

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.

1. Introduction

This is a report of a review of the Pacific regional programme of Wan Smolbag Theatre that received NZAID funding over the period 2003-2006.

The report begins with a discussion of methods used to evaluate the project, which are consistent with those described in the initial proposal. It is followed by some preliminary remarks about the context within which WSB operates and about WSB as an organization. The next section contains the report's key findings. These are discussed under the headings of method of work, materials, training, regionalisation and uncompleted or problematic components. Section six is a reflection on communication processes and relationships that have arisen during this assignment. The report concludes with a brief list of recommendations.

2. Executive Summary

Wan Smolbag Theatre is an innovative and well-organised NGO, operating on sound principles and methods of development and education.

It is well grounded in its country of origin, Vanuatu, and has through this programme made an impressive start to regionalising its education work in the formal and non-formal sectors.

The training methods used and the accompanying resources produced by WSB are of a high quality and have a broad applicability in Vanuatu and the wider South West Pacific region.

This review recommends a continuation of NZAID support for WSB both in its core funding and in its regional education programme.

This review recommends greater communication between WSB and NZAID particularly in relation to the work in the Solomon Islands.

This review also recommends that WSB consider within the context of their regional education programme, the possibility of developing a francophone component.

3. Methodology

This review involved three weeks in Vanuatu, Fiji and the Solomons. Prior to leaving New Zealand, the reviewer was provided by NZAID with the terms of reference for the review, the original project application and an extensive range of other relevant documentation. This included progress reports prepared by WSB for NZAID, the review conducted by USP consultants part way through the 2003-2006 project, and the written resources (booklets and other teaching materials) produced by WSB as part of the project, and many of the DVDs produced by WSB for the project.

The in-country phase of the review began with two days of orientation with Peter Walker and Jo Dorras in Vila, covering the context in which they were operating, the nature of WSB as an organization, the work they were doing, and the purpose and method of this review. Peter and Jo also went through much of the programme of meetings they had organised and explained their reasons for arranging the itinerary in the way they proposed it. Although the original programme they had prepared would have enabled the review to be conducted satisfactorily, as a result of these conversations, agreement was reached on a few amendments to it and then, during the period of the review, a few other minor changes were made.

The overall itinerary remained intact. That was: several days in Port Vila; a two-day visit to Santo accompanied by Bob Homu and Morinda Tari; a return to Vila and travel to Northern Efate; travel to Labasa with Jo Dorras and Annette Charley and (for some of the time) Megan McCoy; a short visit to Suva; and finally, a visit to Honiara, again accompanied by Bob Homu and Morinda Tari.

During the in-country phase, an extensive schedule included formal interviews and informal discussions with people from WSB. Meetings were also held with many key people from outside WSB who are involved in formal and/or non-formal education and who have collaborated with WSB during the course of the work currently under review or were aware of this work. There was observation and/or participation in many workshops or classes in which WSB resources and methods were used; some where educators were being trained by WSB in the use of the resources and methods, some where people who had received training/resources were applying what they had learnt. Valuable meetings were also held with NZAID representatives in Vanuatu and Fiji

although, in the wake of the tsunami, a scheduled meeting with Rebecca Spratt was unable to take place. This was particularly unfortunate but was rectified by way of correspondence and telephone discussion from New Zealand. A full schedule of these meetings and interviews is included in Appendix One.

In addition to these formal encounters, the review included many conversations with WSB members for a range of reasons including to clarify facts, to be briefed on WSB relationships with people to be interviewed, to discuss some of the review's preliminary interpretations and recommendations, and to request meetings with additional people. WSB also made available whatever documentation was requested.

Interviews and meeting were primarily in English but where informants had limited English (some francophone teachers and tourism operator in Vanuatu) or preferred to converse in French (Vanuatu Director General of Education), they were conducted in French. Most interviews were recorded on an mp3 recorder, but this was only as a back-up to the 107 pages of hand-written notes taken over the course of in-country phase of this assignment.

Once back in New Zealand, some preliminary notes were made and, consistent with the methodological outline submitted in applying for this assignment, these were forwarded to WSB as the basis of a subsequent dialogue with them. A draft report was then submitted to NZAID in advance of a debriefing held with Megan McCoy at the NZAID offices in Wellington.

This process of data gathering and interpretation provides a sound basis for the findings and recommendations made in this report.

4. The Context of WSB's Programme:

4.1 Education and Development in Vanuatu, Fiji and Solomon Islands

The three countries in which WSB has been operating in its programme currently under review face similar educational challenges. They have:

- young populations and (excluding Fijian emigration rates) high rates of population growth;
- under-resourced and poorly managed education systems;
- high levels of functional illiteracy;
- prevailing pedagogical practices in schools that are antithetical to currently recognised best practice and are not conducive to student learning¹;

¹ In a class of 8 year-olds in an isolated village school on Nguna Island, Vanuatu, wall charts for children to read were packed with detail of English grammar rules,

- school fees and other associated educational costs that make schooling a significant financial burden on families²;
- teaching workforces that are poorly paid³, with many unqualified teachers⁴, given little or no ongoing in-service education, and with (not surprisingly) low morale⁵;
- school buildings and other facilities that are cramped, poorly designed and, not uncommonly, quite unsafe⁶;
- overcrowded classes with unfavourable teacher:pupil ratios⁷;
- curriculum materials that are outdated and often alien to the local context⁸;
- high levels of failure and exclusion of students⁹; and limited opportunities for paid employment for school-leavers.

There are, however, some signs of hope. Vanuatu's new Director-General of Education, Daniel Lamoureux, is poised to launch a thorough overhaul of the country's formal education system¹⁰. A Vanuatu Qualifications Framework is being constructed to increase access to quality technical and life-skills education. And there is currently¹¹ an extensive review, reorganisation and expansion of pre-service and in-service teacher education at the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SICHE).

such as “the present simple tense uses the base form of the verb which changes only for the 3rd person singular (he, she, my mother, my father, my grandfather etc...)”.

² Moderate school fees in Vanuatu are 19,000 vatu (NZ\$260) per term per pupil, roughly equivalent to the monthly earnings of a house cleaner.

³ Fijian teachers were all given a 5% pay cut in early 2007. Solomon Island teachers, even after recent industrial action secured wage increases, still earn as little as NZ\$120 per fortnight.

⁴ Of 6,000 teachers in the Solomon Islands, as many as 1,000 have received no teacher training.

⁵ Absenteeism among teachers is not uncommon.

⁶ I was authoritatively informed that boarding school dormitories are routinely locked from the outside at night, even when these buildings are made of dried grass and have candles as their only source of light.

⁷ Class sizes of 50 are common. As many as 70 pupils per class is also found

⁸ Some teachers reported having to use textbooks on social issues that were published in 1982, and used pollution examples from Mexico and Tokyo, and deciduous trees in science.

⁹ Of 8,000 children who enter Year One in Vanuatu, only 90 to 120 successfully complete Year 13, many of whom subsequently fail their tertiary studies.

¹⁰ The plan, currently awaiting Ministerial sign-off, will begin with eight task-forces focusing on curriculum, finance, management systems, teacher education, facilities, human resource development, decentralisation, and revision of education laws.

¹¹ With NZAID and University of Waikato support.

The high rates of educational exclusion coupled with limited opportunities in the labour market and a concentration of social problems facing adolescents and youth¹² give non-formal education a heightened importance.

4.2 WSB as an NGO

WSB was founded by Peter Walker and Jo Dorras, English expats who have made Vanuatu their home. Although WSB remains dependent on these two people in many ways (not least by their capacity to provide an effective interface between the organization and donor agencies), WSB's growth and ongoing success have been achieved only by the consistent commitment of Peter and Jo to engaging and nurturing the talents of ni-Vanuatu people at every level and using developmentally sound methods of work.

The ni-Vanuatu people involved in the organization are drawn overwhelmingly from the target demographic – young, unemployed or under-employed, a healthy gender balance and of geographically diverse origins. Considerable individual responsibility and collective power is devolved to these people with decision-making systems and processes for planning, implementation and evaluation that are as open and participatory as is practicable. There is an appropriate mix in WSB's organisational culture of informality and flexibility where possible and hard-headed management and adherence to administrative systems where necessary. This capacity to make difficult decisions through sound processes was demonstrated by WSB's ability to terminate the employment of a long-standing full-time member of the core group of actors/facilitators in a manner that generated remarkably little acrimony.

5. Findings:

Preliminary Comments:

WSB progress reports contain many comments (solicited and unsolicited) from people with whom WSB has worked – as participants, trainees, associated NGOs and representatives of government departments and other Pacific national and regional groups and networks. WSB has also provided many individual evaluation forms from participants in their workshops, including some workshops at which the reviewer was present. In addition, personal conversations were held with many people who have worked with WSB in a variety of contexts. Nothing heard or observed over the course of this

¹² Notable amongst these are teenage pregnancy, substance abuse, sexually-transmissible infections, violence and abuse, health issues such as TB and diabetes, and the looming risk of HIV/AIDS.

assignment provides any reason to suspect that the comments in the progress reports that WSB has submitted to NZAID with regard to this programme are anything but accurate and representative of how WSB is viewed by those with whom it works. This comment is made because the consistently positive comments on the feedback forms are so extraordinary.

5.1 Method of Work

A vital aspect of successful community education is to identify accurately what communities to approach, when and how to work with them, and on what issues. Where the WSB core group works directly with communities, its initial approach is to send researchers with the task of making an assessment of the best issues to begin working on and how, when and with whom that work should be undertaken. This creates a developmentally sound foundation for an ongoing relationship and is, from my observation, a key component in WSB's success.

For much of WSB's work, however, contact with a community or institution (such as a school) is established by means of attracting one or two of its members into a WSB education or training activity. This review included interviews with many people who came into contact with WSB in this way. Some were school teachers involved in formal education. Others were wanting to acquire and employ methods of non-formal education to improve their communities. The development work that these people carry out in their communities is difficult to quantify if for no other reason than their sheer isolation of the communities of many of them. However, there is a strong multiplier effect in action, and this review found in most of them, an extraordinary degree of commitment, enthusiasm, awareness and overall competence.

The process of identifying, training and developing ongoing working relationships with key people in this manner has the potential for inter-agency conflict or tension with, for example, other NGOs vying for the limited time and energy of these key people. With one exception¹³ which was not of WSB's making, WSB's relationships with other NGOs were refreshingly free of any sign of inter-organisational rivalry.

WSB's method of identifying and developing its relationship with counterparts in Fiji and the Solomons is discussed in the section on regionalisation below.

As noted elsewhere in this report, WSB works on many important areas of development that are inherently sensitive and controversial. Any focus (whether explicit or implicit) on gender roles, violence, sex or reproduction, for

¹³ Discussed in the Regionalisation section below

example, can be perceived to run counter to important traditional values. These are issues, therefore, that it is easy for a community education group to treat in such a way that not only frustrates the aims of raising awareness and promoting discussion, but that produces a counter-reaction that can silence discussion and hinder or even prevent on-going educational work.

As discussed in more detail below, almost every educator interviewed spoke very highly about WSB materials and training on these ‘sensitive issues’. It is reasonable to conclude that the quality of WSB materials and training is largely a reflection of the methods that give rise to them.

Once an issue is identified, a decision needs to be made as to whether to develop resources or training around it. Typically, the next step will be to devise a play on the issue, which will usually start with Jo Dorras writing a draft script. From that point, the core group engages in a long and rigorous process of discussion, critique, workshopping and rewriting. It is this process that ensures that all the important considerations (such as factual accuracy, educational merit, cultural appropriateness, dramatic effect etc...) are taken into account in the finished product. This process is one of the key factors in the success of WSB and needs to be nurtured and reinforced, an issue addressed below in the discussion of uncompleted or problematic programme components.

WSB’s internal systems are of a very high standard. As noted above, their management and decision-making structures and systems of planning, implementation and evaluation are fundamentally sound and appropriate for an organization of their kind. Participant evaluations are routinely used in all WSB activities and the comments contained in them are given consideration. The day-to-day demands of planning and implementing such an extensive programme of activities has left little scope for what might be called ‘researching the ongoing impact of the programmes’. Over the course of this review, issues and perspectives have been raised that highlight some areas where further strategic thinking and planning would be timely (see, for example, recommendation 7.4).

There was a scrupulous process of receipting with all the WSP people who were observed handling WSB cash, and it was not surprising to hear that on the rare occasion where there has been questionable expenditure, these systems were able to identify and rectify it very quickly. There is clearly a good degree of trust combined with the back-up of checks and balances.

From modest beginnings, WSB has grown into an organization of considerable size and complexity. WSB’s method of work has enabled it expand its capacity without losing the organisational culture that underpins the vibrancy and freshness of its work. WSB’s ability to build its capacity to establish itself

as a regional organization is discussed further under the regionalisation part of this report.

5.2 Materials

The inventory of materials produced by WSB over the 2003-06 period (see Appendix Two) is very impressive. The output is prolific and this has not been achieved by compromising quality in any way.

The audio-visual resources and associated user guides are factually sound, clearly written, contain a good variety of thought-provoking questions and activities that would stimulate discussion, and that they are designed and produced in an attractive and accessible way. That impression was shared overwhelmingly by the educators who were interviewed who, according to the project design, were to make use of these materials. Nobody was encountered during this review who was not impressed with the WSB resources.

Since WSB progress reports contain many comments, solicited and unsolicited, from educators/facilitators who have found the materials of tremendous value, it seems superfluous to fill this report with more such comments. Rather, it can be confirmed that the resources are, as WSB reports indicate, very well received.

It is worth noting, however, that in addition to those who use the materials directly, very positive comments about the materials were made by other key educationalists. Two in particular are worthy of note:

Margaret McFarland¹⁴, who is leading the development of the new Vanuatu Qualifications Framework, views the WSB materials (and their personnel and networks) as perfectly pitched for the crucial first level of the framework. A key aim of developing the framework is to support and strengthen the delivery of technical and life-skills education by NGOs. To achieve this, a series of three courses (CTC1, CTC2 and CTC3) have been developed to train the personnel of NGOs that are engaged in this kind of activity. In two of those courses, WSB resources¹⁵ form a core part of the curriculum.

Dr Afzal Abdool, Project Manager for the Vanuatu Tourism Education and Training Project (VATET), also spoke very highly of WSB resources. His research at the outset of the project revealed widespread local ignorance of basic facts and dynamics of tourism. He relied heavily of WSB's expertise in communication and education to bridge the gap between the awareness levels of local communities and the levels of awareness necessary to embark on a community tourism project with a reasonable likelihood of success. The

¹⁴ See Appendix One for her position.

¹⁵ Notably *No Questions*, a dvd that explores student-centred pedagogical practices.

tourism-oriented audio-visual and written materials of WSB were invaluable, particularly in the way they focused less on providing answers than on raising questions that could form the basis for learning, discussion and planning. Dr Abdool's network of 60 trainers over three provinces all relied on these materials and a number of them have sent him unsolicited emails praising their quality.

A key characteristic of WSB materials that makes them so useful is that they use language and concepts that are appropriate for populations with low levels of literacy. By successfully pitching the materials at the level they do, WSB ensures that they can be used in both formal schooling and non-formal education contexts.

5.2.1. Criticisms/Suggestions

To balance the overwhelmingly positive responses, an active attempt was made to solicit criticisms or suggestions for how the resources could be improved. Criticism was difficult to find. To the extent that critical comments were made, there were in four categories.

The first, which is not really a criticism at all, was that people wanted WSB to produce even more materials. One English teacher, frustrated with trying to generate student enthusiasm over *I am David*, wanted WSB to write a novel!

The second kind of criticism came from people who were uncomfortable with some of the subject matter of the materials and the way it is dealt with. Four student teachers interviewed at Vanuatu Teachers College, for example, all believed that WSB's advocacy of making condoms available to school pupils was a significant cause of increasing promiscuity. This is demonstrably incorrect. However, the fact that it was a common belief among relatively well educated student teachers who, in other respects (from my observation of their discussion of other social issues over four hours) were reasonably enlightened, is an indication of the challenges facing WSB.

Another criticism that came from two senior educators (one man, one woman, one European, one ni-Vanuatu) was that WSB's gender agenda had become too dominant and was an obstacle to men being receptive to their other educational development work. In a number of subsequent meetings with teachers in Vanuatu, Fiji and the Solomons this was raised as a possible concern. There was very little support for the criticism, even when the question was posed directly to young men. Although there could well have been some self-censorship, it is clear that there is a high level of understanding and acceptance among those with whom WSB works, that gender issues are central to addressing development issues in the Pacific.

In a meeting with the core group of ni-Vanuatu actors/facilitators, the reviewer raised the general concern about dealing with issues that were sensitive in relation to customary matters. Their response was that this level of criticism was commonplace and that there were elements in almost all the work they did that some people found offensive. They considered that this was an unavoidable part of their work and that, if everything potentially offensive to somebody was sanitised or removed, the material would not have the level of impact that it needed.

The fourth category of criticism, which was raised in a number of meetings, was that the materials should be developed in closer consultation with the school curriculum units of the respective Ministry of Education, so that their relevance to the syllabus would be more readily apparent to teachers. Whenever this concern was raised, other teachers would reply that it was not at all difficult to work out how the materials could fit the curriculum.

Some suggestions were made about producing accompanying worksheets that explicitly demonstrate how the materials map onto particular areas of the curriculum. This would be a good idea. However, it is not a recommendation of this review that WSB put significantly more effort into aligning its materials with the formal curriculum. This comment is made for two reasons:

- Curriculum development units move at a very slow pace and in response to many sometimes conflicting demands and pressures. WSB's flexibility and rate of output could be compromised by tying itself too closely to these bodies.
- As noted above, an important characteristic of WSB materials is that they can be used in the vital non-formal area as well as in formal educational contexts. This important element in the materials may be compromised if they are required to be tied too closely to a school curriculum.

5.2.2 New Directions

As discussed below, the WSB materials have a wide applicability in the region. Some of the materials have been translated into French. The francophone ni-Vanuatu spoken to during this review expressed the strong desire to have more of the WSB materials in French. This, however, poses significant resource issues. And to date, the French Government, a potential source of funding, has not been willing to do so. The potential beneficiaries of WSB materials in French would also include Kanak communities in New Caledonia. It would be surprising if there were not interest among political and educational authorities in New Caledonia for producing WSB materials in French.

5.3 Training

As noted above, the WSB materials are of excellent quality and are full of, not just information, but also ideas and suggestions on how to provoke discussion, elicit opinions, expose assumptions, consider alternatives, develop strategies etc... On their own, however, they are insufficient. At one school on Pentecost (Ranwadi), for example, a box of resources sat unopened and unused for months. However, as soon as WSB trainers visited the community and worked through the materials with people, they were constantly being used and applied.

The WSB training for trainers that was observed was of a very high standard. Those participating in it reported feeling enthused, motivated and also equipped with a wide range of useful educational methods. The use of audio-visual material, drama and role-plays is particularly useful in a context of high levels of illiteracy. The techniques that were used in relation to particular content material were also demonstrated to be applicable in other contexts as well. The training was organised in such a way that the participants were constantly seeing new possibilities of ways that the techniques could be used.

Discussions with people who had completed training sessions some weeks or months earlier, revealed that their enthusiasm had not waned. Typically, educators were wanting as much more of this training as they could, and many of them had colleagues and associates who were keen to participate as well.

There was one suggestion for improvement that I would note. Some of the participants in the training session I observed in Honiara expressed the view that when they came to their second WSB training, they were part of a single group that included some who were receiving the training for the first time. These people were of the view that both they and the first-timers would have benefited from there being different levels of training for the two groups.

The policy of working directly with Teachers' Colleges is being used quite effectively by WSB. They enjoy a strong relationship with the Vanuatu Teacher College, and this forms the basis of ongoing links with teachers in the schools after they graduate. There is also currently a very valuable opportunity to develop a similarly productive relationship with the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SICHE). A meeting with the Head of the School of Education at SICHE, Susanne Maezama, revealed that, in conjunction with the University of Waikato and NZAID, they are currently conducting a complete review of their programme of teacher education, and are committed to providing training to the many unqualified teachers in Solomon Island schools. Ms Maezama was very enthusiastic about collaborating with WSB in this initiative.

The training carried out by WSB in the first two years of this project involved 606 teachers and 633 NGO leaders and non-formal educators. Around 62% of the teachers involved in the training were from Vanuatu (376), with remainder

evenly divided between Fiji (112) and the Solomons (118). Of the non-formal educators, 61% were from Vanuatu (389) with around 14% from Fiji (90) and just under a quarter from the Solomons (154). No gender break-down of these data was gathered.

5.4 Regionalisation

WSB has an impressive record as Vanuatu NGO. The project under review was an attempt to broaden the scope of its work to include the neighbouring countries of Fiji and the Solomons. It was quite an ambitious undertaking and it is a credit to the nature of the relationship between NZAID and WSB that it was embarked upon at all.

WSB used a similar method for building relationships in other countries as it has been using so successfully in taking initiatives in new areas of Vanuatu. It worked in collaboration with other NGOs to organise workshops and sought to identify from those workshops individuals who might take on the roles of WSB counterpart trainers in their own countries.

They identified three people, one from Fiji (Anji Naidu) and two from the Solomons (John Aonima and Jeanie Alekevu) to undertake these roles. A considerable period of time was spent with each of these people and they impressed by their calibre and by the extent to which they had been successfully inducted into the WSB network. Each of them had, over the course of this project, been brought to Vila for quite intensive training in the WSB education and training methods. They were also familiar with the materials and had good relationships with the WSB core group.

5.4.1 The Fiji Programme

In Fiji, Anji Naidu has made a big impact in her use of the WSB educational materials and training methods. After initiating contact with one local school, she has been in demand from many other schools in the Labasa area. She has been inducted into and trained in using the training methods and materials of WSB and has demonstrated an ability to be self-directing in this work.

Anji is very keen to work also in non-formal contexts with communities, an area in which she also has skills and experience. To date, however, the demands on her time from formal education institutions have meant that she has not had the time or resourcing to make this possible. Within the constraints of the available resources, WSB is working with her to address this issue by planning new initiatives in the non-formal sector.

5.4.2. The Solomons Programme

In the Solomons, John Aonima is a very talented counterpart trainer with considerable experience and the ability to attract teachers into training programmes. There were some initial difficulties around budgeting but these were dealt with by WSB in a timely and appropriate manner. John has assumed a position of authority over the other counterpart trainer, Jeanie Alekevu, a potential source of tension which might have required some intervention from WSB. However, Jeanie is moving permanently to Vanuatu at the end of this year.

It has not been easy for WSB to expand its programme into the Solomons. It is a very difficult country in which to operate, not least because of problems of recruitment and retention of quality people.¹⁶ It was also the only place where significant dissatisfaction was expressed about WSB's role. However, it was made by people from the Solomon Islands Development Trust (SIDT) and the impression gained from visiting the Trust and from unsolicited comments from three people in different contexts, was that, although the SIDT still has a role to play in the NGO community, it is having difficulty adjusting to the significant reduction in its own capacity and influence in recent times, and its criticisms of WSB should be seen in that context. Overall, WSB's work in the non-formal sector and its relationships with NGOs is very positive.

With regard to the formal sector, the training that has been provided has been of high quality and is making an impact. However, since the programme began there have been important educational developments in Solomons. One of these (that forms the basis of recommendation 7.3) has seen the launch of a major new programme to train unqualified teachers, with the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SICHE) playing a key role and keen to involve WSB. This project, in which NZAID is also a key partner, is in turn part of a broader Sector Wide Approach to Education in the Solomons. Within the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development (MEHRD), the principal office with whom WSB might liaise is the Teacher Training and Development Office (TTDO) and, in particular, its Teacher Training Development Officer. Whilst taking care not to compromise WSB's special position of being outside the systems of formal education, WSB's contribution to teacher training is likely to be enhanced by a greater level of communication with key agencies in the Solomon Islands education sector.

5.4.3. Transferability of Vanuatu-referenced material

¹⁶ The Solomon Islands public service currently has 1,052 unfilled positions for this very reason. These represent more than 20% of the total public service payroll. *Fiji Islands Business*. March 2007, p.37.

One of the issues that was important to consider was the extent to which the WSB materials, which had been produced in Vanuatu, were able to be transferred to and have the same impact in Fiji and the Solomons. This question was put directly to the counterpart trainers and to a number of participants in the Fiji and Solomon Islands workshops. Apart from a comment in the Solomons about *Mr Right Guy* being set in a context unfamiliar to Solomon Islanders (an urban nightclub), people expressed the view that the materials were very appropriate to their contexts as well: the importance of the issues that were addressed; the content and the way the information was conveyed; the pedagogical techniques used; and the familiarity of the context. In relation to this latter point, it was possible that people in Fiji and the Solomons would see the materials as Vanuatu and foreign. However, from their responses, they perceived them more as Melanesian/Pacific and familiar.

5.5 Uncompleted Programme Components

Three components of the programme under review had not been completed or were not entirely satisfactory.

5.5.1. Increasing the capacity of WSB to create materials (Project Activity 6 in the April 2003 Funding Arrangement).

The desktop publishing equipment has been acquired and WSB have demonstrated a capacity to produce high quality educational publications. To that extent, each of the project activities detailed under this heading in the original funding arrangement has been completed. There remains, however, the issue of personnel. WSB has been fortunate to have the services of a very talented graphic designer and desktop publisher, Alison Moore. They also took steps to recruit and train a ni-Vanuatu replacement for Alison in anticipation of her departure later this year. Unfortunately, the one suitable person who was found did not remain in the position.

This leaves WSB with the equipment for a professional resource production unit, but without the personnel to operate it. This situation should be addressed as soon as possible, although doing so would require additional resources, which is outside the scope of this report. The difficulty in resolving this problem is that there are so few people in Vanuatu with the combination of the computer skill base and the eye for design who could be trained into filling this position. It is also clear from the past experience, particularly the problem of retention of staff skilled in this area, that the person also needs to be somebody who shares the WSB vision.

One possibility that would be worth exploring would be whether Jeanie Alekevu could be trained to perform this role when she moves to Vanuatu. She has skills and qualifications in computer work to the point where she has run a

number of computer course for other people, and she has also shown herself to be at one with the WSB development model.

5.5.2. Training for WSB Theatre Facilitators and Communications Officer (Project Activity 4 in the April 2003 Funding Arrangement).

This part of the project took the form of a team visiting WSB¹⁷, observing their methods of working and writing a report entitled 'Enhancing Wan Smolbag Workshops' on 20 June 2005. The report is interesting to read and provides useful account and review of some of the WSB methods of work. However, the original intent of this part of the project was for the creative heart of WSB to be stimulated and reinvigorated by way of contact with and training from other people engaged in the same kind of work as they are. This part of the project did not meet that objective.

The creative heart of WSB is still beating remarkably strongly after many years. However, there was a perceived need for the sort of external exchange of ideas, stimulation and training that this part of the project envisaged, and that need has not yet been met.

It would best be met through an exchange with other practitioners of community theatre/education for development. It is recommended, therefore, that WSB be assisted to participate in such exchanges.

5.5.3. A workshop to produce a manual on the use of student-centred educational materials.

This workshop was not held. Instead the video 'No Questions' was produced. This is a very impressive production. This change to the original proposal was approved by NZAID.

6. Processes and Relationships

Over the course of this assignment, a few matters arose with regard to communication processes and relationships that are worth noting.

6.1. Communication between NZAID and WSB.

While WSB had no complaints about the competence or professionalism of any of the NZAID staff that it has been communicating with, there was a degree of

¹⁷ The team consisted of Robin Taylor, Ian Gaskell and Katarina Tuiamuana.

frustration expressed at the number of different individuals who have had responsibility for managing the WSB project over the last few years. It is acknowledged that the period of this programme was one of growth and adjustment within NZAID and some change in personnel is unavoidable.

Nevertheless, partnerships with groups such as WSB would be enhanced by minimising staff turnover where at all possible. This might be achieved by adopting a policy that, to the extent that is possible within NZAID constraints, no more than two different staff people should serve as managers of a project of three-years duration.

It is of concern that Rebecca Spratt, an NZAID manager in Honiara with extensive knowledge of and responsibilities for assisting the development of Educational Action Plans and strategies in the Solomons, was unaware until this review that WSB was engaged in a regional programme that included educational work in the Solomons. It is equally concerning that WSB was unaware of Ms Spratt's close involvement, interest and expertise in areas of central importance to WSB's work.

6.2. Communication between consultant and NZAID

It is recognised that the circumstances of this assignment, all of which have (understandably) not been disclosed, created a pressure of time that created some potential difficulties. One of these was that, in order to be conducted within the agreed time-frame, the assignment had to be commenced before a contract was finalised. Had the consultant relied on the contractual clause that assignments not be commenced before a contract is signed, the in-country phase of this assignment would have had to have been rescheduled to a much later date.

In order to proceed according to the optimal time-frame, an executive decision had to be made by the University of Canterbury to advance funds for in-country expenses prior to any contract being signed. Moreover, it entailed the consultant embarking on the assignment on (as it later transpired) a misunderstanding of the nature of the contract that had been drafted and was awaiting approval.

The tight time-frame also precluded a briefing of the consultant by NZAID prior to departing for Vanuatu. It was particularly helpful, therefore, that Megan McCoy was able to spend time with WSB and the consultant at Labasa during the course of the review.

Megan McCoy's communication during this assignment has been very good, and her and NZAID's flexibility in response to the consultant's illness (which is now at an end) after returning to New Zealand is also appreciated.

6.3. AUSAID Report

It was not until the final stages of this assignment that the consultant was made aware of there being a contemporaneous review of the core-funding arrangements with WSB being conducted by AUSAID. It would have been helpful in conducting this review to have been aware of this and been in communication with the AUSAID reviewers.

6.4. NZAID Standing

It should also be noted that, over the course of this assignment, many positive and quite unsolicited comments were made about NZAID personnel and processes.

7. Recommendations:

Because of the overwhelmingly positive nature of this report, only a limited number of recommendations are being made. The following are essentially endorsements and suggestions of ways that the positive work of WSB could be further developed.

7.1. Ongoing NZAID Support for WSB.

NZAID should continue its core funding support for WSB and its support for the regionalisation of the WSB education programme. As detailed above, WSB has shown itself to be very successful in its initial efforts to regionalise its educational approach and has provided a sound foundation for future regional work.

7.2 Capacity Building in Materials Production

As noted above, it should be a priority that WSB recruit and/or train suitable people to sustain its capacity to produce high quality publications. Suggestions have been made of possible ways of achieving this although they may require additional resourcing. Particular attention should be paid to the issue of the retention of staff recruited into this area and for this reason, selection criteria should include a commitment to the WSB vision.

7.3. Developing a Relationship with SICHE

There is currently a good opportunity to develop a close relationship with the School of Education at the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SICHE), the kind of relationship the WSB currently enjoys with the Vanuatu

Teachers College. The exploration of these possibilities should be made a priority for WSB's programme in the Solomons. This relationship should be developed in the context of the wider NZAID involvement in the Sector-Wide Approach to education in the Solomons.

7.4. Strategic planning of activity in the formal sector in the Solomons

The work of WSB in the formal education sector in the Solomons, though of a high quality, would be improved by a greater degree of communication between WSB and those involved in the current national Education Action Plan, particularly in relation to in-service and pre-service teacher education. A meeting between WSB and people involved in strategic positions in this Plan, facilitated if possible through contact with Rebecca Spratt, should be organised as soon as possible.

7.5. The Use of Materials with Francophone Communities.

There have been regular requests for WSB to enhance its work with Francophone communities, in particular by having its materials translated into French. Some translation has already taken place (Mr Right Guy) but there are resource constraints to further translation. One advantage of developing a francophone dimension to WSB's work would be the potential in developing relationships with Kanak communities in New Caledonia. It is also possible that approaches be to Kanak political and educational authorities in New Caledonia may reveal potential for cooperation with and funding for such a project. The translation of material in itself would be insufficient, without a corresponding training component.

To the extent that it is compatible with WSB's own priorities for further regionalisation and achievable within NZAID funding constraints, a feasibility study should be conducted to assess the potential for developing a francophone programme within WSB, with the possibility of involving Kanak communities in New Caledonia.

7.6. Exchanges Between WSB and Counterpart Theatre/Education Groups

The need identified by WSB for some external training and stimulation for their Communications Officer was an important one, has not been adequately met and should be attended to. This would best be achieved by way of an exchange or comparable form of contact with groups in other developing countries who are engaged in a similar field of endeavour.

8 Appendices

Appendix One:

Schedule of Interviews and Meetings:

Observation/participation in two-day training workshop on Environmental Issues for second-year social science teacher trainees, Vanuatu Teachers' College

Meeting with Andrea Hinge, Teachers' College Lecturer.

Interview with Michael Taurokoto, responsible for WSB's Good Governance Project

Interview with Alison Moore, WSB Graphics Designer

Interview with Margaret McFarland, Director, Sector Strengthening Programme, Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET).

Interview with Carol Aru, Vanuatu Ministry of Education

Interview with Dr Afzal Abdool, Project Manager, Vanuatu Tourism Education and Training Project (VATET)

Observation/participation in training workshop on participatory student-centred Teaching Methods for second-year social science teacher trainees, Vanuatu Teachers' College

Interview with Andrea Hinge and Charley Pierce, Vanuatu Teachers' College Lecturers.

Interview with four student participants in workshops for teacher trainees at Vanuatu Teachers' College.

Meeting (in English, French and Bislama) with twelve teachers from Vila area who have received training and support from WSB.

Meeting with ten members of the core group of WSB trainers/facilitators.

Interview with Agnes David, Director of Training, Vanuatu Department of Youth Development and Training.

Meeting with Angela Hassan-Sharp, NZAID Manager, Vanuatu

Interview with Siula Bulu and Jo Dorras on WSB Monitoring and Evaluation methods.

Attendance at WSB Haus in Vila for screening of Episodes one to four of Love Patrol, WSB soap opera on HIV/AIDS.

Attendance at a community hall in Santo for screening of Episodes five to eight of Love Patrol, WSB soap opera on HIV/AIDS.

Attendance at Commonwealth Youth Centre in Honiara for screening of Episodes one to four of Love Patrol, WSB soap opera on HIV/AIDS.

Participation in three-day workshop for teachers, held at City Council complex, Honiara.

Participation in three-day workshop for teachers, held at Sangham Secondary School in Labasa.

Interview with Anji Naidu, WSB counterpart trainer/facilitator/educator in Labasa.

Interview with John Aonima, WSB counterpart trainer/facilitator/educator in Honiara, Solomon Islands.

Interview with Jeanie Alekevu, WSB counterpart trainer/facilitator/educator in Honiara, Solomon Islands.

Interview (in French) with Augustin Bule, teacher at College Technique de St Michel, Santo.

Interview with Mr Tabi, teacher at Rowhani School, Luganville.

Meeting with three teachers at Hog Harbour School, Santo.

Observation of use by WSB-trained and resourced teachers of WSB materials/methods in Rowhani School, Luganville.

Observation of use by WSB-trained and resourced teachers of WSB materials/methods in Hog Harbour School, Santo.

Observation of use by WSB-trained and resourced teachers of WSB materials/methods in Noaiwa School, Nguna Island, Vanuatu.

Interview (in French) with Daniel Lamoureux, Vanuatu Director-General of Education.

Observation of use by WSB-trained and resourced teachers of WSB materials/methods in SDA High School, Honiara.

Meeting with Dmitri Geidelberg, NZ High Commission, Suva.

Interview with Pastor Lulu, Leader of WSB Good Governance programme from Sarete Village, South Santo.

Interview with Jeff and Marie Michelle, Nurse and Clinic Administrator of WSB community clinic, Luganville.

Interview (in French and English) with four teachers from Kamena Secondary School and College de Luganville, Luganville.

Interview with Principal, Banban School, Santo.

Interview (in French) with, village tourism operator, Santo

Meeting with Ian Gaskell, Head of School, University of South Pacific, Suva, and author of WSB workshop appraisal, 2005.

Interview with Henry Oti, HIV/AIDS Education Co-ordinator, Oxfam, Honiara.

Interview with Lovelyn Kwaoga and Andela Maria, Family Support Centre, Honiara.

Meeting with Susanne Maezama, Head of School of Education, Solomon Islands College of Higher Education, Honiara.

Meeting with Joseph Majo, Solomon Islands Development Trust, Honiara.

Meeting with Dr John Fugui, Director of Office of Leader of the Opposition, Solomon Islands.

Meeting with ten teachers from Honiara who had participated in more than one three-day workshop run by WSB.

Interview with Theatre Co-ordinator (Solomon Islands Development Trust) and Team Leader (Honiara Youth Theatre).

Meeting with eleven representatives of three Solomon Island community theatre groups; Dance with the Devil, Dreamcast and Alao Theatre Group.

Written correspondence and discussion with Rebecca Spratt, NZAID, Honiara.

Appendix Two:

Inventory of Resources Produced by Wan Smolbag Theatre 2003-2006.

2003. A Piece of Land. DVD and User Guide. English. 80 minutes.
2004. Down to the Bottom. DVD and User Guide. English. 18 minutes.
2004. Sori Susie. DVD and User Guide. Bislama. 34 minutes.
2004. Those Dirty Cigarettes. DVD and User Guide. English. 15 minutes.
2004. Vilij Helt Woka Yu Yes! DVD. Bislama. 25 minutes.
2005. Eniwan I Luk Rose. DVD and User Guide. Bislama (English and French subtitles). 52 minutes.
2005. Environmental Songs. CD and User Guide.
2005. Mr Right Guy. DVD and User Guide. English (French subtitles). 37 minutes.
2005. Vanua-Tai ... of Land and Sea. DVD. Bislama and English. 42 minutes.
2005. Yangfala Long Turism Yes! CD and User Guide. Bislama.
2006. Michael Loves Nancy. DVD and User Guide. English (French subtitles). 36 minutes.
2006. Solid Sistas. DVD, CD and User Guide. Bislama (English subtitles). 34 minutes.
2006. Wan Tru Paradaes. DVD and User Guide. Bislama. 32 minutes.
2007. Love Patrol. DVD (User Guide in production). English. Ten 20 minute episodes.
2007. No Questions. DVD (User Guide in production). English. 61 minutes.

In addition, the following booklets, comics and cartoon stories have been produced as written resources:

Mika I Kam Long Taon / Namba Blong Yumi I Go Antap. Bislama. 2003.

Storian Blong Vira/Nina/Enos. Bislama. 2003/4.

Rif Blong Yumi / Evriwan I Wantem Gat Wota Saplac. Bislama. 2004.

Some Information about Smoking and Alcohol. English and Bislama. 2004.

Sori Susie. Bislama. 2004.

HIV I Stap Long Blad / Kleva I No Save Winim AIDS. Bislama. 2005.

Storian Blong Mary / Frank. Bislama. 2005/6.

Storian Blong Marlene. Bislama. 2005/6.