



Social and Poverty Assessment

Project Number: 41105
June 2007

Solomon Islands: Emergency Assistance Project

An initial poverty and social assessment (IPSA) is prepared in the early stage of the project cycle to assess the significance of social issues for a project. In accordance with ADB's public communications policy (PCP, 2005), the IPSA is disclosed upon completion. The final summary social assessment is included as an appendix to the project's report and recommendation of the President.

Asian Development Bank

Solomon Islands Emergency Assistance Project
SOCIAL AND POVERTY ASSESSMENT
New Georgia South Road, Western Province

A. Introduction

1. The 5.3 kilometers (km) of road to be rehabilitated runs from Lambete to Kindu on the southern New Georgia coast. The road section directly connects Munda with seven villages, a major hospital run by the church and a secondary school ranging in size from 59 to 565 people and with a total population of 2,408 people (estimate 2007). The other villages in the vicinity of the subproject are Panopano, Dundee, Pihariki, Ilangana, and Kilivirae. This road is also connected to the Helena Goldie Hospital (the second biggest hospital in the province) and Noro the biggest industrial town and fishery centre in Solomon Islands, with a 2007 estimated population of 4,484.

2. People from the Munda and Noro areas and surrounding villages use the road to access health care and schools. The total COI population therefore becomes an estimated 8,542 people. The subproject COI encompasses about 14 percent of Western Province's population.

Table 1: Beneficiary Population

Community	Population (1999)	Est. Population (2007)
Directly adjacent to the subproject		
Kindu	230	296
Rapa	46	59
Kokengolo	208	268
Lodu Maho	94	121
Lokuloku	439	565
Helena Goldie Hospital	239	308
Kekehe	374	482
Lambete	240	309
Subtotal	1,870	2,408
Villages/town in the vicinity		
Panopano	67	86
Dunde	298	383
Kilivare	5	7
Pihariki	311	401
Ilangana	289	372
Nurse Aide Post	311	401
Noro		4,484
Subtotal	1,281	6,134
Total		8,542

3. Western Province's population growth rate is 3.2%, significantly above the national average of 2.8%, and some 40.5% of the population is under 15 years of age. In terms of development needs, this translates into an expanding demand for more education, health and

other social services, and for employment opportunities. After Guadalcanal, Western is the most urbanised province in the Solomon Islands, with some 10% of its population living in its two urban areas of Gizo and Munda-Noro area. Munda area has a land area of more than 15 square kilometres (km²) and a population density of approximately 161 people per km², making it one of the most densely populated areas in the Western Province. The population density for Western Province as a whole is just 14 people per km². The beneficiary population in the COI are predominantly Melanesians originally from New Georgia.

4. Churches are the key civil society organisations in the communities, with denominations varying by communities and with some having several churches. The churches assist some of the communities with small development projects, including infrastructure projects such as water supply and sanitation. Churches have also organised youth groups and women organisations at the community level, for outreach programmes and community projects.

5. A team made up of officers from the Asian Development Bank, Ministry of Infrastructure Development (MID) and local consultants visited the site during the damage assessment and subproject examination visit to Western and Choiseul Provinces. The team consulted with communities to the extent feasible; however due to their involvement in emergency recovery it was not possible to hold detailed discussions.

B. Livelihood opportunities

6. The population directly within the COI is mostly urban or peri-urban and many households depend on waged employment for their livelihoods. The Noro cannery, and the United Church Headquarter, hospital, Munda station, Kokenggolo Secondary School and the private sector are major providers of employment. It is located to the centre of the fishery industry in Solomon Islands and this has generated demand for related services such as hotels, guesthouses, banking and catering. The improvement of the Munda section of the road could help boost the local tourism industry to the area.

7. The rural villages in the vicinity of the COI depend on subsistence farming and fishing, as well as wage employment in Munda and elsewhere, for their livelihoods. They generate cash income from the local marketing of food and marine products. The important staple foods are cassava, sweet potato, yams, pana and taro, supplemented with purchased rice. Other important foods include fish, vegetables, fruits and purchased foods such as noodles, tinned fish and sugar.

8. There are three major markets in the area at Lambete, Kokenggolo, and Noro. These markets attract sellers from a number of major islands. Proximity to the water allows for easy off-loading. The produce most commonly marketed by villagers are seasonal root crops, vegetables and fruit, plus fish and other marine products. About half the population of Western Province sell fish at local markets, a higher proportion than any other province in the country. Root crops, vegetables, and fruit are mainly sold by women, whereas men often sell fish. Occasionally some produce is directly sold to trade stores and hotels.

9. Copra has traditionally been a significant smallholder cash crop in the area. However, chronic problems in the marketing and supply chain in recent years have hampered production. Most copra is now purchased by Western Province Copra Limited (WPCL), based in Noro-Munda. Copra is usually transported by road to main ports. There are 22 buying points that buy copra from the villagers and transport them to Noro. The buying points occasionally bring about 6 tonnes of copra per trip, while individuals can sell an average of 500 kilograms (kg). Some other cash crops, including betel nuts, are produced in small quantities.

10. Livestock, particularly pigs and chickens, provide an additional source of food and cash income to a number of households in rural and peri-urban areas. Relatively few households own cattle. The demand for meat is high in Munda but most of it is imported because of limited local supply. Poor slaughtering, processing, storage infrastructure, and transport hamper the market contribution of local producers.

11. Virtually all transport of market produce from the villages around Munda to markets is undertaken by road, with the mode of transport being motorised vehicles or foot. Walking time from furthest villages to Munda (8 km) is about 75 minutes. A fairly regular road transport service operates from Munda to nearby villages and to Noro town. Some people use motorized canoes to access the markets from further villages.

12. The rehabilitation of the road under the subproject would enable more regular and cheaper motorised transport services between the villages along the southern coast and Munda. This would reduce travel time and transport costs associated with the marketing of local produce. It would also facilitate easier travel within the small town of Munda.

13. Lower transport costs should induce more production in the rural villages for the markets, but land scarcity for expansion of agriculture may pose a constraint. Population pressure, increasing cultivation periods and declining fallow periods, and decreasing soil fertility contribute to lower crop yields. Increasing food and cash crop production, or even sustaining them at current levels, will likely require a considerable increase in fertiliser application.

14. Whilst on the one hand the cash income earning opportunities created by road rehabilitation and maintenance are welcome, on the other hand the impact of these on people's—especially women's—overall burden and other commitments need to be carefully considered. The sharing of resources is an integral part of local culture and the project should actively explore group-based labour contracting arrangements with local community leaders and groups. Working on road rehabilitation and maintenance may not be very attractive to households that already have members receiving regular wages through work in Munda.

15. Land tenure on Munda is dominated by customary tenure. Most of the alienated land is held by national government and the Church. Land holds tambu (sacred) sites and monuments, that represent the history of people's clans, lineage and society in general. It is because of these historical ties that land becomes an important link between the living and their ancestors. Politically, land is important as it binds people together as a landowning group. It is a source of political and economic power and is fundamental for Solomon Islanders' identity.

16. The implication of the centrality of land to people's identity is that the project needs to work closely and sensitively with resource owners to avoid misunderstandings and gain their cooperation. Road rehabilitation work will entail gaining access to, and the use of, aggregates on customary land. It might also involve minor road realignments or the reclaiming of the fringes of remnant roads over which de facto property rights have developed. It is therefore critical that the project establishes a credible liaison scheme with communities in the COIs in order to discuss these issues and gain resource owners' oral and written consent. A single liaison process that encompasses both issues of resource access and community employment opportunities is recommended.

C. Social service access

17. Western Province has an adult literacy rate of 94%, the highest in the country (including Honiara) and considerably greater than the national average of 76.6%¹. A major contributing

¹ 1999 Population and Housing Census.

factor is the number of schools, with WP having the highest number of schools in the country, and their relatively even distribution among populated areas. Enrolments rates (5–19 year olds) in WP are 65.4%, well above the national average of 56.3%².

18. There are three kindergarten schools in Kindu, Kokenggolo and Dundu. These villages also have secondary schools. Three other secondary schools that accept students from these areas are and their enrolments are Noro (618), Elelo (560) and Goldie National Secondary School (400). The kindy, primary and secondary schools enrolments in Kindu (56), Kokenggolo (246) and Dundu (407) are adjacent to the road. However, the other five primary schools and five secondary schools are in within the vicinity of the road and have been counted in the COI. Those in kindergarten and primary schools walk daily to schools but some in the secondary level have to use motorised transport services. It is however difficult to determine the impact that increased accessibility will have on school attendance and educational outcomes, given the lack of information on attendance rates and the importance of physical access (versus other factors) in explaining attendance.

19. Western province is second only to Honiara in terms of accessibility to health services, when accessibility is defined as being within one hour or less of health services using the prevailing mode of transport. Some 73.1% of WP's population enjoy such access³. Munda is well serviced, having one of the only two hospitals in WP, with the other one being located in Gizo.

20. The subproject would certainly improve the access of villages along the COI to the government hospital in Munda. The road is presently passable but by generating more traffic and facilitating speedier travel, road rehabilitation will enable a faster response to medical emergencies. It also could encourage greater utilisation of health services as well as the case of education. The road will connect to the Kokenggolo primary and secondary school to other villages.

D. Road safety

21. There is little information available on road safety and accidents/injuries in Western Province. However, a variety of factors contribute to make road safety a significant issue for the subproject: (i) the route of the road, which runs through a number of villages; (ii) the high level of pedestrian (including children) traffic, which is likely to continue to some degree post-project; and (iii) the increase in traffic volume and speed. For these reasons, a local road safety awareness campaign and speed bumps in villages are recommended.

E. HIV/AIDS

22. The reported rate of HIV/AIDS in Western Province remains low. However, as with the rest of the Solomon Islands, WP is vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. Risk factors include (i) the prevalence of sexually transmitted infections, (ii) teenage pregnancy, (iii) gender inequality and violence, (iv) cultural and religious factors, (v) the international port at Noro (connected to Munda), and (vi) the labour dynamics of the significant logging industry and fishing industry; and the tourism industry. It is recommended that contractors be required to provide access to education and control programs for crew and communities.

² 1999 Population and Housing Census.

³ 1999 Population and Housing Census.

F. Conclusions

23. The subproject will bring about several potential benefits to the population of about 8,500 people living in the corridor of influence. These benefits are: (i) reduced transport and marketing costs associated with food and marine products, and cash crops (especially copra); (ii) direct employment in road rehabilitation and maintenance activities; and (iii) improved access to educational and health facilities and services on the island. The improved road in Munda town could also contribute to tourist numbers and stimulate related businesses.

24. However, the decrease in transport and marketing costs may not induce greater rural production for the market, depending on the influence of other constraints (land and labour scarcities) that hamper villagers' capacity to respond. People's willingness and ability to participate in road rehabilitation and maintenance activities will be constrained by the numerous other potential income earning opportunities available and their other time commitments. There will be some improvements in accessibility to education and health facilities, but the impact of this is somewhat indeterminate in the absence of further analysis.

25. Key social issues that need to be considered during project design and implementation include (i) customary land tenure, (ii) road safety and (iii) HIV/AIDS. Strategies for addressing these include: (i) a good project liaison process with local communities, especially landowners; (ii) a local road safety awareness campaign and the construction of speed bumps in residential areas; and (iii) integration of HIV/AIDS education and prevention into the project.