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Catholic Women's Programme in Malaita,
Solomon Islands:

Breaking the culture of silence
through empowerment.

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy
in Development Studies at Massey University

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Abstract

This thesis describes the initiation, development and progress of a programme to empower Melanesian village women. The women are disadvantaged in many ways, among them being minimal literacy skills and living in a patriarchal society.

This thesis found that revealing to the women their great value and skills and so increasing their self-worth and confidence was a crucial initial step of the programme. A participatory approach to the women's empowerment targeted personal inner development of the women rather than being pre-occupied with income generating projects as so many women's programmes are. The programme expanded from teaching about leadership, women's roles and integral human development, to include a health programme and a young women's programme.

The programme is assessed in terms of the achievements of its goal of empowering women. It was found to address strategic gender needs that the women themselves had identified during the programme. Women are now more able to challenge men and tradition in order to work towards a more equitable society.

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GLOSSARY

CWCSI	Catholic Women's Council of the Solomon Islands
CWG	Catholic Women's Group
CWP	Catholic Women's Programme
DMI	Daughters of Mary Immaculate
DWT	Diocesan Women's Team
DSE	Development Services Exchange
LASI	Literacy Association of the Solomon Islands
MHMS	Ministry of Health and Medical Services
NCW	National Council of Women
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
STD	Sexually Transmitted Disease
SDA	Seventh Day Adventist Church
SIBC	Solomon Island Broadcasting Corporation
SICA	Solomon Islands Christian Association
SIDT	Solomon Island Development Trust
SSEC	South Seas Evangelical Church
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VEP	Village Education Programme
WDD	Women and Development Division
WHO	World Health Organisation

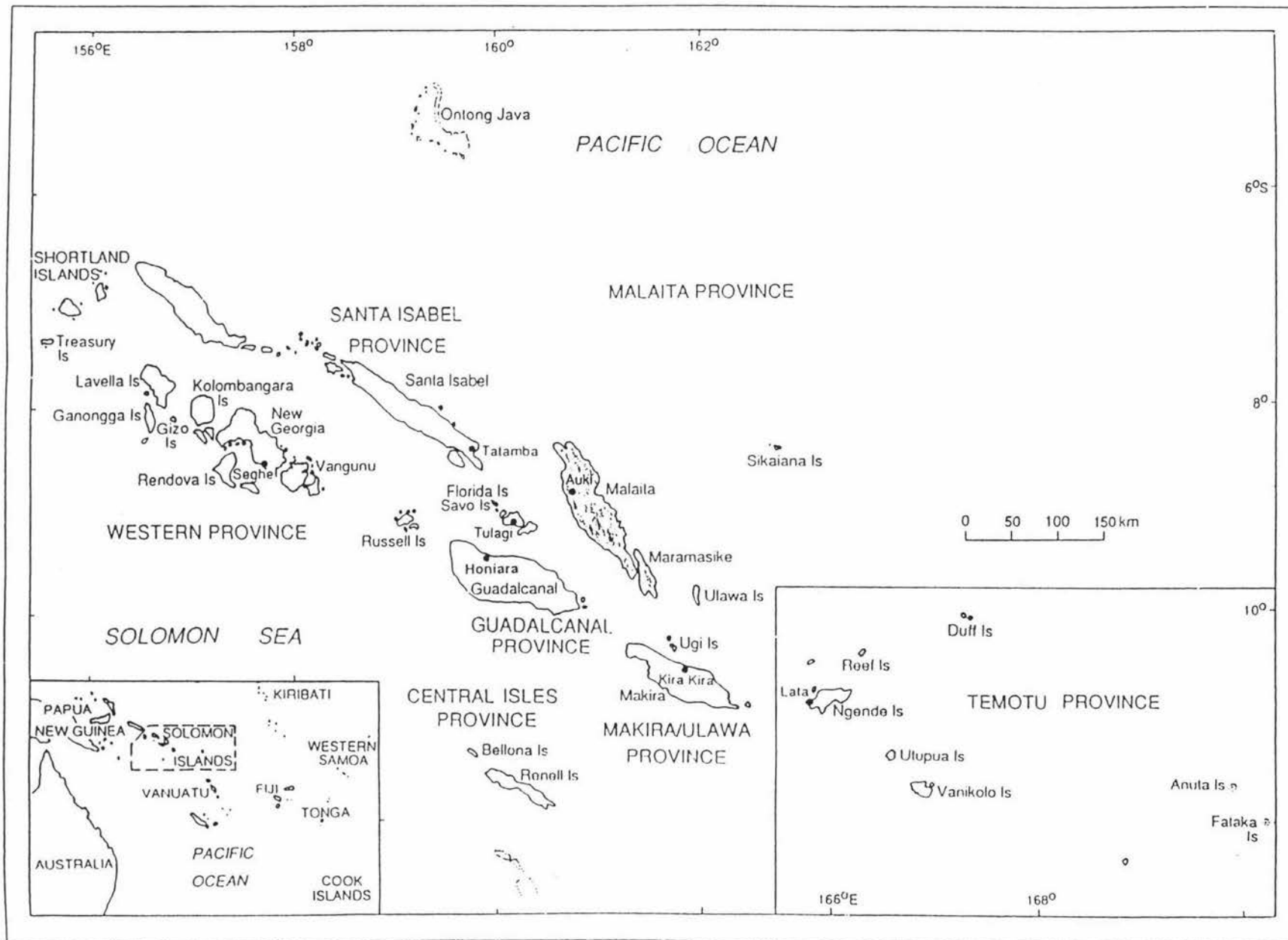


FIGURE ONE: MAP OF THE SOLOMON ISLANDS SHOWING MALAITA.