





## RESULTS SERIES

# HOW UFGE SUPPORT HAS IMPROVED WOMEN'S LIVELIHOODS IN THE SOLOMON ISLANDS: The Story of the Community Access and Urban Services Enhancement (CAUSE) Project


*Based on recommendations from a UFGE financed study, the Solomon Islands' CAUSE project is providing employment opportunities for women, particularly young and vulnerable women, as well as access to relevant training and counseling services.*


## THE ISSUE

 Women are underrepresented in paid and formal work, including work in the countries' main industries. For example, they account for only 2 percent of those employed in construction.

 Traditional social norms, knowledge and skills gaps, and a lack of access to finance and savings curtail women from participating in better, higher-paying jobs.

## THE RESULT

 CAUSE has delivered training and paid employment to more than 1,700 women, 52 percent of which are young women.

 Women represent 53 percent of team leaders in project activities, 83 percent of participants in literacy and numeracy training, and most of the participants in job coaching and counseling.

While the majority of the Solomon Island population works in the informal sector, 85 percent of women are engaged in vulnerable employment,<sup>1</sup> compared to 77 percent of men.<sup>2</sup> Women are also twice as likely as men to perform "unpaid" work, tend to rely on selling less profitable goods for their livelihoods, and are underrepresented in formal employment across different sectors.<sup>3</sup> For example, only 36 percent of public employees and 2 percent of those employed in construction are women.<sup>4,5</sup>

In addition, gender-based violence (GBV) in the Solomon Islands is high, with 64 percent of women between the ages of 15 and 29 reporting having experienced physical and/or sexual abuse from an intimate partner during their lifetime.<sup>6</sup> Beyond detrimental effects on physical and mental health, such high rates of GBV have been linked to increased absenteeism and turnover rates, affecting both women's participation in paid work and firm performance overall.

Through the [Community Access and Urban Services Enhancement \(CAUSE\) Project](#), the World Bank is supporting the government of the Solomon Islands to bridge the gap in economic opportunities between women and men. CAUSE is improving basic infrastructure and services for many of the Solomon Islands' most vulnerable people, particularly those

<sup>1</sup> Defined as work that is unpaid, or with an irregular income, and lacks formal work arrangements with social protection benefits.

<sup>2</sup> World Bank. 2018. [Gender Data Portal](#).

<sup>3</sup> World Bank. 2019. *Enhancing the Economic Participation of Vulnerable Young Women in Solomon Islands study*.

<sup>4</sup> ADB. 2018. *Women and Business in the Pacific*. Manila: ADB.

<sup>5</sup> [Household Income and Expenditure Survey \(HIES\), 2012-2013](#).

<sup>6</sup> Secretariat of the Pacific Community. 2009. *Solomon Islands family health and safety study: a study on violence against women and children*. Noumea: SPC. 66

in urban areas. It aims to help communities become self-sustaining by prioritizing skills training, short-term employment, and income generation opportunities. In less than three years, infrastructure and maintenance work under the project has provided jobs to more than 3,500 people. One-half of those employed in project activities are women, 52 percent of which are young<sup>7</sup> women.<sup>8</sup>

In order to identify the constraints to, and effective measures for, increasing the economic participation of vulnerable young women in urban and semi-urban areas, the CAUSE project team undertook a study supported by the [Umbrella Facility for Gender Equality \(UFGE\)](#). The [Enhancing the Economic Participation of Vulnerable Young Women in Solomon Islands](#) study, published in 2019, informed the work of government and development partners supporting gender, youth, disability, and livelihood activities in the Solomon Islands. It identified a set of 18 specific recommendations to enhance the inclusion of women (particularly young and vulnerable women)<sup>9</sup> and other excluded groups in CAUSE; 15 recommendations have already been implemented.

Based on evidence on knowledge and skills gaps in areas like numeracy produced under the study, CAUSE engaged in a pilot project with the Literacy Association of Solomon Islands to **provide literacy and numeracy classes for project participants** in Honiara.<sup>10</sup> To date, close to **110 women (representing 83 percent of participants) have benefited from literacy and numeracy classes**. Under the project's additional financing, training will be expanded to all targeted urban locations.

As recommended under the study, CAUSE has also **promoted the equitable representation of women among team leaders of urban works activities**, including by tracking and reporting the number of female leaders. Currently, **women represent 53 percent of team leaders**, including 19 percent of leaders in infrastructure subprojects and 60 percent in waste collection.

Beyond benefiting from training and short-term employment, community members who join the project have access to additional services that are based on study recommendations, such as **job coaching and employment support; counseling and GBV referral services; and information and skills training sessions**. For instance, the study found that the lack of financial literacy and knowledge on saving services and techniques represents a barrier for women to engage in higher income generating business activities. As such, sessions on these topics have been included in a training curriculum. Also, based on study recommendations, GBV-related services are provided, including individual and confidential counseling, and referrals to family support and GBV services.

So far, **53 percent of participants** from the more than **1,400 job coaching sessions conducted under the project have been women**. **Women also represent 72 percent of the more than 360 beneficiaries of information and skills training sessions, and 81 percent of beneficiaries from 150+ counseling sessions**. Study recommendations will continue to be implemented during the project's additional financing. These include, but are not limited to, offering pre-bid trainings and orientations to encourage contractors to engage more women in their projects.

<sup>7</sup> Youth was defined as those between the ages of 16 and 29.

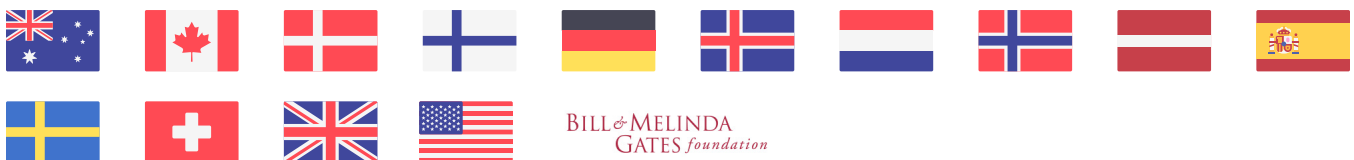
<sup>8</sup> As of March 2021.

<sup>9</sup> The study sought to elicit the perspectives of some of the most marginalized members of society living in low-income urban/peri-urban communities, namely those of unemployed young women with low literacy/education levels, including young mothers and women with disabilities.

<sup>10</sup> Fifty-four percent of women participating in the study had not completed secondary education.



The Umbrella Facility for Gender Equality is a World Bank Group multidonor trust fund investing in knowledge, diagnostics, impact evaluations and data to help policy makers and practitioners close gender gaps in countries and sectors. Learn more on [www.worldbank.org/gender/ufge](http://www.worldbank.org/gender/ufge)



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