

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

**Decentralisation and Central-Local Relations:
A Solomon Islands Case Study on the
Negotiations of Relations
between National and Provincial Governments**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of
Master of Philosophy in Development Studies at Massey University,
Palmerston North, New Zealand

Gloria Tapakea Suluia

2012

Abstract

The literature on decentralisation and development emphasises the prominent role played by representatives of central government and representatives of local government in the negotiations of central-local relations. This thesis seeks to investigate this argument by examining the institutional framework between national and provincial governments and the negotiations taking place within a decentralised framework in the Solomon Islands context, focusing on government officials' experiences. Drawing from a case study in the Malaita Province, the most important institutions and procedures for negotiating relations between the national and provincial governments are explored and the extent to which government officials utilise these structures. Furthermore, government officials shared their assessment of the most important institutions dealing with the negotiation of central-local relations. This was important to understand how decentralisation has affected central-local relations.

This study which adopted a qualitative case study approach found that two institutions were established by the national government to undertake negotiations between the national and provincial governments within a decentralised framework. While these institutions do exist in theory, in practice they have not been fully utilised by national government officials, which undermined their ability to fulfil their mandate. Furthermore, the absence of policies and clear guidelines on the conduct of central-local relations means that national officials are not obliged to utilise these institutions, and can use or create alternative platforms such as sectoral mechanisms. Provincial officials, however, do not have this opportunity. This study also found that in the Solomon Islands context, the Ministry of Provincial Government and the Premiers' Conference, as the institutional channels for negotiating central-local relation are not effective due to their limited institutional capacities.

Overall, this thesis concludes that within the context of the provincial government system in the Solomon Islands, the decentralisation policies introduced since the 1980s have had minimal impact in enhancing the relation between the national and provincial governments. In this respect, the establishment of institutions resulting from decentralisation are not the only platforms for encouraging cooperation and collaboration between the national and provincial governments. While the existence of these institutions benefited government officials by providing them with platforms to carry out negotiations between the two different levels of government, their limited utilisation by national officials is contradictory to the initial purposes of decentralisation policy, which is to foster a relation between national provincial and local politicians where they can work together for the people they represent.

Acknowledgements

I am most grateful to our loving God for all His provisions and for making this journey a memorable one for my family and I. Taku tahi tehaka laoi kite tamana e tapu.

This thesis was made possible because of the support and encouragement of several people. I am especially indebted to my supervisor, Dr Gerard Prinsen, who stood by me throughout the journey of putting together this thesis. His invaluable advice and support has kept me going and motivated through many of the challenges encountered. Special thanks also to my second supervisor, Dr Rochelle Stewart-Withers, for all her assistance in reviewing my draft chapters and for her valuable encouragements. I wish to further extend my special thanks to Professor Regina Scheyvens and Dr Maria Borovnik for their academic and personal advice during the duration of my study with the Institute of Development Studies.

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to all participants who unselfishly devoted their time in sharing with me their valuable and rich experiences as government officials. Your patience and support during the fieldwork was beyond my expectation. I am especially grateful to various Heads of National Ministries involved in this research and to the Premier and Provincial Secretary of Malaita Province in the Solomon Islands for the permission to carry out this research with your organisations/government.

A heartfelt thank you to NZAID, without your financial assistance I would not have this opportunity to pursue further studies in New Zealand. Sincere thanks to Ms Silvia Hooker, Ms Olive Pimentel and Mr Jamie Hooper for all the support rendered to me and my family.

I was humbled by the support and encouragement of so many friends who I have made during my time at Massey University. Special thanks to my postgraduate colleagues who have embarked on this journey with me. Just knowing that I am not alone in this undertaking makes a big difference during those dull moments. Thank you for making my stay in New Zealand a memorable one.

I owe my deepest gratitude to my mum who has supported me regardless of the challenges that life brings. Thank you very much for all your support. Most of all, this journey would not have been possible without the love and support of my dear husband, Rollins and, our three sons, Sean, Liam and John. Your company and laughter keeps me going each day. I am especially indebted to my husband's selfless efforts in caring for our young children and his belief that I can achieve anything if I put my heart into it. Your patience and support never cease. Many thanks for sacrificing your career so I can pursue my studies. Lastly, but not the least, I dedicate this thesis to my late beloved son Angel whom the loving Lord had taken home in Dec 2009 to rest with Him eternally. You are forever in my heart.

Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	ii
List of Figures	v
List of Tables	vi
Abbreviations and Glossaries	vii
 CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	 1
1.1 Background	1
1.2 Significance and Rationale of the Study	3
1.3 Research Aim, Objective, and Questions	4
1.4 Structure of the Thesis.....	5
 CHAPTER 2: UNDERSTANDING CENTRAL-LOCAL RELATIONS WITHIN A DECENTRALISED CONTEXT	 7
2.1 Introduction	7
2.2 Defining Decentralisation	7
2.3 Conceptualising Decentralisation.....	9
2.4 Rationale for Decentralisation.....	10
2.5 Dimensions of Decentralisation	12
2.5.1 Political Decentralisation.....	13
2.5.2 Administrative Decentralisation.....	13
2.5.3 Fiscal Decentralisation.....	14
2.6 Forms of Decentralisation	15
2.6.1 De-concentration	15
2.6.2 Delegation.....	16
2.6.3 Devolution.....	16
2.6.4 Privatisation	17
2.7 Decentralisation and Centralisation	18
2.8 The Concept of Intergovernmental Relations.....	19
2.8.1 Approaches to Central-local Relations.....	20
2.8.2 Types of Government	22
2.8.3 Linkages between Decentralisation and Central-Local Relations	22
2.9 Conclusion.....	23
 CHAPTER 3: THE HISTORY OF SOLOMON ISLANDS DECENTRALISATION	 26
3.1 Introduction	26
3.2 Centralisation and Decentralisation in the Solomon Islands	26
3.3 The Central Government	33
3.4 The Provincial Government System	35
3.5 The Negotiations of Central-Local Relations within a Decentralised Context	38
3.6 Conclusion.....	42
 CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY	 44
4.1 Introduction.....	44
4.2 Qualitative Case Study	44
4.3 Fieldwork Consideration	46
4.4 Positionality and Reflexivity	47
4.5 The Methods.....	48
4.5.1 In-depth Semi-Structured Interviews.....	48

4.5.2 Document Analysis	50
4.5.3 Data Quality	51
4.6 Reflection on the Fieldwork Process	52
4.6.1 Entering the field	52
4.6.2 Overall Reflection	56
4.7 Interviews	56
4.8 Data Analysis	58
4.9 Ethical Considerations	59
4.10 Summary	61
 CHAPTER 5: THE NEGOTIATION OF CENTRAL-LOCAL RELATIONS AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION IN MALAITA PROVINCE.	 63
5.1 Introduction	63
5.2 Background of Malaita Province	63
5.3 The Political and Administrative Structure of Malaita Province	66
5.4 The Management Structure of the Ministry of Provincial Government and Institution Strengthening	70
5.5 Decentralisation in Malaita Province	72
5.6 Relations with National Government	74
5.7 Conclusions	75
 CHAPTER 6: INSTITUTIONS AND PROCEDURES FOR NEGOTIATING CENTRAL-LOCAL RELATIONS WITHIN A DECENTRALISED CONTEXT IN THE SOLOMON ISLANDS.	 77
6.1 Introduction	77
6.2 Institutions and Procedures for Negotiating Central-Local Relations	77
6.2.1 Policy on Decentralisation and Central-Local Relations	77
6.2.2 Experiences with Decentralised Functions	82
6.2.3 Institutions and Procedures for Negotiating Central-Local Relations	88
6.3 Utilisation and Assessment of Institutions and Procedures for Negotiation Central-Local Relations	93
6.3.1 Utilisation of Institutions and Procedures by Government Officials	93
6.3.2 Assessment of Institutions and Procedures by Government Officials	97
6.4 Conclusion	104
 CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS: CENTRAL-LOCAL RELATIONS WITHIN A DECENTRALISED CONTEXT IN THE SOLOMON ISLANDS.	 107
7.1 Introduction	107
7.2 Discussions of Research Question 1: Institutions and Procedures for Negotiating Relations Between National and Provincial Governments	108
7.3 Discussion of Research Question 2: The Extent to which National and Provincial Governments have utilised the identified Institutions and Procedures, and their Assessment of them.	109
7.4 Discussion of the General Research Objective: Has Decentralisation Affected Central-Local Relations between the National and Provincial Governments?	113
7.5 Final Concluding Statement	115
7.6 Recommendation for Policy and Further Research	116
 References	118
Appendices	124
Appendix 1: National and Provincial Officials Interview Guide	124
Appendix 2: Schedule 3, 4 and 5 of the Provincial Government Act 1997	125
Appendix 3: Human Research Ethics Committee Document	131

List of Figures

Figure 1: Structure of Central Government.....	35
Figure 2: Map of Solomon Islands	36
Figure 3: The Structure of the Provincial Government System	37
Figure 4: Data Collection Sites	55
Figure 5: A Map of Malaita Province.....	64
Figure 6: Breakdown of Population by Province	65
Figure 7: The Administrative Structure of the Malaita Provincial Government.....	68
Figure 8: The MPGIS Organisational Structure and its linkages to the Malaita Provincial Government's Structure.....	71
Figure 9: The consultation process on policy formulations	80

List of Tables

Table 1: Research Participants.....	57
Table 2: Malaita Province's Population by Age Group.....	65
Table 3: The Utilisation of Institutions and Procedures by Government Officials in Honiara and Malaita Province.....	110

Abbreviations and Glossaries

AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
HMA	Honiara Municipal Authority
IGR	Intergovernmental Relations
MDP	Ministry of Development Planning
MHA	Ministry of Home Affairs
MOFT	Ministry of Finance and Treasury
MPGIS	Ministry of Provincial Government and Institutional Strengthening
MTDS	Medium Term Development Strategy
NCP	National Coalition Partner
NGOs	Non-Government Organisations
NFC	National Fiscal Commission
PC	Premiers' Conference
PGA	Provincial Government Act
PGSP	Provincial Governance Strengthening Programme
PIC	Pacific Island Countries
PNG	Papua New Guinea
PSC	Public Service Commission
RAMSI	Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands
RC	Resident Commissioner
SMT	Senior Management Team
TPA	Townsville Peace Agreement
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This thesis is concerned with the way in which central-local relations between national and provincial government are negotiated within a decentralised context in the Solomon Islands. The study's site is the Malaita Provincial Government in the provincial capital Auki, Solomon Islands. The focus of this investigation is specifically on the institutions and procedures for negotiating central-local relations and the extent to which national and provincial governments have utilised them. This study highlights national and provincial governments' assessment of these institutions as the relevant platforms mandated for negotiating relations between the national and provincial governments. Overall, this study attempts to explore whether decentralisation has had an impact on central-local relations between the national and provincial governments.

In the Solomon Islands, decentralisation policies have been implemented since the enactment of the Provincial Government Act (PGA) in 1981. However, only limited research has been carried out in the area of central-local relations between the national and provincial governments. As such, this research intends to contribute to a better understanding of this phenomenon.

This chapter will firstly present the background of this study, the negotiations of central-local relations within a decentralised system in the Solomon Islands, and highlight relevant theories of central-local relations. This is followed by a discussion of the significance of this study and the rationale for the research questions and the study approach. Finally, this chapter concludes with an outline of this thesis.

1.1 Background

Since independence in 1978, successive governments in the Solomon Islands have pursued the concept of decentralisation of certain powers and functions to the provinces and local governments with the view of greater involvement and meaningful governance of their people. When the ethnic crisis of 1999-2003 hit the country, the centralised system of government was criticised as the source of the problem and this was evident in the deliberation and recommendations of the Townsville Peace Agreement (TPA) in 2000 and the Buala Premiers' Millennium Conference held in the same year. According to Wielders (2003, p. 8), the TPA specifically called for more autonomy for Malaita and Guadalcanal provinces and a rewrite of the National Constitution of 1978 to relinquish more powers to the provinces. Similarly, the Buala Premiers' Conference in November 2000, acknowledged that the ethnic crisis was a

consequence of ignoring the balance of power between central government and the provinces (Wielders, 2003, p. 9) .

Advocates of decentralisation at the political level perceived decentralisation as important in encouraging balanced and equitable development which was considered necessary to preserve national unity and ensure social cohesion of the country's culturally and geographically fragmented islands. In addition, a common argument for decentralisation in the Solomon Islands was to avoid threats of secession associated with a demand for devolution of extensive powers by a few of the provinces (Premdas, 1982, p. 241). Since the TPA of 2000, the government committed itself to pursue a constitutional reform targeted at greater devolution of powers toward local governments to see a return to peace and normalcy as well as to respond to other issues relating to service delivery. However, decentralisation policies in Solomon Islands preceded the TPA of 2000.

The Provincial Government Act (PGA) of 1981 formally instituted the decentralised system of provincial government in the Solomon Islands, and was updated by the re-enactment of another PGA in 1997. The PGA of 1997 allows the national government to devolve responsibilities for particular powers and functions to the provinces and distinguishes the functions and law making powers of the provincial governments based on three particular schedules. Schedule 3 stipulates the final legislative powers of provincial governments; Schedule 4, contains areas in which provinces could make law subject to review by national government; and Schedule 5 lists other functions transferred from other national line ministries to the provinces through 'Agency agreements'. Despite decentralisation as envisaged in the PGA of 1997, the actual devolution of functions and resources to the provinces has been minimal, leaving provinces to play a marginal role in the delivery of services and development projects in the rural areas (United Nations Development Programme, 2008b, p. 5). In practice, central government ministries maintain most of the responsibilities for service delivery in the provinces citing the lack of provincial capacity.

One of the popular rationales advocating decentralisation is that it leads to efficient and effective service delivery as more functions and responsibilities are transferred to lower levels of government who are closest to local communities (Grindle, 2007b, p. 6). The transfer of power to another level of government brings into play the concept of central-local relations in the development discourse. A core concept of central-local relations involves the dynamics of interactions that takes place between officials exercising power and influence in different institutional contexts and at different levels (Choi & Wright, 2004, p. 2). Anderson (1960), who

was one of the first to focus on the concept of intergovernmental relations, emphasises the interaction among government units of all types and levels. Freinkman (2007, p. 1) argued that the need for stronger cooperation among the different levels of government is driven by the fact that there is no single level of government that is able to effectively delivery public services to local communities. The role that intergovernmental relations play is important as it has the potential to determine whether decentralisation achieves more effective service delivery and democratic outcomes (Mcloughin, 2010, p. 10)

Advocates of decentralisation highlight its links to central-local relations “the manner in which decentralisation redefines centre-local relations has potential implications for successful decentralisation” (Kippra, 2003, p. 6). Thus a complementary relationship exists between decentralisation and central-local relations as illustrated in the literature, as the former necessitates the development of the latter, creating platforms for which the different levels of government can cooperate and coordinate their activities. However, scholars accept this link with caution as the impact of the interactions between national and sub-national levels of governments on decentralisation are mixed depending on the country and the context (Vale, 2010).

1.2 Significance and Rationale of the Study

This study provides an understanding of central-local relations as they play out in a decentralised context of the provincial government system in the Solomon Islands. More specifically, this study includes assessment by national and provincial officials of the institutions for negotiating central-local relations between national and provincial governments. This is a new research theme in the Solomon Islands context, with very limited coverage in the existing literature. Thus, this study is significant in terms of the realities it presented and the information gathered during the fieldwork regarding the negotiations of central-local relations. The findings of this study can be utilised by the Solomon Islands Government to reflect on the design and implementation of decentralisation since the enactment of the PGA of 1981 and to evaluate its impact on central-local relations. These findings may also be of use by key stakeholders within national and provincial governments involved in decentralisation initiatives/programmes particularly those national ministries seeking to devolve more functions to the provinces.

My previous experience as a development worker with various donor agencies (AusAID, RAMSI and UNDP) in the Solomon Islands underpins my interest in decentralisation, more specifically

the relations between the national and provincial governments. The enactment and implementation of the PGA of 1981, introduced a second layer of government in the Solomon Islands known as the provincial governments, bringing into play central-local relations. While examining the negotiations of central-local relations is a new research theme in the Solomon Islands, it is slowly gaining prominence as more focus is being given by the national government and its development partners to strengthen the provincial government system of the country.

The negotiations of central-local relations in the Solomon Islands posits on the understanding that decentralisation is a system of cooperation and coordination between the different levels of government. The establishment of institutions and procedures by national government should encourage discussions and consultations among officials at different levels of government. In this regard, as a student of Development Studies, I wish to explore the concept of central-local relations in the development literature as it relates to the decentralised context in the Solomon Islands.

1.3 Research Aim, Objective, and Questions

The aim of this study is to unpack the functioning of the decentralised system in the Solomon Islands, particularly with respect to the relationship between the national and provincial governments. To achieve this aim, the objective of the research is to consider *“How has decentralisation affected central-local relations between the national and provincial governments?”*

In response to this objective, the following specific research questions have been established:

1. *What are the institutions and procedures for negotiating relations between national and provincial governments?*
2. *To what extent have national and provincial governments utilised these institutions and procedures, and what is their assessment of them?*

In addressing these questions, the research methodology considers these central-local relations as a social phenomenon, and a qualitative case study approach was selected which based on Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 3) derives out of a desire to study things in their natural settings by attempting to make sense of a phenomenon in terms of the meaning people bring to them. The

chosen case study looked at the negotiations of central-local relations by the national government in Honiara and the provincial government in Malaita Province, Solomon Islands. The case study provides information on the institutions and procedures for negotiating central-local relations, focusing specifically on key national and provincial officials as decision makers on decentralisation policies and programmes.

The key research techniques adopted in this study include semi-structured interviews and document analysis. The use of more than one method of data collection is important in this study as it broadens the qualitative insights in the conduct and negotiations of national and provincial governments' relations within their work places. Key research participants included key officials and decision makers in the national government and the Malaita Provincial Government. Government officials were asked about the negotiation of relations between the national and provincial governments in a decentralised system. The key themes that emanated from this study were categorised into five areas: 1) policy on decentralisation and central-local relations, 2) experiences with decentralised functions, 3) institutions and procedures for negotiation of central-local relations, 4) the utilisation of the identified institutions and procedures by government officials, and 5) the assessment of these institutions and procedures by government officials.

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is organised into seven chapters. Chapter 2 provides the conceptual framework for the research project. It presents an overview of the concept and rationale for decentralisation, highlighting its different forms and dimensions. This chapter will pay particular emphasis to the three different dimensions of decentralisation, namely, political, administrative and fiscal decentralisation. In addition, the literature also identifies four different forms of decentralisation, namely, de-concentration, delegation, devolution and privatisation. By unpacking the concept of decentralisation in this manner, it is revealed how certain forms and dimensions of decentralisation may contribute to an increase or decrease in the power of sub-national levels of governments. Then the link between decentralisation and central-local relations is discussed, the literature proposes that the manner in which decentralisation redefines intergovernmental relations can have a significant impact, in that problematic relation between national and provincial governments will affect the successful implementation of decentralisation.

Chapter 3 describes the political history of the Solomon Islands and the emergence of the provincial government system. This calls for the chronological discussion of the origin and different stages of decentralisation, as it moves from a heavily centralised to a decentralised system. The discussion looks at the various reviews of decentralisation. It also explores the institutions and procedures for central-local relations as a means to foster cooperation and collaboration between the national and provincial governments.

Chapter 4 presents the research methodology employed during the fieldwork carried out in the Solomon Islands from 31 May to 15 July 2011. This includes discussions of the positionality of the researcher as well as a detailed description of the various methods used for data collection and the process for analysis. It also discusses the ethical considerations and limitations encountered in carrying out this study.

Chapter 5 introduces and provides some basic information on the site where the case study was carried out, which is Malaita Province, in the Solomon Islands. It discusses the implementation of decentralisation in the province and some of the challenges encountered. This chapter also describes the relations between Malaita Province and the national government as it occurs in a decentralised system in the Solomon Islands.

Chapter 6 presents and critically analyses the findings of this case study which concerns the negotiation of central-local relations between national and provincial governments in the Solomon Islands. This chapter focuses on documenting the most important institutions and procedures for negotiating central-local relations and discusses the utilisation and assessment of these institutions and procedures by government officials. This chapter illustrates the experiences of government officials concerning various institutions and procedures, and their impact on central-local relations between the national and provincial governments.

Chapter 7 presents the insights gained from the case study by situating them within the broader context of the literature as examined in the initial chapters of this study. It focuses on the final discussion of the research and the conclusions emanated from the results. The key questions which formed the basis of this research are discussed as well as the objective of this research. The chapter then concludes with recommendations for possible future policy and directions for further research.

CHAPTER 2: UNDERSTANDING CENTRAL-LOCAL RELATIONS WITHIN A DECENTRALISED CONTEXT.

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a basic overview and understanding of the concept of decentralisation as the key theme in this study, and highlights some of the relevant discourses. It then explores the linkages between decentralisation and central-local relations, given that decentralisation is the context for which the negotiations of central-local relations are assessed in this study.

The literature presented in this review acknowledges that the concept of decentralisation has evolved over time and hence, has acquired a wide range of different definitions. The following section will explore some of the reasons behind the rise of decentralisation; more specifically, attention will be given to the various dimensions of decentralisation, while also considering its different forms. The overall focus is to explore if and how decentralisation has instituted any mechanisms or procedures for negotiating central-local relations. And finally, the actual negotiation of central-local relations within a decentralisation context is examined.

2.2 Defining Decentralisation

Decentralisation carries multiple meanings which, according to scholars, is one of the obstacles in gaining a comprehensive understanding of the term. In order to resolve this, various efforts have been made by academics, institutions and governments to develop a more precise definition of the concept.

Generally, authors tend to agree that decentralisation is a vague and complex concept because, as Bray (1985, p. 184) argued, it covers a wide range of processes and structures. Acknowledging the complexity of decentralisation as a process, various authors such as Lane and Murray (1985), Mawhood (1983), McGinn and Welsh (1999), and Smith (1985) have attempted to define the term. Mawhood (1983) and Smith (1985) defined decentralisation as any act in which power for decision making is transferred from higher levels in the official hierarchy to lower units. They perceived decentralisation as a change in the administrative system. Lane and Murray (1985, p. 163) claimed decentralisation is the reallocation of responsibility and the corresponding decision making authority for specific functions from the centre to local governments and organisational units. They argued that decentralisation is a continuation of work

done at the central government level, now undertaken by those at a lower level. McGinn and Welsh (1999, p. 17) shared a similar view, arguing that decentralisation is concerned with shifts in the location of those who govern, and is understood to involve a redistribution of political authority and power, resources, administrative responsibilities and functions. The location of authority is expressed in terms of the location of the position or the governing body.

One of the most used definition of decentralisation is perhaps that of Rondinelli (1980, p. 137) who described decentralisation as the transfer of responsibility for planning, management, and resource allocation from the central government to (a) field units of central government ministries or agencies; or (b) subordinate units or levels of government; or (c) semi-autonomous public authorities or corporations; and/or (d) area-wide regional or functional authorities. It contains the understanding that decentralisation has a development agenda alongside the renewed global emphasis on governance and human development. A common trend identified in all these definitions is that decentralisation encompasses a shift in the location of those who govern, and a transfer of authority from those in one location or level of organisation to those in another – lower – level.

Walberg, Paik, Komukai, & Freeman (2000, p. 3) identified 22 different definitions of decentralisation obtained from scholarly papers and prominent organisations from late 1960s to late 1990s. According to Dyer and Rose (2005, p. 105), several obvious shifts have taken place in the meanings, definitions, and motives for decentralisation. While some definitions tend to be more general in nature, emphasising the shift in decision-making power and authority from the centre to local levels, others specify functions that require redistribution from central government to lower levels of government. The analysis by Walberg et al., (2000) also showed that some definitions suggest partial distribution of decision-making authority, power, and specific functions from central government to local units, while others suggest the entire distribution of decision-making authority, power, and specific responsibilities is shifted from central government to local levels. The local entities can comprise provinces, districts, municipalities, regional offices, and others, depending on the context in a given country. Within the context of this study, the local unit is the provincial government.

As implied in the above discussion, the concept of decentralisation is complex. Since there are different perspectives regarding its meaning, it is important to examine the different dimensions (discussed under section 2.5) and forms (see section 2.6) of decentralisation so as to gain a

better understanding of the different dynamics and complexities associated with its implementation.

2.3 Conceptualising Decentralisation

The origins of decentralisation, particularly in developing countries, can be traced back to the 1950s and early 1960s, a period when decentralisation in the form of local government was promoted by colonial administrators as a necessary element in the structure of an independent democratic state (Mills, Vaughan, Smith, & Tabidzadeh, 1990, p. 12). In the 1970s and 1980s, interest in decentralisation re-emerged, and this time the focus was on de-concentrating hierarchical government structures and bureaucracies. Beginning in the mid-1980s, a second wave of decentralisation occurred which included political power sharing, democratisation, and market liberalisation. And by the 1990s, decentralisation was portrayed as a means of opening governance to wider public participation through organisations of civil society (Cheema & Rondinelli, 2007, pp. 2-3).

Decentralisation as a concept has become an important theme of governance in many developing countries in recent years and has undoubtedly gained popularity. According to the United Nations Development Programme (1999, p. 11), a significant number of developing and transitional countries have embarked on some kind of decentralisation programme. Gaventa and Valderama (1999, p. 5) cited that all but 12 of the 75 developing countries with a population of more than 5 million have implemented some form of decentralisation. Several factors have contributed to the prominence of decentralisation, such as pressure by international financial institutions and development agencies, challenges encountered with ethnic and geographical diversity, the advent of democracy and multi-party political systems, the desire to improve service delivery to large and dispersed communities, and mere dissatisfaction with the central government's inability to provide effective public services.

There are two commonly cited motives for decentralisation. Firstly, according to Diamond (1999, p. 3), decentralisation, in contrast to heavily centralised governments, creates democratic local governance by moving decision making closer to the people, and creating a place for public participation, it improves public sector accountability. The significance of accountability is strongly emphasised in this motive for decentralisation. For instance, Miller (2002, p. 8) argued that since

decentralisation brings government closer to the people, it enables citizens to be better informed and to understand the conduct of public business. This in turn makes it easier for the latter to monitor and hold the government accountable. Secondly, there is the argument that decentralisation leads to a more efficient and effective service delivery. Decentralised public services are cheaper due to their close proximity to local communities, and tend to downsize central government as more functions are transferred to lower levels of government (Grindle, 2007b, p. 7). This view supports that of Oates (1999, p. 1123) who claimed that decentralisation empowers local governments who can deliver services more efficiently and effectively than central government. Since local governments are much closer to the people, they possess knowledge of both local preferences and cost conditions that a central government is unlikely to have.

According to the World Bank (2000, p. 4), a commitment to decentralisation has become a prerequisite for donor-supported strategies since expectations of state accountability have risen and the discretion available to bureaucrats has been reduced. Likewise, as a consequence of the dissatisfaction that has accompanied centralised planning, reformers have resorted to decentralisation to break the grip of central government (Olowu, 2000; Olowu & Wunsch, 1990). In academic studies, the concept has been used extensively and to some extent, has served as a panacea for addressing a complex collection of development problems. The following section will explore the reasons behind the popularisation of decentralisation.

2.4 Rationale for Decentralisation

In the last three decades, there has been a worldwide interest in decentralisation of government in all parts of the world. According to Smoke (2001, p. 1), the pursuit of decentralisation is widespread, as both developed and developing countries attempt to challenge central governments' monopoly of decision making. As Ebel and Yilmaz (2002, p. 2) point out in their overview of decentralisation:

The western world sees decentralisation as an alternative to provide public services in a more cost-effective way. Developing countries are pursuing decentralisation reforms to counter economic inefficiencies, macroeconomic instability, and ineffective governance. Post-communist transition countries are embracing decentralisation as a natural step in the shift to market economies

and democracy. Latin America is decentralizing as a result of political pressure to democratise. African states view decentralisation as a path to national unity.

Advocates of decentralisation highlight the multifaceted contribution that could be gained by local governments in areas such as more democratic governance and more efficient public service delivery (Agrawal & Ribot, 1999, p. 473). Ribot (2002, p. 2) asserted that decentralisation can lead to several positive outcomes some of which include democratisation and participation, rural development, better public service performance and poverty alleviation. In contrast to centralisation, the most popular rationale advocating decentralisation is that it contributes to good governance in three key interrelated ways; 1) improves public sector responsiveness; 2) improves public sector accountability; and 3) contributes to effective and efficient service delivery.

In the first instance, decentralisation contributes to local governance by taking decision making on local public services closer to the people. By moving decision making to the local population, opportunities are opened up for public participation and representation. Public participation can be achieved through representation of local communities in local authorities, enabling for the institutionalisation and incorporation of local demands and aspiration into policies. Representation as cited in Agrawal and Ribot (1999, p. 474) is a situation where the best interest of the public is taken into account by the authorities. They further noted that representation makes decentralised institutions effective. Representation is part and parcel of democracy which can be described as leadership that is accountable to the people. Thus, a key argument in favour of decentralisation is that (in theory, at least) the involvement and participation of local governments in decision-making processes will ensure that services reflect locally identified needs, avoiding ill-conceived service delivery projects. According to Works (2002, p. 4), the challenge is therefore to ensure that all stakeholders can and will voice their opinions.

Secondly, advocates claim that decentralisation contributes to public sector accountability. For instance, the United Nations (2000, p. 25) argued that (a) public participation by large parts of the population through elective offices, and (b) the close proximity of government meant that local officials can be more easily monitored and held accountable by local communities than officials in the central government, thus increasing transparency and predictability in decision making. While most scholars emphasise that decentralisation and participation are not primary goals rather instruments for improved governance and democracy (Grote & Braun, 2000; United Nations, 2000), others argue that public participation and citizen involvement are good in and of themselves (Agrawal & Ribot, 1999; Ribot, 2002). In this sense, decentralisation becomes a

central pillar of democratic governance. Increasingly, ongoing criticism has been levelled against centralised government for having limited levels of accountability. Underlying the case for democratic decentralisation is the assertion that a more decentralised state apparatus will be more exposed, thus more responsive to local needs and aspirations. This, it is argued will create systems of governance that are more effective and accountable to local people (Blair, 2000; Crook & Manor, 1998; Manor, 1999).

Thirdly, is the argument that decentralisation leads to efficient and effective service delivery. According to Smoke (2003, p. 9) proponents of decentralisation argue that people are not the same everywhere within a country, but rather have varying needs for public services. Often sub-national government are considered to be closer to the people, having good access to local information and a clear understanding of local context, and thus can better identify the mix and level of services their constituents need than can the higher-levels, improving allocative efficiency. This emphasis on more efficient and effective service delivery was partially driven by a global move towards new public management. This new paradigm theorised that implementing service delivery approaches traditionally associated with certain markets would lead to greater cost-efficiency in the public sector (Stanton, 2009, pp. 33-34). Decentralisation from this view, removes government monopolies over public service delivery, thus creating opportunities for competition and enhancing the allocation and distribution of resources.

2.5 Dimensions of Decentralisation

Thus far, the argument has been that decentralisation in general is about the transfer of authority for public functions and resources from national to sub-national levels with the rationale for decentralisation that (a) it will democratise service delivery through bringing government closer to the people, and (b) the belief that local governance is more effective and efficient than centralised governance. This section will explore in detail the various dimensions of decentralisation, of which Cheema and Rondinelli (2007) identified four: political, administrative, fiscal and economic. However, for the purposes of this study, discussions will focus only on the first three dimensions due to their relevance to this study.

2.5.1 Political Decentralisation

For many scholars, political decentralisation is necessary for the establishment of decentralisation in general. Kuazya (2007, p. 4) described political decentralisation as a top-down process, which can be understood to refer to either or both of the following: (a) the relinquishing of power for selecting political leadership and representatives from central to lower levels of governments, and (b) transferring the power and authority for making socio-politico-economic decisions from central to local governments and communities. Jun and Wright (1996) added self-governing, self-determination, local independence, home rule and political autonomy. Grindle (2007b) and Pellini (2000) claimed that political decentralisation is often associated with pluralistic politics in that it enables local governments to be accountable to local communities, with the authority to pass by-laws in their sphere of jurisdiction. Grindle (2007b); Harrigan (1994); and Furniss (1974) all contended that political decentralisation enhances the influence of citizens or their representatives in policy formulation and implementation.

These authors definitions of political decentralisation suggest that decisions made with greater public participation at a local level are better informed and more suited to the diverse interests of society than those made by central government. Furthermore, the opportunity to participate in the selection of representatives for local electoral jurisdictions enhances citizens understanding of their political representatives and likewise allows elected officials to know better the demands of their constituents.

2.5.2 Administrative Decentralisation

Administrative decentralisation as defined by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (2005, p. 2) deals with the relocation of officials in a higher level of government to the lower-level arena so that they perform their duties at the local level. In some cases, government officials stationed at the local level are authorised to carry out certain responsibilities which were previously performed by government officials located in the central government. The United Nations Development Programme (1999) sees administrative decentralisation as a system in which responsibilities at the central, regional and local levels are shared between government institutions. Within this context, the distribution of responsibilities among various level of government enhances the effectiveness of government systems and improves lower-level government capacity. Cohen and Peterson (1999) shared a similar view emphasising on the

hierarchical and functional distribution of powers and functions between central and lower-level units. In other words, administrative decentralisation represents the transfer of authority from an administrative headquarters to a field office. It is carried out in some cases for the convenience of local people so that certain jobs can be accomplished without delay. This dimension of decentralisation requires those government officials working at the local level to remain loyal and answerable to higher officials in the system, as authority remains with the central government.

The World Bank (1999) has claimed that decision-makers and international development agencies are increasingly turning to administrative decentralisation as a strategy for addressing critical governmental needs such as strengthening governance, increasing transparency and accountability, and providing more effective and efficient production and delivery of public goods and services. Authors such as Cohen and Peterson (1999, p. 19) claimed that administrative decentralisation is by far the most common and accepted dimension of decentralisation, insofar as development is concerned. They argued that this dimension of decentralisation is especially prominent in a unitary state system where a certain degree of control is retained and a system of hierarchy is sustained by the central government. The application of administrative decentralisation takes different forms: de-concentration, delegation, devolution, and privatisation and these are discussed in detail under section 2.6.

2.5.3 Fiscal Decentralisation

Fiscal decentralisation refers to the transfer of functions or authority from higher levels to a subordinate (local) level, particularly in regards to the allocation of financial resources (such as financial discretionary powers) and the powers to levy local taxes (Boschmann, 2009, p. 20). A core component of fiscal decentralisation concerns the distribution and control of financial revenue – either through revenue acquired locally or monies dispersed by the central government. Fiscal decentralisation is about the distribution of fiscal responsibilities and the ensuing interactions between national and local governments. It involves the design of intergovernmental fiscal transfer, which shifts revenues earned from taxes by central government to local governments, and the extent to which discretion for borrowing from the private financial institutions is granted to sub-national levels of government. Bird and Wallich (1993) argued for greater decentralisation particularly in the areas of spending and revenue decision making as this

can ensure that expenditures reflect the preferences, needs and fiscal abilities of different localities.

The argument in favour of such extensive fiscal autonomy is that local governments have superior knowledge of local preferences and needs, and thus are able to better target public spending (Freinkman & Plekhanov, 2009, p. 6). Faguet (2004) provides empirical evidence in support of this hypothesis by showing that decentralisation in Bolivia significantly altered public investment spending patterns in a way that is consistent with local governments being more responsive to perceived local needs. However, in practice and as argued by Bahl (1999, p. 61), such autonomy is quite rare, especially in developing and transitioning countries, as central governments tend to maintain control over tax rates in the interests of macro-economic stability.

2.6 Forms of Decentralisation

The degree of responsibility for and discretion in decision making that is transferred to sub-national units of government by the central government can vary. Many authors mainly distinguish among four major forms of decentralisation trialled in developing countries: devolution, delegation, de-concentration and privatisation (Rondinelli & Nellis, 1986, p. 5). Some governments have used all four types, simultaneously or at different times, while others have begun with one approach and later changed to another based on their assessment of the initial outcome. Each of these forms of decentralisation namely de-concentration, delegation, devolution and privatisation denotes a unique set of central-local relationships, differentiating between them is important for this study.

2.6.1 De-concentration

De-concentration is a form of decentralisation where governmental functions and resources (such as civil servants, or public funds) are reallocated downward within the state bureaucracy (Grote & Braun, 2000; Jutting, Corsi, & Stockmayer, 2005). It does not entail the transfer of authority from the centre to sub-national units of government, but rather involves the shifting of workload from centrally located staff to offices outside of the national government (Cheema & Rondinelli, 1983, p. 189). This transfer of authority is undertaken without weakening the hierarchy of the system. Although some downward accountability may be built into their functions, local civil servants'

remain subordinate to central authorities who maintain the ultimate decision making power (Jutting et al., 2005; Ribot, 2001). Field officers are key agents charged with the responsibility of overseeing the implementation of national policies. De-concentration is a weak form of decentralisation which does not allow for local autonomy. The argument is that de-concentration improves the efficiency and effectiveness of the administration of public institutions. It is not aimed at local democratisation, nor does it enhance public representation and accountability. Instead it has the potential to lead to greater technical efficiency (Turner & Hulme, 1997).

2.6.2 Delegation

Rondinelli (1983, p. 189) and Yuliani (2004, p. 3) referred to delegation as the transfer of managerial responsibility for specific functions to local government or local units. Although some decision-making authority might also be delegated, ultimately the central state remains in charge, reserving control over key aspects of policy, and maintaining its position of holding local authorities accountable (Ribot, 2001; Rondinelli, 1983). In contrast to de-concentration, there seems to be far more discretion in delegation of decision making, except that sub-national units of government remains first and foremost accountable to the central government. Advocates claim that delegation has been used in some countries as a means of removing important functions from inefficient government bureaucracies (Ribot, 2001; Rondinelli, 1980), while in others it is considered as another way for government to indirectly provide goods and services for which user or unit charges can be made, but which are not effectively provided by the civil service. While the delegation of power may imply stronger local autonomy, ultimate power remains with the central authority.

2.6.3 Devolution

The literature claims that devolution carries the highest degree of decision-making independence. Turner and Hulmes (1997) explained that often devolution is considered the only true form of decentralisation because of its inherent democratic value. Devolution entails the transfer of resources, functions and decision making to autonomous sub-national units of government (United Nations Development Programme, 1999, p. 6). These sub-national units can operate largely or wholly autonomous of central government within the scope of their functions. In a devolved system, local governments also have some authority over local policy and the allocation

of financial resources. With such independence, local governments are not primarily accountable upwardly to the central government, but rather downwardly to their electorates through regular, competitive and popular local elections. Decentralisation through devolution establishes sub-national levels of government to effectively deliver services and has gained a reputation as the form of decentralisation from which the greatest benefits can be derived (Bossuyt & Gould, 2000; Ribot, 2001; World Bank, 2000).

2.6.4 Privatisation

Privatisation takes place when government functions are transferred to voluntary organisations or to private enterprises with a variable degree of government regulation (Rondinelli & Nellis, 1986, p. 9). In some instances, governments have transferred responsibility to “parallel organisation” such as national industrial and trade associations, professional groups, religious organisations, political parties or cooperatives. For some analysts, privatisation is the ultimate in decentralisation as it tends to give a stronger voice to consumers through markets and by stimulating competition for clients and contracts (Mills, 1994, p. 283). The government in this context maintains its regulatory responsibilities and thus may use planning tools and financial incentives or disincentives in its efforts to coordinate decentralised agencies. Many developing countries governments have long depended on voluntary organisations for the provisions of public services especially in the health sector (Mills, 1994).

Noting the distinction between de-concentration, delegation, devolution and privatisation helps in exploring the negotiations of central-local relationships, however, such relationships are not uniform or static. Many local governments experience all four forms of decentralisation at the same time. This not only results in a complex division of powers and functions, but requires a unique set of central-local relationships. As Grindle (2007a, p. 5) states:

It may matter less what kind of decentralisation characterises specific policy areas than how local governments and local officials adapt to new demands and expectations and how they manage the full complex of decentralised responsibilities.

2.7 Decentralisation and Centralisation

Centralisation and decentralisation are modes of governance – i.e. ways in which control is exercised and decision making operates within a government. Proponents of decentralisation tend to agree that at least in theory, decentralisation holds great potential for development and that decentralised service delivery by devolution is better. However, regardless of the overwhelming theoretical backing for decentralisation, it is yet to be proven whether a centralised or a decentralised system of governance provides services more effectively (Azfar, Kahkonen, Lanyi, Meagher, & Rutherford, 1999, p. 1).

Turner and Hulme (1997, p. 152) made an important distinction that there is a lack of any clear-cut separation between centralised and decentralised governance. Rather they identified centralisation and decentralisation as two extremes of operations on a continuum of authority that can be viewed as complementary to each other. According to Rondinelli and Nellis (1986, p. 11), a common way of pinpointing the position of any given governmental system on this continuum is to determine the extent to which power and decision have been concentrated or dispersed towards local level government. They further argued that few if any countries are either totally centralised or decentralised. This study will look at similar trends in the Solomon Islands government, where the system tends to fluctuates between centralised and decentralised designs.

Various factors tend to conflict with each other when governments engage in the process of finding the appropriate balance between centralised and decentralised decision making. It is argued that centralisation can help ensure uniform and consistent standards, minimise inequalities, avoid the duplication of services, allows for the achievement of economies of scale, and enhances coherence and coordination. Increased centralisation yields more control within central governments, making it easier to impose new policies. In contrast, decentralisation can help improve local autonomy and empowerment, encourage customisation and innovation, and increase participation. With decentralisation, local governments and local institutions are key recipients of power. Based on these central arguments, decentralisation and centralisation both offer relative advantages in terms of their ability to execute public services.

Decentralisation in some instances necessitates the establishment of another layer of government, thus requires additional resources and increases in public expenditure. According to Azfar et al., (1999, p. 5), the addition of another layer calls for an efficient division of

responsibilities among the different levels of government to avoid turf competition and confusion. The transfer of functions and authority to subnational governments needs to be matched with the transfer of appropriate technology, skills, financial and manpower resources to ensure that subnational governments are properly equipped to undertake their new functions and responsibilities. Furthermore, Vista-Baylon (2000, p. 185) noted that governments' intending to decentralise should ensure that human resource development and organisational capacity building continues until such time when subnational governments can independently sustain their own needs.

The motives involved in a central government's choice to decentralise remain debatable. Some literature emphasises the importance of central-local relations in whether decentralisation achieves its outcomes, while critics such as Shah and Thompson (2004, p. 4) question the underlying intent of a government to democratise through decentralisation. They argued that this could be a deliberate means for which the central government could expand its control over local governments. However, most of the literature acknowledges that decentralisation has the potential to engage local communities in their own development.

2.8 The Concept of Intergovernmental Relations

Within the scope of this study, the concept of central-local relations will draw specifically on its association with the national and provincial governments wherein the concept of decentralisation is embedded. Anderson (1960, p. 3) defines intergovernmental relations (IGR) as an important body of activities or interactions that takes place between government units of all types and levels. Choi and Wright (2004, p. 2) concur, describing intergovernmental relations as key changes that occur in the character and content of relationships among officials occupying key policy making positions in various governmental jurisdictions. Wright (1988, p. 2) claims that IGR as a concept recognises all combination of relations among different levels of government such as national-local, provincial-local, inter-provincial and inter-local. The ideological position of IGR is presented in a statement by Hanfas cited in Agranof (1999, p. 3):

the ability of individual decision units to achieve their own objectives will depend not only on their own choices and actions but also on those of others; actions at any one level of decision making will be influenced by the relationship that exists between levels as well as across functional boundaries.

Hence, according to Fritschler and Segal (1972, p. 97), it is important that those who operate in the intergovernmental system has an understanding or at least accepted rules which guides their actions. These rules (including attempts to change them) can impact on local decision making and policy outputs in a significant manner.

As a concept, IGR has been considered an operational term used by public officials to describe their day to day activities within multi-jurisdictional service delivery mandates. Wright (1988) claims that within an IGR environment, the equality of stakeholders removes the hierarchical status, establishing instead an operational mechanism where no level assumes superiority except that of accountability. According to Agrannof and McGuire (2002, p. 2) due to its increasing use, IGR has been mistakenly understood to be synonymous with federalism. There seems to be a tendency particularly in unitary systems for IGR to be equated with decentralisation or a means to allocate certain constitutional or forms of power to lower levels of governments.

2.8.1 Approaches to Central-local Relations

To have a better understanding of the concept of central-local relations between the different levels of government, it is important to examine what the literature says about the different approaches to the concept of intergovernmental relations. Hattingh (1998, p. 5) identified four approaches to IGR namely; the constitutional/legal, democratic, financial and normative-operational approaches, while Roux, Bernard, Botes and Fourie (1999, pp. 171-172) distinctly separate constitutional and legal approaches. The *democratic approach* emphasises provincial and local level government's rights to self-determination, the most extreme example of this is when such government bodies are considered as autonomous institutions. Proponents of this approach are against the centralisation of authority rather they promote greater devolution to subordinate authorities (Hattingh, 1998, pp. 11-12). According to Roux et al., (1999, p. 171), the promotion of one value (democratic principles) is done at the expense of other values (meaningful participation), counteracting the very foundation for participation within the entire governmental hierarchy.

Likewise, the *constitutional/legal approach* suggests the possible use of the constitutional and other legislative provisions as a point of departure in the study of central-local relations. Roux et

al., (1999, p. 171) contend that this approach accepts that the hierarchy of government is dictated by the constitution and that the constitution is a necessary instrument to achieve harmony, thus considered as the basis for determining central-local relations. For example, in Papua New Guinea (PNG), the National Constitution is the supreme law of the country which guides the actions of both politicians and government officials (Ghai & Regan, 1989, p. 1). Section 187H of the PNG Constitution and Part XI of the Organic Law on Provincial Government provides for the creation of appropriate institutions and procedures that support and facilitate central-local relations (Axline, 1986, p. 28). This constitutional requirement resulted in the establishment of the National Fiscal Commission and the Premiers' Council, the two formal institutions through which national and provincial governments relations can be channelled. However, Reddy (1996, p. 74) argued that where formal institutions for intergovernmental relations were found to be inadequate in addressing issues and ensuring coordination between the different spheres of government, informal structures were established.

The *financial approach* relates to specific sections of a country's constitution which stipulates that an Act of Parliament must provide for the equitable allocation of nationally generated revenue between the national, provincial and local level governments as well as the specific conditions for such allocations (Hattingh, 1998). In the PNG context, the National Fiscal Commission (NFC) Act (1982) sets out the allocation of unconditional grants by the national to the provincial governments and between provinces (Axline, 1986, p. 28). Additionally, the NFC promotes cooperation between the national and provincial government and between provincial governments and is often called upon to address fiscal relations arising between the national-provincial and provincial-provincial. Fiscal relations form a critical component of the constitutional approach due to the significance of finances as a resource.

The *normative-operation approach* examines the need to consider all relevant norms necessary for analysing the entire operational realities of government relations. In so doing, it is important not to overemphasise one component of government relations at the expense of another (Hattingh, 1998, p. 14). For example, value as in democracy as one aspect cannot be understated in this approach at the expense of another aspect, such as finance. Mathebula (2004, p. 131) claims that since intergovernmental relations are exercised within a public administration environment, this means that there are norms and values to which it should subscribe. Such norms and values normally shape the behaviours of public officials particularly in the execution of their functions.

2.8.2 Types of Government

In light of the preceding discussions by various scholars on the different approaches to IGR, another factor that influences on the study of IGR is the type of government. According to Works (2002, p. 7), an extensive debate exists among development practitioners regarding the relationship between a system of government and decentralisation. He argues that in practice the line between decentralisation, federalism, unitary states and centralised systems is vague. Although this study acknowledges the existence of different types of governments such as a federal state, a unitary state, and a confederal state, the focus of this study will be on the unitary system because of its relevance to the Solomon Islands context. A unitary system based on MacDonald (2008, p. 11) is one where there is one set of central institutions with the ultimate political and legal authority within the country to rule. In such a government system, there can be several locals or regional institutions of law and government, however, they are essentially subordinate to the authority of the highest or central institutions in that central authority can overrule or override any action taken by them (Work, 2002, p. 7). The workability of decentralisation in such system is therefore reliant on the good will of the unitary central government, instead of relying on existing constitutional divisions of power. According to Axline's (1986, p. 30), within such a context the success and failure of institutions for intergovernmental relations reflect the relative power of the two levels of government.

The effectiveness of centre-local relations may be determined by the extent in which it promotes good governance and the transition of development policy intent into actual service delivery outcomes. Centre-local relations is therefore not an end in itself, but adds value to the extent it supports effective service delivery and good governance across the two spheres of government.

2.8.3 Linkages between Decentralisation and Central-Local Relations

A strong link exists between decentralisation and centre-local relations. Smith (1985) argues that central-local relations are critical in the framing of decentralisation policies. Kippra (2003, p. 6), juxtaposed to Smith asserts that the manner in which decentralisation redefines centre-local relations has potential implications for successful decentralisation. The author further contends that the relations embedded in these two levels of government impact on the uniform adoption of decentralisation policies. Thus central-local relations can be described as an institutional foundation upon which decentralisation develops.

In countries featuring multi-tiered governments such as national, provincial, and local, it is necessary that the different levels of government interact with each other. The literature acknowledged the incentives for sub-national authorities' engagement with central government, particularly in gaining access to centrally managed resources. Others such as Brinkerhoff and Johnson, 2009 as cited by McLoughlin (2010, p. 10) similarly emphasise the critical role played by central-local relations in influencing whether decentralisation achieves better service delivery and democratic outcomes. The development of centre-local relationships according to Freinkman (2007, p. 2) is vital, as in many countries no single level of government is likely to be able to effectively deliver public services. As such, decentralisation can be contextualised as operating in a system; while central-local relations focus attention on the interactions that connect these systems

Proponents of decentralisation tend to describe the relationship between central-local as integral to effective service delivery, while critics argue that cooperation with the central state is often perceived as a threat to local government autonomy. According to Vale (2010) a study undertaken in Brazil shows that the creation of forums for central-local relations aimed at improving policy coordination among the different levels of government delivered mixed results. While in the health sector, it was instrumental in ensuring the participation of sub-national units in recommending policies, in the education sector there are indications that the central government maintains the upper hand. Hence it is important to note that decentralisation processes have not been uniform. The systems of intergovernmental relations and their impact in terms of efficiency and equity in the provision of decentralised goods and services continue to be heterogeneous.

2.9 Conclusion

In conclusion, decentralisation today is widely accepted as integral to better public sector governance and performance. A review of the literature reveals that decentralisation tends to be conceptualised as the degree or extent of the transfer of power and authority from central government to sub-national levels of government. Decentralisation is perceived as an indicator of autonomy, independence and discretion which is regarded as good for service delivery, good governance and democracy. The majority of the literature on decentralisation claims that despite some limitations, establishing sub-national government institutions strengthens democracy by

empowering local communities to participate in governance and development processes, which in turn improves the effectiveness of service delivery.

This chapter has shown that decentralisation is a mixture of political, administrative, and fiscal dimensions and that each can take different forms. The distinction between de-concentrated, delegated, devolved and privatised functions is useful in identifying the levels of local government autonomy. Where the central government authorities wish to exercise control, they may choose a de-concentrated or delegated system rather than a devolved or privatised system. The assumption holds that de-concentrated or delegated systems make public service delivery systems bureaucratic because central authorities still retain decision making power although management responsibilities are spread over different levels of government.

The literature also reveals that decentralisation and centralisation should not be regarded as opposite ends of the spectrum, rather they should be seen as complementary. In many countries, despite the transfer of functions to sub-national governments, the central government continues to maintain some supervisory powers and control over finances. In some instances, the central government attempts to retain its grip on local governments through formal and informal controls or regulatory instruments. While advocates of centralisation claim that this is important in ensuring that sub-national governments act consistently with national development policies and plans, and comply with prudent financial practices; Vista-Baylon (2000, p. 159) argues that in some instances this reflects mere reluctance to let go of central power and control. Hence decentralisation holds new opportunities and responsibilities for both local and central government, but will not succeed unless they mutually support and reinforce each other.

As shown in this chapter, strong linkages exist between decentralisation and central-local relations. The literature illustrates that decentralisation necessitates the development of intergovernmental relations, creating a platform for different spheres of government to cooperate and coordinate on policy matters. In a unitary system, the parliament of the whole country is the supreme law-making body and final authority vests with the national government. This premise forms the basis of relations between the different levels of governments. The manner in which these different levels of government conduct their relations has an impact on the delivery of services to rural communities.

Overall, it is important to embrace the complexities surrounding the concept of decentralisation and the negotiations of central-local relations as the theoretical framework for this study. As

discussed, decentralisation has come to the fore as scholars believe it holds great potential for development. However, assumptions concerning decentralisation must be approached with caution as surprisingly little research has been undertaken to assess whether these conditions exist or if they lead to the outcomes desired.

Chapter 3 that follows looks in detail on decentralisation and the negotiations of central-local relations within the Solomon Islands context, which is the focus of this study.

CHAPTER 3: THE HISTORY OF SOLOMON ISLANDS DECENTRALISATION

3.1 Introduction

Drawing on discussion of the key concepts of decentralisation and the negotiations of central-local relations as outline in chapter 2, this chapter will examine in detail the negotiation of relations between local and central government throughout the political history in the Solomon Islands as the context of this study. A brief history will be provided on the country's decentralisation process, as well as a description of the negotiations of central-local relations in the Solomon Islands.

3.2 Centralisation and Decentralisation in the Solomon Islands

The political history of the Solomon Islands revealed that from 1896 to 1960s, the colony was administered through a centralised system of government under British rule. Premdas & Steeves (1985, p. 36) claimed that indigenous Solomon Islanders had minimal participation in the government, mainly carrying out instructions and guidelines established by the colonial administrators. Power resided with the colonial government through the Resident Commissioner (RC) who had direct responsibility to the High Commissioner for the Western Pacific, based in Suva, Fiji. Under the RC, there were district officers, police officers and other workers implementing orders from the hierarchy. Four main district stations were established at that time namely; 1) Central, 2) Malaita, 3) Western, and 4) Eastern.

District officers were appointed to each of the district stations with a small detachment of policemen to ensure law and order in the villages. According to Randall (1999, p. 13), the establishment of district stations was not necessarily to promote the participation of Solomon Islanders in development; rather it was for administrative purposes. This period could be characterised as 'de-concentration' a term defined as the weakest form of decentralisation in Chapter 2. De-concentration during this period was necessary to maintain law and order and to establish a conducive environment for furthering imperial interest. The RC alone would not be able to administer colonial activities in all the islands. Therefore the British ruled the colony through a centralised system of government with district officers implementing colonial activities on behalf of and in the interest of the RC.

The 1920 Native Tax Regulation signified the beginning of Solomon Islanders' involvement in the administration of the colony. Healy (1989, p. 198) cited that district officers and headmen began to facilitate tax collection through exploiting their own people. In late 1930s and 1940s, the idea of putting in place native courts and councils was proposed as a mechanism to unite customary and administrative law. According to Premdas and Steeves (1985, pp. 35-36), the native courts system survived until 1960 progressively extending its jurisdiction from village disputes to criminal matters. However, like the district administration, the court system was considered by rural communities as an externally imposed system. Solomon Islanders therefore continued practicing collective village decision making and resolving disputes using ancient traditional values and practices. The problem as pointed out by Fox (1987, p. 80) rests with the "spirit of superiority in the ruling race" whereby what colonial leaders said were always right and good. The initiation of native courts and councils was motivated by the idea that the colony is best administered through decentralisation.

The post-war period witnessed the emergence of a collective nationalist movement called the Ma'asina Ruru.¹ According to Bennett (1977, p. 299), the idea that the Solomon Islands should be governed through a decentralised system of government was further pressured by this strong collective indigenous movement. The 'Ma'asina Ruru' was an influential Malaitan based movement which challenged the entire system of imposed government that had preceded the war. According to MacDonald (1976, p. 247), the formation of this group follows similar radical independence movements opposing colonisers in other parts of the world (e.g in Asia and Africa) and was further influenced by the American Labour Corps, during the 'Battle of Guadalcanal' during WWII. The Ma'asina Ruru was initiated by fellow Malaitans who worked in the Solomon Islands Labour Corps during WWII. Premdas & Steeves (1985, p. 37) claim that Malaitans witnessed that although African-American soldiers were segregated in the United States Army, they were treated markedly better than the harsh and cruel treatment locals received from plantation owners. The soldiers spread a message of independence amongst the Malaitan soldiers who then began a campaign of non-compliance and civil disobedience by refusing to pay taxes to the government. This resulted in the arrest of two thousand Malaitan's followers.

The Ma'asina Ruru was an emancipation movement for self-government and self-determination. According to Laracy (1983, p. 135) and Premdas and Steeves (1985, p. 38), Solomon Islanders

¹ The term Ma'asina comes from an 'Are'are word meaning 'brother or brotherhood' and 'Ruru' means rule.

wanted to restrict the authority which Europeans might exercise over them. Posing a threat to continued British control of the Solomon Islands, the movement was suppressed by the regime. Although the Ma'asina Ruru was disbanded and its leaders were arrested, it was successful in communicating its objective; that power to govern communities in the Solomon Islands should be return to Solomon Islanders (Premdas, 1982, p. 242).

The success of the Ma'asina Ruru was notable and resulted in the establishment of the first ever local council on Malaita in 1953, a significant milestone for the idea of decentralisation in the Solomon Islands. By 1964, another 23 local councils had been established throughout the country and the process of giving Solomon Islanders a formally recognised voice at the national level began. These local councils were later amalgamated into eight bodies under the *Plan of Operation 1974-77* and eight provinces when the Provincial Government Act (PGA) of 1981 was enacted (discussed later). The establishment of local councils throughout the country had little effect in relinquishing the political and economic power which remained with the colonial government. According to Alasia (1989, p. 142), although this was the case, it was a small step towards fuller indigenous participation in the political process. The Ma'asina Ruru movement was disbanded in the 1950s.

The British Solomon Islands Order-in-Council (Constitution) proclaimed in 1960 was a significant change to the system of governing the Protectorate. According to Moore (2010, p. 9), this Order provided for the first time the establishment of a nominated Executive and Legislative Councils. Six of the twenty-one Legislative Council members were Solomon Islanders as were two of the eight Executive Council members. Alasia (1989, p. 143) stated that while most of the power remained with the High Commissioner, he was at least obliged to listen to views expressed by members of the Executive and Legislative Councils. In 1964, further amendments to the Constitution provided for an elected majority in a single governing council with executive committees replacing the former legislative and executive councils.

The first half of the 1970s was preoccupied with constitutional changes leading to self-government and eventual independence in 1978 (Premdas, 1982, p. 244). For instance, on 10 April 1970, a Constitution was established by an Order of the Privy Council in London which provided for a new Governing Council comprising of the High Commissioner, a maximum of nine official members, and seventeen elected members, who for the first time outnumbered the number of official members. Moore (2010, p. 15) also cited a British Solomon Islands Order 1974

which saw members of the council transferred to the assembly and the number of elected members increased to twenty four. Under the 1974 Constitution, the Governing Council became the Legislative Assembly which gave birth to the Westminster government in the Solomon Islands.

A Special Committee established in 1973 urged that further devolution of economic and political responsibility should be accompanied by assigning a greater role to councils. Pursuant to this, a British consultant engaged to analyse local level structures advocated for a system of decentralised local councils to facilitate “development from below” (Premdas, 1982, p. 245). The result was the establishment of a *Plan of Operations (1974-77)* to facilitate the implementation of changes envisaged. Two key things emanated from *the Plan of Operations*; the amalgamation of various local councils into several viable ones; and the need to strengthen the role of traditional leaders and chiefs at the district or sub-district level. According to Nanau (1998, p. 188), the former was concerned with the administrative cost of administering small councils whose slim economic base meant that they were reliant on subsidies from the central government. The *Plan of Operations* is said to have paved the way for what is known today as the provincial government system, later enacted in 1981 as the PGA.

By 1976, the majority of recommendations from the *Plan of Operations* had been implemented. The eight new councils comprises: 1) Western, 2) Isabel, 3) Malaita, 4) Central, 5) Makira, 6) Eastern, 7) Guadalcanal and 8) Honiara Town Council (Premdas, 1982, p. 245). Nanau (1997, p. 62) claims that this period witnessed a gradual transfer of functions to the local councils in areas such as administration, agriculture, health, works and education. Local councils which consisted of elected members became focal points through which the diverse regional and ethnic identities of the country could assert power against colonial politicians and the government in Honiara. The *Plan of Operations* also recommended the establishment of a new ministry in 1974, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), mandated to oversee and coordinate the newly established local councils.

According to Premdas (1982, pp. 246-247), two events severely impacted on the capacity of the ministry to undertake an effective devolution of powers and functions. Firstly, the issue of staff shortages; and secondly it confronted hostility from the MHA and the Public Service due to fears of loss of functions resulting from the devolution of responsibilities to the councils. As Premdas (1982, p. 247) puts it:

The fact that those who were to lose from the experiment were asked literally to provide the skills for their own diminished prestige and power indicated a major deficiency in the implementation exercise.

Despite its shortcomings, the *Plan of Operation* was considered instrumental in setting the foundation for the establishment of provincial decentralisation in the Solomon Islands. Issues experienced with the devolution exercise as stipulated in the *Plan of Operations* led pre-independence architects of Solomon Islands decentralisation to call for a thorough examination of the system. In 1977, after a Constitutional Conference, a Special Committee was formed known as the Kausimae² Committee to look at the matter. According to a Report of the Solomon Islands Constitutional Conference (1977, p. 12), one of the tasks of the committee was to examine the relationship between the national government, provincial governments and the Area Councils and to recommend measures that support the effective decentralisation of legislative, administrative and financial powers. Besides the national government, there were nine provincial governments and below the provincial government, Areas Councils were elected to represent sub-wards at the village level.

The Kausimae Committee toured the country extensively soliciting views from locals on the kind of provincial government system that is cost effective and best meet the needs of the people (Premdas & Steeves, 1985, p. 119). Additionally, it explored ways to maximise the law making power of provincial governments due to on-going desires by Solomon Islanders for local control (Kausimae, 1978, p. 44). A significant outcome of the Kausimae Committee Report's recommendation was the listing of the exclusive and final powers of provincial and central government. According to Premdas (1982, p. 249) this was categorised into lists A, B and C. List A comprises the final powers assigned to the national and provincial governments. List B identified subjects which the provincial government could legislate but which Parliament could review. List C includes tasks transferred to provincial government based on the *Plan of Operations* as well as those transferred by respective ministries. In essence the implications of the Kausimae Committee Report were to lessen the tight grip on power by the central government.

The Kausimae Committee Report significantly impacted on decentralisation in post-colonial Solomon Islands as it allowed provinces to operate as semi-autonomous organisations rather than *de facto* agents of the central government (Nanau, 1997, p. 67). Current provincial powers were attributed to the listings designated by the Kausimae Committee Report preceding independence in July 7, 1978 and the PGA of 1981. In 1979, a review was undertaken on the Kausimae Report's recommendations by a working party with specific reference on how

² Kausimae is the surname name of a local politician at that time who was tasked to lead the committee.

devolution should occur. According to a Solomon Islands Government Report (1979, p. 68), the outcome was a Government White Paper in 1979 containing several recommendations, one of which was the establishment of provincial governments to be enacted by an Act of Parliament.

In 1981, the PGA came into place. The Act distinguished the functions and law making powers of the provincial governments based on lists A, B and C (as previously discussed). The aim of the PGA of 1981 was to bring decision making bodies closer to the people. It created a new system of government, which consisted of a legislature and an executive, tasked with the responsibility for administering the province. Nanau (1997, p. 74) argues that through 'devolution' of power and the 'de-concentration' of authority to the lower levels of government, development initiatives would reflect policies from the grass root level, giving voice to local communities.

The first review on the PGA of 1981 in 1987 called for a comprehensive amendment to the Act to allow for a new provincial government system. Recommendations included demands for a federal system and for the PGA 1981 to be repealed and revoked. According to Randell (1999, p. 30), most of the review's recommendations were seriously not considered by successive governments. Thus, the Act remained unchanged for 14 years. In 1993, a new government (the National Coalition Partner (NCP)) came into power, recommending changes to provincial governments funding. In 1994, the NCP government was toppled by a constitutional crisis and a new government assume office. The new government proposed an amendment to the relevant provisions of the Act to maximise benefits sought from exploiting provincial resources. It also recommended the abolishment of Area Councils because of concerns regarding their performance and sustainability³. The abolishment of the Area Councils in 1996 created a gap between the provincial administration and the village level. Following amendments to the Act, a new Provincial Government Act of 1996 was passed by the National Parliament. However, in 1997 the Solomon Islands Alliance for Change Government revoked the 1996 Act and reverted to the PGA of 1981 with changes to enable a review to be carried out. The PGA of 1997 spells out the functions and powers of the provincial government based on scheduled 3, 4 and 5 (discussed further in chapter 5) as opposed to A, B and C as stipulated in the initial Act of 1981.

Nanau (1998, p. 195) cited that a major problem with the PGA of 1996 was the lack of community participation during its conception. He argued that the review was driven mainly from the top⁴ and

³ *It proved very expensive to maintain the Area Councils*

⁴ *Driven by the National Coalition Partners Government, the government of the day at that time.*

designed by central government officials within the Ministry of Provincial Government and the Cabinet. He further pointed that the PGA of 1996 does not deviate greatly from the PGA of 1981 as most of the power, particularly when it comes to control over resources, remains with the central government. While the Act spells out a wide range of services and functions that provincial governments could deliver, the actual responsibilities and resources for delivery of most of these services have neither been devolved nor delegated. According to a UNDP Report (2008b, p. 5), provincial governments currently play a marginal role in delivering services and managing local development in the provinces.

In 1999, militants from Guadalcanal began attacking groups of people from Malaita who since WWII and after independence had settled in Guadalcanal and around the capital city Honiara. On June 5, 2000, a Malaita militia united with a faction of the Solomon Islands Police Force and took over the national armoury, deposed the constitutionally elected government and took the Prime Minister hostage. McDougall (2003, p. 1) cited that the attacks between the two rivalry groups resulted in several hundreds of people being killed and the displacement of thousands of people, mainly Malaitans. According to Tuhaika (2005, p. 4), the ethnic crisis brought the issue of state government to the forefront with renewed interest in constitutional reform.

This led to the Townsville Peace Agreement (TPA) signed in October 2000 which explicitly stated that state government be introduced in the Solomon Islands to allow more autonomy to the provinces by devolution or constitutional amendment. According to Wielders (2003, p. 8), the TPA specifically called for more autonomy for Malaita and Guadalcanal provinces and the establishment of a Constitutional Council to rewrite the Constitution. Consistent with the TPA agreement was a recommendation by the Buala's Premiers' Millennium Conference later that same year for constitutional change targeted at greater decentralisation. This resulted in the establishment of a State Government Task Force in December 2000. The Taskforce recommended *"the adoption of the federal system"* which the government accepted in principle, allowing for the drafting of the constitution (Mae, 2010, p. 10). The government needed financial support to facilitate the process which in 2002, was rendered by UNDP after being approached by the government.

In 2004, a draft Federal Constitution was officially launched. The draft Constitution was circulated and discussed widely by Members of Parliament⁵ within their respective constituencies. Mae (2010, p. 13) claimed that feedback from the consultation revealed that the majority of Solomon Islanders wanted the government to take further steps towards the removal of the current system of government. In December 2007, a constitutional congress was established by the Sikua⁶ led government. The congress started consultation within their respective provinces in anticipation of the plenary meetings to debate the details of the draft Constitution. Mae (2010, p. 14) claims that consultations were inclusive and participatory, eliciting views of different groups in the various communities in the Solomon Islands. During the fieldwork⁷, the Taskforce was embarking on its last round of consultation on the draft federal constitution.

In practice, as argued by Randell (1999, p. 30) devolution as envisaged in the PGA of 1981 is far from reaching its objectives in the Solomon Islands context. Instead of being less reliant on national government for funding and resources, the literature depicts otherwise. This dependency on national government by provinces meant that local governments are accountable upwards to the national government rather than downwards to their constituents. Cox and Morrison (2004, p. 12) claimed that decentralisation arrangements in the Solomon Islands can best be described as political decentralisation but without the relevant devolution of powers, functions, resources and support from the national government. This argument confers with UNDP's (2008b, p. 5) findings which supports a conclusion by a United Nations Common Country Assessment in 2002 that in reality "the powers of provinces are largely illusory," emphasising the need for increased devolution and more equitable distribution of resources to the provinces.

3.3 The Central Government

The role of the central government is important in gaining an understanding of the power dynamics involved within the decentralised context of the Solomon Islands. The period leading up to independence witnessed a strong push for federalism by Western and Guadalcanal Province (Kabutaulaka, 2008, p. 101). There was heated debate between Western Province political leaders and the central government regarding the proposed system of centre-periphery relations.

⁵ Each Member of Parliament was given SBD20,000 (equivalent to USD2,353) to undertake the consultation in their respective constituencies.

⁶ The previous government before the current one led by Hon. Danny Philip starting in 2010.

⁷ The fieldwork was carried out by the researcher in the Solomon Islands in June and July of 2011.

Premdas and Steeve (1985, p. 77) noted that from the Western Province perspective, only a quasi-federal system of government suits the context of the Solomon Islands.

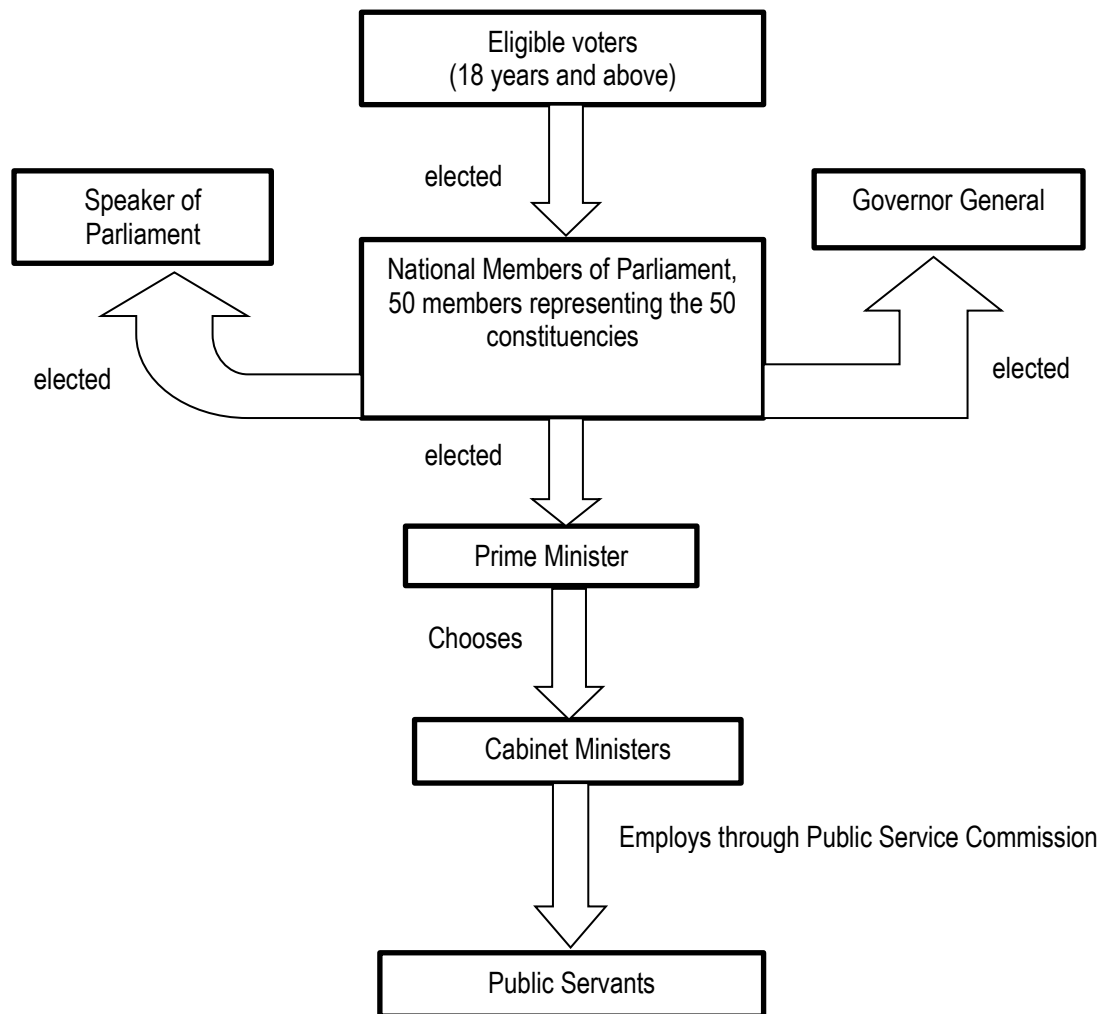
Guadalcanal and Western Provinces further expressed concern that the present structure of government does not reflect the diverse cultures and wishes of the people in that ultimate power resides in a single government. In response to this, the central government through a Report of the Constitutional Committee of 1975 rejected a quasi-federal solution, committing instead to a unitary system of government. Mae (2010, p. 4) argued that the Westminster system was preferred over the federal system as it was less costly to administer and was compatible with the former system employed under the colonial regime. As Ghai (1983, p. 14) puts it:

Despite the fact that at the community level there was wide spread demand for alternative forms of governance and for the recognition of community leaders and traditional structures and systems of governance that allows a large degree of autonomy, the government opted for the Westminster system.

Tuhaika (2005, p. 4) argued that the unitary system of government adopted in the Solomon Islands is characteristically centralised in nature. The provincial governments are subordinates of the central government who retain the ultimate power to make decision and law for the country. There is a unicameral National Parliament of fifty members, the Prime Minister is elected by secret ballot by eligible voters⁸ and chooses the other members of cabinet. These elected national members of parliament then elect the Prime Minister, the Speaker and the Governor-General. According to Pretorius, Lokay and Arumae (2008, p. 29), the 23 Cabinet Ministers appointed by the Prime Minister head each of the 23 ministries tasked with formulating and implementing government policies with support from public servants. Each minister is assisted by a Permanent Secretary, appointed on a four year contract who directs the staff of the ministry (see figure 1 for the structure of the central government).

⁸ 18 years and above.

Figure 1: Structure of Central Government



Source: Nanau (1997, p. 22)

In the Solomon Islands, the *National Constitution of 1978* provides the legal framework for the operations of a provincial government system, and the Ministry of Provincial Government and Institutional Strengthening is the central government agency responsible for coordinating the functions and activities in all the nine provinces in the country.

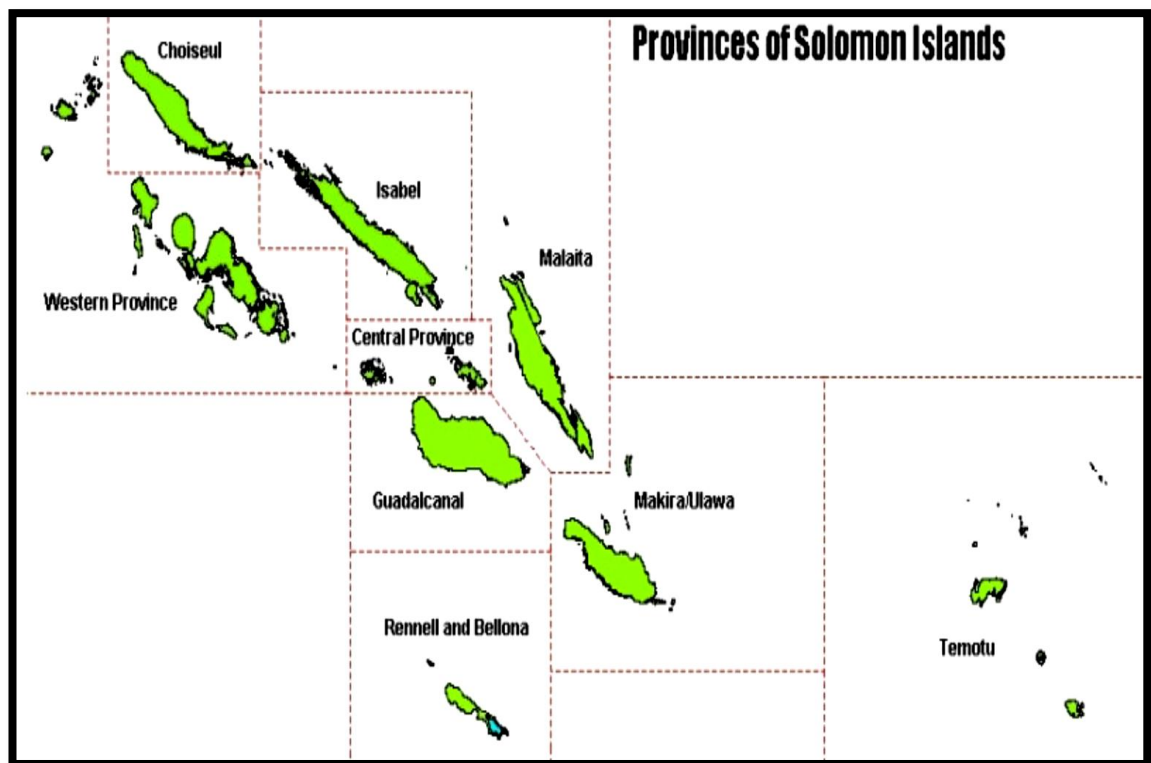
3.4 The Provincial Government System

Before colonial times, communities and villages in the Solomon Islands as previously discussed in this chapter were governed by the “Big Man” and “Chiefly” system. After the Solomon Islands was declared a British Protectorate, the British Government introduced a new system which comprises districts managed by district officers, reflecting a two tier structure (central government

and the districts). The enactment of the PGA of 1981 sets out a two tier structure but this time it consists of the national government and the provincial governments. However, the provincial governments through the provincial assemblies were provided with the authority to establish ordinances to put in place Area Councils, which became a third level of government in the Solomon Islands political structure. The removal of the Areas Councils reverted the system to a two tier structure of national and provincial governments.

The PGA of 1981 led to the formation of seven provinces namely: Malaita, Central, Makira, Western, Isabel, Temotu and Guadalcanal. Later in 1991, two additional provinces were added; Choiseul and Rennell and Bellona⁹. Currently, there are nine provincial governments plus a municipal authority (Honiara), administered by the Honiara City Council, also an elected body. Figure 2 shows a map of Solomon Islands, demarcating the nine provinces.

Figure 2: Map of Solomon Islands



Source: *Atlas of the Solomon Islands*

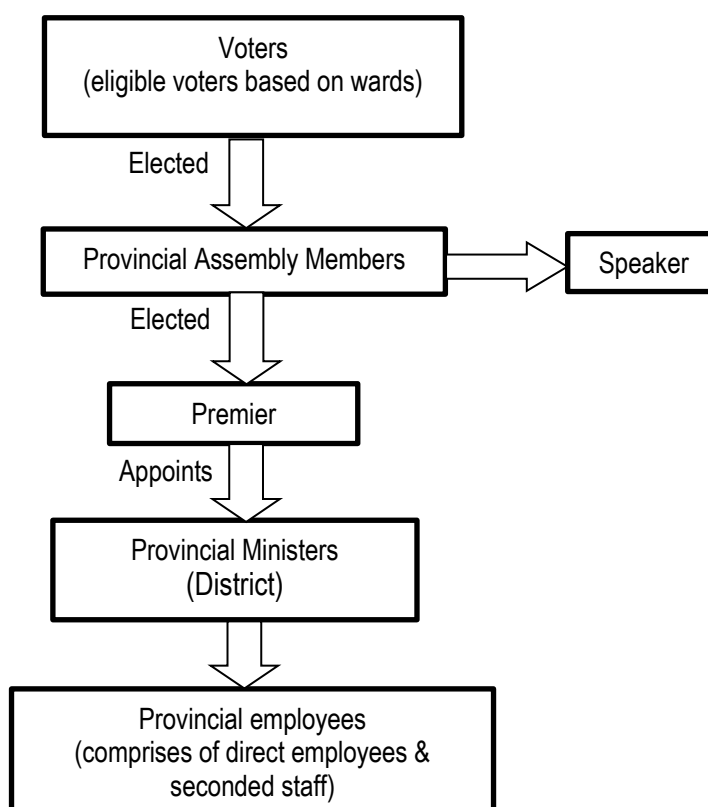
In each of the provinces, there is a Provincial Assembly, the composition of which varies from 9 to 30 members depending on the number of wards (Cox & Morrison, 2004, p. 7). Based on the PGA

⁹ Rennell and Bellona makes up one province

of 1997, each Provincial Assembly is to be headed by an Executive, and lead by a Premier who is elected by a majority of Provincial Assembly members ("The Provincial Government Act," 1997, pp. 8-15). Provincial Assembly Members are elected from the various constituencies of the respective provinces and they have a four year term. The Premier then appoints a Deputy Premier as well as ministers who are tasked with portfolio responsibilities. Ministers become members of the Provincial Executive who deliberate on policy matters concerning the province.

The Provincial Secretary is accountable to the Premier and the Executive. Provincial ministries employ public servants who are either 'direct' or 'seconded' staff. The provincial government structure in the Solomon Islands is a smaller version of the national government structure. Figure 3 demonstrates the structure, line of responsibility and accountability of the Provincial Government system.

Figure 3: The Structure of the Provincial Government System



Source: Nanau (1997, p. 26)

The capacity of the Provincial Governments to finance their operation as well as development projects in rural communities is central in debates about the future of decentralised government in the Solomon Islands. The current Act (1997) provides for provincial governments to generate their own revenue. Randell (1999, p. 73) cited that a statutory provision exists which enables provincial governments to engage in direct investments; however, not many provinces have utilised this. This has resulted in provinces depending largely on national government funding. Each year, each province receives a grant¹⁰ through the government's national budget. The purpose of this fund is to assist provincial governments to meet general administration expenses as well as to cover the cost of development programs in each province. The allocation of provincial grants varies from province to province depending on certain criteria such as population, administrative cost, etc. Cox and Morrison (2004, p. 21) stated that the exact allocation for each province in any particular year is unpredictable, neither is the formula used to devise provincial grants consistent.

According to Randell (1999, p. 73), provincial governments expenditure has continued to escalate since the system was formally introduced in 1981 resulting in substantial deficits accumulated over the years. This view is supported by Cox and Morrison (2004, p. 21) citing that the accumulated debt by provinces ranges from SBD100,000 ¹¹ (USD11,765) to SBD12million (USD1,411,765).

They argued that while provinces are able to raise their own revenues, these are used solely for recurrent expenditure, a large portion of which is expended on provincial personnel salaries and allowances. The inability of provinces to source adequate revenue to finance their operational expenses is partly due to costs associated with tax collection which far exceeds revenue yield. Overall, there is insufficient revenue generated at the provincial government level to cater for capital and recurrent expenditures associated with any service delivery. Expenditures far exceed local revenue collected, leaving provinces dependent on funding from the national government.

3.5 The Negotiations of Central-Local Relations within a Decentralised Context

The conduct and negotiations of central-local relations are fundamental to an understanding of decentralisation because it is there that the different systems of government express themselves. The institutions and procedures for negotiating relations between the different levels of

¹⁰ Commonly referred to as the Provincial Service Grant.

¹¹ SBD stands for Solomon British Dollar, the local currency used in the Solomon Islands

governments are clearly laid out in the *Plan of Operations 1974-1977*, and the *Special Committee Report on Provincial Government 1979* (also known as the Kausimae Committee Report). Reference is also made under *S140 of the Solomon Islands National Constitution (1978)* and Part VI of the PGA 1997, however, these documents failed to specifically identify the responsible institutions and procedures. For example, both the PGA 1997 and the Constitution made no mention of the Premiers' Conference as the relevant platform for central-local relations.

The Ministry of Home Affairs (1979, p. 131) cited that national, provincial and local politicians need to find ways of working together for the people they represent. The negotiations of relations between national and provincial governments as specified in the Kausimae Committee's Report calls for a genuine opportunity for the views of particular officials or bodies to be presented before a decision or action is made, although views expressed might not always be followed or taken in account. For instance, prior to effecting any amendments to the current PGA of 1997, ample time was given to key stakeholders both at national and provincial level to register their comments although not all comments were incorporated in the revised Act. According to the Ministry of Home Affairs (1979, p. 131) when consultations are called for either by the national or provincial government, the procedure requires a detailed request to be made in writing. Sufficient time should then be given for a reply to be made, sent and received. Once a reply is received, it should be carefully considered, and made known to all parties involved in the matter of what the response was. This should also be provided in writing. In circumstances where the matter is urgent, an agreement can be sourced through careful negotiations with the respective parties involved on ways to cut the consultation short or not having consultation at all, if this is in the best interest of the national government.

For example, the development of the Medium Term Development Strategy (MTDS) 2008-2010 document outlining the government development priorities required the Ministry of Development Planning¹² (MDP) to issue a formal notification in writing to both national ministries and provincial governments informing them of the relevant consultations that were to be undertaken. Letters were issued well in advance to allow provinces to make informed decision regarding their participation and to also prepare for the consultation. In instances where any province cannot participate due to inconveniences relating to the proposed date/time, MPD should consider alternative dates before informing its committee members of the situation. This should be in the form of formal letters. In circumstances where the committee is given a tight timeframe to produce

¹² Tasked with the primary responsibility for putting together the MTDS.

the MDTs by the government and is unable to negotiate a timeframe that suits both parties, the MPD can enter into negotiations with the province if it can access certain provincial officials or communities in the absence of the Premier or key provincial officials. In most cases, consultations are cut short because important documents such as this are a prerequisite to donor funding requirements which normally have a tight date line attached to it.

In circumstances where collective bodies such as Provincial Assemblies or Provincial Executives are consulted by the national government, they should be allowed until after their next regular meeting to consider the matter and send a reply (Ministry of Home Affairs, 1979, p. 133). This requires a formal motion outlining their views. Any parties dissatisfied with the consultation or process will have to settle their differences by either face-to-face negotiations or by letter. Similarly the circulations of bills on which consultation is required should follow similar procedures where copies of the draft bills are sent to one another prior to the bill/s been moved. However, failure to do so shall not warrant any legal action by either party.

The Premier's Conference (PC) though articulated in the *Plan of Operations 1974-1977* as a platform for negotiations by national and provincial governments, was implemented in an ad hoc basis until 2007 (Ministry of Provincial Government and Institutional Strengthening, 2010a, p. 1). The PC is attended by the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance, the Minister for the Ministry of Provincial Government and Institutional Strengthening (MPGIS), the Premiers of all the provinces including the Lord Mayor of the Honiara Municipal Authority (HMA) and all the Provincial Secretaries of the nine provinces and the HMA. The PC has power to choose its own chairperson, make arrangements to meet more frequently than once yearly if required, and to invite national politicians, public servants or other parties to attend its meetings, provide information or present papers and respond to questions. The objectives of the PC are to: create a forum for inter-governmental policy dialogue; create greater understanding amongst the Premiers of various provinces of issues of common interest; open dialogue with national line ministries; raise issues through communiqués; and report on progress in the last 12 months to the MPGIS (MPGIS, 2010a, p. 2)

The MPGIS is the mandated ministry to make the necessary arrangements for the PC and is responsible for allocating a senior civil servant to oversee that the relevant tasks are carried out (MPGIS, 2010a, p. 6). The PC normally passes resolutions during its meetings. The national government is expected to report directly, promptly and in detail to the Premiers and the PC on what actions have been taken or not considered on the resolutions of the conference. According

to the Ministry of Home Affairs (1979, p. 135), in instances where resolutions are not followed through or actioned, adequate explanations need to be provided by the national government.

On the other hand, the negotiations of differences and disputes between the different levels of government should be carried out either face-to-face or by formal correspondence. In circumstances where such differences cannot be resolved through negotiations, the governments concerned need to agree on engaging a person or persons to mediate between the two parties but without any power to enforce decisions (MHA, 1979, p. 136). This person or these persons could be traditional leaders, church leaders or a Premier whose province is not involved or a party to the dispute or disagreement. In other words, the mediator has to be a neutral person to prevent any potential for biases in the negotiation process.

The Ministry of Home Affairs (1979, p. 137) cited that if there are differences between national and provincial governments that could not be resolved through negotiations or mediation, then the next step would be for the governments concerned to agree on an arbitrator or arbitrators whom they both respect and whose decision they will accept. It further stated that if the governments concerned failed to compromise on an arbitrator, the Governor General has power to appoint an independent person who is widely respected in the community to act as arbitrator. However, prior to engaging in resolving the matter, the arbitrator need to satisfy himself or herself that no parties including himself has the ability to resolve the differences by mediation. The arbitrator in attending to the negotiations has the power to source professional assistance from lawyers¹³, accountants¹⁴ or any other professional or technical support. The arbitrator's decision is final unless the matter is taken to court.

If all avenues and platforms for negotiations are exhausted but the matter remains unresolved, then the last resort is to take it before the court (MHA, 1979, p. 138). This process only qualifies on points of law or after following the procedures established under the constitution and the Act for negotiating differences.

¹³ *But not any lawyer who might have to sit as judge on the same matter.*

¹⁴ *Especially in cases of alleged fraud or mismanagement*

3.6 Conclusion

The preceding chapter (2) provided a conceptual framework for this research and weaved together the literature on decentralisation and central-local relations. This chapter explored the experience of decentralisation in the Solomon Islands in the course of its political history. It also attempts to describe the institutions and procedures for negotiating central-local relations within a decentralised context in the Solomon Islands.

As shown in the political history of the Solomon Islands, centralisation has been the dominant mode of political system prescribed by a heavily centralised system during the British Protectorate era. The decentralised system of government practiced today in the Solomon Islands resulted from the various colonial policies and laws imposed on the colony and initiatives by local Solomon Islanders. It can be seen based on the discussion in this chapter that the contemporary political system in the country differs from the traditional system previously practiced prior to European settlement on the islands. The traditional system was governed and organised based on distinct features such as ethnic, clans, language, villages, as opposed to the contemporary Solomon Islands which is governed by a central government system with assistance from the nine provincial governments. The advancement of the provincial government system in the country was justified on the grounds that it unites the diverse communities in the country, it encourages the participation of local communities in their development and that it upholds democratic principles. However, based on the analysis, the provincial government system has a long way to go in terms of meeting these objectives.

The demand for a greater role to be played by subnational units in the determination of their own affairs in the Solomon Islands has had a long history. The emergence of local movements such as the Ma'asina Ruru is symbolic of a yearning by colonised people of the Solomon Islands to govern themselves. The move to create a decentralised political system as part of the process of decolonisation signified an ambitious move to effect fundamental political change. The integration of provincial structures into the large policy and planning process was hampered by the fact that the formal decentralisation of power to the provinces proceeded at a more rapid pace than the authority and capability of provincial governments. The fear of a significant decline in the delivery of government services by public officials at national level as responsibility for these services were transferred to provincial government draws attentions to the shortcomings in the establishment and functioning of the provincial system in the Solomon Islands.

Local demands for decentralisation were further consolidated after the ethnic conflict of 1999-2003 and were featured in reports such as the TPA and the Buala Communique. However, the constant changes in government among other factors (such as funding, active participation of locals in the consultation process) highlights some of the challenges encountered in the establishment of a new government system in the country that best suits the demands of the people.

As shown in the analysis, decentralisation necessitates the establishment of institutions and procedures for negotiating relations with different government levels and these are clearly articulated in the *Plan of Operations 1974-77* and the *Kausimae Committee Report 1979* in the Solomon Islands context. The intention behind the establishment of these institutions is not only to encourage cooperation but also to avoid disputes. The establishment of such institutions as revealed by the literature in Chapter 2 are important in shaping the behaviours of those that operates within an intergovernmental system. The assumption holds that the national and provincial governments would have a mutual interest to cooperate and promote decentralisation, and that when disputes did arise, the best method to deal with them would be through a political settlement.

The next chapter (Chapter 4) explores in detail the methodology adopted in this study.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This study seeks to unpack the functioning of the decentralised system, by looking at the relationship between national and provincial governments in the Solomon Islands. It focuses on the institutions and procedures behind central-local relations and the extent to which the national and provincial governments have utilised these institutions in Malaita Province, Solomon Islands. Furthermore, it will examine national and provincial governments' assessment of these institutions and procedures. This study will employ a case study approach by documenting key participants' experiences and views on the institutions and procedures for negotiating central-local relations.

This chapter will discuss the qualitative methodology employed in the study, by firstly discussing the theoretical framework followed by the positionality of the researcher. Further to this, it will discuss the entire processes involved in the preparation and carrying out of the fieldwork, including the analysis of data collected.

4.2 Qualitative Case Study

Increasingly, case studies have been used as a research tool by social scientists. Baxter and Jack (2008, p. 545) define a qualitative case study as a way of exploring a phenomenon within its natural settings, utilising various data sources. The authors claim that the use of a variety of data sources is important, as it allows for the issue at hand to be examined from different perspectives, revealing the multiple facets of the phenomenon. It is interpretive as it tries to make sense of phenomena in terms of the meanings participants bring to them. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 3), qualitative research enables participants to tell their stories and through these stories participants are able to describe their views of reality, allowing the researcher to also gain an understanding of their actions.

This study has adopted a qualitative case study approach to examine central-local relations between the national and provincial governments because it is the most appropriate means for discovering the topic of investigation. In contrast to other methodologies, which focus on quantification, a qualitative case study calls for an in-depth inquiry. A unique characteristic of a case study lies in its attempt to examine a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context,

particularly, in instances where the boundaries separating the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (Yin, 1981, p. 59). Other research strategies, such as 'experiments' and 'histories', differ in that they either deliberately divorce a phenomenon from its context or, respectively, are limited to phenomenon of the past.

In general, Yin (2003 p. 1) asserts that a case study approach is considered when the purpose of the study is to respond to "how" and "why" questions; and when the relevant behaviours of participants cannot be manipulated. Thus, it is appropriate for use in understanding a contemporary phenomenon like the negotiations of central-local relations within its natural setting. This study will use a single case, which according to Darke, Shanks and Broadbent (1998, p. 277), allows the researcher to investigate phenomenon in-depth to provide rich description and understanding of it. It relies, amongst other techniques, on direct observations of the events being studied and interviews with the persons involved in the events. According to Eisenhardt (1989, p. 534), case studies typically combine data collection methods such as fieldwork, verbal reports, interviews, document and text analysis. In a case study, triangulation is made possible by the various data collection methods used.

Thus case studies delve in depth into complexities and processes. The social and physical setting and internalised notions of norms, traditions, roles and values are important aspects of the environment. Case studies are conducted in settings where all these complexities operate. Focusing on individuals' lived experiences, Marshall and Rossman (1999 p. 57) claim that one cannot understand human action without understanding the meaning that participants attribute to those actions – their thoughts, feelings, beliefs, values, and assumptive worlds. Hence, the investigator needs to understand the deeper perspective captured through face to face interactions.

Some of the commonly cited criticism and debates on the merits of a qualitative case study methodology focuses on; the limited "scope for making valid comparison" (Copper & Schindler, 1998, p. 13); the limitations inherent in the drawing up of conclusions based on a single study; and the limited ability of the researcher to generalise concepts and theories in relation to other comparable settings within the institution (Yin, 1994, p. 10). However, Yin (2003 p. 10), argues that like experiments, scientific facts are rarely based on single experiments; rather they are based on several experiments that have repeated the same phenomenon under different conditions. Thus, the same approach could be applied in a case study where multiple case studies can be used, but this requires a different concept of the appropriate research designs. In

other words, a researcher's goal in undertaking a case study is to elaborate and generalise theories, instead of enumerate frequencies (Yin, 2003).

Another major concern regarding the use of case studies is that of boundaries in terms of what should or should not be included in the study. This study has demarcated the research boundaries as follows: a) Honiara and Malaita Province, Solomon Islands; b) only government officials and not community or Non-Government Organisation members, c) central-local relations, limited to the relationship with the national government based in Honiara and the provincial government in Malaita. By clearly defining the boundaries for the research, it is envisaged that the case study will provide an excellent opportunity to gain insights into the area of study and will allow the researcher to gather data from a variety of sources and to collate the data to illuminate the significance of the research (Voss, Tsikriktsis, & Frohlich, 2002, p. 202).

4.3 Fieldwork Consideration

The negotiations of central-local relations as a key concept for this study are perceived as the relations interpreted by government officials of the national and provincial governments under investigation within a decentralised context. This emphasises Taylor and Bogdan's (1998 p. 14) point regarding the importance of a researcher seeing things from the point of view of the participants. In good fieldwork, a researcher needs to be tolerant and respectful of participants' opinions and views, although, sometimes these might be in conflict with the researcher's own views. Likewise, Taylor and Bogdan assert that the behaviour, views and actions of the researcher might be equally perplexing to the participants involved. Thus, it is crucial, especially, in the Solomon Islands context, to acquire qualities such as; patience, courtesy, respect for the elders and those in the hierarchy, to be able to gain support in the field. However, the researcher needs to exercise caution so as not to lose sight of the purpose of the research. As cited by Scheyvens and Nowak (2003, p. 103), researchers need to be determined to see through their research objectives.

Another important consideration is that of trust and establishing relationship with participants involved in the fieldwork. Maiava (2003, p. 100) captures this well when she asserts that for participants to feel at ease and secure with the research process, it is important that trust is built between the researcher and the participants. Establishing relationships of trust is fundamental for

fieldwork in the Solomon Islands, as it provides participants with a secure space for them to openly express their views without fear of any negative consequences.

4.4 Positionality and Reflexivity

For some time now, researchers have been called upon to recognise their own 'positionalities', to explore the politics of their positions, as well as, examine this reflexively. In particular, it is crucial when conducting research that the researcher delineates his or her own position in relation to the study, as this has the potential to influence certain aspects of the study, particularly, when it comes to data collection or the manner in which information is interpreted. Reflexivity according to Kobayashi, 2003 as cited in (Hopkins, 2007, p. 387), has little meaning unless it has linkages to the broader purpose and agenda on how the world should be and how it needs to change. As such, it is important for researchers to consider; what they are, and how and why they are doing it, as well as, thinking about who they are. This brings to light the need for researchers to be considerate of both the similarities and differences that exist between themselves and the research participants. As Hopkins (2007, p. 388) clarifies; "cultural, social and economic differences can be productively utilised in research". Recognising this productivity is but one way of working with, rather than attempting to overcome difference. Hence, in considering differences, it is equally important to think 'past differences' and recognise positions of 'betweenness' in undertaking research.

In highlighting the importance of positionality and behaving reflexively, it is to be noted that this concept has come under criticism for using characteristics such as gender, religion, class or race, characteristics which have little or no say as regards the actual perspective of any particular individual. However, others, such as Robertson (2002, pp. 788-790), argue about the usefulness of positionality. Robertson claims that positionality is useful when one's position is reflected upon and articulated with respect to its influence in terms of the fieldwork undertaken.

Hence this research, involving elites in the national and provincial governments, highlights the importance of considering differences, as well as, similarities. The perceived differences between the research participants and myself are that, I am not a public servant and have never worked in any government ministries in the Solomon Islands. My previous work experiences were predominantly with donor agencies such as Australian Aid for International Development (AusAID), the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) and the United National

Development Programme (UNDP). In this sense, I am different from the research participants. On the other hand, I was born in a village (rural area), speak fluent pidgin and lived in Honiara for most of my work life. Thus, I possess a number of personal characteristics similar to those of the participants. All these factors have the potential to affect the way in which I collect the data, engage with the participants, interpret, and present the data.

In saying this, my experience as a development worker with various donor agencies, such as AusAID, RAMSI, and UNDP in the Solomon Islands has tremendously influenced my interest in decentralisation, more specifically the relations between the national and provincial governments. The PGA of 1997 introduced a second tier to the government system in the Solomon Islands, bringing into play central-local relations. With this background, I have a vested interest in relating the context of the negotiations involving central-local relations in Solomon Islands, with the concept of decentralisation as grounded in the development literature.

4.5 The Methods

As discussed earlier, this research will employ a case study methodology to examine the key research questions. I will utilise two key data collection techniques namely, interviews through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with individuals and document analysis.

4.5.1 In-depth Semi-Structured Interviews

In-depth semi-structured interviews aim to elicit participants' views of their lives, as reflected in their stories, and, also, to gain access to their experiences, feelings and social world. Semi-structured interviews are used to facilitate more focused exploration of a specific topic, using an interview guide. This format of interview is neither highly structured (closed ended questions) nor is it unstructured in such a way that it would give the interviewee license to say whatever comes to mind. Kumar (1996, p. 109) claims that this approach to data collection is applicable in circumstances that require rich information or when little is known about the area/topic of investigation. This technique presents the interviewee with a particular topic and questions which are thoroughly designed to elicit ideas and opinions, rather than preconceived notions. The interviewer, in such instances, plays a critical role in probing, asking follow up questions in order to acquire a depth of information about the key research questions. Two important considerations

when undertaking a semi-structured interview are, first, to avoid leading the interviewee or imposing meanings; and, second, to create a relaxed environment and non-threatening, comfortable conversation. Flexibility is one of the assets of semi-structured interviews, allowing for changes should there be any issues or concerns, pertaining to the research topic or questionnaires, while in the field.

Qualitative in-depth interviews are more similar to conversations. Kahn and Cannell (1957 p. 149) describe interviews as “a conversation with a purpose”. In semi-structured interviews the researcher explores several general topics in an attempt to uncover the participant’s view, but otherwise respects the way in which the participant frames and structures their responses. The assumption is that the participants’ experience with the particular phenomenon of interest should unfold as the participant views it, instead of how the researcher sees it (Marshall & Rossman, 1999 p. 108). Semi-structured interviews are useful in obtaining large amount of data within time constraints. It allows for the collection of a wide variety of information across a large range of subjects even if this involves fewer participants – the familiar trade-off between breadth and depth.

In a semi-structured interview, the researcher develops a framework, referred to as an interview guide, under which the interview will be conducted. Based on this, the researcher generates questions spontaneously during the course of an interview. Semi-structured interviews can either be conducted on; one-to-one situations or collectively with a group of respondents. For this study, the guide used is based on two overarching themes; institutions and procedures for central-local relations and the utilisation/assessment of these institutions by national and provincial governments.

One-to-one interviews were conducted with national and provincial government officials in their various work places or at a conducive location preferred by the respondent. A few interviews had to be conducted over lunch and there was an instance where the researcher had to carry out an interview at the respondent’s residence due to his tight schedule. In instances where a local government official has an international counterpart, interviews were conducted with both parties present. Interviews were voice recorded, where prior consent was granted; otherwise the majority of the interviews were manually transcribed by the researcher. The selection of participants, based on purposive sampling took into account gender considerations.

I noted that interviews conducted in the presence of both a national official and his/her international counterpart, the responses were mainly dominated by the international counterpart. Local counterparts tended to withhold their views, allowing their international counterparts to lead the discussion. In addressing this problem, the researcher either approached the local counterpart after the interview or invited him/her out for lunch in a neutral setting and informally sought his/her opinion/view. Normally, in a one-to-one interview, views expressed by a respondent go unchallenged. When two parties are present, they often listen to each other's responses and may challenge each other's view. While this study benefited from having two respondents probing each other's views, this was, also, identified as a setback, as local counterparts, who had been in the system for a very long time, were not very forthcoming with their views/opinions.

In order to capture the researcher's reflections or impressions while engaged in the fieldwork, a journal was kept and updated on a daily basis. This journal proved to be very useful during the write up of this study as it was able to fill some of the gaps identified in the notes during the write up process. It was, also, helpful in assisting the researcher to cope with the mixed emotions and the general feeling of being overwhelmed by all the stress associated with the various challenges encountered in the field and the difficult task of writing up.

4.5.2 Document Analysis

Researchers commonly supplement participants' observations and interviews with the gathering and analysis of documents produced as a result of day to day activities/events (Marshall & Rossman, 1999 p. 116). This research utilised document analysis because of its relevance to the topic under investigation, particularly, information on current government policies pertaining to decentralisation and central-local relations. Document analysis also allowed the researcher to capture the views of ordinary people through various medium such as; newspapers, minutes of meetings, as well as, various correspondences.

Official documents were gathered from different sources at national and provincial level. At the national level, the three key sources were: i) the Policy Interpretation and Evaluation Unit; ii) the Ministry of Finance and Treasury; and iii) the MPGIS. Official documents gathered related to policy direction on decentralisation and the negotiations of central-local relations; experiences

with decentralised functions; the most important institutions and procedures for negotiating central-local relations; utilisation of the identified institutions and procedures; and government officials' assessment of these institutions and procedures. Likewise, at the provincial government level in Malaita Province, where the case study was undertaken, similar documents were gathered from: i) the Provincial Secretary; ii) the Ministry of Finance (Malaita Provincial Government); and iii) the Provincial Premier. Unofficial information/documents deemed relevant to the research questions were, also, sourced from the above mentioned stakeholders at both national and provincial level.

Due to the limited literature that exists locally on the research topic, a review of documents which are rich in portraying the values and beliefs of participants in their setting was considered as highly relevant. For instance, this study reviewed minutes of meetings, newspaper articles, policy statements, strategic and corporate plans and relevant reports/documents both at national and provincial level. These were useful in developing an understanding of the setting or the group studied. Additionally, research documents from the Parliament Library, the National Library, and the University of the South Pacific (Honiara Campus) Library and samples of free writing from the Solomon Star Newspaper on the topic were quite informative.

4.5.3 Data Quality

This study, which employed a case study methodology, calls for multiple data sources, thus allowing for triangulation which leads to improve validity and reliability of findings. Triangulation compares the results from either two or more different methods of data collection. The researcher looks for patterns of convergence to develop or corroborate an overall interpretation. Triangulation is critical as it validates the findings in terms of accuracy and truthfulness (Descombe, 2007). Each data source provides a point of reference for other sources and the multiple sources of evidence used in this study achieve this triangulation. For instance, this case study used semi-structured interviews and document analysis, thus, triangulation was accomplished through verification of the information obtained at each source used, so that the quality of analysis could be assured. Firstly, individual semi-structured interviews with government officials were used to solicit in-depth perceptions. This was then followed by document analysis (both official and unofficial documents) relating to the topic of investigation to support the context of the study.

According to Fossey, Harvey, McDermott and Davidson (2002, p. 720) sound research requires a systematic and rigorous approach to the design and implementation of the study, the gathering and analysis of data, and the interpretation and reporting of findings. The quality of data in an interpretive approach calls for the research to hold participants' subjectively interpreted experiences within a social context. It gives priority to participants' perspectives and illuminates the subjective meanings, actions and context of the study population. Thus, central to the quality of data is whether the participants' perspectives have been accurately represented in the research process and the interpretations made from information collected, and whether the findings are coherent in the sense that they fit the data and social context from which they were derived. Furthermore, since a qualitative research claims to represent the participants' own perspectives, or subjective experiences of their own worlds, it is important to consider the extent to which the qualitative research report accurately reflects the perspectives of those it claims to represent. Thus the use of quotations with the writer's descriptions and interpretations will assist the reader to evaluate the authenticity of the researcher's claims about the data. Central to issues of data quality is whether the subjective meaning, actions and social context of those being researched is illuminated and represented honestly (Fossey et al., 2002, p. 731). It is, therefore, the intention of this study to present the data through the extensive use of quotes so the reader can easily understand the reality it portrays.

4.6 Reflection on the Fieldwork Process

4.6.1 Entering the field

Originally, I intended to undertake two case studies involving two provinces but after much deliberation and considering the time constraints (the fieldwork was to be completed in six (6) weeks), only one case study was possible. The principal sources of people for Solomon Islands for this study were elites within the various ministries both at national and provincial level. Initial contacts, made through formal correspondences, with key informants three weeks prior to the fieldtrip, failed to illicit any responses. Furthermore, very limited information was available on line regarding the research topic; hence it was quite challenging to gain any insight on national and provincial governments' views on the specific research questions prior to the fieldwork. Although this was the case, I was able to access a previous research paper (thesis), which focused on decentralisation, development and popular participation in the Solomon Islands. This proved to be

helpful in preparing me for the fieldwork, especially, in terms of locating key resources and getting an insight into the kind of challenges encountered in the field.

The Malaita Provincial Government was selected as the site for my case study for the following reasons: it has the highest population in the Solomon Islands; the conflict of 1999-2003 erupted between Malaitan settlers and the indigenous people of Guadalcanal; the majority of displaced people during the ethnic crisis came from Malaita Province; it has the highest migration rate to urban areas, and is one of the fastest growing provinces in the Solomon Islands. Additionally, this province is easily accessible by sea and air, especially, given the time constraints in undertaking the fieldwork. Moreover, there has never been any study conducted in the province on decentralisation nor on the negotiation of central-local relations and this contributed immensely to my interest in exploring this area.

My initially action when I arrived in the field was to follow up on the letters and began a dialogue with key informants. This was vital as I needed to get proper permission from gatekeepers to access key informants for my research. I was able to get one formal response, while the remaining ministries either cited my letter but could not locate it or never received it. I, therefore, had to start the entire process again of negotiating my way through the frustrating and bureaucratic process of gaining permission from the heads of various government ministries at national level. This was a very time consuming process, which took at least two weeks before I commenced my interviews. While awaiting responses from the ministries, I visited the various libraries and newspaper companies as they were my key targets for gaining access to local literature not available on line and public opinion on key research questions.

My first meetings consisted of courtesy calls to each of the permanent secretaries as the gatekeepers of information. Being able to lobby support from these people, at the outset eased access to information and individual respondents. The first meeting I had with one of the ministries was quite straight forward, in that I was able to immediately meet with the head of the unit without any prior appointment. This gave me the opportunity to provide him with an overview of my research, as well as, seek his permission to access key documents and informants. I visited the next ministry (Ministry of Finance and Treasury) the same day and was advised that my research had no linkages to their mandate; therefore I should instead consult the MPGIS. Since this particular ministry was critical to my research, I was able after much explanation to

convince a key official why it was important to engage the ministry in my study. I was granted permission to access key informants as well as documents from the ministry.

The Parliament Library was a primary target for key documents on decentralisation and the negotiations of central-local relations. Alternatively, I used the National Library but during the fieldwork period, it was undergoing major renovations which made the search for documents extremely challenging. Furthermore, I was not allowed to borrow any books from the library as I was not a member. My first attempt to access the Parliament Library was turned down as I was mistaken for a foreigner. I had to undergo a whole process of formally seeking the permission of the Clerk of Parliament to access the library. Fortunately, after complying with all the requirements, I was granted permission to use the library three weeks later. Again, I was not allowed to borrow any of the library books and photocopying or scanning articles was much more complicated than I initially thought. I was advised that I needed to obtain prior permission before I could photocopy or scan documents which unfortunately was not feasible due to time constraints¹⁵. Most of my time was spent manually sourcing information and quotes from library documents.



The Malaita Provincial Government Headquarter

¹⁵ It takes a while for the government to consider and formally respond to such request (could be several days or a few weeks).



The Parliament Library

Figure 4: Data Collection Sites

After receiving the relevant formal permission at national level, I started the interviews and the data collection process with the various ministries. There were several occasions when interviews had to be rescheduled three to four times due to the tight schedules of key informants. This was not unexpected, especially, when dealing with elites but required a lot of patience. I also realised that as a student, people received me differently in contrast to my previous role as a donor representative. Now that I have nothing to offer, it was not a priority to see me, although, most expressed a willingness to do so if time permitted. Luckily, the network I had previously established through my eleven years of experience became an asset in breaking through these hurdles.

My trip to the province was delayed for a week due to the closure of the airstrip in Malaita Province because of non-payment of royalties to local landowners. Upon arrival in Malaita, I met with the Provincial Secretary who was extremely supportive of my research. While initially I intended to meet with a few ministers, as they are responsible for policy formulation at the provincial level, this was not possible as most of them reside in their respective constituencies. I was able, however, to obtain rich information from the Provincial Secretary and the Provincial Premier. I was, also, able to interview a Provincial Advisor, as I felt this was important in terms of obtaining a neutral view of what was happening in the province, as far as, decentralisation and

the negotiations of central-local relations was concerned. I was able to get valuable insights from the interviews, as well as, gather key provincial documents.

4.6.2 Overall Reflection

For me, the fieldwork experience had changed my perspective on the subject matter of this research. I was able to reflect on the complex emotional, mental and physical effects that fieldwork can have on a researcher, especially, students. The insider/outsider dichotomy became a reality during the actual fieldwork. Obviously, I was considered an insider in terms of; ethnicity, nationality, values and language, however, I was also seen as an outsider as I had no prior experience as a public servant and I was also an overseas research student. Surprisingly, all key respondents, both at national and provincial level, accepted my invitations for interviews and responded to all my questions and requests for key documents. I noted that most respondents began our discussions by asking questions that I felt sought to establish a common ground between us, for example, which province are you from, what was your previous work experience. Being an outsider, I felt it had its advantages in that some people tend to open up knowing that you are less likely to judge them. They, also, speak confidently about their views and opinions knowing that I have very limited knowledge and understanding in the field. Nonetheless, being an outsider can also be a disadvantage if it creates an environment of mistrust or suspicion between yourself and the interviewee. Keeping a positive attitude and being flexible was key when it came to moving forward, dealing with the challenges and completing the fieldwork.

4.7 Interviews

A key method used in this study was the one-on-one interviews with individual government officials as I personally felt that issues relating to the negotiations of relations between the national and provincial governments are not only complex but also sensitive in nature. Overall, a total of 16 people were interviewed comprising ten (10) respondents from the national government and six (6) from the provincial government (see table 1 for breakdown of participants). There were no female interviewed at the provincial level as most senior positions are filled by men.

Table 1: Research Participants

No. of Participants	Gender	Status
10	6 males and 4 females	National officials
6	All males	Provincial officials
Total 16 participants	12 males, 4 females	

Source: Author

National and provincial officials' experiences with and understanding of, decentralisation and the negotiations of central-local relations are the key components of this study. This study used purposive sampling thus has no set number of samples, rather the researcher decided to stop adding further data samples when she felt that the same information/themes kept recurring or has reached a point of saturation. Government officials recruited for this study were mainly elites in government ministries, both at national and provincial government level. This included Permanent Secretaries, Under-Secretaries, Heads of Divisions, Premiers and Advisors within government ministries. The assumption was that their portfolios meant they played some role in decentralisation and the negotiations of relations between national and provincial governments. Recruiting Permanent Secretaries and Under-Secretaries did not require any sampling technique, with the exception of Divisional Heads where the snowballing technique was utilised.

My initial prompting questions changed a bit during the fieldwork as I needed to solicit more comprehensive responses from the respondents. I realised that as I progressed with the interviews, I was able to pick up on some of the reactions and feelings of respondents when they were asked to respond to certain questions. For example, I noted that questions associated with personal views on the relationship between national and provincial government were often answered with a 'good' or 'not very good' responses. When ask to elaborate, sometimes officials, especially, seconded staff felt uncomfortable to freely express their views. I, therefore, decided to change the prompting question to 'what are some of the areas you think the national and provincial governments need to work on to improve their relationship'. This change began to elicit meaningful and thoughtful responses. Upon reflection, I realised that my interview skills grew as I proceeded; this helped me to better understand and relate to my respondents. More importantly, I was able to gain confidence and be at ease, especially, when interviewing elites. I must admit that at times it can be very challenging dealing with elites, but at the same time a very rewarding experience. I have learned a great deal from the experience.

4.8 Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is often referred to as making sense of relevant data gathered from various sources such as; interviews, observations and documents and then responsibly presenting what the data revealed (Candle, 2004, p. 417). It involves the interplay between raw data, the procedures used to interpret and organise the data, and merge the findings. Gibson & Brown (2009, p. 1) cited that the success of any research is contingent upon data analysis. This process is often referred to as the most challenging aspect of undertaking any research. In analysing data for this study, my intention is to pay attention to the particular aspects and settings that have been explored. Since a qualitative method emphasises categorisation (Rossman & Marshall, 2006, p. 154), this study will identify general statements of relationships and their underlying themes.

Data was analysed as it was collected in the field. All interviews were either audio taped or manually transcribed (notes), which enabled me to take account of any observations and inferences in the field. A maximum of two interviews were conducted daily to allow sufficient time for transcribing and reflection at the end of each day. This strategy worked really well in preventing information overload, as well as, in enabling me to cope with the challenges encountered during the fieldwork. I tried to complete each transcription on the day of the interview so I could capture the key points in case there was need to clarify any issues. The remaining data analysis was carried out upon my return, and this has involved on-going transcribing, translating, conceptualising data, highlighting key notes/statements and identifying repetitions or irrelevant statements/notes.

Data transcription for me was the most stressful and time consuming process. However, I became very familiar with the data by the time I had finished with it. The audio taped interviews had to be transcribed into pidgin first before being translated into English. During the transcribing process, I often revisited the questions to see if I had missed any important clues that the respondents may have provided. I ensured not to change any words from the tape, although they may be grammatically incorrect as this may inadvertently change the sense of what was said. This means listening to the tape over and over again. During this process, I attempted to include some non-verbal cues, for example, silence may communicate embarrassment or emotional distress or simply a pause for thought. Words such as 'well ...I suppose...' are an important element of a conversation and I normally take note of them when transcribing. To ascertain that I

have translated the transcripts correctly from pidgin into English without losing the original quality of the data, I engaged the expertise of a local person whose spouse is studying at Massey to assist me in this process.

After the data was transcribed and translated, it was necessary to organise it into easily retrievable sections so that it could be analysed. Qualitative data appears in a mass of words, sentences and texts from field notes and interviews. This data needed to be organised, coded, reduced and finally interpreted to make sense of it all (Zohrabi, 2011, p. 703). This study was able to achieve this by identifying some of the common themes during the fieldwork. By doing this, the bulk of the data was reduced into manageable dimensions. After reducing the data, the coding process then began. Coding was an important part of this process as it was useful in identifying the respondents while at the same time protecting their identity. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000, p. 283), coding is much more than just the allocation of numbers to participants; it entails a classification system that imposes a certain order on the data and shapes what we find, translating the data from the respondents into specific categories which are useful for analysis. After coding, the data was displayed in tables which made it easier for the analysis and interpretation of data. Also, the displayed data enabled me to compare and contrast similarities and differences within the patterns and themes.

4.9 Ethical Considerations

Every researcher needs to take heed of the ethical issues involved in any stage of the research process. According to Creswell (2003, p. 87), the main issue in any research is to protect the rights and interests of participants at all times. To ensure that this study complied with the appropriate ethical guidelines of the university (R. Scheyvens, Nowak, & Scheyvens, 2003), this study followed the Massey University's Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants requirements. Thus, prior to the fieldwork, an in-house ethics application was lodged with the Institute for Development Studies. This was followed by an internal discussion with supervisors and a neutral party from the department in which a few ethical issues were further clarified and highlighted for consideration. Following that, a low-risk application was submitted to the Massey University Human Ethics Committee for their consideration for which a low risk notification was granted for the researcher to undertake the fieldwork in the Solomon Islands with government officials.

I took great care during the entire research process to ensure that participants were fully made aware of their rights and that each participant's written informed consent was sought before any interview was conducted. At the outset, participants were made fully aware of the purpose and objectives underlying the research, the type of information required from them, and why the information was being sought. The researcher then presented and briefed the participants on the consent form and gets their consent before carrying out the actual interview. After the interview, participants were asked again whether they are still willing for the researcher to use information obtained for the research. All respondents, except for four, completed the consent form and those who refused to sign the consent form (because they consider it as insignificant) gave their oral consent. All participants were told that their consent was totally voluntary, their identities and responses would be kept confidential, and that should they feel threatened or uncomfortable, it is their right to withdraw from the interview at any time without any consequences. Most respondents were uncomfortable with the use of the voice recorder; hence the majority of the interviews were manually transcribed by the researcher.

Being a local person and a female, I was very conscious of cultural and gender issues when undertaking the fieldwork and had to act accordingly when dealing with various informants involved in the research. For example, appropriate and culturally accepted dressing tells a lot about the researcher and how she is perceived by the participants. Additionally, knowing when to talk in the Solomon Islands culture is extremely important. A long silence or pause does not necessarily mean that the participant is finished or has nothing to contribute and interrupting a conversation is considered very disrespectful. At all cost, the researcher had to gain the respect of all participants and as to not do so would be detrimental to the success of the entire fieldwork and data collection process.

Another ethical issue that emerged in the fieldwork was related to the potential harm the researcher could cause to the participants. With this research the risk of harm was considered minimal. However, the necessary measures were always taken to prevent participants from any risks. Furthermore, as suggested by Scheyvens et al., (2003, p. 155) any research findings have the potential to benefit or inform other people and organisations and could lead to future changes. While the findings of this research has the potential to influence policy and decision making concerning the issue being researched, it was clearly explained to participants that the study has

no linkages to the current Government and that it may not immediately strengthen the relationship between national and provincial governments.

Due to my previous role in working for various donor organisations within the country, I began each interview by clarifying that I was no longer an employee or representative of UNDP and that I was strictly undertaking this research in my capacity as a student of Massey University. This was critical in avoiding any misconception that this research would result in some sort of donor assistance or would directly contribute to the Provincial Governance Strengthening Programme¹⁶. Furthermore, by disclosing my position, I hopefully minimised any preconceived perception by participants regarding my position in this study. I, therefore, explained to all participants that this research was mainly to fulfil the requirements of a master's thesis in Development Studies at Massey University.

In terms of the credibility of the research process, a qualitative research calls into play the need for the researcher to critically reflect on positionality as mentioned earlier in this chapter, as this may influence certain aspects of the study. While the researcher had declared any potential for conflict of interest or biases, it was impossible to be totally neutral and detach oneself from the findings and knowledge emanating from the study. This realisation supports the findings that there is no independent position from which a person can fully and freely observe the world. This self-reflection helps in identifying with the participants instead of being removed from them.

4.10 Summary

This chapter outlines and discusses the approaches and methods undertaken to conduct this study. A case study methodology was adopted as a way of gaining an in-depth understanding of central-local relations as a contemporary phenomenon. Instead of covering all of the provinces in the Solomon Islands, this study opted for a deeper understanding of a specific sample by concentrating on one particular province and its context. Through the use of an interpretive approach, this study investigated the negotiations of central-local relations based on the perceptions of government officials within their social setting. Key to my research methodology

¹⁶ A joint programme between the Solomon Islands Government and several donors to strengthen the capacity of provinces.

was an awareness of positionality as this has the potential to impact on the outcome of my findings.

This study opted for interviews and document analysis as opposed to observations due to time constraints in carrying out the fieldwork. One-to-one interviews were conducted with government officials and these were supplemented with the analysis of secondary data which could not be sourced during the interviews. The use of these methods resulted in a mass of rich data on the key research questions under investigation. Triangulation through the different data collection methods in a qualitative research contributes to the validity and reliability of the data collected.

Data analysis in this context involves the process where data is organised, coded, reduced and finally interpreted to make sense of it all. This study was able to achieve this through the identification of common themes that arose during the fieldwork. By categorising the data into themes, the mass of data was significantly reduced allowing for coding to take place. Coding plays a key role as it links the data to the respondents, while concurrently protecting their identity. This study used tables which enabled the researcher to identify similarities and differences in the patterns and themes. This process concluded by ascertaining the reasonability of the data collected.

The next chapter (Chapter 5) will examine in detail decentralisation and the negotiations of central-local relation within Malaita Province.

CHAPTER 5: THE NEGOTIATION OF CENTRAL-LOCAL RELATIONS AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION IN MALAITA PROVINCE.

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the research findings on decentralisation and central-local relations between Malaita Province and the national government. Whereas Chapters 2 and 3 provide mainly the conceptual context by reviewing the relevant literature on decentralisation and the negotiations of central-local relations, this chapter concentrates on the operational context in Malaita Province, the site of the case study. An introductory section is devoted to describe the province's geography, demography, and economic situation. Malaita Province is one of the first six provinces established when the Provincial Government Act was enacted in 1981. It also has the highest population compared to the other provinces in the Solomon Islands.

5.2 Background of Malaita Province

Malaita Province is situated north-east of Guadalcanal Island, where the capital of the Solomon Islands is located (see figure 5, map of Malaita Province). The province consists of the two main islands of big Malaita and small Malaita, the out-lying island of Ndai and two remote Polynesian atolls of Sikaiana and Ontong Java. The two main islands are made up of mountainous interiors, and narrow coastal terraces, whereas the atolls comprises of more than 100 small raised coral islands. Along the coast, transport is by regular shipping lines and canoes, and along the northern half, a road. Transport in the interior is entirely by foot. The province is predominantly occupied by Melanesians except for the two atolls of Sikaiana and Ontong Java which are occupied by Polynesians. There are seventeen different dialects spoken in Malaita province alone. The provincial capital of Malaita Province is Auki.

With a total land area of 4,225 square kilometres, Malaita Province is the most populous and one of the most developed of the nine provinces in the Solomon Islands. According to the 2009 Solomon Islands national census, Malaita's population in 2009 stood at 137,596, representing 27 percent of the entire country's total population (see figure 6). This is an increase of 10.9 percent from the last census carried out in 1999.

Figure 5: A Map of Malaita Province



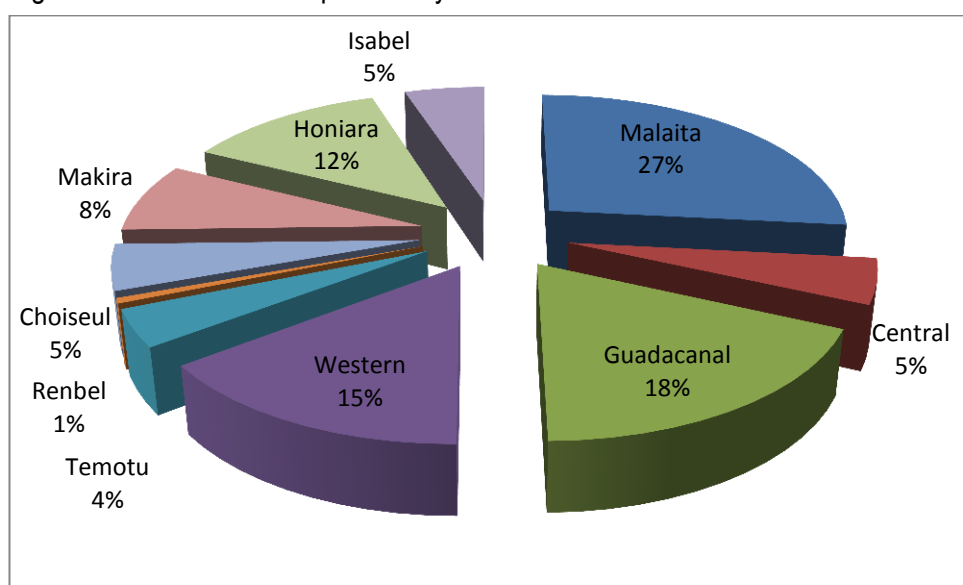
Source: <http://www.visitsolomons.com.sb/>

The average annual population growth rate for the province was 1.2 percent. Of this, only 5,105 resides in the provincial capital Auki, representing 3.7 percent of the entire province's population. The remaining 96.3 percent are mostly rural based farmers who depend on subsistence agriculture, hunting, and fishing to meet their daily needs and to earn cash income for household necessities.

Table 2 provides a summary of Malaita's population by age group. The table reveals that the province has a very young population with 43 percent of its population under the age of 15. This implies that the province has a very high dependency ratio of 49.1 percent measured as the proportion of young and old people to the total population. As such, 49.1 percent of the population is dependent on the remaining population for its economic needs. The data also shows that life

expectancy in the province is very low with only 5.9 percent of the population living beyond 60 years.

Figure 6: Breakdown of Population by Province



Source: Author based on (Solomon Islands National Statistics Office, 2009, p. 1)

Table 2: Malaita Province's Population by Age Group

Age group	Population	Percentage
0-14	59,374	43.2
15-24	25,025	18.2
25-59	45,029	32.7
60 +	8,168	5.9

Source: Author based on (Solomon Islands National Statistics Office, 2009, p. 1).

Major economic and social development in the Solomon Islands are concentrated in the capital Honiara and in other provincial centres attracting a mass movement of people seeking better lives for themselves and their children. Prior to the ethnic crisis of 1999-2003, Malaitans worked in other provinces and their labour contributed significantly to the development of many areas of the country. A significant proportion of the plantation workforce on Guadalcanal, Central, and Western provinces was provided by Malaitans, and on the whole, Malaita province has the highest internal migration rate in the entire country. The ethnic conflict of 1999-2003 between the people of Guadalcanal and Malaitan origin resulted in a massive exodus of people back to their places of origin, the majority of who are Malaitans. The displacement of Malaitans resulted in a

sudden increase in the province's population consequently causing huge repercussions on the ability of the provincial government to provide basic services to rural communities.

According to the 2009 census results, Malaita's employed population, inclusive of subsistence workers amounts to 47,892. This represents 35 percent of the province's total population. However, only 10.5 percent of this were engaged in active paid work, either earning cash income through formal employment or paid in kind. In 2009, the number of female in paid employment was 31.5% compared with 12.4% in 1999. Despite an obvious gender disparity in paid employment this is quite a substantial increase of 19.1 percent compared to the 1999 census. Those doing unpaid work, generally subsistence farmers, make up the largest proportion of the working age population.

Economic activities within the province are predominantly within the agriculture sector. The main cash earning activities include copra, cocoa, logging, small scale rice farming, bee keeping, and reforestation. There are minimal processing and manufacturing activities in the province. Locally produced products are either sold at the domestic market or exported overseas. There is potential to develop the primary sector to boost the province's economy but these are hindered by lack of proper infrastructure, inaccessibility to international markets, high cost of transportation, inadequate technical skills, access to credit, and land disputes. The majority of land in Malaita province is customary owned by tribal groups except for land in Auki and a few sub-stations around the province.

5.3 The Political and Administrative Structure of Malaita Province

The Constitution of the Solomon Islands as discussed in Chapter 3 is the supreme law of the country and it provides for a single Chamber of Parliament. According to the Ministry of Provincial Government and Rural Development (2001, p. 38), there are currently 14 constituencies and 30 wards in Malaita Province. The 14 constituencies are each represented by 14 members of Parliament at the national level. In addition, the Constitution and the PGA (1997)¹⁷ provides for the establishment of the nine provinces each having its own Provincial Assembly. Each of the 30

¹⁷ *The Act will be synonymous with the Provincial Government Act of 1997 throughout this text.*

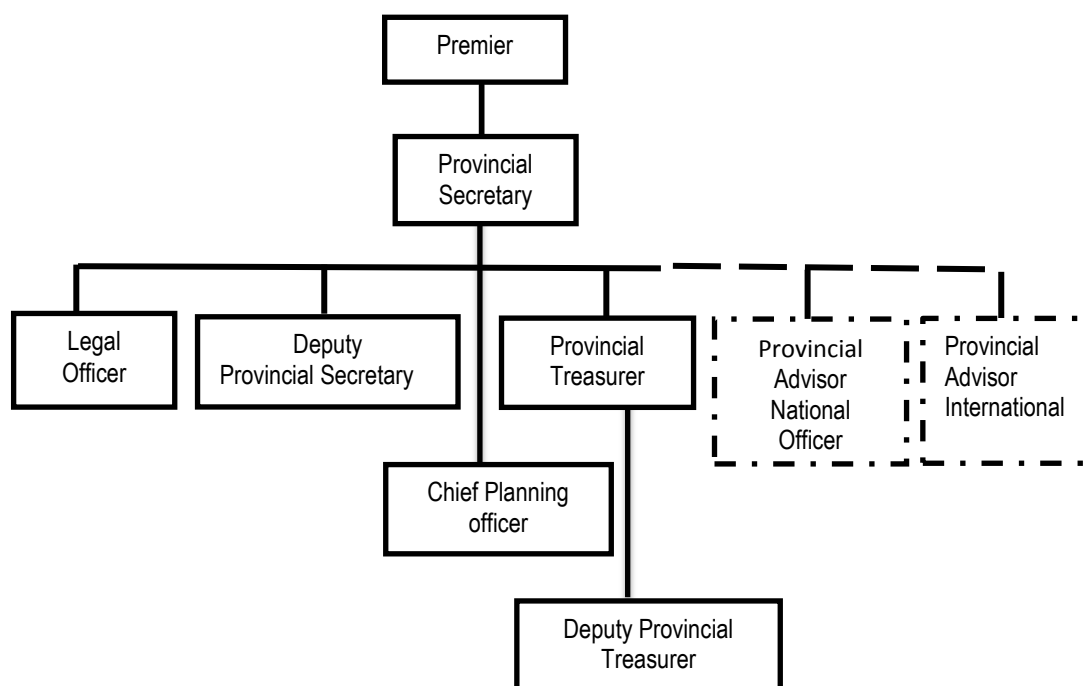
wards has an elected member sitting in the Provincial Assembly. Wards are made up of a number of villages which ranges from 10-50 villages (Nelson & Muggah, 2004, p. 12).

Each province is governed by a Provincial Assembly made up of members elected by popular vote on a ward basis every 4 years. The Provincial Government is led by a Premier, elected by a majority of the Assembly members, and an Executive chosen by the Premier and approved by the Minister for the Ministry of Provincial Government and Institutional Strengthening (MPGIS)(Pacific Islands Forum Secretariate, 2009, p. 172). The Provincial Executive is directly accountable to the assembly and has the power to issue ordinances provided that they are not in conflict with national policies or legislations.

The administrative arm of the provincial governments is headed by a Provincial Secretary who is a seconded officer from the MPGIS at the national level. According to the United National Development Programme (2008a, p. 124), the Provincial Secretary is accountable to the Premier and the Executive as well as the Permanent Secretary of the MPGIS. Provincial staff members are made up of seconded staff from the national government and employees who are directly employed by the province. Seconded staff, who predominantly fill senior positions, are appointed and paid for by the national government. Moli (2006, p. 2) cited that Malaita Province is neither consulted on the appointment of seconded staff, nor over their transfer from the province. All staff members are to be supervised by the Provincial Secretary and accountable to the Executive and the Premier. Figure 7 illustrates the Administrative Structure in Malaita Province.

The PGA of 1997 empowers the Provincial Executive to appoint and recruit provincial staff members but only up to level 4 positions, while those above this level are hired by the central government through the normal Public Service recruitment process. Randell (1999, p. 86) noted that the recruitment of senior and specialist staff by the national government implies that decisions around selection of very influential positions in the provinces are under the power of the national government. Furthermore, the reporting lines for these seconded staff are complex and inconsistent across the different sectors (Cox & Morrison, 2004, p. 14). In theory, all seconded staff are required to report to the Provincial Secretary who is the chief public servant in the province. At the same time, the Ministry of Provincial Government and Rural Development (2001, p. 37) cited that seconded staff are also expected to report to their respective line ministries and to the Provincial Minister.

Figure 7: The Administrative Structure of the Malaita Provincial Government



Source: MPGIS (2011, p. 45)

The discipline of public servants within the province falls under the Provincial Secretary; however, the actual dismissal of seconded staff rests with the Public Service Commission (PSC) at the national level. According to Randell (1999, p. 81), it is not unusual for local disciplinary actions to be undermined by the PSC. For example, in late 1990s, Central Province sacked two of its seconded officers. These officers were later reinstated by the national government citing a lack of authority by the Provincial Assembly to terminate seconded staff.

According to the Ministry of Provincial Government and Rural Development (2001, p. 38), politicians at national and provincial level are supposed to play a prominent role in the delivery of services to their people in the rural areas. The 14 Members of Parliament representing the 14 constituencies in Malaita Province are paid approximately SBD2,000,000 (equivalent to USD235,294) per annum from the national government and the Republic of China (Government of Taiwan) to support development projects within their constituencies. Likewise, Provincial Assembly members receive various grants for small projects at the ward or village level. According to Cox and Morrison (2004, p. 18), it is difficult to ascertain exactly how much of these funding benefits rural people due to inadequate financial records.

Malaita Province mainly sources its revenue from rates, rentals, licenses and other levies. The Ministry of Provincial Government and Rural Development (2001, p. 35) cited that like many other

provinces in the Solomon Islands, the province has limited capacity to generate sufficient local income due to the current structure of its economy where the majority of the population depends heavily on subsistence agriculture and fishing. These are normally supplemented by small-scale cash-based activities to cater for expenses such as school fees and household goods. As a result, the province relies heavily on national government for funds to deliver services and implement development projects in the province. As pointed out by Moli (2006, p. 7) of the total budget of USD0.85M for the financial year 2005/2006, only 10 percent was raised by the province, the remaining 90 percent was financed using grants from the national government.

According to a report by the Department of National Disaster Office (2009, p. 5), the internal administration and financial management capacity of the Malaita Provincial Government requires further strengthening. Despite improvements noted through direct assistance to the province by the Provincial Governance Strengthening Programme (PGSP)¹⁸, other areas still needs to be improved. For instance, according to the Office of the Auditor General (2010, p. 19), several request made to the province for the provision of signed financial statements on its 2009 accounts have failed to materialised. This reflects on the capacity of the province to accountably and transparently manage and report on the expenditure of grants.

Various service delivery to rural communities within Malaita Province are channelled through three key administrative sub-stations namely Malu'u in the northern part, Atori in the East, and Afio in the South. In each of these sub-stations there are various technical departments representing the five main public service sectors: agriculture, fisheries, health, education, and police. According to Moli (2006, p. 3), these administrative sub-stations have managed to survive despite the general run down of the provincial government services and facilities, but do not presently operate effectively. Besides, the provincial government, other organisations such as churches, donors and Non-Government Organisations also participate in service delivery within the province especially in the health and education sector. However, according to the United National Development Programme (2008b, p. 7), such support often bypasses the provincial government depriving the province the opportunity to participate in development projects within Malaita.

¹⁸ This PGSP will be discussed later in this chapter.

5.4 The Management Structure of the Ministry of Provincial Government and Institution Strengthening

Like all other provinces in the Solomon Islands, Malaita Province falls under the supervision of the MPGIS, the central government agency charged with overseeing the affairs of provincial governments. Besides its other tasks, the MPGIS is responsible for ensuring the proper execution of devolved functions to lower levels of governments. According to the MPGIS (2010b, p. 1), the broad functions of the ministry provided for under the Act relate to elections of provincial governments, transfer of functions to the provincial assemblies, and the exercise of administrative functions which include financial and other supplementary obligations. One of the MPGIS's primary tasks is to coordinate the complex relationships between provincial governments and other government ministries and institutions with the interest of developing the provinces.

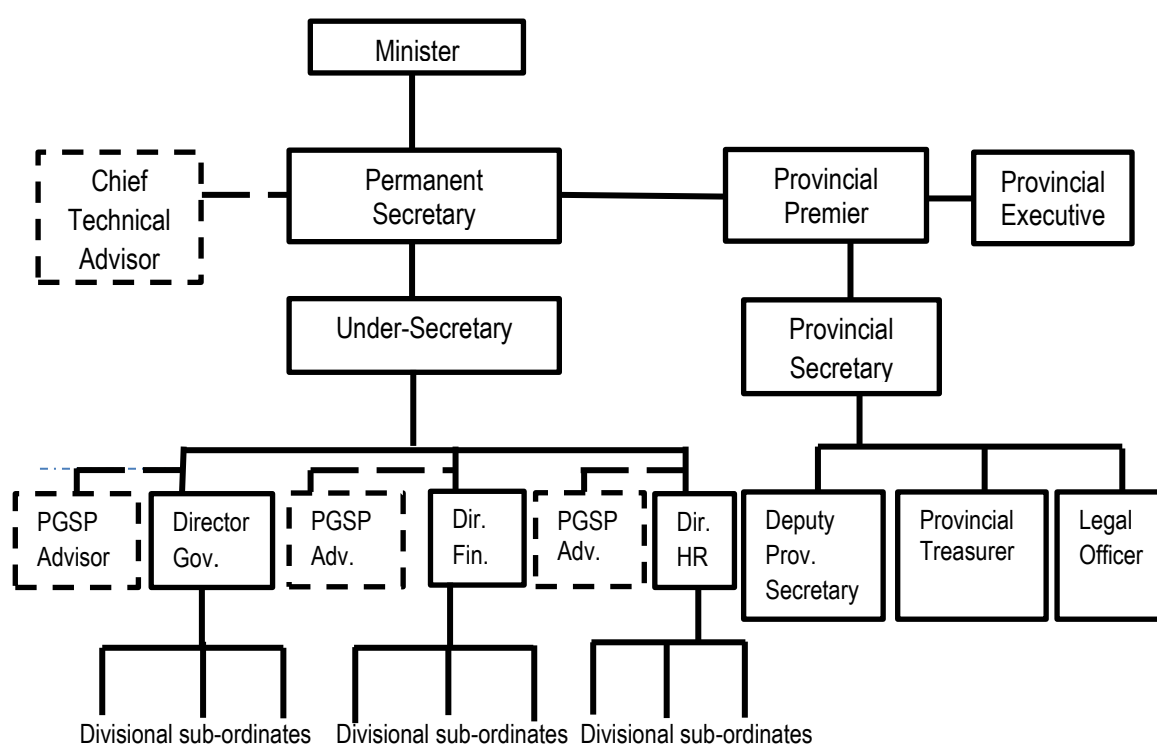
The minister of MPGIS being the political head of the ministry has overarching responsibility for the supervision of provincial governments and for making sure that their functions are exercised in a transparent and accountable manner (Ministry of Provincial Government and Institutional Strengthening, 2010b, p. 1). At a more strategic level, the Permanent Secretary is the final responsible officer tasked with providing advice to the minister and providing direction to the entire ministry. The administration and management of the ministry falls under the Permanent Secretary who has power to make decisions on the actual implementation of government policies (Ministry of Provincial Government and Institutional Strengthening, 2011, p. 17). All activities implemented by the ministry require the approval of the Permanent Secretary and in his absence, the Under-Secretary normally takes charge of ministerial responsibilities. The organisation chart below (see Figure 8) reflects the MPGIS Organisational Structure and its linkages to the Malaita Provincial Government Organisational structure.

The MPGIS Under-Secretary holds the portfolio of Operations Manager for the ministry. According to the Ministry of Provincial Government and Institutional Strengthening (2010b, p. 1), this person has direct responsibilities for dealing with the various Heads of Division and is accountable to the Permanent Secretary. The Heads of Division reports directly to the Under-Secretary. The Permanent Secretary, the Under-Secretary and the three Heads of Divisions within MPGIS make up the Senior Management Team (SMT). According to the Ministry of Provincial Government and Institutional Strengthening (2011, p. 17), the SMT makes decision at the program level, advises on policy issues and provides the link between the minister and the Divisional Heads. On the other hand, the Divisional Heads has supervisory responsibilities for

their divisional sub-ordinates who are responsible for implementing the ministry's policies. Provincial seconded officers especially the Provincial Secretaries are directly supervised by the MPGIS Permanent Secretary.

The MPGIS (see figure 11) houses the PGSP, a programme of the Solomon Islands Government (SIG) with support from several donors¹⁹ to develop the capacity of provincial governments in the Solomon Islands (United Nations Development Programme, 2008b, p. 3). Endorsed in 2008, PGSP focuses on building the capacity of the provinces to deliver services and the MPGIS to perform its supervisory role to provinces.

Figure 8: The MPGIS Organisational Structure and its linkages to the Malaita Provincial Government's Structure.



Note: — — — means PGSP international counterpart (temporary posts)

Source: MPGIS (2011, p. 18)

According to the United Nations Development Programme (2008b, p. 6), this programme was a result of a request made by the Solomon Islands Government to its development partners in 2004 to increase focus on provincial development. The government requested donors to combine

¹⁹ Donors involved in the funding of this projects included, the European Union, AusAID, United National Capacity and Development Fund and UNDP.

forces to develop and implement one comprehensive programme supporting all provinces, in line with the Paris Declaration's principles on donor harmonisation and alignment. The PGSP is a five year programme with total funding support from donors of approximately USD15 million. This amount is exclusive of SIG's contribution of USD411.764 per annum.

Project staff recruited under PGSP comprises of a Honiara-based team operating from the MPGIS office and two provincial advisors²⁰ in each of the nine provinces. The team includes a Chief Technical Advisor who works directly with the Permanent Secretary and the Under-Secretary, a Capacity Development Specialist who works with the Director of the Provincial Governance Division, a Finance Specialist who counterparts the Director of Finance, and a Human Resources Management (HRM) Specialist working with the Director of HRM. All technical positions of the PGSP are filled by international staff (MPGIS, 2011, p. 17). The PGSP is supported by an operational and logistics team which mainly consist of locally recruited staff members²¹ who work under the supervision of the MPGIS Director of HRM.

5.5 Decentralisation in Malaita Province

Decentralisation in Malaita Province hinges on the functions and law making powers of the provincial governments as stated in Schedule 3, 4 and 5 of the PGA of 1997 (refer to Appendix 2). According to Cox and Morrison (2004, p. 10), functions devolved to the province are categorised into two parts based on schedule 3 and 4 of the Act. As discussed in Chapter 3 of this study, Schedule 3 of the Act mainly consists of administrative functions such as the licensing of local businesses, protection of wild creatures, codification and amendment of customary law, management of agriculture land, fresh water and reef fisheries, local shipping and the maintenance of roads, bridges, and harbours, waste disposal and fire protection, and the provision of water supply to rural communities ("The Provincial Government Act," 1997, p. 34). Essential functions such as health and education are not considered as fully devolved functions under the PGA of 1997.

In contrast, Schedule 4 identified functions which may be devolved but contingent upon a mutual agreement between the minister of MPGIS and the Malaita Provincial Assembly (Cox & Morrison, 2004, p. 11). This schedule expands on the basic functions listed in Schedule 3 but entails limited

²⁰ *The two provincial advisors for each province comprised of an international person (a United Nations Volunteer) and a local counterpart.*

²¹ *There were approximately six local staff members during the field work.*

powers to the province when it comes to roads, harbours, cocoa and copra licensing. The subsequent schedule (schedule 5) of the Act further distinguishes between devolved services from functions. For instance, according to Cox and Morrison (2004, p. 11), within the education sector, the province assumes responsibilities for cost associated with teachers' travel to their home villages at the end of each year. This is regardless of the fact that the national government is responsible for the terms and condition of teachers.

In Malaita Province, criticism has been voiced since the implementation of the Act that the devolution of powers is normally given without the means to effect those powers (Office of the Premier, 2011, p. 3). Thus any major changes to the provincial government system in terms of enabling it to effectively carry out its devolved functions would largely depend upon the realistic level of power, the appropriate scale of financial resource provision, and the calibre or quality of personnel made available to the province. According to Randell (1999, p. 60), while the provinces are financially and administratively handicapped to perform their role, a certain degree of expectation remains by rural dwellers that they should be responsive to their development aspirations, economic endeavours and social service delivery.

In launching its Policy Framework and Development Strategies for 2011-2020, Malaita Province expressed strong views and commitment for participative democracy which involves rural communities in decision making regarding the development of their resources and the need to "empower rural communities, encourage participation, and promote a sense of ownership and access to development resources." (Office of the Premier, 2011, p. 3). The provincial government highlighted that decentralisation from the provincial centre to the grass root level as one of its top policy priority (Office of the Premier, 2011, p. 9). It envisages the transformation of the provincial administrative sub-stations into regional growth centres as catalysts for good governance, administration, planned investment, economic planning, service delivery and development planning. The new Government is also looking to embark on key reform programs geared towards strengthening its capacity as part of its strategy to lobby for more powers from the national government.

5.6 Relations with National Government

Authors such as Cox and Morrison (2004) and Randell (1999) highlighted the complexities surrounding relations between national and provincial governments in the Solomon Islands. This is particularly the case when it comes to staffing issues relating to those of Heads of Divisions (seconded staff) in each province and the Provincial Executive. According to Cox and Morrison (2004, p. 14), this is often caused by confusions in the reporting lines of seconded staff. For instance, in practice, most seconded staff regarded themselves primarily as representatives of their national line ministry in the province. As such they remain loyal to the national government, giving little attention to tasks assigned by the provincial government (Moli, 2006, p. 5). Furthermore, seconded staff receives direct funding from national sources without going through the Provincial Treasurer and the normal finance system established in the province. This lack of compliance to provincial government system contributes to undermine the relationship between the provincial government and a few seconded staff of national line ministries (Cox & Morrison, 2004, p. 14).

Randell (1999, p. 81) also cited similar findings stating that seconded staff do not always have a good working relationship with members of the provincial government. She alluded to an incident in 1999 between the Provincial Secretary and politicians of the Malaita Provincial Government which resulted in the removal of the Provincial Secretary. Similar to Cox and Morrison, Randell argued that most disagreements between the national and provincial government appeared to be related to the complex communication lines and the utilisation of funds for projects in the province. These complexities are acknowledged in a discussion paper produced in 1999 by Waena²² cited by Randell (1999, p. 86) who advocated for the disconnection in the line of authority and accountability between the Provincial Secretaries and the Permanent Secretary for the MPGIS. Waena argued that this is necessary in order to delegate the full powers of discipline, answerability and accountability to the provincial governments and to empower the provincial secretaries. However, this failed to receive support at national level.

²² A prominent Solomon Islands politician.

5.7 Conclusions

This chapter describes the formal framework and key aspects of decentralisation in practice in Malaita Province and the dynamics involved in terms of the relations with national government. The implementation of decentralisation in Malaita Province as reflected in this chapter is confronted with challenges relating to inadequate funding, lack of clarity on roles and functions, and inadequate skilled staff. While in some sectors, the provincial government shows some success in terms of its relation with the national government, there is scope for improvement in other sectors. In conclusion, while the Provincial Government Act of 1997 provides a detailed list of areas in which the provincial governments have the final but not exclusive power to make and delegate laws and their legal responsibility for functions, the recentralisation of some of these functions have left the province managing very little in terms of service delivery.

Relations between the province and the national government have attracted public criticism as the level of cooperation required from both parties to provide effective service delivery has been compromised. As a result, politicians have been called on by the public to put aside their differences in the national interest of delivering basic services to the majority of the population in rural areas. In many instances, control over the budget is at the heart of differences encountered by political leaders. In addition, issues associated with the management of seconded staff have further complicated the system at provincial level. Based on the literature, these issues are not unique to the context in the Solomon Islands as decentralised experiences in other parts of the world (e.g Papua New Guinea) tend to reflect similar trends. In most instances, relations between the two different levels of government are further hindered by the personalised nature of political relationships between national and provincial politicians.

Overall, decentralisation in Malaita since the enactment of the PGA in 1981 has minimal impact in empowering the local government to deliver basic services to the majority of its population in rural communities. The level of provincial grants allocated to the province each year has remained static while the costs of transferred services have increased annually, leading to the province being blamed for irregular and inadequate provision of services. No real progress has been made in the province in terms of improved social services or the creation of a rural environment conducive to both local and foreign investment. There has been an absence of any initiatives or activities to source new or sizeable revenue particularly in the manufacturing sector due to issues relating to poor infrastructure, technical skills and the complex land tenure system. All these

points to the challenges involved in the implementation of decentralisation not only in Malaita but other provinces in the Solomon Islands.

The following chapter (Chapter 6) examine in detail the institutions and procedures for negotiating central-local relation, and their utilisation and assessment by government officials.

CHAPTER 6: INSTITUTIONS AND PROCEDURES FOR NEGOTIATING CENTRAL-LOCAL RELATIONS WITHIN A DECENTRALISED CONTEXT IN THE SOLOMON ISLANDS.

6.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses in detail the findings of the research and will respond to the two research questions in this study; 1) *“what are the institutions and procedures for negotiating central-local relations between national and provincial governments?”* and 2) *“to what extent have the national and provincial governments utilised these institutions, and what is their assessment of them?”* Prior to addressing these key research questions, it is important to first present findings on two key themes as they provide vital information in terms of setting the context for discussions on the two key research questions. These are *‘policies on decentralisation and central-local relations’* and *‘experiences with decentralised functions.’*

6.2 Institutions and Procedures for Negotiating Central-Local Relations

The institutions and procedures for negotiating central-local relations as portrayed in this study are categorised into three main themes based on the findings, namely:

- Policy on decentralisation and central-local relations;
- Experiences with decentralised functions; and
- Institutions and procedures for negotiating central-local relations.

Each of these themes will be discussed in detail under each of the respective subheading (6.2.1, 6.2.2 and 6.2.3).

6.2.1 Policy on Decentralisation and Central-Local Relations

An analysis of the current Government Policy Statement revealed that the only reference to decentralisation falls under Section 4.2.4 in which the national government highlighted its intention to ensure that the devolution of primary health care functions to the provinces do take place. The Policy Translation and Implementation Document demonstrated the same picture. This finding concurs with views expressed by key policy makers that they are not aware of any

specific policies that promote consultation amongst the different levels of government. A national official said:

I have no recollection citing any specific reference to decentralisation or the negotiations of central-local relations between the national and provincial governments in the current Government priorities (SOL1, 1).

Another national official shared a similar view:

Compared to previous governments who tend to highlight decentralisation in their policy priorities, this Government is quite silent on this subject matter (SOL3, 2).

However, national officials acknowledge and emphasise the need for different levels of governments to work collaboratively in implementing government policies as illustrated in this national official's statement:

We have directed all line ministries to include key people at national and provincial level when putting together their implementation plans and budgets. Without the cooperation and support at different levels, it would be impossible to achieve current Government policies (SOL1, 1).

A few national and provincial government officials argued that failure by the current Government to specifically reflect policies on decentralisation and the negotiations of central-local relations does not out rightly imply a lack of political will. This view is supported by a national official:

The absence of high level policy in decentralisation and inter-governmental relations does not mean that these are not important matters to the national government. Often the national government just tend to overlook them. Opportunities for negotiations are always there (SOL4, 2).

While all other national officials only referred implicitly to decentralisation, interviews with the MPGIS revealed a different trend. They portrayed policy objectives with strong references to decentralisation and the negotiations of central-local relations. Throughout its Corporate Plan 2011-2015, the MPGIS spelt out its policies pertaining to decentralisation and the negotiations of central-local relations. For example, under section 3.5, the MPGIS listed the “clarification and expansion of functions of provincial governments” and “inter-governmental policy dialogue” as its key policy goals. According to MPGIS officials, these policies aligned with one of its mandate “to

support the decentralisation process through a systemic and feasible delegation/devolution of functions”. Linkages to national priorities were however vague.

Similar policy direction to that of MPGIS is notable with the Malaita Provincial Government. During the field work, the new Provincial Government recently released its “Policy Framework and Development Strategies 2011-2020” which described in detail the province’s decentralisation plans. According to provincial officials, decentralisation as envisaged in the strategic plan seeks to shift the centre of governance, service delivery and development planning from the provincial capital to the regional centres. They also highlighted the need for a rigorous and on-going cooperation and constructive debate between national and provincial governments. According to a provincial official:

Decentralisation policy at provincial level does not only involve national to provincial, but reforms to spread development to all parts of Malaita Province, thus provincial to grass root level as well (SOL4, 2).

A high ranking official at the provincial level stated that decentralisation is their number one priority, thus all the province’s reforms, development policies and strategies hinge on this fundamental reform. The desire for the devolution of adequate powers and resources were apparent during most interviews with provincial officials. This view is evident in this statement by a provincial official:

We have a lot of good ideas but our main problem is that unless we have the relevant powers and resources to implement them, these ideas will end up on the shelves like all the others. There is very little we can do without the relevant powers and resources to undertake work in the province (SOL4, 2).

Provincial officials cited they are working closely with the MPGIS on decentralisation plans for the province. The province is hopeful that there will be cooperation and integration of efforts and priorities between national ministries because of similarities in political directions; to reach out to the marginalised population in rural areas. Strong linkages were made between provincial priorities to those of the MPGIS. However, a provincial official expressed concern regarding the missing links to the overarching policy at national level. This is illustrated in this statement:

The lack of alignment in our policy direction with government policy objectives may implicate negatively on our ability to mobilise the necessary resources from the national government (SOL4, 4).

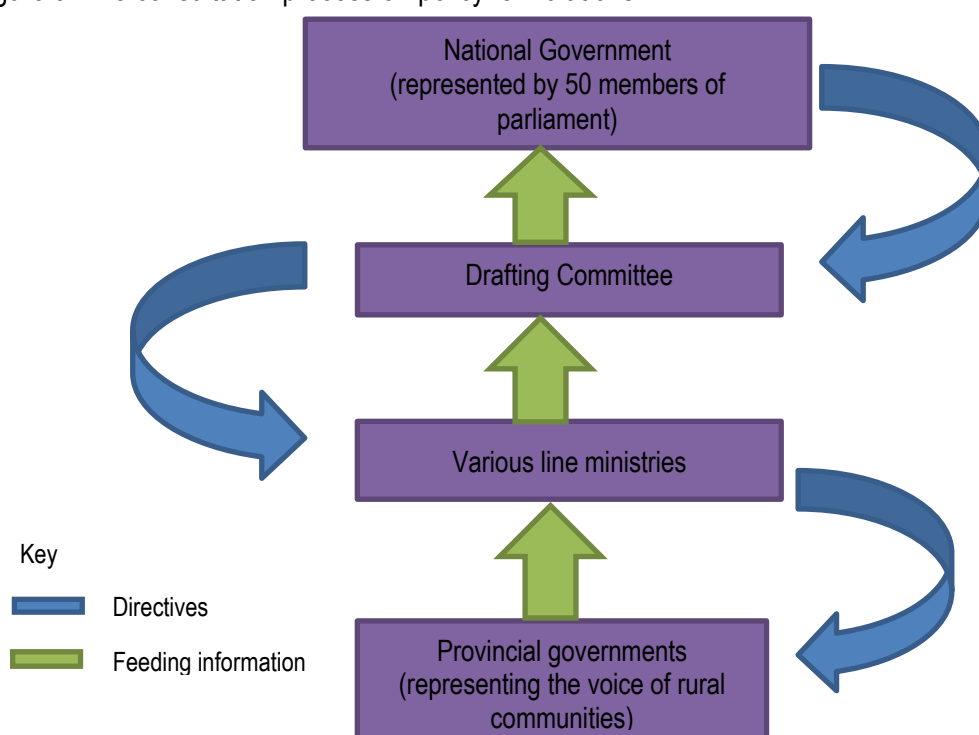
A national official supported this when he said:

If the provinces fail to align their policies to that of the national government, it is very unlikely that they will get assistance from the national budget (SOL1, 2).

Some provincial officials acknowledged that without national government financial support, they would most probably encounter challenges in implementing their policies. In illustrating this, a provincial official described how the province estimates for 2011/2012 bear very little resemblance to their current policy framework. He reported that their budget is dominated by recurrent and operational costs, leaving very little for development or service delivery. Although other provincial officials were aware of this, they said that this is not unusual especially when provincial governments are conditioned to behave like agents of the central government.

The question of how provincial governments contribute or participate in policy making at the national level attracted some interesting findings. According to a national official, the entire policy making process in an ideal situation should encompass views from all levels of governments (see figure 9).

Figure 9: The consultation process on policy formulations



Source: Author (based on interviews)

A drafting committee is normally established by the new government with the primary responsibility for putting together the policy statement. This committee is comprised of people

with varying expertise and background to work under the respective sectors (e.g. social sector, service sector, etc). In drafting the document, committee members are required to consult with key stakeholders (such as the various government institutions, civil societies, Non-Government Organisations, etc) within their sector while maintaining frequent dialogue with the new Government, feeding information upwards as well as receiving directives. Similarly, national line ministries and the MPGIS should source information at the provincial level and feed this upwards. However, in practice this process is rarely followed through by most governments. As noted in this statement by a national official:

In most instances, the drafting committee focuses predominantly on what the new Government wishes to see in the policy statement (SOL1, 2).

These experiences at national level are shared by provincial officials. For example, a provincial official stated that:

High level policy making rests predominantly with the fifty members of national parliament. There is no involvement or consultation with provincial governments (SOL4, 4).

However, provincial officials also expressed their desire to be involved in future key policy making at national level. They argued that provincial governments' represent the voice of more than eighty percent (80%) of the entire Solomon Islands population hence should be listened to. This is demonstrated in this statement by a provincial official:

We have discussed with the Ministry of Development Planning regarding the issue of linkages between provincial and national policy priorities. At the least, the national government should consider priorities that we identified from the communities in its overarching policy statement (SOL4, 2).

A national official blamed the timing and logistics, rather than national government intention as impeding on the consultation process. As illustrated in this statement by a national official:

Once a new government assumes office, it only has about hundred (100) days to release its key policy statement. This makes it impossible for any government to undertake any meaningful consultation with all the nine (9) provinces (SOL2, 1).

A provincial official, however, contended this saying that it has more to do with the manner in which national government perceived the role and views of provincial governments. As long as

provinces are regarded as agents of the national government, their contribution are considered irrelevant. This statement by a provincial official demonstrated this experience:

Our role in representing the needs and aspiration of rural communities is not highly regarded by the national government. Instead of the national government aligning its policies to those of the provincial governments as it reflects the needs of rural communities, the opposite happens. It's a heavily top-down process (SOL4, 4).

6.2.2 Experiences with Decentralised Functions

National and provincial governments' views on decentralised functions to the provinces vary although they both tend to agree that provincial governments in their current state are not in a position to take on additional functions. Officials at the national level reported that provincial governments are caught in a vicious circle of inadequate capacity, limited responsibilities and resources. Many national officials mentioned that in the absence of provincial capacity, there is little justification for transfers of fiscal powers, from the centre to the provinces. This view is expressed in this national official statement:

Provincial capacity and lack of accountability is a major obstacle to fulfil decentralised functions. The national government needs to have a better idea of what government money is spent on and its impact on rural communities (SOL2, 1).

Using Malaita Province as an example, a national official described how the province through support from the MPGIS is focusing on building its capacity so they are able to programme, produce and execute credible budgets, through appropriate participatory and transparent procedures. He further stated that at present, the province does not have the required human resources and financial ability to perform devolved functions to the expectation of national government. This view is shared with a national official who said that:

The provinces lack the institutional capacity and resources to deliver on its mandated responsibilities (SOL1, 4).

Several national officials said that it would be a long term undertaking to build the capacity of the provincial governments to effectively carry out their role in service delivery. This view is shared with a high-ranking provincial official:

Currently the capacity at the provincial level is very weak in terms of human resources and having the right institutions in place. There are reforms coming up to strengthen the Provincial Government Administration. From here, we will take one step at a time in addressing other key areas requiring improvement (SOL4, 2).

According to MPGIS, most skilled positions in the provinces are not filled because of difficulties in attracting qualified people to work in remote areas. They highlighted issues associated with housing and schooling as key deterrents for Honiara based qualified applicants especially those with families. Provincial officials contended this, blaming instead the lack of motivation by the national government to fill vacant positions. According to a provincial official:

The MPGIS is not persistently seeking to fill these positions within the province. If other organisations operating in the province can fill their vacant positions, then there should be no excuses why provincial positions are not filled (SOL4, 4).

A high ranking provincial official stated that despite the various reforms initiated by provinces, it would be extremely challenging to achieve them under the current circumstances of staff shortages.

Additionally, a national official referred to the inability of provincial governments to generate sufficient income to finance its operations and implement development programs as a key impediment to decentralise functions. Some national officials even argued that this was one of the contributing factors why national government has re-centralised some of the devolved functions. As illustrated in this statement by a national official:

Provinces need to prove to the national government that they can generate enough revenue locally to contribute to the cost of delivering services to rural communities instead of heavily dependent on national funding (SOL1, 1).

Furthermore, interviews at national and provincial level revealed that the majority of decision making power for important matters in the provinces is vested at the centre. A provincial official puts it this way:

At present, there is very limited power within provincial governments. When you look at the different ministries at the provincial level, very few have power to make decisions (SOL4, 2).

A prominent view portrayed by national officials was that provincial governments are “just agents” of the national government. They described provinces as mechanisms that represent and implement government policies to rural communities. This view is shown in this national official statement:

The national government created the provincial system so that they can represent national government interest at the local level (SOL1, 2).

Officials from MPGIS and the provincial government contended this saying that provincial governments are more than just agents of the national government. They claimed that provincial governments have a comparative advantage in that their close proximity to rural communities means that they can deliver services more cheaply than their national counterparts. This is reiterated in this statement by a provincial official:

The provinces have a better understanding of the needs, demands and aspirations of rural communities compared to their national counterparts who spent most of their time in Honiara²³ (SOL4, 3).

While acknowledging that provinces need to “put their house in order” by adopting improved practices and delivering on an expanded range of services under the PGA of 1997, provincial officials maintained that with sufficient support, they can take on some of the functions that have been recentralised. A key official at the provincial level stated that the national government needs to ensure that core positions in provincial administrations are filled, properly trained and equipped to carry out their function. A few national officials confirmed this view saying that previous devolution practices were not followed through with adequate support. According to a national official:

Capacity issues at national level contributed significantly to why provinces have not been able to successfully assume their new roles and responsibilities when the PGA of 1981 was implemented. The national government could not provide the required training and on-going support due to limited and inadequate staff.

²³ Honiara is the national capital city of the Solomon Islands where the national government is based.

Even now, we are still struggling to perform our day to day responsibilities with the current staffing we have (SOL2, 1).

Furthermore, officials from the MPGIS and the province argued that while line ministries often demonstrated willingness to transfer functions to the provinces, the relevant resources and decision making power tend to remain with the headquarters. As a provincial official puts it:

With the limited resources and power we have, we could only do so much in terms of delivering basic services. We have learnt to work with what resources we have (SOL4, 4).

One senior national official mentioned that since provincial government have failed to deliver on devolved functions stipulated in the PGA of 1997, they should only be assigned tasks relating to land and infrastructure (roads, bridges, wharves, etc). He believed that service delivery is best left with the national government as they are better positioned to carry this out. His views are expressed in this statement:

By devolving functions relating to land and infrastructure to the provinces, we get less criticism from the provinces regarding lack of provincial development. Without the availability of land and proper infrastructure, it is impossible to attract investors and undertake any meaningful development in the provinces. Thus is reflective of the performance of the provinces and not the national government (SOL1, 1).

On the other hand, a few national officials stated that the national government is not prepared to devolve functions to the provinces unless clarification is obtained on what devolved functions are currently implemented by the provinces and what has been recentralised. As illustrated in this statement by a national official:

Changes to the government system over time had caused a lot of confusion, and has made it difficult to determine the legal functions of the provinces. Unfortunately, this situation is made worse due to the lack of proper documentations regarding these changes (SOL3, 2).

Several national officials emphasised the need for provinces to identify the fiscal gaps within their provinces in terms of the responsibilities they have for which they do not have the resources to implement. This sentiment is captured in this statement by a national official:

The provinces need to be clear on what tasks they are be able to deliver effectively considering their financial resources as well as their capacity limitation. There is no point pumping money into the provinces when they cannot deliver (SOL3, 2)

Using the Provincial Capacity Development Fund (PCDF)²⁴ as an example, a national official described how the MPGIS had to withdraw funds for development projects in rural communities from some provinces due to their inability to utilise the money within the given timeframe. This is a good illustration of lack of adequate capacity.

Another national official argued that while some functions are portrayed as centralised, in reality, they are very much decentralised. This view is shared amongst many provincial officials. Using the example of the education sector, a provincial official described how the central government is only responsible for providing basic grants to the majority of schools. The Auki Primary School²⁵ provided a good illustration; the officer estimated that the annual current expenditure to run the school is SBD 500,000 (USD58,824). Of this, the national government only provides a grant of SBD276,000 (USD32,471) including the salaries of teachers. The funding gap required to operate the school had to be sourced by the province either through funding assistance from the community or mobilising resources from donors and NGOs. This concurs with the view of a national official:

The perception that education is centralised is illusory. If you take a closer look at most of the functions and responsibilities, they rest with the provinces (SOL4, 3).

According to a provincial official, while decisions on where the money should be spent can be negotiated with the national government, issues such as the hiring and termination of teachers requires final endorsement from the national headquarter. While there is on-going debate on whether education is centralised or decentralised, it was noted that most provincial respondents spoke highly of the relationship between national and provincial government within this sector. Malaita Province highlighted the successes of negotiating relations with the national government using this sector. A provincial official said:

²⁴ According to a UNDP Report 2008, the PCDF is an incentive for the adoption of improved governance. The PGSP set up a PCDF to provide provincial governments with a limited, but meaningful amount of discretionary funds for development spending.

²⁵ Auki Primary School is located in the capital of Malaita Province and is a government owned school.

We feel that our suggestions and opinion are taken seriously by the central ministry and they let us drive the process instead of being spectators. Although money is not channelled through the Malaita Provincial Government budget, the fact that we are a signatory on all cheques towards money spent within the sector makes us feel part of the team (SOL4, 3).

Interestingly, differences were noted in other sectors specifically the health and agriculture sectors. Based on a provincial official:

When seconded officers are assigned to the province, they should be accountable to the Provincial Secretary. This is stated clearly in their appointment letter but in practice, this does not happen. We have taken this matter on several occasions with the respective national ministries but are yet to see improvement in the accountability of seconded staff. There is a few seconded staff working within the provincial government office that we have little knowledge regarding their day to day activities (SOL4, 1).

According to interviews with provincial officials, three key elements of decentralisation are currently lacking at the provincial level; the devolution of adequate powers, resources and capacity. Provincial officials believed that without the fundamental changes to the approach by the national government in responding to new initiatives such as the establishment of Regional Economic Centres by the province, service delivery to rural areas will continue to be challenging. This concurs with the view of a provincial official:

National Government should release more power to provincial governments to make decisions, control their finances and make their own money. Development has been very slow in the provinces because the majority of decision making even non-controversial ones had to be approved from the top (SOL2, 2).

In highlighting this point, a high ranking provincial official used the land titles in Auki as illustration. According to the official, the majority of crown land in Auki falls under the jurisdiction of the Commissioner of Lands at the national level. As a result, most development projects in Auki require the prior consent and approval of the Commissioner. Based on the official, breaking through the bureaucratic process of acquiring approval from the national level is not only frustrating but extremely time consuming. He argued that this had significantly slowed down development initiatives within the provincial headquarter. He further stated that:

It would have been much easier if such powers are devolved to the provincial government. This would assist greatly in expediting the process of implementing development projects in the province (SOL4, 2).

The PGA of 1997 had also been described by some national and provincial officials as somewhat limiting the scope of provincial governments' ability to deliver on decentralised functions. In illustrating this, a provincial official stated that under the provisions of the PGA of 1997, provinces can only borrow up to a maximum of SBD20,000 (USD2,352). This amount is insignificant given the current value of the Solomon Islands currency and its purchasing power which is only 5% of the Auki Primary School budget of SBD500,000 (USD58,824). This limits the province's ability to loan money for improving or maintaining important assets. It also prevented provincial government from investing in economic prospects that had the potential to generate much needed funds for the provinces. A provincial official said that:

This is just one example of the many aspects of the PGA of 1997 that needs to be reviewed in order to respond to the current needs of the provinces and broaden its scope so it relies less on national government for money (SOL4, 4).

The desire to be less dependent of the national government when it comes to key decision making was prominent during most of the interviews at the provincial level. However, according to a provincial official, this can only happen if Malaita Province can convince the national government of its ability to mobilise its own resources and transparently account for public funds. A similar opinion was expressed by a national official:

Unless provincial governments can perform to the expectation of national government in performing their small responsibilities, they cannot lobby for further devolution of functions or powers from the central government (SOL2, 2).

6.2.3 Institutions and Procedures for Negotiating Central-Local Relations

Established under the auspices of the PGA of 1997, the MPGIS is the central agency responsible for coordinating the activities of the nine provincial governments in the country. According to responses from the various interviews at national and provincial level, MPGIS's core function were to support the development and strengthening of the provincial government system so it can fulfil its responsibilities to ensure transparency, accountability and efficiency; to provide for the

devolution of powers, decentralisation and delegation of functions that empower decision making by the people who are custodians of natural resources. A high ranking official from the Policy Unit described the MPGIS as:

The mother ministry responsible for providing oversight to the nine provincial governments (SOL1, 1).

A provincial official described the MPGIS as a mediator or middle-person between national and provincial governments.

The MPGIS normally facilitate negotiations between the province and the national government. In instances where there is a break down in central-local relations, the MPGIS act as a mediator between the two parties (SOL4, 1).

This view resonates with those expressed by officials from the Ministry of Finance and Treasury (MOFT) and the Office of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. According to the MOFT, they do not deal directly with the nine (9) provincial governments; instead information is channelled through the MPGIS as noted in this national official statement:

Any negotiations, grievances, request or collaboration with the nine provinces are normally undertaken through the MPGIS (SOL2, 3).

Using the budget process as an example, an official from MOFT explained that formal invitations for budget submissions for provincial grants are made through the MPGIS. MPGIS then ensures that the relevant information is communicated to the provinces. Whether this process is consultative or inclusive of the demands of provinces falls outside their mandate. Budget submissions from provinces via MPGIS are treated as final. In fact it is a requirement that prior to submission to MOFT, provincial budgets have to be agreed in advance by the minister of MPGIS. In circumstances where budget items have to be removed from provincial governments' budget due to limited funding or lack of coherence with national priorities, negotiations are carried out with the MPGIS. According to an official of the MPGIS, the benchmark provided by MOFT gives them an indication of how much funding is available and normally negotiations are undertaken on this basis. However, the final say rests with MOFT in terms of decision making. Another MOFT official provides a similar account:

In most instances, when provinces approached us directly regarding their budget allocation or to negotiate for additional funds, we redirect them to the MPGIS. If

we deal directly with all the provinces, then obviously we won't have time to do our day to day tasks (SOL2, 4).

While all officials at national and provincial level acknowledged that MPGIS plays a key role in negotiating relations between the different levels of governments, the majority admitted that institutions for negotiating relations are not normally complied with. A few officials of national ministries gave accounts of instances where provincial governments had directly approached their ministries without MPGIS's prior knowledge or consent. Similarly, a few line ministries stated that they do not normally utilise the MPGIS when dealing with the provinces. This statement by a national official illustrates this:

We are not aware of any specific guidelines stating that it is mandatory for us to use the MPGIS when negotiating central-local relations (SOL4, 4).

A provincial official said that since assuming his role with the education sector in Malaita Province, he rarely uses the MPGIS for negotiating relations. He said that:

The procedure we have in place to date is through the head of sectoral-local and the Permanent Secretary at sectoral-national (SOL4, 3).

For example, if the provincial government is unhappy about the manner in which development projects within the education sector are managed within the province, the head of the sector at the provincial level is notified. He/she is then responsible for consulting the head of sectoral-national to discuss the matter. In most instances depending on the seriousness of the matter, a team from headquarter led by the Permanent Secretary travels to the province to openly discuss with the provincial government. During such meetings, a compromise is normally reached between the parties involved. There are several instances where it takes time for the matter to be resolved but these are quite rare.

A few officials at national and provincial level stated that the decision of whether to use the services of the MPGIS rest predominantly with the preference of national line ministries. This is illustrated in this statement by a national official:

National line ministries that had benefited from the services provided by MPGIS continued to work through this ministry. Others, however, have opted to negotiate²⁶ directly with the provinces (SOL1, 3).

Other institutions for negotiating central-local relations prominently reflected in interviews conducted with national and provincial officials are the Premiers' Conference (PC) and the Ministry of Home Affairs²⁷. The PC is a platform where all provincial leaders convene with representatives from the various line ministries to discuss matters of importance to the provinces and the entire nation in general. Officials from the MPGIS and the provincial government reported that it was first initiated and funded by the MPGIS in 2007. Since then, the MPGIS has institutionalised the conference making it a regular event.

This conference based on officials at provincial level and a few at national level brings together all the provincial premiers from the nine provinces in the Solomon Islands to discuss issues relating to improved service delivery to rural communities; and to learn and share experiences as political leaders. One of the key objectives of the PC according to one MPGIS official is to create a forum for inter-governmental policy dialogue so provincial leaders can meet to discuss and raise issues concerning provincial governments.

Aside from these official objectives, provincial officials perceived this as a mechanism for discussing important matters with national line ministries. This is illustrated in a statement by a provincial official:

The PC is an avenue for provinces to have an open dialogue with national line ministries on key issues affecting the provinces and the entire nation. It allows us to openly discuss problems affecting the efficient and effective delivery of services to poor communities due to deficiencies in resources and delivery mechanisms by line ministries (SOL4, 1).

²⁶ Most direct negotiations take place between sectoral-national and sectoral-local.

²⁷ While the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) was identified by a few national respondents as another institution for negotiating central-local relations, this is applicable only for the Honiara Municipal Authority (HMA) which falls outside the scope of this study. The HMA is treated as a province of its own covering the vicinity of Honiara. Under the old PGA 1981, the HMA with all the provinces falls under the portfolio of the MHA. When the new Act of 1997 was enacted, the HMA remains with the MHA while all the provinces were assumed under the portfolio of the MPGIS. Although this was the case, HMA is actively involved in organised training and workshops for provinces.

According to MPGIS and provincial officials, the fact that this conference is officially opened by the Prime Minister highlights the importance of this mechanism in bringing together provincial leaders and the national government to discuss development and social issues. According to provincial officials, this makes them feel part of the national development process. Provincial Officials often referred to the PC as the only forum for serious inter-governmental policy dialogue where issues from political decentralisation to inter-governmental financial relations are discussed and communiqués issued. This is captured in this provincial official's statement:

This initiative by the MPGIS is currently the only means whereby we sit and discuss important matters with the national government collectively. These meetings normally conclude with proposed course of actions, which if approved, becomes resolutions. All PC resolutions have to be tabled before parliament for their deliberation (SOL4, 4).

Prior to the establishment of the PC, provincial officials say that there was no alternative means for provinces to directly express their grievances to national government except through the MPGIS. While occasional direct contact with ministries is a possible option, this is contingent upon approval by national ministries. The MPGIS as a platform for central-local relations have been described by both national and provincial officials as not been able to cope with the various requests/issues raised by a few national line ministries and the provinces. These frustrations were evident during the interviews at national and provincial level. A provincial official says that:

Delays and lack of feedback on matters taken with the MPGIS had contributed to further isolate and alienating provincial governments from the centre (SOL4, 1).

Differences were noted in perceptions expressed by most national officials with the exception of MPGIS officials. Though many national officials are aware that the PC is a platform for negotiating relations, very few saw it as an institution for negotiating central-local relations. Rather, it came through quite strongly during the interviews that the PC is an inter-provincial mechanism. As a national official puts it:

I think the PC happens once annually...not really sure as I have never attended this conference. I think it is mainly a platform for provincial governments to carry out negotiation with other provinces and share information (SOL2, 3).

It was noted during the fieldwork that MPGIS had developed a conceptual framework to establish a sub-committee to the PC called the Premiers' Council. According to a few provincial officials,

this new initiative has good intention in terms of ensuring that provinces have direct access to Cabinet. However, there are a few provincial officials who are quite critical about the set-up of another body in light of current financial difficulties faced by the country. A few provincial officials even caution against the creation of another platform that would fail like the others if support at national level is absent. As stated by a provincial official:

The Premiers' Council sounds like a good idea; however, I hope it is not going to turn out like the PC who continues to struggle in terms of getting the right representation at national level. Without national officials, how can we undertake negotiations? MPGIS needs to ensure that there is strong political support for this new initiative at national level before proceeding any further with it (SOL4, 4).

At the moment, based on provincial officials and those at MPGIS, the only authorised body to table and follow up on communiqués with cabinet and parliament is the MPGIS. During the data collection period, the conceptual framework was in its draft form. Initial consultations had been undertaken with various provinces and it is the intention of the MPGIS to table the revised conceptual framework based on feedback from the provinces in the upcoming Premier's Conference, scheduled for the latter part of 2011.

6.3 Utilisation and Assessment of Institutions and Procedures for Negotiation Central-Local Relations

The experience of national and provincial government officials of the institutions and procedures for negotiating central-local relations were categorised into two key themes: a) Utilisation of identified institutions and procedures by national and provincial governments, and b) the assessment of these institutions and procedures by government officials. These are discussed in detail under subheading 6.3.1 and 6.3.2.

6.3.1 Utilisation of Institutions and Procedures by Government Officials

Nine of the ten national officials interviewed have at least utilised the MPGIS for the exercise of respective functions. At the provincial level, all officials interviewed have at least channel

negotiations via the MPGIS. However, it was noted during the interviews that quite a number of national ministries have bypass the MPGIS as illustrated in this statement by a national official:

Only a few line ministries come via the MPGIS when dealing with provincial governments. The majority tend to go directly to the provinces without the prior knowledge of MPGIS. This makes oversight as the key role of MPGIS difficult (SOL3, 1).

This view concurs with those expressed by many national officials and a few provincial officials. Using the education sector, a provincial official described how the negotiations of central-local relations have minimum involvement from the MPGIS. A good illustration was provided on a recent incidence which involved a fire at Auki Primary School. First, a two member team was mobilised by MPGIS just a few days after the school was burnt to undertake an assessment of the situation. A few days after the MPGIS team left, a similar team from the Ministry of Education arrived with the exact terms of reference. According to the provincial official:

This is a total waste of time and tax payers' money. This situation could have easily been avoided if the two parties have consulted or collaborated with each other in the first place (SOL4, 3).

While the majority of officials both at national and provincial level share similar experiences, others particularly those from MPGIS felt that most national line ministries did not fully understand MPGIS's role as illustrated in this national official statement:

I believe that the lack of clarity in MPGIS's role is a contributing factor as to why most line ministries have not utilised its services (SOL3, 2).

It was explained by MPGIS that communications from line ministries to the provinces are supposed to be directed through the MPGIS and national government agencies are accessed by provinces through the MPGIS. However, MPGIS officials seemed to be well aware of the fact that most national line ministries bypass the MPGIS. As a national official puts it:

In most instances, we learn about what is happening in the provinces when something has gone really wrong in the relationship between a particular line ministry and a province, or when we are requested to provide inputs on important cabinet papers prepared by other line ministries involving a province (SOL4, 1).

The only official at national level who had not utilised the services of MPGIS explained that this had nothing to do with his preference of what institution to use. As he puts it:

I have not used the MPGIS because of the portfolio and nature of my job. It was not my responsibility to carry out negotiations with the MPGIS or the provinces (SOL1, 1).

Despite a few exceptions, officials both at national and provincial level channel negotiations via the MPGIS.

Due to logistical challenges in accessing the provinces, a few national officials said that they have utilised the MPGIS when negotiating with the provinces on important policy matters. However, they confirmed that there were instances where they preferred to approach the provinces directly especially on matters requiring urgent attention and action. A national official gave an example of when government had to carry out urgent consultation at the provincial level to satisfy donors' requirements which normally come with tight datelines.

Interesting differences with regards to the utilisation of the MPGIS as a mechanism for central-local relations were noted during interviews with provincial officials. Seconded staff who regard themselves as representatives of their national ministries tend to communicate directly to their ministry at national level. Thus any negotiations are usually channelled through and carried out by national line ministries on behalf of the province. According to a high ranking provincial official, this is particularly common in heavily centralised sectors such as Health and Agriculture. As such, they rarely use the MPGIS.

In contrast, direct provincial employees of the provincial government reported that in most instances, their entry point to national line ministries is through the MPGIS. While this is the case, a provincial official said that:

There are occasions where we have attempted to directly approach some national line ministries because of delays by MPGIS. While in a few cases, we were able to successfully do this, there are cases where we are told by national line ministries to go through the MPGIS (SOL4, 4).

With regards to the PC, very few national officials have admitted to using the PC as a platform for central-local relations. A few national officials said that their attendance at the PC is dependent on whether agenda items require responses from their ministry, while other national officials

stated that their attendance is mandatory. Despite these differences in views, many national officials felt that there are huge potentials in making the PC an effective platform for central-local negotiations. As noted by a national official:

The PC provides an excellent opportunity for the negotiations of central-local relations. However, for this to be effective and constructive for both national and provincial governments there is need to strengthen the PC's machinery (SOL1, 4).

Most national officials expressed their desire to see changes in the process of selecting agenda items for the PC. While acknowledging that the PC is a meeting of provincial leaders, hence provinces should take the lead role; there should be some guidelines to limit agenda items to only matters that are likely to affect the majority of the provinces. According to a national official:

The majority of agenda items for discussion at the PC are crowded with administrative matters concerning the provinces. Because of this, we often feel that our attendance is irrelevant (SOL2, 3).

Notably, most national officials spoken to believed that they could usefully utilise the PC if agenda items are strategically selected to involve high level policy matters of mutual interest. For instance, a national official described that decentralisation plans by MPGIS with line ministries could be an example of an agenda item that is likely to affect most parties both at national and provincial level. Since high level policy is weak in this area, meaningful negotiations can be carried out with national counterparts to gain support in its implementation.

Consequently, those who have attended the PC described the experience as unique in that it is the only time in a year when national and provincial governments sit face to face to discuss issues affecting the provinces and the entire nation. As this provincial official puts it:

Currently, this is the only collective mechanism we have with the other provinces to meet with the national government. Generally, we use this opportunity to rally support from other provinces on important matters affecting the provinces (SOL4, 1).

Many provincial officials share this view stating that the PC is an effective mechanism in sending a clear message to national government on provincial issues. More importantly, they see this as an opportunity to meet with other government officials from national and provincial governments,

discuss important issues, share experiences and lesson learned, as well as develop important networks. One provincial official said:

The networks and relationship developed from these meetings is extremely important in assisting us perform our day to day tasks. It also comes into handy in gaining easy access to important information and people (SOL4, 2).

A national official who previously attended the conferences supported this explanation:

Relationships formed during these meetings are invaluable. As the case is in the Solomon Islands, it's who you know. It takes less time and effort negotiating with people you know (SOL3, 4).

6.3.2 Assessment of Institutions and Procedures by Government Officials.

The Ministry of Provincial Government and Institutional Strengthening

Feedback from government officials on MPGIS's capacity to fulfil its mandate was mixed. According to most national and provincial officials, MPGIS has limited capacity and resources. A major complaint by national and provincial officials is the time taken by the MPGIS to respond to requests taken up with the ministry. A few national officials have identified this as one of the reasons why some line ministries have decided to bypass the MPGIS. They described the process as frustrating and time consuming with no real or satisfactory results on most occasions. As argued by a national official:

Most of the issues tabled and discussed during the PC and later signed as communiqués kept recurring because MPGIS does not have the capacity to follow up on them. This is very frustrating and almost paralysed the Buala Conference in October 2010 (SOL4, 1).

A national official said that the PC operates largely by passing resolutions. So far, only one communiqué out of the four has been tabled in Parliament by MPGIS and gazetted. The general opinion of provincial officials is that the MPGIS is lacking in energy. Frequently, the MPGIS does not get to revisit the resolutions until a few days before the following years' PC which is too late. A provincial official says:

This delay and lack of action has been largely due to lack of capacity in the MPGIS and in some cases the general lack of interest in the issues raised in the communiqués (SOL4, 4).

Despite these comments, a few officials at national and provincial level acknowledged that they are witnessing some improvements in MPGIS's performance recently. They believed that support from the PGSP is a contributing factor for some of these positive changes. An obvious example is the tabling of the most recent communiqué before parliament, the first of its kind since the inception of the PC.

Others, particularly provincial officials have described the MPGIS as showing little regard for its role as the ministry responsible for negotiations of central-local relations. According to a few provincial officials as well as a national official, the MPGIS has seldom raised questions about the impact of some of the national government policies or the equity of the expenditure of national revenue, neither the need for equitable distribution of resources nor the rights of the majority of the population that lives in the rural areas. For example, a provincial official reported that current national policy towards a constitutional reform to introduce a federal system of government in the Solomon Islands could potentially restrict the movement of people thus implicates on 'freedom of movement' between provinces.

On the other hand, a few national officials expressed their concerns about the lack of a formula for the equitable allocation of provincial grants. Using the Republic of China's (Government of Taiwan) funding as example, a national officer described how the Rennell and Bellona Province with a total population of 3,401 people gets the same sized grant as the Malaita Province with a total population of 137,596 people. This clearly depicts the unequal distribution of resources which impacts on basic service delivery to rural communities especially in bigger provinces.

Interestingly, officials from the MPGIS raised this same issue; however, they blamed the MOFT for blindly distributing funds to the provinces. While acknowledging that previously there was no formula for the allocation of provincial services grant to the provinces, this has been resolved and the MPGIS had begun using this formula in 2010 in the formulation of provincial budgets for submission to the MOFT. A national official stated:

Clearly there are communication problems within MOFT especially given the fact that the formula for the distribution of provincial grants was approved by them. The formula is actually reflected in the current budget (SOL3, 2).

Others have alluded to the fact that MPGIS have made little effort in mediating and settling differences and disputes between sectoral-national and sectoral-local. According to a provincial official, MPGIS ineffectiveness in this respect is a direct function of what has become one of its roles - the voice of provincial interests. An example was provided of the weak relationship between the Malaita Province and the health sector. A key provincial official reported that basically the province has very little knowledge of what is happening within this sector. As described by a provincial official:

This is a long outstanding matter that requires attention at the national level. There is a general feeling at provincial level that our mandate to deliver basic services to rural communities has not been respected. At least we should be consulted in important matters occurring in the province within the sector (SOL4, 2).

Information gathered also revealed that most provincial officials have expressed disappointment regarding the manner in which negotiations on the provincial budget takes place. A provincial official mentioned that while improvements are evident in the recent budget process coordinated by MPGIS, in that it is more consultative and inclusive of provinces, it is common practice for budget items to be removed by MPGIS and MOFT without the prior consent of the provinces. Another provincial official reported that in most instances, they learn about omissions in their budget when in receipt of the final approved budget by Parliament. As this provincial official puts it:

Even if our budget is within the specified benchmark provided by the MOFT, we still experience cuts in our budget submission (SOL4, 3).

Similar sentiments were shared with another provincial official:

Sometimes, you tend to wonder why the national government consulted us in the first place to submit our budget (SOL4, 4)

The MPGIS clarified that in most cases provincial budget cuts resulted from lack of alignment in budget items with national government priorities. Although provinces are aware of these requirements, they often tend to ignore them. MPGIS officials acknowledged that the budget process still needs a lot of work to ensure that it reflects both the demands of the provinces while at the same time complying with national budget requirements.

Most provincial officials interviewed perceived the MPGIS as a platform for which provincial and national politicians can operate through whenever they wish to engage in any negotiations. According to a provincial official, MPGIS as part of its role in negotiating relations with the national government have made possible a few professional attachments for provincial staff with sister agencies at national level. According to the officer, these trainings were targeted at strengthening the capacity of provincial staff to deliver on their responsibilities. Another provincial official shared a similar view:

Recently, the MPGIS arranged for the attachment of provincial clerks with the national government²⁸. This is where our clerk worked alongside the clerk of the National Parliament for a few weeks as part of his training. MPGIS has also assisted provinces with training on Financial Management so they can accountably use and report on funds provided by national government (SOL3, 1).

Based on provincial and national officials, negotiations are currently underway for the transfer of some functions from national ministries to provincial governments particularly in areas where provincial governments have a comparative advantage such as in the implementation of Primary Health Care. This view was confirmed with MPGIS who stated that negotiations have started with MOFT as they need to ascertain that MOFT will be supportive to transfer the relevant financial resources with the proposed devolved functions.

The Premiers' Conference

The PC is considered by most officials especially at provincial government level as very important in addressing central-local relations. It is currently the only forum where the heads of national and provincial governments meet. However, in practice, the national government has treated it with somewhat less regard than might be implied by its terms of reference. According to an official from MPGIS and the provincial government, attendance at this conference by high level national government officials is poor and mainly comprises of junior staff members. This undermines one of the key objectives of the forum – to create an open dialogue between national and provincial

governments where questions are directly raised with line ministries, with the expectation of receiving immediate responses. A national official said:

There is a need to upscale attendance at this conference. In other countries particularly in Africa, it is the vice-president²⁹ who chairs this kind of meetings, thus it is taken more seriously by line ministries. The MPGIS needs to send a clear message to line ministries that if the Permanent Secretary is not attending the PC, then there is no need to send a representative (SOL3, 2).

The desire to have key people from national government represented at the PC was obvious amongst most officials at the MPGIS and the province. Most provincial officials reported that on several occasions they were promised answers/feedback from the national government after the PC on major issues raised but this never materialised. As described by a provincial official:

The moment they walked out of the PC, they forget about the very reason why they were there in the first place – to represent their ministries and provide feedback on questions raised (SOL4, 4).

Many of the national officials mentioned that if provinces want high level representation at the PC, they need to address issues relating to the manner in which the PC agenda items are selected. As illustrated in this view by a national official:

Matters relevant to only one province should be dealt with directly with MPGIS. This should restrict the number of agenda items for discussion to allow adequate time for full discussion on important matters (SOL3, 1).

The lack of focus in previous discussions at the PC was highlighted by another national official as one of the contributing factors why senior national government officials have been reluctant to attend the PC. He described the meeting as predominantly taken up by provincial administrative matters. He reiterated that as long as this continues, high level national officials will refrain from the PC meetings. MPGIS in identifying this gap has for the first time initiated a pre-premier's meeting bringing together all the provincial heads. The aim is to strategise on what needs to be prioritised in the upcoming PC.

²⁹ The equivalent of a Deputy Prime Minister in the Solomon Islands context.

Others, particularly national officials have alluded to the fact that in most instances, the PC is not even a venue for the exchange of views. They described that the flow of views tend to be one way – from the provinces to the centre as illustrated in this statement by a national official:

I feel our representation at the PC is mainly to respond to key issues raised by provinces. I believe there should be a more strategic way of conducting the PC to make it more inclusive and conducive for the exchange of views by both parties (SOL1, 2)

A high ranking provincial official described the under-utilisation of the PC by national officials as a major failure of the institutional machinery for decentralisation. Others particularly provincial officials have expressed the view that being an institution for negotiating central-local relations, the PC can be used for more than just the exchange of views. It can be used for negotiations and reaching agreement on decentralised functions. According to one national official, there appears to be very few instances of the latter. In particular, provinces could push national government for amendments to the PGA of 1997 given on-going complaints that the PGA is limiting provincial governments' scope to generate their own revenue.

The lack of any tangible outcomes from the PC has attracted much criticism as illustrated in this statement by a national official:

The PC is a huge drainage to much needed funds from the national budget. It costs millions to conduct one conference, yet there is little achievement in as far as the relationship between national and provincial government is concern (SOL1, 3).

The provinces have repeatedly sought to use the PC for consultations and negotiations on the allocation of powers. The bulk of resolutions emanated from the PCs concerns key policy matters regarding decentralisation. They involve calls for the transfer of powers and functions to the provinces, the provision of more funds and human resources, and clarity on provincial government functions. The national government has, at least, an obligation to negotiate in relation to these matters. As a provincial official puts it:

At large, the national government has ignored these resolutions and failed to provide any satisfactory explanation for its lack of action which undermines the entire purpose of establishing the PC (SOL4, 3).

A few national officials described the sustainability of the PC as highly dependent on the ability of MPGIS to continue funding it. So far, contributions from the provinces have been described as insignificant. A provincial official contended this view, blaming the national government for the scant budget allocations they get annually as provincial service grants. He stated that:

The province could barely meet its recurrently costs with the money it gets from the national government yet it is expected to put more money towards the PC (SOL4, 2).

Most provincial officials perceived the PC as the only direct access they have to the Prime Minister, whose portfolio otherwise has little to do with provincial affairs. They refer to the PC as having great potential value when it comes to high policy lobbying specifically in instances where they encountered difficulties with line ministries or with MPGIS. As a provincial official puts it:

Whenever we have the opportunity, we express our grievances directly to the Prime Minister regarding some of the frustrations or difficulties we have working with some of the line ministries. In most instances he seemed to have empathy for the challenges we face in delivering services to rural areas (SOL4, 1).

In spite of the many challenges it has encountered, many provincial officials including a few national officials commented that the PC has been instrumental in creating provincial solidarity. A provincial official said that:

The PC has enabled the provinces to deal collectively with the national government on a few major issues from a stronger position than would be the case in bilateral dealings (SOL4, 2).

The Buala Conference of 2010 is a very good example of this solidarity. By threatening to boycott the conference due to non-action of previous communiqués, most provincial officials believe that this resulted in the tabling of the Buala communiqué before parliament. As illustrated in this statement by a provincial official:

We tend to have power when we approach the national government as a group but not individually. The PC is the only available mechanism for us to do this at present (SOL4, 1).

6.4 Conclusion

Within the context of decentralisation, the negotiations of central-local relations between the national and provincial government was investigated in this study. Overall, based on the analysis of findings, the study reveals that the PC, the MPGIS, and sectoral mechanisms are the most important platforms in dealing with the negotiations of central-local relations. The findings also suggest that the National Constitution of 1978 and the Provincial Government Act of 1997 say remarkably little about the institutions and procedures for negotiating relations between national and provincial governments. Furthermore, there is a clear absence of policies and guidelines on the negotiations of central-local relations, and this meant that government officials, particularly national officials are not obliged to utilise the mandated institutions, therefore can source or create alternative platforms at their discretion.

With regards to the utilisation of the identified institutions and procedures, this mostly depends on benefits sought by government officials. The most significant finding was that provincial governments do not have the same privilege as national government to directly negotiate with national line ministries using sectoral mechanisms, suggesting an imbalance in power relations between national and provincial governments. Provincial officials perceived their inability to have similar access rights as disempowering and limiting their scope to perform devolved functions. As such they feel empowered using the PC collectively with other provinces to rally support on important matters affecting the provinces and the nation. This feeling of being inferior created some distance between national and provincial governments. In contrast, national officials perceived the PC as more an inter-provincial platform. They feel they have no power to influence which agenda items to be prioritised for discussion. Therefore they use the MPGIS or negotiate directly with the provinces using sectoral mechanisms. The findings also revealed that provincial officials including a few national line ministries have continued to use the services of the MPGIS although they shared similar concerns regarding capacity issues. For provincial officials, the MPGIS is the only alternative institution as the PC happens once annually.

The overall assessment of respondents' experience of the MPGIS as a platform for negotiating central-local relations revealed different findings. Some officials described it as a platform for negotiating central-local relations, a few saw it as the voice of provincial governments, while others perceived it to be an overseer. A common view expressed by both national and provincial officials is that MPGIS's institutional capacity has hampered its ability to effectively implement its mandate. Most respondents both at national and provincial level identified inadequate resources

and skilled manpower as key contributing factors. Others have alluded to a general lax within the ministry in seeing through and making sure that issues and matters brought to the attention of the ministry are addressed and that provinces do get feedback on these issues and matters. Based on responses from the provinces, the MPGIS has not been very proactive in addressing relationship issues especially at the sectoral level. As the voice of the provinces at the national level, a provincial official said that MPGIS can further improve on its consultative process with provinces so that it can meaningfully represent their demands and aspirations at the national level.

The assessment of the different institutions and procedures for negotiating relations between the national and provincial government revealed different experiences by government officials. For instance, a general view expressed by many national officials is that the institutional capacity of the MPGIS has impacted on its ability to foster a relationship of cooperation and collaboration between the national and provincial governments, a view shared with provincial officials. An interesting finding was that most national line ministries utilise the MPGIS for convenience purposes rather than because of its perceived role as the appropriate platform for negotiating central-local relations. In relation to the PC, many provincial officials described it as a powerful platform as it provides them with a consolidated front to negotiate with national government. This view is not shared with many national officials who perceived the PC as an inter-provincial as opposed to intergovernmental platform. They emphasised on the need for the PC to strategise its agenda items so it consists only of matters of mutual interest by the national and provincial government. However, both national and provincial officials agree that the PC has great potential to be an effective platform for negotiating central-local relations.

Overall, as far as the negotiations of central-local relations between national and provincial governments are concerned, the findings revealed that a number of institutions and procedures do exist. However, the absence of clear policies and guidelines to direct the negotiations of central-local relations is impacting on the choice and utilisation of these institutions by national and provincial governments. Based on the findings, this had allowed government officials to have some scope for 'forum shopping'. Furthermore, the utilisation of institutions for negotiating relations is contingent on benefits sought as well as the ability of government officials to influence the negotiation process. The findings also showed that government officials' assessment of the PC and the MPGIS showed that the institutional capacities of these institutions is a concern and is impacting on their capacity to fulfil their responsibilities. Moreover, the different views regarding

the role of the MPGIS revealed the confusion by government officials on the exact responsibilities of the MPGIS which adversely impact on their expectations of this ministry.

The chapter (Chapter 7) that follows examine in detail the discussions and conclusions of this research.

CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS: CENTRAL-LOCAL RELATIONS WITHIN A DECENTRALISED CONTEXT IN THE SOLOMON ISLANDS.

7.1 Introduction

The aim of this thesis was to examine the functioning of the decentralised system in the Solomon Islands, particularly with respect to the relationship between national and provincial governments. As outline in Chapter 1, the general objective of this thesis was to:

Investigate how has decentralisation affected central-local relations between the national and provincial governments?

In responding to this general objective, this research specifically explored the negotiations of central-local relations as it occurs in a decentralised context in Malaita Province, Solomon Islands. The following specific questions guided the research for this thesis:

1. What are the institutions and procedures for negotiating relations between national and provincial governments?
2. To what extent have national and provincial governments utilised these institutions and procedures, and what is their assessment of them?

This research analysed some of the institutions and procedures used by government officials as they occurred within a decentralised context based on the findings reported in Chapter 6. Utilising a qualitative case study approach, this research examined the experiences of national and provincial officials regarding the negotiations of central-local relations.

This final chapter will place the main findings of Chapter 6 into the context of the research questions identified for this study. Section 7.2 provides a general overview of the research findings, while 7.3 discusses the institutions and procedures for negotiating relations between national and provincial governments. Following on from this, Section 7.4 draw conclusions with regard to the second research question, the extent to which national and provincial governments have used the identified institutions and procedures and their assessment of them. Section 7.5 will respond to the general objective of this research “how has decentralisation affected central-local relations?” Finally, the last Section (7.6) focuses on a final concluding statement, recommendations for future policy decisions, and a possible agenda for further research in this area.

7.2 Discussions of Research Question 1: Institutions and Procedures for Negotiating Relations Between National and Provincial Governments.

This section presents the first research question of this study: “What are the institutions and procedures for negotiating relations between the national and provincial governments?”

The main finding concerning this question is that there are two principle institutions established by the national government to deal with the negotiations of central-local relations; the MPGIS and the PC. While many national and provincial government officials acknowledged the existence of these institutions, national officials’ utilisation of these institutions for negotiating central-local relations is found to be limited. Most national ministries have resorted to or developed other platforms such as sectoral mechanisms citing institutional capacity issues. This finding supports Reddy’s (1996, p. 74) argument in Chapter 2 that where it was found that formal institutions for intergovernmental relations were inadequate to address issues and to ensure coordination between the different spheres of government, informal structures were established. In fact, most national and provincial officials preferred sectoral mechanisms as it allowed them to engage in negotiations at their convenience. This view shows that to some extent alternative platforms employed in the negotiations of relations have succeeded, challenging the view of Axline (1986, p. 105) in Chapter 2 that the establishment of an Act is essential in providing a legal framework for the negotiations of central-local relations.

Another finding indicated that most provincial officials and a few national officials do utilise the two institutions mandated for central-local relations. For example, all national officials from the Ministry of Finance and Treasury (MOFT) have indicated that negotiations with provincial governments are carried out via the MPGIS. They further mentioned that every year they send representatives to the PC meetings. Similarly, the majority of provincial officials confirmed that negotiations undertaken by the province with national governments are predominantly through the MPGIS and the PC.

All these findings support the conclusion that most national and all provincial officials are aware of the existence and mandate of these institutions in negotiating relations between national and provincial governments. Even though MPGIS insists that all national ministries are supposed to channel negotiations with the provinces via their ministry and vice versa, all provincial negotiations with national ministries are to be directed through the MPGIS, the inconsistency in

the utilisation of these platforms by national officials implies that there are no consequences for non-compliance. This findings support Mathebula's (2004, p. 131) claim in Chapter 2 that given intergovernmental relations are exercised within a public administration domain, there should be norms and values which it should subscribe as these are important in shaping the behaviours of public officials especially when it comes to the implementation of their functions.

Regardless of the absence in policies and guidelines concerning the negotiations of central-local relations, national officials highlighted the pivotal role these institutions play when relations between national and provincial governments break down. Moreover, many national and provincial officials indicated that these institutions have the potential to foster a relation of collaboration and cooperation between national and provincial governments, provided that issues relating to institutional capacities were to be addressed. In this sense, it can be concluded that in a unitary system such as the Solomon Islands where most of the power is vested in the national government, it is essential that clear policies and guidelines are established to guide the negotiations of central-local relations. This is important in removing the hierarchical status of either the national or provincial governments in the negotiations of relations. This finding supports Wright's (1988) claim in Chapter 2 that within an IGR environment, the equality of stakeholders removes the hierarchical status, establishing instead an operational mechanism where no level assumes superiority except that of ultimate accountability.

7.3 Discussion of Research Question 2: The Extent to which National and Provincial Governments have utilised the identified Institutions and Procedures, and their Assessment of them.

This section attempts to respond to the second research question of this study: "To what extent have national and provincial government utilised the institutions and procedures, and what is their assessment of them?" The previous findings note that the utilisation of institutions for negotiating central-local relations by national officials is quite limited compared to provincial officials. It also revealed that most national officials have resorted to sectoral mechanisms. Furthermore, many national and provincial officials have alluded to the institutional capacities of the MPGIS which implicates on its ability to effectively deliver on its responsibilities.

The main finding concerning this question is that the utilisation and choice of institutions for negotiating central-local relations by government officials is closely link to the degree of influence or control they have over the negotiation process and its outcome. As illustrated in Table 3, provincial and national officials' utilisation of existing institutions and procedures ranges from very minimal to very high.

Table 3: The Utilisation of Institutions and Procedures by Government Officials in Honiara and Malaita Province.

Government Officials	Utilisation level		
	Identified institutions and procedures		
	Ministry of Provincial Government and Institutional Strengthening (MPGIS)	Premier's Conference (PC)	Sectoral mechanisms
National officials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimal utilisation. Contingent on benefits sought. Limited control. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very minimal utilisation. Once yearly meeting. Very limited/no degree of control on agenda items and resolutions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High utilisation. High degree of control.
Provincial Officials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High utilisation. The only available institution besides the PC. Limited control. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very high utilisation. High degree of control. Once yearly meeting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medium utilisation. Participation is contingent upon approval by sectoral-national. Limited or no control.

Source: Author (based on interviews)

National government officials predominantly use sectoral mechanisms as they seem to have more control over the negotiation process and its outcome than is the case with the MPGIS and the PC. Their utilisation of the PC was very minimal and their attendance is mainly to respond to matters raised by provincial premiers. Other findings also supported this conclusion, such as the

rare attendance of key national officials at the PC meetings, the experiences among several senior national officials that the PC is only an inter-provincial platform, and the fact that a few national officials are not very knowledgeable about the PC.

Provincial officials, on the other hand, recorded a high appreciation of the PC as it enabled them to exercise a certain degree of control over matters for discussion. They also feel empowered when negotiating collectively with national government. Hence, it can be concluded that the extent to which government officials utilise the identified institutions and procedures rests on their ability to control and influence the negotiations process and its outcome. Another finding of this research is that the utilisation of certain institutions in negotiating central-local relations is dependent on the benefits sought. For example, a few line ministries who expressed concerns regarding the performance of the MPGIS also described the critical role it plays in acting as a buffer to keep at distance disgruntled provincial officials.

The main finding concerning the question of government officials' assessment of the institutions and procedures for negotiating central-local relations indicated that institutional capacity and lack of resources is a prominent issue. This supports Vista-Baylon (2000, p. 185) finding in Chapter 2 that governments who intend to decentralised should ensure that human resources development and organisational capacity building continues until such time when sub-national governments are able to sustain their own needs. As revealed by the findings of this study and consistent with literature in Chapter 3, capacity building was not feasible in the Solomon Islands context due to shortages in staff and qualified personnel at national level.

The result of this study also showed that while a few national and provincial officials' acknowledged that MPGIS has to a certain extent promoted cooperation between the two levels of governments, the majority felt otherwise as indicated by a few facts: a) MPGIS lack the necessary skilled manpower to address issues raised by national and provincial governments, b) MPGIS has inadequate resources, c) there is a general laxity by MPGIS when addressing issues and providing timely feedback, d) MPGIS is unable to fill key positions within the ministry, and e) MPGIS is unable to meaningfully represent the voice of the provinces at the national level. All these findings support the conclusion that MPGIS has been unable to fulfil its mandate in negotiating relations between the national and provincial governments.

In contrast, the PC has been assessed by national officials as tailored specifically for inter-provincial negotiations. Most national officials viewed the PC as a platform where provincial governments can rally support with other provinces against the national government. For the most part, the majority of issues on the PC agenda reflect the desires of the provincial government to increase their powers and/or funding. The findings of this research suggest that it is likely that this dichotomy between the two levels of government will remain as a central feature of the discussions in the PC. This finding supports Axline's (1986, p. 30) argument in Chapter 2 that the success and failure of institutions for intergovernmental relations reflect the relative power of the two levels of government. For instance, resolutions emanated from the PC are non-binding, hence their implementation depends on the political will at the national level.

The picture arising from this study shows that in practice very few heads of national line ministries have attended the PC. This poor attendance by high ranking officials at national level undermines the legitimacy of the PC as a forum for negotiating central-local relations. This supports Agranoff's (1999, p. 3) argument in Chapter 2 that the ability of individual decision units to achieve their own objectives will depend not only on their own choices and actions but also those of others. The findings of this study revealed that the PC's annual meetings has been assessed by national and provincial officials as not being effective in addressing issues relating to the negotiations of central-local relations, particularly in the sectors of health and agriculture. This in itself contradicts the stated purposes of the national government in providing these institutional frameworks for dealing with relations between the two levels of governments.

Perhaps the most interesting finding of this study is the development of sectoral mechanisms as a platform for negotiating central-local relations. Based on feedback from many national officials and a few provincial officials this platform has been effective in promoting negotiations between national and provincial governments. Dissatisfaction and reluctance by national officials to use the mandated institutions had resulted in the emergence of various direct sectoral negotiations between national ministries and the provinces. This study concluded that sectoral mechanisms as assessed by many national officials and a few provincial officials³⁰ have been helpful in the negotiations of central-local relations.

³⁰ *Those provincial officials who have utilised the sectoral mechanisms*

This study also illustrates that when national government officials fail to use the identified institutions for negotiating central-local relations, it resulted in weakening their credibility. These findings support Choi and Wright's (2004, p. 2) argument in Chapter 2 that a core component of intergovernmental relations is best understood behaviourally as the dynamics of interactions that takes place among officials exercising power and influence in varying institutional contexts. The behaviour of government officials does implicate on the capacity of the MPGIS and the PC to fulfil their mandate.

In conclusion, government officials' utilisation of institutions and procedures for negotiating central-local relations is influenced by the degree of control and power they can impose on the process and its outcome as well as the benefits sought. National officials' failure to accord these institutions greater relevance by actively using them is impacting on their credibility as the mandated institutions to negotiate central-local relations. It also impact on the ability of provincial government to engage in constructive negotiations with the national government. The weakened position of provincial governments to access alternative mechanisms points to the increasing domination by the national government.

7.4 Discussion of the General Research Objective: Has Decentralisation Affected Central-Local Relations between the National and Provincial Governments?

A number of scholars have argued that a key motive in the pursuit of decentralisation policies in the Solomon Islands is that at least in theory, the involvement and participation of local governments in decision making processes will ensure the effective and efficient delivery of services that reflect locally identified needs and aspirations (Grindle, 2007b; Miller, 2002; Oates, 1999). Advocates of decentralisation have alluded to the strong link that exists between decentralisation and central-local relations in that the manner in which decentralisation redefines central-local relations has potential implications for successful decentralisation (Freinkman, 2007; Kippra, 2003; McLoughin, 2010).

Contrary to these arguments, the results emanating from this study suggest that decentralisation has barely strengthened the role of provinces, nor has it enhanced the relations between national and provincial governments in the Solomon Islands. As Ghai and Regan (1989, p. 2) cited in Chapter 2, decentralisation necessitates the establishment of mechanisms to ensure

intergovernmental cooperation and coordination in the exercise of respective functions. This study's finding supports in part Ghai and Regan's argument that decentralisation has enabled the establishment of institutions necessary for the conduct and negotiations of central-local relations such as the MPGIS and the PC, which was confirmed in the case study that was carried out in the Solomon Islands as discussed in Chapter 3. However, this study's findings verified that MPGIS and the PC as the institutions dealing with the negotiations of central-local relations were not very effective in fulfilling their mandate. As indicated in the findings, the fact that there are no clear policies and guidelines to facilitate or guide the negotiations of central-local relations meant that government officials (particularly national officials) can engage in 'forum shopping' without being penalised. This finding supports Fritschler and Segal (1972, p. 97) argument in Chapter 2 that parties involved in the intergovernmental system need to have an accepted set of rules to guide their actions as this has potential implications on local decision making and policy outputs.

As noted in the findings, very few national line ministries have utilised the MPGIS and the PC in contrast to provincial officials. Moreover, relations between national and provincial governments as shown in the case study have deteriorated, and this is particularly obvious in sectors such as health and agriculture. This illustrates the weakened role that MPGIS and the PC plays in facilitating negotiations between the national and provincial governments. This finding contradicts Crook and Manor's (1998, p. 4) argument in Chapter 2 that decentralisation will create systems of governance that are more effective and accountable.

Decentralisation as envisaged in the National Constitution of 1978 provides for the establishment of a second tier of government known as the provincial government system. The PGA of 1997 provides for certain powers and functions to be devolved to the provinces. However, in practice Cox and Morison (2004, p. 13) claim in Chapter 3 that the actual responsibilities and resources for service delivery were not devolved and resulted in provincial governments playing a marginal role in delivering services and managing development at the rural level. This argument concurred with UNDP's (2008b, p. 5) findings in Chapter 3 which supported a conclusion by a United Nations Common Country Assessment in 2002 that in reality "the powers of provinces are largely illusory," emphasising the need for increased devolution and more equitable distribution of resources to the provinces. Within this context, devolution does not appear to be the purpose of the provincial government system in the Solomon Islands.

Furthermore, findings during the fieldwork suggest that the present form of decentralisation may have led to two separate structures, the national government and the provincial governments, rather than a single integrated system of government with complementary and coordinated institutions. The perception by a few national officials that provincial governments are separate entities or are competing with central government departments hinders the development of an integrated decentralised system. Authors such as Bossuyt and Gould (2000); Ribot (2002); and World Bank (2000) claim that decentralisation through devolution is necessary to establish sub-national levels of government and has gained a reputation as the form of decentralisation from which the greatest benefits can be sought, however, within the Solomon Islands context the devolution of functions to the provinces reveals otherwise. Decentralisation through devolution to the provincial governments has had minimal effect in strengthening central-local relations. Rather, it espouses a system of continued dependency by provinces on the national government for human and financial resources.

Hence, this study raises concerns over the ability of the Solomon Islands current decentralised system to enhance the relationship between the national and provincial governments. The findings suggest that the existence of institutions for negotiating central-local relations within a decentralised context, in itself does not foster coordination and collaboration between the national and provincial governments. This is particularly the case in the absence of clear policies and guidelines that would enforce compliance by all actors in the utilisation of these institutions. The results of this study revealed that the MPGIS and the PC, the institutions dealing with the negotiations of central-local relations have not provided meaningful and constructive platforms for the negotiations of relations between national and provincial governments.

7.5 Final Concluding Statement

This research revealed that decentralisation in the Solomon Islands context has not necessarily strengthened central-local relations between the national and provincial governments. Although decentralisation provided for the establishment of institutions to negotiate relations between the national and provincial governments, the devolution of functions, as stipulated in the PGA of 1997, to the provinces has not come without its challenges. Furthermore, the lack of reference in the National Constitution of 1978 and the PGA of 1997 concerning the institutions for negotiating central-local relations, coupled with the absence of clear policies and guidelines has contributed

to actually weakening the ability of these institutions. The findings also revealed different views by national and provincial officials regarding the role of the MPGIS; while several national officials perceived the MPGIS as a buffer between national and provincial governments, most provincial officials described it as an overseer and the voice of the provinces at the national level. Therefore the findings of this thesis suggest that the utilisation and choice of institutions by government officials for negotiating central-local relations is inherent in national and provincial officials' ability to influence the negotiation process and its outcomes. Benefits sought from using these institutions are also a prominent factor. Finally, the study suggests that there is a potential contradiction in the establishment of these institutions by the national government to encourage a relation of cooperation between national and provincial governments and the actual use of these institutions by national government ministries.

7.6 Recommendation for Policy and Further Research

This study can contribute to a better understanding of the negotiations of central-local relations within a decentralised system in the Solomon Islands. The findings from this study could be used by both national and provincial government officials in decision making positions to reflect on existing institutions and procedures, and the role they play in fostering cooperation and collaboration between the national and provincial governments particularly in the delivery of basic services to rural communities. Development partners supporting decentralisation initiatives to provincial governments may also benefit from these findings.

In terms of central-local relations, the current Government may be informed by this research through its on-going reform process to establish a new system of government (federal government) which should result in more authority and power being devolved to provinces. Since a lot of autonomy for the provinces is envisaged in a federal system, the role of MPGIS and the PC may soon be redundant. This research can therefore inform the drafting process of the federal constitution regarding the negotiations of central-local relations in the proposed federal system. This is important in ensuring that weaknesses learned from the current unitary system of government are not replicated in the adoption of a new government system.

Furthermore, while this study specifically focuses on the context in Solomon Islands, it may also be useful for other Pacific Island Countries in the region and in other parts of the world, in that its

findings have the potential to contribute to a better understanding of the dynamics and complexities involved in negotiating central-local relations as they evolve within a decentralised context. Decentralisation necessitates the development of central-local relations in support of effective service delivery and good governance. As illustrated in the Solomon Islands case, the challenges encountered in the negotiations of central-local relations are attributed to the absence of clear implementation policies and guidelines, thus creating inconsistency in the utilisation of institutions by government officials.

Several potential areas have been identified as useful for further research into the negotiations of central-local relations within a decentralised context. Firstly, this study focuses mainly on the experiences of national and provincial government officials; thus it would be useful to carry out a research that incorporates the experiences of other key stakeholders such as donors, NGOs, and civil societies. This would contribute to a comprehensive understanding of central-local relations. Secondly, the current institutions were established by the national government in the late 1970s prior to the enactment of the PGA of 1981, thus probably out-dated and failing to address the current political situation. A complementary research should therefore be carried out on the relevance of these institutions within the current decentralised context in Solomon Islands and alternative strategies that would enhance or foster meaningful relations of cooperation and collaboration between the two levels of governments. Thirdly, a study to examine the role of the MPGIS (i.e. some government officials see it as a buffer between the national and provincial governments, a few consider it as an overseer, while others say it's the voice of the provinces at national level) as the mandated institution dealing with the negotiations of central-local relations is recommended to avoid any confusion or potential for conflict of interest in the implementation of its mandate. Lastly, this case study focuses on the negotiations of central-local relations between the national and provincial government and does not include provincial to community level. A similar study to investigate the negotiations of relations between the provincial government and rural communities would be useful in gaining an overall picture of the reality of central-local relations in a decentralised system in the Solomon Islands.

References

- Agranoff, R. (1999). Expanding intergovernmental management's hidden dimensions. *American Review of Public Administration*, 29(4), 352-369.
- Agranoff, R., & McGuire, M. (2002). American federalism and the search for models of management *Public Administration Review*, 61(6), 671-681.
- Agrawal, A., & Ribot, J. (1999). Accountability in decentralization: A framework with South Asian and West African environmental cases. *The Journal of Developing Areas*, 33, 473-502.
- Alasia, S. (1989). Ples blo iumi: Solomon Islands. In H. Laracy (Ed.), *The Past Thousand Years* (pp. 137-151). Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies.
- Anderson, W. (1960). *Intergovernmental relations in review*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Axline, W. A. (1986). *Decentralisation and development policy: provincial government and the planning process in Papua New Guinea*. Port Moresby: PNG Institute of Applied Social and Economic Research.
- Azfar, O., Kahkonen, S., Lanyi, A., Meagher, P., & Rutherford, D. (1999). *Decentralization, governance and public services: The impact of institutional arrangements*. Baltimore: University of Maryland.
- Bahl, R. (1999). Fiscal decentralization as development policy. *Public Budgeting and Finance*, 19(2), 59-75.
- Bank, W. (1999). *Entering the 21st century: The changing development landscape*. New York.
- Baxter, P., & Jack, S. (2008). Qualitative case study methodology: Study design and implementation for novice researchers. *The Qualitative Report*, 13(4), 544-559.
- Bennett, J. A. (1987). *Wealth of the Solomons: A history of a Pacific archipelago, 1800-1978*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii.
- Bird, R., & Wallich, C. (1993). *Fiscal decentralization and intergovernmental relations in transition economies: Towards a systematic framework of analysis*. (Working paper). Washington D.C: World Bank.
- Blair, H. (2000). Participation and accountability at the periphery: Democratic local governance in six countries. *World Development*, 28(1), 21-39.
- Boschmann, N. (2009). *Fiscal decentralization and options for donor harmonisation*. Berlin.
- Bossuyt, J., & Gould, J. (2000). *Decentralisation and poverty reduction: Elaborating the linkages*. Institute of Development Studies, University of Helsinki.
- Bray, M. (1985). Education and decentralisation in less developed countries: a comment on general trends, issues and problems, with particular reference to Papua New Guinea. *Comparative Education*, 21(2), 183-195.
- Cheema, G. S., & Rondinelli, D. A. (1983). Implementing decentralization policies: An introduction. In G. S. Cheema & D. A. Rondinelli (Eds.), *Decentralization and development: Policy Implementation in developing countries* (pp. 9-34). New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Cheema, G. S., & Rondinelli, D. A. (2007). Decentralizing governance: Emerging concepts and practices. In G. S. Cheema & D. A. Rondinelli (Eds.), *From government decentralisation to decentralized governance* (pp. 1-20). Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution Press.
- Choi, Y.-S., & Wright, D. S. (2004). Intergovernmental relations (IGR) in Korea and Japan: Phases, pattern, and progress toward decentralization (local autonomy) in a trans-pacific context. *The International Review of Public Administration*, 9(1), 1-22.
- Cohen, J. M., & Peterson, S. B. (1999). *Administrative decentralization: Strategies for developing countries*. Sterling.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2000). *Research methods in education* (5 ed.). London: Routledge.

- Copper, D. R., & Schindler, P. S. (1998). *Business research methods* (6 ed.). McGraw Hill, New York: Irwin.
- Cox, J., & Morrison, J. (2004). *Solomon Islands Provincial Governance* Honiara: AusAID.
- Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3 ed.). London: Sage Publication.
- Crook, R. C., & Manor, J. (1998). *Democracy and decentralisation in South Asia and West Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Darke, P., Shanks, G., & Broadbent, M. (1998). Successfully completing case study research: Combining rigour, relevance and pragmatism. *Information System Journal*, 8, 273-289.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. (2005). *The sage handbook of qualitative research* (3 ed.). California: Sage Publication.
- Department of National Disaster Office. (2009). *Assessment report in Malaita Province*. Malaita Provincial Disaster Office. Honiara, Solomon Islands.
- Descombe, M. (2007). *The good research guide for small-scale social research projects* (3 ed.). London, England: Open University Press.
- Diamond, L. (1999). *Developing democracy: Towards consolidation*. Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Dyer, C., & Rose, P. (2005). Decentralisation for educational development? . *An Editorial Introduction*, 32(2), 105-113.
- Ebel, R. D., & Yilmaz, S. (2002). *Concept of fiscal decentralisation and worldwide overview*. World Bank Institute.
- Eisenhardt, K. M. (1989). Building theories from case study research. *Academy of Management Review*, 14, 532-550.
- Faguet, J. P. (2004). Does decentralization increase government responsiveness to local needs? Evidence from Bolivia. *Journal of Public Economics*, 88(3-4), 867-893.
- Fossey, E., Harvey, C., McDermott, F., & Davidson, L. (2002). Understanding and evaluation qualitative research. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, 36, 717-732.
- Freinkman, L. (2007). *Intergovernmental relations in Nigeria: Improving service delivery in core sectors*. Nigeria: The World Bank.
- Freinkman, L., & Plekhanov, A. (2009). *Fiscal decentralisation and the quality of public services in Russian regions*. London: European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.
- Fritschler, A. L., & Segal, M. (1972). Intergovernmental relations and contemporary political science: Developing an integrative typology. *Oxford Journals*, 1(2), 95-122.
- Furniss, N. (1974). The practical significance of decentralization. *The Journal of Politics*, 36(4), 958-982.
- Gaventa, J., & Valderama, C. (1999). *Participation, citizenship and local governance*.
- Ghai, Y. (1983). The making of the independence constitution. In P. Lamour (Ed.), *Solomon Islands Politic* (pp. 9-52). Suva: University of the South Pacific.
- Ghai, Y., & Regan, A. J. (1989). *Decentralisation and intergovernmental relations in Papua New Guinea*. Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea: Institute of Applied Social and Economic Research.
- Gibson, W. J., & Brown, A. (2009). *Working with qualitative data*. London: Sage Publication.
- Grindle, M. S. (2007a). *Going Local: Decentralization, democratization and the promise of good governance*. United Kingdom: Princeton University Press.
- Grindle, M. S. (2007b). Good enough governance revisited: Poverty reduction and reform in developing countries. *Development Policy Review*, 25(5), 553-574.
- Grote, U., & Braun, J. V. (2000). *Does decentralization serve the poor? Paper prepared for the International Monetary Fund's conference on fiscal decentralisation*. Washington D.C: International Monetary Fund.

- Harrigan, J. J. (1994). *Politics and policy in the states and communities* (5 ed.): Harper Collins College Publishers.
- Hattingh, J. J. (1998). *Government relations: A South African perspective*. Pretoria: UNISA Press.
- Hopkins, P. E. (2007). Positionalities and knowledge: Negotiating ethics in practice. *An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies*, 6(3), 386-394.
- Jun, J. S., & Wright, D. S. (1996). Globalisation and decentralization: An overview. In J. S. Jun & D. S. Wright (Eds.), *Globalisation and decentralization: Institutional contents, policy issues and intergovernmental relations in Japan and the United States*. Washington D.C: Georgetown University Press.
- Jutting, J., Corsi, E., & Stockmayer, A. (2005). Decentralisation and poverty reduction. *OECD Development Centre Policy Insight*, 5.
- Kabutaulaka, T. T. (2008). *Elections and political process: Westminster meets Solomons in the Honiara riots*. Canberra: Australian National University.
- Kahn, R., & Cannell, C. (1957). *The dynamics of interviewing*. New York: John Wiley.
- Kausimae, D. (1978). *From local government to provincial government in the Solomon Islands. Decentralisation in PNG*. Port Moresby.
- Kippra, S. N. (2003). *Theoretical and practical issues in decentralisation and fiscal devolution: Lessons from Kenya*. Addis Ababa: Economic Commission for Africa.
- Kuazya, J. M. (2007). *Political decentralization in Africa: Experiences of Uganda, Rwanda, and South Africa*. New York: United Nations.
- Kumar, R. (1996). *Research methodology: Step-By-Step guide for beginners*. Melbourne, Australia: Addison Wesley Longman.
- Lane, J. E., & Murray, M. (1985). The significance of decentralisation in Swedish education. *European Journal of Education*, 20(2/3), 163-170.
- Laracy, H. (1983). *Pacific protest: The maasina rule movement* Suva, Fiji: Institute of Pacific Studies.
- MacDonald, B. (1976). Imperial remnants: Decolonisation and political change in the British Pacific Island. In F. F. King (Ed.), *Oceania and Beyond: Essays on the Pacific Since 1945*. London: Greenwood Press.
- MacDonald, R. (2008). *Safety, security, and accessible justice: Participatory approaches to Law and Justice reform in Papua New Guinea*. Honolulu, Hawaii: East West Center.
- Mae, P. (2010). *Constitutional reforms in Solomon Islands: An analysis of public participation in the reform process*. Vanuatu: University of the South Pacific.
- Maiava, S. (2003). *A clash of paradigms: Intervention, response and development in the South Pacific*. Aldeshot: Ashgate.
- Manor, J. (1999). *The political economy of democratic decentralization*. Washington, D.C: World Bank.
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. (1999). *Designing qualitative research* (3 ed.). California: Sage Publishing.
- Mathebula, F. M. (2004). *Intergovernmental relations reform in a newly emerging South Africa policy*. A thesis submitted to the School of Public Management and Administration in partial fulfillment of the requirement for degree of Doctor of Public Administration, University of Pretoria, Pretoria.
- Mawhood, P. (1983). *Local government in the third world*. Chinchester: John Wiley.
- McDougall, D. (2003). *Fellowship and citizenship as models of national community: United Church women's fellowship in Ranongga, Solomon Islands*. Chicago: University of Chicago.
- McGinn, N., & Welsh, T. (1999). *Decentralisation of education: Why, when, what and how?* Paris: UNESCO/IIEP.

- McCloughin, C. (2010). *Political economy of sub-national government*. Governance and Social Development Resource Centre.
- Miller, K. L. (2002). *Advantages & disadvantages of local government decentralization*. Georgetown, Guyana.
- Mills, A. (1994). Decentralization and accountability in the health sector from an international perspective: what are the choices. *Public Administration and Development*, 14, 281-292.
- Mills, A., Vaughan, J. P., Smith, D. L., & Tabidzadeh, I. (1990). *Health system decentralisation: concepts, issues and country experience*. London: World Health Organisation.
- Ministry of Home Affairs. (1979). *Report on the Special Committee on Provincial Government*. Honiara, Solomon Islands: Solomon Islands Government.
- Ministry of Provincial Government and Institutional Strengthening. (2010a). *Annual Premiers' Conference: A conceptual framework*. Honiara: MPGIS.
- Ministry of Provincial Government and Institutional Strengthening. (2010b). Profile: Ministry of Provincial Government and Institutional Strengthening. *Commonwealth Network: Solomon Islands*. Retrieved from http://www.commonwealth-of-nations.org/Solomon_Islands/Ministry/Ministry_of_Provincial_Government_and_Inst~/welcome website:
- Ministry of Provincial Government and Institutional Strengthening. (2011). *Corporate Plan 2011-2013*. Honiara: MPGIS.
- Ministry of Provincial Government and Rural Development. (2001). *Malaita province development profile*. Honiara: Solomon Islands Government.
- Moli, R. (2006). *Case study: How to increase the effectiveness of provincial service delivery and make the Malaita Province Government more relevant and accessible to the grassroots people*. Malaita Provincial Government. Auki.
- Moore, C. (2010). *Decolonising the Solomon Islands: British theory and Melanesian practice*. (Working Paper). Geelong: Deakin University.
- Nanau, G. (1997). *Decentralisation, development and popular participation: A study of the Provincial Government system*. Masters of Arts in Development Studies A thesis in fulfilment for the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Development Studies, The University of the South Pacific Suva.
- Nanau, G. (1998). Decentralisation reform in Solomon Islands. In P. Lamour (Ed.), *Governance and reform in the South Pacific* (pp. 183-199). Canberra: National Centre for Development Studies.
- Nelson, C., & Muggah, R. (2004). *Solomon Islands: Evaluating the weapons free village campaign*. Honiara.
- Oates, W. E. (1999). An essay on fiscal federalism. *Journal of Economic Literature*, 37(3), 1120-1149.
- Office of the Auditor General. (2010). *Solomon Islands Government: Annual report of the Auditor General 2010*. Honiara: Office of the Auditor General.
- Office of the Premier. (2011). *Policy framework and development strategies 2011-2020*. Auki, Solomon Islands: Malaita Provincial Government.
- Olowu, D. (2000). Bureaucracy and democratic reform. In G. Hyden, D. Olowu & H. Ogiendo (Eds.), *African Perspectives of Governance* (pp. 153-179). Trenton: Africa World Press.
- Olowu, D., & Wunsch, J. S. (1990). *The failure of the centralized state: Institutions and self-governance in Africa*. Colorado: Westview Press.
- Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. (2009). *Good leadership report: Solomon Islands*. Suva: PIFS.
- Pellini, A. (2000). *Decentralisation policy in Cambodia: Exploring community participation in the education sector*. Finland: University of Tampere.
- Premdas, R. R. (1982). The Solomon Islands: The experiment in decentralization. *Public Administration and Development*, 2, 239-251.

- Premdas, R. R., & Steeves, J. S. (1985). *The Solomon Islands: An experiment in decentralization*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii.
- Pretorius, C., Lokay, P., & Arumae, H. (2008). *Solomon Islands public finance management*. (Performance Report). Rotterdam: European Commission.
- The Provincial Government Act, 7 Stat. 1-41 (Solomon Islands Government 1997).
- Randell, S. (1999). *Provincial government review*. Honiara: Asian Development Bank.
- Reddy, P. S. (1996). Local government restructuring in South Africa. In P. S. Reddy (Ed.), *Readings in local government management and development: A Southern African perspective*. Cape Town: Juta & Co.
- Report of the Solomon Islands Constitutional Conference. (1977). *Constitutional Conference*. London: H.M.S.O.
- Ribot, J. C. (2001). Integral local development: Accommodating multiple interests' through entrustment and accountable representation. *International Journal of Agricultural Resources, Governance and Ecology*, 1(3/4), 327-350.
- Ribot, J. C. (2002). *African decentralisation: Local actors, powers and accountability*. Geneva.
- Robertson, J. (2002). Reflexivity redux: A pithy polemic on "positionality". *Anthropological Quarterly*, 75(4), 785-792.
- Rondinelli, D. A. (1980). Government decentralization in comparative perspective: Theory and practice in developing countries. *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, 47(133), 133-145.
- Rondinelli, D. A. (1983). Implementing decentralization programmes in Asia: a comparative analysis. *Public Administration and Development* 3, 181-207.
- Rondinelli, D. A., & Nellis, J. R. (1986). Assessing decentralization policies in developing countries: The case for cautious optimism. *Development Policy Review*, 4, 3-23.
- Rossmann, G., & Marshall, C. (2006). *Designing qualitative research* (4 ed.). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.
- Roux, N., Bernard, P., Botes, P., & Fourie, D. (1999). *Critical issues in public management and administration in South Africa*. Pretoria: Kajiso Tertiary.
- Scheyvens, H., & Nowak, B. (2003). Personal issues. In H. Scheyvens & D. Storey (Eds.), *Development fieldwork: A practical guide* (pp. 97-115). London: Sage Publication.
- Scheyvens, R., Nowak, B., & Scheyvens, H. (2003). Ethical issues. In R. Scheyvens & D. Storey (Eds.), *Development fieldwork: A practical guide*. London Sage Publications.
- Shabbir, C. G., & Dennis, R. A. (2007). From government decentralisation to decentralized governance. In C. G. Shabbir & R. D. A (Eds.), *Decentralizing governance: Emerging concepts and practices*. (pp. 1-20). Washington D C: Brooking Institution Press.
- Shah, A., & Thompson, T. (2004). *Implementing decentralized local governance: A treacherous road with potholes, detours and road closures*. . (Policy Research Working paper). Washington D.C: World Bank Policy Research.
- Smith, B. C. (1985). *Decentralization: The territorial dimensions of the state*. London: George Allen.
- Smoke, P. (2001). *Fiscal decentralization in developing countries: A review of current concepts and practice, democracy*. New York: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development.
- Smoke, P. (2003). Decentralisation in Africa: Goals, dimensions, myths and challenges. *Public Administration and Development*, 23, 7-16.
- Solomon Islands National Statistics Office. (2009). *Basic tables and census description*. Honiara: Solomon Islands Government.
- Stanton, A. (2009). *Decentralisation and municipalities in South Africa: An analysis of the mandate to deliver basic services*. Doctor of Philosophy (Policy and Development Studies)

- 2009 Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Policy and Development Studies), University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg.
- Taylor, S. J., & Bogdan, R. (1998). *Introduction to qualitative research methods: A guidebook and resource* (3 ed.). New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Tuhaika, J. (2005). *Presentation on the occassion of the commonwealth advanced seminar*. Wellington, New Zealand: Solomon Islands Government.
- Turner, M., & Hulme, D. (1997). *Governance, administration and development*. London: MacMillan.
- United Nations. (2000). *Decentralization: Conditions for success. Lessons from Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States*. New York: United Nations.
- United Nations Development Programme. (1999). *Decentralization: A sampling of definitions*. Germany: UNDP.
- United Nations Development Programme. (2008a). *Designing inclusive and accountable local democratic institutions*. Bangkok: UNDP Regional Centre.
- United Nations Development Programme. (2008b). *Provincial Governance Strengthening Programme*. Honiara: UNDP.
- United Nations Economic and Social Council. (2005). *Policy dialogue: Decentralization for poverty reduction*. Bangkok: United Nations Economic and Social Council.
- Vale, H. F. D. (2010). *Theorizing institutional changes: Understanding decentralization and federalization in Brazil, Spain, and South Africa*. Barcelona.
- Vista-Baylon, H. I. (2000). *Decentralization: What, when, and how*. Manila: Asian Development Bank.
- Voss, C., Tsikriktsis, N., & Frohlich, M. (2002). Case research: Case research in operations management. *International Journal of Operations and Production Management*, 22(2), 195-219.
- Walberg, H., Paik, S., Komukai, A., & Freeman, S. (2000). *Decentralisation: An international perspective*. Education Horizon.
- Wielders, I. (2003). *Conflict resolution and governance in Solomon Islands*. Sydney: The University of Sydney.
- Work, R. (2002). *Overview of decentralisation worldwide: A stepping stone to improved governance and human development*. (Paper prepared for the 2nd International Conference on Decentralisation. Federalism: The Future of Decentralizing States?). New York: United Nations Development Programme.
- World Bank. (2000). *Helping countries to combat corruption. Progress at the World Bank since 1997*. Washington DC: World Bank.
- Wright, S. D. (1988). *Understanding intergovernmental relations*. California: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company.
- Yin, R. K. (1981). The case study crisis: Some answers. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 26(1), 58-65.
- Yin, R. K. (1994). *Case study research: Design and methods* (2 ed.). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publishing
- Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods* (3 ed.). California: Sage.
- Yuliani, E. L. (2004). *Decentralization, deconcentration and devolution*. Interlaken, Switzerland.
- Zohrabi, M. (2011). A short analysis of the fundamental issues in language teaching research. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies* 1(6), 698-706.

Appendices

Appendix 1: National and Provincial Officials Interview Guide

1. What kind of documentation do you have regarding 'decentralisation' and the negotiations of 'central-local' relations between national and provincial governments?
2. What is your assessment of decentralised functions to the provinces
3. Can you list a number of institution/procedure to negotiate central-local relations? Which one is the most important and why?
4. What is your assessment of the institution/procedure you identified as most important?
5. What is good and what can be improve based on your experience? Can you provide examples?

Appendix 2: Schedule 3, 4 and 5 of the Provincial Government Act 1997.

34

Relations with central government

12. The admission to meetings of the Assembly or its committees of any member of Parliament whose constituency includes any part of the province.
13. The establishment of a co-ordinating committee to include any such member of Parliament.
14. Securing that no draft Ordinance is debated in the Assembly unless the Speaker is satisfied that the draft has been brought to the attention of the Minister.

Resolution to dissolve or motion of no confidence

15. Where a motion is to be moved under sections 10(2) or 19(4), provision ensuring that adequate notice of the motion (not being less than one week is given to members of the Assembly).

SCHEDULE 3 (Section 26 (3))

LEGISLATIVE MATTERS

Trade and Industry

1. (1) Local licensing of professions, trades and businesses, local marketing.
- (2) The Weights and Measures Act is not included.

Act No 12 of 1973.

Cultural and Environment Matters

2. Local crafts, Historical remains, Protection of wild creatures.
3. Coastal and lagoon shipping, Provision, maintenance and improvement of harbours, roads and bridges.

Finance

4. Raising revenue by-
 - (a) basic rates;
 - (b) property tax;
 - (c) fees for services performed or licences issued by or on behalf of the Provincial Executive (other than services performed or licences issued by them as agent of another); and

(d) such other means as may be approved for the purposes of this paragraph by the Minister by order.

Agriculture and Fishing

5. Animal husbandry, Management of agricultural land, Grants, loans and subsidies in respect of agricultural production, Protection, improvement and maintenance of fresh-water and reef fisheries.

Land and Land Use

6. Codification and amendment of existing customary law about land. Registration of customary rights in respect of land including customary fishing rights. Physical planning except within a local planning area (within the meaning Act No. 22 of the Town and Country Planning Act or an area to which Part IV of that Act 1979) has been applied.

Act No. 22 of 1979

Local Matters

7. Fire services and fire protection, Waste disposal and cleansing services, Resthouses, eating houses and similar places, Public conveniences, Vagrancy, Public nuisances, Cemeteries, Parks and recreation grounds, Markets, Keeping of domestic animals, Building Standards.

Local Government

8. (1) The constitution, area and general powers and duties of Area Councils and similar bodies, their revenue and expenditure.

(2) The making of by-laws by such bodies, that is, laws-

(a) affecting only the area of responsibility of the body;

(b) not having effect until confirmed by the Provincial Executive; and

(c) not made for a purpose for which provision is made by, or is or may be made under, any other enactment.

(3) To determine by resolution of the Provincial Assembly the salaries and allowances to be paid in respect of area councillors.

Housing

9. Housing, Regulation of rents.

Rivers and Water

10. Control and use of river waters, Pollution of water, Provision of water supplies (other than urban water supply in areas, prescribed by under the Solomon Islands Water Authority Act).

Act No. 16 of 1992

Liquor

11. Liquor licensing.

Corporate or Statutory Bodies

12. Establishment of corporate or statutory bodies for provincial services including economic activity.

NOTE References in this Schedule to any enactment include a reference to any order, rules or regulations made under it.

SCHEDULE 4

Section 26(4)

STATUTORY FUNCTIONS**PART 1****FUNCTIONS THAT MAY BE TRANSFERRED***Cultural and Environmental Matters*

The Cinematograph Act
(Cap. 30)

The functions given to the Licensing
Authority under that Act.

The functions given to the Minister under
section 14 (making rules) except paragraph
(f) (Board of Censors).

The Wild Birds Protection Act (Cap 89)

The functions given to the Minister and 14
(Sanctuaries).

Transport

Roads Act (Cap. 17)

The functions given to the Minister under
sections 3, 5, 27 and 29(b) to (f) and (so far
as relating to those paragraphs) (g) of that
Act.

The Traffic Act (Cap. 19)

The functions given to the highway authority
under sections 68 and 69 of that Act (closure
of roads and injury to bridges).

The Light Dues and Harbours Act. (Cap.
100)

The functions given to the Chief Marine
Officer under section 5 of that Act
(obstructions in harbours).

Agricultural and Fishing

The Commodities Export Marketing
Authority Act (Act No. 5 of 1984)

The functions and powers conferred on the Authority under sections 11, 12, and 13 (relating to issue, renewal, revocation, and variation of the conditions of a licence to carry on any prescribed activity in a commodity other than export, including power to receive applications for issue, renewal, revocation and variation of the conditions of such licence, or to make any variation in those conditions, or to register such licence, or to permit temporary carrying on prescribed activity covered by a licence:

Provided that no function or power conferred under those sections shall be exercised except after consultation with the Authority. The function conferred on the Minister under section 32, to exempt a person or a class of persons from the provisions of section 11(1)(b); provided that no such function can be performed except after consultation with the Authority

The Trespass and Branding Act.
(Cap. 88)

The functions given to the Minister or the Under Secretary/Agriculture under that Act

Land and Land Use

The Land and Titles Act
(Cap. 93)

The functions given to the Minister under Division 2 of Part V of that Act (compulsory acquisition of land) in relation to land required for the purposes of devolved functions.

Rivers and Water

The River Waters Act
(Cap. 96)

The functions given to the Minister under that Act.

Forestry

The Forest Resources and Timber Utilisation
Act (Cap 90)

The functions given to the Minister under Part IIA of the Act (approved timber agreement affecting customary land).

The functions given to the Minister and Part

III (licensing of mills).

The functions given to the Minister under section 33 (regulations) so far as relating to Parts IIA, III and VI

Public Holidays

The Public Holidays Act
(Cap. 35)

The functions given to the Governor-General under section 6 of that Act (appointment, for special public holidays).

Liquor

The Liquor Act
(Cap. 33)

The functions given to the Minister under section 16 of that Act (appointment of Liquor Licensing Board).

The functions given to the Minister under s 84 (closure of bars).

The functions given to the Minister under 96 (power to alter fees and forms).

**PART II
CONCURRENT FUNCTIONS**

The functions included in Part I in respect of the following Acts-

The Roads Act
The Traffic Act
The Public Holidays Act

**SCHEDULE 5
(Section 33(3))**

PROVINCIAL SERVICES

Trade and Industry

Employment.
Co-operatives.
Local trades and industries.

Cultural and Environmental Matters

Museums, libraries, local languages, arts and crafts, sports and other cultural and recreative activities.
 Historical remains.
 Conservation of the environment.

Transport

Shipping and harbours.
 Road transport.
 Aerodromes.

Agriculture and Fishing

Agriculture.
 Fishing.

Health

Medical services. Public Health.

Local Matters

Matters included in-paragraph 7 of Schedule 3.
 Welfare and other social services.

Housing

Housing

Information

Newspapers and other information services.
 Statistics.

Forestry

Forestry.

Education

Kindergartens, primary schools, provincial secondary schools and community education.

Electricity

Supply of electricity outside supply areas (within the meaning of the Electricity Act).

Tourism

Tourism

Corporate or Statutory Bodies

Appendix 3: Human Research Ethics Committee Document



MASSEY UNIVERSITY

9 June 2011

Gloria Suluia
35 Rakaia Place
PALMERSTON NORTH 4410

Dear Gloria

Re: Decentralisation and Central-Local Relations in the Solomon Islands: A Case Study of Malaita Province

Thank you for your Low Risk Notification which was received on 23 May 2011.

Your project has been recorded on the Low Risk Database which is reported in the Annual Report of the Massey University Human Ethics Committees.

The low risk notification for this project is valid for a maximum of three years.

Please notify me if situations subsequently occur which cause you to reconsider your initial ethical analysis that it is safe to proceed without approval by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees.

Please note that travel undertaken by students must be approved by the supervisor and the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor and be in accordance with the Policy and Procedures for Course-Related Student Travel Overseas. In addition, the supervisor must advise the University's Insurance Officer.

A reminder to include the following statement on all public documents:

"This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research."

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Professor John O'Neill, Director (Research Ethics), telephone 06 350 5249, e-mail humanethics@massey.ac.nz."

Please note that if a sponsoring organisation, funding authority or a journal in which you wish to publish requires evidence of committee approval (with an approval number), you will have to provide a full application to one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. You should also note that such an approval can only be provided prior to the commencement of the research.

Yours sincerely

John G O'Neill (Professor)
**Chair, Human Ethics Chairs' Committee and
Director (Research Ethics)**

cc Mr Gerard Prinsen
School of People, Environment and
Planning
PN331

Mrs Mary Roberts, HoS Secretary
School of People, Environment and
Planning
PN331

Massey University Human Ethics Committee
Accredited by the Health Research Council

Te Kunenga
ki Pūrehuroa

Research Ethics Office, Massey University, Private Bag 11222, Palmerston North 4442, New Zealand
T +64 6 350 5573 +64 6 350 5575 F +64 6 350 5622
E humanethics@massey.ac.nz animalethics@massey.ac.nz gtc@massey.ac.nz
www.massey.ac.nz

