Election of women in Solomon Islands

the case for a local governance approach

Ian Scales and Josephine Teakeni

PACIFIC ISLANDS NATIONS GENERALLY HAVE VERY LOW RATES OF WOMEN'S participation in national parliaments and Solomon Islands has one of the worst records of all. In this paper we identify constraints to women's participation in electoral politics in Solomon Islands and develop ideas about how to overcome some of them. We focus on opportunities to increase women's representation through governance reform at the village level. We are primarily concerned with governance issues in rural rather than urban electorates, as about 85 per cent of Solomon Islanders live rurally and, apart from three Honiara seats, all seats are predominantly rural.[1]

Women's participation in the Solomon Islands parliament

In Pacific Islands countries just 4.1 per cent of parliament or congress seats are held by women (Fraenkel 2006).[2] A number of the smaller Pacific countries have no women parliamentary representatives. Likewise, women hold none of the fifty seats in the Solomon Islands parliament elected in April 2006; in fact only one woman has *ever* held a seat.[3] The rate of participation of women in Solomon Islands parliament is low not only relative to other Pacific Islands states, poor as their record is, but also globally. Indeed, it ranks second-last in

the world (in terms of the number of national seats held by women relative to the total number of national seats), exceeded only by Saudi Arabia (IPU 2006).[4]

In the April 2006 national elections twenty-six of the 453 candidates (5.74 per cent) were women. None succeeded, although nine received more than the average number of votes for candidates in their constituency. Nationally, less than 4 per cent of votes were cast for the women candidates.[5]

At the provincial level matters are no different. Men dominate representation in all nine provincial assemblies (covering a total of 183 wards), with only one woman representative in 2005.[6] The male-only pattern of representation is pervasive, even down to local levels of governance: it was evident in the now-defunct local area councils, as it is now in systems of informal local governance operating across the country.

There is a gap between the performance of the Solomon Islands electoral system in terms of women's participation and the international treaties and agreements entered into by the Solomon Islands government. In May 2002 the government signed CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women). In addition, it has recognised the Beijing Platform of Action and the subsequent Pacific Platform of Action (UNIFEM 1999a). These agreements oblige Solomon Islands to redress the low rates of political participation by women. They also enable donors to assist in the process. However, questions remain about how best to implement these agreements. To some extent, these questions have been addressed in the Solomon Islands National Women's Policy (SIG 1998), although this document does not present an explicit strategy for increasing women's participation in parliament or in elected leadership positions more generally.[7] Awareness of the importance of promoting women's participation in mainstream leadership is still low in Solomon Islands.

'Big-man' electoral politics

Many commentators have noted the woeful record of political representation in Solomon Islands, with prestige-oriented male politicians living like absentee lords and playing political games in Honiara while delivering few benefits to their constituencies (see for example Roughan 2004). The failure to cultivate responsible leadership at the centre, according to some, helps to explain the

'collapsed state' saga of recent Solomon Islands history (Bennett 2002, among others).[8]

Beyond the need to implement the universal principles of international agreements, there is good reason to focus on increasing women's participation as the single greatest practical reform of leadership needed to overcome the problems of electoral representation generally in Solomon Islands. This view is supported by cross-country comparative research, which indicates a robust correlation between greater women's representation in parliament and lower levels of corruption (Dollar, Fisman & Gatti 1999). Our argument is not that women are necessarily morally superior, nor that having more women in parliament will necessarily change policy priorities, except on issues that directly relate to women's interests (see Lovenduski & Norris 2003), but that the reforms necessary to bring more women to parliament will be the same reforms that increase public participation, awareness and accountability in governance overall.

We also contend that increased women's participation in parliament is dependent on, and will be an indicator of, better governance at the local informal level. Increased women's participation in parliament and better local governance go hand-in-hand, as do women's participation and improved parliamentary leadership.

'Top down' assumptions of change

International women's advisers, many of whom arrived in the country after the mid-2003 Australian-led RAMSI intervention, have tended to conceive the problem as one of a lack of women's electoral support networks, and have focused on building such networks from 'the centre'. There are a number of structures at the centre promoting increased electoral participation of women. Figure 1 shows the links that the National Women's Policy identified among the main women's organisations in the Solomons. We have slightly modified the original diagram by adding international women's organisations and naming more of the active in-country organisations.

Figure 1 The structural relationships among women's organisations in Solomon Islands
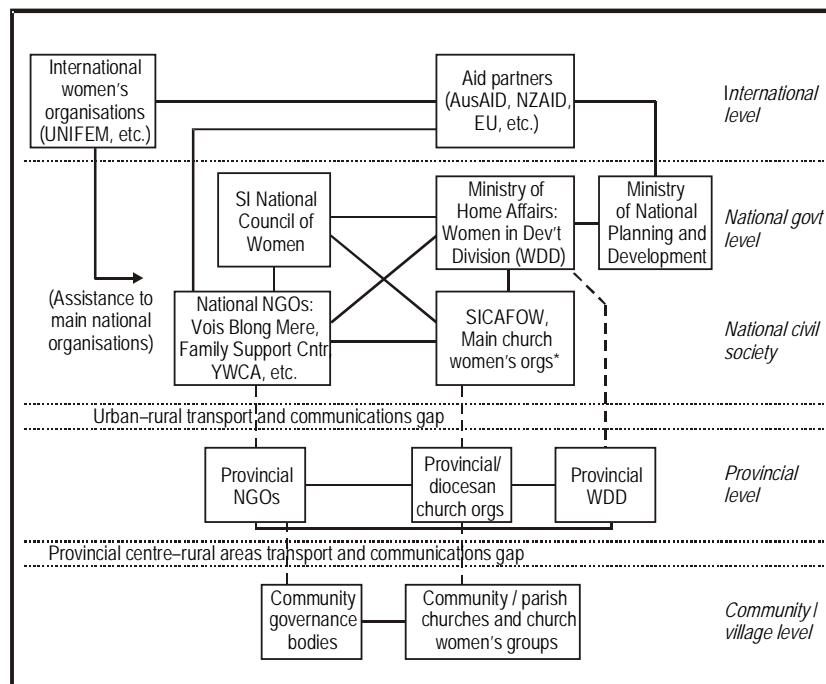
* Main church women's groups: Church of Melanesia Mother's Union; Catholic Mothers; CWC; SSEC Women's Federation; Seventh-day Adventist Dorcas Ladies; United Church Women's Fellowship.

Abbreviations: WDD, (Women in Development Division); SICAFOW (Solomon Islands Christian Association Federation of Women), YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association) SSEC (South Seas Evangelical Church).

Source Adapted from Annex A of the Solomon Islands National Women's Policy (SIG 1998).

Figure 1 alludes to the wide gap between rural communities and the Honiara-based organisations. The urban–rural gap – really a double gap, between Honiara and provincial centres, and between those centres and rural communities – is in large part due to high communication and transport costs and lack of associated infrastructure. The gap largely prevents the Honiara-based organisations from widespread activity in rural areas. For this reason,

government and larger non-government organisations set up provincial offices to act as intermediaries, but these offices are starved for funds and human resources; in most cases the Honiara offices of such organisations have first access, allowing the provincial offices only limited capacity to travel to and communicate with their rural hinterlands. Consequently, provincial office activity, such as it is, is largely confined to the provincial towns. Despite good intentions by the international and national agencies, the majority of the 85 per cent of the population living in rural areas receives almost no exposure to capacity building, especially when it comes to follow-up of one-off workshops. Despite some trickle-down from the centre, for the most part rural people have to draw on their own resources.

Two complementary approaches

In view of the rural resource constraints just outlined, a distinction is drawn here between candidate-based empowerment approaches and community social change approaches to women's electoral participation. Umbrella Pacific agencies, like the United Nations Development Fund for Women and the Women in Politics Pacific Centre, have been active in generating resources to help individual women obtain the skills to run as candidates for election (WIPPaC 1998, UNIFEM 1999a,b).[9] Within Solomon Islands, this individual capacity building approach has been transferred to Vois Blong Mere (Women's Voice, a national women's media organisation) and the National Council of Women (see Teakeni & Sigimanu 2003).

Whilst the individual-focused capacity building approach is undoubtedly important, it cannot produce optimal results if the electoral environment presents significant constraints to women's electoral chances. This was a lesson learnt during the 2001 elections, when no women were elected despite several years of national promotion of the idea that more women should accept candidacy, and voter awareness campaigns that encouraged citizens to 'vote for their future' on the basis of candidates' policies and credentials (Teakeni & Sigimanu 2003). The 2006 election results have only confirmed this. Considering the constraints of actual electoral practice in rural areas, we conclude that social change at the community level is an equally important aspect of any strategy to increase women's participation as elected leaders. This

will not surprise women who have been active in electoral politics in Solomon Islands, but it is important to outline this view from 'the bottom' so that international agencies, who assist principally from 'the top', and have no direct experience of politics in the rural areas, may be persuaded to reconsider their strategies.

Rural electoral politics in Solomon Islands

In the following sections, we consider how electoral politics are conducted in rural areas, and look at the interaction of informal local-level governance associations and formal government institutions. We note that many of the difficulties of electing women in rural areas stem from the single-seat-constituency system used in Solomon Islands, which allows only one parliamentary member for each electorate. In the Solomon Islands cultural context, this constrains many people to think of that single member as necessarily being a male. An alternative model would be multi-seat constituencies, along the lines of the Kiribati electoral system.[10] In such a system, voters may not feel so strongly constrained to vote only males into office.

Voting behaviour, parties and policies

We look in this section at candidate campaign practices and the process of block-voting (rather than individual choice-based voting) in typical village election scenarios. The party system is weak in rural electorates, where 'big-man' politics is still most influential (Alasia 1997). Two features in particular, block-voting and vote-buying, can be observed in the lead-up to any national election in Solomon Islands, and the former is also observed in provincial ward elections. Block-voting is usually understood as the appropriation of a wad of validated ballot papers for marking outside the polling station or a pre-arranged agreement by a number of people to vote in a certain way. Although this was thought to have occurred in at least one constituency during the 2001 national election, the practice was prevented in the 2006 election by changes to the voting system (Commonwealth Secretariat 2002; 2006:16). However, there is another kind of block-voting that is prevalent, which we will discuss here.

Rural constituencies in Solomon Islands cover a large number of villages and underlying descent groups, so elections tend to be contested by a large

number of candidates. An average of nine candidates ran for each constituency in the 2006 elections. Although about half the candidates in the election had a political party affiliation, such affiliations are more important for the candidate's financial support and for the post-election competition in Honiara for a government position than for a policy platform to attract rural constituents' votes. All candidates promise 'development'. However, voters usually do not distinguish a superficial approach to this issue (or constellation of issues) from a substantial one. Lack of local engagement via local organisations in the full cycle of local development programming obscures the mechanics of development processes from many voters, who then remain content with the most superficial promises.

A clear assumption by candidates in campaign mode is that if they can convince the male household heads, the rest of the household will follow his vote. That this is so is demonstrated when vote-buying occurs. Vote-buying consists in many cases of the bestowal of simple gifts, like tobacco or flashlights, on the male household heads. A second tier of vote-buying occurs via patronage relationships: candidates may bestow particular largesse upon local men who are known to influence the opinion of many others. The largesse consists of large gifts, such as canoes and outboard motors, and/or promises of direct benefits if the candidate is successful. The recipients may be given a position, such as 'campaign manager', and be expected to tour villages on behalf of the candidate to gain support, particularly if the campaign manager has stronger social networks than does the candidate in those villages. Sometimes, large gifts, such as a radio-cassette player, are given to buy off a known 'complainer', who then becomes silent. The Commonwealth Secretariat reported similar claims (2006:25).

Vote-buying candidates have to be wealthy, or to have entered into a deal with a wealthy third party (e.g. a logging company) with a promise to return favours during the term of office. Patronage also occurs via distribution of the Rural Constituency Development Fund, an annual grant to each Member of Parliament of SI$400,000 (2005 figures), which is not regulated or audited in any way. MPs can, and are widely alleged to, use this money to favour supporters during their parliamentary term (a claim made also by Maetala 2003).[11]

Often, a significant factor influencing voter choice is the way candidates play their descent-group affiliations, in the context of their alignment to particular factions in contentious local resource exploitation issues. Commonly, this entails candidates' direct or indirect links with logging companies. Competition over resource exploitation is tied to rivalry over 'landowner' rights to the resource, which is determined by complex and highly personal debates about kinship precedence. The winners gain control of royalties, and the losers may permanently lose their financial, and hence political, standing. The winning parliamentary candidate is in a key position to influence decisions about landowner rights. Therefore, these are high-stakes local issues, and rivalry for control over resources by descent-based associations may override any interest in political parties or policies in an election. We are careful to say 'associations' because this accounts for the layer of political construction around resource issues, and is not the same as saying votes are determined by descent group membership. Prior to elections, villages witness the positioning of opinion leaders within one or other candidate's camp. These alignments may be informed by many decades of conflict over control of local resources, and are likely to be well known locally.

Where vote-buying occurs or strong patronage relationships exist, it is difficult for campaigners to win on policy or by promoting initiatives of genuine benefit to the community at large. Vote-buying is an indication of poor community organisation resulting in a lack of consensus on local goals. Even if, because of strong leadership, a community is resistant to the worst excesses of vote-buying, that leadership is, due to 'custom', likely to be almost wholly male. In local public affairs it is a matter of social categories that men are looked to as leaders, whether or not this authentically reflects precolonial culture or is a practice introduced under colonialism with the categorically male 'headman' system. As well as these cultural barriers, in the rough, unregulated environment leading up to elections in rural areas, active discrimination and unfair practices against women candidates may also occur (discussed by Billy 2002; Teakeni & Sigimanu 2003). These factors create a hostile environment for women candidates and can undermine initiatives by national or international women's organisations.

Informal local governance

We now turn to the possibility that stronger local governance associations, as exist in some parts of Solomon Islands, reduce the big-man vote-buying and factionalised block-voting that mark election time in many constituencies. We look at three aspects of informal local governance: what the associations are, what they can achieve in terms of stabilising electorates and what they can do to increase women's participation in leadership. The term *local governance* has been used recently in a Pacific Islands context by Penny Schoeffel and Mark Turner, but our use of the term differs from theirs. Turner primarily discusses local-level government, that is, *formal* local governance. Solomon Islands used to have local area councils, which were of this type, but they were abolished in 1997, ostensibly as a cost-cutting measure.[12] Schoeffel discusses local-level governance of the type we discuss below, that is, informal, often village-based, structures, such as traditional leadership and committees. However, she is more negative about the prospects for local governance than we are. She also makes some Pacific-wide assumptions about local governance that are not correct for Solomon Islands (Schoeffel & Turner 2003). Our use of the term local governance is similar to that discussed by Ian Scales (2005).

Informal local governance in Solomon Islands is home-grown and shows significant organisational variation across the country. It is usually based on leadership not just by traditional chiefs, but also by a combination of traditionally based land and village leaders, church leaders, and those (usually based in town) who have a 'big' government job or are the elected member. Custom, church and government are the three main power bases in almost every rural community, and these bases interact to create complex politics and organisational responses to those politics.

Another feature of rural local governance is the heavy use of village-, and sometimes area-level, committee structures. Typical are school, church, health/clinic and water supply committees. Most communities also have a local church-based women's group and youth group. There may also be a chiefs' council. Although variable in their ability to provide real services and benefits for their communities, these various elements of informal local governance can facilitate exceptional social solidarity. During the 1999–2001 civil conflict, when the central government virtually collapsed and rural

communities were often without government services and policing, communities were able to weather the storm due to the work of these local-level organisations. It was the web of informal local governance that carried on functioning in areas not affected heavily by fighting, and in the areas of fighting it was these networks that were the first to engage in peace-building.

One reason why little is known about this feature of rural society and little is done to support it and further build capacity is that the Solomon Islands government has never had a policy recognising informal local governance or had any interest in working with it. Policy discussions have often assumed that chiefs alone are the basis of community governance and that complex local networks and cultural links can be overlaid by the arbitrary placement of area councils (until 1997) or wards and constituencies (post-1997).

In many areas the community structures that constitute informal local governance extend beyond the village to a district, incorporating nearby villages. Sometimes, a district is based on government boundaries and sometimes on other criteria. Chiefs' councils tend to cover tribal or single-language areas. Church associations are organised in a hierarchy from parish (or equivalent) to diocese (or equivalent) to national structures. Sometimes, services such as schools or clinics are locally managed by area committees, and economic services, such as marketing co-ops and market committees, are also sometimes organised at a district level. Many areas have experimented with local area associations that attempt to resolve conflicts over resources, such as forests, and provide more effective resource management across a district. Ideas about how to manage these structures are often drawn from the old colonial 'village headman' model, the experience of the area councils, the advice of town-based village members who work for government, church committee guidelines and customary concepts of social organisation. Unfortunately, because there is limited understanding of their significance for communities, there has never been any systematic, widespread, long-term support for such organisations.

One example of informal local governance that articulated strongly with formal government was the post-conflict Marau Communities Association and Leadership Council on Guadalcanal (described by Wairiu & Haisiau 2003). It had a two-tiered structure: village-level committees, which sent delegates to

an area committee (or council). This structure effectively networked all the villages into a strong organised body that could deliver services. Part of the council's strategy was to do away with the 'from the pocket' method of electoral campaigning. They developed an 'electoral college' system, in which the pros and cons of each candidate were weighed and the most favourable candidate endorsed by the council. The elected MP was then expected to be accountable to the council (Joseph Hasiau, pers. comm., 2003). This electoral college system is also a version of block-voting, with the population following the council directive, but it is not the factionalised type found in electorates where community governance structures are weak. This may not be the Western ideal of democracy, nor may it be one necessarily open to women's participation, but it is discussed here as one example of articulation between informal and formal governance in the Melanesian context. Not all communities would want to follow this example. Below, we discuss another recent initiative that does foster women's participation and responsible governance across a district.

Local-level strategy

Having discussed the constraints facing women candidates at election-time and the nature of local governance, we now outline a strategy to build capacity in rural areas for stronger informal local governance that brings greater participation by constituents in meaningful local decision-making, along with a greater sense of communal political responsibility.

Building women's participation within local-level governance

We suggest that women's participation in elected leadership will be achieved only by strengthening informal governance associations in rural areas and encouraging women's participation in decision-making at the local level. This, we project, will enhance women candidates' standing more than is possible in the prevailing conditions of competitive village electoral vote-buying and factionalised block-voting. The reasons for this are that: (a) women in more organised communities have more chances to take on community leadership positions that are an indispensable precursor to election (see Teakeni & Sigimanu 2003); (b) organised communities are less prone to accept unsavoury campaign techniques and more conscious of concrete community goals; and

(c) these communities have more effective means for collectively monitoring and evaluating candidates' performance.

Male dominance of leadership positions in Solomon Islands is often assumed to be consistent with custom or tradition. Yet this view is not wholly supported by historical evidence. On Isabel women sometimes figured as chiefs (Bogesi 1947:216).[13] Similarly, in precolonial Western Province leadership by the precolonial *bangara* (clan leaders) was sometimes a woman's role.[14] On Guadalcanal this was also the case: oral historical records suggest that two powerful women leaders played a particularly important role (Kari 2004). In 'Are'Are in south Malaita the Rokotanikeni Association (a constituency-level association formed in 1999) has questioned prevailing assumptions about women and leadership in traditional society, arguing that in at least some precolonial societies there was no categorical necessity for all leaders to be male. The idea that only men can be leaders may well be a result of rigid gender concepts brought with colonialism in the village headman system and the beliefs of missionaries. Part of the work of increasing participation by women in decision-making is to engage in a process of remembering the traditional leadership roles of women.

The West 'Are'Are Rokotanikeni Women's Association is engaging with traditional male leaders to reassess women's participation in local governance. It is also working to build the capacity of women to earn a living and to take on community organisation and leadership, at the same time as seeking to involve both male and female community members across all denominations and age groups in community organisations. While the Association has not yet produced a successful woman candidate, it is laying the foundation for a more goal-focused community that demands higher quality political leadership.

We contend that such participatory community building, informed by a re-examination of community cultural resources, and facilitated by improved organisational and conflict resolution skills, is essential to turning the electoral environment into one that encourages good leadership choices. In such an environment, women stand a better chance of election. Community capacity building, however, cannot be achieved from 'the top'; it can come about only through long-term community development work. There is no *one* model for this kind of organisational development, as each community will extend its own home-grown approaches to its own specific issues.

Candidates, elites and grassroots

In modern Solomon Islands politics, candidates are to some extent judged on their level of education and social status, and educated candidates are often more confident. Education is changing the nature of status in Solomon Islands society. In past times the chiefs, headmen and local pastors formed a powerful rural elite, but many Solomon Islanders comment that it is now the urban elite, the town-based professionals, who have the highest social status in their original rural home-communities. Candidates are increasingly drawn from the urban elite to represent rural constituencies.

This pattern of urban professionals standing as candidates in rural constituencies is evident in the women candidates who registered with the National Council of Women for the April 2006 election. Of eighteen candidates registered in November 2005, twelve were urban-based, three were living overseas and just three were rural-based. Apart from four contesting the three Honiara city seats, all were contesting rural seats. All the women had careers, mostly in NGOs, but also in government, business and education.[15] For both male and female candidates, this is the reality brought about by the financial demands of campaigning and voter expectations about candidates' education and social status.

Results of the 2006 elections provide no immediate indication of whether women candidates with strong involvement in community organisations within the constituency where they contested did relatively better than those whose constituency involvement was less. There were few rurally based women candidates in any case, and the extent of candidates' prior involvement would require more study. We can say, however, that there were still no women candidates who had strong local involvement in constituencies where local governance has been built up to the level outlined above.

Conclusion

Solomon Islands suffers from a legacy of poor governance. Better national governance requires that decision-making be inclusive and coordinated with local initiatives. In the conditions that currently prevail in rural seats women, no matter how well trained in electioneering, have a disadvantage compared to male candidates, particularly those who use vote-buying and block-voting tactics. The 'big-men and money' rural campaign process, suffused as it is with

notions of male-only leadership and patronage politics, excludes women. Women need an environment in which they can demonstrate good community leadership skills prior to elections and successfully campaign on those merits.

We have contended that the current hostile environment for women candidates is indicative of weak informal local governance. Thus, increased women's participation in parliament is dependent on, and will be an indicator of, better governance at the local level. If candidates, both women and men, are elected on the strength of their involvement in local governance that delivers valued outcomes for local communities, we will see a shift away from the election of self-serving prestige-seekers who rely on vote-buying to attain power. Cleaning up the election process in this way will benefit all candidates who prefer to run for election on the strength of their recognised positive role in local communities.

We have drawn a distinction between candidate-based empowerment approaches to the election of women, favoured by international women's organisations, and a community social change and local governance approach. The constraints of actual electoral practice in rural areas mean that social change at the community level is an important aspect of any strategy to increase women's participation as elected leaders. The local governance approach complements the also-essential approach of building the capacity of individual women to participate in decision-making.

To envisage the kinds of changes that may occur at the local level, we have stressed that the prevalent characteristic of local governance as it is actually practised beyond 'the centre' lies in its diversity and its relative informality in comparison to formal government structures. While this informal character has its institutional basis in the traditions and history of each local area, it suffers from a lack of wider recognition and support. Increasing the capacity of home-grown local governance associations to engage in an increased range of local development and service delivery activities is a viable strategy for improving governance. It will lead to both more opportunities for women to assume leadership roles and a strengthening of electorate demand for strong performance by their member of parliament. Building stronger local governance associations is inevitably a long-term process. We believe it is fundamental to encouraging greater women's participation in the Solomon Islands parliament.

Notes

[1] The situation is slightly more complex in that the two seats near Honiara – North-west Guadalcanal and Central Guadalcanal – have a significant peri-urban population, and one seat in each province contains a smaller provincial urban area in addition to rural hinterland populations.

[2] The Pacific Islands countries considered here are the fourteen Forum Islands countries (i.e. the Pacific Islands Forum countries excluding Australia and New Zealand). The figure is arrived at by considering all 585 national seats (including both lower and upper houses in the cases of Fiji and Palau). Data for all other independent countries are derived from the Inter-Parliamentary Union online tabulation (IPU 2006). The number of women in Cook Islands and Niue governments (not included in the IPU tabulation) are two and three respectively (Jon Fraenkel, pers. comm., 2006). Thus there is a total of twenty-four women across the 585 national seats. UNIFEM (2002) reported that 3 per cent of parliament or congress seats in Pacific Forum countries were held by women.

[3] See Drage (1997). Hilda Kari (East Central Guadalcanal 1993–1996) is the sole woman to have been elected to the parliament. The late Lily Poznanski (who was appointed, not elected) was the first and only woman in Solomon Islands Legislative Council, the 1970s predecessor to parliament.

[4] We reach this conclusion by comparing countries with larger numbers of national parliamentary seats but no women with countries with fewer national parliamentary seats but no women.

[5] Data are derived from the SIBC (2006) tabulation of candidate votes by constituency. The exact proportion of votes cast for women was 3.82 per cent. For comparison, in the December 2001 national elections, fifteen of the 328 candidates (4.6 per cent) were women. None was successful (see data from SIBC 2001) although four received more than the average number of votes for candidates in their constituency and one was very nearly successful (Billy 2002). Less than 2.6 per cent of votes were cast for the women candidates (Maetala 2005 has similar figures).

[6] Rose Anilabata (incumbent, Buma ward, Malaita Province) is the sole woman representative. Previously, there were also Rose Dettke (Saghalu ward, Guadalcanal Province, 1997–2000) and Miriam Garo (Waneagu ward, Malaita Province, c.1999–2001) (WIPPaC 1998:21, 47). In the provincial elections held in Western Province in June 2005 eight women ran but none succeeded (*Solomon Star* 17 June 2005).

[7] The objective is implied under section 4.5, 'Decision Making', which says: 'The Government will promote women's participation and representation at all policy and decision making levels …'.

[8] Not all analyses of the conflict have looked at the effect of the masculine leadership culture in Solomon Islands. Whether by intent or oversight, this is most obvious in Liloqula and Pollard (2000), who offer a 'gender and conflict' analysis of the solution to the conflict, but do not ascribe gender a role in their discussion of its causes.

[9] UNIFEM has a regional office in Suva. WIPPaC is a Suva-based NGO.

[10] Vanuatu also has multi-seat constituencies (Van Trease 2005), but Kiribati differs in that voters have as many votes as there are seats in the constituency (e.g. if it is a four-seat constituency, voters have four votes) (see Van Trease 1993). In Solomon Islands such constituencies might align with broad cultural boundaries. We think that if implemented, along with strengthening of women's participation in decision-making at the local level, this system would provide rural voters with more flexibility to vote for women.

[11] The Development Fund replaced an earlier scheme, the SICOPSA grant scheme, which also went to the constituency, but in which decisions on its expenditure went through the local area council and decisions were minuted.

[12] Ruth Maetala (2003) discusses these from a gender perspective, but omits to mention that they no longer exist.

[13] G. Bogesi refers particularly to the Bughotu language area of SE Isabel: '… women have at times been made chiefs', and he expands on the female warrior chief Pora (1947: 216, 211).

[14] A.M. Hocart spent six months in the New Georgia islands in 1908: 'There are women chiefs as well as men, although little is heard of them … they seem to be becoming obsolete' (Hocart n.d., 3). See also Hocart's field notes about Roviana: 'Mere was made mbangara before in Vuraghare … she was mbangara by right of succession' (meaning that the woman Mere was appointed clan leader in the Vuraghare district of Roviana in some era prior to 1908, appointed because she was a descendant of a previous clan leader) (Hocart 1908:1156).

[15] This information was provided by Sarah Dyer, National Council of Women (pers. comm., 22 November 2005). The number of NCW-registered candidates later dropped to fifteen, a loss attributed to the financial demands of candidacy (*Solomon Star* 12 January 2006).

References

Alasia, Sam, 1997, Party politics and government in Solomon Islands, State Society and Governance in Melanesia Discussion Paper 97/7, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, Canberra.

Bennett, J, 2002, Roots of conflict in Solomon Islands – though much is taken much abides: legacies of tradition and colonialism, State Society and Governance in Melanesia Discussion Paper 2002/5, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, Canberra.

Billy, Afu, 2002, 'Fighting for a fair deal in national politics', *Development Bulletin*, 59:58–61.

Bogesi, G, 1947, 'Santa Isabel, Solomon Islands', *Oceania*, 18:208–32, 327–57.

Commonwealth Secretariat, 2002, Solomon Islands National Parliamentary Elections 5 December 2001: the report of the Commonwealth Observers' Group, Commonwealth Secretariat, London.

Commonwealth Secretariat, 2006, Solomon Islands General Election 5 April 2006: report of the Commonwealth Observer Group, Commonwealth Secretariat, London.

Dollar, D, Fisman, R & Gatti, R, 1999, Are women really the fairer sex? Corruption and women in government, Policy research report on gender and development, Working Paper series No. 4, Development Economics Research Group, World Bank, Washington, DC.

Drage, Jean, 1997, 'Database on political participation of Pacific Women', in Women's voices and destiny: the political landscape of the future, Proceedings of the Second Pacific Congress of Women in Politics, 17–21 November 1996, Korolevu, Fiji, WIPPaC & UNIFEM Pacific, Suva.

Fraenkel, Jon, 2006 (forthcoming), The impact of electoral systems on women's representation in Pacific parliaments, a report conducted for the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat by the Pacific Institute of Advanced Studies in Development & Governance, University of the South Pacific, Suva.

Hocart, AM, 1908, 'Field notes', manuscript, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

Hocart, AM, n.d., 'No. 6. Chieftainship', typescript, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

IPU (Inter-parliamentary Union), 2006, 'Women in national parliaments: situation as at 30 April 2006', viewed 15 June 2006, <www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>.

Kari, Hilda, 2004, Perspective of Solomon Island women on customary land tenure, presented in NGO community open workshop / discussions, SIDT Conference Room, Honiara, 25 February 2004 (photocopied paper, 4pp.).

Liloqula, Ruth & Pollard, Alice A, 2000, Understanding conflict in Solomon Islands: a practical means to peacemaking, State Society and Governance in Melanesia Discussion Paper 2000/7, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, Canberra.

Lovenduski, J & Norris, P, 2003, 'Westminster women: the politics of presence', *Political Studies*, 51:84–102.

Maetala, Ruth A, 2003, Understanding local governance in Solomon Islands from a gender perspective, discussion paper, Australian National University, Canberra, May 2003.

Maetala, Ruth A, 2005, '2001 National election reflections', *Solomon Star*, 6 October 2005.

Roughan, John, 2004, Social unrest and electoral institutions in Solomon Islands, paper presented at the Political Culture, Representation and Electoral Systems in the Pacific conference, University of the South Pacific, Port Vila, 10–12 July 2003.

Scales, Ian, 2005, 'State and local governance in Solomon Islands: building on existing strengths', *Pacific Economic Bulletin*, 20(2):140–7.

Schoeffel, Penelope & Turner, Mark, 2003, Local-level governance in the Pacific, State Society and Governance in Melanesia Discussion Paper 2003/7, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, Canberra.

SIBC (Solomon Islands Broadcasting Commission), 2001, 'Election 2001 Special', viewed 16 January 2006, <www.sibconline.com.sb/Election2001.htm>.

SIBC 2006, 'Election results for 2006', viewed 14 April 2006, <www.sibconline.com.sb/election2006.htm>.

SIG (Solomon Islands Government), 1998, Solomon Islands National Women's Policy: Partnership in Development, Women and Development Division, Ministry of Youth, Women, Sports and Recreation, Honiara.

Teakeni, Josephine & Sigimanu, Ethel, 2003, Solomon Islands: Afu's story, presented in Training on Citizenship and Transformative Leadership & Congress on Positioning Pacific Women for Progress, Politics and Peace, Nadi, Fiji, 13–17 October 2003.

UNIFEM (United Nations Development Fund for Women), 1999a, Women and political empowerment: a resource manual for the Pacific, produced for the Women in Politics Pacific Centre by the UNIFEM Pacific Office, UNIFEM, Suva.

UNIFEM, 1999b, Organizing Women for leadership roles: a Pacific woman's manual on running for municipal office, produced for the Women in Politics Pacific Centre by the UNIFEM Pacific Office, UNIFEM, Suva.

UNIFEM, 2002, Positioning Pacific women for progress, politics and peace, annex 1, pre-conference handout, Regional Congress on Positioning Pacific Women for Progress, Politics and Peace, Tanoa International Hotel, Nadi, Fiji, 16–17 October 2003.

UNIFEM, c.2004, 'Gender profile of the conflict in the Solomon Islands', viewed 18 February 2006, <http://www.womenwarpeace.org/solomon_islands/solo_pfv.pdf>.

Van Trease, H (ed.), 1993, *Atoll Politics: The Republic of Kiribati*, Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, Suva.

Van Trease, H, 2005, 'The operation of the single non-transferable vote system in Vanuatu, *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, 43(3):296–332.

Wairiu, Morgan & Hasiau, Joseph, 2003, 'Marau Communities Association: from war to peace—towards rebuilding and developing a community through people's voices and choices', Governance in Pacific States FDC/USP/SSGM symposium, Suva, 28 September–2 October 2003 (papers published on CD-ROM).

WIPPaC (Women in Politics Pacific Centre), 1998, The Long Road: Pacific Women's Journey to Political Empowerment, WIPPaC, Suva.