



Solomon Islands 'Joint Stakeholder submission to the third cycle of the Universal Periodic Review, 15th October 2020

Description of the main activities of the Organizations.

1. This report presents a joint submission from five (5) Solomon Islands Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to the third cycle of the Stakeholders Universal Periodic Review. The CSOs are:
 - Development Services Exchange (DSE),
 - Solomon Islands Development Trust (SIDT),
 - Coalition for Education Solomon Islands (COESI),
 - Solomon Islands Indigenous Peoples Human Rights Advocacy Association (SIIPHRAA),
 - Women's Rights Action Movement (WRAM).
2. DSE is the national umbrella body for CSOs in the Solomon Islands, established in 1988 to promote the growth of a vibrant and robust Civil Society Organization sector, and complements all other sectors in building a strong, peaceful and democratic society
3. SIDT It is an indigenous non-government organization, founded in 1982 and works villagers across the provinces of Solomon Islands to promote community empowerment, community led development and inclusive participation, with a vision that every Solomon Islander is healthy, happy and self-reliant.
4. COESI is a coalition of non- government organizations dedicated to the advancement of educational opportunities for all Solomon Islands citizens, especially those from marginalized and disadvantaged groups. It was formed in 2004 by more than 12 local NGOs through a consultation process facilitated by Asia South Pacific Board for Adult Education (ASPBAE).
5. SIIPHRAA was formed on the 24th of January 2007 by indigenous Solomon Islanders. It aims to advocate for the rights of the indigenous people of Solomon Islanders through ensuring that they benefit from their resources, that the Solomon Islands Government formulate laws that are beneficial to them and their resources, and ensuring that the 2 main land tenure systems (Patrilineal and Matrilineal) in the Solomon Islands, is respected, recognized and upheld.
6. WRAM was formed in 2011 with a goal to support the advancement of women's human rights, non-discrimination and gender equality by advocating for rights holders and seeking accountability from duty bearers. Its main pillars of work are in Women in decision making and leadership (WIL), Eliminating Violence against Women (EVAW) and Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE).

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1. Executive Summary

7. This report highlights key human rights issues identified by the five contributing Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). It called on the Government of Solomon Islands to address these issues accordingly. The Solomon Islands joint CSOs highlighted the plight of people living in the low lying atolls and islands in the Solomon Islands affected by Climate Change. These organizations call on the Government to immediately consult with affected communities and prioritise resources to address their relocation and welfare. The CSOs acknowledged the effort made by Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development (MEHRD) to include the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) agenda 4 into their Planning Strategies and Action Plan. The CSOs noted that the most critical issues that Solomon Islands must attend to towards ensuring 'No One is Left Behind' in education are: 'Access to Education', 'Educational Pathways and Lifelong Learning' and 'Inclusive Education'. The education sector require attention through improved policies, increased resources, or rationalization of existing resources to address the shortfalls encountered. The joint CSOs observed that indigenous Solomon Islanders are facing increasing challenges with land and resource ownership in the face of ongoing emigrations into the country. They supported the move with other countries to endorse the Indigenous Rights (UNDRIP) as a UN Convention with the Solomon Islands subscribing to it. The CSOs also highlighted that Women in Solomon Islands are under-represented in Parliament, Provincial Assemblies and in higher management positions. Section 15 (5) (g) of the Constitution provides that measures can be taken to address historic disadvantages. However, Government has not fulfilled its obligation to take steps to address the historic disadvantage by women to be elected into Parliament and into Provincial Assemblies. They call on the Government to accelerate support towards Temporary Special Measures (TSMs) for Women in leadership and to ensure that the critical mass of 30% for women candidates set out in the Gender Equality and Women's Development (GWED) Policy, become a compulsory threshold in the Political Parties Integrity (PPIA).

Key Issues and Recommendations

Issue 1: Right to life

1.1 Issues #1: Inadequate data collected from investigations, assessments and lack of consultations done with concerned local communities, provincial governments, churches, NGOs, Donor communities and stakeholders on the issue of Relocation and Resettlement.

8. The people living on the atolls and low lying islands in Solomon Islands continue to face severe effects of Climate Change such as inundation and salt water intrusion that is affecting their gardens, wells, graveyards and homes due to continuous sea level rise and frequent extreme climatic events (tropical cyclones and troughs). This people continue to

speak in support of the need for relocation through various consultations, reports on assessments and media publications on effects and impacts of Climate Change on their islands and livelihoods. The CSOs are concerned at the limited actions undertaken by the National Government to address the needs of people living on these atolls and low lying islands, especially on their need to relocate to safer places.

Recommendation:

9. The joint CSOs urgently calls upon the National Government to immediately carry out investigations, assessments and consultations with the affected communities as soon as possible.

1.1.1. Issues #2: Low priority on Relocation and Resettlement in the National Climate Change Policy 2012-2017

10. The CSOs questioned the National Government on why there are no clear and detail strategic direction to address relocation in its National Climate Change Policy, while sea level rise and frequent king tides and other extreme climate events due to climate change continue to affect the low lying islands and atolls. The CSOs understands that the existing National Climate Change Policy 2012-2017 is currently being reviewed with support from the PACRES (Pacific adaptation to Climate Change and Resilience Building) project under SPREP¹. This is an opportunity for the government to liaise and consult with Atoll and low lying island communities, NGOs, CSOs, provincial governments and other important stakeholders to clearly reflect the need for relocation in the new policy².

Recommendation

11. The CSOs calls on the National Government to;
12. Closely liaise and consult with atoll and low lying island communities, NGOs, CSOs, provincial governments and other important stakeholders to ensure relocation is clearly and prominently reflected as an adaptation priority for communities and people of low lying islands and atolls in the revised policy.
13. Develop national an implementation framework that will be derive from the National Climate Change Policy to address the issue of relocation due to projected slow events such as sea level rise and displacement due to disaster events such as tropical cyclones, earth quakes and tsunamis³.

¹ SPREP et al, 2014. Vulnerability and adaptation (V&A) assessment for Ontong Java Atoll, Solomon Islands, PACC Technical Report [Accessed 3th September 2020] from <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/PACCTechRep4.pdf>. Pp. 21, 31

²SIG, 2020. *Solomon Islands Voluntary National Review*, [Accessed 5th September 2020] from https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26795VNR_2020_Solomon_Report.pdf. Pp. 58

³ ADB, 2020. *Solomon Islands National Development Strategy 2016-2035*. Accessed 4th September 2020 from <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/linked-documents/cobp-sol-2017-2019-ld-01.pdf>. Pp. 43.

1.1.2. Issues #3: Low budget allocation to address climate change in Solomon Islands including Resettlement

14. The CSOs are concerned with the low budget allocation for climate change work by the National Government as reflected in its Recurrent and Development Budget Allocation 2020 for the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology. The total government budget allocation for policy implementation stands at only 1% whilst the impacts of climate change continue to increase in severity. The opposition leader of Solomon Islands Government argued that the lack of budgetary allocation in the current national government budget indicated no prioritization for this issue in the global and national level hence the livelihood of people in the low cost areas are daily affected by the impacts of sea level rise⁴

Recommendation:

15. The CSOs call on the National government to increase its Recurrent and Development budget for climate change work and have a specific allocation for Resettlement or Relocation.
16. They also call on the Government to provide budget support for initial assessments and consultation for the people in low lying islands, atolls and vulnerable coastal communities within Solomon Islands on resettlement and relocation plans.

1.1.3. Issue # 4: Indigenous Solomon Islanders rights to land and resource ownership threatened.

17. There are issues that are confronting the indigenous people of Solomon Islands in relation to their ownership of land, and the control of their resources. Almost 90 per cent of land in Solomon Islands is customarily owned, and this is where indigenous people live and sustain their living. Investors came, only to take their resources. Indigenous people are seen to be benefitting less from their resources when investors carry out large scale natural resource extracting such as Mining and Logging. In West Rennell, for example, indigenous land resource owners did not go through proper legal protocols in acquiring their land, did not have a proper agreement with the logging and mining companies that are harvesting their forestry and mineral resources. As a result, they did not benefit from their resources because of the illegal registration and dealing on their land. The CSOs are concerned about the Human Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Solomon Islanders because of the high migration of different ethnic groups coming into Solomon Islands, which has given a serious threat to the indigenous rights of the peoples of Solomon Islands. The migration of Bangladeshi, Chinese, and other foreigners into rural areas in Guadalcanal, Rennell, and Western Province, in the Solomon Islands, reported a huge increase in land

⁴ Opposition press. Wale Slams PM over Climate Change Speech. *Solomon Times Online* [Accessed October 2020] from <https://www.solomontimes.com/news/wale-slams-pm-over-climate-change-speech/10267>.

ownership by foreign individuals, and companies, in those Provinces, for example, two thirds of Rennell Island, was registered and leased by an individual foreigner.

Recommendation

18. The CSOs urgently calls on the national government to:
19. Set up policies or legislation that provide for and serve the interest of indigenous Solomon islanders.
20. Implement the Convention on Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) as a strategy to ensure protecting indigenous peoples' rights to self-determination, participation, and decision making.
21. Reinstate the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) that allows for monitoring of the actions of those involved in the extractive industry sector.

1.1.4. Issue # 5: Ratifying the UN declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP)

22. The Civil Society Organizations under the umbrella body of Development Services Exchange (DSE) support other countries that are advocating for the move to recognize the UN declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP) as a UN Convention status. For example, Solomon Islands UPR submission for the Second Cycle highlighted that Djibouti call for ratification of UNDRIP which the Solomon Islands has 'Noted'. Also, Benin call to ratify ILO Conventions No. 169: Indigenous and Tribal peoples, and No. 189: Domestic Workers to which the Solomon Islands also 'Noted'.

Recommendation:

23. The CSOs call on the Government of Solomon Islands Government to support other countries that are advocating for the move towards UNDRIP attaining a UN Convention Status and the Solomon Islands to ratify when the UNDRIP when it became a UN Convention.

1.2. Right to Education

1.2.1. Issue # 6: Access to Education

24. Access to financial resources is a main barrier to advance education opportunities. Majority of the population lives in rural and remote areas of the archipelago leading largely subsistence based lifestyles. Hence, the ability of families to meet the demands of school fees for their children to attend school is limited. While there is generally high net enrolment at primary level (91.8% NER14), the low enrolment rate at secondary is alarming – (37.4%)⁵, indicating high dropout rates between levels. Government grants to

⁵ MEHRD Annual Performance Assessment Report (PAR), 2018.

schools for students up to Year 10 alleviates much pressure, however school councils set additional parents' contribution fees, and non-payers are often excluded, directly conflicting with the Government's aim of providing education for all children. Additionally, given the diverse and special learning needs of a (as yet unknown) proportion of children, including children with disabilities, and the lack of specific teaching materials and aids, the Government grants are currently completely inadequate to provide for the level of support required to ensure children with disabilities are well supported and are learning effectively in mainstream classes. Children classified by the school census as living with a disability make up only 1.3% of the student body. It is generally assumed that up to 15% of the population live with disabilities, meaning most children with disabilities do not receive any education⁶.

Recommendations:

25. The CSOs therefore call on the Government of Solomon Islands to:
26. Ensure that basic education is free and of good quality, for all children to be able to access and benefit from. This means that there should be no parents' contributions imposed by schools, and therefore, the level of financial support provided to schools needs to be reviewed.
27. Additional school grants per student must be provided to schools which include children with disabilities in classroom learning, to provide more special needs teachers and assistants.
28. To reach out to remote communities in terms of development to improve infrastructure services (roads, bridges, wharfs, clinics, airports & communication services).

1.2.2. Issue # 7: Educational Pathways and Lifelong Learning⁷

29. The CSOs identified that insufficient attention is paid to secondary, and technical and vocational education. Rural Training Centres (RTCs) and mostly run by Church Authorities, and only partially funded by the Government. Places within the RTCs are heavily over-subscribed. Nevertheless, funding to the Tertiary sector dominates government education expenditure (70% in 2017), but the majority of this is for overseas scholarships. This overfunding of scholarships remains a serious drain on limited resources. DSE and SIDT conducted a nationwide literacy assessment of youth and adult to determine the need for literacy and educational programs.

Recommendation:

30. The CSOs recommend that the Government should support initiatives that ensures:
31. Quality language, Literacy and Numeracy (LLN) programs for youth and adults are developed, including bridging programs to access PSET providers.
32. Assistance to RTCs is expanded in scale and scope, and additional skills development programs are provided.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Coalition for Education, Spotlight Report on Education 2020, Solomon Islands.

33. The link between education and the workforce is strengthened to address the skills mismatch, adjust learning modalities and curricula as necessary, and ensure education supports sustainable livelihoods in urban and rural communities.

1.2.3. Issue # 8. : Inclusive Education

34. Accurate data on and understanding of the special learning needs of children with disabilities throughout Solomon Islands is limited. As a result, specific teaching materials and aids have not been developed or distributed to schools. It is therefore unknown how many children with disabilities currently enrolled and participating in schools are actually learning or achieving compared to their peers. Only a limited number of inclusive education initiatives have been established, and on a small scale. The Government and its donors are not currently directing any budgetary support to address and mainstream inclusivity. As common in many countries, civil society is particularly active in this space, and partnerships with them will likely be critical in improving outcomes for children with disabilities.

Recommendations:

35. Therefore, the CSOs call on the Government to:
36. Ensure budget and staffing of the inclusive Education unit is increased to effectively implement the inclusive Education Policy.
37. Support Research to determine the actual number and need of children and adults with disabilities and special needs that access the education system.
38. Ensure Teachers are provided with practical in-service inclusive Education courses.
39. Ensure Pilot inclusive education initiatives are investigated for potential replication in Solomon Islands contexts.
40. Prioritize community education using the existing mechanism.

1.3. Right to Political Participation and Free Elections

1.3.1. Issue # 9: Temporary Special Measures (TSM) for Women in Political Leadership

41. Since 2017, a campaign led by Government through the Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs (MWYCFA) and with funds and technical support by the Women's Rights Action Movement (WRAM) has picked up in the provinces on Temporary Special Measures for women in Provincial Assemblies. The campaign is a response to a province (Western Province) announcing their intention to allocate three reserved seats for women. 5 of the 10 Provinces have policies on gender equality or aspirations to advance women in leadership and decision making.
42. As of September 2020, all nine Provinces in Solomon Islands, have been consulted through the campaign and as a result five (5) provincial governments have agreed to support legislative amendment to facilitate their provinces to set in place quotas for women to be on their Provincial Assemblies. The current *Provincial Government Act*

1997 (PGA) restricts Provinces from setting quotas for women in Provincial Assemblies. An NGO led research on ‘public perceptions of women as political leaders: views on women’s leadership and TSM in Solomon Islands’ conducted in 2019 confirmed that when people are informed about TSM, they support the idea. 92% said they want TSM in provincial assemblies and the same percentage also said yes to TSM in the national Parliament. The research also suggests new directions for policy and programming approaches in relation to women’s participation in politics considering the multiple and complex barriers that constrain women’s political participation in Solomon Islands.

Recommendations:

43. The joint CSOs recommend the following for National Government’s consideration:
44. The SI National Parliament must pass and enforce legislation to remove this limitation for women to have a quota in Provincial Assemblies facilitated by provincial ordinances.
45. Government, donor and development partners work in collaboration with women’s rights organizations and civil society organizations (CSOs) to ensure gender awareness programs – both specific to women’s leadership and more broadly – are locally owned, developed and informed; are linked to local ideas and policies; incorporate the history of patriarchy and how it informs the bedrock of cultural and gender based norms; and recognize cultural diversity across Solomon Islands, and the need to tailor messaging to different contexts.
46. Government fully support the awareness on TSM and the processes it needs to further implement this including changes in laws to fast track them to further women’s political participation as citizens of the country.
47. Government, donor and development partners work with and appropriately resource key women’s rights organizations and CSOs, including the National Council of Women, to support aspiring women candidates to have access to skills development throughout the electoral cycle.
48. Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs (MWYCFA), women’s rights organizations and CSOs, including National Council of Women, WRAM, and development actors work with the Political Parties Commission to advocate for parties complying with the 10 per cent women candidates’ provision, including encouraging better enforcement of the law and assisting in linking parties with aspiring woman candidates through the dissemination of manifestos.
49. Government and donor agencies support and resource the work of women’s rights organizations, CSOs and the National Women’s Forum in advocating TSM while ensuring that initiatives are locally led.

1.3.2. Issue # 10: Women and Political Parties

50. In the current national government, there are 3 female parliamentarians out of 50 Parliamentarians. At the provincial level, out of 172 seats, there are only 4 women. This highly reflects deep entrenched cultural and societal norms hindering women to

participate in the political space. Money politics is another challenge because women cannot carry out their campaigns as they have limited access to finances and are prone to be subjected to violence if they receive campaign contributions which are likely to be given by businesses or supporters who are men. Interviews with women candidates who contested in the 2014 provincial elections for Honiara and Guadalcanal found that they do not have access to financial resources compared to male candidates.

51. One of the key strategies of the National GEWD policy is to review and amend electoral legislation to increase participation of women in leadership and political participation. The policy sets out to enable the introduction of special measures including:
52. an increase in the minimum quota in the Political Parties Integrity Act for women's representation on electoral lists of political parties to at least 30%. Establishment of a mechanism to effectively monitor the implementation of such legislation, and consideration of the adoption of sanctions for political parties that do not comply with the quota; and
53. an enactment of the legislation for at least 30% of reserved seats for women in parliament and encouragement of the creation of a special parliamentary committee on equality of women and men.
54. However, the *Political Parties Integrity Act 2014* section 48 provides that '...A political party shall reserve for women, at least ten percent of the total number of candidates it selects and endorses to contest an election.' Section 48 (2) provides that this quota is not compulsory.

Recommendations:

55. The joint CSOs strongly recommend the Government to consider the following:
56. Amended the Act to ensure that the critical mass of 30% for women candidates as set out in the GEWD policy be set out as a compulsory threshold in the *Political Parties Integrity Act*.
57. Impose effective sanctions where political parties do not comply with the requirement for the 30% threshold of total number of women who are endorsed as candidates.
58. Impose measures that ensure Political parties take on the responsibility to take measures to ensure that women are aware of their manifestos and become members of the party.