



Australia Awards

Australia Awards Global Tracer Facility

Case Study in Solomon
Islands – health field

February 2018



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Acronyms and abbreviations

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ASHM	Australasian Society for HIV, Viral Hepatitis and Sexual Health Medicine
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development (former)
CICH	University of Melbourne's Centre for International Child Health
DFAT	Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HSSP	Health Sector Support Program
INGOs	International non-governmental organisations
MBBS	Bachelor of Surgery
MHMS	Ministry of Health and Medical Services
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
PCR	Polymerase Chain Reaction
RAMSI	Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands
SIAAA	Solomon Islands Australia Alumni Association
SCB	Scholarships and Alumni Branch
UPNG	University of Papua New Guinea
WHO	World Health Organisation

1. Executive summary

This report explores the long-term outcomes of Australian development scholarship alumni from Solomon Islands. Alumni in this Case Study completed their award between 2007 and 2010 in the health field. This research was conducted by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's (DFAT) Australia Awards Global Tracer Facility (the Facility).

1.1 Findings

1.1.1 Development contributions

Alumni have made significant contributions to the development and improvement of health policy and practice in Solomon Islands, **indicating Australia Awards long-term Outcome 1 is being achieved.** Alumni developed a broad range of skills on-award which they have utilised on return. These skills include specific health-related expertise, and broader skills such as communication, critical thinking, and leadership. Examples of contributions to development include:

- leadership in a broad range of areas within the health sector
- knowledge sharing within the workplace and in the wider community
- contributions to national policy and improved practices in health.

Alumni identified the following factors which enabled them to use their new skills and knowledge gained from their award:

- their exposure to a different culture and the confidence gained while in Australia
- strong support from employers and colleagues
- self-motivation.

Alumni highlight that challenges they have faced in making further contributions include:

- the under-resourcing of the health sector
- limited employment opportunities and succession planning
- cultural barriers especially in relation to time management.

1.1.2 Economic and public diplomacy outcomes

Australia and Solomon Islands have a strong history of collaboration and partnership. Key examples provided by alumni and their colleagues include:

- links with Rotary in Australia for the renovation of dental facilities
- collaboration with university partners on research supervision and publications.

All alumni in this Case Study described a link they have with Australia. However, there are **relatively few examples of ongoing professional networks**, collaborations or institutional partnerships with Australia, **suggesting partial achievement of Australia Awards long-term Outcomes 2 and 3.**

Alumni in this Case Study identified a number of factors that have supported their ability to maintain their connections with Australia. These included the interests and efforts of Australians in connecting with and supporting them, the fact that they developed cross-cultural communication skills while on-award, and the increasing use of technology as a platform for maintaining links.

Alumni also identified factors that made it difficult to develop or maintain networks with Australia. These included a lack of opportunity while on-award to build professional networks, a tendency to socialise with international students rather than local students while on-award and the fact that maintaining relationships is time intensive.

1.1.3 Views of Australia and Australian expertise

Alumni in the Solomon Islands Case Study hold enduring positive views about Australia, Australians and Australian expertise, indicating achievement of Australia Awards long-term Outcome 4. The Australia Awards are viewed as prestigious and making a valued contribution to the development of Solomon Islands.

Alumni shared examples of positive views of Australia and Australian expertise as a result of their experiences of life and study in Australia and the support they received on-award. Furthermore, as a reflection of Australia's bilateral relationship with Solomon Islands, alumni had significant prior exposure to Australians and Australian expertise which has also informed their views.

While alumni pointed to cultural shock and cultural differences as a barrier they experienced while adjusting to life in Australia, this did not impact their overall positive views.

1.1.4 Impact on addressing equity issues

The Australia Awards in Solomon Islands balances both merit and equity to achieve the Australia Awards long-term objectives. The impact the Australia Awards can have on gender, disability and social inclusion must, therefore, be contextualised within the broader systemic issues relating to poverty and traditional cultural norms.

Australia Awards in Solomon Islands is working towards promoting gender equality in a number of ways, most notably through maintaining an equal number of scholarships awarded to women and men. There are also measures in place to increase participation of people with disability in the awards. However, applicants with disability are not common, reflecting the significant systemic barriers to participation in the education system and society. The Australia Awards in Solomon Islands are also actively working to ensure people from a diverse range of islands and communities in Solomon Islands are included. This is being enacted through outreach activities targeting rural populations.


Australia Awards alumni themselves are furthering social equity in Solomon Islands through individual advocacy and the Solomon Islands Australia Alumni Association.

Australia Awards Alumni are leading health policy and practice in Solomon Islands—study shows

Australia Awards alumni are contributing to:

-  Leadership in a broad range of areas within the health sector
-  National policy and improved practices in health
-  Knowledge sharing within the workplace and in the wider community
-  Better health outcomes for Solomon Islanders

Australia Awards results

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| <p>1 Alumni provided strong examples of development contributions</p> <p>Achieved ✓</p> <p>“We have gone from looking after undergraduates and now we are supervising the master’s programs from here, instead of sending the doctors overseas for training.”</p>  | <p>2 Alumni are contributing to cooperation between Australia and Solomon Islands</p> <p>Partly Achieved</p> <p>“Maintaining a professional network is vital to my professional development. It was very helpful to keep in contact with my supervisor because she still has an interest in my work.”</p>  | <p>3 Alumni support effective institutional partnerships between Australia and Solomon Islands</p> <p>Partly Achieved</p> <p>“Strong partnerships and relationships are time intensive. With alumni typically returning home to positions of leadership, the time required to invest in relationships with Australians and Australian organisations may be limited.”</p>  | <p>4 Alumni view Australia and Australian expertise positively</p> <p>Achieved ✓</p> <p>“The Australia Awards in Solomon Islands has a strong, positive reputation for its contribution to country development and as a competitive merit-based scholarship to study at internationally recognised institutions.”</p>  |
|---|---|---|---|



Participants: Alumni who completed scholarships between **2006 and 2010**

Case study participants:



- Female alumni
- Male alumni
- Employer of alumni
- Colleagues
- Stakeholders

2. Background of the study

The Australia Awards Global Tracer Facility (the Facility) is a four-year project funded by the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). Through this project, DFAT assesses the development contributions and public and economic diplomacy outcomes of Australia's investment in the Australia Awards.¹ The key research and reporting activities being undertaken are a quantitative Tracer Survey and qualitative Case Studies, which are prepared concurrently throughout the four years of the project.

This report gives the key findings of the Solomon Islands Case Study; the Facility undertook data collection in Solomon Islands in late February 2018.

2.1 Objectives

The Facility seeks to generate high-quality information on former scholarship holders, with a focus on less recent alumni. This information will provide a strong evidence base for country programs and the Scholarships and Alumni Branch (SCB) of DFAT to evaluate the impact of Australia Awards on alumni and, by implication, on their home institutions and countries.

2.2 Scope

The scope of the Facility is limited to alumni of DFAT's Australia Awards and previous DFAT-funded scholarships programs, awards (both long and short duration) and fellowships (managed by SCB).

2.3 Case Studies

The Case Studies are being conducted via an iterative approach whereby the qualitative phase can be designed based on what is learned from the initial quantitative phase.

The Facility Case Study methodology is explanatory and multiple in design. That is, cases are selected based on findings from the quantitative (survey) research, and the 'how' and 'why' of alumni experiences is explained in detail. Multiple Case Studies enable researchers to explore differences within and between cases. Case Studies contribute to the evidence base for country programs, providing useful comparison across cases to build a robust understanding of diverse alumni experience.

¹ See <http://dfat.gov.au/people-to-people/public-diplomacy/Documents/public-diplomacy-strategy-2014-16.pdf> and <http://dfat.gov.au/trade/economic-diplomacy/pages/economic-diplomacy.aspx>

2.3.1 Year 1 of the Facility

In the first year of the Facility, Case Study countries and themes were based on criteria such as availability and range of alumni details in the Global Alumni database; previous country or thematic research undertaken; investment priorities, and partner-country priorities. The cohort for Year 1 Case Studies were alumni who graduated between 1955 and 1995. In Year 1, the selected Case Study countries were Fiji, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Kenya. Field research took place between late October 2016 and March 2017.

2.3.2 Years 2 through 4

Subsequent Case Studies in Years 2–4 will be determined through the annual planning process. Case Studies will not be limited to geographic foci and may be sectoral or regional as determined through findings of the annual survey and planning and consultation process. Case Studies will also align with the priorities of the *Australia Awards Global Strategy: Investing in the next generation of global leaders for development 2016-2018* (the Global Strategy) and any other areas of importance as identified by SCB.

In **Year 2**, the selected Case Study countries and sectoral focus are Vanuatu – Law and Justice, Mongolia – Finance, Solomon Islands - Health, Indonesia - Education, and China – Agriculture and Environment. Field research will occur between mid-October 2017 and April 2018.

2.4 Country context

Solomon Islands is part of Melanesia, a sub-region of Oceania. The country gained independence on 7 July 1978. Spread across an archipelago of nearly 1000 islands comprising nine main island groups, Solomon Islands has an estimated population of 599,500 people. Linguistically and culturally diverse, there are 63 distinct languages spoken with numerous local dialects. English is the official language, but Solomons Pijin is the predominant language for the majority of people (DFAT 2018a).

Between 1998 and 2003, a period of ethnic violence occurred resulting from disputes about land and resources between the two ethnic groups from the main islands of Guadalcanal and Malaita. This period referred to by locals as “the tensions” interrupted all government-run services, displaced several thousand Malaitan settlers, and pushed Solomon Islands to the verge of a failed state (Fox and Walsh 2017). Australian assistance was requested in 2003, leading to a partnership with Australia and New Zealand to support the Solomon Islands Government to address the violence through the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI). RAMSI concluded on 30 June 2017, the end of a long-term commitment aimed at creating the conditions necessary for a return to stability, peace and a growing economy (DFAT 2018a).

Over the period of the ethnic conflict, Solomon Islands experienced severe economic contraction and stagnation. Following the deployment of RAMSI, the country has experienced relatively consistent economic growth (DFAT 2018a). Gross Domestic Product per capita is among the lowest in the Pacific at around US\$2,000 and has only now recovered to levels from before the RAMSI intervention (DFAT 2018b).

In 2018, the United Nations Committee for Development Planning put forward the recommendation to graduate Solomon Islands from Least Developed Country status. However, Solomon Islands remains one of the Pacific Island region's poorest countries, with high costs of service delivery due to its small and geographically dispersed population (DFAT 2018a). Key barriers to economic growth and private sector investment include poor infrastructure, under-developed labour skills, high utility costs, land tenure issues, and limited public administration and financial management capacity (DFAT 2018b).

3. Methodology

This chapter includes an overview of the Case Study design, development and implementation. This is the seventh Case Study of the Facility. Solomon Islands was one of five Case Study countries proposed in the Year 2 Annual Plan. Solomon Islands was selected as a Case Study country on the basis that there was a core group of alumni identified in the health sector, a sector that has clear alignment with investment priorities. In addition, there has been limited previous research regarding alumni in this area.

3.1 Overall Case Study design

The purpose of the Facility Case Studies is to collect detailed qualitative data on the impact and benefits of the Australia Awards. The Case Study methodology proposed is based on the Facility Case Study Approach, which was developed in the inception phase of the Facility and reported in the Annual Plan for Year 1.

The Global Strategy and Australia Awards Global Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (the Framework) form the basis for the Case Study design. The research questions, propositions, data collection instruments, and report template are built around this Framework. Findings reported by alumni are triangulated with relevant stakeholders such as employers and colleagues, and industry bodies thereby strengthening findings by providing further evidence to support or refute propositions. This methodology was developed by the Facility and SCB.

The overarching theory that has guided the design of this Case Study methodology is based upon the goal of the Australia Awards that ‘... partner countries progress their development goals and have positive relationships with Australia that advance mutual interests’.

The Case Study research questions are framed by the intended long-term outcomes of the Australia Awards as guided by the Framework:

- 1 How do alumni use the skills, knowledge and networks gained on-award to contribute to achieving partner-country development goals?
- 2 How are Australia Awards contributing to Australia’s economic and public diplomacy outcomes?
- 3 How has being an Australia Awards alumni impacted alumni?
- 4 Are the benefits of receiving a scholarship experienced equally by all groups who have received them?

The primary unit of analysis for this Case Study is the alumnus or alumna. Case Studies seek to explore how alumni of Australia Awards have acted to contribute to the achievement of the goal and objectives of the Australia Awards.

3.2 Methods

The data collection method used for this Case Study was through interviews. A set of questions were developed for each key participant group, namely alumni, colleagues and employers (both of alumni and generally), alumni associations; and the DFAT staff and managing contractors working on the Australia Awards in partner countries. Questions for each key participant group (see Annex 2) align with the research propositions (located at Annex 1) and long-term outcomes of the Australia Awards. This ensures that data collected directly relate to the key questions the Case Studies are seeking to answer and that there is consistency across each Case Study.

3.3 Sample

Data from the Global Alumni database for Solomon Islands at the time of planning this Case Study revealed 117 alumni who completed their scholarship between 2006 and 2010 (the focus period for the Facility in Year 2). From this group, a total of 14 studied or are working in the field of health. Eight alumni were shortlisted to invite their participation, with a balance of gender and regional alumni.

3.3.1 Contact details

Contact details existed in the Global Alumni database for 11 of the 14 alumni in the sample group. With the assistance of the SIAAA secretary, Junita Ngai, all 14 alumni were contacted and their details updated. The shortlisted sample of eight alumni were successfully contacted, with seven alumni accepting to participate in the Case Study. Table 1 lists the alumni participants in the Solomon Islands Case Study.

Table 1 Solomon Islands Case Study alumni participants

Name	Gender	Australian Government scholarship	Institution	Award Completed	Current position
Dr Ellison Vane	M	Australian Development Scholarship	The University of Sydney	2008	Head of Community Dental Services, National Referral Hospital, Ministry of Health and Medical Services
Mrs Hensllyn Mabo Pwe'a Boseto	F	Australian Development Scholarship	James Cook University	2010	Administration & Project Manager, Ecological Solutions Solomon Islands
Ms Dolores Devesi	F	Australian Leadership Award Fellowship	Australasian Society for HIV, Viral Hepatitis and Sexual Health Medicine (ASHM)	2007	Country Director – Solomon Islands, Oxfam

Name	Gender	Australian Government scholarship	Institution	Award Completed	Current position
Ms Sanneth Talo	F	Australian Leadership Award Fellowship	World Health Organization Collaborating Centre for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Development at the University of Technology, Sydney (WHO CC UTS)	2009	Retired, formerly Registrar; Solomon Islands Nursing Council, Ministry of Health & Medical Services
Ms Brenda Lauri'i	F	Australian Development Scholarship	James Cook University	2010	Medical Technologist, Medical Laboratory, National Referral Hospital
Dr Gregory Jilini	M	Australian Development Scholarship	The University of New South Wales	2010	Under-Secretary of Health Care, Ministry of Health and Medical Services
Dr Titus Nasi	M	Australian Leadership Award Fellowship	The Children's Hospital at Westmead & University of Sydney	2009	Head of Paediatrics, National Referral Hospital, and Chief Paediatrician for Solomon Islands, Ministry of Health and Medical Services

In addition to the alumni who participated in the Case Study, 10 other people were interviewed in order to provide context, triangulate alumni perspectives and better understand the impact of the Australian scholarships on the outcomes for Solomon Islands and Australia. These additional participants included current stakeholders such as the Australian High Commission in Honiara and the Secretary for the SIAAA, members, as well as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the National Referral Hospital and the Human Resource Manager for the Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS). Where possible and available, colleagues of alumni were also interviewed to gather further information about the impact of the alumni. Table 2 lists these participants. In total, 17 people were interviewed for the Solomon Case Study.

Table 2 Key stakeholder and employer/colleague interviews

Name	Position	Reason for interview
Mr George Pego	Human Resource Manager, Ministry of Health and Medical Services	HR specialist and general employer in the Ministry of Health and Medical Services
Ms Julia Fationo	Project Coordinator, Oxfam Solomon Islands	Colleague of Ms Devesi
Ms Doris Manongi	Supervisor, Medical Laboratory, National Referral Hospital	Supervisor of Ms Lauri'i
Dr Loreen Oti	Director of Dental Health Services, Ministry of Health and Medical Services	Supervisor of Dr Vane
Dr. Tenneth Dalipanda	Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Health and Medical Services	Senior colleague of Dr Jilini
Mr Michael Lariu	Director of Nursing, Ministry of Health and Medical Services	Former supervisor of Ms Talo
Dr Steve Aumanu	Chief Executive Officer, National Referral Hospital	CEO of the National Referral Hospital, employer of alumni
Ms Natalina Hong	Secretary, Solomon Islands Australia Alumni Association (SIAAA)	Alumni engagement in Solomon Islands
Ms Leah Horsfall	First Secretary for Education, Australian High Commission	Key stakeholder - DFAT
Ms Debbie Sade	Senior Program Manager Health, Australian High Commission	Key stakeholder - DFAT

3.4 Exclusions

All Case Study alumni were selected from the Global Alumni database, which only includes those who have successfully completed their degree. Accordingly, this study excludes anyone who did not complete their scholarship.

3.5 Data collection

The Facility piloted all Case Study instruments with Australia Awards alumni who resided in Australia. This process validated the instruments and adaptations to questions were made. In addition, an interview guide template for researchers to record all data collected was developed and utilised. Following a review of Year 1 Case Study data, questions were adjusted for clarity.

This Case Study was conducted by Ms Amanda Taylor and Ms Jennie Chainey, core Facility and Research Pool staff who bring relevant expertise in qualitative research and international development. Case Study researchers worked together to undertake data collection and report writing: one conducted the interview and the other recorded and took notes. This enabled high-quality reliable data to be

gathered. At the conclusion of interviews, the researchers discussed and verified the data to ensure completeness and accuracy.

3.6 Process

The Case Study field research was undertaken in Solomon Islands from 19 February to 1 March 2018. Two interviews were conducted via telephone due to unforeseen circumstances and issues with availability. The Case Study researchers were scheduled to fly to Gizo on Friday 23 February 2018 to interview a regional alum. On 22 February 2018, a security issue occurred in Gizo with the advice provided by the local alum to not travel. The second alum, a paediatric clinician was unable to meet in person due to work commitments.

Alumni were requested to provide their resume to researchers where available for further background information. Participants were provided with background information relating to the research and the Facility, and all provided written informed consent to their participation.

3.7 Data management and reporting

All interviews were voice recorded (with approval granted to do so). In addition, the Case Study researchers annotated responses during the interview. A transcription specialist transcribed all interview recordings. After the completion of the interview and transcription process, the Case Study researchers consolidated the written and oral recordings into a single near-verbatim transcript (with restarting of sentences and fillers excluded).

3.8 Transcription approval and coding

Completed interview transcripts and notes were sent back to each of the Case Study participants for their review and approval, to ensure that what was recorded was correct and to provide participants with an opportunity to clarify and/or add to their transcripts.

Transcript review by participants is not consistently used in qualitative research, but was done so here as a courtesy, and to ensure the validity of the data and avoid errors. MHMS and DFAT representatives were advised at the end of the interview that they would be given this opportunity, but participation in this step was not essential to proceed with using their data as permission had already been granted. The researchers provided participants ample time to respond, and follow up requests were sent. All three of the MHMS and DFAT representatives provided feedback on the transcripts, offering minor edits and clarifications of names.

Interview scripts were subsequently coded in accordance with the research questions and propositions using the qualitative research computer software, NVivo. This enabled emerging themes to be identified and links to be made between participants that supported or refuted the research propositions.

Analysis of the Case Study data involved a strategy that was guided by the theoretical propositions developed under the conceptual framework for the Case Study and by the techniques identified in the Facility's Case Study Approach

document. Researchers used analytic techniques such as pattern matching and explanation building to explore all the evidence, and show adequate concern for exploring alternative interpretations.

3.9 Limitations

There were a number of limitations to this research that were inherent to both the nature of the research and the research process, as discussed below.

3.9.1 Positive response bias

It is probable that alumni who felt that they had a positive experience as an Australian Government scholarship recipient and/or had success in their career following their award are more likely to agree to participate in Case Studies. In a study by the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the UK, 'A study of research methodology used in evaluations of international scholarship schemes for higher education' (Mawer, 2014) recognition of positive response bias is highlighted:

...there is widespread recognition that a more pressing problem is nonresponse bias in which those who reply to sample surveys are likely to be engaged with alumni associations or tracing (e.g. Day, Stackhouse and Geddes, 2009) and disproportionately represent the 'successful' outcomes of scholarship programmes. (Mawer, 2014)

Accordingly, it is likely that the alumni in the Solomon Islands Case Study had a positive bias towards their experience, outcomes and views of Australia. The Facility has developed interview questions and analyses approaches to reduce the impact of this bias – these are applied consistently across all Case Studies. Through this approach, leading questions are avoided and alumni are offered opportunities to reflect on their outcomes at the beginning and at the end of the interview without specific questions to guide their answers.

3.9.2 Nature of the research

Outcome 1 of the Global Strategy is that 'alumni are using the skills, knowledge and networks gained on-award to contribute to achieving partner-country development goals'. However, some alumni have shaped development goals rather than contributed to them, and while it may be outside the purview of partner-country development goals that this research is being evaluated against, such contributions are still significant.

The Case Study researchers experienced difficulty in evaluating Outcome 2 'alumni are contributing to cooperation between Australia and partner countries', and Outcome 3 'effective, mutually advantageous partnerships between institutions and business [have been developed] in Australia and partner countries'. These two outcomes are aligned with the second research question for the Case Study 'How are Australia Awards contributing to Australia's economic and public diplomacy outcomes?' There is an overlap and difficulty in differentiating 'cooperation' and 'partnerships'. The research team delineated them by determining that Outcome 2 relates to people-to-people links including informal relationships; whereas Outcome 3 specifically relates to institutional links between the partner-country and Australia, which alumni have contributed to establishing.

The research team encountered no issues in collecting, collating, coding or analysing data related to Outcome 4 of the Australia Awards.

3.9.3 Research process

The ability to code the interview transcripts effectively was dependent on understanding the partner-country development goals, which was not always possible. Researchers involved in the Case Study made concerted attempts to identify relevant secondary data such as policy documents, papers, books and digital resources to provide background and insight into development plans, policies and changes over the time span of 2006 – 2010, the years of focus for Year 2 when these alumni completed their scholarship.

4. Development Outcomes

Summary findings

Alumni have made significant contributions to the development and improvement of health policy and practice in Solomon Islands. Alumni developed a broad range of skills on-award which they have utilised on return. These skills include specific health-related expertise, and broader skills such as communication, critical thinking, and leadership.

Examples of **contributions to development** include:

- leadership in a broad range of areas within the health sector
- knowledge sharing within the workplace and in the wider community
- contributions to national policy and improved practices in health.

Key enabling factors

Alumni identified the following factors which enabled them to use their new skills and knowledge gained from their scholarship:

- their exposure to a different culture and the confidence gained while on-award
- strong support from employers and colleagues
- self-motivation and high calibre of the alumni themselves.

Key challenging factors

Alumni highlight that challenges they have faced in making further contributions include:

- the under-resourcing of the health sector
- limited employment opportunities and succession planning
- cultural barriers especially in relation to time management.

4.1 Background

The health sector in Solomon Islands is characterised by its highly dispersed and rural population, and significant financial and human resource constraints affecting its ability to provide quality care and universal health coverage effectively.

Communicable diseases such as dengue fever and other vector-borne diseases are present and have a substantial impact on mortality rates in the country. Access to water and sanitation and contraceptives are key health issues, as are diseases relating increasing sedentary lifestyles, changing diets, and increased use of tobacco and alcohol (Hodge, Slayer and Skiller 2015).

Commitment and involvement in the health sector in Solomon Islands have been a key and enduring priority of the Australian Government. During the period of focus for this Case Study, 2006 to 2010, AusAID (now DFAT) in partnership with the Government of Solomon Islands established the Health Sector Support Program (HSSP) which commenced in 2007. The establishment of the HSSP was noted at the time by AusAID as a significant achievement in improving the health sector: 'Policy, strategic and administrative frameworks and procedures for implementing this sector-wide program are complex, and their development represents a major achievement' (AusAID, 2007, p. 5). The HSSP is guided by the priorities outlined in the National Health Strategic Plan 2016 – 2020. The plan sets Four Key Result Areas to achieve the identified priority objectives to improve child and maternal health outcomes, address communicable diseases, and response to noncommunicable diseases:

1. Improve service coverage
2. Build strong partnerships
3. Improve service quality
4. Lay the foundation for the future – strengthening human resource capacity and infrastructure.

With this contextual background, this chapter explores the development impact made by Australian Government scholarship and fellowship alumni who graduated in the field of health between 2006 and 2010.

The analysis and discussion of this chapter offer specific reference to Australia Awards long-term Outcome 1: 'Alumni are using their skills, knowledge and networks to contribute to sustainable development'. From this outcome the following propositions are explored:

- alumni develop skills, knowledge and networks on-award that enable and are used to contribute to achieving partner-country development goals
- alumni understand, value and want to contribute to partner-country development goals.

In relation to these propositions, the alumni involved in this Case Study have provided strong evidence of contributions towards the support of country development, especially within the health sector.

4.2 Skills developed on-award

Within this chapter are examples of a range of skills that alumni developed while on their scholarship or fellowship that they have been able to utilise on their return from Australia. While these skills are implicit throughout the analysis that follows, a list of skills identified by the alumni, their colleagues and/or employers is provided here to highlight the depth in knowledge gained and application of skills the awards offered alumni.

Generic/broad/'soft' skills developed include:

- communication

- leadership skills
- critical thinking
- transferability/flexibility

Areas in which *practical/technical/'hard'* skills were developed include:

- policy development
- research techniques
- conflict resolution
- financial management
- project management
- postgraduate supervision
- diagnosis testing (using laboratory instrumentation)

4.3 Alumni contributions

Alumni in this Case Study have made a number of significant contributions to the development and sustainability of the health sector in Solomon Islands. In the sections below, key examples of impact are described. These impacts are articulated in three key areas: Leadership in health; Knowledge sharing; and Contribution to health policy.

4.3.1 Leadership in health

The alumni involved in this Case Study have become leaders in Solomon Island health sector in the decade or so since they returned from their award. Each alum in their own way has offered guidance, structure and vision to the development in their niche areas of health. The contributions of the Australia Awards to leadership in health was neatly encapsulated by Mr George Pego the Human Resources Manager of the Ministry of Health:

'Australians Government scholarship recipients in the Ministry of Health are visible. Most of the recipients are currently taken on leadership roles in most of the divisions and the Ministry' Senior Executives and therefore are very influential. This has added significant value to the Ministry's overall performance as a clear representation and influence of the Australian expertise and scholarship opportunity.'

Among the alumni involved in this Case Study, **Ms Dolores Devesi**, who is now the Oxfam Country Director for Solomon Islands, has been instrumental in leading the development of advocacy, support and education relating to HIV and AIDS. According to a colleague, the work Ms Devesi undertook when she returned from her award helped to highlight her leadership potential. Ms Devesi went on to become Country Representative, then Pacific Program Manager for Oxfam New Zealand. A decade later, when the role of Country Director for Oxfam Solomon Islands came up, Ms Devesi was seen as a highly desirable candidate for this important position, not just among the leaders of Oxfam, but also among those who she now leads who nominated her for the role.

Likewise, **Dr Titus Nasi**, who is currently Head of Paediatrics at the National Referral Hospital, identifies his award as a key pillar in his development as a leader in his field. Studying an International Postgraduate Paediatric Certificate at The Children's Hospital at Westmead and the University of Sydney, he learned skills in mentoring and supervising undergraduate and postgraduate students. Since his return from award in 2009, Dr Nasi has set about developing the skills of other Solomon Islanders through formal training programs to successfully build a team of paediatrics specialist nurses and doctors.

Other strong examples of leadership in the health sector include the position of **Dr Gregory Jilini**, who has a significant role as the Under-Secretary of Health Care at MHMS. In addition, **Ms Sanneth Talo**, who before retirement in 2017 was integral in her position as Registrar of the Solomon Islands Nursing Council. Ms Talo's former supervisor highlighted the role that her fellowship played in her development as a leader: '[Her fellowship] was targeted towards leadership...Her leadership, her way of doing things in terms of leadership has improved, especially managing...and also guiding.'

Further examples of leadership displayed by alumni are illustrated through discussion in the next parts of this chapter and in other sections of this report.

4.3.2 Knowledge sharing

A strong theme of 'sharing' was prominent throughout the interviews with alumni, colleagues and stakeholders in this Case Study. Alumni are sharing the knowledge and skills that they developed on-award in various ways – both through formal training as well as informal mentoring and leading by example. Contributions in both these aspects – the formal and informal – are discussed below.

Formal upskilling

Alumni have led the improvement of practice and policy within health in Solomon Islands through a range of initiatives that have been adopted within their various workplaces. For example, **Ms Brenda Lauri**'i has trained colleagues in her diagnostics laboratory over the years since she returned from Australia in everything from how to disinfect things correctly, to venepuncture. She specifically highlighted techniques she learned in Australia for applying genetic testing to the identification of dengue: 'at the moment, we have a machine that can [do these tests] for dengue...So I have to train my colleagues on how to run dengue PCR (Polymerase Chain Reaction) with that machine.'

Ms Lauri's sharing of knowledge in the workplace also extends beyond the lab:

'I pass on knowledge to the doctors. With different tests some of the doctors would come and ask, "What if we do this and results are this, what would you say or what would you suggest?" So, we talk about the results, we communicate. I share my knowledge with not only my workmates but also the physicians and other professions too.'

Dr Steve Amanau, CEO of the National Referral Hospital, reinforced this, highlighting that alumni from the Australia Awards bring back 'higher levels of competency with technology and equipment, and the skills to teach' others how to use the equipment that the hospital has.

Another alumnus, Dr Nasi has himself been pivotal in the development of a number of formal qualifications and professional development opportunities in paediatrics that has enabled him to build a unit specialising in this area. Dr Nasi has overseen a steady trajectory in training and capabilities in the past decade: 'We have gone from looking after undergraduates and now we are supervising the master's programs from here, instead of sending the doctors overseas for training.' He credits the links he has with Australia through his award as being fundamental in equipping him with the skills and knowledge to build these qualifications and develop the capacity of his area of health.

Others have key roles in training programs which embed new skills within the health profession of Solomon Islands. For example, **Dr Ellison Vane** runs dental internships in the rural areas of Solomon Islands. As part of this internship, junior dentists are introduced to a range of rural practices, while also developing a research project. Dr Vane's employer, Dr Loreen Oti (Director of Dental Health Services for MHMS) highlighted how he 'guides them through the research, what topics and how they should do it, and takes them to the ethics committee'.

Informal knowledge sharing

As noted earlier, alumni are leaders in their workplaces and communities. Through this leadership, they are sharing knowledge beyond the specific technical health-related skills that were the focus of their training. One particular example of this was provided by **Mrs Hensylln Mabo Pwe'a Boseto**. Mrs Boseto undertook her Australian Development Scholarship in Occupational Therapy, and while not being able to work in this area on return, she has drawn extensively on other elements of her training in Australia to contribute significantly to Solomon Islands. Mrs Boseto is currently involved in an 'integrated aquaculture project', teaming with the Queensland University of Technology.

Her contribution to knowledge sharing has come through passing on skills to local tribes who are impacted by climate change and are considering new approaches to agriculture and their way of living. Mrs Boseto described drawing on clinical skills such as 'communication', and 'conflict resolution' that she learned while on-award, a contribution towards participatory development. In other words, to inform, enable and empower local tribes in negotiating threats of climate change and potential opportunities for the future.

4.3.3 Contributions to health policy

Alumni involved in the Case Study provided a range of examples of policy contribution and influence. The examples highlighted below are indicative of the key role played by these alumni in the health sector in Solomon Islands, and complement the discussions above about leadership in this field. Three specific examples stand out from the interviews, and each offer insight into the innovation of alumni and relied on the application of the knowledge and skills they gained through their award.

Ms Devesi helped to establish a range of policies and practices relating to approaches toward HIV. Ms Devesi noted that from her time in Australia the course she undertook built her 'understanding of the rights of people affected by HIV'. On her return, she was able to lobby for and establish two sites for HIV counselling

services. These sites support people in the process of being tested for HIV. The service offered:

‘Counselling first before they give their consent, and then when the HIV test is done, they come back and go through counselling again...You could say it is psychological, but also just about preparing them beforehand on what the outcomes might be and then being able to then refer them and make them aware of what other services are available if they tested negative or positive’.

Prior to this, support of this type was non-existent in Solomon Islands. The expertise Ms Devesi gained during her time in Australia equipped her with the policy background to shift perceptions within the Ministry of Health and convince others of the importance of this policy initiative.

‘It was a long time coming, but I think [it helped] being able to know how to influence the Ministry of Health. I came back [from Australia] equipped with some more terminology that I was able to use in the negotiations and discussions at the AIDS Council level as well.’

Dr Jilini’s role in the Ministry of Health places him at the heart of health policy in Solomon Islands. Identifying the contributions of his training and prior work experience, Dr Jilini has risen to a level of influence within the Ministry where he is able to contribute to the development of health policies. He is currently involved in a reform in the Ministry of Health focussed around restructuring roles and program delivery by the Ministry: ‘The Role Delineation Policy will redefine the level of services and health facilities in the country...My involvement is on the provincial structure...For me, that’s an exciting development.’ The Role Delineation Policy is a comprehensive policy supporting the delivery of universal health coverage. It defines the range and level of services to be delivered to given populations across Solomon Islands, and will assist in achieving the defined Key Result Area – Improve Service Coverage outlined in the National Health Strategic Plan 2016 – 2020 (Solomon Islands Government 2016).

The Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Health, Dr Tenneth Dalipanda, described the change in approach that came from Dr Jilini’s experience in Australia, emphasising that the skills he gained on-award have benefited the Ministry. ‘Before [going to Australia] you think of your division...now [after award] he is thinking “Ministry”...much more strategic...Dr Jinini is chairman of the Reorganisation Committee...and plays a big role with experience in the province, charting the course for how we move.’

Similarly, Ms Talo has been a key figure in building the quality of nursing in Solomon Islands, through her role as registrar of the Nursing Council – a position she held for a decade prior to retirement in 2017. During this time, she used her knowledge and skills to develop policies and procedures for nursing to improve efficiencies and the quality of care in Solomon Islands. Her supervisor Michael Lariu highlighted this achievement: ‘One of the benefits [from the award] I saw in her was the improvement of development of annual operational plans.’ Another specific policy contribution of Ms Talo was the development of the national Nursing Regulations in 2017 – a set of policies which align Solomon Islands with international standards in the certification and ongoing development of the nursing profession.

4.4 Enabling factors

As highlighted in this chapter, alumni have been able to make a range of significant contributions to Solomon Islands' health system in the years following their scholarship. Throughout the interviews, a number of key factors were identified that have helped facilitate these contributions. They are outlined here and relate to the transformative nature of their Australian experience, support received in the workplace, and the fact that these alumni are high calibre motivated individuals with natural leadership abilities.

4.4.1 Benefits of a transformative experience

Alumni in the interviews consistently emphasised the 'transformative' experience that came from their time in Australia on-award. This experience offered many new skills as demonstrated above. However, it also exposed alumni to a new culture and ways of thinking – as Ms Talo explained, before going on-award 'I tended to think that what I know is the only thing that is there'.

Dr Vane found the broadening of his perspective important for his work, with his mindset changing from 'just looking at the person sitting in the [dentist] chair' to thinking about how to 'plan services for the whole' with 'all people having equal rights to access oral care'. This broadened knowledge of approaches in oral health and instilled confidence in Dr Vane to communicate these ideas to improve dental training and practices and advocate for a focus on prevention in addition to treatment.

Exposure to a different culture was also seen as important by alumni. This exposure was not necessarily something taught through their classes; it was an aspect of being somewhere *different*. Dr Jilini noted the simplicity of this – 'I think I learnt a lot by just being there and seeing places and meeting people.' Specific examples of the kind of cultural change that has impacted the way alumni now work include being conscious of what Dr Vane explained as '*Pacific Ways*', realising that 'time doesn't wait for you' and that 'you have to set timeframes to accomplish a task'. Ms Lauri'i and Ms Devesi made similar comments in this regard.

The alumni also highlighted that this exposure built their self-confidence. They noted that this confidence came as a result of having to live independently while in Australia (Ms Lauri'i), from having completed a qualification or course that was high quality (Ms Devesi), and through successfully navigating an experience that was challenging both intellectually as well as logistically (Ms Talo). This confidence has clearly been a factor in the ability of alumni to make an impact on return. Ms Talo said, 'I learnt that my role here is important, I have got the power and authority...I am more confident and recognise who to talk to', and as noted above, was able to use this power to make a substantial contribution to nursing in Solomon Islands.

4.4.2 Workplace support

Alumni found that support from their employers both prior to their award and on returning home, enabled them to utilise the skills and knowledge gained in Australia effectively. For example, Ms Devesi was very thankful to her employer, Oxfam, and its 'continuous support', noting that the organisation 'provided an enabling environment for me to put in place some of the things I had learned, also

being supportive in my leadership role at the time'. For those who worked in the Ministry of Health, planning prior to returning to their department made a big difference too, with Dr Vane noting that his reintegration was specifically embedded in the staff development plan for the dental services.

Support from peers and colleagues in the workplace was also mentioned as a factor assisting alumni in contributing on return from Australia. Mr Pego, from the Ministry of Health, described a camaraderie amongst the scholarship and fellowship alumni in the Ministry (he estimated 15 to 20 alumni). These alumni in the Ministry 'support each other, talking, sharing their thoughts about what is happening in the Ministry within their respective areas of work', as a result, alumni are able to contribute in their roles more effectively.

4.4.3 High calibre candidates

The alumni in this Case Study are incredible people. Their scholarships and fellowships helped them become more effective in making a contribution, but it is important to recognise that individually they were selected for an award because they stand-out as exemplary in their field or studies. From insights shared in the Case Study interviews, the high self-motivation of alumni contributed to their initial selection and their successes on-award, and enabled them to flourish on returning to Solomon Islands. As noted by Ms Debbie Sade and Ms Leah Horsfall at the Australian High Commission: 'we are the beneficiaries of someone who has worked hard and has some really admirable attributes...[the Australia Awards] just tries to help them on their way.'

4.5 Challenging factors

4.5.1 Resourcing constraints

Health is a resource-constrained sector. Alumni in this Case Study working in the healthcare system identified the following factors which have constrained their ability to further contributions to their areas of work. These constraints include:

- *Facilities* – for example, Ms Lauri'i shared that the newer technical equipment she was taught in Australia is not available in the laboratory that she now works in, and the dismantling of a dental clinic was highlighted as a constraint by Dr Vane's supervisor, Dr Oti.
- *Limited funding for training opportunities* – also highlighted by Dr Oti who viewed continued professional development to be a necessity in healthcare to ensure staff remain current in their skills and knowledge.
- The inability of the system to consider *broadening areas of healthcare* – for example, a lack of ability to expand into Occupational Therapy meant that Mrs Boseto was not able to work in the field in which she undertook her training.
- *Human resources constraints* – Ms Talo's position of Registrar of the Nursing Council remains to be filled following her retirement in late 2017 (at time of interview – February 2018). 'It is sad to say that I retired last year and am still waiting for somebody to come here [and replace me]'. This lack of

succession planning to pass on her skills and knowledge prior to leaving can affect long-term sustainability.

4.5.2 Lack of opportunities in some workplaces

For some alumni, the barriers to overcome when they returned home related to circumstances within their workplace. Mrs Boseto found that there were fewer work opportunities in her hometown of Giza compared to those in Honiara. She was unable to accept work in Honiara because she did not want to leave her family and saw this as a missed opportunity to share her knowledge and skills.

4.5.3 'Pacific time'

As discussed earlier, alumni spoke about the issue of 'Pacific time' or 'Island time' as a frustration factor in getting things done in Solomon Islands, sharing that:

'People just take their time. In Australia, everything is efficient. You have to be on time. When you come back to the Solomons, it's like, "Hmm," so then you kind of slack off and just take your time too.'

While the Australian experience helped many alumni approach their work differently when they returned, the prevailing culture in the workplace requires some readjustment to the pace of their workplace. Greater exposure to different workplace practices was recommended as a way to improve efficiency.

5. Economic and public diplomacy outcomes

Summary findings

Australia and Solomon Islands have a strong history of collaboration and partnership, reflected here through examples provided by alumni and their colleagues in this Case Study. Key examples in this chapter include links with Rotary in Australia for the renovation of dental facilities, and collaboration with university partners on research supervision and publications. All alumni in this Case Study described a link they have with Australia. However, there are relatively few examples of ongoing professional networks, collaborations or institutional partnerships with Australia, suggesting partial achievement of Australia Awards long-term Outcomes 2 and 3.

Alumni in this Case Study describe the following factors as supporting their ability to maintain their connections with Australia and to work with Australian counterparts in Solomon Islands:

- Australian interest in connecting with and supporting alumni
- developing cross-cultural communication skills
- the use of technology to maintain links
- individual personality traits.

Alumni identified the following factors as challenges which made it difficult to develop or maintain networks with Australia:

- lack of opportunity on-award to build professional networks
- a tendency to socialise with international students rather than local students while on-award
- maintaining relationships is time intensive.

5.1 Introduction

Australia has active and busy networks with Solomon Islands including partnerships with DFAT, Australian organisations and institutions, and international organisations such as the World Health Organisation (WHO). This results in exposure to Australia, Australians and Australian expertise in the community and the workplace in Solomon Islands.

This chapter describes how alumni have contributed to Australia Awards long-term Outcome 2 'cooperation between Australia and Solomon Islands', and to Australia Awards long-term Outcome 3 'establish effective, mutually advantageous partnerships between institutions and/or businesses in Solomon Islands and institutions and/or businesses in Australia'.

The Australia Awards Global Monitoring and Evaluation Framework describes activities under these outcomes as facilitating business or trade links, participating in international or regional bodies, or advocating the relationship (e.g. promoting study in Australia).

Australia Awards fellowships are specifically intended to support connections between governments, businesses, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in partner countries and Australia. This is due to their 'tailored approach to skills development' (DFAT 2016) which may include opportunities to network, or undertake internships or work placements.

One of the implied on-award activities underpinning achievement of Australia Awards long-term Outcomes 2 and 3 is that award recipients get the opportunity to make contact with Australian organisations while studying in Australia. This chapter explores this and other assumptions and describes the achievements of alumni in contributing to Australia Awards long-term Outcomes 2 and 3.

Two alumni in this Case Study shared examples of significant ongoing links with Australians and Australian organisations as a result of their time in Australia on-award. These limited examples and the challenges described in by alumni in making links in Australia indicate **partial achievement of Australia Awards long-term Outcomes 2 and 3**. Each of the alumni interviewed has some form of relationship developed through their award, and while not always aligned with the long-term outcomes, these relationships are nonetheless significant. These links include friendships with fellow students, inactive university alumni membership, and working with Australian volunteers, consultants and advisors in Solomon Islands.

5.2 Background

Australia's bilateral relationship with Solomon Islands is "deep and longstanding". As an important economic partner with people-to-people and business links growing steadily and an estimated 1,500 Australians living in Solomon Islands, Australia has a significant presence in the country. The Australian Government also provides support for people to people links through the Australia Awards and the Australian Volunteers program. The Australian Volunteers program promotes economic growth and poverty reduction in the Indo-Pacific region through volunteer placements for Australians with host organisations (DFAT 2018).

In the financial year 2015 to 2016, Australia's people to people links in Solomon Islands included 101 Australian Volunteers in Solomon Islands, 79 New Colombo Plan participants, and 10,800 visitors. There were also 132 Solomon Islander students in Australia, 33 recipients of Australia Awards scholarships, and 7,200 Solomon Islander visitors to Australia (DFAT 2017).

In the health sector, Australia is the lead donor amongst a group of sixteen development partners who have aligned their support with Solomon Islands National Health Strategic Plan 2016-2020 and the sector-wide approach to the delivery of health services. Australia provides bilateral assistance through the Health Sector Support Program now in its third phase (HSSP3). The goal of the

program is to improve the access and quality of universal health care in Solomon Islands (Specialist Health Service, 2017).

The significant presence of Australia in Solomon Islands is reflected by the stakeholder participants in this Case Study who identified Australia as a key development partner in Solomon Islands. In particular, Dr Aumanu, CEO of National Referral Hospital described a productive network the hospital has with Australia through DFAT and other non-governmental organisations through which Australian specialists, advisors, and volunteers have provided capacity building, training, and skills exchange.

5.3 Examples of bilateral collaboration and institutional links

Both employers of alumni and DFAT recognise links with Australia as a significant outcome of the Australia Awards in contributing to the achievement of partner-country development goals. This section outlines examples of alumni contribution to bilateral collaboration and institutional links developed as a result of their Australian Government scholarship.

5.3.1 Contribution to ongoing individual professional development

Three alumni in this Case Study have described maintaining links with their former university supervisors, fellow students or university departments who have provided opportunities for ongoing professional development.

Dr Nasi has developed strong links with Australia at both an individual and institutional level. He partnered with the Centre for International Child Health (CICH) at the University of Melbourne to develop a Bachelor of Child Health Nursing in Solomon Islands. In addition to this, he collaborates with colleagues in Australia to support undergraduate and postgraduate students undertake research projects. Dr Nasi's networks have been built over an extended period, and are a combination of multiple opportunities he has had to work and study in and with Australians. He worked in Australia for two years in 1999 to 2000, gained a short-course award in 2009 (the focus of this Case Study), and then an Australia Leadership Award scholarship in 2011.

Mrs Boseto is still in contact with her honours thesis supervisor Ms Marion Gray, who encouraged Mrs Boseto to publish her thesis and is contributing as joint author. As a result, they have collaborated on a submission which is currently in press with the International Journal of Health Research and examines the role of occupational therapy in Solomon Islands. This has provided Mrs Boseto with an opportunity to share her expertise in a new area of practice in the country. Ms Boseto also sees maintaining a professional network as vital to her professional development, sharing "It was very helpful to keep in contact with my supervisor because now she still has an interest."

Dr Vane, in addition to his network with Australia dental suppliers, has also maintained his network with the students from his Master of Dental Science course at the University of Sydney. Together they have formed an alumni network to share ideas. Dr Vane has also developed and maintained links with Australian dental organisations where he learns of opportunities to receive funding to attend conferences in Australia.

5.3.2 Contribution to accessing resources

The health sector in Solomon Islands is significantly resource constrained, and as noted in the previous chapter, both alumni and their supervisors identify this as a barrier in the workplace.

One alum, Dr Vane discussed how he was able to build professional networks through university organised conferences sponsored by local companies and dental professionals. During these conferences, he was able to make connections with medical suppliers – enabling easier access to equipment and materials to assist him in his role as Head of Community Dental Services at National Referral Hospital.

A particular achievement highlighted by Dr Vane was being able to use his links with fellow students to connect with an Australian Rotary group to undertake a project to renovate a building for a dental clinic at the hospital for the Oral Health Department. According to his supervisor, Dr Oti, the department had been in need of a new dental clinic since 2011.

5.4 Key enabling factors

Factors that have enabled alumni to make these connections include the ongoing interest of Australians in supporting development in Solomon Islands, cross-cultural communication skills developed on-award, new digital technologies and the enthusiasm and effort of alumni themselves in seeking and maintain links.

5.4.1 Australian interest in connecting with and supporting alumni

Two alumni in this Case Study have developed strong ties with their Australian lecturers as a result of mutual interest in working together.

Mrs Boseto explained that her continued link with her honours thesis supervisor is a result of their interest in working with her to produce a journal article for joint publication.

For Dr Nasi, meeting a receptive and supportive Australian lecturer while undertaking his undergraduate and postgraduate medical degrees at the University of Papua New Guinea has resulted in an enduring professional network that has linked Dr Nasi with hospitals in Australia. Dr Nasi points to his Australian lecturer, Professor Trevor Duke as being the key factor that has enabled his relationships with Australia to be long-lasting:

I think probably meeting up with Trevor [is a factor that has helped me]. He is somebody who is willing to give up his time and effort, and even at times meet his costs to cover costs, and receive me and do things.

5.4.2 Developing cross-cultural communication skills

Two alumni suggested that their development of cross-cultural communication skills while on-award enhanced their ability to engage and work effectively with Australian counterparts.

Ms Talo explained that as a result of her two-week course ‘Strengthening Leadership in Midwives and Nurses’ she developed greater confidence in her ability to talk with Australians. Ms Talo pointed to this confidence in her

communication skills as an asset when she worked with an Australian volunteer to complete a project.

Permanent Secretary Dr Dalipanda observed the strong communication skills Dr Jilini utilises when working with international advisors, and noted the positive feedback received from advisors working with Dr Jilini. Permanent Secretary Dr Dalipanda saw that these skills are different from those who have not been exposed to learning and working with Australians and other international staff.

5.4.3 The use of technology to maintain links

One alumna mentioned using social media to maintain their networks made on-award. Ms Lauri'i discussed how she utilises Facebook with friends to chat and update each other on their lives and work. With social media and the internet providing an accessible and immediate way to contact people, links may not fade as quickly, a challenge shared by alumni in the Facility Case Studies focusing on Australian Government scholarship graduates from earlier cohorts.

However, there are limitations regarding accessible and reliable internet and phone service in Solomon Islands. Dr Nasi noted that technology is a barrier for him in networking with Australian counterparts, "My biggest challenge is coping with the limited services available here in terms of the internet."

5.4.4 Individual personality traits

Networking itself is a skill and can be an activity dependent on individual preferences. One alum described their shyness as a barrier to building links with fellow students. In contrast, Dr Vane shared the opportunities he undertook to create professional networks while on-award in Australia. Dr Oti observed Dr Vane's diverse range of networks with Australia, including NGOs, fellow students, suppliers, and professional organisations to be the result of his personality. Commenting on his strong networks, Dr Oti said:

He likes doing that, liaising or getting in contact with the overseas counterparts on our behalf. He is quite good in that. [So] I encourage him to do this.

5.5 Key challenging factors

Alumni in this Case Study identified a number of factors that made it challenging for them to build and maintain networks with Australians and Australian organisations. These include the limited opportunity to make connections while on-award and the immense energy that maintaining connections requires.

5.5.1 Lack of opportunity on-award to make professional networks

The connections most commonly developed by alumni during their award were with other international students from their course. Many alumni did not develop professional networks with Australian organisations and institutions.

The constraint for some was that their course was very short (some as short as two weeks) and this didn't allow time to embed relationships.

For others, there were no opportunities for professional connections built into their courses. One alum who had studied an undergraduate degree noted that there are limited opportunities to undertake work experience, which would have increased

chances for making connections. Through work experience, internships and attachments, Australia Awards scholars would benefit from building professional networks and extending their learning through practical application thereby enhancing their ability to apply new skills and knowledge post-award. Mr Pego, HR Manager for MHMS also identifies work attachments on-award as an opportunity to contribute to the achieving these outputs, stating if there were more:

This will provide scholars with the opportunity to apply the new knowledge to the reality and also begin to generate this important relationship with relevant organisation and professions.

5.5.2 Alumni tend to socialise with other international students

Three alumni in this Case Study said that during their award they tended to socialise with other international students, usually those from the Pacific region, Asia and Africa. One alum specifically identified making friends with Australians to be more challenging. Another alum explained that being the introverted individual, they did make a few Australian friends, but mostly socialised with others from the Pacific Islands or Africa. The Australian High Commission in Solomon Islands recognises that more could be done on-award to help connect Australia Awards scholars with Australians. The impermanent nature of a scholar's stay in Australia is also identified to be a potential barrier to making friends with Australian students who are likely attending university with friends.

A proposed solution by the Australian High Commission to strengthen on-award engagement include homestays or a sister relationship with locals who can show Australia Awards scholars around their local areas. It is suggested that local volunteers could be the vehicle for extending this friendship.

5.5.3 Maintaining relationships is time intensive

Despite the success Dr Nasi has experienced in building links, he emphasised in his interview that relationship maintenance is a difficult task. He noted that in addition to the challenge of limited phone and internet service, limited time is also a challenge:

We've been thinking about organising travel around the Pacific Basin, and it's difficult for me to do it from here. It was difficult for one person to look after things and then leave the place and come down.

Strong partnerships and relationships are a time-intensive activity, requiring time to build and embed within an institution or organisation. With alumni typically returning home after their award to positions of leadership, the time needed to invest in relationships with Australians and Australian organisations – if not a core function of their role – may be limited. As a result, this barrier may undermine the long-term sustainability of networks and links with Australians and Australian organisations.

5.6 Recommendations for alumni engagement to support ongoing links with Australia

The Australia Awards in Solomon Islands are strengthening alumni engagement to ensure alumni remain connected with Australia and with fellow alumni over the course of their careers. With the alumni association, SIAAA, gathering momentum

in consolidating their presence in the country, there is significant potential for a strong cohort of alumni to support networking and building relationships with Australians and Australian organisations.

Both the Australian High Commissioner and Deputy High Commissioner actively support the focus on alumni engagement. Over the course of 2017, this focus has resulted in the funding of a part-time staff member to support SIAAA, an active Facebook page, and frequent events hosted throughout the year. The Australian High Commission also engages alumni to participate in events and talks, to help extend the ongoing connection with Australia.

In addition to this, two supervisors in this Case Study provided recommendations to increase opportunities to strengthen institutional links between Australia and Solomon Islands. Dr Oti suggested an exchange for lecturers of Australia Awards scholars to visit to understand the Solomon Islands context, and opportunities for alumni to attend conferences in Australia to support the continuous professional development and maintaining links with Australia. Permanent Secretary of MHMS Dr Dalipanda similarly suggested ongoing professional engagement with alumni to maintain and increase links. Particularly with those who are now at more senior levels, such as undersecretaries, to collaborate with Australian organisations and institutions to develop workshops or conduct joint research.

The Solomon Islands Australia Alumni Association (SIAAA)

About the association

The Solomon Islands Australia Alumni Association (SIAAA) is a local body supported by the Australian High Commission. Six elected alumni managed the association's governance: the president, vice president, secretary, treasurer and two member representatives. All Australian Government scholarship and fellowship alumni and Solomon Islander graduates of Australian institutions are automatically given membership to SIAAA. The purpose of this broad membership qualification is to build a strong community of Solomon Islanders that have links with Australia or with Australian scholarships.

SIAAA secretary Ms Natalina Hong describes the purpose of the association as enabling alumni to maintain their links with Australia. Raising awareness of the association.

Achievements and challenges

With volunteer-run organisations, a key challenge is often the limited time volunteers can contribute. Ms Hong identifies DFAT funded part-time secretary, Ms Junita Ngai as a significant benefit to the management and organisation of the events. Stating that Ms Ngai's support is "one of the biggest factors that promoted the alumni association in the past two years...and helped the group to be more active".

The association provides a variety of events to enable alumni to network. Annually, SIAAA hosts a formal gala dinner, quarterly informal drinks, a family event such as a picnic, and at least one community service project. Alumni also attend pre-departure briefings for newly awarded Australia Awards scholars to share their experiences and to promote the alumni association.

Another key challenge in the development of the alumni association is identifying alumni and registering their details. Events are advertised via social media and in the local newspaper as a way of expanding their reach. Keeping track of members is also a difficulty for SIAAA due to the common practice of frequently changing emails and phone numbers in Solomon Islands. In addressing these challenges, SIAAA utilises their frequent events to register and update alumni details.

6. Views about Australia and Australian expertise

Summary findings

Alumni in the Solomon Islands Case Study hold enduring positive views about Australia, Australians and Australian expertise. The Australia Awards itself is viewed as a prestigious scholarship and valued contribution to the development of Solomon Islands.

The Australia Awards long-term Outcome 4, that 'Alumni view Australia, Australians and Australian expertise' has been achieved based on the evidence provided by alumni in this Case Study.

Alumni shared examples of **positive views of Australia and Australian expertise** as a result of their positive experiences of life and study in Australia and the support they received on-award. Furthermore, a reflection of Australia's bilateral relationship with Solomon Islands, alumni had significant prior exposure to Australians and Australian expertise which has also informed their positive views.

While alumni pointed to cultural shock and cultural differences as a barrier they experienced while adjusting to life in Australia, this did not impact their overall positive views. On-award support during the transition period may assist scholars to adjust and contribute to ensuring positive experiences of life in Australia and stronger networks with Australians.

6.1 Introduction

The Australia Awards aims to develop positive views of Australia, Australians and Australian expertise (DFAT, 2016). One element of the 'theory of change' that underpins the Australia Awards is that undertaking an Australian scholarship will result in outputs that include:

- awardees/fellows and their families have a positive experience of life in Australia
- awardees/fellows complete good quality, relevant education, training, other professional development and research activities.

It is assumed that these factors will translate to the long-term outcome of alumni viewing Australia, Australians and Australian expertise positively. This outcome, in tandem with those on skills, networks, cooperation and partnerships, will contribute to the goal of the Australia Awards that partner countries progress their development goals and have positive relationships with Australia that advance mutual interests (DFAT, 2016).

This chapter includes evidence of Solomon Islands Australia Awards alumni's views about Australia, Australians and Australian expertise based on their experiences in Australia and at Australian institutions. Their views relate to

receiving effective support, having positive experiences of life in Australia, and perception of the Australia Awards as an elite scholarship to study at internationally recognised institutions. Alumni and stakeholders also shared positive views of Australian assistance through the Australia Awards.

These perceptions shared by alumni and stakeholders demonstrate that the **Australia Awards long-term Outcome 4, 'Alumni view Australia, Australians, and Australian expertise positively', has been achieved.**

6.2 Examples of positive views of Australia and Australian expertise

All alumni in this Case Study shared positive views as a result of their time in Australia and spoke warmly of their experiences living and studying in a foreign country. In addition, the Australia Awards in Solomon Islands have a strong positive reputation for its contribution to country development and as a competitive merit-based scholarship to study at internationally recognised institutions.

6.2.1 Alumni had positive experiences of life and study in Australia

All alumni in this Case Study shared positive experiences of life and study in Australia as a result of their transformative experience studying abroad and the support provided to them while on-award. Nearly a decade on, alumni continue to recall their experience living and studying in Australia with positive memories indicating the value they have placed on their scholarship experience. The following examples contribute to the achievement of Australia Awards long-term Outcome 4.

Receiving effective support during awards from host institutions, host organisations and DFAT is identified in the theory of change (DFAT, 2016) as a key contribution to ensuring scholars and their families have a positive experience of life in Australia. Two alumni in this Case Study identified the support they received as being a positive aspect of their scholarship experience. For Dr Vane, an AusAID (now DFAT) liaison officer placed was able to arrange support for computer classes through his university to help bridge a skills gap required for his coursework. Dr Vane described receiving this support ensured that after this transition, his time studying in Australia was “all smooth sailing”.

Another alumna, Ms Lauri'i, described the reliable stipends as being an essential aspect of her time on-award:

If you had an Australian scholarship, you know that everything is paid for and you don't have to wait. There is no delay in your stipend; you won't go hungry...I think it's very efficient in making sure that [scholars are] up to date with their stipend so that they can meet their expenses to make sure that their living is easy and smooth.

Alumni described their time in Australia as a student in positive terms. When asked how she would describe Australia and Australians, Ms Lauri'i summed it up as: 'the country is very advanced and it's efficient and reliable, so very good. And the people are very friendly'. Undertaking a 6-week Australian Leadership Award fellowship, Ms Devesi describes her short-course as an 'unforgettable experience'.

Dr Jilini undertook a two year Master of Public Health degree and had similarly positive views of his time in Australia:

I completely enjoyed it...I think the whole experience to me really has been enriching and valuable, besides the training itself.

6.2.2 The Australia Awards is a prestigious scholarship

The Australia Awards scholarships and the opportunity to study in Australia is highly sought after, reflecting a positive perception of Australia and Australian expertise in Solomon Islands

The strong, positive reputation of the Australia Awards is also demonstrated by its popularity, high application rate, and the calibre and diversity of the awardees. According to DFAT First Secretary for Education in Solomon Islands Ms Horsfall:

I think that we have strong processes for reaching the high achievers and the people with potential, so the selection criteria we have, the reputation the program has, the merit focus on the program, people are very confident that it's not a nepotistic program at all. It really means something, and that has fed into the good reputation. So people are proud of being an awardee and an alumni, and so that helps fuel us in our work. I think that reputation is a huge part of attracting the right kind of applicants ...we really have the pick of the field, which means we do get the best people...Last year we got almost 800 applications...and we awarded 42 [scholarships].

Alumni in this Case Study shared sentiments reflecting that the Australia Awards are perceived to be a high performing scholarship and awarded to potential leaders. Dr Jilini, for example, described his motivation to apply for an Australian Government scholarship, stating: "Naturally you would want to study in a country and in a university that is internationally recognised". Ms Devesi, based on her fellowship experience, perceived that potential leaders were identified and provided the opportunity to build skills and expertise to then return to Solomon Islands as leaders in their field of work.

The prestige of the Australia Awards and its alumni is also reflected in the high-level positions alumni hold. Mr Pego, Human Resource Manager for MHMS, observed that alumni have a visible leadership presence in the ministry, stating that "most of the [alumni have] currently taken on leadership roles in most of the divisions and the Ministry's Senior Executives".

Ms Natalina Hong, an alumna and secretary of the Solomon Islands Australia Alumni Association also noted that the association's annual Australia Alumni Gala Dinner attracted attendance by prominent Australian institution alumni including a former prime minister, permanent secretaries and CEOs, with non-affiliated government officials also in attendance.

In addition to the prestigious reputation of Australian institutions, the Australia Awards scholarships are highly competitive as a result of a number of factors including the contribution to living expenses for study in the region and Australia. A significant opportunity as high user costs are a key barrier to accessing tertiary education in Solomon Islands.

6.2.3 Australian assistance through the Australia Awards is positively viewed

Australian assistance through the Australia Awards is positively viewed in Solomon Islands. Mr Lariu, Director of Nursing for MHMS shared his appreciative sentiments regarding the support provided through scholarships:

I also thank Australia for other long-term scholarships that have been offered. Some of our nurses are also benefiting from those courses, because in developing countries like the Solomon Islands, it's very hard to have that kind of assistance...I'm very positive about the work that Australia does, especially through the scholarship programs that they have for the [developing] countries, not just for the Solomon Islands.

Mr Pego, Human Resource Manager for the MHMS shares similarly positive views of the contributions made by alumni of the Australia Awards in high-level leadership roles in MHMS. As noted in earlier chapters, he attributes the scholarship training as contributing to the Ministry's performance, stating:

This has added significant value to the Ministry's overall performance and is a clear representation and influence of the Australian expertise and scholarship opportunity.

These views shared by the stakeholders participating in this Case Study demonstrate the broader perspective of the Australia Awards scholarships.

6.3 Enabling factors

6.3.1 Alumni had prior positive exposure to Australia

Exposure to Australia and Australians prior to their award was an influential factor for three alumni in this Case Study. As outlined in chapter five, Australia and Solomon Islands have a long history of bilateral relations with a strong presence in-country through Australian aid, Australian consultants and international non-governmental organisations (INGOs). This exposure prior to their awards appears to have provided a positive basis that their views of Australian expertise is based on.

For Ms Devesi, working with Oxfam in Solomon Islands has provided her with a number of opportunities visit Australia with the international Oxfam teams. She noted that her six-week fellowship in Sydney did not change her positive opinion of Australian expertise, stating that 'I think that it's always the same and remains the same'. Similarly, Dr Titus' points to his prior experience working at the Sydney Children's Hospital in Randwick from 2000 to 2001 as his influence in using Australian practices and expertise in his work. Dr Jilini was also working alongside Australian advisors in the Western Province before his award which he points to as an influence in how he refers to Australian expertise in his work.

6.4 Challenging factors

6.4.1 Alumni experienced culture shock

Three alumnae in this Case Study expressed experiencing culture shock which they identified as a challenge they experienced while on-award. For Ms Talo,

staying in Sydney for a two-week fellowship was 'a cultural shock...a total turnover for me. I just had to adjust and adapt to whatever is there, especially the weather'. However, despite nervous anticipation for her new experience, she also viewed the fellowship to be 'an opportunity' identified by her workplace to develop leadership skills.

Ms Lauri'i and Mrs Boseto undertook undergraduate degrees and shared similar experiences with culture shock while adapting to their multi-year stay in Australia. Coming from a community-oriented society, they encountered difficulties adjusting. In particular, Ms Lauri'i observed that Australians were less community oriented:

They could mind their own business too, all the time. People just do their jobs and you just do your own thing...Everyone just does their own stuff.

Mrs Boseto emphasised that while she found it easier to make friends with people from the Pacific or other countries such as Asia and Africa, she found it a challenge to make friends with Australians. The Australian High Commission similarly observed that on-award activities such as homestays or a sister relationship with a local volunteer could help connect scholars with Australians and to adjust to life in Australia. These activities can assist in ensuring alumni have positive experiences of life in Australia and also build relationships with Australians, two outputs identified in the theory of change to achieve long-term Outcome Two and Four (Alumni contribute to cooperation between Australia and partner countries, and alumni view Australia, Australians and Australian expertise positively).

7. Impact of Australia Awards on addressing equity issues

Summary findings

The Australia Awards in Solomon Islands balances both merit and equity to achieve the Australia Awards long-term outcomes. The impact the Australia Awards can have on gender, disability and social inclusion must therefore, be contextualised within the broader systemic issues relating to poverty and traditional cultural norms.

Access to the Australia Awards in Solomon Islands

- Gender disparity in participation in education increases through senior secondary, TVET and higher education levels (DFAT 2014). The Australian High Commission is proactive in implementing affirmative action to promote gender equality, illustrated by maintaining an equal number of women and men during the shortlisting and awarding of scholarships.
- The Australian High Commission welcomes the inclusion of people with disability in the Australia Awards. However, applicants with disability are not common, reflecting the significant systemic barriers to participation in the education system and society. These barriers relate to limited resources in education and entrenched social stigma present a major challenge for people with disability to meet scholarship eligibility requirements.
- The Australia Awards are less accessible for provincial populations, due to limited access to quality education and information about the Australia Awards. The Australian High Commission is proactive in promoting the scholarship opportunity in the provinces, undertaking outreach activities such as travel to rural communities to speak about the Australia Awards, in addition to frequent advertisements in the local newspapers.

Social equity impact of Alumni

- Alumni in this Case Study shared examples of their advocacy for gender equality in the workplace and community.
- The alumni association, SIAAA, have integrated gender equality policies in its governance, by setting a target for equal gender representation.

7.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the impact of the Australia Awards in addressing equity and disadvantage in Solomon Islands. It explores how interventions to 'address barriers to participation and provide on-award/post-award support where participation by women, people with disability and other disadvantaged members of society is low' (DFAT, 2016, p. 12).

This chapter begins by exploring the methods utilised by the Australian High Commission to support access to the Australia Awards for women, people with disability, and provincial populations. It then outlines the contributions made by alumni to promote social inclusion.

The Solomon Islands alumni sample group included three men and four women, which provided a balanced gender representation for this Case Study. The opportunity to fully investigate the impact of the Australia Awards on people with disability was limited as no alumni interviewed identified as a person with disability. However, insights were shared from the Australian High Commission and the SIAAA, and have been considered in this report.

7.2 Context

A cross-cutting objective of the Australia Awards is to positively affect and supporting gender equality, disability inclusiveness and social inclusion more broadly. This section outlines the context of gender and disability in Solomon Islands.

7.2.1 Gender

Entrenched cultural and traditional gender norms create significant challenges for women to access the same opportunities as men in Solomon Islands. Girls are disadvantaged from a young age, and this inequality progresses into the professional sphere. Ingrained in this patriarchal structure, is one of the highest rates of violence against women in the world, with 64 per cent of ever-partnered women between the ages of 15 and 49 experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a partner (Secretariat of the Pacific Community et al. 2009, p.3).

In education, Solomon Islands has improved the gender gap in enrolment in primary and lower secondary, however, this gap increases significantly through senior secondary, TVET and higher education levels (DFAT 2014). The workplace is characterised by the low rate of women in paid employment. Of all those in the workforce, only 26 per cent of women are paid compared to 88 per cent of men. Women are also underrepresented in leadership positions, with just 5 per cent of senior level public servant positions occupied by women (Asian Development Bank 2015). In parliament, of 50 representatives elected, only one is a woman.

However, there is enthusiasm that support for gender equality is beginning to gain momentum. Solomon Islands criminalised domestic violence with the passing of the Family Protection Act in 2014. Ms Hong, Secretary of SIAAA, perceived that women are becoming more aware and vocal about their right to participate in education, employment and decision-making, and men are starting to recognise women's contribution to society. Similarly, Ms Devesi shared her excitement for the work of the Young Women in Parliament Group and the inspiration she draws from them:

I always say to them, "I'm so inspired. I'm really happy to see a group of younger women being able to stand up and lead some of the work."

Gender in the health sector in Solomon Islands

The professional challenges experienced widely by women in Solomon Islands are also present within MHMS with women underrepresented at leadership levels. Human Resources Manager of MHMS, Mr Pego stated that women disproportionately hold operational roles within the health sector, but men overwhelmingly hold the leadership roles. According to Mr Pego, women are underrepresented at the higher level due to their limited participation in the workplace. He advised that from his perspective in the health sector, the major barriers for women's participation include:

- a) Cultural norms that place expectations on women to be responsible for the household and prioritise family duties over professional obligations; and
- b) Limited self-confidence to adopt leadership roles.

7.2.2 Disability

Significant institutional, physical and attitudinal barriers limit access to education and employment opportunities for people with disability in Solomon Islands. The legal framework for disability inclusion is newly emerging, demonstrated by Solomon Islands becoming a signatory to the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* in 2008. However, this framework is yet to be implemented domestically. Additionally, there is significant stigma attached to disability in Solomon Islands which limits the ability of people with disability to participate in society and contributes to an environment where people with disability often face discrimination (Equal Rights Trust 2016).

According to Ms Horsfall, the challenges caused by widespread poverty in Solomon Islands compounds the barriers experienced by people with disability. With so many competing needs and limited resources, people with disability are often not prioritised.

Attitudes toward people with disability varies across the islands, and are influenced by cultural norms, types of disability and awareness levels (Tavola & Whippy 2010). A deep-rooted paternalistic ideology persists, demonstrated by the state's application of the welfare model of disability (Equal Rights Trust 2016). According to the Australian High Commission Senior Program Manager for Health, Ms Sade, stigma is one of the most significant challenges faced by people with disability in Solomon Islands. This widespread stigma reinforces attitudes that people with disability are inherently less capable of contributing to society than able-bodied people. They are therefore often discouraged from pursuing education and leading independent lives (Tavola & Whippy 2010). Additionally, many parents in Solomon Islands hide their children due to shame, or fear of bullying. As education is not compulsory in Solomon Islands, children with disability are easily excluded from formal education (Saemane et al 2016).

According to Mr Pego, this widespread stigma also impacts the workforce participation of people with disability, because their individual needs are not considered. This limits the opportunities available to people with disability. Ms Hong advised this stigma also impacts social inclusion, as people with disability are often reluctant to disclose this: 'they won't really put that as a part of their identity... they will keep that quiet'.

7.3 Access to the Australia Awards

7.3.1 Access for women

The Australian High Commission actively supports affirmative action by maintaining an equal number of women and men from the point of assessing applicants for interview:

‘...when we have the ranking list of all of the applicants...we interview 50 per cent women, 50 per cent men. And out of the interviews, we assign 50 per cent at least to women’.

The Australian High Commission is also considering a plan to incorporate blind recruitment processes, removing gender identifying details such as names, to reduce unconscious bias further.

The Australia Awards contribution to living expenses also contributes to gender equity. While this is specifically a contribution to the individual awardee, this basic support to help alumni meant there was less pressure on their family, and in some cases, this was identified as a factor that enabled family members to accompany them while studying abroad. This was seen as particularly valuable by alumnae because leaving family can be particularly challenging for women in Solomon Islands:

‘There’s a lot of pressure in Melanesian society to support your family... be linked to your family.... So it’s a big deal...to leave the country and go elsewhere for years at a time, especially for women’.

Maintaining the family unit can enable awardees to focus on their studies, and reduce the risk of non-completion.

Gender disparities in access and participation in education are predominant in resource-constrained households. Solomon Islander families with a number of children are still faced with deciding which of their children will attend school. According to Ms Sade, boys are more likely to be given this opportunity: ‘...a good number of girls would not have a chance to go to school... boys would take priority’. Ms Horsfall added this gender disparity is less pronounced amongst affluent families who do not experience the same financial challenges as the majority of families:

‘...you’ve got a pocket of people in this country who live quite differently to the rest and are less affected by the difficult decisions that poor families might have to make... All of their kids go to school and go to good schools and finish school’.

According to Ms Horsfall, this trend continues as the children progress through to the tertiary level, demonstrated at the Australia Awards application process: ‘their daughters have a completely different life to your average girl [in Solomon Islands]...and they’re the girls who end up being interviewed’. This is evidence of an underlying socio-economic inequality, which sees women from comparatively wealthy families having easier access to educational opportunities such as the Australia Awards, compared to women in lower socio-economic demographics.

Most women in Solomon Islands experience unequal access to tertiary level education according to Asian Development Bank figures (2015), only 38 per cent of

enrolments in tertiary education are women. This disproportionate share is represented in the distribution of Solomon Islands Government scholarships which are disproportionately awarded to men. As these scholarships are the only avenue for many young people to study higher education in Solomon Islands, this is a substantial barrier for most young women to continue their education beyond secondary school.

7.3.2 Access for people with disability

People with disability face significant, systemic and cumulative barriers to accessing the Australia Awards. According to the Australian High Commission, these barriers are compounded by socio-economic factors which further prevent many people with disability from accessing quality education.

The Australian High Commission endeavours to be inclusive of people with disability and have in the past offered a small number of awards to alumni with disability. However, Ms Horsfall noted these instances are infrequent as the Australian High Commission's capacity to implement inclusive selection processes is limited due to resourcing constraints and wider systemic barriers which extend beyond the Australia Awards.

According to Ms Horsfall, there are not many people with disability who meet the Australia Awards selection criteria in Solomon Islands. Those that do '...would be probably a few lucky people who have had support that other people with disability haven't...' Widespread economic inequality and income disparity sees children with disability who are born into comparatively wealthy families having easier access to educational opportunities and other support systems which assist them in overcoming barriers. This suggests that responding to broader systemic challenges such as accessing quality educational and support services may facilitate the inclusion of people with disability to meet the Australia Awards selection criteria in the future.

7.3.3 Access for provincial populations

The Australian High Commission is currently implementing approaches to increase engagement with provincial groups. This includes publishing newspaper advertisements to promote the Australia Awards throughout the provinces, and information sessions delivered by representatives of the Australian High Commission such as the Human Development Counsellor, Ms Melissa Stutsel.

According to the Australian High Commission, most applicants and alumni are based in Honiara where there is a higher degree of privilege with greater access to quality education, work experience or extracurricular activities compared. This places provincial applicants at a disadvantage in competing for a scholarship alongside Honiara based applicants:

...they're facing an uphill battle in the provinces. If you haven't been to one of the best schools, if you don't have the support within the home, if you haven't had the opportunity to make your CV look really impressive with work or extracurricular, all the things that you could do in Honiara, it's harder for you.

This is an area in which the Australian High Commission is seeking to improve access and participation.

7.3.4 Balancing merit-based selection with equity measures

The Australia Awards seeks to 'address barriers to participation and provide on-award/post-award support where participation by women, people with disability and other disadvantaged members of society is low' (DFAT, 2016, p. 12). However, according to the Australian High Commission, balancing equity measures against merit-based selection is particularly challenging in the context of Solomon Islands. High academic achievers who do not receive a scholarship are unlikely to be able to attend tertiary education at all, due to limited opportunities and high costs.

Ms Horsfall suggested that most applicants who are unsuccessful in receiving Australian, New Zealand or Solomon Islands funded scholarships are unlikely to attend university.

According to the Australian High Commission, the Australia Awards in Solomon Islands are highly regarded as a merit-based scholarship. For the 2018 Intake, the Australian High Commission received nearly 800 applications for 42 scholarships. Ms Horsfall emphasised the importance of accessible, transparent and consistent selection criteria, to ensure all applicants understand the application process and criteria for selection:

'...we don't only look at academic, there are other criteria... we have had some really top students in the country miss out and complain to us... there's great scrutiny of who gets an Australia Award and who doesn't'.

Introduction of equity quotas to support access and participation is important but problematic. As identified by the Australian High Commission: without equity measures to address barriers to access for people with disability and rural inclusion, there is a risk that the awards will be 'replicating the old power structures'.

7.4 Social equity impact of alumni

Alumni in this Case Study shared examples of their advocacy for gender equality in the workplace and community.

One alumnus, Dr Jilini advocates for his female peers to take up leadership roles within the organisation. Another alumna, Mrs Boseto actively contributes to gender inclusive practices through her work: 'Our organisation is a local-based organisation, and so now I'm very happy to say that we probably have as many, almost an equal number of female staff compared to males'. Mrs Boseto also encourages community stakeholders to be gender inclusive:

'...we always encourage them to have as many women present... when we help the communities or the tribes, like the executive committees, we encourage them to have at least women representatives...'

The alumni association SIAAA similarly promotes women in leadership by ensuring equal gender representation, with the executive comprising of three men and three women. Ms Hong noted their surprise that this rule did not need to be enforced at their last election as the members had voted in an equal number. Ms Hong also recognised the SIAAA does not currently have a systematic approach to promoting

gender equality further but does encourage women to participate in SIAAA forums which provide a space for members to discuss current issues.

Alumnae leaders can also have an impact on their peers as role models. Ms Julia Fationo who works with Ms Devesi at Oxfam Solomon Islands shared that Ms Devesi is an inspiration to her peers as a leader:

I would say she's one of those figures where it places a leadership role, and I think a great example as a leader in Oxfam, and also young women as well, in terms of career development. She has raised the standard where women can learn to be more ambitious, and at the same time, confident and work hard in developing different knowledge and skills at the leadership level...Most of us have been inspired to be able to follow her career path.

8. Conclusion

This Case Study undertaken by the Australia Awards Global Tracer Facility explored the long-term outcomes of a group of alumni from Solomon Islands who studied in the field of health in Australia in the mid to late 2000s. The information collected through interviews with alumni, colleagues and stakeholders suggests that **this group of alumni are achieving two of the four long-term outcomes of the Australia Awards.**

Australia Awards long-term Outcome 1 – alumni are using their skills, knowledge and networks to contribute to sustainable development – **is being achieved.** Drawing on skills developed on-award, **alumni are making noteworthy contributions** to the development of health policy, the professional development of health practitioners, and as leaders in their work and communities.

Limited evidence was identified in the contribution by alumni to Australia Awards long-term Outcome 2 and 3 - alumni contributions to developing cooperation, networks and partnerships between Australia and partner countries. Although all alumni in this Case Study described a link they have with Australia, **maintaining ongoing connections was seen as a challenge.** Alumni identified key challenges as limited opportunities for establishing relationships while on-award, and finding the time and energy to build collaborative partnerships.

Alumni views of Australian expertise and culture are **overwhelmingly positive, indicating achievement** of Australia Awards long-term Outcome 4. This closely reflects the consistent pattern seen across the research undertaken by the Facility to date. Employers of alumni also viewed the Australia Awards as a prestigious scholarship, which contributes to the development of Solomon Islands.

9. Alumni profiles

Dr Gregory Jilini

The overall experience for me has been valuable. I am now confident that when I see an issue, I can look at it from a world-view – I have that bigger picture, but trying to also contextualise it to the local setting. The study, for me, helped me to get those skills.



Scholarship	Australian Development Scholarship
Years	2009-2010
Degree	Master of Public Health (Infectious Diseases Control and Epidemiology)
Institution	The University of New South Wales
Field	Health
Current position	Undersecretary for Health Care, Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS)
Brief biography	<p>Dr Gregory Jilini is currently the Undersecretary for Health Care for the Ministry of Health and Medical Services and is responsible for the provincial health services. Dr Jilini also serves as the Chair of the Medical and Dental Board for Solomon Islands.</p> <p>Following completion of his undergraduate degree in medicine at the Fiji School of Medicine in 2001, Dr Jilini was posted as a medical officer at Gizo Hospital in Western Province where he progressed to the role of acting Provincial Director in 2005. In this role, Dr Jilini developed his interest in public health which led to his motivation to pursue further study in this area of the health sector.</p> <p>Dr Jilini was selected for an Australian Development Scholarship to undertake a Master of Public Health specialising in infectious diseases control and epidemiology at the University of New South Wales in 2009.</p> <p>Following his studies in Australia Dr Jilini was formally appointed to the role of Provincial Director for Western Province.</p>

Location at the time of the field research: Honiara, Solomon Islands
Date of the interview: 27 February 2018

Ms Brenda Lauri'i

I try and work as much as I can to help my department provide better efficient and reliable laboratory services...but I have had this crazy idea: what about if we have a research lab in the Solomon's, so that when researchers came into the country to do their stuff, we could have an advanced lab or something, a research lab where we could all confirm the tests?....So I'm just thinking that it'd be a good idea to set up a proper lab where you could do everything from bacteriology to viruses and all that stuff that you can't do in the Solomon's



Scholarship	Australian Development Scholarship
Years	2007-2010
Degree	Bachelor of Biomedical Science
Institution	James Cook University
Field	Health
Current position	Medical Technologist, Medical Laboratory, National Referral Hospital
Brief biography	<p>Ms Brenda Lauri'i works as a Medical Technologist, at the National Referral Hospital, Honiara, Solomon Islands and is passionate about improving the capacity of local labs to analyse and detect pathogens.</p> <p>In 2007, Ms Lauri'i received an Australian Development Scholarship to study a Bachelor of Biomedical Science at James Cook University and developed a keen interest in improving health outcomes through studying pathology.</p> <p>Ms Lauri'i is currently responsible for providing pathology services to the National Referral Hospital through the analysis of bodily fluids and tissues to determine disease. She uses her technical knowledge and skills developed in Australia to train staff in the use of specialised equipment. She plans to undertake a Master's degree in medical laboratory science in New Zealand in 2018, to further build her capacity as a lab technician and hopes to share her expertise on her return.</p>

Location at the time of the field research: Honiara, Solomon Islands
Date of the interview: 26 February 2018

Ms Dolores Devesi

*I think my biggest achievement is being able to work outside of the Solomon's...I've come back, being seen as a role model for others who are here, which has also reminded me to encourage them as well.
...[When] you're working for an international organisation you can work anywhere in the world once you're in the system but also that you need to make sure that you live up to your values and your principles and be able to shine and not limit yourself.*

Photo not available

Scholarship	Australian Leadership Award Fellowship
Years	2007
Degree	Certificate in HIV Management
Institution	Australasian Society for HIV, Viral Hepatitis and Sexual Health Medicine (ASHM)
Field	International Development
Current position	Country Director – Solomon Islands, Oxfam
Brief biography	<p>As the Country Director of Oxfam, Solomon Islands, Dolores has over 16 years' experience providing aid programs throughout the Pacific region. She has worked in disaster relief, HIV AIDS education and advocacy, social justice and empowering local communities.</p> <p>In 2007, she undertook a Certificate in HIV Management at ASHM in Sydney, to build the capacity of Oxfam to deal with the growing rate of HIV infection. On her return to Solomon Islands, Dolores was made the acting Country Director and worked closely with the Ministry of Health to change policies and legislation in relation to HIV sufferers, especially within the prison sector, while also working tirelessly to coordinate Oxfam's response to the 2007 tsunami.</p> <p>In 2008, Dolores moved to New Zealand to take on the role of the Oxfam's Pacific Program Manager and worked there for eight years providing extensive support in the region, while also completing a Graduate Diploma in Not for Profit Management. In 2016, she returned to Solomon Islands to take on the senior leadership role of Country Director and build the capacity of the local staff. Dolores plans to continue her studies and undertake a Master of International Development in the near future.</p>

Location at the time of the field research: Honiara, Solomon Islands
Date of the interview: 26 February 2018

Dr Titus Nasi

I think the scholarship has created an opportunity for me to look outside and see a broader picture and look back and see what challenges we have here and how to link them up and be able to work towards improving the services and quality of care for the situation in the Solomons.

Photo not available

Scholarship	Australian Leadership Award Fellowship
Years	2009
Degree	International Postgraduate Paediatric Certificate
Institution	The Children's Hospital at Westmead & University of Sydney
Field	Health
Current position	Head of Paediatrics, National Referral Hospital, and Chief Paediatrician for Solomon Islands, Ministry of Health and Medical Services
Brief biography	<p>Dr Nasi is the Head of Paediatrics, National Referral Hospital, and Chief Paediatrician for Solomon Islands, Ministry of Health and Medical Services. He is an active advocate for improving the quality of paediatric care in the region through mentoring and training local hospital staff to reduce child mortality rates.</p> <p>Dr Nasi holds a Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) and a Diploma in Child Health at the University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG). From 1999 to 2001, worked at the Sydney Children's Hospital in Randwick. In 2008, through a professional relationship developed at UPNG, Dr Nasi worked in collaboration with the Centre for International Child Health at the University of Melbourne to develop the Bachelor of Child Health Nursing, improving paediatric health outcomes in Solomon Islands. This relationship has led to further study and an ongoing professional connection to Australia.</p> <p>In 2009, Dr Nasi received an award to study an International Postgraduate Paediatrics Leadership Certificate through The Children's Hospital at Westmead and then went on to study a Master of Epidemiology at the University of Melbourne as part of the Australia Leadership Award Scholarship in 2011. He maintains strong connections with colleagues from the University of Melbourne's Centre for International Child Health (CICH) and continues to build the capacity of staff from Australia and Solomon Islands to improve health outcomes through joint projects.</p>

Location at the time of the field research: Honiara, Solomon Islands (via telephone)
Date of the interview: 28 February 2018

Dr Ellison Vane

I'm proud of what I've actually done and brought back to my country...I think the training I got from the University of Sydney is useful because [on return] I put in a project for a national oral survey, and a project for a new national referral hospital, dental clinic. They were approved.



Scholarship	Australian Development Scholarship
Years	2007 – 2010
Degree	Master of Dental Science
Institution	University of Sydney
Field	Health
Current position	Head of Community Dental Services, National Referral Hospital, Ministry of Health and Medical Services
Brief biography	<p>Dr Ellison Vane is currently the Head of Community Dental Services, National Referral Hospital, Ministry of Health and Medical Services. He specialises in providing preventative oral health care throughout Solomon Islands.</p> <p>Prior to receiving a scholarship, Dr Vane studied Dentistry at the Fiji School of Medicine (now Fiji National University) and was working as The Chief Dental Officer for Malaita Province. He has spent time working in the provinces as a clinician. Dr Vane was selected to undertake an Australian Development Scholarship to study the Master of Dental Science at the University of Sydney and became passionate about applying a population-wide approach to improving the oral health in Solomon Islands</p> <p>On his return from Australia, Dr Vane was promoted to the position of Head of Community Dental Services and began working on improving oral health education and promoting preventative dental disease care at the community level.</p>

Location at the time of the field research: Honiara, Solomon Islands
Date of the interview: 21 February 2018

Mrs Hensllyn Mabo Pwe'a Boseto

An achievement [that I am proud of] is being able to work with people or communities in the remote areas whose lives are threatened by logging and mining and just being able to let them know and be aware that their forest is important... So with those tribes, we've helped them set up executive committees and we have helped them put together some consultations and we're working towards registering them as a community-based organisation. So it's really helping those people to take ownership of their forest or to get ownership of looking after their forest.

Photo not available

Scholarship	Australian Development Scholarship
Years	2006 -2010
Degree	Bachelor of Occupational Therapy with Class IIA Honours
Institution	James Cook University
Field	Health
Current position	Administration & Project Manager, Ecological Solutions Solomon Islands
Brief biography	<p>Mrs Hensllyn Mabo Pwe'a Boseto currently works for Ecological Solutions, Solomon Islands providing project management support to a range of community-based environmental projects designed to empower local villagers to manage their natural resources sustainably.</p> <p>Mrs Boseto applied to for a scholarship while still at high school to pursue her dream to work as a doctor, and went on to study a Bachelor of Occupational Therapy at James Cook University in Townsville from 2006-2009. She was invited to do Honours and completed her studies in 2010. Her thesis is titled <i>The role of Occupational Therapy in the Solomon Islands: Experiences and perceptions of occupational therapists and related health workers</i>.</p> <p>On her return to the Gizo, Mrs Boseto worked as a volunteer, providing health support to her local community. She spent a number of years living in Texas, while her husband completed his Master's degree. Following their return to Solomon Islands, Mr Boseto founded Ecological Solution Solomon Islands, where she leads project coordination and providing support to local communities dealing with the impact of climate change. Mrs Boseto also recently developed her honours thesis for submission as a jointly written article to the International Journal Health Research, which is currently in press.</p>

Location at the time of the field research: Gizo, Solomon Islands
Date of the interview: 23 February 2018

Ms Sanneth Talo

The biggest benefit [I gained from my scholarship experience] is that it exposes us to the outside... and because of this training. I am more confident.



Scholarship	Australian Leadership Awards Fellowships
Years	2009
Degree	Short course - Strengthening Nursing and Midwifery Leadership in the South Pacific
Institution	The World Health Organization Collaborating Centre for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Development at the University of Technology, Sydney (WHO CC UTS)
Field	Health
Current position	Retired, Former Registrar; Solomon Islands Nursing Division, Ministry of Health & Nursing Services
Brief biography	With a background in nursing, Ms Sanneth Talo worked as the Registrar of the Nursing Division, Ministry of Health & Nursing Services for over 11 years before retiring in 2017.

In 2009, she received an Australian Leadership Awards Fellowship to undertake the short course Strengthening Nursing and Midwifery Leadership in the South Pacific at the WHO Collaborating Centre for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Development. On her return to Solomon Islands, Ms Talo continued to work as the registrar and senior administrator of the Nursing Council, utilising the skills she gained to lead improvements to the annual operational plans and training of nursing staff.

Ms Talo grew up on the remote island of Makira, before moving to Honiara to study a Certificate of Nursing. During her career, she was mentored and encouraged to take on a senior leadership role within her organisation and was able to use her skills and experiences as a nurse to improve practices and influence policies.

Location at the time of the field research: Gizo, Solomon Islands
Date of the interview: 22 February 2018

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Annex 1: Case Study propositions

Explanatory Case Studies require the development of propositions that are intricately linked to the original research questions. A proposition is a statement that helps direct attention to something that should be examined in a Case Study. The researcher has to make a speculation, on the basis of the literature and any other earlier evidence, as to what they expect the findings of the research to be. When a Case Study proposal includes specific propositions, it increases the likelihood that the researcher can limit the scope of study and complete the project. The researcher can have several propositions to guide the study, but each must have a distinct focus and purpose. The data collection and analysis can then be structured in order to support or refute the research propositions.

For the Facility, propositions were formed using the Global Strategy outcomes as the basis. Sub-propositions were formulated by speculating on the underlying assumption or enabling factors that realise the proposition. In alignment with the methodology, instruments will be designed to collect data that both support and refute the propositions.

- 1 Alumni use their skills knowledge and networks to contribute to achieving partner-country development goals².
 - a alumni develop skills, knowledge and networks on-award that enable and are used to contribute to achieving partner-country development goals
 - b alumni understand, value and want to contribute to partner-country development goals.
- 2 Alumni are contributing to cooperation between Australia and partner countries
 - a alumni possess and are able to leverage their useful networks and relationships.
- 3 Effective, mutually advantageous partnerships between institutions and business [have been developed] in Australia and partner countries
 - a alumni possess and are able to leverage their useful networks and relationships
 - b partnerships that are developed are effective and mutually advantageous to participating countries.

² This proposition differs from the Australia Awards Program Logic long-term outcome number 1 in order to link this proposition to the Goal of the Australia Awards Program. The use of the term 'partner-country development goals instead of 'sustainable development' makes the proposition and ensuing questions more relevant and relatable to alumni.

- 4 Alumni view Australia and Australian expertise positively
 - a alumni's views are underpinned by their experiences in Australia.
- 5 The benefits of receiving an Australia Award or scholarship are experienced equally by all recipients.
 - a receiving an Australia Award or scholarship positively addresses, rather than reinforces, imbalances that are associated with gender and disability.

Annex 2: Key participant questions

Alumni

[Validation question]

We understand you received an Australian Government Scholarship to study [level, field, years], is this correct?

Could you please confirm your current role and organisation?

1. Can you please tell us why you applied? What was your motivation?
 - a. Were there any barriers to accepting a scholarships and coming to Australia? [e.g. employer support, family responsibilities]
2. Can you tell me about your time in Australia experience as a student?
 - a Did you make any professional networks?
 - b Thinking about the networks that you might have developed during your scholarship, were there any that were long lasting; that resulted in working together or connecting other people?
3. After you returned, what was your job?
 - a What skills and knowledge gained during your time in Australia have been applicable in your work?
 - b What are some of the things that made it possible for you to apply your skills and knowledge after you returned home?
 - c What were some of the things that made it difficult to apply the skills and knowledge you gained after you returned home?
 - d What do you think is needed to assist alumni to use their skills and knowledge when they return home?
4. What do you believe are the greatest benefits of the Australian Government scholarship program?
5. Throughout your career, in what ways have you used Australian expertise in your work?
 - a Can you give an example of this, such as Australian-developed practices, equipment, ways of working, processes, theory/theorists, consultants, journals, models, etc.?
6. Are you currently or have been a member of an alumni association? (University/Australian Government scholarship recipient/ADS)
 - a What was the name of the association?
 - b What do you get out of it?

- c What more could alumni associations do for alumni?
- d If not (a member of an association) why not?
- 7. Can you describe an achievement that you are most proud of, in your work or community?
- 8. Compared with the males/females who have received a scholarship from (country x), how has your career progressed since returning home?
- 9. Have there been any barriers you have had to overcome to progress in your career?
- 10. Compared to peers similar to you but did not receive an opportunity to study overseas, do you believe there are any differences in how your careers have progressed?
- 11. (Supporting Interviewer) did you have any questions you would like to ask of (alumni X)?

Employers/colleagues – For interviews regarding an individual alumni

[Validation question]

Could you please confirm your role and organisation?

- 1. Could you please tell us how long have you known [Alumni X] and in what capacity?
 - a Did you know [Alumni X] before s/he received the scholarship?
 - b Were you his/her manager?
- 2. To your knowledge, what new skills and knowledge did [Alumni X] use [in the workplace following their studies in Australia]?
 - a Could you provide examples of how this was applied?
- 3. How did the organisation support X to use his/her new skills and knowledge after returning from Australia?
 - a Did you have a role in supporting [alumni X] to reintegrate following their scholarship?
 - i If so why? What did this involve?
 - ii If not, why?
 - iii Developing a reintegration/return to work plan?
 - b Did X return to the same role following their scholarship?
 - c Did they receive additional responsibilities after their scholarship?
- 4. In your view, how did studying in Australia impact [Alumni X's] career?
- 5. Have you or your organisation benefited from any networks or friendships between [country X] and Australia created by the [Alumni X] as a result of receiving an Australian Government scholarship?
 - a Please explain further; who and what?

- b What about any other countries?
- 6. Are you aware of any other links [Alumni X] has created between people in [country X] and Australia as a result of receiving an Australian Government scholarship?
 - a Please explain further; who, what why?
 - b What about between people in [country X] and any other countries?
- 7. What more could be done to increase opportunities to create institutional links between Australia and your country?
- 8. How has having an Australian Government scholarship recipient in your organisation impacted how you view Australia and Australian expertise?
- 9. Do you draw on Australian expertise for your work?

Employers/stakeholders – For interviews regarding alumni generally

[Validation question]

Could you please confirm your role in (X organisation)?

- 1. How familiar are you with the Australia Awards?

[If YES; a suggested probe if needed]

- a Estimated, how many Australian scholarship recipients have worked for your [ministry/organisation/sector/field]?

[If NO; probe further with]

- b Do you know of anyone who has received an Australian Government scholarship in your [ministry/organisation/sector/field]?
- 2. Has your (ministry/organisation/sector/field) benefitted from any links or networks developed by Australian Government scholarship alumni?
 - a Do you have any examples?
 - b What have been the results of this?
- 3. Has having Australian Government scholarship recipients in your (ministry/organisation/sector/field) influenced the way you view Australia and Australian expertise?
- 4. Have Australian Government scholarship recipients established any links between your [ministry/organisation/sector/field] and organisations in Australia?
 - a If yes what has been the result of these links?
 - b Benefits to you?
 - c Benefits to your workplace?
 - d Benefits to your country?
 - e If no, why not?

5. Are you aware if alumni have presented any opportunities on return to link your workplace or any other organisation in your country with an organisation in another country?
 - a If yes what has been the result of these links?
 - b Benefits to you?
 - c Benefits to your workplace?
 - d Benefits to your country?
 - e If no, why not?
6. What more do you think could be done to support links with Australian organisations?
7. In your view, what has been the overall long-term impact of having Australian Government scholarship recipients in your [ministry/organisation/sector/field]?
 - a How has having a number of Australian Government scholarship recipients over a number of years influenced your department's ability to achieve its goals and /or objectives?
 - b With regards to skills and knowledge; i.e. changed practices, processes or systems?
8. What are some of the things that make it easy or difficult for women to progress in their careers in your country?
9. What are some of the things that make it easy or difficult for those with a disability to progress in their careers in your country?
10. Comparing Australian Government scholarship recipients to their peers who did not receive an opportunity to study overseas, do you believe there are any differences in how their careers have progressed?

DFAT

[Validation question]

Could you please tell us about yourself and your role with the Australia Awards Program?

1. In your own words, what is the purpose of the Australia Awards Program?
 - a In your own words how does the Program achieve [points stated in the previous response]?
2. Based on your experience what would you say are the strengths of the Australia Awards Program?
3. How do you think alumni participation in the Australia Awards Program contributes to [Country X's] development goals?

- a What evidence have you seen of this either personally or professionally?
 - b How do you think the program lead to benefits for both Australia and [Country X]?
- 4. In your opinion, how do you think an alumni's participation in the Australia Awards Program contributes to a positive relationships between [Country X] and Australia?
 - a What factors/events have informed this opinion?
- 5. How do you think the Australia Awards contributes to gender equality and disability inclusiveness?
- 6. What other barriers do you think Australia Awards alumni have to overcome to progress in their careers in [Country X]?
- 7. What do you think are the barriers to achieving gender equality and disability inclusiveness?
 - a Do you feel [barriers stated in the previous response] have changed over time?
 - b In what way?
 - c Any other barriers?
- 8. If you had the power to change things about the Australia Awards what would you make different?
- 9. That covers the things I wanted to ask. Anything you would like to add?

Alumni Association

[Validation question]

Could you please tell us about yourself and your role with the alumni association?

- 1. In your own words, what is the purpose of the alumni association?
 - a What sort of services does the association provide?
- 2. What is the most valuable contribution the association provides for alumni?
- 3. What are some of the challenges involved in running an alumni association for alumni who have studied in Australia?
- 4. What activities does the alumni association provide to support women to progress in their careers in your country?
 - a What have been the outcomes of the program/s?

5. What activities does the alumni association provide to support those with a disability to progress in their careers in your country?
 - a What have been the outcomes of the program/s?
6. In what ways does the alumni association enable alumni to form new professional and personal networks?
7. What activities does the alumni association provide to help alumni remain connected to each other through face-to-face activities and social media?
8. How does the alumni association support alumni to remain connected to Australia?
9. What role does the alumni association play in fostering cooperation between your country and Australia?
10. What do you think should be done to assist your alumni association to contribute to greater cooperation between Australia and [Country X]?
11. Is the alumni association partnered with any institutions and businesses in Australia?
 - a If yes, what has been the result of these links?
 - i Benefits to you/association?
 - ii Benefits to alumni?
 - b If no, why not?
12. What more could be done to increase opportunities to create institutional links between Australia and your country?
13. How does the alumni association promote Australia and Australian expertise?

Gender Equality and Disability Inclusiveness Experts

Gender Equality

1. How does gender impact career?
2. What barriers are there to achieving gender equality?
3. What could or should be done to improve gender equality?
4. Compared with males who receive a scholarship to study overseas, how do you feel women's careers progress? [for DFAT or those with knowledge of scholarships]

Disability Inclusion

1. How does disability impact career?
2. What barriers are there to achieving disability inclusion?

3. What could or should be done to improve disability inclusion?
4. Compared with others who receive a scholarship to study overseas, how do you feel people with disability career's progress? [for DFAT or those with knowledge of scholarships]

Annex 3: Solomon Islands Case Study participants

Type	Date (2018)	Name	Position or Degree
Alumni	21/02	Dr Ellison Vane	Head of Community Dental Services, National Referral Hospital, Ministry of Health and Medical Services
	22/02	Ms Sanneth Talo	Retired, formerly Registrar; Solomon Islands Nursing Council, Ministry of Health & Medical Services
	23/02	Mrs Hensslyn Mabo Pwe'a Boseto	Administration & Project Manager, Ecological Solutions Solomon Islands
	26/02	Ms Dolores Devesi	Country Director – Solomon Islands, Oxfam
	26/02	Ms Brenda Lauri'i	Medical Technologist, Medical Laboratory, National Referral Hospital
	27/02	Dr Gregory Jilini	Under-Secretary of Health Care, Ministry of Health and Medical Services
	28/02	Dr Titus Nasi	Head of Paediatrics, National Referral Hospital, and Chief Paediatrician for Solomon Islands, Ministry of Health and Medical Services
Alumni employers or colleagues	22/02	Mr George Pego	Human Resource Manager, Ministry of Health and Medical Services
	26/02	Ms Julia Fationo	Project Coordinator, Oxfam Solomon Islands
	27/02	Ms Doris Manongi	Supervisor, Medical Laboratory, National Referral Hospital
	27/02	Dr Loreen Oti	Director of Dental Health Services, Ministry of Health and Medical Services
	28/02	Dr. Tenneth Dalipanda	Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Health and Medical Services
	28/02	Mr Michael Lariu	Director of Nursing, Ministry of Health and Medical Services

Type	Date (2018)	Name	Position or Degree
	28/02	Dr Steve Aumanu	Chief Executive Officer, National Referral Hospital
Australian High Commission Solomon Islands	21/02	Ms Leah Horsfall	First Secretary for Education, Australian High Commission
	21/02	Ms Debbie Sade	Senior Program Manager Health, Australian High Commission
Other stakeholders	21/02	Ms Natalina Hong	Alumni engagement in Solomon Islands

