WOMEN IN GOVERNMENT IN SOLOMON ISLANDS

A DIAGNOSTIC STUDY

August-September 2006

Prepared By
Sherrill Whittington,
Sofi Ospina and
Alice Aruhe'eta Pollard.

October 2006

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abbreviations **2**

Executive Summary **3**

1.0 Introduction **5**

2.0 Conflict and Women's Political Representation **6**

3.0 Culture, Gender and Leadership: The Solomon Islands Context **8**

4.0 Key Pillars of Women's Empowerment in Decision-Making **11**

5.0 Barriers to Women's Leadership at National and Provincial Levels **14**

6.0 Addressing the Barriers **23**

7.0 Interim Initiatives **25**

8.0 In Conclusion **27**

ENDNOTES **29**

Abbreviations

AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
CEDAW	Convention on All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
FPTP	First Past the Post
GRM	
PS	Permanent/ Provincial Secretary
RAMSI	Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands
SIBC	Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation
SICA	Solomon Islands Christian Association
SICAFOW	Solomon Islands Christian Association Federation of Women
SICHE	Solomon Islands College of Higher Education
SIG	Solomon Islands Government
SINCW	Solomon Islands National Council of Women (NCW)
SIPRA	Solomon Islands Party of Rural Advancement
SIWBA	Solomon islands Women's Business Associations
SSEC	South Seas Evangelical Church
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
VBM	Vois Blong Mere
WDD	Women and Development Division
WFP	Women For Peace
WIL	Women in Leadership
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

Executive Summary

The 2006 elections witnessed yet another failure to secure a seat for women in the national parliament, thereby maintaining the Solomon Island's status at the bottom of the world's list of parliamentary representation of women.[i] With only one woman ever elected since independence in 1978, an examination of the barriers preventing a voice for women in the legislature is long overdue. These barriers are both systemic and systematic, with a traditional belief in 'big man' leadership resulting in the national realm of public decision-making being regarded as exclusively male, with women relegated to the domestic sphere. They emerged, however, from this during "the tensions" when they assumed the key role of peacemakers.

To understand why women in the Solomon Islands have been unable to achieve even minimal representation, it is necessary to examine the barriers impeding their progress. Despite the long-term existence of structures and mechanisms to develop and enhance women's participation and empowerment, such as the former Ministry for Women, Youth and Sport, the Women's Development Division, and its civil society counterpart, the Solomon Islands National Council for Women, there has never been a process of consensus-building around priority issues for women, from village-level to the capital.

This has been a major constraint, compounded by the failure to ensure ownership by women of their National Women's Policy which was endorsed by Cabinet in 1998, but never implemented. The Diagnostic Study found that this absence of a common vision for the advancement of women was obvious in the stories of the women candidates contesting the recent election. While they were very conscious of the needs of women at the constituency level, they spoke of their personal experiences and manifestoes rather than of a national agenda for women. Countries that have achieved a critical mass of women's representation have consolidated national level stakeholder support for a common platform and vision for women.

The constraints encountered in the electoral system, electoral process and during the campaign period are systemic and traditional obstacles. The Study found that not only does the 'First-Past-the Post (FPTP) system disadvantage women, but the fluidity of political parties resulting in a large number of independents also presented problems for female candidates in terms of lack of support and political experience. Failure to monitor non-compliance with the electoral laws, particularly concerning campaign finances regulations, resulted in huge amounts of funds being disbursed by candidates, which either deterred women from contesting or placed challenging financial burdens on those who did. The scarcity of female election administrators, and a civic education programme which failed to take into account the special needs of women, tended to minimise their role as political players, thus creating further barriers to their electoral chances. The Diagnostic Study concluded that the likelihood of women being elected in the future at either national or provincial levels is extremely low unless changes are made to the electoral system, and special affirmative measures, such as quotas or reserved seats, are legislated.

The disconnect between the national and provincial levels was highlighted by the fact that the vast majority of women candidates were Honiara-based, highly educated and economically empowered, and more than two-thirds did not reside in their electorates. This lack of affinity with their constituents was undoubtedly an impediment to their electoral

success, thereby necessitating a “two-tiered” approach that provides them with the capacity to bridge the gap, at the same time educating the electorate about the qualities of leadership.

This divide between Honiara and the provinces also mitigates against effective outreach by either the Women and Development Division (the national machinery for women), or the National Council of Women, both of which are poorly resourced, poorly placed to advance the status of women, and in need of substantial strengthening. As the Study concludes, strategies to enhance women’s formal leadership and decision-making roles have to address leadership issues at the national level, while strengthening the role of women’s church and community organisations to be the driving force for awareness-raising and change through an ongoing civic education programme.

In order to ensure that women do not continue to be disadvantaged by financial constraints, it is recommended that a women’s small grants electoral fund be established well ahead of the campaign period. Access to such a fund should be contingent upon the availability of special training programmes for women candidates to develop their skills in campaign strategies and budgeting. One interim measure could be a feasibility study to examine how similar models used elsewhere could be adapted for the Solomon Islands. This could be undertaken in conjunction with the establishment of a women’s political forum which could provide women candidates with support, solidarity and capacity building.

If such affirmative measures could be implemented with concurrent reform of the women’s national machinery, the outcomes for women’s representation in government will be more positive, ensuring that they play an effective role in decision-making at national and provincial levels.

1.0 Introduction

The objectives of this Diagnostic Study of Women in Government in the Solomon Islands are in keeping with the AUSAID White Paper which highlights the importance of gender equality to women's *participation and leadership in decision making*…. [ii] It aims to identify barriers to women's participation in all levels of government, to explore culturally appropriate strategies to address these constraints, and suggests Interim initiatives in advance of further programme design.

In order to elicit views on women's representation in parliament and decision-making bodies, and possible strategies to overcome the handicaps they face, extensive interviews were undertaken at national and provincial levels with members of parliament, senior government officials, members of the National and Provincial Councils of Women, women's groups, traditional authorities, NGOs and other representatives of civil society. Consultations also included visits to villages in the provinces of Malaita and Isabel. [iii] This was complemented by an extensive desk review of documents relevant to the empowerment of women, women in government and decision-making.[iv]

A two day workshop was organized in Honiara with the participation of 23 out of 26 candidates who had contested the 2006 parliamentary elections. The participants shared their experiences as candidates, identified barriers and constraints they faced during the elections and lessons learnt to improve women's chances in future elections.[v] Special commendation goes to these women who not only gave so generously of their time but also told their stories with such honesty. Without them a real understanding of the obstacles they faced would never have been gained.

The consultants would like to extend particular appreciation to Sue Ingram, Director of the RAMSI Machinery of Government programme for her insights and guidance, as well as her assistant, Feva Iabule who provided invaluable administrative support. Our thanks also to Joyce Wore and the GRM team who gave logistical support. Without such facilitation and assistance this Study would not have been possible.

This Diagnostic Study of Women in Government will serve as a basis for the Machinery of Government Program of RAMSI to develop a more comprehensive programme to strengthen women's participation in politics and decision-making, both nationally and provincially during the next four years.

2.0 Conflict and Women's Political Representation

The United Nations Secretary General, in his statement to the Security Council in October 2000 commented that "…*peace is inextricably linked to equality between women and men …maintaining and promoting peace and security requires women's equal participation in decision-making.* [vi] Applying a gender analysis will thus inform the character of structural changes needed to address the political, social and economic transformation of post-conflict peacebuilding. *The way in which gender is integral to peace, violent conflict, and development makes clear that a gendered analysis of peacebuilding – one that truly addresses the nature of power relations between women and men – is essential to preventing and mitigating new violent conflict in societies while helping them recover from current conflict.* [vii] A better understanding of unequal social hierarchies, inequality and oppression, which are often characteristics of societies that are prone to, or embroiled in conflict[viii] can create an enabling environment for inclusive peacebuiilding and reconstruction.

Application of gender analysis not only to conflict and its aftermath, but also to the development and application of gendered early warning indicators can also foster a "culture of prevention"[ix] According to Dr Annelise Moser, coordinator of a study conducted by UNIFEM in the Solomon Islands in 2005 to develop gendered early warning indicators, *We tracked 44 indicators and found that 12 of them were at a high risk level for potential conflict. The most high risk areas were in governance and land issues. So for example, amongst the governance indicators, corruption was a major issue, also women's lack of participation in political processes, came up as a high risk issue.*[x] The study concluded that women's exclusion from decision-making *is a critical risk factor, as research has found that states with a lower percentage of women in parliament are more likely to use violence to settle conflicts.* [xi] This finding based on research undertaken by Dr Mary Caprioli[xii] was reiterated in a study by International Alert, which provided a gender-sensitive rationale of the root causes of conflict being political, economic and social inequality. The study argued that *A 5 per cent decrease in the proportion of women in parliament renders a state nearly five (4.91) times as likely to resolve international disputes using military violence.* [xiii] Preliminary research suggests that countries with very low percentages of women in parliament and the formal labour sector, or cultures that restrict women, condone violence against them or treat women as property, are more likely to resort to armed conflict to settle disputes.

Not only can it be argued that a critical mass of women in elected bodies is more democratic and can create conditions that are less conducive to conflict, recent qualitative studies on the role of women in post conflict Rwanda and Cambodia indicate that in conflict-affected societies women are more trusted than men to be honest and incorruptible.[xiv] The World Bank reports that there is an inverse relationship between the number of women in public office and government corruption. It concludes that…*women (are) more trust-worthy and public-spirited than men. These results suggest that women should be particularly effective in promoting honest government. Consistent with this hypothesis, we find that the greater the representation of women in parliament, the lower the level of corruption,* that women are a good investment for building stronger democracies.[xv] Research also shows that when there is a critical mass of women leaders in government, they are more likely to allocate resources for policies that benefit women, children and families. …*that is, the more women*

who hold high political office..., the greater the constraints women can exert over political decisions.[xvi]

While the voice of women in the Solomon Islands has been virtually absent from the parliamentary arena since independence, they were instrumental in suspending the violence between Malaitan settlers and the indigenous people of Guadalcanal. The women formed the *Women for Peace Group*, issued a Women's Communique for Peace in May 2000 and had as their major objectives to build trust and confidence with the two militant groups, and to convince the fighting parties to lay down their arms. [xvii] But this crucial role in halting the conflict and building peace did not translate into a greater role for women in the formal peace processes or in the national legislature. Despite this integral role Solomon Islands women played, neither they nor their interests were represented at the peace negotiations. Unless special targeted interventions, with supportive mechanisms and processes are established to facilitate their direct involvement, women can be marginalised very rapidly, particularly in societies in which they do not have a voice. The achievement of sustainable peace was regarded as being jeopardized while *gender inequality as an issue faced by women in Solomon Islands w*as ignored and they were not "*equal partners in reforming the nation*".[xviii]

Unlike many other countries emerging from conflict and liberation struggles, there has been no concurrent rapid increase in female parliamentary representation in the Solomon Islands. The transition from conflict to post-conflict peacebuilding can provide an opportunity to redress inequalities in women's representation, and many post-conflict situations have provided a unique opportunity to introduce a more inclusive political framework to advance women's participation. Such is the case in Rwanda which tops the Inter-Parliamentary Union world list of women in national parliaments with 48.8%, Burundi at 30.5%, South Africa 32.8% Mozambique 34.8%, Afghanistan 27.3%, and Timor-Leste 25.3%,[xix]. While such indicators do not reflect an overall improvement in the social and economic status of women in these countries, they do show that women were able to take advantage of such critical windows of opportunity to become advocates for women's representation and to consolidate their roles as key players in national decision-making.

Such representation of women at all levels of decision-making is essential If peacebuilding is to develops a new paradigm for security, rule of law and inclusive governance. The promotion of both *de jure* and *de facto* representation of women, not only in national parliaments but in all levels of government, is not only an indicator of women's empowerment and equality but also enables a more participatory democratic process. Corruption, lack of inclusiveness in decision-making and failure to improve the welfare of its citizenry, are the hallmarks of a weak, even fragile state. The issue of the need for ethical leadership raised by many of the Solomon Islands parliamentary women candidates should become the guiding force to carry them forward as catalysts for democratisation, good governance, transparency and accountability, so that as agents of change they can once more assume the transformative leadership roles they did during "the tensions".

3.0 Culture, Gender and Leadership: The Solomon Islands Context

3.1 The Interface of Gender, Culture and Leadership

In analysing the impediments to women's participation in formal decision-making structures in the Solomon Islands, the role of culture in shaping attitudes to gender and leadership must be addressed. Gender roles are largely determined by the cultural context but they are dynamic. The fact that they can and do change is a very sensitive issue because of their impact on personal identity and, ultimately, on power relations. In Solomon Islands' societies, power and leadership have been traditionally a male preserve, upheld by the "big man" and "chief", and further authenticated and strengthened by both church and colonial hierarchies. This has reinforced the domestic role of women which despite changes in their educational and economic status is still regarded primarily as that of nurturer, caregiver, and supporter. Such gender stereotypes have promoted the male role of decision-maker at the macro level, thereby handicapping women who aspire to national leadership. In analyzing the current situation in the Solomon Islands, the fact that leadership is dominated by men at all levels and in all cultural, church or government spheres, needs to be understood and acknowledged. The process of advancing women in leadership will have to adopt a multi-level and sector-wide approach.

3.2 "Big man" leadership

The big man leadership is complex but premised on the masculine roles of: the warrior, feast giver and priest which are associated with masculinity, strength, fame and supernatural power. A big man leader gains the title through demonstrated leadership skills, achievements, proven character and accumulation of wealth. The type of leadership is relational, reciprocal and dependent on their followers, over whom they have a great deal of influence. As a forerunner of the contemporary politician, he builds strong relationships and connections with other big man alliances or factions and tribes. Because of his position, he is able to acquire great wealth through hosting grand feasts, and in turn he reciprocates through distribution of food and wealth to his followers. Thus, this type of male leadership is not acquired by birth, but earned through hard work and demonstrated leadership skills. This archetype became the model for the future political leader – male, wealthy and benevolent.

3. 3 Chiefly leadership

The other type of traditional leadership is that of chief, either born of a chiefly clan (hereditary) or selected from within the community due to demonstrated leadership skills, knowledge and industry. The latter plays a major role in supervising community activities, keeping law and order and ensuring that the community lives together peacefully and harmoniously. The hereditary chief deals with overall leadership, tribal and land issues that may arise in the community. Chiefly leadership is structured in most communities in the Solomon Islands. Exceptionally, in Isabel province it extends from the village through to the provincial level. This gives Isabel traditional leadership a greater role and partnership with the provincial government and church leadership, forming what they call "*Tripod Leadership*" which is not typical of elsewhere. Since Isabel is a matrilineal society, it allows women to be chiefs at the village and House of Chiefs levels, playing complementary roles to their male counterparts. Such a role for women merits further examination since it may well prove an entry point for enabling their participation in formal decision-making at the provincial level.[xx]

3.4 Church Leadership

The introduction of Christianity had a significant impact on the big man and chiefly leadership roles, with the Churches recognizing and embracing the importance of chiefly leadership in the community. They played complementary roles to traditional leadership by presenting a strongly masculine image which provided few opportunities for women. The Churches trained men to be leaders while women were taught to fulfil their roles as good housewives. While they established girls' schools and church women's groups, the Churches reinforced feminine roles by teaching skills in literacy, craft, nutrition, sewing, family care. Thus, the type of leadership skills women acquired prepared them to manage their homes, provide for family needs and lead the various activities of their women's group. It was not a training ground for national leadership.

On the other hand, male dominance of all church decision-making positions was upheld, in Pastors or Catechists at the village level and Presidents or Bishops of the church at the national level. For example, in 2003, the national SSEC head office had men in all key and upper positions while women were recruited for lower paid positions as cleaner, typist and homeopathic. Women's leadership in the church is limited to managing and leading their church women's groups as well as participating in church welfare activities. Women are represented, however in highest decision making bodies such as in the Church of Melanesia Synod and in the SSEC General Conference and Executive.

Religious rationale for male hierarchical dominance only serves to give a secondary role for women, which when coupled with the cultural expectations of their appropriate functions, provides further challenges to women's access to public office.

3.5 Parliamentary Leadership

Women's attempts to participate in the formal parliamentary leadership have been a recent development. British colonial rule from 1893 to 1978 was also dominated by men who were trained and recruited as administrators and village headman. While in principle, the Westminster parliamentary leadership system allowed men and women to compete equally, due to traditional, church and colonial promotion of male pre-eminence, the process has been very tough for women. Historically parliamentary leadership is extremely fluid and very dependent on the bargaining powers and processes of those in power. It reflects strongly individual male leadership traditions, with electors voting less on party lines or policies, than on factors such as personality, relationships, family ties, gift giving, hosting of feasts, chiefly power and cash donations.

This largely explains why despite the fact that a significant number of women have contested the seven national elections during the post independence period (1980 to 2006) they have been largely unsuccessful. The one exception is Hilda Kari who won in a 1989 by-election, and subsequently in the 1993 and 1997 elections. She was, however, unsuccessful in 2001 and 2006, with the current parliament (2006- 2009) continuing to be an all-male institution.

3.6 Women's Traditional Leadership

The near exclusion of women from legislative decision-making can largely be attributed to traditional notions of female leadership. In some cultural groups in the Solomon Islands, for example in `Are`Are society a woman can carry the big woman title for demonstrated

leadership skills, being industrious, performing religious rituals and participating fully in feasting processes. While chiefly leadership is traced through the first born son, land rights in `Are`Are lie in the ability to trace descent either through male or female links to the common ancestor in any particular territory. Both males and females have equal rights to land and are passed on from one generation to another. Land is not owned by any individual but collectively, thus cannot be sold, with women have the right to be consulted and make decisions on issues relating to land development. [xxi]

Women's access to education and the ability to read and write has given them greater access to leadership within the family, community and church. They have risen to leadership positions within various churches as teachers, youth workers, nurses, administrators, women's group leaders, missionaries and as preachers. Today, the five main churches have established and recruited national women coordinators of the church women's federation which in conjunction with the SICA Women's Desk can be an avenue for outreach and development of community awareness-raising programmes.

Only by reappraising these norms relating to acceptable gender roles can men and women come to a realisation that national development and advancement depends on having the experiences and expertise of the entire population utilised fully, with women equally assuming their place in all areas of decision-making

4.0 Key Pillars of Women's Empowerment in Decision-Making

4,1 Overview

The three key areas of women's empowerment are the elected spheres of legislative government; the national machinery for women (or Women's Ministry) placed strategically in the executive branch, both of which should be counterbalanced by strong civil society counterparts. Together these three areas provide the unifying vision and impetus for women's social, economic and political advancement. When such collaboration works effectively, women can be actively included in the democratic processes. While the status of Solomon Islands women has not been acquired through formal channels, it has been gained both nationally and abroad through alternative avenues such as education, marriage and foreign connections. But without either parliamentary representation or an effective women's government machinery, coupled with a weak national-level civil society network, there is no active inclusion of women in the democratic process and their interests are unrepresented in key areas of decision-making.

4.2 Parliament and legislative bodies

If women are to succeed in gaining representation, it will have to be a dual process given that the Solomon Islands is governed by two levels of government, National and Provincial. The National Parliament has a Prime Minister and a Cabinet of Ministers which he/she appoints, with elections for the National Parliament every four years. Currently there are fifty (50) seats in parliament which is all men. The Provincial Government structure is a translation of the National Government structure, with each Province electing its Provincial Members, forming the Provincial Assembly, headed by a Premier who is elected by Assembly members. Once the Premier is elected, he/she then appoints the Deputy Premier and Ministers with their allocated portfolios. As in all other key spheres of decision-making, male dominance of leadership is clearly evident in both areas, with no women elected representatives in the former, and only one woman in decision-making at the provincial level. There has only been one woman elected to the national Parliament since independence, and one woman to hold a ministerial portfolio, and that was Hilda Kari the former Minister of Women, Youth and Sports who is currently President of the Solomon Islands National Council of Women (SINCW). However, this did not open doors for women into legislative bodies, with women yet to break through the ceiling of traditional leadership norms.

While in principle, the Westminster parliamentary leadership system allows both men and women to compete equally, due to traditional, church and colonial promotion of male pre-eminence, the process has presented many barriers for women. Historically parliamentary leadership is extremely fluid and very dependent on the bargaining powers and processes of those in power. It reflects strongly individual male leadership traditions, with electors preferring not to vote on party lines or policies, but instead to decide in favour of factors such as personality, relationships, family ties, gift giving, hosting of feasts, chiefly power and cash donations. This largely explains why despite the fact that a significant number of women have contested both national and provincial elections during the post independence period (1980 to 2006) they have been largely unsuccessful

4.3 National Machinery for Women

Where women could have had a voice in government is in the national machinery which was established by the Solomon Islands Government in 1964. The Women's Interest Section (WIS) was set up a decade before the First United Nations World Conference on Women in 1975 and functioned more like an NGO, with a focus on the traditional family welfare and domestic science areas for women, providing training in cooking, agriculture, sewing, baking, weaving and health care. These training programs complemented the church and village traditional programmes and, by reinforcing traditional roles, were generally acceptable to all stakeholders.

Much of this early tradition of the WIS has been continued by it successor body, the Women and Development Division (WDD) which is the government arm for women. It is currently poorly resourced, and poorly staffed, and not able to fulfil its mandate of networking with other women's organizations such as the National Council of Women (NCW), five mainline church women's organizations, the Young Women Christian Association (YWCA), Vois Blong Mere(VBM) Solomon, Solomon Islands Women in Business Association and Soroptimist International which together form the national machinery for women in Solomon Islands. Furthermore, WDD has no strong links to the provinces or at the village level, and thus can neither be representative of women nor an agency for women's advancement. This agency is not an avenue for women's representation at all levels of government and across all issue areas, because it has neither the charter nor the resources to support women's upward mobility into key decision-making areas and unable to introduce gender equality issues into government policy debates.

4.4 Women's Civil Society Networks and Organizations

The Solomon Islands National Council of Women (SINCW) was established in 1983, following a submission made by WDD. The establishment of the SINCW gave rise to women's engagement in public awareness programmes on issues affecting women as well as catalyzing women's participation in decision making and political leadership. As an organization that challenged the male leadership domain, it came under heavy criticism by some churches, government, women and men alike. Without a functional Provincial Council of Women at the provincial and village level, SINCW is unable to implement its strategic plans for next year and beyond. Currently there is little or no regular dialogue between WDD and SINCW except at the Advisory or Executive meetings. One positive development, however, that SINCW has embarked on is the establishment of provincial Women's Resource Centres, which if implemented could provide the basis for revitalising NCW's outreach and effectiveness at community level.

4.5 Women's Leadership: acquired status

While the formal channels for women's advancement are either non-existent or non-functional, there is a cadre of women who have achieved status. Many Solomon Island individual women are not members of any women's organizations, neither do they receive support in any form from WDD nor NCW yet they participate actively in leadership at the family, community, church and national level. These women acquired leadership skills or were placed in leadership positions through inherited traditional leadership. This was gained through chiefly family status, church leadership status, personal leadership development, educational attainment and business development and wealth.

In today's context, high educational attainment, senior positions in formal employment, marriage to foreigners and wealth accumulation have endowed an echelon with social status and influence. With five female Permanent Secretaries in the Public Service (the highest level of women in decision-making), as well as prominent women who represent the country at international fora, there does exist a pre-eminent group from whom top women leaders could be drawn. The low representation in decision making positions is attributable to their scarce presence in the power networks out of which leaders emerge and are recruited. In order for women to play a decisive role in national leadership, the acquired status that has enabled many to be regarded as influential in the non-formal sector will have to be translated into the formal legislative and executive structures.

5.0 Barriers to Women's Leadership at National and Provincial Levels

5.1 Overview

In order for women to attain critical representation in both national and provincial decision-making, a number of barriers will either have to be removed or overcome. While there are no legal barriers to equal representation, the government is yet to put measures in place to enable it to live up to its constitutional and international obligations. The current irregularities in the electoral system, particularly in relation to voter registration and campaign finance, do not promote a fair contest. This is compounded for female parliamentary candidates who lack access to funding, have little connection with their electorate, and face gender discrimination because they are challenging women's traditional roles. Capacity to develop campaign strategies, network, and elicit support from key constituents are also essential if female representation is to be achieved. The absence, however, of complementary effective supportive mechanisms promoting gender equality within the government and of a strong, unified vision provided by civil society counterparts, also impedes women's leadership and advancement.

5. 2 Promotion of gender equality in Solomon Islands: the legal framework

The National Constitution of Solomon Islands enshrines the principle of non-discrimination and protection of fundamental rights and freedoms of all its citizens regardless of sex. Currently the draft constitution under discussion includes a stronger equal rights component reflecting the international commitments to which the Solomon Islands Government is a signatory. In this regard, the Government White Paper on the reform of the constitution states that: "*The new Constitution will guarantee equal rights for women and men in all spheres of public and private life, create affirmative mechanisms whereby the discrimination, disabilities and disadvantages to which women have been subjected are rapidly removed, and in doing so will actively affirm the country's commitment to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women(CEDAW) and ensure that women are heard in all issues, their contributions recognised and are able to participate actively in all levels of society*" (SIG, 2005: 33)[xxii]

Prior to signing CEDAW, the Government adopted a comprehensive National Women's Policy in 1998, with the current Government (2006) women and development policy calling for implementation of the earlier policy. Article 7 of CEDAW is relevant to the participation of women in political and public life including equal rights to vote and to be elected, to hold public office, to participate in policy formulation and implementation and in civil society organizations concerned with the country's public and political life. The adoption of temporary special measures (affirmative action) to accelerate 'de facto equality between men and women' in different areas is recommended in CEDAW's Article 4 to redress inequality between women and men, girls and boys in society, such as in education, political representation, employment, etc.[xxiii]

As a member of the Commonwealth, the South Pacific Forum, and the United Nations the Solomon Islands Government has endorsed key policy frameworks including the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, The Millennium Development Goals, The Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015, and the Revised Pacific Platform for Action on Advancement of Women and Gender Equality 2005-2015. All these policy frameworks

emphasize the promotion of gender equality and encourage the government to take action to increase the participation of women in decision-making in political, public and private sectors, with the adoption of at least a 30% target for women's representation. [xxiv]

Thus, the Solomon Islands constitutional framework and international commitments provide an enabling environment for the advancement of women and the promotion of gender equality. Measures need to be adopted to ensure that gender equality as articulated in the government's policy is translated into the political, economic and social spheres.

5.3 The electoral system- a key structural barrier

While there are no formal barriers to women's participation in either the national parliament or provincial assemblies, one of the key structural obstacles to women's equal participation is the nature of the electoral system. Electoral systems are not gender neutral, and women in the Solomon Islands have faced, and continue to face, persistent challenges relating to their political participation. Both at the national and provincial levels, the 'first-past the post' (FPTP) system, coupled with an unregulated weak party structure which generates a predominance of independent candidates and a necessity for unrestricted levels of campaign funding, only serve to exacerbate exclusion of women from decision-making at legislative levels.

Almost all of the top 15 countries with the highest global representation of women use a form of proportional representation, whereas the Solomon Islands, like many former British colonies, uses ***the FPTP system*** where candidates with the most votes win constituency seats.[xxv] In 2006, with an average of nine candidates per constituency, many women candidates noted that this 'winner-takes-all' approach was compounded by vote-splitting, largely due to the placing of 'dummy candidates' on voter lists. Thus, even though there were almost twice the number of female candidates in 2006 compared with the 2001 election, due to the larger number of male candidates,(427 as opposed to 315 in 2001), it was only just over a 2% proportional increase. Even if there is a more significant percentage of women contesting the 2010 national elections and interim provincial elections, while this type of electoral system remains in place without reform of other areas, women will still fail to secure representation at either national or provincial levels.

5.3.1 In the Solomon Islands a ***weak political party system*** predominates. In 2006 thirteen political parties contested, with some political parties claiming the same candidates. This system neither requires registration nor imposes rules or regulations on parties, which has resulted in a great deal of fluidity. Failure to engender party loyalty, with party members able to discard affiliations at will, both before and after being elected to the Parliament, is a deterrent to party membership and stability. While eleven of the twenty-six women candidates chose to contest the elections as party members, for reasons of commitment and/or financial support, others felt that the party manifestoes did not represent their values or reasons for contesting. The current parliament, as in the past, is an expedient coalition, which may not be given to party reform. Without this, any affirmative measures that could be taken to strengthen female party participation will fail to produce more equitable representation.

5.3.2 The issue of ***campaign finances*** was raised as a key impediment to women's equal participation in the elections. Failure by the Electoral Commission to enforce its regulated ceiling of $50,000 on campaign expenditure, has resulted in astronomical amounts being

distributed among the electorate, particularly on the eve of the election, often by candidates who had rarely visited their constituencies either before or during the month-long campaign. [xxvi] Vote buying can occur through patronage relationships, with promises of larger gifts if the candidate is successful.

5.3.3. Either a cause or result of the weaknesses inherent in the party system is the history of a ***large number of independent candidates*** contesting national elections. In 2006 there was a 50% turnover in the 50-member unicameral parliament with independents taking 60% of the all votes and a total of 30 seats in parliament. More than half of the female candidates ran as independents, which gave them freedom to decide their own platforms and campaign on issues of ethical leadership, a common reason for women choosing to be independent but also meant that many gained little or no political experience. The culture of 'big man 'politics which upholds the tradition of the individual providing for the needs and welfare of the electorate, mitigates against women who are not regarded as capable of such delivery.

5.4 The Electoral Process

The most discernible role that women play is that of voters, with very little evidence otherwise of participation in the formal process. As noted in the Commonwealth Observer Report on the 2006 elections: *The majority of the polling stations visited were totally staffed by male officials. Only three polling stations visited had a woman as a presiding officer. There were some women polling assistants and polling agents but they were in a severe minority".* [xxvii] This near invisibility of women again conveys a tacit message that the public arena is not their domain, particularly when it comes to the all-important process of electing a new government.

5.4.1 ***Voter registration*** is undertaken to ensure that all eligible voters can participate, with those ineligible prevented from voting, and to safeguard against voter fraud, such as multiple voting. Voter registration can be either by a self-initiated system, where electors take the initiative to register, or state-initiated registration by national or local authorities. According to the reports of a number of women candidates, the registrar was located in a particular place in the village, and people had to go there to register, whereas in previous elections registration had been undertaken 'door-to-door'. In some instances, those appointed officially as registrars sub-contracted the task, often to individuals involved in campaigning for parliamentary candidates, and who then proceeded either to register voters who supported their candidate or used the process to canvass support. According to the Report of the Commonwealth Observer Group[xxviii]both double registration and voting where one was a non-resident, were quite common, as well as male heads of households registering on behalf of entire families.

5.4.2 ***Election administration*** is undertaken in the Solomon Islands by the Electoral Commission, consisting of the Speaker of the National Parliament as Chair, with two members appointed by the Governor-General for a specific period, from the conclusion of a parliament to oversee the election of the subsequent parliament. This election management body (EMB) has very broad powers, which include registration, complaints adjudication and oversight of the campaigning, voting and counting processes. Any decisions and policies adopted by such bodies can have a significant impact on women's participation in elections, thus necessitating the adoption of a gender-aware approach to all aspects of the election.

This should extend to inclusion of women in leadership and membership positions, and at all levels of administration.

5.5 The Election Campaign

5.5.1 ***Overview:*** Many of the above issues were raised by women candidates who contested this year's election,[xxix] and whose experiences during the campaign period highlight the personal difficulties they faced in running for office. Whether they chose to run as independents or party representatives, the majority decided to contest because they believed they could make a difference, or because they advocated equal participation in decision-making. As one candidate explained: "*there is no vision because men only see one side, and decisions are incomplete if women are not involved".* Others were motivated by development issues, wanting to help people providing roads and basic services for the communities.

Consistent with Solomon Islands elections, the majority chose to stand as independents because they believed this gave them power to negotiate for their constituency on key issues, and to promote policies on women's interests not included in any political party's manifesto. Around 40% of candidates joined a political party for financial, ideological and practical reasons whether as an independent or party member; the major obstacle the women encountered was being accepted as a female parliamentary representative in the context of 'big man' leadership. While the prestige women candidates acquired through family connections, business, education, or marriage provided the confidence, personal resources and determination to run, it may also have worked against their chances of being elected by separating them geographically and socially from their constituencies.

5.5.2 Cultural attitudes: An analysis of the candidates' backgrounds reveals that the most striking aspect the twenty-six women had in common was that they did not typify the traditional female role. This was evidenced by their varied social backgrounds, with some members of chiefly families, others from families holding church leadership, and a number having their own or a family business, which provided standing and support for their candidacies. While this would have also been the case for male candidates, such status is culturally acceptable for males, indicative of his 'big man' leadership.

Cultural barriers were evidenced by the reactions of both traditional and religious leaders to the candidates. Some traditional elders asserted that the appropriate place for women was inside the household and the garden. They emphasised that leadership positions were only for men, in one instance demanding pigs as compensation for a woman challenging traditional leadership, in another threatening to fine any woman voting for a female candidate. Religious leaders were also influential in upholding male leadership norms, claiming that the Bible does not support women in leadership. In some of the constituencies, church ministers used their positions of power and trust and public speaking skills to influence the vote.

The majority of women candidates challenged these norms by having achieved higher levels of education, with some completing tertiary education and others studying abroad, thereby enhancing their informal leadership roles and their confidence to contest. Around twenty per cent of candidates were married to non-Solomon Islanders which also provided an acquired status at the same time as being a source of criticism from opposition campaign managers and supporters. One candidate married to a New Zealander was queried about imposing

white man's ideas, while another had her citizenship questioned so often in the villages that she carried her passport as proof. On of the most negative factors working against these women, and others who had lived abroad, was that they were now considered elitist, too far above their constituents and had to be called 'missus'.

Yet another distinguishing aspect of this group which ran counter to cultural norms was the percentage that were widowed, divorced, or separated. This gave rise to particular discrimination during the campaign, with detractors using political 'assassination' techniques, insinuating that they would be unable to run the "House" (i.e. the national parliament) because they were unable to handle their own houses. Supporters of male competing candidates often deliberately undermined the position of these women candidates, asking unmarried women whether they were going to become an "O2", a second wife, without control of finances.

5.5.3 ***Lack of linkages with constituency:*** Not only did such pervasive cultural attitudes mitigate against women achieving office, another important impediment was that the vast majority of women did not live in their electorates, and had failed to build a constituency support base. Eighty-one percent of the female candidates lived in Honiara but stood in different constituencies throughout Solomon Islands which further distanced them from their electorates. This meant they did not have much contact with the voters and were regarded as unfamiliar with local issues and unreliable parliamentary representatives. While no similar analysis has been undertaken of male candidates, the very traditional view of the normalcy of male leadership, coupled with their much greater access to financial support, discriminates positively in their favour. But if the electorate were made aware of good governance and responsible representation, they would become more discerning about qualities of leadership and be less susceptible to bribery and corruption.

5.5.4 ***Campaign finance:*** Where women are economically disadvantaged, and the vast majority are without access to personal finances, the race is open only to those from well-to-do, educated elite, who are neither representative of women in their electorate nor of women in the Solomon Islands generally. While this undoubtedly also holds true of male candidates, women lacking financial resources to underpin their campaigns have very little chance of being regarded by their voters as capable of returning services and commodities to the electorate, and are thus rendered unelectable.

Finance was one of the major barriers women faced as candidates. Most candidates attribute their electoral failure to the lack of financial resources to compete on equal terms with men. While those in political parties had, in most cases, their registration fees covered, the majority who were independents had to raise their own funds, either by having events, using personal finances or taking out loans. The majority of candidates did not make an estimate of the budget needed for their candidacy and their campaign running costs to cover expenditures such as transportation and feeding campaign teams and supporters.

Female candidates were asked for money by their constituents in exchange for votes, a practice which has had a negative impact on the communities, changing democratic values into a culture of votes for money. Many referred to the 'devil's night', that is election eve, when it is a common practice for campaign managers and supporters to distribute money to ensure votes. One woman candidate referred to this as "money talk", with the illiterate and poor "*going for the money, and this is how the vote swings'*.

5.5.5 ***Campaign strategies and use of the media:*** Despite the lack of funds, women employed a number of campaign strategies to reach out to their constituencies. Rallies, village-to-village visits and public meetings were held, as well as sensitization workshops for campaign teams. Meetings were organised with women's organisations and youth groups in villages to share their ideas and manifestos and gain their support. Music in recreation areas and reggae parties in discotheques were used to get their message across to young people. Other candidates invited people for campaign dinners or made presentations to their congregations after the church services. Pamphlets, flyers and posters were also used by some candidates. Vois Blong Mere aired radio programs interviewing some of the women candidates and *The Solomon Star* published the names of the candidates free of charge. Nevertheless, most candidates did not know how to use the media effectively, and thus not proactive in contacting the Solomon Islands Broadcasting Commission or newspapers.

Failure to develop either a clear women's electoral message or to have a common campaign strategy was a major area of weakness for the women candidates, thus necessitating focus on campaign outreach and development of media strategies.

5.5.6 ***Training and capacity building:*** Prior to the 2001 elections women candidates did not receive any special training or capacity-building. In 2006 women candidates had access to two capacity building trainings, one run by the Women in Leadership (WIL) programme of the National Council of Women, the other by UNIFEM. The Women in Leadership Programme aimed to develop the capacity of potential female candidates and to equip them with the required skills in public speaking and campaigning. The National Council of Women also supported for some of the candidates by writing letters of appeal for fundraising, providing a vehicle or conducting awareness-raising sessions.

Information regarding the Women in Leadership programme was sent from NCW by email, letter, radio or personal contacts. The programme covered areas of leadership, good governance, the electoral commission, the voting system, public speaking and experience sharing. While a more in-depth analysis of the WIL programme has been recently undertaken, lack of planning, coordination and systematic, effective outreach limited the number of candidates who actually participated. This was also made more problematic by the fact that the programme ended before many women had decided to contest.

.

UNIFEM Australia carried out two week's training from 29 August 2005 to 9 September 2005, using a condensed version of the UNIFEM Pacific Women and Political Empowerment Manual which focused on building confidence, public speaking, campaigning and good governance. Between 50 to70 participants attended the training including 18 potential candidates. Two thirds of the participants were young men, chiefs, elders, with half of the participants from rural areas, some of whom became supporters and campaign managers.

While a number of those who eventually contested did have access to some capacity-building, others regretted not having participated in the training and would like to see an ongoing programme for skills development and strategic planning.

5.6 The National Machinery for Women in Government- Women and Development Division (WDD)

Through facilitating women's representation, women's national machineries have the potential to contribute to the process of democratization, whether the country is undergoing

transitions to democracy, struggling to maintain a stable democracy, or looking to make a stable democracy more democratic. Today the focus of these mechanisms is on gender equality and the major obstacles to their success often include lack of political will at the highest levels of government, combined with lack of human and financial resources and clear mandates. This is very much in evidence with the Women's Development Division, housed currently in the Ministry of Home Affairs. As defined in the 1998 Review of WDD, *the **national machinery** for women's development as generally used and understood in the Solomon Islands context refers to **all existing organizations and women's groups that are working together in implementing women's programmes and promoting women's development.** The current National Machinery for promoting women's development in the Solomon Islands comprise: **the Women and Development Division, the National Council of Women, other government departments, the Church women's groups, NGOs and the NGO women's organizations** and overseas **development partners.**[xxx]*

Since its establishment over twenty years ago, WDD has undergone many transformations. In 1986, WDD refocused its attention beyond traditional welfare areas and embraced topics such as leadership, research and information, appropriate technology, income generation activities and became a Division in its own right. It was instrumental in establishing the National Council of Women to co-ordinate the various women's groups in Solomon Islands, and to act as an umbrella body and "mouthpiece". In 1988 WDD facilitated a national survey on women's issues which formed the basis for the National Women's Policy, endorsed a decade later. In its earlier period, and as part of the Ministry of Women, Youth and Sport until 2001, WDD did undertake an important role in influencing government's policies and decision-making with regards to women's development. However, WDD as the government arm for women is not in a position to publicly critique the government, advise, review and evaluate government policies and programmes, or advocate for women in political leadership. Instead, it is an implementing agency for government policies.

5.6.1 *WDD policy of Grand Coalition for Change*

The Grand Coalition for Change Government of Prime Minister Sogavare released its Policy Translation and Implementation Document in August 2006 in which WDD is designated the lead agency for implementing the Women in Development Policy (Number 10.5). [xxxi]This policy requires WDD before the end of 2007 to:

- *Re-activate and prioritize all policies, draft legislation or strategic intent relating to women and gender issues;*
- *Pursue the implementation of the National Women's Policy;*
- *Implement legislation embracing other ministries on protection of women and children in line with international standards;*
- *Publish, distribute and promote the contents of CEDAW with a view to formulating a broad-based policy;*

5.6.2 *Weaknesses of WDD – lack of functional capacity:*

Given the fact that WDD is marginalised, understaffed and poorly resourced, and lacking an outreach capacity to the provinces, it cannot in its current state meet the delivery requirements of this policy. While in 1997 WDD had ten staff, this has now diminished to two headquarters' staff with no WDD seconded officers at provincial level. There are two directly appointed provincial WDD officers in Choisuel and Guadalcanal Provinces, with the third provincial position in Malaita abolished in June this year. The failure to fill the WDD Director's position which has been vacant since 2002, and its subsequent downgrading in 2005 by the Public Service Commission, coupled with vacancies in two junior positions in

the Division, has left it severely under-resourced and incapable of fulfilling its mandate. Currently its major activity is training, with the focus being income–generating skills such as cooking and sewing, as well as women's rights and CEDAW.

Being peripheral to mainstream government, and lacking both policy skills and outreach capacity, WDD cannot undertake a review of the National Women's Policy and will be unable to review or reactivate the entire range of legislation pertaining to gender and women's issues. At present this Division is caught between an awareness of the need to work more constructively on policy and legislative issues at the national level, and the more concrete demands of local constituencies of women who would like to see the national machinery play a more traditional role and implement projects.

5.7 Women's Civil Society Organisations

5.7.1 The Solomon Islands National Council of Women

The Solomon Islands National Council of Women (SINCW) was established in 1983, following a submission made by WDD then known as Women's Interest Office. SINCW was to be an autonomous and independent body that could speak out on behalf of women on issues affecting women's lives at all levels. In addition, it would also play a coordination role and act as the umbrella body for all women's organizations. Its main roles were to act as a mouthpiece, a forum, a watch dog and a collective voice to the government on issues affecting women. SINCW was to operate as an NGO but linking well with the WDD in terms of accessing its annual subvention grant ($150,000) given by the government. SINCW is administered according to its constitution. It was reviewed in 1986 and 1998 and was suspended three times, 1988, 1992 and 1998. These suspensions were caused poor management, misappropriation of funds and confusion over the roles and functions of WDD and SINCW.

The establishment of the SINCW gave rise to women's engagement in public awareness programs on issues that affect women as well as awaken women's participation in decision making and political leadership which are considered as men's domain. As an organization that challenged men's leadership domain, it came under heavy criticism by some churches, government, women and men alike. Generally, SINCW challenged the status quo and was accused of being an organization that was advocating for women's liberation and feminism associated with the Western world. The Women in Leadership desk, a project of the SINCW performed some political awareness campaign in some of the constituencies that women candidates were contesting. Many other women candidates were missed out of that opportunity.

While one positive development embarked on recently by SINCW is the establishment of Women's Resource Centres at the Provincial level, the Council has limited human resources and operates mainly at the national level with little outreach beyond Honiara. This complex situation and difficulties such as lack of financial support, team work, poor communication facilities, poor infra-structure and lack of logistical support at the provincial level have made it difficult for Provincial Councils of Women to operate effectively. SINCW is thereby unable to implement its strategic plans for next year and beyond. Consultations with rural women indicated that SINCW lacks outreach and is regarded as a Honiara entity, Thus, rural women are yet to embrace SINCW as an organization that they own and accept as representing them at all levels.

5.7.2 *Church Women's Organisations*

The churches reach effectively into the village level across the country. The mainstream church women's organizations namely the Mother's Union, the United Church Women's Fellowship, the Catholic Women's Council, the SSEC Women's Fellowship and the Dorcas Welfare Society form the Solomon Islands Christian Association Federation of Women (SICAFOW). These Church women's groups are structured from the national level to the village level. Each respective church women's group has developed its own mechanism and functions in accordance with their church national structure. For example, the Mother's Union has a National Executive, a Diocesan Executive, a Regional Executive, a District Executive, a Parish Executive and a Village Executive. These Executive groups work on a voluntary basis. The SICAFOW Women's desk coordinates women's activities through their various church women's groups' network which provide an effective mechanism that reaches rural women. SICAFOW women's desk integrates other training programs such as literacy, leadership, health, sewing and cooking with their prayer and fellowshipping activities. The church women's groups[xxxii] have the potential in terms of having an operational structure and human resources but would require logistical support to ensure efficient service delivery at all levels.

5.7.3 Other Organisations

There are other women's organizations such as the Vois Blong Mere Solomons (VBMS), Women for Peace (WFP) group and Solomon Islands Women in Business Association (SIWBA). VBMS aims at promoting women's issues, news and stories through the media. VBMS works closely with the WDD, SINCW, the Church women's groups and other NGOs. It operates a women's resource centre and encourages research into women's issues. It is funded under the Bread for the World agency. VBMS is based in Honiara only and has no or little network to the village level except when conducting tours to different parts of Solomon Islands. Radio is an effective way to communicate with those in the villages but is limited to those villages reached by functioning SIBC transmitters and those people who have access to a radio.

The WFP group is also based in Honiara and was established in response to the civil conflict in 2000. WFP group focus its program on advocating for peace through weekly prayer meetings, training in counselling and leadership and microfinance scheme for its members only. In addition, SIWBA centres its activities around women's efforts in business development, especially the grassroots women and is based only in Honiara. One of the positive examples is the Grassroots Women in Self-employment group in Honiara who engages themselves in small income generating activities such as selling flowers, shell jewelleries and sewn items at the main market or to the public

6.0 Addressing the Barriers

Ways of addressing these barriers need to be undertaken expeditiously. Absence of women in the current parliament and in all but one of the provincial assemblies means a lack of representation for half the population, with women's issues and views not incorporated into decision making. Areas such as the electoral system, election financing and the campaign need to be examined with discriminatory impediments removed by affirmative action measures. In order to promote gender equality, focus should also be given to strengthening the government mechanism for women, the Women's Development Division and its complementary civil society body, the National Council for Women.

6.1 ***Electoral system*****.** In order to level the playing field, reform of electoral legislation governing voting processes, limits to campaign financing and political parties needs to be reviewed. The consideration of alternatives to the current electoral system based on a single seat constituency (FPTP) which allows one leader from each electoral district is timely. Within a traditional cultural context that upholds the primacy of male leadership, the chances of a woman being elected are minimal. One model worth considering is a multi-seat constituency system as practised in both Kiribati and Vanuatu.[xxxiii] Another possibility could be the mixed preferential and alternative voting system, as happened in Fiji and will apply in the 2007 national elections in Papua-New Guinea, which would allow women a more equitable chance of representation at all levels. [xxxiv] This would entail, however, a more viable party system, perhaps with fewer and more functional political parties[xxxv] which could be required to specify their position on gender equality and adopt more open and transparent candidate nomination procedures. A code of conduct regulating the behaviours of candidates would help to avoid political 'assassination' of women candidates.

6.2 ***Special Measures*** should be reviewed and introduced to ensure a number of seats be reserved for women in the Parliament and provincial assemblies. As a state party to CEDAW, [xxxvi]. the Government of the Solomon Islands is obligated to examine special measures to redress the lack of women's representation. According to the draft Constitution currently under consideration, which the Prime Minister, Mr Sogavare has committed to have approved by February 2007, "Within three years of coming into force of this constitution, a law shall be enacted to secure a fair representation of women in Parliament".[xxxvii] One equitable fast-track measure could be the introduction of legislation mandating either quotas and/or reserved seats, [xxxviii] with the former setting aside a percentage of existing parliamentary seats for women and the latter reserving seats where only women can be elected. [xxxix] Such was the case in Bougainville where the role of women as peacemakers was formally recognised by allocating three women-only seats. [xl] No such recognition of women's role in working to bring about an end to "the tensions" in the Solomon Islands has been accorded. A special measure of adding reserved seats to the current parliamentary total could be a temporary measure, with women directly elected rather than appointed[xli]. This would assure women's representation, and enable women to become experienced parliamentarians, dispelling the prevalent discriminatory stereotype that women do not belong in the legislature, thus making female decision-makers normative rather than exceptional. [xlii]

6.3 ***Campaign Funding*** is a serious economic barrier given women's limited resources. One way of redressing this inequity could be provision of a donor fund for women candidates which could be disbursed in the form of a small loans grant up to the current

$50,000 ceiling. This could be applied for well ahead of the start of a campaign, and be supported by capacity-building programmes for women candidates in campaign planning.[xliii] Existence of such a fund would encourage many more women to consider contesting who at present are either deterred by the financial demands of a campaign and would relieve them of the necessity of fund-raising while simultaneously running for office.[xliv]

6.4 ***Building a Constituency Base***
To overcome the lack of connection between women candidates and their constituents, a "two-tiered" programme should be developed. It should enable women to identify with the voters and issues in their electorates, and to secure key backing, at the same time as working with the electorate to build their understanding of and capacity for women's leadership. The voters need to be educated about the value of women's representation, as do the candidates on how to engage constituency support.

6.5 ***Civic education*** The ground needs to be prepared well in advance to create an enabling environment supportive to female candidates. Civic education at the grassroots level needs to start as soon as possible to raise the awareness of rural communities about good governance, transparency and accountability. It needs to include gender-sensitive content explaining the importance of women's vote to defend women's interests and encouraging women to vote and to stand for election and leadership positions. Education should also address ethical standards for the selection of leaders and raise the awareness of citizens about their part and responsibility in reducing corruption. Additional efforts are needed to target traditional leaders, the church leadership and women's church groups to sensitize them on good governance and the right of women as citizens to participate in decision-making.

6.6 ***Capacity Building*** The preparation of potential candidates for provincial and national levels needs to be strengthened through capacity building, and start as soon as possible. A range of models need to be examined, evaluated and adapted to local needs. One such model is the UNIFEM Programme for Enhancing Rural Women's Leadership and Participation in Nation Building in Timor-Leste. This nation-wide programme is based on concepts and principles of transformative leadership in which women are prepared as potential candidates to contest local elections and to increase their participation in power structures at local levels. The training aims to build greater confidence in women as leaders, to ensure better informed voting, to enhance the links between elected women and their constituencies, and to promote their accountability to their electorate and to the women's agenda.

6.7 ***Women's National Machinery***. The National Women's Machinery in Solomon Islands is premised on the functional roles of the WDD, SINCW, Church Women's Groups and other Women's Organisations such as the VBMS, WFP group and SIWBA. Networking and efficient service delivery amongst them and to the women is critical. Similarly, the SINCW currently has two staff at the national level with assistance from volunteers. SINCW's direct link to the village women's groups is non-existent. There is very little activity happening at the Provincial level due to a weak administrative setup, lack of financial backup, lack of logistical support and poor communication and infra-structure. Regular communication and dialogue between and amongst the members of the National Women's Machinery is minimal and in some cases non-existent at all levels.

To be effective and sustainable, national machineries for women should be *embedded in the national context, the political and socio-economic system and the needs of and*

accountability to women. [xlv] They should also function as the central policy coordinating unit for gender issues, placed at the highest possible level of government, and invested with the authority and resources needed to fulfill their mandates. WDD as currently constituted is very poorly placed to implement the new Grand Coalition Policy for women. The 1998 review recommended the strengthening of WDD, with posts to be filled at headquarters and in the provinces and many of its functions decentralized to the provincial level. If a Department of Women and Youth is to be established as recommended in *Policy No: 10.5 (c),* WDD will have to be augmented considerably.at national and provincial levels. A more effective WDD will be better placed to implement the current government policies and to foster regular dialogue and support to SINCW and other women's organisations. WDD should refocus its priority areas at the national level, encompassing training, policy formulation, research and data collection, acting as a clearing-house for such information. It could also undertake national coordination, mentoring and evaluation, in conjunction with capacity building on gender equality for their own staff, focal points and senior managers in partner ministries. Strengthening the leadership component within the government machinery will have to be coupled with close collaboration with the church women's organizations integrating leadership into their group activities at all levels.

7.0 Interim Initiatives

Before a longer term programme can be developed and implemented, the following interim initiatives could provide a basis for more sustainable measures to address the equal participation of women in decision-making:

7.1 Database of Women to be compiled with profiles of women leaders in Public Service(incl. Parliament); Provincial Councils; Education; Health; Churches; CSOs; NCW; Law and Justice(incl. police); Business; Women Parliamentary candidates; Media; Community Groups. Such a database would be used for establishing reference groups and consultative mechanisms, selection of women for committees, special focus groups etc. It could be housed in WDD.

7.2 Build on outcomes of Ethical Leadership Forum taking place under auspices of SICA and partners in Honiara November 2006. This Forum can form the basis of a comprehensive rural women's leadership programme at village level which can be developed with Church women's organisations, Winds of Change, community women's groups.

7.3 Model for Provincial Civic Education : building on the civic education programmes undertaken before the 2006 elections, hold a workshop to examine a mechanism, assess availability of materials, suitability and adaptation, as well as a strategy and plan of action for implementation of a culturally appropriate provincial civic education programme. This could lead to the production of an inclusive, participatory and gender-aware provincial civic education resource package, with women, men and youth involved in all stages of design and implementation. This could be a model for civic education to reach women on the ground.

7.4 Women's Political Forum : As a follow-up to the Workshop conducted for Women Political Candidates, explore interest in the potential development of a mechanism involving all women candidates – present, past and future- where women could gain campaign advice and support; receive capacity-building for elections, and develop a shared vision and

common strategies. Such a mechanism could also be a conduit for donor-assisted election funding;

7.5 Fund for Women Candidates: Undertake a short feasibility study of a potential donor fund for women candidates at national and provincial levels.

7.6 Explore Government Interest in a Dialogue to Examine other Models for the Women's Development division in light of the new Policy of the Grand Coalition for Change, WDD as a key pillar for women's leadership in executive government is ill-equipped to be the implementing agency. Undertake a dialogue with the Department of Home Affairs regarding the role of WDD in policy implementation.

7.7 Support WDD to develop a Clearing-House Capacity: As is the case with national machineries for women elsewhere, WDD could be supported to become a clearing-house for information about and for women in the Solomon Islands.

7.8 Areas for Further Research

7.8.1. Participatory research in an example of constituencies to determine voting patterns in regards to women candidates and explore whether there is a clear support base and/or a "women's vote" which could be enhanced in forthcoming elections.

7.8.2 To determine why people voted for certain candidates, undertake participatory research on a sample of male candidates – for example the 26 new MPs elected in April 2006. Were they Honiara-based? What support base did they have at provincial level? What were their linkages with their constituencies? What makes for a winning candidate?

8.0 In Conclusion

Without a voice in key decision-making areas of government, women of the Solomon Islands have been marginalised and redressing this will require immediate and longer-term direct interventions. The electoral system and process need to be re-evaluated to ensure transparency, lack of corruption, and elimination of gender discrimination. Public understanding of women's leadership roles and gender awareness should be mainstreamed in a revised approach to civic and voter education, starting at the provincial levels.

Capacity-building for women at all levels of government, at both national and provincial levels is essential, with networks developed and linkages consolidated among all of the major partners: WDD, SINCW, SICA FOW, and other community groups and organisations. In this current environment, advancing Solomon Islands women's development and capacity for leadership will mean strengthening women's leadership from the national to the village level. Increasing the number of staff of the national machinery from two to its full complement of five professionals, would be of enormous value, as would relocating the WDD to an appropriate permanent Ministry, combined with revamping other logistical support for effective service delivery at the national and provincial levels.

Recognising that the Church women's groups are well established at all levels, training and investing resources in these groups would be ideal to reach rural women. In addition, strengthening the already existing Women's Association at the constituency level as in the case of Malaita, would complement the church effort. The current review of the Solomon Islands National Women's Policy if developed as an inclusive, participatory "bottom-up" approach could be a process of outreach, network strengthening and consensus-building. Such a process could serve to consolidate a common vision and agenda for women, from the village-level to Honiara.

In conjunction with longer term strategies, "fast-track" Interim measures need to be introduced as soon as possible to create an enabling environment. As stated by the Rt. Hon. Sir Peter Kenilorea, Speaker of the Parliament and Chair of the Electoral Commission, The introduction of a quota system, resulting in reserved or allocated seats for women in Parliament would provide a guaranteed solution to the problem as early as 2010.[xlvi] Such measures, in conjunction with electoral reform would serve to remove structural discrimination and provide more equal opportunity for women to achieve representative parity. This would be further lfacilitated by the establishment of a women's electoral campaign fund which could be accessed in conjunction with capacity-building for candidates.

If such initiatives are undertaken, the Solomon Islands could benefit from women's transformative leadership and become a Pacific model for other countries in the region to emulate.

The final voice belongs to one of the women candidates, and co-author of this study Dr Alice Aruhe'eta Pollard:

To be a Successful Candidate
If it was for being religious or a committed Christian member of a church,
No, it didn't work for me
If it was for being interested and connected to my rural communities,
No, it didn't work for me
If it was for working with rural women,
No, it didn't work for me either
If it was for a member of a political party,
No, it didn't work for me
If it was for commitment to family values
No, it didn't work for me
If it was for high educational attainment
No, it didn't work for me
If it was for thorough campaigning,
No, it didn't work for me
If it was for a member of a chiefly and church leader family
No, it didn't work for me at all
If it was for good leadership,
No, it didn't work for me
What did the winning candidate have that I don't have?
$$$, he is a male and had support from the powerful ascribed traditional leadership.

ENDNOTES

[i] As of 31 July 2006, the countries without female representation in their parliaments are: Bahrain, Kyrgystan, the Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Qatar, St. Kitts and Nevis, Saudi Arabia, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, and United Arab Emirates. *Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union, Women in Parliaments.* http://www.ipu.org

[ii] *Australian Aid: Promoting Growth and Stability* - White Paper on the Australian Government's overseas aid program 2006 Chapter 3, p.22

[iii] Refer to Annex I for list of people consulted.

[iv] Refer to Annex VII for references.

[v] Refer to Annex III Workshop Report

[vi] *Kofi. A. Annan, Statement to Security Council, 24 October 2000 introducing the debate on Resolution 1325, Women, peace and Security*

[vii] Gender Equity in Peacebuilding: From Rhetoric to Reality, ICRW 2003

[viii] Tickner, Anne J. 1999.'Why Women Can't Run the World: International Politics According to Francis Fukuyama.' *International Studies Review.* 1(3):3-13.

[ix] Report of the United Nations Secretary-General to the Security Council on Conflict Prevention, A/55/895 – S/2001/574, 7 July 2001 http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/reports/2001/574e.pdf

[x] A. Moser, taken from an Interview FemTALK-Vois Blong Mere, 29 August 2005 .

[xi] A. Moser, *Monitoring Peace and Conflict in the Solomon Islands* Gendered Early Warning Report No. 1, UNIFEM, August 2005 p.6

[xii] M. Caprioli, *Gendered Conflict,* Journal of Peace Research, Vol. 37, no.1, 2000.

[xiii] Ibid, cited in *Gender and Conflict Early Warning: A Preliminary Framework*, Susanne Schmeidl, Swiss Peace Foundation with Eugenia Piza-Lopez, International Alert, July 2002

[xiv] L. McGrew, K. Frieson, and S.Chan. *Good Governance from the Ground Up: Women's Roles in Post-Conflict Cambodia.* Washington, DC: Women Waging Peace, 2004. 20 July 2004

[xv] D. Dollar; R. Fisman,, and R. Gatti,, *Are Women Really the "Fairer" Sex? Corruption and Women in Government.* Policy Research Report on Gender and Development, Working Paper Series, No.4, The World Bank, October 1999.

[xvi] P.M. Regan and E. Paskeviciute. *Women's Access to Politics and Peaceful States*, Journal of Peace Research , *Volume 40 / number 3 / may 2003 p.292.*

[xvii] A. Pollard, *Resolving conflict in Solomon Islands: The Women for Peace Approach*, Development Bulletin 53 p.44

[xviii] E. Sigimanu *Women in Solomon Islands Peace Support Process* **,** PacNews, June 16, 2004 from, PeaceWomen, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom., cited in Sherrill Whittington, *Women and Decision –Making in Post-conflict Transitions*, Conference Paper, Center for Asia-Pacific Women in Politics (CAPWIP), Sixth Asia Pacific Congress of Women in Politics, February 10-12, 2006

[xix] Women in National Parliaments, International Parliamentary Union, *http//:www.ipu.org/wmn-e/wprld.htm*

[xx] Refer to Annex VI for the Report on Field Visit to Isabel province.

[xxi] A. A Pollard, (2006), *Painaha*: *Gender and Leadership in `Are`Are Society, the South Sea Evangelical Church and Parliamentary leadership, Solomon Islands*. Unpublished Thesis, Doctor of Philosophy, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand., pp75&79

[xxii] E. Huffer, *A Desk Review of the Factors which Enable and Constrain the Advancement of Women's Political Representation in Forum Island Countries*, Forum Secretariat , 2006, p. 16.

[xxiii] CEDAW, Article 7 and 4.

[xxiv] Ibid. p.11-15..

[xxv] While Papua new Guinea has also fared poorly under this system, with currently only 0.9% female representation (one elected member), other Pacific countries employing this system have been able to achieve slightly better, with the Cook Islands having two female MPs and Fiji pre-1997 with three . **Source:** *J. Fraenkel, The Impact of Electoral Systems on Women's Representation in Pacific Parliaments, Report Conducted for the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat by Pacific Institute of Advanced Studies in Development and Governance. Revised June 2006.pp9-10*

[xxvi] According to the *Report of the Commonwealth Observer Group*, given the "widespread allegations and controversy over money from local businesses and foreign interests…the obligation on candidates to account for their campaign expenditure should be strengthened by amending the provision to provide for the submission of the statement of account of all expenditures to be made to the Electoral Commission.p.17

[xxvii] *Report of the Commonwealth Observer Group*, Solomon Islands General Election, 5 April 2006.

[xxviii] *Report of the Commonwealth Observer Group*, Solomon Islands General Election, 5 April 2006.

[xxix] Refer to Annex III

[xxx] J. Kere , *Review of Women's Development Division* 1998, p.19

[xxxi] See Annex V

[xxxii] See Annex VII

[xxxiii] Vanuatu has multi-seat constituencies, but Kiribati differs in that voters have as many votes as there are seats in a constituency, which if applied to the Solomon Islands could well facilitate the election of women.., Ibid., p.4

[xxxiv] A preferential system, alternative vote constituency has been operational in Fiji and since 2002 in PNG which will apply "limited preferential vote" in the 2007 national elections. This will only improve women's chances of being elected if the party system is reformed and strengthened, so that there are greater incentives to produce a diversified list of candidates, and women to be placed high enough on party lists to win seats.

[xxxv] Papua New Guinea introduced an Organic Law on Political parties and Candidates in 2001-2 requiring registration of party affiliations and restricts change of Party.

[xxxvi] CEDAW, the Convention on all Forms of Discrimination Against Women*, Article 4: Accelerating of Equality between Men and Women, c*alls on Governments to institute "temporary measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality between men and women…these measures shall be discontinued when the objectives of equality of opportunity and treatment have been achieved."

[xxxvii] Draft Federal Constitution of the Solomon Islands, Part II Composition of the Federal Parliament and qualification of members, Para. 88

[xxxviii] At present, sixteen of the top twenty countries in terms of women's legislative representation have implemented special measures such as quotas and/or reserved seats, placing many post-conflict countries such as Afghanistan, Rwanda, Burundi, Mozambique and South Africa alongside the Nordic countries.

[xxxix] This strategy has been implemented in national parliaments in Bougainville, Morocco, Jordan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Botswana, Taiwan, Lesotho and Tanzania.

[xl] *The Report of the Commonwealth- Pacific Islands Forum Team* noted the recognition of the key role played by women in the Bougainville peace process resulted in the allocation of three seats specifically for representation by women. *However, while 25 women contested the three allocated seats, we understood that no women contested constituency seats, for which they were also entitled to stand. Some people we spoke to suggested that allocating three seats specifically for women may have had an unintended effect of marginalizing them within the process. We were of the view that women should be encouraged in future to contest general constituency seats. We noted that women were represented among polling officials and scrutineers.* P.14.

[xli] This could be achieved, for example, by adding 10 extra seats to the current 50-seat parliament, with nine for each province and one for Honiara. They could either be separate "women only "seats, or be awarded to each woman who gains the highest number of votes in each province. As in other countries, this affirmative action measure could then be removed as women acquire seats in the mixed constituencies. The one weakness in this measure is that women may not contest in the mixed electorates. If a seat is awarded to women who gain the highest number of votes per province, the percentage could be considerably lower than that of the highest male counterparts and such seats can be regarded as 'second-rate'.

[xlii] In Uganda, which has a FPTP electoral system, reserved seats are constitutionally mandated, with one woman representative for each of the 56 districts. At the local level, the Constitution states that one third of the membership of local government councils reserved for women. A similar district quota has been introduced in Timor Leste, where one in three district representative positions have been designated for women.

[xliii] One model could be *EMILY's List* a financial, political and personal support network for progressive Australian Labor women candidates. It is the only network of its kind in Australian politics. EMILY is an acronym and stands for Early Money Is Like Yeast – it makes the dough rise. Early campaign

money is often the most important support a female candidate can have when heading into an election. EMILY's List Australia is based on EMILY's List USA, which identifies talented Democrat women and supports them for election with funding, campaign advice, skills and information.

[xliv] In Ghana, for example, the Ministry for Women and Children's Affairs (MOWAC), together with the Ministry of Local Government and CSOs launched a *Women in Local Government Fund* in March 2006 to support election of women at district level. The Fund also develops modalities for support and capacity building for women, both before and after being elected.

[xlv] Agreed Conclusions 1999/2 adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women, United Nations Secretariat, New York, 1999.

[xlvi] Keynote Address by the Rt. Honourable Sir Peter Kenilorıa, KBE, PC to the RAMSI Machinery of Government Barriers to Women's Participation in Government Workshop, Honiara 21-22 August 2006.

ANNEX I: PEOPLE CONSULTED

Ambu Women's Fellowship SSEC Malaita Province
Dykes Angiki, General Manager, SIBC
Rose Anilabata, Minister for Western Malaita, Malaita Provincial Government
Vivian Bara, Vice-President , Mother's Union, Isabel Diocese.
Julie Brown, Legal Advisor, Malaita Province
Helen Buga, Leader Auki Catholic Women's Group
Warren Cahill, Special Parliamentary Adviser,
Clera , WDD office, Malaita Province
Patterson W. Devi, Provincial treasurer Officer, Isabel Province
Sera Dyer, WIL Desk Officer, NCW
Sue Emmott, Consultant, Women in Leadership Evaluation
Blair Exell, AUSAID Development Coordinator
Fred Faka'ri, Permanent Secretary, Department of Home Affairs
Judith Fangalasu, Director SICA Commission
Chief Billy Gedi, Rogesi tribe, Ghoveo Village, Isabel Province
Honiara Grass Roots Women in Self-employment
Hon. James Habu, Premier, Isabel Provincial Government.
Betty Horopua, Southern representative to the Malaita Provincial Council of Women
Sue Ingram, Director, Machinery of Government, RAMSI.
Hilda Kari, President NCW
Ella Kahue, General Secretary, NCW
Joy Keri, Permanent Secretary , Permanent Secretay, Department of Peace, Reconciliation and National Unity.
The Rt. Hon. Sir Peter Kenilorea, Speaker of the House and Electoral Commissioner.
Harold Leka, Provincial Secretary, Malaita Province
Ruth Liloqula, Permanent Secretary of Special Duties
Margie Lowe, Manager, NZAID
Chief Martin Mara, Bobae Tribe, Ghoveo Village, Isabel Province
Henry Maray, Fomrer secretary Paramount Chief, Isabel Province
Mothers Union Groups, Nereabu and Ghoveo villages, Isabel Provinces
Mary Louise O'Callaghan, Journalist.
George Palua, Senior Policy Officer, Policy and Evalutaion Unit, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet
Edna Ramoau, SIDT, Auki
Patricia Rodie, Director, Department of Education, SICHE
John Roughan, Permanent Secretary, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.
SIDT Leaders Forum for Central and Aoke/Langalanga women and Youth leaders.
Taeasi Sanga, Clerk of the Parliament
Chief Fihu Selwyn, Village Chief, Nereabu, Isabel Province
Ethel Sigimanu, Permanent Secretary, Department of Fisheries and Marine Resources
Hon. Mathias Simata, Deputy Premier, Isabel Provincial Government
Hon Job Dudley Tausinga, Deputy Prime Minister, Leader of Solomon Island's People's Progressive Party and Rural Advancement Party
Josephine Teakeni, Director, Vois Blong Mere
Rachel Theo, President, Isabel Provincial Council of Women.
Janet Tuhaika, Acting Director WDD
Patricia Wale, Leader Auki Catholic Women's Group
Winds of Change (various youth volunteers).

Annex II

	Tabular analysis of Women in 2006 Elections									
Province	**Constituency**	**Candidate**	**Rank**	**Candidates**	**votes**	**%**	**Total Votes**	**Address**	**Party**	
Western	West N/Georgia & Vonav	Nuatali Tongarutu	5	7	331	6.8%	4891	Honiara		
Isabel	Hograno/Kia/Havulei	Jane Magata Tozaka	3	9	507	15.0%	3381	Honiara	Independent	
	Maringe/Kokota	Caroline Hebala Maetia	10	10	35	1.0%	3644	Honiara	United Party	
		Elizabeth Theodi	6	10	124	3.4%	3644	Honiara	Independent	
	Gao/Bogotu	Doris Bava	8	15	97	3.2%	3047	Honiara	Independent	
Malaita	Baegu/Asifoloa	Catherine Adifaka	6	6	21	0.5%	4205	Honiara	Independent	
	Fataleka	Alice Kakabu Baekalia	10	15	37	0.9%	4014	Honiara	United Party	
		Catherine Leta	11	15	34	0.8%	4014	Honiara		
	West Kwara'ae	Rose Anilabata	4	18	502	7.8%	6467	Auki	Socred	
	East Malaita	Afu Lia Bili	2	6	738	21.2%	3479	Honiara	Ass. Of Ind.	
	Aoke/Langalanga	Rachel Fera	3	13	555	12.9%	4305	Honiara	Independent	
	West Kwaio	Patricia Mae Samdalu	6	10	185	4.7%	3978	Honiara	Labour Party	
	West `Are`Are	Alice Aruhe'eta Pollard	5	9	322	9.7%	3322	Honiara	SI Democratic Party	
	Small Malaita	Rose Paohu	9	11	245	4.2%	5890	Honiara		
Guadalcanal	North West Guadalcanal	Doreen Maeke	5	10	181	5.1%	3534	Honiara	Independent	
		Bernadette Tadakusu	9	10	44	1.2%	3534	Tamboko	United Party	
	East Guadalcanal	Shaniella Talasifera	6	6	153	4.7%	3237	Marau	Liberal Party	
	East Central Guadalcana	Hilda Thugea Kari	3	9	655	15.4%	4246	Honiara		
	North Guadalcanal	Catherine Kakamo	7	8	65	2.3%	2811	Ngalibiu	SIPRA	
Central	Russells & Savo	Leotina Kikitu	7	8	177	4.0%	4372	Honiara	National Party	
Honiara	Central	Delma Nori	5	13	535	8.3%	6427	Honiara	Independent	
		Josephine Teakeni	7	13	352	5.5%	6427	Honiara	Independent	
		Miriam Garo	13	13	21	0.3%	6427	Honiara	National Party	
	West	Sarah Lolana Dyer	2	10	641	21.1%	3034	Honiara	Independent	
Makira	West Makira	Clera Rebitai	10	15	120	3.0%	4017	Honiara	Independent	
	East Makira	Doreen Y. Kuper	4	9	567	11.6%	4893	NZ/ SI	Independent	
					7244					

Annex III

Report of Workshop for Women Parliamentary Candidates *From Workshop for Women Candidates, conducted in Honiara from 21-22 August 2006, by the Study Team for RAMSI Machinery of Government Diagnostic Study on Women in Government.*

i) Objectives

The objectives of holding a workshop with the women candidates was to obtain first-hand their experience as candidates, to identify barriers and constraints the faced the April 2006 Parliamentary elections, and how lessons they learnt could improve women's chances in future elections. For the first day of the workshop and into the following morning, 23 of the 26 candidates reflected on their reasons for running, the personal and practical support they received, campaign strategies used, their programmes and issues, as well as the response from the constituency and other candidates. They were also required to address any other barriers they encountered.

ii) Programme

Day I: Reflection on past elections

8:30-9:00	Registration, Opening and Introduction Hilda Kari, President SINWC Opening prayer and welcome on behalf of the National Women Council
9:00-9:30	Sir Peter Kenilorea, Speaker of the House of Parliament Keynote Address
9:30-10:30	Introduction by candidates
10:30-10:45	Morning Tea
10: 45-11:00	Rationale, objectives, methodology and expected outputs Sherrill Whittington, Women in Government Diagnostic Study
11:00- 12:30	Candidates experience on specific topics, individual presentation
12:30-1:30	Lunch
1:30-3:15	Candidates experience on specific topics, individual presentation
3:15-3:30	Afternoon tea
3:30-4:45	Candidates experience on specific topics

4:45-5:00 Conclusion and wrap up of Day One

Day II: Looking forward

8:30-9:00 Objectives of Day Two: Recap, workshop programme and methodology

9:00-12:30 Lessons Learnt from Parliamentarian elections of April 2006
Participants are divided in 5 working groups:

Group 1: Electoral Process
Group 2: Training and Capacity Building
Group 3: Finance
Group 4: Campaign
Group 5: Partnerships

12:30-1:30 Lunch

1:30-2:30 Groups Report-Back. Plenary

2:30-3:30 Strategic Planning

3:30-4:30 Groups Report Back. Plenary
4:30-5:00 Conclusions –Wrap up
Sue Ingram, RAMSI Machinery of Government
Blair Exell, Development Coordinator, RAMSI

iii) Summary *Five groups of candidates highlighted the following issues and recommended ways to improve the process:*

a. <u>Electoral Process</u>

- *Polling stations: location and opening hours***:** Opened on time at 7 am, closed at 5 pm and locations were acceptable.
- *Design of voting ballots***:** Not understandable by the electorate, particularly the illiterate; people did not understand the system which was confusing since people were asked: either to tick or to write an X.
- *Design of the ballot paper***:** it was too small and also the symbols were too small, making it difficult to read. Candidates would prefer to enlarge the ballot paper, as well as the symbols, with a of a photo of the candidates and the symbol so illiterate people can understand.
- *Voter registration*: Several issues, here.
  - Firstly the vote is not compulsory, so this affects registration and participation.
  - Although lots of people are employed by the voter registration they are not committed to door to door registration. Only the electoral commission can encourage people to go and register.
  - Many public servants are employed for registration and often they support other candidates and are not impartial.
  - The best strategy would be to have an electoral board in the villages and that the village have the responsibility to register and everyone can access information easily and read their names in the lists...
- *Electoral Commission officers*: : there were women n the Electoral Commission Office in Honiara but at the constituency level there were no women involved either as electoral commission officers or as registrars. There were a few women electoral observers in some constituencies but no women ballot counters. The NCW Women in Leadership Desk (wrote to the Electoral Commission asking to have women recruited but did not receive a reply. VBM also pushed for women to be involved in the process.

At the national level there was only one woman returning officer selected among hundreds of officers.

b. Training and Capacity Building

- Ten candidates underwent the *Women in Leadership training*, with invitations coming from NCW by mail, by telephone, radio, personal contacts. The training, which was funded by UNIFEM Australia lasted two weeks and covered good governance, electoral commission system, voting system/processes, public speaking, experiences. Some who had not decided to run at the time of the training in August 2005 missed out, and realised it was a disadvantage since it would have helped a great deal with campaign strategy.
- *Civic and Voter education*: From reliable sources the training and contents were good but training time given was limited. The training was only in urban areas and not in the villages. Materials helped but were insufficient and time was limited. According to NCW, Women in Leadership, the civic education teams did a good job but not all the villages were covered. This was due to lack of funds, transport and roads, and insufficient staff. The message was good but some people were not reached because they only went to specific places. In some villages the session were held in the evening which is not a good time for women as mothers are preparing meals, etc. The main problem is lack of time. In other villages, not too many turned up because during the day people are busy with gardening and fishing. The civic and voter education teams should have gone to more communities and have continued the education until the elections.

c. Finance

- *Campaign Budget* – there was a commitment to budgeting but many shortfalls both for those who planned ahead and those who did not. Those working with the candidates were committed but they did not have budgetary strategies. Seven of the candidates went into which they now have to pay back to relatives, or to the bank. .
- *Registration fee:* is a requirement of the Electoral Act that candidates have to pay the $2000 up front. The money came either from the family savings or party support.
- *Campaign spending limit***:** the Electoral Act limit is $ 50,000 dollars, but the majority of women spent well below the amount, and agreed that if they had more funds could have utilized them well above the limit... There is no transparency and accountability, with people not respecting the Electoral regulations, spending over the limit because the law is not enforced.
- *Campaign finance* was raised from family, donations from people/relatives, and friends, as well as fundraising: by having “dine and dance (e.g. reggae)”, selling cooked food, and political party support. There was not enough financial support and insufficient funds. All agreed that money is the KEY underlying factor for a successful candidate. Candidates all concurred that if an electoral fund for women were available they would win.

d. Campaign

- *Members of a Political Party* - reasons for joining included the need for financial assistance and also because women’s interests were reflected in the platform (for example the Liberal Party have women in leadership and participation in decision making). Many believed that if you joined a party you could influence the party to

promote women's issues. Others joined a party because they did not want to be isolated.

- *As an independent candidate***:** The major reason given for running as an independent: was the power to negotiate for the constituency on key issues when forming a new government. Also it enabled candidates to include policies for women such as CEDAW or women's interests not included in other political parties' manifestos or have never been addressed or implemented by any government. The advantages included being free and having freedom of spirit; not being bound or answerable to a party. The disadvantages, however, were largely lack of financial assistance.
- *NCW Support:* The NCW decided to support independent candidates but said they could not support women candidates who joined a political party. The group felt if they were to run again in next elections they would do so as independents and that they will not change their minds.

e. Partnerships

- *Major support* for the women candidates came form family: husband, parents, extended family. friends and community, church, business groups, women' organizations and groups and other individuals and institutions.
- *Support of partners* was gained through community recognition of what you have done before for the community or for certain people in the community or what your family network has done to help people, A lot has to do with return of favours, with a many of the women being recognised as friends.
- *Type of support they received* was financial, or transport, fuel, food, accommodation and moral support. One candidate had two women, who accompanied her to the villages, who supported and cooked for the team for which they were paid a small amount
- *Support from Churches:* a couple of candidates were able to speak to the church congregations.

iv) Conclusions and recommendations

- *Women's Development Division* needs strengthening with appropriate resources and personnel. WDD should be an information centre where the National Women's Policy, CEDAW and other resources can be made available, even down to the village level. Women's issues are hidden in the Department of Home Affairs If WDD were relocated into a higher, strategic and more effective, visible position it could influence policies and outreach. If the Government is planning a Women's Ministry, it needs to fast-track implementation or place it in a key area such as Prime Minister's department. Women must hold the government accountable for I CEDAW and the National Women's Policy.
- *Legislation for Political Parties* – there is a need to limit the number and to influence political party lists to include more women.
- *Campaign spending limits* have to be enforced with accountability and the registration fee re-examined.
- *Voter registration* should be a continuous process not just undertaken a few months before the election.
- *Office for Women in Politics* –an NGO or mechanism for women in politics should be set up which could be an information and training centre for women involved in politics

and those who want to run for office. This should be operated by someone from the outside who is neutral.

- *Workshops* every three months, similar to this one, with external facilitation need to be instituted - perhaps by the Women in Politics office. There also should be a system established whereby women who go overseas to represent Solomon Islands women return and hold workshops to inform other women of regional or international developments.
- *Outreach and Communication* – there is great need to have information about training, workshops, as well as outreach to women's organisations at community/village level. Resources for outreach are very expensive, so will require financial assistance. Both SINCW and WDD have lost their links with the provinces, and they are neither cooperating or working together, and need to be strengthened to be effective. Provincial Women's Councils pay fees to NCW but nothing is happening at the provincial level.

Annex IV

KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE RT HONOURABLE SIR PETER KENILORIA, KBE PC TO THE RAMSI MACHINERY OF GOVERNMENT: BARRIERS TO WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT WORKSHOP

Mr. Stuart Schaeffer, RAMSI Deputy Development Coordinator,
Research Team Members:
Ms Sherrill Whittington,
Ms Sofi Ospina and
Ms Alice Pollard.
Mrs. Hilda Kari, President of the National Council of Women
Mrs. Sera Dyer, Member of the Solomon Islands Law Reform Commission,
Women candidates of the 2006 Parliamentary Elections

At the outset let me say what a pleasure and privilege it is to be standing before you today. If the circumstances had been different I may well have been calling on you to resume your seat in parliament and cease talking. It was an unexpected pleasure to receive the letter of invitation from Sue to address you today and I must be quite frank and say that I was quite humbled by such an invitation and the notion that I might be able to contribute to the process which will eventually ensure that women are represented appropriately in every area of government, whether that be as politicians, judicial officers, senior public servants or as the Governor-General.

I would like to commend the RAMSI Machinery of Government Program for initiating this operational research study. Particularly, I want to acknowledge that the methodology being used will identify and address issues that are drawn for the local context and are relevant to the Solomon Islands and not simply an imported model that is thrust upon us. For this I sincerely thank Sue and the research team who are undertaking this important work.

I am sure that you are all aware of the fact that Solomon Islands is one of the so-called "Dirty Dozen" Countries. The term was derived, I suspect, from the movie of the same name which included an all male cast of war heroes, and was aptly used to describe the 12 UN member countries that had no women in their respective Parliaments. At the time the others included our neighbours Tuvalu, Palau, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru and Tonga as well as the Arab states of Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Three of those countries including Tonga have since elected a woman to Parliament.

Exploring the underlying reasons why the Solomon Islands remains unable to join the vast majority of nations in having women as active participants in the most senior leadership positions is the reason for this workshop.

Let us then explore the Solomon Islands context more deeply.

The Solomon Islands Constitution provides all citizens with certain unalienable rights which include the freedom of conscience (freedom of thought and of religion), freedom of

expression, freedom of assembly and association and freedom of movement. Additionally, Section 15 provides for protection from discrimination on the grounds of race, place of origin, political opinions, colour, creed or sex.

With such constitutional freedoms and protections it was a reasonable expectation at independence in 1978 that there would be a considerable number of women in parliament by August 2006. In fact, since independence a total of 42 Solomon Islands women have stood for election to the National Parliament. Of these, only 1 has been elected into parliament. The positive side of that part of our Parliamentary history is that Hilda served 3 terms in parliament and was promoted into the Cabinet. The worrying feature is that the election of a woman has not paved the way for the election of other women. Unfortunately, Hilda's election proved to be an anomaly rather than the norm. Was it her unique character and particular standing in the community that resulted in her election? Unfortunately it did not herald a new world in Solomon Island politics. Those of you gathered here for this workshop must grapple with this reality and question why and make sure that the barriers to participation are addressed prior to 2010.

While referring to trends I think that it is also worrying that only 2 of the 78 candidates standing for the forthcoming elections to Honiara Town council are women. Strangely 4 of the 43 candidates for the 3 Honiara based seats at the recent national election were women.

Since you are the women who campaigned in the last elections, it is pertinent that you form an important part of this Diagnostic Study. This is your opportunity to speak up and put on the record the issues and impediments to election that you faced in your quest for becoming a national leader. Of course there are many stories that need to be told and this Study will also consult with women in the community, in the church, at university, and in the public, private and non government sectors. Their turn will come to speak on barriers they perceive and face, today and tomorrow however are yours.

In line with the purpose of this workshop, I propose now to simply raise a number of issues and initiatives for you to ponder during your deliberations.

There is no one women's' voice:
As a single example of this complex issue let us look at some of the comments from women in a study of the 2005 election in Tonga which saw no women elected. Some of the responses by women highlighted included: "...we have men who can support us and our issues. I am not going to vote for a woman. What for? What is she going to accomplish?"
Another view was ".women are gutless. There is no way they can stand up to the men in Parliament".

The question you must ponder is what hinders women from showing greater support at the ballot box for other women?

Involvement in Political Parties:
Another issue that is regularly raised is the question of party-backing or affiliation. Should a woman stand as an independent or as a party-member?

It has been shown that women candidates stand better chances of getting elected if supported by a party. In Vanuatu, a successful candidate for the 2002 elections cited that the support of her party was invaluable to her campaign and recommended that women

affiliate with a party and work for changes within the party system as well to ensure equal chances of getting women selected.

Many women however may not feel inclined to enter a party system that is male dominated and without a tradition or mechanisms of support for women. Party systems may need to change before women are inclined to participate but how do you achieve this from outside?

Money and Financial backing:
Women are frequently subjected to the worst levels of poverty. How do women attain access to the financial means necessary to campaign effectively against an incumbent man with considerable amounts of money at his disposal? Even the current $2000 candidate fee may well exclude many women from standing. for election.

The Electoral System:
Another obstacle frequently identified is the type of electoral system that is used. Many commentators suggest that first-past-the-post systems do not get women elected. Certainly the experience of this country does not dispel the theory. On the other hand the countries with the highest number of women in their legislatures have a proportional representation system of voting.

Further, maybe we should be looking for a more direct and rapid solution to this problem through change in the Constitution combined with change in the electoral system. The introduction of a quota system, resulting in reserved or allocated seats for women in Parliament would provide a guaranteed solution to the problem as early as 2010. To illustrate the point let us look at a country not unlike our own that has a tradition of low rates of women in leadership positions and which suffered recent national conflict – Rwanda. Having recently adopted a quota system, Rwanda now has the highest proportion of women in Parliament anywhere in the world – a breath taking 48.8%.

But of course it is never that simple. First there needs the political motivation to introduce such a reform – and there you are relying on attaining the support of the majority of members of Parliament all of whom are of course men. Also, as the famous political commentator Machiavelli noted:

In all human affairs one notices, that it is impossible to remove one inconvenience without another emerging.
Which of the many systems will be the right one for the Solomon Islands and how will it translate at the political level? Will the women elected under this system be treated as second class members entrenching their traditional position in society?

Perhaps it is time for me to cease posing dilemmas for you to grapple with and let you get on with your important work.

In conclusion always remember that you have great support here and in the region. My good friends Dame Carol Kidu and President, Meredith Burgmann work tirelessly to promote the role of women in Pacific politics. Men too provide great support for instance the Minister for Women in Fiji who happens to be a man, recently said at the Induction Program that I attended: '*My heart is saddened when I think about the Solomon Islands and the fact that it has no woman MP'*. I, like many other leaders in the Solomon Islands, share that same sentiment

As you talk about the issues and obstacles facing women and ways they can be correctly addressed, please bear in mind, the urgency of it all.

You need to be frank but most importantly you must listen to each other and reach consensus on ways we as a nation should move forward to dismantle the barriers blocking women from effectively participating in the most senior levels of government. I pray for you and for the success of your endeavours for they are crucial to the long term security and well being of this struggling nation.

Annex V

Policy Translation and Implementation Document Grand Coalition for Change Government

Policy Translation and Implementation Document
Office of the Prime Minister & Cabinet
Honiara, August 2006.

BACKGROUND NOTES

- The Political Advisory Unit is tasked with the responsibility to initiate the translation process of these Policies.
- During launch of the Grand Coalition for Change Government (GCCG) Framework Policy Document, PM "…responsible Ministers with professional advice from their Permanent secretaries…should translate these statements into their ministerial **Strategic Plans** and work programs. From this exercise should emerge a workable programme of Action for the next four years…" p.1
- Part C is the main thrust of this document, which is in matrix format, is the "translation tool" to assist in the proper understanding of the government's approved polices by Ministries and departments.
- ***Planning Periods/Cycle:***
    1. 1st 100 days (4 May to 4 August 2006);
    2. Immediate term(: 1st six months – 4 May to December 31st 2006);
    3. Short-term: 12 months (May 2006 to June 2007);
    4. Medium-term: 24 months (4 May 2006 to July 2008);
    5. Long-term : 48 months and above

Women in Development : Policy issue no.10.5

Goal:

- The needs and wishes of the other half of the population (women) is attended to at the highest level of governance;
- That women take their place as equal partners in the development of the country;
- That women and youth do not see themselves as vulnerable members of our society but equal partners in all forms of development.

Purpose:

- So that women must be seen as active contributors to economic development in the country;

- The government is actually seen as dedicated to the improvement of the welfare of women in the country;
- Ensure fair (as opposed to equal) representation in decision making bodies in government and private sector.

Immediate to Short Term Plan: 4 May-31 December 2007

Policies	Rationale	Action Envisaged	Time Frame	Responsible Authority	Indicators
Policy No:10.5 (a) *Re-activate and prioritize all policies, draft legislation or strategic intent relating to women and gender issues.*	*Women's issues have not been seriously attended to by previous governments so it seems.*	*Sector-wide Approach to Planning be conducted for women and youth sector*	*4/5/06-31/12/07*	*WDD Home Affairs*	*Women's issues not prioritised.*
Policy No: 10.5 (b) *Pursue the implementation of the National Women's Policy*	*The policy needs to be implemented to enable women to take their place in the ongoing development of the country*	*-An implementation timeline agreed to by stakeholders; -Approval by cabinet obtained;*	*4/5/06-31/12/07*	*WDD Home Affairs NCW*	*Legislation enacted.*
Policy No: 10.5 (d) *Implement legislation embracing functions of other ministries (e.g.,Police & Justice)on Protection of women and children with intl.. standards*	*The country needs to adhere to its international obligations.*	*-An appropriate Legislation to embrace our legal obligations out in place;*	*4/5/06-31/12/07*	*Home Affairs* *Law and Justice* *Police and Prisons*	*Legislation enacted.*

Policy No: 10.5 (f) *Link approach for addressing VAW to regional and global Human Rights institutions in order to elevate and strengthen govt. policy Implementation*	*Addressing issues on violence against the most vulnerable incl. women is a government priority*	*The link is able to be brought in line with govt. policy on VAW*	*4/5/06-31/12/07*	*Home Affairs* *NCW* *Police and Prisons*	*Total elimination of VAW*
Policy No: 10.5 (i) *Ensure more women are trained in law, counselling, psychology and other non-welfare areas;*	*Trained manpower in areas identified still favours men folk.*	*A human resources development plan for women to be developed as part of institutional strengthening and capacity building;*	*4/5/06-31/12/07*	*Public Service* *Ministries and departments*	*Marked increase in the training of women in and for the public service.*
Policy No: 10.5 (k) *Provide additional resources to NCW*	*NCW is under resourced and not meeting expectations of women of the country;*	*Additional budgetary support to be sought and provided*	*4/5/06-31/12/07*	*Home Affairs* *NCW*	*Increased performance by NCW to meet needs of women in the country*

Policy No: 10.5 (l) *Assist to minimise the barriers that impede women from participating in decision-making at all levels and facilitate research activities relating to women's issues.*	*Level of participation by women in decision-making level is still very low: the question still remains why they aren't participating.*	*-encourage equal opportunity for women in all sectors and cadres of the Public Service; -remove barriers to equal participation by women in all sectors and at highest decision-making levels*	*4/5/06-31/12/07*	*Ministerial Departments.* *NCW*	*All barriers are eliminated.*

Medium Term Plan

Policies	Rationale	Action	Time Frame	Responsible Authority	Indicators
Policy No: 10.5 (c) *Create a separate Women's Department with its own budget, trained personnel and organizational capacity;*	*Need to have women and youth issues elevated to ministerial representation in cabinet;*	*Government Caucus to consider establishment of new department for women;*	*4/5/06 – 31/12/08*	*Government Caucus* *Cabinet* *Law & Justice*	*A new department established for women and youth development.*
Policy No: 10.5 (g) *Assist all women's' Organisations and/or family support institutions not only with funding but also with expert advice;*	*All women initiated programs need to be assisted by government.*	*-undertake stakeholder consultations to ascertain level and kind of assistance needed; -seek donor support for assistance needed.*	*4/5/06 – 31/12/08*	*National Planning* *Home Affairs* *Finance & Treasury*	*Increased assistance to women's organizations.*

Policy No: 10.5 (h) *Facilitate and develop synergy between Ministries such as Police and Justice, the courts and Health and Medical Services with a view to enhancing the Police Sexual Assault Unit dealing with women related violence.*	*Needs to be better control and rationalising of resources in area of women relating to violence*	*-All ministries affected to consult and agree to a plan to deal with VAW;* *-Bring to bear the objects of the plan to the work of women and their plight.*	*4/5/06 – 31/12/08*	*Home Affairs* *Police &Prisons* *NCW*	*Regular consultation between stakeholders evident.*
Policy No: 10.5 (j) *Provide, through newly established Women's Department , training, advice, skills and knowledge, as well as gender-specific financial assistance that will enable women to participate actively in development.*	*It is a fact that women must participate actively, not passively in development, and to necessitate this affirmative action must be put in place*	*The newly established women and youth department is fully resourced with the right emphasis to enhance newly acquired skills.*	*4/5/06 – 31/12/08*	*Home Affairs* *Women department* *Planning* *Finance & treasury*	*Fully fledged dept. dealing with women and youth development in the country is adequately resourced and established.*

Annex VI

Field Visits

In order to understand the role of women at the community level and provincial field visits were undertaken to the by study team members Alice Aruhe'eta Pollard and Sofi Ospina. The following is a report of their visits:

(a) Malaita Province, 23-25 August

i) Introduction

Malaita is the most populous province in Solomon Islands with a total population of 122,620 according to the 1999 National census, accounting for 30 percent of the total population of Solomon Islands. The sex ratio is 99.7 males to 100 females. It has a land area of 4,200 sq kms, consisting of two main islands namely Malaita and Maramasike, inhabited by Melanesians. There are also two outer island groups namely Sikaiana and Lord Howe on the northern part of the province inhabited by Polynesians.

ii) Essential Services

Malaita has five gravel surfaced main roads; and provides the longest network between communities compared to any other province in Solomon Islands. These roads are Ambu/Auki to Mt. Alasa'a/Busurata, Atori to Ata'a Cove/Sulufoloa, Auki to Foula/Gwounatolo (North Road), Auki to Hauhui (South Road), and Dala North to Atori (East Road). They are not always in good condition due to high rainfall, flooded rivers and lack of proper maintenance. However, they do roads provide an alternative mechanism for movement from one region to another and stimulate economic development. There is no intra-provincial shipping services connecting Auki the provincial centre to other regions, with the only link being rather expensove motorized canoes. Those regions with little or no transport access to Auki, have direct travel to Honiara by charter vessels or regular shipping arrangements between East `Are`Are and Honiara. Solomon Airlines provide daily flight services to Auki and weekly flight services to Afutara, West Kwaio/West `Are`Are and to Atoifi, East Kwaio.

Whilr education is accessible throughout Malaita it is not compulsory. There are 132 Primary Schools, 35 Community High Schools, 4 Secondary Schools and 4 Rural Training Centres. However, it is with the growing population, education services, resources and facilities are stretched and often inadequate. Health services are available throughout the province with the establishment of clinics and two major hospitals. Kilufi hospital is located near Auki in the Western region while Atoifi, a church run hospital is situated in the Eastern region.

iii) Economic Profile

Most families in Malaita live in the rural villages, growing their own food crops such as root crops, vegetables and fruits. Subsistence agriculture is for survival while surplus is sold at the local markets for basic needs such as school fees, soap, kitchen utensils, imported food and kerosene. Cash cropping such as coconut, cocoa, betel nut, chilli and rice and logging are also sources of income for the family. In addition, animal husbandry such as raising pigs, poultry and bee keeping are significant commercial activities for cash as well as for

community purposes. Fishing and collecting marine resources are performed by many families who live in the coastal areas also for cash and family consumption.

iv) Churches

The main churches established on Malaita are Church of Melanesia (COM), Roman Catholic, South Sea Evangelical Church (SSEC), Seventh Day Adventist (SDA), United Church (UC) and other smaller churches such as the Assembly of God. SSEC is the dominant church on Malaita. Each of the mainline churches has an operational structure that reaches the rural communities. More importantly, the church women's groups has set up an effective network that reaches the national level right through to rural women. The church women's network operates on voluntary basis.

v) Traditional Leadership

Traditional leaders or chiefly structures are well established in most villages in Malaita. Chiefs have influential roles in the community in relation to village governance, law and order, land and tribal issues and live harmoniously and peacefully with each other. They also play a significant role as the village overseer. However, it is worth noting that while the constitution allows for traditional leadership to be formally incorporated into the provincial structure, this has not happened in Malaita.

vi) Political Leadership at Provincial Level

Malaita has fourteen (14) constituencies where members are elected for National Parliament and thirty three (33) wards where members are elected for Provincial Government. The elected Provincial Government members then elect the Premier who is the political head of the province. The premier forms the government by appointing his Provincial Government Executive which consists of sixteen (16) elected members of each ward. The Provincial Government Assembly is the decision making body of the province and currently has ten (10) departments. All Provincial Government elected members serve a term of four years. The current Provincial Government has one woman member for West Kwara'ae ward and is a Minister for the Western Region.

vii) Malaita Consultative Processes

Face to face interviews were conducted with Malaita Provincial Secretary, Legal Advisor, Malaita Province, and Southern region representative of the Malaita Provincial Council of Women, Auki Catholic Women's Group representatives and Women and Development Desk Officer (WDD). Group discussion was held with the Ambu Women's Band group and observation method was used at the Solomon Islands Development Trust (SIDT) one day forum for women and youth leaders of West Kwara'ae and Aoke/ Langalanga constituencies.

- ***Findings***

- *Women and Development Officer Desk (WDD)* The WDD desk has been without a seconded staff for the last sixteen years. However, the Malaita province employed its own direct WDD officer for the same period except in 2004 to February 2006 which was without a staff. The current WDD officer was recruited in February 2006. She was provided with an office space with very basic furniture. The officer's roles were limited to providing advisory roles to the provincial government on women's related issues, assisting the Malaita Provincial Council of Women and performing little reach out programs to nearby women's groups. WDD, Malaita is constrained by lack of having the logistic support such as secretarial work, communication facilities and financial

backup to perform her roles efficiently. Having one junior WDD officer for such a big province with a big population to reach out to is unrealistic and problematic. WDD is not known in the villages. More seriously, according to the Malaita Strategic Plan for 2007-2017, the WDD direct post has been axed with no budget allocation. The current WDD Officer who is paid as a casual labour is just hanging on until she is advised to vacate the office any time from now on. WDD desk at the provincial level is in a dire mess and is unable to provide training to its women population or participate in policy formulation, research, monitoring or evaluation on women's issues. WDD at the national level has not being able to solicit funds to finance the provincial WDD nor network with church women's groups at the provincial level. WDD needs to be reformed and strengthened at all levels.

- *Malaita Provincial Council of Women (MPCW)* Malaita Provincial Council of Women has never been well established throughout the province in the rural villages since its establishment in the last two decades. MPCW is merely surviving by an executive at the provincial level, having three representatives from the four regions and from Honiara and few office bearers, totalling to around eighteen (18) members. Communication between rural women and their regional representatives is difficult and for many of them, it is non-existent. With no or little budget allocation and lack of clear focus and direction into the future, MPCW is non functional and is not known at the village level. MPCW has been experiencing leadership crisis in recent months and is due to hold its election for new leaders in October this year. Recently, the development of a Women's Resource Centre in Auki offers hope for women of Malaita, a joint effort by Soroptimist International, Community Sector Programme under AUSAID and the National Council of Women. The Women's Resource Centre will provide services such as offices, training centre, library, accommodation and family support. In addition, one of their recent achievements is the finalization of the MPCW constitution. Similar to WDD, it needs strengthening and resources in order to reach and address needs of rural women.

- *The Strategic Plan of the People of Malaita Province, 2007 – 2017* "Self-reliance" was surfaced over other values at the Malaita Leaders Peace Summit held in November 2004. It became the key word for Malaita's forward planning. In March 2006, further discussions were made by the Provincial Assembly, and a Strategic Planning Committee was established. In June 2006, a draft plan was produced and endorsed by Malaita Provincial Assembly. In July/August, community consultations were carried out with some communities at each of the four regions. Meetings were conducted at Kwai Island in the Eastern region, Malu'u in the Northern region, Afio in the Southern region and Fiu Kwai at the Western region.

- The strategic plan has a *mission statement* embracing working together to build Malaita to be a place where people can live together, and celebrate diversity and respect for each other. The vision statement highlights Malaita to be self-reliance province. The strategic areas are: Governance, Health and wellbeing, Expanding human capabilities and Improving livelihoods. Governance in the context of the Malaita strategic plan includes decision making, empowerment, taking responsibilities, participating equally by all Malaitans in decision making and living together peacefully. Health and wellbeing covers living a healthy life, creating healthy communities and environment and improving health facilities and standards. Expanding human

capabilities mean education for all in all areas and life skills. Improving livelihoods mean providing for our basic needs and survival without damaging our environment.

- To *implement the above strategies*, the Malaita Provincial Government has restructured its administration and political roles and functions. Restructuring means that there will be more direct employees than seconded staff compared to the current structure. There will be also restructuring of the ministerial portfolios and their roles and responsibilities. A key development will be the setting up of the Malaita Regional Development Fund (MRDF) which will take care of ward grants and submit project proposals to donor agencies. Such economic activities will be managed by the Malaita Economic Development Agency (MEDA) the economic arm of the province responsible for economic development, securing aid and working in partnership with donors.

- Another important development will be the establishment of Regional centres and offices. For efficient service delivery, Malaita will develop four regional centres. These are Faumamanu for Eastern region, Afio for Southern region, Malu'u for Northern region and Auki for Western region. These regional centres will play pivotal roles such as coordination of the different wards' projects submissions, training and ideas generated from wards and individual discussions. These centres will be owned by Regional Community Trust and promote culture, community and governance. Women's issues and active participation are provided for at the regional and ward level while mainstreaming of gender issues are provided for at the provincial level.

- While a WDD officer is not catered for at the provincial level, women of Malaita can only be fully engaged at the regional, ward and village level. An effective mechanism will have to be developed by the Malaitan women themselves to communicate with and link to each other on issues relating to them. A possible model developed by the West `Are`Are Rokotanikeni Association is attached.

- *Church leadership* The five main churches operating in Malaita are well connected to the village level. Each church has a women's group functional at the village level, some of which are linked through the two way radios. For example, the SSEC is the dominant church in Malaita. The structure extends from the National level based in Honiara, to the Regional level, to the Association level and down to the villages. While SSEC is well structured, women's programs at the Regional, Association and village levels are centred on spiritual development and fellowship rather than developing lives holistically. The Church of Melanesia and Roman Catholic Church follow similar programs with little attention to other women's issues due to lack of finance, logistical support and trained resource people. Church women's groups work on a voluntary basis and engage in different forms of fundraising activities to finance their own programs. Women at the Ambu SSEC Women's Fellowship expressed the view that should resources be made available, they were eager to attend training in empowerment, leadership and civic awareness and to participate in small income generating activities. Two prominent women of the Auki Catholic women's group added that women need to be assertive and accept positions of leadership. Furthermore, women need training in leadership skills, confidence building and public speaking.

- *Traditional Leadership*, chiefs play a major role in village governance, law and order and tribal and land issues. It is commonly understood that each village has a chief. However, some villages may have two types of chiefs; the head chief which is hereditary and the community chief selected by the community. In the case of the `Are`Are society, the chiefly structure begins at the family level, Arata (tribal) level, community level and the societal level. The chiefly structure is dominated by men. However, there is a separate structure for `Are`Are women called the Auaapuha leadership. This provision in the `Are`Are culture allows women to participate actively in leadership and decision making. Each cultural group in Malaita is different. Malaita chiefly leadership structure is limited only to the societal level and is not organized at the regional or provincial levels as compared to the Isabel traditional leadership structure. In the case of Malaita, traditional leaders receive no financial assistance from the provincial government but are consulted regularly .

- *Central Kwara'ae and Aoke/Langalanga Women and Youth Issues* While in Auki, the Solomon Islands Development Trust (SIDT) organized a one day forum for women and youth leaders of Central Kwara'ae and Aoke/Langalanga constituencies to identify key issues that affect their lives. Both the women and the youth groups expressed their stories through speeches, songs and drama. The key issues for Central Kwara'ae women included lack of income generating activities, lack of women's participation in decision making, lack of information, co-operation, finance and land disputes. The Aoke/Langalanga women identified lack of clean water as their key problem. Similarly, the youth of both constituencies identified employment or lack of income generating activities for young people as priority issues. In response to these issues, the Deputy Premier, CSP coordinator and Rural Water and Sanitation representative responded favourably in one way or the other to address some of the issues especially those concerning water and sanitation.

- *West `Are`Are Rokotanikeni Association* The West `Are`Are Rokotanikeni Association (WARA), is indigenous in nature and was established in 1999,. Women of the WARA are of one constituency, one language, one culture and are related to each other through blood relationships. Women in West `Are`Are play crucial roles in their family, community and church related activities. In fact they provide the strength for any development in West `Are`Are. WARA consists of around forty (40) women's groups, with each group ranging from twenty to sixty members. These women's groups operate at the village level and belong to the churches. These women's groups were divided into eight (8) zones including Honiara/West `Are`Are women. These zones make up the Association. Each Zone has its own executive of eight (8) members. One unique arrangement about the management of the Association is that there are two Executive Committees at the Association level, one for the rural women and one for the urban women. These two Executive committees dialogue and exchange information on regular basis on any management issues that may arise from time to time. The strength of the Association rests on team work and the backup support from West `Are`Are women who had some formal education and are employed and resides in Honiara. WARA has a Reference group who deals with matters at the upper level and has a convener who provides secretarial roles. Women leaders at all these levels work on voluntary basis. WARA has its own constitution and its over all goal is to empower the women of West `Are`Are with knowledge, wisdom and skills to be self-

reliant and to participate fully and actively involved in all forms of development in West `Are`Are. WARA engages in various fundraising activities to raise funds to finance their own activities such as meetings, training workshops, helping people with special needs and supporting their own leaders. WARA has involved in a Revolving Fund Scheme where small loans are administered to members. From 2001 to 2003, European Union Micro-Projects funded Business, Leadership and Skills training for them, a criteria set before qualifying to participate in the loan scheme. Currently, WARA is planning to launch their Savings Club in September. Financially, each zone contributes $200 towards the main account and $200 towards the Rural Executive to tour and assist the rural women. WARA has a bank account with the ANZ Banking group. WARA is now six years old and is making headway towards reaching and touching lives at the rural level. It requires great effort of team work, time, one's own financial resources and commitment. While WARA is making difference to rural women's lives, it has become an additional responsibility to some of us who are already loaded with full time employment, household chores and additional community activities.

viii) Conclusions

- Malaita forms 30 percent of the total population of Solomon Islands and is unique in its diverse cultures and languages.
- Traditional leadership and church leadership, the two dominant leadership structures established at the village level are dominated by males.
- At the implementation level, the churches provide leadership for church women's groups;
- Women lack equal participation in decision making especially in the formal sector.
- There is a lack of a functional WDD office and a Malaita Provincial Council of Women at the formal provincial government level which means that women's needs are not adequately addressed.
- Many believe that women's place is in the home and the garden which further denies women representatiion in formal government positions or leadership.

(b) Isabel Province, 27-31 August 2006

i) Overview

Isabel Province was visited to gain first hand experience of existing mechanisms for the advancement of women and to better understand local factors that either promote or hinder the empowerment of women at provincial and grassroots levels. Special attention was given to structures to reach women in the villages and the interplay between the provincial government and the traditional leadership. Interviews were conducted with senior officials, traditional leaders and civil society representatives. Group discussions were held with a group of women of the Mother's Union in two villages. More than 50 people were consulted. Topics explored included activities organized by the groups, their relationship with the Women's Development Officer (WDD) and the Isabel Provincial Council of Women (IPCW) and their views on the women candidates contesting Isabel Province's three seats in national government and the voter education programme. Institutional and cultural barriers perceived by the women were explored.

ii) Provincial profile

According to 1999 National Census, the total population in Isabel Province was 20,421 (10,424 males and 9,997 females) representing 5% of the total population of Solomon Islands. The majority (97.6%) of the population lives in rural areas depending mostly on a subsistence economy. Produce from their gardens in the hills is mostly for self consumption complemented with some cash crops such as coconut, cocoa, nut, and, in coastal areas, betel nuts. Fishing is also mainly for subsistence. There are eight main languages are spoken in the province by the existing five distinctive cultural groups: Gao, Bugotu, Cheke Holo, Zabana, Kokota, Laghu, Zazao, and Blablanga (UNDP:2004). The majority (96%) of Isabel islanders are Anglicans from the Church of Melanesia (COM); the rest of the population belongs to other churches (e.g. Seventh Day Adventists and Roman Catholics) or are animists. Isabel Province has three members in the national parliament representing the following constituencies: Hograno/Kia/Havulei (6 wards, 6850 population), Maringe/Kokota (6 wards, 7920 population) and Gao/Bugotu (4 wards, population).

iii) Women's status in Isabel

All five cultural groups of Isabel Province have a matrilineal kinship system. Lineage is traced down the mother's line to a common woman ancestor. Land and sea tenure are held according to customary law based on matrilineal inheritance. Marriage is exogenous to the clan and matrilocality applies with husbands compelled to live with the wives' extended family. The knowledge of genealogies to trace common ancestry is critical in relation to shared ownership of land and sea and also for marriage purposes. Even though women play an important role as landowners, participate in the decision making in community affairs and are 'the motors, soul and life of the village' men usually are the spokespersons. According to Henry Marau, former secretary of the Paramount Chief "women are the decision makers but the men do the talking which should reflect women's decisions". Though a number of women had prominence as traditional leaders, the recent past has seen men as the majority of regional political leaders. This has influenced people to associate traditional leadership with men and has threatened to undermine women's traditional high status in Isabel.. With more public awareness of women's rights, women may regain more power. An illustration of this is of women bringing cases to the court against men abusing women's rights as 'owners and guardians of the land'. Currently there is a case in which a 'brother' gave away the clan land to a logging company without consulting. And the woman guardian of the land has put the case to the justice system. This action sets a precedent and the court decision is still pending.

iv) Provincial Government

The current provincial government was established in December 2002 for a 4-year term but was formed only in late 2003 due to the Tensions. There are 16 elected Provincial Assembly members each representing a ward; none are women. Half of the assembly members serve in the executive are of the government, which is composed of the Premier and seven ministers each with a portfolio: Community and Business Affairs, Finance and Administration, Education, Health and Medical Services, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Forestry, Infrastructure and Transport. Five out of eight members of the executive are former central government officials and, in the view of one of them, together are moving the

province forward by providing good government leadership. People consulted for this study seemed happy with the performance of the provincial executive. Provincial revenue comes largely from the national government but at around $SI 1.3 million per year is inadequate to run the province. There is no budget line from the national government to deal with women's and gender issues. Health, education and agriculture are non-devolved functions controlled by the respective central line ministry through staff seconded from the centre by the Public Service Commission. According to the Premier, the Provincial Assembly would consider as a medium term measure to have reserved seats for women, as women's voices need to be heard in the Assembly. He expects that in the long run the number of women in the Assembly will increase as it is very likely there will be greater involvement of women in politics.

v) Women's affairs and gender at the provincial level

- When the current government took office in 2003 there were no women employed in the provincial government. Now there are around 10 women among 43 direct employees working in agriculture, nursing, teaching, tourism, finance, police (3 out of 11 police officers are women). A young woman, recruited on merit, is the Deputy Treasurer. None of the six senior positions seconded from the centre is held by a woman.
- Women's affairs come under the Ministry of Community Affairs and the Department of Tourism, Business and Rural Banking lead by the Deputy Premier (referred to as Community and Business Affairs). There are three administrative officers. One (a man) is in charge of women's affairs, youth, culture, sports and music. Another (a young woman) is in charge of tourism, business and rural banking. The third (a man) coordinates affairs related to the churches, the chiefs, NGOs, community policing and elections.
- The province does not have resources to pay for a Women's Affairs Officer. The former position of Women's Development Officer (WDD) was abolished. The provincial government is willing to reinstate the position if the national government pay for it (as a seconded staff); the province would provide office space, resources and accommodation.
- The women's development budget is $10,000 per year and has been spent in promoting sport among women, specifically to represent the province in athletics in the Solomon Islands Games held in Makira, and to support the women's resource centre.
- *The Women's Resource Centre* is being constructed through collaboration of Soroptimist International, the Community Peace and Restoration Fund (CPRF) and the Community Sector Programme (for a cost of SID 400,000 for the construction and basic furniture) and will be managed by the Isabel Provincial Council of Women (IPCW). The provincial government donated the land, the timber and gravel to build the centre, which is expected to be finalized by March 2007. According to the Deputy Premier the rationale for the establishment of this centre, despite the existence of the well-established Mother's Union conference and accommodation facilities, is that the centre will serve all women irrespective of religious affiliation. The government will stay informed of the IPCW's composition and the activities carried out by the centre.
- The provincial government also supports the Mother's Union (COM) and the DOKAS Society (SDA) with SID 1000 each annually to support some of the activities undertaken by these religious women's groups. In the view of the

Provincial Treasurer there is no discrimination against girls and women in the province. As an example, he mentioned that last year scholarships for tertiary education were offered to both girls and boys and a new kindergarten also assured a gender balance among its pupils.

vi) **The Mother's Union of the Church of Melanesia (COM)** is on the only organization for women in Isabel Province operational from the provincial to the local levels, with a Mother's Union group in each village. The Isabel Diocese goes beyond the Isabel Province to encompass Choiseul, Russell Islands and Western Province.

- The Council of Mother's Union in the Diocese is composed of two representatives per region, with the work being voluntary.
- Activities conducted by the Mother's Union focus on the spiritual dimension of life and bible studies, visits to new born children and to the sick in hospitals, and fundraising. Some places have the literacy programs. The Union started a kindergarten program that has now been taken over by the province.
- According to the Vice-President of the Diocese Mother's Union Executive the organization is self-reliant. It does not receive financial support from the Diocese or the Provincial Government. The funds come from school fees or the rest houses and conference facilities they manage.
- In 2003 UNDP conducted leadership training for the Mother's Union focusing on roles and responsibilities, and monitoring and evaluation. One senior officer reported to be rather theoretical with not much practical application. In one village visited by the study team, Nareabo near Buala, the Mother's Union group is very active.
- The week before the team visited most women in the community had participated in a week-long workshop on nutrition. Other training workshops have covered pig-raising (mostly for men), agriculture (for men and women), cooking and sewing. The training is organized in the rural training centre and supported by IWDA an Australian international women's organization working at village level.
- The result of this continuous process of empowerment is reflected in the planning and activities undertaken to improve the life of the community. Nereabo Mother's Union does not receive funds or support from the Diocese or the provincial government.
- Training is organized in Buala, and usually only one representative per village is invited and sponsored to attend. The Ghoveo women consulted complained that most training and resources are in Buala and cited two trainings organized recently by the Diocese, one on leadership and another about pre-school education. Transport is a big issue limiting the participation. As an indication the group would need a minimum of $300 to cover the transportation expenses (hiring a canoe, renting the engine, paying the driver and fuel). In their view most villagers are left out and no training or capacity building is organized at the grassroots.

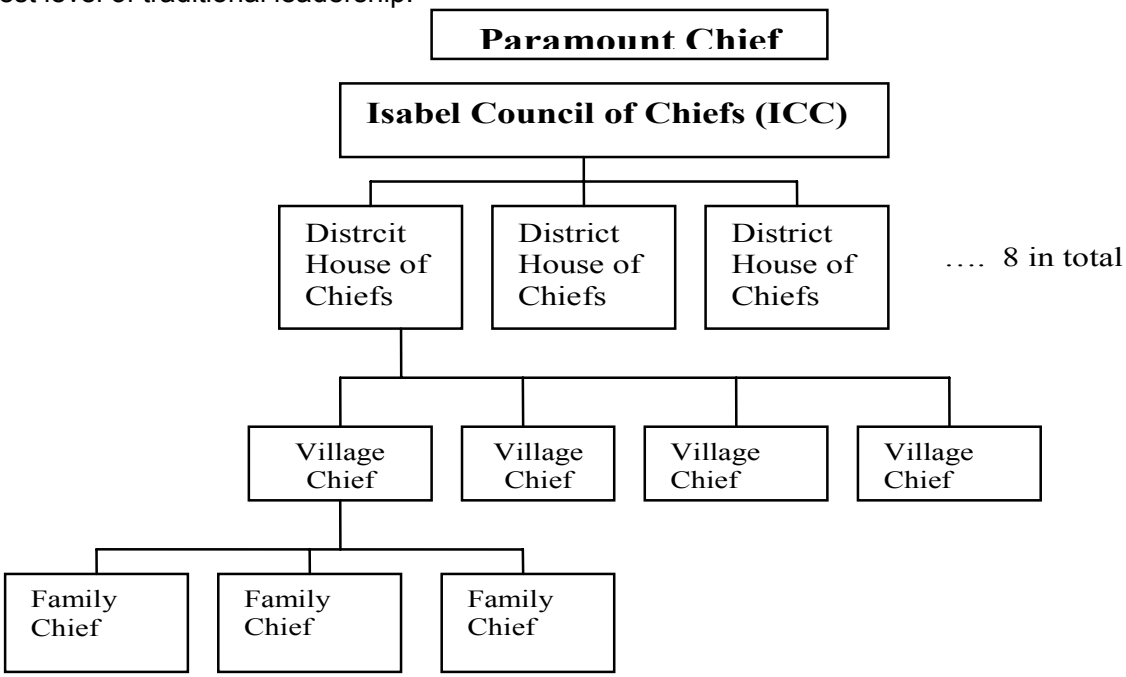
vii) **Isabel Provincial Council of Women (IPCW***)* was established in December 2005 following the visit of a nine-member delegation including the National Executive Committee and President of the SINCW.

- The new resource centre will be the driving force of the IPCW. Its management committee will include representatives from the Mother's Union, DOKAS, Roman

Catholic Church, NGOs, IWA (Isabel Women Association in Honiara), and other interested individuals. It will interlink with the CSP, the WDD and the IPCW.

- The issue is that of reaching out to rural communities, were 97% of the population lives
- Two groups of women consulted in Neareabo and Ghoveo claimed not to know about IPCW, WDD or NCW. None of these groups have contacted them or have come to visit their village. They have heard about the women resource centre to be established in Buala.
- During a meeting convened in Buala to talk about the women's resource centre, the Mother's Union leadership asked each member to contribute $1 dollar towards its cost. The women of Neareabo village at the meeting said they would not contribute as 'we are carrying the timber and the gravel for the centre on a voluntary basis'.
- Some women in Ghoveo felt that the resource centre was a good idea but that they would not benefit from it as their village is far from Buala. They would prefer the establishment of a centre built of local material in their village.
- Thus, an outreach mechanism from the women's resource centre in Buala needs to be established to provide services and capacity building to remote villages.

viii) ***Traditional Power Structures in Isabel*** The traditional power structure in Isabel province is composed of four levels: the village chiefs, the District Houses of Chiefs, the provincial Council of Chiefs and the office of its head, the Paramount Chief, the highest level of traditional leadership.



- The ***Isabel Council of Chiefs (ICC)*** was established in 1975. It is composed of two members representing each of the eight district houses of chiefs. The "districts" correspond to former "council" areas; they are smaller than the constituencies (of which there are three) and may combine several wards (of which there are sixteen). The Paramount Chief is the chairman of the ICC, which is governed by a constitution. Sir Dudley Tuti was appointed as Paramount Chief by the ICC in 1975 and served in this role until he died last

year. He came from a chiefly family, was a headman during colonial times and was a retired Bishop of the Church of Melanesia. He was appointed for his reputation, character and multiple good qualities. During his 30 years as the Isabel Paramount Chief he promoted the role of traditional chiefs in governance and his leadership has enhanced the legitimacy and authority of the ICC (White 2004: 3). Sir Dudley Tuti was said to be supportive of women and recognized their power and influence in the community, but he also said: "This is not enough you must equip yourselves to be leaders". A new chairman of the ICC needs to be appointed. Currently the chiefs are discussing the terms of reference, the criteria for selection, and the manner in which he or she is elected and whether the position should be rotating. More fundamentally, they are discussing the pertinence of having a Paramount Chief as in local tradition there was no such position in Isabel. The ICC was recognized by Isabel Provincial Assembly in 1984 (UNDP 2004: 6) and since them has received financial support from the Province. Currently the provincial government allocates a grant of $12,000 per year to contribute to the functioning of the ICC.

- ***District House of Chiefs*** are composed of all village chiefs of a district (usually around six or seven) and is led by the District Chief of the House of Chiefs. It has an executive composed of a chairperson, a secretary, and a treasurer. Currently there are five women who are part of the leadership structure of houses of chiefs[xlvi]. Each House of Chiefs meets at least twice per year. The provincial government contributes a total of $20,000 per year to finance the programs of the eight District Houses of Chiefs.

- An *ad hoc* ***"Tripod" System*** of consultation facilitates the interface between the Houses of Chiefs and the Provincial Government. A tripartite consultation is held on a regular basis (at least once every three months) between the Premier, the Bishop of Isabel Diocese and the Paramount Chief to discuss the main issues affecting the province and areas of collaboration. Currently, only the Premier and the Bishop meet as the new Paramount Chief has not yet been appointed. According to the Premier the flow of communication from the top down is quite good but it is harder to get good feed-back from the communities.

- Two kinds of ***Village Chiefs*** co-exist in Isabel Province: hereditary (those from a chiefly family line) and appointed or elected chiefs. One of them is appointed by consensus to run the village. Usually the elders propose someone based on their attributes and qualities such as traditional knowledge, skills in fishing and hunting, leadership skills, and education. The name of the person selected by the community is put forward to the District Chief for approval. If also approved by the Paramount Chief he grants the person status of chief for their lifetime in a special lying on of hands ceremony. Variations in the selection of village chief exist from village to village. The village chief runs the day to day business of the village and its community programs, receives visitors and solves minor justice problems in the community. Problems not able to be solved are referred to the District House of Chiefs. A village committee exists in all villages and provides support to the chief. Its composition varies from village to village.

The example of Nareabo Village in Kokota Constituency

Nareabo Village is located a 10 minutes by motorized canoe from Buala Town. The village is made up of around 250 people belonging to one of the two tribes: Psamogho and Tabias. Traditionally the village has had two chiefs, one from a chiefly lineage and another elected or appointed. According to the interim village chief there are two ways to select the latter. In one community members, both men and women, gather and vote for one of the proposed candidates by a show of hands. In the other, the elders discuss candidates until they reach consensus. Both tribes have to agree on the chief. Each lineage has a 'family chief'; there are 12 in the village, including two women. These lineage chiefs elect the tribal chief.

The current interim chief was nominated last year when the former chief resigned. He is the leader of the Church (COM) and has been a religious leader for 40 years. He describes himself as having a 'big mouth to mobilize the community'. A new village chief is to be elected soon.

The chief of the village is supported by a village committee of around 20 people: the 12 family chiefs, the catechist, a youth leader, Mother's Union leaders, a school representative (teacher), and a representatives of villagers from other islanders married to local spouses. Everyone with a stake in the village is represented in the Committee. The committee meets weekly on Sunday evening and the work programme for the following week is discussed (e.g. cleaning campaigns). The community work is voluntary.

ix) People's perceptions of the province's female candidates for the national parliament

Four female candidates contested the three constituencies of Isabel Province for the 2006 parliamentary elections, two in the same constituency (Maringe/Kokota). All four live in Honiara. Jane Tozaka who stood for Hograno/Kia/Havulei Constituency obtained the best results of the four women candidates. She ranked third out of nine candidates and received 15% of the votes in her constituency. According to one senior provincial official she was the strongest candidate but block voting along religious lines favoured the winning candidate who had stronger COM support.

The two candidates running for Marine/Kokota Constituency, Caroline Maetia and Elizabeth Theodi campaigned in the same villages. People from the villages visited remembered their campaigns very well. They felt that the candidates presented their education, experience and interests well. One was considered to have a good knowledge about the workings of the government. They highlighted, however, that the candidates are both Honiara-based and are not familiar with the realities and hardship of their villages and could not be trusted to represent them. Similarly people did not know about the candidates' lives and personalities. The main problem they saw was the candidates' lack of leadership in the community. They had not previously visited or done something for the village. Those interviewed did not consider it to be a cultural issue of preferring a male candidate but they would prefer a younger woman who lives in the village and understands and shares their views.

The perceptions of Ghoveo Village

The Mother's Union group consulted in Ghoveo Village remembered one candidate's visit as a very long (2 hours) and boring campaign meeting: "She was sleepy, her eyes were not bright'. The arguments used to convince people to vote for her were assessed as not very strong. "She brought a Queen's Medal that she had received and talked only about herself…she did not talk about what she was going to do for the village". One candidate came at a time when all the women were gardening in the bush; she left some posters and left.

According to the Premier the people in Isabel Province were ready to vote for women. The environment was right but when the candidates presented themselves they did not perform well. This point of view was confirmed by the visits to the two villages. People would be willing to vote for women candidates but for the right ones, those they feel will properly represent and defend their interests and keep links with the village.

x) Perceptions of the newly elected MP for Maringe/Kokota

The newly elected Member for Kokota was reported by women in Ghoveo to be very sensitive to women's issues. He represents a constituency encompassing around 43 villages and is also a chief in Buala. After the parliamentary session in Honiara he returns to Buala. He is perceived by local communities as an easy man to approach and 'people enter in his house' without any problem. According to one interviewed he is using the RCDP to help people living in the bush, and to help other communities with fishing nets and boats. His approach was said to contrast with the former MP who according to some accounts 'did not spend a single penny in the community during the 4 years he was in parliament'.

Some people interviewed felt there was a need to establish a mechanism such as a development fund backed up by legislation to ensure that the constituencies would benefit from the ward grants ($SI 30,000 is received by each ward representative) and the MPs' RCDF grants ($SI400,000 each per year). The legislation would instruct how the ward and RCDF grants should be dispersed to the local communities to respond to their pressing development needs.

xi) Perceptions of the civic awareness education for the parliamentary election

The civic education team was composed of men and women from Isabel Province. Most members of the civic education team were seen to be either targeting current politicians, standing themselves as candidates or supporters of candidates. The provincial coordinator of the team was a candidate. Not surprisingly, then, among those interviewed, especially at provincial level, conflict of interest was raised as an issue.

The messages of the education campaign were perceived by one provincial woman leader as not adapted to reality and she concluded that 'the members of the team did not respect each other'. A senior provincial official said that the campaign focused on the RCDF and how the current MP spent it, neglecting key governance aspects,and issues related to the election process.

The two villages consulted for this study were visited twice by the civic education team and one of them received a third visit by Winds of Change. Neither of these villages received the NCW Women in Leadership awareness programme. Nevertheless, the village of Nareabo assessed the information they received as very good. The education team stayed overnight in the village and most villagers, both men and women participated in the session and asked many questions.

All the people consulted by the study team stressed the need for a long term civic education program to sensitize and raise awareness of local communities. Women voters are still very much influenced by the voting advice of their husbands or the chief.

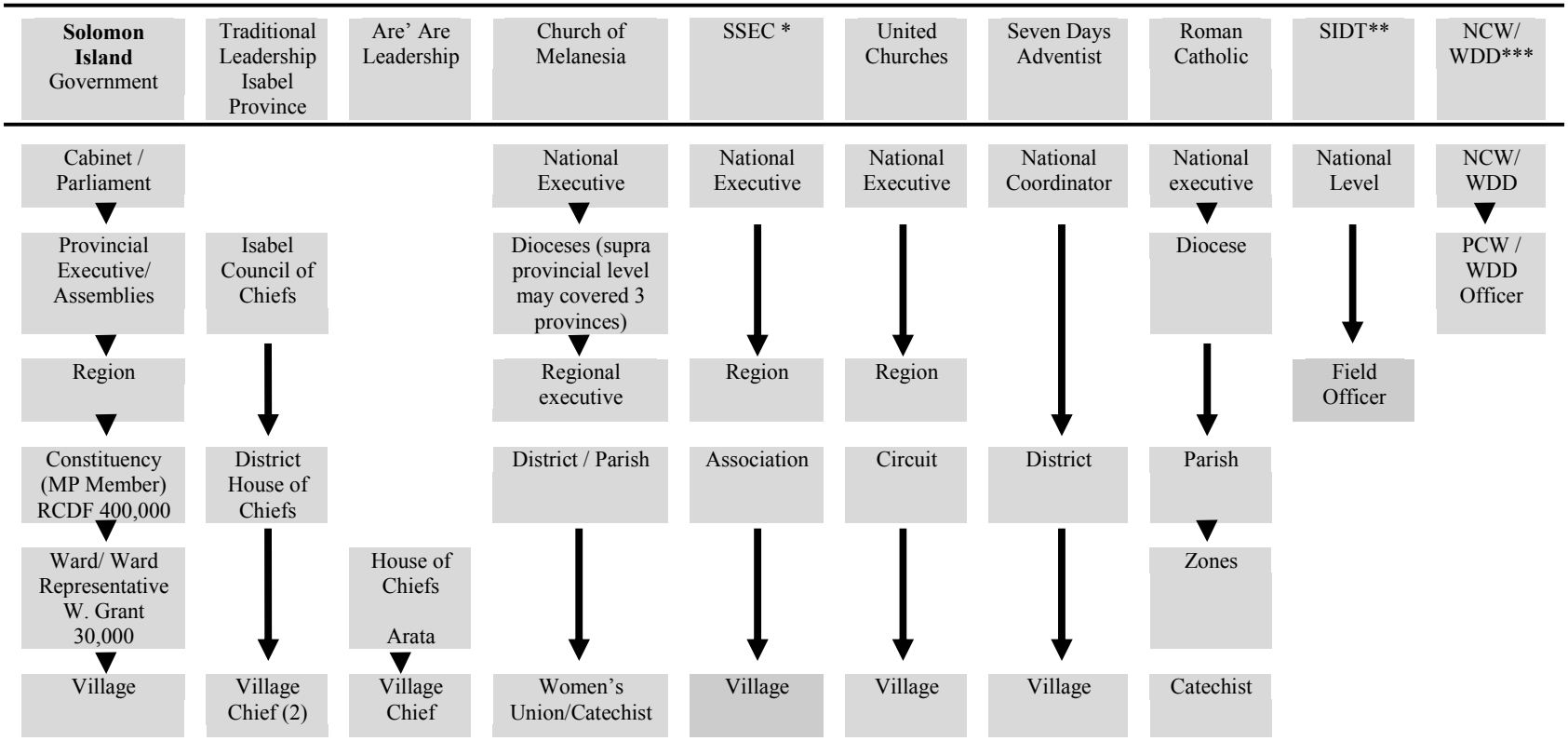
xii) Future prospects for women candidates in Isabel

Provincial Assembly elections for Isabel Province will be held on 5 December 2006. At least four women candidates are likely to contest the elections. Civic education to the grassroots level and leadership training for the potential candidates needs to start from now if female candidates are to be successful. The WIL desk in Honiara has already contacted the IPCW to plan training for the potential provincial candidates.

Perhaps there is a window of opportunity for Rachel Theo, the current IPWC leader and clerk of the Provincial Assembly and the only woman elected in Isabel in 1998 as a Member of the Area Council. She intends to stand for the 2010 Parliamentary elections.

Annex VII

Structure of main government, church and NGO bodies



*South Sea Evangelical Church **Solomon Islands Development Trust *** National Council of Women,

Annex VIII

References

AusAID, (2004), *Report of the Income Generation/Employment Creation Mission to Malaita Province, Solomon Islands.*

Caprioli, M, *Gendered Conflict,* Journal of Peace Research, Vol. 37, no.1, 2000.

Dollar, D; Fisman, R, and Gatti, R., *Are Women Really the "Fairer" Sex? Corruption and Women in Government*, Policy Research Report on Gender and Development, Working Paper Series, No.4, The World Bank, October 1999.

Ellis, Andrew, *Enhancing women's participation in electoral processes in post conflict Countries,* Background Paper, United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI) Department of Political Affairs Expert Group Meeting Glen Cove, New York, USA 19 to 22 January 2004

Huffer, Elise (2006), *A Desk Review of the Factors which Enable and Constrain the Advancement of Women's Political Representation in Forum Island Countries*.

Jayal, Niraja Gopal *From Representation to Participation: Women in Local Government*, Jawaharlal Nehru University New Delhi, Expert Group Meeting on equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes, with particular emphasis on political participation and leadership 24 to 27 October 2005 EGM/EPWD/2005/EP.3, 12 December 2005.

Kere, J. F. (1999), *Review Report of the National Women's Machinery, Solomon Islands*, East Medical Centre, Honiara, Solomon Islands.

Leslie, Helen, *Gendering conflict and conflict management in the Solomon Islands,* Development Bulletin 60, December 2002.

Malaita Province, (2006), Iumi Tugeta Bildim Malaita: *The Strategic Plan of the People of Malaita Province, 2007 – 2017*

Maley, Michael, *Enhancing Women's Participation in Electoral Processes in Post-Conflict Countries,* Background paper, United Nations, Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues And Advancement of Women (OSAGI), Expert Group Meeting on Enhancing Women's Participation in Electoral Processes in Post-Conflict Countries 19-22 January 2004

Mazur, Amy, *The Impact of Women's Participation and Leadership on Policy Outcomes: a Focus on Women's Policy Machineries.* Expert Group Meeting on Equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes, with particular emphasis on political participation and leadership, United Nations, EGM/EPWD/2005/EP.5 12 December 2005

Moser, Annelise, *Monitoring Peace and Conflict in the Solomon Islands, Gendered Early Warning Report No.1* UNIFEM, Pacific Regional office August 2005.

McGrew, Laura, Kate Frieson, and Sambath Chan. *Good Governance from the Ground Up: Women's Roles in Post-Conflict Cambodia.* Washington, DC: Women Waging Peace, 2004. 20 July 2004

Moser, Annelise, *Engendering Conflict Early Warning: Lessons from UNIFEM's Solomon Islands Gendered Conflict Early Warning Project,* UNIFEM, January 2006.

OAS Inter-American Forum on Political Parties *IS FINANCING AN OBSTACLE TO THE POLITCAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN?* OAS Unit for the Promotion of Democracy, the Inter-American Commission on Women and International IDEA, December 16, 2003

Pollard, A.A. (2006), *Painaha*: *Gender and Leadership in `Are`Are Society, the South Sea Evangelical Church and Parliamentary leadership, Solomon Islands*. Unpublished Thesis, Doctor of Philosophy, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand.

Pollard, Al A. *Resolving conflict in Solomon Islands: The Women for Peace approach* Development Bulletin 53. 2000.

Regan, P.M and Paskeviciute, E.*Women's Access to Politics and Peaceful States,* Journal of Peace Research Vo*lume 40 / number 3 / may 2003 p.292*

REPORT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OBSERVER GROUP Solomon *Islands General Election. 5 April 2006,* Commonwealth Secretariat, 2006.

Santa Isabel Development Plan 2003-2007, Volume I: UNDP, Basis for Action. 2003

Schmeidl, Susanne and Eugenia Piza-Lopez, *Gender and Conflict Early Warning: A Preliminary Framework,* , Swiss Peace Foundation with, International Alert, July 2002

Tickner, Anne J. 1999. Why Women Can't Run the World: International Politics According to Francis Fukuyama.' *International Studies Review.* 1(3):3-13.

White Paper on the Reform of Solomon Islands Constitution, Solomon Islands Government, Presented to Parliament by the Prime Minister and the Minister for Provincial Government and Constituency Development, SIG,November 2005.

White, G. M. (2004), *Traditional Leadership Report*, Buala, Department of Anthropology, University of Hawaii. United Nations