



# INNOVATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOCIETIES

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## STARTING FROM SCRATCH IN RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING: SOLOMON ISLANDS, 2004-2009

### SYNOPSIS

This case study describes efforts to rebuild the Solomon Islands Public Service beginning in 2004. When the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) intervened at the request of the Solomon Islands Parliament and ended the country's civil conflict in 2003, the Solomon Islands public service suffered from a critical shortage of trained personnel, insufficient pay tied to a complex and unequal housing-benefit policy, and slow and ineffective processes for centralized recruitment, promotion, and performance appraisal. A small group of officials in the Solomon Islands government and RAMSI decided to tackle these problems with (1) targeted training efforts in offices with good leadership but virtually no staff, (2) a dedicated program to reform the public service housing benefit, and (3) a Public Service Improvement Program to overhaul human-resources procedures. Training efforts were particularly successful in the Office of the Auditor General and the Parliament Secretariat, agencies in which capable Solomon Islander leaders requested and directed RAMSI on-the-job training. The Housing Management Project had quick initial success locating and counting government houses but stalled in efforts to evict squatters and change policies that provided privileged public servants with expensive housing. The Public Service Improvement Program, finally, was delayed for two years by a failed RAMSI procurement process, and, at the time of this study, in late 2009, had completed only initial assessment work.

*David Hausman drafted this policy note on the basis of interviews conducted in Honiara, Solomon Islands, in September 2009.*

### INTRODUCTION

In 2003, the Solomon Islands Public Service was near collapse. Five years of ethnic violence had worsened problems that had plagued the system for decades: a shortage of trained personnel, corruption in hiring and promotion,

and a complex and unequal pay policy. During the violence, known locally as “the tensions,” many public servants left the capital for the security of their home islands. Partly as a result, the public service had a vacancy rate of approximately 20%,<sup>1</sup> and several agencies were not

able to carry out their core functions. The Office of the Auditor General had not performed an audit in over two decades, and Parliament had only one committee and virtually no administrative support. The lack of oversight increased opportunities for corruption: When the Auditor General began to present audit reports to Parliament in 2005, he documented 433 million Solomon Islands dollars (about US\$60 million at the 2005 exchange rate) of corruption over the previous two decades—more than Solomon Islands' annual gross domestic product.<sup>2</sup>

In 2004, a small group of Solomon Islanders and Australians began meeting regularly to consider these public service challenges. This group decided to begin reform efforts by targeting a few agencies with capable leadership and virtually no staff: the Office of the Auditor General, the Parliament Secretariat, and a new unit to manage government housing.<sup>3</sup> The speaker and clerk of Parliament and the auditor general took advantage of resources and advisers from the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) to rebuild these agencies from scratch, recruiting recent university graduates and establishing a new organizational culture. The Housing Management Project, although run by Australian advisers, depended on the political support of the Housing Taskforce, a committee made up of high-level Solomon Islands officials. The Office of the Auditor General, Parliament, and the Housing Management Project became islands of efficiency in the public service, avoiding common problems such as corruption and nepotism by hiring a group of employees together and establishing their own norms. In each agency, talented Solomon Islander leaders harnessed the skills of foreign advisers by placing them at work side-by-side with their Solomon Islands counterparts. Meanwhile, the same group of leaders developed a broader plan to transform public employment procedures, called the Public Service Improvement Plan (PSIP). The PSIP, delayed by a failed RAMSI tender process, began

work in mid 2008; in late 2009, it was still gathering information about the public service before making significant changes.

The geography and social organization of Solomon Islands made public administration difficult long before the contemporary set of challenges. The country, east of Papua New Guinea, comprised 990 islands (about 300 inhabited), 600,000 people, and 63 languages.<sup>4</sup> Fewer than 20% of Solomon Islanders lived in cities or towns; most had their homes in small villages, subsisting on fish, coconuts, and crops like sweet potatoes and cassava. English, the official language, was spoken by only 1%-2% of the population. Solomon Islands *pijin*, a blend of English and local languages, was the lingua franca for the country's 63 language groups. Language and dialect groups were the nation's basic social unit; Solomon Islanders called members of their language group their *wantoks*, from "one talk." The wantok system functioned as an informal safety net; Solomon Islanders who earned steady salaries often complained of the demands made on them, and public servants' wantoks sometimes visited their offices on paydays, expecting a cut. The same pressure may have influenced recruitment, discipline, and the allocation of allowances within the civil service.

During the tensions of 1998-2003, larger groups became salient; ethnic conflict arose out of land disputes between residents of Guadalcanal and farmers from Malaita, Solomon Islands' largest island. A Guadalcanal militia formed to evict Malaitans, who responded by establishing a rival force. In 1999 and 2000, between 100 and 200 people were killed in the conflict.<sup>5</sup> The Solomon Islands police and military, partly compromised by ties to the militias, lost control of the capital; violent crime began to replace organized conflict.<sup>6</sup> Prime Minister Allan Kemakeza, backed by a unanimous Parliament, requested assistance from Australia, the largest power in the South Pacific and a longstanding source of development aid for Solomon Islands.

Help arrived in the form of RAMSI, made up of Australia, New Zealand and 13 other countries in the Pacific area. RAMSI's effort had three components: law and justice, which quickly restored security in 2003; economic governance, which stabilized the budget; and machinery of government, which began operations in 2004, after security and financial stability were established.

The experience of public service reform in Solomon Islands held lessons for other contexts in which skills were scarce. It illustrated the possible fruits of targeted intensive reform and sustained on-the-job training, in which agencies had to be rebuilt from the ground up to overcome skills shortages and avoid patronage norms prevalent in the rest of the civil service. More generally, the experience of Solomon Islands was relevant in a context in which informal social ties were more important than formal institutional relationships; the Parliament Secretariat and Office of the Auditor General had some success building informal relationships that supported their agencies' formal goals. Finally, Solomon Islands' rebuilding experiences also illustrated the benefits and perils of reforming a few agencies before attempting to overhaul an entire system.

## THE CHALLENGE

During the tensions, the economy collapsed, and lack of security crippled the Solomon Islands public service. The government fell three months behind in its payment of public service wages, and economic output, as measured by GDP, dropped by 14.5% in 2000 alone.<sup>7</sup> Public servants who tried to work often faced intimidation by gunmen in the streets; many left their jobs in the capital and fled to their home provinces. By 2003, the Solomon Islands Public Service faced a critical shortage of trained personnel. Approximately 20% of government posts were vacant, and several agencies lacked the staff to perform basic tasks.

The Office of the Auditor General had three employees and had not completed an audit report

in two decades. Without oversight, corruption became easier, and when Auditor General Floyd Fatai submitted a series of 10 special audit reports to Parliament on the intervening period, his office had found evidence of corruption in nearly every government agency, from the Department of Fisheries and Marine Resources to the Ministry of Finance.<sup>8</sup>

Parliament faced a staff shortage similar to the problem at the auditor general's office. The clerk and the speaker of Parliament, Taea Sanga and Sir Peter Kenilorea, were well-respected figures with long experience in the public service, but they lacked support staff and resources. Parliament had only one functional committee (a public accounts panel) and no computer or administrative support for members. According to Sanga, Parliament's other four committees—the Bills and Legislation Committee, the Constitution Review Committee, the Parliamentary House Committee and the Foreign Relations Committee—existed in name only. Sanga herself was the only support staff for all five committees. Because of the relative inexperience and high rate of turnover of members of Parliament in Solomon Islands, the lack of a capable permanent staff was particularly problematic: According to a United Nations Development Program legislative-needs assessment in 2001, MPs frequently failed to attend committee meetings and did not have e-mail access or research assistance.<sup>9</sup>

The skills shortage in the public service was aggravated by insufficient and unequal pay and benefits. In 2004, for example, new recruits with bachelor's degrees earned 1,622 Solomon Islands dollars (about US\$220) per month.<sup>10</sup> In order to supplement public servants' salaries, which were rarely enough to live on, ministries altered their "schemes of service"—conditions of employment—to provide overtime, danger pay and other allowances.

The most costly of such extra-salary benefits was housing, a legal entitlement for all public

servants. By 2003, the government was no longer able to provide housing to most public servants, but nonetheless spent more than 6% of its budget on the benefit.<sup>11</sup> The provision of housing, which encouraged public servants to serve outside of their home provinces, had been one strategy to help public servants avoid social and cultural pressures for corruption. Governments had nonetheless sold houses to fill gaps in the budget, and by the end of the tensions in 2003 the government had lost track of how many and which houses it owned. It could no longer provide housing to most public servants, but nonetheless was financing an expensive housing subsidy program called the Public Service Rental Scheme for a select few.

Inefficient central human-resources procedures, finally, added to the problems of skills shortages and unequal pay. Recruitment and promotion, which occurred through the Public Service Commission and the Ministry of Public Service, its administrative department, were slow and cumbersome. Each stage of the recruitment process occurred centrally, from establishment and advertisement through appointment; public servants said the process took months, though the amount of time varied widely from case to case. Recruitment delays remained common in 2009, when a RAMSI survey found that only 7% of public servants were “happy with the length of time it takes to process appointments.”<sup>12</sup>

Several high-level public servants said a 1998 retrenchment program sponsored by the Asian Development Bank had been partially to blame for the problems facing the public service in 2003. The program, aimed at reducing public service costs, began by dismissing all public servants in administrative positions and inviting them to reapply.<sup>13</sup> Officials were offered severance pay as an incentive not to reapply, and those with marketable skills were those most likely to find other jobs and leave the civil service. “It failed on Day One,” said Fred Fakarii of the Ministry of Home Affairs in a 2009 interview. “We lost a lot

of the people from the original transition. ... What we have now, I can say it’s a result of the 1997 reforms. All the experienced managers left.” Ismail Avui, permanent secretary in the Ministry of Public Service, also bemoaned the loss of “institutional capital and institutional memory.” “The ones not rehired were often the most loyal and dedicated,” he said. The program also attempted to reduce the administrative costs of the public service by eliminating administrative support units in half of all ministries, leaving them to share administrative staff with the remaining ministries. Avui said this crippled many ministries; the government re-established administrative support units in each ministry in 2008. An ADB completion report rated its own performance in the project as “satisfactory” but regretted that the project had to end early due to the onset of the tensions.

#### FRAMING A RESPONSE

In 2004, when security had been restored, officials of the Office of the Prime Minister and RAMSI agreed that an overhaul of the Solomon Islands public service was necessary. The question was how to alter the system without alienating public servants and jeopardizing the chances for future reform. A small group of officials met to consider the options. The group included Toswell Kaua, then permanent secretary in the Office of the Prime Minister and Cabinet; Avui, who was undersecretary in the Office of Prime Minister and Cabinet at the time and became permanent secretary in the Ministry of Public Service in 2007; Edmund Andresen, then public service commissioner; Sue Ingram, soon to be head of RAMSI’s new Machinery of Government program; and Jean Gordon, an adviser who had been working in RAMSI’s law and justice program.

The group began work with a series of informal meetings among themselves and with other officials. Despite the urgency of the problem, those involved insisted that

consultations were necessary. Avui regretted that the broader Public Service Improvement Program began so long after RAMSI's agency-specific efforts but nonetheless agreed that consultations were necessary. By his account, the consultations were crucial in building informal relationships: "We *knew* each other, I think, and it contributed to that group coming together."

The consultations established a ranking of reforms by priority. The first significant decision was to support several specific agencies before launching a program to alter central human-resources procedures. Decisions in this first phase of reform were partly driven by demand: Leaders in the Office of the Auditor General and the Parliament Secretariat persuaded RAMSI and the UNDP to concentrate effort and resources in their offices.

Floyd Fatai, the auditor general, helped attract RAMSI advisers and training courses into the Office of the Auditor General, and the office's role as a watchdog for the rest of government also made its reform a logical first measure to restore accountability in the civil service. Fatai, who died in 2008, became auditor general in 2002 after nearly 25 years as an auditor in that office. After the tensions, Fatai asked several RAMSI advisers to work through the backlog of important audits and begin training the new Solomon Islands staff.

The parliamentary staffing program had similar origins. Sanga, clerk of Parliament, and Kenilorea, speaker of Parliament, seized the opportunity of securing RAMSI and UNDP funding. Kenilorea was a prominent figure in Solomon Islands public life. He had helped negotiate independence from the United Kingdom in 1978 and was elected the first prime minister of independent Solomon Islands. He later served as ombudsman for five years, and was elected speaker of Parliament in 2001. Sanga, the clerk, had been in the Solomon Islands public service since before independence, with a stint as personal secretary to the prime minister and eight years as editor of the parliamentary Hansard.

Sanga and Kenilorea used a 2001 UNDP assessment to highlight their need for assistance. "When we were approached whether or not we had anything to concentrate on after the tension," Kenilorea said, "we suggested that they should pick up this particular area of looking at strengthening the parliament capacity and ability to perform its work of oversight and representation properly." Kenilorea and Sanga also contacted the UNDP, which had recently assessed the parliamentary needs of several Pacific island countries. The UNDP agreed to provide an adviser—Warren Cahill, from Australia—with funding from both RAMSI and the UNDP.

The Housing Management Project, meanwhile, grew out of a consensus among senior public servants that the current system was intolerable. The government was legally obligated to provide public servants with housing, but it had too few houses, no means of keeping records, and an unequal housing-allowance system. Prime Minister Kemakeza provided the initial impetus for reform by writing a letter to RAMSI requesting assistance. RAMSI responded by providing an adviser, Michelle Porter, whom the Solomon Islands government guided by forming a high-level task force composed of permanent secretaries from nearly every ministry.

Discussions about human-resource management reform—the eventual Public Service Improvement Program—continued. Informal meetings led to two formal conferences designing the program, one in November 2005 and another in April 2006. Participants said the long period of planning helped senior public servants reach a consensus on the issues to be resolved, though not how to go about resolving them. The final 10-year plan, finished in October 2006, foresaw changes in recruitment, promotion, and performance appraisal, with emphasis on coordination and capacity building for line ministries and provinces.<sup>14</sup> While the other programs moved forward, however, the PSIP was delayed by a failed contracting process and did not

begin work until July 2008. In the end, RAMSI hired officials directly rather than contracting the project out.

### GETTING DOWN TO WORK

When Auditor General Fatai began to employ RAMSI advisers in 2005, their first task was to revive the office's basic functions. The advisers had backgrounds in audit institutions, mostly in Australia, though some also had experience in other Pacific island countries. Their first task was to work through the backlog of audits and hire Solomon Islander auditors as eventual replacements. Crucially, the auditor general and the advisers hired recent graduates, mostly from the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education. Because few of these graduates had work experience in a similar office, the auditor general and advisers made choices based on potential—performance in college and in job interviews, for example—rather than experience. When the new hires began work, they were little more than clerical assistants. “At the time, it was mostly a RAMSI program,” said Gerbera Maqiti Oso, one of the new graduates who were hired. “They’d just request things and we’d do them.”

Despite the prominent role of the Australian advisers, Fatai made clear that he was in charge of the office. “I as auditor general steer the ship to meet our objective,” he told the Islands Business website in 2007. “I can delegate work, but I’m the one who has to sign off on all the reports.”<sup>15</sup> After a few initial audits, the advisers began to replace clerical tasks with more substantive duties, working through Solomon Islands staff rather than with their support. Some of this training happened informally. “I always said what I was doing,” recalled Agnes Tuiyai, an adviser who arrived in 2006 and oversaw five audit staff. “A big man or boss wouldn’t usually tell you what they’re doing or wouldn’t involve people. They

would just tell you what to do rather than get them involved. So that was a big difference, I believe.”

Fatai’s office adopted the formal capacity-development framework of Australia’s development agency, which stressed participatory learning. The framework divided trainee development into four stages—dependent, guided, assisted, and independent—and required careful and repeated self-appraisal.<sup>16</sup> By ranking their ability in each of the tasks at the audit office, the trainees made clear where they needed help. The trainees were hesitant at first. “The self-assessment was quite a difficult task,” Tuiyai said. “They didn’t want to do it.” The assessments, conducted every four months, identified some unexpected needs—training in the use of spreadsheet software, for example, and on how to conduct interviews during audits—and bolstered the legitimacy of the training offered. Advisers did not make all the decisions about what the new auditors needed to learn. The self-assessments, which involved one-on-one discussions with supervisors, also fostered cooperative performance-appraisal habits that made the yearly public-service-wide performance appraisal easier and more substantive: The auditors became comfortable with judging themselves and being judged.

Australian advisers wrote the audit reports produced in 2006; by 2008, Solomon Islander auditors authored those reports. The transfer of skills occurred through on-the-job training. Each time an auditor accompanied an adviser to an audit interview, he or she said a little more; each time a report was published, auditors contributed a little more. Auditors attended classroom training on Fridays, but they learned more from daily interactions with advisers and each other. “Auditing requires a lot of judgment,” said Maqiti Oso, the former trainee. “The more you do, the better you are at it.”

*Reviving the Parliament Secretariat*

After Sanga and Kenilorea enlisted the UNDP's support for their plans to revive the Parliament Secretariat, the UNDP provided Cahill, a project manager with parliamentary experience in Australia's New South Wales. Sanga, Cahill, and Kenilorea decided, like the auditor general, to hire recent graduates. Like the auditor general's office, the secretariat was starting nearly from scratch because Parliament had only one functioning committee. The secretariat advertised seven positions and filled them with new graduates from several fields, trying to make selections on the basis of motivation and work ethic. With UNDP funding, the secretariat was able to offer higher-than-average salaries, making the selection process easier.

According to Sanga and Kenilorea, Cahill combined expertise in parliamentary processes with an ability to mentor the new hires and listen to their concerns. Sanga said Cahill made sure the new hires were given substantial responsibility quickly. "You throw them in the deep end, and they swim," she said. "You give them faith, and then they perform." Cahill instituted weekly meetings at which he delegated responsibilities, and he made himself available to meet whenever an employee needed help. "The project manager would always sit with them if they had trouble," Sanga said. "They feel they own the place, and they therefore care." Kenilorea added that Cahill's personality—his patience and willingness to listen—worked well with Solomon Islanders. (Cahill had moved to another position shortly before the interviews for this study were conducted.)

In both the Office of the Auditor General and the Parliament Secretariat, bringing in inexperienced graduates made it relatively easy to establish new norms. Kenilorea describes the hiring policy as a key reason for the secretariat's success. "We need to understand that the public service should have a separate culture," he said;

hiring recent graduates together made it possible to establish such a culture.

*Managing housing*

The impetus for the Housing Management Project came directly from Kemakeza, the prime minister at the time, who requested RAMSI's help with the issue. RAMSI responded by quickly sending a consultant, Porter, without taking time for the standard assessments that usually precede donor interventions. Once Porter was in Honiara, however, her six-to-nine-month stint served as an unusually thorough pre-project assessment for what became the government Housing Management Project. When RAMSI decided to form the unit, Porter already knew who had the skills necessary to serve in the unit, and no new hires were necessary. She also benefited from high-level backing: She reported to the housing task force, formed by then-Prime Minister Kemakeza, which included the permanent secretaries from most line ministries.

Porter arrived in Honiara in 2005 to find virtually no systems for managing government houses. The Ministry of Lands believed it owned approximately 300 houses; by the time Porter and her colleagues finished counting, they had found 3,000. The first order of business, according to Porter, was to set up basic policies for asset management; next on the list was a catalog of all government houses. Sometimes traveling by RAMSI helicopter, Porter visited every government-owned house in Solomon Islands, documenting the location and condition of each with a hand-held GPS device and a digital camera. She found in 2005 that 60% of government houses were illegally occupied, and that most had not been maintained since independence in 1978. Ninety percent of the houses were in poor or very poor condition.

After the inventory process was finished, the project worked through the backlog of maintenance requests, prioritizing police and

corrections housing. As it completed this substantive work, the office tried, like the Office of the Auditor General and Parliament Secretariat, to place its Solomon Islands government staff more and more in line to perform substantive tasks. By 2009, the project had changed the layout of its office, putting Solomon Islands public servants at the front to greet visitors and RAMSI advisers to the rear.

## OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

As of September 2009, the PSIP was entering its second year of a planned 10 and had gathered information but not yet made any major policy changes. Avui, permanent secretary in the Ministry of Public Service, said the biggest challenge to the reform of human-resource procedures was that the process began three years later than the targeted interventions.

The failed RAMSI contracting process was the central cause. Avui and his RAMSI counterpart, Ingram, rejected all the tenders submitted for the contract; Avui said none of the proposed teams of international advisers had enough experience in Solomon Islands. RAMSI therefore hired for each position separately, a process that delayed the start of the program until mid-2008. The director of the PSIP, David Nudd, began work in July 2008. Between then and mid-2009, consultants mapped out the recruitment process, collected the ministries' schemes of service to gather information on allowances, and performed a survey to determine public servants' satisfaction with human resources procedures.

An immediate priority for the Ministry of Public Service was the reform of recruitment procedures, which delayed hiring and offered little flexibility for line ministries. The ministry had already attempted some recruitment reform in 2006, delegating advertisement, review, short-listing and interviewing to line ministries. The ministry had been responsible for all of these

processes, with oversight and final decisions from the Public Service Commission.

To introduce line ministries to their new responsibilities, Public Service Undersecretary Nancy Legua said the Ministry of Public Service ran three-day workshops, with one day devoted to describing the changes, a second to drawing up job advertisements, and a third to training selection panels.

The reaction to these new procedures was mixed. Fakarii, permanent secretary in the Ministry of Home Affairs, insisted that little substantive change occurred. "All the procedures and obstacles are still there," he said. "Basically it just makes the ministries cover the costs." At the time of interviews in September 2009, the Ministry of Public Service and the line ministries still blamed each other for logjams. The PSIP was mapping the process, and found that recruitment took an average of six to nine months; the program hoped to reduce the number of steps, but no decisions had been made yet on a policy for doing so.<sup>17</sup>

## ASSESSING RESULTS

The results of training were difficult to measure in 2009, but a few achievements of Solomon Islands' capacity-building efforts were obvious. In the Office of the Auditor General, Solomon Islands government auditors in 2009 performed audits that RAMSI advisers had to complete only two years before. Thanks to the parliamentary strengthening project, Parliament in 2009 had five functioning committees, along with research and administrative support for MPs. Finally, the Housing Management Project successfully cataloged the government's housing holdings, which laid the groundwork for evictions of squatters.

These successes, which depended on strong Solomon Islands government leadership and substantial RAMSI resources, indicated the scale of what remained to be done. By late 2009, the



auditor general regularly submitted hard-hitting audit reports to Parliament, but Solomon Islands' other accountability institutions—the Ombudsman and the Leadership Code Commission, which had the power to discipline public servants—were not rebuilt as quickly despite RAMSI support. The crucial elements of success in the Office of the Auditor General and Parliament were good Solomon Islander leadership and the hiring of a cohort of recent graduates.

Housing benefits remained a source of inequality and resentment in the public service. The Public Service Rental Scheme, a stopgap project meant to see the government through a temporary shortage of houses, directly paid rent for 1,350 public servants at an annual cost to the government of over 43 million Solomon Islands dollars (US\$5.75 million), compared with about 11 million local dollars in housing benefits for the 3,000 public servants who received housing allowances.<sup>18</sup> Evictions had proceeded slowly, with little political will.

“We need a better process for enforcement of evictions,” said Avui, of the Ministry of Public Service. “Honiara is a small place, and people know each other very well. Officers who execute eviction orders must do it with skill. I think that’s why it’s so delayed. We need to just support that process and be mindful of the human element.” Although the government now knew it owned more than 3,000 houses, only about 600 public servants actually lived in a government-owned house in 2007.<sup>19</sup>

In an effort to quantify the results of its capacity-building efforts, RAMSI’s Machinery of Government program performed a survey of staff in the Office of the Auditor General, Parliament, the Housing Management Project and the Ministry of Public Service. The survey asked about levels of ability and satisfaction with capacity-building efforts. In both the Auditor General’s office and the Parliament Secretariat, staff reported significant improvement in nearly

every capacity area between February 2008 and June 2009.<sup>20</sup> The staff of the Housing Management Project reported less change during that period, but they reported higher initial competence levels in February 2008. Of course, since staff evaluated themselves and their teams, they may have had a tendency to exaggerate progress or their initial level.

## REFLECTIONS

Few Solomon Islands public servants disputed the targeted successes of the RAMSI Machinery of Government program, but many regretted that reform of central employment procedures did not occur in the years immediately after RAMSI’s intervention. Ismail Avui, permanent secretary at the Ministry of Public Service, said inaction between 2006 and 2008 made his job more difficult. “The steam has come down, I think,” he said. “We sometimes hear comments from people saying ‘Yeah, but we need outputs.’ Delay has created questions.” Although he was involved in the decision-making process, he wondered whether the targeted approach was wise. “Targeted interventions can’t change a whole culture,” Avui said. “What should have been addressed is the whole public service system.”

Lisa Cleary, a PSIP human-resources adviser, agreed that the sequence of reforms had created some problems. She recalled that the lack of a centralized public service reform program made human-resource reforms at her previous job, in corrections, more difficult. “What was happening is it was just a corrections initiative; it wasn’t a public service initiative,” she said. “My experience was that it was really, really difficult to achieve any change in the sense of making processes more accountable and more transparent. Because if you’re a corrections officer, you’ll simply say: That’s not fair, no one else has to do that, so why should we? ... Whereas, if the change is being promoted from the central agency as policy, and you all shall do this and then you

can, I think it is an easier way to influence change.”

Setting aside questions about sequencing, the success stories in Solomon Islands shared several features: excellent Solomon Islander leadership, high-level support and long-term on-the-job training.<sup>21</sup> Less commonly noted, however, were the informal relationships that were essential to

success. Public servants and donor officials often complained about the negative effects of informal relationships on the public service. While these were undoubtedly real, some of the same cultural norms may have helped employee groups of new graduates form strong informal ties among themselves and with advisers in the service of formal goals.

<sup>1</sup> Pacific Islands Forum Eminent Persons Group. “A Review of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands.” May 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Fatai, Floyd Augustine. “An Auditor-General’s Insights into Corruption in Solomon Islands Government.” Office of the Auditor General, Honiara, 31 October 2007, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> A World Bank note on capacity building has also singled out these three programs for their success. See Bailey, Laura. “Building Post-Crisis Capacity in the Solomon Islands.” World Bank Capacity Development Briefs, 2008.

<sup>4</sup> <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/EASTASIAPACIFICEXT/EXTEAPREGTOPRURDE/V/0,,contentMDK:21479040~isCURL:Y~pagePK:34004173~piPK:34003707~theSitePK:573964,00.html>, Accessed 22 October 2009.

<sup>5</sup> Whalan, Jeni. “The Power of Friends: The Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands.” *Journal of Peace Research*, forthcoming, p. 9.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ismail Avui, Interview; [www.adb.org/documents/books/business\\_reference.../big/sol.pdf](http://www.adb.org/documents/books/business_reference.../big/sol.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> Fatai, Floyd Augustine. “An Auditor-General’s Insights into Corruption in Solomon Islands Government.” Office of the Auditor General, Honiara, 31 October 2007, pp. 10-12.

<sup>9</sup> Clements, Quinton. “Rebuilding Parliamentary Rule Post-Conflict: United Nations Development Program Legislative Needs Assessment Solomon Islands.” February-March 2001.

<sup>10</sup> Public Service New Salary Structure, effective 1 January 2005 (contains old salary data).

<sup>11</sup> RAMSI Annual Performance Report 2005-2006, p. 18.

<sup>12</sup> Solomon Islands Public Service, “2009 HRM Survey,” August 2009, draft.

<sup>13</sup> Asian Development Bank, “Program Completion Report on the Public Sector Reform Program to the Solomon Islands (Loan 1627-SOL[SF]),” December 2002, p. 2 and p. 10.

<sup>14</sup> Public Service Improvement Program, Project Design Document, October 2006.

<sup>15</sup> [http://www.islandsbusiness.com/islands\\_business/index\\_dynamic/containerNameToReplace=MiddleMiddle/focusModuleID=17147/overrideSkinName=issueArticle-full.tpl](http://www.islandsbusiness.com/islands_business/index_dynamic/containerNameToReplace=MiddleMiddle/focusModuleID=17147/overrideSkinName=issueArticle-full.tpl) Accessed 19 October 2009.

<sup>16</sup> AusAid. “A Staged Approach to Assess, Plan and Monitor Capacity Building.” May 4, 2006, p. 4.

<sup>17</sup> Public Service Improvement Program. “R&S Review,” Honiara, 2009.

<sup>18</sup> *Options Paper: Alternative Government Housing Solutions*. Prepared by the Housing Management Project for the consideration of the government, June 2008.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> “Capacity Development Progress Report,” RAMSI, Machinery of Government, June 2009, p. 4.

<sup>21</sup> Again, see Bailey 2008.

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