

**FINAL EVALUATION
UN PEACE BUILDING FUND PROJECT
SOLOMON ISLANDS, PHASE II**

**Project dates: 1 January 2018 – 30 September 2019
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ACRONYMS

CDA	Conflict and Development Analysis
DIM	Direct Implementation Modality
DPC	Direct Project Costs
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GPS	Global Positioning System
IRF	Immediate Response Facility
KII	Key Informant Interview
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MNURP	Ministry of National Unity, Reconciliation and Peacebuilding
MTGPEA	Ministry of Traditional Governance, Peacebuilding and Ecclesiastical Affairs
MWYCFA	Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs
NCE	No Cost Extension
NPAC	National Peacebuilding Advisory Committee
OECD-DAC	Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development – Development Assistance Committee
PBF	Peace Building Fund
PBSO	Peace Building Support Office
PMO	Prime Minister’s Office
PRF	Peacebuilding and Recovery Facility
PWC	Provincial Women’s Caucus
PYC	Provincial Youth Caucus
RAMSI	Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands
RF	Results Framework
RUNO	Recipient United Nations Organization
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SINU	Solomon Islands National University
ToC	Theory of Change
TPA	Townsville Peace Agreement
TRAC	Target for Resource Assignment from the Core
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
TSM	Temporary Special Measures
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNV	United Nations Volunteer
UNWOMEN	United Nations Women
WPS	Women, Peace and Security
YEP	Youth Empowerment Project

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The second round of funding for the Solomon Islands from the Secretary General's Peace Building Fund – some USD3.2m over 21 months – is evaluated to have moderately contributed to progress in the country's consolidation of peace. The project's Theory of Change was ambitious and seen through the lens of the Solomon Islands' complex socio-historical, geographic and operating context, this moderate positive movement of the needle on building peace represents a notable achievement. The time frame afforded by the 21-month implementation period was too short to catalyze a lasting and peaceful consolidation of the country's continued transition away from the 1998-2003 Tensions that began with the 2003-2017 deployment of the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI). Most crucially however, the project:

- filled major budget and capacity gaps for the core peace building actors of the Solomon Islands government (SIG) and built strong relationships with key SIG bodies including the Prime Minister's Office (PMO);
- catalyzed the advancement of legislative items key to peace and reconciliation;
- improved institutionalization and socialization of gender equality into governments and community level peace and reconciliation efforts from a very low base;

The gains and achievements of PBF II require ongoing support to be sustained or advanced; absent consolidation through further financial and technical support, the momentum built by PBF II within the national and provincial governments and within civil society such as the project's Provincial Women's Caucuses will be lost though this would not in itself result in a return to conflict in the country. Project sustainability will also rest heavily on SIG political will; prospects for sustainability are mediated by the government's weakness at funding peacebuilding activities and absence of alternative or parallel peacebuilding donors.

The evaluation examined the project through the prism of OECD-DAC evaluation criteria. Key findings for each criterion are as follows:

Relevance and appropriateness:

The project cohered strongly with government peacebuilding priorities and while intended outcomes and geographic areas of focus were relevant to the peace and reconciliation context in the Solomon Islands, project beneficiaries regularly felt the project could have been more closely tailored to local contexts. The dual focus on higher-level legislative and institutional needs around peace building as well as community-level reconciliation and conflict resiliency meant the project was holistic in focus though not innovative in its composition.

Efficiency:

Ultimately, the project proved efficient in its delivery and implementation while occasionally struggling with recruitment and resulting capacity gaps during the first year of implementation. The original Results Framework was loose and sometimes ill-defined as a guiding document with a dearth of indicators and a baseline making monitoring a challenge. Internal cohesion between Recipient United Nations Organizations (RUNOs) UNDP and UNWOMEN under the PBF project umbrella was institutionally weak. Project cost effectiveness was adequate with the project's value for money evaluated as limited because nearly half of the project budget was dedicated to 'Staff and other personnel', 'Supplies, Commodities, Materials', Equipment, Vehicles and Furniture' and 'Indirect Support Costs' rather than project activities.

Effectiveness:

PBF II advancement of SIG legislative measures central to consolidating peace and encouraging reconciliation was a key win for the project with the Reparations Committee on track to be officially formed and the project was integral in the development of the WPS National Action Plan for Solomon Islands. Progress on addressing land-related conflicts has been tangible but limited with a handful of achievements and advancements. Out in the provinces at community level, Youth Innovators felt themselves to be more respected and valued for participation in the project and community leaders and Provincial Women's and Youth Caucus members established new collaborative connections with each other and with government. The most evident single peace building outcome was seen in the direct application of peacebuilding and conflict analysis training by community leaders around Honiara to persuade youth from the west of the capital not to engage in violence as unrest flared in the wake of April 2019 elections.

Impact:

Project impact was necessarily limited by the short timeframe afforded to respond to deep-seated economic, political and social drivers of tension. Notably however, partners and beneficiaries were more likely to reflect on the project inputs and outputs as useful in and of themselves rather than as steps towards peace or away from conflict; stakeholders consulted did not enunciate the sense that the project was moving the needle on peace or resiliency to conflict, though a broader birds-eye assessment by the evaluator suggested some limited impact. PBF II support to the Reparations Bill has the potential to ultimately deliver the broadest impact as the PMO believes payment of compensation/reparations is a panacea that will bring a sense of national closure around the traumas of the Tensions period. The public awareness resulting PBF II media training of the research and coverage of corruption was viewed as an influential factor in the signing of the 2019 Anti-Corruption Bill.

Gender and Women, Peace and Security:

While the number of women in decision making and leadership roles at community, provincial and national levels has not changed during project implementation, space has been opened and increased to incorporate inputs from women into policy and budgets at provincial level.

The project effectively capacitated and empowered women to tangibly contribute to peacebuilding and social cohesion through peace building training and though advocacy training to Provincial Women's Caucuses established through PBF II which provided women in three provinces with confidence to strategically compile community interests and to present them to government. Inclusion in the project of a UNWOMEN Gender Specialist boosted activities aimed specifically at empowering women and enhancing their role in government and community decision-making. PBF II also reinvigorated SIG's Temporary Special Measures (TSM) with three provinces now having approved application of TSM to their assemblies.

1. INTRODUCTION

The UN Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) was established in 2005 to complement the work of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Support Office by providing the UN system with early and strategic funding for catalytic, innovative, and risk-taking peacebuilding interventions aligned with national priorities. The Solomon Islands has received two phases of PBF funding, with the second phase (henceforth, 'PBF II') completed at end of September 2019.

Following the 'the Tensions' of 1998-2003 in the Solomon Islands, the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) provided stabilization assistance between mid-2003 and 2013 with complete withdrawal in 2017. The PBF has sought in successive phases to support the transition from RAMSI-supported stabilization to more sustainable peace by addressing root causes of tension and conflict, building key institutions and supporting mechanisms and structures improving conflict resiliency in the Solomon Islands.

1.1 Background

The first PBF project phase – implemented from mid-2016 to end 2017 – was designed to support the Government of Solomon Islands and national stakeholders during a transitional period, to create an inclusive space for dialogue and reconciliation and to strengthen national capacity for implementing the country's national peacebuilding policy including women's and youth engagement in peace and reconciliation, especially after the departure of RAMSI. The project was conceived to serve as a framework to advance inclusive peacebuilding in the Solomon Islands and give critical support to efforts in achieving the SDGs, in particular Goal 16 promoting inclusive peaceful societies and strong and accountable institutions.

PBF II has run from January 2018 to end June 2019 with a budget total of USD3,229,267. Target beneficiaries are youth (16-24 years) including females, community leaders and communities in Guadalcanal, Malaita, Western and Choiseul provinces. A no-cost extension has pushed the end of the project to September 2019. It too sought to "support sustaining peace in Solomon Islands post-RAMSI and election period through inclusive implementation of solutions addressing impediments to peace and development" (PBF II Project Document). The Solomon Islands' April 3 general election was the country's first poll since RAMSI's departure. While elections themselves were peaceful, subsequent riots in late April over the outcome and over general dissatisfaction with government performance and corruption illustrated the febrile context and how longer-term grievances have not yet been fully addressed. The Conflict-related Development Analysis (CDA) recently completed as part of PBF II strongly highlighted these ongoing root causes of tension and unrealized post-Tensions reconciliation while emphasizing tangibly rising anger over government graft, weak service provision and mismanagement of resources. The country's low levels of kinetic or lethal conflict are unique and important to emphasize: these are attributable to strong local level conflict prevention (or 'conflict suppressing') mechanisms that retain local buy-in through practices of *kastom* and *wantok*. Gathering public anger over governance and corruption as uncovered in the June 2019 CDA however point to a new tension dynamic, even while past grievances remain broadly unaddressed.

1.2 Structure of the report

This evaluation of PBF II in the Solomon Islands first lays out the evaluation approach and methodology including ethical principles and the report's limitations before providing an overview of the context into which the project was implemented and the evaluation's key findings. The report then examines the project through the prism of OECD-DAC evaluation criteria relevant to peace building, reconciliation and

stability: Relevance and Appropriateness; Efficiency; Effectiveness; Sustainability; and Impact. A chapter on the project's incorporation of gender as a fundamental and mainstreamed element of focus follows with three subsequent case studies collected to illustrate key evaluation findings in greater detail. The report provides a set of concluding points and finally recommendations both for improving program effectiveness as well as for future programming.

1.3 Evaluation Objectives/Purpose of the Evaluation

This summative external evaluation examines the concept, implementation and sustainability of the UN PBF project in Solomon Islands which ran from January 2018 until September 2019. The evaluation was undertaken over 5 weeks between mid-August and mid-September 2019 as the project delivered several final actions during a three month no-cost extension. This is the second successive PBF tranche of work in the Solomon Islands; a third phase of work preliminarily aimed at picking on and amplifying the most impactful components of this second tranche, PBF II, is under discussion.

The evaluation was commissioned to provide a credible, concrete and independent understanding of the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of this peacebuilding project. It seeks to generate evidence-based information against OECD-DAC evaluation criteria relevant to peace building, reconciliation and stability as well as the project's own results framework where possible. UNDP and UNWOMEN are the project's RUNOs and primary implementers alongside implementing partners the Ministry of Traditional Governance, Peace and Ecclesiastical Affairs, Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs (MWYCFA) and the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

This external evaluation sought to deliver on the following core objectives:

1. Ascertain PBF II achievements in terms of both the project and its stated outputs (measured against intended results);
2. Ascertain PBF II relevance and appropriateness to building and consolidating peace writ large in the Solomon Islands, particularly around SDG 5 and SDG 16 (highlighting concrete examples of both); assess the project's alignment with National Peacebuilding Policy and priorities of Solomon Islands and its contribution to enabling the UN's added value in support of sustaining peace priorities in Solomon Islands;
3. Assess whether the support provided by the PBF has promoted the Women, Peace and Security agenda (WPS), allowed a specific focus on women's access to decision making processes, and whether all the peacebuilding interventions supported by the PBF factored in gender equality;
4. Review the project efficiency, including its implementation strategy, institutional arrangements as well as its management and operational systems and value for money.

It is anticipated that the findings of this evaluation are to be utilized in service of several specific goals:

1. Though the concept note for a prospective 'PBF III' is at an advanced stage, PBF project staff view this evaluation as integral to providing a proof of concept of the approach taken in PBF II as well as a means to objectively direct the form and content of this third tranche of PBF funding. This evaluation will take a strongly forward-looking tone by seeking to offer lessons and insights on future peacebuilding in the Solomon Islands;
2. Promotes learning within implementing agencies UNDP and UNWOMEN, within PBF and the Peace Building Support Office (PBSO), government of Solomon Islands and its ministries at national, provincial and ward levels, and across the community of peace actors and current or potential donors supporting peace and development in the Solomon Islands. Encouragingly, the

consultant found that beneficiary groups and implementing partners consistently requested access to the results of this evaluation.

1.4 Methodology

The evaluation was based in an extensive document review and applied a participatory and primarily qualitative method utilizing key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs). The evaluator was also able to join and observe two days of a Lessons Learned workshop of the Provincial Women's Caucuses.

Literature review

To inform contextual understanding of the Solomon Islands and more specifically the role and nature of conflict in the country, the evaluator read all the literature accessible on transitional justice, reconciliation and conflict in the Solomons. These came from think tanks, peacebuilding practitioner organizations, blogs, academic writing and longer-form books compiled by demonstrable experts in conflict in the Solomon Islands. These external sources are listed in the bibliography.

Particular to the project itself, a large cache of project documents, periodic progress reporting, monitoring data, baseline and endline data from trainings and dialogues was consulted as well as work produced in the course of the project: a perceptions survey and a context analysis undertaken utilizing UNDP's Conflict and Development Analysis (CDA) framework.

Focus groups and key informant interviews

As a first step, several external experts with work experience on post-conflict transition in the Solomon Islands were consulted. The project identified and facilitated KIIs and FGDs in response to initial requests by the evaluator. In order to generate first hand, primary data, KIIs and FGDs were undertaken in all three of the provinces targeted by the project (Honiara/Guadalcanal, Western and Malaita) with government figures, implementing partners, beneficiaries, political sections of diplomatic missions, PBF staff at UN HQ in New York, current and former PBF II project staff, and non-project staff based in Honiara and in the regional hub in Suva, Fiji.

Site visits

Because the project was not complete as of the start of the evaluation period, the evaluator took the opportunity to join a Lessons Learned Workshop for the Provincial Women's Caucuses outside of Honiara. A visit to another project activity – a workshop on reconciliation and gender issues at Marau on the Weather Coast – was cancelled due to timing and logistical issues brought about by high seas and flooded roads.

1.5 Approaches in the Field and Sample

The selection of locations for key informant interviews and focus group discussions corresponded directly with the provinces in which the project was implemented: Honiara/Guadalcanal, Malaita, and Western. The logistical challenges of moving outside of provincial capitals (cost and availability of transport and accommodation) meant that nearly all interviews were conducted in the capitals of Honiara, Auki and Gizo, though the consultant spent two days observing and undertaking focus groups and interviews at a Lessons Learned Workshop some 40km outside of Honiara. Once in the provincial capitals, logistics and questions of physical access also strongly dictated the available beneficiaries with whom the consultant could speak, though these challenges of bringing targeted beneficiaries together and into areas accessible by the project mirrored those faced during implementation. As such, stipends

to cover transport were paid to interviewees wherever required. Despite this, several focus groups in Auki (and to a lesser extent Gizo) saw more limited participants, ostensibly because of troubles with transport to the interviews held centrally in provincial MTGPEA offices.

Sampling for each primary data generation method was determined via early scoping and engagement with RUNOs and ultimately rested in large part on logistical feasibility of accessing stakeholders. Concerted attention was given to assuring representative consultation and input from women and youth in groups and as individuals. The demographic breakdown of interviewees is as follows. A detailed breakdown is in annex:

Primary data: key informant interviews, focus group discussions and demographics

Interview Partners		Demographic breakdown	Location
1. UN agency staff (Total of 12 interviews)		Female: 9 Male: 5	Honiara, Suva, New York
2. Implementing partners (Total of 11 interviews)		Female: 1 Male: 10	Honiara; Ginger Beach; Auki, Malaita province; Gizo, Western province
3. Direct beneficiaries (Total of 4 KIIs, 6 FGDs)		Female: 28 Male: 12	Honiara; Ginger Beach; Auki, Malaita province; Gizo, Western province
4. External experts/resource persons (Total of 4 interviews)		Female: 4 Male: 0	Honiara, Solomon Islands; Brighton, UK; Melbourne, Australia
TOTALS	31 KIIs, 6 FGDs	Female: 42 Male: 27	

The evaluation questions to be answered are based in the OECD DAC evaluation criteria and the UN Evaluation Group standards (including those on gender mainstreaming). They have been adapted to the context and provided by the evaluation commissioners (provided in full in annex):

- Relevance and Appropriateness
- Efficiency
- Effectiveness
- Impact/Sustainability

1.6 Evaluation principles

Considerable care was taken during the evaluation to maintain ethical standards appropriate to evaluations in post-conflict contexts. The OECD DAC *Quality Standards for Development Evaluation* constituted the ethical backbone of this evaluation and were adhered to consistently throughout the evaluation process. This seemed crucial given that the country’s 1998-2003 ‘tensions’ period continues to constitute a source of demonstrable trauma for some Solomon Islanders. The project sought specifically to work in conflict-affected regions of the country.

KIIs and FGDs were conducted with assurances of anonymity during reporting. A basic set of interviewee rights (below) derived from ALNAP’s *Evaluation of Humanitarian Action Pilot Guide* was read to subjects of KIIs and FGDs ahead of interviews. As an important component of assuring objective testimony from interviewees and focus group participants, the implementers of the project (primarily UNDP and UNWOMEN) were absent whenever possible though in several instances, project staff were present.

Box 1: Interviewee Rights Advice Card (from ALNAP's *Evaluation of Humanitarian Action Pilot Guide*)

Your rights as an interviewee:

- You have the right to terminate the interview at any time. You have the right not to answer any question.
- Nothing you say will be attributed to you directly or indirectly without your express permission.
- The notes on this interview will not be shared outside the evaluation team.
- If the client agrees, and we have your email address, we will send you the draft for comments.

1.7 Evaluation constraints and limitations

The project presented a challenging evaluability for three core reasons:

1. Original project document and the accompanying results framework were demonstrably loose, underdeveloped and very low on specifics pertaining to activities, proposed or desired target locations and beneficiaries, and indicators. Baselines are either missing or too weak to utilize. Outcome indicators are in many cases unusable. No numbers of workshops/trainings/beneficiaries were specified in the RF so the scope of the project and accompanying outputs compared with anticipated reach and numbers was impossible to evaluate against any expected outcomes. This shortcoming in the original project documentation was readily acknowledged by the project staff, many of whom joined the project towards the middle or end of 2018, months after the project had begun. (The Project Manager, M&E Officer and Gender Advisor joined approximately halfway through implementation, with Deputy Project Manager and Project Officer in place from the project's inception.) Belated attempts were made by the new project staff to tighten indicators and activities were necessarily concretized as implementation proceeded over time, however these original weaknesses meant a dearth of credible baselines and indicators hampered evaluability.
2. The absence of a functional M&E Officer until halfway through the implementation period meant the first half of the project was dramatically under-evaluated with a near-absence of monitoring data and information generated until January 2019. As a result, the project's early impacts are difficult to discern.
3. The Solomon Islands as a geographic context presents manifold logistical challenges – these challenges impacted the geographical reach of the evaluation. Logistical practicalities including limited road infrastructure, rough seasonal seas around Guadalcanal and the considerable costs of either getting the evaluator out to some project locations or bringing diffusely-located participants together to a common location presented a consistent challenge.
4. The evaluation was undertaken by a single international consultant rather than the two-person team comprising a supporting and complementary national consultant as envisioned by the original Evaluation ToR.

1.8 Perceptions survey recapture data

The evaluation was unable to generate the data requested by PBF in New York to provide a set of recapture data to round out the National Perceptions Survey undertaken during PBF I. This request was beyond the scope of the evaluation ToR, though more crucially, the data would not have provided the anticipated utility for discerning a broad change in sentiment around peace, security and conflict in the Solomon Islands. Generating this data proved unfeasible given the considerable time and resources need to administer a large-scale survey in a range of difficult-to-access locations. Several key questions from the original Perceptions Survey were integrated into the FGD and KIIs questions, however the qualitative nature of the responses meant these responses – while particularly useful for revealing

project relevance and impact – were not applicable or analogous as recapture data for the Perceptions Survey. Further, such recapture data would not provide the anticipated insight into PBF II impact: any recapture data generated during the period of PBF II evaluation would not afford sufficient time to have passed to enable the project to deliver sufficient change in policy, behavior, context or perception.

2. PREVAILING CONTEXT IN THE SOLOMON ISLANDS

The project was implemented in the wake of the departure of the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) in place from 2003–2017. Support to this transition away from this external stabilization mission is key to the project’s own rationale and responded to the trepidation of Solomon Islanders and the regional community over sustaining peace going forward. RAMSI was integral in supporting the country to both end the fighting of the 1998-2003 ‘Tensions’ and in helping the country move past that period through stabilization and institutional support. Interviews with Solomon Islanders inside and outside the project and with Solomon Islands government officials (SIG) as well as expert literature and on-ground observations by the evaluator reveal that while RAMSI was broadly appreciated, development in terms of local and national economic opportunity and growth has been sluggish (the country achieved none of its MDGs) and certainly insufficient to account for a young and rapidly growing population. Rather than development or peacebuilding, RAMSI focused more on policing, justice and finance. Given that it did not contest the negative power of the country’s dominant elites over the course of its 14-year deployment however, RAMSI was seen as having presided over a negative peace rather than contributing to any improved social cohesion or institutional reform. Crucially, the Townsville Peace Agreement (TPA) that brought about the official end of the Tensions and agreed a rebalancing of power away from its concentration in Honiara and outward towards provincial capitals remained almost entirely unimplemented.

The Conflict and Development Analysis (CDA) and National Perceptions Survey on Peacebuilding undertaken as part of this project provides perhaps the best quality contemporary context analysis of the Solomon Islands. The CDA in particular highlights concerns about rampant corruption “unequivocally associated with poor governance” (CDA, p. 4) and the “misuse of land and its unbridled exploitation by Asian business interests in logging and mining”. Crosscutting, longstanding development issues such as “gender inequality, youth marginalization, the poverty of economic opportunity, reparations grievances, lack of quality services, are all subsumed under the major flashpoint of the negative political economy of corruption, governance and perceived loss of sovereignty of land and resources” (CDA, p. 4). These concerns were all readily verifiable by the evaluation and remain unaddressed by government while a handful of international agencies seek targeted and incremental responses.

During implementation, the country held its first post-RAMSI general election in April 2019 that precipitated protests and rioting in Honiara.¹ This represented the country’s first recognizable public violence since 2006 riots, also catalyzed by elections. The post-election violence was driven by popular expression of dissatisfaction with the idea of Manasseh Sogavare taking a fourth term as prime minister; public anger at the amount of land and business opportunities taken up by new Asian immigrants in Honiara, while opportunities for informal businesses and local employment have remained severely limited; and the youth population has grown and remains marginalized from politics with limited prospects for employment.² Despite Solomon Islands having one of the youngest populations in the Pacific, public spending on employment and livelihood programs to occupy them is small. Provincial governments, the primary agent for youth policy implementation, are allocated just USD430-720 per year for youth activities, while the Youth Development Division of the Ministry of Women Youth

¹ Elections for Provincial Assemblies took place in mid-June, 2019 (except in Western and Choiseul).

² Ride, Anouk (2019), ‘Riots in Solomon Islands: The Day After’, Australian Institute of International Affairs, 26 April, 2019. <<http://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/riots-solomon-islands-day-after/>>

Children and Family Affairs budget is approximately USD430,000 annually.³ In contrast, each member of parliament is allocated just under USD1m annually for unaccountable discretionary funding.⁴

Recognized and concerted peacebuilding programming is at a premium in the Solomon Islands: beyond PBF II, no other peacebuilding programs are in place in the country. The Ministry for Traditional Governance, Peacebuilding and Ecclesiastical Affairs (MTGPEA) is drastically underfunded making clear the real need for external peacebuilding program support, the limited capacity of government partners and perhaps the diminished government prioritization of the practice. As of writing the SIG had chosen to turn away from a long-standing relationship with Taiwan to cast its lot in with China as infrastructure-provider of choice to the country. The PMO sees this expected dramatic boost in infrastructure as the core of its strategy on peace. This employs the rationale that grievances and root causes of conflict will be addressed by large scale infrastructure and improved transport and communication links. Peacebuilding *is* occurring organically at community level however with community leaders often engaging in their own program of locally-responsive social cohesion initiatives albeit in a diffuse way in diverse communities.

³ United Nations Peace Building Fund & Government of Solomon Islands, 'Solomon Islands Youth Status Report', 2018, p. 26.

⁴ Buchanan, J. (2019), 'Solomon Islands: Conflict and Development Analysis'. UNDP, p. 25.

3. KEY FINDINGS

- PBF II filled gaping and critical budget gaps and responded to major government and civil society capacity and funding shortfalls by enabling dialogue, basic government functions in MTGPEA and Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs (MWYCFA).
- PBF II directly enabled the advancement of legislative items deemed key to peace and reconciliation, specifically the Solomon Islands government's Traditional Governance Bill, its Reparations Bill, Transitional Special Measures at provincial level and to a lesser extent, the government's Anti-Corruption Bill. These legislative initiatives are unlikely to advance much further without PBF support.
- The project's demonstrable impact on ingrained gender inequalities through concrete institutional steps such as provincial uptake of the Temporary Special Measures and less tangible improvements such as the apparent broadening of beneficiaries understanding of the unique role of women in maintaining and building peace in the Solomon Islands represents a major win in a context in which there has been little will or impetus to resource or push for greater gender equality.
- The conceptual linking for project beneficiaries of project activities (and their purpose) to the project's intended outcomes and impacts was not effectively achieved. Beneficiaries beyond government ministries received PBF II activities happily and gratefully as development inputs without linking them to the higher-level peacebuilding outcomes sought by the project. This may not have been entirely the fault of the project however: conflict simply wasn't identified as a pressing concern and did not emerge as an identified concern or issue for the vast majority of figures interviewed during this evaluation: This made 'peacebuilding', by corollary, an afterthought for many. The Tensions themselves were rarely mentioned and future projects seeking 'peacebuilding' outcomes should review carefully their understanding of the role of conflict and its impacts in Solomon Islands society.
- Overall project impact goals were egregiously ambitious and showed a lack of understanding about how challenging and time consuming behavioral and institutional change is in any societal context: 18 months was simply too brief of a timeframe in which to deliver the serious institutional and collective and individual behavioral changes sought by the project.
- Internal cohesion between partner implementing agencies UNDP and UNWOMEN was often weak with activities often delivered independently and without the collaborative approach intended that would maximize the two agencies' comparative advantages. While the project was implemented under a joint workplan, the two agencies did not coordinate consistently enough and coordination mechanisms were under-utilized.
- The project established strong and trusting relationships with government and non-government partners. These relationships tangibly enhanced implementation and facilitated collaborative response to operational, strategic and implementation challenges.
- Key implementing partner, the PMO is working from the premise that once the Reparations Committee has done its work and seen compensation/reparations are paid to victims, a strong line will be drawn under Tensions-era discord and trauma.
- Land (and associated concerns over impropriety in its distribution, use and sale) have continued to be the most evocative factor nationwide with ongoing potential to drive local conflict or wider discontent with government and/or foreign private sector expropriation of customarily-held land.
- The Weather Coast was insufficiently targeted by the project. While some Weather Coast communities were brought into Honiara to participate in reparation consultations and youth anti-corruption work, the region saw limited implementation of peacebuilding activities despite

being the area – beyond Honiara – most impacted by conflict. It has also broadly received the least post-conflict support proportionate with Tensions’ impacts while featuring key hot spots and community friction.

- Beneficiaries are not always equipped or sufficiently motivated or prepared to carry PBF-provided learning to their communities. Where key elements of PBF II based on the training of trainers required the cascading of learning and capacity, beneficiaries consistently felt they needed external support and catalytic funding to take capacity and learning to their communities.
- Provincial Women’s Caucuses created by the project have been highly effective in collaboratively sourcing community interests, packaging those interests and then presenting them as a cohesive set of community interests to government decision-makers and budget-holders at provincial level. this pressure and engagement has delivered several tangible government measures institutionalizing women’s participation in decision-making
- Without future funding, gains made during PBF II are likely to be quickly rolled back. In particular, support to consolidation of new or reinvigorated institutions, carriage forward of legislative initiatives and enabling trained trainers to carry learning and capacity to community level all require consolidation to deliver any lasting impact. Government and donor support to peacebuilding is very limited in the Solomon Islands, meaning this funding burden falls heavily on PBF. Specific recommendations on consolidation and sustainability are provided in the Recommendations section below.

4. RELEVANCE AND APPROPRIATENESS

This section interrogates the following two key questions regarding the project appropriateness and responsiveness to the conflict context in the Solomon Islands:

- 1) Did PBF II support and cohere with the government's own approaches to peacebuilding?
- 2) Did PBF II attend and respond to peacebuilding and state building needs with relevant and realistic actions?

4.1 Project relevance was diluted by the project's founding in a loose and vague project concept and project document low on innovation or cohesion. Despite a verification workshop with SIG to verify the PBF II project document, project staff consistently felt insufficient consultation was undertaken to inform the project document and overall the project suffered from a lack of ownership and accountability during the planning phase. The concept and tailoring of activities were further limited by having some sections of the project document written by Suva-based staff unfamiliar with the Solomon Islands context.

4.2 The country's new government took office in April 2019 and subsequently shifted away from a RAMSI-driven focus on governance and towards an emphasis on infrastructure as an engine of growth. It sees this growth as key to social cohesion and moving the country more demonstrably away from the root causes of conflict that emerged during the Tensions. One Solomon Islands specialist has worried that "[a]n undue focus on infrastructure would be a mistake. Even setting aside donor motives, large infrastructure projects are difficult in poorly governed countries like Solomon Islands".⁵ While the MTGPEA was the project's key implementing partner working specifically on more traditional notions of peacebuilding, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) – also a project partner – outlined this new strategy to leverage Chinese financial support for delivering large scale infrastructure such as airstrips, wharves and ports, roads and communications links in order to better link the country's vast and inaccessibly hinterlands. **Project implementation (following the April 2019 initiation of this largely undeclared strategy) took place without knowledge or reference to this important strategic evolution in the government's approach to peacebuilding** though this evolution in the government's approach to peacebuilding had, in retrospect, minor impact on project relevance over the final six months of the implementation period.

4.3 The project's key implementing partners – MTGPEA and MWYCFA – are also the government's lowest-funded ministries. **As a result, PBF support to these ministries is particularly important and appreciated by the government.** PBF II has been responsible for picking up and supporting significant components of its government partners work plans, for example advancing of the outcomes of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) through PBF engagement of a technical expert consultant to compile a digestible report summary. This has generated considerable goodwill both within the ministries (at national and provincial levels) as well as with beneficiaries who appear broadly aware of the ministries' funding shortfalls. Illustrating the importance of PBF II to government peacebuilding, at one meeting with the Permanent Secretary (PS) of the MWYCFA in Honiara, the ministry was entirely without power as it was unable to pay its power bill. This dearth of funding for the MTGPEA – ostensibly (and formerly) the Ministry of Peace – is incongruous in a post-conflict state in which the new government placed peacebuilding and reconciliation on its list of priorities for the first 100 days of office.

⁵ <https://www.devpolicy.org/the-2019-honiara-riots-what-went-wrong-and-what-does-it-mean-for-aid-20190621/>

4.4 Given distinct regional and community contexts, project relevance was not monolithic and overall stated activities and their outputs contributed more readily to desired peacebuilding outcomes in Malaita and Guadalcanal. Project activities in Western province were appreciated though beneficiaries and implementing partners did not discern a link to conflict resilience or peacebuilding outcomes or impacts. While national-level concerns over land rights, corruption and governance impact Solomon Islanders universally, the regions in which the project was implemented presented two very distinct contexts: The Guadalcanal/Honiara-Malaita axis formerly at the heart of the Tensions; and Western province more subject to cross-border dynamics emanating from Bougainville. Reference to externalities such as the upcoming Bougainville referendum on independence and potential spillover elicited essentially neutral responses and no actual conflict was cited at any time during consultations in Gizo or with Western province stakeholders.

4.5 The relatively strong geographic focus on implementation of activities in Honiara was in some cases the result of simply logistical (and associated cost) calculations but responded also to the manner in which overall socio-economic development, political stability and peaceful co-existence in Solomon Islands depends to a large extent on the positive social and economic development of Honiara City. This outsized importance of stability at the center is acknowledged within the long-term National Development Plan framework of Solomon Islands.

4.6 The project's focus on supporting legislation supporting peace and reconciliation, empowering women's and youth groups and community and church leaders is deemed relevant to the peacebuilding context given their potentially strong influence on reconciliation and the consolidation of peace. The project adequately accounted for the evolution in conflict dynamics, drivers and triggers since the Tensions though all of the underlying causes persist. There is no observed current sense of tribal conflict of the sort that characterized the start of the Tensions over two decades ago, though the core factors that underpinned those tribal divisions have not been adequately addressed in the intervening years. As of the end of field-based interviews in the Solomon Islands on 9th September, the political sections of the diplomatic missions of Australia and New Zealand in Honiara discerned no particular conflict dynamics or unrest requiring imminent address or response. Potential tension between government and population can be discerned as of mid-/late-September over the government's decision to turn away from Taiwan and towards China for future large-scale development support. This precipitated some limited street protests and constitute an emerging tension dynamic, albeit highlighting the well-documented vertical cleavages between government and citizens rather than horizontal tension between groups of citizens. Such tension around government entanglement with external (primarily Asian business) interests was also visible following elections with protests and violence against property bringing security forces out onto the streets in response.

4.7 Some components of the program – most of all the peacebuilding and conflict analysis training – were seen by beneficiaries as lacking sufficient tailoring to local settings. Greater local consultation was required to avoid a one-size-fits-all approach to such trainings. The training manual employed – generated during PBF I by MTGPEA with approval and oversight from UNDP as implementing agency – was seen as promoting a foreign and sometimes irrelevant approach to peacebuilding. Although the training manual sought to deliver training on conflict prevention, some beneficiaries felt the content missed this mark and that the training should be oriented towards “avoiding another problem happening”. They felt the training was aimed at working on “problems that had already happened” rather than conflict prevention. They also viewed the training as requiring greater tailoring to the

community(-level) perspective as they found the training more appropriate for prisons or police or family support centers – more professionalized institutions.

4.8 The project responded appropriately to PBF Priority Area 2 – ‘promote coexistence and peaceful resolution of conflict’ – which seeks appropriately to support “national reconciliation, good governance and the management of natural resources, including land. Such projects can span a wide range of peacebuilding initiatives including social cohesion, women’s empowerment, and peaceful resolution of land disputes and strengthening independent institutions and non-state actors.” **The time frame afforded to a project in the Solomon Islands’ current context appears too short to deliver the desired impacts** however. Given its history and contemporary context, the Solomon Islands would be better served by the Peacebuilding and Recovery Facility (PRF) providing longer term financing of 3 years than the Immediate Response Facility (IRF) that offers just 18 months of support with greater focus on quick impact. It was decided however by the Peace Building Support Office (PBSO), that given the context and size of Solomon Islands, the UN’s absorptive capacity in-country and the urgency of peacebuilding needs compared to some other PBF countries, the country did not warrant a Peacebuilding Priority Plan process and a portfolio of projects that would lengthen the PBF’s period of commitment.

Sustained, reassuring support to civil society and pro-peace mechanisms is demonstrably more pertinent to the Solomon Islands’ context than sharper catalytic change to address any particular or emerging deleterious conflict dynamics. The evident importance of longer-term financing is highlighted by the persistent questions of sustainability that arose during the evaluation as well as the reality that conflict and violence in the Solomon Islands has been essentially absent for a decade and a half since the end of the Tensions in 2003.

4.9 While PBF’s IRF facility seeks more daring and innovative approaches to peacebuilding, unfortunately the project was not judged to be innovative in its prescriptions, responses and actions to the complex conflict context presented by the Solomon Islands. While ‘innovation’ is a goal of the IRF, this dearth of ‘innovative’ activities is not necessarily a negative judgement; the project should simply be relevant and responsive to the context. ‘Innovative’ approaches should be considered, ideally, though they may not be relevant to the context. The project document and Results Framework lay out a safe and traditional set of development and institution-building responses driven by the Communiqué. However the project’s one deployment of ‘innovation’ as an activity in and of itself – the Youth Innovation Forums – elicited a strong set of outcomes, particularly in Malaita. The Forums precipitated a demonstrable surge in broader community interest in entrepreneurship and made the youths selected for the forums notable figures in their community as destinations for peers and younger community members to share learning gleaned from their experience and training.

4.10 The project cohered effectively with national-level peacebuilding and reconciliation policies and structures. Specifically, the project supported Objectives Two and Three of the 2015 National Peacebuilding Policy (“Facilitate accountable, responsive and effective conflict management and transformation structures and mechanisms within governance and traditional systems” and “carry out the mandate of the MNURP [now MTGPEA], and promote community reconciliation, rebuilding, rehabilitation and revitalization” and worked in concert with the National Peacebuilding Advisory Committee (NPAC) whose quarterly meetings were supported by PBF II. These meetings also provided a forum for reporting to government on project progress, however the NPAC remained largely unacknowledged during interviews for this evaluation. The project established a national advisory committee on WPS meeting quarterly and a gender working group comprised of NPAC and the WPS

advisory group responsible for mainstreaming gender within the national peace building agenda. Through a range of deliberations and the support of UNWOMEN, the national peace building policy is to be revised with a view to better integrating WPS issues into the policy. Further, a 2009 parliamentary committee consulting communities across the country found that Solomon Islanders wanted national government to improve space for traditional leaders to contribute to national level decision-making. With its setup and promotion of Provincial Women's Caucuses, Provincial Youth Caucuses (specifically the accompanying training around leadership and advocacy) as well as the Youth Innovation Forums and support to traditional leaders and churches on peacebuilding, the project was strongly oriented to respond to this request and addressed a repeated refrain regarding the need to improve the quality of leadership at all levels of governance.

4.11 The project responds strongly to 'small scale' peacebuilding needs in the Solomon Islands by addressing social cohesion and family conflict through its program of peacebuilding training. This includes Youth Innovation Forum activities that sought to better engage youth (particularly in rural areas) and to move them away from idleness, unemployment, marijuana use and alcohol consumption leading to deleterious impact on the wider community. Community leaders in White River community west of Honiara were able to apply peacebuilding and conflict analysis training to calm youth from that part of Guadalcanal during post-election riots over the retention of the leadership status quo. These riots starkly illustrated youth disaffection, anger and sense of grievance over an absence of opportunities. To a lesser but equally promising extent, Youth Innovators on Malaita were capacitated and empowered to reach out to and engage with idle and angry youth in their communities who were themselves receptive to this engagement, albeit without tangible outcomes to date. Communities see this question of community-level social cohesion as the 'tangible' form of conflict at present in the country, in contrast to the considerably less evident and increasingly distant larger scale conflict concerns that characterized the Tensions and the period immediately following.

4.12 The project responded strongly to the need to support and advance government legislation pertinent to peacebuilding and reconciliation. This included technical support to the Reparations Bill (by contributing to setup of the Reparations Commission that determines claims and reparations was part of the new government's 'first 100 days' promise), the government's Traditional Governance Bill, Transitional Special Measures at provincial level and to a lesser extent, the government's Anti-Corruption Bill.

4.13 One government figure within the MTGPEA saw PBF II as a "blessing" that was badly needed to fill critical gaps in funding and action. The same official saw government itself as providing "lip service" only when it came to peacebuilding in the country as evidenced by low rates of funding. Simultaneously the ministry felt itself to be under considerable political pressure to deliver on peacebuilding in spite of inherent shortage in capacity. **The project was seen to be absolutely critical in supporting the MTGPEA and MWYCFA to deliver on their ambitious workplans.** The MTGPEA was seen to function in large part because of PBF II. The ministry's mandate to advance the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) through the Reparations Commission wouldn't have been achievable without project support and technical input.

4.14 The project was uneven in its consultation with stakeholders over the composition and concept of the project. On the whole, consultation was taken at the national level in Honiara however there were low levels of consultation perceived by stakeholders in provincial capitals during project concept and formulation (the project was criticized by beneficiaries for not taking local contexts into

consideration), though the project made up for this by engaging beneficiaries and partners during implementation. The net result however was the many beneficiaries and participants in trainings arrived at activity locations without a real sense of the purpose of the action or its intended peacebuilding outcomes and impacts. Moreover, beneficiaries and participants did not have a strong sense of where the project components in which they were involved fitted into larger strategies. Most concerning was the regular (but not universal) absence of stakeholders' sense of how individual project activities pertained to peacebuilding. **The project was weak in connecting the purpose of individual activities and their outputs to higher level peacebuilding outcomes or impact.** This was particularly evident in Western province: speaking with community and youth leaders in Gizo for example, beneficiaries did not readily view the programming they received as seeking peace outcomes; they were appreciative of the capacity and engagement but did not discern any larger purpose underpinning this programming. The government partners at MTGPEA provided independent verification of this. Equally, recipients of media training in Honiara did not view the training (or their demonstrable impact through resulting stories and resulting public awareness of corruption) as linked to peacebuilding.

5. EFFICIENCY

5.1 Project delivery rate has been ultimately consistent and strong despite severe challenges during the first half of 2018 in which three key project staff roles – including the project manager – remained vacant. National staff led by the Deputy Project Manager were instrumental in maintaining UNDP project movement and activities. Interruptions to implementation as a result of December government holidays, electioneering and post-election violence meant a three-month No-Cost Extension (NCE) was required to complete several remaining activities. With this NCE, project closure date was ultimately 30 September 2019. The final project activity was delivered during the execution of the external evaluation.

5.2 The project struggled to respond to critical staffing challenges that arose approximately one third of the way through the implementation period. Agencies' own recruitment systems and policies – slow to respond in some instances – were judged partly responsible, though the role of M&E Officer was turned down by two local staff because they judged the salary too low. Ultimately an international UNV was engaged for this role. During an 18-month project, such delays have exponential impact. The departure of the original Project Manager and the M&E Officer in July 2018 and April 2018 respectively negatively impacted coordination internally and with partners and slowed workflow. A temporary project manager on detail assignment from Fiji was engaged for 6 weeks in August-September 2018. After a 3-month gap, a senior international UNDP staff member with extensive prior experience in the Solomon Islands was appointed. Larger delays impacted the recruitment of a UNWOMEN international Gender Specialist (hiring was anticipated for June 2018 but only concluded in November) and negatively impacted delivery of the gender component of the PBF Project as well as the mainstreaming of gender into the project activities more broadly. While gender mainstreaming was essentially absent prior to the arrival of the Gender Specialist, gender mainstreaming was viewed by several UN staff to only have been inconsistently addressed even after the Specialist's arrival.

5.3 Once new team was fully composed and on board by end of 2018, a Technical Working Group meeting was called with government partners MTGPEA, MWYCFA and PMO. As a result, **the project was reinvigorated in January 2019 by production of a revised work plan, renewed milestones, monitoring system and indicators.** Technical Working Group meetings had been held monthly since early 2018, though these were on hold during 2019.

5.4 The final staffing configuration is judged a dedicated, motivated and able unit of nationals and internationals. **Staffing was adequate for the activities planned and delivered however the project may have benefitted from the technical expertise of a Peacebuilding Specialist to insure the project linked to peacebuilding outcomes.** Importantly, the Gender Specialist brought technical qualifications in peace and conflict studies, having worked in mediation and post-conflict settings, albeit in other regions; the complexity of the Solomon Islands' context specifically presents a unique challenge to peacebuilding projects more broadly. The regional PDA in Suva was not viewed as sufficiently knowledgeable of the Solomon Islands context to effectively fill this gap and visits from the PDA were seen as disruptive, unclear in purpose and viewed as confusing the project's relationships with implementing partners.

5.5 When the new Project Manager and M&E Officer arrived, indicators within the RF were largely noted as 'TBD'. Monitoring planning and execution and the Results Framework were boosted by the arrival of a UNV M&E Officer in late 2018. **While greater hold and control was exercised over the RF with indicators reverse engineered by new staff to address this gap, it remained somewhat loose and ill-defined as a guiding document with often arbitrary indicators due to the absence of any working baseline beyond the perceptions survey completed during PBF I.** Problematically, few target numbers

of workshops/trainings/beneficiaries were specified so estimated scope of the project and accompanying outputs compared with intended figures were impossible to evaluate. A Beneficiaries Database Tracker built by the M&E Officer helped to address this gap later in the implementation period.

5.6 The Project Board was viewed favorably by implementing partners as a forum for sharing information, reviewing and approving annual work plans and making agreed and transparent adjustments to the project. It met twice in 2019 and four times in 2018. The Project Board also supported the Reparations Working Group of which the MTGPEA and PMO form the secretariat. The project Technical Working Group met monthly during 2018. **The Project Board improved ministries' sense of ownership of the project.** Ad hoc technical working groups within the Project Board rarely met. The NPAC, Project Board and Reparations Working Group contained essentially the same figures which contributed to cohesion and transparency. Problematically, females were almost entirely absent from these forums.

5.7 Internal cohesion between RUNOs under the PBF project umbrella was institutionally weak and the project's two implementing agencies, UNDP and UNWOMEN were sometimes out of step and insufficiently informed of the other's activities. Some improvement in the 'jointness' of the project occurred after new staff were finally settled in January and a review of the work plan was undertaken, though some disjointedness persisted. Illustrating this is the limited drawing of the UNWOMEN Gender Specialist into UNDP activities to assure that gender was adequately mainstreamed into activities (a stated goal of the project). This is in part due to UNDP having implemented most activities before the engagement of the Gender Specialist and the reasonable limits in the Specialist's bandwidth relative to the volume of work and attention required. (The Gender Specialist was engaged in the drafting of concept notes for 2019 activities however and gender was mainstreamed in trainings, revision of concept notes and agendas, mediation training and the peacebuilding curriculum and a gender component was inserted into MTGPEA/UNDP-led activities including the training agendas and pre- and post-training evaluations. The two agencies were often seen to be reading from distinct workplans and to be implementing independently of one another. This impacted implementation where, for example, beyond specific activities under Output 1.5 supporting WPS, Provincial Women's Caucuses and TSM, UNWOMEN was supposed to provide gender mainstreaming and expertise to UNDP activities. This regular, but not universal disconnect was partially mitigated by the simple sharing of office space and the functional 2019 establishment of a single, shared work plan. Joint planning improved project delivery and outputs of but there was insufficient joint implementation or joint monitoring in this 'joint implementation' project, despite a shared, single workplan. The project Technical Working Group – the mechanism best suited to overcoming this disconnect – met monthly during 2018 but has only been convened 1-2 times since December 2018. The Working Group did not succeed in inspiring useful input from stakeholders beyond the UN's own updates.

5.8 Project cohesion and relationships with government partners was strong with project effectiveness boosted demonstrably enhanced as a result. This helped to overcome any misunderstandings or miscommunication during planning and delivery of project activities. At the Lessons Learned Workshop observed by the evaluator, this three-day gathering of Provincial Women's Youth Caucuses was delivered jointly and largely seamlessly by MWYCPA and UNWOMEN staff. This cohesion reinforces shared approaches and messaging to participants. Government implementing partners did note occasional disconnect with the project citing occasions when PBF was unprepared to execute activities when the ministry had readied itself. For example, workshop allowances were not

always ready for disbursement which caused trouble with participants. Evaluation interviewees on both the government and RUNO sides suggested this was the result of government lacking understanding of the UN system and lacking its own mechanism for disbursement of funds which heightens concerns over corruption and financial management.

5.9 Project monitoring was limited ahead of the November 2018 arrival of the new M&E Officer, though reporting and data were generated from January to June 2018. **Systematic monitoring of the project only began in January 2019 and an M&E plan was created at the beginning of 2019 resulting in clear monitoring data with accompanying recommendations** and occasional intra-team engagement to feed recommendations back into the project for application in future activities. The reinvigoration of project monitoring in the second half represents a particular project success. Data was almost non-existent before the arrival of the new M&E Officer who added gender-disaggregated targets and markers and added milestones to support each indicator. This was tracked and added into ATLAS. There is also now a comprehensive data of participants and training evaluation data, neither of which was captured previously. Recovery of the monitoring system and new capacity to collect and analyze project monitoring data with the arrival of the new M&E Officer halfway through the project implementation period the project effectively fed data and results from the pre-/post-training tool into subsequent trainings. This included the addition of community leaders' input and suggestions on what other skills and capacities they might need. While a strong procedural step in a difficult project monitoring context, some community leaders who received the training felt they did not find the trainings sufficiently tailored to the local context.

5.10 Concurrent delivery with the Youth Empowerment Project – also funded by PBF – has been a drain on project efficiency in some administrative areas due to a 50-50 sharing of the M&E Officer between PBF II and the PBF-funded Youth Empowerment Project (YEP) and time required of the PBF II project manager to provide management to both projects until the arrival of the YEP project manager in July 2019. YEP is the result of identified gaps in PBF II which judged the project to be insufficiently addressing youth issues at the grassroots, community level in the Solomon Islands. PBF II had trialed some of the elements on youth entrepreneurship and peacebuilding now comprising the core of the Youth Empowerment Project.

5.11 Project cost effectiveness – a comparison of costs across different strategies for achieving a given outcome with a view to determining the lowest cost approach⁶ – was judged to be adequate, even allowing for environmental and logistical inefficiencies inherent to the Solomon Islands context and disparate financial mechanisms utilized by the two implementing agencies. Logistical costs of bringing beneficiaries together, providing accommodation, food and living allowances and getting staff to project locations consumed a disproportionately large portion of resources and meant less support and application of UNDP and UNWOMEN comparative advantages around technical capacity input. This also lowered the number of actions the project could take and lessening the number of beneficiaries the project could reach. This challenge is common in the Solomon Islands' difficult geographic and transportation context, however improved planning (e.g. bundling project visits and monitoring/follow-up visits to a given location) may have improved value. The time-consuming nature of project financial systems and logistical arrangements were also seen to diminish the project's scope to provide meaningful technical expertise. Because this is a field office, the project budget-holder sits in Suva for

⁶ M&E Training Resources, UNICEF, 2004

UNWOMEN though all day-to-day financial management is done in-country; this cut into project efficiencies around disbursement of funds to partners.

5.12 Project momentum – crucial to assuring uptake and impact of community-level initiatives and technical support to legislative measures in particular – was weakened by the halting periods of project implementation. Staff recruitment challenges cut into momentum and workflow and December saw nearly complete suspension of activities because of government vacation and dissolving of the Malaita and Guadalcanal provincial governments. The full month of March was dedicated to campaigning meaning key stakeholders were too busy to engage with the program and April elections were followed by rioting and a DSS-ordered lock-down for UN activities. Village-level campaigning for June provincial elections saw most stakeholders disappear to their home villages to cast ballots.

5.13 Despite the addition of UNDP Target for Resource Assignment from the Core (TRAC) funds to PBF's own funding, **resources available were insufficient to achieve anticipated outcomes and impacts.** This judgement is affected by the vague project document and RF and the unanticipated costs relating to planning and logistical challenges. Available funding for activities was also undercut by 30% of project funding dedicated to operations including rental of office space and international salaries.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

5.14 PBF II was a Direct Implement Modality project (DIM) project with UNDP in the role of implementing partner given the agency's technical and administrative capacity to assume the responsibility for mobilizing and applying effectively the required inputs in order to reach expected outputs. UNDP carried some 65% of the project resources with the other 35% with UNWOMEN. **Little, if any, money will be returned to PBF from the project.** An approximate USD170,000 non-spend during 2018 was attributable to difficulties in recruitment of the P3 Gender Specialist and the recruitment period for the Project Manager and these monies were reallocated to 2019 activities.

5.15 Key impacts are evident and can be reasonably expected in the near future as a direct and indirect result of PBF II (see Key Findings and Impact). However, **the project's value for money⁷ was viewed as limited because nearly half of the project budget was dedicated to 'Staff and other personnel', 'Supplies, Commodities, Materials', Equipment, Vehicles and Furniture' and 'Indirect Support Costs' rather than project activities,** according to the project document. For example, the allocation of USD230,000 in total budgetary value for a single mid-level P3 professional position should prompt real questions around value for money in any development context. This proportion of funding is not unusual in UN agency peace building projects and a broader review of UN spending efficiency in peace building and beyond is required in order to drive value for money and spending efficiency within PBF and its implementing agencies.

5.16 The challenging Solomon Islands implementation context has meant that **considerable funding has gone into the logistics of putting beneficiaries and stakeholders in the same place with considerable spending on accommodation, transportation, food and venues.** This perhaps imbalanced the project by taking away from the technical elements that PBF II might have provided. Significant funding has also

⁷ Typically, according to the PBF's own review, Value for Money is interpreted as using resources efficiently. Kluykens, J. and Clark, L. (2014) 'Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund'. <<http://www.unpbf.org/wp-content/uploads/Final-Report-May-UN-PBF.pdf>>

gone towards operations for rental of office space within the UN House in Honiara, international salaries and Direct Project Costs (DPC).

5.17 Disconnect between UNDP and UNWOMEN institutional financial arrangements hampered coordination and project nimbleness and responsiveness when both agencies were involved in a given activity that had short lead times between conception/amendment and delivery. With UNDP speedier in their release of project funds than UNWOMEN (according to both UNWOMEN and UNDP staff), this meant that jointly-delivered activities – some of the activities in Malaita around land were cited in interviews – were slowed which often negatively impacted beneficiaries and partners. For example, where UNWOMEN needed to always show quotations for proposed spending, UNDP did not have to (or did not) go through this process. Quotations, especially from distant provinces outside of Honiara, took some time. UNDP were able to release funds “at the last minute” according to one UN staff member. This naturally impacted the flexibility and responsiveness of the project; an improvement in flexibility and responsiveness may have been valuable in a complex operating environment like the Solomon Islands. The result was sometimes that UNWOMEN relied on UNDP to front up the full amount with later reimbursement to UNDP from UNWOMEN. UN staff agreed this was not a good practice but saw this approach as a way to avoid delaying an activity. With sufficient lead time ahead of activity delivery however, this disconnect was not viewed as a problem: To follow full procedures within the PBF project, the implementing agencies needed to plan at least one month in advance of activities or workshops. This lead time was seen as “a long time”. Implementing partners within the SIG regularly noted and complained about this. They believed that efficiency might be improved if funds were given to the government agencies up front as they felt would be able to disburse funds more expeditiously.

5.18 Local implementing partners were seen to have trouble understanding the system for disbursement which consumed considerable time as project staff ultimately had to help and support those partners in fulfilling their procedural obligations. The disbursement itself presented its own difficulties as funds generally had to be hand-delivered to project sites to pay for meals, accommodation, per diems and other basic costs. This was a security and logistical worry to the project.

5.19 The government did not appear to have a sufficiently standardized system of managing funding from PBF (or other development and peace partners). Project staff were further concerned that disbursing funds directly to government would mean that implementation would be slowed as a result of this dearth of financial systems. Fraud attempts due to spurious reimbursement claims from experts and participants in workshops and activities that required pushback from the Deputy Project Manager. Theft and corruption of project funds was a concern to the project also, particularly given government history in this regard.

5.20 The project’s overall financial flexibility was an important feature and was at the heart of several instances of responsiveness and nimbleness. For example, upon recognizing the import in engaging a technical expert consultant to undertake summary of the TRC report to make this more digestible and readable for both government and lay audiences, funding was repurposed from an original focus on reparations to facilitate this key consultancy that was strongly appreciated by the government. Partner ministries also wanted the project to change the focus of some of the planned work entailing deprioritization of some activities to prioritize others. The project proved flexible enough to respond to these ministry wishes and the changing priorities through inking of formal agreements and Project Board consultation.

5.21 To highlight how many of the efficiency issues of this PBF II project are common to other PBF projects (and therefore how any **efficiency limitations potentially have their roots in institutional inefficiencies rather than project-specific inefficiencies**), it may be worth restating a key observation from the PBF's own 2014 review:

In most cases PBF programmes do not produce a substantial increase in UN inter-agency coordination. There are some examples where UN agencies cooperate in project development and prepare joint proposals, but in most cases, UN agencies implement individual projects based on their mandate and expertise. ...[E]ven when UN agencies submitted joint proposals, implementation was managed through individual agency budgets. UN agencies also have different administrative systems which impede joint work. Field respondents urged UN leadership to encourage more harmonization of UN agency administrative procedures and regulations.⁸

⁸ Kluyskens, J. and Clark, L. (2014) 'Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund'. <<http://www.unpbf.org/wp-content/uploads/Final-Report-May-UN-PBF.pdf>>, p. 72.

6. THEORY OF CHANGE ANALYSIS

This theory of change (ToC) analysis assesses whether the project intervention was based in logical and reasonable premises and suppositions about how to enable or deliver the institutional, individual and societal changes required to build peace, lower the likelihood of conflict and address root causes of tension.

BOX 2: Project Theory of Change:

IF inclusive consultation and dialogue processes continue and if they build on the goodwill created by the 2017 provincial and national dialogues and if they enable communities and their leaders to discuss and find joint solutions to the root causes of the country's peace challenges, as identified in the 2017 communique, including decentralization, democratic governance, anti-corruption, victim-centred reparation and reconciliation, and easing land conflict, and

IF these consultations are institutionalized and lead to priority actions and initiatives at the national and provincial levels with the empowered participation of women and youth,

THEN the people of Solomon Islands, especially in the areas experiencing the greatest tension, will have a higher level of confidence in the future of the country and in their Government's commitment to addressing their peacebuilding needs because they will be part of the process of finding solutions and decision-making which affects them will be more transparent and closer to the communities.

6.1 The ToC provided a broadly robust rationale and recipe for enabling and delivering peacebuilding and conflict prevention outcome and impacts in the Solomon Islands context. However, the evaluation did not reveal that Solomon Islanders are seeking a higher level of confidence in the future per se. Improved confidence in future constitutes a collateral and higher order outcome of tangibly improved dignity and material conditions (development) and a reduction in sense of grievance at the root cause of past or future social discord. The ToC ignores the fact revealed in the project's CDA and consistently backed by testimony and scholarship that the government and its accompanying structural and macroeconomic policy itself is seen as the main obstacle to addressing the root causes of conflict in the country. The recent turn towards China and accompanying concerns over corruption and financial mismanagement and loss of sovereignty encapsulate this flaw in the ToC.

6.2 Several key ToC premises were unfounded which weakened the overall rationale employed:

- At time of project conception – and continuing during the implementation period – there were no particular areas 'experiencing tension' which potentially misdirects project activities geographically. To the contrary: Malaitans felt comfortable enough to return en masse to Honiara despite their forceful ejection by Guales during the Tensions;
- Decentralization, viewed by the ToC and independent scholarship and in consultations as rightly important to state building and peacebuilding garnered only government disinterest as the project sought to include this in its workplan;
- Seeking a measurable boost in popular confidence in the future of the country is far too ambitious of a goal to seek from an 18 month, USD3.2m project.

7. EFFECTIVENESS

Outcome 1: Consensus is built and actions and initiatives taken amongst state and non-state actors, including women and youth, to address conflict causes and triggers (notably, reparation framework, land disputes, governance deficits, weak social cohesion) identified through the national and provincial dialogues, and youth and women’s summits

7.1 The PMO and other government bodies see successful disbursement of compensation for Tensions violence and abuses as *the* route to drawing a line under that particular open social wound. Problematically, no apparent attention has been paid to questions of accountability for offenders and aggressors; rather the government sees the reparations and compensation process as a way to provide third party restitution to aggrieved parties without digging into the past to seek apology or accountability. Analysis of context revealed that **the Reparations Bill is one of a range of measures required to moving the country forward and effectively away from the traumas of the Tensions. With the PBF involvement through technical input and facilitation and advocacy (via production of a summarized version of the TRC report which is seen by MTGPEA to have considerable potential impact if properly disseminated), the Reparations Committee appears set to be officially formed.** This process now rests with cabinet and is subject to their approval. Setup of the Reparations Committee also serves to address impunity: many victims are known to be suffering silently from the impacts of the Tensions and are afraid to come out given that many of the perpetrators and aggressors are publicly flaunting their impunity as ‘big fish’ continuing as members of the country’s leadership. Given the Reparations Committee has yet to make any determinations, more time is required to discern the actual outcome of strong project support for the country’s Reparations Bill. Future outcomes as a result of this work will rest on the Reparations Committee’s ability to establish credibility with the public as an objective and impartial body through fair decisions that are financially manageable for the cash-strapped government. Where reparations/compensation funding will come from is unclear though inability to deliver as a result of shortage of funds will impact credibility.

7.2 Progress on addressing land-related conflicts has been tangible but limited with a handful of achievements and advancements such as PBF work with Ministry of Lands to map out disputed customary land areas by conducting boundary walks so identification of common boundaries can take place between neighbouring tribal groups. GPS points have been recorded a consensus on boundaries and land use established. Even while land itself is seen as a key trigger of conflict country-wide, the contribution to conflict prevention or peacebuilding is as yet unclear. Land summits in November Guadalcanal and Malaita were strongly attended – excessively so – but findings emerging from these summits were short on specifics and broadly too intangible to drive subsequent programmatic or policy activities.

Outcome 2: Structures, inclusive spaces and solutions to address peacebuilding challenges identified through the national and provincial dialogues are established at the provincial level, institutionalized and effective

7.3 Youth Innovators found themselves recognized in their own community and in demand from other local communities to share learning and experience provided by the project so that they too could employ innovative and entrepreneurial thinking to businesses and social projects. Youth Innovators in Malaita have taken it upon themselves to engage with other idler young people often in the grip of marijuana or alcohol. Crucially, the **Youth Innovators feel themselves to be more respected and valued**

for having received and demonstrated these new approaches to entrepreneurialism and business.

Even the Youth Innovators themselves did not suspect they had the resourcefulness and courage and value that have emerged as a result of the trainings and workshops and the will to now act as catalytic leaders within their local areas is tangible in interviews.

7.4 Peacebuilding training was applied specifically to respond to conflict between candidates during elections campaigning: During post-election riots, one community leader claimed White River and West Honiara remained peaceful because most of those present at the PBF II trainings hailed from this area and applied that learning to calm restive youth throughout tense day and night of the riots. Another male community leader who has a large online community through facebook suggested that had White River youths joined the riots, considerably greater violence would have eventuated.

7.5 The project drove new collaborations and connections between community leaders trained in peacebuilding and conflict analysis: Guadalcanal leaders made new connections with leaders from other areas and keep in touch via facebook. Distribution of the attendance list was key to this useful collateral outcome. The community leaders' training in peacebuilding and conflict analysis also catalyzed coordination and linkages between community leaders and government ministries that had previously been lacking. The M&E report itself suggests that "the capacity building initiative has provided a vibrant opportunity to establish linkages of community leaders with relevant ministries. Discussion with officials of ministries suggested that trained cohort will be engaged in future as mediators/catalysts for peacebuilding related initiatives. Additionally, capacitated leaders will also be linked with their provincial offices, where available." Peacebuilding trainings were seen to add to and bolster local and customary peacebuilding and conflict prevention techniques already employed by community and church leaders. Leaders recognized the need to add new peace capacities in a swiftly-evolving time.

7.6. By bringing together the National Peacebuilding Advisory Committee and the WPS National Task Force (together now called the Gender Working Group) and conducting an April gender training of high-level figures within these bodies, **the project was integral in the development of the WPS National Action Plan for Solomon Islands.** Key issues of women in peacebuilding were identified and included in the NAP and clear alignment was made with Resolution 1325. The project also supported sharing this NAP at provincial level with the aim of popularizing it and finding support for implementation. Through lobbying and engagement, the project was also to nudge MTGPEA to agree to review the National Peace Building Strategy to assure its agreement with gender sensitivity principles and measures.

7.7 Alongside planned action to support TPA- and Communiqué-mandated decentralization, **PBF II was unable to make progress on activities to manage the border** and traditional ties between Western province and Bougainville, from which weapons and fighters had crossed during the Tensions with a "conundrum of remoteness and conflict".⁹ The project delivered only one meeting and accompanying memorandum aimed at reconciling traditional leaders on both sides of the border but follow up was restricted by election security concerns around the elections and logistical restrictions on the Bougainville side of the border.

⁹ Buchanan, J. (2019), 'Solomon Islands: Conflict and Development Analysis'. UNDP, p. 42.

8. SUSTAINABILITY

8.1 Project sustainability of PBF II – the idea that interventions should support longer-term goals and eventually be managed without donor input¹⁰ – was mixed with the government’s weakness at funding peacebuilding activities and absence of alternative peacebuilding donors likely to impact any uptake of positive and useful structures or initiatives laid down by the project. Ultimately, sustainability of these peacebuilding and social cohesion gains and initiatives comes down to the ability to provide external funding

8.2 Government partners carry appropriately developed skills and capacity but very limited government funding of the MTGPEA and MWYCFA means they simply do not have the funds to apply those capacities in workshops or trainings. Both ministries noted at provincial and national level that they were the two lowest-funded ministries in government. PBF II sought concertedly to make up for and bolster this shortfall with capacity support such as the peace building and conflict analysis training. **Capacity provided during the course of the project was projected to lapse without continuity of external financial support. In the case of PBF’s permanent departure, national and provincial government partner ministries suggested they could maintain some of the project gains, but on a much-reduced scale** with smaller, fewer meetings costed to fit the available budget. This would apply also to legislative gains made by the project around government priorities such as the Reparations Bill too: this initiative “will fall if PBF are not there” suggests one UN staff member. Longer term, this inability or unwillingness of SIG to dedicate more funding calls into question its commitment to peacebuilding. RAMSI’s long-term largesse may itself have driven a sense of learned helplessness within SIG.

8.3 Policy shifts and budget allocations towards peacebuilding priorities by national or provincial governments provides clear indication of the kind of institutional behavioural change sought by PBF II. Driven in part by the province’s generally progressive approach to gender issues and women’s empowerment, adoption of TSM, the promise of a minimum of 20% budgetary allocation to gender sensitive activities and the budgeting for PWCs in the provincial budget illustrate the **criticality of political will in sustaining results and impact.** These gains were in large part driven by PBF’s own efforts through dialogues and PWCs. These outcomes are not limited to Western province: in Malaita, the Provincial Women’s Caucus showing greater advocacy capacity and strategic nous following PBF capacity support. Following drafting and submission of a white paper to the Premier of Malaita the premier has declared that the provincial government will fully support TSM and budgetary initiatives to support gender equality.

8.4 Project sustainability is particularly tenuous in instances where perpetuating impact is based on specific individuals. Instances within the MWYCFA at both national and provincial level suggest the departure of key individual partners and champions of PBF within the ministry would essentially grind progress and momentum of project activities to a halt with resulting loss of key contacts and stakeholders in the wider community.

¹⁰ ALNAP ‘Evaluation of Humanitarian Interventions: Pilot Guide’, Overseas Development Institute, 2013.

9. IMPACT

9.1 Overall, impact was challenging to assess as 1) the project – already only 21 months long – was only just finishing as the evaluation was taking place so there was little time for any impact to take hold; and 2) the project as it was originally drawn up was ill defined in terms of baselines, activities and intended outcomes. Although staffing and capacity was bolstered with key new hires halfway through implementation, the project's sometimes-challenging first half hampered the project and its drive to deliver social, technical, institutional, gender and community impact.

9.2 Stakeholders did not discern a conflict threat to the Solomon Islands per se and over the course of the evaluation, they only occasionally drew the link between project outputs and peacebuilding outcomes or impact. One PWC member asked directly and skeptically how a women's caucus could possibly contribute to peace at all. Rather, in a context essentially peaceful and free from conflict for 15 years, broadly underdeveloped and underserved by government and/or donors, both **partners and beneficiaries were more likely to reflect on the project inputs and outputs as useful in and of themselves rather than as steps towards peace or away from conflict.** Project staff observed that project activities viewed alone rather than instrumentalised by a guiding ToC appear more analogous to 'development' activities rather than activities delivered in a context recovering from or at risk of conflict. For example, support to youth and women's voices and representation was seen as a net benefit to the community, province and country because of the self-evident lack of women's representation; beyond occasional references in conversations with national government officials, such initiatives were not discerned as ultimately seeking peacebuilding, reconciliation or conflict prevention impacts. This inherent disconnect made impact more challenging to assess.

9.3 None of the stakeholders consulted enunciated the sense that the project was moving the needle on peace or resiliency to conflict, despite a leading question posed during all FGDs and KIIs. Further, none of the stakeholders consulted drew the link between the project activities and peace. Regular reference was made to concerns over idle youth consuming marijuana and locally brewed quaso and their potential as bored or inebriated troublemakers and only one stakeholder linked poverty and hunger to the will to crime or violence.

9.4 Given the serious outbreak of rioting in Honiara in the wake of parliament's controversial election of Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare in April 2019¹¹, the project failed to achieve a key objective of sustaining peace in the electoral period. As stated in the ToC Analysis above, this objective was in fact highly ambitious with long-standing nationally-held grievances over the retention of political figures and an associated lack of representation always likely to trump PBF's limited and tightly focused programmatic inputs on peacebuilding, and reconciliation.

9.5 Without PBF, the Reparations Bill would not have progressed and SIG appreciation for PBF support to the Reparations Bill is clear: The PMO believes the payment of compensation/reparations is a panacea that will bring a sense of national closure to enable the country to move away from that historical chapter and that it will allow them to draw a line under Tensions. The government feels reparations or compensation must be paid to identified victims otherwise the expression of post-Tensions grievance will become a destabilizing and recurring issue. As of writing, the Bill is up for review by cabinet.

¹¹ <http://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/riots-solomon-islands-day-after/>

9.6 A senior MTGPEA official trained through PBF in peacebuilding and conflict analysis addressed one of the Tensions' most infamous open wounds by facilitating a successful week-long mediation, peace training and reconciliation process between two communities in Kwaio, Malaita and Ravu, Guadalcanal. In 2000, ten men sent by the former Prime Minister to kill rebel leader Harold Keke on the Weather Coast were themselves killed by Keke's men. The National Dialogue (supported by PBF) saw this specific case raised as a key obstacle to peace and reconciliation. Rabu villagers lived in some fear of the Kwaio with deleterious secondary effects in the village including heightened domestic violence and alcohol consumption. Although compensation had been paid to the victims' families by the government, reconciliation had not taken place and this event has remained an open wound between the two communities. The ministry official spent time discussing the issue with mothers and sisters of the deceased and worked through the training techniques to shift mindsets in the victims' community to be more receptive to offering forgiveness to the perpetrators and their community. Utilizing learned skills offered by the program, the previously intransigent women relatives in Ravu agreed to meet with the offending Kwaio community. Trauma in general was not sufficiently addressed by PBF II then then only with a late-project mission to Marau on Weather Coast catalyzed by women who came to Honiara seeking psychosocial support: "People are sitting in the dark in Solomon Islands. They witnessed terrible things and are traumatized" said a MTGPEA official. **Apart from trauma, the project overall however did not attend sufficiently to the Weather Coast, the area beyond Honiara most impacted by conflict and certainly an area that has received the least post-conflict support proportionate with Tensions' impacts.**

9.7 The project delivered focused impact on governance and corruption (enunciated in Output 1.4) through an anti-corruption awareness session for Guadalcanal and Honiara youth and women and an anti-corruption media training to 20 journalists from around the country to demonstrably push back against government graft. The training added to the courage and know-how of media organizations to look into this sensitive issue. **The gradual increase in quality and quantity of journalism addressing corruption as a result of the training – including exposure of dozens of corruption cases – and the resulting public awareness was viewed as an influential factor in the signing of the 2019 Anti-Corruption Bill.**

9.8 **The project's establishment and empowerment of Provincial Women's and Youth Caucuses provides clear and positive grassroots input and scrutiny to the government's budget and spending transparency.** It collaterally addresses expressed concerns and grievances over corruption and use of government funds and served to engage communities targeted by the PYCs and PWCs to mobilize to seek avenues to contribute to decision-making. The Caucuses (particularly the PWCs) encouraged and triggered people in those communities to scrutinize how their interests are being served or underserved. Enabling Solomon Islanders to properly understand their rights and what they should reasonably and legally expect from government is its own strong exercise in government accountability. Alongside the newly specialized skills in advocacy and advisory opinion of the PWCs and PYCs, the project has enabled beneficiaries at the grassroots levels of society to voice (and communicate to key stakeholders) their interests and concerns.

10. GENDER AND ADVANCING THE WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA

This section identifies outputs and impacts of the project pertinent to SDG 5 – ‘Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls’ – and to advancing of the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

10.1 Academic literature and consultation with male and female stakeholders on the ground on the historical role of women in peacebuilding in the Solomon Islands makes clear that women played a significant part in conflict prevention during the Tensions and found respect as part of community-level reconciliation efforts following that period of violence where that regard was harder to come by in other areas of life. While gender inequality at all levels and in all decision-making forums is persistent and pernicious in the country, peacebuilding is an area in which women have established credibility as leaders and authorities; **the project has been effective through peacebuilding training and broader empowerment actions in compounding women’s skills and space to contribute meaningfully to peacebuilding and social cohesion.**

10.2 PBF II’s joint implementation by UNDP and UNWOMEN immediately demonstrates a will to deliver a project with concerted and consistent positive impact for women. **Inclusion in the project of a UNWOMEN Gender Specialist boosted activities aimed specifically at empowering women and enhancing their role in government and community decision-making.** For example, for community leaders peace building training of trainers, a gender component was afforded special focus based on technical feedback from UNWOMEN, UNDP, MWYCFA and findings from M&E reporting from the first community leaders training session. The Gender Specialist was underutilized by UNDP however, resulting in reduced mainstreaming of gender across the entirety of the project.

10.3 **The project’s establishment of Provincial Women’s Caucuses has elevated women’s voices in the three provinces of implementation and has empowered women to more actively lobby their provincial governments to incorporate women’s voices from community level into policies and budgets.** Particularly in the more progressive Western province, this initiative has dovetailed with a push to implement TSM. TSM were originally rejected as a measure by the national government however, in tandem with a range of civil society organizations, **PBF II reinvigorated TSM with three provinces now having approved application of TSM to their assemblies.** Additionally, PWCs developed presented concept notes for activities related to TSM awareness and implementation to provincial executive. In practice, central government action is now required to amend the Provincial Government Act to incorporate TSM officially, however Western province has had the Measures approved by the Provincial Assembly and is seeking to proceed unilaterally. Western province reinforced its reputation for progressive policies on gender by promising to allocate 20% of the budget for activities that included gender mainstreaming.

10.4 **The numbers of women in decision making and leadership roles at community, provincial and national levels have not changed during project implementation. But space has been opened and increased to incorporate inputs from women into policy and budgets at provincial level.** Project-driven PWCs were key in this – such space was never available to insure consideration of gender equality. As a result of the project’s launch of provincial level gender policies aligned with the National Gender Equality and Women’s development policy (2016-2020) and the WPS National Action Plan (2017-2021), gender mainstreaming is now incorporated into the 3-year development plans of the three provinces in which the project works. Further, male and female beneficiaries regularly asserted that women feel more able and empowered to provide their opinions and concerns in a public sphere and that men appear more willing to listen.

BOX 3: Empowerment through PWC training case example

Capacity delivery to the Western Provincial Women's Caucus enabled one caucus member from Marobo to find new voice and courage to protect her community from the expansion of a new mining operation. Knowing she had undergone training on advocacy and government engagement, she was approached by people from her community asking her to help them mobilize a group of women against the plans of a mining company seeking to expand operations into the community's traditionally owned area. At the meeting of community leaders with mining company representatives, the company ejected the women from the meeting room for having raised their objections to the new operation. Led by the PWC member, the women's group compiled a letter outlining their feelings and demands and marched to the motel where the mining company was staying where the letter was accepted.

The exact outcome of this anecdote is unknown, however the PWC member found that men from the community would approach her in the following days to thank her with tears in their eyes for standing up for them. Newly-informed community members who had already signed away their land to the mining company revisited their decision and lobbied to nullify their agreements turning over land to the company once they realized the full implications of their agreement. The PWC member was most impacted by the way her actions countered her own brothers' interests and divided the community; she shared that her family was still not talking to her at time of the interview, but she felt courageous and justified that she had taken a stand on behalf of the community. "People can be well organized if they are informed", she concluded.

11. CASE STUDIES

11.1 PWC member's application of PBF training illustrates an example of project-driven women's empowerment strongly reflective of SDG 5 progress as well as the path from project outputs to outcomes to potential impact

Joy, a member of the Guadalcanal Provincial Women's Caucus felt she learned a great set of new and empowering skills from UN facilitators during PWC trainings on advocacy, policy, community outreach and government engagement. She was keen to implement the new knowledge and capacities in her village and following discussions with family during which she shared the knowledge from the training, determined that people in the village should be entitled to greater say in local governance. Joy sought initial feedback from the broader village – "need to get people's power in order to change the leadership style in our community" – and collaboratively drew up a new and revised structure for village governance that spread decision-making more evenly which was presented to the village for verification and approval.

The proposal was submitted to the existing hereditary chief, who deliberated over the plan for two days. Implementing this new, people-driven system of village governance "really increased people's engagement in the community". The previous chief was not excluded from the system; rather, the new structure broadened community input into community decisions. The chief was able to choose a new role for himself in the structure. Joy's community began to discuss issues of education resulting in submission of a list of names of community youth to their MP and the Provincial Ministry of Education for acceptance to SINU. All of these students have subsequently been sponsored and received a space at SINU. Joy felt the "knowledge and skill I gained [during trainings] has been very effective in my community".

11.2 Project outputs to grassroots outcomes

The catalytic impact sought by the project through peacebuilding trainings for traditional leaders, community leaders and church leaders, Youth Innovation Forums and training on advocacy and representation to PYCs and PWCs was strong in delivery of the action's direct outputs, though uneven in translating those into outcomes. Some trained beneficiaries picked the training up and drove tangible outcomes in their communities. In other instances, beneficiaries were either unmotivated or believed that subsequent seed funding was required to initiate actions at community level.

The model of 'cascading' learning (and impact) came from a project recommendation following a late November peacebuilding training that sought to expand the reach of such trainings. The project expected trained beneficiaries to deliver training to their communities on their own initiative (and communicated this to workshop participants), however in many communities this assumption overestimated motivation and initiative. As such, the project should have allocated sufficient small-scale seed funding to support a handful of demonstrative training initiatives that might themselves have subsequently driven initiative and demand for wider training. Releasing these small funds quickly after completion of the Training of Trainers workshop would have sustained momentum and harnessed enthusiasm, revealed as key to cascading impact in the Solomon Islands context. Some limited support was provided by the project through the provincial MWYCFCA in Malaita with small grants of SD26,000 available, but this requires supplementation.

Some ToT participants were frustrated that no support was forthcoming from UN to enable them to cascade that learning and training down to community level where this capacity was really needed. It was suggested by one government peacebuilding practitioner that this attitude may have been borne of

RAMSI's demonstrative effect to Solomon Islanders that they require outside support to deliver peace, but other participants understood that they could not rely on outside money indefinitely and sought greater support from government and greater ownership over peace in their communities. As such, the action's outputs often went unconnected to the communities where outcomes and impact are needed. For their part, some trained community and church leaders acknowledged they needed to show greater personal motivation to support their communities. In Guadalcanal, one FGD participant summarized the wish for tangible inputs into the community in worrying fashion, hoping the project would "not just feed us with talks".

11.3 Conflict sensitivity of PWCs and PYCs

PBF IRF facilities are aimed at innovative peacebuilding solutions in contexts with a range of systemic challenges. Picking up on a recommendation made following implementation of PBF I completed immediately prior to the beginning of PBF II and verified by PBF project staff in a national level consultation with MTGPEA and MWYCFA in January 2018, the project stood up Provincial Women's and Youth Caucuses in Western, Guadalcanal and Malaita. The Caucuses aimed to improve standing of these under-represented groups by serving as advisory bodies to the government on the interests of women and youth. Moreover, they sought to get women to the decision-making table in the short 18-month timespan available.

Initiation of the PWCs and PYCs raised the attention of provincial governments who felt these new entities mirrored too closely the mandate and role of the largely moribund and underfunded National Councils of Women and Youth and their regional subsections which have a mandate to hold government accountable to those demographics. These are the avenues through which the government has sought to work on women's and youth issues. Provincial governments were irked that they were not consulted and that the Caucuses operated as civil society groups outside of their control.

This overlap in mandate was unforeseen by the project, but the project maintains that the Caucuses are simply misunderstood and need time to find their niche. Caucuses have not been effective in differentiating their mandate from the Councils or enunciating how the two bodies might work in tandem. The discord expressed by provincial governments has not caused problems for PBF II, but it has placed the project in an unfavourable light with suspicion that PWCs and PYCs have been deployed to usurp government duties. The lack of action and funding for the Provincial and National Youth/Women's Councils undercuts this.

12. CONCLUSIONS

- SIG has not prioritized traditional peace building and reconciliation sufficiently to dedicate meaningful funding to the practice; as such, project outputs and outcomes are unlikely to be sustained without considerable ongoing external funding. Further, and particularly in the absence of other international donors on peacebuilding and reconciliation, PBF holds outsized importance to sustaining peace in the Solomon Islands
- Going forward, SIG's shift to leveraging large-scale infrastructure projects as the informal core of its peacebuilding strategy will demand a simultaneous shift in traditional peacebuilding strategy in order to coordinate better and support this revised government approach
- SIG provision of third party compensation perpetuates impunity and is not positive for community reconciliation as only one community is involved. PBF should encourage government to address questions of ongoing impunity for perpetrators of Tensions-era violence by advocating restorative approaches to national reconciliation
- PBF must be cautious during future projects not to become viewed by the population as a government proxy due to support for government rather than the population's interests
- Women's demonstrable impact and success as community organizers and peace builders should be publicized to build their profile as peace practitioners or forces for social cohesion while highlighting these instances of women's leadership and empowerment as an avenue to recognition and access to positions of influence in other institutions
- Concurrent implementation of PBF II alongside PBF's Youth Empowerment Project has been a drain on human resources and project efficiency
- Project targeting of locations and beneficiaries required finer attention to demographics, geography, contextual history and the temporal proximity of conflict for Solomon Islanders. Conflict in the Solomon Islands itself should be seen in context and scale as *relatively* limited in terms of deaths and injuries (approximately 200 deaths over a 5-year span) while taking care not to minimize the real and experienced instances of trauma and terror; those cases require specialized support and response. Understanding these realities will tighten future targeting
- Given context and an ambitious Theory of Change, the project was judged too short in timeframe to reasonably achieve key outcomes and impacts
- Another phase of PBF funding will be needed to carry forward PBF II gains and initiatives

13. RECOMMENDATIONS

13.1 RECOMMENDATIONS ON IMPROVING PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS

13.1.1 Utilization of systematic context analysis conflict sensitivity frameworks to maintain distance from controversial government initiatives

Going forward, the potential for harm in a country that already struggles mightily with land ownership and tenure and property rights – the very issues that verifiably drove the country’s worst outbreak of violence since its independence – is extensive and manifold. This also places the Land Act and Traditional Governance bill – core issues for the project – in a new light and makes these efforts subject to new scrutiny around conflict sensitivity (and their potential for conflict blindness). The potential for the new Land Act and Traditional Governance Bill to be instrumentalised in support of the government’s wish to apply large-scale external Chinese funds to infrastructure development. As a result, conflict sensitive frameworks will be dramatically more important for any future PBF work in the Solomon Islands. A seasoned watcher of donor policy in the Solomon Islands concurs: “The country’s clientelist political economy pulls against good governance, and against managing and maintaining infrastructure. It’s a structural issue, not a moral one, but that’s also what makes it so stubbornly persistent, and something that needs to be factored into donors’ decisions.” (<https://www.devpolicy.org/three-questions-about-australias-infrastructure-promise-to-solomon-islands-20190607/>)

13.1.2 Analyze and account fully for full breadth of government peacebuilding strategy and policy

Infrastructure is only collaterally touched on by the National Peacebuilding Policy (Focus Area 2.4 – “Improve accountable Service Delivery”) which specifies “Support [to] decentralized yet nationally integrated infrastructure development planning through inclusive and participatory processes that strengthen community management of local resources”. Problematically for any future PBF (or other peacebuilding funding) this reveals a disconnect between the stated National Peacebuilding Policy and the government’s own internal, infrastructure-heavy approach to peace through economic growth improved links between the center and far flung peripheries. The government has seemingly chosen to make Chinese-funded infrastructure the core of its peacebuilding strategy, though this remains absent in its existing National Peacebuilding Policy.

13.1.3 Improve efficiencies and planning to reduce logistical and transport costs

High cost and general complexity of moving around the country dictate the need to fund and plan for logistical challenges. Bundling trips to provinces outside of Honiara (e.g. adding monitoring trips for earlier activities to implementation visits) will offer greater value for money.

13.1.4 Anticipate a December recess

Do not plan activities for the end of the year; due to the vacation period, government officials are generally unavailable during December in the Solomon Islands.

13.1.5 Undertake impact assessment following sufficient passage of time

This evaluation is unlikely to offer a full sense of outcomes or impact in light of PBF II implementation. A fuller set of conclusions and more accurate review of the value of the project would be more likely 6-9 months following the end of (PBF II or PBF III) activities.

13.1.6 Include realistic and thoughtful exit strategies in subsequent programming

Project outputs and outcomes need either improved mechanisms for handover or sustainability, or effective exit strategies to insure project initiatives do not simply die.

13.1.7 Streamline and improve methods around disbursement of funds

Beneficiaries and implementing partners were sometimes slowed or stymied in their uptake of project initiatives by difficulties in UN remittance of funds. Solomons Post has not proven reliable and UNWOMEN and UNDP have wildly varying financial systems. This also caused some frustration and disappointment and loss of momentum.

13.1.8 Share and disseminate monitoring and evaluation findings

Partners and stakeholders regularly sought feedback and would benefit from a sense of progress to enable learning and improvements. Dissemination and sharing also shows transparency and responsiveness and illustrates the learning process. Stakeholders are regularly concerned that lessons are not learned. The PBF M&E Officer could support civil society partners and government to build their own M&E systems.

13.1.9 Improved organizational arrangements to improve the 'joint' delivery

Joint deliver potentially enhanced by monthly project meetings and making these an internal deliverable against which to deliver.

13.1.10 Tighter project planning in advance of activities

Responds to broad sense from those interviewed that last minute arrangements cost money and cause confusion (and disappointment) both internally and with beneficiaries.

13.1.11 Utilize recommendations and conclusion contained in the CDA

CDA findings alongside contemporary stakeholder consultations should be utilized in formulation of PBF III. The shortage of homework and consultation and collaborative design around PBF II was a shortcoming of the program that has had knock-on effects throughout delivery and implementation.

13.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE PROGRAMMING

13.2.1 Revisit and challenge application of industry-standard understandings of 'conflict' and 'peacebuilding' ahead of any project concept

Exchanges undertaken during evaluation of PBF II evidenced a very limited public concern over future conflict and with resulting low demand for peacebuilding programming. Frustration with government over services, corruption and mismanagement and a potential perceived loss of sovereignty due to government receipt of large-scale Chinese funding were found by the evaluator and the CDA to be the main potential sources of future social tension. The Tensions themselves – the basis for PBF II work in the Solomon Islands – did not appear to constitute a reference point for the Solomon Islanders consulted during this evaluation. In order to insure relevance of future 'peacebuilding' projects, donors and project conceivers should review carefully their understanding of the role of conflict and its impacts in Solomon Islands society.

13.2.2 Disseminate TRC summary report distributed to parliamentarians

The project's summary report was seen as compulsory reading to mobilize MPs and other government figures to focus more tightly and act on peacebuilding and reconciliation.

13.2.3 Support rural communities' ability to take long-term, healthy and informed decisions about use of their land

In addition to supporting the Land Act and Traditional Leaders Bill supporting government policy around land and rural governance, rural communities are too often uninformed of the implications of signing away land rights to private entities and don't always understand the full set of outcomes of such land transfer.

13.2.4 PWCs and PYCs would benefit from participation in UN-brokered workshops with National Councils of Women and Youth (and their provincial subsections)

These workshops would first clarify the Caucuses' complimentary (rather than mandate-threatening) purpose and should then facilitate Caucuses and National Councils to work jointly through clarification of mandates to avoid any overlap or duplication and to assure a smoother, better-defined and consistent flow of information and advocacy delivering grassroots sentiments and findings captured by the Caucuses to the National Councils and other government decision-making entities. PWCs and PYCs should ideally seek to specialize in capturing and encouraging grassroots, community-level interests and concerns and translating and transmitting those interests and concerns to the National Councils and/or other government entities.

13.2.5 Local level conflict resiliency and peace building capacity would be enhanced by ongoing support to community leaders in Honiara, Western and Malaita trained under PBF II in peace building and conflict analysis.

Key avenues for support include: twice-yearly forums providing a platform for technical support/expertise for working collaboratively through more intractable community conflict issues; for sharing of best (and worst) practice between trained leaders from all three provinces; and building and committing to 6-month peace plans to prioritize issues and areas for attention and lay out methodological approaches to respond to those issues. These trained trainers consistently requested small grants to undertake peace building activities in their home communities; this could be explored by PBF III in some cases though with a strong eye on insuring that these trained trainers become self-sustaining conflict prevention and reconciliation entities in their communities. Open-ended support potentially encourages greater reliance on UN monies to undertake peace work.

13.2.6 Maintain and expand Youth Innovation Training Forum with addition of future thinking component

Unemployment and inadequate foresight and planning are key drivers of grievance for young men and women. Encouraging entrepreneurial thinking with concrete support to new business initiatives showed catalytic effect under PBF II. The addition of (carefully selected) 'future thinking' facilitation for larger groups of beneficiaries is recommended to encourage more expansive youth life planning and ambition.

13.2.7 Future PBF projects would benefit from adding a 'gender mainstreaming approvals process' to each activity **requiring a Gender Specialist or focal point to assure sufficient inclusion of gender sensitive components and sign off on each (relevant) activity.** Further, project indicators around gender could be strengthened and tightened and tailored to the Solomon Islands' context.

13.2.8 Utilize or build peacebuilding, mediation and social cohesion skills of local trainers and facilitators

Rather than bringing international trainers in with limited contextual knowledge, building up a network of trained peacebuilding facilitators and mediators from civil society provides a sustainable means of improving tailoring or conflict responses/solutions and provides a great sense of local ownership.

13.2.9 Invest in office technology to support government and civil society partners

PWCs and PYCs as well as some government offices at provincial level are without laptops, internet or basic office infrastructure; investing in provision of even second-hand laptops and printers would immediately improve the professionalism and formalization of nascent partners.

13.2.10 Provide longer-term funding for social cohesion and institution- and state-building

Given the relative absence of urgent issues requiring sudden address (by comparison with most other PBF recipients), longer term consistent support to social cohesion and bolstering of state and civil society institutions and key formal and informal structures crucial to sustaining peace is required. The Peacebuilding and Recovery Facility (PRF) providing longer term financing of 3 years is more appropriate than the Immediate Response Facility (IRF) that offers just 18 months of support.

13.2.11 Provide conflict sensitivity technical support and/or framework to government as it rolls out larger scale infrastructure

SIG's primary peacebuilding actions – large scale projects funded by China or Taiwan – are unlikely to attend sufficiently to the potential for harm given land issues, governance issues, distribution of any commercial benefits. This could be a model for governments seeking to mitigate the regular negative externalities of Chinese and other large-scale donor 'infrastructure for peace' projects. This capacity would be readied for application at the ground floor moment of this expected development. It would also place UNDP more directly at the core of SIG peacebuilding and development in the country. This assistance could be in the form of technical accompaniment sitting with relevant ministries or compilation of CS guidelines/framework tailored to the context and the projects.

13.2.12 Undertake study of potential scope and repercussions (through peace/conflict lens) for Solomon Islands of Bougainville referendum

This study would include examination of trigger and proximate factors that might see spillover of conflict from Bougainville but may also adjust dynamics in terms of tax, trade, transportation, kinship and intermarriage, commercial links and opportunities. It responds to uncertainty over how the formation of a new nation state in Bougainville will impact adjacent regions of the Solomon Islands.

13.2.13 Undertake conflict resiliency survey

Conflict resiliency survey would examine positive factors within communities and customary and formal authorities that are seen to underpin ongoing peace and resiliency to conflict. Survey findings should be subject to broader verification of gathered stakeholders including government, traditional and community leaders and experts with subsequent application of findings to existing or upcoming programming. In particular, this is projected to provide increased weight and evidence for bringing women and youth more centrally into peacebuilding and conflict prevention

13.2.14 Expand, publicize and share youth innovation work

Youth innovation initiatives elicit particular inspiration and interest at village level and should be publicized and leverage as a means of inspiring motivation and hope. The demonstrative impacts of the initiative at community level and across communities are considerable and are worth harnessing. People in communities seek these Innovators out to find out how they can develop their own ideas and support for them

13.2.15 Consolidate and expand women's role in social cohesion and peacebuilding

Actions on WPS and gender should prioritize and focus more concerted on improving women's space in peacebuilding and reconciliation specifically, not just general decision-making and empowerment. Program could provide the capacity AND the financial or in-kind support to make them real destinations for communities when there is discord or conflict internally or externally over issues such as land. This responds to the sense that this is a space where women already have a strong name for themselves and this can represent a beachhead and basis for larger aspirations and involvement.

13.2.16 Caution on further activities around the Reparations Bill

Implementation and government instrumentalization of the Reparations Bill could be a political hot potato that UN may not wish to be associated with from a reputational and conflict sensitivity perspective.

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ANNEX II: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Organization/Affiliation	Demographic breakdown	Locations
UN Agency Staff		
UNDP PBF II project staff	Female: 1 Male: 2	Honiara
UNDP PBF II former project staff	Female: 1 Male: 1	Bhutan, Sierra Leone
UNDP Youth Empowerment Project staff	Female: 0 Male: 1	Honiara
UNWOMEN PBF II project staff	Female: 2 Male: 0	Honiara
UNWOMEN management and Pacific regional staff	Female: 3 Male: 0	Honiara and Suva
UN Solomon Islands Country Office Director	Female: 0 Male: 1	Honiara
Implementing Partners		
Prime Minister's Office	Female: 0 Male: 2	Honiara
MTGPEA national office staff	Female: 0 Male: 4	Honiara
MTGPEA provincial office staff	Female: 1 Male: 2	Auki, Gizo
MWYCFA national office staff	Female: 1 Male: 1	Ginger Beach, Honiara
MWYCFA provincial office staff	Female: 0 Male: 1	Gizo
Solomon Islands Media Association	Female: Male: 1	Honiara
Direct Beneficiaries		
Guadalcanal Provincial Women's Caucus	Female: 7 Male: 0	Ginger Beach
Malaita Provincial Women's Caucus	Female: 8 Male: 0	Ginger Beach
Western Provincial Women's Caucus	Female: 7 Male: 0	Ginger Beach
Malaita Provincial Youth Caucus	Female: 0 Male: 1	Auki
Western Provincial Youth Caucus	Female: 2 Male: 1	Gizo
Guadalcanal community and church leaders	Female: 2 Male: 4	Honiara
Western community and church leaders	Female: 2 Male: 5	Gizo

Malaita Youth Innovation participants	Female: 0 Male: 1	Auki
Western Youth Innovation participants	Female: 1 Male: 1	Auki
Indirect Beneficiaries		
Australian High Commission, Political Section	Female: 2 Male: 0	Honiara
Western Provincial Secretary	Female: 0 Male: 1	Gizo
Independent Experts		
Independent expert, Solomon Islands/M&E	Female: 3 Male: 0	Honiara, Australia, UK
New Zealand High Commission	Female: 1 Male: 0	Honiara