

Community education: An essential dimension in the prevention of violence against women

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This paper explores how global aid agendas impact NGO responsibility for Violence Against Women (VAW) community education programmes. VAW is a critical issue in the Pacific region. A reconfiguration of the NGO sector is taking place whereby larger NGOs receive more resources than smaller, more diverse NGOs. This paper examines a regional-national pattern whereby a Fiji-based NGO regional hub has become a source of VAW knowledge and resources. As a case study, the Vanuatu Women's Centre is an example of a national NGO accessing regional VAW resources to develop initiatives relevant to the Vanuatu context. One issue is whether the Vanuatu experience can be generalised to other Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs). Another issue is whether the specialised knowledge and skills generated by the regional hubs are at the expense of many locally-generated programmes that have previously characterised NGOs. This paper proposes that a community education perspective be applied to development programmes in PICTs.

[Key words: community education, Pacific, regional, national, Vanuatu]

Introduction

'Partnerships in education' has become a key phrase in Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs). However, the place of community education within the national basket of educational provisions has not been widely acknowledged, nor has the role Non Government Organisations (NGOs) play in ensuring community based learning opportunities. In many cases, community education is viewed as distinct from and less valued than formal school systems. This is despite the fact that community based education has been fundamental for learning in Pacific communities, through the family and village institutions, church related activities and, more recently, the many and varied educational programmes run by NGOs. It is widely reported that NGO programmes are now the major, and sometimes only, providers of community education in PICTS, especially for the over 70 per cent of populations who live in the Pacific's rural and often highly isolated communities (SPC, 2011). These programmes are invaluable given the

difficulties resource-strapped Pacific governments face in providing basic education for rapidly growing populations, raising literacy levels and addressing the ongoing need for upskilling opportunities.

Generally, NGO programmes have been grassroots-based and led, have targeted community-identified needs, and been highly accessible. Furthermore, NGO links with regional and global agencies has seen them build considerable expertise and resources, while their place outside government has enabled them to play the NGO role of government watchdog (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2000). Historically, NGO education programmes focused on health and basic needs education, but recently this has widened to include a focus on development issues which are seldom included in the formal school curriculum: issues such as human rights education, and the skills needed to participate in democratic processes and a market economy. More issue-specific NGOs are now emerging which with the support of modern technology are developing a myriad of national, regional, and global knowledge exchange networks¹. As is well documented, the majority of community education programmes in the Pacific have been run by women and women's NGOs (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2007). This pairing of women's NGOs and social issues has been described as a legacy of traditionally held gender roles, reinforced by the actions of former colonial administrators. The separation of domains of responsibility by gender, and the power relations this implies, is a perspective difficult to change.

This paper maintains that the independence Pacific NGOs have long enjoyed has been challenged by the changing aid modalities promoted in recent years by the international development community, and that this challenge is influencing NGOs' role as community educators. While the aid effectiveness agreements developed at Rome (2003), Marrakech (2004), and Paris (2005) commit donors to principles of ownership, the aligning and harmonizing of policies, procedures and practices and an emphasis on results (Rogerson, 2005), means in practice there has been a significant "lack of meaningful engagement between national government and NGOs" (CfBT, 2011, p.18). Noted also is that changes in the ways donors allocate resources not only impacts NGOs but also influences national commitment to social goals:

... [when] donors channel resources through government systems, there is a risk that civil society organizations lose funding of their advocacy and service delivery roles. This can narrow the opportunity to address social goals and may also diminish civil society's autonomy and capacity to hold governments accountable. (NGLS, 2010)

Notably missing in these and other debates is the recognition of the importance of community education to NGO advocacy and service delivery. This suggests a lack of understanding of the importance of community education to individual, community and national quality of life. The role NGOs play in community

¹ Examples include the Women and Business Foundation (WIBF), Ecowomen, Femlinkpacific (also a member of the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders) and the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (FWCC)

education and subsequent changes to NGO status will also influence the nature and availability of community education.

NGOs and community education

This paper examines how NGO responsibility for community education² is being impacted by the changing aid agendas, especially those of the last decade. It is based on a study analysing Violence Against Women (VAW), an issue of serious concern in every Pacific country (SPC, 2011). VAW is a community education programme which addresses issues of domestic violence, family related violence and physical and sexual acts of violence. Although the Pacific Heads of Government declared VAW to be a government responsibility (Cairns Communiqué, 2009), VAW is still widely seen to be a family, women's and NGO issue. That VAW has become a topic of public debate in the Pacific today is a direct consequence of the many years of advocacy, training and activism by groups of very articulate and passionate NGOs.

A number of inter-related givens frame this discussion. First, Pacific NGO autonomy is being challenged in ways that influence NGO participation in strategic decision-making forums and their community education roles. For example, in the pursuit of aid efficiency and effectiveness, Government Aid Coordinating Committees were introduced in PICTs in the 1990s. It was the job of these committees to screen NGO proposals to make sure these aligned with national goals, to reduce duplication and identify programme gaps, and to ensure NGO accountability. Then in the 2000s, national umbrella groups were established such as the Samoa Umbrella Association of NGOs (SUNGO) and the Tuvalu Association of NGOs (TANGO). The proviso that only NGOs which affiliate with these umbrella groups are eligible for donor funding is still widely debated as a challenge to NGO freedom of voice and action (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2000). This has the effect of making NGOs "another arm of government" (Klein, 2003). An additional and not so well known challenge to Pacific NGOs relates to what happened to the language of the Paris Principles when these were adapted to the Pacific context. Briefly, the words 'civil society' are totally missing in the Pacific Aid Effectiveness Principles adopted at Palau (PIFS 2007), with the Pacific principles being described as highly mechanistic and bureaucratic (Fairbairn-Dunlop, Mason, Reid & Waring, 2009).

A second given is that it is only recently that social issues have been incorporated into what were previously economically focused national development agendas. This shift occurred as a result of the marked failure of economic growth models, and it is well captured in the ethos that 'people are the real wealth of a nation' that underpins the UNDP Human Development Reports and Human Development Indexes in the global poverty reduction strategies and targets encapsulated within the UN Millennium Development Goals of 2000. Of relevance to this discussion is the Cairns Communiqué (2009) whereby Pacific governments pledged support to global efforts to prevent VAW, including

² 'Community education' is defined as NGO run educational programmes. This is different from non formal education (NFE) activities which are increasingly being carried out in formal settings.

legislation to criminalise gender-based violence in all its forms. While NGOs welcomed this as a pledge they had argued long and hard for, achieving this goal has also opened up room for conflict. As NGOs and government agencies negotiate their roles within a national VAW strategy, this situation has the potential to influence access to community education.

Changes in donor funding are a third given. A number of generalisations about funding can be made with reference to the 2010 listing of UN Pacific VAW programmes (see Table 1), which together signify an increase in donor influence. First, VAW is being integrated across a range of UN programmes including HIV/AIDS, reproductive health, gender, truth and justice, disaster relief, workplace policy interventions and child labour. Second, evidence of alignment and harmonisation is seen in the cluster of donors partnering in individual projects. Third, there is a trend to programmes becoming generic (regional). This can be interpreted as a donor preference for upscaling projects judged to be successful, donors stating what individual PICTS need, and a donor driven emphasis on operational efficiency. This means donors fund large projects which may be more easily monitored rather than funding small, seemingly fragmented projects which have characterised Pacific NGOs' in past years. As Rogerson (2005, p.532) notes, there has been a trade-off between transaction costs and the spreading of risk.

While assessing NGO access to funding is not within the scope of this paper, anecdotal reports are that funders favour large NGOs which have an established reputation whilst "smaller and newer NGOs aren't being given the chance to build a reputation!"³ This point of differential access to funding is supported in the Pacific Beijing +15 Regional Report (SPC, 2011) comment that, "except for the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (FWCC) and Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT) Pacific organizations and governments have had difficulty accessing and managing large grants to end VAW." This is reinforced by another report observing the success of a national VAW NGO as, "testament to the long-term and sustained support on the part of international donors...which have provided core support to the (NGO) nearly since its inception" (AusAid, 2009).

This paper proposes that a reconfiguration of the Pacific NGO sector is taking place which is seeing the growth of a small group of issue-specific, long standing and well funded NGOs alongside a much larger group of small, diverse and less well resourced groups. Additionally, in the Pacific this pattern is playing out as a regional-national difference. That is, a central hub of regional working and Fiji based VAW NGOs, alongside a much smaller group of national VAW NGOs and agencies. This pattern is envisaged as a partnership between hubs of equal status in which, as will be seen, the role of the central hub has been to generate a robust Pacific VAW resource base that national PICTs can both contribute to and access. The success of this model depends on the relationship between the regional and national hubs, the ability and sensitivity of the regional hubs to play

³ Views expressed at a meeting of Samoa Umbrella NGOs, Apia (2008). See also Fairbairn-Dunlop et al. (2009).

a mentoring role, and the capacity of the often much less well-resourced national PICTs to draw on and adapt the regional programmes to their country contexts.

Table 1. Sample of UN VAW Pacific programmes, 2010

Country	Implementing Agency	Project	Description	Time frame
Pacific Region	UN Dev Fund for Women (UNIFEM)	UN Trust Fund to End VAW	UNIFEM Pacific supports administration of the Trust Fund grants.	On going
Solomon Islands	UN Dev Fund for Women (UNIFEM)	Gender Justice and Truth and Reconciliation Commission	Technical assistance to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to help ensure gender justice becomes an integral part of proceedings	On going
Papua New Guinea	UN Dev Fund for Women (UNIFEM)	Elimination of VAW in the Context of Conflict	As well as the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 research in the PNG Highlands & Bougainville, UNIFEM Pacific provides support to individuals and NGOs such as Kup Women for Peace in Papua New Guinea.	On going
Solomon Is, Vanuatu, Fiji, Tonga, Samoa	Inter-agency Standing Comm., supported by NRC, UNOCHA, UNIFEM, UNFPAUNISD, UNICEF, UNOHCHR	Gender Capacity Advisor	Deployment of an inter-agency advisor to ensure equal attention to and involvement of women and men, and gender equality perspectives, in all sectors of disaster preparedness and response. A main focus of mobilization is for prevention of and response to gender-based violence in crisis situations.	May 2010 – May 2011
Kiribati & Solomon Is	UNFPA	Capacity building to integrate VAW into health system	To increase the awareness of health workers on VAW and improve their capacity to provide appropriate health care to VAW survivors	On-going
Fiji, PNG, Sol Is, Timor Leste	UNESCAP, in collab with SPC ADB	Developing gender statistics	Working with national statistics offices and line ministries to conduct a stocktake of available data from using SPC framework of indicators	Oct 2010 – June 2013
Australia, Cook Is, FSM, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, NZ, Niue, Palau, PNG, Samoa, RMI, Sol Is, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu	United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR)	UNISDR does not have projects but does advocacy and policy work.	UNISDR advocates and offers policy and practical guidance for mainstreaming gender perspectives into disaster risk reduction as well as promotes sharing of good practices and lessons learned in gender-sensitive disaster risk reduction.	On Going
Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu	ILO in liaison with its tripartite partners in each country	Men As Partners in Reproductive Health	In consultation with ILO stakeholders including Govt workers and Employer reps. Aims to change the psychological approach including communication and attitudes, mostly of men towards women and children in the workplace and the home	2005 to 2010
Fiji, PNG, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Samoa, Kiribati	ILO in close liaison with its tripartite partners in each country	Workplace polices in HIV and AIDS Education and awareness of the ILO code in the workplace	Focus on gender dimension of HIV and AIDS for institutional stakeholders (male and female workers and employers) in formal and informal sector.	On Going

It is acknowledged that donor support has been a major factor in the development of this regional-national NGO pattern. It can be assumed (though not proven) that this has been intentional and that donors have framed the strategies they see as necessary to address VAW. Donors develop these strategies based on their perceptions of the available resource capacity of PICTS (financial and human), and then channel support to those NGOs seen as likely to achieve the decided outputs.

The remainder of this paper is in three parts. The first presents an overview of VAW as a Pacific development issue. In line with the proposed regional-national model, the second focuses on the work of regional VAW NGOs and the ways they are establishing VAW curriculum, education strategies, research models and policy focused actions which can be used by national NGOs. The third part is a case study of how a national NGO - the Vanuatu Women's Centre (VWC) – is drawing on the regional knowledge base as it develops its own national VAW programmes⁴. The paper concludes with a brief discussion⁵.

The Pacific and Violence Against Women

The majority of PICTS are signatories to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and to the Pacific Platform of Action for Women (PPA). These commitments list a comprehensive set of rights-based programme and policy level actions to prevent and address VAW (SPC, 2006). There are difficulties, however, in how these fit in Pacific countries in all of which extended family systems are the main social institution, and customary laws are intricately related to land, resource rights and status. A major dilemma for Pacific communities has been whether VAW is a family issue, to be dealt with in family systems, or a human rights and legal issue to be dealt with by police and the courts. This is especially so given that, with the exception of Vanuatu's Family Protection Bill, no PICT has VAW legislation in place.

As noted, women's NGOs play a major role in VAW education and training in all PICTs. Community education programmes in legal literacy and human rights have been developed for judges, chiefs and parliamentarians as well as victims of VAW in rural and urban areas. Considerable community education and advocacy programmes have been carried out through radio and community theatre such as *Won Smol Bag*,⁶ public marches have been held such as those marking the 16

⁴ While there may be commonalities of experience with other PICTs, this Vanuatu case cannot be generalised to other PICTS.

⁵ The paper draws on the author's participation in the Samoa National Council of Women (NCW), Samoa Tete'e Atu programme and in the preparation of commissioned reports including: the national scoping reports for the Pacific Police Domestic Violence Programme (PPDVP) for the Cook Islands, Kiribati, Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu (2007-2009); The Pacific Gender and Aid Effectiveness Case Study Report (2009) for NZAID and AusAID; and the Pacific Regional Beijing + 15 Review (SPC, 2011).

⁶ *Won Smol Bag* (WSB), is a Vanuatu community education NGO, now operating throughout the Pacific. Started in 1989 WSB presently has 100 full- and part-time staff and over 400 volunteers. WSB uses drama to inform, raise awareness and encourage public discussion on a range of

days of Activism against Gender Violence (Nov 25-Dec 16), and counseling services and safe houses have been established in communities. VAW sits firmly (if not always comfortably) in the public domain, and VAW strategies are being creatively incorporated into other social programmes. Attitudes to VAW are changing and this is evident in the use of human rights language in VAW discussions, as well as the increasing number of women (and males) using VAW services. For example, the number of new clients using the FWCC Suva facilities increased from eight in 1991 to almost 20,000 in 2010, and for repeat clients the increase was from 436 (1991) to almost 20,000 (2010). Similar increases were recorded in the FWCC rural offices (FWCC, 2011). The organisation of family systems in traditional times is also being revisited. One key aim of this is to explore whether VAW, as is often said, can be described as a Pacific 'cultural norm', as the following comments attest:

When I remember the old days (in Vanuatu) we never had violence and things like that before. If something was wrong, we did that in our family and then maybe the chief, but we always did that within the family. Looking back, I can never recall violence against women and girls that you see today. It's time to go back to the old days - to look after our families again (Female elder)

... violence against women is not Tongan Culture, but religion and culture (have been) used as excuses to condone the violence (WCCC, 2010)

In 2009 the Pacific Forum Heads of Government mandated VAW as a national responsibility. Also in 2009 however, the Pacific Report to the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women noted, "while governments have begun to acknowledge violence against women as a problem which needs to be addressed, no government in the Pacific has made a serious enough commitment to allocate adequate resources and put in place sound government policies to address this issue" (FWCC 2009). Preventing and addressing VAW is a long-term process which will require comprehensive multi-level, cross cutting and community focused education strategies.

The Regional VAW Hub

As noted above, the regional VAW hub comprises a group of Fiji based NGOs which are developing VAW curriculum, research practice and models of policy level engagement. These regional NGOs are the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (FWCC), the Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM) and the Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT). Three examples of regional VAW focused actions are presented, each of which signals a partnership between Pacific regional NGOs and global VAW counterparts, the collaborative adaptation of global models to Pacific realities, and engagement with national stakeholders. The process by which these regional NGOs have been building Pacific VAW capacity is itself a model national NGOs could follow.

The first programme of activities discussed is that of the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (FWCC) – a leading education and training NGO and the most prominent Pacific voice on VAW. The FWCC provides VAW education, counseling, and legal medical and practical support to women and children victims of violence. Started in the early 1990s from a small house on a main Suva road, the FWCC now operates from a large training and support facility, has three sub-national branches, and is the recipient of funding from multiple donors. In addition to its national role, the FWCC provides the Secretariat for the *Pacific Women's Network Against Violence Against Women*, which affiliates with 13 Pacific member countries and 24 national organisations. The FWCC runs two regional training programmes both of which highlight the FWCC priority as a human rights position on VAW. These programmes prepare education materials and training packages and provide ongoing support in the post training period. The FWCC's Regional Training programme runs twice yearly for women and men working in the field of VAW. Up to 40 participants are accepted for these four-week courses where they learn to analyse, strategise and organise more effectively to address and reduce gender violence in their home communities. Training includes counselling, lobbying and advocacy skills development, and community awareness raising strategies. The high regard in which this training is held is evident in the fact that donor funded scholarships are available for participants. Estimates are that over 700 participants have attended this training since its inception and have returned to their home countries to apply their skills.

Male Advocate (MA) courses are a second regional training programme run by the FWCC. Programme aims are to break down the widely held perception that violence is a women's issue by engaging men as allies in challenging VAW. Participants have included military personnel, police, influential male leaders and other public figures. The MA course materials have been adapted for use in other Pacific countries including the Cook Islands and Vanuatu. Reports from Vanuatu are that approximately 400 males from urban and rural areas have attended the national MA programmes run by the Vanuatu Women's Centre (Finucane et al., 2010). Some of these participants have also joined the Vanuatu Women's rural network of Committees Against Violence Against Women (CAVAWs), discussed below. An idea of how the MA training is valued can be gained from these comments in the Vanuatu Pacific Prevention of Domestic Violence Programme (PPDVP) Report (2009):

As a Male Advocate I work closely with the chiefs in our province to ensure communities are free from any form of violence. Through all the awareness raising that the CAVAWs in this area run and I as a MA have been doing in the communities, chiefs have come to recognise and appreciate the work of the CAVAWs. Really helps... earning more respect from the community and the males (MA)

I believe my role as a MA has really helped my other male colleagues in the police force recognise the CAVAWs and the Vanuatu Women's Centre (VAW NGO)

Importantly, the realization is growing that preventing and addressing VAW requires a whole of family approach including collaboration between males and females and between government, NGOs and community groups.

A further regional hub of experience is developing around VAW research. Until a national benchmark study was undertaken in Samoa in 2001, NGOs were the only agencies carrying out VAW research. An example is Samoa's domestic and sexual violence study carried out by the Mapusaga o Aiga (MOA) in 1996. This NGO study was described as a bold piece of research at the time and there is still widespread controversy as to the validity of the data, the questions asked and conclusions drawn, and the right of an NGO to research and raise this sensitive issue for public discussion.⁷ Even so, Samoa was selected as the site for the first PICT national VAW population baseline study (2001) which was funded by the Government of Samoa (GOS), Samoa's Ministry of Women, NGO partners and donors⁸. The Samoa study set the model for national studies in Kiribati, the Solomon Islands, the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) and Vanuatu. These national studies, which serve as a baseline measure of the prevalence and incidence of VAW, indicate that significant numbers of women and girls have experienced abuse. These studies also measure the brutality of these attacks, the younger age groups involved, and some of the contributing factors such as intergenerational influences, incest, sexual exploitation, witchcraft related incidents and trafficking (SPC, 2011). Again, these national studies presented significant opportunities for awareness rising of VAW and training in skills such as data collection, interviewing and data interpretation.

Policy level advocacy is a third area where regional NGOs are setting a model. The Cairns Communiqué was the culmination of many years of NGO strategising, and it demonstrated the ways global commitments can be used to progress national and regional agendas. For example, Pacific NGOs have argued VAW from a social perspective (quality of life, the effects on children of witnessing these acts) and an economic perspective (the costs of hospitalisation, lost work hours and family care). However, it was the risk to human security perspective which met with success. At the 2009 Cairns meeting, reference was made to global obligations such as Resolution 1820, where the UN Security Council acknowledges that sexual violence is a security issue and therefore requires a security response, and UN Resolution 1889 which calls for women's protection and empowerment to be taken into account during post-conflict needs assessment and planning phases, and subsequent funding and recovery programmes. Kiribati NGOs heralded the Cairns Communiqué as the 'green light' to VAW law changes because "in the past, women's NGOs had to do it in the cultural way, sit and wait for what will come next" (Pacwin, 2009).

These three examples indicate that the regional hub NGOs have been carving a niche role as specialists in VAW training and materials development, research and data collection and policy level action. The number of community education

⁷ Comments made at a national CEDAW consultation, Apia, 2004.

⁸ Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

programmes carried out by the regional NGOs or the national uptake of ideas from these programmes is difficult to determine, however.

A National VAW Case Study: Vanuatu

This brief case study of the Vanuatu Women's Centre (Centre) shows how a national NGO is implementing VAW programmes which are appropriate to its specific physical, social, economic and cultural context. Since its establishment in the early 1990s the Centre has worked closely with the FWCC with whom it shares an unwavering human rights stand and an almost parallel development journey. The Centre has received significant funding from AusAID and from NZAID in the last 15 years. Also highlighted, however, is that while NGOs may have an impressive record in VAW, this does not mean they will automatically be given a place at national VAW (or other) strategic planning forums where their contribution could add to the pool of knowledge from which creative solutions can be devised.

Community education is at the heart of every aspect of the Centre programme which includes counselling and legal assistance support services, legal advocacy lobbying and human rights training, and management and institutional strengthening (Finucane, 2010). The importance this NGO gives to community education is also seen in its goal that "rural communities are entitled to the same services which urban communities enjoy" (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2009). To this end, the Centre now has two rural branches⁹ in addition to its urban base in Port Vila. More recently, the Centre established a network of 35 Community Against VAW committees (CAVAWS) covering most of Vanuatu's inhabited islands. The CAVAW network is a remarkable achievement given that Vanuatu's population is spread over 68 inhabited islands and over 80 indigenous languages are spoken, in addition to the national language of Bislama, and the two other official languages, English and French. Importantly, CAVAW committee members are drawn from the local communities so ensuring community leadership, programme relevance and sustainability, and the provision of opportunities for community up-skilling. Males are included in the CAVAWs and in some places police who have joined these groups have also participated in Male Advocates training¹⁰:

Where possible in the rural areas especially we try to draw local police (and others interested) into our CAVAW training... This is a slow process but we get there with our little ripples of influence (Centre administrator)

CAVAWS are my feeders. They feed me information so I know what is happening in communities (Male Police Officer)

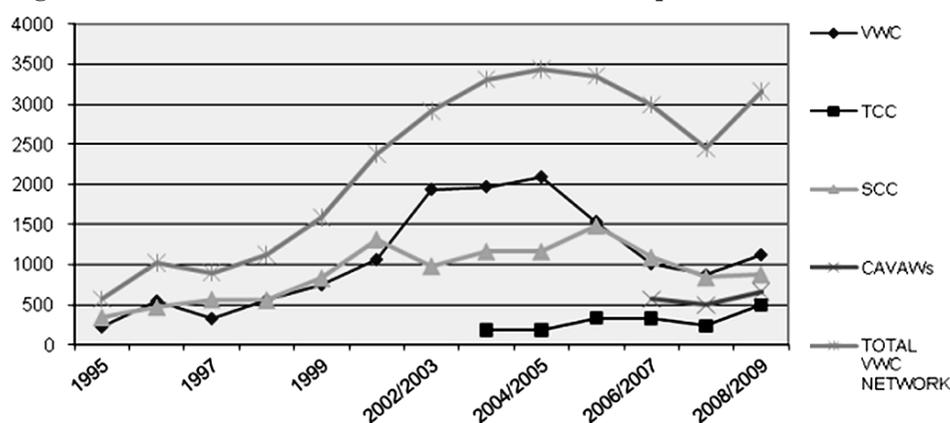
A further community education activity at the national level was elicited by a police education officer's comment to me that while generic training packages were used in the VAW refresher training the Centre was "often called on to help localise these generic materials" (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2009).

⁹ At TAFEA (TCC) in the South and at Santo (SCC) in the North, each with a staff of five.

¹⁰ See Fairbairn-Dunlop (2009)

The Centre schedules regular training for CAVAW members in subjects such as gender and VAW, data keeping, management and counselling. It maintains daily contact with members through email, fax and phone. The CAVAWs have been described as “a unique contribution to building civil society” (Finucane, 2010, p.43) and reports are that they have become vital centres for community education and information exchange. Figure 1 shows the number of VAW information requests recorded by CAVAWs, alongside the data from the Port Vila Centre and the two rural centres. While there have been fluctuations, the data indicate the significance of these NGO-provided educational services, and that ni-Vanuatu women and men are no longer remaining silent on VAW-related issues.

Figure 1. VWC Network total clients and information requests



Source: Finucane et al (2010)

The Centre has also been a research partner in the national study of *Women's Lives and Family Relationships 2009-2010* (Finucane, 2010). When first approached to participate, the Centre argued that this benchmark study must apply a family focused approach so as to capture the interplay of factors influencing VAW and to provide a robust platform for community based interventions. This was agreed to. The coordination of training for the 65 research assistants (male and female) involved in this research, who carried out interviews in 3,750 households covering eight provinces, was also undertaken by the Centre (Finucane, 2010). Both the training and the research approach were described as empowering by the research team and the participating communities.

Given the Centre's extensive experience in VAW, it would be expected that this NGO has been included in relevant national decision-making forums. Indications are, however, that there is still some negotiation to be done on this point. Finucane (2010, p.42) reports that “the Centre programme has improved the working relationships and integrated approaches to reducing VAW, through greater collaboration with health, education and the justice sector.” However, in 2009 the Centre was not included in either the National Steering Committee on Crime and the Law, nor in the Justice Sector Strategy (2009-2014) despite the expectation that VAW would be prominent in these discussions. A final example

of this inexplicable exclusion is associated with developments arising from 'VAW and Discriminatory Laws' being identified as one of the nine areas listed for reform in Vanuatu's Comprehensive Reform Programme (CRP). It was reported that the Department of Women's Affairs prepared a policy to address VAW which was not only inadequately resourced but, rather than attempting to collaborate on these issues, it duplicated some of the services NGOs already provided (FWCC, 2009). More in-depth research is needed to identify how the interplay of factors such as gender, VAW and NGO status are contributing to this marginalisation.

This national case highlights some of the tensions which can arise as government and NGO agencies strive to align and harmonise a national VAW plan of action. This situation may have been exacerbated by the sensitive nature of VAW, and the fact that its prevention is still not taken seriously enough by government agencies; and, that it is still perceived to be solely a family and women's issue. The one undeniable fact is that the Centre has considerable experience in VAW, has developed trusted community networks for the delivery of VAW education and services, and has made strong contacts with regional and global VAW agencies working in this field.

Concluding Comments

This VAW community education study has shown that the reconfiguration of the NGO sector which has been taking place under the aid effectiveness agenda is influencing the nature, practice and availability of community education. As demonstrated, a regional-national pattern of NGOs has emerged featuring a small hub of well-resourced Fiji based regional VAW NGOs alongside a much larger group of smaller, nationally based NGOs and agencies. Over time, and well supported by donors, the regional NGO hub has developed considerable expertise and experience in VAW which it is using to build a robust VAW knowledge base that national hubs can access and contribute to as they develop their own national plans of action. These activities reinforce that VAW education requires specialised knowledge, skills and attitudes. This is especially so when, as in the Pacific, VAW is still regarded by many to be an issue to be addressed within families.

It was proposed in this discussion that the success of this regional-national pattern would be evident in how national NGOs used the knowledge developed by the regional hubs and that this would be dependent on the relationships developed between the regional and national hubs. The journey of the Vanuatu Women's Centre closely matches the experience of the regional hub and there appears to have been a solid uptake of the regional training models and ideas, as seen in the Male Advocates (MA) programme. At the same time, this national NGO has extended the regional models to develop context specific programmes, such as the CAVAWs. In this case, the capacity and motivation of the Vanuatu Women's Centre to adapt knowledge from the regional hubs is high and the relationship between the regional and national hubs has been mutually reinforcing. Whether this would be the case in other PICTs warrants further study

given factors such as differing national contexts, perceptions of human rights and resource capacity.

The Vanuatu case has also identified the tensions which can arise in building government and NGO partnerships in VAW. These tensions may have been exacerbated by a fear of the knowledge base and influence NGOs could bring to national decision-making tables. These tensions also might indicate a downside of the aid effectiveness agenda's focus on the strengthening of partnership relations between donors as development partners with partner governments, at the expense of insufficient attention to the enduring grassroots activity of NGOs. The absence of any reference to 'civil society' in the Pacific Aid Effectiveness Principles, the very low representation of women at the top levels of government in all PICTs, and the continued perception of VAW as a women's issue to be dealt with at the family level could all be seen as contributing factors.

Finally, the Vanuatu case has shown the compelling value of community education and engagement with individual, family and national development. While the community education role of the regional VAW hub cannot be easily evaluated, there are questions as to whether the regional VAW platform has been gained at the expense of the many locally generated, small and diverse national programmes which characterised NGO community education programmes in the past. Given the important place of community education to quality of life, it is maintained here that consideration should be given to applying a 'community education' lens to all development programmes and projects.

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