

## Objecting to Objectivity: Reflecting on Evaluation in Vanuatu

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### Abstract

Evaluation is intended as an objective activity to assess and learn from development interventions. In practice it is donor driven to meet donor needs and is predicated on donor conceptions of knowledge, evidence and meaning. Rejecting the notion of objectivity and viewing evaluation as a reflection of Western epistemologies, this paper draws from observations of two evaluation exercises and several interviews in Vanuatu to highlight a significant shortcoming of current practice: the failure to recognise contextual factors of *kastom*, place and language. It questions the fundamental approaches to evaluation in different cultural settings and concludes with a call to focus on relationships as a first step toward more inclusive evaluation.

**Keywords:** monitoring and evaluation; objectivity; ownership; relationships; Vanuatu

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