



# Initial Poverty and Social Assessment

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## SOL: Domestic Maritime Support Project

**Solomon Islands Domestic Maritime Support Project**

**Supplementary Appendix A**

**SOCIAL AND POVERTY ASSESSMENT**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The main objectives of the Domestic Maritime Support Project and Technical Support Program (DMSP) are to improve the efficiency, safety and reliability of the transport sector in Solomon Islands, thereby contributing positively to economic growth and poverty reduction, particularly in the rural areas. The Project will work with the Ministry of Infrastructure Development (MID) to improve maritime infrastructure and marine transport by supporting a franchising scheme to improve inter-island shipping services to remote areas, rehabilitating maritime infrastructure, particularly rural wharves, and by building institutional capacity to plan, manage, monitor and maintain transport infrastructure and services throughout the country.

2. Improved transport services and infrastructure, particularly by sea, is an essential element in supporting economic development and poverty reduction in Solomon Islands. Existing infrastructure in many parts of the country, especially in more remote rural areas, is either extremely limited or in poor condition. Rural wharves, which will be a major focus of the proposed investment in the planned project, are often in urgent need of rehabilitation, reconstruction or repair. They constitute an important link in the transport system, enabling more efficient, safer, faster and easier loading and unloading of passengers and cargo.

3. Improvements to inter-island shipping services to the currently poorly serviced outer islands are expected to stimulate increased local production of cash crops like cocoa, copra and timber. Opportunities to market smallholder produce will be created as a result of improved transport services, leading to increased household income and a high positive impact on poorer households. Regular, reliable and more frequent shipping services to the outer islands will improve people's access to employment and other income earning opportunities. Improved mobility will also contribute significantly to the health and wellbeing of people living in remote areas by enabling them to travel regularly for a range of purposes, including education, medical treatment, banking, and attendance at church, sporting and recreational functions. Increased frequency of shipping services, together with rehabilitated infrastructure at some key ports of call, will attract higher flows of traffic into and out of these centres. This in turn will encourage the development of small local markets and retail outlets, particularly near wharves. This will offer opportunities to local people, and especially to women, to generate additional income through the sale of food and other produce to passengers.

4. The Project will also improve the safety and comfort of sea transport by building appropriate institutional capacity to regulate services and enforce safety standards on board. Accidents at sea resulting from the lack of maintenance of ships, overcrowding and poor conditions on board are expected to be reduced, and passengers' experience of sea transport is expected to improve significantly.

5. The rehabilitation of rural wharves will contribute significantly to the efficiency, safety, speed and ease of loading and unloading cargo and passengers on and off ships, particularly in bad weather and rough seas. This will greatly facilitate the loading and unloading large volumes of heavy and/or bulky cargo, such as timber ("cubics"), and will reduce losses or damage to cargo which frequently result from accidents during the loading/unloading process via small craft (lightering). It will also reduce the risk of injury from lifting heavy loads into and out of small craft when loading and unloading ships. For sick persons, the elderly and disabled, pregnant women and those carrying young

children, the presence of wharves will greatly facilitate boarding and disembarking from ships.

6. The potential positive social and poverty reduction impacts of the Project will be significantly influenced by effective community consultation and engagement prior to and during the design and implementation of infrastructure works; consideration of support for minor civil works to support the rehabilitated infrastructure, such as the construction of storage sheds, market places and other public amenities near the wharves; and public awareness raising on issues related to environmental protection, health and prevention of STDs and HIV/AIDS. The benefits of increased inter-island shipping services to remote areas will also be enhanced by effective regulation of passenger fares and cargo tariffs and enforcement of safety standards on board ships. The development of a client-oriented service culture within MID and the proposed SIMA will also contribute significantly to the poverty reduction impacts of the Project.

7. Potential adverse social impacts include greater exposure of local youth to alcohol, illicit drugs and casual sexual encounters, carrying a range of health risks, including HIV/AIDS. Adverse environmental impacts resulting from pollution of waters around wharves could result in a reduction of fishing activities by local people, particularly young boys. There is also the risk of conflict between ships' crews and local communities resulting from the behaviour of poorly trained, undisciplined crew and lack of respect for local kastom. Conflict could also emerge between local communities and construction teams working on rehabilitation of wharves. In order to reduce these risks, it is recommended the Project engages local facilitators to work with local communities and construction teams to be the focal point for communication and coordination between the two, to negotiate agreements on access and use of land and resources, recruitment of labour for construction and maintenance work, and to provide public awareness and education on such issues as HIV/AIDS prevention.

## A. SOCIAL AND POVERTY CONTEXT

1. The current population of Solomon Islands is estimated at around 507,000,<sup>1</sup> of which the vast majority, around 84 percent, live in the rural areas, often in small remote settlements widely dispersed throughout the country's six main islands, 20 smaller islands and over 900 small islets and coral reefs. The population is very young, with over 40 percent being under 14 years, with a high youth dependency ratio of 75 per 100 in the working age group. In contrast, the population over 65 is just 3.4 percent. This very young population structure is reflected in all provinces except Rennell and Bellona, which have a small population and high rates of out-migration. The current high population growth rate of around 2.8 percent means the population will reach almost 600,000 by 2015 and is expected to double in the next 25 years.

**Table 1**  
**Solomon Islands projected population by province 1999-2014**

Year	Choiseul	Western	Isabel	Central	Rennel	Guadal canal	Malaita	Makira	Temotu	Honiara	Total
1999	19,787	62,039	20,198	21,337	2,352	59,611	121,299	30,668	18,706	48,513	404,511
2000	20,422	63,583	20,642	21,872	2,393	61,205	124,746	31,527	19,144	49,668	415,203
2001	21,053	65,146	21,099	22,419	2,431	62,821	128,268	32,414	19,596	50,824	426,072
2002	21,680	66,727	21,563	22,976	2,472	64,456	131,855	33,330	20,061	51,977	437,098
2003	21,853	68,608	22,225	23,593	2,555	66,137	135,090	34,116	20,619	53,489	448,286
2004	22,090	71,846	21,875	23,045	2,308	68,931	133,867	34,359	20,077	61,712	460,110
2005	22,974	72,124	23,364	24,802	2,686	69,527	142,018	35,865	21,678	56,227	471,266
2006	23,550	73,932	23,950	25,424	2,754	71,270	145,580	36,765	22,222	57,636	483,083
2007	24,132	75,759	24,542	26,052	2,822	73,032	149,180	37,674	22,771	59,060	495,026
2008	24,716	77,591	25,136	26,682	2,890	74,798	152,787	38,584	23,322	60,488	506,992
2009	24,060	83,759	23,209	24,226	2,174	79,555	143,852	38,123	21,190	78,190	518,338
2010	25,870	81,214	26,310	27,928	3,025	78,290	159,923	40,386	24,412	63,311	530,669
2011	26,436	82,991	26,886	28,540	3,091	80,004	163,425	41,270	24,946	64,697	542,287
2012	27,004	84,774	27,463	29,153	3,157	81,723	166,935	42,157	25,482	66,086	553,935
2013	27,581	86,583	28,049	29,775	3,225	83,467	170,498	43,057	26,026	67,496	565,756
2014	26,450	94,632	24,594	25,389	2,011	89,692	154,080	42,523	22,746	95,061	577,179

Source: 1999 Census Population and Housing Census

2. Solomon Islands has achieved comparatively low levels of social and economic development compared with the other countries and territories in the Pacific. According to the United Nations Human Development Index (HDI), it is ranked second to lowest in the Pacific. The Regional Pacific Millennium Development Goal (MDG) Report notes that Solomon Islands is not on track to achieve most of the MDGs by 2015.

3. An analysis of the key indicators of human development – including life expectancy at birth, adult literacy, school enrolment rates and real GDP per capita – shows considerable variation between provinces. It also shows significant differences

<sup>1</sup> National Statistics Office 2006

between urban and rural areas, with Honiara ranking highest in terms of HDI (0.651) but Guadalcanal ranked lowest (0.571).

**Table 2**  
**Human Development Index by province**

Province	Life expectancy at birth	Adult literacy	Enrolment 5-19 years	Real GDP pc at ppp	HDI	Rank
National	61.6	76.6	56.3	1940	0.598	
Central	62.1	72.0	56.6	1940	0.594	7
Choiseul	61.6	92.2	63.4	1940	0.644	3
Guadalcanal	60.7	73.1	41.1	1940	0.571	9
Honiara	62.8	90.5	67.6	1940	0.651	1
Isabel	60.4	75.2	66.2	1940	0.602	6
Makira-Ulawa	61.9	81.0	65.2	1940	0.622	4
Malaita	61.1	61.4	49.1	1940	0.557	10
Rennell-Bellona	62.1	73.9	72.4	1940	0.616	5
Temotu	62.6	60.6	61.5	1940	0.577	8
Western	61.6	94.0	65.4	1940	0.650	2

Source: Solomon Islands Human Development Report 2002 (based on 1999 Population and Housing Census)

4. Evidence indicates that the incidence of poverty in Solomon Islands, measured in terms of a household's ability to meet its food and other basic needs, also varies considerably between rural and urban areas and between provinces. For the country as a whole, just under 19 percent of households are estimated to be unable to meet their food and other basic needs, with the highest proportion in Honiara (over 24 percent), around 11 percent in other provincial urban centres, and over 15 percent in the rural areas.

5. A recent analysis of rural poverty in Solomon Islands<sup>2</sup> indicates that Malaita has the highest proportion (about 30 percent) of the country's rural poor, while about 16 percent of rural poor live in Makira/Ulawa, 12 percent in Guadalcanal, and just under 12 percent in Western Province. The remainder of the country's rural poor live in Choiseul (10 percent), Temotu (8 percent), Isabel (4.5 percent), and Central Province (3.5 percent), while Rennell & Bellona have the lowest proportion (less than 0.5 percent), largely explained by its very small population (less than 1 percent of the total) and high out-migration. According to this analysis, Makira/Ulawa is the most disadvantaged province in terms of the high proportion of its rural population living in poverty: the province has about 10 percent of the country's total rural population, but about 16 percent of the total rural poor. Temotu is the next most disadvantaged province, with just over 5 percent of the total rural population, but over 8 percent of total rural poor.

6. Many poverty analyses are based on data on estimated household income and expenditure as a key indicator, focusing on a household's average expenditure on food and comparing this with reported income. Apart from the well recognised problems

<sup>2</sup> A Report on the Estimation of Basic Needs Poverty Lines and Incidence and Characteristics of Poverty in Solomon Islands, National Statistics Office of Solomon Islands and UNDP, Suva, August 2007

associated with obtaining accurate data on income, data on expenditure can be misleading. As most rural households produce much of their own food, for example, it is difficult to compare their levels of expenditure on food with urban households as an accurate indicator of poverty. Comparison of a range of other key poverty indicators – the percentage of the population who will not survive beyond 40 years, for example, and the percentage of children of 5 years who are underweight – gives a more complete picture of poverty incidence in different provinces.<sup>3</sup> Based on these data from the national census of 1999, Malaita emerges as the most disadvantaged province with the highest HPI of 31.3, followed by Guadalcanal and Temotu (both 29.8), Central Islands Province (24.1), Isabel (23.9) and Rennell-Bellona (23.3). Choiseul has a slightly lower HPI of 22.8, followed by Makira/Ulawa (22.5) and Western Province (19.8). Honiara ranks least disadvantaged compared with the rest of the country, with an HPI of 12.2.

**Table 3**  
**Human Poverty Index by province**

Province	Percent pop. not survive to 40 years (1999)	Percent illiterate (1999)	Percent w/o safe drinking water (1999)	Percent w/o access to health services (1989)	Percent underweight under 5 years	HPI	Rank
National	17.8	23.4	31.5	25.3	23	23.2	
Central	17.2	28.0	16.6	28.1	29	24.1	7
Choiseul	17.8	7.8	31.3	29.3	32	22.8	4
Guadalcanal	18.8	26.9	58.4	28.5	26	29.8	8
Honiara	16.3	9.5	5.2	0.0	14	12.2	1
Isabel	19.1	24.8	15.3	29.3	35	23.9	6
Makira-Ulawa	17.5	19.0	34.2	29.1	21	22.5	3
Malaita	18.3	38.6	39.7	29.6	20	31.3	9
Rennell-Bellona	17.2	26.1	15.3	30.0	29	23.3	5
Temotu	16.6	39.4	27.1	29.4	15	29.8	8
Western	17.7	6.0	19	26.9	32	19.8	2

Source: Solomon Islands Human Development Report 2002 (from 1999 Population and Housing Census, health information system and 1989 nutrition survey)

7. Solomon Islands continues to experience health problems consistent with widespread poverty. Infant mortality, 66 per 1000 live births, is the worst among the Pacific island countries, while under-5 mortality, at 73 per 1000 live births, was the second worst.<sup>4</sup> Maternal mortality rates are also reported to be very high at around 200 deaths per 100,000 live births. The incidence of malaria is one of the highest in the world (UNESCAP, UNDP and ADB 2005:13), with an estimated 15,172 cases for every 100,000 people in 2000. Infectious diseases such as respiratory infections and water-borne diarrhoeal disease are also widespread, consistent with the poor quality of life

<sup>3</sup> Solomon Islands Human Development Report 2002, Government of Solomon Islands

<sup>4</sup> Solomon Islands Human Development Report 2002

experienced by the majority living in remote rural areas with poor infrastructure and services, including water supply, sanitation, and basic primary health care.

8. Education and literacy levels are low, with primary school enrolment rate in 1999 estimated at 56 percent, the lowest in the Pacific region. The average school participation rate is below 60 percent and is even lower for girls (UNICEF 2005). This is partly a reflection of the isolation of many rural communities and the lack of adequate transport to and from school, reinforced by the poor quality of education in remote areas where the supply of trained teachers and adequate equipment and materials is extremely limited. School fees also constrain enrolment among poor families, and many children are excluded from secondary education due to the current examination system. Gender equality is poor in Solomon Islands compared with other Pacific Island countries, with only 30 females for every 100 males enrolled in tertiary education in 1999.

## **B. THE RURAL ECONOMY**

9. The domestic economy of Solomon Islands is largely dependent on subsistence farming and the exploitation of natural resources. Small-scale agriculture on customary land now faces increasing challenges associated with a rapidly growing population, declining soil fertility and low yields. Small-scale forest exploitation is also an important source of income for small proportion of rural people.

10. Mining and manufacturing also constituted a small but important contribution to the economy prior to the civil unrest in the late 1990s. The 'tensions' have had a major impact on the Solomon Islands' economic development in general, exacerbating the problems already experienced by the country's rural poor in terms of access to basic services, infrastructure, employment and opportunities to participate in public life.

11. Most subsistence farming is carried out by rural households in home gardens, producing food for their own consumption. Important food crops include sweet potato, cassava, banana, taro and yam. Other important sources of food are coconuts, fishing, other marine products including shellfish and mangroves, and fruit and nut trees in the forest or in villages. Subsistence food production sustained the population during the conflict between 1999 and 2003. It underwrites the economy and its value has been conservatively estimated at SI\$325 million.

12. Fresh fruit and vegetables, betel nut, marine products, meats and firewood are sources of cash income for many rural villagers, with most produce sold at small local markets. Villagers also sell produce at the numerous markets in the small provincial towns such as Kirakira and Munda, usually transporting their cargo by sea using small craft or "banana boats" (e.g. canoes with outboard motors). For those who have relatively good access to the largest market in the country, in Honiara, there are opportunities to offer their produce – including handicrafts such as baskets and carvings, as well as fruit, vegetables, fish and meat – to a far larger and more diverse group of potential buyers. Specific islands are known for the high quality of certain products, such as marine products (trochus shell and bêche-de-mer from Tikopia, carvings and weavings from Bellona).

13. For the majority of rural people, access to markets is a significant factor influencing their ability to earn increased income. This in turn has a positive influence on

their motivation to increase production to enable to sale of surplus. Clearly the potential to earn increased income from the sale of food and other products is greatest for those with relatively easy access to the Honiara market, but smaller provincial and village based markets also represent a valuable opportunity for those living within reach of these markets. Improvements in rural transport infrastructure and services will significantly benefit rural producers, particularly those living far from markets.

14. Copra, cocoa and timber are the main export crops, and these, together with coconut oil and palm oil, constituted the main exports during the 1990s. The civil unrest from 1998 to 2003 disrupted the production and marketing of copra and cocoa, but production levels have now largely returned to pre-conflict levels. There is potential to increase both copra and cocoa production significantly, and to increase returns through improved processing of copra and development of value-added industry such as the production of high-value oils.

15. Other non-agricultural sources of income in the rural areas include trading and the operation of small village stores; the production of handicrafts, weavings and other products; trades, such as carpentry and boat building; transport services, both road and maritime; small-scale timber production and forestry; tourism; and some wage labour. Employment in the government sector also provides a source of income for some rural households. For many rural families, remittances from relatives living in Honiara or other parts of the country, or overseas, are another important additional source of income.

## **C. DEMAND FOR IMPROVED MARITIME TRANSPORT**

16. Improvements in basic services and infrastructure, including transportation and transport infrastructure, have been identified by the Government of Solomon Islands (GoSI) and donors alike as a priority need for the estimated 84% of the country's population who live in rural areas. Improved marine transport and maritime infrastructure is an essential element in the country's transport network and an essential prerequisite for supporting economic development and poverty reduction in Solomon Islands. As stated in the GoSI's National Transport Plan, "Marine transport is a vital and major component of the transport sector ... The lack of regular shipping services to areas depresses local production of commodities and undermines development" (p.6).

### **C.1. Inter-island shipping**

17. Inter-island shipping services between more remote provinces, such as Temotu, Choiseul, Shortland Islands, Rennell and Bellona, Sikiana and Ontong Java, and larger regional centres are currently less than adequate. Services are unreliable and infrequent, with some places only served twice or three times a year. Communities living in these remote areas cannot therefore rely on shipping services, whether for passenger travel or for the transport of cargo to/from regional centres. This in turn has had a negative impact on agricultural production in these remote provinces as there are strong financial and logistical constraints to marketing produce outside the immediate local vicinity.

18. Consultations with people from remote outer islands which currently suffer from very infrequent shipping services indicate that demand for more frequent, regular and reliable services is high and would increase even more once regular services became

established and people's expectations of shipping services were raised. At the same time, consultations with communities at selected subproject sites highlighted concerns related to safety and poor conditions on board. Some respondents expressed grave concerns about the poor condition of vessels and lack of safety equipment or compliance with safety standards, overcrowding and extremely uncomfortable conditions on board, lack of training or discipline among crew members, and reports of drunkenness and harassment of passengers were common.

19. Cost is also a concern; while some respondents acknowledged fare increases were a necessary consequence of rising fuel costs, many expressed concern about the affordability of fares and the charges levied on cargo, including personal items. However, responses related to people's willingness to pay indicate that on average about half of respondents from remote areas would be willing to pay a little more for improved services. The remainder indicated that although they attached high value to increased mobility from improved services, they could not afford to pay more than the current charges.

20. Stakeholder consultations reveal that people's perceptions of benefits from increased inter-island shipping as being mainly related to better opportunities to earn income and improved access to services. Some people expressed the view that improved services have the potential to transform their local economies by providing better opportunities to market agricultural produce, cash crops like copra, cocoa and timber, and handicrafts such as carvings and weavings, both domestically and internationally. This in turn is expected to stimulate increased local production of higher value crops and products, in turn generating further demand for shipping services. Opportunities to market smallholder produce such as betel nut, fish, fruit and vegetables at larger, more profitable regional markets were also identified, leading to increased household income and a positive impact on poorer households.

21. While most food consumed in remote rural areas is produced locally, many families also depend on imported processed foods such as rice, sugar and flour. Food shortages are experienced when local shops and stores on the islands run out of stock. Increased shipping services would address this problem by enabling regular restocking of common foodstuffs, kerosene and other consumables, thereby contributing positively to food security in remote areas. Regular shipping services will also greatly increase people's access to foodstuffs and other goods sent by relatives as remittances from Honiara and other centres.

22. People also envisage a range of social, cultural, educational, recreational and other benefits flowing from increased mobility, particularly if the services are reliable and affordable. Improved mobility is expected to have a significant positive impact on the general health and wellbeing of people living in remote areas by enabling them to travel regularly for the purpose of attending school or college, seeking medical treatment, banking, attending church, sporting and recreational functions, participating in festivals and celebrations, and visiting family and friends.

23. Improved shipping services are also expected to improve school attendance and levels of educational attainment. Due to the long distances between home and school experienced by many secondary/high school students, it is usual for students in many parts of Solomon Islands to board during term time and go home only two or three times a year. Travel to school is often by boat/ship and school supplies are also usually

delivered by sea. Improved shipping services will increase school students' mobility and ability to return home regularly, thereby increasing their motivation to attend school. Improved shipping will also help attract teachers to work in more remote areas, reducing the current high levels of teacher absenteeism. Similarly, respondents believe that health services will improve as qualified medical staff would be more willing to work in remote areas and it will be easier to ensure regular supplies of medical supplies to clinics and health centres.

## **C.2. Rural wharves**

24. Existing transport infrastructure in many parts of the country, especially in more remote rural areas, is either extremely limited or in poor condition. Rural wharves constitute an important link in the transport system, enabling more efficient, safer, faster and easier loading and unloading of passengers and cargo onto and off ships. In the absence of wharves, the loading and unloading of cargo and passengers is via small "banana boats" (motorized fiberglass or metal canoes) which is time consuming, difficult, uncomfortable and even dangerous, particularly in bad weather. For sick persons, the elderly and disabled, pregnant women and those carrying young children, boarding and disembarking from ships via small is particularly difficult and treacherous, especially in rough seas. While no reports of serious injury were noted, respondents did observe that the current practice of using small vessels to board or disembark from ships frequently results in people getting very wet and experiencing considerable discomfort, especially given the overcrowded conditions common in the canoes used to transport passengers between ship and shore. Lifting heavy cargo into and out of ships from small craft (lightering) can also cause injury, and losses or damage to cargo are common.

25. Consultations with local communities and stakeholders in the selected subproject sites indicate that demand for rehabilitation of wharves is high, and the rehabilitated infrastructure is expected to yield significant benefits and opportunities, including increasing incomes of local village households for both women and men. Economic benefits are perceived as the most important positive outcome resulting from the reconstruction of the wharves. At the individual household level, community members envisage opportunities to earn income arising from casual employment in the construction work itself, together with opportunities to earn income from the sale of food and provision of lodgings to construction workers. Once the wharves are in operation, the higher flows of people into and out of these areas are expected to stimulate the development of small local markets and retail outlets, providing opportunities to local people to generate additional income through the sale of produce. Women in particular are expected to benefit from the opportunity to sell food and other produce to passengers from ships berthed at the wharf.

26. In addition to offering income-earning opportunities to villagers, the wharves are seen by community members as supporting economic growth at a broader level. In Kaonasugu, for example, the fact that the wharf would be linked directly to the new road, including linking the village and surrounds with the main provincial market at Kirakira, is viewed as particularly positive, resulting in direct improvements to access to markets and thus leading to an increase in the production of cash crops (copra, cocoa, betel nuts and, on a smaller scale but still of importance to households, of fruit and vegetables).

27. Additional benefits identified during consultations relate to improvements in the safety, speed, ease, comfort and convenience of boarding and disembarking from ships,

and the increased efficiency of loading and unloading cargo, resulting in reduced risk of personal injury and loss or damage to cargo. Wharves will also greatly facilitate the offloading of school supplies which are mainly transported by ship.

## **D. PROJECT BENEFICIARIES**

### **D.1. Primary stakeholders**

28. The primary stakeholders in the Project are the Ministry of Infrastructure Development (MID), provincial governments, vessel owners and operators, business owners and operators dependent on inter-island shipping, passengers and other transport users. Secondary stakeholders include other relevant GoSI ministries and institutions. The main beneficiaries of the Project will be rural people living in more remote parts of the country which will be targeted for improved inter-island shipping services under the proposed franchising scheme and rehabilitated infrastructure in the form of reconstructed wharves.

29. Transport users whose primary purpose is to transport cargo potentially include agriculturalists (producers of cash crops such as cocoa and copra, and subsistence farmers), fishermen, traders, and small business owners and operators. Passengers potentially include secondary school students, people travelling for employment, and professional people such as teachers, medical staff and health care workers, government workers, and people with special needs such as women, children, elderly, disabled, and those in need of medical treatment. Other passengers include those attending social, family, religious, recreational functions and sporting events, and tourists.

30. Those benefiting most from the reconstructed wharves include those involved in transporting large volumes of cargo, for example copra or cocoa for marketing in Honiara, or small traders importing goods to stock village stores. Women, particularly pregnant women and those carrying young children, the sick and elderly, disabled and those carrying heavy loads will also benefit significantly from the presence of a wharf. Other beneficiaries include school students and teachers, especially given the large numbers of students that need to board and disembark at the same time.

31. While transport users will benefit most directly, local people living near the reconstructed wharves will also benefit from the increased opportunities to earn income resulting from the larger numbers of people travelling into and out of the area.

### **D.2. Gender issues**

32. The social and poverty impacts of the proposed improvements in shipping services and wharves are expected to be significantly different for women and men. Gender plays an important role in terms of poverty, with female headed households constituting 20 percent of poorest households in rural areas. Women's needs in relation to pregnancy, childbirth and as the main caregivers in the raising of children mean they are more vulnerable to the negative effects of living in remote rural areas where access to health services and formal education may be difficult. There is a strong likelihood that high infant and maternal mortality rates in remote areas are directly the result of poor access to health services, and low enrolment rates among rural children – particularly

girls – are attributed in part to the distance to schools. Improving shipping transport services will especially benefit rural women and their children in this regard.

33. Improvements in the enforcement of safety standards and conditions on board ships will have a significant positive impact on all passengers, but especially on women and children. Overcrowding on ships represents a major risk to life and property, and at the least results in discomfort and possible physical injury. Training and improved supervision of crews will result in a reduction in undisciplined behaviour, e.g. drunkenness and harassment of passengers, particularly of women, which has been widely reported by transport users.

34. Improved infrastructure in the form of rural wharves will have a significant impact on women, particularly pregnant women and those carrying small children. The risk of injury from boarding and disembarking via small craft is high, particularly in rough seas. The presence of wharves will enable all passengers to board and disembark far more easily, safely, quickly and more comfortably.

35. The presence of wharves, and the associated increase in traffic in the form of passengers and producers from neighbouring areas to transport cargo by ship, will provide women with opportunities to set up small rural markets close to wharves to sell produce, especially food, thereby earning additional income.

## **E. RISKS AND POTENTIAL ADVERSE IMPACTS**

36. While improved inter-island shipping services and infrastructure are regarded as potentially highly beneficial by all communities and stakeholders consulted, some risks and potential negative impacts were also identified.

37. One of the most commonly reported risks, particularly to young people, is that of greater exposure to alcohol, illicit drugs and casual sexual encounters resulting from the increased number of outsiders visiting the area. Many leave the remote villages to seek employment and the stimulation of the “bright lights” of urban centres, especially Honiara, and increased mobility may result in larger numbers moving to the towns. On the other hand, more frequent, reliable shipping services may have the contrary effect and encourage young people to move back to their villages as they will not feel as isolated as before.

38. Transport systems and infrastructure development are recognised internationally as contributing to increased HIV transmission. Although the reported incidence of HIV/AIDS in Solomon Islands is low, young people – especially young women and girls – are extremely vulnerable to infection. Increased shipping services represent increased risk, especially given the presence of other risk factors such as the high incidence of STDs, gender inequality, and cultural and religious factors, together with the widespread lack of knowledge and understanding of the causes of HIV/AIDS and its prevention.

39. These risks will need to be carefully addressed through close consultation with communities, and through public awareness and education activities. Various HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention programs are currently being implemented in the Pacific region and Solomon Islands. HIV/AIDS education and prevention will be integrated into the Project through linkages with domestic and externally funded projects, such as those

implemented by NGOs and through local nurse aid posts and clinics. As well as targeting local youth in the communities at the subproject sites, HIV/AIDS education, awareness and prevention programs should target ships' crews and construction teams contracted to work on the reconstruction of wharves.

40. As well as health and social risks, possible environmental pollution from ships berthed at wharves and from the increased traffic into and out of the area presents a moderate risk to the local community. Pollution of waters in the bay at Kaonasugu, for example, from the discharge of fuel from ships could result in the destruction of fish and plant life in the bay, which would have a major impact on small-scale fishing activities by young boys in the area. Community members raised this as a concern and recommended that environmental management plans be drawn up and communities take responsibility for monitoring environmental impacts and reporting any incidents of pollution.

41. The reconstruction of wharves may represent other risks to local people, notably women and girls. Contracted construction teams from outside the area may increase the risk of conflict with local communities and harassment of women and girls. Particular attention will need to be directed at effective management of construction teams and facilitation of community–construction team relations. The role of facilitators to support the management of harmonious relations is discussed further below.

## **F. COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

42. Land in Solomon Islands, as in the rest of the Pacific, is closely bound up with people's identity, social position, social *kastom* (traditional practices) and spirituality. Kinship determines people's rights to land and the resources to be found there. It is therefore essential that the Project works closely and sensitively with traditional land owners and gain their cooperation and support prior to any reconstruction work. A prerequisite of site selection will be the absence of any unresolved land disputes; if any disputes appear to exist, interference by outsiders to gain access to a wharf site or adjacent access road could escalate into conflict and should be avoided.

43. Culturally sensitive, respectful negotiations with land owners and residents of an area should be carried out by skilled facilitators, and formal agreements drawn up and signed by all parties to endorse the reconstruction work and public access to the wharf site. Both the AusAID Community Support Program (CSP) and the Solomon Islands Road Improvement Project (SIRIP) provide good models for this approach and have a wealth of experience and valuable lessons on which this Project can draw. Agreements may include provisions for the protection of the local environment, preference for the recruitment of local labour, and access to and the use of aggregates on customary land for the purpose of construction. It is envisaged that all Project works will take place at pre-existing wharf sites and thus land acquisition should not be necessary.

44. The Project should identify and train local facilitators who are if possible based in the selected sites and are well respected citizens of the same ethnic group as the local community. The facilitators will be the primary contact point between the Project and communities on all Project-related matters, including issues relating to land rights, access to and use of aggregates and the recruitment of labour from communities for wharf reconstruction and maintenance activities.

45. The issue of whether communities should freely contribute aggregates or expect payment will need to be resolved. The CSP generally does not pay resource owners for aggregates as they are seen as a community contribution, but SIRIP's policy was to review this on a case-by-case basis. Depending on the final engineering designs, it may be that there will be limited requirement for aggregates as most materials will be brought in from outside and extensive use will be made of prefabricated components in wharf reconstruction. However some aggregates are likely to be required for the rehabilitation of access roads, and this will need to be negotiated with local resource owners.

46. Labour-based equipment supported (LBES) approaches have been given formal endorsement in the National Transport Plan<sup>5</sup>, particularly in rural areas where opportunities to earn cash income are limited. While intended mainly for maintenance work, LBES approaches may also be suitable for construction work, and contractors should be encouraged to give priority to the recruitment of local labour for this purpose, whenever this is appropriate. The expectation of opportunities to earn additional income from participation in construction work emerged during consultations as an important priority for the communities in the selected subproject sites.

47. The possibility of labour contracts with community groups, as well as individuals, should be actively explored as the sharing of resources is an integral part of Solomon Islands culture. According to SIRIP and the CSP, it is established practice for provincial Departments of Works and other donor projects to contract community groups such as church, women's and youth groups, for road maintenance activities. Similarly, the Project should explore opportunities to recruit community groups to assist in the wharf reconstruction and maintenance work, for example in the provision of food and lodging for construction teams as well as for actual construction work. This should be encouraged as it strengthens and supports community-based organisations and ensures that the benefits of wage income are shared by many members rather than enjoyed by a few individuals.

48. However, while rural people are keen to earn cash income, it cannot be assumed that they have plenty of free time to engage in Project work. Women in particular often have heavy workloads and numerous social commitments, and older children are also required to help in the home and gardens. The opportunity costs of local people's involvement in the Project will need to be explored during subproject analysis.