

Universal Periodic Report

CSO Shadow Report

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES EXCHANGE

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Solomon Islands UPR stakeholders' report for the 12th session was compiled by the Development Services Exchange (DSE) on behalf of the non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Solomon Islands (see appendix). DSE is the national umbrella body for NGOs established in 1984 to facilitate and coordinate development services for NGOs and their partners and has a membership of around 70 members. DSE continues to liaise with civil society organisations aiming to strengthen effective NGO coordination through advocacy, the collecting and sharing of information, capacity building and enhancing relationships with members and stakeholders. In this submission, DSE with its coalition of five NGOs highlight identified key issues and recommendations specific to human rights issues and invites the proposals from the International community for assistance to the Solomon Islands government in the implementation of these recommendations.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

This report was created by a coalition of 5 NGOs and compiled by DSE and the contents of which is the product of their research into human rights issues in their areas of expertise. The process includes a two ways; through a set of verbal consultations and through written submissions from some of our members. The written submissions came from Coalition of Education Solomon Islands (COESI) Live and Learn Environmental Education (LLEE) and Solomon Islands Indigenous People's Human Rights Advocacy Association (SIPHRAA), and were submitted to DSE after an initial visit from the aforementioned representatives explaining the process of the UPR and formatting of their submission. The key issues covered are logging and mining, domestic violence, climate change, disability rights, education, unemployment and corruption. Some human rights issues not covered in this report but are reported by individual Civil Society Organizations.

3.0 BACKGROUND AND FRAMEWORK

Solomon Islands has signed and ratified the following United Nations (UN) human rights treaties: *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)*, *Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD)*, *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)*, *Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC)*, *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (OPCEDAW)*, *UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC)*.

Commented [RN1]: No country signs or ratifies the UDHR.

Government Implementation and Legal Framework

The implementation of the ratified treaties by government provided some efficiency for the promotion and protection of human rights. The basis for the supreme law in the country which emphasizes the fundamental rights and freedoms of its citizen is stipulated in the 1978 Constitution and conforms to all major United Nations instruments regarding representation, customs, traditions, cultural inheritance and land rights. The Constitution guarantees the rights of the individual to life, security, property, expression, protection of privacy, assembly, association and religion - therefore the framework in place supporting the UDHR is the Constitution. Some civil and political human rights are addressed in chapter 2 of the Solomon Islands Constitution, the Solomon Islands National Provident Fund (NPF) Act 1973, the Employment Act 1981, the Labour Act 1982, the Workmen's Compensation Act 1982, and the Safety at Work Act 1982, as well as the Penal Code. A compulsory social security scheme runs in Solomon Islands, the NPF. Under the NPF, workers are eligible for 'invalidity' benefits but only unemployment benefits if they have contributed to the NPF throughout their working lives and have been made redundant. Generally issues pertaining to the right to work are supported by these aforementioned documents.

Rights of Non Nationals

Chapter 2 of the constitution outlines fair and equal treatment of non-nationals including the right to health care, education equal to that offered to citizens, encouraged use of their native languages, preservation and promotion of their national cultures and traditions, freedom of religion, and encouraged participation in nonpolitical associations. They have the same rights as citizens in all matrimonial and family matters. They are permitted to exercise intellectual property rights over their academic works, artistic

creations and inventions. However non-nationals are not entitled to own property, contest or vote in national elections, must obtain work permits and can be denied access to the NPF.

Solomon Islands has signed, but not ratified, the following UN human rights treaties: *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)*, *Optional Protocol onto the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict*, *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography*, *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*.

Human Rights Reporting

It is recognized that timely reporting of human rights issues is made by the government. The CEDAW report was a long overdue report submitted to the treaty bodies which does not reflect well on the Government's commitment and thus lack political will to make is a seriousness and urgent priority. The Report on the Convention of the Rights of Children is another.

We acknowledge that progress is made by the Democratic Coalition for Change government (DCCG) to establish the Solomon Islands Independent Commission against Corruption (ICAC). However, it is noted that the Anti-corruption Bill will be tabled in The establishment of the Independent Commission against Corruption (ICAC) was listed as a priority reform area under the 2015 National government budget. It seems however that there is a conflicting agenda in its implementation and this does not reflect well in terms of accountability.

4.0 Implementation and Efficiency including recommendations for promotion and protection of human rights.

4.1. Right to Life, Liberty, Security of Persons

Forests have been peoples source of food, building materials, medicines, Complaints have been raised by local landowners indicating government's non-consultations with grass-root people on their timber policy. This has resulted in unfair distribution of royalties and benefits by authorities within the provincial government and some trustees to rightful resources owners. Lack of proper data and records documentation of traditional ownership has resulted to envious people causing disturbances. Lack of consultations have continued to create tensions among indigenous peoples, between local landowners and the authorities. It is envisaged that few people are profiting from logging activities in communal land with unfair distribution of profits. Indigenous people have suffered and resulted in some rivers and other water sources pollute, making women and girls to take long walks to fetch water. That gardening areas now become unfertile or less produce.

These foreign loggers have incited the commercial sexual exploitation of children which contributed to loss of traditional cultural values of the indigenous population.

The logging sector output in 2014 was around 2.14 million cubic meters and turned out to be stronger than expected. This reflected high rates of re-entry logging and strong international demand for logs. Consequently the sector contributed ¾ percentage point to overall GDP growth¹. However, this rate of logging is not sustainable and the level of output is projected to stabilize and then decline over the next decade.

SIIPHRAA² assists indigenous people and resource owners to understand the Solomon Islands Forestry Law (Act) and its associated regulation. Including forestry and logging processes, sharing formulae used to calculate logging income, and good logging practices. Under the SI Forestry Law (Forest utilization Act cap 40), the Forestry Act caters for resource owners to benefit from utilizing their own gain but aware of forest regulation that must be understood by both resource owners and logging companies. Information shared with resource owners to understand how revenues from logging are shared and who benefits most as highlighted, 1) logging company (60%); 2) Solomon Islands Government (25%); 3) Licensee (10%) and; 4) Resource

Commented [RN2]: A lot of this issue is a known impact of mining activities etc leading to exodus and behavioral change, so maybe under this heading, you could remove this paragraph but add a new paragraph on liberty, security of person etc?

¹ Solomon Star, 2015, Public Accounts Committee (PAC) Hearing, 11 April, 2015

² Solomon Islands Indigenous People Human Rights Advocacy Association, SIIPHRAA (see appendix)

owners (5%). This clearly shows that logging companies gets the highest share while the resource owners received the lowest (5%).

Recommendation: The Solomon Islands government is urged to review the land acquisition process under the Lands and Titles Act and adopt appropriate forest legislations.

Recommendation: Solomon Islands government is urged to review and reconsider amendment of sustainable equilibrium in consultation with the Civil society sector and affected communities.

Recommendation: The government must strengthen legislative requirements that companies are members of the Solomon Islands Forest Industry Association (as required by law) before they can operate, and that replanting of indigenous tree species is done by the industry.

Recommendation: The government must review the regulations under the Act to ban re-entry logging and control of excessive clear felling of natural forest be developed.

Recommendation: The government should effectively review all non-operational licenses and the processes and procedures for issuance of logging licenses and suspend licenses of logging companies that breach sustainable forestry legal requirements

Recommendation: Government must promote plantation establishment to landowners and provide technical advice on reforestation with appropriate activities.

Recommendation: Government is urged to ensure safeguard the rights of children and put strong penalties towards parents or individuals that engage in giving bribing young girls for loggers and other.

Mining

Indigenous people who are resource owners often lost cases in negotiation with investors and are due to these as identified: 1) Solomon Islands Mining Laws; 2) Formulae used to calculate Mining financial benefits and 3) Right to return to their original land once agreements are signed and mining operation commenced. In 1996, Guadalcanal province had a mining lease signed between both parties and almost 20 years later, in May 2012, witnessed 30 households of around 100 people being evicted under a High Court Eviction order obtained by Gold Ridge Mining Limited (GRML). The National Mining laws of Solomon Islands (Mineral and Mining Act) in terms of sharing formula is unfairly. The formula is calculated as 1) Mining company (97%); 2) SIG (1.5 %); 3) Guadalcanal province (1.3%) and; 4) Resource owners (0.2%)³. It clearly shows that Gold Ridge mining company absorbs the biggest share of the investment while the resource owners get the lowest share.

The West Rennell Resource Owners Association on Rennell Island, Ren/Bell province wanted the national government through Ministry of Mines, Energy Resource to cancel Asia Pacific Investment Development's (APID) mining lease and the company out of their land. They rural people realized that they have been tricked at the first place to accept mining. There was cover up. It was claimed that what happened at the first place which led to the signing of whatever agreements was a cover up and it is sad to learn that many irregularities and falsification of documents happened at the expense of less educated rural resource owners. This clearly demonstrates that foreign investors do not care about resource owners but reap them for their money. The mining operation has raised more social and environmental problems than addressing what they already had resulting in increase of teenage pregnancies and single mothers, high consumption rate of alcohol and drug use, unfilled pits, and oil spills in adjacent reefs. The communities felt the socio-environmental impact and they demanded the company to cease operation immediately. In this case, APID used an initial micro-project at first with \$20,000 for each community; however, signatures obtained were later intentionally used to produce false documents to suggest that APID got the support of resource owners⁴. Since 2007, SIIPHRAA has assisted the resource owners to understand the SIG Mining Acts through legal advocacy training, community para-legal advice and para legal consultancy services.

Recommendation: The Government is urged to review and amend the National Minerals policy with the Mines and Mineral Act to address taxation, transparent issuance of license registers and contracts criteria, reliable data focal source, export data, beneficial ownership, disclosures, distribution of revenues.

Recommendation: The government is urged to promote and strengthen collaboration efforts with all stakeholders committed to work on the implementation of the Extractive Industries Transparency International.

³ Moore Stephens, 2013, Solomon Islands Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (SIEITI) Report

⁴ Solomon Star, 2015, New twist in Mining, 5 April, 2015

Recommendation: Government must ensure to review the minerals and mines act to ensure extractive companies comply with the No. 7 of 2011 EITI Rules for companies in the implementation of the EITI.

Recommendation: The government is urged to establish stringent control mechanisms and vetting system to ensure only licensed and internationally recognized firms that provide proper EIA are allowed to prospect and operate in the country.

4.2 Right to Health-Highest Attainable of Mental and Physical Health

The Metazona Downstream Association (MDA) in North Guadalcanal has threatened to seek legal action against the Gold Ridge Mining Limited (GRML) if their demand is not met. The association demands \$15million [US\$2.03 million] dollar for damages to the river allegedly claimed to have been caused by mining operation done by Gold Ridge Mining Limited (GRML). The effects caused were blockage to the downstream, damages to cocoa plants not producing health fruits, food crops are not healthy, damage to the natural habitats which include herbal medicines resulting in seeking help far distances, water turned muddy causing diarrhea to children making them to depend on water tanks and underground wells and even walk far distances again to fetch water which is not safe for women and girls. Communities living downstream do not use the river to wash, bath and fish because of alleged contamination by cyanide. Not all have access to rain water tanks for daily consumption which raised questions of communities drinking contaminated water. These have seriously denied them of their health rights and all they want is to ensure their demands are met and that their rights are recognized and respected.

Between December 2014 and February 2015, a study was undertaken by The University of Queensland (UQ) for the UN agency, World Health Organization (WHO), to assess ongoing environmental health risks posed by mining wastes and contaminated uncontrolled water discharging from the critically full tailings storage facility (TSF) of the Gold Ridge Mine (GRM). Findings were that conditional and controlled release of untreated water from the Mine's tailings dam is safe, but recommended for quick attention for controlled release of untreated water, warning that an uncontrolled spill-over from the tailings dam could result in an environmental catastrophe⁵. Predictions that there would be no direct risk to human health may no longer be termed risks for environmental activities linked to the livelihoods of people, especially for fresh and marine aquaculture and aquatic ecosystem integrity. It was unfortunate to know that some of the findings are based on predictions which are despicable especially when it involves human life, health, food security and livelihood of local communities. We acknowledge the past government for rejecting the discharging of water from the tailing dam and current DCC Government for the allocation of \$4.0 million to manage and monitor tailing dam at Gold Ridge in its 2015 and 2016 budget.

Commented [RN3]: Footnote the study link

Recommendation: The government is urged to enforce production of the Environmental Impact Assessment by independent environmental specialist with no interference from interested parties concerned.

Recommendation: The government is urged to produce updated report on the important achievements and setback from the Gold Ridge Mining Limited operation and develop appropriate policies and legislation to accommodate resource owners concerns and demand in future undertaking of this kind in other provinces.

Recommendation: The government is urged to consider establish a Compensation Fund to assist villages affected by Mining activities from the government budget.

Recommendation: The Government is urged to include 3 Right to participate in public and political life.

Recommendation: The government is urged to ensure affected communities where mining is sited have adequate safe drinking water.

⁵Island Sun News Desk, GRML respond to PMO's Statement at <http://www.islandsun.com.sb/index.php/latest-news/national/7718-grml-responds-to-pmo-s-statement>, 16 April, 2015

Disability

Data on **disabilities** indicate that about **14% of the total population** reported a **disability**⁶. The proportion of the population with a disability increases with age, and there is very little difference in the proportion of males and females with a disability. While about 10% of children younger than 5 years of age had a disability, it was more than half of the population aged 55-59 years. Of those who reported disabilities, almost 3,000 people could not walk at all, 3,300 people could not remember or concentrate, another 1,400 were deaf, and 900 people were blind. While only about 5,300 people reported a severe disability in the Solomon Islands, they constitute a vulnerable and disadvantaged group, and they are a target group in need of specialized medical assistance. People with disabilities are not recognized and valued by many in the society and often faced violence in their lives. Inaccessibility to public transports (buses) as they are not designed for them. Reduced opportunities to employment, poor designed buildings for access to conferences and meetings. The Solomon Islands is a signatory to a United Nations convention to uphold the rights of people with disabilities; and is therefore obliged to: *"Promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities and to promote respect for their inherent dignity."*

In 2004, the Ministry of Health and Medical Services developed the Solomon Islands National Policy on Disability 2005-2010. One of the objectives is promotion of equal participation of women with disabilities and main stream their issues on a national, regional and international level. The policy recognizes that women and girls, to a greater extent than boys and men with disabilities, face discrimination within the family, are denied access to health care, education, and are excluded from social and community activities. Another objective is to create more opportunities for income generation, employment and promotion based on equal rights and empowerment of all persons regardless of disability or gender⁷.

Recommendation: The National Government is urged to create more opportunities for income generation, employment and promotion based on equal rights and empowerment of all persons regardless of disability or gender.

Recommendation: The Government is urged to ratify the CPRD and to implement the Solomon Islands National Policy on Disability 2005-2010 with provision of appropriate capacity and financial resources.

Recommendation: The government is urged to ensure mainstream gender

Corruption

According to an Advisor to the Internal Audit Division within the Ministry of Finance, Solomon Islands is ranked 143 amongst 186 countries on an international index of countries affected by fraud and corruption. It is evident and alarming that corruption is widespread within the very fabric of our government institutions and organizations. The \$10 million Health scandal within the Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS) is one example of a systematically corrupt transaction within Government ministries. This have denied the right of children, women and men to access goods and services on a non-discriminatory basis, access to shelter, housing and sanitation, adequate supply of safe drinking water, provision of essential drugs, equitable distribution of all health facilities, goods and services especially for vulnerable or marginalised groups. This reflects bad on the Government and particularly Ministry of Health and Medical Services who are fortunate to receive assistance from development partners through the Health Sector Support programme 2008-2015 (HSSP). Of the total funding for the health sector, more than 50% comes from development partners and over 90% of actual development expenditure for health is provided by development partners⁸.

The recent response from the Permanent Secretary for MHMS concerning senior officials from the ministry involved in the fraud during the Public Accounts Committee hearing was irresponsible and promotes corruption in the country. Stating cases of fraud involving high profile officers with specialist skills, knowledge, and professionalism is not easy to deal with since they cannot be replaced, thus the ministry cannot suspend these officers from their position because it is not easy to recruit someone with the

⁶ Solomon Islands Government, 2009, 2009 Population and Housing Census National Report (Volume 2)

⁷Ministry of Women, Youth, and Children Affairs, 2012, Solomon islands CEDAW Combined Initial, Second and Third Periodic Report, p. 36.

⁸Ibid, p. 50

same abilities and skills. This undoubtedly highlights that certain individuals are above the law of the country. This is an act of injustice as all Solomon Islanders are answerable to the law of the country regardless of your professionalism, expertise, years of service, blood relative, or political connections and to do otherwise would be to compound a criminal offence.

Recommendation: The Government is urged to provide and strengthen the capacity through training of investigators like police to promptly and effectively investigate corrupt practices and enforce laws to hold people accountable for their actions.

Recommendation: The Government is urged to strengthen the capacity and allocate more resources to existing anti-corruption institutions which functions to promote and protect human rights. These include the courts and integrity institutions such as the Office of the Ombudsman, the Leadership Code of Commission and office of the Auditor General (AG).

Recommendation: The Government must set up ICAC – expand this which must be adequately resourced, and has sufficient powers to investigate and prosecute corruption related cases.

Recommendation: The Government should establish and domesticate the UNCAC and mandate the institutions that will identify, investigate, and prosecute the offenders.

Recommendation: The DCC Government should move one step further in their vision to fight corruption by clearly outlining the government anti-corruption position on the policy statement and translation document.

Violence against Women (VAW)

The World Bank (2012) has rated Solomon Islands the worst country in the world for sexual violation against women, saying 64% of women report they are victims of domestic violence. The 2009 Solomon Islands Family Health and Safety Study reveals that 64% of the women respondents aged 15 to 49 have experienced physical or sexual violence or both from an intimate partner⁹. The study also found childhood sexual abuse (before the age of 15 years) to be common (37%). Despite the efforts of a number of organisations over the past twenty years, these unacceptable levels remain a serious concern; they are the third highest in the world of the countries surveyed. A mother was left paralyzed after her intoxicated husband struck her with a timber at her back following an argument in Makira/Ulawa province that led to her being hospitalized with severe spinal cord injuries. Also, a pregnant mother was raped at the outskirts of Honiara on her way home which is alarming with a higher prevalence of rape cases in Solomon Islands and rape cases over the years have changed in nature which is sickening to the society and nation as a whole. According to the 'NAFNAO' programme¹⁰ which particularly focuses on rape perpetrators rehabilitation in correctional service inmates, most respondents admitted that their action was intentional. Records compiled by Solomon Islands Correctional Service (SICS), sex offences increased from 12% in 2012 to 30% recently with offenders only sentenced to a minimum of 7 years or more.¹¹ The situation calls for urgent national action, including strengthening legislative protection and law enforcement; treatment and rehabilitation programs for perpetrators; preventative approaches and provision of support services. We welcome passing of the Family Protection Act 2014 and also welcome the proposed reforms to the Penal Code that will make it easier for the police and those in danger to take effective legal action. We call on the Solomon Islands Government to implement the proposed reforms and to put in place effective legislative responses to the issue of gender based and domestic violence¹².

Recommendation:

- The Government is urged to quickly review, implement to strengthen the judicial and legal systems in making passing increased heavy penalties to perpetrators through the establishment of Family Courts to ensure that cases are dealt with expediently and efficiently according to law.
- Law enforcement institutions must recruit more women and set up gender sensitive victim support units to ensure that women feel safe to report crimes and feel confident that complaints will be investigated and prosecuted.
- The Government is urged to take early steps to implement the Family Protection Act passed in 2014 including through allocating appropriate resources to implement the Act.

⁹Ibid, p. 23

¹⁰ 'NafNao' is pidgin word for 'Enough is Enough in English' which is a counselling project involving rape perpetrators rehabilitation in Solomon Islands prisons.

¹¹ Solomon Islands Correctional Services (SICS), 10 April, 2015.

¹² Department of Public Prosecution, Women, Children and Families, Available <http://www.pso.gov.sb/index.php/services/94-women-children-and-families> (Accessed 13 April, 2015)

The Government should take necessary steps to amend section 137 of the National Penal Code and increase the penalties for rape offenders.

- Awareness and education around DV should be compulsory and government to strengthen programs and activities that promote a better understanding among women and girls of their rights and the laws which protect them against physical and sexual abuse

4.4 Right to Work and to Just and Favorable Conditions of Work

The sudden closure of St Barbara Mining Company after the 2014 April flood without prior notification and proper procedure has significantly affected the national economy and impacted around 200 employees at the mine with ripple effect on their immediate families regarding future employment, income, daily food provision, school fees and other basic essentials. Such act of negligence should not be tolerated and be deemed unacceptable for any particular future foreign investor. As mineral prospecting is ongoing in other provinces, with higher chances of mining operation. Guadalcanal should be used as a yardstick to measure any success or failure in future mining developments in Solomon Islands. The minimum wage rate in the Solomon Islands still remains the same for a very long time, considering the rapid inflation rate in the country that adversely impacted the survival of most families whom their wage rate fall within the minimum category. No tangible attempts to raise the minimum wage rate in the country, and there is no concrete national wage policy in existence to monitor private companies' policies around remuneration. Strong mechanism be put in place to safe guard conditions of labor and the absence of a national policy regarding minimum wage rate is a problem that must be seriously addressed. Currently the Labor division only relies on the provision from the Labour Act to deal with minimum wage rate which is \$4.00 per hour which is very low¹³. However, compulsory payment to the National Pension scheme is made (National provident fund).The Ministry of labor should continue to effectively scrutinize employees working conditions of employees in the public, private firms and other industries and engage the law enforcement agencies to investigate on the conditions of workers and their salaries in ensuring that investors and employers comply with relevant labor laws. All government ministries must work together in areas that overlap their roles to address conditions of work men and women in the country. Planned visits to work places around town and the provinces must involve all relevant authorities that have a role to play in protecting the rights of people in the work places, including rights for their safety, entitlements or other privileges.

Recommendation:The national government must review and amend the foreign investment law with clear process allowing transparency and accountability and ensure foreign companies strictly adhere to compliance procedures.

Recommendation: DSE and its coalition urged the government to review of Labour Act 1982 and related regulations to include provision of compulsory social protection and rehabilitation for working Solomon Islanders. Inclusive improved standards that meet international Labor standards in terms of recruitment procedures, general working conditions, minimum wage, health and safety and other relevant standards required for equitable and safe engagement of Solomon Islanders by employers (both gender).

Recommendation: The government is urged to consider review and increase the minimum standards on minimum wage rate in relation to annual inflation.

4.5 Right to Social Security and an Adequate Standard of Living

Unemployment

The UNDP report presented findings regarding the Millennium Development Goals (1999), stated that amongst other countries in the Pacific, Solomon Islands is classed as a state living below the poverty line (on under US\$1.00 per day per person). According to ILO, the current unemployment rate in Solomon Islands, in 2013, is 3.8% with current youth unemployment rate in Solomon Islands is 9.7%¹⁴.Although a high proportion (63%) of the population aged 12 and older are economically active (in the labor force), only a relatively small proportion (24%) was engaged in paid employment. Relatively few people (81 thousand)

¹³Solomon Star, Public Accounts Committee, April 12, 2015

¹⁴ The World Bank, Employment Rate at http://www.indexmundi.com/solomon_islands/unemployment_rate.html (Accessed 20 April, 2015)

supported the rest of the population with respect to paid income, meaning that one paid person supports(on average 5 other people financially¹⁵).Living conditions are of low standards as house rentals are costly which forced local to live in settlement areas. This is due to the rapid population growth and low job opportunities for people to engage in. Unemployment is one of the fundamental social security issues in the country and one that is largely contributing to poverty and economic instability in Solomon Islands. Moreover, this issue is providing an environment that is conducive to anti-social behavior in all levels of society.

In Honiara alone, 80% of youth are unemployed with women and youth among the most vulnerable, which can lead to social problems like increased crime, prostitution and anti-social behavior. In Honiara, women sit for long hours both during the day and night selling food, betel nuts and cigarettes and whatever they can get their hands on to earn an income. People are migrating to Honiara from rural areas in search of jobs and opportunities but, for recent migrants, life in the city can be disappointing. Generally there are very limited job opportunities available and even university graduates have found themselves in the elongated queue of unemployment¹⁶.The various schemes implemented by the government, including the rapid employment scheme and the offshore seasonal work in fruit harvesting simply isn't enough to meet the needs and expectations of the growing numbers of university graduates, school drop outs and idle youth flooding into the national capital from the provinces. ¹⁷The current situation may become a ticking time bomb if not seriously addressed as high unemployment may become a potential trigger for conflict and anti-social behavior¹⁸.

Recommendation:The Government is urged to consider establishing a desk within the Ministry of Labour to address unemployed newly graduates have access ,undergo internship training programme to equip them prior to employment environment.

Recommendation:The Government is urged to create greater employment opportunities in all provinces to address the growing demand for work by unemployed population.

Recommendation:The Government should request assistance from development partners to fund projects to increase the skills, knowledge and experience and provide employment opportunities to newly graduates in all sectors of work.

Recommendation:The government should consider identifying priority sectors and industries that many Solomon Islanders can easily participate in and list them as priority areas and industries to provide skills training.

Recommendation: The government must ensure customary land tenure system is reformed to allow access and availability of customary land to host national projects, and resource owners are empowered to participate in economic activities by using their own natural resources to develop and implement national projects in rural areas.

Recommendation:The Government through MEHRD 'should review the National Human Resources Development Programme under its scholarship awards based on the prioritized development needs of the country.

4.6 Right to Education

School enrolment data shows that 84% of children in the age group 6–15 years were enrolled in schools with female school enrollment rates slightly higher (83.9%) than male (83.2%) enrollment rates. However, school enrollment rates declined rapidly

¹⁵Solomon Islands Government, 2009, 2009 Population and Housing Census National Report (Volume 2)

¹⁶ Alison Ofotalau, Beating Unemployment in Solomon islands at <http://unemploymentinsolomonislands.blogspot.com/2010/11/unemployment-in-solomon-islands.html> (Accessed on 20 April, 2015)

¹⁷ Australia and Zealand are the main markets for seasonal workers in Solomon Islands through MoU signed between these two main development partners and Solomon Islands Government

after the age of 13, and about 20% of 15 year-olds were not attending school. From the age of 14, male school enrollment rates were higher than female enrollment rates. In general, enrollment rates were higher in the urban than the rural areas¹⁹.

Data on educational level completed indicate that in 2009, about 56% of the population 15 years and older had only a primary level education, and 21% of males and 16% of females had secondary education. Only 6% of males and 3% of females had aged 15 and older had a tertiary level education. **Eleven per cent of males and 21% of females had never been to school or only attended preschool.** Educational levels were significantly higher of the population in the urban area than in rural areas, and educational levels of males were higher than females.

According the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (MEHRD) data, in secondary division, a total of 14914 (7696 male, 7218 female) children aged 12 (Form 1) was recorded in 2015. However, according to standard 6 enrolments in 2014 for all 9 provinces there were only 12670 students enrolled. This clearly shows that in 2014, around 2244 (15%) children under no circumstances attended standard 6 education at all. The gap between total enrolment and the population remain uncertain, however factors including children with disabilities, favorable learning environment, availability of infrastructure and facilities, accessibility may have contributed to this identified enrolment gap²⁰.

The legal framework of the development, implementation and monitoring of education is the Education Act 1978. Education is not free and compulsory under the legislation. It is recognized that access to education is a human right and since the beginning of 2009 the Free Fee Basic Education policy has been implemented to address the difficulty which parents faced with paying school fees. In 2009 the SIG released the Policy Statement and Guidelines for Basic Education in Solomon Islands. The strategic objective of the policy is to provide equitable access for all children to quality Basic Education in Solomon Islands. The policy objectives include providing full enrollment opportunity to all children of the age six up to fifteen on an equitable basis and achieve 100% transition rate of all children in year six to year seven by 2015²¹.

Recommendation: The Government through MEHRD should undertake the necessary steps to work with appropriate stakeholders and institutions to develop policies, infrastructures and facilities to accommodate the implementation of facing out the standard 6 examination in Solomon Islands educational system.

Recommendation: The government is urged to consider increasing school budgets (for materials and teachers) to reduce year 6 and 9 drop-outs and phasing out entrance exams in these two years.

Recommendation: The Government is urged to ensure primary education is compulsory and seek continued assistance from development partners and donors for the Free Fee Basic Education Policy in Solomon Islands.

Recommendation: DSE and its coalition members urged the government to , improve and expand the capacity of all educational institutions in the country including promoting quality education and teacher motivation to respond to student demand for places both primary and secondary level including special needs education as a right to all Solomon islanders.

Recommendation: The government is urged to effectively strengthen the education systems and policies to enable reduce gender disparities in primary and secondary results.

Recommendation: The government is urged to provide adequate financial resources to support and assist 'faith based' schools/colleges, including schools for peoples with special needs.

¹⁹Solomon Islands Government, 2009, 2009 Population and Housing Census National Report (Volume 2)

²⁰ Presentation by James Iroga of Ministry of Education and Human Resources Secondary Division during Youth Stakeholders Meeting, 2015

²¹ Ministry of Women, Youth, and Children Affairs, 2012, Solomon islands CEDAW Combined Initial, Second and Third Periodic Report, p. 36.

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