

AGENDA

Presentation of the Findings of Status of Youths in Solomon Islands Report 2016

Venue: Heritage Park Hotel

Time: 9am – 11am

Friday 5 May 2017

9:00 am – 9:15 am

Welcome and Remarks

*Azusa Kubota, Head of UN Joint Presence Office and UNDP
Country Manager*

9:15 am – 9:40 am

Presentation on the findings of Status of Youth Report 2016

Dr Anouk Ride, Author of Status of Youth Report

9:40 am – 10:40 am

Discussions and Q&A

10:40am – 11am

Wrap up and next steps

11am

Closing and light refreshments

STATUS OF YOUTH IN SOLOMON ISLANDS

Report prepared for UNDP by Dr Anouk Ride, 2017

About the draft report

- This report is an activity of the United Nations Development Programme under the Supporting Peaceful and Inclusive Transition In Solomon Islands Project.
- Kind thanks are provided to all the agencies which provided information to the researcher including Ministry of National Unity, Peace and Reconciliation, Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs, Guadalcanal and Malaita Provincial Governments, Honiara City Council, Royal Solomon Islands Police Force, Solomon Islands Development Trust, Save the Children, World Vision, Youth at Work, Consultant Dr Jimmie Rogers and various church and chief representatives and participants at the National Youth Forum February 2017.
- Youth Forum (28 youth representatives from all provinces) input led to 10 significant changes to the report recommendations including four new recommendations covering political representation, mental health, community-based education and added support for young mothers and people with disabilities.

Population profile

One of the youngest populations in world - median age 15.7 in 2009

A diverse population - around 70 languages & 14 cultural differences

Majority rural population (80%), but 2/3rd live in urban (6%) to present in urban areas (the majority of youth)

Poorly educated youth - Solomon Islands ranking low (180 out of 185 countries)

Conflict (1998-2003) disrupted education, many youth resulted as military youth or prominent in riots in 2006

Correct problems with a school, many urban areas & city

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE YOUTH PEACE AND RECONCILIATION FORUM

Youth and conflict in context

- Structural drivers of the tensions remain largely unchanged today - poverty and relative deprivation, ethnic stereotypes and divisions, high numbers of disaffected youth, elite capture of state resources, low levels of rural development and access to services and the marginalization of women from politics and decision-making.
- Conflict-affected Islands (mainly Guadalcanal and Malaita) have added challenges - relative deprivation, isolation from information and services, lower education standards and higher poverty rates as well as local conflict factors.
- The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has pointed to the critical need to increase youth participation in decision-making at local and national levels, provide youth with employment and encourage learning from the tensions so such conflict is not repeated.

Economic participation of youth

- Primary school completion made significant strides since conflict with 94% attendance in 2010 (up from 2/3rds in 1999)
- Secondary school and vocational education not enjoyed same attention, reform, funding and success rates - 40-60% students leave school in secondary school
- Young women in urban areas most likely to leave school, young mothers least likely to complete school (85% teenage mothers out of school or never went to school and 60% do unpaid domestic work)
- Access to education lowest for populous rural areas
- Tertiary education entrenches elite privilege and gender and other disadvantages - only 28% government scholarships for school completers went to women in 2016
- Vocational education demand strips supply, particularly in provinces (capital Honiara has most education options, encouraging urban drift)
- High rates of unemployment, inactivity, low sense of youth agency over livelihoods

Economic participation & violence

- Sexual exploitation of young women around logging camps, fishing ships and tourism developments common but intervention, support services and enforcement of crimes rare
- Minimum age of criminal responsibility is just 8 years, employment 12 years and marriage is 15 years - Inconsistencies with international norms
- Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Commission also pointed need for education to counter negative stereotypes and for youth learn from experience of conflict
- Local initiatives to establish more cross-cultural learnings and peace education in curriculum (particularly by provincial government officers) - but these are poorly resourced
- Youth employment/livelihoods generally reduces rates of crime, GBV and anti-social behaviour, yet, support to increase youth participation is piecemeal, urban-focused

Economic participation of youth & needs

- GOVERNMENT & NGOS: Youth identified in all consultations need for support for livelihoods, however, investment in this is extremely low (particularly for rural areas where the poorest youth reside)
- GOVERNMENT & NGOS: Poor coordination and information sharing amongst government and non-government agencies on employment and education
- NGOS: Recent independent reviews (Y@W and REP employment projects) have pointed to poor performance of projects in improving outcomes for employment and income due to lack of links of assistance with industry needs and economic conditions
- GOVERNMENT: No clear pathway for support for youth likely to be or already impacted by sexual exploitation (mostly young women and girls).
- GOVERNMENT: No service for men wanting to reduce alcohol abuse and violent behaviours. Mental health services poorly resourced.

“Lack of employment and livelihood opportunities impacts on the sense of worth of many young people and their ability to participate in social, community and political life. Many youth just scrape by on a subsistence level in rural areas or through odd jobs or support from others in urban areas...”

Youth & decision-making

Solomon Islands youth have high civic participation rates (70% out of 143 according to Commonwealth Secretariat) and national youth policies reflecting their opinions

BUT very low levels of involvement in decision-making, particularly in Parliament

Voting is transactional, often involving cash payments. And Members of Parliament (MP) need youth to be elected (therefore system favours youth)

Young females face “double disadvantage” of youth and gender - currently only one female MP in Solomon Islands, 3 of provincial level (2 in multi-level local level provinces)

Youth policy implementation low priority for resourcing and staff in budgeting etc.

Political participation of youth

- NATIONAL POLICIES: Youth needs are generally recognized but lack of policy coherence across government – different parts working in different or overlapping ways to same goals.
- INTERNATIONAL NGOS: alignment to support provincial and national youth policies poor, difficulty for governments to track and input into NGO activities, organisations working at cross purposes.
- PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT: supposed to be primary link between youth and government but critically under-resourced - generally 1 staff per province with annual budgets of \$3000-5000 SBD per annum (\$360-680 USD) in funds.
- LOCAL NGO SECTOR: has been successful in promoting youth participation in village or suburb level decision making through youth representation on committees.
- ECONOMIC SECTOR: Encouraging youth-inclusive structures at village level is critical, as youth may be marginalized from key decisions, such as about land and development. Information that exists tend to emphasise control of leaders, brokers and MPs, rather than representative local bodies, over decisions (see Foukona and Timmer, 2016).

Political participation of youth

- Constituency Development Funds (CDF) allocated to individual MPs dwarf Ministry and Provincial Government funding for youth-related projects and activities
- The entire national annual budget for youth development under the Ministry of Women, Youth Children and Family Affairs is only 35% of the discretionary funding allocated to just one Member of Parliament in 2015.
- Information about how these CDF resources are spent and who are beneficiaries is scarce.
- High youth population plus lack of agency over MPs & government leads to frustration or political apathy.

“How youth can better access information about constituency funds and influence Member of Parliament decision making is a critical issue for the future of Solomon Islands.”

Required actions - general

- **Planning for youth economic participation:** Linking education, employment and livelihood interventions with skills shortages, emerging industry growth and business needs (with more focus on rural areas)
- **Policy reform and coherence:** (including for the coming National Youth Policy and sub-policies on employment) underway to better coordinate youth-related policy
- **Support for policy implementation:** funding support and more cooperation (Govt & NGO) needed to implement provincial and national policies
- **Participatory analysis and action:** engaging youth in research, advocacy and decision-making through appropriate, inclusive methods
- **Inclusiveness:** Support for youth-inclusive structures at local level that also encompass disadvantaged groups – young mothers, people with disabilities, people affected by violence
- **Accountability:** Activities to encourage more information about CDF and for youth articulate constituency needs and concerns
- **Peacebuilding for youth:** Peace education & cross-cultural exchanges to break down stereotypes and increase conflict resolution skills
- **Diversionary, health, mental health interventions:** diversion activities for families involved in safe illicit substances, support to stop alcohol/substance abuse and GBV, reduce teenage pregnancy and gender-based violence and youth suicide

Recommendations

Recommendations formulated from ideas from stakeholders and literature on youth development.

Some of these are already underway in policy reform processes.

Resourcing reform is important, as seen from review of past National Youth Policy which pointed to lack of implementation.

PHOTO: JAVIER TORRES/REUTERS

Rec 1. Develop mechanisms for better policy coordination and implementation across Ministries and stakeholders working with youth.

- **1.1** Youth Development Division to have an additional staff member to monitor and coordinate youth inclusion in policy making across whole of government.
Responsible: Solomon Islands Government.
- **1.2** Require Ministries and stakeholders to share Monitoring and Evaluation and other reports on project performance to encourage learning across relevant agencies about best fit approaches to youth projects and programming.
Responsible: Solomon Islands Government.
- **1.3** Other agencies with mandate and projects to work on youth target their assistance to needs identified under the forthcoming National Youth Policy, following approval from provincial and national governments.
Responsible: Development sector and UN agencies
- **1.4** Trial coordinated approaches by government, development sector and UN agencies to addressing youth disadvantages in selected areas to model better policy and implementation coordination and learn from results.
Responsible: Solomon Islands Government, Development sector and UN agencies.

Rec 2. Develop youth-specific data and analysis, including gender analysis, to better understand youth needs and youth disadvantage.

- **2.1** Adopt a standardised definition of youth for policy and data collection that is used across all Ministries to ensure consistent and comparable data on youth is provided by whole of government.
Responsible: National Statistics Office and Solomon Islands Government.
- **2.2** Collect age data for 15-29 year olds in collection of crime statistics to inform practice and policy regarding crime prevention, conflict and gender-based violence.
Responsible: Royal Solomon Islands Police Force, Development sector and UN agencies.
- **2.3** Conduct research on youth involvement in development, monitoring and enforcement of community bylaws with a view towards lessons learnt to inform the Community Policing Program and stakeholders.
Responsible: Royal Solomon Islands Police Force, Development sector and UN agencies.
- **2.4** Conduct further research on youth that leaves school to examine needs, causes, barriers to employment and education and effects.
Responsible: Solomon Islands Government, Development sector and UN agencies.

- **2.5** Conduct further research on the situation of young mothers to examine needs, causes, barriers to employment and education and effects.
Responsible: Solomon Islands Government, Development sector and UN agencies.
- **2.6** Conduct further research on the situation of young people with disabilities to examine needs, causes, barriers to employment and education and effects.
Responsible: Solomon Islands Government, Development sector and UN agencies.
- **2.7** Conduct further research on participation of youth in the sex trade and forced marriages to examine causes, needs and options for greater child protection from sexual exploitation.
Responsible: Solomon Islands Government, Development sector and UN agencies.
- **2.8** Use participatory research elements in project and policy design to enable youth to better contribute to project and policy design.
Responsible: Solomon Islands Government, Development sector and UN agencies.
- **2.9** Analyse power in youth representation structures with the view to recommendations for inclusive youth representation.
Responsible: Solomon Islands Government, Development sector and UN agencies.

Rec 3: Reform current interventions around employment and livelihoods to better link industry and economic factors with government and development sector.

- **3.1** Reform existing employment projects to better target training and support with skills shortages and industry needs.
Responsible: Solomon Islands Government, Development sector and UN agencies.
- **3.2** Reform existing livelihood projects to better target assistance through market analysis, identification of market gaps and needs and tailoring of livelihoods to local market conditions.
Responsible: Solomon Islands Government, Development sector and UN agencies.
- **3.3** Encourage successful businesses at the local and national level to provide mentors, to participants in employment and livelihood projects and outside of these as appropriate, to youth employees and youth entrepreneurs to provide ongoing support.
Responsible: Industry, Solomon Islands Government, Development sector and UN agencies.
- **3.4** Target livelihood and microfinance funding to projects inclusive of disadvantaged youth – particularly people with disabilities and young mothers (that are commonly confined to the domestic sphere and unable to earn an income).
Responsible: Solomon Islands Government, Development sector and UN agencies.

Rec 4: Create more, and more effective, livelihood, education and training options for rural youth and inclusive of rural youth.

- 4.1 Create rural livelihood projects for rural youth that would provide market analysis, skills training and options for start-up finance and materials.
Responsible: Solomon Islands Government, Development sector and UN agencies.
- 4.2 Reward youth-inclusive communal agricultural enterprises through financial incentives (such as tax) awards, media, marketing support for their agricultural products and other means.
Responsible: Solomon Islands Government, Development sector and UN agencies.
- 4.3 Examine options to increase access of youth to vocational training such as Rural Training Centres.
Responsible: Solomon Islands Government, Development sector.

- 4.4 Link vocational training with market needs and start-up finance options to provide greater chances training will lead to better livelihoods.
Responsible: Solomon Islands Government, Development sector and UN agencies.
- 4.5 Provide support for inter-province, national and International marketing of cultural performances and projects including developing youth and women as professional managers, promoters and exporters.
Responsible: Solomon Islands Government, Development sector, Cultural Industries sector.
- 4.6 Consider options for developing good performing Provincial Secondary Schools into National Secondary Schools to decrease pressures and demand on Honiara-based schools.
Responsible: Provincial governments, Solomon Islands Government.

Rec 5: Introduce reforms to the educational system reform to enable greater linkages between skills gaps in economic sectors and education at all education levels.

- 5.1 Link scholarships and educational opportunities with skills gaps, particularly for current industries and emerging industries.
Responsible: Solomon Islands Government.
- 5.2 Life skills be incorporated into the primary school and secondary school curriculum including basic financial literacy.
Responsible: Solomon Islands Government.
- 5.3 Support initiatives for community-based education particularly around literacy, numeracy and financial literacy to provide opportunities for school leavers to obtain basic skills.
Responsible: Solomon Islands Government.

Rec 6: Encourage learning about conflict and peace, local ways of conflict resolution and cross-cultural exchanges.

- 6.1 Support peace education curriculum development including testing, adaptation to provincial needs, teacher training, piloting, finalisation of materials and roll out to all provinces.
Responsible: Solomon Islands Government, UN agencies.
- 6.2 Make the Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Report available to youth, with participatory and engaging adaptations of its content to provide opportunities for youth to engage with the content.
Responsible: Solomon Islands Government, Development sector, UN agencies.

Rec 7: Increase protection of youth from exploitation through legal reform +better resourcing of prevention and support

- 7.1 Develop and support initiatives to foster more prevention from sexual exploitation including greater awareness of rights, how to report crimes and where to go for individual support services.
Responsible: Solomon Islands Government, Development sector, UN agencies.
- 7.2 Target prevention initiatives to specific communities with logging, foreign fishing and tourism where exploitative activities are likely to be taking place, with a particular focus on creating support networks for youth involving chiefs, womens groups and young women.
Responsible: Solomon Islands Government, Development sector, UN agencies.
- 7.3 Establish an emergency fund for victims of sexual violence and forced marriage to travel to Honiara to access services rapidly and provide information for prosecutions.
Responsible: Solomon Islands Government, Development sector, UN agencies.
- 7.4 Collect data on police reports and prosecutions to identify trends and hot spots for sexual exploitation of youth.
Responsible: Royal Solomon Islands Police Force.
- 7.5 Reform the legal system to raise the age of criminal responsibility and minimum age for employment to be consistent with international legal norms.
Responsible: Solomon Islands Government.

Rec 8: Increase the awareness and availability of mental health services for youth.

- 8.1 Support drug and alcohol prevention awareness activities to be targeted at youth and provided at key youth hubs (such as at youth centres, church youth rallies and sporting festivals).
Responsible: Solomon Islands Government, Development sector, UN agencies.
- 8.2 Provide a mental health information and counselling hotline to assist youth with illness, suicide prevention and drug and alcohol addiction.
Responsible: Solomon Islands Government, Development sector, UN agencies.
- 8.3 Support community-based and church-based programs to assist youth known to be involved in drug and alcohol abuse and violence.
Responsible: Provincial government, Solomon Islands Government, Development sector.
- 8.4 Support training of youth in counselling, dealing with trauma, preventative awareness and peer-to-peer support.
Responsible: Solomon Islands Government, Development sector, UN agencies.

Rec 9: Increase youth political participation in national and provincial politics through supporting youth networking and advocacy.

- 9.1 Pool resources from Solomon Islands Government, NGOs, UN agencies and Members of Parliament constituency funds to resource provincial youth centres to enable youth to more readily organize, receive and disseminate information, access Internet and other tools for better youth advocacy.
Responsible: Provincial government, Solomon Islands Government, Development sector, UN agencies.
- 9.2 Encourage development of constituency-wide youth group networks.
Responsible: Provincial government, Solomon Islands Government, Development sector, UN agencies.
- 9.3 Encourage greater transparency regarding spending of Constituency Development Funds and profits, through media and other recognition, successful youth-Member of Parliament dialogues and projects.
Responsible: Development sector, UN agencies.

- 9.4 Profile youth leaders from various communities around Solomon Islands in popular media (such as radio) to promote role models for youth in leadership to youth and the general public.
Responsible: Provincial government, Solomon Islands Government, Development sector, UN agencies.

- 9.5 Support campaigns for mandatory youth participation in political parties and in Parliament through means such as Temporary Special Measures and quotas.
Responsible: Development sector, UN agencies.

Rec 10: Recognise and reward successful youth inclusion in local decision making through means such as forums, awards, small grant funding and others.

- 10.1 Reward Inclusivity in small grant funding for youth projects and activities - such as Inclusion of people with disabilities, young women and young mothers, cross-cultural exchanges and youth-led charity initiatives.
Responsible: Provincial government, Solomon Islands Government, Development sector, UN agencies.
- 10.2 Profile successful cooperation between chiefs and youth to combat crime and violence by means such as media, public forum talks and awards to encourage more cooperation of youth and leaders.
Responsible: Royal Solomon Islands Police Force, Ministry of National Unity Reconciliation and Peace, Development sector.

Thankyou

Researcher
Dr Anouk Rilde
Email: anouk.rilde.com@gmail.com

On May 5 an informal briefing was held on the Draft of the Status of Youth Solomon Islands report at Heritage Park Hotel, Honiara.

In attendance were members of the diplomatic corp, national government ministries, NGOs and youth groups. The following table summarises discussions and suggested amendments to the report following feedback.

FEEDBACK	RESPONSE	CHANGES TO REPORT
<p><i>Sir Bruce Saunders, Businessman:</i></p> <p>Emphasised the importance of attitude and individual change, power of youth for social change and various responses from Rotary and Youth at Work and the need for positive messaging around youth potential</p> <p>Need to connect youth through technology and IT, and think about future of such industries</p>	<p>Positive stories of youth leadership and social change is highlighted throughout the report and (Recommendations 9.4 in particular)</p> <p>Covered under 5.1. and also youth policies of national and provincial government that have called for youth centres to be networked, UNDP and other agencies also looking at how this could be made viable and sustainable</p> <p>Also technical and political challenges in networking centres that need to be addressed</p> <p>Youth Innovation Summit later this year will also discuss these issues</p>	<p>NA</p>

<p>YWPG had many requests from provinces for further civic/political education Suggested the focus of report should be more on decision-making not funding</p>	<p>Noted there was a need to balance the two (decision making vs funding)</p>	<p>Rec. 10 reworded to put focus on decision making: <i>Recommendation 10: Support youth representation and role in decision making bodies at village, ward, constituency, province and national level.</i></p>
<p>Walford, MNURP: Agreed with the needs identified re unemployment and rural youth questioning what is viable to engage youth in economy in rural areas? Each province was likely to have different conditions and solutions and these must be addressed to alleviate drift to urban areas of youth</p>	<p>Recommendation 4 covers this MPGIS to be sent draft report to identify actions in relation to provinces and make sure report complementary to its work in these areas</p>	
<p>Methodio, MWYCFA: Emphasised further action was needed for Ministry to be able to move further on youth issues including addressing rural and urban areas, establishing provincial youth centres and recognizing the realities for young people as highlighted in the report</p>	<p>Specific recommendation to be drafted (under Rec 9) around the provincial youth centres after further information is provided about bottlenecks to implementing this long-standing proposal</p>	
<p>Francis, Capini, KTC Described how his experience working with youth through the Church had made positive changes on the individual level but</p>	<p>Agreed timeframe was a part of transformative change</p>	

<p>that long timeframes and continual work was needed for these transformations Pointed to the lack of counsellors Need to identify the interests of music and build on those to engage young people (eg music) May be some value in compulsory youth service or other activities to keep youth occupied</p>	<p>Identified in Recommendation 8</p> <p>Not explored for this report, however noted Youth at Work incorporates elements of this</p>	
<p>Mei Phillips, World Bank: Noted that currently there are 5 female Members of Provincial Assemblies (not 3 as in the presentation) Stated there was potential for MPGIS to reform their Provincial Community Development Fund to better specify and target youth and women needs Suggested greater internships could help youth get relevant experience to be able to apply for government employment</p>	<p>New sub-recommendation to be drafted under Rec 10 with MPGIS involvement</p>	<p>Corrected.</p> <p>Rec. 3.3 about mentorship for business, also includes government Added Rec. 3.5 Facilitate internship programmes between and among government and non-government agencies to give youth further options for work experience to increase their chances of eligibility for government employment.</p>

Status of Youth in Solomon Islands

(2017)

1) INTRODUCTION

Solomon Islands has a diverse and growing population that is one of the youngest in the world. In 2009, the median age in Solomon Islands was just 19.7 years.¹ The rapid rate of population growth means by 2050, the population of Solomon Islands will exceed Fiji and reach 1.3 million (population in 2009 was 636,750).²

While youth makes up a significant and growing part of the population of Solomon Islands – seven out of 10 Solomon Islanders are under 30 years old³ – there are several obstacles to youth participation in the economy, politics and decision making. This has critical impacts on peacebuilding, economic development, government policy and implementation, and community life at the village and town level.

Global-level analyses of younger populations have pointed to certain risks and opportunities in this phenomena. On the one hand, the so-called “youth bulge” in the population can be associated with increased likelihood of violent conflict and unrest.⁴ The growing population puts strain on services, particularly education and health (see Box 1). On the other hand, younger people are also more likely to be receptive to new ideas and learning, and growing populations present significant economic opportunities for production for the local market and ample labourforce for industry and trade.

The status of Solomon Islands youth is complex and varied across the nine provinces, reflecting the cultural diversity and situational differences in the nation itself. There are around 70 languages spoken in the islands⁵, with different tribal groups also having different cultural traditions and norms and levels of interaction and contact with people from other islands or countries. Different locations also can have vastly different levels of access to government services, education, economic activity and types of violence and conflict. The civil conflict, colloquially known as “the tensions” from 1998-2003 adversely affected Malaita, Guadalcanal and Shortland islands in particular, with insecurity, armed conflict, crime,

BOX 1: Young and growing – Solomon Islands’ youthful population

The youth population is likely to continue to be significant and continue rapid growth until at least 2050. Picture the 300 babies that are born, on average, each week in Solomon Islands right now. This is enough children to fill an average primary school. So, the children born each year could fill more than 50 primary schools.

The number of people aged 0-24 in Solomon Islands is projected to increase by 19 % by 2030 (over 120,000 people, equivalent to the whole population of Honiara and outer areas) and 47% by 2050 (300,000 people, or 3 x Honiara City’s current population).

This young and growing population presents just one of many significant challenges for the government to provide services to children, youth and parents today and tomorrow.

Sources: UNICEF, SPC, MWYCFA.

¹ Solomon Islands Government (2011) *Statistical Bulletin 06/2011*. p 1.

² Secretariat of the Pacific Community (2016) *Revised Pacific population projections*. Noumea: SPC.

³ National Statistics Office (2009) *Report on 2009 Population and Housing Census Basic Tables and Census Description* (Volume 1) Honiara: Solomon Islands Government.

⁴ Urdal, H. (2006) “A Clash of Generations? Youth Bulges and Political Violence”. *International Studies Quarterly* 50(3):607–29.

⁵ Lindvall Arika, L. (2012) “Glimpses of the Linguistic Situation in Solomon Islands”. Romania: International Conference on Languages.

sexual violence and violent disputes between and amongst local armed groups. Youth living in areas affected by conflict have added challenges to their participation in economic, political and social life (see Box 2).

The status of youth is also reflective of the status of economic and social development more broadly with Solomon Islands being a Least Developed Country. On the Human Development Index 2014 (HDI), Solomon Islands is ranked as 156th out of 188 countries and territories (the rank being shared with Mauritania). This HDI of 0.506 is slightly above the average of 0.505 for low development countries but well below average of 0.710 for East Asia and Pacific.⁶ In 2016, the Global Youth Development Index ranked Solomon Islands 109 (out of 183 countries). This index is formed using 18 indicators for education, health and well-being, employment and opportunity, political participation and civic participation. Solomon Islands ranked lowly on youth education – 150 – and at 125 on youth health.⁷

This report details the status of youth in Solomon Islands by synthesizing literature, interviews with key informants working on youth policy and projects and the researcher's own experience on research involving youth in Solomon Islands over the past decade. It was commissioned by the United Nations Development Programme under the Supporting Peaceful and Inclusive Transition in Solomon Islands Project in order to inform the various government and non-government agencies involved in this critical space for development and peacebuilding.

The report is provided into two thematic areas – first, participation of youth in education employment and livelihoods will be detailed, then the participation of youth in politics and governance including elections, national government, provincial government and community-level decision making. Each thematic subsection identifies what is known and knowledge gaps, as well as offer suggested approaches and recommendations. Recommendations will be categorized into those relevant for government, development sector and UN agencies.

In formulating recommendations, emphasis has been put on those policies and projects under which youth have been involved in participatory and consultative processes to identify their own needs. Recommendations are issues raised by the various stakeholders consulted as part of the research for this report. Kind thanks are provided to all the agencies which provided information to the researcher including Ministry of National Unity, Peace and Reconciliation, Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs, Guadalcanal and Malaita Provincial Governments, Honiara City Council, Royal Solomon Islands Police Force, Solomon Islands Development Trust, Save the Children, World Vision, Youth at Work, Consultant Dr Jimmie Rogers and various church and chief representatives. Across all sectors, youth projects and policies tend to be under-resourced and relying on dedication and resourcefulness of staff to continue. This report is indebted to these Solomon Islanders working with youth to advance their participation in the economy, politics and society.

⁶ UNDP, (2015) *Briefing note for countries on the 2015 Human Development Report*, New York: UNDP. p.4.

⁷ Commonwealth Secretariat (2016), *Global Youth Development Index & Report*. London: Commonwealth Secretariat. p. 124-125.

BOX 2: Violent conflict and its effects on youth

While the “tensions” from 1998-2003 is shorthanded as an “ethnic conflict” due to conflict between militants from Guadalcanal and militants from Malaita, the causes and types of violence that occurred are far more complex. An in-depth conflict analysis conducted by the government in collaboration with UNDP in 2004 found contributing factors, included land traditional versus non-traditional authority structures, unequal access to government services, unequal development and economic opportunity, inadequate law and justice institutions, youth unemployment and lack of participation and a lack of educational opportunity. The Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) found what started as ethnic tensions (with Guadalcanal militants threatening Malaitans and evicting them, then a Malaitan militia in Honiara arising as a response) soon developed into a conflict where most violence was directed by the militants against their own people. Out of the approximately 200 deaths that occurred due to violence in the conflict only 20 were caused by militants from the different ethnic groups killing each other. Youth were both victims and combatants, and employed in other ways by militant groups such as cooks, to thief property and act as spies. Young women were particularly vulnerable to intimidation and sexual violence during this time.

On both sides of the conflict, many youths joined the militants because they supported the political causes that militants espoused. There is a sense of relative deprivation on the Weathercoast, which is located on the same island as Honiara, the capital of Solomon Islands, but is a world away in terms of economic and political opportunities. The militants built on sentiments of resentment regarding the lack of government services and support, political and economic exclusion and exploitation by outsiders (such as loggers) to create support for their cause. However, most Weathercoast people giving testimony to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission said while communities supported the militants at first, they soon became fearful and abhorrent of their violent and intimidating behavior.

Similarly, after tens of thousands Malaitans were either warned by friends they should leave or actively forced out by Gualale militants, and key incidents of murder and beatings, Malaitans felt a sense of threat and organized militias to “protect” Honiara. However, this protection provided by the Malaitan militants soon deviated into exploitation – with ransacking of government funds, and intimidating families to get access to cars, money and other goods in Honiara, Auki and North Malaita. The line between Malaita militant groups and youth gangs appearing like militants became blurred, with many Malaitan youth reporting enjoying the feeling of power they had that time wearing army-style clothing and carrying weapons. Marjuana and *kwaso* also became more available and at lower prices, fueling anti-social behavior and violence.

Chiefs and women leaders around Auki, the provincial capital, and in the region of North Malaita (areas most affected by violence) consistently told the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that they were unhappy with militants usurping traditional authority, taking charge of goods and people by threatening them with guns and encouraging violent behavior of their men and male youth.

Structural drivers of the tensions remain largely unchanged today – poverty and relative deprivation, ethnic stereotypes and divisions, high numbers of disaffected youth, elite capture of state resources, low levels of rural development and access to services and the marginalization of women from politics and decision-making. There is also the lingering aftermath of internal conflicts inside communities because of what happened during the conflict, and unresolved grievances with government. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has pointed to the critical need to increase youth participation in decision-making at local and national levels, provide youth with employment and encourage learning from the tensions so such conflict is not repeated.

Sources: Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Commission, UNDP.

Defining youth and the youth population

This report uses the definition of youth stipulated by the Solomon Islands National Youth Policy as young people aged between 14-29, a definition also shared by the Commonwealth Youth Programme. Data collection by international and national organisations has not always used this definition, however, with the Solomon Islands Census collecting data for “youth” as between 15-24 years leading to inconsistencies in data sets regarding youth.

However, the term "youth" is a social and functional construct that may not be definitively about age.⁸

In the last nation-wide participatory situation analysis involving youth, consultations revealed "youth" was commonly perceived by communities as an in-between category between students and adults. There were certain negative characteristics given to the term "youth" in that they were seen to be young people not in tertiary education or employment.⁹ This can also be seen today in the discussions in media and other spheres about the "problem of youth" being one talking largely about youth not working or studying and prey to antisocial behaviours such as dangerous drinking and petty crime. In this discourse, people usually refer to "youth" as young men. Young men typically congregate and distance themselves from family, in the past many young men went to work on plantations or do other labour as a rite of passage, nowadays they may migrate or travel from village to urban areas.¹⁰

Young women do not usually have the same level of freedom of movement, as their sexuality is desirable and seen as open to exploitation, leading to the view young women need to be guarded until marriage. They are more likely to be tied to domestic work around the house and may be under care of older relatives. The idea of "youth" as being relatively free of responsibilities and able to roam occurs in social definitions of youth but may be a bit gender blind. Special attention is needed to ask and clarify the situation of young women in research, consultation and awareness programs "about youth" to unearth the differing social status, freedoms and opportunities for young men and women.

The situation of "young youth" such as teenagers and people in their early 20s has several vulnerabilities as opposed to the "older youth" who are expected to transition to adulthood. In many cultural traditions, the transition from youth to adult can be through age, getting married and establishing a household or taking on an important productive and/or leadership role in the community. "Young youth" have low levels of status and influence because they do not have these characteristics, while "older youth" may lack influence and status if they do not make this transition.¹¹

Young youth are particularly likely to be dense in households in urban areas. In Honiara, 56% of the population is aged 24 or under¹², many of those coming from other provinces to access schooling and a perceived increased chance of employment.

Households in Honiara usually encompass extended families, including large cohorts of youth. While the average household population size is 6.9 people, in Honiara households may include around 20 people putting significant strain on financial resources.¹³

⁸ For a discussion of the concept of youth and implications for youth policy and projects see: UNDP (2006) *Youth and Violent Conflict: Society and development in crisis*. New York: United Nations Development Programme Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery.

⁹ Scales, I. AUSAID/Hassall and Associates (2003) *Youth in Solomon Islands: A participatory study of issues, needs and priorities*. Australia/Solomon Islands: AUSAID. p. 9-10.

¹⁰ Jourdan, C. (2008) *Youth and mental health in Solomon Islands : a situation analysis : tingting helti, tingting siki!* Suva, Fiji : Foundation of the Peoples of the South Pacific International. p. 14.

¹¹ Scales, *Op. cit.*

¹² National Statistics Office *Op. cit.*

¹³ Jourdan, *Op. cit.*

2) ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION OF YOUTH

Education

Solomon Islands has made significant strides in the provision of primary school education, however, many youth are still not receiving secondary school or vocational education. This contributes to low levels of human development and poverty.

Primary school enrolment has increased since the tensions, in 1999, 28% of youth had little or no primary education whereas 94% of children in Solomon Islands attended primary school in 2010.¹⁴ The government in 2009 adopted a fee-free policy for primary school but in reality officials at all schools ask for various contributions on top of fees, meaning financial costs remain a barrier for some to education for the early years.

However, the main financial barrier hits youth enrolled in secondary schools where fees steadily rise with each year. Yearly fees can range from a few hundred dollars in rural areas to several thousand in Honiara. Other issues leading to youth leaving school include teacher absenteeism and poor standards at schools. For example, it is not uncommon to have class sizes of 40 or 50 students in Honiara primary schools and to have days and weeks where teachers are absent. Poor teaching also impacts on students' motivation and ability to pass the standard examinations, which results in students leaving school each year due to poor individual results. For students with special needs there are little supports, and there is little data on disadvantage and enrolment rates – for example a lack of data on enrolment rates for people with disabilities.

Irregular individual participation in education can mean discrepancies in age and educational level. In 2009, less than 1 percent of secondary school students were younger than official age levels and 25 percent of students were 19 or older.¹⁵

Many students leave the education system altogether in secondary school. The rates of youth school leavers, 40% of all students, has profound effects. Girls aged 14 living in urban areas are most likely to leave school, according to the census data.¹⁶

In the National Youth Policy (2010-2015), the document refers to people who leave school as “push outs” suggesting social and economic factors, as well as individual performance, is to blame for the phenomenon of high numbers of youth not completing secondary school. The Policy states: “In 2008, the push out rate in junior secondary schools was 26%; more than 5000 young people were effectively pushed out of the school system. In senior secondary schools the rate was 63% with more than 6800 school push outs. Young women and men must have the opportunity to progress to higher education to secure equal opportunities to jobs.”¹⁷

Reasons for these rates may be different for young men and young women. In 2009, around 8% (almost 2,000) of teenage women had given birth and the majority (85%) were out of school or never went to school. Around 13% of young mothers completed Form 3 as opposed to 25% of other women. Most unmarried teenage mothers live with their parents

¹⁴ UNICEF (2011) *The State of Pacific Youth: Opportunities and Obstacles*, Noumea: UNICEF Pacific and Secretariat of the Pacific Community. p. 6.

¹⁵ National Statistics Office (2009) *Population and Housing Census Gender Report*. Honiara: Solomon Islands Government p. 54.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* p. 49.

¹⁷ Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs (2010) *National Youth Policy 2010-2015*. Honiara: Solomon Islands Government. p. 6.

(72%) and many do not work and rely on others for support.¹⁸

Young women are more likely to be stigmatized for teenage pregnancy and most are suspended from school, while boys who may be the fathers will typically continue schooling for example. On the other hand, boys are more likely to be involved in *kwaso* (homebrewed alcohol) or marijuana use that may lead to dropping out of school. In certain areas, young women report having less control or influence over family finances than the young men, which may impact on choices for who has their school fees paid, however education levels of adults is changing these dynamics to prioritise education of both sexes.

Women of all ages have lower education levels and this is reflected in youth participation in education – 47% of men aged 18 are enrolled in education while only 37% of women are. Literacy rates are slightly higher for boys 15-24 at 91% versus 88% of girls and this gap has narrowed with youth, as compared to older generations, although there may be a discrepancy between these rates and functional literacy.¹⁹

In participatory research, rural young women are more likely to nominate “literacy” as an educational need whereas young men are more likely to nominate “livelihoods” training and education.²⁰ Access to education is relatively low for populous rural areas while 55% of children and youth aged 10-19 in Honiara attended secondary school only 36% of the same age group across the whole of Guadalcanal were in school and 25% in Malaita. These disparities are also reflected in literacy rates – 56% in Malaita and 66% in Guadalcanal (although testing by the Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education found only 7% of people in Malaita and 28% in Honiara were judged literate).²¹

The concentration of the National Secondary Schools in Honiara has had several effects (Provincial Secondary Schools and Community Secondary Schools are options for other students). Firstly, it means that the chances of rural people accessing education is lower, due to increased costs and travel needed to go to school. It also drives migration to Honiara with education seen as the way to transition from rural to “modern” life. In areas such as Temotu and Savo, youth have to walk long distances each day (2-3 hours) in order to go to secondary school. Other students may leave their provinces to go to Honiara and stay with extended family which puts financial pressure on households and can lead to disillusionment of youth if education is not fulfilled or does not result in work afterwards.

In some areas, for example, mountainous parts of Malaita and Weathercoast of Guadalcanal, education is provided traditionally in a village setting to teach youth about culture and subsistence agriculture for example, rather than formal schooling. In other areas, for example those reliant on illicit trade such as *kwaso* (a type of homebrew) sales, education may be de-prioritised over livelihoods and making money for the household, due to poverty and financial pressures.

During the consultations for the Guadalcanal Provincial Youth Policy, one of the issues that emerged for youth in rural areas was access to the internet – it was seen that access to the internet should be provided for rural as well as urban schools with a recommendation for

¹⁸ National Statistics Office *Gender Report Op. Cit.* p. 37.

¹⁹ The 2009 census included a question in order to capture the literacy rate by asking the question to all persons 5 years and older: “Can you read and write a simple sentence in one or more of the following languages: English, Pidgin, Local language, or Other language?”. The way the question was phrased captures a basic skill of reading and writing, and not a more fluent literacy.

²⁰ Scales, I. AUSAID/Hassall and Associates *Op cit.* Note: there is a need for a new participatory study of youth needs to reflect modern priorities and inform decision-makers.

²¹ Oakeshott, D. & M. Allen (2015) “Schooling as a ‘Stepping-Stone to National Consciousness’ in Solomon Islands: The Last Twenty Years” *Australian National University SSGM Discussion Paper 8*: p. 9.

internet stations in each ward. The lack of resources at Provincial Secondary Schools do put these students at a disadvantage in terms of applying for tertiary education, scholarships and other opportunities.²²

Boarding schools in the provinces can provide a bridge between staying in the village without secondary schools and having to travel all the way to Honiara to access education. However, there has been relatively little consideration of boarding schools in the development sector, and their various impacts. On the one hand, boarding schools offer cross cultural experiences and friendships through a shared experience. On the other hand, students away from their families can be vulnerable. For example, a 2013 study of natural disasters found the most vulnerable group to hunger and insecurity were boarding school students from other provinces. During disaster times, they were effectively left to “fend for themselves” and in the case of Temotu’s tsunami, the students were unable to contact their families.²³

After school years, tertiary education tends to entrench elite privilege and gender and other disadvantages. Every year, students complain about some scholarships not being allocated according to educational performance but with elite and kin-based privileges. The system tends to disadvantage women - in 2017 only 28% of government scholarships for school graduates (26 out of 91 pre-service scholarships) were awarded to women.

At the postgraduate level, few men or women have the opportunity to study and then complete their studies. Only 25 Solomon Islanders currently possess a PhD which is very low compared with neighbouring countries such as Fiji, and the current government has recently stated in 2016 it wants to support high achieving tertiary students into post-graduate degrees.

Access to education tells only part of the story however, with many tertiary educated youth being unable to find work in their field after their studies. Scholarships have tended to focus on the civil service while neglecting industry needs resulting in a shortage of finance and managerial staff in most sectors. Tourism and cultural industries, for example, suffer from a lack of managerial, promotional and marketing expertise, despite the need for these skills in order to professionalise goods and services and export cultural goods.

At the other end of the spectrum, only one in six school leavers finds paid employment. There is an acute lack of vocational and life skills training for school leavers, or incorporation of these skills into the primary and early secondary curriculums. Rural Training Centres report high demand for the approximately 2-3000 places offered each year. As summarized by a recent report on urban youth: “...the education system continues to orient young people towards a formal economy and insufficiently prepares them for alternative options, including informal livelihood options. Increasing population numbers have resulted in the current situation where the numbers of vacancies in this sector are few and cannot meet the demand for employment of school leavers.”²⁴ This is recognized by stakeholders currently reviewing the National Youth Policy and in several national policy documents (see Appendix A).

School leavers are even more marginalized from the economy than those with some education, although sometimes the obstacles they face regarding participation remain

²² Guadalcanal Provincial Government, (2010) *Guadalcanal Provincial Youth Policy*. Honiara: Guadalcanal Provincial Government.

²³ Ride, A. Kii, M. West, G. & D. Hila (2013) *Information in Natural Disasters – Solomon Islands*. Australia: AUSAID/SOLMAS. p.25 & 27.

²⁴ Noble, C., N. Pereira and N. Saune (2011) *Urban Youth in the Pacific: Increasing Resilience and Reducing Risk for Involvement in Crime and Violence*. Suva: UNDP. p. 110.

similar. It is not uncommon for educated and uneducated youth to be doing the same activities – such as selling betel nut or running errands for family businesses – in order to eke out a living.

Aside from the broader links between education and conflict – with the current system fueling population pressure on Guadalcanal and contributing to disparities through reduced access of females, people with disabilities and people from rural areas – education also has a role to play in peacebuilding. Several authors, notably Christine Jourdan and Jack Maebuta, have identified that the experience of being at school with people from various backgrounds in the formative years of youth contributes to cross-cultural social links and a greater national consciousness. Friendships and connections made in school years are similar to kin bonds in Solomon culture and highly salient to individual decision making in times of conflict.²⁵ Conversely, Tarcisius Tara Kabutaulaka has argued the older curriculum pre-tensions contributed to ethnic stereotypes (particularly of Malaitans) through the uncritical promotion of colonial texts.²⁶ A recent paper has argued the new social studies materials bring ideas of unity and diversity into the classroom and is complemented by religious studies content on conflict resolution and reconciliation, but cautions its effect may be constrained by gaps in access to education and reluctance of teachers to talk about “sensitive” issues such as the tensions.²⁷

Peace topics have been included in the curriculum – social studies in Grades 7-9 (junior secondary level) address causes and solutions to conflict, using examples from Solomon Islands and overseas and asks students to think critically about prevention of conflict. Grade 8 curriculum addresses the tensions, peace agreements, reconciliation and peace work locally and the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) and the Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Commission.²⁸ However, teachers are often reluctant to tackle these topics and these topics may not be taught. Maebuta has pointed to the need for further teacher training and capacity to provide these courses.²⁹

Currently Malaita and Guadalcanal Governments are developing peace curriculum to address some of these issues and promote further cultural exchange to break down stereotypes. These materials will need further support in order to be tested in classroom settings, train teachers and pilot their approach. Such a project could serve as a pilot for approaches to broader national peace education projects in future years. There is significant local expertise at University of South Pacific Honiara campus in peace education to undertake further peace curriculum work.

The youth recommendations from the Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Commission also pointed to the desirability that youth be encouraged to read, discuss and understand the TRC Final Report.³⁰ (At the time of preparation of this report, the final report had not yet been endorsed by Parliament as a step preceding its release).

²⁵ Ride, A. *Creativity, Testimony and Politics – interpretations of politics in Solomon Islands*. PhD Manuscript, University of Queensland: 2014.

²⁶ Kabutaulaka, Tarcisius Tara (2001) *Beyond Ethnicity: the Political Economy of the Guadalcanal Crisis in Solomon Islands*. *State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Project Working Paper 1/1* (as accessed on 1 January 2014:

<https://digitalcollections.anu.edu.au/bitstream/1885/41949/1/tarcisiusworkingpaper.htm>)

²⁷ Oakeshott, D. & M. Allen *Op. cit.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ See for example: Maebuta, J. (2010) “Understanding the Indigenous Context for Peace Education in Temotu, Nendo, Solomon Islands” *Educate* 10/1: 2-5.

³⁰ Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2013) *Confronting the truth for a better Solomon Islands, the Final Report of the Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Commission*. Honiara: Solomon Islands Government. p. 769.

Work and livelihoods

Solomon Islands has high youth unemployment rates, although it is difficult to quantify because of informal work, shifting between agriculture and informal business, variable incomes and lack of data on livelihoods. The International Labour Organisation has stated the youth unemployment rate is over 35%. For those youth that do get formal employment, turnover can be high.³¹ Certain sectors such as retail and journalism have generally young workforces but they also tend to be lowly paid.

Lower education levels and the fact that most women get married in their early or mid twenties impacts on women's employment. The average age at first marriage is 23.3 years old for women and 27.1 years for men.

Young mothers are particularly less likely to be able to participate in work and the economy. In rural areas young mothers produced goods for own consumption (56%), but most urban teen mothers were doing unpaid domestic work (60%) at the last national census. Only 17 percent of young mothers in 2009 were in paid employment (28% of those in urban areas and 16% of those based rurally). As mentioned earlier, their options are limited due to childcaring responsibilities and lower levels of education.³²

An area which has been identified as a priority for youth in successive consultations is support for livelihood projects. Programs for youth livelihoods have been predominantly urban focused despite the fact most youth live in rural areas (see Box 3). Access to credit and start-up funds remains a key challenge for young people in the provinces and in urban areas in order to engage in provision of goods and services. Another issue, is the lack of business strategy and planning – for example spaces such as youth markets may have several stalls selling the same product, rather than developing youth finance and business skills to identify market needs and plan their production and sales. Financial literacy and management skills have been identified as a need in many areas, with women's microfinance programs having some success in Western Province and Malaita in increasing incomes and savings, however there is little targeted approaches to help disadvantaged young women such as single mothers.

Most projects designed to address youth employment and livelihoods are short term with the Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommending more "strategic long-term" interventions.³³ Programs devised to help youth into work have strengthened their "soft skills" such as communication, applying for jobs, anger management and the like, but not led to employment in the main (see Box 3)³⁴. Part of this is to do with the limited job market in the country, with Honiara estimated to have only around 10,000 full time positions available, but part of this is a failure in the design of education and work projects to tailor their interventions to industry needs and skills gaps. Skills gaps include technical and professional roles in life science, health, natural resource extraction, building and trades, education professionals, retail and tourism managers, science and engineering, arts and culture management and agricultural trade. As a result of the lack of foresight in education and employment policy and projects, on behalf of government but also donors and partners (with RAMSI also being criticized for not engaging with the private sector)³⁵, many skilled

³¹ Evans, D. (2016) "Hard Work: Youth Employment Programming in Honiara, Solomon Islands" *Australian National University SSGM Discussion Paper 7*. p. 4.

³² National Statistics Office (2009) *Gender Report Op. cit.* p. 39.

³³ Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *Op. cit.* p. 768.

³⁴ Evans, *Op. cit.* p. 15-17.

³⁵ Powles, A. (December 2013), *The Private Sector, the Solomon Islands and the Peace-Economic Dividend: Learning from the RAMSI Experience*, London: Kings College/ Humanitarian Futures Programme.

positions in these fields get routinely filled by expatriates rather than Solomon Islanders.

The lack of analysis of markets and what are potential profitable businesses in the local market, or export industries (including neighbouring countries where trade can be fostered to take advantage of favourable trade terms within Melanesian Spearhead Group countries), means available youth employment programs are trying to get youth into employment and small business sectors which are already crowded. Much project planning around employment and livelihoods is also blind to the needs of rural youth. Most poor people – 87% - live in rural areas and most of the extremely poor are in rural areas, according to the 2012/2013 Household Income and Expenditure Survey. The report writers comment: “Overall, between 87-99 % of the poor are found in rural areas, with the higher percentage obtained when using more austere poverty lines and the poverty severity index. In other words, more of the total poverty is found in rural areas if the attention is focused on the poorest.” Yet, livelihood projects are primarily targeted at urban youth (see Box 3 below) and do not tap opportunities to link youth into emerging new export sectors and commodity production – such as cocoa and other agricultural goods – or to provide niche locally-made products of commodities currently exported from overseas. Indeed, such trades could provide employment and livelihood opportunities for urban and rural youth alike.

Youth employment and livelihood opportunities are dependent on broader economic policy and planning. This can include national development strategies and plans and emerging bilateral and regional issues such as labour mobility of Pacific workers to fill skills and staffing shortages in other countries. As summarized by an international UNDP report: “the youth employment challenge is larger than just creating jobs; it concerns the fundamental and challenging problem of how to establish functioning economies, to promote and redistribute growth and to generate government revenue. If youth employment is to be seriously addressed, training must be accompanied by governmental regulations and incentives favourable to the employment of young people, an increase in international investment and an improved macroeconomic environment.”³⁶

In Solomon Islands, the participation of youth in the economy is tied to these elements as well. For instance the Guadalcanal Youth Policy states: “Each year more than 1500 youths waits to enter into the labour market, but the provincial economy is unable to create jobs for this numbers... rehabilitation of the provincial economy and implementation of a comprehensive program of the rural development would keep the youths busy in productive employment.”³⁷

Another issue in relation to youth and employment is exploitation, particularly sexual exploitation of young girls around logging camps and foreign fishing vessels. There is also street prostitution in Honiara, often involving young women who have experienced abuse at home, and prostitution at hotels and bars involving both local and Asian migrant women. Further research is needed to confirm if these trades also include young boys. Investigation and prosecution of the sex trade is rare. Currently, only Save the Children and UNICEF is working actively on prevention through awareness and child protection programs locally while the International Labour Organization (ILO) builds capacity through its Pacific Sub-Regional Child Labor and Trafficking Program. At the government level, the Advisory Committee on Children informs Cabinet and coordinates the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Child.³⁸ The Committee on the Rights of the Child has pointed

³⁶ UNDP (2006) *Youth and Violent Conflict: Society and development in crisis*. New York: United Nations Development Programme Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery. p. 74.

³⁷ Guadalcanal Provincial Government *Op. cit* p. 3.

³⁸ United States Department of Labor (2015) *Child Labor and Forced Labor Report: Solomon Islands* as accessed online 17 November 2016: <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/resources/reports/child-labor/solomon-islands>

to several inconsistencies on minimum ages that could be changed to reflect international standards – the minimum age of criminal responsibility is just 8 years, employment 12 years and marriage is 15 years.³⁹

³⁹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (2011) *Solomon Islands: Child Rights References in the Universal Periodic Review*, 11th Session – 2011, 4th May.

BOX 3: Working or just keeping busy? Employment and livelihood programs

Solomon Islands has a range of projects designed to address youth employment and livelihoods. The World Bank funded Rapid Employment Project (REP) aims to provide skills to participants, pay wages for short term-work and build small-scale infrastructure (eg pedestrian steps or "Jacobs ladders") to disadvantaged communities such as those in the frontier areas of Honiara, commonly home to many squatters and low income families. 53% of participants in 2015 were youth and REP has reached a large number of people (around 12,000 in urban works and services). It is expected to continue until 2018.

Youth at Work (Y@W) was an initiative of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community that is funded currently by a range of donors and focuses on skills training, unpaid internships and getting participants "ready for work". Over 2000 youth have participated in the scheme, mostly in Honiara but there are also local offices in Gizo, Western Province and Auki, Malaita. Provincial offices have more focus on entrepreneurial support as the organisation also has a small amount of funding (\$2000 SBD/\$260 USD) for non-cash support for youth starting businesses under the Youth Entrepreneur Program (which uses curriculum materials developed by the International Labour Organization). People with disabilities and former prison inmates are actively recruited to participate. Youth at Work has funding in place until 2020.

A recent analysis by Daniel Evans (Australian National University) found that while these programs had positive impacts in terms of soft skills transfer, they had a limited impact on the likelihood participants would find employment or more stable incomes. In surveys of participants around 85% had not found employment following participation in REP and 16-22 percent had saved any wages they earned. Survey data from Y@W indicated one in three participants had full or part time work, which is lower than the national employment rate for 15-24 year olds of 43%.

Current reforms underway to Y@W include changes to recruitment to match youth with assistance (with more focus on entrepreneur vs formal employment), support for youth entrepreneurs to obtain proper licencing and other documents needed (e.g. for food preparation), making the community service component more relevant to intended livelihoods, adaptation of training materials for low literacy youth and ongoing mentoring and refresher sessions after the program has finished. The challenges of more disadvantaged groups – particularly those who cannot read and write, people with disabilities and people with a criminal record – plus the saturation of the formal employment market are ongoing.

World Vision is also engaged in youth employment through its Honiara Youth Development, Employment and Small Enterprise Project which provides skills training, partnerships to increase youth employment opportunities and small business support. World Vision has formed partnerships directly with companies to encourage them to take on short term youth employees. Out of approximately 50 placements 8 found ongoing work with these companies. It had high rates of success for the livelihood part of the project which gave youth skills to conduct one-page market surveys, develop a plan for small business activities (e.g. selling phone credit, market stalls and livestock), present their proposals and the successful presenters received start up support equivalent to \$3000 SBD per person (\$350 US). 11 out of 16 businesses continued and using their business skills many have expanded. Lessons learned so far were the importance of mentorship for business and employee youth alike, a buddy system has been set up to try and provide ongoing support to youth. The project commenced in 2014 and will end in 2017.

Save the Children has been recently engaged in two projects relevant to livelihoods. In 2015, the Youth Outreach Partnership Project (focused on youth-led livelihood projects and increasing youth participation and decision-making in community leadership) drew to a close. Over 2000 youth in 29 sites across Malaita, Guadalcanal, Western Province and Choiseul participated. In Choiseul Province youth established three savings clubs with approximately 20 members each and in Malaita, YOPP led to a successful chicken farm selling chickens to hotels in Auki. Reviews of the projects found the project was implemented on the same model for rural and urban communities, despite different strengths and needs. It was found the Strengths Based Approach was more difficult in urban areas where community members do not necessarily own the resources and material assets around them (e.g. land, trees, water) to utilise for livelihoods.

Save the Children's current project - Supporting Youth in Dealing with Alcohol Use to Reduce Violence against Women and Children in Solomon Islands" (abbreviated as the Youth and Alcohol Project) – works with youth in communities around Honiara and Auki. The project includes support for youth involvement in development and monitoring of community by-laws, awareness and capacity building and diversionary activities (such as sports and music). However, youth involved in the project have expressed a need for diversionary activities to include education and livelihoods and Save the Children is considering options for this in Phase 2 of the project which will commence in 2017, building on lessons learnt through YOPP. Internships, support for Rural Training Centres and livelihood activities will form part of the approach. The need for livelihood activities has an added significance for the communities where Save the Children works in which many families are dependent on sales of illicit substances and leaders want to offer alternate livelihoods.

Lessons learnt from each of these projects illustrate the importance of targeting assistance to local employment markets and local market needs, planning for literacy and other capacity barriers and providing ongoing support such as mentoring rather than "once-off" interventions for youth.

Sources: Evans (2016), World Vision, Save the Children.

The lack of adequate opportunities for youth to participate in the informal and formal economy impacts the likelihood of nurturing and sustaining peace. Aimless youth may be more prone to recruitment for militant or criminal groups (as was experienced during the tensions). The *Solomon Islands Family Health and Safety Study* found a correlation between male unemployment and violence against women with focus groups pointing to the financial stressors on Honiara households, plus changing gender norms, creating arguments between couples.⁴⁰

In Honiara, while there are regulations that set aside certain sectors such as transport for indigenous small business only, the entry of Asian migrants and scapegoating of this group for broader governance failures is also creating a potential security risk. Anna Powles argues that resentments of male adults and youth towards Chinese businesses has led to the latter's reliance on private security companies which in turn recruit many young men. Different businesses use security staff from different *wantok* (tribal/language groups) groups, leading to outbreaks of fighting in the past.⁴¹

Lack of employment and livelihood opportunities impacts on the sense of worth of many young people and their ability to participate in social, community and political life. Many youth just scrape by on a subsistence level in rural areas or through odd jobs or support from others in urban areas and this reduces their sense of agency. A UNICEF report pointed to the fact that the wide range of barriers for youth participation in the economy meant youth lacked a sense of control regarding work and livelihoods: "It is interesting that most of the young people interviewed for this report said they had not given much thought to their future career and possible sources of employment. It seemed that since they did not expect to have the opportunity to choose they had decided that there was little point in making any plans. They just seemed to assume that they would have to do whatever work they could find."⁴² A study of mental health in Solomon Islands found that school leavers or those who had received little schooling were at risk of social and psychological difficulties such as isolation and depression. There was a need to place themselves in their communities through taking on productive roles and this was linked to their self-esteem.⁴³

⁴⁰ Secretariat of the Pacific Community (2009) *Solomon Islands Family Health and Safety Study: a study on violence against women and children*. Noumea: SPC, Noumea.

⁴¹ Powles, *Op. cit.* p.8-10.

⁴² UNICEF (2005) *Solomon Islands: A Situation Analysis of Children, Women and Youth*. Honiara: UNICEF. p. 36.

⁴³ Jourdan, *Op. cit.* p. 9.

3) POLITICS & GOVERNANCE PARTICIPATION OF YOUTH

Youth participation in politics and governance in Solomon Islands is complex and varied depending on a range of cultural, circumstantial, historic and conflict factors. The Commonwealth Youth Programme's political participation rank (which conveys whether the policy environment in a country supports youth development and encourages participation of young people in decision making) ranks Solomon Islands at medium in the global index. (Solomon Islands is ranked 76th). The nation also ranked medium, 70th in the world, in terms of civic participation indicating the capacity of youth for community development (the rating is calculated on factors such as volunteering time and willingness to help strangers).⁴⁴ However, these attributes and policies do not generally translate into youth having an influence in political decision making, as explored below.

Youth generally are generally unhindered to vote, and take part in other ways in electoral campaigns such as participation in rallies for certain Members of Parliament (MPs), providing security and conducting advocacy for youth and other issues such as the environment. In some electorates, MPs will secure the support of male youth, generally through cash payouts, to be visual supporters and show up in large numbers to rallies, or in trucks that drive prominently through towns and villages. Transport is provided by MPs to their candidate supporters to make sure they vote. There were allegations in the last election in 2014 that MPs had paid people to register to vote in electorates where they were not residing, in order to boost their political support.⁴⁵

During unrest in election campaigns, male youth are generally perceived to be the largest group involved. However, blaming "wayward youth" for fostering violence in election times turns a blind eye to the role of many different parts of society and governance in these problems.

In 2006, after election of the Prime Minister, looting occurred in Honiara, which targeted Chinese businesses (although the longstanding Asian family-run businesses with good local security networks were generally spared). During the unrest, young men were seen breaking and entering to the stores, but women waited outside to carry the looted goods home. Many people who later lamented the looting, also expressed sympathy with the sentiment of resentment towards Members of Parliament and their perceived corrupt Asian financiers and backers. While the riots were often blamed on young men in media commentary, a wide array of factors contributed to the incidents - including resentment against foreign control of economic sectors and influence over politics, plus public dissatisfaction with corruption, national politics and poor governance.⁴⁶

A Commission of Inquiry into the matter found what appeared to be "spontaneous riots" in fact seemed to have several pieces of evidence that suggested planning, although it was difficult to identify what political and business leaders were involved and the lines of responsibility between looters and leaders were blurred. The Commission tried to explain the violent mass action in this case, saying that evident planning may be the wrong thing to look for in trying to establish responsibility of what happened: "Evidence points to a far more organic process in which commonalities are understood, and do not have to be articulated, or discussions on ways and means are kept to a minimum so that the action is in the hands

⁴⁴ Commonwealth Secretariat, *Op. cit.*

⁴⁵ For a discussion of progress and challenges in Solomon Islands elections see *Summary Report of the Commonwealth Observer Group (2014)* as accessed online 17 November 2016: <http://thecommonwealth.org/media/news/solomon-islands-general-elections>

⁴⁶ Ride, *Op. cit.*

of individuals, their ability to work as a team, and group cohesion.⁴⁷ The looters were taking a particular role in a broader political drama of what was happening at Parliament, and one they felt would be socially supported. Violence was directed at property rather than people.

It is important to remember also, blaming youth for violence to mask broader social and political problems was also a prominent part of the leadup to the tensions. Dr Tarcisius Tara Kabutaulaka describes how expatriate former Police Commissioner Frank Short belittled the developing militants prior to their widescale formation and action as “young people who want a bit of fun and adventure”.⁴⁸ By naming youth in such a way, it masked socio-economic and political causes of unrest and the fact that leadership of the militants were adults, many with strong ties to the political system and national government.

This complexity of role-taking and both participation and marginalization of youth in electoral dynamics is compounded by the fact in most households who to vote for is a communal rather than individual decision, generally based on pragmatic considerations of which candidate is most likely to offer assistance, as well as kin and other loyalties (such as employment). In Solomon culture, a person who gives a gift or favour is generally owed something in return, and so funding grants or material assistance may be considered “gifts” that establish loyalty to Members of Parliament. These loyalties may be weighted more heavily than policy or other matters in voting decisions. In the leadup to elections, Members of Parliament use this to their advantage, giving out many small grants (or cash to individuals or households on so-called “devils night”, the night before the election) to shore up support for second and future terms.

Members of Parliament are wealthy and become more so through the holding of office. As argued by Joseph D Foukona and Jaap Timmer, Members of Parliament often control access and wealth of local lands acting as “landlords” while the state does not curb this power and indeed supports it, meaning that “wealth in Solomon Islands is highly politicised and dependent on the bargaining position of the state and foreign investors”.⁴⁹

These electoral and political dynamics work against youth being elected to provincial or national parliaments as they do not have the resources to demonstrate their value as leaders and participate in gift giving.⁵⁰ However, youth can and do play important roles as influencers of voting decisions, organisers for the candidates and as advocates for youth and other causes.

Challenging Members of Parliament and influential electoral candidates with youth questions and concerns in public fora, can be risky and difficult on several levels, however. Firstly, cultural norms means youth rarely speaks when an elder is speaking or present and “in charge” of meetings and events, meaning appropriate spaces must be given for youth to develop their ideas and the confidence to express them. Secondly, there are many MPs who have claimed to have seen lists of voter preferences, and use this to determine who gets constituency-based assistance (people who have not voted for the MP are turned away). In rural electorates this may be particularly conducive to silencing dissent as constituency

⁴⁷ Solomon Islands Government (2007) *Second Interim Report, Commission of Inquiry into the April 2006 Civil Unrest in Honiara*, 7 September 2007. p. 14-15.

⁴⁸ Kabutaulaka, Tarcisius Tara (2001) *Beyond Ethnicity: the Political Economy of the Guadalcanal Crisis in Solomon Islands*. *Australian National University SSGM Working Paper 1/1* (as accessed on 1 January 2014: <https://digitalcollections.anu.edu.au/bitstream/1885/41949/1/tarcisiusworkingpaper.htm>)

⁴⁹ Foukona, J. & J. Timmer (2016). “The Culture of Agreement Making in Solomon Islands” *Oceania* 86/2. p. 116-131.

⁵⁰ For a valuable report on how these dynamics reduce the likelihood and opportunities for women to get elected see: Dicker, K. Billy, A. & A. Barclay (2016) *The Influence of Gender Norms and Attitudes on Voter Preferences in Solomon Islands*. Suva: UN Women Fiji Multi-Country Office.

funds are the largest and most visible source of funds in the communities that lacking other national, provincial or NGO services and support.

Finally, the large groups of supporters for certain Members of Parliament, who are generally male, can be intimidating for people who wish to speak at public forums. Particularly females and marginalized groups may feel open to ridicule or threats to their personal security. Elections can be tense times, marked by fear of rival groups engaging in intimidation or violence.

Young women in particular are likely to face a “double marginalization” from politics – firstly because they are young, and secondly because politics is tended to be seen as business for men and an extremely male-dominated area (currently there is just one national female Member of Parliament who is also the Minister for Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs). In 2017 there were just 5 provincial female members, two from Isabel which is matrilineal and has female chiefs (and one each in Malaita, Western Province and Temotu). However, women and young women are active as organisers in civil society groups, leadership that is often not recognised and given the same status as male political leadership.⁵¹ In 2017 it is expected the Solomon Islands Women Peace and Security National Action Plan (2017-2020) will be launched that include the aim of a biennial parliamentary forum on women and girls security which is intended as a mechanism to elevate young women’s concerns on the interaction of politics and security.

Given the low levels of voice given to youth in elections, and the high proportion of the population that is young, it is important that the Government of Solomon Islands provides opportunities for youth participation in policy-making. It is seen in a snapshot of eleven major policies related to economic and development matters that there are provisions related to youth in all of them (see Appendix A). All policies recognize the critical need to formulate assistance targeted to youth, with those in Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs (MWYCFA) and Ministry of National Unity, Peace and Reconciliation (MNURP) having a particular focus on youth participation in policy formation and governance.

The latest National Youth Policy (2010-2015) is now out of date and formulation of a new National Youth Policy is currently underway by MWYCFA and stakeholders. This will also be complemented by a new Strategic Framework for Youth Development in Solomon Islands (SFYDSI) and a new national Youth Employment Strategy (NYES) that sits beneath it. A recent rapid assessment of the 2010-2015 policy by the Ministry found that while there had been successes - namely a number of skills training and capacity building activities, the roll out of the community policing awareness and youth leadership in church activities - there were also several shortfalls.

The overall issue was the fact that the Policy was only partially implemented due to capacity and finance constraints. More resources went to priority areas of youth and career paths and youth and governance while other priority areas (health, peacebuilding, sustainable development and youth mainstreaming) were relatively neglected. The majority of activities were implemented in Honiara, with provinces and rural areas mostly running their own activities through local youth groups and church groups, sometimes supplemented with small grants from provincial governments.⁵²

The lack of information collation, clarity on avenues for support for local youth activities, collaboration between stakeholders (NGOs and others) and networking and coordination among government ministries compounded the narrow focus of youth activities on skills and

⁵¹ Pollard, A. (Sep-Dec 2003), “Women’s Organizations, Voluntarism, and Self-Financing in Solomon Islands”, *Oceania*, 74, 1/2: 44-58.

⁵² MWYCFA and consultant Dr Jimmie Rogers.

awareness primarily around Honiara and other urban areas. Resourcing for better planning and coordination of implementation of the Policy, bringing stakeholders into governance frameworks and the need for implementation in all provinces will be vital to give life to the forthcoming National Youth Policy.

While youth needs are generally recognized in policies, there is a lack of policy coherence that negatively impacts their overall effectiveness. For instance, the National Children's Policy also includes youth from 15-18, and national agencies such as the National Statistics Office do not use the MWCYFA definition of youth in their reports.

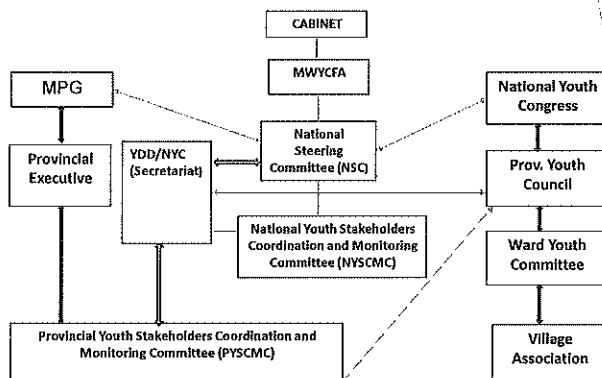
Several policy documents offer different strategies to deal with youth unemployment, livelihoods and education in various ways. This means that several Ministries are doing similar activities in an uncoordinated fashion. It is also very difficult to gather data on what is being done by the whole of government to assist youth. While the Youth Division of the Ministry of Women, Children, Youth and Family Affairs is responsible for policy coordination and does this through the formation of the National Youth Policy and Frameworks, it remains understaffed and under-resourced to accurately monitor and report on implementation across the various Ministries and partner organisations.

Particularly at provincial government level, stakeholders reported various international NGOs did not seek advice or support before starting projects, and there was difficulty tracking NGO activities and directing them in a more strategic and coordinated manner. This may be having some perverse impacts – for example, as seen from Box 3, most NGO employment and livelihood projects are being directed around Honiara and towns, which may promote rural-urban shifts. Similarly projects to increase political and decision making participation of youth are predominantly urban as illustrated in Appendix B. Livelihood projects in rural Malaita and rural Guadalcanal relevant to youth are still a major gap in assistance to alleviate rural-urban drift, rural poverty and migration pressures on land and services in urban areas.

In addition, national and provincial governments have created structures for youth to be represented in decision making. Solomon Islands Government supported creation of a National Youth Congress, Provincial Youth Councils and Youth Stakeholders Coordination and Monitoring Committee. At the village level, associations often have youth representatives on committees (such as church, NGO project committees, village development committees) and these feed into Ward Youth Committees. Figure 1 (below) illustrates the structure of the National Youth Policy (2010-2015) coordination and monitoring.

Figure 1: Avenues for youth participation under National Youth Policy 2010-2015

CURRENT STRUCTURE OF THE NYP COORDINATION AND MONITORING FRAMEWORK



Source: MWYFA

However, most of these structural mechanisms for youth representation survive on goodwill of volunteers. There have been problems retaining participants for the National Youth Congress, Provincial Youth Councils and Ward Youth Committees, with the result that, in Guadalcanal for instance, some of these levels are bypassed in favour of direct contact between local youth groups to the provincial government. The National Youth Congress is currently inactive and may be revitalized as part of the review of National Youth Policy and associated mechanisms.

There needs to be better resourcing, connection, transparency and accountability between these bodies and the youth they represent and engagement of youth that may feel left out of these initiatives. In this regard it may be useful to look more closely and analyse power in youth representation. For instance, if all “youth representatives” are actually sons of chiefs, then other youth are likely to feel excluded from decision making. Building on local youth groups which demonstrate engagement through broad membership and activities could offer greater chances for accountability.

The institutions which have the best connections with these local grassroots youth groups are provincial governments. Local knowledge and commitment of provincial government staff essentially provide the main avenue of government support for youth participation in political and social life in rural areas.

However, provincial government activities are critically under-resourced, with generally one staff member per province with annual budgets of as low as \$3000-5000 per annum to fund youth forums and activities in the province. This is a particular challenge for large population provinces such as Guadalcanal, Makira and Malaita and those where travel between islands is costly such as Shortlands, Temotu and Western Province. In the case of Honiara City Council, youth officers reported while the budget allocation for 2016 was \$290,000 SBD only \$80,000 was given to the Youth Division. Despite the importance given to youth in policy documents, their worth is not followed up by government funding for activities to foster their participation in politics and governance.

Several key informants commented on the phenomenon that politicians and governmental leaders often relegated “youth” to a concern for sports and church sectors rather than being seen as critical to national issues such as democracy and economic growth. As stated in the Solomon Islands National Youth Policy 2010-2015: “Today’s young men and women are

knowledgeable individuals who want to see their needs and aspirations achieved in the foreseeable future, not just for their development but also for the ongoing development of Solomon Islands. Consultations in Guadalcanal, Isabel, Malaita and Honiara City, as well as with youth stakeholders, tell us that young people are frustrated with the scarcity of credible instruments and mechanisms to assist policy implementation."⁵³

The NGO sector has been successful in promoting youth participation in village or suburb level decision making by making youth representation on committees a requirement for assistance (see Box 4 which describes the approach of Solomon Islands oldest NGO the Solomon Islands Development Trust). Similarly, the churches have a tradition of youth activities and reaching out to youth to engage with the church. Local groups such as Red Cross volunteers, Girl Guides, Scouts, Pathfinders and others build networks and skills of youth which may have critical importance during disasters and crisis.

BOX 4: From troublemakers to decision-makers – local initiatives to increase youth participation in rural areas

Solomon Islands Development Trust (SIDT) has a focus on rural development and works in the nine provinces of the country. Administration Officer Kathrine Sanga said there are challenges that the rural youths face, commenting: "Some communities see youths as demeaning and troublemakers thus are not fit to make decisions on a community level."

SIDT counters this with youth participation and representation in their committees and projects. Sanga cites their advocacy and awareness group as an example where the characteristics of youth made them more effective in social change. Their willingness to travel and energy to make effective theatre performances has made their awareness program engaging and memorable to the rural communities visited.

SIDT uses Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) to discuss issues affecting the village community. Youth's involvement in the PRA is substantial and continues to grow as more youths and women are aware of their rights to voice out their concerns and make significant decisions in the community.

Project Coordinator Augustine Todonga emphasized that in the PRA process youth have the space to contribute their issues, what affects them in their community: "Over the past PRA meetings, some active youth representatives raised issues like education and sanitation as the main issues affecting their livelihood in their villages." After the issues are listed, they are prioritised and SIDT assistance is offered to see if they need outside support or look at ways to advocate the issues listed. The PRA also assist village plans to design small community projects.

Speaking highly of the SIDT's programs and approaches, Project Co-coordinator Augustine Todonga said he knows how well these programs have helped shape a young person's life. In his early twenties he was a participant in SIDT's Youth Mental Health Program which spurred his interest in advocacy. Now in his late twenties, he is responsible for co-coordinating all of the trainings and PRA.

"It is understood that some young people limit their participation due to their education level. They have low self-esteem, while in some communities women and youths are not encouraged to take part," Todonga said. However, Todonga said these challenges can be overcome if programs like PRA continue to build cooperation in the villages, supplemented with community organizing skills and advocacy about the rights of women and youths in the community.

By Georgianna Lepping (youth and reporter/fiction writer).

Encouraging youth-inclusive structures at village level is critical, as youth may be

⁵³ Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs *Op. cit.* p. 4.

marginalized from key decisions, such as about land. In Solomon Islands, membership of a tribe is intimately linked to land, but layers of colonial decisions, displacement through tribal conflicts and the tensions, logging and mining developments have put strain on traditional land systems and created many disputes around land. These conflicts were not just between owners and exploiters, but often younger generations disagreed with the giving of land rights to outsiders by older generations. Temporary land rights split communities, between those who gained from the initial deal and those who inherited the decisions of their elders further fuelling insecurity of land and conflict.⁵⁴ Brokers will typically offer traditional leaders cash in exchange for access to land, with youth being left out of such deals.⁵⁵

At the national and constituency level, the gap between resourcing and attention for youth and political priorities is most dramatically illustrated by the size and use of resources allocated to Members of Parliament. According to the 2015 budget, Constituency Development Funds nationally amount to SBD\$260 million (USD\$32m) plus Taiwanese grant funding of SBD \$70 million. Then there is Constituency Water and Sanitation Program (SBD21m), a Constituency Renewable Rural Electrification Program (SBD5.16m), an allocation for Constituency Ships (SBD30m), Discretionary Fund Grant (SBD25m) and the MP Scholarship Award Grant (SBD15m).⁵⁶

Information about how these funds are spent and who are beneficiaries is scarce. A World Bank review said funds were distributed and spent rapidly, but their efficiency and effectiveness, accountability, transparency and dispute management and sustainability was rated as poor.⁵⁷ NGOs, particularly Solomon Islands Development Trust which uses information from villages to report on the state of rural development in constituencies and conducts voter education and awareness (funded by EU) and Transparency Solomon Islands which is conducting a community audit (funded by the UN Democracy Fund) of constituency funds, attempt to highlight information about how funds are spent and their consequences for local development.

While provincial governments, the primary agent for youth policy implementation, are allocated just \$3000-5000 a year per province, the Honiara City Council allocated \$80,000 in the last year and the Youth Development Division of Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs budget is around \$3 million SBD a year, each Member of Parliament is allocated around SBD\$8.5m (USD\$1m) per MP in various constituency funds. That means the entire national annual budget for youth development is only 35% of the discretionary funding allocated to just one Member of Parliament.

A recent consultative process, involving youth forums in Taro, Choiseul Province; Gizo, Noro, and Seghe in the Western Province; Buma, Malaita Province; and Tabalia and Kuma in Guadalcanal Province, identified constituency funds as a critical issue. Youth recommended that a portion of constituency funds be allocated for youth, and that provincial governments be better resourced to implement youth policies.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Fraenkel, Jon (2004) *The Manipulation of Custom: From Uprising to Intervention in the Solomon Islands*. Canberra: Pandanus Books/Australian National University. p. 58.

⁵⁵ Foukona, J. & J. Timmer (2016). *Op. cit.*

⁵⁶ For these statistics and a discussion of CDF see: Batley, J. (2015) "Constituency Development Funds in Solomon Islands: State of Play". Australia National University, State, Society and Governance in Melanesia *In Brief* 67.

⁵⁷ World Bank 2014. *Solomon Islands: Towards Better Investment in Rural Communities*. Washington, DC: World Bank Group.

⁵⁸ Ministry of National Unity, Reconciliation and Peace, *Review of Youth Peacebuilding Forums Conducted by MNURP in 2012*. Honiara: MNURP/MWYCFA.

How youth can better access information about constituency funds and influence Member of Parliament decision making is a critical issue for the future of Solomon Islands. Constituency funds are growing in size and are allocated with the aim of reaching out to all areas of the country including remote and disadvantaged communities. In a few electorates, Members of Parliament have engaged with youth and identified needs for support and followed through this with projects, in the vast majority of electorates information about constituency funds and youth is not available.

Building confidence of youth groups to better engage in politics takes time and working in different ways than with other groups in society. Successful initiatives to include youth in working towards solutions to social problems have tended to employ participatory methodology, rather than formal, lecture or classroom-style activities. Many stakeholders consulted as part of this report emphasised the value of youth-to-youth communication and youth forums but also the need to not conduct youth projects in isolation from the rest of the community and to seek support and advice from traditional and church leaders and keep them informed about youth activities and progress.

Youth empowerment is only accomplished by active participation throughout the process of policy development and implementation and projects. Youth should be allocated an active role in research and project design and have demonstrated their abilities in this area. For instance, youth delivered many of the key testimonies to the TRC on human rights violations that happened to their parents, aunts and uncles and other family members. Young people were also widely involved in the process of collecting and analysing statements. In recent research around human security and markets for people from Savo island, youth provided critical information on conflict dynamics resulting from rural communities selling goods at Honiara markets that was not provided by adult men and women.⁵⁹ A recent Fotovois (Photovoice) exhibit organised by SPC's Youth at Work was designed for youths to discuss and share problems and issues that are affecting them relating to unemployment – resulting stories include engaging in unlawful activities, family distress, drug and alcohol abuse, and political instability. Fotovois has also been used as a participatory analysis tool by youth leaders in Malaita as part of the Olofou programme. A participatory data analysis workshop using stories found youth in Honiara were particularly keen to use indirect ways to express their views and discuss sensitive issues such as discrimination, alcohol abuse, mental health and gender-based discrimination – such as through film, music and fiction.⁶⁰ Such examples indicates that, provided inclusive and safe spaces are provided to hear their views, youth can play a positive role in identifying causes and solutions to violence in the community.

Gender-based violence and alcohol/substance abuse are cross cutting issues that contributes to poor health, lowers participation of youth in community and national life and creates violent dynamics in communities. Rising levels of alcohol and substance abuse is often associated with crime and violence.⁶¹

For instance in a household survey conducted in Temotu and the Weathercoast, when asked : “What do you think are the main causes of violence in families in your community?” – 91% of respondents in Temotu and 70% of respondents in the Weather Coast area

⁵⁹ Georgeou, N, C. Hawksley, A. Ride, M. Kii, W. Turasi, (2015) *Human Security And Livelihoods In Solomon Islands: Engaging with the Market Economy*. Sydney: Australian Catholic University.

⁶⁰ Ride, *Op.cit.*

⁶¹ From 2005- 2010, RSIPF's *Crime Statistics* recorded a total of 3057 alcohol related offenses for the 12 to 45 age group. These alcohol offenses included disorderly behavior, drunk and disorderly conduct, consuming liquor in public places and selling liquor without a license. Relating to substance use, for the 2006–2010 period, a total of 327 marijuana related offences were recorded by the RSIPF for the same age category.

nominated "alcohol".⁶² In the last *People's Survey* in 2013 commissioned by RAMSI 91% said the main cause of conflict and problems in their community was alcohol, drugs and or *kwaso*.⁶³ Alcohol and substance abuse is also perceived as a major cause of conflict in communities by youth – although few participatory studies have been conducted, one found "alcohol, marijuana and teenage pregnancy were almost ubiquitous issues for young women" and alcohol was in the top three issues of concern to young men.⁶⁴

Youth are often involved in the production and sale of illicit substances, which is commonly done by families, with communities around Honiara such as Fishing Village, White River and Burns Creek known for this trade. In village settings, *kwaso* producers will often be on the margins of community development. There is a need for alternate livelihoods, prevention and awareness, and developing police and community support for prosecutions, particularly in areas where bylaws are yet to exist and be implemented.

Community by-laws involving chiefs and traditional leaders are making progress to address alcohol and substance abuse and gender-based violence in some communities with support from the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force, Save the Children's youth projects and Oxfam's projects on gender-based violence. NCD Warriors, a Youth at Work initiative (which works closely with the Ministry of Health and Medical Services for information) support youth-to-youth awareness about Non-Communicable Diseases and how to make better decisions regarding personal health.

Nationally, there is a striking absence of mental health, counselling and alcohol and substance abuse treatment services. Even former combatants, usually targeted for social support and behaviour change programs, have rarely accessed these services in the post-conflict period. Counselling services that do exist are run by churches and refuges for women (therefore limiting their use to certain clientele). The Catholic Church in Honiara (Holy Cross) runs an ongoing Alcoholics Anonymous group and Honiara City Council are establishing a volunteer-staffed counselling service in 2017.

Existing national mental health services include outpatient services at the National Referral Hospital (Honiara) which currently has no accommodation or rehabilitation facilities so clients are seen on a daily basis and live at home. The acute care ward was closed in 2012. At Kilu'ufi Hospital (Auki) there are inpatient services but only 20 beds for the whole country. One mental health nurse/coordinator exists in each provincial government with wide ranging duties including counselling, education, dispensing medication (advised by staff in Honiara/Auki), awareness and follow up of patients returning to their villages. This lack of staff and facilities means staff at the Referral Hospital admit it is extremely difficult to access mental health services in the provinces.

Parents also need intervention around positive parenting, violence and alcohol/substance abuse – as it is recognised many children and youth grow up with parents and other relatives that are themselves practicing alcohol and substance abuse and violence or indeed youth are spending most of their time with other youth rather than having appropriate parental guidance and supervision. A study of mental health, particularly in and around Honiara, pointed to social change and family breakdown as a major factor influencing poor mental health among young people, including arguments in families, depression and suicide.⁶⁵ Communities are generally unaware of community mental health services and

⁶² Curth-Bibb, J, K. Higgins, D. Buataigha, & G. West (2015) *Evaluation Report Channels of Hope Gender: Weathercoast and Temotu*. Australia: University of Queensland. p. 35.

⁶³ ANU Edge/University of South Pacific (2013) *2013 SIG RAMSI People's Survey*. Canberra: ANU Enterprise. p. 13.

⁶⁴ Scales, I. AUSAID/Hassall and Associates, Op cit. p. 25.

⁶⁵ For a summary of impacts of family breakdown, urban drift and other factors see Jourdan, C. (2008)

severe mental illness are in most cases untreated.⁶⁶

Intersection between individuals abusing alcohol and substances or violence perpetrators and government services is most likely to occur when the problems have become extreme – at the point of criminal prosecution or admittance to the national hospital or psychiatric ward. The lack of government services puts the burden for dealing with issues of violence and alcohol or substance abuse on communities.

For some youth, these stresses and violence is turned in on themselves and they commit suicide. This is an issue of concern particularly in some locations, with data and qualitative studies difficult to find but anecdotal reports suggesting most suicides are youth. Hospital statistics indicate suicide amongst women spiked during the tensions with one in 20 maternal deaths attributed to suicide.⁶⁷ Further research on suicide to gather information on the scale and localised nature of the problem plus community-based, provincial and national points of intervention and prevention would be useful to understand this emerging issue.

Youth and Mental Health in Solomon Islands, Suva, Fiji : Foundation of the Peoples of the South Pacific International.

⁶⁶ For a case study from Guadalcanal see: Blignault, I. Bunde-Birouste, A. Ritchie, J. Silove, D. and Zwi, A. (2009) "Community perceptions of mental health needs: a qualitative study in the Solomon Islands", *International Journal of Mental Health Systems* 2009, 3:6.

⁶⁷ Ministry of Health and Medical Services (2001) *Health status of women and children in Solomon Islands*. Honiara: Solomon Islands Government.

5) RECOMMENDATIONS

POLICY COORDINATION

BOX 5: Youth-inclusive peace and development programming

In 2015 the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2250 on youth, peace and security. The resolution sets out five pillars necessary for youth to be part of peacebuilding:

- 1) Participation – in decision making at all levels of government, indigenous processes for conflict resolution, youth-specific fora and UN Security Council missions.
- 2) Protection – from human rights abuses, and to ensure respect for the rights of women, people with disabilities and youth.
- 3) Prevention – support for youth to conduct social inclusion and violence prevention activities, youth employment and education and activities to promote cultures of peace.
- 4) Partnerships – between UN, international, regional and local agencies, the role of the Peacebuilding Commission, and collective efforts on strategies to counter terrorism and extremism.

Youth-inclusive development ideally both identifies the risks facing youth and strengthens protection and prevention, while empowering youth through their full participation in local, national and international politics as well as policy and project design, implementation, monitoring and review.

Sources: UNSC Resolution 2250, UNDP.

Responsible: Development sector and UN agencies

The existing resources allocated to activities and policies involving youth could be made more effective by increased policy coordination.

Government needs to coordinate policies and projects better to ensure complementation rather than overlap or neglect. Development sector and UN agencies need to develop their projects in collaboration with national and provincial governments to support policy implementation rather than subvert it or divert resources in other directions.

Recommendation 1. Develop mechanisms for better policy coordination and implementation across Ministries and stakeholders working with youth.

1.1 Youth Development Division to have an additional staff member to monitor and coordinate youth inclusion in policy making across whole of government.

Responsible: Solomon Islands Government.

1.2 Require Ministries and stakeholders to share Monitoring and Evaluation and other reports on project performance to encourage learning across relevant agencies about best fit approaches to youth projects and programming.

Responsible: Solomon Islands Government.

1.3 Other agencies with mandate and projects to work on youth target their assistance to needs identified under the forthcoming National Youth Policy, following approval from provincial and national governments.

1.4 Trial coordinated approaches by government, development sector and UN agencies to addressing youth disadvantage in selected areas to model better policy and implementation coordination and learn from results.

Responsible: Solomon Islands Government, Development sector and UN agencies.

RESEARCH

The marginalization of youth in policy and decision making is reflected in the lack of data, academic research, participatory research on needs and solutions and inconsistencies in government data collection. There is a need to better understand youth and youth

disadvantage in order to respond to it.

Recommendation 2. Develop youth-specific data and analysis, including gender analysis, to better understand youth needs and youth disadvantage.

2.1 Adopt a standardised definition of youth for policy and data collection that is used across all Ministries to ensure consistent and comparable data on youth is provided by whole of government.

Responsible: National Statistics Office and Solomon Islands Government.

2.2 Collect age data for 15-29 year olds in collection of crime statistics to inform practice and policy regarding crime prevention, conflict and gender-based violence.

Responsible: Royal Solomon Islands Police Force, Development sector and UN agencies.

2.3 Conduct research on youth involvement in development, monitoring and enforcement of community bylaws with a view towards lessons learnt to inform the Community Policing Program and stakeholders.

Responsible: Royal Solomon Islands Police Force, Development sector and UN agencies.

2.4 Conduct further research on youth that leave school to examine needs, causes, barriers to employment and education and effects.

Responsible: Solomon Islands Government, Development sector and UN agencies.

2.5 Conduct further research on the situation of young mothers to examine needs, causes, barriers to employment and education and effects.

Responsible: Solomon Islands Government, Development sector and UN agencies.

2.6 Conduct further research on the situation of young people with disabilities to examine needs, causes, barriers to employment and education and effects.

Responsible: Solomon Islands Government, Development sector and UN agencies.

2.7 Conduct further research on participation of youth in the sex trade and forced marriages to examine causes, needs and options for greater child protection from sexual exploitation.

Responsible: Solomon Islands Government, Development sector and UN agencies.

2.8 Use participatory research elements in project and policy design to enable youth to better contribute to project and policy design.

Responsible: Solomon Islands Government, Development sector and UN agencies.

2.9 Analyse power in youth representation structures with the view to recommendations for inclusive youth representation.

Responsible: Solomon Islands Government, Development sector and UN agencies.

ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION OF YOUTH

The main weaknesses in current efforts to alleviate unemployment and bolster youth incomes and livelihoods is a lack of coordination, sharing economic with development

expertise in project planning, an overly urban focus, shortfalls in the education system and the need to incorporate youth-specific interventions with broader macroeconomic strategy and planning.

Recommendation 3: Reform current interventions around employment and livelihoods to better link industry and economic factors with government and development sector.

3.1 Reform existing employment projects to better target training and support with skills shortages and industry needs.

Responsible: Solomon Islands Government, Development sector and UN agencies.

3.2 Reform existing livelihood projects to better target assistance through market analysis, identification of market gaps and needs and tailoring of livelihoods to local market conditions.

Responsible: Solomon Islands Government, Development sector and UN agencies.

3.3 Encourage businesses and government agencies at the local and national level to provide mentors, to participants in employment and livelihood projects and outside of these as appropriate, to youth employees and youth entrepreneurs to provide ongoing support.

Responsible: Industry, Solomon Islands Government, Development sector and UN agencies.

3.4 Target livelihood and microfinance funding to projects inclusive of disadvantaged youth – particularly people with disabilities and young mothers (that are commonly confined to the domestic sphere and unable to earn an income).

3.5 Facilitate internship programmes between and among government and non-government agencies to give youth further options for work experience to increase their chances of eligibility for government employment.

Responsible: Solomon Islands Government, Development sector and UN agencies.

Recommendation 4: Create more, and more effective, livelihood, education and training options for rural youth and inclusive of rural youth.

4.1 Create rural livelihood projects for rural youth that would provide market analysis, skills training and options for start-up finance and materials.

Responsible: Solomon Islands Government, Development sector and UN agencies.

4.2 Reward youth-inclusive communal agricultural enterprises through financial incentives (such as tax) awards, media, marketing support for their agricultural products and other means.

Responsible: Solomon Islands Government, Development sector and UN agencies.

4.3 Examine options to increase access of youth to vocational training such as Rural Training Centres.

Responsible: Solomon Islands Government, Development sector.

4.4 Link vocational training with market needs and start-up finance options to provide greater chances training will lead to better livelihoods.

Responsible: Solomon Islands Government, Development sector and UN agencies.

4.5 Provide support for inter-province, national and international marketing of cultural performances and projects including developing youth and women as professional managers, promoters and exporters.

Responsible: Solomon Islands Government, Development sector, Cultural Industries sector.

4.6 Progress work for developing good performing Provincial Secondary Schools into National Secondary Schools to decrease pressures and demand on Honiara-based schools.

Responsible: Provincial governments, Solomon Islands Government.

4.7 Facilitate research and policy forums to plan youth-inclusive development programmes for the provinces that would create plans for income generation and development.

Recommendation 5: Introduce reforms to the educational system reform to enable greater linkages between skills gaps in economic sectors and education at all education levels.

5.1 Link scholarships and educational opportunities with skills gaps, particularly for current industries and emerging industries.

Responsible: Solomon Islands Government.

5.2 Life skills be incorporated into the primary school and secondary school curriculum including basic financial literacy.

Responsible: Solomon Islands Government.

5.3 Support initiatives for community-based education particularly around literacy, numeracy and financial literacy to provide opportunities for school leavers to obtain basic skills.

Responsible: Solomon Islands Government.

POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE PARTICIPATION OF YOUTH

The Ministry of National Unity, Reconciliation and Peace and provincial governments are already engaged in work to promote peace in schools, however it is inadequately resourced. The Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report also offers a potentially useful resource for youth to learn about experiences of conflict from different points of view (including concerns of women and children) but may need development of additional materials to tap this potential.

Recommendation 6: Encourage learning about conflict and peace, local ways of conflict resolution and cross-cultural exchanges.

6.1 Support peace education curriculum development including testing, adaptation to provincial needs, teacher training, piloting, finalisation of materials and roll out to all provinces.

Responsible: Solomon Islands Government, UN agencies.

6.2 Make the Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Report available to youth, with participatory and engaging adaptations of its content to provide opportunities for youth to engage with the report analysis and findings.

Responsible: Solomon Islands Government, Development sector, UN agencies.

Recommendation 7: Increase protection of youth from exploitation through legal reform and better resourcing of prevention and support for exploited youth.

Exploitation of youth is possible because of a breakdown in family and community support, lack of information, reporting and law enforcement regarding sexual offences and a lack of targeting and availability of services, such as gender-based violence services, to youth vulnerable to exploitation (e.g. street children and those around logging camps).

7.1 Develop and support initiatives to foster more prevention from sexual exploitation including greater awareness of rights, how to report crimes and where to go for individual support services.

Responsible: Solomon Islands Government, Development sector, UN agencies.

7.2 Target prevention initiatives to specific communities with logging, foreign fishing and tourism where exploitative activities are likely to be taking place, with a particular focus on creating support networks for youth involving chiefs, women's groups and young women.

Responsible: Solomon Islands Government, Development sector, UN agencies.

7.3 Establish an emergency fund for victims of sexual violence and forced marriage to travel to Honiara to access services rapidly and provide information for prosecutions.

Responsible: Solomon Islands Government, Development sector, UN agencies.

7.4 Collect data on police reports and prosecutions to identify trends and hot spots for sexual exploitation of youth.

Responsible: Royal Solomon Islands Police Force.

7.5 Reform the legal system to raise the age of criminal responsibility and minimum age for employment to be consistent with international legal norms.

Responsible: Solomon Islands Government.

Recommendation 8: Increase the awareness and availability of mental health services for youth, particularly preventative programs and counselling and psychosocial support for addicts and perpetrators of gender-based violence.

8.1 Support drug and alcohol prevention awareness activities to be targeted at youth and provided at key youth hubs (such as at youth centres, church youth rallies and sporting festivals).

Responsible: Solomon Islands Government, Development sector, UN agencies.

8.2 Provide a mental health information and counselling helpline to assist youth with illness, suicide prevention and drug and alcohol addiction.

Responsible: Solomon Islands Government, Development sector, UN agencies.

8.3 Support community-based and church-based programs to assist youth known to be involved in drug and alcohol abuse and violence.

Responsible: Provincial government, Solomon Islands Government, Development sector.

8.4 Support training of youth in counselling, dealing with trauma, prevention awareness and peer-to-peer support.

Responsible: Solomon Islands Government, Development sector, UN agencies.

Recommendation 9: Increase youth political participation in national and provincial politics through supporting youth networking and advocacy.

The greatest pool of funding available that could advance youth participation in economic and political life is the constituency funds, ironically, these funds are also those that youth have the least knowledge of and influence over. There is a need to support networking of youth groups to build trust and confidence in order for youth to be able to articulate their concerns and try to influence decisions at the constituency level.

9.1 Pool resources from Solomon Islands Government, NGOs, UN agencies and Members of Parliament constituency funds to resource provincial youth centres to enable youth to more readily organize, receive and disseminate information, access internet and other tools for better youth advocacy.

Responsible: Provincial government, Solomon Islands Government, Development sector, UN agencies.

9.2 Encourage development of constituency-wide youth group networks.

Responsible: Provincial government, Solomon Islands Government, Development sector, UN agencies.

9.3 Encourage greater transparency regarding spending of Constituency Development Funds and profile, through media and other recognition, successful youth-Member of Parliament dialogues and projects.

Responsible: Development sector, UN agencies.

9.4 Profile youth leaders from various communities around Solomon Islands in popular media (such as radio) to promote role models for youth in leadership to youth and the general public.

Responsible: Provincial government, Solomon Islands Government, Development sector, UN agencies.

9.5 Support campaigns for mandatory youth participation in political parties and in Parliament through means such as Temporary Special Measures and quotas.

Responsible: Development sector, UN agencies.

Recommendation 10: Support youth representation and role in decision making bodies at village, ward, constituency, province and national level.

10.1 Reward inclusivity in small grant funding for youth projects and activities – such as inclusion of people with disabilities, young women and young mothers, cross-cultural exchanges and youth-led charity initiatives.

Responsible: Provincial government, Solomon Islands Government, Development sector, UN agencies.

10.2 Profile successful cooperation between chiefs and youth to combat crime and violence

by means such as media, public forum talks and awards to encourage more cooperation of youth and leaders.

Responsible: Royal Solomon Islands Police Force, Ministry of National Unity Reconciliation and Peace, Development sector.

APPENDIX A: SNAPSHOT OF MAJOR NATIONAL POLICY DOCUMENTS & SECTIONS REGARDING YOUTH

POLICY	SUMMARY	TIMEFRAME
National Youth Policy	<p>Six priority policy outcomes and thematic areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improved and equitable access to education, training and employment opportunities for young women and men (Youth and Career Pathways). 2. Increased and equal opportunities for young women and men to participate in decision-making and leadership (Youth and Governance). 3. Youth and health improved through equitable access to health services for young women and men (Youth and Wellbeing). 4. Increased number of young people participating in activities that promote peace building and conflict prevention (Youth and Peace-building). 5. Increased number of young people promoting sustainable development¹³ (Youth and Sustainable Development). 6. Improved capacity to implement this policy (Youth Mainstreaming). <p>Policy has been reviewed and process of preparing new policies and framework begun.</p> <p>The MWYCFA will have a new '3-tier policy framework' for youth development: a new National Youth Policy (NYP), a new Strategic Framework for Youth Development in Solomon Islands (SFYDSI), and new national Youth Employment Strategy (NYES).</p>	2010-2015. New youth policy expected 2017.
National Children's Policy	<p>Also includes youth as children defined as anyone below age of 18. Includes thematic goals of protection, development, survival (health and poverty), participation (MWYCFA annual consultation, child clubs, arts, sports and culture to promote "toleration") and planning. Priority groups abused children, those out of school, children with disabilities or homeless, those in conflict with law.</p>	
Solomon Islands National Peacebuilding Policy	<p>Key elements include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Policy promotes partnership and peace by developing capacity of youth, women and community leaders. The policy seeks to enhance youth and women involvement in peacebuilding by encouraging the development of peace, non-violence, social cohesion and tolerance campaigns design by citizen groups using media, social networks and other forms of community outreach. 2) Promotion of inclusive and participatory decision-making 	2014-2016

	<p>through increased participation of CSOs, women and youth in decision making structures. The policy recognizes that this will need to be done in ways that ensures youths and women do not suffer any repercussions of hostile reaction(s) from members of the community [66]</p> <p>3) Multiplicity Effects of Policy Implementation. Goal to strengthen civil society, women, youth and traditional leaders' capacities to engage in decision-making and non-violent strategies and conflict resolution. [67]</p>	
National Development Strategy	<p>Key elements include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and foster an enabling environment for investment for young entrepreneurs to venture into potential identified industries • Increase employment and labour mobility opportunities in rural areas • Establishing programmes targeting young people, including young newly married couples, with formal employment and non-formal employment opportunities • Improve gender equality and support the disadvantaged and the vulnerable • Develop community engagement programmes that address the needs of women, youth and children and which encourage social and communal stability • Ensure all Solomon Islanders can access quality education and the nation's manpower needs are sustainably met • Ensure that secondary education delivers both work-related skills and transferable skills, including entrepreneurial and ICT skills • Changes in education contents, approaches, structures and funding strategies to address the situation of groups of excluded children, youth and adults including girls, children with disability and language minorities 	2016-2035
National Population Policy	Policy includes provisions on improved access to reproductive health services for youth and improved employment opportunities for youth.[68]	2017-2026
Solomon Islands National Policy Framework for Culture	Outcome and goals regarding teaching of culture, arts and traditional knowledge to younger people, including cultural schools.	2012 +
Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Policy	Includes goals to assist women and youths participation in agriculture, for food security and livelihood development and develop gender and youth related programmes.	2015-2019
Small and Medium Enterprises Policy &	Aims to promote entrepreneurship with a focus on women and youth. Activities include: Conduct a performance review of TVET policy; Create EDCs in every towns to Provincial Level; Setup aligned with the TVET education provision so that the	2016-2020

Strategy	time and resource spent on EDC is for business incubation of technology transfer; Review a TVET provision strategy; Identify successful entrepreneurs who would act as ambassadors to young people; Introduce a component of entrepreneurship training into school and TVET curriculums; Introduce component of entrepreneurship training in school. Note: The <i>DCCG Policy Strategy and Translation</i> also states it will expand the list of businesses reserved for Solomon Islanders and provide youth with required assistance to participate, guide SME distribution of grants to women and youth and mainstream the resources and productive sectors to support women and youth livelihoods.	
National Human Resource Development and Training Plan	Focuses on enterprise and skills to improve livelihoods and an education system aimed at practical life skills and self-employment. Qualifications are to be competency-based and assessed by demonstration of skills.	2013 - 2015
Community Engagement Strategic and Implementation Plan	Ministry of Research, Policy & Planning document on development and execution of a community engagement strategic and implementation plan that builds on ongoing commitments for community development and addresses the specific needs of women, youth and children at the community level and in the most disadvantaged and vulnerable areas in Solomon Islands.	Currently in development.
Crime Prevention Strategy	This Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF) strategy includes engagement with youth, youth representation on local crime prevention committees and identification of issues relevant to youth that also act as "drivers of crime": young women being vulnerable to family violence, high birth rates, low investment in youth and high youth unemployment, limited education opportunities, idleness and boredom, low self-esteem, alcohol, <i>kwaso</i> and marijuana use lead to risk taking and desire for quick cash. [sep]	2016-2018
Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources Act & Management Plans	Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources, in partnership with others notably WorldFish (Malaita) and World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF in Western Province) are supporting community-based fisheries management inclusive of youth and women. Community based fisheries management involves youth in management, monitoring and sustainable livelihoods.	Ongoing

APPENDIX A: CURRENT YOUTH PROJECTS AROUND POLITICAL AND DECISION MAKING ACTIVITIES (2016-2017)

ORGANISATION	THEMATIC AREAS	ACTIVITIES	LOCATION	TIMEFRAME
GOVERNMENT				
Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs	Youth empowerment Policy development	Formulation of National Youth Policy & Framework. Youth mainstreaming. Coordination of support to local youth organisations & provincial governments.	Nationwide, with implementation primarily through provincial government	Ongoing
Ministry of National Unity Peace and Reconciliation	Inclusive participation in peacebuilding Strengthening traditional leadership and conflict resolution	Peacebuilder capacity building and engagement with youth. Promotion of participation of CSOs in decision making. Representation of youth and women in governance and security. Peace education.	Nationwide, has some provincial offices (eg Auki)	Ongoing
Honiara City Council	Youth empowerment	Youth mainstreaming and interdivisional coordination. Youth activities. Support for youth groups & Duke of Edinburgh awards. Youth volunteer scheme.	Honiara	Ongoing

		Training (with partner organisations). Youth events. Youth spaces (new project for free counselling just about to commence).		
Provincial Governments	Youth empowerment & participation	Activities vary but generally include policy development, events, support for local youth groups and forums.	All provinces	Ongoing
Police	Youth participation in crime prevention Youth cooperation with Police Prevention of crime	Youth representatives on crime prevention committees. Youth engagement including sports and awareness to increase confidence of youth in Police. Plan for youth to youth education. Blue Light – youth education to understand law and order processes.	Currently limited to around urban areas but planned roll out (approx. 30 committees currently) National Currently limited to around urban areas	Ongoing
NON-GOVERNMENT				
Churches	Spiritual and social development	Churches run youth activities and groups and also offer youth significant leadership	National	Ongoing

	<p>Fundraising for community events</p> <p>Peacebuilding</p> <p>Family counselling</p>	positions in communities		
Duke of Edinburgh Awards	<p>Community service</p> <p>Youth leadership</p> <p>Mentorship</p>	<p>Previously provided financial and business skills for youth in conjunction with other life skills (Y-FIN) Award program focuses on community service and provides recognised achievement</p>	<p>National, although dependent on volunteers for roll out Malaita & Guadalcanal been most involved</p>	Ongoing
Olafou Youth Programme	Youth participation in community organisation and development	<p>Youth determine community priorities through participatory techniques and conduct small-scale projects Training and support is provided by program (funded by NZ Government)</p>	<p>Various locations across Solomon Islands</p>	Ongoing
Oxfam	Hearing Many Voices project	<p>Capacity building of community sector organisations (CSO)</p> <p>Coordination of CSOs</p>	Various	2016-19

		Advocacy skills Solomon participation in regional and international forums		
Oxfam	Starting Fires	Strengthening Youth Councils & groups Advocacy for youth inclusion	Honiara and select communities where Oxfam already works on Guadalcanal	
Save the Children	Youth and alcohol project	Creation of community bylaws and youth-led project committees Sports and cultural activities for youth Data collection about alcohol and violence Awareness and encouraging role models & behaviour change Diversionary activities (from alcohol and substances)	Communities around Auki and Honiara identified as at risk for crime and alcohol/ substance abuse	Phase II of project to commence next year and develop to offer more diversion activities – internships, trainings, livelihoods
Save the children	Children and Youth in Conflict with the Law	Prevention and support for youth released from prison Activities to build youth confidence in Police Support for ex criminals released from prison	Honiara & Auki	

Solomon Islands Development Trust	Youth involvement in Village Development Committees	Youth representatives on committees for decision making, awareness and reporting to provincial and national governments youth concerns	National	Ongoing
World Vision	Youth involvement in WASH and Gender based violence projects	Youth representatives are on community committees for projects	Honiara and Weathercoast Auki	Ongoing
Young Women's Parliamentary Group	Education about politics Leadership training and opportunities for young women	Awareness about political system Research Training Advocacy	Honiara primarily with some youth from provinces benefitting from tours/visits to Parliament	Ongoing

LIST OF REFERENCES

- Batley, J. (2015) "Constituency Development Funds in Solomon Islands: State of Play". Australia National University, State, Society and Governance in Melanesia *In Brief* 67.
- Blignault, I. Bunde-Birouste, A. Ritchie, J. Silove, D. and Zwi, A. (2009) "Community perceptions of mental health needs: a qualitative study in the Solomon Islands", *International Journal of Mental Health Systems* 2009, 3:6.
- Brigg, M. Chawick, W. Murdoch, J. Namgyal, J. (2012), *Women and Peace: the role of Solomon Islands Women in Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding*. Suva: UNDP Pacific Centre.
- Bush, K. & S. Le Mesurier (2004) *Solomon Islands Peace and Conflict Development Analysis: Emerging Priorities in Preventing Future Violent Conflict*. Suva: UNDP.
- Commonwealth Secretariat (2016), *Global Youth Development Index & Report*. London: Commonwealth Secretariat.
- Commonwealth Secretariat (2014), *Summary Report of the Commonwealth Observer Group* as accessed online 2/12/2016:
<http://thecommonwealth.org/media/news/solomon-islands-general-elections>
- Curth-Bibb, J, K. Higgins, D. Buataigha, & G. West. (2015) *Evaluation Report Channels of Hope Gender: Weathercoast and Temotu*. Australia: University of Queensland/World Vision.
- Dicker, K. Billy, A. & A. Barclay (2016). *The Influence of Gender Norms and Attitudes on Voter Preferences in Solomon Islands*. Suva: UN Women Fiji Multi-Country Office.
- Evans, D. (2016) "Hard Work: Youth Employment Programming in Honiara, Solomon Islands" *Australian National University SSGM Discussion Paper* 2016/7.
- Foukona, J. & J. Timmer (2016). "The Culture of Agreement Making in Solomon Islands" *Oceania* 86/2: 116-131.
- Fangalasu, Judith, Ruth Maetala, Patricia Rodi, Anah Vota, and Elsie Wickham (2011) *Herem Kam: Stori Blong Mifala Olketa Mere: Women's Submission to the Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Commission*. Honiara: Voice Blo Mere.
- Farrell, Negin, Houasia, Munamua, Leon, Rimon & Martiniuk (2014) "Hospital visits due to domestic violence from 1994 to 2011 in the Solomon Islands: a descriptive case series". *Hawaii Journal of Medicine and Public Health*. 73(9): 276-82.
- Gegeo, D. W. & K. A. Watson-Gegeo (2001) Whose Knowledge? Epistemological Collisions in Solomon Islands Development. *The Contemporary Pacific*, 14 (2): 377-409.

Georgeou, N, C. Hawksley, A. Ride, M. Kii, W. Turasi (2015) *Human Security And Livelihoods In Solomon Islands: Engaging with the Market Economy*. NSW: Australian Catholic University.

Guadalcanal Provincial Government, (2010) *Guadalcanal Provincial Youth Policy*. Honiara: Guadalcanal Provincial Government.

Jourdan, C. (1995), "Masta Liu." In *Youth Cultures, A Cross-cultural Perspective*, edited by V. Amit-Talai and H. Wulff, 202–222. London: Routledge.

Jourdan, C. (2008) *Youth and mental health in Solomon Islands : a situation analysis : tingting heliti, tingting siki!* Suva, Fiji : Foundation of the Peoples of the South Pacific International.

Kabutaulaka, Tarcisius Tara (2001) "Beyond Ethnicity: the Political Economy of the Guadalcanal Crisis in Solomon Islands". *Australian National University SSGM Working Paper 1/1* (as accessed on 1 January 2014: <https://digitalcollections.anu.edu.au/bitstream/1885/41949/1/tarcisiusworkingpaper.htm>)

Lindvall Arika, L. (2012) "Glimpses of the Linguistic Situation in Solomon Islands". Romania: International Conference on Languages.

Maebuta, J. (2010) "Understanding the Indigenous Context for Peace Education in Temotu, Nendo, Solomon Islands" *Educate* 10/1: 2-5.

Maebuta, J. (2011) "Peace Education and Peace-building in the Solomon Islands: Disconnected Layers", *Security Challenges*, 8(4): 93–104.

Maetala, R. (2008), "Matrilineal Land Tenure Systems in Solomon Islands: The Case of Guadalcanal, Makira and Isabel Provinces", *In Land and Women: The Matrilineal Factor*, edited by E. Huffer, 35–72. Suva: Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat.

McDonald, D. & Kyloh, D. (December 2015) *Australian Aid/Pacific Leadership Program Evaluation of the Youth@Work Program Solomon Islands*, Australia: Cardno.

Ministry of National Unity, Reconciliation and Peace (2012) *Review of Youth Peacebuilding Forums*. Conducted by MNURP in 2012. Honiara: MNURP/MWYCFA.

Moser, A. (2006) *Engendering Conflict Early Warning: Lessons from UNIFEM's Solomon Islands Gendered Conflict Early Warning Project* Honiara: UNIFEM.

Naitoro, J. H. (2000), "Solomon Islands Conflict: Demands for Historical Rectification and Restorative Justice", *Update Papers, Asia Pacific School of Economics and Management*, Canberra: Australian National University.

Ministry of Health and Medical Services (2001) *Health status of women and children in Solomon Islands*. Honiara: Solomon Islands Government.

Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs (2010) *National Youth Policy 2010-2015*. Honiara: Solomon Islands Government.

National Statistics Office (2009) *Report on 2009 Population and Housing Census Basic Tables and Census Description (Volume 1)*. Honiara: Solomon Islands Government.

National Statistics Office (2009) *Population and Housing Census Gender Report*. Honiara: Solomon Islands Government.

Noble, C., N. Pereira and N. Saune 2011. *Urban Youth in the Pacific: Increasing Resilience and Reducing Risk for Involvement in Crime and Violence*. Suva: United Nations Development Programme.

Oakeshott, D. & M. Allen (2015) "Schooling as a 'Stepping-Stone to National Consciousness' in Solomon Islands: The Last Twenty Years" *Australian National University SSGM Discussion Paper 8*.

Office of the Prime Minister (2015) *Democratic Coalition for Change Government, Policy Strategy and Translation*. Honiara: Solomon Islands Government.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (2011) *Solomon Islands: Child Rights References in the Universal Periodic Review*, Solomon Islands - 11th Session – 2011, 4th May.

Pollard, A. (Sep-Dec 2003), "Women's Organizations, Voluntarism, and Self-Financing in Solomon Islands", *Oceania*, 74, 1/2: 44-58.

Powles, A. (December 2013), *The Private Sector, the Solomon Islands and the Peace-Economic Dividend: Learning from the RAMSI Experience*, London: Kings College/ Humanitarian Futures Programme.

Richmond, O. P. (2011) "De-romanticising the Local, De-mystifying the International: Hybridity in Timor Leste and the Solomon Islands", *The Pacific Review* 24 (1): 115–136.

Ride, A. (2014) *Creativity, Testimony and Politics – interpretations of politics in Solomon Islands*. PhD Manuscript, University of Queensland.

Ride, A. Kii, M. West, G. & D. Hila (2013). *Information in Natural Disasters – Solomon Islands*. Australia: AUSAID/SOLMAS.

Save the Children Australia/Burnet Institute (2016). *Alcohol, Other Substance Use and Related Harms Among Youth People in the Solomon Islands*. Australia/Solomon Islands: Save the Children Australia.

Scales, I. AUSAID/Hassall and Associates (2003). *Youth in Solomon Islands: A participatory study of issues, needs and priorities*. Australia: AUSAID.

Secretariat of the Pacific Community (2009). *Solomon Islands Family Health and Safety Study: a study on violence against women and children*. Noumea: SPC.

Solomon Islands Government (2007) *Second Interim Report, Commission of Inquiry into the April 2006 Civil Unrest in Honiara, 7 September 2007*. Honiara: Solomon Islands Government.

Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Commission. *Confronting the truth for a better Solomon Islands, the Final Report of the Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Commission*. Honiara: 2013.

Urdal, H. 2006. A Clash of Generations? Youth Bulges and Political Violence. *International Studies Quarterly* 50(3):607–29.

UNDP (2006) *Youth and Violent Conflict: Society and development in crisis*. New York: United Nations Development Programme Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery.

UNDP, (2015) *Briefing note for countries on the 2015 Human Development Report*, New York: UNDP.

UNICEF (2011) *The State of Pacific Youth: Opportunities and Obstacles*. Noumea: UNICEF/Secretariat of Pacific Community.

United States Department of Labor (2015) *Child Labor and Forced Labor Report: Solomon Islands* as accessed online 17 November 2016:
<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/resources/reports/child-labor/solomon-islands>

Webber, K. & H. Johnson, (2008) "Women, Peace Building and Political Inclusion: A Case Study from Solomon Islands", *Hecate* 34/2.

the lives of our people. My people learn and earn and we cannot thank the Canadian people and its government for its support of this partnership," Premier Veke said.

Premier Veke said that the Labour Mobility Partnership has helped established very strong and cordial relations between Guadalcanal and Canada.

"There is no doubt that we continue to experience the friendly and cooperative attitude of the Canadian government towards our education and labour

labour mobility sector and also helped the Province prepare road map for its future graduates travel to the Canadian job market.

Last week Solomon Islands High Commissioner to Canada, Robert Sisilo commented on the great importance of further engaging with Canada to strengthen labour mobility arrangement.

High Commissioner Sisilo said Canada offers a lot of potential for trade and investment, and cited the Canada International

were discussed included exports from Guadalcanal into the Canadian market.

"During our discussion High Commissioner H.E. Madison has further extended to the people of Guadalcanal Province opportunity in the area of agriculture export. I think we need to seriously consider this opportunity for the benefit of our people and farmers as most of Canada's agriculture produce is imported and there is no doubt GP can be among the exporters," Premier Veke said.

to assist the people of Guadalcanal to gain market access into Canadian agriculture sector.

"My government would populate a list of products that GP can export to Canada and will provide it to the Canadian officials to validate the export requirements and market access details.

"His Excellency Maddison has welcomed GP's objective to seek Canada as a agriculture trading partner and has also offered to have his trade officials find a market for our products,"

When he visited Canada last year there was discussion surrounding imports from Guadalcanal Province however for his government the important area to consider will be to ensure that supply chain and logistics of sending the produce in a timely manner to Canada is all taken into consideration.

"Therefore I will be asking the Canadian government to help my people and government establish a distribution center in Guadalcanal which becomes a receiving point for farmers

Saskatchewan is Canada's Oil and Grain rich province, which employs thousands of foreign workers.

The Honourable Jeremy Harrison, Minister responsible for Immigration, Jobs, skills and Training signed on the dotted line on behalf of the Government witnessing the agreement between CITEREC, Guadalcanal Government and Saskatchewan Hospitality sector in late 2015.

- GP Media Unit

UNDP: Youth participation key to peace building, sustainable development

SEVEN out of ten Solomon Islanders are under the age of 29. That's according to the latest national census.

However, there is inadequate support for youth participation in economic and political decision making, suggests preliminary findings from State of Youth in Solomon Islands Report 2016, an independent research conducted by Dr. Anouk Ride who specializes in participatory research methodologies to examine aid, conflict, disasters and social change, commissioned by the UNDP with support from the United Nations Peace Building Fund (UNPBF).

"How youth can better access information about development, including constituency funds and influence Member of Parliament decision making is a critical issue for the future of Solomon Islands", said Dr. Ride at a presentation that was held at Heritage Park Hotel.

This research is expected to become a policy paper on the status of youth in Solomon Islands and will be presented to the national stakeholders.

"Youth participation is key to peace building and sustainable development therefore, investing in youth continues to be an important focus for UNDP and the UNPBF supported project in Sol-

omon Islands", Ms. Azusa Kubota, UNDP Country Manager said.

The recommendations are also expected to help UNDP efforts through UNPBF and other UN programmes on identifying effective support to youth in Solomon Islands and inform various government and non-government actors involved in peacebuilding and youth development work. The presentation was well-attended by representatives from the New Zealand, Australian and Taiwanese High Commissions and other government and non-government actors.

Dr. Franco Rodie, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education supported the call for

better implementation and coordination of youth participation. He also highlighted the lack of action at rural level and the need to identify what can be done to improve the situation of youth in rural areas.

Youth representatives attended and supported key findings from the research, and highlighted the importance of youth participation. Mr. Harry James Olikwalla from Honiara Youth Council emphasized the need for young people to be front and centre of decision making and reports.

Ms. Marisa Pepa from the Young Women's Parliamentary Group shared some of the challenges of youth engagement, es-

pecially on how youth in rural areas can influence policy makers.

Currently besides this research, UNDP is launching a livelihood plus peacebuilding programme for marginalized youth from hotspot areas in partnership with the Coconut Technology Centre and Youth at Work. Since 2016, UNDP has been working to support youth engagement with policy makers, including a special programme to support young women. UNDP through UNPBF is also working to organize a youth innovative summit this year and providing grants to support youth activities in marginalized communities.

Solomon Star, Tuesday 9 May, 2017 7

And we have been

Together with my coun-

This is an essential tar-

in time for COP 24.

Shipping is a sector we

