

Solomon Islands Field Trip Report

Building partnerships, strengthening relationships

16 June-2 July 2009

Purpose

1. **To conduct an Appraisal, Monitoring & Evaluation (AM&E) of projects funded by KOHA (NZAID) the Solomon Islands**
 - San Isidro Care Centre Development, Aruligo 09 –monitoring of current project where *Angela Murray* is serving as a deaf interpreter.
 - St Anne’s RTC, Shortland Is –monitoring of current project, where *Peter and Marie Farrell* assisted with organisational development.

2. **To follow up other Mahitahi projects 2008-09 and maintain contact with other past partners:**
 - Don Bosco Technical Institute, Henderson –where *Patricia Larsen* assisted with curriculum development.
 - St Joseph’s Secondary School, Tenaru, where *Alex Abela* is assisting with Business Management.
 - Diocese of Gizo, where *Yvonne Powley* assisted with implementation of their Pastoral Plan Sep 08.

3. **To follow up on new requests for assistance received and potential new projects:**
 - Archdiocese of Honiara- a builder for Mokaruka Parish, Weather Coast.
 - Archdiocese of Honiara, Education Authority –Vatu RTC
 - Archdiocese of Honiara Youth Development –meet new coordinator
 - Auki Diocese –Youth development Project
 - Don Bosco Technical Institute, Henderson –builder for staff houses, and to teach carpentry
 - Don Bosco House of Prayer, Kola Ridge –architect to draw up new plans
 - Don Bosco RTC -Radio Programme animator, Tetere, Archdiocese of Honiara.
 - Christ the King Parish, Tetere –builder for new Sisters’ house.
 - Good Samaritan Hospital, Tetere, Guadalcanal –primary health care professionals
 - Aruligo Care Centre, electrician to install a new generator
 - Women’s Development Office, Gizo –assistance with forthcoming conference Dec 09–facilitator
 - Vanga Teachers College –educational leadership/financial management trainer
 - St Dominic’s RTC, Vanga Pt, Western Province –project manager
 - Diocese of Gizo Development Office –Village Preschools project
 - Rope Pump Project –pilots on Guadalcanal and Western Province.



Honiara –the port and main centre



Christina with volunteer Angela, Margaret and Ali

General Overview

Solomon Islands has one of the lowest sets of social and economic indicators in the Pacific region. Population growth is high (2.8% p.a.) and 40% of the population is under 15 years of age. While there have been improvements since the regional Assistance Mission restored law and order in 2003 following civil conflict there remain significant development challenges.¹

In March 2009 a new NZAID Solomon Islands Programme Strategy 2009-2018 was approved, focussing on fostering growth and improving livelihoods, education and governance, with a budget of \$33 million for the 2008/09 year.

Solomon Islands has enjoyed relatively strong economic growth in recent years, largely attributed to unsustainable harvesting of forestry, which is already declining significantly. Considerable work is being done to develop agro forestry, targeting the Rural Training Centres as an important means of delivery of the programme, including women as landowners in many parts of the country.

The Regional Assistance Mission (RAMSI) continues to ensure basic law and order is maintained, and appears to be set to remain for a few years yet as it works to assist in establishing essential structures for a functioning state. The level of dependency on aid at all levels remains high.

Goal Outcomes

1. Monitoring of KOHA funded projects

1.1 San Isidro Care Centre Development, Aruligo 09

Mahitahi volunteer *Angela Murray* (or Woodville) has been assisting as a deaf interpreter since February 2009, and is there until the end of the year. The project includes development of resources for teaching deaf students as well as training local staff in sign language. I was able to visit the centre on three occasions and stayed overnight on two occasions, allowing me plenty of opportunity to meet with Br George, the Director, other local staff, some students and also Fr Cor Hooymeyers, who is responsible for financial management of the project.

The main points of discussion were:

- The project itself –training local staff and students in sign language, development of resources for teaching in sign language, use of the laptop computer for centre management.
- The recruitment of an electrician to install a generator
- Installation of a Rope Pump for water as a pilot/demonstration model for use in rural villages.

Detailed notes were made and a copy left with Br George at Aruligo. A full report will be submitted to the Project Management Committee (PMC) of the KOHA fund.

Actions:

- Mahitahi to complete AM&E Report to the KOHA PMC.*
- Br George to return application for a volunteer electrician.*
- Mahitahi to follow up recruitment of a volunteer for the Rope Pump project.*



Br George, Margaret, Angela, Louisa, Ali and students



Angela at Aruligo

¹ NZAID/CID Pacific Meeting, Wellington 18 June 2009

1.2 St Anne's RTC, Nila, Shortland Is 09

Mahitahi volunteers *Peter and Marie Farrell* (of Putaruru) and their two young children *Evita and Lisette*, went to St Anne's at Nila from February to April 2009, assisting with organisational development and general maintenance. While the volunteer component of the project is complete, building of the new dormitory and ablution block is not set to be finished until later this year. I met with Sr Rebecca op (Principal) in Honiara before visiting the centre in the Shortland Is where I spent 3 days. On my return I also met with Beata Jio Gizo Diocese Education Officer, Placida Pita Gizo Diocese Development Officer in Gizo. I also visited St Dominic's RTC in the Western Province, which has close associations with St Anne's RTC (a brother centre), and Vanga Teachers College which works closely with the RTC's in training staff. This enabled me to not only gain a broader understanding of the local scene in which St Anne's operates, but also to make valuable contacts and develop the relationships from which future projects may emerge. A full report will be submitted to the Project Management Committee of the KOHA fund.

The main points of these discussions were:

- The project at St Anne's RTC—evaluation of the volunteers' contribution in development of the centre organisation and management systems including the new laptop and printer.
- Development of the new dormitory, largely funded by Caritas, and the need to reallocate KOHA funding for maintenance of the old ablution block towards building a new one adjacent to the new dormitory.
- Installation of a Rope Pump for water as a pilot/demonstration model for use in rural villages.

Once again, detailed notes were made and a copy left with Sr Rebecca at on the laptop at Nila. A full report will be submitted to the Project Management Committee (PMC) of the KOHA fund.

Actions:

- Mahitahi to complete AM&E Report to the KOHA PMC, with an application for variation in the budget to complete the ablution block.*
- Sr Rebecca to return application for a volunteer to install a model rope pump at St Anne's and a local village (Maleai).*



Christina, Sr Rebecca, and friends



The new dorm at St Anne's RTC, Nila

2. To follow up other Mahitahi projects 2008-09

2.1 Don Bosco Technical Institute, Henderson

Mahitahi volunteer *Patricia Larsen* (of Cheltenham) assisted with curriculum development at Don Bosco Technical Institute from April –June 2009. I was able to visit her on site just days before she was due to depart and conduct an evaluation with her and Fr Ambrose Pereira (Director). Patricia made a significant contribution particularly in the area of developing the carpentry syllabus.

Actions:

- Patricia to complete a volunteer evaluation.*
- Fr Ambrose to complete a partner evaluation.*

2.2 St Joseph's Secondary School, Tenaru

I met with volunteer *Alex Abela* (of Beach Haven, Auckland) and the Archdiocese of Honiara Education Officer Cypriano Nuake in Honiara to discuss the project at St Joseph's Secondary School where Alex is assisting with Business Management. There were significant issues with senior management at the school. Cypriano expressed his appreciation of the work Alex was doing with the Board of Management to address these issues. Alex will be there until early 2010.

Action:

- iii. *Mahitahi to obtain a copy of Quickbooks Accounting for St Joseph's.*



Chris (AVI Volunteer), Patricia and Fr Ambrose



Christina and Alex Abela

2.3 Diocese of Gizo, Pastoral Plan

In September 2008, Mahitahi volunteer *Yvonne Powley* (of Northcote, Auckland) assisted team leaders of the Diocese of Gizo with applications for funding to implement their Pastoral Plan. During this field visit I met with members of the Diocese, including Placida Pita, Development Officer, who informed me that nine of the twelve projects had been approved for funding, and the other three had been referred on to other agencies for funding. The diocese is now seeking assistance in project management.

The challenges Mahitahi faced with communicating with partners in the region who were not on email was also discussed –especially St Anne's and St Dominic's RTC and Vanga Teachers College. Placida agreed to relay messages on the Diocese daily radio schedule.

Action:

- iv. *Placida to complete an application for a project manager.*

3. Potential new projects

3.1 Archdiocese of Honiara- Mocaruka Parish, Weather Coast -builder

Archbishop Adrian Smith renewed his request for a builder to work with the local community on the weather coast to build a house and new church. Access is an issue, but a boat may be made available for the project.

Action:

- i. *Archbishop Adrian Smith to return an Assistance Request form for a volunteer*
- ii. *Mahitahi to follow up on potential volunteer.*

3.2 Archdiocese of Honiara, Education Authority–Vatu RTC -trainer

Cypriano Nuake requested assistance with development of Vatu RTC Guadalcanal. More details to be sent by email.

Action:

- iii. *Cypriano to return an Assistance Request form for a volunteer.*

3.3 Archdiocese of Honiara Youth Development –youth worker

I met with the new coordinator Michael Tahiseu from Visale, and we discuss potential new projects in peace and conflict resolution especially amongst youth. Mahitahi has had the offer of a Solomon Islander *Jeffrey Rahari* who is resident in New Zealand who has skills and experience in working with at risk youth, who may be able to assist.

Action:

iv. Mahitahi to obtain a project proposal from Jeffrey to submit to Michael. If acceptable, Mahitahi would follow the usual process for recruitment and briefing.

3.4 Auki Diocese –Youth Development Project

I met with Bishop Chris Cardone, Bishop of Auki, and discussed the potential viability of a youth project in Auki Diocese if Jeffrey were to come. Bishop Chris expressed keen interest.

Action:

v. Mahitahi to follow up with a proposal from Jeffrey Rahari.

3.5 Don Bosco Technical Institute, Henderson -builder

Fr Ambrose Pereira, Director, presented sketch plans requested for new staff houses, and requested a builder to manage the project and to teach carpentry. Students would be involved in the project. An application form has already been received.

Action:

vi. Mahitahi to advertise the position.

3.6 Don Bosco House of Prayer, Kola Ridge –architect

Fr Ambrose Pereira also took me to Kola Ridge in Honiara where the Don Bosco Foundation also have a House of Prayer where youth outreach is based. The current House of Prayer has a serious problem with white ants and needs to be replaced. Fr Ambrose requested concept plans to be drawn up by an architect so that costings and applications for funding may be made.

Action:

vii. Mahitahi to contact Tim Gisler, architect of Te Awamutu, who had completed a Mahitahi assignment in 2007, to consider this project.



New staff houses for Don Bosco Tech



The House of Prayer at Kola Ridge

3.7 Don Bosco RTC, Tetere, Archdiocese of Honiara -Radio Programme animator

Mahitahi had received a request for a Radio Programme Animator in 2008, but had not yet been able to fill this request. Fr Dominic Kachira, Parish Priest of Tetere, confirmed the need was still current, and that they had hopes of expanding the radio station range.

Action:

viii. Mahitahi to pursue recruitment of a volunteer.

3.8 Christ the King Parish, Tetere- a new Sisters' house –builder

Fr Dominic Kachira, Parish Priest of Tetere invited me to visit Tetere to discuss the request for a builder, and to view the site. The bricks for foundations were already on site.

Action:

ix. Mahitahi to advertise for a builder.

3.9 Good Samaritan Hospital, Tetere, Guadalcanal –primary health care professionals

Sr Dany (Superintendent) toured me around the new rural hospital at Tetere, and reiterated her eagerness to have the assistance of any health professionals, especially in primary health care.

Action:

x. Sr Dany to return an Assistance Request form for a volunteer.



Site for the new sisters house, Tetere



Sr Dany at Good Samaritan Hospital

3.10 Aruligo Care Centre - electrician

Br George requested an electrician to install a new generator donated to Aruligo by the British High Commission. The concrete pad had already been prepared. An Assistance Request form was received before I left. Mahitahi has an electrician on the data base.

Action:

xi. Mahitahi to pursue recruitment of a volunteer.



A generator similar to the one to be installed at Aruligo ...



and the site for it.

3.11 Women's Development Office, Gizo –conference facilitator

Beata Jio, Gizo Diocese Office, expressed interest in a volunteer assisting in facilitating a women's development conference scheduled for December 2009 at Moli, Choiseul Province (Gizo Diocese). Mahitahi has a women's development professional on the data base.

Action:

xii. Mahitahi to pursue recruitment of a volunteer.

3.12 Vanga Teachers College –educational leadership/financial management trainer

I visited Vanga Teachers College, Western Province, which was established with EU funding in 2002 to train teachers for rural training centres. I had met with its Principal Miri Taqu in 2006, and met with her again in Honiara on this visit. Of particular concern was the future of the College as the contract with the Gizo Diocese has expired in 2008, and a new contract had not yet been signed by the Bishop. The College had not accepted any new enrolments in 2009, but had been allowed to complete the training for the 2008 intake (it was a two year course).

Miri explained that all parties in the sector, principals of rural training centres including St Anne's and St Dominic's, the Ministry of Education, and the Gizo Education Authority were anxious that the new contract would not be signed, or that its vision to train RTC teachers, not technical/vocational training, might be compromised. The absence of the Bishop, overseas at the time, heightened the concern. Because of my particular interest and background in education for rural development, Miri suggested I meet with the appropriate officer of the Ministry of Education to see if I could assist with the negotiation process, which I did. Subsequently an amended Memorandum of Agreement has been drafted, hopefully acceptable to all parties.

If this is signed, and the College reopens for 2010, Miri has asked for a volunteer to assist with the final module of training for the prospective graduates for 2009, in education leadership and financial management. Mahitahi has a potential volunteer on the data base.

Action:

xiii. Miri to return an Assistance Request form for a volunteer.

3.13 St Dominic's RTC, Vanga Pt, Western Province – project manager

I was privileged to be hosted by St Dominic's for a weekend, and viewed considerable developments there since my last visit in 2006, namely the new office, the first of four new dormitories (147 students in total), several new staff houses, the refurbished church, a new primary school and kindergarten, the portable sawmill work, the honey project, and more. Philemon Ruia (Principal) asked for a project manager to assist in training a staff member Br Finan in project management. Forms were left on the centre computer to be completed and returned.

Action:

xiv. Philemon to return an Assistance Request form for a volunteer.



Vanga Pt –St Dominic's RTC



Miri Taqu, Principal of Vanga Teachers College



3.14 Diocese of Gizo Development Office –Village Preschools project

I met with Placida Pita, Development Officer at Gizo Diocese who described a diocesan project to develop 6-8 kindergartens in the region. The possibility of using these as the base for development of village preschools was discussed. Placida would keep Mahitahi posted on developments.

3.15 Rope Pump Project –pilots at Aruligo, St Anne's RTC, Shortland Is, and St Dominic's RTC Vanga Pt Western Province.

Mahitahi has had the offer of a water engineer, Kees Meindarts of Morrinsville, who has experience in installing simple rope pumps in villages in Africa as a solution to raising water where wells are used. I showed pictures of a functioning pump to several people who may be interested, at Aruligo, St Anne's RTC, Maleai Village, Shortland Is, and St Dominic's RTC Vanga Pt Western Province. If any of the potential partners wish to pursue this, they need to return an assistance request form.

Action:

xv. Any potential partners to return an Assistance Request form for the volunteer.



The Rope Pump –in NZ



A more costly manual pump, at Loga



Maleai Village interested in the rope pump

Conclusion

This 2 ½ weeks was once again very full, having met with approximately twenty partners, some with several projects or assignments in mind. It is evident that the success of past projects is generating a momentum that is self-perpetuating. The challenge is to ensure the focus remains on local capacity building rather than increasing dependency on external assistance, but in general partners have responded well to this principle.

It is interesting to note that while we endeavour to increase the level of funding from NZAID (through the KOHA fund), and are grateful for that assistance, a significant proportion of our projects will remain independent as they would be seen as “building church structures”, regardless of the fact that in many cases these church agencies (the religious orders, parishes, schools or Diocese agencies) work directly or indirectly for community development. It is therefore necessary to maintain independent funding as well.

Finally, our pool of potential volunteers continues to grow, both in number and in quality, enabling me to respond to an increasingly wide range of potential project requests. Our challenge is to extend this to regions not yet reached, both within the Solomon Islands and in the wider Melanesian Pacific. As always, we go where God leads, and only God knows where.

Christina Reymer

Director

28 July 2009