

Background

By way of background, Wan Smolbag (WSB) Theatre was established in 1989 as a small drama group touring villages and schools to raise awareness and motivate action on social, economic and environmental issues. Although this remains its core business, WSB now provides some reproductive health and youth development services through centers in Port Vila and Luganville. The goal of its regional programme is to make the use of student-centred learning techniques an integral part of the education system in Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and Fiji. WSB receives funding from a variety of sources, but primarily from AusAID and from NZAIDs regional and bilateral funds (A\$662,664 in 2008/2009).

Purpose and Objectives

Undertaken jointly for NZAID and AusAID, the review's purpose was to evaluate the effectiveness of NZAID and AusAID support to WSB in Vanuatu, identify the contribution of the partnership to the work of WSB, and identify opportunities for maximising the effectiveness of ongoing support. The aim of the review of the regional programme was to assess progress towards the goals and objectives of the regional design document and make recommendations for the future. The review's approach was to consider relevant WSB, Government of Vanuatu, NZAID and AusAID documents, visit three projects in Vanuatu, consult with WSB staff and recipients of programmes in Vanuatu (and by telephone and emails to Fiji and Solomon Islands), and to consult with AusAID, NZAID and Government of Vanuatu staff.

Main Findings

In terms of the review's findings, the team found that in its bilateral-funded work, WSB performed consistently above expectations, providing solutions to social issues that were relevant, responsive and represented good value-for-money. Although some areas of management and planning needed strengthening, WSB generally managed its activities well. Nearly all expected outputs were achieved and WSB undertook regular monitoring. WSB activities had created employment, contributed to good governance, human resource development, education, improvements in human rights, gender, HIV and conservation awareness, and improved service delivery in the reproductive health area. In terms of the regional programme, the review found that, although many outputs were delivered, WSB had not achieved the overall goal (which it considered to be overstated).

Follow-up

Review recommendations suggested that NZAID and AusAID provide joint support for WSB through a five-year funding arrangement, and provide additional funding to strengthen WSB's management structure. Other recommendations included, for example, developing and annual research plan, a strategic plan for the youth centre and increased access to technical advice. In relation to the regional programme, the review recommended that the goal be reviewed, and that after two more years, the focus of WSM shift back from the wider region to Vanuatu.

To request a copy of the full report email aidevaluation@mfat.govt.nz and quote the reference number - Eva0910.