



Stocktake of the gender
mainstreaming capacity of
Pacific Island governments
- Solomon Islands -



**Stocktake of the gender mainstreaming capacity
of
Pacific Island governments**

SOLOMON ISLANDS

Edited by

**Treva Braun, Gender Equality Adviser at the Secretariat of the Pacific
Community**

Secretariat of the Pacific Community

Noumea, New Caledonia

2012

©Copyright Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) 2012

All rights for commercial / for profit reproduction or translation, in any form, reserved. SPC authorises the partial reproduction or translation of this material for scientific, educational or research purposes, provided that SPC and the source document are properly acknowledged. Permission to reproduce the document and/or translate in whole, in any form, whether for commercial / for profit or non-profit purposes, must be requested in writing. Original SPC artwork may not be altered or separately published without permission.

Original text: English

Secretariat of the Pacific Community Cataloguing-in-publication data

Braun, Treva

Stocktake of the gender mainstreaming capacity of Pacific island governments: Solomon Islands / edited by Treva Braun

1. Gender mainstreaming – Solomon Islands
2. Women's rights – Solomon Islands

I. Braun, Treva II. Title III. Secretariat of the Pacific Community

323.340 995 93

AACR2

ISBN: 978-982-00-0527-3

This publication was prepared as part of the Institutional Stocktake of National Women's Machineries in Pacific Island Countries project, which was jointly funded by the Asian Development Bank and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (now UN Women), and managed by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community.

Contents

Acknowledgements	1
List of abbreviations and acronyms	2
INTRODUCTION	3
1. Objectives and methodology	4
2. Country overview	6
a. Facts and figures	6
b. Key gender issues.....	7
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS	10
1. National women’s machinery	10
a. Structure	10
b. Assessment	14
2. Enabling environment overview	17
a. Legal and policy framework.....	17
b. Political will	19
c. Organisational culture.....	22
d. Accountability mechanisms	25
e. Technical capacity	26
f. Adequacy of financing for gender equality.....	27
3. Additional factors	28
a. Lack of women in decision making and entrenched stereotyping	28
b. Women human rights critical in conflict resolution	28
c. Adverse impact of socio-economic and environmental changes	28
POTENTIAL STRATEGIC APPROACHES FOR GENDER MAINSTREAMING	29
2. Tools development	29
3. Gender statistics	30
4. National, sectoral and corporate plans	30
5. Strengthening of PSC	30
APPENDIX	31
BIBLIOGRAPHY	32

Acknowledgements

Many people contributed to the oversight, research and writing of this report.

We wish to particularly acknowledge the Solomon Islands government for its interest in undergoing the stocktake, and for the open and constructive participation of so many of its agents in the research stages. The openness of a government to institutional review and analysis, and its willingness to implement change based on that analysis, are critical first steps in continually improving governance and development processes for the benefit of the country and its citizens. Similarly we wish to acknowledge the members of civil society and donor and development partners based in Solomon Islands who participated in interviews and focus group discussions for their important insights.

The project manager for the stocktake and editor of this report was Treva Braun, Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) Gender Equality Adviser. Gayle Nelson of Nagada Consultants designed the stocktake methodology. The lead consultant researcher was Sivia Qoro and the national consultant researcher was Nancy Kwalea. The primary government focal points were Ethel Sigimanu, Permanent Secretary and Janet Tuhaika, Director of the Ministry of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs (MWYCA). Hugo Hebala, then Chief Planning Officer (Social Service Sector) in the Ministry of National Planning and Aid Coordination and now Director of the Research, Policy, Planning, and Implementation Division of MWYCA, was a key contributor to the preliminary discussions on the stocktake findings and potential strategies. Technical support and inputs were provided by Ana Laqeretabua (United Nations Development Fund for Women – UNIFEM) and Sakiko Tanaka, Sunhwa Lee and Maria Melei (Asian Development Bank – ADB). Brigitte Leduc, SPC Gender Equality Officer and Mélanie Paquet, SPC Research and Project Assistant (Gender Equality) provided additional research and technical support. Finally, Barbara O'Dwyer (Australian Agency for International Development – AusAID), Joanne Lee Kunatuba (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat) and Doreen Buettner (UNIFEM) provided important inputs at a workshop to discuss the preliminary stocktake findings and potential strategies.

Funding was provided jointly by SPC, ADB and UNIFEM (now UN Women).

Our sincere thanks go to all of these people and agencies.

Secretariat of the Pacific Community

List of abbreviations and acronyms

AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
BPA	Beijing Platform for Action
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSO	Civil society organisations
DHS	Demographic and health survey
GEWD	Gender equality and women's development (national policy)
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
JD	Job description
MDPAC	Ministry of Development Planning and Aid Coordination
MEHRD	Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MOH	Ministry of Health
MNURP	Ministry National Unity, Reconciliation and Peace
MTDS	Medium term development strategy
MWYCA	Ministry of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs
MYWSR	Ministry of Youth, Women, Sports and Recreation
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NWM	National women's machinery
OXFAM	Oxford Committee for Famine Relief
PSC	Public Service Commission
SICAFOW	Solomon Islands Christian Association Federation of Women
SIFHSS	Solomon Islands Family Health and Safety Study
SIFGA	Solomon Islands Full Gospel Church Association
SINCW	Solomon Islands National Council of Women
SINHSP	Solomon Islands National Health Strategic Plan
SINSO	Solomon Islands National Statistics Office
SPC	Secretariat of the Pacific Community
STI	Sexually transmitted infection
TOR	Terms of reference
TFR	Total fertility rate
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VBMS	Vois Blong Mere Solomon
WDD	Women's Development Division

INTRODUCTION

It is now widely recognised that development and governance processes will not be effective or sustainable until women and men participate in and benefit from such processes on a basis of both formal and substantive equality. Despite this, women continue to be significantly under-represented in governance and development processes and experience discrimination and diminished opportunity in virtually all development sectors. Contrary to a wide range of commitments that Pacific Island governments have made to achieving equality between men and women, women's needs, issues, perspectives and contributions continue in many cases to be on the periphery of development and governance dialogue.

'Mainstreaming' a gender perspective across all multi-sectoral development and governance work was universally recognised in 1995 at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China as a critical strategy for achieving government commitments to gender equality and sustainable development. The Beijing Platform for Action (BPA) states that:

Governments and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes so that, before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men, respectively' (UN Women 1995: para 202).

Gender mainstreaming was also recognised in BPA as key to addressing the enjoyment of human rights (*ibid.* para 229) and the overarching objective of gender mainstreaming should thus be to ensure that all multi-sectoral development processes — which might otherwise be acting, advertently or inadvertently, to perpetuate gender stereotypes and inequalities — are instead actively contributing to the realisation of gender equality in all spheres of life.

Definition of gender mainstreaming

... the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.

ECOSOC 1997

The committee tasked with monitoring implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (UNCEDAW), which is the principle international human rights treaty that defines and firmly embeds equality of women and men as a core element of the international legal order, and which has been ratified by 97 per cent of UN member countries, has explicitly called on States Parties to adopt a policy of gender mainstreaming as a strategy for achieving gender equality. For all Pacific Island countries and territories that have undergone an examination before the CEDAW Committee, the committee has either commended existing efforts at gender mainstreaming (where such efforts were actively in place) or, more commonly, urged the State Party to develop or strengthen its gender mainstreaming policies and capacity where they were absent or insufficient. Linked with this are the committee's recommendations to strengthen the government machinery for gender equality (national women's machinery — NWM) with adequate human, financial and technical resources and the authority and

decision-making powers that are necessary for them to coordinate and work effectively for the promotion of gender equality and gender mainstreaming.

1. Objectives and methodology

While gender mainstreaming gained significant momentum in the Pacific in the lead up to and early years following the Beijing Conference, perceptions are that the momentum was not maintained and that national governments do not have the necessary capacity to systematically integrate gender perspectives, including the provisions of CEDAW, into multi-sectoral development processes as part of their strategy to achieve national, regional and international commitments to gender equality.

This stocktake was designed to determine the extent to which capacity for effective gender mainstreaming exists in national governments, and to identify potential areas of strategic intervention to strengthen such capacity. It is an initiative of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), in collaboration with national governments and with support from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).¹ It is being carried out in phases throughout the Pacific region in response to a call from Pacific Island ministries responsible for gender equality and the advancement of women for support to strengthen the institutional capacity of governments to meet their stated commitments to gender equality.

The underlying premise of the stocktake is that NWMs are key catalysts for the mainstreaming of gender and women's human rights but they are not the sole agency responsible for achieving it. To be effective, NWMs need both strong internal capacity and a wider government structure that is supportive of gender equality and mainstreaming. That wider structure must include a strong legal and policy framework supportive of gender equality and mainstreaming, genuine government commitment, a supportive organisational culture, clear accountability mechanisms, strong technical capacity and adequate resources — in short, an enabling environment. SPC's initiative is thus designed firstly to take stock of that enabling environment, and secondly to collaborate with national governments and other development partners in the design and implementation of concrete, evidence-based strategies for enhancing it.

The stocktake does not review or assess the work of government or specific efforts at mainstreaming; rather it simply analyses the degree to which there is an enabling environment for such mainstreaming to take place.

The stocktake process involved desk research combined with in-country structured interviews and focus group discussions. The in-country research was undertaken on 17–28 August 2009. In total, 16 structured interviews were conducted with 15 ministries/departments, including a representative range of both central and line ministries. Informants were senior government officials ranging from Permanent Secretaries and Under Secretaries to technical and operational staff with direct responsibility for policy development and programme implementation in their respective departments. In total, 13 males and six females were interviewed. In addition, one focus group discussion was held with civil society representatives, and separate interviews were conducted with a range of development partners. The Appendix to this report is a list of organisations interviewed or consulted.


¹ Now UN Women.

Enabling environment requirements for gender mainstreaming

- 1. Legal and policy framework:** The extent to which gender equality and mainstreaming commitments are in place by virtue of ratification of relevant international human rights treaties, existence of constitutional and legislative provisions, and existence of government policy mandates
- 2. Political will:** Demonstrated political will means that action is taken on stated gender equality commitments and action is formalised within systems and mechanisms to ensure mainstreaming is sustainable
- 3. Organisational culture:** The extent to which the attitudes of staff and institutional systems, policies and structures support or marginalise gender equality as an issue
- 4. Accountability and responsibility:** The ways in which action on commitments to gender mainstreaming can be traced and monitored within organisations, and the mechanisms through which individuals at different levels demonstrate gender equality related results
- 5. Technical capacity:** The extent of skills and experience that organisations can draw on to support gender and human rights mainstreaming initiatives across and within their operations and programmes
- 6. Adequate resources:** The allocation and application of human and financial resources in relation to the scope of the task of mainstreaming

2. Country overview

a. Facts and figures

SOLOMON ISLANDS 	
Population	515,870 (SPC-SDP:2011)
urban/rural %	20%/80%
Land area	28,370 km ²
EEZ	1,340,000 km ²
Geography	An archipelago consisting of several islands. Volcanoes with varying degrees of activity are situated on some of the larger islands, while many of the smaller islands are simply tiny atolls.
Political system	Parliamentary democracy
Economy	Agriculture Forestry Fisheries
Ethnic composition	Melanesian 94.5% Polynesian 3% Micronesian 1.2% Mixed 0.7% European 0.1% Chinese 0.1% Other 0.1% (Solomon Islands census report 1999)
Main languages	Melanesian Pidgin, English and numerous indigenous languages
Life expectancy M/F	60.6/61.6 (SI NSO 1999)
Labour force participation rate M/F	72.2%/60.4% (SINSO 1999)
Human Development Index (UNDP Human Development reports)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Value: 0.494 (rank 123) in 2010 ♦ Value: 0.566 (no rank) in 2008 (MDG Tracking Report 2010) ♦ Value: 0.610 (rank 135) in 2007 ♦ Value: 0.602 (rank 129) in 2005 ♦ Value: 0.592 (rank 128) in 2004 ♦ Value: 0.594 (rank 128) in 2003 ♦ Value: 0.622 (rank 121) in 2000 ♦ Value: 0.560 (rank 123) in 1995 ♦ Value: 0.434 (rank 105) in 1990
Gender-related Development Index	Value: 0.557 (rank 109) in 1995
Gender Empowerment Measure	n/a



b. Key gender issues

The following is a brief overview of some of the key manifestations of gender inequality in Solomon Islands. This overview is not exhaustive; it is meant to provide the contextual basis for a proper understanding and appreciation of the need for gender and women's human rights to be thoroughly and systematically integrated across all government law and policy-making, programming, planning, budgeting and monitoring. More detailed information on the status of gender equality in Solomon Islands can be obtained from a range of resources, including those listed in the bibliography.

Decision-making

While women in Solomon Islands traditionally played a significant role in decision-making forums, including in land and resource management in matrilineal land systems, these roles were eroded over the years with the introduction of patriarchal religious, legal, economic and political systems. As a result, women's voices and contributions are absent today in the national political sphere. Since independence in 1978, only one woman has ever been elected to parliament (PIFS 2006). Currently, the Solomon Islands parliament is composed of men only. Social attitudes that decision-making is a male domain, a 'first past the post' electoral system that disadvantages women, and discrimination against women in education and employment are contributing factors. Proposals by the Ministry of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs (MWYCA) in 2009 to improve the gender balance in parliament through the use of reserved seats for women have not been supported by Cabinet.

Only a small number of women have been elected to provincial governments, and other important decision-making structures, including in the customary, religious, private and judicial spheres, are similarly dominated by men. This not only violates women's right to political participation, it directly impacts on their enjoyment of human rights in all other social, economic and cultural fields in which they have little decision-making influence.

Peace and conflict resolution

The women of Solomon Islands were instrumental in suspending the violence between Malaitan settlers and the indigenous people of Guadalcanal during the ethnic tension of 1998–2003. This peacemaking role can be traced back to their traditional role as mediators in land disputes and in potential conflicts between warring parties. However, 'this crucial role in halting the conflict and building peace did not translate into a greater role for women in the formal peace processes or in the national legislature. Despite this integral role Solomon Islands women played, neither they nor their interests were represented at the peace negotiations' (Whittington, Ospina and Pollard 2006). Encouragingly, two women were appointed to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission created in 2008 to engage all stakeholders in the reconciliation process and examine the human rights violations perpetrated during the conflict.

Health

The 2007 Solomon Islands Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) revealed that while 88 per cent of women have access to prenatal care and close to 95 per cent have access to antenatal care, quality of health care continues to pose a major challenge, with over 96 per cent of women reporting to

have faced problems such as lack of drugs and health care providers. The proportion of women facing these problems is higher in the rural areas than the urban areas (SPC and ADB 2007).

The average number of children per woman remains high at 4.6. Total fertility rate (TFR) was found to be 3.4 for urban women and 4.8 for rural women. This high rate can be directly linked to low contraceptive use. The TFR is considered too high, indicating the need for more advocacy and awareness among women and men on the use of family planning and the wider implications of high fertility rates. Teenage fertility rates are pronounced at 75 births per 1000 (rural) and 41 births per 1,000 (urban). More women get married at an early age (15–19 years) than men and, despite the lowering of fertility rates among young women aged 15–19, there is evidence of early childbearing, with 9 per cent of 15-year-old women having already had a child.

There were 25 recorded maternal deaths in 2001 (SINSO 2001). As the DHS reports that 85 per cent of all deliveries take in place in a hospital or health facility, this relatively high level of maternal mortality suggests the need for improvement in maternal health care services. There should be a particular focus on increasing the capacity of staff as well as infrastructure development, particularly in rural areas.

Solomon Islands has a low prevalence of HIV infection, although chlamydia and syphilis are endemic among pregnant women, which highlights the increasing vulnerability of heterosexual women to HIV. The Solomon Islands National Health Strategic Plan (SINHSP) 2006–2010 states that sexually transmitted infections (STIs) have been on the increase since 2002, particularly in Honiara, Western and Guadalcanal Provinces. In the strategic plan, it was estimated that, by 2010, there would be a minimum of 350 confirmed cases of HIV. With an estimated ten undiagnosed cases for each confirmed case, it was estimated that by 2010 as many as 3500 people will have been infected (GoSI 2006). It is noted that women are most at risk, especially pregnant women between the ages of 15 and 24 years. Gender inequality is a primary social cause of women's vulnerability to HIV and STIs by virtue of early marriage, sexual violence, unequal negotiating power in sexual relations and culturally sanctioned men's infidelity.

Violence against women

The Solomon Islands Family Health and Safety Study (SIFHSS) found that 64 per cent of women aged between 15 and 49 in Solomon Islands have experienced physical or sexual abuse, or both, by an intimate partner (SPC 2009). Women also suffered gender-based violence during the Solomon Islands' crisis of 1998–2003 (Huffer 2008). Many women were sexually abused by members of both warring parties and many were traumatised and felt hopeless due to the negative social and economic impacts of the conflict (Leslie and Boso 2003). There are also reports of men prostituting women and children, and the extractive industries have spawned an expanding sex trade.

Two major systemic factors contribute to the high levels of violence experienced by women in Solomon Islands: the lack of gender equality and the inadequate legislative framework to protect women's human rights.

Education

The total enrolment rate in early childhood education was estimated in 2005 to be 11,194 or 27.5 per cent (SIG 2007). While there was almost gender parity in terms of total enrolment — 5,523 girls and 5,728 boys — rural schools showed a disparity in favour of boys. The net primary enrolment rate in 2007 was 65.4 per cent. The latest ratio of girls to boys in primary school (2005) was 0.89:1, which dropped to 0.77:1 in secondary school (SPC PRISM). While each of these figures represents an increase over previous years, the gender gap is still significant. The introduction of free primary education in 2009 should result in increasing the enrolment of girls, as well as boys, in primary schools. An important problem, faced particularly by female students at secondary level, is the lack of dormitory facilities. Another major problem is the high drop-out rate of students, with the rate for girls outnumbering that of boys.

Tertiary education reveals the same pattern. Of a total of 1,756 students enrolled in 2005, 784 were girls and 972 were boys. The Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (MEHRD) National Education Plan (2007–2009) shows that the different fields of study pursued reflect the stereotyping of men's and women's roles. Women predominate in the education, nursing, finance and administration fields of study, but areas relating to industry and resources are heavily dominated by men. The lack of representation of female students in the resources sector is mirrored in their lack of employment in these sectors.

Employment

The 1999 census revealed that 60.4 per cent of women compared with 72.2 per cent of men were in the labour force. The number of female wage and salary earners — 17,711 — was less than half the number of male wage and salary earners — 39,761 (SPC PRISM). Over three quarters (76.2 per cent) of women were subsistence workers, compared with 58.1 per cent of men (SINSO 1999). The number of women in paid work was 14.6 per cent (compared to 31.1 per cent of men) (*ibid.*). According to the International Trade Union Confederation, women are overrepresented in low-paid, low-skilled jobs and face serious obstacles when they attempt to enter the labour market (ITUC 2009). In 1999, only 29.5 per cent of women were in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector (ICFTU 1999). The majority of women do not have equal access to education and training, and this has a major bearing on their ability to enter the labour force. Unequal sharing of household responsibilities and other unpaid labour is also a major contributor to economic inequalities between women and men.

Land and resources

Five of the nine provinces in Solomon Islands are still considered to be practising a matrilineal land tenure system, but this system is coming under pressure with the demand for land for large-scale developments and the changing nature of traditional systems (Maetala 2008). In many cases, ownership or usage through customary practices has become a source of potential conflict, and women's land rights are not legally protected. Additionally, women are increasingly at a disadvantage with the introduction of large-scale logging, and the demand for land for development and cash cropping. Women are often relegated to the periphery by men motivated by monetary gain who often negotiate deals with total disregard for women and the traditional matrilineal inheritance

systems. Large-scale extractive industries are also blamed for increasing the exploitation of women and girls through prostitution.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

1. National women's machinery

a. Structure

This section describes the history and current organisation of the national government department responsible for addressing gender equality issues as well as other government and non-government machinery used to promote gender equality and mainstreaming.

Government department for women's affairs

The government machinery for women has undergone a number of structural and functional changes since the 1960s. First established as the Women's Interest Office, the office was later reorganised into a division. In 1994, the government created the Ministry for Youth, Women, Sports and Recreation (MYWSR). In 1997, MYWSR was dissolved and the areas of youth and women were assigned to separate ministries. In 2007, a new ministry, the Ministry of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs (MWYCA), was established in acknowledgement of the important role of women, youth and children as contributors to and beneficiaries of development within society. Within that ministry sits the Women's Development Division (WDD).

In total, WDD has eight staff positions: a Director, a CEDAW Advocacy Officer, a Women's Development Assistant responsible for projects, a Women's Development Assistant responsible for training, and four Provincial Women's Development Officers. While there are nine provinces plus Honiara City Council, certain provinces are 'pooled' together for the purpose of programmes and administration; one Provincial Women's Development Officer is responsible for more than one province in coordinating programmes and activities conducted by MWYCA. This is also indicative of the lack of resources, both financial and human, available to WDD for its programmes.

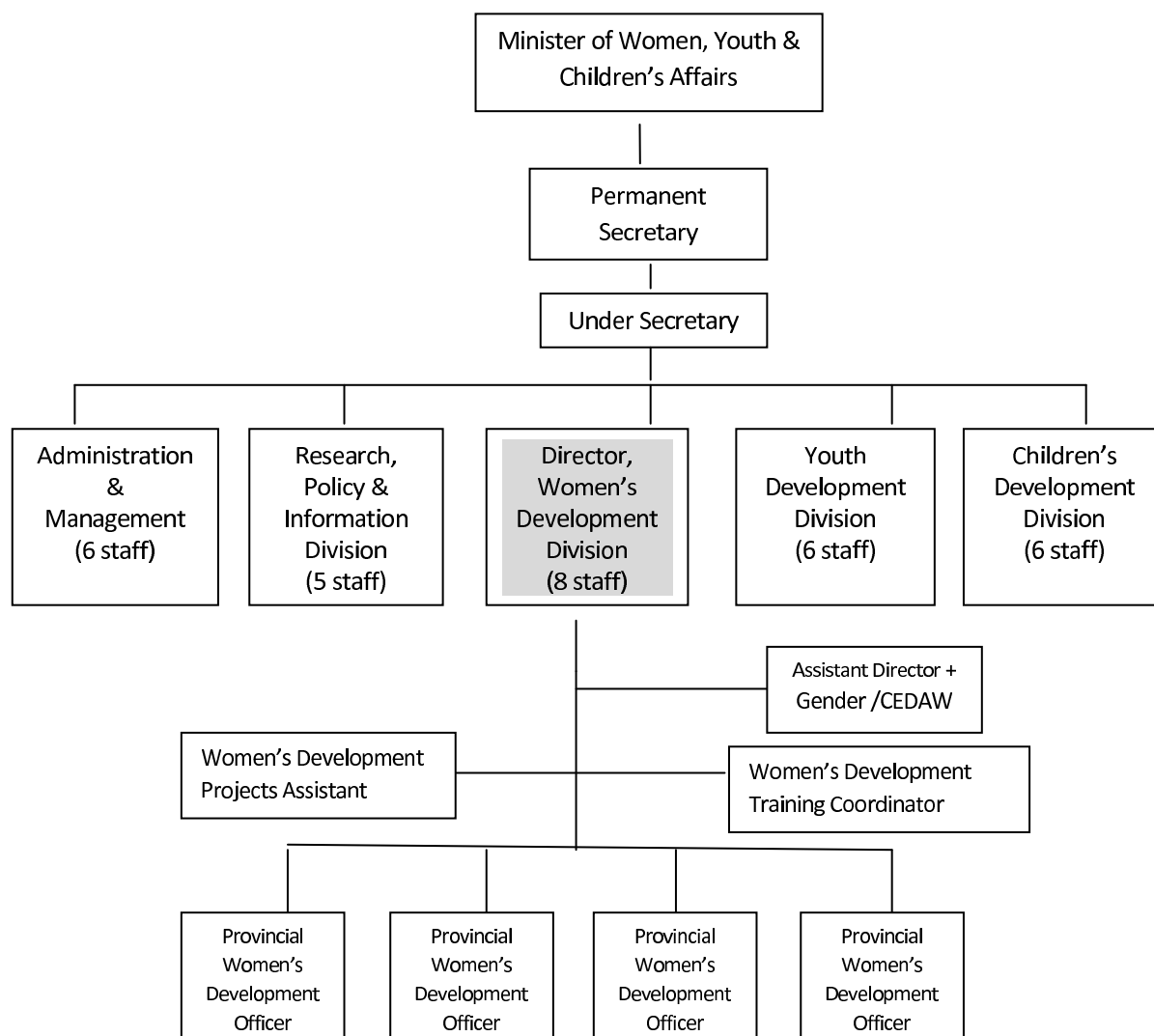


Figure 1: Location and structure of the Women's Development Division

The budget for WDD for the most recent three years is outlined in Table 1. With an increase from SBD 1,067,738 to SBD 1,855,768 between 2008 and 2009, it would appear that there was a substantial increase in WDD's budget. However, the 2009 budget was not provided directly to MWYCA but rather kept within a consolidated fund within the Ministry of Finance (MOF). Allocations were made each quarter. In the case of development projects, these were released as and when they were required. Applications were subjected to two levels of vetting: they were vetted internally by the Officer in Charge in light of other applications and priorities, and they were assessed by MOF against competing priorities in other ministries. In many cases, applications for development programmes were either delayed unnecessarily or were not approved.²

² Solomon Islands Government Response to Beijing + 15 questionnaire.

Table 1: Budget of the Women’s Development Division (SBD)

	2008	2009	2010
Total government budget			
Recurrent budget	1,289,266,723	1,580,862,364	1,622,001,198
Development aid	380,494,592	389,800,000	375,000,000
Total	1,669,761,315	1,970,662,364	1,997,001,198
Total NWM budget			
Recurrent	747,738	1,435,768	1,460,202
Development aid	320,000	420,000	300,000
Total	1,067,738	1,855,768	1,760,202
NWM % of total government budget	0.06%	0.09%	0.09%
Allocation of NWM budget			
Salaries and overhead	135,535	315,184	255,589
Programme costs	612,203	1,120,584	1,204,613
Gender mainstreaming	0	80 000	400

(Note: SBD 1 = USD 0.13 / USD 1 = SBD 8.00 as at 23 September 2011)

Contributions by several donors have facilitated the implementation of a number of gender equality initiatives and have allowed WDD to forge ahead. The donors include AusAID, the New Zealand Aid Programme, SPC, UNIFEM and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

WDD derives its mandate from and implements national policies and action plans with respect to gender equality and women’s issues. The National Policy on Gender Equality and Women’s Development (GEWD) (2010–2015) has five priority outcomes:

- improved and equitable health and education for women, men, girls and boys;
- improved economic status of women;
- equal participation of women and men in decision-making and leadership;
- elimination of violence against women;
- increased capacity for gender mainstreaming.

MWYCA reports on the progress of the policy outcomes through Cabinet reports, its annual report and other reports to stakeholder groups as stipulated in the GEWD policy.

Other government machinery

The newly endorsed GEWD Policy established a multi-sectoral ***National Steering Committee***, which is chaired by the Permanent Secretary of MWYCA and comprises her counterparts in the offices of

the Prime Minister and Cabinet and in the ministries of Development, Planning and Aid Coordination, Education and Human Resource Development, Health and Medical Services, Finance and Treasury, Rural Development, and Justice and Legal Affairs, as well as other staff of WDD, a representative of the National Council of Women and a representative of donors. Given that one of the priority outcomes of the GEWD policy is increased government capacity for gender mainstreaming, this committee will be an important driver for mainstreaming gender and women's human rights, provided it has the active and sustained engagement of its members.

The creation of **gender focal points** within various ministries is one way to assign responsibility for gender mainstreaming. MWYCA noted a regressive trend in the use of gender focal points, citing the removal of the gender focal point positions from the Ministry of Agriculture and the Public Service Commission as examples. There was previously a gender focal point within the Prime Minister's Office, but that post was abolished in 2007. There is a planning officer responsible for monitoring the implementation of the MWYCA national development projects within the Ministry of Development Planning and Aid Coordination; this officer is not considered a gender focal point since her mandate is neither to support gender mainstreaming across her institution nor to play a coordinating role regarding gender mainstreaming initiatives.

There is a CEDAW committee referred to as the **Solomon Islands National Advisory Committee on CEDAW**. Established in 2006, it was chaired by the Permanent Secretary for Home Affairs, Women, Youth and Sports but has been inactive. Its membership is in the process of being reviewed, and it is expected that the committee will be revived soon.

There are currently no women parliamentarians or **parliamentary committees** with a specific gender equality mandate.

There is no national human rights institution in Solomon Islands nor any other special mandate for the protection and promotion of women's human rights.

Civil society and the private sector

Civil society organisations (CSOs) have played an important role in promoting, implementing and supporting the work of the WDD. The Solomon Islands National Council of Women (SINCW), established in 1983 is an umbrella organisation of women's NGOs that focuses on women in decision making, including nominating women to boards and meetings, working with provincial and area councils of women and supporting women candidates in elections. The coordinating role of the SINCW has been reiterated in the GEWD policy. Notably, SINCW has the mandate to organise a quarterly forum for: 'policy dialogue, information sharing and discussion on the implementation of the Policy, the involvement of Churches and CSOs and monitoring of policy outcomes' (GoSI 2010:14). SINCW is a member of the GEWD policy's National Steering Committee and its terms of reference are contained in an annex thereto. The main role of SINCW is to coordinate the implementation of the policy with NGOs, CSOs and churches.

Other CSOs have played an instrumental role in the promotion of women's rights and development. These include:

- Vois Blong Mere Solomons (VBMS) which was established in 2003 and is a national women's media organisation responsible for media publishing and radio programmes advocating and promoting women's issues around the country;
- church groups such as the Solomon Islands Christian Association Federation of Women (SICAFOW), the Christian Care Centre, and the Full Gospel Church Association (SIFGA);
- the Family Support Centre; and
- the Association Federation of Solomon Islands.

b. Assessment

This section reviews the only government department mandated to addressing gender issues, namely the Women's Development Division (WDD) based in the Ministry of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs (MWYCA). The review includes its basic capacity, working environment and relationships with other relevant stakeholders, and how those factors influence its ability to act as a catalyst for the mainstreaming of gender and women's human rights across the whole of government.

WDD faces a number of constraints that limit its effectiveness. Key among these is that WDD is not strategically located within the central government structure to influence mainstreaming across the policy, programming and resource allocation spectra.

Positive interventions to promote gender equality

Since its inception, WDD has been using a 'women in development' approach, although there is now a shift towards a 'gender and development' and rights-based approach. While some projects are still centred in meeting the practical needs of women, increasingly programmes and projects, with the support of development partners, are being designed in response to Solomon Islands' commitments to international human rights commitments. This is reflected not only in the new GEWD policy that WDD spearheaded, but also in various development programmes being implemented by WDD. These include the development of a temporary special measures policy paper that was submitted to Cabinet and the Constitutional Review Committee in 2009; the gender-based violence study completed in 2009 and the resulting development of a national policy and action plan to eliminate such violence; and the ongoing review of sex discriminatory laws, alongside the national Law Reform Commission. These are critical and transformative initiatives. However, they are donor-driven and project-based. The involvement of WDD is through the assignment of staff for the life of the project only.

Insufficient resources

The establishment of the MWYCA in 2007 was not matched by an appropriate level of resources, which reflects lack of government commitment to gender equality. WDD is severely underfunded, with only SBD 1,120,584 (about USD 142 000) available for programme implementation and, to carry out multi-sectoral mainstreaming work across government, only SBD 80,000 (about USD 10 000) was allocated in 2009.

It was evident that the WDD staff lacked knowledge of national budgetary processes. The lack of transparency in the application and approval of funds internally within the MWYCA was, however, raised as a concern. WDD's budget applications are often considered alongside those of two other divisions (youth and children), which could result in competition for funds. Moreover, like the other two divisions, WDD does not directly control the funds allocated to it; this responsibility rests with the Permanent Secretary as the accounting officer of the MWYCA, who approves all payments before they are raised with the Ministry of Finance.

WDD is highly dependent on project-based donor support, which puts the sustainability of its important work at significant risk. Government and donors alike need to significantly step up the amount, duration and strategic focus of their national, bi-lateral and multi-lateral resourcing in order to build long-term national capacity across the whole of government for systematic mainstreaming of gender and women's human rights.

WDD does not have the necessary infrastructure, including internet connections, transportation, facsimile, telephones and computers to implement its activities. Further, due to lack of office space, staff are spread over two separate buildings, making administration, management and coordination challenging.

Need for better coordinated support from development partners

WDD noted the lack of donor coordination in interventions aiming to reduce gender inequalities and the tendency for donors to work independently in carrying out projects. This acts to undermine the effectiveness of WDD as the mandated government department to promote and implement gender equality and mainstreaming. In addition, with limited staff and low capacity, WDD is not well positioned to meet the demands or manage the inputs of donors. Engagement is typically at the Permanent Secretary level and often does not filter down to the Director or other staff levels of the WDD. Coordination of donor and development partner support, as well as enhanced engagement with other government sectors, must be improved if WDD is to be properly equipped for its mainstreaming function. The new GEWD policy includes a mechanism for better donor and CSO coordination, the Gender Equality and Women's Development Partners' Coordination Group, and this facility should be systematically used and supported.

Insufficient skills, sectoral knowledge and interaction with ministries

MWYCA staff reported that the Ministry does not take the initiative and that its programmes and projects are *ad hoc* in nature, with gender equality work confined to a few isolated themes rather than being systematically mainstreamed. This was confirmed by a number of ministries; among the representatives of ministries interviewed for the stocktake, most informants reported that interaction with MWYCA is negligible or is activity driven. Only two informants referred to regular meetings with MWYCA; six had occasional interaction and three had no interaction at all.

For gender mainstreaming to work, such interaction and coordination must increase substantially. However, while WDD can be the driver, it cannot be the sole agency responsible for mainstreaming. Multi-sectoral ownership and capacity are required. The GEWD policy's Plan of Action 2010–2012 proposed the establishment of gender desks in the Ministry of Finance and Treasury, the Ministry of

Development, Planning and Aid Coordination³ and the Prime Minister's Office, as well as a parliamentary standing committee. The desks will have to be staffed by technically skilled gender staff, have clear and adequate resources for gender mainstreaming and have a high level of authority to influence how gender is integrated into their respective areas of work if they are to provide genuine support towards inter-ministerial gender coordination and mainstreaming. Consideration should also be given to similar desks in key line ministries.

WDD is viewed by many as isolated and lacking the technical expertise to drive and influence gender mainstreaming across the different sectors of government. The lack of pro-activeness on the part of WDD was mentioned. Other reasons given for lack of interaction included basic lack of awareness of collaborative gender mainstreaming as a strategy.

The existing staff's ability to work across sectors is severely handicapped, notably by the limited human resources. The lack of capacity and technical skills within WDD for mainstreaming gender and women's human rights across the various sectors of government is another key challenge. WDD recognises its limited technical capacity. Despite the technical complexity of gender and human rights approaches to development, no WDD staff members have specific tertiary level training in gender analysis, human rights, gender responsive planning, gender responsive budgeting, or programme and project evaluation. Similarly, the gender focal point in the Ministry of Development, Planning and Aid Coordination 'does not have authority and the officer does not possess the required technical skills and knowledge to influence decisions either vertically or horizontally. The position is in name only.'⁴

A more concerted effort is needed to develop national skills and qualifications in gender and women's human rights. The technical capacity of the national women's machinery (NWM) to systematically support gender and human rights analysis and planning across government sectors has to be developed.

The establishment of the GEWD National Steering Committee provides an excellent new opening for building not only technical capacity but a national government alliance in support of gender mainstreaming. Through capacity building of this committee, under the leadership of WDD, a pool of multi-sectoral and central government agents can become the collaborative drivers of change and can develop the skills, confidence and government-owned processes for ensuring the institutionalisation of gender perspectives and women's human rights across the work of government.

Strengthening partnerships with civil society

There is an opportunity to capitalise on the strong networking and collaboration amongst WDD, NGOs and other advocates of gender equality. This relationship has proven beneficial where government has not been proactive due to resource constraints. Within NGOs there has been a deliberate policy of addressing gender issues both in terms of programme development and staff practices (Wallace nd). However, to a large extent these organisations are also hampered by lack of financial resources and technical capacity to assist in mainstreaming efforts, and capacity building should include them alongside government, so that even stronger partnerships and synergies can

³ A desk has since been installed in the Ministry of Development, Planning and Aid Coordination.

⁴ Interview with Ministry of Development Planning and Aid Coordination, August 24, 2009.

develop. Government funding directed towards these organisations has alleviated some of their funding constraints but can also be seen as compromising their role and independence in terms of advocacy and holding the government accountable for closing the gap in gender equality.

Need for effective monitoring and evaluation

The monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that were in place when the stocktake was conducted did not include performance indicators, nor were they subject to rigorous scrutiny and discipline. Monitoring was mainly conducted through monthly staff meetings and annual reports to the Cabinet. In addition, reporting under international and regional instruments was at worst non-existent and at best activity driven, with a flurry of activities when reports were due which then dropped off once the reports were submitted. Intersectoral committees were established and consultations conducted but these discussions and analyses would wane and mechanisms would be disbanded when the reporting activities were completed.

Although there are results-based planning and performance management systems, mainly carried out by the planning officers in place in the government, they are to a large extent not directly linked to gender indicators and are based on the general requirements of the public service commission, making them ineffective in their current form as a meaningful tool for gender assessment.

The Strategic Plan of Action 2010–2012 for implementation of the GEWD policy proposes a series of outcomes and outputs in key sectors: health, education, economic development, decision making and violence against women. A particular outcome is dedicated to ‘increased capacity for gender mainstreaming’. The GEWD National Steering Committee has the specific mandate to monitor and evaluate the policy outcomes through quarterly meetings and reports. Clear indicators for measuring progress under each outcome area will be critical to any proper assessment by this committee.

The lack of full and accessible sex disaggregated and gender data continues to act as a constraint to any meaningful reporting, an issue that needs to be addressed, not only for reporting purposes but for effective gender analysis and mainstreaming. The GEWD plan of action proposes the establishment of a Gender Management Information System in MYWCA. This measure will be an important tool for supporting the government’s efforts to mainstream gender.

2. Enabling environment overview

a. Legal and policy framework

Solomon Islands has a moderate legal and policy framework to support the mainstreaming of gender and women’s human rights across the whole of government, with three of the core international human rights treaties ratified and a strong new policy framework for gender mainstreaming. To achieve a stronger framework, greater attention is needed to ratification of and systematic reporting under all core international human rights treaties. In addition, constitutional and legislative reform is needed to entrench a guarantee of both formal and substantive equality in the public and private spheres, based on the definitions of discrimination and equality in CEDAW, and to ensure that customary law cannot be used to discriminate against women. Much greater effort is also needed to ensure that the existing legal and policy framework is widely understood and systematically informs the work of government across the political, economic, social and cultural spheres.

International and regional commitments

Solomon Islands has ratified three core international human rights conventions of particular significance for the human rights of women and girls, as summarised in Table 2. It has also endorsed a number of key international and regional policy frameworks containing commitments to gender equality, including the Beijing Platform for Action, the 2000 Millennium Development Goals, the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005–2015, the Revised Pacific Platform for Action on Advancement of Women and Gender Equality 2005–2015 (RPPA) and the Pacific Plan (2005, revised 2007).

Table 2: Status of ratification and reporting of key international human rights treaties

	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights ICESCR	Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women CEDAW	Convention on the Rights of the Child CRC
Ratification Date	17 March 1982	6 May 2002	10 April 1995
Reporting Date(s)	30 July 2001	No reports submitted	12 July 2002
Examination Date(s)	30 April 1999* 18 November 2002	No examinations	26 May 2003

*Examination conducted in the absence of a State report

Reporting under these conventions has been very irregular. The government is yet to submit its initial and first periodic reports under CEDAW.

There is no national human rights action plan in place to ensure that national commitments to international human rights standards are fully and properly implemented.

Constitution

Chapter II of the 1978 Solomon Islands Constitution (GoSI 1978) contains a Bill of Rights. Article 3 provides that every person in the Solomon Islands is entitled to the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual irrespective of, among others things, sex. Article 15 contains specific anti-discrimination provisions which extend to both direct and indirect discrimination in law. However, the provisions are not in full conformity with CEDAW in that they do not guarantee substantive equality (equality of outcomes), they apply only to the public sphere, and there is no definition of equality as contained in CEDAW. Sub-section 15(5)(f) provides that laws ‘for the advancement of the more disadvantaged members of the community’ shall not be considered discriminatory, a provision that can be used to accelerate progress in areas where women have historically been disadvantaged. However, sub-sections 15(5)(c)-(e) provide exceptions for laws relating to ‘adoption, marriage, divorce, burial, devolution of property on death’ or other like matters of personal law, for ‘the application of customary law’, and ‘with respect to land, the tenure of land, the resumption and acquisition of land and other like purposes’.

Legislation

There is no stand-alone anti-discrimination legislation in Solomon Islands. Examples of equality-friendly legislation and of key legislative gaps in different thematic areas are discussed in section 2b Political will, below.

Gender equality and mainstreaming policies

Work towards the formulation of a national policy for women began in 1988 and after wide consultation the first National Women's Policy was endorsed by the government in the same year. The aims and objectives of the policy were to promote and increase the participation of women at national decision-making level, improve the availability and circulation of information relating to the welfare of women and children, and facilitate training programmes to improve the capacity of women to effectively participate at the various levels of national development. However, it never had an implementation plan, although the MWYCA Corporate Plan 2008–2010 eventually provided some guidelines for implementation. Nonetheless, while the 1998 policy and the 2008–2010 MWYCA Corporate Plan provided a platform for integrating gender equality, such integration into the government's policy, programme and project design was still lacking as of 2009.

A review of the National Women's Policy was conducted in 2009, and the new GEWD policy was endorsed by Cabinet in 2010. In part due to the ongoing research and discussions relating to this gender mainstreaming capacity stocktake at the time, WDD, in its policy, advisory and coordination role, identified gender mainstreaming across the government's national machinery as one of its main tasks, and this is reflected in the new GEWD policy. Given that WDD previously had no clear authority for mainstreaming gender across government sectors, this is a major improvement and should provide a much stronger policy platform for WDD's mainstreaming work. Other significant improvements are that the new policy is accompanied by a Strategic Plan of Action (2010–2012) and is linked to specific international and regional gender equality commitments. However, there was no budget allocated for its implementation in 2010.

Awareness of legal and policy frameworks

Overall, there is only moderate awareness across government sectors of the legal and policy framework for gender equality and mainstreaming, which significantly diminishes its impact. Of the 16 informants interviewed, 13 were aware of at least one international, regional or national legal or policy framework that was supportive of gender equality and mainstreaming, while only one ministry was unaware of any specific enabling instruments. Of the 13 informants that were aware of relevant frameworks, only seven identified CEDAW, six identified the MDGs, five highlighted CRC, and one identified Education for All and the Forum Basic Education Action Plan. Two ministries also cited the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, and one referred to the Pacific Plan. Only three ministries made any reference to the Constitution. No other human rights treaties were identified, nor was the former National Women's Policy, which was in force at the time of the interviews.

b. Political will

While the legal and policy framework represents a government's stated commitment to gender equality and mainstreaming, genuine political will for implementing those commitments is demonstrated when the framework is visibly and systematically put into action across the work of

government. Overall, demonstrated political will in Solomon Islands remains weak but is improving in some areas.

Legislation as a measure of political will

One of the strongest measures of political will for implementing gender equality and mainstreaming commitments is the enactment and enforcement of legislation across civil, political, economic, social and cultural spheres to promote equality and protect women's human rights. While there may be broad general knowledge of international or regional gender equality commitments in Solomon Islands, there are few examples of these commitments being translated into national laws, although there are some noteworthy exceptions. Positive examples of equality-friendly legislative action include the abolition of several sex discriminatory evidentiary rules in the Evidence Act 2009 and the inclusion of rape and sexual abuse during the ethnic conflict as issues to be investigated under the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act 2008.⁵ Significantly, the Cabinet approved a new policy on eliminating violence against women in February 2010.

Legislative gaps include the lack of specific legislation aimed at eradicating violence against women, the definition under the Penal Code⁶ of unlawful sexual intercourse, which is limited to penile penetration (ignoring the fact that there are instances when other objects have been used to violate women's bodies), legislation setting the legal age for marriage for both men and women at 15 (well below the marriageable age recommended by CEDAW),⁷ and the lack of legal provisions expressly prohibiting relationships between people with close blood ties. The law relating to divorce is still based on a mixed system of fault and no-fault and there is no legal recognition of the right to health, including sexual and reproductive health.

Although there is a growing recognition of the important role of women in economic development, including in rural areas, there is no legislation to guarantee equal opportunity and equal pay or to address sex discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace. The Labour Act entitles women to 12 weeks of maternity leave before and after delivery (less than the minimum 14 weeks recommended by the International Labour Organization) and to two hours a day for feeding their infant (JICA 2010:29).

As noted earlier, proposals in 2009 to enact temporary special measures to improve gender balance in parliament did not make it past Cabinet.

Sectoral policies and plans

Another measure of a government's political will for gender equality and mainstreaming is the extent to which national and sectoral policies recognise, prioritise and seek to address gender imbalances. Awareness and understanding of gender equality as a development issue varies across

⁵ Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act 2008 (No. 5 of 2008), http://www.paclii.org/sb/legis/num_act/tarca2008371/

⁶ Solomon Islands Penal Code [Cap 26], http://www.paclii.org/sb/legis/consol_act/pc66/.

⁷ The CEDAW committee confirms that the minimum age for marriage should be 18 years for both men and women: see CEDAW General Recommendation No. 21 (13th session, 1994), Equality in marriage and family relations, para. 36, <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations/recomm.htm#recom21>.

ministries, with social sectors demonstrating a comparatively higher level of awareness and understanding.

Solomon Islands' Medium Term Development Strategy 2008–2010 (MTDS) focuses on six priorities: (i) reconciliation and rehabilitation, (ii) national security and foreign relations, (iii) infrastructure development, (iv) the social services sector, (v) the economic and productive sectors, and (vi) civic affairs (ADB 2009). Although the MTDS recognises that women's development will help achieve the national objective of addressing the basic needs of the people in rural communities, there was no practical intervention to ensure women's participation, and gender was not mainstreamed into the priority themes. A new national strategic development plan is currently being developed, which provides an important opportunity for gender and women's human rights to be integrated.

A number of sectoral policy frameworks and plans of action have been developed — notably in the Health and Education sectors — but these are also quite short on addressing women's issues or gender inequalities. The achievement of gender equality in education and employment was among the commitments of a government policy statement in 2008 (JICA 2010). The Ministry of Agriculture is now developing a national agricultural policy that will provide the roadmap for future agricultural development, which presents an opportunity to integrate a gender perspective.

Provincial development plans are also being developed with technical assistance from the Ministry of Development Planning and, again, the integration of a gender perspective in these plans could contribute to effectively addressing women's needs and reducing gender inequalities.

Ministries rate political will as medium to low

Perceptions of the political will for gender equality and mainstreaming is another, albeit less concrete, measure of actual political will. Of the 15 ministries/departments interviewed, only five rated the political will of the government overall for gender equality and mainstreaming as high. Five ministries rated it as medium, two rated it as low to medium, and three rated it as low. However, it was clear that there was a weak understanding of what gender equality and gender mainstreaming mean and entail. Often these concepts were equated with the number of female officers within the ministries.

Examples that could demonstrate government commitment to gender equality and mainstreaming were cited by thirteen of the ministries/departments. These included the establishment of the MWYCA, submissions on the review of the Criminal Code and Evidence Act, fee-free education accorded to class one as from 2009, the appointment of two female members to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission out of a total of five members, the appointment of the CEDAW Advocacy Officer within the MWYCA in 2007, the review of the 1998 National Women's Policy, the CEDAW initial report consultations that were held throughout the country, and the development of the gender-based violence policy. However, representatives in the resource sectors were of the view that current policies are not extensive enough and do not integrate gender. For example, despite women's important role in food production, they are not reflected in initiatives such as the food security project. Too often, women's roles are assumed to be included and therefore remain invisible in development efforts.

Perceived barriers and priority needs

Of the 16 informants interviewed, 69 per cent cited lack of awareness, understanding and capacity as the biggest barriers to stronger commitment to gender mainstreaming, underpinning the need for sustained gender awareness and technical training. This was supported by the NGO focus group discussions, which rated lack of understanding as one of the major constraints. In addition, three ministries referred to the lack of financial resources. Two ministries associated the lack of priority given by the government to gender equality work to the focus on economic reform and recovery and the need for a total public sector review to improve performance. Other barriers identified include the lack of gender specific sectoral policy frameworks and organisational cultures that are not conducive to gender mainstreaming. Barriers cited as minor included the lack of networking, advocacy and coordination.

Capacity building and gender awareness training were proposed by ten of the ministries/departments as ways to overcome the barriers. The representative of one ministry indicated that, unless there is increased awareness, gender equality will continue to remain on the periphery of the political agenda. Improved sex disaggregated data to help the whole of government understand and respond to the various needs was identified by another ministry. Resource ministries highlighted the importance of developing both national and sectoral gender policies to mandate mainstreaming.

Key supports

Women's NGOs were the most frequently cited as 'additional factors or systems' supportive of generating increased political will for gender mainstreaming (eight out of 14 informants interviewed), with three ranking this support as major, four as moderate and only one as minor. The critical role of church organisations was discussed, as well as that of other organisations, such as a 'women in fisheries' organisation, the Custom Garden Association, the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief (OXFAM) and the Red Cross. This confirms that building partnerships with civil society is considered an important ingredient for successfully advancing gender equality. Capacity building may be required to strengthen the advocacy role of CSOs in getting gender equality more firmly on the political agenda and in holding government to account on gender equality commitments.

Only three informants mentioned WDD as a key support factor, while six cited development partners as factors providing support for increased political will for gender mainstreaming. The lack of identification of WDD reinforces the need for capacity building for this division if it is to be seen as the lead agency for driving gender mainstreaming across government. This would also increase national ownership of gender equality and lessen the view that it is donor-driven or part of the mandate of development partners.

c. Organisational culture

Organisational culture refers to the extent to which the attitudes of staff and institutional systems and structures support or marginalise gender equality as an issue across sectors. A supportive organisational culture encourages a gender lens during all legal and policy dialogues, establishes good lines of communication with the NWM, systematically produces and analyses sex disaggregated data, has organisational systems in place to guide and inform staff on integrating gender (including the provisions of CEDAW, BPA and related instruments) within their technical area,

has gender-sensitive human resource management policies in place, and strives for gender balance at all levels of the organisation's staffing. Analysed against these factors, the organisational culture in Solomon Islands is weak, despite a commonly expressed view that gender equality is important.

Weak inter-ministerial policy dialogue on gender equality

In Solomon Islands, policy dialogue between ministries and donors often prioritise or refer to gender inequalities issues, although where it has occurred it has largely been driven by donors. The significant consultations and links with donors demonstrate the critical role played by them in continuing to leverage legal and human rights commitments to promote gender equality and mainstreaming in Solomon Islands. While this is positive, there is also a need for gender equality to become more firmly rooted within the national government rather than being driven from the outside. Twelve of the 16 ministry personnel interviewed confirmed attending meetings with other ministries and donors where gender inequality was discussed as a development issue. Of these, only six were able to refer to meetings with other ministries and nine informants confirmed that networking, collaboration and discussions with donors had led to increased awareness among government staff, albeit incremental, which has validated for them the important role of women in development processes. Only one ministry informant cited no demonstrated impact.

Weak availability and use of mainstreaming tools including sex disaggregated data

Collection of sex disaggregated data is, to a large extent, confined to the work of the Bureau of Statistics. In most ministries such data are not systematically collected, analysed or used to inform policies and programmes, and there is a clear need to build commitment, understanding and technical skills in this area. Some ministries interviewed collected sex disaggregated data as a matter of government policy and to inform planning and policy development: primarily in statistics, education and health. MOH conceded that assistance is still needed, particularly in the rural areas, and MEHRD stated that more research is required, supported by statistics, to ascertain the impact of various programmes on girls and boys.

No ministry/department had tools or systems in place such as guides, manuals, checklists or indicators to guide and inform staff on how to integrate gender and women's human rights into their technical area of work.

Public service decision making male dominated

The Public Service Commission (PSC) is the body responsible for human resource management for the whole of the public service. Currently there are no specific PSC rules or regulations in support of gender equality. In light of PSC's responsibility in this area, no ministries or departments interviewed had their own human resource policies. Recruitment by PSC depends entirely on recommendations forwarded to it by ministries, normally the interview panels through the panel chair. However, PSC membership requires that two of the four members, as well as the chair, be women.

The male/female breakdown at the top three levels of the public service is summarised in Table 3.

Table 3: Male/female breakdown in top three levels of the public service in 2010

Post	Male	Female
Highest	10	6
2 nd Level	14	4
3 rd Level	44	11

Table 3 reveals that decision making within government continues to be dominated by males, especially in the resources and economic sectors. There are comparatively more women in the social sectors: health, education, national reconciliation, MWYCA and the law reform commission.

There are no formal programmes in place to encourage more women into decision making or technical positions within the public service. Some ministry informants reported informal or *ad hoc* systems for encouraging a greater number of women in senior positions. The absence of more structured systems was attributed to the lack of awareness and prevailing attitudes of stereotyped roles for women. Despite these views, some informants admitted that increased numbers of women in senior posts has had a positive impact in terms of outputs and value added to the ministries concerned.

Nine of the informants were able to identify individuals at the senior executive levels in their ministry who they believed were aware of gender issues and supportive of gender equality.

Priority needs

Key identified needs for improving organisational culture include:

- ✓ developing institutional systems, tools and processes for gender mainstreaming;
- ✓ improving collaboration and networking with WDD, other government ministries/departments and NGOs to work together to integrate gender equality;
- ✓ advocacy by WDD of gender equality as a transformative goal rather than a service delivery mandate;
- ✓ targeting of the education system for increased awareness among the younger generation.

There is particular need for increased understanding and acceptance of gender equality and mainstreaming approaches within the central ministries of planning and finance, given their influence in the development of multi-sectoral policies, programmes and budgets. While attempts were made in 2009 to look at gender budgeting in government programmes, this has not been implemented, possibly due to the political environment of Solomon Islands and its national capacity.

In addition to clear rules, tools and information, a change in attitudes and behaviours is required. There needs to be greater recognition that gender inequalities are affecting the overall capacity and effectiveness of the each ministry, and government as a whole, to achieve development goals and improve the well-being of all citizens. The social and human dimensions, including the gender

perspective, need to be central in the work routine and professional practices of government staff. In particular, senior government officials and department heads need to recognise that there are rarely 'gender neutral' impacts of any decision.

d. Accountability mechanisms

Accountability mechanisms ensure that action on commitments to gender mainstreaming can be traced and monitored within organisations, and that individuals are held to account for gender equality results in their area of work. There are virtually no national accountability mechanisms in place in Solomon Islands.

Job descriptions and performance appraisal systems

Job descriptions (JDs) and terms of reference (TOR) are produced by PSC. With the exception of two ministries, gender mainstreaming responsibilities are not included in the TORs or JDs of government staff. In the case of one ministry, this is an administrative requirement not linked to any policy or legislative requirements but to donors' requirements. Only MWYCA has executive gender-related responsibilities linked to the management of positions responsible for gender equality and mainstreaming.

Performance appraisal systems are also produced by PSC. They are generic and do not reflect the unique mandate of each ministry and staff position. This contributes to a disconnection between outputs or impacts as reflected in the corporate plans of each ministry and the evaluation and monitoring aspects of staff performance. PSC is not actively engaged in planning or reviewing performance. There is a need to put in place performance evaluation guidelines and systems that include identification and evaluation of gender equality results.

A National Human Resource Development Plan has been developed and should be reviewed as a possible entry point for integrating gender equality responsibilities.

Priority needs

Lack of awareness and capacity were referred to by all ministries as the main single barrier to proper incorporation of gender equality responsibilities into JDs, TORs and performance management systems. Virtually all the ministry informants referred to gender awareness and systems training as necessary remedial action.

A number of systems were cited that could be adapted to improve accountability for gender mainstreaming. Of the ten ministry informants who responded to this question, seven identified JDs as the starting point, which would require consultation with PSC. Other systems identified include General Orders (under PSC), the data collection system, existing internal ministerial systems and processes, and the PSC institute, which is an induction course for senior staff. One informant referred to the development of the National Human Resource Development Plan, the National Strategic Development Plan and the Provincial Development Plans as offering a unique opportunity to mainstream gender accountabilities at national and provincial levels. PSC could be targeted and encouraged to work with ministries/departments to review or develop explicit TORs and JDs that integrate gender equality responsibilities at all levels across government.

As already mentioned, gender mainstreaming is not the exclusive responsibility of WDD. All government institutions have to be accountable and show efforts and results in reducing gender gaps in their respective sectors. Mechanisms need to be put in place for each ministry to report on their contributions, the resources dedicated to address gender inequalities or women's and men's different needs, and their measurable results. This would not only contribute to improving the government monitoring system but would also help to raise awareness and build the capacity of the different institutions to mainstream gender.

e. Technical capacity

Gender and women's human rights cannot be properly mainstreamed without a pool of technically qualified experts in these areas, whose skills and experience line and central ministries can systematically draw upon.

Lack of technical skills in line and central ministries

No line or central ministries interviewed have staff with the necessary technical qualifications or capacity to properly understand gender equality issues and how to mainstream them into their work. Of the 12 informants who responded, eight rated this technical capacity as low, one as low to medium, two as medium, and only one as high. All informants reported that there had been no staff training in their ministry in the areas of gender awareness, analysis, planning and budgeting, and they expressed the need for training in these areas. As noted earlier, even the one existing gender focal point 'does not ... possess the required technical skills and knowledge to influence decisions either vertically or horizontally. The position is in name only.'⁸

Only the Ministries of law reform, statistics, justice and MWYCA have engaged consultants to assist with gender-related work, including the review of laws, conduct of gender-based violence research, conduct of demographic and health surveys, and Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) assisted projects. All other ministries reported no use of consultants with technical expertise in gender.

Hands on, results-based training is key and welcome

While gender equality was acknowledged as important, one informant commented, 'We cannot apply it if there is no knowledge of the issues.' There is a major need for capacity building in this area for all ministries, with a focus on improving skills through hands-on, learning-by-doing training in analysing how gender and women's human rights issues apply in specific, selected areas of government work. Most informants stressed that the non-attention to gender inequality issues is due to the lack of technical expertise and awareness about gender, and expressed the need to be trained to a functional level of expertise, including specific training in gender-related analysis, budgeting and planning. Since gender-related training has been available and delivered in the Pacific for many years, it will be critical to move beyond 'conceptual training' and into a learning-by-doing approach of accompanying ministries through actual, results-oriented gender analysis and mainstreaming processes with identified and measurable deliverables.

⁸ Interview with a representative of the Ministry of Development Planning and Aid Coordination, August 24, 2009

Key barriers

The lack of financial resources was the most frequently cited constraint to improving technical skills. As noted by the Head of the Policy Analysis Unit of the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Development Planning, competing demands on national budgetary resources will continue to be the major challenge. One informant also identified specific individuals and the lack of a policy framework as barriers.

f. Adequacy of financing for gender equality

Gender mainstreaming across the whole of government should be built into a government's standard budgeting processes. The national budget should allocate specific and sufficient resources to WDD and to each ministry to engage in systematic, results-based gender analysis, planning, implementation and monitoring. Donor support is also critical, and external resourcing of NWMs should reflect the extensive and important mandate that they are designed to serve through proper multi-sectoral gender mainstreaming.

Inadequate resources allocated by government

The Solomon Islands government does not provide adequate resources for gender equality and mainstreaming. At present, only 0.09% of the total government budget is allocated to WDD (see Table 1).

Of the 12 ministry informants who responded to budgetary questions, nine stated that neither government nor donors provide adequate financial resources for gender mainstreaming. Only two perceived that there were sufficient financial resources.

No sectoral budgets include specific allocations for gender mainstreaming and, with the exception of MWYCA, there are no specific budgets within ministries targeted specifically towards enhancing gender equality. The only examples given of ways in which budgets target women were from the Ministry of Environment, which directs specific funds towards the management of protected areas where the participation of both women and men is required, and the Ministry of National Unity, Reconciliation and Peace, which referred to small seed funding given to women in development activities under the reconciliation programme. Five of the informants were able to link their general budgets to activities that, while not specifically aimed at gender equality, might contribute to it. The examples given, however, mainly included aid-in-kind provided by government for local input during project design stages and equipment to backstop various donor-funded gender initiatives. Seven ministries could not identify any part of their general funding that would enhance gender equality or the empowerment of women.

Weak donor support to WDD

While there must be improvements in demonstrated national level ownership, there is also a need for more direct resourcing from donors, particularly in support of implementation of the GEWD policy, if gender equality and mainstreaming goals are to be achieved and sustained. WDD received only SBD 300,000 in development aid for gender equality work in 2010, a reduction from 2009 when donors contributed SBD 420,000. These figures represent a negligible 0.08 per cent and 0.1 per cent

respectively of total development aid (see Table 1). This does not account for donor funding to specific gender equality projects administered outside WDD.

Key barriers and priority needs

Lack of funds and lack of awareness were the two most frequently cited constraints to allocating more financial resources to gender mainstreaming. Other reasons include the lack of advocacy on the importance of gender equality, and the lack of collaboration, networking and information sharing among major stakeholders. Gender training and awareness raising were cited as ways to address these constraints.

There is a need to significantly strengthen financing for the mainstreaming of gender and women's human rights across the work of government. Institutionalised mechanisms are needed to track resource allocations across government in a consistent manner. Indicators are also needed to measure progress in gender-responsive resource allocations, looking at both the quantity and quality of budgetary expenditure to determine how effectively resources are being used to address gender imbalances.

3. Additional factors

a. Lack of women in decision making and entrenched stereotyping

Contextual challenges to stronger mainstreaming of gender and women's human rights include the complete absence of women in the Solomon Islands Parliament, the low participation of women in senior executive positions in government, and deeply entrenched cultural barriers and sex stereotypes.

b. Women human rights critical in conflict resolution

Solomon Islands has only recently come out of a very challenging time, with protracted ethnic tensions between 1998 and 2003 that stemmed from land and natural resource conflicts. There is ongoing tension between the peoples of Malaita and Guadalcanal, as well as racial tension between indigenous and Asian businesses. These circumstances detract from national development and the human rights agenda, but national responses are also a critical time for concerted efforts by government and development partners to ensure a gender and rights-based approach.

c. Adverse impact of socio-economic and environmental changes

The development of large-scale extractive industries has not helped the cause of gender equality in Solomon Islands. Negative impacts on women's human rights have included the erosion of women's historically strong land rights in matrilineal areas, and the exploitation of women and girls through prostitution.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIC APPROACHES FOR GENDER MAINSTREAMING

The following are potential strategic starting points for increasing the capacity of the Solomon Islands government to mainstream gender and women's human rights in an effective and sustainable way.

1. Capacity development for WDD and GEWD National Steering Committee

There is a need to develop the technical capacity of WDD and the new GEWD National Steering Committee to be key drivers for gender mainstreaming, and to generate wider government awareness and respect for this critical role. The new GEWD policy, which includes improved capacity for gender mainstreaming among its priority areas, together with Solomon Islands' ratification of three key international human rights treaties of particular relevance to women, provide the necessary mandate and authority. WDD has excellent recent experience in gender transformative work by virtue of the gender-based violence surveys, the development of national policies and plans of action to eliminate violence against women, and the lobbying for temporary special measures to increase the representation of women in parliament. However, some of the skill sets remain at the Permanent Secretary level and need to filter vertically throughout the WDD staffing structure and horizontally across other line and central ministries represented on the Steering Committee.

Accompaniment of WDD and the GEWD Steering Committee by a technical expert through a sustained process of identifying one or two key, concrete gender gaps in targeted priority sectors; analysing them from a gender and human rights perspective; developing legal, policy and administrative responses; and implementing the responses with clear process and output indicators for success would provide the necessary hands-on experience and would equip WDD and the GEWD Steering Committee for similar work in a range of other areas in the future. The WDD/GEWD Steering Committee staff should do the work; the technical expert will just guide it.

Another critical element will be working closely with operational staff in the relevant sectors so that, once WDD and the GEWD Steering Committee acquire the necessary technical skills, they will have the capacity to transfer them in whole or in part to other sector representatives. This could involve a series of collaborative meetings, under the aegis of the GEWD Steering Committee, between WDD, the relevant sector and central agencies with gender and women's human rights awareness sessions, hands-on training in analysing a specific development issue from a gender and human rights perspective, and jointly developing and implementing responses that will promote gender equality. Critical to this process is focusing on ministries/departments that are supportive and able to push the agenda of gender mainstreaming within their ministry and ensure the appropriate level of sustained participation.

2. Tools development

Since there are no existing tools or systems in place to assist WDD, the GEWD Steering Committee and the various sectors, such tools could be developed, either broadly or for specific sectors. They could include user-friendly handbooks, guidelines, checklists and analytical tools, many of which

already exist internationally. They should be tailored to the specific needs and context of the Solomon Islands government and be based on national issues and case examples. The use of these tools must be mandated and monitored, and appropriate record-keeping and reporting systems should be developed. They should also be used (driven by WDD and the GEWD Steering Committee and with the assistance and guidance of a technical expert) throughout at least two full and separate mainstreaming processes so that their use is demystified and WDD and the GEWD Steering Committee feel comfortable driving similar processes in future. Finally, there should be a clear process established at the outset for reviewing the impact of the tools, including results achieved and feedback from the people using the tools.

3. Gender statistics

There is insufficient collection, compilation and analysis of sex disaggregated data and gender indicators across sectors. Such data are critical to the identification, understanding and addressing of gender inequalities. Building on SPC's ongoing Pacific Regional Gender Statistics initiative, the Solomon Islands government could be accompanied through a process of compiling key gender indicators in one comprehensive framework, developing user-friendly 'situation of women' statistical reports, conducting policy analysis based on the priority indicators with relevant government agencies, and collaboratively developing policy responses. This will directly complement and support all the other strategic approaches discussed here.

4. National, sectoral and corporate plans

The accompaniment of WDD and one or two targeted sector(s) through a mainstreaming exercise could have, as a primary output, a fully mainstreamed policy or action plan, including key gender and women's human rights indicators to measure performance and impact. This would include the strengthening of related staff performance measures to incorporate gender-related outcomes. The new national strategic development framework will be an ideal candidate, given its influence across all sectors, depending on what stage it is at when the stocktake implementation is ready to proceed. Similarly, one or more provincial development plans could be the basis of a gender analysis and mainstreaming exercise. These processes would involve WDD, the GEWD Steering Committee, the Ministry of Development, Planning and Aid Coordination and the relevant sector(s).

5. Strengthening of PSC

Finally, in view of the GEWD policy's proposed development and strengthening of gender desks in certain ministries and of the current absence of any gender-related JDs, TORs and performance evaluation systems, PSC could be assisted in reviewing and revising its human resource management systems to integrate gender accountabilities for key staff across different sectors. To be successful, this will require targeted training for PSC and relevant staff and may benefit from an incremental approach.

APPENDIX

List of organisations interviewed or consulted

Government

National Statistics Office
Office of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
Law Reform Commission
Ministry of Development, Planning and Aid Coordination
Ministry of Agriculture
Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development
Ministry of Environment
Ministry of Finance and Treasury
Ministry of Fisheries
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Forestry
Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs
Ministry of Lands
Ministry of National Unity, Reconciliation and Peace
Ministry of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs

Development Partners

Australian Agency for International Development
New Zealand Aid Programme
European Union
United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ADB (Asian Development Bank). 2009. Solomon Islands: Interim Country Partnership Strategy, 2009-2011. <http://www.adb.org/Documents/CPSS/SOL/CPS-SOL-2009-2011.pdf> (accessed March 8, 2010).

ADB (Asian Development Bank). 2010. Database and development Indicators: Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). <http://www.adb.org/Statistics/mdg.asp> (accessed March 11, 2010).

GoSI (Government of Solomon Islands) Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development. 2007. National Education Action Plan 2007–2009. Honiara: MEHRD.

GoSI (Government of Solomon Islands) Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (MEHRD). 2008. Policy Statement and Guidelines for Grants to Schools in Solomon Islands. Honiara: MEHRD.

GoSI (Government of Solomon Islands) Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MOHMS). 2006. Solomon Islands National Health Strategic Plan 2006–2010 Our people's health is our passion and everyone's business. Honiara: MOH.

GoSI (Government of Solomon Islands) Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MOHMS). 2004. Solomon Islands National Policy on Disability 2005–2010. Honiara: MOHMS Community Based Rehabilitation Programme.

GoSI (Government of Solomon Islands) Ministry of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs (MWYCA). 2008. Corporate Plan 2008–2010. Honiara: MWYCA.

GoSI (Government of Solomon Islands) Ministry for Women, Youth and Children's Affairs (MWYCA). 2009. Solomon Islands Beijing + 15. Solomon Islands government response to Beijing + 15 Questions. Honiara: MWYCA.

GoSI (Government of Solomon Islands). 1978. The Constitution of Solomon Islands http://www.pacii.org/sb/legis/consol_act/c1978167/.

GoSI (Government of Solomon Islands). 1998. Solomon Islands National Women's Policy: Partnership in Development. WDD, MYWSR, Honiara.

Huffer, E (ed.). 2008. Land and women: The matrilineal factor: The cases of the Republic of the Marshalls, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. Suva: Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat.

ICFTU (International Confederation of Free trade Unions). 1999. Internationally Recognised Core Labour Standards in the Solomon Islands: Report for the WTO General Council Review of Trade Policies of the Solomon Islands. <http://www.icftu.org/www/english/els/escl98solomon.html>.

ITUC (International Trade Union Confederation). 2009. Internationally Recognised Core Labour Standards in the Solomon Islands: Report for the WTO General Council Review of Trade Policies of the Solomon Islands. http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/WTO_report_Solomon_final0509.pdf (accessed March 9, 2010)

JICA. Country Gender Profile: Solomon Islands. February 2010. www.jica.go.jp/activities/issues/gender/pdf/e09sol.pdf (last visited October 18th 2010)

Leslie, Helen and Selina Boso. 2003. Gender-related violence in the Solomon Islands: The work of local women's organizations. Abstract. *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*. 44 (3).
<http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/118851918/abstract>. (accessed March 8, 2010)

Maetala, R. 2008. Matrilineal land tenure systems in Solomon Islands: the case of Guadalcanal, Makira and Isabel Provinces. In: E. Huffer (ed.) *Land and women: the matrilineal factor. The cases of the Republic of the Marshalls, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu*. Suva: Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. 35–57.

PIFS (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat). 2006. A woman's place in the house – the house of parliament. Research to advance women's political representation in the Forum Island Countries: A regional study presented in five reports. Suva, Fiji: PIFS.

SINSO (Solomon Islands National Statistics Office). 1999. *Labour Force Statistics: 1999 Census of Population and Housing*. Honiara.
<http://www.spc.int/prism/country/sb/stats/Economic/Labour/Labor.htm> (accessed March 9, 2010)

SPC (Secretariat of the Pacific Community) and ADB (Asian Development Bank). 2007. *Solomon Islands Demographic and Health Surveys 2006–2007 Final report*. Noumea.
<http://www.spc.int/sdp/index.php> (accessed March 7, 2010).

SPC (Secretariat of the Pacific Community). 2009. *Solomon Islands family and health and safety study: a study on violence against women and children*. Noumea, New Caledonia: SPC.
http://www.spc.int/hdp/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=39&Itemid=44 (accessed March 8, 2010).

UN Women. 1995. Beijing declaration and platform for action. Fourth World Conference on Women. para. 202 (<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/>).

UNCRC. 2001. Committee on the Rights of the Child Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties Under Article 44 of the Convention Solomon Islands. CRC, 2002.

UNICEF. 2010. *Solomon Islands Statistics: Basic Indicator*
http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/solomonislands_statistics.html#66 (accessed March 8, 2010).

OHCHR (United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights) and PIFS (Pacific Island Forum Secretariat). 2009. Discussion paper - Ratification of international human rights treaties: added value for the Pacific region. Suva, Fiji: OHCHR and PIFS.

Vedna, Jivan and Christine Forster. 2008. *Translating CEDAW into law: CEDAW compliance in nine Pacific Island Countries*. Suva, Fiji: UNDP and UNIFEM. <http://www.iknowpolitics.org/node/9329> (accessed March 8, 2010)

Wallace, H. (nd). *Gender and the reform process in Vanuatu and Solomon Islands*. Melbourne: Department of Social Inquiry and Community Studies, Victoria University of Technology.

Whittington, S., Ospina, S. and Pollard A. 2006. *Women in Government in Solomon Islands A Diagnostic Study*. http://www.cdi.anu.edu.au/x_GEN_D_P/2006_10_SI_diagnostc_study.pdf, (accessed March 4, 2010).

WHO, SPC, the University of New South Wales and the Global Fund, 2006. *Second Generation Surveillance Surveys of HIV, other STs and risk behaviours in six Pacific Island countries (2004–2005)*.

Manila. <http://www.wpro.who.int/internet/resources.ashx/HSI/docs/SGS+FINAL+DOCUMENT.pdf> (accessed March 8, 2010).

Additional documents/sites consulted

Coalition of National Unity and Rural Advancement Government. 2008. Policy Statement.

GoSI (Government of Solomon Islands). 2010. Solomon Islands National Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Development 2010–2015: Partners in Development.

GoSI (Government of Solomon Islands) Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock. 2009. Corporate Plan 2009–2010. Honiara

SPC (Secretariat of the Pacific Community) PRISM. <http://www.spc.int/prism/>

Solomon Islands Penal Code [Cap 26]. http://www.pacii.org/sb/legis/consol_act/pc66/ (accessed March 8 2010)

Solomon Islands Law Reform Commission. 2008. Annual Report No. 5 2007. Honiara.

CONTACT DETAILS
Secretariat of the Pacific Community

SPC Headquarters
BP D5,
98848 Noumea Cedex,
New Caledonia
Telephone: +687 26 20 00
Fax: +687 26 38 18

SPC Suva Regional Office
Private Mail Bag,
Suva,
Fiji,
Telephone: +679 337 0733
Fax: +679 337 0021

SPC Pohnpei Regional Office
PO Box Q,
Kolonias, Pohnpei, 96941 FM,
Federated States of
Micronesia
Telephone: +691 3207 523
Fax: +691 3202 725

SPC Solomon Islands
Country Office
PO Box 1468
Honiara, Solomon Islands
Telephone: + 677 25543
+677 25574
Fax: +677 25547

Email: spc@spc.int
Website: www.spc.int