
SINPA

Final Evaluation Report

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**Solomon Islands NGO
Partnership Agreement**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SINPA was a A\$22.6 million program funded by the Australian Government, which aimed to support Solomon Islanders, in particular women and young people, to improve their own health, wellbeing and livelihoods. It comprised of five non-government organisations (NGOs) working in partnership with each other, local Solomon Islands NGOs and their donor, the Australian Government, to identify, test and learn from contextually appropriate development models.

The program supported a diverse set of well-targeted interventions that addressed women's economic empowerment, improved livelihoods for remote communities, inclusive natural resource management, gender based violence, vocational learning and skills training, and youth leadership and empowerment.

Program Effectiveness

A Mid-Term Review of the SINPA Program undertaken in 2011 found that although SINPA had the potential to be a successful program, it was under performing and was only expected to partially achieve its objectives by the end of its duration. It recommended improvements in results-based management, including monitoring and evaluation; overall project management; strengthened application of the Strengths Based Approach; and deeper capacity building investments by Australian based NGO staff on project management and technical aspects of the program.

The end-of-program evaluation found that there had been investments by SINPA Partners in response to all of these recommendations, with the resulting outcome being that SINPA Partnership has led to lasting improvements in the lives of communities, particularly women and young people. All projects had drawn on a strengths based approach to community development and had integrated strategies to promote women's participation and empowerment. The evaluation team found that individual SINPA projects have contributed to improvements in community cohesion, governance, accountability, women's empowerment, well being and livelihoods that benefit both directly targeted communities, and have obvious connections to the broader economic and security environment of the Solomon Islands.

The strengths based approach undertaken by SINPA was an effective approach to building resilience in communities. The most effective project outcomes were seen where communities raised and saved their own funds to invest in community projects. This increased ownership of and commitment to the project by the community. It was also a key factor in helping communities realize that they can solve their own development challenges.

The investments NGOs made in training and support for leadership, management and financial skills at the community level contributed to individuals and groups being able to establish and strengthen local governance structures. This has made a significant contribution to the capacity of communities to maintain community assets, address project and community challenges, and sustain project benefits. The

registration of community governance structures and registration of formal bank accounts helps to consolidate these structures and provides a platform for their ongoing sustainability.

A particularly successful initiative was the women-led savings groups which have resulted in savings in rural communities of more than SBD\$1million and associated benefits that accrue from women's economic empowerment. The savings club model is now being replicated independently by other communities and being integrated into other NGO programs.

The outcomes achieved through SINPA in terms of strengthened community governance, improved rural livelihoods and women's empowerment remains highly relevant to Australia's aid priorities in the Solomon Islands of stability, economic growth and human development.

Program Sustainability

The likely sustainability of improvements in the lives of communities, particularly women and young people achieved is variable across the individual projects under the SINPA Program. The evaluation team concluded that in some projects, the likelihood of sustainability was very high, and in others was much weaker. Sustainability is very much a product of both the approach taken by a project, the geographic location of a community, and the existing strengths of a community. This means that there is also great variability of sustainability within projects as well as between projects.

The evaluation found that with much of rural Solomon Islands still largely a subsistence economy, sustainably productive gardens from which a subsistence livelihood can be obtained is of critical importance and improvements in this area are likely to be sustained. However, communities in more remote areas will struggle to sustain initiatives that seek to increase cash income without better access to supplies, markets, and better analysis of income generating viability. Some of these challenges are beyond the scope and influence of the SINPA partners but others could have been better addressed through more specialised livelihoods technical advice.

The evaluation also found that the strengths based approach taken within SINPA projects is a key factor in overall sustainability. Where projects struck the right balance between inspiring and supporting communities, and standing back to ensure ownership and empowerment, communities recognised that they have their own strengths and resources to improve their own well being and have confidence to continue without ongoing NGO support. Where NGOs did not strike this balance, target communities remain reliant on the NGO's support and are not likely to be able to sustain the work and the benefits that have begun to be accrued without ongoing support.

Program Efficiency

The high cost context of working in remote community based settings is acknowledged as a reality of the projects undertaken within the SINPA partnership. The evaluation team found that field staff demonstrated remarkable tenacity in navigating these challenges and that SINPA Partner NGOs had developed sensible national and provincial level staffing structures that sought to minimise costs. They made good use of local community facilitators who had deep understanding of local contexts, were accommodated within local communities, and capitalised on their own networks to facilitate complex logistics. NGO partners also invested heavily in establishing strong accountability systems, which although resource intensive, provided NGOs and DFAT with confidence that funds were being used as intended. NGO's own internal systems also ensured accountability and efficiency and this was confirmed through an external financial assessment undertaken in 2013.

It was more difficult for the evaluation team to make conclusive comments about overall efficiency as the results based framework did not clearly show what the planned outputs and outcomes were for each phase, and SINPA partner reports do not consistently detail program achievements. Additionally, there were no clear guidelines on how beneficiaries were counted, so there is likely to be irregularity in reporting between NGOs. DFAT's end-of-program reporting requirements should insist that aggregated performance information is presented by each of the SINPA partners.

The evaluation also noted that it was difficult to derive 'administration' and 'overhead' costs from the SINPA financials, as SINPA partners allocated these costs among different SINPA budget lines in different ways. The general observations were that costs allocated to non-project staff and overheads – such as senior management and project managers, office costs and 'indirect recovery costs' – appeared to be well above the accepted benchmark of 10% towards 'administrative costs' in other DFAT NGO programs.

Value of Partnership

It was evident to the evaluation team that the SINPA partnership increased the overall effectiveness of SINPA NGOs, their staff, and their programs. This was achieved through ongoing reflective practice, documenting learnings, developing professional expertise, deepening relationships between NGOs, and sharing resources. Two areas of collaborative focus and attention that led to demonstrated increased effectiveness related to improved gender practice and an improved understanding and application of the Strength-Based Approach.

Despite the many positive aspects of the partnership, the evaluation team found the partnership would have been more effective if it had taken a more disciplined and strategic approach to research, learning platforms, and structured engagement with key actors in the Solomon Islands, including local civil society and government. For example, the team identified opportunities where SINPA Partners could have worked at a program level with Church at an institutional level; advocated to Government on

key issues; and coordinated to broker market linkages. There were also missed opportunities for the SINPA partnership to build the capacity of local civil society and benefit from mutual exchange with other civil society and local government actors. This was identified in the mid-term evaluation and should have been explicitly incorporated into a modified SINPA program, membership of the Steering Committee, role of the Secretariat, and in the individual SINPA projects.

Approaches to Gender

While gender equality was not an explicit objective of SINPA at the partnership level, the overall goal of SINPA sought to improve the health and livelihood opportunities of Solomon Islanders, particularly women and young people. In response to recommendations made during the mid-term review, SINPA adopted a partnership wide commitment to promoting gender equality in projects, improving organisational practices relating to gender equality, and working towards the equal and meaningful participation of women and girls in decision-making processes that affect their lives. This is a stand-out example of what ‘partnership’ between NGOs can achieve and the way that partners can learn from one another.

It was evident that although not all NGO’s under SINPA had analysed power and gender to inform their project approaches, there was good evidence that all had made efforts to ensure their activities were gender inclusive and that project outcomes created benefits for women. Whilst the promotion of gender was a specific planned outcome in some of the projects, others adapted and evolved their projects to include gender considerations. The evaluation report highlights those strategies that were particularly successful in promoting women’s empowerment. The evaluation team concluded that there is real potential for gender power dynamics to change over time in some communities if the initiatives started by the SINPA partners are sustained. The SINPA partnership and in particular the leadership provided by one of the SINPA partners, IWDA, is to be commended for the focus on gender that it was able to achieve.

A section on broader learnings that may relate to future DFAT programs can be in Section 3.2 of this report.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACFID	Australian Council for International Development
ADRA	Adventist Development & Relief Agency
ANGO	Australian NGO
APHEDA	Australian People for Health, Education & Development Abroad
AUD	Australian Dollar
CLC	Community Learning Centres
DSE	Development Services Exchange
IWDA	International Women's Development Agency
LEE	Live and Learn Environmental Education
LNGO	Local NGO
NGO	Non Government Organisation
SCA	Save the Children Australia
SINCA	Solomon Islands NGO Cooperation Agreement
YOPP	Youth Outreach Partnership Program
SKILLS	Sharing Knowledge, Improving Livelihoods, Learning Skills
TTft	Tugeda Tude fo Tumoro
YELP	Youth Engagement and Livelihoods Project
STAV	Standing Together Against Violence

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Document Purpose

This document reports the process and findings of the final evaluation of the Solomon Islands Non Government Organisation Partnership Agreement (SINPA) funded by the Australian Government. The final evaluation reviewed the SINPA partnership model, the five individual NGO projects and approaches to gender. Each of these areas was evaluated against the questions outlined in Section 2.4 of this report and further elaborated in the Evaluation Framework (Appendix C). A synthesis of the overall findings and lessons learned are presented in Section 3 of this report. Noting that a mid-term review was conducted in 2011, this evaluation primarily focused on the second half of the SINPA program.

1.2 SINPA Overview

SINPA is a A\$22.6 million program that aimed to support Solomon Islanders, in particular women and young people, to improve their own health, wellbeing and livelihoods. It was initially planned as a five-year program and then extended for an additional 18 months. It was initiated in 2009, and will end in January 2016. Towards the end of the program it was agreed that SINPA would be extended for an additional 18 months. As a result of budget cuts to the Australian Government this phase was undertaken with reduced budgets and the decision was made to cease partnership priorities and functions early.

SINPA is comprised of five non-government organisations (NGOs) working in partnership with each other, local Solomon Islands NGOs and their donor, the Australian Government – DFAT, to identify, test and learn from contextually appropriate development models.

SINPA seeks to achieve four overarching partnership outcomes:

1	Lasting improvements in the lives of SINPA target communities particularly women and young people.
2	Increased effectiveness of SINPA NGOs and communities to meet the SINPA goal
3	Tested and documented approaches and/or models of community development that build on the strengths of Solomon Islanders.
4	Learning and insights about how to support effective Solomon Islander-led community development that are shared within Solomon Islands and beyond.

Figure 1: SINPA Partnership Outcomes

The projects and partners involved in SINPA include:

Projects	Solomon Islands Partner	Australian Partner
Standing Together Against Violence (STAV): Prevention of Violence Against Women	Oxfam/Family Support Centre	Oxfam Australia
Sharing Knowledge, Improving Livelihoods, Learning Skills (SKILLS): Vocational Education and Training	Union Aid Abroad- APHEDA Solomon Islands	Union Aid Abroad- APHEDA Australia
Youth Outreach Partnership Project (YOPP): Youth Livelihoods and Health	Save the Children Australia	Save the Children Australia
Youth Engagement and Livelihood Project (YELP): Youth Livelihoods	Adventist Development Relief Agency Solomon Islands	Adventist Development Relief Agency Australia
TugedaTudefoTumoro (TTFT): Sustainable Inclusive Natural Resource management	Live & Learn Solomon Islands	International Women's Development Agency

Figure 2: SINPA Projects and Partners

Joint learning and sharing of experience was coordinated via a SINPA Secretariat, initially managed by rotation among the SINPA partners, and then managed by Oxfam in Solomon Islands who was funded to act as the Secretariat for the last three years. It was through this mechanism that documentation collection, joint decision making, and direction of the program was coordinated. Due to funding cuts in 2014, it was negotiated that the SINPA Secretariat would end on June 30, 2015.

SINPA projects have concentrated on the following key development areas: savings clubs and livelihoods, inclusive natural resource management, reducing gender based violence, vocational learning and skills training, youth leadership and empowerment.

The partnership has operated across seven of the nine provinces of Solomon Islands - Choiseul, Guadalcanal, Isabel, Makira, Malaita, Rennel Bellona & Western Provinces.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Evaluation Purpose

The primary purpose of the SINPA Evaluation is to provide an independent assessment of the success of the SINPA program and demonstrate the accountability of Australian Aid. The evaluation findings will feed into ongoing DFAT processes of organisational learning, but the evaluation itself will not be directly used in decision-making. It has already been determined that there will not be an ongoing SINPA program.

A secondary purpose of the evaluation is to contribute to broader learning among SINPA stakeholders and inform future programming. To reduce the tendency for the evaluation to be purely an extractive exercise, SINPA stakeholders have been active participants throughout the evaluation.

Immediate users of the evaluation report will be:

- DFAT Solomon Islands:
 - to demonstrate accountability; and
 - to feed into DFAT programming

Other users of the evaluation will be:

- SINPA partners
- Solomon Islands civil society
- NGO programs and partners in other Pacific countries
- DFAT's broader civil society programs
- DFAT's Gender Thematic Group

At the completion of the fieldwork phase, the evaluation team facilitated a discussion of the preliminary findings with key evaluation stakeholders in the Solomon Islands for the purposes of validation and refinement.

2.2 Evaluation Scope

Priorities for the evaluation that are focussed on SINPA include:

- Assessment of the overall value of partnership - what benefits were obtained through NGOs working together and what were the challenges; was investment in the partnership worthwhile and did it deliver value for the investment; and
- Rapid assessment of the success of each individual project under SINPA – whether each project successfully delivered its project outcomes efficiently, effectively and sustainably.

Priorities for the evaluation that are focussed on potential future programs in Solomon Islands include:

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- Assessment of approaches to gender – in particular the identification of key lessons, issues, challenges and strategies for best practice approaches for gender inclusive outcomes and women’s economic empowerment. It is noted that this was not an intended partnership outcome in the SINPA program, so this will be undertaken through an inquiry lens rather than an evaluative lens.

Noting that a mid-term review was conducted in 2011, this evaluation primarily focused on the second half of the SINPA program.

The Evaluation Framework that includes the questions that have guided this evaluation are presented in Appendix C.

2.3 Methods

The evaluation team consulted with DFAT and SINPA partners to evolve the evaluation plan and framework. Field work has been conducted in collaboration with DFAT and SINPA partners.

Key factors that were considered in the development of the evaluation methodology included:

1. **Participation:** The evaluation was designed to maximise the participation of the partners involved in the implementation of the SINPA program. This included consultation with SINPA partners in the design of the evaluation plan; contributions from SINPA partners towards analysis through an evaluation questionnaire; and a workshop with SINPA partners to inform the evaluation’s analysis. Where field staff were available, they attended and participated in field based focus group discussions with communities.
2. **Inclusivity:** The evaluation sought to solicit the perspectives of a range of stakeholders to inform the analysis against evaluation questions. To ensure that there was opportunity for this range of stakeholders to provide input, the evaluation approach and assessment framework was gender responsive. In all cases, focus group discussions were held with women and men separately, and separate meetings were also held with youth and elders to provide opportunities for nuanced perspectives to be shared. Meeting times were adjusted in some cases to suit the commitments of women. Three techniques were used to ensure that people with low or no literacy, and others who may not normally feel confident to speak, could also provide input. These included a ‘river of change’ exercise where group members would discuss and draw the story of their project and change; a scale where group members would place a sticky dot in the area which represented their experience of the project; and a talking stick, which was passed between group members to ensure that everyone had a turn to contribute.
3. **Accountability:** The evaluation was designed with two key opportunities for the evaluation team to share its analysis with SINPA partners. The first of

these was a workshop at the beginning of the field work at which partners were invited to contribute to analysis. The second was an end-of-evaluation debrief with partners at which the evaluation team invited partners to assist in making sense of field work findings. As participants in the evaluation, SINPA partners are strongly encouraged to identify the most appropriate ways to feed back the evaluation results and learnings to their own partners and communities.

The evaluation involved a range of qualitative research methods:

- **Document review:** a comprehensive review of key documents produced by the program helped to identify key issues for further investigation in the field and formed the basis for factual data presented in this report. Any available end-of-program evaluations undertaken by SINPA partners have also informed the SINPA Evaluation team.
- **Partner Questionnaire:** a self-assessment questionnaire enabled each SINPA partner to help inform the evaluation team's rapid assessment of individual NGO projects.
- **Focussed Workshop:** a two-day inquiry and analysis workshop was undertaken with SINPA partners at the beginning of the field work phase.
- **Key informant interviews (KII):** KIIs with purposively selected informed individuals enabled probing and triangulation of stakeholder perspectives concerning the individual NGO projects and the broader SINPA partnership.
- **Focus group discussions (FGD):** FGDs with beneficiaries enabled the evaluation team to rapidly develop a sense of the diversity of views about individual NGO projects. SINPA Partner staff were actively involved in introducing the evaluation team to community members and assisting to facilitate focus group discussions. Consistency was achieved through the use of pre-prepared question guides and the active presence of evaluation team members in all FDGs.
- **Observation:** general observations during the fieldwork confirmed or challenged preliminary assumptions and conclusions arising from the other methods.

These methods evolved and became more focussed as the fieldwork progressed. Further, each method was of particular relevance to different program stakeholders (and hence parts of the mission). For instance, KIIs were the predominant method of inquiry for Honiara-based stakeholder engagements; while FGDs and participant observations were more relevant at project sites. Focussed workshops were the most relevant for assimilating the views of the various SINPA partners.

Approach

The approach was based on four principles:

- **Triangulation:** the same issues were explored with a range of key stakeholders in order to identify commonalities and differences in perspective, and to bring rigor to the method.
- **Complementarities:** field work was preceded by a comprehensive desk review in order to benefit from the full range of documented M&E information (e.g. routine reports, internal reviews etc.) rather than relying only on primary data collection.
- **Commonality:** common evaluative questions were developed prior to field work to enable consistency and transparency with regards to the lines of inquiry.
- **Efficiency:** the cost of the evaluation was kept to a minimum by relying on indicative findings rather than representative data. This means that qualitative methods were used for primary data collection and there was a strong reliance on the professional judgement of the evaluation team.

Sampling

A purposive sampling approach was adopted for the evaluation. The evaluation team relied on DFAT and SINPA partners to select and arrange interviews with the most relevant stakeholders associated with the program. The aim was to provide the evaluation team with a meaningful overview of program interventions that were accessible within the time and resource constraints of the evaluation. This required a balance between pragmatism and rigour. The purposive sampling of interviewees considered logistical constraints and the importance/relevance of particular stakeholder perspectives to the evaluation questions. The sampling process was refined as the field work progressed and the evaluation team developed more nuanced insights about SINPA.

The sample frame included:

- Delivery team:
 - DFAT program staff
 - SINPA management staff and ex-SINPA staff
 - SINPA field staff
 - Implementing partners engaged within SINPA

Partners/counterparts:

- Oxfam in Solomon Islands
- Oxfam Australia
- Family Support Centre
- APHEDA Solomon Islands
- APHEDA Australia
- Save the Children Australia (representatives from Solomon Islands and Australian offices)
- ADRA Solomon Islands
- ADRA Australia
- Live & Learn Solomon Islands

- Live & Learn International
- International Women’s Development Agency
- National or Provincial Solomon Island government representatives

Relevant/informed third parties:

- DSE (Development Services Exchange) as the peak NGO body who performs a civil society coordination role in the Solomon Islands

Ultimate beneficiaries:

- Women, men, youth, girls and boys
- Community leaders

SINPA partners were involved in selecting communities that the evaluation team visited. They were responsible for preparing communities for the evaluation team’s visit. This planning by SINPA partners was intended to take into account appropriate times and places to facilitate meaningful consultations with women and men separately, with community leaders where appropriate, and with young people separately as appropriate. Where management committee members were stakeholders, SINPA partners were asked to ensure that special time was made to consult with these members separately so that the voices of community members were heard independently of the views of management committee members. The evaluation team necessarily had to rely on the judgement of SINPA partners to make these arrangements, taking into account cultural, gender and other contextual issues.

In cases where SINPA partners have had key staff leave the SINPA program who would otherwise have made valuable contributions to the SINPA evaluation, SINPA partners were encouraged to provide contact details for these staff members so that the evaluation team could arrange phone interviews as appropriate.

2.4 Evaluation Questions

The key evaluation questions relate directly to the focus areas of the evaluation.

Focus Area	Evaluation questions
<p>The overall value of partnership of SINPA</p>	<p>Key Evaluation Question 1: What was the overall value of the structured partnership model? Sub-questions: 1.1 What did the structured partnership model (as distinct from the individual NGO projects) contribute to the four SINPA outcome areas? 1.2 What other benefits, if any, were gained from NGOs working together in a structured partnership model? 1.3 What were the challenges of the structured partnership model? 1.4 What resources were invested into the structured partnership model structure?</p>

<p>The success of each individual program under SINPA</p>	<p>Key Evaluation Question 2.1: Did each individual SINPA program deliver its outcomes efficiently? (EFFICIENCY) Sub questions: 2.1.1 Were activities and outputs completed on schedule and within budget? 2.1.2 What measures were taken during planning and implementation to ensure that resources were efficiently used? 2.1.3 To what extent did responsive changes made during implementation improve efficiency? 2.1.4 What were the specific challenges or advantages of delivering programs in remote areas? 2.1.5 What analysis can be undertaken of each NGO program’s costs relative to its results?</p>
	<p>Key Evaluation Question 2.2: Did each individual SINPA program achieve its outcomes and objectives effectively? (EFFECTIVENESS) Sub questions: 2.2.1 To what extent did each NGO program achieve its stated outcomes and objectives? 2.2.2 To what extent did each NGO program contribute to improving the health, wellbeing and livelihoods of Solomon Islanders, especially women and youth? (NB: this question will take into account the extent to which any improvements were the result of each program and to what extent they may have been due to synergies with, or independent of extraneous factors) 2.2.3 To what extent did responsive changes made during implementation improve effectiveness?</p>
	<p>Key Evaluation Question 2.3: To what extent have the outcomes of the SINPA programs contributed to lasting change? (SUSTAINABILITY) Sub questions: 2.3.1 To what extent were local stakeholders active participants in the planning, implementation and review of each NGO program? 2.3.2 To what extent were program interventions integrated in the local institutional and cultural context? 2.3.3 Does each NGO program have actionable transition, phase out or exit strategies? 2.3.4 Noting that the SINPA program funding is due to finish in January 2016, do local partners have the institutional and financial capacity to maintain the benefits from the program when SINPA finishes?</p>

Approaches to Gender	Key Evaluation Question 3.1: How did SINPA programs seek to promote gender inclusive practice? Sub questions 3.1 What approaches were used to analyse the barriers in communities to gender inclusivity? 3.2 What strategies successfully led to gender inclusive outcomes? 3.3 What strategies successfully led to better economic outcomes for women and will these be sustained in the longer term? 3.4 What other aspects of women’s well-being were impacted, and what was the impact? (positive or negative) 3.5 What challenges or advantages did SINPA partners experience in implementing the SINPA Gender Standards?
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Figure 3: SINPA Evaluation focus areas and questions

2.5 Analysis

Evaluation team members compiled their own notes of interviews and discussions. Regular team discussions throughout the fieldwork phase were undertaken to assimilate the emerging trends against the key evaluation questions. Content analysis methods were employed to identify common and exceptional themes against the key issues in the ToR and the evaluation questions.

A question guide was developed and then used in a semi-structured way to enable the triangulation of issues across different groups of program stakeholders. A data analysis workshop was also held at the end of the field work to ensure that key stakeholders had an opportunity to provide feedback on the evaluation teams’ data analysis and early findings.

The conclusions of the evaluation team synthesise the views of the various stakeholders and reflect the professional judgements of the team members. The evaluation team used a ‘consensus approach’ to conclusions. Where there is a diversity of views on particular issues within the team, this diversity is documented in the report.

2.6 Limitations

The following challenges had an influence on this evaluation:

- **Time:** The rigour of the data gathering and analysis processes for this evaluation was constrained by the time available.
- **Program Scope:** Since the beginning of the program in 2009, SINPA expanded dramatically in terms of reach and range of activities. SINPA operated in seven provinces, as well as in Honiara. From 104 communities in phase 1, the program expanded to over 170 communities. The evaluation team visited 20 of these communities, which represents 12% of the program.

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- **Involvement of SINPA Partners:** The participation of SINPA partners has been central to this evaluation, but it is recognised that this may have impacted the impartiality of the evaluation findings. The potential bias is balanced by triangulating evaluation findings and the consistent presence and inquiry by independent members of the evaluation team.
 - **Judgements:** This evaluation relied on rapid qualitative methods of inquiry, and the professional judgement of the evaluators to interpret stakeholder perspectives. Judgements were made within transparent and jointly agreed indicators of performance enhancing consistency, transparency and fairness.
 - **Access:** Since the program covers a vast geographic area, the evaluation team was only able to gather indicative perspectives from a limited range of stakeholders/locations.
 - **Measurement:** Most human changes are difficult to measure in an absolute sense. There is no consensus on the units of measurement of phenomena such as 'capacity', 'empowerment' or 'well-being' that form part of SINPA. Additionally, the notion of 'value for money' was not defined within the SINPA program. This imposed a significant challenge on the task of judging the performance of aspects of SINPA.
 - **Attribution:** initiatives such as SINPA are implemented within contexts where multiple factors contribute to and/or detract from the anticipated changes. This renders the definitive attribution of changes to particular interventions challenging at best.

3. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

3.1 Partnership

SINPA was a partnership between DFAT and five NGOs to achieve the shared whole-of-partnership SINPA goal of improving the health and livelihood opportunities of Solomon Islanders, particularly women and young people. The SINPA partnership objectives were expressed as:

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

A Steering Committee comprising five SINPA NGO partners and DFAT was established for oversight and coordination of the SINPA partnership. This included oversight of the SINPA facilitator, allocation of a responsive fund, and coordination of the SINPA Annual Reflection Process. The Steering Committee was initially managed by rotation among the SINPA partners, and then managed by Oxfam in Solomon Islands for the last three years. As a direct result of the Mid-term evaluation this function received funding in the latter half of the program in order to deliver upon its role. In addition to the Steering Committee, working groups were created to exchange practice, insights and knowledge. Due to funding cuts in 2014, it was negotiated that the SINPA Secretariat would end on June 30, 2015 – six months prior to the scheduled end of the overall SINPA program.

It was evident to the evaluation team that the partnership increased the overall effectiveness of SINPA NGOs and their projects. This was achieved through ongoing reflective practice, documenting learnings, developing professional expertise, and sharing resources. Two areas in which SINPA NGOs were able to clearly demonstrate increased effectiveness related to improved gender practice and an improved understanding and application of the Strength-Based Approach. These areas are explored in more detail in latter sections within this report, but are highlighted in this section of the report as improvements in both these areas were a product of collaborative focus and attention within the partnership.

Although there were many positive outcomes from the partnership, the evaluation team found the partnership would have been more effective if it had taken a more disciplined and strategic approach to research, learning platforms, and structured engagement with key actors in the Solomon Islands, including local civil society and government. These findings are elaborated in more detail in the following section.

Funding Security

Through providing medium term funding security to NGOs bound by a common goal, SINPA created an environment that was conducive to collaboration, sharing and learning. NGO partners all had funding security and did not regard each other as funding competitors for the life of the SINPA partnership. This was a unique environment for NGOs that enabled a true exchange of resources, expertise, and experience – although it did take a number of years for NGOs to become comfortable with this and open up to others in the partnership. While SINPA NGO staff have said that they expect that sharing and trusting relationships will continue, it will be interesting to see whether this is likely post SINPA, in the absence of the same funding security.

“In SINPA’s case, our organisations have been funnelled into an atmosphere where we have had funding security – ensuring we aren’t all competing in the same space. This has allowed true partnerships to blossom and grow. It’s as if removing competition and encouraging partnership has built a safety net so that partners feel as comfortable now to share what we call “noble failures” as we are in sharing program success. In fact, we probably learned more from exploring together in a safe space why something didn’t work as well as we had hoped.” – SINPA Partner response to Evaluation Questionnaire

Mutual Exchange

One of the key aims of the SINPA Steering Committee was to encourage the development of open, honest and trusting relationships between SINPA Partners. This is a significant aim in the context of a normally competitive funding environment where NGOs are not inclined to share resources or learning. While sharing and coordination is more common among humanitarian response actors, it is far less common between development NGOs. Staff from Solomon Islands NGOS affirmed at the evaluation workshop that prior to the SINPA partnership, they had not had experiences of trusting or sharing with other NGOs. Local Solomon Islander staff identified that exposure to the technical expertise of five international NGOs was a significant benefit to their own professional development. .

One of the lasting legacies of the SINPA partnership is likely to be increased capacity of individuals working for local SINPA partners, who had the opportunity of learning from peers, building networks, and accessing resources outside their own organisations. The evaluation team was of the view that SINPA has developed human capital that will make strong contributions to future development efforts in the Solomon Islands.

Reflective Practice

The SINPA Partnership provided formal and regular opportunities for SINPA partners to meet, share, reflect and collaborate. This included sharing of community development lessons and experiences via presentations at different forums; learning events; development of learning papers and case studies; working groups; joint training initiatives; joint monitoring missions; and the development and sharing of

tools amongst partners. These mechanisms provided a unique opportunity for NGOs to become familiar with the approaches, practices, strengths and differences of other NGOs, thereby enriching their own programs.

Over time, the formal opportunities created for sharing led to deeper understanding between NGO partners, stronger professional relationships between SINPA NGO staff, and culture of trust within the partnership. SI NGO staff reflected at the evaluation workshop that increased trust was one of the most significant achievements of the SINPA partnership, and that this provided a platform for meaningful reflective practice, knowledge sharing, resource sharing, and learning. One of the outcomes of increased trust between partners is that NGO staff felt safe to meet with colleagues and discuss issues that they were facing in their projects and work together to find solutions. As trust was established, and relationships between NGO staff were strengthened, NGOs began to collaborate to strengthen their own projects. For example, OXFAM requested support from SCA to provide positive parenting resources in their gender violence project; ADRA and APHEDA requested advice from LLSI on establishing savings clubs within their projects; and SCA included the establishment of savings club for their youth livelihood projects as part of the YOPP exit strategy.

SINPA Partners were also able to highlight a range of modifications that had been made over the life of their projects with the aim of consistent improvement. Examples included OXFAM's employment of a male ERAW facilitator in response to 2011 reflections; a set of gender standards were designed and implemented in response to the Mid Term Review; and all NGOs had brokered a least one or more relationship with a Government agency in response to community need.

Collaboration

The SINPA partnership created an effective platform for collaboration. A key area of collaboration in the SINPA Partnership was the development of partnership-wide gender standards - a set of minimum standards developed to ensure that the work of SINPA partner organisations did not increase or maintain gender inequality. This included a self-assessment by each SINPA partner against the standards; guided discussions on common areas for improvement across SINPA partner organisations; the presentation of action plans by each SINPA Partner; and the integration of Gender Standards into the Organisational Capacity Assessment Tool (OCAT) that was used within SINPA. IWDA was instrumental in facilitating this collaborative capacity development process.

The development of the OCAT to make an assessment of organizational capacity more broadly was also a key output of collaboration between partners and is a legacy that should continue to be used by partner NGOs. It has wide applicability to civil society actors and could easily be shared with others to assist in capacity assessment and development planning.

Other key areas in which the SINPA NGOs collaborated included the humanitarian response to the 2014 floods in Honiara, the extension of SINPA for a further 18

months, and a coordinated response to SINPA budget cuts for Phase 6. This coordination was voluntary and reflected a sense of solidarity amongst the NGO partners. Working together in these instances meant reduced bureaucracy, saving time and money for partners and DFAT.

Provincial levels

The opportunities of networking, professional development, and resource sharing within the SINPA Partnership did not extend to benefit projects and staff at the provincial level. Because all of the SINPA Partners had an in-country headquarters base in Honiara, the majority of meetings, coordination and relationship development occurred at Honiara based events. This was important from a whole-of-organisation and partnership perspective, but did not provide opportunities for learning and sharing between field staff of different SINPA Partner NGOs.

While key field staff were sometimes able to attend annual reflections and learning events at the national level, SI NGO staff reflected at the evaluation workshop that staff working at the provincial level would have benefited from SINPA investments in supporting provincial level networks, learning events and coordination. This was identified as a recommendation in the Mid-Term Review, noted at Steering Committee meetings, and at annual reflections. There was some evidence of coordination at the provincial level, but learning and strategic planning at the provincial level was not systematically addressed in the life of the SINPA Partnership.

‘What is happening up at the SINPA management level in terms of sharing and learning should also be felt at the different field offices of each partner at the Provincial or even community level. This is an area that the secretariat should encourage the partner organizations.’ – feedback reported during an annual reflection

Learning

One of the key outcomes expected of the SINPA Partnership was that it would generate learnings about how to initiate and support effective, culturally relevant community development in the Solomon Islands context.¹ Over the course of the SINPA Partnership, learning papers were produced on the Strengths Based Approach, Gender and Culture, Livelihoods, Participation and Accountability, Value for Money, the Savings Club model, Youth Participation, and Gender Equality.

SINPA partners developed tools that they used in community work which incorporated program learning. These tools and resources were shared between SINPA partners at annual reflection days, at learning events, within working groups, through the development of ‘learning papers’, and through professional networks established within the SINPA Partnership. SINPA partners were able to identify many examples of how learnings generated within the partnership have informed and enriched their own programs and their own professional knowledge and practice. At various points over the course of the partnership, some of these learnings were shared with actors outside the SINPA Partnership – for example, a paper on the

¹ SINPA 2009 Design

² Analysis of SINPA project achievements of effectiveness are captured in more detail in individual SINPA project reports at Appendix D.

³ This objective was removed at the beginning of Phase 6

⁴ The KAP survey was conducted after the Isabel and Makira Provincial offices were closed.

Savings Club model was launched publically and learning events in the last phase of the program were open to Government and local civil society.

As the SINPA Partnership comes to an end, however, the evaluation team has questions about how the learnings generated within the partnership will inform future programs, approaches, and practices by other actors working in community development in the Solomon Islands. While the SINPA Steering Committee effectively operated as a live resource centre for the duration of the SINPA Partnership, the evaluation team found that there has been poor planning with regards to the sustainability of this function. There were various references made by SINPA Partners during the evaluation to the potential role that DSE could fulfill in housing these resources, but there are ongoing concerns about whether DSE has the resources and capacity to fulfill this role. It is noted that one of the SINPA Partners, OXFAM, is intending to work with DSE over at least the short term to strengthen its capacity with funding support from DFAT. There were some attempts by the Secretariat and the partners to engage DSE in the last phase of the SINPA Program, but in hindsight there would have been value in engaging and supporting DSE throughout the life of the SINPA Program.

The evaluation team found that the vast majority of the learning papers and resources that have been generated within the SINPA Partnership cannot be accessed on-line. The likelihood that a new actor of any type – individual or organizational – would be able to access the rich bank of learnings generated in the SINPA partnership is considered remote. The evaluation team regards this as a significant failure of the SINPA Partnership.

Strategic Approach

While the evaluation team found that the benefits from reflective practice, documenting learnings, and sharing resources improved the effectiveness of SINPA Partners and individuals engaged in the SINPA Partnership, the evaluation team also identified a range of areas relating to the program that could have benefited from a more disciplined and strategic approach. For example, it is clear that the SINPA Partnership studied and documented the strengths based approach, the savings club model, and approaches to gender – all of which are highly relevant to the SINPA Partnership. However, there would also have been great benefit in the SINPA Partnership exploring learning related to livelihoods analysis, the role of the Church as an agent of change, successful approaches to cooperatives, and effective forms of collaboration for small scale producers. It is noted that the SINPA Secretariat prepared several terms of reference for various pieces of research, but was not able to gain support from all SINPA partners.

The process for identifying learning priorities within the partnership was not clear and the evaluation team gained a sense that partners did not always feel that they had 'voice' within the partnership. DFAT and various SI NGO staff indicated that SINPA was at times dominated by Australian NGO staff and this hindered the active participation of Solomon Island staff in meetings and decision making. DFAT found that its role as a 'partner' undermined its role as the donor, particularly when it identified that SINPA needed to focus and become more strategic.

Similarly, the evaluation team found that the SINPA Partnership did not create opportunities to systematically engage with government at national and provincial level, or with local civil society organisations. The objectives of the SINPA Steering Committee were to support partners to become more effective at empowering Solomon Islanders to improve their quality of life; and to facilitate shared exploration of different models and approaches to development which suit the Solomon Islands context. As noted above, it consisted of the five partner NGOs and DFAT. While the evaluation team concluded that the Steering Committee broadly met these objectives, it found that the Steering Committee missed an important opportunity to more deeply engage Government and indigenous civil society organisations. The Mid-Term Review had also identified this as important to overall effectiveness and longer term sustainability.

Given that the partnership was designed to be a flexible and adaptive program that would be responsive to program learnings, it is disappointing that the SINPA Partnership did not prioritise and identify ways to meaningfully collaborate with government and intentionally strengthen local civil society. For example, DSE is the peak body for civil society in the Solomon Islands who has a mandate for networking and coordination. Their inclusion in the SINPA Partnership would have enabled a mutual exchange of different models and approaches between many actors rather than only between the SINPA funded partners. It could also have potentially provided an opportunity for DSE to strengthen its role in civil society sector leadership. Despite DFAT advocating for their inclusion in the SINPA Partnership in the latter phases, this was largely resisted by the SINPA Partners until the last year, when DSE was invited to attend as an observer.

Similarly, there were important connections that were made by individual SINPA Partners with various parts of SI Government, including The Ministry of Commerce, Industries, Labour and Immigration, The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock and the Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs– which would have been more strategic if made or at least shared at the partnership level. It is the view of the evaluation team that if the SINPA Partners had collaborated to engage with Government more strategically, it may have led to stronger partnership outcomes. It is acknowledged that the SINPA partners invited government and local civil society to attend learning events in the last phase of the project, but this did not capitalize on the potential for mutual and iterative exchange and influence.

*“Towards the end, we realise that we missed the chance to spread the benefit of the partnership to others, as they are only now being included in our events’ –
SINPA Partner, SINPA Evaluation workshop*

Role of Steering Committee

The evaluation team is not able to form conclusive findings on the strength of the Steering Committee, but feedback during the evaluation raised issues relating to its effectiveness as a coordination body. One issue that appeared to be an underlying factor was that representatives on the Steering Committee did not always have their participation included in their own duty statements, and as a consequence did not have time to digest information, make sound contributions or follow up action items. A concern discussed at some length at the final evaluation workshop was that the membership of the Steering Committee changed so frequently that decisions made by the Steering Committee were often not followed through.

Other SINPA NGO staff raised issues relating to participation in the Steering Committee and opportunities for contributing to the Secretariat. This included concerns relating to which working language facilitated best collaboration and participation, conducting meetings in culturally appropriate ways, and the balance between Australian staff playing strategic and supportive roles rather than dominant leadership roles. One concern raised by several local NGOs was that discussions and decisions made at Steering Committee meetings were not shared with project staff, meaning that undertakings agreed by NGO representatives were not fulfilled by their own organisations. There are likely many contributing factors, but the result appeared to be a Steering Committee that was not cohesive and as a consequence was not able to gain the support of all partners and function as a proactive, strategic body.

During the evaluation, the team identified a number of areas where the strategic attention of all SINPA partners would have contributed to overall partnership effectiveness. For example, the team identified opportunities where SINPA Partners could have worked at a program level with Church at an institutional level; advocated to Government on key issues; and coordinated to broker market linkages. Program level coordination may have been able to better manage obstacles and constraints like market access that each of the individual SINPA projects experienced. During the final evaluation workshop, the evaluation team suggested that the Australian NGOs could have made more efforts to realize the partnership's strategic potential, but others pointed out that there were no incentives to do so and staff turnover was a compounding factor.

While acknowledging that the evaluation did not review the activity and performance of the Steering Committee with any rigour, the overall impression gained through discussion with SINPA Partners, including DFAT, is that it operated well as a networking body, but did not realize its potential as a coordination body or deliver a lasting legacy on behalf of SINPA.

3.2 NGO Project Performance

This evaluation sought to make a rapid assessment of the success and challenges of each individual project under SINPA – whether each project successfully delivered its project outcomes efficiently, effectively and sustainably. As an evaluative exercise, it does not represent an in-depth or comprehensive evaluation of each individual project and is constrained by the limited set of data, discussions with only current staff, and field work which visited only a small sample of project sites (20 out of a total of 170 communities). The findings of the evaluation team cannot therefore be extrapolated or generalised across the entirety of each NGO project, however do give a good indication on general progress towards objectives.

The evaluation involved a rapid, external qualitative assessment of overall program performance in a short space of time, and therefore relies to a large extent on the professional judgement/interpretation of the evaluators. As a rapid overall program evaluation method, a pragmatic approach was taken to compile indicative performance information. The efficacy of the method rests on triangulating key informants' perspectives. Consistency, transparency and objectivity are maximised by the consistent use of the evaluation questions and Evaluation Framework (Appendix C) to guide the lines of inquiry and to guide subsequent analysis of data.

The findings do nonetheless identify key strengths and challenges observed by the evaluation team within those field sites and within the methodology outlined earlier in this paper. Individual reports were provided in draft form to each of the NGOs prior to their inclusion in this report. Feedback on these draft reports was invited from each of the NGOs and has been incorporated into reports where appropriate. Individual project reports are included in this report at Appendix D.

In addition to commentary on individual projects, the evaluation team has identified findings that are relevant to the overall SINPA partnership in the key areas of program effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability. These are drawn from the individual projects and summarised below. It is hoped that the evaluation team's observations and analysis can be used to inform learnings for the NGOs and their partners; and applied to future DFAT programs.

3.2.1 Efficiency

The focus on efficiency within the evaluation sought to develop an understanding of the degree to which NGOs delivered their activities as planned, measures taken to achieve efficiencies in program implementation, the efficiency challenges of working in remote areas, and an analysis of the costs of individual projects relative to the results of each project.

Overall, investment in the SINPA program totalled \$22.6 million. Table 1 shows how these funds were allocated by each of the SINPA partners.

ADRA	\$3,867,114.00
SCA	\$5,269,586.48
Oxfam	\$3,637,872.14
IWDA/LLEE	\$4,078,358.17
APHEDA	\$3,287,780.78
Secretariat	\$1,402,892.00
TOTAL	\$21,543,603.57*

Table 1 SINPA – allocations by NGO

**Variance between \$22.6 million program investment and \$21.5 million allocations is due to funding for a sixth partner who was terminated from the partnership early on due to performance, a small amount assigned to a funding grant arrangement, and Australian Government costs for monitoring and evaluation.*

The evaluation team faced limitations in the extent to which a comprehensive assessment of efficiency could be made. The first of these is that there were not aggregated results for each project across the life of the SINPA Partnership. Although a results based framework was developed at both the partnership level and individual project levels, the data therein is variable between phases and projects. The second key limitation is that there were no value for money indicators that were agreed within the partnership. Analysis of value is therefore subjective and reliant on the information that SINPA partners were able to provide the evaluation team.

Nonetheless, the evaluation team was able to make observations about cost structures, efficiency measures, and challenges. Individual commentary is contained in each of the individual NGO reports at Appendix D and broader findings are presented below.

Cost Structures

The evaluation team found that with the exception of one SINPA Partner, the in-country models of program delivery were lean and efficient overall. SINPA Partner NGOs developed sensible national and provincial level staffing structures that sought to minimise office overhead costs and travel costs. They made good use of local community facilitators who had deep understanding of local contexts, were accommodated within local communities, and capitalised on their own networks to facilitate complex logistics. Iterative staffing restructures were undertaken by several of the SINPA Partners throughout the program in efforts to maximise efficiencies.

Three of the five SINPA Partners maintained a head office in Honiara and employed provincial level staff to implement and monitor projects, which proved to be a lean model of delivery. The evaluation team found, however, that organisations with provincial infrastructure - such as Save the Children – provided support to other agencies, including SINPA organisations and provincial level government offices. This unexpected benefit from the aid investment builds opportunities for partnership at

the provincial level and assists local government to implement its agenda. In retrospect, there may have been value in the SINPA Partnership sharing provincial level infrastructure in the form of a shared office to capitalise on potential efficiencies and strengthen provincial level coordination.

The evaluation team was less confident about the efficiency of costs allocated to Australian staffing and overhead costs. It was difficult to derive 'administration' and 'overhead' costs from the SINPA financials, as SINPA partners allocated these costs among different SINPA budget lines in different ways. This also means that it is not possible to make comparisons between SINPA NGOs or against other NGO mechanisms. Whilst acknowledging these limitations, the evaluation team's general observations are that costs allocated to non-program staff and overheads – such as senior management and project managers, office costs and 'indirect recovery costs' – are inflated. While there is no common classification among DFAT funded NGO programs for management and other overheads, working benchmarks for other DFAT NGO programs are 10% towards "administrative costs", which would meet the costs of attending SINPA meetings and events, providing management oversight and support, and liaising with and reporting to DFAT. In SINPA, these costs were included as direct costs in project budgets and an additional 10% overhead for indirect costs was also charged by some NGOs. The presence of Australian offices in-country for three out of the five SINPA partners would indicate that the costs of administration and overheads was therefore higher than 10% of total program expenditure. Other DFAT NGO mechanisms have capped NGO allocations to administration and this would probably have been wise in the case of SINPA.

Activity Costs

The high cost context of working in remote community based settings is acknowledged as a reality of the projects undertaken within the SINPA partnership. Material inputs are expensive, tools are often poor quality and break quickly, and freight and transport costs are high. The reliance on imported goods and the lack of reliable infrastructure to transport materials means that project activities are not only expensive, but are often delayed. This all has a bearing on an NGO's ability to deliver projects on time and within budget. The evaluation team found that field staff demonstrated remarkable tenacity in navigating these challenges. When considering these challenges from a whole-of-program perspective, there may have been opportunities for the SINPA partners to coordinate when buying and transporting materials. For example, an opportunity to purchase a bulk supply of fuel at a discounted rate to support community based fuel depots was considered but not pursued. Other efficiencies may have been possible if SINPA partner NGOs had collaborated more strategically.

Monitoring Costs

To ensure the efficient use of funds at community levels, all NGOs developed reporting and accountability systems that were tailored to the nature of their activities. This was not without challenges, as many communities did not have communications to facilitate easy exchange of information. NGOs incurred substantial costs in implementing accountability systems – often requiring field

officers to travel with materials being delivered to communities, inspecting records at communities, and travelling to Honiara with supporting evidence. However, the rigour of these accountability systems was considered necessary to both responsibly account for funds, and also model accountability practices for communities whose sustainability of activities will very much depend on their ability to establish their own internal accountability systems. On this basis, the investments made by NGOs to carefully account for funds at the community level are considered to be an exercise of efficiency, although resource intensive. There was good evidence that three of the five NGO projects had been able to scale back intensive monitoring as local facilitators and community structures had improved their own capacity to account for funds.

Financial Systems

DFAT engaged Chartered Accountants to conduct a financial assessment for the SINPA partners in 2013 as a follow-up from an earlier financial assessment conducted prior to the MTR in 2011. Through the assessments, the SINPA partners were able to demonstrate many improvements since 2011. Contributing factors to improvements were identified as the support from the Australian partners in ensuring financial compliance, fraud trainings delivered by DFAT and individual partners, and the transparency and support SINPA partners have with one another when facing internal difficulties with financial mechanisms. Responses to the Evaluation Questionnaire and participation in the Evaluation Workshop identified a range of internal policies, guidelines and systems that SINPA Partners rely on to ensure efficiency and accountability.

Efficiency of Results

The evaluation team concluded that SINPA Partners had, on the whole, demonstrated good efficiency practices. It found it more difficult, however, to make an assessment of overall program efficiency as the results based frameworks do not clearly show what the planned outputs and outcomes were for each phase, and SINPA partner reports do not consistently detail program achievements. Reporting is not consistent between phases, and figures quoted in reports do not reconcile between phases. It is not clear how many communities were supported by each of the NGOs over the life of SINPA, how much funding was provided to each community, what activities were supported in each of those communities, and what the results were in each community targeted. Additionally, there are no clear guidelines on how beneficiaries are counted, so there is likely to be irregularity in reporting between NGOs. It is not possible to determine from the information provided how many beneficiaries were supported through the SINPA program.

When this finding was presented at the end-of-evaluation workshop with SINPA partners, there was a mixed response. Some partners are confident that this data does exist within reports, but acknowledge that this information has not yet been aggregated. DFAT's view is that record keeping was generally poor and as a consequence it is hard to judge the complete outputs and outcomes of SINPA. There have been good results reported, but it is hard to extract from these the complete SINPA story. DFAT's end-of-program reporting requirements should insist that this aggregated information is presented by each of the SINPA partners.

3.2.2 Effectiveness

A Mid-Term Review of the SINPA Program undertaken in 2011 found that although SINPA had the potential to be a successful program, it was under performing and was only expected to partially achieve its objectives by the end of its duration. It recommended improvements in results-based management, including monitoring and evaluation; overall project management; strengthened application of the Strengths Based Approach; and deeper capacity building investments by Australian based NGO staff on project management and technical aspects of the program.

The end-of-program evaluation found that there had been investments by SINPA Partners in response to all of these recommendations, with the resulting outcome being that SINPA Partnership has led to lasting improvements in the lives of communities, particularly women and young people.

The evaluation team was able to confirm that individual SINPA projects have contributed to improvements in community cohesion, governance, accountability, well being and livelihoods that benefit both directly targeted communities, and have obvious connections to the broader economic and security environment of the Solomon Islands.

Communities targeted under SINPA tended to be remote, with significant youth populations with low levels of education, purpose or income, and who did not have prior experience in managing community projects. Strategies to promote women's participation and empowerment were integrated into all SINPA project initiatives.

The nature of SINPA projects does not lend itself to aggregated reporting of outcomes that are meaningful. For this reason, the key findings of the evaluation team with respect to the effectiveness of individual SINPA projects are captured below²:

YELP, implemented by ADRA

The evaluation team found that ADRA has increased livelihood opportunities and resilience for young people and their communities in which it conducted YELP. A total of 61 livelihood projects were established by YELP, generating a total overall income of \$488,036 SBD.

There are some impressive examples of communities having embraced the strengths based approach, forming strong support around youth committees, saving, and initiating their own projects without reliance on ADRA. The micro-finance approach requiring communities to contribute cash as well as local physical and human resources to their livelihood projects has been particularly effective. The approach encourages good stewardship of funds and the assets created. In the majority of

² Analysis of SINPA project achievements of effectiveness are captured in more detail in individual SINPA project reports at Appendix D.

cases it also appears to have provided communities with an early opportunity to experience achievement, which then has then galvanized ongoing support for new activities.

Community leaders reported that risky behaviours among youth have reduced as a result of the project, relationships between elders and youth have improved, and youth are taking ownership of community projects and assets. The involvement of community leaders within this program was identified as critical to its overall success.

SKILLS, implemented by APHEDA

The SKILLS project provided small grants for a total of 161 Community Learning Centres (CLCs) training activities for a total of 2,892 people (1259 males and 1633 females). The evaluation team found that there is unique value in the model of community learning centres that is distinct from the value of rural training centres (RTCs). CLCs reach members of communities who genuinely would not access other types of training – including women with low literacy and no formal education and youth. Community elders emphasized how important mentoring, skills training and gainful activity was to ensuring that young men in particular contributed positively to community life.

Each of APHEDA's end-of-phase reports recounted numerous examples that demonstrated the positive effects of community based training on community members' livelihoods and well being. The DFAT evaluation team heard similar outcomes and stories in facilitated discussion groups, as did the APHEDA end of project evaluation. However, outcomes from these trainings are collected through ad-hoc discussion with community members, and not collected consistently, making an overall assessment of effectiveness challenging.

The SKILLS project has facilitated provincial and national networks of CLCS to meet on a regular basis over the life of SINPA and has helped to establish a national level body known the Solomon Islands Association of Community Learning Centres (SIACLC) to maintain these networks and represent informal training within the education sector. While acknowledging the challenges of sustaining this organisation, the evaluation team found that APHEDA has done an excellent job in galvanising support for its establishment.

TTfT, implemented by Live and Learn Solomon Islands and IWDA

TTfT established 25 savings groups with a total membership of 778 women. A further 19 savings clubs have been initiated by women who were not in the project but learnt from TTfT savings clubs in neighbouring communities. Using group savings and community labour, savings clubs have built community infrastructure such as offices and meeting halls and established over 80 income generation or community development initiatives with savings club loans and capital.

19 Sustainable Use Areas have been established, and 13 of these developed a Management Action Plan. This assists communities to map out strengths and mobilise support for community-led development for natural resource management.

The evaluation team found that TTfT made an outstanding contribution to the SINPA partnership goal of improving livelihoods and wellbeing of women. The savings clubs established under the TTfT project have led to demonstrable changes in the role of women, the capacity of women, and the resilience of women in rural communities. There is good evidence of the model being replicated by communities that have observed the benefits of savings clubs, and of other NGOs seeking to integrate savings clubs into established programs. LLSI and IWDA have done an excellent job in documenting their approach and sharing learnings within the SINPA partnership and beyond.

STAV, implemented by Oxfam

The evaluation team found that the STAV Program has had mixed success in achieving its overall goal of ensuring that women and girls are able to contribute to and benefit from development, free from the reality and threat of violence. While the program has provided sustained funding to the Family Support Centre and helped the Centre to strengthen in some key governance and management areas, complex fractures in the relationship and high Oxfam staff turnover led to STAV not being able to meet original expectations and plans. Similarly, while the STAV program made some important early contributions to advancing an advocacy agenda regarding violence against women, it has not maintained a particularly active or strategic role in the latter phases of the program.

With regard to its community engagement project, there was good evidence of attitudinal and behaviour change towards violence against women. The Oxfam-commissioned end of program evaluation found that there was 'evidence that violence is less normalized in the three program communities and attitudes that condone violence against women have weakened significantly, including that there is a strong consensus that violence against women is an important issue, women and men commonly reported that they intervene when violence does occur and on numerous occasions men spoke about the shame associated with being violent. The Oxfam evaluation also found that while the program had not effectively addressed the 'root causes' of violence against women, it had taken a culturally appropriate approach, had engaged the whole community effectively, and had effectively mobilised the community to address their self-identified 'triggers' of violence (alcohol abuse, financial stress, parenting stress etc), which has led to a decrease in violence. It found that the program approach was relevant, appropriate and effective to begin with, but needed to transform over time to effectively address gender and power as the root causes of gender-based violence. Oxfam is seeking to incorporate these learnings in new programs in the Solomon Islands addressing family safety.

YOPP, implemented by Save the Children

YOPP has worked in a total of 73 communities across 6 provinces over the life of the SINPA program. Due to various cost and sustainability concerns, SCA exited from 44 of these communities and was present in 29 communities at the end of SINPA. Towards the end of phase 6 a total of 702 young people (348 male and 354 female) were reported to be earning income from 43 livelihoods projects.

SCA reports that some of the communities that were exited have been able to sustain livelihoods activities, but the evaluation team found it difficult to make an overall assessment of effectiveness given the lack of information about the ongoing outcomes in communities that had already been exited during the life of the program. On the basis of review of SCA reports, discussion with SCA staff and visits to project sites, the evaluation team found that there have been mixed results. On the one hand, it is clear that YOPP provides an important platform to engage young people in skills development, governance, leadership, and decision making. Individual stories of significant personal change and growth were shared in a number of YOPP sites during the field visits and community leaders identified significant changes in risky behaviours among youth who engaged in YOPP projects. However, the evaluation team also identified significant challenges confronting YOPP committees to sustain their livelihoods projects – including high input costs, lack of market access, and slow gains. For those projects that had only been initiated in the last phase of the project, the ongoing viability of these projects appeared very uncertain. Again, the results were mixed – there was early success and high levels of confidence in one community, whereas in all others it was too early for communities to report success and have confidence in being able to maintain new livelihoods projects.

Overall

Individual projects reports highlight successful approaches and challenges to project effectiveness. At a program level, these have been synthesised to identify some common themes:

- More successful outcomes were identified in sites where the initial stages of entry to the community and awareness raising of the project included the entire community or at least representation from the various groups within the community, including elders and church representatives. This was true even for projects with specific target groups such as women or youth.
- The accountability mechanisms that were established to assist communities to manage community projects, especially those where income has been generated, have helped to build good governance practices that have benefits at the community level, but also create an increased understanding and expectation of good governance from other institutions, including government.

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- The strengths based approach taken by SINPA projects was an effective approach to building resilience in communities. The most effective project outcomes were seen where communities raised and saved their own funds to invest in community projects. This increased ownership of and commitment to the project by the community. It was also a key factor in helping communities realize that they can solve their own development challenges.
 - The investments NGOs made in training and support in leadership, management and financial skills at the community level have been important factors in individuals and groups being able to establish and strengthen local governance structures. This has made a significant contribution to the capacity of communities to maintain community assets, address project and community challenges, and sustain project benefits. The registration of community governance structures and registration of formal bank accounts helps to consolidate these structures and provides a platform for their ongoing sustainability.
 - The injection of capital to communities worked well where it was used as a platform for growth and success. This only worked where NGOs had assisted communities to make a sound assessment of risks and viability, and provided sufficient technical training to manage the activity. There were cases where NGOs provided training without providing practical materials, where NGOs introduced income generating ideas that had poor linkages to market, where NGOs provided materials without training, or where the costs of an activity outweighed the benefits. NGO staff may have benefited from more training in micro enterprise viability.
 - SINPA projects were most effective at raising awareness of social issues including gender and health when these were embedded within other activities that demonstrated more immediate benefits to communities, such as income generating activities, sports, and skills training.
 - SINPA projects that focused on livelihoods would have been more successful if SINPA partners had undertaken a stronger assessment of livelihood opportunities, tested the viability of livelihoods activities generating income, and worked together to broker market opportunities for communities. There was some evidence of NGO partners creating market linkages in the late stages of the SINPA program, but the potential overall was not realized.

3.2.3 Sustainability

The sustainability of improvements in the lives of communities, particularly women and young people achieved under the SINPA Partnership is very much dependent on the individual project activity. The evaluation team concluded that in some projects, the likelihood of sustainability was very high, and in others was much weaker. Even within projects, the likelihood of sustainability varied across sites and their specific

project activities. Commentary on the sustainability of individual projects is contained in the individual NGO reports at Appendix D.

The evaluation team synthesized its analysis across all individual projects to identify key themes that affected program sustainability. Most of these are common to any community development program, but some are particularly relevant to working in the context of the Solomon Islands:

- Those projects most likely to be sustained are those where the community has had time to realize project benefits and independently manage projects. The savings club model is a stand out success in this regard.
- There is some evidence that local community initiatives are more likely to be sustained where community members receive personal benefit as well as community benefit. For example, sustaining momentum among youth to manage a community based project can be challenging unless there is also a prospect of personal gain from their involvement. This does not have to be a benefit in the form of income, but does need to satisfy personal interests.
- The strengths based approach taken within the SINPA program is a key factor in overall sustainability. Where projects struck the right balance between inspiring and supporting communities, and standing back to ensure ownership and empowerment, communities recognised that they have their own strengths and resources to improve their own well being and have confidence to continue without ongoing NGO support. Where NGOs did not strike this balance, target communities remain reliant on the NGO's support and are not likely to be able to sustain the work and the benefits that have begun to be accrued without ongoing support.
- Investments in new income-generation activities need to be accompanied by good analysis and planning to ensure that they are viable, can access required supplies, and have access to markets.
- With much of rural Solomon Islands still largely a subsistence economy, sustainably productive gardens and marine areas from which a subsistence livelihood can be obtained is of critical importance and improvements in this area are likely to be sustained.
- In cases where community structures have been established for the sole purpose of managing an activity that is driven and supported by an NGO, the community governance structure established is less likely to be sustained than where an

NGO has been a catalyst to establish structures around something already identified by and of value to the community

- Community level governance structures are more likely to be sustained where they have experienced their own success in planning and implementing an activity. This provided them with confidence and momentum to continue without ongoing support from an NGO. This suggests that communities need support to identify activities that are likely to be successful in the short term.
- SINPA projects have achieved gains in well-being, resilience, and livelihoods, but those communities in more remote areas will struggle to sustain their livelihood activities without better access to supplies, markets, and better analysis of income generating viability. Some of these challenges are beyond the scope and influence of the SINPA partners but others could have been better addressed through more specialised livelihoods technical advice.

3.3 Approaches to Gender

While gender equality was not an explicit objective of SINPA at the partnership level, the overall goal of SINPA sought to improve the health and livelihood opportunities of Solomon Islanders, particularly women and young people. Given the value of learning in relation to achieving change for women, the evaluation sought to assess how SINPA projects had promoted gender inclusive practice, how women had been impacted by the program, and what challenges had been experienced.

This area of focus was highly relevant to the SINPA program, as the program had adopted a partnership wide commitment to promoting gender equality in projects, improving organisational practices relating to gender equality, and working towards the equal and meaningful participation of women and girls in decision-making processes that affect their lives. In November 2012, SINPA partners agreed on the 'SINPA Gender Standards' - a set of minimum standards developed to ensure that the work of SINPA partner organisations did not increase or maintain gender inequality. Subsequently, various tools, learning papers and learning events have sought to strengthen organizational capacity to undertake gender analysis and strengthen practice. The evaluation seeks to draw on this learning to capture key lessons, issues, challenges and strategies to best practice approaches for gender inclusive outcomes and women's economic empowerment.

It was evident to the evaluation team that all NGOs had promoted opportunities for and participation of women in culturally appropriate ways. Although not all NGO's under SINPA had analysed power and gender to inform their program approaches, there was evidence that all had made efforts to ensure their activities were gender inclusive and that project outcomes created benefits for women. Whilst the promotion of gender equality was a specific planned outcome in some of the projects, others adapted and evolved their projects to include gender considerations.

The evaluation team concluded that there is real potential for gender power dynamics to change over time in some communities if the initiatives started by the SINPA partners are sustained.

SINPA partners made concerted efforts to strengthen their gender work after the Mid-Term Review. Improvements were made at the partnership level (via Gender Standards and their inclusion in the OCAT) and at the individual project level. Through discussion with SINPA partner staff, it was evident that SINPA partners had invested in providing training opportunities for their own staff to undertake gender awareness and analysis. Officers from each of the five ANGOs highlighted that their understanding of gender issues and ability to apply this learning in their work was one of the greatest benefits of the SINPA partnership. While it is acknowledged that practice in this area is still evolving, the SINPA partnership and in particular the leadership provided by IWDA is to be commended for the focus on gender that it was able to generate.

Barriers to Gender Inclusivity

In order to understand the relevance of strategies undertaken by SINPA partners to address gender inequity, the evaluation sought to identify the barriers that SINPA partners faced in their efforts to promote gender inclusive practice in the Solomon Islands. These barriers have informed the approaches that SINPA partners have undertaken to create meaningful dialogue about gender and opportunities for women's participation. The barriers identified and experienced by SINPA partners included:

- widespread belief that “gender equality” and “human rights” are foreign concepts that challenge local culture and church messages
- male dominated decision making at the community, church and government levels
- prevalence of “traditional” gender role stereotypes meaning that women bear the bulk of domestic labour and do not have time to participate in workshops, training, or other project activities
- the practice of male superiority in decision making, making it difficult for women to participate in activities unless they are invited or encouraged by men
- Melanesian concept of respect for those in authority and the absence of consensus decision making models so that disagreement or discussion of various viewpoints is considered evidence of disrespect
- low levels of education and literacy amongst women
- perception that the promotion of women's rights is equivalent to the demotion of men
- that women's issues are essentially private, domestic concerns and not the subject of public discussion and debate

-
- available resources on gender concepts that do not capture locally acceptable cultural and religious beliefs.

*“I am against gender because it is against my religious beliefs and culture”
Participant at SINPA Phase 5 Annual Reflection*

SINPA partner staff demonstrated a sound understanding of these issues. They provided multiple examples from their work to illustrate how these barriers manifest themselves in communities. It was not apparent that all SINPA partners had undertaken formal, systemic analysis of the barriers to gender inclusivity; however they demonstrated a sound and practical understanding of the issues and challenges.

As not all of the NGO projects sponsored by SINPA had considered gender issues in the original design process, results based frameworks did not have gender outcomes and indicators specified (with the exception of the STAV program), although all reported gender disaggregated data. It was acknowledged by partners, however, that the absence of gender specific outcomes and indicators presented challenges for SINPA partners to ensure their activities were gender inclusive.

Successful Strategies

SINPA partners undertook a range of approaches that resulted in positive changes for women and shifts in community attitudes to gender concepts. These included:

- Formal gender training

There was evidence that all NGO’s had undertaken some form of gender awareness raising activity within their communities since the Mid Term Review. The evaluation team observed that effective discussions of ‘gender equity’ with communities in the Solomon Islands was very much a product of effective field officers who were able to acknowledge cultural and religious norms and use locally appropriate activities and tools to explore notions of gender. Field visits revealed that communities were generally open and receptive to gender messaging and that in most cases the SINPA projects had successfully shifted community attitudes to some degree.

- Program reflection

It was clear the focus on gender in SINPA reflection and learning process had deepened the knowledge and refined the focus of SINPA partner staff. At the evaluation workshop, participants indicated that the sharing of challenges, technical input and development of resources within the partnership had strengthened individual, programmatic and organisational practice. The Gender Standards that were developed within the SINPA Partnership are an excellent tool to assist reflection.

“The use of the gender standards to monitor the project meant that we were able to refocus or prioritise some activities to increase women’s participation. For example, we were able to use the administration of small grants to ensure

that women's training needs were met." – ADRA Response to Evaluation Questionnaire

- Women's Participation

Where projects created explicit opportunities for women's participation in governance structures, decision making bodies and leadership roles, the evaluation team observed that these projects were able to influence changing gender stereotypes and power dynamics. The participation of women in project activities legitimises their involvement in other community activities, provides women with confidence in their own skills, and demonstrates the benefits of women's meaningful participation to others in the community. For example, young women who participated in capacity building training to increase their confidence and self-esteem were able to put new skills into practice when NGOs organised youth forums or look and learn trips to other communities; and in doing so gained the confidence of their mothers to participate in community meetings. Similarly, women who were members of women-led savings groups reported that they were now confident enough to speak up at community meetings, when previously they would have been silent. SCA's youth groups also actively supported the representation of young women in the governance structure. Even though these weren't women only spaces, they provided a space for women to have a meaningful voice amongst their peers, thereby increasing confidence among women and legitimising their participation.

- Skills Development

Similarly, projects that provided opportunities for women to learn and apply practical skills provided a platform for natural shifts in attitudes and behaviours towards women. Focus group discussions with women during the evaluation affirmed that providing women with opportunities to learn new skills increases their access to resources and further opportunities. This challenges existing inequities and power dynamics. Where women learnt skills they could use in their everyday lives, they gained confidence, felt more valued and respected by their communities, became more resilient and generally increased their well-being. This was true even where there were limited opportunities to increase their income. Women reported that where they had gained skills that they could apply to either improving their family's well-being or generate new income, they experienced changes in confidence, self-esteem, and power. In effect, the development of skills in women created opportunities to address power inequities in target communities.

- Tangible Benefits

Focus group discussions with women during the evaluation reiterated the well-known reality that women shoulder significant workloads and as a consequence have limited time available for additional activities. The evaluation team found that women were more likely to prioritise participation in an NGO project if they (and their menfolk) were able to identify immediate benefits. Examples of high levels of engagement by women were the women-led savings groups, training in practical skills that women had identified as priorities, and participation in income generating

activities. Examples were provided in several communities of men originally resisting their wives' involvement in an activity, but then relenting once it was clear that others were benefiting from the activity. For example, where training provided women with skills that they could use to earn money, they were able to demonstrate the benefit of their participation by increasing the income available to their families. In these situations, the men in the community were supportive and more likely to encourage their wives to join project activities. This means that projects need to demonstrate relatively 'quick' family and community benefits in order to secure women's engagement and participation.

- Spaces for Women

It became evident from field visits that in some communities, participating in a committee was a rare opportunity for women to meet, discuss challenges, plan, make decisions and support each other. Where projects established women-centred activities, such as training workshops, or the women-led savings clubs, women highlighted the value of increased cohesion in their lives and on community dynamics. In many communities, the only other opportunity for women to meet as a group are within a church based women's fellowship, where the focus is spiritual. However, women in focus group discussions recognised the importance of meeting as a group to share ideas, challenges, offer support to each other and build confidence. The evaluation team found that projects or activities that create new formal spaces for women to come together increases the resilience of women and also the collective power of women in a community.

- Church Engagement

The evaluation team observed that all SINPA projects sought to engage church leaders in project activities, albeit to differing degrees. There is evidence that this was identified as a key lesson by SINPA Partners in the early phases of the program. At most community sites visited during the evaluation, the pastor was present in focus group discussions. This was particularly important with respect to gender, as messages about the roles of men and women that are promoted by the church in communities have a significant impact on the attitudes and behaviours in a community towards women.

"We know our place from the Scriptures. We are not trying to put ourselves above our husbands because that would be against the Bible." Female savings club member - Folofofou discussion group.

The evaluation team observed that church attitudes to gender varied widely between denominations and even between individual church representatives based in communities.

“We are all created in God’s image – men and women. We are all equal. We all have a role to play.” - Male Pastor - Gagalu focus group

The degree to which a church was supportive of an NGO project had a strong bearing on the ability to promote women’s participation. For example, the team observed one community where the church had been so accommodating of the NGO’s project that weekly prayer services were adapted to allow a specific time slot to discuss gender issues. In contrast, the team met a women-led savings club that was struggling to find a physical space to come together to sustain their savings activities. This was in a community that had the benefit of a large women’s fellowship hall. However, without church sanction, it was not considered an appropriate venue for the women to meet to discuss their savings club business.

- Whole-of-Community Engagement

During field visits, it became clear that the process by which NGOs negotiated entry into communities and garnered support for their projects was vital to achieving positive outcomes. Where NGOs or their staff had initially consulted with all the various membership groups in the community to discuss their objectives and consider appropriate strategies, the project produced stronger results. This was true, even where the project specifically targeted a discrete group such as women. A failure to consult widely at the beginning of the life cycle of a project often led to a lack of widespread participation and crucially for a project focussing on gender – an absence of male support for female participation.

Challenges

The evaluation also identified several areas where SINPA partner NGOs could have refined their approaches to achieve stronger outcomes for women. These are summarised below:

- Influence on Church

The Mid Term Review had encouraged SINPA to be more strategic in the engagement of women and identified the churches as a potential strategic partner for SINPA. While there was good evidence that NGOs had engaged church leaders at the community level, there was not evidence that NGOs had sought to engage the church as a strategic partner. In the context of wide recognition of the influence of the church on social attitudes in the Solomon Islands, this is regarded as a missed opportunity. As a number of NGO staff acknowledged, if an NGO brings a gender equality message into the community, it is likely to be viewed as a foreign concept as an attempt to erode “our way of life”, whereas messages from the pulpit are widely accepted and adopted. There was some reticence from some of the ‘secular’ NGO partners to engage with church, but this is a blind approach to recognising of the

Church as one of the most influential agents for change in the Solomon Islands. It seems imperative that any organisation wishing to promote social change, should be examining opportunities to partner with the church. The evaluation team became aware of other work in the Solomon Islands on gender by the Solomon Islands Christian Association - an ecumenical Christian non-governmental organization, and the Pacific Council of Churches, and it appears to have been a missed opportunity for SINPA partners not to have engaged in this work.

- Young Women

The evaluation team found that SINPA Partner NGO's had mixed success in engaging young women as opposed to more mature women. In terms of power relations in communities, young women who are yet to become wives or mothers are usually the least influential and at times the least visible. There were examples of young women who demonstrated real gains in personal confidence, who were obviously proud of their new found skills and had gained the respect and support of their elders as a result of engaging in NGO projects. However, in other communities young women remained invisible, were not engaged in the projects and still viewed with scepticism by older women and community leaders. The reasons for these patchy results is not immediately obvious, although the team did note examples of strong mentor type relationships between young women in communities and vibrant, female project officers. The team also noted that female officers working in community projects were in the minority. In any event, it seems evident that specific strategies are required to engage young women in projects designed to improve livelihood, health and wellbeing.

- Complexities of Gender

The evaluation team observed that while SINPA partner staff demonstrated a sound understanding of the barriers to women's participation, there was a more limited understanding of the needs and priorities facing women and how projects might address these. For example, despite the prevalence of domestic violence in the Solomons, this issue was not highlighted by any of the SINPA projects outside the STAV project. There would have been value in SINPA partners undertaking more formal, systemic analysis of gender to help deepen their understanding of gender and inform their program approaches.

- Gender Tools

It is a broader finding of this evaluation that resources and tools developed over the life of the SINPA partnership were widely shared between the partners themselves but are inaccessible to the development community at large. This was also found to be true of gender related resources. The NGO's involved in SINPA have built a large body of wisdom that is country specific and effective. Whilst individual staff and community members are likely to retain this knowledge and utilise it for beneficial results, it would be a lost opportunity if it is not disseminated further.

Overall

Overall, the evaluation team was impressed with SINPA's focus on outcomes for women. There is good evidence of immediate benefits for women in terms of increasing their livelihood and wellbeing. Investments in practical training increasing women's skills and providing opportunities for women of all educational levels to demonstrate their leadership and decision making abilities do drive attitudinal change. Obviously, changes in attitude and behaviour are incremental and it will take time before large scale difference is noticed. The evaluation team was of the view, however, that some SINPA initiatives, if able to be sustained over a long period of time, have the potential to realise this change. The women led savings clubs are the best example of this potential.

3.4 Learning for Future Programming

The evaluation team identified a number of themes that may be relevant to further analysis and consideration in future programs. These are drawn from the findings outlined in the body of this report and the broader observations and experience of the evaluation team members.

Budgeting, Monitoring and Reporting

The SINPA Program was delivered by five different NGOs, working across seven provinces and 170 communities in total. Although investments were made after the Mid-Term Review in developing a common results based framework, the evaluation team found that the quality of data presented in individual and partnership level reports did not provide a comprehensive and complete overview of the depth and reach of the SINPA Program. In addition, the administrative load on DFAT was significant, as it was managing 5 projects as well as the Partnership.

If similar approaches are considered in the future, there would be value in considering investment in a cloud based project management information system. This would ensure greater consistency of reporting, track project change accountably, track risk management, and better document results against plans. It would enable aggregated reporting at a program level in a more structured way than the partnership achieved. Considering the total value of the program (\$22.6 million), modest investments in a project management system may have yielded efficiency benefits for DFAT and better quality reporting. Any cloud based management system would obviously need to take into account an assessment of the reliability and cost of using the internet.

As an NGO program, SINPA would also have benefited from early guidelines on budget allocations. Other NGO programs have capped the allocation of expenditure to NGO overheads and project management costs, but this was not applied to SINPA. Clear guidelines on budget categories would have increased transparency to DFAT and between the SINPA Partners. The final evaluation found that allocations to NGO

overheads was not transparently reported in financial reports among all SINPA partners and would have benefited from early attention.

NGO Partnership Approaches

The SINPA Partnership demonstrated that there are significant benefits to be gained from NGOs working together to share expertise, learn from the experience of others, and build professional networks. These benefits were realised in documented learning, effective programs and strengthened capacity of the 5 NGOs participating in SINPA.

The most significant benefit identified by partners and observed by the team, was a conscious, formal practice to reflect on effectiveness. There was strong evidence that reflective practice within the partnership had deepened project learning and led to adapted project approaches that ultimately enhanced effectiveness. The practice of regular reflection also strengthened relationships and created a platform for improved cooperation and collaboration.

The SINPA evaluation also found that there were additional potential benefits from a partnership approach that were not realised under the SINPA Partnership. In particular, the SINPA Partnership did not formally engage local civil society in coordination or learning activities, which is considered essential to longer term capacity to respond to local development challenges. Also, the SINPA Partnership would have benefited from a more strategic approach in which it engaged with Government, created linkages with local civil society, and undertook program level research in areas directly linked to program effectiveness.

The allocation of resources to a coordinating Secretariat is considered essential to facilitating an effective partnership, but its effectiveness would potentially have been enhanced if there had been key 'partnership' outcomes expected of each SINPA Partner, attached to financial incentives. While SINPA Partners contributed to a vibrant learning exchange, the partnership lacked investments from SINPA Partners in more strategic outcomes.

Strengths Based Approach

The SINPA Partnership undertook a 'Strength-Based-Approach' (SBA) - an approach that focuses on a community's strengths, capacities and assets. It seeks to assist community members to recognise their collective strengths, pool their assets, and work together towards the common good to bring about permanent, sustainable development.

The extent to which SINPA organisations applied the SBA differed, as did its results. The evaluation team made five observations that probably warrant further research before being conclusively applied to future programs.

The first of these is that where organisations took a more 'purist' approach to SBA, those communities were more inclined to express confidence in their capacity to sustain project activities and tackle other community needs independently. This meant that where projects only provided material support in response to communities having saved their own funds and identified their own priorities, communities demonstrated more confidence and resilience than communities who were provided material support to kick start a new activity. Evidence from the SINPA program found that where communities had 'skin in the game' through savings, stewardship of resources was higher, community commitment was evident, and activities were more likely to succeed.

The second of these is that the communities who tended to embrace the SBA approach best were those that experienced 'quick gains' in the form of successful projects that yielded obvious community benefits and could be sustained. This suggests that NGOs need to provide technical support to ensure that the 'collective strengths and assets' of communities are used effectively to demonstrate community led success.

The third of these is that existing dynamics of a community have a strong bearing on their ability to 'pool their assets' and 'work towards the common good'. It is important to recognize that the term 'community' does not indicate that there is cohesion among its members. There was evidence of the SBA approach being very successful in communities where existing cohesion was strong, and less unlikely to achieve sustainable outcomes in communities where the community was more diverse. This suggests that the SBA approach needs to acknowledge and take into account existing community dynamics.

A fourth observation may challenge one of the principles of the strengths based approach. The team observed that while individuals in communities initially express strong interest in community level activities, they are also interested in personal gain. Where personal interest and community interests can be aligned, the individual is more likely to maintain interest and involvement. The personal gain does not need to be financial, but does need to address a personal priority. For example, in one community a local woman was committed to running the community store because as a single mother, this role brought her respect from the community. Similarly, a young man who was president of a youth committee was committed to continuing his role because it afforded him recognition in the community as a leader. Youth from another communities were motivated to look after community livestock because they had an expectation of being able to receive one of the offspring. Success was noted in another community who had formed a 'cooperative store', where the profits of the store were shared between a community account and individual shareholders. In contrast, community projects where there was reliance on ongoing voluntary efforts for community benefit tended to struggle and rely on individual champions.

A fifth observation also challenges the SBA principle that community initiatives should be community driven. The evaluation found that communities tended to

develop livelihood ideas based on their skills and experience, but these ideas were not always viable. Communities did not necessarily have sufficient knowledge or experience to make an assessment of available markets, potential profitability, or an analysis of economic opportunities. This meant that there were plenty of examples where communities had prioritised and received support for livelihood activities that had either failed or would be difficult to sustain. It was the evaluation team's observation that this undermines the community's confidence and belief in its own capacity to address local development needs. The implication of this observation is that NGOs need to provide the right mix of support to equip communities to make sound assessments of the viability of new initiatives.

Addressing Power Dynamics

There was mixed evidence of NGOs identifying power imbalances in communities and designing strategies to ensure that those who have least power (such as women, youth, and young women) have opportunities to engage and participate.

The evaluation team noted five successful strategies that tackled power dynamics. The first of these was recognition that in the context of the Solomon Islands, it is imperative to consult and engage with the whole community, in order for the target group to receive support from key parts of the community that have power. This means that parents need to be consulted in order to gain support for youth focused projects, and menfolk and church need to be consulted and engaged in order to achieve support for women focused projects.

The second of these was designing initiatives that formalized opportunities for the target group. For example, women-led savings groups only allowed women to be members, which meant that women also formed the governance structure for those savings clubs, thus building capacity and confidence among women. Strict rules exist to prevent men's involvement in decision-making processes within savings groups although they are encouraged to participate in advisory roles. Another approach undertaken in youth committees promoted women undertaking governance roles in mixed gender groups, promoting the voice of young women as equal and not separate to that of young men. Similarly, in one of the youth projects, the community had insisted on youth holding 'deputy' positions in governance committees, thereby promoting mentoring of youth by the elders in the community. All the projects that established committees required that there be gender and age group specific positions. However, the strongest examples were ones that encouraged those who are traditionally powerless to have key roles. Where these formalized opportunities were not created, leadership positions would be more likely to continue to be filled by those who already had power in the community. It was observed that SINPA projects did not do particularly well at engaging young women. Specific strategies are likely to be needed to engage young women in project activities, and address intergenerational power dynamics that limit their engagement.

The third strategy that shifted power dynamics in communities was support for activities that created community benefits. When others in the community could observe the benefits of women led or youth led activities to families and communities, they developed new attitudes towards those target groups, thus shifting the power dynamics within the community. There was good evidence of changed views among elders of the role and capacity of youth, for example, where they had built community halls or initiated a community income generating project. This had led to youth then participating in other community level discussions, decisions and leadership roles. Similarly, where women had successfully saved income and demonstrated their ability to manage family cash flow, men had become increasingly open to women's engagement in formal positions at the community level.

The fourth strategy, very closely linked to the third, was addressing women's and youth's marginalisation through economic empowerment – in other words, creating income opportunities for women and youth. This supports the premise that economic empowerment, and the autonomy that this entails, contributes to wider engagement and social empowerment. Where women and youth were supported to engage in economic activity, there was good evidence of this premise being realized.

Finally, a fifth successful strategy was the use of community supported activities as a platform to raise awareness of and tackle key social issues such as community hierarchies that limit the engagement of women and youth; and cultural practices, traditions and conservative religious interpretations of women's role and status. The evaluation team found that NGO's were most effective in delivering community awareness messages when they used an activity that met an immediate priority for local communities as their platform. This prompts the need for entry level activities to be interesting and relevant to communities, even if they don't present an immediate linkage to broader social issues. For example, creating sustained interest in communities in natural resource management is more likely where communities can anticipate the benefits that they, their families, and communities will experience from managing their natural resources sustainably. Similarly, engaging communities in gender awareness training is more successful when integrated in a project that directly benefits whole communities. Stand alone awareness raising activities were not found to be as successful as when they were integrated into activities prioritised by communities.

Local Governance and Participation

The evaluation team frequently heard that there is almost no presence of formal government or outreach to communities in remote areas. The link between communities and the provincial government is notionally filled by provincial assembly members but this has become increasingly politicized. Many communities told the evaluation team that the SINPA project was the first project or form of support that their community had ever received, and they knew that this support had come from the Australian Government.

Within this vacuum, the evaluation team found that the community development projects within SINPA provided rural Solomon Islanders with important opportunities to participate in local governance. All of the SINPA projects provided training in leadership, governance, action planning and decision making for local governance. They helped communities establish fit-for-purpose systems to accountably manage community assets and general purpose income. Although not tested or assessed in this evaluation, the commitment of community members to local governance processes and accountabilities that had been fostered under SINPA was evident through focus group discussions. This provides a good platform for accountable leadership practices and drives local demand for good and better governance – both of which are foundational for sustainable and inclusive growth in the Solomon Islands.

These investments in local governance would have been further strengthened by also building the capacity of local NGOs and creating stronger linkages with provincial level government.

Livelihoods Approaches

The focus on livelihoods under SINPA was undertaken through a community based approach, where investments were made to support subsistence and small-scale economic activities. This focus was highly relevant to improving the wellbeing of Solomon Island communities, who are largely remote from urban centres, markets, services and infrastructure.

The evaluation team found that this focus was particularly relevant to engagement of youth. In most communities visited during the evaluation's field work, community elders highlighted the importance of providing youth with new skills, engaging youth in community life, and connecting them with economic opportunity. Youth that participated in focus group discussions were similarly enthusiastic and hungry to learn skills and access opportunities. All communities in which youth had been targeted identified that project activities had led to a noticeable reduction in anti-social and risky youth behaviours. There was a strong desire expressed by youth to earn cash incomes, but frustration at the lack of opportunities. In the absence of employment opportunities for youth, sustained engagement of youth at the community level will be critical for the continuation of peace and stability in the Solomon Islands.

Investment in skills training for livelihoods improvements at the community level was also noted as highly relevant, as there are few opportunities for communities to access any type of training or other forms of local level community support. There was good evidence that even small scale training had led to improved confidence and self esteem, increased income, improved capacity to address individual and family needs, and strengthened resilience.

The evaluation team was conscious that cash income and subsistence agriculture both contribute to sustainable livelihoods and often complement each other.

However, evaluation of SINPA identified that efforts to increase cash income is often determined by circumstances beyond a community's control. For example, remote communities in the Solomon Islands cannot easily depend on inputs that need to be sourced from urban centres as the reliability of these inputs is often challenging. Similarly, communities found that input costs and freight costs are high and if not managed carefully can quickly exceed the sale value of a product.

The more remote communities appeared to experience most success with improving their food gardens as a subsistence activity, with the added benefit of its produce generating cash income. Investments in livestock, handicrafts, and entrepreneurial activity such as carpentry sometimes yielded results, but were very dependent on input costs, access to markets, and local demand.

This indicates that effectiveness of investment in livelihoods intended to generate cash income requires assessment of available markets, potential profitability, or an analysis of economic opportunities in new markets. This requires expertise in micro-enterprise business development.

APPENDIX A: TERMS OF REFERENCE

Evaluation of the Solomon Islands NGO Partnership Agreement

Background

- *Strongim lumi Togeta* is a A\$22.6 million program that supports Solomon Islanders, in particular women and young people, to improve their own health, wellbeing and livelihoods. The program has operated across seven Solomon Islands provinces directly benefiting almost 19 000 people, about 11 per cent of the rural population of Solomon Islands. Of the direct beneficiaries, 55 per cent (10 378) are women. *Strongim lumi Togeta* is commonly referred to as SINPA, referring to the Solomon Islands NGO Partnership Agreements, under which each NGO is contracted.
- SINPA is a partnership between DFAT and five NGOs each running their own separate programs. These NGOs come together as partners to achieve shared whole-of-partnership outcomes. The focus of SINPA as a whole is around learning, sharing and becoming stronger organisations.
- The majority of SINPA programs focus on improving a range of factors that contribute to a person's well being. These include the quality of community governance, food security, and income generation.
- SINPA was initially planned as a five year program. Towards the end of the program it was agreed that SINPA would be extended for an additional 18 months. As a result of budget cuts to the Australian Government this phase was undertaken with reduced budgets and the decision was made to cease partnership priorities and functions early.

SINPA's approach

- SINPA prioritises community-driven development. It does so with a focus on women and young people. Partners work with women or youth inside communities who decide on their development priorities. SINPA partners assist these groups to leverage their own resources to address their priorities. Support is provided through training in leadership and technical skills; assistance to set up governance, financing, advocacy and policy engagement systems; and, supplies to build social infrastructure.
- The individual programs under the SINPA banner include:
 - 1 ADRA and Save the Children support young people develop and complete their own development projects;
 - 2 IWDA through Live and Learn, supports women to set up savings groups who plan, fundraise, and invest funds in projects of familial and communal benefits. IWDA's program also involves setting up natural resource management groups to manage a community's natural resources.
 - 3 APHEDA, supports communities to run Community Learning Centres with

training which focus on community priorities.

- 4 Oxfam, is focused on reducing violence against women including core-funding to the Solomon Islands Family Support Centre

Mid term evaluation

- The findings of the SINPA midterm evaluation were quite critical of the SINPA program. Following on from the evaluation DFAT decided to continue with the program, however, significant work was undertaken to reform the program and learn from the recommendations of the evaluation. Following on from these changes the end point for many of the programs under SINPA is significantly different from how they were designed. This needs to be taken into consideration during this final evaluation.

Evaluation Objectives

- The evaluation of the SINPA evaluation will look focus on assessing three key themes, gender, livelihoods and project delivery in remote areas; with these themes in mind it will assess;
 1. **The overall value of partnership**, what benefits were obtained through NGOs working together, what were the challenges and was investment in partnership worthwhile and deliver value for the investment; and
 2. Undertake a rapid assessment on the success of each **individual program** under SINPA. Considering if the program successfully delivered its program outcomes efficiently, effectively and sustainably, and investment value for money when considering program outcomes and program aims.
 3. Gender – identify key lessons, issues, challenges and strategies to best practice approaches for gender inclusive outcomes and women’s economic empowerment.

Evaluation design

- DFAT will contract one overseas (lead) and one Solomon Island based consultant to evaluate the SINPA partnership and programs. The lead evaluator will undertake a review of SINPA documentation and from this design the SINPA evaluation. The evaluation is to include visits to project communities from each of the SINPA partners.

Reporting

- At the conclusion of the evaluation, the team will produce the following reports:
 1. Present preliminary findings to DFAT and SINPA Partners through a two page aide-mémoire and short presentation on exit.
 2. The first draft of the evaluation report should be submitted to the relevant DFAT Counsellor at Honiara Post, for comments approximately two weeks after the end of the in-country visit. The evaluation report should be a clear and concise summary of the evaluation findings, implications and recommendations. Annexes should be limited to those that are essential for explaining the text.

- The final evaluation report should be submitted to DFAT within 14 days of receiving final comments from DFAT.

Roles and responsibilities

- The Evaluation Team will comprise three members: An evaluation specialist Team Leader; a Solomon Islands evaluation specialist and a representative from DFAT.
- Lead Evaluator (team leader) - will lead the evaluation process, including participating in the initial briefing, assigning tasks and responsibilities to the other team members, and presenting evaluation findings. The Team Leader will also bear primary responsibility for delivering the following outputs, and will marshal the expertise of the other team members to those ends:
 - develop the overall approach and methodology for the evaluation;
 - manage and direct the Evaluation Team;
 - represent the Evaluation Team and lead the Evaluation Team's consultations;
 - manage, compile and edit inputs from other Evaluation Team members, ensuring high quality of all reporting outputs;
 - produce the Evaluation Report.
- Second Evaluator - Under direction of the Team Leader, the Solomon Islands Evaluator will be responsible for providing advice, written inputs and other assistance to the team regarding:
 - the meaning of culturally-nuanced messages and insights conveyed during the in-country interviews;
 - the policies, priorities and interests of the new Solomon Islands Government, and their implications for the evaluation; and
 - the wider social, political and cultural context of the Solomon Islands, and their implications for the evaluation.
- DFAT Officer - Under direction of the Team Leader, the DFAT Officer will be responsible for providing advice, written inputs and other assistance to the team regarding
 - Broader policy advice and inputs on the direction of the Australian Government, and priorities.
- NGOs – In cooperation with Honiara Post and on request of the Evaluator NGOs will;
 - Provide relevant documentation relating to their SINPA activities.
 - Make themselves available for interview with the evaluation team.
 - Arrange for the evaluation team to meet with communities.

APPENDIX B: STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Focus Group Discussions

1. Egolo, Rendova island – 2 x Women’s Savings Clubs (TTfT)
2. Dunde, Munda – Women’s group and CLC members (SKILLS)
3. Pearo, Kolobangara - Women’s Savings Club and Marine Protection Committee (TTfT)
4. Urumaghe, Vella island - CLC members (SKILLS)
5. Varese, Vella Island – YOPP Committee and community members (YOPP)
6. VoriVori Island - YOPP Committee and community members (YOPP)
7. Tamboko – community members (STAV)
8. Matanikau - community members (STAV)
9. Koli GPPOL 1 - YOPP Committee and community members (YOPP)
10. Sali GPPOL 1 – Youth committee and community members (YELP)
11. Olomburi, Foulofo - Women’s Savings Club (TTfT)
12. Manawai, Makasu- Women’s Savings Club and community members (TTfT)
13. Gagalu - Youth committee and community members (YELP)
14. Hadagege - Youth committee and community members (YELP)
15. Rakao - Youth committee and community members (YELP)
16. Family Support Centre staff (STAV)

Focused Workshop Participants

1. ADRA – in-country staff
2. OXFAM - in-country staff
3. APHEDA - in-country staff + Australian project manager
4. SCA - in-country staff
5. LLSI/IWDA - in-country staff

Key Informant Interviews

1. DSE secretary
2. ADRA – in-country staff + Australian project manager
3. OXFAM - in-country staff
4. APHEDA - in-country staff
5. SCA - in-country staff
6. LLSI/IWDA - in-country staff + Australian project manager
7. DFAT First Secretary
8. DFAT Program Manager
9. DFAT Program Officer

APPENDIX C: EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Evaluation Focus Areas as per TOR	Key evaluation questions	Sub Questions	Data source and method (to maximise breadth of perspectives and triangulation)
1. The SINPA partnership model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What was the overall value of the structured partnership model? 	<p>1.1.1 What did the structured partnership model (as distinct from the individual NGO programs) contribute to the 4 SINPA outcome areas?</p> <p><i>NB: this will include reflection on the extent to which ongoing coordination and sharing amongst local civil society organisations is likely in the post SINPA environment?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Questionnaire completed by NGOs - SINPA Annual Reports - KII with NGO and local partner staff - KII with DFAT staff - KII with select SI civil society and SI Government (SIG) stakeholders - Facilitated discussion with NGOs and DFAT at opening evaluation workshop
		<p>1.1.2 What other benefits, if any, were gained from NGOs working together in a structured partnership model?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Questionnaire completed by NGOs - KII with NGO and local partner staff - KII with DFAT staff - Facilitated discussion with NGOs and DFAT at opening evaluation workshop
		<p>1.1.3 What were the challenges of the structured partnership model?</p> <p><i>NB: this will include reflecting on the</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Questionnaire completed by NGOs - SINPA Annual Reports - KII with NGO and local partner staff

		<i>closure of the Secretariat</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – KII with DFAT staff – Facilitated discussion with NGOs and DFAT at opening evaluation workshop
		<p>1.1.4 What resources were invested into the structured partnership model structure?</p> <p><i>NB: the findings for this question will be analysed against the benefits gained from the partnership model and respond to VfM</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – DFAT to provide dollar figure from expenditure reports – Questionnaire completed by NGOs - NGOs to provide estimate of people time and financial resources invested expressed as a dollar figures
2. Individual SINPA programs	2.1 Efficiency: Did each individual SINPA program deliver its outcomes efficiently?	2.1.1 Were activities and outputs completed on schedule and within budget?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Questionnaire completed by NGOs – NGOs Annual Reports – KII with NGO and local partner staff including Honiara based finance and program management staff and field staff
		2.1.2 What measures were taken during planning and implementation to ensure that resources were efficiently used?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Questionnaire completed by NGOs – KII with NGO and local partner staff including Honiara based program management staff and field staff – Facilitated discussion with NGOs at opening evaluation

			workshop
		2.1.3 To what extent did responsive changes made during implementation improve efficiency?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Questionnaire completed by NGOs - KII with NGO and local partner staff including Honiara based program management staff and field staff - Facilitated discussion with NGOs at opening evaluation workshop - FGD with target community members
		2.1.4 What were the specific challenges or advantages of delivering programs in remote areas with regards to efficiency?’	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Questionnaire completed by NGOs - KII with NGO and local partner staff including Honiara based program management staff and field staff - Facilitated discussion with NGOs at opening evaluation workshop
		2.1.5 What analysis can be undertaken of each NGO program’s costs relative to its results?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Questionnaire completed by NGOs - KII with NGO and local partner staff including Honiara based program management staff and field staff - Facilitated discussion with NGOs at opening evaluation workshop
	2.2 Effectiveness:	2.2.1 To what extent	- Questionnaire

	<p>Did each individual SINPA program achieve its outcomes and objectives effectively?</p>	<p>did each NGO program achieve its stated outcomes and objectives?</p>	<p>completed by NGOs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NGOs Annual Reports - SINPA Annual Reports - KII with NGO and local partner staff including Honiara based program management staff and field staff - KII with select SI Government (SIG) stakeholders - FGD with target community members
		<p>2.2.2 To what extent did each NGO program contribute to improving the health, wellbeing and livelihoods of women and youth?</p> <p><i>NB: this question will take into account the extent to which any improvements were the result of each program and to what extent they may have been due to synergies with, or independent of extraneous factors.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Questionnaire completed by NGOs - NGOs Annual Reports - SINPA mid-term evaluation - NGO Final Evaluation Reports, where available - KII with NGO and local partner staff including Honiara based program management staff and field staff - FGD with target community members
		<p>2.2.3 To what extent did responsive changes made during implementation improve effectiveness?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Questionnaire completed by NGOs - KII with NGO and local partner staff including Honiara based program management staff and field staff - Facilitated

			<p>discussion with NGOs at opening evaluation workshop</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - FGD with target community members
	<p>2.3 Sustainability: To what extent have the outcomes of the SINPA programs contributed to lasting change?</p>	<p>2.3.1 To what extent were local stakeholders active participants in the planning, implementation and review of each NGO program?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Questionnaire completed by NGOs - KII with NGO and local partner staff including Honiara based program management staff and field staff - Facilitated discussion with NGOs at opening evaluation workshop - FGD with target community members
		<p>2.3.2 To what extent were program interventions integrated in the local institutional and cultural context?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Questionnaire completed by NGOs - KII with NGO and local partner staff including Honiara based program and management staff and field staff - KII with select SI Government (SIG) stakeholders - Facilitated discussion with NGOs at opening evaluation workshop - FGD with target community members

		2.3.3 Does each NGO program have actionable transition, phase out or exit strategies?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Questionnaire completed by NGOs – KII with NGO and local partner staff including Honiara based program and management staff and field staff (NB: take care not to raise expectations of ongoing support) – FGD with target community members
		2.3.4 Noting that the SINPA program funding is due to finish in January 2016, do local partners have the institutional and financial capacity to maintain the benefits from the program when SINPA finishes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Questionnaire completed by NGOs – KII with NGO and local partner staff including Honiara based program and management staff and field staff (NB: take care not to raise expectations of ongoing support) – Facilitated discussion with NGOs at opening evaluation workshop
3. Approaches to gender inclusivity	3. How did SINPA programs seek to promote gender inclusive practice?	<p>3.1 What approaches were used to analyse the barriers in communities to gender inclusivity?</p> <p><i>NB: Gender inclusivity should be discussed and defined by the group at the Evaluation Opening Workshop.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – KII with NGO and local partner staff including Honiara based program and management staff and field staff – Facilitated discussion with NGOs at opening evaluation workshop

			<p>including whether analysis of barriers was successful or not</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - FGD with target community members
		<p>3.2 What strategies successfully led to gender inclusive outcomes?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - KII with NGO and local partner staff including Honiara based program and management staff and field staff - Facilitated discussion with NGOs at opening evaluation workshop - FGD with target community members
		<p>3.3 What strategies successfully led to better economic outcomes for women and will these be sustained in the longer term?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - KII with NGO and local partner staff including Honiara based program and management staff and field staff - Facilitated discussion with NGOs at opening evaluation workshop - FGD with target community members
		<p>3.4 What other aspects of women’s well-being were impacted, and what was the impact? (positive or negative)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - KII with NGO and local partner staff including Honiara based program and management staff and field staff - Facilitated discussion with NGOs at opening evaluation workshop

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - FGD with target community members
		<p>3.5 What challenges or advantages did SINPA partners experience in implementing the SINPA Gender Standards?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - KII with NGO and local partner staff including Honiara based program and management staff and field staff - Facilitated discussion with NGOs at opening evaluation workshop

APPENDIX D: PROJECT ANALYSIS

Appendix D consists of a summary report for each of the Solomon Islands NGO Partnership Agreement (SINPA) projects. These reports are intended to be read in conjunction with the overall SINPA Final Evaluation Report.

SINPA FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

PROJECT ANALYSIS FOR

Oxfam: Standing Together Against Violence (STAV) Program

Executive Summary

SINPA was a A\$22.6 million program that aimed to support Solomon Islanders, in particular women and young people, to improve their own health, wellbeing and livelihoods. It began in 2009 and comprised of five non-government organisations (NGOs) working in partnership with each other, local Solomon Islands NGOs and their donor, the Australian Government, to identify, test and learn from contextually appropriate development models.

An end-of-program evaluation, commissioned by the Australian Government, was undertaken in November 2015. This evaluation found that SINPA achieved improvements in terms of strengthened community cohesion and governance, improved rural livelihoods and women's empowerment that benefited directly targeted communities and contributed to Australia's aid priorities in the Solomon Islands of stability, economic growth and human development.

It was evident to the evaluation team that the 'partnership' between NGOs and the Australian Government increased the overall effectiveness of SINPA NGOs, their staff, and their programs. This was achieved through ongoing reflective practice, documenting learnings, peer review, training, deepening relationships between NGOs, and sharing resources.

A key strength of SINPA was its integration of gender considerations within organisations and projects. Through collaboration, the SINPA Partners adopted a partnership wide commitment to promoting gender equality in projects, improving organisational practices relating to gender equality, and working towards the equal and meaningful participation of women and girls in decision-making processes that affect their lives. This is a stand-out example of what 'partnership' between NGOs can achieve and the way that partners can learn from one another.

Another asset of SINPA was its commitment to using the Strength-Based Approach. Although partners found it challenging to overcome local community expectations of hand-outs, the strengths based approach undertaken by partners was an effective approach to building capacity and resilience in communities and key to overall sustainability. Projects which explicitly identified and worked with the strengths of a community demonstrated good success in achieving positive and sustainable outcomes where communities were empowered, resourced and confident to independently sustain project benefits.

While all projects under SINPA demonstrated successful outcomes, the quality of reporting across the full life of the SINPA program compromised the ability of partners to aggregate and report program success.

The evaluation found that SINPA Partners had taken a thoughtful approach to managing the high cost context of working in remote community based settings. Field staff demonstrated remarkable tenacity in navigating logistical, communication and accountability challenges and SINPA Partners developed sensible national and provincial level staffing structures that sought to minimise costs and maximize accountability.

Despite the many positive aspects of the partnership, the evaluation team found the partnership would have been more effective if it had taken a more disciplined and strategic approach to research, learning platforms, and structured engagement with key actors in the Solomon Islands, including local civil society and government.

Evaluation Scope and Methodology

The DFAT SINPA Program Evaluation included an assessment of the overall value of the partnership; approaches to gender; and a rapid assessment of each of the SINPA Partner projects. The full report is the SINPA Final Evaluation Report.

This Annex is a report of the STAV project that was implemented by Oxfam. The assessment of each of the SINPA projects considered three areas:

EFFICIENCY: Did the project deliver its outcomes efficiently?

EFFECTIVENESS: Did the SINPA project achieve its outcomes and objectives effectively?

SUSTAINABILITY: To what extent have the outcomes of the SINPA project contributed to lasting change?

The DFAT Evaluation Team undertook a desk review that included Oxfam reports; learning papers prepared by Oxfam; the DFAT Mid-Term Review; the 2013 Financial Management Systems and Procedures Assessment; and the final Oxfam evaluation of the STAV Project. As part of the DFAT Evaluation, Oxfam provided a self assessment of its own efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability in the form of a questionnaire, which has informed the findings of the evaluation team. This was supplemented by field work in the Solomon Islands that included attendance at two workshops by in-country Oxfam staff; a semi-structured discussion with local partner Family Support Centre; focus group discussions at two STAV community sites; and a semi structured discussion with two in-country local Oxfam staff.

Project description

Oxfam (Australia) implemented the Standing Together Against Violence (STAV) Program through its Solomon Islands Office. The goal of the STAV Program is that

women and girls are able to contribute to and benefit from development, free from the reality and threat of violence. It was supported by the Australian Government from August 2009 to January 2016.

The program was designed as an action research program, which sought to identify strategies that would most effectively reduce violence against women in the Solomon Islands. There were three key components to the STAV program: an advocacy program that undertook advocacy and public awareness programs to improve awareness of EAW issues and knowledge of responsibilities of policy implementation agencies; support for Family Support Centre to provide counselling, legal advice and mediation services to women victims/survivors of sexual and domestic violence; and a community engagement program that sought to change attitudes and behaviours in relation to gender violence.

Program Outcomes

The STAV program has been implemented using an iterative approach and as such the program outcomes and objectives have changed several times throughout the program. At a program level, the goal of the STAV program was expressed as: 'To ensure that women and girls are able to contribute to and benefit from development, free from the reality and threat of violence'.

The objectives and components within the STAV program changed several times throughout the program as it sought to be agile and responsive to program learnings. Despite various iterations, the outcome statements expressed from Phase 4 onwards reflect well the key areas of focus for the STAV program:

1. Family Support Centre (FSC) provides quality, women-centred, accessible services
2. Referral networks and policy implementation agencies work together and individually to promote and ensure the safety of women
3. Communities understand the impact of VAW on their lives and utilise assistance of agencies as well as their own interventions to keep women safe

EFFICIENCY

Operational Set-Up

The staffing structure for the STAV Project changed several times over the life of the program. During Phase 4, the STAV program was resourced by an FSC Counselling Mentor, FSC Risk and Finance Advisor, STAV Program Manager, Community Engagement Coordinator, Community Development Officer, Advocacy Officer, MEL Coordinator and a Driver. An additional percentage was applied to Oxfam Senior Management Country Office Staff including the Deputy Country Director, Country Director and Finance and Admin Manager.

Total Cost

The overall funding received from DFAT over the six phases of the project was \$AUD\$3,637,872.14. As an indicator of the way costs were allocated, expenditure for Phase 5, representing 1 February 2013 - 30 June 2014, is shown below. These allocations would suggest that Oxfam incurred very high staffing costs in the Solomon Islands, although it is noted that this included a full time expatriate staff member allocated to the STAV project. Given the generally small scale nature of the STAV project and the geographic proximity to Honiara, the quantum of costs in all categories appear high, particularly when compared to other SINPA projects which supported large numbers of communities across the Solomon Islands and incurred much lower staffing and activity costs.

	Ph 5	% Total
<i>In-Australia Personnel and non-personnel</i>	39,139 10,973	3
<i>In- Solomon personnel</i>	559,665	34
<i>In-Solomon non-personnel</i>	205,567	13
<i>In-Solomon Activity Costs</i>	516,500	32
<i>Monitoring and Evaluation</i>	181,229	11
<i>Management fee</i>	121,046	7
Total	1,634,118	

Reported Results

Oxfam reports indicate that the number of clients accessing support from the Family Support Centre gradually increased over the last four phases of the project - 304 'visits' in Phase 3, 338 'visits' in Phase 4, and 520 'women survivors' in Phase 5, and 580 'people' in Phase 6. Assuming that Phase 5 and 6 reports are both referring to 'clients', this suggests that the number of clients accessing FSC services has increased from about 7 clients per week to about 9 clients per week. Without any data to indicate how many times a client might access FSC's services, it is difficult to gauge the true reach and depth of FSC's services. The data provided in Oxfam reports do not provide this information. However other data presented in reports, suggests that FSC's reach may still be fairly limited. For example, during Phase 4, FSC began to host a 24-hour emergency access hotline and this hotline received 228 client calls in Phase 5 – the equivalent of four people per week. In the same phase, only two clients received overnight access to the Safe Haven facility with their children, and an additional four clients and their children used it for day rest while awaiting referral. In the previous phase, three clients accessed the Safe Haven for a short period of time while receiving other referral services. The evaluation team concluded that program reporting did not provide data or analysis that could easily draw conclusions about the extent to which FSC was providing quality, women-centred, accessible services.

Project reports refer to FSC conducting provincial awareness sessions and mobile clinics that included counseling and legal advice during Phases 5 and 6 to extend its reach. They also refer to a Community Educator being appointed in October 2013, with responsibility for dedicated work in communities - disseminating information

about the work of FSC as well as awareness and advocacy work related to EVAW. During Phase Five, FSC completed and aired a total of 23 radio talks on VAW, child abuse and the services offered by the Centre. Again, the reports detail numbers of people who attend awareness raising sessions, but there is no qualitative information or analysis on the value of these sessions.

FSC joined with four other partners who directly support survivors of violence to form a referral network known as “SAFENET”, whose aim is to improve the quality of and access to, services for survivors of violence. FSC is co-chair of the network’s quarterly meetings. A key output of these quarterly meetings was the creation of a standard referral form that is being used by all SAFENET partners when referring clients to other service providers within the network. FSC reports that the referral form has increased the quality of services offered to women survivors of violence through working towards a more systematic approach to service delivery. This is a starting point from which SAFENET can begin to track the services provided to clients within its system, and to identify opportunities for improvement to ensure safe, quality, respectful and timely service provision.

In addition to providing funding for FSC, the STAV Program invested in organizational strengthening activities. This consisted of the use of an Organisational Capacity Assessment Tool to identify priority areas, and related technical advice, training and mentoring. Key areas of investment included support for improved financial management capacity, strengthened governance, and policy development – all of which contributed to strengthened accountability.

The STAV Program also undertook a community based awareness raising project in three communities located in Guadalcanal (Binu, Ngalitaitai and Tamboko). The program provided training for 18 Community Facilitators (CFs) - three females and three males from each of the three participating communities. Together, the STAV team designed, piloted and supported CF’s to facilitate 11 participatory activities designed to stimulate discussion and sharing on a variety of topics related to EVAW.

Oxfam reports that awareness of the negative impacts of violence in general, and especially violence against women, has significantly increased in all three of its target communities, and that communities report significantly reduced levels of violence. In addition to decreases in violence, communities have reported to Oxfam positive changes in gender relations and expanding gender roles, women’s increased involvement in decision-making about finances, and some opportunities for increased women’s leadership. Oxfam undertook baseline and end-of-line surveys but analysis of this data had not yet been undertaken and presented in a report at the time of the evaluation.

The STAV program also worked on various advocacy and networking initiatives to raise awareness and acknowledgment of issues of violence against women and their impact on individuals and communities. A key achievement in this area was STAV’s contribution to the Family Protection Bill, which was officially passed in August 2014. Another reported contribution of the STAV Program was Oxfam’s participation in the

development and drafting of the Shadow CEDAW report for submission to the UN to sit alongside the Solomon Islands Government (SIG) submission in 2014. STAV has also been involved in the International Women’s Day (IWD) Steering Committee, VAW campaigns during the Pacific Arts Festival, organised events to mark the International Day of Non-Violence, and was a leading member of the 16 Days of Activism planning committee. While it is clear that the STAV program was active in various initiatives, it is not clear whether its work was guided by any strategy, or had clear expected outcomes.

Cost Analysis

The nature of information provided in STAV program reports do not clearly identify what inputs were provided by Oxfam, and what outputs and outcomes were achieved in the same period – thereby making it extremely difficult to make any reasonable cost analysis. If Oxfam is able to provide further financial information for all phases of the project, a more comprehensive costs analysis will be made within the limitations of reported results as noted above. As an initial comment, the allocation of \$539,900 in Phase 6 for in-country Oxfam costs appears difficult to justify when compared to activities and results planned for that same period.

Efficiency Measures

A Financial Management Systems and Procedures Assessment was undertaken in July 2013, which concluded that Oxfam Solomon Islands’ financial systems, controls and procedures were in place and considered adequate. Oxfam also provided technical support and mentoring that it provided to its partner, FSC, which led to improved FSC financial accountability and transparency. FSC reported that this has also contributed to their ability to attract and retain other donors such as UN Women and the Solomon Islands Government.

Over the life of the STAV program, reflection processes and planning process were used to ensure lessons were learned and applied to programming for consistent improvement. This led to Oxfam making several changes to program design to respond to learning. This included the shift from the original program model, which was focused solely on women’s groups within communities to a volunteer community facilitator model which was designed to engage the whole community. Staffing structures also changed to employ a gendered pair of community coordinators working with male and female community facilitators to better enable community activities. It is not clear whether these staffing changes reduced costs at any point, but were certainly responsive to improving program effectiveness. In terms of efficient planning and use of resources, Oxfam chose to pilot the community component of the program in three peri-urban communities around Honiara. This meant that staff based in the Honiara office could travel relatively quickly and inexpensively to grouped communities, and communicate relatively easily with community facilitators. Oxfam reported that these communities faced particular challenges in terms of violence because of their location – but were good choices for being able to test the model with an efficient use of resources.

A dedicated driver/logistician was employed which expedited logistical delays and challenges faced by the program. The labour cost was relatively low when weighed against the benefits in meeting time and budget challenges.

Efficiency Challenges

STAV generally faced efficiency challenges in the form of underspends. These underspends were due to different factors at different times, but a key challenge identified by Oxfam was staff retention, which led to long staffing gaps for key positions such as program managers.

Oxfam also found that its progress was slowed by the availability of communities to participate in STAV program activities. Its experience was that communities had more limited space in their lives for a behaviour change program than they may have made for livelihood/income generation activities which have the advantage of being able to be better incorporated into the normal productive activities of communities. This impacted Oxfam's efficiency because additional visits to communities were required to organise logistics and facilitate progress.

Overall Efficiency Analysis

Based on an early analysis of program costs compared to program activities and reported results, the evaluation team has concerns that the STAV program demonstrated a weak approach to efficiency. Its overheads were significant and if applied over the full life of the program, appear difficult to justify when compared to program outcomes. In particular, the in-country Oxfam costs appear high when compared to the activities undertaken and the management and overhead models of other SINPA partners that were managing much larger, more complex, and more geographically spread programs.

EFFECTIVENESS

Objective 1: Family Support Centre (FSC) provides quality, women-centred, accessible services

There is mixed evidence about the effectiveness of Oxfam's role in increasing FSC's organisational capacity to deliver quality services through the STAV project. In 2009, and again in 2012, an Organisational Capacity Assessment (OCA) exercise was conducted with FSC staff to assess progress of FSC capacity development and determine further capacity building priorities. A comparative analysis based on the two OCAs identified that Board governance had improved, that FSC had developed a clear mission statement that reflected the values and purpose of the organization, that partnerships with other services had improved, and that internal financial management controls had been strengthened.

Through discussion with FSC management and staff during the DFAT evaluation, FSC reflected that Oxfam support for improvements in their financial management capacity was the most significant organisational strengthening achievement of the project. However, FSC highlighted other key capacity needs that were identified collaboratively during the STAV program which were not addressed. Significant areas

that undermine FSC's ability to provide quality services include the need for strengthened capacity in counseling services, strategic planning, and funding diversity. As the STAV program comes to an end, FSC does not have a strategic plan and has no ongoing source of funding, threatening the entire viability of the organization.

Oxfam supported FSC with a move to new premises on Tandai Highway and the creation of a new 'Safe Haven' building/shelter on those premises, but at the time of the evaluation, FSC needed to find a new premise again and will need to leave the 'Safe Haven' shelter on the original premises.

In discussion with the evaluation team, FSC reflected that the partnership with Oxfam over the life of the STAV program had been difficult. The evaluation team recognize that there are a number of factors that contributed to this, including weak organizational governance of FSC at various points throughout the six years, which limited FSC's ability to receive Oxfam's technical support. Another key factor was high Oxfam staff turnover, which led to key commitments being made to FSC which were then unfulfilled by new staff. The nature of Oxfam's approach to FSC was viewed at times as dominant and disrespectful and the nature of FSC's approach to Oxfam was viewed at times as disengaged and unresponsive - and this led to fractures in the relationship between the two organisations that were difficult to repair.

Objective 2: Referral networks and policy implementation agencies work together and individually to promote and ensure the safety of women:

FSC had previously coordinated a referral network called "RefNet", which was wound up in the first quarter of Phase Five, when "SAFENET" took over as the coordinating referral body. FSC has taken up the position of co-chair of the network's quarterly meetings and is positive about the potential role that a coordinated referral process will have to improving service delivery to women survivors of violence. FSC highlighted in discussions with the Evaluation Team, however, that the closure of the Refnet that it had previously coordinated was a real loss. This network played a different role to SAFENET as it was a more case based, practitioner network that linked staff from different services. Case managers and service providers used this forum to discuss cases, challenges, and provide peer support. While FSC recognize the value of the new SAFENET Referral Network at an organizational level, it expressed regret that they had been encouraged to wind-up Refnet.

As outlined above, the STAV program also worked on various advocacy and networking initiatives to raise awareness and acknowledgment of issues of violence against women and their impact on individuals and communities. While it is clear that the STAV program was active in various initiatives, including the 16 Days of Activism planning committee, International Women's Day (IWD), and contributions to the Family Protection Bill, which was passed in August 2014, it is difficult to make conclusive comments about the outcomes of this work. It was certainly relevant in

the context of an increased focus on gender in the Solomon Islands at a national level, but did not appear to have strategic objectives or clearly defined outcomes.

Objective 3: Communities understand the impact of VAW on their lives and utilise assistance of agencies as well as their own interventions to keep women safe

The evaluation team undertook focus group discussions in two of the three communities where the STAV program piloted its approach to community led violence reduction. The evaluation team found that participants in focus groups had experienced positive changes in gender relations, especially between husbands and wives. They provided examples that illustrated changes in stereotyped roles of men and women (such as men now being prepared to fetch water from the river, men sweeping the floor and washing clothes at home, and a husband picking up a crying baby). The Ngalitaetae community also reported that there was significantly reduced incidences of violence in their community:

“Before, violence was a daily event in this community. Now, it hardly ever happens. Now, when there is a fight, everyone comes running and pulls the perpetrator away” - female Community Facilitator at Ngalitaitai.

In contrast, the Tamboko community reported that violence had changed to some degree:

“Yes, there is less violence here now, but we still have a problem. You see, we are Melanesian and when we get angry, we can’t control it. It’s in our culture.” - male Community Facilitator at Tamboko.

This same community emphasized that the Oxfam project should have worked with its whole community, which consisted of seven zones, as it is not possible to achieve change if you are only working with a small part of a larger community. They reported that they had told Oxfam this many times, but that Oxfam ‘did not hear us’.

The Tamboko community also emphasized that the STAV program had not helped them address the key triggers of violence, which they identified as access to and management of finances in the home. They argued that the program would have been more effective if it had used income generating projects as a platform to help women and men work together and address gender issues. This finding raises complexities, as it suggests a lack of community understanding of the root causes of violence.

Oxfam reports, however, that there is some evidence of more structural, community-wide changes taking place that reinforces violence prevention in the communities. Both communities visited in the evaluation discussed their plans to implement community by-laws on preventing violence against women. However, both communities acknowledged that this will require further work including legal advice and establishing community structures that could enforce the by-laws. In Ngalitaetae, this work is ongoing and has a reasonable prospect of being finalized in the not too distant future. In Tamboko, this is a process that will take a longer

period, as it requires consultation and agreement with nearby community zones that were not included in the STAV project. During the evaluation, Oxfam shared their view that the content of the first draft of the by-laws in Tamboko raises concerns about their understanding of gender. Oxfam is continuing to facilitate communities' access to legal advice, and is endeavouring to ensure communities have their own independent relationship with the FSC lawyer, so they can follow up independently.

Oxfam has also reported that there is some evidence that changes at the individual and household level are translating to improvements in women's status and leadership opportunities in the wider community. For example – in one community, more women have taken on recognised leadership roles. One woman took the role as Vice-Chair of the School Committee, and three women became active members of the Community Committee, whereas prior to this, there were no females on the Community Committee. Oxfam reported that the women have said that the STAV project has been an encouragement to them to take on these leadership roles as females.

Oxfam also reports that the safety of women and girls in their communities outside the home has also been impacted: participatory hazard mapping exercises identified areas in the community where women and girls felt unsafe. In one area, community members worked together to reduce the risk to women and girls by clearing away bushes and rubbish from an area near the river – and women now feel safe to access their gardens through this route.

Effectiveness Approaches

For each of the SINPA programs, the evaluation team sought to identify approaches that contributed to overall program effectiveness. For the STAV project, these included:

- Whole-of-community approach

The shift within the STAV program from initially taking an explicitly 'women-centred' approach, with a focus on working with women's groups, to engage the whole community, including men and boys, was an important shift to ensure that the project would be accepted and successful.

- Using context appropriate community tools

The community engagement component of the STAV program designed, piloted and implemented a toolkit of reflection and awareness raising activities to assist communities understand gender stereotyping, roles and responsibilities of women and men, and the triggers for violence. Oxfam field staff learned that it was important that topics were not introduced as 'gender' topics, which challenged traditional culture and customs, but were introduced from an equality and protection perspective.

- Engaging church leaders

The STAV reflection and action project in communities recognized the important role that Church leaders play in gender messaging. They sought to ensure that church

leaders were engaged in reflection and awareness raising activities. In the Ngalitaetae community, the local pastor now makes time every Sunday for one of the women leaders to talk about gender.

- *Partnership Approach*

The challenges experienced in Oxfam's partnership with FSC highlight the importance of investing in relationships that address power imbalances and build trust over long periods in the Solomon Islands context. Despite efforts from various Oxfam staff to support FSC, high Oxfam staff turnover, inconsistent approaches to partnership and a perceived lack of responsiveness by both partners led to a fractured relationship.

Effectiveness Challenges

The evaluation team also sought to identify aspects of each project that posed a challenge to program effectiveness, in order to inform broader evaluation findings. For the STAV project, these included:

- *FSC Governance*

One of the challenges Oxfam experienced in working with FSC was that the volunteer Governance Board is comprised of individuals with substantive, high level roles in Government Line Ministries and who are often travelling out of the country. This has meant that the Board had limited time to meet to discuss strategic issues of importance and was not able to fulfill risk oversight responsibilities or take advantage of strategic opportunities. Engaging the FSC Board was still found to be a challenge at the end of the STAV program.

- *By-law process*

One of the positive outcomes of the community engagement component of the STAV program is the community's interest in developing by-laws. This is an initiative that the community has invested in and was not a planned output of the STAV program. However, communities have identified that they need support to finalise and implement by-laws. Oxfam has some concerns about the content of by-laws in one of these communities, and the mechanisms in place for enforcing the by-laws, but does not have scope to address these concerns directly. Oxfam is continuing to facilitate communities' access to legal advice, and is endeavouring to ensure communities have their own independent relationship with the FSC lawyer, so they can follow up independently.

- *Root causes of gender violence*

The DFAT evaluation found that women and men both reported changes in gender stereotyping and some reduction in violence. However, discussions with communities during the evaluation, observations made by Oxfam itself, and the draft program evaluation report suggest that the program has not adequately addressed the root causes of violence (gender inequality and gendered power imbalances) with communities, but rather the 'triggers' of violence (alcohol abuse, financial stress), which means that communities have an inaccurate understanding of the root causes

of violence and how to address them.

- Approaches to gender awareness

The evaluation team was concerned that Oxfam's approach to awareness raising without a platform for other activity limited the likelihood for deeper and sustained attitudinal and behavioural change. This could have addressed some of the 'triggers' of violence perceived by the community (eg, financial stress and limited livelihood options), as well as increased the relevance of the program to the communities, and created forums for women's economic activity and leadership. This may have deepened the likelihood of sustained attitude and behaviour change.

- High Oxfam Staff Turnover

One of the most significant challenges that has deeply impacted on the overall effectiveness of the STAV Program is the high level of staff turnover. During Phase 4, for example, the three critical positions of STAV Program Manager, Counselling Mentor and Community Engagement Coordinator were left unfilled or temporarily filled. Oxfam reported that this meant that delays to implementing the program were inevitable, with the Community Engagement and Advocacy components particularly affected. FSC reflected that they found it difficult to build relationships with so many different staff people, who were sometimes in key roles for very short periods. One of the areas most affected was the counseling mentoring, which had several people appointed but who did not stay.

Overall Effectiveness Analysis

The STAV Program has had mixed success in achieving its outcomes. While it has provided sustained funding to the Family Support Centre and helped the Centre to strengthen in some key management areas, it did not fulfill original expectations and plans and the future for FSC looks unstable at the end of the STAV program. Similarly, while the STAV program made some important early contributions to advancing the advocacy agenda regarding violence against women, it has not maintained an active or strategic role in advocacy.

With regard to its community engagement project, there was good evidence of attitudinal and behavior change. The Oxfam evaluation found that while the program had not effectively addressed the 'root causes' of violence against women, it had taken a culturally appropriate approach, had engaged the whole community effectively, and had effectively mobilised the community to address their self-identified 'triggers' of violence (alcohol abuse, financial stress, parenting stress etc), which has led to a decrease in violence. Oxfam's own evaluation provides further insights into the extent to which the outcomes of each of the components of the STAV have been achieved.

SUSTAINABILITY

Local stakeholder involvement

Oxfam's approach to working with Family Support Centre, an established local service for women and families affected by violence, is an important contribution to building local capacity. The use of the Organisational Capacity Assessment Tool to identify priority areas was undertaken mutually with FSC, although key priorities for FSC beyond financial management and governance improvements were not adequately addressed by the STAV program. Some recommendations from this assessment – for example, pursuing relationships with other donors and pursuing other funding - were the responsibility of the FSC Board, but these have not been implemented.

It is clear that Oxfam sought to engage local stakeholders in its community engagement work, as it identified and trained eighteen community facilitators from the three target communities, to lead community reflection and action planning in their own communities. This was an effective strategy to achieve broad community engagement.

Appropriateness to context

Seeking to address violence against women is highly relevant in the Solomon Island context. Efforts to work through advocacy, through supporting service delivery and through community engagement reflect in theory a well integrated program. In practice, however, the three components were not strategically linked and as a consequence did not benefit from being implemented alongside other components. Phase-out strategies

The communities involved in the STAV program are aware that Oxfam is exiting at the end of 2015. In the lead up to this exit, Oxfam has been working to empower community facilitators to be transformative leaders in their communities after the project ends, through supporting them in 6 weekly training workshops and regular visits; linking communities with government agencies and service providers; and assisting communities to develop community bylaws. Through discussion with communities, however, the evaluation team found that community facilitators were not sure how they would be able to sustain motivation in their own communities, and not confident about how they would be able to finalise the work they had started on by-laws.

Local capacity to sustain

FSC has been heavily reliant on funding from the STAV program for the last six years and does not have sufficient future funding commitments to sustain its operations. Despite Oxfam and FSC having identified the need for strategic planning and funding diversification, no plans have been developed. At the time of the evaluation, the future prospects for FSC looked very uncertain, thus threatening the work that was achieved under the STAV project.

Communities are likely to sustain some of the changes in attitudes towards gender and protecting women, but it is not clear to what extent. For example, there were profound stories of change in husband and wife relationships shared by women in both communities that would suggest that these changes are highly sustainable. Stories of change collected during Oxfam monitoring processes also indicate that significant changes have occurred at at least an individual level.

In contrast, however, there were comments made during the evaluation in one community that suggested that there is still resistance to attitudinal and behavioral change and a limited understanding of the root causes of violence. Oxfam's own observations and the draft program evaluation report echo this finding. At a community level, therefore, public shifts in understanding and behavioural change are considered less sustainable.

The extent to which communities will be able to implement bylaws without further external support is unknown at this stage.

Overall Sustainability Analysis

The likelihood of sustainability of the outcomes of STAV are mixed. The future role of FSC is very much dependent on the strength and engagement of its Board, who are high profile but too busy in practice to deeply engage in the oversight required. The staff of FSC appear motivated, but a funding crisis will undermine staff stability. The gains that have been made in financial management and accountability could easily be lost if FSC loses key staff. Governance and leadership of the new SAFENET could also be at risk if FSC is no longer able to lead the sector. The lack of a strategic plan or a funding strategy has partly led to FSC's current funding crisis.

The extent to which communities are able to sustain change in behaviours towards women is dependent on many factors. While Oxfam has been present to provide support and ongoing training, community facilitators have felt empowered. As Oxfam exits, however, community facilitators shared that it would be hard to sustain their roles as advocates. In addition, there is concern that communities have not developed a strong understanding of the root causes of violence (gender inequality and gendered power imbalances), but rather the 'triggers' of violence (alcohol abuse, financial stress), which means that communities have an inaccurate understanding of the root causes of violence and how to address them. One of the key triggers of violence against women, identified as financial stress by one community, continue to exist and is used as a reason for resisting behavior change.

SINPA FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

PROJECT ANALYSIS FOR

APHEDA: SKILLS Project

Sharing Knowledge, Improving Livelihood, Learning Skills

Executive Summary

SINPA was a A\$22.6 million program that aimed to support Solomon Islanders, in particular women and young people, to improve their own health, wellbeing and livelihoods. It began in 2009 and comprised of five non-government organisations (NGOs) working in partnership with each other, local Solomon Islands NGOs and their donor, the Australian Government, to identify, test and learn from contextually appropriate development models.

An end-of-program evaluation, commissioned by the Australian Government, was undertaken in November 2015. This evaluation found that SINPA achieved improvements in terms of strengthened community cohesion and governance, improved rural livelihoods and women's empowerment that benefited directly targeted communities and contributed to Australia's aid priorities in the Solomon Islands of stability, economic growth and human development.

It was evident to the evaluation team that the 'partnership' between NGOs and the Australian Government increased the overall effectiveness of SINPA NGOs, their staff, and their programs. This was achieved through ongoing reflective practice, documenting learnings, peer review, training, deepening relationships between NGOs, and sharing resources.

A key strength of SINPA was its integration of gender considerations within organisations and projects. Through collaboration, the SINPA Partners adopted a partnership wide commitment to promoting gender equality in projects, improving organisational practices relating to gender equality, and working towards the equal and meaningful participation of women and girls in decision-making processes that affect their lives. This is a stand-out example of what 'partnership' between NGOs can achieve and the way that partners can learn from one another.

Another asset of SINPA was its commitment to using the Strength-Based Approach. Although partners found it challenging to overcome local community expectations of hand-outs, the strengths based approach undertaken by partners was an effective approach to building capacity and resilience in communities and key to overall sustainability. Projects which explicitly identified and worked with the strengths of a community demonstrated good success in achieving positive and sustainable

outcomes where communities were empowered, resourced and confident to independently sustain project benefits.

While all projects under SINPA demonstrated successful outcomes, the quality of reporting across the full life of the SINPA program compromised the ability of partners to aggregate and report program success.

The evaluation found that SINPA Partners had taken a thoughtful approach to managing the high cost context of working in remote community based settings. Field staff demonstrated remarkable tenacity in navigating logistical, communication and accountability challenges and SINPA Partners developed sensible national and provincial level staffing structures that sought to minimise costs and maximize accountability.

Despite the many positive aspects of the partnership, the evaluation team found the partnership would have been more effective if it had taken a more disciplined and strategic approach to research, learning platforms, and structured engagement with key actors in the Solomon Islands, including local civil society and government.

Evaluation Scope and Methodology

The DFAT SINPA Program Evaluation included an assessment of the overall value of the partnership; approaches to gender; and a rapid assessment of each of the SINPA Partner projects. The full report is the SINPA Final Evaluation Report.

This Annex is a report of the SKILLS project that was jointly implemented by Australian People for Health and Education Development Abroad (APHEDA) (Australia) and APHEDA (Solomon Islands). The assessment of each of the SINPA projects considered three areas:

1. **EFFICENCY:** Did the project deliver its outcomes efficiently?
2. **EFFECTIVENESS:** Did the SINPA project achieve its outcomes and objectives effectively?
3. **SUSTAINABILITY:** To what extent have the outcomes of the SINPA project contributed to lasting change?

The DFAT Evaluation Team undertook a desk review that included APHEDA reports, DFAT joint monitoring trip reports, learning papers prepared by APHEDA; the DFAT Mid-Term Review; the 2013 Financial Management Systems and Procedures Assessment; and the final APHEDA evaluation of the SKILLS Project. As part of the DFAT Evaluation, APHEDA provided a self assessment of its own efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability in the form of a questionnaire, which has informed the findings of the evaluation team. This was supplemented by field work in the Solomon Islands that included attendance at two workshops by in-country APHEDA staff; focus group discussions at four SKILLS project Community Learning Centres;

key informant interviews with two Provincial Learning Coordinators, and a semi structured discussion with the local APHEDA project coordinators.

Project description

Australian People for Health and Education Development Abroad (APHEDA) (Australia) worked with APHEDA (Solomon Islands) to undertake the SKILLS (Sharing Knowledge, Improving Livelihood, Learning Skills) Project. The SKILLS project seeks to promote self reliant, healthy, confident, skilled communities with livelihoods that are applicable to their context.

The first phase of this project was undertaken between 2003 and 2008 under the Australian Aid program funded SINCA. The second phase of the program was undertaken under SINPA from August 2009 to January 2016. Under SINPA, the SKILLS project worked with Community Learning Centres (CLCs) in six provinces. CLCs provide informal education at the community level with the aim of improving livelihoods – whether subsistence, income based or a mix of the two. Initially there were 43 CLCs involved, which then increased to 54 centres, but was ultimately reduced to 28 CLCs in 2012 given the challenges involved in supporting a large number of geographically dispersed CLCs.

Program Outcomes

The overarching goal of the project was:

1. Self reliant, healthy, confident, skilled communities with livelihoods (income based, mixed or subsistence, rural or urban) that are applicable to their current situation

The SKILLS project had three planned outcomes:

1. Enhanced capacity of the CLC communities to build on strengths, and facilitate (through their CLCs) community driven responses to health and livelihood needs
2. Enhanced capacity 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
3. Enhanced capacity of CLAN network to act as a civil society voice for community level training

EFFICIENCY

Operational Set-Up

The SKILLS Project was staffed in-country by two project coordinators, a finance coordinator, a CLAN officer, a small grant officer, and 8 provincial level coordinators (PLCs). Administration for the SKILLS project was based in Honiara and the role of the PLCs was, amongst other things, to mentor and support CLCs with planning, using the strengths based approach, developing project proposals, building provincial CLC networks and monitoring and reporting.

Reported Results

From July 2010 to June 2015, small grants were provided for a total of 161 CLC training activities. APHEDA's final program evaluation of the SKILLS project shows that between March 2012 and January 2016, APHEDA provided training to a total of 2,892 people (1259 males and 1633 females). Data from earlier phases was not available. This data represents the number of people who attended training, and many of the CLC members would have attended multiple trainings – so it is not possible from these figures to determine how many people were directly affected by the SKILLS project.

There is limited reporting of outcomes from the SKILLS project. APHEDA reported on income generated by CLCs within quarterly reports and annual reports in an ad-hoc way. It is clear that various CLCs were generating funds through activities that had begun after training, but there was no consistent reporting of income or savings across all CLCs at any point in time. Similarly, there are many stories of positive change, but not reconciled to the number of training participants. This undermines APHEDA's ability to report its outcomes and the ability for evaluators to draw overall efficiency and effectiveness conclusions.

The overall funding received from DFAT over the six phases of the project was \$3,287,780.78.

Cost Analysis

Individual grants to CLCs were mostly less than SBD\$10,000 per activity with a small number going up to SBD\$15,000. A CLC may have received 4 to 6 grants over the life of the project. On the basis that a training activity catered for 20 participants, this represents a training cost of SBD\$500 per participant (approx. AUD\$100). The APHEDA evaluation concluded that 'given the concrete improvements in people's lives that resulted, this seems a good use of resources'. The DFAT evaluation team found that the cost was low, but that given that overall training outcomes are not known, a final conclusion on efficiency cannot be drawn.

The budget allocation to the Australian project officer appeared to represent approximately 50% of a full time salary. The role of this project officer includes feedback on reports, attendance at Steering committee meetings, and quarterly visits to the country office. The evaluation team could not make conclusive comments on the appropriateness of this allocation, although the general impression was that this seemed disproportionately high to the actual time allocated by the Australian office.

Efficiency Measures

A Financial Management Systems and Procedures Assessment was undertaken in July 2013, which concluded that APHEDA Solomon Islands financial systems, controls and procedures were in place and considered adequate.

The APHEDA evaluation found that necessary systems and procedure changes recommended in the 2011 audit report were implemented as verified by the

auditors in 2013. Two ABV volunteers played a valuable role in improving financial systems and processes and mentoring staff including in better use of MYOB. APHEDA finance staff provided specific capacity building training to Community Learning Centre Coordinators and Treasurers in financial management, committee management and reporting.

In the initial phases of the project, small grants were issued to CLCs for all training costs (including catering, materials, trainer fees, etc.) and CLCs were given bulk amounts to cover all training planned in each project phase. However, APHEDA learned that there were risks to this approach, including financial accountability and timeliness. Following some instances of misuse of funds it was decided that grants would only be provided for individual training activities and procurement of materials would be done by the Honiara office with the balance for local costs such as payment of instructors and food supplies transferred to the CLCs. Further funding to CLCs then became dependent on the acquittal of the previous small grant. This allowed for better tracking of project expenditure to ensure that the project was delivered on budget. By the end of the project, APHEDA reported that CLCs were delivering and reporting on training in their communities on time according to project timelines, which was a significant improvement from earlier phases of the project. The APHEDA evaluation found that project reports and acquittals were provided to DFAT on or shortly after the due dates. A comprehensive review of acquittals was carried out as the project came to an end to ensure all funds received had been fully acquitted.

The APHEDA evaluation also found that in each phase most project activities were implemented albeit with some delays especially in the earlier stages. The reduction in the number of CLCs at the beginning of Phase 4 meant more focus could be placed by Honiara and provincial staff on providing guidance to CLCs in various aspects of the small grants process leading to improved project management. Provincial Learning Coordinators belonged to the target communities thereby enabling them to provide ongoing monitoring and project support and reduced the need for frequent travel costs to be incurred by Honiara based staff.

Efficiency Challenges

The SKILLS project was spread across six provinces and often in quite remote areas, so the logistics, travel and monitoring costs associated with this spread had a significant effect on overall project costs. Project staff and CLC Coordinators often had to contend with communication challenges, bad weather and other factors which further affected logistics and therefore implementation.

As noted above, APHEDA recognised that managing financial risk was a challenge. It made a series of investments to manage this risk, including iterative changes to small grants distribution procedures and more training and support to PLCs and CLC coordinators. Although changes to the small grants process increased logistics and freight costs, it ensured better financial administration of the project and improved the monitoring of outputs.

APHEDA found that efficient monitoring was initially difficult given the number of centres (54) that it was supporting. This had an impact on how much time a provincial level coordinator could spend at each site, the cost of logistics, including freight for materials, and travel for monitoring and supporting remote CLCs. APHEDA reduced the number of centres to 24 after significant consultation with DFAT regarding concerns about APHEDA's ability to support and sustain the large number of centres.

Overall Efficiency Analysis

Overall, the DFAT evaluation found that the SKILLS project demonstrated a strong approach to efficiency. The advantage of using existing community structures (CLCs) and small grants to deliver training was the ability to reach into very remote communities using limited resources. Additional support was provided to these CLCs through provincial coordinators, and setting aside funding for provincial meetings. This gave CLCs the opportunity to share knowledge and experiences at a provincial level – and develop provincial level plans for ongoing support beyond the end of the project.

The in-country operational model was lean and while efficient, was possibly too lean given the concerns that emerged in earlier phases of the project about APHEDA's capacity to adequately monitor and support the CLCs.

There is strong evidence of APHEDA's efforts to appropriately account and acquit for funding at the community level. Monitoring methods for recording activities and outputs were improved over the life of the program, although methods for recording outcomes were still weak.

EFFECTIVENESS

Achievements

The SKILLS project invested in capacity building in three areas: capacity building of CLC coordinators through training and support from APHEDA; capacity building of communities through support for non-formal education; and support for the development of a community learning centre network that would sustain the momentum of community learning centres. This was an integrated approach that ultimately led to a strengthened model of community based learning.

Capacity Building of CLC Coordinators

The final evaluation of the SKILLS project recorded a number of CLC Coordinator improvements identified by APHEDA staff, including improvement in acquittals,; and evidence of CLCs being more integrated into communities and involved in other community activities.

There was evidence that some CLCs were initiated by women's groups and have therefore always had a strong presence of women in the management committees. Where Management Committees had previously comprised of men, the APHEDA

evaluation found that improved gender awareness had led in some cases to male Coordinators starting to include women in Management Committees.

Capacity Building of Communities

The SKILLS project provided grants to CLCs in support of training that addressed community needs and self identified priorities. Training topics included fish farming, back yard gardening, aquaculture, piggeries, furniture making, solar maintenance, bee keeping, basic sewing and pattern designing, carpentry, furniture making, poultry farming, and dying and printing.

There is good evidence from APHEDA reports that training provided by CLCs had a positive impact on livelihoods and well being. Outcomes reported by APHEDA included families reporting that training has led to increased family income from activities such as sewing and furniture making, thereby improving their ability to meet family needs such as school fees. Other outcomes included reports by women that their participation skills training had increased their self esteem and home management skills, thereby improving family health and well being. One example that illustrates this well is where a solar training workshop was held to meet the community demand for maintenance of solar equipment, which most households in the community were using for lighting. Another example recounted during the evaluation was carpentry training that participants could then use to build permanent buildings in their communities. In Niarovai, women showed that they had diversified their garden crops, thereby increasing the variety of food for their families and their product offering at market.

Each of the end-of-phase reports recounted numerous examples that demonstrated the positive effects of community based training on community members' livelihoods and well being. The DFAT evaluation team heard similar outcomes and stories in facilitated discussion groups, as did the APHEDA end of program evaluation. However, outcomes from these trainings are collected through ad-hoc discussion with community members, and not collected consistently, making an overall assessment of effectiveness challenging.

The evaluation team found that there is unique value in the model of community learning centres that is quite distinct from the value of rural training centres (RTCs), which is the next level of formal education available for rural communities. CLCs reach members of communities who genuinely would not access other types of training and access fellowship with women – there were women who attended meetings who had no literacy and no formal education. CLCs provide hands on practical training in or near communities, making skills training accessible to low-income, low-education community members.

“People told me this training was happening but when I heard ‘training’ I thought it involved biros and paper and I ran off to the gardens. But then I started to see that it was practical and the women invited me to join and learn with them.” - Woman from Asiko CLC who had not been to school.

A significant finding from the DFAT evaluation was that CLCs responded to a strong need for skills training for youth, and in particular young men. Many of the youth in rural communities have low levels of education, are unskilled, and are unemployed. In the communities visited in the evaluation, CLCs were the only provider of accessible skills training to young men. The young men who participated in focus group discussions emphasized the importance of them being able to learn new skills. Community elders emphasized how important mentoring, skills training and gainful activity was to ensuring that young men contributed positively to community life. APHEDA had reported that CLC training of youth has led to an increase in young people's contributions to community development, such as the construction of community buildings. This was found to be the case in three of the communities visited, and the evaluation team found that this had engagement of youth had the additional benefit of elders being committed to young people, thereby further building community cohesion and cooperation.

Development of a community learning centre network

Since 2004, the SKILLS project has facilitated provincial and national networks of CLCS to meet on a regular basis, with the aim of facilitating the network to establish a more formal body that would represent informal training within the education sector.

In October 2015, the informal Community Learning Association Network became a formal body, known the Solomon Islands Association of Community Learning Centres (SIACLC). Through APHEDA's support, the new organization has an elected Board, which is advised by an expert steering committee, has appointed a Secretary, and has a constitution and Policies and Procedures Manual. Through this new organization, it is planned that CLCs will be able to formalize their existing relationships with The Solomon Islands Association of Vocational and Rural Training Centres, and the SI government department of TVET (Technical, Vocational Education and Training). Both these organisations are represented on the steering committee.

Effectiveness Approaches

For each of the SINPA programs, the evaluation team sought to identify approaches that contributed to overall program effectiveness. For the SKILLS project, these included:

- The SKILLS project focused on providing practical training that responded directly to community identified needs, and was provided inside communities, making it both relevant and accessible to those who would not otherwise access training. Because APHEDA provided support for training and materials, the training was practical, rather than theory based, thereby appealing to those with low literacy and access to resources.
 - *"I didn't just learn with my eyes, and my ears – I learned because I used my hands."* – young man from Dunde

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- The SKILLS project only used local Solomon Islands staff on the ground, and worked with existing community structures (Community Learning Centres). The small grants program was designed to reinforce and support these existing community structures, rather than duplicate them.
 - The positive aspects of using local volunteer coordinators demonstrates the importance of having a ‘champion’ in the community who is respected and trusted by the community.
 - One of the advantages of having voluntary coordinators is that it reduces the potential for community jealousy where one community member benefits from the project. It also builds community ownership and responsibility for the CLC and is able to leverage other voluntary contributions – such as training and resource sharing. It creates an altruistic culture of skills sharing in the community.

“It is easy enough for me to travel to visit other CLCs because people know that I am a volunteer and will help me with transport. It also means that sometimes people will come and provide training for us for no cost. If I was not a volunteer, they would ask us to pay.” Asiko CLC Coordinator

- Exchange and attachments were an invaluable opportunity for CLCs to build networks and connections, vital to the sustainability of the CLAN and of the individual CLCs.
- There is evidence that APHEDA used an annual process to reflect on program effectiveness and improve delivery. This process was shared with other SINPA partners at a learning event.
- The APHEDA evaluation found that the Project Officer from Australia had played an important role in mentoring and supporting local APHEDA staff. The APHEDA International Program Officer in Sydney reflected that the quality of this support was weaker in the early stages of the project, but that this changed following the Mid Term Review and the appointment of a new Pacific Officer in early 2012 who helped to develop new policies and procedures and worked systematically with the Honiara staff to improve project management and reporting. More recently the Pacific Officer has been systematically working with the local APHEDA team to develop strategies and action plans for the transition to SIACLC.

Effectiveness Challenges

The mid-term review recommended that the SKILLS project ‘provide resources and ongoing technical support for communities and individuals that will turn training received into viable livelihood activities’. This evaluation found that although there is evidence that CLC members have been able to apply new skills to activities after the initial training and that improvements in livelihoods have occurred, further

investments in deeper training at the community level may have yielded stronger outcomes.

For example, the evaluation team found that training participants sometimes faced challenges in applying their training to ongoing livelihood activities because they lacked access to tools, materials, equipment or opportunities. Examples included young men who did not have ongoing access to construction tools, women who did not have access to sewing machines, and communities that did not have income to buy new inputs required to sustain the income generating activities – such as caustic soda for soap making. These findings were also echoed in the APHEDA program evaluation.

Another limitation identified by CLC members is that training is provided only at a basic level. Depending on the nature of the activity, this is sufficient to make improvements to well being and livelihoods. For example, a solar training workshop is sufficient to equip participants to better maintain their solar equipment; and a catering training workshop is sufficient to improve catering services for visitors. In other cases, however, such as in Dundee, participants said that they need access to further training to improve their skills to a level where they can be gainfully applied. Participants in Dundee – men and women – said that a new series of training topics were interesting, but that they would have benefited from focusing on fewer topics more deeply. This was true for carpentry training and sewing skills training.

APHEDA has highlighted that during the implementation of the SKILLS project, the focus was not on getting beneficiaries into business, but on improving livelihoods through provision of capacity building and practical training so that participants could support themselves by using available resources in the communities. However the evaluation team found that while training participants had improved their skills, improving livelihoods often depended on participants being able to generate income with their new skills. Often, however, training participants were constrained to selling their products to their own community members and found it difficult to access market opportunities. . As with other SINPA programs, it appears that training provided to communities under the SKILLS project lacked business viability and analysis and support for marketing.

There are some examples reported in both Phase Six reports and the APHEDA evaluation of the SKILLS project of APHEDA linking CLCs with other service providers such as SINU, the Fisheries Department and DPI officers in Choiseul. It is also noted that APHEDA has planned an ANCP pilot project with Kastom Gaden and Saranga CLC in the first half of 2016, to look at possibilities for marketing products and improving income generated from training, based on the feedback from communities and the SKILLS program evaluation. This is positive, although a broader finding of the DFAT evaluation is that SINPA partners could have invested more in brokering linkages between communities and local business, government and institutions earlier in the program and more consistently.

The success of CLCs very much depends on the strength of the local community facilitator and their relationship with the local community. When APHEDA withdrew

from over half of its communities, there were concerns about the accountability, transparency and trustworthiness of local facilitators. Where there has been a strong champion in the community, and support from CLCs in the provincial network, the CLCs have managed to maintain an ongoing training program without ongoing APHEDA support. However, where the champions have left the community/CLC management committee, the training programs have largely ceased.

Overall Effectiveness Analysis

It is difficult to draw conclusions as to the overall effectiveness of training provided through the CLCs as the monitoring methods used by APHEDA focus on stories of change, and did not capture comprehensive training outcome data.

APHEDA collected stories of success through its regular project monitoring, but the methods used to count the numbers of people trained, and document outcomes from training do not provide a reliable overview of the project's overall achievements. For example, some training sessions were only 1 day events, whereas others were three week events but beneficiaries are counted in the same way. Also, beneficiaries are counted each time they attend a training session, which means that the total number of beneficiaries reached is difficult to calculate. Additionally, the method for measuring outcomes from training was ad-hoc – it relied on collecting stories of change but did not evaluate the change for each training participant. The lack of methodology used to assess how effective the training has been was identified in the DFAT mid term review, but was not addressed by the SKILLS project. Further investments in monitoring and evaluation would have helped APHEDA better demonstrate its overall effectiveness.

The APHEDA evaluation also sought to identify whether the benefits had been widespread across participants. 62 of the 63 participants consulted during the APHEDA evaluation visits to five CLCs reported benefits as a result of the training they participated in; and twenty nine (46 per cent) of the 63 participants reported improved ability to earning income as a result of the training. The APHEDA evaluation concluded that *'while the information is not comprehensive there is evidence to indicate that improved livelihoods have been widespread across CLCs and participants'*.

SUSTAINABILITY

Local stakeholder involvement

APHEDA used a strengths based approach (SBA) in developing and implementing the SKILLS project. It used participatory processes to assist CLC coordinators and members to identify community goals and priority learning activities. The SKILLS project then provided capacity building and small grants to CLCs to carry out the training activities that they had identified as a priority.

Appropriateness to context

During the design of the SKILLS project, APHEDA consulted with 90 Community Learning Centre personnel from 38 CLS. It became clear through those consultation

that livelihood skills training needed to be expanded from income generating livelihoods to improving subsistence livelihoods and mixed livelihoods (subsistence with some cash circulating through the community)

There is good evidence that the SKILLS project was responsive to community need and self identified priorities. It met a huge need for skills training in a non-formal environment for rural communities who have very little access to formal training opportunities.

Phase-out strategies

APHEDA has reported that it expects that SIACLC will provide ongoing advocacy for CLCs and coordination support, including the facilitation of learning exchanges between CLCs. However, the APHEDA evaluation notes that provincial networking has to date been funded under the SKILLS project. Face to face networking will pose some challenges in the future as the PLCs will no longer be in place to co-ordinate and facilitate the meetings, and this will be particularly in provinces where the CLCs are dispersed and have to travel some distance to get to a central location for a DCLAN/ provincial meeting.

The evaluation team found that while there is support for the SIACLC from CLCs where APHEDA has been active, the SIACLC does not have a clear financial resourcing strategy, which will limit its ability to establish itself as a functional association. APHEDA has supported the SIACLC to develop a strategic plan and a transition plan outlining APHEDA's support for the Secretariat for the first six months. The transition plan also identifies alternate partners and funding sources, but discussions with APHEDA staff indicate that the prospects of local government support appear remote. The end of program evaluation commissioned by APHEDA also found that 'the task of getting SIACLC onto a reasonable financial footing is not straightforward given current donor priorities and uncertainty about Solomon Islands Government support for community education in the future'.

In the most recent phase of the project, APHEDA has facilitated provincial level planning and networking for CLC coordinators, focusing on practical ways to sustain CLCs after the SKILLS project.

The final evaluation of the SKILLS project reported that one of the activities planned for the extension phase was the development of a Capacity Building Guide for CLCs. This was based on existing capacity building materials in areas such as financial management, gender and participation, governance and accountability, and monitoring tools and techniques. The intention was that PLCs would use the guide to conduct training for CLCs to prepare them for their work in the post SKILLS period. However this did not occur due to PLCs feeling they had insufficient time to conduct capacity building training. Review and completion of the guide has been incorporated in a USAid funding application which was outstanding at the time of the APHEDA evaluation.

Local capacity to sustain

The evaluation team found that in general, CLCs are determined to continue the practice of sharing skills and knowledge for the benefit of their community members. However, most of the materials for training have been sourced by APHEDA and this aspect of the project will be difficult to sustain. This is the aspect of training that community members value the most – practical materials with which to learn. While CLCs will probably be able to source training expertise in an ongoing way, training activities like sewing, soap making, lava lava dying, and construction will be difficult as these all require material input costs.

APHEDA has reported that there is some evidence that CLCs are creating other opportunities without APHEDA's support and at their own cost. Eleven centres visited by APHEDA between January and June 2015 reported that they have ongoing programs, including exchanging no-cost training between CLCs. The evaluation team found that ongoing activity very much depended on the leadership of the CLC coordinator and the momentum that the community had already achieved. For example, the CLCs in Asiko and Dundee had initiated a number of their own activities, and CLC members were actively contributing to a common fund to continue activities. In contrast, others CLCs appeared highly dependent on APHEDA providing further funding for training and materials. Discussion with local APHEDA staff echoed this finding – that the local capacity to sustain CLCs is very dependent on strong local champions.

APHEDA has also reported that some of the CLCs from whom APHEDA withdrew support in Phase 5 of the project have continued to function. Of the 34 CLCs exited, APHEDA reports that 11 have continued. This is an indication of the potential sustainability of the CLCs who APHEDA has continued to support, who were rated as the stronger CLCs at the time all CLCs were reviewed during Phase 5.

Overall Sustainability Analysis

APHEDA has worked hard over a total period of more than 10 years to support a network of CLCs across the Solomon Islands, but the ultimate sustainability of CLCs and the national network will be very much dependent on the strength of a voluntary movement. While APHEDA has invested in establishing good governance and accountability at the individual level and building linkages and networks between CLCs at the provincial and national level, maintaining momentum will be dependent on the continued commitment of local champions. If the new national association is able to forge formal linkages and support with The Solomon Islands Association of Vocational and Rural Training Centres, and the SI government department of TVET (Technical, Vocational Education and Training), the likely overall sustainability of CLCs would be enhanced.

SINPA FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

PROJECT ANALYSIS FOR

Save The Children - YOPP: Youth Outreach Partnership Project

Executive Summary

SINPA was a A\$22.6 million program that aimed to support Solomon Islanders, in particular women and young people, to improve their own health, wellbeing and livelihoods. It began in 2009 and comprised of five non-government organisations (NGOs) working in partnership with each other, local Solomon Islands NGOs and their donor, the Australian Government, to identify, test and learn from contextually appropriate development models.

An end-of-program evaluation, commissioned by the Australian Government, was undertaken in November 2015. This evaluation found that SINPA achieved improvements in terms of strengthened community cohesion and governance, improved rural livelihoods and women's empowerment that benefited directly targeted communities and contributed to Australia's aid priorities in the Solomon Islands of stability, economic growth and human development.

It was evident to the evaluation team that the 'partnership' between NGOs and the Australian Government increased the overall effectiveness of SINPA NGOs, their staff, and their programs. This was achieved through ongoing reflective practice, documenting learnings, peer review, training, deepening relationships between NGOs, and sharing resources.

A key strength of SINPA was its integration of gender considerations within organisations and projects. Through collaboration, the SINPA Partners adopted a partnership wide commitment to promoting gender equality in projects, improving organisational practices relating to gender equality, and working towards the equal and meaningful participation of women and girls in decision-making processes that affect their lives. This is a stand-out example of what 'partnership' between NGOs can achieve and the way that partners can learn from one another.

Another asset of SINPA was its commitment to using the Strength-Based Approach. Although partners found it challenging to overcome local community expectations of hand-outs, the strengths based approach undertaken by partners was an effective approach to building capacity and resilience in communities and key to overall sustainability. Projects which explicitly identified and worked with the strengths of a community demonstrated good success in achieving positive and sustainable outcomes where communities were empowered, resourced and confident to independently sustain project benefits.

While all projects under SINPA demonstrated successful outcomes, the quality of reporting across the full life of the SINPA program compromised the ability of partners to aggregate and report program success.

The evaluation found that SINPA Partners had taken a thoughtful approach to managing the high cost context of working in remote community based settings. Field staff demonstrated remarkable tenacity in navigating logistical, communication and accountability challenges and SINPA Partners developed sensible national and provincial level staffing structures that sought to minimise costs and maximize accountability.

Despite the many positive aspects of the partnership, the evaluation team found the partnership would have been more effective if it had taken a more disciplined and strategic approach to research, learning platforms, and structured engagement with key actors in the Solomon Islands, including local civil society and government.

Evaluation Scope and Methodology

The DFAT SINPA Program Evaluation included an assessment of the overall value of the partnership; approaches to gender; and a rapid assessment of each of the SINPA Partner projects. The full report is the SINPA Final Evaluation Report.

This Annex is a report of the TTFT project that was jointly implemented by the International Women's Development Agency (IWDA), Australia and Live and Learn Solomon Islands (LLSI). The assessment of each of the SINPA projects considered three areas:

1. **EFFICENCY:** Did each individual SINPA project deliver its outcomes efficiently?
2. **EFFECTIVENESS:** Did each individual SINPA program achieve its outcomes and objectives effectively?
3. **SUSTAINABILITY:** To what extent have the outcomes of the SINPA programs contributed to lasting change?

The DFAT Evaluation Team undertook a desk review that included SCA reports; DFAT joint monitoring trip reports; learning papers prepared by SCA; the DFAT Mid-Term Review; the 2013 Financial Management Systems and Procedures Assessment and other relevant SINPA documents. The Evaluation Team understands that SCA plans to undertake a final evaluation of YOPP; however this had not been concluded by the time this report was prepared. As part of the DFAT Evaluation, SCA provided a self-assessment of its own efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability in the form of a questionnaire, which has informed the findings of the evaluation. This was supplemented by field work in the Solomon Islands that included attendance at two workshops by SCA staff; focus group discussions at five YOPP communities; key informant interviews with Solomon Islands office staff (from the National, Provincial and community level) and with a staff member from the Australian office.

Project description

Save the Children Australia (“SCA”), working through its Solomon Islands Office implemented the Youth Outreach Partnership Project (“YOPP”). YOPP aimed to contribute to the development of socioeconomic activities of young people, particularly women in selected communities in Solomon Islands.

Save the Children initially commenced the *Youth Outreach Program* as a Honiara based pilot in 1998. The program was replicated and expanded over the following years until the Australian Aid program provided financial support via the SINCA mechanism between 2003 and 2009. YOPP was re-designed in preparation for inclusion in the SINPA program and received support from late 2009 to January 2016. The evaluation team found it difficult to determine the total number of communities that YOPP operated in during the life of SINPA. However, it is apparent that at January 2014 (Phase 5) the project was present in 60 communities across 6 Provinces. From this level, YOPP then concentrated on 29 sites across 4 Provinces during Phase 6.

Program Objectives

YOPP originally focused on three objectives as follows:

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; and
3. To enhance young men and women’s participation in policy formulation and implementation at the village, provincial and national levels.

These were refined in response to the Mid-Term Review of SINPA which recommended the adoption of a results based framework. The objectives for the years 2012 – January 2016 were:

1. By 2016, 630 youths (50% female) are sustainably running livelihoods projects
2. *By 2014, 50% of youth in targeted communities report adopting healthier lifestyles³*
3. By 2016, 630 youths (male and female) are playing an active role in community decision making.

EFFICIENCY

Operational Set-Up

YOPP specific staff in Solomon Islands currently includes a Program Manager and 13 Project Officers. These officers are supported by the senior management structure of Save the Children – including Provincial Coordinators a number of financial and administrative support staff based in Honiara and in Provincial offices.

³ This objective was removed at the beginning of Phase 6

SCA in Solomon Islands manage a number of other projects besides YOPP.

The number of YOPP staff and sites was reduced as a result of the closure of SCA offices in Isabel and Makira at the end of 2013. After an operational review conducted in 2014 the position of team leader was abolished. As a result, project officers reduced the amount of time they spent in target communities and spent more time on reporting. This reduction in management layers also ensured greater value for money for the donor, and ensured that the staff who were working with the communities were the same staff members compiling reports and documenting the lessons learnt.

Total Cost

The overall funding received from DFAT over the six phases of the project was \$AUD 5,810,196. As an indicator of the way costs were allocated, the budget for Phase 5, representing 1 February 2013 - 30 June 2014, is shown below.

	Ph 5	% Total
In-Australia Personnel	0	0
In-Australia non-personnel	0	0
In- Solomon personnel	837,571	56
In-Solomon non-personnel	185,347	12
In-Solomon Activity Costs	329,668	22
Monitoring and Evaluation	17,294	1
Management fee	0	
ICR (Indirect Cost Recovery)	135,270	9
Total	1,505,150	100

Reported Results

Given the changes to YOPP objectives over the life of SINPA and the staggered entry and exit of communities, it is difficult to locate consistent, cumulative data to determine and illustrate the overall reach of the project. For example, it is not clear the total number of communities that YOPP operated in over the life of the funding or the total number of youth projects and committees that were supported over the life of the funding.

At the end of Phase 5, YOPP was present in 60 communities across 6 provinces. A total of 91 “youth projects” had been established with 84 being described as “active”. The 7 inactive projects were considered not active due to the young

people's commitment to run and manage the projects. The 'active' projects were differentiated as community projects (total of 23), income generating (total of 51) and WASH projects (total of 10). The same report asserted that 39 of the active projects were sustainable because they had been operating without any financial assistance for one year or more. However the annexure listing these included 51 project descriptions.

An analysis of all YOPP sites was undertaken during the transition from Phase 5 to Phase 6. This analysis recommended that SCA exit sites there was low participation of young people, there had been migration of young people from communities to another communities or towns, commitment and cooperation of communities was low, and where initiatives did not have an income generating result. A total of 44 sites of the 60 sites supported at the end of Phase 5 were exited, including those in Isabel and Makira where SCA closed down their provincial offices. In Phase 6, SCA supported 29 communities in 4 provinces to commence 43 livelihood projects. 16 of these communities had benefited from YOPP support during previous phases whilst 13 were new sites.

Towards the end of phase 6 a total of 702 young people (348 male and 354 female) were reported to be earning income from these projects. A total of \$53,247 AUD was spent supporting these projects which equates to \$1,238.30 AUD being spent on each project. Whilst not specifically calculated, SCA estimated that the monthly income earned from these projects was approximately \$2,000 SBD (around \$330 AUD). This income amount varied significantly between projects and the majority had not commenced earning any income at all at the date of the most recent report (25 out of 43 projects). Specific data showing the amount expended and the income earned from each project for earlier phases was not available.

YOPP committees consisting of young people were established in each of the target communities. Their role included the development and implementation of Youth Action Plans (YAP's) for each youth project, reporting on the progress of projects to the entire community, participating in community decision making meetings and youth forums. The evaluation team did not aggregate figures from all phases of the YOPP program to calculate how many individuals were active members of YOPP committees over the life of SINPA. However, Phase 6 reporting reveals that 102 young males, 113 young females, 23 male adults and 34 female adults were participating in YOPP committees at the end of March 2015.

A suite of technical and life skills training workshops were conducted in YOPP communities. Technical training included content delivered by external training providers on livestock management and other topics to support livelihood projects. Financial management and small business type training were also provided. In addition, young people were offered training on public speaking, negotiation skills, leadership and other "soft" skills to support their participation in YOPP committees and other decision making forums. Other topic areas such as disaster risk reduction, gender awareness and various healthy lifestyle issues were also covered by SCA staff. As at the end of March 2015, SCA reported that a total of 1092 female youth and 1068 male youth (a total of 2160) had directly benefited from the project during

Phase 6 alone.

End of Phase 5 reports reveal that a total of 246 health trainings were provided to a total of 2795 youth and children whilst the health component remained in the YOPP framework. The evaluation team understands that a KAP survey was undertaken in four of the six Provinces who received this health training⁴ and revealed that a total of 54.5% of young people reported adopting healthier lifestyles.

In terms of the knowledge acquired, a KAP Survey revealed that 56% of young male participants and 53% of female participants have an increased knowledge of healthy practices and 53% of females with an increased knowledge of healthy practices across Choiseul, Malaita, Westen and Guadalcanal Provinces.

Cost Analysis

The approximately 30% reduction in staffing costs from Phases 4 and 5 to Phase 6 coincides with around 50% reduction in the number of YOPP sites (from 60 to 29).

The costs per livelihood project appear reasonable provided the projects are able to continue to generate income over a number of years. At this point in time, it is unclear whether this will be the case – especially for those new sites that were added in Phase 6. Although YOPP will conclude in January 2016, SCA may be in a position to monitor the ongoing income generation of these sites if they remain in the same communities under different projects.

SCA's provincial infrastructure necessarily requires a significant spend on overheads that are non-personnel related and also non-activity. In-country staff and office costs represented 59% of program expenditure. There are significant benefits to the provincial set-up both for SCA's program delivery capacity and their ability to build effective partnership relationships with government and other civil society actors that support their program outcomes. Several programs are run out of each provincial office, and only a proportion of costs are allocated towards YOPP. However, the evaluation team notes that other SINPA partners were able to support initiatives in a similar number of sites (i.e. 29) without this infrastructure. Rather than leaving YOPP sites completely unsupported and unmonitored after the closure of the Isabel and Makira offices, perhaps SCA could have borrowed aspects of their SINPA partners' models.

The in-Australia costs and overall 'indirect cost recovery' allocations represented 9.87% of total program expenditure, which is comparable with other NGO programs, which are usually capped at 10%. Monitoring costs represented 4.47%, which is also comparable with the 5% usually assigned to NGO programs.

⁴ The KAP survey was conducted after the Isabel and Makira Provincial offices were closed.

Efficiency Measures

A Financial Management Systems and Procedures Assessment was undertaken in July 2013, which concluded that SCA financial systems, controls and procedures were in place and considered adequate. Recommendations from an earlier assessment conducted in 2011 had been substantially implemented.

SCA staff in Solomon Islands reported that financial management training provided by Australian based staff during the life of the project had been extremely beneficial and assisted them to understand and implement internal policies and procedures.

The SCA operational review resulted in some significant organizational restructuring and ultimately the abolition of the team leader position that had previously been used in YOPP. Obviously this resulted in cost savings from salary overheads. Key Informants also reported greater accuracy and timeliness in the collection and provision of project data as a result of this change.

The decision to scale down YOPP's presence from 60 communities to 29 was to ensure that project officers were able to concentrate on quality of community relationships and interventions and ensure greater sustainability. It is likely that there were also some costs savings as a result of this decision.

The evaluation team sighted evidence of research undertaken when identifying potential sites for YOPP. Selection criteria considered the location of communities (and therefore access to infrastructure), overall and youth population, access to resources, presence of other organisations and likely response to the strengths based approach. This demonstrates an attempt to balance the opposing considerations of selecting sites with a good prospect of achieving success and working in communities with significant needs.

Efficiency Challenges

YOPP experienced a number of efficiency challenges. The ability to select and then retain quality staff is a vital aspect of efficient program delivery. It assists with community understanding and engagement and should contribute to high quality data over the life of the project. Field visits demonstrated the efficiency losses when poor quality staff had contributed to low levels of engagement by communities and even a loss of organisational reputation.

It was also observed that SCA officers generally have strong skills in youth and community engagement but that a deeper understanding of small business and market analysis would have been beneficial when seeking to implement a livelihood project. The evaluation team was informed that part of the renewed focus on livelihood projects in Phase 6 included a visit from a Save the Children Livelihoods Advisor who provided targeted training on ensuring market linkages and project viability.

Efforts to work in up to 63 communities across 6 provinces will always expose organisations to the reality of remote communities in Solomon Islands – limited or

unreliable communication and transport services, limited access to non-natural resources, high probability of inclement weather causing delays in implementation and raising safety concerns for staff.

Overall Efficiency Analysis

Given the lack of cumulative quantitative data described above it is difficult to make an overall assessment of the cost / benefit ratio for YOPP.

Phase 6 reporting provided a snap shot of the cost of supporting the establishment of income generating projects for young people in communities. However, the majority of these projects were still in their infancy having only been established during the 18 months preceding the evaluation and their income earning potential post YOPP was not evident. The evaluation team found evidence in a number of communities of high input costs, limited market opportunities and poor business decisions that led to concerns about the actual income generating potential of the projects over time. The team was informed that a number of projects initiated in communities that were exited prior to Phase 6 were still operational and earning income. There was no specific data for these sites as SCA was not in a position to conduct formal monitoring and the evidence of their ongoing operation was gleaned from joint monitoring visits to on-going SINPA projects in nearby communities and from other ad hoc sources. In these circumstances it is difficult to conclude that there has been value for the aid investment in regard to income earning potential for these young people.

However, other benefits such as lifeskills training and engagement of young people in decision making are not quantifiable in financial terms and there was strong evidence of the positive outcomes achieved by YOPP in these areas, even where financial sustainability is not yet demonstrated.

The evaluation team had some questions about the decision to exit completely from a large number of sites at the beginning of Phase 6. Whilst the team appreciated that multiple factors were considered in the analysis and decision making process, the team wonders if there would have been some benefit in maintaining a presence in original sites and re-focusing communities from general youth projects to income generating projects. This may have allowed SCA to build on existing organizational capital. If there was little enthusiasm in communities to remain engaged in YOPP then questions must be asked about the project's early interventions and site selection process. However, it is also acknowledged that this evaluation has not had the scope to examine the YOPP site selection process in detail and characterise this as an observation rather than a specific finding.

EFFECTIVENESS

Achievements

Communities supported by YOPP to implement livelihood projects created innovative and clever strategies to ensure that income generated could be saved for overall community benefit as well as provided some benefit to individuals. This is essential to ensure projects have reasonable prospects of sustainability and assisted

to maintain young people's interest and engagement in other areas of the project such as general awareness and "soft skills" development.

Individual stories of significant personal change and growth were shared in a number of YOPP sites during the field visits. These included moving testimony from a disengaged young man who had transformed from trouble maker to a respected and reliable team player and happy reports from community elders that their youth were no longer stealing household goods to sell in order to buy marijuana. A number of young women demonstrated their increased self-confidence by freely exchanging stories with the expatriate team members and proudly showing examples of their creative handicraft.

In Varese a group of young men gave a practical demonstration of their screen printing skills. Pride was obvious on their faces as they created T-shirts while being watched by a large crowd of much younger boys.

Effectiveness Approaches

Individual YOPP committees were required to complete a project analysis template for their proposed livelihood activity. These were designed to ensure that communities had considered the viability of their ideas before commencing. Similarly, the Community Project Book was created to provide simple templates committees could use to keep track of the finances of their projects and the duty roster for sharing the labour.

Asked how she felt when SCA delivered gender training a young woman from Malawai grinned and replied "Mi feel gud tumas. Mi feel olsem mi someone tu, mi important tu".

YOPP learnt the benefits of using MOU's to manage community expectations and understanding of the strengths based approach. SCA also encouraged officers to engage the entire target community during initial stages of the project.⁵

YOPP committees were designed to be populated by young people. Even in communities where elders and leaders were very supportive of the project, the committees were made up of young people. Coupled with the organizing of youth forums, YOPP created formal opportunities for young people to have a voice and contribute to decision making. These opportunities were created subsequent to relevant training and gave chances for young people to put learning into practice.

Specific training on the strengths based approach was provided early in the project implementation in communities. At least in latter phases, the idea was tested with potential sites before entering. Project analysis documents and community project book all had spaces highlighting the contribution being made by communities.

⁵ The evaluation team found examples where this had not been done and the results were decreased efficiency and effectiveness.

Effectiveness Challenges

Where young women were engaged successfully in the project they were obviously benefiting from increased self-esteem and confidence. The YOPP data confirmed the participation of young women in YOPP committees and livelihood projects. However, there were some occasions when the evaluation team found young women in YOPP communities to be almost invisible and reluctant to engage. Older community members were willing to report positive changes in their young men but continued to complain that young women were unhelpful and disengaged.

It is difficult to assess the reasons for this inconsistent success with young women and it is probably beyond the scope of this evaluation to attempt to do so. However, the evaluation team noted the challenges that SCA and other organizations face in attracting skilled female officers who are willing to work in communities – especially in the Provinces. The team also noted that where young women were able to participate effectively during the planning stages of the projects, it was more likely that livelihood activities would be identified that met their needs and interests. For example, young women we spoke to in Kusika asserted that they were reluctant to participate in the fuel depot project due to concerns about their personal safety.⁶ This is in contrast to the young women from Malawai who took the basic sewing and crocheting skills they had learnt during the YOPP sewing project and began to create innovative designs that appealed to their age group..

The decision to exit sites has meant that brand new communities in phase 6 have had a very concentrated, targeted presence from project officers over a short period of time. This makes it very difficult to assess the success and extent of the project's interventions over several phases.

In later phases, YOPP made concerted efforts to equip young people to operate successful income generating projects by sourcing relevant training in small business skills and other technical support. The community project book was designed to be a simple tool to both manage and monitor livelihood initiatives. However, the evaluation team noted that young people faced significant business challenges in the sites visited. These included high input costs (eg for manufactured livestock feed), a limited customer base (eg for lava lava sales) and competition from other local producers (eg for the sale of chickens). In these circumstances, it seems that some of the YOPP projects will find it difficult to sustain their livelihood initiatives.

In the sites visited by the evaluation team, the majority of the “strengths based approach” contributions provided by communities were natural resources such as land, local building materials and the availability of young people to participate in training and provide labour. SCA reports that in other sites, community fundraising also made contributions towards project initiatives.

⁶ Kusika field visit produced vastly different data between the young women and the young men who participated in the focus group discussions. This may have been due to the fact that the young women most actively engaged in the project were not present during the field visit.

Where the evaluation team observed other SINPA partners had encouraged communities to find and contribute small amounts of capital, there was some evidence that this approach contributed to greater sustainability and community ownership. The evaluation does not conclude that community capital contribution is a necessary component of the strengths based approach but makes the observation to aid further discussion and dialogue about how best to apply SBA theory in the Solomon Islands context.

Overall Effectiveness Analysis

The decision to remove the health objective from YOPP has been variously described as a response to budget cuts and inconsistency with the overall theory of change. However, there is no doubt that YOPP interventions are having positive impacts on health – particularly drug and alcohol use by young men. Practical projects such as the income generating initiatives supported by YOPP have been shown to be effective vehicles or entry points for general awareness in communities about issues as varied as gender and disaster risk reduction. This is in line with a broader finding of this evaluation regarding the benefit of attaching awareness-raising to practical activities. It is noted that SCA has recently researched and designed a youth specific health project to complement the work in YOPP and to address the issue of alcohol and substance misuse specifically. It is hoped that SCA will incorporate these findings into this and other future project designs.

The evaluation team noted that energetic, skilled project officers have a positive effect on community engagement and therefore achievement of project outcomes.

In the view of the evaluation team, the biggest effectiveness challenge for YOPP has been identifying livelihood projects that will have a real and significant income generating benefit for communities. While there have been examples of the YOPP committee structure providing opportunities for young people to demonstrate their value to community decision making and individual stories of change there have been mixed results across the project. An overall picture of the project's impact is difficult given the lack of information about the progress of communities that were exited some time ago.

SUSTAINABILITY

Local stakeholder involvement

It is clear that youth have been involved in the planning and implementation of livelihood project activities. As an example, in some communities the young people identified that the project would require significant time commitment and therefore decided to create a new committee to manage the project itself. It was hoped that this would ensure that workloads were managed and existing obligations (such as church) were not neglected.

Where YOPP was successful in efforts to engage elders and leaders in the community there appears to be better sustainability prospects.

Appropriateness to context

The YOPP design process included wide consultation and testing with a good number of communities and youth. In the view of the Mid Term Review team the project's outcomes were appropriate to address the needs of youth in Solomon Islands.

Phase-out strategies

SCA is endeavouring to register all of the current YOPP committees as community based organisations (CBO's). This is a relatively time consuming process, however, at the time of the field work for this evaluation, was yet to be completed. It is anticipated that once registered, YOPP committees will be able to obtain formal recognition from their relevant Provincial Governments and apply for other sources of funding. However, it was not clear at the time of this report that communities had received any instruction or direction in how to approach the latter. It is also noted that this initiative was included in Phase 6 as part of the winding down of YOPP. Therefore, sites previously exited will not have this opportunity.

A very practical move that SCA has undertaken is to have all the committees established with bank accounts as this will allow them to securely manage funds raised by their projects.

Building on SINPA learning, SCA is also working towards setting up savings clubs in each of their YOPP communities. As at the date of this report, three savings clubs had commenced however field staff were still unsure how they would be able to train and support their young people on the model before the planned exit dates.

The fifth strategy contained in YOPP's exit plan is to:

“Strengthen the existing community structures that YOPP is integrated in and support the community leaders to take ownership of the project and enhance the young people's leadership skills in the community structures.”

This is clearly designed to support the decision making and youth participation roles of YOPP committees.

Local capacity to sustain

It is feasible that YOPP committees will continue to function as long as they have an effective income generating project to manage. SCA reports show that there are a number of sites from Phase 5 where SCA has continued to work which have been able to sustain livelihood activities. There is evidence (contained in Joint monitoring reports and anecdotal stories from SCA officers) that some of the YOPP projects initiated in Isabel are continuing to function at the end of 2015. There are also examples where communities have been able to formalise arrangements to supply products to local markets (such as an agreement to supply chicken to the Auki prison).⁷ As outlined above, however, the evaluation team observed challenges for the livelihood projects in sites visited during the evaluation that raise concerns about

⁷ A broader finding of the DFAT evaluation is that SINPA partners could have invested more in brokering linkages between communities and local business, government and institutions earlier in the program and more consistently.

the potential for YOPP committees to earn income and sustain livelihood initiatives. More remote communities do not seem to have a clear strategy for how they will re-order stocks of materials without SCA's assistance (e.g T-shirts, screen printing paint and lava lava dyes for Varese project).

The evaluation team found that individual young people have obtained skills and confidence as a result of their participation in YOPP and that there is a reasonable chance that they will be able to apply these skills to parts of their lives. SCA has documented case studies that demonstrate participation in other community leadership roles. In those communities where income generating projects are able to be sustained, youth will continue to have opportunity to be involved in the local accountability processes to the community at large. These opportunities would be enhanced if the strengthening processes in YOPP's exit plan included plans or options for mentoring of the next generation of committee leaders.

The evaluation team considers that it may have been a useful exercise if SCA had found an opportunity to document and analyse the factors supporting sustainability in the YOPP sites previously exited.

Overall Sustainability Analysis

Given the challenges highlighted above, the sustainability of the income generating livelihood projects is assessed as unclear. If the livelihood projects lose momentum, there is a risk that YOPP committees will cease to have a sustainable function and will dissolve.

The evaluation team was impressed by the obvious gains in self-confidence in individual youth and the positive contributions they were beginning to make in their communities. These individuals are likely to retain the skills and experience in decision making and participation they have learned through YOP and apply these skills to other parts of their lives.

SINPA FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

PROJECT ANALYSIS FOR

ADRA - YELP: Youth Engagement and Livelihood Project

Executive Summary

SINPA was a A\$22.6 million program that aimed to support Solomon Islanders, in particular women and young people, to improve their own health, wellbeing and livelihoods. It began in 2009 and comprised of five non-government organisations (NGOs) working in partnership with each other, local Solomon Islands NGOs and their donor, the Australian Government, to identify, test and learn from contextually appropriate development models.

An end-of-program evaluation, commissioned by the Australian Government, was undertaken in November 2015. This evaluation found that SINPA achieved improvements in terms of strengthened community cohesion and governance, improved rural livelihoods and women's empowerment that benefited directly targeted communities and contributed to Australia's aid priorities in the Solomon Islands of stability, economic growth and human development.

It was evident to the evaluation team that the 'partnership' between NGOs and the Australian Government increased the overall effectiveness of SINPA NGOs, their staff, and their programs. This was achieved through ongoing reflective practice, documenting learnings, peer review, training, deepening relationships between NGOs, and sharing resources.

A key strength of SINPA was its integration of gender considerations within organisations and projects. Through collaboration, the SINPA Partners adopted a partnership wide commitment to promoting gender equality in projects, improving organisational practices relating to gender equality, and working towards the equal and meaningful participation of women and girls in decision-making processes that affect their lives. This is a stand-out example of what 'partnership' between NGOs can achieve and the way that partners can learn from one another.

Another asset of SINPA was its commitment to using the Strength-Based Approach. Although partners found it challenging to overcome local community expectations of hand-outs, the strengths based approach undertaken by partners was an effective approach to building capacity and resilience in communities and key to overall sustainability. Projects which explicitly identified and worked with the strengths of a community demonstrated good success in achieving positive and sustainable outcomes where communities were empowered, resourced and confident to independently sustain project benefits.

While all projects under SINPA demonstrated successful outcomes, the quality of reporting across the full life of the SINPA program compromised the ability of partners to aggregate and report program success.

The evaluation found that SINPA Partners had taken a thoughtful approach to managing the high cost context of working in remote community based settings. Field staff demonstrated remarkable tenacity in navigating logistical, communication and accountability challenges and SINPA Partners developed sensible national and provincial level staffing structures that sought to minimise costs and maximize accountability.

Despite the many positive aspects of the partnership, the evaluation team found the partnership would have been more effective if it had taken a more disciplined and strategic approach to research, learning platforms, and structured engagement with key actors in the Solomon Islands, including local civil society and government.

Evaluation Scope and Methodology

The DFAT SINPA Program Evaluation included an assessment of the overall value of the partnership; approaches to gender; and a rapid assessment of each of the SINPA Partner projects. The full report is the SINPA Final Evaluation Report.

This Annex is a report of the TTFT project that was jointly implemented by the International Women’s Development Agency (IWDA), Australia and Live and Learn Solomon Islands (LLSI). The assessment of each of the SINPA projects considered three areas:

1. **EFFICENCY:** Did the project deliver its outcomes efficiently?
2. **EFFECTIVNESS:** Did the SINPA project achieve its outcomes and objectives effectively?
3. **SUSTAINABILITY:** To what extent have the outcomes of the SINPA project contributed to lasting change?

Project description

Adventist Development and Relief Agency (“ADRA”) in Australia implemented the Youth Engagement and Livelihood Project (“YELP”) through a partnership with ADRA Solomon Islands. YELP aspired to create communities in Solomon Islands that are better governed and empowered to engage with youth. It was supported by the Australian Government via SINPA from August 2009 to January 2016.

YELP concentrated its activities in the North and North East regions of Malaita and the North East and Central areas of Guadalcanal. Whilst it is difficult to ascertain from reports the total number of communities supported by YELP over the life of SINPA, it is apparent that during Phase 6 there were 20 communities actively

participating in the project evenly divided between the two provinces of Guadalcanal and Malaita. In earlier phases YELP was active in 28 sites.

Youth Management Committees were set up in the target communities who then become responsible for preparing and implementing Youth Action Plans (YAP's). The project planned to support a total of three YAP's in each community, two of which were intended to have had a livelihood focus. The level of support provided by Project Officers was scaled down for each successive YAP increasing the responsibility borne by the Committee. YELP also provided and / or facilitated technical training as required by the YAP and other general awareness and capacity building training. A strong micro-finance component included supporting communities to start micro-savings groups and to use savings accumulated to secure small loans that could be used to fund any of the three planned YAP's or any extra YAP's the community initiated themselves.

Program Objectives

Originally the YELP project concentrated on three outcomes to achieve their overall goal. These were expressed as:

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

After the Mid Term Review highlighted that the focus on CSO's was not reflective of the reality of the project's activities and recommended the creation of a results based framework, the outcomes were refined to state:

1. Youth Management Committees provide a forum for youth voices to be heard by government and CBO's
2. Youth groups are empowered to increase livelihood opportunities for young people
3. Youth groups are empowered to increase resilience for young people
4. Learning facilities provided for youth groups that offer training and information.

EFFICIENCY

Operational Set-Up

YELP was originally staffed by a Project Manager, M&E Officer and a Micro-Finance Coordinator making up the management team. Guadalcanal and Malaita province both had a Field Coordinator and a team of 6 Project Officers each. After the Mid Term Review and the budget revisions at the commencement of Phase 6 the Field Coordinator positions were abolished and two Project officers were retained for each of the two provinces.

Total Cost

The overall funding received from DFAT over the six phases of the project was \$AUD**3,867,114.00**. As an indicator of the way costs were allocated, expenditure for Phase 6 of the program is shown below. These allocations would suggest that ADRA took a reasonable approach to oversight, support and monitoring of this project.

	Ph 6	% Total
In-Australia Personnel	54,110	10
In-Australia non-personnel	-	
In- Solomon personnel	160,813	30
In-Solomon non-personnel	85,860	16
In-Solomon Activity Costs	180,559	34
Monitoring and Evaluation	4,154	1
Management fee	52,573	9
Total	538,069	

Reported Results

ADRA's reports were largely narrative in style with single examples used to illustrate statements. After the Mid Term Review, the SINPA results based framework was used to track direct beneficiaries and ADRA's contributions to overall SINPA goals. An in-depth analysis of YELP data against program outcomes is beyond the scope of this evaluation. The lack of a specific section in the RBF (provided in regular reports to the donor) showing data against YELP's own program indicators made it difficult to rapidly obtain an overall view of the reach of the program over the entire funding period.

The Evaluation Team viewed a useful spreadsheet that documented various activities in YELP communities during 2012. The document was obviously used to track progress, record participants in training events and highlight achievements and challenges. The data was recorded chronologically rather than cumulatively and only contained comprehensive data for 2012.

As at the end of March 2015 (this being the date of the most recent report available to the Evaluation Team), a total of 86 "capacity building activities" were reported to have been implemented in target communities. It is unclear exactly what kind of training sessions or awareness activities this result includes given the broad range of training activities undertaken in various aspects of YELP.

At the same point in time, ADRA reported the following numbers (as a cumulative total over the life of the program):

Gender / Age group	Direct Beneficiaries	Those reporting increase in income
Female youth (aged 13 – 19)	113	0
Female young adult (aged 20 – 29)	29	82*
Women (aged 30+)	669	106
Male youth (aged 13 – 19)	45	15
Male young adult (aged 20 – 29)	110	96
Men (aged 30+)	524	91
TOTAL	1520	390

**Note the anomaly in the results above i.e. more young female adults reporting an increase in income than there are direct beneficiaries.*

It is interesting to note that the vast majority of direct beneficiaries of YELP are in fact adult men and women despite the project’s outcomes clearly indicating youth as the specific target group. The team read reports acknowledging the challenges the project faced in encouraging youth participation and observed that in some communities the most vocal participants in focus group discussions were middle aged men whilst men under the age of 30 were not very visible. The evaluation team is aware that in the local context “youth” is a broad category⁸ and that it is very common for mature male leaders to act as the “spokesperson” for a group. We also recognize the distinct benefits of engaging the entire community in project activities.⁹ Nonetheless, it appears that in some sites there were fewer opportunities for youth to take leadership roles in YELP than was originally intended.

The same report stated that a total of 61 livelihood projects had been established by YELP, generating a total overall income of \$488,036 SBD. This equates to an average income of \$8,000 SBD per livelihood project.

⁸ The Solomon Islands Government defines “youth” in their official policies as men and women aged between 18 and 35.

⁹ It is a general finding of this Evaluation that effectiveness and sustainability of community projects are enhanced when all members in a community are aware of the purpose of the project and supportive of its outcomes.

Cost Analysis

According to the Budget for Phase 6, the single largest allocation of funding is allocated to direct activity costs at approximately 34% of the overall budget. This is closely followed by in-country personnel (both directly engaged in the project and other office support staff) at just over 30%. Local office overheads are costed at 16.3%, and the portion going to the Australian office of ADRA (via a small portion to personnel costs and a 10% overhead charge) around 19%. This appears to be an appropriate split of the funding.

ADRA's reporting does not reveal the average amount of project funds used to support each YAP. It is also difficult to determine the unit cost of training or capacity building activities. In the absence of this type of cost breakdown it is difficult to make an assessment of the cost to benefit ratio of YELP.

Efficiency Measures

A Financial Management Systems and Procedures Assessment was undertaken in July 2013, which concluded that ADRA financial systems, controls and procedures were properly adhered to and considered operating effectively. A number of recommendations from an earlier assessment conducted in 2011 had been implemented whilst a number remained outstanding.

As outlined above, ADRA was able to make a number of changes to the YELP staffing structure at the beginning of Phase 6 to accommodate reduced budget allocations without any apparent detrimental effect to the implementation of the project.

In latter stages of the project, the micro finance aspect of YELP was integrated into the livelihood projects with target communities being able to access small loans secured against savings created from income generating projects. This is undoubtedly in line with the strengths based approach widely adopted by SINPA and appears to have had a positive impact on sustainability. At the same time, it appears to have been an efficient use of project funds as loaned amounts are either repaid to ADRA or recovered from community's savings balances.

The decision to limit project activities to four regions in two Provinces avoided some of the very costly expenses associated with logistics and travel in the Solomon Islands. It also allowed the project to implement its "ripple effect" approach to expansion into new communities and has operated to create "hubs" of youth management committees clustered relatively closely together. Obviously this has a cost benefit for the project by reducing the cost of community visits and monitoring. At the same time it has also created opportunities for neighbouring youth committees to build supportive relationships which may be maintained beyond the life of the project.

A reporting template was created for YMC secretaries to prepare their own monthly reports rather than waiting for Field Officers to visit. This measure not only saved the time of YELP field staff, it also introduced a community level accountability mechanism that should be able to be sustained beyond the life of the project.

Efficiency Challenges

It appears that during early stages of YELP, training activities were conducted in Honiara with participants being required to find their own transport to attend. Many of these training sessions were theoretical in nature. However, after feedback from community members, ADRA adapted its approach to deliver more hands on practical training opportunities for participants in their own village. This undoubtedly had a positive impact on the effectiveness of the training but would have been more expensive to implement.

Field visits unfortunately revealed a number of situations where YELP had supported communities with the provision of tools and equipment which soon proved to be of inferior quality or once damaged, the community did not have the skills to conduct necessary repairs.

Two women from Sali 2 in Guadalcanal shared how YELP had given them the opportunity to attend sewing training in Honiara. Unfortunately, the training was purely theoretical which was difficult because they had no previous experience whatsoever. Undeterred, they located a woman from outside their community who agreed to come and give them lessons on a machine bought by the project. On the second day of their class, the machine broke. No one has been able to repair it. One woman lamented that her dream of selling simple clothing items made from dyed fabric was unable to be realized. She had identified the nearby GPPOL staff camp as a potential market but she had no product to sell.

Overall Efficiency Analysis

The Evaluation Team were impressed by the micro-finance model adopted by YELP. Communities visited had a deep understanding of the strengths based approach. The majority were actively saving funds, contributing cash to the start-up costs of livelihood projects in their YAP's, accessing micro-loans and actively pursuing further income generating options for their communities.

Whilst some communities were only generating limited income from their projects and experiencing challenges in accessing markets external to their own population, all field visit sites were able to identify real benefits from at least one of their YAP projects. Youth Management Committees were observed to have some long term plans for their communities.

There appeared to be mixed reactions to the benefit of some of the training offered by the project – in particular the content and outcomes from “mentoring” and “personal viability” training were not clearly understood and identified by community members.

EFFECTIVENESS

Achievements

The combination of training and support provided to YMC's in the development of their Youth Action Plans has been successful with at least one project in the communities demonstrating significant benefit.

ADRA used tangible project activities as an entry point for awareness raising on broader issues facing communities, such as gender, disaster risk reduction, and health awareness.

YELP has successfully targeted and engaged young people who had been marginalized in communities and provided them with opportunities to learn skills, take on leadership roles and gain respect.

Now we understand that we are something. We are not babies anymore. We are "big men" - Chair YMC Rakao

Practical skills training offered by the project has led to young people making improvements to community infrastructure in their villages including sanitation and water storage facilities.

ADRA are to be congratulated for their efforts to link cocoa producers to practical training and resources to improve the quality of the beans they are producing so they are suitable for the high end chocolate market. They are also to be commended for their efforts to link their YELP communities to markets via formal relationships with organisations in-country such as PHAMA and CEMA as well as further afield by brokering direct training and selling opportunities with overseas chocolate makers.

Effectiveness Approaches

YELP adopted a strategy of signing MOU's at the entry of the project into the community. These clearly set out the responsibilities of both ADRA and the community based on principles of the strengths based approach. If it became apparent that the community was not actively engaging or supporting the project's initiatives, ADRA was able to pull out of the community citing the failure to comply with their obligations under the MOU.

YELP recognized early on in the implementation that they needed to inform, engage and foster the support of the full community to ensure good outcomes. This was the case despite the project having youth as their target group. A key aspect of this approach was the support and engagement of church structures within the community. The Evaluation team found that most YELP sites had active engagement of local church leaders.

- *In Geza, the youthful Chairperson of the YMC has been transformed from a community outsider engaged in anti-social behavior including excessive alcohol consumption to a dynamic leader. Following his example and encouragement, young people have a renewed sense of responsibility towards their community. This is*

evidenced by their efforts to build and manage a nursery that assisted the entire community to quickly re-establish their food gardens after the devastating floods in 2014. Young people now identify needs of their elderly neighbours and assist them to clean up around their houses.

To tackle the complex issue of benefit sharing inherent in community project models, ADRA has looked to re-ignite the co-operative society model for canteens commenced as livelihood projects. Communities were introduced to the concept, trained in the relevant record keeping and linked with officers from the Ministry of Commerce for on-going support.

YELP also facilitated exchange visits between Youth Management Committees from different communities to assist them to “look and learn”. This assisted committees to share challenges and explore solutions with peers in their local vicinity as well as in other provinces.

Effectiveness Challenges

Whilst ADRA can be commended for its efforts in engaging and mobilising entire communities to support YELP initiatives, they have sometimes struggled to engage young people in the project’s activities. It may have been a mistake to allow adult men (particularly evident in Malaita sites) to hold executive positions on Youth Management Committees. In this respect, the approach adopted by Save the Children in “quarantining” YOPP committee officer bearer positions for young people and calling on community elders to offer their support informally or take up advisory type positions as ordinary members may have been a better model for promoting youth’s active engagement.

Not all of the technical training offered by YELP had opportunities for practical hands on learning. The Evaluation Team heard from community members that this was not an effective model for them to pick up new skills. In some cases the theoretical training presented was beyond the easy comprehension of participants with no prior knowledge of the area. They also expressed doubts about the costs associated with accommodating a limited number of community members in urban centres as opposed to field officers travelling to deliver training directly in communities.

Overall Effectiveness Analysis

The evaluation team found that ADRA has increased livelihood opportunities and resilience for young people and their communities in which it conducted YELP. There are some impressive examples of communities having embraced the strengths based approach, forming strong support around youth committees, saving, and initiating their own projects without reliance on ADRA.

ADRA’s use of the strengths based approach appears to have been very successful. The micro-finance approach of calling on communities to contribute cash as well as local physical and human resources to their livelihood projects has been particularly effective. The approach encourages good stewardship of funds and the assets

created. In the majority of cases it also appears to have provided communities with an early opportunity to experience achievement which then galvanizes ongoing support for new activities.

Although YELP has not achieved all of its outcomes as planned, the evaluation team found that ADRA's engagement with youth in rural communities has made a significant contribution to the SINPA partnership goal of improving livelihoods and wellbeing of Solomon Islanders, especially youth.

Community leaders have reported that risky behaviours among youth have reduced as a result of the project, relationships between elders and youth have improved, and youth are taking ownership of community projects and assets. The involvement of community leaders within this program is critical to its success.

SUSTAINABILITY

Local stakeholder involvement

It was clear from focus group discussions that the identification of potential livelihood projects for YAP's was a community led process. Whilst we heard that ADRA officers provided communities with a list of project ideas, communities felt able to select an activity that was not on the list. YELP staff then attempted (apparently with a high rate of success) to locate individuals or organisations who could provide any necessary technical training.

Field visits also revealed that YELP has managed to engage all sections of the target communities. However, in some instances this engagement moved from support by community leaders and elders to essential control of the committee and associated projects.

Appropriateness to context

Engaging with rural communities to support and promote youth livelihood activities and increase the voice of youth is highly relevant in the SI context. As highlighted by ADRA in one report, recently revised youth policies at the Malaita provincial government level promote similar activities and strategies.

Efforts to improve technical knowledge and market linkages between cocoa growers and chocolate makers is highly relevant for the areas where YELP communities are located with large numbers of mature trees already growing in the area.

Phase-out strategies

YELP has begun to convert canteens into co-operative society stores which can be supported by the Ministry of Commerce after the conclusion of the project. This appears to be a good strategy although some communities with low levels of financial literacy are already reporting some difficulty with the recording requirements.

The evaluation team also heard that Youth Management Committees will be “registered” with the Provincial level youth officers from the Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs. It is not immediately clear what benefits the committees will receive as a result of this action given that the Ministry has no funds available to support community based projects and very limited funds to facilitate their youth participation and engagement policy objectives.

YELP reports discuss efforts that are being made to pass on “Resilience and Mentoring” training modules to church groups for their ongoing use.

The evaluation team is also aware that YELP is seeking formal agreement from relevant Ministries that short term practical skills training for youth with low education attainment will continue to be made available at RTC’s. This is particularly relevant at Ngalikekero RTC in Malaita where YELP supported the building of a specific classroom facility.

Given the late stage in the project that these last two initiatives are being considered there are real doubts about the sustainability gains that are likely to be achieved.

Local capacity to sustain

The evaluation team was able to visit some sites where the YMC or at least a number of members of the committee will undoubtedly continue to pursue livelihood activities with a community benefit focus after the conclusion of YELP.

Literacy levels in some communities may be a barrier to the successful transition of canteens to co-operative society stores. Limited access to markets for communities without local cocoa supplies or who are not located near the main road may also become an obstacle to sustainability.

Overall Sustainability Analysis

ADRA has worked hard to establish linkages between local resources and communities to encourage self-reliance. This includes linking communities with formal banking, establishing cooperatives under the Ministry of Commerce, and establishing formal training linkages with an RTC.

Communities who have clearly understood and embraced the strengths based approach and who have had the opportunity to experience some financial success from their livelihood projects are likely to continue their efforts after the conclusion of YELP.

However, it is not clear how one of the highlights of YELP – the micro finance scheme - will be able to be continued post SINPA. It seems possible that the savings clubs that have been established in YELP communities could be equipped to provide small loans to their members from their own funds in a manner similar to the model adopted by the Todega tude for Tomoro Project administered by Live and Learn Solomon Islands.

SINPA FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

PROJECT ANALYSIS FOR

IWDA/LLSI: Together Today for Tomorrow (TTft) project

Executive Summary

SINPA was a A\$22.6 million program that aimed to support Solomon Islanders, in particular women and young people, to improve their own health, wellbeing and livelihoods. It began in 2009 and comprised of five non-government organisations (NGOs) working in partnership with each other, local Solomon Islands NGOs and their donor, the Australian Government, to identify, test and learn from contextually appropriate development models.

An end-of-program evaluation, commissioned by the Australian Government, was undertaken in November 2015. This evaluation found that SINPA achieved improvements in terms of strengthened community cohesion and governance, improved rural livelihoods and women's empowerment that benefited directly targeted communities and contributed to Australia's aid priorities in the Solomon Islands of stability, economic growth and human development.

It was evident to the evaluation team that the 'partnership' between NGOs and the Australian Government increased the overall effectiveness of SINPA NGOs, their staff, and their programs. This was achieved through ongoing reflective practice, documenting learnings, peer review, training, deepening relationships between NGOs, and sharing resources.

A key strength of SINPA was its integration of gender considerations within organisations and projects. Through collaboration, the SINPA Partners adopted a partnership wide commitment to promoting gender equality in projects, improving organisational practices relating to gender equality, and working towards the equal and meaningful participation of women and girls in decision-making processes that affect their lives. This is a stand-out example of what 'partnership' between NGOs can achieve and the way that partners can learn from one another.

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While all projects under SINPA demonstrated successful outcomes, the quality of reporting across the full life of the SINPA program compromised the ability of partners to aggregate and report program success.

The evaluation found that SINPA Partners had taken a thoughtful approach to managing the high cost context of working in remote community based settings. Field staff demonstrated remarkable tenacity in navigating logistical, communication and accountability challenges and SINPA Partners developed sensible national and provincial level staffing structures that sought to minimise costs and maximize accountability.

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This Annex is a report of the TTFT project that was jointly implemented by the International Women’s Development Agency (IWDA), Australia and Live and Learn Solomon Islands (LLSI). The assessment of each of the SINPA projects considered three areas:

- **EFFICENCY:** Did the project deliver its outcomes efficiently?
- **EFFECTIVNESS:** Did the SINPA project achieve its outcomes and objectives effectively?
- **SUSTAINABILITY:** To what extent have the outcomes of the SINPA project contributed to lasting change?

The DFAT Evaluation Team undertook a desk review that included IWDA/ LLSI reports; DFAT joint monitoring trip reports; learning papers prepared by IWDA/LLSI; the DFAT Mid-Term Review; and the 2013 Financial Management Systems and Procedures Assessment. As part of the DFAT commissioned evaluation, LLSI provided a self assessment of its own efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability in the form of a questionnaire, which has informed the findings of the evaluation team. This was supplemented by field work in the Solomon Islands that included attendance at two workshops by in-country LLSI staff; focus group discussions at five project sites; key informant interviews with three Community Facilitators, and a semi structured discussion with the local LLSI project coordinators.

Project description

The International Women’s Development Agency worked with Live & Learn Solomon Islands to undertake the Tugeda Tude fo Tumoro (Together Today for Tomorrow, TTfT) project. The TTfT project worked toward more inclusive and environmentally sustainable communities in 50 communities across five provinces in the Solomon Islands. Main activities included women led savings clubs, development of income-generating activities, establishment of sustainable use areas and development of community action plans. A range of training and learning sessions supported these activities including in governance and leadership skills, livelihoods, financial management, and sustainable use areas.

Project Outcomes

The TTfT project was designed to create change in four domains:

1. Individual change in knowledge, attitudes and perceptions towards natural resource management practices, sustainable livelihoods and gender inclusive decision making processes.
2. Change in capacity of groups and communities to organise and mobilise environmentally sound, more equitable and sustainable livelihoods.
3. Change in community wellbeing and resilience through safeguarding natural resources, sustainable livelihoods and more inclusive participation and decision making processes.
4. Changes in regulatory and policy approaches, towards evidence-based policies and legal structures that safeguard natural resources, protect rights and promote gender equity.

EFFICIENCY

Operational Set-Up

The TTfT project was jointly implemented by International Women’s Development Agency (IWDA), Australia and Live and Learn Solomon Islands (LLSI). It was implemented by a team of 7 people working from LLSI’s office in Honiara and with 14 community facilitators working in seven hubs in five provinces of Solomon Islands.

Total Cost

The overall funding received from DFAT over the six phases of the project was \$AUD4,078,358.17. As an indicator of the way costs were allocated, expenditure for Phase 5, representing 1 February 2013 - 30 June 2014, is shown below. These allocations would suggest that IWDA took a reasonable approach to oversight, support and monitoring of this project.

	Ph 5	% Total
In-Australia Personnel	112,150	11
In-Australia non-personnel	19,672	2
In- Solomon personnel	277,776	28
In-Solomon non-personnel	91,903	9
In-Solomon Activity Costs	368,932	37
Monitoring and Evaluation	116,647	12
Management fee	0	
Total	987,079	100

Reported Results

At the time of the mid-term review, TTfT had established women led savings groups in 14 TTfT communities and these Clubs had saved over SBD 100,000. By mid 2015, LLSI reported that it was working in 50 communities and had established 25 savings groups with a total membership of 778 women. A further 19 savings clubs have been initiated by women who were not in the project but learnt from TTfT savings clubs in neighbouring communities. Using group savings and community labour, Savings Clubs have built community infrastructure such as offices and meeting halls and established a variety of income-generating activities. The savings clubs have saved over SBD\$763,651 as at 30 Sept 2015 and are likely to be sustained and replicated. Over 80 income generation or community development initiatives have been supported by savings club loans or capital.

LLSI and IWDA reported that 19 Sustainable Use Areas have been established, with 13 so far having developed a Management Action Plan. This assists communities to map out strengths and mobilise support for community-led development. TTfT has linked some of the Savings Clubs and Sustainable Use Area management groups to other resources and institutions including WorldFish, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, and the Commodities Export Marketing Authority. The evaluation team visited an eco-lodge that had been established with the support of a community, and met two communities who had established marine protected areas, but did not see linkages in the other three communities visited during the evaluation.

At the partnership level, LLSI & IWDA documented the savings club model and provided training and support in gender inclusivity. This resulted in the inclusion of gender standards within an 'organizational capacity assessment tool', which equipped SINPA partners to carry out gender analysis of their organisations and developed organizational gender action plans.

Cost Analysis

TTfT provided support in the form of training and awareness raising. Once it had confidence in a savings club's capacity to self-manage, it also made small capital investments to support income generating activities.

On the basis that TTfT has successfully established 25 savings clubs which have saved over SBD\$763,651 as at 30 Sept 2015, the return on TTfT investments in communities is reasonable. The value is extended when the ripple effect is taken into account – the additional 19 savings clubs that have been initiated by women who were not in the project and over 80 income generation or community development initiatives have been supported by savings club loans or capital. Given the success of the savings club model, the evaluation team considered the costs of the project to be fair and reasonable for the outcomes that it achieved.

Efficiency Measures

A Financial Management Systems and Procedures Assessment was undertaken in July 2013, which concluded that LLSI Solomon Islands financial systems, controls and procedures were in place and considered adequate.

There were significant efficiencies in having the bulk of TTfT's project activities delivered by local people in the community. The use of local facilitators, elected by community members ensures that their local credibility leverages commitment from communities, that the facilitator can navigate and negotiate local complexities, and draw on local networks to resolve logistical challenges associated with working in rural areas.

Community facilitators travelled to Honiara periodically for training, reporting and reflection purposes. TTfT held 6-monthly reflection activities, which were reasonably expensive in themselves but proved more efficient in the long-term as the peer-learning and support that grew out of these meant that CFs were able to implement effectively with less close support/ supervision from Honiara between reflections over the longer term. Interim support by phone was largely sufficient in the interim.

Pairing and clustering CFs so they could support each other contributed to a more self-supporting model, as well as enabling synergies in programming where travel or communication between CFs is possible. LLSI reported that 6 community facilitators in Western Province who were in relative geographical proximity organised several learning and support activities together for greater efficiency.

Efficiency Challenges

Although there were significant efficiency and effectiveness benefits to using local community facilitators, the evaluation team observed that this can also create complexities. For example, there are sometimes jealousies within communities when it is known that one of their members is being paid – this can also lead to perceptions that the paid community member is unfairly benefiting from the project. Equally, LLSI became reliant on community facilitators to arrange transport, but could not easily verify or test quoted costs. Despite these challenges, the use of local

facilitators is still considered to be the most efficient and effective way of delivering this project.

LLSI community sites were located in 7 geographic hubs in five provinces. While the approach of 'hubs' was an efficient way to manage projects and build local linkages and networks, LLSI still incurred significant travel costs in transporting community facilitators to Honiara for training and reflection activities, transporting materials for income generating projects, and for their own monitoring trips. In retrospect, it may have been more efficient for LLSI to focus on the same number of communities, but in fewer provinces. On the other hand the spread of the TTfT project across provinces mean that the models was able to be tested and developed across a variety of contexts.

EFFECTIVENESS

Achievements

The TTfT project sought to work in three areas in an integrated way: environmental education; promoting sustainable livelihoods; and promoting gender equality in particular women's inclusion in decision making about natural resource management.

Although it was intended that the areas would be integrated, the evaluation team observed that TTfT had found it challenging to gain the interest and support of communities in taking action in natural resource management. Only three of the six sites visited during the evaluation included a natural resource management component - one was an eco-lodge that was established with the support of a community, and two communities had established marine protected areas. While it is acknowledged that there were many NRM sites in the TTfT project that were not visited, the sites that were included in the evaluation suggested weak linkages to NRM and overall weak understanding and commitment to long term NRM.

Through discussion, Community Facilitators and community members indicated that environmental education had been conducted and was well received, but did not necessarily lead to improved natural resource management. Communities indicated that it was difficult to prioritise natural resource management unless it had a direct and observable benefit to their livelihoods. The reason that marine protected areas had been established is that communities found that fish stock increased when they protected some areas, which then resulted in a higher fish yield after a period of time. Discussion with key LLSI staff also indicated that it had been difficult to mobilize communities into formalized NRM action and that the environmental aspect of the TTfT project had resulted in limited success. Deeper analysis of the constraints to TTfT achieving its natural resource management objectives should be a product of LLSI's own end of project evaluation.

The evaluation team did find, however, that TTfT's focus on establishing savings clubs was an outstanding success and had a positive impact on the economic resilience and well being of women. For example, in Manawai, TTfT provided training for watermelon and cabbage growing, but they did not provide seeds or tools. Women used their own savings to buy seeds and this led to a large watermelon harvest that was sold in Honiara. The savings club model is a good example of a strengths based approach to community development. TTfT provided training and support to communities to start their own savings clubs, without any financial contribution from TTfT.

Women who were members of savings club shared stories that show how important savings have been to supporting sustainable livelihoods. They meet cash flow needs and provide a safety net for unexpected costs like illness. They also provide a basis for investment.

"It was hard to save before, because we spent everything that we had."

"Before, money arrived today and finished today. Now, the money stays."

"Before, I didn't know about savings but now I understand. It means I can meet any needs now. And I am confident."

"Training helped me. I used to spend too much, but I learned to save to meet my basic needs."

"I struggled with life and I didn't know about savings. Then LLSI came and I learned how to save. Now I can buy clothes for my children and pay for school fees. I even saved up until I could build my own house."

- quotes from savings club members in focus group discussions

The savings club model has enabled women's access to and control of financial resources. This is significant as it addresses the lack of sustainable banking services in rural areas in the Solomon Islands and the barriers that women face in reaching banking facilities.

"There are no banks here. But now, we have our own banking right here in our community and we can access cash when we need it to meet our needs. We don't need to leave our community anymore to find a business person to loan us money."

- quote from savings club members in the Olomburi community

The evaluation team found that savings clubs have provided women with an opportunity to mobilise resources to invest in community and personal initiatives and with a space to gain skills and confidence in governance, decision making, and financial management. There was some evidence that the creation of a savings club provided an incentive for both men and women to earn more. It sparked, in some ways, an entrepreneurial drive for men to earn and save money through their wives, and a platform for husbands and wives to work together.

TTfT also facilitated ongoing discussions about gender equality and inclusive leadership, which combined with platforms for women's participation in savings club, income generation and local governance, contributes to gradual attitudinal changes and shifts in power dynamics within communities that recognize women's role in management and decision making. There was evidence that improvements in women's confidence and capacity has led to broader changes to women's participation in community decision making and gender relations.

"Before, women were quiet in meetings. But now they share their mind – they speak out. We don't hold our words inside our mind anymore, now they come out."

- quote from savings club member

One of the benefits of LLSI's investments in the savings club model is that there has been a kind of 'viral effect' whereby women have observed the benefits of savings clubs and replicated the model in their own community without significant project support. Where these clubs were proximate to ongoing LLSI activity, these groups were able to attend and benefit from training. LLSI reports 25 savings club established within the project and a further 19 savings clubs initiated by women in neighbouring communities. This amplifies the positive impact of LLSI's direct support.

Effectiveness Approaches

For each of the SINPA projects, the evaluation team sought to identify approaches that contributed to overall program effectiveness. For the TTfT project, these included:

- Savings Clubs

The evaluation team found that TTfT's focus on establishing savings clubs has achieved a positive impact on the economic resilience and well being of women and their communities. Savings clubs have enabled women in mostly rural areas to have more control over family finance and develop savings habits, which has demonstrated significant benefits to their lives. By being able to access a safe place to save money in their local community, women are able to overcome the challenges of trying to save money in the home when faced with pressure from husbands, male relatives, and wantoks to provide cash.

"It helps to have the money out of the house because then my husband cannot find it and I am not tempted to give it when my wantoks ask for money" – savings club member in focus group discussion

- Strengths Based Approach

The savings club model is a great demonstration of a strengths based approach, in which women are equipped to take greater control of their own development. Training and support was provided over a four year period to support women to establish and practice skills in good governance, leadership, and financial management.

- Formal structures for women

The savings club model has provided an opportunity for women to formally come together on a regular basis. In some communities, this is the only forum in which they are able to discuss non-church related matters. The practice of meeting regularly and self managing has provided women with training and experience in leadership, governance, and financial management. It has also provided women with a reason to come together on a regular basis. Women in communities said that they use these opportunities to share challenges and provide support to reach other. Women highlighted the benefits of closer relationships and community cohesion, which in turn strengthens resilience – this is especially important in communities where leadership and decision making is male dominated.

“Before, we were frightened to share our problems with each other but this savings club helped bring us together, to help each other and uplift each other. - savings club member in focus group discussion

- Formal opportunities for women

A unique aspect of the women led savings club is that it insisted upon women’s participation and leadership. This differs vastly from other community structures where women are encouraged to participate, but where they must share power and decision making responsibilities with men. Limiting membership in a savings club to women has meant that women have become an agent for saving and managing family finances, which shifts power dynamics within families and within communities. The establishment of written policy for the savings club equips women to retain core principles including it being women led and women membership. This has enabled women to resist requests for men to join and offers from more literate men to take over managing their accounts.

- Women led development

The recognition of benefits provided by the infrastructure development, in many cases led by women’s savings clubs, has contributed to increased respect in the community for women’s leadership and participation by men and village elders in these community projects. In this way, women’s ability to manage a savings club and associated income generating projects has demonstrated to men in communities that women can play a role in leadership.

Effectiveness Challenges

Based on the sites visited during the evaluation and discussion with project staff, the evaluation team found that TTfT faced challenges in gaining traction on the natural resource management aspect of the project. It undertook awareness raising activities in all communities, but found it difficult to mobilize communities into formalized action. It is important to recognize that discussion of the environment is challenging in the context of strong incentives for resource use and extraction. The Community Facilitators found that translating natural resource management awareness into practice very much depended on communities being able to see a direct and quick benefit to their immediate lives from changing their natural resource management practices.

One of the challenges identified in SINPA program generally was the limited access of communities to markets. The evaluation team found that new income generating activities often stalled or failed because communities did not have skills to undertake business viability assessments before investing, or faced overwhelming barriers to access markets. In the case of the TTfT project, the examples of successful income generating activities that had been initiated tended to rely on community level market opportunities – for example, fuel depots, vegetables, and small scale livestock. The evaluation team observed that factors that led to successful TTfT income generating activities included that they tended to be small scale, were led by women, and were identified by communities. There was strong interest from women to become involved in more income generating opportunities, but they had been largely encouraged to save rather than withdraw and invest. DFAT had encouraged the project to take more initiative in assisting women to invest, but LLSI and IWDA took the view that learning to save has particular benefits that are important to women, and that establishing a minimum level of financial literacy through savings clubs is essential before leading women into high-risk lending activity.

Overall Effectiveness Analysis

Although the TTfT project has not achieved all of its outcomes as planned, it has made an outstanding contribution to the SINPA partnership goal of improving livelihoods and wellbeing of women. The savings clubs established under the TTfT project has led to demonstrable change in the role of women, the capacity of women, and the resilience of women in rural communities. There is good evidence of the model being replicated by communities that have observed the benefits of savings clubs, and of other NGOS seeking to integrate savings clubs into established programs.

LLSI and IWDA undertook formal reflections throughout the project and adapted its approach to reflect learning, as was intended within the SINPA program. LLSI and IWDA made excellent efforts in documenting their approach and shared learnings within the SINPA partnership and beyond.

SUSTAINABILITY

Local stakeholder involvement

TTfT sought to form Savings Clubs under the auspices of existing community groups such as women's church groups wherever possible, thus increasing the likelihood of their acceptance in the broader community and increasing the likelihood of sustainability.

TTfT also found that groups who had a common interest in shared resources and who already cooperated effectively together, were the best platform for establishing shared natural resource management plans.

Appropriateness to context

LLSI undertook extensive research to design the savings club model and has addressed many of the failures of previous micro credit programs that had operated in remote communities in the Solomon Islands previously. It was evident from discussions with communities that the savings club model suits rural and remote communities who do not have access to banking services.

Although success in the natural resource management components of the project are not as clear, the natural resource management flipchart is considered an excellent resource that is tailored to the Solomon Islands and for delivering awareness raising training in remote communities. This and other LLSI resources should remain accessible to communities for ongoing reference and use.

One of the key investments made by TTfT towards sustainability in the Solomon Islands context was iterative governance, leadership, gender and conflict management training. This has equipped savings groups to establish strong governance and accountability mechanisms that reduces the likelihood of in-group conflicts and provides women with an opportunity to demonstrate their leadership capacity.

The community facilitators are community-based leaders and have the potential to use their skills and knowledge in support of their communities.

Phase-out strategies

TTfT committed to providing leaders of savings clubs with training and resources so that they could respond to future demand from other women's groups to establish new clubs. IWDA and LLSI were proposing that the new savings clubs would access community facilitators through a user pays basis, as some replicated clubs have been established in this way. Discussion with community facilitators, however, did not indicate that training and resources had been provided at the time of the evaluation but was planned. The evaluation team found that the capacity of Community Facilitators across the six sites was variable, indicating that success of an independent user pays model is likely to need ongoing support and resources from a resourced and skilled organization such as LLSI.

There was some evidence that TTfT has helped communities establish linkages with other actors, including other NGOs, and line government Ministries. For example, the community at Pearo has been linked with WorldFish who will provide further support on species identification in their marine protected areas. This is positive, of course, but a broader finding of the DFAT evaluation is that SINPA partners could have invested more in brokering linkages between communities and local business, government and institutions earlier in the program and more consistently. In the case of TTfT for example, there would have been value in identifying market opportunities for local livestock and vegetables that women had been encouraged to grow to earn income. Communities reported limited scope to sell produce locally and may have been able to taken their activities to scale if assisted to make a more formal linkage with medium sized business or markets.

Local capacity to sustain

The evaluation team found that savings clubs established by TTfT show good prospects of being sustained. TTfT reports that all clubs are consistently saving and that women have maintained control of money within savings clubs, with increasing support from their husbands. Monitoring visits made to five savings clubs found that savings clubs had clear policy guidelines to manage and sustain their operation.

It was also evident that savings groups members had acquired sufficient skills, knowledge and experience through the TTfT project to independently manage and continue savings clubs, albeit to different extents in different communities.

As noted above, the evaluation team was not assured that community facilitators would be able to use their skills and knowledge to provide the same level of support for savings club set up and maintenance on a user-pays basis, without support themselves. For example, in two communities visited, savings records were out of date and poorly documented. Savings club members were not sure how they would continue to govern and report on their savings club without the requirement to report to LLSI.

There was also some concern within the evaluation team that important resources developed within the TTfT project such as the Savings Training Guide, savings club forms, and the NRM flipchart may not continue to be accessible to resource people and to communities. It is positive to note that LLSI and IWDA have held discussions to ensure that these resources remain available via Community Facilitators or location in a public access space.

Savings club members in all communities stressed the importance for ongoing financial literacy and management training, particularly for new office holders who would be responsible for recording savings club transactions. The use of passbooks and account ledgers was variable, with some showing records that were well maintained, and others that showed records that were poorly maintained. When asked how savings clubs would continue to manage and report savings club finances after the withdrawal of LLSI, the general response was that members were not sure.

The evaluation team acknowledges that it did not see many resource management aspects of the project through the field visits, but on the basis of the two sites that it did see, was not confident that marine protected areas would be sustained without stronger imperatives for communities to sustain their interest in NRM.

Overall Sustainability Analysis

Overall, the evaluation team found that the savings club aspect of the TTfT project has a strong likelihood of being sustained and of being replicated and scaled. In this way, the TTfT project has made a strong and significant contribution to improving the well being and livelihoods of women and their families. This will be enhanced if TTfT's savings club materials can be made readily accessible to other NGOs and actors in the Solomon Islands.

The evaluation team did not find similarly strong evidence that the natural resource management aspects of the TTfT project are likely to be sustained, although note the potential for the valuable resources developed through the project to continue to educate and inform local communities.