

GENDER ASSESSMENT AND ACTION PLAN

GENDER ASSESSMENT
<p>Gender mainstreaming category: effective gender mainstreaming</p> <p>1. Key issues.</p> <p>Accessibility and Affordability of Electricity: Access to energy is very low in the Solomon Islands, with approximately 12–15% of the population connected to the grid.^a All stakeholders and communities consulted during project design were concerned about access and affordability of electricity. The project social baseline survey found households' access to grid is low within the targeted project communities at 35% in the Henderson area, 27% in Honiara sub-station area, and 43% in Ambu area, with one small village near the Ambu site not connected to the grid at all.^b Households headed by women represent approximately 10% in Solomon Islands. These households on average earn less across all age groups compared to male headed households. Women heads of households are also more likely to be earning less than SI\$10,000 per annum than men heads of households.^c Within the three project areas, the proportion of women-headed households is at or above the national average, with the proportion of households headed by women at 25% in the informal settlement of Henderson. The barriers to grid connection for low income and vulnerable households, including those headed by women, are high, and include connection costs and administrative issues.^d Without additional support, these households will struggle to have access to energy. Project communities support programs subsidizing connection and removing administrative barriers, for example the completed World Bank's Solomon Islands Energy Access Expansion Project and the extension project Solomon Islands Electricity Access and Renewal Energy Expansion Project (SIEAREEP).^e The planned Solomon Islands Renewable Energy Development Project (SIREDP) does not include any subsidization funds for grid connection but there may be opportunities to harmonize with the SIEAREEP and to encourage rooftop solar through the development of the Solomon Islands Grid Code. National data from 2015 indicates that only 20% of women have a bank account, compared to 32% of men. A 2020 study of women's financial inclusion in the Solomon Islands, found that women often need to seek their husband's permission to open a bank account and this permission is often not granted. Women also have reduced ability to make financial decisions within the household compared to men, particularly in remote areas, and women reported hiding income to ensure there were funds for household expenses.^f Within SIREDP communities, women generally have individual bank accounts and have knowledge and/or access to local savings clubs and loan schemes. Despite continuing challenges associated with these schemes, there may be opportunities for female headed Households and businesses in the project communities to access low-cost finance for rooftop solar.</p> <p>Income and Employment: Traditional gender norms in the country continue to influence the role of women. Women are predominantly responsible for unpaid care and domestic work and are concentrated in informal, vulnerable employment.^g Many women work in the informal sector and 89.3% of micro, small and medium sized enterprises in the informal sector are owned by women.^h Men are more likely to be in paid employment.ⁱ Women in the project communities confirmed their time is spent on household work and cultivation but they also earn additional income in local markets. They are keen to see project employment opportunities (footnote b). Solomon Power has demonstrated success in employing women on the Solar Power Development Project.^j Despite heavy duty tasks being largely conducted by men and limited employment of women in technical roles, targets for women's employment set by the project's Gender Action Plan (GAP) were met through working on tasks such as weeding and cleaning (57% performance against a target of 30%). The generation of additional income earning opportunities associated with the project, such as food stalls, was not successful. Women were paid equally for equal work and generally women were paid directly. Based upon this experience, SIREDP has the potential to create employment opportunities for women.</p> <p>Decision making and participation: Men continue to hold most of the decision making and leadership positions in the country. At 8%, women's representation in parliament is significantly lower than the global average (26.1%) and only slightly above the average of other Pacific Island countries (6%).^k Women's rates of leadership in government and business also remain low compared to men. In 2021, 17% of the 24 Permanent Secretaries of the 24 government ministries were women, 14% of Deputy Secretaries were women and 18% of women were at the Director level. In the private sector, 11% of Board members in the Solomon Islands were women, below the regional average of 23.6%. No women held Board Chair positions.^l While some women in the project areas are involved in local women's groups and other bodies, most are generally not involved in women's organizations and groups and are constrained by limited time, lack of support from family, and limited education. The National Council of Women has expressed concern about the lack of women participating in consultations (footnote b). The Solar Power Development Project has achieved targets for women's participation in consultation and a woman is the chair of the Grievance Redress Mechanism Committee. SIREDP will continue with these targets to foster the opportunity for women to be directly involved in decision making related to development in their communities.</p> <p>Gender based violence: Gender based violence (GBV) continues to be an issue in the country, with a 2009 survey finding 64% of women aged 15–49 who had been in a relationship reported experiencing some form of violence from an intimate partner.^m There are some signs that attitudes and understanding may be improving but rates of abuse continue to be high.ⁿ GBV was raised by women and stakeholders as a concern during project due diligence. All communities felt more training and awareness was required and one community specifically raised potential impacts from the influx of workers. SIREDP will contribute to improving awareness and understanding of GBV in the project communities.</p>

Solomon Power Gender Strategy and Gender Sensitive Policies: Solomon Power is progressing a range of initiatives to support gender equality. The organization signed the Wake Mere Commitment to Action 2017–2019, has developed some gender sensitive policies, and is currently implementing three project GAPs. Women account for 21% of the workforce, with two female Directors on the Board and one female as the Deputy CEO (Solomon Power 2023c, 2023d).^o Implementation of current GAPs is on track and should result in increased awareness, training, and employment opportunities for women across solar farm construction, operation, and maintenance. Dedicated resources are in place to ensure GAPs are achieved. Current GAPs do not include leadership initiatives but there is a target to recruit a woman for a technical role. Information on Solomon Power's gender strategies and programs, organizational chart and gender sensitive policy effectiveness has not yet been made available. Without this information, gender analysis is limited. Based upon recent studies, an area for improvement is encouraging women's participation in leadership and technical roles (PSDI 2021).

Project Benefits: Both men and women will benefit from the planned SIREDP with the increased supply of renewable energy supporting reduction of diesel usage and reliability of supply. In the long term it is anticipated that this will support reductions in electricity costs and improve electricity access for all. Women are significant energy users, particularly within the household, and if the project is able to increase households' access to energy, there is potential to reduce time required for household tasks to free women's time for employment, other income earning opportunities, family, education and leisure. Education and security benefits are expected for the children and staff, including women and girls, attending the pilot solar rooftop schools.

2. **Key actions.** Project design measures to promote gender equality and women's empowerment are found in the GAP below. These actions focus on:

- Building on interventions supported under current GAPs by adopting consistent activities and targets related to construction-based opportunities and impacts, including employment, worker and community training, consultation, contractor behavior standards, and provision of resources.
- Working with other electrification and funding schemes to reduce barriers to grid connection for low income and women headed households.
- Support to further develop Solomon Power's gender strategy and ensure gender sensitive policies are in place and are implemented to support women in leadership and technical roles and improve the education and training pipeline for women.

3. **Key implementation arrangements.** Solomon Power will have overall responsibility for implementing the GAP. Contract packages will include requirements for the contractor to understand and implement relevant GAP targets and activities and meet ADB requirements to prevent and address sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH), including a Code of Conduct for behavior on site and in the community. Contract packages are currently under development. Project gender specialists will support GAP implementation, monitoring and reporting. Additional resources will be allocated to implement training programs and conduct any gender strategic reviews.

4. **Negative impact and risks.**

Potential adverse impacts on women and/or girls or potential to widen gender inequality:

Potential negative impacts may include an increase in SEAH incidents due to the influx of construction workers into the project communities. To manage this risk, contractors will be required to have in place a Code of Conduct that meets ADB requirements and all workers on site, including contractors and security, must undergo appropriate training. Communities will also receive awareness-raising training and information sessions. SEAH response and reporting systems will be established to respond if an incident occurs. There is also a potential risk of widening gender inequality if there is no increase in grid connections to women headed households and/or businesses leading to these households being without reliable power and the benefits it brings. This risk will be managed by working alongside existing projects to leverage opportunities for connecting households in the project areas and working to support access to rooftop solar for low-income households.

Risks to implementation of gender targets and activities and mitigation measures

There is a risk that women in communities and stakeholder groups will be unavailable to participate in project consultation and engagement activities, including training. The project will schedule training and consultations at times and places that encourage women to attend, including holding women only sessions to encourage women to voice their ideas and concerns. Support from local women's groups will also be sought. There are also risks associated with the implementation of several project gender action plans by Solomon Power, including potential duplication and overlap in activities such as training, and the need for gender specialists and resources to support implementation. The project will leverage the resources and activities conducted under existing gender action plans and will build on and extend relevant targets and activities under other project GAPs. In addition, the project will support Solomon Power to continue to have dedicated gender specialists and will engage Solomon Power in finalizing and approving the project gender action plan. The closure of the Solar Power Development Project at the end of the year will help to free up additional capacity to support this project. Additional risks include the project-based approach to GAP development and implementation which may not be sufficient to drive cultural and behavioral change within Solomon Power to promote gender equality. There is also a risk that there are insufficient women with education and training to undertake technical and leadership roles within Solomon

Power. These risks will be further discussed with Solomon Power, and additional strategies to address these risks may be identified during project finalization.

5. **Monitoring and evaluation.** Gender equality actions will be monitored and reported by Solomon Power on a quarterly basis as part of quarterly progress reporting to ADB. This will include progress and achievement targets and activities set out in the GAP below as provided for similar projects, such as the Solar Power Development Project. Actions conducted by contractors will be required in contractor project reports to Solomon Power and will be reported in quarterly progress reporting to ADB.

GENDER ACTION PLAN			
Performance Indicators (Activities and targets)	Contract Package Number	Responsibility	Timelines
Output 1: Clean energy generation commissioned			
GAP Target 1.1 During implementation, community consultation and participation activities include at least 30% women, and consultations are scheduled at a time when women can easily attend.		Solomon Power, construction contractor	Implementation phase
GAP Target 1.2 Employment of at least 10% women in project related activities during design and implementation phase and at least one woman in a project management role.		Solomon Power, construction contractor	Implementation phase
GAP Activity 1.1. Separate onsite sanitary facilities provided for women and men during construction.		Construction contractor	Implementation phase
GAP Activity 1.2 Appropriate safety gear and protective equipment provided to ensure job safety for both men and women.		Construction contractor	Implementation phase
GAP Activity 1.3 SEAH risk management undertaken on all project sites, including (i) SEAH risk assessment conducted, (ii) SEAH reporting and response documented in a standard operating procedure, (SOP) and included in the project's Grievance Mechanism; (iii) training provided on the SEAH SOP to relevant personnel, (iv) SEAH requirements included in the bidding documents, (v) selected contractors Code of Conduct complies with ADB requirements.		Solomon Power	Design and implementation phase
GAP Target 1.3 All project personnel sign a Code of Conduct to set standards for behavior on site and within the community, including prevention of SEAH, and protection of children.		Construction contractor	Implementation phase
GAP Target 1.4 Training provided for all project personnel (including contractors and security) on OHS, HIV, health, and GBV/SEAH issues.		Workers – Construction contractor	Implementation phase
GAP Activity 1.4 Community awareness training conducted on project impacts and benefits, including GBV/SEAH and HIV/health related issues.		Solomon Power	Implementation phase
GAP Activity 1.5 Contractors pay equal wages to men and women for work of equal value and women's wages paid directly to them.		Construction contractor	Implementation phase
GAP Target 1.5 At least one member of the Grievance Redress Mechanism Committee is a woman.		Solomon Power	Design and Implementation phase
GAP Activity 1.6 Capacity building training in solar power plant and battery storage operation and maintenance conducted for Solomon Power staff engaged in the SIREDP with at least 15% female participation.		Solomon Power	Operational phase
GAP Activity 1.7. Review of access to energy barriers in the project communities conducted, and actions identified and implemented to increase access to affordable and secure energy, prioritizing woman headed households and low-income households.		Solomon Power	Design and implementation phase
DMF Target 1c./GAP Target 1.6 Training provided to 20 Solomon Power staff, of which at least six are women, on designing,		Solomon Power,	Implementation phase

implementing, operating, and maintaining the BESS (2023 baseline: NA)		Construction contractor	
DMF Target 1d./GAP Target 1.7 Community members (at least 50% women) trained to support operations and maintenance of pilot RSS at 2 schools. (2023 baseline: none) (OP 2.2.1)		Solomon Power	Implementation phase
GAP Target 1.8 At least 20% students (including 20% females) studying at two pilot schools participate in at least one outreach event, of which at least 80% report increased awareness of technical careers in the energy sector.		University of South Pacific, Solomon Power	Implementation phase
Output 2: Energy sector reforms enhanced			
DMF Target 2c./GAP Activity 2.1 Solomon Power gender strategy and gender-sensitive procedures adopted, including flexible working arrangement, introduction of parental leave and workplace harassment, and discrimination policies (including prevention of gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment) (2023 baseline: not available) (OP 2.3.2)		Solomon Power	Implementation phase
GAP Activity 2.2 Solomon Power's policy and procedures effectiveness appraisal conducted (identify women in leadership and technical roles, barriers to women in leadership, effectiveness of current gender sensitive policies and education and training pipeline), benchmarks identified, and action plan developed and implemented to reduce barriers and meet future targets.		Solomon Power	Design and implementation phase
GAP Activity 2.3 Project performance indicators disaggregated and reported on by sex to track progress of indicators in DMF and GAP		Solomon Power	Implementation phase
GAP Target 2.1 Gender specialist employed to manage implementation of the GAP implemented by Solomon Power.		Solomon Power	Design and implementation
DMF Target 2d./GAP Target 2.2 Gender inclusive energy regulation developed (2023 baseline: not available).		MMERE, MOFT, Solomon Power	Implementation phase
Output 3: Private sector participation in clean energy increased			
GAP Activity 3.1 Study on feasibility of low-cost loan schemes for rooftop solar for women headed households conducted. (OP 1.3.2)		Solomon Power	Implementation
GAP Target 3.1 At least 3 community information sessions (with 20% participation by women) conducted on how the Grid Code can enable electrification of households and businesses through rooftop solar. (OP 3.1.5, 2.1.4)		Solomon Power	Post Grid Code approval

^a Customer and financial data provided by Solomon Power.

^b Entura. 2023. *SIREDP Draft Poverty Social and Gender Assessment for the Asian Development Bank*. Unpublished

^c Government of Solomon Islands, National Statistics Office. 2015. [Solomon Islands Poverty Profile Based on the 2012/2013 Household Income and Expenditure Survey](#). Honiara.

^d The World Bank. 2020. [Implementation Completion and Results Report: Electricity Access Expansion Project](#).

^e The World Bank. 2018. [Solomon Islands - Electricity Access and Renewable Energy Expansion Project](#).

^f International Women's Development Agency. 2016. [Case Study: West 'Are'are Rokotanikeni Association, Solomon Islands](#); and International Women's Development Agency. 2018. [These Savings Clubs are Changing Women's Lives](#).

^g UN Women. 2022. [Gender equality and sustainable energy: Lessons from Pacific Island countries and territories](#).

^h ADB. 2023. [Women's Economic Empowerment in the Pacific Region: A Comprehensive Analysis of Existing Research and Data](#). Manila.

ⁱ Government of Solomon Islands, National Statistics Office. 2015. [Solomon Islands 2012/13 Household Income and Expenditure Survey National Analytical Report \(Volume I\)](#). Honiara

^j Solomon Power. 2023. Solar Development Project Appendix C Gender Action Plan (GAP) Monitoring Report, Quarter 4. 31 December 2022, as provided by Solomon Power.

^k UN Women. 2022. [Gender Equality Brief for Solomon Islands](#); and [Pacific Women in Politics](#).

^l The Pacific Private Sector Development Initiative. 2021. [Leadership Matters: Benchmarking Women in Business Leadership in the Pacific](#).

^m Secretariat of the Pacific Community. 2009. [Solomon Islands Family Health and Safety Study A study on violence against women and children](#).

ⁿ International Finance Corporation. 2019. [The Impact of Domestic and Sexual Violence on the Workplace in Solomon Islands Executive Summary](#); and ADB. <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/linked-documents/48346-002-ssa.pdf>

^o Solomon Power. 2023. [Meet the Board](#) and as provided by Solomon Power staff.