

Wan Smolbag Theatre Mid-Term Review Report

Prepared for: AusAID, the New Zealand Aid Programme and Wan Smolbag Theatre

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Executive Summary

The Current Situation and Key Contributing Factors

Wan Smolbag Theatre, formed in 1989, currently employs more than 150 people - 95% of them are local. Beyond its core work as a development theatre company, the organization has branched out into youth programming and reproductive health service delivery (both offered in three locations), a regional television series, and an extensive environmental network. Wan Smolbag currently receives core funding from the New Zealand Aid Programme and AusAID as part of a five-year agreement that runs from January 2010 to December 2014. The total funding originally provided to Wan Smolbag through this arrangement was VUV 535,801,459, although both donors have provided additional funding to Wan Smolbag since 2010. In 2012 core funding covered approximately 55% of all operating costs. Additional funding for core costs and activities in 2012 was provided by other donors including Oxfam, Unicef, and SPC.

Wan Smolbag has received support from several regional and international donors through its history, and has been the subject of numerous reviews. Assessments of Wan Smolbag have been uniformly positive in terms of financial management of activities and resources, and in the volume, diversity and quality of programming activities and products, with Wan Smolbag consistently identified as meeting or exceeding targets. The priority focus of this review, therefore, is on the impact of core funding on Wan Smolbag, the state of the current partnership arrangement, and on how to maximize the effectiveness of ongoing support. The reviewer was also tasked with taking a closer look at research at Wan Smolbag, the governance of the Youth Centre, the organization's connections and networks, current and anticipated demands on the organization, and staff capability.

While retaining its community focus throughout Vanuatu, Wan Smolbag has located its main work in the peri-urban settlement areas in Port Vila, and more recently in Luganville. Changes in the last several years in these communities have included an increase in urban crowding and urban poverty issues, a higher number of out of school and out of work youth, a perceived increase in issues around substance abuse, mental health and conflict among youth, and a growing sense of disillusionment and frustration that has been correlated in other contexts with an increasing loss of trust in public officials and institutions, and a poverty of opportunity.

The most significant changes inside Wan Smolbag since the last review stem from a substantial increase in attendance numbers and activities, and persistent increases in the demands for services. Sections like sports and nutrition, and the reproductive health clinics, have grown significantly, and the production of the ten part television series, *Love Patrol*, has become a regular fixture. This has resulted in increased pressure on management and personnel, as well as on finance, and monitoring and evaluation systems. Significant demands also come from outside of the organization with Wan Smolbag staff and management regularly called upon to participate, or provide leadership, in external meetings, research, and other initiatives.

Overall, Wan Smolbag was rated by all stakeholders in the review, including government, donors and Wan Smolbag management, actors and staff, as a very effective organization. Some of the weaker areas identified were: building and sustaining partnerships with government, other civil society organizations and the private sector, alignment with government priorities, and communicating findings and results - although all were rated on average at a 7 or 8, on a scale from 1 to 10 (with 1 being 'ineffective' and 10 being 'very effective'). Key organizational strengths included: Wan Smolbag's transparency and accountability,

administration of donor funds, capacity to make an impact, understanding of the context in which it works, responsiveness, promotion of social inclusion, acting as an innovator, and supporting more accountable government.

Wan Smolbag was described as a role-model, and as making a significant contribution to Vanuatu. It was also recognized for its accessibility to youth, and its consultative and highly transparent approach to its work. The collaborative approach employed by Wan Smolbag was identified as crucial to its identify and to the success of the organization's governance and management structures, even in the face of significant pressure, change and inadequate resourcing.

Management at Wan Smolbag were located as respected and talented both within the organization, and by donors and government. There was also recognition that management at Wan Smolbag is currently "overstretched". Wan Smolbag staff were also rated very highly in the review, with all 12 criteria from professionalism to commitment and dedication being rated at either a 9 or a 10 across all stakeholders. Staff were recognized as one of the organization's greatest assets. Suggestions for strengthening staff capability included: offering staff formal opportunities for education and training, addressing salary issues, and providing more staff in key areas. The governance of the Youth Centre while functional, was still identified as a weak point, with an updated and more untied Strategic Plan, the establishment of a long term local manager, and the reconfiguration of nutrition and sports identified as priorities.

Reporting was identified as challenging for Wan Smolbag in terms of donor expectations, clarity around "outcomes", and the amount of time managers spent on the administration of donor funds (on average 40% of their time). Research is currently carried out mainly for donors, but there was a mutual interest in having it also serve the needs of Wan Smolbag. Donors said that Wan Smolbag's reports were good, but they found them to be too long and lacking analysis. Wan Smolbag has instituted annual research planning as recommended in the 2009 review, and engages regularly in research initiated both within and outside of the organization. There was an identified need for more resources and staff in both monitoring and evaluation and in research.

In terms of communicating change there was an appetite for the use of stories and new media, as well as an interest in more strategic dialogue and engagement, and less paper. All stakeholders saw an important role for Wan Smolbag in providing an evidence base for policy. Wan Smolbag was perceived by both donors and government as providing a crucial link to communities, and as being able to work in ways and areas where government cannot. Wan Smolbag was valued for its ability to innovate and respond to issues, and was recognized as a highly networked organization with international and regional organizations, as well as with civil society and government in Vanuatu. All stakeholders recognized the value of partnering with government, but recognized the role and importance of an independent civil society.

Core funding for Wan Smolbag was set up to allow the organization to be more responsive, to provide a sense of stability, to streamline administrative work, to provide autonomy and empowerment, and in recognition of donor trust and commitment. While the current arrangement was valued and appreciated by Wan Smolbag, it was only seen to be partially meeting these goals, and was identified as overly tied to a historic project approach. While the arrangement was never set up as complete core funding, in 2012 it was found to be meeting only 55% of overall operating costs, which necessitated a need to go outside of the arrangement to find additional funding for core staff, and for key activities like drama, and the production of *Love Patrol*. While answers varied, on the whole partners identified 100% core funding, or close to it, as the ideal.

Weaknesses were also identified in the relationships among the core partners in the Tripartite Partnership, including the sense that a true and more substantive partnership had not yet been reached in any of the relationships. Both donors in the Tripartite Partnership were identified as working in a somewhat different, and potentially increasingly divergent, funding context. There was also a lack of trust and understanding among several parties, and an ongoing sense of differing expectations and conflicting requirements that were also identified in the 2009 review and elsewhere. Wan Smolbag expressed a greater sense of partnership and ease in dealing with AusAID, but felt that their relationship with New Zealand was not at the same level.

Implications and the Way Forward

Overall Wan Smolbag was found to be a significantly effective organization, with one respondent identifying it as the best organization in the Pacific. Wan Smolbag also continues to work efficiently and delivers high quality results, on time, at a relatively low cost. Wan Smolbag was also seen to be a largely sustainable organization - not in a financial sense, but in the sustainability of its approach and outcomes. In terms of its scalability, given its uniquely collaborative style of work, and the success of the organization in the face of significant growth, stressors, and inadequate resourcing, Wan Smolbag was seen to be very scalable, and furthermore seems to have the appetite and vision to grow and do more, under the proper circumstances.

The review identified the fact that several areas need to be addressed in a more immediate way, and adequate resourcing, planning and strengthening of relationships and systems needs to take place over the short and medium term. Some of the key areas for action include: increasing and strengthening human and financial resources in areas including management (in general and in the Youth Centre), finance and operations, monitoring and evaluation and research; bringing externally funded activities like the MSM and sex worker programs, *Love Patrol* funding, youth and disability drama groups, and the clinics into the core funding arrangement; increasing donor harmonization and bringing all relationships into a more substantive and open partnership model; moving away from the tied and highly project and activity based approach to funding, and ensuring a reasonable and fair level of funding that will support responsiveness, and; focusing on building organizational resilience and continuing to cultivate and support the unique and effective culture of innovation at Wan Smolbag.

Recommendations:

1. Significant existing deficits in human resources and infrastructure should be addressed by key stakeholders as soon as possible (and before the new funding arrangement is put in place) in order to maintain current operational levels. Any further growth will need to be resourced adequately, beyond these levels. Key projects that are currently resourced outside of the core funding arrangement should be addressed temporarily, in order to ensure continuity. Salary levels should be reviewed to ensure that they are fair and reasonably competitive within the context of Vanuatu civil society.
2. A whole-of-organization planning exercise should be carried out starting in April 2013, over a period of several months, taking into consideration the findings and recommendations of this review, and Wan Smolbag's Internal Discussion Paper. This should inform the basis of programming beyond 2014, ideally for a ten year period.
3. Planning should address the following areas and issues in particular:

- a. Streamlining the financial systems at Wan Smolbag, particularly if there is a move towards complete or nearly complete core funding. The current financial system is still overly project and activity based.
 - b. Consideration of the development of linked but more independent structures for programme areas such as the Nutrition Centre, Sports and the Environment Programme. A “new” articulation of the overall governance structure at Wan Smolbag should be developed, keeping the elements of collaboration and partnership in mind, and guided by Wan Smolbag actors, staff and management.
 - c. The creation of a designated Research Unit at Wan Smolbag that will focus more on researching relevant and emerging social issues. This could be research initiated by Wan Smolbag, and also research carried out in partnership with external organizations. This research should be used to inform future programming at Wan Smolbag, and could help to provide an evidence base for both donors and government, and support broader policy development in Vanuatu.
 - d. The creation of a Monitoring and Evaluation Unit at Wan Smolbag that will focus on meeting the requirements of the donor partnership in terms of reporting against milestones, and identifying progress towards programme outcomes for both Wan Smolbag and donors. The development of this section would benefit from the involvement of a Monitoring and Evaluation technical specialist and must be resourced adequately.
4. In general, the guiding focus for key stakeholders should be on building organizational resilience in Wan Smolbag, and protecting and supporting the culture of innovation, and the spirit of partnership and collaboration that has made Wan Smolbag unique and effective.
 5. Significant barriers to effective partnership and donor harmonization must be addressed by all parties - and resolved - if a more substantive and mutually effective long term partnership is the goal. Donors should take a leadership role in this process.
 6. Clarity should be provided by all donors on their financial commitments from 2014 on - by March 31, 2013 - so that planning can begin. Donors should seriously consider entering into a longer term (ideally a ten year) commitment with Wan Smolbag in order to allow for long term planning and security.
 7. Other key donors such as Oxfam should be brought into the core funding relationship. Consideration should also be given to the possibility of delegated cooperation in a further attempt to harmonize donor relations.
 8. The core funding agreement should come as close to 100% of total operating costs as possible, within the context of a programme based, more flexible approach, allowing the organization to remain responsive and dynamic.
 9. Issues around the rationale for, or competition for, core funding should be resolved at the donor level.

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Wan Smolbag Theatre

Mid-Term Review Report

Introduction

Background to the Evaluation

Wan Smolbag Theatre was formed in 1989, starting out as a small, four person, development theatre group touring villages and schools in Vanuatu. The organization has now grown to more than 150 employees (please see Appendix 6), and has added several new facets to its work, including youth programming in three different locations, two reproductive health clinics, a regionally acclaimed edutainment television series, *Love Patrol*, and an established resource monitor network of more than 500 people.

As a dynamic and vital civil society actor in Vanuatu, and in the Pacific region, Wan Smolbag has received support from several regional and international donors through its 23 year history, and has been the subject of numerous reviews. The most recent organization-wide review in 2009 recognized Wan Smolbag as consistently meeting or exceeding targets. Five other substantial reviews since 2007 were also favorable. Feedback about the organization has been uniformly positive, both in terms of Wan Smolbag's financial management of activities and resources, and in the volume, diversity and quality of programming activities and products. The number of reviews carried out on Wan Smolbag and its work led one donor to comment that "Wan Smolbag must be one of the most highly scrutinized organizations."

This Wan Smolbag Mid-Term Review is therefore focusing less on a review of Wan Smolbag and its activities to date, and more on an exploration of how the organization might be strengthened in terms of its internal structures, donor support for its work, and through its programming into the future. Currently, core funding for the organization flows through a Tripartite Partnership between Wan Smolbag, the New Zealand Aid Programme and AusAID. This funding currently covers approximately 55% of all operating costs, and is part of a five-year agreement that runs from January 2010 to December 2014. The total funding originally provided to Wan Smolbag through this arrangement was VUV 535,801,459, although both donors have provided additional funding to Wan Smolbag since 2010. In 2012 Wan Smolbag received VUV 70,542,100 for core funding from the New Zealand Aid Programme and VUV 61,304,299 for core funding from AusAID. Additional funding came from a variety of other donors including Oxfam, AusAID, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community and Unicef (please see Appendix 7).

Wan Smolbag's Vision, Goal and Project Objectives

WSB's agreed vision and the project's long-term goal¹ is:

Wan Smolbag Theatre will contribute to a sustainable and well-governed Vanuatu where women, men and young men and women participate in and contribute to their community's development.

The agreed objective for the project is:

Wan Smolbag Theatre will contribute to improvements in community life in Vanuatu and where appropriate other Pacific countries.

The project has five major outcome areas:

¹ From *Wan Smolbag Theatre Tripartite Partnership Project Design Document - January 2010 to December 2014*, page 17-18

1. Maintaining quality media production and audiences
Expected Outcome: The high quality and reach of live theatre, film, radio productions and supporting publications on contemporary development issues are maintained and strengthened.
 2. Strengthening youth centre services
Expected Outcome: Young men and women from peri-urban settlements who are considered to be at risk, engaged in gender-equal youth centre services which provide them with the skills to participate in the social and economic development of their communities.
 3. Promoting community action on governance and conservation
Expected Outcome: Discussions initiated and increased community action supported on governance, conservation and controversial issues.
 4. Strengthening age appropriate reproductive and sexual health services
Expected Outcome: Improved and extended urban and rural access to age appropriate and confidential sexual and reproductive health services, including family planning, for women, men and young men and women.
 5. Effective management and sustainability
Expected outcome: Strengthened management that maximises the long-term benefits of tripartite planning and reporting, increases long- term sustainability and engages in quality on-going research.
- Wan Smolbag's *June 2007 to June 2012 Strategic Plan* dated May 2007 lists a different, but related, set of objectives. There is currently no Strategic Plan in place for the organization.

Review Purpose and Objectives

The overall purpose and objectives of the Wan Smolbag Mid-Term Review 2012 are to:

1. Assess the current partnership arrangement between Wan Smolbag, AusAID and the New Zealand Aid Programme, and in particular, the impact of core funding on Wan Smolbag.
2. Consider the current demands on Wan Smolbag's services, and the organization's capacity to effectively operate and deliver programs into the future, and identify opportunities to maximize the effectiveness of ongoing support.
3. Take a closer look at the governance of the Youth Centre, and assess Wan Smolbag's capacity to carry out and mobilize research for donor reporting and other purposes, and identify Wan Smolbag's relationships with external organizations (government and other civil society organizations).

Key Stakeholders

The review was governed by a Steering Group with representatives from AusAID (David Momcilovic, First Secretary and Obed Timakata, Program Manager), the New Zealand Aid Programme (Mikaela Nyman, Development Counsellor and James Toa, Development Programme Coordinator) and Wan Smolbag (Michael Taurakoto, CEO and Governance Programme Manager and Jo Dorras, Scriptwriter and Publications Manager). This Steering Group are the key stakeholders, and the primary intended users, of the Wan Smolbag Mid-Term Review Report 2012.

Methodology

The Wan Smolbag Mid-Term Review 2012 was conducted partly through a review of key documents (please see Appendix 5), as well as through a series of semi-structured interviews with a variety of stakeholders (please see Appendix 3) who were collectively identified by the Steering Group prior to the review. Interviews took place over a two week period from Tuesday November 13 to Thursday November 22 (please see Appendix 2). The review was guided by a set of High Priority Questions and Secondary Questions (please see Appendix 4) that were agreed upon by the Steering Group in the Final Evaluation Plan (please see Appendix 1). These questions were used to construct interview guides for various

stakeholders, including Wan Smolbag management, staff, donor partners, and government. The interview guides contained questions that were adapted to each stakeholder, and included a mix of more qualitative interview questions, as well as some quantitative questions that asked for assessments along a scale from one to ten. Due to the busy schedules of some stakeholders, questions were prioritized.

As the review was an evaluative desk review with a focus on Wan Smolbag and its core partners, purposeful sampling procedures were used. Detailed notes for every interview were kept. In order to protect confidentiality, interviews were held individually or in small groups, and reasonable efforts were made to maintain confidentiality through the reporting process. All data was systematically processed. Notes were kept on the key documents utilized, and the responses to all interview questions were organized and maintained. As there was a limited data set, the data was processed simply by a thorough reading and compilation of all qualitative interview responses, and analysis of the information gathered. More quantitative interview questions were entered into a spreadsheet program and processed. Unusual or contradictory information has been noted, and quotations and key issues are brought to the readers attention throughout the body of the report.

Independence

This review, and the recommendations contained within it, reflect the evaluator's independent professional opinion. This professional opinion is rooted in several years of experience working with youth and with civil society organizations in Vanuatu, as well as more than a decade working in organizations and institutions with a Pacific regional focus, and with various regional and international donors. Preliminary findings and draft recommendations were presented to the Steering Group and several key stakeholders (including Wan Smolbag managers and a representative of Oxfam) on Tuesday November 27, 2012. All feedback provided in this formal Feedback Session, as well as any comments provided by email following the session (email comments were provided by only one stakeholder) were taken into consideration in the drafting of the report. The Steering Group was also given an opportunity to provide feedback on the Draft Mid-Term Review Report. Ultimately, however, this Mid-Term Review Report reflects the evaluator's independent professional judgement.

Limitations

The Wan Smolbag Mid-Term Review 2012 was identified as a desk review with an explicit focus on a finite number of key issues (please see Review Purpose and Objectives on page 2 and Appendix 1). The review did not seek to monitor or assess Wan Smolbag activities, progress and impact through the past two and a half years, but rather sought to conduct a more evaluative review of specific areas of Wan Smolbag, and its broader relationships with donors and partners.

Findings and Analysis

Wan Smolbag in General

While the priority focus of this review was on the impact of core funding on Wan Smolbag, the state of the current partnership arrangement, and how to maximize the effectiveness of ongoing support (please see The Core Funding Relationship section starting on page 11), the reviewer was also tasked with taking a closer look at specific aspects of the organization including research, the governance of the Youth Centre, Wan Smolbag's connections and networks, current and anticipated demands on the organization, and staff capability. The focus on the impact and effectiveness of core funding also necessitated a closer look at Wan Smolbag in more general terms, as well as its current management and governance systems.

The first part of this review, therefore, takes a more general view of Wan Smolbag as its focus, and considers more operational questions around organizational effectiveness, staff capability, and management and governance (please see questions 1 through 7 and 13 through 16 in Appendix 4). A brief examination of the potential value of civil society organizations such as Wan Smolbag in the context of Vanuatu, to both donors and government, completes this section (please see question 12 in Appendix 4).

Most Significant Changes - Within Wan Smolbag

Some of the most substantial changes at Wan Smolbag since the last review in 2009 have mainly to do with major growth in attendance numbers and activities. Some of the biggest areas of change and growth identified were:

- ▶ In the Youth Centre (and related “spinoffs” such as Fire Dancing and Hip Hop)
- ▶ In the Nutrition Centre
- ▶ In sports programming
- ▶ Within the Vanua-tai Resource Monitors Network (e.g. it has grown from 200 to 500+)
- ▶ New youth programming in Santo
- ▶ Growth in research, and monitoring and evaluation requirements (partly as an offshoot of increased activity levels)
- ▶ The production of a new series of Love Patrol every year
- ▶ Wan Smolbag is working more with marginalized populations including men who have sex with men (MSM), sex workers and people with disabilities
- ▶ Increasing pressure on management and personnel (also partly as an offshoot of increased activity levels)

“We have three times the number of activities this year. This year especially there has been an increase in numbers. We are seen more as the place to come (e.g. Island Cricket and the Ministry of Health with the school canteens program). There is no one else who has the space and experience on these issues.”

Most Significant Changes - Wan Smolbag's Surrounding Communities

When asked this question, several people referred to the impact they felt that Wan Smolbag's work had already had in some of the surrounding communities, including: increased contraception use, more knowledge of conservation and environmental issues, and higher levels of dialogue in communities. Beyond these positive impacts of Wan Smolbag's work, however, there was also a sense of the following new and emerging social issues, particularly in some of the peri-urban settlement communities that surround Wan Smolbag:

- ▶ Increasing urban drift and increased crowding in urban communities
- ▶ A bigger “youth bulge” – more youth out of school and out of work
- ▶ The perception that youth are more involved in drugs, alcohol and kava
- ▶ More mental health and discipline issues with youth and a greater need for counseling and conflict resolution interventions
- ▶ An increasing sense of frustration in youth and the sense that corruption is permeating through all sectors in Vanuatu
- ▶ The growth of urban poverty

“There is abject poverty in Port Vila in terms of access to school, ways for youth to constructively use their time, overcrowded households, no money and no access to food and gardens, in terms of substance abuse, and the fact that young people don't want to go home. And this will continue to increase.”

“The ‘underclass’ in Vanuatu is rapidly becoming most youth.”

One donor also cited two recent studies as an indication of the relevance of Wan Smolbag's work. One was a study of poverty in Vanuatu that identified the peri-urban settlements in Port Vila as the poorest communities in Vanuatu. This donor stated that there were few or no services available, except those provided by Wan Smolbag, and commented: "That's what's special at Wan Smolbag - they target marginalized populations. No one else is doing this." And a recent study done by Vanuatu Correctional Services² that identified the fact that detainees tend to be younger males 25 years of age and below, living in urban areas, with the majority having an educational level of Class Six and below. Upon further examination by the reviewer the educational profile of detainees was identified as less significant, given that these numbers correlate with the overall educational levels of the general population in Vanuatu. What is clear, however, is that young men in urban areas, particularly if issues around poverty are also taken into consideration, are more susceptible to involvement in criminal activities.

In addition to these reports, a number of other studies of youth in the region have correlated increasing levels of political deterioration and loss of trust in public officials and institutions, with increasing levels of youth disillusionment, violence, drug use, criminal activity and depression³. These issues all form the backdrop to Wan Smolbag's work and can be seen as indications of the organization's ongoing relevance. Clearly any interventions in the area of law and justice should take all of the related issues of poverty, criminal activity, deterioration of public institutions, and an increasingly youthful population into consideration. In the Vanuatu Correctional Services study "broader issues such as managing the impacts of a rapidly growing, youthful and urbanising population"⁴ were identified as areas requiring careful consideration.

Demands and Opportunities

For Wan Smolbag, the biggest demands being put on the organization in 2012 relate to the increasing workload. According to one manager in the organization, "The amount of work is huge. You feel that you've completely exceeded your capacity to do any more – regularly." The key areas in the organization that were identified as understaffed were management, finance, and monitoring and evaluation. There were also a number of issues arising from inadequate office space and infrastructure. For example, the Youth Centre indicated that it was running into space issues on a regular basis, and was constantly having to rotate classes through different areas, in order to find space. The sports programme said that they have already cut down on the number of teams that they will support next year (despite the demand), because they do not have adequate field space.

Demands on Wan Smolbag were identified as being driven by communities, by the increasing demand for services, by emerging issues (e.g. the non-communicable disease "crisis" in Vanuatu), and by the demand being placed on the organization by external agencies. Wan Smolbag is regularly approached to participate in, and support, external research projects, managers are invited to assist with reviews of other programs, and staff are called upon for their input into a variety of meetings and fora, all of which contribute to their workload. There was the sense that "Top management are pulled in so many different directions, because they are good".

"The demands on programme management staff, and on Wan Smolbag in general, have increased so much. This reflects the demand from communities for services. Most of the organizations wanting help with community awareness will come to us too (including government). This puts a big demand on staff and human resources."

² 2012 Detainee Census, Vanuatu Correctional Services

³ Urban Youth in the Pacific: Increasing Resilience and Reducing Risk for Involvement in Crime and Violence, June 2011

⁴ 2012 Detainee Census, Vanuatu Correctional Services, page 1

When asked if there were any areas that Wan Smolbag has yet to act upon, Wan Smolbag staff, donors and government had a variety of interesting suggestions. One idea was that Wan Smolbag could explore alternative and innovative income generation approaches (not formal employment) for youth. Examples included: finding small markets for agricultural products; piloting more non-traditional income generating activities like Fire Dancing; and repurposing/recycling items to sell. Another idea was that Wan Smolbag could assist in taking a deeper look at an issue like urban poverty, through the lens of nutrition and food security. Another suggestion involved the creation of more youth networks that could be embedded in communities and could engage in more ongoing community dialogue. One representative of government said that they would like to see Wan Smolbag become a formal partner with government on the new design for education in Vanuatu. And the suggestion was also made that there was a real space for Wan Smolbag in helping to address the non-communicable disease “crisis” in Vanuatu in a more focused way.

“Currently we are just half a plaster on what is happening. What we are trying to do, we could do a whole lot better. Wan Smolbag is the only organization with space and credibility to do more on urban issues. But we need more people to work on things and we need to pay fair, competitive wages. We need to bring things up a level to do it well.”

Organizational Effectiveness

Overall, Wan Smolbag was identified as a very effective organization by donors, government and by Wan Smolbag managers, staff and actors (please see Appendix 8 for a full breakdown). Government responses to 18 criteria relating to organizational effectiveness rated Wan Smolbag, on average, as an 8 out of 10 (with 1 being ‘Ineffective’ and 10 being ‘Very Effective’). The weakest area identified by government was in the area of building and sustaining partnerships with government, other civil society organizations and the private sector, which they rated as a 7 out of 10. Government indicated that Wan Smolbag’s strengths lay in the areas of organizational transparency and accountability, administration of donor funds, in the organization’s capacity to make an impact, and as an agent for change in Vanuatu society.

In interviews, government recognized Wan Smolbag as playing a strong role in providing leadership, as a role model, in educating citizens, in its financial management, in terms of its human resource capacity, and in its contributions to the health care sector in particular.

“[Wan Smolbag has] increased contraceptive use, especially for young people. I admire all of the films of Wan Smolbag on different social issues from Violence Against Women to HIV/AIDS, and Love Patrol...Wan Smolbag has hit the nail on the head. [It] has done great in its contributions to this country.”

Government also recognized the power of Wan Smolbag’s approach in using drama and theatre to communicate messages, but cautioned that they should not move away from their work with communities or focus too much on entertainment.

Donor responses to 18 criteria relating to organizational effectiveness rated Wan Smolbag, on average, as a 9 out of 10. The weakest area identified by donors was Wan Smolbag’s alignment with government priorities, which they rated as an 8 out of 10. One donor who rated this as a 5 out of 10, qualified this by saying that while they felt that Wan Smolbag were more broadly aligned with government, they also felt that civil society organizations in general had a role to play as more independent organizations (please see Relationship with Government on page 11 for further discussion). Donors identified Wan Smolbag’s key strengths as their level of responsiveness, their ability to promote social inclusion, their role as an innovator and in their understanding of the context they are working in.

In interviews, much of this was reiterated as Wan Smolbag was seen by donors to be working with more challenged communities, and at the frontline of tackling critical issues. In the words of one donor “Wan Smolbag is a second home for lots of people and a real community hub.” The use of drama and the arts as “an entry point”, and a communication platform, particularly in working with youth, was also seen as a strength. Wan Smolbag’s ability to function as a kind of “one stop for youth in a safe environment” also led one donor to identify it as informal but very accessible to youth. The statement was made that Wan Smolbag supported “essential values for youth with brilliant outcomes.” Another donor, who had participated in the organization’s AGM, also commented at some length about Wan Smolbag’s transparency as an organization, saying, “They are highly transparent. Most decisions are consultative, at the organizational level, in front of everyone. In terms of transparency, they take the cake.”

In terms of the 18 criteria relating to organizational effectiveness, Wan Smolbag management, administrative staff and actors rated the organization, on average, as a 9 out of 10. The weakest area in the organization was identified as communicating findings and results, which was given an 8 out of 10. Staff who indicated that this was a weak point for the organization noted the excellent work of the current Research Officer, but indicated that there were just not enough human and financial resources being dedicated to this area to do it well. In terms of Wan Smolbag’s own reflections on its strengths as an organization, transparency and accountability, and administration of donor funds were rated very high, as were their approach to social inclusion and their efforts in supporting more accountable government. One manager responded to questions about the organization’s effectiveness in the following way: “How can a small centre be effective when even millions of dollars can result in a very corrupt and crumbling system. [But] in terms of the value of the place for people who use it - its phenomenal what goes on here.” Another respondent had the following to say about Wan Smolbag’s effectiveness:

“I have worked with most NGOs in the [Pacific] region. They [Wan Smolbag] have the broadest scope, and such creative and insightful ways of working in communities and addressing issues, in a way that builds on peoples strengths, and cultural strengths, and is so culturally appropriate. [Wan Smolbag] is the best NGO in the Pacific region, with the greatest capacity, without a doubt - including Papua New Guinea.”

Management and Governance

In response to questions relating to the overall management and governance of Wan Smolbag, all respondents identified the management and operational staff at the organization as a very talented and hardworking group, and the governance of the organization was seen to be very effective. The organization’s uniquely collaborative and highly participatory approach was seen as crucial to Wan Smolbag’s success and identity, and several managers commented on the strength of this approach. In the words of one manager, “We work on issues together as a team. It makes a massive difference when we are participating together, but it takes time.”

Managers at Wan Smolbag were also seen to be “overstretched” and overworked partly as a result of the volume of work that the organization is now generating internally, and because of their important role in mediation and conflict resolution as part of an organization that deals with diverse populations of youth and with such a large number of staff. The pressures on management were also identified as being based significantly on external demands that are being placed on the organization including meetings with government and civil society, providing leadership in external initiatives, and supporting research.

“We used to have a core management team, with no one in particular in charge. Decisions were made as a team, with the core actors group and the management team. In the last few years, because of changes suggested by donors, we now have a CEO. We still work the same way, but a lot of outside requests are now sent to Michael as the CEO. In terms of how we function as a group, there has been no change, just the demands on Michael’s time.”

Both within and outside of Wan Smolbag, there was some recognition that these external demands could and should be supported. For donors and government there seemed to be a strong interest in Wan Smolbag taking on more of a leadership role within civil society in Vanuatu, and at least two donors recognized Wan Smolbag's ability to always "front up" when called upon. One respondent identified this as placing a significant burden of responsibility on the organization, however, and there seemed to be some overall recognition of the fact that this also needed to be resourced appropriately.

"Everyone - from communities to donors and regional agencies - thinks Wan Smolbag is the solution to everything. Every consultant, looking at any social issue, goes through there. They never say no. But the expectation that they will provide information and support to anything is really unfair sometimes. It's enormous weight to carry. They are already so busy."

Youth Centre Governance

This review was directed to look more closely at the governance of the Youth Centre at Wan Smolbag as a follow up to recommendations contained in the 2009 review. Most respondents answered "somewhat" when asked whether the current management and governance structure at the Youth Centre was effective, and its efficiency was rated, on average, as a 6 on a scale from 1 to 10 (with 1 being 'Inefficient' and 10 being 'Very Efficient'). Key weaknesses were: a centralized finance system that was seen to be cumbersome and out of step with planning; the Strategic Plan (put in place following recommendations from the 2009 review) was identified as out of date, too restrictive and no longer relevant; several respondents identified the management and governance structure as no longer a "good fit" given the growth of program areas; and most people indicated that there should be a local, long term manager at the Youth Centre. There seemed to be a consensus that programme areas like nutrition and sports should be linked to the Centre, but more independent. Given the limitations in the scope of this review, this area was not explored further, but should be in the near future (please see Recommendations on page 19).

Staff Capability

Overall, Wan Smolbag staff were rated even more highly than the organization itself, based on 12 criteria relating to staff capability (please see Appendix 9 for a full breakdown). Averaged out, donors and Wan Smolbag rated the capability of staff as a 9 out of 10 (with 1 being 'Weak' and 10 being 'Very High'). One manager indicated that staff commitment and dedication was a 15 out of 10, saying "People will do anything to make work go ahead." Other comments regarding the capability of staff were "The managers know what they are doing", and "The finance people are just amazing". Several respondents also commented that they felt it was remarkable what staff did, especially given what they were paid. One respondent indicated that "One of Wan Smolbag's greatest assets is its staff."

Several key areas for strengthening staff capability were identified, mainly by people within Wan Smolbag. One issue that was raised consistently in this section and in others, was that there needed to be more staff, especially in key areas such as management, finance and monitoring and evaluation. Several respondents also identified the fact that salary issues needed to be addressed: "The salary is not enough. It is important to value staff properly. It would be good to compare the salary scale with other organizations. Staff are very committed and dedicated, and work long hours." The greatest number of respondents, however, indicated that there should be more professional development, training and educational opportunities available for staff, in a more formal and organized way. According to one manager, "Lots of our staff have basic education and I'd like to be able to build them up."

"Many of the jobs at Wan Smolbag shouldn't be seen as lifelong jobs. Staff should have the opportunity to develop their skills and move on from Wan Smolbag too. It would be good if Wan Smolbag could help with funding and time off. We need more concrete policy around this, but it also means a loss for the organization that needs to be filled."

Reporting Results

Wan Smolbag described reporting to donors as “daunting” and expressed the fact that they were never sure they were giving donors what they wanted. They also requested further clarification on “outcomes” from donors in a more practical way. Wan Smolbag also raised significant issues around the difficulties of reporting to different donors with different needs, expectations and timelines, both within and outside of the core funding arrangement. This was identified as taking significant time and effort, and as placing a substantial burden on key managers. In fact, Wan Smolbag managers indicated spending, on average, 40% of their time on reporting (one manager reported spending as much as 80 to 85% of their time on reporting). In the area of reporting, several people indicated a need for dedicated monitoring and evaluation staff at Wan Smolbag, and also expressed a desire to engage in monitoring and evaluation for their own purposes, and not just for donors: “There is an issue of what you report to donors and what you look at for yourself. We should do both, but we’re still quite weak on the latter.”

From their perspective, donors fairly consistently indicated that Wan Smolbag’s reports rated quite highly against other reports they received, and one donor said that they were “The best reports we see”. At the same time, however, Wan Smolbag’s reports were also described by donors as prolific, broad, general, as “streams of information”, and as very narrative-based and output-focused. One donor, who rated Wan Smolbag very highly in most areas, identified reporting as the weakest area in the organization, and donors consistently indicated that they wanted to see more analysis in Wan Smolbag’s reports. One of the things that donors said they would like to see was “more of the story”. Several donors also indicated that they wanted to be able to engage in more strategic dialogue with Wan Smolbag. One donor expressed an interest in seeing how Wan Smolbag’s work related to high level government policy in the reports (please see Relationship with Government on page 11 for further discussion). Donors also expressed an interest in having the reports “be useful to Wan Smolbag first, and donors second.”

Research Capacity

This review was directed to look more closely at research capacity at Wan Smolbag, and as recommended in the 2009 review, Wan Smolbag was found to have instituted annual research planning. Wan Smolbag is currently used as a research base for a number of external organizations including more recently the Burnet Institute, Intermedia and the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme. Interestingly, Wan Smolbag is also driving some of the research agenda themselves. For example, they initiated the more recent research with the Burnet Institute on men who have sex with men (MSM), and sex workers, and indicated that this was a valuable collaboration. There seemed to be an overall appetite at Wan Smolbag for using more innovative approaches to research (e.g. Most Significant Change) within the organization, although, one of the biggest challenges to this, as with monitoring and evaluation, was the lack of time, the number of dedicated staff, and training. This was indicated as a missed opportunity by one respondent who said that in monitoring and evaluation, and in research, “pieces of the puzzle aren’t being put together”. There is so much there - “its gold, and its untapped”.

Communicating Change

The review took the opportunity to solicit suggestions for how Wan Smolbag could more effectively share and communicate change resulting from its work. Several innovative approaches were suggested by stakeholders, although all of them revolved around a general theme of “Less huge written documents - more dialogue.” One suggestion was for Wan Smolbag to provide updates on its work via podcasts or blogs, or through monthly radio shows, and to use video, radio or theatre to share results, stories, analysis and discussion. One respondent saw great value in supporting Wan Smolbag in going back to communities more regularly (via established long term networks) to share results of their work, and provide updates. Government expressed a keen interest in Wan Smolbag sharing brief (two to three page)

highlights of recent work and findings on a quarterly or twice a year basis, particularly with high level policy analysts. The suggestion was also made that Wan Smolbag should invite more people (donors and government) to the regular partnership meetings and the Annual General Meeting, and encourage them to participate more in daily activities at Wan Smolbag. In the words of one actor, “Come and see how we work instead of getting results through paper all the time.”

Organizational Connections

The reviewer was asked to take a closer look at Wan Smolbag’s engagements with government and civil society, in Vanuatu, regionally and internationally over the past year. While it was hoped that an organigram might be developed to illustrate these connections, it became clear as data was gathered that the organizations were too numerous to express in one diagram. As this was also identified as a lower priority task, these connections have been identified in a list (please see Appendix 10). In summary, Wan Smolbag indicated working, and having recent connections, with 16 civil society organizations in Vanuatu, 25 government departments and units in Vanuatu, and more than 35 regional, international, business and academic organizations and institutes. It is clear that Wan Smolbag is a highly networked organization.

Value of Engaging Civil Society

The review was tasked with looking at the role and value of civil society organizations, including Wan Smolbag, as potential catalysts and/or extensions of government and donor interests. All stakeholders interviewed recognized the role of organizations like Wan Smolbag in facilitating donor and government connections to community, and in helping to inform evidence-based approaches. There was a sense that Wan Smolbag understood the context in which it works “more than anyone else”. Donors indicated that they could get significant traction from civil society organizations, partly because civil society can work where government cannot, because civil society can be more experimental and innovative, and because government tends to be quite centralized and less intrinsically responsive. One respondent stated that “Government has limitations. Civil society organizations are more flexible and more practical. For example, *Love Patrol* - people talk about it everywhere. It was a little experiment and now look at it.”

AusAID’s June 2012 *Civil Society Engagement Framework* also recognizes that civil society organizations can and do act as “powerful agents for change—as partners in the delivery of better services, enabling social inclusion and making governments more effective, accountable and transparent.”⁵ This document goes on to identify further strengths of civil society in their connection to local communities, in their ability to extend services to the poor and the most vulnerable in society, and in their ability to work in areas that are difficult for donors and government to access.⁶ It also articulates the understanding that “Delivering aid through civil society organisations enables us to benefit from these organisations’ grass roots networks, niche areas of specialisation and presence on the ground.”⁷ These are all areas where Wan Smolbag was identified, through the review, as having significant strength, ability and impact.

Other areas where civil society, like Wan Smolbag, were rated highly were in their ability to be responsive, in their approach to building capacity through their work, and in their relatively high levels of accountability as demonstrated in this quote: “Civil society organizations are able to be responsive and get down to the community level. Capacity goes with it, and accountability is high.” Government representatives who were interviewed also recognized the value of civil society, and in particular Wan Smolbag, in providing accessible services for harder to reach populations and in their contributions to Vanuatu society.

⁵ *AusAID Civil Society Engagement Framework - June 2012*, page 1

⁶ *Ibid*, page 3

⁷ *Ibid*, page 3

“Young people find it easier and are more confident to engage with Wan Smolbag. Wan Smolbag has improved and developed over the years. What young people need, Wan Smolbag provides. Donors see this and are very supportive because the outcomes of Wan Smolbag really justify the spending of money. It is really for the benefit and welfare of Vanuatu - not just in urban areas, but in remote rural areas. [It] helps a lot.”

Relationship with Government

Most stakeholders interviewed indicated that civil society organizations, like Wan Smolbag, should work together with government. Representatives of government identified civil society as having the capacity to extend the work of government, to support government in “framing the issues”, and in playing a role in providing an evidence base for policy. According to one government representative interviewed, “Issues need to be well framed and crafted [and we] need good people and institutions – in this case Wan Smolbag – who have the skills to analyze they key issues that need to be taken on in the agenda of government.” Government representatives also recognized their own responsibilities in sharing information about government policy and direction with civil society, and indicated that government could play a role in driving policy in areas that were of mutual interest. As well, all of the government representatives who were interviewed identified Wan Smolbag as an effective partner of government. Some of their comments included:

“They are already a good partner of government in health and around other community issues. It is very effective. The impact of [Wan Smolbag] on community life is very high, and because of that government should be very supportive of them.”

“Both the Ministries of Youth and Education recognize the work that Wan Smolbag does, especially with youth in vocational training.”

“We interact most with them, out of all of the civil society organizations. They are at many meetings. Wan Smolbag is also on the TVET Advisory Group [and have a] healthy approach to building partnership for government and civil society to work together.”

In the review discussions and interviews, some tensions also emerged around the line between civil society as “handmaiden” to government, and the necessity of civil society’s independence from government. While one donor suggested that: “Civil society organizations should do more to support the government of the day”, the majority of stakeholders - from government to donors and Wan Smolbag - identified the importance of an independent civil society. One government representative expressed his support for an independent civil society and suggested that even some “friction” was okay, as there were always ways to solve these issues and talk about them. Another government representative expressed that it was important for an organization like Wan Smolbag to function “both as an advocate for and against government policy, if they feel that it’s detrimental to Vanuatu.” These perspectives are supported in AusAID’s *Civil Society Engagement Framework* where “Respect for Independence” is listed as one of the 10 Principles of Engagement⁸.

The Core Funding Relationship

This second part of the review takes a closer look at priority issues including the impact of core funding on Wan Smolbag, the state of the current partnership arrangement (please see questions 8 through 11 and parts of question 13 in Appendix 4) and begins to trace out recommendations for how to maximize the effectiveness of ongoing support, that are more fully elaborated in the Recommendations (please see page 19).

⁸ AusAID *Civil Society Engagement Framework* - June 2012, page 6

Why Core Funding

When asked why the two donor partners in the Tripartite Partnership - AusAID and the New Zealand Aid Programme - originally moved to core funding for Wan Smolbag, several reasons were cited. The reasons given included: to give Wan Smolbag the ability to be more responsive and creative; to provide the organization with a sense of stability; to give Wan Smolbag more autonomy and empowerment; to move away from a more fragmented project funding approach; to allow the organization to focus more on their work, instead of sourcing and managing donor funds, and; to reduce Wan Smolbag's administrative burden. Core funding was also identified by one donor as recognition of the fact that Wan Smolbag was viewed as a trusted and long term partner, and donors were in it for the "long haul". One donor also expressed the perspective that "Core funding is, in principle, a better way to go."

Strengths of the Current Model

A number of strengths were identified in the current core funding model. For Wan Smolbag, the core funding approach was valued because it had streamlined some of their administrative work, it had provided a level of security for more than 140 people, it had decreased the "worry factor" in general, and it had allowed the organization to expand and explore new areas. One manager expressed the idea that "Wan Smolbag couldn't do a lot of what we do without it." Core funding was also seen by Wan Smolbag as a real demonstration of partnership, and a long term commitment from donors. From the donor perspective, the current core funding arrangement was valued for similar reasons. One donor also recognized that they had gotten "good mileage from Wan Smolbag", saying "It's a real success story".

Weaknesses of the Current Model

Despite the strengths that were identified in the core funding arrangement, most stakeholders expressed the concern that "It hasn't gone far enough." Several respondents indicated that it was not set up as 100% core funding originally, and at this stage covers only a part (actually 55%) of Wan Smolbag's operating costs. Another weakness identified in the current core funding model was that it was not set up to accommodate emerging issues and growing demand, and that it did not adequately support the necessary growth in internal systems (e.g. management, operations and monitoring and evaluation). One respondent said that "Wan Smolbag has never had the chance to open it up and really have the flexibility to experience core funding in its fuller sense." One donor also expressed some concern that the move to core funding was not based on an open and competitive process. This donor raised the possibility of going to a more competitive approach in the future (please see Recommendations on page 19 for a response to this).

One of the key areas of weakness identified in the current funding model, however, had to do with the sense that funding was still situated in a project funding approach. According to one respondent, "It is not really a core funding agreement – [it is] still attached to a historical project approach...and carries some of that baggage. It is still tied to sets of activities and deliverables." A related issue had to do with the volume of work that was still associated with managing donor needs and expectations, and the sense that funding was not yet harmonized both within and outside of the core funding arrangement. For Wan Smolbag, the ideal core funding approach was articulated as follows: A donor saying, 'We will give you X', subject to a work plan, with the funding relatively untied and longer term, and with flexibility and adaptability built into the arrangement, "obviously in a context of responsibility, accountability, and in line with donor interests."

How Much Core Funding

When asked what percentage of operating costs should ideally come from core funding, responses were somewhat mixed. Overall the ideal was identified as 100% or very close to 100% of total operating costs, with one donor indicating that 100% of total operating costs "would really reflect the spirit of the core funding partnership." Wan Smolbag indicated that core funding should only cover 100% or close to 100%

of their total operating costs if the arrangement “was flexible and more programme, and less project, based.” One donor, while recognizing the benefits from an administrative perspective of 100% core funding, also thought that this might create a level of organizational vulnerability for Wan Smolbag, and might also lead to the perception of donor influence in the organization.

The State of the Partnership

[Please Note: This review was tasked with engaging with issues at a somewhat different level from a typical evaluation. Given the long term experience of both donors in the core funding partnership with Wan Smolbag, and the sense that the organization has been highly scrutinized, and consistently assessed as meeting or exceeding targets and objectives - as well as being financially responsible - this review stepped back somewhat to look at the impacts and effectiveness of core funding, and at the core funding relationships themselves. This was done in an effort to ultimately strengthen development outcomes for all stakeholders into the future, and in the spirit of evaluation whereby “Evaluation promotes...dialogue and improves co-operation between the participants in the development process through mutual sharing of experiences at all levels.”⁹ The approach of this review, and the task that the reviewer took on through the process, was also premised on the understanding that “Project performance depends on both donor and recipient action.”¹⁰ Through this process, therefore, it would have been inappropriate to focus only on Wan Smolbag, and not also step back to evaluate the engagements and approaches of donors as well.

Bearing this in mind, however, it is not always easy to raise challenging issues and, even more importantly, to do so in a mutually productive way. The fact that donor organizations are ultimately responsible for providing funding - for both recipient organizations and for reviews - meant that the navigation of these relationships required a mindful and careful negotiation of the issues, a mutual sense of trust, and with the common goal of effective aid in mind. It was the reviewers express intention to work together with all parties in the core funding partnership, particularly through this part of the review, towards a clearer understanding of the strengths and the weaknesses in the current partnership, as well as through a careful consideration of the broader context - and all within the constraints of a “desk review”.

A small number of more challenging issues emerged through the evaluation process that were brought to light and will be discussed in the following section. These issues were raised based on a careful consideration of a number of stakeholder views that were expressed in interviews, as well as through the examination of key documents. Some of the challenges that were identified were not new issues, and certainly, in the reviewers opinion warranted further exploration if the goal of a stronger and more effective partnership for all parties is desired. These issues were also raised with the understanding that “An important purpose of evaluation is to bring to the attention of policy-makers constraints on developmental aid success resulting from policy shortcomings or rigidities both on the donor and recipient side, inadequate co-ordination, and the effectiveness of other practices...”¹¹ It is in this spirit that the following issues are raised, and it is the sincere hope of the reviewer that all parties will take the information on board in an effort to further inform their approach to future engagements.]

In the review, key stakeholders in the core funding arrangement were asked to identify where they would locate the current partnership on a scale from 1 to 10 with 1 being more a more nominal partnership and 10 being a more substantive partnership. Donors and Wan Smolbag management located the current partnership at 5.6 on average, with one donor saying “It is not a true partnership. It is a donor-recipient agreement/relationship still. It is not two way. We need to look at how to make it more of a partnership.”. Several reasons were given for this. Wan Smolbag expressed the fact that they still felt they needed to prove themselves to donors, and justify the money they receive. In one respondents words, there was a

⁹ OECD DAC Principles for the Evaluation of Development Assistance, page 5

¹⁰ Ibid, page 4

¹¹ Ibid, page 5

sense of needing to “do what donors say”. One donor rated the relationship as more nominal because they had the sense that Wan Smolbag still viewed them as a “money source”, and they felt that they were still not able to engage in strategic dialogue with Wan Smolbag as a partner. This donor also expressed some puzzlement at what they perceived as Wan Smolbag’s ongoing sense of anxiety over funding.

In the review it also emerged that the two donors in the Tripartite Partnership seemed to be working from somewhat different, and potentially divergent, funding contexts. For New Zealand, their aid programme is currently under review, and it was identified that their government’s aid priorities were shifting away from core funding of civil society organizations, particularly those that are viewed as outside of their three priority areas of economic development, education, and law and justice. Despite a commitment to supporting civil society in principle, it was less clear how civil society fit into the current approach, and how these engagements are being prioritized. In the *New Zealand - Vanuatu Joint Commitment for Development* dated October 2011, for example, only one commitment is dedicated to supporting civil society in Vanuatu, beyond community and small project support offered through a Small Projects Scheme or the Head of Mission Fund¹². The New Zealand Aid Programme also has an articulated commitment to working more through programmatic and sector level approaches¹³ and working increasingly through government¹⁴. The overall trend was described as a move towards “bigger, fewer, deeper, longer” activities. Within the partnership itself, the long term was identified as uncertain for New Zealand. There was a clear commitment that they were “in it to 2014”, but it was unclear what would happen afterwards.

The other donor in the core funding relationship, AusAID, seems to be working in a significantly different context. The Australian government has been working towards an overall commitment to increasing funding to aid, and AusAID has a strong policy commitment to working more with civil society, and moving “beyond government”. At least three key AusAID studies in the past two years¹⁵ have focused on civil society engagement, including in Vanuatu. This work culminated in AusAID’s June 2012 *Civil Society Engagement Framework*, that sets forth a more robust policy approach to civil society for the coming years. In terms of their engagements with civil society, there is a move towards core funding, particularly with trusted long term partners, and working through more of a flexible programme approach. Within the partnership itself, AusAID consistently expressed that they are in it “for the long haul”, and that they are looking for a mutually secure, confident, long term partnership.

In interviews it also emerged that the two donors in the Tripartite Partnership seemed to have different levels of trust and understanding about Wan Smolbag. AusAID staff expressed pride in their partnership with Wan Smolbag, and the relationship was summarized as follows by one AusAID representative: “I trust Wan Smolbag. We don’t have to micromanage them. In that sense [the partnership] is strong. There is a relationship of trust and mutual respect.” This tone and approach was consistent across all AusAID representatives who were interviewed. New Zealand Aid Programme representatives also indicated that they had a good relationship with Wan Smolbag, and clearly identified the organization as “impressive” and stated that some of the organization’s work was “really excellent”. But there were also areas of concern raised, that indicated to the reviewer that there were uneven levels of trust and understanding in the relationship.

¹² *New Zealand - Vanuatu Joint Commitment for Development - October 2011*, page 15

¹³ *Ibid*, page 2

¹⁴ *Ibid*, page 6

¹⁵ *Working Beyond Government: Evaluation of AusAID’s Engagement with Civil Society in Developing Countries - March 2012*, *Analysis of Five Cases of AusAID Engagement with Civil Society in Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea and the Philippines - January 2011* and *Evaluation of AusAid’s Engagement with Civil Society in Vanuatu: Country Case Study - September 2010*

Both the longer term Development Programme Coordinator who has been directly responsible for overseeing the relationship with Wan Smolbag for several years, and the Development Counsellor who arrived earlier this year, expressed a concern with “transparency around funding”, and said they had difficulty in assessing Wan Smolbag’s full funding picture, given the mix of core and project based funding in the organization. The statement was made “We sit on the Project Coordinating Committee, but are there other Project Coordinating Committees?” This also raised a concern about the extent to which core staff “devote time to other things”. Another concern that was raised by both New Zealand Aid Programme representatives, on separate occasions, had to do with the number of expatriates in the organization. Both expressed an interest in seeing “more local staff”. Wan Smolbag was also identified as “the one who never shows up” for meetings in one key sector, which led to a sense that the organization may be opting to work outside of the system, and raised the associated concern, “Is it really effective for Vanuatu?”

These issues were not raised in isolation by current New Zealand Aid Programme representatives, but were part of a broader set of issues identified in discussions with various stakeholder groups, including Wan Smolbag. A Wan Smolbag manager respectfully identified the tone of their own relationships with their two core funders as follows:

“With AusAID I feel that I can talk to them, with New Zealand I am very cautious. It is a partnership but the donors have the power. The relationship with AusAID has developed a lot further than the one with New Zealand. It may relate to their objectives. AusAID tends to be more trusting and appreciative of what Wan Smolbag does. New Zealand seems to have less trust.”

Within Wan Smolbag, when key managers were asked to rate their relationship with their two core funders on a scale from 1 to 10 (with 1 being ‘Nominal’ and 10 being ‘Substantive’), some respondents requested to comment separately on their sense of their relationship with AusAID and with the New Zealand Aid Programme. The relationship with AusAID was rated as an 8 on average by Wan Smolbag, while the relationship with the New Zealand Aid Programme was rated at a 5.

There were also minor tensions raised about the donor to donor relationship in the core funding partnership. One New Zealand Aid Programme representative expressed concerns about AusAID providing additional funding to Wan Smolbag in a way that was seen as outside of the core funding arrangement. A New Zealand Aid Programme representative also expressed a view that the “the Tripartite Partnership is not equal in any way.” This review was provided as an indication of the perceived imbalance in the relationship, with the New Zealand representative stating that “We wanted something else from the review”. While individual frustrations and opinions cannot be taken on their own as indicative of much broader and longer term relationships, some of these tensions were also raised by other stakeholders, and have been identified in other places.

In the 2009 review of Wan Smolbag (which did not have an examination of core funding relationships as its focus, it is worth noting), the review team identified “experiencing several examples of the two donors having different expectations and conflicting requirements”¹⁶ and raised issues around donor to donor communication. These issues were raised again in an *Evaluation of AusAID’s Engagement with Civil Society in Vanuatu* published in 2010, where similar issues around a perceived lack of effective communication and coordination among the two donors was identified as contradictory to one of the key purposes of donor harmonization¹⁷. Some of these tensions and trends, therefore, clearly precede any

¹⁶ *Mid-Term Review: Wan Smolbag Vanuatu - May 2009*, page 20

¹⁷ *Evaluation of AusAID’s Engagement with Civil Society in Vanuatu - September 2010*, page 20

individuals involved in the current partnership and refer, in the reviewers opinion, to a set of ongoing tensions and issues relating to donor harmonization and approach that need to be addressed.

Ideally these issues will be collectively addressed, with both of the core donors demonstrating leadership around these issues, given the realities of their relative power in these relationships, their own stake in this process, their mutual interest in improving aid effectiveness, and their mutual interest in Wan Smolbag. While these issues are unlikely to result in the downfall of a relatively experienced, resilient and effective organization like Wan Smolbag, there is certainly a “downstream” impact of these issues in terms of overall aid effectiveness. Simply the fact that Wan Smolbag managers identified spending on average 40% of their time managing the donor relationship, and identified the two relationships as significantly different, is an indication that issues from harmonizing reporting, to managing expectations and relationships, and streamlining approaches, should be explored and strengthened wherever possible.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Wan Smolbag - Effectiveness

Despite the fact that measuring the effectiveness of Wan Smolbag, and its activities, were not the express purpose of this review, many of the findings indicated that Wan Smolbag appears to be on track in meeting the project objectives outlined in *Wan Smolbag Theatre Tripartite Partnership Project Design Document - January 2010 to December 2014* (please see Wan Smolbag’s Vision, Goal and Project Objectives on page 1). In terms of its overall effectiveness, Wan Smolbag rated highly on all 18 criteria relating to organizational effectiveness, across all stakeholders (please see Appendix 8). The lowest areas were still a reasonably high 7 out of 10. Staff were also viewed as being capable and effective, with both donors and Wan Smolbag rating them at a 9 out of 10 overall, on 12 different criteria (please see Appendix 9). Government representatives interviewed also recognized the overall effectiveness of Wan Smolbag, and one commented specifically on the strength and leadership of staff in the organization.

The key areas of weakness identified in this review relate to Objective 6 where Wan Smolbag aimed to see “Strengthened management that maximises the long-term benefits of tripartite planning and reporting, increases long-term sustainability and engages in quality on-going research”. The key barriers or weak points relating to the objective of effective management that emerged through this review include:

1. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Monitoring and evaluation was collectively identified as a weak point in the review. Some of the challenges around monitoring and evaluation can be located in the significant lack of human and financial resources currently being dedicated to this area, the conflation of monitoring and evaluation with research, and the significant project focus that has followed Wan Smolbag into its current core funding arrangement.
2. **Governance of the Youth Centre:** Youth Centre governance was seen to be “somewhat” effective, but several issues were raised that should be addressed, including the designation of a long term, local manager. Given the growth in several key areas such as nutrition and sports, there was also an identified need for both the governance structures and the Strategic Plan to be reworked.
3. **Lack of Human and Financial Resources:** Given the demands that are being placed on the organization in several different areas, a need was identified for further human and financial resources. Several of these relate to bringing key activities like the MSM and Sex Worker Programme, the Youth Drama and Rainbow Disability Theatre Group and Love Patrol, into the core funding agreement. Others relate to the need for more staff and corresponding infrastructural changes in specific areas including management, finance and monitoring and evaluation.

4. **Lack of Donor Harmonization:** A lack of donor harmonization both within and outside of the core funding arrangement were identified as a weakness of the current arrangement, and as a potential barrier to ongoing organizational effectiveness.
5. **Overly Project and Activity Focused:** The current project design, as well as the overall organizational Strategic Plan (which “expired” in June of this year) and the Youth Centre Strategic Plan, were identified as still rooted in a historic activity and project approach. Many of the activities and outputs are out of date and too specific to allow Wan Smolbag to function as effectively as it could through a more fluid programme approach.

All of these areas are addressed in the Recommendations (please see page 19).

Wan Smolbag - Efficiency

Despite the fact that measuring the efficiency of Wan Smolbag per se was not the express purpose of this review, many of the findings indicated that Wan Smolbag has continued to offer significant value for money, and Wan Smolbag was generally seen to deliver a high volume of high quality activities, on time, by most stakeholders. This is consistent with the findings of the 2009 review that found Wan Smolbag to be providing more for its funding than comparable organizations in New Zealand and Australia. The example of *Love Patrol* was used as an illustration of this, with the 2009 review pointing out that Wan Smolbag was producing a “10-part fully professional television series (equivalent to 2 ½ feature films for less than it would cost to produce one minute of television programming in Australia)”¹⁸

One caution around efficiency offered by this review relates to issues raised around staff salaries by a number of staff within Wan Smolbag (many of them on behalf of other staff members, and not out of self-interest, it should be noted). In a context like Vanuatu, where there are very few controls and comparisons around salary levels, and where minimum wage is not uniformly accepted as a living wage, it is important for all stakeholders in donor funded projects to ensure that pressures around programme efficiencies are not pushing salaries below a level that is fair and reasonable. Ideally there should also be some general consistency around wages across civil society in Vanuatu, to ensure that organizations like Wan Smolbag can attract and retain staff. Donors should work together with Wan Smolbag to ensure that Wan Smolbag salaries are in line with other comparable salaries, and that program efficiencies are not built onto the backs of staff. The overall goal should be to support organizational efficiency, responsible use of donor funds, and value for money, but in a context of fair and reasonable practices and salary levels.

Wan Smolbag - Sustainability

As has been recognized by key stakeholders, financial sustainability of Wan Smolbag is not a viable goal for the organization. Opportunities for cost recovery are very limited, with the one significant area for income generation being the sale of screening rights to *Love Patrol*. In 2012 this generated approximately 1.2 million vatu in revenue for the organization, which while not insubstantial, would not meet the production costs for even one season of the series, and represents less than one percent of the organization’s annual operating costs (please see Appendix 7). Beyond its direct service delivery functions, in many ways Wan Smolbag may be seen to be addressing major gaps in the area of social services and arts and culture programming that within the context of a more robust national economy, based on higher population numbers, might otherwise be subsidized or supported through the state. Given that this is well outside of the immediate, and most likely the longer term, scope of the Government of Vanuatu, there is a reasonable argument to be made for ongoing donor support for these kinds of services and activities in Vanuatu, especially as issues around urban poverty are on the rise.

¹⁸ *Mid Term Review: Wan Smolbag Vanuatu - May 2009*, page 27

In terms of the more general sustainability of Wan Smolbag's systems and processes, the organization demonstrates a fairly unique, and seemingly sustainable approach. The more participatory and collaborative style of work that was identified as a hallmark of the organization's governance and management structures by multiple stakeholders has remained strong and high functioning, even in the face of what were seen to be donor initiated shifts in its structure (e.g. the designation of a CEO for the organization), and despite substantial pressures including the high demands currently being placed on staff, and in the context of what were described as "stretched" human and financial resources. It is also worth noting that the organization has managed to maintain its relatively flat, grounded and intimate approach and structure, in the context of rapid growth. As one staff member said "Even at 140 staff, it still feels like a 'small organization'". This staff member echoed others in the organization who called for the organization to retain the ability to "keep doing what we are doing, and listening and talking to each other."

Given the above, the reviewer recommends that key stakeholders work together with Wan Smolbag to build and support organizational resilience. Building greater resilience would involve supporting the organization in remaining relatively self-directed, fluid and responsive, and supporting it in cultivating the systems and approaches that are valued by the organization, and have been found to work. Cultivating a culture of resilience in the organization also means working towards a more sustainable level of material and human resources, and includes continuing to take care of staff, and ensuring that peoples' lives and experiences in the organization remain fulfilling and manageable. Resilient organizations are also marked by a culture of innovation, and an emphasis on supporting an environment where staff and community members can do their best, and be their best.

Recent work on building the culture of innovation in organizations has emerged from the private sector, but significant lessons can be taken from the overall approach and applied to civil society. Some of the key components of supporting a culture of innovation have been identified as: fueling passion and a sense of purpose, celebrating ideas, fostering autonomy through extending trust, encouraging courage and saying what you think, creating a space for experimentation and even failure, thinking small in terms of being curious and nimble, and maximizing diversity.¹⁹ In many ways, Wan Smolbag can already be seen to be modeling a culture of innovation. Many of these aspects were recognized by various stakeholders through this process, and have been identified as key elements of the organization's effectiveness. The goal should be for donors and Wan Smolbag to move into the future, with these key elements front and centre.

Wan Smolbag - Scalability

The review found that Wan Smolbag has the systems, adaptability, leadership and drive to expand its operations, in well-considered ways that remain true to its core values and approach. From that perspective, the organization was identified by several key stakeholders as "highly scalable". However, everyone who was questioned about scalability indicated that the organization could only expand with certain elements in place. In the words of one respondent the "ownership and power sharing approach makes it very scalable, but with the right people and the right resources." The only real barriers to future expansion and growth of the organization were located in the areas of resources and infrastructure, with staff pointing out that human resources in areas such as management, finance and monitoring and evaluation, as well as related infrastructure, would need to be expanded in proportion to any increase in activities and scope. In the words of one manager, "At this point in time there are lots of exciting ways we could progress into the future. There is a lot more we can do, as long as donors are willing. We need the partnership to be more effective and flexible. We could really do a lot more, and a lot for this country."

¹⁹ See <http://www.inc.com/articles/201106/josh-linkner-7-steps-to-a-culture-of-innovation.html> accessed on December 2, 2012

“Wan Smolbag could create innovative and creative spaces for young people for the next 50 years. [But we need to] take the opportunity now to give it a solid structure.”

Recommendations

The following nine recommendations are put forth by the reviewer based on the findings in the Wan Smolbag Mid Term Review 2012:

1. *Significant existing deficits in human resources and infrastructure should be addressed by key stakeholders as soon as possible (and before the new funding arrangement is put in place) in order to maintain current operational levels. Any further growth will need to be resourced adequately, beyond these levels. Key projects that are currently resourced outside of the core funding arrangement should be addressed temporarily, in order to ensure continuity. Salary levels should be reviewed to ensure that they are fair and reasonably competitive within the context of Vanuatu civil society.*

The review identified significant existing deficits in human and financial resources in the organization (several of these are also identified in Wan Smolbag's *Internal Discussion Paper*). These issues should be addressed as soon as possible by key stakeholders, ideally with donor support through bridging funds, in order to ensure that current operational levels can be maintained. Key activities such as the MSM and Sex Worker Programmes, the Youth and Rainbow Disability Theatre Groups, and *Love Patrol* should all be brought into the ongoing funding arrangement, to ensure that there is continuity in these innovative and highly successful programme areas. It may also be worthwhile for a donor in Vanuatu to commission an independent and anonymous salary survey that could be used to help civil society organizations like Wan Smolbag in their own determinations of fair and competitive salary levels.

2. *A whole-of-organization planning exercise should be carried out starting in April 2013 over a period of several months, taking into consideration the findings and recommendations of this review, and Wan Smolbag's 'Internal Discussion Paper'. This should inform the basis of programming beyond 2014, ideally for a ten year period.*

The planning process should take place over a two to three month period, and engage all stakeholders in ongoing discussion and negotiation at specified intervals. This will ensure that expectations of all parties are in line, and that all parties' interests are represented in a more dialogical way through the process. Given the current workload at Wan Smolbag, donors should provide specialized technical support to this process, ideally from an individual or team that will be based in Vanuatu for the duration of the planning process. The planning should result in a guiding Strategic Plan for the organization that is flexible and dynamic, and ensures that current levels of responsiveness and innovation in the organization can be maintained. In the words of one donor, “I would hate for them to go for a massive strategic planning exercise that ties them down. It should focus more on how they work and maintain their dynamism.”

3. *Planning should address the following areas and issues in particular:*
 - a. *Streamlining the financial systems at Wan Smolbag, particularly if there is a move towards complete or nearly complete core funding. The current financial system is still overly project and activity based.*

This work could be supported by short term technical assistance, but only once general funding levels and donor commitments are confirmed, and an outline of new structures and programmes are in place.

b. Consideration of the development of linked but more independent structures for programme areas such as the Nutrition Centre, Sports and the Environment Programme. A “new” articulation of the overall governance structure at Wan Smolbag should be developed, keeping the elements of collaboration and partnership in mind, and guided by Wan Smolbag actors, staff and management.

The overall planning process should include discussion of programmes, organizational systems and governance to ensure that management, operations and staffing levels are adequate and proportionate to the level of programming.

c. The creation of a designated Research Unit at Wan Smolbag that will focus on researching relevant and emerging social issues. This could be research initiated by Wan Smolbag, and also research carried out in partnership with external organizations. This research should be used to inform future programming at Wan Smolbag, and could help to provide an evidence base for both donors and government, and support broader policy development in Vanuatu.

A Research Unit at Wan Smolbag would need to be staffed adequately, ideally with a core team of two to three trained people and designated resources. Wan Smolbag has been collectively identified as at the front lines of emerging social issues in Vanuatu, and as deeply embedded in communities. The opportunities that this presents for all stakeholders will not be actualized without adequate resourcing.

d. The creation of a Monitoring and Evaluation Unit at Wan Smolbag that will focus on meeting the requirements of the donor partnership in terms of reporting against milestones, and identifying progress towards programme outcomes for both Wan Smolbag and donors. The development of this section would benefit from the involvement of a Monitoring and Evaluation technical specialist and must be resourced adequately.

A Monitoring and Evaluation Unit at Wan Smolbag is sorely overdue. Many much smaller organizations have dedicated staff in this area. AusAID's new Monitoring and Evaluation Standards recommend that “adequate resources are available for M&E - approximately 5 - 7% of total budget”²⁰ Given current operational levels, this would mean that approximately 15 million vatu (NZ \$ 200,000 or Aus \$ 150,000) should be dedicated expressly to monitoring and evaluation at Wan Smolbag. Currently funds dedicated to monitoring and evaluation are a fraction of this. This area would also benefit from the involvement of a Monitoring and Evaluation technical specialist who could participate through the latter part of the organizational planning exercise to ensure that outcomes are pitched appropriately, and that monitoring and evaluation at Wan Smolbag reflects the spirit of the overall approach to the next phase of funding.

4. In general, the guiding focus for key stakeholders should be on building organizational resilience in Wan Smolbag, and protecting and supporting the culture of innovation, and the spirit of partnership and collaboration that has made Wan Smolbag unique and effective.

The guiding elements of Wan Smolbag's practice and identity should be supported and cultivated more actively by all stakeholders. Approaches like consolidation should be replaced by a mindful approach to building resilience in the organization. This is both in recognition of the relative success of Wan Smolbag as a civil society organization in Vanuatu - and in the region - and as a living example of many of the articulated cornerstones of effective civil society from fostering social inclusion, modeling innovation, being responsive, supporting community governance, and fostering more informed citizens and a more accountable government. The strengths of Wan Smolbag in all of these areas were recognized by all stakeholders in the

²⁰ AusAID IET and Pacific Branches Evaluation Capacity Building Program Monitoring and Evaluation Standards 2012, page 7

review, and the ability of the organization to continue to model innovative and effective approaches, in a uniquely Wan Smolbag way, should be seen as a goal and a value in itself.

5. *Significant barriers to effective partnership and donor harmonization must be addressed by all parties - and resolved - if a more substantive and mutually effective long term partnership is the goal. Donors should take a leadership role in this process.*

Issues that emerged, particularly in the State of the Partnership section of this report, should be actively addressed by donors, in conversation with each other, and with Wan Smolbag. The donor relationship would be strengthened by active involvement in the organization by all donors (beyond their attendance at the Project Coordinating Committee). Wan Smolbag must play their part in ensuring that they engage in frank and more strategic dialogue with donors, with the ultimate mutual goal of cultivating more substantive partnerships.

6. *Clarity should be provided by all donors on their financial commitments from 2014 on - by March 31, 2013 - so that planning can begin. Donors should seriously consider entering into a longer term (ideally a ten year) commitment with Wan Smolbag in order to allow for long term planning and security.*

Donors should provide Wan Smolbag with a clear sense of their anticipated level of financial commitment, and the anticipated duration of their funding, as soon as practically, and ideally by March 31, 2013, so that Wan Smolbag can scale their plans accordingly and/or seek other donors as necessary.

7. *Other key donors such as Oxfam should be brought into the core funding relationship. Consideration should also be given to the possibility of delegated cooperation in a further attempt to harmonize donor relations.*

Oxfam, in particular, as the third key donor in a long term partnership with Wan Smolbag, has expressed an interest in becoming part of a core funding group, and should be brought into the next core funding arrangement. Delegated cooperation should be seriously considered by all parties, to strengthen donor harmonization and to lessen the “downstream” effects of differing expectations and relationships.

8. *The core funding agreement should come as close to 100% of total operating costs as possible, within the context of a programme based, more flexible approach, allowing the organization to remain responsive and dynamic.*

The historic activity and project roots of Wan Smolbag funding should be actively removed, with a more untied, programme based and flexible approach constructed, allowing the organization to remain both responsive and adaptable, with controls, feedback and monitoring processes built in to ensure responsible and accountable use of donor funds.

9. *Issues around the rationale for, or competition for, core funding should be resolved at the donor level.*

*Working Beyond Government*²¹ recommends the use of targeted, rather than competitive, approaches with trusted and effective civil society organizations. A targeted approach is well justified with Wan Smolbag.

²¹ *Working Beyond Government*, page xii

Final Evaluation Plan¹ Appendix 1

Objectives

The overall purpose and objectives of the Wan Smolbag Mid-Term Review 2012 are to:

1. Assess the current partnership arrangement between Wan Smolbag, AusAID and the New Zealand Aid Programme, and in particular, the impact of core funding on Wan Smolbag.
2. Consider the current demands on Wan Smolbag's services, and the organization's capacity to effectively operate and deliver programs into the future, and identify opportunities to maximize the effectiveness of ongoing support.
3. Take a closer look at the governance of the Youth Centre, and assess Wan Smolbag's capacity to carry out and mobilize research for donor reporting and other purposes, and identify Wan Smolbag's relationships with external organizations (government and other civil society organizations).

Key Stakeholders

The review will be governed by a Steering Group with representatives from AusAID, the New Zealand Aid Programme and Wan Smolbag as follows:

Wan Smolbag Mid-Term Review Steering Group Members	
David Momcilovic, First Secretary	AusAID
Obed Timakata, Program Manager	AusAID
Mikaela Nyman, Development Counsellor	New Zealand Aid Programme
James Toa, Development Programme Coordinator	New Zealand Aid Programme
Michael Taurakoto, CEO (or Gloria Lango, Senior Finance Officer)	Wan Smolbag Theatre
Jo Dorras, Scriptwriter and Publications Manager	Wan Smolbag Theatre

This Steering Group constitutes the key stakeholders, and the primary intended users, of the Wan Smolbag Mid-Term Review 2012.

Limitations

The Wan Smolbag Mid-Term Review 2012 is a desk review with an explicit focus on a finite number of key issues (please see Objectives above). The review will not seek to monitor Wan Smolbag activities, progress and impact through the past two and a half years, but will rather seek to conduct an evaluative review of specific areas of Wan Smolbag and its broader relationships with donors and partners.

Summary

As a dynamic and vital civil society actor in Vanuatu, and more broadly in the Pacific region, Wan Smolbag has received support from a variety of regional and international donors through its 23 year history, and has been the subject of numerous reviews. The most recent organization-wide review in 2009 recognized Wan

¹ Please note that according to AusAID's *Monitoring and Evaluation Standards 2012* the "Evaluation Plan supersedes the Evaluation Terms of Reference" (page 33). Therefore, this Evaluation Plan is the guiding document for the review.

Smolbag as consistently meeting or exceeding targets. Feedback about the organization has been uniformly positive both in terms of Wan Smolbag's financial management of activities and resources, and in the volume and quality of programming activities and products. Wan Smolbag has also been recognized as an organization that is able to do a lot with relatively few resources.

This Wan Smolbag Mid-Term Review is therefore focusing less on a review of Wan Smolbag and its activities to date, and more on an exploration of how the organization might be strengthened in terms of its internal structures, in terms of the donor support for its work, and through its programming into the future. Since 2009 Wan Smolbag has received substantial core funding from AusAID and the New Zealand Aid Programme through a Tripartite Partnership arrangement, with additional funding for discreet areas of its work coming from a variety of other donors including Oxfam, AusAID, SPC and Unicef.

The review will be carried out through an examination of various documents, and through interviews with key stakeholders from within Wan Smolbag, as well as key donor agencies and other partners (as required). The Evaluation Plan for the review reflects a collaborative approach, with the Steering Group providing guidance and feedback to the evaluation process. The Steering Group, along with several other key stakeholders, will be brought together for a presentation and discussion of preliminary findings before the final draft review report is produced. Comments from Steering Group members will be incorporated into the final report and the final Wan Smolbag Mid-Term Review Report will be made available to all partners electronically by Friday December 14, 2012.

Methodology

The Wan Smolbag Mid-Term Review 2012 will be conducted partly through a review of key documents (please see Appendix 1), as well as through a series of semi-structured interviews with a variety of stakeholders (please see Appendix 3). These interviews will take place over a three week period from Friday November 2 to Friday November 23 (please see Appendix 2). The following table contains the main questions that will guide the review. These questions will be used to construct interview guides for various stakeholders, including Wan Smolbag management, staff, donor partners, and any other individuals or organizations to be interviewed. The interview guides will contain questions that have been adapted to each stakeholder, and will include a mix of more qualitative interview questions, as well as some quantitative measurement tools including diagrams scales that will ask for assessments along a continuum. Interview guides will be made available as required.

As the review is an evaluative desk review with a focus on Wan Smolbag and its core partners, purposeful sampling procedures will be used. The review will seek to interview all of Wan Smolbag's management and staff, through a variety of in person, and where necessary, Skype or telephone interviews. These interviews will be recorded for the purpose of note-taking only. Thorough notes for every interview will be kept, and will be made available as required. In order to protect confidentiality, interviews will be held individually or in small groups, and confidentiality will be upheld through the reporting process. Any notes made available to any party will have the name of the individual/s interviewed removed.

Given the interest of all parties to strengthen the current partnership arrangement, and the capacity of Wan Smolbag into the future, the first set of questions will be treated as high priority questions in the review. Adequate time has been built into the schedule and the approach to allow new issues to emerge, and be addressed, as necessary. The secondary questions will be explored with a smaller group of stakeholders, in an attempt to elicit more focused information in these areas. Triangulation techniques will be applied to

the extent that similar questions will be posed across a range of respondents, and the majority of interviews will take place with individuals. Key documents will also be utilized to “cross-check” information, and to further inform discussions and findings.

All data will be systematically processed. Notes will be kept on the key documents utilized, and the complete responses to all interview questions will be organized and maintained. As there is a limited data set, the data will be processed simply by a thorough reading of all qualitative interview responses, and analysis of the information gathered. More quantitative interview questions will be processed by collating and presenting the responses. Unusual or contradictory information will be noted, and quotations and key issues will be brought to the readers attention in the body of the report. A network diagram will be developed to illustrate all of Wan Smolbag’s current relationships with other organizations, in Vanuatu, and regionally.

Questions

High Priority Questions

What are the most substantial changes at WSB since 2009? Within the organization? In WSB’s surrounding communities?

What new demands are being placed on WSB in 2012?

How effectively is WSB meeting these demands?

Have any new opportunities for WSB emerged that the organization has yet to act upon?

If yes, what are they?

What new demands are anticipated in the short and medium term future?

What will WSB need/need to do in order to meet these demands?

How would you assess the current capability of WSB staff?

Do you have any concrete suggestions for strengthening the capability of staff at WSB?

How would you assess Wan Smolbag’s current approach to reporting results? (including presentation of information, accessibility of information, type of information conveyed, and quality of information).

Do you have any suggestions for how WSB could more effectively share/communicate change resulting from its work (to donors and to a broader audience)?

What is WSB's current management/governance model?

How efficiently does WSB function (management/operations)?

How are day-to-day operations managed through this model? In different parts of the organization?

How are activities managed through this model? In different parts of the organization?

What are the biggest influences on the success or failure of WSB's current management/governance model?

What impact has core funding had on WSB in terms of its programming and day to day operations?

What has the impact of core funding been on WSB in terms of its overall operations?

What is core funding currently used for? What portion of WSB's total operating costs are currently being met by core funding?

How can the Tripartite Partnership arrangement be strengthened and made more effective for all parties?

How could greater harmonization of donor/partner relations and needs be achieved?

How could the current partnership arrangement be adapted to meet new and emerging priorities (community, government and donor) in Vanuatu and in the region?

As a key civil society partner in Vanuatu, how can donors more effectively support WSB's work and use it as a catalyst, or as an extension of their own goals and interests?

How might donors engage more effectively with civil society organizations in Vanuatu? What lessons can be learned from the partnership with WSB to date?

How "scalable" is WSB? How well poised is Wan Smolbag to meet/adapt to any new demands on its services/operations?

Could WSB expand programming/reach with the same resources?

If provided with an increase in resources, would WSB be in a position to expand its programming? Its reach?

If yes, in what areas?

Could WSB's governance structure and infrastructure support an increase in programming/reach?

If not, how would these need to change?

Secondary Questions

What does governance at the Youth Centre look like (people/planning/processes)?

Is it effective?

If yes, in what ways? What are the key strengths?

If no, what are the key weaknesses?

How might governance of the Youth Centre be improved?

Is Wan Smolbag's approach to research effective (in meeting programming needs/donor needs/in other ways)?

If yes, in what ways? What were the key strengths?

If no, were there gaps in any areas?

Do you have any suggestions for how research at WSB might be expanded/strengthened?

Which organizations (government, CSO) has Wan Smolbag engaged with on a regular basis since 2009?

Note: Will construct a diagram outlining all of Wan Smolbag's engagements with government/CSOs in Vanuatu and regionally over the past year.

Utilization of Findings

The evaluator will prepare a Mid-Term Review Report of no more than 20 pages plus appendices. This report will contain an Executive Summary that can be read/used as a stand alone document, as well as a series of recommendations. These recommendations will reflect the evaluator's professional opinion based on several years of experience working with youth and in civil society organizations in Vanuatu, as well as more than a decade working in Pacific regional organizations. Draft recommendations will be presented to the Steering Group, along with several key stakeholders prior to the submission of the Draft Mid-Term Review Report. All feedback will be taken into consideration in the drafting of the report, although the document will ultimately reflect the evaluator's professional judgement. The Steering Group will have an opportunity to provide feedback on the draft report, as well as on the Final Mid-Term Review Report.

Review Timelines Appendix 2

Date	Task
Wednesday October 24	Contract signed
Friday October 26 to Sunday October 28	Development of Draft Evaluation Plan
Tuesday October 30	Circulation of Draft Evaluation Plan to Steering Group
Wednesday October 31	Presentation of Draft Evaluation Plan to Steering Group
Friday November 2	Final Evaluation Plan circulated to Steering Group Output 1 completed
Saturday November 3 to Wednesday November 7	Review of background documentation
Wednesday November 7	Approval of Final Evaluation Plan by Steering Group
Thursday November 8 to Friday November 9	Scheduling of interviews with all Stakeholders
Thursday November 8 to Monday November 12	Development of Interview Guides
Tuesday November 13 to Thursday November 22	Interviews and Consultations with all stakeholders (please see Appendix 3)
Friday November 23 to Monday November 26	Processing and analysis of all data development of a presentation for the Feedback Session
Tuesday November 27	Feedback Session and presentation of preliminary findings to Steering Group and key stakeholders Output 2 completed
Wednesday November 28 to Sunday December 2	Completion of Draft Mid-Term Review Report
Monday December 3	Circulation of Draft Mid-Term Review Report to Steering Group Output 3 completed
Friday December 7	All comments on Draft Mid-Term Review Report submitted to consultant by Steering Group
Saturday December 8 to Thursday December 13	Revision of Draft Mid-Term Review Report based on comments provided by Steering Group
Friday December 14	Final Mid-Term Review Report circulated to Steering Group Output 4 completed

Stakeholders Consulted Appendix 3

Organization	Individual/s
Wan Smolbag	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Michael Taurakoto, CEO and Governance Programme Manager ▶ Nelson Johnson, Finance Officer ▶ Gloria Lango, Senior Finance Officer ▶ George Pedro, Environmental Programme Manager ▶ Siula Bulu, Health Programme Manager ▶ Peter Walker, Artistic Director ▶ Jo Dorras, Scriptwriter and Publications Manager ▶ Jayline Malverus, Project Assistant ▶ Jennifer Harris, Research Officer ▶ Damian Farrell, Youth Programme Manager ▶ Rita Norman, Coordinator ▶ Emma Dorras, Nutrition Centre Manager ▶ Shirley Jacobus, Nutrition Centre Trainer ▶ Jack Manuel, Sports Coordinator ▶ Judith Iakavai, NCYC Manager ▶ Noel Aru, Pentecost Youth Centre Project Manager and Core Actor ▶ Steward Vanua, Pentecost Youth Centre ▶ Charleon Falau, Core Actor ▶ Morinda Tari, Core Actor ▶ Virana David, Core Actor ▶ Donald Frank, Core Actor ▶ Florence Vira, Core Actor ▶ Joyanne Quiqui, Core Actor ▶ Danny Marcel, Core Actor ▶ Nerry Kalo, Core Actor ▶ Annette Charlie, Core Actor ▶ Kalko Kaltapau, Health Force Actor ▶ John Boita, Health Force Actor ▶ Evelyn Sara, Health Force Actor ▶ Thompson Tom, Health Force Actor ▶ George Siaka, Health Force Actor ▶ Brian Robert, Health Force Actor ▶ Hariet Kalpilelu, Health Force Actor ▶ Yaxley Nangof, Health Force Actor ▶ Loic Taga, Musician and Radio Technician ▶ Kirsten McWilliams, International Volunteer (Graphic Design) ▶ Riaz Deen, International Volunteer (Program Management/Finance)

Organization	Individual/s
AusAID	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Katherine Ruiz-Avila, Counsellor ▶ David Momcilovic, First Secretary ▶ Helen Corrigan, Senior Program Manager ▶ Obed Timakata, Program Manager
New Zealand Aid Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Mikaela Nyman, Development Counsellor ▶ James Toa, Development Programme Coordinator
Oxfam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Alex Mathieson, Director ▶ Megan Williams, Program Quality Advisor
Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Robyn Drysdale, Love Patrol Researcher ▶ Pioni Willie, Senior Policy Analyst (Health), Department of Strategic Policy Planning and Aid Co-ordination ▶ Johnson Vora, Senior Policy Analyst (Education), Department of Strategic Policy Planning and Aid Co-ordination ▶ John Ezra, Senior Policy Analyst (Governance and Leadership), Department of Strategic Policy Planning and Aid Co-ordination

Guiding Questions²

Appendix 4

High Priority Questions

1. What are the most substantial changes at WSB since 2009? Within the organization? In WSB's surrounding communities?

2. What new demands are being placed on WSB in 2012?
How effectively is WSB meeting these demands?

3. Have any new opportunities for WSB emerged that the organization has yet to act upon?
If yes, what are they?

4. What new demands are anticipated in the short and medium term future?
What will WSB need/need to do in order to meet these demands?

5. How would you assess the current capability of WSB staff?
Do you have any concrete suggestions for strengthening the capability of staff at WSB?

6. How would you assess Wan Smolbag's current approach to reporting results? (including presentation of information, accessibility of information, type of information conveyed, and quality of information).
Do you have any suggestions for how WSB could more effectively share/communicate change resulting from its work (to donors and to a broader audience)?

7. What is WSB's current management/governance model?
How efficiently does WSB function (management/operations)? How are day-to-day operations managed through this model? In different parts of the organization? How are activities managed through this model? In different parts of the organization?
What are the biggest influences on the success or failure of WSB's current management/governance model?

² These Guiding Questions were taken, in the same order, and in their entirety, from the Evaluation Plan (please see Appendix 1). They have simply been numbered to support the reader in identifying various questions that are addressed in the body of the report.

8. What impact has core funding had on WSB in terms of its programming and day to day operations?
What has the impact of core funding been on WSB in terms of its overall operations?

9. What is core funding currently used for? What portion of WSB's total operating costs are currently being met by core funding?

10. How can the Tripartite Partnership arrangement be strengthened and made more effective for all parties?
How could greater harmonization of donor/partner relations and needs be achieved?

11. How could the current partnership arrangement be adapted to meet new and emerging priorities (community, government and donor) in Vanuatu and in the region?

12. As a key civil society partner in Vanuatu, how can donors more effectively support WSB's work and use it as a catalyst, or as an extension of their own goals and interests?
How might donors engage more effectively with civil society organizations in Vanuatu? What lessons can be learned from the partnership with WSB to date?

13. How "scalable" is WSB? How well poised is Wan Smolbag to meet/adapt to any new demands on its services/operations?
Could WSB expand programming/reach with the same resources?
If provided with an increase in resources, would WSB be in a position to expand its programming? Its reach?
If yes, in what areas?
Could WSB's governance structure and infrastructure support an increase in programming/reach?
If not, how would these need to change?

Secondary Questions

14. What does governance at the Youth Centre look like (people/planning/processes)?
Is it effective?
If yes, in what ways? What are the key strengths?
If no, what are the key weaknesses?
How might governance of the Youth Centre be improved?

15. Is Wan Smolbag's approach to research effective (in meeting programming needs/donor needs/in other ways)?

If yes, in what ways? What were the key strengths?

If no, were there gaps in any areas?

Do you have any suggestions for how research at WSB might be expanded/strengthened?

16. Which organizations (government, CSO) has Wan Smolbag engaged with on a regular basis since 2009?

Note: Will construct a diagram outlining all of Wan Smolbag's engagements with government/CSOs in Vanuatu and regionally over the past year.

Documents Utilized Appendix 5

Document
<p>1. The DAC Principles</p> <p>DAC Principles for the Evaluation of Development Assistance (From: http://www.oecd.org/development/evaluationofdevelopmentprogrammes/2755284.pdf)</p>
<p>DAC Criteria for Evaluating Development Assistance (From: http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluationofdevelopmentprogrammes/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm)</p>
<p>2. WSB Tripartite Partnership Document</p> <p>WSB Theatre Tripartite Partnership Project/Activity Design Document January 2010 to December 2014 (Dated: November 3, 2009)</p>
<p>3. WSB Strategic Plan</p> <p>Wan Smolbag Theatre's Five-Year Strategic Plan July 2007-June 2012 (Dated: May 2007)</p>
<p>4. WSB Internal Discussion Paper</p> <p>Wan Smolbag Internal Discussion Paper</p>
<p>5. WSB Annual Reports (from 2010 on)</p> <p>Wan Smolbag Biannual Report January to June 2010</p> <p>Wan Smolbag Annual Report January to December 2010</p> <p>Wan Smolbag Biannual Report January to June 2011</p> <p>Wan Smolbag Annual Report January to December 2011</p> <p>Wan Smolbag Biannual Report January to June 2012</p>
<p>6. All Wan Smolbag Reviews (from 2007 on)</p> <p>Student Centred Teaching in the South Pacific: A Review of the Work of Wan Smolbag Theatre Final Report Prepared by David Small for NZAID, July 2007</p> <p>Mid-Term Review: Wan Smolbag Vanuatu by Alison Gray, Andrea Hinge and Pamela Thomas, May 2009</p> <p>Love Patrol Season 2: Evaluation Focus Group Discussions (Funded by SPC Pacific Regional HIV/AIDS Project) by Robyn Drysdale, September 2010</p> <p>VCCT Site Assessment at Wan Smolbag Theatre Clinic (KPH Vila & NCYC Santo) by MoH, HIV Unit, August/September 2010</p> <p>Evaluation Report on the Capacity Development Program in Vanuatu (2006-2010) Supported by The Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), January 2011</p> <p>Evaluation of the Oxfam-Wan Smolbag Sexual and Reproductive Health Project by Bill O'Loughlin and Jaylene Malverus, May/June 2011</p> <p>Identifying the sexual and reproductive health information and service delivery preferences of adolescents in Vanuatu, Burnet Institute, 2010-2011</p>

7. Other Documents
AusAID IET and Pacific Branches Evaluation Capacity Building Program Monitoring and Evaluation Standards 2012
AusAID Evaluation Capacity Building An Integrated Approach The Key Concepts
AusAID Civil Society Engagement Framework June 2012
Australia Vanuatu Partnership for Development
AusAID's Vanuatu Country Strategy (From: http://www.aisaid.gov.au/countries/pacific/vanuatu/Pages/default.aspx)
New Zealand Vanuatu Joint Commitment for Development (October 2011)
New Zealand Aid Programme in Vanuatu (From: http://www.aid.govt.nz/where-we-work/pacific/vanuatu)
Government of the Republic of Vanuatu Priorities and Action Agenda 2006-2015
8. Additional Documents Consulted
Working Beyond Government: Evaluation of AusAID's Engagement with Civil Society in Developing Countries - March 2012
Analysis of Five Cases of AusAID Engagement with Civil Society in Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea and the Philippines – January 2011
Evaluation of AusAid's Engagement with Civil Society in Vanuatu: Country Case Study - September 2010
Urban Youth in the Pacific: Increasing Resilience and Reducing Risk for Involvement in Crime and Violence - June 2011

WSB Staff Profile Appendix 6

Wan Smolbag Employees on Payroll:

- ▶ 153 Employees on Payroll
-

- ▶ 146 local (95.5%) and 7 international/volunteer (4.5%)
-

- ▶ Local staff: 77 full time and 69 part time
-

- ▶ Salaries range from VUV 30,000 to 190,000 per month (Note: Top salary is for a local staff member)

Other People Who Gain Income from Wan Smolbag:

- ▶ 30 plus community members receive VUV 5,000 to 40,000 per month year round through the Moso project
-

- ▶ 15 youth receive VUV 28,000 per month year round through Fire Dancing group
-

- ▶ 4 youth receive VUV 8,000 per month (work one day a week) for the Hip Hop group
-

- ▶ 17 actors received VUV 20,000 each for their participation in the disability play
-

- ▶ 25 youth received VUV 10,000 each for their participation in the youth play
-

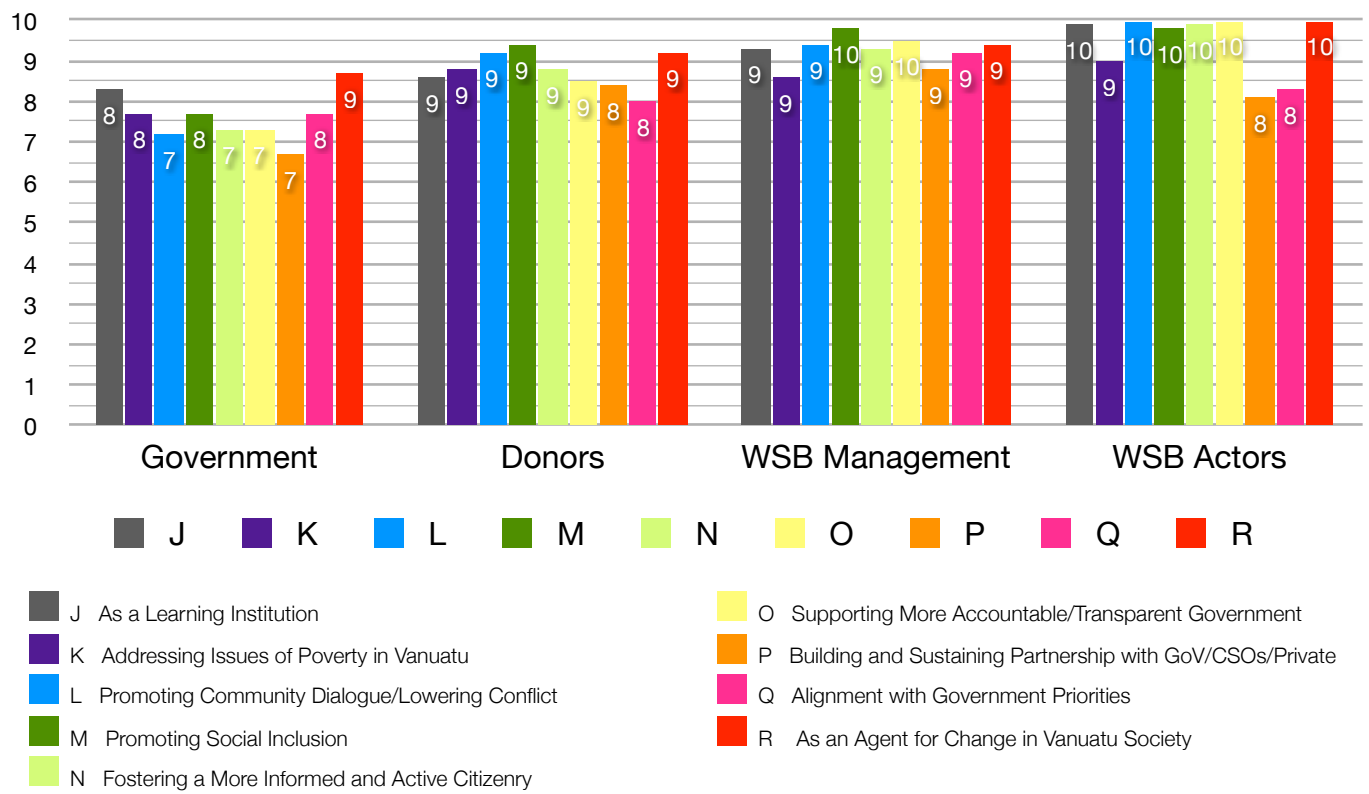
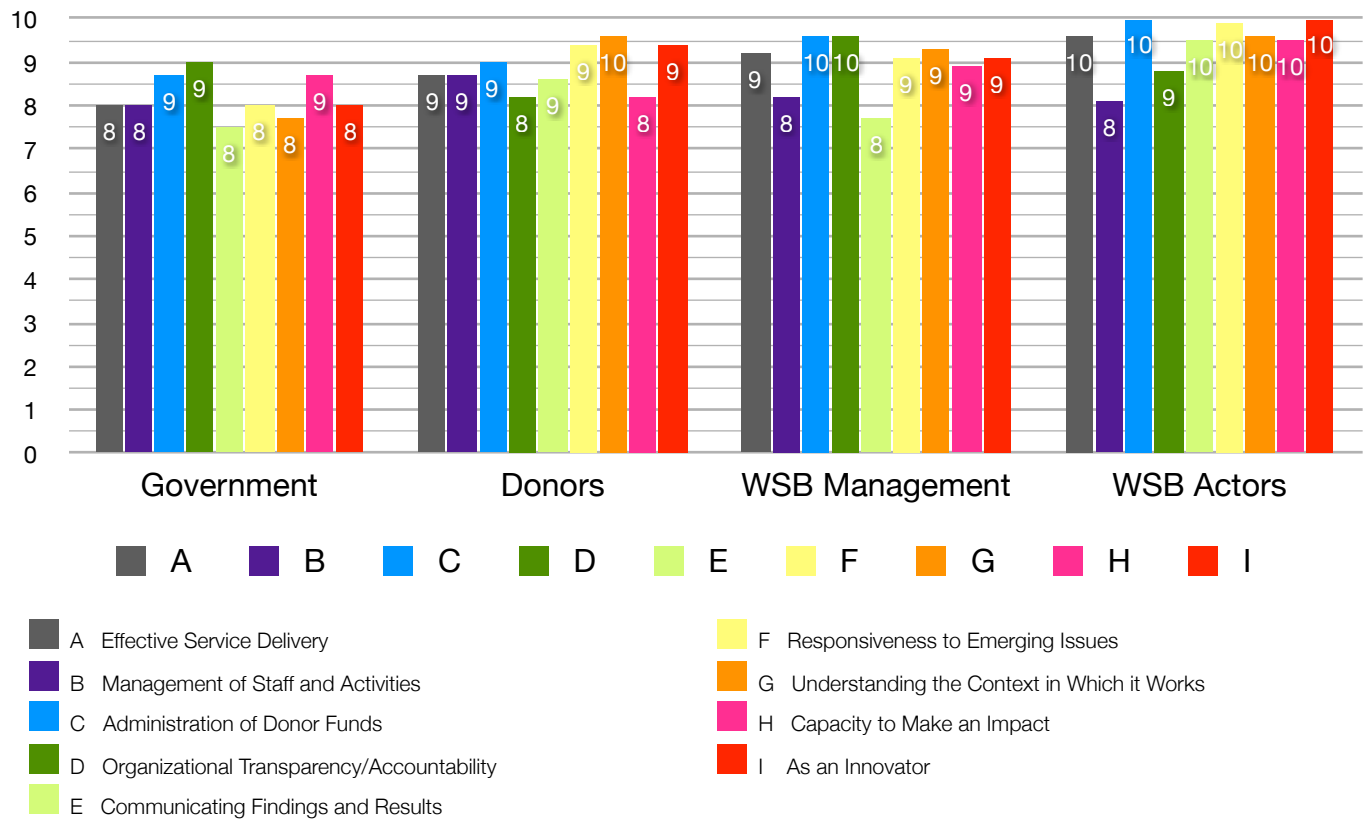
- ▶ 19 women provided catering on the Love Patrol set and received VUV 72,000 to 120,000 each
-

Financial Overview Appendix 7

Donors/Income Sources in 2012 <small>(As an indication of current total ongoing operating costs for staffing and activities)</small>	VUV	NZD <small>(1VUV = 0.0132116 NZD)</small>	AUD <small>(1VUV = 0.0104027 AUD)</small>	% of total operating costs
New Zealand Core Funding	70,542,100	931,974	733,828	29.5
AusAID Core Funding	61,304,299	809,928	637,730	25.6
AusAID Extra Recurrent & LP 6 Funding ¹	49,847,793	658,569	518,552	20.8
Oxfam (KPH Clinic/NCYC/Pentecost) ²	26,555,782	350,844	276,252	11.1
Unicef (Youth Drama) ³	4,299,000	56,797	44,721	1.8
SPC (Sex Worker and MSM Work) ⁴	4,498,085	59,427	46,792	1.9
NZ BSK (Disability Group) ³	2,699,787	35,669	28,085	1.1
Inter Media (Research) ³	5,397,043	71,304	56,144	2.3
German Development Agency (REDD+) ³	1,360,000	17,968	14,148	0.6
SPC (HIV Small Grants Scheme) ⁴	3,045,518	40,236	31,682	1.3
SPC (Capacity Building of CDOs) ⁴	3,867,297	51,093	40,230	1.6
Burnet Institute (KPH Research) ³	4,635,006	61,236	48,217	1.9
TV Stations (Love Patrol Screening Rights)	1,148,067	15,168	11,943	0.5
Totals:	2.3920E+08	3,160,212	2,488,324	100

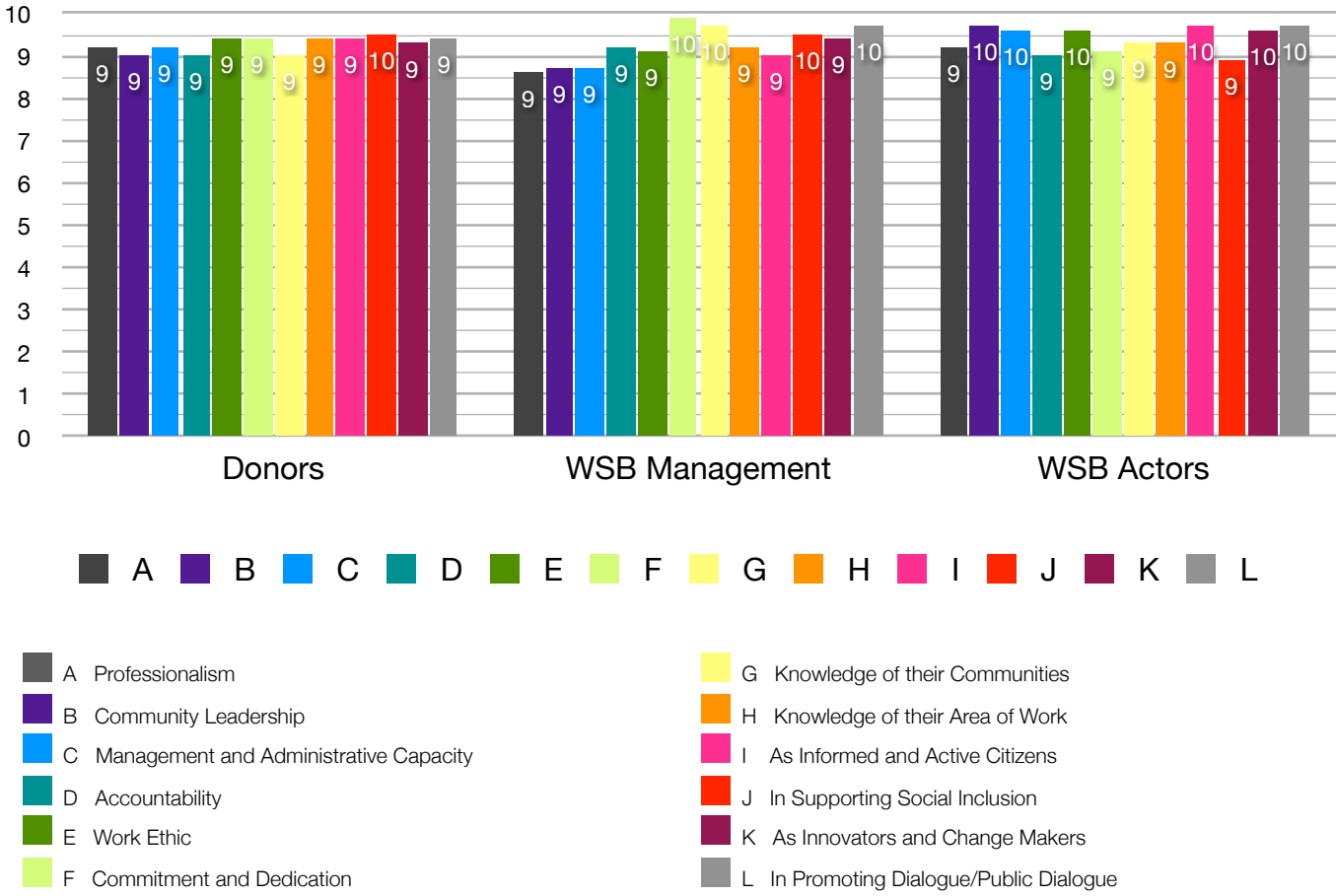
1. Includes Love Patrol 6 funding in 2012 and 2013. There is an ongoing commitment of approx. VUV 26,200,000 (NZD 346,144 / AUD 272,551) through 2014. Note: Does not include funding for Love Patrol 7 - this is unconfirmed. AusAID is also providing VUV 35,152,208 (NZD 464,416 / AUD 365,678) in non-recurrent funds, mostly for the KPH Clinic rebuild
2. Oxfam funding priorities have changed. Funding areas/levels unconfirmed beyond this year.
3. One time project funding - ends in 2012 or 2013
4. Project funding from SPC ends at the end of 2012 (for both the MSM and SW Peer Education Programmes, Capacity Building of CDOs and the NAC Small Grants Scheme)

Organizational Effectiveness Appendix 8



Please note that all indicators of Organizational Effectiveness are based on a scale from 1 to 10 with 1 being 'Ineffective' and 10 being 'Very Effective'.

Staff Capability Appendix 9



Please note that all indicators of Staff Capability are based on a scale from 1 to 10 with 1 being 'Weak' and 10 being 'Very High'.

Organizational Connections Appendix 10

Vanuatu Civil Society Connections / 16

- FSP Vanuatu
- VANGO
- Care International
- Fes't Napuan
- Alliance Francaise
- Youth Challenge Vanuatu
- Vanuatu Red Cross
- Save the Children Vanuatu
- Canal Studio
- Vanuatu Society for Disabled People
- Vanuatu Family Health Association
- Sanma Counseling Centre
- Frangipani Disability Centre
- National Youth Council (Luganville Council)
- Vanuatu Football Federation / Just Play
- Vanuatu Association of Sport and National Olympic Committee

Government of Vanuatu, Provincial and Municipal Government Connections / 25

- Department of Youth and Sport
- Department of Fisheries
- Department of Environment and Conservation
- Department of Forestry
- Department of Geology and Mines
- Ministry of Health - Health Promotion Unit
- Ministry of Health - NCD Unit
- Ministry of Health - Mental Health Focal Person
- Ministry of Health - Environmental Health Unit
- Ministry of Health - HIV Unit
- Ministry of Health - Sanma Rural Health Department
- Ministry of Agriculture
- Ministry of Education
- Vanuatu Tourism Office
- Vanuatu Broadcasting and Television Corporation
- Vanuatu Correctional Services
- Vanuatu Meteorological Services
- Reserve Bank of Vanuatu
- Vanuatu Police Force - Crime Prevention Unit
- Vanuatu Police Force - Family Protection Unit
- Shefa Province - Sports
- Shefa Province - Health

- Shefa Province - Education
- Sanma Provincial Council
- Luganville Municipal Council

Other Organizations (Academic, Regional, International, Business) / 35 plus

- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme
- Secretariat of the Pacific Community
- Secretariat of the Pacific Community - G12 Regional Programme
- Foundation for the Peoples of the South Pacific International
- World Wide Fund for Nature
- Coral Triangle Initiative
- WORld Fish Centre
- Te Mana o Te Moana
- Wildlife Conservation Society
- Oceania Hockey Federation
- Australia Cricket/Island Cricket
- Oceania Boxing IBA
- International Sea Turtles Society
- International Coral Reef Society
- First Peoples Worldwide Fund
- Food and Agricultural Organization of the UN - Farm Support Association
- UN Women
- Institute for Applied Ecology
- Faculty of Applied Science, University of Canberra
- Pacific Institute of Public Policy
- University of the South Pacific
- Australia Pacific Technical College
- Burnet Institute
- Intermedia
- Japan International Cooperation Agency
- Peace Corps
- Volunteer Service Overseas
- Volunteer Service Abroad
- Canada Fund
- Global Vision International
- Unicef
- French Embassy
- Various Vanuatu-based businesses including: Holiday Inn, Mele Beach Bar, Eratap, Erakor Island Resort, Coconut Palms, Iriki Resort, the mamas in the market, Buzz FM, Daily Post