



2020-21 SOLOMON ISLANDS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM PROGRESS REPORT

The *2020-21 Solomon Islands Development Program Progress Report* summarises progress for the reporting period 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021 of implementation of the Australia – Solomon Islands COVID-19 Response Plan and program highlights.

Our development program to Solomon Islands contributes towards achieving the following Sustainable Development Goals.

Program Budget	2020-21 Budget Estimate \$m*
Bilateral	103.1
Regional	29.5
Global	6.6
Other Government Departments	17.6
Total	156.8
Temporary, Targeted and Supplementary Measures (TTS)	15.9
Total ODA	172.7

*Actual expenditure is expected to be available in December 2021/ January 2022.



CONTEXT

Australia and Solomon Islands are strong security, development and economic partners. We share similar COVID-19 response goals—to save lives and livelihoods and emerge stronger post-pandemic. **Australia is Solomon Islands’ largest bilateral donor** and we have reshaped our efforts in response to COVID-19, including through support to keep schools and health clinics open, the courts and police operating, and other government services functioning. Australia’s partnership with Solomon Islands is aligned with the Solomon Islands’ National Development Strategy (2016-2035) and Solomon Islands and Australia continue to be key regional partners.

Over the reporting period, Solomon Islands continued to successfully prevent COVID-19 community transmission, largely through closing borders and strict quarantine processes. **Vaccinations began rolling out across the country in March 2021.** There were 65,800 AstraZeneca doses delivered between February and June 2021 (52,800 from the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX) and 13,000 doses from Australian stocks). Access and vaccine hesitancy remained a barrier, which Solomon Islands, with Australian support, has worked hard to address. On 25 June 2021, 1.1 per cent of the target population had been fully vaccinated and 4.6 per cent had received one dose.

Solomon Islands’ state of emergency, declared on 25 March 2020, was in place throughout the whole reporting period. The focus of the Solomon Islands Government (SIG) remained on preventing COVID-19 transmission. Passenger flights into Solomon Islands were restricted and regulated. Security at Solomon Islands’ western border with Papua New Guinea (PNG) continued to be a high national priority to prevent the spread of COVID-19 from PNG. The Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF), with significant Australian support, continued to play a critical role in maintaining security in Solomon Islands.

The social and economic impacts of COVID-19 have been substantial. **In 2020, the Solomon Islands economy contracted by 4.5 per cent.** The Asian Development Bank (ADB) forecasts growth of 1 per cent in 2021 and 4.5 per cent in 2022, but its forecasts are heavily dependent on development partner-led infrastructure projects, many of which have already faced delays. Any level of COVID-19 community transmission would put these modest growth projections at further risk.

The SIG has conceded that progress against the Sustainable Development Goals is off target, and implementation of the five pillar National Development Strategy (2016–2035) slipped in 2020 and continued to slide in 2021.

AUSTRALIA'S RESPONSE AND PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Australia's development program continues to align with government priorities and deliver across the pillars of the *Partnerships for Recovery* framework. For the reporting period, Australia's development program played a critical role by scaling up health system support, particularly supporting access to COVID-19 vaccines, ensuring continued access to education services, telecommunications, and infrastructure (within the limitations of COVID-19 restrictions), maintaining peace and economic stability through policing support, and boosting skills. In a challenging environment, most investments have made satisfactory progress, although progress has been uneven with two completed investments not fully meeting expected outcomes.

Health Security

Australia has committed \$14.1 million over three years (2020-23) for COVID-19 vaccine access, including delivery support and vaccine procurement, drawing on Australia's **Regional COVID-19 Vaccine Access and Health Security Initiative (VAHSI)**. Through VAHSI, Australia has committed to support Solomon Islands and other Pacific island countries achieve comprehensive vaccine coverage. By 30 June 2021, Australia had shared 13,000 AstraZeneca doses and associated consumables with Solomon Islands from Australian supplies. This is in addition to **Australia's support for the COVAX Advance Market Commitment** totalling \$130 million. By 30 June 2021, this global mechanism had delivered 52,800 COVID-19 vaccine doses to Solomon Islands.

Through our long-standing health program in Solomon Islands, Australia stepped up its health security support and work to strengthen the capability of the SIG to prepare for, and respond to, a COVID-19 outbreak. For the reporting period, through our budget support program and by leveraging our existing partnerships with the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), **we improved testing capability with the provision of GeneXpert calibration and testing cartridges**. We also **provided essential medical and personal protective equipment**, which was distributed to the National Referral Hospital and to SIG medical staff around the country, strengthening the Ministry of Health and Medical Services' (MHMS) COVID-19 management and response. In addition, \$1.7 million in grants was provided to provincial health authorities to support preparedness and response activities, such as training of health workers, community outreach and awareness, temporary quarantine facilities, and procurement of information technology equipment and transport.


Australia continued to support efforts to combat communicable diseases through our \$300 million contribution to the Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance (Gavi), and our \$242 million pledge to the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. Australia's Indo-Pacific Centre for Health Security supported MHMS in infection prevention and control, training for field epidemiology, vector control and surveillance, and the deployment of health security technical resources. For the reporting period, we also provided **training and technical assistance on health systems mapping**, in partnership with WHO, and improved water, sanitation and hygiene services, particularly in health care settings, through the Australian Humanitarian Partnership.

Stability

Our justice, governance, education, gender and police programs continued to work towards safer communities, enhanced security, and supporting the reach of government services throughout the country.

During the reporting period Australia, in collaboration with the United Kingdom, **provided video conferencing equipment across the courts and justice agencies, allowing matters to be heard remotely**. This virtual court system allowed for more efficient court appearances, and vulnerable witnesses had a more appropriate avenue to give evidence. Solomon Islands Court of Appeal sessions have been held with judges based overseas using the video conference system.

The Solomon Islands Education Sector Support Program, which Australia jointly funds with New Zealand, pivoted program delivery to support learning continuity, providing sector budget support, grant funding for non-government organisation delivered programs, and technical assistance. The latter involved a redirection of technical adviser roles to assist the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development (MEHRD) develop and realise its Learning



Continuity Action Plan, Business Continuity Action Plan, and COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan for the education sector. For the reporting period, this resulted in successful rollouts of distance learning through radio, television, online learning resources and print materials; community engagement and support in teaching and learning; and school preparedness through the formulation and testing of school emergency standard operating procedures. We also helped improve teaching and learning by supporting 160 unqualified teachers to complete qualifications and 547 people to commence teacher qualification training. Our partnerships with Save the Children and UNICEF assisted in keeping schools open and communities safe by strengthening COVID-19 response preparedness and planning at the community level, including learning continuity, and providing water supply and handwashing facilities in 50 communities.

Our Defence and Police Development Programs worked closely with Solomon Islands throughout the pandemic to boost the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force's COVID-19 response and preparedness. The Defence Cooperation Program funded the rotating presence of patrol boats Royal Solomon Islands Police Vessel (RSIPV) Auki and RSIPV Gizo on Solomon Islands' western border. For the reporting period, the program delivered enhanced radio communications to two RSIPF western border outposts. Australia **funded the expansion of the Solomon Islands' police small boat fleet from two to six** by providing, repairing and transporting small boats and essential equipment to the western border and gifting two additional aluminium fast boats to provide a more flexible maritime response capability in remote areas. At the request of the Solomon Islands Government, Australia deployed HMAS Maitland (in March 2021) and HMAS Larrakia (in May 2021) to the western border to fill a surveillance gap left by the decommissioning of RSIPV Auki. Under Australia's new Solomon Islands Gender Equality Plan 2020-22, we continued to support the Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs implement the SAFENET referral network in all provinces to ensure services providers worked together to address domestic violence. In the reporting period, we **provided additional funding to UN Women and International Women's Development Agency for improved domestic violence services**, including counselling, and continued to support Oxfam and World Vision's prevention programs.

Economic recovery

Investments in the private sector and infrastructure are central to Solomon Islands' economic recovery. Both are major contributors to economic activity, job creation, and connectivity.

The **Australian-funded Coral Sea Cable** is already transforming Solomon Islands' digital landscape providing faster, cheaper and more reliable internet and reducing internet costs by as much as 90 per cent. An increased number of businesses are selling their goods and services online and considering options for cross-border e-commerce. **Australia's private sector development program**, Strongim Bisnis, pivoted in response to COVID-19 from a focus on tourism, cocoa and coconut, to include a wider range of sectors including financial services, waste management, horticulture, and timber. This program has now delivered results under 55 partnerships and, despite COVID-19 challenges, reported that in the 2020 calendar year an additional 440 households were linked to new markets through Strongim Bisnis investments.

In the reporting period, Australia's **COVID-19 Response Package for the Pacific and Timor-Leste** provided an additional \$10 million for Solomon Islands. This economic support assisted state-owned enterprises to maintain critical infrastructure and provide essential services, \$5million was provided to Solomon Water to connect 2,770 more vulnerable households to clean water and \$1 million to enable Solomon Airlines to provide essential training to its engineers and crew, maintain its aircraft, and undergo a remote operational safety audit.

After 12 years in planning, **construction commenced on the Tina River Hydropower Development Project in June 2021**. It will deliver renewable, affordable, and more reliable electricity to Honiara by 2025 and generate 200 local jobs. Australia's partnership with the ADB and SIG for transport infrastructure improvements came to an end, paving the way for the **new \$250 million Solomon Islands Infrastructure Program (SIIP)**. SIIP is a ten-year initiative that aims to deliver inclusive, resilient, high quality economic infrastructure throughout the country.

ANNEX 1: PROGRESS AGAINST COVID-19 RESPONSE PLAN RESULTS INDICATORS

Health Security

Key Results Indicators	Progress/Result
Decrease in vector borne disease incidence	Supported the rollout and supply of long-lasting insecticide-treated nets, contributed to 12.4 per cent reduction in malaria cases (down from 58,824 in 2019 to 51,518 in 2020).
Increase in rate of supervised deliveries	Budget support to the Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS) contributed to 90.1 per cent of women having supervised deliveries (compared to 90.5 per cent in 2019).
Number of children immunised with Australian support	Data not yet available for this reporting period. We are working with MHMS to support reporting of data against this indicator for the next available reporting period.
Budget execution rate for MHMS over 75 per cent	Target not met: budget execution reached 72 per cent. Support through Solomon Islands Health systems and the MHMS budget execution rate slowed during the reporting period due to the impact of COVID-19 staff and adviser shortages.
Number of people trained in field epidemiology, surveillance and infection prevention and control	Supported 20 public health officers with training to implement contact tracing and strengthen COVID-19 surveillance activities. Eight nurses commenced training in field epidemiology.
Adequate laboratory capacity to test for COVID-19 and report results	Supported refurbishment of the molecular laboratory, procured a quantitative PCR machine, equipment and consumables. The testing of 5,656 COVID-19 samples were validated by the Victorian Infectious Disease Research Laboratory as accurate. Supported upgrades for the MHMS' "Digital Health Information System." This allowed the Ministry to host and collect more sophisticated data (HPV2 and COVAX) as well as support evidence-based decision-making, and the provision of timely and accurate health information to government.
Stock availability in national medical store and in primary health care facilities	Donated 13,000 AstraZeneca doses from the Commonwealth Serum Laboratories and supported the delivery of 52,800 doses of AstraZeneca through our contribution to the Gavi COVAX initiative. Delivery support enabled the administration of a total of 25,638 COVID-19 vaccine doses. Supported logistics and transport for provincial vaccinations, cold chain, warehousing, training, and technical expert advice, and procurement of emergency supplies of PPE for use across the country.
Increase in number of people who have access to improved water and sanitation	COVID-19 Response Package for the Pacific and Timor-Leste delivered 14.8 km of water pipelines in vulnerable communities in Honiara enabling 3,122 people (446 households) to access clean water. Budget support to the MHMS contributed to 762 more people in rural areas having access to basic sanitation and 828 more people in rural areas having access to handwashing facilities. Supported an additional 1,935 people with access to hygiene infrastructure / handwashing devices through the Water for Women program.
Number of people assisted with family planning	Supported the supply of 40,344 contraceptives and an additional 1,127 users of family planning services, to a total of 26,304.

Stability

Key Results Indicators	Progress/Result
Net enrolment primary school rate is over 88 per cent	Data not yet available for this reporting period. Solomon Islands Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (MEHRD) is transitioning to a new education management information system and is currently verifying and cleansing student data.
Number of schools with improved water and sanitation facilities	Supported 129 schools with improved water and sanitation facilities, including: construction of three new school ablution blocks and three new toilet facilities; delivery of 104 water tanks; and support for 127 schools to improve handwashing and rainwater harvesting facilities.
At least 70 per cent of year 4 students achieve the expected level for literacy and numeracy in the SISTA assessment	Data not yet available. The Solomon Islands Standardised Test of Achievement results are still being finalised by MEHRD.
Number of women and girl survivors of violence receiving services such as counselling	Support to the International Women's Development Agency enabled the Family Support Centre and Christian Care Centre to provide counselling, emergency shelter, hotline support and access to medical support services to 6,809 women and girl survivors (14 people with disabilities).
Number of domestic violence counsellors trained	Supported the training of 14 domestic violence counsellors. Supported the implementation of the Solomon Islands Domestic Violence Counselling Guideline to ensure survivors of violence have access to quality and effective domestic violence counselling. Through the Pacific Partnership, UN Women is working closely with the Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs and the Family Support Centre to formally register gender-based violence counsellors.
Capacity to undertake regular border surveillance activities	Supported the National Disaster Management Office to establish a multi-agency COVID-19 On-Sight Operations Coordination Centre to strengthen sector coordination and integrate surveillance, community outreach and preparedness along the western border with PNG.
Professional development and training for teachers, and preparedness for continued education during a COVID-19 environment	Supported 160 unqualified teachers to complete qualifications and 547 to commence teacher qualification training. Supported MEHRD to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic through technical and financial support to implement its Preparedness and Response Plan. This included the printing and distribution of 51,000 documents (learning materials), plus training on distance education, hygiene and child safety for 3,356 teachers.
Numbers of households linked to markets, including digital linkages	Supported 440 households to connect with markets to source products and services as inputs in their economic activities, or to sell their products and services. This includes micro and small enterprises, which are typically family run businesses.

Economic Recovery

Key Results Indicators	Progress/Result
Coral Sea Cable uptake (measured in billions of bits per second - Gbps)	The Coral Sea Cable has led to an increase in wholesale internet supply from 13.5 to 24 Gbps between 2019 and 2021.
Australian budget support as a percentage of total domestic revenue in response to COVID-19 ¹	Australia budget support represented 4.9 per cent of total domestic revenue.
Increased infrastructure investment to improve access to services and contribute to inclusive economic growth	Supported an increase in funding of an additional \$36 million in education, health, transport, and water and sanitation infrastructure, included emergency COVID-19 facilities.
Number of women entrepreneurs provided with financial/business development services	Supported 230 women entrepreneurs with financial and business development services.
Number of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) teachers adopting improved teaching practices	Supported 121 TVET teachers, from eight Rural Training Centres and the Solomon Islands National University, to undertake professional development training, coaching and mentoring. This included four teachers from two centres for people with disabilities, one who has a disability.
Number of TVET students (women/men) reached with improved teaching practices	This data will be available in the next reporting period.
Number of returned labour mobility and seasonal workers reporting increased capacity to earn an income (employment, entrepreneurial)	Under labour mobility programs, supported 995 Solomon Islands workers in Australia, including those unable to return home because of COVID-19 travel restrictions (in Solomon Islands). Data on remittances and their impact on employment and small business enterprise will be reported in the next reporting period.

¹ The wording of this indicator has changed since drafting of the CRP from per centage of supplementary budget expenditure to percentage of total domestic revenue.

ANNEX 2: INVESTMENT PERFORMANCE RATINGS

Investment Details	Year	Effectiveness	Efficiency	Gender
Addressing Gender Equality in Solomon Islands Investment duration: 2012-2022; Budget: \$31.9m	2021	4	3	4
	2020	4	3	5
Health Sector Support Program - Phase 3 Investment duration: 2016-22; Budget: \$103.3m	2021	5	5	5
	2020	4	4	4
Solomon Islands Governance Program Investment duration: 2017-21; Budget: \$46.0m	2021	4	4	4
	2020	5	4	3
Solomon Islands Justice Program Investment duration: 2017-21; Budget: \$37.3m	2021	4	4	4
	2020	4	4	4
Solomon Islands Democratic Governance Phase 2 Investment duration: 2017-21; Budget: \$15.0m	2021	5	5	4
	2020	5	4	3
Education Sector Support Program Investment duration: 2018-23; Budget: \$42.0m	2021	4	4	4
	2020	n/a	n/a	n/a
Strongim Bisnis Investment duration: 2020-23; Budget: \$11.8m	2021	4	4	5
	2020	n/a	n/a	n/a

FINAL INVESTMENT PERFORMANCE RATINGS

Investment Details	Year	Effectiveness	Efficiency	Gender
Solomon Islands Rural Development Program Investment duration: 2007-2022; Budget: \$32.2m	2021 FIMR	4	4	3
	2020 IMR	4	4	4
Solomon Islands Resource Facility and Program Enabling Investment duration: 2015-2021; Budget: \$43.0m	2021 FIMR	4	3	4
	2020 IMR	4	5	4
Solomon Islands Transport Sector-Based Approach II Investment duration: 2016-2021; Budget: \$21.3m	2021 FIMR	3	3	2
	2020 IMR	3	4	3
Solomon Islands Growth Program Investment duration: 2016-2022; Budget: \$51.6m	2021 FIMR	3	3	4
	2020 IMR	5	4	4

Definitions of rating scale:

Satisfactory (4, 5 and 6)

6 = Very good; satisfies criteria in all areas.

5 = Good; satisfies criteria in almost all areas.

4 = Adequate; on balance, satisfies criteria; does not fail in any major area.

Less than satisfactory (1, 2 and 3)

3 = Less than adequate; on balance does not satisfy criteria and/or fails in at least one major area.

2 = Poor; does not satisfy criteria in major areas.

1 = Very poor; does not satisfy criteria in many major area.