

**SOLOMON ISLANDS
NATIONAL ASSESSMENT REPORT
RIO + 20**

**Prepared
By**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report was prepared as part of the Solomon Islands preparatory work towards the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) in 2012 or more commonly referred to as the RIO+20 in Brazil. The report outlines areas of consensus and differences of views regarding progress on Sustainable Development (SD) in general and poverty alleviation, identify key issues and barriers to addressing Green Economy (GE) from the perspective of government, major groups and donors, propose solutions to removing identified barriers, make recommendations on how to strengthen the national SD agenda based on the multi-stakeholder dialogue and outcomes of the workshop, and incorporate an assessment of how the government of Solomon Islands will address its capacity needs with a view to implement UNCSD outcomes.

The national assessment report is a synthesis of outcomes of a stocktaking report and group-based consultations held within a stakeholder workshop for the development of the national climate change policy. The workshop was held from 14-15th December 2011, drawing participants from the national government, provincial governments, Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) and the private sector and UNDP.

The consensus reached regarding progress towards SD and elimination of poverty is that in both, the progress is low and fell short of meeting commitments made in the international SD process originating from the Earth Summit in 1992. The factors responsible for the low progress are numerous, and tied closely with the predominant development paradigm where economic growth is given more importance over the other two pillars of SD and the Solomon Islands' increasing vulnerability to economic, social and environmental maladies and marked low endogenous capacity to adequately address them. The latter inadvertently produces a gap for which development partners have been assisting to address; however, their assistance needs re-augmentation in line with meeting first the needs of the Solomon Islands before any other conditions.

The introduction of SD and GE as development concepts overlay a milieu of sectoral legislations, policies and strategies, and national development plans of which most are underpinned by the predominant development paradigm (see above). Both concepts can be considered as frameworks to rationalise and organise the milieu and with moderation by the development context, paths leading towards SD through GE can be charted. A variety of barriers stand to affect GE implementation and they need to be removed through the implementation of the removal strategies described in the report.

The basic institutional structures (government and non-government) for SD are already in place, although they are aligned with SD pillars, fragmented and do not see themselves as functional units with a common goal of achieving SD. What's needed is improved integration and coordination of legislations, policies, strategies and programmes (projects) amongst national and sub-national institutions, and also with non-government institutions. There are barriers to integration and better coordination and these barriers are given rise to by the fragmented and sectoral-based legislative and institutional frameworks and 'turf protection' and disciplinarian-based training of officials. Strengthening the national SD agenda rests on raising awareness about SD, redefining SD through the addition of political commitment as a fourth pillar for SD and implementing the recommendations made in this report.

The capacity needs to implement UNCSO outcomes are numerous, although the Solomon Islands already has a certain level of capacity. What's needed is strategic capacity development with a specific focus on areas which could catalyse the ability of Solomon Islands to ingrain SD at all levels and enable national institutions to evaluate and address the crucial questions related to policy choices and modes of implementation among development options, based on an understanding of environmental potentials and limits and of needs as perceived by the people. Addressing capacity needs should be done in a coordinated manner within the ambit of a national SD capacity development plan.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

GDP:	Gross Domestic Product
GE:	Green Economy
MEAs:	Multilateral Environment Agreements
MECDM	Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Disaster Management
NDS:	National Development Strategy
NGOs	Non-Government Organisations
NECDAP:	National Environment Capacity Development Action Plan
SD:	Sustainable Development
SICFCS	Coastal Marine Resources Consultancy Services
UN:	United Nations
UNCBD:	United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity
UNCED:	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNCSD:	United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development
UNDESA:	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
WSSD:	World Summit on Sustainable Development

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1. BACKGROUND TO THIS REPORT

The national assessment report is prepared in pursuance of the UN General Assembly Resolution 64/236 to call for a UN Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) to take stock, 20 years after the historic United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED or the Rio Earth Summit). The Conference will take place in 2012 on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), in Rio de Janeiro, and the 10th anniversary of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg.

The objective of the conference is to secure renewed political commitment for sustainable development, assessing the progress to date and the remaining gaps in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summits on sustainable development, and addressing new and emerging challenges. To this end, the focus is on two themes: (a) a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication; and (b) the institutional framework for sustainable development.

UNDESA/Division for Sustainable Development in cooperation with UNDP and UN Country Team is cooperating with national authorities of the Solomon Islands to provide technical and capacity building support to enable the Solomon Islands prepare for and participate effectively in UNCSD, based on their SD goals and objectives, with a view towards defining its national context for effective SD approaches in the long term.

The author was nominated by the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Disaster Management (MECDM) to prepare this national assessment report. This report was intended to cover the following issues:

- A summary of the stakeholders' workshop,
- Outlines areas of consensus and differences of views regarding progress on SD in general and poverty alleviation,
- Identify key issues and barriers to addressing GE from the perspective of government, major groups and donors,
- Propose solutions to removing identified barriers,
- Make recommendations on how to strengthen the national SD agenda based on the multi-stakeholder dialogue and outcomes of the workshop, and
- Incorporate an assessment of how the government of Solomon Islands will address its capacity needs with a view to implement UNCSD outcomes.

2. METHODOLOGY

The national assessment report is a synthesis of outcomes of a stocktaking report and group-based consultation held within a stakeholder workshop for the development of the national climate change policy. The workshop was held from 14-15th December 2011, drawing participants from the national government, provincial governments, NGOs and the private sector and UNDP. Initially, a separate stakeholders' workshop was planned, however, because of delay of funds earmarked for the workshop and the difficulty in organising a separate one as the festive season draws nearer, the above option became the optimal one since most of the stakeholders invited for the national climate change policy were also intended to be invited for the RIO+20 workshop.

3. CONTEXT FOR DEVELOPMENT

Development in the Solomon Islands is carried out in a geographical setting of islands separated by vast oceanic space. Nevertheless, it is endowed with vast natural resources (terrestrial and marine) and a relatively stable tropical climate. The Solomon Islands is intermittently affected by climate extremes such as droughts, floods, storm surges and tropical cyclones, as well as geological hazards such as earthquakes and tsunamis. Of these climatic and geological threats, climate change poses serious risks to livelihoods and may heighten poverty and encumber SD.

The people and social organisation is characterised by a high degree of ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity. The Solomon Islands has a receding inter-census population growth rate trend but still has a relatively high population growth rate by global standards. The population is dominated by children and youths, with clear demarcation of rural/urban divide where 80% of the population reside in rural areas and the balance based in urban areas. A typical community in the Solomon Island is traditionally male dominated; consequently, there are inequities between males and females with the former showing dominance in the political arena and paid employment sector.

National governance and the public service system are immature, unstable and encumbered by corruption and weak political party system. On the other hand, the justice system is fairly stable although it is not also free from corruption and affected by resource constraints. Basic social services are state controlled as evidenced by the national health and education systems. These two sectors are also heavily supplemented with donor funds. Development and gender inequities are present and have not been reigned in properly in the past 18 years.

The Solomon Islands has a narrow-based economy with glaring dependence on logging and overseas development assistance, and with increased susceptibility to global and local economic and financial 'swings' with marked inability to cope with such 'swings'. In the past

27 years GDP growth has been mostly positive and highly variable; on the other hand, this positive trend has not confidently resulted in the improvement of the standard of living of the people. The monetised economy is dwarfed by the subsistence economy which feeds about 80% of the population, provide income and support social and cultural obligations in rural areas. A conservative estimate of the subsistence economy in 2004 determined it to be about 200% the total export value of cocoa, copra, palm oil, tuna and logs (Pacific Horizon Consultancy Group 2008). The monetised economy needs to be diversified and the subsistence also needs strengthening. Moreover transportation, communication and energy infrastructures must be improved to enable SD take root in the Solomon Islands

The biophysical environment is relatively in pristine condition in most parts of the country. However, in some parts of the country especially on the larger islands with natural forests and high density areas such as Honiara, environmental degradation is becoming very obvious because of heavy reliance on unfettered logging; population growth, consumption and political avarice, corrupt practices in the forestry sector and poor enforcement of development related legislation. The degradation of environment had been noted in various reports and highlighted in the media and brought to the notice of decision-makers and yet action to reverse degradation is laboured by numerous factors but especially the lack of national political will. The Solomon Islands is a party to a number of regional and international Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), and MEAs have also catalysed improvements to environmental governance and implementation of environmental programmes.

4. SUMMARY OF NATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS WORKSHOP

The author presented the main findings of the stocktaking report and this was followed by discussions guided by 5 main questions designed to gather some consensus on the following areas:

- a) Progress in SD
- b) Progress in the elimination of poverty
- c) Recommendations to improve national and local SD agenda
- d) GE barriers

4.1. Consensus on SD Progress and Elimination of Poverty

The general consensus reached on progress towards SD was that it was low and fell short of the commitments made in 1992. Underlying the low progress was the focus on short-term monetary and material benefits (reminiscent of quotations such as ‘instant gratification and wealth without work’) as evidenced by landowners selling logging concessions to foreign companies for pittance with little regard for ecological and livelihood benefits accruable from natural forests. The low progress indicates that SD has not been embraced as a fundamental

development principle by the government because of dominant development paradigm, where economic growth is the primary goal and lack of awareness albeit the fact that the Solomon Islands has been involved with the international and regional processes on SD.

Progress in the economic growth pillar occurred with drastic negative impacts on the natural environment and erosion of social capital. The general consensus corroborated findings of the stocktaking report. On the other hand, the participants also noted that assessment of progress in all three pillars of SD was difficult because there are no nationally agreed indicators, evaluation framework, and contextualised definition for SD. Ten per cent of the participants argued that the above assessment was still too optimistic, because in their opinion, the Solomon Islands development performance had declined consistently from the 1990s onwards, and this was evidenced by its low human development index, degradation of the natural environment and erosion of social capital and collision between western and local cultures over the past two decades. Interestingly, the 10% who differed from the main consensus consisted of older (>40 years) participants.

On progress towards poverty elimination, about 20% of the participants felt that poverty is not a major issue in the Solomon Islands. On the other hand, 80% of the participants stated that extreme poverty as evident in sub-Saharan Africa and parts of Asia is not in the Solomon Islands, however, they contended that poverty of opportunity (access to services and income generation activities) and hardship is present and that if SD is not taken up seriously at the national level, poverty may rise and further encumber progress towards SD. Participants also acknowledged the assistance rendered by donor partners and pressed for their assistance to be managed and used properly to ensure poverty/hardship reduction actually takes place.

4.2. Recommendations to strengthen SD agenda

A variety of recommendations were made by participants and the list below is a summary of the recommendations:

- Renew and deepen political commitment for SD
- Regulate all developments to ensure they are in line with SD
- Develop an SD policy
- Strengthen partnership between national government and provincial governments for SD
- Raise awareness about SD and use NGOs such as the Solomon Islands Development Trust for SD advocacy
- Promote SD at the village level (local level agenda 21)

- The education curriculum should emphasise holistic development of individuals with SD¹ factored into it
- Implement population policy
- Strengthen and positively revalue our local cultures and customary land tenure systems for SD
- Repeal the forestry act and enact a new one which resource owners benefit more and environmental degradation is minimised and environmental conservation is enhanced

4.3. GE Barriers

Listed below are barriers² identified by participants:

- Government and the public at large are not well aware about GE
- Political instability
- Heavy reliance on fossil fuel
- Lack of technical expertise on GE
- Lack of financial resources to plan and implement GE programmes
- Legislations especially those concerning natural resources are not aligned with GE features
- Resource owners have unlimited powers on how they utilise their resources

5. SYNOPSIS OF SD PROGRESS

From the outset it is vital to note that when SD is superimposed over development planning processes and production practices prevalent today, it challenges the values and thinking underpinning them. For example, SD considers both short and long term development planning given the significance it places on intergenerational equity and this runs counter to the 4-year electoral cycle and its attendant implications on political and development decisions. More so, whilst SD favours vertical and horizontal integration and coordination amongst stakeholders and institutions, it is challenged by the shift towards political and economic decentralisation. Clearly, the maxim that a problem cannot be solved by same thinking that created it is instructive in the Solomon Islands' efforts to internalise and operationalize SD. Central to the low progress towards SD are the lack thereof or limited political and moral commitment for SD. This assertion was reiterated during the national stakeholders' workshop and this was the basis of the participants' support to add political commitment as the fourth pillar of SD.

¹ The Solomon Islands has started promoting education for sustainable development and it is included in the 2007-2015 Education Strategic Framework

² These barriers have been added to or reconstituted into barriers in Table 1

Against the afore discussion, a perusal of relevant reports (Berdach and Llegu 2007; CBSI 2008, 2010; Government of Solomon Islands² 2011; Ministry of Environment Conservation and Meteorology 2008; Office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator 2002; Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat 2005; Pauku 2009; Roughan and Wara 2010; Solomon Islands Coastal Marine Resources Consultancy Services (SICFCS) 2002; Solomon Islands Government and United Nations Development Programme 2005; Wickham et al. 2009; UNDP 2011; Strategic Asia 2010), interviews with targeted stakeholders and the consensus reached during the national stakeholders workshop (*see section 4.1*) all indicated that SD progress is mixed and can be confidently stated to be short of the global and regional commitments the Solomon Islands has made for SD.

Nevertheless, some recognisable progress (Roughan and Wara 2010; Solomon Islands Coastal Marine Resources Consultancy Services (SICFCS) 2002; Government of Solomon Islands² 2011) has been observed in the environmental protection pillar, namely in climate change and biodiversity conservation. On the other hand, this observed progress is at risk of retreating because of the heavy reliance on external resources for the programmes and projects carried out in the above thematic areas. In addition, careful scrutiny of on the ground impacts and outcomes of programmes and projects implemented so far in climate change and biodiversity conservation was not carried out in this stocking taking exercise because of time and resource constraints. However, ‘ground-truthing’ assessments are needed and will verify the impacts of past programmes and projects. Nevertheless, what is clear is that all past and existing programmes and projects were/are carried out on selected sites and their catalytic effect on engendering similar actions in neighbouring sites were/are more evident in biodiversity conservation than in climate change. The slight advantage of biodiversity conservation over climate change could also be an artefact of the relative newness of climate change as a critical environmental issue. The ultimate test for the success of foundational programmes and projects in any thematic area is their ability to catalyse and draw internal support for existing and new programmes and projects.

On the other hand, in terms of overall progress in the environmental protection pillar, the situation is much more gloomier as demonstrated by latest (2010) MDG progress report on goal 8 (ensuring sustainability), where progress towards this target was tagged with a low probability of achieving the target because of deforestation through logging and increased vulnerability to climate change, and extreme events (e.g. tropical cyclones and flash floods, earthquakes and tsunamis) (Strategic Asia 2010). In the absence of nationally agreed indicators and evaluation framework for SD and attendant data and information issues, it was difficult to accurately assess progress in the other two pillars. The author has relied mainly on the latest MDG report as proxy for overall SD progress by rationalising each MDG goal under each SD pillar and perspectives of stakeholders interviewed and consulted during the stakeholders’ workshops to support the author’s analysis.

MDG goals (1-6)³ can be rationalised under the social development pillar of SD, and MDG goal 8⁴ can be rationalised under the economic growth pillar. MDG 7 also has components which can also be placed under the social development pillar especially those relating to sanitation and drinking water. Consequently, from the 2010 MDG report, progress in the social development pillar can be confidently said to be low as evidenced by relatively poor progress in MDGs 1 & 3. In terms of the economic growth pillar, analysis of CBSI reports and other relevant reports on the economy of the Solomon Islands revealed that the Solomon Islands economy has grown but generally did not performed well over the past two decades. The stakeholders' workshop also noted that economic growth in the Solomon Islands did not result in improved standard of living for most Solomon Islanders, as evidenced by economic inequities such as the national economy being controlled by a few foreign companies and the difficulty faced by most Solomon Islanders to access credit to start new or consolidate their business. In addition, key infrastructures such as roads and communication networks thinly covered the country. Consequently, it is safe to state that progress in the economic growth pillar was not strong from the 1990s onwards.

6. KEY ISSUES + BARRIERS OF GE AND THEIR REMOVAL STRATEGIES

6.1. Key Issues for GE implementation

Key issues affecting GE have been discussed in the stocktaking report and listed below:

- The Solomon Island formal economy resembles a brown economy more closely than a green economy.
- There is a general lack of awareness about GE.
- At the present, there is no explicit GE legislation, policy or plan.
- Aspects of GE are covered in NDS and other national plans such as the national energy policy framework.
- Location of aspects of GE which are currently practiced or covered under existing policies and legislations (use as entry points), the encouragement of so-called win-win policies and practices, and the search for innovative and context appropriate GE policies and regulations (enabling environment) are particularly pertinent for its uptake by the government and other stakeholders including the private sector.
- The transition to a GE will not be possible overnight; it has to be an iterative process with 'starts, stops and restarts' because of the local development context and connectivity with global political and trading processes.

³ Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education; Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women; Goal 4: Reduce Child Mortality; Goal 5: Reduce maternal mortality; Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

⁴ Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development

- To allay concerns about GE suitability and capacity to accrue short and long term benefits to the economy and the society as a whole, GE practice must be informed by sound research and development, backed with political and moral commitment on the part of decision makers, and properly resourced.
- Barriers to GE need to be identified and removed (discussed in *section 6.2*).

6.2. Barriers

Awareness raising is one of the first steps to clarifying barriers (through interaction with different stakeholders, see Table 1) and subsequently the design of better barrier removal strategies (Table 2). The barriers in Table 1 are not exclusive to GE; a lot of them reflect the current socioeconomic, technological, policy, capacity and policy constraints affecting development in the Solomon Islands. Moreover, the list is not exhaustive and indicates the typology and examples of barriers.

Table 1. Barriers to GE

Type of Barrier	Barrier
1. Awareness, Knowledge & Capacity Issues	
1A	Lack of awareness on the part of development planners and the public at large about GE
1B	Indifference to a relatively new development concept
1C	The natural environment and SD are low political and budgetary priorities
1D	Limited or lack thereof of individual, institutional and systemic capacities within ministries to analyse challenges, identify opportunities, prioritize interventions, mobilize resources, implement policies and evaluate progress
1E	Limited internal research and development capacity for GE
2. Fiscal	
2A	SIEA has an exemption from duty on distillate which could bias fuel choice against local biofuels. There is no fiscal incentive to import renewable energy technology, which attract the same duty as electrical equipment in general.
2B	There are no ‘green’ interest rates for renewable energy or access to foreign capital for renewable energy through government support.
2C	The lack of any analysis of the likely development impact of large-scale use of coconut and/or other vegetable oils as bio-fuel is real barrier to its serious consideration for development

2D	Poor management of re-forestation levy by government and customary land owners
3. Financial	
3A	National budgetary constraints [heavy reliance on overseas development assistance to the development (~85%) and recurrent budgets]
3B	High initial costs of renewable energy source compared to conventional energy sources especially with high capacity units such as hybrids of solar and wind, and large solar sets (>20 watts)
3C	High transportation and communication costs
3D	Low income in rural areas
4. Legislative, Regulatory and Policies	
4A	There are no specific legislation, regulations and policies to underpin GE
4B	Inadequate capacity and resources to enforce Environment Act and related Acts (e.g. Protected Areas Act, Forestry and Timber Utilisation Act), national plans and strategies such as the National Biodiversity Strategic Action Plan and the National Adaptation plan
4C	Out of date Forest Resources and Timber Utilisation Act
4D	Lack of enforcement of the Code of Logging Practice
4E	Lack of national standards for renewable energy technologies imported
4F	Legislations concerning natural resources and commerce are not aligned with GE features (low carbon, resource efficient and socially inclusive)
5. Institutional	
5A	Weak government capacity to absorb large projects in line with GE for example in renewable energy
5B	The public service machinery is encumbered by corruption and incompetence
5C	
	Weak coordination amongst ministries – siloed based approach to development planning and implementation of work programmes
6. Structural (environmental, governance and socioeconomic)	
6A	Rapid environmental change
6B	Political instability
6C	Corruption and incompetence in the public service
6D	Rapid cultural and demographic changes
6E	Marginalisation of rural areas in terms of essential development infrastructures and services
6F	Dependence on a narrow range of export products and markets

6.3. Proposed barrier removal strategies

Table 2 outlines strategies needed to be implemented in order to remove barriers. Some of the removal strategies rest on addressing capacity needs identified in Table 3.

Table 2. Barriers and Barrier Removal Strategies

Barrier	Barrier Removal Strategies
1. Awareness, Knowledge & Capacity Issues	
1A – 1C	(a) Develop and implement a communication strategy focusing on key stakeholders
1D	(a) Revise national human resources development plans (tertiary-based education and special trainings) to ensure balanced human skills covering all aspects of GE (b) Streamline and clarify institutional arrangements to promote and implement GE policies
1E	(a) Develop a research strategy for SD and GE and avail resources for its implementation (manpower to coordinate research and disseminate research findings, and finance for competitive research grants and overseas fellowships)
2. Fiscal	
2A	(a) Amend SIEA Act to remove its monopoly on power (b) Implement renewable energy strategies of the national energy policy framework
2B	(a) Provide financial incentives for local entrepreneurs to access capital to provide power and equipment using renewable energy sources
2C	(a) Build this study into the research strategy (1E)
2C	(a) Repeal the existing forestry act
3. Financial	
3A & 3B	(a) Improve revenue collection and design tax incentive for renewable energy and tax disincentives for high carbon emitting technologies
3C	(a) Continue to improve transportation and communication infrastructure as per objective 6 of the National Development

	Strategy (NDS 2011-2020)(Government of Solomon Islands ¹ 2011)
3D	(a) Strengthen (avail resources and technology) subsistence economy and small-holder farming (b) Implement the poverty alleviation and rural livelihood policy under the NDS (2011-2020)
4. Legislative, Regulatory and Policies	
4A	(a) Develop a national policy on GE and mainstream it with SD into national development programmes
4B	(a) Strengthen the institutional capacity of MECDM (b) Allocated funds from the national budget for the implementation of environmentally related acts, strategies and plans
4C, 4D & 4F	(a) Repeal the Forest resources and timber utilisation act, link the Code of Logging Practice to it, and align it and other acts concerning natural resources and commerce with GE
4E	(a) Develop national standards for renewable energy technologies
5. Institutional	
5A&5B	(a) Whole-of-government approaches to work towards ‘an end-state’ in which the policies and programmes of government are characterised by minimal redundancy (agencies performing the same task), minimal incoherence (inconsistent goals and requirements of policy clients) and minimal lacunae (failure to perform all necessary tasks) (b) Strengthen national capacity to manage the delivery of development assistance
6. Structural (environmental, governance and socioeconomic)	
6A	(a) Secure renewed political commitment for environmental protection and restoration through targeted advocacy programmes for national decision makers (b) Decouple economic growth from environmental degradation through diversification of the economy and implementation of economic and structural incentives for the implementation of best environmental practices, and penalties under the polluter-pay principle
6B	(a) Fine tune the political integrity bill and enact it as soon as

	<p>possible</p> <p>(b) Strengthen the leadership code commission to carry out its mandate more effectively</p> <p>(c) Decouple direct financial flows (e.g. rural constituency development funds) from national parliamentarians</p>
6C	<p>(a) Enforce existing check and balance mechanisms such general orders, financial instructions and other public service guidelines</p> <p>(b) Develop proactive and motivation/penalty based mechanisms in line with local cultures and public service principles to assist root out corruption</p> <p>(c) Enforce proper recruitment procedures and apply proper performance management and human resource development programmes</p>
6D	<p>(a) Appropriate institutions⁵ which are able to meaningfully engage with the people of Solomon Islands and their needs.</p>
6E	<p>(a) Implement all strategies under objective 6 (<i>develop physical infrastructure and utilities to ensure all Solomon Islanders have access to essential services and markets</i>) of the NDS</p>
6F	<p>(a) Implement all strategies under objective 5 (<i>increase economic growth and equitably distribute employment and income benefits</i>) of the NDS</p>

7. PROPOSED INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR SD

Government and community structure provide the overall context within which institutions across all levels of government and actors make decisions (Wickham et al. 2009). Underpinning the scope of work carried out by government institutions are legislations and sectoral policies intended to reflect national development plans and sectoral mandates. Barring the availability of resources, these legislations and policies give effect to the scope and depth of work carried out by ministries and other government agencies. As such they can either enable or constrain SD depending on their stipulations and interpretations by implementing ministries and related agencies. Given that SD may in some circumstances challenge the underpinning paradigms of development or ministerial mandates, revisions of

⁵The cultural and social specificities of the country mean that effective policy and programming will have the most effect when institutional setup and modalities are appropriate to the context of a wide range of communities and community settings (Roughan and Wara 2010).

existing legislations and enacting of new ones in cases where appropriate legislations are non-existent may be necessary. However, due care must be exercised to avoid complicating the legislative framework which will only undermine efforts to infuse SD into the legislation and translate them in action plans and activities on the ground.

From the afore discussion, it is clear that the basic institutional structures (government and non-government) for SD are already in place, although they are aligned with SD pillars, fragmented and do not see themselves as functional units with a common goal of achieving SD. There are barriers to integration and better coordination although both concepts are considered important and therefore appear in national development plans and sector plans. The barriers are given rise to by the fragmented and sectoral-based legislative and institutional frameworks and 'turf protection' and disciplinarian-based training of officials. As such people and institutions have to be weaned off from working predominantly on sectoral basis and to build confidence to work both sectorally and inter-sectorally.

At the national level, there is a need for improved integration⁶ and coordination of legislations, policies, strategies and programmes (projects) amongst national and sub-national institutions, and also with non-government institutions. The argument for integration and better coordination is also in line with the emerging consensus that policy and legislative fragmentation needs to be avoided because it displaces traditional venues of control and responsibility, congests and impedes decision-making, increases zones of conflict, and produces unintended consequences (Lane 2008). For the Solomon Islands, the need to promote integration is even more pressing because of development context features such as being an island state, narrow-based and overseas development assistance dependent economy and capacity constraints.

The formation of an independent SD body to advise government and other stakeholders on SD, and monitor progress towards SD is an imperative. Equally important are political and moral commitment to SD at all levels from individuals to local communities to provincial governments and the national government. Given the Solomon Islands limited experience in integrative programming especially amongst government institutions and with non-government institutions; the government needs to develop a protocol for integration and coordination (Lane 2008). The independent SD body can assist in grain integration, and promote collaborations and partnerships using the protocol. More importantly, resources (manpower and finance) must be directed to building capacity to implement integration and coordination. In addition, the task of integration has to be an on-going government priority as it will have to overcome deeply ingrained biases, preferences and priorities.

⁶Three kinds of integration are required. First, disciplinary integration which enables environmental policy to reflect the inter-dependence of socio-economic and biophysical factors influencing environmental outcomes. Second, the integration of government policy and action— both vertically and horizontally—so that government acts in a coordinated fashion. Third, the coordination of government and non-government actors (including communities, NGOs and private corporations) enabling improved coherence in policy and action (Lane 2008).

Moreover, integration and coordination efforts must cope with the globalisation of governance, trading and marketing mechanisms, cultures and capacity because globalisation can both benefit and harm SD if the interface of national and international processes concerning the above features of globalisation is not managed. For example, the strong dependence of the Solomon Islands' economy on overseas development assistance benefits the Solomon Islands through the provision of finance and technical expertise to carry out its development endeavours; on the other hand, it fuels the dependency syndrome and stifles efforts to have endogenous economic capacity to adequately provide basic social services in long term. It may be worth considering converting some overseas development assistance into foreign development investment.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS TO STRENGTHEN NATIONAL SD AGENDA

The recommendations listed below are a synthesis based on recommendations which came from the national stakeholders' workshop (*section 4.3*) and finding of the stocktaking report.

- SD needs to be defined and contextualised to the Solomon Islands circumstances
- Renew and deepen political commitment for SD
- Raise awareness about SD and identify the advantages and disadvantages of SD and communicate them to all key stakeholders from national to local level.
- Promote SD at the community level (local agenda 21)
- Clear goals and indicators for SD need to be established and used within a nationally agreed evaluation framework to monitor and evaluate progress towards SD.
- Sustained political and moral commitment to SD at all decision-making levels (local – provincial – national) through targeted awareness raising programmes.
- Make SD a central development planning principle
- Implementation of SD related plans in the NDS 2011-2020
- An independent SD body such as a national SD commission⁷ to be constituted by representatives from all key stakeholders mandated through legislation.
- Revision of legislations especially those ones with clauses detrimental to SD and premeditated alignment of ministerial work programmes with SD principles.
- Strengthen and positively revalue local cultures and customary land tenure systems as key institutions to achieve SD
- The education curriculum should emphasise holistic development of individuals with SD⁸ factored into it

⁷ Its main roles are to advise government and other stakeholders on SD and GE issues, spearhead research into SD and monitor progress towards SD.

⁸ The Solomon Islands has started promoting education for sustainable development.

- Implement population policy
- Repeal the forestry act and enact a new one which resource owners benefit more and environmental degradation is minimised and environmental conservation is enhanced
- Implement GE barrier removal strategies (Table 2).

For the Solomon Islands, this report proposes a 4th pillar (political commitment) to be added to the three pillars of SD. Political commitment must be treated centrally within SD in opposition to its present implicit treatment. Figure 1 depicts the four pillars of SD as proposed in this report. The proposal stemmed from the relative stagnancy observed in the progress of achieving SD outcomes, and the very aim of the UNCSD of securing renewed political commitment for SD. Political commitment in this context refers to the commitment which people in positions of power take in regards to SD. People in position of power include politicians, business leaders, government officials and individuals. All these decision-makers have power at their disposal (differentiated only by the scope of their decisions and level of resources which can be leveraged to support their decisions) to make decisions which can positively or negatively affect SD. For example, the decision taken by an individual to walk, use public transport, or drive to work involves trade-offs between low (walking & use public transport) and high (driving) greenhouse gas emission options. However, the final decision also rest on other considerations such as convenience, distance to work place and personal routines. From an SD perspective, walking to work is the best option because of its low emission and contribution to personal fitness, however, this is often not the decision taken by car owners.

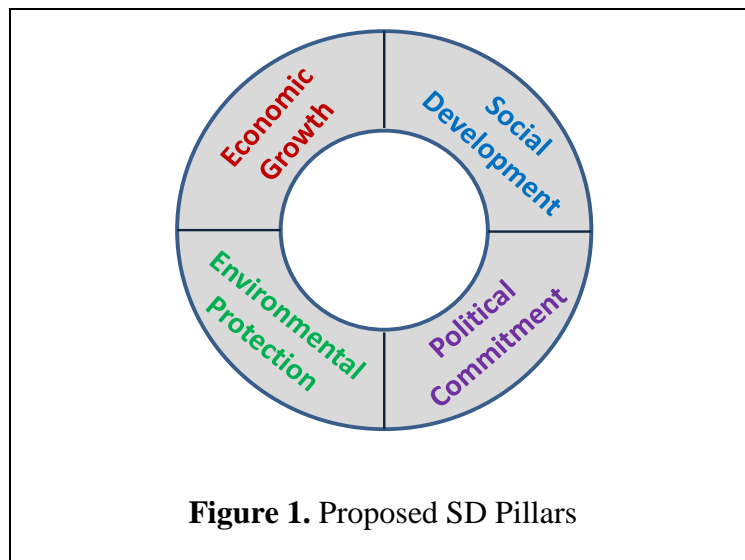


Figure 1. Proposed SD Pillars

The fourth pillar was discussed and considered relevant for SD implementation at the national level during the national stakeholders' workshop. Consequently, it was made into a recommendation to strengthen the national agenda for SD. In addition, there was general consensus that SD needs to be defined and contextualised to national circumstances.

9. CAPACITY NEEDS TO IMPLEMENT UNCSD OUTCOMES

The ability of a country to follow SD paths is determined to a large extent by the capacity⁹ of its people and its institutions as well as by its ecological and geographical conditions. A fundamental goal of capacity-building is to enhance the ability to evaluate and address the crucial questions related to policy choices and modes of implementation among development options, based on an understanding of environmental potentials and limits and of needs as perceived by the people of the country concerned. For example, a shift towards a green economy could require the strengthening of government institutional and systemic capacities to analyse challenges, identify opportunities, prioritize interventions, mobilize resources, implement policies and evaluate progress (UNEP 2011). To enable these two capacities to be enhanced, the individual/technical capacity of government officers must be strengthened through appropriate human resource development plans backed by a workable performance management system and appropriate level of resources.

9.1. Identification of Capacity Needs and Focus of Capacity Development

The process of identifying capacity needs has to be carefully planned to cover national, provincial and local communities and has to be on-going process. Although this process can be viewed as daunting, it is a necessary step since it has been pointed out in a progress report for the Mauritius Strategy for further implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action that previous capacity constraint analysis seldom involve local level actors such as local communities and businesses (Roughan and Wara 2010) rendering past capacity needs assessment work devoid of capacity needs of local level actors.

The focus of capacity development should be on endogenous capacity (people and institutions of this country) to critical mass level to catalyse SD implementation. The foregoing assertion arises from the observation that projects and programmes funded through overseas development assistance often engage expatriates and offshore enterprises (often with little local expertise) to carry out consultancies and prepare reports on national development issues of which there are locals who could carry them out. The net effects of such approach are the suppression of capacity development of locals and local institutions, and studies/reports (analysis) which have in part contributed to the demise of development in the Solomon Islands. The take-home message is that securing the internal capacities of the Solomon Islands to implement UNCSD outcomes is crucial. However, this does not mean that offshore individuals and agencies should not be engaged but they should only be invited on case by case basis and when there are no proven locals and local institutions for that particular case, so that engagement of offshore individuals and agencies cease to be the norm as it is today.

⁹The ability of individuals, institutions and society to perform and adapt functions, solve problems and set and achieve objectives in a sustainable manner (Wickham et al. 2009)

11.2. Capacity Needs for SD

The capacity needs of the Solomon Islands are numerous given its low human development context, structural conditions (e.g. small islands and economy and high population growth rate) and environmental and economic vulnerabilities. Nevertheless, the Solomon Islands already has a certain level of capacity to implement UNCSO outcomes, what's needed is strategic capacity development with a specific focus on areas which could catalyse the ability of Solomon Islands to ingrain SD at all levels and enable national institutions to evaluate and address the crucial questions related to policy choices and modes of implementation among development options, based on an understanding of environmental potentials and limits and of needs as perceived by the people. Therefore the focus of this section will be on the immediate capacity needs of national government which should also reflect needs of provincial governments and other non-government institutions. The needs are a synthesis of needs identified in various SD related reports (Roughan and Wara 2010; Wickham et al. 2009; Koshy et al. 2008; Pacific Horizon Consultancy Group 2008; Lane 2008; Pacific Forum Leaders 2005) the stocktaking report and stakeholder workshop. The list in Table 2 was intended to give a snap-shot of the types of capacity needs.

Table 3. Identified Capacity Needs

Type of Capacity Need	Need
Institutional	
	Strengthen institutional capacity for integration and coordination to plan and implement SD programmes
	Whole-of-government approaches to work towards 'an end-state' in which the policies and programmes of government are characterised by minimal redundancy (agencies performing the same task), minimal incoherence (inconsistent goals and requirements of policy clients) and minimal lacunae (failure to perform all necessary tasks)
	Strengthen national capacity to manage the delivery of development assistance
	Strengthen linkage with provincial governments and clarify powers and responsibilities under devolution orders
	Strengthen and manage the linkages between national lead agency and focal points of other government, NGOs, private sector and community entities
Technical	
	Build capacity to develop national development plan in line with SD principles
	Enhanced national capacity to assess and monitor performance of science and technology for SD
	Strengthen technical, leadership, coordination and resource mobilization capacities of staff involved in coordination roles

	Build capacity to integrate/align all SD related plans such as National Adaptation Programmes of Action, National Environment Capacity Development Action Plan (NECDAP), National Biodiversity Strategic Action Plan, Coral Triangle Initiative National Action Plan, National Solid Waste Strategy, the National Energy Policy Framework and the Program of Work on Protected Areas
	Building core competencies such as, participatory learning techniques, collaborative and adaptive learning, communication competency-based learning, increased mentoring and succession planning, to assist stakeholders in delivering their SD programmes
	Develop appropriate guidelines for best practice sustainable development partnerships
Economic/Financial	
	Ensure trade, investment and SD objectives and programmes are mutually supportive
	Endogenous expertise on trade related aspects of SD
	Endogenous capacity to make autonomous decisions to alleviate poverty and fairly distribute economic benefits geographically and demographically
	Build and enhance Solomon Islands adjustment to new competitive international trade environment by enhancing its export adjustment capacities, including trade facilitation and participation in regional integration initiatives, such as Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations
	Improved financial flows for SD related programmes
	Build capacity at the national level towards a country-led and country-driven donor harmonization process
Knowledge Management & Awareness Raising	
	Research and development strategy and learning network for SD
	Develop knowledge-based tools and innovative strategy options to promote informed decision-making for SD
	Capacity to monitor the state of environment and economy
	Mainstream SD into the national education system
	Coordinated data and information gathering and management mechanism
	Develop an advocacy programme for SD at all levels

11.3. An assessment of how SD capacity needs can be met

To address the capacity needs in Table 3, the following requisite conditions are imperatives:

- The following internal stakeholders are committed to the SD agenda (national government and provincial governments, NGOs and private sector, and the public)
- All stakeholders are prepared to commit their time and resources (financial and manpower) to plan, implement and evaluate SD programmes
- Donor partners are committed to SD agenda and increase financial flows for SD
- Donor partners promote endogenous capacity building for SD

In the absence of the above requisite conditions, it will be difficult to adequately address capacity needs and therefore reducing the chances of implementing UNCSD outcomes. The dynamicity of capacity necessitates a properly designed monitoring and evaluation programme to ensure that resources are directed to where capacity is still lacking or needs development. At the moment, all stakeholders are not very clear about their commitment for SD and therefore, they need to spell out their commitment clearly with the national government to show leadership with a policy statement to confirm their commitment.

To ensure that capacity needs are addressed effectively and efficiently, a national capacity development plan for SD needs to be developed to replace sectoral based plans such as the NECDAP. Quite often, certain stakeholders complain that the development of plans/strategies is an inefficient use of time and resources, however, for a developing country where there is no coordinating mechanism for SD, and SD is being reintroduced over fragmented institutional and policy frameworks, developing a structuring document is indeed a need. The capacity needs in Table 3 can form the initial basis of the national capacity development plan for SD and other areas can be factored in during national consultations.

The implementation of the SD capacity development plan has to be centrally coordinated but implemented in a decentralised format based on meaningful partnerships within government agencies and with non-government institutions. Existing mechanisms for capacity development such as education and training offered by tertiary institutions (local and overseas) and national training institutes linked with ministries such as the Institute of Public Administration and Management should be utilised especially for meeting institutional and technical capacity needs. For some capacity needs, they will have to be met through the set-up of appropriate national institutional framework and partnership with non-government partners (e.g. educational institutions and established research networks).

10. CONCLUSIONS

In relation to the key objectives of the national assessment report, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- The consensus reached regarding progress towards SD and elimination of poverty is that in both, the progress is low and fell short of meeting commitments made in the international SD process originating from the Earth Summit in 1992.

- The introduction of SD and GE as development concepts overlay a milieu of sectoral legislations, policies, strategies and plans, national development plans, and a development context unique to the Solomon Islands.
- Both concepts can be considered as frameworks to rationalise and organise the milieu and with moderation by the development context, paths leading towards SD through GE can be charted
- A variety of barriers stand to affect GE implementation and they need to be removed through the implementation of the removal strategies.
- The basic institutional structures (government and non-government) for SD are already in place, although they are aligned with SD pillars, fragmented and do not see themselves as functional units with a common goal of achieving SD.
- What's needed is improved integration and coordination of legislations, policies, strategies and programmes (projects) amongst national and sub-national institutions, and also with non-government institutions.
- There are barriers to integration and better coordination and these barriers are given rise to by the fragmented and sectoral-based legislative and institutional frameworks and 'turf protection' and disciplinarian-based training of officials.
- Strengthening the national SD agenda rests on raising awareness about SD, redefining SD through the addition of political commitment as a fourth pillar for SD and implementing the recommendations made in this report.
- The capacity needs to implement UNCSD outcomes are numerous, although the Solomon Islands already has a certain level of capacity to implement UNCSD outcomes.
- What's needed is strategic capacity development with a specific focus on areas which could catalyse the ability of Solomon Islands to ingrain SD at all levels and enable national institutions to evaluate and address the crucial questions related to policy choices and modes of implementation among development options, based on an understanding of environmental potentials and limits and of needs as perceived by the people.
- The Solomon Islands needs to address its capacity needs in a coordinated manner within the ambit of an SD capacity development plan.

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