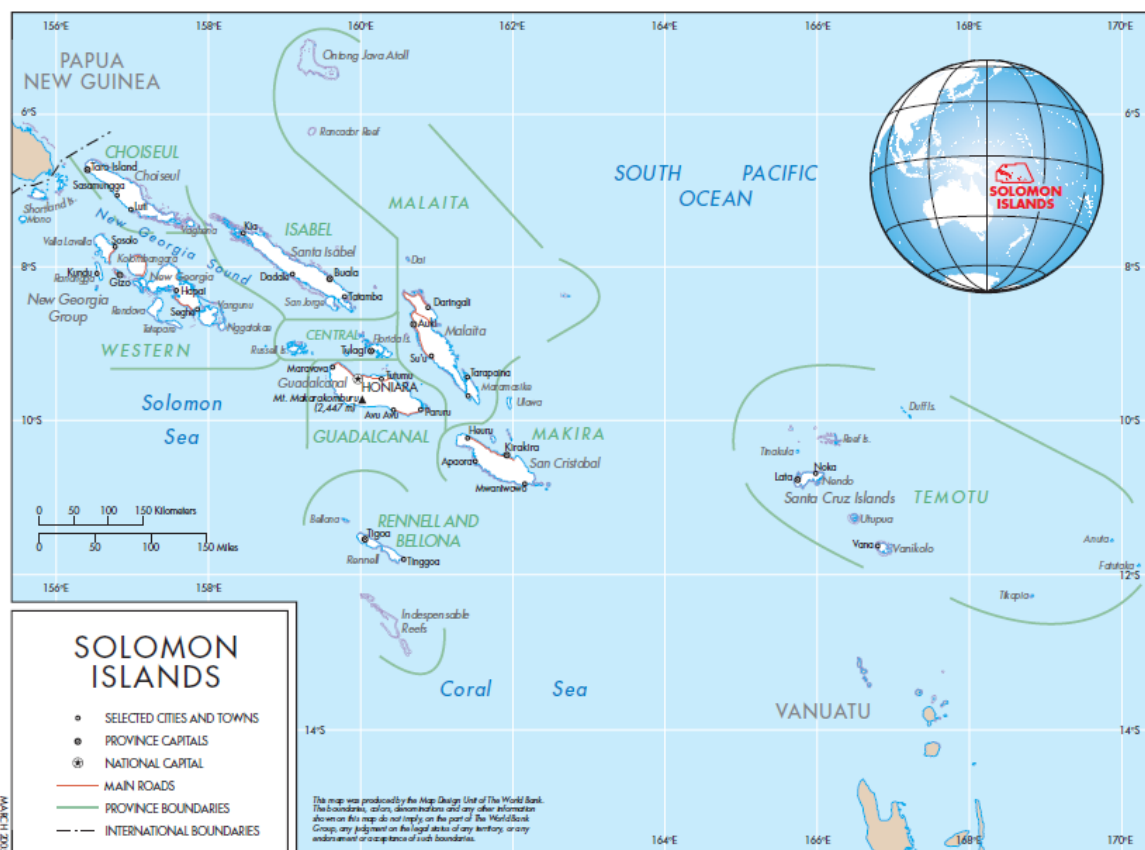




Community Governance and Grievance Management Project

Project Social Assessment

Ministry of Provincial Government and Institutional Strengthening



Honiara
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1 Project Context

The Government of Solomon Islands has requested World Bank assistance for a project to create durable institutional arrangements to assist local authorities (chiefly, religious and customary) to address conflicts and disputes that undermine community security, development and social cohesion, and to facilitate linkages with the state.

A decade after the initial deployment of the 15 nation Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI), basic security and core state institutions have been restored, several mostly peaceful political transitions have occurred, and GNI per capita has risen from USD \$1740 in 2002 to US \$2170 in 2013.¹ However, the underlying causes of civil conflict between 1998 and 2003 remain largely unaddressed and in some instances are becoming more pronounced. Income per capita remains below 1998 levels, a viable model for service delivery and political representation remains elusive and there are marked geographic disparities in access to security, livelihoods and services.

It is against this backdrop that a new institutional form, 'Community Officers', was introduced by Solomon Islands' police in around 20 communities across the country in late 2009. The 'Community Officer pilot' involved the selection and appointment of individual male community members, typically of some standing, to act in a quasi-policing role, working closely with local authorities in support of their dispute management role and acting as a link with local police. The pilot, evaluated by the World Bank in 2012, has since ceased functioning.

The Community Governance and Grievance Management project ('the Project') builds on the lessons of the earlier police-led efforts, and takes into account feedback from public consultations on and evaluation of the pilot project. The Project will be implemented by the Ministry of Provincial Government and Institutional Strengthening (MPGIS) and will operate for a period of four years from FY 2014/15 to FY 2017/18 with funding in the vicinity of USD 3.5 million (approx. SBD 25.2 million). The project will initially commence in two of Solomon Islands' nine provinces and will scale-up to further provinces during the life of the project. The project will work closely with provincial governments; relevant national government ministries/agencies, such as the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF); and communities, particularly community leaders.

While there are nominally three levels of government in Solomon Islands (National, Provincial and Local), the operation of local Area Councils was suspended in 1998 due to fiscal and other operational constraints. Though 'Big Men', chiefs and village leaders still exercise some authority in local disputes, they are not part of the formal state structure. Based largely on a mixture of *kastom*², Christian doctrine and state law, their interventions often deliver different outcomes for men, women and youth, and from one locality to another. Moreover, the scale and complexity of issues brought with the advent in particular of outside investment and natural resource development surpasses the experience and capacity of local authorities. In some cases, local leaders have become complicit in monopolizing benefits for personal gain. Other issues such as changes and increases in availability of addictive substances resulting in antisocial behavior also place a strain on traditional social control mechanisms. Policing is resource-constrained and rarely reaches beyond provincial centres. Lower level courts are similarly constrained, and sit infrequently. There is thus a vacuum in formal local level civil and criminal law enforcement.

The Project Development Objective (PDO) is to strengthen community grievance management capabilities and enhance the effectiveness of linkages with government in targeted communities.

¹ World Bank, World Development Indicators, 2013.

² Indigenous custom, broadly similar across Melanesia, but with local differences in language, dialect and cultural practices that have developed in the relative isolation of the pre-World War 2 era.

This will be accomplished by appointment of lay community members known as Community Officers (COs) who will benefit citizens by, inter alia: i) contributing to increased community cohesion and stability; ii) providing increased awareness around national and provincial government policies, programs and activities; and, iii) acting as a means by which to connect citizens with provincial and national agencies, including the police.

The project has three components, a summary of which is appended at Annex 1:

- Component 1: Revitalizing Government-Community Linkages
- Component 2: Strengthening the Capabilities of Community Officers and Local Authorities
- Component 3: Project Management, Evaluation and Learning.

2 Aim of Social Assessment

The aim of this social assessment is to describe the socio-cultural context to guide project design, to ensure appropriate consultation and spread of project benefits while avoiding harm to indigenous or other vulnerable persons or groups. The project will have no direct physical impacts. It will deliver long term social benefits. OP/BP 4.01, Environmental Assessment was triggered as the umbrella safeguards policy prior to the Concept Note review (August 2013). OP/BP4.10, Indigenous Peoples, was triggered as per policy prior to review, and OP/BP4.12, Involuntary Resettlement was triggered to guide formulation of training for COs in disputes about land that might arise. No other safeguards instrument is required.

The social assessment has been based on consultations and assessments undertaken to date as part of project identification and preparation,³ official statistics and on other credible secondary sources.

3 Stakeholders

The primary beneficiaries of the project will be citizens in selected host communities. In years one and two, the proposed project will support 20 targeted communities in Makira Ulawa and Renbel provinces. In years three and four additional communities in a further two provinces will be added bringing the anticipated number of targeted communities to 80. The number of estimated project beneficiaries will incrementally increase from 860 in year one to 3440 in year four.

Secondary project beneficiaries will be the national and provincial governments, including a number of national agencies. The project will work at both levels to build capacity through a variety of activities related to the selection, management and oversight of COs.

Key institutional stakeholders are the MPGIS, which will implement the project; the Ministry of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs, the Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs, the Ministry of Rural Development, the Ministry of Mines, Energy and Rural Electrification and the Ministry of Public Service. The RSIPF, which is the law enforcement agency closest to the community level is a key stakeholder. Respected community authority figures - chiefs, religious leaders, teachers, health workers, civil society organizations – will also be at the interface of CO and community interactions. Mutual understanding and respect for the roles of all community actors will be critical to the acceptability and success of the CO role.

³Particularly Allen, M., Dinnen, S., Evans, D. & Monson, R., *Justice Delivered Locally: Systems, Challenges and Innovations in Solomon Islands*, The World Bank, August 2013.

4 Population

The population of Solomon Islands at last census (2009) numbered 515,870, of which 48.7% was female. Average life expectancy, 49.4 years in 1960, has risen to 67.9 years in 2011⁴. Illustrating the trend to urbanization, the population is increasing at around 2.3% per annum, at almost 5% in urban areas, and a little under 2% in rural areas. Population densities are low, at an average 19.1 per square kilometer, though migration to urban areas and development sites, has caused, and is causing local tensions. Ethnic distribution is shown in Table 1⁵. Most of Solomon Islands were settled from East Papua some 30,000 years ago. The Polynesian population settled later from the south on unoccupied islands - Anuta, Bellona, Ontong Java, Rennell, Sikaiana, Tikopia, and Vaeakau-Taumako. The majority of the population is culturally relatively homogeneous. Statistics are not disaggregated by ethnicity. There are around 75 indigenous broadly similar Austronesian languages. Local differences and dialects developed in the relative isolation prior to modern transport and communications, and languages are not always mutually intelligible. English is the official language, and Pijin⁶ is the lingua franca.

Ethnic group	Number	%
Melanesian	491,466	95.3
Polynesian	15,911	3.1
Micronesian	6,446	1.2
Chinese	654	0.1
European	721	0.1
Other	672	0.1
Total	515,870	100

5 Social Organization

The nature of social organization, religious beliefs and gender roles have important implications for optimizing the design of the CO role for maximum effectiveness. The population of Solomon Islands is still overwhelmingly rural, with 83% living in villages and leading semi-subsistence village lifestyles. The trend to urbanization is reflected in household sizes, which averages 5.5 persons, but 6.5 in urban and 5.3 in rural areas (Census 2009). Tradition and custom are relatively strong especially in rural areas, and the family and kin group the most important organizing principle in society.

Leadership in Melanesian societies was traditionally at the level of the clan and village, and was achieved rather than ascribed; an individual became a 'Big Man' by virtue of his leadership qualities, oratory prowess and acts of conspicuous generosity. Sponsoring feasts and ceremonies was facilitated by polygamy, enabling a man to benefit from the productive labour of his wives and children in gardening and raising pigs for ceremonies with kin and *wantoks*⁷. Though the son of a Big Man may have had some advantage in accession to leadership, there was no hereditary succession. Big Men often exercised quasi-judicial authority in their village, and were deferred to for conflict resolution. Their achieved success was generally regarded as a sign of supernatural power. On the

⁴ Index Mundi

⁵ Except where otherwise stated, data for the above is from the 2009 Population and Housing Census, Solomon Islands National Statistical Office

⁶ Pijin is a pan-Melanesian Pidgin English with vocabulary and influences from Austronesian languages, German, Malay and Portuguese.

⁷ *Wantok*: literally, "one who speaks the same language" ("one talk"). *Wantokism* is used to describe the relationships of mutual obligation and support between near and distant kin, and those sharing other kinds of social and geographical associations (e.g., from the same village, area, or province). Depending on their location and relationship, people who speak different languages and are of different ethnicities may even describe themselves as *wantoks*.

other hand, leadership in Polynesian societies was generally at the tribal level and was hereditary. Like Melanesian societies, chiefs exercised quasi-judicial authority over their tribal members. Chiefs were often responsible for resolving conflicts among tribal members and in doing so would frequently work with the chiefs of other tribes to address intra-tribal differences. Along with church and school buildings, men's houses are still a feature of local administrative, social and cultural life in some Melanesian villages, particularly in Malaita province, generally flanking a common open area around which dwellings are clustered. Traditional and religious leaders are influential in local social organization and cohesion.

5.1 Religious Beliefs

In the 2009 Census, 96% of the population identified as Christian, distributed across eight denominations of which the largest was the Church of Melanesia. Less than 1% professed custom beliefs, and the remainder were either Baha'ai, professed no belief, 'other' belief, or did not respond.

In pre-European times, both good and ill fortune were commonly believed to be the result of supernatural forces manipulated by powerful men and sometimes women through ancient magical incantations, still passed through generations from same-sex parent to child⁸. Sorcery was held to be practiced by malevolent outsiders' incantations of powerful curses on body fluids or items that had been in contact with the victim, causing illness, death or other calamity. Belief in its power limits an individual's circle of trust to close kin and *wantoks*. (Polynesian communities, however, did not practice sorcery.) Syncretic belief in ancestral spirits and supernatural forces lingers alongside Christianity and is a contributor to the intensity of response to perceived wrongs, and in part explains the still extreme offence often taken at swearing or cursing in Solomon Islands' culture and custom. Demands for compensation or swift physical retaliation against the supposed sorcerer or his/her clan was, and sometimes still is, the norm, considered essential to survival of one's own clan and to re-balance power relations between clans.

Sorcery is an offence under both the State Penal Code [Cap 26] and customary laws in Solomon Islands, and was recently characterised by participants in public consultations as an act of murder (Solomon Islands Law Reform Commission Report 2013). There is however no clear responsibility for management of sorcery cases by local, customary and religious authorities, whose judgements in these and other cases are often perceived to be biased (*ibid*). In some localities in some provinces it is likely that COs will confront cases of demand for compensation or retaliation for supposed malevolent manipulation of supernatural power. Resolution will require tact and the trust of all parties.

In many provinces churches (of varying denominations) are well organized and are involved in the mediation of disputes or the reconciliation of parties following a dispute – especially parties who belong to the same congregation. While church leadership structures vary across denominations, in general terms most congregations have a church committee at the village level and a number of local church officials who are elected or otherwise appointed by the congregation. These committees and officials preside over a wide range of village affairs, and often have a significant role in dispute management within their villages. Accordingly, church leaders and other church actors are likely to be key actors with whom COs will interact.

⁸ *Culture of the Solomon Islands*, John Moffat Fugui: accessed at www.everyculture.com/Sa-Th/Solomon Islands, 26.04.14. See also *Witchcraft and Sorcery Related Killings in Melanesia: Culture, Law and Human Rights Perspectives* Miranda Forsyth, June 2013

5.2 Marriage, Descent and Inheritance

While the situation is variable across the country, in some places marriage is exogamous and often semi-arranged, as an important form of alliance with another clan along with the trading relationships and friendships that form part of a group's security circle in event of natural calamity or third party dispute. Polygamy widened this range of alliances in pre-independence times. It is now discouraged by religious leaders and is generally not practiced⁹. In patrilineal areas, land is inherited through the father, and the wife usually takes up residence in the village of her husband, whose clan may be required to pay bride price¹⁰ in recognition that her clan is losing a productive member. Bride price payment encourages some men to regard women as chattels, bought and paid for, though some women would be shamed not to be so valued. The quantum and timing of, or default on bride price payments can be a source of friction, but the practice persists despite recognition of its sometimes negative impacts.

Land inheritance is matrilineal in most parts of Guadalcanal, Isabel, Central and Makira Ulawa provinces. Traditionally in matrilineal areas, the husband might move to his wife's village if she had better access to land or other assets. The assets he generated were however in custom heritable by his clan rather than his children. This expectation is still the case in some areas, and can also cause friction. However, alliances in practice tended to balance access to resources across intermarried families, since the men of one clan would often have sisters in their neighbour's village, and vice-versa. There are strong elements of bilateral inheritance rights throughout the country today, and friction is often related more to population movement, relative population density and development activities than to *kastom* ideology about access to land.

Conceptually individuals do not own land; the land owns them, as stewards for the clan and its members. Some 85% of land is under customary tenure. Even in matrilineal areas, effective management of landed estate is generally in the hands of the senior male of the family – a brother, uncle or close male cousin of the female line. This tendency has deepened with exploitation of natural resources such as nickel, gold and timber. There is no legislation that enhances to role of women in decision-making in matrilineal areas. Nor is there explicit recognition of women as legitimate landowners through the Land and Titles Act, which limits ownership of land (perpetual estate) to Solomon Islanders, with some exceptions (see Land and Titles Act, s. 112:4(k)). Under the Constitution, Parliament may also grant a non-Solomon Islander a lease.

5.3 Division of Labour, Education and Gender

Matriliney is not a predictor of elevated female status or influence. Women occupy lower social status than men, have minimal representation in government and limited voice in decision-making at local level outside of the domestic sphere.

Most Solomon Islanders are self-employed, whether paid or unpaid. Traditionally, men undertook the heavy work of felling trees fencing gardens, building canoes, hunting and fishing. Women undertook the duties of caring for young and old, household duties, planting and weeding the gardens. As such they were the producers of the family's staple diet. In rural areas these patterns continue, though are blurred where there is intrusion of development, particularly natural resource development, in which investors tend to interact with and employ mainly men. This potentially leaves women to fill new roles in village communities, and to assume some leadership and decision making responsibilities in which men formerly dominated. In urban areas, new professional roles

⁹ *Harmful Practices Against Women in Pacific Islands Countries: Customary and Conventional Laws*: Imrana Jalal; United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, June 2009. Under current law, only one marriage at a time is lawful.

¹⁰ Goods or money given in Melanesian groups by the groom's to the bride's family to formalise a marriage. A reciprocal gift is sometimes given.

such as doctors, lawyers, teachers, pastors, government and business employees may offer opportunities for women that could influence the domestic division of labour. However, the table below, based on data from the 2009 population census, indicates that girls and women in general receive significantly less education than boys and men beyond primary level, suggesting that diversification of female roles is not yet widespread. Nor are levels of female education significantly different from other areas in the matrilineal areas: Isabel, Guadalcanal, Central and Makira Ulawa provinces, shaded pink.

Literacy¹¹ in English is considered an advantage in access to non-traditional livelihoods. Overall in the 2009 Census, 69% of the population over the age of 5 is literate in English, 73% of males and 65% of females. More of the population is also literate in Pijin (67%) than in local languages (66%).

	Primary school		Form 7		Bachelor's degree	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
Solomon Islands	16.17	14.35	0.21	0.09	0.47	0.17
Choiseul	20.28	21.83	0.07	0.01	0.23	0.03
Western	21.77	21.90	0.12	0.06	0.40	0.12
Isabel	15.33	15.53	0.11	0.03	0.15	0.03
Central	15.48	11.77	0.12	0.01	0.13	0.04
Rennell-Bellona	16.65	19.36	0.05	0.05	0.97	0.48
Guadalcanal	14.42	12.72	0.19	0.08	0.26	0.09
Malaita	13.18	10.49	0.11	0.02	0.13	0.03
Makira Ulawa	16.94	16.79	0.15	0.02	0.22	0.06
Temotu	14.94	12.73	0.08	0.04	0.22	0.02
Honiara	12.76	12.22	0.75	0.42	1.95	0.80
Urban	13.85	13.37	0.60	0.34	1.49	0.60
Rural	16.08	14.62	0.11	0.03	0.18	0.05

Discrimination on grounds of sex is prohibited under the 1978 Constitution¹². Notwithstanding, to a varying extent across the country, women do not participate equally with men in political life, consultations and decision-making. They are still subject to pollution beliefs in certain Melanesian societies that constrain relations between brothers and sisters in a family, and between husbands and wives. Other-sex siblings may have a relationship of respect and avoidance. Traditionally, men slept apart from their wives in the village Men's House to minimise pollution risk, and contact was mainly in gardens during the day. Now, homes typically house a nuclear or extended family, but women are sometimes still segregated during menstruation and following childbirth due to fear of contamination from blood. This belief often underpins cases of violence against women, especially in patrilineal areas where the wife moves to her husband's village. As an in-married member, she is at particular risk of suspicion of carelessness or contamination in food preparation causing illness, or collaboration in supplying body materials to adversaries to perform sorcery on items such as sputum, cut hair or fingernails, or items that have been in close contact with the victim. Sexual relations outside of marriage, either pre-marital or adulterous, are accordingly regarded seriously and punished severely. There is still a cultural preference in some areas for separate toilet arrangements for the sexes, partly related to pollution and sorcery fear.

¹¹ Literacy is defined in the 2009 Census as the ability to read and write a simple sentence in the relevant language. Functional literacy may be lower, depending on the definition.

¹² Constitution of the Solomon Islands 1978: 15(4).

Violence against women, often perpetrated by husbands or close kin, is acknowledged to be a considerable issue whose proportions are difficult to ascertain due to the reluctance of the victims to report it. The researchers on the 'Solomon Islands Family Health and Safety Study: A Study on Violence against Women and Children' performed for the Ministry of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs¹³, interviewed 3,500 women across the country. The study concluded that more than a third of women had been sexually abused under the age of 15; two out of three women between ages 15 and 49 have been abused physically and sexually, often by their male kin; and that high levels of violence against children often bear a correlation to these phenomena. The study reports a common sense of entitlement on the part of many men to mete out such treatment. Other studies affirm the prevalence of gender-based violence.¹⁴

Many women are deeply shamed by 'attracting' violence, and fear loss of livelihood through either punishment of the perpetrator who may be the family breadwinner, or loss of face by complaining of an offence against her that in custom requires payment of compensation by the offender to her natal clan. Though recognition of the problem is essential to its management, this custom re-victimizes women by placing them at risk of censure by both kin and affines if they seek redress. The issue of sexual violence has been exacerbated in recent times by the practice of men coercing women and girls into provision of sexual services for foreign investors and work gangs.

Solomon Islands has acceded to the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). COs will encounter cases of violence against women that highlight tensions between *kastom*, economic exploitation, national law and international obligations.

6 Livelihoods and Production Systems

Solomon Islands is classified as a lower middle income country with a per capita GNI of USD \$2170 in 2013. The headcount poverty rate is 22.7% (World Bank Development Indicators).

Livelihoods are dominated by resource-dependent activities, especially the cultivation of varieties of yam, sweet potato, taro, numerous varieties of bean and cabbage, raising pigs and other livestock, hunting wildlife and gathering fruits, nuts and herbs. With the exception of the capital, Honiara, Table 3 shows that half to three quarters of the population in the provinces are engaged in farming, livestock raising, hunting and related activities. The rates of dependency on these pursuits are highest in the main mining and prospective mining provinces (Guadalcanal, Choiseul, Isabel) and those shown by the FAO in 2009 (Solomon Islands Forestry Outlook Study Working Paper No. APFSOS II/WP/2009/31) as around half-logged (Makira Ulawa) to completely logged (Guadalcanal) in licensed areas. The next largest industrial employer is fishing and aquaculture, with 11,607 participants, 5.5% of the total, followed by construction (3.8%), motor vehicle trade (3.6%) and wood products manufacturing at 1%. Mining and related support activities employ less than one third of one per cent. These figures put into perspective the potential influence of resource-based activity on local land and livelihoods, and economic vulnerability to unsustainable extractive industry.

¹³ Secretariat of the Pacific Community, 2009.

¹⁴ E.g. Jalal, Imrana; Harmful Practices against Women in Pacific Island Countries, United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, May 2009; National Policy on Eliminating Violence Against Women; Ministry of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs (2010); Bhusan, A and Rasanathan, J; Gender-based violence in Solomon Islands, WHO 2011

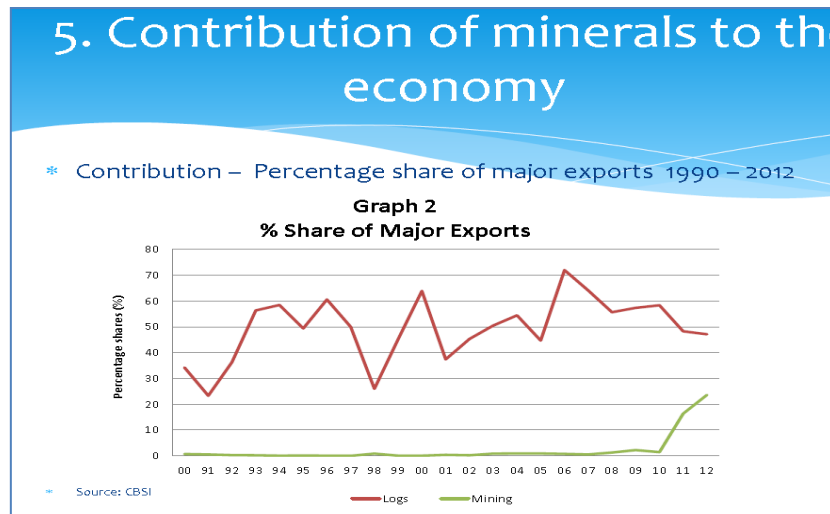
	Total in group	Crop, animal production, hunting and related service activities	
		Number	%
Solomon Islands	210385	124502	59.2
Choiseul	10629	6893	64.9
Western	33306	17679	53.1
Isabel	11970	7596	63.5
Central	10829	8197	75.7
Rennell-Bellona	1285	640	49.8
Guadalcanal	38090	24038	63.1
Malaita	58519	42941	73.4
Makira Ulawa	15326	10643	69.4
Temotu	9625	4273	44.4
Honiara	20806	1602	7.7

Statistically, those aged twelve years and older are seen as being part of the work force. However, school enrolment rates are still 83.5% from age 6 to age of 15. Though they may form part of the household work force, 94% of 12 – 14 year olds have no formal job. It is not until 20 – 24 years of age that more than half of the age cohort has some employment (2009 Census data).

Just over 60% of females and 61% of males twelve and over worked in the week prior to the 2009 census. The only significant variation between rates amongst provinces were in Makira Ulawa, where rates were just below 58% for females and 60% for males, in Malaita and Temotu where female participation was over 68%, and in Isabel, where male participation was also higher at over 68% in the reference period.

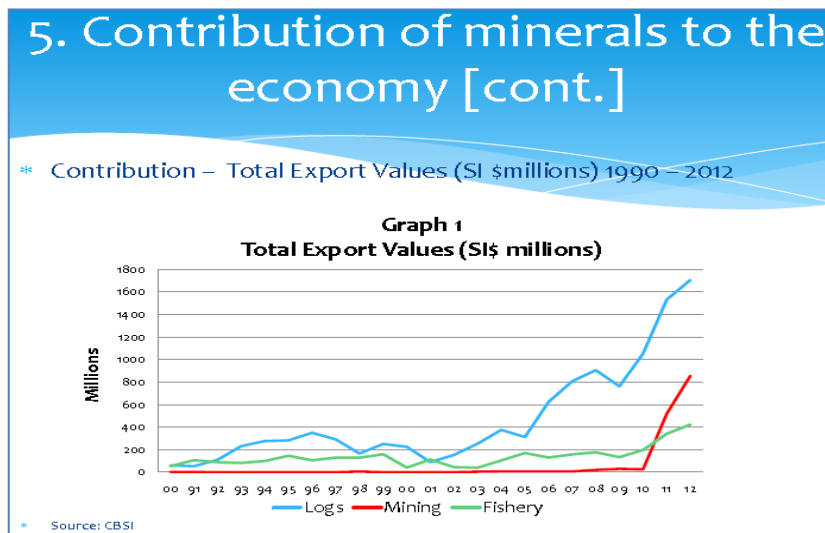
The graphs below illustrate the growth in the contribution of extractive industry to Solomon Islands' export profile. There is a correlation between the surge in export earnings from logs and mining products and the build-up of social tensions between late 1998 and 2003.

Figs 1 and 2: Contribution of extractive industry to exports



Source: <http://www.pmc.gov.sb/sites/default/files/Sustainability%20in%20the%20mining%20industry%20media%20conf%20Final.pdf>

Income inequalities that accompany the advent of industry are reflected in the 2006 Household Income and Expenditure Survey. Though the data is not disaggregated by province, the survey shows that average per capita expenditure in rural households is less than half that of urban households. Median rural per capita expenditure is only 38% of urban levels. Almost 54% of household expenditure country-wide, including purchases and the value of home production, is on food. Of that, almost half is on staple cereals. This leaves little for educational, health and other household expenditure. Both relative and absolute poverty fuel social unease.



Source: <http://www.pmc.gov.sb/sites/default/files/Sustainability%20in%20the%20mining%20industry%20media%20conf%20Final.pdf>

7 Causes of Disputation

Threats to security, development and social cohesion in communities in recent times are most often related to substance abuse and resultant antisocial behaviour, disputes around access to land and natural resources exacerbated by commercial investment and development, inequitable sharing of benefits of local development projects, and domestic violence.

Antisocial behaviour was traditionally regulated by Big Men and senior males in the clan. Custom regulates inheritance of, and access to land and natural resources, and knowledge of local history is essential to interpreting this. Big Men were traditionally the arbiters of distribution of community goods to households and individuals. Family and marital relations were tightly controlled by tradition and custom beliefs. It follows that local knowledge will be highly influential in the main areas of social relations where COs will operate.

The unwritten social contract that used to maintain social control in pre-globalization times is under stress, and the authority figures who upheld social order are now sometimes agents of its undoing owing to a lack of relevant knowledge, bias, cronyism, abuse of power to support private agendas and monopoly of development project benefits. Knowledge of history, community leaders, power relations, land use and access to assets, inter-clan relations and any past tensions will therefore be critical to the acceptability and success of COs in their promotion of social harmony and community cohesion. At the same time, the custom-sanctioned exercise of violence especially against women and youth will require training for COs in alternative management mechanisms that support human rights along with the formal law of the land.

7.1 Statistics on Offending

Though relatively weak reporting mechanisms and reluctance to report offences may result in incomplete data, five-year trends point towards a reduction in offending in some key areas. Reported rates for 2008, the last year that Solomon Islands data is cited, are below those in some developed countries¹⁵. (Although this data might be skewed by offending rates in Honiara, which are likely to reflect different underlying problems and social issues than those in rural areas where COs will operate.) The decline corresponds with the period after the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) mobilized in July 2003. Underlying problems, including economic uncertainty and deforestation, persist and render these gains fragile. Holding the line and brokering improvements will be a challenge for the CO system.

Rates per 100,000	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Burglary, car theft and housebreaking	67.4	105.4	89.4	82.6	74.7
Homicides	4.4	5.5	4.8	5.2	3.7
Assaults kidnapping, robbery, sexual rape	37.2	13.8	16.4	12.2	11.0

Source: World Data Atlas: UN Office on Drugs and Crime and International Homicide Statistics

¹⁵ Rates reported in the same data set per 100,000 of population in the USA for 2008 were: Burglary 730.8; Homicide, 5.4; Assaults, 276.6.

A later study¹⁶ gives a more recent short time-series of data collected by the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force. While the time frame is too short to illustrate trends, there was a drop in most offences, including some matters that COs might conceivably encounter (Table 5).

Offence	2010	2011	% change	2012	% change
Rape	34	59	73.5	33	-44.1
Murder	15	13	-13.3	13	0
Grievous Bodily Harm	37	50	35.1	53	6
Assault Occasioning Actual Bodily Harm	239	269	12.6	243	-9.7
Simple Larceny (Theft)	805	858	6.6	608	-29.1
Indecent assault	56	53	-5.4	47	-11.3
Break-in	418	332	-20.6	275	-17.2

8 Legal and Institutional Framework

COs are not intended to have judicial or police powers; rather, they will potentially function as counsellors, facilitators and mediators in disputes, at the intersection of traditional and government policing power. Provincial Governments, with central government involvement, will select, contract, remunerate, coordinate, report on, manage the performance of, and supervise COs. COs will ultimately be responsible to the Provincial Secretary. They will report regularly through their Provincial Coordinators (a provincial administration staff member who acts as a project focal point). The Provinces will consolidate reports via the relevant Provincial Coordinator, who will liaise closely with project staff in the central PMU in MPGIS.

COs will operate within the framework of the Constitution adopted at Independence in 1978. The Constitution outlaws discrimination on the grounds of “race, place of origin, political opinions, colour, creed or sex whereby persons of one such description are subjected to disabilities or restrictions to which persons of another such description are not made subject or are accorded privileges or advantages which are not accorded to persons of another such description.” The context in which COs work will require broad awareness of relevant constitutional principles as well as relevant civil and criminal legal provisions.

9 Community Participation

There has been comprehensive free informed prior consultation during the evaluation of the precursor police-initiated CO pilot and during project preparation. This has included discussion with a cross-section of individuals in nine communities in five provinces in October 2011 for the evaluation of the police CO project and 86 rural communities for the Justice Delivered Locally project¹⁷. As part of project preparation, subsequent consultations have taken place with all nine Provincial Governments, and with civil society stakeholders.

¹⁶ *Justice Delivered Locally – Systems, Challenges and Innovations in Solomon Islands*: Allen, M., Dinnen, S., Evans, D. and Monson R., The World Bank, August 2013, pp. 31 and 59.

¹⁷ These documents can be found at <http://www.worldbank.org/justiceforthepeer>

The project concept has been well received by both institutional stakeholders and by men, women and youth in free, informed prior consultations at prospective beneficiary community level. Suggestions were noted on numerous aspects of the project design, in particular on the selection, gender, remuneration, training and equipping of COs, and their relationship to other authorities.

Ongoing community consultation will be necessary as the project is implemented to ensure consensus on the role and *modus operandi* of COs.

Factors that may hinder community participation in the project are the customary relegation of women and youth in community discussions and decision-making. Even when they attend community meetings, they are often reluctant to speak in a cultural context where males and seniors dominate. It will therefore be necessary to continue to consult separately with these groups to ensure that COs can assist with equitable conflict resolution. It will further be desirable to ensure that female COs are appointed, or that COs have female colleagues who can facilitate these interactions.

The project will work with host communities to ensure that an agreement is reached upfront around how the CO role will be tailored to the local context and how COs will interact with relevant community institutions and government authorities. As part of the agreement making process, the most significant problems facing communities (including the nature of disputes, and gender-specific issues) and how well existing systems are responding to these issues will be assessed. Agreement will be reached around where COs operate within the given community: with whom they interact locally, what disputes and grievances they will focus on, and how they are expected to behave, so as to tailor the CO activities to particular contexts.

10 Benefit Sharing and Project Grievance Redress

This project will in itself not generate material benefits, but inequitable distribution of development projects and their benefits has been identified in consultations as one of the contributing causes of past and present social disturbance. COs will need to be aware of the legal remedies available in such cases, if mediation and negotiation are not successful.

The project will support the MPGIS, together with provincial governments, to develop and publicize a project-specific community feedback and grievance redress mechanism. This will ensure that COs are held accountable for their actions and that community members will be able to raise with relevant provincial actors issues related to CO behavior and/or performance as well as disputes or problems that arise due to the implementation of the project.

11 Opportunities

Local social conflict management mechanisms are at present frequently not consistent, objective or equitable. Current management mechanisms built on local *kastom* do however exist in most localities, and can be made to work better with COs who can: i). influence the way local leaders manage disputes and ii). reduce the gap between communities and provincial level service providers. The project represents a significant opportunity to support conflict management mechanisms that are lawful, objective and perceived as equitable, while sensitized to local *kastom* and leadership and connected to the wider administrative framework. Outcomes of conflict management could be considerably improved in particular for women and youth.

12 Summary of Findings

12.1 Key Issues Emerging from Social Analysis

Solomon Islands' society is characterized by fissiparous tendencies stemming from:

- Geographical distance and dispersal, resulting in historical evolution of local customs, languages and dialects, and an imperative for self-reliance and strategic alliances to survive.
- Uneven distribution of natural resources attracting local and foreign investment and development.
- Lingering belief systems in some areas that give rise to fear and mistrust of most people other than close kin and *wantoks*, and contain the seeds of disharmony in marriages.
- Marriage, descent and inheritance systems with the benefit of flexibility in allocation of resources along matrilineal or patrilineal lines, but the disadvantage of ambiguity that can give rise to conflict particularly in situations where competition for investment or development project benefits arises.
- A division of labour and participation in society in most parts of the country that relegates women and youth to routine and unskilled tasks and often denies them self-determination or a voice in community governance.
- A resultant tendency from these circumstances to extreme response to threats or slights, and ready recourse to violence in disputes.

12.2 Project Risks and Constraints

The project will incur not direct physical or environmental safeguards risks. Free informed prior consultations have indicated broad social acceptance of the concept, and a desire to see the project institutionalised, supported and extended.

It is anticipated that the main source of inherent social risk in implementing the project will lie in the tensions between formal law, human rights, best practice principles governing intergenerational and gender equity on the one hand and *kastom* practices on the other. This places considerable importance on the selection, skills, personality, acceptability and training of COs. Acceptability of the role and the individual CO needs to be secured through a participatory consultation process in which communities will accept the nominee and agree on the priorities, principles and procedures that will inform CO operations in their community.

There is a distinct risk of difficulty in securing the buy-in of local authority figures in areas where significant developments have occurred or are planned, since the single greatest cause of social disharmony is inequitable distribution of development and commercial project benefits. In many cases this is a direct result of Big Men and chiefs doing what Big Men and chiefs have always done: using their power and influence to command and monopolize labour and resources. In the modern context, the scale of this misappropriation is vastly increased. Weaknesses in the regulation of donor and foreign investment have allowed this to go unchecked, resulting in a break-down of the former tacit social contract under which Big Men looked after their clan and *wantoks*.

A clear need for female COs was articulated in consultations and the evaluation of the earlier CO pilot. It may be difficult to find enough women with the willingness and ability to operate in a space that will inevitably attract some cultural hostility from entrenched traditional authority, and will risk accusations of neglect of normal responsibilities. There is an enhanced risk of physical violence against women who breach cultural norms to accept such positions.

Institutional risks inherent in the earlier police-initiated community officer pilot cannot be entirely resolved within project design. Though major earlier deficiencies can be remedied - COs will be remunerated, uniformed, supervised and better equipped to communicate with other institutional actors - the sector is likely to remain relatively under-resourced as a whole.

13 Recommendations

Recommendations arising from this social assessment and the comprehensive community consultations undertaken to date¹⁸ are:

1. COs need official and community recognition as conflict managers who bridge the gap between local and provincial authorities responsible for maintaining peace and public order. Remunerating and equipping COs as planned in the project will help to achieve this recognition.
2. COs should know and be known and respected in the communities within which they work, to establish trust and reinforce their legitimacy. A process of community involvement in the selection of COs and reaching agreement on CO roles as planned in the project will help to ensure appropriate candidates are identified and selected.
3. Female COs or Support Officers should be available to promote equitable outcomes for women and youth in disputes. They will need sensitive and effective support to ensure their physical and cultural safety in performance of their functions.
4. To improve outcomes of conflict management, the CO program will be strengthened by working with stakeholders to identify their key issues and develop strategies to address them. This may include identifying donor or other initiatives that improve and diversify employment prospects, and assist individuals and communities with anger management and management of substance abuse.
5. Consultations with all sectors and traditional leadership of beneficiary communities will be required to identify the conflicts they themselves see as priorities, to take account of present management methods, successes and failures and to gain acceptance of principles and procedures that will inform CO operations in a new form of social contract. These may not always be consistent where customs differ, but in any case should promote human rights and be within the law of the land.
6. COs will require careful selection and on-going management support to ensure skills, knowledge of applicable law and *kastom* and wide community acceptability, without which they will have no moral authority.
7. CO training will need to include:
 - A community engagement, operational and communications strategy, including a grievance mechanism.
 - Awareness of principles of the Constitution and law applicable to the conflicts they may confront, to avoid creation of a parallel or inconsistent system of handling disputes
 - Knowledge of human rights and the international obligations of the Solomon Islands Government.

¹⁸ See J4P Research Reports: *Evaluation of the Community Officer Project in the Solomon Islands* May 2012; and *Justice Delivered Locally; Innovations Challenges and Innovations in the Solomon Islands*, August 2013 (available at <http://www.worldbank.org/justiceforthe poor>)

- Awareness of the principles informing relevant World Bank and other donors' safeguards policies.
 - Conflict management skills.
 - Gender and intergenerational equity awareness, and in particular raising awareness of human rights issues, and skills in management of gender-based violence.
 - Managing community consultations, recording attendance and agreements.
 - The CO role in relation to related projects and programs promoting social harmony.
8. COs will need ready access to and communication with the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force for conflicts that are beyond their writ, or threaten to escalate out of hand.
 9. At community mobilization stage, COs should collect baseline data on selected indicators both to identify local priorities and as a basis for subsequent monitoring and evaluation.
 10. Alongside the project monitoring indicators, community members representing all groups should be encouraged in mobilization consultations to propose their own indicators, and invited to participate in monitoring them.
 11. Monitoring should include review and analysis of any grievances notified, whether to COs or to other village authorities, including data from health facilities on the incidence of gender-based violence or other assaults that have resulted in bodily harm that have come to notice of the authorities.

Annex1: Overview of Project Components

Component 1: Revitalizing Government-Community Linkages

1. The objective of this component is to revitalize linkages between government and target communities. Both provincial and central governments regard Community Officers as valuable in supporting and strengthening their outreach and extension activities. Necessarily, given the role of the Community Officers, this will be achieved primarily through working with relevant departments of participating provinces, but linkages will also be fostered with central government agencies responsible for policing, land and natural resources and development financing. This objective will also be achieved by assisting provincial governments to fulfill key responsibilities associated with the selection, contracting, remuneration, coordination, reporting, performance management and supervision of Community Officers.
2. A feature of the component will be a facilitated process of working with participating provinces to engage with communities in order to reach a common understanding around how Community Officers' work will be tailored to the local context and how Community Officers will interact with relevant community institutions and actors and with government authorities. Through this process, it is expected that provincial staff, assisted by the project, will assess the most significant problems facing communities (including the nature of disputes, and gender-specific issues) and how well existing mechanisms are responding to these issues. Agreement would then be reached around where Community Officers 'fit in': who they interact with locally, what disputes and grievances they would focus on, how they are expected to behave and what kinds of accountability, locally and with government, should be defined, so as to tailor the Community Officers' activities to particular contexts. As part of this process, the provincial staff, assisted by the project, will collect baseline data on existing use of community grievance mechanisms and community satisfaction with the management of grievances by these mechanisms and existing levels of government-community linkages.
3. This component would also support the provinces to raise public awareness of the roles and responsibilities of Community Officers in the context of existing community governance arrangements; and formalize systems to ensure that Community Officers, local interlocutors and provinces are held accountable for their actions, including mechanisms for community feedback and grievance redress. Under this component, the relevant provincial department will be provided with the necessary office and communication equipment to enable them to effectively carry out their roles.

Component 2: Strengthening the Capabilities of Community Officers and Local Authorities

4. The objective of this component is to ensure that Community Officers and the local actors with whom they interact are adequately equipped with the knowledge, skills and tools to perform their agreed roles. To ensure the relevance and impact of capacity development investments, it

is envisaged that the project will employ a learning-by-doing approach through the provision of short-term training and on-the-job mentoring. This will be planned and implemented by the MPGIS in collaboration with provincial authorities. The development of a standard training package will be a feature of this component. Training will principally be delivered through regular support and supervision visits to host communities involving a number of provincial and national officials. In addition, group training events will take place in provincial capitals involving all Community Officers within the province. Certain training activities will be extended to include relevant provincial government staff, civil society including local actors (eg. chiefs and leaders), and local representative bodies that exist in some provinces such as Ward Development Committees and Councils of Chiefs.

5. A mechanism for sharing lessons learnt across provinces (and potentially with neighboring countries, e.g. Bougainville/PNG) will be supported, for example by cross-provincial visits and joint review activities. Job-related equipment (eg. uniforms, mobile phones/two-way radios, office supplies) will be provided to Community Officers under this component to enable them to effectively undertake their roles and apply the skills promoted under the project.

Component 3: Project Management

6. The objective of this component is to provide support to MPGIS to effectively implement the project, to ensure that it is carried out in accordance with government and Bank processes and guidelines and contributes evidence-based policy guidance to government. The component will be the responsibility of MPGIS and will include: (i) the management of the project, including technical, financial, procurement, social and environment safeguards, monitoring and evaluation, communications, and grievance redress; (ii) project monitoring and reporting, periodic, at mid-term and completion; and (iii) annual project audits and performance reviews.