

Pacific Star: Community Theatre as Environmental Learning in Vanuatu

Stories from Practice

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The power generator kicks in and, as the stage lights (on the back of a truck) come on, we see it is morning in a village in the South Pacific. Jimmy wakes and walks out of his hut. As he wanders through his village—across the stage - he laments that nothing has changed for as long as he can remember. There are still women washing in the river and children running and playing. There is still the problem with the tap that won't run and the shop that is always closed.

Jimmy decides that he wants his life to improve. He needs change. Feeling somewhat frustrated, he walks to a beautiful cave near the village. The cave has a cool, clean stream running through the bottom of it. As he looks out over the river, Jimmy is suddenly struck by an idea.

Jimmy: Yes!

Yes!' replies the echo in the cave.

Jimmy: Come with Island Tours! See the amazing cave!

The echo made his words boom around him—and across the audience of village residents who know just what Jimmy is talking about.

Jimmy: Why not? The tourists would love it!

Laughing and shouting, he runs as fast as he can back to the village and explains his plan to the Chief and his Elders.

Chief: Tourists? Coming here? Bringing in litter and disease? said the Chief—actually the real chief who had agreed to participate in the play - when Jimmy told him of his plan.

Jimmy: Oh, the tourists will love it. I know they will! They pay to see other villages, and their volcanoes and their beaches. So why not us? Why not our cave?

Chief: How will we get them here?

Jimmy: I'll deal with the business side of things.

Elders (together): We'd prefer the Chief to deal with this. He understands our ways.

Jimmy: OK. (Looking now at the Chief) If you want to deal with the business side of things. That's fine by me. I hope you know how to write business letters, dates, paragraphs, who to see. You'll be alright, won't you? I'm going to the garden. You bring in the tourists.

Jimmy begins to walk away.

Chief: Wait! Come back Jimmy. It seems a pity to waste so much dedication.

Storytelling, music, puppetry, song and dance have long been used to entertain and educate in communities in the South Pacific, just as they have in many parts of the world. Community theatre has added to these traditions as people meet to explore issues, debate alternatives, and make decisions about health, economic, environmental and social concerns.

For example, in the southwest Pacific nation of Vanuatu, Wan Smolbag Theatre was formed in 1989 as a small, part-time amateur drama group. Taking its name from the one small bag used by the actors to carry their props, Wan Smolbag now has sixty full- and part-time staff, a studio-theatre and a wide reputation as a leader in the use of community theatre for social change. There is a growing number of similar theatre groups, both within Vanuatu and elsewhere in the region. Some

of these groups focus on a particular geographical area, some a particular range of issues, and others a particular target audience. In Vanuatu, the Wuhuran and Haulua groups work mostly on their home islands of Ambrym and Pentecost, whereas Healthforce concentrates on plays with a health theme. Together, these community theatre groups seek to encourage ecologically and socially responsible ways of living through educational programs that combine educational drama with community discussion, information sharing and entertainment.

This paper uses a case study of 'Pacific Star', a play developed and performed by Wan Smolbag, to reflect on the processes of community theatre as a process of environmental learning. 'Pacific Star' uses song, dance and comedy to explore the dilemmas an island community faces in answering the question 'what is real development?' Thus, it is similar to Ellen Hamilton's account of the use of popular theatre in the Arctic to explore the challenges faced by Inuit peoples in the transition to increasingly western ways of living (Hamilton 1987), the stories by Noel Keogh, Emman Carmona and Linda Grandinetti (1995) that explore cross-cultural experiences of ecological footprints through theatre, and the experience of community theatre as a way of fostering community control of change in Sierra Leone (Malamah-Thomas 1987). As a result, like community arts and cultural action approaches being used elsewhere in the world, community theatre such as 'Pacific Star' is firmly rooted in particular social-cultural, geographical and educational settings and explores a serious topic in culturally appropriate and liberatory ways (Boal 1979, 1992).

Each section of the paper begins with an edited extract that traces the development of the play, and may be read as a story in itself. Indeed, it may be useful to read these parts of the paper first as a way of enabling the communities to speak for themselves without the trappings, interpretations and inevitable distortions of the comments on community theatre as environmental learning that follows each section of the play.

The paper develops in four sections. The first outlines the political, social and economic contexts of the South Pacific and the problems befalling 'paradise'. The next section discusses the emancipatory potential of community theatre in environmental and social learning. This is followed by an analysis of some of the approaches that Wan Smolbag have found to be most effective in integrating their work with broader education movements. The final section explores some of the challenges facing community theatre groups in the South Pacific.

An untouched paradise?

In the next scene, we see Jimmy going to see a tourism agent. On the walls are many posters showing beautiful beaches and resorts.

Agent: I need to know who owns this cave, where it is

and you need to tell me something about it.

Jimmy: I found it not long ago. It's huge! It's cool, and there's a river running into. It's really beautiful!

Agent: Alright, but who owns it?

Jimmy: Owns it?

Agent: Yes. Whose land is it on? This is really important.

Jimmy: There's our Chief. He...

Agent (interrupting): Ah, so the Chief is the custom landowner?

Jimmy (worried): No, no, no. It's a little way away from the village. My family has a garden nearby.

Agent: So you own it!

Jimmy: I found it. Yeah, I own it! Yes, it's mine, mine!

Agent: So, what do you want to get out of all this?

Jimmy: Money! Money! That's what I want!

Agent: I guessed that's what you'd say. But you know, if you want to make real money, then you need lots of tourists and a lot of tourists aren't interested in going out to the islands. It's really expensive. Then you have to publicise your island, and then tourists want to get there easily and when they're there, they want a rest house, restaurants, toilets, everything.

Jimmy (suddenly concerned): Too much!

Agent: You know, it's much easier just to bring in the Pacific Star! (pointing to a poster of an enormous cruise ship on the wall)

Jimmy: The Pacific Star! Wow!

Agent: Just think about it. Then the tourists will come as part of a pre-arranged package tour. They'll stay on the ship and they'll eat on the ship. You won't have to do anything except collect the money.

Jimmy: Collect the money! I like it! How much money?

Agent: Well, it could be a lot. They can carry fifteen hundred tourists on the Pacific Star, and it comes every two weeks! I'll arrange things and you go back and organise everything with the village. Do you think they'll like the idea?

Jimmy: Sure! They'll agree to whatever I say. The Chief made me his agent.

Agent: One other thing. We'll need to build some toilets. We can't have the tourists just running off into the bush. But the most important thing is to make sure there are no land disputes. The whole village has got to be in agreement on this. Understand?

Jimmy: I understand.

Jimmy leaves the agent's office and goes to the lands office. He hesitates outside for a minute. 'But it's on

'our land,' he says to himself. 'I'm just making it official.' So he goes inside and registers himself as the owner of the cave.

Although tourist brochures promote the South Pacific as an 'untouched paradise', the natural environment is increasingly coming under pressure. Rapid economic changes, population shifts, urbanisation and the over-exploitation of resources have resulted in numerous threats to the environment, including coral reef degradation, deforestation, species depletion and water pollution.

Traditionally, an intimate relationship exists between people and their natural environment in the South Pacific. The land and sea are not only vital for subsistence and exchange but also form the basis for kinship systems and spiritual values. While immediate survival requirements took precedence over any longer term notions of conservation, traditional practices such as gender-specific food taboos, temporary bans on resource exploitation and the use of low-impact techniques ensured ecological sustainability by limiting the degree to which any one resource was exploited.

Traditional values remain strong in some areas, but traditional knowledge and ways of life are coming under threat. Communities are increasingly exposed to the wider world and western education, television and advertising have led many aspire to lifestyles radically different from those of their parents and grandparents. Rapid urbanisation is resulting in many people living in cramped non-formal housing without access to clean water, sanitation and land for gardens. Malnutrition and environmental health hazards are increasingly evident. The development of schooling, especially the prevalence of boarding at secondary level, is resulting in young people being less rooted in traditional ways and moving away from their home villages to towns for work becoming their educated status. However, gardening and gathering food and other resources from the forests and reefs remain vital for most peoples' livelihoods and a strong link between environmental degradation and poverty is increasingly apparent.

Some communities are developing village-level initiatives to generate the resources needed to participate in the money economy. However, the temptations from commercial interests, often from overseas, are difficult to resist even when there is an intuitive understanding that they are offering quick but often minimal rewards in return for allowing the exploitation of their resources. Some international companies have promoted the unsustainable logging of forests while others have illegally exported live coral—and others have developed tourist resorts to bring rich foreigners to the beaches and reefs of the South Pacific. Tourism brings the five-fold burden of accelerated environmental decline (damage to beaches, reefs and forests and increasing discharge of effluent into lagoons); employment in lowly-paid service jobs (waiting on tables and room cleaning); violence against women in the form of prostitution and many other tasks that are most often

allocated to and undertaken by women; increasing social inequalities; and the demeaning of traditional culture by treating it as a commodity to be bought.

Community theatre: Community education

Next scene, back at the village, Jimmy goes straight to the Chief.

Jimmy: There are a lot of things we have to do to get everything ready for the tourists. You see, Chief, these tourists expect everything to be right. Some of them have never used a pit toilet.

Chief (magnanimously): Well, they can use the bush. I don't mind.... If it's away from the village of course.

Jimmy: No! They can't use the bush. They like flush toilets... with plastic seats.

Chief: Flush toilets? Plastic seats? Why I don't even have one. And I am the Chief! Here we are, offering them the chance to see our cave, something wonderful. And all they want is a special kind of toilet?

Jimmy: But Chief, we want them to come, don't we? So we've got to give them what they want. And then they'll give us money to build our new toilets.

Chief (placated): Oh, so we don't have to pay for them. That's alright then.

Jimmy: And, they don't like the ants on the beach either. Ants or mosquitoes.

Chief (angry again): Forget it! I'm not going around this island swatting every ant and mosquito to please them! If my island is not good enough for them...

Jimmy (soothingly): Chief, Chief. I'm surprised that you are getting so upset. Calm down. Think of the money! We've just got to make a little effort to please them. Try to make the place look nice. Cut some of the bush down to reduce the number of mosquitoes, that kind of thing.

The chief is convinced and calls a meeting of all the villagers. Full of confidence, Jimmy continues: It's arranged. The tourists are coming. All we have to build six toilets.

Malia (a woman): Oh, Jimmy, that is so good! We need some toilets for the village.

Jimmy (indignant): No. They're for the tourists, not the village. They have to be clean and empty when the tourists want to use them.

All the women: But the children!

Chief: Oh, the children can't be trusted. They shit everywhere! You can't ask the tourists to use a dirty toilet. No, no, no, they will be locked.

Malia: But we need toilets for the village. All our children have stomach sickness!

Chief and Jimmy together (triumphantly): That's exactly why they must not use the toilets.

Malia: Why can't we have our own toilets then?

The other women all nod in agreement.

Chief (throwing his hands in the air): Ah, this is more trouble than it's worth. First, kill every insect on this island, then build everyone a toilet?

Women: That's development!

Chief (laughing, scoffing): Don't tell me that shitting in a toilet is development. Development is roads...

Man: Brick houses!

Another man: Schools!

Women (together): But...

Chief (angry): Oh, sit down. We are discussing important issues here. Women shouldn't say anything. They should just sit and listen.

The woman sat down, glaring angrily at the Chief and the other men.

Jimmy: We should discuss the money. There is a problem here, Chief.

Chief (suspiciously): A problem?

Jimmy: You see, tour operators are always running into land disputes with custom owners.

Chief: There's no dispute here. The cave is on village land. I control it.

Jimmy (carefully): The cave is outside the village.

Malia: So who owns it then?

Community theatre in the South Pacific is firmly rooted in particular social-cultural, geographical and educational settings. Most people live in villages on widely dispersed and remote islands. Transport and communication systems between villages and islands are poorly developed. Although increasing numbers of children complete primary education, many remain functionally illiterate. Only a minority of young people go to junior secondary school and there are few alternative sources of formal education for adolescents and adults. Those who 'drop-out' or who complete their formal education at the end of primary or junior secondary school, have few employment opportunities and, increasingly, fewer ways of securing a livelihood in the formal economy.

The countries of the South Pacific remain very much oral societies and storytelling continues to be an important way in which information is shared. The mass media are either limited or non-existent. Some communities have access to radio and this is often the only source of news and information about social, health and environmental issues. Weekly newspapers have low circulation, especially in rural areas, while an understanding of English and French, the main languages of newspapers and television and videos, is limited. Television

is very restricted across the region although a growing number of people have occasional access to videos, often through the growth in 'bush cinemas' in villages that have generators. However, almost all television programs and videos are imported and, despite their popularity, rarely have any socially responsible content. Indeed, the dominant message of most movies and programs is the promotion of an unattainable and unsustainable consumerism.

In such circumstances, where information is scarce, educational levels low and communication difficult, community theatre can be an accessible and appropriate means of both education and entertainment. Being both oral and highly visual, community theatre can make ideas and information available to a wide range of people, including the poorest, the most disadvantaged and the most remote. Community theatre draws its pedagogical power from providing people with a chance to identify with the characters and to empathise with the dilemmas they face and, by active participation in pre- and post-performance discussions (and sometimes in the plays themselves), it offers a realistic and meaningful exploration of the contexts in which people consider options and make choices. As a result, community theatre has the potential to be an effective medium for community learning.

The 'Pacific Star' play, for example, is a musical comedy that focuses on the dilemmas an outer island community faces in trying to answer the question 'what is real development?' The play's use of song, dance and humour to explore a serious topic is a culturally appropriate way of encouraging community-based reflection, debate and decision making.

Community theatre also has the advantage of being flexible: it is often very easy to change information or to develop or adapt plays for different audiences and situations. For example, Wan Smolbag's plays for children, such as 'The Tale of Mighty Hawk and Magic Fish' (a pantomime about logging), 'Invasion of the Litter Creatures' and 'On the Reef' are enjoyed by adults. Community theatre usually requires little equipment and plays can be performed in a variety of settings—under a tree, in a village meeting area, in a classroom or on a street corner. Plays, sketches and skits can be developed and performed by the network of community theatre groups in a relatively short period of time, providing a quick and widespread response in times of need. In Vanuatu, for example, Wan Smolbag's 1998 campaign to encourage people in the capital city, Port Vila, to destroy mosquito breeding sites is credited with preventing a serious outbreak of dengue fever.

A key advantage of community theatre as an approach to cultural action is the way it can open traditionally sensitive subjects to public discussion and analysis. As a result, it has often been used very effectively to generate action on issues touching on family life such as domestic violence and sexuality, e.g. in relation to family size, sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS. It is also very effective in opening issues of power to public scrutiny. For example, community

theatre can directly and indirectly raise the issue of gender oppression. Women are most often 'at the bottom of all hierarchies and pyramids' (Bjasin 1992, p. 12) and are often excluded from political power. Women are seldom found in levels of decision-making in the vast majority of government offices, institutions, non-government organisations and, sometimes, even at the village level. Until recently, there was scant regard for women's interests and needs in development initiatives; these were marginalised in the narrow focus of economic development that served the needs of a privileged few rather than the life-enhancing benefits of all (Afshar 1991, Sontheimer 1991, Silliman & King 1999, WEDO 1999). By facilitating a dialogue between men and women, as happens in 'Pacific Star', actors can demonstrate the necessity of listening to the ideas of women if development is to be life-centred, just and fulfilling for all.

Community theatre in practice

Jimmy: Listen, you need someone who understands business, right? Because I own the cave, I'll look after it well. It's good for all of us.

Women (accusingly): It's good for you!

Jimmy: You think I'd cheat you? I'll just take a little of the money for myself, that's all... Chief, you know you could charge them to go through the village.

Chief: Ok then, but where will they stay?

Jimmy: That's the magic of this: The tourists will be coming on the Pacific Star!

Chief: The Pacific Star!

Jimmy (beaming): The tourists eat and sleep on the ship. We just collect their money!

Malia: But, how many people?

Jimmy (triumphantly): A thousand.

Malia (gasping): A thousand?

Other women: What about the gardens on the way to the cave?

Jimmy (managerially): We can widen the road or just move the gardens.

Malia: Where? Into the hills? You want us women to spend all day walking to the gardens?

Jimmy (in frustration): I'm trying to help you. Can't you see?

The other men mumbled to themselves in agreement.

Women: You men forget how important our gardens are! Without our gardens we can't eat!

Jimmy: With all the money coming in from the tourists, we can buy all the food we want. No more gardening!

Malia: But buying food is expensive! We've always grown our own food - we know it's good!

Jimmy: Are you really going to get upset about a garden when we will all be rich? We can all do whatever we like after this—send the village children to school in Australia, or start our own businesses. But you...!

Chief: Enough! Enough! Now, we are here to decide about the ship.

Initially, community theatre groups in the South Pacific focused on providing information about health and other issues, mostly during infrequent visits to islands and villages. Recently, however, most groups have extended their activities by developing participatory and interactive ways of working. Often now the development and performance of plays, sketches and skits is seen as a vehicle for shared learning. The most common practice is to introduce and conclude performances with short presentations and 'question and answer' sessions. These put the content of plays in context and enable the audience to participate to the extent of clarifying and questioning issues raised. Ideally, this approach also involves others, such as health or environmental officers, both before and after performances and, sometimes, even as an integral part of a play.

Indeed, community theatre is most effective when it is integrated with the work of other organisations. In terms of environmental issues, this requires groups to work with the government departments and agencies as well as with community-based organisations such as churches, chiefs' associations, women's groups and youth clubs. Such collaboration serves many purposes, including selecting priority issues for dramatic treatment, training theatre members on particular issues, organising pre-performance research and other activities, checking the content of plays, agreeing, planning and organising post-performance activities, gaining permission and making arrangements for visits and performances and monitoring the impact of particular initiatives.

Play development is usually preceded by community-based research to explore knowledge, attitudes and practices. This is a very effective way of making plays meaningful and appropriate and allows sensitive issues to be addressed without causing offence. Many groups also now emphasise post-initial performance activities such as disseminating information about activities, liaising between communities and other stakeholders, providing a variety of support and training to selected community members, and assessing the influence and impact that their work has on particular issues and communities.

Some theatre groups have also worked with communities to develop a play the community then performs. This methodology was used by Wan Smolbag on 'Em i Graon blong Yumi' ('This is our Land'), where the group worked with the people of Tongoa island to examine the situation of the *koroliko*, an endangered seabird that is hunted for food. More recently, over sixty members of the Blacksands community worked with Wan Smolbag to develop and perform a play

about aspects of their lives in their densely populated squatter settlement on the edge of Port Vila. As well as developing a sense of self-worth and confidence, this play has also focused efforts to improve the quality of life in the settlement. For example, basic sports facilities and sexual health education has been for young people, and campaigns developed to promote the building and use of latrines (rather than the bush or the beach) and communal rubbish collection and disposal. In addition, a reproductive health clinic staffed by three nurses has been built at the back of the theatre in Port Vila in response to the frustration of preaching condom usage and knowing that access was limited. An outreach team attached to the clinic works in a program called 'walkabout peer education' while a weekly 'radio soap' called 'Famili blong Sarah' takes 'community theatre' to all islands through the air waves.

Continuing challenges

Everyone set to work cleaning up their village and readying their traditional music and dancing for the entertainment of the tourists. On the day the tourists came, all the villagers dressed themselves in traditional clothes, and prepared stalls to sell food, drink and souvenirs.

The tourists arrived shortly after. There were a great many of them, buying food, drink and souvenirs. The newly built toilets were unlocked for their use. However, a great deal of refuse and rubbish was dropped in and around the cave and the gardens were badly trampled. When the ship had gone, the chief and Jimmy settled down to count up the profits.

Chief (disgruntled): There is not as much money as I thought. This is not going to change anything! I want roads, hospitals ... what can we do with this?

Jimmy (paying no attention, too busy counting the money): Now, here is the village's share. And here's the money for entering the cave. That's mine...

Chief: Wait a minute. You want to keep everything for yourself! And you claim to care so much for the village!

A long silent impasse.

Jimmy (slyly): Why can't we wait a bit longer to divide up the money? Look, why can't we put it all in a bank account until we have enough to buy a taxi?

Chief (sighing): A taxi!

Jimmy: Yes, a taxi service to the wharf ... with all those tourists!

Chief: And local people could use it too, to carry goods to the wharf!

Jimmy: And we can divide the profits!

The men agreed and soon after, they had purchased a taxi. They spent a lot of time driving the taxi around conducting business. Meanwhile, the Pacific Star continued to visit, and the villagers found that much

time was spent preparing for the arrival of the tourists and cleaning up after they had gone. All the villagers had extra work to do but nothing else changed, except the Chief and Jimmy, who now wore fancier clothes and spent most of their time organising things for the tourists.

Community theatre groups have learned many lessons from their work but continue to face a number of challenges, most of which are inherent to the nature of community theatre rather than particular to any focus on environmental education. Key continuing challenges include the on-going professional development of theatre members and the need for sound management practices and a concern and capacity for monitoring and evaluation.

Building professional development and training

Much of the success of community theatre to date is the result of the commitment and the skills of group members. The future success and technical sustainability of community theatre depends on their continuing professional development as actors, directors and play and sketch writers, on their understanding of particular issues and on their capacity to train, support and work with others.

Long-term members of Wan Smolbag have played a key role in inducting and training new members and in training and supporting many other theatre groups. Some members who started as fledgling actors are now confident and competent directors. Others specialise in particular skills such as music, song development and puppetry. While Wan Smolbag actors have received some external assistance, such as during the development of 'On the Reef', much progress has been made by repeated practice.

Managing project management

Community theatre groups have always relied on financial assistance from other organisations. For example, besides receiving support from a large number of external funding agencies, such as the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and the Worldwide Fund for Nature, Wan Smolbag has received financial support from the British Government's Department for International Development (DFID) and the European Union. Such support has given the group a degree of security, within an agreed project framework, to focus on developing their skills and repertoire and to offer technical and small-scale financial support to other theatre groups. Support from external sources has also enabled the group to avoid being perceived as a politically partisan organisation. Despite these advantages, much funding is project-based which often forces Wan Smolbag to respond to ad-hoc offers of support for particular initiatives. The lack of secure long-term core funding which would provide the flexibility to be both proactive and responsive by selecting priority issues is a major problem.

However, reliance on external support involves project management skills that are often very different from those usually held by actors and theatre directors. Wan Smolbag's growth initially placed great burdens on the actors and the director, all of whom undertook specific administrative and management tasks, the latter assuming responsibility for such tasks as record-keeping, report-writing, accounting and liaison with other organisations, including funding agencies. More recently, the group's growth necessitated the recruitment of dedicated administration staff and may, in the future, require the recruitment of staff fully devoted to project management responsibilities.

Assessing influence and impact

External funders increasingly require in-depth evaluations of the impact of community theatre work. However, this is problematic, particularly in terms of any assessment of theatre's influence on values and practices and in terms of what measure of any longer term success can be attributed to theatre. Despite this, there is a wealth of largely anecdotal evidence of the effectiveness of community theatre in the South Pacific. Theatre groups have played a key role in raising awareness of issues and encouraging public discussion of important and often controversial concerns. They have, for example, catalysed public discussion on attempts by logging companies to exploit forest resources for the minimal benefit of the communities concerned. This has led to much public debate about fair logging agreements and post-logging reforestation and, for example, in Vanuatu, Wan Smolbag, is working with village communities to develop and promote code of logging practice in partnership with the Department of Forests.

Wan Smolbag has increasingly focused on monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of their work. Two members with specific responsibility for research and evaluation were appointed in 1996 and have undertaken a number of studies. For example, a recent assessment of the influence and impact of video versions of 'On the Reef' and 'Kasis Road' was conducted in Vanuatu, Fiji and Solomon Islands. The study, which reached quite positive conclusions, was based on pre- and post-viewing assessments with new audiences, interviews and focus group discussions.

Looking forward

Next scene. Several months later. The Chief is ordering villagers to collect clean water for the next group of tourists.

Malia: Chief, the Pacific Star has been coming for a long time now and we don't see a lot of changes. You promised a lot of new developments like roads, brick houses, clinics, water supply...

Chief (interrupting): Not so fast. You can see we've started a taxi service...

At that moment, the taxi comes roaring on stage. Jimmy is at the wheel, wearing expensive sunglasses. Loud music is blaring from the car's stereo.

Jimmy (leaning out of the window): Come on chief, let's go!

Chief (to Malia, as he clambers into the taxi): I've just started work on a brick house. Pipe water will follow. I promise you that!

Other women: But when, chief?

A woman, Malia's sister, distraught, runs on stage before he can answer.

Sister: Malia, come quickly! Your little girl is sick!

Together, they run home while the taxi roars off—in the opposite direction.

Community theatre groups are not the only providers of environmental adult education in the South Pacific. However, they are indisputably high profile advocates of concern for the environment and social change. They are among the few organisations that consistently reach a large number and wide range of people, including some of the poorest and most disadvantaged people in both rural and urban areas. That they do so in an entertaining, accessible and appropriate way means that effective partnerships between theatre groups, government departments, community organisations and external funding agencies have the potential to make a lasting difference both in terms of environmental improvements and social justice.

Closing scene. Outside Malia's house. The baby is indeed very sick. Her husband is by her side. Just as they are becoming frantic about how to get the baby to a doctor, the taxi, with Jimmy and the Chief inside drives past.

Father: Stop! Stop Chief!

The car stops.

Father: Can you take us to the clinic? Our baby is sick!

Jimmy: We're in a hurry we have to get back to the village.

Chief: Yes, we're having a meeting.

Jimmy (angrily): And you want me to go right across the island to the clinic?


But, very begrudgingly, he agrees to take them.

Jimmy (opening the back for the couple and their baby): Here I am, working for the development of this island, and you and your dirty children mess it all up!

He is very angry and he drives as fast as he can to the clinic. The people in the back are thrown around on the rough, bumpy roads. As they drove, the chief and his partner could think only of how late they were for their business meeting.

Malia and her husband climb out of the car when they

finally reach the clinic. Without a word, Jimmy and the chief drive off.

Malia (to her husband, but speaking to the audience):
And did you believe them when they promised us that the Pacific Star would be good for us? 

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The Pacific Star extracts are an edited version of the script of Wan Smolbag Theatre (1995) *Pacific Star* (video) [*Toilets or Tourists?* (play)], Wan Smolbag Theatre, Port Vila, Vanuatu and Pasifika Communications, Suva, Fiji. We would like to express gratitude to Wan Smolbag for permission to include excerpts in this article.

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Website: <http://www.tellusconsultants.com/wansmolbag/contact.html>

One of the authors worked as the United Kingdom's Department for International Development's Regional Education Adviser in the Pacific between 1995 and 1997. The views expressed in this text are entirely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of theatre groups or of the UK Department for International Development (DFID). Any errors, of omission or commission, are the responsibility of the authors alone. Any discussion of the content of this text should therefore be addressed to the author and not to community theatre groups in Vanuatu or to DFID.

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