



**SOLOMON ISLANDS NGO PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT  
(SINPA) - STRONGIM YUMI TUGETA  
INITIATIVE NUMBER: INI854  
MID-TERM EVALUATION:  
NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2011**

**Commissioned by the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID)**

**Consultants:**

Martine Van de Velde, Team Leader/ Evaluation Specialist

Alice Aruheeta-Pollard, Civil Society Based Development Specialist

Steve Jones, Aid Effectiveness Specialist

**Observers:**

Siddhartha Chakrabarti, Second Secretary, Australian High Commission, Honiara

Leonora Kukome, Representative of the SINPA Steering Committee



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## Acknowledgements

The Evaluation Team would like to thank the staff of all SINPA NGO partners, both in Australia and in the Solomon Islands for their openness and frankness during the Mid-Term Evaluation. The focus of SINPA partners on learning and sharing of knowledge and experiences allowed the Evaluation Team to learn and gather information and evidence to provide feedback to both the SINPA partners and AusAID.

We are grateful to the SINPA Steering Committee in-country for their support and availability in providing information on the numerous requests put forward by the Evaluation team.

We also express gratitude to the chiefs, women leaders, youth leaders and church leaders in the communities visited for their cooperation, hospitality and information.

The independent evaluators would like to thank the two observers, Siddhartha Chakrabarti and Leonora Kukome for their insights, logistical support and a good sense of humour.

## Acronyms

ABM	Anglican Board of Mission - Australia
ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency Australia
ADRA SI	Adventist Development and Relief Agency Solomon Islands
ANGO	Australian NGO
APHEDA	Australian People for Health, Education & Development Abroad
AUD	Australian Dollar
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
CLC	Community Learning Centre
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSS	Community Sector Strategy
DAC	Development Assistance Commission
DSE	Development Services Exchange
ECLAN	Extended Community Learning Action Network
FBO	Faith Based Organisation
FSC	Family Support Centre
ICP	Inclusive Communities Program (Church of Melanesia).
IWDA	International Women's Development Agency
LDC	Least Developed Country
LLEE	Live and Learn Environmental Education
LNGO	Local NGO
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MPA	Marine Protected Area
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NRM	Natural Resource Management
NTFP	Non Timber Forest Product
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PDD	Program Design Document
PfD	Australia Solomon Islands Partnership for Development
Project DD	Project Design Document
RTCs	Rural Training Centres
SBA	Strengths-based Approach
SC SI	Save the Children Solomon Islands
SC	Steering Committee
SCA	Save the Children Australia
SI Partners	Solomon Island NGOs partnered with Australian NGOs

SI	Solomon Islands
SIAVRTC	Solomon Islands Association of Vocational and Rural Training Centres
SICA	Solomon Islands Christian Association
SIDT	Solomon Islands Development Trust
SIG	Solomon Island Government
SINCA	Solomon Islands NGO Cooperation Agreement
SINGO	Solomon Islands NGO
SINPA	Solomon Islands NGO Partnership Agreement
SKILLS	Sharing Knowledge, Improving Livelihoods, Learning Skills
STAV	Standing Together Against Violence
TDA	Tetapare Descendants' Association
ToRs	Terms of Reference
TTFT	Tugeda tude fo tumoro
TVET	Technical, Vocational Education and Training
UTS	University of Technology, Sydney
VAW	Violence Against Women
VfM	Value for Money
WARA	West 'Are 'Are Rototanikeni
WPCW	Western Province Council of Women
YOPP	Youth Outreach Partnership Project

# I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## *PROGRAM BACKGROUND*

In the Solomon Islands (SI), Australia's primary support to civil society is through the Solomon Islands NGO Partnership Agreement (SINPA). SINPA complements the Partnership for Development (Pfd) strategy between the Solomon Islands and the Australian Government. SINPA supports six Australian Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and their SI partner NGOs to carry out community-led development activities in the areas of livelihoods and health, and to jointly explore what development approaches are effective in the Solomon Islands context. In this way, SINPA allows AusAID to reach Solomon Islands villages and benefit from a better understanding of on-the-ground activity.

The SINPA partners are:

- Save the Children (SCA) with Save the Children (Solomon Islands) (SC SI)
- Anglican Board of Mission Australia (ABM) with Inclusive Communities Program (ICP)
- International Women's Development Agency (IWDA) with Live and Learn Environmental Education (SI)
- Oxfam Australia with Family Support Centre (SI)
- Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) with ADRA (SI).
- Australian People for Health and Education Abroad (APHEDA) with APHEDA (SI)

SINPA commenced on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 2009, and is due to finish on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2014. The total budget of SINPA is AUD 20 Million. The funds are allocated annually to six Australian NGOs based on an annual workplan.

The SINPA design document has been developed through a consultative process between AusAID and the SINPA partners and includes the following program level goal, objectives and outcomes:

**SINPA's goal is:**

*"To improve the health and livelihood opportunities of Solomon Islanders, particularly women and young people"*

**Supporting the goal, the program has two objectives.**

To support SINPA NGOs:

1. To become more effective at empowering Solomon Islanders (especially women and youth) to improve their quality of life.
2. To explore different models/approaches to development which suit the Solomon Islands context.

**The program has four outcomes:**

1. Substantive changes in the lives of men, women and families as a result of SINPA NGOs work.
2. Examples of approaches and/or models that are consistent with Solomon Islanders' 'ways of doing things' and have engendered developmental changes appreciated by Solomon Islanders.
3. Increased effectiveness of SINPA NGOs at supporting men and women in Solomon Islands to improve their quality of life.
4. Shared learning and insights about how to support effective Solomon Islander-led community development.

## ***EVALUATION BACKGROUND***

The Mid-term Evaluation of the SINPA program was carried out over a period of 12 weeks. It included a desk review of program documentation, teleconferences with SI and Australia-based SINPA NGO staff, and with AusAID representatives. Evaluation consultants prepared an evaluation plan including the evaluation approach and questions, and identified emerging issues. (Evaluation Plan attached as Annex 2).

The desk review was followed by a two-week in-country field visit to 14 project sites and broad consultations with AusAID, NGO staff, community members and other stakeholders. During the field visits, the team sought to test assumptions arising from the Honiara interviews through semi-structured interviews with field staff and communities. Wherever possible, findings were tested through triangulation. The evaluation report was subject to a technical review, followed by a SINPA and AusAID peer review, before the final report was submitted mid-January 2012.

The Mid-Term Evaluation was carried out by the following independent consultants:

- 1) Martine Van de Velde – Team Leader – Evaluation Specialist**
- 2) Alice Aruheeta-Pollard – Civil Society Based Development Specialist**
- 3) Steve Jones – Aid Effectiveness Specialist<sup>1</sup>**

The main objectives of the Mid-term Evaluation were to answer the following questions from the Terms of Reference (TORs):

- To what extent is SINPA likely to achieve its stated goal, objectives and outcomes?
- To what extent is working ‘in partnership’ improving SINPA’s efficiency and effectiveness?
- To what extent is it reasonable to say that the Strengths Based Approach (SBA), as applied by SINPA, will lead to positive sustainable impacts in the Solomon Islands?
- To what extent do the actual and potential benefits of SINPA represent value for money?

## ***FINDINGS***

### **1. To what extent is SINPA likely to achieve its stated goal, objectives and outcomes?**

The absence of a results framework or a clearly articulated Theory of Change at the program and project level made it difficult for the Evaluation Team to assess SINPA’s performance. It was not immediately obvious what results SINPA or the individual projects intended to achieve by the end of the program, or how they expected to do so.

The program and project designs are strong on process (with long sections of the Strength-Based Approach and reflection/learning processes) but weak on a description of intended tangible development results.

Despite the lack of a results framework for the program, an attempt was made to assess the extent to which the six NGO projects contributed to the achievement of the four SINPA outcomes, and their own goal and ‘objectives’. (See *Evaluation Question 1*)

In the evaluation team’s opinion:

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<sup>1</sup>The consultants were joined by the following two observers: Siddhartha Chakrabarti, Second Secretary, Australian High Commission, Honiara and Leonora Kukome, Representative of the SINPA Steering Committee.



- Only limited progress has been made to date by the NGOs implementing SINPA. Most have laid the foundations for delivering on their objectives (e.g., Action plans developed, community groups functioning, some activity based groups are implementing livelihoods or other schemes) but as yet no NGO has made notable progress towards their goals/outcomes.
- Based on progress so far, by the end of SINPA in June 2014, five NGOs are likely to only partly achieve their objectives (ADRA, APHEDA, Save the Children and Oxfam), and one (ICP) is most likely not to achieve its objectives.
- Two NGOs (ICP and Oxfam) have experienced fiduciary and other problems, which have seriously affected progress. Oxfam now appears well set-up to implement its project, while the mission is not confident about ICP/ABM's capacity.

## 2. To what extent is working 'in partnership' improving SINPA's efficiency and effectiveness?

SINPA is based on the concept of partnership, which is incorporated in its name: *The Solomon Islands NGO Partnership Agreement*. The in-country cross-SINPA partnership is an important element, but as part of the evaluation, the team also looked at other partnerships or relationships that SINPA is or should be developing to make the program more effective:

- Among SI NGOs, through the Steering Committee – Cross SINPA Partnership
- Between SI NGOs and the communities with which they work
- Between AusAID and the NGOs in Australia and Solomon Islands
- Within NGOs – between field based staff – office staff in Honiara and office staff in Australia
- Between SINPA NGOs in-country and Solomon Islands and provincial governments
- Between SINPA NGOs in-country and indigenous Solomon Islands NGOs
- Among the ANGOs in Australia

The Evaluation Team found that a strong working relationship based on mutual trust has been established between the six SINPA partners in-country. While the sharing of learning and resources is taking place between partners, it could be undertaken in a more systematic and strategic way. The partnership between the SINPA NGOs should be structured around achieving the program level objectives of SINPA through testing and reviewing models of development that suit SI in a more structured manner.

SINPA NGOs also need to ensure that the SINPA partnership does not become too inward focused and neglects the opportunity of reaching out. There are more opportunities to systematically engage with government at national and provincial level, and with SI civil society organisations. This will allow the learning and experiences of SINPA approaches to transcend beyond SINPA.

The Evaluation Team finds that the weakest links are in the possible partnerships between:

- Australian based NGOs and their SI based partners. There is a need for ANGOs to provide more project management and technical support.
- SINPA and indigenous SI civil society organisations. All SI partners, except one, are branch offices of ANGOs. An important opportunity to strengthen indigenous civil society is missed.

Presently, working in partnership under SINPA is limited to six of its partners sharing experiences and knowledge in the Steering Committee, or the Annual SINPA Reflection Workshop. Working in partnership has resulted in the generation of two learning papers produced by the University of Technology (UTS) on SBA and Partnership.

Although there is a strong degree of trust among the six SI SINPA partners, there is a danger that the partnership will become too inward looking. Now that the relationship between the partners is well established it is time to be more outward looking and connect with other organisations in the Solomon Islands.

Working in partnership with Government and indigenous civil society organisations (CSOs) can be expanded. The latter is especially important if SINPA wants to describe itself as a civil society program. This will also aid effectiveness and contribute to longer term sustainability through the transfer of knowledge and experiences within indigenous SI organisations. Not working in partnership with indigenous SI Civil Society is a missed opportunity under SINPA.

The partnership approach is very relevant and appropriate in the SI context. However, SINPA partners need to look carefully at how the partnership is being implemented and assess how the 'partnership' approach can contribute to a more efficient and effective use of resources. The Evaluation Team believes that SINPA can achieve more by utilizing its partnership approach more effectively.

### **3. To what extent is it reasonable to say that the Strengths Based Approach (SBA), as applied by SINPA, will lead to positive sustainable impacts in the Solomon Islands?**

Central to SINPA is its Strengths Based Approach, which is integrated into its design and implementation. It is described as an innovative approach which is implemented in communities influenced greatly by a "cargo culture". The SBA aims to ensure that community development interventions are based on existing strengths in the community, with external NGO staff participating as facilitators rather than experts, with the community members driving the interventions.

The SBA has the potential to be more than just good community development practice because of its intentional focus to set out and explore first, with the community, its knowledge and ability to implement project activities. This approach is capable of providing more ownership and sustainable results to the SI community.

The Evaluation Team is of the opinion that it is possible for the SBA to change the culture around aid delivery and support communities in taking greater control of their own development. However, relying solely on existing strengths and knowledge does not mean the communities are automatically set up for success.

Too many examples exist where good community development practices are not adhered to and solid project management skills are not applied. SINPA partners should ensure that SBA is not a synonym for poor project implementation.

The Evaluation Team believes that the SBA is very relevant in the SI context where a cargo mentality has impacted on how SI people look at aid and ignore their own community strengths. However, SINPA partners need to ensure that on-ground implementation of the SBA is done more effectively.

### **4. To what extent do the actual and potential benefits of SINPA represent value for money?**

It is not possible to undertake a value for money (VfM) analysis, because it requires a comparison of costs with results and, as yet, there is no agreed results framework for SINPA or its six NGO projects.

Despite this, an analysis of the costs of SINPA was undertaken, which indicates that:

- The NGOs intend to allocate their grants (expected to total AUD16.1 million over 5 years) as follows: 11% to Australia Support Costs, 46% to Solomon Island Support Costs, 36% to Solomon Island Activity Costs and 7% to Monitoring and Evaluation;
- Only 6-7% of the total budget (18% of Activity Costs) is channelled directly to communities. These funds leverage the equivalent of another 3-4% in community contributions, bringing the total for community activities to the equivalent of 9-11% of the total budget.

An analysis of the expenditure in communities and the associated community contributions show that it costs nine dollars to deliver one dollar of direct development aid to communities through SINPA. However, this calculation excludes other benefits to communities resulting from training and capacity building following the Strength-Based Approach.

If SINPA was a delivery-focused program (e.g., a small grants program) this cost structure would be unacceptable. However, the aims of SINPA include:

- Developing effective approaches and/or models to community development,
- Enhancing Solomon Island NGOs' capacity to support effective Solomon Islander-led community development.

These outcomes have the potential to bring significant and sustainable benefits beyond the end of the program. It is important that both of these outcomes are emphasised in the last two years of the program.

### ***AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT***

In addition to addressing the four evaluation questions the Evaluation Team has included a section on "Management Areas for Improvement". These are the areas that were not sufficiently elaborated in other sections of the report.

- The team found that project management across SINPA is faced with challenges, particularly around issues of: financial management; monitoring undertaken mainly at activity and input level; lack of focus on assessing performance against higher level objectives; and limited capacity building of in-country staff. The Team found that most of these areas should and could be rectified and strengthened through more regular intervention and support by ANGOs.
- At the program level, the M&E strategy is not well developed. This is caused mainly by a lack of strategic direction and the lack of a results frameworks or well-articulated Theories of Change, at both the project and program level. It might be appropriate to discuss further whether a facility model is suitable for this type of NGO program.
- A number of mechanisms are in place to support learning and coordination across SINPA including a Steering Committee and SINPA Coordinator (funded from the SINPA budget), Annual Reflection Workshops and Annual Reporting. However, it is noticeable that these initiatives are under-performing because they lack both strategic direction and a clear vision for the future.
- On cross-cutting issues, the Evaluation Team found that the projects could strengthen their interventions around Gender (challenge the boundaries on women

participation); Power (understand better the community power structures before starting work in communities) and engagement with SI Civil Society (ensure SINPA partners engage with local SI NGOs).

## *CONCLUSION*

SINPA has the potential to be a successful program that brings substantive changes to the lives of men, women and families, based on community-driven development models that can be cost-effectively spread widely in the Solomon Islands. However, it is currently under-performing and is expected to achieve its objectives only partially by the end of its duration.

For SINPA to fully achieve its objectives, a step change will be needed in the performance of the Australian NGOs and their Solomon Islands partners in terms of: (i) results-based management, including monitoring and evaluation, and (ii) overall project management (project planning, finance and budgeting, and human resource development/capacity building).

Presently, SINPA partners undertake community development using a Strengths Based Approach. However, while this concept may be understood at a theoretical level in head offices and in-country offices, it is not well thought through at the operational level.

Across SINPA, strong project management skills such as proper planning with communities, risk management and financial management, are lacking.

Australian based NGO staff needs to engage in a stronger capacity building role and provide support to the SI based office on project management and technical aspects of the program.

SINPA management will need to be strengthened in a manner that will allow it to become more strategic and focused on its higher level outcomes and the goal it aims to achieve:

- **Developing effective approaches and/or models to community development,**
- **Increasing the effectiveness of Solomon Island NGOs to support effective Solomon Islander-led community development.**

These outcomes have the potential to bring significant and sustainable benefits beyond the end of the program. It is important that both of these outcomes are emphasised in the last two years of the program. This will let SINPA stand out in comparison with other NGO programs.

## *PRINCIPAL RECOMMENDATIONS*

- Results frameworks and theories of change to be developed for SINPA and for each of the six NGO projects and that these are used as a basis for (i) monitoring program progress in delivering outputs and outcomes and (ii) communicating results within the program and to other stakeholders in Solomon Islands and Australia. (It is important that these are developed in a way that does not compromise the community driven, emergent and reflective nature of the program).
- The M&E framework for SINPA and its six projects to be strengthened to focus on outputs and outcomes and to include operations research and evaluations to provide evidence on what works and does not work.
- SINPA partners to be more pro-active in engaging with Government and SI indigenous civil society organisations.

- SINPA partners to link Strengths Based Approach with sound project management practice, providing technical and oversight support where needed in a non-overpowering way.
- SINPA partners to focus their learning on the practical application of the SBA, not limited to the theoretical understanding of the approach.
- Develop and document models to community development, which can be cost effectively replicated in Solomon Islands.
- Document costs, benefits and value for money of the program and the models developed through careful monitoring, evaluation and operations research involving the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data. Specialist advice will need to be provided by an independent evaluation specialist, experienced in the use of 'mixed method' evaluation approaches to develop an evaluation plan and provide on-going support. Significant inputs on M&E will be needed from the ANGOs.
- ANGOs to be more proactive in building/ensuring the capacity of their partner NGOs in country. ANGOs focus should be outcome focused at both project and program level.

## II. INTRODUCTION

### *PROGRAM INTRODUCTION*

In the Solomon Islands (SI), Australia's primary support to civil society is through the Solomon Islands NGO Partnership Agreement (SINPA). SINPA complements the Partnership for Development, but sits outside of it. It supports non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to carry out community-led development in the areas of livelihoods and health; to work with Solomon Islands Government (SIG) Ministries where relevant; and to jointly explore what development approaches are effective in the Solomon Islands context. In this way, SINPA allows AusAID to reach Solomon Islands villages, and benefit from a better understanding of on-the-ground activity.

SINPA commenced on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 2009 and is due to be completed on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2014. The total budget of SINPA is AUD 20 Million<sup>2</sup>. Funds are allocated annually to six Australian NGOs based on an annual workplan.

SINPA funds three activities:

- **NGO programs** (91% of total funding): delivered to NGOs as a grant on an annual basis;
- **SINPA Coordination** (6% of total funding): supports cross-NGO activities and the full-time 'SINPA Coordinator' position which provides secretarial services to the SINPA Steering Committee.
- **Learning Groups** (3% of total funding): supports technical assistance from consultants to improve joint learning among NGO Partners.

The SINPA design document has been developed through a consultative process between AusAID and the SINPA partners and includes the following program level goal, objectives and outcomes:

**SINPA's goal is:**

*"To improve the health and livelihood opportunities of Solomon Islanders, particularly women and young people"*

**Supporting the goal, the program has two objectives.**

To support SINPA NGOs:

3. To become more effective at empowering Solomon Islanders (especially women and youth) to improve their quality of life.
4. To explore different models/approaches to development which suit the Solomon Islands context.

**The program has four outcomes:**

5. Substantive changes in the lives of men, women and families as a result of SINPA NGOs work.
6. Examples of approaches and/or models that are consistent with Solomon Islanders' 'ways of doing things' and have engendered developmental changes appreciated by Solomon Islanders.
7. Increased effectiveness of SINPA NGOs at supporting men and women in Solomon Islands to improve their quality of life.
8. Shared learning and insights about how to support effective Solomon Islander-led community development.

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<sup>2</sup>As of end 2011 \$12 million has been FMA Reg. 9 approved for the three years, ending in June 2012.

For the NGO programs, SINPA funds six Australian NGO Partners to work with their local Solomon Islands Partner NGOs on six discreet SINPA programs as follows:

1. **Save the Children (Australia)(SCA) works with Save the Children (Solomon Islands)(SCA SI)** to encourage healthy lifestyles through non-formal education (life skills) and mentoring; construction of youth halls; and the enhancement of young people's participation in government policy formation.
2. **Anglican Board of Mission (Australia) (ABM) works with Inclusive Communities Program (Solomon Islands), Church of Melanesia** to address livelihoods opportunities, youth marginalisation, gender violence and societal breakdown by providing assistance in the areas of literacy, financial literacy, small-scale agriculture, and sanitation.
3. **International Women's Development Agency (IWDA) (Australia) works with Live and Learn Environmental Education (Solomon Islands)** to engage communities impacted by logging and encourage more equitable approaches to natural resource management, particularly in relation to gender. This includes through: agriculture skills development; savings schemes; and sanitation behaviour change.
4. **Oxfam (Australia) works with the Family Support Centre (Solomon Islands)** to provide counselling, legal advice and mediation services to women victims/survivors of sexual and domestic violence.
5. **Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) (Australia) works with ADRA (Solomon Islands)** to encourage community action to the challenges of youth unemployment and marginalisation. Livelihoods activities include: sustainable revolving finance schemes; vocational support such as carving, cooking, savings schemes and financial literacy development.
6. **Australian People for Health and Education Abroad (APHEDA) (Australia) works with APHEDA (Solomon Islands)** to support indigenous-managed Community Learning Centres which encourage basic small enterprise skills; awareness and behaviour change in sexual and reproductive health; basic first aid; sanitation behaviour change; and nutrition.

## *EVALUATION BACKGROUND*

As part of AusAID's quality assurance processes an external mid-term evaluation was conducted over a period of 12 weeks involving a total of 90 consultancy person days.

The Mid-Term Evaluation was carried out by the following independent consultants:

1. Martine Van de Velde – Team Leader/Evaluation Specialist
2. Alice Aruheeta-Pollard – Civil Society Based Development Specialist
3. Steve Jones – Aid Effectiveness Specialist

The consultants were joined by the following two observers:

1. Siddhartha Chakrabarti, Second Secretary, Australian High Commission, Honiara
2. Leonora Kukome, Representative of the SINPA Steering Committee

Full Terms of Reference (ToRs) are attached as Annex 1. Prior to the in-country mission, the consultants prepared an Evaluation Plan which attached as Annex 2.

As part of the mission to the Solomon Islands, the team facilitated interviews and discussions with the six partner NGOs implementing the SINPA program. The office-based meetings were followed by field visits to SINPA projects in Guadalcanal and Western provinces. On average, the team was able to visit two to three project sites for each SINPA NGO partner. The visits involved semi-structured interviews with field staff and communities

and findings were verified, where possible, through triangulation. NGO staff was excluded when appropriate, from the community interviews and discussions when the Team sought community views on accountability, transparency and NGO performance. The meetings with SINPA partners and project site visits were complemented by discussions with AusAID, World Bank and other stakeholders. A full list of persons consulted is included as Annex 3.

The main objectives of the Mid-term Evaluation were to answer the following questions from the TORs:

1. To what extent is SINPA likely to achieve its stated goal, objectives and outcomes?
2. To what extent is working 'in partnership' improving SINPA's efficiency and effectiveness?
3. To what extent is it reasonable to say that the Strengths Based Approach, as applied by SINPA, will lead to positive sustainable impacts in the Solomon Islands?
4. To what extent do the actual and potential benefits of SINPA represent value for money?

The Evaluation Team had sufficient access to program documentation and interviewed NGO staff and communities to formulate its findings. However, it should be noted that the communities visited were purposefully selected by the Steering Committee and the NGO concerned. Given the geography of Solomon Islands, random sampling was not feasible. Other key constraints included the absence of project level mid-term reviews and the lack of monitoring data, results frameworks and theories of change for the projects. Had these been available, it would have allowed the evaluators to concentrate more on the inter-linkages between project level and program level results. SINPA partners were very open with the evaluators and selected a stronger and less strong project activity for the team to visit.



### III. THE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM, AUSAID'S AND SINPA'S RESPONSE

SINPA's design document introduces a new approach to AusAID's support for community development in the Solomon Islands. The Agreement emphasises the importance of prioritising community driven development. SINPA seeks to enable people to have a strong voice in determining what is appropriate in their communities.<sup>3</sup>

SINPA's approach recognises that development is complex and to be effective, aid efforts have to be tailored to the circumstances in each country. This is particularly important in 'fragile environments' such as the Solomon Islands.

The Australian Government's International Development Assistance Policy emphasises the valuable role of civil society in development efforts. The 2008 Annual Review of Development Effectiveness points to an enhanced recognition within the international community of the role of communities and civil society organisations in development, thus extending its understanding of 'country ownership' beyond central government.<sup>4</sup> The Government is particularly keen to deepen its partnerships with Australian NGOs.

SINPA sits outside the Australia-Solomon Islands Partnership for Development (Pfd) but aims to support two out of the four Priority Outcomes:

- Improved Service Delivery
- Improved Economic Livelihoods.

The AusAID Solomon Islands Community Sector Strategy (CSS) (2007-11) stresses that CSOs are well placed to adopt holistic approaches towards achieving these outcomes.

The Solomon Islands Government Medium Term Development Strategy (2008-2010) explicitly identifies the contribution of civil society to its rural advancement agenda.

Supporting NGOs allows for development interventions in areas where government interventions are weak or non-existent. This is very relevant for SI where 95% of those having consumption levels below the poverty line live in rural areas. There is therefore, a strong need for an effective rural development strategy.

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<sup>3</sup> SINPA's Program Design Document, 2009, p.2.

<sup>4</sup> Office of Development Effectiveness. (2009). Civil Society Engagement Evaluation Terms of Reference; Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness; Accra Agenda for Action.

## IV. OVERVIEW EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The Mid-term Evaluation was centred on four key evaluation questions. The report addresses each evaluation question directly, followed by a number of other findings that are of importance but not referred to under each question heading.

### Evaluation Question 1: To what extent is SINPA likely to achieve its stated goal, objectives and outcomes?

It is difficult for the evaluators to assess whether SINPA is likely to achieve its stated goal, objectives and outcomes since the Program does not have a results framework or a clearly articulated theory of change. As a result, it is not clear what results SINPA or the individual projects intend to achieve by the end of the program or how they expect to do so.

Neither the Program Design Document (PDD) nor the six Project Design Documents (Project DDs) contain results frameworks or robust theories of change that clearly describe the relationship between the activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts of the intervention, and the assumptions about risks which underlie the change logic. Moreover, the way their goals and outcomes are stated is confusing:

- The **PDD** gives a goal, four outcomes and two ‘partnership objectives’ (see Table 1) for the program but it is not clear how these relate to each other. The goal or impact statement - *improved health and livelihood opportunities*, is less ambitious than Outcome 1 - *substantive change in people’s lives* - and there appears to be substantial overlap and duplication among the outcomes and partnership objectives (See Table 1).
- The **Project DDs** each have a goal and two to four lower level objectives called variously ‘objectives’, ‘components’ and ‘domains of change’. Some of these are written as outcomes (involving behavioural change, which the SINPA alone cannot deliver), others as outputs and others as processes or activities (see also Table 1). It is not clear whether these are meant to be outcomes, or not.
- Neither the PDD nor individual Project DDs specify:
  - the activities and outputs, which must be delivered to achieve the outcomes;
  - the quantitative or qualitative performance indicators against which the program’s progress towards the outputs, outcomes and goals can be assessed;
  - a theory of change indicating how SINPA or the individual projects will translate inputs into activities, outputs, outcomes and the assumptions that underlie the theory.

The PDD and six Project DDs are strong on process (with long sections of the Strength-Based Approach and reflection/learning processes) but weak on results.

It appears that during the SINPA appraisal process, a decision was taken by AusAID, in consultation with the Australian NGOs, not to use a results-based framework in program design or implementation but rather to focus on “holistic, endogenous models of change”<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup>The PDD, August 2009(footnote 17) noted that: “SINCA was based on a logical framework approach. Though there was apparently room for flexibility, local partners did not feel they were able to adapt programs to changing circumstances. Solomon Island NGOs involved in SINCA referred to their felt need to ‘roll out programs and meet training targets’.

Although results-based frameworks, if used badly, can strait-jacket potentially innovative community-driven programs of this kind, used well and in a participatory way, they can provide framework for agreeing the theory of change for the program and a basis for assessing progress against agreed indicators and risks.

The lack of an agreed set of results for SINPA and a convincing theory of change makes the program difficult to evaluate and for AusAID and the partner NGOs to manage effectively. Discussions by the Evaluation Team with NGO staff show that they do not have a clear understanding of their project's expected outputs, outcomes or impacts and tend to focus on inputs and activities – on how the projects are being implemented rather than on what is to be delivered and why (desired outcomes and impacts). This can also be seen in:

- Training courses being delivered, without any follow-up monitoring to assess whether people are using their new skills to establish viable enterprises and whether they face any problems (e.g., in resources or technical support), which need to be addressed.
- Partner NGOs' Phase 3 reports, which focus on activities (e.g., training courses run, reflection workshops organised) or low-level outputs (e.g., no of chicken projects established) with little assessment of the extent to which these activities are leading to sustained development of capacity, better access to services or improved livelihoods.

Similarly, at the SINPA Steering Committee (SC) level, the lack of an agreed set of program results makes it difficult to manage the program strategically and communicate its achievements effectively to outside audiences. A clear statement of expected results and the theory of change are necessary both to manage the program effectively and promote the SINPA brand and the work of civil society in Solomon Islands.

In SINPA Phases 1 and 2, reports by partner NGOs (covering the first 15 months of the program) mainly focused on processes (e.g., growth of a learning culture, increasing awareness, development participatory monitoring techniques, development of partnerships in communities). In Phase 3, with encouragement from AusAID, a monitoring and evaluation framework was introduced. Although this is a step in the right direction, it focuses mostly on activities.

The M&E Framework needs to be strengthened to measure, assess and report achievements at output and outcome level. This is necessary both to manage the program and six projects effectively, and for the final evaluation. It would involve (i) collecting baselines (albeit halfway through the program) against which to measure or assess changes, (ii) undertaking operations research studies, to assess what works and how to improve program/project approaches, and (iii) independent evaluations of the program, projects and models in Phase 5.

A clear and agreed results framework with verifiable indicators is also essential if the value for money/cost effectiveness of SINPA is to be assessed (see Section 4, below). These should be developed in partnership with communities and need not compromise the emergent and reflective nature of the program. With the SINPA projects in the implementation phase for over two years, the NGOs should be in a position to anticipate the key outcomes from their interventions. The individual NGO results frameworks could then be used to develop an overall SINPA program framework.

During its mission, the Evaluation Team developed draft results frameworks with four SINPA partners in order to better understand what is being achieved under the SINPA program and the theory of change of each project. These need to be developed further with communities and other key stakeholders. Standard OECD/DAC results terminology – activities, outputs,

outcomes, impacts, assumptions and indicators - was used. Examples of two of these frameworks are provided at Annex 6.

The lack of results frameworks and clear theories of change also impacts directly on the project management carried out by the NGOs. The lack of a clear direction or project outcomes makes it very difficult if not impossible for the NGO staff to manage the project to meet the desired outcomes. The results frameworks or other similar tools help to clarify project outcomes, thus motivating staff to continue making project improvements to improve the efficiency of service provision.

### *ASSESSMENT OF PROGRAM PROGRESS*

Despite the lack of a results framework for the program, an attempt was made to assess the extent to which the six NGO projects are contributing to the achievement of the four SINPA outcomes and their own goal and 'objectives' (see Table 1).

In the Evaluation Team's opinion:

- Only limited progress has been made to date by the NGOs implementing SINPA. By the end of SINPA in June 2014, based on current performance, five NGOs are likely to only partly achieve their objectives (ADRA, APHEDA, Live and Learn, Oxfam and Save the Children), and one (ICP) is most likely not to achieve its objectives. Two NGOs (ICP and Oxfam) have experienced fiduciary and other problems, which seriously affected progress. Oxfam now appears well set-up to implement its project; however the mission is not confident about the capacity and readiness of ICP/ABM.
- Foundations have been laid by NGOs to deliver on their objectives (e.g., action plans developed, community groups functioning, some activity based groups are implementing livelihoods or other schemes) but as yet no NGO has made notable progress towards achieving their goals/outcomes. A number of programs have been redesigned or modified (e.g., Oxfam) and others have adopted innovations (e.g., women's savings groups) that were not in their original designs.
- SINPA has the potential to be a successful program that brings substantive changes in the lives of men, women and families based on community-driven development models that can be cost-effectively spread widely in Solomon Islands. But, for this to happen a step change will be needed in the performance of the Australian NGOs and their Solomon Islands partners in terms of (i) results-based management, including monitoring and evaluation, and (ii) overall project management (project planning, finance and budgeting and human resource development/capacity building)

**Table 1.SINPA Program Design Document Objectives**

SINPA	
<b>Goal</b>	<i>To improve the health and livelihood opportunities of Solomon Islanders particularly women and young people”.</i>
<b>Partnership objectives for SINPA NGOs</b>	1. To become more effective at empowering Solomon Islanders (especially women and youth) to improve their quality of life.
	2. To explore different models/approaches to development which suit the Solomon Islands context.
<b>Outcomes</b>	1. Substantive changes in the lives of men, women and families as a result of SINPA NGOs work.
	2. Examples of approaches and/or models that are consistent with Solomon Islanders’ ‘ways of doing things’ and have engendered developmental changes appreciated by Solomon Islanders.
	3. Increased effectiveness of SINPA NGOs at supporting men and women in Solomon Islands to improve their quality of life.
	4. Shared learning and insights about how to support effective Solomon Islander - led community development.

**COMMENT – SINPA PDD Objectives**  
 Outcome 1 is higher level than the Goal  
 Outcomes 2 and 4 are very similar to each other  
 Partnership objective 1 is a rephrasing of Outcomes 2 and 4  
 Partnership objective 2 is a rephrasing of Outcome 2

**COMMENT – Project DD Objectives**  
 Some of the project objectives are stated as outcomes (e.g., ADRA), some as Outputs (e.g., Oxfam #1) and some as processes or activities (e.g., APHEDA).

SI NGO	ADRA	APHEDA	ICP	LLEE	Oxfam	Save the Children
ANGO	ADRA	APHEDA	ABM	IWDA	Oxfam	Save the Children
<b>Goal</b>	To improve the livelihood opportunities, resiliency and community engagement of young people in a more empowered and sensitised community.	Self-reliant, healthy, confident, skilled communities with livelihoods that are applicable to their ‘today’ situation.	Strengthen communities to be more responsible to help families help themselves.	Working towards more inclusive and environmentally sustainable communities.	More families in Honiara and Western Province are enjoying lives free from violence.	To improve the health and livelihood opportunities of Solomon Islanders, particularly women and young people
<b>Objectives / components / domains of change</b>	1. CSOs empowered to increase livelihood opportunities for young people. 2. CSOs empowered to increase the resiliency of young people. 3. Communities empowered to engage regularly and effectively in a positive environment with their youth.	1. To build the capacity of project staff and CLC coordinators to work with communities to identify priorities, implement responsive, community-driven effective education and training. 2. To develop the capacity of CLC communities to build on strengths and facilitate community driven responses to health and livelihood needs.	1. Strengthen communities’ abilities to help member families. 2. Strengthen families’ ability to be self-reliant. 3. Build the capacity of ICP and its local partner organisations.	1. Individual change in knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions towards NRM, sustainable livelihoods and gender-inclusive decision-making processes. 2. Change in capacity of groups and communities to mobilise environmentally sound, equitable and sustainable livelihoods. 3. Changes in community well-being and resilience through 1 and 2). 4. Changes towards evidence based policies, laws and regulations that safeguard natural resources, protect rights and promote gender equity.	1. FSC provides quality counselling and legal advice and mediation services to women victims/survivors of sexual /domestic violence. 2. Individuals, families and communities take ownership of the problem of VAW and implement their own strategies to reduce violence and protect women. 3. There is an active referral system for victims of VAW from and within networks (Police, Public Solicitor, FCS, health etc). 4. Law reform and policy development work of others supported by two way information flow (from/to Provincial and community levels).	1. Sustainable livelihoods for young men and women. 2. Promotion and facilitation of healthy lifestyles through non-formal education (life skills) and mentoring. 3. Enhancement of young people’s participation in policy formulation and implementation at all levels.
ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency		ICP	Live and Lean Environmental Education		
APHEDA	Australian People for Health and Education Abroad		ABM	International Women’s Development Agency		

**Conclusions:**

It is difficult for the Evaluation Team to assess whether SINPA is likely to achieve its stated goal, objectives and outcomes since the Program does not have a results framework (e.g., a logical framework) or a clearly articulated theory of change. This also makes it difficult for AusAID and the partner NGOs to manage the program effectively. The lack of direction due to the absence of results frameworks or well articulated theories of change lead to weak project management by the NGOs.

Despite the lack of a results framework for the program, an attempt was made to assess the extent to which the six NGO projects contribute to the achievement of the four SINPA outcomes and their own goal and 'objectives'.

The Evaluation Team concludes that only limited progress has been made so far by the NGOs implementing SINPA. Based on current performance, five NGOs are likely to partly achieve their objectives by the end of the program in 2014. One NGO is unlikely to achieve its objectives.

SINPA has the potential to be a successful program, improving the lives of men, women and families based on community-driven development models. But, for this to happen a step change will be needed in the performance of the Australian NGOs and their Solomon Islands partners.

**Recommendations:**

It is recommended that:

1. Results frameworks and theories of change are developed for SINPA and for each of the six NGO projects and that these are used as a basis for (i) monitoring program progress in delivering outputs and outcomes and (ii) communicating results within the program and to other stakeholders in Solomon Islands and Australia. (It is important to ensure that these are developed in a way that does not compromise the community driven, emergent and reflective nature of the program; keeping a balance between accountability and flexibility)
2. The M&E framework for SINPA and its six projects is strengthened to focus on outputs and outcomes and to include operations research and evaluations to provide evidence on what works and does not work.
3. Project management across SINPA is strengthened and focuses on managing for results, linked to the results frameworks.
4. SINPA should be strengthened with consultancy support from M&E specialist(s) experienced in undertaking systematic evaluations of programs using both quantitative and qualitative information. M&E support provided should be linked to improved project management.

**Evaluation Question 2: To what extent is working 'in partnership' improving SINPA's efficiency and effectiveness?**

***SINPA'S PARTNERSHIP APPROACH***

SINPA is based on the concept of partnership, which is incorporated in its name – The Solomon Islands NGO Partnership Agreement. This is one of the differences from its

predecessor, SINCA or the Solomon Islands NGO Cooperation Agreement. By working under a partnership approach the SINPA partners aim to achieve the SINPA objectives:

- To become more effective at empowering Solomon Islanders (especially women and youth) to improve their quality of life
- To explore different models/approaches to development which suit the Solomon Islands context

The six NGO projects are complementary and share common aspects related to approach however they differ in activity or sectoral focus.<sup>6</sup>

The cross-SINPA partnership is an important element to SINPA, but as part of the evaluation, the team looked at the other partnerships or relationships as well that SINPA is or should be developing:

1. Among SI NGOs, through the Steering Committee – Cross SINPA Partnership
2. Between SI NGOs and the communities with which they work
3. Between AusAID and the NGOs in Australia and Solomon Islands
4. Within NGOs – between field based staff – office staff in Honiara and office staff in Australia.

In addition, there are a number of other partnerships, which could potentially play a significant role in the program. These include:

1. Between SINPA NGOs in country and Solomon Islands and provincial governments
2. Between SINPA NGOs in-country and indigenous Solomon Islands NGOs
3. Among the ANGOs in Australia.

These are shown diagrammatically in Figure 1 below.

## 1. Among SI NGOs, through the Steering Committee - Cross-SINPA Partnership

SINPA NGO partners contrast the program's 'working together' approach with the SINCA program. Under SINPA, the six NGO partners pay greater attention to sharing and coordinating resources.

Some of the feedback received during the evaluation includes:

- SINPA has legitimised coordination and sharing – *“this could happen without SINPA but it wouldn't. In most countries NGOs do not cooperate easily with each other. SINPA is something new.”*
- *“We share because we have to, but we get a lot out of it”.*

The six partners have regular coordination meetings and there is evidence that learning and resources are shared among partners in the field. This cooperation in the field is stronger between NGOs working in similar sectors. Evidence of cooperation and sharing of information among the Australian based NGOs is less evident.

Evidence of working together is anecdotal. The evaluators found that additional opportunities existed with the aim of systematizing and sharing the learning approaches and/or models that have been tested and proven to be successful (SINPA – 2<sup>nd</sup> expected outcome), in line with the two learning papers that were developed by UTS.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> UTS, Exploring Processes for Participation and Accountability, A Learning Paper, p.2.

<sup>7</sup>UTS. 1. Exploring SINPA's Strengths-Based Practice: A Learning Paper 2. Exploring Processes for Participation and Accountability: A Learning Paper. 2011.

The Evaluation Team found that good relations and cooperation existed among the SINPA NGOs in-country, with mutual trust established. None of the NGOs reported opposition to the partnership approach. The NGOs now need to ensure that the SINPA partnership does not become too inward focused as it may miss the opportunity of reaching out to other potential partners. This relationship of trust among the partners is very important and is reflected for instance in the peer review of each other's projects that have been undertaken<sup>8</sup>.

Examples of sharing of resources among SI based partners:

- Financial literacy training organised by APHEDA was attended by ICP staff.
- Sharing financial literacy training and interaction by APHEDA with ICP and ADRA
- Live and Learn and ADRA working together on Women's Savings Clubs.
- Steering Committee members exchanging stories and experiences with each other during annual reflection workshop and steering committee meetings
- Peer review process of each other's projects

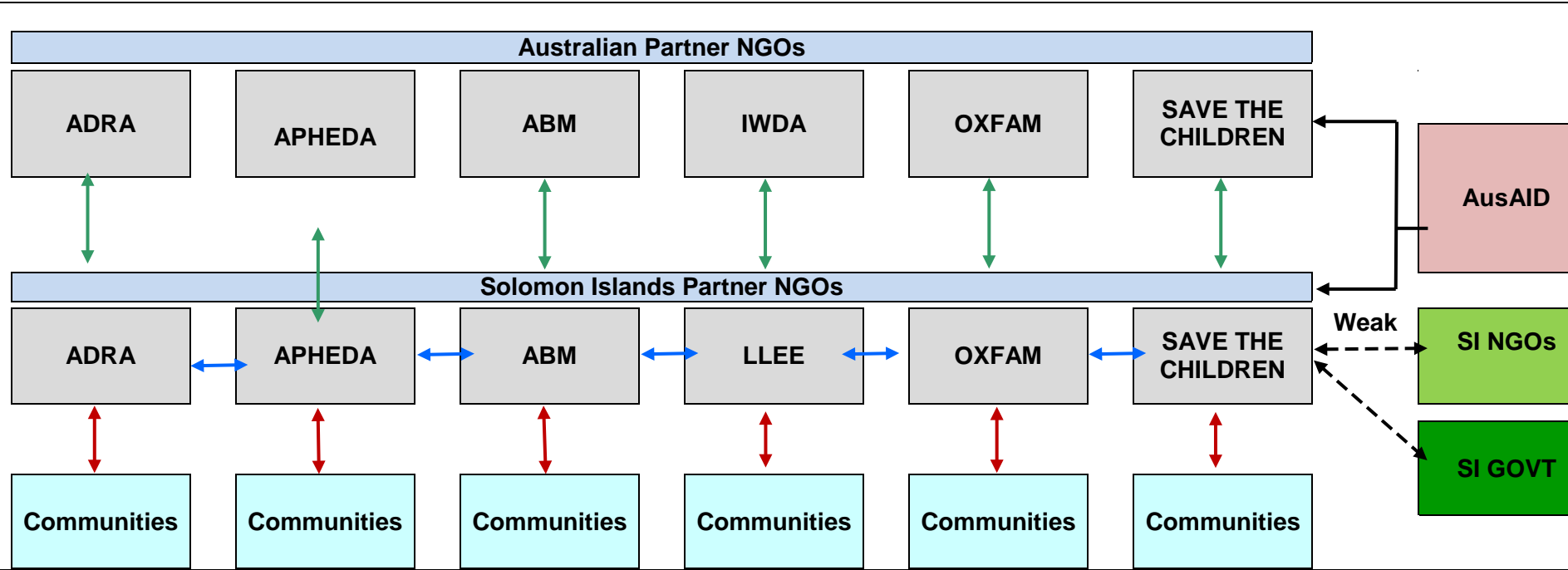
All SI SINPA partners reported that the partnership approach has been beneficial, however, the evaluators are not convinced that this has contributed to greater efficiency (more cost effective) or greater effectiveness (better outcomes). Coordination and working in partnership takes a lot of time and effort. The effectiveness and efficiency of the partnership approach is closely linked to the lack of strategic direction and the workings of the Steering Committee. These aspects are further addressed in the report under Evaluation Question 1 and Section VI.

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<sup>8</sup> Pairs of SINPA NGOs evaluated each others' projects.



Figure 1: Partnerships in the SINPA Program



## 2. Between SI NGOs and the communities with which they work

SINPA NGOs report that their aim is not to 'over-power' the communities they work with, but rather to support them in the initiatives they themselves want to take on and implement. However, the fact that participatory approaches are used and the way communities want to bring about change is respected does not mean that a genuine partnership with communities exists. A genuine partnership would need to be defined between the communities and the NGOs, freely expressing expectations and determining responsibilities on an equal footing. Discussions with communities and NGOs indicate this is still far from being achieved within SINPA and will involve a long term process of engagement with communities.



**Members of the Sausama community Savings club**

A first step towards this would be to increase the downward accountability from the NGO to the communities and to establish channels for communities to ensure their voices are heard in selecting activities and also regarding any concerns they might have with the performance of NGO staff. All SINPA partners need to improve on this by working towards a two way system of communication and feedback).

If the aim is to establish strong genuine partnerships with communities, then more frequent field visits, interactions and dialogue need to occur to establish trust and accountability by both Honiara based staff and provincial staff.

During the team's field visits it was found that visits by project staff are often irregular or infrequent. In one case a project coordinator position was vacant for nearly one year, which resulted in no interaction with the community during that period.

## 3. Between AusAID and the NGOs in Australia and Solomon Islands

SINPA Partners were generally positive about AusAID's engagement with the program. The AusAID Activity Manager attends Steering Committee meetings and has played a key role in encouraging the focus on monitoring, evaluation and strategic issues. However, some NGOs were concerned that AusAID is 'changing the goalposts' and seems less supportive of SINPA than it was.

The Evaluation Team found that AusAID has been a very supportive donor, reflected in its ongoing engagement with partners, its presence at steering committee meetings, provision of advice and support through enhancing reporting formats, and through its agreement to provide financial support for the SINPA Coordinator and SINPA program level. The team found that AusAID support for work with NGOs is still strong but that AusAID as an agency is concerned to ensure that such programs demonstrate tangible results and value for money.

#### 4. Within NGOs: between field based staff – office staff in Honiara and office staff in Australia

The weakest link in this partnership is between the SI-based and the Australian based NGO staff. The support provided by Australian based NGO staff varies but was generally found to be insufficient. In many cases, support is limited to submitting the narrative and financial reports to AusAID and monitoring visits to SI, which often do not result in concrete evidence of improvements made after the visit. It is noticeable that the best-performing SI based office is where the Australian counterpart has been taking an active role in providing advice, technical assistance, building the capacity of SI staff and developing concrete tools for the SI office in areas such as M&E or reporting.

All ANGOs are accredited with AusAID and are expected to ensure good project management by their Solomon Islands partner NGOs, but this is often lacking. While some ANGOs have provided training (e.g. in gender audit, financial management and M&E), some of which was shared with other SINPA partner NGOs, the poor quality of M&E systems and project management in other areas indicates that this is not sufficient and more intensive support, involving further training and mentoring is needed.

#### 5. Between SINPA NGOs in country and Solomon Islands and provincial governments



**Woman trainer at the Kaibia Manihots youth group**

Working with Government agencies varies across SINPA, with some agencies aiming to work with Government around policy (OXFAM – Violence Against Women, Live and Learn on logging and sustainable natural resources management, Save the Children on Youth Engagement), others coordinating activities in the field (APHEDA – RTC – TVET; Save the Children), others working as a team in providing training (LLEE – IWDA) and others having less or no interaction with government (ICP – ABM; ADRA).

Working with Government can be strengthened across SINPA and could be supported through sharing, in a more systematic way, the approaches and lessons learned with relevant line ministries or departments. NGOs in the Solomon Islands also have a potential role

to play in empowering communities to demand better services from governments, but none of the SINPA NGOs have done this yet.

#### 6. Between SINPA NGOs in-country and indigenous Solomon Islands NGOs

What SINPA clearly lacks is a partnership with indigenous SI civil society. The current partnerships within SINPA are between the Australian NGOs and the SI NGOs, the latter being branches of Australian or international NGOs. They are not indigenously grown civil society organisations, with the exception of the Oxfam partner, the Family Support Centre. The Evaluation Team is of the opinion that there are indigenous civil society organisations that the program partners could work with, depending on their sectoral focus. These include: Solomon Island Development Trust, Meresave, Women in Business Association, SI Indigenous Peoples Human Rights Association, Literacy Association of Solomon Islands.

If SINPA aims to support SI CSOs then partnerships should be developed with indigenous NGOs. This may be perceived as more challenging at an operational level, but will contribute

more effectively in the long term to supporting civil society in the SI. The evaluators are of the opinion that an excellent opportunity is being missed.

## 7. Among the ANGOs in Australia

The active collaboration between SINPA NGOs in country is not mirrored among the ANGOs in Australia. Although the ANGOs meet occasionally (e.g. before the Mid-Term Evaluation) they do not coordinate as closely or share as much as their Solomon Island offices. Although they recognise that there are important issues in SINPA (e.g. the lack of a shared view on program results) the ANGOs as a body, have not worked together to address them.

### **Conclusions:**

Currently, working in partnership under SINPA is limited to the six SINPA partners sharing experiences and knowledge in the Steering Committee or the Annual SINPA Reflection Workshop. This partnership has resulted in generating two learning papers produced by UTS/Sydney on Strengths Based Approach and Partnership.

A strong relationship of trust exists among the six SI SINPA partners but there is a danger that working in partnership will become too inward looking. Now that the relationship between the SINPA partners is well established it is time to be more outward looking and connect with other organisations in the Solomon Islands.

Working in partnership between Government and indigenous civil society organisations can be expanded. This will aid effectiveness and contribute to longer term sustainability through the transfer of knowledge and experiences within indigenous SI organisations. Not working in partnership with indigenous SI Civil Society is a missed opportunity under SINPA.

Engaging with local civil society organisations such as DSE, SICA and SIG agencies can occur through conferences where SINPA learnings are presented, joint field visits to model SINPA project sites, and wider dissemination of publications in local language.

Both ANGOs and SI NGOs bring strengths to the Partnership but in-country staff articulated the need for stronger support from ANGOs. Australian based NGO staff need to take up a stronger capacity building role and provide support to the SI based office on project management and technical aspects of the program.

### **Recommendations:**

1. SINPA partners to be more pro-active in engaging with Government and SI civil society organisations. This linking can occur through dissemination of learning materials in the local language, workshops, conferences or joint field visits. Where possible SINPA partners should engage with Government agencies and indigenous civil society organisations to implement project activities. Consultation with Government and civil society should be a pre-requisite and will contribute to changed government attitudes and a stronger civil society.
2. Stronger engagement of Australian based NGO staff with the management of operations in-country. ANGOs need to provide capacity building in results-based project management, monitoring and evaluation. In addition ANGO to ensure that NGO offices in-country have the technical skills or support to follow up technical aspects of project activities (in areas of agriculture, credit, veterinary skills).

**Evaluation Question 3: To what extent it is reasonable to say that the Strength Based Approach (SBA), as applied by SINPA, will lead to positive sustainable impacts in the Solomon Islands?**

### *SINPA – STRENGTHS BASED APPROACH (SBA)*

Central to SINPA is its Strengths Based Approach, which is integrated into its design and implementation. This is an innovative approach, which is implemented in communities who are used to a “hand out” or “cargo” culture, in which donors implement projects without expecting community contributions or engagement. Under SBA, community development interventions are based on existing strengths in the community, with external NGO staff as facilitators rather than experts, putting the community members in the driving seat.

#### 1. SBA as part of the design process

SINPA’s design documents have a strong focus on exploring approaches that enable Solomon Islander-led development. Based on the review of the design documentation and discussions with SINPA staff members there is undoubtedly a strong commitment on the part of the six partners to bring about change in the way aid has been delivered. Using the SBA approach encourages the program partners to go against the cargo culture or ‘hand-out’ culture, aiming to change mentality around aid delivery, change dependency mentality, with the community recognising its own strengths.

The consultation process that the six SINPA NGO partners undertook, as part of the design process, with the communities indicates clearly that communities themselves are very keen to change the attitudes around aid, wanting more aid programs that focus on education, behaviour change and, above all, community involvement and building on existing strengths and knowledge rather than the ‘hand out mentality’.



The University of Technology Sydney (UTS) was commissioned by AusAID and the SINPA Steering Committee to develop a Learning Paper about the practice of using SBA in the Solomon Islands community development sector. The paper was based on the review of design and reporting documentation, academic and other literature on SBA. Further, there were two participatory workshops attended by both Honiara and field based staff. One of the limitations of the approach used was that UTS researchers did not have the opportunity to engage directly with communities and with direct beneficiaries due to funding, scope and geographical constraints.

The research paper states “*Our overall finding is that SBA has been well-utilised by most partners and are progressing well in implementation. Our assessment is that investment of time and resources in the application of SBA in SINPA is of significant value. (...) This finding is significant in that the research revealed that SBA is being contextually indigenised.*”<sup>9</sup>

The Evaluation Team agree with the learning paper’s conclusion that SBA is understood as a concept at the senior levels of SINPA partner NGOs. However, the Team also believes

<sup>9</sup> UTS, Exploring SINPA’s Strengths-Based Practice: A Learning Paper, 2011, p.5



that, based on interviews in the field, it is less well understood by field workers who face difficulty in operationalising the concept.

## 2. Strengths Based Approach in practice at the community level

The Evaluation Team found that weakness lies not in the theoretical understanding of the 'Strengths Based Approach' but more in the practical and operational translation of this concept. During the in-country mission the team found that a number of weaknesses linked to project management quality were shown in various project sites visited.

With one NGO the activities selected for implementation relied heavily on outside technical input, resulting in items purchased from SINPA laying idle in a community building for one year. This was a clear consequence of the lack of a strong community consultation process in identifying existing strengths within the community. It also demonstrated a lack of proper project planning and risk management.

The Evaluation Team understands that the SINPA partners do not want to take the initiative and ownership out of the hands of the community. However there is a difference between 'taking over' and 'leaving the community on its own'.

This is well described by a workshop participant in the UTS paper: *"we feel like we know SBA but (in terms of) how we use it for implementation, we're sometimes confused"*.

Although the Team was advised about Visioning and Action Plan sessions held with communities when the projects started, it seems that these documents were not followed up and updated as experience was gained in implementing schemes and other activities. The Evaluation Team suggests that SBA needs to be an ongoing process, not a one-off event at the start of engagement.

The Team was also concerned about the quality of the community workers across most SINPA partners. It seems that often they are not well trained, supported or supervised. Some communities expressed that the field workers were absent or ineffective.

There is a tension in that: (i) it is often difficult to find candidates willing to live in villages for extended periods of time (one village the work had been done by 4 different person over a period of 15 months), while on the other hand (ii) using peripatetic field workers (covering many different communities) often results in too few visits to be effective, and yet (iii) using community workers from the actual villages is difficult because local factors, which may mean that they cannot work in an independent and equal way with all sections of the community.

The Evaluation Team recognises that the benefits of the SBA can be nullified by other donors who come in and 'dump cargo' (e.g. build a school house without requiring the same level of community participation and ownership (e.g. in providing materials, labour). To encourage the community to continue with an SBA approach in these circumstances requires a high level of skill and engagement on the part of the community workers, which is often missing.



**Kena Women's Savings Club meeting with the evaluators**

### 3. Is SBA more than just good community development practice?

The SBA has the potential to be more than just good community development practice which should be characterised by community consultation, participation in selection of activities and beneficiaries, involvement of the community in each step of the project cycle, community contribution and ownership after the project activity has been completed.

The Approach aims to purposely identify existing strengths within the community which are dormant or not recognised (e.g. the role of women), and to take the resources and indigenous knowledge that exists in the communities as the starting point. This provides confidence to the communities themselves, allowing them to recognise their own strengths on which to build further and support their communities.

However, recognising and building on those strengths does not automatically lead to a successful and sustainable activity implementation.

Key findings around the Strengths Based Approach call for:

1. ***The need for a champion within the community to encourage and facilitate the process with the community in a non-overpowering way.*** SINPA staff regards themselves as facilitators and not as experts. The Evaluation Team found that SINPA partners need to assess more carefully how the facilitators should take up their role. Facilitation is different from visitation. There is no need for all facilitators to be experts but it is important for technical expertise to be provided when needed to ensure a project does not fail through lack of technical input.
2. ***The need to have a thorough understanding of the power and potential conflict dynamics in the community before a project starts.*** Bringing positive and lasting change will require challenging some of the power dynamics in communities (softly and appropriately). How power dynamics is taken into consideration will vary between projects.
3. ***Project selection within the community should be driven and owned by the community.*** However, the SBA should not prevent SINPA partners' staff challenging the boundaries within the communities, e.g. selection of women activities. Often women will fall back automatically on what they already know. It is important to challenge this and work with the women in the community to select an activity where their existing skills can be utilised but will also open new doors. If the dynamics are such in a community that the men very much dominate community life, then women may feel inclined to support the men's choice.
4. Importantly, the evaluation found that when a community engages in practical activities such as training, managing a livelihood or water project, there is ***an opportunity to facilitate a dialogue with the community members on a number of broader social issues facing them.*** The Evaluation Team found that this opportunity is missed in most project sites visited.

Examples for learning illustrative to the above findings:

The Evaluation Team would like to comment very positively on the openness displayed by all SINPA staff during the in-country mission. Most of the SINPA partners showed the evaluators a strong project site and a project site that was facing difficulties. This allowed for making good comparisons and assessing where the strengths and weaknesses lay.

APHEDA – Labukulila – Poultry Training and Model Project

The weakness of the poultry model project pointed to a weakness in the approach of not working with the community as a whole. The poultry project did not get off the ground

because the women were waiting for the men to assist with rebuilding the fences. There was a clear reluctance on the men's part to support the women in their efforts. Men have their priority areas and can assist the women only when they are free or when there are funds available to pay for the work required. The experience of this project clearly pointed out the need for regular engagement with the community as a whole, and not to take for granted that the men would automatically support women in their endeavours. There was a clear need for the provincial Coordinator to be present more regularly than visiting the community on a quarterly basis. This experience also pointed out that a thorough understanding of the power dynamics in this community was required before starting an intervention. It also demonstrated that strong and accepted Community Learning Centre coordinators in the community and strong and respected APHEDA provincial coordinators are necessary. A simple and effective financial management system needs to be put in place for the centre project funds.

#### ICP – Guadalcanal - Gorabau – Water Supply project

The aim of the project was to connect homes via pipes to a water borehole and the community had been provided with the water pipes, funded from the project early in 2010. While monitoring of the project had been constrained because of funding issues, a number of valuable lessons for SINPA can be learned from this project. The project was heavily dependent on outside technical input: digging the bore hole; agreement on the land for the bore hole; setting up a reservoir tank. On visiting the community there was clearly no ownership of the project and community members were just waiting for outside technical assistance to finalise the project inputs. This is an example of a lack of appropriate assessment of the strengths or existing skills in the community. Based on conversations with community members it seemed that the community was presented with a list of activities from which they could choose, rather than being involved in a more participatory selection process.



#### APHEDA – Niorovai – Well Water Pump – Food Processing / Catering Workshop Project.

This project clearly demonstrated tangible development results to the community through the access of community members to water pumps. This project had a clear positive impact on the lives of women and on the community as a whole. The community gathering to meet with the evaluators was large, dynamic and well prepared. It was clear that this community had many ideas and just needed to be supported along the journey. The positive aspects of this project site demonstrated the importance of having a 'champion' in the community who is respected by the community as a whole. One remark the Evaluation Team made regarding the Water Pump project is the need to ensure that the beneficiary selection process is very transparent.

The issue of having a youth group project versus individual family/youth projects may need to be further discussed and explored if the poultry project is sustainable and continuing.



## ADRA – Guadalcanal Province - Tau Community – Chicken Farming Project

The project demonstrated the importance of having a strong community facilitator, a young woman in this community, strong leadership, and the need for the community as a whole (village chief, church leader, elders, women) to support the youth in their initiative. This has



**ADRA-funded poultry project**

led to better relationships between the youth and other community members. The project has the potential - if it remains successful - to provide income for the youth but also allow them to make an investment that can benefit the community as a whole. The project's success also provides an opportunity to open the door to discussing social issues (violence, drugs, alcohol) in a more positive environment. The project also indicated, especially for livestock projects, the need for technical expertise and training to ensure sustainability.

The importance of having a strong community facilitator was very apparent when compared to another ADRA project in Kaio community where project results were less clear - the group was too large (over 70 members implementing a small scheme) and there was no business plan.

## LIVE and LEARN – Kena and Kalibae villages.

Live and Learn works with communities on Kolombangara, affected by the large-scale logging of the island, which started in the 1980s. The programme in Kena and Kalibae villages focuses on gender training, financial literacy training and skills development. It has led to the establishment of women's savings clubs and, in Kena, establishment of a Marine Protected Area (MPA). There are two community facilitators in each village – one woman and one man. Women have become economically and socially empowered through the women's savings clubs, which they manage themselves, and are speaking up in general meetings and, in Kalibae, organising against activities of the logging company. The MPA was established through the efforts of one of the Chiefs and, although difficult to implement because it affects people's immediate livelihoods, is showing results. As with other NGOs, community leaders are asking for greater transparency in the use of project funds by NGOs.



**Chief at Live & Learn Village**

## SC – Kalibae Community, Honiara

SC has been active in Kalibae, a disadvantaged community in Honiara, for two years. Despite the difficulties of working in urban areas (where people are away from home a lot working or looking for work, during the daytime) an active youth group has been formed supported by two SC Project Officers and older members of the community. Activities have included building the Youth Resource Centre, training in furniture making (in collaboration with APHEDA, who provided the trainer), sewing and dying of lava lavas and plans are in place to set up a poultry scheme. The furniture making was popular but after some difficulties the trainer left and there were insufficient funds for the local youth to start an enterprise. In time, the tools disappeared: as a community elder put it “*tools blo furniture hime garem wings*”...and flew away. The lava lava making has been more successful, with

the lava lavas being sold outside Honiara because of the competition in the town. However, the mission noted that there is no business plan in place and it is unclear how any profits of the business will be distributed.

#### SC – Sambora, Vela Lavella

Sambora on Vella Lavella was one of the first communities to be included in SCF's YOPP program. It has made some progress. A Youth Centre and a sanitation program are both nearing completion and the community has engaged with YOPP Sports and won a number of competitions in Western Province. As yet there are no youth-centred livelihood activities. A major difficulty faced by SC has been to recruit village-based Project Officers. The post has been filled by five different individuals over the last 18 months. Community leaders complained about both the high turnover and quality of some of the staff posted.

#### Oxfam – Family Support Centre

Oxfam is the only ANGO working mainly through a Solomon Island NGO – the Family Support Centre (FSC). Despite early problems concerning governance and financial management, which delayed the programme, activities have now fully started. FSC provides a counselling service for victims of Violence Against Women and child abuse, and also undertakes educational work through churches, schools and NGOs to change attitudes. Oxfam partners with FSC and other organisations in national advocacy work and in providing support to the Solomon Islands Government, especially the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs.

#### **Conclusions:**

The Strengths Based Approach has the potential to be more than just good community development practice and to be capable of providing sustainable results to the SI community. However, at the moment, too many examples exist where good community development practices are not adhered to and solid project management skills are not applied. SINPA partners should ensure that SBA is not a synonym for poor project implementation.

It is possible for the SBA to change the culture around aid delivery and to support communities in taking more control of their own development. However, relying solely on existing strengths and knowledge does not mean the communities are set up automatically for success.

It was found that the practical translation of the SBA approach at the community level should be strengthened and support should be provided to the community facilitators or those staff members engaging regularly with the communities. The SBA can only work if it is well understood and applied at the community level.

#### **Recommendations:**

1. SINPA partners to link Strengths Based Approach with sound project management practice, providing technical and oversight support where needed in a non-overpowering way.
2. SINPA partners to focus their learning on the practical application of the SBA, not limited to the theoretical understanding of the approach.
3. Learn from experience across SINPA on the problems of community workers and how best to recruit, train, manage and support them when in the field. A good practice guide supported by the provision of basic tools for community workers should be developed that can also be used by other civil society organisations in-country as well.
4. Develop more advanced training courses for community workers in community engagement and facilitation to give them the depth needed, on their own in villages to deal with difficult communities.

**Evaluation Question 4: To what extent do the actual and potential benefits of SINPA represent value for money?**

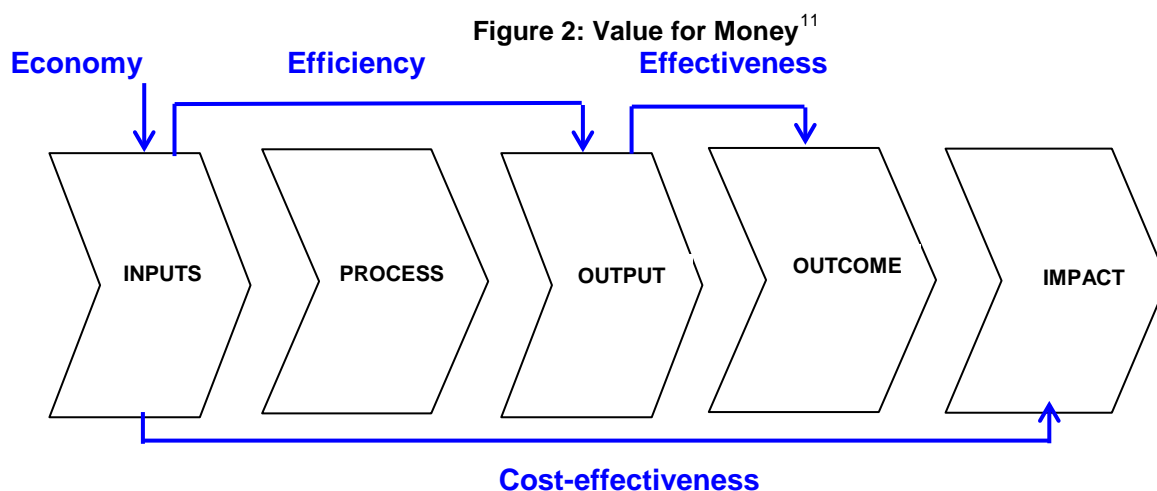
**INTRODUCTION**

Value for money (VfM) is about maximising the impact of each dollar spent to improve poor people’s lives. It is an increasingly important concept in AusAID and other development agencies. The recent Independent Review of Aid Effectiveness<sup>10</sup> proposed that the fundamental objective of the Australian Aid Program should be helping people to overcome poverty and the fundamental operational principle should be value-for-money.

To estimate VfM, the costs and results of an intervention must be compared. This involves assessing:

- **Economy** – Is the program buying inputs of the appropriate quality (e.g., staff, consultants, capital, materials) at the right price?
- **Efficiency** – How well does the program convert inputs into to outputs?
- **Effectiveness** – How well are outputs converted into outcomes or development results?
- **Cost-effectiveness** – How much impact on poverty reduction does the program achieve relative to the inputs invested in it?

This is shown in Figure 2. Program managers can exercise strong control over the quality and quantity of outputs (good and services delivered by the program) but do not have direct control over outcomes (which involve behaviour changes on the part of individuals or organisations).



Assessing the VfM of SINPA and its six projects is not possible at this stage because of the lack of results frameworks and robust theories of change, noted earlier (see response to Evaluation Question 1, above). Despite this, useful indications can be gained by analysing the costs of each project and recommendations made towards a full VfM analysis at the end of the program, in 2014.

<sup>10</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2011) *Report of the Independent Review of Aid Effectiveness*, Canberra.

<sup>11</sup> Based on DFID (2011) *DFID’s Approach to Value for Money (VfM)*, London.

## COSTS OF IMPLEMENTING SINPA

SINPA was designed as a AUD 20 million program over five years, with the funds divided between: (i) **NGO programs** (91%); (ii) **SINPA Coordination** (6%) supporting cross-NGO activities and the full-time ‘SINPA Coordinator’ and (iii) **Learning Groups** (3%) for consultants to improve joint learning among NGO Partners.

By the end of the program, the six SINPA NGOs are currently expected to receive a total of AUD 16.7 million (between AUD 1.7 million and AUD 4.2 million each) and the total program cost is expected to be AUD 18.5 million. The allocation of these grants, by main budget category, for the whole program, is shown in Table 2.<sup>12</sup> It is estimated that 11.1% of the budget will be spent on support costs of Australian NGOs, 45.6% on support costs in Solomon Islands, 36.5% on Solomon Island Activity Costs and 6.8% on Monitoring and Evaluation<sup>13</sup>.

**Table 2: SINPA - Budget by category**

Budget head		AUD million*	%
1.	<b>Australia Support Costs</b> Salaries, administrative and travel costs of ANGOs	1.86	11.1
2.	<b>Solomon Islands Support Costs</b> Salaries, administration, office costs	7.56	45.2
3.	<b>Solomon Islands Activity Costs</b> Transport, telecoms, capacity building direct expenditures in communities	6.17	36.9
4.	<b>Monitoring and evaluation</b>	1.14	6.8
<b>Total</b>		<b>16.73</b>	<b>100.0</b>

\* Current prices for the 5 year project. Source: estimated by NGOs in November 2011.

There are significant differences among the NGOs, as shown in Table 3. Key differences may be summarised as follows:

- Australia support costs (salaries, administrative and travel costs) vary from lows of 2% - 9% of total costs (for NGOs with expatriate managers and other staff in Solomon Islands) to highs of 13%-30% (for NGOs, which only have national managers and senior staff in Solomon Islands);
- Solomon Island support costs (salaries, administration, office costs) vary from 31% to 58% of total costs;
- Combined support costs (Australia and Solomon Islands) vary from 44% to 88%;
- Solomon Islands Activity Costs vary from 8% to 45% of total costs;
- Monitoring and evaluation costs vary from 4% to 14%.

If one ignores ICP, because it ceased operations for an extended period in Phase 2, the combined support costs for SINPA amount to approximately 56% of total costs.

<sup>12</sup>The six NGO partners have only recently introduced the standard chart of accounts for SINPA budget and acquittal reports and there are still some differences, among NGOs, in the way expenditures are categorised and aggregated.

<sup>13</sup> M&E is probably underestimated by up to 2% because of different systems of categorising M&E costs.

**Table 3: SINPA NGO Projects – allocations by budget head (%)**

Budget head	% total budget for each NGO						SINPA %
	ADRA	APHEDA	ICP	LIVE & LEARN	OXFAM	SC	
1. Australia Support Costs	6.9	12.7	30.0	15.5	2.4	8.9	11.1
2. Solomon Islands Support Costs	38.8	31.2	57.6	56.3	49.0	50.4	45.2
<b>Sub-Total 1+2</b>	<b>45.7</b>	<b>43.9</b>	<b>87.6</b>	<b>71.8</b>	<b>51.4</b>	<b>60.2</b>	<b>56.3</b>
3. Solomon Islands Activity Costs	43.4	42.1	8.0	16.8	45.0	40.6	36.9
4. Monitoring and evaluation	10.9	14.0	4.4	11.4	3.6	0.1**	6.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

\* Source: 5 year project estimates by the NGOs in November 2011. \*\* The very low figure for Save the Children is because Monitoring and Evaluation costs are included in Support Costs.

Table 4 shows the Solomon Islands Activity Costs category broken down into sub-categories for three of the NGOs. This was done using their Phase 3 budgets, because this is the first full period during which the NGOs worked in communities. The three other SINPA NGOs were excluded from the analysis either because they did not work extensively in communities in Phase 3 or because of problems in categorising expenditures<sup>14</sup>.

**Table 4: SINPA NGO Projects – Breakdown of Activity Costs (%)**

Budget head		% Total budget for each NGO		
		ADRA	LIVE & LEARN	SC
1.	Transport and telecoms	7.0	2.3	12.0
2.	Workshops, capacity building, advocacy	23.6	8.4	13.7
3.	Activities in communities (excluding #2)	9.2	8.5	9.6
	<b>Total Activity Costs</b>	<b>39.8</b>	<b>19.4</b>	<b>35.3</b>

Note: There are small differences in Activity Costs totals between Table 4, which is based on the estimated total budgets for 5 years, and Table 5, which is based on the Phase 3 budgets.

From the table, it can be seen that the three NGOs spend between 8.5% and 9.6% of their SINPA funds on direct activities in communities (e.g., water supply, sanitation, youth halls, livelihood activities). The combined five-year budget of these three organisations is estimated at AUD 10.24 million, of which an estimated AUD 0.94 million will be spent on direct community activities. Taking into account likely future direct expenditures in communities by ICP and Oxfam, and APHEDA's training-linked small grants program, an estimated AUD 1.25 million out of a total NGO spend of AUD 16.7 million, is likely to be spent on direct community activities, accounting for approximately 7.4% of total spend by partner NGOs and 6.7% of total SINPA spend of AUD 18.5 million (i.e., including expenditure on coordination and learning groups).

This figure is low compared to other community-driven development programs. For example, the AusAID supported Protracted Relief Program in Zimbabwe, which aims to improve livelihoods and community skills and infrastructure in rural and urban communities across

<sup>14</sup> ICP and Oxfam were not included because they were not working fully on community based programs in Phase 3 and APHEDA categorised its expenditures differently and direct comparison with the other NGOs was not possible, in the time available.

the country, through international, national and local NGOs, 23% of the budget is spent in villages (see Table 5).

**Table 5: Comparison of SINPA and PRP, Zimbabwe Expenditure**

Cost Head	SINPA	PRP Zimbabwe <sup>15</sup>
1. Australian NGO.	11%	-
2. TA Management Agency	-	11%
3. In country management and support costs, including field costs and M&E	83%	66%
4. Direct spend in communities	6%	23%*
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

\* Note. The proportion of spend in villages in Zimbabwe was actually somewhat higher than 23% because some spend in communities was included under in-country support costs.

Although the quantum of SINPA funds spent directly in communities is low, communities also contribute to the cost of schemes (e.g. in the form of labour, gravel, timber). During field visits, the Evaluation Team found they contribute, on average, roughly one-third of the total cost. If this is assumed to be the case across the program, direct investment in villages (SINPA Funds and related community contributions) would increase to the equivalent of approximately 10% of the total budget.

It should be noted that direct spending in communities may not be a good measure of the overall impact of SINPA since communities are expected to benefit in other ways from the program. For example, SINPA aims – through the strength-based approach - to develop the skills of communities to plan and implement development schemes (through training, capacity development and the support of resident community facilitators), which can be applied both to SINPA-funded and non-SINPA funded development schemes. If the success of this could be demonstrated, these extra benefits could be attributed, at least in part, to SINPA. Also, if it could be shown that resident community facilitators are essential to the achievement of development outcomes, their costs could be considered as a direct investment in communities.

Currently, it is unclear whether SINPA is achieving these wider results, since SINPA NGOs do not systematically collect data on general community development or immediate programme outcomes. Also, as was noted earlier, it was not obvious during field visits that training and related activities are leading to expected outcomes (e.g. in terms of improved livelihoods). In the 14 communities visited by the Evaluation Team, one or more of the following issues were noted: (i) trainees were not supported in linking to service providers (e.g., for technical support) and thus could not convert training into livelihood outcomes; (ii) business plans were not developed for community and group enterprises; (iii) training outcomes were not monitored; (iv) community facilitator positions, which are key to the ‘strength-based approach’, were either vacant for long periods of time or there were such frequent changes that community leaders complained about the quality of the support received.

Better data on development outcomes from direct SINPA investments and more general community development, including on the work of community facilitators, needs to be collected both for private goods (e.g., livelihood activities) and public goods (e.g., water

<sup>15</sup> DFID (2010) “Protracted Relief Program Phase II (PRP II): 2010 Multi-Donor Mid-Term Review”, Harare. Background paper on “Grant Management Capacity and Analysis of Efficiency and Cost-Effectiveness of PRP Phase 2”.



supply, better community governance), if the performance and VfM of the SINPA approach is to be adequately evaluated.

A key priority, for the last two years of the program, should be to: (i) evaluate and document the outcomes and estimate the value for money of the different community development approaches being implemented by NGOs under SINPA, and (ii) to develop 'models' of community development, which can be cost effectively scaled up in Solomon Islands. This should include:

- development of a common general methodology for partner NGOs to use in assessing the costs and benefits (tangible and intangible<sup>16</sup>) of the different components of the program, which is reasonable and practical<sup>17</sup> and
- involving communities in participatory assessments of the costs, outcomes and replicability of the program.

At present, NGOs do not systematically collect data on the extent of community contributions. It is recommended that this should also be done and that a standard approach is developed to assign market values to bush products (e.g., timber, gravel), land and labour. This is needed since there are not effective markets for these in most parts of Solomon Islands.



***Under-nourished children***

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<sup>16</sup> Intangible benefits might include, for example, increased empowerment or communities and women within families and communities, and greater social cohesion.

**Conclusions:**

The management and support costs of the SINPA model are very high, at 58% of the combined cost of NGO projects and 61% of the overall SINPA budget.

Only 6%-7% of AusAID funds are spent directly in communities, though this figure rises to the equivalent of 9%-11%, if community contributions are taken into account. Other benefits of the model, deriving from the strength-based approach and capacity building have not yet been documented by partner NGOs.

If one only takes account of the expenditure in communities and the community contributions of communities, it costs nine dollars to deliver one dollar of development aid to communities.

If SINPA was a delivery-focused program (e.g., a small grants program) this cost structure would be unacceptable. However, the aims of SINPA include: (i) developing effective approaches and/or models to community development and (ii) increasing the effectiveness of Solomon Island NGOs to support effective Solomon Islander-led community development.

These outcomes have the potential to bring significant and sustainable benefits beyond the end of the program.

**Recommendations:**

1. SINPA should focus on developing models to community development, *which can be cost effectively replicated in Solomon Islands*;
2. Document the costs, benefits and value for money of the program and the models developed through careful monitoring, evaluation and operations research involving the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data. Specialist advice will be needed by an independent evaluation specialist, experienced in the use of 'mixed method' evaluation approaches to develop an evaluation plan and provide on-going support. Significant inputs on M&E will be needed from the ANGOs.
3. At the end of program evaluation a full Value for Money should be carried out covering efficiency, effectiveness and cost-effectiveness.
4. Undertake a VfM economy analysis to assess the extent to which the program is buying inputs of the appropriate quality (e.g. staff, consultants, capital materials) at the right price. This can be done by a local accountancy firm and should be undertaken for each NGO project.



## V. PERFORMANCE FINDINGS FOR EACH SINPA NGO PARTNER

### *PROJECT MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SINPA PARTNERS*

#### 1. General Introduction

The performance assessment of the six SINPA partners is based on a review of project documentation, in-country project site visits (average of 2 – 3 sites) and interviews with staff based in Australia and the Solomon Islands. This approach has allowed the Evaluation Team to gather sufficient evidence to provide a number of recommendations for consideration by the SINPA partners to strengthen their performance, draw out strengths and identify weaknesses. It should be noted however, that this is not an in-depth evaluation or technical appraisal of the SINPA partners' performance. In future, SINPA partners might want to consider conducting their own external mid-term review and end-of-program evaluation. This will allow for a more in-depth analysis and learning for each project.

This section of the evaluation report focuses mainly on the strengths and weaknesses in project management. Assessment of the performance of the SINPA partners around the Strengths Based Approach, Partnership and Value for Money have been integrated under the relevant evaluation questions included in the report. Criteria used to assess performance of the SINPA partners are included as Annex 5.

As part of the evaluation exercise, the Evaluation Team developed a draft *Results Framework* with five of the six SINPA partners. This was done to give the evaluators a better understanding of what is being achieved under the SINPA program and to more clearly spell out the theories of change of each project, using standard results terminology – activities, outputs, outcomes, impacts, assumptions and indicators

The draft Results Frameworks were developed with staff of partner NGOs and will need to be discussed further with AusAID and a wider group of stakeholders if it is to be used for program management. As mentioned earlier, in response to Evaluation Questions 1 and 4, the evaluators' view is that SINPA needs to be strengthened so that it can report against and demonstrate results at the output and outcome level.

#### 2. APHEDA –Sharing Knowledge, Improving Livelihoods, Learning Skills (SKILLS)

##### Operational Set-Up:

APHEDA has an established APHEDA SI Office since 2004 but for SINPA activities, it has engaged with them since 2009 and is working with and through the Community Learning Centres (CLC's) to implement the SINPA activities in seven provinces. The APHEDA Office in-country is staffed by six Honiara based project staff (3F/3M) and eight Provincial Learning Coordinators (3F/5M) (PLCs). There are also 67 CLC Coordinators (15F/52M). APHEDA estimates that about 30% of CLC officers (chairs, secretaries, treasurers) are women.

##### Methodology:

During the in-country evaluation mission, three project sites were visited in three different locations: Niorovai (Western Province); Sausama (Western Province); and Labukulila (Guadalcanal province). The Evaluation Team also spent time with the APHEDA in-country team and the APHEDA Sydney-based Project Officer, who was present for the duration of the in-country evaluation. The in-country visit was followed up with conference calls with the APHEDA International Program Manager and Project Officer.

### Project Design Document (PDD):

The PDD is well written and based on broad consultations with the stakeholders in the communities. Central to the PDD is the “Change Process Logic” (PDD - Figure 5 page 10), which proves to be challenging in terms of assessing progress due to the lack of clarity on expected results, thus making it difficult to assess if the project is effective.

The goal of the project is “self-reliant, healthy, confident, skilled communities with livelihoods that are applicable to their today situation” There are two main levels of objectives:

1. To build the capacities of project staff and CLC coordinators to work with communities to identify priorities, to implement responsive community-driven, effective education and training and to monitor and evaluate the impact of CLC activities.
2. To develop the capacities of CLC communities to understand their strengths, and facilitate (through their CLCs) the changes identified to bring about their community vision of SKILLS.

The Evaluation Team finds the above two objectives relevant to the needs of rural communities where there is lack of employment opportunities. The project is closely linked to the organisational focus of APHEDA. The challenge for APHEDA is to develop a strong and effective road map that will allow the project to achieve these objectives.

### Project strategy:

APHEDA is currently working with 54 Community Learning Centres (CLCs) in eight provinces and aims to work with up to 100 CLCs at the end of the program. APHEDA has established a CLC network, ECLAN (Extended Community Learning Action Network), that CLCs can opt to join. CLCs are set up at the community level in response to local demands. CLCs are managed locally and are independent of one another and independent of any government or educational authority.

The SKILLS project has great potential to achieve strong outputs and outcomes around livelihoods. However, at the moment there is only a partial approach to improving livelihoods. APHEDA has facilitated the formation of CLCs, run specialist training courses and run some demonstrations but there has been no follow-up to (i) assess how effective the training has been (how many people trained use the skills to improve their livelihoods?) or (ii) provide resources and on-going technical support for communities and individuals that will turn training received into viable livelihood activities. The model assumes that the CLC Coordinator will facilitate access to other services and resources. There is limited evidence of this at the moment and success of this approach should be assessed. APHEDA may like to consider whether it should be more proactive in facilitating links between community groups, trained at CLCs, and local service providers able to provide on-going technical support and resources (e.g., Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, Kastom Garden Association).

### Partnerships:

APHEDA's primary partnership is with the CLCs. There is potential to develop closer relationships with the RTCs (Rural Training Centres). The existing relationships with SIAVRTC (Solomon Islands Association of Vocational and Rural Training Centres) and the SI government department of TVET (Technical, Vocational Education and Training) should be further maintained and strengthened.

### Gender /Power:

APHEDA's design process highlighted the need to analyse and address issues relating to gender and power, but this needs further attention. There is a need to provide training to CLC Coordinators and Provincial Learning Coordinators (PLCs) in gender issues to ensure

equity in relation to CLC activities. Currently, gender in the project is only tackled ‘informally’ and left to the coordinators’ initiative. APHEDA may want to consider having gender as one of the requirements for working with CLCs. Through its training activities, APHEDA has the opportunity to challenge in a culturally appropriate way, a number of perceptions around women’s roles in communities. There is a need to encourage appointment of more women CLC coordinators and to have more women members of CLC management committees. Gender training needs to be provided on gender roles at village level. By not challenging the status quo, there is a danger that APHEDA will actually strengthen gender inequity.

The community profiles developed in 2011 for each of the CLCs incorporate problems faced by the CLCs and the plan to address it. It is timely for APHEDA to assess the CLC community profiles developed to see if they can be further enhanced in the future to ensure they incorporate a power analysis for the community and to avoid doing harm.

#### Accountability to communities:

At the CLAN meetings APHEDA shares budgets and expenditure details with CLC Coordinators. The biannual newsletter is another way that APHEDA is accountable to communities through providing information on which grants have been disbursed and which activities have been implemented. Tools used such as the Appreciative Inquiry and Pocket Charts allow for broad Community consultations. However, APHEDA needs to assess if these mechanisms are sufficient and whether or not other accountability mechanisms should be put in place.

#### Monitoring and Evaluation:

A key strength of the project is in the community consultation process and ensuring that community initiatives are not overpowered by project staff. However, the capacity of the project staff to monitor and document changes and achievement of results needs to be strengthened. Strong baseline data (at the community and CLC level and at the project level) needs to be established against which change can be gauged. Currently, only Community Profiles for each of the CLCs has been prepared. APHEDA needs to evaluate whether these Community Profiles can be considered equivalent to baseline data, which forms the basis against which progress can be assessed.

Importantly APHEDA needs to assess if the Change Process Logic is realistic and that allows the project to assess progress and change. At the moment the PDD lacks performance indicators against which staff can assess project achievements and there are gaps in the change logic..

Annual reports are of an acceptable standard but quality should be strengthened with more solid monitoring data and evidence on what is being achieved under the program. This is a challenge across SINPA.

#### Results:

During the three years of implementation, 84 training sessions, 22 DCLAN and 3 ECLAN meetings took place. Phase 3 gender disaggregated data was not yet complete for the training sessions. Based on the field visits there is a need to provide more regular interaction and technical support to the communities to avoid failure or less optimum results. The quality of the projects should be followed up by APHEDA more closely. If training is key to a project then there should be a monitoring system in place to assess the ongoing impact of the training (whether or not people use the skills training).

#### Recommendations:

1. APHEDA needs to clarify what the anticipated results are (outputs, outcomes and impacts) and what changes are expected to be achieved by the end of the project. APHEDA staff members need to be clear on what success will look like so they know which road to take to achieve those outcomes.
2. It is necessary for APHEDA management to assess staffing requirements and ensure that capacity building is provided to the APHEDA staff in-country, inclusive of staff at the provincial and community level.
3. There is a need for project staff to follow up on training provided in the communities:
  - a. The selection of the training activities may have been done in a very participatory manner but this did not necessarily mean that the training selected was the best choice. It can be of great benefit if a good process is employed and the community is gently encouraged to challenge itself to think outside the box.
  - b. APHEDA needs to work closely with the community to ensure selected training activities contribute to livelihood opportunities. Monitoring “what” participants do with the training received should be undertaken, constraints assessed on what is preventing community members from translating training into viable livelihood activities and these constraints (e.g., resources, technical support) addressed.

### 3. Anglican Board of Mission (ABM) - Inclusive Communities Program (ICP)

#### Operational set-up:

ICP, established in 2004 to implement SINCA, is an NGO that sits within the organisational structure of the Anglican Church of Melanesia. ICP is the in-country program partner for the Australian NGO, Anglican Board of Mission (ABM), to implement the SINPA program. The structure of the ICP is that in-country oversight is provided by the Anglican Church’s Melanesian Board of Mission, with a Program Manager and support staff, divided into Program Delivery staff and Finance and Administration staff. The ABM Sydney based Manager provides oversight to the Program.

As an organisation, ICP implements no other programs but the SINPA program. As a result, the exposure and experience of ICP staff is very limited and overhead costs charged to SINPA are reasonably high, as a full office is established in-country for the purpose of managing one program.

There are two full time staff members in the Honiara office - the ICP Program Manager who took up his position mid-September, and a Project Coordinator who has worked on the program throughout. It is expected that more staff will be recruited now that the program has resumed. The evaluators did not receive clarity on a staffing and recruitment schedule.

#### Methodology:

Two project sites were visited in Guadalcanal during the evaluation mission: Duidui and Gorabau. The Evaluation Team met with the ICP Project Manager and Project Officer in Honiara, and this was followed up by a conference call with the ABM Sydney-based Project Officer. Due to conflicting schedules, the Evaluation Team was unable to meet with the ICP/MBM Mission Secretary.

#### Project Design Document (PDD):

The ABM/ICP design document is crucially missing a clear statement on expected results and what success of the program will look like. The PDD does not include any performance indicators against which the project can be assessed.

The goal of the program is to “Strengthen communities to become more responsible to help families help themselves”. The objectives are:

- Strengthen cohesion within the family and village
- Enhance families’ access to livelihoods
- Strengthen partnership capacity to better sustain and replicate program outcomes, and to impact and leverage broader programs.

#### Project Strategy:

The design document explains that ABM/ICP will use an organic approach focused on processes, relationships and capacity building with a strong action/reflection element. ABM/ICP aims to use strengths-based ways to encourage the community itself to grow in its ability to organise and plan; to use its own assets to learn how to develop greater cohesion and respect; and to identify and use health and livelihood opportunities. Criteria for community selection:

- Communities marginalised or overlooked within each diocese of the Anglican Church of Melanesia
- Communities with the potential to be a link to, or focal point for, other communities
- Communities willing to lead their own development or changes
- Communities that the local Church endorses that comply with the above criteria.

#### Results:

Due to concerns around financial management, operations stopped in July 2010, with ABM returning any unspent funds. All project staff, except for one, left the project office. As of July 2010 the project has been in a holding pattern while strengthening financial management. A new Program Manager was appointed in September 2011 after funding for Phase 3 was received by ABM in August. The focus on tightening the financial reporting requirements has greatly affected the partner's capacity, and actual program outputs have suffered.

Based on the two field visits during the Evaluation Mission there are serious concerns around the results and change being brought about in the communities:

- ICP was the implementing partner to ABM for the implementation of SINCA. The evaluators were surprised that only limited systems were in place, for example, around monitoring and evaluation, and reporting.
- In both communities visited as part of the evaluation, the communities had chosen water projects that relied heavily on outside technical input, or contingent upon agreement by other communities. No progress has been made by the communities themselves since the project was put on hold in 2010. What was seen was no different to the cargo culture prevalent in SI.
- Communities indicated that the community consultation and selection of project activities was limited to being presented with a list, presented by the ICP coordinators, from which to choose.
- In both communities the wider social issues facing the communities were not being addressed. Alcohol abuse was affecting family life and, in one village that was reliant on living on royalties from its lands, men were not playing a very productive role in the community.

#### Status update:

The audit began in September 2010 and the final report was given to ABM in February 2011, with recommendations to be put in place before new funding could be provided. The project has resumed, since September 2011, after a risk management strategy was put in place. ABM has engaged Morris and Sojnocki in Honiara to provide ongoing oversight and capacity building. A Morris and Sojnocki staff member works with the ICP Finance Officer/MBM Accountant and ICP Program Manager.

#### Monitoring and Evaluation:

The workplan prepared for Phase 3 (May 2011 – Jan 2012) does not reflect the outputs that can be expected at the end of January 2012. Based on the workplan, it is not clear what the program is aiming to achieve, and which activities are to be implemented to contribute to achievement of the objectives. Overall the workplan submitted is not at all of a satisfactory standard.

Review of the Activity/Project Report Format – M&E Reporting Format: This document was presented to the evaluators as an important link in its M&E activities. This document is not relevant to SINPA.

It is clear that ABM needs to take a leading role in setting up relevant project management tools to ensure efficient project implementation.

The project design document incorporates very clear intentions around Action/Reflection/Learning; Capacity Building; Participatory Assessment and other principles. However, there is no evidence at all that these principals are being translated into practice.

#### Recommendations:

The Evaluators acknowledge that ABM / ICP had its project stopped and had no solid period of implementation. However, based on the activities visited that were initiated before operations were put on hold, and reviewing the quality of tools and reports, it is clear that the project needs an urgent and complete overhaul. A 'business as usual' attitude will not help to get the project back into implementation phase.

The Evaluators are of the opinion that concerns around program implementation, its effectiveness and efficiency are of equal importance to the financial management issues.

The Evaluation Team has serious concerns around the performance of ABM/ICP. Critical actions such as a revised workplan, staff recruitment and training, M&E strategy, etc, require a review and overhaul. This leaves very little time for the project to be able to achieve demonstrable results. The Evaluation Team therefore recommends an urgent discussion between AusAID and ABM to discuss the feasibility of the continuation of the project.

## 4. ADRA – Youth Engagement and Livelihood Project – YELP

#### Operational Set-up:

ADRA SI is the implementing partner for ADRA Australia. The project is implemented in 21 communities in Guadalcanal and Malaita provinces. ADRA implements three project activities with each community, of which two should be livelihood projects. Project implementation is complemented by training supporting technical aspects of project activities and general awareness or capacity training.

#### Methodology:

During the in-country evaluation mission two project sites were visited in Guadalcanal province, Tumubosa Community and Tau Community. The Evaluation Team had the opportunity to spend time with the ADRA in-country team.

#### Project Design Document (PDD):

The PDD is well developed. The expected outcomes don't reflect the project reality because the project focuses more on groups of young people that are informally formed around livelihood activities, rather than on CSOs. There is a need for ADRA to reformulate objectives that are measurable and realistic at both the project and program level.

The goal of the project is to improve the livelihood opportunities, resilience and community engagement of young people in a more empowered and sensitised community. The project has three expected outcomes:

- CSOs will be empowered to increase livelihood opportunities for young people
- CSOs will be empowered to increase the resilience of young people
- Communities will be empowered to engage regularly and effectively in a positive environment with their youth.

#### Project Strategy:



**ADRA Youth Activist**

Overall the project strategy of working with youth in rural communities addresses an urgent need because tensions often exist between youth and the elders, caused by a lack of opportunities for youth. Through providing opportunities to youth, ADRA aims to impact on the cohesion within these communities.

ADRA needs to ensure that interventions are not only limited to the project activities but are used as an entry point for dialogue on wider issues in the communities, such as the role of women, drug and alcohol abuse, and violence against women.

During the visits to the communities it was found that perhaps there was too great a focus on moving from one project to another based on income generation, and not on sufficiently taking into consideration an action plan for the community as a whole. ADRA

has opted to focus more on CBO/interest group level because of the difficulties faced with working at the community level (as reported in their Phase 3 report).

#### Results:

ADRA needs to set up a results matrix, allowing the agency to track the number of beneficiaries (F/M) who are attending training and benefitting from livelihood projects over the course of the project. Results varied among the project sites visited. It will be important for ADRA to document and learn from the stronger and weaker examples of project interventions.

#### Partnerships:

Potential partnerships with RTCs and Ministry of Education need to be strengthened.

#### Gender/Power:

A proper gender and power analysis might assist the Strength Motivators to strengthen links between youth and the community, maximising the impact of the project. There is some concern regarding potential conflict within communities around projects for individual or

community benefits. This needs to be carefully followed up as a sole focus on projects for individual gains may cause tension.

#### Accountability to communities:

Accountability mechanisms should be put in place. This may also help to enhance the relationships between youth and other community members.. It is assumed that the translation of the youth projects will slowly spread to families/individual projects.

#### Monitoring and Evaluation:

The Theory of Change and the three-step Action-Reflection process is the basis for ADRA's M&E practice. There is a good description of this in the PDD but the Evaluation Team was unable to assess how far this is used throughout the implementation. ADRA has a number of useful tools in place to assist the staff in M&E: Action Plan template for the community; Field visit report template; M&E Matrix and MoUs signed between ADRA and community, clearly setting out the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders in the project implementation.

Concerns remain regarding the absence of verifiable performance indicators in the PDD. On review of the baseline document, there is concern that this is a needs and resources assessment rather than a baseline data document. There is no data included in the baseline survey document that allows for changes to be assessed in the community due to a particular livelihood intervention.

#### Recommendations:

- ADRA Australia project staff to demonstrate their added value in the relationship with ADRA SI more clearly. At the moment, ADRA Australia's involvement is limited to financial and narrative reporting.
- ADRA to ensure a good assessment of power and gender dynamics is completed before starting work in communities. This will allow the Strength Motivators in the communities to use the livelihood projects as an entry point to challenge some of the social issues faced and strengthen relationships between youth and the community at large.
- ADRA to focus on the quality and sustainability of the livelihood projects and ensure ongoing support is provided where needed in the future.

## 5. IWDA/ Live and Learn: The Natural Resource Management: Tugeda tude fo tumoro (TTFT) program

#### Operational Set-up:

The Natural Resource Management: Tugeda tude fo tumoro (TTFT) program is being jointly implemented by the International Women's Development Agency (IWDA), Australia and Live and Learn Environmental Education in Australia and Solomon Islands. It is implemented by a team of 9 people (4M/5F) working from Live and Learn's office in Honiara and with 12 community facilitators (6M/6W) working in gender balanced teams in 4 heavily logged provinces of Solomon Islands and working across 34 communities. (By phase 4 we would be working in 40 communities).

#### Methodology:

During the in-country evaluation mission, discussions were held with the program team in the Live and Learn Office, with community facilitators and communities in Kolombangara (Western Province) at Kena, Kalibae and Sausama, The Evaluation Team also spoke by



phone with IWDA, Australia and with the new IWDA Project Officer, who was in Honiara at the time of the mission.

#### Project Design Document:

The PDD is very well written and based on a sound analysis of the problem of sustainable natural resource management (NRM) and livelihoods in communities affected by logging in Solomon Islands. The design is based on strong analysis a participatory social research project, undertaken in 34 communities in four provinces.

The Project goal is to work towards more inclusive and environmentally sustainable communities. In Partnership with local communities and others, the project seeks change in four domains in order to achieve goal:

- Knowledge, attitudes and perceptions of individuals towards natural resource management and practices, sustainable livelihoods and gender inclusive decision making processes
- Capacity of groups and communities to organise and mobilise environmentally sound, more equitable and sustainable livelihoods
- Community wellbeing and resilience through safeguarding natural resources, sustainable livelihoods, and more inclusive participation and decision-making processes
- Regulatory and policy approaches, towards evidence-based policies and legal structures that safeguard natural resources, protect rights and promote gender equity.

The PDD presents theories of change for both community level and advocacy components. These could be strengthened by incorporating findings from the risks analysis. The team worked with the Live and Learn team to develop a results framework for the project, which may involve some changes to the theory of change.

The Evaluation Team considers that the four domains of change identified are all relevant to sustainable NRM in logging affected communities.

#### Project Strategy:

The project strategy involves (i) working with communities to facilitate gender-inclusive NRM planning and decision-making, (ii) connecting communities to government partners in order to influence policy makers and gain their support for the work of the program, and (iii) support for livelihoods that offer alternatives to logging. The core principles of the approach are: the strengths based approach, utilising existing groups and networks, and gaining the support of community leaders and policy-makers in government.

TTFT recognises that just providing training is insufficient and uses pairs of male and female community-based facilitators to work at village level to create awareness and space for women's participation in decision-making on natural resources, challenge exclusion and support community-led social change.

TTFT prioritises: (i) establishing and managing land and sea conservation areas; (ii) sustainable agriculture skills particularly for women and young women and young men to increase soil fertility and decrease reliance on timber forest products for cash incomes. (iii) a women-led savings and revolving funds program to support sustainable livelihoods. (iv) a market focus to support non timber forest product (NTFP) livelihoods. (v) improved sanitation, where this is a community priority.

#### Partnerships:

Live and Learn works in partnership with Government (e.g., Ministry of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs), other SINPA partners (e.g., with Oxfam, ADRA, Save the Children and APHEDA) and with national (e.g., Solomon Islands Credit Union League) local NGOs (e.g., TDA and WARA).

#### Gender/Power:

The project has a strong gender focus and recognises the significant underlying power dynamics involved in logging, land issues and gender. A lesson learnt by TTFT is that for work on gender to be sustainable, men must be involved and support the process. In Phase 4, TTFT will seek to ensure that disabled people and 'married-in' women are included in the project.

#### Advocacy:

TTFT had planned to start advocacy work in Phase 3, but postponed this to Phase 4 in order to build the evidence base and capacity of the NRM community-based organisations, which will collectively try to influence policy at provincial and national levels.

#### Accountability to communities:

Although TTFT recognises the importance of accountability to communities, in two of the three villages visited, leaders stated that they complained that they did not know how decisions on funding of community activities were made. Live and Learn is aware of the problem and is building the capacity and accountability of community facilitators.

#### Monitoring and Evaluation:

Given the complex nature of the issue TTFT has adopted an approach that allows continuous learning through action and reflection. The program encourages the use of Most Significant Change and digistories (e.g., using DVDs).

Live and Learn recognises that TTFT needs to strengthen its monitoring system to produce quantitative and qualitative data on outputs and to track outcomes (e.g., baseline and end line studies in communities; longitudinal monitoring of FSC clients, analysis on most significant changes).

Annual reports of an acceptable standard but need to be strengthened with more solid monitoring data and evidence on what is being achieved under the program.

IWDA and LLEE Australia did a full audit the program in Phase 3 and provided capacity building support, resulting in improvements in performance (meeting workplan and budget targets) in Phase 3, compared to earlier phases.

#### Results:

The project currently works with 3,300 community members in 34 communities in four provinces.

Women's led savings groups have been established in 14 TTFT communities and have so far saved over SBD 100,000.

#### Recommendations

The project has the potential to deliver strong outputs and achieve its outcomes. The foundations for this were laid in the first three phases and must be taken to scale in phases 4 and 5. To do this, Live and Learn needs to focus better on delivering results and documenting models and good practices (e.g., Women's savings groups; approaches to

gender equality in matrilineal and patrilineal communities, community-driven advocacy) that can be replicated after the project. This will involve:

- finalising the results framework developed;
- implementing the advocacy component of the project and documenting lessons learnt;
- strengthening the monitoring and evaluation system to (i) produce quantitative and qualitative data on outputs and track outcomes and (ii) undertake evaluation and action research on TTFT activities to produce robust evidence on any good practices examples developed by the project.

## 6. OXFAM – Standing Together Against Violence Program

Operational set-up:

The Standing Together Against Violence Program (STAV) is implemented by Oxfam Australia's Solomon Islands Office, in partnership with Family Support Centre (FSC) in Honiara. It is implemented by a staff of 5 (0M/5F) in Oxfam and 6 (0M/6F) in FSC.

Methodology:

During the in-country evaluation mission, discussions were held with the program team in the Oxfam Office and with the Family Support Centre. The Evaluation Team also had telephone discussions with Oxfam Australia.

Project Design Document (PDD):

The PDD is well written and based on a sound understanding of the problem of Violence Against Women (VAW) in Solomon Islands. The PDD contains a strong problem analysis and an ambitious theory of change. The theory of change was updated in the Phase 3 Report.

The goal of the project from the PDD was more families in Honiara and Western Province are enjoying lives free from violence. The project has four objectives/outcomes:

- the Family Support Centre provides quality counselling, legal advice and mediation services to women survivors of sexual and domestic violence
- individuals, families and communities take ownership of the problem of violence against women and implement their own strategies to reduce violence and protect women
- an active referral network system from and within networks (police, public solicitors, CCC, FSC, health) operating
- law reform and policy development work of others is supported by 2-way information-flow (from/to provincial and community levels).

In Phase 1, Oxfam ceased working with Western Province Council of Women (WPCW), focusing on Honiara and Guadalcanal, and the partnership with FSC. It also revised the goal and objectives of STAV. The goal is now: Women and girls equally able to contribute to and benefit from development, free from the threat and reality of violence against women. The current STAV objectives are:

- Specialist psychological response services provide quality, woman-centre, accessible services, leading to an increase in available support for women to make informed decisions.

- Commitment in words and action from duty bearers to implementation of government policies promoting women's safety and freedom from violence.
- Communities understand the issue of violence against women and take action to promote respect for and protection of women, including influencing men not to use violence against women.

#### Project Strategy:

The STAV strategy involves work in three main areas:

- Support to FSC in becoming a 'good practice' provider of specialist support services to survivors of violence.
- Developing community-led approaches to combating VAW and testing these in 3 pilot villages in northern Guadalcanal, using experienced Oxfam community workers.
- Advocacy campaigns and work with government to influence changes and/or implementation of laws and policies to combat VAW.

#### Partnerships:

At the outset, Oxfam intended working with both WPCW and FSC. It suspended (and later cancelled) its partnership with WPCW during Phase 1, because of financial governance issues, especially weak systems of oversight. The relationship with FSC was also problematic and difficulties relating to changes in FSC management and weak governance took some time to resolve. The Oxfam-FSC partnership has now begun to operate in the way originally intended.

#### Gender/Power:

STAV is a gender-focused program. It is based on a sound understanding of how gender-based power relationships are the basis of the high levels of violence against women in Solomon Islands and how the way forward has to involve working with women and men. VAW is a deep-seated and culturally accepted practice and addressing it effectively must be based on robust analysis of social and power relationships.

#### Advocacy:

STAV has an active advocacy program and its Advocacy Officer works closely with the Solomon Islands Government (e.g., Ministry of Women, Youth and Children's affairs on the Elimination of Violence Against Women Task Force, the Legislation Working Group and the Law Reform Commission) and undertakes advocacy and public awareness programs with other organisations.

#### Monitoring and evaluation:

Oxfam has established monitoring processes (e.g., regular team meetings to review progress and challenges, and share ideas; community workers' reflection diaries) and FSC reports monthly on progress by its different sections against the annual workplan. However, Oxfam recognises that the program needs to strengthen its monitoring system to produce quantitative and qualitative data on outputs and to track outcomes (e.g., baseline and endline studies in communities; longitudinal monitoring of FSC clients, analysis on most significant changes).

Annual reports of an acceptable standard but need to be strengthened with more solid monitoring data and evidence on what is being achieved under the program.

## Results:

Because of the difficulties discussed above, STAV is behind schedule:

- Objective 1: FSC currently supports approx. 400 clients, who are victims (mostly women and abused children) of violence each year. Most of FSC's funds come from STAV.
- Objective 2: Community based models to address VAW will be developed and tested over the next 2.5 years.
- Objective 3: Oxfam and FSC are making significant inputs to SI government on Violence against Women (see above). It is important that these are documented carefully and STAV's contribution assessed, relative to others.

## Recommendations:

Over the remainder of the program, it is important that Oxfam focuses on delivering results and documenting models and good practices that can be taken forward/replicated beyond the end of the program. This will involve:

- Finalising the results framework developed, during the Appraisal Mission, revising the theory of change and ensuring that all staff (in Oxfam and FSC) understand what the program is expected;
- Strengthening the monitoring and evaluation system to (i) produce quantitative and qualitative data on outputs and track outcomes and (ii) undertake evaluation and action research on STAV activities to produce evidence on good practices developed by the project.
- Continuing to work closely with FSC to strengthen its organisational systems.

## 7. SAVE THE CHILDREN – Youth Outreach Partnership Project (YOPP)

### Operational Set-up:

Save the Children Australia is working with Save the Children Solomon Islands to implement the Youth Outreach Partnership Project (YOPP), which is implemented from the Save the Children office in Honiara. The number of staff working under YOPP is 29, 21 male and 8 female, covering 6 provinces.

### Methodology:

During the in-country evaluation mission, discussions were held with the program team in the SC office in Honiara, with Provincial Team Leaders, community-based Project Officers and communities in Gizo and Vella Lavella (Western Province), Kaibia in Honiara and Horabau (Guadalcanal). The Evaluation Team also spoke by phone with SCA in Melbourne and the SI Country Director, after leaving Solomon Islands.

### Project Design Document:

The PDD is clearly written and based on an analysis of the problems facing young people in Solomon Islands (rapidly growing numbers of young people, lack of economic opportunities and high unemployment, a culture that does not support young people's involvement in community decision-making, a sense of being left out). The design was based on a 'strength based approach' social research project, undertaken in 5 target communities with participation of 800 people.

The goal of YOPP is *improved health and livelihood opportunities for Solomon Islanders*, particularly women and young people. YOPP had three components at the time of the PDD:

1. To build sustainable livelihoods for young men and women using existing resources, strengths and capacities of young people and their communities.
2. To promote and facilitate healthy lifestyles through non-formal education (life skills) and working in partnership with whole communities, government and other civil society organisations.
3. To enhance young men and women's participation in policy formulation and implementation at the village, provincial and national levels.

These have since been restated as outcomes in the target communities:

1. Young people (men and women) from target communities, practising livelihoods using their resources, strengths and capacities.
2. Young people (men and women) from the target communities, practising healthy lifestyles
3. Young people (men and women) from the target communities participating in decision making at village, provincial and national levels.
4. Save the Children staff capacity to facilitate the project increased.

In the Phase 3 report 21 target communities are mentioned, though the intention of YOPP is to expand to 63 communities by 2014.

The Evaluation Team considers that the three outcomes identified are all relevant to the program.

#### Project Strategy:

The project strategy is based on experience gained in SINCA and aims to build sustainable links between young people, youth groups, community leaders and the entire community. YOPP adopts a strength-based approach to mobilise resources within the communities and facilitates communities to develop theories of change resulting in Youth Action Plans. Livelihoods component activities include projects related to poultry, piggery, vegetable gardening, bee-keeping and tailoring, and women's groups in three communities now produce lava lavas (bed sheets and wrappers). The healthy lifestyles component focuses on health awareness (e.g., sports, nutrition), sanitation projects and lifeskills training (e.g., on topics like gender, child rights, public speaking and leadership). YOPP also works closely with the Ministry of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs and provincial governments, including the Provincial Youth Coordinators to raise the voice of young people. Save the Children reports that its strength based/theory of change/action plan approach has been used in its communities for non-YOPP activities.

The evaluation mission noted, in Western Province, that Save the Children has difficulty in attracting, keeping and supervising Project Officers. In one community, there had been no Project Officer for a year and in another there had been four different Project Officers in the space of a year and the community leaders were critical of their effectiveness.

#### Partnerships:

YOPP works with other SINPA NGOs (e.g., ADRA on basic book-keeping training for SC staff and communities) and YOPP Sports, which is financially supported by the Australian Sports Commission and targets the same young people as YOPP. Sports events are used to raise awareness on issues such as HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

#### Gender/Power:

YOPP encourages women's participation in the program. Almost 50% of YOPP beneficiaries are women. Women only projects have been developed on sewing and dyeing of cloth for lava lavas and women also participate in other projects, including piggeries, vegetable gardening and bee-keeping. Participation of girls and women is also emphasised in the management of projects, with half of youth group committee members being female. SC does not directly address gender and works with the existing power structures in villages (e.g. chiefs) in a whole community approach.

#### Advocacy and working with government and others:

YOPP works with Provincial and national governments on youth policy and programs and also links to (i) the Ministry of Agriculture to orient communities on the basics of animal and crop husbandry and provide technical expertise (e.g., on pig husbandry); (ii) the Ministry of Health on health education and prevention of non-communicable diseases.

#### Monitoring and Evaluation:

Save the Children SI has recently strengthened its Program Development Quality Team, which has revised SC's logical framework for YOPP, without output and outcome indicators, and developed a monitoring framework to guide collection of quantitative and qualitative information. Its 'total reach methodology' is reportedly able to establish the number of people benefitting from YOPP, disaggregated by age and gender, but this information is not included in its Phase 3 report. SC's reports (as those of other SINPA partners) are mainly narrative and contain few numbers or evidence on achievement of outcomes.

#### Results:

A total 21 communities in six provinces have developed 29 Youth Action Plans for activities ranging from Youth Centres to furniture making, bee-keeping, cocoa drying and poultry and piggery schemes. A further 17 communities are currently doing so and the project will eventually be rolled out to 63 communities.

49 young people have been trained in basic financial accounting and book-keeping to manage their projects effectively and life skills training have been provided to over 100 young people.

#### Recommendations:

In view of its strengths in M&E (in Solomon Islands and Australia), Save the Children could support SINPA partners in developing and using results frameworks, and in evaluating outcomes.

The SINPA Steering Committee should undertake a review of the problems Save the Children and other SINPA NGOs face in recruiting, retaining, training and managing community-based staff.

## VI. MANAGEMENT AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

### *MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAM*

#### 1. SINPA Steering Committee (SC)

The Steering Committee meets on a quarterly basis in-country and these regular meetings have contributed to building trust between the SINPA partners. There is now a good basis for the Steering Committee to take on a more strategic role. In the past, the quarterly meetings did not go much beyond the exchanging of experiences and identifying areas for coordination and collaboration.

The Steering Committee now needs to take a leading role in setting the agenda for SINPA partners on producing materials for learning, conducting research to strengthen SINPA's interventions, and other interventions that may impact on sharing and improving SINPA approaches. This should be reflected in the Terms of Reference for the Steering Committee.

The SINPA Steering Committee has a budget of AUD 500,000 at its disposal to pay for the SINPA coordinator and to undertake activities in support of SINPA. The Steering Committee should develop an annual work plan that includes initiatives in support of achieving SINPA outcomes.

The Steering Committee could also explore the common themes that exist and identify ways of supporting each other or sharing resources and materials with each other in order to minimise duplication or competition on the ground. They can then work on areas where they differ quite separately.

The SC lacks clear Terms of Reference, defining its tasks relative to those of its member organisations.

A key problem with the SC is that the Chair rotates among the partner NGOs at each meeting. Meetings are reported to be long and not very effective. There is also insufficient follow-up between meetings, so necessary actions are often not taken in a timely way. Moreover, there is no designated spokesperson for SINPA, which means that the program does not have the profile it deserves in SI.

The Chair should have clear TORs including to Chair Meetings, follow up on SC decisions, supervise the SINPA coordinator and act as a spokesperson for SINPA.

#### 2. SINPA Coordinator

The SINPA Coordinator currently rotates between the six SINPA partners, in the past with Save the Children and now with ADRA. It is essential that the position of SINPA Coordinator be filled by a person who has solid experience in community development and who understands the context of the Solomon Islands well. It is important that this person has previous managerial experience, can work independently and is able to drive forward a coordination process. At the moment, too much of the SINPA Coordinator's time is occupied with logistical issues around the Annual Reflection Workshop and other administrative tasks.

The Coordinator should take on the role of being the driving force in mobilising SINPA partners to implement an agreed-upon annual action plan. The SINPA Coordinator could also focus on making links with new networks, government agencies and others, moving beyond the SINPA circle.

During the evaluation, suggestions were made for:



- A Chairman for the Steering Committee (with possible change-over on a quarterly basis) who would provide oversight and supervise the SINPA Coordinator for daily issues.
- A SINPA office which is not linked to one of the SINPA partners, where the SINPA Coordinator would be based.
- The hire of administrative support staff for the SINPA office to support the SINPA Coordinator with logistical and administrative issues.

The Evaluation Team warns against setting up a separate SINPA office that may become a SINPA managing office. It is not desirable for the SINPA NGO partners to become reliant upon an office to undertake any over-arching SINPA activities such as research, preparation of publications or the Annual Reflection Workshop.

It is a luxury for a program such as SINPA to have a budget of AUD 500,000 spread over a 5 year period to undertake SINPA activities. This should not completely replace the effort and time SINPA partners themselves should put into organising activities in support of the SINPA program level outcomes.

The position of the SINPA Coordinator is an important and careful selection of a person with the right capabilities and background needs to be made. The SINPA Coordinator may need to have a small team of mentors/coachers around him/her when he/she needs support and advice or to bounce an idea whenever necessary.

### 3. Role of Australian NGOs

The support provided by the Australian based NGO staff varies across SINPA. Overall, the support provided by the Australian based NGOs was found to be too weak. The Australian NGOs are contractually accountable to AusAID for both the project results and the project finances. The Australian NGOs need to look critically at the support that is provided to the SI based NGOs and assess whether or not:

- The support goes beyond compiling and submitting narrative and financial reports to AusAID in Canberra.
- The capacity building support to the in-country team ensures the project staff on the ground is set up for success to meet the program objectives. The support provided in terms of developing monitoring and evaluation, assessing progress in the communities on a regular basis and the practical translation of the SBA was found to be insufficient.

### 4. Role of AusAID

Administrative and contract issues take up too much time in the Honiara AusAID office. This should be reduced in favour of freeing AusAID staff's time so that regular monitoring visits in the field can be undertaken. Overall, AusAID was found to have had a supportive attitude towards SINPA, with SI SINPA partners rating AusAID 8 out of 10. This rating indicated that SI partners did not feel that AusAID was demanding as a donor with regards to reporting or micro-managing the program. What was pointed out by some of the partners however, was the staff turnover rate within AusAID in-country and the resulting changes in understanding of the initial thinking behind the SINPA design.

### **Conclusions:**

The Steering Committee does not manage the overall program sufficiently strategically or effectively.

ANGOs do not provide sufficient support to their SI partners and SINPA, and do not focus enough on outcomes.

AusAID has had to spend too much time on contract issues. As current problems are resolved, it should be able to become more strategic and field-focused.

### **Recommendations:**

1. AusAID and the SINPA partner NGOS review and revise the terms of reference for SINPA, as needed. It is important that the Steering Committee be central to the discussions of adjusting and improving its role.
2. The Terms of Reference should reflect a stronger strategic role for the Steering Committee, primarily focused on documenting and disseminating the experiences and learnings of SINPA on SBA and partnership models; linking with SI civil society and government institutions.
3. SINPA partner NGOs should consider appointing a Chair from among their own organisations rotating every six months or an independent part-time Chair (e.g. an eminent Solomon Islander for 2 days a week).
4. ANGOs to be more proactive in building/ensuring the capacity of their partner NGOs in country. ANGOs should be outcome focused at both project and program level.
5. AusAID to focus more on strategic support and field monitoring visits to obtain better understanding of progress and challenges on the ground.

## **CROSS-CUTTING THEMES – COMMUNITY DYNAMICS**

### **1. Gender**

The Evaluation Team believes that the gender aspect and the focus on women empowerment within SINPA could be strengthened. Currently, the focus is on supporting women within the boundaries of livelihoods. It is the Evaluation team's opinion that SINPA should be pushing the boundaries further and looking for empowerment (*strongem*) beyond livelihoods.

While SINPA objectives highlight empowerment of women in the Solomon Islands, it is challenging in a context where men dominate decision-making at the community and national level. These constraints are well acknowledged by the Evaluation team. As observed, there was gender participation in all the six NGO's national offices in Honiara, in terms of staffing. A similar scenario was noted at the provincial and community level. Women and girls who were given leadership responsibilities, as in the case of Tau community (ADRA) and the Kaibia Youth project (Save the Children), demonstrated confidence and leadership qualities. Women engaged more at the day to day management of community project activities such as sewing, gardening and fundraising for their savings club, children's education and women's group advocacy work.

SINPA should continue with strengthening the role and responsibilities of women in SINPA project management staffing and in livelihood and other activities supported under the program. At the same time SINPA needs to take on the challenge to increase the role of women in leadership and decision-making in the public sphere.

Women's training and learning are vital as they play an important role in implementing community programs. There is still great opportunity for women to participate in the decision-making process of SINPA programs, as both recipients and agents for change. Specific activities such as women's savings clubs, sewing projects, poultry projects and women in leadership training are initiatives to empower women in the communities. On the other hand, while men dominate leadership and decision-making in the communities, it is noted that many ordinary men feel disempowered and disengaged, which may have an indirect effect on women. SINPA may need to explore ways in which both women and men are empowered as equal participants in leadership and community programs where they complement each other in developing themselves and their communities.

SINPA could further explore ways to improve women's active participation in decision-making such as encouraging women to sit on village committees/boards or church leadership positions, economic empowerment through training in business and microfinance and improved living standards. A very good example is the women's financial literacy and savings clubs, where women have a feeling of ownership, and manage with little assistance from men. Further research could be carried out on activities where women have been successful such as agriculture, weaving/sewing and craft, supported with business skills training and contributing towards their economic empowerment. SINPA could also provide awareness workshops on gender roles to ensure that both men and women share the load of responsibilities in the family and the community levels.

## 2. Power Relations: Finding the best ways of community engagement

The power dynamics in play at the community level is complex and varies according to different customs and leadership structures. Chiefs, Church leaders, landowners, Members of Parliament etc. possess varying degrees of influence and power in the community. SINPA's successful engagement with leaders at the village level through various programs, such as Tau community (Guadalcanal province) and Sausama community (Western Province), demonstrated that the power structures (Chiefs and Church) in the communities can be influenced for positive change.

Working with the power dynamics in communities is challenging, as observed at Kaibia community, where the Church leadership gave little attention to the Youth centre. The engagement of Chiefs, Church leaders and governmental branches at national and provincial levels to support SINPA programs would be an ideal situation. Where there is resistance by community Chiefs/leaders, a gentle push and further consultations and visits will be necessary. Working and understanding the power dynamics at community level is important for the sustainability and ownership of the program by the community, rather than dependence on SINPA.

## 3. Partnerships with Indigenous Civil Society and Government

SINPA NGOs have strengthened and improved their working relationships with each other through closer dialogue, consultation and sharing of information and resources. SINPA partners should now focus on broadening its *circle of friends* as it moves into the third phase.

There are surrounding networks that SINPA could connect with and utilise more effectively, such as the Church networks, civil society networks, women's group networks and government/development project networks. These networks are engaged in similar programs to SINPA (organic farming, dyeing, poultry and piggery project, women/children's

rights, savings clubs, environment issues, literacy programs, leadership training etc), and are established throughout the country. Development Services Exchange (DSE), the umbrella body of all NGOs, has an office in Honiara and can advise on NGO networks that SINPA may be interested in working with.

The issues that SINPA addresses are common priority issues of many other Civil Society groups. With appropriate collaborations and networking, there is a strong potential for learning between SINPA partners and the broader civil society network in SI.

In addition, the Churches, through the Solomon Islands Christian Association (SICA) have a network at national and community level and play a very influential role in development at the community level. The government, through its provincial extension services and development projects such as the Rural Development Program (RDP), is actively engaged at the provincial, ward and community level.

**Recommendations:**

1. SINPA should be more systematic in exploring ways to improve women's participation in community level decision making and economic empowerment. SINPA should explore opportunities to support women empowerment beyond participation in livelihood and social activities. The potential to empower women to take up leadership roles in the public sphere should be explored and encouraged using a cultural sensitive approach.
2. SINPA partners to conduct power analysis of community as part of the consultative phases, prior to starting activity implementation. Analysis of community structures and power relations and their potential influence on SINPA project activities should be ongoing during SINPA implementation and should be part of a monitoring strategy.
3. SINPA to ensure that all possible links are explored to engage with government and local indigenous civil society organisations and networks.

## VII. CONCLUSIONS - RECOMMENDATIONS

### *EVALUATION QUESTION 1: TO WHAT EXTENT IS SINPA LIKELY TO ACHIEVE ITS STATED GOAL, OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES?*

#### Recommendations:

1. Results frameworks and theories of change are developed for SINPA and for each of the six NGO projects and that these are used as a basis for (i) monitoring program progress in delivering outputs and outcomes and (ii) communicating results within the program and to other stakeholders in Solomon Islands and Australia. (It is important to ensure that these are developed in a way that does not compromise the community driven, emergent and reflective nature of the program; keeping a balance between accountability and flexibility)
2. The M&E framework for SINPA and its six projects is strengthened to focus on outputs and outcomes and to include operations research and evaluations to provide evidence on what works and does not work.
3. Project management across SINPA is strengthened and focuses on managing for results, linked to the results frameworks.
4. SINPA should be strengthened with consultancy support from M&E specialist(s) experienced in undertaking systematic evaluations of programs using both quantitative and qualitative information. M&E support provided should be linked to improved project management.

### *EVALUATION QUESTION 2: TO WHAT EXTENT IS WORKING 'IN PARTNERSHIP' IMPROVING SINPA'S EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS?*

#### Recommendations:

1. SINPA partners to be more pro-active in engaging with Government and SI civil society organisations. This linking can occur through dissemination of learning materials in the local language, workshops, conferences or joint field visits. Where possible SINPA partners should engage with Government agencies and indigenous civil society organisations to implement project activities. Consultation with Government and civil society should be a pre-requisite and will contribute to changed government attitudes and a stronger civil society.
2. Stronger engagement of Australian based NGO staff with the management of operations in-country. ANGOs need to provide capacity building in results-based project management, monitoring and evaluation. In addition ANGO to ensure that NGO offices in-country have the technical skills or support to follow up technical aspects of project activities (in areas of agriculture, credit, veterinary skills).

### *EVALUATION QUESTION 3: TO WHAT EXTENT IT IS REASONABLE TO SAY THAT THE STRENGTH BASED APPROACH (SBA), AS APPLIED BY SINPA, WILL LEAD TO POSITIVE SUSTAINABLE IMPACTS IN THE SOLOMON ISLANDS?*

#### Recommendations:

1. SINPA partners to link Strengths Based Approach with sound project management practice, providing technical and oversight support where needed in a non-overpowering way.

2. SINPA partners to focus their learning on the practical application of the SBA, not limited to the theoretical understanding of the approach.
3. Learn from experience across SINPA on the problems of community workers and how best to recruit, train, manage and support them when in the field. A good practice guide supported by the provision of basic tools for community workers should be developed that can also be used by other civil society organisations in-country as well.
4. Develop more advanced training courses for community workers in community engagement and facilitation to give them the depth needed, on their own in villages to deal with difficult communities.

#### ***EVALUATION QUESTION 4: TO WHAT EXTENT DO THE ACTUAL AND POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF SINPA REPRESENT VALUE FOR MONEY?***

##### **Recommendations:**

1. SINPA should focus on developing models to community development, *which can be cost effectively replicated in Solomon Islands*;
2. Document the costs, benefits and value for money of the program and the models developed through careful monitoring, evaluation and operations research involving the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data. Specialist advice will be needed by an independent evaluation specialist, experienced in the use of 'mixed method' evaluation approaches to develop an evaluation plan and provide on-going support. Significant inputs on M&E will be needed from the ANGOs.
3. At the end of program evaluation a full Value for Money should be carried out covering efficiency, effectiveness and cost-effectiveness.
4. Undertake a VfM economy analysis to assess the extent to which the program is buying inputs of the appropriate quality (e.g. staff, consultants, capital materials) at the right price. This can be done by a local accountancy firm and should be undertaken for each NGO project.

#### ***MANAGEMENT AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT***

##### **Recommendations:**

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5. AusAID to focus more on strategic support and field monitoring visits to obtain better understanding of progress and challenges on the ground.

## *CROSS-CUTTING THEMES*

### Recommendations:

- **Gender** – SINPA should be more systematic in exploring ways to improve women's participation in community level decision making and economic empowerment. SINPA should explore opportunities to support women empowerment beyond participation in livelihood and social activities. The potential to empower women to take up leadership roles in the public sphere should be explored and encouraged using a cultural sensitive approach.
- **Power relations** – SINPA partners to conduct power analysis of community as part of the consultative phases, prior to starting activity implementation. Analysis of community structures and power relations and their potential influence on SINPA project activities should be ongoing during SINPA implementation and should be part of a monitoring strategy
- **Civil Society and Government** – SINPA to ensure that all possible links are explored to engage with government and local indigenous civil society organisations and networks.