

Solomon Islands

**Voluntary
National Review
Report**

June 2024



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Foreword



It is my honour to present the Solomon Islands' second Voluntary National Review Report on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). For the Solomon Islands, the VNR process continues to be an invaluable opportunity to take stock of our progress, while also reflecting on the approaches and experiences we have gained in implementation, identifying best practices, and learning important lessons.

This second VNR report is once again presented through the lens of the Solomon Islands National Development Strategy 2016–2035, which seamlessly integrates the SDGs into our unique national circumstances and context. The foundation of our Strategy remains the overarching vision of “improving the social and economic livelihoods of all Solomon Islanders”. This vision continues to align with the SDGs, in particular, to end poverty and hunger, ensure dignity and equality, and enhance prosperous and fulfilling lives in harmony with nature.

This national review process has further deepened our understanding of the progress made and the challenges facing SDG implementation. Moving forward, this invaluable insight will assist us to refine our strategies and accelerate efforts towards meeting the 2030 Agenda.

However, we remain challenged by several risks that impact our progress towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including ongoing threats of climate change and natural disasters and the lingering impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although the worst of the pandemic has passed, its economic and social consequences, combined with higher global food and fuel prices, have resulted in catastrophic impacts which continue to reverberate and pose an ongoing challenge for achieving our national development priorities.

Despite these challenges, which compound our existing vulnerabilities as a “Large Ocean, Small Island State”, our Government remains steadfastly committed to achieving the SDGs through the National Development Strategy and to “leaving no one behind”.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'J. Manele'.

Hon. Jeremiah Manele
Prime Minister of Solomon Islands

Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
CBRM	Community-based resource management
CBSI	Central Bank of Solomon Islands
CSO	Civil society organisation
CEMA	Commodities Export Marketing Authority
CEWG	Core Economic Working Group
EP	Education providers
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
ESF	Education Strategic Framework
GVB	Gender-based violence
GDP	Gross domestic product
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IRD	Inland Revenue Division
JPRG	Joint Policy Reform Group
MCA	Ministry of Communications and Aviation
MCILI	Ministry of Commerce, Industry, Labour and Immigration
MCT	Ministry of Culture and Tourism
MECDM	Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology
MEHRD	Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development
MID	Ministry of Infrastructure and Development
MNPDC	Ministry of National Planning and Development Coordination
MoFT	Ministry of Finance and Treasury
MPS	Ministry of Public Service
MSMEs	Micro, small and medium enterprises
MTS	Medium Term Strategy
MWYCF	Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs
NCDs	Non-Communicable Diseases
N-DOC	National Disaster Operations Committee
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
NDMO	National Disaster Management Office

NDS	National Development Strategy
NECS	National E-commerce Strategy
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NPF	National Provident Fund
ODA	Overseas development assistance
PALM Scheme	Pacific Australia Labour Mobility Scheme
P-DOC	Provincial disaster operations centres
PDC	Provincial disaster committees
PFM	Public financial management
PIM	Public Investment Management
PRM	Policy Reform Matrices
RSIPF	Royal Solomon Islands Police Force
SGVB	Sexual and gender-based violence
SIIP	Solomon Islands Infrastructure Program
SIIVA	Solomon Islands Integrated Vulnerability Assessment
SIMS	Solomon Islands Meteorological Service
SINPF	Solomon Islands National Provident Fund
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIG	Solomon Islands Government
SPREP	Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme
STEM	Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UN	United Nations
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VNR	Voluntary National Review
WHO	World Health Organisation
WB	World Bank
YFDN	Youth for Democracy Network

Executive Summary

Solomon Islands is a culturally diverse country located in the Southwest Pacific. It is comprised of 997 islands with a total land area of less than 30,000 km² and a population of around 720,900 people. The colourful and diverse people of Solomon Islands are of Melanesian, Polynesian, Micronesian, Chinese and European origin with unique customs, culture, and power-sharing structures. Over 70% of the population live in the rural communities in the islands. The country's economy is heavily dependent on natural resources, subsistence farming, fishing, and forestry, which account for around 40% of the country's GDP. The economy has faced significant challenges in recent years, including contractions between 2020 and 2022 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, domestic crisis and other global shocks.

The National Development Strategy (NDS) 2016-2035 maps out the strategic direction for sustainable development in Solomon Islands and remains the overarching development blueprint to implement relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Using the 2020 VNR report as a benchmark, and building on the recent NDS review, the Voluntary National Review (VNR) process for this 2024 report involved an extensive process of consultations and dialogue with various stakeholders.

Implementation of the 2030 Agenda

Solomon Islands localised the SDGs by integrating them into the National Development Strategy. The NDS implementation and monitoring and evaluation framework provides a mechanism for implementation, tracking, and reporting on the SDGs.

The country has made some progress in implementing the SDGs since 2020 when the first VNR report was produced. However, structural issues and challenges such as geographical, capacity and resource constraints, governance challenges, institutional gaps, and access to land issues, remain barriers to implementation.

Notable progress achieved during this reporting period based on the five objectives of the NDS 2016-2025 of sustained and inclusive economic growth, poverty alleviation, access to quality health and education, resilient and environmentally sustainable development, and stable and effective governance and public order, include:

- Broad-based recovery was achieved in 2023, supported by increased exports, expansionary measures, and consumption spending linked to hosting a successful Pacific Games. Various initiatives to enhance economic development were put in place, including: a National E-Commerce Strategy; debt management; public investment management system; tax administration reforms; and financial inclusion initiatives. Additionally, the Solomon Islands National Infrastructure Priority Pipeline was established, with the completion of some strategic infrastructure projects such as the Kukum Highway, sporting facilities, wharves, provincial airports upgrade, and the Munda International Airport. Progress in the energy sector included

the establishment of the Solomon Islands energy policy, including priorities that will be the focus for the next 20 years to reduce current dependency on fossil fuels. Upgrade in internet connectivity in rural location enhanced small businesses development and mobile money transactions and trading. Land reform through customary land recording was another progress made to address land tenure issues and improve land administration.

- Progress was also made in poverty alleviation, improving access to basic services, and promoting sustainable livelihoods, particularly in rural and remote areas. Efforts include fostering food security through sustainable agriculture, improve access to services through infrastructure development, and creating small business opportunities. Labor mobility schemes have also provided opportunities for people to work abroad and bolstered remittances. Initiatives to support the informal sector in the rural areas included the YouSave scheme, which saw informal sector membership in the National Pension Fund increase by 14% in 2023. Support measures to empower women and youth, gender equality, rights of children, domestic violence, social and emotional wellbeing, remain work-in-progress. Targeted social protection measures are also needed. High unemployment rates remain a significant concern.
- Progress has been made to strengthen the healthcare system and education sector, with reforms to enhance access, quality, and governance. Some progress has been made in reducing maternal mortality, infant and under-five mortality. However, the rising cases of non-communicable diseases remains a significant concern. Notable efforts made on addressing the high prevalence of unintended teenage pregnancies, included the government collaboration with stakeholders to ensure accessibility to appropriate information and education. Additionally, further efforts are needed to accelerate the achievement of the Solomon Islands Population Policy target of 44 births per 1,000 women aged 15-19 by 2025 as per global average (compared to a reported estimate of 77 births per 1,000 women).
- Education sector progress included the enactment of the new Education Act 2023. It aims to address shortcomings in the current education system and enhance the delivery of educational services at the early childhood, primary, and secondary levels. The new Act facilitates better collaboration and coordination between the Ministry of Education and all education stakeholders, including providers, schools, teachers, leaders, and local school communities. In February 2024, an accompanying Education Regulation was implemented alongside the new Education Act. This Regulation provides detailed instructions and guidelines on different aspects of school management, including regulations around school fees and charges.
- On environmental sustainability, collaboration with communities resulted in implementation of sustainable resource management practices, renewable energy projects, waste management initiatives, and climate-resilient strategies such as the new National Climate Change Policy 2022-2030 providing a framework for mainstreaming climate action across all development aspect. In addition, the Solomon Islands Roadmap for Improving Access to Climate Finance and Public Spending 2022-2027 was launched to enhance accessibility to climate finance and strengthen collaboration between the government and its stakeholders. Further targeted interventions are needed, with dedicated expertise and financing to fast-track climate adaptation measures.

Several risks, including, deforestation, marine pollution, natural disasters and climate change impacts continue to pose threats.

- Solomon Islands progressed initiatives to safeguard its rich cultural heritage and empower diverse communities, recognizing those as essential for building national unity and cohesion. These efforts include preserving traditional arts and crafts, formalizing the authority of customary landowners and village leaders, and promoting democratic participation and civic engagement, particularly among marginalized groups. Digitalisation of government functions progressed across the government machineries in effort to enhancing effectiveness and efficiency. The development of a new national security strategy provides a comprehensive framework to guide priorities and actions.

Challenges

- The country faces challenges related to maintaining macroeconomic and fiscal stability, managing cybersecurity and money laundering risks, and addressing inadequate staffing, capacity, and financial resources. Access to land for investment and improving the enabling environment for private sector development remain ongoing issues. Opportunities exist to reduce utility and transportation costs, improve basic infrastructure, and diversify the economy to reduce income inequality.
- Significant needs remain to bolster youth livelihood and job opportunities. The education system can be further adapted to enhance employability, and further small and medium enterprise development is needed to address unemployment. Targeted assistance is required for vulnerable populations, and rural and agricultural sectors have potential for further growth.
- Increasing investment in the health workforce, particularly nurses, associated health information and management systems, and services, for example on sexual/reproductive health are priorities that require greater funding and development partner support, especially to reach rural areas. Addressing violence against women and children as requires concerted effort.
- An under-resourced education system limits enrollment opportunities, especially for children in remote areas, resulting in low rates of primary school entry (less than 60% of the eligible population) and completion (around 70% of those enrolled). Dropout rates are higher among male students, particularly in the later secondary school years, and higher education options are constrained as most institutions are located only in the capital city. Gender-related barriers such as a lack of inclusive infrastructure, teen pregnancy, gender-based violence, and social norms limit girls' participation in education.
- The country's vulnerability to natural disasters such as cyclones and earthquakes can set back infrastructure and livelihoods progress, as well as disrupt consistent monitoring of policy implementation. Additionally, deforestation and the impacts of climate change on coastal areas pose challenges for the design and practical application of climate change policies.

- A major challenge in achieving the NDS and SDGs lies in institutional capacity and governance to manage the rapidly changing development context, including population growth, security, cost of living, socio-cultural and environmental changes. Solomon Islands recognizes the need for informed decision making, building capacities across government to support improved service delivery, targeted investments and private sector development, and continuously strengthening national processes and systems to manage these challenges.

Partnerships

Solomon Islands has made significant progress in strengthening partnerships with key development actors to support its national development and sustainability goals. In the first 6 years (2016-2021) of the implementation of the NDS, 65% of the SBD\$13.6 billion expended on development programs and projects came from development partners. A similar proportion of programs and projects was funded through cooperation with partners between 2022 to 2024. This came about from deeper engagement with bilateral and multilateral partners, leading to increased grant and loan funding and technical assistance, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic and security challenges. The Government has also leveraged collaborations with civil society, development partners, and the private sector to deliver essential services and infrastructure. However, scaling up and further deepening the partnerships, and alignment with national needs and priorities, remains critical to accelerating progress.

Moving Ahead

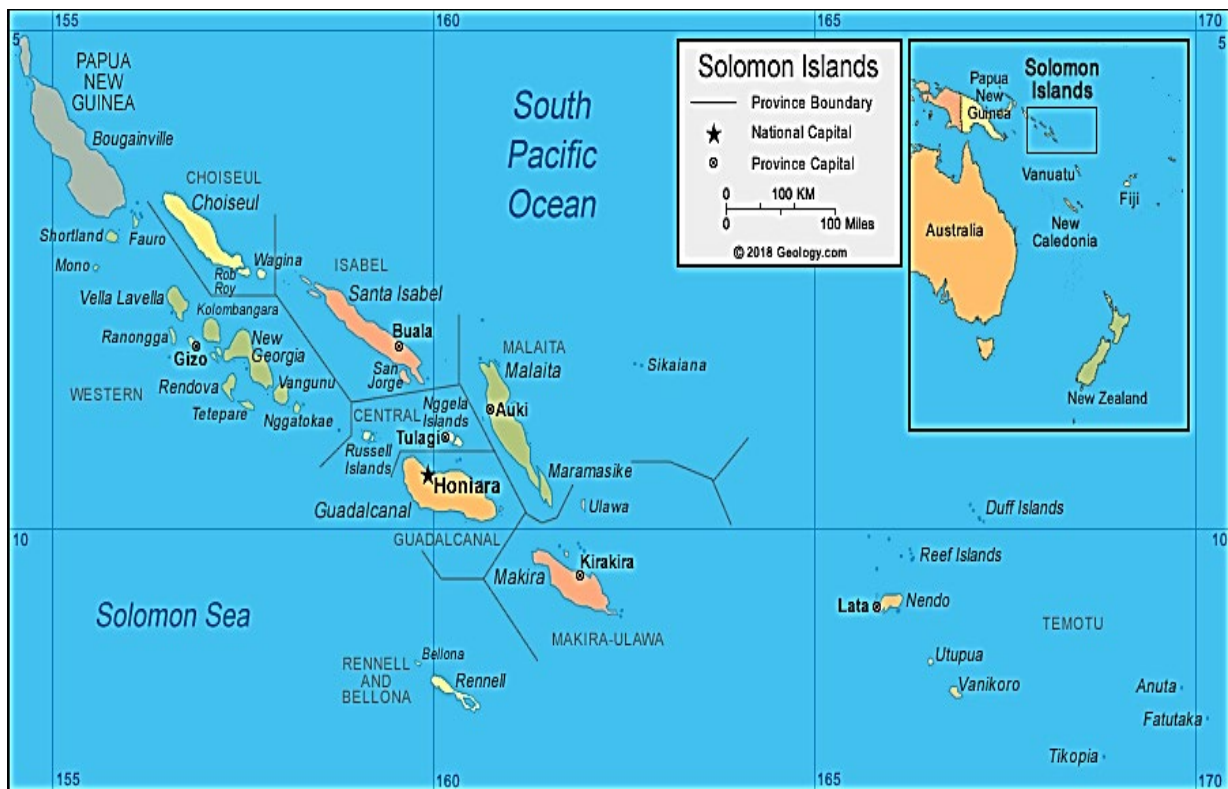
Moving ahead, Solomon Islands is committed to addressing the issues identified earlier, including the following to accelerate progress of the implementation of the NDS and 2030 Agenda:

- Inclusivity is a key principle that will be further embedded in national processes. Ensuring the meaningful participation of marginalized and vulnerable groups, including women, youth, persons with disabilities, people affected by disasters, and Indigenous communities, is essential to leaving no one behind. Such engagement will enable improved responses to sensitive and challenging issues, including protection of the vulnerable groups, and sexual and gender-based violence against children and women.
- Resilience building is a critical consideration, given the Solomon Islands' vulnerability to climate change, natural disasters, and other global shocks. Integrating disaster risk reduction, climate adaptation, and environmental sustainability across all SDG-related efforts is crucial for safeguarding development gains and ensuring long-term prosperity.
- The Government is committed to building further collaborative relationships with civil society organizations, the private sector, development partners, and other key stakeholders. These diverse actors possess invaluable expertise, resources, and networks that can complement and amplify the Government's efforts. Targeted areas for meaningful and durable partnerships include, health and education sectors, social and gender empowerment and protection issues, and environment. The investor and private sector effort to grow the economy, and scaled-up development partner support to reform the business environment and public service systems remain critical.

- Sustained and long-term investments are essential for development. Innovative and sustainable financing is therefore a key enabler of the NDS and SDG implementation strategy. The Government will continue to explore a wide range of financing sources and instruments to channel financing into strategic areas to address investment gaps and catalyse transformative change.
- Targeted capacity building and supplementation, and strengthening institutional arrangements and systems are necessary for accelerating implementation. Several areas for support have been identified in Section 5 of this report.
- Regular monitoring, evaluation and reporting will enable informed decision-making and allow for the adaptation of strategies in response to various challenges and changing circumstances. As part of its effort to improve monitoring and tracking of the NDS and SDGs, Solomon Islands is committed to implementing the projects outlined in the newly established National Monitoring and Evaluations Systems Strengthening Strategy 2024-2028.

Building on our achievements to date and addressing the challenges that lie ahead, Solomon Islands remains committed to implementing the NDS and the SDGs. With a focus on inclusivity, resilience, genuine partnerships, financing and innovation, the Government is forging a path towards a prosperous and sustainable future for all Solomon Islanders.

Figure 1. Map of Solomon Islands





1. Introduction¹



Solomon Islands is committed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by all Member States of the United Nations in September 2015. The 2030 Agenda provides a visionary roadmap for all countries and all stakeholders to strive for sustainable prosperity, social inclusion and equity, while preserving our planet and leaving no one behind.

Implementation has not been without its obstacles. Efforts have been particularly challenged by the impacts of the poly-crisis (COVID-19 pandemic, conflicts, climate change, and higher global commodity prices) which have derailed progress on many SDGs. While significant progress has been achieved, important steps remain to move further towards the country's development priorities and to effectively manage ongoing risks. These steps will also help the Solomon Islands to graduate from the Least Developed Country category as planned in 2027.

In this context, the review of the 2030 Agenda is essential for accelerating progress in achieving the SDGs in these challenging times. In 2020, Solomon Islands submitted its first Voluntary National Review (VNR) report. This follow-up VNR report focuses on the implementation of the Solomon Islands National Development Strategy (NDS) 2016–2035, which has mainstreamed and localised the SDGs. The subsequent sections will describe the methodology, policy and enabling environment, means of implementation, and next steps.

¹ It should be noted that dollars refer to Solomon Island dollars, unless otherwise stated.

2. VNR Methodology

The preparation of this second VNR report started in 2023. Using the 2019 VNR report as the baseline, the Ministry of National Planning and Development Coordination (MNPDC) utilised other relevant reports, data and information, in particular the findings of the NDS review process, to inform this report. Extensive consultation meetings and workshops with relevant stakeholders were held to refine, update and validate information.

The Solomon Islands Government localised the SDGs into the NDS 2016-2035. In 2023, the Government decided to review the NDS after 8 years of implementation to take stock of the progress of the NDS and SDGs, identify challenges, and find ways to improve implementation going forward. Led by the MNPDC, the review process was launched in May 2023. Consultation meetings were convened with more than 50 stakeholders from the Government, state-owned enterprises, the private sector, civil society organisations (CSO) and development partners.

In July 2023, the review baseline assessment was presented to the NDS Advisory Committee which is comprised of representatives from key government ministries, private sector and CSO representatives. Two national consultations were held in August 2023, and nine provincial consultations were held in September 2023, January 2024, and February 2024 to further validate and update the information in this VNR report.

Figure 2. Participants of the second VNR National Consultations held on 15 May 2024



On 8th February 2024, MNPDC convened a VNR awareness and consultation workshop where more than 50 participants from the Solomon Islands Government, private sector, CSOs and development partners attended. The workshop informed stakeholders about the aim of the VNR, and discussed the proposed outline of the report, key messages, the process involved and the contributions from stakeholders in terms of providing data and information for producing the second VNR report.

A draft VNR report was consolidated from inputs from the NDS review consultation reports, other relevant literature, inputs from the prior stakeholder consultations and inputs from the MNPDC management team around the end of April to early May 2024. The draft report was further refined after another national consultation on 15th May 2024 with stakeholders from the Solomon Islands Government, private sector, CSOs and development partners. The VNR Report was endorsed by the Cabinet in June 2024 and submitted to the United Nations.

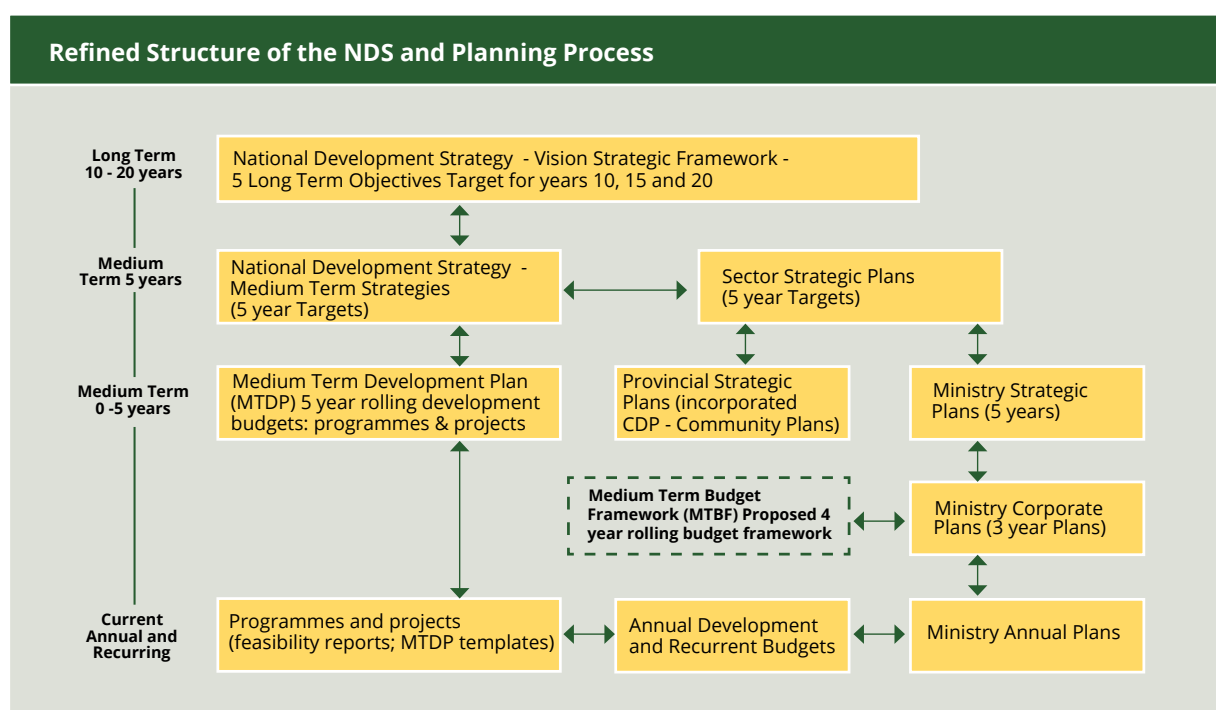
Figure 3. Participants at the first VNR awareness and consultation workshop



3. Policy and Enabling Environment

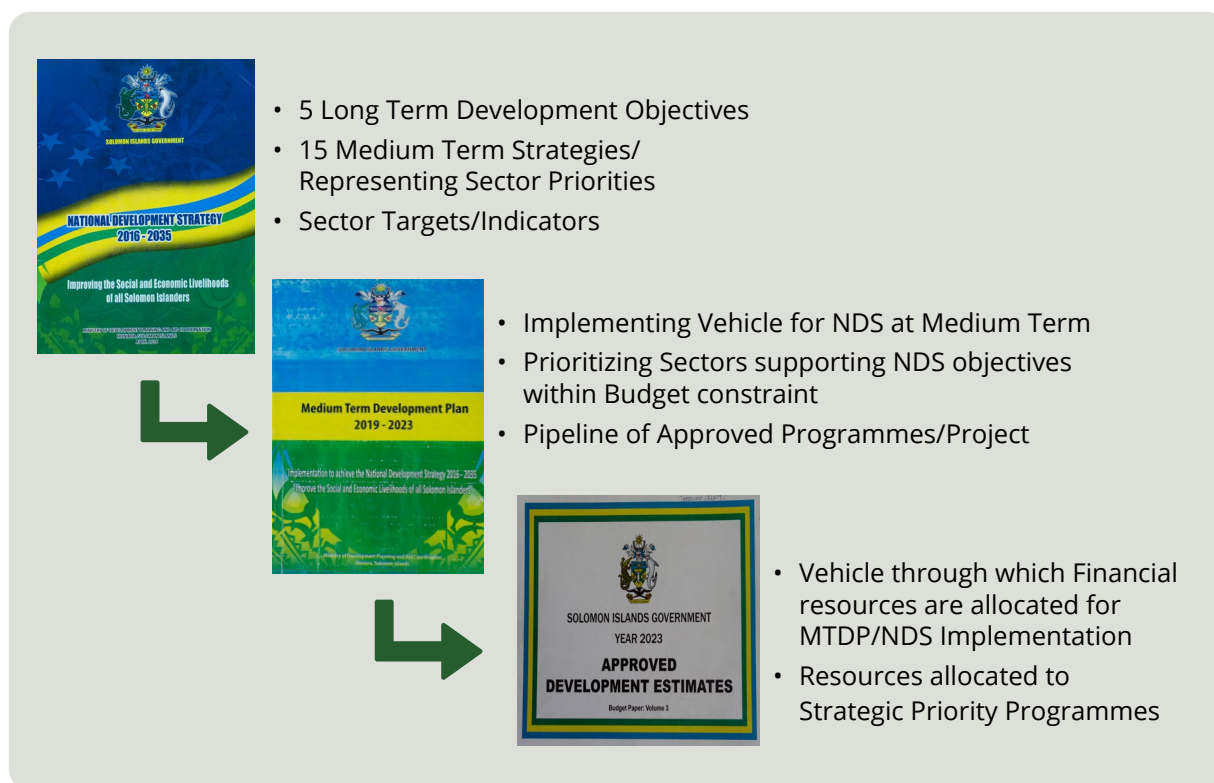
The Solomon Islands Government adopted the NDS 2016-2035 as the country's overarching development strategy with a long-term vision for "improving social and economic livelihoods of all Solomon Islanders". The NDS has five objectives which are supported by 15 medium-term strategies and are aligned to the various Sectoral, Provincial and Ministerial Strategic Plans. The five objectives are focussed on economic growth, poverty alleviation, health and education, disaster and climate change, and governance and public order.

Figure 4. NDS linkages to the overall national planning system in Solomon Islands



The NDS objectives and the Medium-Term Strategies are further translated into actionable programs and projects that are featured in the Medium-Term Development Plan (MTDP), which is a five-year rolling plan reviewed annually to cater for changes and emerging issues. The Annual Development Budget is capitalised to fund relevant programs and projects through governmental budgets and development partner sources. Once implemented, these programs and projects are monitored biannually and evaluated by the Government through the MNPDC. Figure 4 shows a schematic illustration of the national planning system.

Figure 5. Planning and budget process through which programmes and projects are funded



The Solomon Islands Government is the custodian of the NDS and is responsible for coordinating and overseeing its implementation, in partnership with line ministries, provincial governments, development partners, state-owned enterprises, the private sector, and CSOs.

3.1 Integrating of the SDGs into National Frameworks

In 2015, when the current NDS was being prepared, the Solomon Islands Government mapped the SDGs against national development priorities and mainstreamed the relevant SDGs into the five objectives of the NDS and the associated Medium-Term Strategies. The Government then used the national planning system to further translate the SDGs into implementable programs and projects that are factored into the Medium-Term Development Plan and financed through the Annual Development Budget (Figure 4). This approach was also used for other relevant regional and global commitments.

Therefore, the NDS is a single reference point for development planning, policies, priorities, programs and projects, and its means of implementation is supported through the Annual Development Budget, collaborating with development partners and other national stakeholders. Progress is tracked through the monitoring and evaluation systems of the Government. Table 1 below depicts the alignment of the NDS objectives, NDS Medium Term Strategies (MTSs) and the SDGs.

Table 1. Alignment of NDS objectives, MTSS and SDGS

NDS Objectives	NDS Medium Term Strategies	SDGs
<p>NDS Objective 1: Sustained and inclusive growth</p>	<p>MTS 1: Increase economic growth</p> <p>MTS 2: Private sector development and investments</p> <p>MTS 3: Build physical infrastructure/utilities</p> <p>MTS 4: Land reform and economic development</p>	<p>SDG 8: Good jobs and economic growth</p> <p>SDG 9: Innovation and Infrastructure</p>
<p>NDS Objective 2: Poverty alleviated across the whole of Solomon Islands, basic needs addressed and food security improved; benefits of development more equitably distributed</p>	<p>MTS 5: Alleviate poverty, basic needs and food security</p> <p>MTS 6: Increase employment opportunities</p> <p>MTS7: Support disadvantaged/vulnerable</p>	<p>SDG 1: No Poverty</p> <p>SDG 2: No hunger</p> <p>SDG 5: Gender equality</p> <p>SDG 6: Clean water and sanitation</p> <p>SDG 7: Renewable Energy</p> <p>SDG 10: Reduced inequalities</p>
<p>NDS Objective 3: All Solomon Islanders have access to quality social services including education and health</p>	<p>MTS 8: Access quality health</p> <p>MTS 9: Access quality education</p>	<p>SDG 3: Good health</p> <p>SDG 4: Quality Education</p>
<p>NDS Objective 4: Resilient and environmentally sustainable development with effective disaster risk management.</p>	<p>MTS 10: Improve disaster risk management and mitigation</p> <p>MTS 11: Sustainable environment and climate change</p>	<p>SDG 13: Climate Action</p> <p>SDG 14: Life below water</p> <p>SDG 15: Life on land</p>
<p>NDS Objective 5: A unified nation with stable and effective governance and public order</p>	<p>MTS 12: Good public services</p> <p>MTS 13: Reduce corruption</p> <p>MTS 14: Unity, stability, governance</p> <p>MTS 15: Law and order</p>	<p>SDG 16: Peace and Justice</p> <p>SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals</p>

Aid effectiveness principles outlined in national policy stress that development partners, including bilateral, multilateral, and non-governmental organizations, are expected to align their country programs and project portfolios with the objectives and strategies outlined in the NDS. This ensures that external assistance directly contributes to the achievement of the NDS goals, which are closely linked to the SDGs. Partners are also encouraged to utilize national public financial management, procurement, and monitoring systems rather than parallel structures, thus ensuring stronger national ownership and sustainability of development initiatives.

3.2 SDGs Ownership

The first VNR raised awareness of the SDGs through the lens of the NDS and cultivated collective action in implementing the NDS and SDG priorities. Integrating the SDGs into the national development planning, budgeting, and monitoring systems, imparted a strong sense of national ownership. This was further enhanced by mainstreaming the NDS and SDG priorities into the Sector Strategic and Provincial Development Plans, which cascade down to Community Development Plans.

The NDS 2016-2035 review process then sought to find ways to improve the implementation of the NDS and SDGs. Through extensive consultation processes, including in nine provincial centres, stakeholders contributed their views and awareness about the NDS and SDGs was increased. This VNR report and the NDS 2016-2035 review is a further testimony to the Government's commitment to implementing the NDS and SDGs.

3.3 Leaving No One Behind

The principle of "leaving no one behind" has been a driving force behind national initiatives, as the country strives to support and assist the most disadvantaged members of society. The NDS recognises the need to improve gender equality, empower women and girls as active participants and beneficiaries of development, and support the disadvantaged and the vulnerable, including the elderly and people with special needs, the elderly and other marginalised groups. The youth, particularly those who are unemployed and have limited skills, are also recognised for special support.

One of the objectives of the NDS, "poverty alleviated across the whole Solomon Islands and benefits of development are more equitably distributed", is directly focused on ensuring inclusive and equitable development that reaches all segments of the population. This objective recognizes that over 70% of Solomon Islanders reside in the outer provinces and rural areas. The NDS, therefore, tries to ensure that the benefits of development are not centralized in urban centres but also reach these remote and underserved communities.

Figure 6. Consultations with the representatives of remote communities



The Government engaged a wide range of stakeholders at both the national and provincial levels, including national government ministries and agencies, development partners, CSOs, community groups, private sector representatives, provincial governments, community leaders, women, and youth representatives. This inclusive and participatory extensive consultation process allowed the NDS review and VNR process to capture diverse perspectives and development needs across Solomon Islands. It helped validate the priorities of the NDS, including the focus on equitable and inclusive development, and ensured that the VNR and NDS review adhered to the principle of “leaving no one behind”.

3.4 Structural Issues

Solomon Islands continues to face various structural challenges in its efforts to implement the SDGs and achieve its national development objectives. These include:

Geographical issues: As an archipelagic country with over 900 scattered islands, Solomon Islands faces significant infrastructure and connectivity challenges. Providing essential services, transportation, communication, and development initiatives across such a dispersed geographical landscape is highly costly and logistically complex. High transportation costs and limited infrastructure connectivity pose barriers to equitable access to services and economic opportunities, particularly in remote and rural areas. The Government continues to prioritise infrastructure and digital development across the country in its efforts to address connectivity and service access issues for the remotest populations in Solomon Islands.

Capacity and resource constraints: The Government faces significant capacity and resource constraints. For example, the limited number of qualified accountants and auditors in the Office of the Auditor General makes it difficult to fulfil its mandate of auditing the financial reports of all public institutions in a timely manner. Human resource, financial, and institutional gaps undermine the Government’s ability to effectively implement policies and programs, including those related to the NDS and SDGs.

Governance challenges: Corruption remains a persistent governance challenge in Solomon Islands, undermining the transparent and accountable use of public resources. It diverts funding and efforts away from critical development priorities and SDG-related initiatives. The Government remains committed to strengthening transparency, accountability, and the rule of law as these are essential to ensuring the effective implementation of the national development agenda and the SDGs.

Institutional gaps: Solomon Islands faces various institutional gaps, including limitations in human capacity, financial resources, paucity and fragmentation in information and data management, and effective policy implementation. These gaps hinder the Government's ability to plan, implement, monitor, and evaluate development programs in a coherent and sustained manner. Addressing these institutional weaknesses is crucial for driving progress on the SDGs and the NDS.

Access to land: Access to land for development purposes is a significant challenge in the Solomon Islands, where most land is customarily owned. Navigating the complex land tenure system and securing land for infrastructure, economic, and social development initiatives can be a major obstacle. Innovative approaches to land management and community engagement are necessary to overcome this barrier to sustainable development. As a step towards managing land resources better, initiatives are underway to capture all customary land titles, such as the Customary Land Recording by the Ministry of Lands.

These structural and geographical challenges underscore the complex and multifaceted nature of development in Solomon Islands. Overcoming these obstacles requires a comprehensive, whole-of-government approach that strengthens institutional capacities, governance, and stakeholder engagement.



4. Progress in the Implementation of National Development Strategy Objectives and Related Sustainable Development Goals

This section highlights the progress made on the implementation of the NDS and related SDGs during the period 2021-2024.

Figure 7. 2020 to 2023 SDG trends for Solomon Islands

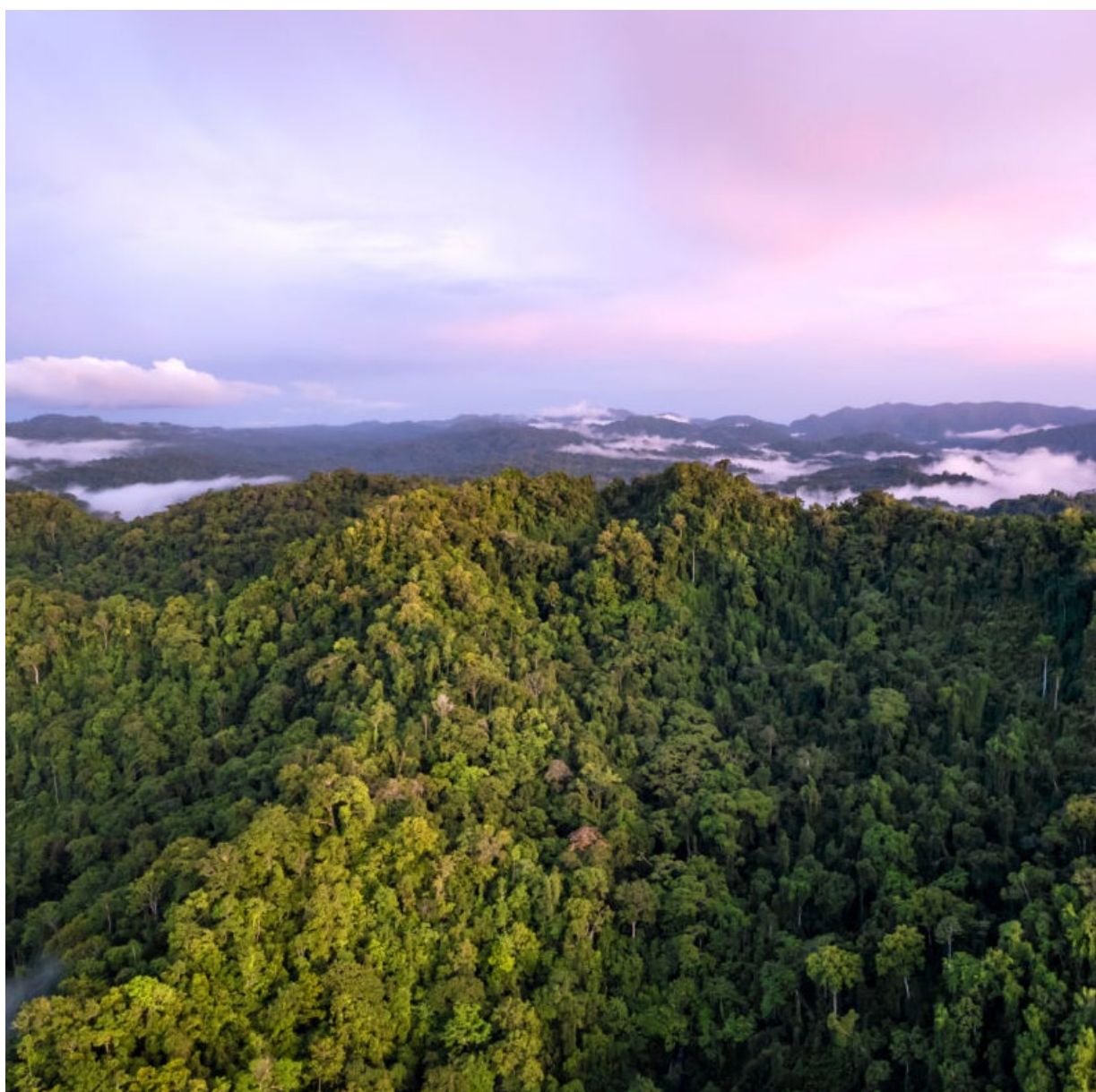


Figure 7 is sourced from a United Nations data portal which presents a mixed picture of the country's progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. While the data suggests that "Climate Action" was on track in both 2020 and 2023, and "Partnerships for the Goals", "Good Health and Well-being", and "Gender Equality" were showing steady improvement, the dashboards also reveal persistent challenges in goals like "Poverty", "Hunger", "Quality Education", "Clean Water and Sanitation", "Life below Water", and "Life on Land".

Drawing on global datasets, Figure 7 highlights a broad direction of progress. However, significant data gaps and limitations hamper understanding of context-specific developments and the realities on the ground. Specific impacts of policies, projects and initiatives undertaken between 2020 and 2024 are not captured accurately, while the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, higher fuel and food prices and interest rates, national security incidents and natural disasters need to be accurately

contextualised and reflected in Figure 7. In this regard, robust validation against national data sources and updating of data will help track the implementation of initiatives in Solomon Islands between 2020 to 2024, notwithstanding the lag time between delivery and impact.

Section 4 of this report highlights some grounded examples of progress made by Solomon Islands, supplementing the limited coverage shown in the 2020 and 2023 global dashboards. The additional information set out in Section 4 provides the context for the entry points for actions (highlighted in Sections 5 and 6 of this report) which are needed to address the persistent challenges in achieving NDS priorities and the Sustainable Development Goals, and to capitalize on progress thus far. The sub-sections below discuss each of the five NDS Objectives and the associated Medium-Term Strategies.



4.1 NDS Objective 1- Sustained and Inclusive Economic Growth



PROGRESS

Diversifying the economy, accelerating reforms to create an enabling environment for private sector investment, and prioritising resilient infrastructure to provide broad-based inclusive economic growth and livelihood opportunities remain key priorities for the Solomon Islands.

MTS 1: Increase Rate of Inclusive Economic Growth

Macroeconomic Issues

The economy depends heavily on natural resources and subsistence farming, fishing, and forestry, which together account for around 40% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and provide employment for the majority of the population. Forestry products, in particular round log exports, are a central driver of the economy, with logging contributing 17% to GDP (and 70% of exports), followed by fisheries (11%), agriculture (8%), and minerals (7%).

The COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting impacts on tourism receipts and disruptions to exports resulted in a contraction of -3.4% in 2020 and -1.1% in 2021. In 2022, the domestic economy contracted by 3% due to multiple shocks, including the outbreak of COVID-19 and the lingering effects of the November 2021 civil unrest in the country. Measures introduced to contain the spread of COVID-19 led to a decline in production output, exports and lower government revenues. Lower logging output and higher international commodity prices pushed the current account deficit higher. Following the reopening of borders and full relaxation of COVID-19 prevention measures, production and other sectors impacted by the pandemic, such as tourism, showed signs of recovery. However, inflation surged to a record high of 9.1% at the end of 2022, weighing on households' real income. Higher food and fuel prices, with associated pass-through and lag effects, resulted in a 3.5% inflation rate at the end of 2023. Inflation is forecast to remain at the same level in 2024.

Growth in Solomon Islands is projected to decline from 2.7% in 2023 to 2.5% in 2024. The outlook for 2024 is based on expected rebounds in fishing and palm oil, an expansion in mining, and a modest pick-up in construction and manufacturing activities.

Strengthen Fiscal Management

The allocation and delivery of the public sector budget remains the most direct policy tool that can support the realisation of the Government’s development aspirations.

The economy of the Solomon Islands is slowly recovering from three years of recession due to the COVID-19 pandemic, civil unrest in 2021, rising global food and fuel prices, and high interest rates. A historic budget deficit of \$1.5 billion was recorded in 2023 due to social protection measures to mitigate the pandemic’s impact on the vulnerable, the rise in health care and related expenses, and the fiscal stimulus following the COVID-19 pandemic and costs associated with hosting the Pacific Games in 2023. At the same time, domestic revenue declined from 2020 to 2023 due to a slowdown of economic activity and trade related to the impact of the pandemic on supply chains and markets. Many development projects were deferred or stopped, and many planned activities could not be carried out because resources were reallocated to address the outbreak of the pandemic and other priority needs.

Despite these fiscal challenges, the Government financed its deficit budget, including through domestic borrowing, revenue measures, and budget support provided by development partners. Several joint economic recovery initiatives were coordinated between the key ministries and departments and their major development partners through the Joint Policy Reform Group (see box below). The Group’s efforts can be seen as a good practice in how partnerships can support economic reforms and recovery measures in a collaborative and effective manner.

The 2024 national budget has allocated a \$20 million “contingency warrant” provision to cover unplanned expenditures that cannot be delayed and are detrimental to the public interest, such as natural disasters, national security, health/disease outbreaks, or other unforeseen events requiring government policy intervention.

Figure 8. New sporting facilities for the 2023 Pacific Games



Joint Policy Reform Group: Effective Coordination and Implementation of Support

The Joint Policy Reform Group (JPRG) is a forum for high-level policy dialogue between the Solomon Islands Government and its main development partners on key macroeconomic and fiscal issues. The JPRG is led by the Government and chaired by the Ministry of Finance and Treasury. The JPRG serves as the main coordination mechanism for general budget support.

The precursor to the JPRG, the Core Economic Working Group (CEWG), was established in 2009 in response to the global financial crises. Over the years, the focus of the CEWG shifted towards medium-term economic and financial reform efforts. The Government's reform priorities are articulated in the annual rolling Policy Reform Matrices (PRM), against which budget support is committed and disbursed.

Members in the JPRG from the Solomon Islands Government include: Ministry of Finance and Treasury (MoFT); Ministry of National Planning and Development Coordination; Ministry of Public Service; Office of the Prime Minister and Cabinet; and Central Bank of Solomon Islands (CBSI). Development partner members include the Asian Development Bank, European Union, World Bank and the Governments of Australia, New Zealand and Japan.

An example of the role of the JPRG could be seen in 2021, when collective action was rolled out to support the country's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Reform priorities were captured in a Policy Redirection Statement setting out the government response plan to the changed economic and fiscal environment. JPRG development partners worked with the Government during and beyond the recovery period to support the reform agenda.

In 2023, the Government's debt stock surged by 36% to \$2,827 million, fuelled by the additional external and domestic loans used to fund infrastructure development projects and expenditure needs for hosting the Pacific Games. In particular, the external debt stock rose by 29% to \$1,635 million, attributed to draw down of \$379 million of external loan agreements with the Asian Development Bank (ADB), World Bank and the Exim Bank of China for the construction of roads, airports, urban water supply and sanitation, land and maritime connectivity, and the national broadband infrastructure. In terms of the debt sustainability indicators, the debt-to-GDP ratio increased to 21% in 2023. Nonetheless, the Government's debt burden remains within sustainable levels and the Government maintains its commitment to keeping the level of debt in the Solomon Islands at a sustainable and affordable level.

As part of its broader public financial management (PFM) reform strategy, which aims to increase budget credibility and improve the strategic allocation of resources, the MoFT upgraded its financial management information system to support effective budget management. Efforts to strengthen tax administration are underway with support from partners, including through the introduction of the Tax Administration Act 2022; restructuring the Inland Revenue Division (IRD) to adopt a more functional structure; training IRD staff in their new roles and processes, including a new tax administration information system; and delivering a public outreach program to increase taxpayer compliance.

Financial Sector Highlights

The Payment System Act of 2022 was introduced to make banking easier and improve access to digital financial services across the country. The main issue was that most people needed to come to Honiara or to the provincial capitals for banking because not all provinces had banks. In addition, a modernised payment system would allow banking to be done digitally on the internet or through mobile phones, making financial transactions more efficient and secure.

The CBSI collaborated with development partners to achieve the objectives set out in the National Financial Inclusion Strategy 2021-2025, including the launch of the National E-Commerce Strategy and YouSave's Mobile Fund (see boxes below).

Financial Inclusion Initiatives for Informal Sector Workers

YouSave, a tailored financial product with the Solomon Islands National Provident Fund (SINPF), has grown steadily over the past eight years. As an inclusive savings scheme, the SINPF provides informal sector workers and self-employed people such as market vendors, farmers, taxi drivers, care givers and fishermen, to save money for retirement. Previously, the SINPF was only an option for formal sector workers to save for retirement. Savings grow in value with annual dividends from SINPF, which on average has been at a higher rate than commercial bank deposit products. It is designed as an accessible product which allows users to deposit funds using mobile phone technology.

In 2024, the SINPF launched a new product called mobileFund, a new instant digital loan that can be used to meet immediate financial needs. It offers a small and short-term loan ranging from SBD\$50 to SBD\$2,000 that can be used for small investments, with repayment terms of up to 90 days.

SINPF is leveraging innovative and mobile phone technology in order to serve its members better. Both YouSave and mobileFund work hand-in-hand to increase value for informal sector members of SINPF. This initiative, funded by the Government of Australia with technical support from the UN, is a low-cost, accessible, and instant form of financing that can assist people in overcoming financial obstacles and achieving their goals, helping to foster financial inclusion in the country.

National E-commerce Strategy, 2022-2027

Developed by the Government of Solomon Islands in partnership with the Government of Australia and the UN, and in consultation with national stakeholders including the private sector, the National E-commerce Strategy (NECS), 2022-2027, was launched in 2023. Recognizing that digital connectivity is the key to unlocking the potential of e-commerce and digital trade, the NECS is a practical roadmap for improving the business, policy and regulatory environment for e-commerce and the broader digital economy.

Through e-commerce, entrepreneurs and businesses of all sizes, including micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), can access new domestic, regional and international markets. Moreover, in Solomon Islands, e-commerce also has the potential to provide economic opportunities to the youth, to women and to those residing in rural areas. In this regard, the NECS aims to reduce business transaction costs and make it easier to start and operate a new business. Already, digital transformation is progressing with some government services moving online and several business establishments harnessing e-commerce as part of their business operations.



MTS 2: Private Sector Development and Investments

Key areas of progress include the revitalisation of the Commodities Export Marketing Authority (CEMA), improved infrastructure to enable commercial activities, provincial buying centres to reduce the cost of market accessibility, and policy and law reforms to support investment and MSMEs. CEMA aims to revitalize supply chain efficiency through purchasing, selling and exporting cocoa and copra products. The strategy will also enable the commercial trading arm of CEMA, Solomon Commodities, to penetrate new markets overseas and add value to products by setting up refineries and downstream processing works (see box below).

Pakera CEMA Buying Centre project completed in 2022

Communities and farmers of Central, East and West Makira constituencies benefit from this Centre, as it saves them time and cost to transport commodities to Honiara city.



Various other infrastructure improvement projects are underway, including new packhouses and slaughterhouses. For example, the Sape farm and packhouse has met the compliance standards required to export frozen cassava, and the Goshen Taro packhouse in Malaita, built through a public-private partnership, has improved supply-side constraints for exporting taro. Markets in Gizo and Honiara were upgraded to provide women vendors with a safe place to work and sell their produce (Figure 9).

Figure 9. Women vendors at Gizo market



Efforts continue to establish a new tuna processing facility at Bina Harbour on Malaita. Water and wastewater treatment plant options for the proposed Bina Harbour Tuna Processing Plant and surrounding villages are currently being developed.

Several policy and legislative changes are underway to further support micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and investments through special economic zones. Expanding e-commerce is critical to MSME success, but faster progress is needed. For instance, tourism sector operators, particularly Honiara-based hotels, accept reservations online via their own websites or booking platforms. The biggest online matching mechanisms for buyers and sellers in Solomon Islands are social media platforms, which have several buy/sell groups with thousands of members (including overseas diaspora). Users on these platforms join dedicated channels to advertise, meet, negotiate and sell a wide range of products, including land and houses. The Solomon Islands Chamber of Commerce, in collaboration with the Government, is developing a digital brokerage tool allowing exporters of cocoa, coconut, ngali nut and other tree crops to reliably share product information with interested buyers or importers. The digital brokerage won't be based on transactions but will focus on bridging information gaps within the value chain and facilitating matching between stakeholders.

Engagement of the youth in commerce is a targeted strategy, including through the Youth Entrepreneurship Council for the Solomon Islands which provides a support network for young entrepreneurs and a voice to advocate to the Government about changes needed to develop a more enabling environment. The Strategic Framework for Youth Development and Empowerment in Solomon Islands was launched in 2020, inter alia, to support the coordination of various stakeholders and partners.

Tourism

Despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Solomon Islands has been identified as an emerging tourist destination with considerable potential for economic growth and employment. Tourism contributed around 5% of GDP and less than 1% of total employment before the pandemic but is seen to have untapped growth potential. Visitor arrivals significantly increased after the reopening of the border in July 2022 and have picked up further in recent years.

Several developments have taken place, including strengthened destination planning, marketing and tourism investment promotion, and a direct air link from Brisbane to Munda in the pristine Western Province, which offers opportunities to grow the tourism sector. A tourism investment guide was developed alongside a Western Province Investable Sites Guide to promote investment.

Ongoing efforts to expand airline access, including through the acquisition of a second aircraft Airbus A320 lease by Solomon Airlines, are further contributing to national tourism objectives. New Air Service Agreements with New Zealand, Indonesia, Japan and China are being pursued. Building on partnerships regionally, Solomon Airlines launched its Auckland route via Port Vila in 2023.

Local and small-scale tourism operators have been offered practical training to be able to meet the minimum standards for accommodation and tourism services. Such initiatives will facilitate further development of small-scale tourism offerings, and ecotourism experiences in remote and rural areas of the Solomon Islands (see box below).

Sisiga Eco-Lodge, an example of ecotourism

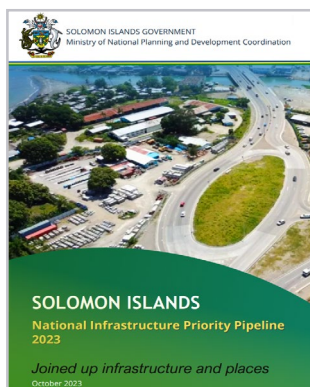
Sisiga Eco-Lodge is built on a man-made island close to mangroves, overlooking the islands in front of Pagoe in Choiseul Province in the western Solomon Islands. It is owned by a local tourism operator. Such accommodation facilities provide income to the business owners, as well as revenue to the Choiseul Province Government through business licenses and other tax obligations. Funding support from the Government assisted tourism operators to upgrade facilities to meet required standards. Training on hospitality management for rural operators has also been provided.



MTS 3: Expand Weather Resilient Infrastructure and Utilities

Infrastructure

Infrastructure plays a critical role in achieving the objectives of the NDS. Infrastructure needs in Solomon Islands are great, but resources are limited. A significant amount of expertise and



funding is needed from development partners to scale up the limited infrastructure funding in the national budget. Several bilateral and multilateral partners support various infrastructure projects in the Solomon Islands. To help identify entry points for development partner support and to identify a portfolio of larger national projects, the Government launched the National Infrastructure Priority Pipeline in 2023. The projects in the Pipeline were selected through transparent criteria, and prioritized and sequenced to provide the best pathway to achieving the NDS.

Several loan and grant-funded projects in social and economic sectors, including education, health, roads, bridges, airports and ports, are aligned in support of the NDS and the National Infrastructure Priority Pipeline. Some of the projects identified are currently ongoing, while other projects are yet to be funded. The process of matching partners with specific prioritised projects is continuing.

The Pipeline could also be used for long-term and structured support programs with bilateral and multilateral partners or for targeted support. For example, the Solomon Islands Infrastructure Program (SIIP), Australia's A\$250 million partnership with Solomon Islands from 2021 to 2031, is aimed at creating local economic opportunities through a large pipeline of economic infrastructure projects. The SIIP aims to improve the quality and accessibility of economic infrastructure to drive growth and help diversify the economy, including in other provinces. A key goal of the SIIP is to enhance the capacity of Government and the private sector to plan, manage, finance, construct and/or maintain critical infrastructure. The Naha Birthing and Urban Health Centre in East Honiara, a flagship SIIP project which commenced in 2024, will provide a new benchmark of health care in Solomon Islands. Once complete the Centre will provide a high standard of birthing, pre and post-natal care services for women, as well as eye, dental, pathology, x-ray, ultrasound and pharmacy services. The new Centre has also been designed to withstand earthquakes and other natural disasters. Importantly, SIIP will also support the maintenance of the facility.

A major infrastructure project completed in 2023 involved the upgrading of the runway, apron and taxiway at the Munda International Airport (Figure 10). The upgrades were implemented by the Government with support from the World Bank. As a result, a new weekly international flight from Brisbane to Munda is now operational, together with more domestic connectivity.

Figure 10. Munda International Airport



The Government has progressed in upgrading a number of provincial airstrips by tar sealing them to ensure that air transportation services are provided regularly to support socio-economic activities in the provincial and rural economy.

Taro Airport Upgrade

Since its construction, Taro Airport in the provincial capital of Choiseul Province was a modest airstrip, limited in its capacity to serve the growing needs of the province. However, with a vision for progress and a commitment to enhancing infrastructure, the Solomon Islands Government, in collaboration with the Governments of New Zealand and Australia, embarked on an ambitious project to revitalize the airport. The work includes a 950m by 30m sealed runway with a taxiway and apron, as well as the installation of a solar-powered lighting system to ensure reliable and safe aircraft landings. The airfield upgrade was completed in November 2023.

The upgrades have facilitated several services, including hospital referrals to the Central Hospital in Honiara and the provision of weekly flights to the province. The impact of this upgrade has rippled throughout the province, including the Shortland Islands in Western Province, breathing new life into the local economy and opening doors to tourism opportunities. With the capability of accommodating larger aircraft such as the Dash-8, Taro Airport facilitates smoother travel for passengers and greater capacity to transport cargo.



Taro Airport runway after the upgrade

Malu Wharf Upgrade

Infrastructure in the Northern region of Malaita Province has also been upgraded. A new wharf in Malu'u facilitates shipping services to Northern Malaita region and provides a direct route from Honiara to Northern Malaita, providing more access to services and opportunities for residents. This wharf is all the more important because the North Road, which spans approximately 112.2 kilometres and plays a key role in connecting the Northern Malaita population to essential facilities such as the Auki market, the wharf, the bank, and Kilufi Hospital, is in generally poor condition, marked by structural deterioration, inadequate drainage leading to erosion, and a lack of regular maintenance.

New wharves have also been built and existing ones upgraded in provincial locations to improve sea transportation and connectivity.



Picture of old wharf on the top and the upgraded wharf below

Energy

Access to safe, clean and reliable energy remains a challenge, particularly in rural and remote areas. Energy costs are high with knock-on effects for businesses and households. To prioritise investments, the Solomon Islands Energy Policy presents the Government's priorities and strategic directions to reduce fossil fuel dependency over the next 20 years. Disruptions to power were particularly prevalent in Honiara leading up to the Pacific Games in 2023. The Tina Hydro plant project, developed in partnership with ADB with a capacity to generate close to 70% of total electricity demand, will be a major renewable energy source that will supply electricity to Honiara. Government and development partners have also implemented solar energy projects in five provinces, which are expected to be commissioned in late 2024.

Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

Upgrades in internet connectivity in rural areas are enabling the development of small businesses, mobile money transfers and trading. Mobile subscribers have exhibited steady growth, fuelled by the efforts of the two network operators to extend coverage to all provinces. The continual enhancements in mobile internet infrastructure and competitive pricing have facilitated widespread access to high-speed internet, encouraging greater data consumption at more affordable rates. Investment of in around 200 new communication towers is aimed to enhance connectivity in rural areas. Submarine cable infrastructure is in place to provide stable connectivity to and from global networks. The Solomon Islands Submarine Cable Company is also pursuing a new submarine cable connection to enhance redundancy and resilience of their service.

MTS 4: Land Reform and Economic Development

Solomon Islands has made progress in implementing the Land Reform Act, which aims to address land tenure issues and improve land administration. Efforts have been made to strengthen land governance through the establishment of land registries and the digitization of land records, making land transactions more transparent and efficient. Registering customary land to provide legal recognition and protection to customary landowners is an ongoing effort, and has taken place in Isabel, Malaita, Guadalcanal and Western Province.

Initiatives have also been undertaken to improve land dispute resolution mechanisms, including community-based land tribunals and the training of local leaders in mediation and conflict resolution.

In terms of economic development, the Government's Economic Stimulus Package launched in 2020 provided tax incentives, soft loans, and infrastructure funding to support small businesses, especially in the agriculture, fishing, and tourism sectors. This helped mitigate the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Major new infrastructure projects were undertaken from 2021-2023, including the construction of a new international airport, expansion of the road network, and upgrades to seaports. This has improved domestic and international connectivity.

Figure 11. Aerial view of the Honiara Kukum Highway Road



In 2022, Solomon Islands signed a new trade agreement with Australia and New Zealand, lowering tariffs and expanding market access for key exports like palm oil, cocoa, and fisheries products. A new trade agreement with the European Union has been agreed to allow for the continuation of major exports.

Reforms to the mining and forestry sectors in 2023 have attracted increased foreign direct investment, with new large-scale projects in gold, nickel and sustainable timber production.

Challenges and Opportunities

Some challenges impact progress, while opportunities remain. These include:

- Maintain macroeconomic and fiscal stability;
- Manage cybersecurity and money laundering risks;
- Inadequate staffing, capacity and financial resources;
- Land dispute is still a key issue;
- Lack of enforcement and monitoring in several areas;
- A conducive environment for private sector investment is limited;
- Need to reduce the costs of utilities, in particular electricity, and improve access for all;
- Supply chain and limited competition in markets remain a concern;
- Basic infrastructure across the country needs improvement;
- Costs of transportation, ICT and connectivity have the potential for improvement; and
- Diversifying the economy and reducing income inequality remains an opportunity.

4.2 NDS objective 2: Poverty Alleviation, Basic Needs Addressed, Food Security Improved, Development Benefits Equally Distributed



PROGRESS

The majority of the population of the Solomon Islands live in rural areas. In this context, the benefits of development need to reach all communities beyond the capital in Honiara. The NDS 2016-2035 prioritises the alleviation of poverty and improvements in the lives of all Solomon Islanders, particularly in rural areas.

Addressing poverty, which is estimated to affect around 25% of the population (below the international poverty line), and meeting people's basic needs are fundamental to sustainable development in the Solomon Islands. Social and communal harmony is important. The drift to urban areas and subsequent unemployment or under-employment, particularly among the youth moving to Honiara, is increasing, affecting urban security and stability risks. Gender equality remains a concern. Challenges exist for women, children, the disabled and other vulnerable groups, including violence and safety issues.

Issues on poverty and gender remain cross-cutting, with linkages across all NDS Objectives and MTSs. The discussion that follows is not exhaustive but attempts to provide a sample of issues which address the various dimensions and highlight some challenges and opportunities.

MTS 5: Livelihoods in Rural and Remote Areas for Poverty Alleviation

The agriculture, forestry and fishery industries together account for two-thirds of all employed persons. The majority of employment in this sector is concentrated in rural areas.

Various programmes have been developed to support small, rural business development and income generation. These include expanding financial services to agribusinesses in rural areas, re-establishing buying centres through CEMA's revitalisation, providing training to rural farmers and producer groups, and enhancing the capability of rural research centres. The Ministry of Agriculture is working in partnership with CSOs to support producer groups and small businesses to access value-added and downstream processing opportunities.

Continued growth in the informal sector is necessary to support employment opportunities in rural areas. An indicator is the YouSave membership in the National Provident Fund, which reached 37,645 informal sector members as of June 2023, a 14% increase from the prior year. Participation in the seasonal worker and labour schemes in Australia and New Zealand has also increased opportunities for those in rural areas to earn income and get exposure to work environments abroad. Increases in remittances in recent years are attributed to such temporary movements of workers in foreign markets.

Furthermore, building on the provision of vocational training can create opportunities for marginalised communities and reduce the prevalence of poverty in rural communities.

Agriculture and Food Security

While the Solomon Islands has made efforts to address food security and nutrition challenges through local initiatives and policies, there remain significant areas for improvement, particularly in addressing declining agricultural productivity, enhancing resilience, and ensuring equitable access to nutritious food for all segments of the population.

Solomon Islands has a comparatively diverse food production system, with a significant portion of the population engaged in agriculture and fishing activities. Traditional agriculture, including the cultivation of staple crops like sweet potato, plays a crucial role in food security. The majority of agricultural and fisheries production is small-scale, rural and subsistence-based, with typically low agricultural yields. A narrow range of cash crops is produced for export, notably oil palm, copra, cocoa and kava. However, there are signs of declining productivity across various agricultural systems, posing long-term threats. Imported foods are increasingly part of the national diet, particularly in urban areas where food is purchased largely from supermarkets.

A Community Food Security Initiative

Starting in 2019, a Community Based Organization affiliated with the Kastom Gaden Association (umbrella body for organic farmers) began an initiative to assist communities in Rennel build a local sustainable farming system with fixed farm sites and to support preservation of seedlings and learning. There are 4 farm sites, with the Ngonona Farm site fully operational.

Vegetables and root crops planted at Nongona Farm site include cabbage, tomatoes, eggplant, pepper, sweet corn, kumara and taro. Farm harvest and yields are high, and when harvested, the produce is shared with the community, with some proportion sold. This initiative mainly serves to provide food security in the community, especially in a remote island where alternative supply is limited.



Meanwhile, gender has implications across all aspects of food security and nutrition in the Solomon Islands. Women play significant roles in agricultural production, marketing, and household income generation, necessitating gender-specific policies and interventions to address these dynamics effectively.

In response to these challenges, pathways for food system transformations in the Solomon Islands, including through the Agriculture Sector Growth Strategy and Investment Plan 2021–2030, have been identified. The pathways focus on leveraging traditional systems, strengthening rural-urban connections, and advocating for healthy, sustainable diets. Furthermore, a national policy on food security, food safety and nutrition is being prepared, which aims to address all forms of malnutrition in all age groups; ensure that all foods produced, processed, marketed and traded in the country are nutritious, safe and healthy for consumption; and increase and support nutrition-sensitive interventions.

As food production primarily occurs at the village level, increasing community-level production for subsistence and domestic markets, incentivizing food processing and value addition, and connecting rural producers with urban demand, are all important (see box below). In addition, further effort is needed to promote cross-sectoral engagement, including by strengthening the National Food Council, investing in institutional capacity for cross-sectoral engagement, and framing food systems transformation as an opportunity for health, environment, and development. In this regard, promoting local food production knowledge, stimulating demand for local Solomon Islands foods, and addressing food access and affordability, remain important priorities.

Climate change is exacerbating existing challenges in productive sectors and will continue to negatively impact the health of fisheries and crop production. Traditional food knowledge that has evolved over generations must be combined with innovation to support the adaptation required to manage the impacts of climate change. In forest logging areas, for example in parts of the Western Province, projects to address ecosystem recovery are underway to support agricultural production.

MTS 6: Increase Employment Opportunities

According to the 2019 Census data, the unemployment rate is 7.9%, with the highest unemployment rate of 21.6% recorded in Honiara. Moreover, the youth unemployment rate (15-34 yrs.) is around 11%, impacting males and females almost proportionately. Agriculture, forestry and fisheries account for about two-thirds (68.4%) of all employed persons. About 87% of employment in this sector is concentrated in the rural areas. Data on employment from the National Provident Fund (NPF) showed the number of people engaged in formal employment surpassed 80,000 at the end of June 2022, with the public service accounting for the most formal sector jobs.

Seasonal workers in both Australia and New Zealand have grown from 2021 to 2024. The Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) Scheme participation increased in 2021 and 2022, with 3,694 Solomon Islanders working in Australia, resulting in a 68% increase in remittances over the same period.

MTS 7: Improve Gender Equality, Child Protection, and Services for Vulnerable Groups

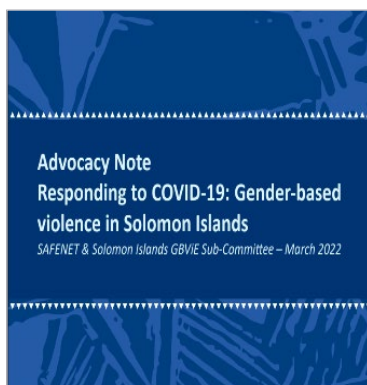
There has been progress in increasing women's representation in the public service, with women making up around 40% of the workforce. However, the Government recognizes that more is needed to achieve gender parity at senior levels of government. In addition, empowering women's political participation at all levels of government remains a priority for a more inclusive and equitable democracy. Similarly, in recent years women accounted for only 7% of CEO roles and 22% of senior management positions in private and state-owned organisations. Women's representation on corporate boards also remains low, with just around 10% of director positions and 35% of deputy chair positions held by women. While some progress has been made, there is a need to continue addressing systemic barriers and biases that limit women's access to leadership roles in key public and private sector organisations.

The intimate partner violence is prevalent in the Solomon Islands, with around two-thirds of women experiencing physical or sexual violence. The Government made notable progress in service provision for the survivors of sexual and gender-based violence victims through the SAFENET referral system. SAFENET is a network of the Government, CSOs, and UN Women, to strengthen referral and coordination of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) services in the Solomon Islands. It aims to streamline the assistance being provided to survivors and help them access more timely and necessary services. It has four inter-connected components: SGBV direct services and support; referral to other service providers through an agreed and coordinated formal referral process; prevention and advocacy programs; and governance and accountability framework. In 2023, the SAFENET referral network recorded 1,217 new clients, a 23% decrease from 2022. However, the proportion of referrals from other services increased by 27%, indicating greater integration and coordination across the referral system.

The SAFENET network, led by the Ministry of Women, Youth, Children, and Family Affairs, was strengthened by expanding the national multi-sector service delivery system. In 2023, a Memorandum of Understanding for membership in SAFENET was signed by new members, including the Honiara City Council, Immigration Department, Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, and Homes of Peace and Empowerment.

In another example of collaboration support, the Government's partnership with Seifples and UN Women has delivered lifesaving support services for women in need. For example, in 2023, Seifples' hotline successfully responded to 6,705 calls, of which 4,601 were from women. This vital service provided a crucial first point of contact and referral for women seeking assistance. Furthermore, 939 women were able to recover from violence in the safe accommodation provided by Seifples. The organization also delivered healing through 234 clinical service interventions and appropriate medical treatment and care for 26 victims of rape. These results demonstrate the positive impact of collaborative efforts to strengthen the capacity of Seifples and improve the availability of survivor-centred services, including referrals, accommodation, and clinical support.

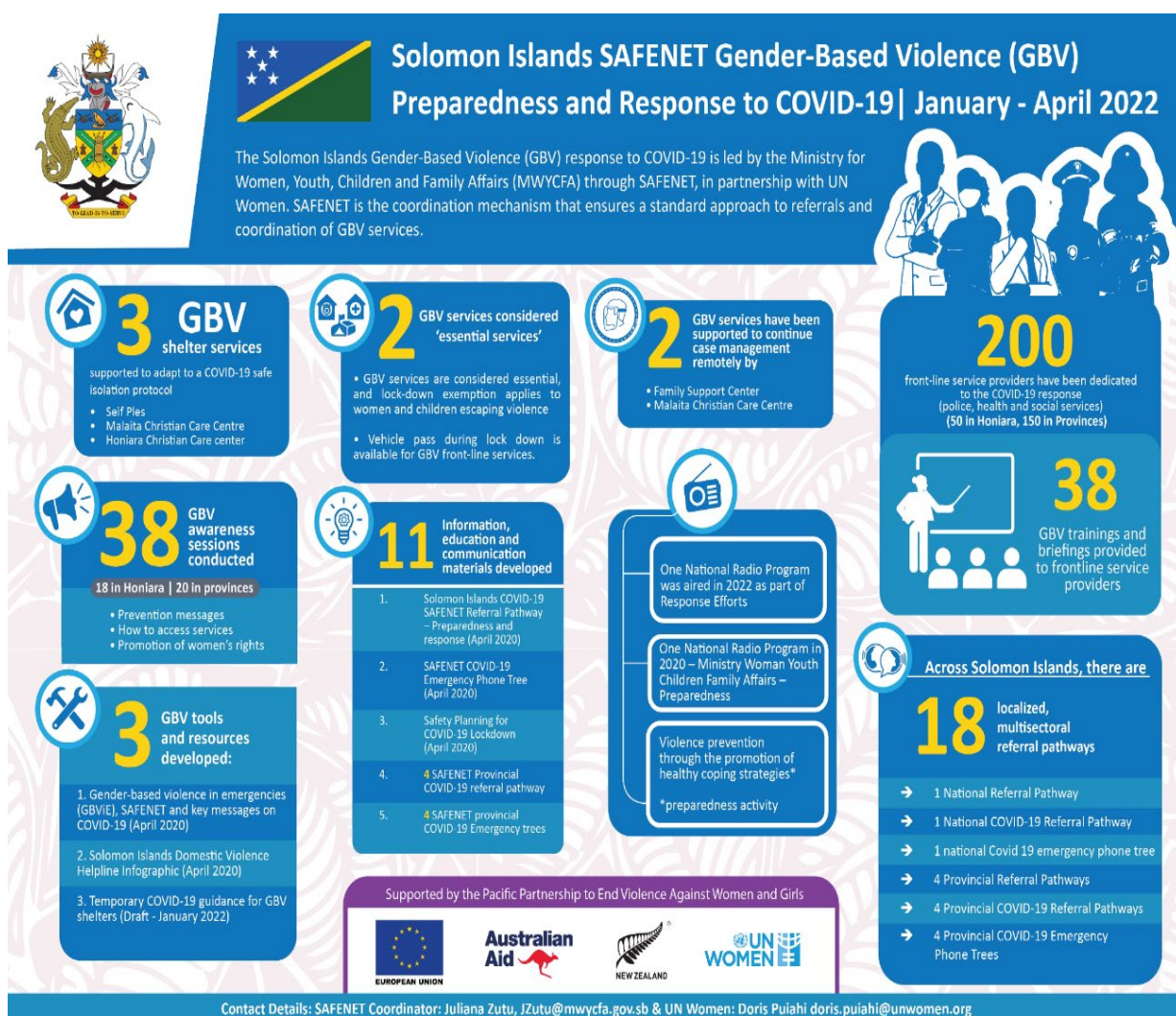
Data from Seifples suggested that SGBV cases increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, which is supported by data showing a comparatively high number of women calling the hotline number compared to previous years. In anticipation of risks during the COVID-19 period, the Government and development partners collaborated to increase awareness of rights and services in communities, including through an advocacy note to inform other ministries of the unique risks that women and girls faced during COVID-19 and its implications for food distributions, social protection, WASH and other core areas.



In addition, dedicated measures were designed to support a gender focus response during the COVID-19 pandemic, accompanied by promotional activities and access measures (Figure 12). This joint effort demonstrated the value of collaboration with development partners to supplement capacity and provide resources in a timely manner for such critical needs.



Figure 12. Leaflet on Gender-Based Violence in response to COVID-19



Additionally, survivors of GBV continue to receive quality care from the Family Support Centre, which provides a Safe House and high standard of counselling services in Honiara, Choiseul, Temotu and Isabel provinces. Several standards-setting initiatives and frameworks for supporting victims, including counselling guidance, were developed with ongoing capacity-building support from the UN and other partners.

The Team-Up Programme was initiated in partnership with national stakeholders and the UN and funded by the Australian Government to support sport-based programs that create opportunities for girls, women and people with a disability to benefit from playing sport.

Several important initiatives have been recently completed to support child protection and development. For example, a revised Solomon Islands National Children’s Policy 2023-2028 was launched in 2023. It sets out the Government’s priorities to ensure that the rights of the child are at the centre of development, now and in the future. The vision of the Solomon Islands National Children’s Policy “is for every child to experience love, care, health, wellbeing and given equal opportunities to enjoy life in all its fullness for a better Solomon Islands”. This was an example of government collaboration with youth advocates, the community, CSOs and development partners, in particular the UN.

In September 2022, the Government in collaboration with development partners, in particular UNICEF, launched an overarching child protection legislation, the Child and Family Welfare Act. In 2023, several activities were undertaken to socialize the Act with service providers and the general public, including during the Pacific Games, and with members of parliament. These activities also encouraged inter-stakeholder collaboration through the promotion of the toll-free helpline for the referral of child protection cases, as mandated by the Act.

In addition, to complement the Education Act 2023, a multisectoral Early Childhood Development policy and a three-year costed action plan (for 2023 to 2026) were launched in May 2023. A national Early Childhood Education curriculum, including teaching and learning materials and standards for quality assurance targeting 3-4 years children, is also being developed.

Violence against children in Solomon Islands remains a concern. Collaboration with development partners, in particular the UN, requires scaling up to strengthen advocacy around this issue; develop further policies to address it; and implement measures for the prevention of, and response to, incidences of violence against children.

Challenges and Opportunities

- Strengthen livelihood support for youths, including through apprenticeships, volunteering programs, and opportunities for employment;
- Create opportunities for small and medium enterprise development, inter alia, to lower unemployment rates;
- Tailor the education system to support employability;
- More action is needed to support people with special needs, women and child-specific challenges, including through empowerment initiatives;
- Provide more support for rural and agriculture development;
- Ensure that the food security and nutrition initiatives reach the most remote and vulnerable populace; and
- Strengthen inclusive and participatory decision-making processes involving civil society and marginalised groups.



4.3 NDS Objective 3: Access to Quality Health and Education



PROGRESS

The Government and development partners have prioritised the implementation of various strategies to improve healthcare and education infrastructure, address access disparities, and promote overall effectiveness of service delivery.

MTS 8: Access to Quality Health Care, Combat Communicable and Non-Communicable Diseases

This section provides a snapshot of progress, challenges, and opportunities in healthcare.

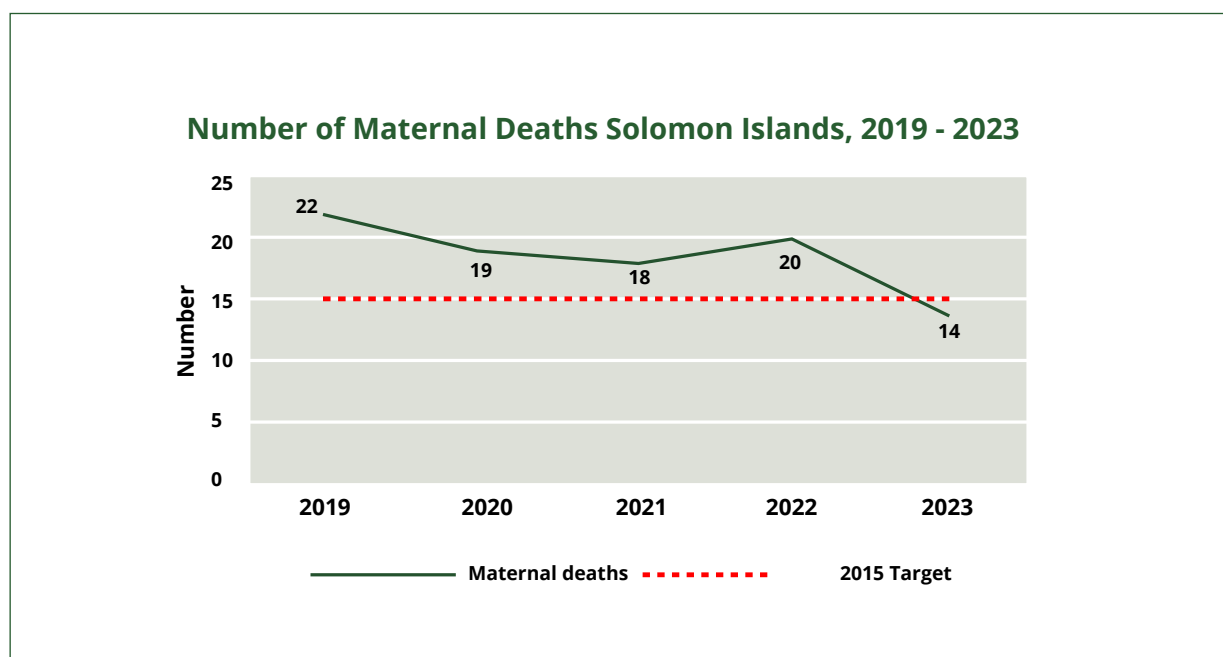
The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic posed an unprecedented challenge for the national health system, stretching limited capacities and resources, and resulting in significant diversion of health care for treatment of patients with other illnesses. Nonetheless, with significant support from development partners, including through the provision of vaccines and budget support, the Government managed the pandemic satisfactorily. The consequential impact of the pandemic, including higher workloads for healthcare workers, quality of healthcare provision, and the limited infrastructure and capacity of hospitals and health centres to manage increased out-patients and in-patients, provided lessons and identified opportunities for improvement.

Discussion below covers strategic health concerns, such as non-communicable diseases. Section 5 of this reports identifies some measures implemented in collaboration with development partners to improve healthcare capacity and infrastructure.

The short commentary on two selected headline indicators (sourced from the Ministry of Health and Medical Services) provide examples of progress being made, noting potential for under-reporting and data constraints which impact the assessment of the full status.

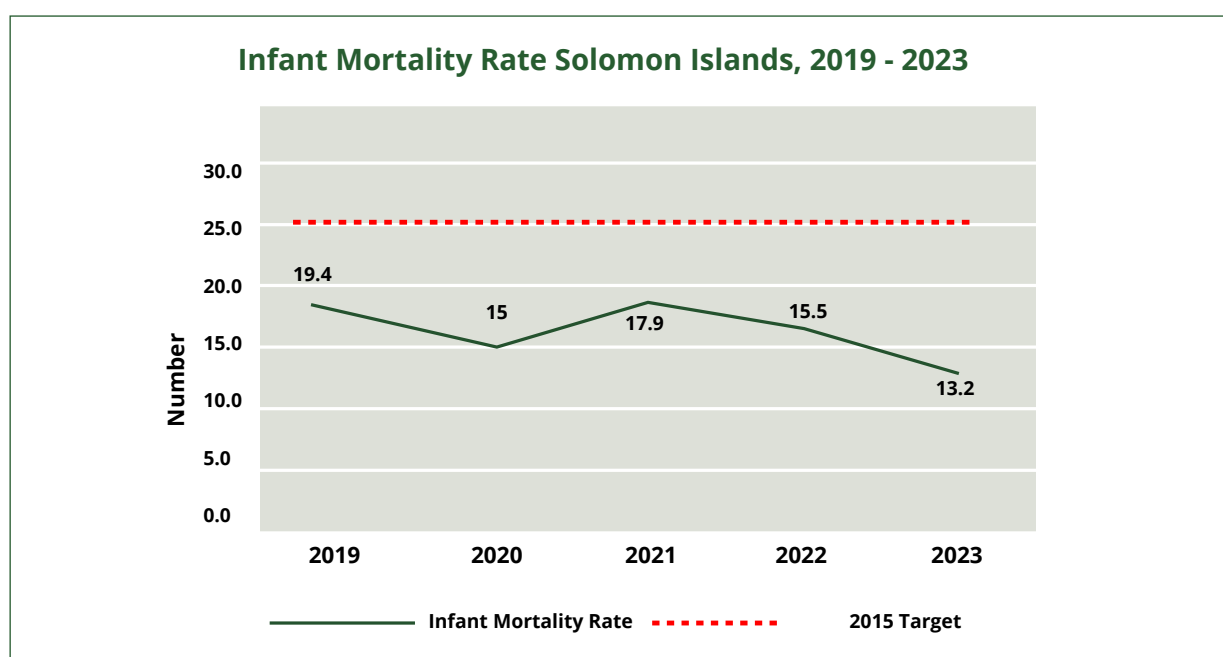


Figure 13. Maternal Mortality Lower in 2023



In 2023, the maternal mortality was 15 women, which decreased from 22 deaths in 2019. The number of maternal deaths between 2020 and 2023 averaged around 18, which is higher than targeted by the Government (Figure 13).

Figure 14. Infant and Under-five Mortality Rate



Similarly, a declining trend in infant mortality rate has been overserved with 19 and 13 deaths recorded in 2019 and 2023 respectively (Figure 14). A similar trend has been reported for under-five deaths, with 25 and 18 recorded in 2019 and 2023, respectively.

There is continuing concern about the high prevalence of unintended teenage pregnancies. The Government, in collaboration with national stakeholders and development partners, remains committed to ensuring access for adolescents and youths (including those with disabilities) to appropriate information and education. In addition, services have been improved in recent years for adolescents and youths to make informed choices about their sexuality and reproductive matters and protect them from unintended pregnancies, gender-based violence, and sexually transmitted infections, as per SDG target 3.7 and SDG target 5.6. More specifically, efforts are in progress to accelerate the achievement of the Solomon Islands Population Policy target of 44 births per 1,000 women aged 15-19 by 2025 as per the global average (compared to a reported estimate of 77 births per 1,000 women). With support from development partners, particularly UNFPA, progress has been made to integrate learning and counselling on such issues within the school system, with necessary follow-up services available upon completion of school education, including the provision of supplies for improving sexual and reproductive health outcomes. Further targeted support is needed.

Non-communicable Diseases

In 2019, the life expectancy at birth in Solomon Islands was 74.9 years for women and 71.3 years for men. In the same year, the mortality rate attributed to cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, and chronic respiratory disease was 44.1% for men and 33.9% for women.

While updated statistics on life expectancy are not available, data collected through the national health information system on the prevalence of selected non-communicable diseases (NCDs) is of concern. For instance, the number of patients presenting to health facilities with diabetes rose by around 6% between 2019 and 2023, with around 35% of all patients with some form of NCDs presenting with diabetes. Similarly, in 2023, around 38% of patients with NCDs presented to health facilities with hypertension.

Fight against Measles, Malaria and Tuberculosis

Communicable diseases also remain a challenge in the Solomon Islands. For instance, the malaria incidence rate increased from 112 per 1,000 population in 2020, to 158 recorded cases in 2023. The tuberculosis incidence was around 46 per 100,000 population in 2020, and 37 in 2023.

The percentage of children (aged 12-23 months) who received one measles vaccine in one year increased from around 81% in 2020 to 95% in 2023. Dedicated and ongoing partnerships, including with bilateral partners and the World Health Organization, have helped immensely to raise immunization rates across the Solomon Islands (Figure 15).

Figure 15. Measles-rubella vaccination support in Guadalcanal Province, 2023



Challenges and Opportunities

Several challenges remain when accessing healthcare, including medication shortages and transportation issues for remote communities. An array of interventions could boost healthcare progress building on initiatives to date, including the following:

- Increase investment in the health sector workforce. For example, the current nurse per 1,000 population ratio is around only 2 nurses. Investing in nursing and improving this ratio can derive up to four-fold returns.
- Strengthen implementation of activities at the provincial level, including through adequate budget allocation and development partner support for outreach to the majority of people living in rural areas.
- Strengthen the health information management system and improve monitoring and data for action.
- Improve access to basic sanitation systems in schools and householders. Only an estimated 17% of schools and 35% of households have access to basic sanitation services.
- Promote sexual and reproductive health, with dedicated budget allocations and further support from development partners to improve the use of modern contraceptives.

MTS 9: Access to Quality Education

Important reforms in the education sector for enhanced access, quality, and governance have taken place since 2020. The changes include legislative amendments, strategic initiatives, better infrastructure, and targeted service delivery improvements delivered in partnership with stakeholders. This section gives an insight into what has been achieved and remaining issues in the education sector.

Governance Reform

The Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development (MEHRD) is responsible for leading the achievement of education goals set out in the NDS 2016–2035 and the Education Strategic Framework (ESF) 2016–2030. The ESF outlines key goals and targets for education by 2030, drawing on the SDGs. The National Education Action Plan (NEAP) 2022–2026 translates the objectives of the Framework into a plan encompassing the entire education sector and focuses on three strategic goals: (i) improving access, (ii) improving quality and learning outcomes, and (iii) improving the management of education services. The NEAP also focuses on climate resilience and the narrowing of gender gaps.

Through the support of the Governments of Australia and New Zealand, MEHRD completed a key reform that commenced almost a decade ago under the Education Act 1978. The new Education Act 2023 effectively addresses gaps in the existing education system, as well as provides for improved delivery of education services at the Early Childhood Education, Primary, and Secondary levels of education. The new Act provides for clear lines of communication for better collaborative work and coordination between MEHRD and all education stakeholders, including education providers, schools, teachers, leaders, and school communities. However, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is not covered in the new Act.

The new Education Act is sensitive to the expanding education system and is designed to be robust, while also being flexible to respond to the current and future needs and aspirations of the people of Solomon Islands. This reform is the largest and most comprehensive change to the education system since independence. The new Act focuses on systems that are more effective and efficient in delivering education services to all Solomon Islanders. An Education Regulation was put in place in February 2024 that provides instructions on various aspects of school management, including fees and charges (see box in page 52).



School Fees Limit Compliance

As you may be aware, the new Education Act 2023 (referred to as the “Act”) and the Education Regulations 2024 (referred to as the “Regulation”) have been gazetted and become effective on 1 January 2024 and 15 February 2024 respectively.

Therefore, the Ministry advises all Education Providers (EPs) and Schools that, in accordance to section 53 (2) of the Regulations, the maximum allowable school fees for a student in a year are as follows:

Education Level	Maximum fee for day students		Maximum fee for boarding students	
	Urban School	Non - Urban School	Urban School	Non - Urban School
Primary Education	\$1,200	\$250		
Junior Secondary Education	\$2,000	\$800	\$4,500	\$2,800
Senior Secondary School	\$4,000	\$3,000	\$9,000	\$7,200

All EPs and School are advised, that subject to section 53 (3) of the Regulation, no other fees or levies of any kind may be charged for the enrollment or attendance of a student at school for:

- i. Enrolling a student in a school; or
- ii. Placing a student on a waiting list for enrollment; or transferring a student from one school to another; or
- iii. Sitting an examination or participation in schools-based assessment.

It is an offence of EPs and school leaders to charge fees without the approval of the Ministry through the Education Board of each EP and School Board.



Challenges and Opportunities

Overall, an under-resourced education system means there is limited opportunity for many children, particularly those in remote areas, to enrol in school. The dropout rates for different grades from 2020 to 2023 show that dropout rates are higher among male students compared to female students. The final years in secondary school have the highest rate of dropouts. Moreover, there are minimal opportunities for higher educational studies because most institutions are only located in the capital city.

Solomon Islands spent about 30% of its annual national budget on education in 2023, with close to \$60 million in additional development funding. Despite this significant budget support and a fee-free policy for primary and junior secondary education, schools at all levels have the right to charge school fees. The financial situation of schools impacts teaching and learning, particularly due to limited education facilities, equipment and materials.

The NEAP notes that learning outcomes, measured by standardized tests in numeracy and literacy, have improved in recent years. This is attributed to an increased number of certified teachers; new syllabi, teachers' guides, and learning materials in primary and junior levels; and the professional development of teachers. Major support projects and programs from development partners have significantly assisted with better outcomes in this regard, including through the Leadership Education Authorities Program.

Despite progress in providing access to Early Years education, long-term trends indicated in the ESF suggest that key challenges across the sector are: (i) the quality of teaching and learning; (ii) lack of adequate resources; (iii) teacher professionalism; (iv) high overage enrollments; (v) high levels of repetition in primary years; (vi) low survival rates across the school years; (vii) provincial differences in age-appropriate enrollments; (viii) gender inequalities; (ix) infrastructure shortages; and (x) government budget limitations that require schools to charge fees for all levels of education and/or government direction of funding, e.g., tertiary education scholarships.

The ESF notes that most students leave school well before their senior secondary years. Factors known to contribute to this are: (i) infrastructure shortages; (ii) the cost of education; (iii) parent or student choice; (iv) lack of accessibility to nearby schools; and (v) a curriculum seen as being too academic and not matched with job market needs. As a result, from 2020 to 2023, the number of students not admitted to the next grade after secondary school Level 12 was 81.4%, 91.4%, 82.9% and 82.3%, respectively. In comparison, after Level 9 and Level 11, the rate of students admitted to the next level during the same period was relatively higher, although the number of students not progressing to complete secondary education remains a concern.

Gender-related barriers limit girls' participation in education, such as a lack of inclusive school infrastructure, high rates of adolescent pregnancy, child and gender-based violence, and social norms that value men in education and employment. However, the Solomon Islands is making significant strides in providing equal access to quality educational opportunities. School enrolment

data for 2020 to 2023 provides an indicator for gender inclusivity at several educational levels within the Solomon Islands. In 2020, out of a student enrolment of 178,837 at all levels, there were 93,393 males (52%) and 85,444 females (48%). In 2023, the figures stood at 191,374, with an increase to 97,961 for males (51%) and to 93,413 for females (49%). Although there was a slight increase in both female and male enrolment by 2023, further efforts for ensuring equal access to education are needed.

However, the imbalance in the number of female-to-male children is less noticeable in the secondary years of schooling. This could be interpreted as an indication of girls being more likely to remain in school as they progress through the school system. In 2023, more females were enrolled in national secondary schools than males. However, across post-primary education, the participation of girls is lower in the science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) subjects, as well as TVET.

The ESF identifies groups at risk of being excluded, such as girls, children with specific learning needs, children who primarily speak other dialects, children living in remote areas, and children from low economic backgrounds. About 11% of the population aged 5 years and over reported at least one functional form of disability. This was especially prevalent among those with some difficulty in seeing (10.6%), with more females (51%) than males (49%) affected. The prevalence of these disabilities was higher in rural areas than in urban areas. Moreover, about 1% of the population aged 5 years and over reported a severe form of disability. The data shows that there is a need to strengthen the support systems for vulnerable groups in the Solomon Islands, including rural healthcare infrastructure, facilities and teaching aids for inclusive education.

Slow progress in developing new secondary curricula, limited range and outdated teaching practices, and the lack of professional development of teachers and school leaders contribute to low student performance. Senior secondary education is mainly focused on preparing students for tertiary-level studies, and although there are some exceptions, it tends to have a limited focus on practical skills to prepare students for the job market. Content like climate change, ICT, gender equality, critical thinking, conflict resolution, and disaster resilience are planned for progressive introduction into different levels of school curricula.

To address these challenges, Solomon Islands has identified priority improvement areas in the ESF: (i) expanded access to secondary education and improved gender-responsive, inclusive, and climate-resilient educational infrastructure; (ii) improved quality and relevance of teaching and learning; and (iii) strengthened educational management and systems.

On gender inclusion, Figure 16 below shows an example of a new infrastructure to improve access to education for girls, where MEHRD, in partnership with the Governments of Australia and New Zealand, provided a new dormitory and ablution block to support the enrollment of girls at Siro High School, Central Province. A similar upgrade was recently completed for Lusalemba Secondary School in Temotu Province.

Figure 16. New accommodation facilities for girls at Siro High School



Noting the importance of strengthening education management capacity and systems to improve quality, efficiency, and effectiveness in the sector, several activities and programs have been undertaken. Building capacity to improve processes and accountability strengthen the collection of sex-disaggregated data; planning and budgeting; asset management and maintenance plans; forecasting education needs; monitoring and evaluation of projects; and reporting on improvements.

MEHRD, together with its key partners, has implemented policies and regulations and delivered training to assist primary and secondary school teachers to meet certification standards, which will ultimately improve the quality of teaching and learning in the Solomon Islands. The training programs are delivered in partnership with tertiary institutions and allow for the ongoing delivery of teacher training activities. For example, STEM educators continue to be provided tailored workshops and upskilling programs to enhance their knowledge and skills. A recent workshop held in March 2024 aimed to upskill STEM teachers on the use of innovative delivery mechanisms and technology (Figure 17).

Figure 17. Workshop for STEM teachers



4.4 NDS Objective 4: Resilient and Environmentally Sustainable Development



PROGRESS

As a nation highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and natural disasters, this strategic objective has been a top priority for the Government. Over the past four years, a tailored and coordinated approach has been adopted to build the resilience of local communities and safeguard the natural environment.

MTS 10: Improve Disaster and Climate Risk Management

Solomon Islands has made significant progress in strengthening its disaster and climate risk management capabilities since 2020. Key achievements include: establishing a National Disaster Management Office to coordinate preparedness; response and recovery efforts, integrating climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction into national policies and plans; enhancing community-based disaster risk management; and improving early warning systems and emergency response capabilities. Coordination mechanisms between national, provincial and community stakeholders have also been strengthened, and external climate finance has been channelled into adaptation and resilience-building projects.

In this context, Objective Four of the National Development Strategy reinforces the Government's commitment to cope with the growing impacts of building resilience to climate change and disasters, with specific targets and indicators to track progress. Similarly, the new National Climate Change Policy 2022-2030 provides a comprehensive framework for mainstreaming climate action across all development sectors.



Disaster Risk Management, Awareness and Preparedness

Over the past four years, Solomon Islands has strengthened its national disaster resilience and preparedness capabilities. This progress has been driven by a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach, with strong leadership from the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO), and active participation and partnership with provincial authorities, civil society, development partners, and local communities.

In 2020, the Government launched its National Disaster Management Plan, outlining a comprehensive strategy to enhance disaster risk reduction, emergency response, and post-disaster recovery. This Plan has served as a guiding framework for coordinated action across ministries and sectors.

A key achievement has been the operationalization of the NDMO as the central coordinating body for disaster management during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. The NDMO worked to strengthen early warning systems, improve data collection and analysis, and enhance emergency planning and response procedures. This has included the establishment of a 24/7 emergency operations centre and the pre-positioning of relief supplies in high-risk areas.

The Integrated Disaster Risk Management project focused on decentralizing and strengthening disaster management and risk reduction capabilities at the provincial and community levels. Building upon the groundbreaking work done in Central Islands Province, where comprehensive vulnerability assessments were carried out, the project expanded to community-based disaster risk management initiatives in other vulnerable provinces, including Guadalcanal, Temotu, and Western. A particularly notable success was the strengthening of disaster management capacity in Temotu Province. By recruiting a dedicated staff, the province was able to significantly strengthen its ability to implement the national disaster management plan at the local level. This capability was activated when Temotu was hit by a series of tropical cyclones in late 2023 and early 2024, which triggered the Provincial Disaster Management Office into action, coordinating response and recovery efforts and providing vital support to affected communities.

Another significant step forward in this regard was the completion of the Choiseul Provincial Emergency Operations Centre in early 2024 (Figure 18). This facility will greatly enhance the province's capacity and capability to coordinate emergency response and recovery efforts. Equipped with advanced communications and information management systems, the Centre will serve as a critical hub for disaster operations, ensuring a more cohesive and effective provincial-level response when the next crisis hits. Recognizing that effective disaster management requires a whole-of-society approach, the Government has also worked to strengthen the coordination capacities of provincial disaster committees (PDCs) and provincial disaster operations centres (P-DOCs) in other vulnerable areas, including in Guadalcanal Province and Honiara City. These sub-national institutions have had their disaster management capabilities strengthened, with a particular emphasis on ensuring gender-responsive approaches.

Figure 18. Newly installed Choiseul Provincial Emergency Operations Centre



In its effort to combat and address the impacts of increasingly volatile climate trends, the Government is taking decisive action to strengthen the country's early warning capabilities. It recognizes that empowering communities with timely, accurate, and actionable information is the first and most crucial line of defence against natural disasters.

Securing adequate financing has been a critical enabler of this progress. The Government has actively mobilized climate and disaster risk financing from international sources, including the Green Climate Fund and multilateral and bilateral development partners. These resources have supported investments in resilient infrastructure, nature-based solutions, and community-led adaptation initiatives.

Solomon Islands Meteorological Service

At the forefront of these efforts to boost the capacity and capabilities of our national and local early warning infrastructure is the Solomon Islands Meteorological Service (SIMS). SIMS plays a vital role in monitoring natural hazards and disseminating lifesaving information to vulnerable communities. Building on the success of past initiatives to equip SIMS with state-of-the-art hydrometeorological equipment and to conduct community-based early warning trainings, the Government has taken the next step in strengthening this critical institution. In December 2023, a newly constructed National Weather Forecasting Office was opened, which will enable SIMS to deliver early warning services more efficiently and effectively to a wide range of stakeholders across the country.

Integrating Disaster Risk Reduction into Planning

As mentioned above, the Government has taken significant steps to integrate disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation into its national and sectoral development plans. This includes conducting detailed risk assessments to inform infrastructure investments, updating building codes to incorporate climate-resilient design standards, and establishing disaster risk financing mechanisms to protect against economic losses.

During the first quarter of 2022, the National Disaster Operations Committee (N-DOC) provided valuable support in COVID-19 response planning processes. This collaboration led to the development of a COVID-19 Response Plan, which was endorsed in early 2022. The six N-DOC Sector Committees contributed to the plan preparation, which was instrumental in ensuring a coordinated and comprehensive response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Empowering Local Communities

Community-based disaster risk management is another step in integrating disaster risk reduction. The NDMO has worked closely with provincial authorities and local CSOs to train community members in disaster preparedness, early warning and emergency response. The NDMO has also facilitated the integration of traditional knowledge and coping mechanisms into these community-based initiatives. For example, the Integrated Disaster Risk Management project commenced implementation in 2022 and focussed on new office facilities in the provinces, NDMO change management initiatives, Climate Change Integrated Vulnerability Assessments, CSO partnerships and grants, and the recruitment of additional personnel to support project activities, such as tsunami preparedness in schools and communities.

In addition, communities identified as high risk in the Solomon Islands Integrated Vulnerability Assessment (SIIVA) have been provided disaster risk management training, through dedicated and newly established projects (see box below).

Solomon Islands Integrated Vulnerability Assessment

Staff in the Central Islands Province were trained on SIIVA methodology and deployed to provide local knowledge and training. Approximately 8, 200 people from 21 Communities in 13 wards in Central Province now have climate vulnerability profiles, drone images, and coast survey data to undertake risk-informed initiatives in their local communities to preserve the surrounding environment and improve their livelihoods and basic services. The assessed communities received basic information about climate change, its potential impacts on communities, and the need to consider climate and disaster risks in their daily lives. A climate risk database stores all SIIVA coastal assessment data and drone images to support decision-making and risk-informed development.

Disaster Response and Recovery

In recent years, Solomon Islands has faced an increasing frequency and intensity of natural disasters, from tropical cyclones and floods to earthquakes and tsunamis. These events have had devastating impacts on communities, disrupting livelihoods, damaging critical infrastructure, and setting back hard-won development gains.

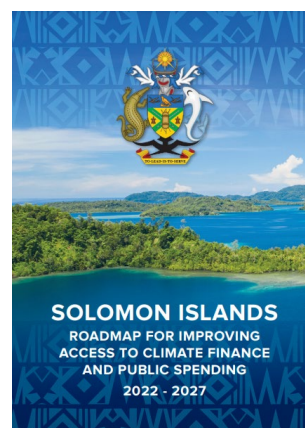
To strengthen national disaster response and recovery capabilities and ensure that affected populations were better supported in the aftermath of these crises, the Government established the National Disaster Recovery Framework. This Framework, developed in close consultation with provincial authorities and CSOs, outlines clear roles and responsibilities for various government agencies, as well as detailed procedures for assessing damage, mobilizing resources, and implementing recovery programs following a natural disaster. Importantly, the disaster recovery process is designed to be inclusive and participatory, with local communities playing a central role in decision-making and implementation. This has not only improved the relevance and effectiveness of recovery programs but also fostered a sense of ownership and empowerment among affected populations.

Furthermore, the Government has placed a strong emphasis on incorporating disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation measures into the recovery and reconstruction process. This includes adopting updated building codes, integrating nature-based solutions for environmental restoration, and strengthening early warning and emergency response systems.

Mobilizing Climate and Disaster Risk Financing

The Government has been proactive in accessing international climate and disaster risk financing mechanisms to implement climate adaptation and disaster resilience initiatives. However, further funding and resources are needed to support improved adaptation and resilience across the country. Lower transaction costs and improved access to and management of external financing are critical, especially given capacity constraints in technical aspects needed in the application and implementation processes. Funds accessed to date have supported investments in early warning systems, resilient infrastructure, nature-based solutions for coastal protection, and community-led adaptation projects.

In addition, a Roadmap for Improving Access to Climate Finance and Public Spending, 2022-2027, was launched to provide strategic objectives and an action plan to guide the work of MoFT's dedicated Climate Finance Resilience Unit (Figure 18). The Roadmap focuses on increasing access to climate finance, strengthening internal financial and management systems, building capacity to adapt to the impacts of climate change, and enhancing coordination between the Government and other stakeholders. It emphasizes the need for an enabling environment, inter alia, the adoption of a robust legal and policy framework, and a risk-informed planning and budgeting framework to respond to climate change, natural disasters and social exclusion risks.



MTS 11: Sustainable Environment and Climate Change Mitigation

As a nation blessed with rich natural resources and vibrant ecological systems, Solomon Islands has long recognized the critical importance of environmental protection and climate change mitigation in its pursuit of sustainable development. In this regard, the Government has progressed with tangible actions and results on the ground over the past four years.

At the policy level, the National Environment Management Strategy 2020-2030 and the National Climate Change Policy 2022-2030 have provided a robust and coherent framework for coordinating and driving environmental and climate action across various sectors. These frameworks have helped mainstream sustainability considerations into national and sectoral development plans, as well as ensured the allocation of dedicated resources and establishment of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

Improved Programs to Effectively Develop and Manage the Environment Sustainably

The Government has made significant progress in the implementation of its environmental protection and restoration initiatives. Firstly, it intensified its efforts to safeguard and revitalize the nation's invaluable forest ecosystems. Forests play a crucial role in absorbing carbon, preserving biodiversity, and supporting the livelihoods of local communities. To this end, the Government has established protected areas, increased community-based resource management, implemented sustainable forest management practices, and scaled up reforestation and agroforestry programs across the country.

One of the key milestones achieved is community-based resource management (CBRM) mapping for all nine provinces. The mapping results show communities implementing some form of CBRM, either formalized arrangement such as Marine Protected Areas, with a written management plan and practices, or with some traditional restrictions on the type of fish and gear used to catch fish that is not written in a formal plan.



Some provinces have had more investments than other provinces, which identified entry points for stakeholder support to improve CBRM across the country. For example, the Malaita Provincial Government made important progress on conservation through the Baru Conservation Alliance, a locally-driven initiative that is making significant strides in safeguarding the island's natural heritage. The Alliance has thoroughly mapped and delineated the boundaries of three key conservation areas on Malaita, Kwainaa'isi, Kafarumu, and Aifasu, which span a total of 5.7 square km. As part of this effort, the Alliance has provided vital training to a dedicated team of local rangers on harnessing GPS technology, setting up camera traps to survey biodiversity, and rigorously documenting their findings. This capacity-building not only strengthens conservation efforts, but also empowers Malaitan communities to be the stewards of their own natural resources. The Alliance has observed that these conservation initiatives are yielding tangible benefits for local livelihoods and cultural exchange. This has not gone unnoticed by other tribal leaders, who are increasingly recognizing the value of safeguarding their natural heritage. In a testament to the grassroots momentum, 12 additional local groups on Malaita have now expressed interest in joining the Alliance and pledging portions of their lands and seas for conservation. This growing network of community-driven efforts offers a promising outlook for the long-term preservation of Malaita's unique and irreplaceable ecosystems.

Waste and Pollution

Waste management and pollution control remain a significant challenge. Outdated and insufficient waste treatment options are contributing to environmental degradation and public health risks. To address these issues, the Solomon Islands Waste Management and Pollution Control Strategy 2017-2026 was developed. This Strategy aims to strengthen waste management systems, limit pollution, and mitigate the impacts on our natural resources and water security. The situation in the capital city of Honiara is particularly concerning, where an estimated 80 tons of municipal waste is generated daily. In 2019, only 59% of Honiara's households had access to solid waste collection services, with even lower coverage in the surrounding peri-urban areas.

To address these challenges, recent progress has included:

- The introduction of the Environment (Single Use Plastic Ban) Regulation 2023 in September 2023. It aims to curb plastic pollution by prohibiting the import, manufacture, sale and supply of certain single-use plastic products. The five items listed in the regulation include plastic shopping bags; plastic straws; plastic cups, plates and cutlery; polystyrene foam takeaway containers, plates and cups; and polyethylene terephthalate (PET) water bottles containing less than 1.5 litres.
- The Gizo Town Council and Gizo Market have a project supported by the European Union and the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) to collect and compost organic waste. In addition, the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology (MECDM) is introducing legislation to improve recycling rates.

- The Marine Litter Pilot Project funded by the Agence Française de Développement and implemented by SPREP engages local communities to conduct beach clean-ups and collect data on types of waste. A Used-Oil Pilot Project has developed a National Used Oil Management Plan and is supporting the construction of a used oil storage facility in partnership with a local recycling company.
- An Australian-funded regional project implemented by SPREP was the Safe and Green Games Strategy for the Pacific Games, which involved the development of the Environment (Single Use Plastic Ban) Regulation 2023; awareness campaigns on plastic pollution on all forms of media platforms; and the provision of recycling bins at the sporting event venues.
- With support from the ADB, a project implemented in 2023 aimed to strengthen the capacities of implementing agencies, MECDM and Honiara City Council, as well as to enhance coordination between them. A follow-up project will include the development of a new waste management and resource recovery facility to reduce the carbon footprint of Honiara's waste sector, the closure and rehabilitation of the existing dumpsite, the expansion of waste collection services, institutional strengthening, and support for behaviour change campaigns, policies, and regulations.

The Government has taken a proactive stance in addressing waste and pollution management through its participation in various regional and international environmental conventions. At the regional level, the country is a party to the Waigani Convention, which bans the export of hazardous or radioactive waste to Pacific Islands Forum countries and prohibits the importation of such waste. Internationally, the Solomon Islands has also signed the Stockholm Convention, a global treaty aimed at protecting human health and the environment from the effects of persistent organic pollutants, and has recently acceded to and ratified the Basel Convention, which is a global environmental agreement on hazardous and other wastes.

Increase Support for Climate Change Mitigation

Despite being a net zero emitter, the Government has made a concerted effort to increase support for climate change mitigation efforts, including in renewable energy technologies, promoting sustainable land use practices, and implementing policies and programs that aim to reduce greenhouse gas emissions across key sectors of the economy.

The Government ratified the Paris Agreement in 2016 with a strong call to pursue efforts to limit the global average temperature increase to 1.5C above pre-industrial levels. In its revised Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), the Government increased its emission ambition by targeting a net zero emission by 2050, as compared to a 45% emission reduction by 2050 in its initial NDC. Notwithstanding, the Solomon Islands remains a negative carbon emitter given that removals through standing forests are more than 30 times the country's emissions.

Sirebe Tribe Carbon Trading

One of the success stories in Choiseul Province aligned to the NDS Objective 4, MTS 11, is the Sirebe Tribal Association which operates as the Sirebe Business Company under the Babatana Rainforest Conservation Project. The Tribal Association became the first conservation site in the country to receive carbon credit from carbon trading in September 2022 and has since been receiving carbon credit on a quarterly basis. It took more than ten years to set-up the conservation area, register the land, and partner with institutions.

The Tribal Association receives an amount of over \$300,000 in quarterly payments for carbon credit, with an estimated amount of around \$1.2 million per year. The project helps fund the school fees for children from kindergarten to tertiary level; water supplies and sanitation; building of permanent houses; and livelihood projects, such as fishing, mechanical and metal workshops. A certain percentage gained from carbon credit is dedicated to women empowerment initiatives. The project is sustainable and has already enabled access to education, improved infrastructure access to clean water, better sanitation, and income generating activities.



Biodiversity Conservation

The Government recognizes the critical importance of biodiversity conservation for economic, social, and cultural well-being. However, an overall decline in biodiversity is of concern, with 16 plant species and 20 out of 53 mammal species listed as threatened on the IUCN Red List. This erosion is partly due to the increased importation of agricultural species and products, leading to a shift away from traditional local food varieties, with many indigenous crops being lost. Several protected areas are in place to preserve ecosystems and assist with restoring biodiversity (see box below).

Six protected areas have been declared in Solomon Islands

These include five terrestrial forest covered spaces: Padezaka Tribal Rainforest Conservation Areas (4,800 hectares), Siporae Rainforest Conservation Area (666 hectares), Sirebe Forest Conservation Area (800 hectares), Vuri Forest Conservation Area (578 hectares) and Kira Forest Biodiversity Protected Areas (678 hectares). In addition, the Arnavon Community Marine Park includes 16,909 hectares of marine protected areas.

These sites are legally protected with yet increasing expression of interests from various communities throughout Solomon Islands.



Forestry

The Government has been working to strengthen the regulatory framework for the forestry sector, with the completion of the Timber Production and Export Association regulations and Forestry Plantation Regulations in 2020. The Government is also in the final stages of drafting a new Forestry Bill, though the process has been delayed due to limited resources and the influence of powerful forest user groups.

Additionally, educating communities on the environmental and social challenges related to climate change, deforestation, and forest degradation, as well as promoting REDD+ as a model for good forest governance and sustainable resource utilization, have been ongoing activities over the past years.



Challenges and Opportunities

- The success of the NDS depends on its ability to address environmental sustainability and build climate resilience. The archipelago faces challenges such as deforestation, marine pollution, and natural disasters exacerbated by climate change. To address these challenges, the Solomon Islands has developed policies for sustainable natural resource management, biodiversity conservation, and renewable energy sources. The country has also raised awareness of environmental conservation and engaged in international efforts to combat climate change. However, climate change remains a significant threat to the country's natural resources and livelihoods, highlighting the need to prioritize measures that enhance climate resilience and mitigate the adverse effects of environmental degradation.
- Vulnerability to natural disasters such as cyclones and earthquakes, which set back the progress of infrastructure and livelihoods, has an impact on progress in policy implementation.
- Deforestation and the impact of climate change on coastal areas affect the design and practice of climate change policies.
- Investing in climate-resilient infrastructure, implementing sustainable land-use practices, and adopting coastal protection measures are key to protecting the Solomon Islands' ecosystems and communities. Empowering local communities and collaborating with regional and international partners for technical support, funding, and knowledge sharing are also critical. Strengthening partnerships for climate adaptation and mitigation can provide valuable assistance for building resilience and promoting sustainable development. Therefore, it is crucial for the Solomon Islands to prioritize the preservation of natural resources, implement adaptive measures, and leverage partnerships to achieve their sustainability and climate resilience objectives.
- With the increase in funding and partners in the climate change space, there is a need to strengthen coordination amongst all relevant shareholders to be able to maximise benefits through collaboration, better target support for transformative initiatives, and avoid duplication.



4.5 NDS Objective 5: Stable and Effective Governance and Public Order

PROGRESS

Objective 5 of the National Development Strategy (NDS) focuses on achieving stable and effective governance and public order. This objective recognizes the importance of strong institutions, transparent decision-making processes, and maintaining law and order for the overall development and well-being of the country.

The Government is committed to achieving stable and effective governance through the NDS. This includes enhancing the capacity and professionalism of key institutions like the judiciary and public administration. Efforts are underway to promote transparency, accountability, and ethical standards in governance processes.

The Government is also focused on upholding the rule of law, improving access to justice, and maintaining public order and safety through effective law enforcement. Additionally, it recognizes the importance of decentralized governance and is working to strengthen the capacity of provincial and local authorities to better serve their communities.

MTS 12: Efficient and Effective Public Service

The Government's reform efforts centre on developing a high-performing, ethical, and service-oriented public sector. This has involved implementing performance management systems, where civil servants undergo regular assessments. Those who excel are rewarded through promotions, bonuses, and training opportunities. The Government has also invested heavily in leadership development programs to instill a stronger sense of strategic thinking, innovation, and people management skills among senior officials.

The Ministry of Public Service (MPS) has reviewed its Performance Management Policy, which is used to manage performance in its workforce and create a high-performance culture. It also aims to create a motivating environment, with recognition and rewards for outstanding performers. The Ministry of Public Service started contracting officers at the Deputy Secretary level about three years ago and recently started contracting officers at the Director level, aimed to increase accountability and establish performance benchmarks.

Digitizing core government functions has been a key priority. Significant resources have been allocated to upgrading IT infrastructure across ministries and agencies, as well as building the data analysis and digital skills of civil servants. This has enabled the Government to streamline administrative processes, improve transparency through online portals, and deliver public services more efficiently and responsively.

Recognizing the importance of citizen engagement, the Government has institutionalized regular public consultations and feedback mechanisms. Citizens can now more easily access information about government activities, policies, and spending through user-friendly online platforms. This has enhanced transparency and allowed the government to better understand and address community needs and concerns.

While the reforms have yielded tangible improvements, the Government acknowledges that challenges remain. Issues such as entrenched bureaucratic culture, limited resources, and capacity gaps in some agencies continue to hamper the pace of change. Ongoing efforts are focused on sustaining the reform momentum, strengthening inter-agency coordination, and fostering a more adaptive and innovative public service ethos.

Overall, the public sector transformation underway in the Solomon Islands is critical to improving public trust and positioning the Solomon Islands for inclusive development.

MTS 13: Reduce Corruption and Improve Governance at National, Provincial and Community Levels

Good governance and integrity in public institutions are essential pillars of the Solomon Islands' national development agenda. Comprehensive reforms are needed to tackle corruption and enhance transparency and accountability across all levels of the public sector.

At the national level, the Government established an independent Anti-Corruption Commission in 2019, with a legal mandate to investigate and prosecute corruption cases, with accompanying legislation. Capacity building to support investigations and prosecution remains in progress, aimed at raising the effectiveness of the Commission.

Figure 19. Building capacity to strengthen skills to investigate cases of corruption



Complementary public awareness campaigns have been delivered to educate citizens on their rights and clarify ways to report corrupt practices. In parallel, improvement in governance at the provincial and community levels has been pursued, noting the devolution of more administrative and fiscal authority from the central government. Crucially, the Government empowered civil society and the media to play a watchdog role in monitoring government performance and integrity (see box below).

Development Services Exchange

The Development Services Exchange is the umbrella body for all CSOs and have successfully advocated to be included within key government decision making processes. Transparency Solomon Islands is supporting young activists in the country by facilitating the Youth for Democracy Network (YFDN). This Network was established following the successful hosting of the Youth Democracy Camps, which empowered young citizens to advocate for transparency, good governance, and citizen rights. The YFDN now actively engages in outreach, radio discussions, parliamentary submissions, and election observations, bolstering transparency and accountability.

MTS 14: Improve National Unity, Peace, and Promote Cultural Heritage

The Government recognizes that safeguarding the country's rich cultural heritage and empowering its diverse communities are essential for building a cohesive nation.

Traditional art and craft galleries and retail outlets have been developed to preserve and showcase unique artefacts and traditional knowledge. Such facilities have created a vibrant space for commerce, with art and craft products in demand from visitors and locals.

Through the Customary Land Tenure Act, traditional landowners have been given authority to manage their ancestral lands. In addition, a Customary Land Dispute Resolution Tribunal has been established to address land conflicts in a culturally sensitive manner.

In addition, progress has been made on the Traditional Governance and Customs Facilitation Bill to formally recognize the authority of village chiefs and elders in resolving local disputes, implement national policies on reintegrating those involved in past conflicts and prevent future conflicts, as well as establish a strategic partnership with churches to support peacebuilding efforts. These comprehensive initiatives demonstrate the importance of promoting unity, stability, and lasting peace across the country.

The hosting of the 2023 Pacific Games was a significant milestone achievement by Solomon Islands demonstrating unity in diversity. The Games ignited a high spirit of unity amongst Solomon Islanders and the participating Pacific neighbouring countries. It was the largest regional sporting event Solomon Islands has ever hosted, and took place during the reporting period of this VNR (see box).

2023 Pacific Games

The Solomon Islands Government successfully hosted the 2023 XVII Pacific Games, a testament to the power of partnerships and a shared vision. The Government's proactive bid in 2016 and the 2017 Pacific Games Act provided the legal and organizational framework for the event. The theme of the Games, "Challenge, Celebrate, and Unite", inspired stakeholders across sectors to work collaboratively, strengthening the position of Solomon Islands as a regional leader. The opening ceremony and inclusive sporting program showcased Pacific unity and diversity, while the event strengthened bonds of friendship throughout the region. The seamless execution of the Games was made possible through the full cooperation and active participation of all involved, including government agencies, volunteers, and the wider community.



Democratic participation and civic engagement have been progressively strengthened, with a focus on empowering citizens to understand their rights, responsibilities, and the avenues available for political involvement. A key component of this effort is the "Tok, Act, Engage!" toolkit developed by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems. This innovative set of educational games and materials was used to engage young people in democratic processes, elections, and community engagement. By equipping the next generation with this knowledge, the Government is investing in the resilience of Solomon Islands' democracy.

Figure 20. Engaging youth in the democratic processes



The Government has also taken steps to enhance inclusion and representation in the electoral process. The Solomon Islands Electoral Commission accredited people with disabilities to serve as electoral observers in the 2024 National Elections, allowing them to actively participate and have a voice. Additionally, the Commission's Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Policy aims to address the barriers faced by marginalized groups, such as women and minorities, in political and civic engagement. Through targeted strategies and capacity building, the Government is working to ensure that all citizens have an equal opportunity to participate in shaping the country's future. The peaceful transition of power through free and fair national elections held in April 2024 was especially noteworthy.

MTS 15: Improve National Security, Law and Order and Foreign Relations

The Government remains firmly committed to ensuring national security and stability. In 2020, the Ministry of Police, National Security and Correctional Services conducted a thorough review of the national security landscape, which informed the development of a new National Security Strategy. This has provided a coherent framework to guide priorities and actions. The National Security Strategy aims to integrate traditional security approaches with emerging threats. It recognizes the importance of addressing key national development agendas from a security perspective, and treats issues such as health, climate change, unemployment, and social issues as national security concerns.

With the support of development partners, progress has been made to modernize and professionalize the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force. This includes enhancing capacities through training, equipment, and intelligence-gathering to improve effectiveness. Recognizing the growing threats in the digital domain, initial measures to strengthen cyber security have also been taken, including through promoting awareness.

Regionally, Solomon Islands has elevated its security cooperation through joint exercises and intelligence-sharing with neighbouring countries and multilateral organizations. This has strengthened the collective ability to respond to national and shared threats. To enhance community engagement, the Government has expanded Community-based Crime Prevention Committees across the country. This empowers local citizens to work closely with the police to identify and address security concerns.

On the international front, Solomon Islands continues to forge diversified partnerships, establishing strengthened and new ties with strategic countries in the Asia-Pacific, Europe, and the United States of America. The COVID-19 pandemic and the national security events prompted meaningful and sustained engagement and support from bilateral partners, demonstrating the importance of good international relations.

Trade agreements have been renewed with important partners, including Australia, New Zealand and European Union. For instance, the temporary movement of labour to Australia and New Zealand provides income-earning opportunities for unemployed youths and unskilled workers, helping to support their families through remittances. Development cooperation and coordination processes and mechanisms have been institutionalized for more effectiveness. Progress has been made to strengthen border controls and maritime surveillance.

Challenges and Opportunities

While reforms have been implemented to enhance accountability and the rule of law, bureaucratic inefficiencies, limited access to justice, and efficiency of public service delivery continue to pose challenges. These issues hinder the effective functioning of government institutions and hamper sustainable development.

To address these challenges, a comprehensive approach is needed to enhance the capacities of public institutions and streamline bureaucratic processes. Strengthening legal and regulatory frameworks and investing in the professional development of public servants can also contribute to improving the overall governance landscape.

Capacity constraints, including limited resources and institutional inefficiencies, continue to hamper the effectiveness of governance and public services. For example, a diagnostic report prepared by MNPDC noted that only six ministries have monitoring and evaluation capacity, impacting the timing and quality of annual reporting, which is needed to improve transparency and accountability. Tailored interventions with the support of development partners could assist in further strengthening national planning and policy implementation systems and processes.

5. Partnerships, Enabling Mechanisms, and Means of Implementation

Solomon Islands continues to develop durable partnerships, improve enabling systems, and strengthen means of implementation for NDS and SDG priorities.

5.1 Partnerships

Solomon Islands has focused on fostering meaningful partnerships with key development partners to support the implementation of the NDS and relevant SDG commitments. Engagement with bilateral partners and multilateral organizations was most evident in the level of funding and development assistance provided during the COVID-19 pandemic and the security incidents experienced in late 2021.

Examples of partnerships include the establishment of an increased diplomatic presence in Honiara, new projects and programmes including those to support the 2023 Pacific Games, and several regional cooperation initiatives to support security needs. Bilateral and multilateral partnerships have collectively provided significant financial and technical assistance for infrastructure development, public sector and civil society capacity building, and social services delivery.

For example, the Pacific Partnership, an invaluable multinational cooperation between the Solomon Islands, United States, and other partner nations, concluded in late December 2023 after 14 days of medical, humanitarian and disaster response, engineering, and host nation outreach efforts in the Solomon Islands (Figure 21). Now in its 19th iteration, the Pacific Partnership is the largest annual multinational humanitarian assistance and disaster relief preparedness mission conducted in the Indo-Pacific. It works to enhance regional interoperability and disaster response capabilities, increase security stability in the region, and foster new and enduring friendships. Due to the success of the Pacific Partnership, the Solomon Islands Government invited the return of USNS Mercy, where the team supported the Solomon Islands' medical infrastructure by augmenting local clinics and the National Referral Hospital during the 2023 Pacific Games. During the mission stop, personnel from the U.S. Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and Army, along with military personnel from Japan, Germany, the United Kingdom and New Zealand, collaborated with Solomon Island professionals to enhance capabilities across the engineering, humanitarian assistance disaster relief, and host nation outreach lines of effort.

Figure 21. Optometry services were provided during a community health engagement, as part of Pacific Partnership



Throughout their two-week stay in the Solomon Islands, the Pacific Partnership conducted more than 352 medical engagements, including 2082 dental procedures. The optometry team distributed more than 3,163 prescription glasses. Moreover, a multinational team of surgeons aboard USNS Mercy completed 94 surgeries, while 14 surgeries were performed alongside Solomon Islands doctors at the National Referral Hospital.

While in the Solomon Islands, medical personnel also augmented medical support to the Pacific Games, providing 150 event days of coverage across 17 sites. The medical team also boosted the capacity of the Australian security forces by providing 14 days of surgical coverage to a 500-person multinational security force supporting the Pacific Games. In addition to events in Honiara and Guadalcanal Province, Pacific Partnership activities included courses and multispecialty medical expert exchanges in Gizo and Auki.

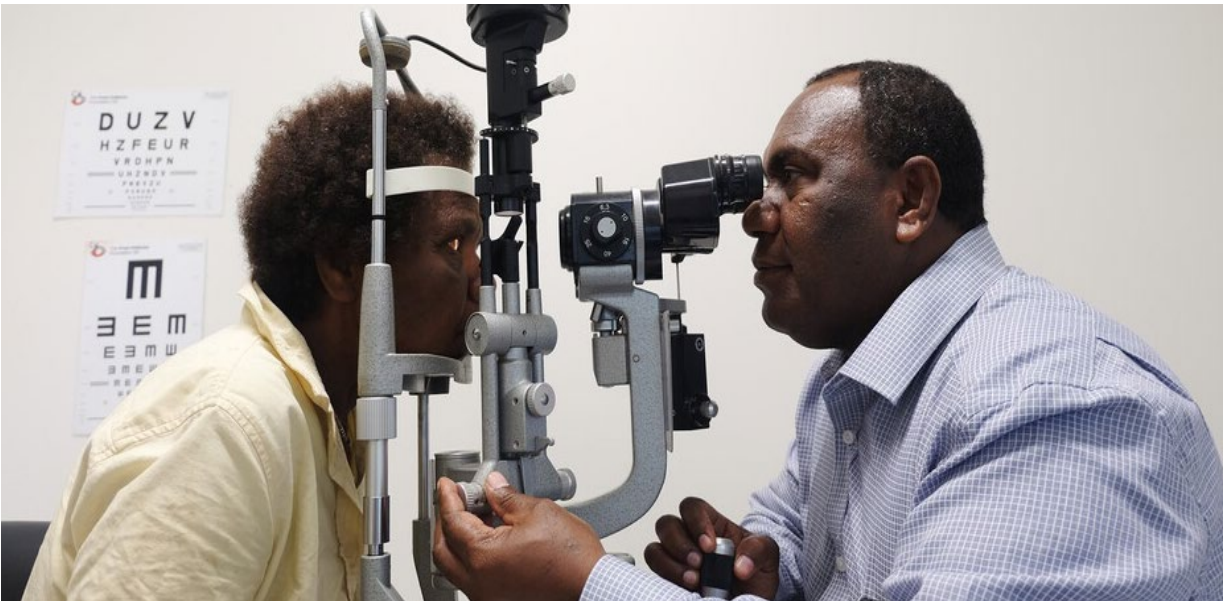
Through an agreement between Solomon Islands and China, work on a state-of-the-art health facility has commenced at the National Referral Hospital (Figure 22). This new health facility aims to expand the range and quality of medical services available to many Solomon Islanders without the need for referral to overseas institutions for investigations and treatment. This new health facility is expected to be completed by 2025.

Figure 22. Ground breaking ceremony for the National Referral Hospital project



The Solomon Islands recognises the need for engagement with civil society organizations, charitable organisations and the private sector. Several CSOs and community-based organizations have been involved in the delivery of essential services and infrastructure. An example of collaboration is the Regional Eye Centre at the National Referral Hospital in Honiara, which has six consultation rooms, a two-bed operating theatre, a procedure room, and a teaching centre (Figure 23). The Centre is managed by a local team within the Ministry of Health and Medical and Services, with support from the Fred Hollows Foundation NZ, and is helping in the fight to end avoidable blindness. Their services reach large sections of the population that would otherwise have limited access to eye care. For example, in 2023, the Centre provided 8,460 consultations, 460 eye surgeries, 306 diabetic laser treatments, and 1,483 spectacles. In addition, the Centre delivered 362 surgical procedures and 1,324 diabetes eye care consultations in 2023.

Figure 23. Regional Eye Centre at the National Referral Hospital in Honiara



Partnerships with the private sector, for example, the National Referral Hospital public-private partnership with Solomon Ports, have leveraged private sector resources to enhance the hospital's capacity to provide state-of-the-art medical care to newborn babies and infants. Through the private donation of a new baby resuscitator, critical care can be provided to newborns, especially those in need of immediate resuscitation and temperature stabilization (Figure 24). Support from other private investors has also supported the provision of health supplies and infrastructure upgrades. For example, in 2022, Solomon Sheet Steel Company Ltd funded the refurbishment of the labour ward at the National Referral Hospital, which is now used as an admitting ward (with around 20 additional beds), and a special care nursery. Another example is the partnership with Solomon Forest Association to construct a hospital in 2023 to accommodate an outpatient facility, a children's ward and a private clinic. The private clinic will be used to generate income to support the operation of the hospital. These initiatives highlight the importance of public-private partnerships in driving healthcare innovation and improving patient outcomes.

Figure 24. Handover ceremony for a new baby resuscitator



The continued implementation of the Solomon Islands Aid Management Policy and Partnership Framework continues to guide how the MNPDC, other relevant ministries, and development partners engage with each other to ensure that the aid effectiveness principles of ownership, alignment, harmonisation, managing for results and mutual accountability are materialised.

The coordination role led by MNPDC is also important to provide support and guidance to traditional and new development partners to strengthen coordination and enhance the effectiveness of development efforts. Some of the current coordination mechanisms include: joint government and development partners meetings held twice a year; a one-on-one high-level bilateral meeting with respective development partners; bi-monthly donor coordination meetings to strengthen coordination and information sharing amongst all partners; and sectoral working groups, such as the Joint Policy Reform Group that looks at financial and economic reforms and others in the health, education, infrastructure sectors, as well as climate change and gender.

Solomon Islands continues to actively participate in regional processes for improved cooperation on issues of common interest and for tailored technical support, including through the Pacific Island Forum, the Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific, and the Melanesian Spearhead Group.

5.2 Enabling Mechanisms and Means of Implementation

Key enabling measures and mechanisms are in place to support the implementation of the NDS and the SDGs. Selected examples of initiatives include the following:

Policy and legislative reforms have been implemented by the Government. Reviews and updates of key policies and legislation have been undertaken, including the review of the National Development Strategy, review of the Public Financial Management Act, reform of tax administration and related laws, public investment management reform (see box below).

- Efforts have been made to strengthen the capacity of government ministries and agencies as key institutions responsible for implementing, monitoring and reporting on the NDS and SDGs. One of the efforts taken to strengthen and improve public service capacity is the contracting of senior officials, as this cultivates accountability for performance and output from officers, considering that extension of employment contracts depends on achieving set deliverables.
- Investments are progressively made to strengthen national statistical capacities and develop robust data collection, analysis, and monitoring systems to track progress towards the achievement of NDS and SDGs. While establishing a complete evidence base for capturing all NDS interests remains a work in progress, targeted support to the respective national stakeholders responsible for data collection and analysis is underway. Continuous action is needed to ensure results are achieved and sustained.
- To support the mobilisation of financing for development, the Government has strengthened tax compliance and administration systems. In addition, the establishment of the Climate Finance Resilient Unit at MoFT will strengthen institutional capacity and help meet compliance standards, thereby allowing the Government to tap potential climate funding from external sources.
- The Ministry has also strengthened its systems on external borrowing and debt management. Significant external grants and loans in recent years have supported major road, bridge and airport infrastructure, internet connectivity, education and rural development projects. The MoFT and MNPDC launched the Public Investment Management (PIM) reform in February 2024, which aims to achieve the goals of NDS and the Medium-Term Development Plan by enhancing the efficiency of externally financed public investments. The PIM Policy and Guidelines provide guidance for optimizing the utilization of external finance, ensuring value for money and sustainability. The PIM Policy and Guidelines also take account of cross-cutting issues, such as climate resilience, gender equality, disability, and social inclusion, in the project initiation, formulation, implementation, operation, monitoring and evaluation stages to enable infrastructure to be more meaningful for all.

Tax Administration Reforms

Solomon Islands is undergoing a pivotal transformation in its tax administration system. With support from the International Monetary Fund and the Pacific Financial Technical Assistance Centre, the Inland Revenue Department has implemented a new organizational structure that promises to enhance operational efficiency and taxpayer compliance.

This initiative is part of a broader spectrum of reforms to strengthen the country's fiscal framework and align it with international good practice. The reforms include the establishment of a large taxpayer office, which focuses on improving compliance among high-value taxpayers and ensuring that they contribute a fair share to national development. These changes are not just about structural adjustments but also aim to enhance the overall taxpayer experience, making compliance simpler and more straightforward. This approach is consistent with global trends, where tax authorities are moving towards more service-oriented models

- Both multilateral and bilateral financing support remain important for Solomon Islands for major capital and infrastructure projects. In addition, during the COVID-19 pandemic, direct and general budget support by partners supported the delivery of much-needed services and social protection measures for the most vulnerable groups. With the SDGs localized into the NDS and sector plans, development partners have been encouraged to align respective support programmes with NDS objectives and SDG goals.
- Private flows, such as foreign direct investment and domestic investment also contribute to development financing in Solomon Islands. However, these private flows remain relatively small in scale compared to public sector finance and overseas development assistance.
- In addition, remittances in recent years from Solomon Islanders working abroad, particularly through the various labour mobility schemes in Australia and New Zealand, provide an important source of household income and support for community projects.
- The Provincial Governance Strengthening Programme and Provincial Capacity Development Fund are initiatives to strengthen all provincial governments through the deployment of specialist personnel and funding support. Initiatives support small to medium scale capital investments in the social and economic sectors, based on performance based grant system that is tied to proper financial management and good governance.
- The Solomon Islands implemented mechanisms to foster greater collaboration and coordination among government agencies, development partners, civil society and the private sector. As highlighted earlier, some developments include regular multi-stakeholder consultations, the establishment of technical working groups, and the development of a partnership framework with religious groups.

- Solomon Islands has actively engaged in South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives to share knowledge, supplement expertise, and best practices with other developing countries, particularly within the broader Pacific region. Areas of recent cooperation include security and law enforcement (see box below), humanitarian assistance and disaster response.

South-South and Triangular Cooperation

The Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF) led the security operation for the 2023 Pacific Games and 2024 National General Elections. At the request of the Solomon Islands Government, various bilateral partners worked alongside the RSIPF in various capacities, including in conducting high visibility patrols and protecting critical infrastructure throughout the 2023 Pacific Games and election period. Through the Solomon Islands International Assistance Force, partners working alongside the RSIPF included security and defence personnel from Australia, Fiji, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea.

The Solomon Islands has made steady progress in strengthening partnerships, putting in place enabling mechanisms, and mobilizing an array of measures to implement national development goals and the SDGs since the 2020 VNR report. However, the unprecedented impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the country's limited capacities, and the need to adapt policy measures given the humanitarian emergencies at the time, also meant a diversion of effort, with a reset and restart needed post-pandemic to gain lost momentum. Building on the foundation achieved to date, efforts continue to scale-up implementation of initiatives.



6. Next Steps and Actions

Solomon Islands is committed to strengthening the whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to the NDS and SDG implementation. This requires strong political commitment, inclusivity, resilience, genuine partnerships, financing, innovation, stakeholder engagement, and targeted investments over the long term. Regular monitoring, evaluation, and ongoing review are equally crucial to accelerate NDS and SDG progress.

At the core of this commitment is the recognition that sustainable development is a complex, multi-dimensional challenge that cannot be addressed in silos. It requires active engagement and collaboration across all levels of government, as well as genuine partnership and participation from civil society, the private sector and the people of Solomon Islands.

Underpinning this approach is the need for strong political commitment and leadership from the highest levels of government. The Government remains committed to championing the SDGs as a national development priority integrated into the NDS, and aligned to policies, plans, and budgets. This high-level buy-in is crucial for breaking down institutional barriers, fostering cross-sectoral coordination and partnerships, and mobilizing the necessary resources for NDS and SDG implementation.

Moving ahead, Solomon Islands is committed to progressing the issues identified in the Enabling Mechanisms and Means of Implementation in Section 5.2, and the following to accelerate progress of the implementation of the NDS and 2030 Agenda:

- Inclusivity is a key principle that will be embedded in national processes. Ensuring the meaningful participation of marginalized and vulnerable groups, including women, youth, persons with disabilities, people affected by disasters, and Indigenous communities, is essential to leaving no one behind. Diverse perspectives, knowledge, and lived experiences must be reflected in NDS and SDG planning, decision-making, and monitoring. Such engagement will enable improved responses to sensitive and challenging issues, including protection of the vulnerable groups, and sexual and gender violence against children and women.
- Resilience building is also a critical consideration, given the Solomon Islands' vulnerability to climate change, natural disasters, and other global shocks. Integrating disaster risk reduction, climate adaptation, and environmental sustainability across all SDG-related efforts is crucial for safeguarding development gains and ensuring long-term prosperity.
- Genuine multi-stakeholder partnerships are the foundation upon which the whole-of-society approach is built. The Government is committed to actively facilitating and nurturing collaborative relationships with civil society organizations, the private sector, development partners, and other key stakeholders. These diverse actors possess invaluable expertise, resources, and networks that can complement and amplify the Government's efforts. Targeted

areas for meaningful and durable partnerships include, health and education sectors, social and gender empowerment and protection issues, and environment. The investor and private sector effort to grow the economy, and scaled-up development partner support to reform the business environment and public service systems remain critical.

- Sustained and long-term investments are essential for development. Innovative and sustainable financing is therefore a key enabler of the NDS and SDG implementation strategy. The Government will continue to explore a wide range of financing sources and instruments to channel financing into strategic areas to address investment gaps and catalyse transformative change.
- Targeted capacity building and supplementation, and strengthening institutional arrangements and systems are necessary for accelerating implementation. Several areas for support have been identified in Section 5 above.
- Regular monitoring, evaluation and reporting will be crucial to accelerate NDS and SDG progress in the Solomon Islands. Robust data collection, analysis, and transparent reporting will enable informed decision-making and allow for the adaptation of strategies in response to various challenges and changing circumstances. As part of its effort to improve monitoring and tracking of the NDS and SDGs, Solomon Islands is committed to implementing the projects outlined in the newly established National Monitoring and Evaluations Systems Strengthening Strategy 2024-2028.



7. Conclusion

The NDS and SDGs represent an ambitious development agenda, requiring consistent commitment from all stakeholders. Solomon Islands continues to focus on interventions and initiatives that will create lasting impact, including major social, economic and environmental sector investments.

In this regard, the 2024 VNR process has been an opportunity to take stock of the unprecedented impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, natural disasters and security unrest, and identify challenges, structural concerns and opportunities. Consultations with various stakeholders, and analysis and reflection during the review process, allowed national stakeholders to identify actions needed and revitalise measures which were derailed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This will help to accelerate the progress towards the NDS and SDG targets and goals.

Building on achievements to date, the Government remains committed to accelerating progress in the implementation of NDS priorities and the SDGs. With a focus on inclusivity, resilience, genuine partnerships, financing, targeted investments, strong national systems and innovation, Solomon Islands is forging a path towards a prosperous and sustainable future for all Solomon Islanders.





