

GENDER AND SOCIAL INCLUSION STRATEGY
FOR THE COMMUNITY GRIEVANCE & GOVERNANCE MANAGEMENT PROJECT



Margaret Wete, the first female Community Officer (known locally as Peace Wardens) in Makira

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Context	2
<i>Social inclusion in governance and conflict management</i>	2
3. Gender and Social Inclusion Strategy	8
<i>Addressing barriers to access and use of the CGGMP</i>	8
<i>Increasing women's leadership within CGGMP</i>	16
4. Project contact information	20

GENDER AND SOCIAL INCLUSION STRATEGY FOR THE COMMUNITY GRIEVANCE & GOVERNANCE MANAGEMENT PROJECT

1. Introduction

This strategy was prepared for the Community Governance and Grievance Management Project (CGGMP) which aims to strengthen community grievance management capabilities and enhance the effectiveness of linkages with government in targeted communities. The project is administered by the Ministry of Provincial Government and Institutional Strengthening (MPGIS) and works with participating provincial governments¹ to fulfill key responsibilities associated with the selection, contracting, coordination, reporting, performance management and supervision of

Community Officers (COs). Community Officers (known as Peace Wardens in Makira) work to help communities to solve problems related to social disorder and conflicts themselves and get help from government when they need to. The aim of their work is to support leaders to address disputes and to build relationships and links between communities and the Police, Provincial Government and the Solomon Islands Government.

This *Gender and Social Inclusion Strategy* was developed over the months of May-June 2017 following a consultative process with Community Officers and leaders in the communities in which they work, project staff and government stakeholders.² The strategy was also discussed at separate meetings of the Project Steering Committee, Project Management Unit and development agencies working on related issues (particularly youth, women and gender-based violence). There was also liaison with the Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs to ensure this strategy is compatible with national-level policies, in particular the recently launched Women, Peace and Security National Action Plan (see Box 1). The upcoming National Youth Policy 2017-2030 also includes a policy priority area “Peace Building Security and Citizenship” which is relevant to this strategy and includes youth involvement in strengthening local mechanisms to

BOX 1: Women, Peace and Security National Action Plan 2017-2021 & CGGM Project

This national-level plan, launched in 2017, is structured around United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and is designed to address the lack of participation of women in official peace processes, security and related decision-making.

Several of the plan’s actions relate to the Community Governance and Grievance Management Project’s work particularly actions to:

- * build capacity and allocate resources in conflict prevention & peacebuilding processes (Actions 1.1.d, 3.2.a)
- * formalize and resource women’s engagement in community, provincial and national peacebuilding activities (Action 4.1.b)
- * build rural women’s capacity to engage in community conflict management (Action 4.1.c)
- * cement equitable processes (Actions 4.2.a, 4.2.b, 4.2.c)

This gender and social inclusion strategy is an action of MPGIS to fulfil obligations under Action 4.2.b which encourages government to review projects to “assess the extent that they deliver equitable benefits to women and men’s peace building and reconciliation priorities, and that program approaches actively challenge and transform discriminatory attitudes and gender norms”.

¹ At June 2017, Makira and Rennell-Bellona Province were participating in the project with planned expansion to Malaita and Guadalcanal Provinces.

² Kind thanks are given to staff at all organisations who provided interviews and comments on the strategy: Ministry of Provincial Government and Institutional Strengthening, World Bank, Ministry of Women, Children, Youth and Family Affairs, Royal Solomon Islands Police Force, Ministry of Justice, Renbel Provincial Government, Makira Ulawa Provincial Government, Community Officers and Project Management Staff, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia), Save the Children Australia, World Vision, Renbel Council of Women, Makira-Ulawa Council of Women. Disability and youth leaders, chiefs, church leaders, school principals and women leaders were also consulted as part of this study.

prevent conflict and help re-integrate young people who may have violated the law into community life.³

Dr Anouk Ride, research consultant, formulated the initial analysis and draft which was further refined by project management and cross-checking with key informants in the various government ministries. Strategy actions were further prioritised by project staff, with immediate actions identified by timing and some actions integrated into project activities identified as ongoing. Activities undertaken to advance strategy actions will be further detailed in the three-month project plans and regular reporting to the Project Steering Committee.

Using the generally accepted concept in the development sector that gender is a social construct, the analysis used to form this strategy examines how gender roles in different communities and cultural settings support or obstruct involvement of women, men, female and male youth in conflict resolution. Gender is understood as social, behavioural and cultural attributes expectations and norms associated with being male or female. However, considering gender alone as a barrier to participation in conflict resolution can mask other social disadvantage - which in the Solomon Islands context can include age (youth being marginalized from decision making), disability and other factors specific to certain locations (such as ethnic minorities). Therefore, the project addresses gender taking a more an intersectional approach to consider how gender also relates to age, ethnicity, disability and other characteristics.

Women, youth and people with disabilities face exclusion from decision-making processes in Solomon Islands due to a range of colonial and post-colonial, cultural and circumstantial factors, as discussed in Section 2: *Context* section of this document. This strategy is designed to address problems that have arisen from this exclusion – one is that these groups are less likely to access and use services around dispute resolution and governance (which is largely seen as a sphere for senior males to make decisions). Another is that some issues adversely affect women and children, such as gender-based violence, which also needs specific responses for victims, so they too can access appropriate support. In Section 3, subsection entitled *Addressing barriers to access and use of the CGGMP* analysis identifies local ways, institutions and processes that can be used to encourage use of the project by all groups in society.

Another key problem this project deals with is the dominance of older men in official leadership roles. In the subsection entitled *Increasing women's leadership [within CGGMP]* a specific analysis is provided of gender and leadership to highlight ways in which communities can be encouraged to nominate, elect and support women to be Community Officers (recognizing that changes towards gender equity for these officers is also likely to pave the way for more youth participation and leadership, as highlighted in the discussion below).

While this strategy is designed to foster more social inclusion, particularly the participation of women and youth, the consultative nature of the strategy process attempts to work with positive traditions, changes and ideas within key actors and communities, to exercise cultural sensitivity and ensure local ownership of the strategy goals and approaches. The CGGMP works with local strengths, particularly local leadership, to advance change through providing inclusive spaces to discuss conflict issues and resolution strategies, to nominate and elect community leaders to coordinate responses to these issues and to link communities with government and services. Using this theory of change, this strategy then makes sure the needs of youth and women are

³ This policy is to be launched in 2017.

recognised in these key functions of the project, that processes around these functions are inclusive, and that local support for women's leadership can be consolidated through project activities. Key changes precipitated by this strategy were more recording of diversity in logbook and project data, changes to training materials to identify and work with disadvantage, providing more spaces for women to talk about gender based violence, and greater coordination between the project and provincial and national level services and supports.

The intent is this strategy will inform project actions for the current phase of the project in Makira and Rennell-Bellona and its planned expansion into Guadalcanal and Malaita provinces. The following document includes an analysis of gender and social inclusion as it relates to the project, then details objectives, approaches, and actions for the strategy.

2. Context

Social inclusion in governance and conflict management

Women's role in peacebuilding in Solomon Islands is demonstrated through many local cultural traditions of women advising men against violence and intervention in armed conflict and the experience of women's activism for peace during the civil conflict from 1998-2003 (known as the "tensions"). For instance, Pollard has described how AreAre women in Malaita use cultural taboos around the female body and female reproduction to stop fighting, a practice also observed in several other Malaitan, Guadalcanal and Makiran societies in the past.⁴ In the Pacific context, female peace activists establish 'entitlements' through church and culture to act as peacebuilders⁵ (the Church opening up space for rural women in Solomon Islands to organize and be involved in key decisions)⁶. Church women, market seller women, and various women grouped under the Women for Peace association acted as mediators, advocates for peace and organisers of safe spaces in places with armed conflict during the tensions. However, these traditions and recent experience of women as peacemakers has not translated into equitable participation in governance and conflict management in the post-conflict period (2003-present).

In Solomon Islands, women are dramatically under-represented in decision making bodies, from local village-based committees to provincial governments and Parliament (in 2017 only one Member of Parliament is female) and this has restricted the participation of women in policing, security and conflict resolution. This disadvantage has arisen from a complex set of factors including local cultural traditions which relegated the role of women to the domestic sphere, compounded by the experience of colonialization and its promotion of males rather than females into leadership in government, police, commerce and church religion, current trends to preference natural resource extraction as the primary driver of development and male control of decisions around land⁷, and women's lack of real economic and political power to engage in Solomon political contests.⁸

⁴ Alice Pollard, *Givers of wisdom, labourers without gain: Essays on women in the Solomon Islands* (Suva, Institute of Pacific Studies/University of the South Pacific, 2000).

⁵ Nicole George, "Institutionalising Women, Peace and Security in the Pacific Islands: Gendering the 'architecture of entitlements'?" *International Political Science Review* Vol. 37: 3 (2016): 375-389

⁶ Debra McDougall, "Fellowship and Citizenship as Models of National Community: United Church Women's Fellowship in Ranongga, Solomon Islands" *Oceania* Vol.74: 2 (Sep-Dec 2003): 61-80.

⁷ Matthew Allen, Sinclair Dinnen, Daniel Evans and Rebecca Monson, *Justice Delivered Locally: Systems, Challenges, and Innovations in Solomon Islands* (Washington, DC: World Bank, Justice for the Poor Research Report, August 2013): 21.

⁸ Solomon Islands elections are typically marked by cash payouts or "gifts" to electors, coalitions of powerful political and economic interests to form a majority government and electors' preference for candidates that have proven tangible material benefit to

As highlighted in the recently launched *Solomon Islands Women, Peace and Security National Action Plan 2017-2021*, the structure of peacebuilding adopted by Solomon Islands Government and the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands also disadvantaged women. Former militants and political leaders were given preference in designing peace agreements and implementation of early post-conflict measures, with RAMSI only recognising gender as a cross-cutting theme to its Partnership Framework in 2009 and taking specific actions to increase women's participation in government and police late in its intervention.⁹

While RAMSI's presence and the end of armed conflict allowed economic activity to rise since 2003, the predominance of natural resource extraction as a driver for development has undercut women's participation in decision-making in rural areas. While subsistence and small scale agriculture, the mainstay of Solomon Islands, is more communally organized with women playing key roles, access arrangements for land for mining and logging has been controlled by men.

Maetala¹⁰ describes how in Makira matrilineal societies usurpation of genealogical knowledge by men is used to establish group identities and land ownership, thus placing them at the forefront of decision-making about land and royalty payments. While Makiran custom has been described as "following the way of the woman"¹¹ meaning to be nurturing and hospitable, this is under considerable strain with power accorded to people who control and facilitate access to rural areas for natural resource extraction and trade (including a recent boom in establishment of bottleshops and sales of Solbrew, a brand of locally-produced alcohol owned by Heineken).

In the case of Rennell-Bellona, patrilineal land ownership was compounded by traditional beliefs that women were among the social groups considered not fit for senior leadership roles.¹² Effects of these cultural barriers have been carried over into society after the introduction of Christianity with few women in village and provincial level positions of office or leadership. Plus, the rapid pace of mining and logging recently has often seen men profit from deals and be more able to leave Rennell while women are more likely to stay in the province and suffer disproportionately the effects of environmental damage, sexual exploitation by visiting crew, violence and diversion of income in family following increased male access to and use of alcohol, and reductions in livelihood and subsistence opportunities.

Women are the primary caregivers in Solomon Islands, and in rural areas are usually responsible for tending to gardens that supply the family's food. These responsibilities constrain time they have available to participate in educational opportunities and decision-making forums, which is particularly notable for women who are poor and have many children (see Box 2). Nationally, the poorest households are rural households without any male members – typically a female living

communities. Men, particularly those that have already captured government resources and natural resource rents, are advantaged due to these electoral dynamics. See: Kiri Dicker, Afu Billy & Alison Barclay, *The Influence of Gender Norms and Attitudes on Voter Preferences in Solomon Islands* (Suva: UN Women Fiji Multi-Country Office, 2016)

⁹ *Solomon Islands Women Peace and Security National Action Plan 2017-2021* (Honiara: Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs, 2017): 19. An instance of the lack of participation in the structure detailed in the Plan was an estimate only 9% of claimants who received compensation in the post-conflict years were women, despite documented impacts of the violence on women including displacement, sexual and physical violence and insecurity.

¹⁰ Ruth Maetala, "Women and Natural Resource Development in Solomon Islands: An Insider View." *eJournal of the Australian Association for the Advancement of Pacific Studies* Issue 1.2 (April 2010): 40.

¹¹ Michael W. Scott "The Matter of Makira: Colonialism, Competition, and the Production of Gendered Peoples in Contemporary Solomon Islands and Medieval Britain", *History and Anthropology*, Vol. 23 No. 1 (2012): 115-148

¹² For a theory about how traditional beliefs in sky gods undermined women's status in Bellona by undervaluing women's role in reproduction and genealogy of the tribe, see Rolf Kuschel, "The Bellonese attitude towards nature" in Thomas Bargatzky & Rolf Kuschel eds. *The Invention of Nature* (1994).

with children, and so rural women living without partners are more likely to experience extreme poverty.

People with disabilities also are less likely to participate in economic and political activities. In Makira and Isabel provinces 1 in 5 people are reported to have a disability.¹⁶ In provinces like Rennell-Bellona which have high rates of migration to Honiara, people with disabilities are often “left behind” for care in the villages, under the care of women. Women with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to sexual and physical violence¹⁷, and relatively little attention has been paid to understanding barriers and increasing participation of women with disabilities in decision-making.

The lack of recognition of Solomon women’s leadership – in, for example in subsistence agriculture and trade, handicrafts and other cultural products, church organizing groups, civil society organisations and economic sectors such as the media and retail – helps cement historical barriers to women in decision making forums. This lack of social experience of women as leaders in Solomon political systems is a critical barrier to women in leadership – for example statistical evidence indicates monarchies in which women can be queen are the type of government institutions which most enhance women’s election to national legislatures.¹⁸ The inclusion of women as chiefs in Isabel historically has also likely contributed to more women in Isabel political systems today. In 2017 there were just 5 provincial assembly female members, two from Isabel which is matrilineal and has female chiefs (and one each in Malaita, Western Province and Temotu).

Although education has the potential to increase women’s chances of participation in decision-making, there is likely to be a long lag between recent improvements in increasing Solomon girls’ access to primary and secondary school education and translating this into increasing numbers of women in positions of influence. Education can increase society’s experience of women in leadership, female teachers demonstrating women in a leadership role in formative years,

BOX 2: Barriers to participation – a provincial snapshot

While all provinces in Solomon Islands have similar disadvantages of women, in some provinces, the levels of disadvantage are particularly pronounced.

Rennell-Bellona Province has the highest ratio of dependents (100 dependents per 100 people of working age)¹³ with the women bearing the bulk of responsibility for care of the elderly, children and youth. Malaita Province is another that has high numbers of dependents (96 per 100 people) with women responsible for the bulk of caregiving and so limited time to participate in decision-making forums. Both provinces also have the highest fertility rates - Rennell-Bellona (5.9 children per woman on average), Malaita (5.6) ¹⁴ which has been attributed to both cultural factors and the lack of locally available services such as family planning and health.¹⁵ These factors also influence education levels – particularly of women and girls – with the Malaita population having the lowest education level of all provinces and Rennell-Bellona having the largest gap between education of men and women (33% of men have some secondary school education or higher compared to 19% of women).

¹³ National Statistics Office, Population and Housing Census Gender Report. (Honiara: Solomon Islands Government, 2009): 24.

¹⁴ Op.cit. 36.

¹⁵ In consultations in Rennell-Bellona with women and youth, the low status of young women plus the lack of knowledge about sexual health and family planning and access to services was attributed as causes to high rates of teenage pregnancy, and “mining/logging babies” which is reportedly on the rise.

¹⁶ National Statistics Office, Population and Housing Census Gender Report, 45.

¹⁷ One study of Kiribati, Solomon Islands and Tonga states that women and girls with disabilities are two to three times more likely to be victims of physical and sexual abuse than those without a disability. See: J. Spratt, *A Deeper Silence – The Unheard Experiences of Women with Disabilities – Sexual and Reproductive Health and Violence against women in Kiribati, Solomon Islands and Tonga* (Suva, Fiji: UNFPA Pacific Sub-regional Office, 2013).

¹⁸ An international study found the “mean percentage of women elected to national office for nations that have high electoral competition but no monarchy open to women is only 12.56, while the mean percentage for nations that have both soars to 28.06”. See Eileen McDonagh, “Political Citizenship and Democratization: the Gender Paradox”, *American Political Science Review* Vol. 96, No. 3 (September 2002): 540.

however female leadership in the education sector in Solomon Islands is also very low with only 3% of school principals being female.¹⁹

Many of the barriers women face to participation in decision-making – in particular cultural norms of subservience and lack of political and economic resources – are shared by youth²⁰. While youth makes up a significant and growing part of the population of Solomon Islands – seven out of 10 Solomon Islanders are under 30 years old²¹ – they are almost non-existent in positions of political office and face significant barriers to employment and economic participation. There are gender difference in these barriers, particularly in rural areas where young women are more likely to nominate “literacy” as an educational need whereas young men are more likely to nominate “livelihoods” training and education.²²

In the past, aimless male youth were prone to recruitment for militant or criminal groups (as was experienced during the tensions). Unrest around electoral campaigns, notably in 2006, have also involved large cohorts of youth. While “wayward youth” are often blamed for these sorts of disturbances they are mostly led or sanctioned by influential adult males. However, currently unemployment and exclusion from economic and political activities is an underlying cause of high levels of male youth involvement in alcohol and substance abuse and related public disturbances.

As highlighted in *Justice Delivered Locally*, a report on local conflicts and their management, the involvement of youth in alcohol and substance abuse and related anti-social behavior and violence is a critical factor in local-level conflict and violence in the majority of communities in Solomon Islands. The report’s authors commented: “The impact of consumption on youth is particularly alarming and renders Solomon Islands at risk of producing large segments of future generations who are unproductive and plagued by mental and general health problems.”²³ As highlighted by Jourdan,²⁴ low self-esteem of youth, linked to their lack of productive roles, has a significant effect on mental health and ability of youth to participate in the economy, politics and society. The ability of local conflict resolution actors, particularly chief and church leaders, to engage and be relevant to youth is essential to control alcohol/substance abuse and related disturbances.

Alcohol/substance abuse and gender-based violence (GBV) are cross cutting issues that contributes to poor health, lowers participation of disadvantaged groups in community and national life and creates violent dynamics in communities. In a participatory study, “alcohol, marijuana and teenage pregnancy were almost ubiquitous issues for young women” and alcohol was in the top three issues of concern to young men.²⁵ Consultations in Makira and Rennell indicate women are more likely to support restriction of alcohol sales and consumption, perhaps reflecting the correlations between male consumption of alcohol and reduced family income and violence against women. Youth in consultations are more likely to identify the need for diversionary and prevention activities regarding alcohol and violence, specifically sports, music

¹⁹ Laisa Elisha and Frances Edwards, “Exploring teachers’ perceptions of women principals in the Solomon Islands” *Waikato Journal of Education* Vol. 19, Issue 1 (2014): 71-81.

²⁰ For the purposes of this report, the definition used by MWYCFA and National Youth Policy of youth being people aged between 15-29 years is used, however it is noted that different organisations use differing definitions of youth and further standardisation of definitions in data collections is needed.

²¹ National Statistics Office *Report on 2009 Population and Housing Census Basic Tables and Census Description* (Volume 1) (Honiara: Solomon Islands Government, 2009).

²² Ian Scales, *A Report on Youth in Solomon Islands: A Participatory Study of Issues, Needs and Priorities* (Canberra: AusAID, 2003).

²³ Op. cit. Allen et al. 15.

²⁴ Christine Jourdan, *Youth and mental health in Solomon Islands: a situation analysis: tingting helti, tingting siki!* Suva, Fiji: Foundation of the Peoples of the South Pacific International, (2008) 14.

²⁵ Ian Scales, *A Report on Youth in Solomon Islands*, 25.

and cultural activities and livelihood projects as well as awareness and community-based education.²⁶

The *Solomon Islands Family Health and Safety Survey*, reports nearly two-thirds of Solomon Islands women surveyed reported experiencing physical and/or sexual abuse from an intimate partner in their lifetime. The survey indicated intimate partner violence is largely unrelated to most socio-economic and demographic indicators, such as age, education, employment, income and marital status of women. There are strong correlations between experience of violence breeding further violence with men who are violent to others are more likely to be violent towards their wives, as are those who saw women and children being hit or were hit themselves when they were growing up. The Solomon Islands study also found a correlation between male unemployment and violence against women with focus groups pointing to the financial stressors on households, plus changing gender norms, creating arguments between couples.²⁷

In some areas community by-laws involving chiefs and church leaders are reducing alcohol and substance abuse and violence, with the support of the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force, Community Officers and various NGOS (Save the Children's Youth & Alcohol Project, World Vision's Channels of Hope Project and Oxfam's Safe Families Project in particular). Crime Prevention Committees established under RSIPF's Crime Prevention Strategy are working to try and prevent such conflicts at the local level through by-laws, diversionary and prevention activities and better coordination between community leaders.

In terms of justice, the Solomon Islands Government passed the Family Protection Act in 2014, although this did not enter into force until April 2016, and implementation remains at an early stage. The objectives of the Act are (a) to ensure the safety and protection of all persons who experience or witness domestic violence; (b) to provide support and redress for all victims of domestic violence; (c) to facilitate programs for victims of domestic violence to assist their recovery and ensure that they are able to lead a safe and healthy life; (d) to facilitate the issue and enforcement of police safety notices and protection orders to stop domestic violence; (e) to implement certain principles underlying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child; and (f) to create offences in relation to domestic violence and provide for increased sentences for persons convicted of such offences where certain aggravating factors are present.

Data from CGGMP indicates that despite these new legal arrangements, and an increased number of projects aimed at providing options for women experiencing gender-based violence to seek help, most GBV disputes are handled within the family, with chiefs and church being the first point of call if further assistance is required.²⁸ Reporting to police is rare, and even more rare is for women and their families to pursue cases to sentencing and prosecution, although numbers of reports and cases are slowly increasing. The concentration of services (legal, refuge, counselling/mental health and police) in Honiara is a significant obstacle for rural women to seek assistance. However, provinces are making their own arrangements to better coordinate assistance for people facing gender-based violence – such as the established tripartite system

²⁶ Anouk Ride, *Status of Youth in Solomon Islands* (Honiara: UNDP, Forthcoming 2017).

²⁷ Secretariat of the Pacific Community, *Solomon Islands Family Health and Safety Study: a study on violence against women and children*. (Noumea: SPC, 2009).

²⁸ Doug Porter et.al *Community Governance & Grievance Management Project (CGGM) Renbel & Makira Provinces Baseline Survey and Summary Analysis*. (Honiara: World Bank and Ministry of Provincial Government & Institutional Strengthening, 2016).

(chiefs, church, government and police) in Isabel and the Provincial Alliance for Safe Families in Malaita.

Relatively little is known about whether the lack of engagement in services and handling of gender-based violence within the family is perceived as satisfactory or not for the women involved. In surveys, women clearly nominate church and chiefs as being their preferred sources of dispute resolution (with regional variations reflecting the relationship between chiefs and community, some communities having confidence in chiefs compared to others where the chiefs are seen as not effective). However, some local forms of settling GBV disputes, such as the payment of compensation in Malaita may be between males and do relatively little to help the woman involved unless the transaction prompts behavior change. Similarly, the church's emphasis on forgiveness and counsel for families to stay together, if not accompanied by male behavior change, may bolster women to stay in abusive relationships.

3. Gender and Social Inclusion Strategy

Addressing barriers to access and use of the CGGMP

Current Issues

As part of the baseline survey for CGGMP, men, women and youth were asked to identify kinds of conflict in their communities. In Rennell-Bellona, men were more likely to report theft, political disputes and violence relating to property and women much more likely to report logging and mining. This probably reflects the gender roles and biases regarding logging and mining where men capture rents and payments while women are adversely affected by the environmental and social changes caused by these developments.

Similarly, in three surveyed wards in Makira (closest to provincial capital Kira Kira) women were more likely to report disputes they were excluded from - politics and public fights – while men reported murder, property and land/ownership disputes. Youth in both sites reported alcohol/substance abuse, fights and politics as problematic in communities (male youth are involved in alcohol/substance abuse and this often is accompanied by fights in public, whereas politics is identified as a problem in which youth participation is often lacking).

Gender relations poses some challenges to women seeking help from Community Officers (COs). One is that male COs may be intimidating and seen as inapproachable whereas women are more likely to be known to them and to make discussions more comfortable. For gender-based violence issues, it is deemed socially taboo for women talk about intimate subjects with another male, and this is a major barrier to bringing cases to COs' attention. However, a recent analysis of logbook data from December-March 2016 revealed 3% of cases brought to COs in Rennell-Bellona were domestic violence and 4% in Makira. Police in Makira reported the number of women reporting GBV at police stations is increasing rapidly. It would be interesting to examine why these exceptions are occurring, and what could be done to encourage more help-seeking. For instance, in Bellona and Makira, COs often said people close to the couple in which the violence was occurring initially reported cases (rather than the abused women). This is one way in which gender barriers can be overcome, at least to access advice, although further support requires women COs, female police or service providers to talk with women in reportedly abusive situations.

Gender of COs also has an impact on the willingness of youth to talk about problems with the previous *Justice Delivered Locally* report and interviews conducted as part of this analysis indicating women are seen as more approachable by youth and mediators between established leaders, such as chiefs, and youth.²⁹ Similarly, women interviewed in Wards where a female CO was present said women were more likely to listen before deciding what to do and be sympathetic to people and their problems. However, listening skills of male COs in some locations were acknowledged as contributing to their community support. So, regardless of the gender of the CO, outreach, active listening skills and collaborative decision making is required to elicit needs of disadvantaged groups.

Another frequently raised issue by youth in project consultations was that male COs who were aggressive or threatening when youth were drinking or smoking could escalate problems, rather than calm those involved. Young men in particular emphasised the need to understand causes of

²⁹ Allen et. al. *Justice Delivered Locally* 77-78.

alcohol/substance abuse and approach youth in a way that would encourage them to listen and take actions to increase safety. COs too often nominated as a professional development need to have some training and support in how to deal with such situations and with people with mental health issues.

Currently, in the absence of any formal instruction or agreements, COs are working creatively to try and find options for women to talk to other women in sensitive cases such as gender-based violence. Some COs in Makira have appointed female “assistants” to work alongside them and deal with women when the need arises. These assistants can be female members of crime prevention committees (or other similarly mandated local committees) or female church leaders. Female church leaders often have some counselling training, guidance and experience in mediating family disputes (such as members of the Mothers Union in the Anglican Church). Male COs in Bellona can call on the island’s only female CO to deal with issues they are unable to attend, and there is a degree of “sharing” cases across wards, which is possible because of the small size and short travel distances on the island. Rennell-Bellona Province more broadly has discussed the potential in appointing a few roaming female COs whose role would be specifically to work on issues of concern to women and elicit further participation in the project.

More information is needed on use patterns of the CGGMP and intersectional issues. For instance, in interviews many COs said women report incidents to them, but the actual parties in violent incidents were mostly men. There is a lack of information on whether youth are reporting incidents as well and whether young women also report incidents. To date, the project has recorded age and gender in data collection, but not specifically recorded information about people with disabilities. Improved data collection and analysis on gender, age and disability could help identify who are bringing issues to COs and whether disadvantaged groups have access.

However, satisfaction (surveyed as part of project review) indicates, both men and women are generally satisfied with the performance of COs (80% men, 71% women). Confusion around what the role of the Community Officer is (particularly what their roles are vs the Police, whether COs can arrest and prosecute for example) contributed to doubts about the project initially but as experience with COs increases this confusion is declining.

Women and youth groups have expressed a desire for awareness about how to use the complaints mechanism to report COs if necessary. Greater awareness of the complaints mechanism amongst youth and women, would help increase confidence of these groups in the project.

At the provincial level, civil society groups expressed a desire for more information and formal contact with Provincial Government about the CGGMP, particularly as many are in the process of formulating new arrangements for gender-based violence services and crime prevention. Regular meetings between provincial government staff working on the CGGMP and women, youth and disability groups as well as church and other organisations running programs relevant to crime prevention and gender-based violence would also add a feedback loop to the project staff to assist in their project planning and implementation.

Provincial and national-level government staff have expressed a need for better coordination of aid, particularly by international NGOs, in order to complement CGGMP project and government strategies for women and youth empowerment. This is particularly the case for iNGOs with projects around gender-based violence, alcohol/substance abuse, crime prevention and women and youth. Regular stakeholder meetings facilitated by the CGGMP could encourage more

information sharing and coordination between the various government and non-government agencies working on issues related to conflict prevention and management.

Reporting of these meetings up to the Project Steering Committee could also help bring gender and social inclusion issues to their attention more regularly. Better networking at the provincial level can also assist to spread awareness about the role of COs, encourage women and youth to consider leadership (as COs or in advisory roles to the CO) and increase use of the complaints mechanism when needed.

Objective 1: The needs of women, youth and people with disabilities are captured in project research, review, monitoring and evaluation.

The participation of women, youth and people with disabilities will be recorded in all reports on project activities to provide evidence of how their needs are recognized and of their participation in decisions.

Strategic Approaches

- Provide project data disaggregated for gender, age and disability
- Provide culturally appropriate forums for women, youth and people with disabilities to contribute their views and experience to project design and review
- Ensure supervision/monitoring expressly elicit issues of most concern to women
- Support research on GBV and conflict resolution

Actions

ACTION	TIMELINE	IMPLEMENTATION BY
1.1 Organise men, women and youth to discuss, in separate groups, their experience to inform project design, review, monitoring and all community discussions.	Ongoing/In every instance	Project staff & consultants
1.2 Provide disaggregations for gender, age and disability in project surveys	Ongoing/In every instance	Project staff & consultants
1.3 Require recording of age and disability (in addition to gender) in logbook data	Started in training for new logbook template in June/July 2017	Project staff, Provincial Coordinators, COs
1.4 Link with government and non-government agencies currently involved in research around women and conflict resolution and gender-based violence	Initial meeting with WPS NAP 3 rd quarter 2017/Ongoing Provincial level GBV meeting initial meeting 2017/Ongoing	Project staff, MWYCFA
1.5 Review logbook data and project reports to compile reports on participation of disadvantaged groups such as youth, people with disability and women in project activities as well as community leaders in church and chiefly roles.	Ongoing, as part of regular review of logbooks	Provincial Coordinators

Objective 2: Equal access to support by COs is provided for men, women and youth and COs are adept at working with disadvantaged groups.

Different groups in communities are seen to use Community Officers when their support is required, as evidenced through logbook and project reports, with no group being seen to be experiencing violence or conflict but not interacting with the Community Officer.

Strategic Approaches

- Build capacity of COs to work with women, youth, people with disabilities
- Encourage COs to identify disadvantaged groups and strengthen relationships and trust
- Establish mentoring arrangements for COs needing further support with specific issues

Actions

ACTION	TIMELINE	IMPLEMENTATION BY
2.1 Scope options for CO training curriculum content on how to work with gender, people with disabilities (particularly mental health issues), youth and people involved in alcohol and substance abuse from current government and non-government agencies and incorporate into CO training plan. ³⁰	Scope – June 2017 Sessions on disadvantage to be incorporated into training sessions to take place September/October 2017	Project consultant/Project staff
2.2 Facilitate analysis of local power and disadvantage by COs and personal action plans to broaden social relationships and promote equal access.	Sessions on disadvantage to be incorporated into training sessions to take place September/October 2017	Project consultant, Project staff, COs
2.3 Encourage COs to identify issues they have working with disadvantaged groups and seek mentoring relationships for specific needs.	2017-2018	Project staff, COs

³⁰ Stakeholders in the project in Makira expressed a desire for men to train other men about gender issues, to facilitate understanding and practical discussions around the issue.

Objective 3: Special arrangements are provided for women to access support in gender-based violence and related conflict resolution cases.

Women facing gender-based violence are to be referred to spaces in which they can discuss the problem and potential avenues of support with other women through CGGMP.

Strategic Approaches

- Encourage participants in families experiencing GBV to bring cases to COs
- Develop options for women to talk to women COs
- Work with provincial-level networks to strengthen ties between COs and services
- Provide training to COs on gender-based violence and available support provided by community, church, government and police.

Actions

ACTION	TIMELINE	IMPLEMENTATION BY
3.1 Review data capture by COs regarding GBV cases and CO's experience with the intent of further understanding of women's experience of COs in GBV cases and outcomes.	Monthly as part of Provincial Coordinator review, Quarterly as part of M&E Officer review	Provincial Coordinator M&E Officer
3.2 CGGMP, Provincial government and COs meet to decide practicable options for providing access to female COs (options include "roaming" female COs across provinces or wards, CO assistants, quotas, male and female COs at region/ward level).	Incorporated in Mid-Term Review process & Agreement process with decisions in 2017 and full implementation 2018	Project Steering Committee, Project Staff, COs, Provincial Governments
3.3 Provincial and national meetings be held between government, COs and service providers for people experiencing gender-based violence to progress GBV cases and referral pathways.	September-October 2017 (Malaita/Guadalcanal) November-December 2017 (Rennell-Bellona/Makira)	Provincial Coordinator

Objective 4: CGGMP models and supports women’s and youth participation in decision-making at local, provincial and national levels.

Project staff demonstrate inclusive participation, require participation by a range of groups in their activities, as well as coordinate with relevant provincial and national level institutions with mandates to reduce social exclusion.

Strategic Approaches

- Provide men and women trainers & model equal gender roles in project activities
- Elicit participation in trainings by chiefs, elders, religious leaders, women, youth, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities to build understanding of disadvantage and capacity for social inclusion
- Facilitate participation of men, women and youth in CO election and review
- Seek input from provincial-level women, youth and disability civil society groups into project design and implementation.
- Support implementation of related objectives in national women and youth policies

Actions

ACTION	TIMELINE	IMPLEMENTATION BY
4.1 Use female trainers and facilitators in all project activities.	Ongoing/In every instance	Project staff
4.2 Require participation of women, men and youth in CO election process.	Ongoing/In every instance	Project staff
4.3 Hold provincial stakeholders’ meetings with women, youth and disability groups to discuss project progress and seek input.	Annually	Provincial Coordinators
4.4 Formalise involvement of CGGMP with Women, Peace and Security National Action Plan including reporting to action plan meetings.	2017	Project staff/MWYCFA
4.5 Support National Youth Policy 2017-2030 Priority Policy Outcome 4 and report on project progress under this priority area.	2017	Project staff/MWYCFA/MPGIS

Objective 5: Use of procedures to report complaints about CO performance by women and youth rises and remedial action is taken where appropriate.

All groups in society demonstrate awareness of how to complain about Community Officers if need be, women and youth are recorded to have made complaints and project reports indicate these complaints are acted on in a timely manner.

Strategic Approaches

- Regular awareness about complaints procedures
- Provide safe spaces for men, women and youth to report COs for bias, inaction or other breaches of conduct
- Remove COs found to breach code of conduct & provide options for election of new CO

Actions

ACTION	TIMELINE	IMPLEMENTATION BY
5.1 Implement complaints mechanism to all project locations to encourage reporting.	2017-2018	Provincial Coordinators
5.2 Include information about complaints procedures in all presentations, materials and speeches at all local, provincial and national meetings about COs and CGGMP.	2017-2018	Project staff, Provincial Coordinators
5.3 Supply information about complaints procedures to main service and support providers and civil society groups at the provincial level (including women's groups, youth groups and people with disability groups)	2017-2018	Project staff, Provincial Coordinators
5.4 Review complaints procedures with the view to making these more efficient in removing COs found to breach their code of conduct and terms.	2018	Project staff

Increasing women's leadership within CGGMP

Current Issues

While the CGGMP has explicit aims to incorporate the appointment of women COs, the project's success in doing so has been constrained by gender roles and expectations. From the current total 29 COs in 2017, 2 are female (in Bellona Ward 7 and Makira Ward 9 Cluster 8 this CO also being a youth aged 26).

Particularly in rural areas, gender roles restrict movement of women and their socialization with males that are not their kin or in-laws. For example, in West Kwaio (see Box), the main barrier local people nominated in regard to women being COs was obtaining permission from her husband and family. However, the experience of COs in Malaita, Makira and Rennell-Bellona is that women with chiefly links and status are not faced with this barrier to the same degree. Their special status, for example as wife or daughter of a chief, allows them to travel, talk to a variety of people, attend incidents, and speak authoritatively

Secondly, a widely-held view that COs must be physically strong, able to intervene in armed fights or arrest a perpetrator, has been a barrier for women becoming COs. This was particularly the case when the project was new, and there was some confusion between the difference between the responsibilities of a CO and a police officer. Women expressed that they feared physical violence and risks to their safety or that they would not know what to do to handle such incidents. As understanding has increased that COs primary tasks are talking to people likely to be involved in incidents, or after incidents, in order to facilitate conflict prevention and conflict resolution, this barrier is being reduced. For example, in Rennell-Bellona, women interviewed commented that peace-building functions are more aligned to women's responsibilities than men, so therefore they could have a role as COs. Encouraging COs to be viewed more as peacemakers, and less as enforcers of the law, allows communities to draw on cultural traditions of women in peacemaking as a rationale for participation in CGGMP.

BOX 3: The power of one? Influence of female COs on outcomes for women in West Kwaio

A study of the role of two female COs under the former pilot project for community officers (administered by RSIPF) in West Kwaio, Malaita indicated women COs dealt with the same types of cases as male COs. The main difference between male and female COs was the parties involved: "The majority of cases dealt with by women COs involved women, either as victims or as alleged offenders. Cases are normally referred to the COs by chiefs; some cases, however, were reported to women COs by women or young people who would have been reluctant or unwilling to go directly to a chief or a male CO. With no precedent for the role, and very little instruction, women COs are creatively responding to cases, drawing on male support to increase their legitimacy where necessary. At times the women COs perform a 'dispute counselling' role, guiding and supporting disputants through local justice processes. On other occasions, they take a more authoritative role, relying on their connection with the police to bring legitimacy to their words of warning. This dual role is not dissimilar to that performed by male COs." West Kwaio COs were closely related to chiefs and female chiefs have been appointed in the area, reflecting a higher level of participation of women in decision making. However, because the COs were embedded in church and chief decision-making roles, the authors commented there was potential for these to reinforce disadvantages of women, regardless of the involvement of female COs. While female COs can be both reflective of greater recognition of the role of women in decision-making, and transformative through demonstrating the value of women's leadership and facilitation, the impact of single female COs on outcomes for women in communities can only be as effective as the community governance that they form a part of.³¹

³¹ Wren Chadwick and Ali Tuhanuku, *Women at the Interface of Local and State Justice systems: A Case Study of Community Officers in Solomon Islands*, Unpublished Paper.

In Rennell-Bellona, there was an Executive Order banning COs from being involved in logging and mining disputes – often a cause of violent conflict in communities. This also may help lower risks to safety for women COs working in the Province as it mandates that such matters be reported directly to the police.

Practical considerations of time and money are also a factor with women's duties in the domestic sphere, particularly caring for children and growing and cooking food, limiting their ability to consider and commit to demanding roles such as that of CO. In areas where women have low levels of education, high numbers of children and low incomes, (e.g. Malaita and Rennell-Bellona, See Box 2) these resource and time barriers, added to patriarchal leadership traditions, have reduced the number of women in leadership.

COs are appointed after community members nominate candidates and vote in secret. The process is monitored by project staff to ensure transparency and there is provision for an equal number of male and female nominees. However, due to the gender barriers mentioned above, the number of female nominees has been lower than males and some women have dropped out of the race along the way.

Women that were successfully elected in Makira and Bellona have some common characteristics. They had close family relations to the chief and therefore special status to speak, travel and carry out their duties. They also had some experience with the Police and understood a little about the system for police reporting and prosecution through family links or experience. They had secured their support from the community in large part from winning the youth and women vote (the women's vote in Bellona being particularly influenced by church groups). Because the voting process requires women, youth and men to be involved, the women and youth vote is generally at least 50% or more of the counted votes (as opposed to other electoral processes which do not necessarily solicit youth and women participation). When asked why they voted for a female CO community representatives cited three key factors – firstly they were locally embedded (staying in the community, versus other leaders who went out for long periods) and secondly they had served the community (for example in the ECE in Makira and in youth sporting groups in Bellona). In both cases, their service in volunteer roles in the community had earned the female COs support with youth in particular. Finally, the women COs were seen as approachable by men, women and youth and they reportedly felt they were more likely to listen to their concerns.

There are also important differences between the current female COs: why they secured community support and how they worked. For instance in Ward 9, Cluster 8, men, women and youth uniformly said they voted for that particular female candidate because of her education (she has completed secondary school, whereas many leaders had no or little school education). This female CO also worked only as a team, attending incidents with the chief and others.

Voters for the Bellonese CO did not mention education as a factor, instead mentioning her status and experience. The Bellonese female CO was attending incidents by herself running "shuttle diplomacy" (talking to one party and then the other separately, trying to get them to see the other's point of view before, bringing them together at the end). While she consulted chiefs and others, her work was seen as effective because she had friendly relationships on an individual level with many people involved in incidents and could help them change attitudes and behavior.

Encouraging communities to nominate high status women and those that have demonstrated their use and responsibility to the community, chiefs in particular to nominate such women, and encouraging such women themselves to consider becoming COs could increase the number of female COs. In addition, there needs to be consideration in project communications and awareness how to reduce gender barriers through clarifying the role of COs.

Effectiveness of female COs, like male COs, is highly dependent on local level governance and police and government responsiveness. If local governance is poor and conflict issues are tense (for example in areas with violent incidents around mining and logging) it will be difficult for women to confront both gender barriers and entrenched conflict and social dysfunction. It is not surprising that where female COs have been elected are generally “peaceful” communities, with low levels of violent conflict. Similarly, female COs have reported that trust the community has in them is linked to whether the Police respond when needed – if the Police cannot back up COs by attending communities to conduct awareness or attend serious incidents in a timely manner, then it is seen that COs do not have the Police as “shadow of the law” behind them, and therefore can be disregarded. Similarly, the ability of the Province to respond to CO concerns around pay, reporting and other issues affects the ability of female COs to carry out their duties.



Jennifer Lewis (right picture, left), the first female Community Officer in Bellona, was elected due to her solid relationships with the community through her many years organizing sports programs for youth (left picture) and support from leaders such as Chief John Tay (right picture, right).

Objective 6: Community Officers, and local advisors to COs, increase the participation of women in leadership and conflict resolution.

More women take up the role of Community Officer and women are demonstrably active in bringing cases to male COs, advising on their decisions and supporting resolution of local conflicts. Male and female COs are required to demonstrate consultation and decision-making with women, youth and men and build collaborative decisions and responses to local issues.

Strategic Approaches

- Promote collegial and collaborative leadership styles
- Increase understanding of role of COs to remove gender bias
- Facilitate sharing of experiences and mentoring between COs
- Foster local debate on benefits of selection of female COs and prior examples of women in leadership
- Encourage leaders to nominate female candidates
- Monitor elections to ensure participation of women and youth, as well as men

Actions

ACTION	TIMELINE	IMPLEMENTATION BY
6.1 Require all COs to demonstrate in logbooks consultation with women in decision-making around conflict prevention and resolution.	From introduction of new logbook in June 2017/Ongoing	Project staff
6.2 Conduct awareness, on role of CO to reduce perceived need of physical strength and discuss how women may fulfil CO duties.	Ongoing	Project staff, COs
6.3 Facilitate forums for COs to share experience of their personal action plans and conduct of their role, including how different COs have worked with different genders, age groups and other characteristics (such as ethnic minorities)	Conducted at Quarterly Cluster Meetings	Provincial Coordinator M&E Officer
6.4 Convene separate meetings for men, women and youth to discuss male and female nominations, encouraging nominations of female or youth CO candidates prior to nomination process.	In every instance of election	Project staff
6.5 Hold separate meetings for men, women and youth to discuss electoral candidate choices after nominations and prior to the voting process.	In every instance of election	Project staff

6.6 Profile the benefits of female COs, including support from male leadership, through project awareness.	Ongoing	Project staff
--	---------	---------------

4. Project contact information

Ravin Dhari
Project Manager
RDhari@mpgis.gov.sb

Dr Anouk Ride
Researcher
anouk.ride.com@gmail.com