

# people's survey 2009

## summary

ANU Enterprise



People's Survey 2009 Summary Report  
Published February 2010  
Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands

*Cover photo:* School teacher Phillip Ashley with his class, Mbambanakira Village school, Weather Coast (Bruce Edwards)

### **Acknowledgements**

The organisers of the *People's Survey* wish to warmly thank all those who worked on the survey, especially the interviewers who diligently collected the data, the focus group facilitators, field coordinators, data entry officers and field liaison officers. The Solomon Islands National Statistics Office played an invaluable role and the expertise and support they provided is greatly appreciated. Finally, we wish to thank the 5,035 respondents in the communities and the focus group participants who generously gave up their time to express their views on these important community concerns.

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7

provinces (and Honiara)

40

focus groups

64

interviewers

5035

questionnaires

31%

said law and order had improved in the past year

88%

support the presence of RAMSI in Solomon Islands

85%

said there should be more women in parliament

74%

said they were spending more of their income on food  
than they were two years ago

# overview



Photo: Bruce Edwards

The *People's Survey 2009* was the third annual survey to assess perceptions of living conditions and current issues in Solomon Islands. The 2007 *People's Survey* was a baseline survey drawn from a representative sample of selected enumeration areas (EAs) designed by the Solomon Islands National Statistics Office (NSO). It was carried out in all provinces except Makira Province and Rennell and Bellona Province. The 2008 *People's Survey* drew a different selection of EAs from the same representative sample, while the 2009 *People's Survey* included a re-survey of most of the EAs visited in 2007.

The *People's Survey 2009* was commissioned by RAMSI and carried out by an independent consultancy firm, ANU Enterprise. The fieldworkers were all trained Solomon Islanders.

The 2009 survey instruments were developed in consultation with RAMSI. They were:

1) A questionnaire in Pijin and English comprising ten sections:

- Background (9 questions)
- Household Economy (13)
- Business and Employment Opportunities (8)
- Access to Basic Services (11)
- Law and Order (5)
- The Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (10)
- General Questions about RAMSI (5)
- Public Accountability (14)
- Representation and Civic Awareness (15)
- Access to Justice (9)

2) Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Guidelines to explore selected topics:

- Impact of the current economic situation on living conditions.
- Nature and causes of current law and order concerns.
- Voting behaviour and perceptions of the electoral system.
- Attitudes towards women in government and senior leadership.
- Perceptions of modern and traditional justice systems and management of offenders.

Forty small group discussions were conducted in Honiara, rural Guadalcanal, Central Province, Malaita and in Gizo in Western Province.

The following document is a summary of the survey's key findings. The complete *2009 People's Survey Report* (available online at [www.ramsi.org](http://www.ramsi.org)) comprises an analysis of the questionnaire data, with graphic comparisons of whole-of-survey level data for 2007, 2008 and 2009 wherever the data are comparable.

Key findings from the focus group discussions are also listed in the following summary report. Readers should bear in mind, however, that FGD methods are not based on statistically representative samples, so do not necessarily cover the full range of views and opinions. The comments included here should be treated as insights and elaborations and used only in conjunction with the statistical findings.

# key findings



Photo: Thomas Perry

## Background Characteristics of Respondents

- For both males and females the most common education level was primary (44%) followed by secondary (39%), while 8% had no schooling and 9% had formal post-secondary education. Overall, 14 per cent reported receiving some form of informal education, with 7% attending Rural Training Centres and slightly more attending an informal course of some kind.
- The average number of years of education was 7.1 years: 7.7 for males and 6.5 for females.
- Sixty-two per cent of all respondents said they practised subsistence cultivation or fishing, and 26% reported subsistence plus another activity that earned cash or wages. Forty per cent reported housework as a major activity, and 16% reported housework plus another activity that earned cash or wages. The other main activities were informal cash activity (26%), unpaid volunteer in a church or NGO (21%), full-time government worker (5%, part time 1%), full-time worker in the private sector (5%, part-time 4%) and self-employment or own business (8%).
- Seventy-four per cent of respondents were currently living in the province in which they were born and 26% were living in a different province.

## Household Economy

- Twenty-one per cent of respondents said their current household financial situation was better than two years ago. Fifty-three per cent said it was worse than two years ago and 24% said it was the same. Nineteen per cent expected their household

financial situation to be better in two years time, 28% expected it to be worse and 29% expected it to be the same.

- Seventy-four per cent said they were spending more of their household income on food than they were two years ago, 9% said they were spending the same and 14% said they were spending less.
- Sixty-one per cent said they were spending more on fuel for transport than they were two years ago, 13% said they were spending the same and 18% said they were spending more.
- Thirty-two per cent said they were spending more on fuel for cooking and generators than two years ago, 10% said they were spending the same and 47% said they were spending less.
- Thirty per cent of respondents said they had had regular wage employment at some time, 25% had paid tax on their wages, and 21% belonged to a superannuation, provident or pension scheme. Men were significantly more likely to give affirmative answers to these questions. Respondents in Honiara were most likely to have had regular wage employment (52%) but those in Honiara Settlements were only a little more likely than those in Choiseul, Temotu, Western and Isabel Provinces.
- Twenty-five per cent of respondents said they had a bank account, and 25% said there was a bank near their home. Nine per cent said a mobile bank sometimes visited their home area, 15% said there was a bank near their workplace and 2% said a mobile bank sometimes visited the area near their workplace.

# ‘Thirty-one per cent said law and order had improved in the past year.’

- Twenty-eight per cent said they had a male family member working away from home and 19% had a female member working away from home. Thirty-six per cent said the absentee worker sends money to the household (remittances). Although the percentage with absentee workers is approximately the same as in 2007 and 2008, the percentage sending remittances has halved.
- The main expected source of assistance for the community in the next two years was the National Government (33%), followed by the community itself (17%).
- Thirteen per cent of respondents said work opportunities for youth were better compared with two years ago, 33% said opportunities were the same and 47% said opportunities were worse.
- National Government was seen as the most likely source of improvement (37%), followed by foreign donors (19%).

## Business and Employment Opportunities

- Twenty-seven per cent said conditions for starting a business were better than two years previously. Twenty-eight per cent said conditions were the same, 29% said they were worse, and 15% did not know.
- The majority of respondents thought it was no harder for women to start a business than for men (69%), while 19% thought it was harder. Men and Young Men (21%) were more likely to say it is harder for women as compared to Women (16%) and Young Women (18%).
- Thirty per cent said they had tried to start a business in the past two years. Of this thirty per cent, 90% said they had experienced problems.
- Ten per cent of respondents had access to a government agricultural program, 12% had access to an NGO program and 72% had no access to an agricultural program.
- Twenty-five per cent said they had a health centre in their village or community. A further 44% could reach a health centre in no more than an hour. Twenty-nine per cent said it took from one to four hours to reach a health centre and 1% said it took more than half a day.
- Thirty-two per cent had a primary school in their community and 50% said they could reach a primary school in no more than an hour. Seventeen per cent said it took from one to four hours to reach a school.
- Eight per cent had a market in their community and 36% said they could reach a market in no more than an hour. Thirty-two per cent said it took from one to four hours to reach a market and 20% said it took half a day or more.
- Forty-three per cent of respondents had visited a health centre from one to three times in the preceding year, 18% had visited four to six times, and 17% had visited more than six times. Twenty-one per cent had not visited a health centre in the past year.

- Of the 81% of respondents who had visited a health centre at least once, 30% said they were always satisfied with the services received, 46% said they were sometimes satisfied and 24% said they were not satisfied.
- Forty-seven per cent of all respondents said health services had improved in the past two years, 42% said they were the same, 6% said they had deteriorated and 5% did not know.
- Fifty-five per cent expected health services to improve in the next two years, 11% did not expect improvement and 34% said they did not know.
- National Government was seen by 38% of respondents as the most likely source of improvement in health services, followed by foreign donors (15%) the community (12%) and Provincial Government (12%).
- Fifty-nine per cent said primary schools had improved in the past two years, 35% said they had stayed the same and 4% said they were worse.
- Sixteen per cent of respondents' homes were connected to mains electricity, 9% had solar power, 5% had a generator, 4% used other sources and 67% had no electricity.
- Ten per cent of respondents had access to a fixed phone line in their community, 22% had access to a mobile phone, 26% had access to a radio and 43% had no access to communications.

## Law and Order

- Thirty per cent described their community as safe and peaceful, 56% said there were sometimes law and order problems and 12% said there were many problems. Men were more likely to say their community was safe and peaceful (33%, compared with 28% for women).
- Thirty-one per cent said the law and order situation in their community had improved in the past year, 53% said it was the same and 14% said it was worse.
- Sixteen per cent described the law and order situation in Solomon Islands as safe and peaceful, 46% said there were sometimes problems, 24% said there were many problems and 14% said they did not know.
- Twenty-eight per cent said the law and order situation in Solomon Islands had improved in the past year, 44% said it was the same, 13% said it was worse and 14% said they didn't know.
- The crimes respondents were most concerned about were stealing/theft/robbery (53%), followed by drunkenness and crimes related to drinking (48%), murder (30%) and violence (26%). More than twenty other concerns were mentioned, some not legally defined as crimes. There were small differences by gender.

# 'Eighty-eight per cent of respondents said they support the presence of RAMSI.'

## Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF)

- Eighty-five per cent of respondents had not had any formal contact with the RSIPF in the past year and 13% had had formal contact. Of the 13% who had formal contact, 57% initiated it themselves, while 37% of the contact was initiated by the RSIPF. Least likely to initiate contact were Young Men (44%) and most likely were Women (73%).
- Thirty-one per cent said that the RSIPF treat people fairly and with respect. Thirty-one per cent said the RSIPF are sometimes fair and respectful and 26% said they are not fair and respectful.
- Four per cent said there had been a theft from their household in the past year, 5% said someone in their household had been a victim of a physical attack and 3% said someone had experienced another type of crime. Eighty-seven per cent said no one in their household had been a victim of crime.
- The main victims of the above crimes were men (57%), followed by families (17%) and women (13%).
- Of the 13% who said their household had experienced a crime, 54% said it had been reported to the RSIPF. Twelve per cent said the crime was not reported and 17% said it was reported to community leaders. Fifty-six per cent said they were satisfied with the way the RSIPF had handled the report and 40% said they were not satisfied.
- The main reasons for not reporting a crime to the RSIPF were that the family sorted it out (29%) or that customary law was preferred (24%).
- Fifty-six per cent said the officer's supervisor or a senior officer was the person who should be informed if a police officer was not doing his job properly. The second most common response was 'don't know' (20%). Seventeen per cent said they would inform their chief and 6% said they would inform RAMSI.
- Sixty-four per cent of respondents said they would make a formal complaint if an RSIPF officer was not doing their job properly, 19% said they would not make a complaint and 15% said they did not know. Young Men (76%) and Men (68%) were most likely to say they would complain and Women were the least likely (54%).

## General questions about RAMSI

- Within the past three months, 59% had seen a male RAMSI police officer and 41% had seen a female RAMSI police officer. Twenty-nine per cent had seen a male RAMSI army officer and 20% had seen a female RAMSI army officer. Six per cent had seen another category of male RAMSI officer and 3% had seen another category of female RAMSI officer. Thirty-six per cent had not seen anyone from RAMSI within the past three months.
- Seven per cent had spoken to a male RAMSI police officer within the past three months and 4% had spoken to a female RAMSI police officer. Three per cent had spoken to a male RAMSI army officer and 2% had spoken to a female RAMSI army officer. One per cent had spoken to another category of male or female RAMSI officer and eighty-seven per cent had not spoken to anyone from RAMSI within the past three months.

- The most commonly mentioned ways in which RAMSI helps Solomon Islands were ‘keep the peace’ (75%), ‘improve law and justice’ (48%), ‘arrest criminals’ (33%), ‘help run the country’ (22%), ‘provide technical assistance’ (15%) and ‘improve the economy’ (9%).
- Fifty-three per cent of respondents said that violence would return to Solomon Islands if RAMSI left soon. The percentage of respondents who said ‘maybe’ was 30%. Seven per cent said violence would not return and 10% did not know. These results were within five percent of those from previous years’ surveys.
- Overall, 88% of respondents said they support the presence of RAMSI in Solomon Islands, which was almost the same as in previous years. Five per cent did not support the presence of RAMSI and 7% did not know.
- Fourteen per cent said that performance of national MPs and senior officials in government had improved compared with the previous year, 54% said performance was the same, 17% said performance was worse and 16% did not know.
- As in previous years, levels of satisfaction with Provincial Governments were lower than with National Government. One per cent rated the performance of Provincial Government as very good, 30% said performance was satisfactory, and 53% rated it as not good.
- Two per cent said the performance of the Provincial Civil Service was very good, 24% said their performance was satisfactory, 52% said their performance was not good and 21% said they did not know.
- Eight per cent said the performance of Provincial Government Officials had improved compared with the previous year, 54% said performance was the same, 21% said performance was worse and 16% said they did not know.

## Public Accountability

- Four per cent of respondents said the National Government’s performance was good with regard to improving basic services and the economy, 40% said it was satisfactory. Forty per cent said performance was not good and 15% did not know. Respondents in Central Province (15%) and Western Province (9%) were most likely to say performance was very good.
- Four per cent said the performance of the National Civil Service was very good, 32% said performance was satisfactory, 42% said performance was not good and 22% said they did not know.
- Ten per cent of respondents were able to correctly identify the role of the Leadership Code Commission. This represented a small increase from previous years. Fifty-nine per cent had never heard of the Leadership Code Commission and 29% said they had heard of it but did not know what it does.
- Twelve per cent knew that the role of the Ombudsman is to investigate official misconduct, 60% had never heard of it and 27% had heard of it but did not know what it does. This question was not asked in previous surveys.

# ‘Fifty-one per cent said the amount of dishonest behaviour among senior community leaders had not changed compared to a year ago.’

- Fourteen per cent correctly identified that the role of the Auditor General’s Office is to check that public money is spent for the proper purpose and 8% cent said its role is to check compliance with revenue guidelines. This is a small increase in correct knowledge compared with previous years. Fifty-four per cent had never heard of the Auditor General’s Office and 29% had heard of it but did not know what it does.
- Eighty-three per cent said there was dishonest behaviour and/or misuse of power among senior people in their community. Twelve per cent said there was none and 5% did not know.
- Twenty-five per cent said there was less dishonest behaviour and/or misuse of power among senior people in their community compared with a year ago. Fifty-one per cent said the amount was unchanged, 11% said it had increased, 7% had never had any and 6% did not know.
- Thirty-seven per cent said complaints about a poorly performing national official should be addressed to the officer’s supervisor, and 22% said complaints should be addressed to the RSIPF. Twelve per cent said complaints should be addressed to RAMSI, while 24% said they did not know.
- Thirty-seven per cent said complaints about a poorly performing provincial official should be directed to the officer’s supervisor and 30% said complaints should be directed to the RSIPF. Eleven per cent said complaints should be directed to RAMSI and 23% said they did not know.
- Forty-one per cent said they would feel safe complaining about a national official, and 43% about a provincial official. Thirty-nine per cent would not feel safe complaining about a national official and 37% would not feel safe complaining about a provincial official. Nineteen per cent did not know how they would feel about complaining about either. Women were much less likely to say they would feel safe complaining about either a national or provincial official.
- Forty-four per cent of respondents said they never read a newspaper and 35% said they read a newspaper only rarely. Six per cent read a newspaper every day, 10% weekly and 5% monthly.
- Thirty-eight per cent of respondents said they listen to the radio every day, 9% said every week, 5% said every month, 17% said rarely and 8% said never, while 31% said they did not have a radio.
- Forty-seven per cent said they could always receive Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation (SIBC) in their community. Thirty-one per cent said they could receive it sometimes, 3% said rarely and 8% said never, while 11% said they did not know.
- Twenty-four per cent were satisfied with the SIBC coverage of local news, 43% were sometimes satisfied, 7% were rarely satisfied and 27% did not know.
- Nineteen per cent were satisfied with SIBC’s coverage of international news, 36% were sometimes satisfied, 9% were not satisfied and 34% did not know.

## Representation and Civic Awareness

- Forty-five per cent said one of the main jobs of a Member of Parliament (MP) was to 'represent their constituency in Parliament', 42% said it was to 'assist those who voted for him', 38% said it was to 'get better conditions for constituency', and 16% said it was to 'govern the country'.
- Thirty-four per cent of respondents said it was easy to arrange a meeting with their MP, 50% said it was not easy and 15% said they did not know.
- Twenty-seven per cent said their current MP speaks out on behalf of the electorate, 43% said the MP does not speak out, and 29% said they did not know.
- Twenty-three per cent of men said their MP does enough to assist men, compared with 20% for assisting women and 18% for assisting youth.
- Thirty-five per cent said their MP had spent Rural Constituency Development Funds (RCDF) or other government funds in their community, 43% said the MP had not and 21% did not know.
- Of those who said that RCDF or other government funds had been spent in their community, 75% said the funds had been spent on community projects, and 24% said the funds had been given to individuals or otherwise misused.
- Seventeen per cent said their current MP had met with their community in the past year to discuss needs, 71% said the MP had not and 11% did not know.
- Eighty per cent of respondents believe their vote is secret, 4% said it is not secret and 16% did not know.
- Of the 4% who said their vote is not secret, 38% thought the polling booth officer could find out, 22% did not know who can find out and 12% thought chiefs and other big men could find out. Forty-two per cent of this group couldn't say how others found out, 19% said lists and numbers can be checked, and 13% said there was no privacy at polling booths.
- Eighty-five per cent said there should be women MPs in Parliament, 9% said there should not be, and 6% did not know. Eighty-six per cent said they would vote for a woman if she seemed like a good candidate, 8% said they would not, and 6% did not know.
- The most common reason given by both males and females for why male candidates always get more votes than women candidates is that it is the custom for men to be leaders (45% for men and 33% for women, 39% overall). The next most common reason was 'male candidates bribe voters' (41% for men, 38% for women). Seventeen per cent did not know and 10% said women are not respected or are discriminated against. More than thirty other reasons suggested were mentioned by less than 10% of respondents.

# ‘Seventy-two per cent said the main source of dispute resolution in their community was the chief or community leaders.’

## Access to Justice

- Fifty per cent of respondents said they had been told about their rights as a man, woman, boy or girl, 37% had not and 12% did not know.
- Aside from ‘no one’ (27%) and ‘don’t know’ (15%), the most frequently mentioned sources of rights education were NGO/church (20%), radio (15%) and community leader (11%).
- Ninety per cent of respondents said their community leader or chief settles disputes, and 7% said they do not. The most likely to say that the community leader or chief did not settle disputes were respondents in Honiara (27%) and Honiara Settlements (24%).
- Fifty-four per cent said their community used local courts to settle disputes, and 31% said it did not, while 14% did not know.
- Seventy-two per cent said the main source of dispute resolution in their community was the chief or community leaders, 3% said local courts, 14% said the church, 4% said police and 5% said the family and compensation.
- Eighteen per cent said they have access to a town court, 28% had access to a local court, 35% said they did not have access to a court and 22% did not know.
- Eight per cent said there was no cost for a lawyer for a criminal matter, and also 8% said no cost for a lawyer for a civil matter. Six per cent said a lawyer was affordable for criminal matters and 14% said a lawyer was affordable for civil matters. Forty per cent thought a lawyer would be very expensive for a criminal matter, and 33% said very expensive for a civil matter. Forty-one per cent said they did not know whether employing a lawyer for a criminal matter would be expensive, and 43% did not know whether it would be expensive for a civil matter.
- Sixty-three per cent said they would report a violent crime to the RSIPF (68% of men and 58% of women), 18% said they would report to their chief and 15% said they would report a violent crime to RAMSI.
- Seventy-four per cent would resolve a land dispute the custom way, 6% would resolve it via the church and prayer, 6% each would use a government court and the Ministry of Lands or Town Council and 5% would use the RSIPF.

# key focus group findings



Forty Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) on three main topics were conducted in Honiara (Guadalcanal), Gizo (Western Province) as well as in Central Province, rural Guadalcanal, and West Malaita. The average group size was five to six participants and separate discussions were held with participants from the four age/gender groups in each location.

## Living conditions and the impact of the Global Economic Crisis

- Every participant perceived their financial circumstances as worse than two years ago. Most gave examples of increases in the cost of basic items, both locally produced and imported. Examples of substantial increases in the price of clothing in second-hand shops were also given.
- The cause of the deteriorating financial circumstances was generally seen as an increase in costs without a commensurate increase in income. Some gave instances of declines in purchasing power of their income. Some mentioned the presence of RAMSI as a factor driving up prices.
- Participants described increasing pressure for limited employment opportunities. This manifests in various ways including increased competition and longer periods of job seeking before employment can be found. Experienced teachers said they feared losing their posts to new trainees who had higher qualifications.
- Some commented on the increasing cost of basic services. It was pointed out that the 'Free Education Policy' had not made education free because there were still associated costs. School uniforms were once given out when fees were paid but now must be purchased separately, which can be as burdensome as the former fees.
- Free education was also criticised for slowing development programs and creating a 'dependency syndrome' and resistance to paying associated costs.
- Participants believed fees for private doctors have increased, with hospital queues and waiting times in the public health sector having also increased, compelling those with work commitments to use costly private services. Outpatient services were perceived as having a shortage of drugs and hence were obliged to reserve medication for only the most seriously ill patients.
- There was considerable awareness of inflation and the declining value of the Solomon Island dollar, and an understanding that this was contributing to higher prices.
- A few participants specifically mentioned the Global Economic Crisis, but pointed out that prices had started to increase before the Global Economic Crisis started, so it had exacerbated the situation rather than caused it.
- Some participants reported instances of the Global Economic Crisis being used as a reason for reducing staff or freezing salaries.

# ‘The gap between the wealthy and the poor was perceived to be widening.’

- It was generally agreed that everyone was affected by the deteriorating economic situation, whether employed or unemployed, rural or urban. However, opinions were divided as to whether the impact was greater in rural or urban areas and where it was better to live.
- The gap between the wealthy and the poor was perceived to be widening.
- Competition in the informal sector was said to be increasing, e.g. in selling home produce.
- In Western Province, the 2007 tsunami was perceived as still having a negative impact on living standards.
- Retired/aged people, the unemployed, young married couples, the disabled and school leavers were perceived as the most vulnerable groups in Solomon Islands.
- Despite accounts of personal hardship and its causes, there was still a common perception that laziness, lack of planning and substance abuse result in some people being worse off than others.
- Some said the traditional family and community safety nets are beginning to fail, and there is growing resistance and loss of capacity to support those who cannot support themselves.
- The word ‘poverty’ was commonly used, but participants distinguished ‘absolute poverty’ as found in African famines from ‘Solomon Island poverty’, where people can always find enough to eat and survive.
- Some participants were concerned by the appearance of beggars in urban areas in recent years.
- Only a few mentioned population increase and large family size as contributing to economic hardship.
- The main suggestions as to how to improve the economy related to developing agriculture and providing funds to assist small business.

## Law and order issues and justice systems

- None of the participants said the law and order situation was good, but some thought it was improving because there was less serious crime while others said it is deteriorating because there was more petty crime.
- Although all agreed that law and order is better now than during *the Tensions*, some said it was better before *the Tensions*.
- As in the questionnaire-based survey, the problems mentioned most often were stealing and violence, with alcohol seen as a major cause.
- Other concerns mentioned included major organised robbery, rape and molestation, as well as dynamite fishing.
- People from other provinces were perceived by some as a source of criminal behaviour. Other contributing factors mentioned included working mothers neglecting their children, lingering animosity from *the Tensions*, population increase, weak governance, unemployment and concentration of development in Honiara.

- The impacts of crime on daily life mentioned included fear, shame, loss of confidence, insecurity, suspicion, anxiety and hunger (when crops are stolen).
- Weak policing and a poorly disciplined police force were frequently mentioned as contributing to law and order problems, especially by the Men and Young Men groups. There were many negative comments and examples of bad police behaviour and police providing poor role models.
- Favouring *wantoks* was seen as a particular concern related to the RSIPF and was heavily criticised. Some thought that the RSIPF could not be blamed for this, however, as it is a cultural expectation. Some recommended that police officers be posted to areas where they did not have *wantoks*, and then be rotated after a few years before they formed new loyalties that could limit their independence and fairness.
- Other suggestions as to how to reduce crime tended to focus on developing small business activities and employment opportunities, especially in agriculture and livestock. This was seen as tackling crime in multiple ways – reducing poverty, providing a time-filling activity and enhancing self esteem. Similar initiatives were proposed in the economic Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) as ways of reducing poverty and hardship.
- Most participants thought that strengthening traditional justice would reduce crime and recommended strategies, such as displaying photographs of offenders, to revive the traditional social controls of shame and humiliation.
- Some participants said there are too many ‘rights’ in today’s society and this has weakened parental and family control.
- Some said that domestic violence had become normalised in Solomon Islands society and awareness-raising is needed so that people understand it is a crime.
- Impacts of domestic violence mentioned included teenage pregnancy, delinquency, runaway children, failure in school and family shame.
- Causes of violent crime mentioned included land disputes, immodest clothing and violent and/or pornographic movies.
- Young women explained how fear of violence restricted their movement and lifestyle choices, and caused their parents to be authoritarian.
- Most participants, both young and old, were knowledgeable about traditional justice systems and described harsh physical punishment, shaming and exile.
- Participants weighed up the advantages and disadvantages of traditional and modern justice systems and saw positives in each. Most thought that the modern use of jail terms and fines as punishment had a greater impact on families than on the offenders, and hence was not a deterrent. Some said that the prison, with its good food and opportunities to learn new skills, was even attractive to some.
- There was a common view that ‘traditional justice’ is focussed on the ideas of settlement and

# ‘Most participants advocated greater use of *kastom* law, traditional punishments and more restorative justice.’

reconciliation, while ‘modern justice’ is based on a winner and a loser. There was also a widespread perception that modern justice often causes victims to suffer more than offenders.

- Most participants advocated greater use of *kastom* law, traditional punishments and more restorative justice.
- Some were concerned that prisons are not secure and there are frequent escapes, with some believed to have been assisted. There were said to be numerous escapees as well as re-offending ex-prisoners at large in Solomon Islands society.
- Participants said that some ex-prisoners rehabilitate successfully, especially if they adopt a faith and find a way of building respectability and self-esteem, but for others faith is a veneer to secure early release and is discarded as soon as they are tempted to return to crime.
- There were not many suggestions as to exactly how a vote was found out, other than possible numbered lists and unsubstantiated suggestions. Many fears that votes are not secret seem to arise because candidates apply a great deal of pressure to voters, and so it is assumed they must ‘just know’ when someone does not vote for them.
- It seemed to be assumed that if someone was given an inducement they would automatically vote for that candidate. None of the participants mentioned the possibility of accepting a bribe and then not voting for that candidate, even though it appears that inducements are sometimes forced upon voters rather than offered.
- Manipulation of illiterate people and other electors by candidates at polling booths was described, and it was suggested that more police should be deployed to prevent disturbances and coercion.
- The main sources of information about government were said to be radio, newspapers and the ‘Coconut Wireless’ (gossip), but it was pointed out that many people could no longer afford to buy newspapers every day or batteries for radios.
- Almost all female and about half of male participants thought it was possible for a woman to lead Solomon Islands, but most male and female participants said it would take time before the nation was ready to accept it. Gender equity in leadership tended to be perceived in terms of a development continuum, with Solomon Islands now near the beginning, with it needing to reach the end before equity could be achieved, because it is a ‘modern’ idea.
- Some male and female participants said that female leaders would be more honest, caring, approachable and responsible than some male leaders and welcomed the idea of female leadership, mentioning the important leadership role women already take in the household. At the same time, they recognised that the culture is against women, and attitudes would need to change before women would win widespread support.
- Religion was used to support the arguments of both supporters and opponents of female leadership, with some saying female leadership is ‘unbiblical’, while others said everyone is equal in the eyes of God.

- Some participants pointed out that women often lack self-confidence, and even those who have it are likely to be subject to harsh criticisms and personal attacks when they rise to higher positions.
- A tendency for women to have well-developed organisational and management skills was mentioned by some respondents who said women could make good MPs.
- There were numerous suggestions that there should be more education on governance and representation and that this could be carried out by local NGOs and churches. One participant pointed out that people need more education as to what is required of a leader and what qualities voters should look for, as many do not know. This could be a good basis for awareness training.
- Most participants thought there were enough opportunities for women to achieve senior positions in the Civil Service, and mentioned several who had.
- The gender inequity in senior posts was attributed to women having generally poor levels of education and being unreliable employees because of their conflicting family responsibilities.
- Some thought husbands should take a greater role in domestic duties to help their wives maintain senior jobs, while others thought women did not have the confidence, or would need special protection, to undertake the solo travel that goes with some senior posts.
- A few participants thought that women already in senior positions had a responsibility to help other women attain them.
- Two participants said there should be specially designated seats for women electoral candidates, but most saw education of candidates and community as the best way of facilitating the election of women to government.
- Women were especially likely to mention that gender equity should begin in the home and primary school, and said it was the responsibility of parents and teachers to ensure that it did. Participants also said there was a need to ensure that scholarships for further studies were awarded to males and females in equal numbers.

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