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**STEPS IN A LONG JOURNEY:
COMMUNITY PROJECTS
AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
IN WEST KWAIO AND CENTRAL KWARA'AE
MALAITA, SOLOMON ISLANDS**

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Abstract

This study attempts to evaluate whether development projects could be means to the end of sustainable development in the Solomon Islands context of a subsistence economy in transition to a cash economy.

Literature on development often emphasizes theory over practice, global over local, project design and implementation over project evaluation, and failures over successes. This research intends to reverse these tendencies and determine, in the evaluation of highly participatory, highly local, small-scale community projects, whether development projects could be means to the end of sustainable development. The evaluation is based on the assumption that community projects can only be truly successful if they contribute to maintain and/or improve the condition of both people and the ecosystem.

It is proposed here that sustainable development may be realized through the cumulative effect of development activities that may be individually minor—at a local or a higher level—but collectively significant. What is inherently difficult is how the collective result of many disparate local development initiatives in the present may result in a desired state of affairs in the future—not just locally, but at a national or regional level.

It is concluded here that community projects may contribute to progress towards sustainable development but are not a sufficient means to this end. Projects may have a *tactical* role in development, but should be integrated to an overall strategy for sustainable development. Ultimately these needs may lead to a new development practice paradigm that replaces *the project*. A new paradigm should be inclusive of emerging initiatives at the grassroots level, but also fit in a broader strategy for sustainable development. The search for a long term development strategy, however, should not impede local action to address more immediate needs.

On line with research by others in this issue, it argued here that in the Solomon Islands the notion of community is interwoven with the land through present use and history in the notion of *fanua kem*, “our place”. The notion of *fanua* could provide a cultural foundation to the notion of sustainable development. It is suggested that the value of *fanua* results not so much a matter of awareness of superior goals but rather, it is in the quotidian quality and ubiquitous use in Solomon Islands villages that the notion of “our place” does provide a sense of identity and belonging to a place, a community, a common past, and a common future.

Preface

This research originates in fieldwork conducted in 1994 in the Solomon Islands for an Australian youth and community development organization. At that time, there were a number of community initiatives (or projects) in their beginning stages. I was fortunate enough to work with these communities and with a group of young volunteers. Whilst I had a definite interest for development issues, the fieldwork was largely unrelated to any theoretical academic consideration of development. Years later it was a matter of personal and academic interest to find out what had happened to those communities and whether their initiatives had succeeded or failed, why, and what the consequences for the future would be.

This work attempts to analysis why people's development initiatives succeed or fail, and ultimately what viable, realistic strategies for sustainable development in the South Pacific would be. By "realistic" strategies, however, I do not mean compromise with the powers that be, but real life actions that represent a modest but viable contribution to the defined or undefined goals of creating a better place to live, "in comfort and dignity"¹, in the near future and on into the distant future. To a greater or lesser degree these are everyone's goals, in the Solomon Islands as elsewhere.

I have tried to find out the answers by trying an eclectic mix of approaches, which is the reason why this thesis is so long and not necessarily better. If I were to do it again I would do it much shorter, and I would make an additional effort to delve into the non-English development literature as well as on what has been written by people from the Pacific. In compensation, to the extent possible I have tried to reproduce what Solomon Islanders have to say: "What people say is real, even if it is not written in the books".² My apologies for any misrepresentation of their opinions, languages or cultural beliefs I may have made. Perhaps the main result of this research will be to bring back a message from the people who are at the "frontline" of development to us who have a more secure life in the North and the West. What people say may resonate in our own lives, help our reflection and encourage our actions. What people in the Solomon Islands experience in their struggle for life is after all a different version of our own struggles. Our cultures and circumstances may differ, but we share the same journey.

Ricardo Roura
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¹ Foanota 1989 – see Chapter 12.

² Balu'u pers. comm. 2000.

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And to the Solomon Islands, a dear place that at times exasperates me but that I could never forget.

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'If you think that education is expensive, try ignorance'

(Attributed to André Malraux)

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This study looks at community projects and sustainable development in Malaita Province, Solomon Islands. The analysis is twofold: it focuses on the evaluation of income-generating community projects, and on the contribution of community projects to sustainable development. Literature on development often emphasises theory over practice, global over local, project design and implementation over project evaluation, and failures over successes. The idea of this research was to reverse these tendencies and seek, in real life development paths, useful insights that could ultimately contribute to the theory of sustainable development.

Some of the community projects considered here were specifically intended to generate an income through a sustainable use of natural resources; others simply aimed to generate an income. As a means for community development, these projects reproduced, at a community level, the choices implicit in the notion of sustainable development. Importantly, these projects had the ideal characteristics of the type of initiative that in theory would follow a sustainable development path: they were highly participatory, highly local, small-scale community projects. Based on these projects, the working hypothesis tested through this research is: "Community development projects are a necessary but not sufficient means to the end of sustainable development in the Solomon Islands."

In testing this hypothesis this work attempts to answer two sets of questions. The first set of questions concern the communities, their well-being and projects. Had the projects been successful in the eyes of people? Had the projects contributed to people's well-being? What makes a community "tick" and work together? Why do community income-generating projects succeed or fail? Are community projects a feasible means for the generation of income? The second set of questions concerns the environment where people live, which in the Solomon Islands is an intrinsic part of people's lives and of who people are. Had the quality and well-being of the local environment increased or decreased since the projects began? Had the projects contributed in any way, either deliberately or unwittingly, to the elusive goal of ecologically sustainable development? How can the communities' wealth be turned into cash in a sustainable manner? Are community projects a viable route to the goal of sustainable development?

In order to test the working hypothesis and answer these questions, this study uses two different approaches depending on whether external and/or internal influencing factors are under

analysis. A narrow, local analysis is used for the evaluation of community projects. A broader, more generic and regional analysis is used to assess the contribution of community projects to sustainable development. The analytical framework used here is represented in Fig. 1.1.

Structure of the study

This study is presented in twelve chapters covering the theoretical and practical aspects of income-generating community projects and sustainable development. Chapters 2 and 3 provide the conceptual framework for this study and discuss the main theoretical aspects. These include the theory of sustainable development and development projects. Issues of community and gender are also included as essential components inherent to community projects and to the notion of sustainable societies.

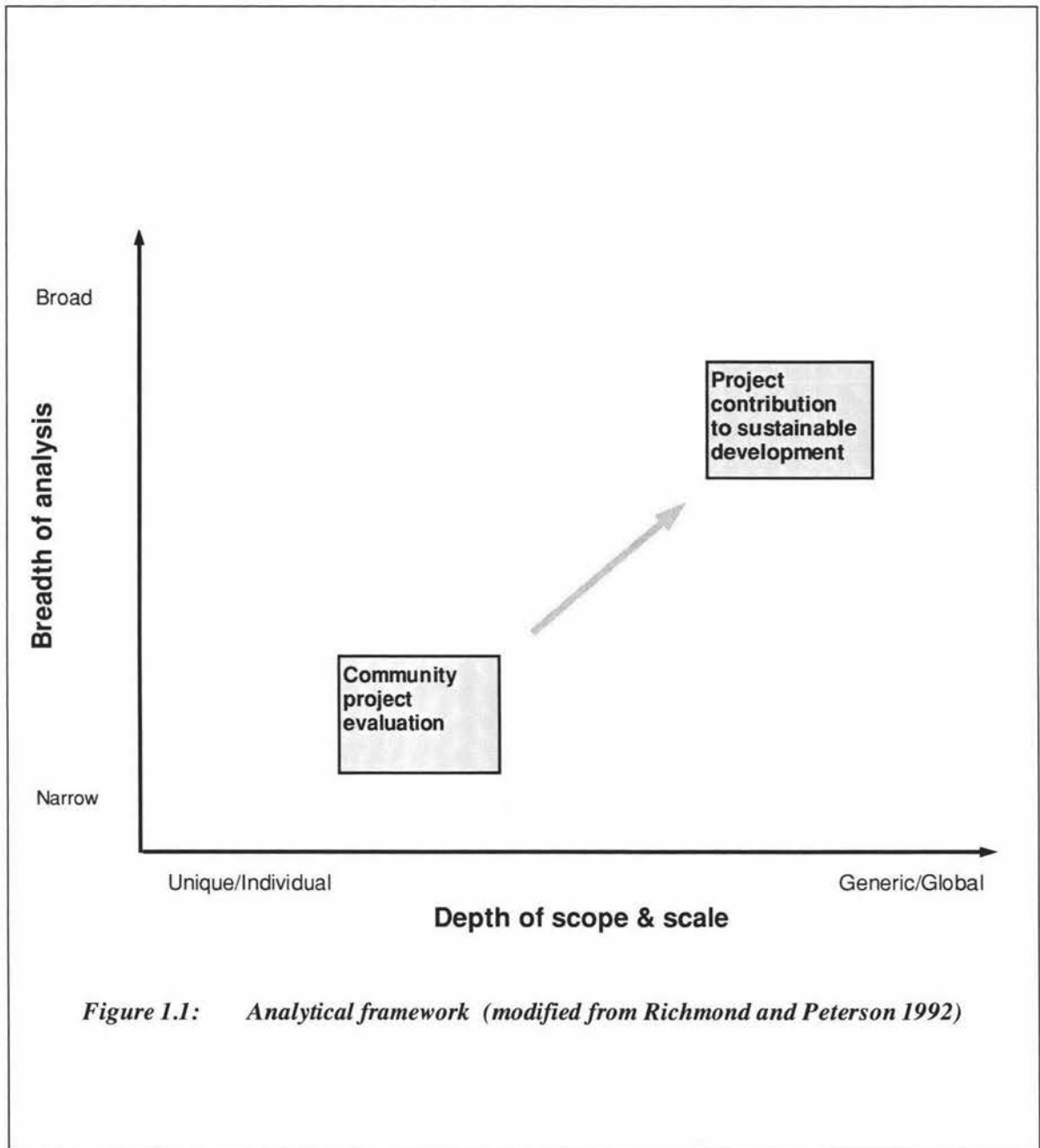
Chapter 4 introduces the research methodology, which includes participant observation (1994) and Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) techniques (2000).

Chapters 5 and 6 examine the context of the Solomon Islands. Chapter 5 describes the background conditions, change and development needs in study area located in North Malaita. Chapter 6 addresses three issues that exert a powerful external influence to community development. These issues provide the context in which the development projects evaluated here took place: logging, land disputes, and ethnic tension.

Chapters 7, 8 and 9 are concerned with project evaluation. Chapter 7 discusses the main concepts of project evaluation and the methodology for the evaluation of community projects used in this study. Chapter 8 examines the time serial (1994-2000) evaluation of three case studies. Chapter 9 addresses the evaluation of three case studies of projects that are locally believed to be successful and, potentially, a model of community projects.

Chapters 10 and 11 address the main themes of community development projects and sustainable development. Chapter 10 discusses key issues of community projects as identified in this study, *what* are the key factors that make community projects succeed or fail and *how* community projects can contribute to sustainable societies in practical terms. Chapter 11 attempts to assess the contribution of development projects to sustainable development themes through the use of two simple analytical tools.

Chapter 12 is the concluding section and attempts to reconcile the theory and the practise of sustainable development through community projects.



CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK—SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, COMMUNITY AND GENDER ISSUES IN THE SOLOMON ISLANDS

2.1 Introduction

This chapter defines a conceptual framework based on two concepts: “sustainable development” and “community”. These concepts represent, respectively, long term *goals* for development; and development *actors*. A special reference is made of gender issues integrated to both sustainable development and the notion of community. Chapter 3 discusses a third term, “development projects”, which represents one type of development *action*.

Understanding how these different but related concepts are linked is important in order to understand how the real life community projects described in later chapters fit in the overall context of development and change in the Solomon Islands. However, none of these concepts is free of controversy, and a critique will be discussed through this text.

The Solomon Islands have undergone a process of rapid social and economic change ever since contact with the outside world began (Bennett 1987, Foanaota 1989). Despite justified criticisms from development academia, further discussed in Chapter 2—most significantly, that the term sustainable development has been co-opted by the *status quo* and thus rendered meaningless (e.g. Adams 1995:373)—in this context sustainable development is a useful term to define development choices and trends. It is also a concept often used by local development actors such as aid donors, government officials, NGOs, and individuals. This justifies the inclusion of sustainable development as a guiding principle in the analytical and conceptual framework of this research while recognising both its theoretical and practical limitations.¹

¹ Whilst the notion of sustainable development as a guiding principle permeates this work, it is accepted that is not necessarily *the* only or definitive guiding principle for development theory or practice.

2.2 Sustainable development

2.2.1 Perspectives

In the figure known as oxymoron, an epithet is applied to a word so that it appears to contradict it; thus the agnostics spoke of a dark light; the alchemists, of a black sun.

Jorge Luis Borges²

A tree as big as a man's embrace grows from a tiny shot.

A tower of nine stories begins with a heap of earth.

The journey of a thousand miles starts from where one stands.

Lao Tzu³

Perceptions of nature and the role of humanity in the environment may be presented as a dichotomy or dialectic between two opposing positions, anthropocentric and ecocentric. The first position emphasises the *instrumental* values of the environment, in which nature is defined as a resource that can and should be used for the benefit of human beings, and valued for how much it can produce. The second position emphasises the *intrinsic* values of nature and favours limiting its use by human beings (or, in some visions, espouses the rights of nature above those of human designs). This dichotomy has been described as such—that is, as two separate belief systems (e.g. Norton 1996)—but has also been described as the opposite ends of a continuum (e.g. Bogner 1998:18). At a political level different world visions create tensions and conflicts between supporters of either position. The notion of *sustainable development* tries to accommodate both views. Thus, the concept of sustainable development represents *compromise* (Overton and Scheyvens 2000:3). Both the strength and weakness of sustainable development is that it appears to contain irreconcilable world views.⁴

The most-often quoted definition of sustainable development is that of the World Commission on Environment and Development. In this definition, a sustainable society is one that “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED 1987). Meadows *et al* rephrase this definition thus “A sustainable society is one that can persist over generations, one that is far-seeing enough, flexible enough and wise

² Quoted in: Subcomandante Marcos (2000): Nuestro siguiente programa: Oximoron! La derecha intelectual y el fascismo liberal. *Le Monde Diplomatique*, Août 2000.

³ Te-Tao Ching. Ballantine Books, New York.

⁴ What Lélé (1991:618) describes as “an attempt to have one’s cake and eat it too.”

enough not to undermine either its physical or its social systems of support.” (Meadows *et al* 1992:209). Aside from the many possible definitions and redefinitions of what sustainable development is or should be, the essential concept (as in WCED) is the ability of a society to maintain its choices on into the future by maintaining its resource base. This is central to the four principles of sustainable development, as in UNCED’s Agenda 21 (1992): futurity, equity, public participation and the integrity of the natural environment (e.g. Becker 1998:61).

The various perspectives of sustainable development, however, usually place emphasis on one of three possible alternative approaches (and variations thereof): ecological, economic, and social (or equity) approaches. These are based on different perceptions of the human role in nature, and therefore each one provides quite a different vision of what a sustainable future would be like, or of the means to arrive there. Focussing on each approach individually and independently of the others exacerbates the tensions that sustainable development aims to resolve. For instance, is sustainable development referring to *sustainable economic growth*, or to *ecologically sustainable development*? Or both?

Yet the tensions that sustainable development aims to resolve may not be fully resolved by compromise: sustainable development, however defined, *has* to be ecologically sustainable. There are limits to material economic growth that are set by the limits of the biosphere (Meadows *et al* 1992; Shiva 1992:216). Daly notices that the concept of sustainable development encompasses both the notion of *optimisation* as well as that of *scale*. Optimisation in the allocation of resources is a necessary but not sufficient quality of sustainable development. Sustainable development is meaningless without an appropriate scale on the use of resources (Daly 1991, original emphasis; quoted in Ekins and Max-Neef 1992:403). At a minimum, the limits (or appropriate scale) are set by the need to maintain the ecosystem services that are essential to the survival of life (e.g. Cairns 1997). In economic terms this implies that there are limits as to how much “human capital” can replace “natural capital” while maintaining a constant capital stock (e.g. Pearce *et al* 1990:10). Without these caveats the notion of sustainable development may indeed be considered an oxymoron, a contradiction in terms, or “a flawed and vague theory even if it does constitute a worthy and vital guiding principle” (Overton 1999:9).

Alternatively, sustainable development could be considered as a set of approaches for meeting basic needs and social justice within the limits set by nature. These limits may be used as *opportunities* for real-life development activities on the basis that placing limits in one dimension creates opportunities for developing other dimensions (Hawken 1993, in Sachs *et al*

1998:84). This may be considered a form of development without growth, or a steady state economy, which Daly defines as:

“...an economy with constant stocks of people and artefacts, maintained at some desired, sufficient levels by low rates of maintenance throughput, that is, by the lowest feasible flows of matter and energy from the first stage of production (depletion of low-entropy materials from the environment) to the latest stage of consumption (pollution of the environment with high-entropy wastes and exotic materials)” (Daly 1992:17; original emphasis).

Daly further notices that a steady state economy is a physical concept, and that only something that is non-physical can grow forever. Thus the question remains as to how the actions of people today may contribute to getting to a future where socially just development within the limits of nature leads to *qualitative* growth.⁵

This study explores the development actions of rural communities in the Solomon Islands. It has been suggested that poor communities have high incentives to manage their resources in a sustainable manner, and historically they have been capable to adapt and develop resource management alternatives that are effectively sustainable (Vivian 1992:72). There are arguments to suggest that local initiatives such as community projects may contribute to a sustainable form of development, but this occurs as the Solomon Islands society is in the process of effectively abandoning a steady state economy to adopt a growth-based economy.

2.2.2 Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework used here to evaluate the contribution of community initiatives to sustainable development is that of IUCN's Barometer of Sustainability (Prescott-Allen 1995). This framework is represented as the “egg of well-being or sustainability” (Fig. 2.1). In this framework the system is defined as *people (human society and economy) within the ecosystem (ecosphere)*. In addition, in this framework people and ecosystem well-being are given *equal importance*. People live in and depend on the ecosystem, “...which surrounds and supports

⁵ Sustainable development could be considered a form of *environmental pragmatism*. Just like sustainable development, pragmatism is a term that can be manipulated to mean opposing views of nature, either instrumental or intrinsic depending on where the limits are placed. This is not the case in philosophical pragmatism, where the term denies that intrinsic and instrumental values are mutually exclusive: anything that is good is *both* instrumentally valuable and intrinsically valuable (Parker 1996:34; Weston 1996:285). From this perspective sustainable development could be considered a form of pragmatism by which conservation would not impede the satisfaction of human basic needs, nor would the latter provide an excuse for unnecessary or unlimited resource use.

them much as the white of an egg surrounds and supports the yolk.” From this perspective, “...just as an egg can be good only if both the yolk and white are good, so a society can be well only if both people and ecosystem are well” (Prescott-Allen 1995). This framework is particularly relevant for the Solomon Islands, where people's lives are still very much linked directly—from a holistic perspective encompassing social, economic and environmental dimensions, as well as in the multiple sense of culture, *kastom*⁶ and tradition⁷—to their land and their immediate ecosystem. In this context, social structures and satisfaction of needs depend largely on the well-being of the ecosystem.

The notion of “equal importance” is significant: development will only be sustainable if it maintains or improves the well-being of *both* the people and the ecosystem i.e. if it contributes—in a broad sense—to *sustainable societies*. This brings a relatively new perspective to the discussion of sustainable development that stresses “social structures and needs” (Overton 1999:7). IUCN’s notion of “people well-being” is comparable or at least compatible with the notion of satisfying basic human needs (e.g. Chambers 1983; Redclift 1991). Thus the “egg white and yolk” framework of sustainable development provides a sense of a steady state of balance between society and the environment. Figure 2.2 represents the connection between the analytical framework (Fig. 1.1) and the conceptual framework (Fig. 2.1).

2.2.3 Development and change in the Solomon Islands

The traditional Solomon Islands society arguably lived in balance with nature. More than a romanticized or idealistic view on the past, this is because livelihood and survival itself depended on maintaining this balance:

⁶ The most literal meaning of *kastom* is customs, tradition, traditional (as opposed to European, modern or Christian) (Simmons and Young 1977). The local meaning of the term is broader and refers to “...the realm of customs, knowledge, rules, and taboos related to ancestors (and hence, the land and knowledge of the past as well as religious customs).” (Keesing 1992:123). By “local meaning” Keesing’s refers specifically to the Kwaio from eastern Malaita, but this description may be taken as valid for the rest of Malaita as well.

⁷ An informant noted that a difference should be made between culture, *kastom* and tradition in the context of adaptation to change, in that some of these terms describe fundamental aspects of a society while others are more superficial and as such not essential. From this perspective some practises may change if required by new circumstances while others should remain as key components of people’s identity (Kolosu, pers.comm. 2000).

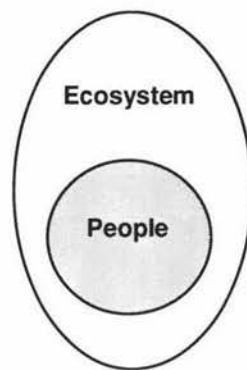


Figure 2.1: The egg of wellbeing or sustainability (Prescott-Allen 1995)

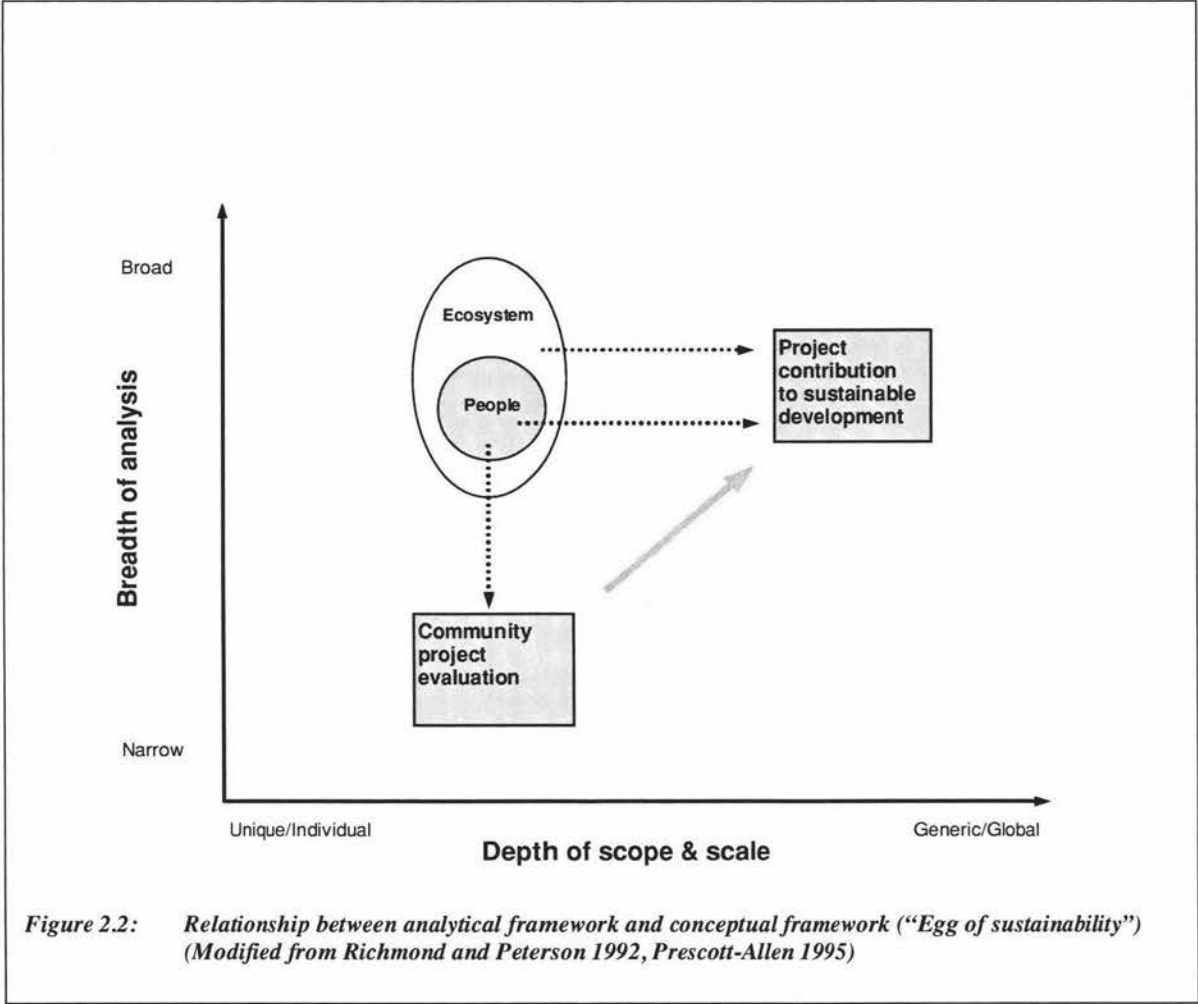
“With everyone sharing a similar standard of living and with little reason or opportunity to consume more than others, Solomon Islanders were able to live for centuries without seriously overusing their natural resources or degrading their environment. Society was classless and equitable because people were self-sufficient and could not be compelled to support a minority who worked less than the rest. The economy was stable and sustainable; because people themselves controlled the resources they depended on and had to safeguard them for their own future. People belonged to the land they shared and worked with their relatives and this is what gave them their identity and place in the world” (Burt 1987).

Social change has significantly altered that way of life that had existed since the arrival of the first settlers in the Solomon Islands about 5,000-3,500 years BP (Taika 1989:152). While there were changes in the traditional society dating from before the arrival of *Areikwao* (white people) (Foanaota 1989), the balance was only significantly upset with the social change caused by exposure to the outside world (Bennett 1982). Some Solomon Islanders date the beginning of a significant increase on the pace of change to within the last two generations (Manita’a pers.comm. 1994).

Changes have included a population shift to the coast, the adoption of Christianity (and consequently giving up "the old ways" including traditional religious beliefs and cannibalism), acculturation, and increased mobility for women (Foanaota 1989) who up until recent times may not have ventured far beyond their own or their husbands’ villages (SIDT 1996). The overall status of women, however, has decreased. Men have gained better access to education and paid work in the monetary economy than have women, while the status of the unpaid work that women usually carry out has decreased (Scheyvens 1999:53). Labour migration accelerated social change (Corris 1973:6). Significantly, exposure to the outside world has created new wants and dependency on Western goods (Bennett 1987:iii), which in turn motivated further change. The adoption of *Areikwao* institutions such as a central government, a Western-style educational system, Christianity, and a cash economy has been both a consequence of change and a cause for further, and faster, changes (Baenesia pers.comm. 1994; SIDT 1996).

The increased dominance of the cash economy is perhaps the most obvious evidence of change:

“Time before come (in the past) people lived very happily. Because people lived from their own hands alone, [there was] no envy, people worked for their food, worked in the garden in the morning, [had] lunch, went back to the garden. Now, there is a lot of people, money came up big, some people like money very much, money is in the cities,



people don't think on *kastom*, find work on town, but [then] some youth don't work. In the future people will not work in the garden, will use money only, not live by their hands." (Manitaa'a pers.comm. 2000).

Since contact not only the number of people and their distribution have changed markedly, but also people's aspirations, tastes, needs and wants (e.g. Bennett 1982, Foanaota 1989). It is apparent that the Solomon Islands is drifting away from largely non-capitalistic forms of production to large-scale capitalistic use of natural resources. In addition, it is drifting away from communal values and social structures towards more individualistic approaches. A simple model (Fig. 2.3) represents the relationship between these trends of social and economic change. Some would see these changes as negative and others as positive; most would agree that the process of change is unstoppable. As an informant described the process of change, "you can slow it down or jump to it, but you can't stop it" (Maimarine pers.comm. 2000). However, these trends may be unsustainable in the long term, simply because they alter the balance between people and the environment that was inherent in the traditional way of living, which was inherently sustainable. Using Daly's terminology, the Solomon Islands society is effectively in the process of abandoning a steady economy to adopt a growth-based economy (Daly 1992:18). Some emerging and localized signs of unsustainability, as defined by Carew-Rew *et al* (1994:17) are already apparent: rising population and consumption of resources, and income-related poverty, which was previously unknown.

This is not to say that the future may also prove to be sustainable: social and economic change represents both challenges and opportunities for sustainable development. For instance, logging illustrates the challenges and opportunities that the Solomon Islands face. Logging rates have been two to several times the sustainable levels for well over a decade (e.g. Schoefel *et al* 1994, Scheyvens and Cassells 1999). Whilst timber extraction rates have lately decreased they have not yet been curbed (Sheeham pers.comm. 2000). In many cases industrial logging has brought not only a significant environmental impact but also social disruption (e.g. Barden 1993, Schoefel *et al* 1994, LaFranchi and Greenpeace Pacific 1999, Scheyvens and Cassells 1999). Whether logging will stop due to conscious, consensual decisions of all stakeholders or after commercial extinction of the forests remains an open question. Logging is perhaps an extreme case, but the same questions apply at other levels of analysis and other sectors of development.

In this context a new point of balance between people and the environment is required for the benefit of future generations, but one in which both the instrumental and intrinsic values of the land and sea are maintained even as social and economic changes continue to unfold. The task of finding this balance is in practice largely in the hands of the rural communities of customary

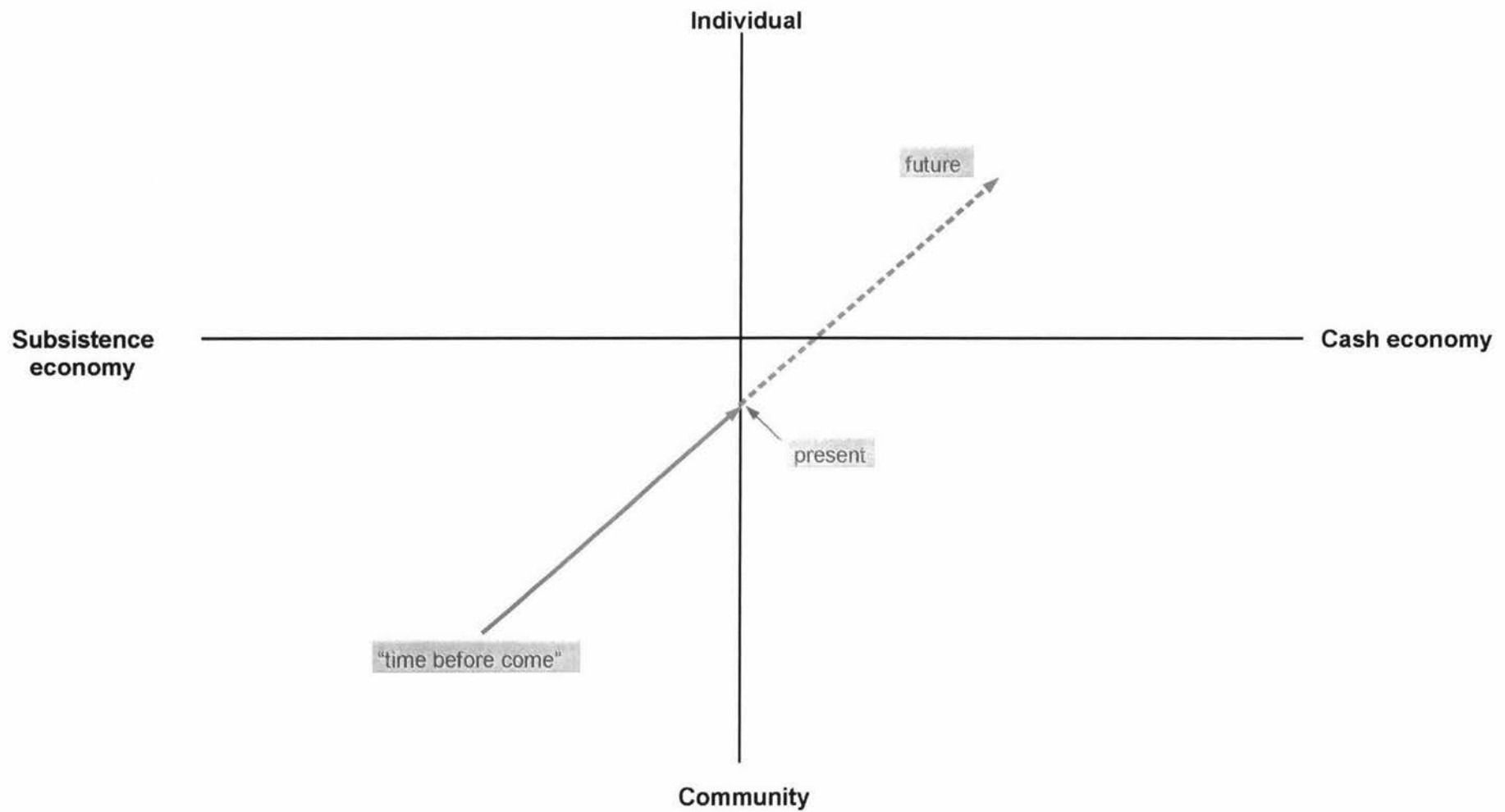


Figure 2.3: *A model of the relationship between social and economic trends in the Solomon Islands since contact with the outside world.*

landowners that constitute 81% of the Solomon Islands population⁸. These are the village people who have to adapt to the growing demands of the cash economy in order to continue to meet their basic needs and wants while still living a largely subsistence lifestyle dependent on natural resources. They attempt to achieve this through whatever means are accessible to them from their material and non-material wealth, and via whatever support structures are available from the *wantok* system, the government, aid agencies or NGOs. It should be noted that despite external pressures, Solomon Islanders are not passive in shaping their interaction with the outside world, but they are effectively active agents of change (Keesing 1992:2). The community projects described in later chapters are part of the local strategies of adaptation to change. They demonstrate the success or failure of this process of adaptation to economic change, and the contribution of these initiatives to a sustainable society.

2.3 People, communities and villages

In the framework used in the present work, *people* (the human society and economy) are one of the dimensions of sustainable development. In the Solomon Islands society, which originates on tribal societies, rural villages or communities provide the most usual grouping as well as places of identity and reference. Through this work the terms “community” and “village” are used more or less interchangeably as shorthand for a group of people living in a more or less delimited locality. Nevertheless it is not assumed here that these terms are synonyms: “village” has geographic connotations whereas “community” may have several meanings.

For the purposes of this work, the notion of community is taken to encompass two different elements: *relationships between people and the place in which they live*; and *relationships between people* (Warburton 1998:17). This conceptual difference can be applied usefully in the Solomon Islands⁹ while recognising that the reality of *community* is a more complex holistic phenomenon.

At a minimum, community refers to a group of people in a geographical area, although proximity *per se* does not necessarily define a community. Factors such as social structure, symbiotic interdependence, sense of belonging or community spirit, and geographical self-

⁸ World Bank data, 1998.

⁹ While the notion of community is discussed here with a focus in the Solomon Islands society, which is largely rural and traditional, it is worth noting that “community” is not a term exclusive of “underdeveloped” societies but that as a concept descriptive of social and geographic interactions it has instead almost universal characteristics (König, quoted in Del Acebo Ibáñez 1996:156).

containment are collectively or individually implied in the notion of community (e.g. Park 1936, MacIver and Page 1972, Tönnies 1979). Tönnies identifies a contrast between community (*Gemeinschaft*) and association (*Gesellschaft*). The former is predominantly rural, based on community of kinship, place and spirit and, as such, genuine and permanent. The latter is predominantly urban and, as a “non-community”, is superficial and transitory. *Gemeinschaft*-relationships are often assumed when referring to villages and community in the Solomon Islands—albeit the reality is more complex. Arguably *Gesellschaft*-relationships, such as gender-segregated division of labour and individualism and which dissipate the sense of community, also exist or co-exist.

MacIver and Page (1972), suggest that what characterises a community is that the life of its members can take place entirely within the community. Thus a community may constitute both the social and geographic environment. In the Solomon Islands, villages constitute the physical manifestation of a community with these characteristics.

2.3.1 Relationships between people and places

Solomon Islands villages

In the past people in the Solomon Islands were commonly divided depending on where they lived, either in bush (inland) or in coastal settlements. There were sharp distinctions between the two types of settlement in terms of population and activities, and the interaction between people on the coast and people in the bush was limited. Apart from the formal exchange of goods, occasional intermarriage and intermittent fighting, they had little contact with each other. Bush people tended to be particularly reserved.¹⁰ Their settlements were not easily accessible to outsiders, and were often located in places with strong natural defences. Coastal villages tended to be more vulnerable to enemy attack but also more open to visitors, so their inhabitants were more accustomed to dealing with outsiders (Foanaota 1989:69). As the population grew and settled near the coast in increased numbers, so the villages changed in character to become larger and permanent, eventually giving place to other hamlets and villages.

Village life is still considered to be “the backbone of the Solomon Islands” (SIDT 1996:1):

“From the village home base, the nation’s resource owners grow their own food, make their own homes, protect, educate and entertain themselves. For many years, because of

¹⁰ Even today Kwara’ae people often speak—and even yell at each other—on a low tone of voice, as in a murmur (pers.obs., 1994, 2000). This custom might be attributed to the tradition of living protected by isolation in the bush. I do not however have any evidence to support this assumption.

this close living to one another, the land, reef and sea they have enjoyed a special blessing. Villagers for the most part have enjoyed peace, tranquillity and order.” (SIDT 1996:2).

A broad range of changes has taken place at a village level in the past 20 or 30 years. Local cultures and languages are “fading away”. The status of the chiefly system—and that of the chiefs themselves—has decreased. There is little interest for village life when compared to the bright but elusive attractions of town life. Urban drift is on the increase, at times leading to previously unknown social malaises such as unemployment, poverty, and prostitution. Food habits, children’s games, clothing, and housing designs and material have all changed under Western influence. Women leave their families to go to school. Arranged marriages are fast disappearing, and people choose who they want to marry (SIDT 1996:4).

Despite social changes the village continues to be the main grouping of people in the Solomon Islands:

“Village living means much more than where people are most in touch with their customs, traditions and history. The village is not only where local language thrives, where people relationships are strengthened, but especially how (sic) people sustain themselves for years and years. Village life works an economy which sustains seven out of ten people nation wide.” (SIDT 1996:1).

The “special blessing” SIDT refers to is a unique relationship of between people and places. It is this relationship that is both the foundation of sustainable development, and at risk of disappearing in the transition from a traditional to a modern society.

Fanua kem, our place

In Pacific cultures, the relation between peoples and places is often integrated in the notion of *vanua*¹¹). *Vanua* is usually translated into English as “land”. This translation misses the many shades of meaning of the concept, which in its simplest form is an integrating concept meaning both “land” and “people” (Batibasaqa *et al* 1999:101). Traditionally, social and economic structures were based on the land. The relationship with the land gave people a sense of identity and belonging, and created a link with the ancestors that had settled that land. In the Solomon Island world view, land, people and spirits were interdependent and inseparable (Burt 1987).

¹¹ See Table 2.1 for more definitions of the equivalent (or comparable) words to the Fijian word *vanua* in Malaitan languages.

The multiple linkages between the physical and spiritual world, and time and space, intersected in the land itself:

“Everywhere [in the Solomon Islands] land had spiritual meanings. It was an enduring link between the past and the future. For it had once belonged to the ancestors, whose spirits were believed to inhabit parts of it, and it would be needed by later generations. So our people saw themselves as trustees of the land” (Ipo 1989:123).

In Malaitan languages from the study area,¹² equivalent terms to the Fijian *vanua* (*fanua* or *falua*) are used to define “place” (or “our place”) as well as “home”, i.e. “the place where we live together”—the village (Table 2.1). In Kwaio language, the term *fanua* comes from the combination of *fa*, dwelling, and *nua*, the spirit that lives at that dwelling. In Langalanga language the term *falua* means both place and home, and *wadogia*, the term for “our land”, also means “a group of people”. The Kwara’ae term *fanua* (or *fanoa*)¹³ has various usual meanings. Describing the occupation of Malaita over a period of several generations Burt describes *fanua* thus:

“...settlers continued to disperse until the whole landscape was occupied, dotted with tabu places and portioned up into areas by boundaries following natural features such as ridges, streams and certain trees. Kwara’ae often refer to such an area simply as a “land” (*ano*), but it is also a “home” or habitation, *fanoa*, a word which covers any inhabited space from a village to the whole of Kwara’ae or Malaita.” (Burt 1994:26)

By long term habitation—the deepest relation between people and places—the environment becomes an indissoluble part of the human beings’ identity. In other words, people *inhabit* their environment by settling the land and taking root in it, and therefore becoming one with through its spatial, cultural and social dimensions.¹⁴ A geographical location becomes a *place* when people inhabit that place. It becomes *fanua kem*, our place.

The meaning of *fanua* is well described by a Westerner long-term resident in the country:

¹² Llangalanga, Kwaio and Kwara’ae.

¹³ Burt spells it as *fanoa* (Burt 1994:26). *Fanua* is used here because that is the way it is pronounced in West Kwaio. However, Burt notes that Kwara’ae is not written as it is pronounced.

¹⁴ In some sociological perspectives the notion of settling or taking root (*arraigo* in Spanish), while literally meaning settling in a place may be considered a holistic phenomena with multiple dimensions i.e. spatial, social, and cultural. De-emphasizing one of these dimensions—e.g. through travel—emphasizes the others (Del Acebo Ibáñez 1996; Del Acebo Ibáñez pers.comm. 2000).

“*Hanua (fanua)*¹⁵ is not only where I live, and my relations, people around me, but is the surrounding relationship with land, trees, rivers, lakes, everything you can think of, encompassing the environment. That is how we use the word environment [in the Western world]. The Pacific word is so much richer, so much more encompassing, so much more understandable for people” (Roughan pers.comm. 2000)

The knowledge and understanding of the land distinguishes those that belong to “our place” and to the community. This is not only defined by the skills required to live in a certain place—e.g. when and where to hunt, gather, fish or garden to obtain specific products—but also by a deeper understanding of how the spatial and temporal connections of the land and people are integrated in the landscape. This knowledge is acquired by living in a place for generations. Referring to Kwaio landscape, Keesing notes that:

“The landscape of Kwaio interior appears, to the alien eye, as a sea of green, a dense forest broken periodically by gardens and recent secondary growth, and an occasional tiny settlement...To the Kwaio eye, this landscape is not only divided by invisible lines into named land tracts and settlement sites; it is seen as structured by history” (Keesing 1982:76, quoted in Hirsh 1995:1)

Everyday community life takes place on this landscape, revisiting sites,¹⁶ further developing its own landscape history,¹⁷ and strengthening links between the people and the land, the past, the present and the future. For this reason the integrity of the land parallels the integrity of the community.

Links with the land are at risk of being lost as much as is the link among community members. People may abandon villages to migrate to the cities; logging may destroy *tambu* sites, familiar

¹⁵ *Hanua* is *vanua* in ‘Are’are, a language from central and south Malaita.

¹⁶ In a 1994 community excursion to gather building materials that were known to grow in a particular part of the forest we stopped to rest on the side of a bush road. Lying on the ground and partially covered by grass and litter there were two boulders, the larger one with a small concavity on its surface, and the other hand-sized. This turned out to be where people stopped for husking and bagging ngali nuts (*Canarium indicum*). That site was not an anonymous part of the bush: it was a *place*, a particular site for a particular activity albeit virtually undistinguishable to an outsider. The rocks—a stone hammer and anvil—were the manifestation of human habitation of that place (pers.obs. 1994).

¹⁷ Some trees planted in 1994 jointly by the community and *arai kwaos* are still identified and their history remembered (Jason pers.comm. 2000).

features of the forest such as large trees,¹⁸ and ecosystem services such as medicinal plants. With these changes the knowledge about a place would decrease, and the ancestral spirits and *devils* would become angry because people would have misused the gift of land given to them.¹⁹ Arguably replacing culture, *kastom* and tradition by modernity may have a negative effect both on traditional communal living and sharing as well as the management of land. The risk is that as people abandon the land physically, they also lose their links with places of cultural and spiritual significance, and a connection with the past that is vital for the future.

2.3.2 Relationship between people

Relationship between people constitutes the basis of community. Weber considers that community exists if social actions are inspired in a subjective sentiment from the parts to constitute a whole. However, community exists only when on the basis of that sentiment the social action is reciprocal (Weber 1977:33). From this perspective König states that community is a relationship that acts in common, i.e. reciprocally, even though not all parts of the relationship are known. Consequently community has a *structural* character and has a decisive role in the survival of the community and in its social and cultural identity, independently of the many individual phenomena that give it a specific meaning (König 1971:108).

The basis of community in the Solomon Islands (in a broad sense) and of village development is blood relationship, which is regarded as an unbreakable tie (Burt 1987). Traditionally, tribal community life was based on the use of natural resources, both cultivated and wild. Men and women had different skills and tasks but all contributed to make an individual family relatively self-sufficient. In very practical ways, everyone depended on their relatives and neighbours in several ways, and community life was based on sharing food, possessions and resources. Giving and receiving built relationships of cooperation and interdependence in which everyone's security was based (Burt 1987).

¹⁸ "We call a very big tree in the forest an '*olo*' [grandparent]. I think that children in the future may never see an '*olo*'" (Manita'a, pers.comm. 2000).

¹⁹ In a village visited during this research wild Malaitan eagles, the tribe's *devils* or ancestral spirits, had moved close to the village and had been unusually vocal for some time. According to the *kastom* chief this was because logging was taking place in ancestral land not far from the village (indeed chainsaws could be heard in the background) and the eagles were upset about people's carelessness of the gift of land that had been given to them (Manita'a pers.comm. 2000; pers. obs., 2000). Aside this explanation based in deep cultural beliefs, the eagles' habitat was effectively being destroyed.

Table 2.1: Equivalent terms to the Fijian “vanua” in different Malaitan languages and some related terms⁽¹⁾

	Kwara’ae⁽²⁾	Langalanga⁽³⁾	Kwaio⁽⁴⁾
Environment	<i>Ano</i>	<i>Yoyona afuigia</i> (surroundings)	No word
Land	<i>Ano</i>	<i>Wado</i>	<i>Wado</i> (<i>Wado tarefu</i> = “the soil and everything in it”)
Salt water	<i>A’asi</i>	<i>A’asi</i>	-
Water	<i>Kajo</i>	-	<i>Ka’ao</i> or <i>Ka’afu</i>
Home	<i>Fanua</i> (<i>fanoa</i>) <i>Fanua kia</i> (my place)	<i>Falua</i> ⁽⁵⁾	<i>Fanua</i>
Our land	<i>Ano kem</i>	<i>Wadogia</i> (“a good collection of people; our land”)	<i>Fanuagu</i> (my place)
People	<i>Nwai</i>	<i>Yoligi</i>	-
Place	<i>Fanua</i>	<i>Falua</i>	<i>Fanua</i> (<i>fa</i> = dwelling; <i>nua</i> = “to do with the spirit that deals at that place”)
Village	<i>Fanua</i>	<i>Falua</i>	<i>Fanua</i> (?)

⁽¹⁾ The transcription of terms is phonetic and may not be the same as in the standard transcript of these languages.

⁽²⁾ Isaac Manita’a, Feratofea

⁽³⁾ John Dili, Gwaidalo

⁽⁴⁾ Joseph Dick Kolosu, Sinalagu

⁽⁵⁾ “Langalanga is different from English, many words have a similar meaning” (Dili pers. comm 2000)

Despite the processes of change described earlier, the clan, language group, and relationship with family and *wantoks* remain the keys of social identity and of political allegiances (Foanaota 1989). These social entities are important for the relationship between people in the Solomon Islands, as the recent outbreak of ethnic tension in Guadalcanal demonstrated. By and large it is within these social entities that communities develop. The village—where people live together—is the focal centre and physical manifestation of these relationships.

However, are all villages communities? It is tempting to construe the notion of community as a socially, politically and economically homogeneous entity, but this perception of community masks a broad range of internal imbalances of interests and power (including those differentiated by gender) (e.g. Doornbos *et al* 2000:8). Some informants were critical of the notion that *village* equals *community*, even though Solomon Islanders themselves often use these terms interchangeably in Pijin or English. For some people the village is indeed the community:

“All men belong to the community, in the past and now too. *Community [is] inside place.*” (Manita’a pers.comm. 2000; emphasis added).

In contrast, some informants (Rougham; Fa’asale; Smiley pers. comm. 2000) considered that the notion of community applied only to the nuclear family:

“The concept of community is identified by developers, investors. [What is] community in the Melanesian society? To us it means myself, my wife and my kids, that is my community—that’s all” (Fa’asale pers.comm.2000).

Solomon Islands Pidgin English (Pijin) makes a distinction between “us—the community” (*mifala*^{20,21}) and “us—the community and outsiders; all of us” (*yumi* or *iumi*²²). The possessive pronoun “our” establishes who is “us—the community” as opposed to “us—the community and others”. In standard usage, Solomon Islanders usually refer to their community or to people in their villages as *mifala*. Thus the Kwara’ae *fanua kem*, “our place”, is in Pijin *ples blong mifala* (rather than *ples blong iumi*) i.e. both the possessive pronoun “our” and the noun “place” define

²⁰ *Mifala* (English me, fellow): we, us; excludes the person being spoken to (Simons and Young 1977).

²¹ *Mifala* could be considered a verbal representation of the “we-sentiment” that, according to McIver, constitutes one of the three elements of the sense of belonging to a community. The other elements are assuming a role within the community, and the physical and psychological dependency of the individual on the community (McIver, quoted in Del Acebo Ibáñez 1996:158).

²² *Yumi* (English you, me): we, us; includes the person being spoken to (Simons and Young 1977)

who are members of the community and, by exclusion, who are not. Beyond theoretical constructs people know who belongs to their community—in a broad sense—and who does not.

Social change, and a growing tendency towards individualism, is affecting the relationship between people, much in the same way it is affecting the relationship between people and the land. Communal life as dictated by *kastom*, while suitable for a subsistence economy, does not adapt well to a cash economy. Traditionally, there was little in terms of accumulation of wealth. Wealth brought prestige and influence only when it was used to help others, either individually or collectively (Burt 1987). According to the Kwara'ae tradition, a person who has discovered, made or received something was the leader for that thing—fruit trees, a patch of cleared land, etc.—and had control over it, but nevertheless had to share it with his family, relatives, and any person who asked for it. Sharing and cooperation was the essence of the tradition for managing the land and the products of the land (Burt and Kwa'ioloa 1992:7).²³ This tradition is not easily transferred to the cash economy, which rewards individualism and the accumulation of wealth. Increasingly, people are asking for money to pay for services, such as work in the garden or in building construction, which before were conducted for free and constituted an essential part of the community ethos and of village life.²⁴

If a modern (or Western) individualistic ethos does not adapt well to village life, the opposite is also true: the difficulties of transferring *kastom* practices to the cash economy are most evident in towns and cities, where the demands of the cash economy are higher. Under *kastom* people must assist their *wantoks*. In Solomon Islands towns it is not uncommon that the salary of a single employed person may be used to maintain a large number of *wantoks* who visit a nuclear family for an indefinite time (Baenesia pers.comm. 1994).

For these reasons—the incompatibility of traditional and modern social and economic systems—several informants thought that it was not easy or even possible to run income-generating projects at a community level without either destroying the community and/or the project (Fa'asala; Roughan pers.comm. 2000). While there are good arguments and examples to support this view, several success stories reported here (Chapter 9) suggest that exceptions are possible—as long as several criteria are met. In fact, under new social and economic circumstances it may well be that in some cases projects contribute to build communities by

²³ This publication reflects the views of Kwara'ae chiefs from the central part of Malaita (Central Kwara'ae), but not necessarily the opinion of Kwara'ae chiefs in West Kwaio (Manita'a pers.comm. 2000).

²⁴ In my first visit to the Solomon Islands in 1994 people complained occasionally about this change in attitude; in 2000, however, it was something many informants referred to.

maintaining alive the tradition of sharing and cooperation—not just for a matter of principle, but because working together benefits everyone.

2.4 Gender issues

Gender issues cut across the notions of sustainable development and community. One argument is that women have a particular relationship with the environment through their household work, subsistence activities and wage labour that also implies nurturing and managing the natural environment. In ecofeminist approaches, the feminine *ethos* is linked to nature in contrast to the masculine *ethos* that is linked to culture (e.g. Shiva 1989, Birkeland 1993, Braidotti *et al* 1994). This section, however, focuses on the equity issues in relationships between people as one of the foundations of sustainable societies. Sustainable development is usually described in terms of economy, equity and environment. In the framework used here, it is considered that no form of development can be sustainable if it is based on inequality or injustice, or if the increased well-being for people that development may provide is qualified according to ethnicity, gender, age, disability, or other characteristic (Prescott-Allen 1995, Overton 1999:7-8).

In Pacific Island societies, gender inequalities traditionally limit women's full participation in (and the benefit they receive from) development processes (Scheyvens 1993, Scheyvens 1999:53). Gender relationships in the Solomon Islands society are regulated by *kastom*, and inequalities are very apparent (e.g. Scheyvens 1999), particularly in parts of Malaita.^{25, 26} Malaita is largely a patriarchal society and one whereby *kastom* women have an explicitly lower status than men. The basic tenet is that “culture looks down on women; this is accepted by women” (Edwards pers. comm. 1994). Male informants in this study expressed similar views, whether coming from pure *kastom*: “The house of men is up the hill, the house of women is down the hill, men look down on women” (Manita'a pers. comm. 2000) or from an arguably convenient blend of *kastom* and Christianity: “Man is the head of the family, same as God is the head of Church” (Smiley pers. comm. 2000). An illustrative listing of Malaitan *kastom* is reproduced in Box 2.1. However, Keesing notices the importance of context and individual

²⁵ In the present study it proved difficult to interview women at a village level in connection with community projects. It was however possible to interview a number of urban women to discuss specifically gender issues in the Solomon Islands. The content of these interviews is reflected through this study.

²⁶ Paradoxically, one of the older and most successful women's groups in Malaita is in East Kwaio, where *kastom* is stronger. The group, Gonabuso Women Association, has about 600 women members, divided in groups with volunteer coordinators (Mielaua pers. comm. 2000).

opinion, and cautions that talk about *kastom* is never unambiguous, and that the differences of perspective go beyond divisions of gender or status (Keesing 1992:13).

Traditional *kastom* segregated men and women and gave them different roles, rights and responsibilities. Some of the regulations intended to regulate heterosexual behaviour are as strong in controlling men as they are for women. Some practices resemble those in Western societies, while others are characteristic of Solomon Islands and/or Malaita. *Kastom* practises, some of which are no longer implemented, or are only implemented partially, or only at times, were contained within a larger social system. The segregation (however unjust it may seem for an early 21st century Western mind) was one of the components that kept the social system functioning.

“Women cannot talk about war, planning. They can talk about garden, cooking, work in the garden, [but] have no power to talk [about men’s issues]. This time, some woman come and talk.” (Manita’a pers.comm. 2000).

However, women did not necessarily lack status, nor they only played a secondary role to men (Tiffany 1987, in Scheyvens 1998:240). Some women had some higher status within the community:

“Before there were some *bigfella* women, we look[ed] up high to them...They talk[ed] on the side of women, but couldn’t talk about things of men, because they had work to do, but every woman respected them because they worked for everyone. [They] were like a chief but only on the side of women.” (Manita’a pers.comm. 2000).

In the past *kastom* provided a guiding principle for gender relationships that worked in the traditional context, enough to maintain a stable tribal society of independent local communities. *Kastom* as a guiding set of rules did not only address gender relations, but the whole framework of society and the way society related with the land, the past (through the veneration of ancestors) and the future (through the management of resources). *Kastom* had (and still has) influence in many aspects of life, and therefore it cannot be replaced without wide-ranging social consequences. For instance, according to the *kastom* prevalent in most of Malaita, married women move to their husbands’ villages (i.e. virilocal residence). This *kastom* is not always followed nowadays, and at times Malaitan men move with their wife’s villages with two negative consequences: 1. there is more pressure on the women’s family land; and 2. if the man dies, his children will have no land rights in their mother’s tribe, and may not be recognized in his father’s tribe, particularly if they do not know their genealogy.

It is not the idea here to speculate on (or idealise) the circumstances of women in generations past. The point, illustrated by the example above, is that *kastom* was used to maintain social stability and manage resources in the context of a holistic system. However, times and circumstances have changed and some aspects of *kastom* have arguably become obsolete.

Some women have gained access to education, and a minority have been able to gain a degree of personal independence through education, employment or self-employment, marriage outside Melanesian society, and in cases share strength of character. Generally these women were able of making a space for themselves to live their own lives. However, in some cases current social structures reproduce and even deepen customary regulations. By and large modernisation and the introduction of the cash economy and imported political and social systems have increased the workload of women while the direct benefit from this change has largely gone to men (Scheyvens 1993, Scheyvens 1999:53). The traditional division of labour has remained even though when in many cases the circumstances that led to this division have changed. Women are still the main producers and take care of a great deal of the daily chores as they did in the past, while many men reduced their role of protectors and food producers (Manita'a pers.comm. 2000).

The challenge—and the choice—for the Solomon Islands society today is whether the existing relationship between genders can be adapted to changing conditions, maintaining the most important cultural aspects but modernising its most oppressive features, or alternatively whether the society of the modern Solomon Islands needs to rid of *kastom* almost entirely.

The reformists propose to work from within the family and retain some aspects of *kastom* while addressing fundamental issues of gender inequality, particularly in relation to women's access to education or opportunities to generate an income. For instance, the Women's Desk's approach at Malaita's Provincial Government is "not to step in anyone's toes" and avoid that their activities clash with established practices and with community leaders.

"*Kastom* is there, it has its place and is promoted at the village level. The communities must be structurally organised, the land managed. Development should fit in what is there"(Mielaua pers.comm. 2000).

A comparable if more radical approach is used by SIDT's Women Program, which is embracing *kastom* but adapting it to a more modern society. This attempts to change *kastom* from within, by keeping the forms (e.g. suitably long dresses) while addressing fundamental issues such as education and coalition building (L.Hora pers.comm. 2000). For instance, SIDT organises awareness rising and training workshops, encouraging women to participate in development and

planning. This may imply adopting non-traditional roles such as public speaking. Scheyvens suggests that promoting the empowerment of women in the Solomon Islands society does not necessarily mean widespread confrontation, and that subtle strategies—such as those described above—may be appropriate to promote profound long term change even though they may require short term compromises (Scheyvens 1998:249).

A more radical alternative is that the aspects of *kastom* that oppress women should be all but eliminated. Some informants suggested that it is up to the women to simply ignore *kastom*—and their husbands:

“Even people strong in *kastom* know that *kastom* is supported by women. *Kastom* still exists because women are holding it. If women stopped doing so, *kastom* would collapse, and men would not be able to do or say anything. They would have to accept it.” (Dunstone pers.comm. 2000).

This is another way of saying that women could opt to *take* power:²⁷

“No heroic social agency is needed to “take power”; we can simply withdraw the power, energy and deference we unwittingly give to the powerful and the ideology of masculinity that supports them” (Birkeland 1993:53).

Using a more specific terminology, the question is whether alternative approaches of Women in Development (WID) or Gender and Development (GAD) (e.g. Rathgeber 1990, Humble 1998:35) would be more suitable or viable for the Solomon Islands. More to the point, however, is how Solomon Islands communities would withstand these changes, and how they could be implemented in real life. Community has been described as a concept integrating relationships between and within people and places; *kastom* provides guidelines for these relationships. On the one hand, the need to preserve the integrity of the community by maintaining *kastom* may be used as an argument to perpetuate conservative and repressive social structures.²⁸ On the other hand, community is a valuable concept in which to build a

²⁷ Labonté notices that “empowerment” is both a transitive and intransitive verb. Used transitively, it means bestowing power on others. Used intransitively, it means to gain or assume power. The importance of this distinction concerns who *controls* the empowering process (Labonté 1990:64).

²⁸ Some of the criticism of PRA techniques centres on the way gender relations affect the results of participatory research techniques that supposedly provide a clear insight into “communal” thinking (e.g. Gujit and Kaul Shah 1998; Goebel 1998). In some cases, what is supposedly participatory research may instead lead to the wrong understanding of society where gross inequalities (of gender, but also of other types) are placed under homogenizing umbrella of *community* and consequently ignored.

sustainable future because it contains and recreates aspects of the traditional ways of living that were inherently sustainable in particular places, and some aspects of *kastom* are relevant to this balance. A traumatic break up from *kastom* may have negative carry on effects on both society and the environment.

It has been suggested that perhaps real progress in gender relations may be achieved by building coalitions (Goetz 1991, quoted in Townsend 1993). It is argued here that development projects may be means to the end of coalition building as well as a vehicle for empowerment. Projects can provide a space for women, increase their skills and self-confidence, as well as a degree of financial independence. However, projects can make a positive contribution to resolve gender inequality only if they are planned and conducted *by and for* women.

2.5 Summary

This chapter has introduced several different but related concepts that are common in the development literature. Sustainable development and community provide a suitable conceptual framework for describing the community projects described later. Gender issues cut across both concepts and are central to the notion of sustainable societies based on equity. It has been argued here that in the Solomon Islands the notion of community is interwoven with the land through present use and history in the notion of *fanua kem*, our place.

This study attempts to evaluate whether development projects could be means to the end of sustainable development. In the Solomon Islands context of a subsistence economy in transition to a cash economy, community projects may be a means to the end of sustainable development if several conditions are met: if projects contribute to maintain the integrity of land and the community, strengthening links between and within people and places; and if they contribute to generate an space for women. Consequently, community projects can only be truly successful if they contribute to maintain and/or improve the condition of both people and the ecosystem. As elsewhere in the South Pacific (e.g. Overton 1999) the notion of *fanua kem* provides both the basis and a guideline for a sustainable future by providing a cultural foundation to the notion of sustainable development.

Box 2.1: An illustrative list of social regulations under Malaitan kastom

Brief to YCI staff on cross-cultural issues with an emphasis on Malaitan *kastom*. 25.03.1994, Jimmy Edwards, National Fund: "Culture looks down on women; this is accepted by women."

Family

- A brother's wife should serve him, treat him with respect, feed him etc.;
- Boys-girls play is limited by culture (i.e. Brothers playing with sisters);
- Brothers and sisters cannot touch each other, share food, or sit together;
- Brothers and sisters do not call each other by name, they use of nick names instead;
- It is a "very serious offence" that a woman and her brother in law touch each other. This requires the payment of compensation from the woman's side;
- It is *tambu* to deal with brothers or sisters in-laws or call them by name. In-laws are usually referred to as "my *tambu*".

The body

- "Secret" parts of the body are *tambu*. Especially thighs, groin and knees for women, and genitals for men. "*Tambu* in men goes from the head to the toes, in women goes from the toes to the head" (Manita'a pers. comm. 2000).
- Women can only talk about body parts from the chest down. They cannot talk about body parts from the chest up.
- There are parts of the body that are not mentioned: "your mouth, "your head". These are very highly respected as tools in meetings.

Body language

- Men are not allowed to walk over a woman's leg; women are not allowed to walk over men's legs;
- Men do not touch women¹, women do not touch men;
- Winking of eyes is not allowed;
- Women should be careful as to how they sit; legs should be closed;
- Women's dress should be neatly around them; (this is beginning to be ignored: women are starting to wear pants, often wide legged pants that in the distance look as skirts).

Menstruation and birth

- Ladies who gave birth or are menstruating are not allowed into the house. Traditionally women spent their menstruation period in separate little houses until they were "purified from blood flow". (This *tambu* is largely ignored nowadays; at most women live in a separate room of the house).

¹ However, men touch each other and frequently hold hands, something that is considered *tambu* by Western societies.

Box 2.1 (continued)

- In the past, when a woman was about to give birth she went to the bush, either alone or with a midwife. After giving birth she would play a drum to let her family know that the baby and/or she had survived. She would not return to the house for several days (Manita'a pers. comm. 1994).

Places

- *Tambu* places are places where ancestors are buried, and/or places of worship and sacrifice. Women are not allowed to walk on the paths leading to these places.
- Women and men's toilets are located in separate parts of a beach, mangrove or bush.

Other tambus

- Men are not allowed in a house where women other than his wife is.
- Men should not walk near a cloth line, nor can touch ropes used by women e.g. to tie firewood, because they would have been in contact with the body;
- No dating is allowed (reportedly this *tambu* is largely ignored, and women enjoy sexual freedom until they marry);
- Single girls cannot enter the house of single boys (traditionally, they lived in common segregated houses);
- Traditionally, women are not allowed to eat pork meat (Manita'a pers. comm. 2000)
- Women are not allowed to enter places where men are preparing to fish or hunt;
- Women must hang the washing behind the house i.e. should not be exposed to public view. This is also largely ignored nowadays, at least in towns;
- Women should not climb trees when there are men around.

CHAPTER 3: DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS AND COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter introduced the concepts of sustainable development and community, and discussed gender issues in the Solomon Islands. This section explores a third, related concept, that of development projects. As described earlier, if sustainable development and community represent respectively long term development *goals* and development *actors*, development projects represent one type of development *actions*.

Development projects are the preferred means used by outside agencies for development practice. This is because the project format allows for a clear definition of goals, methods and responsibilities, and because the project cycle helps to define accountabilities and targets and promote efficiency (Overton *et al* 1999:262). Critiques of the project approach have been many, and Zimbabwe's first president Canaan Banana's oft-cited quote is worth repeating here: no developed country reached that stage by means of development projects. Criticism often emphasises the control orientation¹ and economic core characteristic of the traditional project. As a reaction, the original notion of the development project is currently being stretched beyond its original limits because of the growing demands for a more holistic approach. Thus there is a search both for alternatives to the development project, and for a more appropriate language to describe the various activities of development practice (Shepperd 1998:120).

Despite these limitations and challenges, many public sector and non-governmental investment initiatives in the Solomon Islands have taken place (and continue to do so) through development projects. Replicating the approach of outside agencies, many community initiatives are often defined in project format, somewhere along the spectrum of traditional development projects and grassroots-level initiatives.

This chapter explores the similarities and differences between *the project* as characterised in the development mainstream, and grassroots-level development initiatives.

¹ "The belief that current events and various states of land, labour, technology and capital can be manipulated according to causal relations which exist between them, to achieve a desired objective in a controlled and predictable manner" (Porter *et al* 1991:5).

3.2 Community projects as development initiatives

Development can be defined as *a process of directed change* (Lélé 1991:609).² While it is clear that society in the Solomon Islands is experiencing a process of profound social and economic change, it is less clear what the factors are that direct that change—particularly at the village level. Only the consequences are clear: more cash is needed more often to satisfy the needs that before were met with one's own resources or simply did not exist. Thus a more pessimistic if arguably more appropriate description of development may apply in the case of the Solomon Islands:

“Development can be imagined as a blast of wind that blows people off their feet, out of their familiar space, and places them on an artificial platform, a new structure of living. In order to survive on this exposed and raised foundation, people are compelled to achieve a new minimum level of consumption, for example, in formal education, public health measures, frequency in the use of transportation and rental housing” (Illich 1995:96).

Pre-capitalist modes of production in the Solomon Islands were traditionally not totally oriented to subsistence. Surplus production occurred and part of the population was engaged in non-subsistence production, in some cases linked to the trading and exchange network that existed within and between language groups and islands. Most exchanges, which usually took place at pre-arranged coastal spots, involved a direct system of bartering. In some instances when large quantities of foodstuffs were involved strings of shell money and shark or porpoise teeth served as the media of exchange (Alasia 1989:124).

Nevertheless, the single largest impact on society from its contact with the outside world has arisen from the ongoing transition to a cash economy. The need for cash has increased as part of the processes of decolonisation and development (Bennett 1987:339). Most Solomon Islanders keep their links to the subsistence economy, but money is required to pay for both modern necessities (education, Western-style goods) as well as *traditional* expenses (compensation payments, weddings), which previously were paid by traditional means e.g. using *tafuli'ae* or red shell money. Community involvement in the cash economy is not so much a choice as a necessity.

“*Time before come* (in the past) people used [the] land only, there was no money, only *kastom* money: taro, pana, yam, pigs. In 1953, 10 or 20 cents you cannot spend in one or

² There are probably as many definitions of development as there are development academics. This definition will suffice for the purposes of this work.

two months, maybe in three months. Now, one dollar is nothing. Before there was barter of fish and taro. Now we use money to buy food, *kastom* money costs money. *Time before come* [you paid] 24 dollars for *kastom* money, now 500, 600³ [dollars]. Today everything is different. Before people lived from their hands, now people live for money. [Under] *kastom*, you cannot live without your hands, now is different, people don't work in the gardens, they don't know the rules of *kastom*, only [modern] education" (Manita'a pers.comm. 2000).

Since colonial times, Solomon Islanders obtained cash from whatever limited options were available to them. At different times this has meant plantation work, copra production, land sales or logging concessions. Following on those earlier alternatives to generate an income, many community initiatives represent a search for strategies to "turn wealth into cash" (as described by SIDT 1998). "Wealth" is primarily the natural resources to which all the natives of the Solomon Islands are entitled. It is also the communities' social capital and "manpower".⁴ In many instances this process now takes the name and format of a *project*. Thus projects are a viable alternative for generating income, just as in other times other activities were in vogue. In addition, in the rural Solomon Islands there are little opportunities for employment so projects may be the only viable alternative to produce an income that some communities—particularly women—have.

Arguably conducting a project also reflects an adoption at a grassroots level of some aspects of the mainstream development model: the project format itself, and whatever project support structures external to the communities may be available, such as seed funds, equipment, or advice. This exercise, in itself, can be seen both as a search for a bridge between the subsistence economy and the cash economy as well as an adaptation to the development "industry". Further, many projects see communities effectively embracing the process of change rather than reacting to it. Adoption is both a form of adaptation and a mechanism for survival, and a form of cultural evolution:

³ This comment does not take into account inflation and devaluation. The Solomon Islands currency devaluated by 20% in 1998.

⁴ "Manpower" is the Pijin or English term for a culturally defined and defining, quintessential Malaitan concept. "Manpower" is more than "labour": it could be defined as the "ability and willingness to work hard". The term is further discussed in Chapter 10. The term has cultural implications as a definition of identity: For Malaitans, "manpower" comes naturally as an obvious consequence of who they are. In the view of many Malaitans, other peoples from the Solomon Islands are not as able or willing to work as hard as they do.

“Any society...needs to be adaptive, if only to assist its people to choose which elements of traditional culture they most wish to retain. For in the face of changing circumstances (and they were changing, albeit more slowly, even before the *araikwao* came) it cannot remain static” (Foanaota 1989:70).

Ultimately, people start income generating initiatives because the satisfaction of their needs and wants require money. At least in some Malaitan cultures, such as Kwara’ae, embracing the cash economy and taking initiatives to generate income is another way to apply traditional work ethic.

3.3 Types of development projects

A development project can be defined as "a finite investment package of resources (i.e. finance, equipment and personnel) designed to achieve a particular set of economic and social objectives within a specified period of time" (ODA 1995:1). Projects can also be considered temporary activities that allow incremental progress towards larger development goals (Rondinelli 1983:12), a generic definition that is more suited to community-based projects.

Dixon and Sindall (in Dale 1998:77) specify three development project categories depending on the degree of community control over the project:

1. Projects largely under the control of communities;
2. Projects undertaken by an external agency in partnership with communities; and
3. Projects carried out by an external agency with little or no involvement of local people in decision-making.

In contrast to mainstream development projects, an income-generating community project may be based on the potentially unlimited (i.e. sustainable) use of natural and human resources rather than on financial resources; it may not be designed to achieve well-defined objectives; it may not follow the “logical” order of a project cycle; and it may not have a defined time frame. In addition, in community-based initiatives, the boundaries between family and village life and involvement with a project may be less marked than in the case of a traditional development project.

Community-based projects may depend almost entirely on the “wealth” of a community—natural resources, social capital, etc.—rather than being a means of transferring financial resources from outside organisations (e.g. Rondinelli 1983:307). However, communities may

have an overall “development” goal beyond the project itself, whether this is explicit or otherwise. It has been suggested that in community projects there is a level of “vagueness about goals” and courses of action that are not very streamlined, as community members “tend to react to life’s vicissitudes” rather than engage in long term planning. To this end, “...community members may form diverse alliances and proceed in different ways depending on local circumstances” (Dale 1998:79). For these reasons it has been suggested that in order to better reflect tendencies towards vagueness and ambiguity, project terminology should be changed, so that development “objectives” become development “ideas”, “implementation tasks” become “pursuits”, and the various terms defining the outcomes of a project—outputs, effects, impacts—become “perceived achievements”.

A description of community projects that is more suited to the initiatives described in this work is the concept of *para-project* (Chambers 1993:86). Para-projects have three common features:

1. Para-projects are more labour intensive than capital intensive;
2. Para-projects mobilise local resources including ideas and management skills; and
3. Para-project goals are *qualitative change with quantum shifts in activity and outcome* (Uphoff 1988, cited in Chambers 1993; emphasis added).

Para-projects may exist largely outside the mainstream development path. Communities engaged in an activity with the characteristics of a para-project may take advantage of some of the resources provided by donors or the government while at the same time retaining a greater degree of autonomy and control over the project cycle and the scale and pace of implementation.

Aside from differences in ontology, semantics and terminology, community projects are in a category of their own even though they share some of the basic characteristics and objectives of mainstream development projects. Most of the projects evaluated in the present work have a close affinity to the para-project concept. All met at least two of these criteria:

1. Projects were labour intensive. In particular, all projects relied mostly on “manpower” as the main community asset;
2. The projects were identified and executed by the communities, albeit with varying degrees of input from outsiders; and
3. Projects aimed not only to generate an income but also, implicitly or explicitly, to promote *qualitative change*.

3.4 Why do development projects often fail?

The failure of development projects is a common topic in the development literature (e.g. Rondinelli 1983, Porter *et al* 1991, Chambers 1993). Custworth and Franks (1993:11) differentiate between causes of failure *internal* or *external* to the project process. The former includes problems associated with design and implementation. The latter include problems beyond the direct control of project planners and managers, such as economical, social, environmental or political considerations at a regional, national or global scale. In addition, there are risks and uncertainties “inherent of long term projections of human and economic behavior” (Edwards 1991:72). This topic or rather, the opposite: the main causes of project success—is further explored in Chapter 10.

A non-comprehensive list of common causes of project failure would include questions of size; participation; timing; and project “pathologies”. These causes are contained within a spectrum of possibilities for project failure including internal and external causes. In line with the analytical framework for project evaluation used here, however, emphasis will be placed on internal causes.

3.4.1 Questions of size

Cusworth and Frank (1993:8-9) describe two basic project types: capital intensive projects, which are often large scale, industrial or infrastructure projects; and people-based projects, which mainly involve the agricultural, rural and social sectors. Chambers argues that bureaucratic pressures favour the implementation of fewer, larger projects biased towards large-scale, capital-intensive approaches, where the opportunities for participation are arguably less. Even when carried out according to plan there may be inescapable trade-offs between intended benefits and the project impacts. In some cases, the size of the projects is fundamental to their failure—either because the scale and complexity of the projects prevents them from achieving their desired effects, or because the scale of their negative side effects such as social or environmental impacts outweigh the benefits. At the same time, large projects are “vulnerable to major and expensive problems” (Chambers 1993:77-82).

While small-scale community projects can also fail, they are easier to rectify and adapt to changing situations, and usually do not have irreversible effects of the same magnitude as large projects. For instance, the impact of large scale developments in the Solomon Islands has been well documented. It is generally accepted that from the perspective of communities small-scale, subsistence oriented projects are a preferable alternative to industrial-scale development projects (e.g. Frazer 1993, LaFranchi and Greenpeace 1999). A study conducted in the Solomon Islands

conducted in the late 1990s by Greenpeace Pacific (unpublished at the time of writing this document) suggested that there was a direct correlation between the scale of development projects and the negative effects on the communities (Rosoman pers.comm. 2000).

3.4.2 Questions of participation

Participation by the intended beneficiaries is deemed to be essential for project success (e.g. Rondinelli 1983:309). However, it is not unusual that in mainstream development projects the intended beneficiaries are in some cases seen as “externalities” whose actions can be planned along with other project activities. “Perhaps a more important set of *external* factors are those caused by the reactions of the people affected by the project” (Cusworth and Frank 1993:12; emphasis added). Even when some participation is encouraged, the “target populations” may be excluded from the early part of the project success:

“While the substantive involvement of beneficiaries in project preparation is a laudable but seldom very practical objective...the feasibility of projects often depends on the development of arrangements for securing the genuine involvement of beneficiaries in planning and decision making during *implementation*” (Edwards 1991:70; emphasis added).

Nihal expresses a more inclusive view, which better reflects the approach of community projects:

“Rather to consider the way in which [local conditions] have to be adapted and changed for a given project...the question is now asked of the project—how should *it* be modified to blend in with the existing social and institutional framework” (Nihal 1988:14; original emphasis).

Community initiatives have the potential to be largely participatory exercises from the outset, even when they may exclude some local people or benefit people who are already better off than the rest of the community. Not only is the process internalised to the community from the outset, but community ownership usually includes the entire project cycle.

3.4.3 Questions of time and timing

Projects are defined within time limits: “A project is the investment of capital in a time-bound intervention to create productive assets” (Custworth and Franks 1993:3). However, the project’s time frame may differ from that of the intended beneficiaries. People may have very immediate needs, in which case the project outcome may be seen as too far into the future. Alternatively, they may be more concerned with developing their own local strategies for long-

term survival, in which case the short time frame of a project may be seen as insufficient to adequately address future needs. In either case, projects are unlikely to succeed unless the project process allows a sense of ownership and purpose to develop among the intended beneficiaries. Chambers (1993:86) advocates eliminating deadlines (e.g. in the spending of project funds) to allow time for the gestation and maturity of a project within a community.

When the projects are developed from within a community and have the flexible characteristics defined above the questions of time become less significant and indeed deadlines are abolished and replaced by a community's sense of time. Nevertheless even community development projects are at times instigated on what is from the outset a tight work schedule. An agroforestry project proposal acknowledges this fact:

"Our main problems are (sic) to do with allocation of time to the project. Our time is really full with work on the church, school, village and our own family gardens and things. Even attending our sick takes time and when we have to do anything else like the agroforestry project, we are really conscious that certain things have to be put off. Now all our work is for subsistence so agroforestry sounds good when the results can be realised soon. Any project that is too long term needs funding assistance because people must work to live" (Balai 1994).

Community projects require a significant investment of time, a resource that is not inexhaustible even in a subsistence economy, as well as other community resources.

3.4.4 Project process "pathologies"

The project process may be a formality among more pressing issues for donor organisations. Chambers describes a project process "pathology" characterised by "irreversibility of commitment" (i.e. decisions become irreversible before the appraisal has been completed and respond to political pressures rather than to the project's merits); anti-poor bias; the "cooking" of cost and benefit analysis; and *ad hoc* procedures (Chambers 1993:79-82). In addition, the entire project may be based on the wrong assumptions concerning the local situation and what is needed out of a project. In some cases outside interventions have worked against the real interests of the intended beneficiaries, or they have not been sustainable because they did not meet people's needs or because it ignored environmental and economic realities (Porter *et al* 1991:197). A project affected by these kinds of pathologies is unlikely to meet its objectives. The project may go through the motions of a process, including those of a participatory process, but this may respond to the dynamics of donor organisations rather than those of the intended beneficiaries.

Projects initiated by communities may suffer “pathologies” of their own, further described in Chapter 10, but these would be largely within the control or at least the responsibility of project owners.

3.5 Community projects and the project cycle

The project cycle refers to the stages undertaken in the planning and implementation of a development project. The notion of a project cycle allows the identification of a common sequence of events in community initiatives (e.g. Nihal 1988). Mainstream development projects have—in theory—a well-defined project cycle. Para-projects, instead, may develop following a simpler sequence of stages. The definitions for the project cycle as used here are based on observations made at the community initiatives described in Chapters 8 and 9. Despite the many differences outlined above, a community project is likely to unfold in a way comparable with the mainstream development project cycle, from its inception until reaches a point of completion or ongoing operation.

The notion of the project cycle provides an useful framework for project evaluation. How far a project advances in the project cycle is in itself a measure (albeit narrow or imperfect) of project success.

3.5.1 Identification

At the identification stage the project appears as an idea or possibility worth pursuing. Generally, communities would organise themselves around a project in order to address a *problem*. The identification of a problem allows the community to organise itself, define objectives for its work, and move through the stages of a project cycle (Dale 1998:15).

As described above, the identification of income-generating projects is in essence a search for alternatives to “turn wealth into cash” (SIDT 1998). The community, through individual members or its leaders, assesses the resources available to them and looks for alternatives that are likely to achieve this end. At this stage, outside agents may have acted as project proponents, advisers or catalysts, particularly in projects of an innovative rather than traditional nature. Out of the six projects discussed later (Chapters 8 and 9), three had been identified by the communities or individuals themselves; two by outside NGOs; and one by a government agency linked to an overseas donor.

3.5.2 Formulation

The formulation of the project may take place through the usual community channels or through one formed to deal with the project itself (e.g. a steering committee). At this stage the project would be discussed, and eventually accepted, modified, or dismissed. Community members would carry out the actual project design, in some cases reaching out for advice and support outside the community. A negotiation stage would have taken place if some external funding, materials, know-how or other resources are required.

Of the six projects discussed here, three were designed locally within the communities, and three were largely designed by outsiders. Not surprisingly, the former were traditional projects or were based on traditional skills (e.g. vegetable market gardening) while the latter were novel or innovative in outlook and objectives (e.g. paper making).

Small projects implemented by community organisations may require a simple operational planning. However, most of the successful case studies in this work unfolded with the careful operational planning that is comparable with that of developing a small business elsewhere. In some cases preparations for the project involved overseas training, consultation with overseas as well as local advisers, and access to free seed funds, bank loans, or donations of equipment (Table 3.1). Some of the most successful projects were those that actively reached out for, and therefore received, proportionally more support. The least successful project started at the implementation stage, and then retraced the project cycle to search for outside funds to support the project.

3.5.3 Implementation

At this stage the project institutions are established and its facilities constructed. Custworth and Frank 1993:7 add an additional stage of *commissioning* i.e. when the systems are first put into action. The implementation phase proceeds according to a timetable and work plan agreed on by the community, in which the timing of the project and pace of implementation in relation to other community and private activities would have been discussed.

Most of the projects described here did not require full time involvement from community members that would prevent them from doing other chores (Table 3.2).

3.5.4 Operation

The operational phase of the project is the period when the assets are put to work. This is when the assets should start to yield benefits and, strictly speaking, when the project phase has been

completed. For long-term community projects, this is when projects that are relatively successful can be separated from those that failed. In community initiatives this is also when a project becomes part of a community regular activities, and, arguably, where the road to “development”—however defined—begins.

Five of the six projects described here had reached this phase in the early- to mid-1990s.⁵ One of the projects had been completed while the other four continued for the long term. By February 2000, however, two had been discontinued temporarily, one due to internal reasons (financial problems), the other due to external reasons (ethnic tension).

3.5.5 Evaluation

Evaluation is one of the key elements of successful projects (e.g. Shepperd 1998) yet is the one that is most often overlooked. In community initiatives, internal project evaluation is inherent to the project cycle and takes place throughout the project, albeit informally. If people lose interest in the project—for instance if it is considered that the project’s benefits did not justify the efforts, people will question the continuation of the project at community meetings. Alternatively, people may simply discontinue their participation in the project. An ongoing community project is usually a project that has passed this type of informal—but effective—form of evaluation. Several projects described here had been cancelled or modified because of this type of evaluation.

3.5.6 Completion

Projects may continue for a long time after completion even though they may not be considered “projects” by then but an integral part of community life. Community projects could continue as long-term initiatives; they could be phased out in a planned or spontaneous manner; or they could change onto a different community initiative.

Most of the projects described here had a central component that was accompanied by other initiatives, in some cases involving the activities of smaller groups e.g. a women’s group. The majority were not dominant in relation to other community activities. For most communities the multiple focus of their activities were the many facets of the life of the community itself, not a single individual project. However, communities often run several different secondary projects at the time, in parallel with a main project (Table 3.3).

⁵ This is a consequence of the project selection procedures used for this research: three out the six projects evaluated here were chosen because they were widely considered to be successful.

3.6 Summary and conclusions

It is not surprising that mainstream development projects with the characteristics described—often large-scale, capital intensive, time bound and dominated by outsiders—fail, and that a different kind of project with the opposite criteria or qualities is required. It is argued here that community projects or para-projects, while vulnerable to external pressures and prone to failure, avoid some of the most common causes of project failure in the development mainstream. Their insertion in the community facilitates the flexible, adaptive learning process that is widely considered a key for project success amongst development academic and practitioners (e.g. Rondinelli 1983). In community initiatives both failures and successes contribute to the community's learning process in a more direct and immediate way than in traditional development projects.

In keeping with these views, it is equally not surprising that the notion of project is changing to incorporate participatory, grassroots level approaches as could be described by the notion of para-project. Arguably para-projects are more easily incorporated to community and family life than mainstream development projects, and at least from this perspective have better chances of success. However, it may well be that as projects become integrated with other grassroots activities, what is expected from them is more than what they can deliver e.g. not only to generate an income but also to improve both people and environmental well-being and ensure sustainable development for generations to come. Ultimately these trends and needs may lead to a new development practice paradigm that replaces *the project*.

Table 3.1: Resources available to community projects

	Access to expatriate market	Bank loans	Business plan advice	Donated equipment	Local advice	Local training	Overseas advice	Overseas training	Seed money
Anoa'asa		?	?	?	✓	?	✓	✓	✓
Balai	✓		?	✓	✓	✓	✓		?
Busurata	✓			✓	✓		✓		
Feratofea	✓								
Fiu		?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
HAA		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 3.2: Projects and work regime

	Project	Workers
Anoa'asa	Full time when in operation	Part time
Balai	Full time	Part time (two days a week)
Busurata	Full time	Full time
Feratofea	Part time	Part time (two days a week)
Fiu	Full time when in operation	Full time when in operation
HAA	Full time	Full time

Table 3.3: Primary and secondary projects

	Primary/profit	Secondary/profit	Secondary/non profit
Anoa'asa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large scale reforestation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agroforestry 	
Balai	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper making 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small scale reforestation
Busurata	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market vegetable gardening 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aquaculture • Cattle raising • Rice farming • Small scale reforestation
Feratofea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chilli growing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Kastom</i> dance group • Small scale reforestation
Fiu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rice farming 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising of small farm animals
HAA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eggs and poultry 		

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

Project evaluation was conducted on the basis of criteria for project success described elsewhere (Chapter 7),¹ using qualitative social and economic data collected by methods that included participant observation (in 1994) and Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) techniques (in 2000).

4.2 Participant observation

Participant observation is a method to collect data in a relatively unstructured manner in naturalistic settings by scientists who observe and/or take part in the common and uncommon activities of the people being studied. The method is characterised by the fact that the observer is continuously in touch with the person or group observed, observing, listening, and documenting his or her observations. The *method* includes the explicit recording and analysis of the information gained from participating and observing. One approach to participant observation is to think of all the elements needed to tell a story—who, what, when, where, why, and how (Bogdewic 1992: 45-69; Dewalt *et al* 1998:259).

The rationale for this method is that observing the actions of a community provides a clearer picture of community life—its values, values, dynamics, internal relationships, structures and conflicts—rather than from community members' (normative) statements of what "is" (König 1963:205). The participant observer attempts immersion, to the extent permitted or considered necessary, in local life in order to understand and document how things work. As initially used by Malinowski the method was differentiated by earlier forms of field work by its emphasis on *every day* interactions and observations rather than on using directed enquires into specific behaviours. There is a range of possible degrees of active and emotional participation in the lives and work of the people being observed. However, the method is paradoxical in that the observer attempts to understand the view point of the group observed without "going native". This has been described as "a creative tension" between the goal of documented observation and the situated observer's critical goal of understanding of the situated observer" (Dewalt *et al* 1998:263, 264).

¹ Some of these criteria were developed after the 2000 field work, and applied when writing this document.

Participant observation has the advantage of facilitating the understanding of the observed acts (in the sense of Max Weber²) due to the coincidence (albeit temporary) of life experiences. When the observer joins a group and adopts a role, it reduces the environment of the phenomena to be observed. The result may be an in depth and well-founded view of the group being observed. Participant observation enhances the quality of the data as well as the quality of the interpretation of data. From this perspective participant observation is both a data collection and an analytical tool (König 1963:205; Pratt and Loizos 1992:64; Rennie and Singh 1995; Dewalt *et al* 1998:264).

The disadvantages of the method include that it is the least objective of all social research methods. The result relies both on the integrity and intellectual honesty of the researcher whose experiences cannot be replicated by the nature of the research. In addition, documentation can be difficult—both the actual collection of documentation³ as well as its content, which can be sensitive or too confidential to allow wider distribution. Importantly, it is a slow and intensive method, and it may take a long time to collect and analyse the data (Pratt and Loizos 1992:63). Finally, the method is less suited to "project" situations where the team members are outsiders, not familiar with the area, and where there are time constraints (Rennie and Singh 1995).

Participant observation in Malaita (1994)

Between March and September 1994 the author worked in the Solomon Islands with the Australian chapter of an international youth and community development organisation. The work of this organisation, further described in Annex I, involved field deployment of small international youth groups in rural villages to work on community projects. Selection criteria required that the projects had to be identified and implemented by the communities themselves. Generally, the youth teams joined existing community projects at the early stages of the project cycle. The youth teams worked for four to six weeks alongside community members, usually offering unskilled labour, and in some cases professional assistance (e.g. dentists). Many of the projects were for infrastructure or social investment rather than for generating income, which is the focus of the present study. Over an eight- to ten-week period each youth group typically worked on two or three different community projects.

² Weber proposed the method of *comprehension*, which can be of two types: 1. *endopathic* or affective comprehension (which is to place oneself in the other's place, the real meaning of *compassion*); and 2. intellectual or rational comprehension: which is the analysis of the relation means-end of the action under study. The two types of comprehension are not contradictory but are distinguishable.

³ Some authors emphasise the documentation aspects of participant observation: "If you didn't write it down in your field notes, it didn't happen" (Dewalt *et al* 1998:270).

As staff member (group leader) the author participated at a variety of projects in five different sites in Malaita Province. Pijin training was included as part of staff training; added to later exposure to the language it facilitated interaction with Solomon Islanders and consequently participant observation. The group leader's main task was to manage and ensure the well being of the youth group. However, prior to the deployment of the groups in the field the group leader was also involved in project identification and scoping. This involved spending time at prospective villages to become acquainted with the community, formalise the involvement of the organisation in a particular project and make logistical arrangements. While the groups were deployed in the field the group leader was responsible for acting as a liaison between the organisation and the community, through permanent contact with community leaders, e.g. to arrange work schedules.

The experience allowed for close contact with some community members, observations on running a village-based project and an insight into the communities' everyday lives. Importantly, the time spent in the villages allowed active participation not only in project-related activities but also in other communal activities such as work in gardens, building construction, feasts, assistance to church, etc., which provided a better understanding of community life outside *the project*. Living in close quarters at the villages also allowed for an open discussion of current affairs, a variety of issues related to community life, *kastom* and history, and broader issues such as environment and development.

The opportunities for participant observation varied within different communities depending on the length of time spent there, the type of activities involved in different projects and the rapport established with individuals and with the community as a whole. Whether the researcher was alone in the community or was part of the group of volunteers also allowed for a different type of experience.

The experience could be classified as a form of "active participation" in that the author was engaged "...in almost everything that the other people are doing as a means of trying to learn the cultural rules for behaviour" (Dewalt *et al* 1998:263). This is in contrast to more limited—or complete—forms of participant observation. However, it should be noted that according to some strict criteria *observations are not data* unless they are recorded in some form (Dewalt *et al* 1998:271). In this case, field notes were taken on daily bases particularly in what concerned the projects but also to the extent possible on cultural aspects and people's perception of current issues. Photographic documentation was also used albeit sparingly and most often on request from the villagers.

4.3 Rapid Rural Appraisal

Rapid rural appraisal (RRA) techniques were chosen in the 2000 follow-up work (i.e. project evaluation after five years) to collect qualitative project evaluation data. Field work was conducted during January 2000. The short time available for the field work (one month) did not allow using participant observation once again. In addition, for the purposes of project evaluation a more objective methodology was preferable.

Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) techniques have been distinguished as *approaches* rather than methods (Chambers 1997:134). RRA is located on a continuum between highly informal and fully formalised data collection methods. RRA methods have some limitations—in some cases, information is of questionable reliability and validity, and qualitative rather than quantitative data is generated, among others—but they allow for the collection of information with a relatively low investment of resources (Kumar 1993:8). In addition, it was considered that for the purposes of this work RRA methods provided adequate information without causing much interference to the informants' daily routine.

The methodological paradigm of RRA is that social or economic phenomena constitute a set of multiple realities, within which the observer's reality conditions his/her understanding or construction of the observed phenomena. Within this paradigm RRA can be seen as "...a tool to articulate the opinions, concerns, judgement, and perspectives of those who are often ignored by social scientists researching development interventions" (Kumar 1993:10).

Pre-conditions

A decision was made that the field work methods had to meet the following pre-conditions:

1. Collect the maximum amount of information in the least possible time; and
2. Have the least possible impact on the informants' day-to-day activities and routine.

The reasons for these self-imposed pre-conditions were the limited time available for field work, and a desire to minimise the effect of research on the communities and individuals visited, given its essentially extractive nature. In general terms, RRA methods fulfil these preconditions over Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) methods.⁴ Chambers (1997:134) notes that the term RRA should be used for *data-collecting activities* while PRA should be reserved for *empowering processes*. The purpose of research was entirely academic and this was clearly stated to the

⁴ There is a role for PRA methods when the purpose of research is actually *participatory* and when research leads to participatory action. Despite its potential PRA is not without critics (e.g. Guijt and Kaul Shah 1999).

communities: “Last time I came here to help you, this time I am coming to ask for your help to do my research.”

A low-impact, small-scale approach to data collection contrasts with that used in recent social research conducted in the Solomon Islands (e.g. Schoeffel *et al* 1994, PGDU 1999) in which village-wide meetings lasting several hours or days were held by teams of researchers. The quantity of data is of course considerably greater in these cases, but so is the interference on communities’ lives with arguably little direct benefit to the communities involved even though the research may indeed be useful and necessary. Extractive research methods, while at times unavoidable, can be quite intrusive or even alienating despite efforts from the research team to the contrary.

The following RRA methodologies and/or approaches were considered most suitable for the purposes of research:

- Secondary data analysis;

- Semi-structured interviews with key informants;

- Transect walks;

- Tools developed by the Solomon Islands Development Trust (SIDT) (Roughan 1993); and

- Approaches for offsetting biases.

Some of these methods were conducted with more detail than were others. Another method that had been considered at the planning stage, focus groups, was not used.

4.3.1 Secondary data sources

Secondary data sources included articles, books, and other information available for the Solomon Islands, including maps and aerial photographs. An important source of information are the works of Burt on Kwara’ae and Keesing on Kwaio. From the early 1990s, an increase in commercial timber extraction and in ethnic tension led to a number of publications with detailed information on social and environmental issues (Schoefel *et al* 1994, AIDAB and MNR 1994, DDP 2000a). In addition, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) is active in the Solomon Islands and has produced a number of reports on constituency profiling and action planning (PGDU 2000). Most of this material is difficult to obtain outside the Solomon Islands.

The information available about the villages in the study area itself included time-serial aerial photographs, topographic and resources maps dating from the 1970s, YCI reports (YCI 1994), and personal notes.

Analysis of aerial photographs⁵

Time serial stereoscopic analysis of aerial photographs was used for some parts of the study area (Central Kwara'ae and West Kwaio) to evaluate changes over time, such as changes in the tree cover, village expansion, road construction, etc. The photographs were taken in 1967, 1979, 1986, and 1992, on scales ranging from *ca.* 1:20,000 to *ca.* 1:40,000. There have been earlier aerial surveys but the sets are incomplete or have been lost. The last country-wide aerial survey in the Solomon Islands took place in 1992 before the start of most of the projects evaluated here had started, so it was not possible to evaluate changes since then. Generally, the aerial photographs show a continuum between primary forest or old regrowth, and recent clearings and villages, as well as the appearance of new villages and hamlets, and natural features such as cyclone damage to the forest, landslips, etc. This information was used to complement other types of information and generally to provide the context for project evaluation and perspectives for sustainable development.

4.3.2 Semi-structured interviews with informants

Semi-structured interviews to key informants are the basis for social research methodologies used in this work. Interviews are “a conversation with a purpose” (Hodgson 1987:2, quoted by Millar *et al* 1992:2). Semi-structured interviews have been regarded as “the core of good RRA” (Grandstaff and Grandstaff 1987, quoted by Chambers 1997:136). The approach entails having a mental or written checklist for the interview, but allowing the interviews to be open ended as well as following up on the unexpected (Chambers 1997:136). The interviews take place in an informal environment “that resembles the conversation between acquaintances” (Kumar 1993:11). If the interview is conducted by an “equal”—as it was intended in this case—then the interview is “non-violent” in that there is no symbolic violence in the communication between the interviewer and the interviewee that would create a significant distortion of the answers (Bordieu, 1999).

Questionnaires (further described in Chapter 7) were developed prior to the field work to aid project evaluation. However, these questionnaires were eventually used only as checklists to define areas of enquire, for reasons concerning the form and content of the interviews:

Form: Most informants preferred to open the interview speaking at length about the topics that he or she considered important. This might well be the customary format of interaction

⁵ Examination of aerial photographs was intended to enable footprint analysis (i.e. area-based sustainability analysis) using a methodology developed by Wackernagel and William (1996). This aspect of the research was suspended.

used to address important issues, at least in Kwara'ae. This approach allowed the informant to choose the content of the interview, speaking freely for as long as he or she considered it necessary. The researcher let the conversation flow naturally. Only after this initial discourse had been completed did the researcher ask questions to clarify further points or address other issues.

Content: Very often the informant's initial speech covered contextual issues such as logging, land disputes, ethnic tension, the growing influence of the cash economy etc. rather than the status of the community or community projects. It soon became apparent that these issues had influenced directly or indirectly the communities' lives and projects.

The checklist was used as the basis for asking a limited number of closed questions, with most of the interview consisting of open or probing questions (Millar *et al* 1992).

Figure 4.1(a-c) shows the distribution of informants by language or ethnic group, gender, and affiliation. Annex III lists the key informants' names.

Interview procedures

The prospective interviewers were selected primarily because of their leadership role in project development. The researcher visited the prospective informants, explained the reason for the visit and proposed to conduct an interview at a date, time and place suitable to the informant. In most villages the interview was arranged for a later date. In contrast, government officials or NGO activists agreed in most cases to be interviewed immediately.

Two types of interviews were conducted: long and semi-structured interviews, focused on all the most relevant topics; and short or unstructured interviews, which focused on one or two main topics only. The former were often formal or pre-arranged. The latter were often informal and impromptu or opportunistic. The choice depended on the area of expertise of the informant and on the circumstances of the interview.

Opening the interview, the researcher explained the background and objectives of the research, emphasising that its purpose was merely academic ("*research nomoa*"). Among community members there was not immediate acceptance that this was a valid enough reason to conduct an interview. In one case, before interviewing a paramount chief the researcher was advised by another key informant from the same community to pretend that research would contribute to community development. Indeed, this was the initial assumption of several key informants.

The interviews were conducted in Solomon Islands Pijin and/or English. Only in one instance was the assistance of an interpreter (himself a key informant) required. The interviews were recorded on tape and/or written down in shorthand. The notes taken during the day were reviewed as soon as possible (usually that same evening) to ensure that they were legible and that no information was lost. Permission was asked to record the interviews on tape or to take photographs. Mental notes were taken in the most informal interviews. These were written down as soon as possible.

At the closing of the interviews the researcher gave the opportunity for the informants to ask questions regarding the research or other matters. This offer was often accepted. The questions asked by the informants usually addressed the purposes of the research, or asked for the researchers' opinion, commentary or advice on topics related to development or community projects.

On average the interviews lasted approximately one hour. In some cases the interviews were shorter, and in other cases they were considerably longer or required several sessions. In the latter case it was often the informant who proposed a second (or third) session. In two cases the informants requested to record on tape their own analysis of the situation in the Solomon Islands and their visions for the future.

In Kwara'ae, speaking to chiefs or discussing *kastom* issues requires the payment of compensation. However, by *kastom*, the person being compensated has to accept whatever is given to them. Consequently, advice was sought as to what compensation was suitable in each case and compensation was given as appropriate.⁶ Personal food supplies were always taken to the villages in order not to use the village's supplies.

4.3.3 Transect walks

Transect walks involve walking with local guides and analysts through one area, "observing, asking, listening, discussing, learning..." (Chambers 1997:117). Transect walks included the project sites, particularly in the sites being revisited since 1994; a low-traffic rural road leading

⁶ Compensation was usually food supplies and in one case, for practical reasons, cash. In other cases, appreciation was shown with a small present or an invitation to share a simple meal. For interviews with chiefs it was suggested that 10kg of rice, several tins of tuna and a tin of coffee or cocoa was a suitable compensation. The cost of this was about NZD 20.00

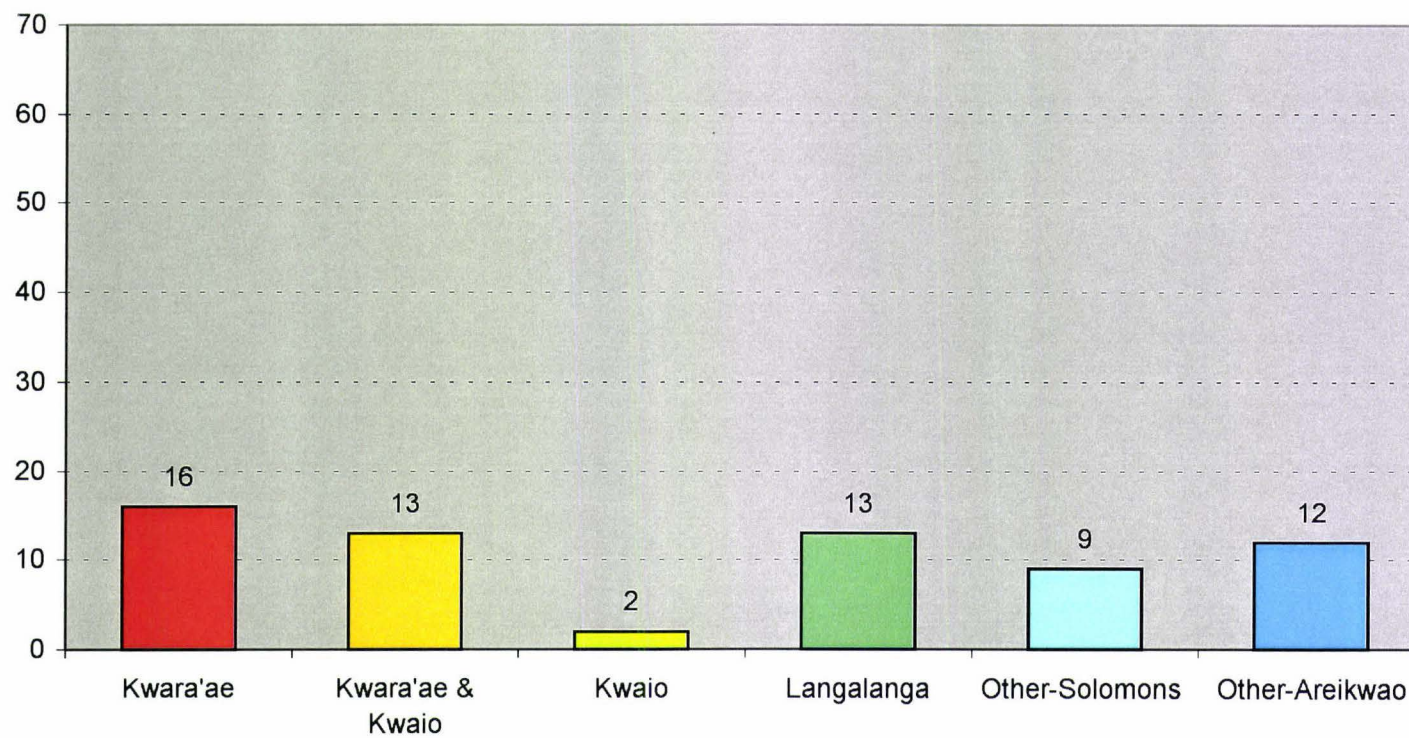


Figure 4.1a: Informers profile by ethnic group (2000) (n=65)

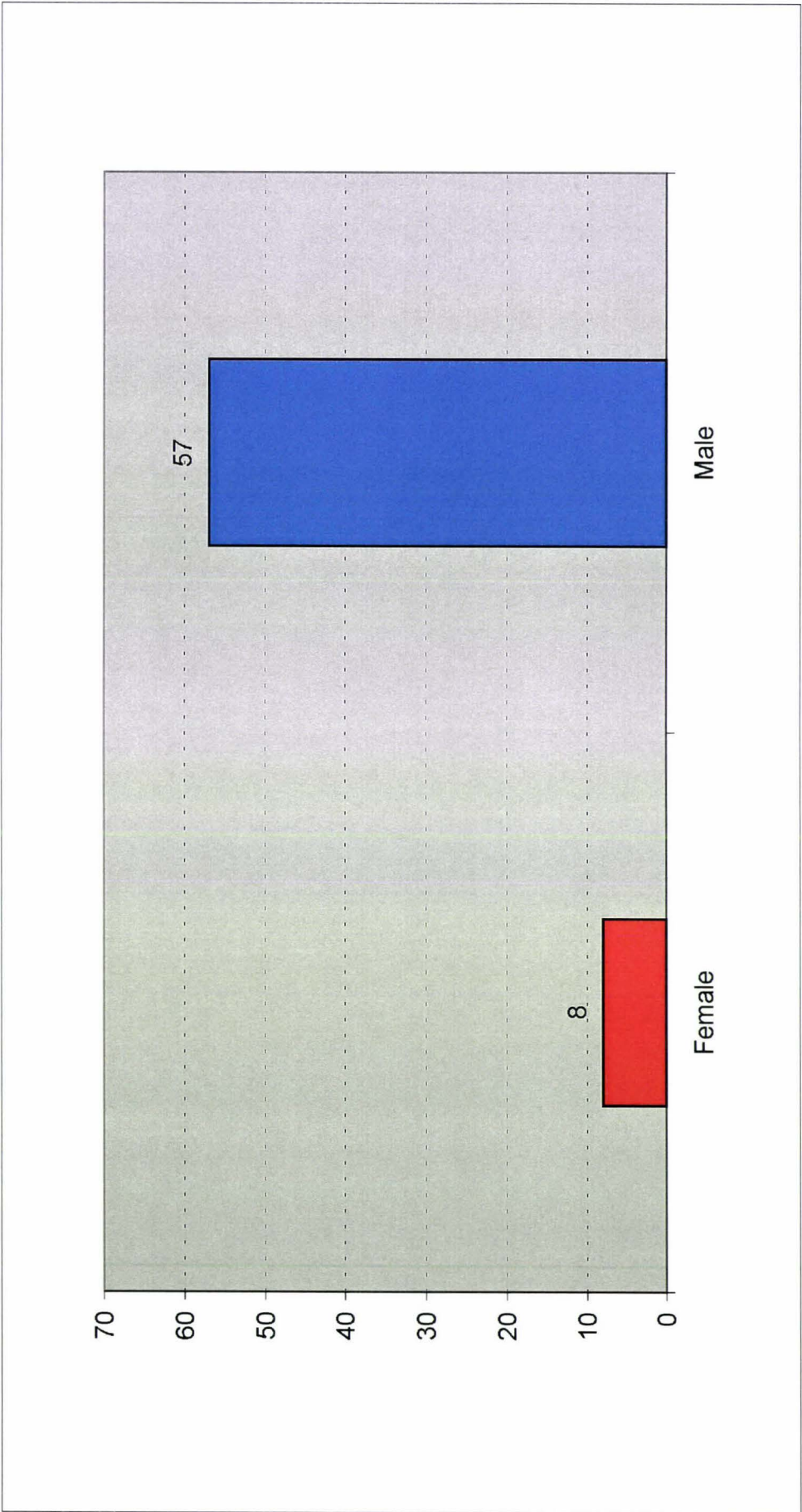


Figure 4.1b: Informers profile by gender (2000) (n=65)

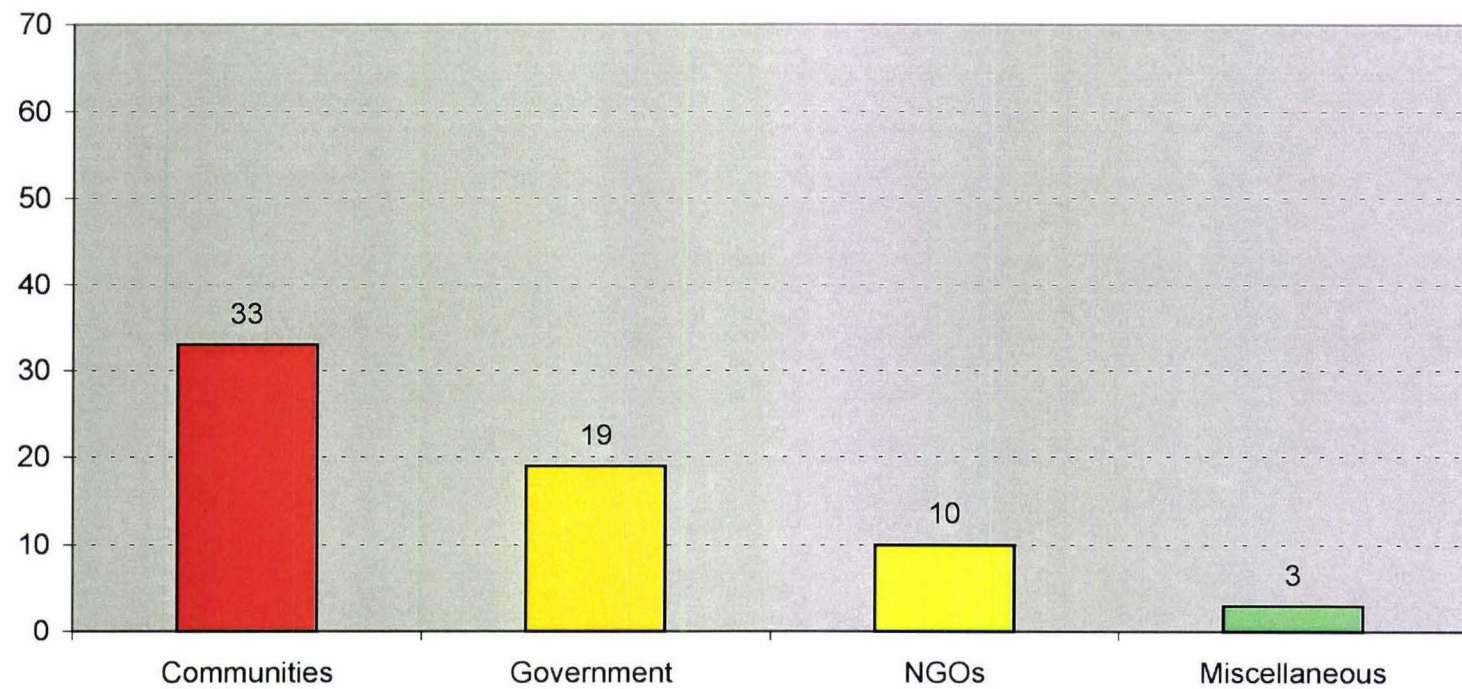


Figure 4.1c: Informers profile by affiliation (2000) (n=65)

into the highlands; a logging road through customary land; and a reforestation project⁷. A transect along the Langalanga Lagoon between Auki and Bina Harbour was conducted by boat⁸.

However, transect walks were carried out less frequently than anticipated. Under *kastom* visitors cannot wonder alone on the land; somebody from the village has to escort the visitors at all times (presumably, both for protection and surveillance). Knowledge about land use, land boundaries, etc., is sensitive and often confidential.⁹ For these reasons, an important component of transect walks—“mapping and diagramming the zones, resources, and findings” (Mascarenhas 1990, quoted in Chambers 1997:117) could not take place other than through the use of photographs or mental notes taken during the walk.

4.3.4 SIDT tools

For SIDT, population and resources are a single dimension of quality living: “...the two sides of one coin.” SIDT has developed a range of tools as part of its education and resource management program. These tools work under the assumption that “local people...given the chance to reflect upon their own lives, own a treasury of experience, information and knowledge...” (Roughan 1993:D1.6). Out of a wider selection of tools developed by SIDT, the following tools were chosen for the present work and used whenever possible. When not used in a participatory manner (i.e. when the analysis is conducted by local people with ulterior purposes), these tools are useful checklist of variables that concern social and environmental parameters relevant to development.

“Wheel of resources”

The wheel of resources diagram identifies village resources, some of which may not be immediately apparent (Roughan 1993). The wheel includes land and sea resources (e.g. food trees), commercial resources (e.g. timber) and people resources (e.g. women). Each resource is given a mark. Displaying each mark on a graph allows the villagers to visualise the resources to which they have access. SIDT complements this tool with other tools describing women’s involvement in community activities, and resources available for women. The resources available to the villagers are the basis for community projects, and in essence comprise the “wealth” that community initiatives can turn into “cash”. Whilst the “wheel of resources” tool

⁷ These transect walks are illustrated in Chapters 8 and 9, Figs. 8.2, 8.3 and 9.1

⁸ This transect is illustrated in Chapter 5, Fig 5.4.

⁹ In one instance an informant drew a map of his ancestral land and how it related by genealogy to other tribes in the area using my pen and paper. When he finished his explanation he took the map away with him.

is mean to be an open-learning tool for group discussion, in the present work it was used only with individual informants or small groups.

“Past, Now, Future” exercise

This exercise allows the villagers to assess trends for a number of environmental and social variables over time. These variables provide the context in which community life including development projects takes place.

4.3.5 Offsetting biases

One of the original methods and approaches of RRA is to be self-critically aware of biases in the researchers' behaviour and learning, and acting deliberately to offset them (Chambers 1997:135). In an earlier work, Chambers (1983:13) describes six biases that hinder outsiders' contact with rural poverty and consequently limit their understanding of reality:

1. Spatial biases (urban, tarmac and roadside);
2. Project bias;
3. Person bias (elites; male; user and adopters; active, present and living);
4. Dry season bias;
5. Diplomatic bias (politeness and timidity when facing poverty);
6. Professional bias.

There was a conscious effort to offset some of these biases during the planning and execution of the 2000 field work. These efforts were not always successful:

1. Spatial biases: Most sites were rural and adjacent to unsealed roads. Two sites were next to (or beyond) low traffic unsealed roads.
2. Person bias: By and large this bias was not successfully offset. Most informants were men of some standing in the community. In practical terms it was very difficult to dialogue with village women. About 12% of the informants were women, but most of these worked for the government, NGOs or businesses rather than being village women.
3. Dry season bias: Field work in 2000 was conducted during the wet cyclone season.
4. Diplomatic bias: The researcher did not avoid facing rural poverty. However, using Chambers' own definition of poverty as “lack of assets, inadequate stocks and flows of food and income”, the notion of rural poverty in the Solomon Islands is questionable even though there are obvious differences in the level of “subsistence affluence” in different villages e.g. malnutrition of children is quite apparent in West Kwaio but not elsewhere. In addition, people in the Solomon Islands do not often perceive themselves as poor even though they may have little money. SIDT defines that a poor person is one

- that “... does not have enough food or clothing, lacks adequate housing *like the rest of the community*” (SIDT 1999:4; emphasis added) i.e. in this view there are not general world-wide standards of poverty but it is relative of a country or region.¹⁰ Nevertheless, the researcher did not push the informants into defining their perception of poverty.¹¹
5. Professional bias: This bias was offset in that the researcher tried to let the informants define the issues.

Offsetting the extractive nature of research

As a subset of offsetting research biases some actions were taken to offset the extractive nature of research by giving something in return. This included:

- Accepting requests to record the informants' thoughts, vision or histories.
- Making communities aware of funding possibilities (e.g. NZODA's Small Projects Fund);
- Offering opinions, commentary or advice, albeit only when requested.
- Passing on contact details of project leaders to NGOs working in the country, or to other project owners, for future reference; and
- Paying compensation as required.

Some actions are still to be taken at the time of writing:

- Sending information to some of the project owners concerning issues of their interest (e.g. organic farming, composting); and
- Contacting fair-trade organisations on behalf of some communities.

4.4 Project evaluation

The data collection methods described above were used for qualitative time-serial project evaluation (1994 and 2000) of three projects, and the summary evaluation of three additional projects. However, project evaluation requires a method of its own, further described in Chapter 7.

¹⁰ The concept of vulnerability to income poverty, defined in terms of lacking adequate income to attain a minimum standard of living, is used by the Solomon Islands Government along with other criteria of vulnerability (SIG 2000).

¹¹ “Poverty in the Pacific is rarely as visible or as extreme as it is in some of the harshest parts of the world—but that is not the important point. There are people who are truly disadvantaged and deprived compared to other people in their community or nation, and that defines poverty in the Pacific” (UNDP 1999, quoted in SIG 2000).

4.5 System analysis and modelling

Systems analysis software was used to develop a simple model of community project evolution through time. The model is described in Chapter 11 and Annex V.

4.6 Modifications to original research objectives and methodologies

The original research objectives and methodologies needed some adjustment during the 2000 field work. The dynamics that developed in most individual villages allowed that only one or a few "official" male informants to be interviewed in each village rather than a cross section of the community. Attempting to measure progress towards sustainable development, were not pursued as planned, and it was not attempted to conduct focus groups or to interview village women. Some factors that limited the exchange of information might have been:

- Mistrust of outsiders, presumably aggravated by the ethnic tension¹²;
- A tendency in Kwara'ae and other Malaitan language groups to withhold knowledge,¹³ and
- The explicit extractive nature of research i.e. villagers had nothing to gain by giving out information.

Usually an immediate rapport was established (or re-established) with the informants known since 1994. This was an advantage, but the most senior of these informants required preferential attention—as a demonstration of appreciation, and to “catch up” on issues unrelated to the research, for instance—at the expense of limiting the interaction with other community members. In most cases it was inappropriate to ask questions regarding land ownership, land boundaries or issues concerning genealogy or *kastom*. Schoeffel *et al* (1994:20) report similar problems, which they attribute to different meaning given to Pijin terms by various users.

However, in Kwara'ae and Langalanga at least these are sensitive issues that are not discussed with strangers for one good reason: genealogy and knowledge of *tambu* sites is the key to land ownership. In general the interviewer did not ask direct questions concerning financial matters, such as precise data about the project financial benefits, as this felt inappropriate.

¹² Aside from people I personally knew from 1994, several informants and other people I met during the field work did not really believe that I was an independent researcher; rather they thought I was a minerals prospector, an investor searching for shady development deals (“black gold”) or even a mercenary.

¹³ For instance, one of the informants closed the second of two long conversations by saying “I told you too much already.”

CHAPTER 5: STUDY AREA—CONDITIONS, CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the study area, which is located in the north-west of Malaita Province, Solomon Islands (Figs. 5.1-5.2), from two different perspectives. First, it describes the local natural resources and the social and economic conditions. Second, it describes the main social and economic changes that have taken place since 1994, the time of the author's previous visit, as well as the perspectives for the future as assessed using Rapid Rural Appraisal methods. The chapter concludes evaluating the development needs for the area. Profiles of the Solomon Islands and Malaita are summarised at the end of this chapter in Boxes 5.1 and 5.2, respectively.

Malaita is an island about 200km long and 40km wide with a central mountain range about 800-1000m high. Auki, Malaita's provincial capital, is located in the north-western part of Malaita at about 100km from Honiara, the national capital located in the island of Guadalcanal (Fig. 5.2). The villages that form part of the present study are located on the west coast of Malaita within a radius of about twenty kilometres around Auki. For the purposes of this research the study area is divided into three sub-areas: Auki and nearby villages (including the southern part of West Kwara'ae), Central Kwara'ae and West Kwaio.¹⁴ The biophysical aspects of these three areas are summarised in Table 5.1. The Langalanga Lagoon is also a distinctive area, although no projects were evaluated there. Figure 5.3 shows the villages where project evaluation took place and other locations visited during field work in 1994 and/or 2000.

In Malaita, population pressure on lands suitable for subsistence gardening is greater than in the rest of the Solomon Islands. However, the study area has the largest economic potential in Malaita Province primarily due to its fertile soil and proximity to transport centres. The coastal area between Auki and Bina, in the southern end of the study area, has been earmarked for the largest development initiative in the Solomon Islands centred around a new deep water port at Bina Harbour (Fig. 5.3).

¹⁴ The current ward names in this area include Auki (Ward 1), Aimela (Ward 2), Faumamanu/Kwai (Ward 16), Kwaimela/Randezasu (Ward 29) and Langalanga (Ward 30). Local people usually refer to their area as "Central Kwara'ae" or "West Kwaio", and this is the terminology adopted here. Auki and Fiu (which is located in West Kwara'ae) as used here refer to wards 1 and 2.

5.2 Biophysical aspects

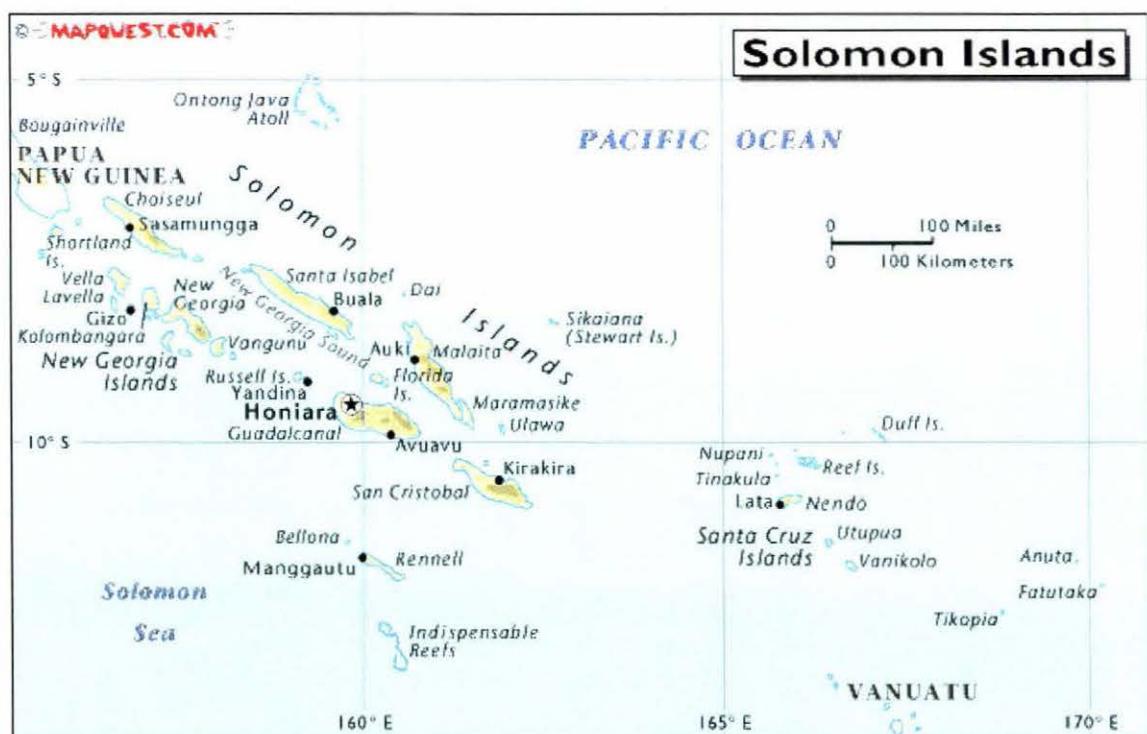
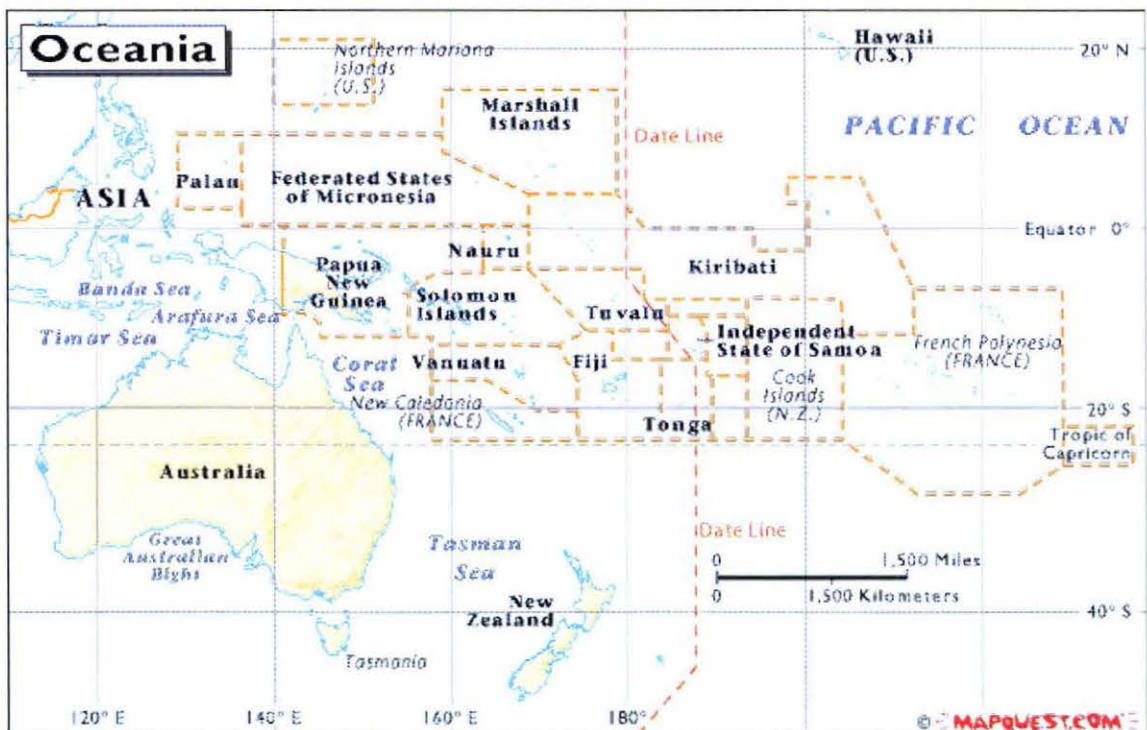
Malaita consists of a rugged mountainous interior flanked by hilly plateaux, lightly dissected hills and narrow coastal terraces with interspersed swamps and valleys. Marine terraces occupy the coastline (Wall and Hansell 1974:4). Over seventy percent (73%) of Malaita is classified as forest. Degraded forest, clearings or gardens occupy the rest of Malaita. Ninety percent of the forested land is classified as hill rainforest with a mixed species composition. The forest types¹⁵ in the study area include hill forests and saline and freshwater swamp forests. On aerial photographs the typical Malaitan hill forest appears as “mid-dense forest with a canopy that has scattered large crowns overtopping a gap-filling, even aged canopy of smaller crowns.” This type of canopy usually indicates severe to moderate disturbance (AIDAB and MNR 1994:24). The Malaitan forests are generally in poor condition as a result of clearing, cultivation and commercial timber extraction, and cyclone damage (particularly cyclone Namu in 1986). In addition, more Malaitan forests have been cleared for subsistence gardening than anywhere else in the Solomon Islands. Since the last aerial photographic survey in which these descriptions are based (1992) the area covered by forests and the forests’ quality are likely to have decreased further due to population pressure and logging.

Outside Auki town and peri-urban areas, land use consists mostly of scattered and dense shifting-cultivation gardens, recently cleared forest, current subsistence gardens, low garden regrowth and coconut plantations. It also includes smaller areas of cocoa groves, rice fields, cattle grazing fields, and miscellaneous other uses including logging in discrete areas. Land cleared in Malaita has more than doubled since 1974 to 148,000 or 35.2% of the total area. The area around Auki is among the most affected (AIDAB and MNR 1994:16).

5.3 Social aspects

Traditionally most of the inhabitants of Malaita lived inland. Bush people tended to live in the central highlands in small communities, which were usually composed of a family unit of two or three generations. Communities lived from basic subsistence economy farming of local crops such as taro and yam, and pigs. These communities moved around their ancestral land

¹⁵ Forest type is defined as “any group of tree dominated stands which possess a general similarity in composition and character” (AIDAB and MNR 1994:21).



Figures 5.1a and 5.1b: Maps of Oceania and the Solomon Islands
 (Source: www.mapquest.com)

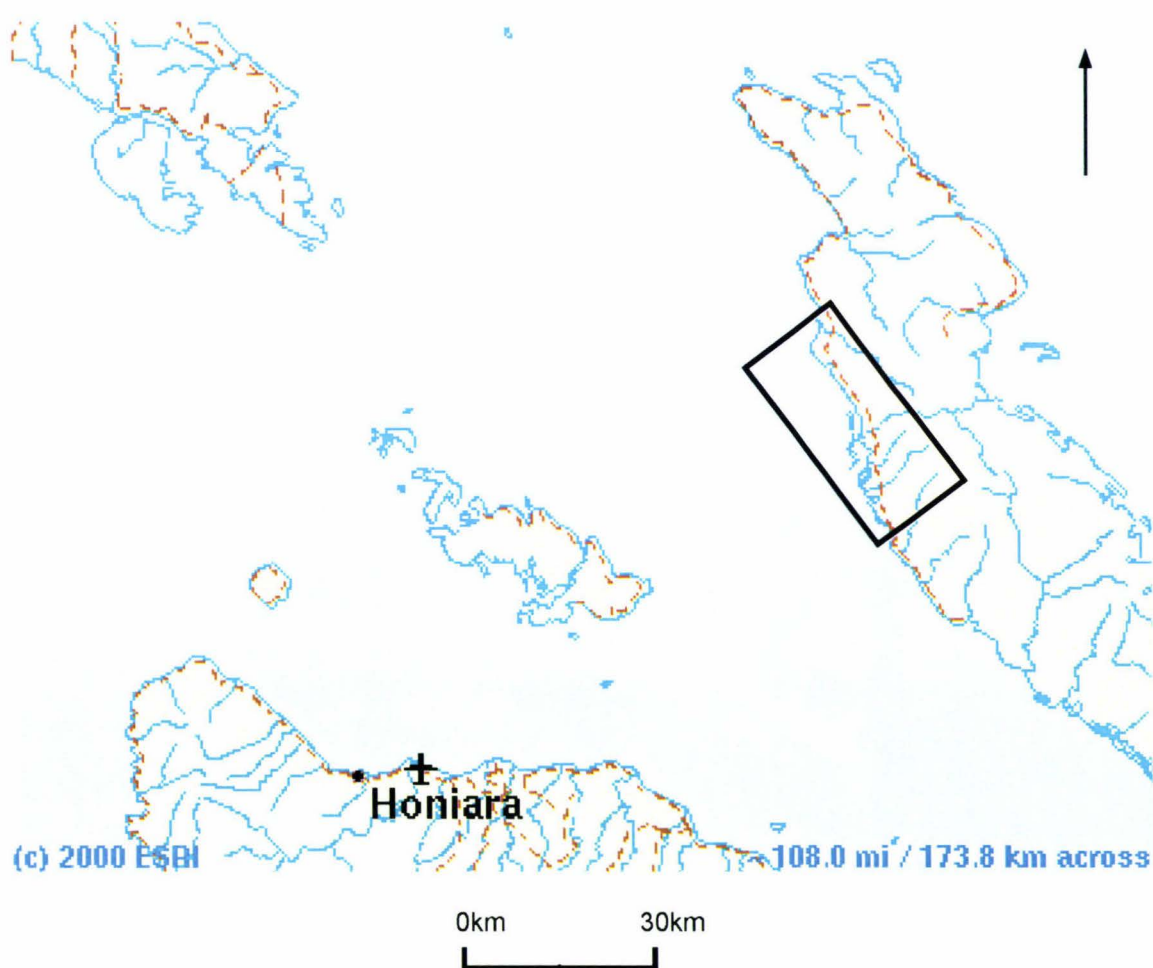
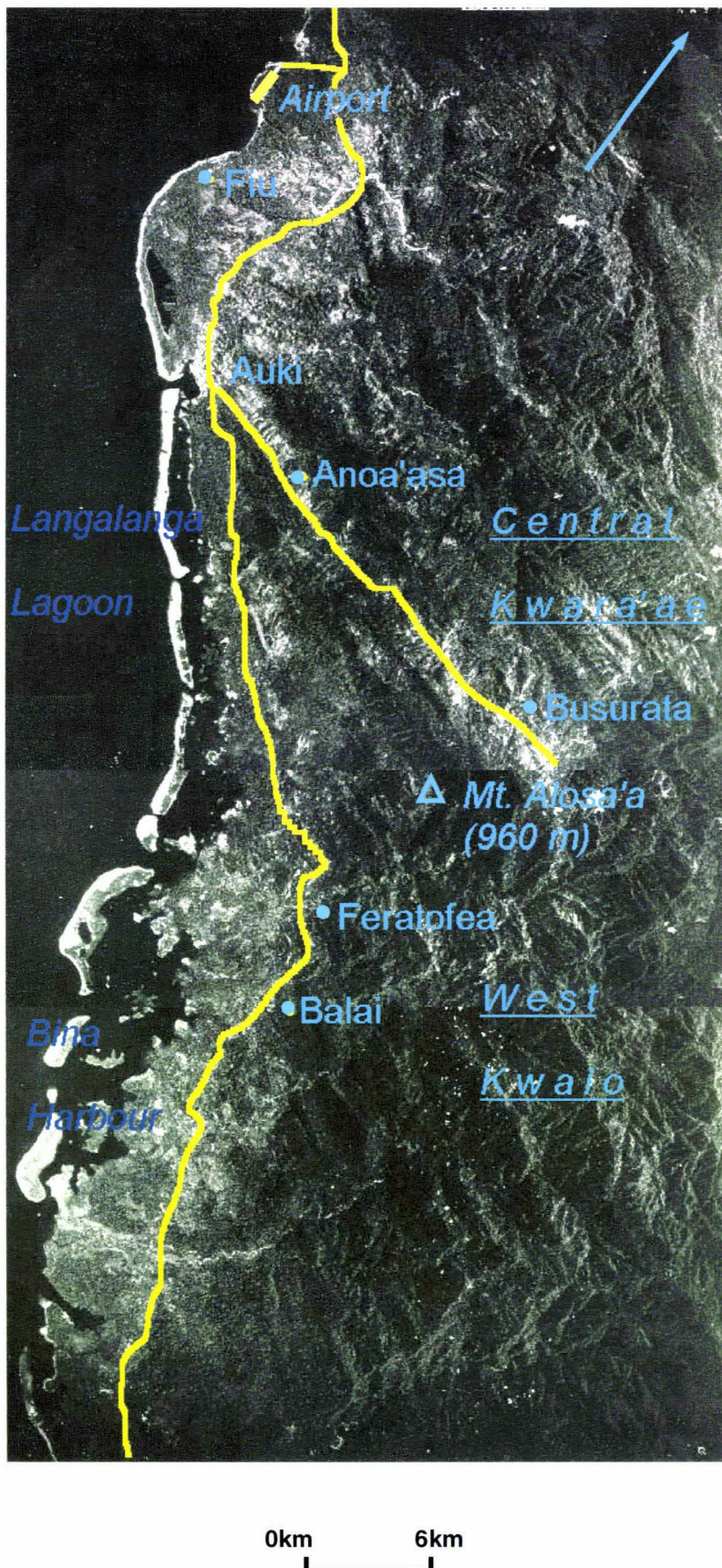


Figure 5.2: Study site in the island of Malaita (rectangle) and relationship to Honiara in the island of Guadalcanal
(Source: www.esri.com)



*Figure 5.3: Study area in North Malaita (2000)
(Composite of 1992 aerial photographs)*

following shifting cultivation patterns (Manita'a, pers.comm. 1994; Burt and Kwa'ioloa 1992). Following the arrival of Christianity to the Solomon Islands early in the XX century, which first reduced and then eliminated the risk of coastal raids, the communities began their move from the hills to the coast. The coastal areas had better facilities and the move encouraged a change from barter to the cash economy.

The movement of hill people to the coast increased after World War II and was encouraged by both the administration and the missions and briefly by the Maasina Ruru movement. The construction of the southern road from Auki to Su'u in 1974 encouraged the settlement of villages by the road. A marked increase in these villages was noted in aerial photographs from 1947 to 1968, accompanied by an increase of coconut plantations over subsistence gardens (Wall and Hansell 1974:21). Village size increased as the communities settled permanently on the coast. Annex II illustrates the main events in the history of a local community since 1904. These include the adoption of Christianity, and periodic events such as village movements, land disputes, cyclones and the initiation of development projects.

Malaita is the most densely populated island in the Solomon Islands. Prior to ethnic tension in the late 1990s, the population of Malaita represented 28% of the Solomon Islands' population and lived in 15% of the country's total land. In the mid-1990s the population growth rate of 2.7% was below the national average (AIDAB and MNR 1994:2). The island's population has since increased significantly in the aftermath of ethnic tension in Guadalcanal by the permanent arrival of several thousand of ethnic Malaitans (DDR 2000a).

Most Malaitan households are rural. In 1994 only 4% of the population lived in urban or peri-urban areas. Throughout Malaita there are pockets of considerable pressure on land resources that limit the commercial and agricultural opportunities available to land owners, and in some areas places pressure on the productivity of food cropping systems. Whilst some clans still have sufficient land resources, many others have not (AIDAB and MNR 1994:2). The ethnic tension has placed additional pressure on some areas, with new populations of displaced people increasing the use of resources by establishing new gardens and extracting building materials. In addition, the distribution of the population reduces the land area that is available for development because many people own land in the interior of the island while living by the coast.

The rural people living in the study area belong to three different language groups, Kwara'ae and Kwaio ("bushpeople" or forest dwellers) and Langalanga¹⁶ ("saltwater people" or coastal dwellers). The boundary of these language groups is located around Bina Harbour (Fig. 5.3) and runs both across the island (between Kwara'ae to the N and Kwaio to the S) and along the coast (between Langalanga in a narrow coastal strip to the W and the other groups inland to the E). Villages from different groups are interspersed in boundary areas, and there is a level of intermarriage and kinship relations across cultural groups. There are active and latent conflicts concerning land ownership among and within these groups, especially in the area of Bina Harbour (further described in Chapter 6). In these groups land ownership is inherited patrilineally.

Field work covered five villages on the western slopes of Malaita's central highlands and coastal plains between the Bina and Fiu rivers, as well as Auki itself (Fig. 5.3). These villages belong either to full-blooded Kwara'ae, or to Kwara'ae mixed with Kwaio. Several Langalanga villages in the Langalanga Lagoon area were visited as well although no projects were evaluated there (Fig. 5.4).

5.4 Economic aspects

By Solomon Island standards, Malaita is a relatively poor and densely populated island. However, the study area is amongst the richest in resources and opportunities in the province. The fertile coastal plains are wider than elsewhere in the island, and they are located close to the provincial capital of Auki (Aoke), which is the main trading port and the focal centre of the island's economy. The coastal area, along with the highlands near Auki,¹⁷ is known as the food basket of Malaita, and contributes significantly to the produce sold in the Honiara market (Smiley pers. comm. 2000). Both subsistence and cash economies could be sustained in the area, more readily than in other parts of Malaita.

¹⁶ Kwara'ae is one of the most widely spoken languages in Malaita with 21,000 speakers and many more who use it as a second language. Kwaio (10,600 speakers) is closer to Kwara'ae than to 'Are'are, another widely spoken Malaitan language. Langalanga (4,900 speakers) has a 66% lexical similarity with Kwara'ae and 56% with Kwaio (Grimes 1996).

¹⁷ Most soils in the highlands are highly weathered and low in nutrient availability, with some pockets of more fertile soil (Wall and Hansell 1974). However, locals consider the highland soil in the Busurata area to be very fertile. *Busurata* (Kwara'ae) comes from *busu* = spring, "water that comes from stones" and *rata* = soil with white soft stone (limestone): Spring that comes from limestone. *Rata* soil is considered to be good for gardening (Smiley pers.comm. 2000).

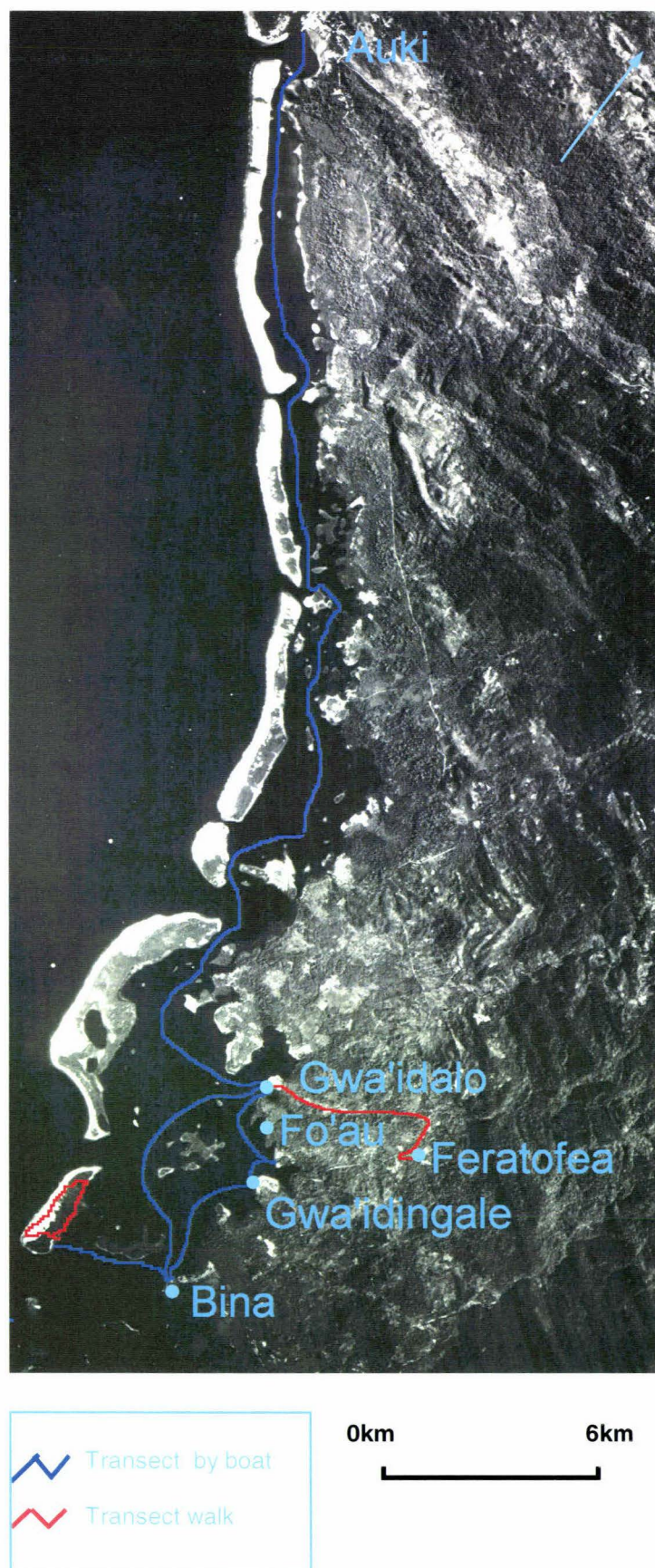


Fig. 5.4: *Transects in the Langalanga Lagoon area (2000)
(Composite of 1992 aerial photographs)*

5.4.1 Subsistence economy

Shifting cultivation¹⁸ still prevails as the main economic activity, both for subsistence and for the production of crops for cash or barter. A 1974 description of shifting cultivation in the Solomon Islands is still valid:

“Cultivation is based on two simple tools, the bush knife and the digging stick. Small areas of forest, either primary or old regrowth, are cleared and burned, after which a variety of crops are planted, usually with one of the root crop staples occupying the largest areas. The size of the gardens vary considerably from 0.04 ha to 1.0 ha with a mean of 0.24 ha, but most farmers have several gardens at various stages of productivity or abandonment” (Wall and Hansell 1974:22).

In a more recent study, Schoefel *et al* report average garden sizes of 0.3ha, with fallow periods of an average 4-6 years for the Solomon Islands. Most provinces reported longer fallow periods in the past (the informants' father's time), although in Malaita the length of fallow was not considered to have been shorter then. Generally it was reported that there has been an intensification in the use of garden land—mainly due to population pressure, but also there has been changes in crops, cropping methods, land use and life-style changes (Schoefel *et al* 1994).

Root crops are planted from cuttings, often in mounds. The local staple foods are root vegetables, traditionally taro (*Colocasia esculenta* and a swamp variety), yam (*Discorea alata*) and pana (a type of yam) and more recently kumara or sweet potato (*Ipomoea batatas*). A few other fruit and vegetables such as “cabbage” (*Hibiscus esculentum*) and “slippery cabbage” (*H. manihot*), paw paw (*Carica papaya*), pine apple (*Ananas comosus*) and sugar cane (*Saccharum officinale*) are also grown. Direct observations suggest that this is nearly the entire list of food crops in West Kwaio. However, in Central Kwara'ae more types of food crop are cultivated, including less traditional crops such as eggplants and tomatoes. Rice is cultivated in parts of Central Kwara'ae and near Auki. Schoefel *et al* (1994:50) report between 12 and 16 types of fruits and vegetables cultivated in most regions of the Solomon Islands, which suggest a comparatively limited food production and diet at West Kwaio. Wild plant and animal foods (nuts, freshwater fish, bats, and others) complement the diet.¹⁹ The forest also provides

¹⁸ “Any farming system where land is periodically cleared, cropped, and returned to fallow; synonymous with slash-and-burn or swidden agriculture” (NRC 1993:672).

¹⁹ Walking in the forest with bush people it is apparent that they often nibble on a variety of wild foods as they progress through the forest. Wild foods are eaten raw or cooked on the spot—wild cassava, the inside of fallen sago

materials for shelter and traditional medicines for the most common diseases including malaria (Schoefel *et al* 1994, Manita'a pers.comm. 1994, 2000).

5.4.2 Cash economy

Rural communities in the area use whatever limited opportunities are available to them and conduct economic exchanges both internally and externally. In a country wide study, Schoefel *et al* report a number of business activities in each village, of which the most common were cash crops or stores, with less common activities including selling petrol, canoe making or hire, chainsaw hire, bakeries, and sale of marine produce. The villages of Malaita were among those in the country least likely to have a business (Schoefel *et al* 1994:79). The projects described in this work (Chapters 9 and 10) were the main source of income for the communities involved. This underscores the relevance of community projects in a transition economy.

The communities in West Kwaio visited for this research live largely in the fringes of the cash economy in what could be considered a basic, non-affluent subsistence economy²⁰ based on shifting cultivation. The communities produce a very limited number of crops, listed above, in sufficient quantities only for their own consumption. Only if there was a surplus of food crops were these sold (i.e. there is no additional planting of these same crops specifically as cash crops). Individual community members find temporary or seasonal (but in some cases quite regular) employment in the logging camps as chainsaw operators or bulldozer drivers. Other villagers run a small village shop, provide services as traditional healers, or own chainsaws for hire. Some community members working in the cities contributed to the maintenance of their families back in the village (although some of those had, since the ethnic tension, returned from Honiara). Two young men had found employment in the police force, and a trained carpenter had returned from Honiara to one of the villages. This illustrative list suggests that only a small percentage of people in the area had some form of cash income. By 2000, some of the sub-tribes had given land to logging concessions (further reported in Chapter 6), and several others were interested in doing the same.

The communities in Central Kwara'ae, in contrast, lived in what could be considered a more affluent subsistence economy. A greater diversity and quantity of crops were cultivated including highland rice, both for consumption and sale. Small and some large livestock were

palm trees, honey, fruits, shots, nuts. In the forest there are also domestic plants left over from abandoned dwellings e.g. coconut trees.

²⁰ *Subsistence affluence* has been defined as "the ability to meet personal needs from own labours without having to 'live by money' " (Burt 1987).

kept as well. A more temperate highland climate and pockets of fertile soil lead to better farming conditions. These advantages were counterbalanced by the villages' relative inaccessibility due to the road's poor condition and the low frequency of transport. Nevertheless many families engaged in vegetable market gardening and sold their produce in the Auki market.

The communities near Auki had limited access to land, but still enough for their subsistence gardens and for some commercial uses. The easy access to Auki facilitated economic interactions and some potential sources of income e.g. tourism, were a more realistic option than for more isolated communities. Overall, the Auki area appeared to be better endowed with resources or alternatives than both Central Kwara'ae and West Kwaio (Figs. 5.5a and 5.5b).

The communities living in the Langalanga Lagoon have very limited access to land, which is used mostly for subsistence gardening. The main source of income is the production of traditional shell money and sporadic visits by tourists. Fishing and cash-cropping is very limited. Some people offer passenger boat transport services.

The accessibility of the land, rather than its availability, is a limiting factor for development. While most Kwara'ae and Kwaio people have ownership rights to land, many people in the study area own land in the highlands that is presently left virtually untouched. Most economic activity (i.e. subsistence economy) takes place in communal land in the coastal plains, relatively near the villages and the road. The lack of easy access limits uses of the land located inland. Inland, building resources may be plentiful, but it would take a person an entire day to collect an armful of sago palm leaves, which are used as roofing material (Daniel, Willy pers.comm. 2000). The same difficulties exist for economic development projects:

“Where I come from there are eight different tribes, because we live in one village we isolate ourselves from our land which is in the interior, and that is one problem that we cannot make a successful project where it should be. Secondly into our original land we cannot do much to contribute to the economy of the Solomon Islands. When you talk about farming, about development, it is quite difficult for us and for many families and tribes to really invest in their own land because of lack of roads infrastructure” (Fa'asale pers.comm. 2000).

Environmental and social impacts aside, logging concessions offer the communities possibilities for exploiting their own resources that could not otherwise be available. Logging often involves road building, which some people see as an added advantage for future development (Fa'asale, Smiley 2000 pers.comm.). This iron choice—trading money and road construction for the

known social and environmental effects of large-scale logging—appears to be common through the Solomon Islands (Schoefel 1994). *Kastom* is an additional constraint to development, at least in parts of Central and North Malaita. Whilst landless people or people who live far from their land can always borrow land for gardening, *kastom* does not allow the commercial use of borrowed land (Smiley pers.comm. 2000).

5.5 Observations of changes 1994-2000

A broad range of changes has taken place at a village level in the past 20 or 30 years (as described in section 2.4.1) (SIDT 1996:4). In 1974 it was noted that:

“Direct communication with Auki and Malu’u facilitates the transport of produce to these centres and the collection and marketing of crops, whilst easy access to stores provides the stimulus to join the cash economy” (Wall and Hansell 1974:22).

Twenty years later in 1994 these changes had magnified and other changes had become apparent. The pace of change in the recent past has been such that some changes were apparent between the two visits of the author to the study area in 1994 and 2000. An informant summarised the situation by saying that over the past few years life had improved for people in the towns, but was the same struggle for people in the villages (Balu’u pers. comm. 2000).

From 1994 to 2000 many changes had taken place in the study area in the wake of ethnic tension in Guadalcanal. Many of the 20,000 ethnic Malaitans who returned to Malaita with intentions to resettle brought with them work experience and skills as well as capital and assets. This resulted in a significant increase of transport services within Malaita using vehicles previously used for that activity in Honiara. Commercial transport along the three main roads from Auki to the S, E and N of the island increased dramatically since 1994. The condition of the unsealed southern road to Su’u had improved because it served the Bina Harbour area, which has priority for development in the country, so some resources were invested in its maintenance. Rural places that were relatively isolated in 1994 were within easy reach of Auki by 2000, and some of them had acquired an almost “suburban” feel. For the people who could afford these services this represented a great improvement in their quality of living, for instance, in the ability to transport sick people to Kilu’ufi Hospital near Auki, the main hospital in Malaita, with relative ease. In addition, many of the displaced people who were able to return with capital have been building modern or “permanent” houses, which in 2000 appeared to be more common than in 1994.

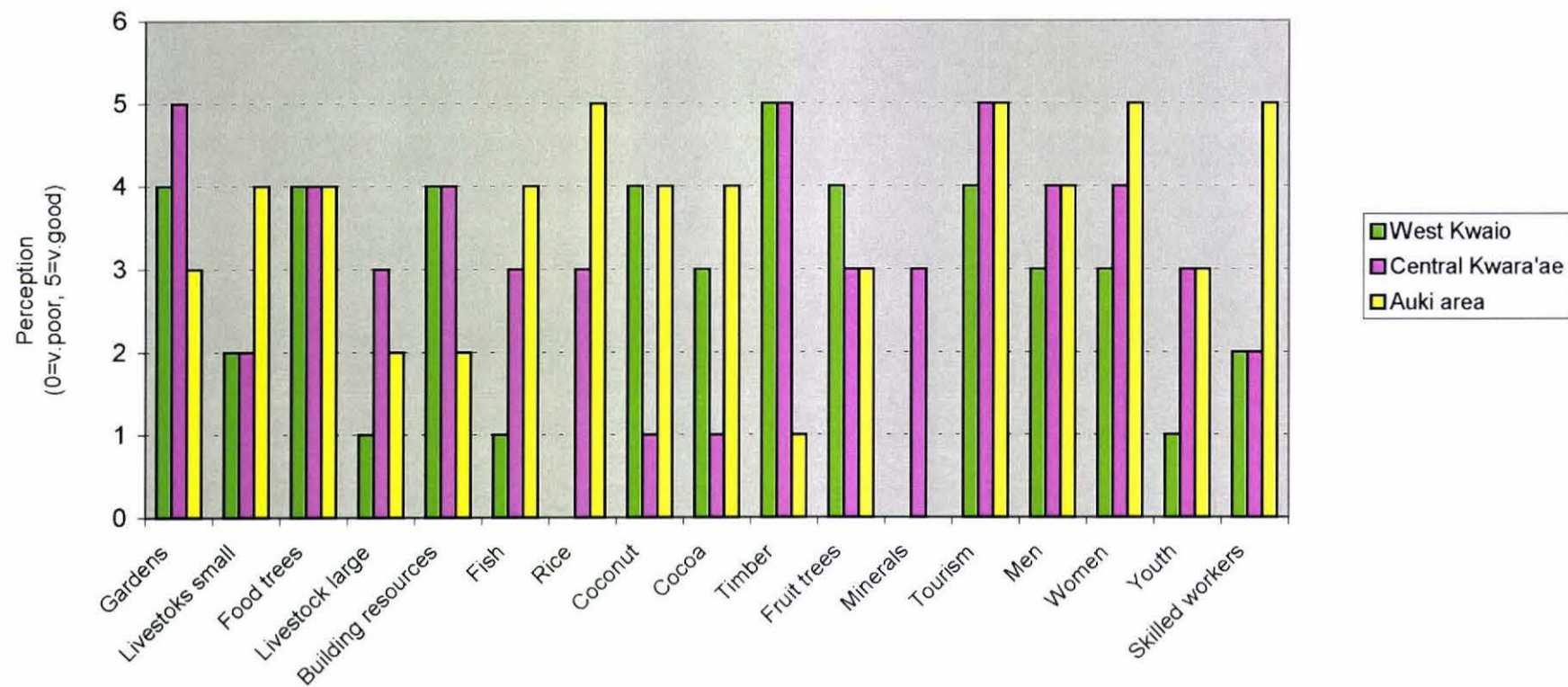
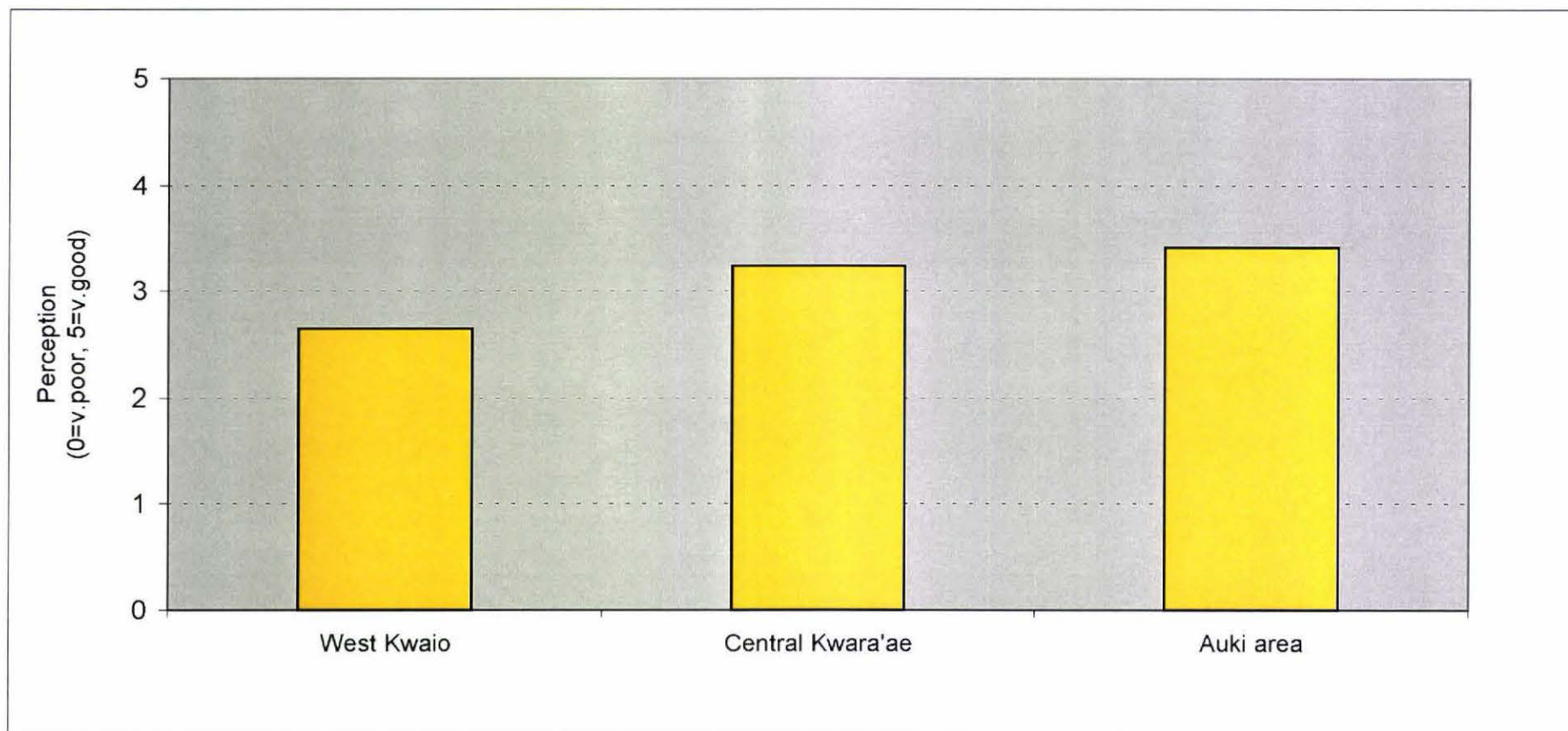


Figure 5.5a: "Wheel of resources"
Land, Commercial and Human Resources



*Fig. 5.5b: "Wheel of resources"
Average Land, Natural and Commercial Resources*

The appearance of some villages had changed as well, compared with a previous visit in 1994. Some villages had become “modernised”: for instance, two of the villages that in 1994 had only leafhouses had now several permanent buildings; one village had two private cars. Auki itself had grown larger, with larger “suburbs” and a noticeable increase in the number and diversity of shops, including new hotels, small restaurants, a bottle shop, and a computer sales and repair shop. Other signs of modernity and improved transport included private cars, numerous taxis and mountain bikes. The swamp forest north of Auki was being logged, with the idea of draining the swamps in order to develop farmlands. The overall impression of the changes since 1994, in Auki at least, was of fairly intense economic activity with a certain level of prosperity, of growth and expansion, and of modernisation.

In some of the villages not far from town, however, the economic situation remained in appearance unchanged since 1994—or had worsened. Many Langanaga people had very little economic activity, usually focused on the manufacture of shell money. Even food production was very limited. Many Kwara’ae villages in West Kwaio had stopped producing food for sale, thus limiting the amount of food that was available at roadside stalls. This had all but ended a basic trade that had existed for generations, by which bush people and salt water people exchanged garden produce and fish. In turn, the changes brought a degree of confusion among the elder people, concerned about losing the traditional ways but aware of the pressure to adopt new ways. According to a Langanaga informant:

“We are not living from [our] culture. The Kwara’ae are not producing vegetables any more. This stopped the trade with Langanaga. They are copying other things from the outside world. They are not doing very much except pineapples from the Kwaio side...The Kwara’ae are losing it. They are walking out from the land, the beauty of the land. The markets show that. [It is] a weak vegetable market. [It is] different in Honiara because of long-settled Malaitans there and the good land of Guadalcanal. Most of the Kwara’ae people especially those who settle in the coast buy in the markets instead of contributing to the economy of the country” (Dili pers. comm. 2000).

Other language groups—particularly Kwara’ae—seemed better adapted to the new situation and tried to benefit as much as possible from the perhaps short lived bonanza. The shift from a subsistence economy to a cash economy gave rise to different attitudes. Some people continued growing their own staple food while participating in the cash economy; others followed mostly one system. As a cause of concern for some informants, some people were producing very little in terms of generating income, and had also stopped growing their own food (Maeliu, Smiley, pers.comm. 2000).

The major changes were apparent in West Kwaio, the most economically depressed sector of the study area, where two new secondary schools had been built since 1994, one of them a model school rated among the best in the country (Kafo pers.comm. 2000). Whilst in West Kwaio there were few income-generating community activities, people were however prepared to contribute with labour to the construction of schools and clinics.

5.6 Results of a RRA assessment

Previous sections have outlined the study area based on the literature and on personal observations. This section provides a different perspective on the same issues. The resource base of different villages and trends in temporal changes were assessed in the 2000 field work using two RRA tools developed by SIDT, the “Wheel of resources” and the “Past-now-future” (Chapter 4).

The first RRA exercise, “past-now-future”, showed a perceived trend of deterioration in the living environment and consequently an increase in the hardships of life (Fig 5.6a&b). Gardens were now further away than they used to be; at present there were less building resources available or they were very far away; and *kastom* medicinal plants were increasingly difficult to find. At times the search of medicinal plants required one or more days wandering through the bush. “Before, everything was easy, now everything has become hard” (Tome pers. comm 2000). Even air and water quality were perceived to have decreased after the trees nearby the villages and in the logging fields further away had been cut down.²¹ The local climate had become very hot. The perception was that trees diverted wind towards the villages and cooled down the air, but the tree cover around the villages had decreased. The effect of logging on streams was very apparent. After the forest had been cleared, “Water low, sun hot, trees help rain but are gone.” (Tome pers.comm 2000). These observations are consistent with the description of changes and trends for the Solomon Islands at large as described by Schoefel *et al* (1994). In brief, people’s perception was that the well-being of the forest, water, fresh air and people were all closely related, and there was a perceptible trend of deterioration in well-being through time. However, despite negative trends and growing hardships the situation at present was still perceived as fair.

²¹ In a review of the literature on political ecology—“the political dynamics surrounding material and discursive struggles over the environment in the third world”—Bryant notes a prevalent “land centrism”. Although water and air quality are essential for the maintenance of life, the political ecology of water and air quality is “still in its infancy” (Bryant 1998:89). Whilst a land-centric approach in the Solomon Islands is primarily a consequence of the cultural and demographic make up, the comment is still pertinent particularly for future trends and applications.

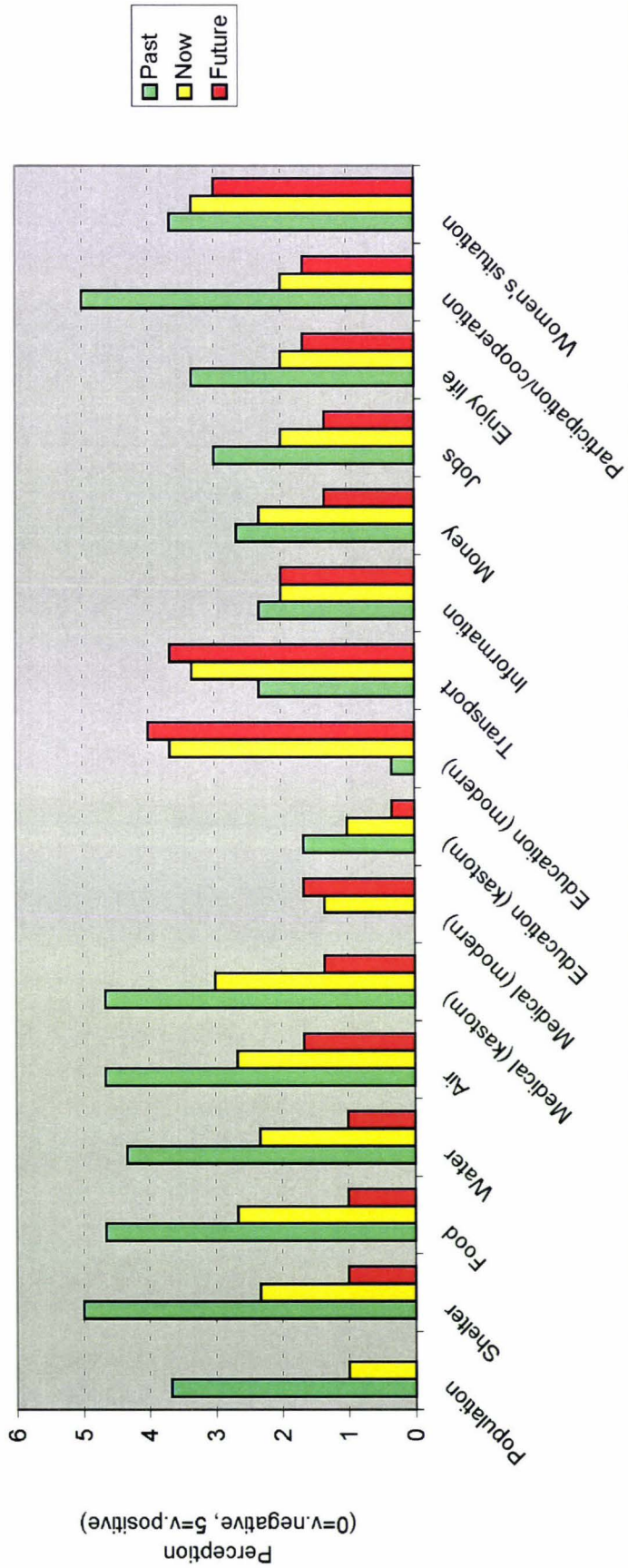


Figure 5.6a: "Past-Now-Future"
Trends for Central Kwara'ae & West Kwaio

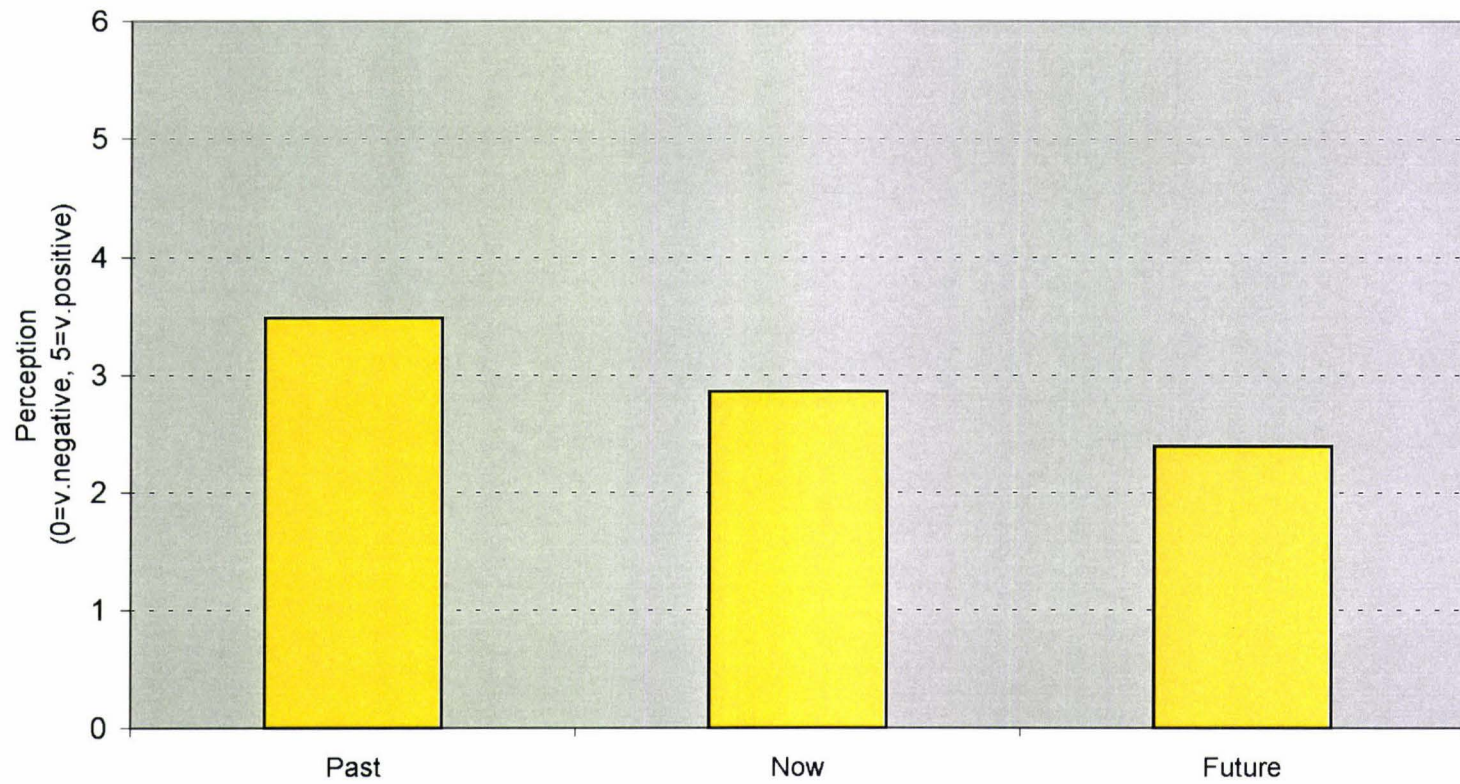


Figure 5.6b: "Past-Now-Future"
Summary of trends for Central Kwara'ae & West Kwaio

The perceived social changes suggested a marked deterioration of *kastom* ways and ongoing and increasing replacement by white people's ways. Most informants saw the past as idyllic: *time before come* when resources were plentiful, and life was very simple and easy within the rigid structure of *kastom*. People lived in small hamlets with their immediate family. They all worked in the garden in the mornings and afternoons, rested through the heat of the day, and socialised in the evenings sharing betel nut after the evening meal. That way of life had been lost, following a movement to the coast and the adoption of Christianity, as villages became larger and permanent or semi-permanent, the environment deteriorated, and the pressures of the cash economy on community life increased as natural resources decreased.

Some changes had been positive, but the positive effects were balanced by negative effects elsewhere. For instance, the advantages of greater accessibility to modern education and medical care were upset by the loss of traditional knowledge in those areas. According to this view, in the future everything would be more difficult than at present because it would be necessary to pay for products and services that in the past were available free of charge. For instance, in 2000 transport was good and people's expectations were that it was going to improve even further; but people had to pay for it. Before all transport was done "foot by foot" (Manita'a pers. comm 2000), with no costs or waiting: "you want to go, you go now" (Tome pers.comm. 2000). Now people had quickly become used to taking buses, even for relatively short distances that only a few years ago would have been done on foot as a matter of routine. In the future people will be more educated in a Western sense, but there will be no jobs for them.

In brief, the future would bring more and perhaps better alternatives to the traditional ways, but at too high a cost for most people and at the expenses of losing the traditional ways.

One of the most marked and negative social changes was the evidence of diminishing cooperation between community members. The increased prevalence of the cash economy was accompanied by an increase in individualism. Cooperative tasks that customarily were done for free, such as working on the gardens or building houses, now required payment—even among members of the same family. Labour market prices had developed. In the future people (men) were going to spend more time sitting around doing nothing, working only if and when paid (Manita'a pers.comm. 2000). However, some changes perceived as negative (e.g. a loosening of *kastom* by younger women, largely shown in their hair, dress and attitude) would be considered positive changes from a Western perspective.

A second RRA exercise, the “resources wheel”, suggested that the resources available to the communities, in which they relied on for subsistence and income, was still perceived to be fair to good (Fig. 5.5b). The worst affected would be future generations, as the situation was perceived to be becoming increasingly worse due to an increase of population, shortage of land, and the prevalence of the cash economy. Interestingly, this perception was based on traditional values: while the future was clearly going to be dominated by the cash economy, people perceived the intrinsic and instrumental value of the land as the main resource available to them to buffer the changes of the future. Money would clearly be required on a daily basis, but the forest would still be essential to provide supplies for food, shelter, medicine, and to maintain the quality of air, soil, and water. The forest, while under threat, was inextricably linked to the well-being of people.

5.7 Conclusions: Development needs

The study area, whilst relatively small in size, has diverse biophysical, economic and social conditions. There are differences in access to resources and economic activity between and within the three dominant language groups. A dual economy with a dominance of subsistence economy is widespread, but there are pockets of both relative wealth as well as relative poverty.

In the future, population growth may lead to a decrease in soil fertility, crop failure and food shortages, and expansion of garden areas into the forest and mountainous terrain, unless more sustainable horticultural practices are introduced. The concern is that a decrease on soil fertility and forest resource depletion would lead to land disputes and social conflict (Shoefel *et al* 1994:40-47, Fa'alimae pers.comm. 2000)—a prediction confirmed with the ethnic tension events in Guadalcanal of the late 1990s. In Malaita there are pockets of extreme pressure on the land (AIDAB and MNR 1994) that reportedly has increased in some regions, such as North Malaita, following ethnic tension (Wale pers.comm. 2000). Shifting agriculture as it is practised now is not sustainable, and therefore the intensification of food production is necessary; however, this requires maintaining the fertility of the soil. The maintenance of the tree cover is often seen as essential, but this contrasts with ongoing large scale logging in several parts of Malaita.

Many informants saw modern education and health care as priorities. Nowadays people demand that schools and clinics are modern or “permanent” buildings with running water, and proper staffing year round (Kinsita'a pers. comm. 2000).

Whilst the situation at present was still considered to be fair in terms of availability of resources, the overall trends were considered to be negative. The satisfaction of overall development needs for the area require the meeting of needs under the cash economy, which ideally should be accompanied by a reversal of negative trends affecting many aspects of community life. The maintenance of the integrity of the land and the preservation of the forest are essential both for cultural and environmental reasons. From this perspective, SIDT's notion of "turning wealth into cash" in a sustainable manner succinctly describes the type of development strategies that are needed in the Solomon Islands and particularly in Malaita. However, it is still unclear what these strategies are, how to implement them, and how they can develop successfully at a village level independently from the issues that affect the country at large.

Since there is an increase on the need and want for money to pay for essential needs such as health and education services, more income-generating opportunities are required. At present employment opportunities are limited and often related to unsustainable activities such as industrial logging. The best or only alternatives available would often take the form of a community or family commercial enterprise—a project.

Box 5.1: Profile of the Solomon Islands²²

Background

The United Kingdom established a protectorate over the Solomon Islands in the 1890s. Some of the most intense fighting of World War II occurred on these islands. Self-government was achieved in 1976 and independence two years later. Current issues include government deficits, deforestation, and malaria control.

Geography and climate

A double chain of islands, mainly of volcanic origin, covered by tropical rainforest (1999 cover: 245,000 square kilometres or 87.5%--WRI 1998). Includes some outlying atolls.

Total area about 279,900 square kilometres;

Eight provinces, each comprising a major group of islands;

About 88% of the land under communal customary tenure;

Cropland 5700 km², permanent pasture 3900 km², other land 25,300 km² (WRI 1998)

Tropical climate with a relatively high and uniform temperature, high humidity and abundant rainfall. Rainy, cyclone season from November to May.

People

Population: 285,000 in the 1986 census (DDP 2000a), 417,000 (1998 data WRI 1998) with annual growth rate of 3.2% (1995-2000) (DDP 2000a)

Ethnicity: Majority Melanesian 94.2%, Polynesian 3.7%, Micronesian 1.4% and Chinese/Caucasian 0.7%, minority groups.

Languages: 86 distinct languages, also English (official language) and Solomon Islands Pijin (*lingua franca*).

Religions: Anglican 34%, Roman Catholic 19%, Baptist 17%, United 11%, Seventh-Day Adventist 10%, other Protestant 5%, indigenous beliefs 4%.

Life expectancy 71 years (1998)

Urban population (% of total) 19% (1998)

Government

Commonwealth member, uni-cameral parliamentary democracy.

Local government under area councils.

Capital: Honiara

Economy

Low income country (World Bank classification)—GNP per capita USD 760 (1998)

Village sector based on subsistence root-crop shifting horticulture and fishing, pig and chicken rising.

Smallholdings of cash crops: coconuts, cocoa, market gardening.

Commercial timber extraction, fishing and some mining.

²² Modified from Schoeffel *et al* 1994:6, with data from DDP 2000a, Leary 1993, World Bank and WRI *et al* 1998-99.

Box 5.2: Profile of Malaita²³

Geography and climate

Location: from 8°18' S 160° 32' E (Cape Astrolabe) to 7° 32' S 157° 53' E (Cape Zele'e) (190km long)

Total area: 4,900 km². Second land mass in the Solomon Islands.

Elongate, sinuous island of hills and mountains aligned NW to SE.

Highest point: Mount Kolovarat (1,430m)

Mean annual rainfall: 3,271 mm, 236 rain days (Auki - 40 year record). More than 6,000mm in wetter areas.

Government

Highest authority: Provincial Secretary

Provincial capital: Auki

People

Mostly Melanesian population in Malaita itself and Polynesian in the atolls of Sikaiana and Ontong Java. Minority groups.

Population 80,032 of a total of 285,176 for the Solomon Islands (1986);

Most densely populated island in the Solomon Islands (28% of the population, 15% of total land area).

Population density in total area 19.5 per km², in cleared land 544 per km² (1986)

Population growth rate of 2.7% below national average

96% rural households, 4% urban households

Forestry and land use

Forest cover 267,334ha (88.8%), mostly hill rainforest of mixed species

Area of merchantable forest: not logged 540 km² (net); logged 204 km²

Indicative allowable cut: 19,800m³ per year

Pockets of pressure on land resources limiting commercial and agricultural opportunities available to landowners and putting pressure on food production

²³ Modified from AIDAB/MNR 1994:2

Table 5.1: Biophysical aspects of study area

	Auki/Fiu	West Kwaio	Central Kwara'ae
Elevation ⁽¹⁾	0-200m	0-200m	400+m
Environmental domains ⁽¹⁾	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coastal • Riverine/freshwater swamps • Marine terraces and platforms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sedimentary hills and ridges • Riverine • Limestone • Volcanics (highlands) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limestone • Volcanics
Land use ^{(2); (3); (4)}	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mature and young coconut trees • Scattered and dense shifting cultivation • Patches of forest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lowlands: scattered and dense shifting cultivation; regrowth and small areas of relict forest on areas previously used for subsistence cultivation. • Highlands: primary and old secondary forests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Widespread food crop gardens on road sides • Primary and old secondary forest containing widely scattered minor areas of subsistence gardens
Forest types ⁽¹⁾	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lowland rainforest, degraded¹ • Freshwater swamps • Hills rainforest, degraded 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hills rainforest, degraded • Hills rainforest, mixed spp. • Lowland rainforest, degraded • Mangroves (Langalanga Lagoon) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hills rainforest, degraded/gardens; • Hills rainforest, mixed spp.

¹ Degraded rainforest includes recently cleared forest, present subsistence gardens and low garden regrowth up to ca. 5m high.

Table 5.1 (continued)

	Auki/Fiu	West Kwaio	Central Kwara'ae
Environmentally sensitive areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Swamps (protection zone proposed) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Langalanga Lagoon catchment Highly erodible and/or >30 degrees Swamps (protection zone proposed) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highly erodible and/or >30 degrees; Auki domestic water catchment
Susceptibility of land to deterioration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mostly low susceptibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highlands moderate susceptibility, lowlands low to very low susceptibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderate to low susceptibility
Constraints on logging and logged areas ^{(1), (3), (4)}	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No logging in 1994. Area listed as “swamp protection zone” Swamp forest logging (2000) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Logged areas immediately S of study area, ca. 5km wide, 40km long (1994) Listed as “logging with restrictions” (lowlands), “no logging” (highlands) Hills rainforest logging (2000) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None nearby. Listed as “area of no logging”
Notes on soil characteristics ⁽²⁾	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aside soil on reef platforms, mostly deep soils with “medium to high available and reserve nutrient reserves” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mostly deep to shallow weathered soils with “low available and reserve nutrients” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mostly deep to shallow weathered soils with “low available and reserve nutrients” and pockets of high availability

Sources: (1) AIDAB 1994; (2) Wall and Hansell 1974; (3) Personal observations 1994; (4) Personal observations 2000.

CHAPTER 6: CONTEXTUAL ISSUES

6.1 Introduction

This research primarily concerns the *internal* causes of the success or failure of community projects. By internal it is meant those issues that are directly under the influence of communities. However, during the 2000 field work it was apparent that most informants considered some contextual (external) issues to be of paramount importance—and indeed some preferred to discuss these issues rather than projects. Some of these issues influenced directly or indirectly the outcome of community projects described elsewhere.

This section introduces three of these issues (logging, land disputes and ethnic tension) with a focus on the study area, thus setting the context in which the projects evaluated here unfolded.¹ Chronologically, these issues have evolved simultaneously but at a different time and pace ever since the Solomon Islands became an independent nation. For instance, in the mid-1990s logging had far-reaching economic, environmental and political implications, but by 2000 it had become overshadowed as a source of political instability by ethnic tension. In addition, while these issues can be analysed separately they are in fact closely linked (Fig. 6.1).

The inclusion of a selection of external contextual issues is relevant for two reasons. First, these may become internalised in community life and reproduce themselves at that level. Second, factors that are beyond the control of the communities can be as important as internal factors (e.g. planning, leadership) in determining the success of a project. Whilst for analytical purposes the framework of this research is limited to the “internal system” (i.e. the communities and their projects), this approach is only intended to simplify analysis.

¹ These issues had a significant influence at a local or regional level. Other issues relevant to the outcome of community projects, not included in this research, might include external (donor) pressure on Pacific states for economic reform—particularly neoliberal economic policies—vis a vis globalization (North and Cameron 2000:1751; Sutherland 2000:459) and the actual or potential local effects of climate change.

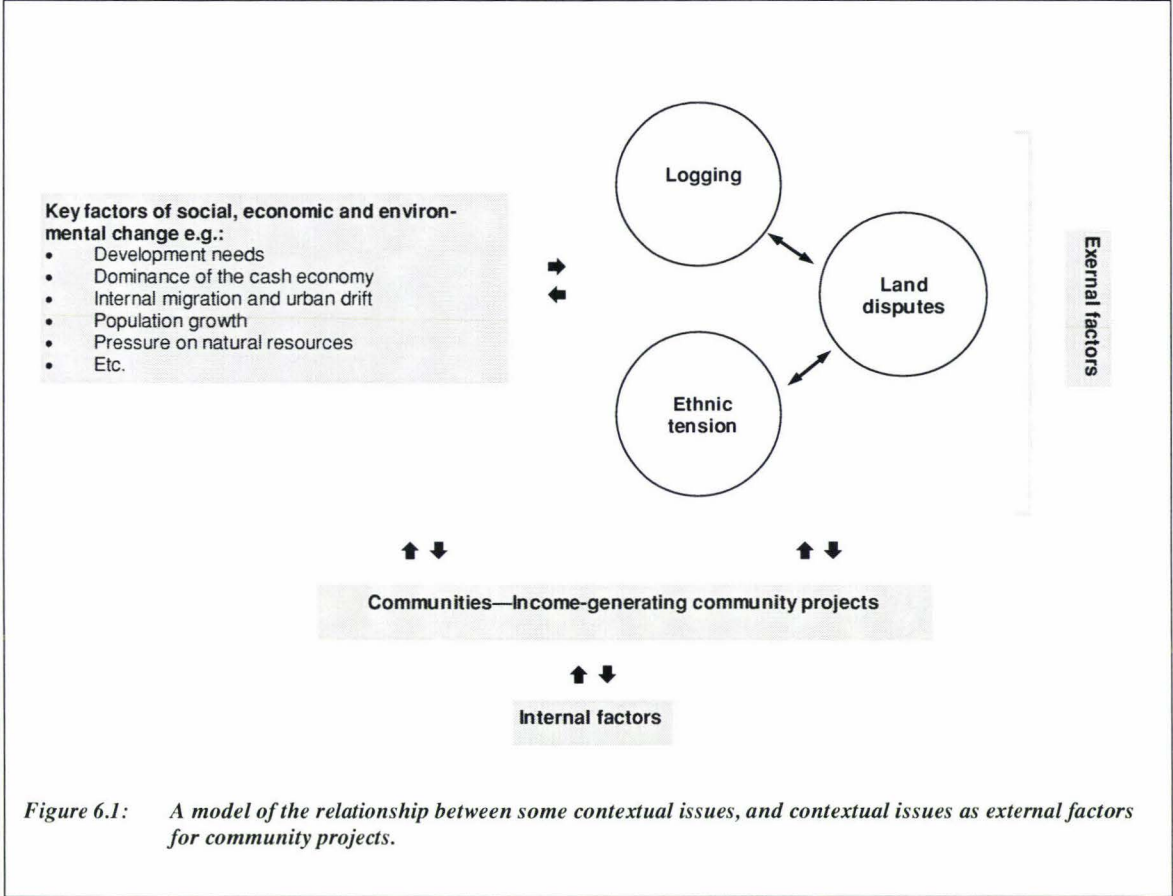


Figure 6.1: A model of the relationship between some contextual issues, and contextual issues as external factors for community projects.

6.2 Logging

"The main problem with present levels of logging is the long-term damage done to both the forestry sector and to the natural resource base" (Rickie Hou, Governor, Central Bank of the Solomon Islands. Solomon Star 11/05/94:1).

"Money earned with your own hands lasts a long time, ten years or two years or three years. Money from logging you earn it today, tomorrow is gone." (Jason, pers. comm 2000).

Through the late-1980s onwards, the social and environmental effects of industrial logging extraction and the industry's influence in the political life of the Solomon Islands epitomise the challenges of sustainable development.

Timber became an important export in the late 1960s to early 1970s coincident with a drop in copra export prices, (Browne and Douglas 1989:114; Barden 1993:A-25). A massive development of logging took place in the late 1980's,² with log exports doubling from 1989 to 1990 (SIDT 1991). The surge of logging in the Solomon Islands during the late 1980s and early 1990s was a consequence of an eastward movement across the Pacific of mostly Malaysian- and Korean-owned logging companies as forest reserves in South East Asia dwindled (Pacnews 1993). The decline in resources was compounded by an increase in international demand for tropical hardwoods (Park 1992:60, 61). By 1990 logging was the most important export earner, over both copra production and fisheries, bringing 35% of foreign exchange earnings (Browne and Douglas 1989:130, Cleary 1992:13).

According to observers, through the consecutive governments of Solomon Mamaloni in the 1990s, well-entrenched pro-logging interests were apparent in the Solomon Islands political class (Pacnews 1994; Rougham pers. comm. 1994, 2000).³ Generally, the government focus on obtaining greater returns from logging outweighed concerns for long-term environmental or social impacts, or the need to develop a sustainable timber industry (O'Collins 1992). Logging

² Bennett's thoroughly documented book (focused on the 1800-1978 period) has few references to commercial logging, which was to become a very important issue only a few years later. Perhaps the significance of logging could not be anticipated when the book was written.

³ According to an electronic newsletter, early in 1993 11 of 15 cabinet ministers had personal financial interests in logging operations (Pacnews, March 1994).

was often (and mistakenly) seen as the only alternative rural communities had to make income,⁴ which was essential for the growing demands of the cash economy (SIDT 1995:4). In 1989, the ombudsman reported that the political and legal system made "practically impossible" for rural people "to say 'no' to logging companies" (quoted in Barden 1993:21). Logging brought well-documented, significant social and environmental impacts (e.g. Schoeffel *et al* 1994, Scheyvens 1999, La Franchi and Greenpeace 1999).

In 1992 there was an increase of 80% in log production, the consequence of both government encouragement and a price boom in the world markets. For the first time since the 1960's the export base become dependent on a single commodity (Solomon Star 11/05/94:1). In 1994, the Central Bank of the Solomon Islands (CBSI) warned that the islands' economy had become heavily dependant on log exports which brought in over 50% of the country's foreign exchange earnings (Solomon Star 03/08/94:1).

Moves by the Government of Billy Hilly to reduce round log exports triggered a change of government and the return to power of Solomon Mamaloni. Regulations limiting log exports were dropped and the ban was postponed until the year 2000. By 1997, logging exports were in the range of 800,000-900,000m³ a year (NZ Herald 1997) and believed to be four to five times the sustainable rate of extraction. The 1997 elections that ousted the logging-friendly government of Solomon Mamaloni led to a reduction in the pace of industrial timber extraction while still experiencing difficulties. According to sources from the post-Mamaloni government:

"Along with a considerable public debt, one of the major problems that the government is facing is the unsustainable logging rate. In 1996 the government earned 20% of its revenue from the logging industry. Reducing the logging rate would therefore cause a drastic reduction in national income. There is also the Opposition, who benefits from current logging practices, challenging the government's attempts to address the issue. These two factors pose a challenge to the government in reducing the logging rate" (PIBN 1998).

In 1999, a new forest act was passed aiming to reduce unsustainable extraction levels. The Act establishes that the diversity of forest ecosystems should be protected and managed in a

⁴ A considerable amount of work has been made by NGOs on the issue of economic alternatives to logging. The work conducted by SIDT is reported in Chapter 11. A recent study by Greenpeace Pacific comparing the benefits of logging and the establishment of oil palm plantations to small-scale economic options suggests that, from the perspective of the landowners, the potential benefits small-scale initiatives considerable exceed those of industrial options (LaFranchi and Greenpeace 1999:4).

sustainable manner and that the precautionary principle should be applied to the conservation, management and use of forest resources (SIG 1999:19). By 2000 logging extraction rates had reportedly decreased but remained above sustainable levels of about 250,000 cubic meters per year (Sheeham pers.comm. 2000). The effects of over a decade of unsustainable logging on forest ecosystems and the extent of remaining forestry reserves are largely unknown, because the last country wide aerial survey took place in 1992.

Logging in the study area

There was no large-scale commercial timber extraction in land belonging of any of the three communities visited in 1994.⁵ This was partly a result of communities' awareness of the negative effects of large-scale logging (e.g. Hino 1994:1). However, logging was an important source of wages in the village economy. Many men worked for logging companies.

In the late 1990s a sub-clan from one of the West Kwaio communities (Anonakinaki and Feratofea) decided to log a block of land of roughly estimated at about 2000 hectares.⁶ The decision was taken by consensus. Three out of five landowners with decision making powers (the most senior men in the male line) were committed to logging; the remaining two reportedly accepted only so as not to be seen as an antagonistic minority (Jason, Manita'a, pers.comm.2000).⁷ Initially the logging concession was given to a Malaysian company. Company operators came to the village and spent some time there without doing any work. Eventually, the community seized a bulldozer, which will not be returned until compensation is paid. Consequently the logging concession was given to a local company, while the sub-contractor was an Australian company. About forty villagers from the area found employment at the logging camp as chain saw operators or bulldozer drivers. This included some of the landowners themselves, their relatives, and people from different tribes or sub-tribes. Among the latter there were people who also worked on a sustainable development community project designed specifically as an alternative to logging, further described in Chapter 8.

A February 2000 transect walk through logged areas revealed the usual impacts of large-scale commercial timber extraction: deforestation, loss of diversity, soil erosion, and sedimentation of streams. Less obvious to outsiders but apparent to local people were the loss of non-timber

⁵ Busurata (Central Kwara'ae) and Feratofea and Balai (West Kwaio).

⁶ The landowners expected that 6,000 to 7,000 cubic meters of wood would come from the logging, although it is not clear that this is a realistic figure.

⁷ Burt notices that Kwara'ae call senior people the owners (Pijin *ona*) but this misrepresents their role of managers of land held in common by those who share a common ancestor ('one blood') (Burt 1994:26).

bush materials such as vines and medicinal plants, the destruction of *tambu* sites, and the large scale transformation of a familiar landscape. This was the case even though logging was relatively selective in that only a few valuable species of trees were targeted. The impacts appeared to be as much a consequence of the logging road, which was about 20 km long and 20 to 30 meters wide, as of timber extraction itself. Locals complained that the logging operator was not following the logging code of practice. For instance, the road was not covered with gravel as it should have been⁸ (SIG 1996:28; Daniel, Willy, sons of Manita'a, pers.comm. 2000; pers.obs. 2000). Reportedly the community may reforest this area afterwards (Manita'a pers. comm. 2000) although it is apparent that this would be a very demanding project.

Logging had also indirect impacts. People living along the Afetafa Stream, which originates in the highlands and provides water to several in West Kwaio villages, complained that after a rainfall the stream would immediately become turbid.⁹ Some complained of the loss of opportunity to sell timber for a proposed large scale development in the area, which was expected to begin in the next few years (the Bina Harbour project, further described below). Wood would have been required for the project once this started, but the community would have no timber reserves left to cut and mill themselves (Takana'a pers.comm. 2000).

Despite these complaints, several communities in the area were interested in logging their forest resources even though the social and environmental impacts of this activity were well known. After the first block of land was completed in one or two years, there were seven or eight more blocks of land in waiting: "Logging [in this area] will not stop in one year or two years or three years. Maybe it will stop in fifteen or twenty years" (Willy, son of Manita'a, pers.comm. 2000). Most people, whether landowners or not, appeared to be unhappy about the situation. At the

⁸ An effort was made to interview the logging contractor to find out his views on logging and development, but while an appointment was made eventually this was not possible.

⁹ Time-serial water quality testing was conducted in the study area in May-July 1994 (Roura 1994). Water quality was measured using a composite index from ten different indicators including turbidity. The water quality of the Afetafa Stream rated as "excellent", with the highest water quality index of all sampling sites in Malaita. On the basis of an estimated turbidity increase (expressed as a concentration of sediments per volume of water) from 5-20 mg/l (1994) to approximately 100-120 mg/l (2000) and keeping all other 1994 values constant, the water quality index of the Afetafa Stream would have decreased from values of 92-93 (excellent) in 1994 to about 85-86 (good) in 2000. Thus an increase of turbidity at ca. 5-6% would have caused a decrease in water quality in a 6-8% range. This estimation does not include other effects of deforestation on water quality such a likely increase in dissolved oxygen and total solids, and decrease in biological oxygen demand that would have lowered further the water quality index. Numbers aside, what is important is that people perceived that water quality had decreased. While objectively (or analytically) the water quality was still good, people's perception was that it was worse. This had a negative effect on the communities' quality of life. Water quantity was also perceived to have decreased.

same time logging, however short-lived as an income generating alternative, appeared to be unavoidable and unstoppable.

6.3 Disputes over land ownership

Sustainable development in the Solomon Islands is dependent on the clear and permanent establishment of land rights. Unquestionable ownership rights provide the stability that allows farming, building, and the leasing or mortgaging of land. Uncertain land ownership means that development initiatives are almost always followed by land disputes, often only after the supposed owner has made considerable investments on the land. Regardless of the outcome of the land dispute process, which can take years to complete, the first effect of land disputes is to stop development initiatives.

While it is clear that all indigenous peoples of the Solomon Islands have access to land ownership by birthright, it is less clear where that land is located. This depends on the traditional systems of land inheritance and ownership. The situation is likely to be aggravated in the future as the numbers of potential claimants increase and traditional knowledge of genealogy and ancestral strains is lost or adulterated.

Land ownership in Malaita follows the pattern of migration and settlement of the first generations of settlers, and the lineage of present day descendants. This system is similar for most language groups in Malaita (Ruksia pers.comm. 2000). In Kwara'ae, customary land ownership is primarily a direct consequence of discovering and settling that land:

“When the first ancestors had arrived and settled in the central bush, then the people separated and spread out everywhere in the country of Kwara'ae. They discovered the land that their descendants then possessed, from generation to generation until the present day. If a man came upon a place which was empty and covered with primary forest where no one had lived before, he cleared the primary forest and lived and gardened and made his home there, which meant that he had settled in that land and it was he who was the leader for the land. He claimed that land because it was he who first discovered it and worked hard clearing the forest with a stone adze”. (Burt and Kwa'ioloa 1992:7).

Upon their arrival in Malaita, the first peoples settled in the highlands in the central part of the island. From there they started their descent to the coast, both east and west. Over many generations, population movements followed the patterns of shifting cultivation, safety from

raiding parties, Christian settlements, and road development. At present most people live in the narrow coastal plains of Malaita away from their ancestral home, which is often in the highlands. As elsewhere in the Solomon Islands, within the estate of each sub-lineage, portions that have been cleared for cultivation by ancestors of living members are considered to be their respective sub-states. Within these, plots and economic trees may be considered to be the property of individuals (Burt and Kwa'ioloa 1992:19, Schoefel *et al* 1994:25) and the individual's descendants.

Consequently, individuals can claim ownership to several estates from which they would own either an indivisible partly or their totality:

1. Indivisible parts of ancestral land belonging to their individual lineage (the first settler);
2. Indivisible parts of ancestral land belonging to the first member of a sub-lineage (a sub-tribal ancestor) and
3. The individual's own estate or plot of land. In turn, this person may initiate a sub-lineage.

In addition, people may live and keep gardens elsewhere on somebody else's land. Consent over the use of the land, as in the case of logging agreements, has to be given by all individuals or groups involved in each plot of land (Schoefel *et al* 1994:25). In Kwara'ae, the *leaders of the land*, who are usually elders, make decisions concerning the use of land. Reportedly people from the younger generations may offer advise or give their opinion but do not participate in decision making (Takana'a pers.comm.2000) even though they have landownership rights.

From a legal perspective, customary land ownership is exclusively based on ancestral strains (*tambu* sites, or sites of sacrifice and worship) (Maimarine pers.comm. 2000). Land inheritance follows patrilineal, matrilineal or cognatic lines.^{10, 11} Land ownership is determined by knowledge held by chiefs and elders about the genealogy and *tambu* sites of a tribe. The basic knowledge establishes whose ancestors settled in which land. Most land boundaries are not formally registered and recorded but are instead recalled as oral traditions. This leads to

¹⁰ In a large-scale social survey in Malaita, 50% of the descent and inheritance systems were patrilineal (father's line), while 30% were matrilineal (mother's line) and 20% cognatic (both/either line). This compares with an average for the Solomon Islands of ca. 50% matrilineal, 32% patrilineal and 18% cognatic in a total of 133 villages (Schoeffel *et al* 1994:21, Table 2.1).

¹¹ If a Malaitan woman marries a man from Guadalcanal, Isabel or Makira, where land inheritance is matrilineal, they will have no rights to land; if a Malaitan man marries a woman from these islands, they will have rights to land in both islands (Smiley pers. comm. 2000).

frequent disagreements over ownership rights between different land owning groups as well as between individuals within these groups (Schoefel *et al* 1994:26).

At present the legal system for determining land ownership in the Solomon Islands follows two separate lines, either through chiefs or the court system. Overall, the present system is widely seen as slow, ineffective and very often inconclusive (Maimarine, Ruksia, pers.comm. 2000). An alternative system currently under development is the Customary Land Recording process under the Ministry of Lands. This is a process aimed at establishing a legally recognised Customary Land Register that contains detail of the land and the tribe. The objective is to encourage the registration of land boundaries and ownership knowledge that is currently held by individuals, while providing an alternative to bypass the court system and prevent future land claims (Ruksia pers.comm. 2000). However, there are questions about the usefulness of this approach and people's reception is likely to be unenthusiastic (Kolosu pers.comm. 2000). This might be because the Customary Land Register essentially requires the recording of knowledge that is normally held secret and transmitted only by oral tradition, although there may be differences among different cultural groups¹². What appears to be certain is that disputes over land ownership are likely to continue for the foreseeable future, and that all land disputes arrest development—sustainable or otherwise—other than the cultivation of subsistence gardens.

Land disputes in the study area: The case of Bina Harbour

In the study area there are several disputes concerning the land owned by bush people and salt water people, land owned by different language groups, and land owned by different tribes and sub-tribes within a given language group¹³. Some of the land claims are being disputed in the courts while others are latent. Land claims are complicated by complex land occupation patterns, as described above, by which villages from three different language groups are intertwined. The most important land dispute is over the area of Bina Harbour, which is the focus of the largest development proposal in the Solomon Islands. Table 6.1 shows land ownership conditions for the project sites visited during this research.

The Bina Harbour project centres on the construction of a deep-water harbour at Bina. The proposed location of the harbour coincides with the boundary of two bush language groups

¹² However, Keesing notes that part of the Kwaio resistance included the writing down of customs, such as customary law and ancestrally imposed taboos as a means to have them recognised by the state (Keesing 1992).

¹³ A single community records several events of land disputes since the early XXth century: 1964, 1980/81, 1985 and 1993 (Balai 1993).

(Kwara'ae and Kwaio), some of whom live in coastal areas, and a salt-water language group (Langalanga) that lives in coastal areas, atolls or artificial islands.¹⁴

Bina Harbour would act as a hub for development in Malaita. The Central Government planners' intention is to concentrate development in Malaita Province between the village of Bina and Auki (i.e. a narrow strip of mostly Kwara'ae coastal land about 25 kilometres long). Spin-off effects of the project would include 1: Limiting outward migration from Malaita and 2: Attracting ethnic Malaitans back to Malaita (Wale pers.comm.2000). The project is stalled on a court case over land ownership between several Kwara'ae and Langalanga parts, ongoing since 1979, which only in 2000 appears to have come close to conclusion¹⁵ (Maimarine, Kinsita'a pers.comm. 2000). In the meanwhile the Kwaio claim is latent.

The disputed land, which includes the strategic southern road, has numerous roadside and coastal villages. Many of the gardens that sustain the population in the area are located in disputed land. Currently, the tribes from all language groups in the area are waiting for the outcome of the Bina Harbour court case before starting any serious development initiative. "Everyone wants development, [but we have to] straighten the genealogy and land ownership" (Kolosu pers.comm. 2000).

It is widely believed that the Bina Harbour project will provide employment opportunities and a demand for locally available natural resources such as timber. However, it is less clear what kind of development will take place after the construction period has been completed. At present there is only a small jetty and a "log pond" at Bina, from where round logs cut all over Malaita are shipped to Honiara for export. The provincial government's only contribution to the project has been to improve the condition of the road from Auki to Bina, and to purchase a brand new vehicle meant to impress potential investors with a sense of progress. By February 2000 there were no concrete development plans or investment proposals other than a tuna cannery proposed by Spanish fishing interests (Wale pers.comm. 2000).

The resolution of the Bina Harbour court case is unlikely to bring any clear-cut solution unless it is brought to the Supreme Court of Justice for a final decision (at present the discussion remains at the lower level Court of Appeal). In January 2000 one of the Kwara'ae parties had

¹⁴ This is the same area where the West Kwaio communities reported in this work (Feratofoea and Balai) are located. The area's Kwara'ae paramount chief is one of the parties in the Bina Harbour court case.

¹⁵ The same week that this 20-years old court case seemed to come to an end, a new Kwara'ae party appeared claiming rights to the land (Maimarine pers. comm. 2000).

been recognised as the primary owner with 50% of the land, with the other two parties in the court case—a Langalanga man and a second Kwara'ae man—had been given equal rights as secondary owners with 30% and 20% respectively. One of the parties in the court case (Kwara'ae) is logging his land (part of which is disputed) to pay for the legal fees.¹⁶ In a twist of fate, the secondary owners also receive their share of the logging benefits, so that the Kwara'ae part is paying both for its legal expenses as well as providing an income to the opposite parties. In other words, the Kwara'ae part is bearing the environmental and financial costs of logging while sharing the benefits with all the parts to the court case. All parties are holding back from seeking development opportunities until the court case is finally resolved (Kinsita'a pers.comm. 2000).

On a positive note, all parties involved in the Bina Harbour court case jointly agreed to sell a fragment of disputed land to the Provincial Government in order to build a World Bank-funded community high school at Gwaningale. Reportedly the World Bank has a policy of not funding development on customary land and the school would not have been built otherwise. The school—modern and well equipped, a surprising sight in an otherwise impoverished area—is now in operation and has the second best performance in the country (Kafo pers.comm.2000). This suggests that community pressure on their leaders to address essential issues such as education and health care may force the leaders to make concessions above their tribal and personal interests (Baenesia pers.comm. 2000).

According to the leaders of Kwaio Fatama, the federation of Kwaio tribes, which have so far stayed away from the court case, the only reasonable alternative to the Bina Harbour land disputes is the *reconciliation* of all the parties so that everyone secures their right to live and work in the land while respecting traditional ownership (in Kwaio's view, theirs). Kwaio tribes have started a reconciliation process with Langalanga tribes that live in the area immediately south of Bina Harbour, which is the subject of a separate dispute. In the view of Kwaio leaders', reconciliation does not mean “kicking people out of their homes” but acknowledging who the legal owners of the land really are (Kolosu pers. comm. 2000).

The land dispute over the Bina Harbour area is framed as a “win-lose” situation: if and when the court case comes to a legal end, people from some tribes will be deprived of the land where they live or where they hope to live from in the future, while others will receive all the benefits. In the meantime there is virtually no development in the area even though all communities have

¹⁶ This is the same land being logged that was reported in the previous section i.e. land owned by Anonakinaki and Feratofea community members.

major needs. The case illustrates the complex issues surrounding any form of development in the Solomon Islands, and the pressures on communities that wish to start income generating projects on disputed land.

6.4 Ethnic tension

Traditionally, Solomon Islanders have always lived on their own land and villages. Land ownership and settlement was always central for all means of livelihood. However, a trend towards internal migration and settlement on other people's land was apparent in the late 1980s. The increase in inter-district marriage and migration of recent decades resulted in many people living in localities where they cannot claim any clan affiliation nor, therefore, any land entitlement. According to Foanaota, "it is an unfortunate situation, which can lead to disputes between the local people and the migrants" (Foanaota 1989:72). In the late 1990s, the ethnic tension resulting from tribal efforts to revert this trend forced the mass displacement of at least 23,000 people (DDP 2000a), violence and threats against Malaitans in Guadalcanal, followed by claims for compensation and retaliation by Malaitans.

The natural resources of eastern Guadalcanal—a large, flat area suitable for commercial farming, mineral resources, and the location of the national capital of Honiara—attracted large numbers of migrants from other islands, in particular from nearby Malaita. Local people have had to conduct land dealings with immigrants, the government itself and foreign companies but have had little participation in enterprises or wage employment. This has left many of them dissatisfied with their role in economic activity. Poor provincial leadership and lack of attention by the national government to the repeated statements of economic and social grievances left the villagers with little hope in the process of governance (Roughan 1999, pers.comm. 2000).

The origins of ethnic tension can be found in the recent history of Guadalcanal (DDP 2000a). Some observers emphasise as critical on the events of the 1990s, which were influenced by the pro-logging policies of the government of Solomon Mamaloni. This was a period characterised by significant cash flows through the sale of round logs, the forgoing of millions of national revenue in the form of tax rebates to logging companies and the MPs Constituency Development Funds. In addition, this period was also characterised by substantial fraud and theft by public servants. Reportedly "...some people become rich at the expense of the many. Handouts were used to retain loyalty of the many who become more dependent than ever before" (Roughan 2000). The national economy contracted after the devaluation of the national currency in 1997. In the context of simmering discontent by the people of Guadalcanal, the

result was a backlash against Malaitans, major industrial investments as the Gold Ridge mine in Guadalcanal, and the city of Honiara itself.

According to some observers another phenomenon that contributed to explaining ethnic tension is the migration of Bougainvillean refugees to Guadalcanal as an aftermath of a nine-year war for independence from Papua New Guinea. Several thousands of Bougainvilleans fled to the Solomons, with many of them settling in Guadalcanal for long periods of time. It has been suggested that the Bougainvilleans passed on to the people of Guadalcanal how they had literally driven the unwanted “Redskins” (Papua New Guinea highlanders) off their island and had stopped the operations of one of the world’s largest and richest mining companies that had expelled many Bougainvilleans off their land. Later events in Guadalcanal including the expulsion of Malaitans and attacks against industrial interests mirror the Bougainville situation (Roughan 2000; Roughan, pers.comm. 2000).

The corruption and “crony system” of governance established by the Mamaloni government in the mid-1990s led eventually to an electoral backlash in the 1997 elections. For the first time in the country’s electoral history, the 1997 elections lead to the dismissal of over half of the sitting Members of Parliament (some of whom had been in power for several terms). The new government embarked on a reform program aimed to dismantle the “crony system”. However, within a month those out of power attempted to mount a non-confidence vote, a strategy tried several times over the life of the new Parliament.

The grievances of the people of Guadalcanal, and their demands for satisfaction, were articulated and manipulated by the Opposition—formerly members of the Mamaloni government—and supported by organised bands of armed militants. This led the government to deploy its armed personnel to stop the escalating violence while simultaneously it started negotiations with the militants. Under traditional customs, a gathering of chiefs and leaders was convened to exchange gifts, seeking reconciliation under Melanesian *kastom*. However, the violence continued, with shootings between the militants and the police. The government requested the deployment of a small contingent of Commonwealth peace-keepers from neighbouring Melanesian countries. The Government blamed the tension squarely on the Opposition’s resistance to political change. In February 2000 the Government reported in the national press that the ethnic tension was politically motivated and orchestrated by the Opposition (Office of the Prime Minister, 2000). Several dialogues between leaders of Guadalcanal Province, representatives of the militants, and the Government took place, leading

to a number of agreements and resolutions until the Townsville Peace Agreement was signed in 15 October 2000 (Box 6.1).¹⁷

Ethnic tension experienced in the island of Guadalcanal from September 1998 was the first of its kind in the Solomon Islands, and is a direct result of the movement and settlement of people in Solomon Islands outside of their home islands and blood and land ties. However, there were strong suspicions in the Government and some observers that the build-up and resolution of the ethnic tension has its roots first in the “crony system” established by the former Prime Minister Solomon Mamaloni through his many years in power, and then in the new Government’s attempts to dismantle it. Rather than the causes, the effects of ethnic tension in Malaita are particularly relevant for this study.

Effects of ethnic tension in the study area

The ethnic tension in Guadalcanal caused a massive displacement of people and exodus of people back to their villages of origin, many of them in Malaita. Official figures place the number of returnees during the peak of the tension at 23,000 or about 4,100 families (DDP 2000a:4). Including the people that remained in Guadalcanal the number of displaced people was close to 30,000, or nearly 8% of the population of the Solomon Islands.

The impacts include (DDP 2000a:x-xi)

- About 52% of the displaced people were forced to evacuate; 43% moved out of precaution; ;
- About 57% of displaced families owned land at the place of displacement;
- The costs of damage to property have been estimated at SID 18,000 (*ca* NZD 9,000) per family;
- Demands on Kilu’ufi Hospital near Auki increased considerably due to the influx of displaced families (e.g. 185% in outpatient attendance). This caused a severe strain on resources at this hospital (Maeliau pers.comm. 2000);
- 76% of the displaced families reported having no means of survival other than assistance from relatives;
- Anecdotal reports suggest that the construction of new leafhouses and gardens has led to localised deforestation (Mielaua, Misuka, Wale pers.comm. 2000).¹⁸

¹⁷ At the time of completing this research (February 2001) the Australia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ website was advising to limit all non-essential travel to the Solomon Islands as the Townsville Agreement was still in the process of being implemented, with substantial amounts of weaponry still to be surrendered.

¹⁸ Traveling by boat on the Langalanga Lagoon between Auki and Bina it was possible to see the smoke resulting from the slash and burn of many new gardens, perhaps related to displaced people.

The area most severely affected by the return of displaced people is North Malaita (Wale, Mielaua pers.comm. 2000), where the high population and limited land have led to food shortages in the markets and an increase in food prices, as well as shortages of land available for gardening. In contrast, despite the increase of population, food was abundant and comparatively cheap at the Auki market (Smiley, Tiffany pers.comm. 2000).

Many Malaitan informants believed that the ethnic tension was a direct consequence of the Malaitans' success through hard work (Smiley, Dili pers.comm. 2000). Many of the displaced people are taking their return to Malaita as an opportunity to do better for themselves in their homeland. In itself, this was a demonstration of ethnic pride, which took various forms: a belief among some Malaitans that the province will continue to feed most of Guadalcanal regardless of the political situation (Smiley pers.comm. 2000); a return to tribalism with growing mistrust of strangers and foreigners (pers. obs. 2000); and dreams of independence for Malaita (Francis pers.comm. 2000). Amongst many Kwara'ae there was a sense of confidence on their own ability to shape their own future if Malaita ever were to become an independent country, even if the viability of this proposition is highly questionable.

While most of the villages included in this study felt the effects of ethnic tension, anecdotal observations suggest that these particular villages were able to absorb smoothly the comparatively few families that returned there.¹⁹ The existing social network that welcomed the displaced people, and the availability of land to establish new subsistence gardens and resources to build new leafhouses buffered the traumatic effects of displacement.

Paradoxically, ethnic tension appeared to have had a beneficial effect at a community level. While many people returned to Malaita destitute, others brought with them capital, skills and experience of working in the cash economy. They also brought the quintessential Malaitan quality: "manpower", which in its common usage combines ability and willingness to work hard. Benefits included the return to the villages of badly needed skilled people and improvements in the transport sector that reduced the villages' isolation (Table 6.2).

¹⁹ According to some informants not all Malaitan tribes migrate. Migration is common in tribes from Northern Malaita, such as Tolbeita, as well as among Kwara'ae. Langalanga people reportedly do not migrate even though they are essentially landless, nor do other tribes from South Malaita such as 'Are'are (Dili pers.comm.2000).

6.5 Conclusions

Many of the current issues that affect communities in the Solomon Islands concern disputes over resource ownership and use. The community projects evaluated in the following chapters developed in the national context of large-scale logging turning in a critical political issue; ongoing and latent land disputes; and ethnic tension. These issues have diverse origins but may be in cases both the cause and/or effect of the others (Fig. 6.1). The outcomes have been significant political, social and environmental effects with long term consequences and arrest of all but the most basic forms of development. Overall, the 1990s saw the well-being of people and the environment in the Solomon Islands decrease.

The connection between these three apparently disparate issues, and their influence from the national scale right across the level of community highlight a deeper malaise: the growing gap between expectations and possibilities that generates deep dissatisfaction and resentment at the grassroots level, and the risk of collapse of the traditional social and economic institutions that held the Solomon Islands together (Roughan 2000). As population grows and pressure on natural resources becomes greater it is likely that conflicts involving the use of land and resources will become greater and more frequent.

This is the context in which income generating community initiatives—which have been identified as one of the most significant sources of income for most rural people—will have to unfold. This context of instability and social and environmental degradation makes the success of community projects an even more difficult proposition. The overall effect is a reduction of the chances of progress towards sustainable development for the Solomon Islands.

Table 6.1: Land ownership in the study area

	Unregistered customary land	Registered customary land	Leased provincial land	Small private plot of land
Anoa'asa		✓		
Balai	✓ ^(*)			
Busurata	✓			
Feratofea	✓ ^(*)			
Fiu			✓	
HAA				✓

^(*) Villages involved in land disputes.

Table 6.2: Influence of some external factors on community project outcomes

	Ethnic tension	Land disputes with other tribes	Logging
Anoa'asa	<i>Positive</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved transport <i>Negative</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Return of families to the land rise concerns of future land scarcity 	<i>None apparent</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project on registered customary land 	<i>None apparent</i>
Balai	<i>Positive</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved transport Two skilled persons returned to village <i>Negative</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community project suspended 	<i>Negative</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community partly involved in Bina Harbour court case Village located in disputed land 	<i>Negative</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Logging on customary land nearby village causes indirect impacts
Busurata	<i>Positive</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved transport 	<i>Negative</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landowner threatened community with eviction in 1994 because of income generating activities in borrowed land 	<i>None apparent</i>
Feratofea	<i>Positive</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved transport One skilled person returned to village 	<i>Negative</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bina Harbour court case stops development initiatives Village located in disputed land 	<i>Negative</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Logging on customary land causes direct, indirect impacts
Fiu	<i>None apparent</i>	<i>None apparent</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project on leased provincial land 	<i>None apparent</i>
HAA	<i>Positive</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential increase of domestic market size 	<i>None apparent</i>	<i>None apparent</i>

Box 6.1: A brief chronology of ethnic tension in Guadalcanal Province, Solomon Islands

September 1998: Beginning of ethnic tension (according to Amnesty International).

8 May 1999: Tavanipupu Island Resort (Marau Sounds) raided by armed men.

23 May 1999: Initial attempt of reconciliation at Cultural Village. Gathering of Chiefs and Leaders from opposing groups exchange gifts.

9 June 1999: Militant violence reported to be on the increase. Hundreds of people seek refuge in Honiara.

12 June 1999: Memorandum of Understanding between the Solomon Islands Government and the Guadalcanal Provincial Government. SIG pays SID 2.5 million to Guadalcanal province "in recognition of the social costs by indigenous people of Guadalcanal as a result of having the capital in Honiara."

18 June 1999: Parliament passes State of Emergency.

21 June 1999: Fiji's Sitiveni Rambuka appointed as mediator by the Commonwealth Secretary in London.

28 June 1999: Honiara Peace Accord. Documents the issues raised by the Militants but these are not signatories to the document.

2 July 1999: Central Bank statement that the tension threatens the national economy.

12 August: Panatina Agreement. Expresses Malaitan views.

August-September 1999: Malaitan hostage crisis. 18 Malaitans disappear.

October 1999: Arrival of peace monitors from Vanuatu and Fiji.

3 October 1999: Amnesty International reports "serious abuse of human rights": 16 killed, 14 disappeared, indiscriminate police shooting and 32,000 displaced people.

15 October 1999: State of Emergency lifted.

21 November: Armed raid and rape on giant clam farm in Guadalcanal.

7 December 1999: Peace keepers term extended due to slow progress in handing out of weapons by militants.

8 December 1999: Government set to pay compensation to displaced victims.

January 2000: Armory at Auki police station raided by armed men, starting the activities of the Malaita Eagle Force. Weapons reportedly taken to Guadalcanal.

25 February 2000: The Solomon Islands Government publishes a public statement directly linking the Opposition to the ethnic tension.

March-October 2000: The ethnic tension escalated with an increase in violence, the capture of Prime Minister Bartholomew Ulufa'alu by the Malaita Eagle Force followed by his resignation, and further inconclusive peace talks.

15 October 2000: Townsville Agreement. Final peace agreement signed in Australia.

CHAPTER 7: PROJECT EVALUATION CRITERIA

7.1 Introduction to project evaluation

This research concerns the evaluation of organised community development activities (i.e. community projects). The literal meaning of evaluation is “to assess the value or worth of something” (Rubin 1995, Dale 1998). Project evaluation¹ is a learning and management tool, the aim of which is usually the improvement of an existing project or future projects.² In essence, evaluation is a reflection on development actions. Project evaluation looks at the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, replicability and sustainability³ of development work (Rubin 1995). Some approaches to evaluation place emphasis on economic aspects (e.g. Pasqual 1999) and others on the ecological sustainability of development projects (e.g. van Pelt 1993). There are several types of development project evaluations, depending on who conducts the evaluation and when (Pasqual 1999:1).

The present evaluation can be defined as an independent, external, ex-post (summative⁴) and largely qualitative evaluation (*sensus* Dale 1998:32). It has two objectives, addressing both a narrow and broad perspective on community projects:

¹ A distinction is often made between *appraisal*, *monitoring* and *evaluation* of projects. The former two concern the assessment of projects prior to or during implementation, respectively (Dale 1998). Other equivalent terms are “ex-ante evaluation” and “ongoing evaluation”. Depending on the timing in relation to the project cycle, evaluations can be mid-term, final or ex-post evaluation (Rubin 1995).

² The literature distinguishes between development policies, programs and projects, depending on the scale of activities and the hierarchy or layer of decision-making. For the purposes of this document I will focus only on development projects.

³ The term “sustainability” as used in the project evaluation literature usually refers to something much more specific to program or project evaluation: “...the maintenance or augmentation of positive changes induced by the program or project after the latter has been terminated” (Dale 1998:45). Thus it refers to something different to the term as used in the context of “sustainable development” e.g. as in the Bruntland Report definition of sustainable development used in Chapter 2. Unless it is indicated otherwise, in this document “sustainability” has the meaning as used in the Bruntland Report.

⁴ According to Dale (1998:31), summative evaluations “are undertaken after the program or project has been completed. Their general purpose is to judge the worth of the program or project and, supplementarily, the appropriateness of design and management. The experiences thus documented may be perceived as *learning* for planning and implementation of other, similar development endeavours.” (Dale 1998:31, original emphasis). This definition describes rather well the spirit in which the present project evaluation has been conducted.

1. The assessment of community projects from the usual perspective of project evaluation; and
2. The assessment of community projects' contribution to sustainable development.

From this perspective it can be regarded as an *integrated* evaluation in that several criteria are used rather than only those of economic efficiency criteria. This chapter describes the analytical framework, criteria and indicators used for community project evaluation from this dual perspective.

7.2 Analytical framework: External or internal influences?

In the conceptual framework used here—the “egg of well-being or sustainability” (represented earlier in Fig. 2.1)—development projects represent a way of interaction between people and their environment (Fig. 7.1). Development projects often use natural resources in a number of different ways and have effects on the environment that may or may not be significant. This model of interaction is valid at any scale, from global to local, but in the context of community projects the local scale is emphasised.

Social actors are often the focus of evaluation of development work. Consequently, one approach to project evaluation requires the consideration of both internal and external factors so that the projects are considered in the broad context in which people's lives unfold. External influencing factors may present both constraints and future threats to communities as well as provide opportunities to promote development (Dale 1998:12, 16). In addition, a “narrow” focus on internal factors has analytical limitations with respect to the complexity and diversity of development issues facing the Pacific Islands and elsewhere. This is one of the reasons why the mainstream development project approach is increasingly seen as outdated (e.g. Overton *et al* 1999:263). An alternative approach to project evaluation focuses mostly on internal factors. By creating a boundary between external and internal factors, the underlying assumption is that the dynamics that take place in the system are driven by relationships within the system.⁵ Internal influences on community development initiatives represent the lower scale components of a hierarchy of multi-scalar systems where external influences represent the upper scale (e.g. Norton 1996:124).

⁵ In systems analysis (“systems thinking”) this approach is called “systems as cause”, meaning that the causes of an event are found within the system itself (Richmond 1992).

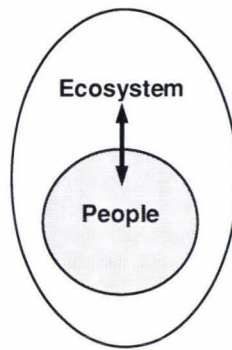


Figure 7.1: *A model of the relation between the “egg of wellbeing or sustainability” (Prescott-Allen 1995) and community projects.*

However, the notion of what is “internal” or “external” is relative and varies according to the *spatial level of assessment*. According to Prescott-Allen (1995), the selection of spatial levels varies depending on which one is most useful for decision making and for the analysis of data, and practical for the collection of data. The *focal level* of analysis is the main level of interest (e.g. the study area). The *differentiation level* is located at a level below the focal level e.g. villages. This has a higher number of units (there are many villages in the study area).

Concerning the requirements of the present analysis, what is important is that:

“The focal and differentiation levels influence, and are influenced by, the levels above and below...Influences to and from higher levels are considered as external influences, and influences from lower levels are considered as internal influences.” (Prescott-Allen 1995).

For the present *project evaluation*, different locations of the study area (Auki, Central Kwara’ae and West Kwaio) represent the focal level (Fig 7.2). Individual villages where the projects took place represent the differentiation level. A choice has been made to exclude external influences for the system under analysis, thus defined as the villages/communities, their environment and the project activities that connect both (Fig. 7.1). This makes the analysis of community projects more manageable. External factors may influence the outcome of community projects, but ultimately these projects cannot achieve their objectives if internal components are not designed or implemented adequately.⁶

However, from the perspective of assessing the *contribution of community projects to sustainable development*, the focal and differentiation levels move upwards: Malaita and generally the Solomon Islands become the focal level, and the study area becomes the differentiation level (Fig 7.2).

In brief, influences that are *external* to individual community projects from the perspective of projects evaluation—such as, for instance, logging—are however *internal* to the study area in what concerns sustainable development. This has been represented earlier when describing the analytical and conceptual framework (Fig. 2.2). This bi-focal perspective enhances our understanding of the system both in a descriptive and normative way concerning the twin goals listed above: it provides an understanding of the working of community projects, which in turn

⁶ External factors could be *internalized* into project evaluation by including different perspectives and spatial levels to the evaluation of projects (Dale 1998:64). A general analysis of this sort is included in Table 6.1, which represents the effects of logging, land disputes and ethnic tension in the community projects discussed in Chapters 8 and 9.

provides a better understanding of community strategies for the broader goal of sustainable development.

7.3 Two approaches to project evaluation

In this work six different projects were evaluated separately. The conditions of the evaluation were different: three projects were assessed five years after a first visit in 1994, and three others were evaluated for the first time in 2000. Two approaches were used: time serial project evaluation for the former, and summary project evaluation for the latter.

7.3.1 Time serial project evaluation

Working in different community projects in 1994 as a participant observer enabled a general (if informal) evaluation of the chances of project to meet its objectives. This initial impression could be used as a benchmark against which to measure the outcomes of project evaluation conducted in 2000. From this perspective this could be considered a time serial project evaluation.

A form used by NZODA for time-serial project monitoring was used as the basis for project evaluation (NZODA, undated). While this form was adequate for its purpose, for reasons of privacy or secrecy it was difficult to obtain a straight answer for each of the form's points. For instance, the projects' financial information or information about land uses were often unavailable. Consequently, the form was used more as a checklist or guideline for the interviews or direct observations. The main points included:

1. Is the project still functioning?
2. How many people were involved—How many are still involved?
3. Has there been a change of name, management or organisational structure?
4. Does the community support the project?
5. How are women involved in the project?
6. What impact does the project have on the environment?
7. Where are the products/services from the project sold?
8. Is there much competition?
9. Is the project growing or getting smaller?
10. Problems facing the project.

7.3.2 Summary project evaluation

The evaluation of three additional "success stories" (Chapter 9) that complemented the time serial described above was more general. Key informants were asked to provide an overview of

their activities and then were asked the following questions inspired on an unpublished report by Greenpeace Pacific (Rosoman pers. comm. 2000):

1. How did the project come about (in your village, life)?
2. What did you expect from the project? What were the outcomes?
3. What changes have taken place in the village as a result of the project?
4. What kind of problems have happened as a consequence of the project?
5. What do you see for your community for the future?

7.4 A simple methodology for integrated project evaluation⁷

A simple method was developed for project evaluation and assessment of the projects' contribution to sustainable development. The purpose of this methodology is to provide the basis for a systematic and objective project evaluation using the type of primarily qualitative information collected during field work.

The main features of the method are as follows:

It uses a set of criteria (described in section 7.5) that are selected to cover, as much as possible, the technical and financial aspects of the project and link these with sustainable societies criteria (namely participation and empowerment, people well-being, and environmental well-being).

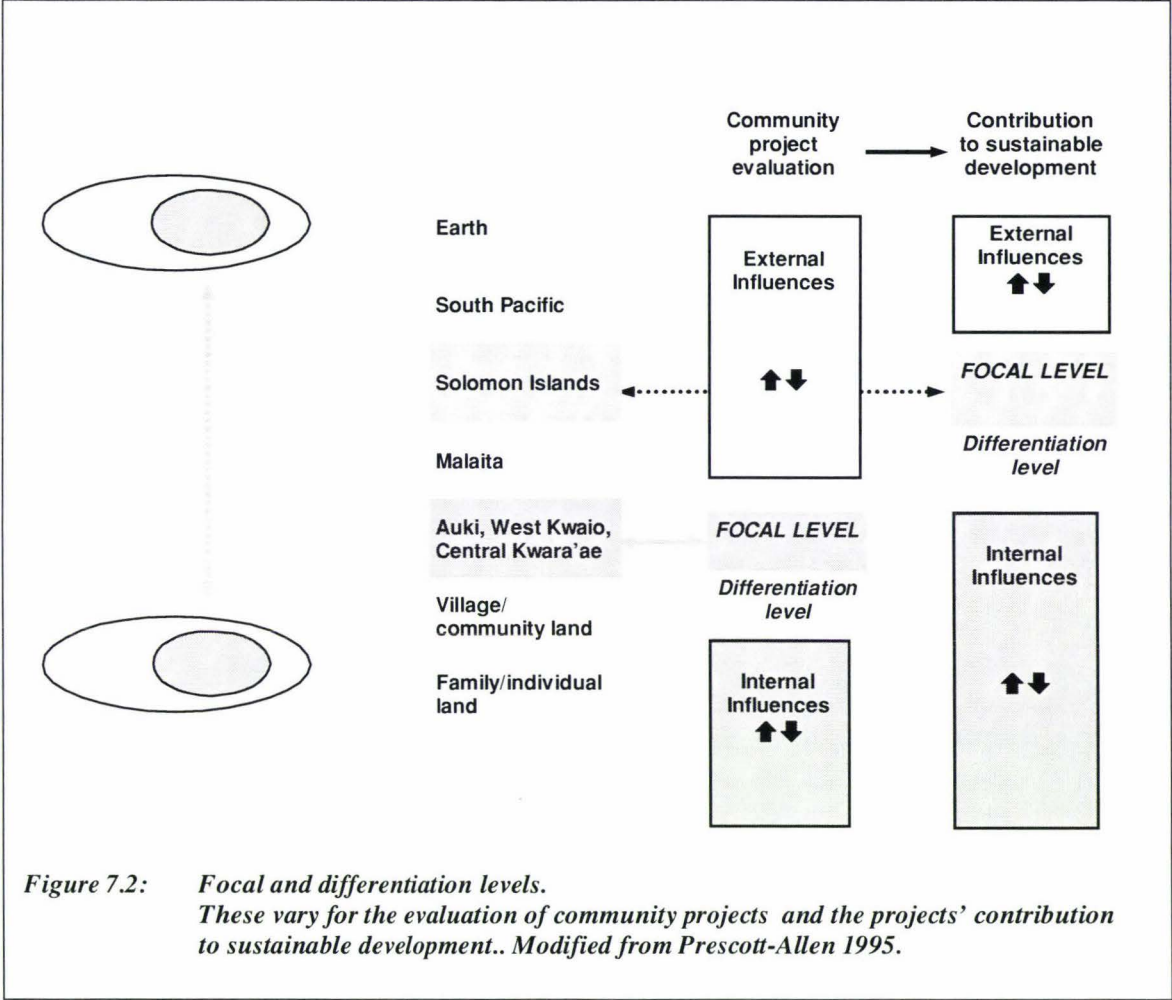
Indicators can be assessed using qualitative methods.

The results of project evaluation is expressed in a 0-100% scale.

Some indicators are objective and rely on facts that can be verified with closed yes/no questions e.g. "Is the project still in operation?" Some indicators are subjective and rely on value judgements e.g. "Does the project non-material outcome contributes to a sense of well-being?"

A value is assigned to each known indicator. This is usually 1 or 0.

⁷ This method is adapted from one developed by the author in September 1999 to assess the implementation of an international environmental treaty. That method, in turn, is partly inspired on IUCN's "Barometer of Sustainability" (Prescott-Allen 1995). The method has a novel feature, which is the "plus/minus" value that accounts for lack of knowledge or uncertainty about an indicator.



The weight given to individual indicators varies depending on:

- i. The importance of the criteria in the context of sustainable societies;
- ii. The objectivity of the data. Indicators that can be defined with closed (yes/no) questions have greater weighting than those that can only be defined with open questions; and
- iii. Data availability. The more and better the data, the higher the weighting.

The final score reflects the weighing assigned to each indicator.

For practical reasons, not all indicators are available for all case studies. Uncertainty caused by lack of knowledge is reflected in the overall assessment. To do this, a plus/minus value is assigned to reflect this lack of knowledge or uncertainty. Thus, project evaluation is defined within a *range* of possible alternatives rather than a single value e.g. 80%±10%.

Table 7.1 represents the methodologies for data collection and the means of verification used for project evaluation. Chapters 8 and 9 include a summary of the application of the method, further detailed in Annex IV.

In this simple assessment method there is no pretence of quantitative or statistic accuracy. Rather than a *quantitative* project evaluation (which would provide a false sense of accuracy), the idea is to provide the basis for a systematic application of a limited set of criteria based on qualitative data. The numeric assessments provided by this method are not an absolute evaluation of the projects but are a relative indication of project success or failure according to the criteria established here. As such the assessment could be used for ranking and comparison of projects as well as for time-serial project evaluation.

The results of applying this method should be seen in the context of the body of existing (mostly qualitative) information concerning the projects evaluated here—including the communities own perceptions—rather than the other way around.

7.5 Project evaluation criteria

The present evaluation has two objectives, each requiring different criteria and indicators:

1. The assessment of community projects from the usual perspective of project evaluation, which requires standard project evaluation criteria and indicators; and
2. The assessment of community projects' contribution to sustainable development, which requires additional, "holistic" evaluation criteria and indicators.

This dual approach requires that the success or failure of community projects should not be judged solely in terms of the projects' technical or financial aspects, but should also include the projects' contribution to people and environment well-being. The criteria overlap since most projects may have as an objective the improvement of people's well-being, and some may have as an additional objective the improvement of environment well-being.

From this dual perspective, project evaluation is not defined in black and white terms, as "success" or "failure" would be. Project success is influenced by many factors, some unrelated to the project itself, so that the result of project evaluation is often failure. Perceptions on the outcome of the project may vary. Communities may not judge success by profit (Pacific Heritage Foundation 1999). Finally, the *timing* of the assessment may give different results:

"A project may be deemed a failure at some stage, but several years later it may become clear that there were positive effects. A failure may well spark off other activities that lead to a positive change." (Rubin 1995:26).

The criteria used here provide a standard approach to assess project success or failure at a certain point in time. While the terms "success" and "failure" are used widely, they do not signify an absolute judgement on the project's outcomes or the communities involved. Rather, "success" and "failure" are used as shorthand to describe the outcome of the projects according to the set of criteria described here. In other words, the outcome of a project is not described in absolute black and white terms, but some criteria are used to choose between different shades of grey in what is in fact a relative judgement.

The standard criteria for evaluation of development projects include (Rubin 1995: 38-39; Dale 1998:41-45):

1. *Efficiency*: What is the cost of achieving the objectives?
2. *Effectiveness*: How far is the project achieving objectives?
3. *Relevance*: Is the project relevant to the needs of the people it intends to help?
4. *Impact*: What are the effects of the project?
5. *Sustainability*: Will project activities and benefits continue after external support is withdrawn?
6. *Progress*: Is the project achieving the original objectives, or have these changed?

These criteria have been reformulated based on five different sets of criteria that link a project's technical and financial aspects with those concerning the improvement of people and environmental well-being i.e. the project's contribution to sustainable societies. A discrete set of indicators has been chosen for each criterion. The methodology used in the fieldwork was

more suitable for the collection of qualitative than quantitative indicators. The criteria were defined based on qualitative indicators that could be assessed using the fieldwork methods selected for this work, namely participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and direct observations.

The project evaluation criteria used here are not comprehensive but are illustrative of the most relevant aspects of a community project from the economic, social and environmental perspectives. Table 7.2 compares the standard criteria listed above with the criteria used here.

7.5.1 Technical criteria

Technical criteria represent essential (if narrow) criteria for project evaluation. Custworth and Franks (1993:8-9) identify two main types of project failure. One is the failure to implement the project effectively (on time, within budget and according to plan). The other is the failure to achieve the effects intended even though implementation has been completed. A successful project is one that is completed in time, in budget, etc. and/or achieves objectives as defined at the outset. A community initiative failing all these criteria cannot be considered successful except perhaps from the broader perspective of the learning experience or other indirect benefit. For instance, the knowledge derived from the experience of project failure can be applied to another project.

The indicators are:

The project cycle has been completed (in time/budget) and/or the project is still in operation;

The project achieves the material (non-profit and/or profit) objectives as defined at the outset and/or other, new objectives.

These indicators are representative of effectiveness and progress criteria described earlier.

7.5.2 Financial criteria

In the case of income generation initiatives the main objective is to generate an income, thus financial criteria are relevant. As with technical criteria, financial criteria provide a narrow view of project success, in that the ultimate outcome of a failed project may be still be positive. In a society in transition from a subsistence economy to a cash economy such as the Solomon Islands it is debatable whether the money (or lack of it) is part of the problem or of the solution. It could be argued that the problems facing communities concern education, health care and opportunities within the communities, and that money—especially money generated locally—is

only part of the solution (Roughan pers.comm. 2000). In other words, the ultimate objective of generating money is not money itself but the satisfaction of needs in the cash economy. By the same token some of the needs may not require money to be satisfied.

Rather than the generation of an income *per se*, it is considered here that for a project to be successful it has to be financially viable and able to be sustained by the community's effort. A community project that is meant to generate an income is essentially a small business enterprise. A community project would need to be financially viable (i.e. generate an income or at least break even) to be considered successful. It would also need to be sustained by the community—e.g. through the community's social capital—even if outside help is limited or non-existent. From this perspective, a project that is sustained by outside funds (e.g. when a community is paid to work its land; or when seed funds are taken as a project income) cannot be considered financially successful even though this might be the perception of the community, because this kind of project would not be viable in the long term.

The indicators are:

Project income at the operational stage > external contribution to project; and/or

Project income at the operational stage > project expenses.

These indicators are, respectively, representative of the efficiency and sustainability criteria described above.

7.5.3 Participation and empowerment criteria

This set of criteria takes into consideration a third dimension of sustainable development: participation and empowerment, in themselves the basis for sustainable, equitable societies (*sensus* Overton *et al* 1999). According to Iddagoda and Dale:

“Participation has been viewed both as a means and an end. As an end, it represents the fulfilment of a very basic human need, namely people's want to have a say in the processes that shape their lives. In this perspective, participation means empowerment.”
(quoted in Dale 1998:80).

Participation and empowerment criteria reflect both objective and subjective aspects of project evaluation. The involvement of women, young people or disadvantaged groups in the project cycle is a relatively objective criteria, even though its measurement may be problematic. The perception of people on the project achievements—the end, or satisfaction of needs—is a more “subjective” criteria and as such is more difficult to measure. The most direct evidence of

success is when the project owners consider that the project has been successful, for whatever reason. The link between satisfaction with a project and empowerment is not direct but a connection can be assumed.¹

The indicators are:

The project involves a cross section of the community and/or disadvantaged groups in decision-making (e.g. women); and

The project owners consider the project a success.

These indicators are, respectively, representative of the relevance and impact criteria described above.

7.5.4 People well-being criteria

As described earlier, the framework used in this work to evaluate sustainable development is that of IUCN's Barometer of Sustainability (Prescott-Allen 1995), in which people and ecosystem well-being are given equal importance. Development will only be sustainable if it improves and maintains the well-being of both the people and the ecosystem. Consequently, projects can only be considered successful if they contribute to maintain and/or improve the condition of both people and the ecosystem.

Communities often organise themselves around a project in order to address a *problem* (Dale 1998:15). Thus the ultimate objective of a project is to resolve a problem, in order to improve the well-being of people. In its most literal meaning, project evaluation is primarily directed at determining whether the objective of resolving a problem has been met. An increase in people's well-being may be a consequence of a project's profit or non-profit outcomes, or of the direct or indirect benefits it generates for the community

The indicators are:

Project material outcome (profit or non profit) allows people to satisfy some communal and/or individual needs; and/or

Project non-material outcome contributes to a sense of well-being (e.g. through acquiring new skills or knowledge, an enhanced sense of community, etc.).

¹ In some of the projects evaluated here there was a palpable sense of empowerment (or satisfaction, or self-confidence) among informants in communities that had succeeded in their project, in contrast with those in which the project had been discontinued.

These indicators are, respectively, representative of the relevance and impact criteria described above.

7.5.5 Environmental well-being criteria

A project that contributes to environmental well-being can be considered successful from the perspective of ecologically sustainable development. Many different approaches have been proposed to evaluate this (e.g. Prescott-Allen 1995; Wackernagel and Rees; Becker 1998). Clearly the selection of indicators for sustainable development is a complex task.

The indicators used here are proxy measures of environment well-being and can be established more easily than many quantitative indicators.

The indicators are:

Project limits or minimises the use of natural resources and/or favours the adoption of environmentally friendly technologies.

Project provides a viable alternative to unsustainable resource use (e.g. large scale timber extraction).

These indicators are representative of *ecological* sustainability criteria, as distinct from *project* sustainability as described above. However, these simple criteria have obvious limitations, in that they are necessary but not sufficient criteria for assess long term ecological sustainability.

7.6 Summary and conclusions

Assessing the success or failure of a community project depends on the perspective used. Even for a project designed to generate income, profit may not be a sufficient criterion. It is apparent that even for income generating projects, an increase on people's well-being does not necessarily has to be measured in terms of income. Where a project's contribution to sustainable development is being assessed, an integrated project evaluation is required.

Table 7.1: Project evaluation and contribution to sustainable development summary

Criteria	Indicators	Means of verification/measurement	Methodology
Technical	1. The project cycle has been completed (on time/budget) and/or the project is still in operation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project owner declarations and/or direct observation e.g. project activities still taking place. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-structured interviews • Participant observation
Technical	2. The project achieves the non-profit and/or profit objectives defined at the outset.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project owner declarations and/or direct observation e.g. project generates income and food. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-structured interviews • Participant observation • Transect walks • RRA techniques
Participatory	3. The project is considered a success by the project owners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project owner declarations e.g. “we are very happy with the project.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-structured interviews
Participatory	4. The project involves a cross section of the community and/or disadvantaged groups (e.g. women)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project owner declarations and direct observation e.g. reference to or witnessing women’s vocal participation in community meeting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-structured interviews • Participant observation
Social (people well-being)	5. Project material outcome (profit or non profit) allows people to satisfy some communal and/or individual needs <i>and/or...</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project owner declarations, direct observation e.g. “now we can pay for children’s school fees”; new church building paid with project income. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-structured interviews • Participant observation • Transect walks
Social (people well-being)	6. Project non-material outcome contributes to a sense of well-being (e.g. empowerment, knowledge, sense of community, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project owner declarations: e.g. “the community learnt how to do it” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-structured interviews

Table 7.1 (Continued)

Criteria	Indicators	Means of verification/measurement	Methodology
Environmental (env. well-being)	7. Project limits or minimises the use of natural resources and/or favours the adoption of environmentally friendly technologies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value judgement on project methodology, direct observation e.g. change from shifting cultivation to cultivating one place. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-structured interviews • Participant observation • Transect walks
Environmental (env. well-being)	8. Project provides alternatives to unsustainable resource use (logging) (i.e. project income can replace income from unsustainable sources)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct observation e.g. logging is taking place on community land 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant observation • Transect walks
Financial	9. Project income > external contribution to project (operational stage) <i>and/or</i> ...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value judgement on project methodology based on project owner declarations and/or direct observation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-structured interviews • Participant observation
Financial	10. ...Project income > project outgoings (operational stage)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value judgement on project methodology based on project owner declarations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-structured interviews

Table 7.2: Comparison of standard project evaluation criteria with criteria used here

	Technical	Financial	Participation	People well-being	Environment well-being
Effectiveness	✓				
Efficiency		✓			
Relevance			✓	✓	✓ (in some cases)
Impact ^(*)			✓	✓	
Sustainability ^(*)		✓			
Progress	✓				

✓ The indicators address basic project evaluation criteria as well as the combined criteria used here to measure project success and contribution to sustainable development.

^(*) The meanings of these terms in the project evaluation literature is often confusing (if not misleading) and quite different from the usual meanings of the same terms in the general development literature:

- “Impact” in project evaluation is often used as the effects or results of the project (positive, wanted effects), rather than the social or environmental impacts (negative, unwanted effects).
- “Sustainability” in project evaluation is often used with the specific meaning that the project activities and benefits will continue after external support is withdrawn, rather than the meaning (or meanings) of sustainable development as in, for instance, WCED 1987.

In this work both “impact” and “sustainable development” will have the meaning used in the project evaluation literature only when indicated specifically.

CHAPTER 8: PROJECT EVALUATION—CASE STUDIES

8.1 Introduction

This chapter reports on three community projects with which the author was involved in 1994 while doing volunteer work with an Australian NGO. Annex I describes the activities of this organisation. The projects were evaluated during a follow up visit in 2000 and their status compared with the situation in 1994.

8.2 Feratofea Cultural Centre, West Kwaio

8.2.1 Community profile

Feratofea is a roadside village located on the coastal plain of central Malaita, at ca. 3km from the coast and approximately 30km south of Auki, Malaita's provincial capital (Figs. 5.3 & 8.2). The village is located on the eastern (inland) side of an unsealed road on an area of mixed clearings, gardens, and largely secondary growth forest. The parent village of Anonakinaki was settled on its present location in 1975 (Balai 1993). Several associated hamlets have grown out from the village since then. These include Balai, further discussed below (*ca.* 1989), Feratofea (*ca.* 1992) and Faumarako (*ca.* 1997).¹ In 1994 there were 42 houses with ca. 300 people in Anonakinaki and nearby hamlets and Feratofea had only one house. By 2000 there were an estimated 60 houses with some 400-500 people (Daniel pers.comm. 2000), and there were some six houses at Feratofea.

The community is located at the boundary of three language groups: Kwara'ae and Kwaio (bush people), and Langa-Langa (salt water people). The community belongs to the Kwara'ae language group but has a distinctive Kwaio influence characteristic of this boundary area.²

The Anonakinaki community subsists largely from what could be described non-affluent subsistence farming. A limited variety of crops is grown for consumption purposes only.

¹ When the mother village becomes too large and crowded people move away to quieter locations. This usually involves nuclear families or extended families with close ties (Manita'a 1994; Jason 2000).

² Many people speak both Kwara'ae and Kwaio. There are more Kwaio speakers than Pijin speakers (Balai 1993).

Because of the various language groups, land ownership patterns in this area are complex, not always coincident with settlement patterns, and subject to disputes. Reportedly the village's ancestral land is a strip of land about five kilometres wide and about 30 kilometres long that stretches across Malaita.

8.2.2 Project profile (1994)

In the early 1990s the community started a series of initiatives aimed to increase their self-sufficiency, protect their culture and find an alternative to large-scale logging. Work was separated between a women's group and a men's group, known collectively as Agrow Community. This work continued from various development initiatives through the community's history.³

Central to the community initiatives was the development of the "Feratofea Cultural Centre".⁴ The centre was designed "to preserve our own culture, custom values, natural resources and environment, as well as to generate income and discourage urban drifting" (Hino 1994:1). The project was a reaction by the community to a perceived deterioration of culture and values, economic stagnation and the risk posed by other development options, particularly large scale logging:

"There are many forms of development in the Solomon Islands and many in the Province of Malaita, but in the view of our community some of these are disastrous. The ruin they have done to our culture, natural resources and environment is largely noticeable with no benefit for future generations." (Hino 1994:1).

The first phase of the project, which started in 1992, included the construction of a traditionally built and decorated *kastom* house. The house had a symbolic role as the first physical manifestation of the cultural centre. Its construction had initiated the process of transferring traditional knowledge to younger generations. Building techniques had varied over time and had adopted some modern materials e.g. nails, sawn timber, and traditional styles and techniques were gradually being lost. The *kastom* house, unlike modern leafhouses, was entirely constructed using bush materials and traditional techniques, with all structures being tied rather than nailed. The outside walls were made of bamboo strips woven in traditional patterns. The building had traditional characteristics, such as strong walls, no windows and a

³ This included cacao (1957), cattle rising (1967) and honey (1988).

⁴ Feratofea: Kwara'ae *fera*=*haus* (house) and *tofea*=*nomoa* (none, no more): "the house that would not be". Some people did not believe that the Cultural Centre would ever become a reality, and the name of the centre mocked this belief.

low entrance. This design was used in times past was used for defensive purposes. Intruders could not break through the walls, and had to crouch to enter the house where they would be vulnerable to defenders. Traditionally these houses had an underground tunnel leading out to the forest (Manita'a pers.comm. 1994). A garden of medicinal or traditional plants surrounded the building. The community planned to use the building as a display centre for traditional artefacts, and as a demonstration in itself of the Kwara'ae cultural lore. Other activities of the cultural centre included a bamboo flute band, and a dancing group, which could perform music for the entertainment of both the community and visitors.

The second phase of the project involved the construction of a classroom for hands-on training of cultural skills.⁵ Community elders and other elders from the area who were versed on the culture, arts, crafts and traditional activities of West Kwaio would take care of the one-to-two week teaching sessions (Hino 1994).

The cultural centre was supposed to provide both financial and non-financial benefits to the community. Financial benefits would be primarily derived from tourism. Non-financial benefits would include cultural preservation and the prevention of urban drift. The planned sources of funding for the project were, in the short term, the earnings from cash crops and aid funds and in the long-term income from the sale of handicrafts to tourists.

The cultural centre project was run by a steering committee, which in 1994 was composed of twelve men including a chairperson, a secretary and a treasurer. The steering committee held regular meetings with the entire community, where all had a chance to speak (pers.obs. 1994). Normally the men's group devoted two days a week to the project. The participation of individual community members in project activities was recorded in a notebook.⁶

As a complementary project, in 1993 the community's women's group planted about 0.4 hectare (one acre) of chilli (*Capsicum fructens*). This project had been identified and designed by Forestry Division officers in Auki (a branch of the Ministry of Agriculture and Land), who provided the chilli seedlings and technical knowledge. By mid-1994 these were producing approximately 50kg of fruit per harvest, which was processed in a home-made drier. The

⁵ This building, a standard leaf house, was almost entirely built with the help of the Australian NGO during June-July 1994. However, the building had not been finished by the time the group left. Some NGO volunteers noted that apart from an injection of enthusiasm their contribution had actually made little impact on the project in terms of concrete results (YCI 1994).

⁶ The Australian NGO requirement of working five days a week created some conflict with the community.

production was sold to a Honiara-based Japanese-owned fishing and cannery company, Taiyo, which used the chillies in canned tuna. After about one year of work and two harvests, the women's group had only collected some SID 300 (about NZD 150).

8.2.3 Project status (2000)

By 2000, the building project had long been abandoned, even though it had seemed near completion in 1994. Apparently the construction had stopped following the departure of the international NGO group. The *kastom* house that had been the symbol of the beginning of the project had been eaten by termites, had fallen down, and had been largely covered by regrowth—thus also becoming a symbol of the end of the project. The *kastom* chief described the results succinctly: “The project has collapsed and the house too” (Manita’a pers.comm. 2000). The unfinished classroom had been left untouched since 1994. On a positive note, the Cultural Centre retained its name and identity and carried on with some activities. The village’s *kastom* dance group had since 1994 won a national and an international award, and was still active.

Reportedly, after the departure of the volunteers in 1994 it had become too hard to find people to work on the project (Manita’a pers.comm. 2000). Local people wanted money in compensation for their time, even though it was a community activity. The Solomon Islands Tourism Board had funded the project with a SI 7,000 grant, but the funds had reportedly been misappropriated by “...a businessman in Auki”⁷ (Manita’a pers.comm. 2000). Others blamed the project collapse on poor management (Laines pers.comm. 2000). Village politics had influenced the outcome of the project, although the precise dimension of these internal affairs can only be guessed at.⁸

By 2000 the women’s group’s chilli growing project had also been abandoned. Reportedly some men had misappropriated the money; then the women collected what was left and deposited it in the bank. The tuna cannery had reportedly stopped buying the chillies for reasons unknown to the informants. The chilli garden was overgrown (Manita’a pers.comm. 2000).

⁷ The details of this event were not clear to the informant, or were not clearly explained to (or understood by) the author.

⁸ The traditional leadership system is based on the performance of individuals. The project could have been designed to increase the prestige and influence of community leaders.

Other income-generating projects started by Agrow community in the early 1990s had collapsed by 2000 without becoming fully operational. In fact, by 2000 the community's economic activity was less than it had been in 1994, when the community was producing kumara as a cash crop (an economic activity not conceived as a "project"). The issues that had led the community to initiate the project remained unchanged or had worsened: financial pressures, apparent lack of choices and alternatives, and a sense of discouragement among its members.

8.2.4 Project evaluation (2000)

- **Technical criteria:** Technically the project had both design and implementation problems. The cultural centre was a meaningful initiative for cultural preservation, but the project's profit- and non-profit benefits, and ways in which these benefits would be generated, were not clearly defined at the outset. The products or services to be sold, and the market for these, were only very generally defined. In addition, from the perspective of the project cycle, the implementation of the project—building construction—had begun before some aspects of project design and funding were completed. Arguably the project's goals had required a significant community effort that its members were not prepared to make if no material rewards were in sight.

In contrast, the dance group was a successful cultural (rather than income-generating) project. However, it did not need the physical structures of the cultural centre to exist. The success of the dance group when compared with the rest of the project validates criticism of cultural centres:

"Malaita is infected with cultural centres, community centres. There is an assumption from part of the people that if they have a building it is more important than what goes on inside it. Most centres are houses for cockroaches. Why do people do this? [Their] assumption [is] that "if we have [a] building training will go on" but the most important thing is the training. SIDT's building came in 1995 after 15 years of activity. We came to this conclusion: the process is most important than the product" (Rougham, pers.comm. 2000).

The chilli growing project was a simpler, more conventional project, and was better designed and implemented. However, it failed to generate enough funds to compensate the additional work it generated for the women's group so it was abandoned. The project's "bottlenecks" (*sensus* Rondinelli 1983) were low production and a limited market: all production was sold to a single purchaser, and the produce was of no interest to the Melanesian population.

- **Participation criteria:** The project had been designed to benefit all community members, even though the decision-making powers remained largely in the men's hands. The project was designed to use community resources such as its culture and natural resources (e.g. for building materials), however its implementation relied fundamentally on the community's "manpower". This resource was arguably over-stretched: typically, communities have multiple demands for "manpower", such as construction or maintenance work for the church, clinics and schools, and work in private houses and gardens. Further, in this as in other communities, men are used to spend a considerable amount of time sitting around, and the project would have had an impact on this practice. The limited "accessibility of achievement" contributed to disillusionment with the project and its eventual collapse.

The involvement of an Australian NGO in the early stages of the project energised its implementation, but that enthusiasm waned after the volunteers' departure. The result was a "boom and bust" cycle in which considerable effort was put into the project for a comparatively short period of time, followed by the project's abandonment.

The project emphasised the involvement of young men. Although women also participated in the project (e.g. working alongside men to collect building materials from the forest (pers.obs.1994), and participated in meetings, at times speaking up, it was not clear whether they were involved in decision-making.

Aside from its low returns, the chilli-growing project was abandoned because it added to the women's already significant workload. Local women had complained to YCI members about the extra chores the chilli garden involved (YCI 1994), suggesting that women were not receiving enough compensation for their involvement in the project. They seemed to feel that their involvement in the project would not result in any significant emancipation from the drudgery of village life.

The community assessment and perception was that the project had clearly failed, and this arguably had a disempowering effect. However, the community took pride on the success of their dance group, with the opposite effect.

- **Financial criteria:** Financially the project had obviously failed because it was not implemented to a point where it could generate an income (i.e. operational stage). As described above, even if it had reached that point, however, it may not have generated an income because of poor design and lack of a business plan.

The cultural centre, while meaningful as a cultural preservation initiative, appeared to have few income generating possibilities. The sources of income were not clearly defined. The most obvious source of income—the tourist market—was limited both locally by the village's relative isolation and regionally by the paucity of tourism in Malaita,⁹ a situation that ethnic tension had only worsened. Another potential source of income would be money risen from within the community: a fee would be charged to the youth attending to courses to pay for the elders' time (Hino 1994). In an essentially subsistence economy this was unlikely. Alternatively, the project could also be used as a lever to raise overseas aid money. While the money was purportedly to be invested in the project, it was not clear if the community considered this as a free loan, or indeed as a form of income (e.g. Fewster, letter to the author, August 1994).

The chilli growing project reached an operational stage but the efforts it required were considered excessive for its returns.

- ***Environmental well-being criteria:*** Five years after the project began, environmental well-being in the area had clearly declined as a consequence of logging near the village. Arguably the failure of the cultural centre to generate an income had been a contributing factor in the decision by some community members to give customary land in concession for commercial timber extraction.

However, the collapse of the project was not the only cause of logging. Other factors were influential as well. First, the alternative of logging was being discussed before the project began (H. Takana'a pers. comm. 2000). Second, only a minority of community members—the leaders of the land—had decision-making powers over the land being logged. Two of these men, who were influential in the cultural centre project, reportedly did not favour logging, but were under pressure to agree in order not to isolate themselves from the rest of the landowners (Manita'a, Jason pers. comm. 2000). What the cultural centre project failed to do, however, was to offer a viable alternative to logging and to galvanise the community against the leaders' decision to give out land in a logging concession—a decision that benefited some people but that many disliked.

⁹ The Solomon Islands Tourism Board office in Honiara advertises several homestays in Malaitan villages, but discourages tourists from going to roadside villages as “there is nothing to do” (pers. obs., 2000). The provincial government's plans for the development of tourism also emphasise coastal and highland locations (Kuri, pers.comm.).

- ***People well-being criteria:*** The project had not been concluded, so it had not reached a stage where it could offer any material or non-material reward to the community that could contribute to their well-being. The success of the cultural dance group, a sub-component of the cultural centre project, had arguably a positive effect on people's sense of cultural pride and morale, and consequently on their well-being. From this perspective the project cannot be considered a total failure.

8.2.5 Balance and perspectives

By 2000 the overall situation at the village had worsened. Most people were only thinking of making money (Manita'a pers.comm. 2000). Paradoxically, the villagers had no communal sources of income, and few individual sources of income at all. Aside from internal issues, this stagnation was partly a consequence of the insecurity of land tenure or, rather, the hope that in the future the Bina Harbour development (described in Chapter 6) would provide employment opportunities and other benefits if the community's legal ownership of the Bina Harbour area was confirmed. This depended on the outcome of a court case.¹⁰

Individual, opportunistic sources of income included selling surplus root vegetables (not a cash crop but a food crop), and employment in logging companies. The financial benefits of logging reached only some community members—landowners and/or logging labourers. Work for logging companies was already in the early 1990's a regular form of employment for many young men. In 2000, the logging contractor employed about 40 local men, some of whom had ownership rights to that land. Logging was the main source of employment. Some of the most educated men in the village had been left out of this activity because they did not have the right skills. One young man had found employment in the police force; another man had started a bakery in the village; and one family owned two chainsaws and hired them out by the day.

Following the ethnic tension in Guadalcanal an Australia-trained carpenter had returned to the village after ten years in Honiara. In a modern sense he was the most skilled man in the village

¹⁰ I had conversations with both main parties to the court case (Kwara'ae and Langalanga). My understanding is that the time available by law for the Anonakinaki community to appeal against the latest court decision benefiting the Langalanga part had expired, making this decision permanent. The Kwara'ae party appeared to be unaware of this situation. A crucial difference between these two parties in the court case was that one party was able to represent himself in court as his own "bush lawyer"—because of his extensive knowledge of the law and command of the English language—while the other party relied entirely on Honiara-based lawyers that his community could hardly afford.

and was slowly starting his own carpentry business. Once the business was functioning his idea was to train a few apprentices as a way of helping unemployed (and unemployable) school dropouts (Toli-Walesome pers.comm. 2000).

Despite the failure of the cultural centre, some people still had interest in starting again and building a new *kastom* house. For this second try, which by early 2000 was still in the formulation stage, people considered that it would be more realistic to start on a small scale and expand from there. This interest suggested that the cultural centre had indeed been meaningful to the community, as a symbol if not as something on which they were prepared to spend significant effort. Perhaps the best hope for the community was that there were still some idealistic people left in the village.

Figure 8.2 summarises the quantitative project evaluation used in this study for the project at Feratofea and the other communities.

**Table 8.1: Summary of community project objectives and outcomes—
Feratofea**

	Stated objectives	Outcomes
Community building	-	-
Cultural preservation	✓	✓ ^(*)
Environment conservation	✓	✗
Food production	-	-
Income generation	✓	✗
Increase women's self sufficiency	✓	✗
Infrastructure	✓	✗
New skills, training, etc.	✓	✗

^(*)Limited achievements.

Table 8.2: Summary of project evaluation—Feratofea

Indicators	Assessment	Score (as in method) (%)
1. The project cycle has been completed (in time/budget) and/or the project is still in operation	✗	0
2. The project achieves the non-profit and/or achieves profit objectives defined at the outset.	✗	3
3. The project is considered a success by the project owners.	✗	1
4. The project involves a cross section of the community and/or it involves disadvantaged groups in decision making (e.g. women)	?	3 ± 3
5. Project material outcome (profit or non profit) allows people to satisfy some communal and/or individual needs	✗	0
6. Project non-material outcome contributes to a sense of well-being (e.g. empowerment, knowledge, sense of community, etc.)	✓	1
7. Project limits or minimises the use of natural resources and/or favours the adoption of environmentally friendly technologies.	✓	20
8. Project provides alternatives to unsustainable resource use (logging) (i.e. project income can replace income from unsustainable sources)	✗	0
9. Project income > external contribution to project (operational stage)	✓	5
10. Project income > project outgoings (operational stage)	✗	0
<i>Evaluation</i>	✗ > ✓	33 ± 3

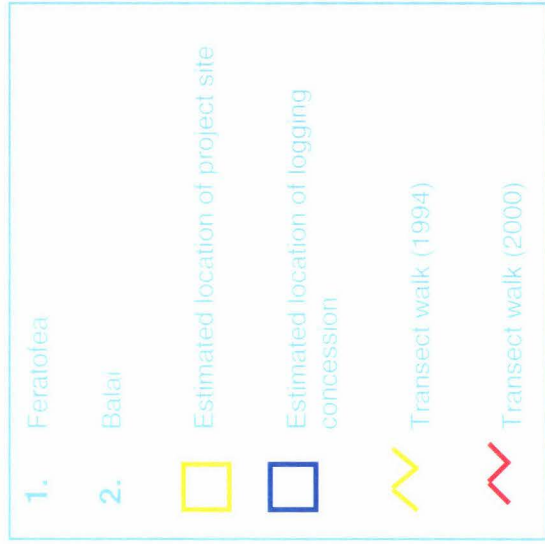
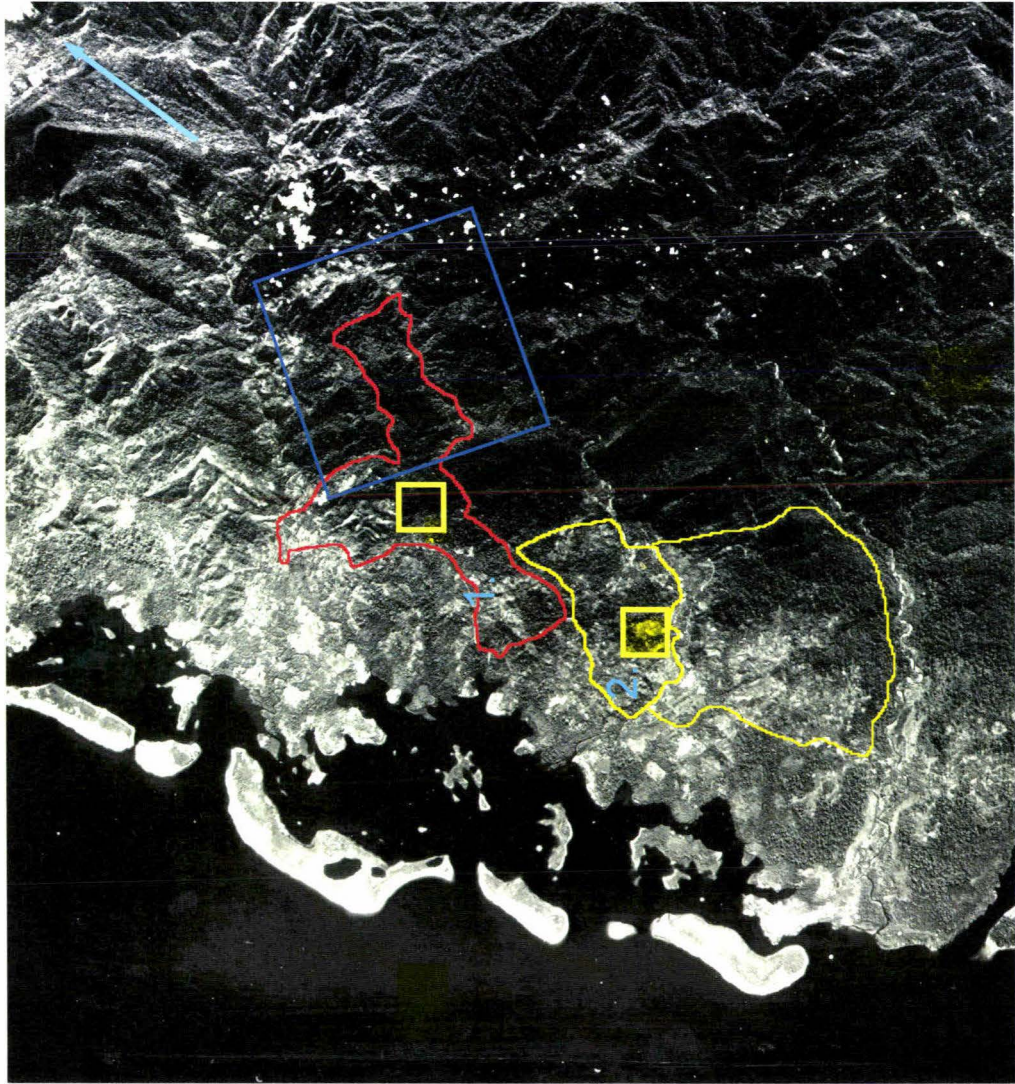


Fig. 8.1: *Feratofoea and Balai (From a 1992 aerial photograph)*

8.3 Paper making project, Balai Community, West Kwaio

8.3.1 Community profile

Balai community is located *ca.* three kilometres further south from Feratofea along the main southern road from Auki to Su'u (Fig. 8.1). Many people in Balai (especially men) are connected to the villagers at nearby Anonakinaki and Feratofea through their maternal line, whereas in this area, the land ownership system gives seniority to those belonging to the male line (Burt 1994:26). Thus people from Feratofea and Balai come from the same original village, Anonakinaki, but they have different rights over the land¹¹. People moved from Anonakinaki to their present location at Balai in 1989 to form a community based on a conservation project (Baenesia 2000 pers.comm.). Nevertheless, some people participated across both communities' projects.

People from Balai have a close working relationship with SIDT. Several of the community's initiatives in the early 1990's were influenced by SIDT's philosophy or were carried out in close consultation with this organisation. These initiatives were often innovative rather than traditional in their outlook and approach to development and included agroforestry, reforestation using native trees,¹² the construction of a permanent building for workshop and meeting facilities, and the fabrication of paper using bush materials, further described below. While the latter was designed to be the community's main income-generating project, the projects were all part of a broader initiative linking conservation and community development. According to a project brief, the project at Balai inspired that of Feratofea, particularly the building of the centre (Balai 1994).

¹¹ The people at Balai would not own land in the Anonakinaki area because of their matrilineal relation. In fact, it appears that in the early- and mid-1980s there were disputes among members from the two different lines (Balai 1993).

¹² Several reforestation initiatives in Malaita in the 1980s that were funded by the New Zealand Government promoted the use of exotic species. The community at Balai tried to innovate by using native species instead (Balai 1994; Kuri pers.comm. 1994).

8.3.2 Project profile (1994)

The paper making project was identified and designed by New Zealand advisers¹³ and had been introduced to the community by SIDT in 1994.¹⁴ The project involved the commercial production of handcrafted paper made from bush materials. The rationale was to generate income through the harvest of renewable farm or forest materials (leaves, bark, etc.) as an alternative to less sustainable uses of the forest, particularly unsustainable large-scale commercial timber extraction. Woodblock printing of traditional designs added value to the paper.

The project required relatively low technology by Western standards: a generator, plastic vats, sieves, sheet and envelope moulds, a blender, etc.). For the community, however, it was rather more sophisticated than the equipment usually employed for work in the village, e.g. it required electricity. The project was successfully implemented in 1994. The early stages included two workshops in which the basic notions of paper-making and woodblock carving and printing were taught to the community by an expert from New Zealand. At that time the production was of ca. 30-50 sheets of paper a day (ca. 3-5 sheets per worker per day) depending on the type of fibre used. Through experimentation with different local materials, the community finally settled on using mostly banana and pineapple leaves for papermaking. The product was a coarse, attractive dark paper with printings of traditional motives in black ink, made into Christmas cards, writing paper and envelopes.

8.3.3 Project status (2000)

The Balai Community Paper Making project continued from its inception in 1994 until the ethnic tension in Guadalcanal began in 1998. During that time the community honed their paper making skills. The project had a management committee, while SIDT kept the responsibility for market research both locally and overseas. The product was mostly sold to hotels and foreign embassies earning the community several hundred to a couple of thousand SI dollars for several

¹³ I believe it had connections with New Zealand's Maruia Society.

¹⁴ Some weeks before starting the paper making project a meeting was organised at Balai to which the leaders from Anonakinaki and Feratofea were invited. YCI staff members, who were then staying at Anonakinaki, were also invited to participate ("You are here to help" (Manita'a pers.comm.1994)). The meeting was called to discuss the paper making project. At that stage the community did not have a clear idea of the use of the paper they were supposed to make. It was apparent that the project was SIDT's idea rather than the community's. The YCI staff were asked to call SIDT to clarify the projects' rationale. A paper-making workshop was held shortly after, after which the community started producing paper. The YCI team visited Balai again two months later, when the project was in production.

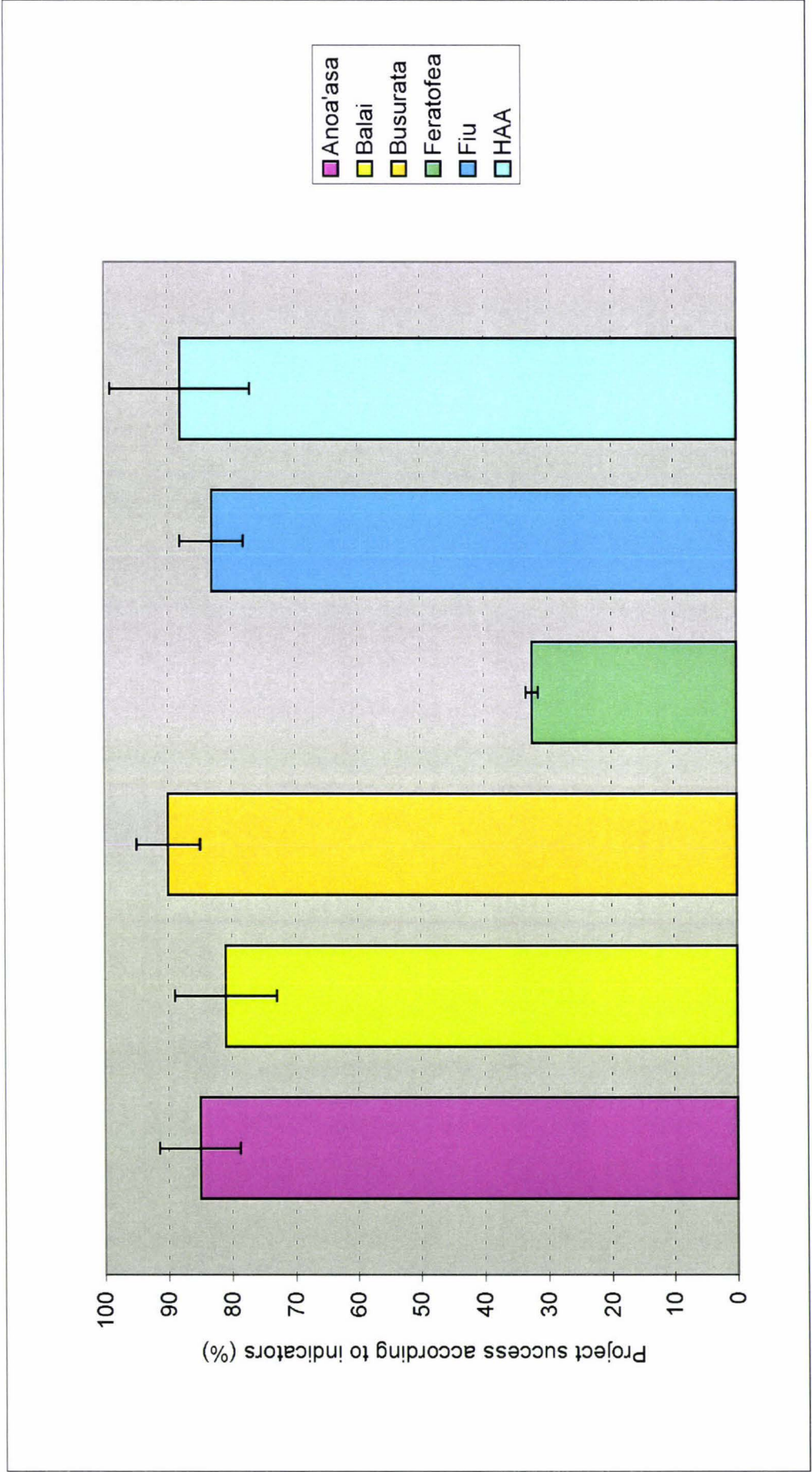


Figure 8.2: Project evaluation (2000)

weeks worth of paper-making. Some prints were exhibited and put on sale at the New Zealand High Commission in Honiara and one of the pieces was purchased for the Museum of Contemporary Pacific Art in Noumea. The project was hailed as one of the successes of SIDT (SIDT 1998) as well as in the academic press as a viable strategy for sustainable development (Hutching 1996, quoted in Purdie 1999:76).

When ethnic tension in Guadalcanal began the village people become afraid to travel to Honiara to sell their prints. Paper production also stopped.¹⁵ By then, 23 families were working in the project—all the families in the village, plus some families or individuals living at nearby Anonakinaki. Community members worked two days a week each although the project was run every day. The community intended to re-start the project in 2000.¹⁶

The community considered it imperative that they improve the technical and operational aspects of the project as well as acquire the necessary skills that would allow for the control of all aspects of project operation. Some of these problems could be resolved internally but others required external support. Two former managers from Solomon Islands Palm Limited (SIPL), which had been forced to lay off its Malaitan employees following ethnic tension in Guadalcanal, had returned to the village. One of them had been appointed as project chairman in replacement of the former project chairman, a traditional leader.¹⁷

While it would appear that the project was a means to record “traditional art and techniques” (Hutching 1996, quoted in Purdie 1999:76), in fact these techniques were novel to the community, which did not have a comparable form of traditional art.¹⁸ The paper quality had

¹⁵ This suggests that communities are very conservative in the way they spend their efforts. The moment the sale of the paper was halted, production also stopped.

¹⁶ Ethnic tension flared up in June 2000 at the time of writing this document, bringing the Solomon Islands to the verge of civil war and causing the dismissal of Prime Minister Bartholomew Ulufa'alu. It is likely that this tension further hampered the re-start of project operations, at least until a peace deal was signed in October 2000.

¹⁷ The people displaced from Guadalcanal had brought with them capital, skills and their work experience as managers. They were prepared to take on the challenge starting a new life in the village (Takana'a pers.comm. 2000). Reportedly, the returnees had been slow to recognize the progress that the community had made over the years with a reforestation program, building a workshop house, and starting the paper making project. Their initial emotion was one of dismay that the community “had done nothing” over the years (Baenesia pers.comm. 2000).

¹⁸ A similar project was set up by SIDT in a village in the Marovo Lagoon (Western Province). The quality of the paper made at this village was inferior to that at Balai, but their artwork was far superior. The Marovo Lagoon area is well known for its superb wood carvings. For the villagers there, working on the woodblocks for printing was an

clearly improved since 1994. One problem was that some of the most experienced women working in the projects had married and, according to the local *kastom*, had moved to their husbands' villages. The poor quality of the artwork was a comparatively more difficult problem to address than the need to increase the quantity of paper. The community was evaluating the alternatives of having one of its members receiving more art training through workshops or formal courses (a process that could take months if not years) to hiring an artist from elsewhere.

While there was no local competition for the paper, nor was there any real market for the paper in the Solomon Islands except the limited markets of the expatriate community and tourists. Exporting the produce to countries such as Australia or New Zealand would have been essential for a significant leap in the community's income. However, this kind of expansion of the business was likely to require the community to gain some training and/or initial external assistance in export procedures, packaging, etc. Significant overseas support (e.g. from New Zealand conservation groups or fair trade organisations) would be required to market the product overseas.

8.3.4 Project evaluation (2000)

- **Technical criteria:** The project was based on a novel idea that was carefully planned and implemented according to plan. The community received significant training, resources and ongoing support from local and international NGOs.

A “quick and dirty” evaluation in 1994 by YCI staff concluded that the community had to increase its production to enable exports, and for that they had to overcome various technical, operational and business “bottlenecks” (*sensus* Rondinelli 1983), including a limited market, too small a scale of operation, and reliance on outside support for marketing and maintenance of infrastructure (e.g. of the generator). At the outset the community had only one domestic kitchen blender in which to grind the vegetable fibres, while something more powerful and/or more units would have been necessary. Over the years the community had obviously come to the same conclusions and addressed (independently) some of these problems. By 2000 the project infrastructure had become slightly more “industrial”: the community had several domestic blenders as well as a washing machine converted into a home-made industrial-grade blender. In addition, the community had acknowledged the need for better management. The community still needed to further

extension of their traditional woodcarving skills. The project in Marovo has however collapsed due to misappropriation of funds (Rougham, Tome, Baenesia, Rosoman pers.comm. 2000).

improve the quality of the paper and especially of the artwork, and the quantity of paper production in order to reach the goal of one ton of export-quality paper.

- **Participation criteria:** Both men and women worked in and benefited from the projects, although it was not clear if the women were involved in decision making or only contributed with labour. Overall the community assessment and perception was that the project was successful and had possibilities for further development, even for becoming a small industry. Over a comparatively short period of time, the community had been able to see some improvements in their village, such as a “permanent” church, which was being built with the project’s proceeds. The community was “very happy” with the project because they had been able to learn new skills and make some money (J. Takana’a pers.comm. 2000). They had become very skilled in making the paper, and were confident of their skills as well as aware of their limitations.
- **Financial criteria:** Financially the project was quite successful, even though it relied on a very small market and part of its success depended on significant external support. Importantly, it had the possibility of accessing the export market if some quality and quantity issues were addressed. To a large extent the future of the project relied on overseas markets, which required further external assistance.
- **Environmental well-being criteria:** The project was purposefully designed to have little impact on the environment by offering an alternative forest use to logging and the use of non-timber forest and farm resources. While these objectives were achieved they did not compensate for the impacts on the local environment that, independently from this project, were caused by logging close to the village. Perhaps more damaging than the actual impacts was the notion that the logging fields were encroaching upon a “green” community, and that the community efforts would be insufficient to prevent environmental deterioration that in the long term would affect their lives.
- **People well-being criteria:** The success of the project had arguably a positive effect on the community and on people’s well-being both through the actual generation of income as well as through strengthening the sense of community. At the same time there was a sense of pressure on the community to produce more money. The project had the potential for sustaining the village but the project leaders acknowledged that this was going to be challenging (H. Takana’a pers. comm. 2000).

8.3.5 Balance and perspectives

The paper-making project started in 1994 and was fully operational by the end of that year, despite being novel in conception and introduced to the community as a pilot project by an outside organisation. The project allowed the community to learn new skills, gain self-confidence, and finance various improvements in the village. There remained several impediments, such as reliance on external support for overseas marketing and the need to improve the quantity of paper produced and the quality of the artwork. It was hoped that the new managers would provide much needed direction.

External factors such as the ethnic tension had limited the development of the project. Consequently, while by itself the community could overcome the challenges of running a project, which could therefore become sustainable and viable in the long term, external events would be influential on the eventual outcomes. Arguably, this community (as that of Anonakinaki) subsisted in a non-affluent subsistence economy. Consequently, the project was important for improving their livelihood and sense of well-being.

Table 8.3: Summary of community project objectives and outcomes—Balai

	Stated objectives	Outcomes
Community building	✓	✓
Cultural preservation	-	-
Environment conservation	✓	✓
Food production	-	-
Income generation	✓	✓
Increase women’s self sufficiency	-	-
Infrastructure	✓	✓
New skills, training, etc.	✓	✓

Table 8.4: Summary of project evaluation—Balai

Indicators	Assessment	Score (as in method)
1. The project cycle has been completed (in time/budget) and/or the project is still in operation	✓	10
2. The project achieves the non-profit and/or achieves profit objectives defined at the outset.	✓	10
3. The project is considered a success by the project owners.	✓	4
4. The project involves a cross section of the community and/or it involves disadvantaged groups in decision making (e.g. women)	?	3 ± 3
5. Project material outcome (profit or non profit) allows people to satisfy some communal and/or individual needs	✓	20
6. Project non-material outcome contributes to a sense of well-being (e.g. empowerment, knowledge, sense of community, etc.)	✓	5
7. Project limits or minimises the use of natural resources and/or favours the adoption of environmentally friendly technologies.	✓	20
8. Project provides alternatives to unsustainable resource use (logging) (i.e. project income can replace income from unsustainable sources)	✓	5
9. Project income >external contribution to project (operational stage)	?	3 ± 3
10. Project income >project outgoings (operational stage)	?	3 ± 3
<i>Evaluation</i>	✓ > ✕	81 ± 8

8.4 Alosa'a Women's Group's cooperative vegetable garden, Busurata Village, Central Kwara'ae

8.4.1 Community profile

Busurata¹⁹ is a Kwara'ae village located in the highlands of Malaita, near Mt. Alosa'a (ca. 960m a.s.l.), one of the highest points on the island of Malaita and a place of ancestral significance for Kwara'ae (Fig. 8.3). The area is characterised by steep hills covered with mixed clearings, gardens, and old growth hill forest. A 20-kilometre dirt road in poor condition and with limited vehicle traffic leads to the highlands, characterised by steep hills and deep valleys covered with mixed primary forest. Villages are found on either side of the road and beyond the road itself. The land is most intensely cultivated near the road where the population density is higher and the land not too steep. The Fiu River and some streams dissect the area.

Approximately 1,700 people live in the area of Busurata (Maeliu pers. comm. 2000). The community moved to that location from previous occupation in the lowlands. The land ownership situation is not clear; people would own land somewhere in Malaita but do not necessarily live there.²⁰

8.4.2 Project profile (1994)

In 1994 approximately 60 women formed the Alosa'a Women's Group. The group was funded in 1992 by a local *man*, following a visit by a US Peace Corps female officer (Maeliu pers.

¹⁹ Busurata Village is the first village at the end of the road. Its name is used here as a shorthand to refer to several villages and hamlets in that area. The women from Alosa'a's Women Group lived across the entire area, rather than specifically at Busurata Village.

²⁰ Shortly after the visit to this village in 1994 by the YCI team, the landowners threatened to evict their tenants, who were forced to pack their belongings and prepare to leave. While the threat did not come into effect, it was speculated that this was a reprimand to the tenants for their intention to raise the profile of the community projects by inviting a foreign organisation to their village, as well as retaliation for the commercial characteristics of the project conducted on borrowed land. The issue was consequently resolved and the landowner authorised the community to continue with their project and the maintenance of a school and clinic (Maeliu, letter to the author, November 1994). Reportedly there were no problems concerning land ownership or disputes in 2000 (Maeliu pers. comm. 2000). However, it is not clear to the author what the land ownership status is.

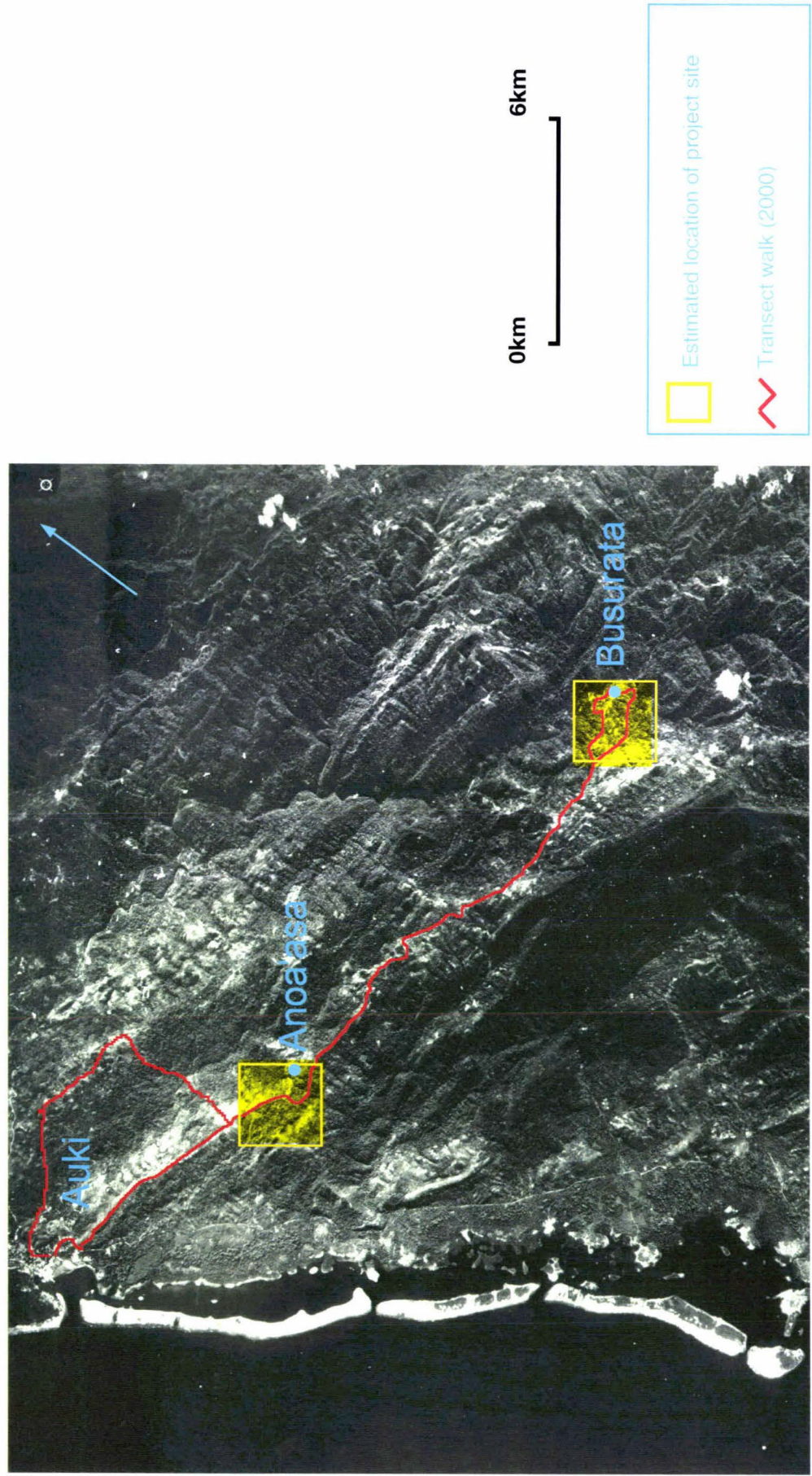


Fig. 8.3: Project sites and transect walks in Central Kwara'ae, Malaita
(From a 1992 aerial photograph)

comm. 2000).²¹ The women's group was closely integrated into the community, in that the women's families cooperated in the project.

The group was led by a steering committee composed of two women and one man. The latter was in charge of the group's public relations. From the perspective of the women's group his was an strategic appointment as, according to the leader of the group (a woman), in the context of the male dominated Solomon Islands society this role was better carried out by a man (Gini pers. comm. 1994). The distribution of power, however, was not even. While all three had access to the group's records of financial management, only the women had access to the money. Some of the group's women resented having a man in a leading role in the women's group, but he was accepted for his energy and drive. In 1994 the main income-generating project of Alosa'a Women's Group was a cooperative market garden.

The group had a comparative advantage over other food producers in Malaita in that the cooler temperatures experienced at ca. 600m above the sea level allowed them to grow vegetables that do not occur in the lower, hotter parts of the island.²² The community produced broccoli, carrots, (Irish) potatoes, cauliflowers, etc., which were sold to the expatriate and Asian markets at lower prices than imported produce. The group used traditional agricultural techniques combined with an eclectic mix of Western-style organic techniques (i.e. mulching, composting, contour planting, etc.). Some ideas had been adopted from a Peace Corps agricultural extension adviser who had lived in the area.

Project development was limited by the isolation of the village. Busurata is located at the end of a secondary road in the highlands. Many hamlets and the gardens were still further away from the road's end. In 1994 only two trucks a week visited the village. As with most other roads in the province, it was unsealed but in comparatively worse condition and virtually impassable in the rainy season. The communities themselves, rather than the provincial government, carried out the small repairs conducted on the road. Thus, even though the community did not live further from Auki than the other communities described here, they were comparatively more isolated. Villagers walked the steep 20km road to Auki on a regular basis carrying their produce downhill and returned carrying uphill the goods they purchased in Auki. Running the

²¹ Aside from this group, in 1994 I was able to meet several "women's groups" elsewhere in North Malaita that were led by men. While Alosa'a Women Group was undoubtedly a genuine women's group, it is possible that the other groups were designed to appeal to overseas donors without providing real means for participation and empowerment of women.

²² By 2000 several other producers in the area were trying to take advantage of this situation.

project required considerable physical effort, of which the community took pride: “All we have is manpower” (Maeliu 1994). Despite these impediments the community appeared to have more drive and more economic activity than those at West Kwaio.

8.4.3 Project status (2000)

In mid-1994 the cooperative garden project had been operational for several years. Although it was a fully operational project, the project owners were continuously looking for new crops, technical improvements or alternative or complementary projects. The market garden project was well organised and the people appeared very motivated. The NGO volunteers who visited the project in 1994 noted a work ethic absent in other communities in West Kwaio, and a strong communal structure.

The women’s group disintegrated in 1995 when women began to lose interest in working cooperatively. Reportedly, the trigger of this event was that “some people” had sent money to help them; the money had arrived in Malaita, but the women’s group never received it. Nevertheless most women had continued with similar projects on an individual family basis (Pili pers.comm. 2000).

Growing market vegetables was still an ongoing community project albeit under a different organisational structure. The project involved increasing numbers of people, arguably competing amongst each other as well as with other growers in the area and in Guadalcanal for the Auki and Honiara markets, respectively. Nevertheless, reportedly demand outstripped supply.

The former male leader of the women’s group had continued growing vegetables successfully. His “new” project involved only five families (33 people). The new project’s main characteristics included:

- A change from traditional shifting cultivation to organic farming in permanent mixed gardens;
- A conscious effort to maintain traditional crops, including several varieties of taro and “cabbages” presently little farmed;
- Introduction of new crops including novel crops (for Malaita) such as wheat, highland rice, grapes and strawberries.
- Aquaculture, developed from introducing lowland freshwater fish into artificial ponds built in the Fiu River;
- Small-scale reforestation; and

- Raising small livestock and small quantities of farm animals.

While some seeds, technical advice and tools were provided by overseas advisers, the project relied largely on “manpower”. The project leader was actively promoting his initiatives in the area, and other people in the Central Kwara’ae area were adopting similar approaches (Maeliu; Chief, ‘Aisiko pers. comm. 2000). A sense of community remained after the break up of the women’s group. The community held regular meetings in which they shared their experiences and knowledge, while keeping income generation within individual families or small groups of families.

8.4.4 Project evaluation (2000)

- **Technical criteria:** Technically the project was based on traditional skills—market vegetable growing—implemented correctly and thoroughly. Arguably the evaluation of the cooperative project by the women’s group led to the dissolution of the group. However, the project itself outlived the women’s group and continued to be run by individual families or small groups.

The project’s “bottlenecks” were the isolation of the village due to its distance to Auki, the poor condition of the road and the low frequency of transport. These factors mitigated against the project taking off in any significant manner.

- **Participation criteria:** The community’s perception was that the project was successful and had possibilities for the future. Importantly, the notion of community remained even though the women’s group had dissolved (Maeliu pers.comm. 2000).
- **Financial criteria:** The project was financially successful. It generated an income from selling in multiple markets: the Auki and Honiara markets; and the local as well as the Asian and Western expatriate markets. It seemed to have a much higher turnover than any of the other projects described here, in the order of several thousand Solomon Islands a month (Maeliu, letter to the author, November 1994). Even if the project failed to generate a monetary income, it would always produce food. Unlike the people in West Kwaio, the people at Busurata seemed to live in a condition of “affluent subsistence”.
- **Environmental well-being criteria:** A critical decision to stop shifting agriculture had improved environmental well-being. Of the initial women’s group (60+ women and their families) only a minority had adopted this measure. However, the project leader was vocal

about the need to establish permanent gardens and more environmentally friendly practices. This approach is consistent with a more theoretical approach to sustainable agriculture in the Solomon Islands (Schoefel *et al* 1994, Frazer 1995, Fa'alimae pers.comm.2000).

- ***People well-being criteria:*** The success of the project had arguably a positive effect on the community and on people well-being. People always had food and some money, and a sense of purpose and security. Various other initiatives—a school, a clinic, etc.—had been undertaken concurrently with the vegetable growing project. In contrast with the communities in West Kwaio who lived on the margins of the cash economy with the lowest form of subsistence economy, this was clearly an “affluent subsistence” economy that also constituted a fairly successful family business.

8.4.5 Balance and perspectives

At least for one of the key informants (Maeliu) the market vegetable project was a viable commercial enterprise as well as a way of life. The project had multiple linkages not only to the generation of income or food production but also to community, health and conservation issues. The project offered a viable alternative for sustainable development in the face of growing population and the growing demands of the cash economy. For that reason this informant tried to promote the project in his area and tried to offer advice for whomever wanted to hear it. He was concerned that some communities elsewhere in Malaita had virtually stopped growing food, particularly the landless Langalanga people.²³ At the same time he tried to learn new approaches from other producers and copy the ideas that seemed to work. The “project” was in fact an ongoing process of learning and experimenting intimately related to the life of the community.

²³ In Gwaidalo, a Langalanga coastal village of *ca.* 1000 inhabitants, many households had *sup sup* gardens on the poor coral soil of the coastal areas (improving the soil with whatever little organic waste they had, and using waste water for watering).

**Table 8.5: Summary of community project objectives and outcomes—
Busurata**

	Stated objectives	Outcomes
Community building	?	✓
Cultural preservation	-	-
Environment conservation	✓	✓
Food production	✓	✓
Income generation	✓	✓
Increase women's self sufficiency	✓	✓
Infrastructure	-	-
New skills, training, etc.	-	-

Table 8.6: Summary of project evaluation—Busurata

Indicators	Assessment	Score (as in method)
1. The project cycle has been completed (in time/budget) and/or the project is still in operation	✓	15
2. The project achieves the non-profit and/or achieves profit objectives defined at the outset.	✓	10
3. The project is considered a success by the project owners.	✓	5
4. The project involves a cross section of the community and/or it involves disadvantaged groups in decision making (e.g. women)	?	3 ± 3
5. Project material outcome (profit or non profit) allows people to satisfy some communal and/or to satisfy individual needs	✓	20
6. Project non-material outcome contributes to a sense of well-being (e.g. empowerment, knowledge, sense of community, etc.)	✓	5
7. Project limits or minimises the use of natural resources and/or favours the adoption of environmentally friendly technologies.	✓	20
8. Project provides alternatives to unsustainable resource use (logging) (i.e. project income can replace income from unsustainable sources)	✓	5
9. Project income > external contribution to project (operational stage)	?	3 ± 3
10. Project income > project outgoings (operational stage)	✓	5
Evaluation	✓ > x	90 ± 5

8.5 Conclusions

Income generating community initiatives can draw from traditional knowledge (e.g. Feratofea) or can adopt (or adapt) modern forms of knowledge and novel ideas (e.g. Balai). The three projects described here all had an income-generating component. However, that was only one (albeit important) element of broader objectives concerning community development, and cultural or environmental conservation. From this perspective none of these projects can be considered exclusively a “small business”. On the other hand, the success or failure of the overall project was often measured by, and depended on, its success in the generation of monetary income.

Table 8.7: Time serial project evaluation—Case studies

	Balai	Busurata	Feratofea
Is the project still functioning?	Temporarily suspended due to ethnic tension.	Yes.	No.
How many people are involved?	23 families	5 families (33 people) in the main informant's group; several similar projects in a community of ca. 1700.	About 200 people when the project was in operation.
Has there been a change of name, management or organisational structure	Yes. A Western-style manager replaced a traditional leader as chairperson of the project board.	Yes. The project changed from a community-wide women's group to smaller groups or families.	No.
Does the community support the project?	Yes.	Yes.	No.
How are women involved in the project?	Labour, maybe decision-making.	Labour, maybe decision-making.	Labour, maybe decision-making.
What impacts does the project have on the environment?	Negligible. Extraction of organic matter (mostly farm waste)	Some areas of forest cleared for the establishment of gardens. Some gardens are now permanent.	When in operation, extraction of building and other materials from the forest.
Where are the product/services sold?	Honiara expatriate market, tourist.	Auki and Honiara markets, Asian customers and hotels.	In theory, local tourism market.
Is there much competition?	Not in the Solomon Islands, but there would be in the export market	Growing number of people producing similar products but so far demand outstrips supply.	There are several cultural centres and other attractions for Malaita's limited tourism.
Is the project growing or getting smaller?	It was growing steadily until it was suspended due to ethnic tension. Intention to grow further.	The project is growing and branching out to other products for subsistence and maybe marketing e.g. rice	The project has been cancelled, except the dance group.
Problems facing the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethnic tension • Limited market in the Solomon Islands. • Poor quality of artwork. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing competition • Potential loss of soil fertility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competition in the tourism market • Lack of community motivation • Land disputes act as a disincentive to development projects.

CHAPTER 9: PROJECT EVALUATION—SUCCESS STORIES

9.1 Introduction

The previous chapter described three community projects on which the author worked in 1994. By 2000, one of those projects had been abandoned before becoming operational, another project had stopped temporarily due to ethnic tension in Guadalcanal, and the third had changed from a community-wide cooperative project run by a women's group into a series of projects run by individual families or small groups. In balance, the first project could be evaluated as a failure and the other two as relative successes.

In order to develop a better understanding of why community projects succeed or fail it was useful to find comparable projects that could be considered "success stories". All projects in the study area would have been influenced by the same external causes. A comparison among them would allow the isolation of the *internal* causes of project success or failure from external influencing factors.

Projects constitute the "bones" of development, and the project format is well developed in the Solomon Islands. This is either because aid funds are only available for those who present their initiatives in a project format, or because people have grown used to the notion that development is the outcome of a succession of projects. These factors are the opposite sides of the same coin under the prevalent paradigm that "projects equal development"—and it might be that development projects are one of the few options available to generate an income. However, while for these reasons many projects are started in the Solomon Islands, the truth is that "...there aren't very many successful projects" (Wale pers.comm. 2000).

Eventually it was possible to select three projects that had run for a number of years and/or that were considered to be reasonably successful by local people (Kuri; Wale, Smiley pers.comm. 2000). While these projects were diverse in activity, scale and focus, they were comparable to the projects described in Chapter 8: they all were initiatives developed largely at a community level although all had received outside support in various degrees; all were largely labour intensive; and their main objective was income generation. Whilst they all fitted the criteria of "para-projects" described earlier (*sensus* Chambers 1993), the community projects described in this chapter were more clearly defined as projects in a more traditional development sense.

9.2 Eggs and poultry project, Auki area

9.2.1 Project owner

Unlike the community projects reported in Chapter 8 this was a family business whose primary owner and operator was a woman. Helen Anilafa-Anisi (HAA), a 47 year-old Kwara'ae woman has run an egg and poultry business since 1993. At that time she quit a government job to start the project. She acknowledged importance of the ongoing support of her husband, a government employee (and non-drinker), to the success of her enterprise. Two of the business' employees are her sons. However, HAA was obviously a very independent and self-confident woman herself, for whom *kastom* was not an impediment to personal development—reportedly she simply ignored it.

9.2.2 Project profile

HAA identified the project following two small business courses she attended in Fiji and Tonga in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In 1993 she resigned from her job with the provincial government and presented a project proposal to the Honiara-based Provincial Development Unit. She was granted seed funds of NZD 16,000, provided by the NZ High Commission. With the help of her husband, over one year she built a house and a chicken farm. Most of the initial loan was invested in imported cages and water systems and in feeding the first lot of birds until they were productive. She borrowed an additional NZD 20,000 from the Development Bank of the Solomon Islands (DBSI) to complete the house and pay for the hens.

By February 2000 she had 450 birds at any one time, two thirds of which were producing and a third of which were feeding for replacement. She kept the birds in two separate locations, with two people in each place working full time feeding the birds and collecting the eggs. Everyone in the business had a salary including her. Apart from salaries and taxes, the business income was all reinvested in the business itself.

HAA had looked for training opportunities at the University of the South Pacific in Honiara and in other venues. In all, she had attended “lots of courses”. She used actively the marketing skills she had learnt and others she developed herself. For instance, unlike other people selling at the market, she used posters advertising what poultry products were available, and attracted customers with her trademark marketing style.²⁴ She also paid attention to detail: for instance,

²⁴ HAA has unique selling techniques that have made her well known in the Auki market. She addresses directly potential customers, and, uniquely for a Malaitan woman, uses sexual innuendos when marketing her products. She

she paid SI\$ 50.00 to the Provincial Government for an annual permit for her market stall, while most other people at the market paid SI\$ 1.00 for a daily permit. This allowed her to save over SI\$ 300 a year on market fees.

9.2.3 Project status (2000)

By February 2000 HAA's expectations of running her own business were already met. The business had paid for a permanent house for the family and for the education of her two children. However, the business had not brought major changes in her life in that before starting with it she had been financially independent. Previously HAA had worked for the provincial government and had grown vegetables. HAA liked the poultry business because it requires skills that women already have.

The benefits for her family have been the two poultry farms, a house, and a water supply for her village. HAA had not experienced problems at a village level as a consequence of her enterprise because "...we are not involved in the village because we know that problems arise in the community [when there is money involved]" (Anisafa-Anisi pers.comm. 2000).

HAA was planning to expand her business further, although there she was aware of the problems of a limited market such as Auki. Nevertheless, if the population of Malaita continued to grow as the displaced people settled there permanently then her business could grow as well. HAA's intention was to expand the business further to 600 producers—the current limit of her cage capacity.

9.2.4 Project evaluation (2000)

- **Technical criteria:** The project had been carefully organised from its earliest stages, and in time it had achieved its intended objectives. Technically, an important part of the project is that it relied in traditional skills but it also used modern technology that the projects owner imported to the Solomon Islands. This set up was complemented by business sense and discipline in the day-to-day management of the project. Of all the projects evaluated for this research this was the one that most clearly resembled a small business.
- **Participation criteria:** While the project was run at the level of an individual family, it offered some contribution to the community with its demand for casual labour. Importantly,

advertises the eggs she sells for one dollar using her trademark cry of "One duli, one duli" ("duli" means penis in Kwara'ae). This made passersby laugh and attracted customers.

the project owner was willing and able to offer advise and help to women who wished to start up their own project or simply needed the support of a confident, independent woman. As a leading member of the local Rotary Club she was well known in the community and was actively sought after by women.

- ***Financial criteria:*** At the early stages the project had benefited from a free loan, which had been complemented by a bank loan. At the operational stage, however, the project had effectively to meet its own ends with no additional external financial support, which it managed to do successfully. Again, from this perspective the project was run truly as a small business—more so than the other projects described here.
- ***Environmental well-being criteria:*** There were little details available concerning the effects of this project on the environment, but it is speculated here that as it was an intensive operation²⁵ it caused little impact on the environment and offered a viable alternative to unsustainable forms of generating income such as large scale commercial timber extraction.
- ***People well-being criteria:*** Over several years of operation the project had contributed to increase the family's well-being by providing financial independence, a permanent house and a regular source of income.

9.2.5 Balance and perspectives

The project was technically and financially viable and provided the basic elements to live well under the cash economy. Rather than a threat, the growing influence of the cash economy would only contribute to improve business possibilities. Since the project was well established it had some advantage in any future competition that might appear.

²⁵ Animal welfare issues are not discussed here. Arguably an intensive free-range operation would have been a viable alternative.

Table 9.1: Summary of community project objectives and outcomes—Helen Anisafa-Anisi

	Objectives	Outcomes
Cultural preservation	-	-
Develop sense of community	-	-
Environment conservation	-	-
Food production	-	-
Income generation	✓	✓
Increase women's self sufficiency	✓	✓
Infrastructure	✓	✓
New skills, training, etc.	-	-

Table 9.2: Summary of project evaluation—Helen Anisafa-Anisi

Indicators	Assessment	Score (as in method) (%)
1. The project cycle has been completed (in time/budget) and/or the project is still in operation	✓	20
2. The project achieves the non-profit and/or achieves profit objectives defined at the outset.	✓	10
3. The project is considered a success by the project owners.	✓	5
4. The project involves a cross section of the community and/or it involves disadvantaged groups in decision making (e.g. women)	✓	5
5. Project material outcome (profit or non profit) allows people to satisfy some communal and/or individual needs	✓	20
6. Project non-material outcome contributes to a sense of well-being (e.g. empowerment, knowledge, sense of community, etc.)	✓	5
7. Project limits or minimises the use of natural resources and/or favours the adoption of environmentally friendly technologies.	?	10 ± 10
8. Project provides alternatives to unsustainable resource use (logging) (i.e. project income can replace income from unsustainable sources)	?	3 ± 3
9. Project income > external contribution to project (operational stage)	✓	5
10. Project income > project outgoings (operational stage)	✓	5
<i>Evaluation</i>	✓ > ✕	88 ± 12

9.3 Rice growing project, Fiu Village, West Kwara'ae

9.3.1 Community profile

Fiu is a Kwara'ae coastal village ca. five kilometres north of Auki on the margin of the River Fiu (Fig. 9.1). The village is located at the end of a ca. 2km unsealed road that is in turn connected to the main road leading from Auki to the airport—possibly the best road in the entire province. Coconut plantations, cacao groves, and mixed subsistence gardens surround the village. Little or no primary swamp forest remains in this area, some of which was being logged in February 2000. The village population numbers are unknown but probably well over 1,000 people. Land ownership is diverse, with some people owning land around the village and others further inland. Unlike other villages visited in this work, volunteers from overseas organisations have spent significant amounts of time at the village conducting development or missionary work.

9.3.2 Project profile

A member of Japanese Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) who spent time at the village in 1989 considered that rice farming was a possibility. Another JOCV volunteer who came to the village in 1992 supported the idea. At that time the community leaders were trying to find out income generating alternatives:

“We looked around for ways of making benefits or employment, and we didn't have any. Without knowing what model to use for development that suited the village, we started thinking on food, something we use every day, and rice is a product that is a close substitute of kumara, a staple food, and is a staple food that can be stored, while kumara is difficult to store. Rice was thought to be possible for the village to go into, if one produces large amounts one can sell, therefore increasing one's income. Rice is a suitable food and we can sell [it] for money, and we can sell it if cyclones or rivers spoil our area. It can be stored and grown even if the weather is wet. So [there are] a lot of advantages for growing rice in the community. [However], up to this moment we don't have a model for development.” (R. Molly pers.comm. 2000).

The JOCV volunteer was not an expert on rice growing so he found a Taiwanese expert in Honiara willing to offer advice, who also saw possibilities for rice growing at Fiu Village. One of the project leaders, and then several villagers, trained for several months in a Taiwanese rice farm in Honiara.

In 1993 the community started clearing the bush for rice planting, followed by the mapping of the area by a government surveyor. Consequently the community applied for ODA funds at the British Embassy. The application was successful and they imported a tiller, a rice thrasher and rice polisher machine. When the machines arrived in January 1995 they started planting. In 1995 they had two harvests, at 6 tons per hectare. The project manager went to Japan for a ten months training on rice-growing techniques. In the meanwhile an insect infestation destroyed about half of the crop (3 ha total, 1.5 ton of rice lost). Many villagers thought that the rice had been spoiled because of witchery, and were prepared to abandon the project. The manager convinced them that the infestation was a natural event, and in 1997 they started again.

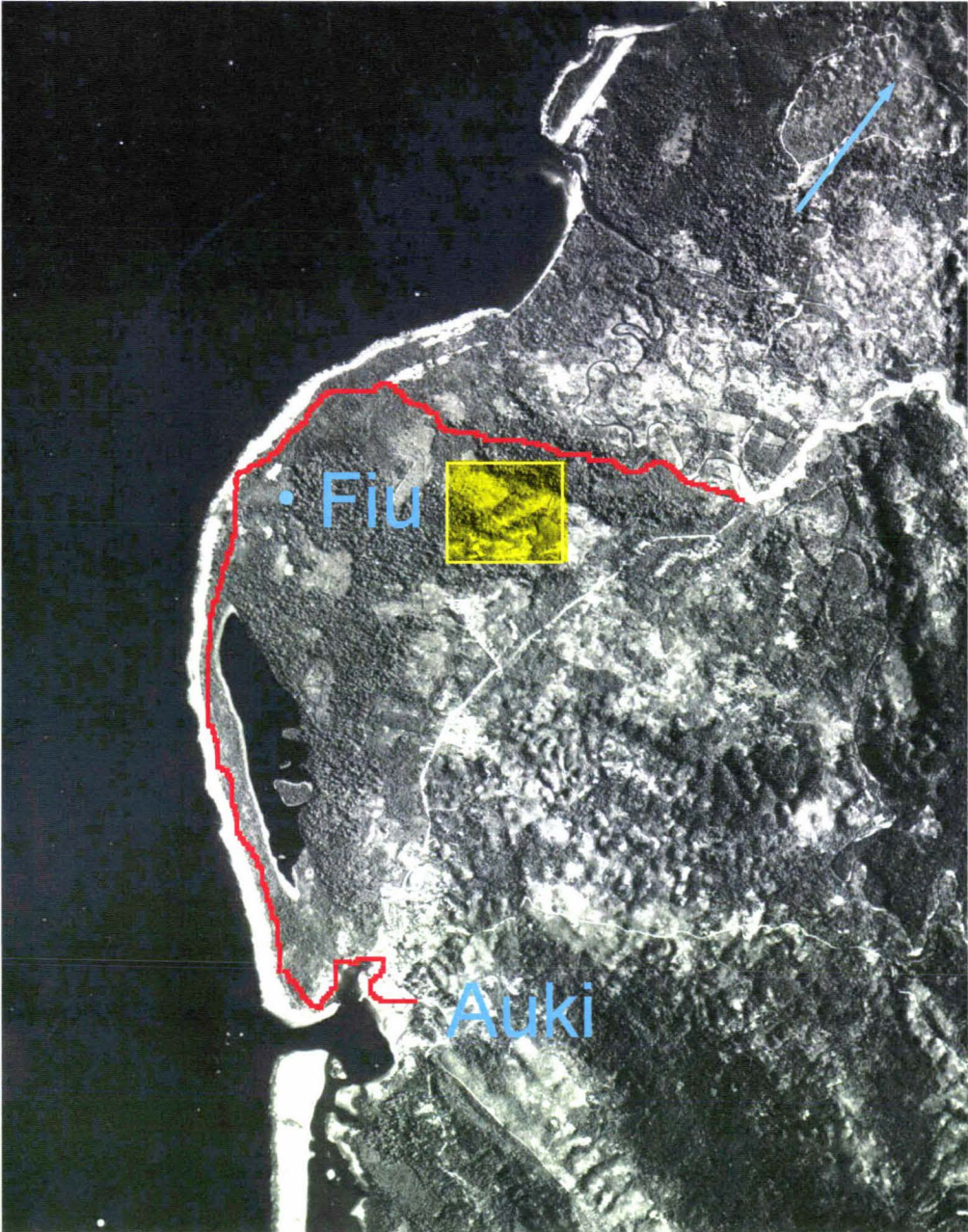
For the first few harvests the community had worked as a whole. Then they decided to split in groups, leaving the opportunity for people to stay out. However, everyone joined in again. The second time, they split into five independent groups. This was successful in 1997 with two harvests, with a production of five tons per hectare (6 hectares total). The rice was harvested, dried, polished, packed and distributed in the village and the excess sold locally. Reportedly the rice is of very high quality, and people preferred it to imported rice. The income was split into the five groups, which sold the rice individually.

However, once the money had been distributed there was none left to reinvest in the project. In 1999 they had mechanical problems and no money to pay for spare parts for the agricultural machines. In February 2000 the community was raising money from donations and the sale of second hand goods.

The community agreed that each group would give up to 30% maximum of their income into the community fund, depending on needs, for fuel and spare parts. However, some of the groups had put their money in a financial scheme in Auki, with no returns as per February 2000, so had not money available to contribute to the community fund.

9.3.3 Project status (2000)

The community had plans to recommence planting in mid-2000. This time, however, the idea was to try intercropping rice and vegetables. Initially (in 1995 and 1996) the community had used fertilisers, but then a JOCV volunteer suggested to turn to organic farming. That brought some conflict with the Ministry of Agriculture and Taiwanese advisers who supported chemical-based farming. The problem for turning to organic agriculture is that Fiu Village does not have



0km 6km



*Fig. 9.1: Project sites and transect walks near Auki
(From a 1992 aerial photograph)*

much livestock, or even pigs or chicken, which could provide the required amounts of manure to use as fertiliser. The community was looking for ways to increase organic matter production.

The expectations for the project were to grow some food and make an income. However, the community did not have enough agricultural experience and the infestation problems took them by surprise.

The main problem was that the community was still split in two groups. A majority of people supported community work, and a vocal minority was only interested in individual projects (even though they remained involved in the project). The rationale for community projects is that the village did not have enough land for many individual projects, so is only viable for every one to combine and share the benefits. In the village, which is located by the coast, people from different tribes live together, and the land of most people is in the bush. Only a few villagers have land in the village area. “The project is based on the community, if you change that then there is no project.” (A. Molly pers.comm. 2000). However, the project is carried out in provincial land so it easy for the community to develop a project without being concerned about potential land disputes. The community has a permanent lease of the land.

The main benefits were that the rice-growing project improved the food supply in the village: “People always have something to eat. A survey in the village showed that 90% of the people ate rice every day” (R. Molly pers.comm. 2000). The community was also able to earn some money. By 2000 this was still a modest amount, because “the project has not been going on for long” (A. Molly pers.comm. 2000)—an interesting comment considering that the project had been in operation for several years, and in stark contrast with the immediate demands for cash common in other projects. Clearly in the mind of the organisers rice farming was a long-term initiative. There were also benefits for investment, as the community created a credit union so the villagers can withdraw advances of cash from the credit union to pay for school fees, which are considered high, and for emergencies.

9.3.4 Project evaluation (2000)

- **Technical criteria:** The project was technically viable and had been prepared in close consultation with rice farming experts. It had also tapped from several sources of external support that were influential to a successful outcome. The early stages of the project had been completed sequentially and carefully, and despite problems—such as insect infestation and financial difficulties—it had been able to be operational. Since the project was

conducted on land leased for the long term to the province it was exempt from the risk of land disputes.

- **Participation criteria:** Although it is not clear what was the role of women in the project's decision making, the project clearly allowed for participation and benefits across the community. In fact, the project itself had contributed to bring the community together, as the land availability situation limited the development of projects run by individuals. There were ongoing problems with the running of the project but the community leaders were aware of these problems and were trying to find solutions.
- **Financial criteria:** By 2000 the project was operational and largely self-financing, and despite some financial difficulties the project owners were able to break even or make a little profit. Importantly, one of the project leaders was a chartered accountant who run his own business consultancy service in Auki.
- **Environmental well-being criteria:** The project concentrated its activities in a comparatively small land area. As the project produced food, it limited the need to develop other gardens in the rather limited land available around Fiu Village. The intentions to intercrop rice and vegetables would further contribute to limit the clearing of land elsewhere. If the project was to turn to organic farming, as it apparently was intended, it would contribute over the years to an increase in the fertility of the soil and would avoid chemical build up.
- **People well-being criteria:** Both of the project outcomes—money and food—contributed to increase the well-being of the community, providing some independence and an obvious sense of empowerment and self reliance.

9.3.5 Balance and perspectives

The project was successful in that it had obviously increased the well-being of the community, including strengthening community organisations, promoting participation, and, arguably, empowering individuals. The choice of rice as a product had contributed to the project success because it allowed for the dual benefits of food and income. However, the main secret for the project success was “just hard work” (A. Molly pers.comm. 2000). The project was technically and financially viable, although in February 2000 it had temporarily stopped due to financial shortages and was at a cross roads regarding a change from chemical to organic farming. This change, in turn, would have significant implications for the project, the community and the local environment.

As in other income generating projects, the project allowed for adaptation to the cash economy so that its expansion was not a threat but rather created further opportunities. At the same time the project provided the basis for survival within the subsistence economy. In fact, the project owners could alternate between both forms of economy at any one time, or combine both of them depending on the internal circumstances of the community as well as on external events.

Perhaps the main threat to the project was the increasing popularity of rice as a crop. It has always been the case in Malaita that different economic activities become fashionable at one time or other, and that the competition increases until ultimately the markets are saturated. This suggests that government guidance is required. (Fakare pers.comm. 2000). Nevertheless, even if competition increased the project at Fiu had a head start in comparison to similar projects that may develop later. Arguably the project was sustainable in a broad sense.

Table 9.3: Summary of community project objectives and outcomes—Fiu

	Stated objectives	Outcomes
Cultural preservation	-	-
Develop sense of community	✓	?
Environment conservation	-	-
Food production	✓	✓
Income generation	✓	✓
Increase women's self sufficiency	-	-
Infrastructure	-	-
New skills, training, etc.	?	✓

Table 9.4: Summary of project evaluation—Fiu

Indicators	Assessment	Score (as in method) (%)
1. The project cycle has been completed (in time/budget) and/or the project is still in operation	✓	10
2. The project achieves the non-profit and/or achieves profit objectives defined at the outset.	✓	10
3. The project is considered a success by the project owners.	✓	5
4. The project involves a cross section of the community and/or it involves disadvantaged groups in decision making (e.g. women)	✓	3
5. Project material outcome (profit or non profit) allows people to satisfy some communal and/or individual needs	✓	20
6. Project non-material outcome contributes to a sense of well-being (e.g. empowerment, knowledge, sense of community, etc.)	✓	5
7. Project limits or minimises the use of natural resources and/or favours the adoption of environmentally friendly technologies.	✓	20
8. Project provides alternatives to unsustainable resource use (logging) (i.e. project income can replace income from unsustainable sources)	✓	5
9. Project income > external contribution to project (operational stage)	?	3 ± 3
10. Project income > project outgoings (operational stage)	✓	3
Evaluation	✓ > ✕	83 ± 5

9.4 Reforestation and agroforestry: Anoa'asa Village, Central Kwara'ae

9.4.1 Community profile

Anoa'asa is a roadside Kwara'ae village located in the highlands of Central Malaita (Fig. 8.3). The area is a stronghold of Kwara'ae culture. The people of Anoa'asa lived on their own registered land so there are no disputes about community land (Misuka pers.comm. 2000). The village chief is also the area's paramount chief and as such a person of influence. The population of Anoa'asa village is unknown.

These villages are connected to Auki through an unsealed road, the same that leads to Busurata (Chapter 8). Nearby Anoa'asa village there are 200 hectares of plantation forest.

9.4.2 Project profile

The community had a reforestation and agroforestry project for nine years since the early 1980s. The project was developed with funds provided by the New Zealand Overseas development Agency (NZODA), under the auspices (and inspiration) of the Solomon Islands government's Forestry Department:

"The idea was theirs, they asked for money to the New Zealand Government. They had the idea to start. They wanted more trees, in custom gardening they cut all trees, so they thought they had to put trees back. They planted imported trees because of Forestry. They planted also local trees, but imported trees grow faster than local trees." (Misuka pers.comm. 2000).

The early project stages required the village chief to travel to Australia, Fiji and Vanuatu to visit various plantations before making a decision to start a similar project in his community's land. The project design was completed and implemented with support from the Ministry of Forestry, which provided the seedlings at a "very reasonable price" (Kuri pers.comm. 2000). After nine years of consecutive planting the project stopped. By 2000 the trees were soon to be ready for harvesting. The community's expectations at the outset were that at the time of harvest ten or more years after the community would be able to do the milling itself and sell the trees. However, by February 2000 the community had not yet decided how to harvest them, how to do the milling, etc. Since the trees were planted for nine consecutive years, the community anticipated that the harvest would last for at least nine years as well.

Agroforestry project

The agroforestry project came about in a similar way and at the same time as the reforestation project. Project identification was the result of a trip to the Philippines by a Ministry of Forestry official, who also masterminded the reforestation project: “If they can feed 65 million people using agroforestry, we should be able to feed our people here” (Kuri pers.comm. 2000). The project was designed as a demonstration project (*sensus* Rondinelli 1983) and funded by the New Zealand High Commission. The project was run by the village’s church women’s group, led by the chief’s wife. The women planted a variety of tropical fruit trees. They also planted in the same area vegetables such as sweet potatoes, Chinese cabbage, and “white man cabbage”. The community used to sell the produce in the market. As the reforestation project, the project run for nine years. After that time, “They [NZODA] moved out from us, then the agroforestry was finished” (Misuka pers.comm. 2000).

9.4.3 Project status (2000)

The community had supported the projects, and was happy with the organising role NZODA had played. The project’s direct benefits included “lots of money” for the village while the planting took place (Misuka pers.comm. 2000). It is apparent that for the community, more than pilot projects reforestation and agroforestry had been a form of regular *employment*. For as long as they planted trees the New Zealand government gave the Solomon Islands government a monthly fee. After nine years the project finished as well as the regular income. By 2000 the trees were ready for harvesting, but the village was waiting for an external initiative, either from the government or from donors, to finance the cutting and milling of trees. The community wanted to plant more trees to plant but did not have at present enough land or money.

9.4.4 Project evaluation (2000)

Technical criteria: Technically the projects had been well designed and successfully implemented and operated for as long as NZODA had paid the community to work on the projects.

Participation criteria: There was not enough evidence collected during the field trip to assess participation criteria, other than the community perception was that the project had been good for them, and that the traditional division of roles among women remained even though women were still organised as a women’s group. The project had not improved gender inequalities as it appeared that it had actually increased the workload of women.

Financial criteria: Financially the project may not have been sustainable as it relied on ongoing outside funding, although the trees themselves represented a significant natural capital that was

still available to the community. The agroforestry project had similar outcomes in financial terms to the reforestation project, in that it relied in significant external financial input that was not financially sustainable but still positive for the community.

Environmental well-being criteria: Environmentally the project had been beneficial in that, although it used mostly exotic trees, it had increased the tree cover in the area. While the agroforestry project had in theory potential to be environmentally sustainable, it did not appeal to people. By 2000 the fruit trees of the agroforestry project had been overgrown by the rehabilitating forest, although some were still alive. If one of the projects objectives had been to ensure its adoption by the community, it had failed as the community had reverted to traditional farming techniques.²⁶ Reportedly during the rainy season it was too wet for agroforestry (Misuka pers.comm. 2000).

People well-being criteria: The reforestation project had increased people's well-being by providing a regular source of income for a considerable period of time, and an important reserve of resources for the future.

9.4.5 Balance and perspectives

The reforestation and agroforestry projects had been discontinued but the village's women's group continued to do market gardening and sold garden produce in the Auki and Honiara markets. For the future the village leaders were thinking on selling the trees, making money, and then starting a new project such as cattle farming or planting rice, to find a way to help young people. The emerging village problems were related to population increase. "This time it is still OK. Population is a worry, it has increased for good. Land will not be enough." (Misuka pers.comm. 2000). The situation was still under control, but there were concerns that in a few decades there will be a shortage of land and the community had to prepare for that situation. The project had benefited the community and although as conducted it was not fully financially viable as a small business—as in essence it had been largely funded by NZODA—it had possibilities of being sustainable: it had maintained the integrity of the land and the community, increased the tree cover, and provided the community with assets—the trees themselves—that if well managed would help them in the future. It was also a model for the community of agricultural alternatives that could be pursued later on as population grew and land become scarce.

²⁶ It is not clear if the traditional agricultural techniques were ever fully replaced by agroforestry.

**Table 9.5: Summary of community project objectives and outcomes—
Anoa’asa**

	Stated objectives	Outcomes
Cultural preservation	-	-
Develop sense of community	-	-
Environment conservation	✓	✓
Food production	-	-
Income generation	✓	✓
Increase women’s self sufficiency	✓	?
Infrastructure	-	-
New skills, training, etc.	?	?

Table 9.6: Summary of project evaluation—Anoa’asa

Indicators	Assessment	Score (as in method) (%)
1. The project cycle has been completed (in time/budget) and/or the project is still in operation	✓	20
2. The project achieves the non-profit and/or achieves profit objectives defined at the outset.	✓	8
3. The project is considered a success by the project owners.	✓	5
4. The project involves a cross section of the community and/or it involves disadvantaged groups in decision making (e.g. women)	?	3 ± 3
5. Project material outcome (profit or non profit) allows people to satisfy some communal and/or individual needs	✓	20
6. Project non-material outcome contributes to a sense of well-being (e.g. empowerment, knowledge, sense of community, etc.)	?	3 ± 3
7. Project limits or minimises the use of natural resources and/or favours the adoption of environmentally friendly technologies.	✓	20
8. Project provides alternatives to unsustainable resource use (logging) (i.e. project income can replace income from unsustainable sources)	✓	5
9. Project income > external contribution to project (operational stage)	✗	0
10. Project income > project outgoings (operational stage)	?	3 ± 3
<i>Evaluation</i>	✓ > ✗	85 ± 8

Table 9.7: Summary project evaluation—Success stories

	Anoa'asa	Fiu	HAA
How did the project come about (in your village, life)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suggested by NZODA and Department of Forestry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suggested by JOCV volunteer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Own idea, inspired after small business course
What did you expect from the project? What were the outcomes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Income and tree plantation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Income and food 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Income and house
What changes have taken place in the village as a result of the project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Village improvements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Village improvements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Built house Continued to be financially independent
What kind of problems have happened as a consequence of the project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Split between those supporting community and individual projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None
What do you see for your community for the future?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuation of the project when funds become available Population increase a cause of concern 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuation of the project Improvement of living conditions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuation of the project

9.5 Conclusions

The examples of success stories described in this chapter suggest that in some cases communities—or individual families—may run successful income generating projects. The notion of “success” is relative. In these cases it means meeting the objectives as defined at the outset of the projects.

The project described here were different in terms of activity, but they all had in common that the people involved had used the resources available to them fully. Overall, the three projects could be considered generally sustainable for their contribution to the wellbeing of people and/or the environment.

The project at Anoa’asa, while highly successful from the community’s perspective, was arguably not financially viable in the long term, as in essence people were paid by an overseas donor to work their own land. In some cases, however, this may be the best alternative available to preserve natural resources.

The project at Fiu, on the other hand, could be considered a model in that it managed to provide a flexible set of objectives—income and food supplies—while at the same time using the limitations imposed by land availability as an opportunity to strengthen the sense of community.

The project carried by an individual family is a model of other type, and one that appears to be emerging in the Solomon Islands, in that it circumvents some of the limitations that conducting income generating activities in a community involves in terms of management and transparency over financial issues.

CHAPTER 10: DISCUSSION—KEY ISSUES IN COMMUNITY PROJECTS

10.1 Introduction

Earlier chapters described the context in which community development initiatives take place and the evaluation of several community projects. These projects ranged from community initiatives to family enterprises, and from exclusively income-generating ventures to projects with both profit and non-profit objectives. Their characteristics ranged from those of para-projects to those not unlike mainstream development projects. This chapter discusses the key elements for the success or failure¹ of community projects identified in this work, and the contribution of community projects to sustainable development.

10.2 Adopting the project format

The growing needs and wants for money lead communities to seek an income and start a project. Adopting an income-generating project is a form of adaptation to the cash economy. This is either because the project is a suitable way of generating an income, or because it is perceived that the project format facilitates access to overseas donor funds and other resources that would be otherwise unavailable to the communities. The advantage of the project format for community development activities is that it allows the communities to remain in control of their own resources while allowing them to have access to funding sources and other external support structures, rather than handing control to outside organisations.

An alternative (or complementary) view is that development projects are one of the few income generation alternatives that are available for most rural people, particularly women. This comment is valid in Malaita and possibly most of the Solomon Islands.

¹ The terms “success” or “failure” are simply used here as shorthand to describe whether a project has met its objectives or otherwise, in accordance to the project evaluation criteria used here. Success and failure are not used to describe the worth of a community or person in the consumer society.

However, there are many impediments for communities to even start a development project. According to a community leader from West Kwaio, the most depressed sector of the study area:

“Development is a big word. Key word. Suppose we only talk about it, I think development cannot come. If you only talk about it, [or you if you are] not lucky at first, development cannot come. For example: a chicken lying on top of an egg. This is development of the egg. If it [the] development [of the egg] is not good, no one will follow it; if the egg comes right, everyone will do it. Development is the same. The land, water cannot develop by themselves, someone has to do it. But talking alone won't produce anything. (Manita'a pers.com.2000).

Even if people are prepared to take some risks and invest limited time and resources on starting an income-generating project, even with good intentions there are many other impediments that need to be overcome before a project can start. For instance, several members of Balai community worked for a logging contractor as well as operating a paper making project that was meant to be a sustainable alternative to large scale logging. When asked about this apparent contradiction and why they were working at the logging camp instead of, for instance, starting an ecoforestry project of their own, an informant wrote down:

- “1. Lack of tools;
2. Lack of capital;
3. Lack of assistance from [the] national or provincial government or [from] any organization;
4. Which person or tribal group will start the project, and lead the project and the people?” (Fa'fale pers. comm. 2000).

These comments suggest that even starting a community project—*let alone* complete is successfully—is in itself difficult. In some communities there may be a vicious circle of inaction—due to lack of motivation and unwillingness to take risks—that prevents rural people from starting income generating activities even though the income is badly needed. Even if communities are prepared to take some risks, lack of tools, capital, assistance and leadership may prove to be insurmountable obstacles. From this perspective the notion that community projects may somehow deliver sustainable development appears remote.

10.3 Meeting project objectives: Internal factors of project success or failure

There are many factors involved in running a community projects, and any of them may be decisive in the success or failure of a project. Not surprisingly, income-generating community initiatives are bound to fail, and the proof is that there are not too many successful projects, estimated at perhaps one in ten or less (Fa'asale, Wale pers. comm. 2000). However, while the failure of community projects may be the rule, there are exceptions as demonstrated by some of the projects evaluated in this research. In fact, for some communities there is no other alternative than working together. In these cases development projects may contribute to strengthen a sense of community. Nevertheless, determining "what makes a community tick" and work together successfully is difficult:

"We are still struggling with the formula of how to keep the community ticking, what motivates the community, are we finding something, are there some motivations? There are no easy answers, but at least we know the questions, and we look for someone with the answers." (R. Molly pers. comm 2000)

The following list of key internal factors of project success or failure is illustrative rather than comprehensive. Some of these factors are technical, others are cultural, and others relate to the characteristics of the Solomon Islands society. Not all these factors have equal influence on the outcome of a community project. Further, some factors are closely related. Taken together, these factors represent "what makes a community tick" and achieve its development project objectives.

Some of the findings of this chapter do not reflect kindly on human nature, and in particular on Solomon Islands society. However, in this criticism there is no intention to "blame the victims" (in the sense of Sachs 1992). In the Solomon Islands there is a clear trend towards more individualistic attitudes, away from traditional community ways. This trend is more manifest when there is money involved. In this context, people at times adopt what may seem unreasonable or selfish attitudes because survival demands so.

10.3.1 Projects as small business

Many village-based income-generating projects arise as a direct consequence of the transition from the traditional subsistence economy to a cash-based economy. At present both economic systems coexist in a dual economy, although the trend is towards the prevalence of the cash economy. People's involvement in the cash economy is less of a choice than a necessity, and

opting out is arguably not viable (Roughan pers.comm. 2000) even though when that may be the wish of some communities.

Understanding the cash economy and how it works is therefore essential for an income-generating project to succeed. Many rural people who lived most of their lives largely in a subsistence economy were not exposed to anything other than the most basic forms of the cash economy—the town markets, in themselves a cash economy version of the age-old bartering system between salt water people and bush people. This limited exposure—and general “business illiteracy”—may not provide enough experience to run an income generating community project, which is in essence a small business. People who were exposed to the cash economy through employment in the cities or work, education or travel abroad, etc., are better prepared to run an income-generating project successfully. Some common factors include:

Financial management

Poor financial skills are perhaps the most common cause of project problems or failure. This, in turn, may be as much due of a person’s exposure to the cash economy as a matter of education or character. According to the deputy manager of a government-run rural fisheries cooperative, there are two kinds of people:

“There are those that never look after financial resources properly, never repay the loans, and when they catch fish they waste their money on drink. And then there are those who always do well. It has a lot to do with financial management.” (Toriteilia pers.comm. 2000)

Accordingly, this program had turned from an emphasis to teaching fisheries skills to teaching financial skills (Toriteilia pers. comm. 2000).

The problems are compounded when an income-generating project involves groups of people. Communities may start working on a project before having agreed how the income is going to be distributed. Even if the project succeeds in generating income, lack of financial planning mitigates against its continuation. Several of the projects discussed here faced this kind of difficulty well into the operational phase of the project. Education and training can improve money management skills and financial planning. To address the problem of managing money, SIDT proposes a simple form of money management that satisfies three important aspects of a project. This entails dividing the profits to:

1. Cover costs and reinvest money in the project;
2. Pay those who worked in the project in compensation for their time; and
3. Bring something to the community.

To these ends SIDT recommends to divide the money in three (not necessarily equal) parts as above (“half and half and half”). This is the approach being used at Balai. However, it is essential that agreements concerning the division of money are made *before the money comes in* (Roughan, Baenesia, pers.comm. 2000).

Business literacy: Understanding income generation

Many community income generating initiatives succumb to an understandable “business illiteracy”, limited resources and lack of support structures. An informant summarized the situation as follows:

“Most projects are funded for two or three years. Most of these people are in many respects illiterate when it comes to business, various [try to run a] project out of what we would consider minimum resources. That they fail? Welcome to the world. In our own Western world most business in the first year, 18 months, 80% fail, [these are the] statistics right across the West. Failure rate [that] we accept in the West despite having a bank that wants its loan back, extracurricular help, small business support from government departments, emergency loans, plenty of strengthening structures, and yet they fail. And here we have nothing! Small business are [only] the concern of the government. Banks won’t touch you, DBSI included. To imply that we would do better than the outside world is amazing. And yet after two years the funding is over. SIDT [has been] going for 18 years and still we live in the knife’s edge. And for a village I just find it inexplicable. Illiterate business people to become successful in two years, I just find it miraculous.” (Roughan pers. comm. 2000).

For some project owners there is no difference between project funds (as loans or seed funds) that has to be invested in the project, and profits, which can be distributed. At times, people sell their capital to pay debts and then go out of business (García pers.comm. 2000). If there is no investment in the project—for supplies, equipment maintenance, etc.—then the project is likely to collapse. In some cases projects are defined so that the seed funds, from the perspective of the community, becomes the profit. It is common that once the seed funds are transferred to the communities the projects do not necessarily proceed (Wale pers.comm. 2000).

In some cases people are not prepared to wait for the project to produce profits and demand compensation for their work even though there may not yet be profits. For instance, at Feratofea it became difficult to find people to work in the cultural centre project, as they wanted money for their work. In brief, some people are not prepared to wait for the business to become

established: “People like money that comes quick, they don’t like to wait” (Fa’fale pers.comm. 2000). In other cases, people demand payment to do work on their own land. Indeed, some donor-funded conservation projects are based on this approach (e.g. Scheyvens and Casells 1999:123; or the case of Anoa’asa village, reported in this work). While this approach may make sense from a conservation perspective, it is not financially viable in the long term.

10.3.2 Transparency

Most disputes within communities are related to lack of transparency in decision-making, money management and book keeping. People’s expectations concerning the benefits of a project may be very high, according to what they see in other communities, but the costs involved are not always adequately considered (Roughan, Rosoman pers.comm. 2000). Traditionally the only money in a Solomon Islands household was *kastom* money, the red shell strings or *tafuli’ae*, which were kept in a special place.

“Transparency was immediate, as everyone could see when the *kastom* money was taken away and everyone knew why: it was a payment for compensation, marriage, etc.” (Fa’asale pers.comm. 2000).

When Western money is used this immediate transparency disappears. Decisions and actions may be taken spontaneously without proper records. Three out of six projects described here reported real or fictitious tales of money or assets being donated to the communities but lost in transit because *someone*—often a person unknown to the informants—had somehow misappropriated it. It was not always clear to the informants who was sending money and why, how the money was being transferred and to whom. However, in some cases, a perception that money has been stolen arises simply because the project funds are not immediately available for distribution (A. Molly pers.comm. 2000).

10.3.3 Skills and knowledge

Some informants suggested that people should choose their projects based on existing skills, such as (in the case of women) vegetable gardening or raising of poultry, which have always been women’s jobs (Anisafa-Anisi pers.comm. 2000). Annex V lists the skills and knowledge available to one community, which can be considered representative of the communities in the study area. Some of these skills or knowledge would be valuable in the cash economy as well as in the subsistence economy. This PRA exercise suggests that what is important is the *spread* of knowledge across the community. Out of 56 listed skills, as many as 33 (*ca.*59%) were performed by only some people in the village.

When projects concern novel activities, adequate training is essential:

“Listen for advise from some very good technical people, and don’t let any other idea to come from behind. It is easy to get more advice, but if you hear those [who don’t know] but not the technical advice then you run into problems. If you follow good advice you’ll succeed.” (A. Molly pers.comm. 2000).

For instance, the papermaking or rice farming projects described here are examples of innovative projects developed successfully from previously unknown skills. Arguably some skills can be acquired in a project context, while others require formal education or training.

10.3.4 Security of land tenure

Lack of secure land tenure is a common cause of project failure in the Solomon Islands. If a project is developed on customary unregistered land, it is common knowledge that land disputes will follow, usually after the project has been successful or a substantial investment has been made. For instance, a rice growing project by Langalanga people in the coastal plain near Lau, a few kilometres south of Auki, ran for enough time to allow its owners to have at least one harvest, but then the project stopped because Kwara’ae people disputed the ownership of the land (A. Moly pers.comm. 2000).

The most successful projects described here were conducted either on provincial land (e.g. at Fiu) or on registered customary land (e.g. at Anoa’asa) (Table 6.1). Landless people (such as the Langalanga or atoll dwellers), or people whose land is too remote to be developed, are normally allowed to cultivate gardens on somebody else’s land, but not to produce anything beyond subsistence levels. If this happens the landowner may claim compensation. This deters people from starting projects (Smiley, pers.comm. 2000).

10.3.5 Sense of community

Unless there is a strong sense of community—in addition to other factors—sooner or later there are disagreements about the distribution or use of money. For that reason income-generating projects work better with nuclear families (Dili, Mielaua pers.comm. 2000). The community projects that are usually successful are those that are not for profit, such as infrastructure projects: churches, roads, rural water supplies, etc. (Fa’asala pers.comm. 2000). When money enters into the equation, projects are likely to fail.²

² Using Tönnies analytical framework, income generating development projects are essentially based on *Gesellschaft* relations and approaches that are the antithesis of *Geimenschaft* relations that build a sense of community.

“If we take a community by defining more than one family, more than one tribe, it is quite difficult to put in a successful project, because in our culture, my father and his sons would only have only one box where we keep all our their traditional money in, that is the concept and definition of oneness, that my father’s community is his sons, and his son’s wives, and that’s all. But when you add another person or family, it is a problem, because we don’t define that as a community, we separated ourselves already. Two different tribes have two different beliefs, despite our commonness we do things the way our [own] tribes believed. We don’t mix up, and unless we accept that concept into development we cannot have successful projects in the country. That is why in any development when we talk about investment of money whether it is [a small project] or a cattle project or cocoa project, if you do research in the country you’ll find that out of ten projects there could be one successful, or none at all.” (Fa’asale pers.comm. 2000).

However, communities ran several successful projects described in this work (e.g. at Fiu and Balai). In these cases there were strong incentives to suggest that working together would allow a better outcome than working individually. In the case of the rice farming project at Fiu, for instance, it was the limited land available for individual projects that led villagers to conclude that they had to work together. The project’s labour demands also required the involvement of the community: “It is a community project or there is no project” (A. Molly pers.comm. 2000). While there are many arguments against conducting community projects, it may be argued that in cases like this, projects contribute to build communities.

10.3.6 Planning

As described in earlier chapters, some income-generating community projects follow careful preparations comparable with preparing a business elsewhere in the developed world. The project then unfolds following, more or less, the steps of a project cycle. Other projects are carried out in a more spontaneous manner. Depending on the type and scale of the project, planning is essential to meet its outcomes. For instance, small projects based on traditional skills and knowledge may meet their objectives even with limited planning, but this is unlikely to be the case in innovative projects.

Common issues resulting from poor planning include lack of definition of monetary and non-monetary objectives of the project, and lack of appraisal as to how the project is going to meet these objectives. For instance, in the rice-farming project at Fiu it was clear the project, if successful, would yield either an income and/or food. At Feratofea, the cultural centre’s

objectives were clear, but it was less clear how the cultural centre would generate an income, or whether the assumptions concerning income sources were realistic.

10.3.7 Ownership

Projects that are based on the skills or resources available to a community but that do not consider the communities' needs or interests are unlikely to succeed. Thus, some potentially viable projects fail because people do not ever "own" them. For instance, a vegetable growing project at Balai, initiated by a JOCV volunteer in the late 1990s, was based on good soil conditions for growing non-traditional vegetables for the Asian market. The project collapsed after the JOCV volunteer departed because the villagers did not know how to cook or eat the vegetables they had grown, so the crop was left to rot. The community did not attempt to sell the vegetables and eventually abandoned the project (Tome pers.comm. 2000).³ In contrast, the paper making project at Balai, an entirely novel concept, ended up being "owned" by the community despite initial reservations because they understood how the project worked and what the benefits were.

10.3.8 Outreach

The resources potentially available to start a community project in the Solomon Islands include free seed money, free advice from local and foreign experts, and in some cases overseas training possibilities. All the successful projects described here had tapped into these resources and used them quite extensively to their advantage (Table 3.1). However, whilst there may be *ad hoc* resources available, the facilities that are available for small business in more developed countries, e.g. bank loans, are often unavailable (Roughan pers.comm. 2000). In this case, local agricultural extension advice, which is one of the cheapest and most accessible forms of support for rural community projects, was considered to be very limited or non-existent by several informants (Anisafa-Anisi, Maeliu, Fakare pers.comm. 2000).

In addition, not all these resources are readily available for everyone. Attending business courses or other training opportunities requires awareness of their existence, confidence to enrol, etc., as well as money, time and ability to travel. Some individuals or communities may have more clout than others in having access to the limited resources available. In addition, the availability of resources appears to decrease exponentially away from the cities. In villages at a relatively short distance from Auki people had never heard of the resources, such as New

³ Another vegetable grower criticized this passive attitude: "You don't waste vegetables: you sell them or eat them" (Maeliu pers. comm. 2000). The same informant reported that at times he was the only supplier of some types of vegetables in the Honiara market, and that usually demand outstripped supply.

Zealand's Small Projects Fund, available to them. Even if they had, the cost of bus fares may have deterred them from going to town to find out more. In addition, a villager may be too shy to enter a government building to ask for information, especially if a women (Anisafa-Anisi pers.comm. 2000).

10.3.9 "Manpower"

"Manpower" is the quintessential Malaitan quality. As used by many Malaitans, it is the shorthand for an attitude towards work that includes both the most literal interpretation (physical ability to work) as well as initiative and entrepreneurial skills. Many Malaitans take considerable pride in their "manpower", and in their view manpower differentiates them from other islanders (and differentiates Malaitans from the centre and north of the island from those further south). Manpower allows Malaitans who migrate to other islands or countries to succeed ("Malaitans go from cutting the grass to top positions" (Dili pers.comm. 2000)). According to some informants it is the Malaitans' manpower that drives the country (e.g. Smiley pers. comm. 2000). From this perspective, "manpower" has been one of the causes of ethnic tension in Guadalcanal.

The Malaitan work ethic results from *kastom*, by which one who does not work does not eat, because one who does not work cannot feed a family.⁴ Consequently, people start working in their parents' garden at a very young age (Smiley pers.comm. 2000). However, whilst some Malaitans do not have the initiative to migrate⁵ or work hard, many Malaitans have an obvious disdain for "drip feeders" or "spoon feeders" (Wale, S. Dili pers.comm. 2000). Government programs are tailored for people that do not fall into this category (Wale pers.comm. 2000).

10.3.10 Leadership and management

Usually community projects need both leadership and management to meet their objectives. In this context, leadership is understood as traditional leadership, which in the Solomon Islands is not a hereditary right but is gained on individual merit:

"Individuals become leaders as a result of their ability to influence people in the society, and to command the support of many people for a considerable period of time and over a specific area. Such influence was reflected in the ability to organise feasting, and to

⁴ However, by *kastom*, people must eat lunch so that they can work hard in the afternoon, while now people often prefer to chew betel nut instead, which makes them weak for work (Manita'a pers. comm. 1994).

⁵ While Malaitans are traditionally migrants, it is only some tribes from Northern and Central Malaita that usually do so, such as Tolbeita and Kwara'ae. Langalanga people seldom migrate (Dili pers.comm. 2000).

arrange for people to work together in gardens and in building barricades and shelters”
(Alasia 1989:138).

The competency required to carry out some projects may be beyond the standard skills of rural villagers. As used here, management represents the exercise of leadership on the basis of technical or professional competency. Some income generating projects may require traditional leadership skills, but most income-generating projects will benefit from management skills.

Community leaders may have limited exposure to the outside world and lack management skills, whereas people who migrated to the cities may be more familiar with the skills required to run a project. Anecdotal information suggests that one of the consequences of mass return migration to Malaita following ethnic tension in Guadalcanal is that community leaders had their traditional leadership challenged by people used to town life and the cash economy (Robinson pers.comm. 2000). This has only emphasised an existing trend towards the deterioration of the chiefly system (e.g. SIDT 1996:4) in that a manager often has a higher status than a traditional leader. For instance, in one of the projects described here a traditional leader was replaced as the project manager by a “modern” manager. In another project, two brothers shared both roles: one took a traditional leadership role and ran the technical part of the project while the other was a trained professional who took care of financial management.

10.3.11 Human nature

The term “human nature” is used here to describe flaws of human character that can influence a projects’ outcome. The flaws that were quoted most often by informants are: dishonesty, envy, lack of commitment and selfishness.

Dishonesty

Dishonesty coupled with other shortcomings in project management, such as lack of transparency and poor financial skills, is likely to lead to project collapse. The most usual dishonest behaviour is when one or more individuals misappropriate money or other assets that belong to the entire community. Under these circumstances, “money destroys communities” (Roughan pers.comm. 2000). In other cases dishonesty does not necessarily affect projects negatively but affects their support structure and makes running projects more difficult to everyone else. A provincial ice service for fisherfolk used to give ice in advance and charge after they had had a chance to catch fish and make money, but eventually had to resort to asking for payment up front because many people were not paying (Toriteilia pers.comm. 2000).

Envy

When a project succeeds outsiders may do their best to spoil it in order to prevent the project owners from boasting about their success. Witchcraft is reportedly a favourite tool to spoil successful ventures (Fa'asala; Smiley pers.comm. 2000). Consequently, when a project fail or runs into difficulties e.g. crop infestation, the first thing some people would blamewitchcraft rather than nature (A. Molly pers.comm. 2000).⁶

"Lack of commitment"⁷

This was one of the most commonly quoted causes of project failure (e.g. Kuri, Garcia, Smiley pers.comm. 2000). The critique has often racial or ethnic overtones: "lazy people" is the opinion that many Europeans and Asians have of Melanesians, except perhaps Malaitans; Malaitans of people from other provinces; north and central Malaitans (especially Kwara'ae and Tolbeita) of south Malaitans (Kwaio and 'Are'Are); and full-blooded people of those with mixed blood (e.g. full-blooded Kwara'ae of those mixed with Kwaio). Ethnic superiority itself reveals a sad but real facet of human nature. However, in some cases there is a sense of admiration across different ethnic groups. According to an informant of the Kwaio and Kwara'ae boundary area:

"Langalanga [people] work on *kastom* money.⁸ But we people in the bush [are] doing nothing. Langalanga [are] very wise men for doing something, using their minds for tomorrow, then after tomorrow. But we are happy sitting down, having betel nut. People [here] don't like to change. Fathers don't teach [their children] how to work." (Manita'a pers.comm. 2000).

⁶ The concept of leveling people to the lowest common social denominator has parallels in many cultures. In New Zealand is called the "tall poppy syndrome"; in Japan it is referred to as "the nail that sticks out will be nailed down"; in the Netherlands, the social requirement is to avoid calling attention to oneself and displaying one's wealth, leading to the notion of "we are all grey meatballs".

⁷ This is an euphemism for "laziness", which is the word that most informants used.

⁸ Langalanga are reef dwellers that fish in inshore waters, severely overfished by the use of dynamite in the 1980s. Many Langalanga people generate an income by making *kastom* money (strings of shell money). However, many Langalanga people do not fish any longer because "fish are very clever these days" (Chief, Gwaidalo, per. comm.. 2000).

“Lack of commitment” is a broad concept and accounts for some of the causes of project failure described earlier. For instance, it shows in the inability to carry out long term planning, or to wait for the project to become established. Reportedly some people carry on with their projects until they earn enough money to last for a few weeks, then stop. When the money runs out they try to start again (García, Toriteilia pers.comm. 2000).

Selfishness

The subsistence economy relies on communal efforts; the cash economy rewards individualism, which is a socially acceptable form of selfishness. In a society seeking a balance between the two economies, both aspects co-exist uneasily. Selfishness can make a project collapse and split communities.⁹

“Before people were honest and unselfish, because everyone was the same. Now there are new commodities—beer, clothes, etc.—and everyone wants them. If you are paddling in a canoe under the sun and someone goes past on a boat with an outboard, you are not happy” (Maimarine pers. comm. 2000).

The selfish actions of one generation can affect the livelihoods of later generations, which SIDT describes in no uncertain terms in relation to the logging issue:

“The ‘*olos* (grandparents) along Guadalcanal Weather Coast are the odds with their younger generation. The older men want logging. They want the feel of money, lots of money, in their hands before they leave this world. They want to buy a few bottles of beer, have more rice, some nice calico, now. They feel that the modern world has passed them by. And now they want to catch up before they head for the grave. Younger tribal members are fighting to keep their forests for their children and their children’s children. Logging is splitting the nation!” (SIDT 1995:2).

10.3.12 Accessibility of achievement

The attitude of a community towards a project is a balance between motivation and disillusion. Ambitious projects are less likely to succeed than projects with a simple goal or a set of several simple goals that are comparatively easier to achieve. The effect of either alternative has a compounding (or draining) effect on the efforts the community makes in a project and on whether an upwards or downwards spiral is generated: motivation generates motivation, disillusion generates disillusion. Collective action (e.g. completing a task) prevents disillusion

⁹ As the cash economy, religion also divides communities, which is why some people prefer to attend non-denominational services (Maimarine, Smiley pers. comm. 2000).

by producing prompt results, thus facilitating a feeling that achievement is accessible (M. Hora pers.comm. 2000).

10.4 Project-based strategies for sustainable development

The previous section described a series of key elements contributing to project success or failure that became apparent during this research. These key elements outlined “*what*”—what makes a community project succeed or fail, often synonymous with “what makes communities tick”.

This chapter describes “*how*”—how community projects can generate an income using strategies that are ecologically sustainable. In SIDT’s words, this represents “how to turn wealth into cash” in a sustainable manner, and generally how to improve the well-being of people without undue harm to the environment (SIDT 1998).

A more comprehensive list of strategies for sustainable development could be found in the development literature. These include overlapping categories of sustainable land use options, policy strategies to support sustainable agriculture, and/or sustainable income generating options (e.g. NRC 1993, Overton *et al* 1999). However, what is important about the strategies listed here is that they are real life alternatives as identified by social actors in the Solomon Islands social actors, and implemented by them through community projects.

10.4.1 Projects that promote sustainable agricultural techniques

Discussing alternatives for Solomon Islands agriculture, Frazer (1993) suggests that it is necessary to maintain a locally appropriate, mixed production system with an emphasis on the satisfaction of basic needs. This is in contrast with the approach prevalent at least since independence of maximising the use of village resources for the benefit of national economic goals (e.g. through large scale monoculture). Maximising the production from village resources in the short term may compromise village level food production in the long term.

Village agricultural practice is characterised as mixed production based on shifting agriculture. Shifting cultivation is sustainable as long as population levels and land tenure conditions are stable and allow for a sufficiently long fallow period that enables the soil to recover its fertility. In tropical rainforest areas the required length of the fallow period depends on local conditions, such as climate, soil and crop type, and may range from a few years to 30 or 40 years (Parker 1992:47; NRC 1993:79). For the Solomon Islands, Schoefel *et al* report average garden sizes of 0.3ha, with fallow periods of an average 4-6 years. In the context of the growing population of the Solomon Islands—with a doubling period of only about twenty years—shifting cultivation

is seen as an unsustainable practice (Schoefel *et al* 1994, Fa'alimae pers.comm. 2000).

Therefore the intensification of food production is necessary, but this needs to be accompanied by measures to maintain soil fertility. These may include establishing permanent gardens, as a pre-requisite for agroforestry and "permaculture" approaches.

Agroforestry—intensive, multi-storied inter-planting of fruit trees and vegetable crops—combines the advantages of reforestation with the establishment of permanent gardens, and is consequently one logical alternative to the problem of tree cover and fertility loss that affects parts of the Solomon Islands. A Forestry Division official who had worked in South East Asia was reportedly credited with introducing agroforestry in Malaita. The rationale was that "If the Philippines can feed 65 million people with agroforestry, then it should be good for us" (Kuri pers.comm. 2000). However, agroforestry requires a significant shift from standard agricultural practises, which are rooted in culture, *kastom* and tradition. Describing an agroforestry project started in the 1990s:

"The agro-forestry idea comes from the fact that in our language [Kwara'ae] good soil from gardens comes from where trees are. We call this kind of soil *dukwasi*. So it makes sense to have a projects that combines growing food and planting trees" (Balai 1994).¹⁰

This suggests that the concept is compatible with the traditional lore of some Malaitan cultures. However, the NZODA-funded pilot project at Ano'asa (Chapter 9) was abandoned after nine years when the donor funding stopped. People reverted to traditional practices, which may never have been fully replaced by agroforestry. Questions remain as to how agroforestry can be adopted successfully in the Solomon Islands.

The projects at Busurata and Fiu (Chapters 8 and 9) could be considered as following the permaculture philosophy.¹¹ The communities had established permanent semi-commercial vegetable gardens and rice paddies. Abandoning traditional shifting agriculture required them to develop techniques to resolve new problems, for instance collecting organic matter that can be used as fertiliser:

"We discovered that to make this organic system work we need[ed] to produce the organic matter to make this work from vegetable and animal [waste], so we can see if we can encourage one section of the village to engage in raising poultry and pigs, so that the waste from that can be used in the farm, and the waste from the farm can be used in the

¹⁰ In a visit to Balai in 2000 it was not obvious that this project was still active.

¹¹ The project leaders were familiar with the concept of permaculture. One of them, who had been trained in Japan, was also familiar with Fukoka's "one straw revolution".

poultry and pigs. We try to find a complementary system where one people's activities are complementing other people's activities." (R.Molly pers. comm. 2000).

At Busurata the project leader used several novel procedures such as composting organic waste, mulching, and terracing. Some of these procedures he learned from advisers, some he copied from local farmers, and some he invented (or re-invented) himself.

These initiatives suggest that some communities are aware that shifting cultivation will no longer be viable as population increases and that some people are prepared to adopt sustainable agricultural techniques.

10.4.2 Projects that maintain the tree cover

The maintenance of the tree cover is often promoted as a central element of sustainable development. For instance, Smith and Plunckett (1995:241, quoted in Becker 1998:65) suggest that tree crops are "virtually synonymous with sustainable agriculture in the tropics". In this research many informants had a clear notion that present land management practices would influence future choices, and that maintaining or increasing the tree cover was an essential component of sustainable development.

Most villages reported carrying out some form of tree planting, from commercial enterprises of about 200 hectares (Anoa'asa), to organised replanting of a few hectares (Balai, Busurata), to random reforestation of abandoned clearings (Feratofoea). In the small scale reforestation initiatives, seedlings were collected from the forest, transplanted elsewhere, and tended for some time. Reportedly, an informant in Busurata had a goal of planting twenty trees a day every day of his life: "If I miss one day, I plant double the number the following day" (Maeliu pers.comm. 2000). One informant had the idea of establishing a national tree planting day, which he had transmitted to a Prime Minister, so that "...one day of one month of the year everyone in the Solomon Islands should be planting trees" (Misuka pers.comm. 2000). Reportedly this community had adopted the practice of planting seedlings wherever a tree was cut down, which is not something prescribed by *kastom* (Misuka pers. comm. 2000).

The appreciation many Solomon Islanders have for the forest has its roots in aesthetical, cultural and spiritual values. According to one informant all trees in the Solomon Islands are connected, like intertwined fingers. Cutting one tree affects all the others: if a bush knife cuts through two holding hands, it hurts both. This is an argument not to cut any trees, which are a gift of the

ancestral spirits to people.¹² In addition, tree-felling has always been difficult work. In the times of the stone adze people seldom cut trees. Settling the land—for instance, by clearing the forest to prepare a garden—was one of the bases of land ownership in Malaita because it involved a significant amount of work (Burt and Kwa’ioloa 1992; Manita’a pers.comm. 2000).

Whilst the importance of maintaining the tree cover is widely recognised among bush communities, population growth and technological change brings new threats to the forest in addition to the well-documented and controversial large-scale logging. Further, because the forest has always been there and greenery surrounds them, people often perceive that the forest is inexhaustible (Baenesia pers. comm. 1994). The growing adoption of the chainsaw is arguably replicating the widespread adoption of the machete earlier in the XX century. While chainsaws can provide the basis for sustainable livelihoods (e.g. through the use of *wakabout* sawmills in ecoforestry), their indiscriminate use can cause significant damage in the local environment.¹³ Small-scale wood milling using chainsaws is commonly (and mistakenly) regarded as a synonym of “ecoforestry” whereas, properly conducted, ecoforestry requires careful long term planning and a considerable dose of restraint in forest management.

10.4.3 Projects that transfer skills and knowledge locally

The discussion of who exactly are the development experts is common in the development literature. This discussion is often framed as a dichotomy among “insiders” and “outsiders” and concerns the conflict (or agreement) that exists between traditional and modern systems of knowledge (e.g. Agrawal 1995, Chambers 1983, Huntington 1998). In this research, informants variously proposed to use existing skills and knowledge (e.g. Anisafa-Anisi pers. comm. 2000) or otherwise find the most qualified experts (e.g. A. Molly pers. comm. 2000); both approaches had been useful in different projects.

¹² In Feratofea, where the hill forests in ancestral land was being logged, it was believed that “...the spirits are sad, because they had gifted the people with the land but people had not given anything back.” Eagles, the tribe’s *devils* or ancestral spirits, had moved close to the village and had been unusually vocal for some time. Reportedly this was to let people know that they were upset about people’s ingratitude (Manita’a pers.comm. 2000; pers.obs.2000). Aside this explanation based in deep cultural beliefs, the eagles’ habitat was effectively being destroyed.

¹³ In Gwaidalo, a coastal Langalanga village in the highly populated margins of the Langalanga Lagoon, villagers were using chainsaws to cut mangroves for woodfire, to the despair of the village chief, who was starting a mangrove nursery to try to maintain the resource. Mangroves act as a filter for water, nursery for reef fish, and self-cleansing toilets; its shoots are edible and staple food for Langalanga people. The destruction of mangroves by coastal people suggests a significant cultural change facilitated by technology.

Cutting across these perspectives, some informants suggested that the best way of learning and sharing approaches that work was through exchanges among the farmers themselves—rural people from anywhere in Malaita or the Solomon Islands who had experience in addressing community problems through development projects. The experience of one community could benefit others. People could teach as well as learn. For instance, after his first successful rice harvest, one informant reportedly distributed rice freely around the villages to encourage people to grow rice themselves. He visited other farms and tried to replicate the better practices he had seen (Maeliu pers.comm. 2000). An alternative approach would be for a community representative to spend time in other villages:

“...visit these communities, and spend some time, six months or even a year so you can see entire crop cycles, be exposed to these communities, experience not only the techniques but you are hearing what they say, what they question, what they argue, see them in community meetings, be exposed to the whole thing. See how they are organised. In that way you can learn and adopt [what is most suitable for your own community]”. (R. Molly pers. comm. 2000).

Working with other communities would allow people to step out of their own village and gain a fresh perspective on how other people deal with similar issues. It would also be a cost effective way of transferring skills, knowledge and tested approaches. By and large this approach would bypass outside “experts”. In terms of the practical implementation of this proposal local NGOs could help with the liaison among distant communities.

10.4.4 Projects that promote the empowerment of women

Women’s involvement in income-generating activities potentially allows them a level of financial independence. Several informants suggested that it was common knowledge that women were often better than men at managing projects (e.g. Dunbar pers. comm. 2000). Women’s projects may be a vehicle for participation and empowerment e.g. through coalition building and allowing women a “space” to develop as individuals. However, it has been argued that many attempts to increase the participation of women have failed to meet its expectations, and that increasing the *numbers* of women involved in participatory projects is not an adequate “soft” alternative to conscious strategies to actively promote change in gender inequalities (Mayoux 1995:236). In the experience of this research, it was not always clear whether women’s involvement in community projects implied that they were involved at all levels of decision-making, or whether they simply carried out a project’s labour on behalf of the community, *in addition to their chores*. A common complaint about development projects—for communities at large but especially for women’s projects—was that they take up too much time

and effort that should be devoted to other essential activities (e.g. Balai 1994, Misuka pers.comm. 2000). Referring to a women's agroforestry project, a village chief commented that:

“Agroforestry is good, but for doing continuously it's not, because women have too many jobs, mainly inside the house, feeding the pigs, chicken, *pikinini*. *Women don't have time to start their own project*. For that reason, the project stopped.” (Misuka pers.comm. 2000; my emphasis).

In other words, it is possible that some “women's groups”, rather than providing women with the opportunities work together for their own benefit, were simply a term to describe a “group of women” in charge of a project's labour, not specifically designed for the benefit of women.

As an alternative to women's groups, some women try to run their own business individually. Obviously, a successful project would give a woman some degree of independence from her husband and *wantoks*. In these cases it often happens that the husbands or families take the profits:

“It is very hard for women. They keep to the culture—not like me—and their husbands are not helpful. It is hard for them to start anything on their own. Family and husbands discourage them, and if they [persevere and] do well the husbands take money from them. Women are also not educated, in our time only a few went to school. They are scared to go to workshops, it is hard to educate them. It is very difficult to change at this time. Maybe those with high education will change” (Anisafa-Anisi pers.comm. 2000)

There are however exceptions. The women's project at Busurata was run by and for the women (in that the women made decisions and kept the profits from their work) but their families helped in the project (pers. obs. 1994).

Several informants—both male and female—were aware of the disadvantaged position of Malaitan women. Some supported the *status quo* on the grounds of respecting *kastom*. Others considered that there is a need to tune down some of the most oppressive aspects of *kastom*. This requires the participation (and re-education?) of men and the society at large, to revalue the role of women in society. To this end there is a need to increase support structures for women, from the women themselves, their families and the government. The practical measures proposed by several informants included access of women to politics, the need to bring the father into the family income generating scheme, the need to eliminate teenage pregnancy marriages, and the need for women to generate a space of their own, either individually and/or collectively. This requires some sort of association or coalition building by women, such as a

women's group, and/or individual women taking the steps to gain that space. Women that are independent by character, marriage or work and life experience may provide a role model. Some of these initiatives could take place in a project format. Alternatively, a standard project may be the means by which some of these initiatives take place. Whatever the alternative, if projects are not designed by and for women, allowing women involvement at all levels of decision-making, and intended to benefit women directly, "women's projects" are hardly liberating but only contribute to increase the women's workload.

10.4.5 Projects that increase people's quality of life

Clearly, many projects that contribute to sustainable development are not linked to the generation of income. SIDT believes that village people could significantly improve their quality of life and well-being with a limited number of simple, affordable improvements in their houses and villages. To prove this point, SIDT runs about 250 village-level demonstration projects in many villages throughout the country. Village-based Village Development Workers (VDWs) run the projects on behalf of SIDT for a small stipend.

The demonstration projects include several components:

- **Kitchen improvements:** Raised kitchens avoid the need for women to crouch over the wood fire. Raised storage keeps food stacks away from domestic and farm animals. Both measures address health issues.
- **Malaria prevention:** The project advocates sleeping every night under mosquito nets and keeping the nets adequately maintained by impregnating them twice a year. The government provides assistance with the provision and maintenance of mosquito nets.
- **Sup-sup gardens:** A small *sup-sup* (kitchen) garden should be kept close to the house. *Sup-sup* gardens keep a small supply of fresh food at a short distance from the home, thus reducing the workload of women. They contribute to dietary improvement (especially vitamin A deficiency, which produces night blindness and is common among people dependent on imported foods such as white rice).
- **Sanitation improvement:** Every village should have a number of toilets proportional to the village population. SIDT recommends toilets composed by a concrete slab and seat. The sewage is flushed with a bucket of water and goes through a U-shaped pipe into a hole in the ground. Properly used, this toilet arrangement is hygienic and free of odours or insects.¹⁴

¹⁴ Whilst this type of toilet is hygienic for the user, there is some discussion concerning its environmental effects. How fast or complete the degradation of sewage is depends on the volume of sewage, the location of the toilet, etc. Some argue that the faeces may contaminate the water table or other water bodies (Del Porto and Rapaport 1997).

- **Rural water supply:** Working with the provincial governments' Rural Water Supply and Sanitation offices SIDT promotes the installation of a suitable water supply for every village, which depending on the village's location may be water tanks, boreholes, or water collection points.

Anecdotal observations suggest that the effective implementation of even these relatively simple measures is a difficult task¹⁵.

10.4.6 Projects that provide sustainable sources of income

Central to SIDT's action is the notion of "turning wealth into cash" (i.e. making an income from the land and the natural resources to which all Solomon Islanders are entitled). More than most of the case studies described here, SIDT's projects establish a direct link between community projects and sustainable development. SIDT's projects were first promoted in the early 1990s as an alternative to large-scale logging. The organisation offers villagers advice and expertise on ecologically sustainable income-generation projects. Several of these projects are based on the innovative, non-traditional use of traditional resources.

In addition to making paper from forest and farm fibres (Chapter 8), these include:

- **Beekeeping:** This project takes advantage of the availability of land in most villages and the diversity of the Solomon Islands forests to produce a unique honey.
- **Butterfly ranching:** This project requires growing a garden of plants that attract butterflies. In time, caterpillars are collected from this "butterfly garden" and transferred to special net cages where butterflies are harvested a few days after hatching. The butterflies are preserved and sold locally to the tourist market or exported.
- **Coral farming:** Small fragments (1-2cm) of live coral are collected from the reef and attached to a base—a pebble, brick, etc.—which is kept underwater, from where the coral

¹⁵ It was not an objective of the present research to evaluate the quality of living in the various villages visited during the fieldwork. From casual observations in over ten different villages it was apparent that the quality of living varied widely. Some villages looked obviously tidier or wealthier than others. A few people in different villages reported that they slept under mosquito nets, but nevertheless malaria was endemic in most villages. Water supplies and toilet facilities varied widely in quality and efficiency. Only in one village was the full toilet set up, as recommended by SIDT, in use. Improved kitchens and *sup sup* gardens did not appear to be very common. This was even the case in the household of an SIDT village development worker. Malnutrition in children was apparent in some villages in West Kwaio. However, *sup sup* gardens were common in some Langalanga villages (e.g. Gwaidalo). Langalanga people are landless atoll and coastal dwellers, and in these cases *sup sup* gardens appeared to be not so much an alternative as a necessity.

continues to grow. Once the corals reach a certain size they are sold locally to the tourist market or exported.

- **“Ecotimber”:** The production of ecologically friendly timber requires communities to agree on a management plan for their forests. Only a few specimens in each block of land are harvested using chainsaws and milled using *wakabout* sawmills.¹⁶ The timber is carried out of the bush manually (i.e. no logging roads are required) and exported with the assistance of overseas NGOs.
- **Ecotourism “extreme”:** Under this scheme tourists are taken to remote villages. Unlike other ecotourism alternatives, tourists receive detailed instructions about the local *kastom* and other practices, which they must be prepared to adopt for their stay at the villages e.g. dressing and eating as the locals do. This approach minimises the social impacts of tourism in the local populations.
- **Ngali nut oil production:** Oil from ngali nuts (*Canarium indicum*)¹⁷ can be used for cooking and body oil. Some of the oil is exported as a base for cosmetics.

All SIDT-supported projects follow the same steps, which address many of the key elements required successful project implementation:

1. A community application. The process of discussing a possible project, and preparing and submitting an application demonstrates the community’s interest in the project;
2. A feasibility study that ensures that the community has the suitable resource base to conduct a particular type of project; and
3. Implementation, which includes training in the specific technologies of the project, book-keeping, etc.

The projects’ design includes detailed management regulations to which the project owners must adhere to ensure sustainable resource use. The basis is careful planning and restraint on

¹⁶ The viability of this proposal is being questioned both in technical terms (concerning the quality of the sawn timber); economic and environmental efficiency (the wastage of wood is greater because *wakabaout* sawmills blades are thicker than in other type of mills) and chainsaw operator’s health issues (“this is something you do for a few years; it is not a long term proposition”—Sheeham pers.comm. 2000). The search is on for alternatives to improve some of these limitations (Rosoman pers.comm. 2000).

¹⁷ Unlike most of the other projects listed here, this project has the added advantage of being based on a traditional Melanesian crop. According to Stevens *et al*, “...among edible nut trees of the South Pacific, the genus *Canarium* is considered to be of particular economic potential because the nuts have a delicate almond-like taste and a hard non-perishable shell. The trees are widely distributed in Melanesia and have a long history of cultivation, which has led to the selection of several domesticates now recognized as distinct species” (Stevens *et al* 1996).

harvesting. For instance, butterfly ranching requires that only half of the caterpillars found in the “butterfly garden” can be collected. The eco-timber project requires keeping “mother” trees as seed sources, selecting and looking for replacement trees, looking after selected small trees in the forest to replace the trees that have been felled, and a commitment not to fell more than a small number of trees for each block of land. The coral-farming project requires that only a small quantity of corals fragments are broken off a living coral.

SIDT has made arrangements with the Ministry of Conservation to prevent resource abuse. The exporters or suppliers of corals and butterflies can only be Solomon Island nationals registered at the Ministry. This ensures that the products only come from sustainable sources and not from the wild. Nevertheless, the responsibility for implementing management measures adequately is left to the communities.

10.5 Conclusions

Many factors are involved in making a community “tick” in order to meet a project’s objective. This chapter has provided only an illustrative list of the key factors as identified by informants. Some factors are related to the ability to deal with the cash economy. Others factors rely on a community’s capacity to adapt to changing conditions. Yet others depend on the use of traditional skills and knowledge, at times adapting them to new tasks. Not all these factors are equally relevant, and some are closely related. Drawing together these different requirements, some informants considered that the key to a project’s success, in their experience, was “just hard work” (Anisafa-Anisi, A. Molly pers.comm. 2000). Clearly, people will contribute with hard work if they believe that their investment of time and labour will yield positive results—in other words, if they believe in a project. This is an argument to support greater community participation in the early stages of project planning.

CHAPTER 11: TWO ANALYTICAL TOOLS

11.1 Introduction

The previous chapter outlined a number of key internal factors of project success or failure. It is however difficult to determine how these factors are actually interlinked and what their influence is in real life community initiatives—both individually and collectively. It is also difficult to establish a link between community initiatives and sustainable development in the context of a complex social and economic change. This chapter provides two analytical tools to simplify the discussion of these issues.

11.2 A simple system analysis model for community projects

In order to better understand the combined effect of these the evolution of community projects through time was represented in a simple systems analysis model.¹⁸

Whilst there is a certain parallelism between the model predictions and real life outcome of community projects, there is no pretence of quantitative accuracy. It is not the intention to represent—or replace—a complex reality with a set of equations. The model is simply used as a tool to make the analysis of many disparate factors more abstract and manageable. The model allows the relationships among different variables to work dynamically in a way that *resembles* real life.

11.2.1 Model description

The model represents a production process whereby natural and human *resources* are transformed into project *outputs*. The time period in which these transformation processes take place is the project cycle, which may turn into long term operation. The model does not include external factors, but only *internal* factors i.e. those that lie within the sphere of influence of the communities (earlier represented in Fig. 7.2).

¹⁸ World3, the model used in the 1970s for the Club of Rome's *Limits to growth* and later on as World3/91 in the 1990s for *Beyond the limits* (Meadows *et al* 1992) are based on different computer simulation languages specifically developed for analysing system dynamics models. The equations of World3/91 were expressed using STELLA software, which is the same software used here. System analysis ("systems thinking") can be regarded variously as a paradigm, language, method and set of technologies for understanding things and processes composed of interdependent relationships (Richmond and Peterson 1996:2-1).

The simplest representation of a development project is that of a process to transform resources into outcomes (Fig. 11.1a).

In community projects, the process represented by the model is based on two distinct “stocks” or sectors: natural resources and human resources (Fig. 11.1b). Natural resources (e.g. land) are the basis for most community projects. Human resources, which are essential to the transformation process, are both material (e.g. labour force) and non-material (e.g. knowledge)¹⁹. Together these resources constitute the “wealth” of a community. As described earlier, an income-generating project is an attempt to “turn wealth into cash” (SIDT 1998), or to turn community resources into material outcomes (i.e. cash). However, community projects may not only have material outcomes but also non-material outcomes, such as the skills and experience that may result even from an income-generating project that failed to generate an income.

The model is a representation of the transformation processes inherent in a community development project. This can be represented as two processes that take place simultaneously and in parallel (or as a single co-flowing process), where non-material and material community resources are transformed into material and non-material outcomes (Fig. 11.1b).

The key factors for project success or failure, such as those described in Chapter 10, are in essence the factors that control how transformation process takes place. Some of the factors that produce this transformation are technical (material, “hard”), and some are non-technical (non-material, “soft”).

In essence, what the model attempts to represent is how all these factors interact individually and collectively in the project process.

11.2.2 How the model works

In the model (Fig. 11.2), the project process has compounding and draining components that work on positive or self-reinforcing loops. These contribute to further increase or decrease the project’s overall outcomes. Several factors determine the rate of change.

Compounding components follow “positive” outputs: e.g. the more motivated a community is, the more labour it invests on a project, and the greater the project outcomes—which feeds back into increased motivation.

¹⁹ These could also be defined as the “social capital” of a community.

Draining components work in the same way but as a consequence of “negative” outputs e.g. a limited “accessibility of achievement” results in a decrease of motivation, and a reduction of the amount of labour put into the project, which may eventually cause the project’s collapse.

The model allows the representation of several of the many possible real life situations. Two basic situations are listed here: the effect of community input on project outcomes, and the effects of resource use on project outcomes.

Annex V describes the model’s different parameters and the equations used.

Effect of community input on project outcomes

Community input is a result of the various factors that make a community “tick” and work together in a project. In practical terms community inputs may be represented, for instance, with the hours of work put into a project, measured in person-hours per week

- ***Sustained community input:*** Successful projects such as those described here (Chapter 9) achieve a certain level of output (e.g. income) resulting from the community’s input. The project completes the project cycle and reaches an operational stage (Fig. 11.3a). In this graph, the community input is constant or increases over time. The project achieves both regular material and non-material results over the years. As long as the resources are available the project could continue indefinitely.
- ***Declining community input:*** Failed projects follow a “boom and bust” cycle. After an initial implementation period in which the community puts a considerable effort into the project and makes some progress in terms of material outputs, a limited “accessibility of achievement” results in a reduction of project activities and the abandonment of the project (Fig. 11.3b). The project activities decrease progressively in time. Material and non-material outcomes reach a peak early in the project cycle and then disappear.

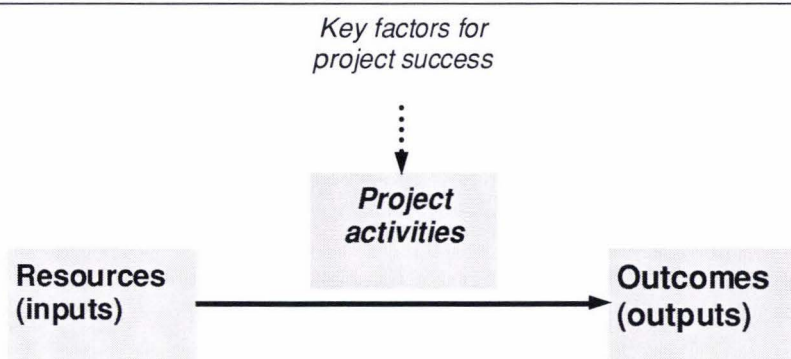


Fig. 11.1a: A simplified model for community development projects

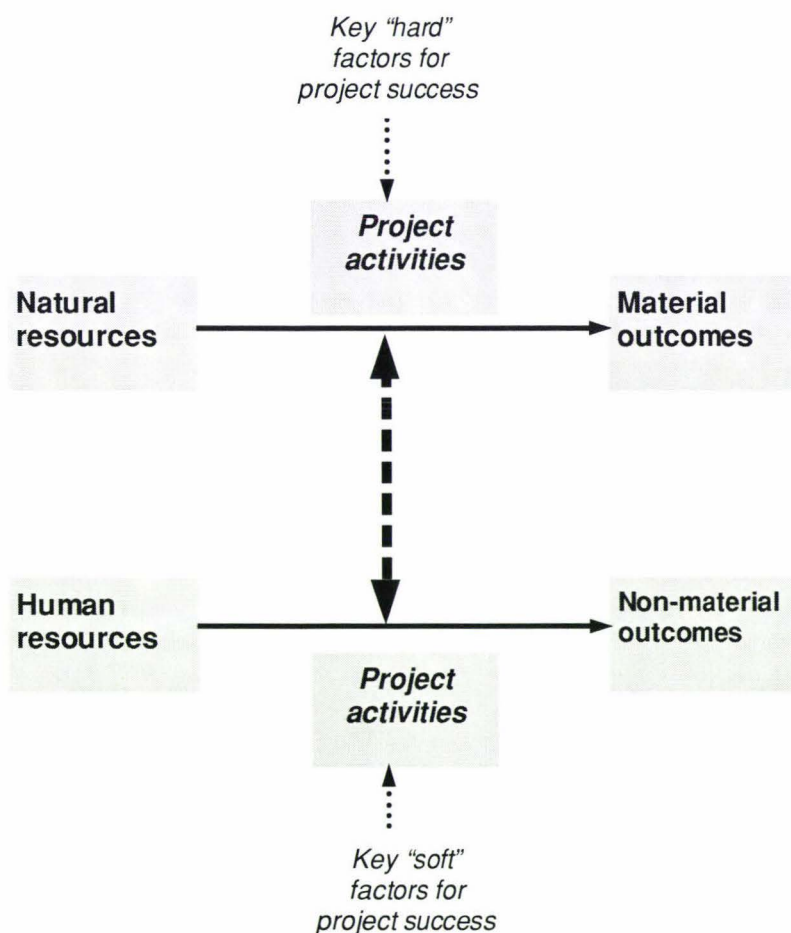


Fig. 11.1b: A model for community development projects. The dashed arrow represents a critical connection between "hard" and "soft" key factors for project success.

Effect of resource use on project outcomes

The availability of natural and human resources are the foundations of community projects. Depending on how these resources are used the projects will be sustainable in the long term or will eventually collapse.

- ***Sustained resources:*** If the level of resources are maintained or increased over time then the project could potentially continue indefinitely. This means that a project can be sustainable in the long term because the resource base is sustained (Fig. 11.3c). For instance, a natural resource such as soil fertility may be maintained through sustainable land use options such as agroforestry. Human resources can be maintained by promoting the conditions encouraging people to stay in the villages rather than migrating to towns.
- ***Declining resources:*** On the other hand, if the levels of resources decline over time then the projects will collapse (Fig. 11.3d). For instance, in the example as above, shifting cultivation and increased population would lead to shorter fallow periods and decline in soil fertility. Urban drift will reduce the community's social capital.

In brief, the model illustrates the relationship between material and non-material cycles of resource use and outcome. The components “upstream” (project resources) are essential to achieve the results “downstream” (project outcomes). What triggers the process are the key factors that “make a community tick” and allows the process of turning “wealth into cash” (or other material or non material outcomes) to take place.

The important point is that in real life “soft” factors such as leadership and sense of community are as relevant to project success as “hard” factors such as the availability of land or person-power. This vital connection is represented in Figure 11.1b by a vertical dotted line. Both are essential components of sustainable development. In addition, a sustainable project should consider not only the viability of the project from a technical or financial perspective, but also the projects' effects on resource use.

The model allows making predictions as to how the different variables interact in the long term (twenty years in the enclosed figures).

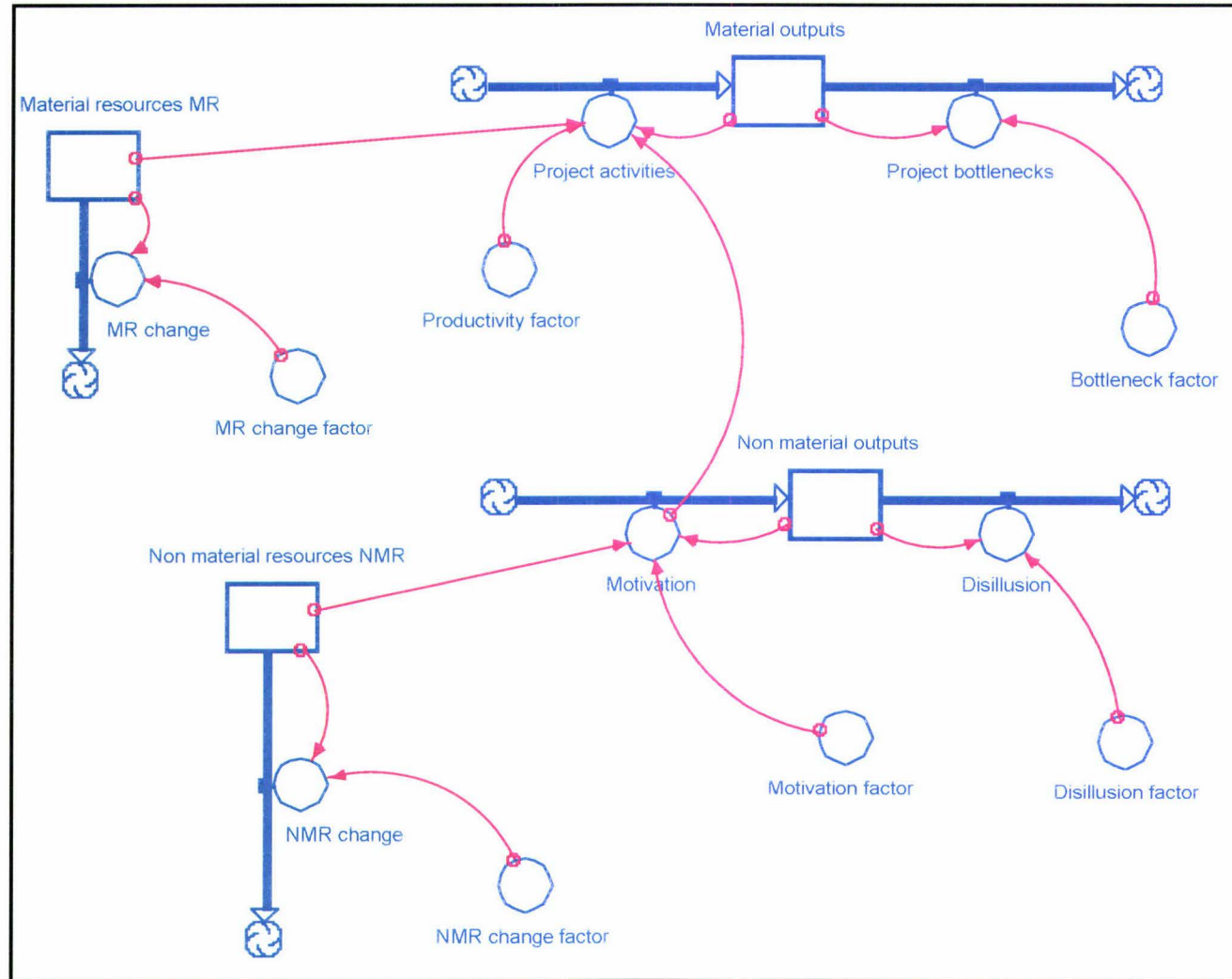
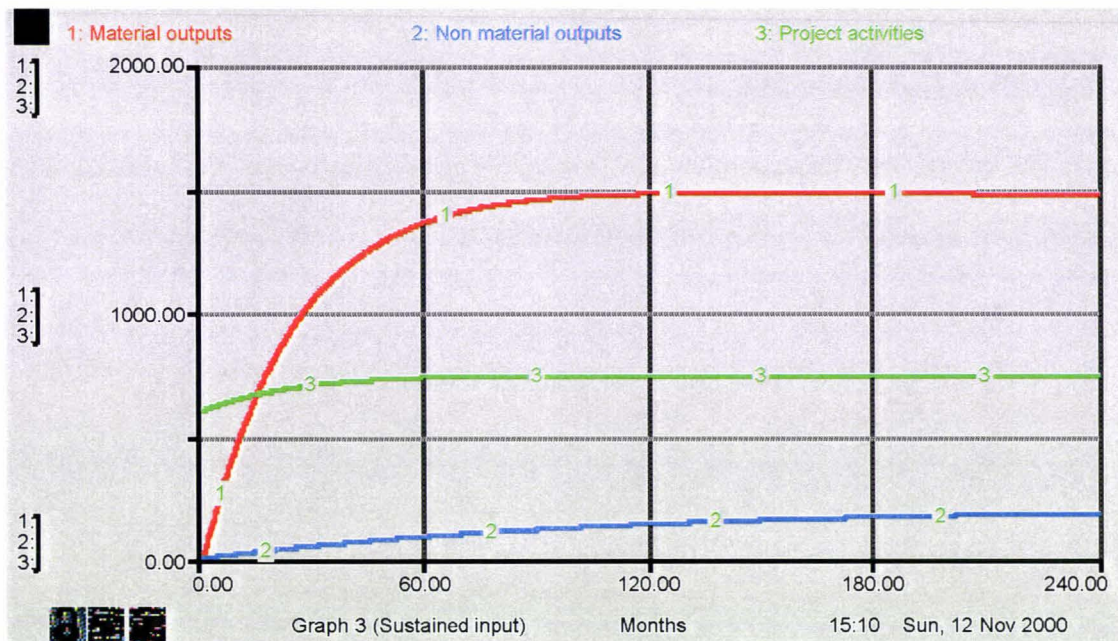
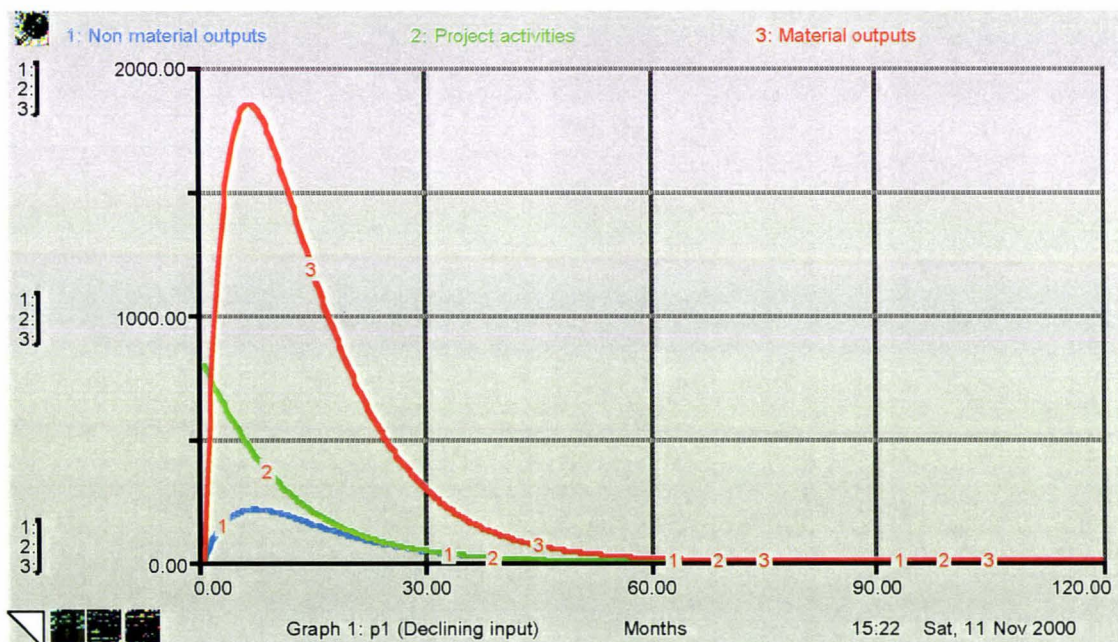


Figure 11.2 : STELLA model for community development projects



(a)

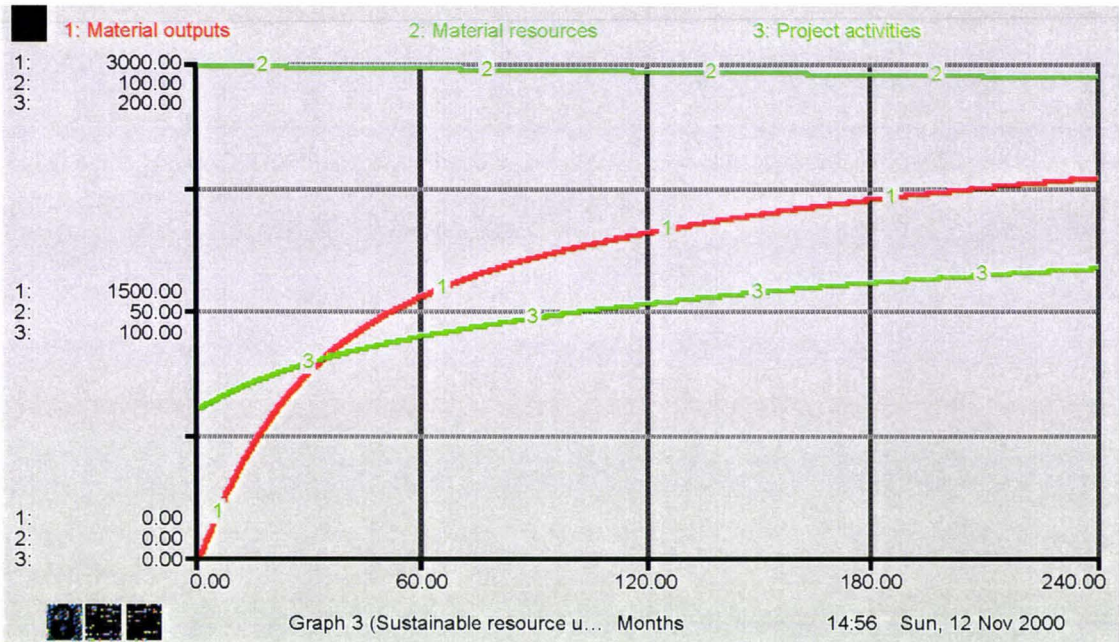


(b)

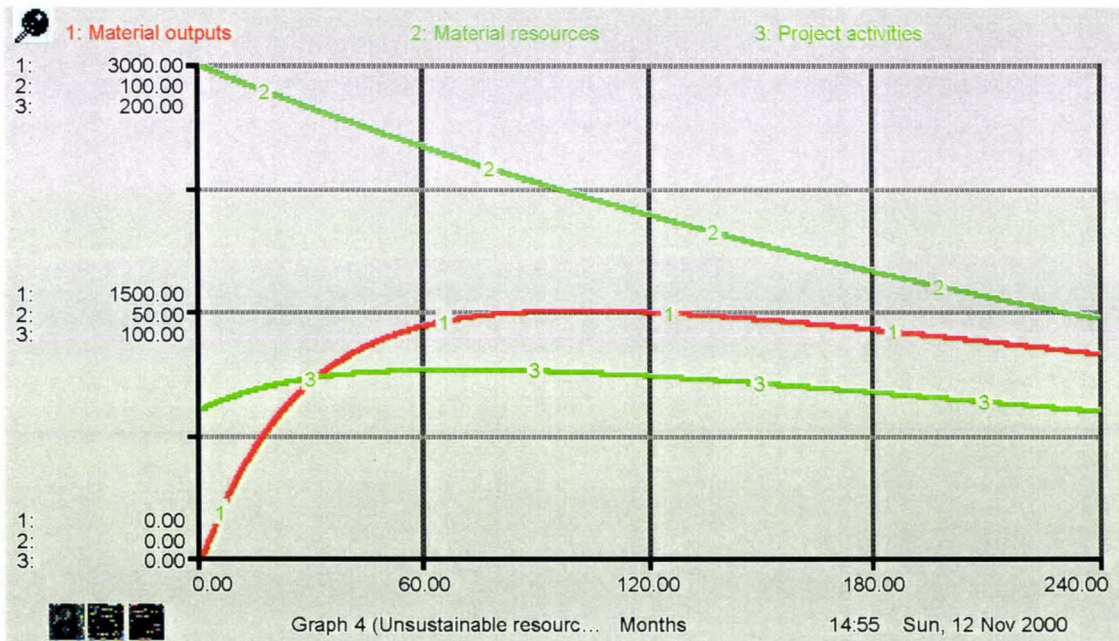
Figure 11.3: *Effect of community input on project outcomes
(All variables constant except “Project activities”)*

(a) Sustained community input: The project completes the project cycle and reaches an operational stage. Community input (project activities) are constant. The project achieves both regular material and non-material outputs over the years. The project could continue indefinitely for as long as resources are available.

(b) Declining community input: Project activities decrease progressively in time. The project follows a “boom and burst” cycle. Material and non-material outputs peak early in the project cycle and then decline.



(a)



(b)

Figure 11.4: Effects of resource use on project viability
(All variables constant except “Material resources”)

(a) Sustainable resource use: If the level of material resources that are the foundations of community projects (e.g. natural resources, labour) are maintained or increased then the project can continue indefinitely. In this case a project can be viable in the long term (i.e. sustainable) because the resource base is sustained.

(b) Unsustainable resource use: If the levels of resources decline over time then the projects will not be viable in the long term even though it may have been technically and financially viable.

11.3 A model of social and economic change in the Solomon Islands

In the Solomon Islands the traditional economic system is the subsistence economy and the traditional social system is focused on rural villages. Together they provide the basis for Solomon Islands culture. As mentioned earlier, *kastom* provided the framework of society and the way society related with the land, the past (through the veneration of ancestors) and the future (through the management of resources).

Over the past 20 or 30 years there have been significant social and economic changes dominated by the adoption of the cash economy and a change in attitudes towards the satisfaction of basic needs, cooperation and communal living. The prevailing trends are towards a greater individualism, dominance of the cash economy and generally adoption of white people's ways. These trends unfold at the expense of the more communal traditional ways and of a simple lifestyle based around the village and subsistence economy. The overall trend of social and economic change was represented earlier (Fig. 2.3).

Current economic and social change trends and the challenges of sustainable development can be represented in a simplified manner in Figure 11.5, which represents the economic system (xx') and the social system (yy'). These systems are in a sustainable balance (or steady state) within certain social, economic and environmental parameters, not defined here, as represented by the white area. Beyond that balance the systems are not sustainable, as marked by the sustainability boundary. Ecological sustainability is assumed. However, there is a "window of sustainability" that narrows through time as, for instance, population grows and the availability of natural resources decreases.

The arrows represent the evolution of these social and economic systems through time, from the remote past ("time before come"²⁰) through to the present and on to a number of possible futures. In the past people lived following *kastom* in a society organised around small communities. Society and the environment were closely related and represented one seamless unit, as it could be represented with the notion of *fanua kem* ("our place"). The system was

²⁰ The first settlers arrived in the Solomon Islands about 5,000-3,500 years BP (Taika 1989:152). The time span from "time before come" to the present could be considered on the order of 25-30 generations or about 750-900 years, which is the known time span of the genealogy of some communities (e.g. Manita'a pers. comm 2000).

stable and with the population numbers at the time, largely sustainable. The closest unsustainable option was that of individuals abandoning the community to adopt a more individualistic system under the *kastom* system (not shown in Fig. 11.5, where it would be an arrow to the north). This would have limited the options for individuals to participate in the barter economy and also would have made them vulnerable to enemy tribes or headhunting raids. This condition changed after contact with the outside world.

The full arrow from the past to the present shows a progressive and steady change from the *kastom* and communal society under a subsistence economy, to a more individualistic society under a cash economy. It could be said that the present represents a transition time in which the subsistence economy and the cash economy coexist in a *dual economy* in which the subsistence economy still prevails (Baenesia pers. comm. 2000). Change will continue following the same trends. The possible futures are represented as futures 1, 2 and 3, which follow weaker to stronger sustainability models. All these three systems continue previous trends towards a growing influence of the cash economy (e.g. as opposed to a return to traditional social and economic structures). Of these three futures marked by a decrease of *kastom* over modern alternatives, future 1 has the largest component of individualism. It is also the one that follows the shortest path to the sustainability boundary and has effectively crossed it (in Fig. 11.5 all the arrows are of the same length). On the contrary, future 3 maintains the existing levels of community involvement while progressing towards the window of sustainability. Future 2 is placed in between.

Not represented here is the option of a traditional communal system under the cash economy (i.e. an arrow to the E). This option would be slightly less sustainable than future 3, because the modern capitalistic system requires and rewards a degree of individualism.

Why is future 3 more sustainable? Because while it ventures into the cash economy it preserves part of the traditional balance of the communal system, which is the system that still regulates social relationships and resource ownership and use in the Solomon Islands. Using the sustainable development framework of the present work, people's well-being and environmental well-being depend on the permanence of the communal system. The dual economy that is effectively replacing the old barter system would not work in a more individualistic system (Baenesia pers. comm 2000). The collapse of the dual economy would also be the collapse of the social framework (e.g. the *wantok* system, the village, the notion of *fanua kem*) and consequently would expose natural resources to unsustainable use (because the population is growing, and natural resources are intrinsically finite).

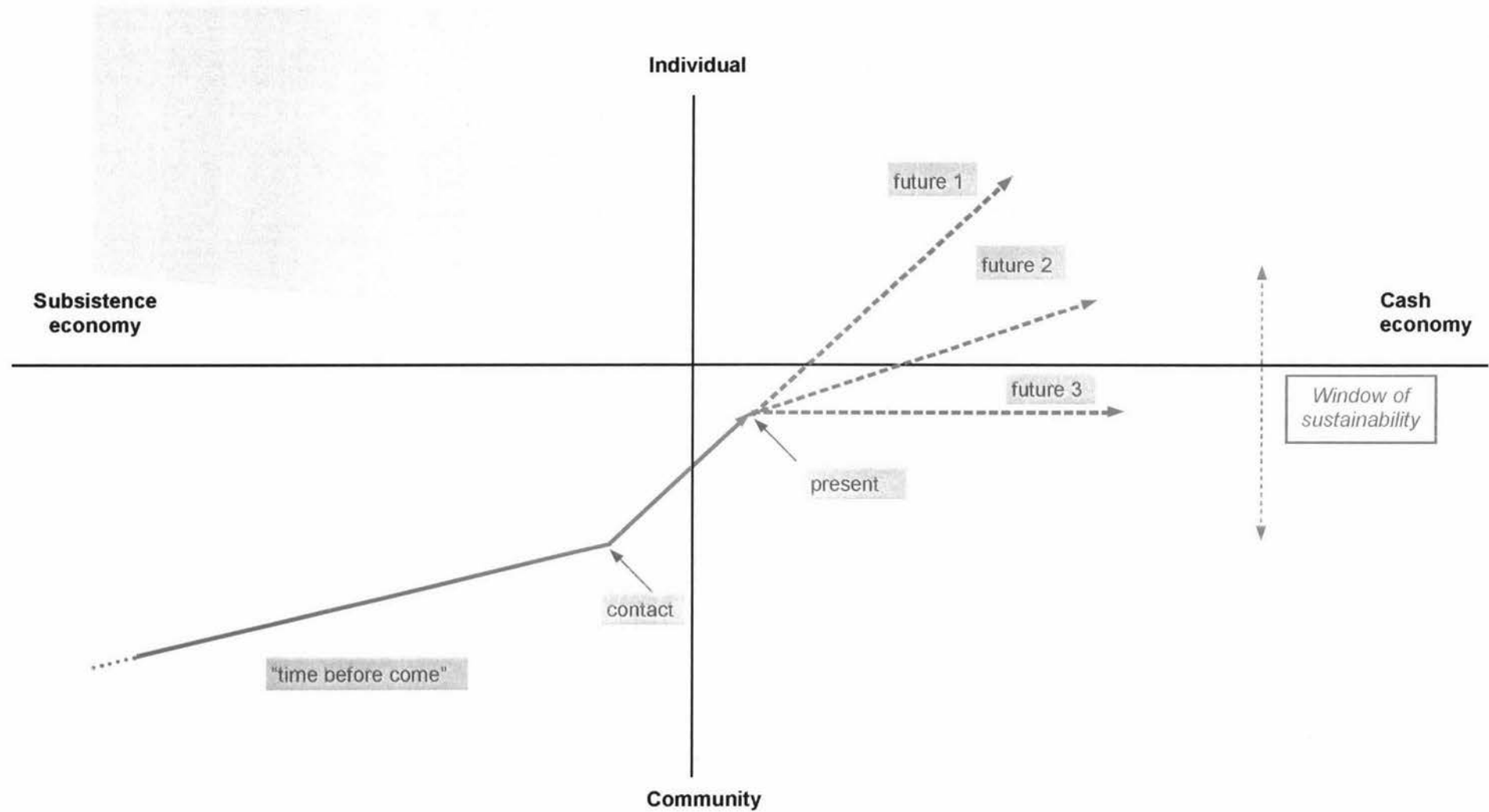


Figure 11.5: *A model of the relationship between social and economic trends in the Solomon Islands since contact with the outside world and perspectives for sustainable development.*

In other words, the goal of a sustainable society in the Solomon Islands depends on the maintenance of at least the basics of the communal system at a level that guarantees the maintenance of the cultural and social system and the integrity of the land as key for ecologically sustainability.

11.4 Conclusions

Two simple analytical tools have been used to describe the long term evolution of community projects and their links to sustainable development.

The system analysis model illustrates that the success of community projects rely both on the availability of natural and adequate human resources, and that a critical link between both lies on “soft” variables—human qualities such as leadership, motivation and hard work. This is consistent with the key factors for project success identified in the field described elsewhere (Chapter 10). From the perspective of long sustainable development, resource-dependent community projects are also dependent on adequate environmental management.

If future activities strike a balance between the various factors involved—social, environmental, economic and cultural—it may be possible that the future unfolds within a “window of sustainability” and that effective progress towards sustainable development in the Solomon Islands, however defined, is made. This is, however, no easy task.

CHAPTER 12: CONCLUSIONS: FROM COMMUNITY PROJECTS TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

12.1 Introduction

The working hypothesis tested through this research is: "Community development projects are a necessary but are not a sufficient means to the end of sustainable development in the Solomon Islands".

To test this hypothesis two issues have been analysed separately: the evaluation of income-generating community development projects, and the contribution of these projects to sustainable development. What has been questioned here is whether development projects are adequate means for arriving to a sustainable future. This is pertinent given 1: the widespread application of *the project* as the main development practice paradigm and 2: the overall poor record of the project to achieve intended results. This study focused on a type of income-generating community projects that would be least likely to fail because of their small scale and degree of grassroots participation in all aspects of the project cycle. It is *the project* what has been questioned here, rather than the involvement of communities in development activities.

Several themes concerning different aspects of community projects and sustainable development have been explored through this study, and will be reviewed in this section.

12.2 The missing link: Development projects contribution to sustainable development

Development projects can be considered the "building blocks" of development (Goodman and Love 1979:7). It is a truism that *if* projects are the bases for development, then sustainable projects are the bases for sustainable development. However, from the perspective of sustainable development the project format has limitations embodied on the short-term project cycle if compared with long term development goals (Overton *et al* 1999:263). It is considered here that development projects can only be sustainable in the long term if they contribute to maintain or improve the well-being of *both* people and ecosystems. This implies that social, environmental and economic objectives should be integrated to development strategies and that choices should be made where integration is not possible (Carwen-Reid 1994). Whilst there is a

level of flexibility in the application of this concept¹ no irreversible social or environmental thresholds should be crossed along the way. In addition, in the long term an increase in the well-being of one of these elements should not (and in many cases, could not) take place at the expense of the other.

Households are under pressure to participate in the cash economy but there are limited opportunities for generating cash. Development projects are among the few alternatives available to rural people. However, it is difficult for rural communities to start a project and there are many potential pitfalls that can prevent a project from meeting its objectives. Indeed, many or most projects fail (e.g. Fa'asale, Wale pers. comm 2000). In addition, even successful community projects do not ensure a long term contribution to sustainable development. This is because, realistically, the outcome of a community project may be modest. According to one informant from the rice farming project at Fiu, one of the most successful community projects identified in this work:

“ I think that the project is good, and will lead us for a good picture in the future: pretty good houses, [if] you look into the house and you will see that things [will] have changed a little bit, [we will] not [be] using kerosene lamps anymore but solar panels”. (A. Molly pers. comm 2000)

This candid definition of development modestly ignores the fact that only a functional community (i.e. a community that “ticks”) could hope to achieve those results. However, are these outcomes sufficient to ensure sustainable development? What are sustainable development projects like in practice?

There is no demonstrated practice of sustainable development, but there is a range of weaker and stronger sustainability models. Local initiatives such as those of SIDT (Chapter 10) have come a long way to defining ecologically sustainable income generating projects. Arguably a project designed and implemented following a stronger sustainability model would more likely make a better contribution to sustainable societies than a project narrowly defined in terms of generating an income. For some of the projects described in this work sustainability was an explicit project goal e.g. the paper-making project at Balai. For others sustainability was implicit in project practice e.g. establishing permanent organic gardens. For most projects, however, the main objective was to improve people's livelihood through the generation of an income. In their own way each of these projects represented a contribution to sustainable

¹ Finding out what the level of flexibility is, is part of the compromise that sustainable development represents.

development for their contribution to people and environmental well-being, but it is questionable that individually or even collectively they would lead to *significant* progress towards sustainable development.

It is proposed here that sustainable development may be realized through the cumulative effect of development activities that may be individually minor—at a local or a higher level—but collectively significant.² It is unlikely and undesirable that there will be a single route to sustainable development (Barrow 1995:379); the same notion applies at the level of community development initiatives, whether these are projects or something else. What is inherently difficult to resolve is how the collective result of many disparate local development initiatives in the present may result in a desired state of affairs in the future—not just locally, but at a national or regional level. This could be called the missing link that exists between community development projects and sustainable development.

Overton *et al* have suggested that at a fundamental level the role of projects is to be a component of a broader process, rather than a time bounded entity that is an objective in itself (Overton *et al* 1999:264). Cumulative outcomes will not happen by chance, but instead the search for sustainability has to be integrated to the design of development activities, which require an overall *strategy for sustainability*. Community projects may fulfil a *tactical* role as part of an overall sustainable development strategy. From this perspective development projects have a role, as long as their inherent limitations are acknowledged. The problem is that arguably too many expectations are placed on the outcomes of community projects, which in fact represent only a fraction of a community's activities, and one form of activity for which many communities are still often unprepared and even unwilling to commit fully.

This analysis suggests that indeed community projects might be a necessary but are not a sufficient component of sustainable development.

² Redclift notes that Claude Lévi-Strauss, in his tract *Race and History* (1958), questions historicist conceptions of progress as flawed: "progress...is neither continuous nor inevitable; its course consists of leaps and bounds...These...are not always in the same direction". Lévi-Strauss further suggests that advancing humanity can be compared to a gambler throwing dice, each throw giving a different score: "what he wins on one (throw), he is always liable to loose on another, and it is only occasionally that history is 'cumulative', that is to say, that the scores add up to a lucky combination" (Lévi-Strauss 1958:23, quoted in Redclift 1994:20). Taking into consideration the growing pressure that exists on natural resources it would be unlikely that sustainable development results from a "lucky combination".

It is apparent that progress towards sustainable development requires long term strategic approaches. In IUCN's words:

"National sustainable development strategies are needed to provide a framework for debate on sustainable development and processes of negotiation, mediation and consensus-building, and to plan and carry out actions to change or strengthen values, knowledge, technologies and institutions with respect to priority issues." (Reid *et al* 1994:

These are fine words, but the reality from the field suggests that this kind of debate may be years if not decades ahead. From this perspective, SIDT's notion of "turning wealth into cash" in a sustainable manner succinctly describes the type of development strategies that are needed *now* at the local level in the Solomon Islands—partly as a stopgap measure for present needs, partly as a foundation for sustainable development in the future.

12.3 A new paradigm of development practice?

Seeking to generate an income through community development projects, broadly defined, is one of the few options available to most rural people and to women, whether because the project effectively manages to generate an income, and/or because it attracts donor resources that otherwise would not be available for the communities.

The failure of many development projects reveals not so much a failure of the people, but a failure of *the project* as a mean to deliver development and progress defined, as the projects themselves, using criteria and approaches that have been introduced in the Melanesian society (or societies) from outside. The growing demands made on projects concerning social and environmental requirements, and the poor record of projects in meeting these requirements, suggest that sooner or later a new development practice paradigm may be required to complement or replace *the project*.

As a first step perhaps it is necessary to streamline the project process so that they become less susceptible to the common causes of failure. This includes placing more emphasis on effective project evaluation, and addressing some of the key common causes of project failure from the early stages of the project cycle. More importantly, a new paradigm of development practice should take into account people's attitudes. The adoption of the cash economy is less of a choice than a necessity to which many communities in the Solomon Islands respond willingly and actively, effectively adapting traditional work ethics ("manpower"), skills and knowledge to

new tasks. Other communities appear less prepared to take action—perhaps as a conscious or unconscious act of resistance to a form of change imposed upon them, perhaps because they are too busy with subsistence activities.

On the one hand, development projects take time and effort, which—land and human resources aside—may be all the resources available to a community. People may not be willing to invest these resources away from essential subsistence activities and into development projects unless returns are certain. The concept of para-project (Chambers 1993:86), with its emphasis on locally available resources and qualitative growth may be an alternative to mainstream development projects more suited to the conditions in many Solomon Islands villages. On the other hand, in the Solomon Islands society and economy there is a growing tendency towards individualism at the expense of communal values, and of modernity and Western values at the expense of customary values. There is an argument that the planning and implementation of development activities should reflect rather than ignore these trends, while at the same time steering towards a sustainable society. Money, and the needs and wants money may satisfy, are at the heart of the matter. In the case of income generating projects it is often money in all its aspects—greed, financial management, transparency—that clashes with the communal social structures, in some cases leading to both the collapse of the project and the breakdown of the community. This does not necessarily have to be the case, and is the reason why some people prefer to manage their finances in smaller community groups, individual families or groups of families, or individually. This does not necessarily have to affect the sense of community—as demonstrated, for instance, as the cases of Busurata and Fiu, where the result of transparent financial management in small groups was to keep the communities functional.

A parallel trend is that income-generating community projects become closer to the model of a small or medium-scale business central to community life, as opposed to an income generating activity complementary of subsistence living activities. Community projects may thus become more “professional” in outlook, from the perspective of the development actors.³

These emerging trends may shed some clarity as to what a new development practice paradigm may be like. Development activities should be more adapted to local conditions and interests, more effective in achieving its objectives, and the same time fitting in a strategy for sustainable development. It has been suggested at the beginning of this study that the search for sustainable

³ Reportedly both the government and NGOs are looking for development activities that include medium scale economic units rather than only small scale units (Rosoman, M. Hora pers. comm. 2000).

development could be considered either an oxymoron—and as such, a dead end—or a way of turning limitations into opportunities. A new paradigm of development practice could contribute to turn limitations into opportunities. It could also contribute to strike the right balance between a subsistence and cash economy. As the examples of this research suggest, no one is better qualified to make these choices than the development actors themselves—perhaps in a synergy of local and outside views that combines the best each party has to offer (e.g. Overton *et al* 1999:259). Locally, some individuals and communities will lead and assume role models; others may follow suit. Existing support agencies—from the provincial or central government, or overseas donors—should arguably place more emphasis on the support of emerging local initiatives rather than insisting on tired models.

12.4 Conclusions: The journey of a thousand miles

Overton *et al* suggest that cultural change has been a driving force for environmental change. Many of the problems in the Solomon Islands arise as a consequence of superimposing Western political and economic systems on a tribal society. For the Pacific, culturally defined concepts such as *vanua* could provide the philosophical and cultural bases for sustainability by providing a vital link with the past (Overton *et al* 1999:266). The same concept applies to the Solomon Islands, where the notion of *fanua* may provide a cultural point of reference in a changing context.

The linkage that exists between resource use at present and the future of younger generations provides perhaps the best reason for sustainable development in the Solomon Islands, and the most clear picture of what it is or what it might be. For many people interviewed for this work the future of their children and grandchildren was a cause of concern, and their desire was that the land and the sea could still provide for them in the future even as communities moved towards a cash economy, as it had provided for them and their ancestors. This is perhaps the main criteria of sustainability as understood by many Solomon Islands communities. The ends and means of locally sustainable development in the Solomon Islands may be contained within this social and geographical context—*fanua*, village, community—and the multiple relations it defines between and within people and places. This because—in Kwara'ae at least—stewardship of the *land* means looking after *people*:

“The meaning of the leadership of the land is this: the person who is leader and his clan must look after and manage their land so that the land and all the things on the land will be good, enabling their families and their descendants to live well and to obtain food and raw materials, on and on into the distant future. Because land is the father and mother of

Kwara'ae people and leadership for land means looking after the clan and all the people of the land." (Burt and Kwa'ialoa 1992:47).

It is apparent that as used by people in everyday language *fanua* does not necessarily define an idealistic, holistic world view from which the notion of sustainable development can be consciously made operational.⁴ It is not so much a matter of awareness of superior goals; rather, it is its quotidian quality and ubiquitous use in Solomon Islands villages and across cultural groups that the notion of "our place" does provide a sense of identity and belonging to a place, a community, a common past, and a common future.

"When I say [to people], 'are you going to protect the *hanua* (*fanua*)?' 'Of course!' [they say]. There is no question [about that]. 'Are you going to protect the environment?' 'I don't know' [may be the answer]. It is not just a matter of a word, is the whole understanding of what this is...People understand intuitively that the relationship they have with all these different realities is summed up in a word *hanua*, *vanua* (*fanua*).'" (Rougham, pers.comm. 2000).

As the Solomon Islands society moves away from a communal society in a subsistence economy, towards a more individualistic society under the cash economy (a dynamic process represented in Fig. 2.4) the challenges are to determine both *what* aspects of tradition could or should be left or changed, and *how* to make these choices. Arguably some of the social and economic changes that have taken place since contact are positive and some are not; some aspects of culture, *kastom* and tradition are to be cherished and preserved while others may need to be changed to conform to universal values—for after all the Solomon Islands is not just a place where things are only "local". According to Kwara'ae chiefs, a clear understanding of the past is essential for making these choices for the future:

"The life of Kwara'ae is changing very fast. Many people in Kwara'ae are forgetting their old traditions or they are changing their old traditions to suit life in the present day and in future times to come. But if we want to change the traditions of the past, we must first understand them before we choose what tradition is good for us to hold and what tradition is appropriate that we change. We must first be sure of the old traditions, before we choose what is suitable for life at this time or in times to come." (Burt and Kwa'ialoa 1992:5).⁵

⁴ This might be a consequence of an erosion of the meaning of *fanua* as described, for Fiji's *vanua*, by Batibasaga *et al* 1999:103.

⁵ In the same vein, SIDT suggests that Solomon Islanders should think about these issues, embrace positive changes and reject negative changes (SIDT 1996:1).

The approach of maintaining the elements of tradition that are valuable while modernizing others or adapting entirely new approaches has been called “progressing with the past” (Clark 1978, Overton *et al* 1999). This may be the path for sustainable development in the Solomon Islands. The traditional and modern systems can coexist in matters that concern the use of the land and the relationship of people with land, as might be expressed with the notion of *fanua*. However, the traditional *kastom* system and the modern systems are by and large mutually exclusive in what concerns gender relations. Just, equitable development that is ecologically sustainable may require changing the relationship between people (i.e. gender relations) without necessarily changing the interdependent relationship between people and places. For a more appropriate definition of sustainable development in a Solomon Islands context it is better to quote a Solomon Islander:

“...despite disputes over land, and despite changes in the way it is used and in the social system of its inhabitants, the land will endure. If treated with respect, if not polluted or plundered, the land, and the sea, will continue indefinitely to sustain us and our descendants in *comfort and dignity*, as they did our ancestors.” (Foanaota 1989:72; emphasis added).

This could be considered a good description (a vision?) of what sustainable development in the Solomon Islands might be: indefinite sustenance from the land and sea—and within the limits of nature; comfort from the satisfaction of basic needs, and the dignity of social justice and gender equality. If the land sustained the people for generations, the people looked after the land, and by settling it and taking root transformed it into *fanua kem*, “our place”.

Ultimately it is a sense of belonging to a place and a community, whether local or global (or both), what will make our choices for the future clearly apparent. It is from our own places and societies—*fanua kem*, the earth as our home—where the journey starts, and also where it ends. Sustainable development is a journey as much as a destination; but it is a journey along a narrow path, and each step should be more or less in the right direction. Certainly it cannot take us backwards or into a bottomless crevasse. Achieving sustainable development means staying on track on into the future to be able to continue the journey. People in the Solomon Islands have been journeying through their lands and forests, “foot by foot”, by generations, and in the process making the land their home for them and their descendants. Metaphorically, their journey continues, and so does ours. Community development projects, as individual steps, may or may not contribute to sustainable development. A single step will not take us to the end of the journey; the journey of a thousand miles starts from where we stand.

ANNEXES

ANNEX I: YOUTH CHALLENGE INTERNATIONAL'S "PROJECT SOLOMON ISLANDS"

Introduction

Part of this research focuses on three community projects with which the author was personally involved in the Solomon Islands in 1994 while working with the Australian branch of a small international NGO, Youth Challenge International (YCI). These projects are described in Chapter 8. The involvement of the organization facilitated the participant observation that constitutes an important part of this research. Consequently, it is appropriate to provide a brief description of the organization and its *modus operandi* in the Solomon Islands.

However, this research is not about the organization itself, or about the contribution of YCI to community development in the Solomon Islands. The involvement of YCI was important especially in one of the projects described here, but not in the others.

Youth Challenge International

Youth Challenge International (YCI) is a non-profit, non religious volunteer organization with focus on youth and community development. In 1994 YCI had regional offices in Canada (international headquarters - Toronto) and Australia (Sydney). The organization worked or had worked (or had partners) in Costa Rica and Guyana (since the late 1980s), the Canadian Arctic (1990) and the Solomon Islands (1993-1995).

The focus, justification and lifeline of YCI is the active participation of young volunteers (18-25 years of age). Upon application to participate in one of the various programs run by the organization, the participants had to undergo four "challenges". The "challenges" included: a selection process that tested of the physical and psychological aptitude of the candidates; a fund-raising period to pay for the individual expenses and to cover the project costs; a three months period of volunteer field work in a developing country; and a 100-hundred hours period of volunteer work back in their own communities. Each stage designed both to provide the

opportunity for participants to acquire different skills and to be valuable as an experience in itself, independently of the other stages.

For the successful participants the involvement with the organization was of approximately one year, the time required to complete the four “challenges”. For local participants (i.e. Costarricans, Guyanese, Solomon Islanders) the involvement was largely limited to the field work. Some of the participants returned to work with YCI as staff trainees, which enabled them to participate as full staff members in following years.

“Project Solomon Islands”

In 1993 YCI expanded the geographic scope of its operations to include a program in the Solomon Islands. Activities in the Solomon Islands projects ran from 1993-1995, with three projects completed in that time. These projects were different in the sense that the in-country headquarters was not supported by YCI headquarters in Toronto but were the initiative and responsibility of the Australian office (Youth Challenge Australia – YCA). The preparatory steps for starting activities in the Solomon Islands were conducted with the assistance of a local NGO, Development Services Exchange (DSE), which is active on the field of youth and community development. According to a DSE representative who was involved in the process:

“Having so many issues that face young people, the scheme was to motivate and mobilize young people at a community level, to increase the idea of voluntarism so that we have more local volunteers. People that came in were from [that] special field overseas. We initially identified school leavers who were interested in working with young people and communities. The whole idea was a cross-cultural exchange and at the same time to motivate Solomon Islanders to become active on the field of community. When the expatriates leave these volunteers should be supported by local communities and be able to continue the good work. So that was how it was developed.” (Fa’asale pers. comm.2000).

The first year (1993) had 38 young volunteers from the various countries involved with YCI—Australia, Canada and Costa Rica—as well as 13 Solomon Islanders, working in three provinces on community services and medical assistance. The organization returned in 1994 with over 60 participants including 20 Solomon Islanders and 20 staff members. Seven teams of volunteers worked on a variety of construction, education and medical projects in most provinces, as well as in the survey of *kastom* sites.

The criteria to select projects suitable for YCA included that the projects had to be:

- Suitable for work-based cooperation by international youth teams;

- Labor-intensive; and
- Located in sites of relatively easy access and where there was some sort of accommodation available.

Many projects involved construction and maintenance work in villages, hospitals or schools. More skilled activities such as para-medical assistance and contributions to teaching and training were carried out as well. In some projects the participants assisted the activities of specialists e.g. mobile dental clinics. More importantly from a development perspective, the village-based projects had to be community initiatives, or had already been adopted by communities (e.g. installation of toilets, water tanks, etc.). YCI's contribution to this type of project was largely as unskilled labour.

In cases YCI worked in cooperation with other organizations or government departments. In 1994 it cooperated with the World Health Organization in a project, named "Makira Against Malaria", on malaria awareness and distribution of bed nets. In other cases the organization brought the specialists to the Solomon Islands. In 1994 YCI organized a roving dental clinic with a volunteer dentist, and facilitated the deployment of Surgical Eye Expeditions (SEE), a USA-based organization of eye surgeons who volunteer a week a year to perform sight restorations operations.

The organization intended to work towards the establishment of a permanent local base in the Solomon Islands. This, however, was not to happen. The Project Solomon Islands was discontinued.

"In 1995 the decision was made to cease running projects out of the Youth Challenge Australia office for the time being. Without external funding for full-time staff, personnel and volunteers were being pushed beyond what could reasonably be expected in their efforts to support the Solomon Islands program - a job that would realistically require several more staff dedicated full-time to overseeing operations, logistics and participation." (YCI website).

The main projects carried out during the three years that comprised the involvement of YCI in the Solomon Islands are listed in Box i.

Notes on the development impact of YCI

Modus operandi and approach to development

YCI's mission was defined as "promoting young people's active, responsible and continuing participation in critical issues of local and global development" with a vision towards "...a sustainable and co-operative global network, with partners in developed and developing regions of the world".¹ In practice, YCI's philosophy had a cultural exchange focus rather than catalyzing change. Most of YCI staff came from a background on leadership, outdoor education, leisure studies, teaching, and medical or paramedical sciences. While some staff had significant hands-on experience on development work, the background of staff members and the funding status of the organization somewhat shaped the philosophy and actions of YCI and its perceived role as an NGO. Rather than taking the role as a "mover and shaker", the role of YCA was that of a "doer". The projects that suited YCI required "doing" something that would keep the volunteers busy. However, in practice it was accepted that "...we don't need to leave something behind" (i.e. in terms of a physical structure). Instead "YCI participants may go on and touch other people afterwards, [creating] a cascade effect".²

The organization's role as an agent of change was self-regulated by the need to be seen as acceptable by the authorities. For instance, it was an unwritten policy in the Solomon Islands for staff not to become officially involved in the logging issue, which was a politically sensitive issue in the mid-1990s. Some staff and participants resented not being able to promote change where it was most needed; other NGOs in the Solomon Islands were reluctant to work with YCI.

Very limited financial resources and an open donor policy further constrained YCI's actions. Some staff and participants argued that a company with unethical sources of income (e.g. a tobacco or logging company) could have disabled the organization capability to promote change

¹ These quotes from YCA's web site illustrate the impression of participants about their work with the organisation:

"I kept thinking that throughout our construction projects, the locals could work faster than myself. I soon learned to recognize that it was not my skilled (or unskilled) labour that made the difference. It was the sharing of ideas. We initiated some infrastructure within the communities, but we never worked without the collaboration of the villagers." (Lara Spiers)

"To wake and see the sunrise in this amazing place each day was just fantastic, and *the work we did seemed to be of real benefit to the communities where we helped out*. I will never forget the friends, the people, the customs and the beauty of the Solomons." (Averil Yeo—emphasis added).

² Staff briefing (Honiara, 22.03.94).

with a comparatively small donation. This, however, was a potential rather than actual outcome.

Social impact

The most obvious social impact of YCI was the temporary demographic changes that a team of 10-12 people (largely but not exclusively *Areikwaos* or white people) had on villages during visits lasting of several weeks, and the perceived intrusion in community life these visits caused, even though these issues were discussed beforehand with the community representatives so that they would know what to expect when the youth group arrived.

An additional source of tension was that the project timing was, in some cases, different for the participants and the local communities. Whilst the former had to occupy their time every day; the latter would normally devote to communal activities a few hours a day, one or two days a week. The rest of the time people would work in their own private affairs or their communal activities unrelated to "the project". A tacit rule from YCI was that the number of volunteers working on a given project should not exceed that of locals i.e. at the very least, a 1:1 ratio of participants-locals had to be maintained in projects that required labour. From personal observations it appears that, over the weeks, the initial enthusiasm of the communities on working every day on communal projects along with the visitors waned, in which case it become difficult to maintain this ratio. Local people had ample time to complete their chores in the weeks, months or years to come, while the visitors had only a limited number of weeks to achieve "something".

Reportedly there was an expectation at a community level that YCI would contribute to their projects not only with labour but also with funds, even though it was made very clear in dealings with community leaders that this was not the case. Solomon Islands participants might have had the same expectations:

"I think it was an expectation of local young people that when the volunteers came from overseas they came with money to work with. At the same time the expectation of the communities was the same. They thought that the volunteers would not only come and work, but also to sponsor. They would come in and establish projects. That was the expectation that I think people misunderstood and led to the discontinuity of the project." (Fa'asale, pers.com. 2000).

YCI made a strict policy of working with projects that had already been identified initiated at a community level. However:

"It is quite difficult for communities to identify projects, because that [should be] planned and owned by the communities. Once the [YCI] scheme was established it took off that kind of understanding from the community. The community here in the case of the Solomon Islands having an expatriate—specially [someone] bringing in something—they thought that he or she must also have the money. So they shifted from the community understanding, from the community volunteer work and were [instead] mastered by the dollar thinking." (Fa'asale pers.com. 2000).

Local communities were quite prepared to accept free labour, even if disinterested about the "cultural exchange" focus central to YCI's activities. In some cases, the communities were not prepared to contribute with their own labour. In one of the sites where the author was working (a rural water supply) it was very difficult to have the locals participating in the very hard physical labour involved. The project was eventually completed, largely by the efforts of two RWSS technicians, the volunteers and a handful of locals. Yet the motivation for the involvement of YCI remained unclear for the community. In the words of the community chief at the opening ceremony without a hint of irony: "What you have done for us is beyond human comprehension" (pers.obs. 1994).

Within the limited possibilities inherent to short-term involvement, the youth group presence was rather empowering through *action*—particularly in the group's roles as a catalyst (or perhaps energiser) of labour intensive projects. As a downside, the group presence had a disempowering effect through *interaction*. This was the case even though both sides enjoyed the social and cultural contact. The critical issue was of choice: *Areikwaos* had a seemingly unlimited range of choices available to them—access to goods, superior education and health care, international travel, jobs—while the Solomon Islanders had to make do with what they had, even if a great deal of it was very unique. As expressed by a chief as the group was about to depart: "You will now return to Australia but I will stay in the village for life" (Manita'a pers. comm. 1994).

In a male-dominated society, *Areikwao* women played a somewhat subversive role. Over half of YCI staff were women, including some Solomon Islands women. YCI women participated in building activities, a traditional male task in the Solomon Islands, and talked to local men as equals. Local women enjoyed working with Western women and felt free to criticize Solomon Islands men for their lack of cooperation on daily chores. However, questions remain as to whether YCI women were treated as "honorary men" rather than women; and whether this contact, after departure, promoted subtle changes, or simply made the local women painfully aware of their situation.

The involvement of YCI also had some positive effects. YCI's contribution accelerated completing infrastructure projects. Sight restoration operations, which YCI helped to arrange, were a first in the Solomon Islands and continued to run annually after YCI's Project Solomon Islands was cancelled. The Solomon Islands participants often found it interesting to travel to other parts of the country and experience a culture different than theirs and have what was in retrospect a unique experience (Caroline, Jeffrey, pers. comm. 2000).

Conclusions

Despite its brief period of activity and patchy record, YCI did not disappear from the Solomon Islands without a mark. Some of the projects were actually useful for the communities or individuals; other projects that YCI had facilitated, such as the involvement of sight restoration organizations in the Solomon Islands, continued thereafter (Maeliu pers.comm. 2000). If nothing else, some people kept good memories of their "cross-cultural" experience with the youth organisation.

Importantly, in a context of growing numbers of unemployed and unemployable school drop outs YCI identified a need that is yet to be fulfilled:

"It is a pity they cancelled the project, last year in the Parliamentary session, the Honourable Member for Makira moved a motion in Parliament asking for government support to establish a national youth volunteer organization. It leads [to] a primary arm to develop a program that would shed the concept to Solomon Islands youth and develop from there." (Fa'asale pers.com. 2000).

The current education system in the Solomon Islands causes a large number of young school dropouts lacking in education and self-confidence, while the existing process of social change attracts them irresistibly away from the villages and into towns. A volunteer youth organisation working on community development projects may have a role to play in the Solomon Islands until a more inclusive education and youth policy is in place.

Box i: Principal projects of YCI in the Solomon Islands 1993-1995

Infrastructure

- Construction and/or maintenance of rural water supplies, school or hospital buildings, a wharf and a playground;

Medical and health

- Work with the World Health Organization (WHO) as part of the "Makira Against Malaria" campaign, visiting over 70 villages to treat bed nets, reinforce malaria awareness education and to help communities clean up mosquito breeding areas.
- Operation of mobile dental clinics: over 100 patients in three provinces were provided with basic dental care.
- Selection and processing ca. 60 patients a year for eye surgery (lens replacements and cataract extraction) in conjunction with Surgical Eye Expeditions (SEE) International.

Miscellaneous

- Work with archaeologists in Tetepare and Rendova Islands as part of a provincial government program to record, preserve and protect artifacts and places of historical significance.
- Photographing and surveying of relics from World War II and traditional custom sites in conjunction with the Solomon Islands National Museum.
- Drafting of an eco-tourism proposal for Santa Isabel.
- Monitoring water quality in the Auki area, Malaita Province.

ANNEX II: RESULTS OF A PRA EXERCISE³, BALAI COMMUNITY, AUGUST 1993

Introduction

The results of a set of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) conducted by Balai community in 1993 are included here for two reasons. First, they illustrate a technique not used in this study. Second, they provide an insight on the history and life of this community, which can be taken as representative of those of other communities in West Kwaio and in the study area at large.

Anonakinaki⁴ time-line

Year	Event
1904	Naliao ⁵ (pagan)
1909	Christianity at Foau [village] ⁶
1910	Kumara comes from Norfolk Island
1927	Moved from Naliao to Anoasa ⁷
1937	School—mission
1942	World War II
1947	Frogs introduced: disaster to local plants and animals; imprisonment if killed
1945	Maasina Ruru movement
1948	Moved from Anoasa to Umumaoro-Bina (six families)
1949	Moved from Bina to Busurata ⁸ [due to] new disease [and] two different churches at Bina
1953	Head tax introduced
1957	Cocoa development, rice and beans introduced

³ Transcription from a drawing on paper, photographed by the author in 1994.

⁴ Two of the villages in the study area, Balai and Feratofea, originate from Anonakinaki village. All villages are located within a few kilometres of each other.

⁵ This geographical name (and others in this annex) is both the name of a *location* and the name of a *village* established at this location. The first is permanent while the second is temporary.

⁶ A coastal Langalanga village located close to the present location of Anonakinaki.

⁷ It is not clear if this refers to the same village as Anoa'asa, a Kwara'ae village in Central Kwara'ae (Chapter 9). This, however, would be unlikely as people belong to different Kwara'ae tribes.

⁸ More likely this does not refer to the same village as Busurata, a Kwara'ae village in Central Kwara'ae (Chapter 8).

	Feast for Bishop Alfred Thomas Hill Doctor starts treating yaws
1960	Union of community
1964	Move from Busurata to Namobusu [due to] sickness Cattle project at Anonakinai ⁹ Land disputes (14 families)
1969	Cyclone, big damage
1974	Roads [construction]
1975	Move from Namobusu [village] to Anonakinaki. Winds up on hill, not enough space. Moved close to road, medical attention etc.
1977	Earthquake (centred west of Guadalcanal)
1980/81	Land disputes. Balai land [on] coast side of land
1985	High court—water supply (source?) in Anonakinaki
1986	Cyclone Namu, big damage. Credit union started
1988	Honey project [at] Anonakinaki
1989	Balai project started—logging.
1990	Rest house built [at] Balai
1992	Reafforestation, agroforestry, Feratofea [projects]
1993	Bina land disputes. 37 families [at] Anonakinaki. Centre house, training, SIDT's AGM [held at Centre] Conservation area surveyed

⁹ Presumably the village was not yet at the location known as Anonakinaki.

Community skills and knowledge

SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE	WHO CAN DO IT?			
	Everyone	Many people	Some people	One or two people
1. Canoe building			✓	
2. Local house		✓		
3. Permanent house			✓	
4. Accounting				✓
5. <i>Kastom</i> bowl			✓	
6. Garden tool		✓		
7. Cattle				✓
8. <i>Kastom</i> medicine				✓
9. Wooden drum			✓	
10. Chainsaw operator			✓	
11. Furniture			✓	
12. Sewing\tailor			✓	
13. <i>Kastom</i> umbrella		✓		
14. Axe handle			✓	
15. Feeding pigs		✓		
16. Traditional history			✓	
17. <i>Kastom</i> dance			✓	
18. Hunting pigs, possum		✓		
19. Making bow and arrow			✓	
20. <i>Kastom</i> basket			✓	
21. Boat building			✓	
22. Reading and writing English			✓	
23. <i>Kastom</i> teaching			✓	
24. Cooking		✓		
25. Panpipe			✓	
26. Beating drum			✓	
27. Electrician				✓
28. Singing	✓			

29. Diving			✓	
30. Pudding ¹⁰		✓		
31. Stone oven		✓		
32. Charcoal stove			✓	
33. Climbing	✓			
34. Looking after pikinini	✓			
35. Kwara'ae read and write			✓	
36. Speak Pijin		✓		
37. Speak Kwaio	✓		✓	
38. Speak Langalanga			✓	
39. Honey bee			✓	
40. Fishing			✓	
41. Driving truck			✓	
42. Riding bicycle		✓		
43. Stealing			✓	
44. Garden planting	✓			
45. Tree planting		✓		
46. Catechist			✓	
47. School teacher				✓
48. <i>Kastom</i> priest			✓	
49. Business			✓	
50. <i>Kastom</i> feast control				✓
51. <i>Kastom</i> money			✓	
52. Making fire with sticks	✓			
53. Painting house			✓	
54. Copra cutting			✓	
55. Hammering nut	✓			
56. Making <i>kastom</i> betel nut bowl			✓	

¹⁰ Presumably this refers to a cassava and coconut milk pudding, traditionally cooked over the fire inside a segment of green bamboo.

ANNEX III: KEY INFORMANTS

- All locations are in Malaita Province except Honiara.
- The spelling of informants' names adopted here is in many cases phonetic and may be incorrect.
- (*) Indicates two or more interviews.

Community members and individuals

1994¹¹

1. Doreen Gini, project leader, Busurata
2. George Tome, project leader, Balai
3. Isaac Manita'a, *Kastom* Chief, Feratofea (*)
4. Lionel Maeliu, project leader, Busurata (*)
5. Paul Hino, Secretary, Feratofea Cultural Centre Steering Committee, Anonakinaki(*)
6. Phillip, son of Kinsita'a, Anonakinaki
7. Savana Kinsita'a, Paramount Chief, Anonakinaki
8. The people of Feratofea, Anonakinaki, Balai and Busurata villages

2000

9. Abel Maerere Moly, Project Leader, Fiu
10. Agustin Maimarine, "bush lawyer", Gwaidalo (*)
11. Annie Dunstone, bussinesswoman, Auki
12. Chief, Gwaidalo
13. Chief, highland village
14. Daniel, son of Manita'a, Feratofea
15. Edward, Balai
16. George Tome, Chief, Balai Community
17. Helen Anilafa-Anisi, businesswoman, Auki
18. Hugo Takana'a, Chairman, Balai Community
19. Isaac Manita'a, *Kastom* Chief, Feratofea (*)
20. Janet, Busurata
21. Jason and son Samuel, Faumarako
22. Jeffrey Takana'a, Balai Community
23. Jim Misuka, Paramount Chief, Anoa'sa
24. John Dili, carpenter, and son Stephen, Gwaidalo (*)
25. John Mata, logger, Log Pond, Auki
26. John Toli-Walesome, carpenter, Feratofea
27. Joseph Dick Kolosu, Chairman, Kwaio Fatana (Federation of Kwaio Tribes), Sinalagu (*)
28. Lionel Maeliu, project leader, Busurata (*)

¹¹ About 30% of my time in the Solomon Islands in 1994 was spent in communities in North Malaita near Malu'u, not included here.

29. Patrick Fa'afale, Balai
30. Reuben Moly, Chairman, Fiu
31. Savana Kinsita'a, Paramount Chief, Anonakinaki
32. Smiley, Manager, Auki Travellers Motel, Auki (*)
33. Willy, son of Manita'a, Feratofea (*)

Government, churches and international agencies

1994

34. Matthew Kuri, Forestry Division, Auki
35. Ben Karai, Senior Planning Officer, Auki
36. Bobby Patterson, Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Office, Auki
37. Dr. R. Velayudhan, Associate Professional Officer, World Health Organisation, Honiara
38. Mark Maeliau, Eye Nurse, Kilu'ufi Hospital, Auki
39. Mateo Iroga, Secretary, Catholic Church Administration, Auki
40. The staff and management of Kilu'ufi Hospital, Auki

2000

41. Alex Ruksia, Malaita Area Recorder, Customary Lands Office, Auki
42. Alphonse Wale, Senior Planning Officer, Malaita Provincial Government, Auki (*)
43. Andrew Toritelia, Fisheries Assistant, Fisheries Development Center, Auki
44. Fred Fakare, Malaita Provincial Secretary, Auki
45. Joseph Rausi, Director, Provincial Government Development Unit, Honiara
46. Kassa, Development Planning Department, Honiara
47. Keith Dolman, Team Leader, AusAID Forest Management Project
48. Marc Maeliau, Senior Nursing Officer, Kilu'ufi Hospital, Kilu'ufi
49. Margaret Mielawa, Women's Desk, Malaita Provincial Government, Auki
50. Mathew Ata, Forestry Officer, Forestry Division, Auki
51. Mathew Kuri, Malaita Development Agency, Auki
52. Nestor Pestelos, Chief Technical Advisor, UNDP Solomon Islands Development Administration and Participatory Planning Programme (SIDAPP), Honiara
53. Richard (Dick) Fa'alimae, Consultant to the Census Office, Auki
54. Peter Sheeham, Commissioner of Forests, Ministry of Natural Resources, Honiara
55. Willy Garcia, UNDP Micro Credit Development Specialist, Honiara
56. Wilson Kafo, Principal, Gwaidinale Community High School, Gwaidinale

Non-Governmental Organisations

1994

57. Abraham Baenesia, Director, SIDT, Honiara
58. Eddy Elifau, SIDT Field Officer for North Malaita, Auki
59. Jim Edwards, National Fund (?), Honiara
60. John Roughan, Adviser, SIDT, Honiara
61. Lawrence Makili, Greenpeace Solomon Islands, Honiara
62. Nicholas Kikini, Planning/Finance Officer, SIDT, Honiara
63. Philip Pupuka, Greenpeace Solomon Islands, Honiara

64. Robin Connor, Resource Manager, Maruia Society, Honiara
65. The staff and doctors of Surgical Eye Expeditions
66. The staff and participants of Project Solomon Islands 1994

2000

67. Abraham Baenesia, Director, SIDT, Honiara
68. Casper Fa'asala, DSE General Secretary (*), Honiara
69. Grant Rosoman, Ecoforestry Project (Greenpeace New Zealand/SIDT)
70. Ian Robinson, CSO/DSE, Honiara (*)
71. John Roughan, SIDT Adviser, Honiara (*)
72. Lucy Hora, SIDT Women Programme Honiara
73. Mike Hora, SIDT Training Officer, Honiara
74. Policarp, SIDT Regional Officer for North Malaita, Foau
75. Silverio Wale, SIDT Project Department, Honiara

Miscellaneous/short interviews

76. Carolyn, 1994 YCI Solomon Islands staff, Lilisiana
77. George Agisiringi, police officer, Foau
78. Isaac Ciril, logger, Feratofea
79. Francis, driver, Auki
80. Jeffrey, 1994 YCI Solomon Islands participant & fisherman, Auki
81. Joses Balu'u, Anglican minister, Honiara
82. Kassa, DDP, Honiara
83. Lainez, Anonakinaki
84. Lainieta Leo, NZODA Project Officer, Honiara
85. Marian and Claire, businesswomen, Auki (*)
86. Ronnie Butala, East Kwaio tour operator, Sinalagu/Napier (*)
87. Staff, RWSS, Auki
88. Steve Parrot, Malaita Eagles coach, Malaita Provincial Government/ODA, Auki
89. Tiffany, Peace Corps, Malu'u
90. Toshiaki Matsuo, Kobe University, International Center of Medical Research, Auki
91. The people of Auki and Honiara
92. The people of Feratofea, Anonakinaki, Balai, Busurata, Fiu and Gwaidalo villages

ANNEX IV: PROJECT EVALUATION DATA

AONA'ASA	Score	Weighing	Total score	Un-certainty	Results (%)
Project cycle completed (in time/budget) and/or still operating	1	2	2	0	20
Project achieves profit/non profit objectives	0.75	1	0.75	0	8
Project considered a success by owners.	1	0.5	0.5	0	5
Project involves youth and/or women	0.5	0.5	0.25	0.25	3
Material outcome (profit/non profit) allows satisfaction of some needs	1	2	2	0	20
Non-material outcome increases sense of wellbeing	0.5	0.5	0.25	0.25	3
Project limits or minimises the use of natural resources	1	2	2	0	20
Project provides alternatives to unsustainable resource use	1	0.5	0.5	0	5
Project income >external contributions	0	0.5	0	0	0
Project income>project expenses	0.5	0.5	0.25	0.25	3
	7.25	10	8.5	0.75	85
Project evaluation (0-100%)	85				
Plus/minus unknowns	8				
Project success range	78-93				

BALAI	Score	Weighing	Total score	Un-certainty	Results (%)
Project cycle completed (in time/budget) and/or still operating	0.5	2	1	0	10
Project achieves profit/non profit objectives	1	1	1	0	10
Project considered a success by owners.	0.75	0.5	0.375	0	4
Project involves youth and/or women	0.5	0.5	0.25	0.25	3
Material outcome (profit/non profit) allows satisfaction of some needs	1	2	2	0	20
Non-material outcome increases sense of wellbeing	1	0.5	0.5	0	5
Project limits or minimises the use of natural resources	1	2	2	0	20
Project provides alternatives to unsustainable resource use	1	0.5	0.5	0	5
Project income >external contributions	0.5	0.5	0.25	0.25	3
Project income>project expenses	0.5	0.5	0.25	0.25	3
	7.75	10	8.125	0.75	81
Project evaluation (0-100%)	81				
Plus/minus unknowns	8				
Project success range	73-89				

BUSURATA	Score	Weighing	Total score	Un-certainty	Results (%)
Project cycle completed (in time/budget) and/or still operating	0.75	2	1.5	0	15
Project achieves profit/non profit objectives	1	1	1	0	10
Project considered a success by owners.	1	0.5	0.5	0	5
Project involves youth and/or women	0.5	0.5	0.25	0.25	3
Material outcome (profit/non profit) allows satisfaction of some needs	1	2	2	0	20
Non-material outcome increases sense of wellbeing	1	0.5	0.5	0	5
Project limits or minimises the use of natural resources	1	2	2	0	20
Project provides alternatives to unsustainable resource use	1	0.5	0.5	0	5
Project income >external contributions	0.5	0.5	0.25	0.25	3
Project income>project expenses	1	0.5	0.5	0	5
	8.75	10	9	0.5	90
Project evaluation (0-100%)	90				
Plus/minus unknowns	5				
Project success range	85-95				

FERATOFEA

	Score	Weighing	Total score	Un-certainty	Results (%)
Project cycle completed (in time/budget) and/or still operating	0	2	0	0	0
Project achieves profit/non profit objectives	0.25	1	0.25	0	3
Project considered a success by owners.	0.25	0.5	0.125	0	1
Project involves youth and/or women	0.5	0.5	0.25	0.25	3
Material outcome (profit/non profit) allows satisfaction of some needs	0	2	0	0	0
Non-material outcome increases sense of wellbeing	0.25	0.5	0.125	0	1
Project limits or minimises the use of natural resources	1	2	2	0	20
Project provides alternatives to unsustainable resource use	0	0.5	0	0	0
Project income >external contributions	1	0.5	0.5	0	5
Project income>project expenses	0	0.5	0	0	0
	3.25	10	3.25	0.25	33

Project evaluation (0-100%)

	33
Plus/minus unknowns	3
Project success range	30-36

FIU

	Score	Weighing	Total score	Un-certainty	Results (%)
Project cycle completed (in time/budget) and/or still operating	0.5	2	1	0	10
Project achieves profit/non profit objectives	1	1	1	0	10
Project considered a success by owners.	1	0.5	0.5	0	5
Project involves youth and/or women	0.5	0.5	0.25	0.25	3
Material outcome (profit/non profit) allows satisfaction of some needs	1	2	2	0	20
Non-material outcome increases sense of wellbeing	1	0.5	0.5	0	5
Project limits or minimises the use of natural resources	1	2	2	0	20
Project provides alternatives to unsustainable resource use	1	0.5	0.5	0	5
Project income >external contributions	0.5	0.5	0.25	0.25	3
Project income>project expenses	0.5	0.5	0.25	0	3
	8	10	8.25	0.5	83

Project evaluation (0-100%)

	83
Plus/minus unknowns	5
Project success range	78-88

HAA

	Score	Weighing	Total score	Un-certainty	Results (%)
Project cycle completed (in time/budget) and/or still operating	1	2	2	0	20
Project achieves profit/non profit objectives	1	1	1	0	10
Project considered a success by owners.	1	0.5	0.5	0	5
Project involves youth and/or women	1	0.5	0.5	0	5
Material outcome (profit/non profit) allows satisfaction of some needs	1	2	2	0	20
Non-material outcome increases sense of wellbeing	1	0.5	0.5	0	5
Project limits or minimises the use of natural resources	0.5	2	1	1	10
Project provides alternatives to unsustainable resource use	0.5	0.5	0.25	0.25	3
Project income >external contributions	1	0.5	0.5	0	5
Project income>project expenses	1	0.5	0.5	0	5
	9	10	8.75	1.25	87.50

Project evaluation (0-100%)

	88
Plus/minus unknowns	12
Project success range	76-100

ANNEX V: SYSTEMS ANALYSIS

Model variables definition

Stocks are used to represent anything that accumulates:

1. **Material resources:** land, forest resources, etc.
2. **Material outputs:** income, food, etc.
3. **Non-material resources:** skills, knowledge, etc.
4. **Non-material outputs:** acquired skills, sense of community, etc.

Flows are used to represent activities. The model also uses various unnamed *connectors* that are used to transmit information and inputs that are used to regulate flows.

1. **Material resources change:** Change on the quantity or quality of material resources available e.g. loss of soil fertility.
2. **Non-material resources change:** Change on the quantity or quality of non-material resources available e.g. loss of community skills due to urban drift.
3. **Project activities:** The activities that constitute a project e.g. rice farming.
4. **Project “bottlenecks”:** Factors that make projects less successful e.g. limited market f.
5. **Motivation:** The “soft” factors that influence positively conducting project activities. Motivation is representative of all these factors combined.
6. **Disillusion:** The “soft” factors that influence negatively conducting project activities. Disillusion is representative of all these factors combined.

Converters (factors, rates, etc.) contain numeric information that generates an output value.

1. **Material resources change factor:** Indicates how fast material resources change through time e.g. deforestation rate.
2. **Non-material resources change factor:** Indicates how fast non-material resources change through time e.g. net migration to the village rate.
3. **Productivity factor:** Reflects how efficiently the project activities are conducted i.e. the factor that makes the project activities be more or less productive.
4. **Project “bottleneck” factor:** Reflects a project’s deficiencies in technical design.
5. **Motivation factor:** Represents the community motivation or effort put into the project.
6. **Disillusion factor:** Represents the community disillusion with the project.

STELLA model equations

$\text{Material_outputs}(t) = \text{Material_outputs}(t - dt) + (\text{Project_activities} - \text{Bottlenecks}) * dt$
 $\text{INIT Material_outputs} = 2$

INFLOWS:

$\text{Project_activities} =$
 $(\text{Material_resources} * \text{Productivity_factor} * \text{Motivation}) + (\text{Material_outputs} / 100)$

OUTFLOWS:

$\text{Bottlenecks} = \text{Material_outputs} * \text{Bottleneck_factor}$
 $\text{Material_resources}(t) = \text{Material_resources}(t - dt) + (- \text{MR_change}) * dt$
 $\text{INIT Material_resources} = 100$

OUTFLOWS:

$\text{MR_change} = \text{Material_resources} * \text{MR_change_factor}$
 $\text{Non_material_outputs}(t) = \text{Non_material_outputs}(t - dt) + (\text{Motivation} - \text{Disillusion}) * dt$
 $\text{INIT Non_material_outputs} = 2$

INFLOWS:

$\text{Motivation} = (\text{Non_material_resources} * \text{Motivation_factor}) + (\text{Non_material_outputs} / 100)$

OUTFLOWS:

$\text{Disillusion} = \text{Non_material_outputs} * \text{Disillusion_factor}$
 $\text{Non_material_resources}(t) = \text{Non_material_resources}(t - dt) + (- \text{NMR_change}) * dt$
 $\text{INIT Non_material_resources} = 100$

OUTFLOWS:

$\text{NMR_change} = \text{Non_material_resources} * \text{NMR_change_factor}$

FACTORS: This list is illustrative; values change for the different examples (Figs. 11.3-11.4)

$\text{Bottleneck_factor} = 0.25$

$\text{Disillusion_factor} = 0.01$

$\text{Motivation_factor} = 0.1$

$\text{MR_change_factor} = 0.001$

$\text{NMR_change_factor} = 0.01$

$\text{Productivity_factor} = 0.1$

ANNEX VI: ACRONYMS

AusAID	Australian Aid
AVS	Australian Volunteer Services
CBSI	Central Bank of the Solomon Islands
CSO	Canadian Services Overseas
DBSI	Development Bank of the Solomon Islands
DDP	Department of Development Planning
DSE	Development Services Exchange
GAD	Gender and Development
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HDI	Human Development Index
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
JOCV	Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NZODA	New Zealand Overseas Development Agency
OECD	Organisation for International Cooperation and Development
PDU	Provincial Development Unit
PGDU	Provincial Government Development Unit
RWSS	Rural Water Supply and Sanitation
SID	Solomon Islands dollar
SIDAPP	Solomon Islands Development Administration and Participatory Planning Program
SIDT	Solomon Islands Development Trust
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USAID	United States Aid
VDW	Village Development Worker
VSA	Volunteer Services Abroad (UK)
VSO	Volunteer Services Overseas (NZ)
WAD	Women and Development
WID	Women in Development
YCI	Youth Challenge International
YCA	Youth Challenge Australia

ANNEX VII: GLOSSARY OF MALAITAN LANGUAGES AND PIJIN TERMS USED IN TEXT

Malaitan languages

Ano'asa (Kwara'ae) (*ano* = ground; *asa* = "scratching against other things"): Rough ground; stony soil.

Anonakinaki (Kwara'ae) (*ano* = ground; *nakinaki* = quartz glass): Soil that contains quartz glass fragments.

Busurata (Kwara'ae) (*busu* = spring, "water that comes from stones"; *rata* = soil with white soft stone (limestone) (this is considered to be a good gardening soil)): Spring that comes from limestone.

Dukwasi (Kwara'ae): A kind of fertile soil. "...good kind of soil for garden comes from where trees are. We call this soil *Dukwas*" (Balai 1994).

Faumarako (Kwara'ae) (*fau* = green; *marako* = stone): Green stone.

Feratofea (Kwara'ae) (*fera* = house of single people; *tofea* = disagree; don't agree with. Used in the sense of "I don't know (but I do know)"): The house that will not come to be.
Luma: House of married people.

Tafuliae (Langalanga): Red shell money.

Solomon Islands Pidgin English (Pijin)¹²

Bigman: Leader, person in a position of authority.

Bigmere: Woman in charge, manageress.

Devol, *devoldevol*: Devil, pagan god, evil being with supernatural power, ancestor spirit. e.g. "*devol blong mifela hem i ingol*" (the eagle is our [tribal] spirit)

(Note: this term usually used by informants to mean "ancestor spirit" i.e. the spirit that the community worships—often the spirit of wild animals that the ancestors (human beings) had tamed and from which people received protection. Taming these wild animals made the ancestors semi-gods (Maimarine pers.comm. 2000). For Christian people, this is at times explained saying that, in the same way as the first settlers worshipped their father (i.e. God, for the Christians), in the same ways their descendents worshipped their *own* fathers. In this view, the adoption of Christianity is a way of returning to the true meaning of the old ways (Smiley per.comm. 2000).

Kastom: Customs, traditions¹³, traditional as opposed to European, modern or Christian practises.

¹² Sources: Simons and Young (1977), Huebner and Horoi (1979), and notes from personal observations.

¹³ Note that *kastom*, customs and traditions have different meanings (Kolosu pers.com. 2000).

(Note: Usually used to refer to the system of rules that guide and control the tribal society.)

Kastom bia (custom beer): Betel nut

Kastom chief: Expert on custom issues

Kastom haos: Traditional meeting house; a house built according to tradition (in terms of design, materials, techniques, decoration, etc.)

Kastom mani: Traditional shell, teeth, or feather money.

Manpawa: Human power/ed, human traction. Often used in the sense of willingness and ability to work hard.

'Olo: Grandparent.

Pikinini: Children

Seleni (English = shilling): Money

Taem bifo kam: The past, in the past.

(Note: As used by some informants, *Taem bifo kam* is the time before people came to live by the coast to join Christianity i.e. it represents the time when people were pagan and lived up in the bush.)

"Taem bifo kam mifela save worship ingol" (in the past we worshiped the eagle).

"Taem bifo kam mifela no save usim mani" (in the past we didn't use money).

Also:

Destaem: Now, at this time, at present

Long fiutur: In the future

"Taem bifo kam laif hem isi tumas; destaem, nomoa" (in the past life was very easy; now, not anymore).

Tambu: (Melanesian):

1. Sacred, forbidden, holy.

Mekem...tambu: To consecrate, to ordain.

Tambu fo smok: No smoking

Tambu buk: Bible.

2. A relative to whom one must be particularly respectful, such as a brother in law or cousin, depending on custom.

Wantok: Friend, ally, one speaking the same language.

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