



SOLOMON ISLANDS: NATIONAL URBAN PROFILE



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UN-Habitat Regional and Information Offices or directly from:

P.O. Box 30030, GPO 00100 Nairobi, Kenya.

Fax: + (254 20) 762 4266/7

E-mail: unhabitat@unhabitat.org

Website: <http://www.unhabitat.org>

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UNITED NATIONS HUMAN SETTLEMENTS PROGRAMME
REGIONAL OFFICE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORDS	5
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	7
INTRODUCTION	10
BASIC URBAN SERVICES	13
GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL LINKS	17
INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS AND HOUSING	20
URBAN SECURITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL SAFETY	23
LOCAL ECONOMY AND EMPLOYMENT	25
URBAN LAND AND PLANNING	27
INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT	30
CONCLUSION	33
REFERENCES	45
ENDNOTES	45

FOREWORDS



According to research published in UN-Habitat's¹ flagship report, *The State of the World's Cities 2010-2011*, all developing regions, including the African, Caribbean and Pacific states, will have more people living in urban than rural areas by the year 2030. With half the world's

population already living in urban areas, the challenges we face in the battle against urban poverty, our quest for cities without slums, for cities where women feel safer, for inclusive cities with power, water and sanitation, and affordable transport, for better planned cities, and for cleaner, greener cities is daunting.

But as this series shows, there are many interesting solutions and best practices to which we can turn. After all, the figures tell us that during the decade 2000 to 2010, a total of 227 million people in the developing countries moved out of slum conditions. In other words, governments, cities and partner institutions have collectively exceeded the slum target of the Millennium Development Goals twice over and ten years ahead of the agreed 2020 deadline.

Asia and the Pacific stood at the forefront of successful efforts to reach the slum target, with all governments in the region improving the lives of an estimated 172 million slum dwellers between 2000 and 2010.

In sub-Saharan Africa though, the total proportion of the urban population living in slums has decreased by only 5 per cent (or 17 million people). Ghana, Senegal, Uganda, and Rwanda were the most successful countries in the sub-region, reducing the proportions of slum dwellers by over one-fifth in the last decade.

Some 13 per cent of the progress made towards the global slum target occurred in Latin America and the Caribbean, where an estimated 30 million people have moved out of slum conditions since the year 2000.

Yet, UN-Habitat estimates confirm that the progress made on the slum target has not been sufficient to counter the demographic expansion in informal settlements in the developing world. In this sense, efforts to reduce the numbers of slum dwellers are neither satisfactory nor adequate.

As part of our drive to address this crisis, UN-Habitat is working with the European Commission and the Brussels-based Secretariat of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group to support sustainable urban development. Given the urgent and diverse needs, we found it necessary to develop a tool for rapid assessment and strategic planning to guide immediate, mid and long-term interventions. And here we have it in the form of this series of publications.

The Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme is based on the policy dialogue between UN-Habitat, the ACP Secretariat and the European Commission which dates back to the year 2002. When the three parties met at UN-Habitat headquarters in June 2009, more than 200 delegates from over 50 countries approved a resounding call on the international community to pay greater attention to these urbanization matters, and to extend the slum upgrading programme to all countries in the ACP Group.

It is worth recalling here how grateful we are that the European Commission's 9th European Development Fund for ACP countries provided EUR 4 million (USD 5.7 million at June 2011 rates) to enable UN-Habitat to conduct the programme which now serves 59 cities in 23 African countries, and more than 20 cities in six Pacific, and four Caribbean countries.

Indeed, since its inception in 2008, the slum upgrading programme has achieved the confidence of partners at city and country level in Africa, the Caribbean and in the Pacific. It is making a major contribution aimed at helping in urban poverty reduction efforts, as each report in this series shows."

I wish to express my gratitude to the European Commission and the ACP Secretariat for their commitment to this slum upgrading programme. I have every confidence that the results outlined in this profile, and others, will serve to guide the development of responses for capacity building and investments in the urban sector.

Further, I would like to thank each Country Team for their continued support to this process which is essential for the successful implementation of the Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joan Clos', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending from the bottom of the signature.

Dr. Joan Clos

Executive Director, UN-Habitat

¹ UN-Habitat - United Nations Human Settlements Programme



Urbanization in Solomon Islands is a relatively recent phenomenon. However, rapid population growth has meant that by the time of the 2009 census, almost 20 per cent (102,030) of the country's total population lived in urban and peri-urban areas. With an annual urban growth rate of 4.7

per cent, it is projected that by 2020, about 25 per cent of the country's population will be living in urban areas if the present trend continues.

Rapid urban sector profiling studies have been undertaken in Solomon Islands by the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Survey with the support of UN-Habitat and financed by the European Commission. To date, three city profiles for Honiara, Gizo and Auki have been completed and published. The present report sets out the national urban profile, consisting of a general background and a synthesis of six themes: governance and institutional links, infrastructure development, informal settlements and housing, local economy and employment, urban land and planning and urban security and environmental safety.

The overall intention of the participatory slum upgrading programme is to assist developing countries in the Pacific region to identify their urban conditions, priority needs and capacity gaps and to ascertain how institutions are responding to these issues, so as to be able to measure the seriousness of urban problems and the gaps in response to those problems and compare them to the standards required by the Millennium Development Goals. In addition, the intention is to bring those problems to the surface so that corrective measures can be taken to improve substandard conditions and reduce the overall levels of poverty.

The identification of the thematic areas is crucial for planning, coordination and channelling of funds from both national and international sources and for implementation of urban programmes and projects. The growing recognition by the Government of Solomon

Islands of the importance of the proper management of urbanization and its perceived role as an engine for national growth will obviously attract attention towards allocation of its share of funds and institutional capacity-building towards raising the urbanization profile to its rightful place in the development of Solomon Islands.

The cross-cutting, participatory nature of rapid urban sector profiling studies is important for the planning and identification of projects for cities in Solomon Islands, for their joint funding by national, provincial and local level government and international donor agencies. The studies are important because of their focus on priority issues and because they take a relatively short time to prepare. Their role as a prerequisite for the lengthy preparation of an urban development plan can assure their place in a more holistic urban planning approach and may provide a short-term solution to some critical urban issues.

The national profile will assist the national Government to identify key urban issues to be included in its overall strategic planning and contribute national efforts to achieving Millennium Development Goal 7, target C (to reduce by half the number of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water) and target D (to achieve significant improvements in the lives of at least 100 million people living in informal settlements by 2020). As part of the efforts of the Government to achieve Millennium Development Goal 7, the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Survey has included in its corporate plan a policy intention to convert all temporary occupation licences to fixed term estates by 2020 (*source*: Ministry of Lands, Housing and Survey, 2010).

I support Solomon Islands national urban profile and look forward to further interventions from UN-Habitat (and other partners) to support the efforts and plans to improve the image and progress of urban development in our country.

Joseph Onika

Minister of Lands, Housing and Survey

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Urban profiling is an accelerated and action-oriented assessment of needs and capacity-building at city level. It is currently being implemented in over 20 countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific and uses a structured approach where priority interventions are agreed upon through consultative processes.

The urban profiling methodology consists of three phases:

- (1) completion of a rapid participatory urban profile at national and local levels, focusing on urban thematic areas and proposed interventions;
- (2) detailed priority proposals; and
- (3) project implementation. In the Pacific region, the Pacific Urban Agenda² was endorsed by leaders of the Pacific Island Forum in 2005.

Urban profiling in Solomon Islands includes a national profile and profiles for Honiara, Gizo and Auki, each published as a separate report. The present report sets out the national urban profile, which constitutes a synthesis of six themes, namely governance and institutional links, infrastructure development, informal settlements and housing, local economy and employment, urban land and planning and urban security and environmental safety.

BACKGROUND

Urban profiling in Solomon Islands started in 2011, following a partnership agreement made between the Government of Solomon Islands and UN-Habitat in response to the sustainable development challenges of rapid urbanization. Solomon Islands has one of the highest annual urban growth rates (4.7 per cent) in the Pacific. This is putting immense pressure on urban service delivery, which is already in short supply and declining in Solomon Islands towns. Urban infrastructure and services, such as roads, drainage systems, power, housing, health and education services, solid waste management, water and sanitation have deteriorated over the years due to minimal maintenance and improvement. These problems have been exacerbated by a lack of urban policies or city development strategies, a lack of skilled human resources and poor management and weak governance at all levels of government in most towns, paving the way for the rising growth of informal settlements and failing infrastructure.

The national urban profile for Solomon Islands is the first long-term documented advocacy tool that aims to encourage a policy shift towards improving the urban planning and management of towns to achieve desired outcomes for the country. The report discusses the following key urban development challenges, which emerged from the Honiara, Gizo and Auki urban profiles.

- Governance and institutional links
- Informal settlements and housing

- Local economy and employment
- Urban security and environmental safety
- Urban land and planning
- Infrastructure development

Achieving progress in resolving these key urban development issues will play a crucial role in transforming towns into productive and liveable places.

GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL LINKS

Effective governance and strong institutional links between the national Government, local authorities and other stakeholders is vital to achieving better service delivery in towns. Local authorities play a critical role in shaping and managing urban centres or towns through the provision and maintenance of services such as markets, education, health, recreational areas, physical planning, drainage clearance and waste management. However, for too long they have been poorly resourced and ill-equipped to execute such roles effectively.

As a result, the urban authorities in most towns, including Honiara city, continue to face inadequate technical capacity and resources to better address urban planning and management issues. Weak public sector financial management and institutional links, coupled with a lack of a national urban vision, have contributed to poor service delivery and urban development in towns. This is further affected by poor local revenue collection, limited financial support from the national Government and the lack of a lead agency with a committed and credible leadership to lead urban reform.

A number of local authorities have recently benefited from donor-supported projects such as the Provincial Government Strengthening Programme (supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Honiara City Council Institutional

income earners in urban centres. Informal settlers have continued to improve their homes (illegally) over the years, resulting in a mixture of housing quality in these informal settlements, despite the lack of tenure security over the land they are occupying. Housing shortage and high rental costs in the city have driven an increasing number of middle and high-income earners into informal settlements, exacerbating health and social issues, as these areas are often lacking in key urban services, such as water and sanitation. Housing and access to land is a critical component for the overall management and strategic planning for towns or urban centres.

LOCAL ECONOMY AND EMPLOYMENT

Towns are the engines for economic growth, as they provide greater social and economic opportunities for the people. Local authorities receive internal revenue from formal economic activities in towns, but these funds are insufficient to provide capital works and maintain quality services to urban residents.

Rapid urban population growth outstrips job creation through the formal sector in the urban centres, especially in Honiara, leading to high unemployment and increasing urban poverty. Employment creation is most likely to take place in the urban informal sector, providing job opportunities for people without a formal education and linking the rural and urban economies through food production, remittances and circular migration. The informal sector needs to be supported by policy as an important source of livelihood in urban areas.

URBAN SECURITY AND ENVIRONMENT

A high rate of youth unemployment and an increasing economic gap between the rich and the poor, coupled with low policing capacity and poor resources, has given rise to urban safety and security concerns in towns.

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