



# **Solomon Islands National Urban Policy (2020 - 2035 )**

**Vision: “Peaceful, Resilient, Inclusive  
and Prosperous Urban Areas”**



Ministry of Lands, Housing & Survey

## FOREWORD



Solomon Island's urban population is growing at a fast rate over the last decade<sup>1</sup>. At the same time, there is positive growth in the economy since 2013 until the emergence of Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 which affects all countries including Solomon Islands. This creates the opportunity for the Government to be more attentive, positive and responsive in addressing urbanization now than a few decades ago. The country has experienced as well as fully aware of the positive impact of urbanization, and this national policy document is one such means to translate the urbanization process into a positive reality.

The Government (through its policy statement on Land, Housing and Survey) proposes to "Develop a National Urban Policy (NUP)". The ultimate aim is to have a clear urban vision which focuses on poverty reduction, prosperity, peace, growth, and resilience which embraces a sustainable development option for urban areas with a strong linkage to rural areas including constituencies, resulting in an influence that reaches beyond the traditional evolution of urban settlements. The national urban policy has three main Goals: to correct the undesirable spatial effect of national economic policies; to make internal management of urban centres and towns more efficient; and to increase economic efficiency, prosperity and socioeconomic integration by eliminating the barriers to resource mobility and diffusion of innovations. The policy will assert the power of urban space and territoriality in national socio-economic development and provide an overarching framework to address urban challenges. At the same time, it is a tool to be used by Government to invest, direct and control growth of urbanization, and a valuable opportunity for the development of a thorough and coordinated nation-wide urban development planning.

The intention of Government is to have a Policy that sets out through an overall framework or a roadmap on which all strategies for urban development will hinge upon. In this regard, the Government will ensure that the various town planning schemes, local plans and constituency development lands are aligned to this National Urban Policy. This will set the scene for building a more resilient and desirable physical form of urban areas of the country, so as to make it more prosperous, livable, inclusive and sustainable. Government Public Sector Investment Programme in urban and constituency areas will need to have regards to the overall policy and strategies identified and promoted in this national urbanization policy document.

Currently my Ministry is responsible for Urbanization. Therefore, I strongly recommend all to actively participate, support and be a part of this initiative so that we can enhance urban development to promote National Development which links to rural and constituencies .

May I thank you sincerely for your commitment to this important National Urbanization Policy.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ishmael Mali Avui'.

Hon. Ishmael Mali Avui, MP

**Minister**

**Ministry of Lands, Housing and Survey**

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<sup>1</sup>Urban growth rate was 4.7% p.a between 1999-2009 SISO

## PERMANENT SECRETARY REMARKS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



The process of developing the National Urban Policy spanned over several years. It started during the period of Urban profiling. This was because it was deliberately designed to be stakeholder-led, and as a consequence has benefited from valuable input from many communities, key stakeholders and local sources. Though too numerous to mention individually, the policy document authors fully acknowledge all the contributions that have informed this production<sup>2</sup>. Particular thanks go to Honiara City Council, the Ministry of Land, Housing and Survey (especially the Physical Planning Unit, its Director and staff), and the Policy Evaluation Unit of the Prime Ministers), the Ministry of National Development and Aid Coordination for their valued expert input to the stakeholder engagement processes, and their continuing support for the National Urban Policy. Further, Western and Malaita Provincial Government and the local NGOs and CBOs participated fully during the period of urban profiling. Valuable information and contributions from Solomon Power, and Solomon Water during the time of consultations. The Solomon Islands National Urban Conference provided the platform to present the outline of the policy and to receive broad stakeholder feedback.

Constructive engagement with international organizations with a presence in Honiara (UNDP and the World Bank and ADB being of particular note) has also added value to the compilation of this document. It is intended that a range of local and international organizations will continue to contribute to improving this policy document, and the implementation strategy.

UN-Habitat had initiated the urban profiling and supported the Honiara, Auki and Gizo as well as the national urban profile. UN-Habitat further supported the development of the Solomon Islands Urban Management Programme of Support (SUMPS) and the Pacific Urban Forum which high-lighted the need for National Urban Policies. Information and knowledge generated through the Participatory Settlements Upgrading Strategy and the Honiara Urban Resilience and Climate Action Plan further supported the development of this Policy. Last but not least UN-Habitat provided the methodology for NUP review and development and review support for this document.

Finally, special thanks go to the Country Team, Urban Land Advisory committee and the Land Board established under the MLHS. Their contribution is hereby acknowledged. UN-Habitat consultant Mr. Donald Kudu, and Mr. Alan McNeil the SPC CTA and the COL, for providing expertise advice and supporting the local engagement activity and discussions.

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<sup>2</sup>The DCGA Policy Interpretation doc PMO, and the Solomon Islands National Development Strategy 2011-2020, MDPAC

# CONTENT

FOREWORD.....	II
PERMANENT SECRETARY REMARKS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	III
LIST OF FIGURES.....	V
LIST OF TABLES.....	V
LIST OF PLATES.....	V
ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS .....	VI
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF OVERALL VISION, MISSION AND OBJECTIVES.....	VIII
OVERALL POLICY GUIDING PRINCIPLES.....	VIII
VISION.....	VIII
MISSION.....	VIII
GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS.....	VIII
PART ONE .....	1
1.0 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 ROLE OF NATIONAL URBAN POLICY .....	1
1.2 POLICY FORMULATION PROCESS.....	1
1.3 POLICY IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND EVALUATION STRATEGY .....	2
1.4 NATIONAL URBAN POLICY DEFINED. ....	2
1.5 RATIONALE FOR THE NATIONAL URBAN POLICY .....	4
1.6 DETERMINANTS AND DRIVERS OF URBANIZATION IN SOLOMON ISLANDS.....	5
1.7 CONTRIBUTION OF URBANIZATION TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.....	6
PART TWO .....	8
2.0 BACKGROUND .....	8
2.1 HISTORY OF URBANIZATION IN SOLOMON ISLANDS .....	8
2.2 THE STATUS OF URBANIZATION IN SOLOMON ISLANDS.....	10
2.3 URBAN GOVERNANCE.....	18
2.4 MULTI-STAKEHOLDERS PARTICIPATION.....	19
PART THREE.....	20
3.0 POLICY ACTION AT NATIONAL LEVEL.....	20
3.1 POLICY ACTION 1: GOVERNMENT FORMULATES AND IMPLEMENTS URBANIZATION POLICIES AND STRATEGIES.....	20
3.2 POLICY ACTION 2: REFORM ECONOMIC POLICIES AND RESOURCE ALLOCATIONS.....	21
3.4 POLICY ACTION 4: IMPROVE URBAN INFORMATION AND RESEARCH.....	23
PART FOUR.....	24
4.0 POLICY ACTION AT CITY OR LOCAL LEVEL.....	24
4.1 POLICY ACTION 1: IMPROVE URBAN ECONOMY AND EMPLOYMENT IN BOTH FORMAL AND INFORMAL SECTOR.....	24
4.2 POLICY ACTION 2: IMPROVE URBAN SECURITY.....	25
4.3 POLICY ACTION 3: FORMULATE AND IMPLEMENT URBAN ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTABILITY PLAN.....	25
4.4 POLICY ACTION 4: INFRASTRUCTURE AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT FINANCE .....	26

4.5	POLICY ACTION 5: MAINTAIN RURAL-URBAN LINKAGES.....	26
4.6	POLICY ACTION 6: IMPROVE URBAN LAND MANAGEMENT AND PLANNING.....	27
4.7	POLICY OPTION 7: IMPROVE HONIARA URBAN PLANNING. ....	29
PART FIVE.....		31
5.0	POLICY ACTIONS ON CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES.....	31
5.1	POLICY ACTION 1: IMPLEMENT HOUSING AND INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS STRATEGIES.....	31
5.2	POLICY ACTION 2: IMPROVE WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION.....	31
5.3	POLICY ACTION 3: IMPROVE URBAN ROADS AND TRANSPORTATION NETWORK. ....	33
5.4	POLICY ACTION 4: IMPROVE DRAINAGE, FLOOD CONTROLS AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT (SWM)34	
5.5	POLICY ACTION 5: CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT.....	35
5.6	POLICY ACTION6: MAINTAIN EXTERNAL SUPPORT (POTENTIAL) IN THE URBAN SECTOR ....	36
5.7	POLICY ACTION 7: IMPROVE GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT OF URBANIZATION.....	37
PART SIX.....		42
6.0	CONCLUSION .....	42
7.0	TERMINOLOGY USED.....	43
8.0	BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCE SIGHTED .....	44

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Urban Centres in Solomon Islands. <i>Source: SIG - National population and housing Census, 2009</i> .....	4
Figure 2: Distribution of Urban population in SI, 2009.....	15
Figure 3: SI Urban Population Trends. <i>Source: SIG National Census 2009</i> .....	16

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Urban Population of Pacific Island Countries .....	11
Table 2: Distribution of Urban Population in Solomon Islands.....	14
Table 3: Key Policy Themes and Policy Goals/Objectives .....	42

## LIST OF PLATES

Plate 1: Urban settlement showing mix construction, permanent and temporary. <i>Source: Consultant collection</i> .....	32
Plate 2: Roads are poor, most people walk. <i>Source: Photo by consultant</i> .....	34
Plate 3: PS – Lands signing of UN-Habitat MOA .....	38

# ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACP	African, Caribbean, and Pacific
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AusAid	Australian Aid
CDC	Community Development Committee
CLGF	Commonwealth Local Government Forum
DCC	Democratic Coalition for Change
DFAT	(Australian) Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
FTE	Fixed Term Estate
GPA	Guadalcanal Provincial Authority
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HCC	Honiara City Council
HEDSUP	Honiara Economic Development Support Programme
HFL	Home Finance Limited
HIES	Household Income and Expenditure Survey
IDA	International Development Association
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
LPS	Local Planning Scheme
LTA	Lands and Titles Act
MDPAC	Ministry of Development Planning and Aid Coordination
MECCDMM	Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management & Meteorology
MFAT	(New Zealand) Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
MID	Ministry of Infrastructure Development
MLHS	Ministry of Lands, Housing and Survey
MTDP	Medium Term Development Plan
NDS	National Development Strategy
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NIIP	National Infrastructure Investment Programme
NIP	(EU) National Indicative Programme
NTF	National Transport Fund
NTP	National Transport Plan
NUP	National Urbanization Policy
PE	Perpetual Estate
PICs	Pacific Island Countries

PPD	Physical Planning Division
PRIF	Pacific Region Infrastructure Facility
PSUP	Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme
RAMSI	Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands
REP	Rapid Employment Project
RWASH	Rural Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene
SIEA	Solomon Islands Electricity Authority
SIG	Solomon Islands Government
SIISLAP Program	Solomon Islands Institutional Strengthening Lands Administration
SIWA	Solomon Islands Water Authority
SP	Solomon Power
SPC	Secretariat of the Pacific Community
SUMPS	Solomon Islands Urban Management Programme of Support
SW	Solomon Water
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
SWM	Solid Waste Management
TCPA	Town and Country Planning Act
TCPB	Town and Country Planning Board
TSDP	Transport Sector Development Programme
THA	Temporary Housing Area
TOL	Temporary Occupation License
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Education Fund
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
WASH	Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene
WB	World Bank



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF OVERALL VISION, MISSION AND OBJECTIVES

## OVERALL POLICY GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Sustainable and inclusive development of urban areas.
- Respect the rights of all citizens.
- Essential infrastructure, Social and Community services are accessible.
- Affordable and livable urban centres.
- Environmentally sustainable and resilient towns and cities
- A Policy that encompasses all people equally and inclusively.

## VISION

**To create Peaceful, Resilient, Sustainable, Inclusive and Prosperous urban areas.** This means clean, safe, harmonious, environmentally responsible, prosperous and resilient city, towns and provincial centres with a high quality of life.

## MISSION

**People focused urban centres** that are planned and managed in accordance with the principles of sustainable urban development to develop safe, environmentally responsible, inclusive, interconnected and resilient urban areas.

## GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS

### GOAL 1: PLANNED URBANIZATION ACROSS THE COUNTRY AND WITHIN TOWNS AND CITIES

#### Objectives of Goal 1

- a. Achieve more balanced urbanization
- b. Promote rural-urban linkages
- c. Establish and coordinate urban planning
- d. Improve urban land management and planning

#### Targets of Goal 1:

1. By 2030, more balanced urbanization is achieved with similar population growth rates of Honiara, towns and provincial centres throughout the country.
2. By 2030, a city network is in place between all urban centres and Honiara with better road and sea infrastructure and services and communications.



3. Support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning (SDG 11.a)
4. By 2030 provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities (SDG 11.7)
5. By 2030, more than 50% of the urban centres have an approved local planning scheme and a fully functioning Town and Country Planning Board (TCPB).

## **GOAL 2: ENHANCED URBAN PRODUCTIVITY**

### **Objectives of Goal 2:**

- 2.1 Reform economic policies and resource allocation
- 2.2 Improve urban economy and employment in both formal and informal sector, with particular emphasis on enhancing economic opportunities for women and youth.
- 2.3 Enhance Infrastructure and Urban Development Finance

### **Targets of Goal 2:**

- a) By 2035, all urban provincial capitals develop commercial zones for employment generation and increase economic activities as part of their city development programme.
- b) By 2030, substantial increase in the employment rate of youths and adults with relevant training and qualifications in both technical and vocational fields, ensuring equal access to men and women.

## **GOAL 3 SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE AND URBAN SERVICES:**

### **Objectives of Goal 3:**

- 3.1 Enhance national emphasis on urban infrastructure and services
- 3.2 Improve and maintain urban infrastructure and services with a particular emphasis on water, sanitation, drainage, transportation, and solid waste management.

### **Targets of Goal 3:**

- a) By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons (SDG 11.2).
- b) By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations (SDG 6.2)
- c) In the short to medium (next 10 years), Solomon Water is fully capacitated to maintain and supply water as well as waste water treatment to all urban areas as and when declared.

## **GOAL 4 IMPROVED URBAN HOUSING FOR ALL:**

### **Objectives of Goal 4:**

- 4.1 Provide affordable housing options that meet diverse needs, including those of women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons.
- 4.2 Improve quality of housing and settlements
- 4.3 Enhance tenure security

### **Targets of Goal 4:**

- a) By 2030, all urban dwellers have access to adequate, safe and affordable housing with all basic services connected (SDG 11.1)
- b) In the medium term (next 5 years), government formulates and approves a National Housing Policy and Strategy.
- c) By 2030, there is functioning housing delivery system to ensure an ease access to funding and make service land available to public, ensuring equal access to women and men as well as vulnerable groups.
- d) In the medium term (next 10 years), all TOL licenses would have been converted to FTEs.

## **GOAL 5: ENHANCED URBAN ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCE TO CLIMATE CHANGE AND OTHER NATURAL HAZARDS:**

### **Objectives of Goal 5:**

5.1 Give urban risks and adaptation a higher profile in national Climate Change policy

5.2 Formulate and implement urban environment and Climate Change Resilience Plans, with appropriate representation of vulnerable groups, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons.

#### **Targets of Goal 5:**

- a) By 2030, all urban centres are resilient, safe and secure for investment and the protection of lives and properties.
- b) By 2030, Environment and Climate Change are fully integrated into the Local Planning Schemes of selected urban centres, adequately reflecting the perspectives of women, youth and vulnerable groups.

### **GOAL 6 ENHANCED URBAN GOVERNANCE, CAPACITY AND SAFETY**

#### **Objectives of Goal 6:**

6.1 Improve governance and management of urbanization

6.2 Build institutional, human and financial capacities

6.3 Improve urban safety

#### **Targets of Goal 6:**

- a) By 2030 enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management, ensuring appropriate representation of women, youth and vulnerable groups in decision-making (SDG 11.3)
- b) Significantly reduce corruption and improve effective, accountable and transparent institutions in support of urban development at national, provincial and local levels (SDG 16.5 and 16.6)
- c) By 2020, build stronger global partnerships to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable demographic, economic and spatial data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location (SDG 17.18)
- d) Significantly reduce all forms of violence (SDG 16.1)

## **GOAL 7 PROMOTE BETTER URBAN PLANNING:**

### **Objectives of Goal 7:**

1. To facilitate a whole-of-governments approach to planning.
2. To integrate planning systems, infrastructure delivery and management
3. To introduce planning laws, or amend existing TCPA so that it allows for participation, and more flexible system of development control instead of rigid zoning.
4. To undertake to introduce capacity building through a Planning Course at SINU.

### **Targets of Goal 7:**

1. By 2030, there is assurance of livable urban centres better urban planning or local planning schemes through protection of land, promote economic growth, social inclusion, environmental sustainability through better spatial planning and land management, plan for urban growth while preventing and upgrading of informal settlements.

# PART ONE

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The National Urban Policy is the first to be developed in the country. It has been produced out of a process initiated by UN-Habitat and assisted by the Ministry of Lands Housing and Survey under the SUMPS programme. The DCC policy statement and the NDS call for the preparation of the national urban policy as a matter of priority for the government, therefore MLHS incorporated under the development budget a provision for such undertaking. This policy is therefore a totally driven and funded project by the Solomon Islands Government. Driving this initiative are the MLHS Permanent Secretary, Under-Secretary, and the Director of Physical Planning, with the technical advice from UN-Habitat and SPC. The two consultants who were initially engaged by UN-Habitat under the PSUP 1 project for Urban Profiling programme have been engaged in preparing this national urban policy report. The time-frame for this policy is 20 years, and it is aligned to two important documents frameworks : the NDS and the SDG time-frames.

### 1.1 ROLE OF NATIONAL URBAN POLICY

The main role of the National Urban Policy is to guide and give direction to the government in the process of urbanization so that there is a fair and effective distribution of resources and investment throughout the country and for the achievement of a balance, safe and prosperous urban areas. This is based on several grounds. Firstly, urbanization in Solomon Islands will continue to grow, which implies demands for both social and economic services will continue and even greater than at present. Secondly, the urban policy identifies the pattern and polarization or concentration of development in a few centres at the expense of others. Thirdly, public sector investment programme, plus all other programmes and plans intended to influence urban growth and prosperity are more likely to be consistent and coherent if formulated within a unified framework under the same national urban policy.

### 1.2 POLICY FORMULATION PROCESS

The process of formulating the policy frame-work consists of interviews, stakeholder-workshops, summits, and analysis of relevant reports and data. The actual process started four years ago when the initial programme for urbanization profiling under the first phase of PSUP started during 2011/12 period under the UN-Habitat. This saw the production of four urban profiles, and development of the SUMPS programme. This initial inputs was followed by the formulation of a series of further studies and analysis. This includes : the formulation of a report on the Assessment of Policies and Legislative

framework, Climate change vulnerability assessment, and the Honiara Urban Resilience & Climate Adaptation Planning workshop in early 2016. The Solomon Islands National Urban Conference held in June 2016 helped to shape the thrust of this policy document. This was followed by a validation workshop in November 2016 where various stakeholders came together and discussed various components of PSUP2 programme. The final process will go through the formal submission to Cabinet by way of a Cabinet Memorandum.

### **1.3 POLICY IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND EVALUATION STRATEGY**

The MLHS should draw up an annual allocation in the budget each year. Following the adoption of this national policy, an implementation plan framework will be prepared by MLHS in conjunction with PMO Policy evaluation unit, and the MDPAC. The PPD of the MLHS in consultation with Planning Boards in each province and the HCC should devise an urban performance checklist in line with the national urban development policy framework outcomes. Each year, the MLHS together with the Policy Evaluation Unit of PMO should carry out performance review to identify the progress and issues faced by each of the stakeholder regarding implementation of their mandate role in relation to urban programs and policies. The process is vital not only because it will enable respective key players to redesign and redirect resources to enhance the desired outcomes, but also promotes accountability and partnership approach to urban planning and management.

### **1.4 NATIONAL URBAN POLICY DEFINED.**

**Definition:** By way of introduction and before getting into the detail substance of National Urban Policy, an explanation is given in order to justify the extensive use of the expressions “National Urbanization Strategy” or “National Urban Policies.” National Urban Policy is “a coherent set of decisions derived through a deliberate government-led process of coordinating and rallying various actors for a common vision and goal that will promote more transformative, productive, inclusive and resilient urban development for the long term” (UN-Habitat, 2015)

Many other terms have been used by various professions (urban planners, political scientists, sociologists, geographers, or economists), such as “population distribution policy,” “national urban growth strategy,” “regional policy,” or “community development policy.” In Solomon Islands context, some of these expressions are limiting because they seem to exclude other considerations which should be the legitimate concerns of national planners. Also, the use of the word “urban” often leads to opposing it to the term “rural.” It is easy to move from there to the unwarranted and counter-productive assumption that an “urban” policy must be “anti-rural” or at least damaging to rural interests; it would be a very unfortunate point of departure for this national

policy formulation because rural and urban areas of Solomon Islands can and do interact very positively. The five principles guiding a NUP are: compact, integrated, connected, socially inclusive, resilient to climate change, human right based (UN-Habitat, 2015).

In formulating the Solomon Islands National Urban Policy and Strategy, the choice of phrase most apt to receive wide acceptance and mobilize public opinion, given the country's particular circumstances of rural-urban dichotomy matters a lot. Therefore, as much as possible the use of words and phrases related to urbanization although new, will have to be accepted as a matter of principle, and explained widely.

In principle, an acceptable definition of an "urban" area is required from the beginning. A useful definition is as follows:

*a place based characteristic that incorporates elements of population density, social and economic organization, and the transformation of the natural environment into a built environment ... a spatial concentration of people whose lives are organized around non-agricultural activities.*<sup>3</sup>

Urbanization is about an increasing share of a countries' national population living in urban settlements. The rate of urbanization is the annual growth rate of this urban share.

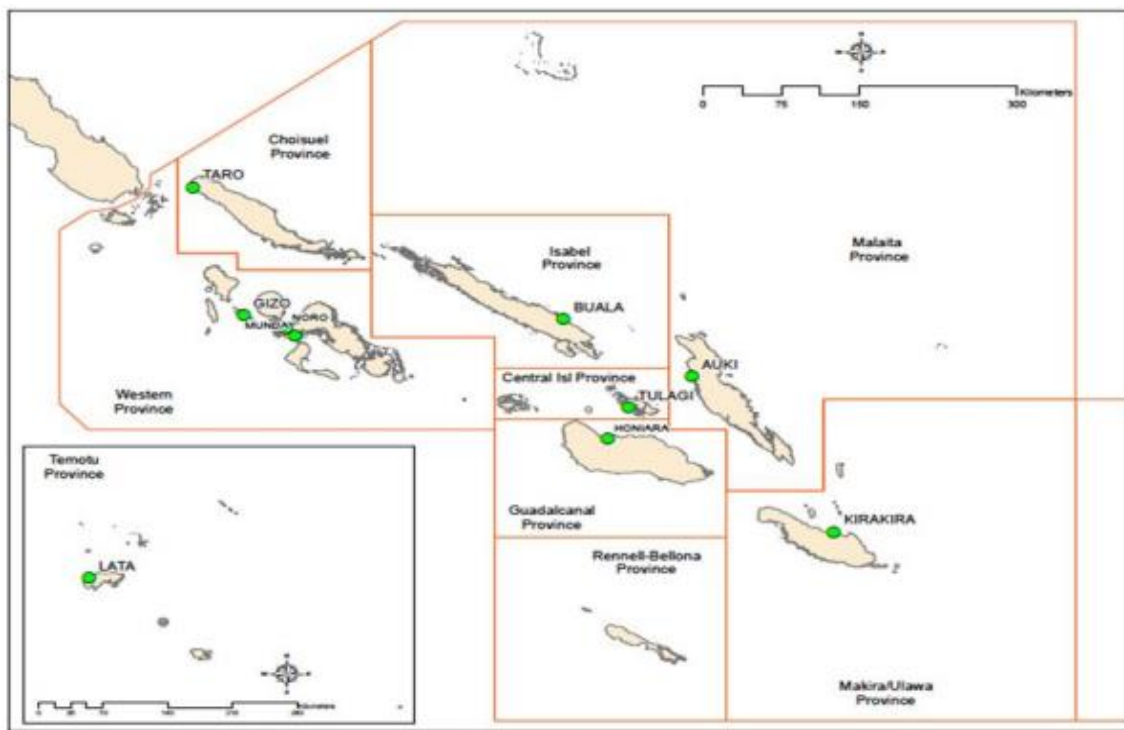
In accordance with the Solomon Islands National Statistics office (SINSO) a distinction between urban and rural areas<sup>4</sup> is made as follows: ".....Urban areas include Honiara Town Council and all provincial administrative centres except Rennell-Belona. A number of enumeration areas surrounding Honiara are classified as urban on the basis of their proximity and access to the town, population density, permanency of settlements and variety of economic activities. All other areas in the country are considered to be rural."

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<sup>3</sup>Weeks, J., 2010, Defining urban areas, in Rashed, T., & Jurgens, C. (eds), Remote Sensing of urban and Suburban Areas, page 34.

<sup>4</sup>Household income and Expenditure Survey – National analytical report v1 Oct 2015.





**Figure 1: Urban Centres in Solomon Islands.** Source: SIG - National population and housing Census, 2009

## 1.5 RATIONALE FOR THE NATIONAL URBAN POLICY

A National Urban Policy is especially important for Solomon Islands because the location of any new economic activity and the movement of population affect the efficiency of the national economy and the stability of the political systems. The country operates on a three-level government system: National government, provincial government, and community government at village level, and all expect services and equity in share of the national wealth. Also, it can ensure a better horizontal and vertical coordination between all levels of governance.

The government has an inevitable influence through its policies, the location of Public Sector Investment Programme especially the infrastructure investment, and the public enterprises or state owned enterprises that it controls. Because government is an important and sometimes even a dominant partner in the growth process, it must clarify its objectives and strategies. This does not mean that the government is relieved from all the economic constraints experienced by the private sector, but rather that a well-thought-out strategy is a requirement for more rapid progress. Currently, the National Spatial Development is marked by a higher degree of economic dualism and inequality among provinces and urban areas. The rapid rate of growth of the urban population leads to the concentration of large groups of low-income households in a few large towns and urban areas (as in the case of Honiara, Gizo, Noro and Auki). This in turn complicates

the task of a balanced development. Effective settlement strategies must be formulated and implemented in order to alleviate this problem.

In other words, the spatial distribution of population and economic activities has important implications for the efficiency of the economies as well as for the distribution of income and welfare and eventually for social stability of the country. Polarization of development in a few areas due to an established market force therefore, cannot be accepted as the norm any more. There must be equity in national development. At present Honiara and its surroundings commands 74% of the urban population, and growing very fast, which means when one talks about urbanization, it invariably refers to situation in Honiara.

The National Government is required by communities on numerous occasions to translate the National Development Strategy into action plans as well as ensuring that it is appropriate and inclusive, which means that to a certain extent possible, be translated spatially or distributed fairly throughout the provinces. This is where the concept of regional planning with spatial dimension through a National Urban Policy plays a vital role.

The NUP is a central policy to address the main issues and challenges related to urbanization, and by promoting a comprehensive and holistic approach on urban development, it can use spatial development as entry door for the provision of effective and sustainable basic services and infrastructures, climate resilient housing, etc.

## **1.6 DETERMINANTS AND DRIVERS OF URBANIZATION IN SOLOMON ISLANDS**

The main determinants of urbanization and population concentration in the country are:

- the rate of development and the structure of the rural sector (which is heavily influenced by the size distribution of landholdings); at present, about 90% of land surface are tribal owned, except for provincial capitals and urban areas and a few agriculture or forest plantations (about 10%).
- the growth rate and sectoral pattern of socio-political decision by government on administration, commercial and industrialization, and land availability; as in the case of Noro being an industrial centre due to the establishment of a fish cannery;
- the location decisions as influenced by government's decentralization policy affecting the distribution of government service activities among urban areas; as in the case of all provincial capitals or administrative centres,
- the availability of land (and tenure structure) and infrastructure as well as condition of the transport and communication networks; as in the case of the Guadalcanal plains, and

- the attractiveness of high density population concentration and size of population that creates economy of scale and efficiency in production and makes urban area attractive for both social and economic development (as in the case of Honiara – the national capital city).

Population redistribution and migration (hence, the patterns of urbanization) are the result of the creation of new employment opportunities, perception of better living standards and social interaction. Population concentration attracts commercial activities and small business set-up. This has been witnessed in the growth of urban areas such as Noro, and the Guadalcanal plains. Other potential areas such as Munda-Noro corridors, Bina Harbor, and the Lunga Henderson-Guadalcanal plains are most likely to follow the same pattern of urbanization. The formulation of an appropriate national urban policy therefore, is justified and timely to lead development in a more rational and balanced approach.

National urban policies will ensure that national economic and social policies as presented in the National Development Strategy document do not accentuate sharply and unnecessarily the concentration of population and economic activities only in large urban areas such as Honiara and its environs.

## **1.7 CONTRIBUTION OF URBANIZATION TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

This policy recognizes that urbanization contributes significantly to the improvement of the standard of living of many people in the Solomon Islands as it brings in greater wealth and socio-economic opportunities for the national population. Urbanization creates a hub of economic benefits (income), improved health and educational facilities as well as better transportation and communication links. People create or are better connected to each other economically, socially and culturally in all provincial centres especially Auki, Gizo and Honiara than in any other rural areas or villages. It also enhances access to information, good sporting facilities, better shopping centres and facilities with a range of goods, and promotes political unity, peace and oneness in a diverse cultural setting. Urbanization also provides great opportunities for the people to apply their creativeness, innovativeness and inventiveness. The recent Festival of Pacific Arts and the establishment of the Cultural Centre in Honiara manifest to that.

The other benefit of urbanization is that it enable local women to advance in education and to participate actively in nation building. The establishment of the SI National University in Honiara is a fine example of that development direction. Urbanization, if managed effectively can provide a window of opportunities to get away from poverty rather than a process that supports its creation. As part of the urban development

process, cities and towns can also play a key role in protecting the environment, reducing the vulnerability to climate change and mitigating the GHG emissions.

The development of towns also creates economic opportunities and linkages for urban landowners, with customary landowning groups, to actively participate in the planning and development of their land resources, hence reaping the financial gains of urbanization. This has been the case in Honiara as it grows outwards along the fringes, at the back of Honiara and along the main road travelling east and west of Honiara. Despite the sensitive issue of non-extension of Honiara boundary into Guadalcanal area, demand for development of surrounding urban areas will continue as population grows. This is where the concept of “Greater Honiara” prevails, and it urgently needs proper management and coordination from the two authorities.

But, unless these opportunities are effectively managed through balanced growth development policies, it can lead to an increased socio-economic inequality, a rise in urban poverty, a deterioration of the environment, falling infrastructure and informal settlements poorly served with basic services. Urban planning therefore is of paramount importance to the creation of urban environment that is prosperous and sustainable. Maintaining a healthy, vibrant and sustainable towns is a real challenge for the country, but it must be taken seriously in order to contain the negative effects of urbanization. The policy objective of the government is to design key enabling urban strategies to promote multi-stakeholder partnership approaches to managing urban growth and to sustain its benefits.

## PART TWO

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### 2.0 BACKGROUND

#### 2.1 HISTORY OF URBANIZATION IN SOLOMON ISLANDS

In response to the rapid growth of urbanization, the government used counter development strategies such as keeping urban facilities at a minimal level for urban migrants and workers were expected to return to their respective villages after a year-work contract. Urban centres then were regarded as government stations, specifically for civil servants and a few commercial entities (mostly Chinese traders). Wages was very low to discourage urban workers from bringing families to Honiara. In spite of these measures and the common view of Honiara being a ‘white-men’s town, locals continued to show an interest in the new national capital-at least to visit once if not stay for several months, or even to stay permanently (Chapman, 1992:89).

Rural-urban migration continued to increase after the country gained political independence from the British in July 7<sup>th</sup> 1978. The right to freedom of movement is provided for in Chapter 2 (14) of the Constitution of Solomon Islands amongst other rights, thus ending all forms of restrictions that were applied previously to stop rural-urban migration.

During the 1980s and until recently, the Solomon Islands Government continues to promote counter-urbanization strategies by pursuing a rural development strategy through rural enhancement policies, decentralization (e.g. through the formation of Provincial Government system) of certain government services such as health and education. This policy was meant to improve the standard of living by spreading basic services and encourage equitable share of socio-economic benefits and political development, and to keep rural dwellers interested in remaining within rural communities. In spite of this political and management approach, rural areas have not progressed or seen development to any significant level to discourage rural-urban migration. In fact, the improvement of transport (by land, sea and air) have accelerated population mobility between rural and urban areas, thus facilitate further urban growth.

The history of Solomon Islands urbanization starts immediately after the second World War (around early 1950s) when the national capital was relocated from Tulagi on Ngella Island to Honiara on Guadalcanal to utilize the infrastructure left after the Second World War. This was followed by the subsequent establishment of other smaller urban areas

such as Gizo, Kirakira and Auki (Bennett, 1987) which were basically district centres for purpose of governance. In 1970 the urban population<sup>5</sup> represented only Honiara (11,191), Gizo (1,500) and Auki (1,622) and was accounted for 14,313 or 8.9% of the national population (160,183).

By 1976, the number of urban areas enumerated in the national population census has risen to 7, giving rise to a rapid increase in urban population (Table 1). The urban population then was 24,359 or 12.4% of the national population of 196,8236.

A decade later in 1986 urban population rose to 44,781 or 15.7% of the national population of 285,176. The rapid increase of urban population especially in the national capital Honiara and its surrounding has put greater pressure on the demand for private and public services, such as water, energy, clinics, schools, recreational facilities, housing and garbage collection. Another critical issue that drew the attention of government officials was the sudden growth of informal settlements at the outskirts of urban centres especially in Honiara (Mamaloni, 1988:50).

By 1999 the national urban population has reached 63,732, which was 15.6% of the total national population (409,042). While there was a high net flow of people moving into Honiara and Noro, the opposite took place in Auki, Tulagi, Lata, Kirakira and Buala as noted in the 1999 census (Table 1). This has not only attributed to the rapid socio-economic growth experienced in Honiara and the newly established Noro town, but it could also be due to the social unrest period (1998-2003) that sent migrants back to Honiara as well as Gizo/Noro seeking refuge.. Another important factor was that there had been little or no major economic growth taken place in other smaller provincial towns from 1987 to 1998, to counteract the pull exerted by the attraction of Honiara as the primate city.

The change of perception towards towns and urban areas has resulted in an urban population of 102,030 or 19.8% of the national population of 515,870 in 2009. This sudden surge of urban population, especially Honiara continues to put enormous pressure on the national government, HCC and service providers in trying to cope with the demands for better services especially education, health, water, energy, housing, transportation, recreational and other public facilities such as solid and liquid waste management.

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<sup>5</sup>The definition of what comprises an urban population differs from one country to another as well as from time to time. Urban population include settlements that has at least 1,000 people living in an area in which the vast majority of the residents would be non-agriculturalists and have central functions over a wide area of settlements (BSIP, 1970:19).

There has been a strong affinity to settle in towns by majority of rural dwellers in particular Honiara after 2003 due to high circular migration between Guadalcanal, Honiara, and the provincial centres. Most of urban centres, especially Honiara and the immediate outskirts proved to be the attraction for settlers socio-economic activities and livelihood. There has been a strong sense of confidence, security, and protection for those internally displaced following RAMSI intervention. Honiara and immediate environs provide the safe-haven for everybody. This increase is also reflected in the fast growth of a number of towns in 2009 (except for Tulagi). However, the towns and urban centres were caught unprepared for the high volume of local migrants. This has been the single major issue for government and local authorities.

The city's average population density has increased from 2,222 in 1999 to 2,953 people per sq.km in 2009. As Honiara city becomes saturated, settlers started to encroach into private land, land that are more vulnerable to disasters, as well as onto customary lands beyond the city boundary. This phenomena has resulted in a sudden rise in the urban population of Tandai and Malango ward (Table 1) in Guadalcanal province. The over-spill effect creates internal problems to traditional landowners and the Guadalcanal Provincial Authority (GPA) in trying to manage urban growth and protect their land rights.

This national Policy recognizes the very fact that counter-urbanization policy did not work, and therefore, there is no guarantee that it will work now. All developing countries including Solomon Islands are urbanizing, thus the policy intension is to encourage and invest in provincial capitals as primary growth centres, as well as other smaller urban centres (as secondary growth centres, or constituency growth centres) to counteract the polarization of Honiara and its immediate environs

## **2.2 THE STATUS OF URBANIZATION IN SOLOMON ISLANDS**

### **2.2.1 URBANIZATION TREND**

#### ***At Regional Level:***

Urbanization is a global phenomenon and one that is going to be dominant in the future of the world cities and towns. In 2008 about half of the total global population of 6.7 billion people lived in urban areas with more than 30% of the urban dwellers lived in 'slums'. The world's population is expected to rise to 9.2 billion by 2050 of which around two thirds will be living in urban areas (UN-Habitat, 2010). By 2020 it is estimated that more than half of the population of the developing world will live in urban areas-repeating the demographic trends experienced by developed countries in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (McAcovy, 2004). Urbanization therefore is not a new thing to the Pacific Island



Countries (PICs)- it has been around for the past 50 years and it is growing steadily. However, the scope of the urbanization varies from one country to another, but there are a range of issues that are common to all. Amongst others are the increasing in urban unemployment, poor urban services and poverty.

From the Pacific standard, the level of urbanization in the Solomon Islands is still low as it ranks second to PNG in the share of urban population as the least urbanized pacific islands (Table 2). However, this does not mean that Solomon Islands is wholly a rural society. The urban growth rate (4.7% in 2009) is the highest in the Pacific region, indicating that it is growing twice or three times faster than other PICs. In 2009, the urban population of the Solomon Islands was 102,030, which is more than the entire population of smaller PICs such as Cook Islands, Palau, Tuvalu and Marshall Islands put together. Moreover, the level of changes and the resultant problems are no less acute than those found in other PIC towns.

**Table 1: Urban Population of Pacific Island Countries**

Pacific Island Country (PIC)	Last census year	National population	Urban population % of the last census	Annual urban growth rate
Cook Islands	2011	14,974	74	-1.2
Fiji Islands	2007	837,271	51	1.5
FSM	2010	102,843	22	-2.2
Kiribati	2010	103,058	54	4.4
Marshall Islands	2011	53,158	74	1.4
Nauru	2011	10,084	100	1.8
Niue	2011	1,611	-	-
Palau	2005	19,907	77	3.2
PNG	2011	7,059,693	13	2.8
Samoa	2011	187,820	20	-0.3
Solomon Islands	2009	515,870	19.8	4.7
Tonga	2011	103,252	23	2.4
Tuvalu	2011	10,564	47	1.4
Vanuatu	2009	234,023	24	3.5

*Source: SPC 2013, cited in Alastair Wilkinson, 2014*

The overall picture is that more people in PICs are moving into urban areas. This is evidenced as a number of PICs (Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Palau, Nauru) have already reached a stage where more than half of the national population are living in cities and towns compared to rural villages. This demographic shift is a clear indication of the growing importance and the critical role towns play in the rapidly growing socio-political economy. In summary, the current urbanization trend is a global phenomenon, which is usually a strong correlation between urbanization and economic development. However, failure to provide employment, affordable housing, better urban services and meaningful strategies to respond to urbanization is to invite into the city and towns a web of urban crises and urban poverty. This is a justification for a NUP, as it will provide

the development frameworks to connect other key urban actors to work together to address the range of urban issues facing the country.

### ***At National Level***

Important to note that the increase in urban population in Solomon Islands is very much associated with the influx of non-productive rural-urban migration, natural and human-made disasters, natural growth and productive economic development migrants of new towns. Of these factors, rural-urban migration is the most dominant force in the urbanization process in the country. For example, between 1986 and 1999, 81% of 18,694 people were enumerated as in-migration (internal and external) to Honiara city while natural growth accounted for 19% (SIG, 1999:6). Between 1999 and 2009, 87,633 or 16.9 % of the national population (515,870) was accounted for as moving between the provinces, despite little economic growth. The strong role of rural-urban migration suggests that population growth of towns and urban centres, is population (social or culturally) driven, rather than economic development (employment) as the key driver, except for new towns such as Noro in the Western province.

The important point to note is that urbanization becomes a reality in Solomon Islands, and one that should be enthusiastically embraced. The important issue and the one to be enhanced, is to generate employment in the urban centres so that there are attractive to economic migrants resulting in high employment rate in the centres. As rural people (e.g. from rural Guadalcanal and other provinces) move to Honiara and or other urban areas it allows the realization of scale economies, achievement of greater thickness in markets and an increased specialization, resulting in national growth and modernization. This is an obvious transformation in the growth of urban areas especially in Honiara, Auki and Gizo. Urbanization that is driven by these positive economic benefits will need to be facilitated and enhanced.

To limit population concentration in large urban centers, especially Honiara, and its surrounding, decentralization policies must encourage the growth of the agricultural sector as well as the growth of primary and intermediate towns as market centres. These intermediate towns (or primary growth centres) are currently the Provincial Capitals namely- Auki, Gizo, Buala, Taro, Tulagi, Kirakira, Tinggoa, and Lata. Decentralization must be based on policies favorable to the linkages between agriculture, mining, forestry and fisheries, transportation and communication sectors of the surrounding rural areas because the stagnation of these services and natural resources sectors would only slow the growth of provincial capitals and rural centers and would speed concentration in large urban areas of Honiara and its immediate outskirts. In order to survive and sustain growth, all provincial towns must be multi-functional which means they have to operate as an administrative centre, industrial centre, social and recreational centre as well as a

commercial centre. Only then can they become a viable and growing entity and have the necessary economy of scale for sustain business and economic development. The linkage between urban centres and rural areas must be enhanced and maintained.

Provincial governments are being strengthened through appropriate sector policies strengthening programmes such as the MPGIS sanctioned PGSP programme, Rural Development Programme (under MDPAC), transport policies (under MID), industrial park or estates policies (under MCILI), and, more important perhaps, the systematic development of organizational and informational networks between these urban centres and Honiara (such as banking networks, commercial/industrial network, NGOs and non-state actors network and administrative/ governance network). Such strategies are a new way of thinking about provincial growth centers (or economic growth centres) than a precise methodology. Government will be in a better position to concentrate on a growth centre policy that moves to a position that shows a sign of strength as well as concentrate on various forms of investment that already show promise for growth.

The urban population of the Solomon Islands is relatively low by any world standard, but it is growing at a faster rate (far more than the national and the rural growth rate), outstripping the capacity of service providers and government to provide services and meet demands. By 2009 just below one fifth (102,030) of the national population (515,870) had been living and working in Honiara and twelve other urban areas , as shown in Table 1 and Figure 1.

Much of the social, economic, commercial, educational, political and infrastructure developments have been concentrated in Honiara for the past decades, hence it becomes the primate city in the country. It is equally important in this policy to be fully aware of the growth and expansion of Greater Honiara into Guadalcanal province. A recent report by MLHS<sup>6</sup> as a paper to the Land Board in 2015 presents a background to this policy and needs to be fully applauded and taken further for implementation. In making the clarification on the sudden rise in urban growth of adjacent land to Honiara, the 2009 National census clarifies that parts of adjacent Tandai Ward of Guadalcanal were classified as “urban” for the first time in the 1999 Census, and then parts of Malango Ward were added in the 2009 Census (Solomon Islands Government 2009 (2), p.22). By including these areas in the calculations, Greater Honiara’s population growth

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<sup>6</sup> Ministry of Lands, Survey and Housing, Honiara’s Future: An Investigation To Identify Land For Urban Expansion, Main Report, Version 1.1 For Land Board Meeting 25 June 2015

was 4.15% per annum between 1986 and 1999, and 4.29% per annum between 1999 and 2009, indicating that the city's population growth may not be slowing at all.<sup>7</sup>

**Table 2: Distribution of Urban Population in Solomon Islands**

Province	Town/urban	1976	1986	1999	2009
HCC	Honiara	14,942	30,413	49,107	64,609
Guadalcanal	Tandai	N/A	N/A	3,013	10,837
	Malango	N/A	N/A	N/A	4,636
Western	Gizo	2,707	3,710	2,960	3,547
	Noro	N/A	N/A	3,482	3,365
	Munda	N/A	N/A	N/A	1,315
	Nusa Roviana	N/A	N/A	N/A	1,528
Isabel	Buala	1,414	1,901	451	971
Central	Tulagi	808	1,622	1,333	1,251
Malaita	Auki	1,926	3,252	1,606	5,105
Makira	Kirakira	1,767	2,588	979	2,074
Temotu	Lata	795	1,295	361	1,982
Choiseul	Taro	N/A	N/A	440	810
<b>Total</b>		<b>24,359</b>	<b>44,781</b>	<b>63,732</b>	<b>102,030</b>

Source: SI National Census Report, 1986 and 2009

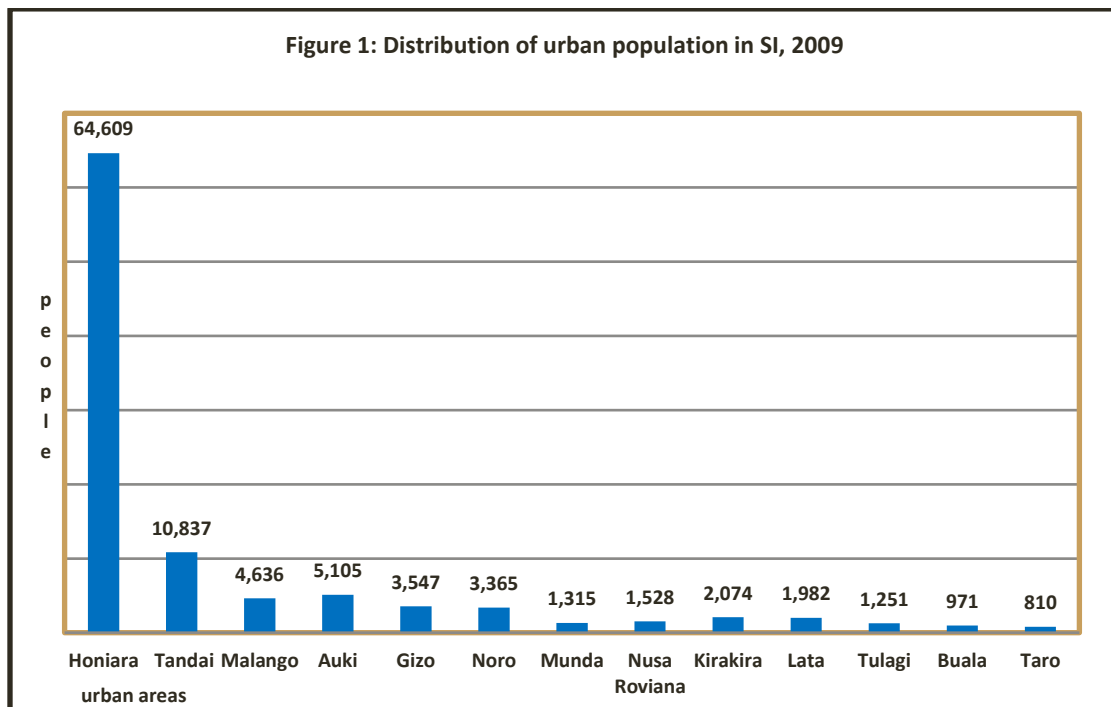
The MLHS report<sup>8</sup> highlighted that Honiara's population at the 2009 Census was recorded as 64,609, but the National Statistical Office adjusted this figure for the purpose of population projections by estimating the population mid-year and also adjusting for the suspected 8.3% under-enumeration (Solomon Islands Government 2009 (2), p.157). The resulting "Base Population" for Honiara in 2009 is 69,067. In adjacent Guadalcanal Province, 16.5% of the official 2009 population was classified as "urban", and extrapolating to the revised 2009 Base population of Guadalcanal (i.e.100,081) indicates that the 2009 Base urban population in Guadalcanal Province is about 16,513 people.

Recent HIES (2012/2013) revealed that Urban Households earn close to 3 times the average income of rural households, and two times the median and per capita income. However, Poverty rates in the other provinces (excluding Honiara) are in the 7-10 percent range, but Honiara's poverty rate of 15 percent is also higher than the national average. The national GDP growth rate in real term is 2.8%, dependency ratio is 83% rural and 56% urban and the national life expectancy is 71 years.

<sup>7</sup>These figures should be treated with caution. The classification of an area as "urban" for the first time in a Census does not mean the population of that area was zero at the time of the previous Census. It is not possible to provide definite figures on urban population growth, and these figures represent reasoned estimates.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid

The urban demographic trends experienced in the country shows that there is continuous movement of people towards towns (Figure 1), but polarize more into Honiara and vicinity compared to other towns as indicated in Figure 1. The figure below shows the original urban population in the 2009 census.



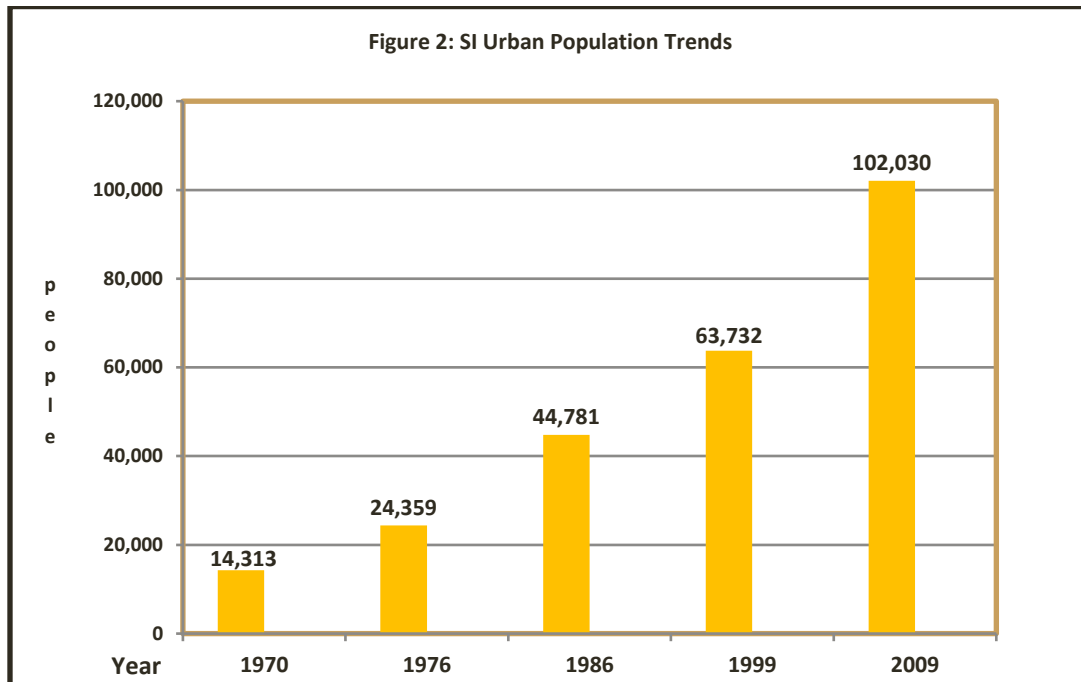
**Figure 2: Distribution of Urban population in SI, 2009**

Interestingly, the urban trend as shown in Figure 1 and 2, appears to attract little attention as it is being overshadowed by almost 80 percent of the population living in the rural areas in 2009. This is evidenced on the fact that the government continues to put more emphasis on rural development strategies, resulting in the lack of or little effort and plans to improve effective urban planning and management. The only exception is the HCC which has an approved Local Planning Scheme in 2015. As a result, key institutions involved in provision of housing; urban planning and management, urban services, infrastructure development and management are being neglect and poorly resourced or ill-equipped and not properly coordinated. This has led urban development to a web of urban misunderstanding, mismanagement and neglect.

The national average urban growth rate (4.7%) exceeds the national population growth rate of 2.3 indicating a shift of attitudes from rural towards towns, particularly to Honiara as clearly demonstrated in Figure 1. This is a clear manifestation of the growing importance of towns as the engine of economic growth, places of opportunities and future prosperity. Against the current urban growth of 4.7%, it is projected that by 2020, one quarter(25%) of the total national population will be living in urban areas. Which

means that more people will be urbanizing. If not careful, many may face hardship and poverty should urban centres not designed to be inclusive, affordable or effectively planned or managed to accommodate the rapidly increasing population.

At present, the national capital – Honiara, all provincial capital and areas declared and enumerated as urban in the national census are recognized as urban centres under this policy. The primary growth centres are Honiara, and the provincial capitals; whilst all others are secondary growth centres.



**Figure 3: SI Urban Population Trends.** *Source: SIG National Census 2009*

The main growth in urbanization takes place in Honiara and its immediate outskirts. Therefore, one can more or less define urbanization within the context of a greater Honiara phenomena. It is only recent (due to Tension and natural disasters) that the growth rate of other centres such as Gizo, Noro, Lata, Auki, Buala, and Taro experienced a sudden surge in their urban growth rate. This growth is not sustainable, and this policy projects that growth in these centres will be more or less stable, and remain constant below the national urban growth rate. The 2009 Census estimates that rural-urban migration will continue to result in a rapid urban population increase. The following extracts are important to note<sup>9</sup>:

<sup>9</sup>Ministry of Lands, Survey and Housing, Honiara's Future: An Investigation to Identify Land For Urban Expansion, Main Report, Version 1.1 For Land Board Meeting 25 June 2015

*Clearly... internal migration (rural-urban) will continue. In view of the currently relative small urban proportion of Solomon Islands, it can be expected to grow substantially in future, as has been the case in most other countries in the world.*

*The urban growth will not be limited to Honiara, but will most likely include the other provincial urban centres, as has happened in the recent past (1999-2009). Most importantly, the growth of what is described as "Honiara urban area" will continue, and this will affect the urban areas of Guadalcanal bordering Honiara probably more than Honiara itself. As a result rural to urban migration will cause Guadalcanal's population to increase very rapidly and its urban part in particular.*

*The most important outcome of the projections is the fact that Guadalcanal will eventually become the province with the largest population size if current estimated migration levels prevail into the future, and will have the highest number of people of all provinces just after the year 2020.*

*(Source: Solomon Islands Government 2009 (2), pp.175-176).*

The MLHS report<sup>10</sup> highlighted that the Census provides population projections based on “constant migration” (i.e. the realistic projection) and “zero migration” (for comparison purposes). The 2050 projected population of Honiara is 169,003 based on constant migration (32,653 more than the zero migration projection), and the 2050 projected population of Guadalcanal Province is 354,513 based on constant migration (124,503 more than the zero migration projection). The Census does not differentiate between the urban and rural population projections for Guadalcanal Province, but the urban population of Solomon Islands is projected to grow much faster than the rural population and it can therefore be expected that the urban population of Guadalcanal Province will increase to at least 187,000 by 2050 (an increase of more than 170,000 people). The combined urban population of Honiara and adjacent urban areas of Guadalcanal Province are therefore projected to increase from 85,580 to about 356,000 in 2050.

The rapid growth of Honiara-Guadalcanal Plains over the past inter-censal decades has many significant implications for both physical urban planning and regional economic planning. The high demand for land in Honiara as the national capital demonstrates a clear understanding of needs and priorities within a framework of an established long-term plan to guide its future development. The proposed local planning scheme (or a structure plan ) for Greater Honiara, and the approved Honiara Local Planning scheme constitute two important efforts towards establishing such a framework.

However, it is equally important to note that the problem embraces issues wider than physical planning alone. It is a specific objective of regional development to locate new economic activities outside of Honiara-G plains corridor wherever possible, and this has fundamental implication for physical planning. Furthermore, the growth of Burns Creek/Lungga/Henderson area with respect to absolute size and rate of growth has led to fragmented and uncoordinated administrative arrangements, whereby some parts of the urban-systems are part of municipal authorities and some parts are not. Because of this, it leads to confusion and serious discrepancies in the level and range of services provided to residents and constitutes an inadequate basis for the planning and

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<sup>10</sup>ibid



coordination of utilities. A strategic approach to the overall development of a Greater Honiara is now urgently needed. This will take the form of a Greater Honiara Local Planning Scheme. Honiara needs high density development and proper consolidation of activities and land-use. The starting point is the approved LPS. Further, the government's proposal to bring in strata-titling legislation is commendable in this regard.

## **2.3 URBAN GOVERNANCE**

The role of the Government is to provide the legal framework and policy to drive development and safeguard both public and private interests. The Town and Country Planning Act (TCPA)<sup>11</sup> empowers the local authorities to be responsible for shaping and managing urban centres and towns through provision local planning schemes, and maintenance of public services such as health, education, and waste management. However, because local authorities are agent of the national government and given the fact that they are poorly resourced and ill-equipped, the national government has a major role directly. Public sector investment in infrastructure services (housing, education, health, road, etc.) and law and order, economic policy settings; property ownership and revenue sharing from business tax are the main responsibilities of urban government.

However, government's intervention and involvement has not always been based on clear values, objectives and strategies. This has led to duplication of resources, work plans, and over dependency on the national government, resulting in key urban infrastructures such as roads, health, and housing declining. The national government has been constantly urged by the public and local authorities in the past and recently to increase its financial contribution and leadership role in town planning. The NUP will assist to certain extent the manner in which future resource allocation and actions will be programmed and utilized to produce target outcomes for urban areas and towns. As far as urbanization is concerned, the role of government is to provide a conducive environment to sustain peace, governance, and public services. All other development roles will need to be done in partnership with the private sector and NGOs.

This National Urban Policy maintains that Government will continue the process of decentralization. Therefore, appropriate management of all provincial capitals is very important to the success of a decentralization policy. Provincial capitals and urban centres are the entities and venues for facilitating activities and programmes related to decentralization. Devolution process also enhances provinces to take more responsibilities in the area of administration, health, education, town and country

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<sup>11</sup>All provincial authorities are empowered to set up Town and country planning boards to deal with planning application and approval.

planning and housing. Provincial capitals and urban centres therefore will continue to grow as more functions are devolved to provinces, as well as all other supporting social and economic activities. In the case of Honiara, policies to limit or stop completely population growth are not a substitute for policies that directly, address the issues of making land available and affordable, creating a resilient urban environment, or relieving congestion and pollution and an upgrading programme. Where towns and urban areas other than Honiara are not efficiently and effectively managed, their chances of attracting industries and deflecting rural-urban as well as town-to-town migrants away from the capital Honiara are very limited. Very important that all urban areas are properly planned in accordance with the requirements under the LTA, TCPA, and the Environment Act. This calls for institutional and capacity building as well as a new management outlook for urban management. The demands for proper acquisition, planning, allocation and management of urban land are crucial in this regard.

## **2.4 MULTI-STAKEHOLDERS PARTICIPATION**

The private sector being the “the engine of growth” is an influential player in shaping city and provincial towns through provision of services such as housing, transportation, food production, commercial and business activities, entertainment, and other social livelihood activities. The SOEs provide critical infrastructures such as electricity (Solomon Power), water (Solomon Water), transportation air transportation (Solair), housing (Home Finance Ltd.) and telecommunications (Solomon Telekom), which have always been the primary role of the government in the past. All other development not within the mandate of the official service providers are done and rightly so, by private individuals. All these service providers are urban based. The decisions that governments, businesses and individuals make have a significant impact on city and towns. This is why policy and legislation to govern urban development is important. The interaction of individuals, workers with the businesses and government continues to shape how city and towns grow as well as how they are planned and managed. However, in most cases, such interactions have not been well coordinated and not based on sound principles and objectives to guide urban growth. Therefore, the NUP puts emphasis on a continuing partnership between the community, service providers, business sector, and government in a well-coordinated development planning framework. This is an important focal areas as it provides that development pathways in urbanization.

## PART THREE

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### **3.0 POLICY ACTION AT NATIONAL LEVEL**

The policy issues as presented here are interlinked and cross-sectoral. Policies and programmes to address any one of the issues would undoubtedly affect the others. For example, urban land policies would have an impact on productivity, population movement, the environment and poverty. To emphasize these interlink ages, the strategy outlined are cross-sectoral in nature and are to be approached at national level. They are neither comprehensive nor applicable in their entirety to the country. However, they present an integrated approach to urbanization. Solomon Islands Government will need to adapt to this approach to each particular situation and circumstances it is facing.

#### **3.1 POLICY ACTION 1: GOVERNMENT FORMULATES AND IMPLEMENTS URBANIZATION POLICIES AND STRATEGIES.**

##### **3.1.1 POLICY GOAL: URBANIZATION ISSUES ARE ADDRESSED AS PRIORITY FOR IMPLEMENTATION BY GOVERNMENTS.**

Following the formulation of this National Urban Policy, there will be a need to take a series of actions which are required to implement the policy<sup>12</sup>. To achieve the objectives of the NUP, a comprehensive and sustained nation-wide as well as province-wide initiative is required. Hence, the NUP must promote better coordination mechanisms from the national to provincial levels, in order to ensure consistency in the implementation phase. Such an initiative can only succeed at both levels on the basis of a firm commitment by both governments, in collaboration with other development partners. The emphasis would be to address urban issues in a dynamic manner through a series of multi-sectoral programmes<sup>13</sup>, which would be part of an annual work plan. Cabinet will need to sanction this national urban policy in the first instance and give direction.

The recently (2013/2014) formed Solomon Islands Urban Management Programme of Support (SUMPS) needs to be reviewed and activated. Central to SUMPS mandate is the formulation and implementation of the national strategies and action plans on urbanization, local planning schemes, subdivision planning, site and service schemes,

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<sup>12</sup>Currently, the MLHS undertook reviews of policy and legislations, including amendments to the LTA, TCPA, Survey Act, Valuation Act, Strata Titling, as well as policy development such as the national housing policy, land allocation policy, Honiara climate change adaptation plan, and the Honiara settlement upgrading strategy.

<sup>13</sup> Multi-sectoral programmes include the National Development Strategy(NDS), the Solomon Islands Urban Management Programme Support (SUMPS) and the National Infrastructure Investment programme(NIIP)

citywide settlement upgrading programmes; regularization strategy, urban infrastructure development and management, and climate change and disaster mitigation action plans. Under SUMPS the following actions have been identified for implementation:

1. Profiling and national prioritization of action: including profiles of urban areas, preparation of feasibility studies on identified priority projects, development of a national urbanization policy (*underway*), and a national housing policy expected to respond to low-cost/affordable housing needs (*underway*).
2. Institutionalizing ward development and corporate development planning process: including ward profiling and capacity building for HCC.
3. Developing Honiara's Local Planning Scheme (LPS) (*2015 LPS now gazetted*).
4. Planning for climate change (*Honiara vulnerability assessment completed and Urban Resilience and Climate Adaption Plan in draft*).
5. Upgrading of selected informal settlement areas (*ongoing and new subdivision plans for informal settlement zones 19–22 completed*).
6. Ongoing capacity building (including establishment of Diploma in Physical Planning course at the Solomon Islands National University) and communication and knowledge management. (*ongoing*)

In formulating urbanization strategies, policies and action plans, Governments must be fully aware that urban centres and provincial towns do not function in isolation and that they have economic, social, physical and cultural linkages with rural areas surrounding them and other urban centres. Consequently the concept of urban systems should be emphasized in urbanization strategies and policies. These plans and strategies must also be flexible and adaptable to the local realities and priorities.

To achieve that, there must be a better horizontal coordination at the national level (inter-departments / agencies that play key role in the urban development and might have over-lapping responsibilities). This can be done with the organization of regular meetings, the use of digital technologies, enhanced channels of communication, a better knowledge sharing, etc. The NUP should propose more concrete actions.

## **3.2 POLICY ACTION 2: REFORM ECONOMIC POLICIES AND RESOURCE ALLOCATIONS.**

### **3.2.1 POLICY GOAL: GOVERNMENT RECOGNIZES AND FACILITATES THE GROWTH OF BOTH FORMAL AND INFORMAL ECONOMY AND ALLOCATE RESOURCES TO MANAGE AND CONTROL DEVELOPMENT.**

Economic activities in urban areas contribute over 50 percent of the national gross domestic product (GDP). Therefore, the effectiveness and efficiency of urban markets and investments need to be improved. Inefficient markets and resource allocations are not only detrimental to urban productivity and the urban environment but also contribute to entrenching urban poverty. It is important to balance reliance on market mechanisms with strategic government interventions in order to ensure that both equity and efficiency objectives are achieved. This is specifically applicable to Honiara as the main city. Informal economy is thriving in some urban centres, but authorities are turning a blind eye to it. Government will need to facilitate the growth of informal sector in a controlled way by setting land aside for market vendors, and ensuring hygiene and safety are maintained with minimal control.

### **3.3 POLICY ACTION 3: INVEST IN HUMAN CAPITAL**

#### **3.3.1 POLICY GOAL: CITY COUNCILS AND PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS HAVE PROPERLY TRAINED AND EXPERIENCED MANPOWER.**

The goal of urban development and management policies, strategies and plans of action should be to improve the quality of life of urban citizens. All measures that contribute to improving the environment and sustainability as well as the efficiency of towns and urban centres contribute towards this goal. Government also needs to make interventions specifically focusing on developing human and community capital. This not only involves investing in education, primary health care and the provision of safety nets to mitigate the impacts of economic development, it also means giving the people greater control over governance, especially at the local and city-level.

Capacity constraints appear endemic in the SI urban sector, but do not appear to have been systematically mapped for the sector<sup>14</sup>. Capacity development as a response to such constraints has both individual capacity enhancement (education and training, on the job learning) elements, as well as institutional and organizational change elements (how to more efficiently use skilled cadres organizationally (within organizations) and institutionally (across organizations)).

Two education and training efforts are noteworthy: a) the development of an Urban Planning Diploma Course at SINU as proposed under SUMPS, and b) the REP/Pre-Employment Training which has been successful and deserves to be continued.

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<sup>14</sup>ADB – Solomon Islands country partnership strategy: Urban Sector Assessment – Issue paper for stakeholders consultation, Honiara 13 Oct 2015

### **3.4 POLICY ACTION 4: IMPROVE URBAN INFORMATION AND RESEARCH**

#### **3.4.1 POLICY GOAL: AUTHORITIES ARE GIVEN PROPER ADVICE AND PLANNING DECISION BASED ON ADEQUATE AND PROPERLY RESEARCHED INFORMATION.**

The effective formulation and implementation of urban strategies, policies and plans are highly dependent on accurate, comprehensive and timely information. As most urban issues are inter-disciplinary, urban planners and policy makers require access to sectoral data, including economic, demographic, land resources, poverty, social, geographic, environmental, climate change, and natural resources data. Furthermore, before policies to address several urban issues are formulated, further research is required so that there will be a better understanding of the multi-dimensional nature of the urbanization issues before policy and strategies are formulated and adopted. This is the area where academic or research institutions such as SINU, USP, etc. play an important role. The role played by UN-Habitat and other UN Agencies as well as local and international NGOs are relevant in this regard.

## PART FOUR

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### 4.0 POLICY ACTION AT CITY OR LOCAL LEVEL

#### 4.1 POLICY ACTION 1: IMPROVE URBAN ECONOMY AND EMPLOYMENT IN BOTH FORMAL AND INFORMAL SECTOR

##### 4.1.1 POLICY GOAL: URBAN AREAS ARE ECONOMICALLY VIBRANT AND PROSPEROUS. UPGRADE TOWNS TO SUPPORT EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION, ECONOMIC GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

The efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery in towns makes urban centres more attractive to economic development. Towns are the engines for economic growth, as they provide greater social and economic opportunities for the people than the rural areas. Local authorities receive internal revenue from formal economic activities in towns, but these funds are insufficient to provide capital works and maintain quality services to urban residents. Rapid urban population growth outstrips job creation through the formal sector in the urban centres, especially in Honiara, leading to unemployment and increasing urban poverty<sup>15</sup>. Employment creation is most dominant in the urban informal sector, providing job opportunities for people without a formal education and linking the rural and urban economies through food production, remittances and circular migration.

The informal sector needs to be supported as a matter of policy as an important source of livelihood in urban areas<sup>16</sup>. The WB/AusAid Rapid Employment Project (REP) primarily supports labour-intensive public works (including for roads in Temporary Housing Areas (THAs – informal settlements) in Honiara, with MID and HCC as the implementing agencies, and with cash transfers for labour as the main operational mechanism. The REP expires by end-2016. A proposal for a second phase of REP post 2016 - a community-driven, urban services and infrastructure program – is on the drawing board with a focus on women and youth. Further, there is a need to explore the extension of REP to other urban centres.

Similar constraints apply to funding urban infrastructure development. Land-based finance is a potential source particularly relevant in urban areas, but its operational

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<sup>15</sup>UN-Habitat – Solomon Islands : National Urban Profile 2012

<sup>16</sup>ADB – Solomon Islands country partnership strategy: Urban Sector Assessment – Issue paper for stakeholders consultation, Honiara 13 Oct 2015



applicability depends on resolving land tenure issues, both on customary land and on state land.

## **4.2 POLICY ACTION 2: IMPROVE URBAN SECURITY**

### **4.2.1 POLICY GOAL: ALL URBAN CENTRES ARE SECURE AND SAFE IN TERMS OF LAW AND ORDER.**

All urban centres experienced more violence than rural areas. A high rate of youth unemployment and an increasing economic gap between the rich and the poor, coupled with low policing capacity and poor resources, has given rise to urban safety and security concerns in towns, especially in Honiara. This has wider repercussions for the local and national economy, for investment and for the social well-being of urban communities. Urban security and safety are integral to achieving sustainable urban development. There is a need for police and security services to operate at city and urban levels. This will depend very much on the National Service of the government, especially the introduction of community policing at community level.

## **4.3 POLICY ACTION 3: FORMULATE AND IMPLEMENT URBAN ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTABILITY PLAN.**

### **4.3.1 POLICY GOAL: ALL URBAN CENTRES HAVE ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTABILITY PLAN. THIS IS INCORPORATED INTO THE LPS FOR THE CENTRE.**

The urban environment has undergone significant transformation, with the rapid growth of urban centres and the development of a built environment. Some urban space is becoming hazardous and unliveable - most visible in housing developments on steep slopes, river banks, swampy areas and gullies. The authorities (local and national) need to ensure that towns are protected by incorporating environmental risk reduction and climate change considerations into urban planning<sup>17</sup>.

The National Infrastructure Investment Plan (NIIP, 2013) notes under Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management that the Solomon Islands are exposed to a wide range of geological, hydrological, and climatic hazards, including tropical cyclones, landslides, floods, and droughts. Most of the existing infrastructures are essential to the development of the Solomon Islands, such as roads, bridges, airstrips, and wharves, as well as economic activities such as cash crops, which are located on the coast and thus exposed to climate driven extremes such as intense storms, tropical cyclones, and flash floods. Moreover, as a mountainous country, increased floods are also a concern.

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<sup>17</sup>UN-Habitat – Solomon Islands : National Urban Profile 2012.

Capacity Development Support for Climate Change Vulnerability and Adaptation Assessment: Towards Implementing Climate Change Adaptation Actions for Honiara and Key Development Centres in the Solomon Islands. The intention is to build on the Honiara Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment to developing a Climate Resilient Local Planning Scheme and Investment Program.

#### **4.4 POLICY ACTION 4: INFRASTRUCTURE AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT FINANCE**

##### **4.4.1 POLICY GOAL: INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT AS WELL AS OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE ARE PROPERLY COORDINATED.**

The National Development Strategy (NDS) and National Infrastructure Investment Plan (NIIP) 2013 include in the national infrastructure investment priorities ongoing projects on Honiara water, non-revenue water, urban roads sealing. For a number of reasons, expenditure on operations and maintenance (O&M) of infrastructure assets in the Solomon Islands has been low for many years. This has led to a situation where a large proportion of the country's existing infrastructure has fallen into disrepair. Rehabilitation and ongoing maintenance are therefore a fundamental part of future infrastructure investment and of the NIIP. The NIIP envisaged that development partner grants will comprise around 40% of the funding required for the national infrastructure investment plan, slightly less than 45% would be private sector funding, and 13% concessional loan financing. It is expected that SIG development funds would cover around 4% of the total funding envelope. Notably, SIG development funds are mostly used for investments in smaller projects which fall below the SBD14 million threshold applied in the SI NIIP<sup>18</sup>.

Similar constraints apply to funding urban infrastructure development. Land-based finance is a potential source particularly relevant in urban areas, but its operational applicability depends on resolving land tenure issues, both on customary land and on state land.

#### **4.5 POLICY ACTION 5: MAINTAIN RURAL-URBAN LINKAGES**

##### **4.5.1 POLICY GOAL: THERE IS BETTER AND GREATER LINKAGE BETWEEN URBAN CENTRES AND RURAL AREAS, IN TERMS OF THE FLOW OF GOODS AND SERVICES, AND IMPROVED COMMUNICATIONS.**

All urban centres exist for the purpose of servicing the rural area. Throughout the provinces, all centres are regarded as collection and marketing centres for the rural population. It is the responsibility of government to develop major urban and rural

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<sup>18</sup>ADB – Solomon Islands country partnership strategy: Urban Sector Assessment – Issue paper for stakeholders consultation, Honiara 13 Oct 2015

infrastructures and services. A priority (as defined in the NDS 2011-2020 and the draft MTDP 2016-2020) is to develop the rural areas and improve market linkages to urban areas. Connecting rural areas with reliable services in urban areas is a challenge due to the geographical dispersion of settlements and the topography of the country. As a result, most communities have difficulty accessing quality health care, education, water and adequate transport. The government's franchise shipping connecting un-economical areas to Honiara and other urban centres will need to be supported, and developed into as sustainable shipping scheme. Whilst the national Government has helped to shape the country's urban centres, there is still weak investment, coordination and an increased dependency on the national Government, resulting in a decline in infrastructure in all provincial towns.

Building better roads to link rural and urban areas offers benefits to both through improved livelihoods. Many rural problems of poverty, food security and environmental issues in the Solomon Islands cannot be solved without strengthening urban-rural linkages. Unfortunately, rural and urban development and their institutions are often seen as two quite separate sets of issues by policy-makers, whereas, in fact, they are linked together through economic development, food production, remittances and circular migration.

## **4.6 POLICY ACTION 6: IMPROVE URBAN LAND MANAGEMENT AND PLANNING**

**4.6.1 POLICY GOAL: URBAN LAND ADMINISTRATION, MANAGEMENT AND PLANNING HAVE THE CAPACITY TO FULLY OPERATE AND SERVE THE NEEDS OF URBAN POPULATION IN AN ACCOUNTABLE AND TRANSPARENT MANNER. THE ADMINISTRATION WILL PROVIDE THE MEANS AND PROCESS FOR A HEALTHY LIVING ENVIRONMENT TO CATER FOR A RANGE OF NEEDS FOR THE URBAN POPULATION WHILST CONTRIBUTING TO BUILDING A RESILIENT SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT.**

Land plays a critical part in urban development. There is a shortage of developable land in urban centres, especially in Honiara city. The capacity to make land available for development is low and hindered by institutional and regulatory barriers. The limited supply of state land hinders the provision of adequate (serviced) and affordable housing. Formalizing security of land tenure in THAs/informal settlements is hampered by weak land administration, resulting in land rental arrears, and inconsistency in the implementation of plans such as the conversion of temporary occupation licenses (TOL) and illegal occupation of state land.

Most land that can be developed adjacent to urban centres is in customary land ownership. Customary land is only alienable through long and complex procedures<sup>19</sup>. The Government has no jurisdiction over customary land unless the landowners have entered into an agreement through a formal lease with the Government for use of the land. While the planning and administration of all land in Solomon Islands is the responsibility of the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Survey (MLHS). Enforcing responsibilities fall to the Honiara City Council (HCC) and provincial governments (for areas beyond Honiara city boundary the provincial government of the Guadalcanal Province), but the local and provincial governments have limited capacity to deal with land management issues.

Towns in Solomon Islands suffer from poor physical planning, as evidenced by the lack of a land use policy or plans and strategies to effectively address the growing planning issues in towns (transportation and road networks, failing infrastructure, an absence of green and recreational spaces and poor housing standards). Planning is done in a piecemeal manner with little or no connection to other sectorial plans or consultation with service providers and communities. The key challenges are to improve land administration and strengthen planning capacity, as well as develop inclusive planning frameworks between government agencies, service providers and communities (including customary and urban land owners).

The SIG's Twenty Year National Development Strategy 2016-2035 includes a review of the "Lands and Titles Act", and re-establishment of customary land recording and registration process. The review of LTA was completed in 2014, whilst the customary land recording is part of the customary land reform programme under the MLHS for 2016.

In the urban sector, with MLHS in the lead, SIG envisages to:

- a) Develop a National Urbanization Policy (NUP). (being done now)
- b) Secure fixed-term leases from original customary landowners with the intention to expand Honiara City.
- c) Return unused alienated land to original landowners. (policy being developed)
- d) Encourage landowners and land resource owners to participate in economic development activities and to become partners in development opportunities.
- e) Support urban and rural dwellers to build or buy appropriate and affordable housing to meet individual and family needs.
- f) Implement a climate change relocation/resettlement program.

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<sup>19</sup>UN-Habitat – Solomon Islands : National Urban Profile 2012.

The ongoing Solomon Islands Urban Management Programme of Support (SUMPS) has been initiated in 2013 to assist SIG/MLHS to address the above policy, institutional and regulatory challenges, with focus on support for ward profiling, local planning schemes development, THA upgrading and capacity development.

#### **4.7 POLICY OPTION 7: IMPROVE HONIARA URBAN PLANNING.**

**POLICY GOAL: ALL DEVELOPERS ADHERE TO THE REQUIREMENTS AS STIPULATED IN THE LPS. THE HONIARA CITY COUNCIL HAS THE FULL CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE LPS.**

Honiara is the National Capital of Solomon Islands. Therefore special attention in terms of planning and development is required. The Honiara Local Planning Scheme (LPS) 2015 was prepared in accordance with the Town and Country Planning Act to:

- a) assist in securing orderly development in the interests of the health, amenity, convenience and general welfare of the people of Solomon Islands;
- b) indicate the general principles upon which development in Honiara will be promoted and controlled;
- c) assist in the selection of, and define sites for particular purposes, whether by carrying out of development or otherwise;
- d) protect important features and areas; and
- e) safeguard paths for access and other infrastructure services, such as SIEA, Solomon Water (SW) and telecommunications infrastructure.
- f) This new Honiara LPS supersedes the previous Honiara LPS 2012. It is prepared in response to the numerous land use and urban planning issues identified in the Local Planning Study that was prepared in 2014. In summary, these issues include:
  - g) Rapid population growth around Honiara and inadequate infrastructure to meet the needs of the population;
  - h) Scarcity of land for housing developments;
  - i) Unaffordable private real estate market;
  - j) Informal settlements growing in an uncontrolled manner, sometimes built on road reserves, flood plains or steep slopes;
  - k) Areas that are subject to potential natural hazards and climate change are not identified and developments continue to occur in these vulnerable areas; and
  - l) Poor planning in the past leading to inappropriate use of land, building designs that are unsuitable for their purposes and infrastructure that is not integrated with developments.

In addition to addressing the existing land use issues, the LPS also takes a strategic approach to provide a framework for Honiara City to grow in the future. The city's Visions were developed to guide the land use framework. It is anticipated that future developments will conform to a more structured urban pattern to allow more orderly use of land and to minimize environmental and social impacts between different developments within the city.

The LPS was presented to the Honiara Town & Country Planning Board for consideration and endorsement, then presented to the Minister for Lands for final approval and gazettal as the primary document for guiding and controlling land use and developments in Honiara for the next 5 years. The LPS was gazetted in 2015.

The Town and Country Planning Regulations 2015 was gazetted in 2015, which makes subdivision of land a type of "development" for the first time in Solomon Islands (Solomon Islands Government 2015, pp.594-595). This means approval is required under the Town and Country Planning Act (TCPA) for any subdivision of land that is situated within any "control of development" area in Solomon Islands.

The Honiara Local Planning Scheme 2015, approved and gazetted in October 2015, requires at Clause 8.3 that developers are to fund infrastructure to service individual lots in new subdivisions, including roads, footpaths, water, electricity and telecommunications. Developers are thus, required to provide details of the necessary infrastructure with their applications for subdivision. The Local Planning Scheme (LPS) requires applicants to consult with utility agencies in the planning for provision of necessary infrastructure.

For all other urban centres, the same approach to planning and legal framework will be adopted.

## PART FIVE

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### 5.0 POLICY ACTIONS ON CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

#### 5.1 POLICY ACTION 1: IMPLEMENT HOUSING AND INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS STRATEGIES

##### 5.1.1 POLICY GOAL: PROVISION OF ACCESSIBLE, AFFORDABLE AND DECENT HOUSES TO MEET THE CURRENT AND FUTURE URBAN POPULATION WITH ADEQUATE SOCIAL AMENITIES.

Informal settlements provide affordable houses for about 35 per cent of the lower and middle income earners in Honiara and other urban centres. Informal settlers have continued to improve their homes (technically illegally) over the years, resulting in a mixture of housing quality in these informal settlements, despite the lack of tenure security over the land they are occupying. Housing shortage and high rental costs in the city have driven an increasing number of middle and high-income earners into informal settlements, exacerbating health and social issues, as these areas are often lacking in key urban services, such as water and sanitation. Housing and access to land is a critical component for the overall management and strategic planning for urban centres.

A Temporary Housing Areas Upgrading Program is under development (i.e. transforming TOLs into more permanent tenure instruments, and ensuring appropriate provision of area infrastructure). There is now a need to implement an informal settlement upgrading project in ward 8- Aekafo area. Experience gain from this settlement upgrading can be replicated in other informal settlements. The Honiara City-wide upgrading and prevention strategy will be adopted to guide the settlement upgrading in Honiara.

#### 5.2 POLICY ACTION 2: IMPROVE WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION

##### 5.2.1 POLICY GOAL: ALL URBAN CENTRES MUST BE PROVIDED WITH GOOD QUALITY WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION AS BASIC NEEDS.

Water supply and sanitation in Honiara and other urban centres are a priority in the NIIP. Several institutions interact to provide water resources in Honiara. The Ministry of Mines and Energy is responsible for water resources assessment and management. Solomon Water (SW) (formerly Solomon Island Water Authority (SIWA) until 2012) provides piped water to urban areas and reports to this Ministry; it does not provide any non-piped water in urban areas. The Rural Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Department in the Ministry of Health is responsible for water supply in rural areas. The Ministry of Provincial



Government is responsible for water supply in the provincial centres, except for the urban areas where SW operates.



**Plate 1: Urban settlement showing mix construction, permanent and temporary.** *Source: Consultant collection*

It is unclear who has jurisdiction in informal settlements in peri-urban areas. Agencies are reluctant to take on this responsibility because peri-urban settlements have distinct problems from rural areas. Peri-urban settlements have greater population density, heterogeneous populations (leading to ethnic tensions), and lack access to basic resources (for instance, residents in peri-urban areas cannot cut down trees and manage gardens because there is not enough space and it is unclear who owns the resources).

The lack of TOLs and Fixed Term Estates (FTEs) is an important contributing factor in the growth of informal settlements and the lack of services. To apply for water and other services, residents need proof of tenure. Unsettled title disputes also delay development. For example, a Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) project to rehabilitate SW piped water system in Honiara was delayed by five years due to land disputes.

SW provides sewerage services in a limited area in Honiara city, covering 5 - 10% of the city's population. However, there currently is no treatment facility, and the sewage collected is disposed untreated into the sea. In informal settlements a variety of individual household-based sanitation practice exist. There are no government targets for improving sanitation services in these settlements; like in the case of water supply, it is unclear where the institutional responsibility for such support lies, and this should be unambiguously be assigned by SIG. Until either a department or utility is authorized,



obligated and resourced to provide sanitation services to the city (and to informal settlements in particular), sanitation services will continue to be deficient. NGOs and markets can only meet a small amount of need in this space.

### **5.3 POLICY ACTION 3: IMPROVE URBAN ROADS AND TRANSPORTATION NETWORK.**

#### **5.3 POLICY GOAL: ROAD ACCESS AND ROAD NETWORK IN ALL URBAN AREAS ARE GOVERNMENT’S COMMITMENT AND PART OF A LOCAL PLAN FOR EACH CENTRE.**

The Ministry of Infrastructure Development (MID) is responsible for building roads. For each centre, with the assistance of all stakeholders, a land transportation plan must be designed and approved. The critical need at present is Honiara road network. MID has a proposal for a Honiara by-pass in its projects pipeline. HCC has outsourced maintenance of existing roads within its jurisdiction to private service providers. HCC does not monitor the sector to ensure quality service delivery. Lack of street lighting can contribute to criminal activity and endanger public safety. Urban transport is included in the national transport plan (2010). For new subdivision in all urban centres, there is a need to implement an integrated approach to development of road and road networks. To address the lack of public infrastructure in new subdivisions in Solomon Islands, the following is being suggested<sup>20</sup>:

- Town and Country Planning Boards adopt standard conditions to be attached to planning permits, requiring public infrastructure to be provided and public land handed over.
- Developer to liaise with SIWA and SIEA to utilize CSO to fund public infrastructure in new subdivisions.
- SIG consider the merits of establishing a new SOE for land development, or expanding the role of Solomon Islands Home Finance Ltd to include land as well as housing.

Roads in informal settlements are poor, and residents in these settlements do not have easy access to public transportation; most people walk to work.

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<sup>20</sup>MLHS New subdivision 2016 report



**Plate 2: Roads are poor, most people walk.** *Source: Photo by consultant*

## **5.4 POLICY ACTION 4: IMPROVE DRAINAGE, FLOOD CONTROLS AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT (SWM)**

### **5.4.1 POLICY GOAL: GOVERNMENT UNDERTAKES PROPER DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF DRAINAGE, FLOOD CONTROLS AND SOLID WASTE**

Urban centres in the country face difficulties in maintaining drainage, flood controls and solid waste. For Honiara, whilst minimal service is carried out by HCC, there is no drainage infrastructure or solid waste management in the informal settlements. This contributes to flooding, particularly in coastal settlements. HCC is in the process of clearing major city drains as part of flood prevention efforts.

Since only a small proportion of solid waste is collected, much of the Honiara urban area's waste is improperly disposed of through open burning and illegal dumping. This has serious public health and environmental consequences. HCC does not collect garbage regularly even in formal areas. HCC is installing skips at the edge of informal settlements for collection and may expand that effort as resources permit. There are no sanitary landfills in the Solomon Islands. The largest garbage dump-site in Honiara is called Ranadi Dump, which HCC is in the process of upgrading with JICA support.

A key weakness of the existing legislative framework is the overlapping roles of the Environmental Health Division in MHMS, and Environment and Conservation Division in MECDM, with both agencies assigned the responsibility for pollution control and regulation of illegal dumping of wastes to reduce risks to human health. In addition, implementation of existing solid waste regulations and strategies is limited<sup>21</sup>.

HCC's total operating budget (excluding staff salaries) for SWM is earmarked to pay the collection contractors. While HCC receives various grants from the national government, which are estimated to account for one-third of total revenue, apparently there is no funding specifically allocated for SWM. HCC does not collect payments directly from residential users for the solid waste collection or disposal services that it provides. All properties within Honiara City are subject to an annual property tax based on the value of land or property on it, which should then be used in part to support SWM. However, many property owners do not pay the tax, and collection rates are reportedly around 25%.

HCC also derives revenues for the provision of waste collection services to market vendors and commercial businesses. The amounts received are used to off-set the costs of providing residential collection services. The cost of providing solid waste collection services is included in the market fee charged to market vendors.

## **5.5 POLICY ACTION 5: CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT**

### **5.5.1 POLICY GOAL: THE OFFICES DEALING WITH URBAN DEVELOPMENT HAS SUFFICIENT QUALIFIED WORKFORCE.**

Capacity constraints appear endemic in the SI urban sector, but do not appear to have been systematically mapped for the sector. Capacity development as a response to such constraints has both individual capacity enhancement (education and training, on the job learning) elements, as well as institutional and organizational change elements (how to more efficiently use skilled cadres organizationally (within organizations) and institutionally (across organizations)).

Two education and training efforts are noteworthy: a) the development of an Urban Planning Diploma Course at SINU as proposed under SUMPS, and b) the REP/Pre-Employment Training which has been successful and deserves to be continued.

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<sup>21</sup>ADB – Solomon Islands country partnership strategy: Urban Sector Assessment – Issue paper for stakeholders consultation, Honiara 13 Oct 2015

## **5.6 POLICY ACTION6: MAINTAIN EXTERNAL SUPPORT (POTENTIAL) IN THE URBAN SECTOR**

### **POLICY GOAL: FUNDING IS AVAILABLE FOR NATIONAL URBANIZATION PROGRAMMES**

The Solomon Islands Urban Management Programme of Support (SUMPS) is supported by World Bank, New Zealand, UNDP and UN-Habitat. The SIG also contribute a lot of its resources on an annual basis under the development budget provision.

The following urban-based support operations are included in the NIIS: JICA-supported Solid Waste Management - support to Honiara City and Gizo; Improvement of water supply for Honiara and Auki; Non-revenue water support for Honiara and Auki; GEF support for Sustainable integrated water resource and waste-water management; PRIF: Water supply - support to SW.

From Pacific Urban Forum (PUF), March 2015: Key priorities in urban areas comprise upgrading of informal settlements and access to safe and affordable housing for all, land, provision of basic infrastructure and services, building urban resilience to climate risks and other shocks, enhancing rural-urban linkages, addressing gender inequalities, job creation and strengthening capacity for urban governance, planning, management, and data collection and analysis.

According to the NIIS it is generally not expected that the broad priorities of development partners to SIG will change significantly from recent trends. These are summarized below<sup>22</sup>:

- ADB – roads and maritime transport, sustainable energy, and public sector management.
- AusAID/DFAT – roads and maritime transport (NTF), urban water supply, rural water supply, and climate change adaptation.
- European Union – water supply and sanitation, climate change adaptation, and possibly energy.
- JICA – urban water supply, roads, Honiara port, and solid waste management.
- New Zealand – roads and maritime transport, and fisheries.
- UNDP – climate change adaptation, and rural services delivery.
- UN-Habitat – climate change adaptation, informal settlements upgrading, urban planning, urbanization policy and strategy

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid

- World Bank – Rural Development program, energy, climate change adaptation and disaster risk management, urban planning and infrastructure, marine environment, and civil aviation through the Pacific regional program.

## **5.7 POLICY ACTION 7: IMPROVE GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT OF URBANIZATION.**

### **POLICY GOAL: EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT URBAN GOVERNANCE TO ENHANCE BETTER DELIVERY OF SERVICES TO MEET THE DEMAND OF THE PRESENT AND FUTURE URBAN GENERATIONS.**

The need for effective governance and strong institutional links is critical to achieving better urban quality of life. Currently this is lacking at the national and provincial urban level. The Solomon Islands urban sector needs greater political and economic autonomy so as to ensure effective, efficient and equitable development. This is evidential over the past recent years when there have been a number of questions raised by the public about the efficiency and effectiveness of the local authorities.

The Local Government Act (LGA) and the Provincial Government Act (PGA) of 1997, mandates the HCC and provincial authorities to be responsible for the management of urban centres through the provision and maintenance of services such as health, education, public amenities, and waste management. The Town and Country Planning Act (TCPA) Cap 154 empowers local authorities<sup>23</sup> through their Town and Country Planning Board (TCPB) to undertake physical planning and urban management for urban growth and change in their respective towns. In that capacity, they are key players in shaping and managing urban centres and towns. But, for too long, they have been poorly resourced and ill-equipped to execute their mandatory roles and functions effectively. As a result, local authorities continue to face inadequate technical capacity and resources to effectively address urban development and planning issues.

The TCPB in all provincial towns have been inactive for many years, except for Honiara. This is not only due to the lack of resources, but also due to limited knowledge of planning issues and their mandatory duties as stipulated under part 3, section 8 of the TCPA or unwilling to execute duties for various reasons. As a result, TCPB in all provincial capitals have not been able to meet regularly and take control of planning and development. The production of a Local Planning Schemes (LPS) is beyond the capacity

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<sup>23</sup>Local authorities refer to the Honiara City Council and provincial governments executives that are elected by members of the Council or Provincial Assembly to head the local governments in Honiara and in the provinces. The HCC is linked to the national government through the Ministry of Home Affairs while provincial authorities by the Ministry of Provincial Government and Institutional strengthening (MPGIS). The HCC has been given more political autonomy, thus it is operated under the HCC 1999 Act, while provincial authorities operate under the PGA of 1997.



excepted of the Boards. Therefore, to guide urban development as required under part 3 of the TCPA, decisions have been taken arbitrarily based on political preferences. The issue is further exacerbated because there is a lack of or qualified and competent urban planners at provincial level. Currently there are no planners at Tulagi, Buala, Gizo, Tigoa, and Makira. Each of the remaining four provinces has a Physical Planner, while seven are stationed at the MLHS. The Planners at the MLHS have recently mobilized in providing technical support to the provincial town and country planning boards. However, this is barely touching the surface with respect to the vast needs of provincial and HCC mandated responsibilities. The need to increase capacity building especially training of planners is critical, if more consistent urban policies and strategies are to be developed and implemented.



**Plate 3: PS – Lands signing of UN-Habitat MOA**

Weak public sector financial management coupled with ineffective local revenue collection, limited financial support from the national government has contributed to poor service delivery in city and towns (UN-Habitat, 2012). A number of local authorities<sup>24</sup> have benefited from donor projects such as Provincial Governance Strengthening Programme (PGSP), Commonwealth Local Government Project (CLGP), Honiara Economic Development Support Programme (HEDSUP) and Rapid Employment

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<sup>24</sup>Local authorities refer to both Honiara City Council (HCC) and Provincial Governments/Authorities.

Project (REP) aimed at strengthening and improving institutional capacity. While some local authorities have noticed improved internal revenue collection and financial management practice, there is still a need for effective and efficient governance and strong institutional links to improve service delivery. The PGSP report for example, has shown that budget forecast and management is still weak at the local authority level as evidenced from over-spending and under-collection of budgeted revenue during 2013/14 fiscal year (MPGIS, 2015). The report further noted that the 7 out of 9 local authorities are still struggling to produce a qualified audit report<sup>25</sup> for the past decades.

Urban governance will continue to remain as one of the key challenges facing Solomon Islands in the years ahead. Clearly local authorities and the national government are struggling to effectively deal with the patterns and rates of urban development in respect to the resources they have at their disposal. The end result is that many of the decisions on urban development and growth, which are being taken, occur outside the policy and relevant legal mechanisms of the state. The need to improve urban planning and governance therefore remains a critical issue, if we are to provide a healthy, vibrant and sustainable future.

The Solomon Islands Government will provide further support to local authorities in all nine provincial towns including the HCC to:

- Develop a Master Physical Plan and Local Planning Scheme (LPS) to ensure city and urban centres are well planned and managed to maximize the efficiency of land use and transport networks,
- To undertake comprehensive policy planning, feasibility study and provide financial support to implement part of the LPS to facilitate housing affordability and diversity, improve public transport, carry out climate change mitigation and adaptation plans, and to develop key infrastructure sites; and
- Improve coordination and governance arrangements within and between local authorities, private sectors, NGOs and community groups working in the city and each provincial towns.

The strategy proposed under this policy option be further enhanced through the following:

- ⇒ **Consolidate the Physical Planning Division to become a national urbanization coordinating body**

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<sup>25</sup> A qualified audit opinion is when the Auditor-General states that the PG FS and its accompanied notes are complied with the PG controls and other requirements such as accounting standards (e.g. IPSAS Cash-basis).

The PPD will work closely with local authorities so that all urban plans, human settlement strategies are interconnected and promote national development interests. It will also assist provincial authorities to enhance their technical and administrative capacity to deliver technical support and services to their urban population. This commitment was evidenced in the development of five urban profiles, whereby relevant local authorities and other stakeholders were consulted, participated well and had their inputs included.

⇒ **Integrate Urban Planning and Management**

The primary role of the PPD is to ensure that a national strategic urban planning process incorporates inputs from other functions such as land-use and transport planning, socio-economic and infrastructure development, environmental impact assessment and urban investment. Desirable outcomes are likely to be achieved if goals, objectives and funding are aligned together between the two levels of government and other stakeholders. This planning approach must be adopted in all urban centres and towns. Each provincial and local authority through the established Town and Country Planning Board is responsible for implementing urban plans or LPS. The NUP calls for the facilitation by national government, private sector and donor supports in the development of the city and provincial towns through the formulation of LPS.

⇒ **Promoting and rewarding good urban governance**

The Solomon Islands urban sector needs greater political and economic autonomy so as to ensure effective control, efficient and equitable development. The national government has been and is prepared to support local and provincial authorities that embrace good urban governance through provision of additional technical and funding support of major infrastructures in their towns. The national government will be responsible for building the technical and administrative capacity of local authorities to delivery better services.

⇒ **Simplify Development Planning Administrative Processes**

The past experiences have shown that a significant time and resources have been used in administrative processes, resulting in the delay of releasing planning approval for developer to develop land, or infrastructure that are critical for service delivery. This bureaucratic delay causes unnecessary expenses to investors, government and community. In spite of past continuing statements of commitment from the responsible authorities and the recent planning workshop held in 2007 that re-enforced the call to reduce such ‘red tape’ within all levels



of government, there has been little reform done to date. There are many reasons for the delay in carrying out the review of the planning processes. Amongst other reasons is lack of budgetary allocation to carry out such a task and the general lack of capacity. The NUP calls for critical reform is done to enhance delivery of planning and administrative services.

⇒ **Encouraging participation and active engagement with key stakeholders and the public**

The national government through this NUP encourages the participation of key stakeholders and the wider community in issues that affect them in addition to the opportunity provided under Part 3, Section 8, clauses D, E and G of the TCPA. The use of media such as radio and newspaper must be encouraged. Engaging the public in a forum to discuss urban issues affecting the people's lives to assist relevant authorities in making sound decisions. Building and maintaining a strong institutional linkage is therefore vital to increase partnership approach to delivery of better urban services.

## PART SIX

### 6.0 CONCLUSION

By accepting the key urban policy themes shows that there is still more work to be done on agreeing precise actions and activities, as well as setting yardsticks by which they can be evaluated and monitored. The assigned goals for each of the key themes will form the foundation of a set of Solomon Islands National Urbanization Goals. Targets and indicators should be set against each key policy theme to facilitate measuring of progress on achievement and stakeholder responsibility.

**Table 3: Key Policy Themes and Policy Goals/Objectives**

Key Policy Theme of the NUP	Policy Goal/Objective
<b>1: Governance and Coordination Framework</b>	Effective and efficient urban governance to enhance better delivery of services to meet the demand of the present and future generations.
<b>2: Informal Settlements</b>	improve the quality of life of those who reside in the informal settlements by providing adequate social amenities accessible to them.
<b>3: Urban Land</b>	Efficient land management system that contributes to social stability, economic growth and sustains the environment.
<b>4: Infrastructure Development</b>	Effective, efficient, safe and sustainable infrastructure available to promote better delivery of services to the people of Solomon Islands.
<b>5: Urban Housing and Services</b>	Provision of accessible, affordable and decent houses to meet the current and future urban population with adequate social amenities.
<b>6: Urban Planning and Environment</b>	Provide a healthy living environment to cater for a range of needs for the urban population whilst contributing to building a resilient socio-economic and physical environment.
<b>7: Economic Development and Urban Poverty</b>	Upgrade towns to support equitable distribution of population, economic growth and development.

While this catalogue of National Urban Policy options in the country may not be exhaustive, it is nevertheless fairly representative of both the major issues which confront planners, policy-makers and national, provincial and city governments. This National Policy attempts to present the important key issues and the available policy remedies. In conclusion the following are derived through this policy formulation:

Solomon Islands needs to harness the positive potential of urbanization through investment in improved rural services, connective infrastructure, and improved urban administration. This is important as the majority of population will still live in the rural

areas for the next few decades, whilst the country will continue to experience a fast rate of urbanization.

## 7.0 TERMINOLOGY USED

**Informal Settlements:** Characteristics of informal settlements vary within urban areas of the country, but all share inadequate access to basic services<sup>26</sup>. Informal settlements are defined as follows:

*Informal or unplanned residential areas that have developed outside of the formal urban planning rules of a city, often in physically marginal or peri-urban areas. They are characterized by uncertain or illegal land tenure; minimal or no water supply, sanitation, electricity, and other services; informal employment and low incomes; and lack of recognition by formal governments.*<sup>3</sup>

Growth in informal settlements far outpaces city-wide growth, as families grow and extended family members from their home islands move in. In Honiara, Solomon Islands, some settlements are expanding at an estimated 26 per cent per annum, compared to formal city growth of 2.7 per cent,<sup>4</sup> and are expected to make up 64 per cent of Honiara's population by 2023.

**Urbanization:** is a process where urban areas increase in the share of the national population. This change is in response to the trend of the socio-economic development of a given town, which pull rural people to move to towns and cities.

**Urban Areas:** Includes all provincial administrative centres except for Renbel, which is considered to be more rural in nature compared to smaller provincial centres such as Taro, Buala and Tulagi. They are defined as an urban area because of the significant administrative, transport and economic functions that connects them to Honiara. The peri-urban of Honiara (Tandai and Malango) and Munda, Noro and Nusa Roviana in the Western Province are defined as urban areas because they have concentrated population and significant economic functions (Statistic Division, 2009:17).

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<sup>26</sup> World Bank – Feature article . Delivering water and sanitation to Melanesia informal settlements.2015

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