Research Article

Grounding Innovation in Pacific Media Communication for Development Projects

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Abstract

The Pacific Islands are home to diverse and fast-changing media and communication infrastructures and practices. In this article we examine the Pacific Media Assistance Scheme (PACMAS) Innovation Fund, which has opened up the media and communication for development field to new players by funding many small-scale, low-cost initiatives. As elsewhere, the funding environment has exerted a major influence over the kinds of projects that are implemented, both in terms of the focus and goals as well as the actors who are able to participate. This article explores some of the ways in which this Innovation Fund, which has funded highly localized, small-scale initiatives, has encouraged experimentation and how these initiatives respond to locally determined needs. Central to this article is the question of what happens when donors have less control over the focus of funded projects. Through an analysis of some projects undertaken as part of the PACMAS Innovation Fund, we investigate what innovation means in this context, paying particular attention to how the spread of digital technologies is integrated into media and communication for development practices.

> The Innovation Fund runs the risk that as it continues to address a broad range of demand-driven requests, the absence of a more tightly focused strategic approach may lead to a degree of ad hocery in the facility with limited reinforcement of funded activity outcomes and an undermining of sustainability. (O'Keefe, Gyles, & Harry, 2013, p. 5)

The Pacific Media Assistance Scheme (PACMAS) Innovation Fund (IF) is a unique initiative in the Pacific, offering small grants for media and communication for development projects. The statement above is from an independent review of the PACMAS program and reveals a tension between the open approach to innovation taken in the early administration of the IF and what Ramalingam (2013) might call the problematic biases toward top-down, mechanistic development. A counterpoint to the view expressed in the independent review is that the IF model allows for adaptive, locally driven, and complexity-based approaches. As such, it implicitly rejects cookie-cutter solutions based on "travelling orthodoxies" (Mosse, 2013), which are universally asserted over the particularities of local places and realities. These local realities, prompted "a broad range of demand-driven requests" (O'Keefe, Gyles, & Harry, 2013, pp. 26, 45) by IF applicants, yet the IF was severely criticized in the review as unfocused and ad hoc. The IF had welcomed local, small-scale organizations and projects based on their own ideas of what would be useful in that place. The reviewer feared the demand-driven nature of the IF would detract from the main media development work undertaken and promoted by PACMAS and, as such, was not considered strategic.

The IF provides a different approach to *strategy* as well as to ideas of sustainability and innovation.

Monitoring and evaluation often focus on how closely central strategic planning is delivered through implementation. Some argue that a more suitable focus for evaluation would be an initiative's ability to be adapted to local contexts and systems (Lennie & Tacchi, 2013). This is a tension between results-based management and more adaptive and learning-based approaches to development (Armytage, 2011; Conlin & Stirrat, 2008; Lennie & Tacchi, 2013). The IF is vulnerable to criticisms of being broad and demand-driven if the criteria for evaluation is centralized and closed.

In this article we argue that initiatives like the IF require different criteria to evaluate value and outcomes. We consider how funding models such as this can allow for innovation, creating a space where the relationship between donor-driven agendas meets local experimentation. We use examples provided through the IF to explore how we might interpret *innovation* in a context like the Pacific, with its fast-changing media and communication environment.

We discuss a series of examples of innovative media and communication practices in the IF, together with a critical analysis of the application of development *strategy* in the Pacific. These examples were collected through a baseline study, "PACMAS: State of the Media and Communication Report" (Tacchi, Horst, Papoutsaki, Thomas, & Eggins, 2013), and an Australian Research Council (ARC)-funded research project, Mobilising Media for Sustainable Outcomes in the Pacific Region, that partnered with the international development arm of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, ABC International Development (ABCID) and focused on the PACMAS program.

The 14-country baseline study consisted of a desk review of existing literature and documentation, field visits by a team of research assistants to each of the countries, 212 interviews, and a verification process involving 28 participants from across the Pacific. Researchers for the Mobilising Media study engaged with media and communication initiatives across the Pacific to develop an approach to the design and evaluation of media and communication for development (C4D). We conducted a workshop with media and C4D practitioners from across the Pacific in Goroka, Papua New Guinea (PNG), a field visit and a second workshop in Vanuatu, interviews with media and C4D practitioners, and ongoing action research as we developed and tested the design and evaluation approach. Thirty practitioners from ABCID, PACMAS, and nine IF projects took part in the research project. While the questions relating to innovation and innovation funding were not included in the original research proposal (which centered on impact evaluation), these areas emerged as important areas for analysis. Throughout the research we and the research participants were conscious that we were researching an endangered program, so the politics of development and funding decisions became highly relevant to our thinking about evaluation. The examples included in this article are not presented as representative of the IF or of media and communication initiatives in the Pacific. This article should not be read as an evaluation of the IF. Rather, this article is an opportunity to explore what innovative approaches to funding and delivery of media and communication for development activities in the Pacific can tell us.

A Demand-Driven Focus

Donor agendas and funding approaches have a significant influence over the practice of media and communication for development in the Pacific. Local organizations are attuned to donor interests in areas such as climate change, health communication, and over the past 15 years, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)[1]. Local organizations consider that the alignment of funding with these types of development goals and themes has a limiting effect on their practice, but "that's the world we are working [in]" (Interview IF9[2]). The MDGs, for example, are seen as an externally imposed prescription of "the values they should conform to" (Interview ABC/PACMAS2). Responding to these goals is central to receiving funding. A good example of donor-driven agendas leading to inappropriate activities occurred in Niue, where research participants reported on the earlier impact of funding availability for HIV/AIDS awareness, which led to an HIV/AIDS programming emphasis, even though there were no reported cases on the island. As a consequence of this funding,

1. http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/
2. IF# refers to interviewees who are part of an IF funded project; C4D# refers to interviewees who are media and communication for development practitioners in the Pacific not funded by IF; ABC/PACMAS# refers to interviewees who are employed by ABCID or PACMAS.

journalists interviewed said that there had been more coverage of HIV than of noncommunicable diseases, which actually are a significant health problem in Niue (Tacchi et al., 2013).

Despite static high-level goals such as the MDGs (now superseded by the Sustainable Development Goals), terminology and policy strategy in this space have been in a state of flux during the past few years. Media and communication have generally fallen within the governance sphere in Australian aid, though in 2013 there was some momentum behind adopting a C4D approach. Processes were started to establish a C4D branch within AusAID in Canberra (see Noske-Turner, 2014). However, this plan was abandoned almost as soon as it was developed, along with other sweeping changes to Australia's aid policy when the new federal government was installed and the merger of Australia's aid and development agency (AusAID, now renamed Australian Aid) into the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). These shifting fashions are politically driven, with implications for and effects on the practices and priorities of implementing agencies such as ABCID as well as practitioners in the Pacific. Local actors are compelled to continually adapt to policy and to thematic and language trends for their own viability.

Scarcity and short-term funding impact media and C4D practice in the Pacific. *Wan Smolbag*[3] of Vanuatu is a well-established organization engaged in a range of media and communication for development activities. Securing core funding from New Zealand and Australian government aid programs and OXFAM has enabled Wan Smolbag to consolidate its programs and services. Prior to this, however, its experience of constantly piecing together funding from individual funders for projects and responding to their specific areas of interest mirrored the experience of many smaller organizations doing media and communication for development work in the Pacific (Interview C4D1). Historically, the funding environment for media and communication for development in the Pacific has favored larger and established players.

Australian Aid (formerly AusAID) within DFAT is the largest donor to media and communication sectors in the region, with other Development Assistance Committee (DAC) countries such as Germany, New Zealand, and Canada and multilaterals, particularly the EU, contributing smaller amounts.[4] Through AusAID/DFAT funding, PACMAS is one of the major media and communication for development actors in the Pacific. Until recently PACMAS has largely focused on support to mass media, with activities such as journalism training, support to broadcasters (particularly public service and government), and media policy and legislation. At around the start of PACMAS, there were growing critiques that Australian journalism approaches were being imposed on the Pacific (Papoutsaki, 2007; Robie, 2008; Sharp & Papoutsaki, 2008) with regard to the number of consultants, trainers, and other implementers being brought in from outside the Pacific. Broadening PACMAS' focus to encompass all forms of locally relevant media and communication through the IF was in part a response to such critiques.

The IF can be compared to some other media and communication for development initiatives being implemented via small-grant programs. Though small grants do, to some extent, compound the issue of secure, long-term funding, they have the potential to enable new and grassroots organizations and actors to develop and implement projects and to encourage innovation. In addition to the PACMAS IF, UNESCO's International Programme for the Development of Communication administers small grants globally in the Pacific; however, the funds tend to go to established media organizations rather than NGOs. The Christensen Fund was seen by several of our research participants as the most accessible funding source for small grants. The Christensen Fund includes a focus on arts and culture and, for this reason, was of particular interest for media and communication initiatives that are beyond mainstream development themes.

The impetus for the introduction of an IF into PACMAS was in part a response to broader shifts at the policy and donor levels to incorporate more C4D approaches. While PACMAS continued to be located within governance frameworks, there was a recognition that using media to advance better governance required a broader focus on how people communicate, including such high-profile examples as FemLINKPACIFIC[5] in Fiji and Wan

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3. *Translates to One Small Bag, a reference to the theatre crew traveling to islands with just one small piece of luggage.*
4. *Sourced from http://stats.oecd.org/qwids, including Media Free Flow of Information (15153) and Communication Total (Communications policy & administrative management (22010), Telecommunications (22020, Radio/television/print media (22030), Information and communication technology (ICT) (22040).*
5. *http://www.femlinkpacific.org.fj/index.php/en/*

Smolbag in Vanuatu. Ironically, given the extract above from the independent review written in 2013, an earlier independent review had argued strongly for a move toward C4D (PACMAS, 2011). Our collaborative projects with ABCID were a response to this desire to be more C4D-oriented and to understand communicative practices and development needs in the Pacific on their own terms, rather than relying on global metrics of media development. The development of an IF was meant to allow for more C4D-focused and locally conceived, -designed, and -implemented activities as part of the overall program.

The IF has enabled new actors to apply for small grants. Due to the smaller grant sizes, there has also been a greater tolerance for risk compared to most funding schemes, with an estimation that approximately 12% would "not make it" (Interview ABC/PACMAS2). The maximum amount granted was AU$30,000, or, up to AU$50,000 if the project had a regional focus. To be eligible, the applicants had to be Pacific-based or have a Pacific-based partner on the application. From the perspective of funds recipients, this has been a welcome addition to the funding landscape precisely because it allows Pacific-based organizations to propose and implement locally relevant media and communication for development projects. One IF recipient described the model this way:

> Well, I think that they're small grants, but they're big enough to do something. And I think that it's good to fund smaller organizations to be able to do a project that they are really passionate about and want to do. . . . Rather than saying we'll give one contract to one of the major players . . . it's really building capacity at the local level. I just think that they're a good size for people to say, "I've got a project that I want to realize." I think just diversifying—decentralizing funding and giving smaller chunks to a number of people and see what they can do with that. (Interview IF9)

The view from ABCID/PACMAS on the value of the small-grants funding model was similar:

> What the Innovation Fund does is give them total control (Interviewer: To go straight to them.) Straight, yeah. . . . None of us in between trying to tell them how they should do their program for their people, you know? (Interview ABC/PACMAS2)

The demand for funding opportunities of this kind is reinforced by the number of applications the program has received. There were 23 applications in the first round, growing steadily with each subsequent round to 60 applications in the fourth and final round. The groups funded through the IF included established organizations such as the Secretariat of Pacific Community and the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters, medium-sized NGOs, small and emerging NGOs with significant volunteer contributions, media outlets, training and education institutions, and small production organizations. There were several cases where the IF was the first grant received. Canal Studios on the island of Santo in Vanuatu was an example of this, receiving AU$8,000 to purchase equipment and hold video production workshops with communities on the island.

Some of the projects that failed to be completed similarly reinforce the value of genuine community-led, demand-driven projects. In an early round, nonresidents of the Pacific successfully applied for funding through the scheme, with what was, essentially, a proxy organization to fulfill the criteria that required the organization to have a Pacific-based partner. In this case the project was designed without local input and, predictably, led to inappropriate inputs and no sustainable outcomes. In later rounds, additional checks were put in place to ascertain the organizations' capability and capacity to deliver against their proposals, vindicating the importance of prioritizing local knowledge of needs and appropriate solutions.

As a funding model the IF pushes back against the dominance of donor agendas, funding community-led initiatives. There is irony in the reviewer's notion that *demand-led* leads to broad, ad hoc, and nonstrategic activities. *Participatory development*—where community-led development initiatives drawing on local knowledge and local solutions rather than from so-called development experts or traveling rationalities (Mosse, 2013; Ramalingam, 2013)—has been accepted as the ideal by major development agencies for decades, although in practice it has been severely criticized (Cornwall & Brock, 2005; Leal, 2007). From "putting the last first" (Chambers, 1983, 1997) to deconstructing the gaze of "experts" on the "Third World" (Escobar, 1995), the ideal that people should be at the center of their own development is not new. Although this kind of

funding model is not the only answer to the participatory development agenda, the demand-driven nature of small-grants programs could be celebrated as a response to constrained funding environments that favor the bigger actors and impose 'expert' development strategies. Furthermore, while the risk associated with this kind of funding can be high, the losses are low and the benefit in terms of experience and learning might be very high.

Digital Innovation the Pacific Way

The introduction of an IF into the Pacific not only offered a different funding model, but given the strong associations of the concept of innovation with technology, it has also provoked reflections about the meaning of innovation in the Pacific and in media and communication for development. Small grants are a growing funding model globally, often with a strong ICT focus, for example, the Making All Voices Count initiative,[6] the Information Society Innovation Fund Asia,[7] and the Global Innovation Fund.[8] Indeed, the original intention for the PACMAS IF, according to the program design document, related strongly to new media and technology:

An Innovation Fund: will be established to respond to the demand from stakeholders for a transparent and open mechanism through which to access the PACMAS program. The Innovation Fund (IF) is designed to build both technical and creative capacity within the Pacific media and communication sectors. Stakeholders stressed their desire to innovate through:

- The creation of new media content (including social and citizen media);
- The trialing of new forms of communication that serve community groups;
- Investigation of the potential of new media technologies;
- Engagement in training opportunities. (PACMAS, 2011, p. 23)

As the IF nears completion, there is a sense among a range of staff working closely on the program that the fund has not "been as innovative as it should be" and that most of the projects funded were a "rehash of a lot of things that have been done . . . most of them are not something new, something cutting edge" (Interview ABC/PACMAS2). However, the way the meaning of innovation had evolved in this context was more complex:

And innovation is relational, isn't it? . . . We wouldn't consider it as an innovative idea in the context of Melbourne media, but [it] is in fact innovative in the resource-constrained context that they're working in, and I think that was how innovation seemed to be applied. . . . [It's] also relational to the other support that PACMAS offers, so where the rest of the PACMAS activities were deemed to be strategic and focused on both the objectives of PACMAS and also of the donor, [the] innovation fund did have some freedom to sit outside of that, where the applicants were driving [it]. (Interview ABC/PACMAS1)

The use of digital platforms and technologies is an interesting entry point to think about grounded innovation. Although a minority, there were several projects that engaged overtly with digital technology. For example, the Secretariat of Pacific Community held a Web 2.0 training course in parallel with the Pacific Heads of Agriculture and Forestry Conference (in which trainees covered journalism ethics and the use of social media, blogs, and creative commons as well as tools such as Google Maps and RSS).[9] The Pan-Pacific Media Training Project, which primarily focused on producing documentaries, included some training around new and social media to build the capacity of "a new generation of digital content producers in the Pacific."[10] Two other capacity-building projects used digital technologies to deliver training and education: a collaboration between James Cook University in Sydney and National University of Samoa saw a "no-cost exchange program" using virtual classrooms and virtual collaboration to produce news stories, and an e-learning project led by the Pasifika

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6. http://www.makingallvoicescount.org/
7. http://iisif.asia/grant
8. http://www.globalinnovation.fund/
9. http://www.pacmas.org/profile/web-2-0-social-media-for-development/
10. http://www.pacmas.org/profile/the-2014-pan-pacific-media-training-project-begins-in-tonga/. This project had some additional sources of funding.

Media Association[11] aimed to provide resources for Pacific Island journalists and media managers. Another example was a project to migrate a Tongan newspaper to a new server to enable "enhanced navigation and responsive design, support for mobile, community building, and messaging and alerting, and enhanced delivery and communication mechanisms."[12]

One IF project that stood out as a tech-focused innovative project was M-Link, from Women in Business Development. M-Link created a system that connected small-hold farmers to local restaurants and hotels. It created a mobile database for farmers, including access to crop and organic compliance information and a way to track the progress of participating farmers. The system provided farmers access to a mobile knowledge bank, including contributions from local farmers and extension workers. The app included functions for the farmers' business accounting, budgeting, farm management, and market information.

While these projects most clearly include digital technology, a closer interrogation of the spectrum of projects indicates that digital technologies have been a significant aspect of many, with a complex blending of analog and digital adapted to suit local communicative ecologies. The *communicative ecologies* concept (Slater, 2013) has been central to our research. It refers to "complex systems of communication, media and information flows in a community" (Tacchi, 2015, p. 223). This approach ensures that we remain open and attuned to wider contexts of communication flows, channels, and practices, including formal and informal, technical and social, beyond Western-centric expectations of communication. This means recognizing that communication may equally take place in *haus piksas* (village cinemas) in PNG or the airport runway in Tuvalu, where people gather of an evening, as well as mass media platforms such as film, radio, and newspapers. The communicative ecologies approach grounds our analysis of innovation, sustainability, and strategy in local contexts, enabling us to explore how the spread of digital technologies is being integrated into Pacific media and communication practices. In doing so we are careful not to exaggerate or generalize the usefulness of digital technologies for media and communication projects in the Pacific. The accessibility and functionality of mobile phones and other devices vary within and across countries and depend, to a large extent, on local infrastructures.

When discussing communicative ecologies in the Pacific, the recurring theme is diversity. Although private companies are entering these spaces and investing in infrastructure, the spread and use of digital technologies remain uneven throughout the Pacific. For example, the Internet in Tuvalu can often be down for days at a time and has serious connection problems (Tacchi et al., 2013). Mobile phone use across the region is of highly variable quality and availability, with people in PNG often walking to specific locations known to have strong signal strength, referred to as *bush phone booths* (Tacchi et al., 2013). Charging mobile phones is another obstacle in rural areas, where communities often lack access to electricity (Watson, 2011). These features of communicative ecologies in part account for why digital technology may not have featured strongly in most projects. One of the IF recipients described the risk of too much hype over the potential for ICTs in the Pacific:

> The only people that are on the Internet are urban, educated, employed people because they're using their employer's access—yes they use mobile phones a lot, and it is growing slowly, but . . . it's very important that people don't think, "Oh yes, that's where the conversation takes place," because that is only one conversation—and it's not actually a very inclusive conversation. (Interview IF4)

There are examples that highlight how digital and analog technologies are integrated in projects. For example, Capitol FM in Vanuatu received funding to purchase new outside broadcast equipment for its radio station. Although ostensibly to improve the quality of FM radio, the particular equipment was specifically chosen to afford the station flexibility to use mobile networks for live broadcast of events, depending on the infrastructure available. The IF, therefore, allowed this local radio station to select suitable technical solutions that allowed it to adapt to diverse communicative ecologies encountered in Vanuatu.

Another example of blending digital and analog technologies comes at the distribution end of projects. A

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11. http://www.pacmas.org/profile/pasifikatrainer-e-learning-resource-for-working-journalists/
12. http://www.pacmas.org/profile/the-matangi-tonga-online-project/

majority of IF applications include a content production focus, and one of the most common distribution methods for the content produced is DVD. Project outlines often state that the content will also be aired on TV and social media. However, the latter does not seem to be as central to distribution, and indeed, most of the videos posted on YouTube relating to IF projects are published by PACMAS rather than the local organization, and the number of views is low. The DVD is an interesting example since it is a digital technology, housing content that is generally filmed and edited using digital technology, yet the movement of the DVDs is predominantly analog, moving with people as they travel to various communities. The strategies outlined by the IF recipients indicate that these distribution networks are seen as viable and effective channels. Canal Studios states in its distribution strategy that "the completed videos will be put into DVDs and distributed around Santo and beyond."[13] The potential to harness DVD distribution networks—specifically the CD haus piksas for C4D content—has been the subject of research by Eby and Thomas (2016). Indeed, a larger Vanuatu-based organization, GIZ,[14] has similarly noted the ways DVDs, including DVDs with C4D content, are spread. GIZ's DVDs, produced as part of a climate change engagement project (*Yumi Tugeta*[15]), were found to have been shared and viewed across Vanuatu:

> Now everybody has—even in remote villages where there's no electricity—everyone has a little generator, a screen, and a DVD set. . . . So this DVD has gone everywhere in Vanuatu. (Interview C4D3)

Our baseline study research similarly found that many Pacific countries have active networks for sharing informally sourced media content such as through the use of USBs and portable hard drives, depending on and in response to the local communicative ecologies.

An IF project by Kilocutz Production House in Niue offered a training course for making movies with smartphones and tablets, using these devices for shooting and editing. In many contexts a natural channel for this digital content would be YouTube, Vimeo, or one of the other video-sharing platforms. However, this content was destined for TV. Niue's media and communication landscape is remarkable. This tiny island, with a population of 1,500, was one of the earliest nations to provide free Wi-Fi. However, the Internet speeds are painfully slow, and the local TV station reported that to account for this they upload their news bulletins to YouTube during the night (Interview Niue02). Here again, cobbling together traditional and digital distribution channels is perfectly adapted to local communicative ecologies.

These amalgams of digital and other technologies and communication spaces are suggestive of what Slater (2013) termed "communication assemblages," which are the "heterogeneous and skilled engineering of stable or routinized networks for achieving communication" (p. 47). Taking a grounded view of innovation considers digital technologies as they are appropriated, adapted, and assembled to create something new. Ignoring this context risks imposing external conceptualizations and values about what constitutes the new or cutting edge, and can devalue such locally and relatively contextualized views. The communicative ecology approach is a useful lens for unpacking these adaptations and, seen in this way, are examples within the IF of a highly sophisticated integration of digital technologies in ways that are sensitive and grounded in the diversity of infrastructure, systems, and networks available and relevant in the Pacific context. This is a form of innovation using newer technologies, blended with older technologies and modes of communication, to achieve locally relevant outcomes.

Continuity of Practice

We argue that far from a series of ad hoc, rehashed, nonstrategic projects, there is a strong continuity between many of the IF projects and larger, long-term, endogenous media and communication for development practices in the Pacific. What is clear from surveying media and communication for development practices in the Pacific is that there exists a particularly strong storytelling element. This takes many forms, from community-based drama, film, television, and video production, to music performance and production. Wan Smolbag is

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13. http://www.pacmas.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Project_profiles_Real-Life-Issue_Vanuatu.pdf, p. 1
14. https://www.giz.de/en/html/about_giz.html
15. Yumi Tugeta translates to 'We're Together' or 'Working Together.'

one of the largest and best known organizations operating in this space, with its many traveling theater groups, radio dramas, and print media content. The origin story of Wan Smolbag was described this way:

> It started in 1988 . . . as a drama group . . . focused primarily on doing awareness in communities . . . on different social issues, health, and environment—anything that affected the lives of people. And then it basically grew out of that. The name Wan Smolbag was coined to show that you can do drama in a community with a small suitcase of props. You didn't need . . . elaborate staging or writing. Then other areas of Wan Smolbag grew out of interactions with communities. (Interview C4D1)

Community theater is also widely practiced across PNG. Awi (2014) explored the use of folk opera for HIV/AIDS education, finding that the narrative of the folk opera *Kumul* was

> carefully framed within selected Papua New Guinean beliefs drawn from the audit to deliver HIV and AIDS messages using symbolic and metaphoric communication techniques without offending people. . . . *Kumul* is recognisable to Papua New Guinean audiences because it reflects their lifestyle and a worldview, which connects them to their beliefs and spirituality, and the larger cosmological order. (Awi, 2014)

The Centre for Social and Creative Media at the University of Goroka has similarly harnessed a rich storytelling tradition combined with film making. The *Yumi Piksa*[16] project was a film-based project exploring local approaches to filmmaking that created stories of HIV/AIDS experiences (Thomas, 2011). More recently the *Pawa Meri*[17] project was a documentary video series showcasing stories of women's leadership in PNG.

This emphasis on storytelling in dramatic, musical, and documentary forms is evident in the analysis of the kinds of projects funded by the IF, where 45 of the 55 funded projects involved some kind of content production. One of these was the Vanuatu-based organization Further Arts, which has engaged in projects using film, music, and festivals for cultural and development-related goals. For example, it received funding to build multimedia studios in response to local interests, particularly among youth, plus additional funding for training. (The studios were sadly destroyed by the 2014 cyclone that devastated Vanuatu.) In this context, there was a particular interest in music videos. Music was also an interest for Further Arts' sister organization, Canal Studios, which was originally set up as a community music studio. Both organizations have an interest in blending cultural development and celebration into their projects and as part of their practice.

Canal Studios emphasized that it encourages the youth accessing the studio to engage with both modern and traditional musical forms. Further Arts has partnered with organizations to organize festivals, celebrating traditional cultures with multimedia products.

> We're there effectively to take photos and video, so then we can go back to our studio and edit them and make a video. So it's important to understand what effect our presence has on the community because it's not a common thing for a group of people to be taking photos of all these traditional dances and stuff—so questions like that. And then if we've got a final multimedia product at the end, we send it to them and see if it's what they expected, if it's what they want, [and] how we can use that product to best help them promote their cultures or community. (Interview IF2)

Along with a strong focus on and tradition of content production (both media and community-based), there is also a strong appetite for dialogue-based communication, either in association with content production or as the primary focus of media and communication for development initiatives. Dialogue-based approaches to media and communication for development have a long history in the Pacific. For Wan Smolbag the dialogue aspect is critical to their approach as a whole.

> We're not changing people's mindsets. We're creating a space where these discussions can be held, [where] different views can be discussed, mindsets can be challenged, opportunities can be, you know, provided where women can speak in a community setting, for example, where normally they wouldn't be allowed to openly share their views. (Interview C4D1)

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16. Yumi Piksa *translates to 'Our Pictures.'*
17. Pawa Meri *translates to 'Powerful Women' or 'Strong Women.'*

Dialogue and engagement are two of the most significant impacts of the climate change initiative Action Against Climate Change in Vanuatu. Implemented by GIZ and funded by PACMAS as part of its broader strategic activities, the initiative involved bringing in climate change experts and media to six local schools to write and produce stories. Although the stories themselves were considered successful, it was the follow-on effect that was considered by GIZ to have had the greatest lasting impact:

> This was the first time I would say that in the media there was a human connection story. So rather than the general earlier stories saying "globally this and that," this was Ni-Vanuatu telling Ni-Vanuatu what they were thinking about climate change. . . . It started a new era in the climate media relations. And now you find it's all about talkback shows. It's all about getting people [to] talk to each other. No more foreign documentaries. Everything is locally produced. (Interview C4D3)

This inclusion of dialogue is often key for IF recipients. For example, the Lowy Institute received a grant from the IF to hold an event for Melanesian youth to come together for dialogue and discussion. Although they expected some media products as a result of the discussion, from a media and communication for development perspective, the process of communication—coming together to "talk about stuff that they care about and just find out a bit more about each other"—was the central goal (Interview IF4). Often the dialogue components are not as obvious, though in discussions with IF recipients about what they are trying to do, discussion and dialogue are considered a significant aspect. This occurred with a filmmaker who received a grant to produce a documentary about a community in a remote area of Vanuatu. Ostensibly, this was seen as a content-based project; however, it was important to the filmmaker that the authorities (NGOs, government, etc.) see the film in the hope that it might spur a dialogue about the community's needs and what could be done about a lack of services.

There has been little attention paid to media and communication for development approaches in the Pacific compared to some larger regions where there is an identified "Indian school," "African school," and "Latin American school" of scholarship and practice (see Manyozo, 2012). However, there are some distinctive endogenous approaches emerging that emphasize storytelling and dialogue. Understanding and incorporating these endogenous approaches are likely to lead to more effective and sustainable outcomes, and the community-driven nature of the IF demonstrates how a more open funding model can encourage this in practice.

Conclusion

In the quote that opens this article, the ad hocery and lack of strategic focus were key criticisms leveled at the IF. As an independent review for AusAID/DFAT, this statement has a lot of power, and as such, has had a series of consequences for the program. Although ABC ID and PACMAS opted to continue with the IF, following the review there were considerable efforts to inject a more "strategic" focus, serving to reduce some of the original open approach. There were heightened concerns about how to make a clearer link to program goals:

> The other difficulty with the Innovation Fund is: How do we link it back to our overarching goal, which is governance? . . . I think that's an area we've struggled a little bit to address. [For example,] programs on dugongs[18]—How does that relate to governance? Stopping the overfishing of a particular breed of fish like they've done in Fiji right now . . . How is that related to governance? How is that related to strengthening the media? You know? Yet we funded it. (Interview ABC/PACMAS2)

Narrow definitions of *strategic development* have far-reaching ramifications for media and communication for development practitioners on the ground. Their capacity to effectively respond to local challenges and interests in ways sensitive to changing communicative ecologies is constrained. We argue that projects funded through an IF model have the potential to be innovative in a grounded sense and sustainable if we rethink our notions of sustainability. Some relevant frameworks for sustainability in media and communication for development are emerging (e.g., Servaes, Polk, Shi, Reilly, & Yakupitijage, 2012) that focus on the appropriateness and

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18. A dugong *is a marine mammal also known as a sea cow.*

compatibility of approaches by using a series of indicators relating to the actors involved, the type of communication, the processes, the channels used, and the message to reach a more holistic view of sustainability. There is a strong continuity among many of the IF projects and a range of media and communication for development approaches that have long-term, endogenous roots in the Pacific.

Many of the projects work in ways that adapt to or build on existing communicative ecologies, integrating new and digital technologies and contributing to achieving locally defined goals and spaces for dialogue. These kinds of outcomes require different measures, with an eye to issues of continuity, groundedness, and local demand. It is helpful to begin by grounding notions of innovation when thinking about how new technologies are being used in media and communication for development in the Pacific. ∎

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