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### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

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### Four criteria for each indicator

**Assessment: “Was the benchmark achieved?”**

- “Yes” = 1
- “Yes, restricted” = 0.75
- “No, extended” = 0.25
- “No” = 0

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KEY STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Solomon Islands has taken on significant international commitments in child protection and is looking for innovative, realistic solutions to build a viable child protection system in a context of tight resources and still developing political structures. A broad model for such a system has been formulated within a Child and Family Welfare Bill which has gone through large-scale consultations and awaits Parliamentary approval. However, particular implementation mechanisms for the Bill still have to be designed. In the meantime, it remains difficult for the Government to ensure children’s safety given the limited formal workforce dedicated to welfare services and child issues, lack of standards and quality control tools to ensure that existing services are safe and effective, fragmented data systems, and weak policies for public communications and awareness raising.

Strong dimensions:

- **Strategic anticipation.** Although currently limited, capacities for child protection are organized with substantial flexibility to react to unforeseen contingencies and to foster innovation. Key strategic documents, including the Child and Family Welfare Bill, explicitly call for the development of new tools which would suit local context and limited resources. The key strategic documents also specifically refer to the need to address new child protection risks, such as those brought by the urbanization of the capital Honiara. Budgeting rules are highly flexible, with considerable opportunities for the ministries to request in-year re-allocation of funds between budget lines. Since 2011, the Government also started setting aside funds for a contingency expenditure to meet unforeseen spending needs throughout the year (e.g., in case of natural disasters).

- **Open collaboration.** Current activities and future plans related to child protection strongly involve families and communities. Communal responsibility for the well-being of children and the principle of keeping children close to their families is an important cultural norm and is established firmly within the Child and Family Welfare Bill. The Government is introducing community-based restorative justice for juvenile offenders (including through the imminent transfer of the current juvenile facility to the “softer” rehabilitation centre in Tetere). The Government, including the Ministry of Finance and Treasury (MFT) as well as the Ministry of Provincial Government and Institutional Strengthening (MPGIS) are gradually strengthening mechanisms for cooperation with sub-national authorities (even though this work is currently limited to the provincial tier, while involving local self-governments is the subject of the on-going Constitutional review debate).

- **Agility.** The Government is taking the first steps to make sure that existing capacities can respond to the variable needs of vulnerable children. Staff working with children have begun to receive specialized training in child protection, which is currently included in: the curricula for nurse training, a part of the induction for police training, and the upskilling for correctional facilities specialists.

Weaker dimensions:

- **Resilience.** Solomon Islands is just beginning to introduce a Managing for Results approach to policy planning. It entails a new Monitoring and Evaluation component, including the recent launch of result indicator matrices for every ministry. The Ministry of Development Planning and Aid Coordination (MDPAC) is expected to lead in the production of a National Performance Evaluation Report. However, performance analysis and reporting within key ministries in child protection is still developing; annual reports are not publicized. The existing policies related to child protection, such as the Children’s Policy, acknowledge the importance of monitoring and call for periodic review, but do not establish any concrete mechanism for this process. Performance appraisal also remains weak at the level of individual public service employees.
• **Predictive learning.** Evidence on issues of child protection (such as survey data on prevalence and factors of abuse and maltreatment, as well as attitudinal data) is limited, and even existing information is not utilized for setting priorities and plans. Broad commitment to the child protection agenda is not yet supported with a clear set of priorities and standards, either in terms of clear job descriptions for the respective staff or as service requirements for organizational providers.

• **Navigational leadership.** Navigational leadership requires that partners in child protection systems have a clear and transparent picture of the current situation in the sector, empowering them to confidently embrace proposed changes. At the moment, producing such a picture is difficult for Solomon Islands. One factor is fragmentation and gaps in data describing child protection issues (e.g., labour statistics, including the Labour Household Survey, still seems to be missing). Budget allocations lack predictability and were especially variable for the Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS) which hosts the Social Welfare Department. Despite the significant progress in establishing accountable payroll and staff accounting systems (including through introduction of the Aurion system), there are still gaps and duplications, especially in the Education Sector (resulting from the difficulty of the system to track the movement of the teacher workforce widely scattered across the country’s territory).
Current progress

• Since the 2008 Baseline Assessment “Protect me with Love and Care”, Solomon Islands has made massive progress in building national structures for child protection policy design and implementation. Political determination to ensure children’s safety from abuse and exploitation was expressed through signing six additional international treaties relevant to children’s rights for protection, including both optional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). This has made Solomon Islands the fourth most active country in ratifying international treaties related to child protection across the entire Pacific region (after Australia, New Zealand and Fiji).

• Given that the practical implementation of political commitments had traditionally remained a significant challenge, the Government – starting from 2010 – began a comprehensive reform of its national strategic planning system. The new approach is based on the philosophy of Managing for Results, which establishes multi-year, fiscally responsible priorities that would trickle down all the way from national goals to the work plans of individual public employees. The new approach also intends to cyclically link the planning phase with analysis of performance. The reform was launched through the approval of the National Development Strategy (NDS) 2011-2010, but it eventually led to further matching reforms in public financial management, human resource management and data systems.

• Although the country does not yet have a specific child protection policy, strategic objectives in this area are included in a range of national programmatic documents. The current approach to strategizing for child protection is two-pronged:
  o One prong falls under NDS Objective 2 (“To provide support to the vulnerable”) and covers CRC-driven legislative reform and capacity building through the Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs (MWYCFA) and as part of the MWYCFA’s Children’s Policy.
  o The second prong falls under NDS Objective 3 (“Ensure equal access to quality health care”) and is the responsibility of the MHMS. The second prong includes the provision of front-line preventive and protective welfare services. The National Health Strategic Plan 2011-2015 pledged to “do more and do better in domestic violence, prevention and enforcement of child protection” through “definition of protocols”; “staff training”; and “working with the justice system to reform practices (MHMS, 2011).”

• The Government is leading a highly consultative process to develop a Child and Family Welfare Bill. The Bill defines broad rules and principles which, if implemented, would establish a comprehensive child protection system, including an inter-agency referral mechanism, a platform for registration and standardization of service provision, as well as monitoring and data exchange requirements.

1 Other treaties signed since 2008 include the Convention on the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities, the Convention on Abolition of Forced Labour, the Minimum Age Convention, and the Convention on Worst Forms of Child Labour.
Open challenges

• In line with the new monitoring system launched by the NDS, corporate plans of both key Ministries (MWYCFA and MHMS) contain matrices of expected outcome indicators for child protection. However: (1) These results indicators are quite broad (e.g. “child protection acts enforced”); and (2) It is not clear what mechanism is used for the analysis of achievement against these indicators. Annual reports of the key ministries are not publicly available and their existence has not been possible to verify.

RECOMMENDATION: Assist key ministries in the production of annual reports (or their child protection sections) against the current corporate plans. Liaise with the MDPAC and the MFT to identify options within the current performance management system which would help to reward ministries and departments for their analytical approach to reporting within the new system (e.g., clarify requirements for competing for the title of the Division of the Year and Recognition of Excellence in Performance, which currently exists).

• Reflecting child rights in legislative decisions, including the annually voted budget allocations, depends on effective cooperation with the National Parliamentary structures. Despite significant developments in the past decade, these structures are still very fragile and their capacities are incipient: for example, the MPs and Standing Committees do not have sufficient time or information to consider Bills in sufficient detail. At the moment, the Parliament receives no specific support in the child protection area (unlike, e.g., gender issues and anti-discrimination, where the United Nations Development Programme Parliamentary Project is providing active targeted support).

RECOMMENDATION: (1) Consider periodic support to the Parliamentary Committees on Health, Education and Justice to raise awareness and advocate for child protection. (2) Liaise with the Solomon Islands Young Women’s Parliamentary Group and use it as a bridge for the advocacy of child protection issues within Parliament. Ensure that the Group remains operational with the change of Parliament.

• Solomon Islands continues to search for an optimal model of multi-layer governance and policy administration at the local level. Although the legislation describes the possibility of creating three levels of government, in reality there are only two (central and provincial). Area councils were suspended in 1998 as part of a cost-saving initiative, and while it would be legal to recreate them, there has been slow progress in this direction. At the same time, in reality, communities do practice various forms of local self-governance, including highly organized “collectives”, which have written constitutions and produce community bylaws. But there is no universal formal structure to represent this tier and to facilitate its effective cooperation with the upper governance levels. This “disconnect” between local and central government is seen as one of the key issues in the country’s political dynamics. It is also a significant bottleneck for the effective implementation of the central Government’s child protection policies at the community level.

• The institutional split of the child protection agenda between the MWYCFA and MHMS is a mixture of problems and opportunities. Given the flexible approach of the Child and Family Welfare Bill in defining the future child protection system, more specific decisions will have to be made in terms of dividing tasks between the two ministries (MWYCFA and MHMS), as well as task sharing with the sub-national partners (provincial governments and, potentially, local governance structures).

o The Health Sector in Solomon Islands suffers from weak infrastructure and human resources, as well as an allocation bias towards Honiara. However, contact rates are rather high by regional comparisons: the joint assessment by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the MHMS noted that Solomon Islanders were likelier to contact public health care when compared to people living in other lower-income East Asia and Pacific countries (87 per cent sought professional help when ill, compared to 60-75 per cent regional/income group average).
The MHMS has successively participated in at least two inter-agency child-related initiatives: the 2010-2015 “Born identity” project which set up a birth registration mechanism involving health facilities, and the 2014 Initiative for community-based management of Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM). In both cases, frontline health workers have taken up additional responsibilities, with strong support and leadership from headquarters. In particular, the SAM initiative offers an example of working at the level of nurse-aids through remote area posts (at sub-area level).

However, even though the MHMS is one of the key ministries with responsibility for child protection and hosts the Social Welfare Department (SWD) which is responsible for the actual provision of welfare services, child protection is not yet mainstreamed within the health system. None of the current health service providers follow explicit policies or protocols related to children victims or children at risk of abuse in terms of ensuring specific support, referral and data collection.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Designing implementation mechanisms for the Child and Family Welfare Bill (including a referral system, standards and registration procedures, a data sharing and surveillance system, and a monitoring system) would require a designated assignment, which should include: institutional mapping; data flow mapping; intergovernmental financing analysis; and consultations at sub-national (provincial, area, and sub-area) level.

However, options could be considered in the following direction (perhaps on a pilot basis):

In response to the National Health Strategic Plan objective “To do more and to do better” for protecting children from violence, the MHMS could consider a gradual development of a “child protection function” within the health system. In its philosophy, the approach would utilize the successful experience of child protection development in the Philippines, although it would have to be significantly reduced in scale to match the Solomon Islands context.
o This could include opening small CPUs in the provincial hospitals and the National Referral Hospital (NRH), but also upskilling health workers at sub-provincial level to act as satellite CPU representatives in their communities. To achieve this, nursing officers and nurse-aids would have to receive respective training and, ideally, an opportunity to associate through an umbrella organization to exchange issues and experiences.

o Provincial Governments should be encouraged to establish a provincial protocol for implementation of the Child and Family Welfare Bill. The MPGIS/MWYCFA/MHMS may issue guidance and support on what such a protocol would entail, but can leave scope for flexibility in the exact organization of this process at the local level. Once again, this approach would contain a lot of features similar to the Philippines experience.

o The protocol may entail a Memorandum of Understanding, which would set up a provincial child protection committee, including: provincial Welfare Officers (where they exist); provincial hospital CPU (or designated person); the provincial Police Sexual Assaults and Family Violence unit; Provincial Education Office; representatives of Rural Training Centres; and other relevant stakeholders (including church and civil society). The leadership of the committee may be assigned to the Social Welfare Officers (where these posts exist) or to a stakeholder who is found to be strongest in the local circumstances.

o The provincial child protection committees should function as hubs which provide support and guidance to partners at the local level. They should deliver information about the new Bill to the communities (possibly through nurse-aids) and coordinate response measures when reports would be delivered from any of the participating sectors (police, health clinics, schools, and churches).

o In line with the Child and Family Welfare Bill, the provincial Welfare Officer – where such posts exist – would be either directly responsible for orchestrating a referral/response process at the local level (if this task would be delegated to such Officer by the Director) or ensure timely reporting of the situation to the Director.

o The hospital-based CPUs may host a new surveillance and data management system for child protection, as was successfully piloted by the Philippine General Hospital CPU. The hospital staff designated to undertake a child protection surveillance function may be trained to document information on violence against children which was detected through the provincial health network. It could also integrate and share data (e.g., legal information) from other sectors such as welfare, education and police to ensure that children at risk are duly and periodically assessed, and their families receive whatever support is available from the Welfare Officer, NGOs or faith-based organizations.

o This approach would help to gradually develop a child protection database which could be used to consolidate data at the national level (for policy development and reporting).

• Building up systems of child protection services at the community level is also key to the revitalization of the juvenile justice system. Currently, the only functional facility for young offenders in Solomon Islands is the Juvenile facility within the Rove Correctional Centre in Honiara. While the Government tried to develop juvenile units in other provinces to keep children closer to home (in particular, within the correctional facility in Auki, Malaita Province and Gizo, Western Province), in reality, children are still sent to the Honiara Centre because of its proximity to other programmes for children. Not only does it take children away from their communities, but it is also unsustainable: the amount of juvenile prisoners has been steadily growing and there have already been cases in the last years when the number of juvenile detainees reached beyond the current capacity of the Rove Centre.
• The National Advisory and Action Committee on Children (NAACC) and its Protection Sub-Committee are still in the process of the first stage of “revitalization”. According to the roadmap developed by the second NAAC review in 2012, the first stage should help to “get the NAACC house in order” before launching strategic changes (stage two). The direction of such strategic changes still has to be chosen, so that the reformed NAACC fits into the architecture of the new child welfare system after the introduction of the Child and Family Welfare Bill.

• Solomon Islands is the poorest country in the Pacific region, and raising incomes would require significant reforms including diversification of the economy away from dependence on the logging industry. In the meantime, economic hardship has shown to be one of the strongest factors exposing children to the risks of maltreatment in Solomon Islands: for example, failure to meet minimum living standards and lack of income-generating opportunities was quoted as a frequent reason for engaging children in prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation, as well as hard labour (Humanium, 2015). The NDS 2011-2020 launches a major exercise to design a new, restructured system of social protection for Solomon Islands. It is not yet clear whether the system would include any specific child-related aspect. Some studies reckon that while introducing cash benefits including conditional cash grants is usually a questionable approach for Pacific societies, Solomon Islands may be “arguably more ready to consider this option” compared to Vanuatu for example. There is also a growing understanding of the limited capacity of the traditional system to fully deal with social protection pressures, especially for the vulnerable and marginalized population groups (Dwyer, 2013).

**RECOMMENDATION:** Liaise with partners working on developing the new social protection system for Solomon Islands to incorporate a child-related component.

• National programmatic documents assume that the Education Sector shall participate in building safe environments for children, e.g., through integrating legal literacy into curricula. However, in reality, existing sector-level plans do not seem to include such activities. The current National Education Action Plan 2013-2015 is strongly focused on the objectives of expanding access to education (including for disabled children), improving its quality and cost-effectiveness. This plan contains no programmes or activities related to ensuring child safety in educational institutions. It also has no reference to the above listed cross-cutting initiatives such as integration of legal literacy into curricula (MEHRD, 2012).

**RECOMMENDATION:** Follow up with specific assessments of the implementation of the school safety agenda and identify bottlenecks in order to make further progress.

• The Solomon Islands is one of the most vulnerable countries in the world in terms of exposure to natural hazards. But since the 2007 tsunami, significant progress has been achieved in establishing disaster risk reduction management systems, though mechanisms to map and address specific disaster-related risks to child safety are not yet well developed.

**RECOMMENDATION:** In the development of the future child protection surveillance database, coordinate with the National Statistical Office (SINSO) and the Ministry of Mines, Energy and Rural Electrification (MMERE) which hosts hazard data and spatial mapping instruments to coordinate DRR and Child Protection response efforts.

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2 Such as introduction of the 2010 National Disaster Risk Reduction Plan, a National Disaster Risk Council and a Risk Reduction Committee.
Current progress

- Since 2008, public financial management (PFM) in Solomon Islands has steadily improved. This progress has been achieved achieved in partnership with a range of donors and international organizations, coordinated through the Core Economic Working Group (CEWG) set up in 2009. Current approach to PFM is reflected in the Government’s PFM Reform Roadmap 2014-2017, which is based on the recommendations of the 2012 Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability (PEFA) assessment.

- Until 2012, strategic budgeting remained one of the biggest challenges for the Solomon Islands PFM system. Therefore, the current reform is focused on introducing realistic multi-year budgeting procedures linked to sector-level policies. Prior to developing its budget for 2014, the Government has elaborated its first Medium-Term Development Plan (MTDP) as a set of mid-term priorities agreed with line ministries. The MFT required that all development budget submissions from the line ministries were accompanied by their mid-term expenditure plans according to the MTDP. The 2014 budget respectively contains development expenditure estimates for 2014-2016 for each ministry by broad functional and economic classifications, including all key ministries working on child protection issues (MSYCF, MHMS, MJLA). According to the PFM Reform Roadmap, development of the MTDP is the first step towards elaborating a full-scale Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF). It is expected that the MTEF will be operational by 2016, covering not only development expenditure but also the entire budget.

- Ministries working on child protection have significant flexibility in spending their budgets, including the possibility to re-allocate funds within their budgets through virement procedures. In fact, the 2012 PEFA assessment concluded that the current level of utilization of intra-ministerial virements was excessive, linking it to weak planning and noting instances of “questionable and sometimes irresponsible allocations”. While the MFT is working on streamlining virement procedures to ensure against such instances, the flexibility itself is an opportunity to ensure effective child protection responses at their level, including in cases of unforeseen events and contingent financial need.
• Since 2011, the Government has introduced the practice of setting aside funds for contingency expenditure to meet unforeseen spending needs throughout the year. Admittedly, the size of the allocation decreased during 2011-2014 (reflecting the overall economic slowdown and tightening of the fiscal realities in those years). However, the practice is an important new approach which should create fiscal space for reacting to unforeseen situations with child protection risks, such as natural hazards.

• Solomon Islands have started to establish initial capacities for performance audits both within internal and external audit functions. In particular, the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) undertakes two Performance Audits every year. A relevant example of such audits is the 2011 Performance Audit Report “Teacher Absenteeism in SI Primary Schools”. This instrument could be used in the future to ensure that the workforce recruited to provide services related to child protection (within police, education, health as well as welfare function) is utilized to its full potential.

Open challenges

• Current strategic documents and reform plans related to social welfare (including the plans to “do more and do better” in terms of frontline provision of services through the MHMS) are based on optimistic fiscal forecasts which do not yet incorporate longer-term fiscal risks.

  o Most of the key current strategies and policies were produced around 2010-2011, at the height of the economic and fiscal expansion, and include ambitious reform goals across sectors, including social welfare. However, economic growth in Solomon Islands had significantly slowed down in 2012-2013 (as a result of the reduction of main economic activities such as agriculture, logging and gold production). During 2014, initial signs of recovery were jeopardized by the floods in Guadalcanal and the closure of the gold mine.

  o The fiscal buffers developed during prosperous 2010-2011 are significant (according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimates), but might not be sufficient for ambitious reform plans, especially in case of negative shocks such as natural disasters.

  o At the moment, the Government is planning considerable expenditure expansion in 2015, which is a mixture of opportunities and macro-fiscal risks. One factor which helped the Government to maintain fiscal discipline was relatively lower spending in 2014. However, expenditures are expected to grow starting from 2015 as a result of public sector reform plans, involving considerable investment, and political commitments, which have to be observed after the elections in 2014. The latest IMF recommendation to the Government was to “recalibrate ambitious spending plans in line with implementation capacity, revenue envelope, financing availability, and the need to preserve fiscal buffers for resilience against shocks.”

**RECOMMENDATION:** In designing the implementation mechanism for the Child and Family Welfare Bill, maximize the use of existing posts and resources (given that expansion may not be realistic or sustainable). However, develop longer-term plans for a gradual increase in the amount of provincial Welfare Officers under the optimistic fiscal scenario.

• Although the MFT began working with line ministries to help them with costing their programmes, this process is currently limited to development budgets (not recurrent expenditures). The ministries require further support in this direction. While some of them engage in programme costing, including with fragmented donor support, these estimates are not always consistent with fiscal realities (which was, e.g., the case of the costing exercise for the National Health Strategic Plan 2011-2015).

**RECOMMENDATION:** Make sure that the costing of the future proposals for the implementation of the Child and Family Welfare Bill is undertaken within the national MTEF process and in partnership with the MFT.
One of the significant barriers to the transparency, predictability and equity of allocations on social welfare, healthcare and education in Solomon Islands is the growing utilization of “Constituency Development Funds” (CDFs).

These funds represent expenditures allocated by the Parliamentarians at the discretion of individual MPs to their respective constituencies. This instrument was introduced in 1992 and has expanded significantly since then. The latest international assessments (2012 PEFA and 2014-2015 IMF reviews) noted that the disbursement rate of these expenditures was very high and the allocation process highly opaque.

World Bank research shows that most of the expenditures funded through the CDFs go to the household or individual levels, “surpassing central government funding of provincial government”, and thereby further eroding its role. According to some views, the introduction of CDFs stirred the subsequent elimination of the area councils as a form of local self-government. This research also believes that constituency funding represents the increasingly popular political trend in Solomon Islands, compared to the alternative of stimulating local self-organization and local governance (Allen, Dinnen, Evans, & Monson, 2013).

CDFs are one of the factors for the variation between budgeted and actual expenditures for individual ministries, which remain significant (as funds tend to be re-allocated away from ministerial budgets to support the CDFs).

Division of responsibilities between the central and provincial level is still evolving, but at the moment lacks specificity, including in social welfare matters.

As was discussed earlier, the only functional formal tier of subnational government in Solomon Islands is the provincial tier (represented by the Provincial Assemblies). Many of the functions initially devolved to the provinces were later re-centralized, but the resulting division is not clearly specified. The still effective Schedule 5 of the Provincial Government Act 1997 defines provincial responsibility as not only issues such as garbage collection but also “welfare and other social services.”

Given the current fragmentation of data, it is difficult to estimate whether provincial mandates are appropriately covered by the existing mix of local revenue and transfers from the central budget. By some estimates, the bulk of fiscal transfers (including the Fixed Service Grant) go to fund capital investment in non-devolved functions, while support to recurrent costs of local services is minimal.

Although transparency of transfer allocation is improving, the system is still not sufficiently transparent and effective given the size of CDFs. Allocation of the Fixed Services Grants among provinces was transferred to a transparent formula in 2010, which was developed under the Provincial Government Strengthening Programme (PGSP).³

**RECOMMENDATION:** Produce a mapping of the current division of functions relevant to child protection between the national and provincial levels. This mapping may be used as one of the inputs into the development of the future referral system for the implementation of the Child and Family Welfare Bill. Is social welfare a non-devolved function? Should it remain as such in the future? How would it be funded? Liaise with the PGSP and the MPGIS to collect necessary data.

³ Initially, in 2012, the formula assumed that 80 per cent of the grants are allocated per capita (the remainder through fixed allocations). However, the Government has later updated this approach by requiring that the allocations of the 20 per cent portion is based on the scores of individual provinces in the performance measures assessment for the Provincial Capacity Development Fund (the better the performance, the higher the allocation of the fixed services grant).
Assessment Solomon Islands Summary

Current progress

- Even though Solomon Islands have very few social workers working within the Government’s child protection workforce, there is a range of professionals in adjacent sectors who are supposed to, or might potentially be, involved in activities relevant to child protection: educators (teachers); healthcare staff (doctors, nursing specialists, nurses, nurse aids); the Police (in particular, staff working in specialized units for Sexual Assaults and Family Violence which exist in all provinces); and staff working with children in the correctional facilities (the Rove Correctional Centre – and, in the near future, the Tetere Correctional Centre). The Child and Family Welfare Bill assumes an eventual expansion of social welfare officer positions, even though it tries to build on existing resources where possible.

- Those working with children have access to relevant tertiary or vocational training. Certificate and diploma level education in Social & Community Work, Community Development, Counselling, and Youth in Development Work linked to child protection are offered by the University of South Pacific (which also has a campus in Honiara). In addition, the Solomon Islands National University (SINU) offers two Diploma level courses which are relevant: a Diploma in Community-Based Rehabilitation (School of Nursing & Allied Health Sciences) and a Diploma in Youth Development (School of Education & Humanities).

- Solomon Islands have the benefit of a well-spread system of Rural Training Centres (RTCs) supported by Church groups, NGOs and community-based organizations. The RTCs are also united within the Solomon Islands Association of Rural Training Centres (SIARTC), which assists in experience exchange and capacity building. This network is an asset that could be used to develop technical and vocational education training (TVET) education in social work and community development.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Consider providing support to the SIARTC to develop a course in social work which includes child protection elements. The course would explain the new child protection structure under the Child and Family Welfare Bill and prepare community members to participate in the system, including through providing inputs as volunteers, project participants, as well as potential applicants to future welfare assistant posts.

- Specific training on child protection has been mainstreamed into the induction and continued development programmes across adjacent professions:
  - Police and correctional service: Training in child protection issues is part of the induction to all police officers, provided via the Police Academy. In addition, the Training School for Correctional Services provides up-skilling in juvenile justice to the correctional officers working in the Rove Centre, and a pilot scheme is underway, with support from UNICEF, to formally accredit this training into an induction programme for all new correctional officers, which is expected to be completed by 2016.
  - Nurses and teachers: The DSW of the MHMS reports that the curriculums for training nurses and teachers in the SINU contain specific modules on child protection. These modules are taught by visiting experts from the DSW itself. It was not possible within this assessment to analyse the substance of these modules.

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4 At the time of this report, the amount of professionals working as social welfare specialists was reported as two, down from 11 in the previous years (as employees under the SWD section of the MHMS). As was discussed earlier, the National Health Strategic Plan 2011-2015 includes a priority of “doing more and better” in terms of providing services of domestic violence prevention and enforcement, as well as child protection. Planned activities in these areas include: “Definition of protocols”; “Staff training”; and “Working with the justice system to reform practices” (MHMS, 2011). It is not clear whether the Ministry considers actual expansion of the posts.
• Solomon Islands are in the process of Performance Management Reform (PMP) for the civil service. This work is part of the general shift to Management for Results and the philosophy of translating whole-of-government policy objectives into measurable outputs produced through individual staff inputs. This includes a new approach to developing job descriptions and performance appraisal forms, to result in practical feedback for every employee and his/her personal up-skilling plans. The vision of the change was formulated through the Solomon Islands Human Resource Management Strategy and Implementation Plan 2011-2015 (MPS, 2009).

Open challenges

• At the moment, social work is not yet recognized as a profession. Professional standards of services for individuals and organizations working in social welfare and, in particular, with children, are not yet introduced. The Child and Family Welfare Bill would introduce two possibilities for the imposition of the standards, although none of these would be immediately compulsory: (1) The Minister (responsible for child and family welfare affairs) may make regulations on the qualifications, appointment and duties of the social welfare officers and assistant social welfare officers; and (2) The Director for Social Welfare would become responsible for the registration of all welfare service providers, and Clause 52 requires her/him to establish criteria for the registration of such providers, which may include specific standards. Registration, however, would be compulsory.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Ensure that key ministries and the NAACC develop Standards and Registration procedures as stated in the Bill, and that sufficient technical support is provided in this process.
• Implementation of the Performance Management Process (PMP) is still in its early stages. For example, while the new strategy requires that all members of staff at central and provincial level have clear job descriptions that are based on measurable performance targets, interviews show that some of these still remain outdated and not practically helpful for performance management. In a similar way, while some ministries started to pilot a new performance appraisal process, it is not clear whether the approach was already rolled out to the ministries working on child protection issues, in particular the MHMS which would include the DSW specialists providing social welfare frontline services.

• The 2008 Baseline Assessment showed that, at the time, at least four provinces of Solomon Islands had Community Welfare Volunteers (CWV) working to prevent child abuse, to notify authorities of instances of abuse and to refer children for further help. For example, there was a group of 29 CWVs working in the Choiseul province. However, even where such volunteers were available, “awareness of their work was quite low” and “the presence of CWVs in communities did not seem to have had a strong impact on the development of (child protection) plans”. The report recommended stronger evaluation and capacity building for the existing CWVs, a clearer delineation of their responsibilities, as well as more active awareness raising and promotion with the communities (UNICEF; AusAID, 2009). However, at the time of this assessment, no information was provided on the activities of the CWVs or the further support that was established for these volunteer workers.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Follow-up with more specific investigations on the current status of the CWVs and the bottlenecks to their operation. Involve CWVs into the future referral mechanism.

• The Government-wide up-skilling facility – the Institute of Public Administration and Management (IPAM) – has very limited capacities and does not offer any relevant training at the moment. At the time of this assessment, the IPAM was looking to employ a Training and Development Advisor “to support the expansion of high quality learning and development programmes”.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Liaise with the IPAM Advisor to discuss possibilities for introducing a short training course in child protection that would be available to civil servants from across all ministries.

• The Child and Family Welfare Bill provides the Director for Social Welfare with vast powers to organize a data coordination structure to be used for surveillance, but the exact outline of this structure is not yet clear. The Child and Family Welfare Bill places the overall responsibility for organization and management of the information system on the Director, who is responsible for “monitoring and assessing services provided”, as well as “maintaining an information management system on children”. The Director also has power to request assistance from other Government agencies to assist her/him in undertaking any tasks specified by the Bill/Act. This opens an important opportunity to initiate a data coordination structure which could be used for surveillance purposes and would effectively link the key sector-level databases which already exist and are developing in parallel.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Consider creating a surveillance database on the basis of the current Health Sector management information system, as discussed under Domain 1.
Current progress

- SINSO⁵ is a dynamic and ambitious agency, which is consistently improving and expanding its work, both in terms of quantity and quality. In 2013, SINSO won an award: the Division of the Year in Recognition of Excellence and Performance. Jointly with international partners, SINSO has produced a range of surveys with important data to be used for developing child protection policies, such as the 2009 Census, the 2007 Demographic and Health Survey, and two rounds of Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) (2005/2006 and 2012/2013).

- SINSO is actively pursuing projects to integrate social statistical datasets with Geographical Information Systems to enable spatial analysis of social data. The SINSO website already features an interactive tool for the analysis of spatial dimensions using 2009 Census data which is disaggregated at the sub-provincial level.⁶

- During 2006-2013, the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) ran an annual Solomon Islands People’s Survey. The survey collected opinions of Solomon Islanders “on a broad range of issues including business, employment, law, order, public accountability and access to services” (including health and education). Notably, the RAMSI survey sample included respondents aged from 15 years, thereby containing primary data by the 15-18 years age group.

Open challenges

- The current process of planning for child protection does not utilize any of the existing survey data or administrative statistics. The only reference to statistical evidence is the illustration of demographic trends within the Children’s Policy based on the Census data.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Run a joint workshop on child protection data (perhaps under NAACC) with the participation of key ministries (MWYCFA, MHMS) as well as the SINSO and key international actors supporting data collection (UNICEF, SPC, International Labour Organization (ILO)). Discuss ways in which existing data could be used in the policy process. Identify barriers and reasons why data is not currently used.

- Administrative data, collected by the relevant ministries and relevant to child protection, is not consolidated into an integrated database that could be used to develop child protection policies and to orchestrate surveillance efforts. Every agency (including MHMS, MEHR and the Police) is operating its management information system (MIS) according to its individual policy, including the development of a data collection template and data exchange protocols. Datasets are not reconciled in terms of concepts, definitions and disaggregation criteria. Moreover, unlike in some other Pacific countries, the data collected for these individual sector-level datasets does not seem to be systemically shared with the SINSO.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Consider creating a surveillance database on the basis of the current Health Sector MIS, as discussed under Domain 1.

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⁵ Institutionally, SINSO is part of the Ministry of Finance and Treasury.
⁶ An example of such special analysis is provided in Figure 12 on page 93, showing the geographical distribution of school dropouts in female population by area.
• The ILO report for 2009 stated that, at the time, Solomon Islands had no Household Labour Force Survey or establishment survey in place. To address this gap, the ILO Decent Work Programme for Solomon Islands included a plan to help the Government in developing methodologies and capacities to collect labour market information, including through the introduction of labour force surveys (ILO, 2009). However, it is not clear whether this survey has already been implemented.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Follow up on the progress with the Household Labour Force Survey and ensure that its child labour findings are publicized among relevant stakeholders.

• While important research is taking place at the regional and global level to look into child protection issues in Solomon Islands (e.g., unpacking drivers of violence against children or looking for positive cultural traditions which could be used to promote child safety), there is no mechanism to effectively communicate the outcomes of this research to the Government or to align current academic efforts with the Government’s policy priorities.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The protection sub-committee of the NAACC may consider developing and maintaining a list of key child protection issues which, in their opinion, require research, data collection and academic discussion. This research agenda should be published on the Government’s website and shared specifically with the key regional research institutions such as the University of South Pacific.
DOMAIN 5. QUALITY ASSURANCE

Current progress

• Solomon Islands has just begun designing a new, quality-oriented but affordable system of welfare services in child protection. The outline of the new system is established within the Child and Family Welfare Bill. According to Bill, the ultimate responsibility for the organization of the child welfare system, including its quality control, stays with the Director responsible for social welfare matters. In particular, the Director is responsible for “monitoring and assessing the services provided under this Act by the Division and by other organizations, groups, and individuals.”

• The Bill would introduce: key definitions and principles for ensuring child safety; a system of standards for services by individual and organizational providers; a registration process; and a new referral and data exchange mechanism.

• Strategic documents for child protection (the Children’s Policy, the Child and Family Welfare Bill) are flexible and open to innovative solutions. They call for practical, even if unorthodox, solutions which would help Solomon Islands build a child protection system from a very low base, fitting the local context, and using the limited resources that are currently available to support the required services and programmes. In particular, such a flexible approach was embodied within the existing Child and Family Welfare Bill, which establishes key principles and structures for the child protection system but leaves significant leeway in terms of its particular organization.

• Solomon Islands NGOs, which represent one of the most promising resources for the future system of service provision, have access to a coordination platform – “Development Services Exchange” (DSE). The DSE helps its members to develop their capacities, coordinate and share information, as well as promote collaboration on existing and new projects. The DSE annual report for 2012-2013 states that the association is planning to expand its activities in the Child Protection area.

RECOMMENDATION: Liaise with DSE to support its plans in child protection and to reach out to NGOs inviting them to work on child protection issues.
Open challenges

- Clear identification of the oversight structure for the future requires a policy decision on the current regulatory mismatch between the DSW/MHMS and the MWYCFA. At the moment, the Director responsible for social welfare matters is the DSW within the Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS), covering frontline provision of services, including the few social welfare assistant posts. At the same time, the MWYCFA covers policy development and reporting on child rights issues. This regulatory mismatch creates a vacuum in terms of future oversight over Bill implementation.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Consider a decentralized, MHMS-based referral and surveillance system, as discussed under Domain 1.

- At the moment, the referral system for children requiring protection is hardly functional. To a large extent this is explained by the lacking social welfare element in the referral chain: even where staff in health, education or police identify a need for further support to a child, they report having nobody to address “at the receiving end”. As was reported earlier, the number of social welfare assistants is small and has been reduced. No information was provided on the status of the initial attempts to introduce inter-ministerial Memoranda of Understanding to assist in a crisis situation, as it was intended at the time of the 2009 Baseline Assessment.

- While the new registration process is not yet functional, the current rules for the registration and monitoring of organizational service providers remain fragmented, not rigorous enough and do not have specific requirements related to social welfare. There are several different statutes governing the registration of various types of NGOs, which means that there is no centralized registry and each statute creates a separate registry. In particular, registration of charitable trusts and most non-membership NGOs falls under the responsibility of the Registrar of Companies (however, for example, cooperative societies would register separately with the Registrar of Societies; a separate Registrar exists for credit unions). Moreover, at least at the time of available studies, registration was not at all required unless the NGO intended to acquire property or appear more credible to potential donors (Upton, 2006).

- Apart from limited financial supervision, there is no system for inspecting activities of the NGOs in the social welfare sector. At the moment, an inspection mechanism for service providers is lacking. Some types of national NGOs, such as credit unions or cooperative societies, are subject to financial audit requirements by central supervisory bodies. However, NGOs registered under the Charitable Trusts Act are not covered by these audit requirements. Other than limited financial supervision, there is no system for the systematic analysis of the substance of activities undertaken by the non-profit service providers, including in terms of quality and safety of their services for children.

- A child-friendly reporting and complaints system does not currently exist. The 2009 Report “Protect me with Love and Care” recommended the establishment of a reporting hotline for collecting complaints on instances of abuse, which would be available to children, but there does not seem to be any progress since.

- Protection of whistle-blowers would be provided under the Child and Family Welfare Bill, but even under the Bill reporting would not be mandatory. At the moment, there is no mechanism to ensure the timely reporting of abuse and maltreatment instances. The Child and Family Welfare Bill (Clause 16) states that “any person who has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child may be in need of care and protection may report the matter to a social welfare officer or a police officer”. The Bill further establishes that such reports may be made anonymously (Clause 17), and that reporting persons would be free of any civil, criminal, or disciplinary proceedings against them and that the reports would not constitute a breach of professional etiquette or ethics of a departure from accepted standards of professional conduct, unless the information was disclosed in bad faith (Clause 18). That is, while the Bill establishes protection measures to potential whistle-blowers, the reporting is not mandatory.
Current progress

- Research shows that Solomon Islanders share important positive values which could be utilized to build a safe environment for children and to support protective interventions. Positive influencing proved to be an important and effective mechanism in child protection communications. In particular, the 2011 paper by L. Thompson and D. Baschiera from the Charles Darwin University (Australia) on “Perceptions about Traditional Culture in the Solomon Islands and their Potential for Assisting in the Protection of Vulnerable Children” showed that Solomon Islanders see a significant role for traditional values in building a safe environment for children. The authors strongly recommend that these positive cultural perceptions be integrated into interventions to eliminate child abuse (Thompson & Baschiera, 2011).

- There are signs of the Government’s determination to build on positive values in its future communications for child protection. In particular, the positive influencing approach was the basis of the consultations to develop the Child and Family Welfare Bill. The Briefing Papers contain a discussion of cultural strengths which may be used to build a safe environment for children in Solomon Islands. These strengths include the traditional values of caring for and nurturing children, the perception of communal responsibility over the child’s well-being, a history of community self-help and community-based problem solving. Based on this, the Consultations highlighted that the new Bill would further strengthen traditional practices that promote and provide care and protection for children, especially given the risks of a breakdown of traditional structures in the recent times.

- The Government is cognizant of the changing nature of risks faced by the children and the need to address the new issues in child protection. The child protection section of the Solomon Islands National Children’s Policy has a specific discussion on the impact of social change on risks for children, including such emerging problems as street children in Honiara (Solomon Islands were reported by other studies to have the largest number of “street children” compared to other countries in the Pacific, represented by children who migrate away from their parents to search for economic opportunities in the capital city (Copland & Roberts, 2010)).

- The Government is also working specifically on communications to manage child protection risks related to social disruptions. The Solomon Islands National Development Strategy for 2011-2020 outlines a range of strategies to support the policy of Social and Communal Stability. These include measures such as: promotion of importance of national unity, capacity building for peace stakeholders, peace-building activities in rural areas and village communities (participatory workshops, youth rallies, annual peace summits), and the introduction of a peace education policy into the national curricula. The key agency responsible for these programmes is the Ministry of National Unity, Reconciliation and Peace (MNURP).

Open challenges

- Child protection policy development within the Government is not yet well connected to the wealth of diagnostic research that looks into cultural and attitudinal factors behind child abuse in Solomon Islands. None of these papers and statistics (even the 2009 Baseline study) is cited in the strategic documents and discussions. Moreover, much of the relevant on-going attitudinal research led by the international partners (such as the Knowledge, Attitude and Practices (KAP) surveys) focuses on youth and gender, rather than specifically on child abuse and maltreatment.
• SINSO did not include any attitudinal components into the surveys which took place in the past five years. The latest survey with some relevant questions was the 2005-2006 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS). The Gender-Based Violence Survey was planned by the Government jointly with the SPC, however it is not certain whether this research had taken place and its results do not yet seem to be publicized.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Follow up the progress with the GDV survey and possibilities for new rounds of the DHS, ensuring, where possible, that the surveys maintain attitudinal components. Consider possibilities for expanding instruments to include questions relating specifically to child protection.

• The Government has not yet developed a public influencing and behaviour change strategy – either as a separate document or as a set of individual messages and programmes. The existing strategic documents which refer to child protection objectives do not contain any discussion of the behavioural and attitudinal components of child protection and the need to influence these. In particular, there are no communication plans contained in the National Development Strategy or the Children's Policy.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Future planning rounds related to child protection (such as the elaboration of new policies and corporate plans) should expand activities into the area of communications and behaviour influencing. The Government would require technical support to develop a strategy for such influencing, including evidence-based diagnostics and monitoring tools.

• The Government still needs to develop materials to equip its positive influencing plans. This would include practical models, cases and positive deviance examples to demonstrate how child protection issues could be positively resolved.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- **Build on the existing work of the Community Child Protection Programme led by Save the Children, which “works to educate parents, teachers and communities about child protection,” including awareness raising on positive disciplining;**

- **Utilize approaches developed through UNICEF work to implement community-based management of severe acute malnutrition. Somewhat like child protection, malnutrition is difficult to prioritize politically given the variety and scale of other public health problems. It is also similar in that addressing SAM depends strongly on the prevention and follow-up, both requiring active public communication and influencing through community-level work. The project included a community mobilization component, delivering information at the point of screening through nurse-aids and “satellite point” gatherings (UNICEF, 2014). This experience revealed an exceptionally high response rate among the Solomon Island communities towards the information they received on the positive consequences of screening, follow up and proper child nutrition generally. When people learned that these behaviours mattered, they usually responded with due follow up. This indicates a possibility for behaviour influencing at the community-level by providing practical information on the positive consequences of ensuring child safety.**

- **Consider launching a radio campaign to support the future implementation of the Child and Family Welfare Bill. Radio broadcasting has proved to be one of the most effective communication channels for public influencing in Solomon Islands and has been used in the past for campaigns such as the promotion of gender equality in 2013 and mass measles vaccination in September 2014.**