



External finance for rural development

Country case study: Solomon Islands

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Key messages

- Rural development is a priority for the Government of Solomon Islands, but this is not yet reflected in practice.
- The finance gap for rural development is already large, and the Government's demand for external assistance for rural development is only expected to rise in the future.
- The Government aims to maximise the demand for grant financing, in general, for rural development. The Government's demand for external support is primarily for concessional rather than non-concessional borrowing, and concentrates only on those initiatives – such as infrastructure projects – that guarantee economic or financial returns.
- Projects funded by development partners now need to be aligned with national priorities, help mobilise private investment and their support needs to come without strings and with a longer-term horizon to help strengthen national systems.

Introduction

Background

Rural development worldwide relies heavily on private funding. Yet the public sector has a key role to play in providing both investment and policy support to tackle persistent market failures. These include the under-provision of public goods (such as infrastructure and research and development), negative externalities (such as the need to adapt to and mitigate climate change), informational asymmetries and risk (e.g. the development of rural financial markets) and the lack of protection for vulnerable people through, for example, social protection.

Far more finance is needed to achieve food security and promote sustainable agriculture in line with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2. The United Nations (n.d.) estimates that an additional \$267 billion per year is needed to achieve every SDG 2 target: almost twice as much as total official development assistance (ODA) each year from all donors combined. Official development finance (ODF)¹ to agriculture and rural development marginally rose from \$10.2 billion in 2015 to \$10.9 billion in 2018. This is only a fraction of ODF disbursements of \$254 billion in 2018. Public expenditure on agriculture development also remains low. Since 2001 governments have spent, on average, less than 2% of their central budgets on agriculture (FAO, 2019).

Objectives, definitions and methodology of this country case study

This country note summarises key findings from a country analysis of financing for rural development in Solomon Islands, one of 20 analyses that will be synthesised for comparison in Prizzon et al. (2020).

The case study has two main objectives:

- to map demand from the Government of Solomon Islands (SIG) over the next five to 10 years for external development assistance to support public investment in inclusive and sustainable rural development
- analyse the financial and non-financial terms and conditions of such demand, its main preferences and the type of instruments that the Government wishes to access or scale up to support public investment in rural development.

Definitions

What we mean by public investment in inclusive and sustainable rural development (see Prizzon et al., 2020 for more details): Our research has focused on six areas that contribute to such investment: access to agricultural technologies (research and development) and production services; agricultural value chain development (e.g. crops, livestock, fisheries); climate-resilient agricultural practices; rural basic infrastructure (e.g. water and irrigation systems, local roads, local energy generation and storage facilities); rural financial services; and rural investment environment (e.g. policy, legal and regulatory frameworks).

What we mean by external assistance for inclusive and sustainable rural development: We look beyond ODA and we include government-to-government funds from bilateral and multilateral donors that also do not meet concessionality criteria² (usually defined as other official flows, or OOFs). We call this official development finance (ODF). As a proxy for financing rural development, we examine data on external assistance to the agriculture sector and rural development (cross-cutting) based on an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) definition. This is not a perfect measure, but given the lack of a sectoral

1 The sum of ODA and OOFs: the latter flows from bilateral and multilateral donors that do not meet the concessionality criterion for ODA eligibility.

2 The definition of concessionality is based on the share of the grant element. With the 2014 reform, the grant element varies according to the income per capita of the ODA-eligible country to be counted as ODA: at least 45% for low-income countries (LICs), 15% for lower-middle-income countries (LMICs) and 10% for upper-middle-income countries (UMICS). The International Monetary Fund (IMF) discount rate (5%) is also adjusted by income per capita group: 1% for UMICS, 2% for LMICs and 4% for least developed countries and other LICs.

definition or attribution to rural development as such, it is the closest we can get to a consistent, cross-country mapping of external assistance from development partners. As a second-best option, we largely rely on quantitative and qualitative data on agricultural development. Agriculture is a major component of rural development but it does not capture non-farm activities. We will highlight the limitations of this approach throughout the country case study.

Research questions

This country case study reflects our four main research areas:

- the Government's priorities for public investment in inclusive and sustainable rural development
- financing for public investment in inclusive and sustainable rural development
- borrowing (external development assistance) for this public investment
- the Government's preferences in relation to external development assistance for public investment, including its demand for specific types of instruments.

As this project took place during the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic, we also reflect the short- and medium-term implications of the crisis for government priorities and preferences for public investment as well as the amount and type of external assistance demanded.

Methodology

We used a qualitative case study approach, with the analysis of individual countries informed by a political economy framework as developed by Greenhill et al. (2013) for aid negotiations (see Prizzon et al., 2020).

Our approach comprised a critical review of relevant policy literature and data analysis, which also helped us to identify country stakeholders. This was followed by interviews with key informants and an electronic questionnaire submitted before each interview.

For Solomon Islands, we held 12 interviews between April and June 2020 and received 14 questionnaires (see Annex 1 for a list of the interviewees who agreed to their names being shared).

Solomon Islands: country context

Solomon Islands has been classified as a lower-middle-income country (LMIC) since 2010. It is eligible for concessional assistance from the international financial institutions (IFIs), including the International Development Association (IDA) of the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank.

The country is classified as a fragile state by the World Bank, reflecting the consequences of the civil unrest in the late 1990s known as 'the Tensions', which had a profound and harmful impact on the economy. Law and order were restored in 2003 with the support of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands, led by Australia. The country's fragility is also linked to the limited reach and effectiveness of the state and its vulnerability to natural disasters (World Bank, 2017: x). In particular, the country is highly exposed to the consequences of climate change, being ranked close to the bottom of the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative Vulnerability Index to climate change (at 169th among 189 countries) (ND-GAIN, 2020).

Economic development and access to finance

Solomon Islands is supposed to graduate from the list of least developed countries in 2024 but the process is now on hold. Leaving that list means an end to preferential trade conditions but has a limited impact on terms and conditions for loans from development partners.³ Most of the country's economic growth has been driven by forestry (logging) and mining. However, a falls in its logging stock and in international commodity prices call for greater economic diversification towards tourism, agriculture and fisheries.

The country is classified as having a moderate risk of debt distress, meaning that its allocation from the IFIs consists of both grants and loans (50% grants and 50% loans) to reduce that

3 With the exception of Japan.

risk. In September 2019, the Government of the Solomon Islands cut ties with Taiwan and established diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China to negotiate for grants and infrastructure investment. It is worth noting that the Government is highly decentralised, delegating powers to provinces and constituency development funds to Members of Parliament (MPs) for the allocation of funds across sectors and priorities.

The vast majority of the population live in rural areas – 77% in 2017, according to World Bank data (World Bank, 2020a) – and agriculture plays a crucial role in the country's economy. Agriculture still accounts for more than 60% of total employment (*ibid.*) and contributes to more than 50% of the country's real GDP (World Bank, 2017), although this is driven largely by logging, rather than other dimensions of the agriculture sector.

Government priorities for rural development

Rural development is a core priority for the Government, as captured in its National Development Strategy 2016–2035. Rural development is centre stage in government policies because of the large share of people who live in rural areas, the economy's reliance on agriculture, forestry and fisheries, and the pressing need to balance opportunities for peace and stability across the country.

Specifically, the National Development Strategy aims to grow 'the economy through creating investment opportunities in manufacturing and industry development such as tourism, agriculture, fisheries, forestry, energy and related sectors in an environmentally sustainable manner' (SIG, 2016a: 10). In general, priorities for rural development aim to boost economic development, alleviate poverty, improve livelihoods and increase employment and labour mobility in rural areas. Strategies and actions for agriculture development are spelled out in the 'Solomon Islands Agriculture and Livestock Sector Policy 2015–2019' (which is currently being updated) (SIG, 2014). Taken together, its policy objectives – ensure food

sovereignty, improve livelihoods, promote agriculture for import substitution and increase trade – support rural development indirectly.

The prioritisation of rural development reflects the challenges that face rural areas. Our interviewees cited the urgent need to expand public investment in rural development and boost its effectiveness. They raised concerns that ranged from the country's difficult geography – scattered islands leading to very high logistical costs – to the lack or poor quality of rural infrastructure (roads, ports, energy). They also cited the very small market for rural finance, the limited levels of mechanisation and technology transfer in agriculture, and restricted access to land and markets.

In addition, the prioritisation of rural development in the Government's strategy is not reflected in the implementation of its rural development agenda, which faces serious challenges. These include low absorptive capacity, the need to strengthen technical skills at all levels of government and throughout project cycles, governance issues that hamper communication across all levels of government, and a financing gap that the Government cannot close on its own. All of these prevent the translation of government policy priorities on rural development into the effective delivery of programmes and the achievement of the Government's own targets for the sector.

Several government priorities in the National Development Strategy and Agriculture and Livestock Sector Policy overlap with those that we define for inclusive and sustainable rural development. For example, the development of basic infrastructure in rural areas was mentioned as a top priority by nearly every interviewee. These overlapping priorities are consistent with the responses of our interviewees (every respondent, for example, mentioned the development of basic infrastructure in rural areas as a top priority). They are as follows:

- to provide essential infrastructure to support the integration of the rural sector into the mainstream economy
- to promote disaster risk mitigation and adaptation measures to climate change

- to promote agro-processing, value-adding (to increase profits for farmers on their raw products), agribusiness and rural credit facilities
- to strengthen farmer institutions as well as the research and development capacity to raise the productivity of food crops and livestock, and strengthen value-adding technologies to boost production for both local consumption and export
- to promote, develop and reinforce the policy and regulatory framework for food and livestock production.

Among its objectives, the 2015–2019 Agriculture and Livestock Sector Policy includes the ‘promotion and the empowerment of women, youth’ – the latter to entice youth back to rural areas and into the agriculture sector and to boost rural employment. It also aims to support the participation of people with special needs ‘in all agricultural developments and activities’. However, it emerged from several interviews with both government and development partners that the implementation of these policies and their targeting of specific groups on the ground is still work in progress. What’s more, it is often driven by donors’ agendas rather than being prioritised by the Government.

The response to the Covid-19 crisis only reinforces the need to prioritise rural development. No cases had been detected in Solomon Islands at the time of writing, but border closures, the loss of tourism and falling demand for the country’s main commodities required a massive fiscal stimulus package by the Government.

Our interviews, both at the start of the Covid-19 crisis and at the earliest stages of the economic recovery, generated consistent responses across government and donor interviewees. They all stressed that the crisis only heightens the importance of rural development and agriculture for the country, given the even greater and urgent need to ensure food security and self-sufficiency, reduce food prices, boost employment and increase agricultural production as imports from other countries are restricted.

Financing rural development

Public finance

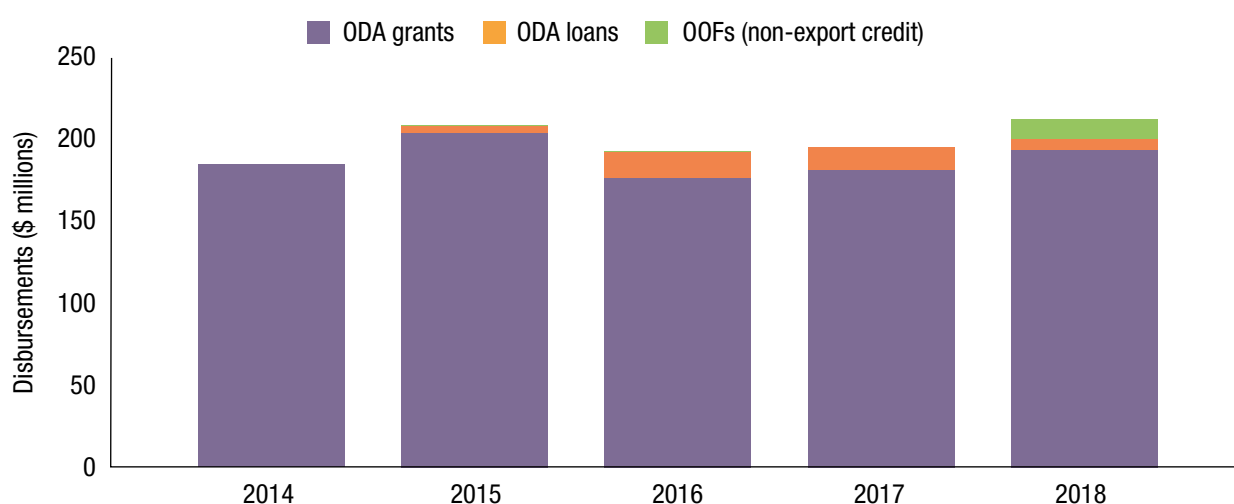
The extraordinary recovery in domestic revenues since 2003, following the country’s conflict, was used to expand public expenditure on service delivery as well as on the Constituency Development Fund (World Bank, 2017: 13). However, these revenues have plateaued in recent years and key revenue streams such as taxes on logging are expected to decline in years to come, and the outlook for public finance is uncertain (SIG and UNDP, 2018).

Much of the growth in the development budget has gone to two sectors: rural development and infrastructure. The Rural Constituency Development Funds are the largest source of financing at sub-national level and have been growing rapidly. They now account for the majority of development expenditure on rural development, expanding by an annual average of 15% since 2011, despite some year-on-year fluctuations (SIG and UNDP, 2018).

However, many of our interviewees questioned whether these resources are targeting rural development directly, as they are used by individual MPs for their constituencies and there is limited transparency about the allocation of funds by sectors and activities. Infrastructure spending – most of it in rural areas given the geography of the country – rose from 7.4% of the development budget in 2011 to 21% in 2017, equivalent to an almost fivefold increase in real terms (SIG and UNDP, 2018).

One policy objective is to meet public spending targets for agriculture similar to the one set out in the African Union’s Malabo Declaration on public spending. The agriculture sector strategy states that the annual budget of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock should, therefore, account for more than 10% of public expenditure to reflect the importance of the agriculture sector to the national economy. However, we did not find any data to measure whether and how total public expenditure on agriculture and rural development met this target.

Figure 1 Official development finance disbursements to Solomon Islands



Note: constant 2017 prices. ODA, official development assistance; OOF, other official flow.
Source: OECD (2020)

External development assistance

The data shows that the Government has received mostly concessional finance over the past five years: essentially grants and concessional loans from sovereign donors and multilateral development banks with relatively stable volumes of total ODF (Figure 1), amounting to around \$200 million each year. Non-concessional finance has been only limited and recent (in 2018).⁴

Because of the impact of the conflict on the economy in the 2000s, the country was downgraded to IDA terms from its International Bank of Reconstruction and Development terms, shifting it from non-concessional to concessional lending. In addition, because the country is classified as being at moderate risk of debt distress, 50% of the projects funded by IFIs are funded via grants. Assistance from the major donors to Solomon Islands – Australia and New Zealand – comes in the form of grants.

Aid dependency has fallen sharply. ODA fell from just over 31% of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2010 to just over 12% in 2016 (World Bank, 2017). The ODA to gross national income ratio has been stable, at 15% for the past two years. While it has fallen from 50% in 2014, ODA to the Solomon Islands in 2017 was still equivalent to 40% of government spending (World Bank, 2020a).

ODA will continue to play a key role in investment for the development of infrastructure

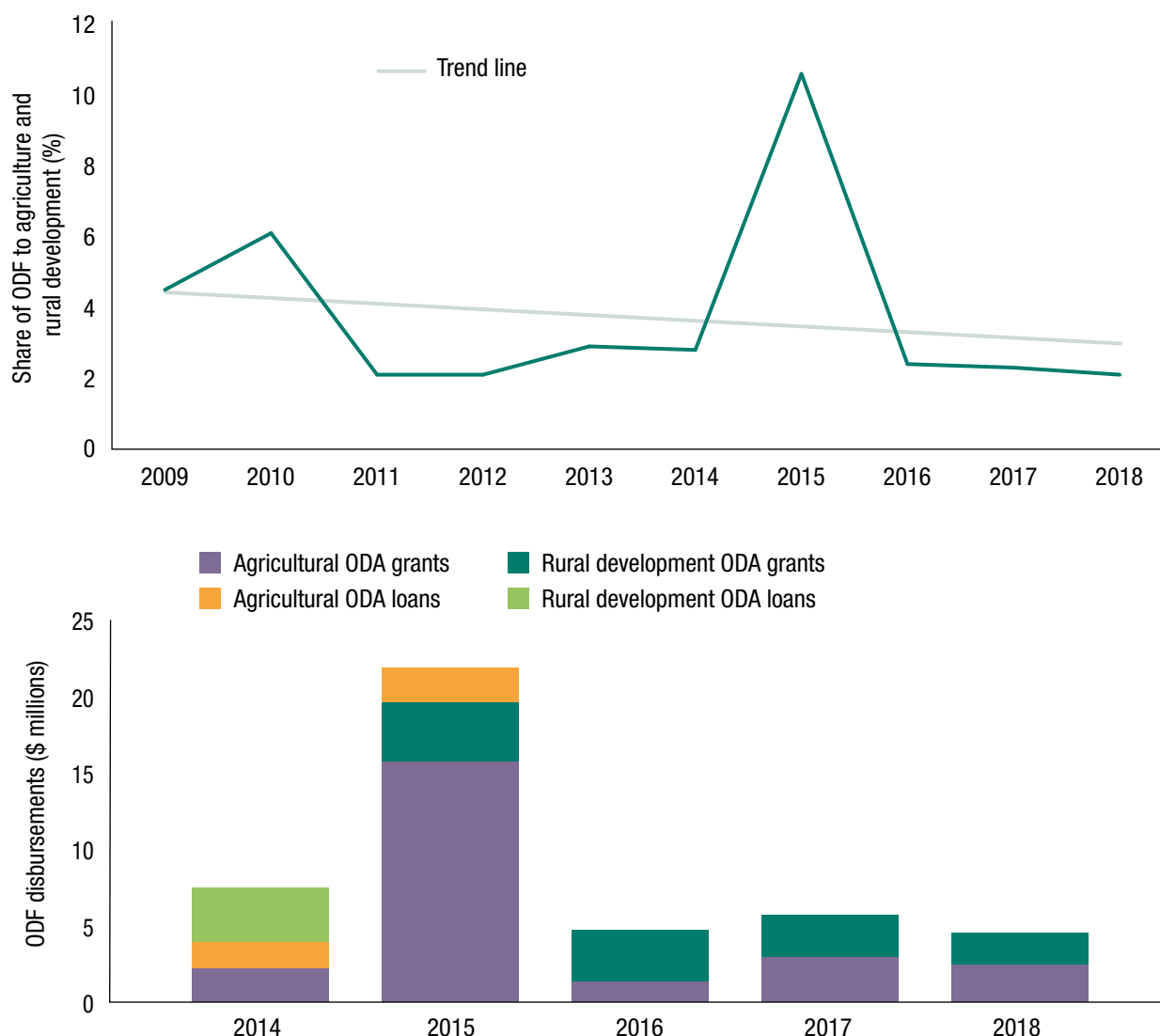
and the productive sector. The role of ODA is spelt out in the National Development Strategy, with clear directions about where it should be concentrated:

By 2035 the balance of funding in key social sectors such as health and education would have shifted so that reliance on development partners is reduced. ODA will continue to play an important role in investing in infrastructure and supporting productive sector development, including through the promotion of investment in key industries. (SIG and UNDP, 2018).

Our interviews found that development partners fully expect to remain large contributors to the Solomon Islands agriculture and rural development sector. As one interviewee pointed out: ‘development partners are supplementing the government well, with greater volumes than the government could offer and complementary to what the government is doing’.

Despite the prioritisation of rural development and agriculture in the National Development Strategy, the share of assistance going to agriculture and rural development over the past 10 years has been very low, at close to 2% over recent years (Figure 2). This is far lower than

Figure 2 Share and composition of official development finance to agriculture and rural development



Note: ODA, official development assistance; ODF, official development finance; OOF, other official flow. Disbursement figures use constant prices.
Source: OECD (2020)

the average share of 5% of total ODF across developing countries as a whole.

Two other points are worth noting. First, annual ODF on agriculture and rural development is rather low (about \$5 million each year). One notable exception was seen in 2015, linked to an \$11 million project by the European Union, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Government of Australia, and implemented by the World Bank, to improve basic infrastructure and services in

rural areas and strengthen linkages between smallholder farming households and markets. Second, all projects supporting rural development or agriculture as recently as 2018 were funded via grants, reflecting trends and access to finance across sectors that go beyond agriculture and rural development.

While there are no costed plans or needs assessments for the agriculture sector or rural development more generally,⁴ all of our interviewees noted that the Government's

⁴ At the time of this country case study (April–June 2020) we understood that the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock was developing a new strategy but the details could not yet be reflected in this country case study.

demand for external assistance for these sectors is only expected to rise in the future. The financing gap is still quite large, and while there are expectations that Solomon Islands will reduce its dependency on aid in the long term, this is not the case in the short and medium term. The Government is actively looking for new official donors and diversifying its funding base.

It is worth noting, however, that demand for external development assistance (including for agriculture and rural development) is primarily for grant and concessional finance, rather than for non-concessional resources (as discussed in the next section).

Government officials and development partners all stressed that they value every aspect of development assistance – including for sustainable and inclusive rural development – such as additional financial resources at better-than-market terms, technical assistance, policy dialogue and learning from other countries.

However, the demand for additional finance stood out. This is not surprising, given the large financing gap for public investment in general in Solomon Islands, with around 14% of the entire development budget supported by development partners (SIG, 2020) and the demand for technical assistance to support capacity development in a country where skills for strategy development, project identification and implementation are lagging behind.

What emerged from our discussions with interviewees was that additional finance should come hand-in-hand with technical assistance to maximise the impact of financial resources.

Borrowing for rural development

Debt trends and composition

Debt sustainability was a clear issue right after the Tensions, and continues to shape today's current prudent approach to borrowing and debt management. The debt-relief packages agreed with the Honiara Club Agreement in 2005 and the technical support the Regional

Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands on debt management also helped to restore a more sustainable and affordable debt profile and composition.

As of early 2020, Solomon Islands was classified as being at moderate risk of desk distress (IMF, 2020a). This classification has implications for the split of the country's portfolio of support from IFIs: notably 50% grants and 50% loans. The debt-to-GDP ratios are now relatively low: general government debt as a share of GDP has been below 10% since 2015, although it has risen more recently (IMF, 2020b).

The country's debt composition is dominated by multilateral concessional borrowing (accounting for around 77% of total public and publicly guaranteed debt), followed by 13% of non-concessional borrowing from multilateral organisations and then bilateral loans (World Bank, 2020b). The Government does not borrow commercially and has not issued bonds to date (with a rather low credit rating of B3 according to Moody's⁵). The Government is subject to the non-concessional borrowing policy of the World Bank, which limits this source to specific activities (and approval by the World Bank).⁶

This combination of prudent debt management, a large share of concessional borrowing (mostly from multilateral development banks) and limited access to non-concessional financing all point to limited appetite and future demand, in the medium term, for non-concessional borrowing, not only for rural development/agriculture but also across all sectors.

Policies and preferences for borrowing and debt management

The Government's prudent approach to debt management is reflected in a detailed set of restrictions in the Public Financial Management (PFM) Act and in criteria for taking up borrowing in the Debt Management Strategy (2018). Reflecting some international best practices, these include a threshold on

5 A B3 rating by Moody's indicates that 'obligations are considered speculative and subject to high credit risk'.

6 The non-concessional borrowing policy was reformed in April 2020 and is now referred to as the Sustainable Development Finance Policy.

government borrowing, the maximisation of concessional finance, and clear criteria for external borrowing and priority sectors.

Threshold on government borrowing. The Government's main objective for its debt management strategy is to stay below the government borrowing to GDP ratio of 30% and avoid any greater risk of debt distress. The country is well below this threshold but the Government also assesses whether debt service payments remain affordable, measured as a maximum target for an annual debt servicing requirement as a share of domestically sourced revenue no greater than 10%. We understand that any proposal for a new loan under review would be rejected if it exceeded this debt threshold. Yet discussions were underway at the time of our interviews (April–June 2020) to revisit the threshold in response to the crisis prompted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Maximisation of concessional finance. The Government accepts project proposals with a minimum grant element of 25% and is keen to blend loans that do not meet these requirements with grants from other donors.

Priority sectors. Loans are, in principle, allowed only for high-priority infrastructure and development initiatives in line with the Government's development and debt policies. The criteria are, however, quite general as high-priority infrastructure or development initiatives should be consistent with the National Development Strategy, the National Infrastructure Investment Plan or the policy statements of the incumbent Government. Our interviewees noted that the main sectors for which the Government might be willing to borrow are transport, mining, disaster risk reduction and tourism.

Criteria for borrowing (which excludes some activities for rural development). Borrowing by the Government is expected to fund development proposals that generate economic or financial returns. More precisely, the Debt Management Advisory Committee and the Minister of Finance are expected to consider a series of economic, financial and social criteria when assessing new loans: net economic return (including social returns); net financial return (if applicable);

the location of the proposal relative to the relative economic needs of different regions; and the commercial vs. community service characteristics of the proposal. For these reasons, the Government is reluctant to borrow for climate-resilient rural development, financial services or the rural investment environment. According to the criteria, some of these activities, which could contribute to rural development, might not be eligible for external borrowing. In addition, Government borrowing should only be for capital rather than recurrent expenditure.

Prioritisation of grant financing for rural development. Many interviewees indicated that the Government sees rural development as a social sector that should be funded by grants rather than loans. It also emerged that the availability of grants from the main bilateral donors (Australia and New Zealand) and from the World Bank limits the appetite for borrowing, including for rural development. The Government is keen to ring-fence grants for rural development – without pressure on the government budget – while it does not exclude borrowing for it.

Preferences for specific terms and conditions. Our interviews revealed the Government's preference for loans with low interest rates, long maturity and long grace periods, in US dollars. Fixed interest is stated as the main (and only) preference when it comes to the terms and conditions of these loans (SIG, 2016a: 48).

Acknowledgement of the political drivers of borrowing decisions. The country's debt management strategy and our interviewees stressed that one key challenge for borrowing decisions is to resist 'overtures to borrow beyond what is considered sustainable and affordable in the pursuit of meeting economic and development objectives' (see SIG, 2016a: 22).

In short, Government demand for borrowing for rural development and agriculture could grow but in concessional rather than non-concessional terms and for specific activities and projects that support rural development, especially those – such as infrastructure projects – that have the potential to generate economic or financial returns. However, the Government aims to maximise grant financing, in general, for rural development.

Preferences and instruments for rural development

Preferences for development assistance for rural development

Preferences for external assistance replicate and are well aligned with the principles of development effectiveness. The main Government document that states these principles is the Partnership Framework for Effective Development Cooperation, published in January 2016 (SIG, 2016b). These principles apply across all sectors, including rural development and agriculture, and can be grouped into four main clusters:

- ownership, alignment, harmonisation and simplification
- transparency, accountability and predictability
- managing for results
- inclusive partnerships.

Most of these principles were confirmed by our interviewees when asked to describe the country's preferences for external assistance.

First, the Government requires projects to be aligned with national priorities, and requires untied support from donor contractors. This was the main priority reflected by both government officials and development partners. Our interviewees noted most partners now align with national priorities and the national strategy, and that this has improved over time.

Second, rapid changes in the governments of Solomon Islands (we often heard the phrase 'the priorities of the government of the day') mean that the speed of negotiation and project implementation are highly valued, given the need for rapid decisions.

The third most preferred attribute was project durability to ensure alignment between the maturity of the loan and project cycle and to ensure enough time for results to materialise and to be measured.

Fourth, respondents valued the use of country systems to improve speed and build capacity. A general lack of trust from donors means that their use of national PFM systems decreased over time (from 66% of the total volume of projects

and programmes in 2016 to 58% in 2018). As a result, the share of development cooperation recorded on budget subject to parliamentary scrutiny decreased from 100% in 2016 to 67% in 2018 (OECD and UNDP, 2020).

The Government's Aid Cooperation Strategy prioritises three main modalities and instruments: general budget support, sector-wide approaches and pooled funding (SIG, 2016c). These reflect Government preferences for ownership of development programmes, predictability, use of country systems, and alignment to national priorities, and aim to reduce fragmentation among development partners.

Demand for other types of instrument

Our interviewees did not identify strong demand for specific instruments, or instruments that were less traditional. The demand was primarily for instruments that support private sector intervention, especially public-private partnerships, for donors to fund projects that have had a proven impact and that attract private sector funding (including guarantees to reduce the cost of capital) and to limit the impact on external debt. As already noted, instruments – even those that are the most innovative or less traditional – should have a strong technical assistance component.

Three of the instruments suggested in our questionnaire, were mentioned by every interviewee: namely Catastrophe Deferred Drawdown Option (CAT-DDO, to manage risk given the country's exposure to natural disasters), project preparation facilities (to support feasibility studies and capacity-building) and multi-phase lending (to ensure project durability).

Conclusions

Our analysis of the experience and perspective of SIG on financing public investment for inclusive and sustainable rural development, and particularly its demand for external assistance, is summarised as follows.

- Rural development is a core priority for the Government, reflecting its importance for economic growth and poverty eradication and the large share of the population

living in rural areas. It will become even more important in the country's recovery from the crisis prompted by the Covid-19 pandemic. The expansion of basic rural infrastructure is a policy priority, aiming to tackle infrastructure gaps in a country whose population is scattered across many islands. However, the prioritisation of rural development in the National Development Strategy is not reflected in the Government's implementation of this agenda.

- The Government's demand for external assistance for rural development and agriculture is only expected to increase. The financing gap is already large, and while aid dependency is expected to fall in the long term, this is not the case for the immediate future. However, demand is primarily for grants and concessional loans, rather than for

non-concessional resources, and for technical assistance to improve absorptive capacity.

- The Government's demand for borrowing for rural development and agriculture could grow in concessional rather than non-concessional terms and for specific activities that can generate economic or financial returns, such as infrastructure projects. However, the government aims to maximise grant financing, in general, for rural development.
- In terms of preferences for external assistance to agriculture and rural development, the Government requires projects funded by development partners to align with national priorities. It aims for untied support from donor contractors that has a long-term horizon (project durability) and supports the strengthening of the country's own systems.

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Annex 1 List of interviewees

Name	Institution
Yoko Asano	Japanese Embassy to the Solomon Islands
Tawfiq El-Zabri	International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)
Ethel Frances	Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock
Alejandro Matos Lopez	European Union
Robert Meyenn Dukavalaka	Ministry of Finance and Treasury
Andrew Schloeffel	Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)
Son Thanh Vo	World Bank
Pita Tikai	Kastom Gaden
Barnabas Vote	Ministry of Finance and Treasury
Samuel Wara	Ministry for National Development Planning and Aid Coordination

Acknowledgements

This country case study on Solomon Islands is part of a project that aims to map future demand from recipient country governments for external development assistance from official donors to support public investment in inclusive, sustainable rural development over the next five to 10 years. It also aims to explore the financial and non-financial terms and conditions of this assistance. Its analysis is included in the synthesis report for this project (Prizzon et al., 2020) reviewing the experiences of 20 low- and middle-income countries.

We are grateful to the interviewees who gave up their time to take part in this project, share their insights and provide feedback, particularly during the challenging times of spring 2020. Their contributions were vital to corroborate and challenge our initial analysis.

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