



INDEPENDENT EVALUATION OF THE VANUATU COUNTRY PROGRAMME

Key findings from Sapere Research Group

Report highlights

- There is clear evidence of New Zealand's strategic alignment and mutual accountability with Vanuatu's agenda.
- Activities funded by New Zealand are generally successful at achieving short term to medium outcomes.
- Vanuatu has seen a growth in aid proliferation since 2002, something that donor countries, including New Zealand, could consider addressing.
- New Zealand is considered a responsive partner, with strong technical advice.
- Activities seemed to be effective, but the evaluation expressed concern about their sustainability.

Context

Vanuatu is an island group of 83 small islands, with around 63 inhabited. It has a young fast growing population of 289,700, with the medium age being 21.3.

Vanuatu has a large rural population (76%) with a majority depending on agriculture. The services sector is also important to Vanuatu's economy. Another key issue for the country is vulnerability to extreme weather and natural disasters.

The relationship

New Zealand has a strong relationship with the Government of Vanuatu. We are seen as a trusted dialogue partner.

MFAT ensures close engagement with government agencies and community groups throughout Activity inception and design. There is an issue with capacity of local NGOs and community groups along with churn in Vanuatu government having an impact of long term ownership/viability of Activities.

Aid quality

Our development programme has high quality ownership, dialogue and technical advice. New Zealand's current programme aligns well with Vanuatu's own framework. There is also mutual accountability between the two countries.

There is strong support for agriculture and tourism, mainstays of the economy. New Zealand has seen a growth in the number of number of Activities it funds. In 2014, we funded 89 Activities, as opposed to an OECD average of 12. Furthermore, Activities are spread thinly across a number of sectors.

The evaluation questions whether this spread is good for New Zealand's visibility. There are also a number of other donors meaning that proliferation is an issue that needs to be addressed.

Insights into Economic and Human Development Outcomes in Vanuatu



Tourism

New Zealand is working with Vanuatu on two tourism projects. A overarching programme providing assistance to Vanuatu tourism is tracking well but results will take time to realise. The project has also been effected by circumstances beyond its control, including Tropical Cyclone Pam.

One of the projects is focused on infrastructure in Vanuatu. Highlights include rehabilitation of the coastline infrastructure and improved public sea front access. Involvements of key stakeholders at various stages and local knowledge throughout the project have also been invaluable.



Education

New Zealand's funding of the Education Support Programme is considered effective, having achieved short and medium term outcomes. The language policy encouraging use of the mother tongue is increasing literacy and leading to sustainable outcomes. It also provides an example of New Zealand and Australia working together to harmonise Activities and reduce proliferation.



Economic governance

The Pacific Business Mentoring programme operates across a number of countries. It has achieved some immediate outcomes. Closer attention needs to be paid to the private sector in each country and assessing where opportunities lie for growth based on an approach aligned with national development strategies. It could also be better targeted to country specific contexts.



Health

WASH Activities are valued by the community improving hygiene awareness and practice by those participating. These Activities need clear ownership by community leaders. Monitoring has demonstrated the need for more sustainability and coordination of delivery of some these of the Activities because of governance, poor design and a lack of technical expertise.



Law and Justice

New Zealand has been supporting the Judicial Strengthening Programme since 2003 providing a key plank for maintaining law and order in Vanuatu. There are sustainability concerns with this programme due to capacity in the judicial system. The Programme will be required for some time in the future.

New Zealand also supports the Vanuatu Corrective Services partnership which is seeing mixed outcomes. While it has seen a reduction in prison escapes and a more effective probation system, re-offending rates haven't declined and imprisonment rates have increased. Another issue is the lack of willingness for local staff to embrace the objectives of the Activity.

Sapere recommendations

Sapere recommended that New Zealand align its development assistance to Vanuatu's recently released long-term national development strategy. We should also look at reducing the number of Activities we support. Alongside this, it was recommended that we take a more nuanced approach to sustainability by having a better understanding of informal behaviours and incentives in place in Vanuatu. Finally, Sapere recommended that we increase our visibility and voice given that we are regarded well by the Government of Vanuatu.



This document is informed by Sapere's independent evaluation of the Vanuatu country Programme completed in 2017

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