



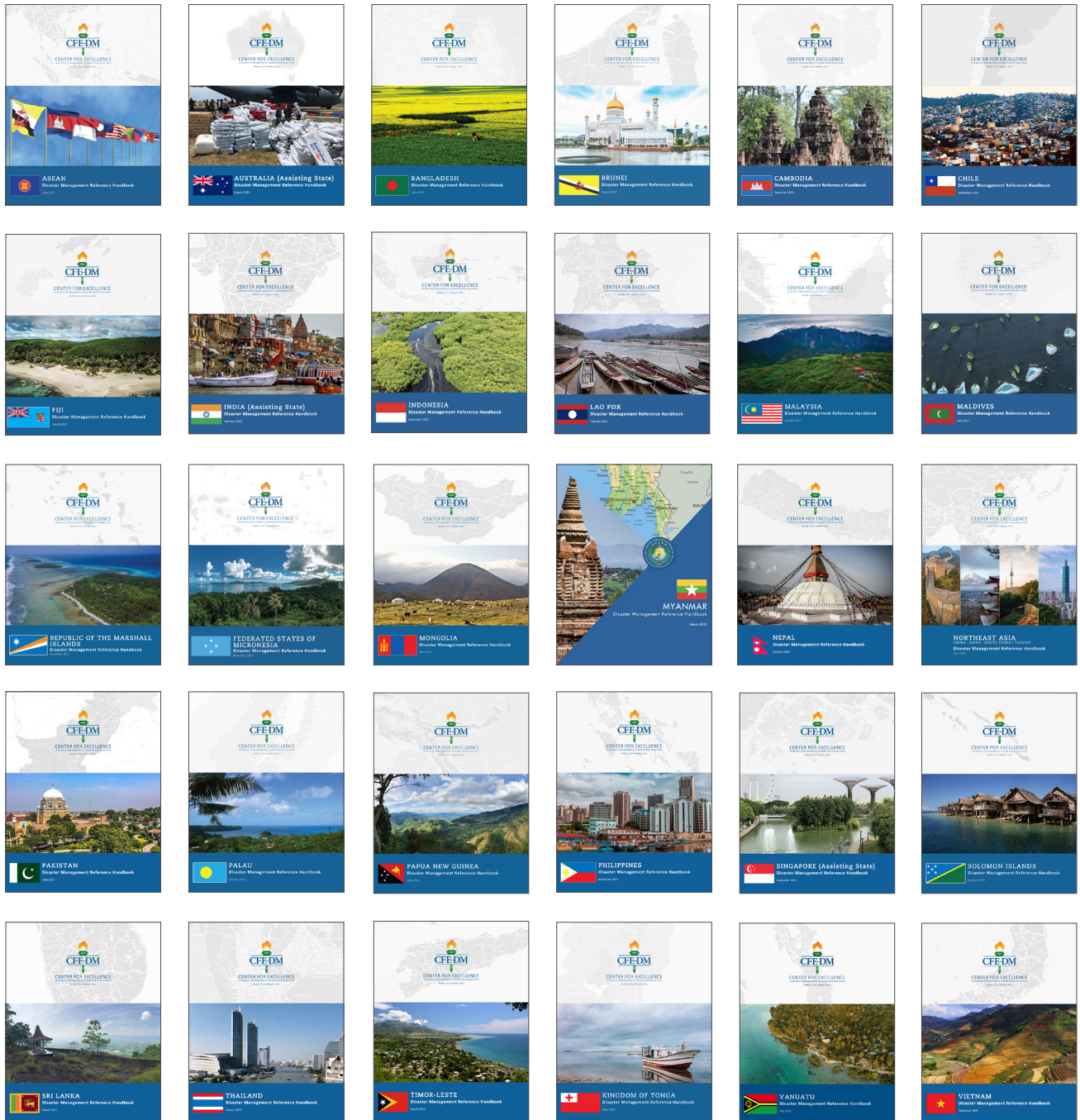
SOLOMON ISLANDS

Disaster Management Reference Handbook

October 2023

Disaster Management Reference Handbook Series

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Front Cover

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Letter from the Director

Climate change has a significant impact on disaster risk and can pose a significant threat to vulnerable populations. As such, disaster risk management that is concise and communicates reliable information is crucial. This Solomon Islands Disaster Management Reference Handbook provides the reader a baseline understanding of key national entities involved in disaster management and Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Response (HADR). In addition, this resource details disasters occurring in the Solomon Islands in the last ten years. Hazards including earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanos, flooding, and tropical storms have a large impact and even more recently with the 2023 Tropical Cyclones.

The Solomon Islands' National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) trains cross-functional teams of disaster response professionals who will be responsible for coordinating international assistance in times of national crisis. Last year, the Center for Excellence in Disaster Management & Humanitarian Assistance (CFE-DM) joined the NDMO, the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF), the National Emergency Response Team (NERT), the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), the Pacific Community (SPC) Pacific Islands Emergency Management Alliance (PIEMA), the Australian Civil-Military Centre (ACMC), the U.S. Coast Guard, and the USNS Mercy through U.S. Pacific Fleet's Pacific Partnership 2022 to instruct this team. This was a new initiative at the national level with the Solomon Islands NERT. The NERT underwent an intensive indoctrination course to prepare them for their central role in coordinating relief operations. A desktop exercise allowed the teams to develop response plans for a simulated earthquake and tsunami off the coast of the capital city. The training focused on command system fundamentals, search and rescue, foreign military aid in disaster responses, and multinational roles in humanitarian assistance. The establishment of the NERT by a NDMO in the Pacific with the availability for rapid deployment is the first capability of its kind to be established and as such is very significant.



Sincerely,

Joseph D. Martin, SES
Director

About the Center for Excellence in Disaster Management & Humanitarian Assistance

Overview

The Center for Excellence in Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance (CFE-DM) is a United States (U.S.) Department of Defense (DoD) organization comprised of nearly 30 subject matter experts that provide academic research, civil-military coordination training, and operational insights to support decision making before, during, and after crises. The Center is designed to bridge understanding between humanitarians, civilian, and military responders. CFE-DM partners with a diverse group of governmental and nongovernmental actors, as well as academic institutions to increase collaborations and capabilities in humanitarian assistance and disaster response. While maintaining a global mandate, the Indo-Pacific region is our priority of effort and collaboration is the cornerstone of our operational practice. The Center is a direct reporting unit to U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) and is located on Ford Island, Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii.

Vision

The Joint Force, allies, and partners are fully prepared to conduct and support foreign humanitarian assistance.

Mission

CFE-DM builds crisis response capacity in U.S. and partner militaries, enhances coordination and collaboration with civilian and foreign partners, and strengthens those relationships to save lives and alleviate human suffering before, during, and after humanitarian crises.

Contact Information

Center for Excellence in Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance
456 Hornet Ave
JBPHH, HI 96860-3503
Telephone: +1 (808) 472-0518
<https://www.cfe-dmha.org>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Solomon Islands is exposed to a range of natural hazards, including earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanos, tropical storms, and flooding. Natural disasters that particularly affected the country include the 2007 Gizo earthquake and tsunami, 2009 Guadalcanal flash floods, 2013 Santa Cruz earthquake and tsunami, 2014 flooding in Honiara and Guadalcanal, and the 2016 Makira earthquake and tsunami. As Solomon Islands works to strengthen disaster resilience, more recent events such as 2023's Tropical Cyclones (TC) Kevin and Judy and 2020's TC Harold have caused less widespread human fatalities but still caused significant loss of livelihoods and economic damage. Increased resilience is evident when looking at Solomon Islands' progress in strengthening capacity since 1986, when TC Namu killed more than 100 people and left up to 90,000 homeless.¹

Effective disaster risk management is one of the five objectives of the Solomon Islands National Development Strategy 2016-2035.² The country's various strategic objectives reflect the interrelated dynamics of managing disaster risk and providing equitable economic and development opportunities. As an economy far from major international markets and that relies on imported food and fuel as well as other commodities, Solomon Islands continues to face significant challenges to address poverty and to extend health, education, and other government services to its people. Disasters have a disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable populations, including economically and socially marginalized groups. The issue of unequal economic opportunities has contributed to social tension along ethnic lines; it played a role in the 2021 civil unrest as well as "The Tensions" (1998-2003), which ushered in the Australian-led Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (2003-2017) to stabilize security. Furthermore, recurring disasters have cross-cutting effects by repeatedly setting back wider economic progress. Solomon Islands is projected to incur

average annual losses of US\$20.5 million over the long term due solely to earthquakes or tropical cyclones.³ The 2022 World Risk Index categorized Solomon Islands in its highest risk classification, as "very high" for disaster risk, and ranked it at 33 out of 193 countries, based on exposure and vulnerability to natural hazards.⁴

Climate change exacerbates disaster risk in Solomon Islands. The country is significantly vulnerable to extreme rainfall events and is already experiencing warming temperatures, a trend expected to continue through the century. Sea levels are rising faster than the global average; submergence of the country's lowest-lying islands has already begun and threatens coastal communities. The fisheries sector faces a dire outlook with potential reductions in the maximum catch potential of over 50%, a major threat to national food security, national income, and dietary health. In short, Solomon Islands faces a large range of hazards that overlap with climate change. Furthermore, fundamental social issues of poverty, inequality, and poorly planned development are among the biggest drivers of disaster risk, making disaster risk reduction (DRR) of critical cross-cutting importance.⁵

Solomon Islands has been instituting a holistic approach to disaster management. The 2018 National Disaster Management Plan sets out comprehensive arrangements that emphasize a whole-of-government, national, provincial, and local approach to planning, preparedness, response, and recovery. Local communities are encouraged to take measures to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters. A new initiative at the national level is the Solomon Islands National Emergency Response Team (NERT), the first rapid deployment capability of its kind established by a national disaster management organization in the Pacific.⁶ It is also considered one of the best global practices in localizing the United Nations (UN) Disaster Assessment and Coordination methodology.⁷

COUNTRY OVERVIEW

Solomon Islands is a multi-ethnic Pacific Island state, where more than 70 individual indigenous languages are still used. While the country is comprised of more than 900 islands, much of the population is on six main islands. A majority (80%) of Solomon Islands' approximately 721,000 people live in rural areas, though the country has a high urban growth rate. The country went through a challenging time of ethnic violence and civil unrest, referred to as "The Tensions," from 1998 to 2003. The Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands operated from 2003 to 2017 as an international peacekeeping force led by Australia but comprised of civilian, police, and military personnel from 10 Pacific nations. While the mission helped stabilize the security situation, some of the underlying issues of ethnic tensions and uneven economic opportunities remain, and they helped fuel the civil unrest seen in November 2021. The country is tackling cross-cutting challenges of stable governance, poverty alleviation, health and education, and equitable development.

History

Human history in Solomon Islands is believed to extend back as much as 30,000 years when the first Papuan settlers arrived from New Guinea.⁸ Around 4000 BCE, Austronesian settlers started arriving and intermixing with Papuan settlers; they included Lapita people who started appearing around 2000 to 1600 BCE. Polynesians started settling in the islands between 1200 and 1600 CE; they primarily settled in the outer islands, including Rennell, Bellona, and Ontong Java.⁹ Solomon Islanders have their own origin stories, which differ between tribes and islands but commonly indicate that they originated from within the islands.

The Spanish explorer Álvaro de Mendaña de Neira was the first European to reach the islands in 1568. His stories of finding gold and rumors of discovering the biblical King Solomon's gold

mines led to the islands acquiring the name, "Islas de Solomón," or "Solomon Islands." He failed to establish a permanent settlement, and further European contact did not occur until 1767, when British Captain Philip Carteret arrived. By the mid-1800s, the islands were regularly visited by European explorers, British and American whalers, missionaries, and sandalwood traders.¹⁰ The practice referred to as "blackbirding," slave trading, which was historically practiced by Europeans on many South Pacific islands, also affected Solomon Islands. Between 1871 and 1903, slave traders, or "blackbirders," forcibly or coercively took 30,000 men from Solomon Islands to labor on the sugarcane plantations of British-colonized Fiji and northern Australia, primarily Queensland. In 1885, Germany declared a protectorate over the northern Solomon Islands, and in 1893 the United Kingdom (UK) established a protectorate over the southern islands. Germany transferred its Solomon Islands claim to the UK in 1899 in exchange for the UK relinquishing its claims in Samoa. Colonial boundaries still divided archipelago groups as Buka and Bougainville became part of German New Guinea, now Papua New Guinea's Autonomous Region of Bougainville, while Santa Cruz Island and the Polynesian atolls at the northern end of the Vanuatu archipelago became part of Solomon Islands.¹¹

Solomon Islands was heavily impacted by World War II (WWII). Japan invaded in 1942, and as Japan occupied the islands, heavy fighting occurred against Allied forces, especially around Guadalcanal. The Guadalcanal Campaign from August 1942 to February 1943 was a turning point in WWII's Pacific theater. Japan was forced out by 1945, whereupon the British re-asserted rule. During the war, large parts of Solomon Islands were destroyed. Toward the end of the war, nationalism emerged, and in 1946, an independence movement, Marching Rule, was established.¹² In 1952, Britain made Honiara the

capital to leverage use of the infrastructure the U.S. built up on Guadalcanal Island during the war;¹³ among key structures was Henderson Field, now the country's international airport, 12 kilometers (km; 7.5 miles) east of the capital.¹⁴

In 1976, Solomon Islands became fully self-governing and, in 1978, obtained independence within the British Commonwealth. In the decades following WWII, laborers from the poorer island of Malaita migrated to Guadalcanal in search of work. However, ethnic Guales, the indigenous Guadalcanal residents, resented the Malaitan migrants. Then, in 1997, Bartholomew Ulufa'alu, a Malaitan, was elected Prime Minister; within the first year, his government survived several motions of no confidence, and the ethno-political rifts that drove these maneuvers soon erupted. "The Tensions" refers to a period of internal conflict from 1998 to 2003; it was characterized by inter-island ethnic tensions and unrest fueled by uneven economic opportunities and development. In the late 1990s, armed ethnic and nationalist groups formed; key among them were the Guadalcanal Liberation Army, led by Harold Keke, and the Isatubu Freedom Movement.¹⁵ The groups targeted Malaitans in Guadalcanal with threats and violence; Malaitans, in response, formed the Malaita Eagle Force.¹⁶ Thousands of Malaitans also fled back to Malaita or to Honiara, where there was a large Malaitan community. In June 2000, the Malaita Eagle Force kidnapped Prime Minister Ulufa'alu because they believed that he was not doing enough to protect their interests although he was Malaitan. Ulufa'alu resigned in exchange for his release. Over the next year, a couple of peace agreements were signed by various militant groups and government authorities, but not the key Gualé militant leader, Harold Keke. In December 2001, new elections ushered in Sir Allan Kemakeza as Prime Minister. However, law and order further deteriorated, and conflict escalated. Economic and social problems worsened, and the government was unable to pay wages and fund services. Amid a climate of lawlessness, widespread extortion, and ineffective police action, in June 2003, the Government of

Solomon Islands formally requested military help from Australia and New Zealand. Pacific foreign ministers backed a multinational force, and the Solomon Islands government approved a peacekeeping plan, leading to the deployment of the Australian-led peacekeeping force, Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI).

RAMSI operated from 2003 to 2017. The mission was built by a coalition of Pacific states and included soldiers, police, and civilians from Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga, and Vanuatu.¹⁷ RAMSI played a significant role in restoring stability, rebuilding damaged infrastructure, helping to reconstitute the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF), and overseeing disarmament. However, there were limitations to the mission, and significant challenges remain relating to governance, social services, and economic prospects. RAMSI's efforts were primarily focused on immediate peacekeeping and stabilizing tasks and focused less on deep-rooted governance and development issues.¹⁸

During RAMSI's mandate, in 2003, Keke surrendered to Australian forces and, in 2005, he was jailed for life for murder. In 2006, Parliament elected Manasseh Sogavare as Prime Minister. His predecessor, Snyder Rini, had resigned after eight days in office as rioting followed his appointment. In 2007, a tsunami struck northwest Solomon Islands after an undersea earthquake; at least 34 people were killed and thousands were left homeless. Toward the end of that year, Sogavare resigned after a vote of no confidence and was replaced by Derek Sikua. In February 2009, heavy rains led to deadly flooding on Guadalcanal, and the government declared a national disaster. Two months later, a national truth and reconciliation commission was launched to investigate various aspects of "The Tensions," including the more than 100 deaths and 20,000 displacements that occurred during the conflict. Even as the commission undertook its work, the country continued to experience disasters and political unrest. In January 2010, an earthquake triggered landslides and a tsunami

that left 1,000 people homeless. In August 2010, Danny Philip was elected Prime Minister, but he resigned the following year and was replaced by Gordon Darcy Lilo. In February 2013, a tsunami following another earthquake killed at least nine people. In April 2014, heavy rains associated with a tropical cyclone caused some of the worst flash flooding in the country and killed at least 22 people.

In the November 2014 general election, Gordon Darcy Lilo was defeated and replaced by Manasseh Sogavare, who became Prime Minister for the third time. In November 2017, Sogavare lost a vote of no confidence and was replaced by Rick Houenipwela,¹⁹ but in April 2019, Sogavare regained the Prime Minister's post for the fourth time. During this mandate (on-going as of writing this handbook), in September 2019, Sogavare suddenly switched Honiara's diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to China.²⁰ The diplomatic switch was very contentious within Solomon Islands, particular in Malaita, the most populous province, which had been receiving significant aid from Taiwan. Kiribati followed Solomon Islands in switching recognition from Taiwan to China, and both Solomon Islands and Kiribati gained a significant amount of aid from China the following year.²¹

Public opinion surveys conducted from April to May 2021 indicated significant, sustained social challenges.²² The problems identified as the most serious were unemployment, cost of living, and corruption, all of which the majority of respondents thought were worsening.²³ On 24 November 2021, riots broke out in Honiara, primarily in the capital's Chinatown area, where businesses were looted and torched and at least three people died. The riots followed Prime Minister Sogavare's refusal to meet with protestors from Malaita. Malaitan anger was partially driven by economic disparities, which were exacerbated when the government switched recognition from China to Taiwan, a shift that led to the cessation of Taiwanese aid to the province.²⁴ Malaita Province Premier Daniel Suidani had large support in his province for his outspoken opposition to recognizing China. A

group of senior national politicians also opposed the diplomatic switch away from Taiwan on the grounds of democratic principles, human rights, rule of law, and debt trap concerns with China.²⁵ As the riots raged, Sogavare urgently requested international assistance when the prime minister's residence and the parliament building were threatened by rioters. Australian forces began arriving on 26 November and were followed by forces from Papua New Guinea, Fiji, and New Zealand. While the peacekeeping force fielded some criticism for supporting Prime Minister Sogavare, it also played an important role in restoring order, although their mandate could not address long-standing domestic tensions behind the riots.²⁶

Despite the clear domestic rifts over Honiara's relationship with Beijing, in April 2022, Solomon Islands signed a security pact with China. Information about the planned pact had been leaked the previous month and prompted expressions of concern by not only Australia, but also by the U.S., Japan, New Zealand, and other Pacific countries.²⁷ The U.S. took further steps to renew and strengthen the bilateral relationship with the Solomon Islands, including the February 2023 opening of the U.S. Embassy in Honiara.²⁸ Solomon Islands does not have a standing military but is considering forming a defense force. In July 2023, Prime Minister Sogavare first publicly mentioned the ambition in a press conference upon his return from a week-long visit to China.²⁹

In November 2023, Solomon Islands will host the Pacific Games, with more than 5,000 athletes from 22 Pacific Nations. As the country prepares infrastructure and security to accommodate the games, the high-profile event provides Solomon Islands an opportunity to shine and extend regional influence.

Culture and Demographics

There are diverse languages, ethnicities, cultures, and traditions in the Solomon Islands, partially due to the relative isolation of its many

island communities. For this reason, local governance systems, including familial ties, are often more important than national political institutions.³⁰

Family, clan, and communal ties are strong. Most Solomon Islanders consider themselves to be part of an immediate family of 200 people and can trace back their ancestors ten generations. The Pijin word “wantok,” which derives from “one talk,” refers to people from the same language group and is used to indicate blood relatives in the extended family.³¹ Islanders are obligated to and receive benefits from their wantok, which functions as a way of sharing community assets. The wantok provides social security and economic support, particularly as paid employment is scarce and there is no government social security system. Kastom refers to traditional ways, beliefs, and land ownership, and it is bound up in Melanesian systems of culture and traditional knowledge.³² Community life at the local level still depends on mutual assistance among relatives and neighbors. Management of shared community resources is inherited by seniority of descent, in the male or female line, although, in practice, this descent more often advances men’s claims to leadership based on their support for others. Participation in the market economy brings opportunities as well as challenges to the traditional dynamics of mutual assistance and group ownership of resources.³³

Solomon Islands has long had rich oral traditions and histories, including origin stories, genealogies, songs, and customary knowledge. Furthermore, research in western Solomon Islands following the 2007 earthquake and tsunami supported the idea that intergenerationally transmitted oral histories and cultural stories are a factor that increases effective indigenous responses to environmental disasters.³⁴

Music, songs, and dances are an integral part of the country’s culture. Folk songs and dances are performed during traditional ceremonies. Many islanders compose songs, and both group and solo vocals are common forms of traditional

Melanesian performances. Music is produced through slit-drums and panpipes, and panpipe orchestras are very popular. A thriving craft industry has been bolstered by tourism growth, with markets featuring traditional handicraft items such as stone carvings, woven baskets and bags, tribal jewelry, and indigenous pottery. Written literature significantly developed in the 1960s as part of the growth of Pacific Islander literature in the region, with John Saunana and Celo Kulagoe recognized as notable writers from the country.³⁵

Ethnic Makeup

The population is primarily indigenous Melanesian, with approximately 95.3% of the population Melanesian, 3.1% Polynesian, 1.2% Micronesian, and 0.4% other ethnicities.³⁶ Various Polynesian cultural communities historically occupied outlying islands, including coral atolls, although many Polynesians have moved to the Honiara area. Many Micronesians are Gilbertese (i-Kiribati) who were forcibly resettled to the Solomon Islands in the 1960s from present-day Kiribati’s Phoenix Islands, which the British Colonial Administration considered drought-stricken and not habitable long-term. The Gilbertese people continue to integrate into the larger Solomon Islander society through intermarriages and ways of life.³⁷ Around Honiara there are small numbers of other migrant groups, including Chinese and Europeans, although their numbers have declined since independence.³⁸

Key Population Centers

Solomon Islands has a population of approximately 721,455 people, according to a provisional population count based on the 2019 National Population and Household Census.³⁹ The population has steadily increased over the past several decades, from 285,000 in 1986, 409,000 in 1999, and 552,000 in 2009. An estimated 26% of the population live in urban areas, compared to 74% who reside in rural areas. The urban growth rate is 5.3% and is almost three times the rural population growth rate.

Solomon Islands is considered one of the world’s fastest urbanizing countries, with rural-to-urban migration driven by the pursuit of economic and educational opportunities.⁴⁰ Honiara, the capital and commercial hub of the country, accounts for more than two-thirds of all urban residents, excluding residents in the adjoining urban areas of Guadalcanal.⁴¹ Most of the population lives in coastal regions.

The government distinguishes urban areas as including Honiara and the administrative centers of all provinces except Rennell-Bellona Province.

Table 1 provides the Solomon Islands government breakdown of urban versus rural populations by province.⁴²

Table 2 shows provisional population density nationally as well as by province, based on the 2019 census.⁴³

Figure 1 visually depicts the population

distribution across Solomon Islands; it is published by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and is based on 2009 census data from the National Statistics Office and 2022 population projections for gender disaggregation by the UN Population Fund (UNFPA).⁴⁴

Language

English is the official language. However, the most widely used and understood language is Pijin or Pidgin.⁴⁵ Solomon Islands Pijin is one of the three Melanesian creoles that stabilized on the plantations of Queensland, Australia; it is closely related to Tok Pisin of Papua New Guinea and Bislama of Vanuatu. Its syntax primarily reflects that of Eastern Solomonian Languages, and 80% of its vocabulary comes from English.⁴⁶ Although English is used in the local media,

Province	All Areas		Urban		Rural	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Solomon Islands	721,455	100	184,832	25.6	536,623	74.4
Choiseul	30,619	100	909	3.0	29,710	97.0
Western	94,209	100	13,628	14.5	80,581	85.5
Isabel	30,399	100	829	2.7	29,570	97.3
Central	30,326	100	1,431	4.7	28,895	95.3
Rennell-Bellona	4,091	100	-	0.0	4,091	100.0
Guadalcanal	154,150	100	28,395	18.4	125,755	81.6
Malaita	173,347	100	6,695	3.9	166,652	96.1
Makira-Ulawa	52,006	100	1,542	3.0	50,464	97.0
Temotu	22,132	100	1,227	5.5	20,905	94.5
Honiara town council	130,176	100	130,176	100.0	-	0.0

Table 1: Solomon Islands Urban-Rural Population by Province, 2019

	Land Area	Total Population	Population Density (per km²)
Solomon Islands	30,407.3 km²/11,740 square miles	721,455	24
Honiara (Capital Territory)	21.9 km²/8.5 square miles	130,176	5,950
Province			
Central	615.3 km²/237.6 square miles	30,326	49
Malaita	4,224.7 km²/1,631 square miles	173,347	41
Guadalcanal	5,336.3 km²/2,060 square miles	154,150	29
Temotu	868.4 km²/335.3 square miles	22,132	25
Makira-Ulawa	3,187.7 km²/1,230.8 square miles	52,006	16
Western	7,509 km²/2,899 square miles	94,209	13
Choiseul	3,837.3 km²/1,481.6 square miles	30,619	8
Isabel	4,136.2 km²/1,597 square miles	30,399	7
Rennell-Bellona	670.7 km²/258.9 square miles	4,091	6

Table 2: Population Density by Province, 2019



SOLOMON ISLANDS

Population Distribution | Total Population: 515,870

Census 2009

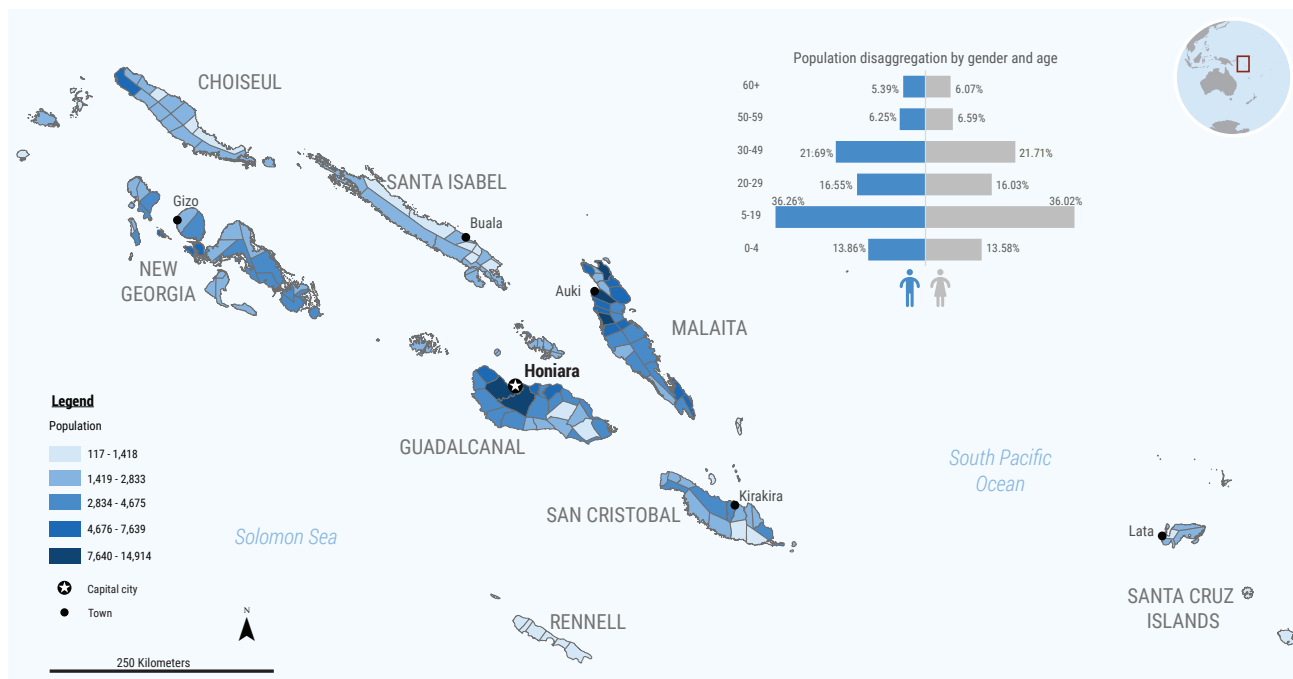


Figure 1: Solomon Islands Population Distribution

government transactions, and some businesses, it is only spoken by about 2% of the population. Two main varieties of Pijin are spoken - a more anglicized variety spoken by a younger, urban middle class or by English speakers, and a more classic variety found in rural villages. Pijin pronunciation varies as many speakers are influenced by their own native languages.⁴⁷ There are at least 76 individual languages recorded in Solomon Islands; three of these languages have become extinct and 73 are still in use. Of the languages still in use, 16 are diminishing or endangered. Indigenous languages with more than 10,000 speakers include Cheke Holo on Santa Isabel Island, Kia District, and Hograno coastal villages; Are'are in the Malaita Region; Gela in the Florida Island region; Ghari in Guadalcanal Island; Kwaio in Central Malaita; Lau in Malaita; Lengo on Guadalcanal Island; and Toabaita in north Malaita Island.⁴⁸ There is interest in documenting endangered languages, as well as documenting the more widely spoken creole in its existing form before it changes.⁴⁹

Religion

The vast majority of Solomon Islanders are Christian, a legacy of missionary efforts that began two centuries ago. Many are Protestant, mainly adhering to the Anglican Church of Melanesia, though there are also smaller numbers of Roman Catholics and members of other denominations.⁵⁰ Approximately 90% of the population is affiliated with the following Christian churches: Anglican Church of Melanesia (32%), Roman Catholic (20%), South Seas Evangelical (17%), Seventh-day Adventist (12%), and United Methodist (10%). Prior to European colonization, traditional animistic beliefs were widespread. Believers of animism attribute a spiritual essence to objects of nature. Today, an estimated 5% of the population adheres to indigenous, animistic religions, with adherents primarily found among the Kwaio ethnic community on the island of Malaita. Less than 5% of the population collectively comprise congregations of Muslims, Baha'is, Jehovah's Witnesses, members of The Church

of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, members of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (Unification Church), and members of indigenous churches that have broken away from major Christian denominations (such as the Christian Fellowship Church, which separated from the United Methodist Church in 1960). The constitution provides for religious freedom, including the freedom to change religions, proselytize, and establish religious schools.⁵¹

Vulnerable Groups

Vulnerable groups are addressed here as groups of people who, due to their social position or circumstances, are likely to be disproportionately disadvantaged by adverse impacts from natural disasters, crises, and economic shocks than other groups in the community. The groups covered below are not comprehensive but highlight some groups with heightened social vulnerabilities. Factors exacerbating vulnerabilities are often cross-cutting. Climate change brings repeated disaster shocks, which particularly impact vulnerable groups.

Women

The Government of the Solomon Islands ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 2002. The Solomon Islands National Council of Women (SINCW), a non-governmental organization (NGO) established in 1983, coordinates women's organizations in the country. SINCW's mandates include monitoring the effective implementation of the Solomon Islands Government's international gender equality and women's rights commitments, advancing women's political leadership, and encouraging women's participation in decision making. SINCW reports that women continue to face challenges to political participation and representation.⁵² A recognized step toward gender equality was the 2017 publication of the Women, Peace, and Security National Action Plan 2017-2021, which focused on preventing violence against women and girls.⁵³ It also paid

particular attention to women's experiences of conflict-related sexual violence during "The Tensions" and minimal role in follow-on peace processes.⁵⁴ It recognized the roles that civil society organizations play in increasing women's participation in peace and security and women's protection issues.

Solomon Islands has a relatively high rate of documented violence against women and girls with a reported 64% of ever-partnered women aged 15-49 years having experienced physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner, with levels of such violence higher in Honiara than in the provinces. Organizations that provide services to survivors of gender-based violence include the Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs (MWYCFA), the Family Support Centre, and the Malaita Christian Care Centre, with support from UN Women, the Pacific Community (SPC), Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), and government donors.⁵⁵ Women in rural areas are vulnerable due to their remoteness, and efforts have included aiming to decentralize services. While many indicators of women's reproductive health have improved, rural women still face difficulties in accessing health facilities where service providers and medications are consistently available. Levels of girls' education lag in rural areas, where 25% of women and girls aged 15 years and above had no schooling compared to 13% of men and boys in the same age category, based on the 2009 census. In general, men of Solomon Islands control most of the productive resources and services, including land, tools and equipment, income and savings, raw material, transportation, livestock, farming inputs, and technical agricultural information. It is reportedly common for husbands to consult with wives in making decisions on resources and benefits, but men have the final say.⁵⁶

An increasing body of research has shown that climate-related disasters and climate change have a disproportionate effect on women. Climate change is also anticipated to disproportionately affect women in Solomon Islands through its effects on crop production processes. The majority of households are in rural areas and

an estimated 96% of rural households grow at least some of their own food. Women play a significant role in household production and selling of produce. Food production is expected to experience impacts of climate change, which could bring changes in precipitation, temperature, water availability and seasonality, transformation of soil organic matter, soil erosion, altered pest and disease profiles, and decline in arable areas due to the submergence of coastal lands or soil and water salinization.⁵⁷

In May 2023, the Women's Resilience to Disasters Programme was launched collaboratively by the Solomon Islands Government, Australia Aid, and UN Women. The program aims to adopt gender-responsive decision-making and governance systems and enable targeted action to build the resilience of women and girls.⁵⁸ It focuses on at-risk areas, including Malaita and Central Province, with an emphasis on enhancing early warning systems for women, girls, and people living with disabilities. The program aims to work at local and national levels with women and girls, community organizations, and governments for more gender-inclusive planning, policy, and decision-making for inclusive DRR practice.⁵⁹

Women and girls are disproportionately at risk of human trafficking, particularly in the many communities across the country that are close to extractive industries, such as logging, fishing, and mining. In September 2022, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), European Union (EU), National Council of Women, and MWYCFA launched a new project to combat human trafficking and gender-based violence. The project, "Strengthening the Capacity of Civil Society Organisations in Solomon Islands to Prevent Trafficking in Persons and Gender-Based Violence and to Protect Survivors," will support implementation of the Solomon Islands Government's National Action Plan against Human Trafficking and People Smuggling, 2020-2025. It will work with national and local partners to strengthen civil society capacities to provide preventative and protective services to women and girls, and to increase awareness of

and advocacy on human trafficking and gender-based violence.⁶⁰ In accordance with the National Action Plan, the government of Solomon Islands has been conducting national sensitization and provincial consultations on the process to accede to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children.⁶¹

There has been legislative and policy progress to support reduction of gender-based violence. The National Policy to Eliminate Violence Against Women and Girls, 2016-2020, was notable as a national strategic policy, but since it expired its renewal has been delayed. The National Development Strategy 2016-2035 and the National Population Policy 2017-2026 also provide policy guidance to reduce violence against women and girls.⁶²

Children

Solomon Islands has made steady progress in reducing the mortality rate of children under five years of age from 38.2 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 18.8 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2021.⁶³ Rural areas still have significantly higher mortality rates than urban areas, but the country is on track to meet international child mortality reduction goals by 2030. The country has a 33% rate of childhood stunting (low height-for-age), which is among the highest for Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICT). There are significant disparities between rural and urban areas, and between rich and poor households. Childhood wasting (acute malnutrition, low weight-for-height) is less prevalent in an indication that children typically attain daily energy requirements but the foods consumed lack sufficient nutritional value. Child obesity rates are among the lowest in the region, although obesity is becoming a significant public health concern for adults. The Solomon Islands has an exclusive breastfeeding prevalence of 75%, one of the highest rates in the PICT region.

The primary school net enrollment ratio is around 92%. Challenges to improving school attendance and completion rates include that a

significant proportion of children enrolled are over-age, an enrollment disparity disadvantages girls, and enrollment drops precipitously after primary school. The junior secondary net enrollment ratio is 42%, suggesting that less than half of children aged 13 to 15 years are enrolled in school. Children often must travel long distances to the nearest functioning school, and this distance discourages enrollment and contributes to dropping out. Levels of sexual abuse toward children under the age of 15 years are at 37%, among the highest in the PICT region. Commercial sexual exploitation of children is linked to the logging and fishing industries, with girls vulnerable to child marriage to foreign workers. The social protection system was assessed in the low-to-middle range among PICTs in terms of comprehensiveness and impact. However, traditional social safety nets play an important role in Solomon Islands, though they are sometimes overwhelmed by disasters.⁶⁴

MWYCFA works to protect the rights of women, youths, children, and families, through creating equal opportunities and utilizing effective partnerships. Two of the ministry's six divisions focus on children and youths. The Youth Development Division manages government priorities for youth development and empowerment, while the Children's Development Division oversees the implementation of the National Children's Policy and coordinates the implementation of the CRC in partnership with stakeholders. Significant national-level legislative and policy steps have included the Family Protection Act of 2014, the Child and Family Welfare Act of 2017, Solomon Islands National Youth Policy 2017-2030, and the Strategic Framework for Youth Development and Empowerment in Solomon Islands of 2017.⁶⁵

People Living in Poverty

Approximately 12.7% of the population in Solomon Islands lives below the poverty line, which the Solomon Islands Government defines as the minimum expenditure needed to obtain basic food and non-food goods. Data suggest that

poverty in Solomon Islands is overwhelmingly rural, although meeting basic needs costs twice as much in Honiara, compared with most other provinces. Significantly high poverty rates are found in Makira-Ulawa Province, where almost 33% of the population lives in poverty, and Guadalcanal Provinces, where approximately 20% lives in poverty. Honiara has a 15% poverty rate, which is above the national average. The lowest poverty rate is found in Temotu. Living standards were measured based on total consumption expenditure as the total monetary value of all food and non-food goods consumed by the household. Accordingly, the overall incidence of "food poverty" is quite low in Solomon Islands, with only 4.4% of the population living under the food poverty line in the country as a whole. Relevant for disaster risk management, the higher rates of poverty observed in Makira-Ulawa and Guadalcanal were also due to significant weather-caused devastations just before and during the 2012-2013 period of the survey conducted by the Solomon Islands National Statistics Office.⁶⁶

Poverty is a cross-cutting issue that intersects with education levels, gender inequality, post-conflict dynamics, inter-ethnic tensions, and land rights. Poverty levels are correlated with low educational attainment, as approximately 40% of people considered to be poor are living in households headed by someone with fewer than six years of primary schooling. Female enrollment rates remain lower than male enrollment rates at all levels of education, with the widest gaps in secondary and post-secondary education.⁶⁷ Migrant households are significantly less likely to be poor than non-migrant households. This finding correlates with poverty rates being significantly lower among wage workers, and that Solomon Islands migration is mostly internal migration, which drives urbanization.⁶⁸ One urban demographic particularly vulnerable to climate change are people living in informal urban settlements, which are often overcrowded, poorly serviced, and found around the Honiara area. In the country's post-conflict era, the peacebuilding

process is closely tied to land recording. “Securing land rights is an important component of sustainable development and peace. Therefore, the customary land recording helps unite communities and lays strong foundations for social cohesion,” said Ismael Mali Avui, Minister of Lands, Housing, and Survey. As of December 2021, the customary land recording process was complete in the target provinces of Guadalcanal, Western, and Malaita. The UN Development Programme (UNDP) Programme Manager Vardon Hoca pointed out the connection with development and poverty alleviation in stating, “Having land rights recorded grants the landowners the right to utilize land for development.”⁶⁹

Persons Living with a Disability

In Solomon Islands, it is estimated that 15% of the population has some form of disability. The prevalence of disability is slightly higher among women (15%) than men (13%). People living with a severe disability (2% of women, 1% of men) are much less likely to go to school or get work. Only 2% of children with disabilities attend primary school, compared to 66% of children overall. The disability rate is higher among older people and people living in rural areas, a statistic that underscores the importance of making services available to those living outside of urban areas.

Attitudes towards disability seem to stem from a belief that people with disabilities cannot be expected to take a full and active part in home or community life and should be cared for by others. An advantage is that this promotes care for people with disabilities, but a disadvantage is that it precludes supporting people with disabilities to participate fully in private and public spheres regardless of their actual capacity. Men and women with disabilities may be prevented by their families and communities from getting married. In some cases, husbands leave their wives if they become disabled once already married. Attitudes can isolate men and women living with disabilities from family support networks and shape their

roles, responsibilities, and participation levels in the household. Women and girls perform the majority of caregiving for people living with disabilities. Family violence disproportionately affects women and girls living with disabilities, as they are two to three times more likely to experience physical and sexual abuse than women and girls without disabilities. Women with disabilities are more likely to be excluded from decision-making, even on decisions related to their own health. Widows and people with disabilities experience the most marginalization regarding access to and control of resources. Having a disability can make people with tenuous claims to land rights more vulnerable. Children’s capacity to claim land rights when their parents pass away was a source of significant economic insecurity for families with children with disabilities.

People living in rural areas already face increased challenges in accessing healthcare, which requires time-consuming travel. This challenge is exacerbated for people with disabilities reported, especially for those with chronic health conditions or disabilities that require repeated visits to distant health care facilities. Furthermore, facilities are not always accessible for people with disabilities, and adequate training for healthcare staff was identified as another barrier for people with disabilities to access healthcare.

In recent years, there have been encouraging indications that where health resources must be prioritized, priority was given to pregnant women and people with disabilities. A man from East Honiara with a sensory disability observed that, since the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, people with disabilities are prioritized and have more free access to services compared to before. While there is not data to determine how widespread the phenomenon is, it is an encouraging community-level indication.⁷⁰

Policy progress is being made, as seen in recently adopted policies. In November 2022, the Cabinet approved the National Disability Development Policy, though it reportedly

lacked consultation outside Honiara among the provinces. The National Disability Inclusive Development Policy 2023-2030 was also adopted. One priority area was the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which Solomon Islands signed in 2008. The Solomon Islands National Inclusive Education Policy 2022-2026 sets out to provide universal education to every child via increased access, though there is little in the policy about education of students with disabilities, and disaggregating data by disability is not required.⁷¹

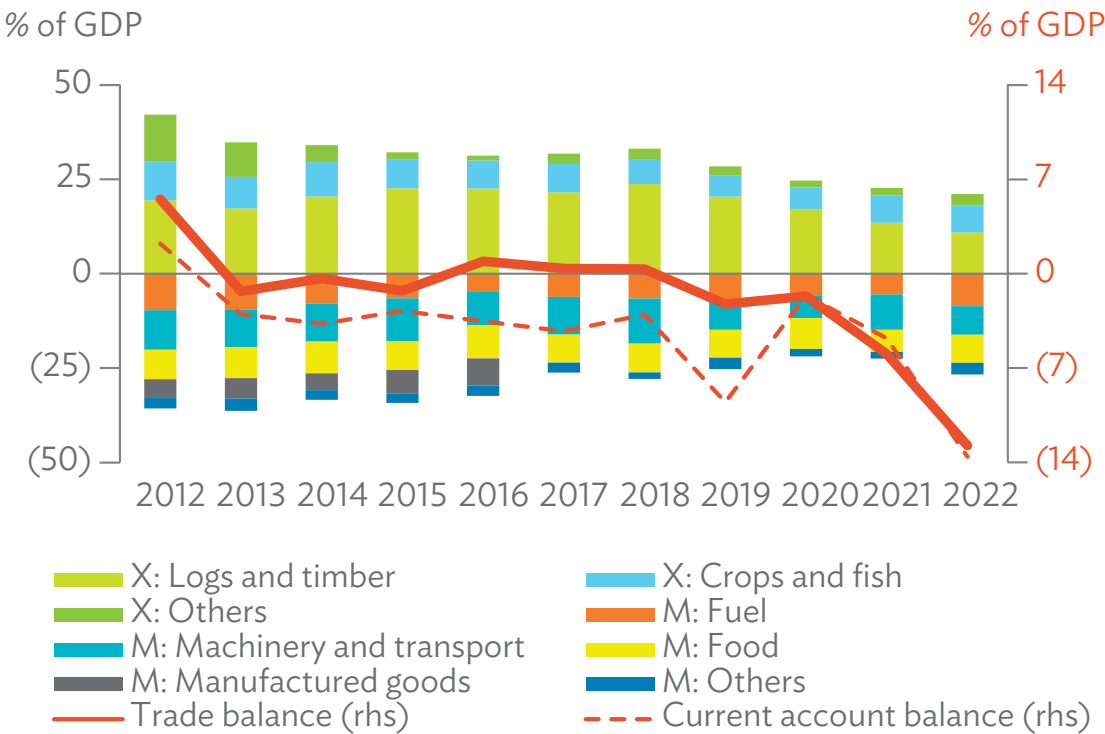
The main civil society organization advocating for people with disabilities is the Disabled People’s Association of Solomon Islands, which operates as People With Disabilities Solomon Islands (PWDSI). PWDSI organized in the 1990s, formally registered in 2003, and is the national umbrella organization of persons with disabilities across Solomon Islands. In collaboration with the Solomon Islands Deaf and Blind Association and the Blind and Vision Impaired Association, PWDSI established Self Help Groups in six of the country’s nine provinces. It is the recognized coordination point between government and

other stakeholders for expertise, collaboration, consultation, and engagement with people with disabilities. PWDSI is also a founding member of the Pacific Disability Forum, the regional focal body for disability that aims to build capacity of disabled people’s organizations in the Pacific.⁷²

Economics

Like many of its PICT neighbors, Solomon Islands confronts economic challenges. Its people are mostly located far from major markets; it has limited infrastructure; transportation is costly and infrequent; it is exposed to external price shocks; the domestic market is small; and there is limited available skilled labor.

Solomon Islands imports more than it exports with the current account balance often sitting at more than 10% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to the negative. Figure 2 shows the country’s trade balance and components over the period 2012-2022.⁷³ This import reliance means the country is exposed to price variations, particularly on foods and fuels, and this risk is compounded by environmental hazards



GDP = gross domestic product, M = import, rhs = right-hand scale, X = export.

Figure 2: Solomon Islands Trade Balance and Components

linked to volcanos, earthquakes, tsunamis, and cyclones. In fact, in 2019, the Emergency Event Database (EM-DAT) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) assessed that Solomon Islands suffered about 2% of GDP loss due to disaster-inflicted damages. The country is not expected to reach its full pre-pandemic output levels until 2025 as additional shocks, such as the 2021 political violence, compounded damages from the COVID-19 pandemic. The World Bank estimates that Solomon Islands' GDP growth will be positive in 2023 and remain between 2.5% and 3% through 2026. The post-COVID recovery is expected to be supported by the 2023 Pacific Games and several large infrastructure projects in the energy and transport sectors. In the medium-term, the services sector is expected to support growth, followed by the construction sector and increased mining activity. These sources of growth are critical for recovery as a projected decline in logging activity has suppressed and likely will continue to be a drag on primary sector growth.⁷⁴

The country's top five export markets are China, Italy, India, Switzerland, and Netherlands, in order of total value of exports in 2021. The country's top five countries of origin for imports are China, Australia, Singapore, Malaysia, and South Korea, also in order by total value of imports in 2021.⁷⁵

The economy is in the midst of a transition of sorts after years of relying on logging and forestry. Moreover, the Pacific Games being held in the country in November 2023 are causing shorter-term shifts that could bolster construction and retail trade even as the transport, food, and public services sub-sectors expand.⁷⁶ In 2020, the agriculture sector made up an estimated 34% of GDP while industry made up 17%, and services made up 48%. All of these sectors showed falling output in 2020, a result that was not unexpected given the ravages of the COVID-19 pandemic on small, isolated economies. Before that year, all sectors had shown modest but variable growth for several years. Occasional downturns in individual sectors appear to reflect major shocks such as

storms or international market strains.⁷⁷

Forestry and logging have long formed the basis of revenue and provided the greatest percentage of exports. Between 2015 and 2020, logs and timber accounted for some 70% of exports and more than 20% of GDP. However, their yields have also long been assessed as over the sustainable harvest, and declines in output and exports since 2016 reflect both global shocks like COVID-19-induced supply chain hiccups and an intentional move toward greater sustainability on behalf of the country's logging stakeholders. Nonetheless, in 2022, logging exports brought in US\$176 million although they made up only 46.8% of total exports. That year, exports of key agricultural products – i.e., palm oil and kernels, cocoa, copra, and coconut oil – reached 18% of total exports, and fish accounted for nearly 16%. As log and timber exports steadily make up a smaller portion of total exports, fisheries and agriculture – both crops and livestock – are expected to continue to expand production and value-added activities to replace lost logging output.

Some 90% of households are involved in some type of agriculture, and 36% of households raise livestock; most of this activity is focused on home consumption. Cash crops include coconut, betelnut, cocoa, cassava, and kumara sweet potato. However, even those plots that yield more than necessary for their owners' sustenance rarely bring in significant revenue as farm-market linkages – transport, financing, and geography – are complex. Building the sector to deliver sufficient food for domestic consumption will require better transport links among far-flung communities, reliable funding for inputs, land ownership changes that encourage improvement, and logistical supports like a cold chain to promote development of value-added activities. Export of agricultural products is a target of the government, but the outcomes are expected to be longer-term.⁷⁸

The Central Bank considers financial inclusion to be one of its tools to ensure that the primarily agricultural people of the Islands can access information and financial services

that promote poverty alleviation, job creation, and sustainable growth. As of 2020, the number of adults with a formal bank account stood at approximately 150,000. There were four commercial banks, 10 credit unions, 812 savings groups, and two credit institutions operating in the country. Individuals' access to financial services was (and is expected to remain) dominated by mobile telephones. From the first National Financial Inclusion Strategy (NFIS) in 2011, by 2020 the country had created 825 financial services access points, connected more than 280,000 adults (133,000 of them women) to financial services, and enrolled 74,000 people in financial literacy trainings, 28,000 in credit programs, and 21,000 in savings clubs. By 2025, the third NFIS aims to increase the number of adults with access to financial services to 400,000 (of which 50% should be women) and to increase to 1,155 the number of points where people can access these services. Reaching these goals will rely on the country also completing tasks to ensure that adult Islanders have government-issued identification documents, that banking systems have interoperable payment mechanisms, and that electricity and mobile telephone services are reliable.⁷⁹ With greater ability to access financial services, people will have greater ability to invest in their land or in value-added industries and activities that help diversify the rural economy.

The tourism sector is small but promising. As with its neighbors in recent years, Solomon Islands saw a near total halt to tourism arrivals during 2020 and 2021 with only the barest pickup in 2022. Indeed, an official count of visitor arrivals in 2022 stood at 7,327, less than one-quarter of pre-pandemic arrivals. Although there is some hope of building a vibrant and sustainable tourism sector, there are key challenges: 1) difficult inter-island travel; 2) costly energy supplies; 3) poor solid waste and sanitation management; 4) limited foreign investment; 5) limited financing for tourism services entrepreneurs; 6) human resources shortcomings; and 7) land ownership complexities. In the end, there is little

expectation that the country could welcome more than 100,000 tourists annually, and the focus is expected to be on cruise passengers with specific interests in nature (e.g., birdwatching).⁸⁰

The portion of GDP made up of remittances from Islanders working overseas has risen in recent years and reached nearly 5% of GDP in 2022. As it is nearly 12,000 km (7,500 miles) from Solomon Islands' main islands to the nearest major market for overseas labor, Islanders participate less frequently in labor schemes than do their fellow Pacific Islanders. Indeed, less than 1% of the population is thought to be living and working overseas although they are eligible for major guest worker schemes run by both Australia and New Zealand. Nonetheless, there is increasing pressure on the economy that could see a greater outflow of labor migrants as, based on World Bank data, the country sees more than 12,000 new labor force entrants annually but creates only about 2,000 new formal sector jobs.⁸¹

Government

The Constitution of Solomon Islands, the "Solomon Islands Independence Order," came into force on 7 July 1978.⁸² Solomon Islands is a parliamentary democracy under a constitutional monarchy. As a Commonwealth realm, the head of state is King Charles III, represented by the Governor-General of the Solomon Islands. The head of government is the Prime Minister, who serves a four-year term. The Office of the Prime Minister and Cabinet is the lead office and coordinating ministry of government. The Office of the Prime Minister coordinates, manages, and monitors the implementation of government policies and programs. The Cabinet is appointed by the Governor-General on the advice of the Prime Minister.⁸³ The Cabinet ensures that the work of its Ministries is properly coordinated.⁸⁴ The Prime Minister rarely commands a clear majority in Parliament; thus, governments are often formed by a coalition of parties.

Solomon Islands has a unicameral, or single chamber, Parliament. The National Parliament of Solomon Islands replaced the Legislative Assembly in 1978, when Solomon Islands gained

independence. The country is divided into 50 single-member constituencies, with Parliament comprising 50 seats, a number that increased from 47 seats in 1997 and 38 seats in 1994. Parliament meets on average three times per year, with the meetings usually lasting 3-4 weeks. Parliament meetings are open to the public; proceedings and debates are in English or Pidgin. All Parliamentary documents are in English. Parliament considers an average of thirteen bills each year, with most bills proposed by the Government, though bills by private members may be brought for consideration. Voting in general elections is based on universal adult suffrage – anyone over the age of 18 who is not a convicted criminal can vote. Any citizen over the age of 21 can be a candidate, either as a member of a political party or as an independent. General Elections are held every four years.⁸⁵ The last election was held April 2019. The subsequent election was originally planned for 2023 but was deferred to April 2024. Prime Minister Sogavare advocated postponing the election until after Solomon Islands hosted the Pacific Games in November 2023; he argued that hosting two large-scale events in the same year would strain the country's limited resources.⁸⁶

The judiciary is a mixed system of English common law and customary law. The Court of Appeal is the country's supreme court, which has appellate jurisdiction only, hearing appeals from the High Court. The High Court has unlimited original civil and criminal jurisdiction and appellate jurisdiction. The High Court hears appeals from the Magistrates' Courts and the Customary Land Appeal Court, though only on points of law from the latter. Decisions of the High Court on appeals from the Customary Land Appeal Court are final, while other High Court rulings are subject to appeal to the Court of Appeal. Magistrates' Courts have both civil and criminal jurisdiction in limited cases, where claims do not exceed SBD 2,000 (US\$237), or SBD 6,000 (US\$711) in the case of a principal magistrate. The Customary Land Appeal Court is a separate court that applies customary law in hearing appeals relating to land from the Local

Courts. Local Courts hear disputes for which all customary means of resolution, including referral to the chiefs, have been exhausted. Local Courts have civil and criminal jurisdiction where all parties are islanders in the area of jurisdiction.⁸⁷ There are five Customary Land Appeals Courts and five Magistrates' Courts (one each in Gizo, Auki, Honiara, Kirakira, and Lata), and 19 Local Courts throughout the country.⁸⁸

The Electoral Act of 2018 brought several changes aimed at strengthening the electoral system, including requiring candidates to present party certificates, regular reviews of the voters' register, remote voting, higher candidate nomination fees, making it compulsory for employers to release workers on polling day, and special considerations for assisting people with disabilities to cast their votes.⁸⁹

Apart from the national government with its seat in Honiara, the country is divided into nine administrative areas or provinces – Central Island Province, Choiseul Province, Guadalcanal Province, Isabel Province, Makira-Ulawa Province, Malaita Province, Rennell-Bellona Province, Temotu Province, and Western Province. The provinces are administered locally by elected Provincial Assemblies and are headed by Provincial Premiers.⁹⁰

Environment

The environment of Solomon Islands is heavily influenced by its size and location in the South Pacific. The country is situated on the Pacific Ring of Fire and has a tropical climate and mountainous terrain. The geography and remote location pose challenges for disaster response across the country's hundreds of islands. The majority of the population lives in remote or rural areas and engages in subsistence agriculture. Increasing frequency of disasters, particularly storm-related heavy precipitation that leads to flooding and landslides, challenges food security and the resilience of communities. As with many Pacific islands, Solomon Islands is particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

Geography

The Solomon Islands archipelago extends about 1,448 km (900 miles) from northwest to southeast in the southwest Pacific Ocean. The country is comprised of a double chain of 992 volcanic islands and coral atolls, with a land area of 27,986 km² (10,805 square miles). It is located to the southeast of Papua New Guinea and to the northwest of Vanuatu. Geologically, the islands are part of the volcanic arc extending from New Ireland in Papua New Guinea to Vanuatu. There are six main islands, which are Choiseul, Guadalcanal, Malaita, New Georgia, San Cristobal, and Santa Isabel. The island terrain is heavily forested and mountainous.⁹¹ There are also extensive plains, with only those on the northern side of Guadalcanal having been developed for large-scale agriculture. The highest point is Mount Popomanaseu, which peaks at 2,335 meters (m; 7,661 feet) on Guadalcanal.⁹² The country also has a number of volcanos. Tinakula, in the Santa Cruz group, and Kavachi, a submarine volcano near New Georgia, have erupted regularly every few years. Simbo Island has a solfatara, a volcanic area or vent that emits only hot vapors and sulfurous gases. Savo Island has hot springs, but the volcano there last erupted in the 1840s.⁹³

Borders

Solomon Islands does not share land borders with any other country; it has 5,313 km (3,301 miles) of coastline.⁹⁴

Climate

Solomon Islands is located within 12° south of the equator and has a tropical monsoon climate. It is hot and humid but

also with cool winds and abundant, year-round rainfall. Temperatures are stable throughout the year, not usually exceeding 32°C (90°F). Figure 3 graphs the monthly mean temperatures and precipitation amounts for the country for the period 1991-2020.⁹⁵ High temperatures are around 31°C (88°F) from November to April, when the warmer and wetter winds from the northwest predominate. From May to October, temperatures drop slightly, but only average a decrease of 2-3°C (decrease of 3.6-5.4°F), when relatively cooler southeast trade winds prevail. Rainfall is abundant, generally averaging 3,000–3,500 millimeters (mm; 120–140 inches) a year.⁹⁶ Precipitation occurs throughout the year. It peaks from January to March and decreases slightly from May to November, but even then, it remains around 200-250 mm (8-10 inches) per month.⁹⁷

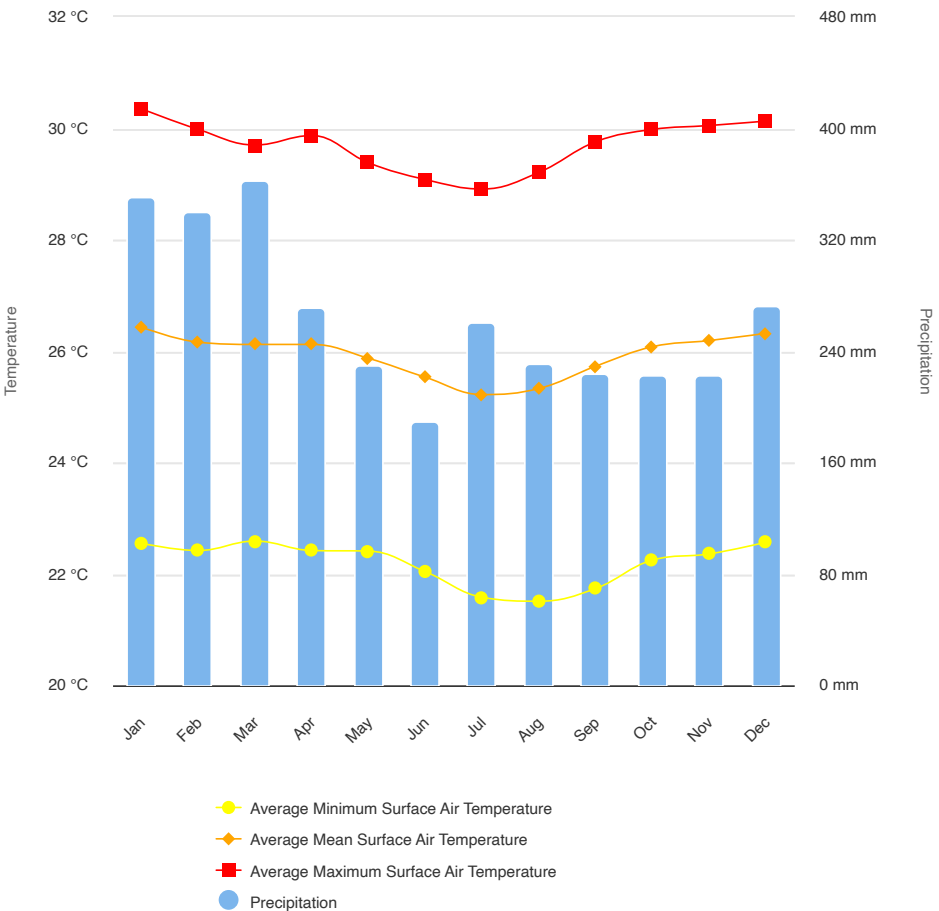


Figure 3: Solomon Islands Temperature and Rainfall Means (1991-2020), World Bank

DISASTER OVERVIEW

Solomon Islands faces a range of frequently occurring natural hazards, including tropical storms and cyclones, flooding, landslides, earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, and sea level rise. Its natural disaster risk is already being exacerbated by climate change, a trend that is projected to continue and particularly affects food security and livelihoods as the majority of the population engages in subsistence agriculture and fishing in rural locations. Located in the southwestern Pacific Ocean, the country's distance from other major countries shapes challenges across several spheres. When large-scale disaster events trigger a need for external assistance, the distance adds complexity to international disaster responses. The islands' location far from major international markets adds logistical burdens to importing and exporting commodities. Recurrent disasters exacerbated by climate change contribute to cross-cutting challenges in addressing poverty, extending health and education, and shifting from response to DRR in tandem with sustainable development.

Climate Change

Solomon Islands, along with many other small PICTs, is already experiencing the effects of climate change, a trend that is expected to continue and is contributing to more frequent disasters. The country's former disaster management office director, Mr. Loti Yates, expressed concern with increasing disasters. "Fifteen years ago, we were dealing with floods only on the Guadalcanal plains around this time of year," he said in January 2019, when three storm systems in two weeks had inundated much of the country with heavy rain that caused flooding, landslides, and the destruction of homes and food crops for up to 22,000 people. "Very rarely you'd hear of flooding on other parts of the Solomon Islands," but that is no longer the case. "Solomon Islands doesn't need a cyclone to get severe flooding. What we go through –

maybe two or three tropical depressions, which have very high rainfall and, consequently, there is huge flooding." He added, "When it comes to seeing the changes over the years - I can vouch for that. Things have just been getting worse and worse."⁹⁸

The country is already experiencing warming temperatures, a trend expected to continue throughout the century. Future rates of warming for Solomon Islands are likely to be in the range of an increase of 0.7°C–2.8°C (increase of 1.3°F–5.0°F), depending on the 21st century rate of global emissions.⁹⁹ The range of average temperature increase is based on the lowest-emission and highest-emission Representative Concentration Pathway (RCP) scenarios. RCPs describe possible trajectories for carbon dioxide emissions and the resulting atmospheric concentration. There are four commonly used RCPs (2.6, 4.5, 6.0, and 8.5), which were developed based on their end-of-century "radiative forcing" – a measure of the combined effect of greenhouse gases, aerosols, and other factors that can influence climate to trap additional heat.¹⁰⁰ RCP2.6 is the most optimistic scenario and indicates a 2.6 watts per meter squared (W/m²) forcing increase relative to pre-industrial conditions. RCP8.5 is the most pessimistic of the four scenarios and indicates an 8.5 W/m² forcing increase.¹⁰¹ Globally, RCP2.6 projects a rise of 1.0°C (1.8°F) above the 1986–2005 baseline by 2100, while RCP8.5 projects a rise of 3.6°C (6.5°F).

Sea levels are rising an estimated three times faster in Solomon Islands than the global average with the country noting a rise of 7–10 mm (0.28–0.40 inches) annually since 1993.¹⁰² Submergence of the country's lowest-lying islands has already begun to threaten coastal communities. A 2016 study using satellite imagery dating from 1947 through 2014 and focusing on 33 islands showed that five vegetated reef islands within the country's waters had already disappeared under rising seas and that an additional six similar

islands were eroding to the point that they were soon to be lost. A World Bank assessment in March 2023 reported that 26,000 Solomon Islanders had already been forced to relocate from 2008 to present,¹⁰³ and it is projected that up to 47,000 people in Solomon Islands will be directly exposed to sea level rise by 2050, based on the RCP8.5 scenario.¹⁰⁴ Even under RCPs 4.5 and 6.0, the country could experience sea level rise of up to 1.74 m (5.7 feet) by 2100.¹⁰⁵ While nature-based adaptations such as coral reef and mangrove restoration may offer protection to some communities, other communities may need to consider alternate measures including managed relocation. The country’s fisheries sector faces an especially negative outlook with potential reductions in the maximum catch potential of over 50%, which will pose a major threat to national food security, national income, and dietary health in poorer communities.

Short and medium-term rainfall changes are difficult to project; however, extreme precipitation is anticipated to increase in the coming decades. The country is significantly vulnerable to extreme rainfall events, for which DRR measures can be especially critical. Figure 4 depicts a projection that the number of

people in Solomon Islands exposed to extreme precipitation will increase from 100,000 people in 2000 to 513,000 people by the year 2050, based on the RCP 8.5 emission scenario.¹⁰⁶

In 2015, Solomon Islands was one of six island nations (along with Vanuatu, Kiribati, Tuvalu, Fiji, and the Philippines) that released the “People’s Declaration for Climate Justice”; it announced a plan to sue large multinational fossil fuel corporations, which they blamed for carbon pollution, the degradation to their ecosystems, and the other damaging climate change effects. While the effort was deemed by some to have a low chance of success, it was partially aimed at bringing attention to issues of accountability for climate change. Solomon Islands ranks very low in greenhouse gas emissions - 173 out of 185 countries - but is very vulnerable to some of the impacts of climate change.¹⁰⁷

Solomon Islands’ vulnerability to climate change impacts is worsened by socio-economic conditions. The country has a small but developing economy that relies on forestry, agriculture, fishing, and tourism sectors; they are highly vulnerable to natural hazards, which are exacerbated by climate change.¹⁰⁸ Additionally, vulnerable groups are disproportionately

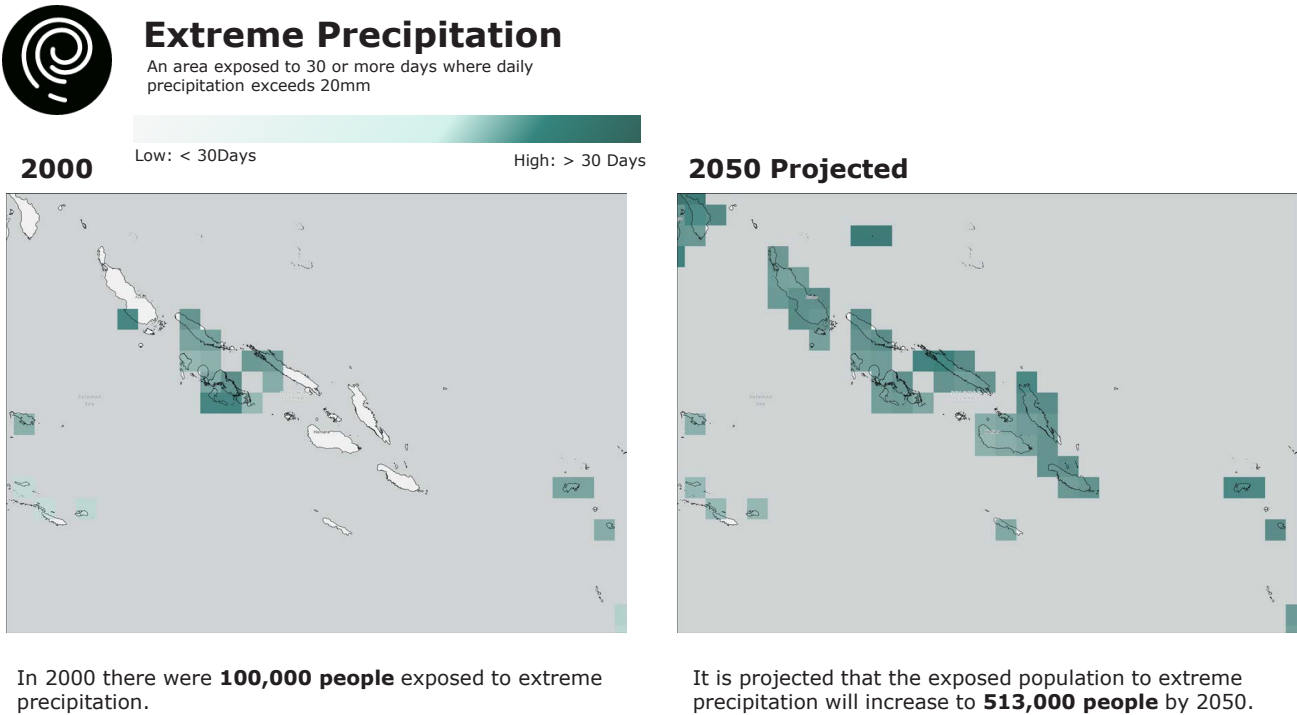


Figure 4: Majority of Population Projected to be Exposed to Extreme Precipitation by 2050

impacted by hazards and climate change. Research has found that climate change and disaster risks have a considerable and wide-ranging impact on the well-being of children, women, and other vulnerable demographics. This often manifests secondarily; as climate change and extreme weather increase threats posed by diseases, lack of healthcare, and food insecurity, these challenges disproportionately affect vulnerable groups. Climate change, extreme weather, and other disasters also affect child protection by exacerbating the risk of violence against children when families are uprooted and traditional social safety nets strained, leaving children living in difficult and unsafe conditions.¹⁰⁹

Solomon Islands is facing growing climate change impacts, which overlap with and exacerbate a range of hazards. Although communities draw upon local systems and apply a wealth of local knowledge, repeated climate-related shocks are exhausting the social resilience of communities.¹¹⁰ The Solomon Islands Meteorological Services Division has been undertaking a Traditional Knowledge Project, which aims to record traditional knowledge of

weather and climate not only for posterity, but to revive it to bolster community resilience to extreme weather and natural disasters and to integrate traditional forecasting methods into forecasting products. Funding is a challenge, and the long-term project is expected to take at least three years in just the monitoring phase to test traditional forecasting methods.¹¹¹

Hazards

Solomon Islands experiences tropical storms and cyclones, floods, earthquakes, and tsunamis, among other hazards. Figure 5 shows the key natural hazards that affected Solomon Islands from 1980 to 2020.¹¹²

Tropical Cyclones/Storms

Solomon Islands experiences an average of one to two tropical cyclones per year, and more southerly islands are more frequently hit. Tropical cyclones, also known as typhoons or hurricanes, affect nearly all PICTs. The cyclones that affect Solomon Islands are usually in the early stage of their life cycle and are thus relatively small. However, they have caused

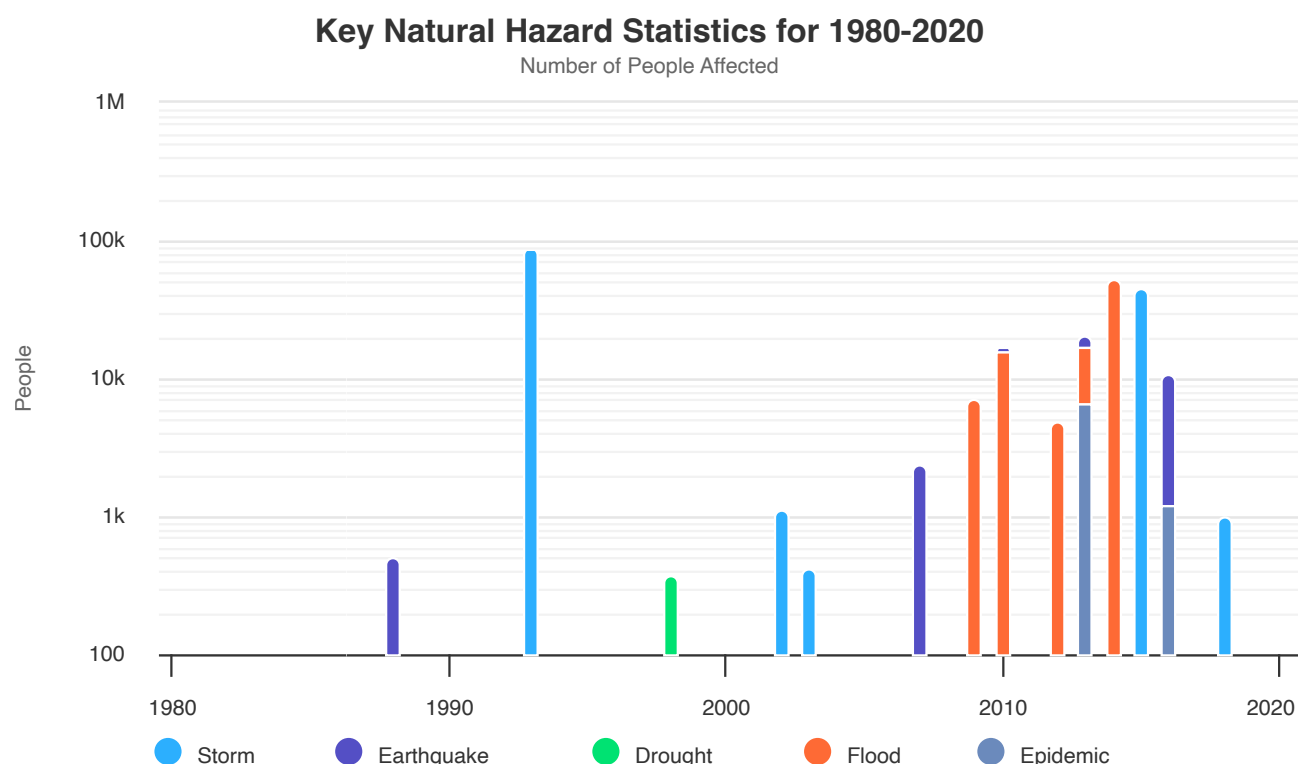


Figure 5: Key Natural Hazards in Solomon Islands for 1980-2020

loss of life and frequently cause significant damage to structures, crops, forests, and local water supplies.¹¹³ Cyclone season typically lasts from November to April for the South Pacific, including Solomon Islands. While the entire country is vulnerable to cyclones, historically, Rennell-Bellona, Temotu, and Makira-Ulawa Provinces are the most affected by tropical cyclone-associated heavy winds and rainfall, the latter of which has had tremendous impact on agriculture and infrastructure.¹¹⁴

Flooding

Inland flooding results from heavy and prolonged rainfall that causes the water level in rivers and streams to rise over their banks and inundate the surrounding land. Flash flooding, a common flooding type in PICTs, occurs within a few hours of torrential rains with little warning and dissipates rapidly. Coastal flooding occurs when storm surges or waves inundate low-lying coastal areas. Coastal flooding often accompanies tropical cyclones, which bring heavy rains and storm surges. A cyclone's associated torrential rains, which can reach up to 600 mm (23.6 inches) in one day, can lead to widespread flash flooding and river flooding. These rains can also trigger landslides in hilly areas. Storm surge – a rise in water level above the normal tidal level – may inundate coastal areas as the cyclone makes landfall. Storm surge and waves are the greatest threat to life and property in coastal areas and cause severe coastal erosion. For low-lying atolls, a storm surge may inundate the whole island.¹¹⁵

Many factors influence flood intensity, including rainfall intensity and duration, terrain steepness, water levels preceding the rains, increased runoff due to deforestation, capacity of rivers, streams, and drainage networks, and high tide levels preventing river drainage. Floods have tremendous impacts on human life, crops, property, transportation, and infrastructure. Floods can drown livestock, wash away crops, and saturate soil for months afterwards, thereby preventing new planting. Flooding also brings secondary health hazards when flooded sewage systems contaminate drinking water.¹¹⁶

Earthquake

The earthquake hazard level is considered high in Solomon Islands, with more than a 20% chance of potentially damaging earthquake shaking in the next 50 years.¹¹⁷ The island nation is situated above the subduction zone where the Australian and Pacific tectonic plates meet. The Australian plate dives beneath the Pacific plate toward the east-northeast at a rate of 94 mm (3.7 inches) per year, which is relatively fast in geologic terms.¹¹⁸ Shallow (0-70 km or 0-45 miles) and deep (down to 700 km or 435 miles) earthquakes are associated with oceanic subduction zones such as the New Hebrides trench, which connects Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, and Papua New Guinea, all of which have an enhanced risk of earthquake.¹¹⁹ Solomon Islands and Vanuatu are among the world's most seismically active countries, after Japan, as they all lie on the Pacific Ring of Fire. It is not unusual for Solomon Islands to have 60 to 70 earthquakes a year; while many of the quakes are small and go unnoticed, there are also larger quakes with many aftershocks.¹²⁰ Earthquakes can trigger secondary hazards, including tsunamis and landslides.

Tsunami

Tsunamis are most often caused by offshore earthquakes, which can cause the sea floor to abruptly lift or subside, shifting the overlying water column. This movement can set in motion a tsunami, a series of waves that travels at great speed in deep ocean but as it approaches a coastline slows and steepens in height. Unlike regular waves, tsunami waves have very long wavelengths that can extend hundreds of miles and crash onto shore with devastating force and flood low-lying areas.¹²¹ As an island nation situated in the Pacific Ring of Fire where earthquakes are frequent, Solomon Islands faces a high tsunami hazard level. There is more than a 40% chance of a potentially-damaging tsunami occurring in the next 50 years.¹²²

Landslides

Landslides are a significant geological hazard

in Solomon Islands, as they are in many of the Pacific's mountainous, volcanic islands such as Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Fiji, Samoa, and Micronesia. Rainfall patterns, terrain slope, geology, soil, and earthquakes make localized landslides a frequent hazard by destabilizing soil or rock to the extent they move downward under gravity's influence.¹²³ Landslides are usually a secondary phenomenon that occurs after slopes are rendered unstable, often by storm systems that bring prolonged rain or flooding, or by earthquakes or volcanic eruptions.

Volcano

Solomon Islands has eight volcanos, out of which two have erupted in the past two decades (Kavachi and Tinakula) and another two have erupted in the past two centuries (Savo and Simbo).¹²⁴ Simbo Island has a solfatara, a volcanic area or vent that emits only hot vapors and sulfurous gases. Savo Island has hot springs, but the volcano there last erupted in the 1840s.¹²⁵

Kavachi volcano, located about 24 km (15 miles) south of Vangunu Island, is one of the most active submarine volcanos in the Pacific. The volcano erupts frequently, and steam and ash are often visible. A 2015 expedition to the crater during a lull in activity revealed it was the unlikely habitat of the scalloped hammerhead shark and silky shark alongside multiple fish species, and this finding led to Kavachi being dubbed "sharkcano."¹²⁶ The small island of Tinakula, just 3.5-km (2.2-miles) wide, is the exposed summit of a massive stratovolcano at the northwest end of the Santa Cruz Island group, located in the southeastern part of the country. Tinakula's activity in recent years began in October 2017 with an ash explosion, followed in December 2018 by dense gas and steam plumes and weak thermal anomalies, which continued into 2022. During January to September 2022, satellite imagery showed persistent white gas and steam plumes rising from Tinakula. Most observed plumes were profuse, dense, and drifted to the west or southwest. In or around the year 1840, Tinakula produced an explosive eruption with pyroclastic flows that swept all sides of the

island and killed inhabitants.¹²⁷

History of Natural Disasters

The following is an overview of natural disasters in Solomon Islands in the last ten years. It is limited to disasters resulting from natural hazards; thus, it does not include important human-made disasters – notably periods of civil unrest during 1998-2003 ("The Tensions") and in late 2021, or oil spills in 2019¹²⁸ and 2021.¹²⁹

2023 February-March – Tropical Cyclones Judy and Kevin

TC Judy affected Solomon Islands in late February 2023, and it went on to make landfall and cause wider devastation in Vanuatu in early March. TC Kevin affected Solomon Islands in early March and also went on to severely impact Vanuatu. Following the twin cyclones, the Planning Function Team within the Solomon Islands National Emergency Operation Center (NEOC) developed a response plan of action, which was based on reports from the Reef Islands, Tikopia, Anuta, and Vanikoro of significant damages to fruit trees and other sources of livelihood and called for an official damage assessment.¹³⁰ After the National Disaster Council (NDC) and the National Disaster Operations Committee (N-DOC) approved the deployment of the Initial Damage Assessment (IDA) Team and emergency relief to Anuta and Tikopia in Temotu Province, the Royal Solomon Islands Patrol Vessel Taro departed on 9 March 2023. The vessel stopped at Lata to conduct a courtesy call to the Temotu Provincial government leaders and then carried the assessment team to Anuta and Tikopia. The National Support Assessment Team consisted of officials from the Ministry of Infrastructure Development (MID), RSIPE, health agencies, and National Disaster Management Office (NDMO), alongside members of the NERT and representatives of Solomon Telekom Company and the Water Resource Divisions of the Ministry of Mines, Energy, and Rural Electrification.

While the deployment provided national support to Temotu Province, the assessment undertaken in the province was led by the Temotu Provincial Disaster Committee (PDC) and Temotu Province Disaster Operations Committee (P-DOC). The Solomon Islands Red Cross, World Vision, and Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) provided food and non-food items, and the deployment was financially supported by the RSIPF and New Zealand Government.¹³¹ Findings indicated that the agricultural sector was the most affected in both Tikopia and Anuta, with widespread damage to food gardens on the islands. The two main root crops, cassava and taro, were covered by landslides or inundated by water then subjected to extreme heat after the cyclones. People relied on coconut and rainwater tanks, as there was high turbidity in water sources and some reservoirs were buried by landslides or damaged; thus, water was deemed unsafe to drink.¹³² The NDMO prepared to dispatch a relief boat to the affected communities of Tikopia, Anuta, Duff, and Reef Islands in Temotu Province. The NEOC confirmed the loading started 1 May 2023 and the relief boat, MV Ocean Joy, departed Honiara on 3 May 2023 to the impacted communities.¹³³

2022 November – Earthquake

On 22 November 2022, a shallow earthquake of magnitude 7.3 occurred at Southwest Guadalcanal. The NEOC was activated and established communications with the Provincial Emergency Operation Center (PEOC) to determine earthquake impacts. Immediate impacts were limited to isolated pockets of landslides observed in South Guadalcanal. No significant signs of tsunami inundation were observed from coastal areas. Multiple initial assessment teams were deployed. Impacts did include three people injured and some damage to buildings across Honiara;¹³⁴ follow-on assessments reported that a lack of enforcement of building codes and standards likely contributed to the observed structural damages.¹³⁵ Although no tsunami threat was issued, a slight increase in sea level was

experienced in some areas.¹³⁶ An oil-like substance was observed on Tasivarongo Point and prompted further technical assessments.¹³⁷

2020 – 2023 – COVID-19

Although COVID-19 was first identified in December 2019 in China and had become a global pandemic by March 2020, Solomon Islands did not experience widespread local transmission until January 2022. The 7-day rolling average of daily new confirmed cases peaked at 437.57 on 3 June 2022. Local transmission dropped to zero by the end of that month. As of August 2023, Solomon Islands had largely prevented further local transmission,¹³⁸ save for a cluster of cases in November 2022 that was Temotu Province's first outbreak.¹³⁹ As of 16 August 2023, there had been 21,611 confirmed cases of COVID-19 with 153 deaths across the country. As of 4 July 2023, a total of 612,700 vaccine doses had been administered.¹⁴⁰

Cognizant that Solomon Islands' health system was susceptible to being overwhelmed by a large outbreak, the national government's strategy was one of strict border controls and preventing entry of travelers. When an outbreak finally affected the country, in February 2022, the National Referral Hospital scaled back its operations to critical care only and shut down outpatient services, and it established field hospitals to boost COVID-19 response capabilities.¹⁴¹ As in many countries across the world, COVID-19 mitigation measures such as lockdowns and school closures had significant economic impacts. COVID-19 restrictions caused employment decline, with the losses mainly clustered among informal jobs and jobs in the service sector. Many households were also challenged by reduced income from agriculture.¹⁴² Primary and secondary schools were closed for more than seven months during 2022, and this educational hiatus affected the learning of school-aged children across the country.¹⁴³ Concerns about side effects stopped many people from getting vaccinated early in the pandemic, but vaccine hesitancy fell as the number of cases increased.¹⁴⁴

2021 July – Savo volcano activity increases

Savo volcano resumed activity in mid-2021 and spurred a heightened alert, although no damaging eruptions had occurred as of August 2023. On 28 July 2021, residents on Savo reported increased seismicity. Two days later a team from the Geological Survey Division and the NDMO investigated the volcano, observed steam and gas emissions rising from an area in the crater, possibly indicating an active fissure, and interviewed residents. They briefed the N-DOC and other authorities on 31 July and confirmed the increased seismicity. This report prompted preparedness actions, including continuing to monitor the island, deploying technical teams, and issuing Volcano Safety Messages to inform residents of the island as well as in surrounding areas.¹⁴⁵ Savo Island is located in the middle of the country and is home to almost 3,000 people.¹⁴⁶

2020 April – TC Harold

In April 2020, TC Harold caused destruction in Solomon Islands before moving onto Vanuatu, Fiji, and Tonga. TC Harold impacted Solomon Islands during 1-4 April 2020 as a Category 2 storm with devastating winds, heavy rains, river flooding, rough seas, high oceans waves, and coastal flooding, including from storm surges. The rough sea conditions led to the deaths of 27 people in the early hours of 3 April 2020 when they were swept off the MV Taimareho ferry. The ferry was carrying over 730 passengers from Honiara city to Malaita Province. Despite cyclone warnings, the ferry had set off in strong winds, reportedly as part of a COVID-19 evacuation program.¹⁴⁷ An estimated 59,000 people were affected by TC Harold. The NEOC provided coordination support to the PDC of each of the four affected provinces to conduct an IDA. At least 25 schools in the provinces of Guadalcanal, Makira-Ulawa, and Central were damaged or destroyed.¹⁴⁸ The timing of the storm added to challenges as the people of Solomon Islands were under a state of emergency to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus.¹⁴⁹ As communities recovered, the NDMO requested a water supply restoration initiative with funding support from

the Australian government and UNDP for the most affected communities in West Guadalcanal: Vatulovo Savoulu, Visale Community High School, Veuru, Mangakiki, Verahue, Hulavu, and Selwyn College. The UNDP's Integrated Disaster Risk Management project, which was implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Environment Climate Change and Disaster Management and Meteorology (MECDM), worked with the Guadalcanal Province and Rural WASH Programme of the Ministry of Health and Medical Service to construct the water supply systems. On 13 October 2021, the restored and constructed water supply system was handed over to Mr. Francis Sade, the Guadalcanal Province Premier, for the benefit of more than 4,000 people.¹⁵⁰

December 2018 – January 2019 – Flash flooding

Heavy rain and strong winds affected Solomon Islands in late December 2018 and early January 2019. The rains caused rivers to burst their banks and sweep through villages on the main islands of Malaita and Guadalcanal. More than 22,000 people saw their homes and crops destroyed by extreme weather. The flash flooding also contaminated drinking water. Eighty percent of those affected were subsistence farmers living in rural areas. However, the flooding had secondary effects on people in the capital. "The Guadalcanal plains is the food basket of Honiara," said Mr. Loti Yates, Director of the NDMO at the time.¹⁵¹

September 2018 – Tropical Cyclone Liua

When TC Liua developed near Solomon Islands on 26 September 2018, it was the first cyclone to form in the southwest Pacific in the month of September in almost 70 years.¹⁵² The official cyclone season runs from November through April. The cyclone struck the country as a Category 1 storm. It led to at least one death in Makira-Ulawa Province and left trails of damaged homes and food gardens in both Guadalcanal and Makira-Ulawa Provinces.¹⁵³

2018 March – Flooding

On 1 March 2018, heavy rain caused localized flooding across Honiara. Flood waters affected

many low-lying areas and significantly disrupted the transport network. The flooding affected 9,000 people, particularly in East Honiara's Panatina ward, where 18 villages reported significant flooding. The flooding displaced 15 people from Bruns creek, Hatanga quarter, and the Panatina creek area, and damaged or destroyed eight properties.¹⁵⁴ The storm and flooding had the biggest impact on people living in squatter settlements.¹⁵⁵ The storm brought 171 mm (6.7 inches) of rain in five and a half hours and came as Honiara launched a major review of its disaster resilience planning.¹⁵⁶

2017 October – Tinakula eruption

On 21 October 2017, an eruption started in Tinakula volcano in Temotu Province after more than five years of relative inactivity. Tinakula's eruption was classed as Category Three, indicating a minor eruption. The eruption produced an ash cloud that reached an altitude of 10.6 km (35,000 feet) and caused heavy ashfall on nearby islands. A police patrol was deployed from the provincial capital, Lata, to the remote area.¹⁵⁷ Frank Menesa, Provincial Police Commander of Temotu Province, said, "Police successfully rescued three people from Tinakula after receiving a report in the early hours of Saturday [21 October 2017] that the volcano had erupted." The three people reportedly went to the uninhabited island to tend to their gardens and pigs. An additional team of police and agriculture officers visited the area again on 23 October to monitor the volcano and check on and advise the population of approximately 30 people on the nearby island of Niupani. Provincial authorities also advised people on Santa Cruz and the Reef Islands to be careful as the islands' drinking water had been affected by the ash from the volcano.¹⁵⁸ The Meteorological Service issued a warning for aviation. The NDMO issued several public instructions relating to health and safety, particularly regarding eye and skin irritation, breathing difficulty, and ash's effects on water supplies and crops.¹⁵⁹ An estimated 11,500 people were affected on nearby islands, and 19 schools and nine health facilities were located

in the exposed areas. There were plans for water bottles to be shipped to affected communities. A reported 40 tons of food supplies were deployed to Tikopia, Duff, and Anuta to address ongoing food security issues stemming from the impacts of TC Donna earlier in the year.¹⁶⁰

2017 – Tropical Cyclone Donna

TC Donna was an off-season tropical cyclone in the Southern Hemisphere during May 2017; it affected Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, and New Zealand. TC Donna caused the deaths of two people in Temotu Province; an adult was struck by a fallen branch, and a Tarano School primary school student drowned on an outboard motorboat crossing a lake. Temotu Province also suffered damage to its infrastructure and food gardens from the cyclone. The NDMO reported that four houses and twelve kitchens in Namo village collapsed, the Safoa community high school was damaged, crops were destroyed, and the water supply system required maintenance. The NDMO sent Patrol Boat Auki to Temotu to conduct an initial disaster assessment and, if required, distribute relief supplies. The Solomon Islands Alliance of Humanitarian NGOs coordinated support to the NDMO to assess the impact of TC Donna in remote islands of Temotu Province.¹⁶¹ The storm's damage to root crops contributed to several months of critical food shortages on Tikopia, Anuta, and Duff Islands. From 29 October until 11 November 2017, the NDMO coordinated a response deployment to the affected islands. The NDMO facilitated food relief of 40 tons of rice on the MV Onogou for 2,593 affected people on Tikopia, Anuta, and Duff. The NDMO also facilitated shipment of bottled water that was to be distributed to 6,485 affected people in Reef Islands. The national government provided the food relief and covered all logistical costs, and NZAid and Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade provided the water relief.¹⁶²

2016 December – Makira earthquake and tsunami

On 9 December 2016, a magnitude 7.8

undersea earthquake occurred 61 km (38 miles) southwest of Kirakira, the provincial capital of Makira-Ulawa Province. Among the aftershocks was magnitude 6.9 quake the next day. About 34,000 people in Makira, South Malaita, and Guadalcanal Provinces were affected by widespread destruction of homes, community kitchens, food sources, and livelihoods.¹⁶³

2016-2017 – Dengue outbreak

From August 2016 to April 2017, Solomon Islands experienced its largest and longest-running recorded dengue outbreak, with 12,329 suspected cases, 877 hospitalizations, and 16 deaths. Although the outbreak outpaced public and clinical resources, authorities responded by scaling up the national syndrome-based early warning surveillance system to support the increased information demands.¹⁶⁴ Dengue infection is caused by four types of viruses (DENV-1, DENV-2, DENV-3, DENV-4) in the Flaviviridae family. The 2016-2017 outbreak was primarily a DENV-2 outbreak. The viruses are transmitted through the bite of infected *Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus* female mosquitoes that feed from dawn to dusk. The mosquitoes thrive in areas with standing water, including puddles, water tanks, containers, and old tires.¹⁶⁵

2014 July – Measles outbreak

In 2014, Solomon Islands experienced a serious measles outbreak. On 23 July 2014, the World Health Organization (WHO) issued a health alert for a suspected measles outbreak in Solomon Islands; the outbreak started with a traveler who acquired the infection in Papua New Guinea.¹⁶⁶ By the time a mass measles vaccination campaign was launched on 1 September, over 600 cases had been reported, including two measles-related deaths. The vaccination campaign aimed to immunize children and adults aged 6 months to 30 years.¹⁶⁷ By 5 October, measles cases were being reported from all provinces, with a reported total of 3,802 cases and seven deaths.¹⁶⁸ Reported cases increased to 4,563 by 9 November; and nine deaths had been recorded. The national measles

rubella campaign coverage exceeded the 95% target, reaching 97% coverage by 24 November. However, with 18 out of 47 zones below the target, the campaign shifted to target the areas with lower vaccination rates.¹⁶⁹ By 19 December 2014, all provinces completed their vaccination campaigns, and reported cases were declining by January 2015.¹⁷⁰

2014 April – Honiara flash flood

On 3 April 2014, severe flooding in Honiara and the northern Guadalcanal Plains resulted from prolonged heavy rainfall, which was brought by a tropical depression that strengthened into TC Ita after passing Solomon Islands. The flooding resulted in 22 deaths, including 18 in Honiara, two in Guadalcanal, and two in Isabel Province. The floods caused massive destruction and damage to public infrastructure, houses, water sources, sanitation facilities, livelihoods, and agriculture in the Guadalcanal region as well as Makira-Ulawa, Malaita, and Isabel Provinces. The worst affected area was Honiara after the Mataniko River burst its banks on 3 April.¹⁷¹ The floods displaced around 12,000 people, who primarily sought emergency shelter at 26 evacuation centers. An estimated 52,000 people were affected by the floods across the country.¹⁷² The flooding caused significant damage to the economy, estimated at US\$108.9 million. It reduced GDP by 5.1%, damaged major infrastructure, fully destroyed 675 houses, and closed the Gold Ridge Mine. Small shops and market vendors across the affected regions faced disruptions to supply chains.¹⁷³

2013 February – Earthquake and tsunami

On 6 February 2013, a magnitude 8.0 earthquake occurred off the coast of the Santa Cruz Islands in southeast Solomon Islands; it generated a 0.9-m (3-foot) tsunami wave that killed 10 people and damaged or destroyed more than 700 homes.¹⁷⁴

Older Natural Disasters

It is worth noting several significant natural

disasters that occurred prior to the last ten years:

- In January 2010, an earthquake triggered a tsunami and landslides that affected Rendova Island, and although it did not cause fatalities, it did leave about 1,000 people homeless after their homes were destroyed.
- In February 2009, Solomon Islands was hit by torrential rains and flooding, which exacted a significant death toll on Guadalcanal Island. A national emergency was declared, and both Guadalcanal and Savo Islands were evacuated.
- On 2 April 2007, an underwater earthquake of magnitude 8.1 struck 345 km (214 miles) northwest of Honiara and generated a significant tsunami that killed at least 34 people and displaced approximately 5,500 people. Tsunami waves as large as 10 m (32.8 feet) reportedly struck Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea. In Solomon Islands, the most affected area was Western Province, including Gizo, Simbo, Ranogga, Shortlands, Munda, Noro, Vella la Vella, and Kolombangarra, along with parts of the southern coast of Choiseul. Up to 50,000 people were estimated to be affected out of a population of 100,000 in Western and Choiseul Provinces.¹⁷⁵
- In May 1986, TC Namu struck Solomon Islands as one of the country's worst disasters, as the storm killed more than 100 people and left up to 90,000 people homeless.¹⁷⁶ Malaita Province was the worst affected, but widespread flooding and wind damage also occurred in Guadalcanal, Makira-Ulawa, and Rennell-Bellona.¹⁷⁷

Country Risk

Risk calculation takes into account exposure to hazards, vulnerability, and coping capacity. Addressing all of these elements is important in reducing and mitigating disaster risk. Various indices emphasize structural or institutional risk while others emphasize hazards or losses (human and economic). Regardless of emphasis, disaster risk calculations use some form of the equation:

$$\text{Disaster Risk} = (\text{Hazard} \times \text{Vulnerability}) / \text{Capacity}^{178}$$

Taken from the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) glossary, definitions will help clarify this formula:

- Capacity - The combination of strengths, attributes, and resources available within an organization, community, or society to manage and reduce disaster risks and strengthen resilience.
- Disaster risk - The potential loss of life, injury, or destroyed or damaged assets, which could occur to a system, society, or a community in a specific period of time, determined probabilistically as a function of hazard, exposure, vulnerability, and capacity.
- Hazard - A process, phenomenon, or human activity that may cause loss of life, injury, or other health impacts, property damage, social and economic disruption, or environmental degradation.
- Vulnerability - The conditions determined by physical, social, economic, and environmental factors or processes, which increase the susceptibility of an individual, a community, assets, or systems to the impacts of hazards.¹⁷⁹

In general, the goal of indexing risk is to inform decision makers and DRR and climate change adaptation (CCA) practitioners of the level of risk to and underlying capacity of the target community. The various risk calculation models support proactive crisis management frameworks and are helpful for prioritizing allocation of resources and for coordinating actions focused on anticipating, mitigating, and preparing for humanitarian emergencies.

INFORM Risk Profile

INFORM is a collaboration of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Reference Group on Risk, Early Warning, and Preparedness with the European Commission. It is a multi-stakeholder forum for developing shared, quantitative analysis relevant to humanitarian

crises and disasters. The Joint Research Center of the European Commission is the scientific lead. There are three operational dashboards – i.e., INFORM Risk, INFORM Severity, and INFORM Climate Change.

- INFORM Risk is an open-source risk assessment for humanitarian crises and disasters. It can support decisions about prevention, preparedness, and response.
- INFORM Severity is a way to measure and compare the severity of humanitarian crises and disasters globally. It can help develop a shared understanding of crisis severity and ensure all those affected get the help they need.
- INFORM Climate Change is an upgraded INFORM Risk Index that includes climate and socio-economic projections with results intended to inform policy choices across climate mitigation, climate adaptation, disaster risk reduction, sustainable development, and humanitarian assistance.¹⁸⁰

The **INFORM Risk** Index measures the risk of humanitarian crises and disasters in 191 countries. The INFORM model is based on the standard dimensions of risk: Hazards and Exposure, Vulnerability, and Lack of Coping Capacity. The first dimension measures the natural and human hazards that pose the risk. The second and third dimensions cover population factors that can mitigate against or exacerbate the risk. The Vulnerability dimension considers the strength of individuals and households relative to a crisis while the Lack of Coping Capacity dimension considers factors of institutional strength.¹⁸¹

The INFORM model is split into different levels to provide a quick overview of

the underlying factors leading to humanitarian risk. INFORM gives each country a risk score of 1-10 (1 being the lowest and 10 the highest) for each of the dimensions, categories, and components of risk, as well as an overall risk score.¹⁸² The higher the score the more at risk a country is. In the 2023 INFORM Risk Index, Solomon Islands had an overall risk score of 4.5/10, which INFORM categorizes as the “Medium” risk class and lands the country as the 55th most at-risk country in the Index. The Hazards and Exposure dimension score takes into account a combination of both natural and human hazards, and Solomon Islands rated 3.5/10 or 67th of 191 countries. The Vulnerability dimension score was 4.0/10 or 79th of 191, and the Lack of Coping Capacity dimension score was 6.5/10 or 31st of 191. Physical exposure to Tsunami at 8.7/10 was the greatest threat in the Hazards and Exposure dimension, with Development and Deprivation measuring at a 6.7/10 for the Vulnerability dimension and Physical Infrastructure rated 7.8/10 in the Lack of Coping Capacity dimension. Figure 6 shows the INFORM Risk dashboard for Solomon Islands for 2023.¹⁸³



Figure 6: INFORM Risk Index, Solomon Islands (2023)

World Risk Report

The World Risk Report by Bündnis Entwicklung Hilft strives to raise awareness of disaster risk among the global public and political decision-makers and to provide practitioners with data to promote faster orientation to complex situations – i.e., societies experiencing disasters. This effort stems from the perception that disaster risks are not solely determined by the occurrence, intensity, or duration of extreme events. Social factors, political conditions, and economic structures play an important role in turning these events into crises. Thus, this index is based on the assumption that every society can take precautions – e.g., effective disaster preparedness and management – to reduce the impact of extreme events and lower the risk of disasters.

The World Risk Report calculates the level of risk a country faces based on a formula of exposure to hazards and vulnerability. It provides an assessment of the risk that countries will confront disasters but does not indicate probabilities for the emergence of disasters, nor does it forecast the timing of future disasters. This index uses 100 indicators that include risk, hazard exposure, vulnerability, and coping capacity (as defined above), and adds two others:

- Susceptibility - The disposition to suffer damage in the event of extreme natural events. Susceptibility relates to structural characteristics and frameworks of societies.
- Adaptation - A long-term process that also includes structural changes and comprises measures and strategies that address and try to deal with future negative impacts of natural hazards and climate change. Analogous to “lack of coping capacity,” the lack of adaptive capacities is included in the Index.

In the 2022 World Risk Report, Solomon Islands ranked 33 of 192 countries wherein the lower the rank, the greater risk the country faces. Solomon Islands’ total Index score was 14.62 (on a scale of 0-100 wherein the lower the number the less risk a country faces), putting it in the

“very high” risk class. The component scores were:

- Exposure: 9.62 (very high)
- Vulnerability: 22.23 (medium)
 - Susceptibility: 17.95 (medium)
 - Lack of Coping Capacity: 11.25 (medium)
 - Lack of Adaptive Capacity: 54.43 (high)

For comparison, the Solomon Islands’ score puts it above the regional (Oceania) median of 4.15 and above the sub-regional (Melanesia) median of 12.63. In fact, as it ranks among the world countries most at risk of disasters, Solomon Islands, along with Australia, New Zealand, and Papua New Guinea, actually lifts the sub-regional and regional index numbers into higher risk categories and earns the entire region the rank of second most at-risk after Africa. However, as shown above, except in the “Exposure” category, the country does not fall into the “very high” risk class. Its score and ranking are, thus, decisively shaped by exposure to hazards. In terms of Exposure, Solomon Islands is above the medians for Oceania (1.23) and Melanesia (7.71) in a reflection of the country’s exposure to earthquake, tsunamis, cyclones, flooding, drought, and sea level rise. In the overall Vulnerability dimension, the country is above the medians for Oceania (13.20) and Melanesia (20.08) because, for the sub-components of “vulnerability,” it rates in the medium-high risk classes. Under Susceptibility, Solomon Islands is above the median for Oceania (9.85) but below the median for Melanesia (18.44) due, in part, to the relatively few socio-economic disparities that could undermine social cohesion despite the country’s relatively low levels of development in educational and health sectors. In the Lack of Coping Capacity dimension, Solomon Islands is also above the median for Oceania (10.90) but below the median for Melanesia (11.82) because it has built an active, community-minded disaster response mechanism despite its recent experiences of political conflict. Finally, under Lack of Adaptive Capacity, Solomon Islands sits above the medians for both Oceania (33.39) and Melanesia (43.74)

in a reflection of stalled educational attainment in post-secondary studies and years of stalled investment across the board.¹⁸⁴

Global Climate Risk

The Global Climate Risk Index (CRI) developed by Germanwatch analyzes impacts of extreme weather in terms of both fatalities and economic loss. The index is based on the Munich Re (a re-insurance company) NatCatSERVICE databases, among the most complete databases in the world in these categories of loss. The CRI examines disaster impacts in both absolute terms (e.g., number of fatalities) and in comparative, relative terms that allow analysts to set events and their impacts alongside each other to assess how a given country or community used its strengths or struggled due to its weaknesses in the face of an extreme event. The countries ranking highest on the CRI experience either frequent smaller-scale weather events or rare but extraordinarily intense events. In sum, the CRI allows DRR and disaster management practitioners to consider how exposures and vulnerabilities will be impacted by climate change. The two different CRI measures – most impacted countries in a single year and most impacted countries over 20 years – offer analysts an opportunity to tease apart the effects of rare but major events versus frequent, cumulative events.

The major events examined by the CRI are tropical cyclones (typhoons). The key takeaway is that countries with high exposure to such storms – either frequent small ones or rare massive ones – will be preparing for less predictable, potentially less frequent, but probably more powerful typhoons under climate change scenarios. The CRI cites various DRR and CCA efforts in countries exposed to hydrometeorological hazards, and it points

to initiatives like the Pacific Catastrophe Risk Assessment and Financing Initiative (PCRAFI), a regional risk pool for DRM and financing solutions for Pacific Island countries. PCRAFI provides insurance against typhoons, earthquakes, and tsunamis in parallel to Pacific Resilience Program initiatives to bolster early warning and recovery capacity. Germanwatch also points to the CRI findings as a clear reason to improve global climate change financing programs to ensure that the most affected countries – many of which are also least developed states – do not experience worsening development outcomes because of disaster losses. The CRI cites outcomes from the COVID-19 pandemic as examples of how simultaneous or consecutive disasters can erode resilience in the absence of international solidarity funding.

In the 2021 CRI, based on single-year (2019) data, Solomon Islands ranks 130, much less “at-risk” than other countries in this index. It experienced no deaths from storms in that year but did suffer from material damage. To the contrary, in the 20-year data table, Solomon Islands ranks 71 of 180 countries; while it experienced human deaths and material damage in absolute terms over the period, earning it ranks of 125 and 157 in the average fatalities per year and average losses (in terms of GDP) per year respectively, its average fatalities per 100,000 inhabitants and average losses per unit GDP over the period earn it ranks of 34 and 44, respectively. Thus, for its size, the country experienced extreme weather that caused significant damage occasionally during the 20-year window used for this assessment. This reflects the small size of the population and economy and the disproportionate harm done by any storms to the small country’s ability to rebuild in the wake of a disaster.¹⁸⁵

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE FOR DISASTER MANAGEMENT

Institutions, policies, and plans for disaster management, including DRR and CCA, are set at the national level. Provinces and local authorities within Solomon Islands have also developed disaster operations committees to oversee all aspects of preparedness, response, and recovery within their jurisdictions.

Lead Government Agencies in Disaster Response

The government lead for disaster management in Solomon Islands is the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management, and Meteorology (MECDM).¹⁸⁶ The MECDM is organized into four technical divisions, each of which is responsible for a technical area – i.e., environment and conservation, climate change, disaster risk management (DRM), and meteorology. There is a separate division that is responsible for corporate services.¹⁸⁷

The governance framework for disaster management is established under the National Disaster Council (NDC) Act 1989 and the National Disaster Management Plan (NDMP) 2018, which sets out the key institutional framework for disaster management. The NDC Act established the NDC, which advises the government on issues related to DRR, disaster management, preparedness, and response.¹⁸⁸ The National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) is the Secretariat of the NDC. Below the national level are provincial disaster

committees which oversee Provincial Disaster Operations Committees (P-DOC), and local-level disaster committees. Figure 7 depicts the disaster management institutional framework in Solomon Islands.¹⁸⁹

National Disaster Council (NDC)

The NDC is chaired by the Permanent Secretary for MECDM. The NDC is responsible to the Cabinet for policy development and for the strategic management of planning and arrangements for disaster management. The NDC is also responsible for overseeing disaster response and the coordination of international, regional, and bilateral support during disasters.¹⁹⁰ The functions of the NDC are set out in the NDMP of 2018.

The NDC is responsible for overseeing disaster response through three agencies:

- NDMO (all hazards except pandemics and pest and disease)
- Ministry of Health and Medical Services (pandemics)
- Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (pests and diseases)

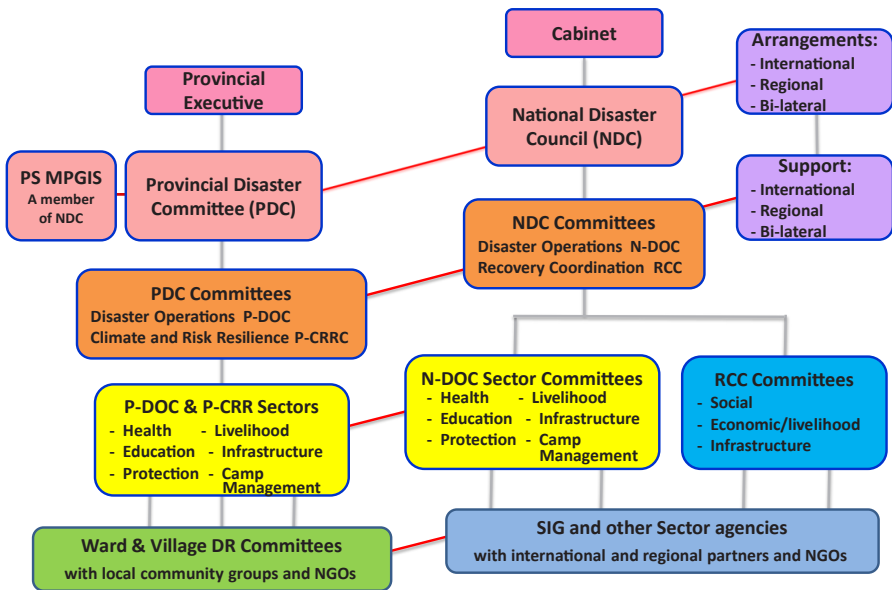


Figure 7: Solomon Islands Disaster Management Institutional Framework

There are three committees under the NDC:

- National Disaster Operations Committee (N-DOC)
- Recovery Coordination Committee (RCC)
- Climate and Risk Resilience (CRR) Committee

The N-DOC is chaired by the director of the NDMO.¹⁹¹ The N-DOC is responsible for establishing disaster management arrangements for preparedness and response and for planning at the national, sector, provincial, and local levels. It is also responsible for managing the coordination of disaster events and providing support to the provincial and local levels. Further responsibilities include public awareness and training, early warning arrangements, and assessment and response structures for managing disaster events and coordinating available resources to support affected communities.¹⁹² Recently the N-DOC led the COVID-19 response and the response to the civil unrest in Honiara in November 2021.

The sector committees of the N-DOC are:

- Health
- Education
- Protection
- Livelihood
- Infrastructure
- Camp management

The RCC is chaired by the Permanent Secretary or Under Secretary of the Ministry of National Planning and Development Coordination (MNPDC). The RCC is a multi-sector forum and includes representatives from all relevant ministries and NGOs supporting disaster recovery and risk resilience.¹⁹³ The RCC is responsible for establishing arrangements, policies, and procedures at the national, sector, and provincial level for recovery and rehabilitation from disaster events. In the aftermath of a disaster, the RCC is responsible for developing a recovery funding arrangement for recommendation to the Cabinet through the NDC. This arrangement is to include re-

allocation of sector budgets, international partner and stakeholder support, and commitment through national development planning as appropriate. Under the RCC are economic/ livelihoods and infrastructure committees. These committees support the MNPDC's coordination of post-disaster recovery and rehabilitation.¹⁹⁴

The CRR Committee is responsible for addressing hazards and the reduction of disaster and climate risk within social and development planning processes and practices. The CRR Committee has a working relationship with the Committees of the NDC and at the provincial level.¹⁹⁵

National Disaster Management Office (NDMO)

The NDMO is the Secretariat of the NDC and hosts the NEOC. The NDMO leads responses to all hazards except for pandemics and pest and disease. Its primary functions are to advise the Minister and the NDC on DRM matters; to develop policies and plans and to establish arrangements for DRM at the national level; to coordinate, support, and monitor plans at the sector, provincial, and community levels; to coordinate and manage the national post-recovery response; and to support public awareness. The NDMO also maintains a database for DRM information, including hazard and vulnerability maps.¹⁹⁶ The NDMO is comprised of an operations unit and program unit, as well as a logistics unit and corporate services.¹⁹⁷

The functions of the Operations Unit include:

- Dissemination of tsunami early warning
- Dissemination of all hazards precautionary safety messages
- Information collection, analysis, and dissemination
- Communication
- Coordination of humanitarian response
- Resource requesting, dispatching, and tracking
- Alert monitoring and warning monitoring
- Corporate services¹⁹⁸

The functions of the Programs Unit include:

- Prepare awareness materials
- Provide Introduction to Disaster Management and Initial Damage Assessment (IDA) training for school of nursing
- Provide DRR awareness for communities
- Liaise and coordinate with stakeholders in DRR activities
- Support operation unit in peace time and during disaster time¹⁹⁹

National Emergency Operations Center (NEOC)

The NEOC is a multi-agency operation hosted and overseen by the NDMO; it coordinates disaster responses.²⁰⁰ The NEOC hosts the National Emergency Response Team (NERT), a rapid deployment mechanism.²⁰¹ During the recent COVID-19 pandemic response, the NEOC was the “engine room” for ensuring the COVID-19 Response Intent of the NDC, N-DOC, and the COVID-19 Oversight Committee established under the Office of the

Prime Minister and Cabinet were achieved in a coordinated manner.²⁰²

Provincial Disaster Committees (PDC)

PDCs are chaired by the Provincial Secretary and operate through sub-committees mirroring the national NDMO structure.²⁰³ The PDCs are responsible for advising provincial executives and overseeing and coordinating disaster response operations of the P-DOC. P-DOCs hold similar responsibilities to the N-DOC at the provincial-level. Below the provincial level are local-level ward and village committees that manage disaster response in coordination with the PDC and take directions from the N-DOC.²⁰⁴ The Provincial Disaster Management Office (PDMO) provides secretariat support to the PDCs and hosts the Provincial Emergency Operations Centers (PEOC).²⁰⁵ Figure 8 depicts the provincial disaster management structure.²⁰⁶

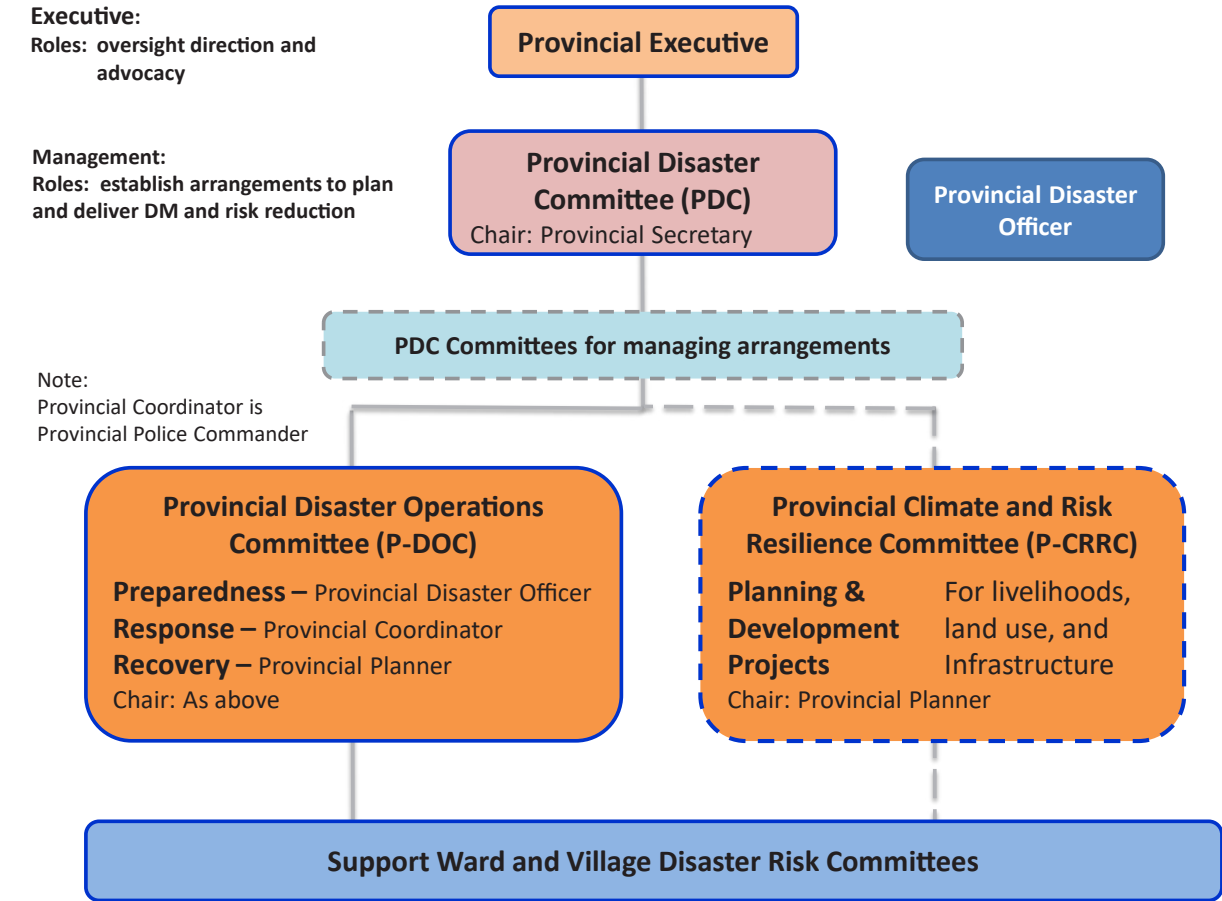


Figure 8: Solomon Islands Provincial Disaster Management Structure

Disaster Relief and Emergency Response

In the event of a disaster, the Director of the NDMO is the Disaster Coordinator pursuant to the NDMP 2018.²⁰⁷ According to the NDMP, the Minister responsible for disaster management may declare a state of disaster in whole or in part of Solomon Islands. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, a State of Public Emergency (SOPE) was declared by the Governor-General, pursuant to Section 16(2) of the Constitution.²⁰⁸

There are three stages of NEOC activation for a disaster or potential disaster – standby, full activation, and stand-down. The Disaster Coordinator may activate the NEOC and place the N-DOC arrangements on standby if there is a threat of a potential disaster. During a disaster, the Disaster Coordinator will fully activate the NEOC and N-DOC arrangements. Upon the declaration of a disaster, the NDC will meet within 24 hours of a declaration.²⁰⁹

The operational functions of the NDC during disasters and non-declared events include:

- Advising the Minister on declaration of a disaster
- Strategic oversight and direction to the N-DOC on priorities and overall management of the disaster
- Advising the Cabinet on resource and funding requirements and the overall management of the disaster
- Accessing international support as appropriate
- Approving transition to recovery
- Oversight for activations for non-declared events and approval for requests for non-budgeted funds²¹⁰

During a disaster, the NDC has powers to requisition any private vehicle, vessel, or other property, if reasonably justified in the public interest for the purposes of responding to the disaster situation. This power may be delegated by the NDC to the Disaster Coordinator.²¹¹ Figure 9 depicts the N-DOC disaster management operational arrangement.²¹²

The NEOC is led by the National Operations Manager who reports to the Disaster Coordinator who acts as the Chair of the N-DOC. The NEOC is comprised of six functional teams: assessment, operations, public information, planning, logistics, and support and administration.²¹³ Figure 10 is the organizational structure of the NEOC.²¹⁴

The functions of NEOC include:

- Monitor and assess developing disaster situations
- Coordinate Assessment (Initial Situation Overview, IDA, Disaster Scene Assessment)
- Coordination and support to national and provincial responses
- Address external support issues for humanitarian assistance and disaster response including civil-military coordination with RSIPF National Emergency Management Special Events Planning (NEMSEP)²¹⁵

The NEOC commonly undertakes the following:

- Coordinate assessment
- Information management
- Geospatial information management system
- Solomon Islands Government coordinated Situation Reports
- Development of hazard specific plans
- Development of emergency/disaster management
- Response plans
- NERT support for national responses²¹⁶

The NERT is a nationally deployable team attached to the NEOC and directly responsible to the N-DOC.²¹⁷ It provides trained personnel capable of deploying to disaster areas at short notice. The Solomon Islands NERT is the first capability of its kind to be established by an NDMO in the Pacific region.²¹⁸

COVID-19 Response (2020-2022)

The COVID-19 operation was the most complex and lengthiest disaster response operation executed using the NDC “Arrangements.” The Arrangements were

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE FOR DISASTER MANAGEMENT

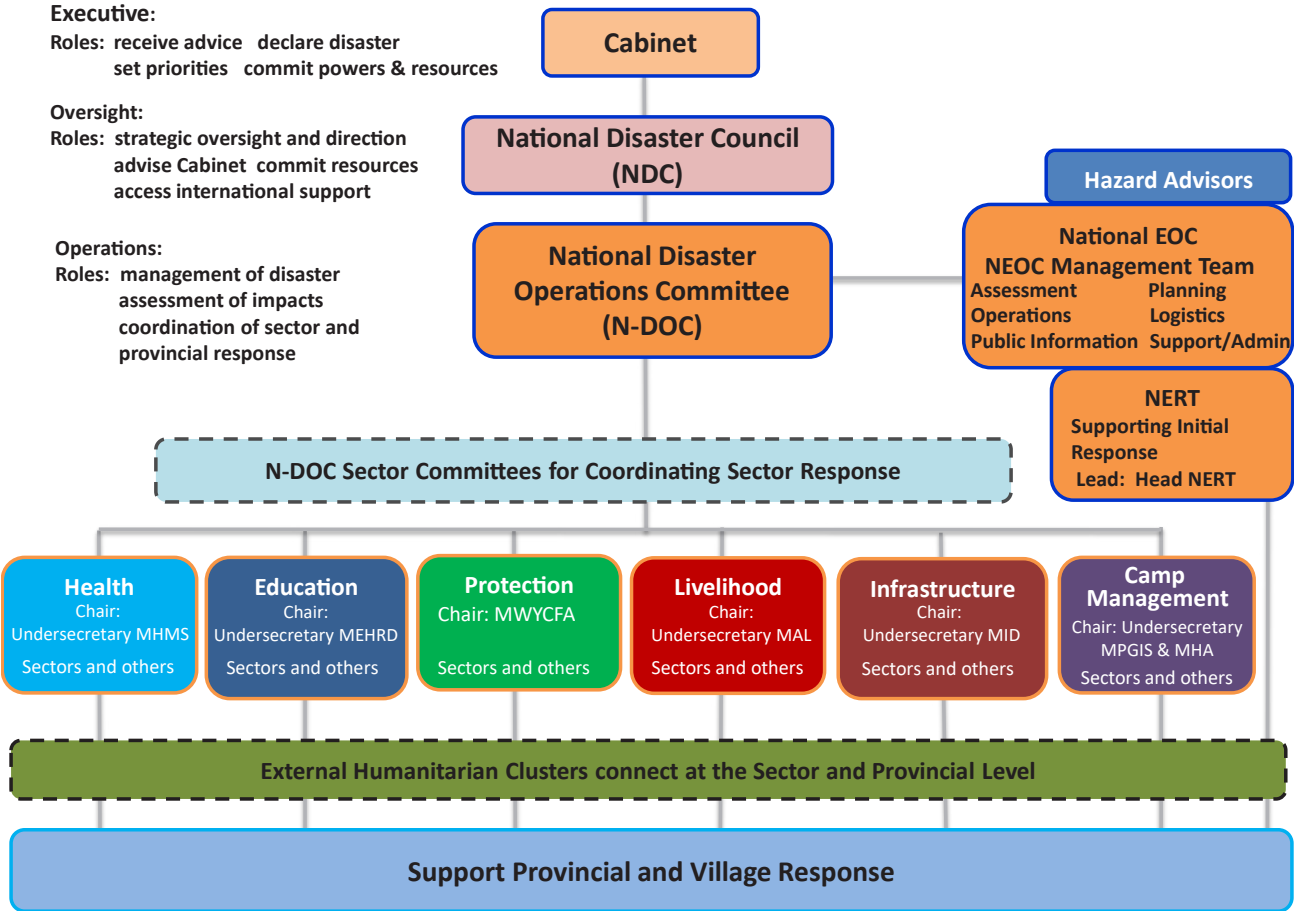


Figure 9: Solomon Islands Disaster Management Operational Arrangement under N-DOC and NDC

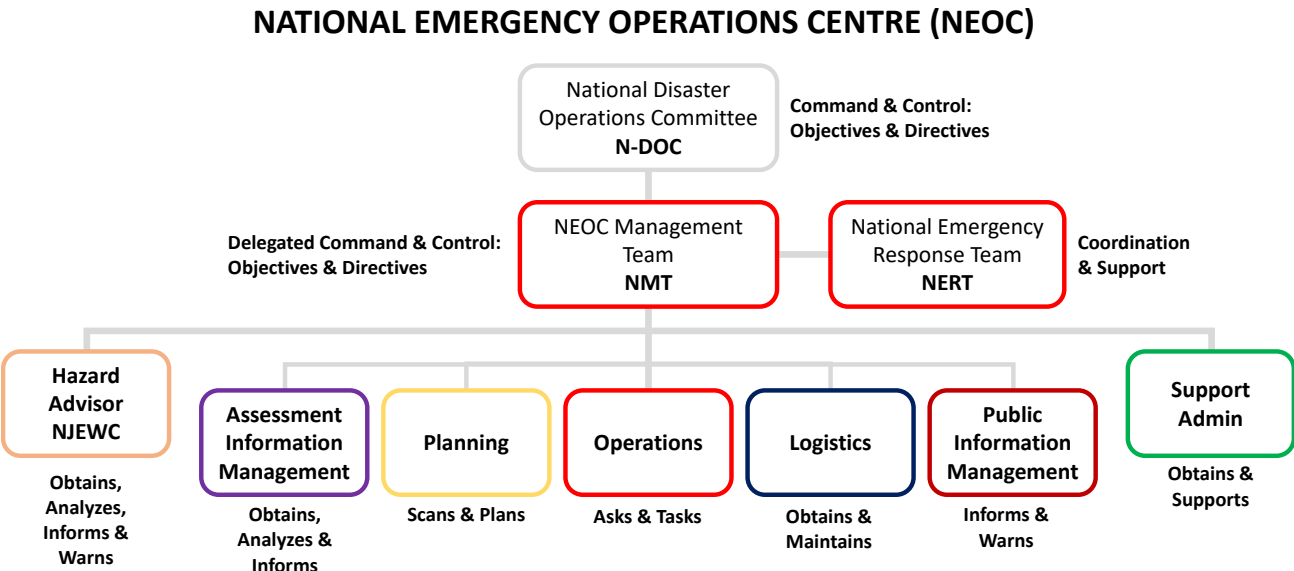


Figure 10: Organizational Structure of the NEOC

tested over the course of 27 months. The Solomon Islands Governor General declared the Health SOPE pursuant to section 16(2) of the Constitution on 25 March 2020. In the absence of specific pandemic response arrangements, the government included a provision in the SOPE (Section 18) for COVID-19 response efforts to be led by the N-DOC and P-DOCs.²¹⁹ From 26 March 2020 to 4 July 2022, the NEOC was activated on the “Full-On-Activation Mode” to provide support to the N-DOC under the NDC. The N-DOC managed national and provincial sector efforts to coordinate and implement COVID-19 response efforts. The NEOC deployed the NERT to further support the N-DOC including with camp management.²²⁰ The N-DOC was transitioned to “standby mode” on 4 July 2022, and the SOPE ended on 24 July 2022.²²¹

Civil Unrest, Honiara 2021

During the civil unrest in Honiara in November 2021, the N-DOC of the NDC was placed on “full activation mode” and launched a humanitarian response. The unrest resulted in widespread damage to properties and businesses following three days of looting and destruction of property from the Chinatown area towards the Ranadi industrial area and up to Burns Creek. The various N-DOC sector committees responded, including National Security, Livelihood, Education, Infrastructure, Health, and Camp Management.²²² The Solomon Islands Red Cross Society also activated its conflict response plan and led the registration of Internally Displaced Persons with support from the Livelihood Sector Committee.

Savo Volcano Evacuation Exercise 2022

In 2022, the NDMO with support from the Australian Defence Force (ADF) conducted a one-day evacuation exercise on Savo Island, where monitors have observed increased volcanic activities.²²³ The aim of the evacuation exercise was to test the community evacuation arrangement, the P-DOC and N-DOC coordination arrangement, and operational procedures in coordinating evacuation

response through the NDC arrangement.²²⁴ Agencies participating in the exercise included Geological Survey Division, the Solomon Islands Meteorological Services (SIMS), selected communities on Savo Island, the N-DOC, the Central Islands P-DOC, Sector Committees, RSIPF, Solomon Islands Red Cross, ADF personnel, and crew from ADF’s Pacific Support Vessel, ADV Reliant.²²⁵

Armed Forces Role in Disaster Relief

Solomon Islands does not have a military but is considering forming a defense force.²²⁶ The RSIPF is the civil-military focal point for the NEOC, including for foreign armed forces providing disaster relief pursuant to Section 117 of the NDMP 2018. The RSIPF is a member of the NDC and N-DOC, and it maintains a liaison in the NEOC. The RSIPF also provides transport and logistical support to initial response and assessment through the NERT. The RSIPF is furthermore the Provincial Coordinator and chair of the P-DOCs for preparedness and response.²²⁷

The RSIPF has received disaster response training from Australia through the RSIPF and Australian Federal Police Policing Partnership Program. In March 2023, the NDMO, Airport Fire, and RSIPF’s Fire Rescue completed a five-day Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) training course.²²⁸ This course was followed by the donation of four firetrucks from Australia to improve the RSIPF’s Fire Rescue capabilities.²²⁹

The RSIPF has also received disaster management and response training from the U.S. In September 2022, the NDMO, RSIPF, and NERT partnered on a humanitarian assistance response training with the U.S. Coast Guard District Fourteen emergency management response experts, U.S. INDOPACOM’s Center of Excellence in Disaster Management (CFE-DM), and the USNS Mercy through U.S. Pacific Fleet’s Pacific Partnership 2022. The training focused on command system fundamentals, search and rescue, foreign military aid in disaster responses, and multinational roles in humanitarian assistance. Photo 1 is a photo of

the NDMO, RSIPE, and CFE-DM participants in the training.²³⁰

Solomon Islands is also receiving disaster response support from China. Solomon Islands and China signed a Memorandum of Understanding to enhance cooperation in DRR and Emergency Response in July 2023.²³¹



Photo 1: Pacific Partnership 2022 Solomon Islands Humanitarian Response Training Team

Disaster Management Partners

International partners collaborating with the Solomon Islands government and communities in disaster management and DRR include UN agencies such as the UNDP, UNFPA, United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), UN Women, and IOM. Bilateral partners include governments of Australia, New Zealand, and the U.S., including the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). At the community level, support for DRR and preparedness comes through the Australian Humanitarian Partnership (AHP) NGOs and their local partners. The main AHP NGOs operating in Solomon Islands are Oxfam Australia, World Vision Australia, Caritas Australia, CARE Australia, and Plan International Australia. These agencies are required to work within the framework of the Solomon Islands’ NDMP to provide for effective integration of their activities.²³²

UN Resident Coordinator for the Pacific

Solomon Islands is supported by the Pacific Multi-Country Office in Suva, Fiji. The UN Resident Coordinator to the Pacific oversees five Pacific island countries – Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.²³³

The UN has been present in Solomon Islands since 1978, with around 20 agencies implementing programs. The UN Pacific Strategy (UNPS) 2018-2022 is the current strategic framework that outlines the collective response of the UN system to the development priorities in 14 PICTs, including Solomon Islands.²³⁴ The UNPS 2018-2022 outlines six outcomes, the top being addressing climate change, disaster resilience, and environmental protection.²³⁵

The UN has supported Solomon Islands to respond to the humanitarian needs of those impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and TC Harold in 2020 under the Pacific Humanitarian Response Plan, with efforts led by the UNDP, UNFPA, and UNICEF. The health response has been carried out by a Joint Incident Management team led by the WHO. The socio-economic response was led by United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), UNDP, the International Labor Organisation, and UN Women.²³⁶

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

UNDP has been on the ground in Solomon Islands since 1999. With funding from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), UNDP is providing capacity building and material support to the NDMO and PDMOs. In 2021, UNDP with support from DFAT provided three new additional Yamaha 23-foot boats, 60-horsepower Yamaha engines, and stationery items to support disaster preparedness and response operations in Central, Makira-Ulawa, and Temotu Provinces.²³⁷ Also in 2021, UNDP facilitated hosting of a COVID-19 mock lockdown exercise for N-DOC Sector Committees; this exercise allowed UNDP to enable the NEOC to function at Mendana Hotel during the height of the COVID-19 community transmission period (January-March 2022), and UNDP also facilitated a lessons learned workshop to document learning from the November 2022 outbreak response.²³⁸ In 2022, UNDP with support from Japan trained a total of 113 schoolteachers from 13 schools in Western Province as part of the School and Community-

Based Disaster Risk Management program.²³⁹

Given the NDMO's expansion in scope in recent years and the increase in numbers of DRM, disaster management, and humanitarian stakeholders within Solomon Islands, UNDP is supporting NDMO in its change management process to review human resources structures, internal business processes, and program focus. As of July 2023, UNDP was supporting the NDMO with disaster preparedness planning for the Pacific Games, set for November 2023.²⁴⁰

UNFPA

In Solomon Islands, UNFPA focuses on providing sexual and reproductive health services and protection from gender-based violence to affected populations during humanitarian emergencies.²⁴¹

UNICEF

The UNICEF Pacific team in Suva, Fiji, provides disaster relief and supports child-centered DRR.²⁴² Moreover, UNICEF and UNDP are partnering with the Solomon Islands government under the Provincial Governance and Service Delivery Project (2022-2025) funded by the EU. The project will improve service delivery and strengthen government capacities to support people-centered development including delivering water and sanitation activities.²⁴³

UN Women

In 2023, the Solomon Islands government launched the Women's Resilience to Disasters (WRD) program in partnership with UN Women and Australia. The WRD program aims to reduce the disproportionate impact of disasters on women and girls, in all their diversity, by strengthening their resilience and capacity to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters. The program will also address the underlying gender inequalities of risk by involving women and girls in decision-making at all levels.²⁴⁴

Australian Humanitarian Partnership (AHP) Disaster READY Network

The AHP Disaster READY Network in Solomon Islands includes Save the Children Australia, Oxfam Australia, World Vision Australia, Caritas Australia/CAN DO, Live and Learn, and Plan International Australia. The program has piloted a cash transfer program to test its viability in remote communities, worked with local disabled people's organizations to ensure stronger representation for people with disabilities on disaster committees, and increased gender and protection capacity at the national, provincial, and community levels. Teams on the ground have also supported the NDMO's creation of a disaster information management system, strengthened local early warning systems, and connected the private sector to the disaster management network.²⁴⁵

European Union (EU)

The EU contributes humanitarian assistance to the Pacific in response to disasters through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism.²⁴⁶ In Solomon Islands, the EU has been supporting efforts to improve access to safe water and improved sanitation in urban and peri-urban areas of Solomon Islands since 2014. In June 2023, the EU announced the contribution of €18 million (US\$19 million) as part of the five-year Urban Water Supply and Sanitation Project.²⁴⁷

Japan

The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) is providing assistance to Solomon Islands with a focus on infrastructure as a base for economic activities, alleviating the negative effects of rapid economic development, and improving activities related to the Millennium Development Goals.²⁴⁸ Past assistance has focused on DRM, providing special volunteers, and delivering emergency communication systems.²⁴⁹

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

International Committee of the Red Cross

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is a private, independent humanitarian organization, headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland. The ICRC bases its activities on the provisions of International Humanitarian Law (IHL), and it is neutral in politics, religion, and ideology. The ICRC assists with the protection of civilian victims of armed conflict and internal strife and their direct results. Within these roles, it may take any humanitarian initiative as a neutral and independent intermediary.²⁵⁰ The ICRC regional delegation in the Pacific is based in Suva, Fiji. It covers 16 countries, including Solomon Islands, and it focuses on promoting IHL and providing relief assistance to communities affected by conflict.²⁵¹ In 2003 and 2006, ICRC supported the Solomon Islands Red Cross Society responses to communal violence. More recently, during the COVID-19 pandemic, ICRC detention support agents worked with correctional authorities in Solomon Islands to ensure that people held in the country's correctional centers had access to mobile telephones for weekly phone calls with their families during the period that family visits were halted to ensure the virus did not enter these facilities.²⁵²

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is a humanitarian organization that provides assistance and promotes humanitarian activities carried out by the National Societies, with a view to preventing and alleviating human suffering. IFRC was founded in 1919 and includes 191 National Societies. The IFRC carries out relief operations to assist victims of disasters and combines this with development work to strengthen the capacities of its member National Societies, including the Solomon Islands Red Cross Society.²⁵³ In recent years, IFRC has managed

funding appeals for earthquake, drought, and flooding emergencies in Solomon Islands and delivered support to the National Society for pandemic-related activities.²⁵⁴

Solomon Islands Red Cross Society

In 2017, the Solomon Islands Red Cross Society launched a strategic plan to reach 30% of the population by 2020 and to decentralize its operations with new branches in Makira-Ulawa, Isabel, and Choiseul Provinces.²⁵⁵ In 2023, the National Society celebrated 40 years since it was established by an Act of Parliament in 1983.²⁵⁶ Originally formed as a branch of the British Red Cross, the National Society applied for recognition by the ICRC in 1990 and, based on its activities and its legal statute as a voluntary aid society auxiliary to the national government, it was recognized in 1991.²⁵⁷

Movement partners of the Solomon Islands Red Cross include IFRC, ICRC, and the Australian Red Cross. Government partners include the Ministry of Home Affairs, MECDM, MWYCFA, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Honiara City Council, Provincial Governments (Western, Malaita, Rennell-Bellona, Temotu, and Guadalcanal).²⁵⁸

U.S. Government Agencies in Solomon Islands

On 2 February 2023, the U.S. officially opened an embassy in Solomon Islands to broaden U.S.-Solomon Islands engagement and to deepen cooperation.²⁵⁹ The last U.S. Embassy in the country had closed in 1993. Between 1993 and 2023, the U.S. Embassy in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, managed U.S. interests in and relations with Honiara. The priority for the mission is to advance a free and open Indo-Pacific through partnerships, and key activities focus on sustainable infrastructure and energy, freedom of the seas and skies, DRM programs. During the COVID-19 pandemic and before the new Embassy was opened, U.S. diplomatic staff were on the ground in Solomon Islands to support the country's pandemic-related information sharing and relief activities. As the

new Embassy opened in 2023, the U.S. State Department had already worked to reestablish other U.S. activities, including the Peace Corps' presence and WWII unexploded ordnance (UXO) mitigation efforts.²⁶⁰

In August 2023, USAID Administrator Samantha Power visited Solomon Islands in what was the first visit ever by a USAID Administrator to the country. Administrator Power announced the establishment of a USAID Country Representative Office in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, which also supports Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.²⁶¹ In Solomon Islands, USAID supports disaster preparedness and action on climate change and the environment. USAID is conducting a Strengthening Competitiveness Agriculture and Livelihoods (SCALE) project in Malaita Province to support agriculture and small-scale farmers. Within the project, the Forest and Development Fund provides grants to Solomon Islands organizations for activities that support USAID SCALE's objectives of protecting forest, enhancing livelihoods, and building capacity of local organizations.²⁶²

USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (USAID/BHA) is the U.S. Government lead federal coordinator for international disaster response and humanitarian assistance. USAID/BHA requests U.S. DoD support to disaster response operations on an as-needed basis, and only in situations where the U.S. military can provide a unique capability that other first responders, including those of the host nation and international humanitarian partners, have insufficient capacity to provide. USAID/BHA responds to humanitarian crises in approximately 80 countries every year—including natural disasters, conflicts, and severe food insecurity—and fulfills its mandate of saving lives, alleviating human suffering, and reducing the physical, social, and economic impact of disasters worldwide. USAID/BHA provides funding, supplies, and expertise for the rapid and effective provision of humanitarian aid throughout the world.

USAID/BHA's staff presence globally and at its Washington, D.C., headquarters includes

experts in the food security, nutrition, WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene), health, shelter/settlements, logistics, agriculture, economic recovery/livelihoods, livestock, DRR, climate adaptation, and humanitarian protection sectors. USAID/BHA has humanitarian advisors at all of the DoD combatant commands, Special Operations Command, and key DoD field-forward positions, as well as at the U.S. Mission to the UN in New York, the U.S. Mission to the UN and other International Organizations in Geneva, the U.S. Mission to the UN Agencies in Rome, the U.S. Mission to the European Union in Brussels, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, Georgia. To support disaster response globally, USAID/BHA maintains regional offices in six countries – Costa Rica, Hungary, Kenya, Senegal, South Africa, and Thailand – as well as 14 liaison offices, where regional advisors coordinate with relevant actors across their respective regions and countries. In addition to these offices, full-time USAID/BHA staff are present in 32 other countries. USAID/BHA's vast network of implementing partners includes affected communities, local and national governments, other U.S. Government entities, and international partners, including NGOs, international organizations, the international donor community, and the private sector. Relief supplies are pre-positioned primarily in implementing partners' warehouses, and in five USAID/BHA-managed warehouses around the world to enable a rapid response to any location globally.

As the lead federal coordinator for Foreign Disaster Response (FDR), USAID/BHA's annual budget reflects the U.S. Government's interest in providing needs-based assistance, and it has been as high as US\$11.9 billion annually in recent years for humanitarian assistance activities. All of USAID/BHA's programs and activities are humanitarian assistance, targeting populations most vulnerable to the impacts of shocks from slow or sudden-onset emergencies. USAID/BHA's humanitarian assistance consists of two major conceptual areas, which may frequently be interlinked programmatically and strategically. The first area is humanitarian response pursuant

to a Declaration of Humanitarian Need (DHN) issued by the U.S. Ambassador or Chief of Mission in the affected country based on four criteria:

1. There is evidence of significant unmet humanitarian need
2. U.S. Government humanitarian assistance will save lives, reduce human suffering, and mitigate the impact of humanitarian emergencies on the most vulnerable
3. The host country requests or will accept international assistance; and
4. Responding aligns with U.S. Government interests and humanitarian objectives.

This DHN permits USAID/BHA to begin emergency response activities. Humanitarian response is characterized by urgent action, including rapid assessment of needs and provision of funding to partners to meet those needs, logistical support to local and national actors, and frequently the deployment of USAID/BHA disaster response experts or teams.

The second conceptual area of USAID/BHA assistance is known as early recovery, risk reduction, and resilience (ER4) activities, which aim to improve the well-being of vulnerable people by strengthening their capacities to manage risk, to anticipate, withstand, recover from, and adapt to shocks and stresses, and to support positive, transformative change. These ER4 activities may be integrated with humanitarian response programming or may be stand-alone activities. ER4 programs and activities are cost-effective, reducing the need for future humanitarian assistance when shocks occur. Core USAID/BHA Responsibilities During an Emergency Response

- Conducting assessments of humanitarian needs
- Developing U.S. Government response strategy
- Coordinating the operational on-ground response in support of the U.S. Ambassador
- Providing fast and effective funding to established partners (NGOs, international organizations, etc.)

- Leading official reporting on humanitarian issues and U.S. Government response activities
- Requesting support from other U.S. Government agencies as required.

When civilian and host nation military response capacity is overwhelmed and the U.S. military has a unique capability, USAID/BHA may request supplemental FDR support from DoD for a limited period. These requests occur in less than 5% of all official U.S. Government responses. Interagency requests for DoD support to FDR are transmitted to the Secretary of Defense (SecDef) in an official memorandum (Executive Secretariat Memo), which is required in order to leverage such DoD support. With SecDef approval, DoD components may provide non-reimbursable foreign disaster relief support to USAID using available Overseas Humanitarian, Disaster, and Civic Aid (OHDACA) funds. Coordination between USAID and DoD personnel is facilitated at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels by Humanitarian Assistance Advisors to the Military (HAA/M), who are USAID/BHA personnel trained to liaise with DoD counterparts and bridge gaps between the U.S. military and international humanitarian community. The DoD capabilities most commonly requested by USAID/BHA during a disaster response are logistics and airlift support rather than direct assistance to beneficiaries. USAID uses the Mission Tasking Matrix (MITAM) form as the formal means of tasking for DoD resources at the tactical level. OHDACA steady-state projects are distinct from FDR activities, and their implementation requires coordination with the local or regional USAID mission as well as approval by the relevant U.S. Ambassador and DoD combatant command.

The U.S. Government prioritizes civilian leadership in humanitarian operations in accordance with internationally-recognized humanitarian principles, including both the leadership of our responses and engagement

with partner nations. The unique socio-political context of each partner nation is a key consideration for decision makers at all levels before, during, and after the use of DoD capabilities in a disaster response scenario.

USAID Country Representative to Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu

Harbour City Road
Port Moresby, NCD
Papua New Guinea
Tel: +675-308-9100

E-mail: infopacificislands@usaid.gov

U.S. Agency for International Development

1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004
Tel: 202-712-4487

E-mail: phl.pics.mong.desk@usaid.gov

U.S. Embassy in Solomon Islands

Russell Comeau, U.S. Chargé d'Affaires, a.i.
U.S. Embassy
BJS Building, Commonwealth Avenue
Honiara, Solomon Islands
Tel: 677-23426
Fax: 677-27429

E-mail: EmbassyHoniara@state.gov

Laws, Policies, and Plans on Disaster Management

National Disaster Council Act 1989

The NDC Act 1989 was enacted to support the establishment of the NDC to manage disasters. The Act was supplemented by the NDMP 2018, which sets out a comprehensive arrangement for disaster management.²⁶³

National Disaster Management Plan (NDMP) 2018

The NDMP 2018 is a comprehensive whole-of-government plan that sets out arrangements for disaster management, with an emphasis on a whole-of-government, national-, provincial-, and local-level approach to disaster planning, preparedness, response, and recovery.²⁶⁴

Implementation and Monitoring Plan for the National Disaster Management Plan 2018

This plan supports the effective implementation of NDMP 2018. It aims to achieve three key objectives: 1) enhance ongoing NDMP 2018 governance, collaboration, and accountability; 2) promote coordinated planning and monitoring of disaster management sector priorities; and 3) support collaborative action to progress priorities.²⁶⁵

National Development Strategy 2016-2035

The Solomon Islands National Development Strategy 2016-2035 is the country's main development strategy. It sets out five objectives: 1) sustained and inclusive economic growth; 2) poverty alleviated across the whole of Solomon Islands; 3) all Solomon Islanders have access to quality health and education; 4) resilient and environmentally sustainable development with effective disaster risk management and response; and 5) unified nation with stable and effective governance.²⁶⁶ Of the document's five objectives, objective four is the most relevant to the MECDM's work and to the work of disaster management agencies.

National Climate Change Policy 2012-2017

The National Climate Change Policy recognizes climate change as a sustainable development issue that brings opportunities as well as challenges. Building upon this idea, the government, through this policy, aims to enhance the country's adaptive capacity while pursuing a path of low-carbon development.²⁶⁷

Disaster Management Communications

The scientific, institutional, and practical aspects of DRR and disaster management require coordination and communication tools and mechanisms. These elements can range from government agencies that detect natural events – e.g., earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and storm formation – to the telephones that members of the public carry and to which warnings can be

sent. In addition, the websites and databases used by local, national, and international partners provide resources for historical comparison, information management, and digital workspaces for responders, donors, and even affected populations.

Early Warning Systems

Early warning systems serve to warn of impending disasters to enable timely preparation and response by the public. An Early Warning for All initiative is being spearheaded by the World Meteorological Organization and UNDRR, with support from the International Telecommunication Union, the IFRC, and other partners, to ensure that everyone on Earth is protected from hazardous weather, water, or climate events through life-saving early warning systems by the end of 2027.²⁶⁸ In Pacific island countries, climate early warning systems are being introduced to support countries to prepare, respond, and recover from climate-related disasters.²⁶⁹

In Solomon Islands, the Solomon Islands Meteorological Service (SIMS) of the MECDM provides early warning of hydrological hazards. The Geological Survey Division (GSD) of the Ministry of Mines, Energy and Rural Electrification (MMERE) monitors seismicity and volcanic activities.

Solomon Islands Meteorological Service Division, MECDM

SIMS is responsible for the following early warning system components – monitoring of precursors, forecasting of probable events, and issuance of a warning or an alert when an event of catastrophic proportions takes place.²⁷⁰ Currently, SIMS operates seven manned Meteorological Stations, six Automatic Weather Stations (AWS), and seven Automatic Rainfall Gauge (ARG) stations. The main operating office is located at the GESO Building, Vavaya Ridge, Honiara. In August 2022, SIMS began construction of a Forecasting Unit building at the main operating office. The new National Weather Forecasting Office is an initiative

implemented by the UNDP Integrated Disaster Risk Management (IDRM) Project funded by the Australian Government in partnership with the MECDM.²⁷¹ The National Weather Forecasting Office will play a significant role in enhancing the early warning system of Solomon Islands and will effectively provide weather and marine weather forecasting and timely and accurate information with regard to cyclones, floods, earthquakes, tsunamis, and other severe weather.²⁷²

As an archipelago, Solomon Islands faces challenges in building its meteorological observation and monitoring network to provide timely information to the public.²⁷³ To address this challenge, SIMS has established Marine Early Warning Systems in Tulagi, Central Province, and in Western Province with support from the UNDP IDRM and the Australian government. The warning system uses a flag to notify small craft skippers of current weather conditions to allow them to make important decisions before they travel to another island or on the open ocean. SIMS efforts aim to translate early warning messages and distribute them in simple, understandable, and usable forms.²⁷⁴

Local communities use conch shells to alert community members of cyclone risks as shown in videos produced by World Vision and by Oxfam with support from the AHP.²⁷⁵ In urban areas, some communities use truck horns as sirens and solar-powered three-color emergency lights for flood-monitoring activities.²⁷⁶

SIMS is further collaborating with other ministries on climate early warning systems, including collaborating with the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock to design tailored services for farmers.²⁷⁷

Geological Survey Division, MMERE

The GSD is responsible for the surveillance and monitoring of earthquakes and volcanos and advocacy of early warning, public education, and awareness of geo-hazards.²⁷⁸

GSD participated in the ADF-supported Savo Island Exercise Longreach/Exercise Island Fire 2022 alongside SIMS, the N-DOC,

Central Islands P-DOC, Sector Committees, RSIPIF, Solomon Islands Red Cross, and selected communities on Savo Island. The exercise was held in support of the current review process and development of the new Savo Volcano Emergency and Disaster Management Plan.²⁷⁹

Early warning to women

Women in Solomon Islands are more vulnerable to disasters. In key historic events - the 2013 tsunami and 2014 floods - nearly all casualties were women and children. Because subsistence agriculture is widespread in rural areas, women and girls spend their days out in traditional gardens, where early warning signals do not reach them. Since men keep the family mobile telephones, radio is the best way to warn women. The meteorological service is also communicating through women's desk offices to disseminate early warning through women's networks.²⁸⁰

Tsunami safety drills

In 2017, Solomon Islands began holding tsunami drills at schools in the tsunami-prone Western Province. The tsunami drills were supported by the national government, Japan, and UNDP through the School and Community-Based Disaster Risk Management.²⁸¹ As of August 2022, 113 teachers from 13 schools in Western Province had been trained to be ready for disasters under the program.²⁸²

Information Sharing

Understanding how to overcome the information challenges that civilian and military agencies experience during a typical disaster response mission is important. Sharing information is critical since no single responding entity, NGO, international governmental organization, assisting country government, or the host government can be the source of all the required information.²⁸³ Collaboration, information sharing, and networking have been the backbone of successful disaster response and preparation. Disseminating information not only to those in-country and threatened by disaster,

but also to those responding to assist in the emergency has been crucial to timely, efficient, and effective disaster response. There are many resources, stakeholders, and components to consider before, during, and after a natural disaster. This section will discuss country-specific, humanitarian, regional, government, and U.S. DoD information sources.

Solomon Islands Information Sources

Disaster information sharing is limited in Solomon Islands. The key sources of disaster information and early warning are the NDMO and SIMS. The UNDP IDRM Project has supported the expansion of information sharing and early warning systems. The AHP-supported Disaster READY program is another key source of disaster-related information.

Solomon Islands National Disaster Management Office (NDMO)

The NDMO leads responses to all hazards except for pandemics, pests, and diseases. The NDMO maintains a database for DRM information, including hazard and vulnerability maps.²⁸⁴ The NDMO is comprised of an operations unit and program unit, as well as a logistics unit, and corporate service.²⁸⁵ The NDMO website provides updated and news on disaster managements concerns.²⁸⁶

Tel: +677 23031 or +677 23032

Web: <http://www.ndmo.gov.sb/>

Facebook: NDMOSI

YouTube: @SI_NDMO

X/Twitter: @SI_NDMO

Solomon Islands Meteorological Service (SIMS)

SIMS provides early warning information related to heavy rain, strong wind, tsunami, and sea swell. It provides a public weather forecast and marine weather forecast. It has a dedicated climate and ocean service covering rainfall, El Niño-Southern Oscillation, malaria early warning, tropical cyclone outlook, and climate trends.²⁸⁷

Tel: +677 27658

E-mail: forecast@met.gov.sb
Web: <https://met.gov.sb/>
Facebook: SIweather
YouTube: @solomonmetservice2137

Humanitarian Information Sources

UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Office of the Pacific Islands

Based in Fiji, OCHA's Office of the Pacific Islands mobilizes and coordinates humanitarian action in partnership with national and international actors. Its key objective is to support national efforts to protect the lives, livelihoods, and dignity of people in need. OCHA Office of the Pacific Islands personnel can provide support in information management, reporting, mapping, media and communications, assessments, humanitarian financing, and inter-cluster coordination. OCHA can deploy teams to assist in the coordination of incoming international relief at the earliest stages of an emergency.

Web: <https://www.unocha.org/pacific>
For OCHA situation reports, click on "Subscribe" button on top of page.
X/Twitter: @UNOCHA_Pacific

ReliefWeb

ReliefWeb is a service of UN OCHA that consolidates information and analysis from organizations, countries, and disasters for the humanitarian community.

A subsection of ReliefWeb is ReliefWeb Response (RW Response). It aggregates operational content from other humanitarian action platforms to provide an authoritative source of information. The goal is to ensure that humanitarians can share, find, and re-use critical information quickly and efficiently.

Website: <https://reliefweb.int/>
RW Response: <https://response.reliefweb.int/>

PreventionWeb

PreventionWeb is provided by UNDRR to consolidate disaster risk reduction information into an online, easy to understand platform.

Website: <https://www.preventionweb.net/>

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)

IFRC is the world's largest humanitarian organization, comprised of 191 National Societies, including the Solomon Islands Red Cross Society.²⁸⁸ A secretariat in Geneva, Switzerland, and over 60 delegations around the world. The IFRC carries out relief operations to assist victims of disasters and combines this with development work to strengthen the capacities of the National Societies. IFRC's work focuses on four core areas: promoting humanitarian values, disaster response, disaster preparedness, and health and community care.²⁸⁹ The IFRC is among the key partners of the Solomon Islands Red Cross Society.

Web: <https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc> and <https://go.ifrc.org/>

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

ICRC is an impartial, neutral, and independent organization whose exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence and to provide them with assistance. It also works to prevent suffering by promoting and strengthening humanitarian law and universal humanitarian principles.²⁹⁰

Website: <https://www.icrc.org/en>
Facebook: @ICRC
X/Twitter: @ICRC

Global Disaster Alert and Coordination System (GDACS)

GDACS is a cooperation framework among the UN, the European Commission, and disaster managers worldwide to improve alerts, information exchange, and coordination in the first phase after major sudden-onset disasters.
Website: <https://www.gdacs.org/alerts/>

Virtual OSOCC

The Virtual OSOCC is a real-time online coordination tool for disaster response professionals from urban search and rescue

teams, national authorities, and regional and international organizations.

Website: <https://vosocc.unocha.org/>

The latest alerts can be found here: <https://www.gdacs.org/Alerts/default.aspx>

To subscribe: <https://www.gdacs.org/About/contactus.aspx>

ThinkHazard!

ThinkHazard! is a website that provides detailed information on a country. Information is provided on Solomon Islands regarding hazards, country assessments, projects, early warning systems, and other resources.

Website: <https://thinkhazard.org>

Humanitarian Country Teams (HCT)

HCT is a strategic and operational decision-making and oversight forum established and led by the Humanitarian Coordinator in each country. It is generally comprised of representatives from UN agencies including IOM, international NGOs, and the IFRC and the National Red Cross/Crescent Society. During a disaster response, HCTs often produce a Situation Report (SitRep), usually in conjunction with OCHA.

Most HCT SitReps can be found through

ReliefWeb: <https://reliefweb.int/>

Humanitarian Data Exchange (HDX)

HDX is an open platform for sharing data across crises and organizations. Launched in 2014 with the goal of centralizing humanitarian data for easy access and analysis, HDX is managed by OCHA's Center for Humanitarian Data in The Hague.

Website: <https://data.humdata.org/>

Regional Information Sources

Pacific Disaster Net

Pacific Disaster Net is an online platform for disaster risk management and climate change documents, reports, alerts, data, projects, and professionals for the Pacific region. The platform is an ongoing live service provided by the SPC, UNDP, UNDRR, and IFRC. While climate

change is broader than the traditional scope of humanitarian assistance, many PICTs approach DRR in tandem with climate change adaptation.

Web: <http://www.pacificdisaster.net/main>

U.S. Government Sources

U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)

USAID is committed to responding to crises around the world to help people and places most in need. They aim to:

- Promote Global Health
- Support Global Stability
- Provide Humanitarian Assistance
- Catalyze Innovation and Partnership
- Empower Women and Girls

USAID produces a monthly “USAID Newsletter,” available digitally: <https://www.usaid.gov/news-information/newsletter>. More information and updates from USAID are available on Facebook (@USAID), Instagram (@usaid), X/Twitter (@usaid), and YouTube (USaidVideo).

Website: <https://www.usaid.gov/>

USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA)

USAID/BHA provides timely and extensive reporting on foreign disaster events and response efforts. Regular products for an internal U.S. Government audience, including the DoD, include alerts and situation reports, which are available via email mailing lists. Information products for public use, such as Fact Sheets and Program Maps, are available on USAID.gov (<https://www.usaid.gov/humanitarian-assistance>) and posted on social media. To learn more about USAID's work in different countries, visit <https://www.usaid.gov/humanitarian-assistance/where-we-work>.

Pacific Disaster Center

Pacific Disaster Center (PDC) has trademarked an early warning and decision support system called DisasterAWARE®. DisasterAWARE® is primarily for disaster

management practitioners and senior decision makers. It supports DRR and best practices throughout all phases of disaster management from early warning to multi-hazard monitoring. It has a collection of scientifically verified, geospatial, data and modeling tools to assess hazard risks and impacts. A restricted version of DisasterAWARE is the EMOPS (Emergency Operations) system, which is specifically for the disaster management community, including government agencies and humanitarian assistance organizations serving at local, state, federal, and regional levels.²⁹¹

PDC also provides a public version, Disaster Alert, which offers open access to a world map documenting 18 hazard types.²⁹² Disaster Alert also has a free, early-warning app to receive customizable, maps-based, visual alerts regarding active hazards. The app offers a global notification system covering natural and man-made hazards. It is available on both iPhone and Android.²⁹³

Website: <https://www.pdc.org/> and <https://www.pdc.org/disasteraware/>

Emergency Operations (EMOPS) system (request account): <https://disasteraware.pdc.org>

All Partners Access Network (APAN)

APAN is the Unclassified Information Sharing Service for the U.S. DoD. APAN provides the DoD and mission partners community space and collaboration tools to leverage information to effectively plan, train, and respond to meet their business requirements and mission objectives. APAN's technology team has been supporting foreign disaster relief operations for over 15 years.²⁹⁴ APAN has played an integral role in the success of disaster responses, such as the 2015 California Wildfire Response and the 2013 Typhoon Haiyan Response in which they provided organizations and militaries a centralized location to share information, increase situational awareness and decrease response time and duplicated efforts for best practices in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) services.²⁹⁵

Website: <https://www.apan.org/>

Joint Typhoon Warning Center

JTWC provides advanced warning for U.S. Government agencies and organizations. Website: <https://www.metoc.navy.mil/jtwc/jtwc.html>

Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies (DKI-APCSS)

DKI-APCSS is a U.S. DoD institute that addresses regional and global security issues by inviting military and civilian representatives of the U.S. and Asia-Pacific nations to its program of executive education and workshops.

Website: <https://dkiapcss.edu/>

The Center for Excellence in Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance (CFE-DM)

The CFE-DM is a U.S. DoD organization established by the U.S. Congress in 1994 and is a direct reporting unit to USINDOPACOM. CFE-DM provides training and education to help U.S. and foreign military personnel navigate complex issues in disaster management and humanitarian assistance. They produce country focused disaster management reference handbooks, after action reports, best practices, and lessons learned for advancement in response coordination. CFE-DM also works to improve cross-coordination, reduce duplication of efforts, and promote U.S. involvement in civil-military consultations and dialogues with relevant humanitarian and disaster response parties such as UN OCHA. CFE-DM provides resources and updates at its website, as well as via their Facebook (cfedmha) and X/Twitter (@cfedmha) accounts.

Website: <https://www.cfe-dmha.org/>

Disaster Management Reference Handbooks are available for download at: <https://www.cfe-dmha.org/Publications/Disaster-Management-Reference-Handbooks>

Civil-Military Coordination in Foreign Disaster Relief Missions: Best Practices for Information Sharing is available here: <https://www.cfe-dmha.org/Publications/Best-Practices-Pamphlets>

INFRASTRUCTURE

A growing urban population implies a growing need for services and requires an increase in social infrastructure and services, both of which are limited in Honiara's current contexts. Demand for water, power, health services, and communication services is expected to increase with the urban population growth. Only 16% of the households living in rural areas have access to sanitation, and 5% of the households living in remote islands have access to electricity. The impacts from future natural hazards and climate change events are likely to cause large-scale damage to physical infrastructure built to cater to the growing urban population.²⁹⁶

Transport

Due to the country's geography, transport of people and cargo is a challenge even in normal times. The population relies heavily on multi-modal transport for access to essential goods, services, and livelihood opportunities, and the economy is dependent on interisland transfers to support domestic trade and commodity exports. Interisland sea transport uses small- and medium-size coastal vessels, which would be insufficient for any large-scale emergency. Heavy rains can disrupt road transport due to flooding, landslides, and other damage to bridges and roads.

The Ministry of Communications and Aviation (MCA) is responsible for developing air transport policy and for managing services, assets, and security in the aviation subsector. The Ministry of Infrastructure Development (MID) is responsible for constructing, rehabilitating, and maintaining publicly owned ports and roads.²⁹⁷ The National Transport Plan 2011-2030 establishes a policy framework to maintain and develop infrastructure, services, and capacities of government agencies and the private sector, and the National Transport Fund is a mechanism to fund the transport sector. The overarching

strategy for the road, aviation, and maritime sub-sectors is the Sustainable Transport Infrastructure Improvement Program, which aligns government funding with development partner assistance, which fund approximately 85% of transport projects.²⁹⁸

Airports

There are 28 airports and airfields, 10 of which are government-owned and 18 of which are community-owned.²⁹⁹ As of September 2023, Honiara International Airport (HIR) is the only international airport, and it is primarily served by routes in Australia, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, and Vanuatu.³⁰⁰ However, Solomon Airlines announced in August 2023 that it would restart international service between Munda Airport (New Georgia, Western Province) and Brisbane, Australia, in October 2023.³⁰¹ HIR accounts for 55% of departing passengers (domestic and international), with Munda Airport in Western Province second at 27% of departing passengers. Service frequencies at domestic airports vary from daily to weekly.³⁰² Solomon Airlines operates all domestic routes. The Civil Aviation Authority of Solomon Islands (CAASI) is an independent safety regulator that also manages the airports.³⁰³ There are no large areas of covered storage available at airports. During disaster responses that involve the receipt of international relief cargo, agencies would have to collect their cargo as soon as it was cleared if it needed to remain covered.

HIR, Munda, and Gizo (Nusatupe, Western Province) airports are the only airports with paved runways. HIR also has one 50 × 50-m (164 × 164-feet) helipad. Munda, on New Georgia, can accommodate international flights, and permission for flights to Munda can be arranged through CAASI. The other airports have unpaved, mainly coral rock, runways. Most runways remain operational after heavy rains as the coral rock provides a solid landing base. Munda can accommodate aircraft up to a C130.

The airports of Gizo, Seghe, Kirakira, Santa Cruz, and Auki can accommodate aircraft the size of a Dash 8. The remaining airports, if operational, could accommodate a Twin Otter. There is no night flying equipment and no refueling services at the regional airports.³⁰⁴ Table 3 shows details of airports with paved runways in Solomon Islands.³⁰⁵

Airport	IATA/ICAO Code	Elevation	Runway Length	Runway Surface
Honiara International	HIR/AGGH	9 m (28 feet)	2,200 × 45 m (7,218 × 148 feet)	Asphalt
Munda	MUA/AGGM	3 m (10 feet)	1,400 × 30 m (4,593 × 98 feet)	Asphalt
Gizo	GZO/AGGN	3 m (10 feet)	1,100 × 9 m (3,609 × 98 feet)	Asphalt

Table 3: Codes and Runway Lengths for Solomon Islands’ Main Airports

Seaports

The Solomon Islands Maritime Safety Administration oversees safety regulation, and the Solomon Islands Ports Authority, a state-owned enterprise, operates the two international ports and several domestic wharves. Community wharf assets are owned either by private companies or the government, and interisland shipping services are privately operated.³⁰⁶ Many island groups see only a monthly shipment of goods from Honiara.³⁰⁷

Solomon Islands’ two international ports are Honiara and Noro. There are 91 community jetties and boat ramps.³⁰⁸ Provincial authorities manage Gizo, Ringi Cove, Tulagi, and Yandina, the largest of the domestic-only ports. They are suitable only for interisland vessels and have no handling and storage facilities or security.³⁰⁹ Beyond Honiara and Noro, 5-15-m (16-50-foot) Banana Boats are the most common type of vessel delivering people and cargo to all islands. They are mostly owner-operated, and their condition and safety vary.³¹⁰ Wholesaler Clipper Oil imports all fuels via its hubs at Honiara and Noro ports. Monthly deliveries in Honiara and Noro³¹¹ are made through submarine pipes to storage tanks at the ports; there is an estimated total tank storage capacity of 17.6 million liters (4.6 million gallons).³¹² All onward movement from the ports is handled by local trucking.

Honiara

Latitude: 9° 25’ 44.5” S
Longitude: 159° 57’ 30.2” E

The seaport of Point Cruz is Honiara’s port and is the country’s main port of entry. The port

is accustomed to large volumes of containerized cargo; it relies on shipboard cranes to unload containers to wharf, although containers can be unloaded by other means on Berth 2 if the ship is roll-on-roll-off (RO-RO) capable. The country’s main fuel buoy is in this port. Pilotage and tugs are compulsory for vessels longer than 40 m (131 feet). If necessary, humanitarian cargo will be given priority with prior approval from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

There are two berths, one conventional (130 m; 427 feet) and one multi-purpose (150 m; 492 feet); draft alongside is 8-10 m (26-33 feet) at the conventional berth and 12 m (39 feet) at the multi-purpose berth. The multi-purpose berth can also handle RO-RO vessels. There are eight 45-ton reachstackers and eight forklifts; total offtake capacity is 250 containers per day. Adjacent to the international port, there are seven small jetties for local cargo and passenger or fishing vessels.³¹³ Passenger ferry services operate from the Point Cruz wharf and include operations by MV Pelican Express and MV Solomon Express, both of which offer once-weekly service to Malaita and to the western provincial cities of Mbunikalo, Seghe, Noro, and Gizo.³¹⁴

Noro

Latitude: 8° 13’ 20.2” S
Longitude: 157° 11’ 56” E

Noro has a single berth with a limitation of 64 m (210 feet) total length; maximum draft in the channel is 15 m (49 feet). There are very few facilities and limited port infrastructure. There are two forklifts capable of moving

containers and two forklifts for moving pallets. Humanitarian cargo will be given priority, if necessary, with prior approval from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. There are two covered warehouses, both approximately 280 m² (3,014 square feet) in area.³¹⁵

Roads

The road network comprises about 1,523 km (946 miles) of roads, of which 184 km (114 miles or 12%) are sealed. The network also includes 441 bridges and 2,016 culverts. Guadalcanal and Malaita provinces account for 65% of the total network,³¹⁶ and only three-quarters of the country's rural population is estimated to have access to roads.³¹⁷ Nonetheless, these roads are critical links from villages to the coastal jetties and wharves that link each island to the hundreds of others.

Private ownership of vehicles in rural areas is minimal, and most people walk to schools, health centers, or other service and market areas.³¹⁸ The paved roads are concentrated in and around Honiara and in other major towns; elsewhere, most roads are coral, gravel, or dirt. Most outlying islands have few or no roads, with overland transportation infrastructure consisting of walking trails. Maintenance and construction of roads and associated infrastructure is challenging due to heavy rainfall and steep terrain. The Solomon Islands Road Improvement Project was launched to maintain and rehabilitate roads and bridges with funding from Australia, New Zealand, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the national government.³¹⁹ Photo 2 shows locals walking on an ADB-funded improved road on the outskirts of Honiara.³²⁰ Climate change-influenced increased rainfall intensity is already exacerbating the poor conditions of most roads and bridges, and heavy rains regularly lead to closures and delays.³²¹

The domestic road construction industry has developed in response to better planning and communication of public demand. However, many local contractors lack financial capacity, and a shortage of technical skills is an ongoing barrier for contractors.³²²



Photo 2: Family Walks along ADB-Funded Second Road Improvement (Sector) Project, Honiara

Railways

There is no rail infrastructure in Solomon Islands.

Waterways

There are no internal waterways; many remote communities use outboard motor-driven canoes for sea transport to other nearby communities.

Schools

The Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (MEHRD) is responsible for the implementation of education priorities and initiatives that range from early childhood education through primary, secondary, and community education. Since 2017, the Solomon Islands Tertiary Education and Skills Authority (SITESA) has been tasked with overseeing the development of tertiary education and skills training to better match education and

training to labor force needs.³²³ The MEHRD is responsible for in-service and pre-service teacher training, curriculum management, and management of financial resources allocated to Education Authorities (EA). MEHRD is the focal point for cooperation with development partners and donors as well as NGOs in the education field. The present Education Strategic Framework 2016-2030 has the following goals:

- To provide equitable access to all girls and boys to quality early childhood development, care, and pre-primary education by 2030 and to achieve full enrollment of all 5-year-old children by 2030
- To achieve full completion to quality and relevant basic education (primary and junior secondary) for all children in Solomon Islands
- To extend equitable access and ensure the quality and relevance of secondary education to deliver both work-related skills and transferable skills, including entrepreneurial and information and communications technology (ICT) skills, to increase the number of youths who have relevant skills for employment, decent jobs, and entrepreneurship
- To consolidate the establishment of a comprehensive, integrated system of tertiary education, which provides quality education and relevant skills for employment, decent jobs, and entrepreneurship
- To strengthen multi-stakeholder approaches to extend adult literacy and gradually introduce lifelong learning approaches to education and training
- To manage education resources in an efficient, effective, and transparent manner so that it promotes access and quality goals

The education system is divided into:

- Early Childhood Community Education for children under the age of 5 years
- Pre-Primary Year, the first official year of education, for students aged 5 years
- Primary Education, for children ages 6-11 years, in Years 1-6

- Junior Secondary, Years 7-9 for students ages 12-14 years; Year 9 is the final year of “Basic Education”
- Senior Secondary Education, Years 10-12, for students ages 15-18 years
- Tertiary, or Year 13, considered a foundation year for university.

There are 1,100 schools, including early childhood centers, throughout the country. Of the total, 510 are primary schools, and 243 are “community” high schools that incorporate both primary and junior secondary years. There are fewer than 30 provincial or national secondary schools. Schools are administered by various government and non-government EAs. There are other non-school options for skills development for students exiting the formal education system after Basic Education; they include Rural Training Centres (RTC), which offer technical skills training and are mostly run by churches and the private sector, supported by MEHRD through grants and teacher salaries.³²⁴ Education is free up through Junior Secondary; Senior Secondary, Tertiary, and RTCs may charge fees.³²⁵

In 2017, MEHRD reported net enrollment rates in primary school that ranged from a low of 75% in Western Province to more than 100% in Honiara and Malaita Province; net enrollment rates can top 100% in areas where children who are not of the official school age are enrolled. Net enrollment in junior high for the same year ranged from a low of 28% in Central Province to 75% in Honiara, and net enrollment in senior secondary ranged from 12% in Choiseul Province to 93% in Honiara.³²⁶ As a snapshot pre-COVID, in 2019, there were 209,377 students enrolled from early childhood education through Year 13; enrollment of boys and girls was roughly equal across all but Year 13 when girls made up only 43% of students. There were more than 8,600 teachers in schools in 2019; 53% of them were women.³²⁷

SITESA's strategies focus on establishing a recognition framework for tertiary diplomas and vocational skills achievements, engaging the private sector in developing skills training

programs, and planning, regulating, and funding grants for tertiary education.³²⁸ There are two public tertiary education institutions in the country, the Solomon Islands National University (SINU; until 2013, the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education) and the University of the South Pacific (USP), which has a campus in Honiara. However, the pool of students whose secondary education qualifies them to enter tertiary education is small. Secondary school is not free or compulsory, and enrollment rates are low while drop-out rates are high. In addition, many schools do not offer Year 13, which is crucial as a transition year.³²⁹

Disaster Risk Reduction in the Education Sector

Hazards affect schools and education in various ways. In Solomon Islands, schools may be located in areas where cyclones, floods, or landslides will directly damage facilities or cut off access to them. Concurrently, pandemics, storms, and droughts can disrupt the processes of education as children cannot attend school for health, safety, or economic reasons. Once schooling has been disrupted, children are at higher risk of emotional, mental, and physical disorders and are at higher risk of child trafficking. In the past 20 years, Solomon Islands' children and schools have felt impacts from earthquakes and tsunamis, floods, drought, and community conflict. In 2007, an earthquake and tsunami destroyed or damaged more than 140 schools in Western and Choiseul Provinces. Another earthquake and tsunami in 2013 displaced 2,700 school children and damaged 21 schools in Temotu even as flooding disrupted schooling for more than 100 students in Makira-Ulawa Province for more than one month. The Tensions and Bougainville (Papua New Guinea) crises of the late 1990s and early 2000s saw massive displacement and destruction of schools even as, in some cases, the state could not continue to pay teachers and school administrators. Flooding in 2014 struck schools in Guadalcanal and Honiara and damaged more than 30 school buildings. Finally, the El Niño

drought of 2015-2016 disrupted school days when schools in Rennell-Bellona, Choiseul, and Western Provinces would run short of water.³³⁰

Successive studies have found that children are particularly vulnerable to hazards due to their physical fragility, developing mental and emotional capacity, and dependency on adults for care either at home or in school. The Solomon Islands' own experiences with disasters have shown that children not with their families are at greater risk and that equipping children with knowledge of what risks are and how to respond can mitigate the dangers, including at school. Indeed, successive disaster management plans have explicitly stated that children and youth must be encouraged to participate in DRR and planning.³³¹ The ability of the national school system to sustain operations during and after a disaster event requires planning, training, and community input to ensure that administrators, teachers, and students and their families are all aware of how to respond in case of emergency.

The first Policy Statement and Guidelines for Disaster Preparedness and Education in Emergency Situations in Solomon Islands was published in 2011 to reflect elements of the NDMP of 2010. Its goals were to develop, implement, and improve DRR, mitigation measures, and preparedness for schools in order to minimize the impacts of natural disasters on education and to facilitate effective response when disasters strike; to ensure continuous access to quality education for all school-aged children before, during, and after emergencies; and to ensure transparency, effectiveness, and efficiency in funding and use of human resources for education before, during, and after emergency situations. The Policy Statement highlights the leadership of the national government, via the NDMO, and it places responsibility for rapid assessments of the education system's emergency needs on the Primary Education Division. That Division is joined by the Early Childhood, Secondary, and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Divisions in being tasked with coordination and guideline development and

dissemination during an emergency and recovery from it. Moreover, it targets the development of a database of qualified teachers who are available and up to date on the principles of education-in-emergencies. Responsibility for implementation at the school level and coordination of planning and execution with the Provincial Disaster Management Office lies with the respective EAs. Each School Management Team is responsible for:

- Leading the development of the school's disaster management plan and adapting it to the school's context
- Ensuring the Education in Emergency policy is implemented at the school
- Providing support and encouragement to teachers where necessary in implementing the policy
- Coordinating in-service workshops necessary for providing the knowledge and skills to assist teaching staff in emergency preparedness
- Ensuring school emergency drills are outlined in the school's yearly programs and are carried out at least twice each year
- Ensuring the school installs basic safety equipment on its premises and has proper storage for emergency resources
- Making sure that all buildings within the school have clearly displayed evacuation maps
- Ensuring that the school's disaster management plan is updated annually
- Ensuring that routine checks are carried out on the school's basic safety equipment and any faulty equipment is replaced.³³²

The Policy was joined the same year by the MEHRD's guidelines for preparing a school disaster management plan (SDMP), which was required to include a profile of the school, the make-up of

the School Disaster Management Committee, hazards, resources, a drill schedule, evaluation, and integration with early warning systems. Of note, in addition to the school's leadership, the Committee must include students and community members.³³³ But it was not until 2016 that training for teachers and integration of DRR into school management was set to be rolled out.³³⁴ Figure 11 shows the School Disaster Management Flipchart that MEHRD and Save the Children Developed ahead of the 2016 training.³³⁵ In cooperation with USP, this "School Leadership" training was to include how to identify hazards in the school environment, develop an annual work program for the maintenance and upkeep of school grounds, understand roles and responsibilities in maintaining a conducive school environment, and understand general principles of disaster management and preparedness.³³⁶

The MEHRD's COVID-19 Education System Response Scenario Planning document highlights the four principles of the Ministry's response to the pandemic but also underscores the desired outcomes of all disaster responses:

- Safety of All Persons – Students, Teachers, Principals, School Staff, Education Authorities, and MEHRD
 - Ensure that the physical, mental, and psychosocial health of all persons is prioritized



Figure 11: MEHRD's School Disaster Management Flipchart

- Community Engagement and Mobilization
 - Embed public health and education continuity objectives into community
 - Community-driven and community-led behavior change and education support
- Continuation of Critical Functions
 - Ensure that critical functions carried out by MEHRD continue, e.g., payment of teacher and staff salaries
- Learning Continuity
 - Provide an accessible distance learning program that covers prioritized curriculum/minimum standards for each learning level in multi-media formats
 - Embed community-directed learning into programs
 - Support for school leaders, teachers, and parents/guardians for at-home learning as well as for return-to-school processes³³⁷

In the 2022-2026 National Education Action Plan (NEAP), the government points to the COVID-19 pandemic alongside knowledge that extreme weather events are likely to become more frequent as drivers of planning to build disaster management into the education sector. The NEAP identified gaps in infrastructure, human and financial resources, and national systems that need to be plugged to build toward DRR policies for schools and their surrounding communities. Over the period of the NEAP, schools were tasked with evaluating the COVID-19 response and incorporating lessons learned into Education-in-Emergency strategies. The first stage is ensuring that each school conducts an audit of their own risk and develops a plan and guidelines for preparedness and response, and this stage will be followed by training and exercise programming to ensure students and their families are engaged in the DRR process.³³⁸

Among the projects being implemented to build DRR into schools, Disaster READY includes 18 local partners and the AHP's five NGOs – CARE, Caritas, Oxfam, Plan, and World Vision – that, together, conduct inclusive

leadership training, planning, and management development programs that actively integrate schools into community-based DRR in Honiara and on Malaita.³³⁹ In addition, since 2017, the UNDP has supported teacher training programs in the country. The School and Community-Based Disaster Risk Management project trains teachers to review school disaster plans, help set up disaster committees, and ensure stakeholders understand their roles before, during, and after a disaster. The programming is coordinated with the NDMO, SIMS, MECDM, EAs, and the GSD. SIMS highlights that the training for teachers is critical because they can pass along to students and their families information regarding what to do if/when a disaster warning message is received.³⁴⁰

Solomon Islands also participated in the Pacific Coalition for the Advancement of School Safety (PCASS), a coalition of national EAs, international NGOs, and civil society groups. PCASS was established to promote school safety, and it helped develop the School Safety Roadmap for the Pacific Region 2016-2018, which, in turn, guided the development of the Solomon Islands' national strategy for school safety implementation.³⁴¹ As part of its development of school disaster management resources, the government formed a school disaster management task force of government officials, local and international development practitioners, and academics, including the USP. The task force selected 15 schools where students in Years 3-5 would pilot the use of newly developed materials. The materials were accompanied by Save the Children evaluation visits that also served to deliver emergency evacuation kits, additional educational materials, radios, flashlights, megaphones, and medical kits to complement simulation exercises.³⁴²

SINU's Department of Environment Studies includes courses on disaster preparedness and management within its curriculum as part of its diploma and certificate intended to build a professional cadre able to support communities in DRR and disaster response.³⁴³

Communications

Concerted reforms in the ICT sector began in 2008; the results have included establishment of an independent regulator and liberalization to promote competition. New service providers have entered the market since 2010, and observers note a reduction in consumer prices, improvement in service, and increased access.³⁴⁴ Nonetheless, there are several challenges in making hazard information available to the public. These include limited ownership of high frequency (HF) radio and television sets in rural communities, limited access to the internet throughout the country except in urban areas, pamphlets that are not translated into local dialects, and low levels of literacy.³⁴⁵

Telephones

The sector regulator, Telecommunications Commission of Solomon Islands (TCSI), reports that there are 7,007 fixed telephone subscriptions in the islands. This number is dwarfed by the 607,077 mobile subscriptions reported by TCSI, which reports a mobile telephone penetration rate of 96%.³⁴⁶

Our Telekom is the primary telecoms operator; it is owned by Solomon Islands National Provident Fund (SINPF). BMobile is the second operator.³⁴⁷ The first LTE services were launched by national telecoms in 2017 in Honiara, but the main platform for mobile voice and data services remains 3G.³⁴⁸ More than 93% of mobile handsets sold in the country are Android devices.³⁴⁹

Internet Access

In 2023, the International Telecommunications Union estimated that the number of internet users in Solomon Islands was 264,400, approximately 36% of the population.³⁵⁰ TCSI reports that there are four internet service providers (ISP) licensed to operate; they are Solomon Telekom, BMobile, SATSOL, and Hantek.³⁵¹ Solomon Telekom offers broadband and Wireless data, SatSOL and Hantek offer mobile Wi-Fi access points and dedicated customer premises equipment connections. The

two independent ISPs, SatSOL and Hantek, are the operators who sell Internet bandwidth.³⁵² There were only 1,000 fixed broadband subscriptions in the country as of 2020 for a population penetration rate of less than 1%.³⁵³

Access to data services is very low with minimal accessibility in remote areas. The lack of access to affordable broadband constrains the expansion and deepening of banking and e-commerce³⁵⁴ in addition to limiting public access to government services, including telehealth. More than 70% of mobile phone connections are 3, 4, or 5G and are broadband capable, and approximately 60% of internet traffic in the Solomon Islands is via mobile telephone.³⁵⁵ The major improvement in connectivity in recent years came after the set-up of the Coral Sea Submarine Cable (CS2) and Solomon Islands Domestic Network (SIDN), both of which went live in February 2020 and improved data availability at lower costs. CS2 is a 4,000-km (2,485-mile) link with landing points in Auki, Honiara, Noro, and Taro in Solomon Islands, Port Moresby in Papua New Guinea, and Sydney in Australia. Built in parallel to CS2, SIDN joins four Solomon Islands provinces to ensure extension of benefits from CS2 throughout the country. SIDN multi-core fiber links include branching units from Honiara to Auki in Malaita Province, Noro in Western Province, and Taro in Choiseul Province. Each link has a beach landing and cable duct routes from the landings to landing station sites. The Kacific-1 satellite allows an alternative route for international data traffic.³⁵⁶

Mass Media

Freedom of speech and of the press are guaranteed through the Constitution's Article 12.³⁵⁷ Radio is the key means of information delivery due to high rates of illiteracy and low rates of television ownership. Public broadcaster Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation (SIBC) is a key resource as its radio stations reach the largest segment of the population.³⁵⁸ SIBC is also a key partner of the NDMO with whom it runs regular tsunami response drills,

and SIBC maintains back-up generators to allow emergency information broadcasts.³⁵⁹ Although media freedom is generally the rule, the government in 2022 moved to assert greater control over SIBC, and observers assessed that the move was intended to reduce critical coverage reaching the public.³⁶⁰

The country's mass media is limited in size and scope by both the small market and the limited number of trained journalists. There are only three licensees for terrestrial television; they include church and private entities and have minimal territorial reach. Conversely, more than 95% of surveyed Solomon Islanders report listening to the radio regularly and are within range of at least one radio station. There are two daily newspapers and others that publish a few times every week, but they focus on news in Honiara and are limited by distribution networks to markets in and around the capital.³⁶¹

Repeated examinations highlight that the country's journalists are few and extremely busy reporting daily events and, therefore, have minimal opportunity to examine issues in depth. Those journalists that do report critically on political and business elites report frequent pressure and harassment from the parties they criticize. In 2022 and 2023, an additional aspect of media pressure has come from political factions supporting or opposing close ties between Solomon Islands and Beijing.³⁶² Moreover, there are concerns of foreign influence over the country's few media outlets. In 2022, reports emerged that the owners of the Solomon Star newspaper and Paoa FM radio station had received grants totaling more than US\$150,000 from the Chinese government in exchange for agreeing to "promote the truth about China's generosity and its true intention to help develop" the country. Despite concerns over external influence, the reputed grants also reflect the fact that Solomon Islands news media have few funding sources to ensure access to key technologies and the ability to maintain production facilities.³⁶³

Less than one-fifth of Solomon Islanders are thought to be social media users, and Facebook is

the most used social media platform as no other platform can claim more than 10% of Solomon Islander social media users.³⁶⁴

Post

Solomon Islands Postal Corporation (SIPC) is a state-owned enterprise, and the MCA has oversight over the SIPC board.³⁶⁵ SIPC operates the postal service under the brand-name Solomon Post. It handles postal services and offers financial services at its 10 post offices throughout the country. The Solomon Post EziPei is a mobile wallet that allows Solomon Islanders to access banking services without internet access and in remote areas.³⁶⁶

In 2017, Solomon Post adopted the "what3words" convention for addresses since there has never been a standardized addressing system to allow mail and package delivery beyond central post office boxes, which can be up to 95 km (60 miles) from some residences. Moreover, Solomon Post has long struggled with high volumes of mail not reaching recipients.³⁶⁷ Despite the what3words introduction, in 2020, MCA and SIPC continued to seek ways to reduce costs and improve service by encouraging other initiatives to expand the use of postal codes.³⁶⁸

International courier services, such as DHL, deliver parcels and documents in Solomon Islands.

Utilities

The Ministry of Mines, Energy, and Rural Electrification (MMERE) manages policy for both the electric power and water and sanitation systems. Both Solomon Power and Solomon Water are overseen by boards that report directly to MMERE. Due to its oversight of energy and water resources and services, it is also a focal point for mitigation of geological and hydrological hazards as well as for mitigating greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. MMERE's Energy Division and Water Resources Division are the implementing partners for national energy and water and sanitation projects in coordination with other agencies and donor partners.³⁶⁹

Power

The Solomon Islands Electricity Authority (SIEA), hereafter “Solomon Power,” is a state-owned electricity utility that generates and supplies grid-connected electricity. It provides electricity to Honiara and eight key settlements (Auki, Buala, Gizo, Kirakira, Lata, Malu’u, Noro-Munda, and Tulagi). Installed capacity in Honiara is 34 megawatts (MW) with a peak load of 1.5 MW; combined installed generation capacity in the provincial centers is 2.3 MW. Most grid-connected power generation in Solomon Islands is diesel, but investment in renewable energy is increasing.³⁷⁰ The Lungga power station (diesel) in Honiara is the main power station with a generation capacity of 27MW; it was joined in 2016 by the Henderson Solar Plant (1MW). Meanwhile, since 2016, upgrades have been completed to the diesel generators in Gizo (1.5 MW), Noro (1.5 MW), Munda (250 kilowatts; kW), Auki (1MW), and Tulagi (500 kW). In May 2016, the refurbished Buala Mini Hydro plan was completed, returning 150 kW of clean energy to the grid, and in July 2017, two mini-hybrid stations (solar panels, battery storage, and back-up diesel) were brought on-grid in Western and Choiseul Provinces to serve 400 new customers.³⁷¹ Renewable energy projects have been proposed: Tina River Hydropower Project (20 MW) for the Honiara grid, Fiu River Hydropower Project (750 kW) for the Auki grid, three new small solar–diesel hybrid grids, and refurbishment of Buala hydropower plant (185 kW).

Electricity access is low. Grid-connected electricity is supplied to less than one-fifth of the population. While the access rate in Honiara is 64%, access in the remainder of the country is 6%, and five of nine provinces have access rates below 4%. The main reasons for the low access rates are the high cost of diesel power generation in the provincial centers, a disincentive for Solomon Power to expand the distribution network in the absence of adequate community service obligation funding; the lack of a government community service obligation funding for grid extensions;

the difficult geography and dispersed small population; and the low capacity to pay in some areas.³⁷² Customers pay the highest rates in the region for electricity at US\$0.80 per kW-hour, approximately four times the global average.³⁷³

Development and provision of economic infrastructure is concentrated in Honiara; 89% of the national power generation capacity is in Honiara. Kerosene lamps are the main source of lighting for 79% of households, while 12.2% use solar systems. Other sources of lighting for households include wood fire, mini-hydropower, portable generator, and gas. For cooking, 98.3% of households use wood with the remainder relying on gas, kerosene, and other forms.³⁷⁴

Water and Sanitation

Though surface water sources like rivers, lakes, or streams are used as the main source of supply for major towns on the larger, high islands of Solomon Islands, small, low-lying islands rely exclusively on groundwater and rainwater collection. Thus, communities must work closely to ensure they manage their water resources effectively, and community-based management schemes are in effect outside urban areas of the country.³⁷⁵ There are potential benefits and risks from this type of management as nature-based solutions can be more resilient to hazards given the lack of expensive or overly-technical parts alongside the presence of local knowledge, but these systems can also be vulnerable to climate change or major disaster events that are vastly beyond predicted conditions.

About one-third of the country’s urban population lives in informal settlements. They get their drinking water from public water supply schemes, rainwater tanks, public wells, springs, streams, and other sources, such as bottled water. In the Greater Honiara Area, 41% of residents do not have access to the city’s public water supply system, and 24% do not have access to basic sanitation. In other urban areas, rates of access to water and sanitation are even lower.³⁷⁶ In 2020, the government reported that 67% of the entire population had access to basic water services, but there was a significant divide between urban

(91%) and rural (59%) access. Moreover, as of 2020, open defecation remained the norm across the country at 44% of the total population; access to basic sanitation sat at 78% in urban areas and 21% in rural areas.³⁷⁷

Solomon Islands Water Authority (SIWA) – hereafter “Solomon Water” – is the state-owned enterprise mandated to develop and manage urban water supply and sewerage services. The Solomon Water board reports to MMERE and provides consolidated water and sanitation services in Honiara, Auki, Noro, and Tulagi.

Through its 30-Year Strategic Plan (2017–2047), Solomon Water adopted a target of achieving 95% coverage of properties within its service areas with access to the reticulated water supply network. It also adopted a target of 30% coverage of properties within Honiara with access to the reticulated wastewater network. As of the 2017 publication of the Strategic Plan, the Honiara water supply system supplied approximately 55% of the population in the city and surrounding areas of Guadalcanal. Supply is divided into nine zones with limited cross-connection between systems, and there is a large proportion of small diameter reticulation pipes. These elements contribute to frequent water outages and poor supply pressure across much of the network. Moreover, most water supply sources only have chlorination facilities for basic treatment, and individual chlorination facilities are sometimes offline for lengthy periods due to maintenance issues; water quality is frequently compromised due to these failures.

Some 50% of water produced is not billed due to a combination of leaks, illegal connections,

and meter inaccuracy. This high volume of Non-Revenue Water (NRW) increases operation costs and is the cause of a major amount of lost income.³⁷⁸ Solomon Water systems in Auki, Noro, and Tulagi suffer similar issues to Honiara, including high NRW, limited redundancy, intermittent supply, and areas of low pressure.

Sewerage is limited to the main urban area of Honiara around the National Referral Hospital. The majority of urban and industrial areas within Solomon Water’s supply catchments are not sewered, and this lack increases risks to water quality and public health. The wastewater system provides reticulated sewerage to some commercial and industrial properties in Honiara, as well as a limited number of adjacent residential properties. Greater Honiara’s sewer network is about 36 km (22 miles) long, with 15 discrete gravity collection systems. Thirteen of these discharge to the ocean while two discharge to the Mataniko River.³⁷⁹ There are no wastewater systems in any of the provincial centers. The wastewater system does not undergo any form of treatment, with raw sewage discharging directly to the ocean and the rivers. Additionally, operational issues and limited backup power means that sewage regularly overflows to customer properties at multiple locations across the catchment. The widespread use of septic systems in urban areas is a significant issue, due to poor construction, lack of maintenance, and lack of resources to enforce construction and operating standards. This may result in contamination of rivers, coastal waters, and groundwater near urban centers, with severe health and environmental implications.³⁸⁰

HEALTH

Health risks confronted by Solomon Islanders include vector-borne diseases, respiratory diseases, waterborne and foodborne diseases, malnutrition, and non-communicable diseases (NCD). In fact, the country can still be characterized as in the midst of an “epidemiological transition,” wherein it is burdened by both communicable diseases and NCDs without the capacity to fully combat either.

In the past decade, the causes of death and disability have shifted somewhat away from communicable diseases and neonatal disorders and toward chronic, lifestyle-linked conditions and accidents.³⁸¹ Causes of death in the country are strongly skewed toward NCDs and accidents although there is still a struggle with some respiratory and gastro-intestinal infections. Figure 12 shows the top 10 causes of death in 2009 and 2019 as well as the change in death rates related to each condition per 100,000 people during that ten-year period.³⁸² Life expectancy for Solomon Islanders born in 2018 is 75 years for women and 71 years for men, well above life expectancies for other countries in the region.³⁸³ Meanwhile, between 1990 and 2018,

the fertility rate fell by nearly two children per woman – from 5.9 to 4.2 – and the mortality rate for children under five years of age halved,³⁸⁴ meaning that although fewer children are being born, more children are surviving. The country still struggles with a high maternal mortality rate – 122 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births – despite a 20% improvement over numbers in the year 2000, when the rate was 150 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births.³⁸⁵ With good rates of births attended by a skilled birth attendant (91%), a key contributing factor to maternal deaths is the unavailability of medicines and equipment to address complicated delivery cases.³⁸⁶

Most of the country’s health facilities are vulnerable to hazards, and access can be difficult or impossible due to storms, flooding, and landslides. Additional climate-related impacts on the health sector will emerge as, by 2100, Solomon Islands will confront a drastic rise (to 75-100% from an average of 15%) in the number of “hot” days – i.e., when maximum temperature exceeds the 90th percentile threshold for that time of the year.³⁸⁷ This level of heat has

What causes the most deaths?

- Communicable, maternal, neonatal, and nutritional diseases
- Non-communicable diseases
- Injuries

Cause	2009 rank	2019 rank	Change in deaths per 100k, 2009–2019
Ischemic heart disease	1	1	↑ +17.0
Stroke	2	2	↑ +7.2
Lower respiratory infect	3	3	↓ -19.2
Diabetes	6	4	↑ +12.3
Diarrheal diseases	5	5	↓ -17.4
COPD	7	6	↓ -0.2
Road injuries	9	7	↓ -1.1
Breast cancer	23	8	↑ +11.6
Self-harm	10	9	↓ -0.4
Cirrhosis liver	12	10	↑ +0.3

Figure 12: Top Ten Causes of Deaths per 100,000 People (2009 and 2019) and Rate Change

implications for health as it leads to heat stress, reduces human and agricultural productivity, and allows disease vectors to spread to new areas that were previously inhospitable. Nonetheless, some assessments see the heating in Solomon Islands rising to the point that the country is too warm to be hospitable to some vectors, such as the mosquito that carries dengue.³⁸⁸ The additional climate change-influenced hazard of sea level rise poses more direct and indirect threats to Solomon Islanders who will confront up to 1 m (3 feet) of sea level rise by 2090,³⁸⁹ a level that will contaminate freshwater sources, force communities into displacement, and put mental health under strain as people struggle to adapt to changing lives and livelihoods.

Health Care System Structure

The Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS) provides oversight and regulation of the health sector by enforcing standards and guidelines, and it develops partnerships with

international agencies and donors to improve various initiatives, such as control programs for vector-borne diseases, sexually-transmitted infections (STI), and tuberculosis (TB).³⁹⁰ The Provincial Health Offices of MHMS are headed by provincial directors and are responsible for delivering primary health care services and public health outreach programs. The private sector and various international and national NGOs do play a small role in the health sector. There are faith-based hospitals that receive both church and some government funding. Figure 13 shows the health system's place in the public institutional structure and relationships among health system players.³⁹¹

A hierarchy of MHMS facilities from the National Referral Hospital (NRH) to nurse aide posts deliver primary and secondary care services. These facilities are:

- Hospital - 9
- Area Health Center - 37
- Rural Health Clinic - 98
- Nurse Aid Post - 159³⁹²

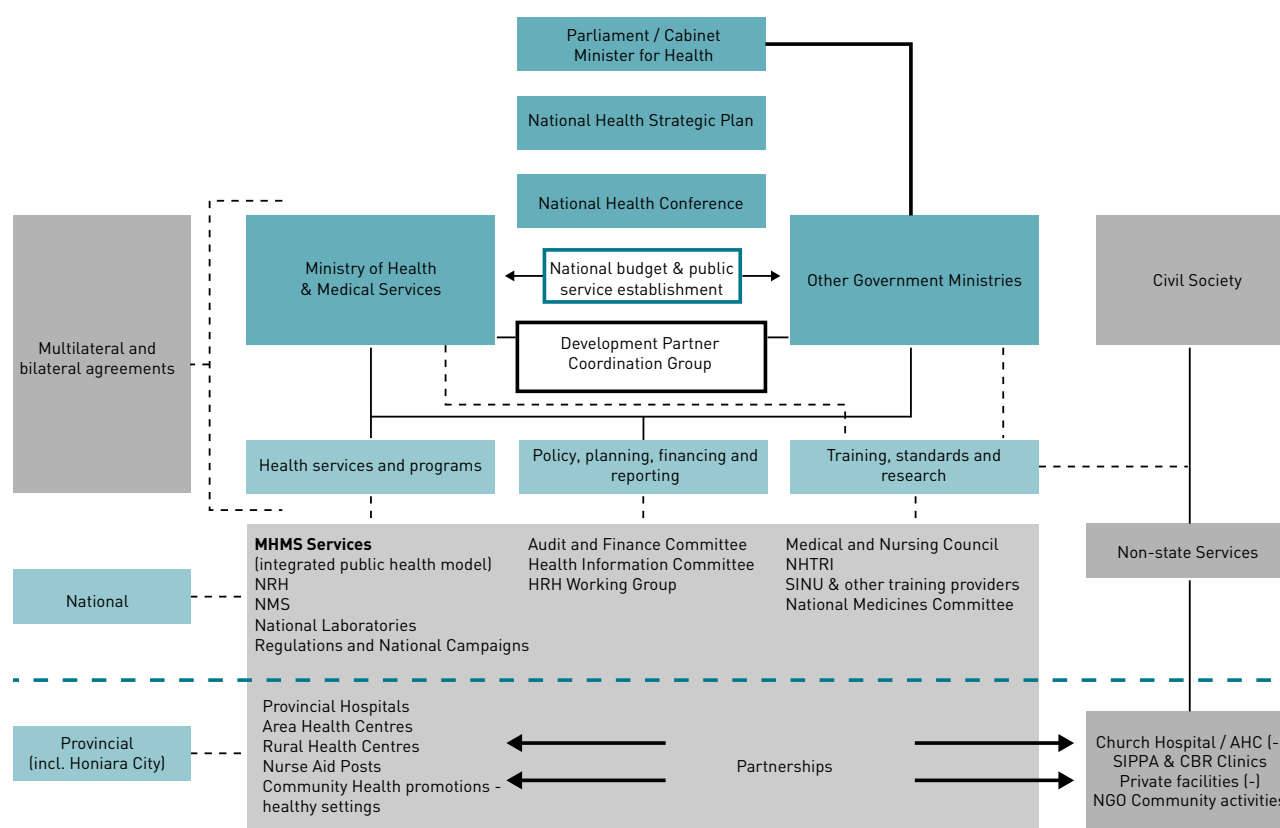


Figure 13: Overview of the Health System

The NRH offers specialist hospital care, surgical facilities, and inpatient services, and it operates as the Provincial Hospital for Guadalcanal Province. NRH has 300-400 beds. Other provincial hospitals provide the highest standard of care available outside Honiara and serve as the Provincial Health Offices. These hospitals generally lack infrastructure and staff for most surgical and specialist services; they can have between 25 and 150 beds. Kilu'ufi Hospital, based in Malaita, is the busiest hospital outside Honiara and consistently reports short resources. Area Health Centers offer both inpatient and outpatient care; however, inpatient care is limited by bed and service constraints. Area Health Centers offer specialized birthing facilities as well as space for administration and staff housing. They are usually staffed by at least two registered nurses, one of whom may be a trained midwife, and one or two nurse aides. Rural health clinics generally play a supervisory role to multiple nurse aid posts within the same area. Multiple rural health clinics feed area health centers. They are usually staffed by a registered nurse and a nurse aide. Nurse aid posts are the basic level for all health services as they are usually located in remote areas and staffed by local nurses who have strong links with the local community. Trained nurse aides working at nurse aid posts provide basic first aid care including the treatment of mild ailments or injuries, immunization services, and stabilization of patients for transport. Some nurse aides can deliver babies.³⁹³

Maintaining facilities throughout the country, but especially on smaller, remote islands, is a significant expense. Rural facilities are frequently damaged by storms and other weather or seismic events, and there are frequent disruptions to water, sanitation, and electricity. Some estimates find that 80% of hospitals use rainwater catchment tanks to maintain water supply.

Outside the MHMS system but still in existence and important for communities are kastom medicine and kastom doctors. Kastom medicine includes a range of practices and botanical remedies either prepared at home

or by specialists; these remedies are used to treat disease, injuries, and mental afflictions of both physical and spiritual or social origin, and to confer protection from sorcery and spirits. It is used to treat a variety of conditions, like diarrhea, malaria, ulcers, constipation, diabetes, cancer, STIs, high blood pressure, asthma, yellow fever, pneumonia, and hepatitis. There are kastom abortifacients, postnatal and antenatal treatments, and contraceptive methods. Kastom doctors are healers with specialized knowledge and who use a combination of plant-based medicines and physical manipulations of the body, sometimes in a ritual context. In some cases, they are perceived as possessing healing powers derived from either Christian or traditional spiritual sources. Kastom healing traditions do vary widely across different regions of the country, and some villages may report that they no longer have a kastom doctor.³⁹⁴

Health Strategies and Surveillance

MHMS is responsible for all strategic and operational planning. The National Health Strategic Plan (NHSP) is the highest-level document for guiding the whole health sector. The most recent NHSP was delivered in November 2022 and covers the period 2022-2031. It is themed "A Healthy Future for All Solomon Islanders," and it targets universal health access to preventative, curative, and rehabilitative services.³⁹⁵ The latest NHSP followed the 2016-2020 iteration, which also identified six priority interventions – immunization; family planning; water, sanitation, and hygiene; supervised hospital or facility-based deliveries and neonatal care; malaria control; and TB control. The plan identified four underserved provinces (Malaita, Makira-Ulawa, Choiseul, and Central Islands) and two priority population groups – i.e., people living with disabilities and women exposed to violence and abuse. The WHO Country Cooperation Strategy for 2018-2022 was aligned with Solomon Islands' 2016-2020 priorities. The WHO focus areas included:

1. To improve service coverage
 - 1.1. Support coordination of the reproductive, maternal, neonatal, child, and adolescent health (RMNCAH) program and scale best practice interventions
 - Support harmonization of RMNCAH activities within UN agencies, NGOs, and donors to avoid duplication and ensure timely implementation
 - Support greater use of evidence-based planning to prioritize and enhance better immunization, family planning, health facility-based deliveries, and newborn care
 - 1.2. Strengthen malaria control to reduce transmission in order to accelerate elimination
 - Provide technical support to refine national malaria guidelines and strategies guided by the NHSP and action frameworks in the Western Pacific Region
 - Help the MHMS to strengthen health systems, especially health service delivery and surveillance, in order to concentrate on reducing and eliminating malaria by maintaining universal case management and vector control, and strengthening case and entomological surveillance
 - 1.3. Increase coverage of community-based TB control activities
 - Support the MHMS to provide TB care for people with limited access to health care, including those living in remote and urban areas who are marginalized without access to health information and high-risk populations including people living with HIV
 - Assess regularly the financial hardship sustained by TB patients and their households with a view to advocating universal health coverage and social protection
 - Support the use of new rapid diagnostic tests and strengthen the TB laboratory network for optimal diagnosis and follow-up of TB patients
 - 1.4. Scale up implementation of Package of Essential Non-communicable (PEN) disease interventions
 - Support implementation of PEN to strengthen coordination in reviewing and monitoring the national multisectoral NCD plan, and monitoring enforcement of the tobacco and sugary substance control legislation, as well as alcohol policy
 - Support regular reviews of PEN scale-up, improved integrated service delivery, capacity-building, and monitoring of NCD indicators
2. To improve service quality
 - 2.1. Build capacity, deploy and retain health workers
 - Support the review and strengthening of health workforce policy in line with the ongoing reform, including supporting fellowships, on-the-job training, strengthening human resource information management, and a human resources deployment and retention plan, including projections
 - 2.2. Strengthen implementation of the monitoring and evaluation framework of the NHSP by supporting its use to conduct periodic evaluation reviews and promote evidence-based decision-making
 - 2.3. Strengthen health information systems and disease surveillance
 - Support strengthening of the health information system to include an integrated hospital information system and improve civil registration and vital statistics
 - Support strengthening disease surveillance and expanding its coverage for NCD surveillance through the STEPS survey

- 2.4. Strengthen the National Public Health Laboratory by providing it with technical support to improve and accredit it
3. To build strong partnerships
 - 3.1. Convene and coordinate health development partners
 - Continue to play the role of convener and coordinator of development partners together with the MHMS
 - Support coordination between UN programs working on RMNCAH
 - Support convening and coordinating between central and provincial health authorities on sectoral planning and review processes
4. To set foundations for the future
 - 4.1. Strengthen preparedness and response towards disasters and outbreaks
 - Support cluster coordination, preparedness, and response by developing and refining standard operating procedures for public health and clinical services for emergency response management in outbreaks and disasters
 - Support vulnerability risk assessment for infectious hazards (all hazards) and disaster risk management, and provide support to strengthen country capacity for event-based and syndromic surveillance for routine and post-disaster monitoring
 - Support the MHMS as a leader to strengthen health cluster coordination in all graded and protracted health emergencies³⁹⁶

The MHMS National Surveillance Unit conducts surveillance for five priority syndromes: acute fever and rash, diarrhea, influenza-like illness, prolonged fever, and dengue-like illness. There are eight sentinel surveillance sites in five provinces, and all health workers are expected to report anything unusual to the Surveillance Unit. At the provincial level, coordinators collate

surveillance reports from health facilities and send them to Honiara monthly. Infection control nurses play a key role in disease notification and surveillance by collecting and following-up on lab specimens; ensuring sites have sufficient resources to identify, contain, and prevent disease; identifying potential disease threats by monitoring trends; identifying and investigating outbreaks; mitigating the impact of infectious diseases by coordinating with key agencies and divisions to disseminate health promotion messages and other disease prevention resources; providing feedback and information to clinicians on disease management; and improving communication and coordination between key health personnel and divisions within both the public health and hospital sectors.³⁹⁷ MHMS has established a mechanism, the MHMS Health Emergency Operations Centre (MHEOC), to coordinate outbreak response efforts.³⁹⁸

Various cooperative and inter-agency programs are critical to NHSP fulfillment. Vector control for malaria, dengue, lymphatic filariasis, chikungunya, and other diseases is the responsibility of the Vector Borne Disease program in close cooperation with MHMS Provincial Health Offices, Provincial Administrations, Honiara City Council, and MHMS' Environmental Health Division. Under the NHSP, public health campaigns are organized by the Health Improvement and Health Care Divisions of MHMS, and Provincial Directors and their Health Teams deliver the programs or implement them as part of one-week-per-month outreach tours to designated areas of each province.

Provincial health services offer regularly-scheduled health services and child welfare clinics where mothers can bring their children in for regular check-ups, vaccinations, family planning services, and general health education.³⁹⁹ Due to this service outreach, the country has maintained relatively high child immunization rates although, as of 2018, the country as a whole fell below the 95% coverage threshold to keep measles at bay.⁴⁰⁰ Under the Expanded Programme on Immunization, the

provincial child health coordinator oversees routine delivery of weekly immunization clinics at designated sites in the province. They are supported by a dedicated logistics chain that includes procurement, delivery, and maintenance of refrigerators and spare parts.⁴⁰¹

Communicable Diseases

Disease outbreaks are common in Solomon Islands with several epidemics in the years preceding the COVID-19 pandemic. The country recorded outbreaks of rubella (2012–2013), dengue (2013 and 2016), rotavirus (2014), measles (2014), Zika (2015), and meningococcal disease (2015), although most of these diseases are not endemic. Given the lack of access to clean water and sanitation systems, contaminated water sources are often used and increase the risk of water-borne diseases. In addition, a key concern is that climate change is expected to bring warmer and wetter conditions that will drive a surge in mosquito-borne diseases, such as malaria and dengue fever.

Chikungunya

The first case of chikungunya in Solomon Islands was mistaken for a case of dengue during the 2013 outbreak of that disease. Subsequent laboratory testing of samples collected during the 2013 and 2016 dengue outbreaks identified clear evidence of chikungunya circulating in the country albeit at rates significantly lower than dengue.⁴⁰² Chikungunya is spread by day-biting *Aedes aegypti* or *Aedes albopictus* mosquitoes. Most commonly, the symptoms clear after a few days.⁴⁰³ The most common symptom is an abrupt onset of fever, often accompanied by joint pain. Other symptoms include muscle pain, headache, nausea, fatigue, and rash. Severe joint pain usually lasts a few days but can persist for months or even years. Serious complications are uncommon, but atypical

severe cases can cause long-term symptoms and even death, especially in older people. There is no vaccine or antiviral drug treatment for chikungunya. Treatment is focused on relieving the symptoms.⁴⁰⁴

COVID-19

According to the WHO, Solomon Islands reported 21,611 confirmed cases of COVID-19 with 153 deaths between March 2020 and November 2022; no cases have been reported since November 2022. As of 4 July 2023, 612,700 doses of vaccine had been administered,⁴⁰⁵ and some sources estimated that approximately 52% of the population had received at least one dose of vaccine.⁴⁰⁶ Figure 14 shows a graph of confirmed COVID-19 cases per day in Solomon Islands.⁴⁰⁷

In January 2020, the Prime Minister ordered the establishment of a multi-agency Coronavirus Oversight Committee to assess the threat of the disease and coordinate the government and non-government responses. The Committee drew up a preparedness and response plan. Even before the first case was detected in the country, the government had set up quarantine and isolation centers, and on 20 March 2020, the government ordered schools in Honiara and Guadalcanal to close immediately and schools elsewhere in the country to plan to go on extended break when the school term ended later in March.

Daily new confirmed COVID-19 cases

7-day rolling average. Due to limited testing, the number of confirmed cases is lower than the true number of infections.



Figure 14: Daily Confirmed COVID-19 Cases, Solomon Islands (as of 4 August 2023)

Non-essential travel within the country was discouraged, many markets were closed, and cancellation of non-church social gatherings was advised.⁴⁰⁸ On 22 March, the country closed its borders to non-citizens and non-residents and required returning residents, air crew, and cargo ship workers to quarantine for 14 days upon arrival.⁴⁰⁹ On 25 March, a state of emergency came into effect.⁴¹⁰

In March and April 2020, the N-DOC for Camp Management took responsibility for establishment and management of all government quarantine facilities. Meanwhile, the NEOC and other N-DOC sectors were placed in Full-On Activation Mode. The NERT was activated to support the MHEOC, Honiara City Council EOC, Guadalcanal Province EOC, and Camp Management EOC. The MHEOC led multi-sector coordination within the government.⁴¹¹ For lower levels of administration, the Oversight Committee worked with Provincial Governments and their P-DOCs, which were activated in all provinces, to plan and dispatch essential cargo.⁴¹²

Through 2020 and 2021, the country recorded few infections. However, with only a 20% adult vaccination rate in December 2021, the Omicron strain of the virus arrived, and the country was hit by a wave of infections that erupted in January 2022.⁴¹³ The first case of community transmission was reported on 19 January 2022; 12 hours later the country had recorded more than 100 cases, and within two days, 50 nurses at the NRH had tested positive.⁴¹⁴ As the country's medical establishment struggled under the strain, the government declared the country's first lockdown from 19 January, initially for 60 hours, but it was swiftly extended to 30 January. The virus was assessed as having come to the country via the illegal entry of a vessel from Papua New Guinea to the remote island of Ontong Java. Although the outer island was locked down, COVID-19 quickly spread to Guadalcanal. After 30 January, a partial lockdown took effect with some restrictions, including a curfew in Honiara.⁴¹⁵ The wave of infections continued and overwhelmed the health system with NRH short

of beds and staff and the government advising asymptomatic or minimally symptomatic people to isolate themselves at home. At the same time, testing capacity was overwhelmed to the point that the government admitted it was almost certainly undercounting cases. The surge did drive more people to seek vaccinations,⁴¹⁶ and the surge abated in the summer and autumn of 2022. In mid-June 2023, the country reopened its borders fully to international travel and stopped requiring proof of vaccination or a negative test.⁴¹⁷

Dengue

Dengue virus is a tropical mosquito-borne flavivirus with four antigenically distinct serotypes (DENV 1, 2, 3, and 4). While most dengue infections are asymptomatic or cause a self-limiting febrile illness of mild to moderate severity, some 5% of infections lead to dengue hemorrhagic fever and dengue shock syndrome, both of which are serious and potentially fatal.⁴¹⁸ The *Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus* mosquitoes are the primary vectors. After the virus incubates in the mosquito for 4–10 days, an infected mosquito can transmit the virus for the rest of its life. The *Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus* live in urban habitats and breed mostly in containers, tires, and other water-filled spaces. They bite during the day, with peak times early in the morning and during the evening before dusk. Infected humans are the main source of the virus for uninfected mosquitoes. Patients who are infected with dengue virus can transmit the infection via mosquito bites for 4–12 days after the first symptoms appear. Symptoms include flu-like illness, severe headache, pain behind the eyes, muscle and joint pains, nausea, vomiting, swollen glands, or rash. Symptoms usually last for 2–7 days and generally appear following an incubation period of 4–10 days after the bite from an infected mosquito. Severe dengue can include respiratory distress, severe bleeding, or organ impairment. There is no specific medication for treatment for a dengue infection, and there is no vaccine available for protection. Most treatments focus on relieving

symptoms and drinking plenty of fluids.⁴¹⁹

Major outbreaks have occurred in Solomon Islands (DENV-3 in 2013 and DENV-2 in 2016). In early August 2016, a sentinel surveillance site in eastern Honiara reported increased numbers of patient presentations with symptoms meeting the dengue-like illness case definition. Subsequently, a large and protracted outbreak of DENV-2 was identified and a public health emergency declared for the city of Honiara and Guadalcanal Province. From August 2016 through April 2017, 12,329 cases met the suspected case definition, 3,486 samples were tested, and 43.3% of those samples tested positive. Throughout the period of the emergency, 877 people were hospitalized and 16 people died due to their infections. Confirmed cases were identified in nine administrative jurisdictions. Infection rates were far higher in urban Honiara, where 75.8% of cases were recorded. A dengue triage facility - the “Dengue Desk” - stood up at the NRH to which community and rural health facilities referred suspected dengue cases. The MHMS increased health service staffing and reallocated ward space for the surge, sourced additional clinical and diagnostic supplies, revised clinical case management protocols, and provided clinical staff with refresher training. Additional health promotion campaigns were delivered through radio, newspapers, and door-to-door distribution of risk messages in areas of Honiara, where vector control activities also used mosquito spraying and manual removal of habitats during community clean-ups. Vector control efforts in areas outside Honiara were limited to ad hoc community clean-ups.⁴²⁰

Hepatitis

Two strains of hepatitis – B and C – are prevalent in Solomon Islands. As of 2022, MHMS reported that some 60,000 Solomon Islanders were living with Hepatitis B, and the virus was considered the fourth most significant cause of cancer in the country.⁴²¹ The rate of prevalence among adults has been on a consistent decline, and the country has reached 87% coverage of

the 3-dose vaccine. There are significantly fewer people living with Hepatitis C, but it remains a health concern. As of 2019, there were 2,500 Solomon Islanders living with chronic Hepatitis C, and there was a 0.4% adult prevalence rate; both of these values have been plateaued for nearly two decades.⁴²²

Hepatitis viruses most commonly cause inflammation of the liver. The Hepatitis B virus is transmitted through exposure to infected blood, semen, and other body fluids. It can also be transmitted from infected mothers to infants at the time of birth or from family members to infants in early childhood, or through blood transfusions, contaminated injections during medical procedures, and through injection drug use. Hepatitis C virus is mostly transmitted through exposure to infected blood, most often through blood transfusions, contaminated injections during medical procedures, and through injection drug use. Sexual transmission is also possible, but it is much less common.⁴²³ Many people with hepatitis do not have symptoms and do not know they are infected. If symptoms occur with an acute infection, they can appear anytime from two weeks to six months after exposure. Symptoms of acute hepatitis can include fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, dark urine, light-colored stools, joint pain, and jaundice. Symptoms of chronic viral hepatitis can take decades to develop, and both Hepatitis B and C can evolve to cause liver cancer.⁴²⁴

Malaria

Malaria is a parasitic disease spread through the bite of infected mosquitoes. There are four parasite species that are involved in human-to-human transmission of malaria: *Plasmodium falciparum*, *P. vivax*, *P. malariae*, and *P. ovale*. *P. falciparum* and *P. vivax* are the most common in Solomon Islands. Malaria parasites are transmitted through the bite of infected female *Anopheles* mosquitoes, which bite mainly between dusk and dawn. In the human body, the *Plasmodium* parasite multiplies in the liver and then infects red blood cells. People with

malaria often experience fever, chills, and flu-like symptoms. Left untreated, they may develop severe complications and die. Transmission does depend on climatic conditions, such as rainfall patterns, temperature, and humidity that impact mosquito breeding patterns. In many places, transmission is seasonal, with the peak during and just after the rainy season.

Symptoms can appear within seven days after infection, but the incubation period can extend to as long as 8-10 months or longer among people who have been taking medicine to prevent infection or who have some immunity due to previous infections. Common symptoms are a slowly rising fever that escalates to a rapid temperature rise and fall, headache, nausea, chills and shivering, excessive sweating, diarrhea, dry cough, muscle or back pain, and enlarged spleen. Symptoms may appear in cycles or episodes of 48 hours (*P. vivax* or *P. ovale*) or 72 hours (*P. malariae*). *P. falciparum* does not usually cause regular, cyclic fevers. In rare cases, malaria can lead to impaired function of the brain, convulsions, loss of consciousness, and death. Persons who develop any Malaria symptoms during or after traveling to an endemic area, including most areas of Solomon Islands, should consult a physician.⁴²⁵ Travelers can add a layer of protection via chemoprophylaxis, which suppresses the blood stage of malaria infections, thereby preventing malaria disease.

Solomon Islands targets elimination of malaria by 2035 via vector-control actions and health system strengthening.⁴²⁶ However, WHO disease surveillance shows that the country saw malaria cases rise by 40% between 2015 and 2021.⁴²⁷ Since mosquitoes breed in standing water, a significant portion of vector-control programs focus on disrupting breeding by public education campaigns to encourage emptying water from containers around the house combined with campaigns regarding bite prevention that encourage sleeping under insecticide-treated nets. The Honiara City Council also sprays houses to protect against mosquitoes.⁴²⁸ In 2015, the national meteorological service also rolled out a Malaria Early Warning System on Guadalcanal. It links information from MHMS' monthly surveillance data and integrates it with meteorological service data on rainfall. Once integrated, the system can deliver warnings to communities of high concentrations of infections.⁴²⁹ In a 2018 survey, MHMS found that the national annual malaria mortality rate stood at 3.0 deaths per 100,000 people, well above the targets set for 2015, and showed minimal improvement over 2011 rates. The provincial rates varied widely from 0.0 per 100,000 in Choiseul, Guadalcanal, and Rennell-Bellona (Renbel), to 11.4 per 100,000 in Temotu. Figure 15 shows a graph of malaria mortality rates by province for the period 2016-2018.⁴³⁰

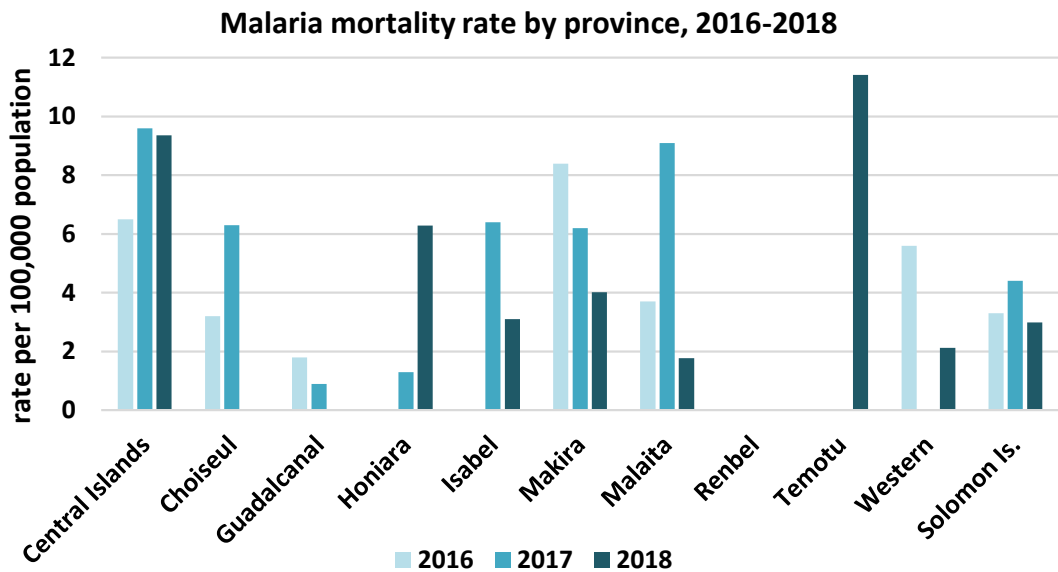


Figure 15: Malaria Mortality Rate, by Province (2016-2018)

Tuberculosis

Solomon Islands has among world's highest incidence rates of TB as it records 250-450 cases (new or relapse) every year.⁴³¹ Treatment success rates are generally higher than 90% with some variation across provinces; nonetheless, all provinces report treatment success rates higher than 80%.⁴³² MHMS and the National TB Programme, through sustained prevention and control efforts, have made progress as the burden of morbidity and mortality has been decreasing since 1990; they have fallen by 79% and 76%, respectively, in comparison with 1990 figures.⁴³³

TB is caused by *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. The bacteria usually attack the lungs, but TB bacteria can attack any part of the body such as the kidney, spine, and brain. Not everyone infected with TB bacteria becomes sick. As a result, two TB-related conditions exist: latent and TB disease. If not treated properly, TB disease can be fatal. TB bacteria spread through the air from one person to another. When a person with TB disease of the lungs or throat coughs, speaks, or sings, TB bacteria can get into the air. People nearby may breathe in these bacteria and become infected. When a person breathes in TB bacteria, the bacteria can settle in the lungs and begin to grow. From there, they can move through the blood to other parts of the body. TB in other parts of the body, such as the kidney or spine, is usually not infectious. Symptoms of TB disease depend on where in the body the TB bacteria are growing. TB disease in the lungs may cause symptoms such as a bad cough that lasts three weeks or longer, pain in the chest, and coughing up blood or sputum (phlegm from deep inside the lungs). Other symptoms may include weakness or fatigue, weight loss, lack of appetite, chills, fever, and sweating at night. People who have latent TB infection do not feel sick, do not have any symptoms, and cannot spread TB to others.⁴³⁴

Non-Communicable Diseases

Approximately 70% of deaths in Solomon

Islands are due to NCDs.⁴³⁵ Sedentary lifestyles with changing dietary intake have contributed to a steady increase in obesity, diabetes, hypertension, and other associated complications. Key elements fueling risk of developing an NCD are that tobacco and alcohol use has been increasing even as many people lack access to water and sanitation.⁴³⁶ In 2022, MHMS reported that six Solomon Islanders die every day due to NCDs. To address this challenge, MHMS and other government ministries are implementing the Multi-Sectorial National NCD Strategic Plan 2019-2023 as well as the NHSP 2022-2031.⁴³⁷ One element of these strategies is the SOLPEN (Solomon Islands Package of Essential Noncommunicable Disease) program, jointly developed by MHMS and WHO; it enables government health facilities to identify people who have NCDs and divert them to specialized clinics where they receive comprehensive assessments and care plans, overseen by 12 NCD Coordinators nationally. Based on the SOLPEN program, NCD Coordinators are in direct contact with NRH, which then allows a Coordinator to prescribe medications for diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease.⁴³⁸

Breast and cervical cancers are the first and second most identified cancers in Solomon Islands, and together they are the second leading cause of death for women within the country. In 2015, the Solomon Islands Government, with the support of Family Planning Australia, implemented a pilot screening program, which resulted in over 4,000 women being screened. However, there is still a lack of access in terms of screening devices in the capital, and in provincial centers, lack of awareness for rural women and timely treatment for cancer patients continue to be major issues for women.⁴³⁹

The Integrated Mental Health Service is at NRH, and there are few providers at the provincial and local levels. Only four of NRH's beds are set aside for mental health, although NRH's Acute Care Ward does provide outpatient clinics for assessment, treatment, and review of clients, basic counseling, and referral to the

National Psychiatric Unit, which has 20 beds and is located at Kilu'ufi Provincial Hospital, Malaita Province. Other provincial hospitals do not have specialized inpatient mental health departments. Instead, provincial services are delivered by a team of mental health nurses, who also conduct public education campaigns around mental health, give mental health talks to nurses and doctors, and may deliver clinical care and referrals. Most facilities are poorly equipped to provide support to people with mental illness, despite evidence of significant need, such as high rates of self-harm.⁴⁴⁰

Training for Health Professionals

SINU is the dominant health professional training institution in the country; it provides training for nurses, midwives, and some community health workers. All other health workers are trained offshore or on-the-job. More than half of the entire health workforce is female; more than three-quarters are 30 years of age or older, and nearly all are local Solomon Islanders with expatriates clustering in specialist or administrative fields.⁴⁴¹

Solomon Islands does not maintain a medical school. Rather, Solomon Islanders who plan to study medicine attend either the Fiji National University School of Medicine and Health Sciences or the University of Papua New Guinea for training as doctors, pharmacists, laboratory technicians, and other allied health workers. Additional training has been arranged in China, Cuba, and Taiwan,⁴⁴² although the last students in Taiwan moved to Chinese medical schools in 2019 when Solomon Islands shifted recognition

to Beijing.⁴⁴³ MHMS began sending students to Cuba in 2007, and, between 2012 and 2019, the arrangement helped boost the number of doctors in Solomon Islands to 170 from 79.⁴⁴⁴ However, the country struggles to get new medical graduates to return to the country, and many doctors move away to Fiji, Australia, New Zealand, or further afield in search of better salaries and working conditions.

The nursing workforce is the backbone of the health care system, and nurses are largely considered well-trained and knowledgeable. More than one-half of the health workforce are nurses or nurse aides, and two-thirds of these nurses/nurse aides are based in rural areas. As of 2018, there were 2.2 nurses per 1,000 people, although Honiara reports 6.3 nurses per 1,000 people largely due to the presence of the NRH. Nonetheless, 16 Rural Health Clinics were not staffed by a registered nurse, and Malaita was the worst-affected province with six Rural Health Clinics lacking a registered nurse. There are three nursing schools in Solomon Islands – the School of Nursing at SINU, the Helena Goldie Hospital School of Nursing, and the Atoifi Adventist Hospital School of Nursing. Together, they graduate 10-20 new nurses annually, and these nurses are joined by occasional graduates of nursing training in Fiji.⁴⁴⁵ SINU is the largest nursing school and offers two courses – a four-year Bachelor of Nursing and a three-year Diploma in Nursing (pre-service). The bachelor's program has three streams – acute nursing practice, primary health, and midwifery.

SINU offers training courses in community-level health services with either a two-year Diploma of Community-Based Rehabilitation or a two-year Diploma of Public Health.⁴⁴⁶

WOMEN, PEACE, AND SECURITY

The Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda encompasses efforts to increase women's meaningful participation in the promotion of peace and security through conflict prevention and resolution, peace negotiation, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, humanitarian response, relief aid, and economic recovery and development. The WPS agenda gained global visibility with United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, which was adopted in October 2000 and affirmed the important role women play in many aspects of promoting and maintaining peace and security. The WPS agenda has since expanded with the adoption of additional related UNSCRs: 1820 (2009); 1888 (2009); 1889 (2010); 1960 (2011); 2106 (2013); 2122 (2013); 2242 (2015), 2467 (2019), and 2493 (2019). These resolutions together address various issues of gender and security, including the need to stop gender-based violence and to promote women's roles in conflict resolution, recovery, and peacebuilding. The WPS agenda has also broadened to include applying a gendered perspective to humanitarian assistance, disaster management, DRR, and climate security for more equitable participation to address humanitarian needs and benefit the entirety of a society over the longer term.

The country has ratified CEDAW, which forms the cornerstone of the WPS agenda and the legal framework for upholding women's rights in conflict, post-conflict, and peacebuilding contexts. The Solomon Islands National Action Plan (NAP) for WPS 2017-2021 followed the WPS framework structure by using the four pillars of participation, protection, prevention, and recovery and reconciliation.⁴⁴⁷ In addition, the National Security Strategy 2020 emphasized participation of women in peace and security decision making processes at the local, national, and international level.⁴⁴⁸ Of note, the NAP writing process allowed the country's government to examine its recent

conflict experiences from a gendered perspective. During "The Tensions" (1998-2003), there was documentation of more than 5,700 human rights violations, including killing, torture, kidnapping, detention, and diverse forms of sexual violence. All parties to "The Tensions" committed sexual violence, including rape and gang rape, forced nakedness, and forced witness of rape or other forms of sexual violence. Although both women and men experienced sexual violence, the majority of victims were women.

The NAP on WPS narrative regarding "The Tensions" highlighted that women throughout the country experienced increased levels of violence, lack of access to basic services, forced displacement, and a lack of access to justice. Property violations and the destruction of productive resources had a grave impact on women's livelihoods. Spending on health dropped, and women had limited access to health services. The consequences of sexual violence and rape, including pregnancy, birth and bearing children, contraction of STIs, shame, stigmatization, and psychological trauma, had an enduring impact as stigma, shame, and cultural and religious taboos associated with being a victim of sexual violence meant that women were generally reluctant to disclose sexual violations to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which worked from 2010 through 2012.

Traditional practices and forms of reconciliation and compensation remain current in Solomon Islands, and during "The Tensions," women drew on both kastom and Christian doctrine in performing peacemaking roles, which included invoking traditional restrictions (tambu) to mediate and exert pressure on militants to disarm. In Honiara, women also organized to provide social, spiritual, and material support to each other and to combatants. Groups such as Women for Peace, Westside Women for Peace, and Vois

blong Meri provided food, prayed, held peace meetings, shared information, and traded produce and goods, including with women from opposing sides of the conflict, as ways of reconciling and building peace. While some women's groups and women leaders were present at formal reconciliation ceremonies, social and cultural gender stereotypes excluded women from taking active, public roles; rather, their involvement was generally as observers or supporters. Primary actors in both formal and community-based reconciliation events were male politicians, militants, chiefs, and religious leaders. In fact, women were explicitly excluded from participating in some situations, such as in the consultations leading to the year 2000's Townsville Peace Agreement, which included a provision that, on condition of the surrender of weapons, all parties to the conflict would be granted amnesty or immunity in respect of criminal and civil acts done in connection or association with the armed conflict. By not explicitly exempting sexual and gender-based violence from the amnesty provisions, it contributed to perpetuating a culture of impunity.

Even under RAMSI, which began operations in mid-2003 with over 2,000 police, soldiers, and civilian staff from 15 Pacific countries, women's participation and gender considerations were not prioritized. Not until 2009, after an Australian government review, did RAMSI establish a Partnership Framework that set out objectives and milestones, which included building toward equality between men and women. Activities to combat violence against women and increase women's participation in government were included in the work plan, and a gender advisor was appointed to work across police and civilian capacity-building programs. Not until the formation of the TRC in 2010 were women officially involved in the post-conflict phase. The five TRC Commissioners included two women, one of them a Solomon Islander. The TRC did seek to integrate gender perspectives and women's participation and did engage and train 14 female statement takers (out of 30) who gathered 2,362 statements on human rights

violations, 37% from women and 63% from men. In conducting field research for the women's chapter of the TRC Report, the TRC undertook a further 100 interviews and 11 focus groups with women leaders in villages and towns. However, even the TRC process had successes and failings as there was reluctance by both women and men to participate in the statement-taking process, in part due to insufficient communications and awareness with communities to help them understand the process. For women victims, there were also substantial practical obstacles – time, transport, and household and productive responsibilities – which were compounded by fears of reprisals, shame, or demands for compensation. The TRC conducted a total of 17 official hearings that involved 344 people (78% men and 22% women). The TRC did not reach its gender balance targets in either statements or hearings. Moreover, while some victims were compensated, a greater number were not, and reparations disproportionately benefitted politicians, militants, police officers, businesspeople, and those with connections to the government. Based on the lists compiled by the TRC and held by the Ministry of National Unity, Reconciliation, and Peace, women comprised only about 9% of the claimants who received payments.

Based on this background, the NAP on WPS 2017-2021 laid out targets for formalizing government structures and mechanisms to include gender issues and women's/girls' security in policies and practices, to monitor and evaluate progress toward gender inclusion, to lay out recruiting and employment targets for women in policing, and to ensure resource allocation for women's engagement in community-based conflict prevention. The NAP included a goal of reforming political party activity to require inclusion of women, but there was also recognition that traditional and religious leaders – usually men – also needed to be sensitized to these inclusion actions to ensure community buy-in.⁴⁴⁹ However, by 2023, in community submissions regarding the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women "List of issues and questions prior to

the submission of the combined fourth and fifth periodic reports by the Solomon Islands on CEDAW,” shortcomings were identified in inclusion of women in writing and implementing laws, strategies, and plans, despite some signs of increased female participation within Honiara.

Ahead of the CEDAW review, the Disabled Peoples Association of Solomon Islands (DPASI) explicitly criticized implementation of SAFENET, the national referral network and hotline for gender-based violence, for its lack of accessibility for women and girls living with disabilities, and it pointed out that services for women and girls – especially those living with disabilities – were all but unavailable in rural and remote areas where a preponderance of the country’s people living with disabilities reside. While there is now a specialized police unit to work on gender-based violence, access has proven uneven as there are often financial obstacles to accessing services and seeing claims through to prosecution. Moreover, DPASI underscores remaining reluctance among women to report violence – sexual or otherwise – because of two key issues: 1) doubt that anything will be done; and 2) continued reliance (financial, disability-specific, or other) on the perpetrator of the violence – usually an intimate partner. Finally, DPASI points out that girls in general – and especially girls living with disabilities – lack equitable access to education both because they are regarded as important household workers and because schools lack hygiene facilities that, as they get older, girls require, particularly during menstruation.⁴⁵⁰

Potentially the most important issue that hobbles efforts to improve the lives of women in Solomon Islands is that political participation remains low, all but ensuring that women’s voices are not heard in consultations to develop laws, strategies, and policies. The SINCW, an NGO, underscored in 2023 that only six women had ever won seats in the national Parliament between 1978 and the elections in 2019, when two women won seats (of 26 who contested for seats) and were joined a year later by two more women who won seats in by-elections. Of the 50 seats in Parliament, women hold four, the highest number ever; a 2009 proposed

constitutional amendment to require that 10 seats be reserved for women has never passed.⁴⁵¹ Among other firsts, the appointment of the first female Chief Magistrate occurred in 2017, followed by the appointment of the first female Solomon Islander judge in the High Court in 2019.⁴⁵² SINCW reports that, during campaigns, female candidates and their staffs face various social and economic obstacles related to harassment, unfair pricing for services, and work by traditional vote mobilizers that sway voters toward male candidates. Although the Political Parties Act (2014) lays out a 10% quota for females in parties’ slates of candidates, this quota is voluntary, and in 2019 elections, only four of 13 parties contesting elections put forward 10% or more female candidates.⁴⁵³ At the provincial level, only 15 women have ever been elected to Provincial Assemblies, and as of 2023, five of 39 provincial assembly members nationally were women, none of whom sat on the Honiara City Council.⁴⁵⁴

Various global indices on WPS or gender equality have struggled to include accurate and complete information on Solomon Islands due to shortfalls in data. UN Women reported that, as of 2020, less than 30% of indicators to monitor progress toward Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) with a gender component were available. Gaps in data clustered around unpaid or domestic work, gender pay gaps, and information and communications skills.⁴⁵⁵ SINCW did report in 2023 that the government had launched an online database to support the national Gender Equality and Women’s Development (GEWD) Policy. The gender management information system is intended to support the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation requirements and general dissemination of information on the GEWD policy. The effort to collect and update information will also, however, require maintenance and competency that have, so far, been lacking among ministries responsible for inputting updated sex-disaggregated data and gender analysis. The database is only accessible by the MWYCFA with strict requirements for outsiders seeking access.⁴⁵⁶

One index that finds sufficient data for its indicators is the World Bank's Women, Business, and the Law index that measures an economy's performance around the life of a working woman. It uses eight indicators that are informed by 35 questions, and it averages the indicator scores to calculate a country's score to 100, a perfect score. For Solomon Islands, the index measures conditions in Honiara, rather than the whole country. In the 2023 index, the country's overall score is 56.9 (or that percentage of the gender gap closed throughout the working life of a woman). Certain areas measured note that adult women Solomon Islanders do enjoy legal equality in terms of wealth assets, pensions, marriage, and entrepreneurship. However, there remain discriminatory laws that prohibit women working in certain industries or on certain schedules, laws do not prohibit firing of pregnant workers, and there are no laws against or legal remedies for sexual harassment in the workplace.⁴⁵⁷

Despite the potential for abuse and lack of protections, some 84% of Solomon Islander women participate in the labor force; the country stands highest in the region in this statistic. This rate has also been consistent for more than two decades and is only 4% lower than Solomon Islander men's participation. Despite this high participation rate, of working women, 72% are in posts or industries considered vulnerable to abuse or sudden disruption and that offer no wage or job protections. What is more, surveys indicate that working women often lack control over the wages they earn, including whether they can deposit wages in their own bank accounts. An International Finance Corporation (IFC) survey of 1,200 employees in Solomon Islands found that work time lost because of violence totals two working weeks per year per employee, due to feeling distracted, tired, unwell, or being late or absent. Fifteen large companies in Solomon Islands have committed to introducing policies for respectful workplaces under the Waka Mere project with an IFC survey showing much lower levels of acceptance of violence among Waka Mere employees than previous

studies.⁴⁵⁸

A 2020 UNFPA survey found that some 64% of women report experiencing partner violence in their lifetimes, and 42% report such violence in the past year. Moreover, 19% of those who have experienced intimate partner violence have also had their earnings or savings taken from them by their partner. A Family Health and Safety survey also found that 11.6% of currently partnered women who had experienced physical or sexual partner violence reported they had experienced a partner trying to stop family planning.⁴⁵⁹ Solomon Islands established a national SAFENET referral network in 2013.⁴⁶⁰ SAFENET is a network of government and non-government organizations that advocate, manage, and conduct referral and coordination of sexual- and gender-based violence services in hopes of streamlining victim and survivor experiences in accessing appropriate services and assistance in a timely manner. It has four components: direct services and support, referral to other service providers through an agreed-upon and coordinated formal referral process, prevention and advocacy programs, and a governance and accountability framework. SAFENET is supported by the MHMS, the RSIPF Family Violence Unit and Sexual Assault Unit, Public Solicitor's Office, Family Support Centre, Christian Care Centre, and the MWYCFA.⁴⁶¹ As of 2021, other agencies and NGOs that had signed the Memorandum of Understanding to abide by the SAFENET standard operating procedures included Seif Ples, Solomon Islands Planned Parenthood Association, Honiara City Council Clinics, the NRH, Social Welfare Division, and Integrated Mental Health.⁴⁶² In May 2023, SAFENET gained new partners in the form of the "Hope Trust," which included the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions; the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, Labour, and Immigration; and the Honiara City Council Women's Development Division.⁴⁶³ The SAFENET Domestic Violence Helpline is staffed 24 hours per day, seven days per week; it is available by calling 132 anywhere in the country.⁴⁶⁴

CONCLUSION

The 992 islands of Solomon Islands are exposed to hydrometeorological hazards such as cyclones, drought, and flooding, which can drive follow-on landslides or food and water shortages. Other hazards include volcanic activity, earthquakes, and tsunamis, all of which threaten lives, livelihoods, ecosystems, and infrastructure. Climate change-influenced temperature increases, sea level rise, ocean acidification, and coral bleaching are all already evident and pose risks to the more than 80% of the population that resides in low-lying coastal areas. Accelerated coastal erosion and salinization of well water is an additional risk for several of the smaller, low-lying islands.

As a response to the challenges posed by the country's geography, the central government has devolved significant responsibility to provincial assemblies. However, provincial governments often focus primarily on brokering local disputes, including over logging or water access rights; their ability to regulate businesses or carry out health or environmental service delivery is hamstrung by human and financial resource constraints. They are of the community and utilize highly localized, highly negotiated solutions, and this characteristic also feeds the general concept for disaster management – i.e., communities take measures to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters when they occur under the principle of supporting self-help.⁴⁶⁵

The national government knows that a future emergency like the floods associated with 2014's TC Ita is inevitable, and it has taken major steps to strengthen its disaster management capabilities, including raising public awareness of the dangers of building shelters on riverbanks. Among the key steps taken to inform the public regarding potential high waters and flooding was the “build-back-better” approach taken with bridges reconstructed after Ita that incorporate water-level markers plainly visible to and understood by the community that lives in the area. Local community leaders say they

can activate an evacuation on their own if they see river waters rising above a certain point rather than waiting for central government notifications.⁴⁶⁶

Despite this local focus, the National Development Strategy 2016-2035 has as one of its objectives that government, through MECDM, will work to achieve “Resilient and environmentally sustainable development with effective disaster risk management, response and recovery” with two tasks: 1) improve disaster and climate risk management; and 2) manage the environment in a sustainable, resilient way and effectively respond to climate change. To accomplish these tasks, the national government has utilized lessons learned from various disaster events to develop an institutional structure and policy framework for building a culture of DRR even as it develops tools to respond to extreme events. With the NDC advising the government and hosting the NEOC, the NDC and NDMO oversee coordination of whole-of-government disaster operations by chairing the N-DOC. Below the national level, provincial officials oversee provincial and local disaster committees. All committees, councils, and offices are responsible for ensuring the public receives the information and training that will allow them to prepare for and respond to extreme events. As part of this effort, the NDMO maintains a database that includes hazard and vulnerability maps. Moreover, national and provincial agents rely on technical and emergency support from global partners, especially the NGOs of the AHP and their local partners, who work within the framework of the National Disaster Management Plan.

Additional partnerships among the Solomon Islands government, local civil society, and the international community – government, military or police, and civilian – will be critical to reducing the country's exposure to risk as climate change makes hazards more extreme and the repeated occurrence of disaster events undermine efforts to build community resilience.

APPENDICES

DoD DMHA Engagements in the Past Five Years (FY 2018-2023)

The list below describes the DMHA engagements that the U.S. has had with Solomon Islands in the last five years.

National Emergency Response Team Induction Course, May 2023

In May 2023, the Solomon Islands' NDMO conducted training of a cross-functional team of disaster response professionals, who will be responsible for coordinating international assistance in times of national crisis.⁴⁶⁷ The NERT is the first capability of its kind to be established by an NDMO in the Pacific. It is a rapid deployment capability established by the NDMO as part of the NDMP 2018. NERT forms part of the NEOC and supports disaster assessments and coordination by providing trained personnel capable of deploying to disaster areas on short notice. In the May training, NERT Batch 2, which includes 30 participants from Government Ministries, NGOs, and the private sector,⁴⁶⁸ underwent the intensive 10-day induction course to prepare them for their role. The NERT initiates received an intensive 5-day academic course interspersed with hands-on simulations in team building, Plan of Action research and writing, and On-Site Operations Coordination Center (OSOCC) design and construction. The desktop exercise focused on developing response plans for a simulated earthquake and tsunami off the coast of Honiara during the country's hosting of the Pacific Games, set for November 2023. At the conclusion of the classroom instruction, the 10-person NERT teams were then sent on a short-notice simulated deployment to an isolated beach where they put into action the training they had received. The teams erected tents, constructed OSOCCs, and began coordinating relief efforts in response to a simulated volcanic eruption on Savo Island. The

course was funded by Australian Aid through UNDP's IDRM project and conducted by the NDMO on the model of UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) with support from UNDP, UN OCHA's Suva and Bangkok offices, the Pacific Community's Pacific Islands Emergency Management Alliance (PIEMA), the Australian Civil-Military Centre (ACMC), and the CFE-DM. A team from CFE-DM and U.S. Embassy Honiara played the roles of a USAID BHA DART team and liaison officers from USS America (LHA-6) sent to Honiara to provide foreign disaster relief assistance. The U.S. team provided the NERT teams their first opportunity to engage in UN Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination with uniformed military personnel.⁴⁶⁹

Pacific Partnership, August-September 2022

Pacific Partnership kicked off in Honiara on 29 August 2022. Pacific Partnership is the largest annual multinational HADR preparedness mission conducted in the Indo-Pacific, and in the exercise's 17th year, this stop marked the fifth time it has visited Solomon Islands. It was also the first visit to the country by the U.S. Military Sealift Command hospital ship USNS Mercy (T-AH 19), which can provide emergency on-site care for deployed U.S. forces and supports other operations, such as HADR. U.S. Navy Captain Hank Kim, the Pacific Partnership 2022 mission commander, said, "Pacific Partnership focuses on military and civilian organizations working collectively to ensure the international community is better prepared to synchronize and function together when executing effective disaster response in the aftermath of a disaster emergency." Events were planned based on the requirements and requests of Solomon Islands. Engagements in Honiara and outlying islands included medical care and exchanges, engineering projects, discussions on HADR, and community outreach events.⁴⁷⁰ Photo 3 shows U.S. Navy Lieutenant

Commander Alice-Anne Alcorn as she conducts a dental examination on a local child in Honiara during Pacific Partnership 2022.⁴⁷¹ The Pacific Partnership Humanitarian Assistance Response Training (HART) was a multi-day international workshop and exercise that ran in Honiara in early September. U.S. Coast Guard District Fourteen emergency management response experts partnered with U.S. INDOPACOM's CFE-DM, USNS Mercy, Solomon Island's NDMO, the Royal Solomon Islands Police and Fire, and the Solomon Islands NERT to corroborate efficient response and coordination for natural disasters, oil spills, and search and rescue situations. Coast Guard District Fourteen subject matter experts shared their technical knowledge on incident command system fundamentals and provided an international and joint rescue coordination brief regarding search and rescue capabilities. The workshop also included discussions on foreign military aid in disaster response, coordination mechanisms to maximize inclusivity, and multi-national roles in humanitarian assistance.⁴⁷²



Photo 3: U.S. Navy Delivers Dental Checks in Solomon Islands, Pacific Partnership 2022

International/Foreign Relations

Solomon Islands' foreign policy hews to the vision of "Friends to all, enemies to none."

Foreign policy activities focus on engaging partners and international agencies on how the country – and the world – can attain the SDGs. In this pursuit, Honiara places significant emphasis on South-South relations and regional cooperation. Because of its small size and, therefore, small market, the country relies on strong trade deals to cushion the impacts of global price shocks for key imports. Thus, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade houses, under one roof, the diplomats who are key to ensuring that Solomon Islands' bilateral and multilateral ties serve both security and economic goals.⁴⁷³ The country is in its

transition phase toward graduating from among the countries classified by the UN as Least Developed Countries. Having met the criteria for graduation for gross national income (GNI) and human assets, Honiara's strategy for graduation now focuses on the economic and environmental facets of graduation – e.g., remoteness, dependence on a narrow economic base, and vulnerability to natural disasters.⁴⁷⁴ In working toward graduation, the country has concluded various regional and bilateral trade agreements within the Pacific region, with the EU, and with the UK.

The government of Solomon Islands is dependent on donor support for some 60% of its budget.⁴⁷⁵ Multilateral partners include the ADB, EU, IMF, and World Bank Group. Australia, Japan, New Zealand, the People's Republic of China (PRC), the U.S., and various agencies of the UN provide development assistance. Solomon Islands is the Pacific region's second highest recipient of official development assistance (ODA). However, net ODA has decreased steadily since a peak during the 2010–2016 period. In 2010, ODA was equal to 68.6% of the country's GNI, but this ratio declined to 15.6% in 2016, and in 2019, it was approximately US\$224 million (14.4%).⁴⁷⁶

Australia

The relationship between Australia and Solomon Islands covers all facets of government,

security, economics, and culture. Australia is Solomon Islands' main development partner with a focus on supporting stability, enabling economic growth, and improving human development across health, justice, education, infrastructure, the private sector, policing, gender, governance, and rural development. In 2020, Australia delivered US\$137.95 million in funding for laying submarine fiber-optic telecommunication cable between Honiara and Sydney, and Australia is investing an additional US\$172.44 million to implement the Solomon Islands Infrastructure Programme (SIIP).⁴⁷⁷ Additional funding comes in various forms, including small grants for local communities to develop sustainable enterprises⁴⁷⁸ alongside traditional streams of budget support. Indeed, in late 2022, Australia committed to plugging a budget gap related to Solomon Islands' hosting of the Pacific Games, set for November 2023.⁴⁷⁹

Not all views of the relationship are rosy, and Australia confronts challenges from Solomon Islands officials and communities who seek a more forthright – i.e., less colonial – attitude from their partners. Many Solomon Islanders push back against the pocketing of much funding by Australian consultants even as Australian programming goes toward “invisible” projects in governance and policing while Chinese investment delivers stadiums and hospital facilities that people can see immediately. There is significant discomfort within Solomon Islands over Australia's continued control over how and when a Solomon Islander can enter Australia even though Australians enjoy free access to Solomon Islands.⁴⁸⁰ Nonetheless, many Solomon Islanders seek employment in Australia under one of three programs: Seasonal Worker Programme, Pacific Australia Labour Mobility, or Pacific Labour Scheme. They provide Solomon Islanders authorization to work in horticulture, agriculture, or tourism sectors, and each year some 2,500 workers use these programs.⁴⁸¹ The Pacific Australia Labour Mobility scheme was the most recent; it launched in 2021 to bring seasonal horticultural workers from Pacific countries to Australia for the harvest for up to three years.

Since the conclusion of the RAMSI and RISPF's resumption of independent law enforcement and security services, Australia has continued to support the country through a bilateral police capacity development program. A treaty signed in August 2017 allows Australian police, defense, and associated civilians to deploy rapidly to Solomon Islands in the event of an emergency. The treaty was activated for the first time in November 2021 following civil unrest in Honiara, and, since then, more than 300 Australian personnel have deployed as part of the Solomon Islands Assistance Forces (SIAF), which also includes Fiji, Papua New Guinea, and New Zealand, to restore law and order in Honiara.⁴⁸²

China

According to the Solomon Islands Prime Minister in July 2023, China is providing the country with funding for health, agriculture, sport, and climate change adaptation and mitigation. This comment came at the end of the Prime Minister's week-long visit to Beijing,⁴⁸³ which has only had ties with Solomon Islands since September 2019 when the country shifted recognition from Taiwan to the PRC. Although this shift came with a promise from China for US\$730 million in financial aid, it still triggered violent anti-government unrest in Solomon Islands. The riots killed four people and prompted China to offer anti-riot gear and send a team of six police liaison officers to equip and train Solomon Islands police.⁴⁸⁴ The first high-level visit from Beijing to Honiara came only in May 2022 when China's Foreign Minister joined his Solomon Islands counterpart in signing various bilateral agreements, which touched upon trade, health cooperation, and DRR.⁴⁸⁵

Even before Honiara established official diplomatic relations with Beijing, the bilateral trade relationship was critical to the Solomon Islands' economy, and China was the country's largest trade partner.⁴⁸⁶ In 2019, China was the destination for 63% of Solomon Islands exports and the origin of 13% of imports.⁴⁸⁷ In 2021, China exported US\$167 million in goods to Solomon Islands while about US\$283 million in

goods went the other direction. The top goods exported from China to Solomon Islands are rice, iron, prepared meats, pasta, and plastic lids. Goods going the other direction are dominated by woods, locust beans, seaweed, sugar beets, cane, corals, and shells.⁴⁸⁸ Moreover, since the diplomatic opening, Solomon Islands signed on to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and secured a US\$66 million loan from the Exim Bank of China to erect 161 mobile towers built and run by Huawei, which already had a contract dating to 2018 for an underwater telecommunications cable network that was jointly funded by Australia.⁴⁸⁹

Keen international interest has focused on the security aspects of the bilateral relationship after Solomon Islands signed a security pact with Beijing in April 2022. As of mid-2023, no details of the pact had been made public, but there was concern in the U.S. and Australia that it might allow China to post troops to Solomon Islands, a suggestion repeatedly rejected by the Solomon Islands' Prime Minister.⁴⁹⁰ By July 2023, China had already provided the Solomon Islands with police training and donated replica guns and riot-control equipment such as water cannon vehicles, and an additional agreement on law enforcement and security had been signed by the two governments.⁴⁹¹

Japan

JICA has been working in Solomon Islands for 45 years. In addition to technical cooperation, loans, and grants, JICA volunteers work in key projects within Solomon Islands to deliver expertise and networking. Of the more than 400 volunteers who have taken postings in Solomon Islands, most have worked in health, education, or infrastructure development. Several have deployed to Honiara to support development of Solomon Islands' disaster management policies and strategies.⁴⁹² The most recent large-scale projects undertaken by JICA are grants for the improvement of the Honiara airport and upgrading Kukum Highway alongside technical assistance for solid waste management,

sustainable forestry, and maritime safety.⁴⁹³ On this last score, in May 2023, Japan and Solomon Islands signed a support deal for Japan to procure and deliver a landing craft to support RSIPF explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) activities that improve the safety of inter-island transport.⁴⁹⁴

Although the two countries have long enjoyed cordial ties, since 2019, Japan has increased its emphasis on Pacific Island countries, including Solomon Islands. At the Ninth Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting in July 2021, Japan announced the Pacific Bond (Kizuna) Policy to strengthen ties, in part to check China's influence.⁴⁹⁵ The Kizuna concept is intended to promote bonds among countries and among communities, particularly during natural disasters,⁴⁹⁶ an area where Japan has particular expertise that can be delivered to Pacific partners. Following the publicity surrounding the April 2022 China-Solomon Islands security pact, Japanese officials visited Solomon Islands to directly convey concerns. Moreover, Japan became one of five inaugural members of the "Partners in the Blue Pacific," alongside Australia, New Zealand, the UK, and the U.S., to coordinate assistance for Pacific Island countries. On 19 March 2023, the Japanese Foreign Minister visited Solomon Islands for talks with Prime Minister Sogavare, to whom he emphasized the importance that Japan places on its relations with Solomon Islands.

Beyond diplomacy and development, Japan has bolstered its security assistance to Solomon Islands. In 2017, Japan instituted the Indo-Pacific Deployment for Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF), a series of exercises with regional partners; since the first Japan Pacific Islands Defense Dialogue in September 2021, the Indo-Pacific Deployment's geographical area has expanded to include Pacific Islands. In August 2022, the JMSDF conducted exercises with its counterparts in Tonga, Fiji, Solomon Islands, and Palau.⁴⁹⁷ During the drill with Solomon Islands, the JMSDF destroyer Kirisame and Solomon Islands Maritime Police patrol boat Taro engaged in a maritime security exercise, joined by the U.S. Navy's Oakland.⁴⁹⁸

New Zealand

Historic and people-to-people ties underpin the bilateral relationship between Solomon Islands and New Zealand. New Zealand is a destination for elite Solomon Islanders seeking business or educational opportunities and for many Solomon Islander overseas laborers. New Zealand was part of the RAMSI deployment and the 2021 post-riot SIAF deployment to Honiara. However, New Zealand, like the U.S. and Australia, was taken aback by Solomon Islands’ security pact with Beijing,⁴⁹⁹ and, in June 2022, the New Zealand Defense Minister and his Solomon Islands counterpart launched discussions on a work plan to ensure Solomon Islands maritime security.⁵⁰⁰ This effort to refocus ties with Solomon Islands was part of a larger New Zealand-Pacific Islands refresh that saw Wellington add high-level positions to diplomatic and trade missions throughout the region.⁵⁰¹ Then, in April 2023, a large delegation of New Zealand officials began a tour of the Pacific Islands countries in Solomon Islands. The key talking points were to ensure that New Zealand is viewed as a partner for regional states to address the impacts of climate change.⁵⁰² Shortly after this tour, New Zealand announced that the personnel deployed in latter 2021 as part of the SIAF would remain in the country through December 2023 at the request of local authorities.⁵⁰³

Beyond these high-level programs, New Zealand is also one of the top donors of ODA with a focus on infrastructure, education, and health care. Since 2004, New Zealand has been the lead donor in Solomon Islands’ education sector with a long-term partnership with the MEHRD. New Zealand has also contributed NZ\$31.7 million (US\$18.7 million) towards transport infrastructure in Western Province since 2010 to ensure safe aviation that allows the province to develop its economy. Ongoing engagement links New Zealand with the Honiara City Council to increase youth engagement and opportunities for youth in the city, and there are plans for additional assistance to the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources and the MCA to improve sustainable fisheries and support

resilient infrastructure.⁵⁰⁴

United States

U.S. interests in Solomon Islands date to World War II, and since the Battle of Guadalcanal, there has been a historic aspect that sees dignitaries attend annual commemorations in the Islands. Diplomatic relations date to Solomon Islands’ independence in 1978,⁵⁰⁵ and in January 2023, the U.S. reopened its Embassy in Honiara as part of broadening engagement with the country and region after the release of the Indo-Pacific Strategy in late 2022.⁵⁰⁶ This renewed commitment to the Pacific Islands will build upon DRR and CCA programming conducted by USAID, such as the five-year, US\$25 million Strengthening Competitiveness, Agriculture, Livelihoods, and Environment Program to increase trade over the long run, improve natural resource management, promote agribusiness and small enterprise development, and expand critical small-scale infrastructure.

On the economic front, in 2020, the U.S. exported US\$4.7 million worth of goods to Solomon Islands and imported US\$3.3 million worth of goods. Solomon Islands is a party to the 1987 Treaty on Fisheries between the U.S. and 16 Pacific Island parties. The Treaty provides access to waters under the jurisdiction of the Pacific Island parties for certain U.S. fishing vessels in exchange for industry payments and promotes broader cooperation. Under a separate Economic Assistance Agreement associated with the Treaty, the U.S. Government provides US\$21 million per year to support economic development regionally through the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency, based in Honiara. In December 2020, the U.S.’s Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) approved a US\$23 million program to help Solomon Islands address constraints to economic growth – e.g., management of natural resources in the logging sector and insecure access to land. This program integrates components of MCC’s strategic priorities, such as women’s economic empowerment.

To address the significant impact of unexploded ordnance (UXO) from World War

II-era battles, the United States has provided more than US\$6.8 million since 2011 to remove explosive hazards and build local capacity. The United States, working in partnership with Australia and NGOs, has trained the RSIPF in EOD techniques. Assistance has also developed Solomon Islands' capacity to locate and track remaining UXO contamination. The U.S. Coast Guard conducts subject matter expert exchanges with Solomon Islands border protection officers, and the U.S. military provides international training courses to national security officials through the Daniel K. Inouye APCSS in Honolulu, Hawaii. U.S. military ships regularly call on ports in Solomon Islands to engage in exercises and exchanges with the RSIPF. The Defense Prisoner of War/Missing in Action Accounting Agency has conducted operations in Solomon Islands since 1987 and deploys missions throughout the year to recover and repatriate remains of U.S. soldiers from World War II.⁵⁰⁷

Participation in International Organizations

Solomon Islands is a member of, participates in, or cooperates with the following international organizations and agreement frameworks either as a government or via a national NGO or other entity:

Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), Asian Development Bank (ADB), Commonwealth, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Group of 77 (G-77), Institute of Catastrophe Risk Management (ICRM), International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), International Development Association (IDA), International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), International Finance Corporation (IFC), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), International Labour Organization (ILO), International Maritime Organization (IMO), International Monetary Fund (IMF), International

Olympic Committee (IOC), International Telecommunications Union (ITU), Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA), Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS), Pacific Community (SPC), Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), South Pacific Regional Trade and Economic Cooperation Agreement (SPARTECA), United Nations (UN), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Universal Postal Union (UPU), World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), World Health Organization (WHO), World Meteorological Organization (WMO), World Trade Organization (WTO)

Force Protection/Pre-Deployment Information

The following information is provided for pre-deployment planning and preparations. Visit www.travel.state.gov prior to deployments for further up-to-date information.⁵⁰⁸ DoD personnel must review the Foreign Clearance Guide (FCG) for travel to Solomon Islands (www.fcg.pentagon.mil). All official travel and personal travel for active-duty personnel must be submitted through an APACS request. Contact information for the Defense Attaché Office can be found in the FCG if you have additional questions.

Passport/Visa

Travelers may obtain a visitor permit for a 30-day stay upon arrival at Henderson International Airport in Honiara, and visitors may enter any number of times as long as total time in Solomon Islands does not exceed 90 days in a 12-month period. Travelers who arrive on a one-way airline ticket must have documentation stating their business, including work permits for those who plan to work in Solomon Islands. In all cases, travelers must have a valid passport with at least

six months remaining validity, an onward or return ticket, and proof of sufficient funds.

Travelers who plan to arrive or depart on a yacht must apply for a visitor's permit by visiting the Solomon Island Immigration website and must not attempt to enter the country via its sea borders without proper documentation and approval.

Travelers who anticipate transiting or visiting Australia should obtain an Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) or Subclass 771 visa for Australia before leaving the United States.

Some HIV/AIDS entry restrictions exist for visitors to and foreign residents of Solomon Islands. According to the Solomon Islands Immigration Act, an immigration officer can bar from entry or deport travelers who refuse to submit to an examination by a government medical officer after being required to do so.

Safety and Security

Travel in groups for safety and security, especially in the evening or at night. All water activities should be done in groups. Swimmers should be aware of saltwater crocodiles that can be found at the mouths of rivers emptying into the sea. Demonstrations occur frequently and may take place in response to political or economic issues, on politically significant holidays, during international events, or during other cultural events that attract large crowds. Even demonstrations intended to be peaceful can turn confrontational and possibly become violent. Visitors should avoid areas around protests and demonstrations and check local media for updates and traffic advisories.

Petty theft is common in some parts of Solomon Islands. Guided or group tours are generally safer than traveling alone. Landowners may demand money from people who enter their land without permission. Home invasions, burglaries, and violent crime typically increase in the months approaching the Christmas holiday season. Yacht-related robberies can occur, usually at night while occupants are asleep. Most criminals are not deterred even when boats are anchored offshore. Visiting yachts should be

wary of allowing strangers onboard and boaters should take precautions when leaving the vessel to go ashore.

The tourism industry is unevenly regulated, and safety inspections for equipment and facilities do not commonly occur. Hazardous areas/activities are not always identified with appropriate signage, and staff may not be trained or certified either by the host government or by recognized authorities in the field. In the event of an injury, appropriate medical treatment is typically available only in/near major cities. First responders are generally unable to access areas outside of major cities and to provide urgent medical treatment. Unexploded World War II ordnance remains in Solomon Islands, particularly in the areas of Hell's Point, the ridges behind Honiara, the New Georgia group of islands, Tulagi, and the Russel Islands. Be alert when hiking, boating, or diving. Be vigilant for ordnance and obey all posted warnings.

Solomon Islands is subject to earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and sudden tidal movements and tsunamis. The Pacific cyclone season extends from November through March.

Traffic in Solomon Islands moves on the left side of the road. Paved roads are found only in and around Honiara. These two-lane paved roads are poorly marked and have many potholes. Roads are not well lit at night. The remaining roads in Solomon Islands are made of coral, gravel, or are dirt tracks. Vehicles are frequently poorly maintained, and drivers have little regard for traffic regulations and do not follow safe driving practices. Visitors should be careful when driving off main roads to avoid trespassing on communal land. Traffic jams are common in Honiara; pedestrians often walk on the roads and may not consider vehicle traffic. Police control of traffic is limited, even in Honiara.

Drivers who are involved in a road accident are required by local laws to stop and stay at the scene until the police arrive. If a crowd gathers after an accident and appears threatening, drivers should proceed directly to a police station. Incidents of individuals being harmed by crowds as a result of a traffic accident are rare.

Taxi services in Honiara and Auki are widely available and are generally safe. Public bus and mini-bus services are also available, but safety standards may vary widely and information on routes may not be available in published form. Incidences of petty theft are more frequent on public transportation. While greater government regulation and oversight has led to an increase in safety of ferry services, travelers should be aware that safety standards may still vary widely, and amenities onboard are often extremely limited.

Victims of Crime: U.S. citizen victims of sexual assault are encouraged to contact the U.S. Consular Agency for assistance. The Consular Agency is located at Commonwealth St. Point Cruz Honiara and can be reached at 677-23426 or 677-7494731 or 677-7498367.

Report crimes to the local police using the local emergency number 677-999. Victims of crimes may also contact the U.S. Embassy in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea at 675-308-2100. Local authorities are responsible for investigating and prosecuting crime. For U.S. citizens who are the victims of crime, the U.S. Embassy can:

- Help find appropriate medical care
- Assist in reporting a crime to the police
- Contact relatives or friends with written consent
- Provide general information regarding the victim's role during the local investigation and following its conclusion
- Provide a list of local attorneys
- Provide information on victim's compensation programs in the U.S.
- Provide an emergency loan for repatriation to the United States and/or limited medical support in cases of destitution
- Help find accommodation and arrange flights home
- Replace a stolen or lost passport

Emergency Contact Information

U.S. Embassy Honiara
Blums Building, by the Port of Honiara
Honiara, Guadalcanal
Solomon Islands

The U.S. Embassy in Honiara does not currently provide routine or emergency services to U.S. citizens. Such services are provided by U.S. Embassy Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea.

U.S. Embassy Port Moresby
Harbour City Road, Konedobu
Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea
Mailing Address: PO Box 1492, Port Moresby,
N.C.D. 121, Papua New Guinea
Tel: 675-308-9100
Emergency After-Hours Tel: 675-7200-9439
Email: ConsularPortMoresby@state.gov

Currency Information

Solomon Islands dollars (SBD)
SBD 1.00 = US\$0.1183 or SBD 8.31255 =
US\$1.00 (as of 28 July 2023)

Travel Health Information

The CDC provides guidance that all travelers to Solomon Islands should be up to date on routine vaccinations. The following are additional recommendations for travel to Solomon Islands. The information in Tables 4 and 5 is taken directly from the CDC website under the Travelers Health Section (<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list/>).⁵⁰⁹

Health Alerts for Solomon Islands: As of 28 July 2023, there are no health risk alerts.

The following actions you can take to stay healthy and safe on your trip include:

Eat and Drink Safely

Unclean food and water can cause travelers' diarrhea and other diseases. Reduce your risk by sticking to safe food and water habits.

Eat

- Food that is cooked and served hot
- Hard-cooked eggs
- Fruits and vegetables, you have washed in clean water or peeled yourself
- Pasteurized dairy products

Don't Eat

- Food served at room temperature
- Food from street vendors
- Raw or soft-cooked (runny) eggs
- Raw or undercooked (rare) meat or fish
- Unwashed or unpeeled raw fruits and vegetables
- Unpasteurized dairy products
- "Bushmeat" (monkeys, bats, or other wild game)

Drink

- Bottled water that is sealed
- Water that has been disinfected
- Ice made with bottled or disinfected water
- Carbonated drinks
- Hot coffee or tea
- Pasteurized milk

Don't Drink

- Tap or well water
- Ice made with tap or well water
- Drinks made with tap or well water (such as reconstituted juice)
- Unpasteurized milk

Take Medicine

Talk with your doctor about taking prescription or over-the-counter drugs with you on your trip in case you get sick. If you are going to a high-risk area, fill your malaria prescription before you leave, and take enough with you for the entire length of your trip. Follow your doctor's instructions for taking the pills; some need to be started before you leave.

Prevent Bug Bites

Bugs (like mosquitoes, ticks, and fleas) can spread a number of diseases in Solomon Islands. Many of these diseases cannot be prevented with

a vaccine or medicine. You can reduce your risk by taking steps to prevent bug bites.

To prevent bug bites:

- Cover exposed skin by wearing long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and hats.
- Use an appropriate insect repellent (see below).
- Use permethrin-treated clothing and gear (such as boots, pants, socks, and tents). Do not use permethrin directly on skin.
- Stay and sleep in air-conditioned or screened rooms.
- Use a bed net if the area where you are sleeping is exposed to the outdoors.

For protection against ticks and mosquitoes:

Use a repellent that contains 20 percent or more DEET for protection that lasts up to several hours.

For protection against mosquitoes only:

Products with one of the following active ingredients can also help prevent mosquito bites. Higher percentages of active ingredient provide longer protection.

- DEET
- Picaridin (also known as KBR 3023, Bayrepel, and Icaridin)
- Oil of lemon eucalyptus (OLE) or para-Menthane-3,8-diol (PMD)
- IR3535
- 2-undecanone

If you are bitten by bugs:

- Avoid scratching bug bites and apply hydrocortisone cream or calamine lotion to reduce the itching.
- Check your entire body for ticks after outdoor activity. Be sure to remove ticks properly.

Safety and Security

Note that conditions can change rapidly in a country at any time. To receive updated Travel Advisories and Alerts for the countries you choose, sign up at step.state.gov.

Routine Vaccines	<p>All travelers should be up to date on all routine vaccines before every trip. Some of these vaccines include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chickenpox (Varicella) • Diphtheria-Tetanus-Pertussis • Flu (influenza) • Measles-Mumps-Rubella (MMR) • Polio • Shingles
COVID-19	All eligible travelers should be up to date with COVID-19 vaccines.
Hepatitis A	Recommended for unvaccinated travelers 1 year old or older going to the Solomon Islands. Infants 6-11 months old should also be vaccinated against Hepatitis A; the dose does not count toward the routine 2-dose series. Travelers allergic to a vaccine component or who are younger than 6 months should receive a single dose of immune globulin, which provides effective protection for up to 2 months depending on dosage given. Unvaccinated travelers who are over 40 years old, immunocompromised, or have chronic medical conditions and who are planning to depart to a risk area in less than 2 weeks should get the initial dose of vaccine and at the same appointment receive immune globulin.
Hepatitis B	Recommended for unvaccinated travelers of all ages traveling to the Solomon Islands.
Malaria	<p>Malaria is present throughout the Solomon Islands. Three types of the Plasmodium parasite are present, and chloroquine resistance has been documented.</p> <p>CDC recommends that travelers going to the Solomon Islands take prescription medicine to prevent malaria. Depending on the medicine, travelers will need to start taking this medicine multiple days before departure and during and after the trip.</p>
Measles	Infants 6-11 months old traveling internationally should get 1 dose of measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine before travel. This dose does not count as part of the routine childhood vaccination series.
Rabies	Solomon Islands is free of dog rabies. However, rabies may still be present in wildlife species, particularly bats. CDC recommends rabies vaccination before travel only for people working directly with wildlife. These people may include veterinarians, animal handlers, field biologists, or laboratory workers working with specimens from mammalian species.
Typhoid	Recommended for most travelers, especially those staying with friends or relatives or visiting smaller cities or rural areas.
Yellow Fever	Required for travelers 9 months old or older and who are arriving from countries with risk for virus transmission.

Table 4: CDC Information for Vaccine- and Prophylaxis-Preventable Diseases in Solomon Islands

Dengue	Transmitted by the bite of infected mosquitos. Avoid bug bites.
Hantavirus	All eligible travelers should be up to date with COVID-19 vaccines.
Leptospirosis	Contracted by touching urine or other body fluids from an animal infected with leptospirosis, by swimming or wading in urine-contaminated fresh water or contact with urine-contaminated mud, or by drinking water or eating food contaminated with animal urine. Avoid contaminated water and soil.
Tuberculosis	TB is transmitted by inhaling TB bacteria that is in the air from an infected and contagious person coughing, speaking, or singing. Avoid sick people.
Zika	Transmitted by the bite of an infected mosquito or by an infected pregnant woman to her unborn baby. Avoid bug bites.

Table 5: CDC Travel Health Information for Non-Vaccine-Preventable Diseases in Solomon Islands

Sendai Framework

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 is the global blueprint and 15-year plan to build the world's resilience to natural disasters.⁵¹⁰ The Sendai Framework is the successor instrument to the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters.⁵¹¹ Adopted at the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai, Japan, in 2015, the Framework aims to achieve the substantial reduction of disaster risk and losses in lives, livelihoods, and health and in the economic, physical, social, cultural, and environmental assets of persons, businesses, communities, and countries by 2030.⁵¹²

The Framework outlines seven targets and four priorities for action to prevent new and reduce existing disaster risks.

The Seven Global Targets include:

- Substantially reduce global disaster mortality by 2030, aiming to lower average per 100,000 global mortality rates in the decade 2020-2030 compared to the period 2005-2015.
- Substantially reduce the number of affected people globally by 2030, aiming to lower average global figure per 100,000 in the decade 2020 -2030 compared to the period 2005-2015.
- Reduce direct disaster economic loss in relation to global GDP by 2030.
- Substantially reduce disaster damage to critical infrastructure and disruption of basic services, among them health and educational facilities, including through developing their resilience by 2030.
- Substantially increase the number of countries with national and local DRR strategies by 2020.
- Substantially enhance international cooperation to developing countries through adequate and sustainable support to complement their national actions for implementation of this Framework by 2030.
- Substantially increase the availability of and access to multi-hazard early warning

systems and disaster risk information and assessments to the people by 2030.⁵¹³

The Four Priorities of Action include:

- Understanding disaster risk
- Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk
- Investing in disaster reduction for resilience; and
- Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to “Build Back Better” in recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction.

Figure 16 shows the Sendai DRR Framework.⁵¹⁴

Among the tools Solomon Islands uses to track its progress toward both the Sendai Framework goals and the Sustainable Development Goals is the Sendai Framework Monitor. Along with nine other Pacific and Oceania countries, Solomon Islands signed on immediately to use the Monitor to inform climate and DRR policymaking, coordination, and preparedness. The Monitor allows governments to integrate reporting from across their agencies and across international databases, including the Pacific Disaster Loss Database. Moreover, the Sendai Framework Monitor links to the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific and the Sustainable Development Goals in terms of Goal 1 - end poverty, Goal 11 - resilient cities, and Goal 13 - climate change.⁵¹⁵

In its latest Status Report of Solomon Islands' progress toward DRR goals, UNDRR highlighted the following:

Priority 1. Understanding Disaster Risk.

Understanding disaster risk requires a thorough understanding of the hazard, vulnerability, exposure, and adaptive capacity of the country. The PCRAFI, supported by World Bank, ADB, and Pacific Community (SPC)/ South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission, provided technical assistance to develop Pacific risk modeling and assessment tools for assessing earthquake and tropical cyclone risks, with detailed exposure information. The project consolidated eight national databases, including

Chart of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030

Scope and Purpose						
The present framework will apply to the risk of small-scale and large-scale, frequent and infrequent, sudden and slow-onset disasters, caused by natural or manmade hazards as well as related environmental, technological, and biological hazards and risks. It aims to guide the multi-hazard management of disaster risk in development at all levels as well as within and across all sectors						
Expected Outcome						
The substantial reduction of disaster risk and losses in lives, livelihoods, and health and in the economic, physical, social, cultural, and environmental assets of persons, businesses, communities, and countries						
Goal						
Prevent new and reduce existing disaster risk through the implementation of integrated and inclusive economic, structural, legal, social, health, cultural, educational, environmental, technological, political, and institutional measures that prevent and reduce hazard exposure and vulnerability to disaster, increase preparedness for response and recovery, and thus strengthen resilience						
Targets						
Substantially reduce global disaster mortality by 2030, aiming to lower average per 100,000 global mortality during 2020-2030 compared to 2005-2015	Substantially reduce the number of affected people globally by 2030, aiming to lower the average global figure per 100,000 during 2020-2030 compared to 2005-2015	Reduce direct disaster economic loss in relation to global GDP by 2030	Substantially reduce disaster damage to critical infrastructure and disruption of basic services, among them health and educational facilities, including through developing their resilience by 2030	Substantially increase the number of countries with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies by 2020	Substantially enhance international cooperation to developing countries through adequate and sustainable support to complement their national actions for implementation of this framework by 2030	Substantially increase the availability of and access to multi-hazard early warning systems and disaster risk information and assessments to people by 2030
Priorities for Action						
There is a need for focused action within and across sectors by States at local, national, regional, and global levels in the following four priority areas.						
Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3	Priority 4			
Understanding disaster risk	Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk	Investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience	Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response, and to “Build Back Better” in recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction			
Disaster risk management needs to be based on an understanding of disaster risk in all its dimensions of vulnerability, capacity, exposure of persons and assets, hazard characteristics, and the environment	Disaster risk governance at the national, regional, and global levels is vital to the management of disaster risk reduction in all sectors and ensuring the coherence of national and local frameworks of laws, regulations, and public policies that, by defining roles and responsibilities, guide, encourage, and incentivize the public and private sectors to take action and address disaster risk	Public and private investment in disaster risk prevention and reduction through structural is non-structural measures are essential to enhance the economic, social, health, and cultural resilience of persons, communities, countries, and their assets, as well as the environment. These can be drivers of innovation, growth, and job creation. Such measures are cost-effective and instrumental to save lives, prevent and reduce losses, and ensure effective recovery and rehabilitation	Experience indicates that disaster preparedness needs to be strengthened for more effective response and to ensure capacities are in place for effective recovery. Disasters have also demonstrated that the recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction phase, which needs to be prepared ahead of the disaster, is an opportunity to “Build Back Better” through integrating disaster risk reduction measures. Women and persons with disabilities should publicly lead and promote gender-equitable and universally accessible approaches during the response and reconstruction phases			

Figure 16: UN Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030

that developed for Solomon Islands, into a regional database, the Pacific Data Hub, hosted and maintained by SPC's Applied Geoscience and Technology Division. The Hub holds 736 datasets relevant to Solomon Islands. Before this development, in 2014, a vulnerability and adaptation assessment of Honiara provided the national and local government and community leaders with information to define adaptation priorities and plans, and it provided guidance in identifying actions to manage the impacts of climate change. The Solomon Islands Integrated Vulnerability and Adaptation Assessment is a nationwide comprehensive approach to conduct climate vulnerability assessment and planning for improving multi-sector coordination, aligning support, and optimizing the selection of climate change interventions and assessing their likely and actual impact. In 2020, a weeklong Integrated Vulnerability and Adaptation Assessment on the remote Sikaiana Island in Malaita Province was conducted to collect baseline data to develop national and provincial strategic planning, climate finance access, informing regional, international meetings and other activities.

Priority 2. Strengthening Disaster Risk Governance to Manage Disaster Risk. The government of Solomon Islands acknowledges that DRR must be aligned with CCA, as they are both developmental in their outlook. National Disaster Management Plan 2018 is a practical, sector-based, and explicit framework for preparing for and managing disaster events and supporting resilience in provinces and villages. It is supported by national-level arrangements coordinated through the NEOC. It recognizes the fundamental role of Government to establish and sustain arrangements for resilient development and disaster management across sectors and communities. The Implementation and Monitoring Plan for the National Disaster Management Plan 2018 was developed to improve governance, collaboration, and accountability, to promote coordinated planning and monitoring of disaster management sector priorities, and to support the collaborative action

to progress the priorities.

Priority 3. Investing in Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience. Investing in DRR for resilience is an important component in effectively implementing policies, frameworks, legislation, and strategies. Investing in structural and non-structural measures to reduce or prevent disaster risk is critical to improve the resilience of infrastructure and communities. Among Pacific Island Countries, Solomon Islands receives the second highest ODA. However, net ODA decreased steadily through 2016 because the security situation had improved and the RAMSI concluded in June 2017, and in 2019, ODA was around US\$224 million (14.4% of GDP). Australia is the main development partner and focuses on supporting stability, enabling economic growth, and improving human development. In 2020, Australia supported the laying of a submarine fiber optic telecommunication cable linking Honiara to Sydney to improve internet connectivity in Solomon Islands. Australia is also investing via the SIIP, which will assist in boosting the economy of the county. Since 1973, the ADB has supported the country with loans, grants, and technical assistance. In 2020, the Bank supported Solomon Islands' response to the impacts of COVID-19, and in 2021, the Bank committed to support the Solomon Islands Government with a concessional loan to rehabilitate the critical transport infrastructure in the country.

Priority 4. Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response to “Build Back Better” in recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction. Disaster recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction are an opportunity to “build back better” through integrating DRR measures. Following 2014's Tropical Cyclone Ita, the ADB Transport Sector Flood Recovery Project supported the recovery plan of the Solomon Islands Government. It involved 12 sub-projects comprising construction and rehabilitation of infrastructure to reestablish connectivity between eastern and western Guadalcanal through Honiara. Bridges were constructed over river crossings to improve connectivity

between towns, and water level markers on the bridges assist locals in taking necessary actions in instances where the water level rises above a certain point. In 2014, the Community Resilience to Climate and Disaster Risk Project was launched in Solomon Islands by the ACP-EU Natural Disaster Risk Reduction Programme to improve the resilience of selected communities in Guadalcanal, Temotu, Malaita, Central Islands, and Bellona. It strengthened the capacity of government in disaster and climate risk management by implementing DRR and CCA investments. The Solomon Islands Government has also installed rain and tide gauges, various staffed weather stations, and automatic weather stations to improve early warnings systems. SIMS is responsible for providing early warnings. To predict the arrival of disaster events, SIMS works with communities to gather traditional knowledge used by the locals under the Traditional Knowledge Project to improve the early warnings. SIMS conducted a two-day workshop on Climate Early Warning System with farmers and the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock to understand the needs of agriculture sector to provide tailored climate services.⁵¹⁶

Country Profile

The information in the Country Profile section is sourced directly from the CIA World Factbook for Solomon Islands. Additional numbers on country comparison to the world can be found by going directly to the CIA website (<https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/>). It discusses topics including geography, people and society, government, economy, energy, communications, military and security, transportation, terrorism, and transnational issues.⁵¹⁷

Background

Settlers from Papua arrived on Solomon Islands around 30,000 years ago. About 6,000 years ago, Austronesian settlers came to Solomon Islands and the two groups mixed extensively. Despite significant inter-island trade, no attempts were made to unite the islands into a single political entity. In 1568, Spanish explorer Alvaro de MENDANA became the first European to spot the islands. After a failed Spanish attempt at creating a permanent European settlement on the islands in the late 1500s, Solomon Islands remained free of European contact until 1767 when British explorer Philip CARTERET sailed by the islands. The islands were regularly visited by European explorers and American and British whaling ships into the 1800s, followed by missionaries in the 1850s.

Germany declared a protectorate over the northern Solomon Islands in 1885, and the UK established a protectorate over the southern islands in 1893. In 1899, Germany transferred its Solomon Islands to the UK in exchange for the UK relinquishing all claims in Samoa. The UK tried to encourage plantation farming, but few Europeans were willing to go to Solomon Islands and the UK left most services - such as education and medical services - to missionaries. In 1942, Japan invaded Solomon Islands and

significant battles against Allied forces during the Guadalcanal Campaign proved a turning point in the Pacific war. World War II destroyed large parts of Solomon Islands and a nationalism movement emerged near the end of the war. By 1960, the British relented to allow for some local autonomy. The islands were granted self-government in 1976 and independence two years later under Prime Minister Sir Peter KENILOREA.

In 1999, longstanding ethnic tensions between ethnic Gule in Honiara and ethnic Malaitans in Honiara's suburbs erupted in civil war, leading thousands of Malaitans to take refuge in Honiara and Gule to flee the city. In 2000, newly-elected Prime Minister Manasseh SOGAVARE focused on peace agreements and distributing resources equally among groups, but his actions bankrupted the government in 2001 and led to SOGAVARE's ouster. In 2003, Solomon Islands requested international assistance to reestablish law and order. The Australian-led Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands, which ended in 2017, was generally effective in improving the security situation. In 2006, riots broke out in Honiara and the city's Chinatown burned over allegations that the prime minister took money from China. SOGAVARE was reelected prime minister for a fourth time following elections in 2019 and that same year announced Solomon Islands would switch diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to China. In late November 2021, protestors, mostly from the island of Malaita, calling for SOGAVARE's removal and more development in Malaita, sparked rioting in Honiara.

Geography

Location

Oceania, group of islands in the South Pacific Ocean, east of Papua New Guinea

Geographic coordinates

8 00 S, 159 00 E

Area

total: 28,896 sq km

land: 27,986 sq km

water: 910 sq km

comparison ranking: total 143

Land boundaries

total: 0 km

Coastline

5,313 km

Maritime claims

territorial sea: 12 nm

exclusive economic zone: 200 nm

continental shelf: 200 nm

measured from claimed archipelagic baselines

Climate

tropical monsoon; few temperature and weather extremes

Terrain

mostly rugged mountains with some low coral atolls

Elevation

highest point: Mount Popomanaseu 2,335 m

lowest point: Pacific Ocean 0 m

Natural resources

fish, forests, gold, bauxite, phosphates, lead, zinc, nickel

Land use

agricultural land: 3.9% (2018 est.)

arable land: 0.7% (2018 est.)

permanent crops: 2.9% (2018 est.)

permanent pasture: 0.3% (2018 est.)

forest: 78.9% (2018 est.)

other: 17.2% (2018 est.)

Irrigated land

0 sq km (2022)

Population distribution

most of the population lives along the coastal regions; about one in five live in urban areas, and of these some two-thirds reside in Honiara, the largest town and chief port

Natural hazards

tropical cyclones, but rarely destructive; geologically active region with frequent earthquakes, tremors, and volcanic activity; tsunamis; volcanism: Tinakula (851 m) has frequent eruption activity, while an eruption of Savo (485 m) could affect the capital, Honiara, on nearby Guadalcanal

Geography - note

strategic location on sea routes between the South Pacific Ocean, the Solomon Sea, and the Coral Sea; Rennell Island, the southernmost in the Solomon Islands chain, is one of the world's largest raised coral atolls; the island's Lake Tegano, formerly a lagoon on the atoll, is the largest lake in the insular Pacific (15,500 hectares)

People and SocietyPopulation

714,766 (2023 est.)

comparison ranking: 167

Nationality

noun: Solomon Islander(s)

adjective: Solomon Islander

Ethnic groups

Melanesian 95.3%, Polynesian 3.1%, Micronesian 1.2%, other 0.3% (2009 est.)

Languages

Melanesian pidgin (in much of the country is lingua franca), English (official but spoken by only 1%-2% of the population), 120 indigenous languages

Religions

Protestant 73.4% (Church of Melanesia 31.9%, South Sea Evangelical 17.1%, Seventh Day Adventist 11.7%, United Church 10.1%, Christian Fellowship Church 2.5%), Roman Catholic 19.6%, other Christian 2.9%, other 4%, unspecified 0.1% (2009 est.)

Age structure

0-14 years: 31.06% (male 114,104/female 107,900)
15-64 years: 63.82% (male 233,501/female 222,640)
65 years and over: 5.12% (2023 est.) (male 17,238/female 19,383)

Figure 17 shows the population pyramid for the Solomon Islands for 2023. A population pyramid illustrates the age and sex structure of the population, as distributed along the horizontal axis, with males shown on the left and females on the right. The male and female populations are broken down into 5-year age groups represented as horizontal bars along the vertical axis, with the youngest age groups at the bottom and the oldest at the top.⁵¹⁸

Dependency ratios

total dependency ratio: 74.8
youth dependency ratio: 68.8
elderly dependency ratio: 6
potential support ratio: 16.5 (2021 est.)

Median age

total: 23.5 years
male: 23.2 years
female: 23.7 years (2020 est.)
comparison ranking: total 175

Population growth rate

1.69% (2023 est.)
comparison ranking: 53

Birth rate

22.34 births/1,000 population (2023 est.)
comparison ranking: 52

Death rate

3.95 deaths/1,000 population (2023 est.)
comparison ranking: 215

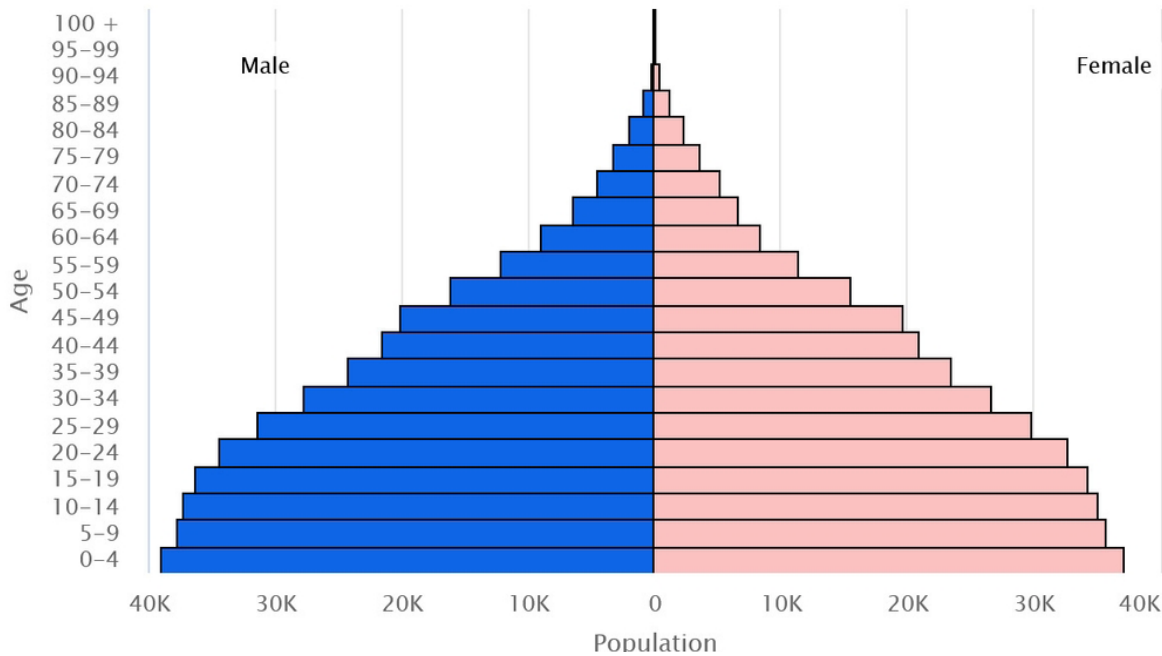


Figure 17: Population Pyramid, Solomon Islands (2023)

Net migration rate

-1.52 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2023 est.)
comparison ranking: 159

Population distribution

most of the population lives along the coastal regions; about one in five live in urban areas, and of these some two-thirds reside in Honiara, the largest town and chief port

Urbanization

urban population: 26% of total population (2023)
rate of urbanization: 3.57% annual rate of change (2020-25 est.)
total population growth rate v. urban population growth rate, 2000-2030

Major urban areas - population

82,000 HONIARA (capital) (2018)

Sex ratio

at birth: 1.05 male(s)/female
0-14 years: 1.06 male(s)/female
15-64 years: 1.05 male(s)/female
65 years and over: 0.89 male(s)/female
total population: 1.04 male(s)/female (2023 est.)

Mother's mean age at first birth

22.6 years (2015 est.)
note: data represents median age at first birth among women 25-29

Maternal mortality ratio

122 deaths/100,000 live births (2020 est.)
comparison ranking: 64

Infant mortality rate

total: 19.53 deaths/1,000 live births
male: 23.3 deaths/1,000 live births
female: 15.58 deaths/1,000 live births (2023 est.)
comparison ranking: total 80

Life expectancy at birth

total population: 76.96 years
male: 74.32 years
female: 79.73 years (2023 est.)
comparison ranking: total population 100

Total fertility rate

2.82 children born/woman (2023 est.)
comparison ranking: 52

Gross reproduction rate

1.38 (2023 est.)

Contraceptive prevalence rate

29.3% (2015)

Drinking water source

improved: urban: 95% of population
rural: 65.9% of population
total: 73.1% of population
unimproved: urban: 5% of population
rural: 34.1% of population
total: 26.9% of population (2020 est.)

Current health expenditure

4.4% of GDP (2020)

Physicians density

0.19 physicians/1,000 population (2016)

Hospital bed density

1.4 beds/1,000 population (2012)

Sanitation facility access

improved: urban: 95.6% of population
rural: 22.6% of population
total: 40.6% of population
unimproved: urban: 4.4% of population
rural: 77.4% of population
total: 59.4% of population (2020 est.)

Obesity - adult prevalence rate

22.5% (2016)
comparison ranking: 75

Alcohol consumption per capita

total: 1.19 liters of pure alcohol (2019 est.)
beer: 1.1 liters of pure alcohol (2019 est.)
wine: 0.06 liters of pure alcohol (2019 est.)
spirits: 0.02 liters of pure alcohol (2019 est.)
other alcohols: 0 liters of pure alcohol (2019 est.)
comparison ranking: total 146

Tobacco use

total: 36.5% (2020 est.)
male: 53.8% (2020 est.)
female: 19.2% (2020 est.)
comparison ranking: total 12

Children under the age of 5 years underweight

16.2% (2015)
comparison ranking: 34

Currently married women (ages 15-49)

64.1% (2023 est.)

Education expenditures

12.8% of GDP (2020 est.)
comparison ranking: 2

Literacy

total population: NA
male: NA
female: NA

Youth unemployment rate (ages 15-24)

total: 1.9%
male: 1.6%
female: 2.3% (2021 est.)
comparison ranking: total 200

Environment

Environment - current issues

deforestation; soil erosion; many of the surrounding coral reefs are dead or dying, exhibiting the effects of climate change and rising sea levels

Environment - international agreements

party to: Biodiversity, Climate Change, Climate Change-Kyoto Protocol, Climate Change-Paris Agreement, Desertification, Endangered Species, Environmental Modification, Law of the Sea, Marine Dumping-London Convention, Marine Life Conservation, Ozone Layer Protection, Ship Pollution, Whaling
signed, but not ratified: Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban

Climate

tropical monsoon; few temperature and weather extremes

Land use

agricultural land: 3.9% (2018 est.)
arable land: 0.7% (2018 est.)
permanent crops: 2.9% (2018 est.)
permanent pasture: 0.3% (2018 est.)
forest: 78.9% (2018 est.)
other: 17.2% (2018 est.)

Urbanization

urban population: 26% of total population (2023)
rate of urbanization: 3.57% annual rate of change (2020-25 est.)
total population growth rate v. urban population growth rate, 2000-2030

Revenue from forest resources

20.27% of GDP (2018 est.)
comparison ranking: 1

Revenue from coal

0% of GDP (2018 est.)
comparison ranking: 150

Air pollutants

particulate matter emissions: 10.67 micrograms per cubic meter (2016 est.)
carbon dioxide emissions: 0.17 megatons (2016 est.)
methane emissions: 0.43 megatons (2020 est.)

Waste and recycling

municipal solid waste generated annually: 179,972 tons (2013 est.)

Total renewable water resources

44.7 billion cubic meters (2020 est.)
Government

Country name

conventional long form: none
 conventional short form: Solomon Islands
 local long form: none
 local short form: Solomon Islands
 former: British Solomon Islands
 etymology: Spanish explorer Alvaro de MENDANA named the isles in 1568 after the wealthy biblical King SOLOMON in the mistaken belief that the islands contained great riches

Government type

parliamentary democracy under a constitutional monarchy; a Commonwealth realm

Capital

name: Honiara
 geographic coordinates: 9 26 S, 159 57 E
 time difference: UTC+11 (16 hours ahead of Washington, DC, during Standard Time)
 etymology: the name derives from “nagho ni ara,” which in one of the Guadalcanal languages roughly translates as “facing the eastern wind”

Administrative divisions

9 provinces and 1 city*; Central, Choiseul, Guadalcanal, Honiara*, Isabel, Makira and Ulawa, Malaita, Rennell and Bellona, Temotu, Western

Independence

7 July 1978 (from the UK)

National holiday

Independence Day, 7 July (1978)

Constitution

history: adopted 31 May 1978, effective 7 July 1978; note - in late 2017, provincial leaders agreed to adopt a new federal constitution; progress has been stalled, but as of February 2023, the draft constitution was with the Constitutional Review Unit in the prime minister's office
 amendments: proposed by the National Parliament; passage of constitutional sections,

including those on fundamental rights and freedoms, the legal system, Parliament, alteration of the constitution and the ombudsman, requires three-fourths majority vote by Parliament and assent of the governor general; passage of other amendments requires two-thirds majority vote and assent of the governor general; amended several times, last in 2018

Legal system

mixed legal system of English common law and customary law

International law organization participation

has not submitted an ICJ jurisdiction declaration; non-party state to the ICCT

Citizenship

citizenship by birth: no
 citizenship by descent only: at least one parent must be a citizen of the Solomon Islands
 dual citizenship recognized: no
 residency requirement for naturalization: 7 years

Suffrage

21 years of age; universal

Executive branch

chief of state: King CHARLES III (since 8 September 2022); represented by Governor General David VUNAGI (since 8 July 2019)
 head of government: Prime Minister Manasseh SOGAVARE (since 24 April 2019)
 cabinet: Cabinet appointed by the governor general on the advice of the prime minister
 elections/appointments: the monarchy is hereditary; governor general appointed by the monarch on the advice of the National Parliament for up to 5 years (eligible for a second term); following legislative elections, the leader of the majority party or majority coalition usually elected prime minister by the National Parliament; deputy prime minister appointed by the governor general on the advice of the prime minister from among members of the National Parliament
 election results: Manasseh SOGAVARE elected

prime minister on 24 April 2019

Legislative branch

description: unicameral National Parliament (50 seats; members directly elected in single-seat constituencies by simple majority vote to serve 4-year terms)
elections: last held on 3 April 2019 (next to be held in April 2023)
election results: percent of vote by party - UDP 10.7%, DAP 7.8%, PAP 4.4%, independent 56.3%, other 20.8%; seats by party - DAP 7, UDP 5, PAP 3, KPSI 1, SIPFP 1, SIPRA 1, independent 32; composition - men 46, women 4, percent of women 8%

Judicial branch

highest court(s): Court of Appeal (consists of the court president and ex officio members including the High Court chief justice and its puisne judges); High Court (consists of the chief justice and puisne judges, as prescribed by the National Parliament)
judge selection and term of office: Court of Appeal and High Court president, chief justices, and puisne judges appointed by the governor general upon recommendation of the Judicial and Legal Service Commission, chaired by the chief justice and includes 5 members, mostly judicial officials and legal professionals; all judges serve until retirement at age 60
subordinate courts: Magistrates' Courts; Customary Land Appeal Court; local courts

Political parties and leaders

Democratic Alliance Party or DAP [Steve ABANA]
Kadere Party of Solomon Islands or KPSI [Peter BOYERS]
People's Alliance Party or PAP [Sir Nathaniel WAENA]
Solomon Islands Party for Rural Advancement or SIPRA [Manasseh MAELANGA]
Solomon Islands People First Party or SIPFP [Dr. Jimmie RODGERS]
United Democratic Party or UDP [Sir Thomas Ko CHAN]

note: in general, Solomon Islands politics is characterized by fluid coalitions

International organization participation

ACP, ADB, AOSIS, C, EITI (candidate country), ESCAP, FAO, G-77, IBRD, ICAO, ICRM, IDA, IFAD, IFC, IFRCs, ILO, IMF, IMO, IOC, ITU, MIGA, OPCW, PIF, Sparteca, SPC, UN, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UPU, WFTU, WHO, WMO, WTO

Diplomatic representation in the US

chief of mission: Ambassador Jane Mugafalu Kabui WAETARA (since 16 September 2022)
chancery: 685 Third Avenue, 11th Floor, Suite 1102, New York, NY 10017
Tel: 1-212-599-6192
Fax: 1-212-661-8925
Email: simun@solomons.com

Diplomatic representation from the US

chief of mission: Russell Comeau, Chargé d'Affaires, a.i.
embassy: BJS Building, Commonwealth Avenue Honiara, Solomon Islands
Tel: 677-23426
Fax: 677-27429
Email: EmbassyHoniara@state.gov

Flag description

divided diagonally by a thin yellow stripe from the lower hoist-side corner; the upper triangle (hoist side) is blue with five white five-pointed stars arranged in an X pattern; the lower triangle is green; blue represents the ocean, green the land, and yellow sunshine; the five stars stand for the five main island groups of the Solomon Islands

National symbol(s)

national colors: blue, yellow, green, white

National anthem

name: "God Save Our Solomon Islands"
lyrics/music: Panapasa BALEKANA and Matila BALEKANA/Panapasa BALEKANA
note: adopted 1978

National heritage

total World Heritage Sites: 1 (natural) - East Rennell

EconomyEconomic overview

lower middle-income Pacific island economy; natural resource rich; primarily subsistence agriculture and fishing; land rights conflicts; fairly low public debt; underdeveloped financial sector; large, state-owned enterprise presence

Real GDP (purchasing power parity)

\$1.703 billion (2021 est.)

\$1.707 billion (2020 est.)

\$1.766 billion (2019 est.)

note: data are in 2017 dollars

comparison ranking: 201

Real GDP growth rate

-0.2% (2021 est.)

-3.38% (2020 est.)

1.75% (2019 est.)

comparison ranking: 194

Real GDP per capita

\$2,400 (2021 est.)

\$2,500 (2020 est.)

\$2,600 (2019 est.)

note: data are in 2017 dollars

comparison ranking: 202

GDP (official exchange rate)

\$1.298 billion (2017 est.)

Inflation rate (consumer prices)

-0.12% (2021 est.)

2.96% (2020 est.)

1.63% (2019 est.)

comparison ranking: 215

Credit ratings

Moody's rating: B3 (2015)

note: The year refers to the year in which the current credit rating was first obtained.

GDP - composition, by sector of origin

agriculture: 34.3% (2017 est.)

industry: 7.6% (2017 est.)

services: 58.1% (2017 est.)

comparison rankings: agriculture 14; industry 212; services 136

GDP - composition, by end use

household consumption: NA

government consumption: NA

investment in fixed capital: NA

investment in inventories: NA

exports of goods and services: 25.8% (2011 est.)

imports of goods and services: -49.6% (2011 est.)

Agricultural products

oil palm fruit, sweet potatoes, coconuts, taro, yams, fruit, pulses, vegetables, cocoa, cassava

Industries

fish (tuna), mining, timber

Industrial production growth rate

-3.84% (2020 est.)

comparison ranking: 183

Labor force

366,000 (2021 est.)

comparison ranking: 164

Labor force - by occupation

agriculture: 75%

industry: 5%

services: 20% (2000 est.)

Unemployment rate

1.03% (2021 est.)

0.92% (2020 est.)

0.75% (2019 est.)

comparison ranking: 222

Youth unemployment rate (ages 15-24)

total: 1.9%

male: 1.6%

female: 2.3% (2021 est.)

comparison ranking: total 200

Population below poverty line
12.7% (2012 est.)

Gini Index coefficient - distribution of family income
37.1 (2013 est.)
comparison ranking: 84

Household income or consumption by percentage share
lowest 10%: NA
highest 10%: NA

Budget
revenues: \$514 million (2019 est.)
expenditures: \$537 million (2019 est.)

Budget surplus (+) or deficit (-)
-2.9% (of GDP) (2017 est.)
comparison ranking: 128

Public debt
11.46% of GDP (2020 est.)
7.74% of GDP (2019 est.)
7.69% of GDP (2018 est.)
comparison ranking: 198

Taxes and other revenues
21.05% (of GDP) (2020 est.)
comparison ranking: 82

Fiscal year
calendar year

Current account balance
-\$78.192 million (2021 est.)
-\$25.06 million (2020 est.)
-\$153.998 million (2019 est.)
comparison ranking: 88

Exports
\$413.657 million (2021 est.)
\$428.834 million (2020 est.)
\$591.293 million (2019 est.)
note: data are in current year dollars
comparison ranking: 193

Exports - partners
China 65%, Italy 9%, India 6% (2019)

Exports - commodities
lumber, fish, aluminum, palm oil, cocoa beans (2019)

Imports
\$619.46 million (2021 est.)
\$556.26 million (2020 est.)
\$752.909 million (2019 est.)
note: data are in current year dollars
comparison ranking: 196

Imports - partners
China 24%, Australia 13%, South Korea 12%, Singapore 12%, Malaysia 10% (2019)

Imports - commodities
refined petroleum, fish, insulated wiring, broadcasting equipment, excavation machinery (2019)

Reserves of foreign exchange and gold
\$694.515 million (31 December 2021 est.)
\$660.996 million (31 December 2020 est.)
\$571.632 million (31 December 2019 est.)
comparison ranking: 160

Debt - external
\$757 million (31 December 2017 est.)
\$643 million (31 December 2016 est.)
comparison ranking: 172

Exchange rates
Solomon Islands dollars (SBD) per US dollar -
8.03 (2021 est.)
8.213 (2020 est.)
8.173 (2019 est.)
7.953 (2018 est.)
7.887 (2017 est.)

Energy

Electricity access

electrification - total population: 76.3% (2021)

electrification - urban areas: 79.2% (2021)

electrification - rural areas: 75.3% (2021)

Electricity

installed generating capacity: 40,000 kW (2020 est.)

consumption: 93.527 million kWh (2019 est.)

exports: 0 kWh (2020 est.)

imports: 0 kWh (2020 est.)

transmission/distribution losses: 14 million kWh (2019 est.)

comparison rankings: installed generating capacity 196; consumption 196; exports 133; imports 146; transmission/distribution losses 190

Electricity generation sources

fossil fuels: 94.8% of total installed capacity (2020 est.)

nuclear: 0% of total installed capacity (2020 est.)

solar: 2.7% of total installed capacity (2020 est.)

wind: 0% of total installed capacity (2020 est.)

hydroelectricity: 0% of total installed capacity (2020 est.)

tide and wave: 0% of total installed capacity (2020 est.)

geothermal: 0% of total installed capacity (2020 est.)

biomass and waste: 2.6% of total installed capacity (2020 est.)

Coal

production: 0 metric tons (2020 est.)

consumption: 0 metric tons (2020 est.)

exports: 0 metric tons (2020 est.)

imports: 0 metric tons (2020 est.)

proven reserves: 0 metric tons (2019 est.)

Petroleum

total petroleum production: 0 bbl/day (2021 est.)

refined petroleum consumption: 2,200 bbl/day (2019 est.)

crude oil and lease condensate exports: 0 bbl/day (2018 est.)

crude oil and lease condensate imports: 0 bbl/day (2018 est.)

crude oil estimated reserves: 0 barrels (2021 est.)

Refined petroleum products - production

0 bbl/day (2015 est.)

comparison ranking: 199

Refined petroleum products - exports

0 bbl/day (2015 est.)

comparison ranking: 137

Refined petroleum products - imports

1,577 bbl/day (2015 est.)

comparison ranking: 194

Natural gas

production: 0 cubic meters (2021 est.)

consumption: 0 cubic meters (2021 est.)

exports: 0 cubic meters (2021 est.)

imports: 0 cubic meters (2021 est.)

proven reserves: 0 cubic meters (2021 est.)

Carbon dioxide emissions

333,000 metric tonnes of CO2 (2019 est.)

from coal and metallurgical coke: 0 metric tonnes of CO2 (2019 est.)

from petroleum and other liquids: 333,000 metric tonnes of CO2 (2019 est.)

from consumed natural gas: 0 metric tonnes of CO2 (2019 est.)

comparison ranking: total emissions 194

Energy consumption per capita

6.955 million Btu/person (2019 est.)

comparison ranking: 165

Communications

Telephones - fixed lines

total subscriptions: 7,000 (2021 est.)
subscriptions per 100 inhabitants: (2021 est.) less than 1
comparison ranking: total subscriptions 198

Telephones - mobile cellular

total subscriptions: 470,000 (2021 est.)
subscriptions per 100 inhabitants: 67 (2021 est.)
comparison ranking: total subscriptions 175

Telecommunication systems

general assessment: mobile services have continually expanded in the Solomon Islands; 3G services became available in 2010, leading to an increase in mobile broadband uptake; Solomon Islands currently host three ISPs; fixed broadband services are largely limited to government, corporations, and educational organizations in the Solomon Islands; telecommunication infrastructure in the Solomon Islands requires significant investment due to the geographical make-up of the islands; this presents a great challenge to rural connectivity in the country; although various international organizations such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank have taken a special interest in having communication services improved in both the Solomon Islands and the Pacific region in general, internet and broadband penetration remain low; the provision of broadband infrastructure, particularly to rural areas, is also hindered by land disputes; internet services have, improved with the build-out of the Coral Sea Cable System linking Papua New Guinea to the Solomon Islands, as also with a connecting cable to a landing station at Sydney; the Australian government provided most of the funding for the Coral Sea Cable System, with contributions and support from the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea governments; the launch of the Kacific-1 satellite

in late 2019 also improved broadband satellite capacity for the region, though for telcos in Solomon Islands satellite services are now largely used as backup for international traffic; in recent years, the country has stabilized both politically and economically and this, along with improvements to mobile infrastructure, has led to a rise in mobile services and the slow uptake of broadband services; while the first LTE services were launched in late 2017 in the capital Honiara, the main platform for mobile voice and data services remains 3G, while in outlying areas GSM is still an important technology for the provision of services (2022)

domestic: fixed-line is less than 1 per 100 persons and mobile-cellular telephone density 67 per 100 persons (2021)

international: country code - 677; landing points for the CSCS and ICNS2 submarine cables providing connectivity from Solomon Islands to PNG, Vanuatu and Australia; satellite earth station - 1 Intelsat (Pacific Ocean) (2019)

Broadcast media

Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation (SIBC) does not broadcast television; multi-channel pay-TV is available; SIBC operates 2 national radio stations and 2 provincial stations; there are 2 local commercial radio stations; Radio Australia is available via satellite feed (since 2009) (2019)

Internet country code .sb

Internet users

total: 255,600 (2021 est.)
percent of population: 36% (2021 est.)
comparison ranking: total 175

Broadband - fixed subscriptions

total: 1,000 (2020 est.)
subscriptions per 100 inhabitants: 0.2 (2020 est.)
comparison ranking: total 206

Transportation

National air transport system

number of registered air carriers: 1 (2020)
inventory of registered aircraft operated by air carriers: 6
annual passenger traffic on registered air carriers: 427,806 (2018)
annual freight traffic on registered air carriers: 3.84 million (2018) mt-km

Civil aircraft registration country code prefix H4

Airports

36 (2021)
comparison ranking: total 108

Airports - with paved runways

1
note: paved runways have a concrete or asphalt surface but not all have facilities for refueling, maintenance, or air traffic control; the length of a runway required for aircraft to safely operate depends on a number of factors including the type of aircraft, the takeoff weight (including passengers, cargo, and fuel), engine types, flap settings, landing speed, elevation of the airport, and average maximum daily air temperature; paved runways can reach a length of 5,000 m (16,000 ft.), but the “typical” length of a commercial airline runway is between 2,500-4,000 m (8,000-13,000 ft.)

Airports - with unpaved runways

35
note: unpaved runways have a surface composition such as grass or packed earth and are most suited to the operation of light aircraft; unpaved runways are usually short, often less than 1,000 m (3,280 ft.) in length; airports with unpaved runways often lack facilities for refueling, maintenance, or air traffic control

Heliports

3 (2021)

Roadways

total: 1,390 km (2011)
paved: 34 km (2011)
unpaved: 1,356 km (2011)
note: includes 920 km of private plantation roads
comparison ranking: total 175

Merchant marine

total: 27
by type: general cargo 9, oil tanker 1, other 17 (2022)
comparison ranking: total 138

Ports and terminals

major seaport(s): Honiara, Malloco Bay, Viru Harbor, Tulagi

Military and Security

Military and security forces

no regular military forces; the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force is responsible for internal and external security and reports to the Ministry of Police, National Security, and Correctional Services (2023)

Military equipment inventories and acquisitions

China and Australia have provided equipment to the Solomons Islands Police Force; the maritime branch operates patrol boats provided by Australia (2022)

Military - note

Australia and New Zealand provide material and training assistance to the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (2023)
Transnational Issues

Disputes - international

from 2003 to 2017, at the request of the Solomon Islands Governor-General, the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI), consisting of police, military, and civilian advisors drawn from 15 countries, assisted in reestablishing and maintaining civil and political order while reinforcing regional stability and security

Acronyms and Abbreviations

°	degrees (of temperature or latitude/longitude)
\$	dollar(s) – Australian, New Zealand, or United States
ACMC	Australian Civil-Military Centre
ADB	Asian Development Bank
ADF	Australian Defence Force
ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency
AHP	Australian Humanitarian Partnership
ARG	Automatic Rainfall Gauge
AWS	Automatic Weather Stations
BCE/CE	Before Common Era (formerly BC) / Common Era (formerly AD)
BHA	Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (of USAID)
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CAASI	Civil Aviation Authority of Solomon Islands
CCA	climate change adaptation
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (of the U.S.)
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CFE-DM	Center for Excellence in Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRI	Climate Risk Index
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CRR	Climate and Risk Resilience
CS2	Coral Sea Submarine Cable
DART	Disaster Assistance Response Team (of USAID)
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (of Australia)
DHN	Declaration of Humanitarian Need
DMHA	Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance
DoD	Department of Defense (of the U.S.)
DPASI	Disabled Peoples Association of Solomon Islands
DRM	disaster risk management
DRR	disaster risk reduction
EA	Education Authorities
EM-DAT	Emergency Event Database
EOD	explosive ordnance disposal
ER4	early recovery, risk reduction, and resilience
EU	European Union
FDR	Foreign Disaster Response
GDP	Gross Domestic Product

GEWD	Gender Equality and Women's Development
GHG	greenhouse gas
GNI	gross national income
GSD	Geological Survey Division
HAA/M	Humanitarian Assistance Advisors to the Military
HADR	humanitarian assistance and disaster relief
HART	Humanitarian Assistance Response Training
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
HF	high frequency
HIR	Honiara International Airport
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICT	information and communications technology
IDA	Initial Damage Assessment
IDRM	Integrated Disaster Risk Management
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ICP	internet service provider
IOM	International Organization for Migration
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
JMSDF	Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force
km / km ²	kilometer(s)/square kilometer(s)
kW	kilowatt
m/m ²	meter(s)/square meter(s)
MCA	Ministry of Communications and Aviation
MCC	Millennium Challenge Corporation
MECDM	Ministry of Environment Climate Change and Disaster Management and Meteorology
MEHRD	Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development
MHEOC	MHMS Health Emergency Operations Centre
MHMS	Ministry of Health and Medical Services
MID	Ministry of Infrastructure Development
MMERE	Ministry of Mines, Energy and Rural Electrification
MNPDC	Ministry of National Planning and Development Coordination
MW	megawatt
NWYCFA	Ministry of Women, Youth, Children, and Family Affairs
N-DOC	National Disaster Operations Committee
NAP	National Action Plan
NCD	noncommunicable disease
NDC	National Disaster Council

NDMO	National Disaster Management Office
NDMP	National Disaster Management Plan
NEAP	National Education Action Plan
NEMSEP	National Emergency Management Special Events Planning
NEOC	National Emergency Operation Center
NERT	National Emergency Response Team
NFIS	National Financial Inclusion Strategy
NGO	non-governmental organization
NHSP	National Health Strategic Plan
NRH	National Referral Hospital
NRW	Non-Revenue Water
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ODA	official development assistance
OHDACA	Overseas Humanitarian, Disaster, and Civic Aid
OSOCC	On-Site Operational Coordination Center
P-DOC	Provincial Disaster Operations Committee
PCASS	Pacific Coalition for the Advancement of School Safety
PCRAFI	Pacific Catastrophe Risk Assessment and Financing Initiative
PDC	Provincial Disaster Committee or Pacific Disaster Center
PDMO	Provincial Disaster Management Office
PEN	Package of Essential Noncommunicable (disease interventions)
PEOC	Provincial Emergency Operation Center
PICT	Pacific Island Countries and Territories
PIEMA	Pacific Islands Emergency Management Alliance
PIF	Pacific Islands Forum
PRC	People's Republic of China
PWDSI	People With Disabilities Solomon Islands
RAMSI	Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands
RCC	Recovery Coordination Committee
RCP	Representative Concentration Pathway
RMNCAH	reproductive, maternal, neonatal, child, and adolescent health
RO-RO	roll-on-roll-off
RSIPF	Royal Solomon Island Police Force
RTC	Rural Training Centres
SBD	Solomon Islands Dollar
SCALE	Strengthening Competitiveness Agriculture and Livelihoods
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SIMS	Solomon Islands Meteorological Services
SDMP	school disaster management plan
SIAF	Solomon Islands Assistance Forces

SIBC	Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation
SIDN	Solomon Islands Domestic Network
SIEA	Solomon Islands Electricity Authority
SIIP	Solomon Islands Infrastructure Programme
SIMS	Solomon Islands Meteorological Services
SINCW	Solomon Islands National Council of Women
SINPF	Solomon Islands National Provident Fund
SINU	Solomon Islands National University
SIPC	Solomon Islands Postal Corporation
SITESA	Solomon Islands Tertiary Education and Skills Authority
SIWA	Solomon Islands Water Authority
SOLPEN	Solomon Islands Package of Essential Noncommunicable Disease
SOPE	State of Public Emergency
SPC	Pacific Community
STI	sexually-transmitted infection
TB	tuberculosis
TC	Tropical Cyclone
TCSI	Telecommunications Commission of Solomon Islands
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
U.S.	United States
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNDAC	United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDRR	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNPS	United Nations Pacific Strategy
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USINDOPACOM	U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (of the DoD)
USP	University of the South Pacific
UXO	unexploded ordnance
W/m ²	watts per meter squared
WASH	water, sanitation, and hygiene
WHO	World Health Organization
WPS	Women, Peace, and Security
WRD	Women's Resilience to Disasters
WWII	World War II

Endnotes

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Center for Excellence in Disaster Management & Humanitarian Assistance
456 Hornet Avenue, Building 76, Joint Base Pearl Harbor - Hickam, Hawaii 96860-3503
Telephone: 808.472.0518 | DSN: 315.472.0518
<https://www.cfe-dmha.org>

  @cfedmha