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WHAT'S BREAKING GROUND IN 2025

p6

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PNG Programme.*

17

A WAKE-UP CALL FOR SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES

10



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Founder Publisher
Mr. Rodney Rupokets
rodney@apactenders.com

Business and
Marketing Director
Ms. Namoi Kaluae
Solomon Islands

Editor
Mr. Douglas Saefoa
Solomon Islands

Contributing Writers
Mr. David Spring
Sydney, Australia

Jason Paisoi
Port Moresby, PNG

PT Marketing and
Research Consultant
Ms. Lorna Bondoc
Manila, Philippines

Media and Advertising
Enquiries

✉ contact@apactenders.com

🌐 www.apactenders.com

☎ **Solomon Islands**
+677 38229
Philippines
63 927-002-3699

Editorial Enquiries
media@apactenders.com

Published by
Adkonect
PO Box 1368
Henderson Courts Building
Henderson
East Honiara.
www.adkonect.com.sb
sales@adkonect.com.sb

CONTENTS

COVER STORY

06 **BIG PROJECTS, BIGGER WINS WHAT'S BREAKING GROUND IN 2025**

10 **A WAKE-UP CALL FOR SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES**

12 **WHAT'S COMING IN 2025 - WORK!**

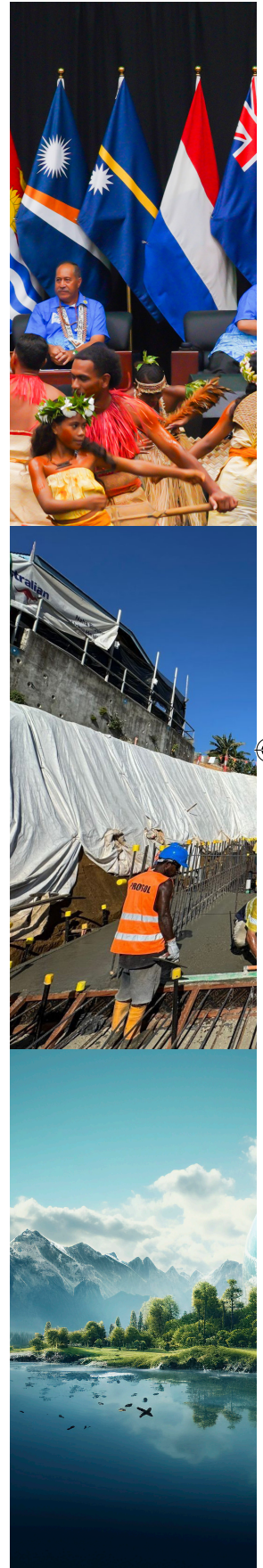
13 **PITA 2025 AGM & CONFERENCE TO FOCUS ON DIGITAL SOVEREIGNTY AND CONNECTIVITY IN THE PACIFIC**

14 **A RISING TIDE: CONFRONTING CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC**

16 **AUSTRALIA'S DIPLOMATIC BLITZ - MORE TALK, OR ACTION?**

17 **SPECIAL AUDIT OF CONNECT PNG PROGRAMME SETS STAGE FOR ACCOUNTABILITY AND FUTURE PROGRESS**

18 **Q&A WITH DOUGLAS SALVAGE & TOWAGE GROUP**





20 SOLOMON ISLANDS PM WARNS AGAINST COMPLACENCY IN FISHERIES SUSTAINABILITY AMID ONGOING THREATS

21 PRIME MINISTER MARAPE DEMANDS GLOBAL ACCOUNTABILITY ON ILLEGAL FISHING AT HONIARA SUMMIT

22 DECEMBER 'QUAKE ROCKS VILA - 3 PERSPECTIVES

24 SICCI EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: PRIME MINISTER'S BREAKFAST EVENT

25 TINA RIVER HYDROPOWER PROJECT ACHIEVES 23% COMPLETION, ON TRACK FOR 2028 COMMISSIONING

26 NET ZERO

28 A NEW DAWN FOR SOLOMON ISLANDS: STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

29 AUSTRALIA'S NEW SBD\$230 MILLION EDUCATION PROGRAM SET TO GO

30 A NEW DAWN FOR SOLOMON ISLANDS: STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



BIG PROJECTS, BIGGER WINS

What's Breaking Ground in 2025

The Solomon Islands, with its stunning natural beauty and vibrant culture, is on a journey of transformation. Recognizing the critical role of infrastructure in driving economic growth, improving social well-being, and enhancing resilience, the nation is embracing a powerful tool: Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs). This collaborative approach, enshrined in the Solomon Islands National Infrastructure Priority Pipeline (SINIPP) 2023, is proving instrumental in tackling a diverse range of development challenges across multiple sectors.

Paving the Way for Progress

Connectivity is key to unlocking the potential of the Solomon Islands, where communities are scattered across hundreds of islands. SINIPP 2023 prioritizes investments in road infrastructure, recognizing its vital role in facilitating trade, access to essentials. The Malaita Main Roads Project is not just about building roads; it's about building opportunities. By improving connectivity, the project is expected to:

- **Boost agricultural productivity:**

Facilitating the transport of agricultural produce to markets, increasing incomes for farmers and stimulating rural economies. Currently, over 60% of Malaita's population relies on subsistence agriculture, and improved road access is projected to increase agricultural output by 15% within five years of project completion.

- **Enhance access to education:**

Making it easier for children to attend school, particularly in remote areas, improving educational outcomes and contributing to human capital development. Studies have shown that improved road access can increase school enrollment rates by up to 10%.

- **Improve healthcare access:**

Enabling faster and more reliable access to healthcare facilities, saving lives and improving health outcomes. Currently, only 50% of the population in rural Malaita has access to basic healthcare services within a one-hour travel time. The project aims to increase this to 80% by 2028.

- **Promote tourism:**

Opening up new areas for tourism development, creating jobs and generating revenue for local communities. Malaita has significant untapped tourism potential, with pristine beaches, cultural attractions, and diverse ecosystems. The improved road network is expected to attract an additional 5,000 tourists annually to the island.

Building a Healthier Nation

Investing in healthcare infrastructure is crucial for improving the health and well-being of the Solomon Islands population. SINIPP 2023 recognizes this priority, highlighting several PPP projects aimed at expanding access to quality healthcare services.

One such project is the Naha Birthing and Urban Health Centre in Honiara. This state-of-the-art facility, developed through a PPP, will provide comprehensive maternal and child health services, including antenatal care, birthing services, and postnatal care. The center will also offer a range of other healthcare services, such as immunizations, family planning, and treatment for common illnesses.

Naha Birthing and Urban Health Centre	Facts
Number of Beds	50
Specializations	Maternal and Child Health, Family Planning, General Medicine
Estimated Project Cost	SBD 100 million (USD 12.5 million)
Funding Sources	World Bank, Solomon Islands Government, Private Healthcare Provider
Expected Completion Date	2026

By improving access to quality healthcare, the Naha Birthing and Urban Health Centre will contribute to:

- **Reducing maternal and child mortality rates:**

Providing a safe and supportive environment for mothers and newborns, ensuring access to skilled birth attendants and emergency care. The maternal mortality rate in the Solomon Islands is currently 110 deaths per 100,000 live births. The project aims to reduce this by 20% by 2030.

- **Improving family planning services:**

Empowering women and families to make informed choices about their reproductive health. Currently, only 30% of women in the Solomon Islands have access to modern contraceptive methods. The project aims to increase this to 50% by 2028.

- **Strengthening disease prevention and control:**

Providing immunizations and other preventive healthcare

services, reducing the burden of infectious diseases. The project aims to achieve a 90% immunization coverage rate for children under five years old by 2027.

Empowering the Next Generation

Education is the cornerstone of development, and SINIPP 2023 emphasizes the importance of investing in education infrastructure to equip the next generation of Solomon Islanders with the skills and knowledge they need to thrive.

PPPs are playing a key role in this effort, supporting the construction and renovation of schools, libraries, and other educational facilities across the country.

These projects are not just about providing physical spaces for learning; they are also about creating an environment that fosters creativity, innovation, and critical thinking.

Education Infrastructure Development	Statistics
Number of Schools Constructed/Renovated (2023-2027 Target)	50
Number of Libraries Constructed/Upgraded (2023-2027 Target)	10
Estimated Investment in Education Infrastructure (2023-2027)	SBD 200 million (USD 25 million)
Focus Areas	Early Childhood Education, Primary and Secondary Education, Vocational Training

By investing in education infrastructure, the Solomon Islands is:

- **Expanding access to quality education:**
Ensuring that all children, regardless of their location or background, have the opportunity to receive a quality education. The primary school enrollment rate in the Solomon Islands is currently 75%. The government aims to achieve universal primary education by 2030.
- **Improving learning outcomes:**
Providing students with access to modern facilities, technology, and resources, enhancing their learning experience and preparing them for the future. Studies have shown that access to quality education infrastructure can improve student performance by up to 15%.
- **Developing a skilled workforce:**
Equipping young people with the skills and knowledge they

need to contribute to the economy and build a better future for themselves and their communities. The government aims to increase the proportion of the workforce with secondary or tertiary education from 20% to 30% by 2030.

Connecting the Islands to the World

In today’s interconnected world, access to information and communication technologies (ICT) is essential for economic growth, social inclusion, and good governance. SINIPP 2023 recognizes the transformative potential of ICT and prioritizes investments in telecommunications infrastructure. One notable project is the Remote Communities ICT Project, which aims to expand internet connectivity to remote and rural communities across the Solomon Islands. This PPP initiative involves the deployment of broadband infrastructure, including fiber optic cables, satellite connections, and wireless networks, bringing the benefits of the digital age to previously underserved populations.

Remote Communities ICT Project	Facts
Target Communities	100 remote and rural communities
Technology	Fiber optic cables, satellite connections, wireless networks
Estimated Project Cost	SBD 150 million (USD 18.75 million)
Focus Areas	Early Childhood Education, Primary and Secondary Education, Vocational Training
Funding Sources	International Telecommunication Union, Solomon Islands Government, Private Telecommunications Companies
Expected Completion Date	2028

By expanding internet access, the Remote Communities ICT Project is:

- **Bridging the digital divide:**
Ensuring that all citizens, regardless of their location, have access to information, online services, and opportunities for education and economic empowerment. Currently, only 20% of the population in rural areas has access to the internet. The project aims to increase this to 60% by 2030.
- **Improving healthcare delivery:**
Facilitating telemedicine and remote healthcare consultations, bringing specialized medical expertise to remote communities.
- **Enhancing education:**
Providing students in remote areas with access to online learning resources and opportunities for distance education.
- **Promoting e-government:**
Enabling citizens to access government services online, improving efficiency and transparency.

Harnessing the Power of Nature: The Tina River Hydropower Project

One of the flagship projects within SINIPP 2023 is the Tina River Hydropower Development Project. This ambitious undertaking, estimated at SBD 1.5 billion (USD 185 million), aims to harness the power of the Tina River to provide clean, reliable, and affordable energy to the capital city, Honiara, and its surrounding areas. Currently, Honiara relies heavily on expensive and polluting diesel generators, a situation that is both financially and environmentally unsustainable.

The Tina River Hydropower Project, a beacon of sustainable development, promises to transform the energy landscape of the Solomon Islands. By shifting from fossil fuels to renewable hydropower, the project is expected to:

- **Reduce energy costs by up to 40%:**
Making electricity more affordable for households and businesses, stimulating economic activity and improving living standards.
- **Increase energy access:**
Expanding access to electricity in rural areas, promoting economic development, improving healthcare and education, and enhancing overall quality of life.
- **Create hundreds of jobs:**
Boosting local economies and providing valuable skills training in construction, engineering, and operation of the hydropower plant.
- **Reduce greenhouse gas emissions:**
Contributing to the Solomon Islands' commitment to combating climate change and protecting its pristine environment.

This transformative project is a testament to the power of collaboration. The Solomon Islands government, recognizing the complexity of the undertaking, partnered with Korea Water Resources Corporation (K-water) and Hyundai Engineering Company Ltd. (HEC) to form a special purpose company, Tina River Hydropower Development Company (TRHDC). This PPP model brought together the government's understanding of local needs and priorities with the private sector's expertise in engineering, construction, and project management, enabling the project to overcome numerous challenges, including complex terrain, environmental considerations, and financing hurdles.

Connecting the Islands: The Munda International Airport Upgrade

Beyond energy, SINIPP 2023 also prioritizes investments in transportation infrastructure, recognizing its crucial role in connecting communities, facilitating trade, and promoting tourism. A prime example is the ongoing upgrade of Munda International Airport in the Western Province.

This project, another successful PPP, involves the expansion and modernization of the airport's runway, terminal building, and other facilities to accommodate larger aircraft and increased passenger traffic. By improving air connectivity, the project aims to:

- **Boost tourism:**
Attracting more visitors to the Western Province, renowned for its pristine beaches, world-class diving, and historical significance as a World War II battleground.
- **Facilitate trade:**
Enabling easier movement of goods and services, supporting economic growth and creating new opportunities for local businesses.
- **Improve access to essential services:**
Facilitating access to healthcare, education, and other essential services for remote communities in the Western Province.

The Munda International Airport upgrade is a partnership between the Solomon Islands government and a consortium of private sector companies, leveraging their expertise in airport design, construction, and management. This collaborative approach has enabled the project to overcome challenges such as land acquisition, environmental impact mitigation, and financing constraints.

Going Beyond Infrastructure: Building Capacity and Empowering Communities

The impact of PPPs in the Solomon Islands extends beyond bricks and mortar. By fostering collaboration between the public and private sectors, these partnerships are also building local capacity, transferring knowledge, and empowering communities.

Through PPPs, local businesses and workers are gaining valuable experience in construction, engineering, project management, and other specialized fields. This knowledge transfer is creating a skilled workforce that can contribute to future infrastructure development and economic growth. Moreover, PPPs are promoting community engagement and ownership. By involving local communities in the planning and implementation of infrastructure projects, the government is ensuring that these projects are aligned with local needs and priorities, and that the benefits are shared equitably.

A Model for Sustainable Development

The Solomon Islands' experience with PPPs offers valuable lessons for other developing nations seeking to accelerate infrastructure development and achieve sustainable growth. By embracing a collaborative approach, fostering trust and transparency, and prioritizing community engagement, the Solomon Islands is demonstrating how PPPs can be a powerful tool for building a more prosperous and resilient future.

The success stories highlighted in SINIPP 2023 – the Tina River Hydropower Project, the Munda International Airport upgrade, and many others – are not just about building roads, bridges, and power plants. They are about building a stronger nation, one that is connected, empowered, and equipped to face the challenges of the 21st century. The Solomon Islands, through its strategic embrace of public-private partnerships, is charting a course towards a brighter future, one where sustainable development and improved quality of life are within reach for all its citizens.



Pacific Island leaders at the Summit.

A WAKE-UP CALL FOR SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES

The Honiara Summit, held on February 24, 2025, was a stark reminder of both the progress we've made and the daunting challenges we still face in achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Target 14.4.



By **DOUGLAS SAEFOA**
Pacific Tenders
Honiara, Solomon Islands

THIS GOAL, which aims to regulate overfishing, restore fish stocks, and ensure sustainable fisheries management by 2030, is not just a target on paper—it's a lifeline for millions of people who depend on the ocean for their food, livelihoods, and cultural identity. Yet, as the summit revealed, we are running out of time to turn the tide on overfishing and ensure the long-term health of our marine ecosystems.

The Alarming State of Global Fish Stocks

Let's start with the hard truth: 37.7% of global fish stocks are overfished. This isn't just a statistic; it's a crisis. Overfishing threatens food security, undermines livelihoods, and destabilizes marine ecosystems. The summit rightly emphasized the urgent need for improved fisheries management and stock restoration. But here's the catch: without accurate and timely data, we're essentially flying blind. Many countries, particularly those with limited resources, struggle to monitor and report on the status of their fish stocks. This lack of data isn't just a technical issue—it's a barrier to progress.

We can't manage what we don't measure. Strengthening national reporting systems and investing in capacity development for fisheries stock assessments must be a top priority. Without these foundational steps, even the best-intentioned policies will fall short.

Effective Management Works, But It Needs to Be Scaled Up

The summit did offer a glimmer of hope: fish stocks under effective management are recovering. This is proof that when we commit to science-based, adaptive management, we can achieve sustainable outcomes. However, these success stories are still the exception, not the rule. Many regions lack the resources, expertise, or political will to implement robust management systems.

To truly turn the corner, we need to scale up these efforts globally. This means not only strengthening management frameworks but also ensuring they are flexible enough to adapt to the complexities of marine ecosystems. One-size-fits-all solutions won't work. Fisheries management must be as dynamic and diverse as the oceans themselves.

The Power of Local Knowledge

One of the most promising discussions at the summit centered on the integration of local and traditional knowledge into

fisheries management. Too often, the voices of coastal communities—those who depend on the ocean for their survival—are overlooked in policy decisions. Yet, these communities hold invaluable insights into the behavior of fish stocks and the health of marine ecosystems.

By combining scientific data with local knowledge, we can create more inclusive and effective management strategies. This isn't just about sustainability; it's about equity. Small-scale and artisanal fishers, who are often the most vulnerable to overfishing and climate change, must have a seat at the table.

Fisheries: A Cornerstone of Sustainable Development

Fisheries are more than just a source of food—they are a cornerstone of sustainable development. For coastal communities and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), fisheries provide livelihoods, economic opportunities, and cultural identity. Yet, these contributions are at risk. Overfishing, climate change, and habitat destruction threaten to undermine the very resources that millions of people rely on.

The summit rightly underscored the need to maintain these contributions, particularly in the face of a growing global population. Sustainable fisheries management isn't just an environmental issue; it's a social and economic imperative.

The Need for Collaboration and Innovation

If there's one thing the Honiara Summit made clear, it's that we can't achieve SDG Target 14.4 alone. National and regional

fisheries institutions play a critical role in improving data collection, stock assessments, and management advice. But they need support. Capacity building, knowledge sharing, and regional cooperation are essential to bridge the gaps in resources and expertise.

Technological innovation also has a crucial role to play. From advanced monitoring tools to data-driven management strategies, technology can help us make smarter, more informed decisions. But innovation requires investment. Governments, international organizations, and the private sector must step up to fund these efforts, particularly in data-poor regions.

A Call to Action

The Honiara Summit was a wake-up call. While there have been notable successes in fisheries management, the alarming state of global fish stocks demands urgent and coordinated action. We have the tools, the knowledge, and the frameworks to achieve SDG Target 14.4—but we need the political will and financial commitment to make it happen.

As the 2030 deadline for the SDGs approaches, the outcomes of the Honiara Summit provide a clear roadmap. Strengthened international collaboration, increased investment in technology and capacity building, and the integration of local knowledge into management strategies are not just recommendations—they are necessities.

The ocean is our shared heritage, and its health is our shared responsibility. Let's not wait until it's too late to act. The time to secure sustainable fisheries and a healthy marine ecosystem is now.



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WHAT'S COMING IN 2025 – WORK!

Like the prophets of old, forecasting the future is fraught. It is more than just googling a list of events to attend, networks to build, and bids to write.



By **DAVID SPRING**
PT COLUMNIST
Sydney, Australia

APAC TENDERS' 2025 look ahead analyses trends to watch and themes to consider; projects to track and what they reveal about the direction of industry. Read on to look at what three areas hold – climate/resilience, water and public buildings.

Climate change is an increasing risk to the viability of Pacific livelihoods, as we know them. Rising seas, droughts and climate-related disasters are placing new pressures on vulnerable communities. The battle for both adaptation and transitioning to clean energy are in full swing and 2025 will bring an ongoing focus on this.

The Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI) is an international intergovernmental organisation that exists to support “a low-carbon, resilient world of strong, inclusive, and sustainable growth and its Members, in the transformation of their economies into a green growth economic model.” GGGI has been around since 2012 but has only recently become more prominent in the Pacific. Its programs still tend to be small, but they also co-finance with larger multilateral banks to increase their impact.

GGGI is looking at ways in which their funds can be channelled into the private sector and to entrepreneurs, rather than solely to public institutions. The Pacific Green Entrepreneurs Network (PGEN) was a pilot run in 2021-2023 and recently evaluated. Increased employment and increased revenue for the targeted firms were two positive outcomes of the scheme. The scheme also allowed many organisations to secure further funding, as a result of the PGEN seed capital. PGEN is not expected to run again soon, but watch for the growth of those seeds into green-focussed businesses, small green industries looking to scale up, and industry-led initiatives in partnership with government.

The energy transition is another key aspect of climate resilience. gets all the headlines, but other projects are underway, to supplement Honiara's power supply and for rural

areas. On the sidelines of COP29, the ADB inked a deal with Solomon Islands for solar farms in Guadalcanal and Malaita (total capacity of 2.5MW). The USD 20m project (co-financed with Saudi Arabia) also includes a utility-scale grid-connected battery energy storage system for grid integration of more renewable energy and various other “capacity and enabling” support. Tonga also signed a USD 4.6m deal for a network to distribute solar power.

Energy Fiji is active in investing in renewable energy and associated infrastructure. They are out to tender for everything from pre-feasibility consulting services, generator conversion, public private partnerships to develop solar farms, and grid extensions. In November, the World Bank signed a partnership with Energy Fiji to develop a road map for transitioning from fossil fuel to renewable energy; the ADB were appointed as transaction adviser in January. Fiji's energy transition is powering.

Adaptation is not only infrastructure and energy projects, but in innovative finance. First launched in 2017, the proceeds from Fiji's sovereign green bonds are being used by villages such as Vatani, in Viti Levu's east, to set up basic facilities such as rainwater tanks. More than 8000 water tanks have been installed in villages across Fiji. Noting that the World Bank, Australia and New Zealand also contributed to the sustainable clean water project, the bonds are a way of accessing funds for practical climate adaptation needs. Further bonds have been issued by Fiji, such as the sovereign blue bond in 2023, for marine ecosystems.

Lastly, resilience is also managing the damage from disasters such as the earthquake that struck Port Vila in December 2024 (see story page 20). An extensive rebuilding program will occur. But this time, unlike post-cyclone recoveries, it will be heavily influenced by insurers and private companies – the hardest hit by the damage and collapsed buildings. There is also a strong Chinese construction element to the rebuilding – worth exploring.

Water – Nauru has a water supply and sanitation project, for similar reasons to Santo's Luganville – drought resilience. The Solomon Water “pipeline” (no pun intended) of projects is very strong, despite their governance issues and project delays in

2024. Solomon Water has a 30 year plan and is progressively rolling these out. Around Honiara alone, there are projects and plans for water treatment plant, new river offtakes, bores, reservoirs, pumping stations and interconnected pipes and reticulation systems.

GGGI is focussed on energy transition projects and adaptation plans, but have also received requests for funding water security for Mele near Port Vila. It is worth contacting the 'accredited entities' in your country, who are the organisations accredited to propose projects to GGGI and implement them once approved. In Vanuatu, the accredited entities are Save the Children, ADB and UNICEF.

Public buildings – Vanuatu has a program of new public buildings underway. These are not part of a co-ordinated program or a particular push for resilience, but have arisen through a combination of necessity and opportunity. On top of that, post-earthquake funding will soon flow and some will go to damaged public buildings.

A new police headquarters is currently out to tender; a Hall of Justice to replace the one that was burned down in 2007 is under design. A new national security hub is being developed by the Australian government.

PNG are investing in a new air traffic control tower at Port

Moresby International (Jacksons) airport. Solomon Islands are no doubt still adjusting operational budgets to maintain the large investment in sporting infrastructure built for the 2023 Pacific Games, so their new buildings infrastructure is constrained. Finance will be sought, but expect caution from donors and few projects in this sector.

APAC Tenders watch

So don't expect 2025 to start with a bang and a slew of new projects and opportunities. The Vanuatu post-disaster recovery work is the exception, with some tangible projects expected to market by Q3. Prophecy is fickle, but tracking targeted projects and sectors with APAC Tenders can help turn forecasts into profits.

About the Author

David is an experienced engineer, with over 20 years experience in construction, design and international development. David has been working in Solomon Islands and Vanuatu as a team leader for the past six years, specifically on road and bridgeworks. He worked on intra-Ministry roles at the Ministry of Infrastructure Development (MID, Solomon Islands) and led the Cyclone Pam road reconstruction project in Vanuatu, understanding donor requirements and how development projects are procured and delivered. Continuing as a Team leader for MID and with some corporate responsibilities for Cardno, David seeks to deliver equitable access for communities, which generate social and economic benefits.

PITA 2025 AGM & CONFERENCE TO FOCUS ON DIGITAL SOVEREIGNTY AND CONNECTIVITY IN THE PACIFIC

Honiara, Solomon Islands – The Pacific Islands Telecommunications Association (PITA) has announced that its Annual General Meeting (AGM) and conference will be held in Honiara, Solomon Islands, from 29 April to 2 May 2025. Hosted by Our Telekom, this year's event will bring together industry leaders under the theme:

"Digital Nations in a Smart Blue Continent: Strengthening Digital Sovereignty and Connectivity for a Resilient Pacific Future"

The conference will serve as a key platform for CEOs, executives, and telecom experts from across the Pacific to discuss innovation, digital inclusion, cybersecurity, and infrastructure development. With a focus on overcoming challenges such as geographical isolation, regulatory hurdles, and investment gaps, the event aims to foster collaboration for a more connected and resilient digital future.

Key Event Highlights:

- Keynote Presentations & Panel Discussions: Exploring network expansion, digital sovereignty, and cybersecurity in the Pacific context.

- Technology Demonstrations & Exhibitions: Showcasing innovative, sustainable solutions tailored to regional needs.
- Workshops & Breakout Sessions: Delving into emerging technologies, affordability, and best practices for telecom services.

Christina Lasaga, CEO of Our Telekom, emphasized the significance of the gathering:

"We are honored to host telecommunications leaders in Solomon Islands. This is a pivotal opportunity to share expertise and develop collaborative strategies that will drive digital transformation across the Pacific. Strengthening digital sovereignty and connectivity is essential for improving resilience and quality of life in our communities."

PITA's conference underscores the region's commitment to leveraging technology for sustainable growth. By pooling expertise and resources, the association aims to build a future-ready telecommunications landscape that empowers all Pacific Island nations.



A RISING TIDE:

Confronting Climate Change in the Asia-Pacific

The \$400 million Greater Malé Connectivity Project built under the Maldives' "Building Climate Resilient Safer Islands" project.



By **LORNA BONDOC**
PT Marketing and Research Consultant
Manila, Philippines

THE EMERALD ISLES of the Maldives, strung like jade beads across the Indian Ocean, are sinking. Not in some metaphorical sense of economic decline, but quite literally disappearing beneath the rising tides. This stark reality, faced not only by the Maldives but by a vast swathe of the Asia-Pacific region, has spurred a wave of ambitious engineering projects, a defiant human response to the encroaching chaos of climate change. This region, home to 60% of the world's population and some of its most dynamic economies, is tragically also one of the most vulnerable to the impacts of a warming planet. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) estimates that by 2100, the region could see a 4.6°C temperature increase, a change that would usher in a terrifying escalation in typhoons, floods, and droughts. The consequences are already devastatingly real. Last year's floods in Pakistan, which submerged a third of the country and caused damages exceeding \$30 billion, offer a chilling glimpse into this dystopian future. In 2015, Cyclone Pam slammed into Vanuatu, causing an estimated \$450 million in damages, a staggering 64% of the country's GDP.

Yet, amidst the rising waters and scorching heat, a spirit of resilience prevails. Across the Asia-Pacific, governments, aided by international organizations like the ADB, Australia Aid, and the UNDP, are embarking on ambitious projects to mitigate climate risks and rebuild shattered communities.

In the Maldives, where the highest point on land barely reaches eight feet above sea level, a monumental bridge and causeway project is underway. Funded by a \$400 million loan from the ADB, the Greater Malé Connectivity Project aims to link the capital island with three neighboring islands, ensuring safe passage for residents even as the seas rise. This infrastructure is specifically engineered to withstand both sea-level rise and increasingly powerful storm surges. It's not just about transportation; it's about preserving a nation's very existence.

Further east, in Cambodia, where rural communities grapple with the erratic rhythms of drought and flood, the Green Climate Fund (GCF) has stepped in with a \$29.2 million grant. This funding will bolster irrigation systems and construct climate-resilient infrastructure, offering a lifeline to over 200,000 people whose livelihoods hang in the balance.

These projects, however, represent just a few pieces in a much larger mosaic of climate action. Across the region, a diverse array of initiatives is taking root:

- Vanuatu, still reeling from the devastation of Cyclone Pam in 2015, is rebuilding with the help of Australia Aid. Funds are being channeled into the reconstruction of homes, schools, and health facilities, while efforts are also underway to restore livelihoods and bolster disaster preparedness.
- The ADB, responding to the catastrophic floods in Pakistan, has committed \$2.3 billion to support the country's recovery and reconstruction. This aid package encompasses rebuilding critical infrastructure, providing essential humanitarian assistance, and crucially, strengthening resilience to future disasters.
- In Nepal, where the 2015 earthquake left deep scars, the UNDP is playing a pivotal role in recovery. This involves providing technical assistance for rebuilding homes and infrastructure, promoting sustainable livelihoods, and strengthening disaster risk reduction measures.
- The Maldives, with support from the UNDP and the Green Climate Fund, is implementing the "Building Climate Resilient Safer Islands" project. Focused on six vulnerable islands, this initiative involves constructing coastal protection structures, improving water management systems, and promoting sustainable land use practices.

But it's not just about concrete and steel. Increasingly, the region is turning to nature-based solutions, recognizing the inherent resilience of natural ecosystems.

- Vietnam has implemented large-scale mangrove restoration programs, supported by organizations like the UNDP and the World Bank. These efforts involve planting millions of mangrove saplings along the coastline, forming a natural barrier against coastal erosion and storm surges.
- Coral reef rehabilitation projects are underway in the Pacific Islands, supported by Australia Aid and the Global Environment Facility. These initiatives aim to restore the vital protective role of coral reefs against storm surges and support the region's rich biodiversity.
- The Philippines is a recipient of Green Climate Fund (GCF) financing for various projects. For example, the GCF has approved \$10 million for a project to enhance the climate resilience of agricultural systems in the Cagayan River Basin.
- The World Bank is also actively involved in supporting climate resilience in the Philippines. Projects include initiatives to improve water resource management, enhance coastal protection, and promote climate-smart agriculture.

This wave of climate action, however, faces formidable challenges. Financing remains a major hurdle, with the scale of the crisis demanding substantial investment. The ADB, for its part, has committed \$7.1 billion for climate finance in 2022 alone and aims to reach \$100 billion in cumulative climate finance from its own resources by 2030. Australia has pledged \$2 billion over 2020-2025 to support climate change and disaster resilience in the Pacific. But more is needed.

Capacity building is also crucial, ensuring that local communities have the knowledge and skills to manage and maintain these critical projects. This is where organizations like the UNDP play a vital role, providing

technical assistance and capacity building support for climate resilience and recovery projects.

Yet, amidst these challenges, there lies a glimmer of hope. Technological advancements, such as early warning systems and climate-resilient building materials, offer promising solutions. Regional cooperation, exemplified by initiatives like the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response, is fostering knowledge sharing and coordinated action.

Perhaps most importantly, there is a growing recognition that climate action is not merely a matter of survival, but also an opportunity for economic growth and sustainable development. Investing in renewable energy, green infrastructure, and climate-resilient agriculture can create jobs, boost economies, and pave the way for a more equitable and prosperous future.

The Asia-Pacific region stands at a crossroads. The choices made today will determine not only the fate of millions of people but also the future of our planet. As the tides rise and the storms rage, the region's ambitious engineering endeavors offer a powerful testament to human ingenuity and a beacon of hope in the face of an uncertain future.

About the Author

Lorna Bondoc, Founder and CXO at YOVEO Digital (www.yoveodigital.com), a marketing support firm dedicated to empowering agencies and marketers. She has over 30 years of experience providing clients with consulting and digital marketing solutions.

Beyond YOVEO Digital, Lorna also serves as a Regional Correspondent at APAC Tenders, keeping a close pulse on business opportunities across the Asia-Pacific region. This dual role allows her to offer a unique perspective on the trends impacting regional businesses.



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Australia's Diplomatic Blitz - More Talk, or Action?

Australia has struck deals with Tuvalu, Nauru and PNG over the past few months. What does it mean for the countries who benefit, the delivery environment and opportunities to expect

By **DAVID SPRING**
PT COLUMNIST
Sydney, Australia

IT WOULD come as no surprise to anyone to hear a politician accused of being all talk and no action. That's what made Australia's diplomatic hustle across the Pacific in the back half of 2024 all the more startling – action! From Tuvalu to Nauru to PNG, Australia has hustled and agreed its way to some challenging and useful outcomes. Months or even years in the planning, let's look at the outcomes and how it may translate into work for our industry.

The bank of diplomacy

Australia has had a long association with Nauru, dating back to well before the infamous "Regional Processing Centre" became an Australian election-winning political solution. In December, the two countries inked the Nauru-Australia treaty. This latest deal is essentially budget support – fungible aid to ensure that Nauru doesn't go bankrupt. It includes financial and diplomatic assistance to the Commonwealth Bank to establish a branch in Nauru when Bendigo Bank leaves in 2025.

This type of arrangement is not dissimilar to Telstra's nascent ownership of Vanuatu's Digicel, or Qantas' code-sharing, engineering and operational support to various Pacific Airlines – the Australian government using former state-owned enterprises (now fully privatised businesses) to resolve institutional and economic problems in the Pacific's favour. Also common is Australia's commitment to supporting Nauru's policing and security recruitment, training and infrastructure.

Get ya footy on

A Papua New Guinean NRL team! Since 2014, the PNG Hunters have played in the Queensland Rugby League (QRL) competition, the Queensland Cup, with some success. The Queensland Cup is a feeder competition to the National Rugby League (NRL) and for rugby league-mad PNG, getting a locally-based NRL team has been a national obsession. Now, geopolitics has enabled it. With Australian objections to Chinese infrastructure and security gains in PNG growing, the Australian-funded NRL team is a tangible, effective soft power counter initiative. Details are debated as to what the political deal involves and how it will play out. What matters to APAC Tenders is the economic development that will follow.

The funding contribution towards the new team is not simply for coaches, staff and players. AUD 250m of the AUD 600m is being invested in grassroots rugby league across the Pacific – junior football, school retention programs, elite pathways and opportunities for young people. The PNG government has also allocated AUD 150m to the new club, to build infrastructure. The necessary infrastructure has not been announced in detail but will likely include:

- A secure compound for players and their families – seen as

- an important measure to be able to lure international talent
- A stadium suitable for nighttime TV coverage
- Training facilities, as part of the process for developing sporting pathways for elite athletes
- Additional junior rugby league grounds

Analysing the announcements to date, it looks that the new infrastructure will be built with PNG money – Australia's funding is fully allocated. However, if additional funding is required to support this effort, it is unlikely that Australia would balk at it, given their interest in the deal. The new team is due to play its first game in the NRL in 2028, so watch closely for further announcements.

A year in the making

The Australia-Tuvalu Falepili Union treaty was signed on 9 November 2023 and entered into force on 28 August 2024. It is a well-worded reality check that climate change is occurring, specifically linking climate change to sea level rise, to so-called climate refugees. While recognising "Tuvalu's continuing statehood and sovereignty, notwithstanding the impact of climate-change related sea-level rise...[Australia] will create a special visa pathway to support mobility with dignity, which will enable citizens of Tuvalu to come to Australia to live, work and study."

In other words, despite Australia's reluctance to sincerely commit to global emissions reduction so as not to jeopardise fossil fuel export profits, climate change is occurring to the extent that low-lying countries may not be habitable soon. Interestingly, the explanatory memorandum to the Union mentions ongoing Australian-funded economic development in Tuvalu, such as

- Extension of the Tuvalu Coastal Adaptation Project
- Co-financing (with Japan, New Zealand, Taiwan and the United States) the Tuvalu Vaka primary undersea telecommunications cable, which met a major milestone, landing in Funafuti by the end of 2024
- Co-financing (with the Asian Development Bank) to rehabilitate the Niutao Harbour and construct new harbour facilities at Nui

With only 280 visas available annually, life must go on in Tuvalu too.

The delivery environment

For the past 10-15 years, the Pacific infrastructure delivery environment has been changing, taking on more Chinese characteristics. There have been many upsidies to this, including speed to market, greater volume and long-ignored but popular projects (such as stadiums). The long-term efficacy of Chinese-built infrastructure is debated, but is in large part fuelled by a

Continue next page

Special Audit of Connect PNG Programme Sets Stage for Accountability and Future Progress

Australian Investment Enhanced Safety Standards in Fiji



Mr Herbert Maguma, Deloitte Office Managing Partner, signing the agreement while Principal Internal Auditor Mr Barry Egu watches attentively.

power struggle. The Australian blitz needs to be seen in this context. Regardless, it will have an effect on the freedom with which these countries can or will want to, enter into “any partnership, arrangement or engagement with any other State or entity.” Australia has incrementally built a support infrastructure for Pacific countries to engage with for concessional loans the Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific (AIFFP), co-financing or institutional support to deliver critical infrastructure. The starkly poor performance of Chinese designed/built/owned buildings in Port Vila in the recent earthquake will only reinforce the message that the Australian created environment is safe and reliable, even if it’s slow. This attitude will flow down into the project environment too. After all, speed is not everything, unless you’re a rugby league winger.

APAC Media

The signing of an agreement to commence a Special Audit into the Connect PNG Infrastructure Programme marks a pivotal moment for Papua New Guinea’s most ambitious infrastructure initiative. With Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu and Norths Projects Ltd now formally engaged to conduct the audit, the focus shifts to the next steps: ensuring transparency, accountability, and laying the groundwork for the programme’s future success.

The audit, set to begin in March 2025, will be the first comprehensive review of the Connect PNG Programme since its launch in 2020. Acting Chief Secretary Ivan Pomaleu emphasized that the audit’s findings will not only address past performance but also shape the direction of the programme moving forward. “This audit is about more than just accountability—it’s about ensuring that the Connect PNG Programme delivers on its promise to transform Papua New Guinea’s infrastructure and improve the lives of our people,” he said.

What Comes Next: A Roadmap for Accountability and Progress

The audit team will conduct physical inspections of all Phase One projects across eight provinces, focusing on key areas such as the proper use of public funds, project performance, and compliance with laws and policies. The findings will provide a clear picture of what has been achieved so far and identify areas for improvement. This will enable the government to address any irregularities, enhance efficiency, and ensure that future phases of the programme are implemented with greater transparency and effectiveness.

One of the critical outcomes of the audit will be its role in rebuilding public trust. By addressing concerns about mismanagement or unethical practices, the government aims to strengthen confidence in the Connect PNG Programme, which is central to the country’s economic

growth, social development, and national integration.

Collaboration and Commitment: A Call to Action

Acting Chief Secretary Pomaleu has called on provincial governments, project managers, and contractors to collaborate closely with the audit team. “This is a collective effort,” he said. “The success of this audit depends on the cooperation of all stakeholders. Together, we can ensure that the Connect PNG Programme delivers the infrastructure our nation needs.”

The audit’s findings will also serve as a foundation for future decision-making. By evaluating the sustainability and long-term impact of the programme, the government will be better equipped to allocate resources, prioritize projects, and ensure that the benefits of improved road connectivity are felt across the country.

Looking Ahead: A Brighter Future for Papua New Guinea

As the audit gets underway, the focus is firmly on the future. The Connect PNG Programme represents a 20-year vision to transform the nation’s infrastructure, and this audit is a crucial step in ensuring that vision becomes a reality. By addressing past challenges and setting a clear path forward, the government is committed to delivering a programme that not only meets its goals but also earns the trust and confidence of the people of Papua New Guinea.

The next few months will be critical as the audit team begins its work. The findings will not only shape the future of the Connect PNG Programme but also set a precedent for how large-scale infrastructure projects are managed in Papua New Guinea. With transparency, accountability, and collaboration at the forefront, the nation is poised to take a significant step toward a brighter, more connected future.

Q&A *with* Douglas Salvage & Towage Group

Navigating Challenges and Opportunities in the Solomon Islands

Interviewee **FRANCIS DOORO**
Operations Manager

The maritime industry is the lifeblood of the Solomon Islands, connecting its scattered islands and enabling trade, commerce, and development. At the heart of this vital sector is Douglas Salvage and Towage Group, a company that has carved a niche for itself in marine salvage, ocean tows, tug and vessel charters, and freight services. In this exclusive interview with Francis Dooroo, Operations Manager, we delve into the company's origins, operations, challenges, and future aspirations.

1 What does your company do, and how did it come about?

Douglas Salvage and Towage Group is a key player in the Solomon Islands' maritime sector, offering a range of services including marine salvaging, ocean tows, tug and vessel charters, and freight and cargo services. The company operates extensively across the country, servicing all nine provinces and reaching even the most remote locations. (CONFIRM DATE OF ESTABLISHMENT IN SI)

"Our cargo runs primarily focus on Gela in the Central Province and the Western Province," explains Dooroo. "However, for charter runs, especially the mobilization of heavy building materials, we cover the entire country. Our fleet includes two landing crafts and two tug boats, though currently, one of each is undergoing repairs at the slipway." (Can Further Clarify-Marketing angle)

This extensive reach and capacity make Douglas Salvage and Towage a critical partner for businesses and communities across the Solomon Islands.

2 What inspired the company to venture into salvage and towage, and what challenges did you face early on?

Douglas Salvage and Towage is a sister company of Cruz Holdings Limited in Fiji, a family-owned business with a long history in the shipping industry. The expansion into the Solomon Islands was a strategic move to address the growing need for reliable towage and tug services in the region.

"With the increase in international marine vessels entering Solomon waters, there was a clear need for efficient towage services to ensure smooth transshipment processes," says Dooroo. "We partnered with the Solomon Islands Ports Authority to consolidate shipping schedules and work with shipping agents like Tradco, Carpenters Shipping, and Express Freight Management."

However, the journey hasn't been without challenges. One of the biggest hurdles has been competing with other operators who benefit from government subsidies and shipping grants. "Their lower freight rates make it tough for us," Dooroo admits. "But we make up for it with our size and capacity. For instance, we can carry up to 30 containers per shipment, which is why clients like Solrice rely on us."

3 How does your company ensure safety and efficiency in challenging marine environments?

Operating in the Solomon Islands' diverse and often treacherous marine environments requires a combination of skill, experience, and technology. Douglas Salvage and Towage prides itself on its highly skilled workforce and adherence to stringent safety standards.

"Our team has extensive knowledge and experience in maritime salvage and towage operations," Dooroo emphasizes. "A prime example of our capabilities was the salvage of the bulk carrier Solomon Trader on Rennell Island in 2019. We worked closely with the Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC) and the Ministry of Environment, providing real-time assessments and reports."

The company's vessels and crew meet all necessary maritime safety and certification standards. Equipped with advanced navigation systems and communication tools, they ensure every operation is carried out with precision and care.

4 *Can you highlight a recent or notable salvage project?*

Dooro points to two standout projects that showcase the company's expertise. The first was the salvage and refloating of a grounded fishing vessel owned by Global Fishing, which ran aground on a reef near Gela earlier this year. "We successfully salvaged the ship and towed it to Avi Avi Slipway," he recalls.

The second was the Rennell Island oil spill containment and salvage operation in 2019, which drew international attention. "Salvage operations are highly coordinated efforts involving experts from various fields," Dooro explains. "We've proven our ability to collaborate effectively and deliver detailed reports to shipowners, insurance companies, and environmental agencies."

5 *What role does technology play in your operations?*

Technology has revolutionized the maritime industry, and Douglas Salvage and Towage has embraced these advancements to enhance its operations.

"We use standard navigation and communication equipment, but we've also added Starlink satellite systems to our vessels," says Dooro. "This allows us to track and communicate with our ships in real-time, no matter where they are. We also use apps like WhatsApp to stay in touch with clients and provide updates on vessel locations."

These innovations have significantly improved the company's ability to respond to emergencies and ensure efficient operations.

6 *What are your future goals, and how do you see the industry evolving?*

Looking ahead, Douglas Salvage and Towage aims to expand its fleet and strengthen its position in the market. "Currently, there are only two major operators in the marine salvage and towage sector—PacTow and us," Dooro notes. "If opportunities arise, we'll definitely look to grow our fleet."

The company is also keen to see advancements in digital financial services. "In a geographically sparse country like the Solomon Islands, access to banking services is limited," Dooro explains. "We need more affordable mobile or digital money options to enable rural communities to participate in commercial activities. This is something we hope the government will invest in, as it's vital for businesses like ours."

Additionally, the company is focused on improving operational efficiency, particularly in cargo handling, to better serve its clients and support the country's development.

Conclusion: A Beacon of Maritime Excellence

Douglas Salvage and Towage Group has established itself as a reliable and innovative player in the Solomon Islands' maritime industry. From tackling complex salvage operations to navigating competitive challenges, the company has demonstrated resilience, expertise, and a commitment to excellence.

As the industry evolves, Douglas Salvage and Towage is poised to lead the way, leveraging technology, expanding its capabilities, and contributing to the nation's economic growth. For businesses and communities across the Solomon Islands, the company remains a trusted partner, ensuring that the seas remain a pathway to opportunity and progress.

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Solomon Islands PM Warns Against Complacency in Fisheries Sustainability Amid Ongoing Threats

By DOUGLAS SAEFOA

Pacific Tenders
Honiara, Solomon Islands

Honiara, Solomon Islands – While celebrating the Pacific region’s success in achieving the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14.4 target for offshore tuna stocks, Solomon Islands Prime Minister Jeremiah Manele has issued a stark warning against complacency. Speaking at a session focused on the Pacific’s response to SDG14.4, Manele emphasized that climate change, illegal fishing, over-exploitation, and marine pollution remain significant threats to the sustainability of the region’s fisheries.

“We cannot rest on our laurels,” Manele declared. “The challenges we face require continued vigilance and innovation to ensure the long-term health of our marine resources.”

The Prime Minister acknowledged the region’s remarkable progress in managing offshore tuna stocks, which have met the SDG14.4 target of sustainable exploitation. However, he stressed that this achievement is not a final victory but a milestone in an ongoing battle. “Our success with tuna stocks is a testament to decades of regional cooperation and leadership, but it is not the end of the road,” he said.

Manele highlighted climate change as one of the most pressing threats, noting its potential to disrupt marine ecosystems and fish populations. He also pointed to illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing as a persistent challenge, undermining efforts to maintain sustainable fisheries. Over-exploitation of near-shore fish stocks and the growing problem of marine pollution further compound the region’s struggles.

“These threats are not just environmental issues—they are existential challenges for our communities, economies, and way of life,” Manele said. “The Pacific’s dependence on fisheries means that any decline in the health of our oceans directly impacts our people.”



Solomon Islands Prime Minister Hon. Jeremiah Manele

The Prime Minister called for renewed regional collaboration and innovative solutions to address these challenges. He emphasized the importance of leveraging scientific research, strengthening enforcement mechanisms, and enhancing regional frameworks like the Niue Treaty Subsidiary Agreement (NTSA), which facilitates cooperative surveillance and enforcement efforts.

Manele’s message resonated with urgency, urging Pacific nations to build on their achievements while confronting emerging threats head-on. “The vision of our Leaders brought us this far, but the work is far from over,” he said. “We must remain steadfast in our commitment to sustainable fisheries, not just for today, but for the generations to come.”

As the Solomon Islands continues to play a leading role in regional fisheries management, Manele’s warning serves as a timely reminder that the fight for sustainability is an ongoing journey—one that demands resilience, innovation, and unwavering dedication from all Pacific nations.



PNG Prime Minister, Hon. James Marape.

Prime Minister Marape Demands Global Accountability on Illegal Fishing at Honiara Summit

HONIARA, SOLOMON ISLANDS | 25 February 2025 – In a powerful address at the Honiara Summit on Sustainable Fisheries, Papua New Guinea's Prime Minister, Hon. James Marape, issued a bold call for global action against illegal fishing and the exploitation of Pacific fisheries. Under the theme "lumi Tugeda Delivering on SDG 14.4: Achieving Sustainable Fisheries," Marape challenged major industrial nations to take responsibility for their role in ocean pollution, overfishing, and climate change, while urging stronger support for Pacific-led marine resource management.

"The Pacific has been a steward of the ocean for centuries. We don't need lectures on sustainability—it's our way of life," Marape declared. "The real lecture should be directed at the big industrial polluters who continue to degrade our oceans and plunder our resources."

The Prime Minister called out major global powers, including the United States, China, Japan, India, and the European Union, to step up their efforts in combating illegal fishing and supporting Pacific nations in protecting their waters. "If there is any sense of morality left in you, take this message back to your countries. The ocean is a global asset, a carbon sink, a supermarket, and a superhighway for your ships and submarines. It needs protection, and it's time you acted," he asserted.

Marape announced that Papua New Guinea will take drastic measures to combat illegal fishing, including sinking unauthorized vessels found in its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). "If I catch illegal fishing in my waters, I will sink all the boats. We have signed defense cooperation agreements with the United States to strengthen our enforcement capabilities, and we will not hesitate to act," he warned.

The Prime Minister also criticized the global economic

imbalance that leaves Pacific nations impoverished despite their vast marine resources. "Why are nations like Kiribati, with 3.5 million square kilometers of ocean, among the poorest in the world? We are not just Small Island Developing States—we are a Big Ocean Nation. It's time we rise and fight for what is rightfully ours," he said.

In a significant policy announcement, Marape revealed that Papua New Guinea will ban the export of unprocessed fish starting 16 September 2025. "No fish caught in our waters will leave without being processed locally. This is how we ensure economic benefits stay in our region and uplift our people," he stated.

Marape emphasized the need for Pacific unity in managing shared resources, noting that fish species like tuna migrate across borders. "We are in this together. Fish do not belong to one country—they migrate. This is why we must work as one Pacific," he said.

The Prime Minister concluded with a rallying cry for global support, calling for technological assistance, stronger enforcement against illegal fishing, and urgent action on climate change, which threatens fish stocks and Pacific livelihoods. "Let us not be lectured on sustainability—we are the practitioners of it. It's time for the world to recognize our role and support our efforts," he said.

As the Honiara Summit sets the stage for future regional fisheries policies, Prime Minister Marape's uncompromising stance underscores Papua New Guinea's commitment to safeguarding the Pacific's resources for generations to come.

- Office of the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea

December 'Quake Rocks Vila – 3 Perspectives

By **DAVID SPRING**
PT COLUMNIST
Sydney, Australia

IT'S LUNCHTIME just before Christmas. The mood is festive, in the humid air of Port Vila's bustling downtown. And then, an earthquake hits. Vila residents are used to tremors, shakes and the occasion jolt. But this was different. This was 'let's get out of here' different. The experience was of terror, inability to stand, falling debris, panic and building failure. Tragically, it is estimated that fourteen have lost their lives.

A National Recovery Committee was established and the "cluster" response structure came into effect. The Prime Minister's office set up a Recovery Operations Centre, which took responsibility for issuing press releases on the access restrictions access pass arrangements (amongst other things). And a Recovery and Resilience Plan was released before New Year, setting out the principles and priorities for the recovery. Read on for three quick takes on how this is playing out.

Construction & Engineering Firms

The first thing to note about the damage caused by this earthquake, compared to say a major cyclone, is that it is landlords, property owners, private firms and insurance companies who are squarely affected. This makes the shape of the recovery different – both the speed of recovery work and the interests being represented.

This resulted in a somewhat chaotic and inconsistent approach to things like building assessments, infrastructure priorities and access restrictions. For construction and engineering firms, the engagements were rapid, loosely defined and urgent. Business interests were at stake, so assessments were ordered and undertaken quickly. This effort brought in some international specialist, but it was mostly local expertise involved.

Without a national building code and with a range of international backgrounds involved, the standard to which buildings were assessed as safe or not, will never be known. This is a significant risk for the remaining building stock, as superficial assessments and repairs can result in weakened building stock remaining in use until the next major seismic shock yields their remaining strength.

The local building industry is now at full capacity. This means that any major reconstruction and existing projects in the pipeline will most likely need to be undertaken by regional firms.

Landslides were a major visible feature of the earthquake's effects around the Port Vila basin. Significant geotechnical and geological survey will be required to assess the stability of these slopes and the mitigation of present hazards. Ideally the Ministry of Public Works and Utilities (MIPU) would be co-ordinating this, as geological models are expensive to establish and several different engineering firms are now building their own, at the behest of their various clients. This information will not be publicly available, even for government. This is just one example of the opportunity that exists for MIPU to



Figure 1 – Landslides to the vertical faces beneath George Pompidou area. Source: Efate Earthquake Recovery and Resilience Plan.



Figure 2 – Damage to power lines. Source: Efate Earthquake Recovery and Resilience Plan



Figure 3 – Embassy Building at European Corner, damaged beyond repair and now demolished. Source: Efate Earthquake Recovery and Resilience Plan.

build knowledge from this disaster for future resilience, if they engage with the clients and firms involved.

Restoring critical services

Some critical services were lost during the earthquake. Two water reservoirs in the Ohlen area were destroyed, cutting off vital water supplies. Telecommunications were down for several days and power was lost to many areas of town. The submarine

internet cable landing site was damaged. Some buildings at Port Vila's Central Hospital were significantly damaged - some lives were lost and patients had to be moved to a military facility. A mass casualty triage centre was set up outside the emergency ward of Port Vila Central Hospital.

Each of these services has a different service provider and cluster/sector lead. Thus, the efforts are not co-ordinated, but are led by the private firms who manage these services - Digicel and UNELCO have been outstanding. The Central Hospital is a special case, as a public building with a critical service function, and several medical clinics in the peri-urban areas of Port Vila being damaged beyond repair, adding to the pressure.

The private firms will effectively look after themselves, with insurance claims likely covering the costs of assessment and restoration. The Ministry of Health will need to assign resources to the physical infrastructure needs to restore services and consider the approach needed to build resilience against future disasters.

Sponsors

Vanuatu has no shortage of friends. People from all over the world have offered assistance, from NGO earthquake appeals (Action Aid, CARE, amongst many others) to the EU's €400,000 emergency grant. The Australia Pacific Islands Business Forum is no different, offering support in the form of advocacy "with the Vanuatu Chamber of Commerce to ensure that support provided considers the needs of business for open transport channels, communication and access to finance as the population rebuilds their businesses". The 7th Australia Vanuatu Business Forum has been pushed back to 12-13 March

2025 to ensure meaningful attendance. Expect attendees and presentation on solutions tied to disaster recovery.

Way forward

A snap national election was called in November 2024 after a motion of no-confidence. Originally scheduled for 14 January and moved to the 16 January, the electioneering process has been blamed for some of the perceived slow response to the earthquake. In particular, the red zone through the CBD is still in place, much to the frustration of many business owners and the public. As at the time of writing, the election result has still not been resolved.

While the public service, including security services, has been over-functioning to manage both the surprise election and the earthquake aftermath, the pathway to recovery will only gain momentum when a government is installed. With aftershocks continuing and a starving business community, there is no time to lose in putting the nation first.

Brighter lights

Though it is small comfort to those who have lost loved ones, the damage could have been worse. Most buildings did endure the earthquake with minimal damage. Bridges and infrastructure built during the Cyclone Pam recovery aftermath, such as the new ring road bridges and drainage systems in Port Vila were designed for earthquake loads and remained essentially unscathed.

If nothing else, this disaster is a reminder of Vanuatu's vulnerability – economically and politically, as well as in the face of mother nature and human-induced climate change.



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Executive Summary:

PRIME MINISTER'S BREAKFAST EVENT

Theme:

"Catalyzing Economic Growth Through an Empowered Private Sector: Creating an Enabling Environment"

Speaker:

Mrs. Namoi Kaluae

Chairlady of the Solomon Islands Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SICCI)



1. Introduction and Opening Remarks

In her address, Mrs. Namoi Kaluae highlighted the indispensable role of the private sector as a key driver of economic growth, innovation, and inclusive development in the Solomon Islands.

She underscored the strong alignment between SICCI's upcoming Strategic Plan (2025–2030) and the Solomon Islands Government's 100-Day Policy Statement, both of which aim to drive national development through sustainable private sector engagement.

2. Strategic Objectives of SICCI (2025–2030)

Mrs. Kaluae outlined four strategic pillars that will guide SICCI's work in the coming years:

a. Enabling a Supportive Policy Environment

- Advocating for transparent and equitable policies that facilitate job creation, business growth, and formalization of SMEs.
- Emphasizing fair incentives and the need for a level playing field across all sectors.

b. Enhancing Business Competitiveness and Trade

- Expanding capacity-building and trade initiatives, with a focus on local content and inclusive infrastructure development.
- Drawing attention to high electricity costs as a critical constraint, citing SICCI member data:
 - o 80–85% face revenue losses linked to power costs.
 - o 60% struggle to meet deadlines.
 - o 83% cite operational costs as a growth barrier.
- Called for legislative reforms to lower energy costs and encouraged Independent Power Production solutions.

c. Strengthening Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)

- Promoting collaborative approaches across value chains—from

production to marketing.

- Proposing the formation of a Cabinet Sub-Committee to institutionalize private sector input on key policies such as trade, taxation, and investment.

d. Building SICCI's Institutional Capacity

- Reinforcing SICCI's ability to sustainably and effectively represent the interests of the private sector.

3. Alignment with Government Development Goals

Mrs. Kaluae reaffirmed SICCI's commitment to working in tandem with government efforts to stimulate economic growth, generate employment, and attract foreign investment. She highlighted ongoing initiatives such as:

- The proposed SIG-SICCI Advisory MOU to institutionalize public-private dialogue.
- Skills development programs in procurement and agriculture trade.

4. Call to Action and Closing Message

Mrs. Kaluae concluded by urging a renewed partnership between government and the business community. She emphasized the vital role of SMEs as the backbone of the economy and called for well-balanced regulatory frameworks that enable private sector innovation while safeguarding national interests.

Final Message:

"Together, let us commit to catalyzing economic growth through an empowered private sector—uniting for a prosperous Solomon Islands."

SICCI

SOLOMON ISLANDS CHAMBER
OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY



HEC Engineers explaining the construction of the tunnel portal captured by the project team.

Tina River Hydropower Project Achieves 23% Completion, On Track for 2028 Commissioning

APAC MEDIA

The Tina River Hydropower Project, a flagship infrastructure initiative in the Solomon Islands, has reached a significant milestone, with construction now 23% complete as of January 2025. This progress underscores the project's steady advancement toward its goal of delivering affordable, clean, and renewable energy to the nation by early 2028.

Once operational, the 15-megawatt hydropower facility is expected to meet nearly 70% of Honiara's electricity demand, significantly reducing the country's reliance on expensive diesel-generated power and driving down energy costs for consumers.

Progress and Key Developments

On 28 January 2025, a delegation from the Tina Hydro Project Office's Environmental and Safety Team, accompanied by representatives from the World Bank, conducted a site inspection to evaluate ongoing construction activities. The team noted substantial progress compared to the previous year, highlighting the project's momentum.

According to Mr. Euiman Moon, Project Manager at Hyundai Engineering Company, overall project completion has reached 23%, with road construction nearing 87% completion. Critical components of the project, including dam and powerhouse construction, are also progressing steadily.

"This milestone reflects our unwavering commitment to delivering the project on schedule for commissioning in 2028," said Mr. Moon. "We are working closely with Tina Hydropower Limited and the Project Office to ensure construction remains on track while adhering to sustainability and safety standards."

During the site visit, Mr. Moon guided the World Bank delegation through key areas, including the dam and powerhouse, showcasing the project's achievements to date. The collaborative efforts of all stakeholders have been instrumental in maintaining progress and ensuring the project remains aligned with its objectives.

A Transformational Initiative for the Solomon Islands

The Tina River Hydropower Development Project is a cornerstone of the Solomon Islands Government's strategy to transition to renewable energy and reduce carbon emissions. Funded and supported by a coalition of international partners, including the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development, the Asian Development Bank, the Government of Australia, the Green Climate Fund, Korea EX-IM Economic Development Cooperation Fund, and the World Bank, the project represents a significant investment in the nation's sustainable development.

Upon completion, the hydropower facility is expected to deliver long-term economic and environmental benefits, including lower energy costs, reduced greenhouse gas emissions, and enhanced energy security for the Solomon Islands.

Looking Ahead

With construction progressing as planned and strong collaboration among stakeholders, the Tina River Hydropower Project remains on course to achieve its 2028 commissioning target. This transformative initiative is poised to play a pivotal role in powering the Solomon Islands' future with clean, reliable, and affordable energy.



NET ZERO

Government targets, how are they progressing, and what needs to happen and what opportunities does that present for industry

By **DAVID SPRING**
PT COLUMNIST
Sydney, Australia

CLIMATE CHANGE is as political as it is physical. Resilience, response, adaptation, mitigation, emergency. Targets like “Net Zero by 2050” are used as slogans. The bureaucracy around it is as dense as a tropical cyclone. This article looks at what Net Zero means, how the world plans to get there, and some translations into delivery to be expected in 2025.

Net Zero or Netflix

The United Nations defines Net Zero as “cutting carbon emissions to a small amount of... emissions that can be absorbed and durably stored by nature”. This is an overall position for the world but can also be achieved by each country. In fact, the theory is that if each country targets and achieves this, then the world will also, by definition, be at Net Zero.

The mechanism for each country to hit Net Zero is by setting and achieving “Nationally Determined Contributions.” That is, contributions to reducing emissions that are self-determined, evaluated and proposed, according to what is possible, what is palatable and what is necessary.

These contributions are promises to take specific actions to reduce emissions. They are typically grouped by sector to enable comparison and implementation. There is much more to it than simply building solar and hydro as part of the energy transition. Agriculture and its subsectors, tourism, commercial/residential, and transport are key. Transport is typically focussed

on transportation (emissions), rather than infrastructure. Health, water, waste management, ICT, governance, gender inclusion, policy, finance are also a focus. These sectors are genuine contributors to emissions reduction, not simply an afterthought to promote Pacific Island beauty like a Netflix documentary.

What did the Pacific COP?

In the array of COP29 commitments, all the focus was on the “Loss and Damage” reparations – essentially compensation from the most developed to the least developed countries, to assuage climate guilt and help prepare the latter to deal with the effects. Again, politics, with economic consequences. Across Melanesian countries, Loss and Damage requests range from estimates of USD 20m to 900m in any one year, depending on the disasters encountered.

However, the amount received by a country is not a one-to-one payment for damage repair and loss reparation – it is a proactive receipt of funds to mitigate future climate impacts. As operationalised under the UN climate framework, these amounts contribute to capacity building and financing to deal with the practical effects of climate change – administration, setting up reparation frameworks, micro-insurance and finance schemes and displacement resettlement.

The funding will be administered through the climate funds, as it is only accredited entities in each country who can develop and prepare proposals for the climate funds (such as the Green Climate Fund (GCF)). In the Pacific, most government ministries, even climate change ministries, are not accredited

agencies. This is usually because part of the criteria to qualify as an accredited entity is financial management and governance integrity, which for some governments is intentionally opaque. Organisations such as Save the Children and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) are accredited and operate across the Pacific, but may well have different priorities to national governments. Thus, there is a potential disconnect between the planned contributions as laid out in the national plans and the proposals that accredited entities will promote and get approved.

National co-ordination is needed as well as an alignment of priorities with capacity – capacity to develop and implement

projects and funding to maintain and operate them. There's no point in building a new micro hydro system that operates for a few years, only to fall into disrepair and emissions reduction gains to be reversed.

Nationally determined capital works ahead

Imperfect as the system is, how are industry leaders translating the national plans into actual hard project for 2025? Renewable energy projects are the 'chunkiest' for designers and contractors who are hungry to contribute. Solomon Islands have the topography and rainfall for hydro power, with several either under construction or planned. Planned projects are tabled:

Project	Capacity	Province	Capacity (kW)	Mitigation Potential (tCO ₂ e) Annually
Luembalele River	190	1,065.22	750,000	Feasibility
Huro River	120	672.77	550,000	Feasibility
Mase River	1,750	9,811.2	4,000,000	Feasibility
Sorave River	200	1,121.28	600,000	Prefeasibility
Rori River	300	1,681.92	750,000	Feasibility
Vila River	1,210	6,783.74	4,000,000	Prefeasibility
SOLAR GRID CONNECT				
Kakabona Solar PV	1000	1401.6	4,000,000	Feasibility
OFF-GRID SOLAR –DIESEL HYBRID SYSTEMS				
10 Boarding Schools	1600	1160.8	6,000.000	Prefeasibility
OFF-GRID SOLAR –DIESEL HYBRID SYSTEMS				
Whole Country	Various & Regulating imports of electrical appliances	10%	various	Feasibility by 2035
Solomon Water seven pump stations (6 Honiara based and 1 Auki based stations)	7617.6kWh	325.91	218,982	Feasibility
GEO THERMAL				
Savo Geothermal	20,000-40,000	224,256.00	150,000,000	Prelim Assessment

Source: Table 3, Solomon Islands 2021 Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology. Note: "Province" column likely to be intended to be a Cost column, perhaps in USD '000s

Vanuatu's focus for renewables is for household solar in off-grid areas and conversion from diesel fuel to copra oil fuel by upgrading existing urban electricity generation infrastructure. Fiji's single largest emissions source in 2013 was the energy sector, and they set a target to reduce this by 30%. Fiji already has a number of large dams, providing drinking water and power generation and will look to this again, as well as wind power, following the successful Butoni Wind Farm approximately 10 years ago.

Next are water projects. Solomon Water have a large and

ongoing program of works. Mele, a peri-urban area of Port Vila has an intermittent water shortage problem which is being developed by actors outside of the 'accredited entity' family. This highlights the opportunity for unsolicited bids to those entities, for worthy projects. Luganville in Santo has an ADB water supply project underway to address current needs – this has been expanded to take in additional aspects of climate resilience.

This is just part of the work that needs to be done to enable the world to adapt with equality – it is as political as it is physical.



Hon. Rexson Ramofafia, and the EU Ambassador, H.E. Ms. Barbara Plinkert.

A New Dawn for Solomon Islands: Strategic Partnerships and Sustainable Development

APAC MEDIA

The recent meeting between Solomon Islands' Minister for National Planning and Development Coordination, Hon. Rexson Ramofafia, and the European Union's Ambassador, Her Excellency Ms. Barbara Plinkert, marks a pivotal moment in the nation's journey toward sustainable development. Held on the sidelines of the Honiara Summit on February 26, the discussions underscored the importance of international collaboration in addressing critical infrastructure and energy needs. But beyond the diplomatic formalities, this meeting signals a broader shift in how the Solomon Islands is positioning itself for a more prosperous and self-reliant future.

At the heart of the discussions was the confirmation of EU funding for two transformative projects: a water and sanitation initiative in Honiara and the construction of the Fiu bridge in Malaita. These projects, long-awaited by local communities, are not just about improving infrastructure—they are about enhancing the quality of life for Solomon Islanders and laying the groundwork for economic growth. The funding, secured through the European Investment Bank (EIB), is a testament to the EU's commitment to supporting the Solomon Islands' development agenda.

However, the significance of this meeting extends far beyond these two projects. Minister Ramofafia and Ambassador Plinkert explored broader funding opportunities and reinforced strategic partnerships, emphasizing the need to align EU development assistance with national priorities. This alignment is crucial. Too often, development aid is dispersed without a clear connection to the recipient country's long-term goals. By ensuring that EU support dovetails with the Solomon Islands' priorities, both parties are setting a precedent for more effective and impactful development cooperation.

One of the most promising outcomes of the meeting was the focus on the Bina Harbor Tuna processing plant. This project, which has been in the pipeline for years, is now being fast-tracked as part of the government's preparations to graduate from the Least Developed Country (LDC) category. The tuna industry holds immense potential for the Solomon Islands, and the Bina Harbor project could be a game-changer, driving economic growth and creating much-needed jobs. The government's commitment to allocating SBD 100 million (approximately USD 10 million) annually from next year's budget underscores the project's strategic importance.

Equally noteworthy is the emphasis on renewable energy. Minister Ramofafia's announcement of targeted amendments to the Electricity Act is a bold step toward creating a more enabling environment for renewable energy projects. By removing punitive clauses and streamlining regulatory oversight, the government is signaling its readiness to embrace clean energy solutions. The Tina Hydro project, already a success story, serves as a testament to what can be achieved when political will meets strategic planning. Yet, as the Minister rightly pointed out, legal reforms are essential to unlocking the full potential of renewable energy in the Solomon Islands.

Ambassador Plinkert's reaffirmation of the EU's commitment to sustainable development in the Solomon Islands is both encouraging and timely. Her announcement that EURO 10 million remains available under the current funding cycle provides a tangible opportunity to accelerate progress on key projects. However, as she noted, the devil is in the details. It is now up to both parties to ensure that these funds are deployed effectively and transparently.

What makes this meeting particularly significant is its focus on inclusivity. Minister Ramofafia's insistence on extending infrastructure development beyond Honiara reflects a commitment to equitable growth. Too often, development efforts are concentrated in urban centers, leaving rural areas behind. By prioritizing projects like the Fiu bridge and exploring new funding avenues for rural infrastructure, the government is taking a more holistic approach to development—one that benefits all Solomon Islanders.

As the Solomon Islands navigates the complexities of development, partnerships like the one with the EU will be critical. But equally important is the government's willingness to take bold steps, whether through legislative reforms or strategic investments. The road ahead is not without challenges, but the discussions between Minister Ramofafia and Ambassador Plinkert offer a glimpse of what is possible when vision, commitment, and collaboration converge.

This is not just a story of funding and projects; it is a story of hope and resilience. It is a reminder that, even in the face of daunting challenges, progress is possible. For the Solomon Islands, this meeting represents a new dawn—a chance to build a future that is not only prosperous but also sustainable and inclusive. The world is watching, and the time to act is now.

Australia's New SBD\$230 Million Education Program SET to go

HONIARA, SOLOMON ISLANDS [15 January 2025] – Australia's new eight-year SBD230 million (AUD 44 million) Stronger Education Together (SET) program was launched today, Wednesday, 15 January 2025, with the signing of a partnership agreement between the Governments of Solomon Islands and Australia.

The Minister of Education and Human Resources Development (MEHRD), Honourable Tozen Leokana and the Australian High Commissioner, His Excellency Rod Hilton, signed the agreement, formalising the commitment of both countries to implement this ambitious new program under the broader Solomon Islands-Australia Education Partnership.

The eight-year program aims to improve equitable school access and enhance the quality of education across Solomon Islands.

The investment will assist MEHRD to deliver critical school infrastructure, increase its strategic management capability, and improve teacher training facilities at Solomon Islands National University (SINU) to better equip teachers with critical skills. The program will also support non-governmental organisations to meet the needs of school children with disabilities more effectively.

In his remarks at the signing ceremony, Minister Leokana said the signing of the new program is a testament to the partnership between Solomon Islands and Australia in the education sector and both Governments' commitment to increase access to quality education for all children in Solomon Islands.

"As we embark on this transformative journey, collaboration will be key. We must work together across government, communities and development partners to create a brighter, more inclusive future for all our children.

"With the support of Australia and other partners, we can ensure that

education remains a powerful driver of growth, equality and harmony across our nation," he said.

High Commissioner Hilton highlighted that building a stronger Solomon Islands – Australia education relationship at all levels is a priority for Australia.

"Over the past 18 months we have sat around the table with you, to tok stori, to reflect, to listen and learn about your vision for delivering a stronger education system, one that can equip the students of today with the skills and knowledge they need to address the challenges of tomorrow. I am very proud to announce that today, we are committing significant new resources to help make this vision a reality," he said.

The intention is to focus Australian support on delivering quality education infrastructure across the Solomon Islands, strengthen pre-service teacher training, and provide long- and short-term training opportunities aligned with Solomon Islands' skills needs.

Australia has been Solomon Islands' most significant and longest-standing partner in the education sector for over 20 years, supporting a range of investments and institutions.

From 2020 to 2025, the Solomon Islands Education Sector Support Program (ESSP) has been Australia's flagship basic education program – delivered in partnership with MEHRD and New Zealand and is due for completion in March this year.

The new SET program will build on the achievements and lessons learned from ESSP, strengthening Australia's support to Solomon Islands, and reaffirming its commitment to improve basic education outcomes for all.

Government to Allocate \$50M-\$100M Annually for Critical Development Projects Starting in 2026

IN A BOLD move to prioritize the development of key national development projects, the Government for National Unity and Transformation (GNUT) has announced plans to allocate between \$50 million and \$100 million annually for critical national development projects starting in 2026. This allocation, part of the government's broader development budget, marks a significant step in ensuring the successful execution of priority national projects.

Prime Minister Hon. Jeremiah Manele, MP, unveiled the plan during a Press Conference over the weekend, highlighting the government's determination to play a leading role in the funding of infrastructure projects before seeking support from external donors.

"As a government, it is imperative that we demonstrate our own commitment to our priority projects. We firmly believe that before approaching our donor partners, we must first invest in these vital projects ourselves."

The annual allocation, slated to begin in 2026, will directly support major development projects critical to the nation's development. Among GNUT's key projects are the Bina Harbour Tuna Processing Plant, the Dala to Atori road, and a variety of projects spanning several sectors, including Health, Agriculture, and Education. These sectors are seen as crucial to the government's long-term development plans

and should help improve living standards across the country.

Speaking to the local media, Prime Minister Manele reiterated that GNUT's strategy is not merely about seeking donor assistance, but also about demonstrating the government's genuine commitment to these initiatives.

"By making this investment, we show our donors that these projects are truly our priorities. Our financial contributions will provide the foundation for securing additional funds to bridge the financing gap necessary for the successful completion of these projects," he emphasized.

Prime Minister Manele elaborated that this approach would strengthen the government's partnerships with international donors, fostering greater collaboration and ensuring the efficient and timely implementation of projects.

He adds, the successful realization of these projects would have a far-reaching impact, benefitting all citizens and contributing to Solomon Islands overall development.

As the government moves forward with these plans, the public can expect further improvements on the allocation process and the implementation of key infrastructure projects that will shape the nation's future.

A New Dawn for Solomon Islands:

Strategic Partnerships and Sustainable Development

APAC MEDIA

Honiara, Solomon Islands – In a bold move to transform the nation's agricultural sector, Solomon Islands Finance Minister Hon. Manasseh Sogavare announced a series of significant investments during the unveiling of the 2024 budget in January. The multi-million-dollar allocations aim to revitalize rural economies, boost exports, enhance food security, and reduce reliance on imports, marking a pivotal step toward achieving the government's economic transformation agenda.

Key Investments in Agriculture

20 million to revitalize the rural economy through the Cocoa and Coconut Development Program. This initiative aims to increase cocoa exports by 50% and copra exports by 40%. Key components of the program include:

- Equipping farmers with tools for pruning, grafting, and farm maintenance.
- Training farmers on proper pruning and grafting techniques to improve bean quality.
- Providing equipment for driers and establishing regular shipping services to producing areas.
- Creating a revolving fund for local buyers and offering fuel subsidies for selected ship operators.
- Establishing nurseries for cocoa and coconut replanting.

This comprehensive approach is expected to empower farmers, boost productivity, and strengthen the export potential of these key commodities.

30 million investment has been earmarked for the establishment of an Agriculture Research Center, designed to promote agricultural excellence through advanced research and development. The center will benefit agriculture officers, farmers, the Solomon Islands National University (SINU), and external research institutions. By fostering innovation and knowledge-sharing, the government aims to enhance the growth and sustainability of the agricultural sector.

6 million to strengthen the cassava export chain, with the goal of exporting 30–40 tons of freshly frozen cassava monthly. Key initiatives under this program include:

- Establishing an out-grower scheme to support large-scale commercial cassava farming.
- Purchasing farm machinery and container refrigerator storage systems.

- Creating a revolving fund for out-grower farmers to acquire small tilling machinery.

This investment is expected to position the Solomon Islands as a competitive player in the global cassava market.

4 million to develop export treatment facilities, including vapor heat treatment (VHT) and fumigation. The program will enable the export of fresh pineapples, vegetables, spices, taro, mangoes, and melons. Specific targets include:

- Bi-monthly exports of 15–20 tons of fresh pineapples to Australia.
- Quarterly exports of 5–10 tons of mangoes, melons, and vegetables to other Pacific Island countries.
- Construction of two fumigation chambers and full operationalization of the VHT plant.

These facilities will enhance the quality and marketability of Solomon Islands' agricultural products.

20 million to strengthen the piggery and poultry sectors, with a focus on import substitution to improve food security and nutrition. Key objectives include:

- Increasing local production of eggs and meat by 30%.
- Reducing imports of eggs and meat by 30%.
- Producing 40 hectares of maize for animal feed and establishing a feed mill.
- Developing a 20,000-day-old chick egg hatchery, a national pig breeding facility, and three slaughter facilities.
- This program aims to enhance self-sufficiency and provide sustainable livelihoods for farmers.

A Vision for Economic Transformation

Minister Sogavare emphasized that these investments are critical to achieving the government's policy priorities and driving economic transformation. "Agriculture is the backbone of our economy and a key driver of rural development," he said. "These initiatives will not only boost exports and reduce imports but also create jobs, improve food security, and empower our farmers."

The government's focus on sustainable agriculture and value-added production is expected to yield long-term benefits, positioning the Solomon Islands as a competitive player in regional and global markets. By investing in infrastructure, research, and farmer support, the initiatives aim to unlock the full potential of the agricultural sector.



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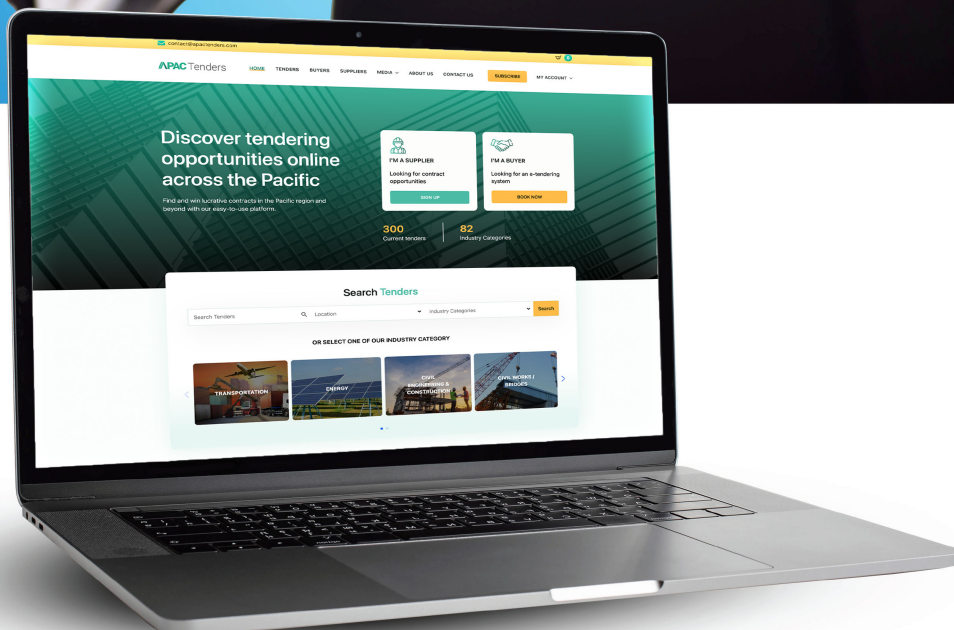
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