

Solomon Islands Voluntary National Review 2020

Key Messages

The National Development Strategy (NDS) 2016 – 2035 is the blueprint for sustainable development in Solomon Islands. It sets out the vision and priorities for advancing human and economic development, ensuring peace and security and the protection of the natural environment. Relevant elements of the 2030 Development Agenda, the SAMOA Pathway, the Istanbul Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries and other relevant international and regional frameworks have been integrated into the NDS, through the five long-term objectives of: inclusive economic growth; poverty reduction; access to quality health and education; resilient and environmentally sustainable development; and effective governance. The NDS 2016-2035 sets the targets and benchmarks for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) at the national level.

The NDS preparations, and localisation of the SDG's, have been a consultative and inclusive effort. Similarly, the VNR process captures broad stakeholder views, facilitated through a dedicated national Coordinating Committee. The VNR provides an opportunity to share Solomon Island's national development priorities and related SDG implementation progress.

The Solomon Islands is the third largest archipelago in the South Pacific, comprising a total of 997 islands spread over an exclusive economic zone of 1,340,000km². The population is 639,157 and predominantly rural. There is also a very large informal sector. The level of biodiversity in the Solomon Islands is globally recognised. While such complexity and diversity provide opportunities, they also pose significant challenges in our efforts to achieve the SDGs.

Implementing the 2030 Development Agenda and the SDG's

Solomon Islands has promoted economic growth through investments in agriculture, fisheries, forestry, tourism and mining sectors. The Government, with development partners, has provided technical and financial support to programmes aimed at achieving sustained growth and employment.

Ensuring access to basic education and improving the quality of education remain important priorities for Solomon Islands. The Government has implemented free education, and other targeted policy measures which have increased primary and secondary school enrolment rates, and

improved gender parity with more girls starting, and remaining, in school. Solomon Islands continues to maintain high levels of proficiency in literacy and numeracy, scoring higher than the regional proficiency levels for years four and six.

Solomon Islands has made impressive gains in health outcomes over the last two decades and is progressing towards achieving universal health coverage. Current priorities include: detection and treatment of non-communicable diseases; addressing shortages of health workers; and increasing the availability of treatment facilities across all health centres. While there is no discrimination in access to basic health care, disparities remain, largely owing to population spread over a difficult terrain. The COVID-19 pandemic underscores the threat of infectious diseases, given limited containment capacity and adverse impact. Solomon Islanders remain vulnerable to health risks due to natural disasters, as well as, malaria, tuberculosis, dengue fever and measles outbreaks.

Human rights, gender issues, peace building and security concerns remain policy priorities, which are being addressed. Reducing domestic violence remains a challenge, and mechanisms have been established to help affected women and children. Employment opportunities for women in senior management roles have improved, although more progress is needed.

Solomon Islands remains vulnerable to climate change and natural disasters. Policy frameworks such as the National Climate Change Policy, Nationally Determined Contributions and the National Disaster Management Plan underpin measures currently in place. The effective implementation of adaptation and mitigation measures is dependent on timely availability of financial and technical resources.

Principles of good governance and transparency remain important national priorities. The Government has recently passed the Whistle-blowers Act, Anti-Corruption Act and has established an Independent Anti-Corruption Commission. Ongoing good governance programmes at national,

provincial and community levels aim to empower civil society, address corruption and strengthen the judicial system and law enforcement capacity.

Moving Ahead

A major challenge in achieving the SDG's lies in institutional capacity and effectiveness to manage the rapidly changing development context, including through population growth, socio-cultural and environmental change and global economic systems. A deeper integration of legislation, policies, plans, budgets and activities for transformative change is necessary. Underpinning a sustainable pathway for Solomon Islands requires unlocking the needed means of implementation, and ensuring durable and genuine partnerships to enable the full and effective implementation of the SDG's.