

Let's Make our Families Safe - Mekom Famili Blong Iumi Sef

Design Document for Solomon Islands: prevention of family violence program

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Executive Summary

The Let's Make our Families Safe program (the Safe Families program) strives to prevent family violence in Solomon Islands. It is a 10 year program with action at community and provincial levels, starting in two provinces, and expanding over time across Solomon Islands. The first three year phase will start in 2014 with a budget of AUD 4.8 million.

The Safe Families program is one part of Australia's Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development (Pacific Women) initiative and complements a broader program of efforts to promote gender equality in Solomon Islands and across the Pacific. This design is based on a year of extensive consultations and research.

Why?

Australia works in partnership with Solomon Islands to support a safe and prosperous society for one of our closest neighbours. While there has been considerable progress in the country, Solomon Islands remains highly aid-dependant, fragile and poor. With the scaling down of the significant investment in RAMSI, Australia is working to protect gains made in stability and to promote economic growth. Supporting Solomon Islands' efforts to prevent family violence sits squarely within these aims.

Solomon Islands has one of the highest rates of family violence in the world. Nearly two-thirds of ever-partnered women aged between 15 and 49 years have experienced physical or sexual abuse from an intimate partner. This sits alongside broader issues of inequality. Women are marginalised in political leadership and economic and social development. The high incidence of family violence is not only a gender equality issue, but it is also a significant impediment to stability and economic and social progress.

The Solomon Islands Government has made good progress in developing gender-related policies but more action needs to be taken to implement these policies.

What?

The Safe Families program seeks to start the process of changing ingrained social behaviours which see family violence as acceptable. Very few women who experience family violence seek services or help of any kind beyond their families or communities, as it is considered a private matter. Nearly three-quarters of Solomon Islands women think that a man is justified in beating his wife under some circumstances.

While there have been efforts to prevent family violence by government, churches and other civil society organisations and donors, few efforts have been made beyond Honiara. Most activities have been localised and of insufficient length and intensity to sustain changed attitudes and behaviours.

To start to change individuals' behaviours and attitudes, efforts must be focussed at the community level. Such efforts need to be perceived as consistent with religion and tradition and of benefit to the whole community; men and women alike. Efforts must include responding to individual incidences of family violence when they occur. These efforts need to be supported by all local leaders in the community and sustained over a long period of time. These multi-faceted efforts are

crucial to achieving a 'tipping point' whereby a critical mass of people no longer believe that family violence is acceptable, leading to sustained changes in social norms.

Such community level action can be more effective when supported by government and other leaders and service providers actively working together at the provincial level. Such 'joining up' can build towards a critical mass of support for change in the acceptability of family violence and reduce the gap between communities and service providers.

The Safe Families program's goal is that family violence is no longer considered acceptable behaviour in Solomon Islands. The program will support community level activities to work to prevent family violence and strengthen their impact including linking those activities up to government and non-government stakeholders at the provincial level.

Specifically, the Safe Families Program consists of three components:

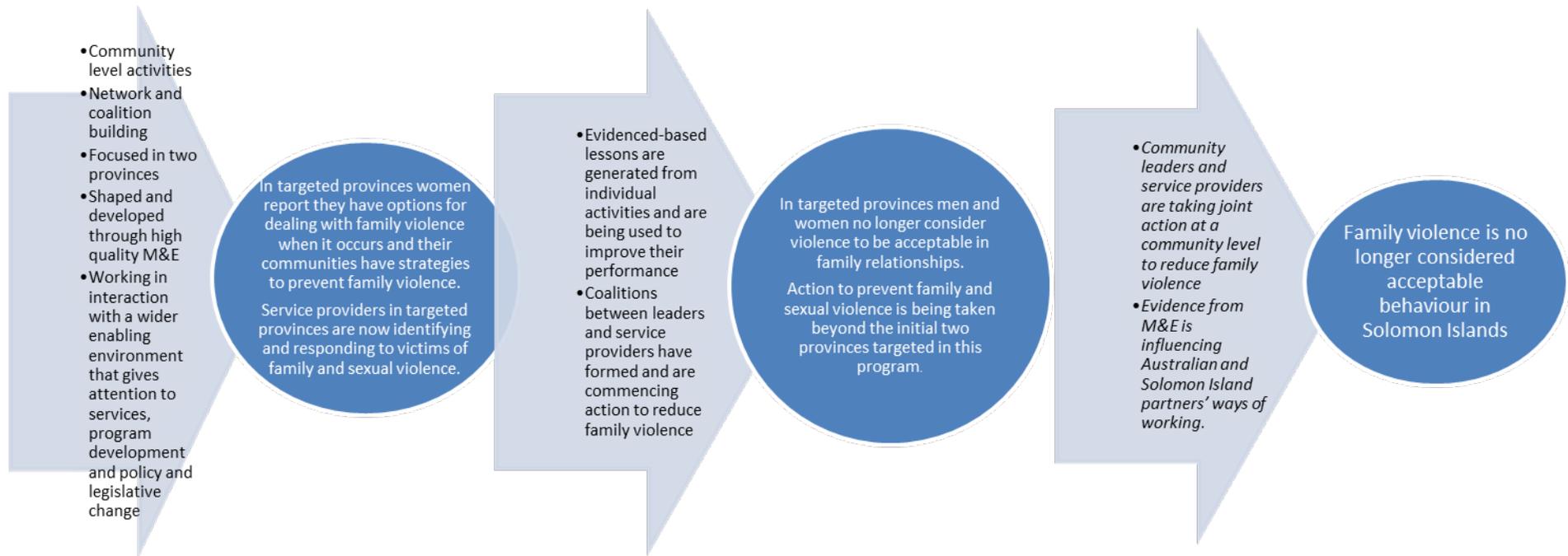
1. Support to community activities to prevent family violence,
2. Facilitation of coalition action at the provincial level, and
3. Rigorous monitoring and evaluation and support to learning processes.

How?

The bulk of the program's resources will be directed to the first component which will be implemented by an organisation with strong community development experience, selected through a competitive grants process. The Australian-funded Pacific Leadership Program will facilitate coalition action in the second component. The monitoring and evaluation will be managed by the Pacific Women Hub based in Suva ensuring that lessons learned are shared beyond Solomon Islands to the region. The monitoring and evaluation will include an action, reflection and research approach and reflection workshops will also be used to promote accountability to Solomon Islands citizens.

Working in sensitive areas such as challenging ingrained social norms, beliefs and attitudes is inherently risky. Particular care will be taken to 'do no harm' to women and to move at communities' own pace. Attention will also be paid to the special needs of women and children with disability. Commencing action in only two provinces will help the Safe Families program to manage these risks.

The way the program's action will contribute to its goal and objectives is in the following diagram.



Introduction

The Let's Make our Families Safe program (the Safe Families program) is directed towards prevention of family violence in Solomon Islands. It is a 10 year program with action at community and provincial levels, starting in two provinces, and expanding over time across Solomon Islands.

The Safe Families Program forms one part of the Solomon Islands Country Plan to address gender inequality. Under this plan, Australia is supporting a broad range of activities to promote gender equality. This support includes progressing gender equality policies, improving economic development for women and changing men's violent behaviour through a faith-based initiative. Efforts are also being made to improve the gender equality outcomes across Australia's aid program including in education, health, justice and broad based economic growth. The Safe Families program will work closely with these other efforts and details are included in Annex 6. Accordingly, the Safe Families program must be viewed as one element of this comprehensive support.

In turn, the Country Plan itself complements the work of other stakeholders in Solomon Islands who are providing support for women's leadership and decision-making, economic empowerment and work to improve service delivery to survivors of violence. The Country Plan also complements Pacific regional efforts to promote gender equality including reducing family violence under **the Australian Government's Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development program** (Pacific Women). Pacific Women is a 10 year program focused on enabling women and men across 14 Pacific countries to improve gender equality and women's empowerment.

Australia primarily provides support for sector programs by working in partnership with the Solomon Islands Government to support its systems to deliver services. The Safe Families program will take a different approach. **The Safe Families Program will support community level activities** to work to prevent family violence and strengthen their impact including by linking those activities up to government and non-government stakeholders at the provincial level.

This document outlines the design for the Safe Families Program.¹ It is based upon a year of consultation and research undertaken by Australian government staff building on a considerable body of Pacific and Solomon Islands enquiry into gender equality and family violence. The design comprises six sections.

- First, the design outlines its methodology including what is understood by the concept 'prevention of family violence'. It also discusses existing efforts to prevent family violence.
- Second, the design outlines the Australian and Solomon Island government policy context. The design then gives some background on the current situation in Solomon Islands, especially in relation to the position of women and their experience of family violence.

¹ The document was written by Philippa Venning DFAT with support from Linda Kelly, Praxis Consultants. The DFAT Honiara gender team—Rochelle White, Louisa Gibbs, Brenda Wakela and Susan Cash—contributed throughout the process and wrote parts of this design. Gillian Brown, Lesley Hoatson and Daniel Evans provided valuable external reviewer comments. Dr Alice Pollard provided sage advice throughout, and the Pacific Leadership Program—Georgina Cope and Lionel Gibson contributed relevant sections. A wide number of other people assisted through provision of experience and knowledge. The full list of people consulted is contained at Annex 1.

- Third, the design canvasses the current situation in Solomon Islands, especially in relation to the position of women. Women’s experience of family violence, efforts to prevent it and implications are presented.
- Fourth, the design outlines the program theory of change, based on international, regional and Solomon Islands experience, concluding with objectives for the Safe Families Program.
- Fifth, based on the theory of change, the design proposes an implementation model consisting of three components. Detailed examples for how each component could be procured and implemented, and locations to start the program are included in the Annexes.
- Finally, the design outlines how Australia will manage the Safe Families Program. This includes how Australia will work in partnership with Solomon Islands stakeholders, roles of team members, budget, risk management, safeguards and, lastly but importantly, sustainability.

Section 1: Methodology and concepts

Initial research

Development of the Safe Families program has been a rigorous and lengthy process. Supporting prevention of family violence is a sensitive area of work for a foreign government and requires a staged and consultative approach.

Stage one - decision to work on prevention of family violence: A design team working on Australia’s investment in gender equality issues across the Pacific region visited Solomon Islands in mid-2012. This consultation provided potential partners an early opportunity to engage in conversations about opportunities for Australian programming on gender equality issues across the Pacific. The design team acknowledged **the high rates of violence (particularly sexual violence) in Solomon Islands and identified the need for a comprehensive approach based on evidence of what achieves results.**²

An interim plan to address gender inequality in Solomon Islands was developed following this mission. This was further informed by a country-specific inquiry about gender equality in Solomon Islands in March 2013.³ In determining where Australian assistance would be best placed, this inquiry concluded that there were existing players to be supported in relation to women’s leadership and decision making and economic empowerment, and a small body of work being conducted to improve service delivery to survivors of violence. Additionally, support for gender equality initiatives in sectors such as education, health, justice and infrastructure being carried out through Australia’s sector development programs should be further developed.

In contrast, there was little evidence of long term dedicated programs focused on preventing family violence especially in rural areas. Importantly, the team concluded that Australia’s current program

² AusAID, *Delivery Strategy: Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development 2013-2023*, 2012

³ This team conducted a comprehensive literature review and met with over 50 stakeholder groups to look at what contributions were being made on gender equality initiatives by government, other donors, civil society groups, churches, business groups and coalitions.

was in a good position to work on this difficult issue of prevention. Existing commitment to the family violence issue was identified in current programming.⁴

In addition, the lack of data and research in relation to gender equality issues in Solomon Islands was noted and it was recommended that some funding be directed towards a specific and ongoing research program.

As a consequence of this research and problem analysis, the Australian aid program in Solomon Islands developed a Gender Country Plan, responding to identified resources, strengths and gaps. The key components of this plan include the following:

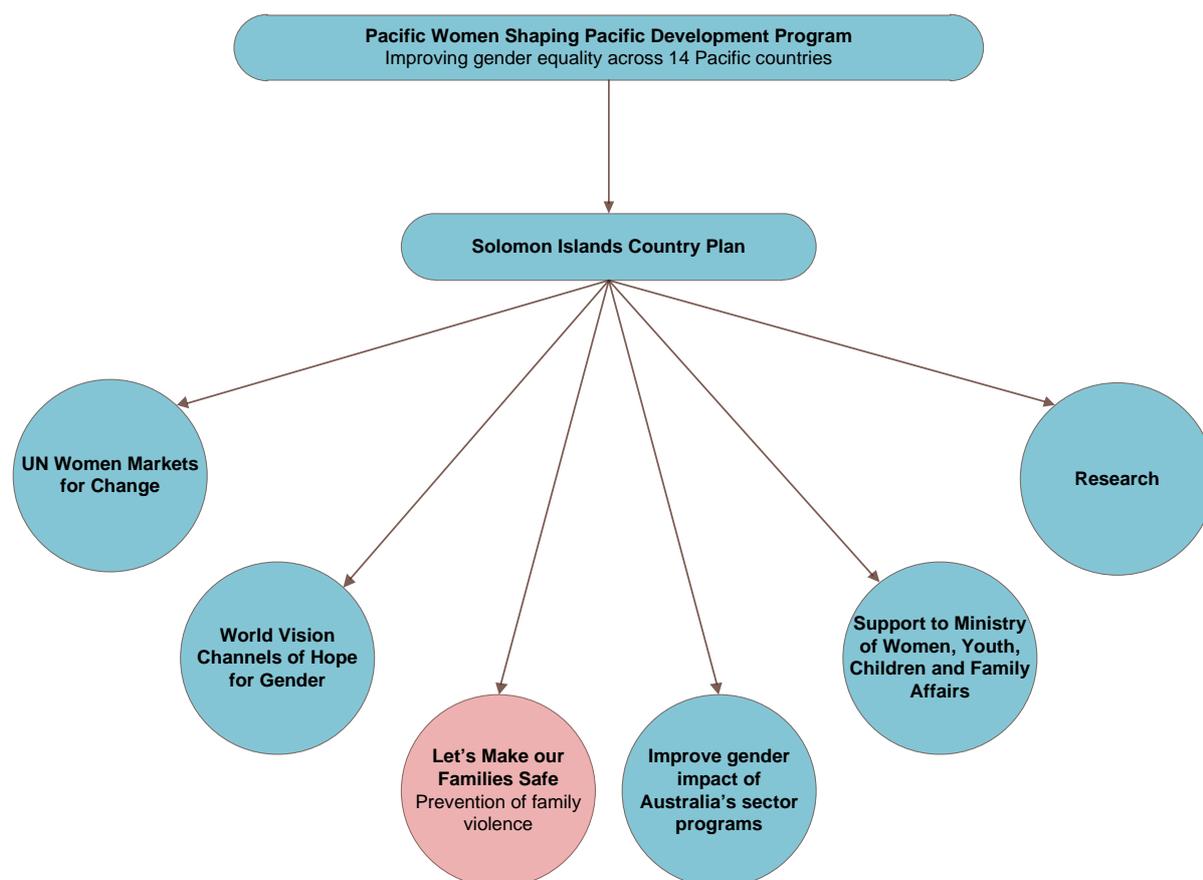
1. A focus on improving the economic development of women through support to UN Women – Markets for Change
2. Attention to changing attitudes towards women and girls through support to the World Vision – Channels of Hope for Gender program
3. Development of a specific programme to work on prevention of violence against women
4. Support to Australia’s bilateral aid sector programs to increase their gender equality impact
5. Support to the Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs.

In addition a decision was made that allocation of the research funding will be considered throughout 2013-2016 to identify and support good quality research and benchmarking exercises as appropriate within the wider plan of work. These components are depicted in Figure 1 below.

At this time, implementation of component one is being negotiated, implementation of components two and five has commenced, and advisory support is being recruited to provide support for component four. **This document provides the detailed design and support for component three, a program to address prevention of family violence.**

⁴ For example, the Health Program has funds earmarked to support SAFENET. The Justice Program has provided support for law reform initiatives dedicated to the legal dimensions of family violence, as well as funding the staffing of a dedicated Elimination of Violence Against Women policy officer in the MWYCFA. Australia’s NGO program supports a partnership between Oxfam Australia and the Family Support Centre (a local Solomon Islands NGO) to improve counselling services to survivors of violence.

Figure 1: Safe Families in relation to broader Australian support to promoting gender equality



Stage two - decision on how to work on prevention of family violence: DFAT conducted **six months of consultations** with a range of stakeholders. Consultations were conducted with representatives from:

- **churches**, including theological and administrative leaders of the churches, church NGOs, church women's groups and theological colleges based in Honiara and in provinces.
- **government**, including from MWYCFA, police (RSIPF and RAMSI), ministries of health and education and provincial level government
- **international and local NGOs** based overseas, in Honiara and at provincial level
- **peak bodies** such as the National Council of Women, Youth Council and the Solomon Islands Women in Business Association
- **donors** including UN organisations and Australian funded programs and local staff from DFAT's own team
- **private sector**
- **prominent individuals** interested in preventing family violence.

Most discussions were held in Honiara, although informants were selected based on their ability to talk about their experience in a range of provinces. In addition, field trips were conducted to Malaita (for the first phase of the design), Isabel and Choiseul.

Selected people from the above groups were also brought together to participate in three sets of workshops in Honiara. The first was an internal workshop with local staff to conduct a political economy analysis on family violence in Solomon Islands. The second, co-facilitated by the Pacific Leadership Program, focussed on how to promote change in Solomon Islands. The third series focussed on the robustness and effectiveness of the approach described in this document. A list of people consulted is set out in Annex 1.

Much of the evidence supporting the proposals in this design comes from these informants. **Where evidence is from written or other sources it is referenced.**

Concepts

What does 'prevention of family violence' mean?

In Solomon Islands, **family violence** has been defined to include abuse or threats of abuse in a domestic context including physical abuse, sexual abuse, and emotional, verbal and psychological abuse.⁵

There are different ways in which family violence **prevention** can take place. Useful public health categories often engaged for understanding approaches to prevention are "primary", "secondary" and "tertiary".⁶

1. **Primary prevention** strategies seek to stop violence before it occurs and therefore lower the rate of violence at a community level. Primary interventions can include those delivered to the whole population or to particular groups that are at higher risk of using or experiencing violence in the future. Heise notes:

*"Although programmes to help individual women to escape violent relationships and seek justice can reduce violence, they do so one woman and perpetrator at a time. To reduce the overall level of partner violence in a population, such efforts must be complemented by initiatives to create a generation of men, women, children, religious leaders, and other social institutions that view violence in the family as unacceptable and are willing to take action to stop it."*⁷

2. **Secondary prevention** strategies are targeted at individuals and groups who exhibit early signs of perpetrating violent behaviour or of being subject to violence. These strategies are focused on reducing the rate of repeat violence among women already abused and are often delivered by services providers such as health clinics or shelters when survivors of violence present for assistance following an episode of abuse.
3. **Tertiary prevention strategies** involve providing support and treatment to women and children who have experienced violence or to men who use violence. This category includes efforts to mitigate the negative impacts of the violence, such as health impacts (for example

⁵ SPC and Ministry of Women, Children, Youth and Family Affairs, *Solomon Islands Family Health and Safety Study: A Study on Violence Against Women and Children*, 2009. A draft of the *Family Violence Bill* adds economic abuse.

⁶ This section draws heavily from Heise, *What works to prevent partner violence?*, 2011; VicHealth, *Preventing violence before it occurs: A framework and background paper to guide the primary prevention of violence against women in Victoria*, 2007; and World Health Organisation, *World Report on Violence and Health*, 2002.

⁷ Heise, *What works to prevent partner violence?*, 2011, p4.

treatment for sexually transmitted diseases following a rape), social impacts (for example therapeutic interventions for perpetrators), or legal or justice impacts (such as formal or informal legal system interventions).

Many policy documents in relation to violence against women divide responses into categories of access to justice, services and prevention.⁸ In these documents, responses categorised under ‘prevention’ are often essentially advocacy and information campaigns. **In this design, a broader definition of prevention described above is preferred. The primary, secondary and tertiary categorisation makes it clear that prevention responses include approaches to provide or improve services—by the state including justice institutions and non-government providers including church organisations.**

All these approaches are important in changing social norms in relation to the acceptability of violence, as will be explained in Section 4 Theory of Change below. Accordingly, in this design, it is understood that prevention policies and actions can occur anywhere in this broad framework and that **for a successful prevention program in the Solomon Islands context, prevention work across all categories is likely to be required.**⁹

Section 2: Government Policy Context

This section covers the Australian and Solomon Islands governments’ policy and enabling environment relevant to prevention of family violence. It explains why Solomon Islands is an important partner for Australia and why family violence prevention has been chosen as an area of cooperation.

Australian Government policy

Pacific region

Australia has close historical, political, aid, security, economic and community links with the Pacific. Australia is the leading aid donor to the Pacific, supporting sustainable economic and social development through bilateral and regional programs. Pacific Island countries receive the largest amount of Australian aid on a per-capita basis. This assistance is complemented by a program of

⁸ For example, Office of Development Effectiveness, *Violence against Women in Melanesia and East Timor: Building on Global and Regional Promising Approaches*, 2008.

⁹ Prevention activities to be supported by this design might be directly related to service provision or improving quality of existing systems, as well as the work to change the opportunity and environment for women and for men so that they behave differently. Whilst primary prevention is a logical ambition of the program, it is also an extremely challenging prospect, deeply embedded in behaviour and attitude change and changes to the cultural, political and social environment. The existing number of women who have already experienced violence (64 per cent) also propels secondary prevention measures into an important space. Opportunities for tertiary prevention measures may also be available through existing service providers in Honiara, but less so for survivors of violence living outside the capital city. Consequently, when talking about “prevention”, this design considers primary, secondary and tertiary prevention strategies as potentially relevant and valuable.

defence cooperation with many Pacific island states, contributing to their efficient and sustainable use of maritime resources and enhancing regional security.¹⁰

Trade between the Pacific and Australia is estimated at around \$30 billion annually¹¹ and Australia, New Zealand and Pacific Islands Forum countries are negotiating a regional trade and economic agreement to promote regional integration, create jobs, enhance economic growth and raise standards of living in the Pacific.¹² The Pacific Seasonal Workers' Scheme commenced in 2012 after a three-year pilot and the number of participants is increasing as it is becoming established in more countries. There are also a large number of Australian NGOs and churches which work to promote social wellbeing or have other social connections with organisations in Pacific Islands.¹³

In line with the importance of the Pacific region to Australia and the costs of gender inequality and family violence, **Australia has dedicated significant resources to analysing and acting on findings to address family violence.** In 2007, Australia's Office of Development Effectiveness conducted a study to assess the effectiveness of current approaches and identify promising practices to address violence against women in Melanesia and East Timor.¹⁴ The study recommended a framework for action and included a supplementary country report on Solomon Islands. In response to the report Australia pledged long-term commitments to end violence against women, promote gender equality as a central principle of all its work, work in partnership with key stakeholders and align with partner government priorities and adopt an integrated approach.¹⁵

More recently, Australia has promised support for the work of Pacific Island countries to fulfil the commitments made in the *Pacific Leaders' Gender Equality Declaration*. The Declaration, made at the 2012 Pacific Islands Forum, recognises the high personal, social and economic cost of gender inequality and commits member countries to take a range of actions to progress gender equality including ending violence against women. In response, Australia committed to a ten year period of support to help the 14 member countries improve women's equality and empowerment. This support is encapsulated in the Pacific Women program.

¹⁰ In Solomon Islands, Australia's Defence Cooperation Program supports the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force's Maritime Unit and Explosive Ordnance Disposal Team and the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency to help coordinate maritime surveillance.

¹¹ Most of these are imports to Pacific Island countries from Australia – Australia is the source of over 30 per cent of all imports and over A\$2.3 billion in direct investment; *DFAT Submission No 33, Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, Inquiry into Australia's Relationship with PNG and other Pacific Island Countries*, 2003. Only two per cent of Australia's exports go to the Pacific; *ABS International Trade in Services by Country*, 2007.

¹² Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations between Australia, NZ and the Pacific Island Forum Countries, www.dfat.gov.au/fta/pacer/. Negotiations have taken place over 10 years but have not reached agreement.

¹³ For example ACFID, Oxfam, trade union organisations, Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace; Phd Jonathan Schultz, *Overseeing and Overlooking: Australian Engagement with the Pacific Islands 1988-2007*, 2013

¹⁴ Office of Development Effectiveness, *Violence against Women in Melanesia and East Timor: Building on Global and Regional Promising Approaches*, 2008

¹⁵ Australian Agency for International Development, *Responding to Violence against Women in Melanesia and East Timor: Australia's response to the ODE report*, 2009

Solomon Islands

Solomon Islands is one of Australia's nearest neighbours and promoting peace and security have been a longstanding feature in the close bilateral relationship.¹⁶ Security became a bilateral issue after a period of civil conflict known as the "tension" which started in 1998 and culminated in the then Solomon Islands Prime Minister Sir Allan Kemakeza asking Prime Minister John Howard for Australian assistance to end the violence. Following regional consultations, Australia led the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) which arrived in Honiara in July 2003.

Australia has invested heavily in Solomon Islands' security and economic development.¹⁷ In addition to its security component, RAMSI's civilian component focused on building economic policy, revenue and capacity of central agencies and justice institutions. Alongside this investment, Australia's bilateral aid program focused on other enablers of economic growth including health, education and transport infrastructure services. Australia gained international credibility through its regional approach to RAMSI and its success in ending the armed conflict alongside efforts to restore core functions of government.

Ten years on, RAMSI is scaling down. Since July 2013, all Australian-funded RAMSI programs except the policing program have been joined with Australia's bilateral programs under the *Solomon Islands—Australia Partnership for Development*. Australia supports four priority areas: (1) improved service delivery in health and education; (2) improved law and justice services, (3) improved broad-based economic growth (including rural development, market access, transport, energy and telecommunications), and (4) improved governance (including economic, public sector and democratic governance). This assistance is worth around \$190 million per year¹⁸ and Australia provides approximately 75 per cent of donor assistance to Solomon Islands. About half of Australia's support is spent on improved governance. RAMSI's policing component will remain until 2017 but is shifting from force protection¹⁹ to building police capacity. Support to community policing continues to be a focus.²⁰

The Australian Government still finances a significant proportion of Solomon Islands' budget but efforts are being made to promote Solomon Islands' economic growth. Solomon Islands recently joined Australia's Pacific Seasonal Worker Program. Although only around 40 workers have participated since its commencement in July 2012, Australia is working to increase this number in

¹⁶ The relationship between Australia and Solomon Islands was cemented in World War II when Australians were involved in the struggle to liberate Solomon Islands from the Japanese occupation.

¹⁷ Australia has provided more than \$2 billion dollars through RAMSI accompanied by \$0.5 billion in bilateral Australian Aid over the same ten year period.

¹⁸ Including regional programs

¹⁹ That is taking measures to ensure operational effectiveness through managing risks and minimising vulnerabilities from threats.

²⁰ *PPF Drawdown Strategy 2013-2017*. The Strategy involves training and other support to develop the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force into a highly effective, modern and professional police force. One aim is that by 2017 the RSIPF will be able to respond to existing and emerging community based crime threats effectively and efficiently. RAMSI's PPF continues to support provincial police posts through a mentoring program, communications and logistical support, police housing and station refurbishments. The PPF is also assisting the RSIPF to develop community crime prevention programs and strengthen community policing in rural and isolated communities.

line with growing demand from Solomon Islands workers.²¹ Australia is also providing significant support to increase the employability of Solomon Islanders through basic education, scholarships and technical and vocational skills development, aiming to increase Solomon Islands' potential for economic growth and regional integration.²² Increasing access to remittances is not only a way for families involved to improve their living standards, but can also provide capital to promote small businesses in Solomon Islands.

While Solomon Islands' small formal economy,²³ remoteness from the main trade routes and high cost of transport limit trade and commercial interests between the two countries, these links are increasing. There is some investment from Australian companies, particularly in financial services and resources.

Australia's current assessment is that Solomon Islands is on the path to peace and stability, although international experience suggests that this will take some decades to achieve.²⁴ **A significant risk to this achievement however is the considerable gender inequality experienced by women in Solomon Islands, in particular the violence directed towards women and children. Promoting gender equality is therefore considered key to achieving the aims of the Partnership with the Solomon Islands Government and Australia is working to improve the gender equality impact of all its programs.**

Solomon Islands Government policy and legislation

Policy

The Government of Solomon Islands, along with the other Pacific Island Forum countries, has committed to the *Pacific Leaders' Gender Equality Declaration*. Introduced above, the 2012 Declaration commits member countries to take a range of actions to progress gender equality including ending violence against women. **Solomon Islands has made good progress in developing gender-related policies, including on eliminating violence against women, but more action needs to be taken to implement these policies including passing legislation.**

The Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs (MWYCFA) is charged with leading and coordinating issues of gender equality. The MWYCFA works to improve gender equality in line with

²¹ Only 20 per cent of the working age population is engaged in formal employment in Solomon Islands. Accordingly, the Australian seasonal workers program presents a significant opportunity for low skilled workers to become engaged in economic activity. Evidence around the region suggests workers are able to remit around between AUD 5-6,000 from a six-month job placement. With its close proximity to the Australian labour market, this presents a large opportunity for Solomon Islands to boost activity in its domestic economy where they have limited growth prospects from natural resources and they experience one of the lowest levels of remittances in the Pacific (0.3% of GDP).

²² *Solomon Islands—Australia Partnership for Development*

²³ Around 43,500 people were employed in 2009, mostly in government and in providing basic services; Solomon Islands Government, *Population and Housing Census*, 2009

²⁴ World Bank research indicates that countries take at least 30 years to recover in economic and development terms from major conflict.

the Solomon Islands National Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Development (GEWD Policy).²⁵ This GEWD policy, launched in 2010, identifies five priority areas:

1. Health and education
2. Economic status of women
3. Decision making and leadership
4. Elimination of violence against women
5. Gender mainstreaming

It is a solid and thoughtful policy framework; however the MWYCFA has struggled to carry it forward.²⁶

Expanding on Priority 4 above, a targeted *National Policy on the Elimination of Violence Against Women 2010* (EVAW Policy) provides the policy framework for acting to end violence against women. It commits the Government to 'exercise leadership to end all forms of violence against women and support advocacy in this regard at the local, provincial, national, regional and international levels by all sectors and all political and community leaders, as well as the media and civil society'. It also commits the Government to take positive measures to address broader inequalities that perpetuate violence as well as the factors which can trigger violence, to strengthen prevention efforts to address discriminatory social norms, and to raise awareness of and respect for women's rights.²⁷

Under the EVAW Policy, the EVAW Task Force has been established. It includes representatives from the police, Ministries of Health and Education, NGOs, church organisations, media and donors and oversees implementation of the *EVAW National Action Plan 2010-2013*. This plan outlines actions to be taken under seven strategic areas including eliminating and preventing violence against women through public awareness and advocacy; strengthening and improving protective, social and support services; working with men to end violence against women; and coordinating policy and services.²⁸ Multi-stakeholder taskforces have been established to respond to each of the five priority outcomes in the GEWD Policy above and all report to a National Steering Committee. These taskforces have met infrequently, but the EVAW Task Force has been the most active.

²⁵ The Policy contains a *Plan of Action 2010-2013*. A subsequent plan of action has not yet been developed, but has been included as a task for the GEWD Policy Adviser that will be recruited by the MWYCFA with Australian funding to commence in early 2014.

²⁶ Due to underlying misconceptions of "gender equality" and entrenched attitudes towards the roles of men and women, the MWYCFA has also had difficulty achieving traction with other SIG ministries on gender mainstreaming attempts. In addition, with limited staff and budget, the MWYCFA lacks capacity to actively manage and implement the mainstreaming agenda. The introduction of gender performance indicators for permanent secretaries could potentially empower the MWYCFA to support other Ministries to meet and report against gender targets, but whether the indicator targets can be measured remains uncertain. The GEWD Policy establishes a National Steering Committee with representation by permanent secretaries from a variety of ministries. The GEWD Policy establishes quarterly meetings for the National Steering Committee to consider progress reports of the implementation of the Policy. However, in practice, the National Steering Committee has met only twice in nearly 4 years.

²⁷ Solomon Islands Government *National Policy on Eliminating Violence Against Women, 2010*

²⁸ The key strategic areas most relevant to this program are extracted. The other 3 key strategic areas are developing national commitments to eliminate VAW, strengthening legal frameworks, law enforcement and the justice system, and rehabilitating and treating perpetrators; National Action Plan January 2010-2013.

The EVAW Policy and Plan had been recognised by one service provider as:

'The most important document that we women have to work by. It is government owned, and shows that the government is committed to working towards addressing this issue, and that it is everyone's responsibility to educate each other, provide responsive services, and respond to the situation'.²⁹

Australia is supporting implementation of the GEWD Policy and the EVAW Policy and Plan. The Safe Families program's efforts are directed to supporting the Government's policy obligations to work at the local and provincial levels on factors which trigger violence, efforts to address discriminatory norms and awareness raising on respect for women's rights to live free from violence. Other Australian programs support other areas of the GEWD Policy, including health and education and the economic status of women, and other areas of the EVAW Policy and Plan including policy, justice reform and law enforcement. Australia is also supporting the gender mainstreaming objective of the MWYCFA under the Solomon Islands Gender Country Plan.

Legislation

There are currently significant weaknesses in the legislative framework to address family violence.

The *Evidence Act 2009* removed some discriminatory practices such as the 'cautionary rule' which assumed that a woman's word must be treated with caution. A *Family Protection Bill* has been prepared but its presentation to Parliament has been repeatedly deferred. If passed in its current form this legislation would be very significant. It would for the first time create a "domestic violence" offence and penalties. It would also increase access to protection orders and impose obligations on health workers and police in relation to supporting survivors of violence and investigating perpetrators. *Penal Code* amendments are also needed. The Law Reform Commission reviewed the *Penal Code* and made recommendations for amendments to sexual offence provisions to better protect women, such as expanding the definition of rape. Acting on the recommendations is one of 12 legislative projects on the Ministry of Justice's work plan for 2014. Australia funds a legal policy adviser to support the Ministry of Justice's work plan.³⁰

Section 3: Solomon Islands Country Context

This section provides some basic country data to set this design in context before discussing in more detail the current situation for women in Solomon Islands including the incidence of family violence. Implications of the high rate of family violence and attempts to address it are then presented.

Country data

Solomon Islands is a mostly Melanesian archipelagic state of nine main island groups. Solomon Islands has an ethnically, linguistically and geographically disparate population. **The country is highly aid-dependent and although stable it remains very fragile.** Poverty remains a fundamental concern. Since independence in 1978 the country has remained a Least Developed Country and it ranked 143

²⁹ Solomon Islands expert respondent to ICRW, *Violence against Women in Melanesia and Timor-Leste: Progress made since the 2008 ODE report*, 2012.

³⁰ There is also a draft *Child and Family Welfare Bill* waiting for Parliamentary consideration. It proposes to give a legal mandate to the Ministry of Health and Medical Services to provide social welfare.

out of 186 countries in the 2012 Human Development Index. Solomon Islands is currently either 'off track' or showing only 'mixed results' against the Millennium Development Goals.

Effective service delivery is hampered by the geographic spread of the population. The relatively small population of 515,870 is spread across 90 islands that make up an archipelago of 997 islands. In fact, Solomon Islands has one of the lowest population densities (17 people/ km²) and urbanisation rates (20 per cent) in the world.³¹ Distances between islands are significant, for example the north western Choiseul group is approximately 1,500 kilometres from the south-eastern Santa Cruz Islands – a distance equivalent to that between London and Rome.³²

Religion plays a prominent part in daily life for many Solomon Islanders. Ninety-eight per cent of the population is Christian³³ and the majority of Solomon Islanders belong to one of the main five denominations—Anglicans, Catholics, South Sea Evangelicals, Seventh Day Adventists and United Church.

The formal economy provides only limited income opportunities for most Solomon Islanders. Despite high economic growth driven mainly by unsustainable logging exports, most Solomon Islanders have limited options to increase their income. Economic opportunity is constrained by unreliable and costly access to markets and limited access to basic services. Eighty per cent of the population live in rural areas where the main source of economic activity is small-holder agricultural production. Solomon Islands has a pronounced youth bulge, 41 per cent of Solomon Islanders are under the age of 15 and the median age is just 19.8.³⁴ Finding employment opportunities for this demographic will be an ongoing challenge. The capital city Honiara whilst relatively small (approximately 65,000 residents) is undergoing rapid urbanisation yet improvements to infrastructure and availability of jobs are not keeping pace with the influx of residents.

Solomon Islands has been described as having significant rates of small-scale social disturbances which put social cohesion under threat.³⁵ Such an environment is conducive to high rates of violence. Reduced social cohesion is explained by a range of factors which extend beyond the tension.

Small-scale social disturbances are exacerbated by a number of factors including the presence of natural resource development projects (especially logging) in communities and the *wantok*³⁶ culture which encourages men to defend their *wantoks* when they are involved in a dispute. *Wantok* disputes can quickly escalate and translate into violent acts of revenge. The term "Ramboization" has been coined to describe the guerrilla fighter persona popular with some young men.³⁷ The internal migration to Honiara described above is increasing opportunities for ethnic rivalries to flare

³¹ Solomon Islands Government, *Population and Housing Census, 2009*

³² *World Bank Solomon Islands Country Partnership Strategy 2013-2017* (2013)

³³ Solomon Islands Government, *Population and Housing Census, 2009*

³⁴ Solomon Islands Government, *Population and Housing Census, 2009*

³⁵ Allen, Dinnen, Evans and Monson, *Justice Delivered Locally: Systems, Challenges and Innovations in Solomon Islands*, World Bank Justice for the Poor Research Report, August 2013

³⁶ 'Wantok' means one who speaks the same language and describes the relationships of mutual obligation between family and others who come from the same place.

³⁷ Allen, Dinnen, Evans and Monson, *Justice Delivered Locally: Systems, Challenges and Innovations in Solomon Islands*, World Bank Justice for the Poor Research Report, August 2013

up into violence. The rapid increase in alcohol and other substance abuse is further fuelling social disturbances and community violence.³⁸

A survey of school-going children found many informants have experienced physical harm and verbal insults from other children and teachers. Seventy per cent of informants reported that teachers in school use physical abuse.³⁹ This has the unfortunate effect of normalising violence as a conflict resolution or punishment technique for many children.

With widespread social disturbances and community violence, the most marginalised groups in society are expected to bear the brunt. These particularly include women and children and people with disability. The next part discusses the situation for women in Solomon Islands including their experience of family violence.

Situation for women in Solomon Islands

There are many development challenges facing the general population, however dominant patriarchal systems and entrenched gender norms prevent women, in particular, from taking full advantage of development gains. Specific issues promoting and impeding women's ability to participate in society on equal footing to men are listed below.

Economic development

Economic empowerment of women is a particular challenge. The Economist Intelligence Unit's *Women's Economic Opportunity Index* ranks the women of Solomon Islands 124 out of 128 countries with respect to the laws, regulations, practices, customs and attitudes that allow women to participate in the workforce under conditions roughly equal to those of men. Support for female entrepreneurs is expanding. Women's Resource Centres have been established by Provincial Councils of Women in all but one province. The Solomon Islands Women in Business Association is also providing financial management and business training to female entrepreneurs and has established the Meres' Market in Honiara with all female stall holders.

An estimated 54 per cent of women are 'economically active' but they are concentrated in small scale informal businesses such as selling cooked foods or running kiosks.⁴⁰ As of September 2012, 38 per cent of public service positions were held by women however the majority of these jobs are junior positions. Women account for only 12 per cent of senior management positions.⁴¹

Education

In 2009 there was almost gender parity in total enrolment at primary schools with 83.9 per cent of girls enrolled compared to 83.2 per cent of boys.⁴² Secondary school remains out of reach of many children as there are only enough places for 27 per cent of the grade 6 cohort to progress to grade 7. **Girls are particularly impacted by these limited places and continue to miss out on the opportunities that a good education provides, with only 14 per cent of girls of senior secondary**

³⁸ Allen, Dinnen, Evans and Monson, *Justice Delivered Locally: Systems, Challenges and Innovations in Solomon Islands*, World Bank Justice for the Poor Research Report, August 2013

³⁹ UNICEF, *Children in Solomon Islands: an Atlas of Social Indicators*, 2011.

⁴⁰ Hutchens, A with contribution from Sonali Bishop, *Women in Business in Solomon Islands*, IFC, 2008

⁴¹ *World Bank Country Partnership Strategy 2013-2017* (2013). The police force also has a new policy to ensure each intake of recruits is 30 per cent women, although this is not yet enforced in practice.

⁴² Solomon Islands Government, *Population and Housing Census*, 2009

school age actually attending school. The reasons for the low percentage of girls at this level are multifaceted and include: family preference to withdraw their daughters rather than their sons if they cannot afford school fees; a lack of girls' dormitories; distance; financial limitations; cultural factors and a lack of access to adequate sanitation in schools.

Health

Health indicators in Solomon Islands are among the lowest in the region.⁴³ Average life expectancy is 66.2 years for men and 73.1 years for women.⁴⁴ The total fertility rate of 4.7 and the infant mortality rate of 22 per 1000 births are both some of the highest rates in the Pacific region.⁴⁵ Solomon Islands has a better record in maternal mortality with a rate of approximately 143 per 100,000 births,⁴⁶ below the world average of around 210 maternal deaths per 100,000 births.

Challenges to accessing adequate health care remain. The 2007 *Demographic and Health Survey* revealed that while 89 per cent of women have access to prenatal care and close to 95 per cent have access to antenatal care, the quality of health care remains a concern. Ninety-six per cent of women reported facing problems such as a lack of available drugs and health care providers. Women's access to family planning services and cultural taboos around talking about contraception mean the capacity of women to choose the number and timing of their children is limited.⁴⁷ This helps to contribute to the high teenage pregnancy rate with 12 per cent of girls aged between 15 and 19 years old experiencing pregnancy and childbirth.⁴⁸

Leadership

Women's voices remain largely absent in the national political sphere. Since independence only two women have been elected to parliament. A 2009 proposal by MWYCFA to improve the gender balance in parliament through the use of reserved seats for women was not supported by Cabinet. A small number of women have been appointed to provincial government and other important decision making structures including customary, religious, private and judicial spheres. Whilst these structures are still dominated by men, women are slowly making their mark.

There appears to be public support for female politicians. The 2013 *People's Survey* found that 91 per cent of respondents believe women make good leaders. Eighty-nine per cent thought there should be women MPs in National Parliament of which 80 per cent agreed there should be reserved seats for women candidates. Advocacy and consultation on reserved seats is ongoing.

Impact of 'the tension'

Between 1998 and 2003 Solomon Islands faced an internal armed conflict ('the tension') which only ended with the arrival of the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI). During

⁴³ SPC and Ministry of Women, Children, Youth and Family Affairs, *Solomon Islands Family Health and Safety Study: A Study on Violence Against Women and Children*, 2009

⁴⁴ Solomon Islands Government, *Population and Housing Census*, 2009. The average person in Australia lives more than 10 years longer than an average person in Solomon Islands.

⁴⁵ Solomon Islands Government, *Population and Housing Census*, 2009

⁴⁶ Solomon Islands Government, *Population and Housing Census*, 2009

⁴⁷ *World Bank Solomon Islands Country Partnership Strategy 2013-2017* (2013)

⁴⁸ Japan International Cooperation Agency, *Country Gender Profile: Solomon Islands*, 2010

this period there were between 150-200 deaths and 450 gun-related injuries and approximately 35,000 people were displaced.⁴⁹

After a positive and enthusiastic start during the 1990s to address women's rights and violence against women, the gains of the previous decade were virtually wiped out by the conflict. The period of lawlessness led to a further degradation of infrastructure and services and a sustained period where lawlessness, crime and violence were the norm particularly in Honiara, the impact of which is still being felt by the population and civil society. Health and education services were impacted with many schools closed and many health centres left barely functioning. Whilst the impact of the tension was widely felt, the low status of women contributed to their increased vulnerability during the period. As well as the issues that impacted men, women experienced greater tension within their homes and restrictions on their freedom of movement which reduced their ability to seek assistance including medical care and protection.⁵⁰

Despite the many hardships faced by women during this period they also played an integral role in restoring peace. During the tensions women mobilised themselves into groups to advocate for peace. These groups included the Guadalcanal Women for Peace and Westside Women for Peace groups which used non-confrontational activities and outreach to warring factions and victims to lay the foundation for national peace-building. Despite this instrumental role in suspending the violence, it did not translate into a greater role for women in the formal peace processes.

International evidence shows that there is a higher prevalence of violence against women in societies during conflict and post-conflict situations.⁵¹ This is the case for Solomon Islands. The *Family Health and Safety Study* argues that "the current nature of violence against women and children in Solomon Islands cannot be truly understood outside the scope of the civil conflict".⁵²

Family violence

The 2009 *Family Health and Safety Study* is the most comprehensive data source on violence against women in Solomon Islands. **The study found that 64 per cent of ever-partnered women aged 15-49 have experienced physical and/or sexual abuse from an intimate partner in their lifetime** and 42 per cent of women reported experiencing physical and/or sexual violence in the 12 months leading up to the study. Childhood sexual abuse was found to be relatively common with 37 per cent of women aged 15-49 reporting that they had been sexually abused before the age of 15. Forced sex is high amongst youth. Thirty-eight per cent of sexually active youth reported they had been forced to have sex when they did not want to. In some areas, such as Taro Islands in Choiseul Province almost half (48.9 per cent) of girls reported forced sex.⁵³

⁴⁹ SPC and Ministry of Women, Children, Youth and Family Affairs, *Solomon Islands Family Health and Safety Study: A Study on Violence Against Women and Children*, 2009

⁵⁰ SPC and Ministry of Women, Children, Youth and Family Affairs, *Solomon Islands Family Health and Safety Study: A Study on Violence Against Women and Children*, 2009

⁵¹ Partners for Prevention, *Why do some men use violence against women and how can we prevent it? Quantitative Findings from the United Nations Multi-country study on Men and Violence in Asia and Pacific*, 2013

⁵² SPC and Ministry of Women, Children, Youth and Family Affairs, *Solomon Islands Family Health and Safety Study: A Study on Violence Against Women and Children*, 2009 p38

⁵³ UNFPA and the Asia-Pacific Women Faith and Development Alliance, *A Mapping of Faith-based Responses to Violence against Women and Girls in the Asia-Pacific Region*, 2013

Sexual violence is more common than non-sexual physical violence. The study also found that women in Solomon Islands are more likely to experience severe forms of physical partner violence rather than moderate violence.

Physical punishment is frequently used to discipline women who are seen as transgressing their prescribed gender roles. Attitudes towards the lower status of women are deeply entrenched **and 73 per cent of women believe that a man is justified in beating his wife under certain circumstances**, such as disobedience.

The study also concluded that **the characteristics of perpetrators were found to be more significant than characteristics of survivors of violence** in determining risk factors for experiencing family violence. The study identified 7 main risk factors:

1. The perpetrator's alcohol consumption;
2. That the perpetrator fights with other men;
3. That the perpetrator was beaten as a child;
4. That the perpetrator is unemployed;
5. The women's attitude to sex (women who believed that a wife can refuse sex with her partner under at least some circumstances);
6. That the women steps out of accepted gender roles; and
7. That bride price has been paid from the perpetrator's family to the woman's family.

Seventy per cent of victims do not tell anyone that they have suffered from violence with women in Honiara less likely to tell someone compared to rural women.⁵⁴ This lack of disclosure is unsurprising given the overwhelming view that family violence incidents are considered "a private matter" between husband and wife or extended family. When women do speak out they are most likely to tell their parents and secondly their friends. Friends and family often reinforce the belief that the victim needs to be patient and maintain the relationship because of the sanctity of marriage.

Women also tell local leaders or religious leaders, but rarely report violence to the police or formal services such as health services (even though they might seek care). Eighty-two per cent of women reported they had never gone to any agency or authority for help and family violence is acutely underreported in the state justice system. In most instances, the police response to a report of domestic violence will be to tell women to "go home and think about it".⁵⁵ (Although it should be noted that in 2010 the RSIPF adopted a "no-drop" approach to domestic violence matters.)

The severity of the violence correlates with the likelihood of a woman seeking help. Fifty-one per cent of women that do not report violence stated that they do not seek help because violence is 'normal' or 'not serious'.⁵⁶ Women can also be reluctant to report as they are concerned about the economic impact of having a spouse incarcerated.

⁵⁴ SPC and Ministry of Women, Children, Youth and Family Affairs, *Solomon Islands Family Health and Safety Study: A Study on Violence Against Women and Children*, 2009

⁵⁵ Allen, Dinnen, Evans and Monson, *Justice Delivered Locally: Systems, Challenges and Innovations in Solomon Islands*, World Bank Justice for the Poor Research Report, August 2013

⁵⁶ SPC and Ministry of Women, Children, Youth and Family Affairs, *Solomon Islands Family Health and Safety Study: A Study on Violence Against Women and Children*, 2009

Responses from family and friends, religious leaders and service providers vary in different locations in the country. In some locations, such as in Malaita and Guadalcanal, a woman talking about domestic violence outside her family could result in a claim for compensation from her male relatives for bringing shame on her husband. Conversely in Renbel Province there do not appear to be cultural barriers that discourage women from reporting instances.⁵⁷ In the small communities of Rennell and Bellona, those who inflict family violence are generally socially ostracised but rarely reported to anyone, especially the police.⁵⁸

Women with disability are particularly vulnerable to violence. Studies into violence against women with disabilities has found that when gender is combined with other typically disadvantageous factors, such as disability or poverty, the disadvantage experienced by individual women is magnified exponentially.⁵⁹ These findings are supported by other international research which shows that women with disability are two to three times more likely to experience physical and sexual abuse than women without disability. Women with disabilities face this higher risk of violence based on social stereotypes that exclude or isolate them from society, their economic dependency on others, reduced ability to defend themselves, and reduced agency and awareness of their rights. Women with disability can be subjected to all forms of violence; however women and girls with intellectual disabilities and mental illness are particularly vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse. Women with disabilities are also less likely to access support, refuge or legal redress than their peers without disabilities.

Current efforts and activities to address family violence

There have been recent positive advances addressing family violence. Since the publication of the *Family Health and Safety Study* in 2009, significant progress has been made in raising awareness about the prevalence of the problem in government agencies and in the media (although this appears not to have reached many people in rural areas). As discussed above, legal reforms are under way and there is an Elimination of Violence Against Women Task Force in place, bringing government, civil society and donor interest groups together to coordinate efforts, under the auspice of the MWYCFA. There is also a government and NGO joint commitment to coordinate referrals and services in Honiara, see Box 1 on Safenet below. In the public sphere, the Pacific Conference of Churches' high-level discussion held in Honiara in March 2013 featured debates on the churches' response to family violence.

Box 1. Safenet

SAFENET – The Solomon Islands referral network for survivors of violence

Building on informal referral practices, in 2013 the five main service providers to survivors of violence signed a memorandum of understanding. The five organisations include SIG agencies (the Ministry of Health and Medical Services, the RSIPF and the Public Solicitor's Office) as well as local non-government organisation Family Support Centre (providing counselling services) and the Anglican Church of Melanesia operated

⁵⁷ Allen, Dinnen, Evans and Monson, *Justice Delivered Locally: Systems, Challenges and Innovations in Solomon Islands*, World Bank Justice for the Poor Research Report, August 2013

⁵⁸ Allen, Dinnen, Evans and Monson, *Justice Delivered Locally: Systems, Challenges and Innovations in Solomon Islands*, World Bank Justice for the Poor Research Report, August 2013

⁵⁹ UNDP, *Pacific Sisters with Disabilities: at the Intersection of Discrimination*, 2009; Australian Government, *Triple Jeopardy: Gender-Based Violence and Human Rights Violations Experienced by Women with Disabilities in Cambodia*, Research Working Paper 1, 2013

Christian Care Centre (offering refuge accommodation for women and children).

The MOU sets out commitments of the organisations to make referrals to each other to ensure that a survivor of violence presenting to any one of those services is enabled to receive the services of all five. The Ministry of Health takes a lead role in SAFENET, including housing the SAFENET Coordinator through its Social Welfare Division.

Significantly, with the legal, counselling and refuge services located Honiara, SAFENET is only operational within the capital city. At provincial level, formal support services are sparse and coordination occurs when individuals form networks based on good relationships.

Individual SAFENET agencies have also developed internal protocols, including the RSIPF's *Domestic Violence Policy* and the Ministry of Health and Medical Service's *Policy and Clinical Protocols for Minimum Standards of Treatment of Survivors of Gender Based Violence*.

A matrix mapping the current formalised family violence prevention activities taking place in Solomon Islands is at Annex 2. **Notably, for a country with one of the worst rates of family violence in the world, the number and scale of activities addressing family violence prevention is very small.**

The vast majority of the population do not have access to these formal programs and services that are listed in Annex 2. This is because:

1. The vast majority of services and programs are concentrated in Honiara, whereas 87 per cent of the population live outside the capital city.⁶⁰
2. Even where services are recorded as being “nation-wide”, provision of services is still spread thinly and not always accessible. Geography poses a constant challenge in Solomon Islands. For example, despite health clinics being the government service with the most reach in the provinces, 33 per cent of people surveyed in the 2013 People’s Survey reported that it took over an hour to reach a health clinic (including over 6 per cent who said it took over half a day).⁶¹ Distance can dissuade someone from accessing a program or service unless it is the most serious of issues. Using the health example, injuries from an incidence of family violence must be extremely severe for a woman to travel half a day to receive treatment.
3. Programs are localised and have small target areas. To give some context there are an estimated 5,000 communities in Solomon Islands. The current programs being run by the large international NGOs Oxfam and World Vision work in 3 and 30 communities respectively.

The matrix of activities **does not capture the informal actions of local individual champions to reduce violence in their community, the church-based pastoral care provided to survivors of violence or the non-state resolution of family disputes carried out in accordance with *kastom*** that are the main (or often only) responses available to survivors of violence. These types of interventions, supports and services are localised and not formalised, but are significant in the influence that they have in the way that family violence is understood, viewed, treated and resolved.

There is a significant disconnect between the activities being undertaken. Although there are synergies between the aims of many of the projects, there is only occasional collaboration between

⁶⁰ Solomon Islands Government, *Population and Housing Census, 2009* recorded 64,609 people living in Honiara out of a population of 515,870.

⁶¹ ANUedge and University of the South Pacific, *2013 SIG RAMSI People’s Survey Report, 2013*

groups with similar goals. More work is required in all three categories of prevention along with the coordination of those efforts.

Broader impact of family violence

In Solomon Islands evidence shows that violence does not just impact the victim but in fact inhibits development for women and for the country as a whole.

Family violence is in the top four most prevalent forms of local-level conflict and disputation in the Solomon Islands and recent research strongly suggests that this poses a risk to ongoing social cohesion and stability at the local level.⁶² The very high prevalence of violence also reflects the acceptability of using violence as a way to resolve any sort of conflict.

Violence is intergenerational and Solomon Islands research indicates that one factor which makes it more likely that a man will be violent is his exposure to violence as a child. There is also significant co-occurrence of intimate partner violence and child abuse and more than half of women victims of violence reported that their children had witnessed the violence.

“This kind of life determines the child’s future. This leads to a gloomy future because they live in fear. If they live in violent homes they will become violent themselves” (FHSS respondent)

Beyond the social impacts, family violence also has direct economic costs—on individuals, employers and public sector services—and indirect costs in terms of lost productivity.

Women who experience violence are less likely to be productive, either in the formal or informal sector. This includes a reduced ability to participate in subsistence activities at the community level with victims of violence unable or unwilling, to leave the house after severe bouts of violence.

“It affects how I provide for the family because when I am badly hurt by my husband’s treatment I can’t walk to the garden and the children go hungry. Because I am the only one working in the garden to provide food for the family”. (FHSS respondent)

Families who experience violence are also more likely to have health issues.⁶³ Children from violent families are more likely to perform poorly at school. (This is on top of the generation of children whose education was curtailed during the tension.)

“It has really affected my children, especially out first son. It really effects his education. He has sleepless nights and is scared and this affects his learning ability. He can’t concentrate well in class. And his teacher notices this as well. They are traumatized by this problem.” (FHSS respondent)

Finally, in Solomon Islands **women who experience violence could be expected to be less likely to participate in decision-making or leadership roles.** Although there is little formal evidence in this area, World Bank research has found that increased political representation of women leads to better economic and social policy development in a country.⁶⁴

⁶² Allen, Dinnen, Evans and Monson, *Justice Delivered Locally: Systems, Challenges and Innovations in Solomon Islands*, World Bank Justice for the Poor Research Report, August 2013

⁶³ World Bank, *Gender Equality and Development: World Development Report*, 2012

⁶⁴ World Bank, *Gender Equality and Development: World Development Report*, 2012

In summary, despite considerable Australian government investment in the social and economic development of Solomon Islands, the inequality of women, particularly as it manifests as violence against women and their children, is a substantial risk to ongoing economic development and stable social development of the country.

Section 4: Theory of Change

First, this section reflects on lessons for the Safe Families program from international and regional experience on prevention of family violence. Second, it describes research on factors which enable social change in Solomon Islands conducted as part of this design. Finally, implications of these findings for this program are identified, providing the basis for the program objectives.

International experience

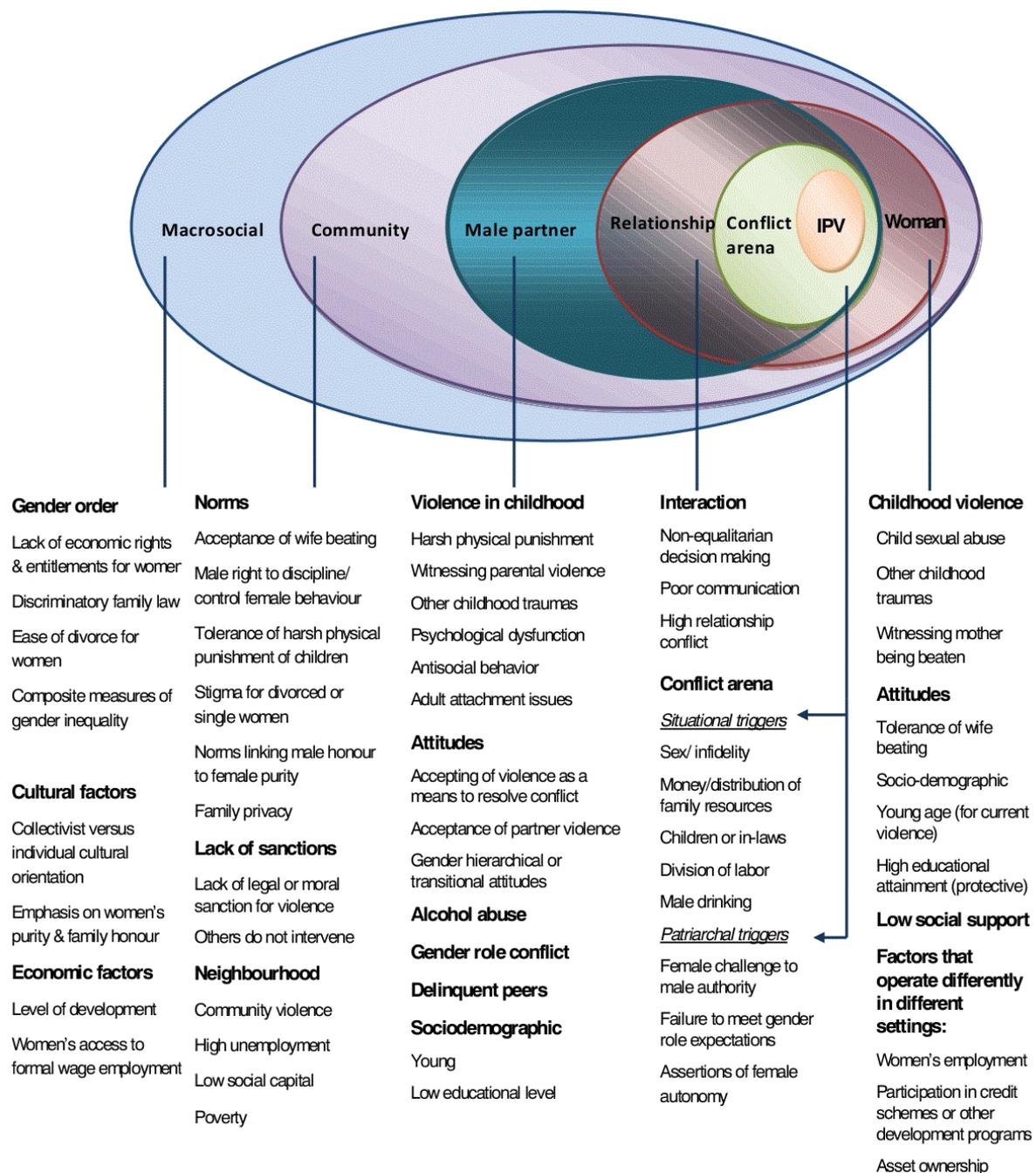
International evidence about effective prevention of family violence provides broad lessons but few specific strategies for the Solomon Islands context.

Research in developed and developing countries has shown that many factors can be causes of family violence. But research has not shown how these factors interact to cause any one instance of family violence. This is hardly surprising given the complex developmental pathways which lead any family to its current situation.⁶⁵ The following diagram outlines factors which have been shown to impact on family violence across various levels.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ For example, both the individual woman and man are the product of their individual genes and conditioning, their relationship will be the subject of its own dynamics, their relationship will be situated in its own relationship with its children, extended family, neighbourhood and community and all this is situated in cultural, economic and political systems all of which impact on that family's experience (Heise, pg. 6).

⁶⁶ Heise, *What works to prevent partner violence?*, 2011, p7

Figure 2: Heise's Conceptual Framework for Family Violence



Notwithstanding this complex array of causes, research has focused on some of the most common causes of family violence and related interventions.⁶⁷ These include:

1. Social norms

Social norms relating to masculinity and male authority and control over their family, gender roles, obedience required from women and the acceptance of wife beating including to enforce these social norms have been shown to affect family violence. **In developing countries, research indicates that the social norms and practices which operate at the**

⁶⁷ Drawn heavily from Heise, *What works to prevent partner violence?*, 2011

community level are of particular importance in determining likelihood of family violence and whether women will seek assistance.⁶⁸ One example of community level social norms and practices relevant to Melanesia is the perception that payment of bride price gives a husband proprietary rights over his wife. Most evaluated interventions trying to change gender-related social norms have run participatory workshops to provide information, encourage understanding through reflection and debate and encourage action or media campaigns combining media messages with local activities such as 'edutainment'. Some have resulted in significant reductions in family violence. **Generally, interventions which aim to shift social norms tend to be more effective when they ban or discourage behaviours as opposed to trying to present alternative behaviours to follow.**⁶⁹

2. Childhood exposure to violence

Children who are exposed to violence are more likely to perpetrate and experience violence later in life. Research from developed countries has shown that childhood exposure to violence can lead to behavioural problems and poor school performance which are associated with perpetrating violence and that children learn that violence is an effective way to resolve issues. Parenting and school programs have been effective in reducing harsh parenting and schooling and improving parent and teacher-child relationships. However, this causal relationship has not been proven through research in developing countries.

3. Alcohol abuse

Alcohol abuse has been shown to be a key factor in increasing both the frequency and severity of family violence in developed and developing countries. Interventions consisting of individual counselling and support groups and reducing the availability of alcohol have reduced family violence in developed countries but there is little evidence from developing countries as yet.

In addition to the above findings, two interventions to prevent family violence have been commonly tried, although results have been inconclusive.

4. Economic empowerment of women

Evidence on the impact on violence of women's economic empowerment (such as microfinance and cash transfer programs) is mixed with some reporting increased backlash against women, at least in the short term, and others reporting success in encouraging women to adopt safety behaviours.

5. Policy, law and justice system reform

There is evidence that the presence of an active autonomous feminist movement in a country makes policy change and government action on violence against women more likely.⁷⁰ Feminist activism was found to be a more important indicator than numbers of

⁶⁸ DFID, *A Practical Guide on Community Programming on Violence against Women and Girls*, Guidance Note 2, 2012

⁶⁹ Heise, *What works to prevent partner violence?*, 2011

⁷⁰ S. Laurel Weldon and Mala Htun, 'Feminist mobilisation and progressive policy change', *Gender and Development* 21:2, 231. This study analysed policies on violence against women in 70 countries from 1975 until 2005. It did not include any countries in the Pacific however.

women legislators or national wealth. International and regional agreements have also been used by such movements to influence policy.⁷¹ **However, evidence that laws criminalising family violence and that subjecting perpetrators to punishment under the legal system reduce family violence in either a direct sense or indirectly through changing social norms is limited,** mainly due to poor evaluation.

In summary, international experience as depicted in the above diagram tells us that the likelihood of family violence occurring is affected by a complex interplay of factors operating within and across a number of levels: (1) individual men and women's beliefs about the worth and rights of women and children; (2) social norms about the roles and worth of women and the acceptability of violence to solve problems at the community level; and (3) the enabling policy, legal and service environment which reinforce individual and community norms about the acceptability of violence.⁷² But the evidence does not tell us much about the specific pathways in which these factors operate to impact on family violence in a particular context. In terms of violence prevention the evidence suggests that women acting together for change makes a difference.

Pacific experience

A range of efforts have been made in the Pacific to provide services to survivors of, and to prevent perpetration of, family violence.

Local women's movements in some Pacific countries, for example Vanuatu and Fiji, have used international agreements and regional networks in policy advocacy to achieve policy change and government action.⁷³ While there has not yet been sufficient momentum for policy change to cascade across the Pacific (as has happened in other regions such as Latin America), respondents interviewed for this design have described how advocating through regional bodies, such as the Pacific Island Forum, can be a more effective way of influencing national governments than domestic advocacy efforts.

Where efforts have been made in Pacific countries to provide services for survivors, research indicates that to be effective, services need to be in culturally appropriate locations and provide emergency medical care, counselling and follow-up services.⁷⁴ Services are more effective if integrated into health and education services and if efforts are made to make these services more accessible for women. Integrating victim support services can increase the consistency and reach of the social message that violence is unacceptable. However, given the sheer number of survivors of violence and the weakness in quality and reach in services, **it has been concluded that many more resources would be needed to respond to the service needs of all survivors.**⁷⁵

⁷¹ S. Laurel Weldon and Mala Htun, 'Feminist mobilisation and progressive policy change, *Gender and Development* 21:2, 231.

⁷² Heise, *What works to prevent partner violence?*, 2011; WDR 2012

⁷³ For example, in Vanuatu women's rights activists lobbied for 11 years for the *Family Protection Act 2009* and in Fiji, the Fiji Women's Rights Movement have advocated for many gender related reforms including the *Domestic Violence Decree 2009* and the *Crimes Decree 2009*; International Centre for Research on Women, *Violence Against Women in Melanesia and Timor-Leste: Progress Made since the 2008 ODE Report*, 2011.

⁷⁴ International Centre for Research on Women, *Review of AusAID Programs in the Pacific Aimed at Ending Violence Against Women*, draft, 2013

⁷⁵ International Centre for Research on Women, *Review of AusAID Programs in the Pacific Aimed at Ending Violence Against Women*, draft, 2013

Pacific research suggests that **not enough sustained attention is being given to stopping the ongoing cycle of violence and changing behaviour and attitudes to prevent future violence.** There have been attempts to prevent violence including by involving male champions and addressing triggers such as alcohol and drug abuse, but these have not been substantial enough (in terms of length of time nor number of levels nor range of factors) to lead to substantial and sustained behaviour change.⁷⁶

While rigorous evidence is minimal, **Pacific experience suggests some caution against uncritical transplantation of programs which have been implemented in other regions.**⁷⁷ This means that any interventions need to be tailored to the specific context. At the same time formal justice system responses are still important – some respondents have said they are important to send a message to men and women that violence is not acceptable and to provide a demonstration and deterrence effect where a woman does seek redress from the legal system. (Formal justice system reforms are also important to ensure that an individual woman who seeks redress is not further harmed through the justice system.)

In terms of prevention, messages which are couched in terms of gender and human rights may not resonate with Pacific (especially Melanesian) women, many of whom take a more communal approach to welfare, or with Pacific men who see them as Western concepts against local tradition and religion. Respondents for this design strongly suggested that **messages are more effective when couched in terms of family welfare, respect and livelihoods.**

Finally in Melanesian culture, women are more likely to actively participate in women-only activities (such as church women's groups and women's savings clubs). However, these activities have been found to **need to actively include men**, at least at the start, to receive men's endorsement. If not, women can experience reprisals as women-only activities can be rejected by men and accordingly the community for being exclusive.

International and Pacific experience shows that social norms and practices are key to determining the likelihood of violence and whether women will seek assistance, that alcohol is a key factor in the frequency and severity of violence and that children's exposure to violence perpetuates the cycle of violence. It shows that interventions to prevent family violence must take into account the complex interplay of factors which increase the likelihood of family violence and that these factors will not only be Pacific-specific, but community-specific reflecting the cultural, social and economic

⁷⁶ International Centre for Research on Women, *Review of AusAID Programs in the Pacific Aimed at Ending Violence Against Women*, draft, 2013

⁷⁷ For example, in relation to state services, the reason women may not seek services may not only relate to quality and accessibility of the service. In some places, even capital cities, women can be frightened to be seen approaching a health facility or the police station due to reprisals from family members who would consider her action to be in breach of cultural norms to not discuss family violence. A woman may not want to go to a safe place outside her community as it may put her in breach of social norms and expectations placed on her including from any bride price paid to her family. Such action may leave her family liable for claims for compensation from her partner, put her children at risk and alienate her from her community support structure and even her ownership of land (at least in matriarchal areas). Similarly, a woman may not want her partner to go to jail as it may have implications for her family's livelihood.

experience of that community. This complexity has made measuring the success of interventions difficult—interventions must be broad enough to address and track progress across a number of factors but at the same time must be localised enough to target the community and individual levels where norms and practices play out.

Process of change in Solomon Islands

In Solomon Islands there has been research conducted on the prevalence and causes of family violence,⁷⁸ however, there has been insufficient action and learning about how to prevent family violence. The research for this design therefore focused on **what is needed to catalyse social change at community, provincial and national levels in Solomon Islands**, particularly change associated with gender and violence issues. *Findings presented below which are not footnoted come from the extensive consultations conducted for this design.*

Change in individual men and women

Information is a first step towards accepting change. Information alone it is not enough to result in changed attitudes or behaviours, but it is a necessary part of the process. To be effective, information must be accessible. Most rural Solomon Islanders have low literacy and education levels. Linking new ideas to traditional concepts can help people to understand new information and indicate that the messages are not against culture⁷⁹ or religion. For example, rural savings clubs have explained to villagers the concept of saving money in a bank account with pictures of women holding traditional shell money in local bags around their neck.

Christian beliefs and the authority of the churches can persuade people to behave differently. On the other hand, **where information is perceived to be against religion or tradition, it will usually be rejected outright.** Hearing the information from a number of trusted sources including traditional and church leaders will reinforce that those institutions support the messages.

When information is presented in lecture-style it is often poorly understood. While sermons in church may be heard by many, villagers sometimes report that information is not given clearly or simply enough to be understood. Information provided by church leaders in a less formal way (for example the Chairman's parish update after the sermon) may be clearer. Others report that lecture-style information particularly on sensitive issues is harder to internalise than information delivered with humour. Reports from Honiara indicate that radio talk-back shows on topical issues are less effective than humorous banter between radio DJs on controversial topics interspersed with popular music. This is particularly the case for young people many of whom reject standard voices of authority in society, including traditional and church leaders.

Increased knowledge can confer social status on an individual but will not necessarily contribute to change. Previous experience suggests that any information or training sessions offered are usually highly sought after, partly because information is hard to access in rural areas but also because it is one way for individuals to gain some social power. However, this desire for social status and knowledge will not lead to change until a critical mass of people in a community have the knowledge and accept the change.

⁷⁸ SPC and Ministry of Women, Children, Youth and Family Affairs, *Solomon Islands Family Health and Safety Study: A Study on Violence Against Women and Children*, 2009, noting that it was mainly quantitative.

⁷⁹ Noting that there is of course not a single agreed concept of culture

Men and women are more likely to accept change where they see benefits demonstrated. This demonstration effect is more powerful if an individual has invested something in the change and the benefits are for the community, rather than an individual. For example, men accepted that the women in their community were participating in a women’s-only savings club when they saw that the savings which were being invested would not just benefit the women, but benefit their families and the community. (*Wantok* obligations make it more difficult for individuals to accumulate wealth.)

Men and women are heavily influenced by what they perceive their peers and neighbours think of them and this perception is in turn influenced by social norms. For example, some women report that their husbands share household chores when the couple are on their own, but if there is another family member or friend present, the husband will stop for fear of ridicule and often seek to demonstrate his control over his wife to the other person. Cultural norms prescribe that women alone do household chores and most people will not want to stand out by changing their behaviour in a public way.

Efforts towards men’s acceptance of women’s equality will take generations. Given longstanding constructions of masculinity, most men are reluctant to relinquish power and control in their lives – over their families – simply because they are given information about respecting women and children as equals.

Behaviour change ≠ attitude change

In 2012, Justice Apaniai of the Solomon Islands High Court handed down an historic judgement – he overturned the common law position developed 300 years ago that said a man could not be found guilty of rape, if the woman he had sex with was his legal wife (*R v MacBrerth Gua*).

This was a landmark case for Solomon Islands, with the prosecutors who argued the case being supported through Australia’s justice program. International advisers in the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions supported local prosecuting lawyers to use international case law to argue that the principle was out dated and could not be upheld in Solomon Islands culture in 2012.

The trial judge was able to accept that *the law* could no longer support a premise that by the act of marriage, a wife was effectively under contract to have sex with her husband at any time. However, his comments in sentencing the husband highlighted that he still held *an attitude* that violence by a husband towards his wife could be justified in some circumstances. The judge stated that the wife “must also share the blame” for the act of rape because the wife had previously left the marital home because the marriage had soured.

These sentiments were overturned in 2013 by the appeal court of 3 judges; but they highlight the depth of attitudes held on these issues and the step-by-step nature that change will take.

However, individual discussions with chiefs, pastors, other community leaders or service providers and family members about the damage their violence causes their families or how they are expected by *kastom* and religion to respect their family can prompt men to self-reflect and change their behaviour. This change is likely to be short-lived if these discussions are not reinforced by subsequent discussions or changing community opinion. An example of this from another social issue is gambling – where church leaders have discouraged gambling, gambling will stop for a while until the issue drops and then individuals will start gambling again.

There is some evidence that if men know that what they are doing is illegal and that they may be arrested by the police and sent to jail, they may stop perpetrating violence. This message is

reinforced when the legal system successfully prosecutes and sends some perpetrators to jail. Such changes in men's behaviour do not necessarily reflect a change in attitudes, but can be an important first step to making family life safe for women and children.

The first step for a woman requires them to understand that family violence is wrong. But knowing this is not enough. A critical mass of people must support a woman to go outside cultural expectations and talk about family violence and seek assistance. Women are more likely to turn to trusted members of their community for assistance. This is most likely to be a family member but could also be a service provider. Trust in a service provider may result because they are from the same area or because they have developed a relationship through repeated visits. In many cases this would be a church women's group. It could also be from other community leaders. If a woman has seen that cases of family violence are ignored in her community, or raising the issue has backfired on a woman who has experienced violence, it discourages other individuals from speaking out or seeking assistance.

Community level change

At the community level it appears that the majority of people in a group would need to reject family violence before it is more acceptable for an individual to not be violent than to be violent. Community change is therefore critical to individual change.

One or two self-motivated individuals can start the community change process, but they will need support from local leaders. Although most local leaders are men, the ideas they hold can be influenced—in Solomon Islands, like most Melanesian countries, leadership is not unchallengeable but rather can be contested and negotiated. It is important that all leaders, especially church and traditional leaders, are included from the very start of any process to ensure that everyone is included and that any activities are not perceived as favouring any group over another.

Change also requires slow and sustained action over a number of years before a critical mass in the community will change their views on what is acceptable. It took seven years of working with a community before the first steps towards setting up a savings club could be taken (see example in box below). Even where messages and action are accepted, as in using bed nets and wall sprays to eliminate malaria, when energy to provide messages and action waned, people reverted to previous behaviours and malaria incidence rose again. Activities which bring community members together such as school festivals, church activities, sports and theatre have all been used to present messages to groups of people and can help to maintain interest over time.

The power of women's groups, including church women's groups to slowly work to support community level change is illustrated in the box below.

Community change: Women's savings club in Malaita Province

Savings clubs are not a new concept in Solomon Islands, but Rokotanikeni was one of the first savings clubs for women. It was driven by a woman leader from West Are Are in South Malaita, Dr Alice Pollard, who is based in Honiara. Rokotanikeni began as an association in 1999 and the savings club commenced in 2006.

At the start, traditional leaders, church leaders and the local MP were brought together in public fora so that concerns could be voiced and addressed. Importantly, this was done in local language, not Pijin. The Association dealt with the perception that they were privileging women with reference to cultural norms: culture mandates the sexes to be separate. In terms of religion, the Association aimed to expand upon the activities of the Church and the Church was tasked with maintaining the spiritual aspects of the Association's work.

It took several years for a critical mass of people to understand the concept of savings (pictures of women storing shell money in a traditional bag held around the neck were used to explain), trust the leader of the Association with their money, and witness the benefits of saving. After seven years, the savings club commenced. The Association has been careful to not be seen as in competition with other organisations and has attracted engagement from other stakeholders, such as the *Kastom* Garden Association which provides information to improve women's livelihoods from agriculture, and the Ministry of Commerce in Honiara.

As a result, women have been able to save money for school fees, solar panels, basic necessities and other income generating investments. Men also see the benefits for them and their communities of their wives' savings.

Most problems have related to process, for example record keeping skills and management of the Association. Regular visits and support from Dr Pollard are still required. The Association has been funded by small amounts of donor money to hold activities including financial management training, but the leader has ensured that donors are not dictating timetable or directions or reducing the ownership that women members have over the Association.

In relation to family violence, this means that a community must hear repeatedly that family violence is unacceptable from a number of sources: trusted local leaders including chiefs and church leaders; government service providers such as local teachers, health post workers and visiting police officers and trusted family and friends, over a long time period. These messages must be demonstrated not only through information but also through actions in relation to individual cases of violence. If a pastor or a chief ignores family violence or is violent themselves, then it sends a clear message to the community that family violence is acceptable. Similarly, if a health care worker does not ask a woman who seeks service at the clinic whether her injuries were from family violence, it infers that family violence cannot be discussed let alone addressed. Police who fail to take action in cases of family violence indicate to the community that violence is not wrong.

Change at the provincial level

The enabling environment at the provincial level can have a direct connection with action at the community level. Some service providers at the provincial level have responsibility for delivering services at the village level, for example community police officers and community affairs officers in the provincial government. Where actions and approaches are 'joined up' between service providers in a province the impact can contribute directly to changes at the community level (see the example of Isabel province outlined in Box 2 below).

However, while informal connections between service providers usually exist in most provinces, they **do not necessarily lead to joint action or sharing of resources**, across the province. This has been explained through individuals not feeling confident in their positions or wanting to stand out to be a first mover to initiate collaboration. Establishing formal committees to work on a problem can help

these informal networks coalesce into joint action. Committees can give individuals permission to admit that they do not know the answer and give them authority to act through tasking a group to acknowledge a problem and work together to address it. For example, in Isabel province, setting up a committee to work on family violence led to connections between service providers and other stakeholders, which then facilitated their engagement in prevention strategies as well as coordinated and responsive service provision. In Isabel, political support from a provincial MP also assisted the coalition to act and gain status, although political support is unlikely to be enough to sustain action.⁸⁰

Box 2. Isabel United Against Family Violence

Isabel United Against Family Violence – approaching change at three levels

Isabel Province is the longest island in the Solomon Islands and has a population of around 30,000 people, most of whom share the same ethnicity and religion (Anglican Church of Melanesia). Isabel is matrilineal and known for its tripod system where traditional chiefs, church and provincial government have equal power.

In 2010, the Isabel police noted that family violence was increasing, but not being reported to them. The then Provincial Police Commander brought together various stakeholders from the capital, Buala, to discuss how best to tackle the family violence problem. This gathering became a committee which became known as Isabel United Against Family Violence (the Alliance). It included several officers from the RSIPF in Buala, Community Affairs from the Provincial Government, the Ministry of Health's Clinical Nurse Consultant based in the Buala hospital and provincial Social Welfare representative, the Mothers Union of the Church of Melanesia, one Chief representing the Isabel Council of Chiefs and the provincial manager of Save the Children.

In its first phase, the Alliance conducted five workshops across Isabel covering all 16 wards to raise awareness that family violence is not acceptable. The Alliance asked Chiefs to select two participants per village to attend the workshops and these participants became volunteer 'agents' to assist their communities to help themselves to prevent family violence but also provide information on services available. The aim was to encourage reporting to the chief and for chiefs to engage church leaders to resolve the cases. Cases which cannot be resolved or result in serious injury should be reported to the police. There was a large increase in the number of cases reported to police during phase one (up to 98 cases in 2011, with only 4 reported in 2003) and several made it to court with four perpetrators sentenced to prison and others fined or given good behaviour bonds. Many others were mediated by police or magistrates informally. A member of the Alliance explains that communities saw sending a perpetrator to prison as akin to sending a sick person to hospital to help them recover.

An Australian volunteer working in the provincial government and RAMSI PPF advisers provided support in the start-up phase and RAMSI continues to provide a boat and fuel for Alliance members to travel to the workshop sites. The Alliance was successful in obtaining budget contributions from the provincial government, Ministry of Health and the Police and this funding was used for participants to travel to the workshops. All members of the Alliance contributed, sometimes in kind.

The Alliance is currently in its second phase and continuing its awareness workshops targeting schools and logging camps. They are also training chiefs in family violence as they have found that agents need the support of their chiefs to be effective and chiefs need to be in favour of cases being reported for them to reach the police.

Budget from the provincial government ceased in 2013 reportedly because support has not been forthcoming from the new Premier and executive (possibly because they are unaware of the work being done and consider the Alliance to be the Police's program). While the budget from the RSIPF, Ministry of Health and RAMSI continue, funding is uncertain and transportation costs for villagers to travel remain a problem. The very active Provincial Police Commander and woman MP who were motivated to initiate the Alliance have both moved on – the PPC was transferred to head Honiara police and has not been replaced. Despite this, the Alliance continues its good work but lacks the political support necessary for profile and budget. The Alliance did consider becoming an NGO to help with fund raising but decided to continue pursuing local funding sources. Reports to the police have dropped off in 2013, which the Alliance puts down to a drop in incidence due to

⁸⁰ For example, in another province, an MP rushed to set up a savings and loans club in his constituency, but the politicisation and hurried nature of the change led to the club's collapse.

their efforts and the police cracking down on unlicensed liquor sellers, but monitoring has not been conducted and follow up has been minimal. Anecdotally, villages which have experienced a drop in incidence have been those where Save the Children has conducted intensive workshops for all groups in the village over two years and those where chiefs have been supportive in the work of the agents and shown leadership in other areas (such as protesting the granting of new liquor licenses).

Change at the national level

It is more difficult to find evidence of what supports sustained change at the national level in Solomon Islands. Evidence from Australian bilateral and RAMSI programs suggests that this is a challenging and slow area of change for reasons ranging from capacity constraints to low connectivity across the archipelago. Evidence shows that strengthening the capacity of institutions is *important but far from sufficient* for improving the provision of services. In Solomon Islands there is a lack of direct causal relationship between improved institutional processes and better service delivery.⁸¹ In relation to legislative processes, there can be long stretches between parliament sittings, causing a backlog to legislative amendments. Consequently, where political or social change relies on legislative change, there can be a delay in desired impact of programming.

In any event, **where Honiara-based government ministries and church bureaucracies make policy-level changes, there is little evidence of them having influence on services or behaviours at the community level.** While there are several recent examples of national level policy changes relating to family violence prevention and services,⁸² there is little evidence of these national changes having an impact at the community level as yet.

However, provincial actors report that **support from the national level can allow space for action**, for example through budget allocation. For example, in Isabel province, the hospital's and police's involvement in the Alliance against Family Violence (see Box 2) is enabled by budget set at the national level. The initiative taken by actors at the provincial level was not driven by this budget allocation, but rather by individuals at the provincial level who sought budget after the Alliance was formed and activities had commenced.

Implications of the evidence for the Safe Families program

The research suggests that there needs to be action at both the community and individual levels before family violence becomes unacceptable to a critical mass of people in that community. This action can include primary, secondary and tertiary prevention activities (for example community activities such as workshops from service providers presenting consistent information that family violence is wrong and has consequences, alongside work with local leaders and service providers to resolve individual cases of family violence).

This action will be more effective when supported by consistent messages. Involving church, chiefs and government officials will result in consistent and repeated messages which can lead to pressure

⁸¹ Office of Development Effectiveness, *Building on Local Strengths, Evaluation of Australian Law and Justice Assistance – Solomon Islands Case Study*, 2012

⁸² A church synod has declared family violence as a sin. The Ministry of Education has included a module on family violence in the education curriculum currently being rolled out. New modules to train nurses on how to respond to family violence have been prepared by the Ministry of Health. The Ministry of Health, Police, Public Solicitors' Office and Honiara-based civil society groups have agreed in a Memorandum of Understanding to coordinate service provision at the national level (see Box 1 on Safenet).

to change social norms and behaviours. This action will also be more effective if it demonstrates consistency with *kastom* and religion. Linking community action with service providers and others at the provincial level can build towards a critical mass of support for change and reduce the gap between communities and service providers.

In Solomon Islands there are some services and organisations already experimenting with community based activities that include elements of primary, secondary and tertiary prevention of violence. This community and individual level action to prevent violence **would be more effective if it is connected to service providers and political and other leadership at the enabling environment level.** This would promote consistency in messages and give status and potentially funding to community activities as they are situated as part of something bigger. It would also encourage service providers to coordinate both services and community outreach activities and to meet any rising demand for services from community activities. Such coalitions for change should be formed at the provincial level or below to be locally relevant.

Opportunities to link community and provincial action to broader momentum for change at the national and regional level may also improve the enabling environment and bring indirect benefits for local action.

Finally it is clear that the process of change will need to be carefully monitored. There is no clear recipe for how change is likely to be achieved in any one location and the process must rely on learning from action. Rigorous monitoring and evaluation will be required to ensure the program achieves its objectives, can be expanded to other provinces and contributes effectively to policy and wider program development.

Accordingly, the proposal is for Australia to:

1. **Support existing and new community activities to prevent family violence,**
2. **Facilitate coalition action at the provincial level, and**
3. **Conduct rigorous monitoring and evaluation** to influence policy and action in Solomon Islands, regionally and internationally.

These three major components would be supported by the work undertaken through the Australian Government Gender Country Plan discussed above, in particular the **support for improved gender equality outcomes in Australia's sector programs.**

Finally, given the need to work for a critical mass to achieve change in social issues in Solomon Islands it is proposed that **the program would initially concentrate the above support in two provinces.** For a tipping point for change to be achieved, there needs to be a critical mass of people who believe that family violence is unacceptable in any location. This will be more likely if there are many partners involved at both the community and enabling environment levels, many communities engaged in activities which are sustained over time and more opportunities for learning. Accordingly, this program will initially focus its resources to implement the program on a limited area. Sufficient activity at both the community and enabling environment levels will make it more likely that these activities are mutually reinforcing and results will be seen sooner. Focusing implementation will also promote the 'do no harm' approach as implementers can become more knowledgeable about the context and the M&E systems can be more intensive if working in fewer

locations. Once lessons have been learned, then an informed decision about expanding to new provinces can be more sensibly taken.

Objectives

Based on the above theory of change, the 10-year **goal** for this program is that **family violence is no longer considered acceptable behaviour in Solomon Islands**. The main indicator of success will be a reduction in the incidence of family violence.

The program will contribute to this goal through focus on the following objectives:

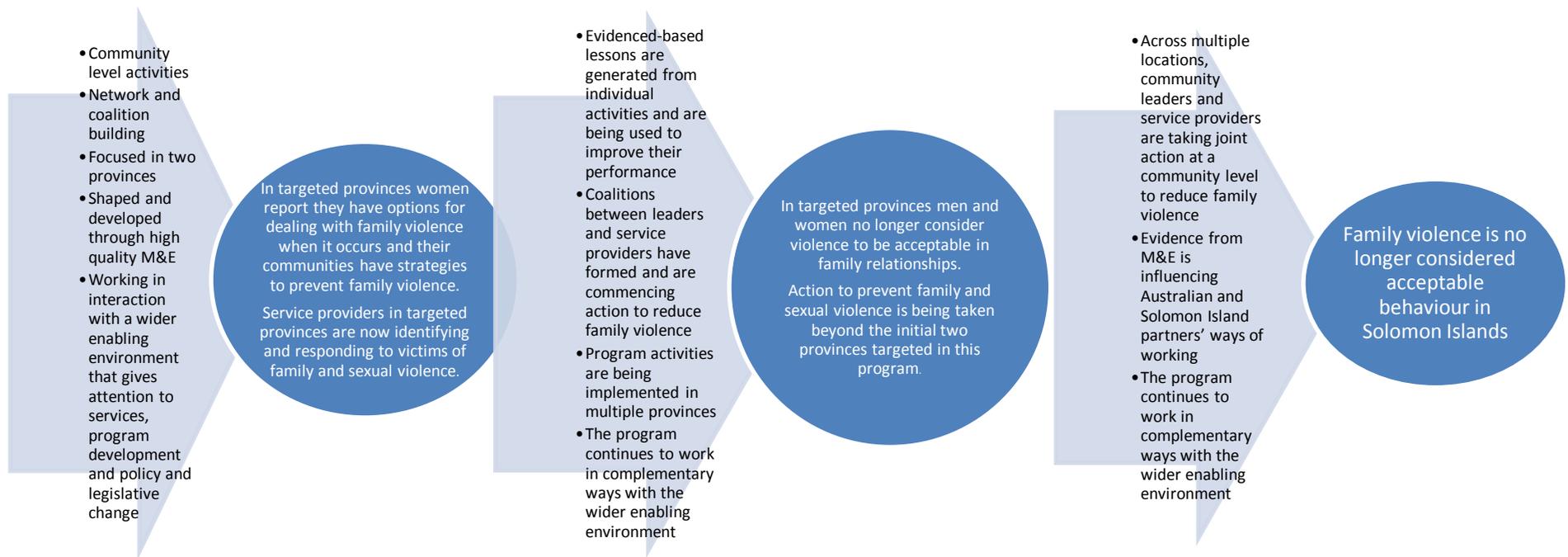
By the end of the first three years of the program:

- In targeted provinces women report that they have options for dealing with family violence when it occurs and that their communities have strategies to prevent family violence.
- Service providers in targeted provinces are now identifying and responding to victims of family and sexual violence.

By the end of six years of program implementation:

- In targeted provinces men and women no longer consider violence to be acceptable in family relationships.
- Action to prevent family and sexual violence is being taken beyond the initial two provinces targeted in this program.

The following diagram summarises the connection between these objectives and the program theory about how change will happen.



Section 5: Program Implementation

As presented in the previous section, the Safe Families program will focus on community level action in two provinces alongside support for coalitions and alliances for change within those same locations. This section proposes how the components of the Safe Families Program would be implemented. Further details are included in Annexes 7, 9 and 10. Other implementation options considered are included in Annex 4.

Component 1: Community activities to prevent family violence

This component will provide direct financial and other support to communities to conduct activities to prevent family violence. Decisions on what should be supported should be made locally and collectively such as through a ‘local conversations’ approach, described below.

A series of ‘local conversations’ would be held. That is, individuals and organisations working on family violence or related issues at the community level and other leaders would be invited to come together⁸³ to discuss causes of family violence in their communities, what needs to be done to prevent family violence and who is best placed to do it and hence receive support. It is expected that the ‘local conversations’ would canvass a wide range of ideas that are likely to cover the spectrum of primary and secondary and tertiary preventative approaches. For example, proposed activities may not only focus on efforts to make family violence unacceptable, but also to empower, protect and serve women and children survivors.

The ‘local conversations’ approach would give participants a stake in the decisions made collectively and the approach would start to develop recognition of a community of interest such that consensus is built across groups on priorities and the benefits of working together.⁸⁴ This approach should foster joint ownership and action from the start of the program rather than relationships with the Safe Families program being about competing for scarce funding. This would further the aims of the coalition component, described below.

To be effective, the way the local conversations are managed will be important. They must be inclusive and locally owned. Local networks would be utilised to ensure interest from a broad range of organisations working or intending to work in the target provinces.⁸⁵ There will also need to be support for local actors to develop and articulate their ideas and networks without detracting from community ownership.⁸⁶ Lessons learned on how to implement effective community level programs in Solomon Islands are synthesised in Annex 3 and these lessons would be reflected in implementation.

Following decisions made through the ‘local conversations’, groups would be supported to conduct new, or extend existing, activities to prevent family violence. Funding could include grants to NGOs, churches or other civil society or private sector groups with sufficient capacity to manage the funds or through direct funding for community activities. Those implementing the community activities may need additional support during implementation such as mentoring and advice.

⁸³ Most likely at a ward level

⁸⁴ Harris, PNG Nation in waiting

⁸⁵ The justification for including a wide net is not to reach all citizens in a province, but to ensure a wide range of beneficiaries are included, including children, youth and the disabled. In depth discussions with People With Disability Solomon Islands (PWDSI) - the only disability focused NGO operating in the country – would be required early in implementation to ensure the program is sufficiently supporting women with disability. PLP would be a check on the inclusiveness of the local conversations run by the implementer of component 1.

⁸⁶ M&E input from the implementer of component 3 would also be needed from the start of efforts to develop ideas and activities.

In the implementation of the community level activities the Safe Families program would seek to encourage:

1. Organisations or groups to join with other local actors in the implementation of their activities at the community level
2. Organisations or groups to link with other activities and partners at the provincial level
3. Organisations or groups to participate in and contribute to learning (a requirement of the program is that funded groups and organisations will agree to engage with the monitoring and evaluation conducted by the program).

Activities involving children would be encouraged given the intergenerational nature of the transmission of violence in Solomon Islands.⁸⁷

This component will be implemented by an organisation with strong community development experience selected through a competitive grants process.

More details of how this component could be managed and implemented are in Annex 7.

Examples of potential community activities:

World Vision International's Channels of Hope Program

This program aims to use the scriptures to explain the basis for the value of women and gender equality and communities' role in preventing family violence. While church leaders are the primary agent of change, service providers including police and health officers are included in the activities to try to bridge the gap between service providers and the community.

The Church of Melanesia's Mothers Union's Positive Parenting Program

The Mothers Union is piloting a positive parenting course for new parents. This program aims to give families tools for managing conflict and preventing violence. Currently in its pilot phase, the aim is to expand it throughout the extensive Mothers Union network.

Component 2: Facilitation of coalition action at the provincial level

The second major activity for the program will be to facilitate coalitions between CSOs, private sector, service providers, churches and other government and non-government leaders at the provincial level (or below). These coalitions would contribute directly to change through enhancing the efforts of service providers across the province. The coalitions would also be expected to contribute indirectly to changing the social norms in the province about family violence and therefore contribute to supporting and enhancing community based activities. It is expected that several of the initiatives and stakeholders supported under component 1 would also be involved in the coalition-focused work under this component.

⁸⁷ Noting that the Australian government *Child Protection Policy* would apply to any activities involving or impacting upon children.

Examples of potential coalition action:

The Isabel Alliance (see Box 2)

There is interest from police chiefs in some other provinces to set up a similar coalition, for example in Choiseul.

Oxfam: Standing Together Against Violence

With Australian support, Oxfam plans to facilitate cross-learning on lessons learned from the Isabel Alliance to other provinces.

In areas where coalitions take longer to build, funding may be used to bring potential coalition members together to start to plan for joint action. The program would map out potential actors to find where the developmental leadership exists in the target provinces to ensure any efforts are supporting and strengthening local leadership and not imposed from outside.

The program would also scan for opportunities to link up provincial level coalitions to broader movements for change both within Solomon Islands and regionally, where appropriate. This would be done through cooperation with sector programs (see below) and through the Safe Families program's role as part of the regional Pacific Women program.

This component will be implemented by the Australia-funded Pacific Leadership Program (PLP). PLP has an established process for, and experience in, supporting multi-stakeholder coalitions. A detailed outline of how PLP would approach this activity is included in Annex 9.⁸⁸

Component 3: Rigorous monitoring and evaluation and support to learning processes

Monitoring and evaluation is a critical component of the Safe Families program. Alongside accountability requirements it needs to provide information for learning and program improvement. Through a dedicated process of monitoring and evaluation the program expects to learn about how to support effective change processes that will facilitate prevention of violence. It intends to build on the learning to expand program location and scope and contribute to influencing other programs both in Solomon Islands and across the region.

Both of the above components will be subject to rigorous monitoring and evaluation by the program. This information will be used to improve performance of the community level activities and learn lessons from both community and coalition activities. The monitoring and evaluation therefore needs to be ongoing and constant, operating as an additional strategy in the program.

It is proposed that an action reflection approach would be utilised working across levels of community and province as well as the national level. The process and outcomes of activity at community and provincial level would be examined in detail utilising indicators, performance questions and through examination of key assumptions. This information would be utilised to support a six monthly process of reflection at both community and provincial level.

⁸⁸ The contract for the implementation of PLP is being retendered. PLP Phase 3 is due to start in July 2014. From this point, this program will task PLP's contractor through service orders. Until Phase 3 starts, the program can task the current contractor to commence the coalitions work as long as it is within the current contract's budget. Co-located in Suva, PLP will work closely with the regional Pacific Women program.

At the national level information from program activities would be used to examine the interaction of those activities with other components of the Australian aid program's Gender Country Plan. The outcomes of the combined components would be the basis for an annual reflection process that would contribute to further improvement in the Country Plan and provide information for program reporting within the Australian Government systems.

An annual reflection that brings together other national stakeholders including the government of Solomon Islands, other donors and key stakeholders such as churches, NGOs and women's groups would also be managed by the program in cooperation with those stakeholders. The purpose of this reflection process would be to make public the findings from this program. There would be encouragement for similar sharing from other stakeholders with an emphasis upon evidence of outcomes and analysis of implications. It is expected that this broader process would contribute to country level reporting for the Government of Solomon Islands and other actors.

Formal evaluation of the program against its objectives would be undertaken at the three year, six year and end of program points.

The Solomon Islands Country Plan includes a dedicated research budget. The Safe Families program may raise suggestions to the gender team for research which would provide for more in-depth examination of particular areas relevant to program progress. Research is already planned to investigate the connection between women's economic empowerment and violence against women.⁸⁹ In conjunction with the regional Pacific Women program, efforts will be made to cooperate with research and M&E in other Pacific and other countries where Australia is working to eliminate violence against women.

This component will be implemented by Australia's Pacific Women Hub. The Hub, currently in its inception phase, is a flexible management structure which has been established to support Pacific Posts' implementation of their gender activities under the regional Pacific Women program.⁹⁰ The Hub offers significant advantages for this program:

- The Hub would bring considerable efficiencies given management costs will be borne by the regional program for the benefit of the whole Pacific. This program would pay for costs directly attributable to work in Solomon Islands only. This is particularly beneficial for this program which requires significant resources to implement but is of low monetary value.
- The Hub would offer flexibility. The contract for the contractor supporting the Hub would be wide enough in scope for the program to direct the actions of the Hub through regular tasking notes. This would allow the program to make decisions progressively.
- The Hub will ensure coherence and coordination with regional approaches to M&E and learning.

Details about how monitoring, evaluation and research will be provided are in Annex 10.

The location of the work

As explained above, given the need to work for a critical mass to achieve change in social issues in Solomon Islands the Safe Families program will initially be concentrated in two locations.

⁸⁹ Planned for Solomon Islands, PNG and Vanuatu, conducted by SSGM and IWDA.

⁹⁰ The Hub is also tasked to manage regional research, share good practice, report on performance and ensure coherence and coordination of Pacific Women activities. The Hub is supported by a contractor (contracted until November 2014) which provides technical support, logistical support and communication and learning support. It is estimated that 70 per cent of Post's activities under their Gender Country Plans will be managed by the Hub.

The following are **criteria for the selection of provinces**:

- a. Strength of leadership at the provincial level (including premier, provincial police commander, church and community leaders)
- b. Strong interest in the program from political, state and church leaders at the provincial level
- c. Existing activities focussing on family violence and related issues at the community level
- d. Strength of any existing coalitions or other joined up action at provincial level or below
- e. Utility of lessons learned for/from others
- f. Need
- g. Accessibility.

These criteria would also be considered for any expansion into new provinces during the course of the program as lessons are learned from the first two provinces and more funds become available.

On the basis of current information and recommendations from people consulted, components 1 and 2 could commence in **Choiseul and Malaita** provinces, with some supporting work in Isabel. Rationale for this selection is included in Annex 5. The choices can be revisited if the context requires.

Isabel was considered as a target location, but the coalition work is functioning with RAMSI support. However, the coalition has not managed to conduct M&E to assess its results and improve its effectiveness. Accordingly, it is proposed that the Safe Families program conduct M&E on the existing work of the Isabel Alliance.⁹¹

Cooperation with sector programs

The Safe Families program will work closely with the Australian bilateral aid sector programs in Solomon Islands to reinforce the work being undertaken in those programs to support gender equality. As an example of this work, Australia has recruited a Senior Social Development Adviser in Solomon Islands to assist the sector programs to improve their gender outcomes. Specifically with respect to family violence, this Adviser will ensure that the policy dialogue and M&E conducted in all Australia's programs are mutually reinforcing. Cooperation will focus on the areas of health, law and justice, education, economic development and community programs. Details of how this will be done in each sector are in Annex 6.

Section 6: Program management

This section describes how Australia will work in partnership with Solomon Islands stakeholders and the roles and responsibilities of team members. It also outlines the budget, how risks will be managed, safeguards built into the program and lastly, but importantly, the Safe Families approach to sustainability.

Program governance

Given this program is primarily focussed at the community level, accountability to Solomon Islands citizens is critical. Citizens of both Solomon Islands and Australia will be able to access information on the program including reviews and regular performance reporting on the DFAT and Pacific Women websites. But given the lack of internet and media accessibility in Solomon Islands, annual reflection workshops will be held involving interested Solomon Island stakeholders to enable feedback and facilitate cross-learning (see component 3 on M&E above).

⁹¹ Australia is also funding the evaluation of World Vision's Channels of Hope program in Honiara and Guadalcanal and Temotu provinces to generate lessons for others. The upcoming Australian-funded UNWomen – Markets for Change program in Honiara will also be evaluated in relation to impacts on women's safety.

The formal way for the Solomon Islands and Australian Governments to hold this program to account is through the annual Solomon Islands – Australia Partnership for Development high level talks. Gender is one item of many on the agenda so it is not a forum for detailed discussion, although it may be an opportunity for both governments to raise big issues and reflect on progress.

More regularly, there will be informal opportunities for the two governments to discuss issues and progress. For example, the Counsellor managing gender and the Senior Social Development Adviser will meet regularly with the Permanent Secretary of MWYCFA.

At the regional level, Australia will report to the Pacific Islands Forum on Australia's contribution to progress towards meeting the obligations in the Pacific Leaders' Gender Declaration. The program will also provide input to the Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development advisory board which meets annually to assess progress under the regional program.

At the international level, this program will contribute to learning on approaches to preventing family violence through rigorous monitoring and evaluation and the publication and dissemination of results. The program will also feed information to Australia's Global Ambassador for Women and Girls as appropriate.⁹²

Roles and Responsibilities

Head of the Aid Program at Honiara Post

The head of the aid program will bear overall responsibility for the program. This includes managing the Counsellor in charge of the gender program to ensure the program is delivering results and the other Counsellors so that advice from the Senior Social Development Adviser leads to improved results in the sector programs.

The head of the aid program will also lead discussions on progress in the Partnership talks and the Pacific Islands Forum outlined in Governance above.

Counsellor

The DFAT Counsellor managing the gender program will be responsible for leading the gender team to manage this program and deliver results. They are accountable to the head of the aid program at Honiara Post. The Counsellor's responsibilities include:

- Sharing messages and lessons learned from the program with the DFAT management team
- Sharing messages and lessons learned from the program through policy dialogue with the MWYCFA and other SIG counterparts as relevant and seeking and actioning their feedback
- Sharing messages and lessons learned from the program with AFP and RAMSI and seeking and actioning their feedback
- Managing the quality of gender team staff performance and internal program review (for example Quality at Implementation reports).

Gender team

The DFAT Honiara gender team will be responsible for management of the implementation of the program and will be the primary interface with Solomon Islands partners. The gender team is accountable to the Counsellor. The gender team's responsibilities include:

- Managing the competitive grants process to select an organisation to implement Component 1

⁹² The ambassador advocates internationally for women's equal participation in political, economic and social affairs.

- Managing the partnership with PLP to implement the coalitions Component 2 through providing clear tasking notes to the Suva Post
- Leading engagement with the Pacific Women Hub in Suva which is responsible for managing M&E Component 3, facilitating cross learning and assessment across the Pacific and working to help standardise approaches to M&E and research
- Facilitating the implementers of components 1, 2 and 3 to agree protocols and processes to ensure coordination and clarity in responsibilities and accountabilities
- Ensuring coherence between the components in the Gender Country Plan such that all programs are coordinated and mutually reinforcing
- Establishing a strategy to communicate failure constructively to stakeholders, the public, DFAT and the Minister to manage the risk of short term program failure leading to a lack of long term commitment
- Supporting the policy dialogue messages of the Counsellor with the MWYCFA
- Ensuring that gender program support to the MWCYFA supports its own policy advocacy with other Ministries in relation to family violence, including in relation to the EVAW Taskforce
- Meeting Australian Government quality and reporting requirements
- Sharing lessons learned with the Solomon Islands Gender Equality Donor Coordination Group
- Inputting into SINPA re-design to ensure coherence with this program and clear mechanisms for lesson-sharing
- Sharing lessons learned with other parts of DFAT funding community level programs
- Providing input into the Pacific Women advisory board and the Pacific Gender Donor and Development Group
- Managing internal engagement with the Pacific Women project team, other Posts and the gender teams in Canberra.

Senior Social Development Adviser

The soon to commence Senior Social Development Adviser will be responsible for assisting Australia's sector programs in health, education, law and justice, economic development and community programs to reinforce the prevention of family violence messages and actions of this program. The Adviser will be accountable to the head of the aid program. Responsibilities include:

- Assisting DFAT staff to increase their knowledge and skills to address family violence issues as relevant, particularly in policy dialogue and monitoring and evaluation
- Assisting DFAT staff to track their partners' obligations under family violence laws and policies
- Ensuring that lessons from this program which are relevant to the sector teams' programs are fed back to the sector teams and influence policy dialogue and M&E
- Working one day a week in the MWYCFA to support the Ministry's mainstreaming action plan, including its advocacy with other Ministries in relation to family violence.

The Pacific Women Hub

The Hub is responsible for managing M&E Component 3. The responsibilities of the Hub, how it will interface with PLP and the Australian Aid program in Suva and Honiara are described in Annex 10.

Pacific Leadership Program

PLP is responsible for managing the coalitions Component 2. Its responsibilities and how it will interface with Pacific Women and the Australian Aid program in Suva and Honiara are described in Annex 9.

DFAT manager of the Pacific Women Hub

The DFAT manager of the Pacific Women Hub will bear overall responsibility for management of the contract with the Hub contractor. This includes acting to resolve any disagreements between the Honiara and Suva posts in relation to tasking the Hub.

Budget

It is expected that each component will be funded to the levels below, with a total 3 year program cost of AUD 4,830,000.

Overall Budget (AUD)	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
Component 1	1,200,000	1,200,000	1,200,000	3,600,000
Component 2	200,000	200,000	200,000	600,000
Component 3	200,000	200,000	200,000	600,000
DFAT staff travel costs	10,000	10,000	10,000	30,000
Total	1,610,000	1,610,000	1,610,000	4,830,000

Risks and Risk Management

Working to prevent violence against women is always inherently risky due to **the need to challenge ingrained social norms, beliefs and attitudes** in order to promote gender equality. Risks occur at several levels.

At the level of program implementation key risks include:

- The risk of backlash and further violence to women who challenge social norms and entrenched gender roles;
- The risk that individuals working in NGOs or government service areas who are partnering in the program may also use violence against women thus reducing the overall legitimacy and integrity of their work;
- The risks that promotion of women's human rights and challenging harmful cultural and religious beliefs and practices can be resisted as a foreign, imposed agenda.

These risks will be managed through engaging closely with church leaders, chiefs and local leaders and other men at the community and province levels to ensure activities are seen as inclusive and consistent with culture and religion. Program support will proceed at communities' and coalitions' pace. Personnel and partners will be closely vetted to ensure they are committed to gender equality and that activity staff promote appropriate behaviour and messaging on gender equality. Each of these risks will be closely monitored during implementation through the extensive investment in monitoring and evaluation.

There are also risks associated with the design approach. This includes a significant risk that this program's **focus on preventing family violence is too narrow to achieve results.**

This risk will be managed through collaboration with other works areas, including Australia's efforts in improving outcomes for women through its sector programs described above. However, the effectiveness of these efforts is also reliant on Solomon Island Government receptiveness to act to change policy and implementation on areas impacting on family violence. This is a particular challenge at the province level and below.

There are several **implementation risks** including:

- There is insufficient interest from, and skills within, communities to run activities under component 1 including joining up with other actors to reach a critical mass of action
- The 'local conversation' consultation process is captured by larger organisations or local political interests
- Communities lack the capacity to implement their ideas and manage funds
- Coalition members are not supported by senior members of their organisations.

Managing these risks requires the right personnel hired by the organisation implementing component 1 and PLP. They must be able to facilitate community action adeptly, accurately assess implementation and fiduciary risks and help actors address them, and encourage actors to join together to increase the chance of effective action. Personnel will also need to tap into broad networks, extending to Honiara-based organisations who may be interested in working in the target provinces. PLP will also need to help coalition members to work politically to garner support from their organisations and this may include linking up with Australia's sector programs to increase status and recognition of coalition activities. Where the right personnel cannot be sourced from the target provinces, the implementers of the program will need to take a flexible and collegiate approach to solving the problem.

A further risk from this program's approach is associated with the range of stakeholders involved in the proposed actions. Given the need for the three components and the rest of the Australian aid program to work collaboratively, there is a **risk that the number of implementers will make management difficult**. This risk will be managed with clear roles and responsibilities and communication protocols and regular reflection on what is working and what is not. From the perspective of communities and coalition members, the personnel under components 1 and 2 in the target provinces will work together as one team. Using the Hub for M&E will help to ensure that lessons are effectively captured across the components and shared with Solomon Islands and regional stakeholders.

There are also risks to committing to an evidence-based approach to preventing family violence. '**Collateral failures**' will be a part of the process of learning what works and what does not and are intrinsic to experimentalist approaches. Sharing the learning from these failures will benefit all stakeholders interested in reducing family violence in Solomon Islands, and will ensure value for money for Australian tax payers in the medium and long run. However, a communications strategy might need to include an element on 'communicating failure constructively' so there is no inadvertent damage for Australian commitment to fund violence prevention efforts in the longer term.

The risks outlined above pale in comparison to the risk of not intervening in this area. Australia is the largest donor in Solomon Islands and has made a commitment to addressing gender inequality and family violence. Australia risks undermining its considerable investment in security and economic development in Solomon Islands if it fails to act comprehensively to support violence prevention.

A Draft Risk Register is at Annex 12 which will be revisited six-monthly by the implementer of Component 3 on M&E.

Safeguards

An overarching principle for this design is that 'do no harm' criteria will be integrated in all phases of this project. The safety of women and children affected by violence, particularly those with disabilities, will remain a primary consideration during implementation and monitoring.

Protection of women

As mentioned in the risk section, the Safe Families program will be trying to change attitudes and behaviours that are very much entrenched in *kastom* and religious beliefs. International evidence shows that as these attitudes are challenged and women are empowered, it can result in backlash against women and a spike in violence. There is also the chance that women will be exposed to risk if they take on ideas of gender equality that the surrounding community environment does not support leaving women who speak out unprotected. All activities will closely monitor the situation of women within their communities and ensure that they explicitly focus on doing no harm whilst also ensuring local support networks are established to protect women as much as possible. One important safeguard mechanism will be to ensure men and women are both involved in activities to ensure it is not seen as a women's project against men and securing the support of local leaders including church leaders.

Disability inclusion

The Safe Families program will ensure that the special needs of women and children with disability (explained above) are supported by:

- Making it a requirement that funded activities clearly specify how they will ensure women and children with disability are included and catered for in activities and that any community workshops include discussions on the particular protection needs of women and children with disability;
- Ensuring M&E incorporates disability specific indicators to ensure the program captures data on the number of women and children with disability living within a community, the number participating in activities, and an evaluation of the outcomes for these women and children; and
- Inviting People With Disability Solomon Islands to participate in reflection workshops, program monitoring and evaluation, and local conversations at the provincial level.

Child protection

Violence against children is a significant issue in Solomon Islands and the *Family Health and Safety Study* found that there is also a strong association between intimate partner violence and child abuse by the same perpetrator. Children who are victims of abuse, or witness their mother being abused are likely to experience behavioural emotional or schooling problems. Given the demographics in Solomon Islands (40 per cent of the population under 15), engaging young people will help to break the inter-generational cycle of violence.

Accordingly, activities directly targeting children will be encouraged. Activities that engage with children will be required by the implementing contractor to comply with the Australian Government's *Child Protection Policy*. There will be great attention given to ensuring children are protected while they or their families engage in the program. The program will assess the impact on children through the M&E.

Sustainability

DFAT broadly defines sustainability as "the continuation of benefits after major assistance has been completed". The widespread behaviour and attitude change needed to achieve the goal of preventing family violence will take generations. After 10 years, this program is aiming for men and women in the target locations to change their behaviour by choosing non-violent ways to resolve conflict in the family. It is not aiming for the activities funded or the coalitions supported to be able to continue their activities without external support. It is aiming for the funded activities and the support to coalitions to embed new

ways of working so that stakeholders—organisations, communities and individuals—continue to work in a collaborative way to prevent family violence.

For this collaborative approach to persist beyond the life of the program, local ownership and resilience are critical factors for the success of coalitions and joined up activities under components 1 and 2. Experience in the Pacific indicates a number of principles in relation to supporting sustainable coalitions which this program will adopt:

- Local ownership is critical to long term developmental change⁹³
- Substantive and enduring change is possible when local people identify a shared ambition and influence and act with others to realise it
- Leadership is exercised at all levels of society, and involves more than just the leaders at the top of organisations
- The exercise of leadership is risky and unpredictable. Therefore, respectful and robust relationships with those leading change are essential for resilience
- Developmental change is more durable and sustainable if it is collectively owned and led by a coalition of actors who are able to contribute their political capital and resources to the change process
- Knowledge of the local context and institutions is critical.⁹⁴

It is important that providing funds to individual activities under component 1 strengthens this approach to sustainability. For example, care must be taken that decisions on what activities to fund are made in a way which contributes to broader commitment to prevent family violence rather than in a way which foments competition and ill will between stakeholders.⁹⁵ Using a 'local conversations' approach where potential grantees are brought together to work through problems and decide what needs to be done and who should be funded to do it would help to foster joint ownership and action rather than competition. Incentives to encourage individual grantee organisations to join with other local actors in the implementation of their activities will also be vital.

Strong monitoring and evaluation in component 3 will fortify this approach to sustainability. Not only will it help funded activity implementers and coalition members to improve their performance, but any evidence on the benefits of coalitions and collaborative action will encourage potential funders (donors, government and NGOs) to work in a way which supports collaboration, rather than weakens it. Beyond the target locations, increasing the quality, quantity and accessibility of evidence on what works to prevent family violence will make a lasting contribution to domestic, regional and international development practice.

⁹³ Box 2 on the Isabel Alliance shows how donors can support local initiatives without reducing local ownership. Supporting through logistics and helping state coalition members to seek their own budget and other members to contribute in kind as happened in Isabel is a model which increases the likelihood of sustainability and effectiveness. It is still too early to comment on the Alliance's sustainability, but it should be noted that the Alliance considered becoming an NGO so they could apply for funding from donors. At the very least, this program will not incentivise coalitions to seek unsustainable funding sources. If there is no existing local leadership supporting prevention of family violence through 'joined-up' action, the program will move gradually and nimbly to help generate shared ambition for change.

⁹⁴ PLP

⁹⁵ This approach has begun right from the design of this program - the lengthy facilitated internal design process has allowed time for extensive and genuine consultation and has started to share information and build connections between local actors who want to contribute to preventing family violence.

To ensure the ongoing support of Australia's sector programs, DFAT's aid management systems will be used to clarify and embed the roles of staff and programs to contribute to the goal of prevention of family violence. The Senior Social Development Adviser will be responsible for encouraging staff to include family violence data collection, analysis and policy dialogue in the gender sections of the Quality at Implementation Reports on health, education, justice, broad-based economic growth and community development. This will ensure annual reflection on progress and setting deliverables for the next year.

Annexes follow in a separate document.