



International Support to the Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Commission

END OF PROJECT REPORT

**UNDP
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1. Project Data

Country:	Solomon Islands
Project Number/Code:	Award ID 00045564, Project ID 00053843
Project Title:	International Support to the Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Commission
Executing Agency:	UNDP (Direct Execution)
Period Covered:	March 2009 – March 2012
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2. Introduction

This report covers the life span of the Project, “International Support to the Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Commission”. The project was based in Honiara, Guadalcanal Province with supported activities reaching all provinces of Solomon Islands. The project implementing partner was Ministry of National Unity, Reconciliation and Peace (MNURP).

Between 1998 and 2003, the Solomon Islands (SI) endured a period of intense conflict. Much of the violence was committed by armed male militia from Guadalcanal and Malaita Provinces who were locked into conflict over access to political power, employment, compensation (money) and land rights. These “ethnic tensions” resulted in numerous murders, deaths, rapes, sexual and Gender Based Violence and reports of torture, as well as the internal displacement of over 20,000 Malaitan people from the capital city of Honiara, on traditional Guadalcanal land, to their home province of Malaita.

The Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was established by the Government of the Solomon Islands on April 29, 2009. It came about as a result of consistent and sustained advocacy by the churches spearheaded by the Solomon Islands Christian Association (SICA). The TRC formally began operations on 15 January, 2010 for an initial term of one year. In December 2010, the mandate was extended by the Prime Minister for an additional year in application of the section 4(1) of the Act.

The TRC was mandated to promote peace, security, unity, healing and reconciliation by investigating human rights violations, restoring dignity to victims, and investigating the root causes and antecedents of the crises, which gave rise to the conflict in Solomon Islands. The human rights violations to be investigated by the TRC specifically include killings, abductions,

enforced disappearances, torture, rape, sexual abuse, persecution of any identifiable group, forced displacements, deprivation of liberty and serious ill-treatment; deprivation of economic rights, such as the right to own property and the right to settle and make a living. The TRC also looks into tension-related actions that destroyed public property, including the circumstances surrounding the raid of the police armories, and must analyze the impacts caused by the conflict on health, education and the legal sector. To be considered by the TRC, the events must have occurred in the period from 1 January 1998 and 23 July 2003.

In considering these human rights violations and violent incidents, the TRC broadly looks at the root causes, context and relevant events that preceded the incidents. The TRC looks at issues of accountability and responsibility for human rights violations and other abuses that occurred during the Tensions.

The strategy of the TRC involves pooling resources of interested development partners to ensure that the international community presents a coordinated approach to support the TRC. To that purpose, an “International Support Facility to Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC-ISF)” was created and managed as a project UNDP. The ISF provided a mechanism for development partners to supply resources to the TRC and facilitates an effective interface between the TRC and donors, while at the same time ensuring reporting on and monitoring of donor contributions. The central objective of the ISF is to respond to TRC requests for financial, administrative and technical support in a timely and efficient manner to enable the Commission to comply with its mandate.

Donor funding included donations from the European Commission, UNDP (TRAC and BCPR), Government of Australia (through AusAID) and Government of New Zealand (through NZAid) and the total budget amounted to USD 3.5 million. The TRC was also co-financed by the Solomon Islands Government (SIG), which covered a number of running cost including salaries of many national staff and rent of TRC premises, and amounted to 2 mil. USD.

The project document was signed in March 2009 with expected duration until February 2011, in line with the mandate of TRC which was to expire on 15th January 2011. Due to implementation challenges the project effectively started only in fall 2009 with arrival of International Commissioners (providing quorum to act for TRC). Crucial (international) post of TRC Executive Secretary was filled by UNDP only in April 2010 and activities of TRC subsequently rolled out in full during second half of 2010. In December 2011, Solomon Islands Government decided to further extend the mandate of TRC by one year, expiring on 15th January 2012.

3. Project Aim, Objective and Outputs

The SIG and UNDP agreed Country Programme Action Plan (CPAP) 2008-2012 identifies crisis prevention and recovery as one of the strategic areas to be addressed by UNDP assistance. Effort towards this strategic priority is geared to developing capacities that assist national government with policies and strategies towards peace building and tension reduction.

Establishing capacity for peace building and dialogue at the national level requires the combination of strong leadership from government and increased development partner attention. Donors agree that government and national legislated mechanisms must assume responsibility to facilitate healing and a reconciliation process that is appropriate and meaningful for Solomon Islands men and women. To this end, this project is part of a broader package of UNDP administered support to SIG that will enhance the capacity for peace building and conflict prevention in Solomon Islands. In addition to this support for the TRC, which focuses on victim support and reconciliation, UNDP is supporting the capacity development of the national Ministry of National Unity, Reconciliation and Peace to review strategies and national policies through a practical human rights based approach and conflict sensitive analyses. This is part of the broader strategy to establish sustainable capacities for peace building and reconciliation in the Solomon Islands.

The strategy to support women's active engagement in the project and encourage gender issues is to be addressed on two fronts. The first aspect of the strategy is within the project structure, which is to attain gender balance within the project unit and to incorporate gender relevant indicators where appropriate in the monitoring and evaluation framework that is to be developed in close consultation with the TRC. The second aspect to the gender strategy is to support women's active engagement in the TRC. This will be done by engaging women and women's groups to actively participate in all aspects of the TRC. One specific area of engagement is to strengthen service provision to women survivors to be able to participate in the TRC. This is to include legal support and rights awareness, specifically targeting women and female victims of the tensions. Furthermore, support will be provided to assist women to create support mechanisms to assist in female participation in the TRC especially on the issue of sexual abuse. The TRC-ISF will actively support gender appropriate support services to victims pre- and post-testimony.

This project will support the TRC to fulfill its functions as laid down by the TRC Act and its future amendments and in line with the TRC Action Plan, through the TRC-ISF.

To this end, the project adopted two deliverables:

Project Output 1:

Establishing an operating TRC-International Support Facility (TRC-ISF)

The strategy involves pooling resources of interested development partners to ensure that the international community presents a coordinated approach to support the TRC. The establishment of an operating ISF provides a mechanism for development partners to provide resources to the TRC. The ISF will provide an effective interface between the TRC and donors. The ISF is to respond to TRC requests for financial, administrative and technical support in a timely and efficient manner while at the same time ensuring timely reporting on and monitoring of donor contributions.

Activities carried out include:

- Deployment of project manager and support staff,
- Maintaining logistic and operational support for TRC-ISF

Project Output status as of 29th February 2012:

ISF has been fully staffed and operational since January 2011, and therefore efficiently supported extensive amount of activities of TRC during the whole year 2011, when TRC was granted additional year to its existence. With decreased workload in last quarter of 2011 contract of the support staff were phased out.

Project Output 2:

Administrative, operational and logistical support to TRC-mandated activities.

The primary role of the ISF is to support the TRC's work and the implementation of the TRC Action Plan. Specifically, procurement and administrative functions agreed to by donors and government will be the main task of the ISF. In addition, the Facility will assist in sourcing international technical assistance to the TRC as required, including sexual and gender-based violence expertise. This arrangement provides the TRC access to international experience and technical assistance without reliance on one service provider.

Activities carried out include

- Research Program,
- Field-work,
- Statement Taking,
- Data Analysis,
- Transcribing,

- Public hearings,
- Closed hearings,
- Counselling,
- Women’s program,
- Exhumation program,
- Media and community awareness.

Project Output status as of 29th February 2012:

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4. Main achievements

The major achievements of the Project are as below:

- i) Big amount of statements were recorded and collected (2,362 covering all six provinces touched by Tension: Guadalcanal, Malaita, Western, Choiseul, Temotu, Makira):

Provinces	No. of males’ statements	Percentage of males’ statements	No. of females statements	Percentage of females statements	No. Of statements collected
Guadalcanal and Honiara					1,323
Malaita					756
Western					100
Choiseul					32
Temotu					47
Makira					103
Total	1,483	63%	879	37	2,362

ii) The work of TRC transcribers was very critical to the final report as they were committed to transcribe all collected audio records from the public and closed hearings, individual interviews by Commissioners, and all statements collected by the statement-takers throughout the provinces. During their work, they had challenging times in listening and transcribing all the testimonies; the work also affected their lives. They were also traumatized and were provided with trauma counselling in order to complete their work. The total statements transcribed were as follows:

Transcription items	Number of transcriptions
Statements	1,890
Public Hearings	11
Closed Hearings/Interviews/Focus Groups	300
Total Pages	5,230

iii) Number of successful Public Hearings was organized. Public Hearings were essential for the Commission to hear to the testimonies of victims, but also of perpetrators, to give people a voice and make the country stop and listen to them. Two kinds of public hearings were developed: regional public hearings and thematic public hearings. Thematic public hearings were aimed at receiving information on specific issues related to the tensions. These themes related to women, youth and ex-militants. Details on organized hearings are as follows:

Venue	Types	Dates	Male	Female	Participants
1. Honiara/FFA	National	09/03/10	13	5	18
		10/03/10	72%	28%	100%
2. Malaita/Airahu	Regional	27/05/10	26	12	38
		29/05/10	68%	32%	100%
3. Guadalcanal/ Visale	Regional	23/06/10	25	11	31
		25/06/10	65%	35%	100%
4. Western Region/Gizo	Regional	13/07/10	22	8	30
		–15/07/10	73%	27%	100%
5. Central Region/Tulagi	Regional	09/09/10	16	4	20
		– 10/09/10	80%	20%	100%
6. Eastern	Regional	27/10/10	16	1	17

Region/Kirakira		-29/10/10	94%	6%	100%
7. Honiara/United Church	National	22/11/10	0	23	23
	Women Thematic	-26/11/10	0%	100%	100%
8. Honiara/United Church	National Youth	22/11/10	8	6	14
	Thematic	– 26/11/10	57%	43%	100%
9. Malaita/Buma	Regional Ex - combatants	02/05/11	19	0	19
	Thematic	-03/05/11	100%	0%	100%
10. Guadalcanal/Holy Cross	Regional Ex - combatants	11/05/11	15	0	15
	Thematic	– 12/05/11	100%	100%	100%
11. Honiara/Holy Cross	National Leaders	03/11/11	14	3	17
	Thematic	– 04/11/11	82%	18%	100%
		Total	169	73	242
		Hearings	70%	30%	100%

iv) Closed hearings organized were supplementing Public Hearings and were organized where events to be discussed were of particular sensitivity and letting it out to public was not possible:

Venues	Dates	No. of interviews	Participants
Honiara	2010	52	Retired Police Officers
Honiara	2011	15	Ex- Combatants
Honiara	2011	10	Politicians
Honiara	2011	3	RSIP
Honiara	2011	7	Others
Western/Choiseul Vigilantes	01/09/11 02/09/11	4	Vigilant Groups
Rove Prison Inmates (3 MEF, 1 GLF, 1 GRA, 6 BS)	21/09/11 – 22/09/11	11	Ex - combatants

Total Male		100 (98%)	
Total Female		2 (2%)	

5. Lessons learned

The following lessons were learned during the project implementation:

- 1) Planning is key process in Solomon Islands and is frequently insufficient (more sometimes it doesn't exist). Extra assistance should be provided to local institutions in order to have planning processes in place.
- 2) Recruitment is a critical process and requires extra attention and follow-up. Detailed staffing requirements should be discussed at least six months prior to required filling of the position. It's very hard to get well qualified people for take up vacant posts in SI context, so slight relaxing of global requirements is beneficial.
- 3) Crisis Prevention field is very sensitive process anywhere around the world, so some aspects of activities' implementation are beyond immediate control. In SI context this "uncertainty" is further strengthened with low emphasis put on planning. Starting with preparations for implementation of activities early enough is therefore necessary, and active exploration of strategies to overcome potential issues is recommended.

6. Recommendations

- I. Use of DEX modality, where as per the initial project's setup UNDP only plays role of funding agent and can't be directly involved in organization of activities (like in case of TRC), and hence UNDP has difficulties adhering to its guidelines, is unfavorable.
- II. Further expansion of FTP guidelines to better suite LDC context would be highly appreciated. In Solomon Islands, since TRC was reaching out remote areas of the country, big amount of vendors wouldn't have bank account while cash advance can only be given to UNDP staff member (so TRC didn't qualify). Also amount of available vendors was very limited so to execute competitive bidding process was a problem.
- III. Rather than working with "ex-combatants", who in local context could actually be considered as criminals, rather than people with ethnic hatred agenda, UNDP should concentrate on assistance to Solomon Islands Government in creation of jobs and generation for livelihoods, particularly for young generation.