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Independent Office of Evaluation

Solomon Islands Rural Development Programme Phase II

PROJECT PERFORMANCE EVALUATION





Solomon Islands

Rural Development Programme Phase II

Programme Performance Evaluation

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Photos of activities supported by the Rural Development Programme Phase II

Front cover: A cocoa farmer, Malaita, Solomon Islands.

Back cover, left: A farmer spreads cocoa beans to dry at Tupaghotua Cocoa Partnership in Guadalcanal Plains, where he works and owns a cocoa plantation.

Back cover, right: An example of export-quality cocoa beans at Arania Enterprises in Auki, Malaita Province, Solomon Islands.

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Preface

This report presents the findings of the project performance evaluation (PPE) of the Rural Development Programme Phase II (RDP II) in the Solomon Islands undertaken by the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE). The PPE offers insights into IFAD's role in co-financed projects, implementation of community-driven development (CDD) and agribusiness partnerships in the context of a Small Island Developing State.

The RDP II was the largest rural development investment in the Solomon Islands, with national coverage. It aimed to improve basic infrastructure and services in rural areas and strengthen market linkages for smallholder farming households, with a focus on community infrastructure, social services, and agribusiness partnerships.

RDP II contributed to improving rural infrastructure and enhancing access to social services using a CDD approach. While infrastructure utilization was generally high, some infrastructure like classrooms and health posts faced underutilization due to a lack of complementary interventions such as teaching and learning materials, basic health equipment and the absence of qualified staff. While full institutionalization of the CDD approach was not achieved, Ward Development Committees gained notable recognition in community-based planning. Future CDD approaches in similar contexts should consider contextual challenges such as capacity, logistical challenges, remoteness and transaction costs to ensure effective implementation.

During implementation, agribusiness partnerships contributed to improved productive capacities for agribusinesses and smallholder farmers. These improvements, which included increased productivity, better market access, and knowledge and technology transfer, were not fully sustained. Critical programming gaps, such as inadequate due diligence in selecting agribusinesses and weak agribusiness partnership governance mechanisms, contributed to a decline in these gains over time. The focus on export-oriented cash crops, such as cocoa and coconut, required mitigation strategies to counter the heightened vulnerability to global market price fluctuations and the impacts of unforeseen global events such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Agriculture Supplemental Equity Facility (ASEF) and Disaster Recovery Grants (DRGs) were programme subcomponents for integrating access to finance and disaster recovery and resilience, respectively. However, ASEF grappled with the familiar challenges typical of matching grant-type facilities, including high interest rates, lack of collateral from agribusinesses, and the reluctance of commercial banks to lend to them. On the other hand, DRGs were narrowly focused on short-term relief for flood victims of the 2014 Guadalcanal flood and failed to take a longer-term vulnerability and resilience perspective given the frequency of weather and climate-related hazards in the Solomon Islands.

The report provides four recommendations for ongoing and future projects in the Solomon Islands and the Asia and the Pacific region in general, as follows: (i) intensify IFAD engagement in co-financed programmes to fully leverage its comparative advantage; (ii) create stronger programme alignment with contextually relevant corporate strategies and priorities; (iii) tailor targeting for diverse communities; and, (iv) ensure clearer criteria and approach for implementing inclusive agribusiness partnerships interventions.

I hope that the findings of this PPE will be instrumental in further enhancing development effectiveness in the collaboration between the Solomon Islands Government and IFAD.



Indran A. Naidoo, PhD
Director
Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD

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The evaluation was conducted under the guidance of Fabrizio Felloni, former IOE Deputy Director and Johanna Pennarz, IOE Lead Evaluation Officer. Massiel Jimenez, IOE Evaluation Analyst, and Dee Jupp, IOE senior consultant, provided valuable comments on the draft report. IOE evaluation assistants, Nene Etim, Antonella Sisti and former IOE Evaluation Assistant Christiane Kuhn provided administrative support throughout the evaluation process.

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Currency equivalent, weights and measures

Currency equivalent

Currency unit = Solomon Islander Dollar (SBD)

US\$1.00 = 8.23 SBD

Weights and measures

1 kilogram = 1,000 g

1,000 kg = 2.204 lbs

1 kilometre (km) = 0.62 miles

1 metre = 1.09 yards

1 square metre = 10.76 square feet

1 acre = 0.405 hectares

1 hectare = 2.47 acres

Abbreviations and acronyms

4Ps	public-private-producer partnerships model
APG	Agribusiness Partnerships Grants
ASEF	Agricultural Supplemental Equity Facility
CCA	climate change adaptation
CDD	community-driven development
CDFs	Constituency Development Funds
CDG	community development grant
CHs	community helpers
DFAT	Australia Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DME	direct micro expellers
DRG	disaster recovery grants
EC	European Commission
EIRR	economic internal rate of return
ENRM	environment and natural resource management
EOI	expression of interest
ESMF	environmental and social management framework
EU	European Union
FIES	food insecurity experience scale
GAP	good agricultural practice
HACCP	hazard analysis and critical control points
HIES	household income and expenditure survey
IA	impact assessment
ICRR	implementation completion and results report
IDA	international development assistance
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MAL	Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock
MIS	management information system
MNPDC	Ministry of National Planning and Development Coordination
MPGIS	Ministry of Provincial Government and Institutional Strengthening
MTDF	medium-term expenditure framework
MTR	midterm review
NALSP	National Agriculture and Livestock Sector Policy
NDS	National Development Strategy

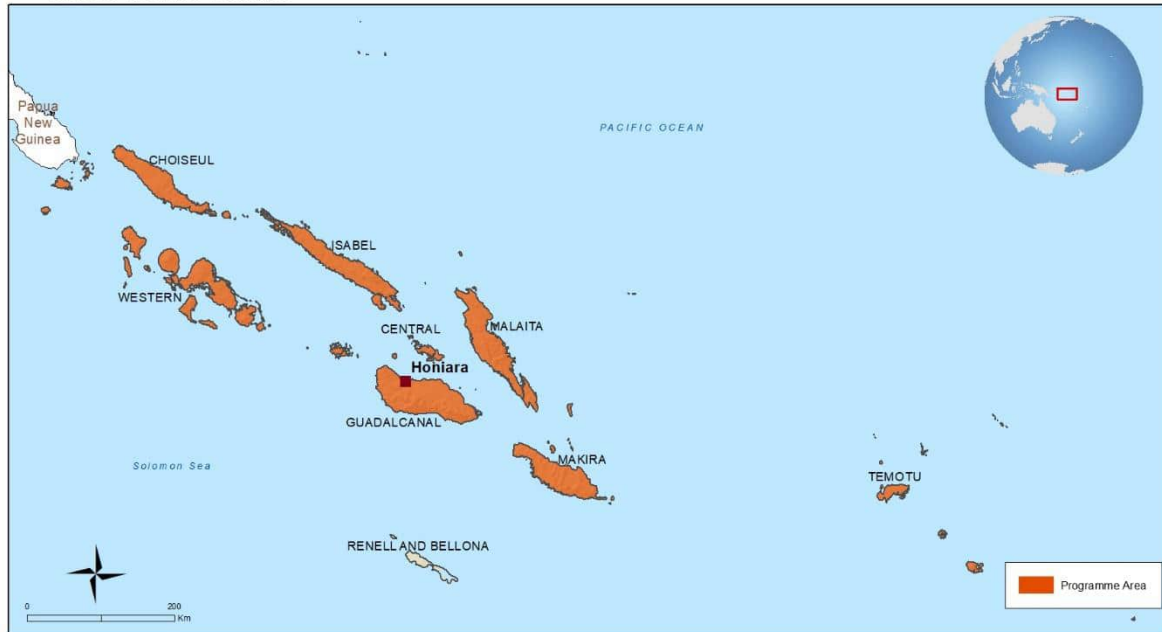
NPV	net present value
O&M	operations and maintenance
PAD	project appraisal document
PAR	participatory action research
PCR	project completion report
PCU	programme coordination unit
PDO	programme/project development objective
PIC	Pacific Island Country
PIM	project implementation manual
PMC	programme management costs
PMU	project management unit
PPE	programme performance evaluation
RDP	Rural Development Programme
RIA	Research and Impact Assessment Division (IFAD)
RF	results framework
SBD	Solomon Islands Dollar
SIC	Subproject Implementation Committee
SIDS	Small Island Developing State
SIDT	Solomon Islands Development Trust
SINU	Solomon Islands National University
SIS	supervision and implementation support report
TCH	technical community helper
WDC	ward development committee

Map of the project area

Solomon Islands

Rural Development Programme II (RDP II)

Project Performance Evaluation



The designations employed and the presentation of the material in this map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of IFAD concerning the delimitation of the frontiers or boundaries, or the authorities thereof.

Map compiled by IFAD | 31-01-2023

Executive summary

A. Background

1. The Rural Development Programme (RDP), prepared in 2007, was a long-term initiative supporting the Solomon Islands' national rural development goals. It was planned in two phases using a community-driven development (CDD) approach to bolster rural infrastructure and establish the structures necessary for future development. The RDP I, completed in February 2015, was succeeded by RDP II, approved in November 2014 and became effective from May 2015. The RDP II aimed to build on RDP I's achievements and lessons learned through improving infrastructure and services in additional rural areas, enhancing linkages between smallholder farmers and markets, and assisting flood-impacted communities in the Guadalcanal province. The programme concluded in February 2022. The RDP II was a *pari passu* co-financed programme with a total budget of US\$46.9 million. It was financed by a World Bank loan (US\$9.0 million), an Australian Aid grant (US\$13.3 million), a European Union grant (US\$10.5 million), an IFAD loan (US\$4.6 million), and by the Government of the Solomon Islands (US\$9.5 million). The actual disbursement at completion was US\$41.75 million (89 per cent of the total budget).
2. **Evaluation scope and approach.** The project performance evaluation (PPE) was conducted in line with the revised IFAD Evaluation Policy (IFAD, 2021a) and the 2022 IFAD Evaluation Manual. It adopted internationally recognized evaluation criteria and a six-point rating scale to assess programme performance. The scope of the evaluation covered the entire programme and the whole implementation period (2015 – 2022). Using a mixed methods approach, the PPE triangulated data evidence to assess the performance of the programme. The in-country field mission took place from 13 March to 24 April 2023, covering Temotu, Makira, Malaita and Guadalcanal provinces.

B. Main findings

3. **The RDP II programme was well aligned with national policies and development strategies, but a few gaps were observed.** It contributed to two objectives of the National Development Strategy (NDS) through component 1, by promoting equitable access to services through rural infrastructure development. While component 2 aligned with the National Agriculture and Livestock Sector Policy's 2015-2019 (NALSP) twin-track approach on staple crops and export expansion, it missed an opportunity for deeper synergy. The emphasis on cash crops (domestic and export) departed from NALSP's staple food priority, even though aspects like disaster mitigation and agribusiness aligned well. The emphasis on empowering local communities, bolstering climate resilience, offering inclusive financial services, and fostering partnerships closely resonated with the IFAD's SIDS strategic priorities.¹² However, the programme lacked clear pathways to food security and nutrition in a context where the quality of diets is a big challenge.
4. **The expected component synergies did not materialize due to the lack of well articulated linkages.** Although the RDP II aimed to leverage the combined contributions of the two programme components, it did not establish mechanism linkages, resulting in siloed implementation. The choice of eligible subprojects in component 1 remained consistent with those of RDP 1 (water supply, schools, health facilities, resource centres). However, the envisioned integration of agriculture commercialization infrastructure (e.g. feeder roads, bridges, jetties, storage facilities) through component 2 lacked specificity. Clear guidance on targeting, technical designs, capacity-building and sustainability was missing, hindering

¹ IFAD's SIDS strategic priorities were articulated in the paper "IFAD's approach in Small Island Developing States - A Global Response to Island Voices for Food Security."

² The emphasis on empowering local communities, bolstering climate resilience, offering inclusive financial services, and fostering partnerships closely resonated with IFAD's objectives.

effective integration, resulting in the programme components operating independently, resembling “two projects in one”.³ IFAD did not adequately leverage its comparative advantage to influence programme design and implementation to ensure successful synergies between the two programme components, even with its extensive global experience in integrating CDD principles into agriculture-focused interventions.

5. **Evidence suggests that the inclusive adjudication process for the selection of infrastructure subprojects was unevenly applied.** The infrastructure subproject selection process sought to achieve a participatory and inclusive decision-making process for community empowerment and contribute to long-term sustainability. The observed challenges with the quality of community facilitation resulted in uneven application, given the weak capacity of the community helpers (CHs). Field interviews suggest the need for strengthening inclusiveness, participation, empowerment and transparency mechanisms during subproject selection processes. While no evidence of elite capture was observed, there was inadequate participation of specific subgroups such as women, youth, the elderly and people living with disabilities in the subprojects selection process.
6. **Subproject utilization varied across infrastructure categories.** Multipurpose community buildings reportedly served as central hubs for a wide range of activities such as community and social gatherings such as festivals and weddings. Similarly, evacuation centres are serving their purpose of providing temporary shelters during times of floods and tropical cyclones. The water supply systems subprojects contributed to enhancing access to clean drinking water, and reducing the burden on women and girls who endured walking long distances to fetch water. However, daycare facilities and health posts faced significant utilization challenges due to staff shortages, resource limitations and budgetary constraints by the provincial government. Despite the programme not pursuing a rigorous community agency model, communities that demonstrated strong participation, ownership and empowerment showed higher infrastructure utilization and maintenance.
7. **The programme successfully facilitated agribusiness partnerships between smallholder farmers and agribusinesses but they remained fragile.** Despite the key output targets on the number of agribusiness partnerships not being met (35 of the original target of 79), they proved effective in improving production, productivity and access to markets for the smallholder farmers in the value chains targeted (e.g. cocoa, coconut, ngali nuts and livestock) as well as capacity-building of smallholder farmers on good agricultural practices to ensure hazard analysis and critical control points (HACCP) compliance. Results achieved for agribusinesses included the provision of processing facilities and equipment and business development services.⁴ However, most partnerships remained weak due to inadequate governance mechanisms in areas such as contractual agreements, risk management, communication, capacity-building approaches and inclusion strategies.
8. **Access to finance through the Agricultural Supplemental Equity Facility (ASEF) matching grant initiative was not effective.** This financing initiative was designed to be accessible through commercial banks for agribusiness projects, with borrowers contributing 20 per cent of the project cost, while the banks were to provide loans covering 60 per cent of the cost. The remaining 20 per cent was to be financed through an ASEF grant awarded to the borrower. Agribusinesses struggled to meet the stringent loan collateral requirements of commercial banks, which typically excluded unregistered or customary land as collateral. Other limiting factors included the difficulty and cost of accessing commercial bank branches (mostly

³ In contrast, for component 1, there were detailed guidance notes on technical designs, targeting criteria, indicative budgets, implementation mechanism and sustainability strategies.

⁴ These included oil mills for coconut, fermenters for cocoa, extractors for honey, and slaughter facilities for cattle, transportation (three-tonne truck or canoe and outboard motors).

located in Honiara, Gizo, and Auki), high interest rates, and the inability to demonstrate a history of past business success. These critical aspects were overlooked at design stage, in particular understanding the readiness of the financial sector to lend to agribusinesses, including the appropriateness of the matching grant approach as an instrument to facilitate access to finance.

C. Conclusions

9. **Linking the CDD approach and agriculture commercialization needs clear protocols and guidelines for their disparate objectives.** While there is clear scope for applying typical CDD principles to agriculture commercialization infrastructure, seamlessly linking these objectives without clear guidance and protocols is difficult. Beyond the general challenges of integrating CDD principles in infrastructure projects, specific hurdles arise when dealing with agriculture commercialization in terms of the technical complexity and long-term institutional sustainability issues, unlike the more immediate user-driven upkeep associated with access to social services infrastructure. Therefore, simply applying conventional CDD principles is insufficient for seamless integration. Clear guidance and protocols, clarifying the how and why, are crucial to overcome these challenges. These include standardized technical designs with a pre-approved menu of options, specific budget ranges, well defined targeting mechanisms, as well as counterparts with expertise in participatory development activities.
10. **CDD can be a useful approach in the context of SIDS that face similar challenges to those of the Solomon Islands.**⁵ As demonstrated in the RDP II, CDD can empower local communities to identify and address their own development needs, thereby increasing their access to and utilization of social services infrastructure. Furthermore, if successful in promoting social cohesion and strengthening community ownership, the CDD approach can contribute to fostering resilience and fortifying local governance structures in SIDS contexts. It is imperative that CDD mechanisms are deeply rooted in the prevailing local contexts to generate benefits, including reinforcing participatory governance principles such as participation, transparency, trust and accountability. This requires the availability of adequate capacity at the subnational level for implementation and facilitation, to provide bespoke approaches taking into consideration the geography, as well as the logistical complexities and costs of delivery.
11. **Governance arrangements, tailored to local contexts, are crucial for the success and inclusivity of agribusiness value chain partnerships.** The RDP II experience has shown that loosely defined partnerships may not always be effective in supporting agricultural commercialization, underscoring the need for context-specific governance systems to achieve desired outcomes. Power imbalances between agribusiness partners and smallholder farmers, stemming from inequalities in terms of access to information, networks, finance, expertise and negotiating power, were evident in the RDP II agribusiness partnerships. The programme supported smallholder farmers, who were largely unorganized, making it challenging for them to voice concerns, share ideas, and negotiate improved collective governance terms. Therefore, it is essential to address these asymmetries and foster collective action among smallholder farmers for more equitable and effective partnerships.

D. Recommendations

12. **Recommendation 1: IFAD should intensify its engagement in co-financed programmes to improve performance in areas where it has specific strengths.** This entails enhancing its involvement throughout the programming cycle, leveraging its extensive expertise and comparative advantage.⁶ In particular,

⁵ SIDS often face unique challenges such as limited government capacity, geographic isolation, and vulnerability to climate change and environmental disasters.

⁶ Including design, supervision, implementation support, midterm review, and programme completion reporting.

during the implementation phase, even when not serving as the lead managing agency, IFAD should sustain an active, continuous interaction with the programme, providing structured, ongoing technical assistance. A fit-for-purpose mechanism which is sufficiently resourced both financially and technically should be earmarked to support IFAD's participation. Operationally, IFAD should focus on areas where it can add significant value in co-financing arrangements in a contextually relevant manner. These include targeting the poorest, inclusive value chain development, strengthening farmer organizations, and institutional capacity-building of relevant government agencies.

13. **Recommendation 2: IFAD should adapt its programming approach to ensure stronger alignment with contextually relevant corporate and strategic priorities, such as those outlined in the SIDS strategy.** These include fostering sustainable and inclusive food systems, promoting rural non-farming employment and small enterprises, and enhancing the resilience of rural households to environmental and climate change challenges. Additionally, IFAD should continue to learn from its engagement with the SIDS and use this as an opportunity to continue refining its approach and provide clearer operational guidelines for design and implementation in such unique contexts.
14. **Recommendation 3: Targeting strategies in SIDS contexts characterized by remoteness, geographic diversity, and the limited capacity of public institutions should consider different localized needs and any gaps in capacities of the targeted communities.** A more bespoke targeting approach should be applied in the diverse geographical areas based on sufficient understanding of the poverty and multidimensional vulnerability of the different communities.⁷ At the same time, create a comprehensive map of potential service providers and private sector partners, evaluating their capacities and weaknesses, to inform customized intervention packages and cost structures that align with the ground realities in terms of access to services, availability of service providers, and presence of commercial activities in general.
15. **Recommendation 4. For projects utilizing the public-private-producer partnerships approach, IFAD should clearly define context-specific criteria, the model, and required capacities for implementing inclusive agribusiness partnerships.** This includes setting measurable standards for inclusiveness, equity and adaptability. To address power imbalances, it is important to invest not only in the capacity-building of smallholder farmers and private agribusinesses but also in strengthening institutional capacities to broker, support and moderate these partnerships at the national and subnational levels. In addition, IFAD should define and target contextually specific capacities that are important for agribusiness partnerships to thrive. These may include partnership-building, technical expertise, business and market understanding, innovation, policy support and governance approaches.

⁷ The MVI incorporates multiple dimensions of vulnerability, including environmental, economic, social, and institutional factors, to provide a holistic understanding of the challenges faced by SIDS.

IFAD Management's response¹

1. Management acknowledges the overall evaluation findings of the Rural Development Programme – Phase II (RDP II) project performance evaluation (PPE) conducted by the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE).
2. Management appreciates the efforts invested by IOE and some adjustments made in the final version, particularly in acknowledging the unique context in which the RDP II was implemented. Management would like to emphasize the context-specific challenges related to this project, with the Solomon Islands being a Small Island Developing State (SIDS) and marked by high fragility². The country is marked by limited institutional capacity and unique challenges including its size, remoteness, insularity, limited resource base and vulnerability to climate and natural disasters. IFAD delivers high impact programs in countries with fragile and conflict -affected situations and will continue to do so under the IFAD12 and IFAD13 business model, leveraging the lessons learned through self- and independent evaluations.
3. Management would also like to highlight that the RDP II was a World Bank led project (in IFAD terminology, a cooperating institution or CI-led project). It should be noted that the World Bank's Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) also conducted an independent evaluation of the RDP II. While noting some of the concerns highlighted in the IFAD PCR and the IOE PPE, the IEG assessment rated the overall project outcome as moderately satisfactory. Management also noted the positive outcomes as assessed by the empirical studies conducted by IFAD's Research and Impact Assessment division (RIA), which concluded that 'RDP II showed positive and significant impacts on productive outcomes for treatment households relative to control households'³ and that directly informed the World Bank's completion report and self-evaluation. Management will also consider the findings of these evaluations including the RIA empirical work to inform future designs. Broader triangulation of evidence, possibly coordinated by IOE, would help sharpen future programming and allow national stakeholders to more easily compile lessons learned.
4. Notwithstanding the above, which relate more to the evaluation and learning framework and its evaluation for the organization, Management appreciates the considerable efforts by IOE and the relevant recommendations contained in the PPE. Management will follow up on and ensure these are adapted to the extent possible and will take advantage of deepened decentralized presence in the region to encourage follow up. Detailed responses to the recommendations below.
 - **Recommendation 1: IFAD should intensify its engagement in co-financed programmes to improve performance in areas where it has specific strengths.** This entails enhancing its involvement throughout the programming cycle, leveraging its extensive expertise and comparative advantage.⁴ In particular, during the implementation phase, even when not serving as the lead managing agency, IFAD should sustain an active, continuous interaction with the programme, providing structured, ongoing technical assistance. A fit-for-purpose mechanism which is sufficiently resourced both financially and technically should be earmarked to support IFAD's participation. Operationally, IFAD should focus on areas where it can add significant value in co-financing arrangements in a contextually relevant manner. These include targeting the poorest, inclusive value chain

¹ The Programme Management Department sent the final Management's response to the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD on 20 March 2024.

² The World Bank list of Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations, FY2024, lists the Solomon Islands as characterized by high institutional and social fragility.

³ From Executive Summary, Research and Impact Report, Solomon Islands, Rural Development Program Phase II, RIA 2022.

⁴ Including design, supervision, implementation support, midterm review, and programme completion reporting.

development, strengthening farmer organizations, and institutional capacity-building of relevant government agencies.

Partially Agreed. Management agrees that IFAD should continue deepened engagement in the context of co-financing arrangements. IFAD's objective in such contexts is to build on respective strengths and comparative advantages of different partners, especially in the context of a co-financed project. This includes developing targeting strategies focused on the poorest rural communities, developing pro-poor value chains and strengthening farmer organizations. While the call for more intensive engagement is valid and will be followed, Management would like to nuance its approach, building on extensive in-country experience, by acknowledging that engagement by multiple IFIs or development partners in a co-financed project should be sensitive to the requirements, needs and capacities of Governments and national counterparts. In such cases, IFAD should avoid duplication of efforts and ensure aligned and harmonized engagement with projects (especially in CI-led projects). This will ensure greater efficiencies at the project level and ensure that IFAD is aligned with the principles of donor alignment.

- **Recommendation 2: IFAD should adapt its programming approach to ensure stronger alignment with contextually relevant corporate and strategic priorities, such as those outlined in the SIDS strategy.** These include fostering sustainable and inclusive food systems, promoting rural non-farming employment and small enterprises, and enhancing the resilience of rural households to environmental and climate change challenges. Additionally, IFAD should continue to learn from its engagement with the SIDS and use this as an opportunity to continue refining its approach and provide clearer operational guidelines for design and implementation in such unique contexts.

Agreed. Management agrees that the programming approach should be fully aligned with the SIDS Strategy. It should be noted that the SIDS Strategy (approval 2022) was approved after the approval of RDP II (EB approval 2015). In recognition of the specific challenges and vulnerabilities of SIDS countries, IFAD has expanded its engagement in the country through investment projects and regional programmes such as: i) the Melanesia Rural Market and Innovation Development Driven Programme (MERMAID), which seeks to demonstrate scalable pathways for enhanced nutritional outcomes and improving opportunities for rural income generation; ii) the Pacific Islands Rural and Agriculture Stimulus Facility (PIRAS) that works with 30 communities and aims to support economic recovery by prioritizing food self-reliance, improving local nutrition, and developing sustainable, equitable agricultural sector growth opportunities; and iii) the Farmers' Organization for Africa, Caribbean and the Pacific (FO4ACP) programme and the Pacific Island Farmers Organization Network (PIFON) that will focus on enhancing incomes, improving livelihoods, and promoting food security for family farmers and smallholders. Furthermore, the EB recently approved the Agricultural Investment for Markets and Nutrition (AIM-Nutrition) investment project which was jointly developed by IFAD and FAO. Finally, to enhance strategic engagement with Pacific Island Countries (PICs) and in line with the SIDS Strategy 2022-2027, a Regional Strategic Opportunities Strategy (RESOP) will be developed that will mark a move away from individual Country Strategy Notes (CSNs) and provide an overarching framework for engagement with all PICs, while maintaining individual country programming. All new engagements and designs will be aligned with the principles and approaches outlined in the current SIDS Strategy and will foster sustainable and inclusive food systems, including with a focus on enhanced nutritional outcomes and climate resilience. IFAD's engagement in the region

will build on proven approaches that promote community-led development for women and youth, and that strengthen collaboration with local and regional organizations.

- **Recommendation 3: Targeting strategies in SIDS contexts characterized by remoteness, geographic diversity, and the limited capacity of public institutions should consider different localized needs and any gaps in capacities of the targeted communities.** A more bespoke targeting approach should be applied in the diverse geographical areas based on sufficient understanding of the poverty and multidimensional vulnerability of the different communities.⁵ At the same time, create a comprehensive map of potential service providers and private sector partners, evaluating their capacities and weaknesses, to inform customized intervention packages and cost structures that align with the ground realities in terms of access to services, availability of service providers, and presence of commercial activities in general.

Agreed. In terms of targeting strategies, IFAD's current focus in designing the AIM-Nutrition project is on promoting inclusive approaches and mainstreaming targeting and gender requirements in all project activities. Management will ensure an appropriate bespoke targeting approach is developed: the participating communities will be identified following a preliminary targeting strategy based on key criteria such as poverty, nutritional vulnerability and climate change (and customised for the diverse geographical areas). With regard to mapping potential service providers and private sector, the Pacific Islands ICO will build a network and assessment of such partners, initially in each country where IFAD has substantive engagement.

- **Recommendation 4. For projects utilizing the public-private-producer partnerships approach, IFAD should clearly define context-specific criteria, the model, and required capacities for implementing inclusive agribusiness partnerships.** This includes setting measurable standards for inclusiveness, equity and adaptability. To address power imbalances, it is important to invest not only in the capacity-building of smallholder farmers and private agribusinesses but in also strengthening institutional capacities to broker, support and moderate these partnerships at the national and subnational levels. In addition, IFAD should define and target contextually specific capacities that are important for agribusiness partnerships to thrive. These may include partnership-building, technical expertise, business and market understanding, innovation, policy support and governance approaches.

Agreed. The 4Ps approach should be clearly defined in its specific context. Lesson learnt from RDP II indicate that to address power imbalances, it is important to invest not only in the capacity building of smallholder farmers and private agribusinesses, but also to strengthen institutional capacities to broker, support, as well as moderate these partnerships. The capacity of Ministry of Agriculture including its extension services were very limited outside of the PMU. The 4Ps approach- with the nuance mentioned above- will be implemented and deepened in the Solomon Islands by the PIRAS programme through: i) fostering partnerships between smallholder producers, private companies, and public institutions, ii) investing in building the capacities of smallholders and private partners; iii) promoting financial inclusion by facilitating access to credit and investment opportunities and; iv) engaging in

⁵ The MVI incorporates multiple dimensions of vulnerability, including environmental, economic, social, and institutional factors, to provide a holistic understanding of the challenges faced by SIDS.

policy discussions with governments, private sector entities, and civil society organizations.

Solomon Islands

Rural Development Programme Phase II

Programme performance evaluation

I. Country and programme background

A. Introduction

1. In line with the IFAD Evaluation Policy¹, and as approved by the 137th Session of the IFAD Executive Board in December 2022,² the Independent Office of Evaluation (IOE) undertook a project performance evaluation (PPE) of the Rural Development Programme Phase II (RDP II) in the Solomon Islands in 2023. The RDP II was a co-financed programme, implemented from 2015 to 2022 with a total budget of US\$46.9 million through a *pari passu* arrangement.³ This programme was financed by: (i) a World Bank loan of US\$9 million; (ii) an Australian Aid grant of US\$13.3 million; (iii) a European Union grant of US\$10.5 million; (iv) an IFAD loan of US\$4.6 million; and (v) the Government of the Solomon Islands contributing US\$9.5 million.

B. Country background

2. The Solomon Islands is a Small Island Developing State (SIDS)⁴ in the south-west Pacific consisting of approximately 1,000 islands. It has a total landmass of 29,000 square kilometres, with a population of 721,000 people⁵ and a population growth rate of 2.6 per cent per annum. The islands are divided into nine provinces: Choiseul, Santa Isabel, Guadalcanal, Malaita, Makira, San Cristobal, Belonna and Rennell (RennBel), Western Province and Temotu. It is classified as a Least Developed Country (although expected to graduate from the classification in 2027)⁶ with a Human Assets Index of 74.8 and a Human Development Index of 0.577, ranking it 153 out of 189 listed countries in the Human Development Report. The Solomon Islands' annual real GDP growth fluctuated between 2.5-3.9 per cent in the period 2015 to 2018, declined to 1.7 per cent in 2019 and contracted 3.4 per cent in 2020, 0.6 per cent in 2021, and by 4.1 per cent in 2022.⁷
3. Three primary sectors of the economy account for 34 per cent of GDP: agriculture (16 per cent), forestry including logging (13 per cent), and fishing (5 per cent)⁸, while industry contributes 11 per cent and services 55 per cent. Exports are dominated by timber, palm oil, cocoa, copra, and some coconut oil. According to the 2012-2013 Household Income and Expenditure Survey, about 12.7 per cent of the population of the Solomon Islands lived below the basic needs poverty line.⁹ Poverty incidence was substantially higher in the provinces of Makira at 31.5 per cent and Guadalcanal at 22.2 per cent. The capital, Honiara at 10.5 per cent, also had a higher-than-average incidence of poverty in 2012, but the vast majority of the poor in the Solomon Islands, an estimated 87 per cent, lived in rural areas.^{10 11}
4. **Conflict and fragility.** The Solomon Islands has experienced two decades of peace following "the Tensions" conflict from 1998 to 2003. The civil unrest was catalysed by

¹ <https://www.ifad.org/en/web/ioe/policy>

² See EB2022/137/R.3, <https://webapps.ifad.org/members/eb/137/docs/EB-2022-137-R-3.pdf>

³ This means that IFAD's financing was fully integrated/blended with that of the other financiers and contributed to all aspects of the programme.

⁴ See box 4 for a definition of a Small Island Developing State.

⁵ 2019 Provisional Count 2019 National Population and Housing Census, <https://www.statistics.gov.sb>

⁶ <https://www.un.org/ldcportal/content/solomon-islands-graduation-status>

⁷ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=SB>.

⁸ Based on Central Bank of Solomon Islands data, downloaded from its website: <http://www.cbsi.com.sb/statistics/key-statistics/>

⁹ <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/158941528204217521/pdf/Solomon-Islands-PEB-Spring-2018.pdf>

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ "Poverty in the Solomon Islands - a snapshot", available at https://www.statistics.gov.sb/images/SolomonFiles/Social-and-Demography-Statistics/Solomon_Islands_Poverty_Maps/_SI_Poverty_Maps_Brochure_2018.PDF

land disputes in Guadalcanal between indigenous Guale and Malaitan migrants and was exacerbated by inequitable local-centre relations, unequal resource distribution, disputes over land rights and poor or non-existent social services delivery.^{12 13} The Tensions resulted in a 24 per cent drop in gross domestic product during this period, the cessation of state functions in Guadalcanal, and the weakening of state functions in other provinces: civil servant salaries went unpaid for years.^{14 15} This added to the formidable challenges to rural development already posed by the country's geography. Following peacekeeping and reconstruction efforts, the economy began to recover (see figure 4, annex 5).¹⁶ However, the gross national income per capita has not yet reached pre-conflict levels, and the factors driving growth remain fragile. Since 2003, the nation has been largely peaceful, apart from a brief period of disturbance in Honiara's Chinatown after the 2006 elections (Craig and Porter, 2014) and violent protests in November 2021.¹⁷

5. **Agriculture and livelihoods.** The agriculture sector (including crops, livestock, inshore fishing and forestry) is the foundation for providing livelihoods in the country and accounts for 70 per cent of total employment.¹⁸ The wet tropical climate is favourable for a wide range of crops, including important cash crops such as cocoa and coconut, spice crops such as vanilla, cardamom, chilli, ginger and turmeric, as well as major food crops such as sweet potato (kumara), yams, cassava, taro, bananas and a range of fruits and vegetables. Solomon Islands agriculture typically falls into three categories, namely: (i) smallholder subsistence farming with occasional sales of surplus, particularly copra or cocoa (the majority of rural households); (ii) smallholder semi-commercial farming with deliberate market production including cash crops; and (iii) commercial farming including plantations. Speciality crops targeting niche markets include coffee, kava, vanilla, spices and indigenous nuts, but volumes are low and volatile.¹⁹
6. **Food and nutrition security.** The Global Hunger Index for the Solomon Islands in 2022 shows a moderate score of 19.4.²⁰ The overall index and stunting have only slightly reduced since 2000, while the proportion of undernourished people is going up, particularly following the devastating 2014 flash floods.²¹ Besides hunger and food insecurity, the triple burden of malnutrition (undernourishment, hidden hunger and overweight) is remarkable in the Solomon Islands. In 2015, 47 per cent of women were overweight or obese, while 32 per cent of children were stunted, 8 per cent were wasted, and 16 per cent were underweight. About 39 per cent of children and 41 per cent of women had iron deficiency anaemia.²² The prevalence of wasting and stunting is higher among children in rural areas than in urban, whereas overweight is more prevalent in urban areas. The prevalence of overweight adults with a body mass index over 25 in the Solomon Islands is lower than some other Pacific SIDS; however, it is increasing and is among the highest globally, at 60 per cent of women and 50 per cent of men (Global Nutrition Report, 2022). Although home gardens, traditional food systems, and safety nets have been strengthened, people in the Solomon Islands are vulnerable to food insecurity from food system shocks and hazards; for example, natural disasters limit capacity to grow food and are negatively affecting an already low dietary diversity.

¹² World Bank RDP II, Implementation Completion and Results Report.

¹³ Craig and Porter, 2014.

¹⁴ World Bank RDP II, Implementation Completion and Results Report.

¹⁵ Craig and Porter, 2014.

¹⁶ Logging exports resumed, palm oil plantations reopened, and the Gold Ridge mine restarted production, all contributing to economic growth.

¹⁷ <https://www.csis.org/analysis/deep-roots-solomon-islands-ongoing-political-crisis>.

¹⁸ ILO (2019) Solomon Islands employment and environmental sustainability fact sheets, 2019.

¹⁹ IFAD (2021) Solomon Islands, Country Strategy Note.

²⁰ <https://www.globalhungerindex.org/solomon-islands.html#:~:text=Solomon%20Islands%20In%20the%202022%20Global%20Hunger%20Index%2C,has%20a%20level%20of%20hunger%20that%20is%20moderate>.

²¹ <https://reliefweb.int/report/solomon-islands/ocha-flash-update-3-solomon-islands-flash-floods-6-april-2014>

²² Solomon Islands Demographic and Health Survey 2015. Solomon Islands National Statistics Office, Solomon Islands Ministry of Health and Medical Services and the Pacific Community.

7. **Gender and Youth.** According to the 2009 census, 62 per cent of women and 64 per cent of men aged 12 and older were in the labour force, including those who produce goods for their own consumption (subsistence work). However, of those employed, women were only half as likely as men to be in paid work (26 per cent of women and 51 per cent of men).²³ Women and girls have less access to opportunities and services, and less control over resources than men and boys. Heavy workloads and high rates of violence against women and girls significantly constrain both rural and urban women from exercising their rights to participate equally in the social, economic and political spheres. In addition, women face constraints in increasing their agricultural productivity and participating in agricultural value chains. Women dominate food production roles while men have continued to dominate processing and technical skills.²⁴ Other important barriers that limit the participation of women in commercial agriculture include limited access to financial services, limited say in household finances and lower literacy levels.
8. Youth in the Solomon Islands make up a significant portion of the population, but they face several obstacles to involvement in work and livelihoods, politics, and decision-making. In fact, seven out of ten Solomon Islanders are under 30 years of age.²⁵ The Solomon Islands' National Youth Policy 2017 -2030, defines youth as persons between 15 and 34 years of age.²⁶ The government recognizes that youth have a crucial role to play in the agriculture sector, despite the challenges that they face, and more needs to be done.²⁷ This includes addressing issues such as access to land, capital, and training; promoting agro-entrepreneurship among the youth; and ensuring their participation in agricultural policy-making.²⁸
9. **Climate risk and vulnerability.** Climate change and its associated negative impacts are affecting communities and their livelihoods. Scientific evidence shows that climate change will hurt productivity of the agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors across the Pacific over the coming decades, and more specifically in the Solomon Islands.²⁹ The annual surface temperature for the western, central, and eastern regions of the Solomon Islands has increased during the last 30 to 50 years, and general trends show that in the central region there was a decrease in rainfall and a slight increase in rainfall for the western and eastern regions in the past 30-50 years.³⁰ Extreme weather conditions such as intense tropical cyclones, heavy rainfall, extreme high tides exacerbated by sea level rise and prolonged periods of drought have affected food production, water supply systems and livestock production systems, which are critical for community livelihoods and well-being.^{31 32}

C. Policies on rural development and agricultural growth

10. The government considers rural development to be a key priority, as reflected in its National Development Strategy (NDS) 2016-2035. Specifically, the NDS aims to grow "the economy through creating investment opportunities in manufacturing and industry

²³ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and SPC. 2019. Country Gender Assessment of Agriculture and the Rural Sector in Solomon Islands. Honiara.

²⁴ Men tend to undertake the more strenuous work of ploughing land, clearing gardens, heavy planting and harvesting tasks, and construction work, whereas women do more ongoing and labour-intensive tasks such as maintenance of seedlings and gardens, intercultural operations, and post-harvest processing.

²⁵ UNDP (2018) Solomon Islands Youth Status Report 2018.

²⁶ Solomon Islands National Youth Policy 2017-2030, <http://www.mwycfa.gov.sb/resources-2/strategic-plans-policies/youth-development-empowerment/6-solomon-islands-national-youth-policy-2017-2030/file.html#:~:text=The%20policy%20articulates%20the%20values.and%20productive%20engagement%20that%20can>

²⁷ The Solomon Islands Government formally recognizes the invaluable role that youth play in agriculture. The government's Agriculture & Livestock Sector Policy 2015-2019 highlights the importance of providing opportunities for young people to engage in the sector.

²⁸ UNDP (2018) Solomon Islands Youth Status Report 2018.

²⁹ Taylor, M. et al (2016) Vulnerability of Pacific Island agriculture and forestry to climate change.

³⁰ Solomon Islands Government, 2021 Nationally Determined Contribution, available at, <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/NDC/2022-06/NDC%20Report%202021%20Final%20Solomon%20Islands%20%281%29.pdf>

³¹ This caused significant damage to economic and social infrastructure, such as roads and bridges as well as hampering the delivery of critical services provided by clinics and schools among other services.

³² An increasing number of people in rural communities where most of the population resides are struggling to manage and cope with the negative effects of climate change.

development such as tourism, agriculture, fisheries, forestry, energy and related sectors in an environmentally sustainable manner” (Solomon Islands Government, 2016a: 10). It highlights agriculture as part of its objective 1 (sustained and inclusive economic growth) as well as its objective 2 (poverty alleviated across the whole of the Solomon Islands, basic needs addressed, and food security improved; benefits of development more equitably distributed).

11. Furthermore, the Agriculture Sector Growth Strategy and Investment Plan 2021-2030,³³ the National Agriculture and Livestock Sector Policy 2015-2019 (NALSP) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock’s (MAL) Corporate Plan of 2015-2019, are in strong alignment with key existing governmental policies and development plans. These include the NDS and the Medium-Term Development Plan 2016-2020 (MTDP), which translates the long-term development objectives of the NDS into medium-term development strategies with specific priority programmes under each strategy and budget plans for individual ministries. The latest MTDP includes thirteen priority programmes that address the agriculture sector and form the basis for budgetary allocations to MAL for 2016-2020.³⁴ On the other hand, the Solomon Islands National Fisheries Policy 2019-2029 differentiates between four major subsectors: offshore, inshore (coastal), inland freshwater and aquaculture. While the offshore fisheries subsector is one of the country’s largest revenue earners, the policy particularly highlights the importance of aquaculture and inshore fishing in terms of achieving food security in the country.³⁵

D. IFAD’s SIDS strategic approach and portfolio in Solomon Islands

12. **IFAD and Small Island Development States (SIDS).** IFAD's Strategic Framework 2016-2025 recognizes the specific challenges and vulnerabilities facing Small Island Developing States (SIDS). As a result, IFAD has developed a strategy for engagement with SIDS: the [Strategy for Engagement in Small Island Developing States \(SIDS\) 2022-2027](#).³⁶ This strategy recognizes that SIDS, such as the Solomon Islands, have specific social, economic, environmental, food and nutrition-related opportunities and vulnerabilities.³⁷ The strategy’s strategic objectives reflect the thematic priorities for SIDS engagement defined in IFAD’s contributions to the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action Pathway.³⁸ Prior to the approval of the SIDS strategy, IFAD’s engagement in the SIDS was guided by the policy paper, [IFAD’s approach in Small Island Developing States: A global response to island voices for food security](#).³⁹ The document outlined IFAD’s strategic approach to enhancing food security and promoting sustainable smallholder agriculture development in Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the context of the exacerbated impacts of climate change and persistent market access challenges.
13. **IFAD in the Solomon Islands.** IFAD has provided support to the Solomon Islands through various projects, including the Rural Financial Services Project and the Agricultural Development Project, which were approved in 1984 and 1988, respectively. However, due to non-payment of arrears, the Solomon Islands was suspended from receiving IFAD assistance until mid-2008. IFAD restarted its engagement in the Solomon Islands by partnering with the World Bank to support the Rural Development

³³ The Agriculture Sector Growth Strategy and Investment Plan identifies strategic opportunities and outlines an ambitious path to revitalize the agricultural sector to contribute to the well-being and prosperity of all Solomon Islanders, ensuring food and nutrition security and increased economic growth.

³⁴ At the time of writing there was no successor MTDP to the 2016-2020 version.

³⁵ Artisanal fishing in the lagoons and reefs provide the needed proteins, but due to declining yields livestock, mainly pigs and poultry, gain importance as a source of protein.

³⁶ The IFAD Strategy for Engagement in Small Island Developing States (SIDS) 2022-2027, as approved by IFAD Executive Board Executive Board, 135th Session. Rome, 25-27 April 2022.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ The three strategic objectives are (i) promote sustainable, nutrition-sensitive and inclusive food systems; (ii) promote rural non-farm employment and the development of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises; (iii) strengthen resilience of rural households and agricultural production systems to environmental and climate change.

³⁹ <https://www.ifad.org/en/web/knowledge/-/publication/ifads-approach-in-small-island-developing-states-a-global-response-to-island-voices-for-food-security>

Programme (RDP) Phase I in 2010, followed by a Phase II in 2015, which ended in 2022.⁴⁰ In alignment with IFAD's country strategic note for the Solomon Islands, IFAD's primary areas of emphasis from 2022 - 2023 included: (i) improving the productivity, sustainability and resilience of smallholder agriculture both for producing cash crops and nutritious food; (ii) facilitating nutrition education to combat malnutrition; (iii) helping smallholders to access agricultural technologies, innovation, and information; and, (iv) linking smallholder farmers and their organizations to markets.

E. The Rural Development Programme Phase II

14. **Description and evolution of the programme.** The Rural Development Programme (RDP) was formulated in 2007 as a long-term intervention to support the Solomon Islands' national rural development goals. The programme was planned in two phases using a community-driven development approach (CDD) to support rural infrastructure and put in place the structures and mechanisms necessary for CDD to continue to function for future development. The RDP I closed at the end of February 2015 and was followed by the implementation of the RDP II following its approval in November 2014. The RDP II became effective in May 2015 and aimed to build on the achievements and lessons learned in RDP I by improving infrastructure and services in additional rural areas. It further sought to develop linkages between smallholder farmers and markets, as well as to assist flood-impacted communities in Guadalcanal province. The programme closed in February 2022.
15. **Programme objective.** The programme's development objective was to improve basic infrastructure and services in rural areas and to strengthen the linkages between smallholder farming households and markets.
16. **Programme components.** The RDP II had three components: (i) community infrastructure and services; (ii) agribusiness partnerships and support; and (iii) programme management.
17. **Component 1: community infrastructure and services.** This component aimed to extend and refine the CDD mechanisms developed during the first phase of the RDP with some modifications based on implementation lessons and evaluation findings. This component had three subcomponents which included: (i) community development grants; (ii) community facilitation and capacity development; and (iii) rural infrastructure disaster recovery and resilience.
18. **Component 2: agriculture partnerships and support.** This component aimed to: (i) assist farming households to engage in productive partnerships with commercial enterprises, primarily focusing on the cocoa and coconut value chains; (ii) build the capacity of MAL to deliver its core functions of regulation, research and sector coordination; and (iii) restore the productive assets of households critically affected by the April 2014 flash floods. The subcomponents for component 2 included: (i) agribusiness partnerships; (ii) an agriculture supplemental equity facility; (iii) agriculture commercialization; (iv) agriculture and livestock disaster recovery and resilience; and (v) coordination and management of the implementation of component 2.
19. **Component 3: programme management.** This component was to finance activities designed to establish a project management unit to manage component 1 activities directly while overseeing component 2, as well as strengthening the capacity of the Ministry for Planning and Development Coordination (MNPDC)⁴¹ for overall programme management, including financial management, procurement, monitoring and evaluation (M&E), and social and environmental safeguards.
20. **Programme beneficiaries:** The programme was expected to benefit approximately 65,000 beneficiary households, or about 357,500 people (assuming a household size of

⁴⁰ IFAD, 2021. Solomon Islands Country Strategy Note.

⁴¹ The Ministry for National Planning and Development Coordination (MNPDC) was previously called the Ministry of Development Planning and Aid Coordination.

5.5 people).⁴² The majority of these households, about 48,000, were to benefit from improved community-driven rural services, such as water supply, health and education facilities, transport, energy, etc. Each rural ward in the country would receive two community development grants and a higher concentration was expected to go to rural communities in Guadalcanal that were significantly damaged by the April 2014 flash floods. Approximately 17,000 smallholder farming households, agribusiness owners and other contributors to agriculture value chains would also benefit from investments to improve agricultural productivity, marketing, value addition and incomes.⁴³

21. **Programme cost and finance.** At appraisal, the RDP II was a US\$46.9 million co-financed programme through a *pari passu* financing arrangement. This comprised: (i) the World Bank grant of US\$9 million; (ii) Australian Aid grant of US\$13.3 million; (iii) European Union grant of US\$10.5 million; (iv) IFAD's grant of US\$4.6 million; and (v) the Government of Solomon Islands' contribution of US\$ 9.5 million (see table 1). In terms of financial contribution, the RDP II was a relatively small programme for IFAD, compared to other funding partners. The RDP II finances were managed by the World Bank through a multi-donor trust fund.

Table 1

Project financing by financier (US\$'000)

Financier	Appraisal	% of appraisal costs	Actual	% of actual costs	% disbursed
World Bank	9 000	19.2%	10 470	25.1%	116.3%
Australian Aid	13 300	28.4%	10 500	25.1%	79.0%
European Commission	10 500	22.4%	10 440	25.0%	80.3%
IFAD	4 600	9.8%	4 270	10.2%	92.8%
Borrower's contribution	9 500	20.3%	6 070	14.5%	86.7%
Total	46 900	100%	41 750	100.0%	89.1%

Source: World Bank Implementation Completion and Results Report (ICRR).

22. Table 2 outlines the relative weight of each component in relation to the total financing of the project. As shown, component 1 (community infrastructure and services) absorbed 56.6 per cent of total project funding, while component 2 on agriculture partnerships and support incurred 26.3 per cent of the programme costs. The programme management costs (component 3) received 17.2 per cent of the total costs.

Table 2

Project financing by component (US\$'000)

Component	Appraisal	% of appraisal costs	Actual	% of actual costs	% disbursed
1. Community infrastructure and services	23 462	45.9%	23 620	56.6%	109.76%
2. Agriculture partnerships and support	18 880	40.1%	10 960	26.3%	58.27%
3. Programme management	6 570	14.0%	7 170	17.2%	109.1%
Total	46 900	100.0%	41 750	100.0%	89.0%

Source: World Bank ICRR.

23. **Timeframe.** On 21 November 2014 and 11 March 2015, respectively, the Executive Boards of the World Bank and the IFAD approved the financing of RDP II. The World Bank's financing showed a three-month efficacy lag, compared to two months for IFAD

⁴² Solomon Islands National Statistics Office, <https://www.statistics.gov.sb/statistics/social-statistics/social-general>

⁴³ It is important to note that the programme appraisal document does not make reference to specific target groups but instead presents the information in a generic manner as highlighted in this subsection.

financing. The IFAD financing's completion and closing deadlines of 30 June 2020 and 31 December 2020, respectively, went as planned with no adjustments. On the other hand, the World Bank's original financing closure date was 28 February 2020. The changes in the final programme closure dates for the World Bank were the result of a restructuring in July 2019 which extended the closing date of the EU grant from 28 August 2019 to 28 February 2021, and extended the project's closing date to the same date. A final restructuring extended the closing dates of the EU grant by a further two months, to close on 30 April 2021, and the World Bank grant by eleven months, to close on 7 February 2022. The main programme financing dates for both institutions are summarized below.

Table 3
Key programme financing dates by IFAD and World Bank

Key project financing dates	IFAD	World Bank
Approval	11 March 2015	21 November 2014
Effectiveness	7 May 2015	27 February 2015
Midterm review	28 August 2017	28 August 2017
Original completion	30 June 2020	
Actual completion	30 June 2020	
Original closure	31 December 2020	28 February 2020
Actual closure	31 December 2020	07 February 2022

Source: IFAD project completion report (PCR) and World Bank ICRR.

24. **Implementation arrangements.** The overall coordination of the RDP II was guided by a steering committee comprised of relevant government departments, and it was chaired by the Ministry of National Planning and Development Coordination (MNPDC). The Permanent Secretary of MNPDC served as both the programme coordinator and programme director, assisted by a national programme manager, international programme advisor, finance and procurement specialists, and support staff for each component. In terms of implementation, MNPDC led component 1, while the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) led component 2 (see annex V, figure 6 for the detailed programme implementation structure).
25. **Changes during programme implementation.** The programme underwent multiple restructurings on the following dates: February 2016, April 2016, June 2017, January 2018, August 2019 and February 2021.⁴⁴ The changes made during these restructurings included adjustments to the programme's indicators and targets, financing plan, and costs, as well as amendments to legal agreements, procurement arrangements, and legal covenants. The most significant changes occurred during the January 2018 restructuring when several outcome targets were revised, including a reduction in the target for the number of beneficiaries with improved quality of, or access to rural infrastructure or services from 264,000 to 140,000 (a 46.97 per cent reduction). The target was later increased to 155,000 in the 2020 iteration with the support of additional financing. The target for smallholder households engaged in productive partnerships with commercial enterprises was reduced from 17,000 to 14,000 (an 18.6 per cent reduction) which translated into approximately 77,000 from the original 93,500.

⁴⁴ These changes were mainly driven by financing shortfalls, additional financing and an extension to allow for the completion of the programme.

II. Evaluation objectives, methodology and process

26. **PPE objectives.** The objectives of the evaluation were to: (i) provide an independent assessment of the overall results of the programme; (ii) generate findings and recommendations for the design and implementation of ongoing and future operations in the Solomon Islands; and (iii) identify issues and inform ongoing and future evaluative work related to the corporate and/or strategic domains in the Pacific SIDS.
27. **Scope.** The PPE covered the entire implementation period of the RDP II programme from 2015 to 2022 and included all components of the RDP II.⁴⁵ An in-depth analysis was conducted on the key issues identified during the scoping and evaluation design stage (see annex VI).
28. **Methodology.** The PPE was conducted in accordance with the revised IFAD Evaluation Policy (IFAD, 2021a) and the IFAD Evaluation Manual of 2022. It adopted a set of internationally recognized evaluation criteria and a six-point rating scale (annexes II and III, respectively) to assess the performance of the programme. The detailed evaluation framework provides information on the data's overarching questions, sub-questions, evidence criteria and indicators and data sources identified by PPE evaluation criteria (see annex IV).
29. **Process.** Review of available secondary country context and programme documents included the programme appraisal document (PAD), supervision and implementation support (SIS) reports, IFAD PCR and World Bank ICRR, among others. The PPE team conducted in-country data collection from 13 March to 24 April 2023 in two phases, covering Temotu, Makira, Malaita and Guadalcanal provinces. Primary data collection involved key informant interviews, beneficiary interviews, focus group discussions, and community infrastructure site visits. The communities visited were purposively selected.⁴⁶ This was to ensure a balanced representation of locations for both component 1 and component 2. Consequently, the PPE team visited four provinces. Three of these provinces, namely Guadalcanal, Makira, and Malaita, were chosen due to their high concentration of programme activities. This allowed the team to observe and evaluate a significant portion of the programme operations. The fourth province, Temotu was also selected because of its geographic remoteness. This was important for the evaluation to capture the experiences associated with implementing the programme in remote and hard-to-reach communities.
30. At the community level, interviews primarily involved community members, both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, lead partners, co-partners, community helpers, technical community helpers (TCHs), and O&M committees. At the national and provincial levels, the evaluation team interviewed government officials, former RDP II staff and lead and co-partners. Evidence gathered from different levels was triangulated to make informed judgments of programme performance. The IFAD Research and Impact Assessment Division (RIA) impact study analysis was particularly useful in providing empirical evidence on programme effectiveness and impact. The list of persons met and the mission itinerary are annexed to this report (see annexes VIII and IX, respectively).
31. A wrap-up meeting was held on 24 April 2023, at the end of the field mission, with IFAD and Solomon Islands government stakeholders present to validate findings, share emerging findings and inform the stakeholders of the next steps in the evaluation process. This was followed by data analysis through triangulation, report drafting and internal IOE peer review.

⁴⁵ IFAD's contribution was fully blended with the co-financers, which allowed its funding to impact all aspects of the programme.

⁴⁶ Purposive sampling involves selecting units based on known characteristics that are relevant to the evaluation. The evaluation used several characteristics to identify the provinces, which include the concentration and saturation of programme activities and the expected accessibility, due to the remoteness of some communities.

32. **Limitations.** The major limitation for the PPE primarily stemmed from the absence of comprehensive M&E data for the programme, which hindered the ability to adequately triangulate evidence with primary data collected during the field mission. In addition, the logistical challenges posed a significant hurdle for the evaluation. Due to the remoteness of several communities and the inadequate communication and transport network, arrangements for data collection visits were not easy to schedule, necessitating multiple visits to the same communities for mobilization and subsequently for data collection. The lack of a clearly formulated theory of change underpinning programme design and anticipated pathways of change posed difficulties in shaping the evaluation approach and establishing cause-and-effect relationships.
33. **Mitigation strategies.** The evaluation team conducted multiple community visits to schedule interview appointments in areas where prior mobilization was not possible. This approach ensured the availability of community members for interviews on the day of data collection. In the absence of comprehensive M&E data, the team relied on extensive qualitative data collection to generate adequate evidence. The evaluation team reconstructed a theory of change based on what was presented in both the World Bank ICRR and IFAD IA report, which allowed the unexpressed but expected programme outcomes to be clarified.

III. Main evaluation findings

A. Programme performance on evaluation criteria

Relevance

34. The section assesses the extent to which: (i) the objectives of the programme are aligned with national policies, development strategies and IFAD strategies; (ii) the quality of programme design, the targeting strategies' consistency with the objectives; and (iii) the relevance of the programme design changes during implementation.

Alignment with national policies, development strategies and IFAD strategies

35. **Alignment with national priorities.** The RDP II programme was well aligned with national policies and development strategies, but a few gaps were observed. It responded to key objectives of the NDS. Specifically, component 1 contributed to objective one of the NDS: to alleviate poverty and improve the lives of Solomon Islanders in a peaceful and stable society and prioritize the need to improve rural water supply and sanitation infrastructure.⁴⁷ In addition, component 1 interventions were also reflective of objective six, which focused on the development of physical infrastructure and utilities to ensure all Solomon Islanders have equitable access to essential services and markets. During implementation, the 2011-2020 NDS was replaced by NDS 2016-2035⁴⁸ and the elements of component 1 remained relevant.
36. Component 2 was aligned with the National Agriculture and Livestock Sector Policy 2015-2019 (NALSP)⁴⁹ which envisaged a twin-track strategic approach: (i) to enhance and diversify the production of staple foods and climate-resilient crops and livestock; and (ii) to expand the export base through the development of existing and potential new commodities. Component 2 was consistent with this approach, in particular the focus on promoting disaster risk mitigation and climate change adaptation, promoting agro-processing, value addition, and agribusiness. The lack of focus on the production of staple food crops and the focus on cash crops (both for domestic and export markets) in the programme design was a missed opportunity for further alignment with the NALSP. The RDP II, unlike RDP I, focused on a few promising export-oriented cash crops (particularly cocoa and coconuts) and moved away from strengthening the MAL extension service to commercial partners and SMEs. However, MAL continued to face capacity gaps. These included the provision of extension services and community engagement at the subnational level, and sector coordination, policy implementation and creating an enabling environment at the upstream level.⁵⁰
37. **Alignment with IFAD strategies.** The alignment of the programme with IFAD's strategic priorities in SIDS, as articulated in IFAD's approach in "Small Island Developing States - A Global Response to Island Voices for Food Security", was evident to some degree given that it was prepared at about the same time as the design of the RDP II.⁵¹ The emphasis on empowering local communities, bolstering climate resilience, offering inclusive financial services, and fostering partnerships closely resonated with IFAD's objectives. However, the lack of a food security and nutrition focus was a significant shortcoming in achieving stronger alignment. During programme implementation, opportunities for further alignment particularly at midterm review were

⁴⁷ The need to improve rural water supply and sanitation is prioritized in the NDS and actions under objective 1 include to "facilitate infrastructure development for an efficient, effective and quality service delivery to rural communities in water supply and sanitation, electricity, transport and communications"; and "expedite development of water supply and sanitation coverage through more efficient use of resources in community contracts and community enterprises supported by pre-qualified NGOs under competitive contracts" – both areas within the scope of community development grants. Government of the Solomon Islands. 2011. National Development Strategy 2011 to 2020, Honiara.

⁴⁸ Solomon Islands Government. 2016. National Development Strategy 2016-2036: Improving the Social and Economic livelihoods of all Solomon Islanders, Honiara.

⁴⁹ https://www.pacificclimatechange.net/sites/default/files/documents/Solomons-Islands-NALSP_Final%20Draft_151118.pdf

⁵⁰ Extension services outreach in the Solomon Islands by the government is still low with extension officers preferring visiting mainly the easy to reach communities which are more accessible.

⁵¹ <https://www.ifad.org/nl/web/knowledge/-/publication/ifads-approach-in-small-island-developing-states-a-global-response-to-island-voices-for-food-security>

not seized but instead, design changes were more focused on the revision of output targets.

38. The partnership-oriented approach, which involved collaboration with both the public and private sectors, served to further enhance the congruence between RDP II and IFAD's approach to public-private-producer partnerships. This collaborative engagement extended to working alongside other financing partners like the World Bank, Australian Aid and the European Union. Such partnerships not only enabled the pooling of expertise and resources but also contributed to the overall effectiveness of aid harmonization, in line with the principles outlined in the Cairns Compact and the Pacific Aid Effectiveness Principles.

Relevance and quality of design

39. **The CDD Approach.** The use of the CDD to deliver social and community infrastructure investments was relevant. It aimed to capitalize on the valuable lessons learned through addressing gaps in improved access to public goods (such as infrastructure and social services) during RDP I.⁵² ⁵³ The approach remained relevant during RDP II due to the persistent challenges the government faced in delivering social services and social infrastructure in rural areas. These challenges were primarily a result of the government's limited capacity to provide services and overcome the geographical hurdles of reaching remote, isolated and vulnerable communities in a timely and effective manner. It further presented an opportunity to leverage local resources, knowledge and social structures; enhance community ownership; build community capacity to manage future development initiatives; and contribute to addressing a diverse range of community prioritized needs. Furthermore, the decentralized government structure was an opportunity to strengthen local governance and enhance collaboration between the provincial governments and local communities in prioritizing their development needs.
40. **The expected synergies between the two components did not materialize due to the lack of clear design logic.** The choice of eligible subprojects, as identified in the PAD (World Bank, 2014), remained consistent with that of RDP 1, which included water supply, schools, health facilities and resource centres. However, the envisioned linkages and advancement of agriculture commercialization infrastructure (e.g. feeder roads, footbridges, jetties, storage facilities etc.) as well as capacity-building and training initiatives (e.g. income-generating skills) under component 2 were not adequately elaborated in the programme design. Thus, the majority of the funded subprojects closely resembled those financed during RDP 1. In the end, the two programme components operated in silos with no linkages, both at the coordination and implementation levels. Similar to observations highlighted in the World Bank RDP I Project Performance Assessment Report, synergies were essential to the programme's intended outcomes, but the programme design lacked protocols and approaches articulating how, where and why they should be linked. This made integration difficult and resulted in the programme team referring to "two projects in one".⁵⁴ The lack of specific guidance on their integration in terms of facilitation, targeting mechanisms, standardized technical designs with pre-approved options, specific budget ranges, and counterparts with specific expertise in participatory development, as well as the lack of coordination between government departments and ministries obscured the required synergies.
41. **Disaster recovery and resilience grants (DRGs) were narrowly focused on recovery rather than building longer-term resilience.**⁵⁵ These were provided

⁵² These gaps are primarily a result of structural, institutional, geographic, logistical and capacity limitations that hindered the government's ability to effectively deliver services to its citizens.

⁵³ During the RDP 1, the programme developed procedures for community engagement in the design and implementation of rural infrastructure and service delivery with varying degrees of success and these were to be sustained during RDP II.

⁵⁴ World Bank RDP I, Project Performance Assessment Report.

⁵⁵ According to the design report, these grants were intended to provide rural infrastructure disaster recovery and resilience support to communities in Guadalcanal affected by the April 2014 flash floods.

under both components 1 and 2 as part of the rural infrastructure disaster recovery and resilience support, and agriculture and livestock disaster recovery and resilience support subcomponents, respectively. Although the grants were undeniably crucial for addressing the immediate aftermath of the 2014 flash floods in Guadalcanal, they seemed to focus on post-disaster recovery over long-term resilience-building in the absence of well-articulated activities to address this critical subcomponent.⁵⁶ Given the susceptibility of the Solomon Islands to frequent environmental disasters, a more balanced approach that equally emphasizes disaster preparedness, recovery and proactive resilience-building measures was essential to ensure the long-term sustainability and adaptive capacity in the face of future calamities. The assumption that the RDP II would be linked with another World Bank-funded project for building long-term resilience, Community Resilience to Climate and Disaster Risk Project, did not hold.

42. **Design of the Agricultural Supplemental Equity Facility (ASEF).** As part of the agribusiness partnership component, RDP II aimed to establish a matching grant financial facility to enhance agricultural sector finance and rural enterprise growth. This involved borrowers contributing 20 per cent of project costs, banks lending 60 per cent, and the remaining 20 per cent funded by an ASEF grant. However, the design did not sufficiently take into account the financial sector's unwillingness to lend to a traditionally risky subsector. Additionally, it overlooked the capacity of agribusiness partners to meet the loan requirements of financial institutions. This aspect was not considered in the PAD operational risk framework.⁵⁷ In view of the limited financial capacity of Solomon Islands' agribusinesses, alternative financing arrangements could have been more effective. Integration of considerations such as loan or credit guarantees, resolving issues around land tenure and advocating for alternative collateral, asset-based financing (leasing) and interest rate subsidies, among other innovative financing modalities, could have improved the quality of design.

Adequacy of design changes

43. **Design changes appeared to largely prioritize achieving targets over further enhancing relevance.** Several adjustments were made during programme implementation, however none responded or contributed to further improvement of the programme components and related subcomponents. Changes were mainly in response to time and cost overruns as well as the need to overcome implementation bottlenecks, which resulted in a decrease in some of the physical output targets.⁵⁸ Some of the changes made included allowing transfers of funds to Subproject Implementation Committees (SICs) to be treated as disbursements to ease the fund flow issue under component 1. In addition, the reduction in the amount of the ASEF grants in component 2 was driven by low uptake, instead of addressing the underlying factors which were hindering uptake, in particular the ability of the agribusinesses to meet the loan requirements of the banks.⁵⁹
44. Several other changes included adjustments to the programme development objective (PDO) indicator and intermediate result indicator targets, adjustments to the financing plan and project costs, amendments to the legal agreement, alterations to procurement arrangements, revision of a legal covenant, and minor editorial updates to the PDO. The supervision reports suggest that this did not affect the achievement of the PDO. However, it raised questions about the original design and its logic.

⁵⁶ More elaboration was required at design to ensure sufficient coverage of disaster recovery and resilience. According to the World Bank at the time of design, there was another ongoing project, Community Resilience to Climate and Disaster Risk Project which largely focused on community resilience and as a result RDP II did not elaborate this component.

⁵⁷ World Bank PAD, annex 4, Operational Risk Assessment Framework.

⁵⁸ IFAD RDP II programme completion report.

⁵⁹ The initial target disbursement of US\$2,000,000 in ASEF grants under component 2 was reduced to US\$1,000,000 after the MTR, and then further reduced to the actual achieved amount of US\$120,000 (only 6 per cent of the initial target).

Quality of the logical framework

45. **The programme's logical framework did not adequately outline how the expected results would be achieved.** Instead of balancing the focus on measuring outputs and intermediate results with higher-level results, it primarily focused on the former. As such, the logic model or results chain did not persuasively explain how the development goal of poverty reduction was to be achieved, including mapping the pathways and the expected interlinkages between the two programme components. In its analysis, the IFAD PCR exemplified this gap by highlighting the inadequacies of the RDP II logical framework and internal design logic in relation to: (i) the lack of integration between the community infrastructure and agriculture interventions; and (ii) the absence of measures to assess the potential impact on institutional capacity within the MAL and the private sector at either the province or community levels.

Relevance of the targeting approach

46. The RDP II had a two-pronged targeting approach which operated in parallel for the two programme components.
47. **The universal targeting approach was relevant in reaching all the rural communities with social services infrastructure support.** This meant that all 174 wards received community development grants (CDGs). The approach ensured equitable distribution of resources and development opportunities across all rural communities and ensured that no community was left behind in the development process, given the Solomon Islands' context of poor to non-existent social service delivery. While the universal targeting approach was appropriate, it missed the opportunity to target those communities with the least access to critical social services such as water supply systems, health posts and education facilities among others, thereby addressing geographical disparities in access to social services and promoting equity. These disparities are partly due to the country's geography, with many islands and communities located in remote and hard-to-reach areas for the delivery of social services.
48. **The selection of subprojects based on the ranking of ward priorities was relevant and consistent with the CDD approach principles.** At the ward level, each ward was to implement two subprojects, chosen based on the community's prioritized rankings derived from the ward development plans in consultation with the provincial planning office.⁶⁰ This approach ensured that the projects were tailored to the specific needs and priorities of each community and provided an opportunity to foster a sense of ownership among community members, increasing the likelihood of the programme's success and sustainability. Furthermore, ensuring that the process was facilitated by the provincial government planning office in addition to the CHs further enhanced the approach and made it evidence-based, in line with key access to social services indicators for the respective communities. The process made use of ward profiling, which specified details about each community's infrastructure, including its condition, as well as community needs.⁶¹
49. **The agribusiness partnerships component had a well-articulated and relevant partner selection process.** It incorporated a two-stage application process, starting with expressions of interest (EOIs) and proceeding to full partnership proposals, allowing for a thorough evaluation of potential projects. The involvement of an Inter-Ministerial Screening Committee at the EOI stage provided an initial filter, ensuring that only promising applicants advanced to the next phase.⁶² The selection process also included the establishment of an independent Technical Appraisal Committee, composed of experts from various fields to evaluate full proposals. Furthermore, the provision of technical assistance for full proposal development and the incorporation of

⁶⁰ These plans were obtained from provincial planning offices and validated through community consultation in subproject decision-making.

⁶¹ Information about past and present development projects was also included. Demographic data were gathered during village meetings.

⁶² PIM for component 2.

environmental and social safeguards assessments further enhanced the relevance of the approach. Key considerations were also integrated in the targeted approach for the potential agribusiness partners. These included access to markets, management capacity, strong working capital and knowledge of agribusiness.

50. **The selection criteria for individual smallholder farmers had shortcomings.** The decision to delegate the selection of individual beneficiary programme participants for component 2 to the lead and co-partners led to targeting weaknesses in the absence of a well-articulated approach. In the context of agricultural commercialization, the Programme Implementation Manual (PIM) assessed that it was challenging and perhaps counterproductive to implement strict targeting criteria due to its focus on engaging commercially active and viable smallholder farmers within rural communities. Consequently, it was decided to entrust the selection of individual farmers for programme participation to both the lead partners and co-partners who were expected to ensure subsistence and semi-subsistence farmers who expressed interest in participation were included. Due to the lack of implementation monitoring for the targeting approach, this balance was not fully achieved and its potential reduced in terms of its effectiveness in reaching vulnerable smallholder farmers, resulting in missed opportunities for addressing target groups' specific constraints.
51. **Summary.** The overall relevance of the RDP II was mixed. The programme was in line with the government policies, strategies and national priorities, as well as IFAD policies and strategies in the context of SIDS. However, by proactively considering the contextual challenges in the Solomon Islands—such as remoteness, geographical disparities affecting access to social services, high transaction costs, logistics and transport limitations, and distance to markets—during the design, the relevance of these interventions could have been further enhanced. Furthermore, the design lacked essential mechanisms to ensure synergies between the two components which resulted in the programme being implemented as two projects in one programme, similar to the RDP I. In addition, the design of the disaster recovery and resilience grants was not sufficiently granular to address the vulnerabilities of the country to climate and weather-related disasters. Lastly, the targeting approaches for individual beneficiaries, particularly for component 2, lacked specific mechanisms to reach interest groups such as women, youth and people living with disabilities. Considering the available evidence, the PPE rates relevance as **moderately satisfactory (4)**.

Effectiveness

52. The effectiveness criterion assesses the extent to which the programme achieved the intended objectives, including any unplanned achievements. The reconstructed theory of change identified four major pathways for achieving the desired impact. These were: (i) improved community capability for managing infrastructure subprojects for improved access and utilization of social services; (ii) improved productive capacity and agribusiness partnerships between private agribusinesses and smallholder farmers; (iii) increased capacity of agricultural institutions to provide demand-driven agricultural services; and (iv) improved recovery and resilience of flood-affected communities.

Effectiveness of outreach

53. **Almost all targets were significantly lowered in 2018.** According to the World Bank ICRR, the target for "beneficiaries with improved quality of, and/or, access to rural infrastructure or services (including from disaster recovery)" was reduced from 262,850 to 140,000 (a 47 per cent reduction), but the target was later increased to 155,000 in 2020 with additional financing available. A new indicator with a disaggregated target for female beneficiaries was set at 70,000. The target for "male and female members of farming households engaged in productive partnerships with commercial enterprises" was reduced from 68,200 to 14,000 (an 80 per cent reduction).⁶³ The target for the "number of male and female beneficiaries receiving agriculture and livestock support to recover incomes lost from the April 2014 flooding" was reduced from 5,400 to 2,500 (a

⁶³ World Bank, ICRR.

54 per cent reduction) following a verification exercise. As noted, the PDO was adjusted as part of the March 2020 additional financing to the phrasing included in the financing agreements.⁶⁴ Table 8 in annex V presents the physical achievements of outputs for the RDP II.

54. The RDP II data shows that the programme approved 330 community infrastructure subprojects, and 317 were completed (96 per cent) at the end of RDP II. As shown in table 4 below, the completed subprojects included 162 water supply and sanitation (51.1 per cent), 66 education (20.8 per cent), 54 multipurpose community buildings including evacuation centres (17 per cent), 18 economic affairs subprojects (5.7 per cent), and 17 health facilities (5.4 per cent).⁶⁵ The total reported outreach numbers for the subprojects was 171,320 beneficiaries of which 84,673 were women (49 per cent). It was not clear from the available beneficiary data whether it eliminated double counting given that beneficiaries from a given ward could also have benefited from the subproject infrastructure created in a neighbouring ward. In some communities, there was an overlap between component 1 and 2 communities which most likely resulted in beneficiaries benefiting from the two programme components.

Table 4

Subprojects implemented by category

Subproject category	# of subprojects	# of beneficiaries	# of female beneficiaries	Funds (SBD)
Water/sanitation	162	84 070	41 418	33 839 052
Economic affairs	18	8 155	3 953	3 480 000
Education	66	40 096	20 054	15 418 096
Health	17	13 576	6 703	4 248 581
Community buildings	54	25 423	12 545	12 750 723
Total	317	171 320	84 673	69 736 452

Source: World Bank, ICRR.

Effectiveness of targeting

55. **Evidence suggests variations in the inclusive adjudication process for the selection of infrastructure subprojects.** Subprojects aimed to establish inclusive decision-making processes. The extent to which this was achieved depended on the quality of community facilitation. Interviews in the field suggest the need for enhanced inclusiveness and community ownership, as well as ensuring transparency in the subproject selection process to ensure strong alignment with the needs of different subgroups. While elite capture was not evident in the subprojects selection process, there was inadequate participation of subgroups such as women, youth, and the elderly in the selection process. For example, in some communities, focus group discussion (FGD) participants reported facing a disenfranchising experience, presented with pre-determined technical designs for subprojects and expected to rubber-stamp or confirm the construction sites without meaningful participation and contribution to decision-making processes.
56. **Despite a seemingly robust partner selection process, evidence suggests it lacked the necessary due diligence.** This resulted in the selection of partners with insufficient strength or capabilities. Some of the selected agribusinesses lacked experience working with smallholder farmers in a mutually beneficial manner, and there

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ The subprojects in the education sector included primary and secondary school classrooms, dormitories, early childhood education centres, and staff housing. In the community sector, completed subprojects included community halls, resource centres, evacuation centres, and foot bridges/paths. Subprojects associated with economic affairs encompassed areas such as solar charge stations, electricity generation, and communication infrastructure. Additionally, within the health sector, subprojects comprised rural health clinics, staff housing, and nurse aid posts.

were no specific interventions to enhance their technical or management capacity. In addition, agribusiness partners were required to have sufficient working capital; however, the PPE found that some of the co-partners did not meet this requirement. Likewise, the programme's approach of targeting only smallholder farmers perceived as commercially viable was exclusionary and contributed to the programme not reaching the most vulnerable smallholder farmers. Limited ambition in terms of gender equality goals resulted in poor targeting of women, as well as youth who are key participants in the agriculture sector, especially within supported value chains.

57. Overall, targeting effectiveness challenges, as presented above, is related to the absence of logically linked and clearly defined targeting goals, and lack of specificity on the beneficiary subgroups relevant to the intervention of both components 1 and 2. In particular, careful consideration of the capacity of both the community-based institutions responsible for facilitating programme implementation, particularly for component 1, as well as the capacity of agribusinesses to target individual farming households for component 2 was necessary.

Impact pathway 1: Community capacity for managing infrastructure subprojects for improved access and utilization of social services enhanced

58. Component 1 aimed to contribute to this impact pathway through interventions implemented through using the CDD approach. The key focus areas included capacity-building for subproject planning, implementation and management. This was expected to contribute to increased access and utilization of infrastructure and social services.

Effectiveness of local capacity-building

59. **The development of local capacity to manage infrastructure investments was limited.** While utilization of technical community helpers (TCHs) and community helpers (CHs)⁶⁶ was a pragmatic decision, to facilitate subproject implementation and community involvement, high turnover rates and inadequate facilitation capacity hampered the effectiveness of this approach.⁶⁷ This information emerged from interactions with former cadres during the field mission who indicated not receiving training from either Solomon Islands Development Trust (SIDT) or Solomon Islands National University (SINU), the training service providers for CHs and TCHs, respectively. This finding aligns with the RDP I evaluation findings which highlighted insufficient social and participatory skills on the part of the cadres. Moreover, the absence of ongoing in-service training, particularly in collaboration with provincial governments and service providers (SIDT and SINU), prevented adapting capacity-building efforts to the evolving needs of later subproject implementation stages.
60. Furthermore, the evaluation did not find evidence of either a training needs assessment or an assessment of the quality and effectiveness of the training activities. This suggests that capacity-building adopted a standardized off-the-shelf approach. This one-size-fits-all training approach did not account for variations in capacity needs among different cadres. A decentralized training pathway could have been considered, with the option of working closely with the provincial government staff to ensure that the facilitation and technical capacity of the CHs and TCHs was maintained throughout the duration of the programme.

⁶⁶ The RDP II provided community level support using TCHs and CHs. While their roles overlapped, the TCHs provided engineering and technical services to communities while the "non-technical" CHs focused more on community facilitation, oversight and monitoring.

⁶⁷ Although RDP II did not provide data on turnover rates, the frequent turnover of TCHs and CHs emerged as a notable challenge in the delivery of consistent training to new cadres.

The role of community helpers (CH) in RDP II was crucial, emphasizing community facilitation, oversight and monitoring. CHs underwent training on community facilitation and RDP processes and procedures which spanned four weeks, facilitated by the Solomon Islands Development Trust (SIDT).⁶⁸ It included practical field trips on weekends, allowing CHs to engage with communities directly. While the training laid a solid foundation for CHs, it could have benefited from a sharper focus on RDP II specific aspects. Most of the communities lacked even basic local capacity or experience in initiating community infrastructure and hence relied very much on the trained TCHs.

Technical community helpers (TCH) played a specialized role in RDP II, providing engineering and technical services to communities. Their 16-week training programme aimed to equip them with the necessary skills. Solomon Islands National University (SINU) was contracted to design and deliver this training to 28 TCHs. While this training was modelled on similar "barefoot engineer" programmes in other regions, the 16 weeks of training was insufficient to transform individuals with no prior technical background into competent community engineers. The training, however, fostered a sense of camaraderie among TCHs, facilitating mutual support and exchange of experiences, particularly during the early stages of the programme. Interactions with the former TCHs highlighted one notable area which could have enhanced the role of the TCH by ensuring trainers were fully conversant with the roles and responsibilities of TCHs within the context of the RDP II, as some sessions reportedly covered less relevant topics.

Source: PPE elaboration based on PIM.

Community contributions and agency

61. **Community contribution to subproject implementation demonstrated mixed results.** Community contribution was expected to come directly in the form of labour, funds and in-kind (material) contribution to the subprojects. In addition, community involvement was also expected in the management and supervision of the contractors. Evidence from the field suggests that although community contributions started strongly with initial programme enthusiasm and perceived benefits, this declined over time as reported by former TCHs and CHs and SIC committee members. This shift highlights a key challenge: the programme's reliance on voluntary labour for public works competed with the communities' livelihood activities. Comparatively, communities in peri-urban areas exhibited lower levels of in-kind and labour contributions compared to remote locations. This suggests that a different approach, for example, including public works programme (cash-for-work) might be more effective in stimulating continued engagement in such contexts.
62. **Programme contributions to community agency was evidently limited.** While RDP II incorporated elements of community participation and empowerment through participatory decision-making, evidence appears to suggest that the programme pursued a less rigorous CDD model compared to similar interventions in other countries. The programme primarily measured agency based on the number of participants in consultations, disregarding the crucial indicators of meaningful participation, social cohesion, and empowerment which are critical in generating local ownership, and ultimately, long-term sustainability. Further substantiating this point, the instances of programme facilitators influencing subprojects' decisions raises questions about the level of genuine community empowerment (see paragraph 55). In addition, the observed limited social and participatory skills of CHs (see paragraph 59 and 60) emphasize gaps in the programme's contribution to building community agency, suggesting a less comprehensive application of CDD principles, which ultimately hindered the programme's potential to fully empower communities.

Access and utilization of quality infrastructure and social services

63. **Much of the subproject infrastructure observed during the field mission for improved access to social services was functional, but with weaknesses in**

⁶⁸ Along with other project personnel like provincial team leaders, deputy team leaders, finance officers, PSU and PCU staff.

construction quality. The World Bank ICRR indicates a generally high level of satisfaction with the quality of subprojects based on a survey of 296 of the 317 completed subprojects, a proxy indication of their quality. However, the PPE field mission observed that construction quality often fell short.⁶⁹ This apparent discrepancy highlights the limitations of relying solely on surveys for assessing quality, which may not capture the technical aspects observed during the field mission. The PPE identified several factors which influenced construction quality: the capacity and facilitation provided by SICs, TCHs, and CHs; the experience and expertise of contractors; and the quality and suitability of construction materials. Substandard technical designs that failed to consider site-specific needs further contributed to issues. Subprojects near Guadalcanal, the main commercial hub for construction materials, generally displayed higher quality due to easier access. Conversely, remote outer islands faced significant logistical challenges in obtaining and transporting materials, leading to damage and deterioration, as seen in Temotu province with cement, pipes, and even solar panels.

64. **Limited oversight and expertise hindered quality.** Beyond the previously mentioned factors, inadequate community supervision and limited technical expertise among TCHs further compromised construction quality. This resulted in weakened oversight and collaboration with contractors. Field interviews revealed a clear lack of community supervision due to weak facilitation, leading to poor ownership of projects by communities. This was compounded by the limited proximity of CHs and TCHs to their assigned communities. For instance, in Guadalcanal, these cadres resided primarily in Honiara, affecting the quality and quantity of support they could provide. Additionally, mobility challenges in the outer islands, coupled with limited and expensive transportation, further hampered oversight. Simpler designs, like those of community halls and schools, generally yielded better construction quality due to their less complex nature. However, technical failures were observed in some water supply systems, such as gravity-fed and rainwater harvesting systems.
65. **Subproject utilization varied across infrastructure categories.** Multipurpose community buildings reportedly served as central hubs for a wide range of activities such as community gatherings, local festivals, and weddings, particularly in communities with active management committees and resource mobilization for periodic and regular maintenance. Similarly, evacuation centres served as temporary shelters during times of floods and tropical cyclones. In contrast, access to day-care facilities faced challenges due to uncertainties about the placement of qualified teachers, the lack of teaching and learning materials and budget constraints, ultimately hindering their utilization.⁷⁰ In the absence of linkages with the provincial government, which the community expected would assume responsibility for the systemic aspects of the facilities, the ongoing responsibility did not always materialize. The same applied to the solar charging stations that were installed in some communities of Temotu province that only benefited those with mobile phones.
66. The water supply systems subprojects contributed to enhancing access to clean drinking water and reduced the burden on women and girls who endured walking long distances to fetch water. However, in the absence of any analysis of water quality, the PPE could not adequately verify the extent to which the water systems were providing clean and safe drinking water in line with acceptable standards. There were water quality concerns from rainwater harvesting and gravity water systems with concerns about contamination from roofs, microbes and bacterial growth.⁷¹ In some communities, water availability was constrained by inadequate capacity of storage tanks for rainwater

⁶⁹ Surveys were carried out for 296 of the 317 completed subprojects through focus group discussions with (a) SIC members, (b) non-SIC women's groups, and (c) non-SIC men's groups. Across all provinces, SIC satisfaction was 95 per cent, men's satisfaction was 92 per cent, and women's satisfaction was 91 per cent, indicating the strong satisfaction of communities with the subprojects.

⁷⁰ In the end, uncertainties about the stable placement of teachers made parents reluctant to send their children to those facilities.

⁷¹ These concerns underscored the necessity for behavioural interventions regarding the safe use of water from various supply systems. Beneficiary communities predominantly rely on traditional and unsafe practices, including drinking water from these sources without proper treatment.

harvesting systems and reduced water level of streams and rivers, in the case of gravity water systems as a result of seasonality.

Impact pathway 2: Improved productive capacity and agribusiness partnerships between private agribusinesses and smallholder farmers

67. Key areas of analysis on this impact pathway include: (i) capacity-building of lead and co-partners; (ii) capacity-building of smallholder farmers; and (iii) improvements in the productive capacity of the target groups.

Establishment of agribusiness partnerships

68. **Key output targets for the establishment of agribusiness partnerships were not met.** The programme fell short of its original target and revised targets from 79 to 43 agribusiness partnerships. The objective was to promote the development of stronger and more profitable alliances between private sector agribusinesses and smallholder farmers. As indicated in table 5, the programme ultimately succeeded in funding 35 agribusiness partnerships (81 per cent of the revised target) in targeting the following value chains.

Table 5

Number of agribusiness partnership proposals received and funded

Call for proposals cycle	Number of proposals received	Number selected	Full business proposals developed	Proposals rejected by TAC	Approved to proceed	Funded
# 1	130	27	24	4	20	20
# 2	84	27	25 ⁷²	7	18	15 ⁷³
Totals	214	54	49	11	38	35

Source: Component 2 agribusiness partnerships database.

69. **The established agribusiness partnerships proved effective during the programme but remained non-binding and time limited.** While the established agribusiness partnerships were initially effective during programme implementation, their non-binding and time-limited nature hindered continuity. Private agribusinesses (lead partners) selected co-partners and smallholder farmers at their discretion, creating a loosely structured network lacking a formal governance framework. This lack of clear contractual agreements, risk management strategies, communication, capacity-building and inclusion strategies, limited the trust and transparency in some partnerships. Furthermore, the limited capacity of MAL, both at the national and subnational levels to effectively coordinate and monitor agribusiness partnerships had a negative effect as no efforts were made to improve partnership governance. Discussions with co-partners and smallholder farmers showed limited awareness regarding their respective roles and responsibilities toward each other. In the end, the partnerships remained fractured with some lead partners relying on non-RDP II intermediary suppliers (the equivalent of co-partners) for the supply of the primary produce required.
70. The successful scaling up of the partnership model hinged on the profitability and stronger collaboration between agribusinesses and smallholder farmers. A few agribusinesses, particularly those based in Honiara and Guadalcanal, demonstrated strong breakeven potential as they were operational before the RDP II, contrary to some co-partners who at the time of the PPE had either idled their operations or were operating seasonally. Some of the challenges highlighted were related to working capital constraints, limited profitability due to price fluctuations, lack of trust, transparency and accountability between lead partners, co-partners and smallholder farmers.

⁷² This includes one EOI from Call 1 which had not been fully developed into a full proposal. This number also excludes three EOIs selected which were not submitted as full proposals.

⁷³ Due to a shortfall in finances available to RDP II, three partnerships were put on hold, thus funding only 15 partnerships.

Stronger capacity for agribusinesses and smallholder farmers

71. **The RDP II successfully supported agribusinesses with mechanization.** Support provided included the provision of processing facilities (oil mills for coconut, fermenters for cocoa, extractors for honey, and slaughter facilities for cattle). Some partnerships also received assistance with transport logistics (three-tonne trucks or canoes and outboard motors). This was expected to address the lack of technology dissemination, limited linkages between large-scale agribusinesses and downstream partners (smaller agribusinesses and smallholder farmers). Positive results were achieved during the initial phases of the programme, primarily within the coconut value chain, where coconut co-partners (Direct Micro Expellers [DME]) efficiently extracted coconut oil using machinery provided. The cocoa bean co-partners also benefited from sun-drying technology, which reportedly reduced post-harvest losses by 25-30 per cent and transport costs by 30-40 per cent. This contributed to improved market access for smallholder farmers and mid-stream microprocessors through the agribusiness partnerships.
72. **Access to finance through the Agricultural Supplemental Equity Facility (ASEF) matching grant initiative was not successful.** The ASEF revived the supplemental equity facility activity originally established under RDP I. The financing initiative was designed to be accessible through commercial banks for agribusiness projects, with borrowers contributing 20 per cent of the project cost, while the banks were to provide loans covering 60 per cent of the cost. The remaining 20 per cent was to be financed through an ASEF grant awarded to the borrower.⁷⁴ Two commercial banks, the Bank of South Pacific and the Pan Oceanic Bank, were the participants in the ASEF scheme.⁷⁵ However, the uptake fell significantly below the initial expectations outlined in the programme design.
73. While promotion was conducted through provincial tours from June to August 2017, the low uptake of ASEF grants was primarily attributed to several key challenges. The smaller agribusinesses often found it challenging to meet the eligibility criteria for loans due to the stringent loan collateral requirements imposed by commercial banks. These requirements typically excluded unregistered or customary land as acceptable collateral. In addition, the difficulty and transaction costs associated with accessing commercial bank branches (which were primarily located in Honiara for Pan Oceanic Bank and in Honiara, Gizo, and Auki for Bank of South Pacific), high-interest costs associated with commercial bank loans, and the inability to demonstrate a history of past business performance also contributed to the limited uptake of the ASEF.
74. **Agribusinesses required more customized and intensive capacity-building support.** While the uniqueness of the value chains supported was to some degree recognized from the perspective of technical and extension advisory support, a more tailored approach was required for business development services, taking into consideration the size and stage of growth of the enterprise.⁷⁶ Unlike a one-size-fits-all approach, this underscores the importance of tailoring the support initiatives to the specific needs, challenges, and potentials of individual agribusiness entities.⁷⁷ The different agribusinesses visited during the evaluation demonstrated various levels of capacity in terms of financial literacy, record-keeping, as well as marketing and market support capacity, with significant gaps observed especially among the co-partners.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Eligibility was limited to enterprises engaged in the agriculture sector, broadly defined as including primary production as well as other activities in the value-chain.

⁷⁵ ANZ bank which was the major bank lending to rural businesses under the RDP phase I, Supplemental Equity Facility declined to participate in the RDP II ASEF due to a change in lending policy to focus on bigger clients.

⁷⁶ Capacity-building support provided included training sessions covering modules on financial literacy and emphasizing the importance of record-keeping.

⁷⁷ This required, among other things, a thorough assessment of their technical expertise, technology adoption, financial resources, market access, business planning and financial management proficiency, regulatory compliance, and experience of building partnerships with smallholder farmers.

⁷⁸ At the time of the PPE mission, about 10 of the 22 visited lead and co-partners had stopped their operations citing working capital constraints and fluctuating market prices.

For some agribusinesses, it was their first time engaging in productive alliances with smallholder farmers but they were treated as a heterogeneous group.

75. **Despite support for business development activities, capacity gaps persisted, mostly among early-stage enterprises at the co-partner level.**⁷⁹ Similar to the findings from the impact assessment of component 2, respondents were not able to articulate key business metrics such as turnover, total expenditure, total revenues, or net profit. There was a general lack of systematic documentation and record-keeping of transactions to allow for a proper analysis of an enterprise's financial performance.
76. **Training and capacity-building of smallholder farmers contributed to the adoption of improved farming practices.** These included production and productivity enhancement of different commodities and were supported through training and adoption of improved agriculture practices such as pruning, thinning, grafting, cloning, integrated pest and disease management, rehabilitation of old plantations, developing seedling nurseries, introduction of new varieties of seedlings, plantation area expansion, etc.⁸⁰ This contributed to the rehabilitation of cocoa and coconut fields with new seedlings. Nurseries were developed with new genotypes and the supply of cocoa and coconut seedlings was ensured to increase the plantation area. It was also observed that some supported plantations were neglected by the smallholder farmers in the absence of continued extension support from the MAL and non-continuation of partnerships with agribusinesses in some communities.
77. Despite the lack of adequate quantitative data on farmers changing their practices due to RDP II-supported training, field evidence suggested that adoption improved during the programme's implementation due to the incentives of a ready market from the lead partners and co-partners. The continued use of good agricultural practices (GAP) had largely declined following programme completion, in view of idling of operations by some lead and co-partners. Smallholder farmers engaged in agribusiness partnerships that have sustained beyond the life of the RDP II have continued using GAPs to meet the quality requirements of the lead and co-partners, in particular organic and Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) certification.
78. **The functionality and availability of tools and implements impacted the continued adoption of GAP.** Smallholder farmers were supplied with small tools and implements through their partnerships, to promote GAP. As highlighted in the RDP II impact assessment for component 2, most small tools and implements were found to be non-functional due to wear and tear in the absence of maintenance and servicing mechanisms built into the agribusiness partnership. The farmers did not take responsibility to replace their worn and damaged tools and implements. Efforts could have been made to train artisans who could have supported the repairs and maintenance of tools and equipment at the village level. Apart from ensuring long-term use of tools and equipment, this could have also played a key role in generating wage employment, particularly for the youth.

Improved productive capacity

79. **Evidence of productivity gains appears mixed.** During programme implementation, productivity gains were reported across the different value chains, driven by the promotion of GAP, increased access to markets, as well as support with farming tools and equipment for the value chains supported.⁸¹ According to the IFAD impact assessment report, the RDP II significantly increased cocoa harvest value (measured in kilograms) for participants. Treatment households had a 46 per cent higher cocoa harvest relative to an average of 300kg a year for the control group. Similarly, their cocoa yields (measured in kilogram per tree) were 12 per cent higher than an average

⁷⁹ Business management training sessions were conducted for produce drier, coconut oil mill, and DME owners with the aim of enhancing their business acumen, optimizing operational efficiency, fostering strong relationships with smallholder farmers, and ensuring profitability.

⁸⁰ World Bank ICRR.

⁸¹ Such tools and equipment included solar drying equipment and installation of coconut DMEs.

of 0.97kg per tree a year for the control group.⁸² Coconut, on the other hand, did not show significant impacts, since treatment households decreased both their harvest quantities and the crop value of coconut. Contrary to the impact assessment findings, smallholder farmers interviewed during PPE reported limited productivity changes for both crops. The observed poor condition of the cocoa and coconut plantations suggests reduced productivity driven by fluctuations in market prices, and the presence of several market intermediaries resulting in declining access to markets. This resulted in some co-partners stopping their operations and smallholder farmers switching to other seemingly more lucrative crops such as tobacco and kava.

80. **Infrastructure support for market access required more significant investment and was not included in the RDP II.** Although the programme partially addressed this by providing transport assets including two- and three-tonne trucks, as well as outboard motor boats to selected agribusiness partners for the collection and delivery of farm produce, it did not comprehensively address the market access barriers. These emanate from insufficient infrastructure, poor road network and inadequate transport systems as reported by farmers in both Malaita and Makira. Although the grant-funded trucks provided temporary relief, these ultimately proved unsustainable, resulting in smallholder farmers resorting to arduous long-distance transportation of their produce to market on foot. The trucks could not go to far-lung production areas and hence the produce had to be carried manually.
81. In Temotu province, for example, smallholder farmers were confronted by infrequent visits from buyers due to its geographical remoteness, causing extended waiting times. This affected the quality of produce, making it difficult for farmers to secure favourable prices as well as increasing post-harvest losses. The programme plan of setting up a local agro-processing facility through the PTZE Enterprises partnership was a noble idea to address some of these challenges, but it was not yet operational at the time of the PPE due to working capital shortages.

Impact pathways 3: Increased capacity of agricultural institutions to provide demand-driven agricultural services.

82. RDP II supported MAL to roll out and implement participatory action research (PAR) activities with a primary focus on cocoa but the results were short-lived.⁸³ The implementation of the PAR process made use of the farmer field schools approach with support from the MAL extension officers. This included radical pruning to rejuvenate old trees, formative pruning to shape young trees, ongoing tree maintenance and light pruning for healthy growth, selection of superior trees based on production and quality, grafting high-performing trees onto others for replication, and continuous monitoring to identify and promote the best clones.
83. Although this contributed to positive gains in terms of production and productivity on cocoa farms, a combination of price fluctuations and the impacts of the prolonged COVID-19 pandemic affected the continuation of the revitalization of cocoa farms and contributed to the abandonment of cocoa plantations in both Malaita and Temotu provinces in the absence of risk management and sustainability planning. Furthermore, extension support provided to the cash crops value chains did not continue with the same level of intensity in the absence of RDP II's financial support given the limited outreach capacity of MAL.

Impact pathways 4: Improved recovery and resilience of flood-affected communities.

84. The disaster recovery grants (DRGs) focused primarily on water supply systems for the communities in flood-affected Guadalcanal communities. The DRGs were mainly utilized

⁸² The impact assessment report confirms that it opted to measure yields in kilogram per tree instead of kilogram per hectare as we found significant challenges in the respondents' ability to measure their plantation size. The respondents' estimation of the number of total trees available in the plantation seemed more accurate, as corroborated by local partners.

⁸³ A total of 32 PAR groups were established in all provinces with the exception of Renbel (given the absence of cocoa in the province).

for water supply: 84 per cent (33 of the 39 subprojects) addressed this need through improved and disaster-resilient boreholes, and raised storage tanks, with the remaining three going to education and multipurpose community buildings subprojects. Table 6 below provides a summary of the supported subprojects that aimed at contributing to this impact pathway.

Table 6
Subprojects for disaster recovery

Subproject category	# of subprojects	# of beneficiaries	# of female beneficiaries	Funds (SBD)
Water/sanitation	33	11 798	5 669	7 086 532
Economic affairs	-	-	-	-
Education	3	2 178	1 040	1 170 333
Health	-	-	-	-
Community	3	1 552	757	895 543
Total	39	15 528	7 466	9 152 408

Source: World Bank, ICRR.

85. **A longer-term perspective for disaster recovery was required to address the recurring challenges posed by disasters.** One-off DRGs provided short-term recovery but fell short in addressing ongoing vulnerability and recovery needs, given communities' susceptibility to recurring weather-related and climate-induced disasters and their fragile livelihoods. In the context of the Solomon Islands, where the frequency of weather and climate-related disasters continues to increase, communities are continually caught in a cycle of recovery and face significant challenges dealing with the destructive impacts of climate events. This situation persisted in the absence of interventions built into the RDP II that took a longer-term perspective.
86. The recent tropical cyclones further highlight the narrow focus of the RDP II in strengthening community preparedness as gaps were observed. This was confirmed by evidence from several communities such as Mbauanani, Kekenā, Lalaro, and Papango hit by tropical cyclones Judy and Kevin between February and March 2023. Regular training and capacity-building were highlighted as being crucial to equip communities with disaster management skills. Additionally, deployment of adequate early warning systems could have helped the communities to prepare for potential disasters in advance.⁸⁴ As discussed in the relevance section, these gaps were linked to limited consideration of the systemic components of disaster preparedness in the design of the DRGs, which primarily focused on physical infrastructure.
87. **Communities' perception of changes in their resilience capacity was uneven.** The IA suggests positive impacts on resilience, indicating that programme participants were 12 percentage points more resilient than non-participants in their ability to recover from shocks. When analysed for specific shocks, this increased further for climate shocks (28 percentage points difference) and non-climate shocks (22 percentage points difference) (see table 7 below). Furthermore, programme participants showed slightly higher crop diversification index results, but had a lower income diversification index. However, the experience of community members interviewed by this PPE provided qualification and some dissenting views which suggests perceptions of low levels of

⁸⁴ For example, there was an observed overreliance on radio broadcasts, due to the lack of community-based communication mechanisms, further highlights these deficiencies. Only a handful of beneficiaries indicated that their primary sources of information are the Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation radio and the Solomon Islands Meteorological Office, which provided rain gauges for rainfall measurement.

resilience capacity.^{85 86} The recent cyclone severely impacted primary livelihoods like crop production, fishing and market gardening, leaving many households struggling to bounce back. Additionally, flooding damaged critical infrastructure like roads and bridges, further disrupting access to essential services such as markets, schools, and health facilities due to slow disaster response mechanisms and rebuilding efforts. In addition, saltwater intrusion into water sources compromised drinking water availability and quality.

Table 7

Assessment of resilience outcomes

Resilience indicators	Average treatment effect on the treated	Potential outcome mean	N	Treatment	Control
Ability to recover, all shocks	0.12* (0.06)	0.76 (0.04)	772	362	567
Ability to recover, climate shocks	0.28** (0.14)	0.53 (0.15)	545	410	273
Ability to recover, non-climate shocks	0.22** (0.08)	0.57 (0.05)	592	263	329
Gross income diversification	-0.07*** (0.02)	0.24 (0.03)	1,196	619	577
Crop diversification index	0.06* (0.04)	0.73 (0.02)	1,196	619	577

Standard errors in parentheses * p<0.01, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01.

Source: IFAD RIA (2022), Impact Assessment Report RDP II.

88. The timing of the implementation of the IA and the PPE offers some explanation as to the contrasting findings. The IA was conducted at the tail end of programme completion, which might have limited its ability to capture the programme's effectiveness in addressing existing vulnerabilities in the context of the Solomon Islands. On the other hand, the PPE was conducted after a specific shock (tropical cyclone) with communities indicating continued vulnerabilities. This suggests the programme might not have adequately addressed the specific threats communities face, like flooding, or the reported impacts might have been temporary.

⁸⁵ According to the IA, on average, 76 per cent of control households considered they recovered from any of the suffered shocks.

⁸⁶ The IA assessed resilience by asking respondents whether they had suffered any shock (such as climatic shocks, economic or financial shocks, health shocks or conflict or violence shocks) in the 12 months preceding data collection. If so, respondents were asked to what extent the household recovered from such shocks. Respondents could classify whether they considered the household : (1) did not recover, (2) recovered some, (3) recovered to some level, or (4) fully recovered. Similarly, the PPE followed a similar approach, although the questions were asked in a qualitative exploratory manner.

Box 2

Voices from the community: insights on preparedness, recovery and resilience

"We realize that we are not adequately prepared for natural disasters such as tsunamis, sea-level rise, or flooding. We lack secure shelters to seek refuge when these events occur, and many of us are unaware of what to do in such situations."

"During cyclones, some of the old leaf houses were blown away, leaving some elderly people without shelter. We lack evacuation centres to seek refuge, and in our community, people living along the coastline are particularly susceptible to sea-level rise. Compared to the past, we now experience frequent high rainfall and unpredictable high tides, sometimes covering the main road."

"We strongly believe that awareness programmes in communities regarding climate-related issues should be conducted. We need to know what signs to look out for in terms of tsunami warnings, floods, and earthquakes. Drills should be conducted on how to respond during a disaster. Currently, when a cyclone hits, we mostly stay indoors and pray, as we are not adequately prepared for these climate-related risks. Even (for) sea-level rise, which is apparent in our community, we do not have a clear future plan."

"Some of the impacts of these events in our daily lives have been wide and varied. Rivers flood, bridges are broken, and this causes drains along the road to be damaged. This has made travelling to Auki to sell our farm produce or visit the hospital difficult. Generating income has become challenging, as our gardens no longer yield high quantities of essential crops like taro, sweet potatoes, and yam. Our drinking water sources have not been spared, with saltwater infiltrating our streams and boreholes."

Source: Community focus group discussions (FGDs) in Malaita and Guadalcanal provinces.

Innovation

89. IFAD defines innovation as a new process, product or approach that adds value and delivers a sustainable, equitable, inclusive and/or new contextual solution to rural development challenges. This subsection of effectiveness assesses the performance of the programme with respect to this criterion.
90. **Although the CDGs were introduced during RDP I, they can be considered as an innovative approach in the context of the Solomon Islands.** The RDP II continued with the implementation of this approach in the demanding logistical conditions of the Solomon Islands, primarily building upon mechanisms introduced during RDP I, while incorporating some lessons learned from it. As highlighted in the IFAD PCR and further confirmed by the PPE, the approach has proven its potential for engaging communities in planning decisions and successfully implementing community-based development projects. In the long run and if effectively executed, this can play a key role in ensuring wider outreach social services in the absence of strong government capacity to deliver these services.
91. **Despite mixed performance, the APG and ASEF were an innovative attempt to stimulate agricultural development and link smallholder farmers to markets.** This was a particularly important milestone in the absence of a strong and vibrant private sector. This became the strategy for RDP II's approach to agriculture support given the less successful strategy of relying mainly on the direct delivery of extension services by MAL, which had not yielded significant positive results.⁸⁷ However, as this report points out, the approach faced many challenges that negatively affected its potential given the limited capacity of the agribusiness private sector.
92. RDP II supported innovative technology for agriculture production technology through the PAR and solar cocoa driers. The cocoa lead partners and co-partners were trained on improved farming practices by MAL staff and were expected to cascade the skills gained from these trainings to the smallholder farmers they were working with. The objective was to maintain consistent high-grade cocoa bean quality, and attract an average of a ten per cent premium on their supply prices. While these initiatives were

⁸⁷ IFAD, PCR.

successful during implementation, the PPE found that farmers and processors alike were not taking up the initiatives with their capital to replicate these technologies.⁸⁸

93. **Summary effectiveness.** The programme generated mixed results across the different impact pathways. Although the programme was relatively successful in enhancing access and utilization of community infrastructure, there were gaps in the quality of several subprojects. The programme failed to adequately enhance and sustain community participation in the implementation of subprojects due to poor facilitation from weak capacity among the SICs, CHs and TCHs. Although the agribusiness partnerships were successful in increasing access to markets and productivity, these benefits were not sustained beyond the programme. Most of the partnerships were weak and lacked structured governance mechanisms, except in a few partnerships which expanded to include other provinces not supported by RDP II. The programme's approach to targeting proved more effective for community infrastructure and social services, thanks to the participatory subproject selection process. However, the agribusiness partnerships fell short in effectively reaching intended target groups such as women and youth, due to the absence of a well-articulated targeting approach. In view of these considerations, programme effectiveness is rated as **moderately unsatisfactory (3)**.
94. **Summary innovation.** Overall, the programme attempted to implement some innovative approaches in the context of the Solomon Islands, such as the continued use of the CDGs, APGs and ASEF. However, these innovations faced challenges of scalability and insufficient monitoring which limited their effectiveness. The PPE rates innovation as **moderately unsatisfactory (3)**.

Efficiency

95. The efficiency criterion assesses the extent to which the intervention or strategy delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely manner. This section analyzes the performance of the programme in these two areas: operational efficiency (how well the intervention was managed, including timeliness, business processes) and economic efficiency (conversion of inputs into results as cost-effectively as possible).
96. **Timeliness.** The RDP II significantly benefited from the groundwork laid during the implementation of RDP I. The World Bank's RDP II ICRR noted that the preparation time from concept to approval (21 November 2014) was reasonable in comparison to other projects within its Solomon Islands' portfolio.⁸⁹ The PAD estimated effectiveness by 30 January 2015, but this was slightly delayed, until 27 February 2015.⁹⁰ During implementation, delays stemmed from increased costs, funding shortfalls as a result of exchange rate losses and delays in counterpart funding. The logistical challenge of delivering support to every rural ward in the country remained complex, necessitating an extension and a constantly adaptable approach.⁹¹
97. **Disbursement performance.** Disbursements for the World Bank funding largely went smoothly, but challenges were experienced with co-financing disbursements. On the other hand, the disbursement of the IFAD loan and grant fund was delayed by approximately one year, as noted in the joint review and monitoring report of February 2017.⁹² Although IFAD financing became effective in 2015, the authorization signature letter from Solomon Islands Government to IFAD, which was required for the submission of withdrawal applications, was not submitted until mid-2016. Once this problem was resolved, IFAD disbursed funds rapidly, reaching 92.8 per cent by February 2019. Similarly, the EU grant funding also faced administrative delays, as the agreement to

⁸⁸ Unfortunately, either through design oversight or through failures in implementation, the project has not paid sufficient attention to monitoring and evaluating the results of these innovations.

⁸⁹ World Bank, RDP II ICRR.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid., para. 67.

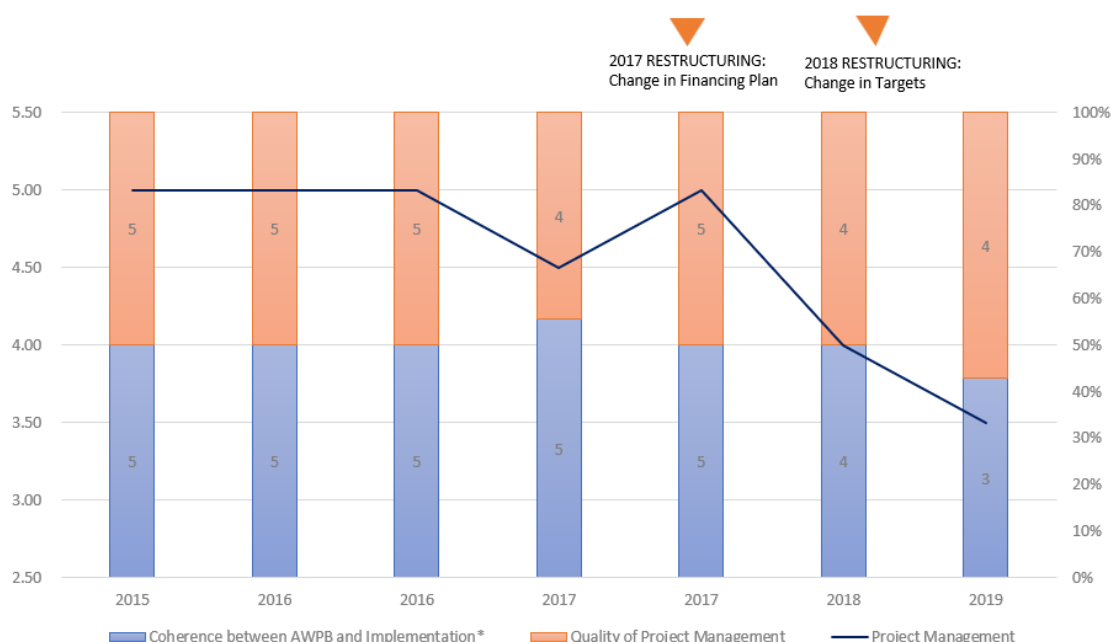
⁹² IFAD PCR.

manage the co-financing through the World Bank-managed trust fund was not signed until December 2016, causing delays in accessing funds.

98. The Solomon Islands Government committed to contributing SBD 50 million; however, contributions were often delayed adding to the challenges in adhering to programme timelines. The delay in counterpart funding by the Government resulted in 116 subprojects of cycle 6 and call 2 for agribusiness partnerships being put on hold in 2019. The cash flow constraints required the programme to resolve the issue urgently to avoid further implementation delays. Unfortunately, this was not resolved in a timely manner and resulted in the extension of the programme closing date by 23 months. However, by the time of programme completion the programme had disbursed 89.1 per cent of programme funds.
99. **Project implementation and management.** The overall performance of programme management, assessed through two SIS indicators—coherence between annual workplan and budget, and implementation and quality of project management—remained stable until 2017 at the midterm review (MTR) stage, but subsequently decreased below the level of moderately satisfactory. This decline was primarily driven by a reduction in coherence between the annual workplan and budget and implementation, as illustrated in figure 1 below. According to the 2018 supervision mission report, this was primarily due to cash flow issues and shortages of technical engineering support. As a result, the programme experienced implementation delays in the main activities.⁹³ As described earlier, the release of counterpart funds faced delays, resulting in further setbacks to the annual workplan and budget in 2019.⁹⁴

Figure 1

Project management overtime



Source: IOE analysis based on SIS ratings. * AWPB = annual workplan and budget.

100. **Programme management costs (PMC).** At completion, the PMC were 17.2 per cent of total programme costs which was 3 per cent higher than the planned programme management costs at appraisal and 4 per cent higher than the global norm for project management in fragile and conflict-affected settings. However, this was lower than the

⁹³ IFAD Supervision Mission Report, 2018.

⁹⁴ IFAD Supervision Mission Report, 2019. Also, according to the World Bank RDP II ICR, the Government's 2018 annual budget did not include the anticipated outstanding balance of government counterpart funding (SBD23.7 million or US\$3 million equivalent), leading to project delays and necessitating the March 2020 additional financing.

25 per cent comparative costs of RDP I.⁹⁵ The higher PMCs in the Solomon Islands compared to other fragile and conflict-affected countries reflect the logistical complexity of managing projects in an expansive and diverse island archipelago with limited to non-existent transportation infrastructure and high fuel costs in the Pacific, which had a significantly negative impact on the cost of programme support and oversight. In addition, given the hybrid CDD approach of the project, 67 technical staff at the provincial and ward levels had to be recruited to support beneficiary communities for both infrastructure, services and livelihoods activities, with the additional operational costs to support MAL extension agents in the field contributing to the overall high PMCs.⁹⁶

101. **Financial management improved over time.** The programme accounting requirements were put in place including setting up the accounting software and agreement on a new format for the Interim Financial Report. However, there were delays in submitting the report during the early stages of implementation. On a positive note, audited financial statements were submitted promptly although the management letters consistently raised concerns about the timely retirement of staff travel advances, outstanding advances to various entities, and non-compliance with tax obligations including the failure to deduct and remit withholding tax.
102. **The financial management issues pertaining to acquittals remained a challenge.** These problems include outstanding balances and non-acquitted funds for staff advances, agribusiness partnerships grant advances, and sub-grantees advances. As of 31 December 2017, significant amounts remained unpaid, such as staff travel advances, agribusiness partnership grants, and CDGs and DRGs. The submission of staff travel advances had been a major concern, with supporting documentation provided found to be unsatisfactory, necessitating additional training for better compliance. Progress was observed in reducing the non-acquitted balances for agribusiness partnerships grants, however this required intense follow-up until programme completion throughout the implementation period.
103. **Cost per beneficiary.** The actual cost per beneficiary, estimated at about US\$243, was US\$76 lower than the revised target of US\$316. This was primarily a result of changes in beneficiary targets upon programme completion, coupled with a decrease in the overall programme costs. Despite the challenges and high transaction costs for implementation, this suggests the programme successfully increased its reach in a cost-effective manner.

Table 8

Cost per beneficiary

	Revised target	At programme completion
Total number of beneficiaries	155 000	171 320
Total programme costs (\$'000)	49 100	41 600
Cost per beneficiary	US\$ 316	US\$ 243

Source: World Bank ICRR.

104. **Economic and financial impacts.** The ex-post economic and financial analysis indicates that the programme has an economic net present value (NPV) of US\$18.8 million. The programme's economic internal rate of return (EIRR) was 15 per cent at completion, 2 per cent higher than what was estimated at design.⁹⁷ A sensitivity analysis

⁹⁵ World Bank Report No: ACS13685 Islamic Republic of Afghanistan: Strategic Directions for the National Solidarity Program analysed costs in six large-scale and long-running national CDD programmes in fragile and conflict-affected states (Burundi, Haiti, Myanmar, Nepal, South Sudan, Afghanistan).

⁹⁶ World Bank RDP II ICRR.

⁹⁷ Ibid., economic and financial analysis.

showed that a decrease driven by a 20 per cent decrease in benefits yielded a NPV of US\$10.9 million and an EIRR of 12 per cent.⁹⁸

105. **The aggregated economic models from components 1 and 2 have positive incremental benefits.** At programme completion, the benefits of component 1 had an NPV of US\$29 million, while those for component 2 benefits had an NPV of US\$10 million. It was further observed that component 2 was profitable from an economic analysis standpoint, despite eleven agribusiness partnerships being assessed as not being profitable from a financial analysis perspective. This was partly because the economic analysis took into consideration shadow prices rather than the actual market prices. An analysis of the relative contribution of the generated benefits by components aligns with the resources allocated to each of the programme components. The benefits for component 1 and component 2 represent 74 per cent and 26 per cent of the programme benefits, respectively. This distribution of benefits largely corresponds to the allocation of programme costs, where component 1 and component 2 account for 66 per cent and 34 per cent of programme costs, respectively (excluding project management costs).
106. **Summary.** The programme faced several financial management challenges including delays in counterpart funding, exchange rate losses in managing multiple currencies, and delays in finance acquittals for the subprojects and agribusiness partnerships, as well as staff travel advances. However, the programme still achieved reasonable efficiency, given the challenges of the operational environment and the high transaction costs in a geographically dispersed environment. A relatively lower-than-expected cost per beneficiary was recorded and a reasonably positive economic rate of return was achieved. The PPE rates efficiency as **moderately unsatisfactory (3)**.

Rural poverty impact

107. This section analyses the contribution of the RDP II according to the following core impact dimensions, in line with the IOE Evaluation Manual: (i) household income and assets; (ii) household food security and nutrition; (iii) human and social capital; and (iv) institutions and policies. In addition, impact on welfare domains is also analysed given the social services that were supported through component 1.
108. The assessment of the rural poverty impact criteria was constrained by limited programme M&E data. For component 1, available evidence mostly focused on output-level analysis, offering insufficient insights at the impact level. The IFAD RIA IA, conducted as part of the IFAD 11 impact assessments, was the most credible available evidence to provide insights on impact domains in component 2. However, it had limitations given its restricted focus on cocoa and coconut value chains only. Other targeted value chains such honey, ngali nuts and small livestock were not considered. To establish a counterfactual, the IA employed a matched comparison approach. This involved combining statistical matching at the village level, using geographical information systems data, and gathering information from programme staff and local stakeholders.⁹⁹ Due to data gaps, the PPE also relied on primary qualitative data collected in FGDs and KIIs.

Impact on household income and assets

109. **The programme's contribution to household income and assets is assessed as weak.** The IFAD IA did not find statistically significant differences in impacts on income outcomes between the treatment and control groups in terms of crop income, wages, self-employment income, and fishery income (see table 9 below).¹⁰⁰ In addition, the

⁹⁸ According to the RDP II project design report, assuming the expected benefits generated from: (i) improved service delivery and greater private investments in rural areas; (ii) changed patterns of agricultural production, increased agricultural productivity and increased marketed output; and (iii) restoration of productive assets destroyed during the recent floods, the ex-ante EIRR of RDP II was estimated at 17 per cent (10 per cent and 22 per cent for component 1 and component 2, respectively).

⁹⁹ Doing so ensured that the selected villages in the counterfactual group were comparable to project villages at the beginning of the project, which was necessary for estimating attributable impacts.

¹⁰⁰ IFAD, RIA RDP II Impact Assessment Report.

gross total income did not show significant differences among treatment households relative to control households. Furthermore, the RIA IA did not find significant differences between the treatment and control households when analysed for both durable and productive assets.^{101 102} While field visits and qualitative assessments corroborated these findings on asset ownership, they also offered anecdotal evidence of potential income increases linked to improved market access through agribusiness partnerships for targeted smallholder farmers. These partnerships generated short-term employment opportunities at the DME processing facilities. As highlighted in the effectiveness section, some partnerships were not sustained beyond programme implementation and access to markets and employment opportunities both declined over time.

Table 9
Income outcomes

Impact indicators	Average treatment affect on the treated	Potential outcome mean	N	Treatment	Control
Gross total income	0.17 (0.16)	3944.2 (0.18)	1,170	603	567
Gross crop income	0.19 (0.21)	1652.4 (0.25)	1090	567	523
Wages	-0.10 (0.17)	6374.1 (0.18)	396	179	217
Gross self-employment income	0.12 (0.25)	1130.0 (0.16)	261	92	169
Gross fish income	0.32 (0.43)	1199.9 (0.53)	123	60	63

Note: Outcome variables are in logarithmic scale with standard errors in parentheses. * p<0.01, **p< 0.05, ***p< 0.01
Source: IFAD RIA (2022), Impact Assessment Report, RDP II.

Impact on food security and nutrition

110. **The programme had positive impacts on food security.** The IA reported a 25 per cent and 11 per cent increase in household food security and dietary diversity respectively, based on the increase in household food security and an 11 per cent increase in dietary diversity based on the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES).¹⁰³
¹⁰⁴ This may be attributed to reported income increases from cash crop sales, improved market access, and short-term employment opportunities, as discussed in the previous paragraph.¹⁰⁵ When analysed for the specific components of the FIES, the IA assessment asserts that treatment households are significantly more food secure than control households.¹⁰⁶ This was evidenced by reduced concerns about food, fewer skipped meals, decreased likelihood of eating less food than desired, diminished instances of running out of food, lower likelihood of going hungry, and reduced likelihood of households not eating for an entire day.¹⁰⁷
111. **The IFAD RIA IA suggests encouraging nutrition outcomes.** The IA used improved dietary diversity as a proxy for positive nutrition outcomes. However, in the

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² The Durable Asset Index includes home assets owned by the household, such as mobile phone, smartphone, a TV, refrigerator, a bike, a car. The Productive Asset Index includes agricultural or fishery assets owned by the household, such as an animal cart, electrical generator, a canoe, a motorboat, a tractor, a sprayer, a water pump, a wheelbarrow, hand tools, a chainsaw, a whipper snapper, or fishing net.

¹⁰³ As most commodities supported by RDP II have limited food value, improvements in their production and marketing cannot be expected to have a direct impact on food security but may have an indirect impact through the increased purchasing power of the beneficiaries.

¹⁰⁴ The index consists of eight item-response questions measuring diverse aspects of respondents' access to food, which are then aggregated to construct the FIES indicator. Measured with the FIES indicator which captures the answers to eight questions related to households' experiences on access to adequate food: <https://www.fao.org/policy-support/tools-and-publications/resources-details/en/c/1236494/>

¹⁰⁵ IFAD, RIA IA.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Although food insecurity is not perceived as a major challenge, seasonal fluctuations in food availability and access were reported, especially when traditional food crops (cassava and sweet potatoes) are in short supply. Factors contributing to this seasonal insecurity included decreased home garden productivity due to climate change, excessive rainfall, salinity, decline in soil fertility, and invasive insect infestations.

absence of nutrition interventions and nutrition-focused indicators, the evidence remains weak and not adequately supported. The increase observed in dietary diversity was primarily driven by consumption of dairy and sweets rather than more nutritionally rich food groups, raising concerns about the quality of dietary improvements. The food groups considered are: cereals; tubers; vegetables; fruits; meat; eggs; fish, legumes; dairy; oils; sweets; and spices. Respondents are asked whether the household consumed any product from each food group during the previous seven days. A disaggregated look at the food groups as part of household dietary diversity score shows that such increase is driven by consumption of dairy and sweets.¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, the Solomon Islands face a triple burden of malnutrition, necessitating a more nuanced approach beyond improving food security and dietary diversity.¹⁰⁹ Key informants emphasized that the predominant focus on cash crops over food crops by most agricultural projects has resulted in inadequate implementation of nutrition-sensitive agricultural interventions to address the challenges of malnutrition.

Impact on human and social capital

112. **Investments in human capital development were significant but impact remained limited.** Several capacity-building initiatives were implemented these include training SICs, TCHs and CHs as well as training operation and maintenance (O & M) committees in component 1, which facilitated the implementation of subprojects. Training targeted different programme structures, which included facilitation and subproject implementation management as well as O&M. Beneficiaries met during the PPE demonstrated knowledge and skills learned in areas such as participatory planning, but had gaps in meaningful participation, particularly for decision-making and technical maintenance skills for some subprojects' infrastructure.
113. In component 2, human capital development was mainly through training in GAP to facilitate compliance with HACCP practice on the part of smallholder farmers. On the other hand, co-partners were also trained on financial literacy, record-keeping and business management, but their capacity remained low. As discussed in the effectiveness section, several agribusiness enterprises met, particularly at the co-partner level, but they were not able to demonstrate adequate changes in knowledge and skills acquired as a result of the programme. Although the RDP II placed a significant emphasis on training, the extent to which the capacity needs of the various trained groups were assessed remained unclear. Furthermore, the lack of data regarding post-training impact assessment for the targeted groups required analysis.
114. **Evidence of social capital development is mixed.** There is some evidence of selected communities organizing themselves into stronger groups to manage the subprojects' infrastructure. However, the general lack of trust among communities' members has resulted in the dismantling of maintenance committees, despite a clear need for such structures. Smaller communities that had grasped the importance of pro-social behaviour demonstrated stronger cohesion reflected by continued community participation, including paying a user fee for maintenance.
115. The agribusiness partnerships proved ineffective in influencing social capital due to a lack of tangible interventions to foster mutual trust, accountability and transparency among the agribusiness partners and smallholder farmers. Furthermore, there is no evidence of smallholder farmers forming producer groups or other types of associations. Instead, they continue to operate as individual family farm units, which is the traditional approach in the Solomon Islands. The potential advantages of encouraging farmers to collaborate in groups, transitioning away from the conventional family farm units, could be investigated. Such an approach could have strengthened smallholder farmers' bargaining power when dealing with intermediaries and agribusinesses.

¹⁰⁸ IFAD, RIA IA.

¹⁰⁹ Some of the basic determinants of malnutrition include low dietary diversity, declining per capita agricultural and fisheries productivity, under and overconsumption, and dietary shifts in urban areas, especially a growing preference for unhealthy imported foods (due to taste, convenience and affordability).

Impact on institutions and policies

116. At the grassroots level, the programme was partially successful in setting up and enhancing the capacity of the O&M committees. Setting up and capacity-strengthening of O&M committees was one of the key institutional achievements of the RDP II. Other RDP II-sponsored structures such as the SICs were time bound and were not functional beyond the programme. This was a missed opportunity as they could have played a key institutional role in terms of mainstreaming community-based project implementation and management within the context of decentralized governance structure of the country.
117. **The RDP II bolstered the role of the ward development committees (WDC).** The RDP II showcased the effectiveness of gender-balanced WDCs in grassroots planning processes, leading to an enhanced role for the WDCs. However, challenges persisted. The WDC, and the chairperson's position in particular, remained politicized due to their involvement in managing the Constituency Development Funds (CDF), which constitute the largest source of funding for rural development through the state budget.¹¹⁰ The ongoing efforts to finance the position of the WDC support officer through a World Bank-funded project, the Integrated Economic Development and Community Resilience (IEDCR), is a positive attempt to depoliticize the activities and operations of the WDCs, and is commendable.
118. **Support to private agribusinesses was a positive step but remained fragile.** The agribusiness partnerships to some degree facilitated an inclusive approach to value chain support, fostering a positive environment for growth and collaboration. The absence of a governance framework to moderate the partnerships contributed to their institutional fragility. Furthermore, the programme did not foresee a long-term role for the local and national public institutions in providing a regulatory framework for the agribusiness partnerships to thrive. This could have played a crucial role in pushing forward the partnerships agenda and ensured their alignment with government priorities.

Impact on welfare domains

119. **Impacts of the infrastructure of subprojects on welfare domains are less visible.** The contribution of subprojects' infrastructure to access and utilization outcomes are positive but the impact pathways on welfare indicators such as enrolment and attendance, health and water-related indicators were not fully verifiable in the absence of data on these domains. However, the impact can be assumed to be limited given the lack of interventions to address systemic challenges. These include a shortage of healthcare professionals, inadequate focus on behavioural change interventions, absence of teaching and learning materials, and sociocultural barriers that constrain access and utilization. An exception is the evident impact of improved water supply on time savings which are particularly beneficial for women and girls through reducing self-reported time spent fetching water.

¹¹⁰ Constituency Development Funds (CDF) in the Solomon Islands are a form of government funding allocated to each of the country's parliamentary constituencies for the purpose of financing local development projects and community initiatives. In theory, the CDF is designed to empower Members of Parliament to address the specific needs and priorities of their constituencies.

Box 3

Changes in access to drinking water in RDP II communities

Before the water supply was available through RDP II, we dug pit holes and bought squatting ring slabs. Then, we built small shelters on top and placed drums inside. When it rained, water collected from the roof and filled the drums. This water was used to flush waste. However, this became problematic during weeks or months without rainfall, so careful water usage was necessary. Now that we have a water supply system in the community, there is a continuous water *source*. As a result, we can properly maintain our sanitation facilities. We generated several ideas for constructing proper toilets through the training we attended. Some individuals from our community also received sanitation projects from other organizations. As a result, when the water supply was implemented, a majority of community members built sanitation facilities and connected them directly to water supply.

Source: Beneficiary FGDs.

120. **Summary.** The IA evidence indicates that the programme made some positive contributions to food security and nutrition, demonstrated by improvements in the dietary diversity. Although the programme was nutrition sensitive, it failed to address the contextual challenges of malnutrition directly. Despite anecdotal reports of income increases from improved market access, household income and assets did not show a positive trend. There were temporary positive changes in human and social capital and empowerment, but they were not lasting due to inadequate capacity-building efforts. Institutional and policy impacts were low, particularly in agribusiness partnerships, due to the lack of a deliberate effort to strengthen the agribusiness partnership governance approach. Access to community infrastructure and social services interventions contributed to increased recognition of community-based participatory planning but had limited influence on systems. Impacts on welfare domains from increased access to social infrastructure were not tracked and were less than expected in the absence of complementary interventions. The PPE rates rural poverty impact as **moderately unsatisfactory (3)**.

Sustainability of benefits

121. The sustainability criterion assesses the extent to which the net benefits induced by the strategy and programme continue over time and are scaled up (or are likely to continue and scale up) by the government or other partners. It includes institutional, technical, social and financial sustainability. Other specific sub-criteria include: (i) scaling up and (ii) environment and natural resources management, and climate change adaptation, are also discussed in this section.

Institutional sustainability of subprojects infrastructure

122. **The long-term sustainability of RDP II-supported infrastructure is threatened by the lack of institutionalization and systematic links between provincial governments and subproject communities.** The establishment of clear linkages between the provincial government and the subproject communities was important for long-term institutional, technical and advisory support. This could have ensured sustainability through embedding subprojects in permanent institutional structures. The PPE did not find provincial line ministries assuming responsibility for either maintenance, technical and budgetary support for RDP II-funded subproject infrastructure. The provincial governments expressed concerns about their lack of engagement during programme implementation and highlighted ongoing budgetary constraints hindering their ability to effectively support O&M activities. While O&M committees were established, their sustainability remained fragile due to the absence of ongoing technical and advisory support. Establishing clear links between these committees and provincial governments could have provided a conduit for capacity-building and a shared responsibility for maintaining infrastructure.
123. **The increased role of the WDC has enhanced participatory community-based planning.** The strengthening of the role of the WDCs has demonstrated the willingness of the Government to place communities at the centre of their own development.

However, much more is needed to ensure full integration, not only for planning but also at the implementation level through government budget allocation, in particular for ongoing community facilitation activities. This may require reforms to the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) to ensure its alignment with village-level priorities. This includes prioritizing transparency, establishing bottom-up decision-making processes, and addressing the CDF's reputation for resolving governance issues and elite capture, as these factors currently undermine its potential to effectively fund rural development projects that are both controlled and prioritized by members of parliament. As highlighted in the impact section, the ongoing efforts by the World Bank-funded Integrated Economic Development and Community Resilience project can further enhance the professionalization of the WDC and its role in rural development.

Technical sustainability of the subprojects

124. **Community capacity for maintaining the subprojects' infrastructure investments remained weak.** While available programme monitoring data suggests that 98 per cent of the subprojects had received operations and maintenance training, including the preparation of O&M plans (see table, 12, annex V), field visits revealed significant gaps in actual knowledge and skills among O&M committees, threatening long-term sustainability.¹¹¹ This discrepancy, alongside reports from several committees indicating a lack of training, highlights potential issues with the high turnover of O&M committee members or the limited effectiveness of the training itself. The apparent high turnover within O&M committees exacerbates the challenge as knowledge transfer mechanisms appear inadequate. However, it is worth noting the observed resilience and resourcefulness displayed by some communities, particularly in smaller and less complex projects, where basic maintenance continues even without formal training.

Financial sustainability of subprojects' infrastructure

125. **Economic infrastructure subprojects demonstrated stronger financial sustainability but faced the challenges of high O&M costs.** Some projects successfully transformed into livelihood-infrastructure hybrids, such as solar charging stations offering fee-based charging (for mobile phones, laptops and speakers), refrigeration services, and fish trading (buying and selling). Likewise, community halls generated revenue through rentals. However, the high costs of O&M, particularly for communities that are further away from commercial hubs were reported, particularly for the solar charging stations. In Temotu province, a solar charging station needed substantial funds for battery replacement, indicating a potential barrier to sustainable energy solutions in the region.
126. A large number of the subprojects were not economic in nature and did not have simultaneous investments in the productive sectors, requiring them to rely solely on inconsistent community contributions which were expected to be an average of SBD 11 per household per month (see table 13, annex V).¹¹² Several factors contributed to challenges with user fees contributions, which included the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on household income and misappropriation of funds by O&M committee executives. For some subprojects, the failure to successfully collect user fees for O&M contributed to the non-functionality of subprojects' infrastructure, due to disputes among community members. For instance, in Guadalcanal, a critical water supply system faced challenges when its generator malfunctioned. The high costs of repair led the community to abandon the system, resorting instead to fetching water from more distant sources.

Sustainability of agribusiness partnerships

127. **The sustainability of agribusiness partnerships initiated under the RDP II had mixed results.** In Guadalcanal province, horticulture and cocoa value chain agribusiness partnerships demonstrated more resilience, as smallholder farmers

¹¹¹ Training involved building skills and knowledge of committee members to effectively manage infrastructure facilities and engagement with the broader community, including collecting and managing funds for operations and maintenance.

¹¹² Expected contributions also varied, reflecting variations in terms of costs for the different provinces.

continued collaborating with lead partners and co-lead partners to market their produce. For example, Jedom Organic Limited, working in the horticulture value chain (food preservation) had plans to continue providing training to smallholder farmers on post-harvesting, food handling, sorting, grading, preparation, packaging and labelling. Similarly, Chan Wing Limited, working in the cocoa value chain, has continued working with the same smallholder farmers that were supported during the RDP II and expanded their operations to include other provinces in line with their market growth. On the negative side, many agribusiness partnerships faced challenges of weak partnership governance framework and therefore were likely unsustainable. In Malaita province, for example, most coconut and cocoa partnerships had idled their operations with co-lead partners shifting the RDP II grant-supported vehicles to seemingly more lucrative public transport businesses.

Sustainability of market access

128. **Market access for smallholder farmers improved during programme implementation but has been gradually declining for cocoa and more rapidly for coconut.** During programme implementation smallholder farmers reported that access was facilitated by the agribusiness partnerships, which ensured a ready market for their produce, particularly for the cocoa and coconut value chains. Through the agribusiness partnerships, investments in direct micro expelling (DME) mills for coconut and the introduction of cocoa drying facilities created a readily accessible market for smallholder farmers. This contributed to enhanced productive capacity for a range of value chain actors (lead partners, co-partners and smallholder farmers) at different levels. The IFAD RIA IA confirmed this by using the value of crop sales and the proportion of sales over the total crop value and confirmed enhanced market access.¹¹³
129. **Market linkages efforts were not robust enough to be sustainable beyond programme implementation.** The non-binding relationship between lead partners, co-partners and smallholder farmers meant that co-partners were not obligated to consistently purchase produce from their affiliated farmers. This resulted in a great deal of mistrust among growers and traders. In the end, there are fewer formal relationships between the various value chains actors as the partnerships have not been fully developed and evolved. The reduced support in terms of partnership monitoring and extension support played a vital role in facilitating access to markets through nurturing partnerships, after the programme completion. Low and volatile commodity prices and the lack of price incentives for quality were major concerns for both growers and traders. However, lead and co-partners also cited the adverse impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic as contributing to their cash flow and profitability challenges, threatening their viability and ultimately their capacity to guarantee smallholder farmers access to reliable markets.

Scaling up

130. Scaling up happens when: (i) other external partners or the private sector adopt and generalize the solution tested or implemented by IFAD; (ii) other stakeholders invest resources to expand the solution to a bigger scale; and (iii) the government applies a policy framework to generalize the solution tested or implemented by IFAD (from practice to a policy). At the time of the evaluation, most of the RDP II-funded activities had not been scaled up and there was very little evidence of scaling up prospects. Therefore, this subsection mainly focuses on those where evidence of scale-up was observed.
131. The participatory development approach, which makes use of the ward development committees, has been partially adopted and scaled up by the government. As discussed in the sustainability and innovation sections, there exists an opportunity for adoption as

¹¹³ Compared to an average value of sales aggregated over a 12-month period of SI\$3,487 (US\$455 2015 purchasing power parity) for the control group, the project increased such value by 27 per cent. This increase was reportedly driven by the significant project impact on value of cocoa sales, which increased by 30 per cent for the treatment group compared to the control group.

an institutionalized approach to rural development by the Government, either in its entirety or through adoption of key CDG methodologies into the framework for the Constituency Development Funds (CDF).¹¹⁴

132. A key observation was that most of the lead partners and co-partners that were operational before RDP II support were more likely to continue and expand their operations and generally had a stronger and more positive relationship with the co-partners and smallholder farmers. This suggests that pre-existing operations and relationships were a key factor in the success and continuation of these partnerships. Some successful agribusiness partners scaled up their operations to provinces not initially supported by RDP II, showing the growth and expansion of successful partnerships (see table 13, annex V). Others have continued their operations with different co-partners following the completion of the programme. This further affirms that while the agribusiness partnerships approach was appropriate, it required a more tailored approach to supporting the different players along the value chain based on their current capacities and stage of growth and development.

Environment, natural resource management and climate change adaptation

133. In this subsection, the PPE assesses environment and natural resource management (ENRM) and climate change adaptation (CCA) performance. Some aspects have already been discussed in the effectiveness section and thus will not be reiterated here. Beyond ESMF safeguards, the programme did not have other noteworthy ENRM and CCA interventions, which limited the extent of assessment on these sustainability subcomponents.
134. The environmental and social safeguards compliance remained inadequate due to a lack of technical capacity at the subnational level and subsequently the high cost of outreach and dispersed communities. The IFAD PCR stated that an environmental and social management framework (ESMF) was prepared for RDP II design, based largely on the experience of RDP and similar projects in the region. RDP II was classified as environmental category B (medium risk) and the project appraisal document (PAD) recognized that small-scale, site-specific and manageable risks could arise from community infrastructure development (ground and vegetation disturbance, limited tree cutting, temporary construction impacts from noise, dust and construction waste, increased erosion potential, disruption to domestic activities and safety risks); and from agriculture activities (cultivation in environmentally sensitive areas, soil erosion, land and water degradation, use of agrochemicals). However, it determined that the subproject screening processes and application of environmental codes of practice were considered adequate to mitigate these risks.
135. The joint review mission in March 2018 noted that the provincial project teams did not have an adequate understanding of safeguards issues. Eventually, an environment officer was appointed to carry out oversight and support safeguards compliance measures. It was beyond their capacity to visit individual subproject sites spread over the country. The PCR also noted that most agricultural practices promoted by RDP II were organic and waste materials were recycled for biomass fuel and compost. The ESMF compliance audits were often carried out remotely through the TCHs, who also designed subprojects and investments, supplemented with geotagging, photographs and other forms of documentary verification. With respect to component 1, the December 2020 semi-annual report listed environmental and social safeguard activities such as initial site assessments, ESMF compliance monitoring, grievance redress, safeguard auditing, environmental impact assessment, sustainability assessment. No safeguard issues were identified.
136. **Summary. Sustainability of benefits.** On balance, the PPE rates overall sustainability of benefits as **moderately unsatisfactory (3)**. Environment and natural resources

¹¹⁴ IFAD, PCR.

management and climate change adaptation are rated as **moderately unsatisfactory (3)**.

137. **Scaling up.** There is limited evidence of scaling up RDP II programme interventions, except recognition of ward development committees as a mechanism for involving the communities in participatory planning processes. The PPE evaluation assesses scaling up as **moderately unsatisfactory (3)**

Gender equality and women's empowerment

Gender mainstreaming

138. **The programme design lacked a clear strategy for tackling the underlying causes of gender inequality and discrimination.** The PAD and the ICRR appear to present conflicting approaches regarding how gender equality issues were to be addressed within the programme.¹¹⁵ While the PAD envisioned a more proactive approach aimed at ensuring the active participation of women in decision-making processes, the World Bank's ICRR indicated that the programme was not designed to advance gender equality, promote women's empowerment, or cater to gender-specific needs. This discrepancy between the initial intentions outlined in the PAD and implementation highlighted the programme's inconsistency in addressing gender equality and women's empowerment-related concerns in the absence of specific targets. Although the PAD highlighted the need for ensuring the active participation of women, it did little to articulate specific strategies or approaches on how this was to be achieved.
139. **Despite the initial shortcoming, the programme made efforts to articulate an approach to address gender equality and women's participation.** This was done through the development of a gender action plan in 2017 following the realization that gender issues had inadequate coverage.¹¹⁶ The action plan recommended the establishment of quotas to ensure minimum access for women, with the aim of enhancing women's agency within the programme in the framework of customary gender roles in community affairs through component 1 and in agricultural production and marketing for component 2. However, it is important to note that the effective tracking and implementation of these quotas were not adequately ensured. As the IFAD PCR acknowledges, the gender action plan prioritized measurement of achievement of women's outreach targets as opposed to implementing gender equality actions.
140. **A comprehensive analysis of the constraints faced by women within value chains lacked evidence of its use.** A comprehensive assessment to identify the constraints to, and effective measures for, increasing women's participation and productivity in agricultural value chains in the Solomon Islands, including through the RDP II was conducted; however, the evidence of its use during programming was not apparent.¹¹⁷ Despite the assessment being conducted late during programme implementation, there was still room for it to influence the direction of component 2, agribusiness partnerships, particularly in delivering interventions that addressed some of the bottlenecks women face to effectively participate in the agriculture value chains. The analysed domains were: (i) access to resources (land, technology, finance); (ii) production decisions (extension services, knowledge transfer, education); (iii) access to and control over income (earning and controlling income); (iv) group participation and

¹¹⁵ The PAD further asserts that the World Bank would engage a gender advisor to conduct an assessment during implementation of the first round of grants and provide additional guidance on addressing issues as they arise.

¹¹⁶ The MTR recommended: (i) reinforcing training on gender to provincial team leaders before the launch of the second cycle of community development grants (CDGs); (ii) reviewing and revising community facilitation and documentation tools to be used by community helpers during the second cycle of CDGs; (iii) engaging female facilitators and gender focal persons where possible and to formalize the programme policy for supporting the female community helpers in undertaking field works; (iv) compiling and reporting gender results in semi-annual reports and documenting gender impacts through the preparation of feature stories; and (v) reaching out to other partner agencies to organize informative sessions on gender with agribusiness partners.

¹¹⁷ World Bank (2018): Gender Inclusive Value Chains: Improving Women's Participation in Solomon Islands
<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/353911538724168885/pdf/130528-4-10-2018-15-19-5-SIReport.pdf>

leadership (sociocultural barriers); and (v) time allocation (domestic responsibilities and health).¹¹⁸

Women's outreach, participation and leadership

141. **Substantive participation of women remained elusive.** The RDP II facilitated the participation of women in the programme mostly as beneficiaries but less in various implementation committees. At programme completion, 84,673 females benefited from component 1 (49.4 per cent of beneficiaries) while 105,927 females participated in subproject selection meetings (49.7 per cent). Women's participation in critical committees fell short of the expected targets of at least 50 per cent, i.e., 37 per cent of WDC, 33 per cent of SIC members and 35 per cent of OMCs.¹¹⁹ The underrepresentation of women in programme committees stemmed from entrenched patriarchal norms, limiting their participation. Traditional gender roles, emphasizing women's responsibilities in family care, household chores, and farm work, also contributed to this disparity.
142. According to the World Bank ICRR, component 2 proposals from (nearly all) potential agribusiness partners mentioned the involvement of women (and youth), but this was often ignored by partners during implementation.¹²⁰ This was confirmed during the PPE mission which observed the exclusion of women from participating in training activities organized by co-partners. Only two of the thirty-five supported partnerships involved predominately women's groups, and two other partnerships started women's savings clubs. The late development and narrowly focused implementation of the programme's gender approach made it challenging to ensure the meaningful participation of women.
143. **Participation of women in decision-making remained limited.** The involvement of women in decision-making processes remained limited, despite indications of their representation in bodies primarily designated for component I, as discussed earlier. While some subprojects attempted to ensure gender balance in committees, the persistence of traditional and patriarchal structures was evident due to the absence of specific measures challenging these norms. Notably, the prioritization of women's participation in decision-making for subproject selection was not consistently addressed to meet their needs. During discussions with female participants in FGDs, it was apparent that their disappointment at being excluded from crucial programme decisions, such as determining the location of subproject infrastructure, particularly for water systems, was high.
144. In some communities in Temotu, the exclusion of women from decision-making processes contributed to the selection of subprojects that failed to address the community's most pressing needs effectively. In Nemba and Mola communities, solar charging stations were prioritized over the construction of water systems. While solar charging stations can provide an economic benefit for individuals, the need for clean and accessible water was widely confirmed as being the most pressing need of the communities at the time of subproject implementation.

Equitable workloads, employment and income

145. **RDP II demonstrated a mixed performance in alleviating the burden on women and girls.** Notably, component 1 achieved better results than component 2, despite the challenges highlighted earlier in this section. The centrally located water supply systems supported by component 1 contributed to the reduced burden of time spent fetching water for girls and women. The extent of these improvements varied across communities. Field evidence from both Guadalcanal and Makira provinces indicates that the water supply systems contributed to time savings, leading to increased school attendance for girls. On the other hand, for component 2, women largely continue to be engaged in time-consuming and labour-intensive activities. These include planting,

¹¹⁸ World Bank (2018): Gender Inclusive Value Chains: Improving Women's Participation in Solomon Islands

<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/353911538724168885/pdf/130528-4-10-2018-15-19-5-SIReport.pdf>

¹¹⁹ World Bank, ICRR.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

pruning, production, and harvesting, while men primarily handled land preparation, post-harvest processing and sales activities. Nevertheless, the introduction of tools and equipment such as solar dryers, two- and three-tonne trucks, and pruning gears and tools did contribute to reduced labour burden for both cocoa and coconut farming during implementation.

146. **Agribusiness partnerships had mixed employment and income opportunities for women.** Anecdotal evidence suggests that employment and income opportunities available to women under RDP II varied depending on the type of agricultural production. For example, opportunities have increased post-COVID-19 in cocoa but declined significantly in coconut production systems. Due to a glut in the market, prices remain depressed and have led to reduced harvests, hence a decline in employment and income. Furthermore, the supervision report of March 2019 noted that in Malaita province, it was not clear if women's contribution to the production systems was duly recognized or properly compensated.¹²¹
147. **Summary.** While there were efforts to include women in committees and project activities, challenges rooted in traditional gender roles, lack of training, and limited participation in decision-making processes hindered the empowerment of women in the RDP II programme. The programme initially lacked a focused and systematic approach to address issues of gender equality and women's empowerment. When an approach was eventually developed, it was narrowly focused and there is minimal evidence to suggest that it was fully implemented. A more holistic approach was required to address the sociocultural factors and power relations that drive gender inequality. The PPE rates gender equity and women's empowerment as **moderately unsatisfactory (3)**.

B. Performance of partners

IFAD performance

148. **The role and contribution of IFAD in the programme design in the co-financed partnership remained unclear.** IFAD's co-financing contribution amounted to 10 per cent of the programme's total financing, managed in a harmonized manner through multi-donor trust fund modalities, with the World Bank being the overall programme lead. IFAD was expected to play a lead role in supporting the agriculture partnerships component. However, the IFAD project concept note for the RDP II did not provide clarity regarding IFAD's involvement in the section on 'justification, rationale for IFAD involvement, commitment, and partnership.' Specifically, the absence of explicit mention of the anticipated added value of IFAD and how the programme intended to harness IFAD's comparative advantage, apart from the expectation of fielding an agriculture specialist during implementation support and supervision missions as articulated in the PAD, was lacking. There was scope for leveraging IFAD's comparative advantage in areas such as targeting, gender equality and women's empowerment, strengthening partnerships between smallholder farmers and private enterprises, and implementation of CDD type of programmes which included both infrastructure and livelihood objectives.
149. Despite progress in re-engaging with the Government, and collaborating with key development partners while addressing the past criticism of IFAD's engagement in the Pacific related to small-scale projects, lack of harmonization, misalignment and ineffectiveness, it appears IFAD missed a crucial opportunity envisioned through its participation in RDP I.¹²² The initial engagement in RDP I was seen as an opportunity to influence the design of RDP II, but this was not realized.
150. **IFAD should have played a more active role in its implementation and supervision support role as envisaged in the programme PAD.** IFAD did not

¹²¹ In cases where most of the men and husbands in the community are working in the provincial or national capital, women are left to tend their cocoa and coconut plantations. The PCR noted that in the agribusiness partnerships where smallholders are being assisted by MAL and the lead partner's technical facilitator, women perform various roles in production activities such as brushing, pruning, grafting, cleaning farms, collecting coconut husks etc.

¹²² Concept note on Solomon Islands Rural Development Programme Phase I.

provide adequate leadership particularly ensuring high technical quality implementation of component 2 in line with its comparative advantages. This is further acknowledged by the IFAD PCR which indicates that IFAD could have been more proactive in providing supervision and implementation support for component 2, as well as providing support with the articulation of targeting and social inclusion mechanisms, strengthening M&E systems, proposing and recommending design adjustments focused on outcome-oriented improvements, in addition to the output driven changes that characterized the programme. The joint mission report and MTR did not specify if IFAD participants assumed the role of an agriculture specialist.¹²³

151. **Supervision Missions.** Implementation and supervision missions were consistently carried out during the implementation of the RDP II. Given the lead implementing agency was the World Bank, supervision missions were mostly conducted in line with its approach. The supervision reports produced were generally of good quality, and their recommendations were largely followed up in subsequent missions. While these reports provided valuable insights into physical and financial progress, fiduciary risks, and safeguards issues, they lacked a more rigorous and in-depth analytical approach that could have identified potential challenges to the achievement of the programme's development objectives and to enhance effectiveness.
152. **IFAD did not systematically follow up on programme documentation.** The IFAD system retained only partial documentation on project implementation, and full copies of documents from the lead partner (e.g., all supervision reports, regardless of whether IFAD representatives participated in the mission, and all project periodic physical and financial progress reports) were neither required nor systematically followed up by IFAD.
153. **Summary.** IFAD's role and performance in programme design and implementation support fell short of expectations. Despite its global expertise in integrating CDD principles into agriculture commercialization projects and brokering partnerships between agribusinesses and smallholder farmers, IFAD did not fully leverage this comparative advantage. This was evidenced by the design and implementation gaps in targeting and social inclusion, agribusiness partnerships and access to finance mechanism (ASEF) through matching grants. A more proactive approach from IFAD, particularly during supervision and implementation support missions, could have addressed these shortcomings. This is particularly relevant considering the context of RDP II as a follow-up phase. The opportunity to build upon the experiences and lessons learned from RDP I could have been better leveraged. By adopting a more hands-on approach, IFAD could have shared its valuable global insights and experiences with similar projects, potentially leading to stronger programme design and more effective implementation. The PPE rates the IFAD performance as **unsatisfactory (2)**.

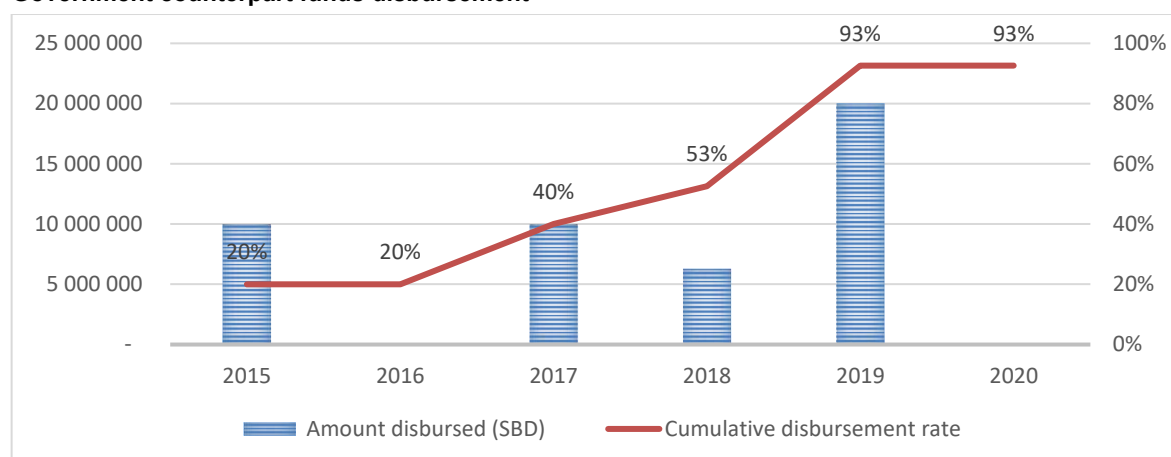
Government performance

154. Given the complexity and logistical challenges involved in the implementation of RDP II, successful completion of the project would not have been possible without active and effective support and cooperation from government agencies, including the Ministry of Finance and Treasury, MNPDC as the executing agency and implementing agency for component 1, MAL as implementing agency for component 2 and the role of the provincial governments, although the latter's role was not adequately defined. However, the parallel implementation of components 1 and 2 through different ministries hindered effective coordination and reduced the potential for synergy and collaboration among the components.
155. **Disbursement of counterpart funding was slow and this affected the programme implementation timeline.** The Government did not provide the committed counterpart funds that were required for smooth implementation (see figure 2). As of the 2018 supervision mission, the Government only disbursed 40 per cent of

¹²³ IFAD RDP II. PCR, p.17.

the agreed contributions (SBD 20 million out of SBD 50 million). The transfer of an additional SBD3.3 million under the 2017 budget was processed, but it had not reached the programme's account. Given that the original closing date for the project was after two years, the 2018 supervision mission report highlighted the need for the government to incorporate the outstanding government contribution of SBD 26.7 million in the 2018 budget.¹²⁴ Nevertheless, the Government's 2018 annual budget did not include the anticipated outstanding balance of government counterpart funding, leading to programme implementation delays and necessitating additional financing and extension of implementation in March 2020.

Figure 2
Government counterpart funds disbursement



Source: IOE analysis based on 2018 supervision mission report.

156. **Fiduciary management.** At the time of MTR, the fiduciary management performance remained satisfactory, and no material issues were identified. At completion, the ICRR registered that the project complied with the relevant financial management procedures and guidelines as well as covenants regarding the submission of annual audited financial management reports and quarterly Interim Financial Reports which were generally submitted on time and were of acceptable quality. Qualified project staff were in place at central and provincial levels to manage project finances and accounting was under the supervision of a finance manager at the PCU level. The project's accounting and reporting functions, internal controls, and disbursements were adequately maintained. Some weaknesses observed during implementation were long-standing issues of the slow acquittal of programme advances to subprojects, agribusinesses and staff, but these issues were eventually resolved, albeit with significant delays by the time of programme completion.¹²⁵
157. **Compliance with the financing agreement covenants was moderately satisfactory.** The compliance with loan covenants was rated as satisfactory in supervision reports up to MTR in 2017. The rating was moderately satisfactory (4) in March 2018 and moderately unsatisfactory (3) in April 2019. The declining rating was related to poor performance in the disbursement of counterpart funds which persisted throughout the implementation of the programme.
158. **Procurement.** There were several procurement challenges that were highlighted by the World Bank's ICRR which include delayed procurements caused by budget shortfalls, an outdated procurement system and selection of key consultants.¹²⁶ Despite these shortcomings, PCU complied with the World Bank's procurement procedures and guidelines. The procurement arrangements under RDP I largely continued under RDP II, with the PCU responsible for overall procurement, guided by a detailed Programme

¹²⁴ RDP II Supervision Mission Report, 2018.

¹²⁵ World Bank RDP II, ICRR, para 88.

¹²⁶ For example, PCU gender consultant, the O&M consultant, and the root cause analysis consultant.

Operations Manual. To increase efficiency, RDP II attempted a decentralized procurement approach to be undertaken by SICs and agribusiness lead partners. However, it did not materialize due to the less developed markets of suppliers as the procurement of nearly all goods and services had to be done in Honiara. In addition, under component 2, higher first-tranche payments made to partners to procure inputs for farmers increased the fiduciary risk to the project.¹²⁷ As a result, procurement was centralized in 2018, which increased PCU's workload but reduced overall programme costs and risks.

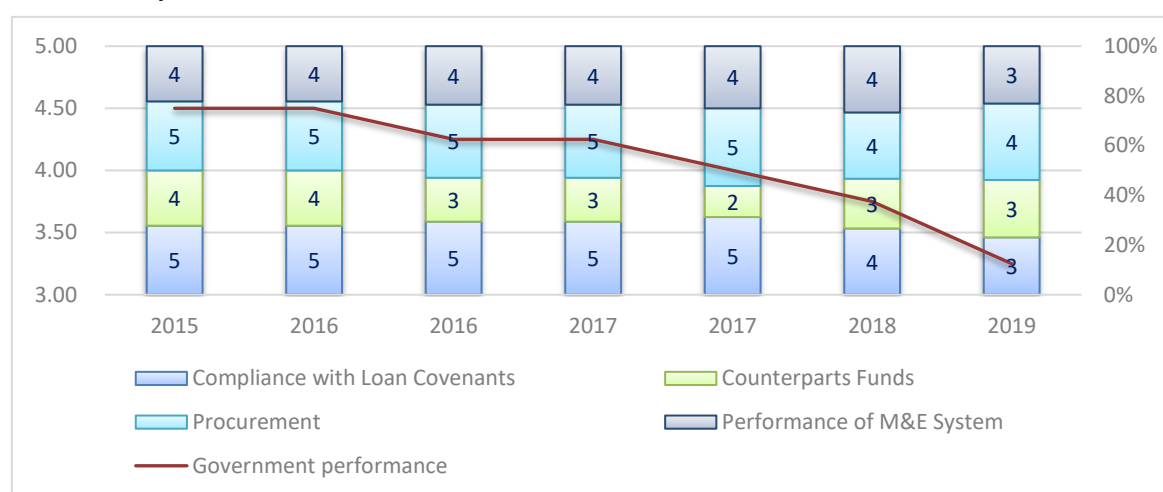
159. **Programme M&E.** The supervision reports (2018 and 2019) noted that the project's M&E system was functioning but not to its full expected capacity. The web-based MIS for component 1 was able to capture all component data and the progress of community grants implementation. However, not all subprojects in the project's MIS had been updated with the latest information because most CHs and field workers still required proper training in data entry and the new MIS system.¹²⁸ The field evidence suggests that the remoteness of several subproject locations and the poor or lacking communication infrastructure in some of the rural areas resulted in delays in submitting information from the tablets to the MIS. However, this did not result in reporting delays.¹²⁹ Better coordination across the teams within PCU was needed to ensure updated information was provided and updated in the programme MIS.
160. **The M&E system was not integrated between the two programme components.** While the MIS system contained information related to component 1, component 2 data was not linked or integrated, leading to the creation of an Excel-based manual system for managing component 2 data. This fragmentation hindered comprehensive planning and monitoring of programme progress. As a result, component 2 activities M&E data was kept in spreadsheets managed by the PCU's M&E officer justified based on the relatively small number of agribusiness partnerships and other activities in comparison to component 1.
161. **The programme had an MIS system but it had several key weaknesses.** The programme's MIS system played a crucial role in storing information related to programme's direct beneficiaries and implementation locations. However, a significant challenge arose as the system was hosted in the United States, making troubleshooting difficult due to limited control over the user rights. The provider, Tiger Company retained all administrative rights, including the setup of accounts and granting user access to local users. These challenges served as an important lesson, guiding enhancements for the M&E system of the Solomon Islands Agriculture and Rural Transformation Project, a World Bank-financed project. The new approach involved locally hosting the system within the government ICT infrastructure.

¹²⁷ Two agribusiness partners defaulted on their contractual commitments and caused the government to have to reimburse the advances made. (World Bank RDP II, ICRR, para 68.)

¹²⁸ RDP II Supervision Mission. 2018.

¹²⁹ World Bank, ICR, para 82.

Figure 3
Government performance overtime



Source: IOE analysis based on SIS ratings.

162. **Summary.** The RDP II could have benefited from a closer working relationship between the two coordinating ministries. They could have sought support for a unified project management structure under which a better synergy was created between the two programme components. Delays in counterpart funding affected the completion timeline of the programme while several gaps were observed in programme M&E. The PPE rates government performance as **moderately unsatisfactory (3)**.

C. Assessment of the quality of the programme completion report

163. This section, on the assessment of the quality of the programme completion report (PCR), is based on its review.
164. **Scope:** The scope of the PCR follows the IFAD PCR guidelines and assesses all the relevant criteria outlined in these guidelines. However, there are noticeable gaps in terms of comprehensiveness. This is because the PCR was prepared before the final closure of the programme; thus, it lacked adequate data to facilitate a comprehensive assessment of evaluation criteria. The programme had to complete the PCR as per IFAD requirements given that IFAD financing was ending as planned. In addition, the PCR mission was conducted remotely due to COVID-19-related travel restrictions and it could not capture the full results and lessons learned from programme implementation. Other challenges related to data limitations in view of a weak programme monitoring and evaluation system. The scope of the PCR is rated **satisfactory (5)**.
165. **Quality:** Despite data challenges, the PCR offers a critical analysis of the programme's performance, with some alignment to the PPE's findings, even though the PCR was prepared before the programme was completed. This analysis covers various aspects, including design changes driven by funding shortages rather than programme logic and quality improvement, the limited role of IFAD in supervision missions and its impact on the implementation quality of the agribusiness partnerships component, and sustainability challenges related to subproject grants mechanisms. However, some critical implementation gaps highlighted in some of the supervision mission reports and confirmed by the PPE were not adequately addressed in the PCR. These gaps included the absence of design linkages between programme components and its sub-optimal approach to the agribusiness partnership approach. The PPE rates the quality of the PCR as **moderately satisfactory (4)**.
166. **Lessons.** To some degree, the PCR provides some good lessons regarding aspects of the programme, some of which were in line with the findings of the PPE mission, although they were presented in a cross-cutting manner with no specific section on lessons learned. Understandably, the PCR also took a cautious approach in suggesting

lessons given that the preparation of the IFAD PCR was done ahead of the completion of the programme. However, one would have at least expected an analysis of the emerging lessons. The PPE rates this criterion as **moderately unsatisfactory (3)**.

167. **Candour:** The PCR acknowledges the programme shortcomings in various areas clearly and candidly. It withholds and offers indicative judgments in some areas due to insufficient information, since the PCR was prepared while the programme was still ongoing. This led to some ratings lacking adequate substantiation. The PPE rates candour as **moderately satisfactory (4)**.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

A. Conclusions

168. **The implementation of RDP II faced significant challenges due to the diversity of the Solomon Islands and the complexities posed by the SIDS context.** The country consists of many small islands, which are remote and hard to reach. This results in huge logistical and transaction costs, as well as limited access to well-developed commercial hubs, especially in the outer islands. The government faces considerable technical and financial resource constraints. The country's vulnerability to extreme weather events such as tropical cyclones and flash floods added another layer of complexity to the RDP II programming. This means that the country is frequently in a state of rebuilding and recovery, which hinders its development progress. These contextual factors underscore the need for adaptable, resilient, and context-specific approaches in future rural development initiatives.
169. **The decision by IFAD to re-engage in the Solomon Islands through the RDP was a strategic opportunity for IFAD to strengthen its collaboration with the Government and other development partners.** However, IFAD did not adequately leverage its comparative advantage to influence programme design and implementation. This was a missed opportunity to further advance its strategic approach guiding interventions in SIDS, as outlined in the 2014 paper "IFAD's approach in Small Island Developing States: A global response to island voices for food security". Specifically, component 2 on agribusiness partnerships provided an avenue for IFAD to draw on its comparative advantage in brokering partnerships between smallholder farmers and agribusinesses. Simultaneously, component 1 on community infrastructure and social services, presented opportunities for IFAD to utilize its extensive global experience in integrating CDD principles into agriculture-focused interventions. Despite these opportunities, IFAD adopted a hands-off approach, limiting its ability to influence key areas of strategic importance.
170. **Linking the CDD approach and agriculture commercialization needs clear protocols and guidelines for their disparate objectives.** While there is clear scope for applying typical CDD principles to agriculture commercialization infrastructure, seamlessly linking these objectives without clear guidance and protocols is difficult. Beyond the general challenges of integrating CDD principles in infrastructure projects, specific hurdles arise when dealing with agriculture commercialization in terms of the technical complexity and long-term institutional sustainability unlike the more immediate user-driven upkeep associated with social services infrastructure. Therefore, simply applying conventional CDD principles is insufficient for seamless integration. Clear guidance and protocols are crucial to overcome these challenges, such as standardized technical designs with pre-approved options, specific budget ranges, well-defined targeting mechanisms as well as counterparts with expertise in participatory development activities are essential.
171. **CDD can be a useful approach in the context of SIDS facing similar challenges to those of the Solomon Islands.**¹³⁰ As demonstrated in the RDP II, CDD can empower local communities to identify and address their own development needs, thereby increasing access to and utilization of both infrastructure and social services. Furthermore, if successful in promoting social cohesion and strengthening community ownership, the CDD approach can also contribute to fostering resilience and fortifying local governance structures in SIDS contexts. It is imperative that CDD mechanisms be deeply rooted in the prevailing local conditions to generate benefits including reinforcing participatory governance principles such as participation, transparency, trust and accountability. This requires ensuring there is adequate capacity for implementation

¹³⁰ SIDS often face unique challenges such as limited government capacity, geographic isolation and vulnerability to climate change and natural disasters.

and facilitation, tailoring approaches, taking into consideration the geography as well as the logistical complexities and costs of delivery.

172. **Governance arrangements, tailored to local contexts, are crucial for the success and inclusivity of agribusiness value chain partnerships.** The RDP II experience has shown that loosely defined partnerships may not always be effective in supporting agricultural commercialization, underscoring the need for context-specific governance systems to build stronger partnerships. Power imbalances between agribusiness partners and smallholder farmers, stemming from inequalities in access to information, networks, finance, expertise and negotiating power, were evident in the RDP II agribusiness partnerships. This resulted in gaps in trust, transparency and accountability between lead and co-partners and smallholder farmers in the absence of universally accepted norms of contractual behaviour. The programme supported smallholder farmers, who were largely unorganized, making it challenging for them to voice concerns, share ideas, and negotiate improved governance terms collectively. Therefore, it is essential to address these asymmetries directly and foster collective action among smallholder farmers for more equitable and effective partnerships.

B. Recommendations

173. **Recommendation 1: IFAD should intensify its engagement in co-financed programmes to improve performance in areas where it has specific strengths.** This entails enhancing its involvement throughout the programming cycle, leveraging its extensive expertise and comparative advantage.¹³¹ In particular, during the implementation phase, even when not serving as the lead managing agency, IFAD should sustain an active, continuous interaction with the programme, providing structured, ongoing technical assistance. A fit for purpose mechanism which is sufficiently resourced both financially and technically should be earmarked for IFAD's participation. Operationally, IFAD should focus on areas where it can add significant value in co-financing arrangements in a contextually relevant manner. These include targeting the poorest, inclusive value chain development, strengthening farmer organizations, and institutional capacity-building of relevant government agencies.
174. **Recommendation 2: IFAD should adapt its programming approach to ensure stronger alignment with contextually relevant corporate and strategic priorities, such as those outlined in the SIDS strategy.** These include fostering sustainable and inclusive food systems, promoting rural non-farm employment and small enterprises, and enhancing the resilience of rural households to environmental and climate change challenges. Additionally, IFAD should continue to learn from its engagement with the SIDS and use this as a mechanism to continue refining its approach to provide clearer operational guidelines for design and implementation in such unique contexts.
175. **Recommendation 3: Targeting strategies in SIDS contexts characterized by remoteness, geographic diversity and the limited capacity of public institutions should consider the different localized needs and capacities of the targeted communities.** A more bespoke targeting approach should be applied in the diverse geographical areas based on sufficient understanding of the poverty and multidimensional vulnerability of the different communities.¹³² At the same time, create a comprehensive map of potential service providers and private sector partners, evaluating their capacities and weaknesses, to inform customized intervention packages and cost structures that align with realities on the ground in terms of access to services, availability of service providers and presence of commercial activities in general.
176. **Recommendation 4. For projects utilizing the 4Ps approach, IFAD should clearly define context-specific criteria, model and required capacities for implementing inclusive agribusiness partnerships.** This includes setting

¹³¹ Including design, supervision, implementation support, Midterm Review, and programme completion reporting.

¹³² The MVI incorporates multiple dimensions of vulnerability, including environmental, economic, social, and institutional factors, to provide a holistic understanding of the challenges faced by SIDS.

measurable standards for inclusiveness, equity and adaptability. To address power imbalances, it is important to invest not only in the capacity-building of smallholder farmers and private agribusinesses, but also in strengthening institutional capacities to broker, support and moderate these partnerships. In addition, IFAD should identify and target contextually specific capacities that are important for the agribusiness partnerships to thrive. These may include partnership-building, technical expertise, business and market understanding, innovation, policy and governance approaches.

Basic project data

			Approval (US\$ m)		Actual (US\$ m)	
Region	Asia Pacific	Total project costs	46.9		41.8	
Country	Solomon Islands	IFAD	4.6	9.8%	4.3	10.2%
Loan number	1100001716	World Bank	9	19.2%	10.5	25.1%
Type of project (subsector)	Rural enterprises, non-farm employment, markets and value chain integration	European Commission	10.5	22.4%	10.4	25.0%
Financing type		Australian Aid	13.3	28.4%	10.6	25.1%
Lending terms [*]	Highly concessional	Government	9.5	20.3%	6.1	14.5%
Date of approval	11/03/2015					
Date of loan signature	07/05/2015					
Date of effectiveness	07/05/2015					
Loan amendments		Number of beneficiaries: (if appropriate, specify if direct or indirect)	357,500		275,391	
C						
Loan closure extensions						
Country directors	Ronald Hartman (2008- 2018) Chase Palmeri Tawfiq El-Zabri (2018 – 2022) Candra Samekto (2022 to date)	Loan closing date	30/06/2020			
Regional director(s)	Nigel Brett Reehana Raza					
Lead evaluator for project performance evaluation	Raymond Mubayiwa	IFAD loan disbursement at project completion (%)				
Project performance evaluation quality control panel	Fabrizio Felloni Johanna Pennarz Massiel Jimenez Dee Jupp	Date of project completion report	30/06/2022			

Definition and rating of the evaluation criteria used by IOE

Criteria	Definition *	Mandatory	To be rated
Impact	<p>The extent to which an intervention or country strategy has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects.</p> <p>The criterion includes the following domains:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> changes in incomes, assets and productive capacities changes in social/human capital changes in household food security and nutrition changes in institutions and policies. <p>The analysis of impact will seek to determine whether changes have been transformational, generating changes that can lead societies on to fundamentally different development pathways (e.g., due to the size or distributional effects of changes to poor and marginalized groups).</p>	X	Yes
Project performance	Project performance is an average of the ratings for relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of benefits.	X	Yes
Relevance	The extent to which: (i) the objectives of the intervention or strategy are consistent with beneficiaries' requirements, country needs, institutional priorities and partner and donor policies; (ii) the design of the interventions or strategy and the targeting strategies adopted are consistent with the objectives; and (iii) the intervention or strategy has been (re-) adapted to address changes in the context.	X	Yes
Effectiveness	<p>The extent to which the intervention or country strategy achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives and its results at the time of the evaluation, including any differential results across groups.</p> <p>A specific sub-domain of effectiveness relates to innovation, the extent to which interventions brought a solution (by practice, approach/method, process, product or rule) that is novel, with respect to the specific context, timeframe and stakeholders (intended users of the solution), with the purpose of improving performance and address challenge(s) in relation to rural poverty reduction.¹</p>	X	Yes
Efficiency	<p>The extent to which the intervention or strategy delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way.</p> <p>"Economic" is the conversion of inputs (e.g. funds, expertise, natural resources, time) into outputs, outcomes and impacts, in the most cost-effective way possible, as compared to feasible alternatives in the context. "Timely" delivery is within the intended timeframe, or a timeframe reasonably adjusted to the demands of the evolving context. This may include assessing operational efficiency (how well the intervention was managed).</p>	X	Yes

¹ Conditions that qualify as an innovation: newness to the context, to the intended users and the intended purpose of improving performance. Furthermore, the 2020 corporate-level evaluation on IFAD's support to innovation defined transformational innovations as "those that are able to lift poor farmers above a threshold, where they cannot easily fall back after a shock". Those innovations tackle simultaneously the multiple challenges faced by smallholder farmers. In IFAD operational contexts, this happens by packaging or bundling together several small innovations. They are mostly holistic solutions or approaches applied and implemented by IFAD-supported operations.

Criteria	Definition *	Mandatory	To be rated
Sustainability of benefits	The extent to which the net benefits of the intervention or strategy continue and are scaled up (or are likely to continue and be scaled up) by government authorities, donor organizations, the private sector and other agencies. Note: This entails an examination of the financial, economic, social, environmental and institutional capacities of the systems needed to sustain net benefits over time. It involves analyses of resilience, risks and potential trade-offs. Scaling up* takes place when: (i) bilateral and multilateral partners, the private sector or communities adopt and diffuse the solution tested by IFAD; (ii) other stakeholders invest resources to bring the solution at scale; and (iii) the government applies a policy framework to generalize the solution tested by IFAD (from practice to policy). *Note that scaling up does not only relate to innovations.	X	Yes
		X	Yes
Other performance criteria			
Gender equality and women's empowerment	The extent to which IFAD interventions have contributed to better gender equality and women's empowerment. For example, in terms of women's access to and ownership of assets, resources and services; participation in decision-making, workload balance and impact on women's incomes, nutrition and livelihoods; and in promoting sustainable, inclusive and far-reaching changes in social norms, attitudes, behaviours and beliefs underpinning gender inequality. Evaluations will assess to what extent interventions and strategies have been gender transformational, relative to the context, by: (i) addressing the root causes of gender inequality and discrimination; (ii) acting upon gender roles, norms and power relations; (iii) promoting broader processes of social change (beyond the immediate intervention). Evaluators will consider differential impacts by gender and the way they interact with other forms of discrimination (such as age, race, ethnicity, social status and disability), also known as gender intersectionality. ²	X	Yes
Specific domain of sustainability: environment and natural resources management and climate change adaptation.	The extent to which the development interventions and strategy contribute to enhancing the environmental sustainability and resilience to climate change in small-scale agriculture.	X	Yes
Performance of partners (assessed separately for IFAD and the Government)	The extent to which IFAD and the Government (including central and local authorities and executing agencies) supported design, implementation and the achievement of results, conducive policy environment, and impact and the sustainability of the intervention/country programme The adequacy of the borrower's assumption of ownership and responsibility during all project phases, including government and implementing agency, in ensuring quality preparation and implementation, compliance with covenants and agreements, supporting a conducive policy environment and establishing the basis for sustainability, and fostering participation by the project's stakeholders.	X	Yes
		X	Yes

² Evaluation Cooperation Group, "Gender. Main messages and findings from the ECG Gender Practitioners' Workshops) (Washington, D.C., 2017), <https://www.ecgnet.org/document/main-messages-and-findings-ieq-gender-practitioners-workshop>

Rating comparison^a

Criteria	Programme management department rating	Project performance evaluation rating	Rating disconnect
Relevance	5	4	-1
Effectiveness	4	3	-1
<i>Innovation</i>	3	3	0
Efficiency	4	3	-1
Impact	4	3	-1
Gender equality and women's empowerment	4	3	-1
Sustainability of benefits	3	3	0
<i>Scaling up</i>	3	3	0
<i>ENRM/CCA</i>	4	3	-1
Overall project achievement	3.78	3.11	-0.67
Performance of partners^d			
IFAD	4	2	-2
Government	4	3	-1
Average net disconnect^b			-0.82

a Rating scale: 1 = highly unsatisfactory; 2 = unsatisfactory; 3 = moderately unsatisfactory; 4 = moderately satisfactory; 5 = satisfactory; 6 = highly satisfactory.

b The algebraic sum of disconnect, divided by the number of criteria and sub criteria, excluding 'overall project achievement'; the disconnect is rounded at the first two decimals

Ratings of the project completion report quality

	IOE rating
Scope	5
Quality	4
Lessons	3
Candour	4
Overall rating of the project completion report	4

Rating scale: 1 = highly unsatisfactory; 2 = unsatisfactory; 3 = moderately unsatisfactory; 4 = moderately satisfactory; 5 = satisfactory; 6 = highly satisfactory.

Evaluation framework

Criteria and overarching evaluation questions	Specific questions proposed for this PPE	Judgment criteria/indicators of success	Data sources and methods
Relevance			
Was the intervention/ programme relevant and aligned to:	Was the programme relevant and coherent in contributing to increased smallholder farmers' productivity and access to social services?	Evidence of the programme design being relevant to the context in which it was implemented	Data Sources
(a) the country's development needs and challenges as well as national policies and strategies; (b) IFAD's relevant strategies and priorities; (c) the needs of the beneficiaries and tailored to very poor or marginalized people or special categories?	Was the programme supportive towards the realization of the country's key policies and rural/agricultural development frameworks?	Evidence of vulnerability-based targeting	PCR
Was the design realistic in terms of meeting the context and implementation capacity?	Did the programme employ clear strategies and criteria in targeting the poorest areas and groups? How relevant was the targeting criteria to the needs of the target group?	Evidence of the programme's contribution to the National Development Plan and the Agriculture Sector Growth and Investment Plan	World Bank ICRR
Was the design re-adapted to changes in the context (if applicable)?	How well were the design linkages and complementarities achieved between component 1 and 2?	Evidence of improvements in the environment for smallholder farmers to thrive	National Agriculture and Livestock Sector Policy, 2015-2019
	To what extent did the design of the RDP II take into consideration the staffing and capacity levels of the Ministry of Agriculture and the agribusiness partners?	Evidence rural agricultural markets are more competitive and efficient	Agriculture Sector Growth and Investment Plan
	Did the design of the RDP II take into consideration the lessons learned, experiences and recommendations from various supervision missions, and evaluation of RDP I?	Evidence of the capacity of the different institutions to deliver on their mandate to enable smallholder productivity increases	National Development Plan, 2021-2035
	Were RDP II institutional arrangements for management, coordination and oversight appropriate for the interventions?	Evidence of design alterations which were driven by the changing context	IFAD in the Pacific - Partnering for Rural Development, 2014
	To what extent was the programme design flexible in accommodating changes during implementation? How relevant were the design changes?	Evidence of alignment with other donor programmes or activities	IFAD's Approach in Small Island Developing States - A global response to island voices for food security, 2014
	How were the context and existing institutional structures considered in the programme design? How has the context changed, e.g. market access and trends in important commodities or social cohesion and social dynamics in the communities?		Data collection methods
	How relevant was the targeting of the rural financing instruments ASEP and APGs? What were successful contract agreements between smallholder farmers and agribusinesses? How did this change over time and in view of changing markets?		Scoping and desk review
	Did the programme ensure increased participation of youth? Did the operation and maintenance of the subprojects create attractive employment opportunities for them? Why are these (not) attractive? How can they be made more attractive for young people?		Key informant interviews (semi-structured)
	How did people with special needs feel represented and considered in the processes? Were there any attempts to involve them better? What could have been done to better involve them?		Focus group discussions, potentially with participatory mapping exercises
			Participant observation

Criteria and overarching evaluation questions	Specific questions proposed for this PPE	Judgment criteria/indicators of success	Data sources and methods
Effectiveness			
<p>Were the objectives of the intervention/programme achieved or likely to be achieved at the time of the evaluation?</p> <p>Did the intervention/strategy achieve other objectives or did it have any unexpected consequences?</p> <p>To what extent did the programme or project support/promote innovations, aligned with stakeholders' needs or challenges they faced?</p> <p>Were the innovations inclusive and accessible to a diversity of farmers (in terms of gender, youth and diversity of socio-economic groups)?</p>	<p>How and to what extent did RDP II interventions contribute towards the programme's intended outcomes? What worked well and why? What did not work well and why?</p> <p>Did the improvements in social services infrastructure contribute to increased access to services?</p> <p>Were there any improvements in farmers' knowledge, attitudes and practices in terms of GAPs? In what ways did these contribute to productivity enhancement as well as smallholders' competitiveness?</p> <p>Were implementation timelines of the two major components and their key activities sufficiently synchronized to deliver on the expected outcomes and complementarities of the programme?</p> <p>Were there changes in the RDP II operating environment which affected effectiveness? If yes, which were these? In what ways did they affect effectiveness?</p> <p>To what extent did RDP II reduce the vulnerabilities of the poor (including environmental, social and economic factors) by social group category, i.e. women? Youth? Poor rural smallholder farmers in general?</p> <p>Did the RDP II achieve its objectives of building disaster recovery and resilience for communities in areas prone to floods?</p> <p>What factors contributed to such programme achievements? What were the key challenges?</p> <p>What innovations were introduced by RDP II? Which were implemented and scaled up? Which of the innovations were the most successful and why? Which of the innovations were the least successful and why?</p>	<p>Evidence of completed infrastructure subprojects</p> <p>Evidence of uptake of ASEF and APG schemes</p> <p>Evidence smallholder farmers are linked to markets and financial services.</p> <p>Evidence of agricultural training conducted</p>	<p>Data Sources</p> <p>PCR</p> <p>World Bank ICRR</p> <p>Supervision reports</p> <p>IFAD impact assessment</p> <p>Compliance note</p> <p>MTR</p> <p>Semi-annual report December</p> <p>Implementation Manual</p> <p>Data collection methods</p> <p>Scoping and desk review</p> <p>Key informant interviews (semi- structured)</p> <p>Focus group discussions, potentially with participatory mapping exercises</p> <p>Participant observation</p> <p>GIS mapping</p>
Efficiency			
<p>What is the relation between benefits and costs (e.g. net present value, internal rate of return)? How does it compare with similar interventions (if the comparison is plausible)?</p> <p>Are unit costs of specific interventions in line with recognized practices and congruent with the results achieved?</p>	<p>Were the financial, human and technical resources adequate and were they mobilized in a timely way?</p> <p>Was the PMU sufficiently staffed and did it have people with the appropriate qualifications? Was the PME effective in executing its tasks?</p> <p>Did the various branches/departments of the Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Development Planning and Aid Coordination provide adequate staff to implement programme activities for which they were responsible?</p>	<p>Evidence of timely start-up time and disbursement profiles for the intervention</p> <p>Level of discrepancy between planned and utilized financial expenditures</p> <p>Cost in view of results achieved compared to costs of similar projects from other organizations</p>	<p>Data sources</p> <p>Supervision mission reports</p> <p>Project completion report</p> <p>Midterm review report</p> <p>Data collection methods</p>

Criteria and overarching evaluation questions	Specific questions proposed for this PPE	Judgment criteria/indicators of success	Data sources and methods
<p>Are programme management cost ratios justifiable in terms of intervention objectives, results achieved, considering contextual aspects and unforeseeable events?</p> <p>Is the timeframe of the intervention development and implementation justifiable, taking into account the results achieved, the specific context and unforeseeable events?</p>	<p>Did these staff execute the activities for which they were mandated, in a timely way?</p> <p>How was IFAD human resource organized and deployed to supervise and support programme implementation?</p>	<p>Adequacy of project choices in view of existing context, infrastructure and cost</p> <p>Quality of results-based management reporting (progress reporting, monitoring and evaluation)</p> <p>Occurrence of change in project design/ implementation approach when needed to improve project efficiency</p> <p>Costs associated with delivery mechanism and management alternatives</p> <p>Management costs as a proportion of the overall project budget</p>	<p>Desk review checklists</p> <p>Key information interviews</p>
Impact			
<p>Has the intervention/programme/project had the anticipated impact on the target group and institutions and policies? Why?</p> <p>What are the observed changes in incomes, assets of the target group, household food security and nutrition, social/human capital and institutions and policies over the project/country strategic opportunity programme period? What explains those changes? What are the challenges?</p> <p>From an equity perspective, have very poor/marginalized groups, special categories, benefited in a sizable manner?</p>	<p>To what extent and in what ways did RDP II contribute to the strengthening or the establishment of pro-poor institutions in particular, ensuring community participation in governance systems?</p> <p>To what extent and in what ways did RDP II contribute to the strengthening, establishment or implementation of pro-poor policies?</p> <p>What contribution did RDP II make to the improvement in the productive capacities of smallholders in the target areas? Please provide specific examples/evidence</p> <p>Did RDP II interventions have the anticipated effects on the target groups (i.e. the poorest smallholders, women and youth in particular?) – if in the affirmative, please provide specific examples/evidence</p> <p>What changes have taken place in household food and nutrition security? What explains such changes? How do beneficiaries perceive their food security and nutrition situation? How has food security and dietary diversity increased through programme participation?</p> <p>What changes have taken place in household income and asset ownership? What explains such changes?</p> <p>How did different types of infrastructure in subprojects impact beneficiaries' standard/quality of life? Which groups of people benefit from the subprojects and why?</p> <p>Have farmers' groups increased their institutional capacity? Are they still working with the agribusiness partners?</p>	<p>Evidence of improved food security in farming households</p> <p>Evidence of increased human and social capital</p> <p>Evidence of increased disaster resilience</p> <p>Evidence of infrastructure improving the standard/quality of life</p> <p>Evidence of increased agricultural productivity</p> <p>Evidence of increased household income</p> <p>Evidence of improved policies and institutions</p> <p>Evidence of improved institutional capacity of MAL</p> <p>Evidence of women's empowerment</p> <p>Evidence of improved capacity of farmer organizations in the management of their affairs</p>	<p>Data sources</p> <p>Concept note</p> <p>PCR</p> <p>World Bank ICRR</p> <p>IFAD impact assessment</p> <p>World Bank impact assessment on agribusiness partnerships</p> <p>Semi-annual reports</p> <p>Economic and financial analysis</p> <p>(Supervision reports)</p> <p>Data collection methods</p> <p>Scoping and desk review</p> <p>Key informant interviews (semi-structured)</p> <p>Focus group discussions, potentially with participatory mapping exercises</p> <p>Participant observation</p> <p>GIS mapping</p>

Criteria and overarching evaluation questions	Specific questions proposed for this PPE	Judgment criteria/indicators of success	Data sources and methods
Sustainability			
<p>To what extent did the intervention/programme contribute to long-term institutional, environmental and social sustainability?</p> <p>What is the level of engagement, participation and ownership of the government, local communities, grass-roots organizations and the rural poor? In particular, did the government ensure budget allocations to cover operation and maintenance?</p> <p>Did the programme include an exit strategy? ¹</p> <p>For scaling up:</p> <p>To what extent were results scaled up or likely to be scaled up in the future? Is there an indication of commitment of the government and key stakeholders in scaling up interventions and approaches, for example, in terms of provision of funds for selected activities, human resources availability, continuity of pro-poor policies and participatory development approaches, and institutional support?</p> <p>For environment and natural resource management and climate change adaptation, to what extent is the intervention/strategy:</p> <p>Improving farming practices? Minimizing damage and introducing offsets to counter the damage caused by those farming practices?</p> <p>Supporting agricultural productivity that is sustainable and integrated into ecosystems?</p> <p>Channelling climate and environmental finance through the intervention/country programme to smallholder farmers,</p>	<p>What has been the level of engagement, participation and ownership by farmer organizations of RDP II-supported activities?</p> <p>To what extent is there government commitment to continuing supporting RDP II activities, for example including RDP II activities in MAL annual workplan and budgets? Is there evidence to suggest synergies between the MoA and the relevant authorities at various levels responsible for contributing to the maintenance of the infrastructure created by the programme?</p> <p>Are the O & M committees set up by the programme functional and ensuring maintenance of the social infrastructure created by the programme?</p> <p>Are there any financial sustainability models that were promoted during the implementation of the programme at the national and community levels? If so, how are they ensuring sustainability of benefits?</p> <p>What are the current maintenance practices of the rural infrastructure created by the RDP II</p> <p>To what extent was the implementation of the RDP II embedded in the broader structures of the relevant government institutions responsible for construction, operations and maintenance?</p> <p>What have been the main challenges regarding sustainability of the benefits accrued from RDP II? What lessons can be learned by Government and IFAD for future programming?</p> <p>What are the institutional structures and agreements regarding O&M? Are responsibilities between ministries and the OMCs clear and effective? What are the activities of the OMCs, how regularly do the OMCs hold meetings?</p> <p>What are the skills, training, and equipment necessary for maintenance? Have O&M structures been sufficiently tested before project completion, was there sufficient time for this?</p> <p>How substantially were CDD elements incorporated into the use of Constituency Development Funds?</p> <p>Have the communities developed their own projects and acquired funds from other sources to maintain or improve the infrastructure? Did they continue using CDD elements beyond the programme scope?</p>	<p>Existence of climate risks to programme benefits</p> <p>Existence of institutional and governance risks to programme benefits</p> <p>Existence of socio-political risks to programme benefits, e.g. low social cohesion</p> <p>Evidence of a meaningful maintenance agreements and implementation</p> <p>Evidence of other organizations, the government, and the private sector scaling up elements of RDP</p> <p>Evidence of elements of CDD being sustained beyond the programme duration</p>	<p>Data sources</p> <p>Implementation Manual</p> <p>Concept note</p> <p>PCR</p> <p>World Bank ICRR</p> <p>World Bank IA</p> <p>Supervision reports</p> <p>Semi-annual reports</p> <p>O&M surveys conducted by the last five field missions in 2020-21 (World Bank ICRR)</p> <p>Joint donor reviews</p> <p>MTR</p> <p>Data collection methods</p> <p>Scoping and desk review</p> <p>Key informant interviews (semi-structured)</p> <p>Focus group discussions, potentially with participatory mapping exercises</p> <p>Participant observation</p> <p>GIS mapping</p>

¹ Useful references to Management's documents related to this criterion include the IFAD action plan on sustainability and the IFAD Project Design Guidelines, 2020 (notably annex V).

Criteria and overarching evaluation questions	Specific questions proposed for this PPE	Judgment criteria/indicators of success	Data sources and methods
<p>helping them to reduce poverty, enhance biodiversity, increase yields and lower greenhouse gas emissions? Building climate resilience by managing competing land use systems while reducing poverty, enhancing biodiversity, increasing yields and lowering greenhouse gas emissions?</p>	<p>How long were ASEF and AGP contracts continued? Were new contracts made and if so under what conditions? What were the success factors? Did the government step in to help develop rural finance structures?</p> <p>To what degree did the private sector and banks scale up efforts started with ASEF and APGs?</p> <p>What is known about negative environmental impacts of project activities of both components of RDP II, short-term and long-term?</p> <p>How feasible were the sustainable approaches for agriculture promoted in the programme in the environmental conditions on Solomon Islands? If not, how could have feasibility and effectiveness been increased? How many farmers picked up methods from the training?</p> <p>How was the tension between sustainable agricultural practices and economic viability handled by the programme and by agribusiness partners? Were any negative effects of increased production of export crops on soils observed, e.g. due to the extension of worked land?</p> <p>Were infrastructure projects placed in locations that are safe from rising sea-levels? Were climate-proof materials used? Is it possible to maintain them after project completion? Can spare parts be sourced locally?</p> <p>Did the involvement with agribusiness partners under ASEF and APG motivate land use extension or change? Did these affect the environment?</p>		

Gender equality and women's empowerment

<p>What were the project's achievements in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, including intersectionality issues?</p> <p>In particular, were there changes in: (i) women's access to resources, income sources, assets (including land) and services; (ii) women's influence in decision-making within the household and community; (iii) workload distribution (including domestic chores); (iv) women's health, skills, nutrition?</p> <p>Were there notable changes in social norms, attitudes, behaviours and beliefs and policies / laws relating to gender equality?</p>	<p>What evidence is available to indicate that the programme promoted gender equality and women's empowerment at different levels (community, household, individual)?</p> <p>Did the programme have a gender strategy? If so, was the programme's gender strategy/approach implemented and with what results?</p> <p>What are the current social norms, attitudes, behaviours and beliefs in the community in relation to gender equality? Is there any evidence of positive improvements in the RDP II programme communities?</p> <p>Was the monitoring system responsive to provide gender disaggregated data?</p> <p>How substantial was the participation and involvement of women, youth and marginalized actors in the CDD process? What are their perceptions and what were success factors and constraints they faced, e.g. gender norms?</p>	<p>Evidence of changes in the gender dynamics at the household and community levels</p> <p>Evidence of enhanced women's participation in leadership and decision-making structures at the community level</p> <p>Evidence that women implemented the agricultural techniques which they learned in the training</p> <p>Evidence that women benefited from disaster recovery programmes</p> <p>Equitable household decision-making in smallholder farms</p>	<p>Data sources</p> <p>PCR</p> <p>World Bank ICRR</p> <p>Supervision reports</p> <p>IFAD impact assessment</p> <p>World Bank 2018, Gender Inclusive Value Chains: Improving Women's Participation in Solomon Islands.</p> <p>Gender Action Plan (issued as part of the 2017 MTR)</p>
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Criteria and overarching evaluation questions	Specific questions proposed for this PPE	Judgment criteria/indicators of success	Data sources and methods
Was attention given to programme implementation resources and disaggregated monitoring with respect to gender equality and women's empowerment goals?	<p>How was the participation of women in the process perceived by men? Did the attitude of men regarding the role of women in society change due to the involvement of women in the process?</p> <p>In which way did the chosen subprojects specifically benefit women? For instance, in terms of a reduction of their workload to fetch water, improvements in child health and therefore less care work, etc.?</p> <p>Why was women's participation in the planning meetings high, but their representation in committees low? What were the selection processes like, where were constraints for women to participate?</p> <p>What effect did the participation of women in the programme have beyond the scope of RDP II, e.g. in their homes?</p> <p>Did the Technical Appraisal Committees try to increase the number of supported agribusinesses that support women and youth? Were agribusinesses sanctioned when they did not deliver on their promise to support women and youth and people with special needs?</p> <p>How did the establishment of the agribusiness partnerships affect the lives of women who own agribusinesses, who work in them, of women who head farms, of female household members of male farmers or hired workers who are female or wives of male workers?</p> <p>How did the activities, incomes and decision-making power, care work and overall work burden of women change due to RDP II? Were work conditions favourable? How were women remunerated for their work?</p> <p>Were women having full control over incomes generated from their jobs in relationship with the agribusinesses? How did the income change their standard of living? What did they spend the money on and why?</p>	<p>Evidence of equitable access to community assets created by the programme including services</p> <p>Increased control of economic resources (income, assets)</p>	<p>Semi-annual report December 2017 plus other semi-annual reports</p> <p>Implementation Manual</p> <p>Data collection methods</p> <p>Scoping and desk review</p> <p>Key informant interviews (semi-structured)</p> <p>Focus group discussions, potentially with participatory mapping exercises</p> <p>Participant observation</p>

Performance of IFAD

How effectively did IFAD support the overall quality of design, including aspects related to project approach, compliance, and operational aspects? ²	<p>How well did IFAD support the design of RDP II, its implementation and supervision? To what extent was this support consistent?</p> <p>Did IFAD provide the required financial and human resources in an adequate manner? Did IFAD do so in a timely way?</p>	<p>Evidence of adequate technical support being provided to the programme</p> <p>Evidence of adequacy of supervision missions</p>	<p>Data sources</p> <p>RDP II design report</p> <p>Supervision mission reports</p>
How proactively did IFAD identify and address threats to the achievement of project development objectives? ³	How effective was IFAD in identifying and addressing bottlenecks and supporting RDP II performance?	Evidence of adaptive management and support being provided to the RDP II programme.	<p>Project completion report</p> <p>Midterm review report</p>

² Useful reference to Management's comments that relate to the criterion are the IFAD project design guidelines (2020).

³ Sources for self-evaluations include project supervisions and project status reports.

Criteria and overarching evaluation questions	Specific questions proposed for this PPE	Judgment criteria/indicators of success	Data sources and methods
<p>How effectively did IFAD support the executing agency on the aspects of project management, financial management, and setting up project-level M&E systems?</p> <p>How did IFAD position itself and its work in partnership with other development partners?</p>	How effectively did the IFAD Country Office and the Regional Office provide support to RDP II interventions?		<p>Policy documents</p> <p>RIA impact study</p> <p>Data collection methods</p> <p>Desk review checklists</p> <p>Key information interviews</p> <p>Focus group discussions</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews</p>

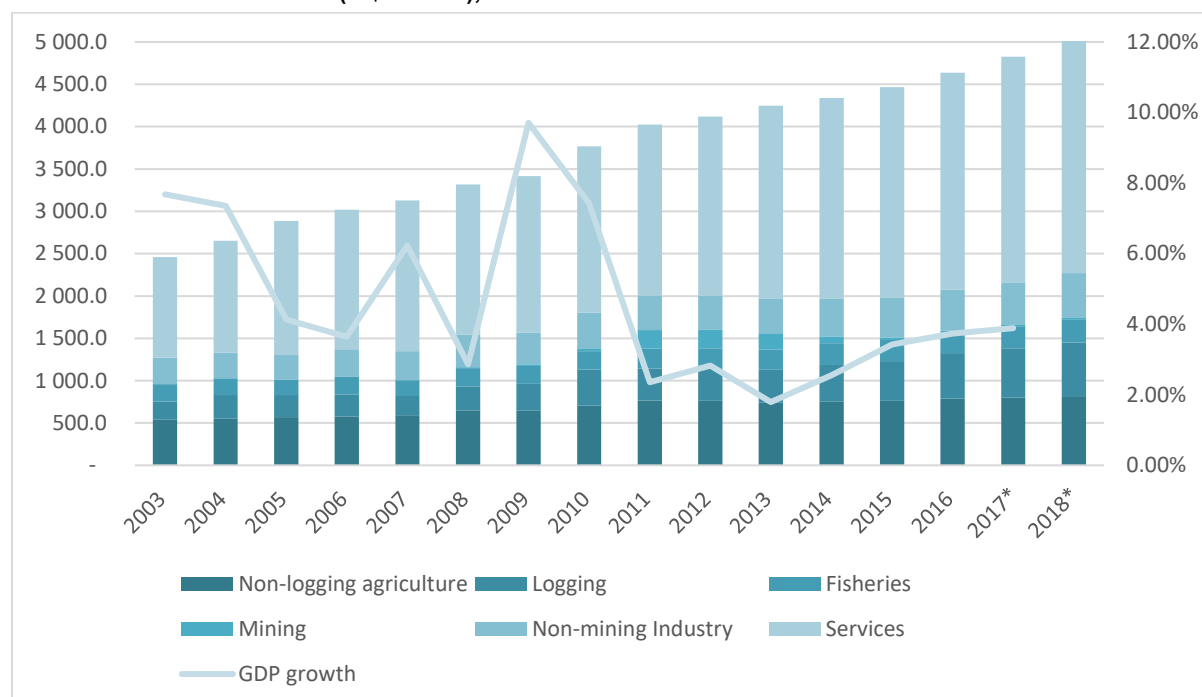
Performance of the Government

<p>Did the government pay adequate attention to design quality (adhering to quality standards when available) and set realistic expectations on targets and implementation capacity?</p> <p>Did it provide oversight and strategic guidance at design and during implementation?</p> <p>Did the government comply with the loan covenant and fulfil its fiduciary responsibilities according to the loan agreement?</p> <p>To what extent did the government demonstrate its ownership of the programme?</p> <p>Were management decisions supported by a functioning M&E system?</p>	<p>Did government demonstrate sufficient ownership in the design and implementation of RDP II? If so, in what ways?</p> <p>How well did government perform in fulfilling covenants?</p> <p>To what extent did government perform its required programme oversight and management?</p> <p>To what extent and how well did government mobilize the required resources (counterpart resources)? How timely was this resource mobilization?</p> <p>How well and to what extent did government address implementation bottlenecks? Did government do this in a timely way?</p> <p>To what extent and how quickly did government address fiduciary and procurement concerns?</p>	<p>Evidence of government ownership of the RDP II programme</p> <p>Evidence of sufficient government oversight.</p> <p>Evidence of quality procurement processes by the government.</p> <p>Evidence of follow-up on supervision missions recommendations</p>	<p>Data sources</p> <p>RDP II design report</p> <p>Supervision mission reports</p> <p>Project completion report</p> <p>Midterm review report</p> <p>Policy documents</p> <p>RIA impact study</p> <p>Data collection methods</p> <p>Desk review checklists</p> <p>Key information interviews</p> <p>Focus group discussions</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews</p>
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Source: PPE team.

Supplementary information

Figure 4
Post-conflict real GDP trend (SI\$ million), 2003-2018



Source: IOE analysis based on data from the Central Bank of the Solomon Islands, * CBSI GDP estimates.

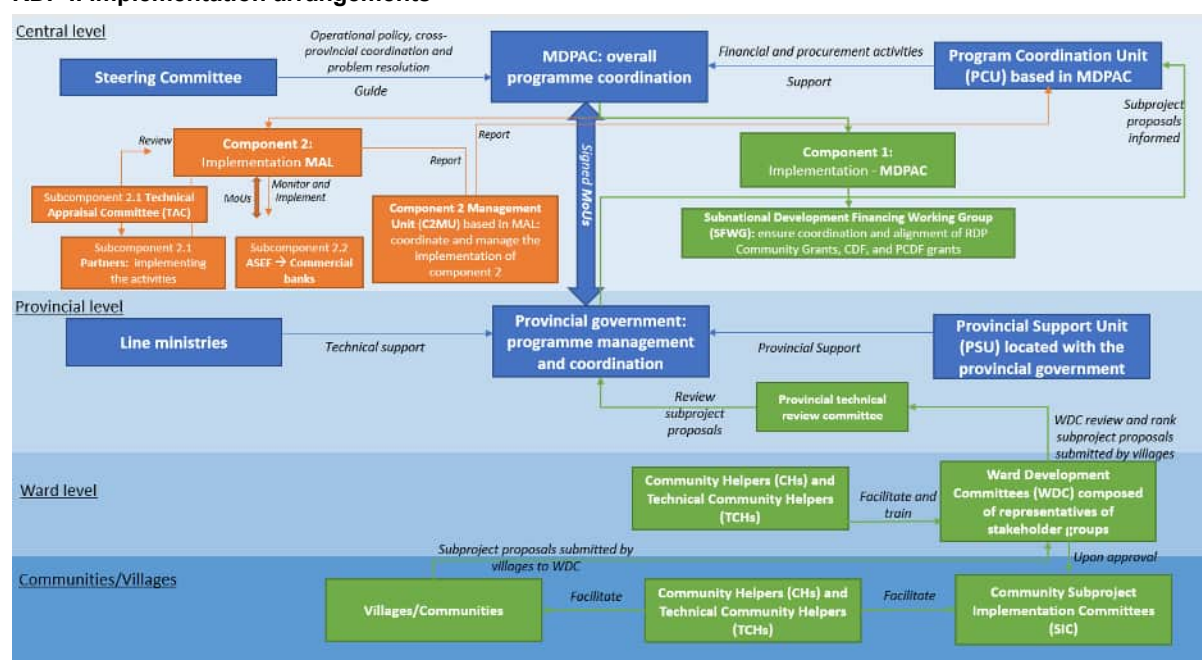
Box 4

What are Small Island Developing States?

SIDS are a group of 58 countries and territories (38 are United Nations Members) while the rest are non-United Nations Members or Associate Members of Regional Commissions, as classified by the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. IFAD's Membership includes 38 SIDS (36 United Nations Members and 2 non-United Nations Members: Cook Islands and Niue). The latter are the only states that participate in United Nations specialized agencies such as IFAD without being United Nations Members. SIDS are generally clustered into three regional subgroups: (i) SIDS in the Atlantic, the Indian Ocean, the Mediterranean and the South China Sea; (ii) Caribbean SIDS; and (iii) Pacific SIDS.

Source: IFAD Strategy for Engagement in Small Island Developing States 2022–2027.

Figure 5
RDP II implementation arrangements



Source: IOE analysis based on PAD.

Table 10
Physical achievement of outputs

Indicator name	Unit of measure	Base-line	Original target	Formally revised target	Actual achieved at completion	Achievement %
Beneficiaries with improved quality of, and/or, access to rural infrastructure or services (including from disaster recovery)	Number	0	262 850	155 000	171 320	111%
Female beneficiaries	Number	0	131 425	70 000	84 673	121%
Male and female members of farming households engaged in productive partnerships with commercial enterprises	Number	0	68 200	14 000	18 922	135%
Female members of farming households engaged in productive partnerships with commercial enterprises	Number	0	7 000		8 977	128%
Increase in the volume of produce sold by households engaging in agribusiness partnerships	Percentage	0	30	15	50	333%
Number of male and female beneficiaries receiving agriculture and livestock support to recover incomes lost from April 2014 flooding	Number	0	5 400	2 500	2 846	114%
Female beneficiaries of agriculture and livestock recovery support	Number	0	1 250		1 366	109%
Number of community infrastructure subprojects completed (including from	Number	0	374	275	317	85%

Indicator name	Unit of measure	Base-line	Original target	Formally revised target	Actual achieved at completion	Achievement %
disaster recovery)						
Participants in community prioritization/consultation meetings	Number	0	180 000		213 088	118%
Female participants in community prioritization/consultation meetings	Number	0	90 000		105 927	118%
Percentage of completed subprojects for which community engagement in post-project operations and maintenance are established	Percentage	0	100		100	100%
Community and other non-project-financed contributions as a percentage of total subproject costs (at the time of completion)	Percentage	0	30	30	25	83%
Representatives in Ward Development Committees who are women	Percentage	0	50		37	74%
Number of agribusiness partnerships established	Number	0	79	43	35	81%
Number of partnership members who adopt improved farming practice due to engagement in agribusiness partnerships	Number	0	7 000		7 298	104%
Total value of ASEF grants disbursed	Amount (USD)	0	2 000 000	1 000 000	122 986	6%
Client days of agriculture training provided	Number	0	20 000	22 000	38 394	175%

Source: World Bank, ICRR.

Table 11
Number of agribusiness partnerships with activities by commodity by province

	Choiseul	Western	Isabel	Central	Guadalcanal	Renbel	Malaita	Makira	Temotu
Cocoa	-	1	1	-	4	-	7	4	1
Coconut	-	2	2	-	3	-	7	6	-
Food crops	-	1	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
Livestock	-	1	-	-	1	-	1	-	-
Honey	1	1	-	-	-	1	-	1	1
Ngali nuts	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Total	1	7*	3	0	10	1	15	12	2 ¹

Source: component 2 monitoring data.

¹ Two partnerships had activities that covered more than one commodity: one in Western Province covered food crops and livestock and one in Temotu covered cocoa and honey.

Table 12
Status of programme O&M committees at completion

Province	Original number of SPs	Terminated/ cancelled SPs	Total SPs after terminated ones cancelled	Number of completed SPs	Number of O&M training sessions completed	Number of O&M training sessions not done	Percentage of completed SPs with O&M plans
Choiseul	17	0	17	17	17	0	100%
Western	39	1	38	38	38	0	100%
Isabel	32	1	31	30	28	3	93%
Malaita	57	2	55	54	55	0	102%
Central	26	1	25	22	25	0	114%
Guadalcanal	83	2	81	79	76	5	96%
Renbel	19	0	19	19	16	3	84%
Makira	40	1	39	39	39	0	100%
Temotu	17	0	17	16	15	2	94%
Total	330	8	322	314	309	13	98%

Source: component 1 monitoring data.

Table 13
Expected monthly O&M contributions and composition of O&M committees

Province	Average household contribution per month (USD)	Average number of O&M committee members			Percentage of O&M committee	
		Total	Female	Youths	Female	Youths
Choiseul	8	8.6	2.6	Not recorded	30%	Not recorded
Western	9	6.9	2.6	2.6	38%	37%
Isabel	11	7.4	2.9	1.0	39%	13%
Central	12	7.6	2.4	1.5	32%	19%
Renbel	15	7.9	2.5	0.3	31%	4%
Guadalcanal	14	7.5	2.8	1.4	37%	18%
Malaita	9	7.2	2.5	0.6	35%	8%
Makira	5	9.8	3.8	2.1	39%	21%
Temotu	10	6.2	1.2	1.1	20%	18%
All RDP II	11	7.7	2.7	1.4	35%	18%

Source: component 1 monitoring data.

Table 14

Subprojects physically observed and their status

Province	Ward	Name of subproject	Status	Summary observations
Guadalcanal	Saghalu	Selwyn College girl's dormitory	Successful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well-maintained building which is fully utilized with 200 girls in the hostel. School has assumed full responsibility for O&M, plans to use market gardening to generate additional income. Fundraising activities include food fairs and contributions from the church.
Guadalcanal	Saghalu	Tamboko water supply (borehole)	Not successful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Borehole not functioning for about a year. Generator to pump water from the borehole is also not working. Very little community ownership due to design changes e.g. changes from solar to generator powered system.
Guadalcanal	Sahalu	Verahue kindergarten	Not functional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No furniture or equipment and currently no teacher and has been closed for over a year. School committee is no longer functional (limited ownership); Has urgent maintenance needs with weeds growing under the roof.
Guadalcanal	Ghaobata ward	Sape village water supply project	Partially successful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiated in 2016 as part of the flash flood recovery programme (RDP II) for the 2014 floods in the north of Guadalcanal. Sape village community closely collaborated during and after the water supply project. Community was trained on water supply maintenance, community development, and technical skills. Challenges include a shallow borehole depth affecting water quality, incomplete projects in other communities, and the importance of community unity. Positive experience with the WDC emanating from transparent processes and involvement of the community in decision-making. Community is responsible for maintenance but insufficient funds for operations and maintenance. Community experiences frequent flooding, with recent events causing damage to crops and infrastructure, but there is limited external recovery support; impacts include food insecurity, damaged roads and other infrastructure; General lack of readiness to respond to future climate-related disasters, more disaster preparedness training and capacity-building is required.
Guadalcanal	Vulolo Ward 19	Kekena water supply project	Partially successful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Benefited from water supply under the RDP II flash flood 2014 recovery programme, resulting in 26 households with 6 standpipes. Limited community involvement in the preparation of development plans. Lack of proper collaboration with the community at the planning stage, leading to misunderstandings with contractor and weak supervision resulted in cost increases. Facing challenges in maintaining water supply system due to trust and transparency issues among communities – the funds for O&M were stolen. Despite challenges the project has contributed to improved water supply in the community.

Province	Ward	Name of subproject	Status	Summary observations
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial challenges for operations and maintenance are highlighted. Flash floods continue to affect drinking water sources. More efforts on training for community leaders on project management, financial literacy and maintenance of water supply systems is needed. Lack of disaster preparedness is noted. The impact of weather changes, including frequent rainfall, drought, and cyclones, has affected agricultural activities.
Guadalcanal	Ghaobata ward	Evacuation centre (Papango village)	Successful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Papango community, located in the east of Guadalcanal province, was severely affected by flash floods in 2014 and supported with an evacuation centre. Key success factors: completion of the evacuation centre, community collaboration, trust, and support from RDP II. Challenges included community trust issues regarding fund handling, difficulties in working with illiterate villagers, and managing multiple contractors during project implementation. Received training on evacuation centre and water supply maintenance, money management, leadership, and clean campaign. Evacuation centre used for hiring, fundraising, workshops, weddings, and church activities to generate funds for maintenance and community needs. Frequent flooding due to changing weather patterns and river quarrying; recovery supported by various organizations providing food, water, sanitation, tools, seeds and training. Community resilience-building: prepared for future flooding, evacuation centre in place, calls for disaster preparedness awareness talks, training through churches, and RDP II assistance during events. Future development opportunities recommended to partner with local churches for better implementation and community collaboration.
Guadalcanal	Malango Ward 20	Mataruaks water supply project		
Makira Ulawa	Kirakira	Water supply - gravity fed	Successful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subproject solved long-standing challenges with improving access to water. Community contributions from a special fund generated from the logging operations in the areas as well as sourcing materials like sand, gravel, timber and labour. The system has twenty standpipes serving about 30 people per stand pipe but was not able to reach people who living at a distance from the system; Plans in place to raise funds for operations and maintenance.
Makira Ulawa	Ugi	Umwara evacuation centre	Successful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concrete, well-constructed building equipped with solar system for lighting and mobile phone charging. The evacuation centre caters for 25 households. O&M committee in place with women responsible for looking after the building in terms of maintaining the surroundings. Community contribution included labour, gravel and sand and trees that were milled for timber. Initial contractor was terminated due to poor quality work.

Province	Ward	Name of subproject	Status	Summary observations
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recently used to provide shelter during cyclone Jude that affected eastern Solomon Islands and Vanuatu in February 2023.
Makira Ulawa	Bwanasugu	Water supply scheme	Successful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to water has been ensured. Committee changed but there was proper handover with the new committee. User fee collection of SBD 10 per household is no longer functioning, they prefer to contribute based on repairs required; No proper feasibility design assessment. Questions remain in terms of sustainability given the lack of trust among community members due to lack of adequate ownership.
Makira Ulawa		Wasu kindergarten	Successful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construction structure of good quality completed in 2021, partly affected by COVID-19 restrictions. Placement of teachers took a long time, but eventually 3 teachers were recruited by the Ministry of Education. Serves around 100 – 120 households. Committee of 8 people has recently been established to look after O&M as well as construction of teachers' accommodation. Local logging industry provided support with equipment, timber and gravel for the construction. Strong sense of community ownership.
Malaita		Tekwin gravity water supply system	Successful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Ferakui community in Foa'ambu, consisting of Tekwin, Anomose, and Topafo communities, shares a water source 30 minutes away, resulting in uneven distribution favouring Tekwin and Topafo due to gravity. Inadequate supervision and lack of engineering plans caused unfair water distribution, with storage tanks placement leading to flow mostly to Tekwin and Topafo. Individual households maintain standpipes without a formal O&M committee or support from the provincial government. Improved water supply has reduced waterborne diseases and brought economic benefits like better sanitation, market gardening, and animal husbandry. Mobilizing communities to address their water issues proved challenging. Water pressure fluctuates with seasons, higher during heavy rain. No training has been provided on water treatment.
Malaita	Ward 26 Kwarekwareo	Lalaro rainwater harvesting system (storage tanks)	Partially successful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supported with water storage tanks for rainwater harvesting but contractor challenges were reported during implementation. Project implementation faced challenges with community participation, which decreased over time. Collaboration with CH, who took on more responsibility affecting participation and transparency.

Province	Ward	Name of subproject	Status	Summary observations
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issues with establishing O&M committees, financial constraints hindered community participation. Participatory approach was positive but required ongoing support to the community in terms of expectations – community not cohesive enough. Recent cyclones Jude and Kevin caused flooding, affecting agriculture and fishing activities, loss of physical assets and affecting incomes and food security. Community face challenges in terms of disaster preparedness, recovery and resilience (with an absence of early warning systems and evacuation centres).
Temotu	Nea/Noole	Water supply system	Partially successful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inland community on Santa Cruz Island; approximately 30 households with 184 residents during the project. Consultative process in determining the subproject; Initially proposed a borehole system, but later changed to water tanks due to budget constraints. Rainwater harvesting system inadequate for all the community needs. O&M committee in place with fair representation of women however, monthly contributions for maintenance faced challenges; families often failed to pay. Disputes over usage, families hosting the tanks felt unsupported in terms of maintenance.
Temotu	Nemba	Solar charging station	Partially successful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aimed to charge batteries for lights, phones, laptops. Initial focus was solar but expanded to include refrigerator to provide storage facility for fish and making ice blocks (to generate income). Initial planning committee had women representation; current committee lacks women members. Community contributed timber and gravel for building equipment house. Division over project priority; women preferred water supply over solar charging and subproject was to be selected from a predetermined list. Limited community contribution for O&M, income inadequate to sustain operations and maintenance e.g. replacement of solar batteries. No support from the provincial government, the provincial assembly or member of parliament.
Temotu	Neo/Malo	Solar charging station	Partially successful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Solar charging subproject serving 17 households and approximately 80 individuals and including a solar refrigerator. Chosen collectively as a priority over other project options. Implementation committee set up with RDP's assistance; included two women members. Community provided timber, labour and food contributions. Batteries are damaged and currently refrigerator is not working. Committee faces challenges in collecting funds for maintenance and repair, it attempted a village canteen to raise funds; faced complaints, dissolved voluntarily. Dispute over canteen operation and funds misuse; not all community members benefited financially.

Province	Ward	Name of subproject	Status	Summary observations
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community decided to repurpose the building into a clinic or aid post due to the lack of a nearby clinic.
Temotu	Beka	Maleu rain catchment (water tanks)	Successful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initially, around 30 households and 315 residents were part of the project, but the population increased due to in-migration. The community actively contributed resources, including timber, gravel, sand and labour. Additionally, they provided food during the construction phase. Although the implementation committee included women representatives, the current operation and maintenance committee consists entirely of men. Eleven water tanks were supplied and strategically placed in small houses designed for rainwater collection. The provided tanks fell short of meeting the community's water needs, leading to concerns. Household members are responsible for minor repairs, such as tap replacements and addressing leakages. Sense of disappointment with the WDC and MPA (Member of Provincial Assembly) for their perceived lack of assistance.
Temotu	Graciosa Bay	Classroom block	Incomplete	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mona Primary School is in the Graciosa Bay Ward. So mostly, observation of the funded classroom was made. Incomplete at the time of visit; still a lot of work to do on the classroom.
Temotu	Luova	Luova water catchment	Partially successful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disputes in the community due to tank installation, some individuals replaced the taps with locks, rationing and restricting tank use. Water supply not adequate to meet demand, and tank sites are not neutral and accessible to everyone. Water availability issues were not fully addressed. Women were not adequately consulted for tank placement; frustration and anger among women due to the essential role they play in water usage. The project partly solves the water shortage problem but faces the challenges of inadequate distribution, disputes, and lack of involvement of key stakeholders. Original plans, particularly implementing a water borehole, could have better addressed the overall water availability issue.

Table 15

Lead and co-partners visited and status of their operations

Province	Ward	Name of lead/co-partner	Activity	Status	Observations
Guadalcanal	Tuvaruhu	Chang Wings Ltd	Cocoa	Successful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operates in the bulk market space, primarily exporting cocoa, and precedes RDP II. Faces the challenge of a short-term focus among farmers, who tend to sell to whoever they like (limited commitment); Had four co-partners, but none of them are functional; now collaborating with different co-partners who buy wet beans, dry them, and then sell them. Provided training in farm management, dealing with climate change, and bookkeeping to smallholders. Makes on-time cash payments to farmers and partners. Worked with MAL staff on a cost-reimbursement basis.
Guadalcanal	Panatina	JEDOM Organic	Horticulture processing	Partially successful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RDP II supported farmers in producing fruits and nuts. Provided training to farmers in primary processing, such as sorting and grading. The Kastom Garden Association was engaged to provide the training. Agreements with farmers are not binding, and farmers can opt to sell their produce elsewhere. The production line includes root crops (cassava) flour, chips, biscuits, and dehydrated taro. Due to a business slowdown and challenges with working capital, the company is currently dealing with a reduced number of farmers.
Guadalcanal	Burns creek	Kastom Gaden Association	SolAgro and Zai Na Tina through training	Successful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RDP II service provider and is membership-based association. Provided training to members and currently runs trainings of 25 persons per batch. Thinking of providing training in agroprocessing but first needs to build the capacity of women in rural areas.
Guadalcanal	Panatina	SISBEC/PADSI	Honey value chain	Not successful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides business development training services; engaged to train farmers to promote beekeeping. Worked with five co-partners but the partnership is no longer working, expect in Ulawa; Asian bee invasion in 2021 because of logging during and Covid-19 during 2020-2022 brought the bee industry to its knees. Demand for honey far exceed what the market can supply. The Centre is continuing to offer training and provide business support to those who need. Business services include preparing business plan, loan proposal, bookkeeping etc. Good thing about RDP II is that it certainly helped to uplift the bee/honey industry.
Guadalcanal	Burns Creek & Baniata	SolAgro (Zain Na Tina – Lead Partner)	Ngali nuts	Successful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaged in the Ngali nuts value chain, with Zoi Na Tina as the lead partner. Benefited from the provision of a storage facility, kitchen, and a boat equipped with an outboard motor engine. Encountered challenges in obtaining organic certification for nuts due to the communities' limited knowledge.

Province	Ward	Name of lead/co-partner	Activity	Status	Observations
					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Received labeling and packing equipment, although some issues arose with the nuts breaking. Participated in training sessions on organic farming, conducted by experts from Pacific Organic Ethical Trade for producer groups. Established non-binding agreements with farmers. Did not receive any working capital.
Guadalcanal	Sahalu	Verahue Copra mill project	Sale and marketing of copra (coconut kernels) for oil extraction	Not successful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The crushing mill has not been operating for about a year. All equipment is available and locked in a room. Faced viability challenges related to low prices offered by the lead partner.
Guadalcanal		Chottu's Gaudacanal products	Coconut oil extraction	Successful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coconut oil extraction and sale to wholesale market for local repacking and selling. Training for 10 farming families for quality copra supply, which meets machine capacity. Used to supply to SNP but the business relationship did not work. Converts copra waste into animals feed. Tools and equipment provided to farmers included wheelbarrows, drums etc. Provides an unspecified loyalty dividend to farmers which keeps them loyal to him. Faces working capital challenges. Scale of production still recovering from the COVID-19 led downturn. Plans to expand machine production capacity from 1-tonne to 5-tonnes per day.
Guadalcanal		KOSI	Value addition, coconut soap, oil and now expanding into chocolate processing	Partially successful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supported and collaborated directly with the direct micro expelling process. Initial focus on coconut replanting at a ratio of 160 coconut trees per hectare. KOSI assisted DMEs in establishing nurseries for replanting, providing trees to farmers when ready. DMEs responsible for selecting farmers, prioritizing hardworking or highly productive individuals. Farmers may not always work well together; some perceive DMEs as wealthier, leading to community conflict. Need for effective community engagement and a specialist to support relationships between DMEs and farmers. Supported 42 DMEs in the Solomon Islands; currently, 20 are still active. RDP-funded support for 6 DMEs (4 in South Malaita, 2 in North Malaita), none currently operational. Lack of business skills and awareness of the business environment cited as reasons for DME inactivity. The decline in operational DMEs, especially those supported by RDP II, points to issues of mismanagement. Some DME owners have political ambitions and used the programme as a stepping stone to their political careers.

Province	Ward	Name of lead/co-partner	Activity	Status	Observations
Guadalcanal		Maraghoto Holdings		Partially successful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purchased Ngali nuts from a women's farmers group, which was buying nuts from other farmers. Invested in a solar hybrid drier, purchased a vehicle and a canoe, and provided training to the farmers on nursery preparation, nut cracking, and grading. Maraghoto still buys nuts from farmers but no longer collaborates with the women's group in Makira province due to challenges, including competing priorities among women in the Ngali nut farmer group. Faces high prices of packaging due to the absence of local manufacturers; most packaging materials are imported. Has a limited ability to purchase all available Ngali nuts due to limited working capital. A replanting programme is necessary to ensure industry sustainability, including introducing high maturing varieties. There is a need for affordable local capacity-building for quality certification, as HACCP certification is expensive.
Guadalcanal		Solomon Tropical Products		Not successful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three DME mills were acquired through RDP II. One is non-operational due to a land conflict; another is owned by a non-operating politician. The third, located in Isabel province, is functional but struggles with transporting processed oil to Honiara. Fees implementation was slow, including fund disbursement delays, some activities were completed only by the time of the programme completion. Important to promote hybrid coconut variety for replanting, but it has lower oil yield than the local Solomon tall variety.
Guadalcanal	Malango Ward 20		Cocoa plantation		
Guadalcanal	Ghaobata ward		Cocoa plantation	Partially successful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involved in cocoa and palm oil farming, as well as gold mining. Buys and exports cocoa, also involved in value addition making chocolate. Used RDP II funds to source tools and conducted training sessions on cocoa farming, pod selection, record-keeping, and fermenting (worked with 60 farming households and employs 12 casual workers). Productivity challenges include old cocoa trees, inadequate maintenance, rat damage, lack of farmer commitment and climate change. Highlighted the need for cocoa tree replanting, heavy pruning of old trees, focusing on specific cocoa varieties, establishing seedling nurseries, and providing funding for replantation and maintenance.
Makira/Ulawa		Ugi Copra Mill (Co-Partner of Solomon Tropical Products)	Copra oil extraction	Partially Successful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Copra oil extraction. Movement of copra (or other market products) around the island is mostly done by outboard motor-powered boat. Operations include two extraction machines that run off a 35 KVA generator (currently not working). Working capital not provided and is a challenge, and co-partner can only buy one third of the copra from the farmers, meaning they have to find alternative markets;

Province	Ward	Name of lead/co-partner	Activity	Status	Observations
					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operating costs quite high in terms of moving copra from farmers to the mill site given the high fuel costs, further complicated by weather conditions at sea. Frequent bad weather makes it difficult to transport copra from the farmers to the mill site. Low copra prices affected their profit margins and are unable to meet high machine repairs and maintenance costs.
Makira/Ulawa	Central Bauro	R and Sons Coconut Crushing Mill	Virgin oil extraction	Not successful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produces virgin coconut oil and works with 38 certified organic farmers. A three-tonne pick-up truck was also supplied to the co-partner to use for buying and collecting coconuts from the local farmers from designated collection points. Highlighted price concerns based on prices given by the lead partners and quite difficult to be profitable. Tried to make soap to deal with price challenges but the cost of other ingredients is quite high and eventually stopped operations. Confirmed other farmers were affected when he stopped operations. Efforts are underway to review the operations with the support of the lead partner.
Makira/Ulawa		Aherara Coconut Processing	Coconut oil extraction	Not successful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involved in coconut oil extraction and used to sell to Coconut Pacific Solomon Islands. Coconut Pacific provided loan for on-lending to the farmers. The infrastructure is intact with all equipment (including pressing machine), but it is not operational. Prices are not competitive enough, hence stopped operations; Sold the 3-tonne truck provided by the programme;
Makira/Ulawa		Pakera Enterprise	Cocoa	Successful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supported training and provided tools (pruning equipment), support included drying facilities for all co-partners, track for transporting beans, and solar smoke free driers. 6 co-partners – all at dispersed locations; each supporting an average of 23 families. Supplies to Chang Wing Corporation and business relationship precedes the RDP II. Buys beans from outside the agreed farmers to keep up with reliable processing and supply. Access to finance (without collateral) for working capital is a major issue. Other challenge is lack of farm feeder roads. Farmers have to bring beans on their back due to lack of access roads. Strong extension services and outreach to the farmers.
Makira/Ulawa		Lucas Co		Successful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supported with a solar drier under RDP I on a pilot basis and RDP II further supported expansion to 2 drying units. Works with 6 co-partners, covering 62 farming households. Received a 3-tonne truck and a boat (logistic support) to ferry cocoa beans from Ugi Island. Sells her product to the international market (UK & France) using a third-party licence. The payment method to farmers is cash or up to one month deferred payment, depending on her cash flow situation.

Province	Ward	Name of lead/co-partner	Activity	Status	Observations
					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no binding contract with farmers, and they are free to sell to anyone. Access to finance (working capital) is the main constraint for her business expansion. Currently employs four people, but during peak times the number rises to 10.
Malaita	Ward 1/Auki	Rela Coconut Crushing Mill	Coconut oil extraction	Not successful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initially supported during RDP I (with a coconut drier), during RDP II, also received a 3-tonne truck to facilitate logistics in buying produce from farmers. Provided tools and training to farmers. Worked with 60 farmers, focusing on certified organic farmers from the North Road and South Road Catchment area (Farou and Tairu catchment area). Challenges with organic certification standards led to the disqualification of a significant number of coconuts (cracked or broken coconuts). Farmers were pleased with the support as they had a ready market to sell their coconuts. Stopped operations in 2022 citing COVID-19 disruption, which affected the pig industry which was benefiting from coconut meat for animal feed after oil extraction.
Malaita	Ward 29/Keamela	AJ Enterprises	Cocoa drier	Not successful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Received a grant of SBD 160,000 and was provided with a truck. Did not receive working capital funds to buy wet beans from farmers. Supported farmers with training and provided tools (grass knife, pruners, and wheelbarrows). Training covered areas such as integrated pest and disease management, financial literacy and farm management. No longer operating and drying facility appears abandoned, faces competition from numerous buyers in the community. Farmers seek individual buyers for better prices, selling to exporters independently. Cocoa production in the community is declining due to excessive rains and unpredictable rain patterns in recent years. Appears to have faced challenges in building trust with local communities;
Malaita	Ward 7 Fo'ondo/Gwaiiau	Manaere Coconut Crushing Mill	Coconut oil extraction	Not successful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Received support from RDP II, which provided another coconut drier and a 3-tonne truck as well as the construction of small storage shed. Main activity is production of coconut oil and supplies to KPSI, works with a network of 52 farmers, and key requirement is organic certification from the National Association for Sustainable Agriculture Australia. Worked with both certified and uncertified farmers and product for uncertified farmers was for the local market. Most plantations registered under male household heads although women predominantly did the work on the farms. Little evidence of record-keeping; employed casual workers. Challenges faced include: coconut rhinoceros beetle infestation, payment delays from KPSI, machine breakdowns, delayed spare parts delivery, poor road conditions, initial community conflicts, non-receipt of COVID-19 stimulus funds. DME stopped operations.

Province	Ward	Name of lead/co-partner	Activity	Status	Observations
Malaita		Plundering coconut crushing Mill		Successful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-RDP II-funded oil extraction plant; employs 25 people (10 men, 15 women) on a rotational basis. Enterprise has allowed partner to improve standard of living, bought a truck, purchased land and built a house. Delays in payments from KPSI affects his operations particular managing farmers' expectations. Continued operations during COVID-19 pandemic, but prices have been fluctuating. Also works with organic certified farmers KPSI used to provide extension support but visits are infrequent. No signed agreement with KPSI, which impacts price negotiations.
Malaita	Ward 28 Waneagu Silana Sina	Coconut replanting project	Coconut replanting project	Not successful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supply of young coconut palms for replanting and maintaining old coconut plantations. Changing weather patterns affecting crops yield, in particular high rainfall. Assistance included tools, young coconut palms, and organizing groups for plantation maintenance. Access to extension services has been a challenge and deteriorating over the past 8 years. Faced financial constraints to maintain the coconut plantations with other issues including soil fertility, fertilizer needs, and impact of rhino beetle on coconut yield; Government needs to intervene, coconut prices are very low. Low resilience and capacity to respond to disaster, recently affected by the flooding caused by cyclone Jude.
Temotu	Ward 8	PTZR Enterprises	Cocoa/honey project	Not successful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secured RDP funding in 2017, earmarked for cocoa and honey farming initiatives. Utilized funds for constructing a cocoa dryer, an incomplete packing house, and distributing tools among 70 cocoa farmers and 15 honey farmers from various wards on Santa Cruz Island. Implemented a buying schedule, with farmers responsible for transporting beans to the dryer in Lata. Challenges include low prices for wet beans and additional costs for farmers transporting beans. Currently, only uses beans from his farm, discontinuing buying wet beans from local farmers. Concerns raised about local cocoa farmers shifting to other crops, particularly kava. Plans for the packing house involve the production of breadfruit flour and chips.

Key PPE issues and questions

1. Key issues for this PPE have been identified through a review of different studies and reports concerning the programme and scoping interviews and the IFAD Solomon Islands country team as well as the former RDP II programme manager. In view of the impact assessment study of the RDP II's agribusiness partnerships component conducted as part of the IFAD 11 (IFAD, 2022b), the current PPE will therefore seek to **triangulate, contextualize, complement and explain** the extent to which the programme contributed to the achievement of certain outcomes or impacts and why some impacts or outcomes were achieved or not achieved. The key issues and questions to be addressed by this PPE are outlined below.

Social cohesion and participatory governance contributions of the CDD approach

2. The theory of change for CDD programmes typically has two sets of outcomes: (i) social welfare; and (ii) social cohesion and governance. Given the 10-year implementation of the CDD approach from RDP I to RDP II in the Solomon Islands, the PPE would seek to understand the suitability of the approach for the context of the SIDS in the Pacific. In addition, the evaluation will seek to understand the contributions of the CDD approach to the expected outcomes of increased access and quality of social infrastructure, as well as contributing to social cohesion and enhanced participation of communities in local governance systems. While both the IFAD and World Bank project completion report indicate an overachievement in the community participation targets, there is no evidence of the extent to which this has contributed to long-term goals of achieving social cohesion and citizen participation in governance processes beyond the RDP II.
3. Furthermore, given that the available evidence suggests a mixed performance, the current PPE will seek to explore some of the reasons behind this performance. For example, the set-up of operations and maintenance plans took place after project completion with no evidence of their quality, implementation and performance. In addition, delays were mentioned in mobilization of material contribution for the different infrastructure activities (World Bank ICRR, 2022). There was weak community cohesion which often required constant encouragement of programme staff in attempts to nurture community togetherness (RDP Semi-Annual Report, 2020).
4. Filling knowledge gaps on these critical dimensions of the CDD approach is crucial as it is at the centre of the RDP II component 1 and remains highly relevant for achieving successes in a country that is characterized by its distance from government agencies and therefore depends on approaches that are more self-reliant and can work independently from constant government inputs like CDD. In addition, both cofinancing partners for RDP II (IFAD and the World Bank) have follow-up projects which build on the mechanisms and structures created through the CDD approach, highlighting the importance of understanding the post programme scenario on these critical CDD aspects.

Suggested lines of inquiry

- a. What are the welfare impacts generated by the RDP II? Did the benefits reach the poorest quintiles and the IFAD target groups?
- b. To what extent has access to and use of basic services, in line with the infrastructure supported by RDP II, improved? How did the supported infrastructure activities complement component 2 (agribusiness partnerships) of the programme?
- c. Did RDP II contribute to improvements in social capital/social cohesion using the standard proxy measurements for social capital such as trust, collection action, association, groups and networks?

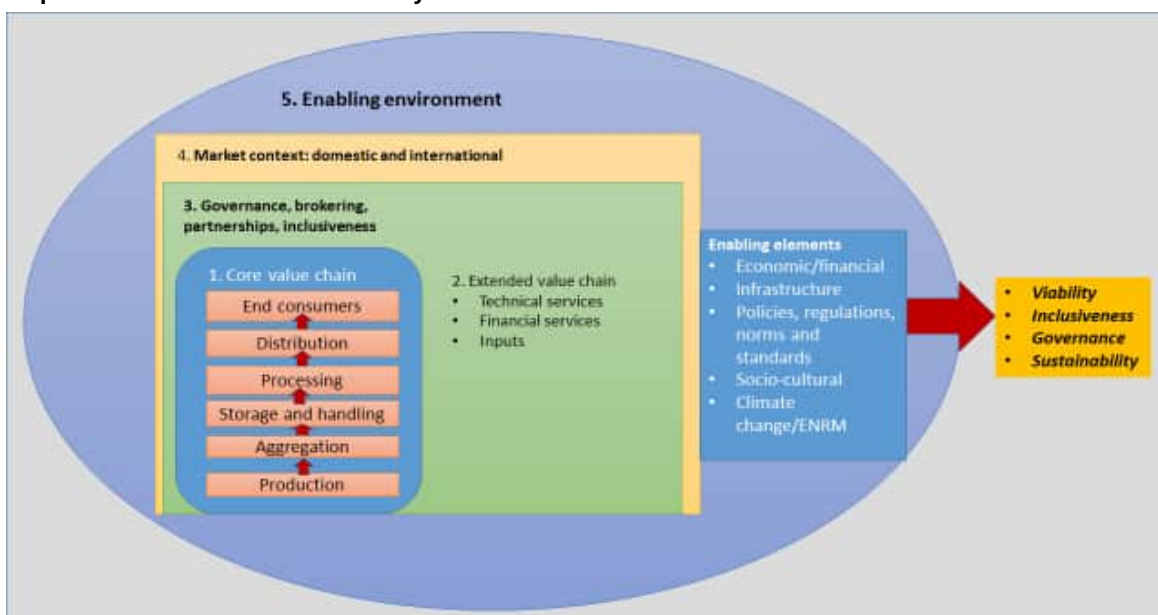
- d. To what extent did RDP II contribute to improved local governance (participation in local meetings, satisfaction and increased confidence with government officials, awareness of programme activities and so on)?
- e. Has the project generated effective community participation and decision-making? What are success factors and barriers for different pillars of CDD?¹

Inclusiveness of the agribusiness partnerships

5. The agribusiness partnerships component under RDP II was designed to increase agricultural production and enhance market access through: training farmers on improved farming practices adhering to organic certifications; installation of updated technologies for processing and aggregation; leveraging timely transport facilities for commodities; adding more commodities for markets; and accessing high-end boutique and niche buyers in an export market. This approach built on the value chain model called "public-private-producer partnerships" (4Ps), which seeks to bring together the public sector, smallholder farmers, and private sector companies to work towards a common goal of improving the economic and social well-being of smallholder farmers and supporting rural economic development in an inclusive manner. The figure 2 summarizes the conceptual model of this approach.

Figure 6

Representation of the value chain system



Source: Adapted from IFAD IOE 2019, corporate-level evaluation on IFAD's Engagement in Pro-poor Value Chain Development.

6. The 4Ps model suggests that there are various pathways for the smallholders to benefit from participating in value chains by transforming those value chains and bringing smallholders into higher-value commodities, and their contributions in different contexts have not been fully understood.² In the context of the RDP II, the theory of change was that **smallholders' income will improve through access to high-value markets and putting in place mechanisms to support smallholders' compliance with standards.**³ Available evidence from the RIA impact assessment of the RDP II suggests positive impacts in terms of productive

¹ This could include: contribution to projects and participation by different groups of community members, perceptions by community members on contribution and participation, attendance in community meetings, social pressure, local politics, social cohesion in the communities, logistical, labour and material constraints, election of WDC members, composition of WDCs and re-election after grant cycles, role of the WDCs in facilitation, existing and emerging power relations, creation of effective check and balance mechanisms.

² These pathways include being producers, workers, micro-entrepreneurs, or engaged in processing, as well as being consumers.

³ These include training, finance, involvement in producer organizations, and contracts (partnerships).

capacities (treatment households had a 46 per cent increase in cocoa harvest value compared to the control group, and their cocoa yields were 12 per cent higher) and access to markets (total value of sales increased by 27 per cent for the treatment group compared to the control group, driven by a 30 per cent increase in the value of cocoa sales). Despite the observed positive impacts, the income effects of the programme were not significant. In addition, challenges were observed in terms of uptake of the ASEF funds, lack of trust among smallholder farmers to facilitate aggregation, the operations and maintenance of infrastructure and tools created through the programme, with limited evidence on the extent to which the institutional environment was strengthened in the context of the brokering approach. The PPE will therefore seek to disentangle these issues and create a better understanding of what worked and what did not work in delivering inclusive partnerships for smallholders.

Suggested lines of inquiry

- a. Are the agribusiness partnerships created by the RDP II viable and sustainable in the long term, and are they able to maintain benefits for all stakeholders over time?
- b. To what extent have the partnerships helped smallholder farmers develop new skills, knowledge, access to technology, infrastructure and resources that can enhance their livelihoods and resilience?
- c. How were the agribusiness partnerships structured to ensure equitable opportunities for men, women, and youth, and to facilitate the inclusion of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in critical value chains?
- d. What is the profitability and return on investment of the partnership for smallholder farmers and their agribusiness partners?
- e. Have the financial costs and risks of the partnership been fairly distributed among all stakeholders?

Disaster resilience and recovery

7. Agriculture and livestock disaster recovery and resilience was one of the subcomponents of the RDP II, and its objective was to assist farmers to recover from the flash floods of April 2014, in restoring their farm production and incomes, while improving their resilience to future disasters in Guadalcanal communities. The programme supported the replacement of agriculture and livestock assets as well as repairing damaged infrastructure. In addition, it delivered training and awareness-building materials on climate and disaster risk management and climate-resilient farming practices to farmers in all provinces through MAL extension services.
8. The RIA impact assessment study indicates positive resilience contributions made by the programme: beneficiaries were significantly more likely to recover from any shock by 12 percentage points compared to the control group.⁴ In addition, programme participants experienced an increase in the likelihood of recovering from climatic shocks by 28 percentage points for climate shocks, and 22 percentage points for non-climate shocks.⁵ It will be interesting for the PPE to assess the extent to which the resilience impacts can be linked to the programme and the extent to which they have been sustained beyond the RDP II. More specifically, the PPE will also seek to understand the perceived level of disaster recovery particularly for the Guadalcanal communities that were affected by the 2014 flash floods.

⁴ According to the RIA impact study, 76 per cent of control households considered they recovered from any of the suffered shocks.

⁵ Climate shocks included droughts, floods, sea level rises and non-climatic shocks included loss or reduction of income such as economic shocks, death or illness of a household member as a health shock, and land disputed or domestic violence as a conflict shock.

Suggested lines of inquiry

- a. To what extent did the RDP II contribute to agriculture and livestock disaster recovery to pre-flash floods level and beyond in terms of productivity and incomes?
- b. What is the community's self-perception of its disaster preparedness, recovery and resilience to face similar future disasters?
- c. To what extent has the programme contributed to the institutional capacity of the local government agencies to support disaster recovery, given the vulnerability of the Solomon Islands to climate and weather-related risks?

Linkages/synergies between programme components 1 and 2

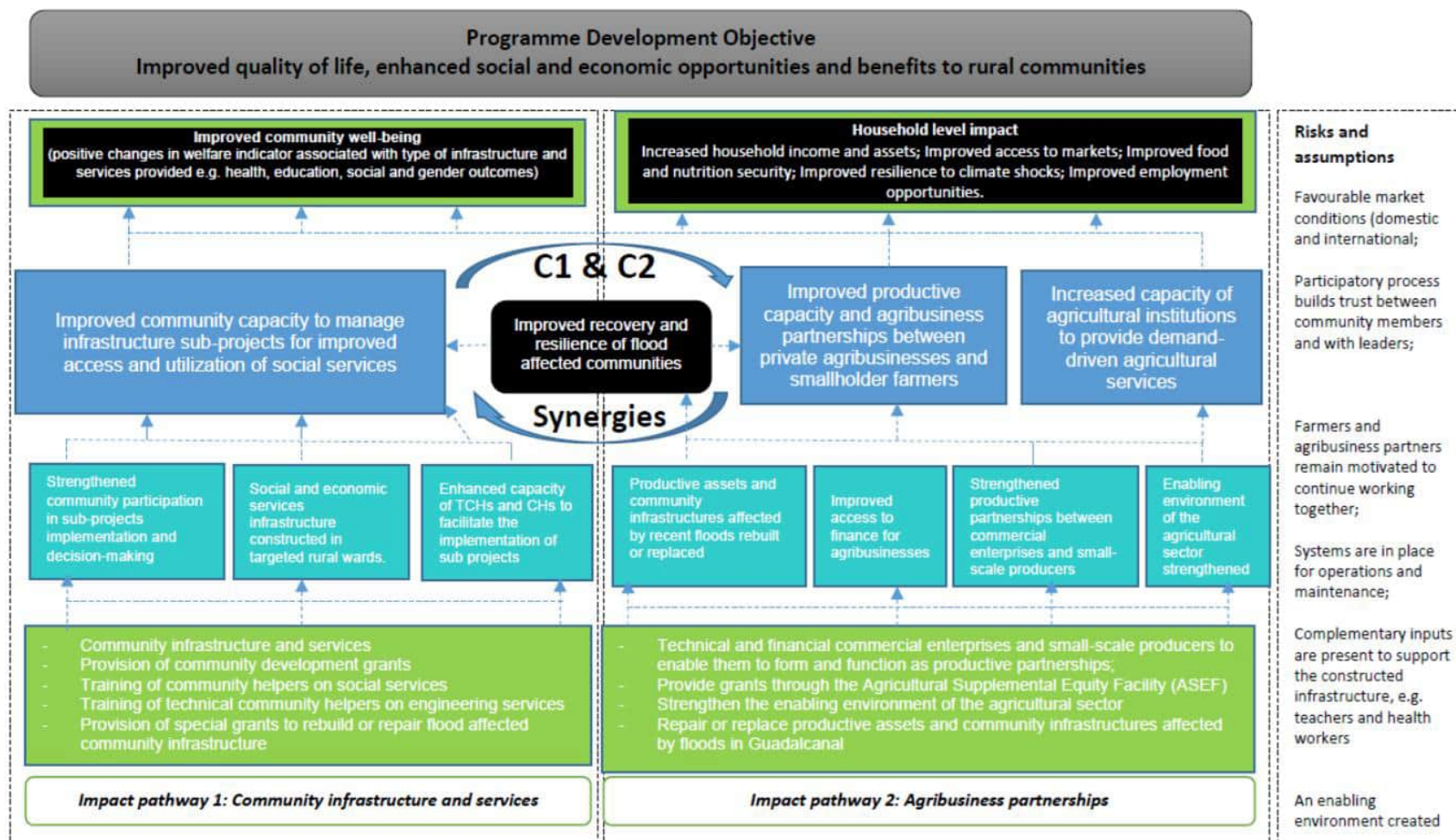
9. For both RDP I and II the programme designs intended that the programme components should be linked to generate synergies (RDP II Design Report). For RDP I, a missing linkage between the programme component has been identified as the components of the project have largely operated in "silos" with staff working on the different components being unaware of each other's roles and activities and it was perceived as being "two projects in one" (World Bank PAR, 2015). While RDP II set out to close this gap, this was complicated, amongst other things, because the theoretical elaboration of potential linkages in the project design was too vague (IFAD PCR, World Bank ICRR). Although the programme design report described the different ways in the coherence could have been established, there were no indicators to measure such linkages (World Bank, ICRR). The current PPE will seek to provide clarity regarding the theoretical linkages in programme design, the actual implementation of linkages on the ground, actual overlaps on the ground, and the perceptions of administrative and programme staff and beneficiaries regarding potential or actual links.

Suggested lines of inquiry

- a. What synergies and conflict of interests between the two programme components have been observed? At what level were these linkages observed (administrative level, programme staff level, beneficiaries' level)?
- b. Did the CDD approach allow for interactions between the subproject implementation committees of component 1 and farmers' organizations? Was there lobbying for certain subprojects or potential synergies and were conflicts of interest discussed, e.g. between farmers and non-farmers, how were these resolved (if any)?
- c. Which completed subprojects facilitated agribusiness commercialization activities or other impacts and if so, in what ways?
- d. How could the programme design have been improved to better link the two components, and at what levels of implementation should these linkages have been established?

Theory of change

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List of key persons met

Government

Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock

Lottie Vaisekavea, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock and former RDP II Programme Manager

Roy Timothy, Chief Field Officer/Cash Crops Coordinator, Department of Extension Services

Lily Wame, Deputy Director, Department of Extension Services

Jacinta Marie, Chief Research Officer, Department of Research

Andas Melanda, Department of Extension Services

Obed Maneanra, Department of Livestock

Margaret Kiko, Field Officer, Department of Extension Services

Ricky Wate, Director of Livestock, Department of Livestock

Alister Talua, Principal Planning Officer, Department of Planning

Ofer Dotan, Department of Planning

Ministry of Development Planning and Aid Coordination

Susan Sulu, Permanent Secretary

Mathew Walekaro, Chief Planning Office, Economics and Productive Division

Samuel Wara, Director, Development Cooperation Division

Travis Ziku, Deputy Secretary, Planning and Programme Quality

Serena Tabiur, Principal Planning Officer, Economics and Productive Division

Dan Lenny, Chief Planning Officer, Strategic Planning and Budget Division

Samuel Aruhu, Director, Social Development and Governance Division

Provincial Government

David Tuita, Provincial Secretary, Malaita Province

Maesac Siua, Provincial Secretary, Guadalcanal Province

Peter Trenor Rara, Provincial Secretary, Makira Province

Peter Herehura, Provincial Planning Coordinator, Malaita Province

Peter Tofuola, RWASH Office, Malaita Province

Joel Deny, Provincial Health Director, Guadalcanal Province

Wilson Hohoko, Human Resource Manager, Guadalcanal Province

Rickson Saukoroa, Chief Education Officer, Guadalcanal Province

Don Rocky, Provincial Planning and Development Coordinator, Guadalcanal Province

Former RDP II Staff

Mark Johnstone, Programme Implementation Advisor

Gabriel Hiele, Programme Manager, Component II

Don Belande, Water Resources Engineer, Component I

Moses Suifasia, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, Component I

Gilroy Silvae, Financial Controller

Simon Baete, Agribusiness Partnerships Coordinator

Johnleyo Omeagaro, Deputy Team Leader, Malaita Province

Flora Lasi, Team Leader, Guadalcanal Province

Trisia Sese, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, Component II, Malaita Province

Margaret Kwaiga, Procurement Officer

IFAD

Hartman, Ronald Thomas, Director Global Engagement, Partnership and Resource Mobilization, former CPM Solomon Islands

El-Zabri, Tawfiq, Country Director (Iraq & Yemen), former Country Director – Solomon Islands

Samekto, Candra, Country Director, Solomon Islands

International and donor institutions

World Bank

Erik Caldwell Johnson, Lead Social Development Specialist, World Bank, and former Task Team Leader – RDP II

Kosuke Anan, Senior Social Development Specialist, World Bank, and former Task Team Leader – RDP II

Winrock International

Dr. Morgan, Chief of Party Scale Project, Malaita Province

Agribusiness Partners

Henry Kapu, General Manager/CEO, PTZE Enterprises, Temotu Province

Adam, Adam and Joan Cocoa Trading Enterprises, Maono Village, Malaita Province

Joseph Naumai, Rela, Malaita Province

Rodney Sama Rodoania, Manaere Coconut Crushing Mill, Malaita Province

Alister Kapu, Co-Partner, Cocoa/Honey Project, PTZE Enterprises, Lata, Temotu Province

Co-Partner, Ugi Corpa Mill, Ugi, Makira Province

Robert, R and Sons Coconut Crushing Mill, Central Bauro, Makira Province

Aherara Coconut Processing, Makira Province

Pakera Enterprise, Makira Province

Lucy Kasimnone, Lucas Cocoa, Makira Province

Dr Shane Tutua, Owner, SolAgro Products (Zoi Na Tina)

Jack Chottu, Chottu's Gaudacanal Products

Diana Yates & Igeoma Behul, Chan Wing Motors Limited

Jennifer Kelly, Jedon Organic Food

Stewart Mane, Administration and Finance Manager, KOSI

Luke Luludelea, Extension Officer, KOSI

Cecilia Vakisoro, Extension Officer, KOSI

Dr. Richard Pauku, Maraghoto Holdings (Ngali Nuts value chain), Guadalcanal Province

John, Owner, Solomon Tropical Products (STP)

Research, training institutions and service providers

Tikai Pitakira, Kayosom Garden Association Interviewee:

Ben Nginabule and Rodney Suibacea, Solomon Islands Small Business (SIBSC)

Beneficiaries

Women's Focus Group Discussion, Coconut and Cocoa Farmers, Mauro Village, Malaita Province

Mixed Focus Group Discussion, Rainwater Catchment System (Water Tanks), Noipe Village, Noole Ward, Temotu Province

Mixed Focus Group Discussion, Solar Charging Station, Manoputi Village, Nemba Ward, Temotu Province

Mixed Focus Group Discussion, Solar Charging Station, Maglalo, Neo/Malo Ward Temotu Province

Mixed Focus Group Discussion, Maleu Rain Catchment (Water Tanks), Maleu Village, Beka Ward, Temotu Province

Mixed Focus Group Discussion, Coconut Farmers, Makira Province

Romano Haga, Chairperson, Operations and Maintenance Committee Gravity Water Supply Project, Central Bauro, Makira Province

Lency Ramoni, Chairman, Operations and Maintenance Committee, Evaluation Centre, Ugi Ward, Makira Province

Mixed Focus Group Discussion, Kwaonasugu Community Hall, Makira Province

Mixed Focus Group Discussion, Smallholder Farmers, Manaere Coconut Crushing Mill, Malaita Province

Male Focus Group Discussion, Feraqui Gravity Water Supply System, Malaita Province

Mixed Focus Group Discussion, Water Supply Project (Water Tanks), Lalaro Community

Mixed Focus Group Discussion, Coconut Replanting Project, Mbaunani Village, Ward 28 – Waneagu, Malaita Province

Mixed Focus Group Discussion, Water Supply Project, Sape Village, Ghaobata Ward, Guadalcanal Province

Mixed Focus Group Discussion, Water Supply Project, Kekenā Village, Ward 19 – Vulolo, Guadalcanal Province

Mixed Focus Group Discussion, Community Evaluation Centre, Papango Village, Ghaobata Ward

Mixed Focus Group Discussion, Water Supply Project, Mataruka Village, Malango Ward 20

Key Informant Interview & Focus Group Discussion, Tupaghotua Cocoa Plantation Project, Okea Village, Malango Ward 20

Key Informant Interview, Cocoa Farming Project, Pitukole Cocoa Plantation, Leivatu Village, Ghaobata Ward

Mixed Focus Group Discussion, Smallholder Farmers working with Aherara Coconut Processing, Makira Province

Mixed Focus Group Discussion, Bwanasugu Water Supply Scheme, Makira Province

Mixed Focus Group Discussion, Wasu Kindergarten, Makira Province

Robert Tetehua & Patrick Billy, Vehahue Kindergarten, Key Informants, Guadalcanal Province

Richard Pauku, Deputy Principal, Shelwin Secondary School, Maramoto, Guadalcanal Province

Pauline Chia and Leo Chia, Tomboko Bore Hole Project, Guadalcanal

Tito Mamani, School deputy principal (operations), Selwyn College Girl's Dormitory, Guadalcanal Province

Gloria Soma, Catetaker, Verahue Kindergarten, Sahalu Ward, Guadalcanal

Other resource persons

Fred Ramo, Cocoa Intermediary, Malaita Province

Redson Tubini, Cocoa Intermediary Malaita Province

Elizabeth Iro, Supervisor, Plundering Direct Micro Expeller (Cocoa & Coconut), Malaita Province

Dick Laumni, Owner, Plundering Direct Micro Expeller (Cocoa & Coconut), Malaita Province

Field itinerary

Day	Location/Province	Component 1: Community infrastructure		Component 2 - Agribusiness partnerships		Other concurrent activities
		Project activity visited	Activities	Project activity + lead & co-lead partners visited	Activities	
15-Mar-23	Temotu	Water catchment	1 FGD & 1 KII	N/A	N/A	N/A
		Solar charging station	1 FGD & 1 KII	N/A	N/A	N/A
16-Mar-23	Temotu	Water Catchment Project	1 FGD & 1 KII	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Temotu	Malo Solar Charging Station	1 FGD & 1 KII	N/A	N/A	N/A
17-Mar-23	Temotu	Primary school classroom block	1 FGD & 1 KII	PTZE Enterprise	1 KII	N/A
28-Mar-23	Makira	Kwaonasugu Community Hall	1 FGD & 1 KII	R & Sons Coconut Crushing Mill	1 FGD & 1 KII	N/A
				Pakera (Cocoa co-partner)	1 KII	N/A
29-Mar-23	Makira	Umwara Evacuation Centre	1 KII	Ugi Copra Mill	1 KII	N/A
30-Mar-23	Makira	Maniwiriwiri Rain Catchment	1 KII		N/A	N/A
		Maraone Kindergarten	1 KII			
		Verahue Kindergarten	1 KII			N/A
02-Apr-23	Guadalcanal	Tamboko water supply (Bore hole gravity fed)	1 KII	Verahue Copra Mill Project	1 KII	N/A
		Selwyn College Girl's Dormitory	1 KII			N/A
03-Apr-23	Guadalcanal	N/A	N/A	Kastom Garden Association (KGA)	1 KII	N/A
				SolAgro Co-Partner of Zain Na Tina	1 KII	N/A
04-Apr-23	Honiara	N/A	N/A	Chang Wings Ltd and co-partner Cathlro	1 KII	N/A
				JEDOM Organic	1 KII	N/A
				SISBEC/PADSI	1 KII	N/A
11-Apr-23	Honiara	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	National level stakeholders consultations in Honiara
12-Apr-23	Malaïta	N/A	N/A	Rela Coconut crushing mill	1 FGD & 1 KII	Courtesy call to the Provincial Secretary for Malaïta
				AJ Enterprises	3 KII & 2 FGDs	N/A
13-Apr-23	Malaïta	Tekwin gravity water supply system	2 KIIs	Manaere Coconut Crushing Mill	1 FGD & 1 KII	N/A
				Plundering Coconut Crushing Mill	1 KII	N/A
14-Apr-23	Malaïta	Lalero rainwater harvesting system	1 KII & 1 FGD	Coconut replanting project	1 FGD & 1 KII	Consultants with various provincial level stakeholders
17-Apr-23	Honiara	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Consultations with national level stakeholders
18-Apr-23	Honiara	N/A	N/A	KOSI	3 KII	Concurrent community mobilisation
				Maraghoto Holdings	1 KII	
19-Apr-23	Guadalcanal	SAPE Water supply project	1 KII, 1 male FGD, 1 female FGD	Solomon Tropical Products (STP)	1 KII	N/A
		Kekena water supply project	2 KII, 1 male FGD, 1 female FGD	N/A	N/A	N/A
20-Apr-23	Guadalcanal	Evacuation centre (Papango Village)	2 KIIs	N/A	N/A	National level stakeholder consultations
		Mataruaks water supply project	1 KII & 1 FGD			
21-Apr-23	Guadalcanal	N/A	N/A	Cocoa farming	1 FGD & 1 KII	National level stakeholder consultations
	Guadalcanal	N/A	N/A	Cocoa farming	1 FGD & 1 KII	
24-Apr-23	Honiara	Wrap up meeting and departure				

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Independent Office of Evaluation
 International Fund for Agricultural Development
 Via Paolo di Dono, 44 - 00142 Rome, Italy
 Tel: +39 06 54591 - Fax: +39 06 5043463
 E-mail: evaluation@ifad.org
www.ifad.org/evaluation

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