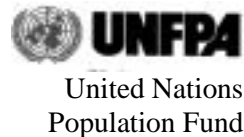


UNITED NATIONS

**COMMON
COUNTRY
ASSESSMENT**

**SOLOMON
ISLANDS**

'FINAL DRAFT' OF 23 MARCH 2002



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The Solomon Islands
(Source: Microsoft Encarta 2002)

FOREWORD

The Common Country Assessment resulted from the United Nations Secretary General's reform programme approved by the General Assembly in 1997. It represents a shift towards full collaborative programming of United Nations agencies' assistance to each country. The aims of this Common Country Assessment are to:

- review and analyse the national development situation of the Solomon Islands;
- identify key issues as a basis for advocacy and policy dialogue between the United Nations agencies and the Solomon Islands; and
- identify areas for priority attention in meeting key development challenges by the Solomon Islands and the development assistance community.

This common understanding among the UN partners of the key development challenges facing the Solomon Islands serves as the basis for developing a United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) as part of the same process. This, in turn, will identify common objectives and a common time frame for UN system action and will assist individual UN agencies in their detailed programming exercises.

During the 1990s, a series of global conferences was convened by the United Nations to address major economic, environmental and social concerns. These global conferences produced a political consensus on major development issues facing the world today, culminating in the Millennium Summit of September 2000. The global agenda that emerged from the declarations and the action plans of these conferences and the Summit has created common ground for co-operation between the United Nations system and host governments, including Solomon Islands, on national development policies and strategies.

Having the status of a Least Developed Country, Solomon Islands is a priority country for UN assistance in the Pacific. There is a strong interest within the Government to ensure that development assistance is better directed and coordinated. Better-coordinated United Nations assistance will benefit the Government and people of the country. This CCA and the subsequent UNDAF are expected to play strong roles in improving such coordination.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Solomon Islands faces a crucial test of sustainability as a nation. Its component provinces resent the rule of its centralist government. The economy, weakened through a decade of poor economic management and low quality governance, has been pushed to the brink of collapse by a civil uprising between militia of two of the country's main islands. Post-Independence gains in health, education and infrastructure are being eroded. The commercial timbers of the nation's natural forest resources are almost spent. A frank and detailed assessment of the country's circumstances is a necessary pre-requisite to identifying the areas where UN agency support can assist recovery.

CHAPTER 1: THE PACIFIC ISLANDS CONTEXT

The assessment begins with a consideration of the development issues that the Solomon Islands shares with other Pacific Island states. Globalisation, vulnerability, climate change, management of ocean resources, population-poverty-development linkages, and data limitations are discussed.

Small states face the difficult task of securing the benefits of globalisation while maintaining national sovereignty and retaining flexibility to formulate economic and social policies. Their concern is to protect traditional values such as communal resource tenure and co-operative economic activity, minimise possible social costs such as increased inequality and worsened working conditions, deal with reduced control of investment decisions and with erosion of preferential market access, cover the costs of joining (or not joining) the World Trade Organisation, carry out substantial commitments to the global community summarised in the Millennium Declaration Goals of 2000, and develop a capacity to capitalise on new information and communications technologies which could reduce their isolation.

Numerous studies have documented the susceptibility of small island states to

external economic fluctuations and environmental shocks. A Commonwealth Secretariat vulnerability index ranks the Solomon Islands among the most highly vulnerable of the 111 countries it has studied.

For small island countries the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warns of deteriorating coral reefs, mangroves, and seagrass beds, major species loss, and declines in vital reef fisheries. For the Pacific islands in general the World Bank warns of likely reductions in agricultural output, declines in ground water quantity and quality, substantial health impacts, extensive capital damage due to storm surges, and diminished fish production. It concludes that: "managing change will be particularly critical in the area of climate change, a subject ... of immense and immediate impact on Pacific Island countries."

Solomon Islands seas encompass a rich tuna fishery, as do some other Pacific island states. Distant water fishing nations have long operated in the area, and during the 1990s the island states captured only 11% of US\$2 million in annual landed value. Effective management of the tuna resources of the Pacific islands region is a key challenge addressed through the South Pacific Forum Fisheries Agency but which needs continued vigilance and negotiating strength to ensure equitable returns for Pacific island nations. Now that Solomon Islands' forest resources have been depleted its marine resources assume even greater significance. Pacific island countries are assisted in their approach to assessment of seabed and sub-seabed minerals through the South Pacific Geosciences Commission.

The Asian Development Bank has warned of growing poverty in the Pacific islands, with 43% of the population 'disadvantaged', the key issues being: governance, population growing faster than the economy, declining educational performance, weakness of the private sector, breakdown of traditional support systems,

and an urban elite capturing most of the benefits of modernisation. Development challenges include disappointing macroeconomic performance, increasing poverty, greater environmental degradation, and limited progress in gender equality. Population growth, youth unemployment, rapid urbanisation, and other pressures are also reflected in a growing disaffection among youth that is particularly troubling bearing in mind that they are to become the future society.

Assessing key development issues, formulating and implementing effective policies, and monitoring results require a wide range of timely, accurate and consistent data. In the Solomon Islands, as elsewhere in the Pacific island region, much of the development data needed is inconsistent, available only at national level and has limited breakdowns by gender, age, income group, or geographic location.

Pacific island countries are highly dependent on donor assistance for developing and implementing social and economic policies. There is a perception in the region that donors shift emphases too frequently, leading to support that is often too short-term to produce lasting impacts. Where aid is a small percentage of GDP, the volatility of aid flows and priorities may not be a serious concern. For countries of the scale of the Solomon Islands it is arguable that it can actually undermine development efforts.

CHAPTER 2: SOLOMON ISLANDS AND THE CCA PROCESS

An outline is provided of Solomon Islands' development goals and objectives and the major issues and problems that affect the country and its development potential. This is done in the context of an emerging global consensus regarding the goals of development. The nature of UN assistance to the Solomon Islands is outlined and the process through which the CCA was formulated, concluding with a statement of the three broad development assistance themes that emerge from the CCA process, namely: more equitable

access to sustainable development opportunities; governance, security and human rights; and improved access, quality and delivery of basic services to all sections of the community.

Basic development indicators are summarised in the table below. The Solomon Islands ranks 13th of 15 Pacific island countries and 121st in the world in the UNDP's Human Development Index. Women's participation in decision-making is improving but remains relatively low.

The Solomon Islands is economically under enormous pressure, with negative economic growth, very low Government revenue, increasing public debt, and low levels of foreign reserves. The national development goals and objectives of all governments since Independence in 1978 have been consistent in that they have favoured establishing the economy on a base of large-scale, export-oriented resource development projects, they approved of and encouraged foreign investment, and they stated a determination to address the needs of rural people and to protect the environment. The current Government has stated its intention to "reverse the decline in our country's production, exports and income, reform the management of the Government's finances, reduce expenditure, increase revenue and

Indicator	Overall	Male	Female
Population:			
Population (thousands; Census, 1999)	409.04	211.38	197.66
Population growth (% p.a.; Census, 1986-1999)	2.8		
Mortality:			
Life expectancy at birth (1999; years)	61.0	60.6	61.6
Maternal mortality ratio (per 1000 live births, Census, 1999)		2.1	
Infant mortality rate (per 1000 live births, Census, 1999)	66		
Economic:			
GDP per capita (1999) US\$	168		
Ave. ann. rural household income (NSO, 1993; US\$)	158		
Ave. ann. Honiara household income (NSO, 1991; US\$)	477		
Unemployment (15-30 year age group; Census, 1999)	40		
Shelter:			
Population in permanent housing (%; Census, 1999)	31		
Services:			
Access to piped water supply (%; Census, 1999)	62		
Access to modern sanitation (%; Census, 1999)	23		
Development & health:			
Adult literacy (in English and Pijin; 1991)	22	27	17
Low birth weights (1994)	13		
Underweight children (% under 5 years; 1990s)	11		
School participation rate (5-29 years) (MHRD, 2001)		56	44
Human Development Rank of 15 PICs (1998)	13		
Human Poverty Rank of 15 PICs (1998)	14		

improve debt management, initiate a new deal for provinces and allocate resources more equitably, repair, upgrade and maintain our physical infrastructure, and revive programmes in our social sectors, particularly in health and education."

CHAPTER 3: NATURAL RESOURCES, BIODIVERSITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The nature of the natural resource base for development is described, with a brief outline of the ways in which these resources are being exploited. This information is set in the context of the Solomon Islands' rich biodiversity heritage and of the management of the environment, which sustains resources for development.

There has been a major loss of traditional knowledge. However, much that is relevant for resource management remains and very little of this has been documented. The effectiveness of development project interventions is improved where traditional knowledge is recognised and accessed, and the holders of that knowledge are given due recognition.

Fisheries resources have high importance; first as a vitally important component of the subsistence base (in 1988 annual per capita consumption of 22.4 kg of fish and 12 kg of shellfish). Fisheries resources have also been a major contributor to export earnings through tuna. In 1998, the domestic fleet took 116,438 tonnes. After the disruption arising from the armed conflict, this dropped to 45,090 t in 1999, 21,163 t in 2000, and 17,699 t in 2001. Tuna resources are managed under an excellent National Tuna Management and Development Plan ("Tuna 2000"). Prospects for aquaculture are technically promising and there is potential in game fishing and in reef and lagoon sports fishing. Fisheries development, for which the resources are widespread through the country, lends itself to decentralisation. Fisheries potential has been compromised by the destruction by Malaita Eagle Force (MEF) militia of marine resources research facilities on Guadalcanal.

Contrary to the rationality displayed in the approach to tuna resource development, and

despite the noble intent of Government policy over the years, uncontrolled and destructive logging has been a long-standing and serious problem, with irreparable damage being done to the environment, the forests and the economic future. Considerable aid support has helped establish proper controls to ensure sustainable harvest levels, to maximise the capture of resource rents, and to reinvest the resultant cash flows prudently. However, results have been compromised by poor governance.

Subsistence agriculture continues to underpin life for most Solomon Islanders, though now mixed with income earning objectives. A large oil palm plantation on Guadalcanal and copra plantations in the Russell Islands represent industrial scale agriculture. Palm oil exports generated significant foreign exchange before closure result from the recent conflict. A second plantation oil palm venture on Vangunu Island, Western Province, has yet to mature. Efforts to build up a cattle industry have been unsuccessful although on technical grounds this has potential. MEF militia destroyed the main centre for agricultural research in the Solomon Islands, at Dodo Creek, near Honiara – a serious setback for both cash crop production and for improved subsistence agriculture.

A number of areas in the country are prospective for epithermal gold. A diamond prospect has been identified in Malaita. Nickel deposits at San Jorge, and Tataka (Isabel) have attracted attention and sub-seabed stratigraphy suggestive of petroleum has been identified.

Eighty seven percent of the land area of the Solomon Islands is under customary resource tenure. The traditional land and sea resource management regimes of the Solomon Islands are community based, and participatory. In essence, a "Corporation" owns an area and its resources, the directors of which are "primary rights holders" who collectively have the authority to allocate use rights (through the Chairman, the spokesman for the line). Ordinary members are those who hold "secondary" rights. Customary land and sea tenure systems, though ancient in origin and constant in

principle, have changed. Much of this change is positive since it demonstrates a capacity to adapt to new circumstances. Development on customary land and in customary sea is achievable through carefully developed adaptive management regimes that ensure that benefits are equitably shared among stakeholders.

More attention is needed in planning and resource management to ensure a sustainable basic supply of food for all. A policy for "subsistence reserves" of resources to be delimited in each customary area is necessary before allocation of any surplus resources for small-scale commercial development.

Solomon Islands animal and plant life, which has always been significant for rural Solomon Islanders is also of international importance. There is a greater diversity of land animals than in any other Pacific island nation – 223 birds, 52 native mammals, 61 land reptiles, and 17 different frogs. Many of these animals are endemic; that is, they are found nowhere else in the world.

The once rich forest areas of the Solomon Islands have been depleted by severe reduction of forest canopy (even though so-called 'selective logging' is carried out), extensive disturbance to fragile soils, and sedimentation of water bodies. Inshore fisheries are under threat, through overfishing, sedimentation from soil erosion, and pollution from sewage near urban areas. Few measures have been undertaken to address environmental concerns. An Environment and Conservation Division established in 1984 has had minimal impact and a 1991-1992 National Environmental Management Strategy remains a "wish list".

CHAPTER 4: SOCIETY AND GOVERNANCE

There has been increasingly poor performance of successive governments since the 1980s. The Government of 1992-94 bravely tried to correct the logging industry's erosion of natural capital and use of bribery but was forced out by a campaign funded by those whose interests were threatened. The past twenty years of Central

Government expansion has been accompanied by a decline in standards and efficiency. Revenue leakage through duty remissions and through failure to support the monitoring of log exports has caused massive losses. Provincial governments, too, are not strangers to inefficiency but they have the excuse that the Central Government has kept them under-resourced. Allegations of corruption and the misuse of public office are widespread – yet investigations are rarely conducted. Some recent political performances suggest a need for a fresh attempt in political education. Yet the need for better understanding of political processes and their application for good governance is not confined to politicians. If accountability is to be improved, then the public needs improved awareness so that, through their emerging CSOs, they can better participate in promoting good governance.

The Solomon Islands has failed to achieve a level of political maturity sufficient to permit the formation of stable governments. There has been a high turnover of governments – ten in twenty-three years – and seven prime ministers. Despite this instability it is reassuring that, except for the change of government brought about by a coup in June 2000, all other changes have been constitutional. Public confidence in the institutions established for its protection is low. The Royal Solomon Islands Police Force is in need of rebuilding. A Leadership Code Commission has never acted; the Ombudsman's Office can investigate but not take action; the Office of Public Solicitor, set up to help 'the little people' has been sidelined.

The general inefficiency and ineffectiveness of the public service has been one element of poor governance, and sound economic management has been elusive since the early 1980s. The Solomon Islands public service is the country's largest single employer. At its highest level in 1993 it had 8,473 employees – a growth of 48% over 15 years. Between 1991 and 2000 public service salaries averaged around 33% of Government's annual expenditure, which was more than Government development expenditure (27%). In 2002 the Government

has returned to the theme of downsizing of the Public Service with an announced reduction in Public Service expenditure.

The achievement of national unity is important and has huge implications for policy-making, the distribution of national wealth, and development in general. This is particularly so for Solomon Islands, a nation-state constructed out of a culturally, linguistically and ethnically diverse population. With over 400,000 people speaking sixty-five distinct languages (but sharing a lingua franca, *Solomons Pijin*), the challenge of nation building was destined to be difficult. National consciousness is not deep. Most people carry with them competing clan, island, province and nation identities – and in that order of priority.

The resource-rich provinces resent the fact that a large percentage of income generated from natural resource development in their provinces is taken by Central Government – nominally to be shared with other provinces. This might not have become a real issue if good governance had prevailed and a fair measure of services and other benefits had accrued to those whose resources were being used in the national interest. However, those concerned have watched their resources dwindle without a corresponding improvement in their basic services since such a high proportion of what national revenue has not been wasted has been invested in Honiara infrastructure and facilities. In 1999 it is estimated that almost 48% of the Honiara population was of Malaitan origin. Other non-Guadalcanal people collectively made up approximately 43% of the city's population.

A debate on federalism through devolution commenced in the years leading to political independence. In 2001 Central Government finally came to accept as the basis for national governance. The current Government has held to this position and federalism is now a priority matter on its agenda. One of the key measures under consideration for federalism is "an equitable sharing formula" – ranging from equity between Province (State) and nation to equity at a local level, as in the case of development on an area of communally

owned land (which could mean an equitable sharing of benefits between a developer or a Government agency and landowners).

Statistics and descriptions compiled on a national basis can give a misleading impression of the entity "Solomon Islands". Not only is there obvious geographical diversity in the resource base and accessibility of different provinces but there is striking diversity *within* provinces. It is important that this diversity be recognised, understood and accommodated in the formulation of development assistance strategies, programmes and projects.

Amnesty International has reported cases of rape, abductions, torture and murder by both "sides" during the crisis on Guadalcanal. Yet those involved in the violation of human rights have not been held accountable. They were given blanket amnesty under the Townsville Peace Agreement signed between the conflicting parties in October 2000.

Thirty-five new Solomon Islanders are entering the world each day – the equivalent of one full classroom. For a tiny nation this is a staggering fact. Educational infrastructure falls well short of meeting their needs. Nor are sufficient teachers being trained or health facilities being established or upgraded to care for this daily addition. Rather, a backlog of services and facilities needed to give children and youth a reasonable start in life continues to grow. A troubling measure of the extent to which development efforts have failed to achieve targets is the eagerness with which many disaffected youth took up arms in the recent conflict. A darker dimension of the conflict is the trauma experienced by so many young people and the question as to whether this will further frustrate their personal development and their opportunities to contribute as the country's next teachers, doctors and leaders.

CHAPTER 5: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In 2000 the estimated Gross Domestic Product (GDP), including subsistence production, was SI\$291.1 million (US\$57.0

million) in real terms, based on 1985 prices. This is down from \$339.7 million (US\$68.9 million) in 1999 and \$341.3 million (US\$70.8 million) in 1998. Wide fluctuations in national income are not uncommon, a result of dependence on a small number of primary export products which are influenced by world market prices and by climatic variations that affect agricultural production and fish catch. Export earnings from the main primary products generally increased during most of the 1990s until 1998, after which they fell dramatically. Real GDP per capita in 1999 was \$831 (US\$168).

Civil unrest on Guadalcanal led to the closure of Solomon Islands Plantations Limited in mid-1999 (the only palm oil producer in the country and also a producer of cocoa), the closure of Gold Ridge mine in mid-2000 (the only mining operation), and the cessation of timber log production and sawmilling on Guadalcanal. Production of copra and cocoa on Guadalcanal by other commercial enterprises and by smallholders also ceased in 1999. The civil unrest also adversely affected the operations of manufacturing and service industries in Honiara. The export production base has been badly damaged. The recovery of the economy and economic growth will require additional investment to re-establish this base. Serious investors cannot be expected to return quickly.

In 1991 the average annual household income in Honiara was \$2387 with per capita income of \$358. A rural survey (1993) returned an average annual household income of \$66, per capita income being \$11. In 1999 nearly two-thirds of the adult population were not engaged in paid employment and nor were they looking for paid work. They were engaged in subsistence production, undertaking unpaid household duties, retired, students, or members of a growing category, the "liu" – pushed out of the education system, disenchanting, and not engaged in anything constructive. Unemployment disproportionately affected young people. Among the age group 15-29, in 1999 the unemployment rate was 40%.

Throughout the 1990s Government finances showed continuing budget deficits, from poor revenue performance and high recurrent expenditure. A high level of tax exemptions and duty remissions provided to individuals and enterprises by the Minister of Finance made the situation much worse. Over the period 1993-1997, for instance, total log export duty remissions are estimated to be \$208 million, of which \$153 million were for the two years 1996 and 1997. Major revenue losses also resulted from a lack of monitoring and inspection of log export shipments when, in 1996, Central Government disbanded the Timber Control Unit of the Forestry Division. As a consequence, the Solomon Islands' indebtedness and debt service obligations have grown. With weak revenue performance, high level of public expenditure and mounting debt service payments, the country began to accumulate debt arrears in 1994. The Government securities market collapsed in 1995. By February 2002 the government's total debt was "well in excess of \$1.3 billion".

Recurrent expenditure has always been high. A restructuring of the public service in the early 1990s resulted in a top-heavy public service, which, by 1997 accounted for 46 percent of recurrent expenditure. In 2000 it was still 35%.

Planning, and the formulation of development strategies at the national level have been sector-based. The development needs of the provinces have been articulated through sectoral programmes of the Ministries of Central Government, meaning that provincial planning lacks a real role. There has been no overall regional development strategy framework for development in the provinces and for sub-regions within provinces.

CHAPTER 6: THE STRUGGLE OVER RESOURCES

An account of the struggle over resources that in 1998 led to armed conflict is presented. The period of violent social unrest in Guadalcanal since 1998 has sometimes been described simplistically as an "ethnic crisis". Although there are clear

ethnic differences between the protagonists, ethnicity itself is not the cause.

The underlying causes derive from a linkage between poverty, resources, and governance. A poverty of resources caused some to seek opportunities elsewhere. The host landowners became resentful at the numbers of settler relatives who followed and were also upset at the failure of Government to channel to them a fair share of the benefits accruing from large-scale developments on their island. The social and economic impacts of the conflict are listed, and the uneasy and uncertain situation in early 2002 described.

When the MEF on 5th June 2000 staged a *de facto* coup, the relatively localised conflict became a national phenomenon. Up to this date the country had had a proud record of respect for the Constitution. A peace treaty (The Townsville Peace Agreement) was eventually signed. However implementation has proved to be very difficult because of the weakness of the State and the equivocal position of the Police force, some of whose senior officers participated in the coup. A genuine resolution of the civil unrest remains elusive. An atmosphere of suspicion persists, and public confidence in Government may never have been lower.

Western and Choiseul Provinces continue to experience the downside of an association with Bougainville that initially was seen as helpful in warding off attempts by the MEF to enter this part of the country. Armed criminals from Papua New Guinea's Bougainville Island move in and out of these Provinces with impunity.

CHAPTER 7: BASIC NEEDS AND SAFETY NETS

Basic needs such as health, food security and nutrition, shelter, water supply and sanitation, education, and social safety nets are discussed. As with every aspect of the country's development there has been a focus on the capital and lesser urban areas to the detriment of the wider rural community. The traditional safety net of the "wantok system" (kinship ties) in the country has

kept the country free of extreme poverty. Solomon Islanders see "poverty" in terms of lack of land and sea resources and lack of opportunity. Growing urbanisation, erosion of traditional values and ways, the monetisation of many aspects of life and a fast growing population hint of the advent of real poverty to come.

Because Solomon Islanders traditionally practise subsistence farming and food has generally been ample, it is often assumed that everyone has access to adequate amounts and quality of food. That is not necessarily the case. It has been estimated that 77% of the country's animal protein comes from seafood. The basic traditional diet is healthy, but there are worrying nutritional trends. Urban communities are beginning to experience a marked rise in diabetes as diets shift to processed foods and high sugar intake. While severe malnutrition is rarely a problem in Solomon Islands, the incidence of mild-to-moderate malnutrition is high, and this increases susceptibility to infectious diseases. In 1989, malnutrition amongst children under 15 years was about 23%. Women are also a high-risk group, with high rates of anaemia reported in 1989. Also, 33% of women were classified as overweight and 11% as obese.

About 69% of the rural population has access to what is termed "clean water". Of the total population, 23% has access to "improved" toilet facilities. About 86% of housing in urban areas is permanent compared to 21% in rural areas. While there is a widespread need for housing improvements in conjunction with water and sanitation advances, overall, housing is not a major problem. However, some in urban squatter settlements in and near Honiara are desperately in need of housing. And the situation in some villages is not good. Sixty-five percent of the country's housing is of traditional thatched construction. Yet the sources of traditional housing materials are declining. A clearer picture of rural housing and the availability of building materials is needed in order to define requirements to support village based housing initiatives.

The present official health care system consists of six different levels of health facilities operated through a referral system. The distribution of health infrastructure in rural areas is impressive, but is not necessarily a good indicator of health services. There is a constant problem of keeping clinics staffed and supplied. Not even the Central Hospital is immune to these problems. The use of traditional medicine is prevalent, and about 10% of births are conducted by traditional midwives. The traditional medical service has brought relief to many that the official health service cannot quickly reach and should be recognised as a backup system for modern health care.

At the beginning of 2002 there was provision for a total establishment of 76 doctors (a ratio of one doctor to 5382 people), but of the many Solomon Islanders trained in medicine over the years only 30 were occupying posts, alongside 19 expatriate doctors. The Central Hospital at Honiara consumes 25-30% of the total budget, although only 15% of the country's population live in Honiara. The period after Independence saw a comparative *overall* improvement in both the accessibility and quality of health services – though poor statistics prevents an evaluation of the distribution of health benefits (as opposed to infrastructure) in rural areas. National figures for life expectancy at birth increased and there was a dramatic decline in the national infant mortality rate from 129 to 66 deaths per 1000 live births over the period 1978-1999. More children were immunised and leprosy appears to be well on the way to eradication. A resurgence of tuberculosis (TB) is a concern. In 1999 a total of 289 new cases of TB were diagnosed, as compared with 215 cases in 1998. Malaria is one of the Solomon Islands' major public health problems despite intensive efforts to control it since 1965. A 67% reduction in the number of cases was achieved between 1992 and 1999. An intensified malaria control programme in Honiara from 1995 to 1999 reduced the incidence in the capital by 80%. However since 1999 it has been difficult to maintain momentum because of the internal conflict. There has been a recent 20% increase in malaria and dengue has

now appeared. The prevalence of mental health illness has increased, from 15.6 per 10,000 population in 1997 to about 20 per 10,000 in 1999.

Although formal education has supplanted that traditionally provided through the family, two areas of traditional education remain important for life in the Solomon Islands and are being neglected: kinship in relation to ownership and access rights to land and sea, and language. Unfortunately, formal schooling has been presented as a step to employment in the formal sector, as a pathway *away from* rural, village life, rather than something that provides for modern living but does this by building on the village and its culture. The Education Strategic Plan 2002-2004 provides for rehabilitation and reform of the education system in such a way as to recognise traditional social and cultural values and the important stabilising role of rural, village communities.

Seven years of primary schooling include a preparatory (kindergarten) year. Early childhood education is provided for some by NGOs and communities. A new form of secondary institution, the Community High School (CHS), has emerged from a public initiative. The CHS is considered to be the most exciting educational development in the country since Independence. These schools use excess capacity in primary schools after their classes finish at lunchtime, to teach secondary level students who cannot find places in the established secondary schools. The number of CHSs surged from 9 in 1995 to 52 in 1997. Although more children are schooling there has been a decline in quality. In 1996, over 80% of primary school teachers had no more than Grade 9 (Form 3) education. Indeed, 26% had had no teacher training! Teaching materials are inadequate in both quality and quantity.

The system has failed to provide a universal basic education. Limited resources are spread over three levels of education, with a bias towards the upper levels and a heavy reliance on high cost residential facilities. According to a 1991 survey the country's literacy rate was the lowest in the Pacific

Island region (30 per cent of 15 year olds and above). Yet that is believed to have been double the level at Independence in 1978.

Women are significantly under-represented in all facets of decision-making and the professions, including teaching. The ratio of men to women teachers is 63:37. The future looks more promising, the ratio of male to female students having reached 56:44 averaged over primary and secondary, though female numbers drop at secondary level. There are numerous examples of gender inequality, which the Government itself explicitly acknowledges. Development programs and projects are designed by, and directed mainly toward, men – even agriculture, despite the greater role of women in this sector. The extent to which women in the Solomon Islands face discrimination varies and largely reflects the extent to which conservative and unenlightened old traditions persist. For over a decade the Solomon Islands Government has provided for a portfolio responsibility for women's affairs, and some provinces have also done this – but the resources allocated for this work are sparse.

The social structure and associated traditions of Solomon Island societies continue to provide the ultimate safety net. Kinship ties facilitate the care of children and the elderly. Shelter and food are provided for those unable to fetch for themselves. Yet such traditional social practices are eroding, and disappearing especially fast in urban communities. The State has poorly developed support services, its effort having been concentrated on a National Provident Fund established in 1973, before Independence. The Fund's resources have been depleted by Government over-borrowing and by mass early withdrawals by members.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS: SUPPORT FOR REBUILDING

The post-Independence course of development in the Solomon Islands was hijacked in its 20th year by a bloody struggle over resources. Social and economic development gains achieved in the previous

two decades have been eroded. Development has not simply stopped; it has regressed. A daunting variety of indicators attests to this.

The continued activity of armed bands of militants poses a threat to the continued viability of the nation state. Three factors stand out – the poor state of law and order arising from the conflict, the shattered sense of national unity, and the hijacking of the national treasury through cash payments to individuals who threaten and intimidate. Trained medical staff have left Guadalcanal in fear and frustration, and the nation's foreign exchange reserves have declined to the extent that, at the end of December, 2001, the amount was sufficient to cover only two months of imports.

The armed conflict has arisen as an outcome of a struggle over resources, with its origins in poverty – not a poverty of grinding hunger but a poverty of resources and opportunities that, if not addressed, could lead to abject poverty. Governance has been ineffective. There has been poor accountability of Government to interest groups and a failure of Government to "read" and understand the interrelationship between economic development and society. The Government and the donor community should take the "long view" – to commit to long range approaches as well as short-term interventions. It is imperative that the approach to management of the country's remaining land and sea resources be placed on a sustainable footing. This point needs further emphasis in light of the inevitable temptation for Government to attempt to pull back from the brink of insolvency by increasing the rate of exploitation of land and sea resources.

In light of events since 1998 and the long history of calls for devolution, federalism is a logical move. However, decentralisation to States must be accompanied by a major advance in accountability at all levels of government or the mistakes that Central Government has made in alienating and isolating its constituency will merely be transferred to a lower level. A greater sharing of resources with the States will not translate into improved equity for all unless

specific provision is made for State Governments to be more accountable to their constituents. A form of regional development, spreading opportunities and responsibilities through the Provinces or States has to be an integral part of the federal package. For this to be effective, planning at a central level has to be geared to serve rather than to direct Provinces/States, and the public must have a significant role in development planning. In a modern Solomon Islands there will continue to be a need for people of disadvantaged areas to find opportunities on other islands. As current tensions ease it should be possible to negotiate access agreements that are fair to both resource owners and resource users.

A number of the concerns that frustrate economic and social development in the Solomon Islands also feature in some other Pacific island countries, especially its Melanesian neighbours. These include poor governance; conflict over access to resources; growing numbers of unemployed and disaffected youth; fragile national identity; difficulties in developing arrangements through which sustainable development can take place on customary land; a major loss of natural capital through

unsustainable rainforest logging; a fast declining biodiversity heritage; a degrading environment; increased threats to agriculture and public health from introduced weeds, pests and diseases; and vulnerability to international criminal activity. It follows that regional and sub-regional (Melanesian) approaches can be effective in supplementing national initiatives.

To rebuild public confidence, re-establish a sound basis for this once promising nation, and regain the respect of the international community, action is required on several fronts. There is a crisis of confidence in the institutions of the State. It will be critical that security and law and order issues are addressed systematically to find sustainable solutions, as a lack of sustained progress in these areas will impede success in the three thematic areas identified for attention by UN Agencies:

- More equitable access to sustainable development opportunities;
- Governance, security and human rights; and
- Improved access, quality and delivery of basic services to all sections of the community.

CHAPTER 1: THE PACIFIC ISLANDS CONTEXT

1.1 CCAs for Pacific Island Countries

One of the major challenges for the United Nations (UN) has been the co-ordination of the work of its different agencies. It was with this realisation that the Common Country Assessment (CCA) developed. The objective of the CCA is to ascertain the nature of development, issues and problems in the member countries of the UN.

This report is one of several CCA reports prepared for Pacific Island Countries (PICs) which are also Forum Island Countries (FICs) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs). They differ considerably from each other in terms of size, resources, political stability, cultures, languages, economic diversification, development opportunities and constraints. Nonetheless, they share much in common.

This introductory chapter briefly summarises the regional context and several shared issues facing the FIC LDCs. Later chapters cover these matters further as they specifically affect Solomon Islands. The inter-linked areas of governance, human rights, gender, land tenure, economic development, civil unrest and increasing poverty are also among other shared issues in the region discussed in later chapters.

The Pacific Ocean is vast: distances between and within countries are immense. For PICs, land mass is typically one-third of 1% of the area of a country's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Solomon Islands has a sea area (encompassed by its 200 nautical-mile EEZ) of 1.34 million km². The islands that make up the nation-state extend over a distance of 1,700 kilometres from Papua New Guinea's island of Bougainville in the north-west, to Vanuatu in the south-east.

The scattered nature and remoteness of the component islands of PICs make difficult the provision of adequate services to

dispersed and often tiny populations separated by open sea.

1.2 The Challenges of Globalisation

Globalisation is the process of integrating the economies of the world through global markets and a global system of production. The process depends on reducing both natural barriers to trade in goods, services and ideas, and artificial barriers. The first can be done through fast and reliable transport and open communications. Artificial barriers can be reduced by lowering tariffs, quotas, and foreign exchange controls. Globalisation is extending at an historically unprecedented rate. For small countries such as Solomon Islands, adjusting to this extraordinary rate of change is a tremendous challenge. The PICs should strive for an 'impossible trinity': i) securing the benefits from globalisation; while ii) maintaining national sovereignty, and iii) retaining the flexibility to formulate and implement their own economic and social policies.¹

A CCA is not the appropriate place to discuss or analyse the debate regarding the costs and benefits of globalisation for various parties. Nevertheless, the UN system does have a genuine 'comparative advantage' in this area and, so, is able to assist PICs in more informed debate on globalisation, better understanding it, considering realistic options, and adapting to its challenges. How can the PICs:

- deal effectively with the valuable (and under-utilised) preferential market access to the European Union, Australia and New Zealand;
- protect cultural values such as communal sharing of resources and a co-operative approach to economic activity;
- minimise social costs (e.g. possibly increased inequality, takeovers of local industry, lost markets and jobs,

¹ Siwatibau, 2001

lower wages and worsened working conditions);

- afford the high costs of joining the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and determine whether they should do so, how to negotiate entry on fair terms and whether they can afford not to;
- protect the coastal environment from further degradation and pollution which can often result from poorly regulated investment; and
- implement the 2001 regional Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement (PICTA) so that it enhances regional integration, protects women workers, expands trade within the region for all participating countries (not just larger, more diverse PICs) and adequately prepares LDCs for the anticipated more-universal trade liberalisation.

Globalisation is also about the free flow of ideas, not just the spread of the market economy. These ideas include an increasing commitment by countries worldwide, including PICs, for concerted action across a wide range of human rights and other concerns. Many of the ideas were articulated during a series of United Nations conferences and World Summits during the 1990s, culminating in a series of measurable and time-bound goals which are summarised in the Millennium Declaration Goals.

The PICs are also parties to a number of international and regional treaties, conventions and declarations. The small size and limited human resources of the PICs contribute significantly to difficulties in fully appreciating their treaty commitments and in effectively implementing those they do ratify. For example, the PICs consider PICTA – and the related Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER) – as important vehicles for progressively replacing aid with trade and preparing them for globalisation. However, smaller states such as Solomon Islands lack the resources to implement the agreements effectively and to use them to their national benefit.

1.3 Vulnerability

There is extensive documentation of the susceptibility of island states to external economic fluctuations and environmental shocks. Vulnerability indices have been developed and, though they differ in detail and coverage they give broadly similar results. The Commonwealth Secretariat has developed an index that ranks 111 developing countries (34 small and 77 large – over 1.5 million population – for which data were available) according to measurable components of exposure and resilience to external shocks. Income growth volatility is the most apparent manifestation of vulnerability.

The most significant three determinants of income volatility identified by the Commonwealth are:

- i) lack of diversification (measured by UNCTAD's diversification index);
- ii) export dependence (indicated by share of exports in GDP); and,
- iii) the impact of natural disasters (represented by the portion of population affected, considering cumulative frequency and impact over the previous 27 years).

These measures of volatility are combined into a composite vulnerability index weighted by average GDP as a proxy for resilience (the second component of the Commonwealth index). Among the results are the following:

- Of the 28 "most highly vulnerable" countries, 26 (92%) are small states and 18 (64%) are island states; and
- The "most highly vulnerable" category includes six PICs: Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu.²

The South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC) has developed a comprehensive Environmental Vulner-

² The smaller PICs would presumably have been included if sufficient data were available to rank them.

ability Index (EVI) with 47 indicators. Provisional results for four PICs suggest that Tuvalu has a highly vulnerable natural ecosystem whereas Fiji, Samoa and possibly Vanuatu are moderately vulnerable. Other PICs have not been assessed but it seems likely that the Solomon Islands would be in the same moderately vulnerable category.

A 7 Million Euro Financing Agreement entitled "Reducing Vulnerability of Pacific ACP States" is to address vulnerability reduction in the Pacific ACP States through the development of an integrated planning and management system in the sectors impacting on hazards, aggregates and water and sanitation.³

1.4 Global Climate Change

It is now accepted that climate change is real. Every successive report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has shown stronger evidence and a higher degree of confidence in its predictions. The most recent IPCC synthesis report concludes, with a "robust level of confidence", that global warming is underway and "is likely to increase during the 21st Century at rates unprecedented in the past 10,000 years." It does not specifically look at PICs but concludes that for small islands in general:

- "Projected future climate change and sea-level rise will affect shifts in species composition and competition. It is estimated that one out of every three (30%) known threatened plants are islands endemics, while 23% of bird species are threatened. Coral reefs, mangroves, and seagrass beds that often rely on stable environmental conditions will be adversely affected by rising air and sea temperatures and sea-level rise (medium confidence).
- Declines in coastal ecosystems will negatively impact reef fish and

threaten reef fisheries (medium confidence).

- Islands with very limited water supplies are highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change on the water balance (high confidence)."

Although countries such as the Solomon Islands, Fiji and Vanuatu are not as vulnerable to sea level rise as their neighbours in the eastern and northern Pacific, they are just as vulnerable to the global climate changes expected. Changes in weather patterns, for example, will impact on agriculture, forestry and fisheries as well as on human settlements. Though the changes cannot be predicted with certainty, there is a greater chance of detrimental impacts than favourable ones.

Most media attention has focussed on sea level rise. However, the expected impacts could include:

- reduced agricultural output (in terms of diminished crop growth and changed patterns of disease and pest infestation arising from changing rainfall patterns and increased temperatures;
- a decline in ground water quantity and quality as sea level rise causes saltwater to intrude into coastal aquifers;
- deterioration in health conditions through increased diarrhoea and, where rainfall increases, a higher incidence of mosquito borne disease such as malaria and dengue fever;
- higher maintenance costs for coastal infrastructure as rising sea level facilitates increased wave action; and
- shifts in the distribution of temperature sensitive fish stocks such as tuna which could undermine fisheries.

The World Bank concludes that "managing change will be particularly critical in the area of climate change, a subject ... of immense and immediate impact on Pacific Island countries. Choosing a development path that decreases the islands' vulnerability to climate events and maintains the quality of

³ The Project, to be implemented by SOPAC, will address problems such as: unavailability of accurate, sound, and timely data; weak human resource base; limited resources; and lack of appropriate management plans, policies and regulatory frameworks to deal with these three focal areas.

the social and physical environment will, not only be central to the future well being of the Pacific Island people, but will also be a key factor in the countries' ability to attract foreign investment in an increasingly competitive global economy".⁴

1.5 Managing Ocean Resources

The Central and Western Pacific is the world's richest tuna fishery providing a third of the global catch with a landed value of US\$2,000 million annually during the 1990s. However, the PICs captured only 11% of this, the bulk of benefits accruing to distant water fishing nations. Solomon Islands, according to the World Bank 2000 Report (vol. 1, Fig 3.5) – at least until 1999 – led all PICs in the value received for tuna: about US\$50 million (SI\$250 million) in 1998 and US\$40 million (SI\$200 million) in 1999.

The PICs have invested US\$200-300m of public funds in industrial tuna fisheries. This has been good for local employment but, because of a protracted period of low market prices, has not been profitable. In effect, the income earned through fishing licence fees imposed on distant water fishing nations operating in their PIC EEZs has been negated by the costs of establishing and maintaining local enterprises.

Tuna are highly migratory and move freely in and out of the EEZs of PICs. Effective management is a key challenge. The determination of sustainable yield, arm's length access negotiations with distant water fishing nations, accurate monitoring of catches, and good economic returns and employment for Pacific Islanders can only be successful if done co-operatively on a regional basis. It was for these reasons that the regional Forum Fisheries Agency was established. This agency, in which the Solomon Islands is a key party, has been effective in strengthening the collective capacity of PICs in tuna resource management and in particular in enabling PICs to negotiate

from a position of strength with distant water fishing nations. It has recently been supplemented by the establishment of a Commission for the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Species in the Central and Western Pacific, to be based in the Federated States of Micronesia.

Another category of ocean resource that benefits from a regional approach is seabed minerals. For over 30 years there has been a regional approach to coordination of seabed mineral exploration through the Suva-based South Pacific Geosciences Commission (SOPAC). Technical support provided by this agency has been valuable for the Solomon Islands in areas such as coastal erosion monitoring, while hydrodynamic studies of Hathorn Sound were fundamental to the establishment of the fisheries and industrial base at Noro in Western Province.

To address shared environmental concerns PICs established a South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP). While, among other things, this agency has given support for the establishment of the Solomon Islands limited capacity for environmental management, it is also the secretariat for an innovative regional treaty on the ocean environment: Convention for the Protection of the Natural Resources and Environment of the South Pacific Region.

1.6 Population Growth, Poverty and Development

Nearly a decade ago, an Australian National University study⁵ referred to the PICs: population growth "careering out of control". Widespread poverty, malnutrition, disease, unemployment and environmental degradation, was envisaged as a result. Later, in 1996, the East-West Center warned, "rapid population growth may be hampering the region's development efforts. ... Accommodating the additional numbers of people will pose

⁴ World Bank, 2000.

⁵ Cole, R.V. (ed), 1993.

major challenges to their governments and societies.”⁶

The Asian Development Bank recently warned⁷ of growing, and in some cases ‘hard core’, poverty among Pacific communities, families and individuals. Over forty percent of the population of its PIC members was considered ‘disadvantaged’ in 1998 as estimated by UNDP’s Human Poverty Index. In the ADB’s opinion, six key issues affect all of its Pacific members, in approximately the order listed below:

- “difficulties in providing good governance;
- population growth outpacing economic growth;
- declining educational performance;
- weakness of the private sector;
- breakdown of traditional support systems; and
- urban elite capturing most of the benefits from modernisation.”

All of these issues are evident in the Solomon Islands. The ADB also listed five “key development challenges” for the PICs:

- “disappointing macroeconomic and growth performance over the past decade;
- increasing poverty, particularly in Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu;
- continuing reliance on large Government investments ...;
- increasing environmental degradation; and
- little progress in strengthening the role of women in political, economic, and social spheres.”

Rapid population growth alongside rapid social change, makes it difficult to provide services, can frustrate employment plans, increases pressure to migrate, weakens social security, exacerbates domestic

⁶ Ahlberg, D., 1996.

⁷ ADB, 1999.

Box 1.1 – PIC Data Limitations as a Constraint to Analysis and Monitoring

In the mid 1990s, the difficulty of monitoring Sustainable Human Development (SHD) was assessed for Fiji (Chung 1995), which has a relatively well trained and staffed statistics office: “Although the institutional capacity for [data collection and] monitoring in Fiji is perhaps as good as anywhere in the South Pacific, official data often are unreliable or inaccurate, have important gaps or uneven coverage, are over-aggregated, and out-dated.” Official statistics said little about salient SHD issues, there was little continuity in data collection, data were not timely, and data were fragmentary and scattered. In addition, there was only limited analysis of the data that do exist: “Policy requires multiple data-sets (national, community and household) but linking available data-sets is nearly impossible. ... Lousy data give lousy results.”

In most other PICs, including Solomon Islands, capacity for data collection and analysis is even more limited. In 2000 the Pacific Islands Forum Economic Ministers’ Meeting (FEMM) resolved to strengthen the collection of economic statistics in the region. By mid 2001, assessments of statistical needs were underway in several PICS (but not yet in Solomon Islands) and the ADB was considering a Regional Technical Assistance programme (RETA) in economic statistics. In 2001, the Ministers noted the need for:

- * a coherent reform strategy for statistical operations in the region based on a systematic assessment of country needs;
- * establishing a regional capacity to coordinate and conduct and/or provide technical assistance for national censuses, and large-scale social and economic surveys (as PICs such as Solomon Islands are too small to justify, develop or sustain such services);
- * reducing the heavy demands of donor agencies on national statistical offices; and
- * improving the quality and coordination of the variety of regional databases.

The Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) is the regional agency with the mandate for the collection of statistical data and support to PICs but it lacks the resources to address all important PIC needs.

Sources: Papers from FEMM, June 2001; Chung, 1995; and Nov. 2001 discussions

violence and generally hampers development efforts.

NZODA has provided assistance in eight PICs, including the Solomon Islands, to address domestic violence, “a problem confronting every country visited [with] consistent themes across the region. For instance, there’s no agreed definition of what constitutes domestic violence, no legislation and a lack of legal frameworks or consistent practice for addressing the

issue. Alcohol is often an aggravating factor and victims withdraw many complaints before they get to court. ... Increasingly there is an expectation among women, church and Government leaders, as well as the police, that the situation must change.”

Rapid population growth, youth unemployment, urbanisation, poverty and other pressures are also reflected in the growth in youth gangs and street kids in urban centres through much of the region. The issue of disaffected and unemployed youth is increasingly coming to public and Government attention as an issue that must be addressed. This component of society made up a large part of the militias that recently engaged in armed conflict in the Solomon Islands. In that role they found an aberrant form of excitement, challenge and power to ward off the boredom and lack of direction of their former lives.

1.7 Data Limitations on Effective Analysis and Monitoring

A wide range of timely, accurate and consistent data is needed for the accurate assessment of key development issues, the status of natural resources and the environment, the formulation of development policies, the practical implementation of policies and programmes, and for monitoring results and impacts. The UN family and others have devoted considerable resources to the collection and analysis of data and to improving the statistical capacities of PICs and their regional organisations. However, much of the assistance has been ad hoc, short term and incomplete. There are pockets of good data for most PICs sufficient for ‘snapshots’ which indicate reasonably well the current development situation at the national level. In general, however, there are few consistent time series datasets that allow accurate indication of trends, and there are extremely limited breakdowns of available data of all sorts by gender, age, geographic location or income group.

UNDP notes that “social statistics are particularly hard to locate and difficult to

use because they are often unreliable or outdated. ... It leaves us without critical indicators of development.” Without better information on trends and more disaggregation, however, there is some degree of speculation regarding which issues are most serious (and require immediate attention) and which trends are genuinely improving. In the case of Solomon Islands, however, not even poor data can obscure the issues of concern: poor economic management, poor governance and social conflicts arising from uneven development.

Better data are needed at three levels:

- Primary, as in census surveys or health information systems;
- secondary, as in better and more relevant tabulations and compilations; and
- tertiary – more and better interpretation and policy analyses.

Box 1.1 argues for a better regional capacity to assist PICs improve the collection, analysis and use of data at national and sub-national levels. The regional organisations, too, are frustrated by inadequate data for analysis, though in some cases they, too, are not effective in compiling and analysing their own data. Effective implementation and monitoring of the regional trade agreement (PICTA), requires a considerable amount of disaggregated trade data, which neither the countries nor their regional organisations have the resources to routinely collect and interpret.

1.8 Development Assistance to the Pacific

Unlike most larger LDCs, those in the Pacific are extremely dependent on donor assistance for developing social and economic policies. Their ability to plan, and to implement these plans, depends to an unusual extent on the areas in which bilateral and multilateral donor funding is available both to the countries directly and for interventions through regional organisations and the donors’ own regional assistance programmes. There do

not appear to be any comprehensive recent analyses of trends in aid flows to the PICs overall or to the Solomon Islands in particular, in terms of quantity, sectoral concentration, thematic concentration, sources.

A common perception within the region is that donors shift toward new emphases every few years, that there is less continuity in programming assistance, and that there is less willingness to support specific national efforts for a period sufficient to make a difference. There is a perception of sudden switches between specific area of assistance, and shorter project cycles. For larger countries, where aid is a small percentage of GDP, this may not be a serious concern; for the PICs, it frustrates and, it could be argued, even in some cases undermines development efforts.

1.9 Some Conclusions

A number of the key national development issues facing the PICs, and the LDCs

among them, require cooperative regional or global action by the PICs in concert with the development assistance community as well as national action. Among the issues to be so addressed are:

- more effective provision and use of aid, better data and skills for the analysis and monitoring of social and economic development and of environmental change and the status of natural resources;
- understanding and effectively implementing those key treaties and international commitments to which the PICs are party;
- addressing the impacts of climate change, more effectively managing the resources of the vast Pacific; and
- addressing common key issues such as rapid population growth, internal migration, increasing poverty, disaffected youth, domestic violence, and limited progress in achieving gender equity.

CHAPTER 2: THE SOLOMON ISLANDS AND THE CCA PROCESS

This chapter summarises the current development situation in Solomon Islands, and the Government's policies and goals in the context of the emerging global consensus regarding the goals of development. Selected themes are identified, and a CCA framework to address both Solomon Islands and international concerns.

2.1 The Development Context

The island-nation's geographic fragmentation and distance from major global markets make the delivery of services, communication and trading difficult and expensive. Further, most of the islands are small and lack the resources to generate the income required for development. A large number of ethnic groups, at differing stages of social evolution from their original form to one which incorporates modern beliefs and practice, and 65 distinct indigenous languages shows it to be a country for which decentralised services are a necessity, although this raises the cost of services.

Poor policies and bad governance at the domestic level, and unfavourable international economic and political changes have often compounded the country's development challenges. Over the past three years civil unrest and armed conflict that started on Guadalcanal in late 1998 has exacerbated these challenges and set back development gains.⁸

Since independence from Britain on 7 July 1978, successive governments have attempted to address "development" with varying levels of commitment and degrees of success. Generally, however, the development trend – measured in terms of economic and social indicators – has not

⁸ See Chapter 6 for detailed discussions of the civil unrest and its social and economic costs.

Box 2.1 – Solomon Islands Facts

- Land area: 28,369 km²
- Exclusive Economic Zone area: 1.34 million km²
- Population: 450,000 (est. for 2001).
- Annual population growth rate: 2.8% (1986-99); 3.2% (1976-95).
- Population density (persons per km²): 13.
- Human Development Index ranking: 121.
- Life expectancy: 61 (male), 62 (female).
- Infant mortality: 66/1,000.
- Maternal mortality: 2.1/1,000
- GDP: SI\$339 million (1999); \$291 million (2000).
- GDP per capita about US\$138 (2000).
- Major Industries: logging, tuna fisheries, gold mining, palm oil, copra.
- Status of resources: forest (depleted); tuna (sustainable); inshore fisheries (at risk of over harvesting); minerals (only partly exploited).
- Indigenous languages: 65.
- Children attending primary school: 70%.
- Population with "safe water": 60%.
- Population with improved toilets: 23%.
- Population living in traditional houses: 65%.

been entirely positive. Although there was some economic growth in the early years after Independence, these gains were overshadowed by subsequent declines in the late 1990s (See Chapter 5.)

Although many social indicators have shown an overall improvement on a national basis for both females and males up until at least 1999, they are still well below target. They compare unfavourably (Box 2.1) with those of other countries with a resource base similar to that of the Solomon Islands but with a better governance record. Also, there is a widespread concern that urban centres, and especially the capital, Honiara, have benefited at the expense of rural areas. Data presented on a national basis obscure this unevenness but data disaggregated by Province has not been readily available.

The inclusion of the Solomon Islands in the list of Least Developed Countries (LDC) in 1993 is a prompt, if any is needed, of action

to address this unsatisfactory designation. This CCA provides the basis for a better understanding of the country's development needs, problems and potentials. It is meant to assist in attempts to place people at the centre of development.

The country's cash economy has been built on the export of timber (round logs only) and on the harvesting, processing and export of fish, copra, palm oil, and cocoa. Recently some export income from gold has been achieved. This base for exports has been severely disrupted by the closure, suspension and/or reduction of production following the unrest and conflict on Guadalcanal in 1999 and 2000 (see Box 6.3).

Currently, the Solomon Islands is economically under enormous pressure. The country has:

- negative economic growth;
- very low Government revenue;
- increasing public debt; and
- low levels of foreign reserves.

In short, the country is on the verge of bankruptcy. The country has been kept afloat, economically, through an inflow of foreign grants, especially from Taiwan. This includes a SI\$127 million loan (about US\$26 million) from the Export-Import (EXIM) Bank of Taiwan. About SI\$80 million (US\$16 million) from this loan was released in 2001. Most of it was used to pay "compensation" (in principle though not always in fact) to those who lost properties during the civil unrest. There have been widespread allegations of misappropriation of the money.

The manner in which the EXIM Bank funds have been handled is problematic because:

- the money is not being used for productive economic purposes;
- the conditions for repaying the loan have not been made public;

- it has fuelled a culture of "compensation" – a dependency on Government handouts; and
- a small number of powerful individuals appears to capture most of the benefit.

Although the economic decline is commonly attributed to the civil unrest on Guadalcanal, it is important to note that the country's economy had been under stress well before the Guadalcanal uprising.

2.2 National Development Goals and Objectives

The national development goals and objectives of all governments since Independence in 1978 have been consistent in that they have favoured establishing the economy on a base of large-scale, export-oriented resource development projects, that they approved of and encouraged foreign investment, and that they stated a determination to address the needs of rural people and to protect the environment. Many political parties have come, and some have since gone, or merged. Despite the similarity of approach, a fundamental difference in the political ideology behind development can be seen in the contrast between two dominant political forces of the past – the United Party and the People's Action Party. In short, the former promoted strongly centralist driven development, while the latter presumed to promote policies that afforded greater recognition to rural communities.

Accordingly, apart from this difference of emphasis the approach to development has been broadly the same. A typical statement of this approach is contained in the national development objectives of the 1985-1989 National Development Plan:

- Promote physical, mental and social wellbeing and the advancement of knowledge;
- Promote the equitable distribution of the benefits of development;

- Promote greater self-reliance and local control of the national economy;
- Strengthen and diversify the productive base and capacity of the local economy;
- Preserve the values, traditions and integrity of Solomon Islands society;
- Consolidate devolution and inter-governmental relations;
- Promote national unity within the diversity of the nation; and
- Promote international cooperation and world peace.

A new government came into office in December 2001 and is yet to announce its plan for recovery and development. However five crucial challenges have been identified:⁹

- "Reverse the decline in our country's production, exports and income;
- reform the management of the Government's finances: reduce expenditure, increase revenue and improve debt management;
- initiate a new deal for provinces and allocate resources more equitably;
- repair, upgrade and maintain our physical infrastructure; and
- revive programmes in our social sectors, particularly in health and education."

In presenting these challenges it was also stated that: "Firstly, we must make every effort to advance the peace process, remove the threat of weapons from our society, [and] restore confidence to return [ex-combatants] to their productive activities."

2.3 International Goals of Development

An important part of the mandate of the United Nations is to advocate for – and achieve international standards in – the recognition of human rights. The Government of the Solomon Islands has

⁹ Prime Minister's "100 days and beyond" speech, 22 February 2002.

made a number of commitments to international conventions or declarations. In recent years, these have included being signatory to, or participating in, the Decade for Education for All (1991), the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (1994); the Beijing Platform of Action (1995); and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (ratified in 1995). The Solomon Islands has not yet ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) but is a signatory to the 1995 Pacific Platform of Action (on women).

The main global conferences of the 1990s, and key global conventions, are described in Annex 2B and summarised in Box 2.2.¹⁰ The promotion of universal human rights can be controversial. Many societies, including the Solomon Islands, believe that few real

Box 2.2 – Some International Treaties and Conventions Signed by the Solomon Islands
(not all have been ratified)

- The World Summit Declaration on Children [1992];
- The Port Vila Declaration on population and Development [September 1993];
- The Pacific Regional Platform and the Noumea Declaration on Women [1994];
- Beijing Platform of Action for Women [1995];
- The International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action [1994];
- The Suva Declaration on Sustainable Human Development in the Pacific [1995];
- The Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

¹⁰ There has been one notable global conference since then: The UN General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on HIV/AIDS held in New York in June 2001. Among the agreed goals is development and implementation of multisectoral national strategies and financing plans (by 2003), integration of HIV/AIDS policies into mainstream national development policies (by 2003), and reduction of HIV/AIDS among 15-24 year-olds in badly affected countries by 25% (by 2010).

injustices exist in their own community. The discussion of these rights is nevertheless an important part of the development process; 'culture' and 'tradition' are generally not good reasons for maintaining discrimination or injustice.

In September 2000, over 150 Heads of State and of Government met for a Millennium Summit in New York to negotiate a Millennium Declaration committing the United Nations to achieving 'a just and lasting peace all over the world' and rededicating the organisation to 'respect for the equal rights of all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion.' The Declaration affirms that 'the equal rights and opportunities of women and men must be assured'; and states that 'prudence must be shown in the management of all living species and natural resources, in accordance with the precepts of sustainable development.' It calls on states to 'promote gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable;' 'combat all forms of violence against women and to implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;' and 'adopt in all our environmental actions a new ethic of conservation and stewardship.'

The various global conferences and treaties have resulted in a bewildering number of action plans and goals. The core common development goals which have emerged, and estimates of the Solomon Islands' progress in attaining them, are shown in Annex 2B. Annex 2A lists the Millennium Declaration Goals (MDGs)

Box 2.3 – Summary of MDGs and Solomons' Status	
Global Goals	Solomon Islands: Achievements & Challenges
Halve the proportion of people living in extreme poverty.	No poverty assessment has been carried out in Solomon Islands. "Extreme" poverty is believed not to exist in the Solomon Islands. A survey designed and initiated in 2000 to test this could not proceed because of civil unrest.
Halve the proportion of people suffering from hunger.	No data on this indicator are available for the Solomon Islands where hunger is not considered to be a significant problem – although there are troubling signs of some malnutrition.
Halve the proportion of people without access to safe water.	In 1999 62% of Solomon Islanders had access to a piped water supply.
Enrol all children in primary school. Achieve universal completion of primary schooling.	In 1999 65% of females and 66% of males in the 6-15 years age group attended school.
Empower women and eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education.	In 1999 the gender breakdown of the 5-29 years group enrolled in educational institutions was 54:46, male:female; ie female enrolments were 85% of those of males.
Reduce maternal mortality ratios by three-quarters.	Maternal mortality was reported to be 209 per 100,000 live births in 1999.
Reduce infant mortality rates by two thirds	In 1999 infant mortality rate was still at 66 per 1,000 live births.
Reduce under-five mortality rates by two-thirds.	Under-five mortality was only 7 per 1,000 live births in 1998.
Halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS	One (1) HIV case has been recorded in the Solomon Islands but no survey has been conducted.
Provide access for all who want reproductive health services.	Contraceptive prevalence was only 7% in 1999
Implement national strategies for sustainable development by 2005 to reverse the loss of environmental resources by 2015.	Solomon Islands National Environment Strategy (NEMS) prepared in 1991/92 has not been implemented. No Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan has been prepared.

agreed by the world's leaders. These have since become a key agenda item of the UN and a driving force of its reform process. The goals are time-based (achievement by 2015), measurable and often quite ambitious. A preliminary comment on status of attainment by the Solomon Islands is attached as Annex 2A with a summary in Box 2.3. In some cases, available data were inconsistent or too limited to allow accurate and reasonable estimates. Nevertheless, the Solomon Islands has the potential to meet some of the goals whereas the attainment of others may be unlikely without a strong commitment by the government and support of the development community.

Their status of and the Solomon Islands' involvement in other global treaties of relevance, such as the Kyoto Protocol on limiting greenhouse gas emissions, the Convention on the Law of the Sea, and several key regional agreements among members of the Pacific Islands Forum countries (mainly related to trade, environmental protection and fisheries management) are summarised in Annex 2D.

Ratification of agreements or treaties by the Solomon Islands usually requires specific legislation, which in turn often requires external assistance, as government legal human resources are extremely limited. Effectively implementing agreements such as the regional trade agreement to help the Solomon Islands achieve its goals for economic growth, trade growth and trade diversification, or regional and global conventions for the conservation and management of migratory fish species also require substantial assistance at both regional and national levels for analysis, monitoring, enforcing and other support.

Except for the country specific need to resolve the civil unrest, most international objectives correspond with national goals. The Solomon Islands Government has committed to a number of international conventions or declarations that involve, or are related to, human rights.

2.4 UN Assistance to the Solomon Islands

Most UN assistance has been directed to and through government ministries, including ILO's private sector business development promotion activities. UNDP struck a responsive chord with its investment in the recently concluded SIDAPP project, which targeted provinces and rural communities. It is the sidelining of these initiatives by earlier Government policies that is now recognised as having been fundamental to the conflict that the country has recently endured.

WHO has long been active in supporting the health system, and with some encouraging

results, including a marked reduction in the incidence of endemic malaria. The agency's contribution has been broadened through complementary inputs through UNICEF and UNFPA. UNIFEM has worked through local institutions in support of women's rights.

Most projects include a capacity-building component, something that is a continual concern as there is a high turnover of trained and experienced public servants, a constant outflow of qualified professionals, and too few qualified candidates to fill many of the gaps. Few NGOs have been directly involved in implementing assistance programmes. This reflects generally weak NGO capacity and some reluctance of the Government to allow a greater role for NGOs. This attitude may be relaxing.

The response of UN agencies to the recent conflict has brought about a shift in the pattern of assistance. UNDP has been active in establishing a Community Reconciliation and Reintegration Programme, and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and ILO are now represented in Honiara for the first time.

The effectiveness of development assistance has long been a concern of the Government. Although the Solomon Islands receives considerable aid per capita, there is a perception within the Government and among the public, shared by some donors, that too little of this has had a lasting benefit on the quality of life. On the other hand there is also a tendency among some in the Solomon Islands to treat development assistance as a "right" – a troubling sign of dependence.

2.5 The Solomon Islands CCA

The country assessment is "a country-based process for reviewing and analysing the national development situation and identifying the key issues as a basis for advocacy, policy dialogue and preparation of a United Nations Development

Assistance Framework (UNDAF)."¹¹ Under the UNDAF the work of the UN agencies will be coordinated. It is intended to bring "greater coherence to United Nations programmes of assistance at the country level . . . with common objectives and time frames in close consultation with governments."¹²

The main objective of the CCA is to achieve deeper knowledge of key development challenges among the partners involved in the CCA, based on a common analysis and understanding of the development situation of the country. This also serves as a basis to facilitate formulation of a UNDAF that sets common objectives and a common timeframe for UN-system actions. The secondary objectives are to:

- create a common information base of the activities of the UN funds and programmes that will reduce overlapping and duplication of assessment exercise by the different UN organisations and others; and
- provide an overview of the present level of national development and a framework for monitoring and measuring progress towards the achievement of sustainable human development objectives.

The Solomon Islands CCA was arranged by the office of the Suva-based UN Resident Co-ordinator and is part of a global UN initiative.

In the period November 2001 to February 2002 consultants were engaged to compile the Solomon Islands CCA, guided by a Working Group of staff of UN agencies. At a December 2001 meeting in Suva progress on the preparation of a draft CCA was reviewed and plans made for a workshop to be held in Honiara in February to consider a

draft. For purposes of validation a draft Solomon Islands Government officials and representatives of local NGOs then considered CCA at a two day CCA/UNDAF workshop in Honiara, 20th-21st February, 2002.

Consultations were held with development partners, especially the SIG, NGOs and UN agencies operating in the Solomon Islands. A seven days in-country research period was devoted to the collection of data and to consultation with SIG officials, including those of the Ministry of National Planning and Development, the Ministry of Provincial Government and Rural Development, the Ministry of Finance, the Prime Minister's Office, and the Central Bank of Solomon Islands (CBSI). E-mail consultations were conducted with ADB, The World Bank, and SPREP, and discussions held with the vice-Chancellor of the University of the South Pacific, the Pacific Concerns Resource Centre and WWF (South Pacific) in Suva.

Discussions were also held in the Solomon Islands with civil society representatives: non-government organisations (NGOs), church representatives, women's organisations, trade unions and ordinary people to gain insight into the country's development issues, problems and potential.

2.6 Data for Planning and Monitoring Development

The CCA report is affected by the inadequacy of data. This was caused by either the unavailability of the data or the reluctance of officials to supply data that were regarded as sensitive. Much of this sensitivity was about issues and information related to the social unrest and the subsequent armed conflict. Some data that is normally routinely collected, such as by the Solomon Islands National Statistics Office (NSO) has not been collected since 1999 owing to the disruptions on Guadalcanal. This loss has been partly offset by useful information compiled by UNDP, UNICEF,

¹¹ United Nations, Common Country Assessment (CCA), Guidelines, April 1999, p.2.

¹² Action 10 a) of the Report of the Secretary-General "Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform"; A/51/950.

UNFPA, WHO, ILO, and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

In spite of these limitations the analysis and conclusions provide a reliable basis for understanding the Solomon Islands' development situation, and the issues, problems and potentials. General observations, experience and knowledge of the country have been used where data is weak or lacking.

2.7 Country Assessment - Principal Themes

During a CCA/UNDAF workshop, UN agencies discussed an earlier draft of the Solomon Islands CCA and possible new issues to be covered. This included consideration of:

- the major development goals and targets which have emerged from key global conferences and treaties over the past decade, particularly as expressed in the Millennium Summit of 2000;
- current UN assistance and the extent to which this addresses national development needs;
- cross-cutting issues or themes (gender, environment, equity of access to services, and issues specific to island developing countries); and
- regional commitments entered into by Solomon Islands through treaties or as articulated by the Pacific Islands Forum or other regional Action Plans endorsed by Solomon Islands.

The selection of CCA themes for the Solomon Islands was based on:

- consultations with the government, and consideration of recent government policy;
- documentation on key development issues of concern to the Solomon Islands;
- discussions with NGOs and civil society organisations, development agencies,

and others familiar with Solomon Islands;

- discussions with UN agencies on those key issues facing Solomon Islands which are within their mandates and could – or should – be addressed; and
- ideas and information that emerged from a workshop on the draft CCA in Honiara, 20th-21st February 2002.

The Common Country Assessment process does not attempt to assess the entire range of development concerns. Rather, it identifies key issues as a basis for advocacy, policy dialogue with the country and for preparation of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). The UNDAF is a planning framework for the development operations of the UN system at the country level (in this case, a UN "business plan" for Solomon Islands) and includes common objectives, common strategies for assistance, a common timeframe for design, delivery and follow-up, and a framework for programme resources.

Accordingly, while the CCA covers a wide range of development issues it brings a focus to those areas in which the UN might best assist Solomon Islands with development. The process of organising and carrying out the CCA is further described in Annex 3.

Conceptually, the framework for this document is built upon:

- the reality that no lasting progress can be made until the weapons in public hands are taken out of circulation, there is a return to pre-1998 levels of law and order and confidence in the Police service is restored;
- the primacy of people-centred and equitable development and an acknowledgement of widespread concern in the Solomon Islands that this has not been the focus of past development efforts;

- the fact that the difficulty of access to resources under customary tenure frustrates development and that new approaches that give "land owners" more confidence, more equity and more "say" in the use of their resources are needed;
- the recognition that Solomon Islands has decided upon a development path based on closer integration with the regional and global economies, expanded and diversified trade,
- an acceptance of the fact that the Solomon Islands has chosen to change to a federal form of government and to spread development more widely across the island nation;
- the expectation of a major improvement in governance and significant roles for the private sector and for civil society;
- the knowledge that, as a nation of islands, Solomon Islands cannot meet its development objectives without particular, and more effective, attention to protecting, conserving and managing its land and sea environment, resources, and biodiversity;
- the understanding that continuing efforts are needed to ensure access to safe water and sanitation, to basic health services, and to shelter (with particular attention to the need to maintain supplies of traditional building materials) if development progress in the Solomon Islands is not to be compromised;
- the appreciation that some of the constraints and opportunities facing Solomon Islands can only be effectively addressed through co-operative action at the regional level;
- the need for well designed, pragmatic assistance which does not overwhelm the limited local administrative capacity but augments it (and includes mechanisms for effective monitoring); and
- the understanding that the UN system must work effectively and cooperatively with the wider donor community to address the issues facing Solomon Islands.

Three broad themes emerged from the process:

- More equitable access to sustainable development opportunities.
- Governance, security and human rights.
- Improved access, quality and delivery of basic services to all sections of the community.

Reaching across all themes are the essential development pre-requisites of law and order, security and reconciliation – matters that were forcefully put forward by Solomon Islanders at the Honiara workshop of 21st-22nd February 2002. These themes are presented and their components described in Chapter 8.

CHAPTER 3: RESOURCES, ENVIRONMENT AND BIODIVERSITY

3.1 Knowledge of Natural Resources

As part of preparations for Solomon Islands' independence, the Government of the United Kingdom funded a detailed study of land resources that involved the acquisition of soil, climatic, land use, vegetation and topographical data as a basis for an analysis from which a number of "Agricultural Opportunity Areas" was identified.¹³ In the late 1980s AusAID funded a broad assessment of forest resources. Detailed estimates of timber stocks are left to logging companies to undertake (sometimes done) and report to the Forestry Department (in the absence of independent verification). No comprehensive inventory or assessment of marine resources has been undertaken although some understanding has been built up from stock-specific studies such as a regional skipjack tuna tagging programme conducted over many years through the South Pacific Community.

A good understanding of the nation's geology was established through U.K. funded survey, analysis and mapping beginning in 1950 – primarily as a basis for assessing mineral prospects. Prospecting companies are licensed to operate in the Solomon Islands on condition that they provide reports on their activities and findings. The returns of information are far better than those from loggers and a useful body of mineral resource information has accumulated.

There has been a major loss of traditional knowledge arising from a weakening of the traditional education system and from an implicit disrespect for traditional knowledge in comparison with that learned in schools. However, much that is relevant for resource

management remains and very little of this has been documented.¹⁴

There are important gender differences in traditional knowledge. In Marovo, for instance, while men possess the widest and most detailed knowledge of the marine environment in general, women have unsurpassed knowledge of the nearshore zone and its fauna of shellfish and crustaceans. Since women usually gut the fish catches back in the village they have developed an intimate knowledge of the reproductive cycles of important food fishes – information that is important for fisheries management.¹⁵

While the primary rainforest is generally the domain of men, women better understand secondary vegetation and garden areas. Old women are the gardening counterparts of master fishermen. They possess a deep and detailed knowledge of the cultivation of numerous varieties of staple crops. This is recognised in the Solomon Islands, where the Agriculture Department has put some emphasis on the role of women extension officers.

The effectiveness of development project interventions can be enhanced where traditional knowledge is recognised and accessed, and the holders of that knowledge are given due recognition.

3.2 Living Marine Resources

Not surprisingly for an archipelagic nation, fisheries resources have high importance – first as a vitally important component of the subsistence base. A 1983 National Statistics Office survey reported an average per capita fish consumption of 25.7 kg per year. A

¹³ Hansell, J.R.F and Wall, J.R.D., 1974. This is a neglected source of very valuable information.

¹⁴ Examples include Baines, 1989; Henderson and Hancock, 1988; Kwa'ialoa and Burt, 2001.

¹⁵ Baines and Hviding, 1990.

subsequent unpublished 1988 survey indicated annual per capita consumption of 22.4 kg of fish and 12 kg of shellfish¹⁶. Total seafood consumption would have been the total of these (34.4 kg) plus other nutritious seafood such as marine worms, seaweed, crabs and crayfish.

A measure of coastal communities' heavy dependence on marine resources is evident in 1999 Census data, as calculated and presented in Table 3.1.¹⁷ It should be noted however, that there are few full-time fishers, that individuals who fish are also agriculturists.

Table 3.1:
Marine resources taken by households for subsistence (% of households for each Province)

Province	fish	shellfish
Choiseul	86	46
Western	90	48
Isabel	76	59
Central	87	72
Rennell-Bellona	83	33
Guadalcanal	61	23
Malaita	51	37
Makira-Ulawa	83	68
Temotu	87	69
Honiara	4	<1
Solomon Islands (incl. Honiara)	63	40
Solomon Islands (<i>not</i> incl. Honiara)	70	45

Since the proximity of these resources and the limited investment needed to exploit them lends itself to small-scale commercial development, village communities have been encouraged by Government to utilise these resources as sources of cash. The 1999 Census reveals some of the results shown in Table 3.2.¹⁸

A major thrust of fisheries policy during the 1980s and 1990s has been the establishment of Rural Fisheries Centres. To provide the

Table 3.2:
Marine resources taken by households for trade (% of households for each Province)

Province	fish	shells	Beche de mer
Choiseul	39	9	15
Western	46	14	16
Isabel	31	7	17
Central	45	13	15
Rennell-Bellona	25	10	9
Guadalcanal	17	4	1
Malaita	18	7	7
Makira-Ulawa	19	5	7
Temotu	40	15	24
Honiara	1	<1	<1
Solomon Islands (incl. Honiara)	25	7	9
Solomon Islands (<i>not</i> incl. Honiara)	28	8	10

services and backup needed by artisanal fishermen (fisheries extension services, ice for preserving catches, assistance in forwarding catches to Honiara markets) thirty Centres have been established, of which twenty-one were still in operation or under rehabilitation in 1998. Most are now under the control of Provincial governments. Both central and provincial governments have had difficulty in making these centres function properly. Some have been leased to private enterprise and later returned to Provincial control. Two phases of an EU Rural Enterprises Project have been based on (some of) these centres, and a third phase has been approved for implementation.

Fisheries resources have also been a major contributor to export earnings through tuna. An industrial skipjack tuna fishery was established in 1971. In 1998 116,438 tonnes¹⁹ was taken by the domestic fleet, of which a proportion was canned for the domestic market (300,000 cases annually) and for the export market (65,000 cases per annum). Two locally based companies had been operating pole-and-line and purse seine vessels - Soltai Fishing and Processing

¹⁶ Leary, 1991.

¹⁷ Based on data in 1999 Census table B6.17.

¹⁸ Based on data in 1999 Census table B6.17.

¹⁹ S.I. Dept of Fisheries data.

Company Ltd²⁰ (SFPCL, known as "Soltai"), and National Fisheries Developments Ltd (NFD). A third company, "Solgreen", operated a long lining operation.

In 1998 Solomon Taiyo Ltd (now Soltai) had reached a peak, operating 28 catcher vessels, four purse seiners and a busy cannery. At that time it employed 2,300, a majority of these being women cannery workers. It was producing a high quality canned product that met exacting EU quality standards and fetched good prices through contracts with Sainsbury's in the UK. Only Soltai and NFD now operate, though at much reduced capacity as a consequence of the conflict. CBSI data reveals the extent of the decline of the industry from the peak year of 1998 – a drop in 1999 to 45,090 tonnes; 2000, 21,163 tonnes; and 2001, 17,699.²¹

Both companies have shifted their operational bases to Noro, Western Province, a more secure location. Soltai currently operates 12 catcher boats, has 680 employees, has resumed exports of canned and smoked tuna and has an export market for fishmeal. The company is in urgent need of a purse seiner to boost catches to satisfy market demand for its products. Production is at risk from the fact that some catcher boats are in need of replacement.²²

Despite its success in generating employment and in earning foreign exchange the industry has been in a precarious economic state for some years because of low international market prices.

Foreign fishing vessels also take tuna from the Solomon Islands EEZ. The Solomon Islands gains licence revenue from their operations. These vessels are excluded from

fishing in the Main Group Archipelago (MGA). This area, the richest tuna area in the archipelago, has been designated a pole-and-line fishing preserve because this fishery is locally based and uses labour intensive methods which generate and sustain employment. Also, its catches can be labelled "dolphin free" and so fetch higher prices. These are elements of a sensible tuna management regime

This is consistent with the innovative sustainability and "precautionary principle" aspects of the Solomon Islands Fisheries Act and an excellent National Tuna Management and Development Plan ("Tuna 2000"). The stated objective of the Fisheries Act 1998 is "to ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable utilisation of the fishery resources for the benefit of Solomon Islanders". It requires that:

- marine resources be developed in a sustainable manner;
- conservation must allow for optimal utilisation of the marine resources; and
- there must be a balance between conservation and development of the marine resources.

Feeding into the offshore tuna fishery is an inshore bait fishery conducted at several locations by the pole-and-line tuna fleet, harvesting some 2000 mt annually, mostly of anchovies (*Stolephorus*) and sprats (*Spratelloides*).²³ Based on limited data, this is believed to be around the maximum sustainable yield. Bait fishing grounds are rotated as catches decline. Baitfishing grounds boundaries are delimited by the Department of Fisheries in consultation with "reef owners" and used as a basis for determining payment of baitfish "royalties".

Prior to the recent downturn, Soltai had been paying an annual total of about half a million dollars a year in baitfish royalties to

²⁰ Up until late 2001, the company was Solomon Taiyo Ltd, a joint venture between Solomon Islands and a Japanese company. The Japanese equity was then purchased with funds from Taiwan and transferred to Western Province.

²¹ CBSI Monthly Report for December 2001.

²² Personal communication: General Manager, Soltai.

²³ These small fish are used as live bait, thrown from catcher boats to attracting skipjack tuna towards the vessel.

village communities. The company was also contributing of the order of a million dollars a year in "in kind" contributions, in the form of fish for feasts, and building materials for community ventures.²⁴

A foreign entrepreneur has conducted small-scale prawn aquaculture successfully on a trial commercial basis in north Guadalcanal. Although the ecological conditions required for small-scale aquaculture are present, the social basis for sustained effort is not. A generally satisfactory supply of wild stock removes much of the incentive for aquaculture for subsistence or small-scale commerce.

There is strong interest in the prospect of black pearl farming, based on excellent results from a trial at Nusatupe, near Gizo, which produced high quality pearls in a much shorter period than those of the established Cook Islands industry. Central Government envisages a central industrial scale pearl farm linked in with small local enterprises.

A good quality marine research capability had been built up in the country through a research station of the International Center for Living Aquatic Resources Management (ICLARM) and the Institute of Marine Resources of the University of the South Pacific (USP). Malaita Eagle Force fighters destroyed the Guadalcanal headquarters of ICLARM, and USP withdrew its Institute staff. This is a serious blow to prospects for the development of the country's marine resources.

The ADB has recognised that fisheries is a priority area, given its importance to the economy, as well as for food security. A 1999 ADB-financed Fisheries Sector Study identified key policy and institutional issues, as well as potential investments. The Bank saw as an immediate concern the need to optimise revenue generation from the fisheries sector and to rationalise the

licensing scheme under the Tuna Management Plan and the 1998 Fisheries Act. In the medium term, a priority would be to build the capacity of the Fisheries Division to formulate and implement sound policies and programmes. A loan for a Fisheries Management and Development Project of US\$6.0 million (including a GEF-funded marine biodiversity conservation component) was proposed for 2000 but has been stalled by the continuing uncertainty in the country.

Other potential rests in game fishing and in prospects for establishing reef and lagoon sports fishing. This would fit neatly with some of the existing "village stay" and bungalow based ecotourism enterprises in the Solomons.

Fisheries development, for which the resources are widespread through the country, lends itself to decentralisation. There are, however, many constraints to be overcome. These include the difficulty of money management resulting from the absence of rural banking facilities in most of the country, the fact that few individuals are interested in full time fishing due to the distractions of other commitments; and problems of catch preservation and transport to market. The last problem is one that has been addressed by rural fisheries centres, with mixed success.

3.3 Land Resources – Forestry

Contrary to the rationality displayed in the approach to tuna resource development, despite the noble intent of Government policy over the years (... "wise management and utilisation of forest resources to maintain their productivity and develop their potential contribution to the national economy and welfare of the people")²⁵ uncontrolled and destructive logging has been a long-standing and serious problem, with irreparable damage being done to the

²⁴ Personal communication: General Manager, Soltai.

²⁵ Forest Policy Statement for the Solomon Islands, 1985.

environment, the forests and the economic future. Enforcement efforts by Forestry staff have been compromised by political interference and foreign logging company investment proposals of dubious quality have been approved. The Solomon Islands has been easy prey for companies seeking few restraints and maximum profit.²⁶

Considerable aid support has been provided to help establish proper controls to ensure sustainable harvest levels, to maximise the capture of resource rents, and to reinvest the resultant cash flows prudently. A Timber Control Unit established in the Department of Forestry in the 1980s with AusAID assistance was initially effective but was not given the resources, encouragement and protection²⁷ needed to implement the Code of Practice for Timber Harvesting, and to act on infringements of logging licence conditions. Massive amounts of revenue have been lost through tax exemptions and remissions provided to loggers by the Minister of Finance.²⁸ The situation is dismal, despite the fact that the Government has for years received World Bank and AusAID assistance in the formulation and implementation of a sound forestry sector strategy and policy framework.

While it has been all too easy for foreign companies to enter onto customary land to "mine" trees it has proved difficult for the Forestry Division to encourage and support re-planting on customary land (Box 3.1). The reasons are both traditional and historical. Tradition allows that whoever is permitted to plant is entitled to harvest the resulting produce, no matter on whose land it is grown. If Forestry staff are engaged in replanting then it may be perceived that the harvest will be the Government's. History also hinders. There is a history of land having been alienated from customary control in

Box 3.1 – Logging on customary land

A decision to log is momentous. Unwisely, it usually involves all of a landowning group's forest. If only a portion were so allocated, options on the future use of the remaining forest could be kept open for decisions by a different generation facing different circumstances. Logging liquidates a resource that may have served a lineage for many centuries, that harbours all of that line's historical links with the past, and that has been traditionally viewed as a resource borrowed from future generations. The logging of a landholding group's forests may be the most dramatic development impact they will experience. Its environmental and social consequences can be very debilitating.

Source: Baines, G.B.K., 1989. *Traditional Resource Management in the Melanesian South Pacific: A Development Dilemma*.

practice, even though not in law, through the planting of long-term crops such as coconut. Further, there remains a memory of a 1960s Government initiative to establish a National Forest Estate by persuading landowner representatives to give up their timber harvesting rights, but then proceeding to assume full ownership.²⁹

Times change, and so do perceptions. Some recent developments offer hope that reforestation and village based community forestry may be welcomed by Solomon Islanders. There is a surge of interest in replanting trees. Most advanced are the activities of communities replanting logged areas of North New Georgia under the auspices of the Christian Fellowship Church. In providing support for this and for others in the area, AusAID has discovered that the enthusiasm for this sort of activity has spread to other places like Tangarare, West Guadalcanal.³⁰

3.4 Land Resources – Agriculture

Subsistence agriculture continues to underpin life for most Solomon Islanders. For a long time, however, subsistence

²⁶ Bennett, J. provides discussion and detail on this destructive field of activity.

²⁷ Work in the field can be dangerous as TCU staff often face threats and intimidation from logging company staff.

²⁸ See 5.4 for a discussion of revenue leakage.

²⁹ Some communities of Alu Island, Tetemara area, Allardyce area and Vanikoro were dispossessed in this way – and remain so.

³⁰ Solomon Islands Forestry Management Project. Bi-Monthly Report, November-December 2001.

production has been mixed with income earning objectives. Some data from the 1999 Census shown in Table 3.3 help to quantify this.³¹

Table 3.3:
Proportion of households in each Province engaged in trade in agricultural products

Province	coconut	cocoa	rice	betelnut
Choiseul	65	7	6	36
Western	56	12	3	31
Isabel	55	25	6	52
Central	47	11	3	61
Rennell-Bellona	40	<1	<1	<1
Guadalcanal	46	36	1	36
Malaita	35	26	2	25
Makira-Ulawa	59	30	3	36
Temotu	56	10	6	49
Honiara	1	<1	<1	<1
Solomon Islands (incl. Honiara)	43	20	3	31
Solomon Islands (<i>not</i> incl. Honiara)	47	23	3	35

Ignoring the figures for urban Honiara, it is seen that the staple cash crop, coconut (sold as copra), in 1999 involved 47% of all households. In times of low copra prices there are many who, if they have alternative income sources such as fishing, neglect their coconut stands. It can be confidently stated that the number of households that are in a position to prepare and sell copra is well above 50%. The figures are indicative of quite a strong uptake of cocoa as a cash crop. Rice is a recently introduced crop. Copra and cocoa have been marketed through the Commodities Export Marketing Authority (CEMA). This Statutory Authority has failed and for some time has not had funds to purchase farmers' produce. This means that data in Table 3.3 almost certainly understate the usual involvement in copra and cocoa. Data for betelnut is

provided to show how important a source of household cash this crop has become.

The subsistence producer has been the backbone of the agriculture sector for a long time, copra having been first produced over a hundred years ago. There are now few surviving large scale copra plantations established in colonial times – except those managed by Russell Islands Plantation Estate Ltd., another Statutory Authority that has failed in recent years.

A large plantation of oil palm on Guadalcanal has been a source of palm oil exports that have generated significant foreign exchange. This is one of the enterprises closed as a result of the recent conflict (Chapter 6 has more detail). A second plantation oil palm venture on Vangunu Island, Western Province has yet to mature.

MEF militia destroyed the main centre for agricultural research in the Solomon Islands, at Dodo Creek, near Honiara. This is a serious setback for both cash crop production and for improved subsistence agriculture.

Following the demonstrated success of beef cattle raising on coconut plantations during the colonial period the cattle industry was identified as a suitable area of agricultural endeavour to promote. A very considerable investment of aid funds³² was made from the mid seventies up until the mid 1980s, complemented by ADB loan funds. For a time, cattle numbers increased, but disinterest and poor governance have stalled development on this front.

3.5 Mineral Resources

The lure of gold is what brought the Spaniard Mendana to the Solomons in 1567. The archipelago "Solomon Islands" had been named in reference to the mythical rich gold mines of King Solomon. Four hundred years later the country's first mine was

³¹ Figures based on data compiled in Table B6.17 of the 1999 Census.

³² Australia, U.K., and N.Z.

opened – a gold mine at Gold Ridge, Guadalcanal.

A number of areas in the country are prospective for epithermal gold. Most of the prospecting for this commodity in recent years has been in Western Province, targeting Fauro (Shortlands), Paraso (Vella Lavella) the Masi crater (North New Georgia), and the Kele River (Vangunu, Marovo). Gold deposits have been confirmed in areas adjacent to the Gold Ridge mine.

Contrary to earlier geological dogma a diamond prospect has been identified in Malaita. Nickel deposits at San Jorge, and Tataka (Isabel) have attracted attention, and sub-seabed stratigraphy suggestive of petroleum has been identified in Iron Bottom Sound, Manning Strait, and between Choiseul and Shortlands. None of these has yet been proven as commercially viable.

3.6 Resource Tenure and Management

Despite a hundred years of attempts by outsiders to wrest control from the customary "land owners", eighty seven percent of the land area of the Solomon Islands is under customary resource tenure. Much of the land was taken early in the 20th century on the basis that it was judged to be unoccupied and, so, "wasteland" was returned to the customary owners after the intervention of the fondly-remembered Philips Commission of Enquiry. Land taken earlier for plantations (mostly for coconut) remained classified as "alienated land" at the time of Independence. Much of this has since been returned to the original owners. Yet some customary land remains trapped in alienated tenure. This includes land taken as national forest estate over thirty years ago.

The Tuhaika Report, the principles of which now constitute the foundation for the establishment of a federal government, provides for all alienated land (already transferred to Provincial control) "... to be returned either to the traditional owners or their descendants (first option) or to the

*States which can hand them down to customary landowners, where appropriate (second option)."*³³

Under current Solomon Islands law, following the British example mineral rights are vested in the State. The Tuhaika Report stipulates that:

"All the natural resources; i.e. forests, minerals, reefs and islets off the foreshore also belong to the customary land owners."

but:

The Federal Capital area (Honiara) and Provincial Headquarters land areas may be exempted ..."

The return of alienated land is something that will be welcomed by dispossessed land owning groups. This opens a new opportunity for resource development with traditional owners leasing land to resource developers (see 3.7).

A typical traditional resource management system is a community-based, participatory system for the integrated management of both land and sea. It is based on social relationships among people, and is expressed as rights to exploit resources.

In promoting community commercial development of land and of fisheries stocks no attention has been given to what a community needs to keep reserved for its subsistence needs. A common impact of localised commercial development is a depletion of resources needed for local consumption, with the already disadvantaged becoming more so. Commercial development of communal resources also tends to exacerbate income gaps as the relatively advantaged are better placed to exploit commercial opportunities (a fisheries example being possession of outboard motor powered boats, that only a minority can afford).

³³ page 98

This problem was addressed in Western Province's Strategy for Development (1985) in the form of a policy for "subsistence reserves" of fisheries resources to be delimited in each customary fishing area before allocation of any surplus resources for small scale commercial development. However, this idea has not been implemented anywhere in the country.

Nor have women's roles been fully recognised. In the case of fishing, men's role may be more adventurous but women's gleaning activities on reefs, in shallow lagoons and along the foreshore make a vitally important contribution to nutrition – and particularly during periods of rough weather when fishing is not possible. Women have the leading role in food crop production.

Overfishing is already a primary concern in coastal fisheries even though not in all areas. Wherever there has been access to receptive markets, overexploitation has inevitably followed. Harvests for export typically expand until the resource is depleted, or a drop in the market price provides a disincentive. Solomon Islands fisheries for bêche-de-mer, mother-of-pearl, giant clams, and other sedentary species typically undergo "boom-and-bust" cycles.³⁴

Through the 1980s, the primary sources of cash income for coastal villagers in the Solomon Islands were trochus shell and copra (dried coconut flesh). Copra prices, however, were depressed and, where the alternative of fishing for trochus was available, a typical villager response was to concentrate on that. The result of over harvesting was a subsequent rapid decline in trochus stocks after 1990. However, a renewed interest in bêche-de-mer emerged in 1991. Not only was this a convenient alternative source of income, but there had been a surge in prices for this product. Again, a steady production decline followed, culminating in a collapse of interest as stocks became depleted. A similar sequence

is evident with respect to pearl shell. This pattern of "boom, bust and ban" reflects an inability to manage stocks for sustainability.

It is clear that inshore fisheries resources are of vital importance for the subsistence element of the village life that is destined to continue for some time. It is also clear that this "subsistence resource" can be quickly depleted. Land for food production has long been a problem for some communities as the nearer (and often more fertile) land has been planted to long-term coconuts. Women bear the brunt of the costs this imposes, through increased distances to walk to food gardens and to walk back carrying produce and firewood. More attention is needed in planning and resource management to ensure a sustainable basic supply of food for all. This is a case that clearly demonstrates the contribution women can make to planning and resource management.

3.7 Adaptive Resource Management Regimes

Small kinship-based groups living in villages have long managed their own resources. It is no surprise that attempts to impose a western-style "top-down" approach to resource management and conservation has been ineffective. The resources and ecosystems are dispersed over a vast area with poor transportation and communication infrastructure. The financial, technical, and human resources required to centrally manage them far exceed those that could ever be made available to the relevant agencies.

The traditional land and sea resource management regimes of the Solomon Islands are community based, and participatory. They are an expression of social relationships among people, expressed as rights to exploit resources. In essence, an area and its resources are owned by a "Corporation", the directors of which are "primary rights holders" who collectively have the authority to allocate use rights (through the Chairman, the spokesman for the line). Ordinary members

³⁴ Discussed in Huber and Baines, 2000.

are those who hold "secondary" rights. Such rights may be inherited, or they may be gained through marriage to a "primary" rights holder, through approved residence in a village located on the "Corporation's" land, or for other reasons.^{35, 36}

Customary land and sea tenure systems, though ancient in origin and constant in principle, have changed. Much of this change is positive since it demonstrates a capacity to adapt to new circumstances.³⁷ This gives hope that further adaptation is possible – provided it is accompanied by a more enlightened approach from "the other side". *Rigid insistence on forms of tenure, management, and development assistance developed elsewhere could bring about failure.* Solomon Islanders noted how the enthusiasm of the World Bank for registration of customary land in neighbouring PNG generated major public opposition, and an eventual back down.

The best approach is for governments to provide the legal and administrative framework to support traditional management systems.³⁸ The Solomon Islands Fisheries Act, 1998 has provision for community based marine area management plans though the opportunity to do this has not been advertised.

Development on customary land and in customary sea is achievable through carefully developed adaptive management regimes that ensure that benefits are equitably shared among stakeholders. Sustainable development of resources under customary tenure requires that:

- resources will be carefully assessed with a view to determining and making provision for subsistence needs before commercial quotas are established;

³⁵ Baines, 1995.

³⁶ Admittedly, this is a simplified presentation that obscures important cultural distinctions and represents a "western" perspective. For a discussion of these points see Burt, 1994.

³⁷ An example from Marovo is presented in Hviding and Baines, 1994.

³⁸ This argument is advanced in Baines, 1995.

- traditional knowledge will be respected and used as a basis for resource management; and
- both men and women have recognised and respected roles in the use and management of land and sea resources.

The intention of the Solomon Islands Government is that federalism will be accompanied by a return of most alienated land to the original customary owners. This is another area where a flexible and adaptive approach is needed. In those States where there is alienated land such as that which was taken under the guise of "national forest estate" this land is viewed by the Provinces as one of their key development opportunities. There will be a temptation to try to keep control of that land.

However, all stakeholders can participate and benefit. It would not be difficult to develop a leasing model for management of such land along these lines:

- the original owners regain ownership on condition that they lease some or all of the land back to the State for use according to conditions agreed by the owners and the State;
- the owners receive periodic lease payments and other benefits;
- procedures and mechanisms are in place to make it possible for the owners to monitor and report on the use of their land and on any social or environmental changes of concern; and
- any "downstream" resource owners or users have opportunities to report their concerns.

3.8 Environmental Management

Most of the country's rural population continue a heavy dependence on the natural environment for their food, medicines and building materials – and the nutritional status of urban dwellers is boosted by occasional contributions of food by their rural kin.

Conspicuous environmental problems (Box 3.2) have arisen from extremely poor logging practice. There is very little control of the industry by a Forestry Division which, though it is backed by legislation, and equipped with trained staff is continually hampered by pressure from corrupt individuals of influence who protect the perpetrators of uncontrolled logging. The once rich forest areas of the Solomon Islands have been depleted by severe reduction of forest canopy (even though so-called "selective logging" is carried out) extensive disturbance to fragile soils, and sedimentation of water bodies. This rampaging form of "tree mining" is rapidly depleting the country's poorly studied biodiversity.

The country's mangrove forests, though not as rich in biodiversity as those of neighbouring Papua New Guinea are still among the richest in the world in terms of species diversity. Mangrove forests are important as nursery and feeding grounds for fisheries and as a habitat for diverse species of flora and fauna. Mangrove

**Box 3.2 –Environmental Issues
in the Solomon Islands**

- Population growth;
- lack of environmental information, lack of environmental awareness and lack of institutional capabilities;
- threats to terrestrial flora, fauna and ecosystems - loss of biodiversity;
- degradation and over harvesting of coastal and marine resources;
- pollution, waste disposal and peri-urban issues;
- land degradation issues;
- pesticides and other chemicals; and
- mining.

Source: Solomon Islands State of the Environment Report, 1991.

destruction has occurred in Solomon Islands in association with clearance for coconut plantations, for solid waste dumps close to towns, during development of ports, wharves, roads, seawalls and other coastal

infrastructure; in the use of mangrove for firewood for cooking and for drying copra and bêche-de-mer.³⁹

The marine environment and its biodiversity are also under threat through overfishing, sedimentation from soil erosion caused by deforestation and farming, and pollution from sewage near urban areas. Other threats arise from dynamite fishing, the use of natural and synthetic poisons for stunning fish, small mesh gill net fishing, reef gleaning where stones are broken or turned on the reef, and incidental catch of non-target species ("by-catch").

Luckily agrochemicals have not been widely accepted by farmers so the risk from these is concentrated where there are industrial scale activities, including oil palm plantations. It is fortunate that an earlier widespread application of the dangerous chemical DDT for mosquito control was phased out in the early 1990s. Its long-lived residues will still be present but the extent of this has not been assessed.

Only limited measures have been undertaken to address environmental concerns. An Environment and Conservation Division was established in 1984 but has had minimal impact. A Bill providing for environmental assessment was drafted in 1992 but no government has had sufficient interest to introduce it into Parliament. A Wildlife Protection Bill is in a similar state of limbo. Representatives of a wide range of sectors enthusiastically participated in the formulation of a National Environmental Management Strategy (NEMS) for which technical assistance was provided by the ADB through the South Pacific Regional Environmental Programme (SPREP), 1991-1992. However, since no government has shown lasting interest in it, its priority programmes remain a "wish list".

Environmental impact assessment (EIA) guidelines have been formulated, and training carried out for both private sector

³⁹ WWF, n.d., p.13.

and Government staff. The first such training was in 1978 and the latest, 1999. Until EIA is seen as an integral and ultimately cost-saving accompaniment of development the most that can be said is that a few individuals have had some exposure to the subject.

The inability of decision-makers to appreciate the importance of environmental and biodiversity protection for the future of the country is a reflection of the extent to which formal education has divorced them from the keen environmental understanding which was an integral part of a life directly dependent on natural resources. Most Solomon Islanders continue to depend on resources from their immediate environment – and the fact that the country is heavily dependent on its natural resources as a basis for economic growth is an added reason for embracing environmental management (Box 3.3). The subject needs higher priority and more considered treatment at central and provincial government levels.

Under federalism the assumption of environmental management responsibilities by States may present difficulties. Small States will not be able to afford separate environmental agencies. Means of establishing a monitoring and regulation capability will be needed. It might be appropriate to include this with resource management responsibilities.

3.9 Biodiversity

Biodiversity management involves management for the use and/or protection of all living plants and animals. This includes those which are directly used (such as agricultural crops, medicinal plants of the forest, trees for wood), and also those which are not used directly but are useful in the form of forests and other ecosystems to provide services for survival and development, such as forest regulation of flows of water for hydro power, for human consumption, and/or for crop irrigation. Similarly, mangrove ecosystems provide

Box 3.3 – Main Objectives for Environmental Conservation

- Appropriate legislation must be enacted;
- encourage community awareness and participation;
- EIA guidelines must be followed in the design and implementation of development projects;
- laws, regulations and guidelines established by respective sectoral agencies to protect resources under their responsibilities must be strictly enforced;
- more resources and finance be allocated to environmental conservation; and
- work closely with NGOs concerned with environmental conservation.

Source: SIG, "Medium Term Development Strategy 1999-2001, vol. One: Policy and Strategy", Honiara: Ministry of Planning

services in the form of fisheries habitat and coastline protection.

The Solomon Islands' biodiversity is matched by a considerable cultural diversity. Each of 65 groups has its own language and traditions and, also, varying patterns of use of species and soils. Also, among these differing cultures there is a wealth of knowledge about the ecology and uses of plants and animals.⁴⁰

Solomon Islands animal and plant life, which has always been significant for rural Solomon Islanders is also of international importance. There is a greater diversity of land animals than in any other Pacific island nation – 223 birds, 52 native mammals, 61 land reptiles, and 17 different frogs. Many of these animals are endemic. That is, they are found nowhere else in the world. This is the case with 41% of the frogs and reptiles, 50% of the mammals and 82% of the birds.⁴¹ Yet very little is known about the distribution and status of these animals, or of the rich range of marine animals, including hundreds of different fish

Henderson and Hancock (1988) list a total of 3,210 vascular plants having been

⁴⁰ See, for example, Kwa'ialoa and Burt, 2001.

⁴¹ Leary, 1991.

identified and estimate that the true total may lie in the vicinity of 4,500 species when unrecorded species are added.

The sparse scientific reference material on Solomon Islands biodiversity is under threat. At the National Herbarium and Botanical Gardens 30,000 plant specimens are decaying as a result of a shortfall, since the 1970s, of the modest funds needed for their care. During its occupation of the "Red Beach" area outside Honiara during the unrest elements of the MEF ransacked and burned the national agricultural research facilities and, with them, valuable scientific reference collections of plants, insects and butterflies.

Another aspect of biodiversity is that which has been introduced. It is believed that the cuscus (*kandela*) was introduced centuries ago, as were the food staples taro and pana. Sweet potato came much later. Not all immigrant biodiversity has been useful, however. Some introduced species have become problems which impede and add to the cost of development. One example is the creeping vine *Mikania micrantha* that can overwhelm plants in food gardens and trees planted in reforestation projects. The melon fruit fly has severely set back any chance of establishing a soft fruits industry. The dreaded Giant African Snail resides nearby in Bougainville and could easily enter the Solomon Islands, with devastating consequences for food gardens and agricultural crops. A Solomon Islands Quarantine Service exists to address these problems, yet its true value to the economy is not recognised.

Efforts were made during the colonial administration to establish protected areas for biodiversity, such as national parks and wildlife reserves. Though still legally in existence, these are not managed for conservation (one, at Mt Austen, has been

deforested) and few know that they exist. The conservation model used was inappropriate for the Solomon Islands, but no government since 1978 has shown an interest in the subject.

3.10 Sustainable Development

Solomon Islanders have experienced the trauma of environmentally and socially disruptive development – logging. As the last of the forest capital is shipped out to Asia and the opportunity for a cost-free investment in a timber industry is closed forever, a switch to reforestation mode becomes necessary. Though expensive in time and money, there is no other option.

The deforestation experience may provide a stimulus for a shift to more sustainable forms of resource development. The tuna industry and its supporting baitfish industry is a reasonable example. Establishing sustainability of resource use in the Solomon Islands requires attention to a number of matters:

- Effective means for establishing resource development on customary land and in customary sea areas in ways that are fair for all stakeholders;
- improved mechanisms for determining customary resource ownership and resolving disputes over this;
- a need for an improved capability in the acquisition and use of knowledge on resources, biodiversity, environment and people to improve resource management;
- rehabilitation of the agricultural research capability and support for marine resource research; and
- support for multiple-use community forestry.

CHAPTER 4: SOCIETY AND GOVERNANCE

In recent years, as they have diminished in the Solomon Islands, issues of national unity, good governance and sound economic management have become more conspicuous. National unity has long been a prominent issue – expressed in terms of the need for the nation to be backed by stronger provincial level government. It has been brought into sharper focus by the civil unrest on Guadalcanal.

Governance became an issue because of the increasingly poor performance of successive governments since the 1980s. The 1992-94 Government tried to correct this by targeting the logging industry's erosion of natural capital and use of bribery. However, those benefiting from logging industry support succeeded in removing that reformist government.

The general inefficiency and ineffectiveness of the public service has also been an element of poor governance, while sound economic management has been elusive since the early 1980s. This chapter provides an overview of some of the major social and governance issues that influence development processes and outcomes in the Solomon Islands.

4.1 Identity and Allegiance

The achievement of national unity is important and has implications for policy-making, the distribution of national wealth, and development in general. This is particularly so for the Solomon Islands, a nation-state constructed out of a culturally, linguistically and ethnically diverse population. With over 400,000 people speaking sixty five distinct languages (but sharing a lingua franca, *Solomons Pijin*), the challenge of nation-building was destined to be difficult. At the time of Independence on 7 July 1978 some in the

Western Solomons region (which then included what are now the Western and Choiseul provinces) spoke of secession to form a separate nation-state or to join the neighbouring island of Bougainville, which, at that time, was pressing for secession from Papua New Guinea. This thinking had emerged because of the colonial administration's failure to meet demands for a system of government that provided for local level autonomy to determine and control the development of their natural resources and to benefit from its outcomes.⁴²

The country's pioneer leaders recognised the difficulty of forging a strong national consciousness. A former Prime Minister, the late Solomon Mamaloni, once described the Solomons as a "nation conceived but never born."⁴³ Writing to commemorate the 10th Independence anniversary, Mamaloni stated that the Solomon Islands "has never been a nation and will never be a nation and will never become one." This may be overly cynical – though it does carry an element of truth.

Yet among the younger generation of Solomon Islanders, a sense of national consciousness has been in the making. Three factors have played an important role: the education system; *Pijin* as a common language; and a shared popular culture. It can be seen, too, in the many marriages between different language groups, and in the heart-warming situations such as Malaitans helping their Guadalcanal neighbours and people from Isabel adopting a child from another island culture.

⁴² Premdas, R. R., J. Steeves, P. Larmour 1984.

⁴³ Mamaloni, S., 1992, pp 7-18.

Even so, national consciousness is not deep; allegiances to a particular "wantok"⁴⁴ or ethnic group are of primary importance. Most people carry with them competing clan, island, province and nation identities – and in that order of priority. While education has the potential to assist in the development of a national identity that potential is greatly hindered by the fact that each year more than 50 per cent of Class Six students (in the age group 11-12 years) are pushed out of the school system.⁴⁵

The relative weakness of national consciousness is very noticeable in thinking on how national wealth should be distributed. Many in the resource-rich provinces resent the fact that a large percentage of income generated from natural resource development in their provinces is taken by Central Government – nominally to be shared with other provinces. This might not have become a real issue if good governance had prevailed and a fair measure of services and other benefits had accrued to those whose resources were being used in the national interest. However, the people of Guadalcanal and Western Province in particular have watched their resources dwindle without a corresponding improvement in their basic services since such a high proportion of what national revenue has not been wasted has been invested in Honiara infrastructure and facilities.

Although under customary law, and also under formal legislation such as the Lands and Titles Act and the Forestry Act, local communities hold the rights to natural resources – at least onshore or as far out as the fringing reef – revenue from the exploitation of natural resources is collected and distributed by the Central Government. Income generated from such developments then is shared with other provinces on the

basis of population.⁴⁶ Provinces with larger populations receive a greater percentage of Central Government grants even if they have not contributed their natural resources to generate income. Because of this, some provinces (especially Guadalcanal, Western and Choiseul) have demanded that national wealth be distributed on the basis of a province's contribution to national income.

4.2 Honiara Focus

There has been a rapid growth of Honiara and of squatter settlements around it. This is shown in Table 4.1⁴⁷, which, through figures for people per household, also points to an increasing density of living.

Table 4.1:
Population, population growth rate and persons per household, Honiara, 1970-1999

Year	1970	1976	1986	1999
Population	12,006	14,942	30,413	49,107
Growth rate (%)		3.7 (1970-76)	6.8 (1976-86)	3.8 (1986-99)
Persons per hh	5.4	5.5	7.0	7.1

The recent decline in population growth rate to some extent reflects the movement of people out of Honiara in 1999 due to the civil unrest.

Much of Honiara's rapid growth has arisen from in-migration of people seeking employment, education and recreation. A constant Central Government focus on improving facilities in Honiara (at the expense of expenditure on rural areas) has contributed to this movement. At the time of the 1986 census 9 out of 10 adults in Honiara had been born elsewhere. The majority of these had come from Malaita. From 1970 to 1986 Malaita Province's net

⁴⁴ "Wantok" is the term used to refer to those who speak the same language.

⁴⁵ SIG, "Medium Term Development Strategy, 1999-2001".

⁴⁶ Note that landowners may benefit directly from royalty payments and/or through holdings of shares in the company involved in natural resource development. The extent of such benefit, however, is dependent on the negotiating power of landowners. They usually do not have the expertise and access to information to be able to negotiate fair arrangements.

⁴⁷ 1999 Census Report.

migration loss more than doubled (a 104% increase) over a period when the Malaita born population increased only 61%.⁴⁸ Some of these migrants found employment in development areas such as Western Province. The bulk of them moved to Honiara and Guadalcanal. Densely populated areas such as the north and Kwara'ae areas of Malaita were the sources of most migration to urban areas.⁴⁹

In 1999 Malaitan-born people made up 29% of Honiara's Solomon Islander population⁵⁰ as compared with only 5.4% Guadalcanal-born. Thirty-eight percent of the Honiara population in that year was Honiara-born. Assuming that 29% of these were born into families of Malaita origin, and adding this number to the total of Malaita-born produces an estimate of almost 48% of the Honiara population being of Malaita origin.⁵¹ Other non-Guadalcanal people collectively made up approximately 43% of the City population.

Not surprisingly, rapid growth has exerted pressure on urban services. There are persistent water and electricity shortages, although these are at least partly due to inadequate maintenance of infrastructure. The City road system is in very poor condition apart from the main road from the City to the airport. Most sewage is treated in a multiplicity of septic tanks with effluent seeping into the sea along Honiara's foreshore. Rubbish collection is intermittent and its disposal poorly planned and polluting.

Through the late 1980s, extending into the 1990s, Honiara became a site for the manifestation of the country's growing

national problem of a partly educated and largely unemployed youth. Living in crowded urban and peri-urban conditions with little prospect of cash income but within view of an exciting array of material goods that were beyond their reach it is surprising that there were not more disturbances such as that which marked the year 1989. Then, a riot developed from a dispute between Malaita youths and those from Rennell and Bellona over an alleged insult. Police records indicate that most of those involved in the rioting were unemployed youth.

4.3 Melanesian Political Culture

While the Solomon Islands political structure reflects a modern Westminster system in principle, the political culture and practices combine modern with "traditional" politics. This generates conflicts and contradictions that have major implications for governance and for development.

The Solomon Islands has failed to achieve a level of political maturity conducive to stable government. There have been ten governments in twenty-three years – and seven prime ministers. Only two have stayed in power for the full four-year life-term of Parliament. Among other things this has frustrated the development and implementation of policies. Despite this instability it is pleasing to note that, except for the change of government brought about by a coup in June 2000 all other changes of government have been constitutional.

Instability arises partly from the absence of a coherent political party system. No political party has a firm and distinctive ideological base. What are referred to as political parties are collections of individuals who may have been brought together merely by a desire to seize an opportunity to share power in a government. For lack of ideology and because of the traditional importance of clan allegiances voters are much more inclined to vote for individuals rather than a political party.

⁴⁸ 1986 Population Census; Report 2B, page 51.

⁴⁹ Connell, J., 1983, p.12.

⁵⁰ The non-Solomon Islander population excluded from the calculation is a little under 4 % of the City's population.

⁵¹ The count of Malaitans resident in Honiara at the time may have been higher than usual as some were refugees from outside Honiara.

On a number of occasions Parliament members have "crossed the floor" on a no-confidence motion, causing governments to collapse. There have been documented cases where Government ministers were offered financial incentives to join the Opposition, bringing about the collapse of a government. In November 1995, for example, logging companies are reported to have given S\$7 million (US\$ 1.5m) worth of cars, air fares, other "gifts" and money to ministers to cross the floor and join the opposition after the then Government of Prime Minister Francis Billy Hilly tried to control logging excesses by setting sustainable yields, insisting on the payment of taxes and duties and pressing adherence to the laws relevant to the logging industry.⁵²

Generally, those in public office, such as Members of Parliament, are regarded as the modern version of a "big-man".⁵³ They are expected to distribute wealth – in the form of goods, payment of school fees, fares, or accommodation, and contribute to the costs of feasting and other traditional social obligations. This is a huge burden that, on a member's meagre salary, politicians cannot afford. Some are prepared to accept bribes to enable them to meet the expectations of their Constituents.

4.4 Governance

The first attempt at centralised administration in the Solomon Islands was barely 100 years ago and only gradually, over decades, began to take hold – interrupted by World War II during which Solomon Islanders returned to their old forms of self-administration.

⁵² Bennett, J., 2000, p.354.

⁵³ "big-man" is the term used to refer to the Melanesian traditional leadership system. It differs from a chiefly system primarily because it is not hereditary. It is more meritocratic and plutocratic in nature; one becomes a leader (Big-man) through merit and the distribution of one's wealth. This requires that leaders accumulate and then distribute wealth to followers.

After a short experiment with local government and a Legislative Council that was a prototype for a Parliament, Britain propelled the Solomon Islands into the complexities of the modern world in 1978. A three-tier system of government was adopted and, on the introduction of the Provincial Government Act, 1981, the levels became: Central, Province, and Area Council. The past twenty years has seen a growth in Central Government and a decline in standards and efficiency. Provincial governments, are not strangers to inefficiency but they have the excuse that Central Government has kept them under-resourced.

There has been a constant demand from some NGOs for more transparency in Government.⁵⁴ One of the country's achievements is that its print and radio media have not been hindered in their comment and criticism on public affairs.⁵⁵ Published letters to the editor of the local newspaper, *Solomon Star*, have consistently demanded proper public sector management, accountability, adherence to the law, and transparency. At least one Government (that overthrown by the coup in 2000) admitted to a serious governance problem, placing accountability to the public on its agenda for action.

Alleged corruption and bribery are spectacular manifestations of bad governance in the Solomon Islands, but there are others. One source of the perceived decline in the quality of governance is public administration. The Solomon Islands public service is the country's largest single employer. Since Independence it has expanded both in its numbers and scope – partly as a result of attempts to overcome weaknesses in the economy, and partly as a response to the generous provisions of development assistance. In 1978 the size of

⁵⁴ Roughan, J., 1994, pp.143-154.

⁵⁵ That is, until February, 2002 when a senior politician is alleged to have intimidated a newspaper editor to cease reporting news of the politician's alleged misdemeanours.

the public service was 5,740 (60% of formal employment). It grew in the late 1980s and 1990s reaching its highest level in 1993 at 8,473 employees. This was a growth of 48% over 15 years.

Public service salaries absorb a high percentage of Government expenditure each year. In the period between 1991 and 2000, for example, public service salaries averaged around 33% of the Government expenditure, which was more than the Government's development expenditure (27%).⁵⁶

The public service has lacked proper management and there has been little co-ordination or priority setting in public expenditure. Though there are some competent and idealistic officers, their efforts are constantly undermined by inadequate resources, poorly motivated and trained supports staff and frequent political interference. Box 4.1 is a listing of problems of the Solomon Islands public service that emerged from reviews in 1989 and 1992.

Box 4.1
Major Conclusions of the 1989 and 1992 Reviews of the Public Service

- Public Service too large, yet unresponsive.
- Pay structure must accommodate an element of wage restraint.
- Existing salary structure does not reflect the status, duties and responsibilities of public servants under the Constitution.
- Salaries low in comparison to other countries in the region.
- Public Service should be smaller and more productive.
- Personnel should be rewarded according to productivity.
- Considerable skills deficiency.

Following these reviews reform programmes were established. A substantial increase in pay levels was introduced, with corresponding cuts in the size of the Service.

⁵⁶ Central Bank of Solomon Islands, "Annual Report, 2000", Honiara: CBSI, p.93.

Despite these measures, the level of performance continued to deteriorate. This was later stated to have arisen from unclear objectives, weak management and supervision, and lack of accountability.⁵⁷

By 1997 there had been a slight decline in public service employee numbers to 7,650. Then a more comprehensive approach to public service reform was adopted – a Policy and Structural Reform Programme. This arose partly from domestic concerns and partly from pressure from aid donors and lending institutions. A Public Service Reform Unit was established within the Prime Ministers Office to implement the programme.

By 1999 the number of public servants had dropped to 4,337, not only as a result of the reform programme but also from large-scale retrenchment resulting from the corporatisation of Government enterprises such as the postal service, and the sale of Government-owned forest plantations. Subsequently the economic difficulties arising from losses of revenue from stalled economic activity on Guadalcanal caused the Government, in October 2000, to send 800 public servants on unpaid leave to relieve its strained finances. However, most of them were reinstated in February 2001 as the Government did not have sufficient funds to make severance payments.

In 2002 the Government has returned to the theme of downsizing of the Public Service with an announced reduction in Public Service expenditure⁵⁸ that is expected to lead to a further cut of about 500 officers.

Ministers have complained that Permanent Secretaries resist, obstruct or fail to carry out directives and come up with solutions. Permanent Secretaries have expressed concern that Ministers interfere in

⁵⁷ SIG, "Medium Term Development Strategy, 1999-2001", Vol. One: p.116.

⁵⁸ Prime Minister's "100 Days and Beyond" speech, 22nd February 2002.

administration and bypass them. Governments have taken an easy way out of this predicament by appointing more special advisers appointed from outside the civil service. Political appointees, too, now often fill Permanent Secretary positions. There has been no sign that this politicisation of the public service has improved governance.

It is now the norm in the Solomon Islands for the board of a statutory body to be appointed by a Minister – which makes board members accountable to Ministers rather than to the public service. There are continuing complaints of Ministers "stacking" boards with their supporters, and appointing people to reward them for political support rather than competence. In 2002 a new dimension was added to this process – all Chairmen of statutory boards are now members of Parliament who support the Government but for whom no Ministerial portfolios are available.

Allegations of corruption and the misuse of public office are widespread – yet investigations are rarely conducted. While this may be partly attributable to a lack of police manpower and resources, and limited skills in the collection of evidence and in prosecution, political and "wantok" factors are also operating to frustrate prosecution efforts. In 1996, for instance, several public servants were sacked after having allegedly been involved in the swindle of SI\$10 million (about US\$2 million) of public funds. Secret payments of SI\$7 million (about US\$1.5 million) in cash and kind are alleged to have been made to some senior politicians and officials between 1993 and 1995. Although individuals were charged in November 1995, court proceedings were stopped due to "a lack of sufficient evidence."⁵⁹ No public officer or politician has ever been convicted of corruption.

Another factor that could be constraining good governance is the manner in which politicians are elected and to whom, or to

what interests, they perceive they are accountable. The Solomon Islands has a first-past-the-post system with elections for both Parliament and for Provincial Assemblies held every four years. Yet many of those elected into public office do not have the support of a majority of voters. Since Independence, 67% of all elected Members of Parliament received less than 50% of the votes cast. In the December 2001 elections forty-one of the fifty elected Members of Parliament received less than 50% of the votes cast in their constituency. One winning candidate received only 13% of the votes, and is now a Minister. All the winning candidates together received only 25 per cent of all the votes cast.

International election observers from the Commonwealth Secretariat, Pacific Forum Secretariat, and the International Election Observer Mission from the USA observed the 2001 national election. The Commonwealth Secretariat group reported the election as being generally free and fair.⁶⁰ What they were not in a position to observe was that, in some parts of the country, voters and candidates were intimidated either before or after the election, not during it. In South Guadalcanal, for example, two of the four candidates could not visit that Constituency to campaign because the local militant leader had intimidated them. In East Guadalcanal, some voters were assaulted and a Rural Training Centre was set on fire after the election when the candidate supported by militants lost the election.

Only a small number of the original Solomon Islander political leaders given a modicum of political education and skills during the 1970s experience with Legislative Council remain in circulation. Recent political performances indicate a need for fresh efforts in political education. Yet the need for better understanding of political processes and their application for good governance is not confined to

⁵⁹ Crocombe, R., 2001, p.517.

⁶⁰ *Solomon Star*, 11 December, 2001, p.3

politicians. If accountability is to be improved then the public needs to share in improved awareness so that, through their emerging CSOs, they can better participate in promoting good governance.

Public confidence in the institutions established for its protection is low. This is particularly the case with the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force, which is in need of rebuilding. A Leadership Code Commission established to help maintain the integrity of leaders has never acted; the Ombudsman's Office can investigate but not take action; the Office of Public Solicitor, set up to help 'the little people' has been sidelined. All need attention if governance is to become effective.

Effective governance requires that state power be exercised in ways that are:

- accountable – to the state's constituents and the international community;
- representative – taking account of the interests of different groups in the community;
- transparent – easily understood, frank and open;
- efficient – using available resources productively, with little waste; and
- equitable – striving for a fair distribution of resources and the elimination of poverty and discrimination.

The evidence reveals serious shortcomings in accountability at both political and administrative levels. Successive governments have failed to take adequate account of the interests of groups and their differing (and sometimes conflicting) needs, and this has been an important factor in the unrest which emerged in 1998 (as explained in Chapter 6).

Transparency is not a feature of governance in the Solomon Islands. Many instances of inefficiency in resource use have emerged and not least in the area of revenue leakage through duty remissions and through failure

to support the monitoring of log exports. The definition of "fair" distribution of resources is an issue that has long been prominent. It has emerged in all four of the official investigations of matters relating to the Constitution and to Provincial Government (see 4.6). Central Government's response to recommendations arising from these reviews was, until 2000, inaction.

As declining revenue increasingly compromises the Central Government's capacity to undertake, or even to oversee, resource management in rural areas – despite the existence of provincial governments established to address local needs – so, management responsibilities have reverted to those who held them before, the rural communities. The fact that this is by default, not by plan, means it is not happening smoothly or efficiently. Provincial governments are interposed between the communities that have tenure over resources and the Central Government. However, the "powers" of Provinces are largely illusory. Apart from decision making powers in some small local subject areas, the legislation under which they operate has them acting primarily as agents of Central Government.

4.5 Federalism

A debate on federalism through devolution commenced in the years leading to Independence and was sustained through four formal reviews – all of which concluded that a federal system was needed. In 2001 Central Government finally came to accept this. The Government that came into power in December 2001 held to this position and federalism now is a priority matter on its agenda. What is envisaged is a three-tier system of national, state and local government, with provision for traditional chiefs to be part of the legislative process at the State level. The form of local government is to be left to the States to determine. In the smaller States this may be at village level while larger States will likely

need a higher level of government that incorporates a number of villages.

The States are to have their own constitutions which are to include matters such as land, traditional practices and norms, control of internal migration in terms of settlements, and the roles of traditional chiefs. States are to have power to raise revenue, and to establish their own public service, health service, educational system and police force. Some States will for some time be of too small a scale to assume some of these responsibilities. Provision is to be made for Central Government to continue to provide for these – at least during a transitional period.

One of the factors that fuelled the long debate on federalism was inequity in the distribution of benefits from exploitation of natural resources. This has long been a complaint of Western Province, from which much logging revenue has been captured by Central Government, and was one of the grievances that contributed to the recent conflict in Guadalcanal.

One of the key measures of the federalism proposed is "an equitable sharing formula". This implies equity at several levels, ranging from equity between State and Nation to equity at a local level, as in the case of development on an area of communally owned land (equitable sharing of benefits between a developer or a Government agency and landowners). Alienated land would also fall within this provision in cases where the original customary owners are known or can be established. This is the case with land alienated by the colonial regime in the 1960s for the purpose of establishing a "national forest estate".⁶¹

⁶¹ This land is at Alu, in the Shortlands and at Viru, both in Western Province, and at Allardyce, Santa Isabel, and in Vanikoro, Temotu.

4.6 Provincial Diversity

Statistics and descriptions compiled on a national basis can give a misleading impression of the entity "Solomon Islands" and of its circumstances. Not only is there an obvious diversity in the resource base and accessibility of different provinces but there is striking diversity *within* provinces.

A simple manifestation of the country's diversity is its 65 indigenous languages. Superimposed on this is a historical diversity expressed, and well remembered, in terms of the order in which different groups settled a particular island. So, the weather-coast (south) people of Guadalcanal regard those of the island's north as recent settlers – though centuries past. Superimposed on this dichotomy is a third phase of settlement at Marau (in the north-east) by people who settled there many generations ago from nearby south Malaita. The fourth phase of Guadalcanal settlement began with the post World War II declaration of Honiara as the capital and the decision to establish large-scale resource development activities on the Guadalcanal Plains. Within Malaita distinctions are made between the landless, sea-oriented "solwara" (saltwater) people who live on artificial islands made of coral boulders, other coastal Malaitans, and "bush" people of the interior.

A distinction between people of coastal and of interior origins is also seen in other provinces. Its practical meaning is not in some form of social discrimination, but in terms of access to resources. The great majority of Solomon Islanders now can be termed "coastal" in terms of residence. However those who traditionally were coastal are often found to have customary rights to fishing grounds but little access to land resources. Conversely, people of "bush" origin tend to have limited access to fishing areas but are often not short of land. Through intermarriage and other mechanisms a form of resource sharing has developed in some places.

In addition to ethnic and historical diversity, account needs to be taken of the diversity of development experience and achievement. Island communities with a longer period of post-Contact experience (that is, exposure to "Western" influence) tend to more easily accommodate modern development than do communities that have had a shorter experience of interaction and trade and which have remained conservative in outlook and tradition.

It is important that this diversity be recognised, understood and accommodated in the formulation of development assistance strategies, programmes and projects. A rich source of information on the circumstances of individual Provinces is a set of "provincial profiles" prepared in the course of the UNDP Solomon Islands Development And Planning Project (SIDAPP) completed in 2001.

4.7 Civil Society Organisations

Public interest groupings were slow to develop in the Solomon Islands. When one of the now higher profile development NGOs – the Solomon Islands Development Trust (SIDT) emerged 20 years ago the Government of the day felt very uncomfortable at having its development approach questioned. A move by it to register NGOs as a basis for controlling them was diverted and SIDT remains, together with a much larger number of NGOs and other Civil Society Organisations.

Many of the latter had been in existence for a long time in the form of Church organisations devoted to community development and to social issues. Many of these are women's organisations and their role has expanded recently to embrace development issues. Some women's groups were active in seeking a resolution to the recent conflict on Guadalcanal. That conflict galvanised others into forming a loose network of "civil society organisations" (Box 4.2) whose membership has been very

Box 4.2 – Gizo Civil Society

Gizo Civil Society emerged as a response to the coup of June 5, 2000 and a reaction to increased lawlessness in Gizo. At that time a majority of local businessmen met and formed the Gizo Night Watch. This was funded by the business houses of Gizo and later drew some support from the New Zealand High Commission. In the early days of Night Watch, 40 volunteers patrolled the business and residential areas, armed with whistles, torches and walkie-talkies. The Police coordinated the groups and provided logistic support. Women's groups, churches and businesses fed the volunteers. A core group of 12 volunteers continues to work every night with the Gizo Community Policing segment of RSIP.

The Gizo community is a tight knit and cooperative group of about 2,000 people of many different cultures from all parts of the country. Gizo Civil Society is a loose but organised group of people who react to the needs of the community, providing an open forum to discuss community concerns. The first of a 'new' round of public meetings was held at the Gizo Community Centre on Thursday 3 May 2001, attended by residents and representatives from businesses, NGOs, CBOs (Community Based Organizations) and Churches. Sir Maepeza Gina and Ashley Wickham facilitated this meeting. From this point Gizo community activism came under the banner of Gizo Civil Society.

The Society operates through dialogue and resolutions, which lead to consensus action. Whether the action is a peace march, press releases on matters of concern such as poor transparency in Western Provincial Government activities, or more meetings with development partners, we have found that positive results have strengthened the community.

As to who gave the mandate to civil societies – our answer is – you did. You/we, the people, have the constitutional right to freedoms of expression and of association under the Solomon Islands Constitution, (Articles 3, 12 and 13) as well as under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Articles 19 and 20).

Source: based on a letter by the Acting Secretary of the Gizo Civil Society to the editor of "Solomon Star" in response to a critical letter of 1st March 2002 by "Peter Inoko".

vocal about corruption and about the continuing law and order problem – as a consequence of which they have become targets for threats and intimidation.⁶²

Another thriving CSO that had its origins in the conflict is the Rural Development Volunteers Association (RDVA). This was originally made up of students who were

⁶² As stated, for instance, in Gizo Civil Society newsletters.

prevented from resuming their overseas courses because Government could not provide funding during the conflict. They were organised through SIDAPP into a volunteer group to work in rural areas to compile data on those displaced by the fighting, as a basis for assessing the support needs of these people. The current focus of the RDVA is establishing a national e-mail system to facilitate rural communications.

The wide range of CSOs now operating is a promising sign for the Solomons' future. It is encouraging to note that the Prime Minister has declared an intention to engage in a programme of dialogue with public interest groups.

4.8 The Constitution

With independence less than twenty-five years ago, the drafters of the Solomon Islands Constitution of 1978 had the enviable advantages of modernity of perspective during the compilation of this primary legal instrument. The result is a lengthy and sophisticated document, which within its 145 articles explicitly defines the role of Westminster parliamentary institutions in a disparate geographically scattered Pacific micro-state.

The challenge for Solomon Islands has been to ensure the observance and implementation of this guiding instrument within a nation state of ill-funded central institutions, some of which have no effective reach outside of the capital city.

The Constitution expressly recognises custom law as one pillar of law in Solomon Islands, stating that "Customary law shall have effect as part of the law of Solomon Islands".⁶³ Customary law, together with the Constitution and with statutory and common law, thus comprise "law" in Solomon Islands. In case of direct conflict between these sources of law the Constitution provides for a hierarchy of these.

⁶³ Schedule 3, and as subject to ss 75, 76.

Constitutional provisions, including the rights of citizens defined in it, remain paramount and cannot be contravened by custom. Statutory law as well is considered to be controlling in any conflict with custom. Yet customary law is ranked above common law. A considerable body of statute law is in place, yet customary law is still the most relevant law for most. Its legal norms are the general rules and principles governing the activity of communal life in this traditional society, where an estimated 85% of the population remain in villages.

In 1987, a Constitutional Review Committee (CRC) reported with a primary recommendation to alter the Constitution to enable a greater measure of devolution. In response the central Government produced a White Paper refuting the arguments put forward and used this as a basis for ignoring the Committee's recommendations.

The Guadalcanal unrest brought the issue of decentralisation back into focus – to the extent that the 2000-2001 post-coup Government undertook a fresh review of this issue – the outcome being "The Tuhaika Report". The Government then acted promptly to prepare a Constitutional Amendment Bill to cater for the establishment of a federal system of government.

The new Government installed in December 2001 accepted the report, but it has chosen to approach the required Constitutional change through a new Constitution rather than amendments.⁶⁴

4.9 The Judicial System

The Solomon Islands judiciary has admirably retained its independence throughout the recent troubled times. Justices of its High Court have faced down threats against themselves and their family members by militants and disgruntled petitioners. During the period of civil unrest

⁶⁴ Cabinet decision of 30th January, 2002.

the independence of the judiciary was under threat when the MEF took control of Honiara. Key members of the judiciary then fled to refuge in Western Province. Independence of the judiciary aside, the capacity to function effectively even in the relative peace of 2001 and the present uneasy calm remains sharply constrained by financial and manpower resource shortages.

The Solomon Islands judiciary has four primary levels, progressing from:

- Local Courts to
- Magistrates Courts to
- the High Court and finally to
- the Court of Appeal.

Local Courts are comprised of customary law leaders, often chiefs, who have no formal education in law. The Magistrates Courts are the first level in which judges have a formal legal background and qualifications. The Court of Appeal meets infrequently, incorporating visiting Justices from other Commonwealth jurisdictions such as the United Kingdom, Papua New Guinea and Australia.

Constraints such as low resources are most apparent in the geographic coverage of the judiciary at the Magistrate level. Although Magistrate posts are authorised for three Provinces outside of Honiara, in only one of these, Gizo, (Western Province), does a Magistrate remain. The other two locations, Auki and Kira Kira have remained without resident Magistrates for the past two years. In other Provinces, where Magistrates normally would visit to administer justice several times a year, no Magistrate has been funded for travel since June 2000. Many suspects are not even being arrested or charged in the first place because the Police do not expect touring to resume. The effect of this on law and order is pernicious. Also a wide variety of civil cases, including those dealing with the welfare of children and their mothers, are left unattended. Numerically as well as geographically, the remaining Magistrates face considerable

challenges, with only six Magistrates presently active in a country of more than 420,000 persons.

The Constitution attempts to provide a separate but linked track for the resolution of land disputes. The imposition of a British model continues to cause frustration and disappointment in the area of customary land ownership. Even the Local Courts and the Customary Land Appeal Court manned by individuals knowledgeable about custom law tend to reach clear decisions in terms of "winners" and "losers". Where a claim or defence is clearly unfounded, such an outcome is obviously correct. However, Solomon Islanders argue that in other cases, a more delicate compromise is more consistent with custom and in the longer-range interests of all parties.

4.10 Other Institutions of Law

As with the judiciary, other notable institutions of law in Solomon Islands are sophisticated in structure but lack resources to even minimally perform their constitutionally mandated roles.

Low Government budgetary reserves are only a partial reason for this shortcoming. Greater priority to these institutions by Government, even with its limited funds, is one necessary response. Additionally, the Government could approach funding of these institutions through the devolution of budgetary control to the entities themselves, allowing the modest fees collected by the judiciary and some other institutions to remain within these institutions to cover their running costs. Specifically, although the Public Solicitor's Office is constitutionally empowered to collect modest fees if so authorised by the Parliament, no Parliament has yet provided such authorisation.

Major donors also should consider directing additional attention towards the judiciary and these other institutions. At present, even those donors and agencies supportive of

“law and justice” at present appear to concentrate efforts, programmes and funds on but one institution in this sphere, the national police.

The Public Solicitor’s Office

The Office of the Public Solicitor is mandated by the Constitution to provide free legal advice and representation to low-income Solomon Islanders. Like the Judiciary, and perhaps more so, it has been more adversely impacted by these challenges. Of the ten authorised legal posts within the Office, only four of these, all in Honiara, are presently filled. Public Solicitor’s Office branches in Western and Malaita Province have been closed since 2000, again due to a lack of resources and prioritisation by national (and Provincial) governments.

Unlike many other countries, Solomon Islands has few legal rights NGOs. Only one such NGO provides legal aid to needy individuals and this NGO is active in Honiara only.

The Ombudsman

A Solomon Islands Ombudsman’s office has been established by the Constitution with special provisions for appointment of the Ombudsman, which emphasise the status of the office and its non-partisan nature. The jurisdiction of the Ombudsman extends to:

- investigation of conduct of Government departments, statutory bodies, and
- provincial and local government, subject to specific exceptions.

Further, any person or body affected may complain to the Ombudsman, who has discretion whether or not to investigate. The Ombudsman may also commence an investigation on the Ombudsman’s own initiative. Historically, this significant office has unfortunately been of limited effect. It has always lacked resources and appears not to have been taken seriously by

Government. Over the years it has received numerous complaints from rural communities arising from logging of their land – one manifestation of the social and environmental disruption brought by this activity, for which there continues to be a search for an effective forum for complaints. There has been little action on these complaints.

Within the Pacific island region the institution of the Ombudsman has a scattered record, ranging from the provocative and high-profile activism of the Vanuatu institution in past years, to the relative malaise of the institution in Papua New Guinea.

Among matters that need to be addressed are:

- reform of laws to better accommodate custom while meeting the new demands of a rapidly changing society;
- making legal aid accessible to a majority of people, especially rural dwellers;
- inadequate court infrastructure and support services;
- the absence of special facilities to deal with cases involving juveniles; and
- the ponderously slow process of litigation, particularly in cases of land disputes.

4.11 Security

There is currently a serious lack of discipline and professionalism within the Royal Solomon Islands Police (RSIP). During the civil unrest, some police officers joined militant groups and participated in the forced resignation of the Government in June 2000 – for which some were later promoted by the post-coup Government. The RSIP has lost the confidence of the public. Indeed, trust and confidence in the police is one of the biggest single issues in the country. It affects people’s well being directly – effectively limiting freedom of

movement and expression – as well as the confidence and willingness of investors.

The recruitment of ex-militants as Special Constables (SCs) has undermined any residual public trust in the police. It had been agreed that a hundred from each side would be absorbed into the SCs. However, absorption was much larger, the number of SCs exceeding 2,000 by the second half of 2001. The process also was carried out illegally, ignoring recruitment procedures and provisions of the Police Act.

The large number of SCs is a drain on scarce public finance while their net contribution to public security is in doubt. Although some SCs support police efforts to maintain law and order, many are uncontrolled and lack policing skills. As part of the current police reform, Government is trying to address the problem. By early 2002 the number of Special Constables had been reduced to less than 1400 by removing those with criminal records or full-time jobs elsewhere.

A balanced and carefully considered approach is required to improve the democratic control of the entire police force, reduce its size, and increase its effectiveness and efficiency. Support for upgrading of police skills is being provided by AusAID and under consideration by NZODA. AusAID also supports the Solomon Islands Law and Justice Institutional Strengthening Programme which provide a broad range of strengthening for the RSIP, the prison service and the judiciary. Some of the key programme objectives are to: i) support the reestablishment and improvement of RSIP operations procedures and planning; ii) promote the development and implementation of community policing policy and approaches; iii) strengthen RSIP capacity in key areas of human resource management, support training and professional development; iv) facilitate the introduction of welfare services and equal employment opportunity within the RSIP; and v) promote efficient and effective management and

administrative systems throughout all levels of the RSIP.

UNDP is designing a project to assist the government in preparing for the demobilisation of SCs by improving the administration of the Special Constables, development of a demobilisation plan, establishment of a guidance and referral system, establishment and publication of an overview of the programmes of reintegration support, and provision of some initial resettlement support. In the current political circumstances, this problem is very sensitive. However, the new government has shown an initial commitment to deal with it.

4.12 Human Rights

Some leaders are prone to treat ideas of human rights and democratic values as contradictory to traditional principles and beliefs. This impinges particularly on the rights of women and children.

During the crisis on Guadalcanal both "sides" in the conflict committed human rights abuses. Amnesty International has reported cases of rape, abductions, torture and murder.⁶⁵ Despite this, those involved in the violation of human rights have not been held accountable. Instead, they were given blanket amnesty under the Townsville Peace Agreement (TPA) signed between the conflicting parties in October 2000.

4.13 Children and Youth: The Nation's Future

Thirty-five new Solomon Islanders are entering the world each day on average. To cater for their schooling there should be one new classroom completed each day and one additional teacher trained and paid. For a tiny nation this is a staggering fact.

Educational infrastructure falls well short of meeting that sort of target. Nor are sufficient teachers being trained or health facilities

⁶⁵ Amnesty International, 2001.

being established or upgraded to care for the daily crop of 35.

A very high population growth rate of 3.6% (1976-1986) has reduced to a still high rate of 2.8% (1986-1999). Yet the backlog of services and facilities needed to give children and youth a reasonable start in life continues to grow. Prior to 1998 gains were being made in education and health coverage – with the important proviso that national statistics obscure lack of progress in neglected areas of low population and difficult access. The gains and the shortcomings are detailed in Chapter 7.

A troubling measure of the extent to which development efforts have failed to achieve target is the eagerness with which many disaffected youth took up arms in the recent conflict. Some are now being engaged in village based employment stimulated through local training centres and through development assistance interventions.⁶⁶

A darker dimension of the conflict is the trauma experienced by so many young people and the question as to whether this will further frustrate their development and their opportunities to participate as the country's next teachers, doctors and leaders.

⁶⁶ There is, for instance, a growing interest in tree replanting on customary land in Western Province and Guadalcanal.

CHAPTER 5: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

5.1 The Economy⁶⁷

The economy of the Solomon Islands is made up of a mixed subsistence sector on which the majority of the population is dependent, and a monetised sector dominated by large-scale commercial enterprises. These sectors straddle both rural and urban space. Production in the mixed subsistence sector includes household production for self-consumption and surpluses for sale to local and urban markets as well as household production of cash crops for the export market. The monetised sector comprises commercial enterprises and organisations involved in primary production, manufacturing and the service industries. This includes the provision of public goods and services by the Government and goods and services provided by statutory bodies.

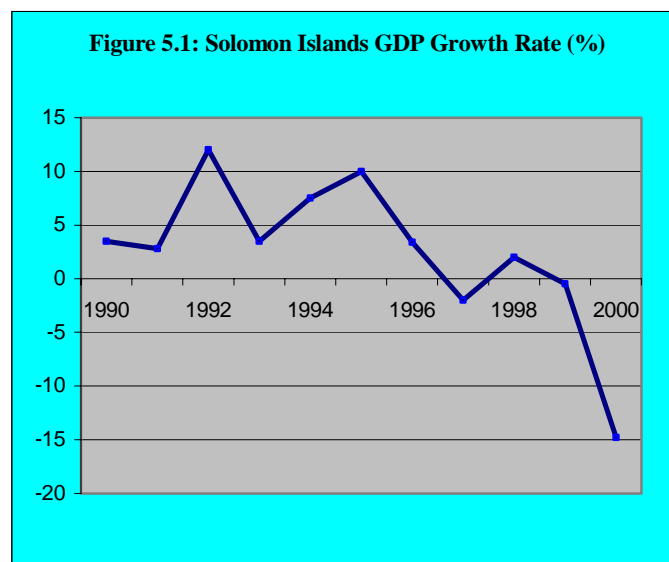


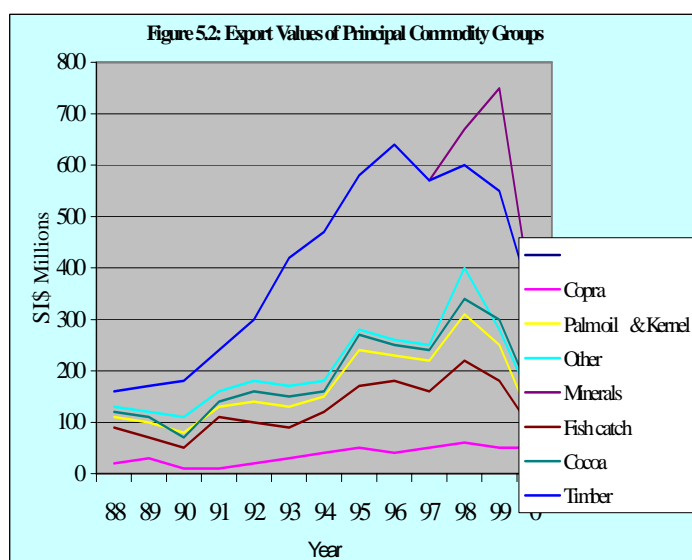
Table 5.1: Production of major export commodities

Year	Copra (mt)	Coconut Oil (mt)	Palm Oil (mt)	Palm Kernel (mt)	Cocoa (mt)	Fish Catch (mt)	Timber Log Production. ('000 m ³)
1985	41,907	-	20,000	4,177	1,713	31,106	378
1986	31,672	-	14,560	3,133	1,874	44,207	471
1987	27,148	-	11,999	2,432	2,667	32,408	322
1988	29,272	-	15,227	3,172	2,639	41,913	310
1989	33,691	21	20,091	4,476	3,299	36,947	304
1990	34,306	2,693	22,104	5,051	3,895	25,986	442
1991	25,133	2,717	22,518	4,992	4,615	50,859	336
1992	29,073	3,879	30,854	6,781	4,159	39,996	640
1993	29,057	4,286	30,986	7,043	3,297	32,486	547
1994	22,500	2,827	29,737	7,183	3,337	39,005	267
1995	26,148	4,372	29,562	6,861	2,482	56,133	-
1996	21,989	3,520	28,680	6,834	2,464	41,199	-
1997	28,679	5,399	28,863	7,005	3,907	40,654	650
1998	26,971	8,339	29,077	6,821	3,454	49,390	604
1999	23,242	10,345	12,877	3,182	2,395	47,961	622
2000	19,004	8,553	-	-	2,316	19,653	536

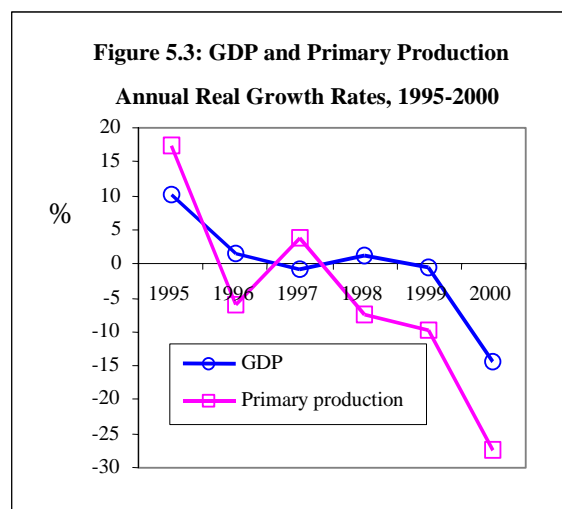
⁶⁷2000 Note: all amounts are in Solomon Islands dollars (SBD) unless otherwise stated.
Source: Central Bank of Solomon Islands, Annual Report 2000, p.98

The estimated gross domestic product (GDP), including subsistence production, in 2000 amounted to \$291.1 million (US\$57.0 million) (in real terms, based on 1985 prices)⁶⁸. This is down from \$339.7 million (US\$68.9 million) in 1999 and \$341.3 million (US\$70.8 million) in 1998. Generally GDP fluctuated during the 1990s, but fell continuously, 1999 – 2000 (Figure 5.1). The Central Bank of Solomon Islands (CBSI) forecast a further fall in GDP for 2001 though it was not prepared to quantify this.

The fluctuations in national income are a result of the dependence of the economy on a small number of primary export products (Table 5.1) that are influenced by world market prices and, also, climatic variations that affect agricultural production and fish catch. Export earnings from the main primary products generally increased during most of the 1990s until 1998 after which they fell dramatically (Figure 5.2). In real terms (based on 1985 prices) the value of primary production declined over the period 1995-2000 (Figure 5.3). Primary production has a strong influence on the level and changes in national income.

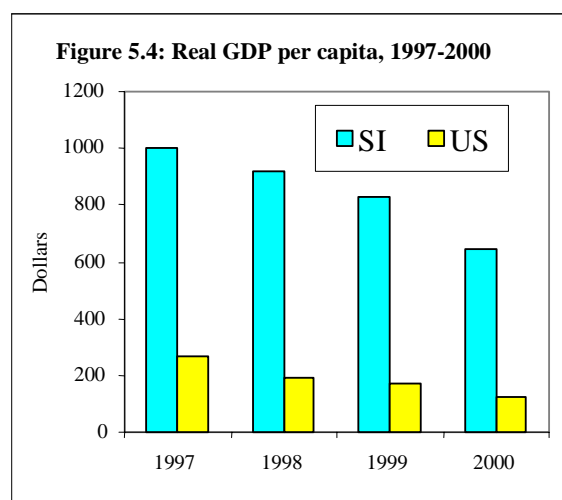


⁶⁸ Central Bank of Solomon Islands Annual Report



Real GDP per capita in 1999 was \$831 (US\$168). It generally declined over the period 1997-2000 (Figure 5.4). Given the forecast by the Central Bank of the Solomon Islands (CBSI) of a further fall in real GDP in 2001, real per capita income is expected to further reduce in 2001.

The 1999-2001 decline in primary production and earnings and, so, national income arose from civil unrest on Guadalcanal. This led to the closure of Solomon Islands Plantations Limited (SIPL) in mid-1999, the only palm oil producer in the country and also a producer of cocoa, the closure of Gold Ridge mine in mid-2000, the



2000.

only mining operation, and the cessation of timber log production and sawmilling on Guadalcanal. Production of copra and cocoa on Guadalcanal by other commercial enterprises and by smallholders also ceased in 1999.

The unrest did not immediately impact on the fishing operations by Solomon Taiyo Limited (STL)⁶⁹, the major industrial fishing operation in the country. However, during a later stage of the unrest armed rebels boarded fishing vessels and management decided to cease operations. Using reserve stocks a reduced level of processing of canned products was continued, the primary objective being to keep the factory equipment operational. By contrast, the palm oil factory has been neglected for so long that it is now beyond rehabilitation.

As of the start of 2002, of the large commercial enterprises only the tuna fishing operations of the former STL and of NFD have resumed, the former under new arrangements. Towards the end of 2000 the foreign joint venture partner, the Maruha Corporation of Japan, terminated its partnership in the company with the Central Government. The company, renamed Soltai Fishing and Processing Ltd (SFPL), is now a wholly state-owned enterprise, the Western Province being the new equity partner with the national Government.

The Commonwealth Development Corporation, the major investor in the oil palm and cocoa plantations of SIPL, has withdrawn. No palm oil has been produced since the closure of SIPL in mid-1999. The Gold Ridge gold mine remains closed. Customary landowners of the Gold Ridge area have demanded renegotiation of the mining agreement. Production of logs, copra and cocoa by commercial enterprises and smallholders on Guadalcanal is yet to resume.

The civil unrest also adversely affected the operations of manufacturing and service industries in Honiara, the Capital, which is located on Guadalcanal. These enterprises continue to be affected by law and order problems in Honiara.

The economy has experienced downturns in the past (see Figure 5.1), but nothing as dramatic as this. Up until 1998 these arose largely from external factors such as world market prices and climatic conditions while the production base remained intact and economic recovery followed on improvement in the external environment. The situation now facing country is quite different. The export production base has been badly damaged and economic recovery will require additional investment to re-establish this base. Investor confidence, both foreign and domestic, has "taken a beating" and serious investors cannot be expected to return quickly. This adds to and compounds the problems of structural factors and economic policy management, particularly fiscal policy.

5.2 Income Distribution

GDP per capita, an average measure, does not show the actual distribution of income. This can be determined from surveys of household incomes and expenditure conducted in the early 1990s by the Statistics Office for Honiara (1991), the provincial centres (1992) and the rural areas (1993). The results of these surveys showed wide disparities in income and expenditure between rural and urban areas, between income groups and between nationals and expatriates. In 1991 the average Honiara household income was \$2387 per annum with per capita income of \$358.⁷⁰ A 1993 rural survey returned an average annual household income of \$330, the per capita income being \$55.

⁶⁹ Now Soltai Ltd.

⁷⁰ The 1991 urban results also showed that, in Honiara, expatriate households had seven times the income of Solomon Islander households.

The report of the survey of provincial centres does not provide the total income of households by income group. However, by using the midpoint of each income group to calculate total income for each income groups, the estimated average monthly income of households in the provincial centres would be \$610.⁷¹

Taking all the surveys together, the majority of households (93 percent) were in the low-income group (\$0-\$750). Together they accounted for 22 percent of total household income. About one-twentieth of one percent (0.05%) of households (just 30 households) accounted for over one-third (37 percent) of total household income. The wide disparity between the low-income and high-income groups is explained by the income distribution in Honiara where the bottom 45 percent of households accounted for eight percent (8%) and just 30 households at the top accounted for over a half (51%) of the total household incomes in Honiara. The highly skewed income distribution in Honiara is caused primarily by expatriate incomes. Even so, among Solomon Islander households, the top 10 percent received over 50 percent of total incomes in Honiara, showing a decisive shift from the relatively egalitarian society of the past.

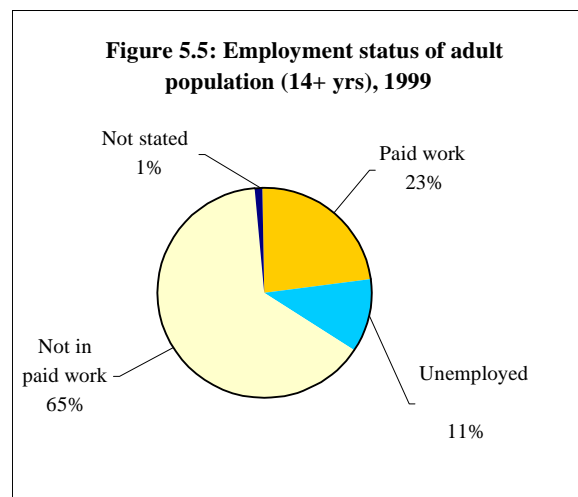
5.3 Employment

While subsistence activity remains a very strong element of the rural economy Solomon Islanders have long been under pressure to sell their labour and their products for the cash needed for life's basics, schooling, clothing, food and health. The pressure continues to increase, in line with people's growing expectations.

Yet, in terms of formal employment the 1999 Census has revealed that of the adult population (defined as 14 years and over) only 23% were engaged in formal

employment and 11% were unemployed,⁷² (Figure 5.5). So the majority (nearly two-thirds) of the adult population were not engaged in paid employment and nor were they looking for paid work. They were engaged in subsistence production, were undertaking unpaid household duties, were retired, were students, or they were members of a growing category, the "liu" – pushed out of the education system, disenchanted, and not engaged in anything constructive.

In 1999 agriculture was the single most important source of paid work, contributing 21 percent of employment. Agriculture, forestry and fishing together contributed just over one-third of total employment. Other sectors providing paid employment were manufacturing, wholesale and retail trade, public administration, education and health. Annual employment surveys carried out by the National Statistics Office show that formal employment stagnated throughout most of the 1990s with the exception of 1993 and 1994 when there was an upsurge. The public sector (Government and statutory authorities) provided 31 percent of employment over the period 1994-1998. In 1999 Honiara had the largest number of employed, followed by Western, Malaita



⁷¹ The report also does not provide the number of persons in each household as a basis for calculation of per capita income in provincial centres.

⁷² defined as those not active in paid work but looking for paid work.

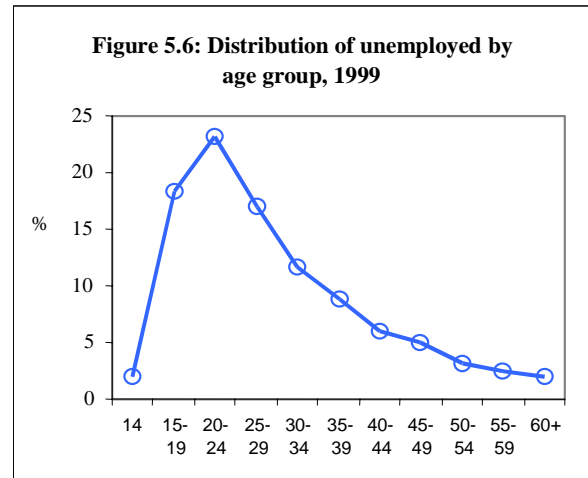
and Guadalcanal Provinces, as shown in Tables 5.3⁷³ and 5.4.⁷⁴ The gender distribution in paid employment underestimates the economic participation of women. In particular, they have a key role in the informal sector, as explained below.

In 1999 over 27,600 people not in paid employment were seeking paid work. They represented 11 percent of the total adult population (and 32 percent of the labour force). Thirty nine percent of the nation's unemployment was in Malaita, followed by Guadalcanal (14%) and Western (11%). The Malaita figures were elevated by the fact that a majority of SIPL employees (the oil palm venture operating on Guadalcanal) had been from Malaita (another large group was from Temotu). On closure of SIPL they were returned to their provinces of origin. Closure of the Gold Ridge mine also impacted on employment in Guadalcanal and Honiara. Following the withdrawal of the Maruha Corporation from STL and subsequent financial problems for the company a redundancy exercise was implemented in February 2001 and 1,900 of 2,600 employees were retrenched – most in Western Province.

Table 5.3: Paid employment by Province (1999)

Province	Number employed	% of national total in paid employment
Choiseul	2668	4.6
Western	13417	23.5
Isabel	2721	4.7
Central	3740	6.5
Rennell-Bellona	184	0.3
Guadalcanal	6740	11.7
Malaita	8713	15.2
Makira-Ulawa	2342	4.1
Temotu	1407	2.4
Honiara	15460	26.9
Solomon Islands	57472	100.0

⁷³ Calculated from data provided in Table B6.01 of the 1999 Census Report.



Unemployment disproportionately affected young people as shown in Figure 5.6. The age group 20-24 years experienced very high unemployment (40%) as did the 15-19 years group (57%) and the 25-29 years group (30%). Forty percent of those aged less than 30 years were unemployed.

A profile of Malaita ex-combatants closely matches the statistics shown above.⁷⁵ They:

- are aged between 14 and 25 years;
- have low levels of formal education, with 55% having completed primary school only, and 45% having reached Form 3 level;

Table 5.4: Percentage of population in paid employment (1999)

Province	% males employed	% females employed
Choiseul	31	14
Western	45	24
Isabel	32	12
Central	39	17
Rennell-Bellona	20	5
Guadalcanal	24	12
Malaita	18	7
Makira-Ulawa	17	8
Temotu	17	7
Honiara	54	31
Solomon Islands	31	15

⁷⁴ Calculated from data provided in Table B6.01 of the 1999 Census Report.

- are unemployed and relying on family support; and
- see some form of self-employment as their only real option.

No comparative survey of IFM ex-combatants has been undertaken but their profile is similar.⁷⁶

The importance of the informal sector is not well appreciated. Yet it is very visible and is increasing. Generally speaking, it is built on the foundation of family and its semi-subsistence skills base. Studies of women traders in the Solomon Islands (Box 5.1) reinforce the importance of informal trading sales to household security. In a Solomon Islands survey it was established that informal trade was the sole income for one third of a sample of 323 women traders⁷⁷ in fish and shellfish (further discussed in chapter 3).

A Women's Business Association established in 1996 includes among its membership some Honiara women market vendors, among them Sup Sup Garden Club members who sell surplus garden produce. Men, too, contribute to the informal sector,

Box 5.1 – Women informal traders in the Solomon Islands

- Two-thirds were self employed;
- Three quarters of these spent at least 16 hours a week on income earning activities;
- More than one-third were sole income providers;
- Their enterprises were farm gardening (38%), food catering (21%), crafts (15%) and textiles (11%);
- Four out of ten sold at a market, 34% from home, and 16% from shops;
- Only 25% had received any assistance to run their businesses – from relatives, banks or other sources;
- Most (75%) were married, with an average of 5 children and 25% lived in households of more than 7 people;
- Almost 20% had no formal education at all and over 50% had had only a few years of primary schooling;
- Twenty-five percent were unable to write in any language; and
- Almost a third could not do simple arithmetical calculations.

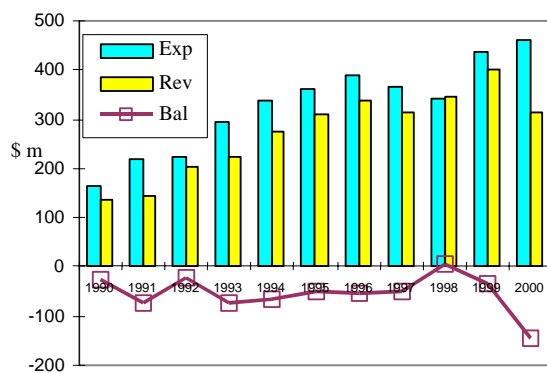
Source: adapted from ILO/UNDP 1993

and labour long and hard with women in harvesting and processing copra, shell and beche-de-mer for very modest returns. The village level contribution is vital. Analysis of returns from the 1999 Census show that, where Honiara data are excluded, at least 47% of all other households engage in the marketing of agricultural products and 28%.

5.4 Government Financial Management

Budget deficits. Throughout the 1990s Government finances showed continuing budget deficits, with the exception of 1998 (Figure 5.7)⁷⁸ when implementation of a Policy and Structural Reform Programme (PSRP) commenced. The PSRP effect on public expenditure began to take effect in 1999. However due to the impact of the civil unrest, public expenditure went up again in 2000 and 2001 and public revenue fell.

Figure 5.7: Government Budget Outcomes, 1990-2000



⁷⁵ From a survey by the Malaitan Christian Outreach Program.

⁷⁶ Personal communication, N.Supa, Secretary of the Peace Monitoring Council.

⁷⁷ Fairbairn-Dunlop, P., 1997. Women's Triple Agricultural Role: food security, informal trade and cash cropping. J. South Pacific Agriculture.

⁷⁸ Central Bank of Solomon Islands Annual Report 2000. PSRP expenditure and external financing of it and donor grants for recurrent budget support in 1998-2000 is excluded from Figure 5.7.

To assist the Government in implementing the reform programme the development partners funded certain PSRP expenditures. They also provided grant assistance for operating costs particularly in education and health. Some of the grant assistance in 1999 and 2000 was to offset the additional costs imposed by the civil unrest. Grants to the recurrent budget amounted to \$38 million in 1998 and \$78 million in 1999. Donor grants to the recurrent budget in 2000 amounted to \$135.9 million – nearly doubling the grant financing of 1999 and exceeding the total grant financing provided for both 1998 and 1999.

Both poor revenue performance and the maintenance of high and increasing levels of recurrent expenditure have caused the persistent budget deficits. As a consequence the Solomon Islands' indebtedness and debt service obligations have grown.

Revenue leakage. Poor revenue performance resulted from the weak capacities of the tax revenue collecting departments, the Inland Revenue and Customs Divisions, and of other departments collecting non-tax revenues. It was made much worse by a high level of tax exemptions and duty remissions provided to individuals and enterprises. Some duty remissions and exemptions arose from contractual arrangements with companies. In other cases the Minister of Finance granted remission and duty exemptions for a wide range of goods, even including cigarettes, alcohol, and vehicles⁷⁹. This was a sign of a major breakdown in financial management and highlights a major problem of governance. There was no sign of the Government bringing its Minister into line with stated policy.

Log export duty exemptions escalated between 1993 to 1997, reaching a massive \$87.6 million in 1997.⁸⁰ During the period 1993-1997, total log export duty remissions

amounted to an estimated \$207.9 million, of which \$153.3 million were for the two years 1996 and 1997. Under the PSRP 1998-1999 timber export duty remissions and other discretionary remissions were considerably reduced. For example, during January-September 1998 total timber log export duty remissions amounted to \$7 million, a considerable reduction from the \$87.6 million granted in the previous year.

The total revenue loss from log export duties has been far higher than these figures indicate. Major revenue losses arose also from a lack of monitoring and inspection of log export shipments when, in 1996, Central Government disbanded the Timber Control Unit of the Forestry Division and terminated external assistance provided by AusAID to support this unit. A high proportion of log export revenue was thereby lost. AusAID supported TCU monitoring re-commenced in May 2001 and, on the basis of the first six months of log export duty revenue captured since then it is estimated that about \$15 million had been lost through the 1996 decision to subvert the TCU. Had it not been lost, this sum could have been invested in (for example) 150 badly needed classrooms.

For many years revenue leakage has been a feature of the logging industry in the Solomon Islands. Prior to the establishment of the TCU there was little effort to verify data on volume of log exports provided by exporters to the Customs Division. Transfer pricing was common and, in addition, logging companies were able to reduce their payments to Government even further by listing high-value logs as low-value species.

Misappropriation of public funds, made easier through the weak controls over public funds, has been another way in which public monies have been squandered. One example is the 1996 sacking of a number of public servants allegedly involved in a swindle of \$10 million – a rare and possibly unique instance of punitive action having been taken in such a situation.

⁷⁹ A recent Court judgement found that the Minister had exceeded his powers in doing this.

⁸⁰ Solomon Islands Government, 1999.

Public expenditure. Recurrent expenditure has always been high. A restructuring of the public service carried out in the early 1990s resulted in an increase in the number of upper level positions in the public service and in their pay levels. A top-heavy public service was created and payroll expenditure rose significantly. In 1997 this amounted to 46 percent. However, it was reduced to 25% in 1998 as result of the PSRP – after which it rose again, to 35% in 2000. In January, 2002 a record number of permanent secretaries was appointed – 28 to serve 18 Ministries. This is another example of weakness in governance – staffing costs absorb a major part of public funds.

Another important component of recurrent expenditure is debt service payments. A persistent high level of deficits continues to add to Government indebtedness. With its weak revenue performance, high level of public expenditure and mounting debt service payments, the country began to accumulate debt arrears in 1994. The Government securities market collapsed in 1995 when, having exceeded its borrowing limits, the Government could no longer borrow from the CBSI to meet debt service obligations and to refinance debt in the banking system. By 1997 Government debt arrears on external and domestic loans reached \$104.2 million, increasing from just \$18.7 million of domestic debt arrears in 1994.

The problems of debt service payment and arrears were addressed in the PSRP, 1998-1999. Arrears and normal debt service payments were made so that by May 1999 the debt arrears were reduced to \$52.4 Million. However, due to impacts of the civil unrest on the Government budget, further debt arrears accumulated (as revenue leakage proliferated). In addition, new debt has been incurred. In 2001 the Government took out a loan of \$127 million (about US\$25 million) from the EXIM Bank of Taiwan for payment of compensation, including that promised for properties lost as result of theft and destruction during the

civil unrest. At February 2002 the government's total debt was reported to be "well in excess of 1.3 billion".⁸¹

5.5 Banking and Financial Services

Banking and financial services are provided by three commercial banks, and by the Development Bank of Solomon Islands (DBSI), credit unions and specialised financial institutions such as the National Provident Fund (NPF), Housing Finance Corporation and insurance companies. There are also informal financial activities in lending, including individual moneylenders.

Some of the commercial banks and the DBSI have branches in provincial centres. The Housing Finance Corporation provides housing finance mainly to residents of Honiara. The NPF is a main source of loan funds to the Government. It has established a housing loan scheme for its members. Credit unions provide financial services to their members. The main credit unions are those based on professions or employment such as the Public Servants' Credit Union and Teachers' Credit Union. There are also some village-based credit unions. UNDP has funded a micro-finance scheme for women, mainly in Honiara (closed in 1999). The Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) Regional Centre, while it was located in Honiara, began a credit scheme for youth.⁸²

The banking and financial services provide access to credit mainly to commercial enterprises and to those in formal employment, particularly high-income earners. Access by rural and low-income people is very limited. The DBSI, which has been set up to assist with financing of projects, has not been very effective because of its clients' high levels of arrears and the Bank's high operating costs. DBSI funds have been sourced from donors.⁸³ The civil unrest caused the suspension of DBSI lending operations in 1999. Another

⁸¹ Prime Minister's "100 Days and Beyond" speech.

⁸² Due to the social unrest, the CYP Regional Centre was relocated to Brisbane in 2000.

⁸³ Largely by a credit line from the International Corporation Development Fund (ICDF), Taiwan.

source of rural credit, the Rural Constituency Development Fund Credit Scheme was only temporarily suspended, resuming operations towards the end of the 2000.

5.6 Regional Development

Planning, and the formulation of development strategies at the national level has been sector-based. The provinces are expected to formulate regional/provincial development plans and programmes, though they are given few resources to do this. In practice, the development needs of the provinces have been articulated through sectoral programmes of the Ministries of Central Government, meaning that provincial planning lacks a real role. There has not been an overall regional development strategy framework for development in the provinces and for sub-regions within provinces.

The recognition of the need to focus on regional and provincial development led to the establishment of a Provincial Development Unit (PDU) and Provincial Development Fund (PDF) in 1980. However, the focus of the PDU and PDF and donor funds administered by PDU were on small-scale community projects submitted by individual provinces. These project interventions were ad hoc, not part of a systematic provincial approach to planning.

Lack of support for planning has always frustrated the provinces. In 1983 a concerted attempt was made to gain the attention of Central Government. A conference of provincial planners concluded: "... as currently practised, provincial planning is largely a coordinating process in response to political, sectoral and private development pressures ..."⁸⁴. Planners were particularly frustrated by the failure of the National Planning Office to respond to their approaches or to support them. They were also frustrated by being put in a position from which they had little or no opportunity to engage in strategic thinking as a basis for real planning; that they

were simply being asked to react to plans and projects conceived by others, primarily donors and development banks. National planning has improved since then, though little has improved at a Provincial level, despite assistance through the ESCAP Pacific Operations Centre.⁸⁵

This is not to say that successive governments, assisted by donors and development agencies, have not attempted to promote and support community and rural development. They have – but with a "top-down" approach that has had little success.

A refreshing change came with the Solomon Islands Development Administration and Participatory Planning Programme (SIDAPP), funded by the UNDP and implemented during 1996-2001. It aimed at building the capability of the Ministry of Provincial Government and Rural Development (MPGRD) to provide training and other services to the provinces. SIDAPP prepared constituency development profiles that incorporated small-scale rural development projects in three provinces: Isabel, Malaita and Rennell-Bellona. Unfortunately, little progress has been made in implementing these constituency projects. In the course of establishing a foundation of information and understanding for a proposed National Integrated Rural Development Project (NIRDP) a provincial development profile was prepared for each province. These constitute the most up-to-date and comprehensive account of the circumstances of the provinces.

SIDAPP also took an initiative in promoting regional and community development through the introduction of a modern, but simple, telecommunications network using radio communications as a basis for e-mail exchanges. The first of the so-called PFNet ("People First") rural stations was inaugurated at Sasamunga, Choiseul, in October 2001.

⁸⁴ Report of the Provincial Planning Conference, Gizo, Western Province. 18-21 October, 1983.

⁸⁵ Among other things EPOC produced a Training Manual for the Formulation, Implementation and Review of Provincial Development Plans in 1989.

A number of active and effective NGOs provide community services in leadership training, rural development, agricultural training, promotion of food gardens and good nutrition, family health and family planning counselling, supporting self-help and self-employment initiatives and assisting vulnerable groups. In addition there are a number of more specialised development NGOs whose work is primarily concerned with empowering people particularly at the grassroots level by extending their knowledge and understanding of critical development issues and their interests and rights. These NGOs engage both in public education and in providing practical support to local communities. They raise community awareness on development issues and offer development alternatives. Church based organisations are involved mainly in vocational training through rural training centres serving approximately 1,600 trainees. These centres receive very little Government support.

There has been no overall regional development strategy to provide a coherent development framework for these projects and programmes. Nor has there been any overall assessment of the situation. As part of the PSRP, which began in 1998, the Government initiated the process of formulating a regional / provincial development strategy. It allocated funds in the development budget for a national stock-take to provide the base data for the situation analysis and formulation of the regional development strategy. UNDP agreed to provide technical and advisory assistance for this. However, the civil unrest intervened and the initiative was abandoned.

5.7 Constraints and Prospects

The constraints on the country's economic development include:

- low prices for export commodities (copra, oil palm, tuna, cocoa, logs);
- structural weaknesses within the Solomon Islands (physical, institutional and socio-cultural);

- undisciplined and wasteful Government financial management;
- poor economic management and management of national development;
- "top-down" planning, with no meaningful role for Provinces;
- instability and uncertainty arising from the civil unrest on Guadalcanal ; and
- an investment climate that discourages genuine investors (those with a long-term perspective and prepared to respect the law).

Both immediate actions and long-term strategies are needed to restore macroeconomic stability and social balance. Immediate steps are needed to consolidate and maintain peace among the affected communities and to restore law and order. Secondly, the initiatives taken by the current Government to stem the bleeding of the economy through duty remissions and by ignoring the understatement of log exports must be maintained. Every aspect of Government budget management needs improvement. Public expenditure must be curbed, and spending allocated to the improvement of public services, particularly in non-urban areas.

The recent establishment of an independent grouping, The Economics Association of the Solomon Islands, provides the public with a collective voice on economic matters. It has been prepared to speak out on concerns such as duty remissions.

A continuing dialogue between Government and its development partners is a pre-requisite to provision of the assistance needed. Donors expect the Government to resume the effort in policy and structural reform initiated prior to the civil unrest. For the longer term, the whole process of national development planning and management needs review and reorganisation – with particular reference to strengthening provincial level planning and to developing partnerships with private enterprise and civil society.

CHAPTER 6: THE STRUGGLE OVER RESOURCES

6.1 Background

During World War II Guadalcanal was the stage for one of the fiercest battles between the Japanese and US-led Allied forces. After the war the military infrastructure in the northern part of the island served as a basis for the establishment of the returning colonial government's administrative headquarters – now the national capital, Honiara. Though not a good port, in other respects it was seen as a good location from which to facilitate economic development in the Protectorate, and not least because of its proximity to the archipelago's only large tract of arable land – the Guadalcanal Plains.

There has since been a sustained flow of migrants from other parts of the country to Honiara. The major source of these migrants has been the nearby densely populated island of Malaita. Many of the early migrants to Honiara from Malaita and other islands settled on Government-owned land. Demand has long since outstripped the limited supply of this alienated land (land removed from customary tenure). Since the 1960s many settlers have presumed to "buy" customary land from the indigenous people of Guadalcanal.⁸⁶ Some others have foregone formality and illegally established a presence on both customary and Government land. The increasing number of settlers has been a concern among indigenous Guadalcanal people for some time.⁸⁷ There has been a general acceptance of non-Guadalcanal people

arriving as nuclear families for employment, at least in Honiara.⁸⁸ However, there has been growing Guadalcanal resentment of those who come, not for employment, but to gain access to land – and of those who come as "lius", a Pijin term for the footloose unemployed.

Malaita's land and natural resources have long been under population pressure and an obvious strategy for its people has been to seek alternative areas to create a living. Under a colonial regime this was not possible. The administration's focus was on keeping Malaita habitable through improved agriculture. It sponsored studies of the diminishing fertility of agricultural land, proffered agricultural advice and promoted export crops.⁸⁹ The movement of people in those days was closely controlled. Many Malaitans worked throughout the Protectorate, but under contract conditions that required that they return home when their work period finished. A Vagrancy Ordinance was in place to deal with those found out-of-place without good reason.

Quite properly from its own perspective, Britain insisted on a fully democratic Constitution as a basis for political independence in 1978. Concerns of representatives of the then Western District to have stronger control over resources, and the nascent concerns of Guadalcanal people about outsiders seeking to enter their lightly populated island were brushed aside. Freedom of movement was seen as an essential

⁸⁶ This was done willingly by older men, despite its' not being consistent with custom. It is resented by women and by younger men who view the act as a sale of their birth right.

⁸⁷ "The worst fear the Tasimboko people have is in regard to the immigration of Malaita people." Allan, C.H., 1957, p.76.

⁸⁸ Another source of resentment has been the failure of the SIPL to give preferential employment to Guadalcanal people in a Malaita dominated enterprise on Guadalcanal island.

⁸⁹ See, for instance, Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Shifting Cultivation and Soil Exhaustion in West Kwara'ae, Malaita, June, 1969.

element of a democratic constitution. A radical shift in inter-island relations was thus effected.

The implied freedom of internal movement, and that notion that the nation's resources were to be shared among all so that the resource-poor would benefit from a transfer of resources from the resource-endowed are not unusual in a modern State. For the Solomon Islands, which had experienced only a brief period of centralised rule in its history and a very short period of preparation for Independence, this represented a radical departure from the norm.

The people of Malaita have recognised and seized the opportunity presented by the national constitution. They have established communities throughout the country, concentrated where there are opportunities for employment in resource development projects and where they can obtain rights to land. Kolombangara Island in Western Province is another example. Prior to 1998 there was in Western Province every appearance of a welcoming acceptance of those "genuine" Malaitan settlers in their midst. This has always been qualified by a concern about the unemployed who use extended family links to move in on their relatives in "the west". This was not unlike the tolerance once demonstrated by the people of Guadalcanal.

There were many points over the years since Independence when the issue of incursions by settlers manifest itself in forms which needed to be addressed by Central Government. In 1981, for instance, a task force was set up in the Ministry of Natural Resources to determine the administrative and legal procedures to be followed to contain the spread of settler housing into a catchment from which water was drawn for Honiara's water supply. The Government chose not to confront the Malaitan settlers and decided against action. In 1988 a major rally of

Guadalcanal people marched on the Parliament to publicise their grievances. The Prime Minister of the day addressed them, adopting a lofty national position on the issue but offering nothing to ease their concerns. For a further ten years the issues sat and smouldered.

Meanwhile, the development of the capital and facilities for urban dwellers continued – while in rural Guadalcanal nothing changed. In particular, basic education, health and road access improvements did not materialise. Guadalcanal land owners had contributed resources for national development but did not see a proportion of these benefits being shared with them in terms of improved services.

6.2 Frustration Erupts

Frustration arising from Central Government's inaction over the years was to translate into direct action. In 1998, a small group of Guadalcanal youths, tired of empty words and claiming to represent the interests of indigenous Guadalcanal people began a campaign to garner support around the island in a bid to force out settlers. By late 1998 the group had gained considerable support and had begun to harass and intimidate settlers around Honiara. The group's objective was to drive out the Malaitan settlers and "lius" that made up the highest proportion of all settlers on Guadalcanal.⁹⁰ They claimed not to be directing their actions at settlers from other islands though these, too, decided to move.

By the end of 1998 a Guadalcanal militant group had been formed, referring to itself initially as the Guadalcanal Revolutionary Army (GRA) and the Isatambu Freedom Fighters (IFF), and later as the Isatambu Freedom Movement (IFM).

Militia numbers were not large but, the issue having been given such prominence

⁹⁰ 1999 Census, p.65.

by these actions, a move was made to once more place before the Central Government the concerns of Guadalcanal people. At a rally in February 1999 the "Bona fide demands of the Indigenous People of Guadalcanal" was presented (see Box 6.1 for a summary). By mid-1999 about 20,000 people (around 13,000 Malaitans, the rest being people from other areas of the country)⁹¹ had been displaced from Guadalcanal.⁹²

Box 6.1 – Summary of Demands made at the February 2nd 1999 rally of Guadalcanal people

- State Government.
- Review of the Constitution.
- Review of the Lands & Titles Act.
- Transfer of Perpetual Estates Titles.
- Return of all alienated land.
- Rental for Honiara land.
- Increased shares in Solomon Islands Plantation Ltd.
- Review of the formula for the revenue sharing - 50% of all revenue collected by the government from investments on Guadalcanal.
- Proper acquisition of Honiara's offshore area.
- Relocation of the national capital.
- Control of internal migration.
- Amendment of the Electoral Act.
- Compensation for Guadalcanal people murdered in and around Honiara.
- Compensation for the killing of a Guadalcanal youth by police.

Source: "The Bona Fide Demands of the Indigenous People of Guadalcanal", submitted to the Central Government, 2 February 1999.

Guadalcanal representatives demanded that the Central Government take firm action to curb the violence and to compensate their losses. The Government seemed unable to deal with the emerging

⁹¹ These figures are rough estimates. Because of the difficulties of enumerating people's movement, it is difficult to know exactly how many people were displaced.

⁹² SIG, Report on 1999 Population & Housing Census: basic tables and census description, Honiara: Statistics Office, p.70.

crisis. Hopes of a settlement of the tension, if not the claims for loss of life and property, arose in the form of a meeting of traditional leaders from Guadalcanal and Malaita. At this forum, in a gesture based on a tradition that people of Malaita understood well, the Guadalcanal chiefs offered a sum of compensation for the actions of their young against Malaitans – and the traditional leaders of Malaita accepted. Yet the IFM made their contempt for this move known. This was a serious loss of face, and status, for the traditional leaders on both sides.

In January of 1999 a group raided the Police armoury at Auki, the administrative centre of Malaita, and stole all the weapons it contained. By mid 1999 a group of Malaitans, offended by the actions of the IFM and frustrated by the Government's inability to resolve the conflict, emerged as a militant group, the Malaita Eagle Force (MEF). Backed secretly by Malaitan elements within the Royal Solomon Islands Police and some prominent Malaitan businessmen and elders, the MEF "landed" on Guadalcanal and quickly developed a strong presence in Honiara, with armed patrols throughout the city and "bunkers" established just beyond the limits of the City.

During the height of the Bougainville crisis in neighbouring Papua New Guinea the then Mamaloni-led Government had secretly purchased about SI\$10 million (US\$2 million) worth of arms from the US. In 1997 the Ulufa'alu-led Government obtained the assistance of New Zealand in blocking delivery of portion of this arms shipment. It is uncertain what quantity of arms may have reached the Solomon Islands and whether these formed part of the arsenal amassed by the MEF.

By late 1999 open confrontation between the IFM and MEF escalated in areas around Honiara and the MEF, with much superior arms, pushed into areas previously occupied by the IFM. The

Commonwealth Secretariat, responding to approaches by the Government, deployed a contingent of police officers from Fiji and Vanuatu, and a Special Envoy. A number of attempts to facilitate a peace process failed.

On 5 June 2000 the MEF, in collusion with some Malaitan officers of the RSIP,⁹³ took control of the police armoury in Honiara and staged a *de facto* coup, forcing Prime Minister Ulufa'alu to resign. A rushed Parliament meeting was held under pressure and Manasseh Sogavare of Choiseul Province was elected by Parliament as a replacement Prime Minister.

In the months that followed, open confrontation between the two militant groups intensified in areas around Honiara. By the end of 2000, more than 100 people had been reported killed.⁹⁴ Killings also took place within the militant groups themselves, especially after October 2000 when, a peace treaty having been agreed, sub-group rivalries that formerly might have been worked out through fists and compensation were played out with guns.

The new Government, assisted by Australia and New Zealand, continued with attempts to resolve the crisis. On 2 August 2000 a cease-fire agreement was signed aboard the Australian warship HMAS Tobruk. This was followed by a peace conference in the Australian City of Townsville, 10-15 October 2000 at which the Townsville Peace Agreement (TPA) was signed.

Despite the signing of the TPA and the cessation of overt violence between the IFM and MEF, law and order problems

have persisted and the economy remains in a precarious state. Under the TPA all weapons were to be handed over to an international monitoring group. At the start of 2002 the Peace Monitoring Committee (PMC) estimated that 500 small arms remained unaccounted for. From time to time these weapons appear in the context of robberies, as inducements to pay "compensation", and for occasional revenge killings.

6.3 The Role of Civil Society Organisations

Credit is due to groups of women who attempted to mediate in the difficult circumstances, bravely venturing between "bunkers" established by the warring parties to try to reason with them. Suspicion among militants that this was a vehicle for spying meant that in some cases the effectiveness of this approach was compromised. Overall, however, women's actions are deemed to have been effective through advocacy, opening up dialogue between the warring factions. Their contribution was of unquestionable value in supporting women and families affected by the fighting with cash, food and other resources and in rallying others to provide support. They were also active in drawing attention to the social and human consequences of the fighting. Yet, despite their active role and the understanding they had developed of the situation, they and others of civil society were excluded from the negotiations that eventually brought a form of peace.

Among Church organisations one achieved remarkable success. The calm, low-key efforts of the Melanesian Brotherhood, a group established within the Church of Melanesia (Anglican) had for years walked the length and breadth of Guadalcanal giving spiritual support to members of all denominations. Their unassuming, humble and honest approach gained them the trust of both "sides". While often in danger from edgy militants

⁹³ Solomon Islands has no conventional army. It has a police force and an arm of the police, the Police Field Force (PFF), which operates as a small quasi military force.

⁹⁴ This figure has not been independently verified and is most likely an under-estimate.

they succeeded in preventing some armed confrontations and saving the lives of some individuals targeted by militia. Much is to be learned about conflict resolution, "Solomons style" from this experience.

6.4 Beyond Guadalcanal

The MEF did not confine its operations to Guadalcanal. Tulagi, the administrative centre of Central Province was subject to theft and damage. Small armed units travelled to Santa Ysabel, where deft diplomatic moves by that island's traditional leaders defused the threat. More serious in their consequences were the attempts to enter Western Province, ostensibly to protect Malaitan settlers there.

Though some anti-Malaitan statements had emerged at this time from a few members of the public in "the West" the official line, stated publicly, was that genuine law-abiding Malaitans were welcome. This was not enough to calm the situation, and the MEF threat persisted. Western Province officials took action to prevent incursions. Through its long-term links with Bougainville, armed members of the BRA were invited to help establish a security force in the Province. This added a new dimension to the instability.

When the BRA withdrew from the Western Provinces some of its former members chose to remain. Some had married Solomon Islanders and settled. Others took on "security" roles with some local businesses. Others no longer had a role – but they still had weapons. Several incidents have involved the use of these weapons in shows of force that have kept the residents of Gizo and Noro in fear of worse. The downside of the Bougainville connection manifested itself in another way through a Solomon Islander who had received military training in Bougainville. Lacking a cause after the signing of the TPA had deflected the threat to the Western Solomons, he became a source of

trouble, firing his weapon in public places and then using it for criminal activities in Choiseul, where Police later killed him. His ex-BRA colleagues demanded the return of his ("their") high powered weapon, creating fear in Gizo by firing into the air and invading and damaging the Police Station.

On 22nd February 2002 the Bougainville factor reached an ugly climax. Two Malaitan "Special Constables", armed and in the Noro area allegedly without Police knowledge, were shot dead by Bougainvilleans. When news reached Honiara, in retaliation some Malaitans there attacked Solomon Islanders from "the West" and stole their possessions. The situation was deteriorating. It was saved, or at least diverted, by a prompt display of determined leadership. The Premier of Western Province promptly offered compensation to families of the victims and paid this through representatives of Malaita Province and Honiara City Council three days later. This was accompanied by public statements of conciliation and calls for restraint by Malaitan leaders. It was followed quickly by a supporting statement from the Bougainville leadership expressing apology and stating a determination to help rid the Solomon Islands of Bougainvillean trouble-makers.⁹⁵

The western Solomons (Western and Choiseul Provinces) have been affected strongly by the conflict in Guadalcanal and by the instability and uncertainty now faced by the whole nation. Yet the association with Bougainville makes for a different situation, requiring responses tailored to these special circumstances. This must necessarily involve interaction with PNG in general and with Bougainville in particular.

⁹⁵ One of the clauses of the Bougainville Peace Agreement of early 2000 requires the return to Bougainville from the Solomon Islands of all ex-BRA except those who married and settled in the Solomons.

6.5 Poverty, Resources and Governance

The period of violent social unrest in Guadalcanal since 1998 has been described simplistically as an "ethnic crisis". While there are clear ethnic differences between the protagonists, ethnicity itself is not the cause.⁹⁶

The prospect of poverty in an island home short of arable land put pressure on Malaitans to seek opportunities elsewhere. In the absence of a rational arrangement through which their resources could be made available for development in a way that brought them fair returns, Guadalcanal elders made impromptu quasi-legal arrangements with settlers. Some settlers began to take unfair advantage of the opportunities in Guadalcanal. As resentment developed so did tensions arise. At no stage in the long history of expressed grievances did Central Government offer any practical compromise to accommodate the interests and concerns of landowners and settlers. It was a failure of governance in that Central Government:

- did not see itself as accountable to its constituents;
- failed to take account of the interests of different groups in the community;
- was not transparent in its dealings on the issue; and
- was not equitable in that it did not strive for a fair distribution of benefits from the use of resources – in particular it did not translate economic gains from the use of Guadalcanal resources into basic services for rural Guadalcanal.

Land, and benefits arising from its use were central to Guadalcanal Province's demands submitted to the Central

Government in February 1999.⁹⁷ The Province and indigenous landowners had benefited only in a small way from the large oil palm plantation operated by Solomon Islands Plantations Ltd (SIPL), and from a gold mine at Gold Ridge. Some benefits came in the form of schools and health centres established by the companies – though it might be argued that this was a benefit to Central Government as it was saved the costs it would otherwise have had to meet. In any case, these company offerings were primarily for its employees, not for others living in the vicinity.

A thirty percent shareholding in the oil palm plantation and factory was held by the Central Government with a mere 2% allocated to Guadalcanal – collectively to Guadalcanal Province and the concerned landowners. In addition to this equity, landowners received annually, SI\$100 per hectare as land rental and SI\$500 per hectare as "premium". The agreement was negotiated in 1971. By the mid-1990s landowners had come to perceive it as unfair and had become vocal about it. Despite persistent efforts by landowning groups to get Central Government and CDC to increase their benefits, nothing was resolved. In the meantime more land was acquired for plantation expansion.

The Government of 1997 proposed that as part of privatisation under a Structural Adjustment Programme the Government would sell two-thirds of its 30% share to CDC and one third to Solomon Islanders (of all provinces). The Guadalcanal Provincial Government demanded that instead of selling to CDC, the Central Government should transfer its holding to the Province.

The differences which ultimately gave rise to violence were over resources; a struggle

⁹⁶ A discussion of the Solomon Islands crisis is in Kabutaulaka, T.T., 2001.

⁹⁷ "Bona Fide Demands of the Indigenous Guadalcanal People" - a document submitted to the Solomon Islands Government in February 1999.

between a group which is resource poor and another which is poor in the sense of opportunities and skills to exploit its resource potential. Nation status opened opportunities for migration to resource rich areas. Despite early signs of Guadalcanal concern no measures were put in place by the Central Government to mediate what was clearly a major shift in population and resource distribution. This, despite the various messages of concern, some highly publicised, others through political connections, conveyed by representatives of the Guadalcanal people. The principles of effective governance are that State power be exercised in ways that are: accountable, representative, transparent, efficient, and equitable. Governance failed in every one of these principles:

- There was no practical response from Central Government to the articulation of Guadalcanal concerns;
- the laws against those who illegally occupied land were not enforced;
- no effort was made to introduce measures to stem the drift of unemployed onto Guadalcanal land;
- only meagre benefits were allocated to Guadalcanal and to its landowners from major national development projects; and
- rural communities felt that none of the palm oil profits had translated into the basic services they craved.

6.6 Triggers for Chaos

An accumulation of frustration subsequently was transformed into direct physical action.

More than a decade of civil war between the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA) and the Papua New Guinea Defence Force (PNGDF) had displaced many Bougainvilleans. About 9,000 were given sanctuary in the Solomon Islands and many of these resided in Guadalcanal for long periods. It was inevitable that they would have shared with Guadalcanal people information on how they (the Bougainvilleans) had driven away the Papua New Guinean Highlanders who had arrived in large numbers to staff a giant open-cut copper mine and assumed prominence in local business. Bougainvilleans had also confronted one of the world's largest mining companies and caused it to close its mine and withdraw.

In the context of a weak and weakening economy the challenge of providing employment for the many youth who have emerged from schooling cannot be met. This has long been the situation and from it has emerged a growing class of disaffected youth positioned "somewhere between cultures", aspiring to things modern but inaccessible but, having to a large degree been distanced from their culture groups by formal education, able to draw little comfort and satisfaction from their origins. Feeling rejected and bored some were ready fuel to feed the fire of conflict.

6.7 Social and Economic Costs of the Conflict

The civil unrest and the subsequent armed conflict have imposed enormous social and economic costs. Boxes 6.2 and 6.3 list some of these.

Box 6.2 – Social Costs of the Conflict

- Ethnic differences emphasised, to the detriment of a fragile sense of national unity.
- Guadalcanal-Malaita mixed marriages and their progeny the target of enmity by both "sides".
- A grotesque distortion of the traditional practice of "compensation", now used as a pretext to extort money from the innocent
- Police force compromised by participation of some officers in the militia, so eroding public trust in the institution.
- Much reduced security of person and property.
- Over 30,000 Internally Displaced Persons
- Deaths and injury from militia action and from destruction and obstruction of medical services.
- Increased death toll and illness from a flight of medical staff from their posts, coupled with a gross deficiency in pharmaceutical stocks.
- Break-up of families.
- Loss of family food gardens, economic enterprises and assets.
- Recent gains in women's status undermined as attention focused on the civil strife.
- Education interrupted and many students affected by trauma.
- Damage to transport infrastructure, schools, water supply and sanitation systems, Government buildings and health facilities.
- Major increase in unemployment as oil palm and mining activities ceased.
- A weakening of traditional leadership.
- Increasing poverty.
- Increased abuse of women & children.

- The Honiara Peace Accord signed on June 28, 1999.
- The Panatina Agreement signed on 12 August 1999.
- Cease-fire Agreement on 2 August 2000.
- The Townsville Peace Agreement (TPA) on 15 October, 2000.]
- The Marau Peace Agreement (MPA).⁹⁸

Since the signing of the TPA and the MPA there have been no further formal attempts to facilitate conflict resolution. The TPA, while having brought about a cessation of overt violence between the two militant groups, has weaknesses in that:

- It assumes that the parties to the conflict are strong cohesive entities with a clear chain of command and able to implement the agreement. Yet, after the signing of the TPA, divisions emerged within both the MEF and the IFM;
- The TPA addresses more than was within the power of the parties involved identifying, for example, development projects for Guadalcanal and Malaita.
- Issues of justice and accountability were ignored. No legal action has been taken against those who committed criminal activities during the crisis. Rather, they have been given blanket amnesty.

6.8 A Negotiated Agreement

Although the overt violence between the IFM and MEF has ceased and the groups officially disbanded the crisis is far from resolved.

Attempts made to negotiate and conclude a settlement to the crisis were:

- A *kastom* (custom) feast of Guadalcanal and Malaita traditional leaders held in Honiara on 23 May 1999.

Further, some remain concerned that Civil Society Organisations and women were denied representation in the TPA talks, which meant that the issues discussed were narrowly limited to the interests of those three parties and did not necessarily represent those of the entire country.

⁹⁸ The conflict in the Marau area of north-eastern Guadalcanal was between Malaitans whose ancestors had long ago settled the area (not then occupied by Guadalcanal people) and the IFM. The Malaitan rebels here regarded themselves as a separate force and did not participate in the TPA.

6.9 An Uneasy Calm

The hoped for return to normalcy and political stability that are vital for reviving the prospects of the near-devastated economy has yet to materialise.

Through early 2002, at least, though overt violence between the two militant groups had ceased, the "quiet" was punctuated by the occasional revenge killing. A Peace Monitoring Council (PMC) established under the TPA to monitor the peace process appointed "peace monitors". After evidence emerged that women monitors were particularly effective the PMC increased their number. The PMC is a local group established by the Government to work closely with an International Peace Monitoring Team (IPMT) sponsored by Australia and New Zealand. The IPMT established a presence on both Malaita and Guadalcanal. The PMC stated that most of some 500 guns not handed over to the IPMT as a condition of the TPA are believed to be in the hands of the MEF and of police officers who joined them, as well as ex-IFM members.⁹⁹

Implementation of the TPA has proved very difficult because of the weakness of the State and the equivocal position of the Police force.

A national election held in December, 2001 was declared "free and fair" by a group of international observers. As is usual in Solomon Islands elections there was a high turnover of members. Knowledgeable observers have pointed to a tendency in this election for some Guadalcanal and Malaita voters to support candidates who backed the militias. A consequence is that, with half of the Cabinet now composed of members from those two islands, the militias have direct representation in Government. It remains to be seen whether this will result in an accommodation of interests, bringing some resolution of the problem.

⁹⁹ Peace Monitoring Council, 18 September, 2001.

Box 6.3 – Economic Costs of the Conflict

- Exports of palm oil and palm oil products fell from SI\$97.9 million in 1998 to SI\$65.1 million in 1999 and, subsequently, to an estimated SI\$6.5 million in 2000 before production ceased altogether in that year.
- Fish export revenue, which suffered as a result of low prices and civil unrest, sank from SI\$195 million in 1999 to SI\$45 million in 2000. The sector's contribution to GDP fell by an estimated 42 percent in 2000.
- Agricultural output dropped by over 50 percent from the beginning of 1999 to the end of 2000.
- Other important sectors in the economy, such as logs, copra, and cocoa, suffered some downturn as a result of the disturbances, although they all continued to export in 2000.
- Gold from the Gold Ridge mine on the main island of Guadalcanal had begun to make a significant contribution to exports before the mine was closed in June 2000.
- Rapid decline in economic growth (in 2000, GDP declined by 14 per cent).
- Tourism fell to negligible levels.
- Infrastructure damage estimated at over SI\$250 million, (equivalent to 20 per cent of Solomon Islands GDP).
- The Government experienced acute cash-flow difficulties as tax revenues plummeted and most external assistance was suspended.
- Disruption of economic activity placed severe strains on the delivery of Government services throughout the country.
- Massive loss of personal property on Guadalcanal by people of all Provinces as a result of MEF action.
- A significant increase in overseas debt incurred through loans taken out for repatriation payments to former militants and compensation to victims of the unrest.
- The destruction of an ICLARM coastal aquaculture research and demonstration facility that was studying the suitability of giant clam farming, pearl oysters, sea cucumbers, and other species for village-level aquaculture enterprises.
- A substantial drop in cash and materials infused into village communities by Soltai – through reduced baitfishing.
- The wanton destruction of national agricultural research facilities and irreplaceable reference collections and other data.

One notable casualty of the election is that the voice of women has been muted. The sole woman member of the previous Parliament was not returned and nor were any of the record number of 14 women candidates who bravely stood for election.¹⁰⁰ Through the National Council of Women, UNIFEM had supported special training for them.

A genuine resolution of the civil unrest remains elusive. An atmosphere of suspicion persists, and public confidence in Government may never have been lower. A Guadalcanal leader has characterised the situation as "a nineteenth century culture of violence that had faded through the influence of church missions and modern schooling has been re-ignited".¹⁰¹

The "uneasy calm" persists and shifts. In late February 2002 the IPMT was forced to withdraw its monitoring teams from Marau and Tetere following threats to its staff and, soon afterwards, from its Malu'u base in Malaita. On the 8th March, a "Wokabaout for Pis" (Peace March) was held in Honiara; that day having been declared a Public Holiday by a supportive Government.

All recognise that the priority is to remove weapons from circulation. Not only is this an issue with respect to the inter-island

struggle, but some of these weapons have been used to support criminal activity elsewhere – as in Savo, an island off north-west Guadalcanal.

Elsewhere outside Guadalcanal, Western and Choiseul Provinces continue to experience the downside of their association with Bougainville. Armed criminals from that island are able to move in and out of the Province with impunity. An atmosphere of insecurity and intimidation prevails in the Provincial capital of Gizo and in the Noro industrial centre, tempered by hopes that the Bougainville authorities will at last take action to remove those of their island who are feeding the insecurity.

Once weapons are secured a priority must be a restoration of the tolerance, trust and understanding that, despite recognised differences, was a conspicuous feature of Solomon Islands society before 1998.

The masses of disaffected and partly educated youth for whom employment now is a more elusive dream than ever it was before still wait. Some, now categorised as "ex-combatants", are benefiting through training and support for small-scale enterprise development. Those who chose not to take up arms have reason to wonder if their needs, too, will be addressed.

¹⁰⁰ They were subjected to male threats and intimidation - as were many male election candidates.

¹⁰¹ Personal communication; the leader does not wish to be identified.

CHAPTER 7: BASIC NEEDS AND SAFETY NETS

The Solomon Islands is slowly developing and improving its ability to cater for the social, economic and political needs of its population. Although overall progress has been made since Independence, the country's rating on the Human Development Index remains at 121, out of a total country list of 174. Health status indicators still show room for improvement (Table 7.1). As with every aspect of the country's development there has been a focus on the capital and lesser urban areas to the detriment of the wider rural community. This chapter considers the State's effort to meet people's basic needs, and the extent to which safety nets are in place.

7.1 Food Security and Nutrition

Because Solomon Islanders traditionally practise subsistence farming and, so, food has generally been ample, it is often assumed that everyone has access to adequate amounts and quality of food. That is not necessarily always the case. Rapid social and economic changes have changed farming practices, with a shift towards cash crops. Although the Solomon Islands produces most of its food supplies, it also imports food – to the extent of an average of 14 percent of total import expenditure during the 1990s.

The traditional safety net of the "wantok system" (kinship ties) in the country has kept the country free of extreme poverty. Solomon Islanders see "poverty" in terms of lack of land and sea resources and lack of opportunity. Growing urbanisation, erosion of traditional values and ways, the monetisation of many aspects of life and a fast growing population hint of the advent of real poverty for some. This could become an emerging issue.

Table 7.1: Basic health status indicators

Life expectancy- 1999	60.6 (m); 61.6 (f)
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births) 1999	66
Maternal mortality (per 1,000 live births) 1997	2.1
Total fertility rate (women 15-49 years.) 2000	5.7
Crude birth rate (births per 1000 population) 1999	34
Crude death rate (deaths per 1000 population) 1999	9
Contraceptive prevalence rate 1995	5.8
Low birth weights (%) 1994	13.2
Malnutrition (child under 15 years) (%) 1989	23.0
Antenatal coverage (%) 1994	79.2
Postnatal coverage (%) 1994	68.8
Deliveries in health facilities (%) 1994	83.5
Immunisation coverage (%) 1995	69
Average household size 1999	6.3
Household with electricity supply 1999	16%
Children 5-19 yrs attending school 1999	56%
Disabled population 1999	2.7%
Population using bednets 1999	53%
Population with safe water 1999	60%
Population with improved toilets 1999	23%
Doctors per 10,000 pop. 1999	1.3
Nurses per 10,000 pop. 1999	8.3
Nurse aides per 10,000 pop. 1999	7.6
Dentists per 10,000 pop. 1999	0.63

Sources: 1999 Census; WHO-Western Pacific Region Health Data bank; Ministry of Health and Medical Services 1997-1999 Annual Health Reports

It has been estimated that 77% of the country's animal protein comes from seafood.¹⁰² This has important implications for the sustainability of marine resources, especially given the growth of population and the pressure on fisheries resources for commercial development (an issue discussed in Chapter 3). The basic traditional diet is healthy, but there are worrying nutritional trends. In areas where pressure to reduce garden fallows is acute, a switch from the root crops of yam, taro and sweet potato to

¹⁰² The 2000 World Bank Regional Economic Report, vol. 1.

cassava has the effect of markedly weakening the nutritional quality of the diet. Urban areas are beginning to see a marked rise in diabetes as diets shift to processed foods and high sugar intake.

A national food security assessment was undertaken in the mid 1980s. There is no recent data on this important subject though it is Agriculture Department policy to incorporate food security considerations into national programmes.

Children are at particular risk from the combination of poor nutrition, unsafe water, ineffective sanitation, and a high incidence of diarrhoea. While severe malnutrition is rarely a problem in Solomon Islands, the incidence of mild-to-moderate malnutrition is high, and this increases susceptibility to infectious diseases. In 1989, malnutrition amongst children under 15 years was about 23%.¹⁰³ Women are also a high-risk group. A 1989 National Nutrition Survey¹⁰⁴ found high rates of anaemia among women. Also, 33% of women classified as overweight and 11% as obese.¹⁰⁵

An exciting locally inspired initiative that has attracted some support from UNICEF and other agencies is the Sup Sup Garden Club in Honiara. During its best years, the 1980s, it had a large and active membership of members who shared experience and planting material for food gardens. Based with the Honiara Town council, it drew support from the Department of Agriculture with planting material and with advice through the Women's Agricultural Extension Programme. This was a great move towards improving urban nutrition and it also enabled some to market their surplus and generate a small cash income. However enthusiasm has waned, partly because the small traders have come to appreciate that more profit is to be made through selling betelnut and parcels of cooked rice and

canned fish – a major deviation from the nutritional objectives of the Sup Sup Garden Club.

7.2 Water Supply and Sanitation

According to the 1999 census 60% of the population has access to water supplied by the Solomon Islands Water Authority (SIWA) in urban areas, or the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation project (RWSS). Some households have rain water tanks. About 69% of the rural population has access to what is termed "clean water".¹⁰⁶ This is in the form of "gravity feed" supplies. There is no form of water treatment in rural areas. Protection of water sources from animals, people and land "run off" is all that is feasible at present. In small islands the main source of water is from wells and from rainwater captured in water tanks. This figure matches closely a 1999 census figure of about 38% not having received piped water supply (meaning 64% do have it).¹⁰⁷

In recognition of the close link between good water supply and good health, the Government has approved the expansion of the current National Water and Sanitation Project, (AusAID supported). It includes training for women in water and sanitation. A UNICEF primary schools water and sanitation programme has seen the instalment of systems in 25 schools in three pilot provinces over the period 1995 to 2000.¹⁰⁸ This included school educational programmes on the health aspects of safe water and proper waste disposal.

The 1999 Census, drawing on individuals' responses to a question on toilet facilities, produced a figure of 23% of the total population with access to "modern", simply meaning "improved" toilet facilities. This has been seen as good news, in light of an

¹⁰³ ADB 1998, p.124.

¹⁰⁴ Ministry of Finance, 1989.

¹⁰⁵ ADB, 1998, p.123.

¹⁰⁶ SIG, "Medium Term Development Strategy 1999-2001, vol. One: p.58; also see ADB, 1997, p.124.

¹⁰⁷ 1999 Census Table B9.01

¹⁰⁸ SIG, "Medium Term Development Strategy 1999-2001, vol. One, p.58.

earlier estimate that only 19% of the rural population had access to improved toilet facilities. Most urban households have access to toilet facilities, either septic systems, or pour flush. In peripheral urban areas, septic systems, pour flush, squat type or VIP (ventilated improved pit latrine) are available.

7.3 Shelter

The 1999 census shows that about 61% of Solomon Islanders live in temporary dwellings, 7% in semi-permanent dwellings, and 31% in permanent dwelling, (0.17% did not state their type of dwelling). About 86% of housing in urban areas is permanent compared to 21% in rural areas.¹⁰⁹ While there is a widespread need for housing improvements in conjunction with water and sanitation advances, overall, housing is not a major problem. However, some in urban squatter settlements in and near Honiara are desperately in need of housing. And the situation in some villages is not good.

Most Solomon Islanders provide their own shelter using "bush materials". While falling well short of modern standards for housing a well built "leaf house" is cool, comfortable and healthy. Many of the villagers who now roof their houses with iron sheeting still choose to eat and sleep under a roof thatched with sago palm leaf as it is so much cooler. The frame and flooring of some well built "leaf houses" have stood strong for decades. Provided good quality materials are used and the thatched panels are properly overlapped the roof and wall panels may last for up to 20 years.

The 1999 Census Report contains figures from which it can be calculated that 65% of the country's housing is of traditional thatched construction. Fourteen percent of all leaf houses were built before the previous Census (1986), making them at least 13 years old.

Seventy percent of leaf houses have been built within the last 10 years.¹¹⁰ To an extent, this reflects the population growth over that period as well as the demise of old dwellings through ageing, termites, and/or cyclones. However, it is likely that this also exposes a tendency to "cut corners" and save money and effort in making and fixing roof and wall panels by using fewer units, with less overlap and, so, reduced rot resistance. Consequently the whole house needs replacement sooner.

Yet it is not only for reasons of economy that leaf panels are sparingly used. It is becoming increasingly difficult to obtain traditional building materials. Building a village home is not just a matter of wandering into the nearest patch of forest and cutting poles and leaf. The sago palm that provides leaf for thatch grows on swampy ground. The durable hardwood needed for house posts may be on distant high ground, (and trees of the desired species are not naturally abundant). Frame timbers are less problematical but split palm flooring is not so readily located.

It may be that the land of the clan to which the house builder belongs does not contain one or more of these components. He may need to purchase his needs – or he may negotiate access to another clan's land and this will generate a reciprocal obligation. This is the case with the "lucky" villager who has access to forest resources. For those whose forests have been logged there is a very serious deficit in building materials.

The situation is complex. The need is pressing. The prospect of a widespread decline in village housing standards with consequent implications for health is a matter for concern. It is not an option to think of providing every villager with iron roofing and sawn timber, and nor does this stimulate pride and self-reliance. A clearer picture of rural housing and the availability of building materials is needed in order to

¹⁰⁹ 1999 Census Table B8.01.

¹¹⁰ 1999 Census Table B8.03.

define what is needed to support and sustain village based housing initiatives.

7.4 Health

Solomon Islanders were well served for centuries by their traditional medical practitioners, drawing on an impressive understanding of many of the health issues of the old days and backed by a "bush pharmacy" from which they prepared traditional medicines.

Church missions introduced the first modern medical services, and still serve a limited role in this respect. However, the major provider of basic health care services now is the Government, with about 10-13 per cent of its recurrent budget being spent on public health services. The present official health care system consists of six different levels of health facilities operated through a referral system:

- a 300 bed Central Hospital in Honiara, which is also the national referral hospital;
- nine Provincial Hospitals;
- 23 Area Centres;
- 95 rural health clinics;
- 129 Nurse aid posts; and
- 154 Volunteer Health Worker posts.

The Ministry of Health and Medical Service (MHMS) is responsible for the management of the Central Hospital and all the health facilities in the provinces. Three hospitals and fifteen clinics are run by church based organizations.

The distribution of health infrastructure in rural areas has improved greatly, but it is not necessarily a good indicator of health services. There is a constant problem of keeping clinics staffed and supplied. Not even the Central Hospital is immune to these problems. Though it consumes about 25-30 per cent of the total budget, only about 15 per cent of the country's population live in Honiara

Fortunately an unofficial traditional health service continues to function. This makes a major contribution to rural health where official services remain sparse. For instance, the 1999 Census revealed that about 10% of live births were attended by a traditional birth attendant. Traditional birth attendants are recognised, and provision is being made in a WHO-UNFPA project for them to receive additional training to upgrade their skills in areas where trained nurses may not be available. A difficult area to resolve is that relating to traditional medication. There have been many demonstrations of its effectiveness, but this is not readily amenable to scientific testing. In the Solomon Islands the use of traditional medicine is prevalent and, as in the case of childbirth support, has brought relief to many that the official health service cannot quickly reach.

In 1995 there were 925 health service employees including 55 doctors and 454 nurses. This gives an indication of the service at about its peak. The disturbances of recent years have caused many trained Solomon Islander staff to leave and expatriate doctors are now being contracted. As at the beginning of 2002 there was provision for an establishment of 76 doctors, but from the many Solomon Islanders trained in medicine over the years only 30 were occupying posts, alongside 19 expatriate doctors.

The period after Independence saw a comparative *overall* improvement in both the accessibility and quality of health services. National figures for life expectancy at birth increased and there was a dramatic decline in the national infant mortality rate from 129 to 66 deaths per 1000 live births over the period 1978-1999. In the years 1986-1997, life expectancy is reported by WHO to have increased from 61 to 66 years for females and from 59 to 65 for males.¹¹¹ More children were immunised and contagious diseases such as tuberculosis

¹¹¹ 1999 Census data, however, differ; see Table 7.1

(TB) and leprosy appeared to have been well on the way to eradication.¹¹²

Province disaggregated data would greatly improve understanding of the health situation in the country. However, this type of information has proved difficult to obtain.

Mortality and morbidity (illness) continue to be dominated by communicable diseases – diarrhoea, acute respiratory infections, malaria, TB, sexually transmitted diseases (STD) and yaws. The incidence of malaria, maternal mortality, diarrhoea, and malnutrition among children, and STD, has continued at high levels and, in some cases, has increased. In recent years the incidence of non-communicable diseases such as hypertension, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and cancer has also increased.

A resurgence of tuberculosis (TB) is a concern. The World Health Organisation (WHO) reported that in 1999 a total of 289 new cases of TB were diagnosed, as compared with 215 cases in 1998. For the first time since the introduction of Directly Observed Treatment Short-course (DOTS) in 1999 an 85% cure rate was achieved. A troubling trend is that the percentage of TB admissions in the paediatric ward of the national hospital increased from 0.5 in 1999 to 1.2 in 2000. Further support is needed for this programme, especially at the provincial level, with greater surveillance.¹¹³

Malaria is one of the Solomon Islands' major public health problems despite intensive efforts to control it since 1965. Through a WHO supported national anti-malaria programme a 67% reduction in the number of cases was achieved between 1992 and 1999. An intensified malaria control programme in Honiara from 1995 to 1999 reduced the incidence in the capital by 80%.

However since 1999 it has been difficult to maintain the momentum and, due to the economic crisis and the ethnic tension faced by the nation, there has been a 20% increase in the number of malaria cases.

About 95 per cent of the population is at risk of getting malaria. Consequently, the highest public health priority is the avoidance and control of this disease. As part of the anti-malaria campaign people are encouraged to use bed-nets. Approximately 425,000 bed nets were distributed during the 1990s and 1999 Census data show that 51% of households had bed-nets at that time. Simple laboratory facilities for microscopic identification of the disease in blood samples have doubled. Diagnosis and treatments for malaria patients have been improved.

Other health service programmes include strengthening of maternal and child health care, focusing mainly on improving vaccine delivery services. There is also a programme aimed at improving the infrastructure facilities, equipment and medicine stocks in rural clinics. Staffing also needs attention.

The National Psychiatric Unit at Kilu'ufi Hospital, and the Honiara psychiatric unit are the only two mental health service providers. The total number of cases seen as outpatient in Honiara Psychiatric Centre and as admissions at the National Psychiatric Hospital (Kilu'ufi Hospital) increased from 663 in 1997 to 915 in 1999, with an average of 764 per year. The prevalence of mental health illness has increased, from 15.6/10,000 population in 1997 to a 1999 level of about 20 in 10,000.

Some of the key Government goals for health care are listed in Box 7.1. Constraints on health care are outlined in Box 7.2.

¹¹² Medium Term Development Strategy 1999-2001, vol. 1, p.33

¹¹³ World Health Organisation (WHO) Representative's Annual Report for Solomon Islands, 1 January to 31 December, 2000.

Box 7.1 – Key Government Goals of Health Care Development

- Improving access to health care services and the quality of services.
- Improving health care supervision and management with effective allocation and utilisation of resources.
- Improving the quality and amount of human resources available for delivering health services.
- Reducing the levels of morbidity and mortality in the country.
- Promoting environmental health and family health education.
- Promoting maternal and child health care and family planning.
- Developing partnerships for health care promotion.
- Improving financial planning and management capacity in the Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS).

Source: SIG, "Medium Term Development Strategy 1999-2001, vol. One: Policy and Strategy", Honiara: Ministry of Planning & Development, p.35.

In summary, health trends of particular concern are the resurgence of TB, the growth of diabetes, a continued high level of betelnut consumption (the associated use of lime causes lip cancer), high tobacco use, the continuing problem of malaria and the advent of a new scourge – dengue.¹¹⁴ A close watch is being kept on the incidence of malnutrition.

While efforts continue to provide comprehensive medical support for all Solomon Islanders the traditional medical service will continue to have an important support role in areas where clinic facilities are inadequate. During the recent troubled times in Guadalcanal many who had had some access to clinics returned to the traditional medical service when clinics could no longer be maintained. This clearly

¹¹⁴ The first cases were reported in February 2002.

Box 7.2 – Constraints to Health Care Development

- An inadequate number of medical workers at all levels due mainly to inadequate education and training.
- Inappropriate deployment of health staff mainly due to a general reluctance of staff to work in rural areas;
- Delay in developing and implementing staff performance evaluation systems.
- Inadequate medical equipment and supplies due to low budgetary allocations.
- Inadequate skills in equipment maintenance;
- Inadequate financial planning and management capability;
- Poor maintenance of existing health facilities and lack of funds for maintenance;
- Inadequate transport and communication services;
- Too much emphasis in terms of resource allocation on curative services based mainly in Honiara;
- Fast growing population;
- Insufficient focus on family health education.

Source: SIG, "Medium Term Development Strategy 1999-2001, vol. One: Policy and Strategy", Honiara: Ministry of Planning & Development, p.35.

demonstrates their importance as a back-up service that should always be maintained.¹¹⁵

7.5 Education Systems

Traditional education has been largely displaced by formal education. This is not unexpected in a society in transition but it does come at some cost to society. Two areas of traditional education that remain important for life in the Solomon Islands and are being neglected or only partially taught are: kinship in relation to ownership and access rights to land and sea, and language. It is not easy for the formal education system to deal with these subjects. There are many languages, and dialects of those languages, and only small numbers of people speak some of them.

¹¹⁵ Fiji's experience with a Traditional Healer's Association that has forged links with the medical profession is a useful model.

Though principles of kinship and inheritance can be taught¹¹⁶ there is much variation in the detail. The clan and family focused informal education of the past is fading, and while the significance of loss of language may not yet be apparent to many, the results of a poor education in genealogy and inheritance are clearly evident in the constant argument and disputation over land boundaries and rights. Much of the blame for this can be attributed to those with a partial knowledge but an inadequate understanding of traditional land laws and rights. This is not simply a cultural nicety. The improper understanding of this subject is destined to continue to be a major impediment to sustainable development of Solomon Islands resources. There are opportunities to work with traditional leaders to develop awareness and education to alleviate the problem of distorted understanding of customary tenure. As an example, the Kwara'ae people of Malaita now have a published record of their land law¹¹⁷ for the guidance of their young and a programme to record Kwara'ae customary land boundaries began several years ago.

Formal or school based education was first introduced to Solomon Islands to provide skilled people to administer government, to provide services and to resource the emerging private sector. It was, and in many ways continues to be seen as a step to employment in the formal sector, and as a pathway *away from* rural, village life. Unplanned growth and expansion of formal education has created a disjointed and complex system characterised by an unnecessarily large number of school types, and complex and poorly linked administrative and management structures.

¹¹⁶ And were included in some social science curricula developed in 1989.

¹¹⁷ The principles of the customary land law of the Kwara'ae of Malaita has been published as: Burt, B. and Kwa'ialoa, M., 1992.

7.6 The School System

Formal education in the Solomon Islands is largely a responsibility of the Government although churches and some individuals also provide education services. The educational system has a three-tier structure of primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Over 90% of primary education is provided by the Government, and consists of seven years of schooling including a preparatory (kindergarten) year. Early childhood education is provided for some by NGOs and communities, with training support from Government.

Early Childhood: Early Childhood Education (ECE) centres are community based, staffed by teachers trained at the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SICHE) or personnel who have completed a field based training programme.

Preparatory: Formal education commences at the preparatory grade, which is delivered for one year at primary schools for children aged five to six years.

Primary: As shown in Table 7.2, primary school enrolment rates vary widely by province. For Honiara city and Malaita province, it is only 62% increasing to 84% in Makira-Ulawa. The purpose of Primary education is to introduce children to the skills needed for writing, reading, mathematics, community studies, science,

Table 7.2: Provincial variation in primary school enrolment rates

Province	Percentage enrolment
Choiseul	78
Western	70
Isabel	77
Central	74
Rennell-Bellona	n/a
Guadalcanal	68
Malaita	62
Makira-Ulawa	84
Temotu	75
Honiara	62

agriculture, art, music, physical education and Christian education. Primary education is not compulsory, although Government desires that all children in the Solomon Islands should have at least a primary education. Most commence primary at the age of six or seven and primary schooling continues for six years.

The Teaching Service Establishment records 535 primary schools (Table 7.3) of which more than 80 are attached to Community High Schools. The national average enrolment per school is 126 students.

There is a wide range in mean school enrolments (Table 7.4), with a number of very small and very large schools in each province. There is also variation between provinces as to the mean size of each school, with the mean school enrolment in Honiara, Malaita, Guadalcanal and Isabel being higher than the national average. A Ministry survey in 2000 indicated that 56% of primary schools were not offering all grades that year. The Ministry aims to achieve an average of one trained teacher for every class of 30 to 35 pupils. Mean class size reported by surveyed schools is significantly less than this, and actually declines between Prep and Standard 6.

Secondary: There are three types of

Table 7.3: Schools and enrolments (by type and by Province)

Province	Primary	CHS	Total	Enrolment	Mean enrolment per school
Honiara	9	11	20	5972	299
Malaita	117	21	138	22788	165
Guadalcanal	72	10	82	11178	136
Isabel	25	4	29	4224	146
Makira	47	6	53	7232	136
Central	32	6	38	4401	116
Temotu	41	2	43	4118	96
Choiseul	43	5	48	4504	94
Western	138	12	150	11990	80
Renbel	11	0	11	781	71
Total	535	77	612	77188	126

secondary schools. National Secondary Schools (of which there are nine), Provincial Secondary Schools (PSS) (16) which are boarding schools, and Community High Schools (CHS) (93) are day schools with limited boarding. Students are admitted to Form 1 on the basis of their performance in the Solomon Islands Secondary School Entrance Examination. All students enrolled in these schools follow the same curriculum and sit a Form 3 Examination. Over 71% of secondary level students are enrolled in Government schools while the remainder attend Church-run schools.

PSSs were established in the 1980s to expand the number of junior secondary school places. They have since expanded to offer Forms 4 and 5. In many cases the facilities available, such as libraries, science laboratories and dormitories have not been expanded. The PSSs were started with an emphasis on vocational education for

Table 7.4 Enrolments in Forms 1-7 by Province (in 2000/2001)

Province	No. of Schools	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7	Total Enrolment
Central	7	323	285	208	46	63			925
Choiseul	8	360	248	234	110	49			1,001
Guadalcanal	17	1,119	649	443	339	191	96		2,837
Honiara	14	1,021	1,021	979	798	708	211	74	4,812
Isabel	5	375	338	315	150	165	27		1,370
Makira	9	579	585	559	393	246	65		2,427
Malaita	34	1,627	1,254	1,091	637	274	27		4,910
Renbel	1	59	51	21	24				155
Temotu	4	228	207	185	118	62			800
Western	19	1,104	1,033	762	503	416	62		3,880
Total	118	6,795	5,671	4,797	3,118	2,174	488	74	23,117

students who would remain in rural areas after leaving school. In recent years, however, these schools have become more academic. The Government is in the process of changing the structure of secondary education by replacing the current split between vocational and academic schools with a mixed-mode curriculum for all secondary schools.

The CHSs are considered by the ADB¹¹⁸ to be the most exciting educational development in the country since Independence. They grew out of a community initiative in Honiara in 1995. These schools use excess capacity in primary schools after classes finish at lunchtime, to teach secondary level students who have been unable to find places in the crowded secondary school system. The teachers are Government paid but the schools charge fees to cover non-teaching costs. The first CHSs were established in the early 1990's. There has been a rapid growth in their number, in response to community support and pressure – from 9 in 1995 to 52 in 1997. This has strained the capacity of governments to provide trained teachers, equipment and curriculum materials. Most do not possess the buildings required to teach all subjects, especially science, and they lack libraries. CHSs have as much as 60% more junior secondary students than the PSSs and NSSs combined. CHSs provide a cost-effective alternative to residential boarding. One reason for higher numbers is that parents are more willing to enrol daughters in day schools than at PSSs and NSSs, which require them to reside away from home.

Complete enrolment data for secondary schools based on 2000/2001 surveys showed total enrolment of more than 23,000. The advantage of Honiara residency is apparent in the high enrolment figure (Table 7.5) for the City. However, this would be lower if only regular Honiara residents were included. Since only Honiara has Form 7

and four other provinces still do not have a Form 6, Honiara enrolments at these levels include some students who have come from the Provinces. Another feature of this tabulation is how poorly served are the children of Central, Guadalcanal, Malaita and Temotu.

Table 7.5: Secondary enrolments as % of population of Province

Province	%
Choiseul	5.0
Western	6.2
Isabel	6.7
Central	4.3
Rennell-Bellona	6.5
Guadalcanal	4.7
Malaita	4.0
Makira-Ulawa	7.8
Temotu	4.2
Honiara	9.8
Solomon Islands	5.6

Tertiary education:

Within the Solomon Islands this is provided by the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SICHE), and by the University of the South Pacific through its Extension Centre in Honiara. Other University level education opportunities are available to Solomon Islanders through Government and aid-funded scholarships at tertiary institutions in Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Australia, and New Zealand.

Participation: Analysis of the 1999 Census indicates that 66% of 7 to 15 year olds attended school in 1999 (males, 66.5% and females 64.8%). Data extrapolated from the 1999 Census and from Primary school enrolments reported in the first half of 2001 indicates that the participation rate of 6 to 15 year old children who might attend school is 65.9%. For males the rate is 66.4% and for females it is 62.9%. On the basis of a survey of 2001 enrolment the Ministry has calculated a primary school participation rate of 73%. Using a participation rate of 70%, and extrapolating from the 1999 census, the Ministry has concluded that approximately 33,650 children between the ages of 6 and 15 are not attending school. To accommodate this number would require 1,000 additional classrooms and as many additional trained teachers!

Vocational Training. Church-operated Rural Training Centres provide valuable

¹¹⁸ 1997 ADB Solomon Islands Economic Report

vocational training. An impressive total of fifty-five has been established. However nine of these are closed as a result of the conflict.

Gender: Women are significantly under-represented in both primary and secondary teaching (Table 7.6).

Table 7.6: Gender distribution in teaching service

%	CHS		PS	
	women	men	women	men
trained	38	62	36	64
untrained	32	68	44	56
Total	37	63	37	63

Source: Education Ministry survey, late 2000

While still short of parity, overall the ratio of male to female students is not unreasonable. However, the figures in Table 7.6¹¹⁹ obscure the fact that the ratio in primary schools is better than at secondary level. The Census data for tertiary education can be misleading and are not quoted here.¹²⁰

In recent years enrolments of female students have been increasing. However, educational opportunities for girls are still very limited. This is partly because of a cultural norm that a woman's place is at home. Even so, higher female enrolments could be achieved if more female boarding facilities were to be provided. Not only do fewer female students start secondary schooling, but fewer complete their secondary education.

The Education Strategic Plan 2002-2004 provides for rehabilitation and reform of the education system in such a way as to recognise traditional social and cultural values and the important stabilising role of rural, village communities. It is especially important that basic education be re-

¹¹⁹ Calculated from data in Table B5.02, 1999 Census.

¹²⁰ It is known that the Solomon Islands has yet to produce 59 Ph.D.s! The data are obviously skewed by the presence of expatriate advisers.

Table 7.7: Gender breakdown of population 5-29 years attending school

Province	% male	% female
Choiseul	54	46
Western	52	48
Isabel	52	48
Central	54	46
Rennell-Bellona	55	45
Guadalcanal	55	45
Malaita	55	45
Makira-Ulawa	55	45
Temotu	54	46
Honiara	54	46
Solomon Islands	56	44

anchored in the community. While facilitating the development of the knowledge and skills needed for economic wellbeing and advancement, it is envisaged that basic education will promote and develop the positive aspects of village society. This Plan presents a strategic framework within which the education system will be rehabilitated and long-term development programs designed and initiated. It establishes the priorities and a plan of action to help the education system recover from the effects of tension and conflict and to contribute to long-term resolution of these problems.

A significant outcome will be Provincial education action plans and a National Education Reform Plan that will detail a comprehensive reform program to be implemented over 15 years.

Distance education: Using modern telecommunications, distance education in the Pacific Island region was pioneered by the University of the South Pacific. Its Solomon Islands Centre has been using this technology for 30 years. An experimental extension of this system has recently been announced. USP is to provide study opportunities to village based students (initially at Sasamunga, Choiseul) through the PFNet e-mail service introduced through SIDAPP.

One of the main challenges facing the country's education system is that of providing universal primary education and improving the accessibility of education in general. Twenty years after Solomon Islands' Independence, universal primary schooling continues to be elusive. Total primary enrolments grew at an impressive rate of 6.5% annually from 1981 to 1996. But because population grew at an annual rate of more than 3% during that period, close to half the expansion in primary capacity was required simply to cope with additional children in the particular age group.¹²¹

Enrolment rates in rural schools are lower than those of urban schools. The dispersion of rural populations among small communities is one reason for this situation. Many students spend much time and energy walking to and from school. Dispersed small populations make it difficult to consolidate schools and raises the cost of supporting rural schools.

The difficulty of adequately meeting demand is not the only problem. There is also the competing need to improve the quality of education. Low quality arises mainly from the insufficient standard of teachers and from inadequate (in both quality and quantity) teaching materials. In 1996, over 80 per cent of primary school teachers had no more than Grade 9 (Form 3) education. Indeed, 26 per cent had had no teacher training! Science teaching at secondary level is only at a basic level. At the secondary level, Solomon Islander teachers make up about 84% of the staff, but only 22% of these have degree qualifications.¹²²

According to a 1991 survey the country's literacy rate was the lowest in the Pacific Island region (30 per cent of 15 year olds

and above). Yet that is believed to have been double the level at Independence in 1978. Data from the 1999 census based on self-reporting of literacy, produced an adult literacy rate of 76% (83% for males and 68 % for females). This novel approach to literacy assessment cannot be used as a definitive statement on the subject.

The proportion of Government recurrent expenditure on education fell from 20.5 per cent in 1988 to 15.5 per cent (S\$63.5 Million) in 1998. This was equivalent to 5.3 percent of the GDP.¹²³ It almost regained the 20% level in 2001, though this was 20% of a much smaller "cake".

The system has failed to provide a universal basic education. Limited resources are spread over three levels of education, with a bias towards the upper levels and a heavy reliance on high cost residential facilities. Both the National Secondary Schools and the Provincial Secondary Schools are almost exclusively boarding schools. Consequently the expenditure on secondary education on a per student basis is five times that for primary education. The Government subsidy for the 1400 students at SICHE alone takes up 20 per cent of the Government educational expenditure.

In implementing the National Education Strategy 2002-2004 the issues to be confronted are:

- Disruption of the nation caused by ethnic conflict and the subsequent and continuing decline in financial resources available for education.
- Population increasing at 2.8% per annum will increase the demand for primary and junior secondary education. The school age population is expected to be 146,000 in 2015.
- Deficiencies in education facilities, trained teachers, materials and equipment;

¹²¹ ADB, *Solomon Islands: 1997 Economic Report*, Manila, p.112.

¹²² ADB, *Solomon Islands: 1997 Economic Report*, Manila: ADB, pp.114-115.

¹²³ SIG Medium Term Development Strategy 1999-2001, vol. One, p.42.

- Only 70% of children of primary school age attend primary school, and too small a proportion progresses to secondary, vocational, technical, and post-secondary education.
- Isolated communities, where current approaches to providing educational services are costly and inefficient.
- Syllabuses, curriculum and materials, have not been renewed for more than a decade, and do not meet the expectations of parents and employers.
- The assessment system tends to divide and exclude young people from education rather than assess their competencies, promote learning or enhance teaching practice.
- An under-resourced and disparate technical and vocational education structure that provides low quality services fails to produce a sufficient number of people possessing the skills needed for the economic advancement of communities, regions or the nation
- A highly centralized system that has become increasingly alienated from its clients and has failed to lead in establishing and achieving priorities.
- A multi-layered management and administrative system in which responsibilities are unclear and within which legislation, regulations and procedures are not adhered to in a disciplined manner; and
- A large proportion of national budget is directed to senior secondary and higher education at the expense of that directed to primary and junior secondary education.

7.7 Gender

Gender issues do not refer to ‘women’s issues’ but to the relationships between men and women and their broad implications for society. For most levels of education males have ranked higher than females. Male and female school enrolment is now close to equal for primary school and is improving

for secondary school. However, other benefits of development have not yet been reasonably distributed. Few women have access to well paid employment. For many women, the problems of childbirth in quick succession, inadequate nutrition, unsafe drinking water, poor sanitation, ill health, shortage of wood fuel and inadequate access to health care are part of everyday life.

Men and women are raised differently to take on different responsibilities and roles determined by customs, tradition, religion and education. Gender roles given by societies and families often lead women and men to have different expectations and experiences in life. These affect the way they see the world and the way they make decisions in the home, community and at work.¹²⁴ If half of a country’s talent is under-developed, under-recognised or under-utilised, everyone – men, women and especially children – suffers as a result.

There are numerous examples of gender inequality (Box 7.3) which the Government itself explicitly acknowledges. Development programmes and projects are designed by and directed mainly toward men – even agriculture, despite the greater role of women in this sector, thus denying women access to important knowledge and new resources.

Box 7.3 – Village women

Solomons' village women have rarely experienced, first hand, what it means to enjoy the Better Life -- healthier, more productive and, especially, an easier and satisfying one. At times they glimpse it from afar . . . a trip to Honiara to see how the other 'half' live. Village life, on the other hand, is terribly physical. Food production remains laborious, social obligations (church, school, community calls) grow daily and for one's limited economic life -- small business work, income generating attempts -- the demands grow but there's less and less time, fewer resources or necessary skills available to gain even modest amounts of money.

Source: intervention by John Roughan at a workshop to consider a draft CCA, 21st February 2002.

¹²⁴ UNIFEM Pacific, 1998; definition from Forsec.

The extent to which women in the Solomon Islands face discrimination varies from one area to another and largely reflects the extent to which conservative and unenlightened old traditions persist. A sweeping generalisation is sometimes heard about those Solomon Islander societies characterised by matrilineal inheritance,¹²⁵ to the effect that "our women have higher status because our land rights are inherited through our mothers". Even where traditional rights are inherited through the female line it is customary that the eldest living son be the spokesperson and leader for the "line" or "clan", not the woman through whom inheritance is determined. Paradoxically, though matrilineality does not infer status on women, it does seem to enhance their respect in the eyes of men of their culture group.

However, a rigorous examination of customary law in terms of human rights is less forgiving. One study¹²⁶ points out that customary law in the Solomon Islands is basically conservative and patriarchal and emphasises status, duties, and community values (as opposed to human rights provisions that emphasise individual rights, freedoms and equality and reflect internationally accepted values). The customary system is based on male domination and customary tribunals are presided over by males. Even where title to land descends through matrilineal lines, men generally litigate land disputes.

For over a decade the Solomon Islands Government has provided for a portfolio responsibility for women's affairs, and some provinces have also done this. A National Council of Women has been in existence for about 20 years and some provincial councils have also been formed. Staffing and funding of the Women and Development Division of the Ministry of Women, Youth, Sports and

Recreation has always been less than the task requires to address inequities concerning women's place in society and in the national development process. What is particularly lacking is a response to the need to place gender at the centre of socio-economic planning. If the Solomon Islands were to ratify and implement the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against women (CEDAW) then a more solid base for progress would be in place.

Women are currently under-represented at nearly all levels of decision-making institutions and including, as indicated above, traditional institutions. No woman sits in the 50-member National Parliament or in any of the Provincial Assemblies. Only one female has served as a Member of Parliament (and as a Minister), but she was not returned at the 2001 elections. In recent years there have been as many as three female permanent secretaries at post. Today there are none.

Women's potential is not being tapped and their opportunities to contribute to the development process are minimal. A World Bank Country Economic Memorandum (1993) reported a very high labour participation ratio for Solomon Islander women (84%), which indicates that they work hard. However, their participation in the monetised sector was only 14%, compared to 37% for men.

Conventions and statements of relevance to the effort to establish an equitable role for women in the Solomon Islands are:

- The Port Vila Declaration on Population and Development [September 1993];
- The Pacific Regional Platform and the Noumea Declaration on Women [1994];
- Beijing Platform of Action for Women [1995];
- The International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action [1994]; and

¹²⁵ Malaitan and Choiseul societies are patrilineal. Most others are matrilineal. At least half of Solomon Islanders have matrilineal inheritance.

¹²⁶ Core, J.C., 1999.

- The Suva Declaration on Sustainable Human Development in the Pacific [1995];

Some of the actions needed to redress the gender imbalance include:

- Institutional strengthening of the Division of Women and Development;
- Co-ordination of activities that address women's problems, and networking between the Government and the women's groups and NGOs;
- encouragement and support for the inclusion of gender sensitive approaches in development projects and in development planning in general;
- review of women's legal rights as provided for in CEDAW, including access to resources (land), and freedom from abuse; and
- more determined effort to implement the existing National Women's Policy.

7.8 Children

The welfare needs of Solomon Islander children need serious consideration. With about 47% of the population under the age of 15 years there is an imperative to ensure that development does not disadvantage this population but brings it benefits and support. This requires more thought and action than has been the case so far. Government's stated commitment is illustrated by its having:

- Signed the Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children (November 1992);
- established a National Advisory Committee on Children (NACC) (1993) consisting of representatives of Government, NGOs and church organisations;
- acceded to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (1994);
- produced drafts of a Child Policy and a National Plan of Action (1994);

- reviewed existing legislation on Child Protection (1999) and used this as the basis for producing a draft Child Bill; and
- as part of its role of advocacy of the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) and, in accordance with the National Plan of Action, NACC produced a document entitled "Children First".¹²⁷

Relevant policies and documents relating to the welfare of children and developed as part of CRC implementation include:

- National Food and Nutrition Policy, 1995;
- Breast-feeding Policy, 1996;
- Revised Expanded Programme of Immunisation Policy, 1995 (includes Hepatitis B vaccination);
- amendment to Education Policy, 1997 - to expand access to high schools by permitting primary school management to establish secondary class levels in their schools; and a
- National Youth Policy, 2000 - catering for ages 14-29 but including children below 14 who might have faced similar difficult experiences.

In promoting the interests of the child at both the international and regional levels, Solomon Islands is a party to the World Summit Declaration on children [1992]. In terms of policy and institutional framework the welfare of children seems to be well based. However, much is yet to be done "on the ground". There is a need to:

- Review and harmonise laws to eliminate inconsistencies in how the concept of child is defined in the country's laws – the concept of child varies for the different purposes of health care, marriage, imprisonment and legal protection;¹²⁸

¹²⁷ NACC, Initial CRC Report, 1998.

¹²⁸ Solomon Islands Government /UNICEF, 2001, p.4.

- improve child health – infectious diseases are still the major cause of death in children between 1 and 5 years, most often from diarrhoea, malaria or pneumonia;
- improve the antenatal situation - in 1994 at least 20% of mothers still did not have access to safe deliveries;
- expand the Programme of Immunisation to make it accessible to all children (current coverage is about 90%);
- improve access to clean water and proper sanitation; and
- enforce regulations on the protection of children and their rights and the various requirements of relevant regional and international conventions.

Since late 1998 civil unrest and armed conflict has adversely affected the situation of children. Some children joined the fighting, and children and mothers were amongst those killed or maimed during the crisis. The damaging impacts of the period of unrest and the continuing uncertainty that prevails today is adversely affecting the attitudes and confidence of children and youth and compromising their capacity to learn. In Fiji the armed disturbances of 2000 are reported to have had marked psychological effects on children nationwide. In a report compiled by Save the Children Fund teachers gauged the effect of the coup. It was seen that the nature of relationships between teachers and student, teachers and teachers, and teachers and parents were affected. The report said teachers found it difficult to talk about these issues without taking political sides. "In some schools, it was prohibited to talk about the crisis amongst students and teachers for fear of reprisal from neighbouring communities." According to the report disciplinary problems in some schools became more serious. Solomon Islands schools could be facing similar problems.

Aside from the new complex of problems arising from the unrest, major constraints to improving the situation of children include:

- Slow implementation of the CRC has been largely due to the absence within the Government's organisational structure of a focal point to deal with children's issues and development, and the weakness of Government support for the NACC;
- low awareness in the provinces and rural areas about children's rights and circumstances, apart from medical and education, has meant difficulties in obtaining information on their situation;
- co-ordination among relevant bodies in Honiara has been weakened by the disinterest of some NACC members;
- delays in finalising policies and a plan of action, and the Child Rights Bill, have not helped to strengthen co-ordination;
- the major reduction in revenue to Government has restricted funding resources for activities to improve the situation of children and to work towards CRC goals, despite considerable assistance given by development partners;
- an annual population growth rate of 2.8 percent (1999), though a reduction on past rates, continues to exert pressure on the already minimal social services;
- enrolment of children in primary schools in the mid-1990s has been hampered by the impacts of the unrest, and the quality of education, too, has suffered because of the strains on teachers, even fewer school supplies and disruptions to teaching during periods of rebel activity;

- lack of public social facilities to cater for disabled children and for those otherwise vulnerable; an inadequacy of social services – apart from the traditional family safety net for children, which is fast weakening due to rapid social change;
- although pre-1990 legislation provides some protection for children, overlap and fragmentation makes it difficult to monitor their legal situation;
- inadequate capacity to implement the provisions of the CRC;
- the attitude of society, stemming from traditional norms towards women and children who are regarded by many men as of inferior status; and
- a lack of reliable data on the circumstances of youth and children.

7.9 Safety Nets

The social structure and associated traditions of Solomon Island societies continue to provide the ultimate safety net. Kinship ties facilitate the care of children and the elderly. Shelter and food are provided for those unable to fetch for themselves. Yet such

traditional social practices are eroding, and disappearing especially fast in urban communities. Where traditional support is beginning to fail, as in the case of unemployed youth, risks of social problems develop, in both urban and rural areas.

The State has poorly developed support services in this respect, its effort having been concentrated on a National Provident Fund established in 1973, before Independence. The Fund's resources have been depleted by a mass withdrawal of members' contributions in late 2000 and early 2001 by former employees of companies impacted by the unrest. This compounded a problem arising from a decision to allow early withdrawal of contributions (at age 40 years). Further, the Fund has been a major lender to the Government during recent years of heavy borrowing at a time when limits on Government borrowing from the CBSI had been exceeded. The precarious financial circumstances of the Government and its level of default on borrowings raises the question as to whether workers' funds are generating a return adequate to their retirement needs.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS: SUPPORT FOR REBUILDING

8.1 A Threatened Nation

The continued activity of armed bands of militants (and of their "solution", the special constables) poses a threat to the continued viability of the nation state. Three factors stand out in this respect; the poor state of law and order arising from the conflict; the shattered sense of national unity, and the hijacking of the national treasury through cash payments to individuals who threaten and intimidate. Not only does this represent a diversion of funds from the public purse but it also encourages the further proliferation of compensation demands. A diversion of national resources to make these payments starves the seven "peaceful" provinces of development funds. This can only exacerbate resentments about preferential treatment for the two provinces engaged in the conflict at the expense of the others. It also appears to reward a resort to violence. The collapse of national unity could result in the further deterioration of the socio-economic situation, as some provinces will be deprived of access to income and services.

Trained medical staff have left Guadalcanal in fear and frustration. The nation's foreign exchange reserves have declined to the extent that, at the end of December 2001, the amount was sufficient to cover only two months of imports. Two major money earners (palm oil and gold mining) remain stalled and another (tuna fishing) operates at a reduced level. Meanwhile a new crop of school "push outs" from 2001 has joined the already large pool of partly educated, bored unemployed – fuel for future feuds.

The armed conflict has arisen as an outcome of a struggle over resources, with its origins in poverty – not a poverty of grinding hunger but a poverty of resources and opportunities that, if not addressed, could lead to abject poverty. Governance has been ineffective. There has been poor

accountability of Government to interest groups and a failure of Government to "read" and understand the interrelationship between economic development and society. A linkage between poverty, resources and governance is fundamental to the recent unrest. These are development themes now needing close attention. Suspicion and conflict overlay them.

8.2 A Long-term View; Short-Term Emphases

While humanitarian assistance will be needed, as will short-term measures to disarm, restrain and reorient militants and the special constables, responses that are to be effective in more than the immediate term require long-term development thinking. The approach needs to be one that will lead to opportunities to:

- redress geographical imbalances;
- create alternative means of subsistence for ex-combatants, including their reintegration and resettlement, develop meaningful opportunities for youth to engage in productive activities; and
- improve governance at all levels.

Largely as a consequence of the environment of conflict, the national economy has been contracting, Government revenue shrinking and the civil service's effectiveness has been severely reduced and compromised.

The post-Independence course of development in the Solomon Islands was hijacked in its 20th year by a bloody struggle over resources. Social and economic development gains achieved in the previous two decades have been eroded. Development has not simply stopped; it has regressed. A daunting variety of indicators attests to this.

It is absolutely clear that short-term measures designed to address the situation,

such as disarmament and humanitarian assistance will have to be implemented simultaneously with longer-term development efforts. It is also clear that some preference should be given to interventions such as micro-enterprise development which can yield quick results, as in providing economic opportunities for ex-combatants, while laying the foundation for the longer-term development and structural measures in which lie the only prospect for lasting conflict resolution and future prevention.

The Government and the donor community should take the "long view"; to commit to long range approaches as well as short term interventions. Medium Term Development Strategies must link in to immediate palliative measures, and the latter must lay the ground for the former.

The focus here is on the main challenges that the people of the Solomon Islands are facing at present or are likely to face during the five year UNDAF period, beginning in 2003. The conclusions drawn do not include recommendations on how to meet these challenges or who will carry them out. That task will be a part of the mandate of the UNDAF. The main findings of the country assessment are re-stated as a basis for suggesting broad areas for high priority assistance.

In recent years donors and lenders have begun to pay closer attention to the need for a "social safety net" (see Chapter 7). Further work on this concept by the United Nations Research Unit for Social Development (UNRISD) has resulted in the unit advancing the position that social policy should not be treated merely as an afterthought, as implied by the safety net approach. Instead, social policy must be an integral ingredient of any developmental strategy.

The Solomon Islands Government has attempted to implement programmes in education, health, housing and social welfare, with mixed results up to 1998, the start of civil unrest. Since that time the achievements have been severely degraded.

The need for better governance and economic management is overwhelming. Significant, and in some cases dramatic, changes in the structures of Government, policies and institutional cultures are needed if the Solomon Islands is to meet its obligations to its people and meet social, economic and environmental targets set by international organisations, and in large part endorsed by the Solomon Islands, to guide development. A quantitative assessment of how much has been achieved to date in relation to these targets, and how much lately has been lost, has been constrained by the quality and availability of data.¹²⁹

8.3 Access to, and Management of, Resources

Access to resources has been an important issue in the origins of the conflict in Guadalcanal – but it is also an issue nation-wide. There are instances of access problems at a smaller scale, too, right down to cases where individuals with long standing traditional secondary rights to access a clan's resources are subsequently being prevented from exercising those rights as clan members seek to preserve their resources for commercial development or to sustain their expanding population. It is difficult, even, for Government to obtain customary landowner approval to site infrastructure of benefit to the local community, such as schools, clinics, roads and wharves. Resource owners of customary land and sea areas need to be confident that their rights are secure before they relinquish resources for development. Fresh and innovative approaches to development on customary land are needed and, among other things, the demonstrated inadequacy of the court system to resolve land ownership must be addressed.

A bitter consequence of the failure to provide services to the rural population has been that it has thrown customary resource owners into the arms of loggers.

¹²⁹ Annex 1 includes a summary compilation of basic data.

Through logging "royalties" school fees and transport costs have been met for a few years – but once the timber has been removed and the degraded soils covered with an impenetrable weedy regrowth nothing is left but some prospect of a long, hard and uncertain road to reforestation. The nation's forest resources have been squandered and soil fertility compromised as well.

It is imperative that the approach to management of the country's remaining land and sea resources be placed on a sustainable footing. This point needs further emphasis in light of the inevitable temptation for Government to attempt to pull back from the brink of insolvency by increasing the rate of exploitation of land and sea resources.

8.4 A Federation of States

National unity cannot be achieved simply through high sounding rhetoric and by promoting the concept through school curricula. The never-strong sense of national unity has been severely damaged by events since 1998. Before tackling this it is necessary to focus on rebuilding trust, understanding and confidence.

In the anguish over erosion of national identity one major achievement has been overlooked – the strong sense of Provincial identity that prevails. Considering the country's recent past – an island group of 65 languages and a multiplicity of groups that in the past not infrequently feuded with their neighbours – to have developed a sense of shared identity at a Provincial level is remarkable. This matches the persistent calls for decentralisation, and it also demonstrates that, given time, a national identity, too, should mature.

For many Solomon Islanders the reality has always been that national unity is achievable only through a fair measure of local autonomy – a case of "unity in diversity", of constructing a nation on building blocks with which the population more readily identifies. The point was dramatically made by Western District in

1978 through its initial refusal to accept Independence on centralist terms. Time and time again this strongly felt need has emerged, and not least in the recommendations of all four of the committees and commissions established to enquire into the issue. Always, there has been a resistance at central level to the loss of power and influence that this would mean for that level of government.

The events of 1998-2000 shocked Central Government into taking steps towards actions to "federalise" the nation. A Constitutional amendment Bill was prepared in 2001 as a basis for devolving increased powers and responsibilities to State governments. Though a new Government has since taken office it has committed to implementation of this radical change. In light of events since 1998 and the long history of calls for devolution, this is a logical move. However, there are also hazards. Decentralisation to States must be accompanied by a major advance in accountability at all levels of government or the mistakes that Central Government has made in alienating and isolating its constituency will merely be transferred to a lower level. A greater sharing of resources with the States will not translate into improved equity for all unless specific provision is made for State Governments to be more accountable to their constituents.

Increased responsibilities at Provincial or State level imply reduced responsibilities and, so, staffing and finances, at the central level. This is the logical response to an argument advanced by some against devolution, that it is too expensive.

8.5 Regional Development

A form of regional development, spreading opportunities and responsibilities through the Provinces or States has to be an integral part of the federal package. For this to be effective, planning at a central level has to be geared to serve rather than to direct Provinces/States, and the public must have a significant role in development planning.

A fundamental flaw in the approach pursued from 1978 was an attempt to establish economic growth on a foundation of large-scale resource development projects, which has meant minimal attention to small-scale development in other areas. Development of the dispersed tuna resource in this way may have been reasonable. Large-scale oil palm on the Guadalcanal Plains, however, has backfired dangerously.

Perhaps six of the nine provinces have a resource base adequate to sustain a reasonable level of regional economic development.¹³⁰ The others are much less well endowed with resources. In a modern Solomon Islands there will continue to be a need for people of disadvantaged areas to find opportunities on others' land. As current tensions ease it should be possible to negotiate access agreements that are fair to both resource owners and resource users.

Recent governments have recognised the need for a regional approach to development, but have already encountered difficulties that demonstrate how carefully regional development ideas must first be thought through and discussed with all stakeholders. The future of an oil palm development on Vangunu, Western Province, may have been compromised by a failure to recognise the rights of downstream communities. A great hope for Malaita – a fishing port at Bina Harbour – has been frustrated by a failure of landowning groups to agree on boundaries and rights.

Regional development must address the reality that not all Solomon Islanders have reasonable access to services. Many rural dwellers are far from centres of administration and decision-making, and long distances from the locations of social services such as education and health.

¹³⁰ Choiseul, Guadalcanal, Isabel, Makira-Ulawa, Malaita and Western.

8.6 Governance

The weak condition of governance in the Solomon Islands is described in 4.5. To rebuild public confidence, re-establish a sound basis for this once promising nation, and regain the respect of the international community, action is required on several fronts, leading to:

- Improvements in economic policy formulation and economic management;
- firm measures to curb corrupt practices;
- development of supportive, but transparent, links with private sector development;
- strengthened accountability mechanisms for public sector management;
- strengthened law enforcement institutions (Police, Public Prosecutor, Customs, Prison Service);
- improved public access to the legal system (legal aid and public legal services, public education; strengthened Office of the Ombudsman);
- a greater awareness and understanding of political processes and modern government;
- increased ability of civil service organisations in a range of activities including monitoring human rights, and assessing Government performance;
- improved independent media and NGO/CSO capacity to understand, assess and monitor governance; and
- more support for disadvantaged groups.

8.7 Meeting Goals and Targets

The country assessment presented in the preceding chapters consists of the identification and discussion of a wide range of issues to give a picture of the development situation, complicated as it is by recent armed conflict and continuing uncertainty. The focus is on the main challenges that Solomon Islanders face at

present or are likely to face during the next five to ten years.

Since the Common Country Assessment has been made within a reference framework consisting of national and internationally agreed development goals it needs to provide some indication of the progress the country has made so far in reaching these goals. Apart from the country specific goal of restoring peace and stability following the armed conflict, there are no fundamental differences between the national and international goals. Both sets of goals refer to the same key areas of social development, economic wellbeing, environmental sustainability, human rights and social integration.

The findings of the assessment are reflected to a fair degree in the five challenges posed by the current Government:¹³¹

- "To reverse the decline in our country's production, exports and income;
- reform the management of the Government's finances;
- initiate a new deal for Provinces and allocate resources more equitably;
- repair, upgrade and maintain our physical infrastructure."

8.8 Concerns Reflected Elsewhere in the Region

A number of the concerns which frustrate economic and social development in the Solomon Islands also feature in some other Pacific island countries, especially its Melanesian neighbours. These include:

- A poor record of governance;
- conflict over access to resources;
- growing numbers of unemployed and disaffected youth;
- fragile national identity;

- difficulties in developing arrangements through which sustainable development can take place on customary land;
- a major loss of natural capital through unsustainable rainforest logging;
- a fast declining biodiversity heritage;
- a degrading environment;
- increased threats to agriculture and public health from introduced weeds, pests and diseases; and
- vulnerability to international criminal activity.

Regional or in some cases sub-regional approaches to some of these concerns can be productive. Much can often be gained simply through improved coordination and exchange of information on a regional basis, as with plant quarantine, or police intelligence. A subregional approach (through the Melanesian Spearhead Group) would be more appropriate for a sharing of experience regarding approaches to development on customary land since the land tenure systems of Melanesian countries have a great deal in common.

8.9 Issues for Priority Development Attention

The picture that has emerged through this assessment is of high hopes and opportunities at the time of Independence, followed by a few years of modest gains in economic growth – though this has been at considerable cost to forest resource capital. Valuable forest has been fragmented and soils degraded by logging. Offshore fisheries has been a bright area in terms of resource management and employment but the continuing low economic returns for tuna have cancelled out some of the gains. Plantation scale agriculture has brought economic benefits and employment in copra and oil palm. Low prices for the former have meant poor net returns. Palm oil has been a better earner but failure to address landowner grievances has compromised this industry and become one of the triggers that in

¹³¹ First presented in a Prime Ministerial speech "100 Days and Beyond: Restoring Economic Growth in the Solomon Islands" to the Economic Association of the Solomon Islands, 22nd February, 2002.

1998 set off instability throughout the nation.

The development approach pursued since Independence has had an unbalanced focus on large-scale resource development to the neglect of a smaller scale of development on customary land. Effective approaches to the latter are yet to be found. These will hinge on equitable agreements between all stakeholders and a comprehensive approach to rationalising customary resource tenure on a foundation of tradition. There is a place for large scale resource development but the people-centred approach for which the country is crying out demands much more considered attention to small scale, regionally dispersed development.

Considering the expressed needs of the Solomon Islands itself and the mandates of the United Nations, priority areas for future development assistance are likely to be governance, health, education, employment creation and livelihoods, sustainable development and assisting Solomon Islands address the observance of human rights and address gender issues. Improved internal transport and communications require considerable external assistance. Sensitive support interventions regarding the development of models for resource management on customary land are also indicated. Solomon Islands also requires support in its reporting on follow-up to the various UN conventions and conferences.

The international development community should provide support in a form, with sufficient continuity, and for a sufficient duration, to genuinely assist the Solomon Islands to shift progressively toward a more secure, sustainable and equitable development path. This requires assistance efforts that are designed so they do not overtax the limited implementation, administrative and monitoring capacities of the Government but, rather, augment them. Some assistance should be channelled through CSOs/NGOs, with the proviso that they, too, should not be overtaxed and that they would benefit from institutional strengthening measures including improved financial management and accountability.

Clearly the United Nations cannot assist Solomon Islands address all of the development issues facing the country. The UN must work in co-operation with numerous other players.

Short-Term Priorities

The short-term emphases indicated are:

Peace and reconciliation. Support reconciliation initiatives and the restoration of law and order and assist the Solomon Islands to transform militia members into constructive citizens, through employment, education and training, and with stimuli to establish small scale enterprises.

Rehabilitation of infrastructure. Focus on health, educational and research facilities destroyed or damaged during the conflict.

Longer-Term Priorities

Areas for longer term donor attention (not prioritised) include the following:

Improved Governance. Back measures to introduce sound financial management and effective management of natural resources, greater accountability, curbs on corruption, the establishment of a federal system and more equitable sharing of the benefits arising from resource development.

Institutional reform. Assist efforts to make the public service more transparent, consultative, efficient and accountable, and to restore the credibility of the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force.

Development of resources under customary tenure. Support the development of new approaches that emphasise the traditional community base for resource management while protecting resources needed for subsistence and which include a practical formula for resource-sharing that can bring sustained benefits to all stakeholders – including the return of alienated land to the original customary owners so that it remains available for development through lease-back arrangements.

Sustainable development. Assist Solomon Islands to plan, implement and monitor people-centred development at a provincial level in a way that is integrated at a national level and in a manner which is more practical, sustainable, equitable, compatible with local cultural norms and gender sensitive, and support initiatives to assist customary resource owners to manage their land and sea resources and other biodiversity in a sustainable manner.

Health and housing. Assist Solomon Islands further develop health policies and programmes that will result in improved health indicators, with an emphasis on rural areas while supporting relevant elements of the traditional medical system. Contribute to an appreciation of rural housing needs and measures to address these.

Agriculture. Re-equip the agricultural research and demonstration capability seriously damaged during the conflict, emphasising on-farm research and the re-start of stalled regional projects such as those on the important root crop, taro.

Forestry. Support Solomon Islands in regulating logging so as to maximise economic returns, reduce damage to the environment and associated resources and promote local added value activities in the forestry sector.

Environment and biodiversity. Support Solomon Islands in efforts to redress the problems arising from forest fragmentation and soil degradation resulting from unregulated logging, promote a practical rationale for biodiversity conservation on land and in the sea, encourage measures to assess and monitor the environmental and social consequences of development activities, and assist improvements in waste management and pollution prevention and control.

Social policy and "safety nets". Assist Solomon Islands to incorporate social policy as an essential ingredient of development

policy and planning, including a practical, equitable and affordable safety net for the relatively poor and disadvantaged.

Sustainable livelihoods. Assist Solomon Islands to develop and implement policies for, and measures to promote, formal and informal employment, including "rotational" employment to help reduce the high and growing numbers of people not engaged in productive activities – with particular emphasis on youth and on rural communities.

Human resource development. Support the development and implementation of education and human resource development policies which improve the quality, relevance and practicality of education and training at all levels, with more attention to pre-school years and to achieving gender balance.

Human rights. Assist Solomon Islands to implement human rights conventions to which it is party, enhance the status of women and conduct dialogue between employers' and workers' organisations to broaden decision-making, protect the rights of workers and improve the conditions of workers' employment.

Globalisation. Assist Solomon Islands in the more informed consideration of globalisation, better understanding of its likely impacts, and formulation of realistic options for adaptation to its challenges so as to secure its benefits while maintaining national sovereignty and retaining flexibility to formulate and implement Solomon Islands' own economic and social policies.

Knowledge. Provide the support needed to better acquire, analyse, understand, store and use data and other information for socio-economic development, education and cultural support.

Vulnerability. Assist Solomon Islands to understand and more effectively act to mitigate the effects of economic and environmental vulnerability.

8.10 Development Themes

The development areas indicated above are encompassed by three themes that emerged from the CCA process.

Overarching Focus

There is a crisis of confidence in the institutions of the State. At the forefront of public concern is the persistent insecurity of person and property. Neither reconciliation nor development can take root until order is restored and law once again prevails. There are close links between and a nexus of opportunities and challenges for addressing restoration of peace and security, poverty reduction and improved governance. It is critical that security and law and order issues are addressed systematically to find sustainable solutions. A lack of sustained progress in these areas will impede success in the three themes.

In the immediate future a number of measures are also required to promote reconciliation and provide humanitarian relief.

Development Themes

The development themes, with indications of their coverage, are:

Theme 1: More equitable access to sustainable development opportunities

- New approaches that emphasise the traditional community base for resource management.
- Increased economic growth and trade access.
- Strengthened sustainable natural resources management in mining, fisheries and forestry sectors as well as the promotion of local added value activities and development of a country-wide resource profile.
- Policies and measures to promote formal and informal employment and further development of the subsistence sector.

- Restoration of agricultural production opportunities, along with research and demonstration capability and identification of market outlets for rural production.
- High cost and lack of transport and communications within the country.
- Skills and entrepreneurial training.
- Increased commitment to biodiversity conservation, and improvements in pollution prevention and control and waste management.
- Increased focus on resource (land and marine) management and ownership, including customary ownership.
- Fair distribution of national wealth amongst provinces.
- Promotion of women's involvement in development.
- Encouragement of micro-projects to increase participation, particularly in rural areas.

Theme 2: Governance, security and human rights

- Critical role of peace and security, law and order and a strengthened role for community leadership.
- Upholding of democratic principles and cultural values as enshrined in Constitution.
- Increased coherence on initiatives promoting peace and security.
- Increased support for NGOs that are involved in addressing law and order issues.
- Increased independence of the judicial system.
- Improved law enforcement services.
- Enhanced economic and financial management, including focus on maintenance of infrastructure and sustainability of service delivery to village level.
- Strengthened management of development cooperation to promote local ownership.
- Need to emphasise / promote participatory planning.

- Develop a HIV/AIDS and STI strategic plan.
- Devolution of a significant measure of power and responsibility, including improved communications and dialogue between government, NGOs and CSOs.
- Need for an ICT policy and strategy for effective and efficient governance.
- Efforts to make the public service more transparent, consultative, efficient and accountable.
- Planning, implementing and monitoring development at a provincial, community and village level in a way that is integrated at a national level and which is more practical, sustainable, equitable, compatible with local cultural norms and gender sensitive.
- Social policy as an essential ingredient of development policy and planning.
- Increased awareness of human rights as enshrined in the Constitution.
- Ratification and effective follow-up by Solomon Islands to key conventions and conferences, the Millennium Development Goals and national reporting on progress.
- National budgets should be more focused and to reflect priority development opportunities and improved aid management.
- Re-establishment of people-centred governance through a federal system of government.

Theme 3: Improved access, quality and delivery of basic services to all sections of the community

- A more equitable provision of a wide a range of basic services (health, education, transport, communications, credit schemes and employment opportunities) regardless of geographical location and gender.
- Service delivery to take account of population increases.
- Higher quality of services in general and, in particular, for disadvantaged and vulnerable people including women, youth, the disabled and the aged.
- Need for a national human resource development plan, including incentives to retain skills in the country and the distribution of skilled personnel to rural areas.
- Increased agricultural extension to promote improved productivity of traditional local crops with increased food security.
- Nutritional education and awareness of locally produced food.
- Provision of quality reproductive health services, including family planning and sexual health for women and adolescents.

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: INDICATORS OF DEVELOPMENT

ANNEX 2: SOLOMON ISLANDS AND THE UN'S GLOBAL AGENDA: PROGRESS IN MEETING COMMON CHALLENGES

- A) The Millennium Declaration Goals for 2015
- B) Global Conference Goals and Indicators to Assess Performance
- C) International Human Rights Treaties to which Solomon Islands is a State Party
- D) International Conventions and Declarations: Solomon Islands Position in Relation to Goals and Targets
- E) Key Regional Conventions and Treaties: Status in Solomon Islands

ANNEX 3: THE PROCESS OF PREPARATION OF THE CCA

ANNEX 4: ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ANNEX 5: REFERENCES AND SOURCES

ANNEX 1: INDICATORS OF DEVELOPMENT

Some key indicators vary widely depending on the source cited. Often reports do not cite primary sources or are ambiguous. As noted in the main text, the lack of reliable, consistent and timely data and time-series is common in all sectors throughout the PICs.

Indicator	Overall	Male	Female
Population:			
Population (Census, 1999)	409,042	211,381	197,661
Population growth; % p.a., (Census, 1986-1999)	2.8		
Mortality:			
Life expectancy at birth (1999; years)	61.0	60.6	61.6
Maternal mortality ratio (per 1000 live births, (Census, 1999)			2.1
Infant mortality rate (per 1000 live births, (Census, 1999)	66		
Economic:			
GDP per capita (1999) US\$	168		
Av. ann. rural household income (Nat. Stats. Office, 1993) US\$	158		
Av. ann. Honiara household income (Nat. Stats. Office, 1991) US\$	477		
Unemployment (15-30 yr age group) (Census, 1999)	40		
Shelter:			
Population in permanent housing (%) (Census, 1999)	31		
Population in traditional "leaf housing" (Census, 1999)	65		
Services:			
Access to piped water supply (%; Census, 1999)	62		
Access to modern sanitation (%; Census, 1999)	23		
Households with radio (%; 1999)	41		
Development & health:			
Adult literacy (in English and Pijin; 1991)	22	27	17
Low birth weights (1994)	13		
Underweight children (% under 5 years; 1990s)	11		
School participation rate (6-15 years)		66	63
School participation rate (5-29 years)		56	44
Secondary school enrolments			
Human Development Index (1998 data; Pacific HDR, 1999)	0.371 *		
Human Poverty Index (1998 data; Pacific HDR, 1999)	49.1 **		
Gender:			
Members of Parliament (2001 election)	50	50	0
Proportion of population in labour force (% of total)		46	24

Notes: * 13th of 15 PICs ranked; ** 14th of 15 PICs ranked

**ANNEX 2:
SOLOMON ISLANDS & THE UN GLOBAL AGENDA:
PROGRESS IN MEETING COMMON CHALLENGES**

2 A) The Millennium Declaration Goals for 2015

The Millennium Declaration is a balance sheet of international human development goals adopted by the United Nations in 2000. The table below summarises the Solomon Islands achievements in these areas.

Global Goals	Global Achievements	Solomon Islands: Achievements & Challenges
Halve the proportion of people living in extreme poverty.	Between 1990 and 1998 the proportion of people living on less than US\$1 (1993 PPP) a day in developing countries was reduced from 29% to 24%.	No poverty assessment has been carried out in Solomon Islands. "Extreme" poverty is believed not to exist in the Solomon Islands. A survey designed and initiated in 2000 to test this could not proceed because of civil unrest.
Halve the proportion of people suffering from hunger.	The number of undernourished people in the developing world fell by 40 million between 1990-92 and 1996-98.	No data on this indicator are available for the Solomon Islands where hunger is not considered to be a significant problem – although there are troubling signs of some malnutrition.
Halve the proportion of people without access to safe water.	Around 80% of people in the developing world now have access to improved water sources.	In 1999 62% of Solomon Islanders had access to a piped water supply.
Enrol all children in primary school. Achieve universal completion of primary schooling.	By 1997 more than 70 countries had primary net enrolment ratios over 80%. In 29 of the 46 countries with data, 80% of children enrolled reach grade 5.	In 1999 65% of females and 66% of males in the 6-15 years age group attended school.
Empower women and eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education.	By 1997 the female enrolment ratio in developing countries had reached 89% of the male ratio at the primary level and 82% at the secondary level	In 1999 the gender breakdown of the 5-29 years group enrolled in educational institutions was 54:46, male:female; ie female enrolments were 85% of those of males.
Reduce maternal mortality ratios by three-quarters.	Only 32 countries have achieved a reported maternal mortality ratio of less than 20 per 100,000 live births.	Maternal mortality was reported to be 209 per 100,000 live births in 1999.
Reduce infant mortality rates by two thirds	In 1990-99 infant mortality was reduced by more than 10%, from 64 per 1,000 live births to 56.	In 1999 infant mortality rate was still at 66 per 1,000 live births.
Reduce under-five mortality rates by two-thirds.	Under-five mortality was reduced from 93 per 1,000 live births to 80 in 1990-99.	Under-five mortality was only 7 per 1,000 live births in 1998.
Halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS	In a few countries HIV/AIDS prevalence is showing signs of decline.	One (1) HIV case has been recorded in the Solomon Islands but no survey has been conducted.
Provide access for all who want reproductive health services.	Contraceptive prevalence has reached nearly 50% in developing countries.	Contraceptive prevalence was only 7% in 1999
Implement national strategies for sustainable development by 2005 to reverse the loss of environmental resources by 2015.	The number of countries adopting sustainable development strategies rose from fewer than 25 in 1990 to more than 50 in 1997.	Solomon Islands National Environment Strategy (NEMS) prepared in 1991/92 has not been implemented. No Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan has been prepared.

2 B) CONFERENCE GOALS AND INDICATORS TO ASSESS PERFORMANCE

International conferences convened by the United Nations during the decade of the 1990s:

- 1 World Conference on Education for All Jomtein 1990
- 2 World Summit for Children New York 1990
- 3 UN Conference on Environment and Development Rio de Janeiro 1992
- 4 International Conference on Nutrition Rome 1992
- 5 World Conference on Human Rights Vienna 1993
- 6 International Conference on Population and Development Cairo 1994
- 7 World Summit for Social Development Copenhagen 1995
- 8 Fourth World Conference on Women Beijing 1995
- 9 Ninth Congress on the Prevention of Crime and Treatment of Offenders Cairo 1995
- 10 Second UN Conference on Human Settlements - Habitat II Istanbul 1996
- 11 World Food Summit Rome 1996
- 12 Ninth Session of the UNCTAD - UNCTAD IX Madrid 1996
- 13 UNGA - 20th Special Session on the World Drug Problem New York 1998
- 14 Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies Stockholm 1998

A set of Core Goals and Indicators: A concept of 'People-centred Development' based on the collective findings of these conferences is emerging. Many of the development goals and objectives articulated at these conferences are shared. It is useful to group the conference findings and identify the core elements of the emerging concept. The following list is of indicators that could be used to measure country performance in relation to each goal/objective. The Solomon Islands situation in relation to these goals and indicators is shown in the third column.

Goal	Indicators	Solomon Islands: 1990s
1) Economic well being		
1.1 The proportion of people living in extreme poverty should be reduced by at least one half by 2015	a) Incidence of poverty: Population below \$1 a day b) Poverty Gap Ratio (Incidence times depth of poverty) c) Inequality: Poorest fifth's share of national consumption	a) Extreme poverty is not found in the Solomon Islands. b) No data c) Surveys, 1991-93, revealed that 93% of households were in the "low income" group (\$0-750 per annum).
2.) Social Development: There should be substantial progress in primary education, gender equality, basic health care and family planning as follows:		
2.1 There should be universal primary education in all countries by 2015	d) Net enrolment in primary education e) Children not reaching Grade 5 in primary school	d) 66% (from 2001 enrolments) e) No data
2.2 Progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women should be demonstrated by eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2005.	f) Literacy rate, 15 to 20-yr-olds g) Ratio of girls to boys in primary education h) Ratio of literate females to males 15 to 24 year olds	f) Literacy data not disaggregated by age. g) 54:46 h) No data
2.3 The death rate for infants and children under the age of five years should be reduced in each developing country by two thirds of the 1990 level by 2015.	i) Infant mortality rate j) Under five mortality rate	i) 66 per 1,000 live births j) 7 per 1,000 live births
2.4 The rate of maternal mortality should be reduced by three fourths between 1990 & 2015.	k) Child malnutrition: % of under-weight children under 5 years l) Maternal mortality m) Births in modern health facilities	k) 11% l) 209 per 10,000 live births m) 85% (1999)

2.) Social Development: (continued)		
2.5 Access should be available through the primary health care system to reproductive health services for all individuals of appropriate ages, including safe and reliable family planning methods, as soon as possible and no later than 2015.	n) Contraceptive prevalence rate	n) 7% (1999)
	o) HIV prevalence rate in 15-24 year-old pregnant women	o) nil reported
3) Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration		
3.1 There should be a current national strategy for sustainable development in the process of implementation in every country by 2005, so as to ensure that the current trends in the loss of environmental resources including forests, fisheries, fresh water, climate, soils, biodiversity, stratospheric ozone are effectively reversed at both global and national levels by 2015.	p) Countries with national sustainable development strategies	p) Though there has been significant degradation of forests and forest soils there is no sustainable development strategy.
	q) Status of natural resources	q) Native forests (depleted); water (slight deterioration); inshore fisheries (vulnerable); offshore fisheries (sustainable).
	r) Biodiversity protected	r) Pre-Independence protected areas not viable. Only one small conservation area legally established since 1978 Independence (Arnavon Islands).
	s) GDP per unit of energy use t) Carbon dioxide emissions	s) No data t) No data
4) Social Integration		
4.1 Nations should commit themselves to foster societies that are stable, safe and just and are based on the promotion and protection of all human rights as well as non-discrimination, tolerance, respect for diversity, equality of opportunity, solidarity and participation of all people.	u) Periodicity of free and fair elections	u) National and provincial elections successfully held every 4 years without interference.
	v) Changes in government through an electoral process	v) Every national government since Independence in 1978 changed democratically except that deposed by a civilian coup in 2000.
	w) Voter participation in elections	w) Good voter participation
	x) Recognition in law of the right to freedom of expression, association and assembly	x) These rights are stipulated in the Constitution and have been upheld until civil unrest began in 1998 and, in the insecurity now prevailing, they have been compromised.
	y) Effective legislative framework, law enforcement, prosecutions, legal profession in conformity with international standards	y) A reasonable legislative framework but good pre-1998 record of law enforcement since shattered. Prosecution capability has always been weak.
5) Overall Development (General Indicators)		
	z) NP per capita	z) US\$926
	aa) Adult literacy rate	aa) 22 (male 27; female 17)
	ab) Total fertility rate	ab) 6.4 (1980-84); 6.1 (1984-86)
	ac) Population with access to safe water	ac) 62% (1999)

2C) INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS TREATIES TO WHICH SOLOMON ISLANDS IS A STATE PARTY

Treaty	Status
Convention Against Discrimination in Education of 15 December 1960	Accession :1978
Convention on the Political Rights of Women of 31 March 1953	Accession: 1981
International Convention with the Object of Securing the Abolition of Slavery and the Slave Trade of 25 September 1926 as amended by the Protocol of 7 December 1953	Accession: 1981
Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade and Institutions and Practices similar to Slavery . . . of 7 September 1956	Accession: 1981
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 19 December 1966	Accession: 1982
International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination of 7 March 1966	Accession: 1982
Protocol Instituting a Conciliation and Good Offices Commission . . . for Seeking Settlement of Disputes . . . to the Convention against Discrimination in Education of 10 December 1962	Accession: 1982
Geneva Conventions relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, the Amelioration of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field, the Amelioration of the Wounded, Sick and Shipwrecked Members of Armed Forces at Sea and the Treatment of Prisoners of War, of 12 August 1949	Accession: 1989
Protocol I additional to the Geneva Conventions relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, etc, relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts of 12 Dec 1977	Accession: 1989
Protocol II Additional to the Geneva Conventions relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, etc, relating to the Protection of Victims of non-International Armed Conflicts of 12 Dec 1977	Accession: 1989
Convention relating to the Status of Refugees of 28 July 1951	Accession: 1995
Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees of 4 October 1967	Accession: 1995
Convention on the Rights of the Child of 20 November 1989	Accession: 1995

2 D) SOLOMON ISLANDS POSITION IN RELATION TO GOALS AND TARGETS SET FORTH IN INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND DECLARATIONS

UN treaty bodies currently operating:

Human Rights Committee (HRC)
 Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESR)
 Committee Against Torture (CAT)
 Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CETRD)
 Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC)
 Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

Monitors the implementation of:

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Right
 Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
 International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
 Convention on the Rights of the Child
 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

Details of the above (and other) instruments and the status of action to implement them is summarised below:

Name of Instrument	Content Highlights and Goals to Achieve	Status of Ratification/Signature	Remarks
1 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. [A: 1966, F: 1976]	<i>Rights to Self Determination</i> (people freely determine their political status and freely choose their economic, social and cultural development), <i>Equality</i> of rights of men and women, <i>Right to life, Equality</i> before the law, <i>Freedom</i> from torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, slavery, compulsory labour, arbitrary arrest and detention. <i>Right to a fair trial</i> if accused plus several other human rights. (States which are party to the Covenant promote, protect, observe and take all other steps to this end.)		
a) First Optional Protocol	Enables the <i>Human Rights Committee</i> set up under the Covenant (HRC) to receive and consider communications from individuals in countries which are party to the Covenant who claim HR violations after all domestic remedies of HR have been exhausted		
b) Second Optional Protocol (1989)	<i>Abolition of the death penalty.</i> No one within the jurisdiction of a State party to the Protocol may be executed. HRC is competent to receive and consider communications from individuals unless the State party opted out of this concession at the time of ratification		
2 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights [A: 1966, F: 1976]	<i>Rights to Self Determination</i> (people freely determine their political status and their economic, social and cultural development), <i>Equal rights</i> of men and women. Without discrimination on any ground whatsoever enjoying the following rights among others. <i>Right to work</i> , just and favourable conditions of work, fair wages, decent living conditions, healthy working conditions, rest, leisure and social security.		

	<i>Right to form and join trade unions</i> , to freely pursue economic, social and cultural development. States which are party to the Covenant promote, protect, observe and take all other steps to this end		
3	Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide [1948]		
4	Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees [1961]		
5	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination [1965]		
6	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women [1979]		
7	Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment [1984]		
8	Convention on the Rights of the Child [1989]		
9	<p>ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work</p> <p>Declaration comprises the eight Conventions listed below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining b) Elimination of all forms of compulsory labour c) Effective abolition of child labour d) Elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation 		
	Convention 87 (1948) Freedom of Association & Right to Organise		
	Convention 98 (1949) Right to Organise & Collective Bargaining		
	Convention 29 (1930) Forced Labour		
	Convention 105 (1957) Abolition of Forced Labour		
	Convention 100 (1951) Equal Remuneration for Men & Women for Equal Work (1951)		
	Convention 111 (1958) Discrimination: Employment & Occupation		
	Convention 138 (1973) Minimum Age for Work:		
	Convention 182 (1999) Worst Forms of Child Labour		
10	<p>International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families [1990]</p> <p><i>Rights and freedoms</i> including freedom to migrate for work, Freedom from forced labour, torture, practice of any religion, unlawful arrest/ detention</p> <p><i>Right to equality</i> before the law as citizens of the receiving country,</p> <p><i>Right</i> against arbitrary expulsion,</p> <p><i>Right</i> to equal pay, conditions of work, social security as citizens of receiving State,</p> <p><i>Right to transfer funds.</i></p> <p>(States which are party to the Covenant promote, protect, observe and take all other steps to this end.)</p>		Convention is not in force

E) KEY REGIONAL CONVENTIONS AND TREATIES: STATUS IN SOLOMON ISLANDS

There are a number of agreements among members of the Pacific Islands Forum (16 countries plus Australia and New Zealand) and several restricted to the 14 Forum Island Countries. The status of key agreements is summarised below. The UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol on greenhouse gases are not, of course, regional agreements but these are of particular interest to the island countries. Treaties do not automatically enter into force when signed. National legislation may need amendment, or new legislation specific to the treaty in question may need to be enacted as a basis for ratification:

"Ratification is the act of depositing an instrument of ratification certifying that the State making such a deposit is bound by the Agreement. In The British legal system, agreements are not self-executing and need to be incorporated by an Act of Parliament to have the force of law. Principles of customary international law, however, could apply as has been the case in Britain from which most of the FIC take their precedents." (Dec. 2001 e-mail message from Dr. Transform Aqorau, Legal Counsel, South Pacific Forum Fisheries Agency)

Convention or Treaty	Status Overall	Sol Islands Status
1) Trade & Economic Cooperation		
South Pacific Agreement on Regional Trade and Economic Cooperation (SPARTECA; 1980)	Entry into force: 01 January 1981 ¹	Ratified.
Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement (PICTA; 2001)	Not in force; Signed by 9 of 14 FICs and ratified by three ¹	Signed.
Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER; 2001)	Not in force; Signed by 13 of 16 Forum members and ratified by four ¹	Signed.
2) Environment & Resource Management		
South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty (Treaty of Rarotonga) 1985	Entry into force: 11 December 1986; Signed, ratified & in force in 11 of 14 FICS and 13 of 16 Forum members ¹	Ratified.
South Pacific Forum Fisheries Agency Convention, 1979		Signed.
Convention on the Conservation of Nature in the South Pacific (Apia Convention) 1976		
Convention for the Prohibition on Fishing with Long Driftnets in the South Pacific 1989.		
Convention for the Protection of the Natural Resources and Environment of the South Pacific Region ("the SPREP Convention") a) Protocol on dumping b) Protocol on pollution emergencies	Entry into force: 22 August 1990 Entry into force: 22 August 1990 Entry into force: 22 August 1998	Signed.
Waigani Convention on Hazardous and Radioactive Wastes (The Waigani Convention) 1995	Not in force; Signed by 14 Forum members and ratified by ten ¹	Signed.
United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) ⁴ Agreement for the implementation of the provisions of the Convention relating to the conservation and management of straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks	Entry into force: 16 November 1994; Ratified by 13 of 16 Forum members Entry into force: 11 December 2001	Ratified 23 June 1997. The Solomon islands is the only PIC Party to the Agreement - 13 February 1997.
Convention for the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPT, 2000)	Not yet ratified ² Signed by 15 of 16 FFA members	Signed.
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC, 1992)	Entry into force: 21 March 1994	Ratified.
Kyoto Protocol on Limiting Greenhouse Gas Emissions (1997)	Not in force; ratified by most Forum Island Members	

Notes and sources:

- Information from Forum Secretariat as of 28 November 2001.
- Requires ratification by three signatories north of 20° N and seven south of 20° S.
- SPREP Convention & protocols signed and ratified by most Forum members plus France, UK and USA.
- Information from Law of Sea website www.un.org/Depts/los as of 12 November 2001.
- "The difference between the UN Fish Stocks Agreement and the WCPT Convention is that the former is an instrument of global application whereas the latter is regional. Further the latter is based on the former in terms of its jurisdictional scope."

ANNEX 3: THE PROCESS OF PREPARATION OF THE CCA

In July 2001, the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Suva, Fiji decided to carry out a Common Country Assessment for the Solomon Islands simultaneously with the preparation of CCAs for three other Pacific Island Least Developed Countries: Kiribati Tuvalu and Vanuatu. CCA/UNDAF Working Groups, with membership from UN agencies resident in Fiji, were established for each country.

In November 2001, a CCA Manager was engaged to oversee the process for all four countries and consultants were appointed to visit the countries and prepare initial drafts of the CCAs. In November a CCA/UNDAF training workshop was held in Suva for the UNCT, resident UN agency staff and the consultants. During the workshop, a preliminary list of key development themes for the Solomon Islands was prepared by the UNCT. In the same month, a UN consultant visited Honiara to collect information and meet with government officials, civil society organisations and donor representatives.

A meeting of UN agency staff, senior Solomon Island government officials and a Solomon Island NGO representative was held in Suva in December 2001. Chaired by the UN Resident Coordinator, its purpose was to discuss progress on the CCA/UNDAF process and timing for both CCA and UNDAF completion. A schedule based on the Solomon Island delegation preferences was agreed.

From early December 2001 through February 2002, the UN agencies' Solomon Islands CCA/UNDAF working group met frequently to monitor progress, review early drafts, provide additional information, and generally supervise the process. In February, two additional consultants expanded and revised the CCA into a discussion draft, which was provided to the government and civil society organisations prior to an in-country CCA/UNDAF consultative meeting. Thirteen senior government officials, twelve UN agency staff and consultants, eleven CSO/NGO representatives and four donor representatives attended the meeting, which was held in Honiara from 20-21 February. The meeting reviewed CCA/UNDAF progress, discussed the Millennium Development Goals and their relevance to the Solomon Islands, and agreed on key development issues for the CCA to be further refined for the UNDAF.

This revised draft CCA was completed in mid March 2002, incorporating considerable feedback from the meeting. As the CCA was being finalised, the CCA/UNDAF working group had begun work on the UNDAF; preparation of the two documents was part of a single integrated process.

ANNEX 4: ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank	NZODA	New Zealand Overseas Development Agency
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development	PACER	Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations
BRA	Bougainville Revolutionary Army	PDU	Provincial Development Unit
CBSI	Central Bank of Solomon Islands	PDF	Provincial Development Fund
CCA	Common Country Assessment	PFF	Police Field Force
CDC	Commonwealth Development Corporation	PF Net	People First Network
CEDAW	Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (UN)	PICs	Pacific Island Countries
CRC	Committee on the Rights of the Child (UN)	PICTA	Pacific Islands Trade Agreement
CRC	Constitutional Review Commission (Solomon Islands)	PMC	Peace Monitoring Council
CSO	Civil Society Organisation	PNGDF	Papua New Guinea Defence Force
CSS	Community Secondary School	PSRP	Policy and Structural Reform Programme
CYP	Commonwealth Youth Programme	PSS	Provincial Secondary School
DBSI	Development Bank of the Solomon Islands	RDVA	Rural Development Volunteers Association
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone	RWSS	Rural Water Supply and Sanitation
EPOC	ESCAP Pacific Operations Centre	RSIP	Royal Solomon Islands Police
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific	SFPL	Soltai Fishing and Processing Limited
EU	European Union	SICHE	Solomon Islands College of Higher Education
EVI	Environmental Vulnerability Index	SICUL	Solomon Islands Credit Union League
EXIM	Export-Import Bank (Taiwan)	SIDAPP	Solomon Islands Development Administration and Participatory Planning Programme
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organisation	SIDT	Solomon Islands Development Trust
ForSec	Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat	SIG	Solomon Islands Government
FICs	Forum Island Countries	SIPL	Solomon Islands Plantations Ltd
GDP	Gross Domestic Product	SIWA	Solomon Islands Water Authority
GEF	Global Environment Facility	SOPAC	South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission
GRA	Guadalcanal Revolutionary Army	SPC	Secretariat of the Pacific Communities
HDR	Human Development Report (UNDP)	SPREP	South Pacific Regional Environment Programme
ICLARM	International Center for Living Aquatic Resources Management	STL	Solomon Taiyo Limited
IFM	Isatambu Freedom Movement	TCU	Timber Control Unit
ILO	International Labour Organisation	TPA	Townsville Peace Agreement
IMF	International Monetary Fund	UNCTAD	United Nations Conference for Trade and Development
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change	UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
IPMT	International Peace Monitoring Team	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
LDCs	Least Developed Countries	UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
MEF	Malaita Eagle Force	UK	United Kingdom
MGA	Main Group Archipelago	UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
MHMS	Ministry of Health and Medical Services	UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
MPGRD	Ministry of Provincial Government and Rural Development	UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
NACC	National Advisory Committee on Children	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
NEMS	National Environmental Management Strategy	UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
NFD	National Fisheries Developments Ltd	USP	University of the South Pacific
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation	VIP	Ventilated Improved Pit Latrine
NIRPDP	National Integrated Rural Provincial Development Project	WB	World Bank
NPF	National Provident Fund	WDR	World Development Report (WB)
NSS	National Secondary School	WHO	World Health Organisation
		WTO	World Trade Organisation

ANNEX 5: REFERENCES

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