

Solomon Islands Country Report

for the

5-Year Review of the Mauritius Strategy for Further Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for Sustainable Development of SIDS (MSI+5)

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents 2

1. Solomon Islands: Situation Overview..... 6

1.1 Governance Situation 6

1.1.1 Peace and security..... 7

1.1.2 Land and Conflict..... 7

1.1.3 Governance and democracy 8

1.1.4 Human rights, gender, persons with disabilities..... 8

1.2 Economic Situation 8

1.2.1 Macroeconomic performance 8

1.2.2 Subsistence sector trends 8

1.2.3 Forest sector trends 9

1.2.4 Agriculture sector trends 10

1.2.5 Fisheries sector trends 11

1.2.6 Minerals sector trends 12

1.2.7 Tourism, manufacturing sector trends 13

1.2.8 Energy sector trends 13

1.2.9 Remittances: RSE participation 13

1.3 Social Situation 14

1.3.1 Overview..... 14

1.3.2 Education 14

1.3.3 Health..... 15

1.3.4 Urbanisation 15

1.4 Environmental situation 16

1.4.1 Overview..... 16

1.4.2 Biological diversity 16

1.4.3 Freshwater resources 16

1.4.4 Coastal environments..... 17

1.4.5 Climate change and sea level rise 17

1.4.6 Land and sea pollution: 17

2. National Enabling Environment 18

2.1 National Policies and Strategies 18

2.1.1 CNURA Government policy 18

2.2 National Sustainable Development Strategy 19

2.2.1 Medium Term Development Strategy 2008-2010..... 19

2.2.2 National Environment Capacity Development Action Plan –NECDAP..... 21

2.2.3 National Energy Policy Framework..... 21

2.3 Non-State Actors 22

2.3.1 Communities and villages 22

2.3.2 Churches..... 22

2.3.3 Business 22

2.3.4 Non government organisations 23

3. The Thematic Areas..... 24

3.1 Climate Change and Sea-Level Rise 24

3.1.1 Climate Change Division of the MECM..... 24

3.1.2 National Adaptation Program of Action – NAPA..... 24

3.1.3 Climate change mainstreaming..... 25

3.2 Natural and Environmental Disasters 25

| | | |
|-------------|---|-----------|
| 3.2.1 | History of environmental disasters | 25 |
| 3.2.2 | Disaster response systems..... | 28 |
| 3.2.3 | Disaster Capacity Development | 29 |
| 3.3 | Management of Wastes | 30 |
| 3.3.1 | National Waste Management Strategy | 30 |
| 3.4 | Coastal and Marine Resources | 31 |
| 3.4.1 | National programmes and plans..... | 31 |
| 3.4.2 | Coral Triangle Initiative National Action Plan – CTI | 32 |
| 3.5 | Freshwater Resources | 32 |
| 3.6 | Land Resources | 33 |
| 3.6.1 | Land administration and tenure | 33 |
| 3.6.2 | Mining | 34 |
| 3.6.3 | Agriculture and Forestry | 34 |
| 3.7 | Energy Resources | 36 |
| 3.8 | Tourism Resources | 38 |
| 3.8.1 | Sustainable Tourism | 38 |
| 3.9 | Biodiversity Resources | 39 |
| 3.9.1 | National Biodiversity Strategic Action Plan – NBSAP..... | 39 |
| 3.9.2 | Programme of work on protected areas (POWPA) | 40 |
| 3.10 | Transportation and Communication | 40 |
| 3.10.1 | Air transport | 40 |
| 3.10.2 | Shipping..... | 41 |
| 3.10.3 | Land transport | 41 |
| 3.10.4 | Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) | 41 |
| 4. | Cross-cutting Issues | 43 |
| 4.1 | Science and Technology | 43 |
| 4.2 | Graduation from Least Developed Country (LDC) Status | 43 |
| 4.3 | Trade: Globalisation and Trade Liberalisation | 43 |
| 4.4 | Sustainable Capacity Development and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) | 44 |
| 4.5 | Sustainable Production and Consumption | 45 |
| 4.6 | Knowledge Management and Information for Decision-Making | 45 |
| 5. | Implementation | 46 |
| 5.1 | Access to and provision of Financial Resources | 46 |
| 5.2 | Science and Development and Transfer of Technology | 47 |
| 5.3 | Capacity Development | 48 |
| 5.4 | National and International Governance including trade and finance | 49 |
| 5.5 | Monitoring and Evaluation | 49 |
| 6. | Impact and Responses to the Recent Global Crises | 51 |
| 6.1 | The Global Fuel and Food Crises | 51 |
| 6.1.1 | Rice..... | 51 |
| 6.1.2 | Fuel..... | 52 |
| 6.2 | The Global Financial Crisis | 52 |
| 6.2.1 | Temporary logging downturn..... | 52 |
| 6.3 | Responses | 52 |

- 7. Challenges and opportunities 54**
- 7.1 Key challenges for sustainable development 54**
- 7.2 Key opportunities for sustainable development 55**
- 7.3 Key priorities for sustainable development 56**
- 7.4 Challenges, Needs and Priorities for future MSI Implementation 57**
- 7.4.1 Challenges – MSI implementation 57
- 7.4.2 Needs – MSI implementation..... 58
- 7.4.3 Priorities – MSI implementation 58

Table of Figures

Figure 1: Log volume and export prices 2000-2008 (source: CBSI 2009 Annual Report) 10

Figure 2: Export volumes of key agricultural commodities 2005-2008 (Source: CBSI Annual Report 2009)..... 11

Figure 3: National Fish Production and Export Prices (source: CBSI 2009 Annual Report).. 12

Figure 4: 2006-2008 Government Spending Trends (sourced from 2008 Medium Term Development Strategy)..... 47

Figure 5:World food and fuel prices 2002-2009 (Source CBSI 2009 Annual Report)..... 51

List of Tables

Table 1: Subsistence economy in relation to agriculture and extractives (from State of Environment Report 2008)..... 9

Table 2: MTDS Alignment to the MDGs and MSI..... 20

Table 3: Overarching Energy Framework Goals and Policies 21

Table 4: Vulnerable Sectors Identified under NAPA..... 25

Table 5: Summary of recent environmental disasters (adapted from 2009 National Circumstances Report) 26

Table 6: Strategies associated with Policies and Goals in the National Energy Framework... 36

Table 7: Oil consumption for selected PICs (Source: 2007 CIA World Factbook)..... 56

1. Solomon Islands: Situation Overview

Solomon Islands continues to face some of the most difficult development challenges within the Pacific Islands sub-region. It experiences the lowest per capita income in the region and is one of the lowest ranked countries in the region by HDI¹. This situation has resulted from rapid socio-economic and cultural change due to the ongoing effects of globalisation as its long standing and historical impacts.

The challenges faced by all developing countries have been compounded in Solomon Islands' case by a series of human and natural disasters which have impeded sustainable development progress on community and national levels.

Most notable amongst these incidents have been the 1998-2003 national civil unrest called the "tensions" in which major governmental institutions were rendered inoperable and violence led to the largest internal displacement (estimated 20,000 people) in the entire Pacific region. Solomon Islands' social service institutions and policy processes remain affected by the effects of this period and face significant challenges have been compounded by the impacts of both the global economic crises and successive natural disasters.

The base unit of Solomon society, the village, is experiencing these pressures in the immediate term as well as over extended periods.

Constant exposure to natural disasters poses ongoing challenges to local communities as well as regional and national systems. The most dramatic of these was the 2007 Western Province earthquake and tsunami which affected more than 36,000 people and killed more than 50². The severe impacts of this disaster have been compounded by the very recent January 2010 earthquake and tsunami in the same region which has left more than 1000 people homeless.

This situation has meant the continuing importance of measures and policies such as the MSI, in decreasing its degree of exposure to future vulnerabilities arising from other such shocks.

1.1 Governance Situation

Governance in Solomon Islands is distributed between formal state institutions and informal but influential traditional and community institutions which reflect the makeup of national society.

Formal state governance is headed by a national, democratically elected parliament of 50 members each representing a single geographically defined electorate. Executive government is derived from this parliament through a process of coalition formation and

1 Statistics extracted from tables at http://hdrstats.undp.org/buildtables/rc_report.cfm accessed 10 Sep 2009.

2 NDMO (2007) Lessons learnt Workshop Report, Honiara.

the election of a Prime Minister who then appoints a cabinet. There are nine provinces of widely differing size and population as well as a capital city administration.

Each province and the capital administration are elected through area elections. Despite this, there is very little devolution of power, little capacity and limited resourcing of these territorial governance bodies. A matrix of customary authority, church based institutions and locale-specific community bodies forms the main context for local level governance, the exact nature and makeup of which varies considerably across the territory of the country.

Central governance continues to evolve within the democratic framework and acts as a valuable and important intermediary between community level leadership and governance and national policy processes. Community level governance has demonstrated remarkable resilience and capability in the face of lawlessness and violent conflict in the past. However it faces challenges in integrating with systems of state law as well as the agents of globalisation such as resource companies.

The global nature of threats to livelihood security demands that national level responses be mounted on behalf of the many local communities that make up the Solomon Islands nation. International frameworks such as the MSI are key for such responses.

1.1.1 Peace and security

Having experienced five years of deadly conflict from 1998-2003, Solomon Islands' central policy concern is peacebuilding and the maintenance of basic security for its citizens. This emphasis remains central to the Government's policy platform³. There are currently several key programmes in place for the pursuit of this objective, most notably the National Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which has in early 2010 commenced its work of public hearings.

1.1.2 Land and Conflict

Land issues continue to be a prominent in considerations of conflict, both at local and national levels. Because of continued strong links between people and their lands, issues of land use, migration and resettlement remain potent determinants of stability and conflict.

About 87% of the land in Solomon Islands are under customary land tenure with rights and ownership outside of governmental and legal systems. This pattern of land relations, including customary land tenure has central importance for the use of land resources under both subsistence and the cash economic models.

The complex range of factors attached to land relations make the displacement implications of natural disasters and climate change extremely significant – there is

3 Coalition for National Unity and Rural Advancement Government Policy Statements (2008) January 2008., Honiara. Part 1.

considerable potential for “knock-on” effects of population displacement and great sensitivity to these possibilities remains from the prior conflict period.

1.1.3 Governance and democracy

Democratic governance has enjoyed mixed success in the history of Solomon Islands, with a history of generally peaceful elections, in the sense that large scale controversy and challenges to the legitimacy of elected parliaments has not been experienced. However, there have been two significant departures from this pattern, both regarding the political executive. In 2000 the sitting PM was coerced by a militant group to resign, forcing Parliament to elect a new PM. In 2007 there was rioting and destruction on a large scale in the capital Honiara, following announcement that a PM had been elected who was broadly perceived to be associated with corruption.

1.1.4 Human rights, gender, persons with disabilities

Human rights and gender issues benefit from increased programming and recognition, but there continue to be indications that broad recognition of these critical aspects of human social development is lacking in policy processes and delivery agencies.

There has been considerable recent progress on the development of facilities and programming for the support and education of persons with disabilities, most notably through the establishment of a rural training centre for the personal development of persons with disabilities, called the San Isidro Rural Training Centre for the Deaf and located on Western Guadalcanal. Throughout the country, however, appropriate programming and services for persons with disabilities is, in general sparse.

1.2 Economic Situation

1.2.1 Macroeconomic performance

Solomon Islands' macroeconomic performance continues to be dominated by external flows both incoming and outgoing. Aid flows and commodity exports characterise foreign exchange receipts while food, equipment and fuel imports dominate outgoing flows. The domestic economy is dominated by government and donor spending; private sector growth while continuing, remains hampered by poor regulatory systems and infrastructure. In this context a very considerable grey market has been developing alongside the subsistence sector⁴. Quantifying both of these sectors and understanding the basis of their operation remain key unknowns within the macroeconomic framework.

1.2.2 Subsistence sector trends

The subsistence sector continues to dominate domestic production albeit at poorly quantified levels. Conservative estimates place subsistence at the very centre of human development of Solomon Islands.

⁴ Unpublished data, Islands Knowledge Institute (2009) Income and livelihoods survey in peri-urban Honiara.

Table 1: Subsistence economy in relation to agriculture and extractives (from State of Environment Report 2008)

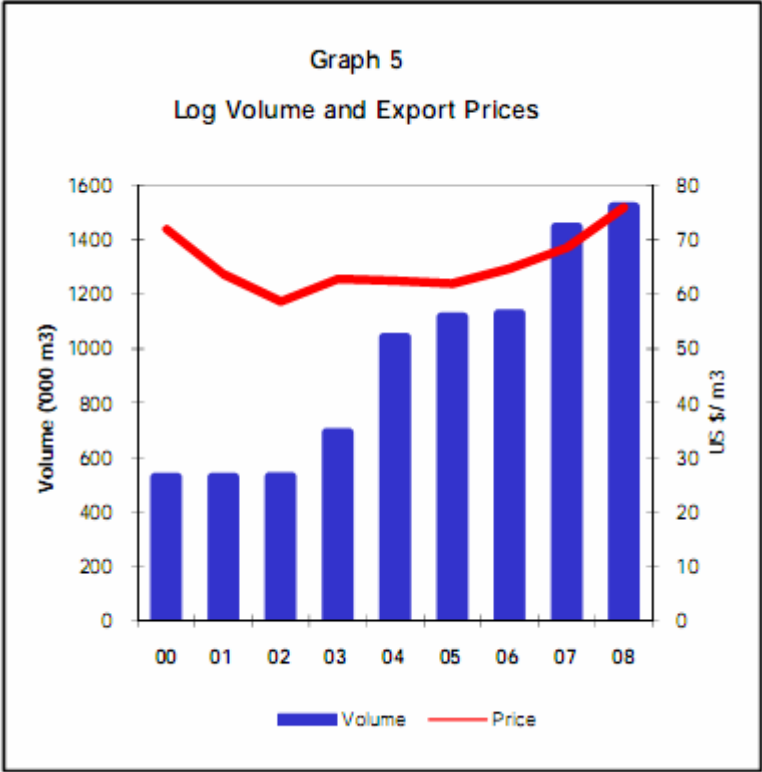
| Subsistence activity | Agriculture | Extractive industries |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| 2008 estimates | 2007 exports | 2007 exports |
| Forest uses – \$2.6 billion | Copra cocoa, palm oil – | Logs, tuna, gold – |
| Root crops - \$1.1 billion | \$212 million | \$996 million |

Subsistence food production, housing and medicinal sources dominate the supply of basic livelihood factors for the majority of the population, including a significant proportion of the urban population. Food production is facing threats from pests and disease, with African Giant Snail remaining a major threat on Guadalcanal, and fruit fly spreading throughout the Solomons. There is increasing diversity in cropping types and farming methods, but intensification of land use in several areas is leading to soil degradation, leading to localised subsistence viability crises⁵. The heterogeneous nature of the country's population and biota means that localised trends can still have knock-on effects on other areas through gardening encroachment and resettlement pressures. The poorly understood and little quantified nature of this major sector means that policy measures to support or protect it remain unclear.

1.2.3 Forest sector trends

Solomon Islands forestry sector comprises logging and plantation forestry. Logging remains at a crisis level, set to exhaust the accessible resource in the very near future. Contrary to expectations, there was some acceleration in extraction in 2009, but with continued low prices in key Asian log markets, it is expected that this will not increase further.

Figure 1: Log volume and export prices 2000-2008 (source: CBSI 2009 Annual Report)



Plantation forestry is continuing via two major avenues: large scale and corporately-integrated operations conducted by two large companies, managing plantations or contiguous plots of more than ten thousand hectares each⁶; and community scale plots managed by villages, families or church communities throughout the Solomons. It is unclear to what extent community level plots are being renewed or maintained, but large scale plantations continue to experience some growth.

1.2.4 Agriculture sector trends

The non-subsistence agricultural sector comprises smallholders and large corporate development projects. Smallholders possess extensive and dispersed plantings of coconut, cacao and market gardens. Coconut and cacao are generally processed to copra and coconut oil or dried cacao beans respectively. Market gardens produce almost exclusively for the local market, although have been occasional and small exports of fresh produce to the Australian and New Zealand markets⁷. Despite long standing policy indications about diversification, the vast majority of exports from the smallholder sector continues to be

6 Kolombangara Forest Products Limited operating on Kolombangara Islands in the Western Province and Eagon Forest Products Limited operating in northern Choiseul Province as well as in the Viru region of New Georgia in the Western Province (Arara).

7 In 2008 there were two exports of root vegetables from the Guadalcanal Weather Coast to Australia, and there has been an occasional export of fresh green coconut to New Zealand as well. Neither has been ongoing.

dried copra and cacao. Both products have enjoyed strong growth in volume⁸ and are standout successes in terms of sustainable export earnings. Large corporatised agriculture currently comprises a contiguous region of palm oil plantation on Guadalcanal, currently exceeding 5000 Ha, Guadalcanal Plains Palm Oil Limited (GPPOL).

Figure 2: Export volumes of key agricultural commodities 2005-2008 (Source: CBSI Annual Report 2009)

| Period | Copra (m.t) | Coconut Oil (m.t) | Palm Oil (m.t) | Palm Kernel (m.t) |
|--------|----------------|-------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| 2005 | 26182 | - | - | - |
| 2006 | 21213 | 122 | 5427 | 1236 |
| 2007 | 22249 | 741 | 17151 | 4829 |
| 2008 | 39849 | 505 | 21981 | 6139 |

It has been achieving consistently strong export volumes and has increased production in both 2008 and 2009. In a novel situation for Solomon Islands, the company is processing for export from planting managed both by outgrowers and the company itself. The viability of this model may hold promise for replication elsewhere in the country. Another two government-sponsored palm oil projects, in Malaita's Auluta Basin and Vangunu in the Western Province, are currently on hold.

1.2.5 Fisheries sector trends

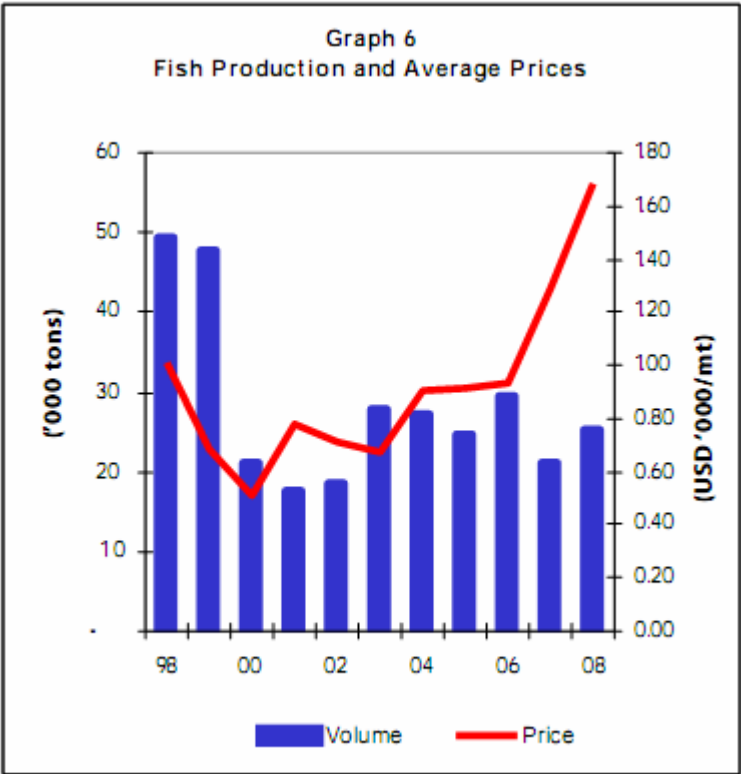
Solomon Islands possesses considerable fisheries resources, both inshore and open ocean. With the approaching exhaustion of loggable forest, there is a great deal of policy emphasis on fisheries, particularly tuna. Solomon Islands is one of five countries in the Pacific region whose sea territories jointly enclose more than 40% of the world's tuna stocks¹⁰.

8 2007-2008 the copra industry recorded 40% growth in exports (CBSI Annual Report 2008) while cacao remained relatively steady in production but experienced increased revenue from international price rises.

9 CBSI Annual Report 2008

10 Insert reference on the Nauru Accord and Western Pacific Tuna Commission.

Figure 3: National Fish Production and Export Prices (source: CBSI 2009 Annual Report)



The sustainability of these stocks is a matter for regional cooperation in policy formulation and enforcement, and the country is actively participating in these regional efforts. Tuna catches in the country by national tuna processing and exporting companies indicate strong stocks, with catch limited more by corporate fleets and operational issues, such as poor weather, than by catch effort.

1.2.6 Minerals sector trends

Minerals and mining are an area of major development and investment in the country. The environmental and social effects of such developments will be a key consideration in ensuring social and environmental sustainability as well as overall national benefit. Current mineral production is already underway from individual miners carrying out alluvial operations in the vicinity of Gold Ridge. There are also currently major exploration and prospecting activities occurring in four of the nine provinces of the country and the Gold Ridge Mine is undergoing a process of reactivation which will take place over 2010. Considerable deposits of gold, copper, nickel and bauxite have been identified and there is a high probability of production operations commencing within the next 10 years. Prospecting licenses have also been issued for considerable seabed areas to the southeast of the New Georgia group of islands in the Western Province.

1.2.7 Tourism, manufacturing sector trends

Despite high level policy recognition of the place of tourism in national sustainable development, progress in developing the sector remains slow. Poor national infrastructure, particularly in the area of communications and air transport has hampered the increases in visitor numbers which many plans call for. Some hotel and resort development in the last 5 years has increased bed capacity within the capital Honiara as well as introduced additional options and variety in higher end offerings in the Western Province. The 2007 earthquake and tsunami have posed particularly difficult challenges for the key attraction areas of the Western Province, with considerable reef damage as well as destruction of infrastructure at the nucleus resort town of Gizo. Future development will need to be guided by an awareness of vulnerability to natural disasters arising from geo-hazards as well as extreme climate events.

Manufacturing within Solomon Islands remains relatively minor and largely focused on the local market. Key components of the manufacturer sector include basic timber processing and furniture making, as well as food packaging and processing.

1.2.8 Energy sector trends

The energy sector in Solomon Islands continues to be dominated by fossil fuels, with more than 4 million litres imported on average per month¹¹. Approximately 60% of this import level is consumed in power generation by the national electricity authority, SIEA or by institutional and private sector generation plants. The remaining 40% of the import volume is consumed in roughly equal measure by the transportation sector (22%) and the community sector (18%) in the form of kerosene or petrol for power and cooking in villages. Essentially all transport fuels and the majority of power generation is relies on imported petroleum products. There are two private producers of biofuel, selling to the Honiara market, but at very low volumes. There is considerable potential for coconut based biofuel because of the massive plantings of coconut throughout the country. A number of micro-hydro power stations are in operation in three provinces, with plans for the installation of two more. There is very significant potential for further hydroelectricity development throughout the country, with more than 330MW of generation potential, more than 70% of it identified on Guadalcanal where the capital is located¹².

1.2.9 Remittances: RSE participation

Unlike other Pacific Islands countries, Solomon Islands does not have significant reliance on remittances, due to its relatively low emigration rate and small diaspora. However, recent opportunities for seasonal work in NZ have created scope for remittances to become a feature for national development policy. The Recognised Seasonal Employer scheme is a policy initiative of the NZ government to enable the NZ horticultural and

11 Solomon Island's (sic) Report to Regional workshop for Asia and the Pacific on ways and means to promote the Sustainable production and use of Biofuels. Bangkok, Thailand, 25-27 November 2009.

12 National PIREP Country Report 2003.

viticultural industries to access Pacific Islands labour on a seasonal basis¹³. Under the scheme, Pacific Islanders are able to be employed as semi-skilled labour in the two industries for up to 7 months per year. Between 2007 and 2009, almost 450 Solomon Islanders participated in this scheme, but due to poor monitoring, the relative costs and benefits of this involvement remain unclear.

1.3 Social Situation

1.3.1 Overview

The social situation in Solomon Islands is characterised by rapid population growth driving demographic shifts, which together with urbanisation and monetisation are causing ongoing issues of cultural change and dislocation.

Solomon Islands social sector is under the pressure of rapid transition – in terms of population size and structure, urbanisation, economic activity, political structure and cultural dynamics. Population growth remains extremely high at around 2.4 - 2.5 per cent per annum¹⁴, which when taken with even higher rates over the last 30 years has led to significant youth bulge and an attendant high dependency rate (approx 41.9% of population is children under 15¹⁵). This growth has had implications for communities and family structures as well as effects on the continuity of traditional cultural practice and knowledge.

The trauma of the recent “tensions” continues to affect the entire population, particularly youth, and together with the pressures of globalisation, is causing ongoing difficulty. A key challenge for policy makers is to meet these multiple challenges in an integrated manner, and at a pace which is sufficient to the urgency being experienced.

1.3.2 Education

There has been considerable progress in terms of increasing access to education at primary and secondary levels, but maintaining quality of educational services has been difficult. 6 out of 10 children beginning grade one reach grade 6, while in primary schools, net enrolment for boys and girls completing full primary education stands at 91% and should rise to 100% by 2010. The literacy rate for 15-24 years of age was 62% in 1990 and 84.5% in 1999 and by 2010 it is planned that this rate should increase to 85%. The MDG of universal primary education by 2015 is likely to be achieved as enrolment and retention rates continue to rise. The Primary Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) in 2005 reached 94%, but with an NER of 95% for males and 93% for females there is a continuing gender gap.

13 Department of Labour (2009) Final Evaluation Report of the Recognised Seasonal Employer Policy (2007-2009).

14 ESCAP Statistical Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific 2008, accessed at <http://www.unescap.org/STAT/data/syb2008/2-Urbanization.asp> and <http://www.unescap.org/STAT/data/syb2008/index.asp> on 3 September 2009.

15 “A survey, conducted by Solomon Islands’ National Statistics Office and UNDP, indicates that there were 223,603 (41.9%) children under the age of 15 (115,020 boys and 108,583 girls, a ratio of 106 boys per 100 girls) in the total estimated population of 533,671 in Solomon Island .From SCA CRS report 2009 p10.

The transition rate from Solomon Islands Secondary Entrance Exams (SISEE) into Form 1 rose to 95% in 2006. However, there is concern about the number of pupils dropping out during primary education.

Access to secondary education is increasing, mainly due to the increasing number of Community High Schools (CHS). As a result, transition rates for SI Form 3 rose from 58% in 1996 to 73% in 2006 and for SI School Certificate from 20% in 2002 to 38% in 2006. The secondary NER was 23% in 2005 and this is expected to show an increase in the just completed 2009 National Census¹⁶.

1.3.3 Health

Health in Solomon Islands is characterised by high but variably reducing levels of infectious diseases and an increasing burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs). Malaria and acute respiratory illness (ARI) are important elements of the disease burden, with malaria being one of the leading causes of mortality in children and infants. In 2007, clinical malaria and fever were responsible for 28% of acute care attendances. In 2007, ARI accounted for 23% of total clinic visits. In 2006, clinical malaria accounted for 349.5 per 1,000 populations; fever accounts for 302 per 1000 population while slide confirmed 156 cases per 1,000.

The Ministry of Health has identified the following key health issues: malaria; acute respiratory infections (ARI); STI/HIV; high maternal mortality; diarrhoea; skin diseases; yaws TB and leprosy; non communicable diseases - such as diabetes; mental health; and access to sustainable clean water supply and sanitation¹⁷.

1.3.4 Urbanisation

Solomon Islands is experiencing rapid urbanisation, with the brunt of the rural-urban migration occurring towards the capital (Honiara). Honiara has experienced a doubling time of less than 17 years, with national urbanisation increasing from 1990 to 2007 by almost 4 percentage points from 13.7 to 17.6 per cent of the overall population¹⁸. Urban family and community structures are even more stressed than in the wider country due to this high growth pressure in towns, compounded by the monetised nature of urban dwelling and the high itinerancy of the urban situation. *Wantok*¹⁹ driven overcrowding of urban households is endemic and appears to be worsening. Education opportunities for youth underlie much urban drift but there are also elements of youth attraction to the urban lifestyle and desire for avoidance of traditional community structures. The formal

16 Ministry of Development Planning and Aid Coordination (2009) Solomon Islands National Report on Implementation of the Barbadoes Programme of Action, p24-25

17 Pacific Horizons Consultancy Group Ltd (2009), National Circumstances Report 2009. Honiara, Climate Change Division, Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Meteorology, p25-26

18 ESCAP Statistical Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific 2008, accessed at <http://www.unescap.org/STAT/data/syb2008/index.asp> on 3 September 2009

19 *Wantok* is a pan-Melanesian (Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea) term denoting persons sharing kin, language and cultural relations. These relations also carry reciprocal expectations of obligation and support.

monetised economy is not creating jobs at a sufficient rate to meet demand arising from urban drift and the maturing children population²⁰.

1.4 Environmental situation

1.4.1 Overview

Solomon Islands environment remains largely intact due to the relatively low population density, short history of significant exploitation and high productivity of the seas, which has limited the reliance of populations on the land for animal protein. However, environmental degradation and change is a very significant problem due to rapidly accelerating land use, logging and the effects of global environmental change on seascapes and terrestrial landscapes.

1.4.2 Biological diversity

Globally significant biological diversity exists throughout the country, on both land and marine environments, much of it still undescribed. Solomon Islands forests are recognised as “Globally Outstanding” and are included as an ecoregion in the Global 200 listing, with high degree of endemism. Marine biodiversity is at similarly remarkable levels, with Solomon Islands forming part of the Coral Triangle of four countries with extreme levels of marine biodiversity²¹.

A considerable proportion of the subsistence sector depends on key biodiversity either directly or indirectly, particularly in the form of functioning biomes such as coral reefs and mangroves. Habitat destruction is the most significant threat to these biomes, and is being driven by commercial activities as well as subsistence and settlement spread²².

1.4.3 Freshwater resources

Freshwater resource availability varies widely between different inhabited landforms in the country. The large high islands have significant river systems providing large volumes of freshwater, but smaller low islands and atolls are reliant on groundwater in the form of a freshwater lens, and on rainfall collection. A 2006 report estimated reticulated water supplies were available to only 50% of the national population, and these mainly on the large islands²³. Population pressures and inundation of the freshwater lens due to sea level rise are the main issues for small island water resources, while watershed degradation due to logging and human settlement growth is the primary threat to larger islands water resources. Contamination of groundwater is a significant issue in the capital and other urban areas, due to a low incidence of reticulated sewage, and high reliance on septic tanks.

20 Roughan, P.D. (2009) Solomon Islands National Report on Implementation of the Barbadoes Programme of Action, p3

21 Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Meteorology (2008), Solomon Islands State of Environment Report.

22 Ibid.

23 Kew Consult (2006) Solomon Islands Water Governance Programme – Mission 1 Report

1.4.4 Coastal environments

The majority of the country's population lives within the coastal regions of the islands²⁴, and are highly vulnerable to coastal environmental issues, particularly those related to severe weather events and other natural disasters such as tsunamis. The state of the coastal environment throughout the Solomons varies widely depending on the extent of human presence and exploitation and on the effects of recent natural disasters. In the vicinity of urban areas such as Honiara, and within peri-urban or heavily populated regions such as the Auki-Langalanga region, there is considerable environmental degradation due to effluent, marine species over-exploitation and habitat destruction through land clearing and reclamation. In the vicinity of the 2007 earthquake and tsunami there has been considerable habitat loss of reefs and seagrass beds through landform lifting and underwater landslides²⁵. Logging activities continue to cause siltation problems for reefs in those coastal areas downstream of them.

1.4.5 Climate change and sea level rise

There are severe problems from sea level rise, emerging in the northern atolls of the Solomons, particularly Ontong Java atoll²⁶. Subsistence root crops have been failing for almost a decade there due to saltwater inundation and intrusion into the raised beds traditionally used for gardening. While mean sea levels have not yet permanently inundated these regions, severe weather and high tides have meant such problems are worsening. Similar problems of inundation have been reported from the artificial islands in the province of Malaita, some of which have existed for more than 500 years²⁷. The effects of sea surface temperature change on reefs and bleaching have not yet been adequately investigated.

1.4.6 Land and sea pollution:

Solid waste is a growing problem, particularly in urban areas such as Honiara. Attitudes and policy settings are both continuing issues preventing²⁸ a comprehensive approach being executed. Due to poor public awareness and policy absence, a great amount of household-compostable solid waste continues to be added to the landfill waste stream, overburdening the waste collection and disposal function of Honiara City Council. Similar problems exist for other population centres in the country. Sewage effluent from urban areas and crowded coastal rural areas as well as plastic waste are increasingly evident in sea pollution, and are again related to public attitudes towards waste and the high availability of cheap plastic packaging materials. In addition to this, there continue to be concerns about the potential of oil leakage from bunkering in sunk World War 2 vessels throughout the Solomons.

24 The only sizable numbers living more than 5km inland are populations in central Guadalcanal and Malaita, and these are estimated to be less than 10% of total the population

25 Morris and Mackay (2008) State of the Coral Reefs of the World, p182.

26 Climate Change Division, Climate Change Division Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Meteorology. (2009), National Circumstances Report 2009. Honiara.

27 SI April 2nd 2007 Tsunami Lessons Learnt Workshop Report

28 SPREP (2000) Solid Waste Management Project Solomon Report, SPREP.

2. National Enabling Environment

The national enabling environment for the MSI consists of a framework of formal policy operating within a complex network of governmental and non-governmental institutions. Formal policy settings arise from the political process and the priorities of successive governments combined with programming emerging from multi-year international and regional frameworks. A network of non state actors interact with formal government institutions and play a critical role in the delivery of services and the informing of policy as part of this enabling environment. Private sector, NGOs and communities are inherently central to sustainable development within the Solomon Islands situation, due to the localised and highly autonomous nature of communities, land- and resource-ownership and cultural and social affairs. Churches remain another central feature of the national enabling environment, providing coordinative and service delivery functions, some of which have expanded in recent years.

2.1 National Policies and Strategies

National policies and strategies forming the MSI enabling environment form two broad groups: Firstly there are key cross-sectoral policy platforms which normally focus on the immediate programmatic priorities of a political administration; and secondly there are issue-based or sectorally focused programmes and strategies which adopt a thematic approach and often foresee implementation over a longer timescale than national policy platforms. In the former case, there are two key sources of direction:

- Coalition for National Unity and Rural Advancement Government Policy Statements²⁹. These statements form the overarching outline of the current government’s national strategy.
- Medium Term Development Strategy 2008-2010³⁰ (MTDS). This strategy documents the medium term national objectives of the government and links them to a monitoring framework.

2.1.1 CNURA Government policy

The key focus of the current CNURA government is on six priority areas, namely:

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| 1. Reconciliation and rehabilitation | 4. Social services sector |
| 2. National security and foreign relations | 5. Economic/productive sector |
| 3. Infrastructure development | 6. Civic affairs |

29 Coalition for National Unity and Rural Advancement Government Policy Statements (2008).

30 Solomon Islands: Medium Term Development Strategy 2008-2010 (2008)

Although focused on the pressing national issues of the day, these policy statements provide a politically rigorous framework for the pursuit of key MSI foci, by centring on a six-part mission which cleaves closely the broad framework of international development goals:

- the empowerment of the people through rural advancement strategies,
- the pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals,
- revitalize the economy,
- improve law and order,
- provide effective service delivery and
- improve devolution of powers and decision-making authority to the people.

In addition, these statements detail a range of actions which relate to the vulnerability, adaptation and sustainable development objectives of the Mauritius Strategy including:

- Rehabilitation of tsunami damaged infrastructure in Western and Choiseul Provinces
- Liberalisation of telecommunications to improve rural communication
- Build hydropower for provincial substations and provide power for 20 clinics and secondary schools through renewable energy

The CNURA policy statements also provided the basis for a Medium Term Development Strategy (MTDS) which articulates a more detailed framework of programming together with relevant outcome monitoring frameworks.

2.2 National Sustainable Development Strategy

The NSDS is composed of an overall Medium Term Development Strategy together with specific sectoral framework which are continually evolving. In a post-conflict situation of reconstruction, this iterative and evolutionary approach is optimal. It is articulated through several key strategic documents amongst them the Medium Term Development Strategy, National Adaptation Plan of Action, National Environment Capacity Development Action Plan, National Biodiversity Strategic Action Plan, Coral Triangle Initiative National Action Plan and National Energy Policy Framework. This section will present the primary aspects of the MTDS as more sectorally focused strategies and policies will be presented in Section

2.2.1 Medium Term Development Strategy 2008-2010

In 2008 the Solomon Islands government launched the Medium Term Development Strategy 2008-2010, set in the context of the CNURA Government's "Policy Statements" of January 2008, and linking the Policy Statements to a set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) many of which relate also to MDGs.

The MTDS sets out the primary emphases and direction of the current CNURA government, which are centred on peace and nation unity, the rebuilding of systems and infrastructure, the decentralisation of administration and governance, and the establishment of the country on the path to sustainable and sustained economic growth.

Table 2: MTDS Alignment to the MDGs and MSI

| MTDS Section | MDGs directly addressed | MSI foci directly addressed |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| Whole of government | MDG 1 | |
| Reconciliation and rehabilitation | | Natural and Environmental Disasters |
| Infrastructure development | MDG 8 | Transportation and Communication Climate Change and Sea-Level Rise Natural and Environmental Disasters |
| Social sector development | MDG2, MDG4, MDG 5, MDG 6, MDG 7 | |
| Economic development | MDG 1, MDG 7 | Land Resources Energy Resources Tourism Resources Biodiversity Resources Coastal and Marine Resources Freshwater Resources |
| Civil affairs development | MDG 3, MD 2, MD4 | |

The environment sector which includes Climate Change issues, is addressed under the Economic development section of the MTDS. The KPIs for climate change focus on NAPA Implementation, Awareness of Climate Change, programming for the development, transfer and application of appropriate, environmentally friendly, low cost technologies, and the enhancement of food production and resource security. Policies and strategies will be developed to encourage adoption of appropriate technology, including through implementation of the National Renewable Energy Policy.

2.2.2 National Environment Capacity Development Action Plan –NECDAP

The NECDAP is a key part of the enabling environment for meeting MSI and BPOA related commitments. This strategy outlines a series of critical steps needed to enable SI to meet the reporting and monitoring requirements of key MEAs that it is signatory to. Because these monitoring and compliance requirements are so closely aligned to the information needs for successful implementation of the MSI, this strategy is a very important enabling factor for the MSI agenda.

The NECDAP is an action plan for the development of a comprehensive suite of actions geared towards the development of capacity for implementation of national obligations under the key MEAs Solomon Islands is signatory to. It is an outcome of the National Capacity Self-Assessment (NCSA) Project, an initiative by the Secretariats of the CBD, UNFCCC and UNCCD to identify and overcome the capacity constraints hindering Parties to effectively implement the three international environmental agreements.

Five programmes recommended by the NECDAP have been included in the MTDS and are:

- Environmental Protection and Management
- Good Governance and Environmental Stewardship Programme
- Environmental Research, Development and Monitoring Programme
- Environmental Training and Education Programme
- Appropriate Technology Development and Transfer Programme
- National, Regional and International Environmental Agenda Implementation Programme.

2.2.3 National Energy Policy Framework

The National Energy Policy Framework Sets out the broad direction of energy policy for the country, emphasising: renewables and reduction of energy use and production impacts. This high level document provides a strong basis for specific energy sectoral actions as well as for the application of broad principles of sustainability in any energy-intensive development directions.

A National Energy Policy Framework was developed and endorsed by cabinet in 2007. The Policy encourages the energy sector participants to maximise the application of appropriate, proven and cost-effective renewable technologies utilizing indigenous resources to meet the energy demands and needs. The Framework has two overarching goals and associated policies.

Table 3: Overarching Energy Framework Goals and Policies

| | |
|---|--|
| Goal: Optimal utilisation of renewable resources. | Goal: Preservation of a clean and well-maintained environment. |
| Policy 1 – Promote the use of renewable | Policy 2 –Ensure minimal negative impacts of energy |

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| energy resources. | production, distribution and consumption on the environment. |
|-------------------|--|

2.3 Non-State Actors

The state remains one of many actors within the sustainable development scene within Solomon Islands, and an ongoing collaborative approach remains essential to continued progress on most issues.

2.3.1 Communities and villages

The majority of Solomon Islanders continue to live in more than 5,000 villages spread throughout the country, and these units form the basis of society and existence for the country. These villages are the seat of local level, decentralised, networked governance for people, territory, resources and cultural affairs. Because of the autonomy and self-sufficiency of this sector, there is huge scope for enhancing overall national resilience and establishing solid basis for sustained and sustainable development. However, in order for this to happen, appropriate methods and approaches are critical. Although the formal policy framework engages with this sector through service delivery channels, particularly schools, rural clinics and rural projects, there is an active search for improved systems for village level consultation processes. In this regard, certain innovations which harness provincial level government are currently being investigated in Choiseul and Malaita provinces³¹.

2.3.2 Churches

More than 98% of Solomon Islanders identify with at least one Mosaic religious tradition³², primarily one of five Christian denominations³³. As institutions, these churches have predated the modern constitutional state and have greater reach and contact with the majority of the scattered rural population. In recent years, the churches have assumed greater roles in service delivery, both of national policy programmes and of donor funded initiatives. This has been particularly evident in education (with the administration of the majority of primary and secondary schools in Western Province being handed over to the United Church) and in health services (with three regional hospitals in Western, Malaita and Guadalcanal Provinces being operated by three different denominational authorities).

2.3.3 Business

Solomon Islands business environment is dominated by a small number of large foreign owned exporters together with a very large number of small, owner-operator type enterprises. The large foreign exporters are concentrated in the logging, fisheries and palm oil industries with some presence in hospitality, while small, informal owner-operators concentrate on cottage industry or artisanal- scale activities in food production,

³¹ IKI (2009) Emerging innovations for good governance? Consultation, local democracy and constituency funds.

³² Solomon Islands Statistics Office (2000) 1999 Census Report

³³ In order of population proportion: Anglican, Roman Catholic, South Sea Evangelical, United and Seventh Day Adventist.

retailing and transport. A rapidly emerging medium sized enterprise sector consists of cash crop exporters, and urban-centred service providers in the areas of construction, security services, real estate and hospitality.

Systematic policy engagement is currently dominated by larger businesses, and there remains a risk that their concerns dominate policy considerations. There is an urgent need to develop mechanisms for incorporating the majority of very small businesses into the policy framework for sustainable development.

2.3.4 Non government organisations

Solomon Islands possesses an active non government scene with a range of mature indigenous NGOs as well as an increasing presence of international NGOs. There is high degree of policy engagement in issues of sustainable development, particularly the environmental sector and biodiversity, by large international NGOs such as Worldwide Fund for Nature, Conservation International and The Nature Conservancy. A number of policy areas of special significance to sustainable development are also addressed by a range of local NGOs with sectoral focus such as Kastom Gaden Association (food security and agrobiodiversity), ECANSI (marine protected areas and forestry governance) and IKI (knowledge management for sustainable development). Several larger national NGOs such as SIDT and National Council of Women are instrumental in cross-sectoral and multi-thematic approaches throughout the spectrum of sustainable development policy and programming.

3. The Thematic Areas

This chapter outlines the situation, progress and current activities which Solomon Islands has achieved in the key thematic areas of the MSI.

In this respect there has been a notable and rapid acceleration in the policy recognition for climate change issues and food security, while there are certain subsectors of MSI focus which have yet to achieve widespread mobilisation and public awareness.

3.1 Climate Change and Sea-Level Rise

Climate change and sea-level rise issues have experience a degree of mainstreaming over the past two years, through the institution of a new Climate Change Division within the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Meteorology, as well as through integration of climate change into sectoral plans and policies.

3.1.1 Climate Change Division of the MECM

The Climate Change Division was instituted within the MECM in 2008 with a mission to pursue institutional strengthening, and properly equip Solomon Islanders with tools for effective mitigation and adaptation to undesirable climate change impacts³⁴. Its programming has seen the Division focus on a set of basic enabling activities with close ties to national obligations under the UNFCCC. The most important activity to date has been the development of the National Adaptation Programme of Action.

3.1.2 National Adaptation Program of Action – NAPA

The National Adaptation Program of Action, which has been developed and is being championed by the newly created Climate Change division, recognises that the future of the country depends on timely and effective action to adapt to the challenges of climate change.

The NAPA was completed in 2008 with the objective of guiding a country-wide programme of adaptation activities to address adverse effects of climate change and climate variability, including extreme events.

The NAPA identified key vulnerable areas as being:

³⁴ Climate Change Division, Climate Change Division Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Meteorology. (2009), National Circumstances Report 2009. Honiara. p25

Table 4: Vulnerable Sectors Identified under NAPA

- | | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| ▪ Agriculture | ▪ Energy | ▪ Education |
| ▪ Water | ▪ Fisheries | ▪ Tourism |
| ▪ Human health | ▪ Mining | ▪ Trade and Industry |
| ▪ Human settlements | ▪ Infrastructure | ▪ Forestry |
| | ▪ Waste Management | |

Seven key priorities were identified in the programme and have been itemised to budget stage for proposed implementation under GEF-PAS to be implemented by the World Bank³⁵:

1. Agriculture and Food Security, Water and Sanitation, Human Settlements and Human Health, Education Awareness and Information
2. Low lying and artificially built-up Islands
3. Waste Management
4. Coastal Protection
5. Fisheries and Marine Resources
6. Infrastructure Development
7. Tourism

Some areas of the Solomon Islands are highly vulnerable to the effects of sea level rise threatening the countries marine resources³⁶.

3.1.3 Climate change mainstreaming

Climate change considerations have been increasingly articulated within a number of other policy settings, including the Coral Triangle Initiative, disaster planning and Integrated Water Resources Management. These aspects of mainstreamed climate change policy are detailed in relevant policy specific sections of this report.

3.2 Natural and Environmental Disasters

Solomon Islands continues to be impacted by a range of natural disasters of both atmospheric and geological origin. The most recent has been the January 2010 earthquake and tsunami which left more than 1,000 people homeless.

3.2.1 History of environmental disasters

Solomon Island's vulnerability to extreme events is apparent from a long and growing list adverse events resulting from climatic and tectonic incidents. According to the Risk level

35 Climate Change Division, Climate Change Division Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Meteorology. (2009), National Circumstances Report 2009. Honiara.

36 *ibid.*

provided by the NDMO cyclone's risk level is "High" and it occurs at least 2 cyclones per year from November to April. A summary of some of the most significant recent disasters is provided in Table 3.

Table 5: Summary of recent environmental disasters (adapted from 2009 National Circumstances Report)

| | |
|---|---|
| Cyclone Namu | Cyclone Namu was the most devastating and the most costly Tropical Cyclone to affect the Solomon Islands in the History resulting 90,000 homeless, and more than USD100million in economy losses. It developed from gale to hurricane force very quickly on the 18th May 1986 whilst travelling from the North towards Sikaiana. The cyclone was very erratic in its path and varying speeds of movement (ranging from 5 to 20 knots). Many places reported wind speed estimates exceeding hurricane force (64 knots) and there were 100 knots estimated. Wide spread damage occurred to Sikaiana, South Malaita , Makira, Rennell & Bellona and Eastern Guadalcanal, including 103 dead and 33 missing, |
| Cyclone Nina 1993 | 30,000 people affected and about USD 20 million in economic losses. |
| Cyclone Fergus 1996 | 30,000 people affected with a relief cost of USD 1.9 Million. |
| Cyclone Zoe 2003 | A category 5 cyclone reaching its peak on Sat 28 Dec 2002 with extremely high seas, sustained winds of 245km/h and gusts up to 340km/h. The eye of the cyclone was located only 50 Km Southeast of Anuta Island. Tikopia sustained more damage because Zoe was almost stationary near the island for a period of 16 hours. Despite of the scale of damage no casualties resulted on either Tikopia and Anuta Islands. |
| Tropical Cyclone Beni | Affected Rennell and Bellona province, the islands however sustained little damage even though Beni was stationed near the islands for a period of 10 hours |
| Earthquake and Tsunami Western and Choiseul Provinces 2007 | <p>On 2 April 2007 an undersea earthquake measuring M8.1 triggered a tsunami that struck the islands of Gizo, Simbo, Ranongga, Shortlands, New Georgia, Mono, Vella Lavella and Kolombangara in the Western Province and Choiseul Province.</p> <p>All islands in the affected provinces suffered widespread damage to housing, infrastructure, schools, and medical facilities. Several villages were completely destroyed by the combined effects of the earthquake and tsunami. The force of the quake was such that the physical environment of the islands and reefs have changed, leaving some islands and reefs uplifted or were inundated causing additional concern about the impact on coastal vulnerability, ground water access and levels,</p> |

| | |
|---|--|
| | <p>agriculture and livelihoods. Secondary hazards of landslides will continue to exist in the coming months and possibly years.</p> <p>An estimated 36,000 people of a total population of 100,000 in both provinces have been affected. Over 15,000 people are estimated to be displaced. 52 people have been confirmed dead, mostly children. The disaster caused total damage losses of \$248 million in terms of depreciated assets (reflecting the generally poor condition of many of the assets at the time of the disaster). In current cost value terms (without betterment) the damage value is \$512 million. If all the assets were to be replaced to current modern standards and building practices the potential replacement cost is \$745 million.</p> <p>Most damage (in terms of current value) was incurred in infrastructure (\$185 million or 36%), non Government shelter and housing (\$124 million, or 24%), health (\$123 million, or 24%), and education (\$53 million, or 10%).</p> |
| <p>Ontong Java High Swells 2008</p> | <p>For three days in December 2008 the two atoll island communities of Luaniua and Pelau experienced unusually high swells which inundated swamp taro gardens. Near the atolls the sea was generally calm and there was no strong winds prior to that period as well as the tide was normal. The swells came in from the north probably as a result of build-up of waters associated with the Low to the far north near the equator at that time.</p> <p>These high swells results in salt water intrusion into communities' taro farms and gardens. The high swells also result in salt intrusion into the main freshwater lenses of the Island atolls. Any issue is the increasing unusual high tides resulting in continuous coastal erosion. Although no lives was lost such phenomena underlies the challenges that such atoll is faced with.</p> |
| <p>Flooding North West Guadalcanal, Central Islands, Isabel, Malaita and Western Province and Makira, 2009</p> | <p>Heavy and continuous rainfall associated with a trough of low pressure south of the Rennell Bellona Province caused severe flooding in North-Western Guadalcanal. Further damage resulted from flooding and landslides were reported from eastern Guadalcanal as well as Central Province, Isabel, Western, Malaita and Makira Provinces. Flash flooding as a result of continuous heavy rain, swept through villages, destroying dwelling houses, food gardens and water sources.</p> <p>The worst affected area was Western Guadalcanal, though effects were are also observed in eastern Guadalcanal as well as Central, Malaita, Isabel, Western and Makira Provinces. The disaster claimed 13 lives and affected approximately some 270 villages and 20,000 people. Emergency response and relief is coordinated by the National Disaster Management</p> |

| | |
|--|---|
| | Office. |
| Earthquake and tsunami, Western Province 3 January 2010 | A major earthquake measuring 7.1 on the Richter scale occurred causing a tsunami of estimated 3m height which impacted directly on the island of Rendova, destroying homes and inundating villages. An estimated 1000 people were rendered homeless but there were no deaths. |

3.2.2 Disaster response systems

The national disaster response is guided by the National Disaster Act (1989) and the National Disaster Plan (1987). The National Disaster Act makes provision for the organization and management necessary to ensure preparedness for, response to and recovery from disasters. The Act therefore provides legal basis for the national disaster management plan and for actions taken in accordance with the Plan. It also makes provision for the use of special powers, should the need arise.

The National Disaster Management Plan is implemented by the National Disaster Management Office. The objective of the plan is for action to be taken for dealing with disasters in the Solomon Islands for cyclones, flood, drought, landslides, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and tsunami³⁷.

The Government policy of response to disaster is guided by three overall principles;

1. To recognize disaster problems as a part of the total government responsibility and to make the best possible arrangements to deal with them.
2. To concentrate on the three major aspects of preparedness, response and recovery but also, where possible, to take into consideration wider measures such as mitigation and the inter-relationship between disaster problems and national development
3. To apply, in particular, the important principles of optimum utilization of all available resources, and maintenance of appropriate levels of preparedness in order to achieve such utilization to develop progressively programs of training and public awareness, in which community self-reliance and self-help form important objectives

The NDMO in undertaking its responsibilities in response to a disaster comes in three stages which includes;

³⁷ ibid

- Short term (immediately) – Rapid impact assessments on food security (supply) , shelter, health and other immediate logistical support which includes costs, financial assistance locally and internationally
- Medium term (up to 1 month) – Maintenance of Water supply systems, planting materials, seek international assessments and assistance on food security –e.g. FAO
- Long term (1-3 months) – deploy advisers on recovery of community productivity in small islands through the regeneration of Agriculture and Fisheries. Rebuilding of schools, clinics, houses- development plans in place.

3.2.3 Disaster Capacity Development

The NDMO is currently developing the national disaster risk management plan to provide for a mechanism not only during a disaster but also risk management. The risk management plan is being designed to provide for;

- detailed institutional arrangements for the overview and implementation of disaster risk management in the Solomon Islands
- allocation of roles and accountabilities for disaster risk management to agencies across sectors and levels of government including civil society and the private sector
- establishment of explicit structures across levels of government, sectors and communities for preparing for, managing and recovering from disasters
- establishment of mechanisms for understanding hazards and addressing disaster risk reduction, including climate change adaptation, within national, sector and provincial planning and budgeting processes
- provision of promotion and development of disaster management in communities and for the addressing of hazard risk in livelihood practices, land use and development
- promotion of initiatives in disaster risk management which are gender and child specific, recognising particular roles and vulnerabilities in communities.

The following have been identified as major capacity issues in relation to disaster and risk management in the country. These issues are the challenges that NDMO and other agencies involved in disasters and risk management currently faces;

- Financial resources - Solomon Island NDC disaster fund has been completely inadequate to respond to or undertake relief activities. A considerable supplementation in funding and support was made available via bilateral and multilateral agencies.

- Human resources - the capacity of NDMO staff to coordinate disaster response is limited in the country. The NDMO has recently employed provincial disaster officers.
- Communication and transport facilities – the logistical challenges of disaster response in Solomon Island are compounded by extremely limited infrastructure and resources. Communication problems abound in both the fixed line and mobile telephone systems. Transport and access to affected areas was possible only by air or sea.
- Legislative framework: Current SI legislation identifies the NDC and NDMO as responsible for leading and coordinating disaster responses, yet the roles and responsibilities of other stakeholders are not clear. There is considerable duplication in the SI disaster response and persistent concerns about political interference in relief distribution. Legislative reform is needed to provide greater clarity on needs assessment and the criteria for aid distribution.

3.3 Management of Wastes

Waste issues have become increasingly pressing in the urban and periurban regions of Solomon Islands as populations and per capita use of packaging has increased. Progress has been made however on addressing these in a systematic way. A National Waste Management Strategy has recently been finalised.

3.3.1 National Waste Management Strategy

The National Waste Management Strategy has been recently completed and this represents a major step forward for integration of waste issues and concerns into broader sustainable development policy in the country³⁸. Prior to this strategy, there had been no comprehensive and coordinated basis for dealing with waste issues.

The Strategy focuses on solid waste but recognises the scope for many of these management issues to apply to liquid and gaseous wastes as well. This focus arises from the visibility of the problem and its acknowledged impact on other sectors such as “tourism and health”³⁹. It prioritises developing a framework of policy and initial programming to progress this policy.

Objectives identified in the strategy include:

- Develop and implement a national waste management policy.
- Review all existing regulations relating to waste management and draft specific legislation on waste management.
- Promote waste minimization in all aspects of development.

38 MECM 2009, National Solid Waste Management Strategy

39 *ibid*, p.9.

- Improve and upgrade existing waste management and disposal systems.
- Look at ways of improving waste management awareness and education activities.
- Provide relevant documented information for politicians and stakeholders and make them aware of the need for their support in waste management.
- Provide a guideline template for rural and community level to practice waste management.

3.4 Coastal and Marine Resources

Coastal and marine resource have a massive potential to contribute to sustainable development of the country, through export earnings from the tuna and commercial pelagic fishery but especially from the continued productivity of the nearshore, subsistence and artisanal fishery.

This sector is the targeted focus of a range of government and donor initiatives, as well as part of the overall approach of several multi-sectoral programmes such as the Coral Triangle Initiative.

3.4.1 National programmes and plans

Government is conducting a number of on-going programmes in the two areas of community level fisheries and commercial export fisheries. In community fisheries, the government has continued funding of pump boats, fishing gear and outboard motors. It is also progressing planning for the acquisition of land for onshore processing facilities for use by community level fisheries. In the field of commercial export fisheries, the government has already begun a process of corporate restructuring of the SolTai company to permit more efficient operations. Government is also facilitating the securing of land for the development of two planned private sector financed and operated tuna loin factories on Guadalcanal and Malaita. These factories are a key part of the overall strategy to increase the export value of the fish catch. Another key policy element supporting the export fishery sector is the establishment of a programme to conduct an assessment of dolphin population as part of wider Government involvement in active management of the marine environment, and of the various stakeholders including traditional communities.

There are also two major programmes currently underway with the support of donor partners. These are addressing both structural progress in the sector as well as mitigation of the effects of the recent earthquake and tsunami in 2007. The EU, using Stabex funds has recently funded programmes for the development of rural pearl farming and seaweed aquaculture. to commercialise seaweed production, most of which were completed in 2008 and 2009. The World Fish Centre and Village Technology Trust continue to implementing other components of the project which are focused on restoring productivity of coastal communities livelihoods impacted through tectonic uplift of reef areas by the 2007 earthquake. These activities are restoring access to the sea via low impact methods by digging channels through earthquake uplifted reefs. NZAID is

providing long term, programmatic support for the institutional strengthening of the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources (MFMR) as well contributing dugout canoes to affected coastal communities in Western and Choiseul provinces.

3.4.2 Coral Triangle Initiative National Action Plan – CTI

The Coral Triangle Initiative national action⁴⁰ plan presents a major part of the enabling environment for MSI implementation through its built in linkage with regional action, multilevel focus on marine ecosystems from local reefs through to multinational priority seascapes, and through its inherent inclusion of human development issues in its scope of action.

Solomon Islands is part of the Coral Triangle, a grouping also consisting of Indonesia, Philippines, Australia and PNG, countries which share the greatest concentrations of marine biodiversity on the planet. The members of this grouping have formed an organisation for international cooperation, called the Coral Triangle Initiative, and as part of this, Solomon Islands has developed a National Action Plan as a platform for national implementation of the CTI overall strategy. The foci of the CTI Action Plan are five-fold:

- priority seascapes;
- ecosystem approach to managing fisheries and other marine resources;
- marine protected areas
- climate change adaptation
- threatened species

The National Action Plan has a focus on climate change adaptation, with two principle targets identified:

Target 1. Region-wide Early Action Plan for Climate Change Adaption for the near-shore marine and coastal environment and small islands ecosystems developed and implemented.

Target 2. Networked National Centres of Excellence on Climate Change Adaptation for marine and coastal environments are established and in full operation.

3.5 Freshwater Resources

Freshwater resources are benefiting from a strong process of mainstreaming and multi-programmatic approaches targeting urban and rural situations.

A number of programs are currently being implemented in the country which include an urban component which involves hydrological investigation of urban Honiara water sources for subsequent development. This is supported through technical assistance from JICA, EU and GEF. JICA is supporting planning for water supply and wastewater in

40 Climate Change Division, Climate Change Division Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Meteorology. (2009), National Circumstances Report 2009. Honiara.

Honiara through studies of rehabilitation of both supply and wastewater systems and evaluation of wells for possible development as new sources.

There is also GEF support for an Integrated Water Resources Management programme (including wastewater) in 14 Pacific countries to promote planning processes for cross-sectoral resource management. The implementation is supported through SOPAC and the EU regional Water Facility. The programme is intended to operate from 2008 to 2010 focused on urban water supplies and wastewater.

The Rural Water Supply Programme complements other programs that are focused on urban areas. It supports development of rural water supplies to ensure Solomon Islanders have adequate access to clean and safe water supplies. The initial stage of the programme will identify communities who are willing and able to participate in development, operation and maintenance of rural water supplies and have an identified source of suitable water. This process would be carried out by civil society organisations as well as government. Subsequent feasibility studies and development will include communities as partners⁴¹.

3.6 Land Resources

Land resources issues are responded to via three major sectoral foci: land administration and tenure, mining and forestry. All three are central bases for economic development and sustainability, relating as they do to key elements of current and future production and livelihoods.

3.6.1 Land administration and tenure

The government is funding a number of important programmes to address land issues, the most significant being the Land Reform Programme. This programme is aimed at addressing nation-wide issues of customary and tribal lands. The challenges addressed in the programme are to clarify land ownership and provide secure, transferable use of land within clearly identified boundaries. A new Tribal Lands Act has been developed for tabling in parliament, providing for the identification of tribal groups as juristic persons able to own and transfer land - and be sued for breach of contract and prosecuted for criminal acts.

The Government has committed \$8 million in the 2008 budget to start the process, and has approved an establishment of 36 staff in the provinces to implement the reforms.

Two important donor funded program have been and are currently implemented by the Ministry of Lands, namely the RAMSI Machinery of Government Programme Housing Project Phase 2, and the Interim Assistance Lands Programme. The former programme is being implemented within the Housing Division of MLHS to identify policy options for

41 Climate Change Division, Climate Change Division Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Meteorology. (2009), National Circumstances Report 2009. Honiara.

institutional housing for Government ministries and for rentals to public servants. The latter is an Australian bilateral programme providing Interim Assistance to the Division⁴².

3.6.2 Mining

There is very extensive activity in the mining industry, and the government is positioning the country for reliance on this as the major replacement for logging as that resource is exhausted. Currently the Gold Ridge mine is the only one able to produce, and is being rehabilitated after closure in 1999, but planning is at an advanced stage for several other resources, particularly nickel deposits in Isabel Province and the Shortland Islands in the Western Province.

Gold Ridge Mining Limited company has commenced rehabilitation operations towards mine reopening at Gold ridge since the closure of the Ross Mining operation due to the civil unrest in 1999. Although the re-development of the Gold Ridge Mine on Guadalcanal has been a priority project of successive governments, unresolved issues such as land acquisition, resettlement, restoration of the tailings dam, landowners' demands, and political risk have led to continued delays in a return to production. Significant progress has been made, and tailings dewatering commenced at the end of 2009, on schedule for projected recommencement of operation in 2010.

Interest from foreign mineral firms continues to grow. The Ministry of Mines and Energy issued 56 licenses for exploration in 2008⁴³ with most of the licences being for exploration for gold, silver and nickel. Prospecting licenses were approved for 12 new companies. Ten companies are performing on-shore exploration on Guadalcanal, Isabel and Western province while two have been approved to conduct off-shore exploration in the Western and Makira Provinces. International tenders prepared for offer in 2010 are expected to lead to prospecting work at Tataka and Jejevo Isabel Province, areas known to have nickel and cobalt deposits⁴⁴.

3.6.3 Agriculture and Forestry

Agriculture and forestry sectors are both divided into two subsectors - smallholders and larger industrialised operators. This distinction is very important for policy and programming for sustainable development since the impact and developmental effect of measures depends on the nature of the landholding in question.

The Government Forest policy provides strong support for the protection of the environment ecological sustainability, and is based on a recognition of the fact that the long term sustainability of Solomon Islands society, and its standard of living, depend heavily on the protection of the Solomon Island environment against irreparable damage.

42 Climate Change Division, Climate Change Division Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Meteorology. (2009), National Circumstances Report 2009. Honiara, p19.

43 Central Bank of Solomon Islands (CBSI)

44 Climate Change Division Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Meteorology. (2009), National Circumstances Report 2009. Honiara, p19.

A primary focus of the national forest policy is to protect the ecological functions of the forest by excluding high impact uses where these cause unacceptable long term damage to the forests. This is envisioned to be implemented through enforcement of ecologically based standards for commercial scale logging operations and therefore observe the international, multilateral and bilateral treaties and commitments signed by the Solomon Island Government⁴⁵.

The government and donors continue to fund forestry programming and integrated rural livelihoods approaches which combine forestry and agricultural approaches within a broader livelihoods framework.

Ongoing activities in sustainable forest management include the AusAID funded Forest Management Project and the EU funded Sustainable Forest Management Project. The AusAID funded Forest Management Project (Phase II) ended in June 2009 by aspects of this work will be continued via the Rural Livelihood Programme (see following) whilst the EU funded Sustainable Forest Management Project is expected to end in 2010. It has been designed to address a diverse range of issues associated with forestry and has a budget of 26 million dollars.

National government initiatives which currently implemented and will continue over the next 5 years include Sustainable Forest Industries and Downstream Processing Programme, Forestry Institutional Strengthening and Capacity Building Programme and Forestry Conservation Management Programme.

Solomon Islands Rural Livelihoods Programme – The forest component of this programme hopes to achieve two major outputs which are:

- increased plantation establishment and improved plantation maintenance (silviculture) by landowners and
- enactment and implementation of the Forestry Plantation Regulation, including 7.5% levy on log exports to fund reforestation.

Sustainable Forest Industries and Downstream Processing Programme - The national government provided \$4million to establish the programme in 2008 and will further provide about \$2.1million per year thereafter. Major outputs of the project include; increased production of processed forest products, improved availability and quality of information and data on the current state of the forest and enhanced awareness by resource owners and stakeholders of statutory responsibilities and functions.

Forestry Institutional Strengthening and Capacity Building Programme – This ongoing national program funded by the government aims to develop capacity in key forestry institutions through training and skills development combined with provision of operational funds and materials to apply the skills. This training is complemented by

45 Ibid. p38

construction of staff housing in rural areas, including as necessary at village level for extension workers. There is also an information management focus with databases planned for creation and availability to users, including through the web.

Forestry Conservation Management Programme – This programme is intended restore the National Herbarium and National Forest Research Institute. It will re-establish botanical gardens and the facilities of the Herbarium and Research Institute. SPC has indicated interest in supporting the program and there are discussions also being held with Japan on possible support⁴⁶.

Land use and planning is currently a strong focus of the NGO sector, particularly Kastom Gaden Association (KGA) which has ongoing programmatic work in this area, developing and sharing local varieties which have enhanced disease resistance or improved nutritional values.

Government policy is currently focused on food security through the continued implementation of a National Rice programme aimed at substitution of the considerable volumes that the country imports⁴⁷.

3.7 Energy Resources

Renewable and environmentally friendly energy are the central focus of government energy policy in the form of the National Energy Policy Framework. The Framework was endorsed by Cabinet in 2007 and rests on two goals:

- Optimal utilisation of renewable energy resources
- Preservation of a clean and well maintained environment

Each of the goals is actioned by a policy which in turn involve the execution of a range of strategies.

Table 6: Strategies associated with Policies and Goals in the National Energy Framework

| Goal: Optimal utilisation of renewable energy resources. | Goal: Preservation of a clean and well-maintained environment |
|--|---|
| Policy 1 - Promote the use of renewable energy resources. The strategies include; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase public awareness on the benefits of | Policy 2 -Ensure minimal negative impacts of energy production, distribution and consumption on the environment. The major strategies include; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure and promote EIA on all energy |

46 ibid p12--13

47 CBSI 2008 Annual Report 2008

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>renewable energy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide tax incentives for the use of renewable energy technologies. • Ensure there is in-country capacity to implement renewable energy projects. • Ensure the renewable energy resources are used in an economically and environmentally sustainable manner. • Promote and or support efforts on research and development of appropriate renewable energy technologies. • Provide appropriate training for local to promote renewable energy • Promote the ability to manage and maintain of standardise equipment in remote areas • Promote right economically, energy efficient equipment appropriate technology • Establish appropriate laboratory for research • Encourage partnership in development with private sector • Promote renewable energy in the schools' curriculum | <p>projects.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that energy resources are consumed in an environmentally sustainable manner. • Ensure that safety measures are prioritised in the planning and construction of energy projects. • Ensure and maintain co-operation and coordination of organisations in the energy sector within the framework of the Environmental Act and the relevant Environmental Management Strategy. • Employ re-cycling measures whatever applicable to the energy projects⁴⁸ |
|---|---|

This emphasis on clean and renewable energy is being realised in the form of advanced planning for a major hydropower project near the northern plains of Guadalcanal. The Tina River system in north Guadalcanal. This project, if implemented is expected to have a capacity of between 20 and 40 MW, representing a surplus requirement to even high projections of future demand.⁴⁹

The government is also implementing the Policy Framework through the funding of an Energy Conservation and Efficiency Project as well as two other programmes focused on rural electrification through renewable energy. The principle targets are schools, clinics and hospitals and the energy sources include mini-hydro, solar, wind power and biofuel. A rural and provincial centre focus is being maintained to further improve service

48 Solomon Islands Government (2007) National Energy Policy Framework

49 European Investment Bank (2009) Solomon Islands Technical-Economic Feasibility Study for the Proposed Tina River Hydropower Development, Terms of Reference Document.

delivery in rural communities. These are being supplemented by a number of donor funded programs.

The Japanese funded Improvement in Honiara Power Supply Project implemented an interim solution to stabilize the Honiara power grid. This project costing \$38million has installed a new generator and distribution cables to stabilize the power supply in Honiara.

The AusAID Rural Electrification Project began initial operations in 2007 and was built up to over \$12m per year in 2009 focused on provincial powers supplies in , complementing Government's programme.

The Sustainable Energy Project is being implemented by CBSI. It involves the provision of World Bank sourced credit guarantees to finance renewable energy projects in rural areas.

Italy and Turkey are funding two parallel programmes of solar lighting for schools and health centres, consistent with the emphasis on rural and renewable energy⁵⁰.

3.8 Tourism Resources

Tourism has been identified in the Government's Policy Statements and Medium Term Fiscal Strategy, as a leading growth sector to offset the decline in logging which is fast approaching. Past and current development in the tourist sector has been in the sustainable sector, with the only large scale hotels being located in the capital. There remain no large resorts in the country, with the largest sector of growth being eco-resorts and lodges with occupancy of less than 30 persons.

3.8.1 Sustainable Tourism

Sustainable tourism has been implemented through the Tourism Sector Programme which has delivered programmes in institutional strengthening at the provincial level in 2007, funded at the level of \$2.1 million. In 2008, Government funded preparatory work on two elements of the Tourism Sector Programme; the Anuha tourist development project and the development of a hospitality training programme with SICHE.

As part of the Tourism Sector Programme, Government also funded \$2 million of eco-tourism grants. Thirty percent of these funds were allocated to support rehabilitation of tsunami-damaged tourism infrastructure in the Western Province while the remaining seventy percent of the fund is being awarded through a process of competitive applications. The grants are used to complement owners equity and commercial credit, rather than being awarded to fund the major part of any project⁵¹.

50 Climate Change Division Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Meteorology. (2009), National Circumstances Report. Honiara p23-24.

51 Solomon Islands: Medium Term Development Strategy 2008-2010 (2008) p49.

The RAMSI Economic Governance Programme has provided support during 2007 and 2008 for the International Visitor Survey to establish the baseline for tourism development. The Survey provided a quantitative basis on which to build a tourism development strategy and is planned to be repeated to provide monitoring information on progress of development and for early identification of changes in market trends.

3.9 Biodiversity Resources

Biodiversity resources are foundational to the operation and resilience of the subsistence economy which sustains and protects the massive majority of the rural population. Subsistence food, shelter and medicinal supplies for the majority of the population are directly derived from ecosystems which are functional because of high biodiversity. As such, biodiversity is a prominent contributor to human security and sustainable development in the country.

Protection and utilisation of biodiversity resources are being carried out through two major government initiatives which are closely coordinated with NGO partners. The overall-framework for biodiversity is one of these initiatives – the recently completed National Biodiversity Strategic Action Plan, and this is being complemented by the Programme of Work on Protected Areas (POWPA).

3.9.1 National Biodiversity Strategic Action Plan – NBSAP

NBSAP sets out strategic directions in the area of biodiversity, with central aim of halting and reversing biodiversity loss in the country. The NBSAP has been developed in the context of long standing threats to national biodiversity from logging, inappropriate land use practices and over exploitation of natural resources. It also recognises the compounding effect of natural disasters, invasive species, pollution and climate change. Thirteen major focal areas have been identified;

1. mainstreaming of policies and legislation
2. ecosystem based approach to natural resource management
3. species conservation
4. protected area systems using community-based management approaches
5. management of invasive species and genetically modified organisms
6. benefit sharing and access to genetic resources
7. human resources
8. capacity building and availability of financial resources
9. research and monitoring
10. agro-biodiversity
11. climate change
12. waste management and
13. alternative energy

Focal areas with active programming and rapid progress under this framework include:

1. mainstreaming of policies and legislation
4. protected area systems

5. management of invasives and genetically modified organisms

11. climate change

12. waste management

13. alternative energy

These are detailed in the named sections of this report.

3.9.2 Programme of work on protected areas (POWPA)

Solomon Island's Program of Work for Protected Areas (PoWPA) consists of two components – an ecological gap assessment and a legislative gap assessment. These activities are being funded via a grant to the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Meteorology (MECM) from Global Environment Facility through UNDP (GEF/UNDP) under the PoWPA global project.

The PoWPA was adopted (decision VII/28) at the Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), at its 7th meeting in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in February 2004.

The aim of the PoWPA is to increase the number of protected areas (PAs) and at the same time ensure that as far as possible PAs be designed and located in the best places to conserve biodiversity and that this should be determined by a multi-stakeholder process. The PoWPA project in Solomon Islands has as its objective the “extension and strengthening of the network of effective protected areas across the most significant areas of biodiversity in Solomon Islands”. A protected areas bill is also under preparation to provide the legislative basis for the implantation of protected areas under this programme of work.

3.10 Transportation and Communication

With a highly dispersed population, the issues of transportation and communication are very influential for equitable development and the rural population.

3.10.1 Air transport

Government's development budgets have included provisions for \$24.3m to replace navigation equipment at Henderson International Airport as well as for preparatory works for the construction of new provincial airfields, tar-sealing of grass airfields and a Western Province International Airfield. The major components of this budgetary direction include;

Construct 6 new airfields at \$6.5m each

Tar seal 6 airfields at \$5m each

Construct 6 provincial terminals at \$0.5m each

Build new Honiara domestic terminal

Resurface and strengthen Munda runway for 737 and A320 aircraft.

3.10.2 Shipping

The National Transport Fund has been established under law, in order to provide for the apportioning of budgetary resources for the specific purpose of enhancing shipping and other transportation services.

There is substantial donor support for the enhancement of shipping services which are critically important for an archipelagic country such as the Solomons.

EU funded programmes have already provided 14 new or rehabilitated wharves under the Marine Infrastructure Programmes (I and II) and are expected to provide a further 7 under the EU funded component of SIEAP and 10 to 15 under the EU funded component of the Domestic Maritime Support Project (DMSP). Both these latter two programmes are associated with ADB technical support.

Japan is also providing substantial physical infrastructure through its programme to rehabilitate the Auki jetty and the associated market.

ADB's on-going shipping programme includes institutional development to consider a subsidized franchise scheme to support of uneconomic routes and support and capacity building for the National Transport Fund and its secretariat.

3.10.3 Land transport

Land transport infrastructure is being developed through considerable donor support.

AusAID funded road component of the Community Sector Programme (CSP) will continue to upgrade roads on Malaita with an additional 191km upgraded, in addition to a number of bridges to connect sections of road developed under other projects.

JICA has built 3 substantial bridges on Guadalcanal to re-connect road sections and is preparing studies for further Grant Aid assistance to the sector in the MTDS period.

ADB funded Solomon Islands Emergency Assistance Programme (SIEAP) will rehabilitate 73km of roads in Gizo, Choiseul and Western Provinces. Government is providing \$6 million for Gizo infrastructure rehabilitation to meet its obligations under the SIEAP.

Government funded Rural Road Development (RRD) project which began in 2008 continues to rehabilitate and restore bridges and roads over a total of 65km in Makira and Temotu.

3.10.4 Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs)

The government's commitment to liberalise the telecommunications industry by permitting competitors to enter, has been realised with the passage of the 2009 Telecommunications Act. The Act provides for the operation of multiple commercial providers in the Solomon market. In a major breakthrough, an international tender was held in late 2009 for a competitor mobile phone provider, and a contract awarded to a new entrant, beMobile.

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With operations of beMobile it is expected that considerable improvements in service quality and pricing will be available to the majority of Solomon Islanders. In anticipation of the arrival of the competitor, the incumbent monopoly operator has, in the past 2 years increased coverage area of their network more than 200%.

4. Cross-cutting Issues

4.1 Science and Technology

Technology options to support MSI processes are currently largely concentrated in the area of renewable energy, particularly solar power systems. The science and technology workforce continues to grow from a low base level.

There has been budgeted and implemented an “Appropriate Technology Development and Transfer Programme⁵²” to develop, transfer and apply appropriate, environmentally friendly, low cost technologies and enhance food production and resource security. Policies and strategies will be developed to encourage adoption of appropriate technology, including through implementation of a National Renewable Energy Policy.

Partnerships will be developed between Government and the private sector to develop, apply and promote awareness of available contemporary and traditional technologies. Emphasis will be placed on food production - relevant to the highest proportion of Solomon Islanders - to adopt sustainable farming practices and increase partnerships between commercial agricultural enterprises and smallholders. Technologies promoted will include adoption of international food production standards to increase marketability and value of food exports and import substitution, including organic certification systems.

Key Outcome indicators related to the MDGs are:

- MDG 7: Average annual change in forest area reduced from 1.4% (1990-2005) to zero by 2013.
- MDG 7: Proportion of population for whom solid fuel is the primary energy for cooking reduced from 91% in 2005/6 to 85% by 2010
- Food production and resource security enhanced.

4.2 Graduation from Least Developed Country (LDC) Status

There are currently no policy directions explicitly directed at graduation from LDC status. This situation will be reviewed as a part of the monitoring of progress towards MDGs.

4.3 Trade: Globalisation and Trade Liberalisation

Solomon Islands has been a member of the WTO since July 1996, being the only LDC Member in the Pacific. However, there is limited exposure to the multilateral trading system due to the structure of the economy and relationship to markets. There remain major resource and capacity constraints in participating in the multilateral trade negotiations, and although there is the formation of a trade policy framework through the Enhanced Integrated Framework, the country's trade policy remains on an ad hoc basis.

52 Ministry of Development Planning and Aid Coordination (2008) Medium Term Development Strategy.

Solomon Islands is a party to several regional trade and economic cooperation arrangements in the Pacific. It receives unilateral preferential market access granted by some developed Members of the WTO, through GSP and other programmes for LDCs. It is taking part in the Pacific ACP-EC Economic Partnership Agreement negotiations⁵³.

In the last 10 years, Solomon Islands liberalized its foreign investment regime by adopting a new Foreign Investment Act in 2005 which simplifies the registration procedure for foreign investment. Solomon Islands is in the completion stages of the Diagnostic Trade Integration Study which is an initial process within the Integrated Framework system.

4.4 Sustainable Capacity Development and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

As part of the thorough recovery and reform packages being implemented post-conflict, Solomon Islands has a range of institutional capacity development programmes in play, most significantly in the public service, and law and order institutions. Sustainability of these programmes is of key concern, and this is a matter which is being incorporated into broader concerns about aid and development coordination.

Education for Sustainable Development is included within the broad thrust of the 2007-2015 Education Strategic Framework⁵⁴, which places emphasis on the preservation of indigenous knowledge and skills as being “important for the sustainable development of the Solomon Islands.”

This dimension is planned to be incorporated into both the formal and non-formal curriculum where appropriate.

The formal education system in the Solomon Islands remains hampered by resource constraints, untrained teachers and a curriculum that needs revision. Of special urgency is the revamping of the current curriculum for the greater relevance to the needs and trajectory of the nation.

The National Education Action Plan (NEAP) has identified these as key challenges that must be addressed in the short term for education to progress in the Solomon Islands. The role of ESD is to identify the main principles of ESD which could contribute to overall improvement of the formal education system.

ESD therefore needs to be introduced into all levels of discussion, particularly with donors and partner organisations, as a central consideration across sectors.

⁵³ World Trade Organisation Secretariat (2009) TRADE POLICY REVIEW - SOLOMON ISLANDS. Report by the Secretariat

⁵⁴ Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (2007) Education Strategic Framework 2007 – 2015.

There is considerable programming and progress in the non-formal arena which bears great relevance to sustainable development, and although these are not necessarily wholly educational, these programmes are directed at meeting the goals of ESD which include empowering people to make decisions about their long-term future⁵⁵.

4.5 Sustainable Production and Consumption

Sustainable production and consumption is currently being pursued in the MTDS programme through the emphasis on food security and on rural development.

Given the intact nature of production ecosystems and the almost complete absence of irrigation and chemical fertilisation, Solomon Islands remains in an enviable position at the moment in terms of sustainable food and building materials. The challenge continues to be how to maintain this position, against pressures from global markets to exploit resources and from local populations.

In this sense, the policy issues lie heavily within the regulatory arena, in ensuring that exploitation of resources is done with minimal impact on functioning ecosystems, and that maximum returns are ensured, so that exploitation rates are minimised.

This situation has been anticipated in policy statements from the Medium Term Development Strategy at the top, through to departmental and ministerial action plans. In this regard, the most pressing aspect continues to be the coordination of planning, monitoring of implementation and identification of opportunities for efficient programming.

4.6 Knowledge Management and Information for Decision-Making

Knowledge management is a critical issue for Solomon Islands development planning and tracking. This is the case because of two separate factors:

- The dispersal of populations and autonomy of communities – The extremely dispersed nature of Solomon Islands communities and their sheer number – 5000 villages across islands stretching 1600km East to West and 750km North to South – makes the collection of accurate data on a regular basis very difficult and expensive. This logistical challenge is compounded by the low level of integration of these communities with national institutions. Their autonomy and low dependence on central systems reduces opportunities for contact with the systems of the state.
- The lack of adequate systems, training and planning for information management – Although the Statistics Department within the Ministry of Finance has been reactivated post-conflict, there remains a lack of an overall framework for development information gathering, management and use in planning. This is

⁵⁵ UNESCO (2007) Education for Sustainable Development in the Pacific – a mapping analysis of Tonga, Palau and the Solomon Islands

repeated at lower levels, with information management and knowledge approaches in individual ministries seriously lacking.

The 2008 State of Environment Report makes this point in outlining one of the policy issues facing the country's environmental sector:

Policy makers have very poor access to all the different sorts of environmental information:

- *location specific primary monitoring data*
- *sector or activity-specific information*
- *gross integrated national-level data sets*

Without ready access to this information, neither analysis for design nor integration for implementation of policy can happen. It is of key importance that environment stakeholders (in government and outside) can access the best available information on the environment and just as importantly, assess how valid and accurate it is.

(State of Environment Report, 2008, p84)

5. Implementation

5.1 Access to and provision of Financial Resources

The Government's priorities in addressing the outstanding needs for economic development and the supportive elements for this are reflected in very significant increases in national funding emphasis on economic, infrastructure and social services sectors. Between 2006 and 2008 the proportion of the Government development budget dedicated to these sectors more than quadrupled.

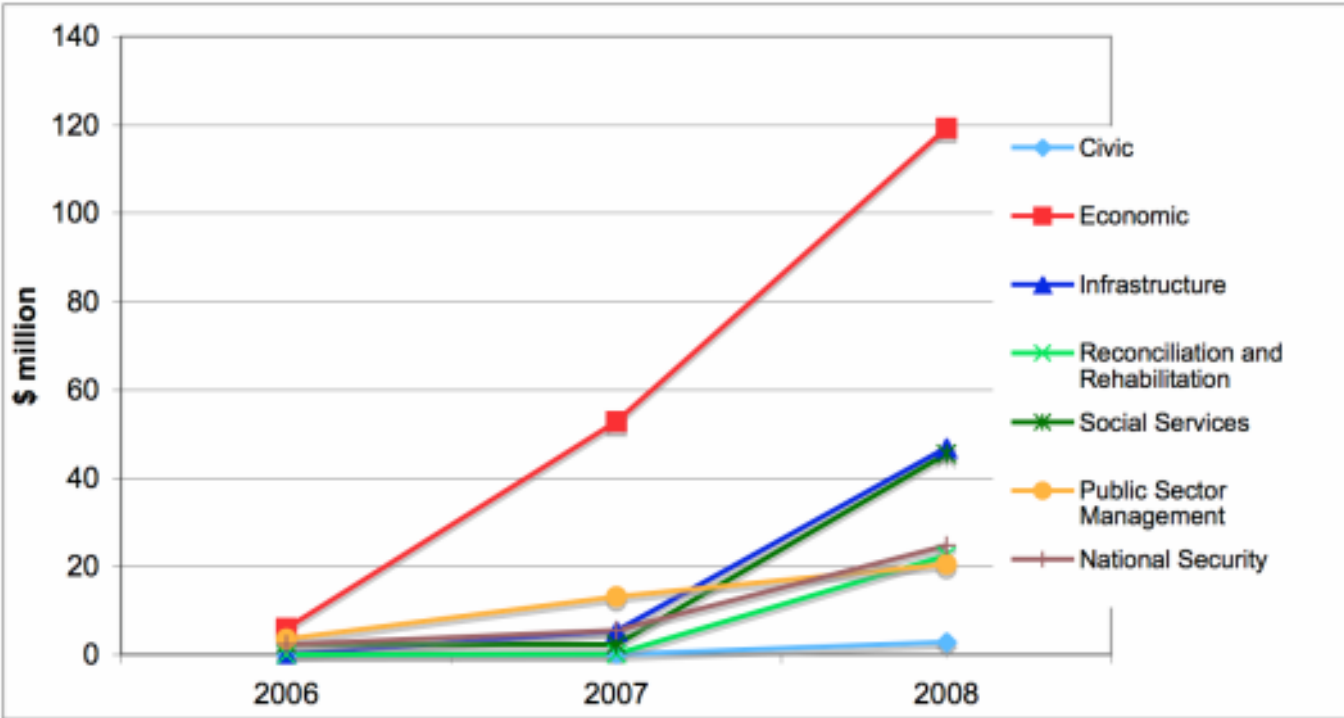


Figure 4: 2006-2008 Government Spending Trends (sourced from 2008 Medium Term Development Strategy)

The country has also benefited from very significant aid inflows from its donor partners, totalling SBD2.917 billion⁵⁶ in development commitments over the 2008-2010 period. With such major inflows, a very significant issue is the coordinative and administrative capacity of the national systems.

Large scale, cross-sectoral initiatives such as the MSI make the capacity constraints quite apparent, and are valuable for highlighting issues which might otherwise be siloed in sector specific approaches.

In this situation, the importance of smart programming and the appropriate provision of financial resources is highly important. Implementing Paris declaration positions requires particular attention to the modalities of aid provision and a real dedication on the part of development partners, to long term capacity development.

5.2 Science and Development and Transfer of Technology

Science and technology are urgently needed for effective implementation of the MSI within the Solomon Islands context.

Science and scientific research is needed to generate and update the knowledge base necessary for well grounded understanding of the operation and components of

56 Medium Term Development Strategy (2008)
Page 47 of 59

production and ecological ecosystems, as well as the geophysical and climatological changes that these systems are undergoing into the future.

There is an urgent need for scientific research capacity development actions in order to develop the skilled workforce, the science administration systems and the necessary facilities for effective and relevant science to be undertaken on an ongoing and sustainable basis. Capacity is particularly needed in the areas of:

- Productivity and resilience research into agricultural, agroforestry and marine reef ecosystems. Food security and export agriculture depend on the continued productivity of these systems, and hence so does sustainable development.
- Research and monitoring of environmental change, particularly the relationships between global and local climatic systems and the interactions of ecosystems and climate.
- Disturbance and recovery analysis focused on the effects of extreme events on coastal environments and shorelines and the dynamics of their responses.

The capacity for research is very low within the country, but without this capacity, MSI implementation will suffer from avoidable constraints and missed opportunities.

There exists scope for the employment of appropriate technologies, and some of these have already begun to be transferred through private sector actions. This has been particularly apparent in the field of photovoltaic solar power systems for both rural and urban areas.

There exists considerable further opportunity for the utilisation of technologies in the energy, transportation and construction fields, but due to limited information flows and the small size of the national market, many opportunities for these to be introduced have been missed.

There is a great scope for the further development and potential commercialisation of indigenous technology systems, most notably the low-cost reclamation and coastal engineering techniques of certain parts of the Solomons where artificial, handmade islands are an ancient tradition.

5.3 Capacity Development

Capacity development is at the heart of most of the reform and sustainable development directions in Solomon Islands. There are two essential aspects of this capacity development concern, and these are connected via the arena of development assistance.

National capacity – National capacity development needs include technical and administrative capacity, areas where development analyses often recognise capacity gaps. However, there are growing capacity gaps within national systems, in the ability to analyse strategically and to engage effectively with communities and local institutions. These are less recognised, in part because analyses of capacity constraint do not emerge

from domestic actors such as communities and local business, but are nonetheless very important for long term, sustainable development initiatives such as MSI.

Partner capacity – Development partners face their own capacity constraints which can place undue stress on national systems. These partner constraints are not in the areas of finance or resourcing, but in the areas of staff experience particularly long term, non-aid experiential knowledge of Solomon Islands. In the absence of this capacity, interventions can often place increased strain and demands on national systems, or programming can be arranged so that national capacity issues remain unaddressed.

5.4 National and International Governance including trade and finance

Trade is increasingly important for Solomon Islands, with exports and imports increasing to 70% of GDP in 2006 up from 47% in 2003⁵⁷. Although almost all exports are primary products, especially logs tuna and palm oil, imports are becoming more diversified.

Currently the main contributions of trade policy to sustainable development lie in the development of an overall framework for linking trade policy to overall national development and sustainable development goals. In this respect, the key enabling activity currently underway lies in the engagement of Solomon Islands with the Integrated Framework. The diagnostic stage of this engagement is nearing completion⁵⁸. Once complete, this will open significant potential for trade to be more fully integrated into wider concerns about future growth and development trajectories of the country.

5.5 Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation are especially significant elements for Solomon Islands implementation of the Mauritius Strategy since so many of the thematic foci of the Strategy involve indicators that remain poorly measured and reported.

Current challenges in monitoring of programmes and evaluation of effectiveness emanate from the lack of infrastructures for information gathering and knowledge management, difficulties in gathering data and a thorough institutional unfamiliarity with operationalising monitoring.

However, given the broad alignment of MSI, BPOA, the MDGs and other broad developmental frameworks towards similar goals in terms of social development, economic development and human development there is ample scope for monitoring processes to be harmonised.

Such harmonisation is one a key implementation priority for Solomon Islands continued MSI implementation. There is sufficient co-alignment of international frameworks amongst themselves as well as with the broad thrust of national policies such as rural development and peacebuilding, to create synergies in monitoring processes.

⁵⁷ WTO Secretariat (2009) Trade policy review Solomon Islands.

⁵⁸ The Diagnostic Trade Integration Study is due for completion in the first quarter of 2010.

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Ensuring such harmonisation in monitoring should also permit common evaluation processes and considerable improvement in the overall efficiency of

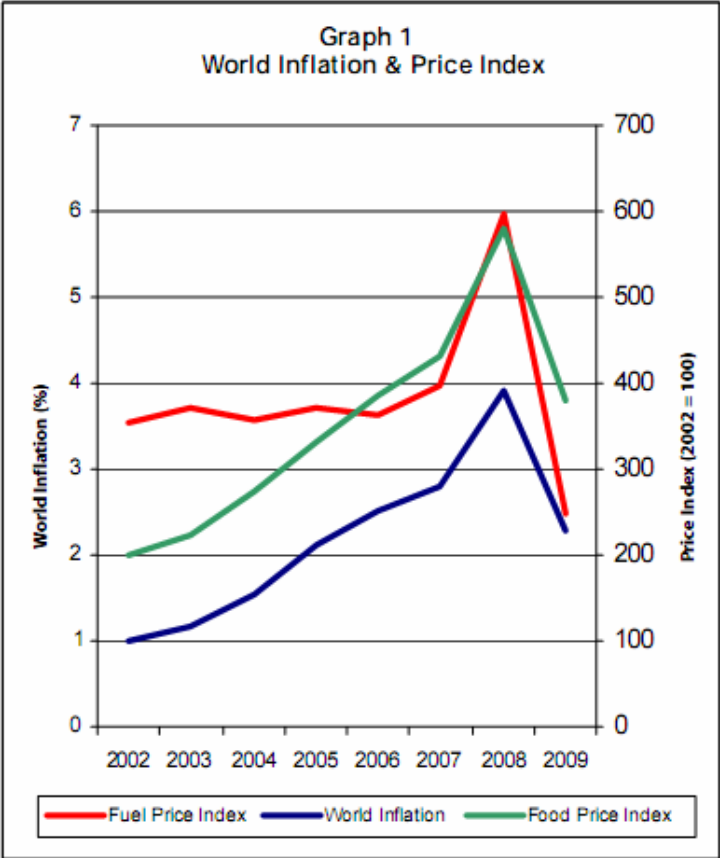
6. Impact and Responses to the Recent Global Crises

The series of two global crises in 2008 and 2009 have had a mixed set of effects on the Solomon Islands economy. Structural factors within the country have mediated some of the worst effects, but the importance of vulnerability issues to development planning has been underscored by the turbulence of this period.

6.1 The Global Fuel and Food Crises

Food and fuel prices spiked in mid 2008. with low levels of foreign currency reserves, this caused severe pressure on the country. With almost 99% of transport and electrical energy derived from fossil fuels, there is a particularly high exposure of both urban and rural populations to fuel prices.

Figure 5: World food and fuel prices 2002-2009 (Source CBSI 2009 Annual Report)



The proportional dependence of food on imports is lower than that of fuel, although the steadily increased reliance on imported foods means that pressures from the fuel and food crises were experienced, particularly in urban areas.

6.1.1 Rice

The food price shock was particularly marked in the area of rice prices, with a doubling (at peak) of retail prices in town and even higher rises in rural areas. Solomon Islands is one of the highest per capita consumers of rice, and this was the main route for the

international food price spikes to be visited on the country. The shocks have prompted a redoubling of efforts at increasing domestic rice production, but has also renewed focus on improvement of the production of traditional crops⁵⁹.

6.1.2 Fuel

Fuel prices peaked in third quarter 2008 and while easing, remain elevated throughout the country. The inefficient transportation network means that high fuel prices drive up the prices of all transported goods, including fuel itself, which is crucial in rural areas to provide outboard motor powered sea transport. This inefficiency also drives the farm-gate, "rural" price of commodities downwards, as transport margins consume a greater part of sales prices. Power prices for urban areas also experienced increases, but due to the very low proportion of electrified households, this impact was muted compared to that via the sea transport use route of fuel. Nonetheless, this has prompted the accelerated focus on large scale hydropower for urban and industrial power systems, and local private sector efforts at biofuel production.

6.2 The Global Financial Crisis

The global financial crisis has affected the country primarily through a depression in the level of demand for key export commodities, particularly logs. Because of low exposure to global financial systems, the domestic financial system has shown limited flow on effects from the financial crisis.

Commodity prices for copra, palm oil and cocoa while crashing during the early parts of the crisis, have rebounded. More importantly, the momentum from post-conflict recovery and investments continue to drive production increases despite the financial crisis' effects.

6.2.1 Temporary logging downturn

The downturn in logging activity was experienced in early 2009 but indications for 2010 are that there will be a full resumption of growth. This downturn was driven by a slowdown in the growth rate of the Chinese economy, which is the major end market for Solomon Islands logs. As China has weathered the financial storm and continued growth, demand for this key commodity has rebounded. This is only a temporary situation as this resource will be exhausted in the short term.

6.3 Responses

The twin crises of food and fuel (2008) and financial meltdown (2009) have highlighted the significance of selective vulnerability of the country's economy which derives from a narrow export base. It also reinforces the importance of self-sufficiency for basic staple foods and resilience of the agro-ecological systems that produce it.

Economic diversification is a long standing priority with complex associated strategies spanning such areas as infrastructure, policy reform and education. Government

59 "Solomons food security facing a fork in the road", accessed at <http://dev-updates.blogspot.com/2008/06/how-to-feed-solomons-split-vision.html> on 2 Dec 2009.

responses in these areas are continuing apace with additional urgency spurred on by the crises experience.

The resilience and productivity of national food systems is being responded to in a novel intersectoral way. A National Food Security, Food Safety and Nutrition Policy 2010-2015 is under development in a significant coordinated approach between the Ministries of Health, Agriculture & Livestock and Fisheries. This intersectoral approach is an indication of the outstanding level of commitment to integrated responses to the various global crises. The Policy is a 5-year plan with long term focus integrated across food production and health portfolios, and so represents a key measure to proactively respond to long term needs in the area of resilience and human security.

7. Challenges and opportunities

Solomon Islands faces significant challenges for sustainable development but also is presented with significant opportunities. Both are intimately related to its position and identity as a small island nation, with considerable diversity and situated in an early stage of state development.

7.1 Key challenges for sustainable development

The principal challenges facing Solomon Islands sustainable development and progress in the Mauritius Strategy lie in institutional development and deployment to manage the rapidly changing context that is being driven:

- internally by population growth, cultural change and environmental change;
- externally by global environmental change and global economic systems.

As such the key challenges are:

- Appropriate institutional development

Appropriate institutions in this case, are institutions which are able to meaningfully engage with the people of Solomon Islands and their needs. The cultural and social specificities of the country mean that effective policy and programming will have the most effect when institutional setup and modalities are appropriate to the context of a wide range of communities and community settings.

- Management of engagement with global systems

The small size of the country and developing nature of its institutions means that national economic systems and policy settings remain vulnerable to more established and powerful globalised actors. This vulnerability applies even more to the communities and groups that constitute the country and manage the majority of its resources, so the management of and selective engagement with such global actors and systems is critical to purposeful long term development in the country.

- Environmental change

An intimate relationship between society and functioning ecosystems means that environmental change poses immediate and significant challenges to food security, water supplies and even the living environment. National level environmental change is amenable to mitigation through intervention but governance challenges to such interventions abound. Global climate change demands society wide adaptation and this has attendant problems of prediction and coordination. Together these aspects of environmental change hold a large influence on the future of sustainable development for the country.

- Negotiation of rapid demographic and cultural change

Rapid growth, cultural mixing, the advent of digital media and increased international and national population movements are all driving through going shifts in cultures, cultural norms and the renegotiation of value systems. With as diverse a set of traditions as in the Solomons, adapting institutions and systems to respond to and manage these shifts will be a significant and ongoing challenge for policy design, implementation and evaluation in all sectors.

7.2 Key opportunities for sustainable development

The greatest opportunities available to Solomon Islands for sustainable development derive from the strength and viability of its indigenous, hybridised sociocultural systems for human organisation and production. These, together with intact natural resources and ecosystems, have in the past buffered the people from the shocks of global economic cycles, and represent an alternate infrastructure for truly sustainable development paths of the sort that industrial countries are now seeking.

- Resilience

Solomon Islands communities remain highly resilient in the face of social and environmental change as well as human and environmental disasters. This continued resilience is doubly important for sustainable development. Firstly it has enabled a degree of cushioning for the population from external and internal shocks that would not be possible through more formal systems including the market, government or formal NGOs. Secondly, this resilience provides a basis for building further infrastructure for a resilient, sustainable island based development model.

- Untapped potential

Solomon Islands possesses massive untapped potential in terms of a resource base. There remains considerable scope for further development of agriculture at small holder and commercial scales, without needing to confront food security trade off points, as well as very considerable freshwater resources on the larger islands, which both host most of the population and make up most of the land area. Associated with the freshwater resource are significant untapped sources of hydroelectric power, again located contiguous to major population and industrial centres. Marine and forest productivity remain viable despite the ongoing threat of deforestation and siltation. Non-renewable resources of greater value and significance are being uncovered on an ongoing basis, particularly in the minerals sector, and the extent of this resource offers potential for medium to long term foreign exchange flows that offer the country a potential form of “bridging finance” during the looming period of recovery, transition and adaptation.

- Limited exposure to global systems

Solomon Islanders and the national economy remain heavily dependent on local production and governance systems, reducing their exposure to international trading and financial flows. While this does not by any means mean independence from the global system, the limited level of exposure preserves a range of development options that are often not available to other SIDS. This relatively low exposure is reflected in oil use

figures which put the country lower than all Pacific neighbours in per capita oil consumption, 22% lower than Vanuatu 27% lower than PNG, 59% lower than Samoa and 80% lower than Fiji.

Table 7: Oil consumption for selected PICs (Source: 2007 CIA World Factbook)

| Country | Ranking in total oil consumption | Bbl oil/day | Population | Per capita daily consumption (bbl) |
|------------------|----------------------------------|-------------|------------|------------------------------------|
| Fiji | 126 | 10,000 | 905,000 | 0.01105 |
| Samoa | 162 | 1,000 | 177,000 | 0.00565 |
| Papua New Guinea | 111 | 18,000 | 5,670,000 | 0.003175 |
| Vanuatu | 167 | 620 | 209,000 | 0.002967 |
| Solomon Islands | 158 | 1,280 | 552,000 | 0.002319 |

7.3 Key priorities for sustainable development

Key priorities for Solomon Islands within the MSI framework emerge from the special status of Solomon Islands as a post-conflict state which is also a SIDS and LDC. The combination of factors means that MSI related priorities need to engage closely with these realities.

Government stakeholder at an intersectoral workshop in 2005 hosted by the Ministry of Development Planning and Aid Coordination, on “Principles for good international engagement in fragile states” identified three key principles at the very top of priorities for good international engagement⁶⁰.

These were:

1. Take context as the starting point – although international frameworks make efforts to understand and engage with local realities as a matter of course, there is a special urgency to this in the case of Solomon Islands. Combining post-conflict issues with climate change vulnerability in an LDC-SIDS context demands highly grounded thinking and approaches.

Such grounding will require considerable capacity in applied research as well as monitoring and evaluation, so that the ground reality of a complex and rapidly

60 WORKSHOP MATRIX OF AGREED ACTIONS - PRINCIPLES FOR GOOD INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT IN FRAGILE STATES, December 2005

changing situation, is not lost or obscured from the view of those policy actors charged with the responsibilities of responding to needs and issues.

2. Move from reaction to prevention – the international socioeconomic and global environmental changes that are impacting our national situation need to be engaged in a proactive and anticipatory way.

Achieving this shift from reaction to prevention will require the afore-discussed level of grounded understanding of context, but it will also require innovation in policy approaches so that timely responses provide a strong and straightforward basis for anticipatory, “forward looking” change. Such forward looking change should open the opportunity for further impacts to be prevented rather than being reacted to again.

3. Focus on state building – the institutions needed to link, service and represent our many diverse communities are state ones. These need to be developed and enhanced with urgency.

The focus on state building needs to be guided by both the foregoing considerations. The choice of forms and function for state institutions will rest on an adequate understanding and a clear view of the scope for state action, and the role of the state within the Solomon context. Statebuilding will also need to foresee future needs and evolve in anticipation of them.

7.4 Challenges, Needs and Priorities for future MSI Implementation

Future MSI implementation will face challenges from the sectoral situations that need to be engaged as well as from the policy environment itself. They map onto key areas of the national context and the need to prioritise alignment so as to reduce administration of development programming and maximise opportunities for progress.

7.4.1 Challenges – MSI implementation

Maintaining recognition for high level coordinated approach within the overall national policy framework

A major challenge for MSI implementation has been ensuring the visibility for a long term, consistent high level policy direction towards sustainable development. This challenge is set to continue for the MSI into the future. This has been because of the urgency of different post-conflict political considerations, many of which remain placed to continue to play a central ongoing role.

Overcoming capacity limitations for effective planning, monitoring and evaluation – smarter harmonisation of different framework

Capacity limitations for effective planning, monitoring and evaluation are extensive and will continue to hamper efforts at implementation of sustainable development directions. Significant past development partner assistance for capacity development has met with limited and mixed success, in part due to the capacity difficulties of partners in

understanding the complexities of the national situation. These capacity issues will continue to pose challenges that need to be overcome.

7.4.2 Needs – MSI implementation

Improved information gathering and management

There remains wide ranging needs for improvements in information gathering and management. This is of central importance both for monitoring progress as well as for designing approaches and recognising dynamics.

Processes for building knowledge able to support a country-specific framework for sustainable development

The unique circumstances of Solomon Islands are not being reduced by ongoing global integration; rather they are being accentuated. There is a need for processes of analysis, research and information management that will support ongoing, institutional learning that supports a country specific articulation of sustainable development.

Ongoing and flexible support mechanism for “demand driven” country assistance

Assistance is needed for many aspects of the implementation of the MSI, but modality of that assistance makes a great difference to its effectiveness, as the modalities determine how assistance is rendered, to whom and in what specific situations. The opportunities for systemic development of capacity arise from incipient situations, and so flexibility and responsiveness to national priority setting is essential to long term improvement in national systems.

7.4.3 Priorities – MSI implementation

Recognition of post-conflict situation and needs

The recent series of natural disasters which Solomon Islands has been exposed to is additional to a fragile post-conflict situation. The country therefore faces a complex combination of the recognised SIDS vulnerabilities and challenges layered on top of the trauma and difficulty resulting from armed national conflict. This configuration needs recognition within the different frameworks that the country’s sustainable development operates within, on the international stage.

Recognition of potential for integration of disaster response with long term adaptation

The recent series of disasters has offered opportunities for new recognition of existing resiliences and vulnerabilities as well as experience of recovery and rehabilitation. The nature of these disasters makes them extremely valuable as a potential source of lessons for long term adaptation and offer some basis for integrated responses which relieve immediate issues while building systems for long term viability.

Mainstreaming knowledge and information as a central basis for contextualised sustainable development

Knowledge as a theme must be given greater basis than it is currently, and this recognition must extend further than the technical and sustainability aspects. There needs to be a stronger understanding of the processes of development and islands peoples themselves, as this is the type of understanding that will yield deep frameworks able to support the tasks of sustainable development over the long term.

Mainstreaming knowledge as a priority in MSI implementation for the Solomons will also pay dividends in terms of improved monitoring and evaluation frameworks which build on the strengths of people and communities.

Finally and most importantly, for Solomon Islands, a focus on knowledge offers the promise of an integrated and islands-grounded vision and framework for “sustainable islands”, which will be able to provide a theoretical foundation for mobilising support both in high level policy settings as well as in community and grassroots situations.