



Solomon Islands Agriculture and Rural Transformation Project
Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock

SIART

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Bulletin



The
**Solomon Islands
Government**

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MEET OUR SIART MANAGEMENT UNIT TEAM

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Cover Photo:

Centre of the second row: Minister of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, Derek Franklyn Wasi, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, Dr. Samson Viulu, and Provincial Secretary of Malaita Province, Eric George in a group picture with the representatives of the first five ABPOs who signed the grant agreements and SIART PMU team.

Pic: SIART/Oligao Niniu

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Project Update



By **WILLIAM Okekini**

Greetings to you, our good readers of the third quarter SIART Bulletin.

I am honoured to provide an update on the implementation of the Solomon Islands Agriculture and Rural Transformation (SIART) Project for the third quarter of 2024. This quarter saw significant advancements across all four main components of the project:

1. Infrastructure Development

MAL Offices in Auki and Kirakira: The construction of two double-storey MAL offices is progressing smoothly. The offices, which will house 20 to 35 staff members, are expected to enhance service delivery in the Makira/Ulawa and Malaita provinces. The next step is the tender process, following the completion of land surveys and the Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP).

KGVI Slaughter Facility: Renovations are underway at the KGVI slaughter facility, which will handle daily pig slaughtering. This facility will soon be operational and outsourced to a private investor, providing a reliable outlet for pigs supplied by local farmers.

Adaliua Pig Breed Farm: Plans are in place to renovate this previously Taiwanese-operated facility, which will benefit from updated office areas and piggery houses.

Tenaru Field Experimentation Station (FES): The Tenaru MAL Research Centre continues to expand, with the SIART Project facilitating the development of the first 10 Ha of the 37.5 Ha site. This centre will play a critical role in agricultural research, training, and international collaboration.

2. Agribusiness Producer Organizations (ABPOs)

By the end of November 2024, SIART aims to sign 10 to 15 more ABPOs, with 5 scheduled for baseline coverage by the end of October. SIART continues to review proposals, with plans to sign a total of 30 ABPOs by year-end.

In October, SIART will support World Food Day, promoting initiatives like:

Cocoa and coconut processing and marketing,

Local animal feed formulation,

Livestock health and meat processing.

Additionally, financial training for young professionals (YPs) and ABPOs has been successfully completed.

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3. Capacity Building

SIART has developed draft manuals for key commodities, which will be distributed to farmers during ABPO training sessions across three provinces. These resources will be complemented by leaflets, posters, and booklets.

4. Procurement and Support for Young Producers

SIART is currently evaluating an additional 20 young producers for support, with procurement ongoing for signed ABPOs to ensure timely delivery of necessary resources.

5. Monitoring and Evaluation

Progress is steady in the development of the SIART Management Information System (MIS), with updated project data being collected as baseline work continues.

6. Social and Environmental Safeguards

Work on social safeguards has been integrated with infrastructure development and ABPO initiatives, ensuring compliance with environmental requirements.

These activities highlight the significant strides made in Q3 2024, as the SIART/MAL Project continues to build infrastructure, strengthen agribusinesses, and empower rural communities across Solomon Islands.

SIART Project Approves 28 Agribusiness Producers Organizations for Development Grants



William Okekini, SIART Agribusiness Officer.

The Solomon Islands Agriculture and Rural Transformation (SIART) Project is pleased to announce that its Technical Evaluation Committee (TEC) has approved grant proposals from 28 Agribusiness Producers Organizations (ABPOs) to become beneficiaries of the SIART Project. This marks a significant milestone in the project's efforts to support the growth and development of agribusiness in the Solomon Islands.

SIART Project is funded by the World Bank and the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) is the implementing agency.

William Okekini, SIART Agribusiness Officer, revealed that out of 311 Expressions of Interest (EOIs) submitted by ABPOs across the project's three target provinces—Malaita, Guadalcanal,

and Makira Ulawa—in 2024, 38 eligible EOIs were selected for evaluation by the independent TEC. After a series of rigorous evaluation meetings, 28 ABPO proposals were approved for grant support.

“The TEC has carefully evaluated the 39 ABPO proposals and approved 28 of them to date,” Okekini stated. “However, some of these ABPOs still need to meet certain eligibility requirements before they can be confirmed as grant recipients.”

The ABPOs' proposals primarily focused on cocoa, coconut, pig-gery, and poultry, reflecting the diverse agricultural potential of the Solomon Islands. Despite the success in securing approvals, Okekini acknowledged the challenges faced during the grant process, particularly in the three project provinces.

“The implementation of the ABPO grant process has not been easy. Solomon Islands agribusinesses are rarely organized as groups, which made the process challenging. The ABPO model is new to many community groups, and it has been a time-consuming and tedious effort for them to meet the grant requirements,” Okekini explained.

Producers' groups encountered

significant hurdles, such as organizing members, managing administrative tasks, registering their groups with the Company Haus, obtaining Tax Identification Numbers, and opening ABPO bank accounts.

To overcome these challenges, the SIART Project team is providing ongoing support to help ABPOs meet the necessary requirements, including assistance with registration and opening of their bank accounts.

In the coming weeks, ABPOs that fulfill these requirements will sign agreements to receive their development grants from the SIART Project.

Despite the obstacles, the ABPO grant support model shows promise for the future of agribusiness development in the Solomon Islands.

By empowering rural farmers to organize themselves, the model strengthens their collaboration with the Solomon Islands Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development and other agriculture sector stakeholders.

This, in turn, will enable ABPOs to increase production, improve agricultural practices, and access markets for their commodities ●

Minister of Agriculture Thanks World Bank for Supporting Agribusiness Producers Organizations through SIART Project.

The Solomon Islands Minister of Agriculture and Livestock, Honorable Derek Franklyn Wasi, extended heartfelt thanks to the World Bank for its substantial grant funding support through the Solomon Islands Agriculture and Rural Transformation (SIART) Project.

The funding was allocated to five Agribusiness Producers Organizations (ABPOs) whose proposals were recently approved, with grant agreements signed during a ceremony held at the Solomon Islands National Stadium Media Hall in Honiara.

The five ABPOs signed the grant agreements were Green Ag- Farm Community Company Ltd, Alisuri Sustainable Livelihood, Aibilaka Cocoa and Coconut Buying Enterprise, Taki Farmer Association, and Kafoliki Coconut Farmers Association.

In his keynote address, Minister Wasi emphasized the alignment of the SIART project with the Government of National Unity and Transformation's (GNUT) policy framework. "This project fully aligns with the government's strategic plan, structural framework, and the pillars of our partnership with the World Bank," Wasi said, highlighting the significance of the initiative in supporting the nation's agricultural transformation.

Minister Wasi acknowledged the challenges the SIART project faced over the past two years, including changes in project management. However, he expressed satisfaction with the progress made, stating, "We are happy to mark the first grants distributed to our farmers."

The grant process began with an Expression of Interests (EOI) phase, where the three Provincial Project Teams in Malaita, Guadalcanal, and Makira Ulawa received 311 EOIs from interested farmer groups. Of these, 39 proposals passed the initial screening and were independently evaluated by a Technical Evaluation Committee (TEC), with 28 proposals ultimately approved. Five ABPO recipients from Malaita successfully met all requirements and

have signed their grant agreements, while other groups will sign once they fulfill the necessary conditions.



Minister of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, Honorable Derek Franklyn Wasi congratulated the five ABPO recipients from Malaita during his keynote address during the grant agreement signing ceremony on Thursday 12, 2024. Pic: SIART/ Oligao Niniu



A group photograph of the MAL Minister, Honorable Derek Franklyn Wasi (centre back row), Permanent Secretary, Dr. Samson Viulu, Provincial Secretary of Malaita Province, Eric George, five ABPO recipients representatives (left from row), and the officers of MAL and SIART Project during the ABPO grant agreement signing ceremony.

Pic: SIART/ Oligao Niniu

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Looking ahead, Minister Wasi shared that SIART aims to receive up to 100 proposals for evaluation by the TEC, with a target of approving 66 ABPO beneficiaries. He underscored SIART's objectives, including increasing agricultural production, improving market access, promoting climate-smart agricultural practices, and enhancing the participation of women and youth in agricultural development.

Minister Wasi assured the ABPO representatives of continued support, stating that the SIART Project will work closely with Community Resources Persons, lead farmers, and

"Today's signing ceremony marks a significant step forward in our collective effort to transform agriculture in the Solomon Islands. It represents our commitment to strengthening agricultural productivity and fostering sustainable development for our farmers and communities"- Minister Wasi.

young professionals deployed within the Provincial Project Teams to ensure the necessary assistance is provided.

"Today's signing ceremony marks a significant step forward in our collective effort to transform agriculture in the Solomon Islands," Minister Wasi concluded. "It represents our commitment to strengthening agricultural productivity and fostering sustainable development for our farmers and communities."

The SIART Project, backed by the World Bank, is a vital initiative that seeks to improve agricultural livelihoods across the Solomon Islands, with a focus on empowering agribusiness farmers downstream processing ●

World Bank and SIG Mission Commends Agribusiness Producers Organizations in Malaita.

A joint mission team from the World Bank and the Solomon Islands Government (SIG) visited several Agribusiness Producers Organizations (ABPOs) approved for Solomon Islands Agriculture and Rural Transformation (SIART) grants in Malaita from September 18 to 21, 2024. The team expressed their satisfaction with the farmers' plans and practices, highlighting the positive impact of the grants on the rural communities.

The mission visited the Alisuri Sustainable Livelihood Association in West Mbaelelea, Green AG-Community Company Limited, and Taki Farmers Association in North Malaita. These ABPOs had recently signed agreements under the SIART grant program. A cocoa Agribusiness Producers Organization near Mbitaama, which has had its proposal approved but needs to meet a few final requirements before signing its grant agreement, was also visited. Additionally, the team explored the Wanenira piggery ABPO in Kakara, where members are raising crossbred pigs and seeking to expand their businesses.

During the visits, farmers expressed their gratitude for the high-level engagement, emphasizing the rarity of such visits. One cocoa farmer remarked, "We are truly honored by your visit today. It's rare for high-level agricultural officers from the Government to come to our communities." The farmer noted that agricultural extension officers have not been able to visit regularly due to logistical challenges.

Grant Support and Training Opportunities

The mission team provided insights into how the SIART grant agreements would function. "The grant will not only provide cash grants but also deliver the necessary training and tools for you to earn a decent living," explained Son Thanh Vo, co-leader of the World Bank Agricultural Implementation Support Team. He urged the farmers to fully utilize the knowledge and resources that will be provided under the grant.

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William Okekini, SIART Agribusiness Officer, emphasized that the ABPO beneficiaries would receive agricultural technical training from the SIART Project Provincial Teams in the coming weeks, specifically targeting the crops and activities they are involved in. Cocoa farmers, for instance, will receive training on cocoa management, including proper pruning techniques and grafting to boost yields.

Green AG-Community Company Limited member, William Abuinao, shared how his group has relied on cocoa farming for generations, cultivating 30 hectares of land. However, individual farmers selling wet beans at lower prices prompted them to form an organization. “As a group, we aim to acquire equipment for fermentation and driers and move to dried bean production, which will significantly increase our members' incomes,” Abuinao said.

He also pointed out the need to adopt low technology operational systems, such as solar dryers, to enhance production efficiency and quality. “With solar dryers, we can produce high-quality dried beans and reduce our dependency on firewood and smoke-dried beans,” Abuinao added.

Peer-to-Peer Learning

The joint mission team praised the ABPOs' initiative to

incorporate peer-to-peer learning into their operations, where farmers share knowledge and best practices within the SIART grant support network. Thanh Vo stressed the effectiveness of local farmers using their native languages to explain agricultural techniques to their peers, enabling a more practical and accessible transfer of knowledge.

The mission team concluded their visit by encouraging other ABPOs to learn from the successful practices of the grant recipients, particularly in utilizing profits as revolving funds to reinvest in their communities and expand their agricultural operations.

During the mission team's visit to Solomon Islands, they also met with the Minister for Agriculture and Livestock, Hon. Franklyn Derek Wasi. In his brief to the visiting mission team, Honorable Wasi thanked them for their funding support to MAL through the SIART project

and said that, the people of Makira, Malaita and Guadalcanal provinces (the three target provinces) are very privileged to be selected as the sites for the SIART project.

Minister Wasi also highlighted to them the eight policy priorities for MAL under the GNUT and hopes to have an expanded scope of engagement with World Bank in the near future going forward ●

**“As a group,
we aim to acquire equipment for fermentation and driers and move to dried bean production, which will significantly increase our members' incomes.”**

IN PHOTOGRAPHS: MISSION VISIT TO AGRIBUSINESS PRODUCERS ORGANIZATIONS IN MALAITA.



Right: Son Thanh Vo, World Bank mission leader discussed with Elton Egeta, Coordinator of Alisuri Sustainable Livelihoods Association and Mark Johnston of SIART.



A group photograph with the farmers of Alisuri Sustainable Livelihoods Association, West Mbaelelea.



A group photograph with the farmer members of Taki Farmers Association.



Group photograph with the members of Green AG- Community Company Limited.



Group photograph with the members of Faufua Cocoa Farmers Association.



William Okekini, SIART Agribusiness Officer did awareness to the members of the Faufua Cocoa Farmers Association.

Four draft agricultural commodities training manuals have been developed.



Standing: John Tatalo, SIART Institutional Capacity Building officer viewing the write up of the MAL Livestock officers during the development of the small livestock manuals.

The Solomon Islands Agriculture and Rural Transformation project's Institutional Capacity Building develops four agricultural commodities training manuals.

John Tatalo, SIART Institutional Capacity Building officer said the four commodities which the project decided to develop first was because most of the Agribusiness grant proposals submitted to the project were on the cocoa, coconut, pigs, and chickens.

"So far four draft training manuals on cocoa, coconut, piggery, dual purpose poultry are in place," Tatalo said.

SIART shared the cocoa, coconut, piggery, and dual purpose poultry draft manuals with the World Bank Implementation Support team for review.

Tatalo works with a contracted graphic designer to do the manuals layout and develops informational posters.

"I am hoping to have the final manuals for cocoa,

coconut, piggery, and dual purpose poultry before the trainings for the Agribusiness Producers Organization beneficiaries later this year.

"We will develop other agricultural commodities manuals later," he added.

SIART began the workshop with the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock officers to develop the manuals for the other agricultural commodities ●



MAL officers who attended a series of workshops in the development of the Agricultural commodities training manuals development with the SIART Project. Pics: SIART/ Oligao Niniu

FIVE ABPOS DEVELOP THEIR ESCOPS IN MALAITA

The SIART Project Management Unit (PMU) supported the first five Agribusiness Producers Organizations (ABPOs) beneficiaries to develop their Environmental and Social Code of Practices (ESCoPs).

According to Steve Sae, SIART Environmental Safeguards officer, that the ESCoPs helped the five ABPOs to identify their environmental and social risks and the relevant mitigation measures.

"We have verified the ESCoPs for the first five ABPOs which have recently signed their grant agreements with the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL)," he said.

He further emphasized the importance of having landowning groups or individuals who are members of Agribusiness Producer Organizations sign "Land Commitment Letters." These letters serve as formal agreements, committing their land for agribusiness activities that are currently ongoing or will

take place in the future. For example, access to small infrastructure such as hot air dryers, solar dryers, and storage sheds—facilities built on land owned by a clan or family group—must not create any impediment for other members of the producer organization. By signing these commitment letters, landowners ensure that their land can be utilized without causing conflicts or disruptions to the organization's activities.

This process also ensures that these facilities are not owned by any one individual but collectively by the members of the Agribusiness Producer Organization, promoting shared ownership and equal access to the infrastructure among all stakeholders involved.

He added that the Project Management Unit (PMU) will continue to support the verification of Environmental and Social Codes of Practice (ESCoPs) for other Agribusiness Producer Organizations (ABPOs)

across all project provinces as the implementation progresses. This ongoing support is crucial to ensuring that all ABPOs' operational activities run smoothly and avoid any potential challenges. The verification of ESCoPs, along with the signing of "Land Commitment Letters," is essential to mitigating potential environmental impacts and conflicts related to land use.

By ensuring that landowners are committed to allowing agribusiness activities through the "Land Commitment Letter" and that these activities follow the guidelines set out in the ESCoPs, the project can operate in a sustainable and environmentally friendly manner. This structured approach helps prevent disruptions while promoting practices that minimize negative environmental effects, ensuring long-term sustainability for both the ABPOs and the communities involved ●

ES Safeguard team conducts community consultations on the planned KG VI Slaughterhouse construction.

The Environmental and Social Guards Team conducted a community consultation to inform the public about the planned construction of a pig slaughterhouse.

The consultations aimed to educate the community on the benefits and potential impacts of the project, especially for residents living near the facility.

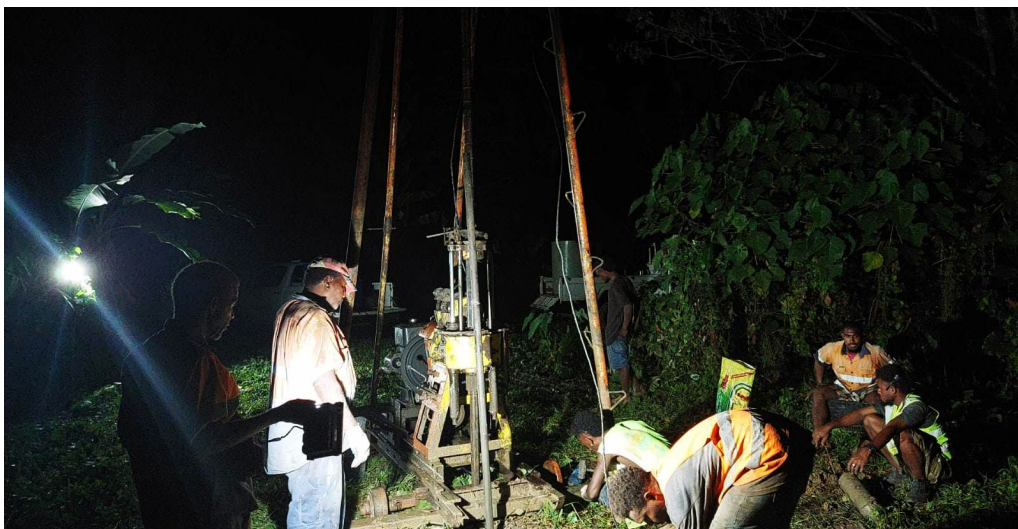
The primary objective of the two days of consultations was to address any unexpected environmental or social risks associated with the project and ensure early engagement with the public. The establishment of this slaughterhouse may present environmental and social

challenges that must be addressed prior to construction.

Consultations were conducted in nine locations, included the Perch Christian School, SIFF Academy, Tongs Corporation, and Burns Creek Health Centre. Feedback from participants was generally positive, with many pig-gery farmers expressed their support towards the facility development, which is expected to help boost local pig production.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) has planned to re-establish the facility, which will be capable of slaughtering up to 20 pigs daily ●

INFRASTRUCTURAL ACTIVITIES IN PROGRSS.



A contracted team did the Geotechnical survey on the Tenaru MAL Research and training center development site.

Pics: SIART/ Godfrey Hou.



An update from Godfrey Hou, Civil Engineer of the Solomon Islands Agriculture and Rural Development (SIART) Project stated that a progress has been made to the small agricultural infrastructures and two Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock's offices developments in Auki and Kira Kira.

For the Auki and Kira Kira MAL offices developments; Environmental and Social Management Plans public disclosures have been done, the land surveying, Topographic survey, Geotech Survey and Site Investigations for both the new Auki and Kira Kira offices have been done.

He said the design for the MAL Kira Kira office has been complete, while the MAL Auki office design is in progress.

The design for the King George VI pig slaughter facility has been completed, which its Environmental and Social Management Plan development is on progress.

He also highlighted that the design and the activity schedule for the renovation of the Adaliua Pig Breeding Farm were completed. And its Environmental and Social Management Plan development is on progress.

The MAL Tenaru Research and Training center development activities are as follow; Land Survey (Topographic Survey) was completed, Geotechnical Survey and Site Investigation are in progress– as the field work was done, and awaiting lab results of the soil sample from the Ministry of Infrastructures Development (MID) lab, and the Master Plan development is on progress ●



SIART team inspected the KG VI pig breeding facility, slaughter facility, and biogas digester now dysfunctional.

Pics: SIART/ Oligao Niniu

World Bank Team Impresses with Progress of Solomon Islands Agriculture and Rural Transformation Project.



The World Bank mission team with the MAL Permanent Secretary, Dr. Samson Viulu (centre) and SIART Project Management Unit in persons and virtually during the fifth mission in September 2024. Pic: SIART/ O. Ninu

The fifth World Bank Implementation Support Mission expressed its satisfaction with the progress of the Solomon Islands Agriculture and Rural Transformation (SIART) Project under the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL). The mission took place from September 16th to September 27th, 2024.

During their time in Honiara, the mission team met with key officials from the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, the Ministry of Finance and Treasury, the Ministry of National Planning and Development Coordination, and the SIART Project Management Unit. Additionally, a joint team comprising World Bank and Solomon Islands Government representatives travelled to Malaita Province to meet with Agribusiness Pro-

ducers Organizations (ABPOs) that had recently signed their grant agreements under the SIART Project.

Son Thanh Vo, the World Bank Agriculture Implementation Support Team Leader for the SIART Project, expressed his satisfaction with the project's progress.

"The project is now in good shape, despite a few areas needing improvement," Vo stated.

The mission team congratulated MAL and the SIART Project on successfully signing grant agreements with the first five ABPOs prior to the mission's visit. Vo also expressed that the team was impressed by the organization, determination and development aspirations of the ABPOs they visited in Malaita.

He further emphasized that continued focus on diligent disbursement of funds for required activities would be crucial moving forward.

"MAL leadership will need to provide additional support in engaging with the Ministry of Infrastructure Development regarding the infrastructure component of the SIART Project," Vo added.

Dr. Samson Viulu, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, expressed his gratitude on behalf of the Ministry for the World Bank's financial support through the SIART Project, which aligns with the Solomon Islands Government's policy.

"The SIART team has performed well, and I am optimistic that this success will continue in the coming months," said Dr. Viulu.

He also reaffirmed MAL's commitment to supporting the SIART Project's implementation, particularly in ensuring that farmers have improved access to markets through enhanced transportation and increased production. Additionally, he announced plans to establish a digital hub for SIART grant beneficiaries, which will facilitate marketing, information sharing, and learning opportunities for the ABPOs ●



Solomon Islands Agriculture and Rural Transformation Project
Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock

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