



**Supporting rural Ni-Vanuatu's own development:  
A critical analysis of two International Development  
Agencies' approaches.**



**Source:** Author's own work

**Josephine Kalsuak**

*BHUS (Griffith University, Queensland, Australia)*

*Grad. Dip NFP (Unitec Institute of technology, Auckland, New Zealand)*

*Dip. In Youth Development and Cert. in Youth Development,*

*(University of the South Pacific, Vanuatu)*

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## Table of Contents

Preface.....	4
Abstract.....	6
Abbreviations.....	6
Statement of Originality.....	12
Acknowledgement .....	62
Introduction.....	14
Chapter One: Vanuatu, Human Services & Development.....	15
1.1: Background .....	6
1.2: The Research Problem .....	17
1.3: Problem Statement .....	18
1.4: Research Aim & Questions.....	18
1.5: Conceptual Framework.....	19
1.6: Methodology .....	19
1.7: Significance of the Study .....	20
1.8: Limitations of the Study.....	20
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	21
2.1: Vanuatu Context.....	21
2.2: Aid and Development .....	23
2.3 Human Rights.....	27
2.4: Community Development .....	30
2.5: Conclusion.....	34
Chapter 3 Research Design.....	36
3.1 Methodology .....	36
3.2: Method of data collection.....	37
3.3: Data analysis .....	38
3.4: Ethical Consideration .....	39
3.5: Study limitation.....	47
3.6: Conclusion.....	39
Chapter 4: The Community Paralegal Program.....	40
4.1: Why Community Paralegal Program? .....	40
4.2: Pacific Regional Rights Resource Team Overview .....	41
4.3: RRRT's three Tier Approaches.....	41

4.4: Structural Arrangements of the CPP .....	43
4.5: Community Paralegal Program design .....	43
4.6: The Community Paralegal Training (CPT) .....	45
4.7: Evaluation of the Community Paralegal Program .....	47
4.7.1: Evaluation Findings: RRRT Poverty Reduction through Access to Justice Project .....	47
4.7.3: Final Evaluation of the Poverty Reduction through Access to Justice (PRAJA) ...	48
4.7.2: Community Paralegal Training Program Evaluation .....	49
Box 1: Goodwillie (2009) evaluation findings .....	50
4.8: Conclusion .....	50
Chapter 5: Case Analysis – The Community Paralegal Program .....	52
5.1: Impact Statement Analysis .....	52
5.2: Coordinated Management of Meaning: an analytic approach .....	54
5.3: Conclusion .....	60
Chapter 6 – Case Study 2: Peace Corp and Kaidaliki Women .....	62
6.1 : Peace Corps International Volunteer Program .....	62
6.2: Overview of Kaidaliki Women’s Community Safe House Project .....	63
6.3: Project Design - Kaidaliki Women’s Community Safe House .....	64
Kaidaliki Women’s Community Safe House Project .....	65
6.4: Insider’s Perspective .....	67
6.5: Conclusion .....	69
Chapter 7: Case Analysis: Peace Corp and Kaidaliki Women .....	71
7.1: Coordinated management of meaning (CMM) .....	71
7.2: Community Development Analysis of the two Projects .....	74
7.3: Conclusion .....	76
Chapter 8: Discussion .....	78
8. 1: Introduction .....	78
8.2: Revisiting the research problem .....	78
8.2.1: Community development approaches: .....	79
8.2.2: An enabling environment for Community Development .....	82
8.2.3: Strategies to support rural Ni Vanuatu’s own development .....	84
8.3: Relation of the case study findings to other studies .....	87
8.4: Strength and limitation of this study .....	87
8.5: Chapter conclusion .....	88
Chapter 9: Conclusion .....	90

9.1: Introduction .....	90
9.2: Chapter Summaries .....	90
9.3: Implications.....	93
Postscript.....	95
Reference .....	98

## **List of Tables**

Table 1: Community Paralegal Program design .....	46
Table 2: Community Paralegal Workshop topics .....	47
Table 3: Kaidaliki Project design .....	66
Table 4: Key similarities and differences of the two case studies .....	77
Table 5: Enabling Community: Strengths and limitation .....	78

## **List of Figures**

Figure 1: Map of Vanuatu .....	16
Figure 2: Nakamal of Taloa Village, Nguna Island .....	34
Figure 3: RRRT three tier approach .....	44
Figure 4: Community Paralegal .....	52
Figure 5: The Architecture of communication .....	56
Figure 6: Some members of the Kaidaliki Women's group .....	65
Figure 7: A residential area in Merre Sauwia Village.....	67

## **List of Boxes**

Box 1: Goodwillie (2009) evaluation findings.....	53
Box 2: Indication for future practice .....	91

## Preface

*I use personal pronouns to express the insider's perspective sections of this dissertation. The central purpose is to make a connection between my writing, personal experiences and to position myself in this research (Thomson & Kamler, 2013). I also use italics to distinguish my input as an insider from my considerations as researcher. With fourteen years of professional experiences with two International Non-Government Organisations in Port Vila, I became motivated to consider current human service interventions in Vanuatu through perspectives learned during my study in Australia.*

*A common feature of the two organisations I worked for, is that they are international development agencies operating on project bases with funding support received from Australian and New Zealand Aid. What I came to see was that whilst the expressed intention of these organisations was to improve people's lives, in practice the concerted efforts were on the desired outcomes of their programs.*

*Increasingly, my concern became that the relation between the program intent and its relevance to the local context was rarely given attention. The agencies appeared to assume that despite tight project time lines, the interventions would be sufficient to achieve the project aims and contribute to sustainable and resourceful families and communities that align to human rights standards and are free from gender base violence. Little attention was given to the fit between this and community life, how community members experienced it and what happened beyond the program.*

*I attended international and regional strategic planning meetings with donors and international development agency staff and consultants to develop work plans, budgets, review the goals and activities of the program, develop research and evaluation plans. But at no time was the overall direction and shape of the programs discussed, nor was any critique of the*

*direction of development considered. Local workers had lower status than international workers, and although we could see that the programs were not fitting easily with communities, we were not in a position to question.*

*Given the scarcity of resources and the huge need for development, I wondered how those resources could be better used. Introduced to Community Development practices and theories and given the opportunity to do a Bachelor of Human Services (Honours) program, I was inspired to critically reflect on the situation. In shaping the dissertation, I have included an analysis of one program that I worked in for eight years alongside analysis of another agency's work with a local women's group in my home village. Both are typical of interventions which reach the rural islands and they enabled me to examine whether the approaches undertaken by two international agencies have supported and enabled rural Ni Vanuatu to lead their own development.*

## **Abstract**

Vanuatu is an archipelago of eighty-three Islands that was colonised by the British and French. The colonial powers disrupted the subsistence livelihood, customary practices and kinship system. Upon independence in 1980, Vanuatu faced competing tensions of revaluing significant elements of its culture and becoming a modern nation. A Council of Chiefs was established alongside a modern parliament and the push to a market economy sat uncomfortably alongside traditional subsistence. To develop the modern state Vanuatu became highly dependent on International aid, yet the frameworks and assumptions of donors and NGOs delivering aid were at odds with Vanuatu culture and values. This has been most apparent in relation to the rural islands, which have largely retained subsistence lifestyles. This dissertation is focused on the rural islands and their development.

The role of International Development Agencies in supporting post colonised countries like Vanuatu is essential. Yet, scholarly literature provided evidences that the focus of development interventions are on the two large islands and their urban populations. They rarely reach rural islands, tend to be short term, and do not respond to local needs and cultural values. Hence, these approaches perpetuate a continuous need for further international assistance and undermine sustainable development goals.

The four literature themes discussed in this study are Vanuatu context, aid and development, human rights and Community development. Vanuatu's context comprises of eighty percent of rural population. Since its independence, Ni - Vanuatu<sup>1</sup> were pressurised to adopted modern leadership style creating tension and confusion. Previous studies about

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<sup>1</sup> *People of Vanuatu*

Vanuatu suggested that an integration of the modern and traditional system of governance, legal, political and development is relevant. Vanuatu's existing system of the Nakamal<sup>2</sup> way has been identified by several researchers as a local mechanism that facilitated continuous dialogue relevant to people's needs. However, whilst the Nakamal is a traditional way of facilitating dialogue, there is a critical literature that indicated that it also devalues women's status and gives undue power to men.

Development aid in Vanuatu is accompanied by agreements between the government and donor partners. Major bilateral donors to Vanuatu are Australia, China, France, New Zealand, the European Commission, the United States and Japan with Australia being the largest bilateral donors. These agencies anticipated that Vanuatu will adopt a similar economic and social structure to advanced capitalist economies. Powerful bodies like the Asian Development Bank, United Nations and the World Bank, all engage the Vanuatu government in plans which are directed to that end. Their aim is to shape government, the legal system and the economy to reflect those of the west. Little attention is paid to culture and custom. This produces tension in the urban cities and rural areas, but the rural islands try to ignore it and maintain their local ways. The tension is that whilst the rural areas want to retain their subsistence lifestyles they do want services and facilities. They are affected by external values and their aspirations for things like education are changing. Aid to Vanuatu is important but there is emerging evidence in the literature that it will only be effective when it takes account of the Vanuatu context, culture, power relations, available local options and changing norms.

Human rights principles are a new framework adopted by international development agencies to replace the poverty reduction approach. Donors use human rights as a criterion for funding applications. Although Vanuatu is a signatory to human rights conventions, it is a

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<sup>2</sup> A traditional meeting place in Vanuatu

highly contentious issue at the community level. There is a body of literature which examines whether human rights are an imposed western concept or have a basis in natural law, whether it promotes individualistic capitalism and the extent to which it divides men and women, power holders and communities. Like any concept, the way it is introduced is important. Vanuatu does have a moral code, which has been broken by colonisation. Reconnecting to it may be a way of beginning a more productive conversation with rural ni Vanuatu.

There are multiple and competing understandings of community development in the literature. It can be a way of engaging local people with national agendas or a way of strengthening the people's own preferred ways of operating. The literature review scanned different approaches, including those led by governments, external agencies and those led by the people themselves. In Vanuatu there are existing structures through which community development could be progressed, such as the Nakamal, the tradition of dialogue and the existing traditional model of leadership. However, these are currently at risk or confused by western influences.

This study used a critical inquiry methodology based on a case study method and a researcher's insider perspective of two projects implemented by international development agencies in rural Vanuatu. The case study incorporated three levels of data analysis which are the analysis of program documents, coordinated management of meaning (CMM) (Pearce & Cronen, 1980) and Community Development analysis. CMM analyses conversations as a way of understanding power dynamics and to determine how actors are shaping the world they engaged in (Pearce, 2004).

The Community Paralegal Program was designed by an international NGO called RRRT in responding to global human rights agenda. The findings demonstrated that at the local level this program was designed without consultation with the local people yet relied on local people

for delivery. It provided human rights training to local people, called community paralegals, who were required voluntarily to engage in human rights education and social change projects in their communities (Jalal, 2005). Impact stories were provided by community paralegals as evidence of their work (Choules, 2011).

The partnership project between Peace Corp Vanuatu and the Kaidaliki Women's group was implemented in a rural village. The international volunteer was in a rural village, at their invitation to live and work alongside the women, identifying their needs and supporting their existing community projects (Peace Corp, n.d). The volunteer worked with the women to access resources to further their projects (Wilson, 2015).

This study explored two case studies with different approaches. The former demonstrated an example of an international designed program directing developing countries like Vanuatu to adopt human rights, a concept related to western style legal system, government and economic organisation. The latter worked alongside community using their concepts, structures and existing leadership. Both international agencies labelled their approach as community development. The Peace Corps Project fits the literature descriptions of community development from below. It strengthened local women and their structures and leadership. It built on their strengths and left them more confident that they could address local issues themselves. However, this project remained very local, driven by local needs and did not engage the community with the bigger pressures which are beginning to shape their world. The Paralegal program did transfer some skill and knowledge, as determined by external agencies. The abstract concept of human rights was grasped and interpreted into community by a few of the program participants, mainly those who already held enough status and leadership experience to achieve the goal. Overall this program did not achieve its objective and was discontinued. It would have been more effective, if it begun with more dialogue at the program design stage or at the stage of interpreting the program into the existing cultural frame. The

CMM analysis indicated that the program was based on an implicit notion that the development professionals know better than community what the community needs. This was communicated subtly in several ways, which produced local resistance. Nevertheless, this program did try to address a bigger issue of development. In discussion, it was evident that unless there is genuine partnership between agencies and community, the community will not be better prepared to shape its own development. Resistance to outside ideas is understandable, but communities are better served if they understand their context and the various pressures trying to shape it and can devise strategies to address that. The Nakamal is the place where traditionally such discussions would happen, and where those wanting to resist and those wanting to progress would come together and work out a way forward.

In summary this research points to the need for integration of top down and bottom up approaches. Support for rural communities to work on their own priorities remains important. However, they also need to be engaged in dialogue in ways that link local and national priorities. There is a role for international development agencies to support this process.

This study contributes to knowledge of how rural interventions can enable communities to have a stronger voice in their own development. It calls for a future participatory research to explore how Ni -Vanuatu can expand on their existing community development skills and how future partnership between international development agencies and Ni Vanuatu communities could facilitate a social development approach which links national and local needs and ensures the voices of rural people are heard.

## **Abbreviations**

CP – Community Paralegal

CPP - Community Paralegal Program

CPT – Community Paralegal Training

CMM – Coordinated management of meaning

DFID - Department for International Development

HIV/AIDS – Human immunodeficiency virus/ Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome

LRTO- Legal Rights Training Officer

RRRT – Regional Rights Resource Team

NGOs- Non- Government Organisations

PRAJA - Poverty Reduction through Access to Justice for All

SEWA - Self Employed Women’s Association

VNDP – Vanuatu National Development Plan

UN – United Nations

UNDP – United nation development program

## Statement of Originality

I certify that the work presented here is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original and the result of my own investigations, except as acknowledged, and has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for a degree at this or any other University.

Signature: Kabnick

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I am appreciative to Sandra Bernklau (former Director of RRRT) and Lyndamae Wilson (former Peace Crop volunteer to Vanuatu) for providing me with relevant information for my case studies. I am grateful to my husband, Robert Kalsuak and my three children who have supported me throughout my entire duration of study.

## **Introduction**

This dissertation will explore the approaches of two international development agencies in supporting community development initiatives in rural Vanuatu. The two agencies are the Regional Rights Team Community Paralegal Program and Peace Corp Vanuatu volunteer program. It will identify the strategies employed by each project in supporting the local community members to acquire skills and knowledge to shape their own development within and beyond the agency's intervention.

This dissertation comprises of nine chapters, a preface and post script. The preface outlines the reasons I used an insider's perspective and the postscript discusses the learnings I acquired in undertaking this project. Chapter one discusses Vanuatu's transition from colonisation to Independence, describing transition tensions between traditional and modern ways. The literature review in chapter two discusses four themes: the Vanuatu Context, Aid and Development, Human Rights and Community Development. This locates the dissertation in relation to previous studies about Vanuatu and provides a context to examine the extent to which rural Ni Vanuatu can influence their own development.

Chapter three comprises this dissertation's research design. This study uses a qualitative approach of critical inquiry methodology to explore the approaches of the two International Development Agencies mentioned above. Its method of data collection is a case study and the researcher's insider perspective. It analyses the data using the published program documents, coordinated management of meaning and community development perspective. Chapter four and five outline the Community Paralegal Program. Chapter six and seven present the Kaidaliki partnership with Peace Corp Volunteer Program. Chapter eight comprises of this study's discussion and chapter nine contains the conclusion and implications for future practice.

# Chapter One: Vanuatu, Human Services & Development

## 1.1: Background

The archipelago now known as Vanuatu has been settled for 500 years before the common error and was named New Hebrides by Captain Cook in 1774 (The Commonwealth n.d). The French and British governments both colonized the New Hebrides and administered it under separate systems until its independence in 1980 (Cassity, 2006). The name Vanuatu means “Our Land” (The Commonwealth n.d).

Figure 1: Map of Vanuatu



Source: World Atlas (n.d)

The colonising powers disrupted the subsistence lifestyle and customary governance across the islands (Jowitt, & Cain, 2010). Vanuatu's Independence from the colonised powers, has presented many challenges (Fenny, 2007). The country was new to democratic elections, the elected and appointed government officials were inexperienced in their roles (Hooper, 2005). The new constitution provided for a Council of Chiefs, but the chiefs were not familiar with the requirements of governing a modern nation in a globalising economic context (Westoby, 2010).

The tensions between traditional ways and modern life played out in all forums (Hooper, 2005). Despite, Vanuatu is culturally rich, it is regarded by the western standards as a poor nation that relies mainly on international aid for its economic existence (Strachan, Samuel & Takaro, 2007). Ni-Vanuatu were unprepared for the opportunities and pressures associated with a globalising world (Naidu, 2010). Many rural Ni-Vanuatu still embraced the cultural heritage of customary land, governance, subsistence economy and the wider kinship network (Hooper, 2005; Westoby, 2010). Yet, pressures were mounting to adopt western values of individuality, rather than kin and community connections, to farm for cash rather than subsistence and sharing and to increase one's consumer expectations (Naidu, 2010).

Since independence, Vanuatu has become highly reliant on external aid to re-shape its governance, economic and social systems (Schmaljohann and Prizzon, 2014). The pressures were felt in the urban centres of Port Vila and Luganville the focus of development assistance and investment with less attention to the remote islands (Clark, 2013). Eighty percent of Vanuatu's population live in the rural islands (Wilson, 2006). The islands extend over a 1000 kilometre in a north-south direction with small populations and little access to services (Clarke, Feeny, Donnelly, 2014).

The delivery of basic infrastructure and services to rural islands is a major development challenge (Addinsall et al, 2016). There are insufficient health, education facilities, teachers, doctors and human services are barely existent beyond the two urban centres (Clarke, Feeny, Donnelly, 2014). Transport is poor, and islanders cannot easily travel to the major centres to access services (Landsmeer, 2015). Development efforts are slow to establish basic infrastructure such as reticulated water, electricity and transport (Kumur, Naidu, & Kumur, 2011).

There is a lack of public information on the ways the remote islanders are responding to the post-independence challenges in addressing social development (Addinsall et al., 2016; Naidu, 2010). This inhibits informed discussion between policymakers, donors and rural populations about how best to direct the scant resources available (World Bank, 2014). The absence of infrastructure, services and information limits the development of a Human Service sector uniquely relevant to Vanuatu's rural context (Hollis, 2017).

### **1.2: The Research Problem**

The role of International development agencies in supporting rural development in developing countries like Vanuatu is important (Clarke, Feeny, Donnelly, 2014). Yet the international community's ability to facilitate social development at the rural community level remains limited (Hollis, 2017). Haley (2008) argued that donor supported initiatives made little progress as most efforts focused on government institutions and public-sector reform. This approach disconnects the rural community members from discussion about the design and management of international funded community projects (Cassity, 2006; Buggy & McNamara, 2015).

A comprehensive analysis of current social interventions in the remote islands of Vanuatu would be very helpful in facilitating dialogue about what works and how. Such an analysis is challenged by the lack of publicly available information, which is beyond the scope

of this dissertation. To fit within the scope of an Honours project and to make best use of the scant published resources, the research approach in this dissertation is to describe and analyse two different projects and their contribution at the local level. Although different from each other in approach, the two projects typify those, which reach the remote islands.

One is an externally designed human rights program delivered at scale across eight South Pacific Island nations. The second is a Peace Corps volunteer program, locating a trained volunteer in a rural community. Whilst an in-depth consideration will reveal the strengths and limitations of each project, this research aims to consider each project in terms of its contribution to the capacity of the community to actively engage with and promote its own development.

### **1.3: Problem Statement**

Current international development interventions have failed to reach and engage rural Ni Vanuatu. It remains unclear how to design programs which would be beneficial at the local level in the rural islands.

### **1.4: Research Aim & Questions**

This dissertation aims to identify the ways in which each project assisted the recipient communities to gain increased skills and knowledge to shape their own development within and beyond international development agency's interventions.

Three research questions are:

1. What are the approaches undertaken by the two International Development Agencies to support development in rural Vanuatu?
2. How did each agency contribute to an enabling environment for rural communities to progress their own development?
3. What relevant strategies can be adopted to support rural communities to progress their own development?

### **1.5: Conceptual Framework**

This study's conceptual framework links interest to effective social justice oriented human services (Chenoweth, & McAuliffe, 2015). This perspective recognises that any interventions should aim to add value to people's existing strengths (Ennis & West, 2010). Secondly, this study had the awareness that rural communities in Vanuatu are collectivist by tradition rather than individualist (Addinsall et al 2016). This can pose a challenge for those from individualist cultures who may be driven by more individualist frames of reference (Naidu, 2010). Finally, aid is not politically neutral despite precautions against bias (Schmaljohann and Prizzon, 2014). Aid is sometimes a way of steering a developing country towards institutional forms and practices which the donor countries value (Saldanha, 2005). Haley (2008) argued that aid is often seen as serving the donor country's interests in trade or politically stable neighbour. Similarly, the International NGOs who administer aid projects may intentionally or unintentionally reinforce power imbalances (Buggy & McNamara, 2015).

These considerations lend a critical theoretical perspective, which makes evident how power relations shape events (Mansuri & Rao, 2004). Introduced to community development during my studies in Australia, I embraced it as a possible way to think about development in rural Vanuatu and wanted to understand it better. My aim in this study, is to put my trust in careful documentation and analysis to reveal the dynamics of helpful and unhelpful practices rather than assume that a human service approach will have a better fit.

### **1.6: Methodology**

Taking both projects as case studies, the study will firstly describe the two approaches using published materials. Each will be considered in terms of its own achievements and evidence and compared with analyses from the literature. Furthermore, the insider's perspective will fill in the gaps in the program's published literature. Secondly, an analysis drawn from social science methods called Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) will

be used to identify ways in which communication between parties plays a role in shaping relationships, ideas and the broader narrative that links the parties (Cartier & Lowry 2017). In communications, power relations are implicit often invisible, yet have effect in shaping actions and outcomes (Pearce, 2002). The final analysis is to examine the two projects according to the program's published document and the community development analysis from the literature review.

### **1.7: Significance of the Study**

The significance of this dissertation is to explore pathways that will encourage demand and involvement from local rural stakeholders in the planning of donor funded interventions. It examines how and whether local rural community members in Vanuatu could participate actively in the decision - making process of donor-funded projects as agents, planners, implementers and evaluators of their own development to enhance ownership. It is an early step in investigating considerations for weighing up the suitability of projects for specific remote communities. This could assist donors, government departments and non-government organisations in Vanuatu to think critically about how valuable donor dollars are used and engage critically around the views, ideas and interests that are being promoted. Finally, this study may add to the confidence of human service practitioners to critically question and suggest alternatives and lay the foundation for further research.

### **1.8: Limitations of the Study**

The study is limited by the dearth of published material, which is beyond the control of the researcher. One means of overcoming this may have been to engage in extensive fieldwork in Vanuatu, but that was not logistically possible. Furthermore, the discipline of working with that data which is available, and subjecting it to systematic scrutiny, is a valuable means of paving the way towards a larger study.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

Four themes formed this literature review: the Vanuatu Context, Aid and Development, Human Rights and Community Development. These themes locate this study in relation to previous research about Vanuatu. They provide a context for examining the extent to which the people of rural Vanuatu can influence their own development.

### 2.1: Vanuatu Context

Vanuatu is a string of islands in the South Pacific with a total land mass of 12, 189-kilometre square (The Commonwealth, n.d). Vanuatu has a population of 279,888 (Live Vanuatu population clock, 2018), with 80% residing on the rural islands (Clark, 2013). The capital town, Port Vila is located on the Island of Efate and the second largest town, Lugainville is located on the Island of Santo (The Commonwealth, n.d). As stated in chapter one, it was colonised by French and British, who each imposed their own rules. The country's independence was granted in 1980 (Britannica, n.d) and since then the country has been involved in a range of tasks associated with establishing an independent nation (Jowitt, & Cain, 2010).

Vanuatu now has a unicameral parliamentary democracy with a 52-seat parliament (Forsyth, 2009). Multiple changes of party and leaders, combined with corruption, have produced an unstable political system (Van Trease, 2016). In 2015 a third of Vanuatu's government were imprisoned for bribery and corruption (Forsyth & Batley, 2016). This affected the willingness of investors and local people to trust the government (Forsyth & Batley, 2016; Van Trease, 2016). Forsyth & Batley (2016) analysed the events of 2015 argued that Vanuatu's legal and political systems are beginning to work in the intended ways, while in the past little action would have been taken. Vanuatu born, Gregoire Nimbtik, in his PhD thesis, entitled: *Worlds in Collision* (2016) argued that what is seen by the West as corruption,

can be perceived locally as normal behavior. Nimbtik (2016) stated that it would be better to unravel and understand the tension between differing worldviews and social practices that enable such behavior. Nimbtik concluded that traditional authority structures like the Council of chiefs and the Nakamal offer the best hope in connecting people, the government and in restoring legitimacy of government. The Nakamal is both a place for meeting and deliberations at the village level (Westoby, 2010). Huffer and Molisa (1999) researched governance in Vanuatu concluded that Vanuatu's existing elements for good governance, emphasized through the Nakamal Way promoted dialogue.

Several authors discussed the culture clash between the model of development preferred by International donors and the culture of Vanuatu. Westoby (2010) from the University of Queensland, researched Vanuatu Kastom<sup>3</sup> governance system argued that since Vanuatu's independence the authority and capacity of the customary chiefs has been undermined by development, which continues the process of colonisation. This writer continued that there is little effective governance at the local level to replace the cultural heritage of customary land tenure, customary governance, subsistence economy and the wider kinship network. Naidu (2010), attributed the changes experienced by the Pacific Islands to the impacts of modernisation. This author stated that the transition from colonisation to independence confused and caught the Pacific Islanders between two different worlds, pressuring Islanders to adopt western values.

The Vanuatu Government produced development plans with the help of its primary donors, particularly the Australian Government (Australian Government, 2017). The National Development Plan (VNDP) aimed to promote a stable, sustainable and prosperous country and is organised across three pillars: economic development, environment and society (Vanuatu

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<sup>3</sup> Kastom is a pidjin word referring to tradition, culture, religion, economics, arts and magic in the Melanesian region.

Government, 2016). VNDP calls for a balance to uphold the cultural heritage as the foundation of an inclusive society (Vanuatu National Development plan, 2016). Dr. Gregoire Nimbtk, now director of the Vanuatu planning department, launched this plan, saying: “The VNDP views the *nakamal* as the place where our national development discussions will take place and a map that set out the borders of development debates” (International Union for Conservation of Nature, 2016, p.2).

This is a shift from pre - 2016 thinking which was less clear on the inclusion of the Nakamal in national development strategies. This does reflect the direction of earlier critiques of development for example, Prasad & Kausimae (2012), argued that colonisation created weak social development outcomes for Vanuatu. Strengthening the traditional kinship system, whilst investing in education, human resources, social infrastructure, would reduce political instability and provide a basis for policy development and implementation (Prasad & Kausimae, 2012; Cassity, 2010). The contentious perspectives on the Nakamal are expressed in the emerging women’s services area. It is recognised that attitudes which devalue women and resist women’s rights and human rights are maintained amongst those who promote Kastom and Nakamal as essential to the governance of Vanuatu (Biersack, 2016).

## **2.2: Aid and Development**

The transition from a colonial state to an independent nation is accompanied by agreements between the Vanuatu government and their donor development partners (Cassity, 2010). This occurs within a context of significant overseas aid infrastructure, including UN agencies; the influential London based Overseas Development Institute, other global agencies, AusAid and its equivalent partner countries (Saldanha, 2005). The donors anticipated that Vanuatu will adopt a similar economic and social structure to that of the advanced capitalist economies (Rodman, 1987). To establish the institutions and structures which would enable this, the Vanuatu government has become highly dependent on overseas

aid (Schmaljohann and Prizzon, 2014). Major bilateral donors to Vanuatu are Australia, China, France, New Zealand, the European Commission, the United States and Japan with Australia being the largest bilateral donor (Huffer & Molisa, 1999). Major donors such as New Zealand and Australia have a direct interest in a strong and stable Vanuatu (Australian Government, 2017; New Zealand Government, 2015).

The focus of most external donor investment tends to be the two large towns (Cassity, 2010). Little investment filters into the rural areas, therefore they do not have the same kind of access to development funds (Rodman, 1987). According to Wilson (2006), much of the literature is pessimistic about the future of the rural islands. They are further from markets, have small populations, find it harder to establish a cash economy and harder to attract basic government funded services (Rodman, 1987). Wilson (2006) pointed out the rural Islands are more resistant to modernisation, have less access to education but have an existing degree of self-reliance and intact cultural and community processes.

As with most newly independent nations, the government has few sources of revenue to establish services and infrastructure (Naidu, 2010). A cash economy is vital to establishing a tax base that will provide government revenue however, Vanuatu has no tradition of locals paying taxes (The Commonwealth, n.d). People on remote islands have an established subsistence and shared economy, which they are reluctant to let go of (Wilson, 2006). Yet, increasingly people have aspirations that cannot be met by the subsistence economy and can only be satisfied through government provision of services, for example: Vanuatu parents increasingly want high school education for their children (Addinsall et al, 2016).

An overview of the literature on aid to Vanuatu indicates the significance of aid being directed according to the worldview and interests of external agencies and this has poor compatibility with internal culture and conditions, especially in the rural areas.

Forsyth (2009) who practised law, researched the legal system in Vanuatu provided a good example of this tension. Her research revealed that investing all the legal resources into building the capacity of the State justice system, whilst ignoring the *Kastom* or customary system of conflict resolution amounts to poor development in Vanuatu. Rather, a more pluralistic approach which acknowledges the contribution of both systems and looks carefully at how they can better complement one another, would produce better outcomes. Forsyth opens with a preface, which encapsulated the issue of two legal systems:

...I went with some members of the Vanuatu Police Force to serve a summons in remote villages on one of the outer islands. We took a four-wheel drive and set out, following barely marked tracks, through the dense bush. From time to time, we arrived at villages consisting of leaf houses and surrounded by gardens used for subsistence agriculture, with perhaps only an odd yellow gumboot or an empty packet of rice lying around as a sign of modern life. On entering the village, we would announce why we had come and flourish a very white paper summons. Inevitably, the chief of the village would come to speak with us and explain in a bemused manner that the dispute that was the subject of the summons had been ‘*stretim long kastom finis*’ (resolved in a customary manner already), often many months previously, and that everyone had forgotten about the conflict and had got on with their lives. The police were then in the unenviable position of having to explain that, nevertheless, the defendants would still have to attend court on the named day at the named time. Each time, the villagers would resignedly accept the summons and in return ply us with green coconuts and ripe pawpaw (Forsyth, 2009, pxvi).

Following significant research of these two systems, it seemed obvious that a pluralistic system drawing on the strengths and countering the weaknesses of both systems, would be a more helpful approach.

Authors who have looked at the development of the economy (Gay, 2004), the environment (Buggy and McNamara, 2015; Nunn, Aalbersberg, Lata & Gwilliam, 2013), and the education system (Cassidy, 2006) all came to similar conclusions. Gay (2004) investigated

the outcomes of the Asian Development Bank's sponsored Comprehensive Reform Program argued that this reform intended to modernise Vanuatu's economy over ten years, led to a deficit in the country's economic position. Again, (Gay, 2004) attributed that reform was being driven by external partners without sufficient attention to Vanuatu's context and culture.

Buggy and McNamara (2015) researched climate change projects in rural Vanuatu, argued that donors and the national government assumed that funded projects would be successful since they were implemented at the community level. These authors claimed that the social context, power relations, available local options and changing traditional norms were being ignored leading to the failure of many donor funded projects. Nunn, Aalbersberg, Lata & Gwilliam (2013) also researched environmental governance in rural Vanuatu, identified that the established traditional system of governing the environment was located at the village level and the development attempts to relocate this with national government encountered many obstacles and resistance.

Cassidy (2010) from the University of Sydney, examined the progress from the first step towards a sector wide approach to education which was agreed by the government of Vanuatu, Australian aid and New Zealand Aid in 2008. This author argued that by 2010, it was clear that funds were centralised within the Vanuatu government systems and there was little evidence of implementation in rural areas. Basically, when external donors drive ideas for Vanuatu's development, these cut across local understandings of what works best for Vanuatu and give rise to local resistance (Fenny, 2007). Few development agencies have fully engaged with the social context, power relations, available local options and changing traditional norms, leading to the low success rate and sustainability of many donor funded projects (Saldanha, 2005).

In terms of human services, the Vanuatu National Development Plan 2016 to 2030 addresses these under the social inclusion pillar with a focus on eliminating violence against

women and children and ensuring human rights (Vanuatu Government, 2016). However, action plans if they exist are left to aid agencies. In the rural islands, community and churches along with small civil society groups deliver what social support exist (Clarke, 2013). There is little literature on this, which is why this dissertation focuses on the rural islands. This dissertation speaks into that gap.

In conclusion, literature on aid and development described the transition of Vanuatu from colonisation to independent nation in the context of transition to a familiar western model and significant reliance on external aid. The tensions between the self-reliance of rural communities and the imposed models exist across all areas of development, including economic, social, physical infrastructure and legal development. The area which is touched on in some literature but in which there exists little research is how the people of the rural islands can have more say on the pace and direction of their own development.

### **2.3 Human Rights**

Hamm (2001) wrote a timely paper capturing a global shift amongst International development agencies, from a poverty reduction approach to a human rights approach to development. The author argued that in the 1990s, human rights approach to development became a donor and recipient condition requiring developing countries, who were signatories to the international conventions, to adopt human rights language and processes in shaping policy dialogue. Other development objectives such as poverty reduction, basic needs and gender equity would be considered within a human rights framework (Biersack, 2016). Hamm (2001) stated that poverty reduction and basic needs approaches to development had been inadequate in addressing the gap between rich, poor and the feminisation of poverty. Further, neoliberal economic globalisation was producing hardships, injustices and exploitations which required a stronger human rights approach (Fraser, 2010).

A series of UN Conferences through the 1990s created a new awareness of the need for a human rights perspective. This was structurally confirmed by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI): “The Overseas Development Institute (ODI) in London stated what a human rights approach to development means: ‘A rights-based approach to development sets the achievement of human rights as an objective of development’” (Hamm, 2001, pg: 1011).

These global agreements that human rights are a necessary framework for development has its critics. Jowitt (2003), University of the South Pacific examined the origin of human rights, argued that there is little basis for the argument that they are part of natural law. The author argued that human rights gain legal status only if ratified within a legal system. She said it cannot be claimed, that the concept derived from anything other than human belief. Seen through a critical lens, the promotion of human rights largely by liberal democracies is a means of defending the beliefs of that system. In other words, defending individualism and private property within a capitalist system. Jowitt argued that there is little basis for promoting such liberal ideas as human rights over and above the ideas that are central to other cultures, for example, the Melanesian way as articulated by Narokobi (1983).

Narokobi (1983), a Papua New Guinean lawyer and international consultant, articulated that the Islands of Melanesia are giving away their culture and ways of being to live in the “shadow of the west”. He urged the Melanesian country and people to look deeply into their culture, spirituality and their relationship with each other to find their own way forward. Jolly (2000), argued that human rights language is being perceived by Ni Vanuatu as a globalising discourse that promotes individual rights over collective rights. The emphasis on individual rights produced resistance from traditional leaders and power holders who accused agencies of not understanding local culture and undermining the role of customary leaders (Westoby, 2010).

Biersack (2016) showed the struggle of introducing human rights into Vanuatu, outlined that the Vanuatu Family Protection Act criminalised domestic violence, it was opposed by the Malvatumauri Council of Chiefs<sup>4</sup> and the religious groups. The author further argued that these latter groups claimed that the human rights legal framework undermined cultural authorities and will break up families. The kastom court remained intent on reconciling families rather than on punishing perpetrators or protecting women's rights (Jolly, 2000).

Biersack (2016) reported that even in state courts the judicial officers and police officers are reluctant to place charges and send perpetrators to jail. In rural islands, the Vanuatu Police Force are not adequately addressing domestic violence, leaving women at the mercy of custom court (Jolly, 2000). Biersack (2016) concluded that there is no 'hypodermic-style' transfer of universal human rights into Vanuatu, there is a slow customisation as people struggle with the changes and new attitudes. She suggested more attention needs to be paid to how "Human Rights doctrines are mobilised, vernacularised, resisted and reinterpreted by different players and different contexts" (Biersack, 2016, p. 320).

Miller (2017) identified that most International NGOs in the Pacific are working within an explicit Human rights framework using a theological approach which includes but does not prioritise human rights. Ishay (2004) reviewed these human rights debates showed how historical traces of multiple cultures and religions are embedded in contemporary human rights thinking. Ishay (2004) concluded that cultural rights are important but must be checked against universalist perspective since global human rights offer a united position to overcome exploitation, violence and security threats.

Australian community development proponent, Ife (1995) argued for approaching human rights from below, that is from the everyday of people's lives together. He identified

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<sup>4</sup> Composition of council of chief elected by the Island and urban council of chiefs to preserve and promote the customary practises .

two approaches, advocacy and education and recommended that they be pursued through the methods and practices of community development. This means the focus will be on addressing pressing issues in people's lives, identified by listening to people's stories, aspirations, disappointments, pain and weaving in the human rights story, so that people can comprehend its relevance to their situation.

In summary, this literature section has positioned human rights as a donor and recipient requirement and examined its strengths and critics. It has outlined how the importance attached to culture in Vanuatu society often conflicts with human rights. It has indicated that the imposition of rights, as a legal requirement, from above leads to resistance, and has drawn on Jim Ife, to consider that implementing a human rights perspective from below could have different outcomes.

#### **2. 4: Community Development**

In the literature there are multiple and competing understandings of what community development is (Ife, 1995, 2012; Kenny, 2010; Bullen, 2007; Ingamells, 2010, 2017; Lathouras, 2010). It can be confused with community-based service delivery and with government planning, consultation and engagement (Ife, 1995). There are intersections between those community initiatives which are driven by stakeholders beyond community, and those driven by the people of the community, but the two need to be distinguished from each other (Bullen, 2007).

Ife (2012) stated that Community development focused on valuing the knowledge and skills of local community members. Ingamells (2017), Griffith University made the point that community development called for mobilisation and continuous relationship building with community members as a pathway to enhance agency and address their own development. Similarly, Ingamells (2010) stated that encouraging community members to voice concerns on

issues affecting them and negotiating the change they want, enables community-led development. Therefore, Community Development is about being inclusive and fostering ongoing relations for change in ways that the people of the community believe will enhance their lives.

Kenny (2010) from Deakin University, made the point that community development altered society's structure and power relations by allowing ordinary people to lead. As stated by Ingamells (2010), this equipped community members with information and skills to undertake leadership role and promoted ownership. Lathouras (2010) from the University of Sunshine Coast, made the point that working alongside the community members to understand their situation in order to address the community's needs: "Community Development Practitioners need to carry their agenda lightly and go with the pace of the community" (Lathouras, 2010, p.27). The more government and services have an ethos of engaging with the community, in ways that draw out what is important to community the better the outcomes are likely to be (Ingamells, 2010). Yet, as Ife (2012) argued, there must be an identifiable community to engage with. In brief, community development focused on an enabling environment to support community members to work together and develop the leadership and structures they need.

Given the individualistic emphasis of Australian society, there is often a need to build a sense of community and strengthen community capacity. In contrast, Vanuatu's community building already exists in a more traditional sense. As stated in previous literature review, this traditional community centred around the nakamal way, a traditional meeting house where people come together to engage in dialogue for the community's best interest.

“The Nakamal signifies the whole interconnected web of relationship between people, past (ancestors), present, future and other realities of life, flora, fauna, weather, spirits and so forth – it enshrines harmony” (Westoby & Brown,2007, p.22).

This sense of community is at risk, as the Western emphasis on individualism is promoted (Westoby, 2010).

**Figure 2:** Nakamal of Taloa Village, Nguna Island, Efate, Vanuatu.



**Source:** Safe guarding indigenous architecture in Vanuatu (2017).

However, the chiefs (traditional leaders) are confronted with challenges in facilitating the Nakamal. As previously discussed, there are tensions between the Nakamal way and contemporary human rights perspectives. For Ni Vanuatu the familiar Nakamal is being replaced with other meeting spaces such as urban, national and international committees and forums (Westoby & Brown, 2007). These spaces are less inclusive of rural people, but they are where Vanuatu’s future is being shaped.

Whilst many community development concepts are drawn from the Australian or Anglo-Euro American literature, it is useful to explore the literature about traditional societies in the non-English-speaking countries and Indigenous worlds.

In some parts of the world, people who are struggling in the face of development are organising for themselves. In these circumstances the outcomes appear to be of greater benefit to the local people. For example, Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) (2009) in India and Slum Dwellers International, a movement of urban poverty fighters which began in Africa and operates across several countries (Slum Dwellers International (SDI), n.d). Both these organisations focused on people working together and building the supports they need through savings, credit, housing, urban planning, childcare and legal aid (SEWA, 2009; SDI, n.d). When asked how the United Nation agencies could help, Rose Molokoane, a former slum dweller and organiser of people's movement, said that they should play a mediating role between governments and their people, to ensure local people are shaping decisions and actions that impact their lives (SDI, n.d). From her perspective, the major development organisations and governments say the right things, but the ways they approach them creates dependency, which in turn contributes to poverty.

In Latin America, people with traditional rural lifestyles are facing neo liberal demands for modernisation (Bronkema & Flora, 2015). Further, Bronkema & Flora, (2015) indicated that the agencies such as International funds, World Bank and International Monetary Fund stepped in to assist using a trade liberalisation approach with no focus on social wellbeing. The lack of social wellbeing attention led to the establishment the Council of Popular Education of Latin America and Caribbean. This council comprised of the poorest and indigenous people and its main purpose and function of popular education, stemmed from the work of Paulo Freire in the 1970s. Bronkema & Flora (2015) argued this method has developed macro and micro processes for challenging oppression and building 'buen vivir' at the local level. The

term 'buen vivir' symbolised the people's own idea of the good life, rather than the idea promoted by development lobbies or governments. (Bronkema & Flora, 2015). In social movements, people learn to be active in their public lives, but also to embrace human rights in their private and local lives (Ife, 2012). This is another way of framing and practising community development.

Mansuri and Rao (2011) identified that the World Bank has prioritised participatory development across many developing countries through top down efforts which are rarely successful. However, they argued that where local people engage and drive decisions, success will be more likely to occur. Nevertheless, the authors paid little attention to the processes through which rural populations learn to drive deliberations and decision making within modernising contexts. In contrast, the Latin American literature, provided specific attention to popular education processes, critical awareness, becoming a public actor, learning in action, group reflection and enabling people to become political subjects increasingly skilled in public contexts (Bronkema & Flora 2015). The literature revealed that where the local people drive change, they become more aware of the ways in which external agents are driving them, and clearer where this does and does not fit with their own understandings of what is practical and appropriate to their situation.

## **2.5: Conclusion**

In conclusion, the problem statement derived from the literature is that current international development interventions fail to put rural Ni Vanuatu at the centre of development processes and consequently local people often resist development initiatives.

Vanuatu's history of colonisation and the consequent struggles around development are discussed. In some cases, development funds remain in the government system, urban centres and do not reach the rural areas. The literature indicated that the more the planners and development partners acknowledge Vanuatu's context, culture and local knowledge the more

they may be able to design appropriate strategies. However, it does seem that across the world, development agencies have a low success rate in those settings which are struggling to establish a post-colonial nation. It is unclear whether people-led processes, like in Latin America have a big impact on government and investor's approaches, but it certainly appears that people are more aware, more active and less likely to support initiatives that are not in their interests.

The literature is convincing in arguing that international assistance is crucial for Vanuatu's development, yet less clear on how that development will best be achieved. The tension between modern and traditional ways is described throughout the literature, with a few writers arguing that greater involvement of local people and processes is the most likely way to work through that tension.

Ife (2012) has emphasised that the pursuit of human rights as development would be best undertaken using community development skills and knowledge. To sum this up, drawing on the above literature, it would mean: working with the culture of local people, encouraging their skills and knowledge, strengthening their structures, working at their pace on their priorities, fostering adult and popular education, encouraging critical awareness. The literature, including the Latin American literature, also identify learning the skills to be active in the public world, and engaging around human rights in the private as well as public worlds.

The question of how far rural communities are encouraged and enabled in these areas by human rights and development initiatives implemented in their communities, remains the question for this research.

## Chapter 3 Research Design

This chapter outlined the research design, methodology, methods, method of data collection and analysis. The method section explained the reasons for using the chosen methods and how these methods will respond to the research questions. Furthermore, it discussed the ethical considerations and the limitations of this study.

### 3.1 Methodology

The study used a qualitative approach through critical inquiry methodology (Carey, 2009), to explore the two International Development Agencies approaches in supporting rural Ni Vanuatu to lead their own development. Critical inquiry is linked to critical theory and challenged the status quo by questioning the inequalities that exist within multiple realities (Holloway & Wheeler, 2013). Additionally, critical theory aimed to address the issues of power, oppression and social injustice (Chenoweth and McAuliffe, 2014).

Such methods are drawn from critical theorists such as Habermas (1971) and Freire (1972) who argued that certain holders of power benefited and influenced ideas and language that shaped people's experience and aspirations. Critical inquiry explored and questioned the feasibility and effectiveness of a practice (Carey, 2009). It questioned the social and culturally produced ways of seeing and acting in the world (Carr & Kemmis, 1986).

Critical inquiry enabled people to be aware of the external shaping forces, reflected on realities and transform actions through conscientization or critical consciousness (Freire, 1972). As a Human Service worker who will return and practice in Vanuatu, this dissertation will assist my own conscientisation and critical analysis to identify some program features which inhibit success (Freire, 1972; Carr & Kemmis, 1986). I have seen first-hand how well intentioned international development programs fail to include local voices in all stages of implementation hence the projects rarely achieve the desired program goals and outcomes.

The philosophical underpinnings of critical analysis attracted an understanding that impartiality is impossible and shared realities exist (Boyle, 2012). This study recognised the researcher as an active contributor in the research context therefore the researcher is not neutral (McDonald, 2012). Mackay (2016) made the point that positioning oneself created conditions for the practitioner to contribute to a positive change. In brief, this study will draw on critical inquiry directed by critical theory.

### **3.2: Method of data collection**

This study used a case study method to describe and analyse whether the approaches undertaken by two international development agencies, have supported rural Ni Vanuatu's own development. Case study method examined any aspect of a phenomena and explore data within the situation where the activity took place (Yin 2009; Stake 1995). This method is relevant for this dissertation since the researcher has no control over the phenomena and it enabled the researcher to explore the phenomena and understand its complexity (Yin, 2013). A case study is an approach used to explore the relationship to a research question or social issue and is represented by a personal experience, policy, a social role or a group of people (Carey, 2009).

The first Case study explored the Community Paralegal Program (CPP) of the Pacific Regional Rights Resource Team (Regional Rights Resource Team, (RRRT), n.d). The second examined a Peace Corps Vanuatu Volunteer program through the placement of a trained volunteer at Merre- Sauwia village working with the Kaidaliki Women's group (Wilson, 2013). The reasons that prompted the selection of the two projects as case studies were (i) the case studies displayed the typical characteristics of projects implemented by international development agencies in rural Vanuatu; (ii) there were few published accounts of Human Services projects in rural Islands, but there were some documents of these two projects; and (iii) my experience as a Ni Vanuatu worker provided some insight into these two cases.

These case studies will enable the author of this dissertation to answer the research questions:

1. What are the approaches undertaken by the two International Development Agencies to support community development activities in rural Vanuatu? This will be addressed in chapters 4 and 6.
2. How did each project contribute to an enabling environment for further community development? This will be addressed in chapter 5 and 7
3. What relevant strategies can be adopted to support rural Ni Vanuatu in their own development? This will begin in chapters 5 and 7 and be concluded in chapter 8.

The researcher's own perspective is included as data where it can fill gaps in the published literature. This is shown in italics, to distinguish such contributions which are drawn from memory and from the analytic research role. This study recognised the researcher's role as directed by the ontological framework that is concern with the act of being in existence (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010). Mackay (2006) made the point that positioning oneself in a research context created conditions for the practitioner to contribute to a positive change.

### **3. 3: Data analysis**

This dissertation will use three levels of data analysis, which are (i) the analysis of the program's documents; (ii) Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) framework (Pearce & Cronen, 1980) and (iii) community development analysis.

The first level of data analysis will examine the program documents. The Community Paralegal Program will provide a summary and analysis of the program and evaluation data conducted by RRRT and its consultants. The Peace Corp and Kaidaliki Case study will provide an analysis of the approach taken by Peace Corp in preparing its volunteers for the community placement.

Secondly, the CMM analysis examines the layers of meaning in a communication and displays how power is used to consistently create certain effects (Cartier & Lowry, 2017). This power is embedded in the place, language and style of the communication, which have effects and elicit responses from the other party (Griffin, 2012). These effects can “sustain and or destroy relationships, organisations and communities” (Pearce, 2004, p.24). According to Pearce & Cronen, (1980) relationships and meanings are shaped in conversations and in turn they affect people’s lives and realities. The third level of analysis compared the interventions with the core concepts of community development as addressed in the literature review. These three forms of analysis provided triangulation and deep engagement with the research problem (Holloway & Wheeler, 2013).

### **3.4: Ethical Consideration**

As no field work is undertaken in this study and there is negligible risk, it was considered that a formal ethics submission was unnecessary. The data will be taken from public domain literature, nevertheless, a strong social justice ethos underlies the study providing an ethical orientation.

### **3. 6: Conclusion**

In summary, this chapter had discussed the research design, outlining the methodology, methods, method of data collection and analysis. It has justified the reasons for using case study methods as a means of focusing on two rural project interventions. It has explained how the case study methods along with three methods of analysis will provide a framework for responding to the research questions. Furthermore, this chapter has discussed the ethical considerations and the limitations of the study.

## **Chapter 4: The Community Paralegal Program**

This chapter provides an overview of the Community Paralegal Program (CPP). Firstly, it expands on the reasons for choosing this program as a case study. Secondly it overviews the structural arrangements of the Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT) and the CPP. It discusses the program design, implementation and evaluations of the CPP in rural Vanuatu. This provides the basis for the analysis in chapter 5.

### **4.1: Why Community Paralegal Program?**

This program has been chosen for several reasons. Human rights are poorly understood in the Pacific Islands since they are not part of the culture and governments have not promoted human rights education in the past (Jalal, 2005). The protection of human rights in Vanuatu is absent in the areas of Violence against Women, prison condition and government corruption (Borgen project, 2017). The lack of human rights protection marginalised the poorest in rural areas, particularly women and children are suffering the worst injustices (Morgan, 2013). Yet, human rights are a central component of the delivery of international aid and considered critical to advancing Human Services in Vanuatu (Biersack, 2011).

Secondly, in its structure and approach, the CPP is typical of the kind of program which donors fund for implementation in the rural islands. The third reason is that there are very few scholarly accounts of social program delivery in rural Vanuatu. Finally, I have first-hand experience of its implementation, the changes it went through and its current phase. As a past ni Vanuatu staff member I bring a perspective to the ways it operated in community that are barely evident in official accounts.

## **4.2: Pacific Regional Rights Resource Team Overview**

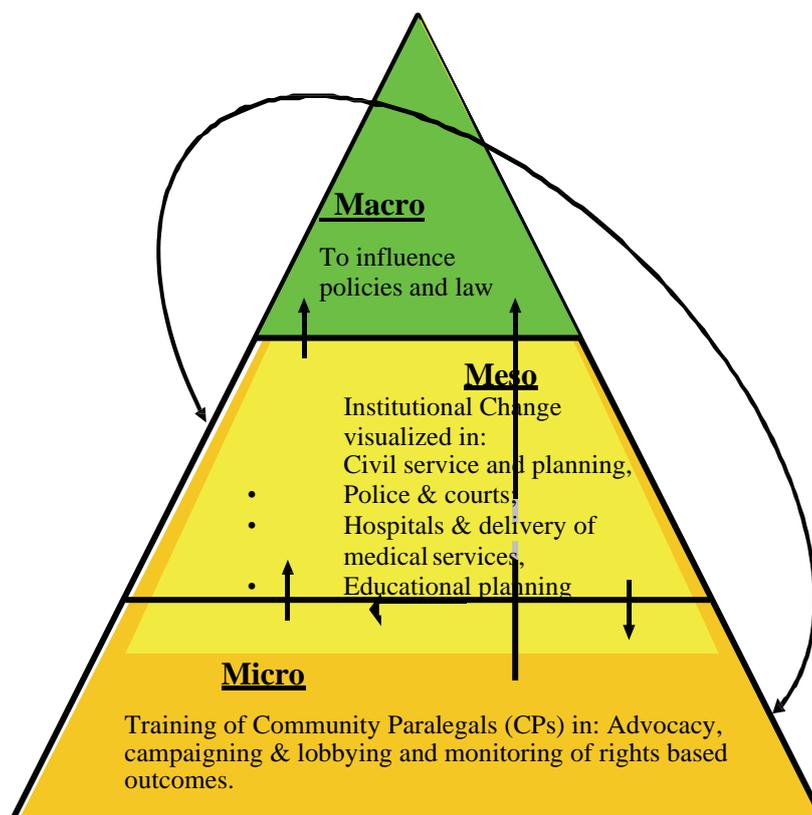
RRRT aims to support Pacific Island governments and civil societies to increase observance of human rights and good governance (RRRT, n.d). Initiated in 1995, it was established as a project of the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) with a goal to increase the legal literacy and women's social status across Cook Islands, Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu (Jalal, 2005).

In 1998, the organisation expanded its activities to a broader human rights and gender spectrum and this included the initiation of the CPP (RRRT, n.d). In the year, 2000 DFID ceased its support in the pacific region and RRRT became a project of the United Nations Development Programme Pacific Centre (UNDP) called Poverty Reduction through Access to Justice for All (PRAJA) (Jalal & Shiraishi, 2006). In 2010 to date, RRRT is a program under the Secretariat of the Pacific Community and receives core funding from the Australian Government and additional project support from the European Union, Kingdom of the Netherlands, and the German Development Bank (Pacific Community, n.d).

## **4.3: RRRT's three Tier Approaches**

RRRT provides human rights capacity building development through policy advice, and training using a three tier, macro, meso and micro approaches (Choules, 2011).

**Figure 3: RRRT three tier approaches**



Source: Jalal, (2005).

The macro and meso components involve working with the government institutions and organisations while the micro level work involves individuals in the community (Miller & Archuletta, 2013). Jalal (2005) stated that RRRT's macro level targeted the Pacific Islands government ministers, magistrates, members of parliament and senior public servants. The meso level is the second tier where RRRT worked in partnership with stakeholders within the mid-level public officials such as the Law Reform Commissions, Legal Aid Commissions, Ombudsman offices, national human desks, government department and non-government organisations (RRRT, n. d). The third component is the micro level that located the CPP and trainings to community members (Jalal & Shiraishi, 2006).

#### **4.4: Structural Arrangements of the CPP**

In Vanuatu, RRRT's approaches to implement the CPP involved partnership agreements with three different local NGOs: Vanuatu National Council of Women, Vanuatu National Youth council and the Vanuatu Rural Training Centre Association (RRRT, n.d). The three NGOs were responsible for selecting rural participants through their existing network and providing continuous support to the community paralegals (Jalal & Shiraishi, 2006).). The Vanuatu Rural Training Centre Association was RRRT's main partner (RRRT, n.d). The Program funded the salary of one legal rights training officer (LRTO) and administrative cost contribution to the main NGO partner (Jalal, 2005).

RRRT acquired funding, developed partnership agreements and the training materials in Suva (RRRT n.d). RRRT trainers travelled to each Pacific Island Country to deliver the training to the participants (Cholues, 2011). The Legal Rights Training Officer was responsible for organising all workshop logistics and assisted the trainers to facilitate the training sessions (RRRT, n.d). Upon the completion of each workshop, the CPs returned to their own communities and were required to submit to RRRT an impact story, as evidence of their work and of their knowledge and skill (Cholues, 2011).

#### **4.5: Community Paralegal Program design**

A CP is an activist or grass roots worker to whom disadvantaged groups have easier access than they do to lawyers (RRRT, n.d). According to Choules (2011), participants for the CPP were already involved in community work and civil society roles. From 1997 to 2010 RRRT trained a network of over 400 CPs in Cook Islands, Fiji, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Tonga, Samoa and Nauru (RRRT, n.d). The program design of the CPP, as described below was sourced from the organisational records. A program design is the process and plan of actions, an organisation uses to achieve its goals (United Way, 2016).

**Table 1: Community Paralegal Program Design**

<b>Program Title</b>	Community Paralegal Program
<b>Program Aims</b>	To strengthen the capacity of civil societies and marginalised groups to advocate, assert, monitor and defend human rights and good governance (RRRT, n.d)
<b>Implementing Agency</b>	The Pacific Regional Rights Resource Team
<b>National Program Partners</b>	The design indicated that local NGOs in each host country would host the CPP. Three Vanuatu NGOs partnered with RRRT to implement this program. Vanuatu Rural Development Training Centre Association was the main partner who hosted RRRT's legal rights training officer and assisted in facilitated the implementation of the program. Vanuatu National Council of Women and Vanuatu National Youth Council were involved in supporting the participants within their existing networks in the rural areas to attend the CPT.
<b>Program Location</b>	RRRT's main office is located in Suva, Fiji and this is where all the decision making about this program funding and implementation occurred. The RRRT trainers travelled to other Pacific Islands to deliver the CP training. In Vanuatu, the program was implemented in Port Vila and the rural participants travelled to Port Vila to attend the workshops.
<b>Intended Outcomes</b>	It is intended that the trained CPs will acquire the skills and knowledge to advocate for disadvantage community to access services using a human rights base approach and conduct education programmes to enable disadvantaged people and communities to become aware of their rights (RRRT, n.d)
<b>Program Type</b>	The CPP is a human rights advocacy program. RRRT trained local leaders on issues of human rights and requires them, as volunteers, to raise awareness, educate and advocate in their local communities.
<b>Scale</b>	CPP was implemented across eight countries in South Pacific Regions and has trained about 400 community leaders (RRRT, n.d). In Vanuatu, there were 40 trained Community Paralegals residing in various Islands around the country (Jalal, 2005).
<b>Timeframe</b>	The CPP began in 1997 and ended in 2008 (RRRT, n.d). The CPT lasted for the period of eight weeks over two years, followed by a training of trainers and refresher courses (Jalal, 2005).
<b>Program Requirement</b>	RRRT expect a CP to undertake certain activities in the community. According to the RRRT (n.d), a CP must be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake an activity to seek a structural change from a human rights framework.</li> <li>• Speak confidently in existing village meetings on issues promoting a human rights position</li> <li>• Advocate for those who are marginalized</li> <li>• Speak effectively and present their issue well</li> </ul>

- 
- Work with different groups.
  - have good written skills to prepare a media release or write a project proposal for resource mobilization

It was a requirement for each CPs to continue undertaking human rights awareness in their own community as part of their other paid or unpaid community activities (Jalal, 2005). Their work was to be made evident through regular submission of impact stories (Cholues, 2011).

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**Support for Paralegals**

All the expenses related to the training are covered by the RRRT (Cholues, 2011). RRRT continued to provide training, advice and mentoring through the legal rights training officer (Jalal, 2005). No remuneration was paid to community paralegals and a Certificate of Participation was given to participants who completed the total seven modules (Cholues, 2011).

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**Program Resources**

The available literature does not provide detail of the funding allocated to this program. The funded training covered the community paralegals costs of attending training, including airfares, accommodation, daily subsistence allowances, ground transport, workshop supplies and the RRRT trainer's salaries and costs (Cholues, 2011).

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The training of paralegals is the central plank of the program and this training is in the next section.

#### **4.6: The Community Paralegal Training (CPT)**

The CPT lasted for a period of eight weeks over two years (Jalal, 2005). It is divided into six stages and delivered for ten days using a workshop approach (Cholues, 2011). Table 2 summarises the topics discussed in each module.

**Table 2: Community Paralegal Workshop topics**

<b>Stage of Community Paralegals Training</b>	<b>Topics discussed</b>
Stage 1	What is a Community Paralegal Training? What is the law? Sources of the law: Constitution; Legislation, Customary Law, Common Law; International Human Rights Law Introduction to Human Rights What are human rights Development of Human Rights International Bill of Rights Pacific Culture and human rights Democracy Good Governance
Stage 2	The United Nations System Development Globalisation Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (DDRIP) Poverty Alleviation Poverty reports/statistics Human Rights and Development International Conventions –ICESCR Disability Convention
Stage 3	Human Rights Conventions Gender Equality and Discrimination Affirmative Action Convention on the Rights of the Child Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) Link to goal 3 of MDGs
Stage 4	Convention on Racial Discrimination (CERD) Convention Against Torture (CAT) Convention on Refugees Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (DDRIP)
Stage 5	Family Law Divorce Marriage Separation Affiliation Maintenance Basic Counselling Skills
Stage 6	Strategies for Change Monitoring and Evaluation Code of conduct – Ethics Individual Participant’s assessment: Develop an action plan for a community intervention

Source: (RRRT, n.d)

In the next section, the evaluations of the program are discussed. Of relevance is the extent to which there is evidence that participants were able to translate the complex materials of the training into their work in the communities.

### **3.5: Study limitation**

The absence of a field work research component limits the opportunities to collect data about the lived experiences of the project beneficiaries. This study is small focusing on only two case studies albeit typical of rural island interventions. Therefore, claims to have generated new knowledge must also be modest. In brief, the above discussions outlined this dissertation's limitation. The lack of publicly available information about the two projects is also a limitation.

### **4.7: Evaluation of the Community Paralegal Program**

Three evaluations of relevance to the CPP implemented between 2007 and 2010. The data for this section were collated from the three evaluation reports undertaken by the external evaluators.

#### **4.7.1: Evaluation Findings: RRRT Poverty Reduction through Access to Justice Project**

The first evaluation will discuss the overall program of work undertaken by RRRT, including the CPP. David H. Lempert, an experienced development consultant (RRRT, n.d) undertook the work. The review focused on the overall operation of the organisation and very little information was provided about the CPP. The evaluation is critical of RRRT for not achieving its stated objectives, and more importantly for its way of working. Lempert stated:

“There are several fundamental problems with RRRT’s approach to rights training that potentially undermines development agendas and contributes to poverty rather than solves it – primarily the undermining of existing social and community institutions that needed reform rather than replacement by foreign supported NGOs, and the destabilizing of policy frameworks and existing social allocation mechanisms through the

encouragement of “advocacy” without an understanding of overall development policy and of social responsibility and cohesion” (Lempert, 2007, p. 2).

In relation to CPP, Lempert (2007) criticised the loose framework, the lack of clear documentation of what local society needed, the lack of attention to culture, the unclear statement of program outcomes, the lack of baseline data and measures and the reliance on anecdotal evidence. He concluded that RRRT had little understanding of how to progress rights understandings in the context of sustainable development.

#### **4.7.3: Final Evaluation of the Poverty Reduction through Access to Justice (PRAJA).**

RRRT’s PRAJA program was again reviewed in 2010. UNDP commissioned Helen Tavola, a social development consultant and Graham Leung former president of the Fiji Law Society and current magistrate in Nauru undertook the final evaluation of the PRAJA program (RRRT, n.d).

This evaluation stated that the CPT is highly rated by the selected participants interviewed since it changes personal attitudes to support human rights and contributed to secure employment. However, the concerns highlighted in the report were the high attrition rate of the CPs during the early beginnings, the lack of support and the absence of relevant needs assessment at the beginning of the program.

This report endorsed Goodwillie’s (2009) findings and reiterated her concerns, as reflected in the Box One below. The decision had already been made to locate CPT as a Diploma in Human Rights and Good Governance within the School of Governance, Development and International Affairs at the University of the South Pacific (Bernklau, 2012). This was expected to position the course better in terms of sustainability and quality. Unfortunately, it was beyond the reach of rural people in terms of qualification and financial ability. The trained community paralegals were not informed about the closing of the program and its transition to the

University of the South Pacific and they were disconnected from the overall process. It is still unclear whether they were able to continue with the ongoing human rights advocacy work in their own communities.

Figure 4 shows a closing ceremony of a Community Paralegal Training organised in Port Vila, gathering participants from the outer Islands and the two urban centres together.

**Figure 4: Community Paralegal**



*Source: Author's own work*

#### **4.7.2: Community Paralegal Training Program Evaluation**

The UNDP Pacific Centre commissioned a specific evaluation of the Community Paralegal Training Program in 2009. Goodwillie (2009), reviewed the program across the eight Pacific Islands. She saw the CPs themselves as the main beneficiaries of the program, in terms

of increased human rights understandings, personal empowerment, and the ability to attract other paid jobs. She found it difficult to know how effective their work with communities had been. Her concerns were mainly with the support of community paralegals, the absence of pay and administrative details and aspects of accreditation. She reported that it was increasingly difficult to know who was and was not a CP. She did not mention the concerns raised by Lempert (2007) about the approach to human rights, although she did question the level of professional training for RRRT staff. The issues which she recommended be addressed are:

**Box 1: Goodwillie (2009) evaluation findings**

- No clear indicators or monitoring and evaluation for CPT.
- Inconsistent selection process for CPT.
- Has been a high dropout rate for CPT in all countries.
- CPT organized as disparate activities, not a comprehensive programme.
- Some trainees overwhelmed with amount of information. They could use more interactive and learner centred approaches.
- Course materials too academic rather than community centred.
- Links between LRTOs and CP did not always work well.
- Many CPs felt that they lacked practical skills to undertake follow-up activities.
- Lack of support and mentoring to LRTOs and CPs.
- RRRT should move towards accreditation of courses.

**4.8: Conclusion**

This section drew on a range of documentation of RRRT and CPP to provide an overview of the CPP program. As can be seen the CPP was designed to be implemented in urban and rural areas of the South Pacific. Its complex arrangements made it difficult to ensure that implementation was responsive to the felt needs of local people in rural areas, and that it contributed to development initiatives there. It is unclear from the documents how much this program cost, but the CPs themselves were not paid and the resources did not stretch to supporting the work well at the remote level.

The program's outcome was that the trained CPs were equipped with human rights skills and knowledge to advocate for the disadvantage community. So, the CPs were resource people

in their respective communities. However, given the lack of ongoing support and monitoring, it is unclear whether the CPs actually undertook human rights advocacy in their communities. Even though the program relied on the CP's impact statements, not all the trained CPs provided impact stories.

As indicated above, a main source of evidence that the CPs provided was impact statements about their human rights engagement in community. The program evaluations provided no collation or analysis of these, but a few have found their way into publications. The next chapter begins with an analysis of an impact statement, as a way of considering how far the complex program arrangements discussed above actually resulted in actions on the ground.

## **Chapter 5: Case Analysis – The Community Paralegal Program**

### **5.1: Impact Statement Analysis**

Chapter 4 presented data describing the CPP program. Little was said in the documents examined there about the activities on the ground. When programs are delivered across 8 Pacific countries, there is a tendency for program staff to immerse in abstract program considerations, poorly addressing community's specific needs and struggles (Saldanha, 2005). From a CMM perspective, this is one way in which program dynamics and power relations are established (Pearce, 2006). Ni Vanuatu were invited into the program context, rather than the community invited the program resources. The program dictated the structure and language of engagement. Local people participated by accepting the kinds of agency (empowerment) the program prescribed (enables). The program's language of human rights and social practice is valued in such program context ignoring the language of rural community's everyday life. This chapter draws on the concepts of the coordinated management of meaning framework to analyse the Community Paralegal Program.

Whilst impact statements are barely mentioned in the evaluations, Choules (2011) wrote an academic paper for a human rights publication, in which she described the CPP and provided, as evidence of success, the following impact statement:

#### **Impact Story: Women in the Cooperative.**

A recent example of the role men play as allies comes from a ni-Vanuatu community paralegal. He described the situation in his village cooperative where it was always men who were employed as the manager. Capable women had applied for the position but the Executive Committee had never appointed a woman. Some of the women discussed the situation with the community paralegal as they were keen for women to have the opportunity to take on the role. At the next Annual General Meeting of the cooperative

the community paralegal asked the Executive Committee why no woman had ever been appointed. The chairperson explained that there was a written policy which stated that men and women can apply for the position but only if no man applied could a woman be appointed to the position (a discriminatory policy). The culture of that village (and many Melanesian communities) is that women do not ask questions of men in public meetings. It was therefore important for them to get the support of a man who was able to ask the question (a strategic alliance). By asking the question (strategic action) they were able to find out that there was a structural reason for the discrimination against women candidates. With that information they then knew what to do. They worked together and lobbied to get the policy changed. At a later meeting of the cooperative it was agreed to change the policy and remove the discriminatory clause. Men are no longer given automatic preference. This meso level change is important. By enacting institutional change the benefit continues into the future for all whose human rights would have been otherwise discriminated against (Choules, 2011, p21).

In terms of program intent, Choules chose this as a good story. It illustrated the kind of local activity that the program anticipated. However, there were at least 40 CPs trained in Vanuatu, and few impact stories are to be found in the evaluations or the published literature. So, we must ask how typical this story is. As an insider to the program, I can shed some light on this. Italics are used here to identify where the author is speaking as insider and distinguish it from the researcher's academic analysis. In fact, the insider's account should be data, rather than analysis.

*I was the legal rights training officer at the time, and I worked with CPs to try and draw out their stories in the form of impact statements. So, I know that this CP was already an experienced community leader, prior to CP training. He was able to use the CP training in his regular leadership role in community.*

*The account provided by Choules does reflect the story much as the CP told it, although the comments in brackets are hers. (With the researcher hat on again, it would be helpful to have his verbatim impact statement alongside her recounting of it). A small number of other CPs showed the human rights insight implied in this CP story. From memory, the few who did, were already well known local leaders, or quickly moved on to paid employment. For example, one CP was headhunted for paid employment with Transparency International. Another well-known female leader was excited to learn about HIV AIDS in the CP training, and wanted to*

*present that to a larger audience. She approached the health department who were organising a big event. At first, they said no, because the information was too controversial, but she kept up the pressure and she got permission to speak publicly about the need to support and care for, rather than discriminate, against people with living with HIV/AIDS. Her confidence and status preceded the CP training, but the latter opened a new way of thinking for her. Many CPs however, struggled to provide impact statements, failed to do so, or provided partial stories when pressed. They were unpaid for their CP role, so it was hard to insist that they conform to program requirements.*

*In the case of the impact statement chosen by Choules, the CP would have been unlikely to use human rights language with the male members of the cooperative. More likely he based his argument with them on practical grounds, e.g. Women were the main users of the co-op, and they had practical understanding of what was required, they could make a positive contribution. Ni-Vanuatu are practical people and would have responded to such an argument more readily than to an explicit human rights argument. Further, what Choules did not say was that Co-ops are not a traditional structure but had been introduced by a Western program and many did not last long, including the one in question. The women then were not seeking entry to ground long held by men. Similarly the female CP did not need to make the human rights context explicit in her public health talk, rather she could focus on the practical and humane aspects of caring for someone with HIV/AIDS.*

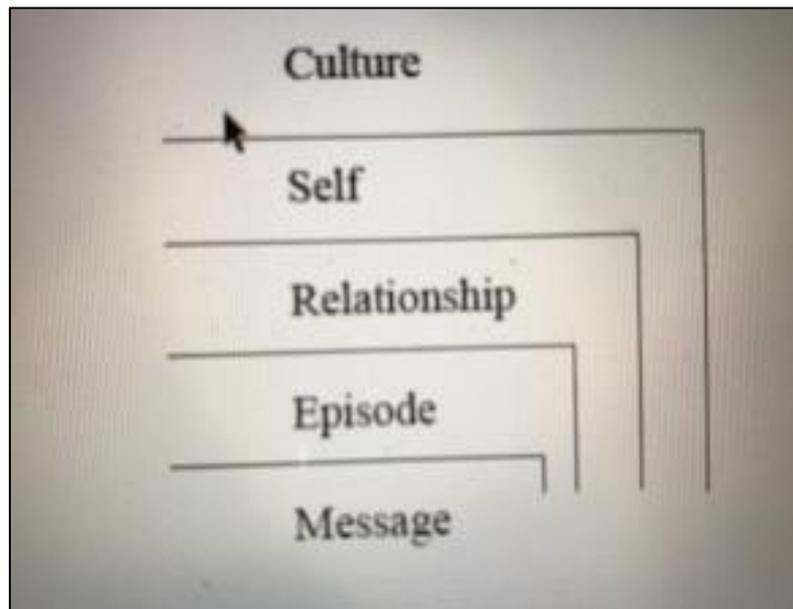
CPs operated in a context of hostility towards human rights as an introduced western construct. At times CPs were seen as breaking marriages, causing disharmony, going against culture and religion (Jalal, 2005). CPs who were experienced community leaders had the skill and status to do this work; they had the confidence to translate the human rights concepts into local concepts that sat more readily with culture. Others found that this kind of pressure made it difficult to act. Neither RRRT program staff, nor UNDP engaged with these tensions in the community. CMM on the other hand considers the conflicting views within a community.

## **5.2: Coordinated Management of Meaning: an analytic approach**

The aim of adopting CMM as an analytical approach was to provide an objective, systematic way of thinking about familiar events that would potentially push thinking and understanding to new places and open new possibilities (Pearce, 2006). According to Pearce

& Pearce (2000), CMM analysis show what the pattern of a communication does, rather than what the content of the communication is. The concepts to guide analysis are refer to as the “architecture of communication, nested within the level of message or speech act, episode, relationship, self and culture”. (Pearce and Pearce, 2000, p.408). This is shown in Figure 5.

**Figure 5: The Architecture of Communication**



Source: Pearce & Associates, 1999, P. 36

**Message:** Choules and the CP were the two authors to the *message* or impact statement as documented in Choules’ article. For both, the content of the message is that human rights advocacy and action can be incorporated into day to day activities at the grassroots level. The message is *the speech act*, which is analysed for its effect and what the message does in the world (Pearce & Associates, 1999). This analysis is achieved, firstly by examining the episode that the message is nested within.

**Episode:** Pearce & Pearce (2000) distinguished three levels of *episode* to public social change work. The “largest episode is the strategic process, the second is the event and the third is the facilitation” (Pearce & Pearce, 2000, p.415). The strategic process refers to a plan for a deliberately chosen sequence of events intended to lead towards a desired outcome, which

provides the context for events and facilitation (Pearce, 2004). Choules, along with most of the people cited in chapter 4 are contributing to program thinking, are speaking within a strategic episode. They contribute to communication which has formed, is delivering or is defending a strategic process to engage Vanuatu communities with human rights (Chen, 2004).

The second author, the CP whose original impact statement is drawn on, speaks into a lower level of strategic process known as the event, nested within the requirement of the larger strategic process (Pearce, 2004). The force emanating from the strategic episode requires that he provided evidence of an activity that contributes to the broader strategy (Pearce, 2006). He may or may not fully grasp the implications of the broader strategy.

Choules' paper and the CP's impact statement can be read as a conversation or a part of an ongoing conversation (Pearce, 2000) even though the CP is unlikely to have read Choules' paper. In fact, Choules can speak authoritatively about Vanuatu and about this CP's work and the CP may not know this has happened. Meaning is managed by giving one way of telling the story more legitimacy than other ways (Chen, 2004). This shows how a range of intersecting social practices (program, research, academic writing) happen, so they are part of the power dynamic that determines what gets to be understood as truth or reality or the basis for future funding and action (Pearce, 1994).

Choules is speaking of the CP to the professional human rights community. The CP is speaking of people in his community and to a lower level of CPP manager who collects the impact statements. Yet together they are contributing to a pattern of communication. The men and women in the cooperative may have different stories of what happened, but these are the *untold stories* (Pearce, 2004). CMM used the metaphor of a daisy in which each petal represents a person or group with a perspective on some aspect of the situation, but only a small number of petals represent the story told (Pearce, 2006). The stories untold could result in a different

understanding, if face to face sharing occurred, so that minds could be changed, strategic processes could be more widely contributed to and owned (Pearce & Pearce, 2000).

**Relationship:** Choules and the CP by being in the same conversation, are in *relationship*, although neither is required to know or engage face to face with each other (Pearce & Associates, 1999). Pearce & Pearce (2000) view of relationship questions how profoundly open people are to each other. CPP is interested in who speaks and who is affected but does not speak. Both are considered to contribute to outcomes, because if everyone affected was able to speak, the outcome would be different. The CPP is being co-created by the actions and non-actions of diverse people (Pearce 2009). The distance between people, their openness or not to each other, their willingness or not to speak up, shapes the pattern, the power relations and the management of meaning (Pearce, 1994).

**Self:** Pearce (2006) describes self as *identity* or *life script* relating it to the drives coming from the life journey of the communicator. Choules academic article as speech act, forms part of her *identity* and performance in the human rights professional field. As an international volunteer, she is likely feeling pressure to show she knows the rules of the game and can perform (Pearce & Associates, 1999). Pearce (2009) explain that people act within sets of norms, expectations, self-concepts, professional, communities, a local moral order and culture. In the published writings of human rights professionals there are things people in that context feel obliged to say and things they are not supposed to say. To speak of Vanuatu, for example, in the following way, is permitted:

“It is worth pausing in this discussion of the community paralegal training program to note the antipathy to human rights in the Pacific. There is little knowledge of human rights in the Pacific and the awareness that people have of human rights is often the result of misinformation. As a result, there is strong outright and unqualified rejection of human rights” (Choules, p.18).

This quote has taken for granted the program's approach to human rights, and counterpointing it with local resistance, frames relationships, justifies professional activity and defends the program (Cassidy, 2006). To write a showcase human rights publication, that the CPP was an attempt by the human rights professionals to impose, with minimal consultation, a culturally resisted form of human rights on a community, which has its own moral order, would be risky and seen as disruptive to a valued human rights industry (Chao & Kesebir, 2013).

The CP's *self* in the speech act is less easy to detect and analyse. Within the program's framework, the impact statement was a requirement. This could be a response to a certain degree of program pressure and is termed in CMM as a *logical force* (Pearce 2009). It may have been a way of showing that the CP, as learner was performing the expected duties. In the CMM context, it is often used as playing the game (Pearce, 2006). However, the CMM analysis is interested in the tension between the story lived and the story told. This is not to say the story told by the CP is untrue (this is a concept incompatible with CMM). Rather, the story lived may have used communication compatible with everyday life in his own community, and the story told reframed this for a human rights context (Pearce & Pearce, 2000). This is unknown, but it can be assumed that a leader who is an active participant in a range of community and training events, is familiar with code switching, that is, drawing on the skill of interpreting and responding to situations differently depending on the cultural meaning system he is currently operating within (Chao & Kesebir, 2013). This reflects the CMM emphasis on logical force and its impact on the self within any given message, people act within cultural norms and values, and these vary from context to context.

Both Choules and the CP know that human rights are controversial in Vanuatu. Both are continuing to communicate within a coordinated strategic process (Pearce & Associates, 1999) in ways which promote human rights. In CMM it does not matter whether they believe in

human rights, it matters whether they are contributing to the discourse of human rights. Meanwhile Vanuatu voices speaking against human rights are depicted in some of the human rights literature as reactionary and obstacles to change (Biersack, 2016). Polarisation exists, the voices against human rights are rarely given serious opportunity to air their case within the human rights conversations (Fraser, 2010). This split impacts society, community and family. From a CMM perspective, the more that formal public processes are used to persuade rather than engage people, the more the power divisions will deepen (Chen, 2004).

The pattern of communication emerging from this analysis indicates that the external development industry believes it knows what is best for Vanuatu and assumes the authority to impose this on Vanuatu (Cassity, 2006). What this communicates, intentionally or not, is that the West knows best, and Vanuatu is both deficient and resistant. An unequal relationship is established and the people of Vanuatu either accept a lowly position or stand in resistance (Jolly, 2000). External agents and internal agents are invested in processes and structures which, whether they know it or not, produce polarisation (Hooper, 2005). The strategic imperative driving this process is a belief by external authorities that there is only one way forward for Vanuatu towards contemporary nationhood, with governance, a legal system and human rights practices that resemble those of Western nations (Forsyth, 2009). Those who refuse this imperative are not taken seriously within the key processes of communication.

A key question is: what would it take for participants, external and local to change the terms of the conversation? In analysing what the communication is creating, the picture we arrive at is one which shows where the process is falling short of respectful inclusive dialogue (Ingamells, 2010). If this were reversed and applied the lessons from the analysis, it might pay attention to *facilitation* of dialogue that is inclusive of people with diverse views; the dialogues would require multiple *episodes* to explore and examine all perspectives (Chen, 2004). As people gradually understand the issues, hear each other, and consider options, it may be a way

forward from a colonised past to a desired and culturally resonant future (Westoby, 2010). The people in dialogue, would shape the way forward – rather than have it shaped for them by forces they cannot adequately engage with. As was mentioned in this dissertation, the communities of Vanuatu have a well-established tradition, through the Nakamal of engaging with each other in the process of shaping action and addressing problems (Westoby, 2010; Nimbtik, 2016; Huffer & Molisa 1999)

### **5.3: Conclusion**

This chapter has examined the Community Paralegal Program using the Coordinated Management of Meaning analysis. The analysis indicated that some existing community leaders are able to use their status, experience and capacity for complex social process to interpret human rights concepts into a local Vanuatu context. However, this is a small number, and probably does not warrant labelling the program a success. It has discontinued and is replaced by a University of South Pacific Diploma in Human Rights and Good Governance program. Also, the analysis demonstrated that CPP, as part of a larger set of structures designed to steer small countries towards Western styles of government and economic organisation using program approaches designed to co-opt and persuade rather than enter genuine dialogue at the local level. Meanwhile, many ni-Vanuatu are reacting to the imposition of human rights and have no forum to discuss this. Analysis of the strategic initiative and its component illustrated some ways in which the various levels of force at play within a program are made invisible to produce a story which is acceptable to key stakeholders. CMM provides a way of making these levels visible and questioning the integrity of the process. This combines with the discussion in chapter four in which evaluation material identified the shortcomings of the CP process and which, to at least one experienced evaluator, flagged the harmfulness of the approach to culture and to the pre-existing strengths of the culture.

This chapter concluded by asking how a more grounded public dialogue process in Vanuatu at all levels from local to national, could build greater local understanding of what is at stake for Vanuatu and explore a wider variety of options to reach inclusive agreements? The next case study is focused closer to the grassroots, in a situation where the external agency carries its agenda lightly.

## **Chapter 6 – Case Study 2: Peace Corp and Kaidaliki Women**

This chapter presents the case study of the Peace Corp Vanuatu program and the Kaidaliki Women's Project. In response to the first research question, it describes the role undertaken by Peace Corps Vanuatu Volunteer program in supporting the Kaidaliki Women's Group. Secondly it overviews the Kaidaliki Women's group and the project design of the Community safe house. This project was chosen since it demonstrated the ways an external agent worked alongside the rural people to address specific locally identified needs. There is no scholarly literature about this project, all the data were collected from the Peace Corp Vanuatu program website and Peace Corp Volunteer stories blog.

Peace Corps International volunteer program aims to assist Ni Vanuatu to advance education, community health services, leadership and facilitate the delivery of development programs and resources to rural communities and institutions (Peace Corps, n.d). International development volunteering is a government sponsored program engaging volunteers who are "motivated change agents", who might be new graduates, mid-career professionals or retired people and are placed at the host organisation at the request of local communities, organisations, or government agencies in developing countries (Trau, 2015). The international volunteers live in the rural community build relationships and share the rural community lifestyle for a period (Wilson, 2015).

### **6.1 : Peace Corps International Volunteer Program**

Peace Corp is an American organisation that send trained men and women outside America to help people of interested developing countries to meeting their needs and helps Americans understand other cultures (United State Agency for International Development, 2016). It has been active in Vanuatu since 1990, recruiting 793 volunteers and currently about 76 volunteers are active across Vanuatu communities (Peace Corp, n.d).Volunteers do projects as requested

by communities ranging from health, education, technology, sport, environment, depending on volunteer skills and community needs (Wilson, 2015). Volunteers learn to speak Bislama<sup>5</sup>, live with a host family, and participate in the life of the village (Zuiker, 1999). They are paid a living allowance equivalent to local subsistence and are accustomed to the living conditions and forms of transport used by villagers (Trau, 2015).

The Peace Corps Volunteer In-service Program prepares volunteers for their placement. This begins with five days in Port Vila, and then continues whilst volunteers are in the rural village they are assigned to (Zuiker, 1999; Wilson, 2015). It is delivered in two phases: pre-service and in service, with assignments assessed on competency based (Peace Corp Vanuatu n.d).

## **6.2: Overview of Kaidaliki Women's Community Safe House Project**

Merre-Sauwia village is located on a rural Island off shore of Port Vila. (United Nation Development Program, 2012). The villagers are subsistence farmers with limited access to health, education, employment, transport, electricity, piped water, sewage system and infrastructure (Addinsall et al, 2016). Despite its smallness and remoteness, this village has a well-established eco-tourism and marine conservation project (United Nation Development Program, 2012). It has hosted Peace Corp volunteers and is home to the Kaidaliki Women's group (Peace Corps, n.d).

The Kaidaliki Women's Group meets weekly for discussions about various things of importance to women, at the women's regular meeting space which is the only community meeting house in the village (Wilson, 2015). On March 13, 2015, tropical cyclone Pam affected Vanuatu slamming the community-meeting house leaving the people of Merre-Village seeking refuge (Shelter Cluster, 2015). The cyclone's aftermath damaged the women's regular meeting

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<sup>5</sup> *Bislama – Creole language, one of the official languages of Vanua*

space and the village's only meeting house (Wilson, 2015). The situation motivated the Kaidaliki Women to develop a Women's Community Safe House project.

### 6.3: Project Design - Kaidaliki Women's Community Safe House.

Lynda Mae Wilson took the role of a Peace Corp Community Health Volunteer from January 2014 to February 2016 (Wilson, 2015). The first approach undertaken by the volunteer was the implementation of a needs assessment which enhanced the development of relevant activities according to the community's concerns utilising the existing community networks and structures (Peace Corp, n.d). One of the responsibilities the community requested of Wilson was to assist the Kaidaliki Women's group.

**Figure 6: Some member of the Kaidaliki Women's Group**



**Source:** Wilson (2015)

Table 3 summarised the program design of the Kaidaliki Women's project. The information contained in the table was obtained from (Wilson, 2015).

**Table 3: Kaidaliki project design**

<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Kaidaliki Women’s Community Safe House Project</b>
<b>Project Background</b>	The women were already meeting regularly to weave, sew and discuss community projects in the village community house. The cyclone destroyed the community house and alerted them to the need to create a permanent safe space. The project grew out of the women’s direct experience and was supported by a Peace Corps volunteer to design and develop this project.
<b>Project Aims</b>	The stated project aims in the grant application made by the women were to educate the community members about climate change and disaster preparedness and to improve the safety of community members during future cyclones.
<b>Intended Outcomes</b>	The concrete community safe house will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accommodate the villagers during future cyclones</li> <li>• Be used as a communal place for community activities</li> <li>• Increase the Women and community member’s skills in preparing for disaster.</li> </ul>
<b>Project Type</b>	It is a community-based project identified by the local village women, in consultation with the men and with technical assistance provided by the Peace Corp volunteer.
<b>Scale</b>	The project covered a local village.
<b>Timeframe</b>	The project began on May 2015 and was completed in 2017.
<b>National Project</b>	The Kaidaliki Women’s Group at Merre Sauwia Village are the main implementers.
<b>Partners</b>	Peace Corp Vanuatu program is the supporting partner.
<b>Project activities</b>	The activities undertaken by the Kaidaliki Women and the Community members to ensure the establishment of the Safe House are:

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**Establishment of a project committee:** A project committee was established with a specific role to oversee the establishment of the building.

**Community consultation:** The women organised several community meetings to discuss the project, established a working committee and requested use of communal land. The project was approved by the village council and communal land allocated specifically for the project.

**Community contribution:** The women took the leading role to contribute sand, coral and paid for a local architect to develop an architectural plan of the house. The men agreed to undertake the construction of the building.

**Capacity building:** The president of the Kaidaliki Women and the Peace Corp volunteer attended a program design and management workshop organised by Peace Corps in Port Vila. At the completion of the workshop, the two women organised a similar workshop at the village, equipping the ladies with basic program design and management skills and knowledge.

**Funding:** The Kaidaliki Women utilised the workshop opportunity to apply for funding under the Small Project Assistance Program and the Vanuatu National Council of Women.

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<b>Support for Kaidaliki Community Safe house</b>	Merre Sauwia village had an agreement with Peace Corps Volunteer program to host a volunteer for a two-year period. Peace Corp Volunteers enhanced the village member's capacity building with the provision of skills and knowledge in the areas identified by the community members. For this project the Peace Corp volunteer supported the women to develop and implement the project's activities.
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<b>Program Resources</b>	The women had an existing guesthouse that provides income to the Kaidaliki group and they received \$280 from Vanuatu National Council of Women (Cullwick, 2016). The project received \$9,988.78 US Dollars from Peace Corps Small Project
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Assistance Program and made community contributions to provide a total \$25,390.62 US Dollars.

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The volunteer completed her requirement in February 2016, but the project continued through to completion.

#### 6.4: Insider's Perspective

*Merre – Sauwia, my own village, is in a remote area. I grew up in Port Vila and visited my village during holidays. When I spent my holidays in the village, I experienced the lack of access to services. Like the volunteer, I lived with no access to electricity, reticulated water and internet. Services such as chemist required an hour of climbing a substantial hill. This is no longer an enabling environment for the members of my family who live in the village to acquire a decent standard of living. My relatives of Merre Sauwia are traditional owners of the land, but as (Addinsall et al, 2016) pointed out, the limited access to services created difficulties in mobilizing the land for sustainable economic activities and productive uses.*

**Figure 7: A residential area in Merre Sauwia Village**



**Source:** Wilson (2015)

*Made aware of the Peace Corp contribution by my relatives, I could see that they felt the communication and relationship with such an external agency enabled them to soar above the challenges and take some control.*

*Land is an identity to Ni Vanuatu (Naupa, 2017). I consider myself to be privileged as my education and work experiences equipped my personal development. I was able to acquire land tenure in the urban area and contribute to land decision-making processes if relevant. However, for my fellow rural women, the patriarchal culture combined with the lack of education made land a male dominated domain leading to the absence of women in land discussions (Naupa, 2017). I acknowledge the importance of the strategy undertaken by the Kaidaliki Women to acquire communal land from the village council. Allowing the women to access the land and take the lead in developing it, was a big shift for the village men. For the women, this was also made possible by the way they included the men in the project, in helping with the construction of the safe house, it became genuinely a community project. Yet, the leadership of the women was acknowledged.*

*From an insider perspective, I know that one of the village Chiefs trained as a community paralegal, a project discussed in case study one. By endorsing and supporting the Kaidaliki Women's project and providing his support to the women as they sought funding, this Chief effectively advocated for gender equity and human rights, although that language was never used.*

*The Peace Corps volunteer was welcomed back on visits to the community and is warmly regarded as a friend of the community. The people of this community have high regard for Peace Corps. They appreciate its ways of working, liking that the volunteers live alongside community, talk with community and support what the community sees as the priority. From this kind of relationship, the local people feel that they have a sense of power to make changes.*

## 6.5: Conclusion

In conclusion, chapter six described the Case study of the Peace Corp Vanuatu volunteer program and the Kaidaliki Women's group. It responds to the first research question by describing the role undertaken by the Peace Corps Vanuatu Volunteer program in supporting the Kaidaliki Women's Group. The Kaidaliki Women's group and the project design of the community safe house are discussed. From an insider perspective, in italics, the author has added some insights, specifically based on her knowledge of how local residents experience the Peace Corps contribution. Chapter 7 analyses this approach.



## Chapter 7: Case Analysis: Peace Corp and Kaidaliki Women

This chapter examines the project discussed in Chapter 6 at two levels. Firstly, it analyses the speech act, using the coordinated management of meaning (CMM) then it considers the project from a community development perspective.

### 7.1: Coordinated management of meaning (CMM).

This section analyses one of the volunteer's blogs as a speech act according to the CMM. The entire blog entry is presented below:

Blog: October 8, 2015 by Lyndamae  
Kaidaliki Women's Clubhouse and Community Safe House Funding Approved!!!

In local language, Kaidaliki means 'the mamas cry for something better' and the women of the Kaidaliki Mamas Group have been doing just that since 1988.

They are a group organized by monthly business meetings and workshops about climate change, gardening, health, gender development and more. Every Tuesday morning, you'll see each mama dressed in her nicest island dress attending the weekly devotion at their local church, followed by activities such as making handicrafts for gifts, fundraising and storytelling about their culture at their community hall. In November 2013, they began managing a small two-person guest house as a way to support their activities. Unfortunately, things are very different now.

On Friday, March 13, 2015, Cyclone Pam slammed into the offshore island of Nguna and required 53 women, men and children of Mere- Sauwia to seek shelter inside a small cement block house with only a tin roof. The women were forced to stand, holding their small children and babies in their arms for more than 9 hours as water poured in through the roof, walls and up through the floor. The next morning the community discovered the category 5 cyclone had destroyed the women's regular meeting space and the only community meeting house.

The women of the Kaidaliki Mamas Group need a permanent structure as a safe house for use of the men, women and children of the village during future life-threatening cyclones and a place to conduct their monthly activities including workshops on climate change and disaster preparedness. The women have transported the required amount of sand and coral necessary to move forward with the house construction. The community is ready to contribute the necessary labour to make the Kaidaliki Women's Clubhouse and Community Safe House, a dream of 32+ years, a reality.

- The women have had several meetings about the house over the past twelve months
- They agreed on the design and the name: Kaidiliki Women’s Clubhouse and Community Safe House.
- An 8-person committee has been formed including the executive committee members, a community manager, foreman and myself.
- They have paid a foreman to draw up plans to build a 11 x 8-meter concrete clubhouse.
- The committee members have gathered quotations, created a budget and identified their community contribution.
- The development committee met and recommended the community allocate land for the house, and it was passed unanimously at a village meeting. Land is ready and available to build.
- Kaidiliki Mama’s Group president, Touliu Jerry, and I attended the Program Design and Management Workshop hosted by the Vanuatu Peace Corps Office in December 2014.
- We identified the SPA grant as a possible funding source and the group of women attended a workshop proposal development workshop facilitated by myself and Touliu June 7-9, 2015. They applied principles learned during the workshop by breaking into two groups to discuss each question and coming back together to give their final answers in the application.
- **Goal #1:** Improve safety of community members during future cyclones by building a permanent safe house for the use of men, women and children of Mere-Sauwia.
- **Goal #2:** Build capacity by educating community members about climate change and disaster preparedness during a workshop.
- From start to finish, the Kaidaliki Mamas Group have been involved in every step of the application. In August 2015, we submitted the Kaidaliki Women’s Clubhouse and Community Safe House proposal to the the Small Project Assistance (SPA) Fund through USAID and Peace Corps and it was a **SUCCESSFUL APPLICATION!!**

The community of Mere-Sauwia is thankful beyond words for this opportunity and funding...now it’s time to build!

**Message:** The volunteer’s message, repeated in full here, minus the photograph and the plan of the safe house, is part of her blog records, written most likely for her peer volunteers. It is the only published record of this project. It is unclear whether the women themselves knew the blog was being written or shared. The blog provided a detailed account of the local women’s plans and activities. This has the effect of acknowledging their skills. The active subject throughout is “we” or “the women”. This suggests an inclusive approach to support the women

by sharing knowledge. The volunteer shared her knowledge of project design and of how to get resources, and the women taught the volunteer about their world. This two-way sharing creates a respectful context for working together.

***Episode:*** The *episode* within which the message is nested has multiple layers (Pearce, 2000). Peace Corp's strategic intent relates to generating good will and providing immediate support as requested by community (Peace Corp, n.d). The strategic intent of the local project is determined by the local community, putting the power in community's hands (Chen, 2004).

The lower level of episode is described as "event" (Pearce & Pearce, 2000) is indicated by the volunteer in terms of a collaborative process. Each small event (Pearce, 2000) is within the women's sphere of control – they know what to do and how to do it, and if they need extra expertise the volunteer was able to provide it, or request expertise input from Peace Corps, or the women request it themselves from within their own networks. A key event, the women's successful request for land, is totally nested within their own relationships and culture.

***The Self:*** The volunteer is from an individualistically oriented culture, and the women maintain a collectively oriented culture. Yet this causes no tensions, because the volunteer was able to accept and work within the host culture and is under no pressure from elsewhere to introduce aspects of individualism.

***The relationships:*** The volunteer's speech act is nested within several relationship patterns (Pearce & Pearce, 2000). The women's horizontal relations (Ingamells, 2010) with each other are celebrated rather than challenged through the story. The women's relationship to the men is presented in a positive fashion. The men are included in the design and implementation of the Safe House, through the Nakamal, the community grants and the land at the women's request. There is no evidence of a dynamic of exclusion (Chen, 2004). The volunteer's relationships to the local people and to her peers and the broader Peace Corps

organisation hold the story in a harmonious way. There is a slight transformation of power – the women are on a more equal footing with the men and the community has acquired important external supporters.

There is no dynamic in this speech act which sets up the “us and them”, or points to the West knowing best. This is achieved through the larger strategy (episode) (Pearce & Pearce, 2000) being based on shared learning, and appreciation of culture. The women were not invited into a Peace Corps project, as they invited a Peace Corps volunteer into their project work. This means that the outcomes of the project are the women’s achievements. They needed external funds and external expertise, but in small measures, because predominantly the people of the village were the main resource. It is possible to imagine that with multiple experiences of this kind, layering one up on another, the people of the village may be able to steer their own development.

However, the sense of harmony and celebration may be at the cost of embracing the bigger issues that are confronting Vanuatu. The bigger issues of how Vanuatu can take its role as a nation in the wider world continue to be addressed at some higher level beyond the sphere of community inclusion. At a meso level, the women were empowering themselves and were supported by the men in their project, however there was no explicit addressing of gender relations and family violence. It was not for a volunteer to raise such macro and meso critical issues, which is why the focus of this thesis now turns to community development.

## **7.2: Community Development Analysis of the two Projects**

This section of Chapter 7 addresses: *How each project contributed to an enabling environment for further community development?*

In the literature review, some key points from the community development literature were: *working with the culture of local people, encouraging their skills and knowledge, strengthening*

*their structures, working at their pace on their priorities, fostering adult and popular education, encouraging critical awareness, strengthening the skills they need to be active in the public world, encouraging their organisations and networks, and engaging around human rights in the private as well as public worlds.* It was pointed out that people's movements, such as SEWA and Slum Dwellers International seem to have more impact in the face of neo liberal development than development projects led by international development organisations.

The paralegal program did encourage new skills and leadership in the CPs. They already knew how to work in culturally appropriate ways, so it was up to them to engage in the work at a local level. Since the issue was so contentious and the ongoing support so limited, many CPs were unable to do this. However, those who already held leadership positions were able to introduce human rights into existing community processes. This has had the effect of increasing human rights awareness, although sometimes was divisive. Has this paved the way for the community to play a greater role in its own development? This is debateable. The literature review and the CMM analysis indicated that resistance is likely when western concepts are introduced as universal and when they conflict with local tradition. There needs to be more opportunities for people to engage with each other about human rights in a calm and non-reactive manner.

Many of these areas of enabling community development are evident in the Peace Corp volunteer's account. The Kaidaliki group was strengthened, the community's traditional dialogue and problem-solving approaches were engaged, adult education occurred, and new public world skills were built. The community's own organisational structures and networks were strengthened. Positive gender relations were fostered, although negative dynamics were not addressed. The pace of the work of the Kaidaliki women's group was set by the women themselves. The volunteer had her own timelines and left when her date to leave arrived. She felt no pressure to hurry the women along. The project proceeded without her, indicating

sustainability. Above all from a community development perspective, it can be said that the approach fits well with traditional approaches, people are comfortable with it, and in the context of this village, a basis of skills and knowledge exists which could be built on.

Gillespie (2004) examined what it would take for small Community Driven Development initiatives to be scaled up exploring how successful initiatives in one community could be implemented in other communities. Perhaps an important question is how multiple small projects of this kind, happening in the same small community, could become the basis of skill, confidence and capacity to tackle the bigger issues which surround and press on communities but exist at a larger scale. The analysis of this dissertation does suggest that beginning where the community is at, working at that pace, on issues of concern to them is a very good starting point. The Kaidaliki project illustrated this. However, the process must build on itself, so that each success enables the community to grasp and work on the bigger issues. In neither project did the possibility of this become evident.

### **7.3: Conclusion**

To conclude, this chapter used CMM to analyse the communication grounded in this project and used core community development concepts from the literature review to analyse the practices. It became clear that the Kaidaliki project offered a culturally appropriate approach to development, than the CPP. It was culturally respectful, drew on local strengths, worked through existing local processes, at the community's own pace, and achieved some small gains, in areas of great importance to community. Although the CPP tended to provide skills to a small number of people as individuals, the Kaidaliki project worked with people as a collective, so that the group grew in strength. Nevertheless, the project worked on a very small scale, which barely touches the bigger challenges at the macro level. The project

illustrates some ways that the Ni- Vanuatu would find appropriate in terms of beginning to engage the bigger issue.

## **Chapter 8: Discussion**

### **8.1: Introduction**

This chapter discusses the findings by revisiting the research problem and examining the case studies in relation to the research questions. It brings to the forefront material from both case studies to address the key question of how rural Ni- Vanuatu can have a greater role in leading their own development.

### **8.2: Revisiting the research problem**

The stated research problem in the introduction, was that international development interventions have failed to reach and engage rural Ni Vanuatu. Therefore, it remains unclear how to design programs which would be beneficial at the local level in the rural islands. There is heavy dependence on international development agencies to support Vanuatu's development, but their approaches have little impact on the rural villages (Hollis, 2017: Clarke, 2015).

Using a case study of two internationally designed programs, presented in the previous two chapters, the findings explored the programs in relation to three research questions:

1. What are the approaches undertaken by the two International Development Agencies to support development in rural Vanuatu?
2. How did each agency contribute to an enabling environment for rural communities to progress their own development?
3. What relevant strategies can be adopted to support rural communities to progress their own development?

### 8.2.1: Community development approaches:

This section will address this research question: *What are the approaches undertaken by the two International development agencies, to support development in rural Vanuatu?*

Both agencies considered that their program took a community development approach. In comparing the two interventions, the CPP responded to an international agenda of establishing a human rights framework. It aimed to influence community using a top down approach (Mansuri and Rao, 2004). In contrast, the Peace Corp Program, by locating a volunteer in the community at the community's invitation to work alongside the community, took a bottom up and horizontal approach (Mansuri & Rao, 2004). Bottom up implies a process driven by the people themselves, and horizontal implies a process which connected local people to each other (Movement for community led development, n.d). This responds to the needs of the community and is culturally resonant, engages local people and adds to their skills (Chenoweth, & McAuliffe, 2015).

**Table 4: Key similarities and differences of the two case studies.**

<b>Approach</b>	<b>Community Program</b>	<b>Paralegal Peace Corp &amp; Kaidaliki</b>
Development Aims Defined by:	Program and its funders	Kaidaliki Women's Group
Design and Development of Project	Program staff	Community members
Scale	8 Pacific Nations	1 rural community
Skills transferred to:	Community Paralegals as individuals	Community members as collective
Volunteers	Fully dependent on local individuals as volunteers to implement	Peace Corps volunteer and residents work together to implement
Key Program Staff	Based in Suva, Fiji	Based in Merre Village, Vanuatu.
Target Audience	Rural community	Rural community

Allocation of Financial Resources	The rural communities had no control over, or access to program resources.	The program finance did not reach rural communities, but the volunteer supported community to get a grant for their project.
Ongoing Support	The CPs did not receive ongoing support when return to their various villages upon completion of training. RRRT anticipated its NGOs partners will fulfil this role.	The volunteer lived with the women in the same village and provided ongoing support when needed.

Table four outlined the similarities and differences of the two initiatives. Both programs targeted the rural communities using different approaches. As reflected in the table, the programs differ in development aim, program design, transfer of skills, location of staff, allocation of financial resources and ongoing support to the target group.

RRRT engaged a partnership arrangement with three local NGOs in Vanuatu to select and support participants for the training (Bernklau, 2012), yet was unable to adequately support these NGOs. Prior to the 1980s there were no NGOs in Vanuatu and the few that existed at the national level are relatively inexperienced, under pressure, and have limited reach into local areas (Jalal, 2005). International agencies tend to value the NGO, Civil Society model (Hollis, 2017). In contrast, Peace Corps, directed its support to the Kaidaliki Women's group, a well-established local people's community group. This may be a key distinction in terms of how the future is envisaged. RRRT favour a future with civil society organisations that are similar to those of Western society, whereas locality groups like Kaidaliki are usually invisible to external agencies, yet very important to locals and a focus for community development activity.

The dependence on volunteers is typical of programs which reach the rural parts of Vanuatu (Trau, 2015). The cost of running each program is not published, it is clear that they are costly, yet minimal financial resources reach the rural community. Dependence on volunteers may

save money and could even have other benefits, but it suggests low priority status for the program and the development struggles of the communities.

The international development community speaks of local people shaping their own development (Mansuri & Rao, 2011). In the CMM analysis this language was reflected in program design or delivery, only so far as local people would be trained to do what the international community thought needed to happen. Local people became the brokers between an international language of human rights and the local community. The Kaidaliki Women and the Peace Corp program displayed that the community was in control of the project. Peace Corps used its influence to assist the community with skills and financial resources. Each program's strengths and limitations can be mapped in the way indicated in Table 5.

**Table 5: Enabling Community: Strengths and Limitations**

	<b>Strength</b>	<b>Limitations</b>
Community Paralegal Program	Engaged community with key development concerns – human rights	Broad Scale – did not sufficiently engage community in dialogue about human rights and cultural implications.
Peace Corp Vanuatu and the Kaidaliki Women;	Local scope – enabled local people to lead from their strengths in a culturally resonant way.	Did not engage community with broader development concerns and impacts

Long term outcomes of the CPP were minimal and none of the reviews and evaluations were able to point to clear outcomes. At the individual level, a small number of CPs benefitted from the training, went on to better jobs, but there are no evident lasting community outcomes. However, the Kaidaliki Women's Group, pre-existed the Peace Corps intervention and

continued beyond it. The women had added to their skill repertoire and confidence, and they continued to work on the community house. Nevertheless, neither project had contributed to local understanding of the challenges of transition that Vanuatu faces. This issue is addressed further in the next section.

### **8.2.2: An enabling environment for Community Development**

The section discussed this research question: *How did each agency provide an enabling environment to further community development?*

The findings revealed that both projects intended to create an enabling environment for community development by working with a group of people who shared a common identity as rural Ni Vanuatu. Kenny (2010) outlined that community development takes place in a setting amongst a group of people with common identity, locality and disadvantages. The CPP selected several community leaders from rural Vanuatu and trained them to be CPs. However, the Program's lack of familiarity with the communities meant that many people who commenced the training did not have the skills or status to continue the human rights work in community. In theory the CPP should have been a good approach but lacked adequate local engagement and local knowledge.

In comparison, the Peace Corp volunteer lived in the Women's village and worked with the local women and learned from them which makes the village projects successful. Equipping the community members with the skills, knowledge and resources that are relevant to their area of needs advances community development (Ingamells, 2010). The findings from the Kaidaliki group revealed that the Peace Corp volunteer equipped the women with information, skills, knowledge and resources after identifying their needs. Following a deep level of engagement with the community, the volunteer exhibited a greater understanding of the intricacies of

community structures and relationships in a more culturally appropriate approach to address issues that were identified and owned by the community.

Also, the CPP intended to equip locals with human rights information and skills. However, it did not engage with the question of whether this was relevant to community's areas of concerns. The CPP provided training resources, however there were no resources to support the CP's work in the rural areas. Despite the lack of resources, the CPs were required to submit impact stories to verify that they utilised the skills and knowledge gained from the training. The absence of any training in how all this fitted within the wider transition of Vanuatu from subsistence villages to contemporary nation, meant the CPs operated partly in the dark, and could make little contribution to program reflections and review.

Assisting community members to take a leading role in voicing their concerns fosters community development (Ingamells, 2017). The CPP demonstrated that RRRT did not involve local NGO partners and the CPs during the design and implementation stage of the CPP. Nor did it engage the local voices, skills and knowledge of rural community members (Ingamells, 2017; Ife, 2012). The achievement of program outcomes, to equip the CPs with Human Rights skills and knowledge to advocate for disadvantage community (RRRT, n.d) depended mainly on the pre-existing skills and credibility of the CPs enhanced and supplemented by the program training.

The Kaidaliki Women's group established that the local women took responsibility for leading the project drawing on their lived experiences, traditional ways, and the additional skills provided through the project. The Peace Corp volunteers recognised the existing strengths and capacities (Ennis & West, 2010) of the local women. This approach values local

community knowledge and recognised local community members as experts in their lives (Kenny, 2010).

The CPP has been discontinued and a new university program replaced it. Options were given to the CPs to apply, however the eligibility requirements created obstacles for entry. The Peace Corps volunteer has completed her stay in Vanuatu and the women utilised the transferred skills to acquire further funds to complete the community safe house. Both programs had some effect in preparing the community for their future. The human rights discourse has reached local communities creating some benefits and causing some disruption. The people of Merre-Sauwia village are more confident to take on projects after the Peace Corps Project.

The CMM analysis revealed the ways in which language and relationships inhibits deeper discussion and dialogue in community. To advance community development, it is vital for practitioners to work alongside the community members to understand their situation and appreciate their culture (Lathourous, 2010). The exploration of this study suggested that a community is best enabled when program staff live in community and work alongside community members, appreciating their culture, but exposing them to new ideas and skills. Short timeframes are not helpful however, nor project by project basis with long gaps in between (Mansuri, & Rao, 2004).

### **8.2.3: Strategies to support rural Ni Vanuatu's own development**

This section responds to the research question: *What relevant strategies can be adopted to support rural Ni Vanuatu in their own development?*

It is clear in this dissertation's explorations that there is a significant tension between insider and outsider thinking about development. Ni Vanuatu's own existing social institutions,

cultural ways and subsistence economies are their strengths (Wilson, 2006). External institutions expect Vanuatu to adopt institutions, economy and individualistic lifestyles like those in the West (Cassidy, 2006). The Vanuatu government is heavily influenced by its external donors, which is reflected in the official plans, but the tension between inside and outside permeates government and rural community (Westoby & Brown, 2007).

As discussed in chapter 4, Lempert's (2007) evaluation of RRRT, argued that it is the existing social and community institutions in Vanuatu that needs reform. These revolve around the Council of Chiefs, Kastom Court and the Nakamal, and the power they collectively hold to perpetuate or change certain local practices (Westoby, 2010). Lempert (2007) inferred that it is not a case of local practices and institutions being outdated or problematic and Western ideas and institutions being modern and beneficial. Rather, some harmful practices have become deeply rooted within traditional structures and are often justified as "culture". They need to be addressed, but the structures themselves may still have a significant purpose. Similarly, external practices of development through imposition of Western concepts are unhelpful, yet well informed external agencies have a role to play.

The CMM analysis showed how an unhelpful form of social practice is protected through the kinds of communication that are established and normalised. This suggested that a helpful form of social practice would be to acknowledge that the people of Vanuatu need to be engaged in a range of forums with the development challenges so that they can identify what is at stake and what they want to do about it. For example, rural people resist projects which stimulate a cash economy, yet want services that only a solid tax base can provide. People resist a human rights framework yet want protection from the law. These contradictions suggest that only through popular education and dialogue can people weigh up their options and chart their own way forward. At a national level, it is hard to envisage how this might happen, but at the rural island level, the task is much easier. It is clear from the CMM that the imposition of ideas

causes' resistance, but that same ideas can be grown up from within, given skilful facilitation. Some local leaders are showing the way with this. But also, skilled outsiders who live locally and appreciate the culture can add to this work.

The community development analysis indicated that community development approach engages community members. They already have skills and relationships to bring about change at the community level. They have a traditional practice of dialogue. They know how to engage the people of their community, including the chiefs and leaders. They know how to frame requests and arguments. They have some knowledge in accessing broader networks. They have seen what does not work and have some recognition of the limits of external intervention. Western ideas have left a legacy of failed projects in rural areas. Yet, for the most part local people have local horizons in terms of development. They are not engaging directly with the major development challenges of Vanuatu as a nation.

Western economic development has not been able to address poverty but does produce increased levels of poorly paid dispiriting work, debt, loneliness and ecological destruction (Gay, 2004). Rural Ni Vanuatu are reluctant to give up what they have for this (Wilson, 2006). Yet new ways must be found if this new nation is to survive in the contemporary global environment. In the literature examined in chapter 2, it is evident that people across the world who experience the pressures Vanuatu is experiencing are taking their development into their own hands and becoming a force for change with their own governments and institutions. People in Vanuatu have not been exposed to these spaces, their work, struggles and successes. It is hard to know what you could be doing if you have no examples to draw on. Across the world it is largely women who are stepping into these leadership roles, community-based organising and driving new responses to housing, infrastructure, finance, education and healthcare (SEWA, 2009; SDI, n.d).

### **8.3: Relation of the case study findings to other studies**

This section compares the findings of this study with other studies about Vanuatu. The findings demonstrated that the CPP failed to include the Vanuatu context and culture, in its efforts to import a global human rights agenda. The Kaidaliki project was immersed in culture and local ways of working but failed to address the significant challenges that are the national context of transition. Other studies, drawn on in the literature review identify similar issues. Gay (2004) found the Asian Development Bank's Comprehensive Economic Reform failed since it was driven by external partners without sufficient attention to Vanuatu's context and culture. Forsyth (2009), argued that acknowledging both the *kastom* and the modern system would be a useful approach to facilitate development. Wilson (2006) pointed out that imported forms of education ignore existing ways that are relevant to the cultural and community processes. However, previous studies have not shown how local work, at the grassroots level can enable communities to grasp the full extent of the challenges and opportunities that are shaping transition at the national level. On the hand, international literature drawing examples from People's Movements in India, Latin America and Africa displayed that when communities engage together, educate themselves, and build locally owned structures, they can persuade the governments to adopt approaches relevant to people's needs.

In conclusion, this section suggests that other studies done in Vanuatu see the problem but are less clear on the solutions. The analysis of this study indicated the importance of working according to the local context, culture and processes to increased Ni Vanuatu's own development.

### **8.4: Strength and limitation of this study**

The methodology of using a case study approach is a strength, as the researcher had no control of the behaviour or events (Yin, 2014). Further, using critical theory and the coordinated management of meaning enabled the author to undertake an objective analysis of

the structures and system underpinning international agencies approaches to rural development in Vanuatu (Habermas 1971 & Freire 1972).

The lack of publicly available information about the two projects is a limitation accompanied by the absence of field work. Using only two projects as a case study means that the outcomes cannot be generalised (Yin, 2014). Lastly, this study is undertaken within the scope of an honours program, although its findings and recommendations have great relevance to the author, they would need to be supplemented with further research and validation if they were to be mandated publicly. Indications for further action are summarised in Chapter 9.

### **8.5: Chapter conclusion**

Both case studies clearly indicated that ni Vanuatu have strengths to bring to the development challenge. Whilst these strengths, such as knowing how to get things done in their own communities, building relationships, leadership, local structures and networks were more evident in the Peace Corps case study than the CPP, both approaches activated them to some extent.

It is evident that Ni- Vanuatu respond better to approaches which put the power and responsibility for local development into their hands. Approaches which activate the elements of community development discussed in the literature review are more likely to engage local Ni- Vanuatu. The more these approaches gradually expose people to the greater challenges that impact on them and the ways other communities are handling them, the more control Ni- Vanuatu will have.

Thirdly, working through local institutions to reform them, is part of the community development challenge. A locally initiated popular education approach would be useful. Finally, engaging each other in an inclusive process to discuss the best options, are critical to

shaping Ni Vanuatu's own future. Such discussions would be best facilitated at the local level, with local people from each island, gradually included in higher levels of discussion.

## **Chapter 9: Conclusion**

### **9.1: Introduction**

This dissertation explored the approaches of two international development agencies in supporting community development initiatives in rural Vanuatu. It has responded to the study's objective by critically analysing the extent to which each agency engaged with rural communities in their own development. Further, it established ways in which the two programs speak to the three research questions. This study's contribution and relationship to other studies was considered. Finally, the study's limitations and implications for further development practice in rural Vanuatu are outlined.

### **9.2: Chapter Summaries**

Chapter one discussed Vanuatu's transition from colonisation to Independence and the conflicts between traditional and modern life. It indicated that Ni Vanuatu prefer customary governance, kinship and subsistence systems. However, these systems inadequately withstand the modernised pressure of cash economy. Again, chapter one displayed that since independence Vanuatu highly relies on foreign aid, which influences decisions regarding Vanuatu's development.

The literature review in chapter two echoed that International development assistance is relevant for a post colonised nation like Vanuatu. Yet, the literature argued that unless International development partners acknowledge Vanuatu's local context, culture and knowledge they may be unable to design relevant strategies for the people. The literature also drew examples from SEWA in India, SDI in Africa and the Council of Popular Education in Latin America where local people have taken proactive steps towards development that values

local context, culture and local people's expertise, whilst addressing the legacy of colonisation in local organisations. The literature review pointed to a strengthening of traditional structures such as the Nakamal and customary governance alongside modernising structures as an alternative to adopting totally Western style of governance.

Chapter three discussed a qualitative approach of critical inquiry and case study methodology. Case studies of two International Development Agency programs provided the data to examine how Ni-Vanuatu could better lead their own development. Three levels of data analysis used were, the analysis of the program documents, coordinated management of meaning and community development concepts. An insider's perspective, italicised throughout, provides an integrating thread.

Chapter four and five showed the CPP was internationally designed responding to a global human rights agenda. Implemented across eight Pacific Island nations, it provided no opportunity for local voice in the process. The assumption that Vanuatu should adopt a style of nationhood similar to that of the more developed economies, was seen to be a weakness, since it generated resistance from ni Vanuatu across several policy areas. The imposition of human rights focus created no space for local input and generated significant resistance. The CMM analysis exposed the ways that communication obscured the power dynamics and questioned the integrity of the process. It showed the limitations of using structural processes of unequal power relations around barely examined, or taken for granted, strategic imperatives. The insider's perspective outlined what happened to the CPs on ground, and this was barely discussed in the program's published literature.

Chapter six and seven demonstrated that the Kaidaliki partnership with the Peace Corp Volunteer Program was a culturally appropriate approach to development. Peace Corp met the request and need of the Kaidaliki Women's group. It was culturally respectful and drew on the

Women's local strengths. It worked through existing local networks, community's own pace, and achieved small gains, in areas of importance to community. The CMM analysis indicated a mutuality between the volunteer and community, however the community could not be engaged with the bigger challenges of transition through this volunteer approach.

The discussions in chapter eight demonstrated the different approach of the programs. Both programs provided training and capacity building, but the CPP had trained individuals for a modern nation state, while the Peace Corps project added to local skills for local purposes. In relation to research question two and three, when seen through a community development lens, it was evident that the CPP did not engage at the level of community, did not fully engage with local stakeholders in its planning, did not conduct a needs assessment to identify the community's needs and did not support the CP with resources to undertake their own community activities. The Peace Corp volunteer working with the Kaidaliki Women undertook a needs assessment and worked alongside the women to source resources within the existing networks. That approach provided an enabling environment for further community development, yet its success was limited in scope. The rural community members remained disconnected from major discussions about their own development, in terms of economy, law, education, health and infrastructure.

Emerging from the analysis it became evident that Ni Vanuatu's existing skills, relationships, structures and processes could serve their development. What they lack is opportunity for informed discussion at the local level concerning the bigger issues that are shaping Vanuatu. Facilitated discussion about the relationship between emerging desires for services is necessity for a cash economy and tax base to fund such services, would provide a foundation for a way forward. Similarly, discussion about the need for a legal system that can protect the rights of Ni Vanuatu and how this can sit side by side with the kastom system would be helpful. Dialogue of this kind takes time and good facilitation. It enables people to think

about what they do want rather than react to what they do not want. It may produce unexpected solutions to difficult challenges. Community development is a form of popular education that could provide a bridge between local and national. It is not therefore a matter of top down versus bottom up, but rather building connections and dialogue to bridge the two.

In summary, unless different processes are used, it is highly likely that major development decisions will be progressed by external agencies and the national Vanuatu government based on considerations that have little to do with local need and aspiration. There will be continued community resistance and local development will suffer. The discussion chapter had discussed this study's limitation, which will be address in the implication section.

### **9.3: Implications**

This dissertation is significant in identifying pathways that will encourage demand and involvement from local rural stakeholders in the planning, implementation and decision making of International Development interventions. This has been addressed in the literature review and discussion chapters. It is evident that community development practices and theories offer inclusive options to strengthen local rural voices and expertise in the planning and implementation of development. International Development Agencies could assist this process. However, since this study only draws on two case studies, further research is needed. Therefore, indications for the future, rather than firm recommendations are preferred. The foremost of these are considered below. They are identified as points for intervention and preferably participatory action research. This process will ensure all involved can learn from the process, and there can be incremental improvements based on the learnings.

**Box 2: Indication for future practice**

1. Agencies engaging with rural communities of Vanuatu employ approaches consistent with community development practice and theories adapted to the rural Vanuatu context, engaging communities in design and delivery as equal partners, and researching effectiveness together.
2. The Nakamal Way – that is the existing practices, structures and processes familiar to rural people should provide the context for intervention and for subsequent reflection, so that its relevance, strength and limitation in promoting Community led development in Vanuatu can be better understood.
3. Working through existing formal and informal local institutions is important to developing local capacity and local learning.
4. Thoroughly explore the strengths and limitations of international development agency's strategies in promoting rural Community led development in Vanuatu.
5. Explore rural Ni Vanuatu perspectives on rural community led development.

## Postscript

*In considering how the learnings in this dissertation will assist my practice upon return to Vanuatu, perhaps is a new awareness that my culture and insider status are a strength. My earlier studies in Vanuatu placed a lot of emphasis on self-esteem and local status, but in my employment, this was not the case. Local Vanuatu workers were lower in status than international workers and expected to adopt the knowledge, attitudes and beliefs of the international agencies. Through the work on human rights and gender, the prevailing attitude was that culture was a hindrance to development, training and supervision expected ni Vanuatu to adopt that attitude. This means that the strengths of local workers and of local communities are not accessed as beneficial to social change. In this study, the approach of the international agency Peace Corps, showed that cultural appreciation and working with the local people can be more effective.*

*I am now pleased to have a better understanding and skills for community development and a clearer idea of how a program might use community development concepts in engaging within the Vanuatu context. The programs I was involved in thought they were doing community development when in fact, they were simply delivering externally designed programs into community. Unintentionally this treats local people as if they have no skills and knowledge to bring to the development process. Even at the start of this thesis, I could not fully imagine how it could be otherwise. With a shift in lens, I can see that communities have elements which could enable them to take a more proactive role. They know how to work together, how to make their leadership work with them, how to use their own structures for change. They need professionals who can work with rather than against these characteristics, and who can help address the unjust power dynamics that have emerged and been supported by external powers.*

*The CMM analysis shone a light on the power dynamics of external intervention. It is easy to identify deficits and believe that a program will address them, but it takes time, resources and skill to engage with a community in an open way that enables the community to bring knowledge and skill to the process. When past processes have divided the community, as is the case with colonisation, the push to a cash economy, the imposition of human rights discourse, it is even harder to fully engage. As a local I know that communities have their own understandings of the things which need to change to make their communities strong, but rarely have the opportunity to discuss these with agencies which could provide support. I return to the Pacific with increased confidence to engage community members on their own terms, to listen, and to raise some of the larger issues for people to consider and talk with each other about.*

*I now have a broader perspective on human rights, as a protective factor in the legal system of nations, an important element of the relation between people and their government and an international agreement, intended as defence against imperialism and exploitation. However, it is not intended to undermine local cultures, whilst equity between women and men and freedom from violence in everyday life are critical, each culture will have its own levers for change to achieve these. I have not yet fully understood how such deep changes can be brought about from within Vanuatu, but I do know that in community development, you start with the people and their dialogue with each other, and trust that as their understanding of their current situation is brought into focus, they will find ways forward, that they themselves can sustain.*

*As community development is a practice based professional and academic discipline, this dissertation enhanced my practice framework. It enabled me to value local people's existing knowledge and skills, understand community situations, build relationships, develop and support collaborative working relationships and create conditions that will enable community to influence, access and participate in decision making, devising strategies that they believe*

*will work, and managing resources. The CMM analysis increased my ability to critically question structural processes and power dynamics imposed by international initiatives on local communities. As I step into practice, I understand that there will be challenges and that I may have to advocate for the agencies I work for to integrate a bottom up, culturally appropriate approach into their practices. I also see from my study, that there are other ni Vanuatu who are endeavouring to work in these ways. By connecting and drawing on overseas examples of local people taking the lead, may able to assist Ni Vanuatu, in their rural communities, to examine the pressures impacting on them, and find creative, culturally resonant ways forward.*

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