be consumed as they were either bad or the one left for were really hard.

"We will now wait for the cyclone season to finish before we start planting cassava again. I lost my yaqona plantation as well and I am thankful that I have replanted again thanks to the assistance from CAN DO."

Case Study Five

DETAILS

Implementation Area: Nukunuku Village; Tavuki Component: Agriculture and Livelihood- Cash for Work & Disability Allowance

Cash For Land Cultivation & Seeds Assistance

86 year-old Miliakere Rokolaca of Nukunuku village in the district of Tavuki was reduced to tears when she thanked CAN DO for the Cash for Land Cultivation initiative that has helped in the set of a farm to benefit people like her. She hasn't been able to move around for 3 years and relied on her son Joni Rokolaca to take care of her.

"When I heard about the initiative, I was really thankful because it's the first time for me to come across such an initiative to assist the vulnerable members of the community," Miliakere said.

"It gave us a sense of belonging. My son has been taking care of me. I can only sit like this but can't move around so he does everything for me. I feel sorry for him for having to do all these and with this initiative, I am really grateful because it will definitely help him in taking care of me."

Each of the 17 communities received cash for work amounting to \$900 to set up farms for the vulnerable members of the community which includes people living with disabilities, the elderly and single mothers.

Miliakere's son Joni has extended his heartfelt appreciation to CAN DO and the Australian Aid for the kind assistance. "I moved from my village to take of my mother. My mother is from Nukunuku and I am from another village. It's not easy taking care of her – ensuring that she takes her bath, carrying her to the toilets and having to worry about the food she eats. I am really grateful for this assistance that will at least ease the burden for me as it will supply us with vegetables and crops."

The village of Nukunuku has already planted over 300 cassava and kumala tops. They will conduct communal work once a month to plant and maintain the farm. Harvest will be distributed to the most vulnerable in the village.

Joni is also thankful for the seeds distributed to each community which will be planted in those farms to benefit the vulnerable and most disadvantage members of society

"You have brought in a lot of seeds to be planted in the farm. We have been told by the Kadavu Agriculture Officers that there's a lot of seed supplies and we can also share it out in the village. Even the seeds assistance we received from Government was only enough to be planted once but as for the one you brought; we have been told that it is enough to last us for half a year. Thank you CAN DO!

Case Study Six

DETAILS

Implementation Area: Namalata Village, Tavuki District Component: WASH/SANITATION

Success Story – Surviving the Impact of TC Harold

Tropical Cyclone Harold caused massive destruction on the island of Kadavu affecting food security and livelihood of the people.

But the impact was not limited to that, people were psychologically and emotionally affected too because of the loss brought about by the Category 4 cyclone.

It was through this trying time that Empower Pacific stood in to help them recover psychologically and mentally thanks to the financial support provided by Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade under the Australian Humanitarian Partnership.

Stress Management Awareness

Life was hard after the cyclone and Ana (not her real name) was greatly affected. As it was also around the same time of the Covid-19 lockdown, people were laid off and providing for her children's lunches to school was difficulty.

She revealed that food was a source of worry and as a result, she was losing her temper and taking out her anger on her children. She was constantly beating her children up that resulted in the involvement of the Department of Social Welfare. She was also lost.

Being sad, rejected and helpless, Ana came to know of Empower Pacific through the women's rally awareness session facilitated by Emi – EP's Officer based in Kadavu that was held at their church. Emi facilitated a stress management awareness session for them under the Healthy Minds Happy Life theme.

Ana saw this as an opportunity as Emi's presentation

provided a broader knowledge of what she could do to improve her life.

"The first learning was to control my temper. Anger management was a major issue discussed and after Emi's first session, I could identify that I needed to control my temper," Ana said.

"No matter who made me get angry, I would take my anger out on my kids and I learnt a lot from Emi."

Ana said the sessions helped her to improve and it was evident in her relationship with her children.

"Previously I would not listen much to my kids but after the intervention there was a change in the relationship. Better communication lines were established and we now have two way dialogue instead of just one."

The support that she received from Emi was very good. She was very thankful to have met Emi because it has led to a lot of positive changes in their lives.

Ana also shared that after the involvement of the Department of Social Welfare, people in the village looked and treated her differently.

"If there was any assistance or help provided, I was often overlooked."

"Emi encouraged and empowered me to overlook those perception. Now when I see other women going through what I went through I always think "that was me at one stage."

"I am very thankful that there is someone who can help address the issues that women go through as women's issues were pushed aside and there was no one to hear them out."

She told her children about her regrets of how she used to be and shared that her religious belief is a source of strength and support for her.

Case Study Seven

DETAILS

Implementation Area: Nabukelevu-ira, Kadavu Component: Food Security and Livelihood

Success Story – TC Harold Activation Project

The devastation caused by TC Harold on April 8, 2021 affected many people in Fiji, particularly in Kadavu, where the Category 4 cyclone made a landfall.

No lives were lost but it left people on the island struggling for months. Their farms were destroyed and seafood supplies were scarce because the tidal waves also wiped out their fishing boundaries. Food security and livelihoods became badly affected throughout the island.

In Nabukelevu-ira village in the district of Nabukelevu, elders were left to sacrifice some of their meal time in order for their children to still enjoy the luxury of having three meals a day. Food was really scarce.

Seeds and Agricultural Kits

But thanks to the immediate intervention by the Australian Humanitarian Partnership (AHP) through Live and Learn Environmental Education Fiji, the people of Nabukelevu-ira were able to recover well as they were assisted with vegetables seeds after the cyclone. This is part of the AUD\$1m given by Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) under the AHP partners to respond to TC Harold in affected areas in Fiji.

"Two weeks after the cyclone, we still had access food, left over from the cyclone but things became hard after that. We relied mostly on food rations that were given by Government and other organizations. Life was pretty hard."

"I had preferred cutting down on my meals so that we can at least have enough for our children. You know, I am old and my life span on this earth is short compared to our children so might as well I sacrifice on their behalf."

Tukana said they would have breakfast at around 10am, lunch would be as late as 4pm and that would be their final meal for the day. A cup of water at night was sufficient to take them through the night until their next meal.

This was the practice for months until assistance arrived from Live and Learn in the form of seeds and agricultural kits that helped them rebuild their lives. LLE assisted 1000 households with agricultural kits and vegetable seeds with distribution conducted in six villages in the Tikina of Nabukelevu I Ra and Yawe area. The Tikina of Nabukelevu consists of three villages namely Nasau, Daviqele,Qalira and Nabukelevu I Ra while the two communities from the Tikina of Yawea included Ekita and Naqalotu. The tools distributed consisted of a Shovel, Digging hoe, Cane Knife and a File.

SMART Agriculture Training

But what was more rewarding was the lessons learnt from trainings conducted to empower communities on Food Security through Climate Smart Agriculture as well teaching them Good



Figure 3. Ms. Alumeci Tukana, in the middle, with others who chose to sacrifice their meals to feed the children in their families.

Agricultural Practices.

"We are grateful for the lessons that were taught particularly on how to sow these seeds. We received seeds prior to that but we were not taught how to grow them and eventually some were wasted," 26 year-old Tomasi Waqa said.

"Climate smart agriculture taught us the importance of planting right and that is definitely what we have been following after the cyclone. We won't plant cassava in the cyclone season because they are easily damage during any cyclone but instead plant kumala because it can withstand the cyclone." He extended his appreciated to the Australian Humanitarian Partnership for choosing Nabukelevu-ira as one of the benefiting communities.

Case Study Eight

DETAILS

Implementation Area: Nabukelevu-ira, Kadavu Component: Food Security and Livelihood

Responding To Utmost Urgent Needs

Tropical Cyclone Harold passed straight over Fiji, in particular the islands of Kadavu, Vatulele, and the Lau group, causing widespread and significant destruction of public structures, and blocked roads due to fallen trees. Flash flooding occurred in low lying areas and areas close to riverbanks, seawater flooded in low lying coastal areas. Power outages throughout the areas made it difficult to immediately quantify the damage. Radiotelephone, landline phones and mobile phone networks were all affected.

Entire villages were destroyed. Homes and crops were damaged, and power lines were cut. On Sunday, 12 April, the Government of Fiji declared a State of Natural Disaster for areas severely affected by TC Harold.

The declaration was for certain parts of the Eastern, Central and Western Divisions of the country. Eastern Division, Kadavu and the Southern Lau Group that were particularly hard hit.

According to the data provided by NDMO, the Nakasaleka district has an estimated 29 communities which is comprised of formal villages and settlements making up a total population of 1,839 adults and children and this represents 17% of the total population in Kadavu.

Unise's house was partially destroyed by Tropical Cyclone Harold. Like many in her community in Kadavu, Fiji, she and her family now face lack of food, access to income and a disruption to education.Mrs. Unise's story in her own words (translated from I-taukei)

"We were at home when we felt the cyclone gale hovering over the house and all of the sudden it blew away parts of our house. We packed whatever we could and started to evacuate to the nearest well-built house. We took cover there, until it was a bit calmed.

"The cyclone gale lasted for almost three hours and within that period there was torrential downpour and darkness took over the horizon. The excessive rain flooded most low-lying houses as well as the one near the sea. With that happening, we were just praying, asking God for protection over us. I gathered my children around me as well as my nephew who is deaf. All this while I was assuring them that all will be fine soon".

"Our house was partially destroyed by TC Harold and it's an ongoing trauma as I feel restless and stressed thinking of how we can rebuild given the fact that our main source of income our farm was also severely affected."

"Everything was destroyed and it will be time consuming for us to get back on our feet. Thanks to the Government for the current food rations that at least meets some needs of the families especially with our day to day food".

"My five children are still in a state of shock since they were traumatized with the incident they witnessed. I could see that there's changes in their behaviour after the passing of the cyclone. Most times they just stare at the walls or it takes time for them to respond to me calling them or they even talk amongst themselves about the aftermath of TC Harold. My deaf nephew's condition has deteriorated a bit as he can't freely express himself since we cannot communicate well. Most of the time he is in his own world as language and communication is a barrier between us".

"My children's school stationeries and items were completely destroyed by TC Harold. They have no other item available. With school starting soon, I'm having restless nights thinking of how I can meet my children's education needs. With Save the Children distributing school bag kits and hygiene kits, it is a blessing and an answered prayer as God only knows my thoughts how busy it was overthinking and stressing about getting things for my children. Now I can have sweet dreams knowing that my children will attend school as soon as it starts".

SavetheChildrenisoneofsixNGOsinFijiresponding to the needs of communities whose lives were devastated by Tropical Cyclone Harold. Save the Children conducted a rapid needs assessment on the island and, with the support of Disaster READY, through the Australian Humanitarian Partnership, we have begun providing Psychosocial support for affected children, school bag kits that include a school bag and stationery, and distributing food and family hygiene kits – so that children like Unise's are able to look towards a brighter future.



Figure 3. Mrs. Unise Coa of Nakasaleka Kadavu Photo: Save the Children Fiji

Case Study Nine

DETAILS

Implementation Area: Nabukelevu-ira, Kadavu Component: Food Security and Livelihood

Reaching Fiji's Hardest Hit Communities

Ilisapeci Raiyawa, Tiliva District School head teacher, was amongst the households devastated by Harold. Her quarters were partially destroyed by Tropical Cyclone Harold. Like many in her community in Kadavu, Fiji, Raiyawa and her family now face lack of food, and a disruption to education.

Mrs. Raiyawa's story in her own words (translated from Itaukei)

"As soon as we felt the cyclone gale hovering over the island, I opened the School as it is also an evacuation centre apart from the village hall. Some of my colleagues have started evacuating to the classroom opened to take shelter as the cyclone gale continues to gain its strength".

"The cyclone gale lasted for almost three hours and within that period there was torrential downpour. The excessive rain water flooded most low-lying houses".

"My quarters was partially destroyed particularly the roofs blown off by TC Harold. I am fortunate that the villagers have started rebuilding it before the commencement of school. Villagers around the district comes in groups at their designated dates to clean up and help rebuild not only the quarters but the school also".

"Almost everything was destroyed by TC Harold. This includes personal belongings as well as school properties. TC Harold wrecked almost everything and it will be a slow start for us when school reopens as we try and rehabilitate and replace what was destroyed".

Witnessing Save the Children Fiji distributing school bag kits and hygiene kits gives us community members a positive vibe as the assistance came right on time. The timely assistance will enable parents and guardians to send their children to school without worrying about their stationeries and educational kits. It also gives us teacher's hope which will further boost our morale in teaching them when school reopens".

"Thank you, Save the Children, for the great help and we are also hoping that our early childhood students will be assisted soon as they were also affected by TC Harold".

Save the Children is one of six NGOs in Fijires ponding to the needs of communities whose lives were devastated by Tropical Cyclone Harold. Save the Children conducted a rapid needs assessment on the island and, with the support of Disaster READY, through the Australian Humanitarian Partnership, we have begun providing Psychosocial support for affected children, school bag kits that include a school bag and stationery, and distributing food and family hygiene kits – so that school children are able to look towards a brighter future



Figure 3. Ilisapeci Raiyawa and her children with their school bag kits provided by Save the Children Fiji (PC: SCF)

Case Study Ten

DETAILS

Implementation Area: Nabukelevu-ira, Kadavu Component: Food Security and Livelihood

Case Study 07