



Solomon Islands 41st Independence Anniversary Symposium Proceedings

Moving Forward in Unity to Build a Stronger Nation



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Organized by: The Solomon Islands Students Association (SISA), Solomon Islands Research Network (SIRN) & Solomon Islands High Commission Office in Fiji (SIHC)

The University of the South Pacific, Laucala Campus, Fiji Islands

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Table of Contents

Recommended Citation.....	ii
Foreword.....	v
Acknowledgement	vi
1.0 The Symposium Report	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Objectives	2
1.3 Call for papers.....	2
1.4 Symposium organizers.....	3
1.4.1 Solomon Islands Students Association (SISA).....	3
1.4.2 Solomon Islands Research Network (SIRN).....	4
1.4.3 Solomon Islands High Commission (SIHC) Office, Fiji	5
1.5 The symposium programme.....	6
2.0 Paper presenters, working titles and abstracts.....	7
2.1 Tony Hiriasia. Constituency development funds (CDFs): common problems and outcomes	7
2.2 Jerry Siota. Rethinking new public management: public service reforms and service delivery	8
2.3 Ambrose Malefoasi. Education decentralization, education authorities and education delivery.....	8
2.4 Pamela Kenilorea. SIICAC: A different trajectory from FICAC?.....	9
2.5 Walter Malau. Fraud concepts and repeated disclaimer of audit opinions in Solomon Islands.....	10
2.6 Jeremy Dorovolomo. The role of sports in building a socially cohesive Solomon Islands	11
2.7 Katy Soapi. Conservation: experiences of the Tetepare Descendants Association	11
2.8 Exsley Taloiburi. Unlocking the potential of international climate finance	12
2.9 Milton Keremama. Ethnometeorological knowledge and climate change data on Choiseul.....	13
2.10 Linda Vaike. Nationally determined contributions (NDCs) for MSG countries	14
2.11 Gordon Nanau. The status of land issues in Solomon Islands: policy suggestions	14
2.12 Stephen Kapu. The Anglican Church of Melanesia, 1975 to 2019.....	15
3.0 The Symposium summary and resolutions	15
Session I: Official addresses and statements.....	16
Session II: Public sector management, reforms and leadership	17
Session III: Fraud, anti-corruption commissions and nation building	18
Session IV: Community conservation project	19
Session V: International climate finance, climate data, local knowledge and food security	19

Session VI: Supplementary issues: land and church.....	21
4.0 Symposium evaluation and feedback.....	21
4.1 Evaluation responses.....	22
4.1.1 Gender composition of respondents.....	23
4.1.2 Level of study	24
4.1.3. Symposium awareness	25
4.1.4. Sessions attended	26
4.1.5. Attendance determinants.....	26
4.1.6. Sessions of interest to participants	27
4.1.7. Satisfaction rate.....	27
4.1.8. Likelihood to attend future Solomon Islands’ Symposium.....	28
4.2 Analysis.....	29
4.3 Limitations	30
4.4 Symposium costs	30
5.0 Symposium observations and suggestions for future events.....	31
5.1 Observations and comments	31
5.2 Suggestions	32
6.0 Conclusion	33
References.....	35
Appendices.....	36
Annex A: Symposium programme	36
Annex B: Attendance list	39
Annex C: Random photos	43
Annex D: Budget detailed break-down.....	45

Foreword

The second Solomon Islands Independence Symposium was held on 5th July 2019 at the University of the South Pacific (USP) in Suva, Fiji. The 2019 symposium is part of a week-long independence commemoration by Solomon Islands Students, academics and those working and living in Fiji, and descendants of Solomon Islanders taken to Fiji during the colonial era. Discussion papers by postgraduate students, academics and researchers were presented and aligned to the independence theme *‘Moving forward in Unity to Build a Stronger Nation’*. It was attended by around 250 participants, mainly students and staff of USP, Fiji National University (FNU), University of Fiji (UniFiji) and the Pacific Theological College (PTC).

Our two guests of honour were USP’s Vice Chancellor, Professor Pal Ahluwalia and His Excellency Mr. William Soaki, Solomon Islands High Commissioner to Fiji. Professor Ahluwalia in his opening remarks reminded students that one of USP’s main focuses under his leadership is to excel in research and innovations. This also means increased top-ranked research publications. The Symposium is a strategy to fulfill this essential function of the university. He pledged USP’s support for future symposiums in this ‘series’. High Commissioner, Mr. Soaki, in his remarks shared his office’s excitement on being part of the organizing committee as well as co-funding this program with SISA. He strongly believes that there is a missing link between academia and the Solomon Islands Government (SIG). The High Commissioner assured participants that the ‘proceedings’ from the symposium will find its way to the SIG. His Excellency challenged students to be ‘foot soldiers’, rather than ‘keyboard warriors’.

The Organizing Committee compiled this report for two reasons: (1) to provide a summary of the events for those who did not attend; and (2) to have a document that can be forwarded to SIG through S.I High Commission office in Suva, Fiji.

Jerry Begg Siota

Chair,

Symposium Organizing Committee, 2019

Acknowledgement

The 2019 Solomon Islands Independence Symposium Organizing Committee (SIISOC) wish to say *tagio tumas* to Solomon Islanders and supporters in Suva, Fiji for the successful 2019 symposium.

We sincerely thank the Solomon Islands High Commissioner, H.E William Soaki for his key note address and participation in the entire programme. We also gratefully acknowledge the Vice Chancellor and President of USP, Professor Pal Ahluwalia, for his presence and opening address. We thank them both sincerely for gracing us with their presence.

Secondly, we acknowledge SISA and the Solomon Islands High Commission in Fiji for financial support. Without these support, the symposium may not have been successful.

Thirdly, *tagio tumas* to all paper presenters for engaging the student body with your research findings. On this note, it is fair to thank Solomon Islands Research Network (SIRN) members, particularly Dr. Gordon Nanau and Dr. Jeremy Dorovolomo for your technical support.

Appreciation also goes to the following individuals, who played critical roles in supporting this event: Mr. Adrian Neve (SISA President & SIISOC Member), Mr. Maxsweeney Kekevera (SISA Treasurer & SIISOC Member), Mr. Ellison Mason (SIHC Counselor & SIISOC Member), Mrs. Maria Nanau (SIISOC Member), Mrs. Ellen Wariu (SIISOC Member), Mr. Jerry Siota (SIISOC Member), Dr. Samson Viulu (Rapporteur), Dr. Tammy Tabe (Session 4 Chair & Rapporteur), Dr. Paul Mae (Rapporteur) and Mrs. Pamela Kenilorea (Rapporteur).

Finally, without our MCs, Session Chairs, time-keepers and ushers, the symposium would not have progressed smoothly. Our special thanks to all of you.

Tagio tumas lo iufala evriwan!

1.0 The Symposium Report

1.1 Introduction

The *Solomon Islands 41st Independence Anniversary Symposium* is the second event following its inauguration in 2017. A collaborative effort between the Solomon Islands Students Association (SISA), Solomon Islands Research Network (SIRN) and Solomon Islands High Commission in Fiji (SIHC) resulted in a successful symposium. It was hosted at the AusAid Lecture Theater, USP Laucala Campus on 5th July 2019. The SISA and SIHC co-sponsored the program whilst SIRN provided the technical support. The symposium adopted as its theme the national 41st Independence Anniversary theme: “*Moving forward in Unity to build a Stronger Nation*”. At 41 years of age, there are issues that threaten to divide the Solomon Islands. Some of these issues were highlighted during the symposium. These range from governance issues, battles against corruption, strategies for nation building, climate change, environmental preservation, land issues, the role of the churches in maintaining order in society, to mention a few. There is also much optimism that such an event provides a platform for researchers and the Solomon Islands Government (SIG) to engage in valuable conversations around national issues and look for possible evidence based solutions.

According to recent statistics, Solomon Islands economy continues to rely on unsustainable activities such as logging. Recent statistics showed record level exports of logs exceeding 2m cubic meters (CBSI, 2019) while copra and cocoa exports are declining (Ibid). Data also showed increases in urban population to 19.8% (SINSO, 2009). Nevertheless, total population in urban areas outnumbered the total number of ‘formal jobs’ in existence (CBSI, 2019). This means, that more than 50% of the population are unemployed or engaged in the informal sector. Furthermore, only 62% of school-aged children are accessing education (MEHRD 2013). The uneven distribution of development gave rise to high social inequalities. Statistics indicate that 14% of people live under poverty with parts of Honiara, such as East Honiara recording high incidences of poverty (SINSO, 2017). This confirms the notion that increased migration to urban areas puts pressure on limited infrastructure and jobs available in urban centers and that may contribute to increased levels of poverty and crime. Lack of important infrastructure such as roads, schools, clinics, electricity, and access to safe water and proper sanitation, constrains economic and social

development in the provinces. Moreover, global phenomenon such as climate change put additional pressure on the government and its limited resources. Further still, corruption in the public sector present additional challenges. These and other factors are threats to national unity.

The organizers of the *Solomon Islands Independence Symposium series* aspire to provide an avenue for Solomon Islands issues to be discussed and debated bi-annually. The recommendations and resolutions emanating from such conversations are forwarded to government representatives, non-government organisations, students and researchers. Research and analysis should always be the basis for policy making in Solomon Islands and it is important that that policy-makers can recognize and appreciate the role of proper research in addressing our national challenges. Recommendations, resolutions and suggestions can potentially influence policy initiatives and development practice. Establishing a stronger linkage between research and SIG is a medium that can propel Solomon Islands to “move forward in unity to build a stronger nation”.

1.2 Objectives

The objectives of the 2019 Symposium are as follows:

- Provide a platform for Solomon Islands under-graduate students, research students, professionals and academics to share evidence-based suggestions and recommendations on issues affecting Solomon Islands;
- Close the gap between academia and SIG by mutual sharing of evidence-based solutions;
- Provide a platform for Solomon Islands students and researchers to meet regularly and publish collaboratively on issues affecting Solomon Islands;
- Provide an avenue to stimulate young people to think more broadly, analytically and constructively in finding solutions to problems facing Solomon Islands.

1.3 Call for papers

The organizing committee convened on April 2019 and a two month (May to June) call for abstracts and papers was disseminated. A specially designed flyer by Solomon Islands USP

journalism students was distributed via email and social media. It attracted 13 papers which were divided into five (5) categories:

1. Public sector management, reforms and leadership;
2. Fraud concepts, anti-corruption commissions and nation building;
3. Community conservation projects;
4. International climate finance, climate data, local knowledge and food security adaptation;
and
5. Other national issues (such as land issues & the Churches role in national development)

1.4 Symposium organizers

As mentioned, SISA, SIRN and SIHC were the key supporters and organizers of the 2019 Symposium. Hence it is important to understand: (i) what they hope to achieve by supporting the symposium and (ii) the type of support they rendered.

1.4.1 Solomon Islands Students Association (SISA)

One of SISA's objectives is to engage students in educational activities. The range of programmes includes initiation of USP's student support services for Solomon Islands students, especially seeking assistance from senior students and USP Student Learning Services (SLS). The activities are based on their relevance to students after completion of studies, preparing them for job applications and life in the workplace.

When the Solomon Islands Research Network (SIRN) requested SISA's support to organize the 41st Independence Symposium, it aligned well with our objectives and we rendered total support. The work then began when the SIRN, SISA and the Solomon Islands High Commission Office worked collaboratively to plan and organize the symposium program.

SISA executive hoped that the symposium will give valuable experience to students, particularly with quality information relevant to Solomon Islands context and focusing on current issues. Working together in organizing the symposium provided an avenue for students to interact with

our academics and researchers. Information during the symposium provided students with essential information for their reflection and digestion. Hopefully these information will assist students to improve their communities, societies and the country.

SISA executive has rendered strong support towards this program with contribution in planning and finance; withdrawing its financial contributions from the University of the South Pacific Students Association (USPSA) towards the symposium. SISA also plays a major role on arrangement of logistical support including, venue arrangements and assisting the food preparation for the event.

1.4.2 Solomon Islands Research Network (SIRN)

The Solomon Islands Research Network (SIRN) comprises mostly of Solomon Islands research/thesis students, academic and administrative staff at USP Laucala Campus. Our aim as a network is to ensure research projects undertaken in the Solomon Islands have a platform that the wider community could hear about their findings and recommendations (where there are recommendations). As such, the Independence Anniversary Symposium is the principal forum for such engagements by researchers on Solomon Islands issues. We expect students and USP researchers doing work on the Solomon Islands to use the platform to educate themselves and get factual information on issues affecting or benefitting Solomon Islands. As these presentations are evidence-based, it is our aim that some of the evidence-based suggestions/recommendations find their way through policy channels to inform decisions at the national, provincial or local levels in the country.

Moreover, as a network that encourages research, discussions and finding solutions to Solomon Islands issues, SIRN is also hopeful that the papers presented are actually written up and published in accessible publications. To ensure that this happens, SIRN organizes writer's workshops and discussions to assist the young and not so young researchers to write up their papers. At the end of the exercise, the participants would have developed skills to turn papers presented in conferences and workshops into completed publishable drafts. SIRN is hopeful that such papers will be published either as conference proceedings, special issues on a journal or edited books. Again, the

expectation is to get these data and information on the Solomon Islands to policy makers and decisions makers in the country. It will also result in people interested in the country to learn more about the issues, challenges and achievements.

The SIRD is one of the partners in the organisation, implementation and evaluation of the Independence Symposium. The organising committee is made up of representatives from the Solomon Islands High Commission Office in Suva, the Solomon Islands Students Association and SIRD. SIRD mostly provides advisory and technical support to the organising committee with the aim that there are actual tangible outputs at the end of the symposium. Members therefore are responsible for putting together the Symposium Programme, vetting of brief coverage of the papers to the wider community prior to release, drafting of symposium communique, putting together of symposium report and proceedings, writers' workshops after presentations, writing support and advice to presenters, and editing and publication of conference papers where possible. Again, SIRD basically plays the advisory role and provides technical support to the symposium.

1.4.3 Solomon Islands High Commission (SIHC) Office, Fiji

The High Commission expectation regarding the symposium is to bring together our academics and students to discuss issues/matters pertaining to our country. As a member of USP with the second largest number of students in the region, we have a great interest in our students. Hoping they will return home one day and become 'foot-soldiers' to assist our country in all our works of life. The symposium is a vehicle for training whilst simultaneously providing opportunities for students to present their research findings or what they have studied and recommend changes to our country's system, formation, powers and how we administer our human resources. It is for the good of our nation! We hope that this will also encourage more to write and advocate for more good things.

In terms of support – the SIHC coordinates with the organizing committee, students, our government and other stakeholders to raise awareness about this symposium. Not only that, but we also support in terms of finance and advise on how we can conduct something that will raise the profile of our country. This year we were honored by the presence of the Vice-Chancellor at

the opening the symposium. Also, we were graced with the participation of some professionals and public officers sharing their knowledge. I have heard some students mentioned that *“I have learnt a lot from these talks”*, some they said *“it was an eye opening event that we need to do it every year”*. Other students, *“this type of event make me want to work hard and give me some knowledge about what I want to do in the future”*. Overall, this is what the High Commission really want to achieve, engaging more with our students and academics to create an informed society, rather than a society that ignores what we are capable of. We need to be more proactive with the limited resources we have. Sometimes, we say that everything is about money. This type of mentality should not be the case because it will make us expect more and do less. At the end of the day, we are building up a country where we solve our own issues. This year we have raised the profile of our symposium and we must keep it like this. The High Commission will always try and assist us in this respect and education being one issue that is a priority.

1.5 The symposium programme

The programme was divided into six (6) sessions, session one being the official opening. The official opening was done by our Chief Guest, USP Vice-Chancellor and President, Professor Pal Ahluwalia. The keynote was delivered by His Excellency Mr. William Soaki, Solomon Islands High Commissioner to Fiji. Three Masters of Ceremony (MCs) were identified by SISA to control the day’s program. The other five (5) sessions were plenary sessions in which presenters present a paper based on issues, research findings, policy suggestions and research proposals. The medium of presentation was English. Presenters were given 20 minutes each for their presentations. Once all presenters in one plenary session are done with their formal presentations, questions and comments were invited from the audience for 30 minutes. In order for the sessions to go smoothly, each session had chairpersons and time-keepers. A ‘communique group’ was also mobilized to keep record of all presentations. A new inclusion for 2019 symposium was the engagement of three experienced journalism students who provided coverage for all sessions. That helped with dissemination of news on the symposium. Aspects of articles presented were also sent to local newspapers in Honiara, Solomon Islands, as well as on social media by our journalists. These greatly assisted in getting the ‘symposium findings’ out to a wider audience in Solomon Islands.

The day-long program started a bit late but we managed to conclude successfully by 6pm. The beauty of this program was the attendance; we registered around 147 symposium participants. Most of the MCs, chairpersons, time-keepers and ushers are students. The actual symposium program is attached as annex 1.

2.0 Paper presenters, working titles and abstracts

The abstracts of the twelve research papers/projects presented and discussed during the symposium are provided in this section. If you find any of these papers interesting and useful, you are welcome to communicate directly with the paper presenters. You can also see below the brief biographies of the respective researchers. Some of these presentations have already been written up and will come out as part of an edited publication that SIRD is currently working on to showcase research on Solomon Islands by Solomon Islanders. We hope that you will also be keen to read the contents of that publication once it comes out. We wish to thank these Solomon Islanders for sharing their views on these important topics.

2.1 Tony Hiriasia. Constituency development funds (CDFs): common problems and outcomes

Biography

Tony Hiriasia is currently a PhD Candidate with the School of Governance, Development and International Affairs, FBE, USP. He's sponsored by USP Research Office under their Pacific Scholarship for Excellence, research and innovation (PSERI) scheme.

Abstract

In an attempt to improve public service delivery, some developing countries have introduced forms of fiscal decentralization through constituency development funds (CDFs). The heterogeneity of needs and priorities in different localities (constituencies) is often used as a strong case for establishing CDFs. In theory, the schemes seem an attractive option for more equitable distribution of public resources. Yet, the reality is far more ambiguous and uneven and some common problems have emerged. In Solomon Islands, MPs are given fiscal powers to spend funds allocated directly from the national budget to their constituencies via the RCDF. This paper looks at some common issues that have emerged in Solomon Islands since the establishment of CDF in the 1990s. It pays particular attention to constituencies the researcher had visited as part of his field work for a PhD thesis.

2.2 Jerry Siota. Rethinking new public management: public service reforms and service delivery

Biography

Jerry Siota is a PhD candidate in the School of Governance, Development and International Affairs, FBE, USP. Prior to joining USP, he graduated with an MSc in Organizational Change and Development at the University of Manchester, United Kingdom. He also worked as an Assistant Secretary in the Ministry of Public Service for 6 years (2010-2016).

Abstract

As a paradigm of public service reform, New Public Management (NPM) has risen in popularity over the past three decades. The academic literature on NPM has also flourished. The key objectives of NPM reforms include, de-bureaucratizing of government services by reducing the size and cost of government; stimulating local market competition in the provision of services and the adoption of performance monitoring and measurement techniques. With its qualified success in countries such as the UK and USA, it has been promoted eagerly by international development organizations in developing countries such as Solomon Islands. Nonetheless, despite numerous policy makers advocating its implementation and various scholars examining its effects, there are relatively few studies of NPM's impact on the public service reform and service delivery in Solomon Islands.

Similar to the findings of Hood and Dixon's (2015) longitudinal study of UK reforms, I argue that the adoption of NPM reforms in Solomon Islands has resulted in public services being worse and a bit more expensive. In fact, it has generated an environment vulnerable to corruption. Moreover, there was a mismatch of reform prescriptions with the 'reality' of challenges in SI. Whilst the reforms were seen as a 'technical fix', the public service problems in SI were more political, behavioral and cultural.

My research suggests that reforms implemented across SI public service were more concerned with 'what a certain policy should look like' than 'what outcome a policy should achieve'. A brief-case aid and paper-based reform scenario. If aid donors remain more concerned with what reforms should look like without actually diagnosing the underlying issues in a host environment then developing countries such as SI will continue in a cycle of 'successful failure'. They will continue to lack institutional and resource capacity to sustain meaningful and beneficial reform.

2.3 Ambrose Malefoasi. Education decentralization, education authorities and education delivery

Biography

Ambrose Malefoasi is currently a PhD candidate with the School of Education, FALE, USP. Prior to joining USP, he graduated with a Master's Degree from Waikato University in New Zealand. He has more than 10 years working experience in the Solomon Islands. He rose to the

position of Under-Secretary with the Ministry of Education & Human Resources Development before joining the academic lane.

Abstract

The Solomon Islands Education System is framed under the umbrella of decentralization and comprises of the central body Ministry of Education, Education Authorities and Schools. In the entire system, the Education Authorities are key conduits for the delivery of education services to schools in the Solomon Islands. The Solomon Islands education system have three tiers of organization: the Ministry of education, the Education Authorities and schools. There is still prevailing problems in the understanding of the roles and responsibilities performed by the Education Authorities. Education authorities couldn't interpret between lines of what they have under their control and the responsibility of the central governments. These have affected the efficiency and effectiveness services provided to schools. The study will be based on pragmatic paradigm and will employ explanatory sequential mixed method research on six Education Authorities and fourteen schools under their auspices. The study argues that in order to be effective and efficient in delivery of education services, application of public participation theory and systems theory needs to be considered for a scattered context such as the Solomon Islands. In this study, it is argued that for effective and efficient service delivery, principles of participation, accountability and transparency, school/community connectedness, effective communication and gender representation are important.

2.4 Pamela Kenilorea. SIICAC: A different trajectory from FICAC?

Biography

Pamela Iuhania Kenilorea graduated with her Law Master's Degree from School of Law, USP. She is currently she joined USP's Law Undergraduate teaching staff in 2013. She is the coordinator for Professional Diploma in Legal Practice Outreach Program based in Solomon Islands since 2017. Ms Kenilorea is currently pursuing her PhD at USP on a part time basis, her research focuses on Anti-Corruption Laws in Solomon Islands. Prior to joining the academic law, she was a private practitioner from 2005 to 2011.

Abstract

Since 1995 there has been a plethora of academic research to support the common perception that corruption hinders growth. Transparency International publishes the annual Corruption Perception Index ('CPI') which ranks the level of corruption of the public sector of countries, with countries having a higher CPI score perceived as less corrupt. At present the corruption barometer measures from 0 which is highly corrupt to 100 which means a very clean public sector. Last year Solomon Islands CPI was 44 out of 100, whilst Vanuatu scored 46 and Papua New Guinea 28. Whilst Solomon Islands can then be seen as less corrupt compared to PNG, corruption is still prevalent with incidents similar to the loss of US\$4 million dollars in the Fisheries and Marine Department 2005 due to diversion and misappropriation of funds by public officers yet to be uncovered. This paper will consider the latest action taken by the Solomon Islands Government to combat corruption.

In December 2018 the Anti-Corruption Act of Solomon Islands was passed as law with the Government allocating \$3.1 million dollars to commence the rolling out the said Act.

Under this new Act, a new Institution will be established, namely the Solomon Islands Independent Commission Against Corruption (‘SIICAC’) with the aim of addressing the problem of corruption in the country. This is a giant leap in the Government’s recognition of corruption in the Solomon Islands particularly in the establishment of an Institution with a primary objective to address this problem.

This discussion will identify and compare the similarities and differences between SIICAC and FICAC. The basis for comparing Solomon Islands with Fiji is because Fiji has had a similar law and institution in operation for over 10 years. More importantly, Fiji is the only Melanesian Country with such an anti-corruption institution. Papua New Guinea is the next Melanesian country in line with its Anti-Corruption Bill already tabled in Parliament. By examining the legal framework between these two Melanesian countries a trajectory can be projected for the laying out of the new law and institution in the Solomon Islands. In particular, the discussion will focus on the major aspects of the new law including the formation and structure of SIICAC, its functions and powers, and the control of its funding. From this comparative analysis, it may then be argued that Solomon Islands trajectory will be less like its Melanesian neighbor.

2.5 Walter Malau. Fraud concepts and repeated disclaimer of audit opinions in Solomon Islands

Biography

Walter Malau is a former UK Chevening scholar, graduated with MSc in Forensic Accounting in De Montfort University, UK, in 2018. He is a Professional Accounting Practitioner and consultant with various Institutions in Solomon Islands including the Solomon Islands Government.

Abstract

Financial frauds in the form of financial transactions (FTs) and financial statements (FSs) are as alarming as other frauds since white collar crime publication in the 1930s. Given its current magnitude globally, this study seeks to review the fraud literature and contextualize it to the Solomon Islands Public Sector (SIPS) setting where disclaimer auditing opinions (DAOs) have significantly impacted recurrent issues of audited reports for years. The attention of FSs and FTs within the DAOs are unbecoming and hence require the need of this study. This subject area is a pioneer study in the locality of the author and seemingly across the pacific region. Utilizing the methodology of a single case-study, a judgmental sampling on the SIPS’s practitioners was selected to seek their professional views and perceptions. An online interview was conducted to gather this data. The study triangulates these views/perceptions to the literature review and corporate documents. The study findings revealed the practitioners’ acknowledgement of FS, FT and fraud concepts generally in the SIPS as prevalent and aligned to some components of the fraud triangle. It further suggests that fraud is positively linked to repeated audited report

issues and the executive management if and when DAOs issues are repeatedly appeared in annual audit reports.

2.6 Jeremy Dorovolomo. The role of sports in building a socially cohesive Solomon Islands

Biography

Dr Jeremy Dorovolomo is currently Senior Lecturer at the USP School of Education. Dr. Jeremy Dorovolomo taught in Solomon Islands High Schools for several years since 1989. He held all posts possible in the Solomon Islands High School system including being School Principal, prior to joining Teacher Education at the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education 2000. He joined the School of Education, University of the South Pacific in 2004 to date. He is a Bachelor of Education (Queensland University of Technology), Master of Education (University of Southern Queensland) and Doctor of Education (Southern Cross University). He is chair of the USP School of Education Research Committee, heavily publishes and regularly on the Vice Chancellors awards for quality publications since the inception of the award system in 2012.

Abstract

The study utilizes the Nominal Group Technique (NGT) to solicit consensus among 16 participants, who all had a role in Solomon Islands sports, on what they feel are important strategies in using sports to promote social cohesion in the country. The study gained consensus among participants on the need for a national sport policy, a critical need for sporting facilities, a vibrant school sports system, bolstering community sports, and coordinated collaboration among relevant stakeholders to promote sports and peaceful co-existence in the country. As many sectors as possible should be recruited to promote a Solomon Islands that is cohesive and sports is an important avenue. This study has integral implications for Solomon Islands post-conflict and post-RAMSI (Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands) led by Australia, in ensuring there is continuing peace and stability.

2.7 Katy Soapi. Conservation: experiences of the Tetepare Descendants Association

Biography

Katy Soapi is currently the Manager of the Pacific Natural Products Research Center, Institute of Applied Sciences at USP. Ms Soapi holds a PhD in Synthetic Organic Chemistry from the University of East Anglia in UK. She has conducted research on marine natural products, biodiversity conservation and Ocean acidification. She has been part of numerous marine bioprospecting expeditions in Fiji and Solomon Islands. Katy is also a founding member of a community based conservation organization in the Solomon Islands – the Tetepare Descendant’s Association which has champion biodiversity conservation.

Abstract

Tetepare Island, in the Western Province of the Solomon Islands, is the largest uninhabited Island in the South Pacific. It has some of the last remaining primary and lowland rainforest in

Melanesia. The Islands is conserved and managed by descendants who have formed the Tetepare Descendants' Association (TDA). This talk will discuss TDA's experiences in biodiversity conservation through community and international engagement. It also discusses some of the challenges, successes and lessons learnt in the last 12 years of this community based and managed projects.

2.8 Exsley Taloiburi. Unlocking the potential of international climate finance

Biography

Exsley Taloiburi is currently works as PIFS Climate Finance Adviser & Resilience Team Leader based in Suva, Fiji. Mr. Taloiburi holds double master's degrees, a Master of Environmental Management from the University of Tasmania and an MSc of Marine Science from USP. He has more than 12 years of relevant experience. This includes 8 years of specific experience in climate finance analysis (using the Pacific Climate Change Finance Assessment Framework) and policy advice in the Pacific region and internationally (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of the Parties - UNFCCC COP). Exsley has led multi-agency teams to undertake national climate finance assessments/reviews in the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Republic of Palau, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati and TA secondment on climate finance to the Government of Papua New Guinea. He also participated in similar assessments in Nauru and Tonga.

Abstract

Solomon Islands has ratified and subscribed to a number of international multilateral frameworks – two of those are the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Under these multilateral arrangements on climate change, a global commitment of USD30 billion was made available between 2010 and 2012 as international climate finance for vulnerable small island developing states like Solomon Islands. From next year (2020), a global commitment of USD100 billion per year will be available for countries that have the necessary enabling environment. Over the past decade, Solomon Islands has accessed around USD112 million as international climate finance from a wide range of donors and for both adaptation and mitigation projects. In 2017, Solomon Islands was successful in getting the Tina River Hydropower Project approved for USD86 million under the Green Climate Fund with support from the World Bank. This leveraged additional co-financing from a range of other donors taking the total project investment to USD234 million (~SBD1.92 billion) over the next 5 years. This is an indication that international climate finance is a potential drawcard, but currently underutilized, for sustaining Solomon Islands economy, create new job opportunities, and build the resilience of Solomon Islanders to cope with the impacts of climate change and disaster (unlocking the triple dividend of resilience). Currently, Solomon Islands economy is overly reliant on logging which is projected to decline over the next few years. Logging accounts for more than half of GDP, is the main supplier of foreign exchange and the largest formal-sector employer after the government and a significant provider of government revenues. The pace of logging activity has been unsustainable and quality has dwindled. In line with plans for long-run sustainable logging, the government envisages a sharp contraction in logging activity but such a sharp decline would spill over to the rest of the

economy and employment. The government cannot be complacent, instead government must be analytical and strategic and pursue new and innovative ways of sustaining growth. There is no shortage of policies and plans. Recently, a new and dedicated climate finance unit was established within the Ministry of Finance and Treasury (MoFT), with support from the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, to focus on accessing international climate funds. MoFT is also exploring accreditation to directly access climate finance. This will be fast-tracked if the new government prioritizes the implementation of the Public Financial Management (PFM) Roadmap, which did not receive much support from previous governments. There is also need to encourage a greater role for private sector and civil society organizations in supporting sustained growth. Options such as green bonds or a dedicated national climate change fund/facility should be explored. Incentives that promote access to affordable insurance, savings, and credit, can help those who are vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

2.9 Milton Keremama. Ethnometeorological knowledge and climate change data on Choiseul

Biography

Milton Keremama is currently a PhD candidate at the Pacific Center for Environment and Sustainable Development (PaCE-SD), The University of the South Pacific. He holds a BSc (in Biology and Chemistry), PGCE, PGDCC, and MSc (in Climate Change) from the University of the South Pacific. He has worked as a trainee metallurgist at the Goldridge Mines in 2000 until the mine's closure due to the ethnic tension on Guadalcanal. He went on to serve as a high school teacher between 2001 and 2006. Between 2006 and 2010 he worked as a project officer at the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Disaster Management in Honiara. His current project and interests are in ethno-meteorological knowledge, traditional knowledge, genealogy-recording and climatology of the Solomon Islands.

Abstract:

Ethnometeorological knowledge is often relegated as myths that lack substance fit for scientific comparison. This paper focuses on 2 Choiseulese narratives *Óra loboloboro ae*, *sadae mōga* which literally refers to the middle-of-the-year as the wet season in Choiseul and a local belief that a series of more than 4 consecutive rain-days (>4CRDs) is a sign of an impending tropical cyclone (TC). The incidences of *Óra loboloboro ae*, *sadae mōga*, and the >4CRDs local belief were documented and compared with rainfall data. Our Choiseul study found wet season occurs in May-October with rainfall peaking in July contradicting past references that November-April is the wet season and May-October period is the dry season in the Solomon Islands. Consistent with Choiseul's climate data, local narratives, observations and cultural activities including cessation of nut-climbing expeditions all supported the conclusion that May-October period is the wet season. Our study found the local '>4CRDs' narrative consistent with rainfall data based on frequency counts calculated before and after TC Annie in 1967, TC Bernie in 1982 and TC Namu in 1986. The coherently consistent patterns between the Choiseul climatological data and narrated patterns disclosed by indigenous observations and experiences support the conclusion that can be used with richer and more accurate climatologies of remote locations like Choiseul Island.

2.10 Linda Vaike. Nationally determined contributions (NDCs) for MSG countries

Biography

Linda is a staff and PhD Candidate with USP's Pacific Centre for Environment and Sustainable Development (PaCE-SD). Linda's research interest lies in the areas of climate science, climate finance and adaptation. In her role as a teaching staff, she assists PaCE deliver postgraduate diploma courses on climate science, climate finance and climate adaptation.

Abstract

The Paris Agreement requires that signatories develop and communicate their post 2020 climate actions in the form of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). This presentation encompasses an overview of the NDCs communicated by the Pacific Small Islands Developing States with a focus on Solomon Islands. It identifies the gaps and challenges the nationally determined contributions potentially entail and is a contribution to the development of discourse on NDCs. A key focus of the presentation was on information communicated in the Solomon Islands first NDC document, and proposes key mitigation and adaptation intervention for NDC enhancement and future communication.

2.11 Gordon Nanau. The status of land issues in Solomon Islands: policy suggestions

Biography

Gordon Nanau is from the Solomon Islands with a keen interest in land issues and extractive industries in the Pacific. One of his research projects was an investigation of the impacts of globalization on local communities in Melanesian countries. He is also a keen observer of other areas such as constitutional reforms in the Pacific, elections and democracy, sub-regional cooperation, political leadership, ethnicity, vulnerability, and rural livelihoods. Gordon graduated from the University of the South Pacific (USP) in Fiji and the University of East Anglia in Norwich, United Kingdom. He is currently a senior lecturer in the School of Government, Development and International Affairs at USP in Suva, Fiji.

Abstract

Perceptions on land ownership in Solomon Islands' indigenous communities changed a great deal since colonisation. Local views on the right to access tribal land and resources are increasingly being distorted by the contemporary emphasis on exclusive ownership where individuals have total control over a particular piece of land. This is a direct consequence of two distinct worldviews and value systems juxtaposing. Successive governments since independence in 1978 have continuously exploited people's desire to re-claim control over their 'lost' land. As such, land issues have often been core campaign and policy objects. There is also a general impetus by successive governments to register and give titles to land. This tendency is encouraged with minimal research and analysis on its likely impacts on personal/community relationships, livelihoods and vulnerability. Solomon Islands could learn from certain local land recording and dispute resolution initiatives and extract from them solutions to land related

challenges. Historically, a factor that normally defines whether or not a development project is acceptable and is uniting people and communities in host communities is the shareholding arrangement. Being a delicate subject, land must be treated with vigilance. Rigorous research and thorough analysis must be undertaken before decisions on land reforms are made. How do we strike a balance between the need for economic development and the necessity of the 'subsistence buffer' that is at the core of social security, peace and co-existence in Solomon Islands? This paper proposes a number of policy options.

2.12 Stephen Kapu. The Anglican Church of Melanesia, 1975 to 2019

Biography

Stephen Kapu holds a Masters of Theology Degree from Patterson Theological College (PTC) in Suva, Fiji, attained in 2014. Before that, he graduated with a Bachelor of Theology from the University of Auckland in New Zealand in 2010. He is currently a PhD candidate at PTC. Before coming over for his PhD studies, he was a lecturer and Head of School for Church History at Bishop Patterson Theological College, Kohimarama, in Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands. He is an ordained priest with the Anglican Church of Melanesia (ACOM).

Abstract

The Anglican Church of Melanesia (ACOM), comprising Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and New Caledonia, has been growing and vigorous in mission since Church Independence, in 1975. This was evident in the population census that took place in the Solomon Islands in 1976 and 1986 respectively. Until recently, ACOM has nine dioceses within its jurisdiction. Seven of these are in the Solomon Islands and two are in Vanuatu; the Diocese of Vanuatu which includes New Caledonia and the Diocese of Banks and Torres. This growth was a surprising phenomenon, considering the fact that churches were declining in the West, the original hub of Christianity (Ernst, 2006, 4; see also Ward, 2006, 13). This rapid growth of the ACOM can be attributed to ecclesiastical, contextual, and cultural factors. This growth has had a great impact on Melanesian society and the church, and has played important functions and as well as dysfunctions.

3.0 The Symposium summary and resolutions

The *Solomon Islands 41st Independence Anniversary Symposium 2019* (SIAS 2019), co-sponsored by the Solomon Islands Students Association (SISA), the Solomon Islands High Commission in Fiji and supported by the Solomon Islands Research Network (SIRN) was held at the AusAid Lecture Theater, Laucala Campus in Suva, Fiji on 5th July 2019. It brought together more than 250 participants from the University of the South Pacific (USP), the Fiji National

University (FNU) and other organisations in Suva and Solomon Islands. The theme of the symposium was '*Moving Forward in Unity to Build a Stronger Nation*', the official theme for national celebrations in 2019.

The 41st Independence Anniversary Symposium summary, resolutions, information, outcomes and suggestions as per dedicated sessions and themes are summarized in the following sections.

Session I: Official addresses and statements

1. In his official statement, the University of the South Pacific (USP) Vice Chancellor and President (VCP), Professor Pal Ahluwalia acknowledged that students are the heart of the university and re-iterated the critical role that USP plays in the region.
2. While acknowledging SISA for making available a platform where students, researchers/staff and alumni meet to discuss challenges facing society and promote research, he also emphasized the need for those with university education to give back more to their respective communities.
3. The VCP highlighted his passion and support for research and innovation and underlined the power of education and the importance of health in the success of any country.
4. The VCP also informed the symposium that in the recent Vanuatu Council Meeting, the USP Council endorsed the construction of the Solomon Islands USP campus as soon as required processes are completed.
5. In his official address, the Solomon Islands High Commissioner to Fiji, His Excellency Mr. William Soaki saluted and thanked SISA and the symposium organizing committee for making available a platform for critical discussion.
6. His Excellency also encouraged students to be 'foot soldiers', actively finding solutions to Solomon Islands challenges rather than keyboard warriors focusing only on problems.
7. He reminded and challenged participants on the theme: *Moving Forward in Unity to Build a Stronger Nation* and the need to remain united despite the exit of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) and in the midst of other national challenges and concerns.

8. The High Commissioner also acknowledged and thanked USP through the VCP for supporting SISA initiatives and permitting the use of university facilities. He further thanked the VCP for the update on the progress and development of the Solomon Islands USP campus.

9. He further encouraged students to use the symposium space as a practice ground to raise concerns and thoughts constructively on issues presented. He concluded by reflecting on the anniversary celebration theme stating that ‘today we move forward to build a stronger nation together’.

Session II: Public sector management, reforms and leadership

10. That the Constituency Development Funds (CDF) undermines legislative responsibilities of Members of Parliament (MPs) and compromises the independence and legitimacy of legislature. It is potentially a conflict of interest in government dealings and reduces the strengths of checks, balances, accountability and transparency in government.

11. There are ambiguous, unclear fiscal arrangements and duplication of responsibilities under the current CDF processes. Poor coordination and too much autonomy given to MPs, leads to wastage and results in poor communication between the MPs and Members of Provincial Assemblies (MPAs).

12. That CDOs are political appointees and most do not have the capacity to properly account for constituency related costs and issues. They are usually multi-tasked and given new and additional responsibilities, often resulting poor performance. Consequently, a lot is spent on administration and logistics in one parliamentary term.

13. That more local participation in the identification of needs for constituencies to support be encouraged to avoid exclusion and marginalization of people in our communities.

14. The symposium learnt that most public management reforms in the Solomon Islands resonates with the New Public Management and Neoliberal agenda which aims to reduce the size and cost of government, in order to improve service delivery. But findings indicate a major problem of ‘transferability’; transferring these ideas into local contexts.

15. Initial results from the presentation indicate that reforms do not get to the people nor improve their livelihoods partly because of the lack of capacity in the public service to deliver these reforms and also because of the cultural context (e.g. *wantok* system) that affects the delivery of reforms.

16. Subsequently, Solomon Islands normally end up with ‘paper based reforms’ that are not implemented. Moreover, the effects of ‘briefcase aid syndrome’ are evident in the public sector where experts produce reports as end products to satisfy the requirements of donors and stakeholders.

17. The symposium is grateful to learn of a research proposal that focuses on education decentralization, the education system and education delivery in the country. The proposed study will trace how education is conducted, how is it carried out and how schools are managed, who is responsible to schools and accountability mechanisms in place. The findings of this very important research will be shared in future presentations.

Session III: Fraud, anti-corruption commissions and nation building

18. The symposium was reminded that development of the Solomon Islands is often hindered by corrupt decision and actions.

19. The recently legislated Solomon Islands Independent Commission Against Corruption (“SIICAC”) will play a significant role in addressing and reducing corruption in the country but it must be given the financial support and autonomy to facilitate its operations. It should also be given independent powers to investigate and prosecute cases of corruption.

20. As a newly established Commission, it is important for SIICAC to learn from Fiji’s FICAC, which has been in operation for more than 10 years. This is to determine the processes that will be used and how to deal with corruption complaints in Solomon Islands in an effective and efficient manner.

21. Fraud commonly involves fraud transactions, fraud statements, and the use of positions to facilitate fraud actions. The symposium learnt that the 3 major components of the ‘Fraud Triangle’ are **Perceived Opportunity, Perceived Pressure and Rationalization**. These are important for understanding and determining why fraud is/are committed.

22. That most repeated audit report findings issued by the Office of the Auditor-General under disclaimer audit of opinions are positively linked to the “Fraud Triangle” in the Solomon Islands government audit reports.

23. We support the recommendation on the need for an Audit Act to facilitate and guide investigations into Fraud activities in Solomon Islands.

24. Sports play a crucial role in social cohesion in the country, especially in the post-conflict and post-RAMSI period.

25. Social cohesion through sports is an important political framework that can be used for stability, peace and nation building.

26. We support the call that Solomon Islands develop a National Sports Policy to ensure the long-term sustainability of sports that support social cohesion nationwide through different sports.

Session IV: Community conservation project

27. That the formation and organisation of Tetepare Development Association (TDA) be a model for other communities venturing into the conservation of marine and land based natural resources in Solomon Islands to emulate

28. That ‘land’ be recognised as the common denominator that can potentially unite people to collectively achieve economic independence, capacity building and sustainable livelihood.

29. We learn that TDA is a success story using local social capital such as the ‘wantok system’ and ‘tribal identity’ to collectively improve living standards through sustainable means.

Session V: International climate finance, climate data, local knowledge and food security

30. Reconfirm the reality that there is danger of rich indigenous local knowledge becoming extinct as a consequence of the lack of interest among youths and the passing away of elderly custodians of such knowledge.

31. We agree that the SIG must embark on a national effort to support preservation and safeguarding of local knowledge to complement the modern weather forecasting to improve the accuracy of predicting cyclones and other extreme events at the local community level.

32. We acknowledge that for the first time, the local weather and seasonal knowledge of Choiseul are in sync with the results of modern climate data to reveal the unique pattern of the rainfall distribution on Choiseul. This warrants a closer attention to the data of Choiseul and a thorough examination of the climatology of the island, because further confirmation to the current findings would greatly improve our understanding of the dynamics of the climatic features that regulate the weather and seasons in the region.

33. We note the consistency of local weather and seasonal knowledge of Choiseul with the climate data recorded by meteorological stations. This confirms that local weather and seasonal indicators can be used to support information regarding the climatology of remote locations like Choiseul Island and other localities in the country

34. We support the call that the climate finance unit established in the Ministry of Finance and Treasury (MoFT), with support from the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MECC) be strengthened and activated to seriously work on accessing international climate funds.

35. That accreditation to directly access climate finance be fast-tracked if SIG prioritizes the implementation of the Public Financial Management (PFM) roadmap, which did not receive much support in previous parliaments.

36. We recognize the need to encourage a greater role for private sector and civil society organisations to support sustained growth with options such as green bonds and incentives that promote access to affordable insurance, savings, and credit that can help those who are vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

37. We learn the information communicated by Solomon Islands in its first Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) including the mitigation targets and adaptation needs.

38. We agree that the gaps and challenges identified that inhibit the implementation of NDCs include capacity, technological and funding support.

39. That there should be a national NDC Strategy implementation plan to guide NDC implementation, including all support (internal and external) needed to achieve NDC targets.

Session VI: Supplementary issues: land and church

40. We agree that land is a delicate issue and must be treated with sensitivity and sensibility. As such, future attempts to reform land must be informed by proper research and analysis.

41. We learn that the three areas that require attention in the area of land reforms are: (i) rigorous research, analysis and information sharing; (ii) capacity building, outreach and innovation; and (iii) structural, legislative and institutional change and/or strengthening

42. We agree that an important determinant to successfully engage customarily-owned land for economic development in the Solomon Islands is through the negotiations and establishment of proper shareholding arrangements.

43. We learn that one such successful model that may be replicated in the Solomon Islands is the GPPOL/GPRDA arrangement. Another model that may be successful is the proposed Tina River Hydro Development Project ((TRHDP) under its proposed shareholding arrangements.

44. We acknowledge that churches, including the Anglican Church of Melanesia (ACOM)) have played and continues to play important roles in Solomon Islands.

45. That the proposed research on the influence of ACOM among its adherents and the wider community is an interesting piece of research.

46. We look forward to the findings of this research project as it attempt to find ways to reinvigorate itself and suggest change to the way it currently operates to reverse its declining influence. Hopefully other churches could also learn from the findings of the proposed research.

4.0 Symposium evaluation and feedback

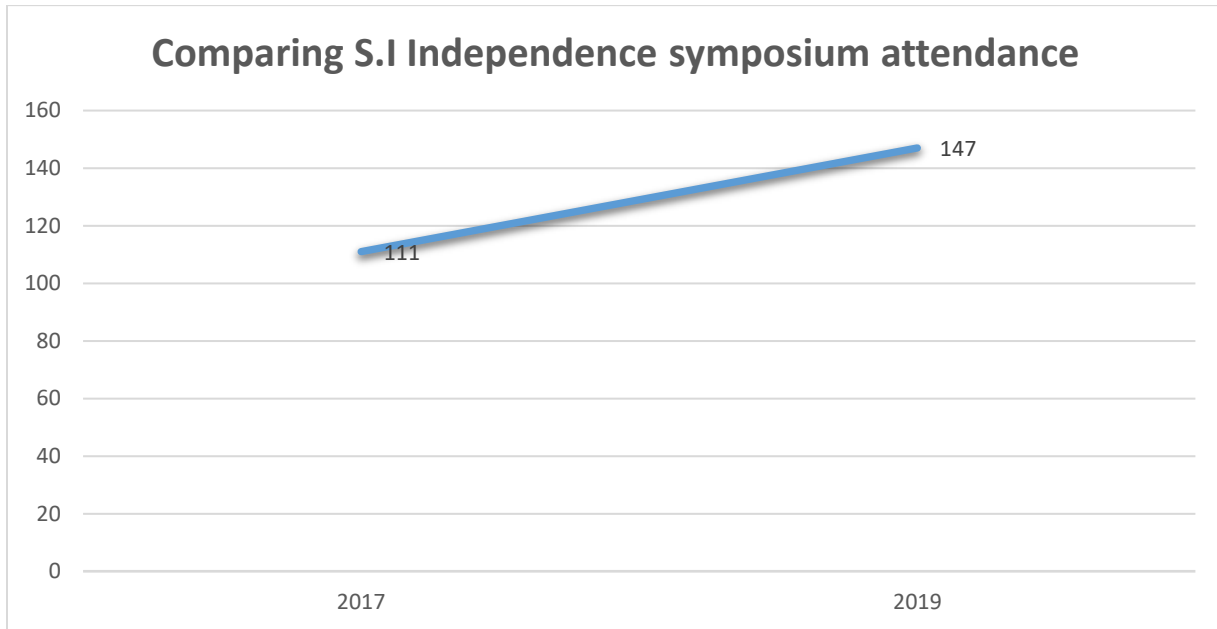
This section of the proceedings reports on how participants reacted to the second SISA, SIRD and SIHC organized symposium. It specifically evaluates and critically examines the Solomon Islands

41st Independence Anniversary symposium. A total of 16 questions were asked via the question-pro software and administered to participants. The survey evaluates and analyses information on the program's activities, characteristics, and outcomes. The ultimate objective is to ascertain how participant felt about the program, to improve its effectiveness, and/or to inform future programming decisions. The responses and results of data collected are reported below with brief analysis.

4.1 Evaluation responses

The symposium attracted a total of 147 participants. However, only 32 participants completed the survey. Fifty percent (50%) response rate would have been desirable, but due to time and other factors, the committee used the available data as representative of all participants. The attendance increased by 24% from the 2017 Symposium; a remarkable achievement.

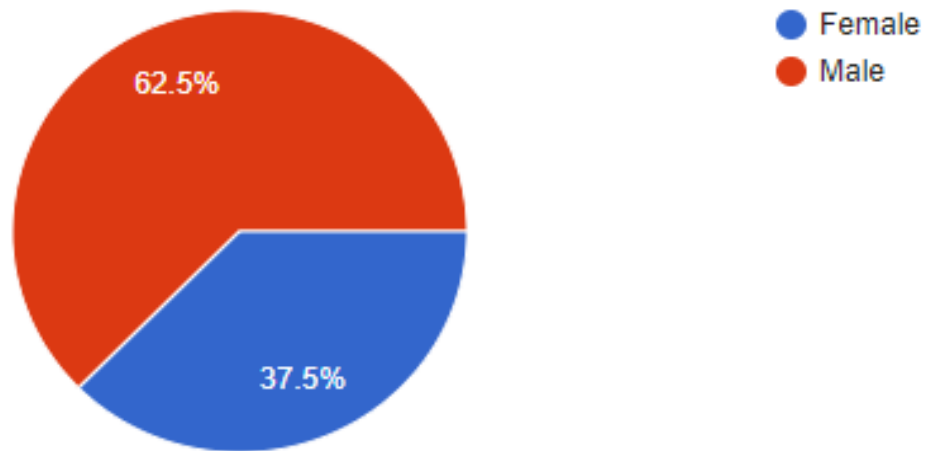
Figure 4.1: Symposium series attendance



4.1.1 Gender composition of respondents

Considering the gender composition of respondents, 62.5% were males and 37.5% were females (see Figure 4.2). There is not much improvement from the 2017 symposium survey therefore, future organising committee must encourage students to participate. This can be improved if students made aware of such survey before and after the symposium programme.

Figure 4.2: Gender composition

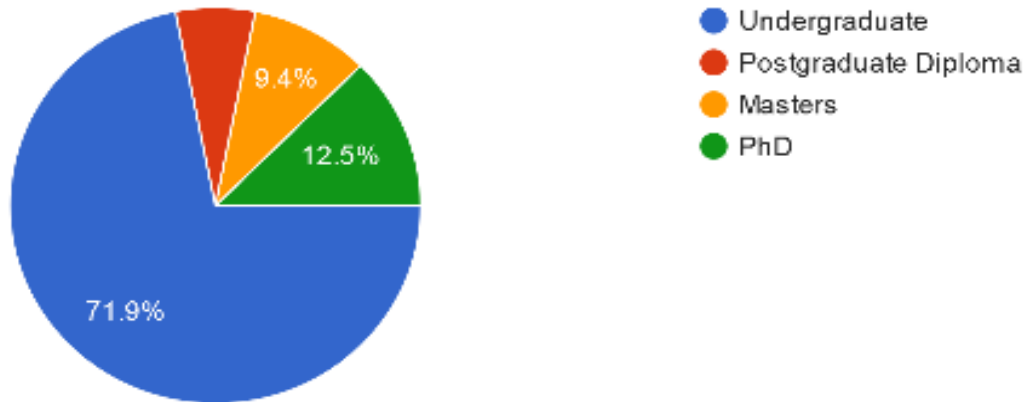


4.1.2 Level of study

The survey also analysed the respondents in terms of their programme of study. It clearly showed that the highest response rate was from the undergraduate students followed by lecturers and PhD researchers, Masters Students, and then the Postgraduate Diploma students. This was an improvement from the 2017 survey response rate where only 35% of undergraduate student completed the survey. However, more could be done to encourage responses to such evaluative surveys in the future especially on SISA organised programmes and events.

Figure 4.3: Levels of study of respondents

3

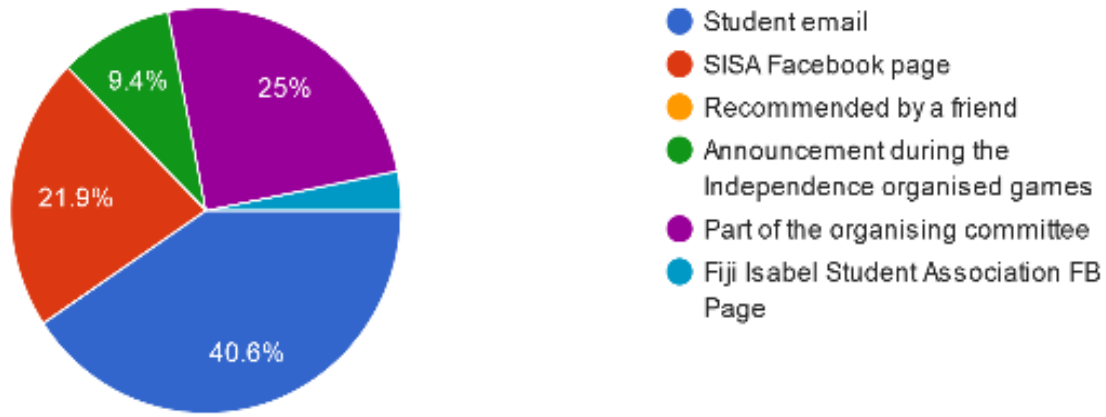


4.1.3. Symposium awareness

One of the questions asked in the survey is related to how participants got information about the symposium. From the responses, it is clear that the official student email and social media were the two popular outlets where participants got their information about the symposium. SISA email circulation and Facebook page were marked as the highest mediums disseminating information about the symposium. This is an indication that for future events, email circulations and Facebook posts should be used more as communicative channels for SISA members. Figure 4.4 below illustrates the different channels through which participants accessed information about the symposium.

Figure 4.4: Sources of information on the symposium.

3



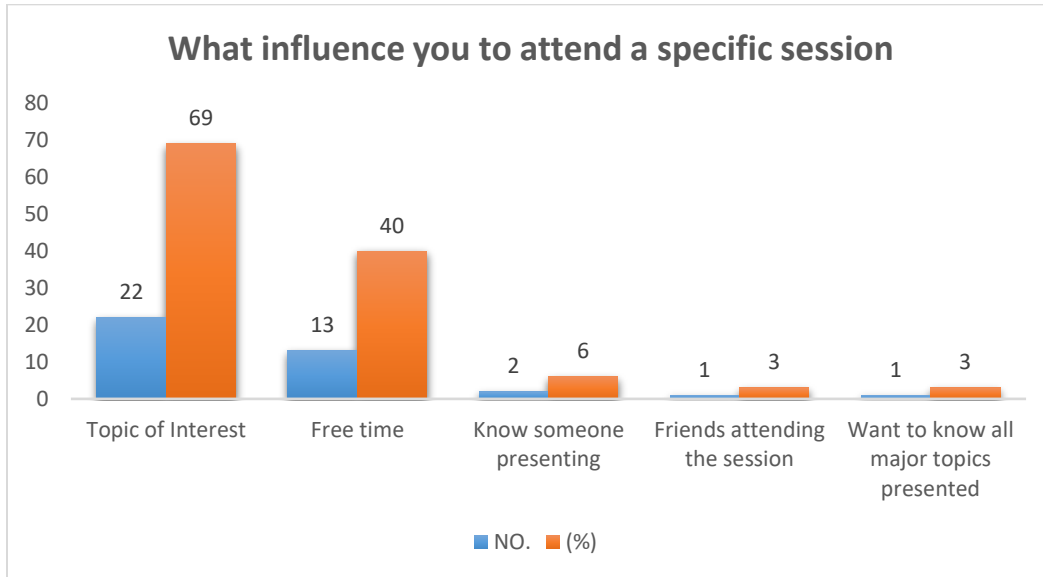
4.1.4. Sessions attended

Question four in the survey was for respondent to indicate the sessions that they attended. According to responses received, most attended sessions 2, 3 and 4, followed by session 5. Sessions 1 and 6 were less rated. This is expected for sessions 1 and 6 because participants arrived at the venue later than schedule and some left after having lunch. However, a majority of participants remained and participated in all sessions throughout the day

4.1.5. Attendance determinants

According to the 32 respondents, 22 of them stated that they attended the sessions that were interested to them and 13 respondents attended the sessions because that was the time they were free. It is good to see from the responses that participants attended the topics they are interested in. See also Figure 4.5 below.

Figure 4.5: Reasons for attending a session



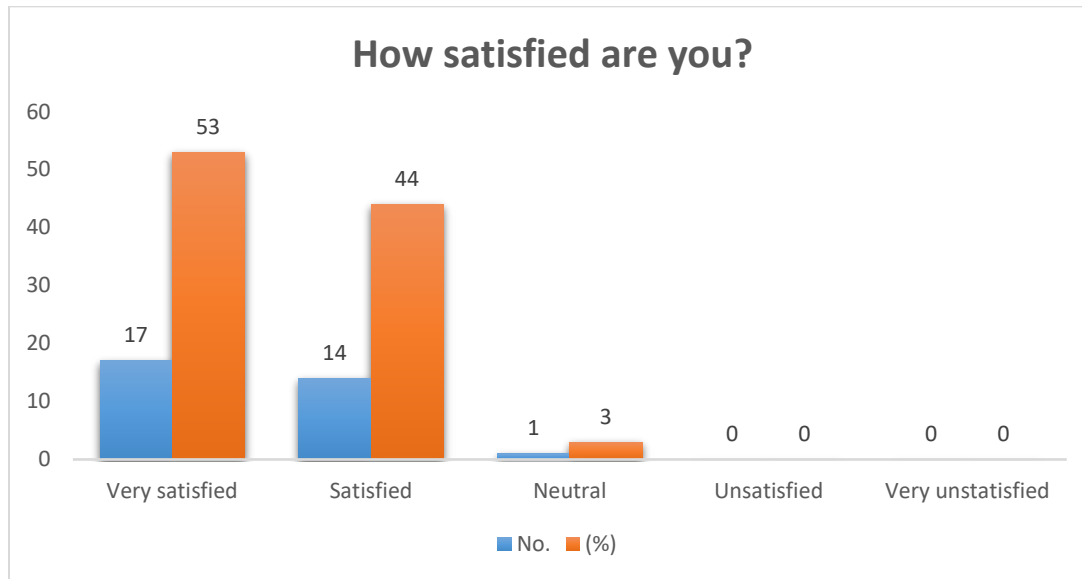
4.1.6. Sessions of interest to participants

Question six was for the participants to indicate the sessions that were interesting to them. The results showed that session three (3) was rated more interesting with 22 respondents, followed by session four (4) with 18 respondents. Session two, five and six are also interesting as the number of respondents were close, 11, 12 and 10 respectively. Session 1 was rated low, maybe because this was the opening programme and many participants arrived at the venue after this session.

4.1.7. Satisfaction rate

According to the responses from the survey, 53.1% of respondents rated very satisfied with the event, 43.8% rated satisfied and followed by 3.1% who were neutral about their response. The results indicated the very high level of satisfaction by participants in the second Solomon Islands independence anniversary symposium program. See figure 4.6 below. This is a good indication as more students are learning from and enjoying the organized conversations based on properly research topics.

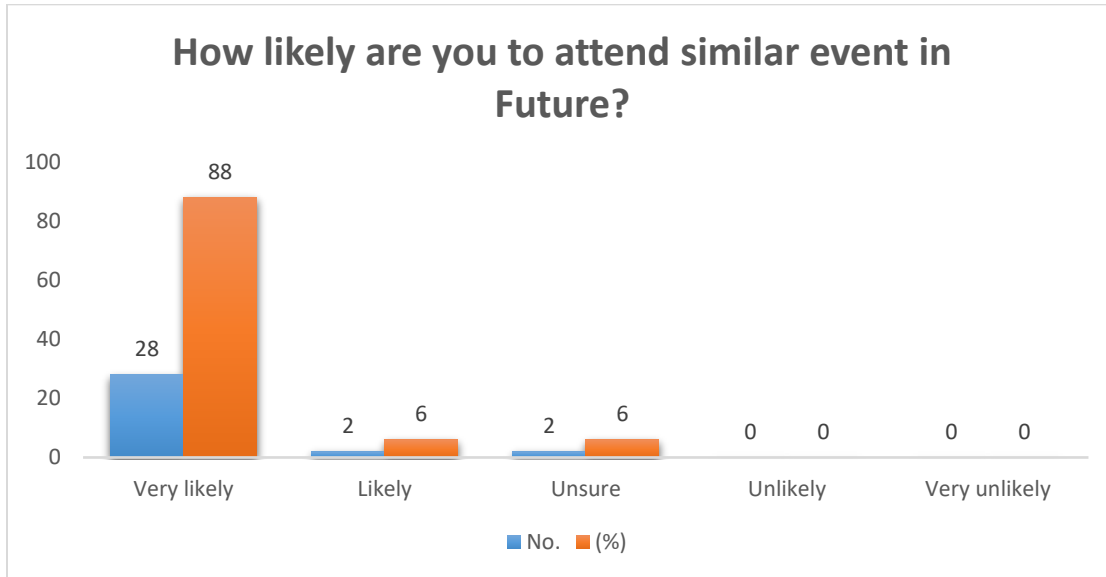
Figure 4.6: Satisfaction rate of participants



4.1.8. Likelihood to attend future Solomon Islands' Symposium

It is encouraging that majority of respondents indicate they are highly likely to attend future symposiums. The architects and initiators of the 2017 symposium should be acknowledged, as it seems their vision is gaining steady followers. Young Solomon Islanders studying in universities and institutions in Fiji are showing massive interest in the programme. It goes to show that there is a hunger for proper research and analysis on many of the issues facing the country. This is comforting for future organizers as well.

Figure 4.7: Likelihood of attending future events



4.2 Analysis

There was an improvement on attendance compared to the 2017 symposium. The feedbacks from respondents basically conclude that the 2019 symposium was an improvement, well organized with excellent presentations. Nevertheless, some respondents indicated disappointment with attendance. They believe that more students' ought to take part and own such important programs. Some, respondents feel that such conversations should be ongoing. Research findings shared by presenters are relevant and helpful for undergraduate students. The evaluation reveals two vital points. First, there is high appetite for the 'symposium'. Students now understand the importance of discussing issues based on proper research and how research can be used to strategize and address challenges in practical terms. This is reflected by the fact that there were more undergraduate students who attended and participated in the programme. Secondly, the involvement of SIHC provided a link between academia and Solomon Islands Government. The Solomon Islands Independence series may have just made its mark on important national discussions and has potential to develop further in the future.

4.3 Limitations

While the program has improved from logistical hiccups experiences with the 2017 symposium, the online evaluation response rate was less impressive. For 2019, only 12.8% of attendees responded to the online evaluation. This is lower than 30% response rate in 2017. Future organizing committees must strategize to improve this gap.

4.4 Symposium costs

The total budget for the Symposium is \$4000, which is \$2000 each from both SISA and SIHC. The summary of the total cost is outlined in the table below.

Symposium Budget

Symposium Budget Allocation	
Particulars	Total Cost (FJD)
Morning & Afternoon Tea	\$669.19
Lunch	\$1,514.94
Utensils & Others	\$382.71
Transport	\$58.60
Hiring Journalist students to cover the symposium	\$150
Organizing Committee expenses	\$68.80
	Total Expenses \$2,843.24
	Remaining Balance \$1,156.76

(Source: Independence Symposium Organizing Committee)

The budget was set at FJ\$4,000 mainly because hiring of venue, chairs and tables were anticipated. However, the use of AusAid Lecture theatre for free saved a lot, hence the remaining balance of \$1,156.76. The organizing committee decided that the balance will be used for ‘writing workshop’ and publication of an edited book that should serve as a tangible output of the Symposium. This was a valuable lesson from the 2017 conference proceedings (Mane *et al.*, 2017). It is now known that to host a symposium of this nature and magnitude at USP Laucala Campus, organisers would require around FJ\$3,000.

5.0 Symposium observations and suggestions for future events

The Symposium organizing committee debriefed on 15th July 2019 at USPSA Federal Secretariat Office. It was an opportunity to share general observations and discuss the aftermath, mainly the compilation of this ‘proceeding’ and proposed publication of an edited book. SIRN through Dr. Jeremy Dorovolomo led a ‘writer’s workshop’ on 2nd August 2019 to help early researchers to convert their findings to publishable material. The observations contained here are essential for organizers of the 43rd Solomon Islands Independence Symposium in 2021. Some observations and general comments are outlined below.

5.1 Observations and comments

SISA, SIRN and SIHC were requested to provide general observations on the 2019 symposium as the supporters and organizer of the programme. Their observations are as follows:

- The 2019 program was very successful and it has achieved its primary objectives. There were numerous feedback from students and senior academics who participated in the program that the sharing of research findings provided insights, experience and new knowledge.
- The overall observation was that students were able to appreciate the importance of such organized academic activities. Students acknowledged that their own participation has been rewarding because of invaluable information shared on that day.
- SISA executive saw the program as one of its biggest achievements and a new level of experience gained while collaborating with senior academics who are members of the Solomon Islands Research Network, the Solomon Islands High Commission Office and other students who are volunteered their time to make this event happen.
- The Solomon Islands 41st Independence Anniversary Symposium was a great success. The Solomon Islands Students Association, Solomon Islands High Commission Office in Fiji and SIRN planned and executed this interesting and all-encompassing symposium very well. It caught the attention of many in the university community and there is no doubt that participants learnt a lot about Solomon Islands, from the important findings by

researchers presented at the symposium. The quality of research projects, research findings and engagement with participants is of very high quality. Twelve potential papers were presented and with support from SIRN through the writing workshops, the papers will be made available to Solomon Islanders as published articles. The interest shown by undergraduate students in the proceedings that day was commendable. It is an indication that our students may consider undertaking research based degrees in the future once they graduate with their bachelor's degrees.

- SIRN wishes to drive the message through such platforms that Solomon Islands must use research to inform its policies now and in the future. The Solomon Islands High Commission Office in Fiji, the SISA Executive and the Symposium Organizing Committee under the able leadership of Jerry Siota (PhD Candidate) must be acknowledged for the job well done!
- Organizing a symposium is not easy. We have to identify people who are willing to initiate change. It is also recommended that the organizing committee have other representatives from FNU and catering rep (someone to concentrate on logistics for food preparation, tea and lunch) to be included.
- The group felt that the programme was a success despite the late arrival of students in the opening program.

5.2 Suggestions

- The current SISA executive wishes to see that this program be supported by future executives to ensure that the program is maintained and ensure that our students get maximum benefit out of it.
- The High Commission Office while complimenting the efforts of the committee and the successful symposium is thinking of involving the Ministry of Commerce and Solomon Islands Chamber of Commerce (SICC) in future events.
- The Independence anniversary symposium could be held biannually to allow time for research and publication of current papers.
- It was proposed that in the future, it may be advisable to have the symposium before sports and other planned activities and programmes. This is to avoid excuses of tiredness or commitment with other programme preparations.

- It was suggested that for future programmes, organizers ought to invite speakers to talk on Entrepreneurship and other motivational talks that could open the minds of the audience to some innovative ideas to try out in the Solomon Islands.
- Topics of discussion should be given out to potential participants ahead of time so that they can read on the topics and ask relevant- questions
- Most of respondents suggest that students' attendance to this symposium is still poor and needs improvement in future events.
- It was suggested that for future events, we invite various stakeholders from Solomon Islands to come over specifically to be part of this event depending of course on affordability.
- For future events, hire a full time video camera operator to cover and capture the entire sessions for our future reference and use
- Another suggestion is to give a little more time or keep reminding people for submissions of topics for presentation and to keep encouraging undergraduate students to also participate in addressing issues

6.0 Conclusion

The 'ethnic tensions' taught Solomon Islanders many lessons. One of such lessons, is the lack of 'national unity'. This is a difficult phenomenon to rectify since Solomon Islands hosts more than 80 languages and dialects with diverse cultural groups. Former Prime Minister for Solomon Islands, Mamaloni stated during the 10th Anniversary Independence Celebration that: "...the Solomon Islands Community has never been a nation and will never be a nation and will never become one" (Mamaloni, 1992). Although shrouded with negativity, the statement reflects the current reality of our country. For instance, 31 years after Mamaloni shared those sentiments, Solomon Islands is still searching for a formula to move *forward in unity to build a stronger nation*'. Indeed a recipe for 'nation building' is 'national unity'. But how can we achieve 'national unity' with all our differences? According to some researchers such as Jourdan (1995), Solomon Islands can achieve national unity through: (i) the education system; (ii) Pijin as a common language; and (iii) popular culture. The *Solomon Islands Independence Anniversary Symposium (SIAS) series* is a vehicle to achieve national unity because of two factors. First, SIAS is

educational in stimulating young students to understand the root of problems within our country. This will enable them to think of broader solutions to existing problems. Secondly, SIIAS is an example of ‘popular culture’, where Solomon Islanders mingle and discuss common issues of interest and collectively discuss solutions to those issues. With the recent feedback, it is encouraging that the ‘appetite’ for SIIAS or similar events has grown. Young undergraduate students recognize SIIAS’s importance and significance is in bridging research to policy. This is also in line with USP vision of *shaping the pacific futures* (USP, 2019). It is our hope that SIIAS will influence more indigenous researchers to emerge and contribute to positive change in Solomon Islands and the region in the near future. More research means more and well thought out solutions to Solomon Islands problems. The onus is on the Solomon Islands Government to recognize the findings and recommendations of research presented in the SIIAS series. That is a means to support in achieving the adage of ‘*Moving forward in Unity to Build a Stronger Nation*’.

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Appendices

Annex A: Symposium programme

Solomon Islands 41st Independence Anniversary Symposium

“Moving Forward In Unity to Build a Stronger Nation”

The University of the South Pacific, AusAid Lecture Theater,

Laucala Campus, Friday 5th July 2019

Time	Activity/theme	Chair/MC/Presenter/Affiliation	Paper Title/Task
7:30 – 8:30	Registration	Registration will continue throughout the day	
8:30 – 8:35	Announcements, Housekeeping Matters & Opening Prayer	MC/Reverend David Tiva	Masters of Ceremony (Derick Liosulia, McClean Sarukiki, Jellyn Malefoasi)
8:35 – 8:40	Garlands	Guests of Honour, MC, Flower Girls	Garlanding of VC & High Commissioner (Lisa Fito'o & Elizabeth Manedika)
8:40 – 8:45	Welcome Remarks by Symposium Chair (and Chair of Session I)	Jerry Siota (Symposium Chair)	
8:45 – 9:00	Session I: Statement by USP Vice Chancellor and President	Maria Nanau (Committee Member) to introduce USP VC & President	Address by USP Vice Chancellor and President, Professor Pal Ahluwalia
9:00 – 9:15	Keynote Address Solomon Islands High Commissioner to Fiji	Ellison Mason (Committee Member) to introduce His Excellency William Soaki	Address by His Excellency, Mr. William Soaki
9:15 – 9:30	Group Photo/Morning Tea	Group Photo/Morning Tea	Group Photo/Morning Break
9:30 – 11:00	Session II: Public Sector Management, Reforms & Leadership	Chair: Ellen Wairiu Time Keeper: Harry Noel Pae	1. Decentralising through Constituency Development Funds (CDF): Some common

		<p>Presenters: Tony Hiriasia (PhD Candidate, SGDIA) – 20 minutes Jerry Siota (PhD Candidate, SGDIA) – 20 minutes Ambrose Malefoasi (PhD Candidate, SOE) – 20 minutes Discussion/Q & A (30 minutes)</p>	<p>problems and outcomes in Solomon Islands 2. Rethinking New Public Management: An Inquiry into Public Service Reforms and Service delivery in Solomon Islands 3. Education Decentralisation in the Solomon Islands: Education Authorities and delivery of education services</p>
11:00 - 12:30	Session III: Fraud Concepts, Anti-Corruption Commissions & Nation Building	<p>Chair: Maxweeny Kekevera Time Keeper: John Mark</p> <p>Presenters: Pamela Kenilorea (Lecturer, SOL) – 20 minutes Walter Malau (former Forensic Auditor, SIG) – 20 minutes Jeremy Dorovolomo (Snr Lecturer, SOE) – 20 minutes Discussion/Q&A (30 minutes)</p>	<p>1. SIICAC: A different trajectory from FICAC? 2. The link between Fraud Concepts and Repeated Disclaimer of Audit Opinions: A Case study of the Solomon Islands Public Sector Audited Reports. 3. The role of sports in building a socially cohesive Solomon Islands</p>
12:30 – 13:00	Session IV: Community Conservation Project	<p>Chair: Tammy Tabe Time Keeper: Rachel Lano</p> <p>Presenter: Katy Soapi (Manager, PNPR Centre) – 20 minutes Discussion/Q & A (30 minutes)</p>	<p>1. Community based Conservation: Experiences from Tetepare Descendants Association</p>
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
14:00 – 15:30	Session V: International Climate Finance, Climate Data, Local Knowledge and Food Security Adaptation	<p>Chair: Adrian Neve Time Keeper: Junior Donga</p> <p>Presenters: Milton Keremama (PhD Candidate, PACE-SD) – 20 minutes</p>	<p>1. Unlocking the potential of international Climate Finance to sustain Solomon Islands economy 2. Comparing ethnometeorological knowledge and climate data: Rainfall patterns on Choiseul, Solomon Islands</p>

		Exsley Taloiburi (Climate Finance Advisor, PIFS) – 20 minutes Linda Vaike (PACE-SD staff and PhD candidate) – 20 minutes Discussion/Q & A (30 minutes)	3. An Overview of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) for MSG independent countries (Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands) with a focus on Solomon Islands
15:30 – 17:00	Session VI: Other National Issues	Chair: Paul Mae Time Keeper: Emily Nalangu Presenters: Gordon Nanau (Snr Lecturer, SGDIA) – 20 minutes Jack Waisi Martin (IPPF, Suva) – 20 minutes Steven Kapu (PhD candidate, PTC) – 20 minutes Discussion/Q & A (30 minutes)	1. The Status of Land Issues in Solomon Islands: Policy Suggestions 2. Knowledge and Evidence on Abortion in Solomon Islands: Preliminary Research Findings 3. A Study of the Development of the Anglican Church of Melanesia, 1975 to 2019.
17:00 – 17:15	Afternoon Tea	Afternoon Tea	Afternoon Tea
17:15 – 17:30	Thanks/announcements/next steps/ & Closing prayer	Symposium Chair/ MC/ Rev TBC	(Symposium Communique Team: to meet briefly at this time): Samson Viulu, Paul Mae, Pamela Kenilorea, Tammy Tabe, Gordon Nanau, Jeremy Dorovolomo, Jerry Siota, Joseph Sua & other interested volunteers
17:30 – 18:00	Clean/tidy up of symposium venue	Ushers, Committee members & Volunteers	

Annex B: Attendance list

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Annex C: Random photos



Caption: Vice Chancellor and President of the University of the South Pacific Professor Pal Ahluwalia speaking at the opening of the symposium while the Solomon Islands High Commissioner to the Republic of Fiji, His Excellency William Soaki looks on.
Photo: Rosalie Nongebatu



Caption: Solomon Islands High Commissioner to the Republic of Fiji, His Excellency William Soaki delivering the keynote address at the symposium. **Photo:** Rosalie Nongebatu



Caption: Guest of Honors and Participants preparing for 'group photo'. **Photo:** Jared Koli



Caption: USP PhD Candidate, School of Government, Development and International Affairs, Tony Hirasia presenting on 'Decentralising through Constituency Development Funds: Some common problems and outcomes in Solomon Islands'. **Photo:** Rosalie Nongebatu

Annex D: Budget detailed break-down

No.	DETAIL/PARTICULARS	QUANTITY	UNIT PRICE	TOTAL COST
1.	MORNING & AFTERNOON TEA			
1.1	Navintees Spicy kitchen (Cakes, sandwiches & other finger food)	50	5.00	250.00
1.2	Coffee	1x200g	13.50	13.50
1.3	Tea (100s)	2	5.95	11.90
1.4	Sugar	1 x 4kg	7.00	7.00
1.5	Paul's Milk	6	2.25	13.50
1.6	Mineral water	36	1.00	36.00
1.7	Mineral water	24	1.35	32.40
1.8	Mineral water	14	1.00	14.00
1.9	Apple	31	0.55	17.06
1.10	pineapple	8	2.50	20.00
1.11	melon	2	20.00	40.00
1.12	Sausage rolls (Hot Bread)	60	1.15	69.00
1.13	Cake mix (Extra Supermarket)	8	2.95	23.60
1.14	Cake mix	2	4.95	9.90
1.15	Cooking oil	2x1L	3.44	6.88
1.16	30s tray eggs	1	13.25	13.25
1.17	FMF Cookies – choc chip	3	3.75	11.25
1.18	FMF Oaties	3	3.95	11.85
1.19	FMF cookies	6	3.95	23.70
1.20	O & C cracker	6	1.65	9.90
1.21	Fire fare	4	4.65	18.60
1.22	Milo	1x200g	3.95	3.95
1.23	Milo	1x500g	10.95	10.95
				\$668.19
2	LUNCH			
2.1	Navintees Spicy kitchen - tray chicken soup	4	75.00	300.00

2.2	- lamb soup	3	100.00	300.00
2.3	Ctn chicken			440.00
2.4	Rice	3x10kg	18.53	55.59
2.5	Fish (49.90 & 36.60)			86.50
2.6	Dalo	7	18.00	126.00
2.7	Cassava	1 bag	80.00	80.00
2.8	Fire wood	9	1.50	13.50
2.9	Fire wood	20	2.50	50.00
2.10	Bele (cabbage)	6	2.50	15.00
2.11	Ice cubes	4	2.50	10.00
2.12	Drinks - Sunquick	3	9.95	29.85
	-Tang	10	0.85	8.50
				\$1514.94
3.	UTENCILS & OTHERS			
3.1	Plates	5 pck	11.95	59.75
3.2	Drinking plastic cups	2	3.95	7.90
3.3	Foam cups	5 pck	4.95	24.75
3.4	Serviettes (100s)	4	3.25	13.00
3.5	Spoons (100s)	3	5.95	17.85
3.6	Aluminium foil	1x150m	45.90	45.95
3.7	Aluminium trays – rectangle	5	5.95	19.75
	- oval	2	2.95	5.80
3.8	Plastic serving spoons	9	1.99	17.91
3.9	Plastic bag	1	0.20	0.20
3.10	Table cloth	10 M	1.85	18.50
3.11	Garland	2	25.00	50.00
3.12	Garland	2	50.00	100.00
3.13	Manila folder (USP BK Centre)	2	0.35	0.70
3.14	Manila pocket folder (USP BK Centre)	1	0.65	0.65

				\$382.71
4.	TRANSPORT			
4.1	Taxi (USP – Flea market)			6.90
4.2	Wheelbarrow fares	2	5.00	10.00
4.3	Taxi (transporting rice from Laucala beach to USP)			8.20
4.4	Parking fee			3.50
4.5	Car hire			30.00
				\$58.60
5.	Journalist	3	50.00	150.00
6.	Debriefing lunch	8		68.80
				\$2843.24

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