

EVALUATION OF THE YOUTH@WORK PROGRAM SOLOMON ISLANDS

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PACIFICLEADERSHIP
P R O G R A M
An initiative of the Australian aid program

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	Executive Summary.....	7
2	Background.....	10
2.1	The Solomon Islands Labour Market Context.....	10
2.2	The Youth@Work Program.....	10
3	Overview of Evaluation.....	11
3.1	Purpose of the Evaluation.....	11
3.2	Approach and Methodology.....	11
3.3	Limitations of the Evaluation.....	12
4	Key Findings from the Qualitative Review.....	13
4.1	How Y@W has developed.....	13
4.2	The Main Program Benefits so far.....	16
4.2.1	What differences have been attributed to the program?.....	16
4.2.2	Views of young program participants on the value of the program.....	17
4.2.3	Views of employers re value of internships through Y@W program.....	20
4.2.4	Views of government on the value of Y@W and YEP.....	22
4.2.5	Views of development partners on the program.....	23
4.3	Challenges and Lessons Learned.....	23
4.3.1	Solomon Islands macro economy and the labour market	23
4.3.2	Program specific challenges	24
4.4	Program Implementation in Provinces.....	26
4.4.1	Program experience so far in Choiseul province	26
4.4.2	Program extension to Malaita	28
4.5	Other Youth Employment Programs.....	30
5	Key Findings of the Cost Benefit Analysis.....	31
5.1	Overview.....	31
5.2	Outline of the Cost Benefit Analysis.....	31
5.3	Benefits.....	32
5.3.1	Private benefits.....	32
5.3.2	Social Benefits.....	38
5.3.3	Employer benefits.....	38
5.4	Costs.....	39
5.4.1	Private costs.....	39
5.4.2	Social costs.....	39
5.4.3	Program costs.....	39
5.4.4	Costs of the Y@W program in Choiseul.....	44
5.4.5	Could Y@W increase the stipend for interns?.....	45
5.5	Value for Money.....	46
5.6	Social Impact Assessment.....	46
5.6.1	Gender.....	46
5.6.2	Disability.....	47
5.6.3	Socio economic group.....	47
5.6.4	Age.....	48
5.6.5	Rural Areas	49
5.7	Comparison with Other Unemployment Schemes.....	49
5.7.1	Labour mobility schemes.....	49
5.7.2	Rapid Employment Project (REP) World Bank.....	50
5.8	Final Considerations.....	50
6	Conclusions.....	52
6.1	Program Effectiveness.....	52
6.2	Opportunities for Further Program Strengthening.....	52
6.2.1	Program design.....	52
6.2.2	Strategic oversight of the program.....	52
6.2.3	Program management.....	52
6.2.4	Training and mentorship.....	53
6.2.5	Increased links with other job creation employment schemes.....	53
6.3	Sustainability.....	53
6.4	Program monitoring.....	54
6.5	Recommendations.....	55

FIGURES

1.	Employment outcomes from Tracer Study One	33
2.	A snapshot of employment effects from Tracer Study Three	34
3.	Employment effects from Tracer Study Four	34
4.	Employment effects from Tracer Study Five	35
5.	Employment rate of Y@W comparison against the Counterfactual	36
6.	Costs of the Y@W program, Honiara, May 2012 - August 2013	40
7.	Costs of the Y@W program, Honiara, June - December 2013	41
8.	Percentage share of costs for Y@W program in Honiara, 2014	42
9.	Costs of the Y@W program, Honiara, 2015	43
10.	Costs of the Y@W program, Choiseul, 2014	44
11.	Costs of the Y@W program, Choiseul, January - June, 2015	45
12.	Employment by Gender	46
13.	Y@W program participants by Gender, Honiara	47
14.	Phase One Participants by Age	48
15.	Phase Two Participants by Age	48

TABLES

1.	Employment rate by age for Solomon Islands	35
2.	Unemployment rate by age for Solomon Islands	35
3.	Employment rate of Y@W comparison against the Counterfactual	36
4.	Costs of the Y@W program, Honiara, May 2012 - August 2013	40
5.	Costs of the Y@W program, Honiara, June - December 2013	41
6.	Costs of the Y@W program, Honiara, 2014	42
7.	Budget for the Y@W program in Honiara, 2015	43
8.	Costs of the Y@W program, Choiseul, 2014	44
9.	Costs of the Y@W program, Choiseul, 2015	45

ANNEXES

1.	Evaluation Terms of Reference	58
2.	List of Stakeholders Consulted	61
3.	Summary feedback from participant focus groups in Taro, Choiseul	61
4.	Example of community service activities for YEPs in Choiseul	62
5.	List of Employers of interns, Honiara	63

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AusAID	Australian Aid program within DFAT (see below)
AUD	Australian dollars
CCA	Climate Change Adaptation
CHICCHAP	Development partners in Choiseul province: Provincial Forestry Division, Provincial Fisheries Division, SPC, SWoCK, SPREP, GIZ, SIWSAP, UNDP, RDP, LLCTC.
CV	Curriculum Vitae
DFAT	Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIZ	German company that specializes in international development
ILO	International Labour Organisation
INGO	International Non Government Organisation
LMU	Labour Mobility Unit
MCT	Ministry of Culture and Tourism
MCIE	Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Employment
MEHR	Ministry of Education and Human Resources
MFAET	Ministry for Foreign Affairs and External Trade
MNDPAC	Ministry of National Development, Planning and Aid Coordination
MWYCA	Ministry of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs
MNURP	Ministry of National Unity, Reconciliation and Peace
NCD	Non Communicable Disease
NGO	Government Organisation
PHARMA	Pacific Horticultural Market Access program
PLP	Pacific leadership Program
REP	Rapid Employment Programme (World Bank)
RSE	Recognized Seasonal Employees program (New Zealand)
SBD	Solomon Islands dollar
SI	Solomon Islands
SIG	Solomon Islands Government
SPC	South Pacific Commission
SPCSICPM	SPC Solomon Islands Country Programme Manager
SPREP	Secretariat of Pacific Regional Environment Programme
SWP	Seasonal Workers Program (Australia)
TOR	Terms of Reference
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
USAID	United States Aid program
Y@W	Youth@Work program
YEP	Youth Entrepreneurs Program
YOSI	Youth of Solomon Islands magazine

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Youth@Work (Y@W) program is a practical response to the growing issue of youth unemployment, a key national development priority for the Solomon Islands Government (SIG). It provides youth with training, practical experience and support to increase their potential for workforce participation. The majority of urban participants join the internship stream. They are trained in work related skills and key development issues and are assigned to work placements for up to six months. Provincial youth and some young people from Honiara participate in the Youth Entrepreneurship Program (YEP) component. Rather than taking on an internship, they receive additional training to help them to start their own business and can apply for a small startup grant in the form of materials. From the program's inception it was intended that all participants would have access to mentoring and relevant follow up resources. However this has been difficult to achieve.

The initiative is operating within a challenging economic and social environment. Solomon Islands faces some significant challenges in trying to address issues of youth employment and facilitating the active involvement of the nation's youth in sustainable development. Within this context Y@W is making a difference to the lives of hundreds of young Solomon Islanders. It has been especially effective in providing them with new knowledge about a wide range of topics of relevance to their own future and to the development of their country; as well as expanding both their personal and basic work related skills. Training and practical experience provided through workplace internships and village YEP placements have contributed to multiple benefits for young people in both Honiara and Choiseul province.

The Program is helping to improve youth attitudes and behaviour; enhancing their appreciation of their own value and the contribution that they can make within their communities; opening up their minds to new ideas and possibilities for their own future; and motivating many to pursue further study. For a number it has also led to employment. A 'snapshot' of Y@W participants from March 2015 shows that at the end of their internship 31% of youth surveyed were still employed, many with their original internship host.

Employers of interns greatly appreciate the service provided through Y@W. They report that interns are willing to learn and are making a useful contribution. They note that with the help of the preparatory training provided by Y@W the interns are often more 'work ready' than staff that they have recruited through other channels. Community members from some of the villages from which young people have participated in YEP are also very satisfied. They note the broader social benefits that have been achieved, providing examples of youth sharing the new information and skills that they have learned about agroforestry, conservation, fisheries, nutrition and healthcare with other village members; and of the YEPs taking more initiative than before and playing a more active role in community development.

Similarly representatives from national and provincial government departments attribute a variety of benefits for youth, families and the wider community to both Y@W and YEP. Likewise, representatives from development partners and NGOs have commented on the success of these initiatives in helping to address some of the critical issues facing Solomon Island youth today. These activities are giving young people hope, confidence, dignity and a purpose and participants are discovering how they might make a meaningful contribution to the future of their country. This clearly has wider social impacts for Solomon Islands society.

Y@W has many strengths including strong program management support from SPC; established links with many Government Ministries; commitment from development partners; an enthusiastic youth team is implementing it; and it has built good connections within the private and NGO sectors. The program fits well with SIG's youth policy framework that includes a focus on improving youth education and employment opportunities and engaging youth in sustainable development. A key factor that has led to the success of the initiative so far is that Y@W responds to the aspirations of youth for workplace training and experience. The needs of rural youth who want to expand their knowledge and practice in income generation are also being addressed.

Considerable groundwork has now been laid to try to address significant youth employment and engagement concerns that are critical to the future of Solomon Islands. This Evaluation has facilitated a comprehensive review of Y@W implementation to date with a view to building on this experience to further enhance the program's longer-term impacts. Opportunities for program strengthening have been identified. These are listed below. Y@W is now well placed to continue to build a good practice model that will make a valuable contribution to the lives of Solomon Island youth who are so critical to the future of this nation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Following is a list of suggested actions that should be undertaken to further enhance the effectiveness of Y@W program implementation and the achievement of longer-term development outcomes.

Strategic level actions

A. Revisit the program's Theory of Change within the broader context of youth education, vocational training and employment, and the labour market situation in Solomon Islands. Clarify the program's primary purpose and document its Program Logic identifying the core program components that should be pursued to achieve the program goal. This will include strategic discussion about whether the goal is to establish a youth employment scheme with a labour market focus or to impact more broadly on youth development. Whether the program should be proactively targeted towards engaging more disadvantaged and vulnerable youth or young people more broadly should be determined.

In line with developing this more strategic approach, the program should retain an ability to provide a flexible response towards achieving the program goal. The challenge of 'testing out' new program strategies that have a potential to contribute towards the development of an innovative program model, while at the same time ensuring that each new activity is appropriated resourced and implemented effectively, will need to be carefully managed.

An experienced program design expert with experience in youth (and community) development to work alongside key stakeholders should be engaged to undertake this task, with input from a development labour market economist. This would help to ensure the development of a robust program model. (See also 6.2.1).

B. Establish a Strategic Advisory Group to determine the overarching purpose of this program and its Theory of Change (as outlined above) and to direct the program going forward. This Group should include high-level delegates from relevant SIG ministries who have sufficient time and a passion for this cause; people with demonstrated experience and strong commitment to youth development; and external partners. Input from youth advocates from the NGO and private sectors, tertiary institutes and vocational training providers and those with labour market expertise should be sought. Youth participation in this Group should be a priority. (See also 6.2.2).

Representatives from the following Ministries should be invited to participate: The Ministry of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs; The Ministry of National Unity, Reconciliation and Peace; the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Employment; the Ministry of Education and Human Resources; the Ministry of Culture and Tourism; and the Ministry of National Development, Planning and Aid Coordination. Given that the central focus of this program is on youth, consideration could be given to nominating MWYCA as the lead ministry.

Program level actions

C. Increase efforts to build a strong and capable staff team to implement Y@W in both in Honiara and provincial areas. In particular, strengthen the program management capacity of staff in leadership roles. Provide training for key leaders in youth and community development as well. This training input should be supplemented with ongoing, high standard mentorship for Group Leaders. (See also 6.2.3).

D. Strengthen and better resource the youth training and mentorship components for both Y@W interns and YEP participants. Provide all youth with enhanced follow-up services and access to further work related training resources. Ongoing mentorship support from people who have established a successful business would be especially beneficial for youth entrepreneurs who have undertaken the initial business training and seek to setup their own enterprise. (See also 6.2.4).

E. Identify strategies to enhance the participant's experience of program quality, benefits and outcomes. This includes reducing the number of participants (in the internship component in particular) in each phase and increase the length of internships and YEP placements (but not necessarily standardise them). Strengthen monitoring both during after Y@W and YEP placements, ensuring that the participant perspective is heard. Consider raising the youth internship allowance thereby increasing the financial and economic benefits for interns. Currently the allowance barely covers transport costs. Consider asking employers to make a small financial contribution towards the internship stipend. (See also 4.2.2, p.18; 4.2.3 and 5.3.3).

- F. Engage a Gender specialist** to work with the Gender and Inclusion Group Leader to conduct a gender audit of Y@W and to develop a 12-month action plan to address significant barriers to the full participation of women in the program. Consideration could also be given to undertaking similar dedicated investigations and planning with respect to increasing the involvement of other disadvantaged youth cohorts, eg. young people with a disability, juveniles. See also p. 19, p. 28 and Section 5.6).
- G. Ensure that sufficient time is given to plan program establishment in Malaita.** This includes following up the initial investigation that was undertaken during the scoping visit that took place in October. This will require more in-depth discussions with provincial authorities and NGOs that have experience in youth income generating activities; and training new Malaita based staff alongside their Honiara colleagues during the first quarter of 2016. (See also 4.4.2).
- H. Identify strategies to build program sustainability** during the strategic level discussions outlined above and incorporate these in ongoing program implementation. Regularly monitor the progress being made towards building national ownership. This includes strengthening the active engagement of SIG and representatives from other relevant local sectors; integration of program activities with national priorities and management structures; and appropriate capacity development support to strengthen Y@W management and staff. (See also 6.3).

Monitoring and Evaluation

- I. Align the program's M&E Framework with the agreed program logic.** Adjust the initial data collection methods and instruments in line with this Framework to ensure that regular and periodic monitoring activities produce the most useful information to inform the further development of the program. An Evaluation specialist in liaison with the program Coordinator and the General Manager of Pasifiki should facilitate this. Input from a development economist with experience of labour market interventions and youth entrepreneurship initiatives would be helpful. Training of program staff in data collection, management and analysis should be conducted and opportunities to involve selected interns in some data collection and analysis activities should be explored. (See also 6.4).

Specific actions to build a good practice youth employment model

- J. Increase Linkages with other employment programs.** Link Y@W to broader labour market policies and strategies, and coordinate with other labour market interventions such as the Seasonal Workers Program and the Recognized Seasonal Employers scheme. Reducing youth unemployment has two main elements. One is to improve the work place skills (labour supply) and the second is to increase the number of young workers demanded by employers (labour demand) through job creation schemes. Y@W already addresses the labour supply aspect. If the program's goal is to reduce youth unemployment then further activities and partnerships concerned with job creation are essential in the long run. Linking with the Labour Mobility Unit in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade to supply a 'work ready' pool of youth offers significant potential going forward. While there is already a private sector recruitment agent model for the RSE this should not preclude greater linkages between the programs. The private sector recruitment agents would benefit from having a 'work ready' pool of labour.
- K. Conduct more investigation on the potential substitution effects and long run saturation of the labour market.** Further evaluation and labour market analysis is needed on substitution of permanent work placements with unpaid Y@W interns. Some employers have reported that if Y@W did not exist they would have taken on more permanent workers at higher wages. More in-depth investigation is also required concerning the potential long run saturation of the labour market. Formal sector employment in Solomon Islands is small and the number of internships will have an upper limit. This matter will impact on program outcomes and long-term sustainability.
- L. Positive employment outcomes are unclear and need more investigation.** As it stands key program objectives of Y@W are increased employment for youth leading to improved livelihoods. Currently the employment rate snapshots of Y@W interns from the Tracer Studies are lower than or virtually the same as the employment rates for the Solomon Islands' population as a whole (aged 15-24¹). Surprisingly this would suggest that Y@W is having little or no effect on the employment prospects of interns. More investigation of this should be undertaken by a labour economist to determine whether the program is actually achieving benefits relating to employment. N.B. The above recommendations may need to be re-sequenced (and possibly revised) in light of the redevelopment of the Theory of Change and program logic.

¹ Close S. (2012) 'Skills for Solomon Islanders - Opening new opportunities', World Bank, Sydney.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Solomon Islands Labour Market Context

Y@W has been operating in unique circumstances. Solomon Islands is characterised by high levels of subsistence, unemployment, low levels of formal sector employment and a dramatic youth bulge. On the latest Human Development Index (2014)² Solomon Islands was classified as having 'poor' human development, at 157th out of 187 countries. Approximately 22.7% of people suffer basic needs poverty according to UNDP, while food poverty is 10.7%. Urban households in Honiara suffer from disproportionate levels of poverty, with almost one in three people unable to afford a basic minimum standard of living. Poverty in rural areas is 19%.

Most Solomon Islanders engage in a combination of agriculture, subsistence activities, cash or barter exchange and informal small business activity (either as part time employees or business owners). In Honiara, many individuals are employed part time or as casuals by small business operating informally. Many others generate income through a range of informal and part time business trading opportunities, such as operating a temporary retail stall or selling products in the town market³. Many Solomon Islanders move between agricultural production for exchange, subsistence agriculture and informal small business activities and cannot easily be assigned to a single employment category. Those with formal employment may also engage in agricultural or subsistence activities at various times to generate additional cash income or meet various social obligations⁴.

Youth unemployment is a key issue for Solomon Islands, with some 45% of the adult population aged 15-29⁵ years. There is increasing community concern about the number of youth who leave school without 'work ready' skills; the limited availability of youth vocational training opportunities; and the rise of delinquency and alcohol and drug related problems. There is concern too about the problems associated with urban drift including youth losing touch with their traditional and family support structures in order to participate in a cash economy. Subsistence farming dominates the economy but provides very limited employment prospects for youth⁶.

These problems are significant. The Solomon Islands labour market operates under circumstances that are very different to conditions in developed countries. Despite many difficulties there is very little in the way of labour market institutions and labour market activities that address unemployment eg. improving workplace skills, 'job readiness' or job creation. Within this context Y@W has sought to make a contribution to enhance employment prospects and the lives of Solomon Island youth.

2.2 The Youth@Work Program

The Y@W program commenced in mid 2012 as the Intern/ Mentoring Program for Solomon Islands Youth⁷. It was devised by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) Solomon Islands Country Office in conjunction with the then Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of National Unity, Reconciliation and Peace and Pacific Leadership Program (PLP) Advisory Panel member, Mrs Joy Kere. An initial pilot phase (July 2012-December 2013) was primarily funded by Australia through PLP.

Y@W is a practical response to the growing issue of youth unemployment, a key national development priority for the Solomon Islands Government (SIG). It provides internships combined with training in work related skills and key development issues, together with mentoring support. The program aims to fill a critical gap in youth employment by placing young people (many of whom had been 'pushed out' of formal schooling) into a career pathway that leads to paid work or to starting their own business. It is implemented by SPC and funded by a range of donor partners including the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Plan International Australia, and most recently, the UK-based Diamond Jubilee Trust for the Queen's Young Leaders Programme. PLP has continued to support Y@W since its inception and currently funds the monitoring and evaluation/tracer study component.

At the time of this Review the initiative had operated for more than three years. It has been adapted and expanded significantly over time in response to challenges faced and lessons learned. Circumstances that contributed to this evolution are discussed in Section 4.1 below. To date some 2000 young people have participated in the Y@W internship program and many more have had business opportunities through YEP and an allied monthly Youth Market.

This adaptive process has led to a range of innovations to provide alternatives to formal job placements for increasing numbers of young people keen to join the program, and respond to the challenge of sourcing sufficient placements for participants in the internship stream. A range of sub-activities such as NCD Warriors and a YOSI Magazine have been developed. Furthermore the program now has a focus on disability inclusion (Y@W PLUS) funded by Plan International Australia. More recently another component (Y@W CHOICE) with a focus on juveniles who have been in prison has been added. The program also has a provincial focus. It was expanded to Choiseul in 2014 and there are plans to set up program activity in Malaita next year.

²www.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr14-report-en-1.pdf

³World Bank (2015). 'Well being from Work in the Pacific Island Countries', World Bank East Asia and Pacific Regional Report .

⁴World Bank (2015). Ibid.

⁵Curtain, R. Review and Analysis for the demand for skills in the Solomon Islands Labour Market (2013).

⁶World Bank (2015). Ibid.

⁷Grant Funding Agreement, Australian Aid/Pacific Leadership Program. Dated 23 May 2012.

3 OVERVIEW OF EVALUATION

3.1 Purpose of the Evaluation

Key objectives for this study are outlined in the Evaluation Terms of Reference (TOR) provided in Annex 1. In summary these are to:

- Document what is unique about the Y@W program and the context in which it has emerged.
- Analyse the effectiveness and efficiency of the Y@W model and program.
- Identify lessons learned from implementation; key risks and opportunities for the going forward; and provide recommendations to further enhance ongoing Program delivery and results.

3.2 Approach and Methodology

The Evaluation is underpinned by a strengths based approach with a focus on identifying: what has worked well; the key factors that have contributed to this success; the main challenges that have been overcome; and how program activities and results could be further enhanced in a future phase. Incorporation of this approach sets the scene for a positive and proactive dialogue with respondents and allows them the freedom to discuss any shortcomings that they think may have impeded program implementation and effectiveness. Collection of this feedback from a wide range of stakeholders (see Annex 2) will assist the Evaluation Team to make informed judgments to answer the research issues listed above.

The evaluation has been conducted by a team of two, with one person taking a lead role in the qualitative data collection component in the field and the other responsible for a cost-benefit analysis. A suite of mixed methods data collection activities have been undertaken, including:

- A preliminary desk review of key program documents and reports.
- Intensive review of the quantitative data associated with a longitudinal Tracer Study established to monitor Y@W and program management data.
- Extensive consultation with a wide range of stakeholders in Solomon Islands, both in Honiara and Choiseul Province using a variety of qualitative data collection techniques including: face to face and telephone interviews, focus group sessions and participant observation. Stakeholders include:
 - Key representatives of the SIG, development partners (DFAT, SPC, PLP and Plan International Australia) and other representatives of the Y@W program Steering Committee.
 - The Manager of the SPCSI Country Office.
 - Y@W staff in Honiara and key leaders in Choiseul Province.
 - Current and former interns and YEP participants.
 - Implementing partners (public, private and NGO sector) who have hosted interns.
 - Pasifiki staff involved in the Tracer Study.
- Research on the context in which Y@W has been implemented, including consideration of data related to the Solomon Islands labour market; and community attitudes and perceptions about youth unemployment.
- Research on other relevant program models (from around the world) for addressing youth unemployment and comparison of these with Y@W.

Key Questions

The key questions for the Evaluation are listed below.

- I. How and why did the Y@W program develop? What was the context within Solomon Islands at that time? (In particular re youth employment).
- II. In what ways has the Y@W program changed since its commencement in mid 2012? Why did these changes occur? What are the main benefits of the Y@W program so far? What factors have contributed to these achievements? What other program benefits / impacts do stakeholders hope will be achieved in the longer term?
- III. What are the main benefits of the Y@W program so far? What factors have contributed to these achievements? What other program benefits / impacts do stakeholders hope will be achieved in the longer term?
- IV. Has the Y@W program responded to the needs and expectations of program participants (interns and employer hosts) and other stakeholders? In what ways? If not, why is that? What changes might be made to the program to enhance participant satisfaction in future?
- V. Has the Y@W program had any effect on the wider Solomon Islands community? If so, what effects have been observed? [Do stakeholders have any suggestions about how the Y@W program (has or) might potentially influence community attitudes and perceptions about youth employment and young people in Solomon Islands?].

- VI. What have been the main challenges associated with the Y@W program? Have these challenges been resolved - if so, how? If these challenges are ongoing how might they be overcome in future?
- VII. What are the most important lessons that have been learned from the Y@W program implementation so far about how to address the issue of youth employment in Solomon Islands? What risks and opportunities are there for the program going forward?
- VIII. Considering the overall cost of the Y@W program since its inception in mid 2012 and the benefits that have been achieved so far, has the Y@W program been good value for money? Why is this expenditure justified?
- IX. Are there any other programs (anywhere in the world) that aim to address the issue of youth employment? If so, do such programs offer any useful insights for the further development of the next phase of the Y@W program model? If so, what insights?
- X. Is the Y@W program model sustainable in its current form? How might the program be further strengthened to achieve more lasting benefits / longer-term impacts, for SI youth, employers and the wider community?
- XI. The Y@W program is currently operating in Honiara and in Choiseul province. Would there be value in extending the program to other parts of Solomon Islands? If so, does it need to be adapted in any way to better suit the context? Suggestions on how it could be adapted.
- XII. How comprehensive and useful has the Tracer Study been in monitoring the progress, effectiveness and efficiency of the Y@W program? Are there ways that this could be further improved?

3.3 Limitations of the Evaluation

The Evaluation Team was mobilised within a very short timeframe. This made it difficult to plan adequately for the in-country field component. As a consequence some of the people who could have contributed to the Review discussions were not available during the Evaluation Team visit or there was insufficient time to arrange to meet them (eg. Ministry representatives, Y@W trainers and mentors). More time to meet with the SPCSI Country Program Manager (CPM) would also have been helpful.

Of particular note is the fact that the proposed extension of Y@W to Malaita province was a key driver for the Evaluation. As such the Evaluators anticipated that the findings and recommendations of this study would impact on the decision about whether or not to establish the program in this new location at this time and if so, what prior steps should be undertaken to ensure its successful rollout. However on the second day of the field visit they were told that following an initial scoping study the funding agreement for the Malaita program would be signed within the next few days. It later emerged that staff recruitment for the new provincial positions had commenced.

This meant that the focus of this aspect of the Review was forced to shift. Instead of assessing the suitability of replicating the Y@W model (as requested in the TOR) the Evaluators concentrated their efforts on how program setup in Malaita should be undertaken in light of the Evaluation findings. Given the momentum that had already been set in place to recruit and train new staff, the best that could be done was to recommend that program establishment should be slowed down during the first six months in order to build a more solid basis for implementation. A central recommendation of this study is the need for key stakeholders to determine the main purpose of this program within the broader labour market context and the need for increased vocation education and training opportunities for youth. A more sophisticated investigation of the possibilities for Y@W in Malaita and analysis of what is economically viable especially for YEP will be needed before commencing activities in Malaita. Once the program purpose and logic have been agreed and further investigation has been undertaken to identify the activities that will be most effective in Malaita, SPC will be in a much better position to recruit appropriately skilled staff and to provide them with the training needed to equip them for their roles.

Additional constraints in meeting the full range of stakeholders faced the Evaluator who spent three days in Choiseul province. In particular:

- There was insufficient time to meet with development partner representatives, most of whom were not in Taro at the time;
- The current program staff had commenced in July 2015 (mid way through Phase 6) and had little knowledge of program implementation during the initial 18-month period (Phases 4 and 5). Their limited contact with former interns, and with YEPs and their village communities made it virtually impossible to identify any medium term program outcomes that may have been achieved.
- The three villages involved in current YEP placements are remotely situated (1.5, 3 and 5 hours from Taro by boat respectively). This meant that only one of these villages could be visited. Furthermore the time available to meet with both the community and YEPs in this village was considerably restricted (less than two hours, with six hours travel time by sea). Insufficient preparation time and communication constraints in rural areas (no phone service) also meant that seven of the ten YEPs were absent from the village and community leaders were not expecting the visit at all.

Importantly, the Evaluation has been constrained by significant limitations in the quality and comprehensiveness of program data and the data collected via Tracer studies. This matter is discussed in detail in Section 5.

4 KEY FINDINGS FROM THE QUALITATIVE REVIEW

4.1 How Y@W has developed

The origins of Y@W go back to mid 2012 when SPC advertised for five short-term office interns and received 260 applications in a few days. Subsequent discussions between the SPCSI Country Program Manager (CPM) and senior representatives from the SIG Ministry of National Unity, Reconciliation and Peace (MNURP) and the Ministry of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs (MWYCA) highlighted their mutual concern about the high level of youth unemployment. This led to a request from SPC and the Permanent Secretary of MNURP for external donor support to trail a one-year project⁸ with three main objectives: to match youth with role models; to provide apprenticeships; and to conduct training for youth in job seeking and cross cutting issues.

This initial pilot was funded primarily by the Australian Government through PLP. The first six-month phase combined training with internships in both public and private sector roles for over 200 young men and women from the original youth cohort who had applied for work experience with SPC. Suitable placements were found with government departments with which SPC had a prior connection, by 'scanning the phone book' and through business contacts associated with the family of the Program Coordinator. In addition some 70 mentors were recruited and trained to support youth participants. Based on the perceived success of this trial the initiative attracted further financial support and became known as Y@W.

By the time of this Evaluation the program had almost completed its seventh phase. Over the past four years it has evolved and expanded significantly in response to challenges faced, lessons learned and to new opportunities that arose. Following is a list of the sub-activities that are currently being undertaken in addition to the internship stream, together with a brief explanation of the focus of each component:

- **YEP:** provides urban and rural youth with training in life skills and cross cutting issues, together with business training to enable them to set up and manage their own small businesses.
- **Youth Market:** is 'a space for youth businesses to sell their products and services; and an event where youth can meet, showcase their talent, find information on community services and be inspired by other youth'⁹.
- **Y@W PLUS:** with a focus on training Youth with Disabilities, sourcing suitable internships and providing those who are interested with skills to commence their own small business. Funded by Plan International Australia.
- **Y@W CHOICE:** with a focus on providing young people released from prison with vocational and enterprise training. Funded by UK partners, the Queen's Young Leaders Program.
- **NCD Warriors:** provides opportunities for youth to participate in activities that promote the importance of non-communicable disease prevention and good nutrition by giving talks in schools and broader community education. This initiative supports the implementation of national policies of the Ministries of Education and Health to educate students and the wider public about these concerns. Supported by SPC, WHO and Taiwan Technical Mission.
- **Y@W ICT:** provides a Team Leader and interns to contribute to an initiative being implemented by the SIG Ministry of Finance, ICT Support Unit. The interns are taught computer and ICT maintenance skills and are then available to be called on by government departments that require ICT support.
- **YOSI Magazine:** is a good quality publication that 'provides young Solomon Islanders with information about issues affecting them; inspiring stories about youth; and a place for young people to express their creativity'¹⁰. It includes promotional articles about the benefits for youth who join Y@W.
- **Fruit@Work:** is a youth business that promotes local healthy fruit as an alternative to unhealthy snacks. It has a focus on encouraging healthy lifestyles to Honiara business and government workers and has links to NCD Warriors.
- Other initiatives such as **Fish@Work** and **Ag@Work:** these activities link young people with development partners (eg. CHICCHAP partners¹¹ in Choiseul province) and NGOs that are undertaking projects in these sectors.
- **Specialised internship recruitment** for organisations such as Seif Ples that could not run its service for women and children who are victims of domestic violence without the regular provision of 10 new interns on 15-week rotations.

In their discussions with various stakeholders the Evaluators endeavoured to unpack the rationale for adding each of these new activities. They also sought to understand how such decisions were made. Based on this feedback it appears that several of the above components could be classified under either the internship or YEP streams rather than being seen as separate entities.

⁸The Intern/ Mentoring Program for Solomon Islands Youth (July 2012-June 2013).

⁹YOSI Magazine No. 1. p4.

¹⁰YOSI Magazine. Ibid.

¹¹Provincial Forestry Division, Provincial Fisheries Division, SPC, SWoCK, SPREP, GIZ, SIWSAP, UNDP, RDP, LLCTC.

It is evident that where possible the SPCSI CPM has endeavoured to ensure that the program builds on long term links established with over 20 SI ministries, and aligns with SPC priorities and the development work undertaken by development partners. This has contributed to the development of initiatives such as NCD Warriors and ICT@Work, and Fish@Work and Ag@Work respectively. The rationale for giving these activities different names may be that it helps to attract the attention and support of a particular government department, funding agency or development partner. However the growing number of 'new' components is also leading to considerable confusion about how each one fits within the broader Y@W program.

It appears that from the start it was intended that Y@W would provide a flexible response to the issue of youth unemployment. Adaptation and experimentation was encouraged and indeed this has occurred. The opportunity afforded for the program to develop iteratively has clear advantages and has the potential to create a good practice program model. But based on the findings of this Evaluation it seems that in this case many of the above components have been added too quickly without them being sufficiently underpinned by the resources needed to make them most effective. The challenge is how to maintain a degree of flexibility and experimentation that leads to the creation of an innovative program model, while at the same time ensuring that each new activity is well managed and resourced and contributes to achieving the overall program goal.

Following is an explanation as to how each activity came about. It should be noted that the information provided to the Evaluators on this aspect was not always fully comprehensive in this regard. Despite this gap, a concerted effort has been made to determine how and why each activity has evolved.

YEP was added in 2014 as a core program component for several reasons. It responded to the challenge faced by Y@W staff in trying to find sufficient internships for youth in urban areas. It also provided an alternative for those young people who wanted to start their own business venture. In Choiseul province YEP includes an additional 13-week village community service component focused on climate change adaptation (CCA). SIG has identified CCA as a key priority for SPC assistance. The focus in Choiseul was to link youth participants with development partners that were engaged in CCA projects, to learn new skills related to environmental sustainability.

The Youth Market emerged from suggestions made to SPC by program staff in response to the needs expressed by youth clientele. It was developed to provide youth entrepreneurs with a venue at which they could sell the products of their business ventures. Over time its main focus has expanded to include entertainment and information provision. It is a useful promotional mechanism through which youth and the wider community find out about Y@W and how they can participate. Similarly the impetus for the YOSI magazine came from program staff. The focus of the first two issues was on providing youth with information about a broad range of issues of relevance to them, not just on matters related to employment. The publication is a useful educational tool and like the Market helps to promote Y@W and YEP to youth. However producing the magazine is costly and requires considerable staff resources. At present this cost is not being recouped through paid advertisements. If the magazine is to be continued under the Y@W banner, consideration should be given to how it can best support program implementation.

It has been noted that the combined effect of all the communications work that has been undertaken by Y@W staff through Youth Markets, YOSI, youth festivals and social media has had a 'huge impact... (in terms of) giving a voice to youth, empowering youth... not just putting them in internships or new businesses'¹². This may well be the case and can be used to justify the staffing resources that have been allocated to this aspect. However, for such activities to be most effective it is important that they are aligned to contribute towards the achievement of the higher-level program goal. Clarity on this aspect is now needed.

Both Y@W PLUS and Y@W CHOICE respond to particular concerns of two of the more recent program funders to ensure the inclusion of especially disadvantaged youth, namely those with a disability and those who have been in prison (respectively). The decision by program management to target these youth cohorts could in some ways be seen as opportunistic. However without the active participation of such young people on an equal footing to other youth, there would be a serious flaw in the development effectiveness of Y@W overall. In line with this, it will be critical in future that these components are mainstreamed (not seen as separate) into the broader program.

NCD Warriors and Y@W ICT can be seen as creative ways to increase the number of internship opportunities that are available to the ever-increasing number of young people who are seeking work experience. However, these components are more than that.

¹²SPCSI CPM, December 2015.

They respond to the expressed needs of government departments for intern assistance in priority areas for which there are insufficient, appropriately trained, paid workers. There are strong similarities between these two activities and the regular internship program. Where they seem to differ is in that they require specialised training and supervision by a dedicated Y@W Team Leader. To ensure the quality of the internship experience these aspects need to be managed well. The Fruit@Work initiative that seeks to involve some youth in a small business enterprise linked to NCD Warriors does not appear at this stage to provide youth with the training and support structure that is needed to help them to develop their own business skills.

In a similar way both Fish@Work, Ag@Work and the specialised recruitment of interns for certain organisations are mechanisms through which YEP placements and internships are being facilitated in particular contexts. The Evaluators did not speak to any stakeholders who oversaw youth in either Fish@Work or Ag@Work initiatives. But it was reported that the focus of these activities is to give rural youth a work experience opportunity supervised by skilled personnel who are implementing development projects that are conducted by external partners. In future the pros and cons of maintaining these initiatives as separate components should be considered.

The decision to extend the Y@W program to Choiseul in 2014 was influenced by several factors. This includes: a desire by donors to test the program in a provincial area and that it would be relatively easier to do this in Choiseul province than in some other locations; the excellent reputation of development partners in this province working collaboratively and achieving good quality development outcomes; and the fact that to date this province had not received a large investment of development assistance.

The recent decision to establish the program in Malaita has already been discussed in Section 3.3 above. It appears that part of the rationale for this expansion relates to the fact that there is a high demand for Y@W from this province and that a significant number of youth who have participated in the Honiara program actually come from Malaita. Furthermore, DFAT and other external partners are eager to provide development assistance to provincial areas. As already noted, the timing of this decision was unfortunate having been made before the findings of this Evaluation were known. This has broader implications for the way in which other components have been added. In future it will be important that sufficient time is given to reflect on lessons learned¹³. This will help to ensure that ongoing program development is most effective.

The inclusion of new program components is not uncommon for an initiative of this nature and has allowed scope for innovation. The fact that staff have had an opportunity to experiment with new ideas has been worthwhile. It is possible to argue that each of the above activities is in some way linked to providing young people with information, training and exposure to work oriented activities. Conducted effectively most of these have the potential to contribute to youth development. However not all are of equal value in terms of the quality of the workplace experience or active engagement in youth entrepreneurship. Nor do they all benefit the program to the same extent overall.

Given the limited resources available for program implementation it may be better that some activities discontinue (eg. Fruit@Work). Similarly, activities such as NCD Warriors have value as a mechanism through which youth are educating their younger peers, but it is imperative that such 'internship placements' also provide well-supervised 'workplace' learning opportunities for program participants. Unfortunately the Evaluators were not able to witness activities such as Ag@Work and Fish@Work in action. These have a strong potential to provide meaningful 'apprenticeships' for young people. But again, for such initiatives to increase participant skills and future employment prospects, they need to be well planned and monitored. But the bigger issue that now needs to be considered is how (if at all) these various activities contribute towards tackling systemic youth employment concerns, if that is indeed the primary purpose of the program.

¹³On this point, it was noted by one stakeholder that program adjustments were made during annual reflections, but there was no mention of these forums during the Evaluation meetings.

4.2 The main program benefits so far

4.2.1 What differences have been attributed to the program?

Stakeholders across all sectors involved in this Review attribute a wide range of benefits to the Y@W program. There is unanimous agreement that this initiative has contributed to some important changes for youth. Participants now have: Improved attitudes and motivation; increased willingness to learn; development of a work ethic; youth have been 'opened up to new ideas and new ways of doing things'; and have developed a vision for their own future'. Increased confidence and willingness to ask questions and take initiative; to appreciate their own value; and to take pride in their own abilities.

- Improved behavior and more inclined to contribute positively to their communities - to be 'good citizens'.
- Enhanced personal skills eg. Hygiene, ability to communicate with others, honesty.
- Increased knowledge and work related skills eg. preparing a CV, applying for a job, punctuality, teamwork; as well as specific technical capabilities linked to their placements.

A good proportion¹⁴ has also gained employment when their internship has ended. One example of such an achievement is given below.

Case Study: Augustine - Intern in Taro, Choiseul Province

Augustine dropped out of school in 2013 after completing after Form 5. Before taking up a Y@W internship he didn't have a paid job and 'just hung about' with nothing meaningful to do. He used to avoid being asked to help in his community. Friends who had been involved in Phase 4 of Y@W (the first phase of the program conducted in Choiseul) told him about this program and encouraged him to sign up. He didn't really know what it was about but he was keen to learn, so he applied.

He joined Y@W in 2014 and following the initial two-week upfront training in job finding skills, goal setting, business training and life skills he was given an internship with Taro Hospital. He received 13 weeks work experience where he was trained in data entry and analysis of health related information collected from clinics all over Choiseul eg. types of disease, cause of death etc. This data contributed Ministry of Health reports for the World Health Organisation.

During his internship, Augustine participated in weekly Cross Training workshops run by Y@W. Topics included workplace ethics, teamwork, problem and communication skills. The workshops also provided information about a range of development issues relevant to Solomon Islands e.g. climate change, food security, human rights. He said that this training and workplace experience helped him to improve his attitudes and behavior and to take responsibility for his own future. He learnt how to relate to work colleagues and the importance of punctuality and honesty. At work he developed the confidence to give presentations. As a result he became motivated to learn new things that would help to improve his life. It seems that before Y@W Augustine wanted to change, to become 'a better person', but he didn't know how. Y@W helped him to discover a way of doing so.

After the internship Augustine was offered a permanent job at Taro Hospital. He continues to expand his knowledge about computers through on-line tutorials that he finds for himself. He has learnt techniques to install software, and how to use various programs and data management applications. His Y@W experience has also affected other aspects of his life. Now if he is asked to help out in the community he is more than willing to assist. Augustine is quick to point out that not all those who did Phase 4 internships ended up in a permanent job. Many went back to 'doing nothing'. But, he says 'they have learnt some new ideas that can help them for the future'. When asked what advice he would give a friend who was thinking of joining Y@W he said without hesitation: *'Do it even if it doesn't lead to a permanent job. You will get some valuable work experience and learn new things. Don't waste any chance to learn. Try to practice what you learn and plan your life for the future'*.

Those young people who have participated in YEP are also exhibiting many of these same changes. Meetings with youth and community members in Choiseul province indicated that YEP's are learning new technical and life skills relevant to their village context. Moreover some have a better understanding of their role within their communities, sharing what they have

¹⁴See Cost Benefit Analysis for a discussion of this aspect, Section 5.

learned with village elders and other youth; and actively helping to enhance the wellbeing of disadvantaged individuals and the community overall.

One young Honiara based woman who joined in the business training provided through YEP reported that the new skills that she had learnt in business planning, budgeting and on-line marketing had been very helpful. This had encouraged her to develop new products (jewelry) to sell at the Youth Market. Because of this she had made more money than she would have received in a month by selling to friends.

The Evaluation Team also spoke to eight young people with disabilities who had participated in YEP business training. Six of these youth who are hearing impaired had also been supported to undertake additional agricultural training at an organic farm. Following this they developed a business plan to set up a joint farm and applied to Y@W for a small grant to help kick start their project. But significantly these youth spoke of the enormous value of their YEP experience in terms of access to new information, being accepted and treated *'like a human being'*, improved self-confidence and the chance to mix with other youth. Another success story is that of a young woman with an intellectual disability who after completing the YEP training established a small business recycling rags and turning them into doormats.

Key factors that have contributed to these achievements are

- Initiative taken by the SPCSI CPM to try to address youth employment issues, together with good financial management systems that meet donor requirements.
- A youth policy framework set by SIG that includes a focus on improved youth training and the active involvement of youth in sustainable development.
- Contribution made by external partner agencies to support youth development and enhance their potential to take up employment opportunities.
- The program is implemented by youth for youth.
- A capable, locally appointed Program Coordinator who managed staff & program delivery.
- Motivated program group leaders who support their teams in their roles.
- Established links with some provincial and government personnel; public, private and NGO sector employers to secure internship placements for new recruits.
- In Choiseul province a good working relationship between the provincial government and development partners provides logistical and program related support for YEP village placements.
- Youth applicants willing to take up opportunities to control their own futures.
- Employers willing to 'give youth a go' and train them in relevant workplace skills.

The Evaluation has found that the Y@W program has responded well overall to the needs and expectations of youth participants, employer hosts and other stakeholders. In addition to discussing program benefits, respondents have also identified some areas in which the program could be further enhanced. Following is a summary of the main points that have been raised.

4.2.2 Views of young program participants on the value of the program

Youth report a high degree of satisfaction with their participation in both the Y@W program and the YEP component. Those who have undertaken internships see this as a chance to learn some skills that will give them a better chance of finding employment. For many it is a *'stepping stone'* that may be complemented with further formal study or training. Even if their internship does not result in a permanent job immediately, they are grateful for the workplace experience, exposure to new ideas and the improved skills and knowledge that they have attained. They believe that this will *'stand them in good stead'* and help them to secure paid employment one day. An example of what current interns said about the value of their Y@W involvement, during focus groups held in Taro is provided in Annex 3.

Youth who have participated in YEP also shared their opinions about how their program experience had been of benefit. They reported that they now have greater knowledge and skills relevant to their lives. They have learnt many new techniques in agriculture, agroforestry, fisheries, conservation of coastal areas, healthcare and nutrition and have begun to apply these in their villages. Some had learned how to organise themselves and to develop a work plan. They had appointed a group leader and prepared a schedule to carry out their daily activities and community service in the village. Like youth who took up internships, they now have a greater appreciation about how they can contribute to their communities and are more motivated to do so.

Example of benefits reported by YEP participants in Loimuni village

In Loimuni village six young people had completed YEP placement in late 2014 (Phase 5). A visit to this village during the Evaluation provided an opportunity to meet with three of these youth who had finished their YEP involvement in mid 2014.

These young people had participated in two weeks live-in training in Taro followed by practical work in their village over 13 weeks. After this they were given some back up business training. They reported that they had learnt some skills in forestry and agroforestry but this training was incomplete¹⁵. They also learnt the importance fish and coral conservation, how to prevent disease and what foods to eat. The business training taught them how to set up and operate a small business, factors that hinder business growth and the problems associated with credit.

Following their training the youths had held a community meeting at which they shared some of what they had learned. They felt that they had benefited a great deal despite that fact that none had been successful in commencing a small business. One had tried to do so (see below). They had some ideas about small income generating activities that they might undertake in the future but lacked any finances to do so at this time. Despite this they said that they would definitely tell other friends to join YEP if they got the chance since it is an opportunity to learn new information and skills.

As well as noting many benefits of their Y@W and YEP participation young people state that certain changes to the program would help to make this experience even better:

- Screen CVs to ensure that participants are placed in a job suit to their skills.
- Reduce the length of time that it takes to place an applicant in an internship. (SPC is currently addressing concerns raised by interns who began community service in March 2015 but had not been placed by mid-November due to over-subscription in Phase 7¹⁶. The Evaluators were advised that as of mid December all Phase 7 applicants had been placed in an internship).
- Improve training. Young people are very keen to learn but venues are not comfortable; trainers often come late (or not at all); some presenters are not skilled; and some training is a waste of time. Some youth would like extra training in practical skills relevant to their internship. Youth reported that they were expected to make a significant commitment (both in financial and social terms) to participate in the community service and training components. It would be only fair for this effort was reciprocated in terms of the quality of the training provided.
- Extend the time of work placements. Currently the length of internships varies between 6 weeks and 6 months. But even those who are fortunate enough to be given a longer work experience opportunity think this should be increased: 'Y@W internships should be extended to one year. All the jobs (I apply for) need five years experience and I only have six months'. Youth focus group participant, Honiara.
- The internship stipend is barely enough to pay for daily bus fares. Some interns go without lunch. Some participants from rural areas stay with relatives in Honiara and the family expects them to pay for their living costs. Some rural youth are paying \$80 a day in bus fares and travelling 2-3 hours one way to attend the Y@W training (leaving home at 5.30am). (SPC has now agreed to pay bus fares to enable youth to attend the training.)
- Some young people are 'exited' from Y@W by staff because they came late to training twice or miss one training session. More consideration should be given to the reasons why some youth (especially females) might not turn up to training, including financial and social barriers that make this difficult.
- Provide opportunities for youth to share their experiences with other youth.
- Provide better follow up support and access to resources and mentoring after an internship is over. 'After the internship finished I did not hear anything from Y@W and now I just stay at home'. Youth focus group participant, Honiara.
- Some Honiara based YEP participants want more practical experience: 'More hands on experience to help me to learn more skills - not just about custom garden but other things too... If I can learn to communicate better with others then I will be able to help my own people to learn these things too'.

¹⁵SPC have advised that they have evidence to show that the two week front-loaded training program was completed, with training in agro forestry, nutrition, coastal based resource management, savings, ethics and peace building and that Loimuni youth did attend. This comment from youth participants requires further investigation.

¹⁶In mid December 2015 SPC reported that all phase 7 interns had now been placed.

Unfortunately this review provided little opportunity to hear from many village based YEPs who had completed the program. The Evaluation Team met only one former YEP whose business plan had been approved. SPC had given him resources to the equivalent of \$1,000 to help him commence his new business venture¹⁷. He reported that he had set up 'a climate change farm', planted vegetables, and integrated crops with some poultry. He had received further assistance from USAID. But due to a land dispute (it appears that the youth had established his project on land owned by the village leader without asking first) a fence was erected around the farm so that no one has access and some of the gardening equipment has been stolen). The young man now has an idea of buying a bale of clothes (it is unclear where he would get the money from to buy the stock) and setting up a small shop to sell them. Establishing a new business venture is far from easy. Better monitoring and follow up support from Y@W field staff could have helped this young man to avoid problems such as these and to develop his farm in such a way that it would generate income and be sustainable.

Many of the villages where YEP has been implemented are very remote. The three YEP villages in the current phase are located 1.5 hours, three hours and five hours boat ride from Taro respectively. Life in such isolated places presents additional development challenges to those that are being dealt with in Honiara. Involving young women in programs such as Y@W is especially difficult.

Issues that constrain the participation of young women in YEP

In Qorebara village ten youth are currently engaged in YEP, nine of whom are male. One of the Evaluators met with three of these young people including the only female. When asked what she had learned as a result of her YEP experience this young woman said that she had learned 'how to make a basket garden' comprising a range of different vegetables and fruit. She also spoke of the value of the training that she had received in Taro about disease prevention and nutrition. She had applied this new knowledge in her own family and shared the information with her friends. In her mid-20s this young woman is the Mother of two children aged 5 and 10 years. She said that she had noticed a difference in her children's health when they began to eat more fresh produce from her garden instead of processed foods.

When asked why it was that there was only one young woman in the group, the response from the village elders was that all the others were busy raising children and supporting family gardening activities. Their husbands did not like the idea of them participating in YEP. The female who had joined YEP said that she was fortunate to 'have a good husband 'who was prepared to let her go to Taro and to *'look after the children for two weeks'*.

N.B. The SPCSI CPM notes that the overall female/male ratio in the Y@W program in Choiseul is in fact gender equal since the low proportion of females applying for program in this particular village was off set by taking on more females in the Taro internship program. Indeed program reports indicate that since its commencement in this province young women have been relatively well represented in both rural and urban placements. However statistics don't tell the whole story. The participation of young women needs to be considered within the context of the purpose of the Choiseul program. If it is a priority to target the most disadvantaged youth then the recruitment of young village women should be a priority. This may require Y@W staff to make extra efforts to ensure that an equal number of young rural women are recruited.

A thorough gender analysis of the participation of young women in each component of the program is beyond the scope of this current study. But in future this matter requires further investigation.

¹⁷The Evaluators tried unsuccessfully to find out how many youth in Honiara and Choiseul province had received 'start-up grants' in the form of either funds or resources. The question has been raised as to whether or not the program should involve 'micro-credit, loans through partnership between banks & Y@W or even a cash transfer windfall on completion of the program. Such matters are beyond the scope of this Evaluation but could be the subject of further research. However for this to be relevant a decision needs to be made about the overall purpose and activity components of Y@W.

4.2.3 Views of employers re value of internships through Y@W program

Employers of interns in both Honiara and Choiseul province greatly appreciate the service provided through Y@W. They report that the interns are very willing and are making a useful contribution in the workplace. They note that, with the help of the preparatory training provided by Y@W these youth are often more work ready than staff that they recruit directly. *'The training that interns receive from Y@W is an excellent grounding.'* (Employer, Honiara). Many employer respondents in this Review also commented on the benefits for youth themselves of participating in this program.

It is evident too that many employers view the Y@W internship program as a way of filling workforce gaps. For some, especially government departments that have a cap on the number of new posts that can be filled and NGOs, that often do not have the sufficient funds to engage enough staff, the internship program provides a way for them to get through their workload. *'The interns help us to meet our performance indicators... if we didn't have them we would manage, but we would not get through all our work as effectively.'* (Employer, Choiseul). It is not uncommon for interns placed in private enterprise to be seen as *'free labour'* helping to increase the company's productivity. In some cases there is a danger that interns may be seen as an alternative to employing new staff. *'If Y@W was not available we would have hired one or two staff or employed casuals ... Y@W is like a recruitment agency.'* (Employer, Honiara).

Case Study: Employer Views On The Value Of Y@W At Seif Ples, Honiara

Seif Ples is a non-government agency that provides support and emergency accommodation for women and children who are victims of domestic violence. The clinic was set up in February 2014 and is closely linked to the Ministry of Health and Medical Services and the Ministry of Police, National Security and Correctional Services. Seif Ples provides a 24-hour hot line that is run by rotating shifts of Y@W interns. Five groups of Y@W interns (both female and male) have been placed so far, with 10 new interns commencing every 15 weeks.

The clinic has four permanent staff but insufficient funds to employ any more. Over time the Program Manager has developed a clear set of criteria to help Y@W staff to recruit the most suitable interns. Female interns are directly engaged in providing support and referrals for victims and their families. Male interns are tasked with broader community awareness raising about family and sexual violence.

Young people placed as interns with Seif Ples benefit in many ways from this experience, including learning practical skill in program administration, answering the phone with confidence and looking after people who are traumatised. They also improve their communication skills and their ability to engage in advocacy work. One success story is that of John T who took up an internship in the first half of 2015. This gave him the opportunity to learn about gender based and family violence and he became actively involved in community education about these issues. Following the completion of his internship John was successful in gaining employment with Save the Children and is now involved in the agency's advocacy and program work in many different provinces.

With respect to the above case study, some stakeholders would like assurance that adequate safeguards are in place to ensure the safety and security of any interns assigned to work in Seif Ples. This is an important point but a thorough investigation of such matters is beyond the scope of this Review. However it should be noted that input provided in an interview with the Seif Ples Manager includes sufficient information to show that intern safety is being taken very seriously, with on-site training and backup police support provided.

This raises a broader issue of to degree to which Y@W staff are monitoring intern placements and about whose feedback is being requested. The Seif Ples Manager gave the Evaluators a copy of an Intern Assessment form that the employer is asked to complete at the end of each placement. Feedback received from other employers during the Evaluation suggested that Y@W staff used to undertake monitoring visits mid way through an internship as well, but that this has not been happening recently. However during the two-week field visit the Evaluators did not receive any information that would lead them to believe that interns are being formally asked to comment on how their workplace experience might be improved. This may be happening informally in some instances. Indeed some youth who participated in the Evaluation focus groups reported that they were unhappy that they had not been given much useful work to do or that they were idle. There would be considerable value in ensuring that there is a formal mechanism to regularly collect such feedback in future.

But although satisfied overall, employers also have some suggestions about how Y@W could be further enhanced. All nine employers interviewed in this Review suggested changes to improve program administration and delivery. One employer who regularly hosts interns requested a dedicated staff member with whom to liaise; a couple of employers would like

a 'rolling program' to avoid a gap between when one intern finishes and another starts in their placement; several asked that interns selected for them have specific or higher level skills and educational background; a number suggested that internships be extended to one year; one employer expressed concern that his interns had not received their stipends on time; another reported that in earlier phases Y@W staff had conducted monitoring visits, but that this had not occurred recently. Speaking on behalf of youth who had approached Y@W to join the program, one employer said that more could be done to engage with those who enquired about the program between phases, rather than simply telling them that the program is full and to come back in a few months.

It is apparent from the above responses that many of these employers see Y@W as a 'recruitment service'. As such, they are starting to be more definite about the type of interns that they want. *'Some young people in the Y@W program have done agricultural training. The interns that we have now have not had this training. Maybe next year some new interns with agricultural experience could be sent to work with us.'* (Employer, Choiseul). It is evident too that some NGO employers could not run their programs without the ongoing input of capable and interns who are willing to learn new skills.

Several employers commented on how the program could be improved. A number of the issues raised related to program administration. One respondent would like Y@W to strengthen the access point for employers to discuss their recruitment requirements. Another employer was concerned that despite several emails from him his intern was not given his stipend on time. A third employer noted that Y@W staff is not monitoring intern placements as often as they did in the past.

Community views on the value of the Y@W program

In Honiara the Evaluation Team heard considerable informal feedback about the value of the program not only for individual youth but in terms of community wellbeing as well. Community service contributions were particularly welcomed. One member of the Evaluation Team visited three villages in Choiseul where youth had participated in YEP (Loimuni in Phase 5, in Poroporo Phase 6 and Qoraebara in Phase 7). In two of these villages the Evaluator heard community views about the program's worth.

In Poroporo village a group of women (some of whom were parents of the YEPs) contributed the following information. Six young people from the village completed YEP placements recently (Phase 6, 2015). They learned new skills in agriculture, reforestation and conservation and are now working alongside the community to integrate what they have learned with the traditional ways of farming. Some other village youth have begun to adopt these new farming methods as well. The former YEPs are now more engaged with the rest of the community continuing to plant trees and crops, doing conservation work and supporting disadvantaged community members, such as the elderly. The women said that the youth had done some of these things before they joined YEP, but the difference is that now they take the initiative in 'leading these activities' working alongside village elders and other youth.

When asked what advice the women would give to another village that might want to join YEP they responded that they would tell the other community to definitely encourage their young people to join YEP. They would say that their youth will get lots of useful information, new ideas and techniques and that this will help the rest of the community to learn how to improve their current farming practices.

But as well as reporting positively on the YEP experience to date, the village leader in Qorebara village where ten youth are currently involved in YEP said that Y@W staff should provide the community with more information about the program. It seems that although field staff had conducted an initial awareness-raising session to encourage youth to join the program no further community discussions about YEP had occurred. Community members said that since joining the program they had noticed some positive changes in the youth. They were *'not just hanging about...they were disciplining themselves'* and taking initiative to implement their own agricultural activities and clean the village. But the community elders were concerned that the YEPs had not shared what they had learned with others. It was agreed that the youth would be invited to demonstrate some of their new skills to the broader community.

This feedback reinforces a point raised by a Provincial representative in Taro. He recommended that Y@W staff should inform communities (especially parents) about the program purpose before it begins, as well as explaining what their young people are doing once program activities are underway.

When asked what advice this community would give to people from a neighbouring village that might express interest in YEP, one of the school teachers responded that she would most definitely tell them to join the program. She went on to say that this would help to ensure that youth in her own village would not be influenced by negative behaviors exhibited by young people from the nearby village.

4.2.4 Views of government on the value of Y@W and YEP

Y@W is implemented in partnership with four Solomon Islands Ministries. Both the MNURP and MWYCA took part in initial discussions that led to Y@W establishment. In 2014 MWYCA provided SBD 300,000 to help finance youth training and the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Employment (MCIE) gave SBD 60,000 for program activities in Honiara. More recently, MWYCA indicated its interest in investing in program expansion to other provinces and in supporting program activities for youth with disabilities. In-kind support has been received from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MCT) by way of free training space in Honiara. Furthermore, representatives from each of these ministries have participated in a Y@W Steering Committee that meets weekly to discuss program progress and operational matters.

This Review has received positive feedback from MWYCA about the value of Y@W: *'it is one of the best programs in SI... It grabs the attention of government and more and more young people are hearing about it and want to participate... The program is changing community attitudes towards youth. Young people are taking on leadership roles and communities are encouraging youth to join'*. (MWYCA, Honiara).

The program fits well with the National Youth Policy and has good potential to make a practical contribution to help to achieve two of the policy's priority outcomes: Improved and equitable access to education, training and employment opportunities for young women and men; and increased involvement of youth in promoting sustainable development. MWYCA respondents believe that for this to be most effective senior Ministry personnel should be involved in strategic level program decision-making. This would not only help to ensure that Y@W aligns with the Government's youth development goals but would build longer-term sustainability.

But there is concern that the program does not have sufficient focus on assisting youth who are most vulnerable and who have lower levels of education. There is a belief that overtime the number of internships made available to young people who have not completed high school has declined. More opportunities for placements in industrial and productive sectors and for youth who want trade experience have been requested. For this to be achieved Y@W staff may need guidance on how such internships can be sourced. This raises a bigger question of which youth are being targeted, and importantly which youth should be targeted in future? Should this be the most vulnerable young people? Another important youth cohort? Or should the internship program focus on recruiting youth who are closest to the labour market already? This matter should be further considered within the context of the purpose of the program.

Government personnel who have hosted youth interns have been very satisfied. They attribute a variety of benefits for youth, families and the broader community to both Y@W and its YEP component. Some government officers (e.g. from the Ministry of Provincial Government and the Ministry of Health in Honiara and in Choiseul province from the Forestry Division and Taro Hospital) have reported that they would like to employ some of these interns as permanent workers, but that this cannot be easily done due to public service caps. Feedback from Government respondent in Taro highlights the value of this program, not only in terms of youth gaining employment, but also with respect to broader benefits for the community:

"The Y@W program is working well... A bonus for the province... Most youth here live in rural areas, many are school dropouts... They need to be engaged... Y@W helps to address this problem... The interns are involved in cleaning up the town on a Friday afternoon... They learn something to improve themselves... not just be trouble makers... They are taught to how apply for a job, prepare a CV... Some are getting jobs after the internship. One is now a bursar in a school and another one has become is a plumber"

(Government respondent, Choiseul province).

Some suggestions were also made about how the program could be strengthened. This included the need to provide follow up business training and mentoring support conducted by people who run successful businesses 'to assist those youth may have lost their way'. It was also stressed that youth who develop small businesses need somewhere to sell their produce. Importantly, a strong message from provincial authorities is that they want the program to help address the problem of young people drifting to Honiara. *'There are opportunities in Choiseul for young people who are willing to work hard'*. (Government respondent, Choiseul province).

4.2.5 Views of development partners on the program

Likewise, development partner respondents commented on the success of these initiatives in helping to address some of the critical issues facing Solomon Island youth today. It was reported that in Choiseul province YEPs are engaged in practical work (such as tree planting) alongside development partners who are jointly implementing an Integrated Climate Change program. Unfortunately it was not possible to speak directly with any of these partners during the three-day provincial visit.

Respondent feedback from both DFAT and PLAN International (Australia) acknowledges that many program benefits have been achieved to date. While DFAT believes that Y@W has touched the lives of many people and has achieved some good success stories, there is concern to ensure that growth in the program is balanced with a focus on achieving key objectives. A priority for DFAT and other development partners is to ensure priority is now given to ensuring program sustainability.

For PLAN, involvement in this program enables the agency to support activities that promote inclusion and mainstream women and people with a disability in particular. PLAN believes that one of the chief benefits to date has been that some youth, who would otherwise not have had the opportunity, have had access to training. But agency respondents also note that there is scope for further program strengthening and opportunities to learn from other youth entrepreneurship initiatives and mentoring programs in which PLAN has been involved in other countries¹⁸.

There are opportunities too for the program to be more directly linked with SPC's own activities in placing technical experts in development projects across 15 development sectors. Strategies to increase the opportunities for youth to be formally assigned to extended work experience roles by way of an 'apprenticeship' receiving 'hands-on' training from these skilled personnel, should be explored.

4.3 Challenges and Lessons Learned

A number of significant challenges have confronted those committed to the successful implementation of this program. Some of these challenges relate to the broader context concerning the macro-economy of Solomon Islands and the labour market. Other issues relate more specifically to the difficulties of managing a development project of this nature.

4.3.1 Solomon Islands macro economy and the labour market

Success of Y@W is likely to be dependent on the macroeconomic picture of Solomon Islands. Slow economic growth, rising population and urbanization means that employment creation especially for youth is a significant concern. Solomon Islands faces inherent barriers of scale and distance that can preclude development of manufacturing and service industries associated with high productivity and better paid work. It remains a post conflict country and faces continued conflict pressures arising particularly from uneven distribution of economic opportunities, including the concentration of the formal sector in Honiara. The pace of growth in urban populations is outstripping the pace of employment creation¹⁹. This is a particular concern for Y@W that, apart from a small program in Choiseul province has been primarily operating in Honiara.

Although SIG has developed a National Youth Policy that includes priority outcomes in youth education, training and employment and the contribution of youth to sustainable development, there are very limited funds available from national and provincial budgets to implement the strategies that have been proposed.

The economic performance of Solomon Islands since independence in 1978 has been mixed and volatile, with economic growth falling consistently short of the regional average. The economy grew at around 4.5% per annum for the first decade, slightly lower than the 5% average recorded during the previous 10-year period. Annual growth declined further in the nineties to the disappointing rate of around 3.5%, little higher than the rapid annual population growth of 2.9%. Toward the end of the decade, economic reforms and an upturn in Asian economies after the regional crisis led to a short-lived improvement. During the Tensions, the economy shrank by a quarter, with a drastic effect on many people's livelihoods. As revenue collection dwindled and the currency devalued by 20%, the government defaulted on domestic and foreign debt and became unable to finance its operations.²⁰

With the stabilisation of the security and political situation from 2003 onwards, the economy expanded rapidly for the next five years, rebounding quickly from a downturn in 2009 during the global economic crisis. By 2012, growth of 5.5% still lagged the regional average of 7.3%, being below that of neighbouring Papua New Guinea but higher than that of Vanuatu, Fiji, Samoa, Kiribati, Micronesia and Tonga. A reduction in output from the logging sector has undermined growth, and this trend is expected to continue in coming years. The sustainability of the logging industry is possibly the most worrying macroeconomic trend in coming years²¹.

¹⁸Youth Empowerment for Sustainable Development, Timor Leste, and projects in Vietnam, Cambodia, Indonesia and Bangladesh

¹⁹World Bank 2014, Ibid.

²⁰Solomon Islands Trade Policy Framework, 'Building Productive Capacity for Trade and Quality of Life', Solomon Island Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade, 2015

²¹Solomon Islands Trade Policy Framework. Ibid

A sharp economic shock is on the horizon with the potential loss of 60% of exports within 5-10 years. An FAO report²² states that at the current rate resources could be exhausted by 2015. Agricultural output has also declined, particularly in cocoa and copra. Agricultural value added is 39% of GDP, considerably smaller than services value-added, that is 55% of GDP, with manufacturing a very small 3.8%²³. Closure of the Gold Ridge mine in 2014 and its offering for sale to foreign investors is another worrying trend, although there are a number of other prospects in the pipeline, notably in nickel²⁴.

The effectiveness of Y@W needs to be considered within the context of this broader macroeconomic uncertainty. The internship program and the outcomes of small income generating activities will be dependent on this labour market climate. With such uncertainty and limited private job creation programs all stakeholders need to think outside of the box to create youth employment opportunities.

Despite the macroeconomic uncertainty there are significant future employment opportunities from temporary labour migration schemes. Given the economic vulnerabilities of the Solomon Islands like other Pacific nations the World Bank has said: 'In the Pacific Island countries, which are small and far from world markets, labour mobility represents the most significant and substantial opportunity for overcoming geographic constraints on employment.'²⁵

Challenges associated with the Solomon Islands Labour Market have already been discussed. Further challenges associated with two particular matters that effect Y@W effectiveness are discussed in the Cost Benefit Analysis component i.e. Section 5. Firstly, the potential for 'saturation'. The formal sector labour market is limited and there will be restrictions on the number of intern opportunities in the long run. Secondly, the danger of a 'substitution' effect i.e. with some employers reporting that they would have hired staff on higher wages but instead (substituted) Y@W interns. Such concerns should be carefully monitoring going forward.

4.3.2 Program specific challenges

Lack of a clear understanding of program purpose

The program has developed organically since its inception and its purpose is not clearly understood. Stakeholders in this Review have widely varying opinions about its central goal, including to:

- give young people 'a second chance in life';
- engage youth, especially 'trouble makers';
- give youth an opportunity to learn work relevant skills and gain work experience;
- provide a pathway for youth into employment or entrepreneurship;
- empower youth to lead their own development;
- provide opportunities for youth to have 'a life changing experience';
- get young people into permanent jobs;
- meet then needs of employers for 'work ready recruits'.

The view of one youth representative from the Y@W+ stream is instructive: *'I needed more skills to sustain my life. My family could not help me to find a job. Y@W provided an opportunity for me to shape my life and to build my potential'*.

While the above objectives are not necessarily mutually exclusive there is the potential for some of these priorities to compete. If the main goal of the program is to enable as many youth as possible to have work experience then this may limit the number who can take up permanent jobs in the very limited formal sector. Y@W could be an excellent training program but it might not lead to youth employment.

Rapidly increasing numbers of youth applicants

Youth unemployment is a major concern in Solomon Islands. An increasing number of young people (whether 'school push outs', 'drop outs' or those who have completed tertiary studies) are looking for ways to secure a permanent job. The reputation of Y@W as a 'stepping stone' into ongoing employment is leading to more and more young people to apply to join the program.

²²See: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/014/am626e/am626e00.pdf>

²³There is a misperception that the Solomon Islands cash economy is primarily agricultural. Not only is the services sector considerably bigger, but according to World Development Indicators arable land, estimated at 18,000 hectares, represents only 0.64% of total land area. Subsistence output, however, is important for most peoples' livelihoods. Agriculture remains an important source of employment, particularly in outer islands and rural areas.

²⁴Solomon Islands Trade Policy Framework, 'Building Productive Capacity for Trade and Quality of Life', Solomon Island Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade, 2015

²⁵World Bank (2015). Ibid.

These applications have spiraled in the last 12 months. Over 700 youth were admitted into the initial community service phase in March 2015, far exceeding the established phase intake of 250 new recruits. Program staff soon realised that they could not manage such a large intake and split the group into two separate phases (7 and 8), thereby delaying the commencement of the internship component for half the group until the latter part of the year. Although this strategy helped to ensure that the size of groups at training workshops was *'not too excessive'*, staff faced considerable difficulty in trying to find suitable internship placements for all participants.

Within this context there is a danger that young people could be assigned to work experience placements of lower standard (in terms of access to learning opportunities, doing meaningful work and the length of the placement period).

Program management

Currently the program lacks a clear direction. Many new components have been added over time but these are not necessarily linked to the same overall goal. This has the effect of spreading staffing resources too thin. The departure of some senior staff (including the Program Coordinator) in recent months has left some gaps and impacted on program management. SPC has developed a new staffing structure. The SPCSI CPM reports that a highly skilled youth development specialist has been successfully recruited as the new Program Coordinator and that all Group Leader and Team Leader roles have recently been filled. Up until now it has been challenging for SPC to implement such an innovative program with annual funding. The approval of multi year program funding (2016-2020) provides a firm basis to facilitate forward program planning and enables SPC to recruit key staff on multiple year contracts.

Training and mentoring

Two of the core components of the original Y@W program are training and mentoring. Program staff have faced difficulties in ensuring the quality of both of these aspects. Securing the services of competent and reliable trainers with experience in youth education, and finding satisfactory venues for some training activities have been problematic. Identifying suitable mentors who are prepared to provide ongoing employment and business development support to young people has been especially difficult. SPC has endeavoured to address this gap by providing participants with the opportunity to use the Y@W Resource Centre to access employment, scholarship and study opportunities'. There is potential to develop this facility further and to provide an increased level of follow up support to youth who have completed internships.

Training youth in entrepreneurship presents another challenge. To date program staff have engaged the services of ILO trainers to conduct two courses in business development. In Honiara 25 YEPs are trained each quarter. In Choiseul province approximately 30 YEPs receive small business training in each six monthly program phase. Recently 13 Y@W staff completed the ILO 'Train the Trainers' program and it is intended that in future business training will be 'done in-house'. However the Evaluation has found that two weeks of training is not always sufficient to equip young people with the skills and confidence needed to conduct a successful business long-term. Follow-up mentoring from someone who has established a profitable business would be most helpful. But securing the services of volunteer mentors has been extremely problematic. Alternate strategies to address this gap need to be explored. For example, one idea that has been used in another youth entrepreneurship program is to incorporate international volunteers who have business skills as mentors. Another strategy that could be considered is to set up peer-to-peer-mentoring sessions between youth entrepreneurs, with input from the ILO trained program staff.

The challenge of the macro economy for youth establishing new business enterprises

The success of small businesses that are created from any entrepreneurship training will be limited by the overall state of the macro economy. The disposable income of most Solomon Islanders is small and thus the demand for products is low. The variety of goods that can be sold is also limited by macroeconomic conditions and the natural resources and endowments available to Solomon Islanders. This is one reason why so many people at the Youth Market sell the same product. If there are many small businesses all selling the same product this will have the unfortunate consequence of lowering the price and thus the profit margins for all the entrepreneurs.

The macroeconomic context is a significant limitation to the success of YEP. It is important to recognise this and to acknowledge the difficulty of mitigating this problem. Even with the best entrepreneurship training it will be hard for Solomon Islanders to significantly improve their livelihoods because the macroeconomic picture is challenging and works against them.

Ensuring that the program is inclusive

It is evident that efforts have been made facilitate the inclusion of youth who have a disability. More recently the program has been extended to young juveniles who have been in prison. Expansion of the program to provincial areas has provided more opportunities for rural youth participate as well.

Staff report on the challenges of finding internships and mentors for young people with disabilities. It is likely that the same issue may occur with respect to juveniles. The Evaluation has seen evidence of how Y@W are making efforts to resolve this issue with a group of eight young hearing impaired participants being provided with additional training in organic farming and encouraged to develop their own joint farm. There are challenges also with respect to recruiting young village women for YEP placements. There is anecdotal evidence to suggest that a lot of young women are dropping out however up until recently no data was collected on this aspect. From mid 2015 the Tracer Study has started to track the reasons behind the higher drop out rate for females. This will assist program staff to better understand and address this matter in the coming year.

This raises the bigger question about whether or not Y@W should focus primarily on the most disadvantaged young people or whether it should be open to all. If the latter is the case, then it will be important that strategies to ensure the proactive recruitment of more vulnerable youth are in place. Having said that, it will also be important that such youth are not separated out, but a mainstreamed within the program. These matters should be discussed in line with the high level dialogue concerning the program's strategic direction.

4.4 Program Implementation in Provinces

4.4.1 Program experience so far in Choiseul province

2014: Phases 4 & 5.

Y@W commenced in Choiseul province in 2014 (with Phase 4, in line with the Honiara program). The End of Year Report (covering Phases 4 and 5) states that in its first year 94 young people completed either an internship or a YEP placement. Just under half of these (46) youth took up internships in Taro. They were placed with various government ministries (Health, Agriculture, Fisheries, Forestry, Provincial departments), Choiseul Bay Secondary School, the Women's Resource Centre, SIPPA, the Y@W office and in private enterprise.

The other 48 program participants joined the YEP stream and graduated from the SISBEC business training course. Of these 46 were eligible for grants of \$2,000 in seed money (given in kind) to start a new business based on their business plans in: farming, fishing, retail, material dyeing and printing, telekom top up and bakery.

A total of 53 youth from ten villages around Choiseul completed 15 weeks community service in their home villages. It had been intended that participants would be selected from all seven CHICCHAP identified communities to assist with their Climate Change adaptation activities, as well as from three other communities. But only one of these partners was village based. USAID SPC helped to monitor youth activity in two villages and Y@W staff liaised with Agricultural Extension Officers to assist with YEP monitoring in five other communities.

In this inaugural year, program staff confronted a number of important challenges that they developed strategies to address including: conflict of interest in youth participant selection; difficulty of ensuring adequate supervision for village based youth; and lack of a clear understanding in communities about the purpose of Y@W.

2015: Phases 6

A total of 44²⁶ youth participated in Phase 6 of the Choiseul program. According to the End of Phase report, only five of the original 12 interns completed their placements, two of whom went on to permanent jobs. Most interns were placed with CHICCHAP development partners: GIZ (5), SPREP (2), MAL (3) and two with private construction firms.

Twenty six (26) young people participated in YEP placements in five villages. In Choiseul YEP aims to target youth from rural communities to reduce the number of young people moving to urban areas in searching for jobs. Following an initial two -week training program in Taro the YEPs participated in a 15 weeks program of climate change adaptation activities conducted by Climate Change Partners such as GIZ and SPREP. Youth in each village devised their own daily workplans and were monitored by Y@W field staff. Annex 4 provides information about of the daily Community Service activities undertaken by YEPs in one of the villages visited during this review.

²⁶There appears to be a discrepancy in the number of youth who completed this phase.

As was the case in 2014, Y@W staff identified a number of challenges that they had faced in implementing the program effectively. They also listed strategies that they had undertaken to address these issues. These are listed below.

Challenges Faced in Phase 6	How they are managed
Availability of Trainers on specific dates for training changing due to work commitment and at time away in Honiara or in other communities. Not much qualified people available for certain Climate Change Topics.	Quick to compromise topics and trainers overnight or fill in with self-building topics that are work place and office related.
No proper monitoring of interns as all of the field officers are away monitoring the youths in the community who are in the YEP.	
No work schedule in the workplaces for the interns and when the supervisors are away the interns do not have anything to do.	This is a lesson learned that the Y@W Team in Choiseul have considered and will try to improve on in Phase 7. To have make sure that the work plan for each interns are created by supervisor for the 15 weeks and Y@W to have a copy during the signing of intern-employer agreement.
When not having occupied in the workplaces they tend to return to Y@W office and still have nothing to do there.	Y@W have procured four computer as to start up the resource in the Y@W office in Choiseul for youths to use when they have nothing to do in their work place as to prevent them from going back to their house. This is also to help them do their CV and for some to learn basic computing.
Youths seems to not aware of any upcoming activities of Y@W apart from the general work plan of the program known to them during the frontloaded training.	This is a lesson learned that the Y@W Team in Choiseul have considered and will try to improve on in Phase 7. Y@W CHSL Team have to make sure the intern supervisor has updated information of Y@W upcoming events as the best way to relay message to the intern under their supervision.
Youths have personal issues that are needed to be discussed one on one in person. This really affect their willingness to continue on in the internship, need for mentors to continue to mentor and monitor them	This is a lesson learned that the Y@W Team in Choiseul have considered and will try to improve on in Phase 7. Will find mentor for the youths as done in the past phases in 2014

2015: Phase

At the time of this review 16 youth (13 of whom are female, from an original total of 19 recruits) were half way through their Y@W internships. The internship of one other young women had ceased when she was employed permanency in her intern role as a Bursar for the Choiseul Bay Provincial Secondary School.

Internships

Organization	Number of Interns	Intern Quit
Hospital	1m/5f	1m
Women's Division	1f	
Tourism Division	1f	
GIZ	1f	
Pujivai Adventist School	1m	
Choiseul Bay PSS	1f	
Y@W	1m	
Forestry	1m/1f	

One day per week interns were engaged in Community Service activities in Taro. For example they were involved in tagging and planting coastal trees as part of the Ecosystem Base Adaptation to Climate Change. This activity was led by SPREP with the combined effort of the CHICCAP partners and Taro primary school (Grade 6).

It was reported that 30 other youth (comprising 10 from each of three villages) had joined the YEP stream. The YEPs participated in the initial two-week training attended by interns in Taro. In addition seven young people (5F:2M) had been sent to Zai Na Tina organic farm for 2 months agriculture training. One of the Evaluators visited one of these villages (Qorebara) located three hours by boat from Taro and met with both the community leaders and some YEP participants (See pp15&17).

The three-day review visit by the Evaluator to Taro and three villages in Choiseul province (one from each of Phases 5, 6 and 7) identified some important strengths of the program work currently being undertaken there. These are:

- A motivated new staff team with skills in community engagement and computer literacy.
- Good connections built between Y@W, provincial authorities, development partners, and NGOs. Potential to use these links to ensure that interns and YEPs have meaningful work related learning opportunities.
- Young people keen to improve their knowledge and skills; and eager to contribute to their communities.
- Employers willing 'to give youth a go' and to train them in relevant skills.
- Some young people obtaining permanent work after their internship ends.

There is now an opportunity to build on these strengths. Following is a list of strategies that could be undertaken to further enhance program effectiveness.

- Staff training and mentoring would help to extend their skills in program management, and youth and community development.
- Continued attention should be given to participant selection to ensure that disadvantaged youth and 'school drop outs' can join the program. Particular consideration should be given to developing strategies to increase the number of young women from villages and youth with disabilities who apply.
- Many of the villages selected for YEP involvement have been very remote. Monitoring program activities in communities situated several hours (up to five) boat ride from Taro puts a considerable strain on program resources, both staffing and financial. When planning for 2016 and 2017 serious consideration should be given to choosing villages that are located much closer to Taro and to each other. This would enable program staff to give more time to program monitoring and community liaison; as well as spending time together to discuss ways to address the challenges faced, and apply these new strategies to enhance ongoing program development.
- Follow up support should be given to YEPs who have completed their placements to: encourage them to continue to share what they have learned within the broader community; and to help them to implement their business plans. This may also involve helping them to access further business development training or skills enhancement in particular technical areas.

4.4.2 Program extension to Malaita

Following a recent scoping visit SPC and DFAT have agreed to establish Y@W and YEP in Malaita province. SPC intends to undertake an intensive planning stage during the first quarter of 2016 to build on this initial investigation. This includes exploring opportunities to link with work being undertaken by provincial government, NGOs and other development partners. Save the Children's experience in small income generating activities, although now winding down should be considered.

Key findings of the Scoping Study are:

- Overwhelming support to establish Y@W in Malaita from the Provincial Government, communities and youth
- Provincial/national government allocate few resources to rural youth development
- Link closely with the provincial government's youth desk and maintain strong working relationship with other civil society organisations, TVET, Women's division, Provincial Council of Women, Provincial Youth Council, Provincial Health Department (Health Promotion) and Department of Industries (Ministry of Commerce, Industries, Labour and Immigration).

- Focus in Malaita should be recruit and place people in the informal sector, utilize existing supports, provide funds to kick start businesses.
- Malaita has a good pool of trainers who can be sourced to provide trainings.
- Utilise TVET's Community Learning Centres for community based YEP activities.
- Ministry of Commerce and TVET have training programs that youth at work can access at no cost.
- MCILL can be utilised to provide business training for YEP
- Six months of training would be much better.
- Need to link youth to older more experienced workers to help them think through how they can develop their own businesses.
- The YEP program should consider adding a "Saving Club" component to encourage savings.
- However, some time is needed to assess the community sites that will be targeted.
- Participate in the coordination and partnership network established by provincial government and CSO officers called the Malaita Provincial Partnership for Development.

The intention is to 'start small'. It is likely that a key focus will be on YEP placements in fisheries and agriculture. Care is needed to identify products that are economically viable drawing on studies about the economic potential of agricultural commodities for export eg. PHARMA²⁷. During the first three months SPC intends to train new staff for the Malaita program in the Honiara office. This will equip them with operational skills and provides an opportunity for them to learn specialized skills in youth work and community development through training with their Honiara based colleagues. This would be a valuable investment.

Lessons learned from program implementation in Choiseul will also provide useful insights especially relevant to establishing YEP initiatives in rural locations. As is the case for all Y@W employees, support from appropriately skilled staff mentors will be a crucial input as these new recruits set up and run the Malaita program. It is hoped that steps taken to implement the broader recommendations of this review will lead to a robust program model that can be replicated in other provinces and beyond. In particular it will be essential that the program be designed in close cooperation initiatives being undertaken to implement the National Youth Policy and link with the recently established provincial coordinating committee comprising provincial government and NGOs representatives.

The main challenges that have been identified as likely to confront those who are involved in establishing the Malaita program are: finding suitable work experience placements; commitment of youth to participate in the program consistently; and training delivery. Based on what has been learned from program implementation in Honiara and Choiseul province so far, it seems unlikely that lack of youth motivation to participate in the program will be a major concern.

On the basis of the findings of the scoping study it appears that program establishment in Malaita should focus more on YEP activities in rural areas with a focus on small business development. There are very limited opportunities for youth internships in the formal sector. The business sector is very small and there are only a small number of government offices. Most youth live in rural areas, not in Auki. There are some nearby villages and it would not be too difficult for youth to catch a bus to attend training and internships. They would need assistance with bus fares. But it would be too expensive for

²⁷Pacific Horticultural and Agricultural Market Access program, Technical Report 43 (2013). Feasibility study on developing exports of selected products from Solomon Islands to Australia

youth who live in remote areas to travel to town for training. As is the case in Choiseul province, a two-week live-in training program would be needed.

The above issues are relevant to any potential expansion of Y@W to other locations.

4.5 Other Youth Employment Programs

The CBA includes discussion of three other employment schemes that are operating in Solomon Islands, namely the Recognized Seasonal Employers (RSE) Program for New Zealand, Seasonal Workers Program (SWP) for Australia and the Rapid Employment Project (REP) that is being implemented by the World Bank. As well as these larger scale initiatives some of the INGOs that are based in Solomon Islands have conducted projects that include a focus on youth development. Eg. Youth engagement programs conducted by Save the Children have helped young people to create sustainable livelihoods, participate in their communities and avoid dangerous behaviour such as drinking and taking drugs. Similarly, World Vision's economic development projects have engaged youth in activities to increase economic resilience through improved food security, sustainable livelihoods and access to loans and credit. However these small-scale projects have been affected by recent DFAT cuts and may not continue.

Various stakeholders in this Evaluation have identified a number of other youth employment programs that may provide useful insights to enhance the Y@W program model. For example, PLAN International have been involved in a Youth Entrepreneurship program in Timor Leste. Useful lessons may also be learned from the agency's experience in conducting vocational training projects in Cambodia, Vietnam and Indonesia²⁸.

Recently published research about one youth employment program is of particular interest. Since 2014 the Building Paths for Youth Entrepreneurship program has been piloted by Raleigh International in Nicaragua and Tanzania. It 'seeks to create strong, sustainable enterprises in rural communities... It offers volunteers, communities and local partners the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to support young entrepreneurs and/or enable micro or small enterprises to succeed. It involves 200 volunteers from three countries jointly working to support 100 local entrepreneurs²⁹.

Emerging findings of the review of this pilot highlight the importance of: ensuring that program design responds to changes in context; the support given to youth by business mentors (by skilled international volunteers); support from family and community to assist young entrepreneurs with their business operations and help them to access funding; strategies to enable youth to access finance to start and operate their enterprises, including seed capital; and training youth in business and life skills, including the provision of follow-up support services. Further investigation of the Youth Entrepreneurship model established by this program is recommended.

²⁸Reports of these projects were not available for review at this time of this Evaluation.

²⁹Pompa,C. & Pasamen,T. (Nov. 2015) Building Paths for Youth Entrepreneurship Report.

5 KEY FINDINGS OF THE COST BENEFIT ANALYSIS

5.1 Overview

This Evaluation uses the economic tool of cost benefit analysis to assess the private and social costs and benefits of the Y@W program. Data limitations and the short duration of program implementation mean a full assessment is not possible. This analysis seeks to highlight major considerations and areas for further evaluation. The Solomon Islands' economic context is one of high youth unemployment, low formal sector employment and little in the way of labour market institutions and interventions. Given this context Y@W is playing an important role. It is one of only a handful of implementing programs in the country directly targeting youth labour market issues and is certainly the most significant.

Major benefits from the program are improved 'work readiness' of unemployed youth resulting from training in workplace skills. Creating a more 'work ready' pool of unemployed workers has significant benefits as it can 'smooth the transition' from unemployment into work. Employers reported benefits of having access to 'work ready' and low cost labour. The overall level of youth unemployment however will also depend on the numbers of workers demanded by employers. Essentially the numbers of jobs that are available in the economy.

To fully assess the economic benefits, and whether Y@W increases employment, further investigation is needed on the issue of 'substitution' as some employers have reported they have substituted higher paid and more permanent employees with Y@W interns. Additionally further data collection on interns who go on to permanent employment after the Y@W program would be useful. Assessment of the long run economic benefits to those individuals and whether or not they drop back out of the labour market are crucial areas for further review. Similarly from an economic evaluation perspective more data collection on the 'counterfactual', i.e. youth who have not gone through the program, is needed. This is important because without this data it is hard to assess whether the economic and employment outcomes are better for youth who have gone through the Y@W program compared to youth who have not.

While it is unrealistic to expect Y@W to address the full scope of labour market challenges in the Solomon Islands it is important that it acts as part of a comprehensive labour market strategy. Additionally a labour market needs assessment is recommended to determine the implementing activities that would be most useful. Y@W's current focus is the labour supply side (skills and work readiness), however whether Y@W can reduce unemployment is also dependent on the number of workers demanded by employers. Y@W's initial theory of change states that improved work place skills acquired through work experience is a medium term program outcome. It refers to reduced unemployment alongside economic benefits for youth as a long-term outcome. If this is what the program aims to achieve then more significant labour market interventions will be necessary in order to realise planned employment outcomes.

Linking with programs that focus on labour demand and job creation such as the World Bank's Rapid Employment Project, the Seasonal Workers Program (SWP) and the Recognized Seasonal Employers (RSE) Program would create a more coordinated and comprehensive labour market response. Y@W should continue its efforts not to act in a silo. There may be potential for a direct link with the Labour Mobility Unit (LMU) in the Department of Foreign Affairs and External Trade. The SWP has suffered from not having an easily available 'work ready' pool of workers and LMU has low institutional capacity to carry out the necessary checks and training of potential workers. A direct link with LMU, providing a pool of 'work ready' labour, may have significant potential in future years.

5.2 Outline of the Cost Benefit Analysis

Cost benefit analysis is an economic methodology that can be used to consider the overall impact of a program. There are limitations with this approach when evaluating Y@W since the program has been only operational since mid 2012 - making it difficult to assess the long run economic and social impacts.

This current analysis relies on two forms of quantitative data: six monthly Tracer studies that provide a 'snapshot' of outcomes at different periods of time; and the datasets used by Y@W to keep track of participant progress through the program. There are limitations in terms of the quality and comprehensiveness of this data and its value for this purpose of this Review. It is beyond the scope of this report to conduct a full quantitative empirical study. However the authors have 'made the best' of the available data and have recommended strategies to enhance of the program going forward, including suggestions to strengthen program monitoring.

This economic assessment attempts to create a framework for evaluating the economic benefits and costs to the participants and employers as well as wider Solomon Island society. It includes discussion of private and social benefit and costs as well as the effects on various groups that are of interest including gender, disability, age and rural and urban concentration. Other employment programs operating in the Solomon Islands and across the Pacific have also been reviewed, including the World Bank's Rapid Employment Project and Australia's Seasonal Worker Program and New Zealand's Recognized Seasonal Employer program.

5.3 Benefits

5.3.1 Private benefits

Work Experience

Since mid-2012 the internship program has provided around 2000 individuals with work experience. For many participants this is their first taste of formal employment.

Much of the concentration has been in low-level administrative roles such as filing, photocopying, answering phone calls and taking messages. Unfortunately due to data limitations it is not possible to break down internships by occupation, however a list of employers is provided in Annex 5. Gathering more detailed data on occupation and the roles that interns fill will help to further analyse the future program.

The qualitative data reported in Section 4 of this Report list suggests that interns become more confident and learn work and personal skills that will be useful in any further employment. The Program is helping to improve youth attitudes and behavior; enhancing appreciation of their own value and the contribution that they can make within their communities; opening up their minds to new ideas and possibilities for their own future; and motivating a number to pursue further study.

However despite the numbers of participants receiving work experience through the internship program there is some evidence to suggest that some youth and employers would like the length of the internship to be increased. It takes time for an employee to learn new work skills and a longer internship may improve the outcomes of the program for those individuals. It should be noted that the length of internship has varied quite significantly. Participants interviewed in this Evaluation reported timeframes that ranged from 10 weeks to 6 months.

Do all participants get an internship?

It is unclear whether or not all program participants in the internship stream are placed in a formal, supervised intern role. Datasets held by Y@W that are used by staff to monitor participant progress through the program (and on which Phase reports are also based) suggest that some of those who undertake the community service and the training components do not take up an internship. The Evaluators have been strongly assured by SPC that all youth who do not 'quit' and complete the training are given an internship. This assurance is mainly based on the Phase reports that SPC receives from Y@W staff. Unfortunately initial indications suggest there may be some differences between the Phase reports and the overall datasets held by program staff. Either participant monitoring data needs to be better recorded or there are a relatively small number of participants who do not become interns. Further investigation on this issue is needed going forward. Research into the reasons why some participants might be classified as having 'quit' the program is also required.

Key Points

- Interns are receiving becoming more 'work ready' - learning important work and personal skills that will be useful to find further employment.
- Gathering more detailed data on occupation and the roles that interns are fulfilling in future years will help to further analyse the program
- Some evidence that the duration of the internships is not always long enough, with some participants and employers asking for the length of internships to be increased.
- More investigation is needed on whether any youth are slipping through the net and not getting an internship or if data recording needs to be improved.

Employment

'Youth don't have a job, this is the only opportunity to have a job in the Solomon Islands'

[Youth respondent]

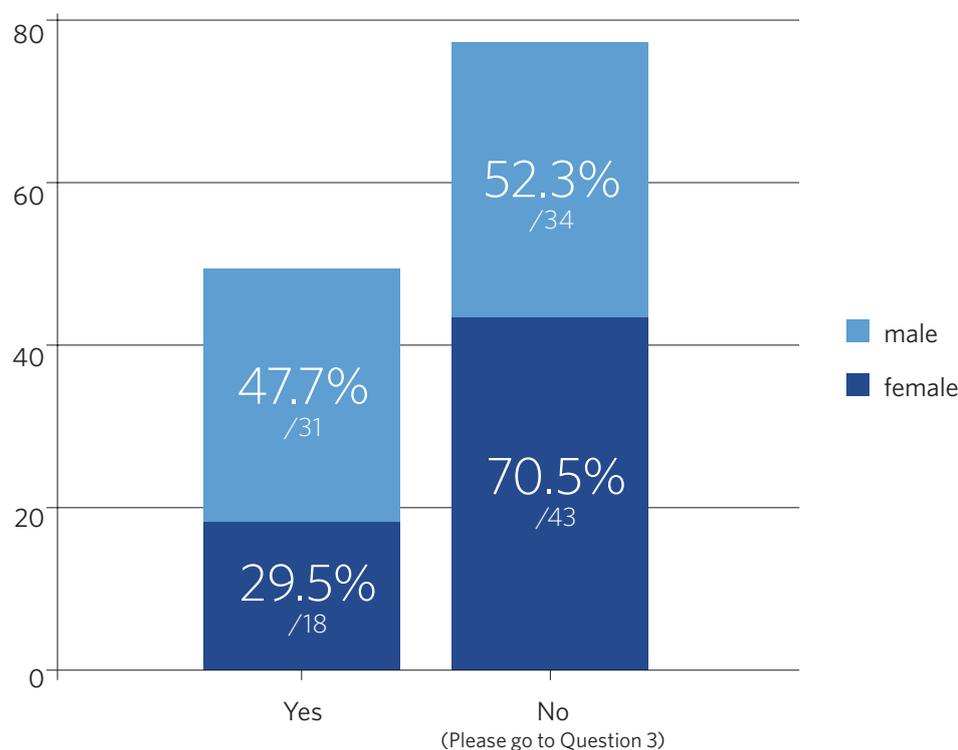
The above quote indicates that participants don't join Y@W merely to get work experience, but they have expectations of employment. It is also clear there are very few schemes in Solomon Islands designed to relieve unemployment and Y@W may be the only one that is directly targeted at youth. Unfortunately the existing data does not allow us to measure exactly how many interns went on to receive permanent employment. This is a major limitation. If long run employment and economic benefits are to be measured better data collection / record keeping of this aspect is needed. It would also be useful to know more about their economic outcomes from the permanent jobs they gain and if they continue to be in employment or drop back out of the labour market. While the data does not provide any direct record keeping of every participant who gains permanent employment, we do have a 'snapshot' in time about the ongoing employment of some interns from the Tracer studies. These snapshots are discussed below

Tracer study One: A snapshot of Employment Outcomes

We can see from Tracer study One that 38.9% of interns who were interviewed in February 2013 had secured further employment.

FIGURE ONE: EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES FROM TRACER STUDY ONE

Are you currently employed?



Tracer Study Two: A snapshot of employment effects

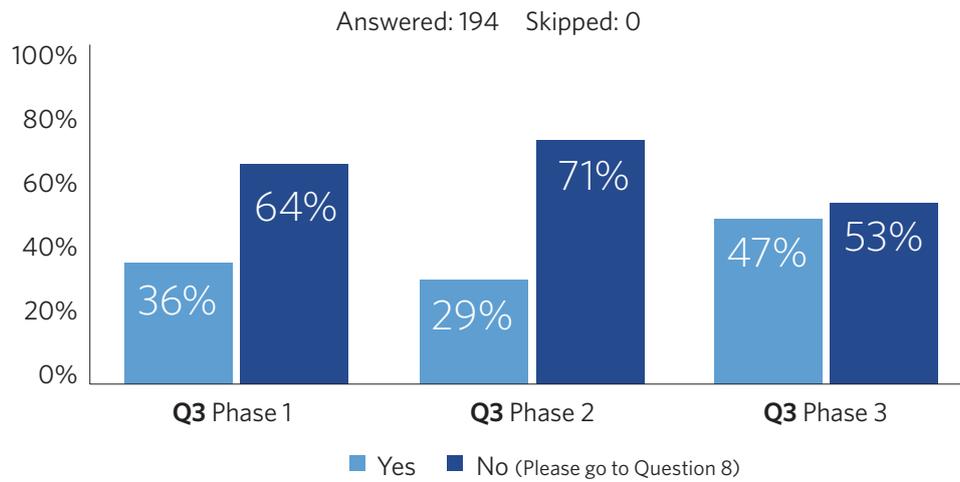
In Tracer study Two 51% of youth were employed in August 2013, however this number included 67 youth from Phase 2 of Y@W who were still undertaking their Internships. If these current interns were removed from the analysis then only 28% of youth were employed at the time of the survey. For the purpose of looking at the long run economic benefits it is important to look only at the employment outcomes of those who have finished their internships, and not include those who are currently doing their internships in the analysis. This issue was recognised in the subsequent Tracer studies.

Tracer Study Three: A snapshot of employment effects

In Tracer study Three 38% of youth surveyed were employed in March 2013 with more females (43%) than males (31%) being employed. More Phase 3 youth were under employment than those from Phases One and Two, with 47% of youth under some form of employment.

FIGURE TWO: A SNAPSHOT ON EMPLOYMENT EFFECTS FROM TRACER STUDY THREE

Q5 Are you currently employed?

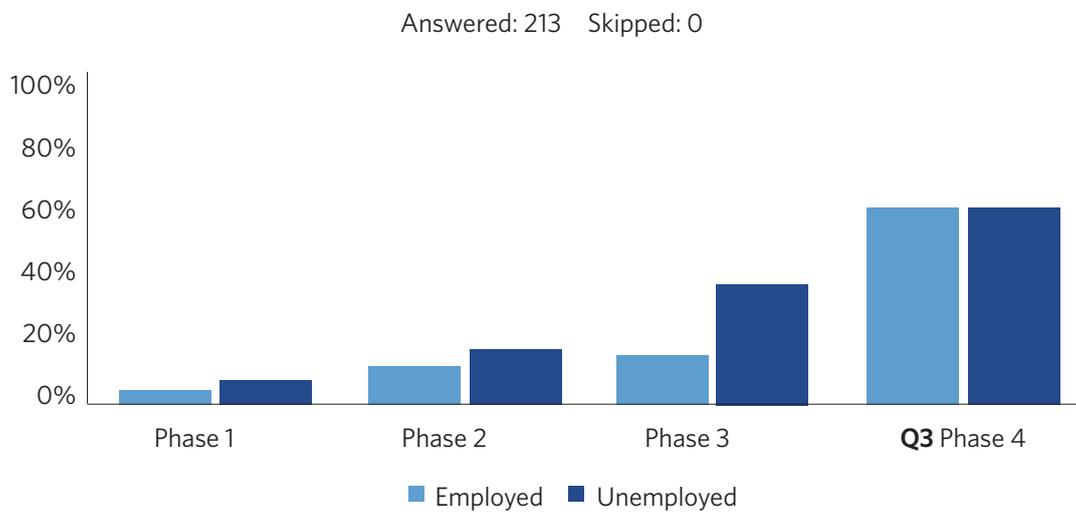


Tracer Study Four: Employment Effects

In Tracer Study Four 43% of youth surveyed were employed in September 2014 with more males (45%) than females (40%) being employed.

FIGURE THREE: EMPLOYMENT EFFECTS FROM TRACER STUDY FOUR

Q5 Employment Among Y@W Participants by phase



Tracer Study Five

The number of youth employed in Tracer study 5 which is a 'snapshot' from March / April 2015 is 31%.

FIGURE FOUR: EMPLOYMENT EFFECTS FROM TRACER STUDY 5

Q5 Employment Among Y@W Participants by Phase



The Counterfactual

An evaluation of this nature would benefit from comparison with a review of the workplace skills and employment prospects for youth who have not been through the Y@W program. Unfortunately such an assessment is beyond the scope of this study but such an evaluation will be needed going forward.

However in the absence of this type of data collection we can look at indicative data. There are substantial gaps and inconsistencies in data on employment and labour force participation in Solomon Islands, but key issues are identifiable: formal paid employment is limited in the overall population, and young people account for a larger share of unemployment and informal employment³⁰. Estimates of unemployment vary from two percent in the 2009 census, to 39.4 percent of the labour force (not in full-time education, engaged in domestic duties, or inactive where inactivity separable) that is unemployed, among other yet higher estimates. Labour force participation rates are similarly ambiguously defined and variable at around 60–70 percent, and estimates of people in paid employment again vary significantly. While estimates vary, a common finding is that youth make up a significant share of the unemployed³¹. However despite these wide variations the World Bank using a variety of sources estimates the following employment and unemployment rates by age.

TABLE ONE: EMPLOYMENT RATE BY AGE FOR SOLOMON ISLANDS

Age	15-24	25-64	15-64
Solomon Islands	43.43%	66.76%	60.23%

Source: World Bank 2014, Farchy, 2011, from HIES, Census data.

Note: Employment rate is defined as the proportion of the labour force that is employed (ILO).

TABLE TWO: UNEMPLOYMENT RATE BY AGE FOR SOLOMON ISLANDS

Age	15-24	25-64	15-64
Solomon Islands	55.60%	33.20%	39.80%

Source: World Bank 2012, Farchy, 2011, from Census, HIES data.

Notes: Unemployment rate is the proportion of the labour force (not in full-time education, engaged in domestic duties, or inactive where inactivity separable) that is unemployed. The numbers do not separate those actively seeking employment from the inactive due to lack of data issues

In the Table below snapshots' on the employment rate from the Y@W Tracer studies have been compared with the World Bank employment rate for those aged 15-24.

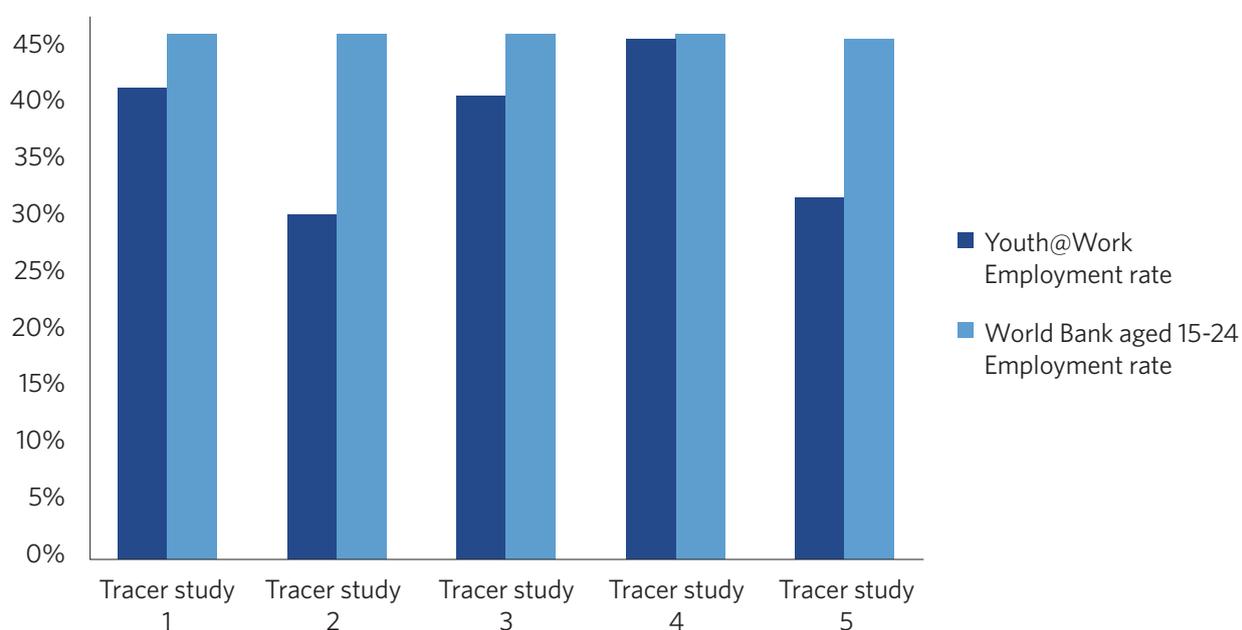
³⁰Close S. (2012). Ibid.

³¹Close S. (2012) Ibid.

TABLE THREE: EMPLOYMENT RATE OF Y@W COMPARISON AGAINST THE COUNTERFACTUAL

Tracer study	Youth @ Work Employment Rate	World Bank aged 15 -24 Employment rate	Difference between Y@W & Counterfactual
Tracer study 1	38.90%	43.43%	-4.53%
Tracer study 2	28.0%	43.43%	-15.43%
Tracer study 3	38.0%	43.43%	-5.43%
Tracer study 4	43.0%	43.43%	-0.43%
Tracer study 5	31.0%	43.43%	-12.43%

FIGURE FIVE: EMPLOYMENT RATE OF Y@W COMPARISON AGAINST THE COUNTERFACTUAL



Surprisingly, according to the data available Y@W participants have worse rates of employment than Solomon Island youth in general. Snapshots from all Tracer studies show that Y@W interns have lower (or virtually the same) employment rates than the World Bank figures for Solomon Islands’ youth population as a whole (aged 15-24)³² Additionally if we were to compare the Tracer study employment rate against the employment rate for the population as a whole (aged 15-64) the outcomes would be even worse. This suggests that Y@W is having little or no effect on the employment prospects of the interns.

This is clearly just an indicative look at the figures and as noted earlier there is much variation in statistics on the youth national employment rate for Solomon Islands, although this is the World Bank’s best estimate from its sources. Further investigation concerning these indicative calculations by a labour economist would be of interest.

Financial Benefits

Interns received around 200 Solomon dollars per fortnight (\$34 AUD) for the length of their internships. However they are not given a stipend during the community service or the training elements of the program. From the qualitative review we know that the length of the internship can vary from several weeks to 6 months. Few employers pay extra wages to interns, but some do, as can be seen from the example below:

³²World Bank (2012). Ibid.

Case Study: Frank 21 – Employer gives him extra wages at Kokonut Café

Frank is 21 years old and joined Y@W in July 2014 as part of Phase Five. Frank successfully completed the community service and other Y@W training. He learnt how to write a C.V., and did some computer training and the wider cross training where he learnt lessons about climate change and human rights. He enjoyed the training and said 'trainings are good, many good things.' Because he completed the community service and the other trainings he was successful in getting a Y@W internship at Kokonut Café.

Kokonut Café being a good employer topped up Frank's wages while he was an intern. Frank normally would receive around 200 SBD every two weeks from Y@W but Kokonut café paid him 300 dollars on top of this - substantially increasing his earnings.

Unfortunately Frank had a death in the family and had to leave his internship at short notice. He did not inform his employers and is scared to return. He is now unemployed but has picked up some casual labour working in construction in his father's business. Unfortunately the contract has finished and Frank now stays at home.

As can be seen from the following example, some participants who were given permanent employment subsequently gained a significant increase in their income.

Case Study: Jonathan 22 – Permanent Employee at PAOA FM

Jonathan is 26 and had spent 3 years looking for a job after failing to complete his degree at USP. He could no longer afford to pay the University fees. In 2013 after hearing about Y@W through friends he applied to join the program. After completing his training he was interned at PAOA FM as a radio announcer. On completion of his internship he was offered a period of probation. He was then offered a permanent job, promoted to be a news reporter and radio announcer and paid \$1200 SBD every two weeks. Several years on Jonathan now has his own radio show that focuses on challenges that youth face in the Solomon Islands. He is grateful for the opportunity that Y@W gave him and said 'the program taught me to try my best. It gave me confidence and lifted me up'.

Increased Workplace Skills

'The training gives me enthusiasm and life skills. I never learnt this at school... Bring me fella up' (Youth respondent)

The qualitative component of this Report (Section 4) provides considerable evidence of the up-skilling that has occurred for those who have participated in the program. This includes increased confidence, presentational skills, improved C.V. writing and computer literacy. Tracer study reports show that many participants found training in these areas useful (especially CV writing) and many have requested more computer training. Other skills attributed to the workplace experience are documented earlier in this Report.

YEP and Youth Market

One component of Y@W is training youth in entrepreneurship and the establishment of the youth market. A twelve-week course in business training covers areas such as business planning, basic accounting and consideration of costs. The ILO trainers have run this training. More recently several Y@W staff in Honiara have completed the ILO Train the Trainer's course and they will conduct the business development workshops for youth in future.

Data collected from youth market surveys (analysed by Pasifiki) reveal that only 61.5% of stallholders participated in the business development training prior to the youth market. Youths who had attended the training felt that it had opened their minds to basic business concepts ranging from how to manage a small business, to marketing. The most common benefit that youth gained from this training was in 'running a small business'. Qualitative evidence obtained from respondents about the youth market indicates that the market facilitates significant economic benefits for some individuals and aides their small income generating activities.

5.3.2 Social Benefits

Overall

Recent history shows that Solomon Islands society suffers when there are high levels of idle youth. Clearly there is a correlation between youth unemployment and social problems such as crime and anti social behavior. Y@W activities are giving young people hope, confidence, dignity and a purpose. This has wider social benefits for society as a whole. Many of these community level benefits are discussed throughout this report, including in the areas health, education, gender, disability, civic engagement and community participation.

The wider benefits in terms of improved health and education are illustrated in the case study of the young woman from Qorebara village (p. 23) who had learnt 'how to make a basket garden' comprising a variety of vegetables and fruit; spoke of the value of the training she had received about disease prevention and nutrition; had applied what she learned in her own family; and had noticed a difference in her children's health when they began to eat more fresh produce from her garden instead of processed foods. She had also shared these new ideas with other young women in her village.

The social benefits related to gender are also reflected in the above case study. Another example is illustrated in the case study on pp. 24-25 that highlights the success story of John T. who took up an internship in the first half of 2015 at Seif Ples. This gave him the opportunity to learn about gender based and family violence and become actively involved in community education about these issues. Following the completion of his internship John he gained employment with Save the Children and is now involved in the agency's advocacy and program work in many different provinces. Not only has his Y@W internship has positive outcomes for him, but he has become a role model for other males to advocate against gender based and family violence.

On civic engagement and participation, in both Honiara and Choiseul province the Evaluators received considerable feedback about the value of the program not only for individual youth but in terms of enhancing community wellbeing. In Proporo (p. 26) six village youth who completed YEP placements are now working alongside the older members of their community to integrate the new skills that they have learned in agriculture, reforestation and conservation with the traditional ways of farming.

5.3.3 Employer benefits

There is considerable evidence to show that Y@W benefits both private and public employers by providing them with a 'work ready' source of labour. One example of the value given by an employer to Y@W internships is provided below.

Employer Case study: The Bulk shop

The Bulk Shop is a large supermarket and general store operating with several outlets primarily in Honiara. It is one of the largest employers of Y@W interns to date with 34 interns placed between 2012 and 2014. Bulk Shop management has been impressed with many of the Y@W interns have taken on 23 of them as permanent employees. They play an important role in the operations of the franchise doing jobs such as stocking shelves, cleaning and retail assistance.

Bulk Shop management also believes that it is important to pay interns an extra allowance for weekend work, including providing bus fares and lunch. If the interns become permanent employees they can expect to earn wages of \$4 SBD an hour as a shop assistant and \$5 SBD an hour as a Stockman. On average they work 88 hours every two weeks. One intern who had successfully moved up the chain now worked in accounts earning \$16 dollars SBD an hour.

Bulk Shop management also reported that if Y@W did not exist they would have taken on 80% of number of interns (i.e. 27 workers) as casual workers on wages of \$50 dollars a day but only for short periods of one or two weeks. However they viewed Y@W interns as much higher quality workers than normal casual labour saying 'the interns have knowledge of the workplace'. Another incentive for having Y@W interns was that they don't pay tax on these employees.

Potential Substitution Effect

While we have seen some reports of employers valuing Y@W interns and wanting to 'give youth a chance' there may be an incentive for employers to use Y@W as a source of 'free labour'. Management from the largest employer of interns, the Bulk Shop, reported that they would have taken 80% of the number of interns as casual labour, albeit for short periods (paying 50 SBD a day), if Y@W did not exist. Similarly the Solomon Island's Provincial Press reported potential substitution effects. Substitution between Y@W interns and more formal employment needs investigation.

The evaluation has found that some employers are beginning to see Y@W as a 'recruitment agency'. Some have reported that interns are helping staff to increase productivity and 'meet their performance indicators'. Going forward potential problems associated with the quality of internships; 'free labour', and the potential for substitution should be monitored carefully. Some employers reported that they would have hired staff on higher wages but instead (substituted) interns from Y@W. This issue of substitution between more permanent jobs and lower paid Y@W interns needs further investigation.

Similarly the potential problem of employers continually using 'cycles' of interns and not taking some on as more permanent employees needs to be monitored. If the program is looking to give work experience to as many young people as possible this is not an issue. But if the objective is to help smooth the transition of young people into permanent employment the objectives may be contradictory. Program design and clear objectives are essential. One possibility is that some employers (e.g. in the private sector) could possibly make a small contribution to the stipend to incentivise the employers to invest in interns and look to take more on as permanent employees.

Key Points

- There may be an incentive for employers to use Y@W as a source of free labour and substitute more permanent employees with Y@W interns.
- The issue of substitution needs further investigation.
- Employers could be asked to make a small contribution to stipend of interns.

Has Y@W reduced Youth Unemployment?

From SPC's perspective the main program focus is on training young people with job related skills, providing work experience and opening up a pathway towards a career or to start their own business. But not everyone has this same understanding. From a labour economist's perspective Y@W does not change labour market demand and does not create formal employment. It improves labour market skills and experience. To have a more significant effect on the number of unemployed youth a labour market intervention would need to create employment e.g. public works schemes. Given the scale of the problem of youth unemployment in Solomon Islands a more holistic and coordinated long-term strategy for labour market interventions is needed in the longer term. Interventions that are not part of a bigger plan for labour market policy will not have a large-scale impact. Donors need a sophisticated and coordinated approach to such interventions. It is crucial that Y@W does not act in 'a silo'. Efforts already commenced to develop links between Y@W and other employment related schemes e.g. SWP and RSE and the Rapid employment project should continue.

5.4 Costs

5.4.1 Private costs

Youth participant feedback in this Review provided some evidence to suggest that the costs incurred by them during their training and community service, such the cost of bus fares and of not being able to participate in other income generating activities (eg. selling foodstuffs) may be prohibitive for some participants. Some participants were traveling for up to two or three hours to attend training and the bus fares incurred were a significant part of their disposable income. Following feedback from the Evaluators on this matter SPC has responded immediately to try to address some of these concerns.

5.4.2 Social costs

There is some evidence to suggest that with the growth in the popularity and reputation of Y@W that is concentrated largely in Honiara, some youth have travelled from nearby rural provinces such as Maliata to sign up. Solomon Islands has particular social issues associated with urbanisation and land rights (World Bank 2015). These issues are complicated and beyond the scope of this study but may be the subject of further investigation.

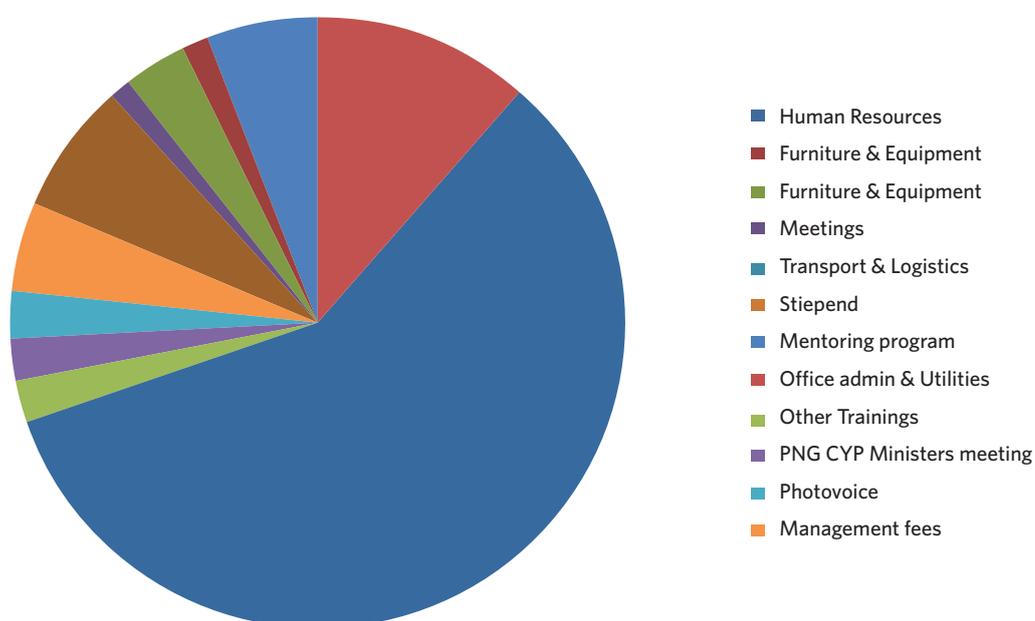
5.4.3 Program costs

The following Tables show the costs over time for the Honiara based program. In 2012 the most significant is the stipend for the interns (54.1%) at 1,056,000 SBD.

TABLE FOUR: COSTS OF THE Y@W PROGRAM IN HONIARA, MAY 2012 – AUGUST 2013

Budget Detail	Actual Costs SBD	% Share
Human Resources	209,600	10.7%
Furniture and Equipment	12,000	0.6%
Furniture and Equipment	53,800	2.8%
Meetings	7,357	0.4%
Transport and logistics	2,000	0.1%
Stipend	1,056,000	54.1%
Mentoring program	89,726	4.6%
Office admin and Utilities	287,742	14.7%
Other Trainings	28,270	1.4%
PNG CYP Ministers meeting	40,226	2.1%
Photovoice	37,000	1.9%
Management Fees	127,660	6.5%
Total	1,951,381	100.0%

FIGURE SIX: COSTS OF THE Y@W PROGRAM IN HONIARA, MAY 2012 – AUGUST 2013



For the second half of 2013 we can also see that the Stipend is a significant proportion of the overall Honiara program costs (59.5%)

TABLE FIVE: COSTS OF THE Y@W PROGRAM IN HONIARA, JUNE - DECEMBER 2013

Budget Detail	Actual SBD	% Share
Human Resources	178,800	15.7%
Furniture and Equipment	32,000	2.8%
Start up meetings	23,500	2.1%
Transport and stipend	678,000	59.5%
Publicity for training / mentoring	5,000	0.4%
Cross training	24,000	2.1%
Admin and Utilities	111,500	9.8%
Workshops	6,000	0.5%
Tracer study	75,118	6.6%
quarterly update and meeting	5,000	0.4%
Total	1,138,918	100.0%

FIGURE SEVEN: COSTS OF THE Y@W PROGRAM IN HONIARA, JUNE - DECEMBER 2013

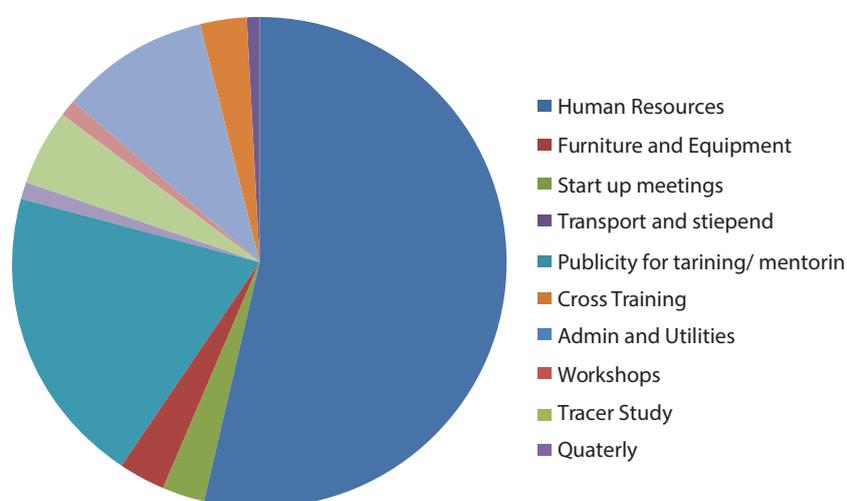
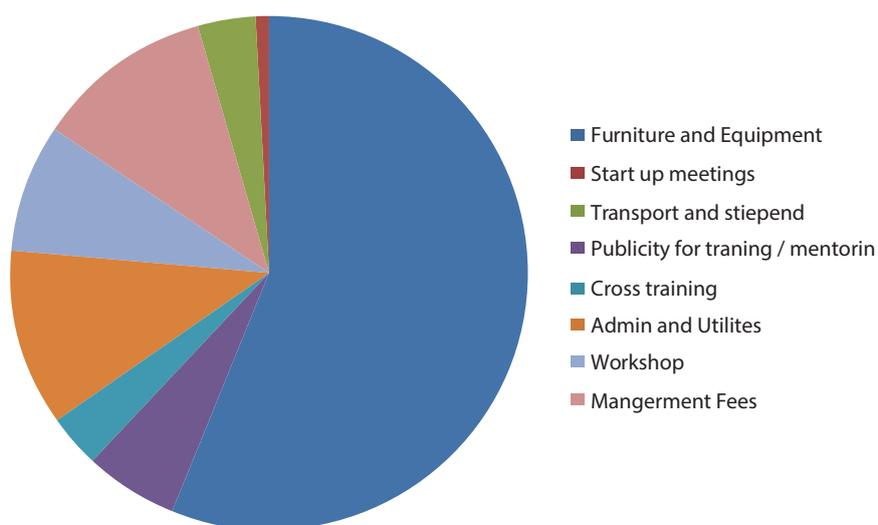


Figure 7 shows the costs for 2014 for the Honiara part of the Y@W program. The most significant proportion is again for transport and intern stipends (54.2%). Further breakdown shows that the greater part of this expenditure was on stipends at 1,320,000 SBD. Transport and logistics officer and staff are only 36,000 SBD. The amount of the stipend is around 200 dollars every two weeks. This cost will vary depending on the number of intern placements and the length of the internship.

TABLE SIX: COSTS OF THE Y@W PROGRAM IN HONIARA, 2014

Budget Detail	Actual SBD	% Share
Human Resources	357,600	14.3%
Furniture and Equipment	64,000	2.6%
Start up meetings	9,000	0.4%
Transport and stipend	1,356,000	54.2%
Publicity for training / mentoring	103,663	4.1%
Cross training	48,000	1.9%
Admin and Utilities	223,000	8.9%
Workshops	139,534	5.6%
Management fees	201,012	8.0%
Total	2,501,809	100.0%

FIGURE EIGHT: PERCENTAGE SHARE OF COSTS OF THE Y@W PROGRAM IN HONIARA, 2014

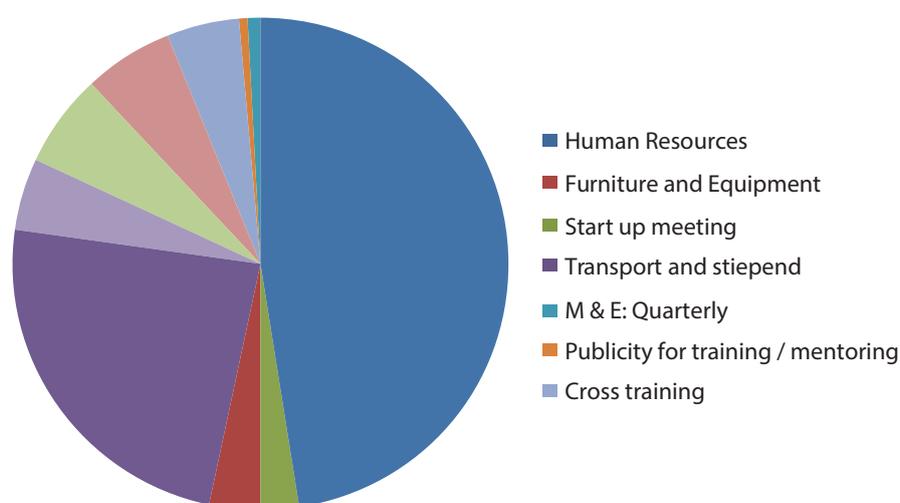


We can see below the costs for the Honiara program to date in 2015 (i.e. November). Again the stipends are a considerable proportion of the total costs (40.77%). Human Resources at 822,000 SBD (23.34%) now make up in absolute terms and as a proportion, a substantial amount of the overall costs of program implementation. This is most likely due to recent changes in the wage structure for staff.

TABLE SEVEN: BUDGET OF THE Y@W PROGRAM IN HONIARA, 2015

Budget detail	Actual SBD	% Share
Human Resources	822,000	23.34%
Furniture and Equipment	144,000	4.09%
Start up meetings	47,000	1.33%
Transport and stipend	1,436,000	40.77%
M & E: Quarterly update and meeting	10,000	0.28%
Publicity for training / mentoring	10,000	0.28%
Cross training	228,000	6.47%
Admin and Utilities	283,000	8.03%
Workshops	312,000	8.86%
Management fees	230,440	6.54%
Total	3,522,440	100.00%

FIGURE NINE: COST OF THE Y@W PROGRAM IN HONIARA, 2015



5.4.4 Costs of the Y@W program in Choiseul

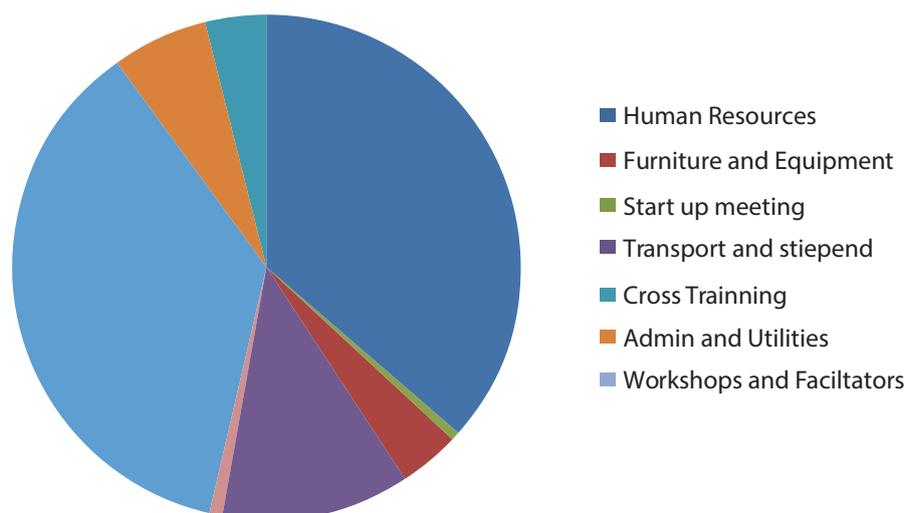
As we can see below the costs of the Choiseul program differ considerably from those of Honiara. This is primarily because the program is substantially different in Choiseul with less emphasis on internships as the size of the formal sector is relatively small. Here a much greater proportion of the costs are on Workshops and Facilitators (34 %). The costs of transport and stipends are still heavily dominated by the cost of the stipend, although in Choiseul interns receive a transport and a food allowance. The amount spent on transport allowances seems to be significant. This is due to the logistics of implementing a program in an outer province. This includes the high cost of fuel for the boats that transport youth to and from Taro to attend the two-week training block and to enable staff to undertake regular village monitoring visits.

As would be expected, the costs per youth in Choiseul are higher than for the Honiara program. In 2014 from a total of 107 recruits, 94 participants completed the program in Choiseul (comprising 46 interns and 48 YEPs).

TABLE EIGHT: COSTS OF THE Y@W PROGRAM IN CHOISEUL IN 2014

Budget Detail	Actual SBD	% Share
Human Resources	144,595	15.47%
Furniture and Equipment	36,585	3.9%
Start Up Meetings	4,506	0.5%
Transport and Stipends	313,726	33.6%
Cross Training	21,264	2.3%
Admin and Utilities	88,182	9.4%
Workshops and Facilitators	318,004	34.0%
Publicity for training and mentoring	7,612	0.81%
Total	934,474	100.00%

FIGURE TEN: COSTS OF THE Y@W PROGRAM IN CHOISEUL IN 2014

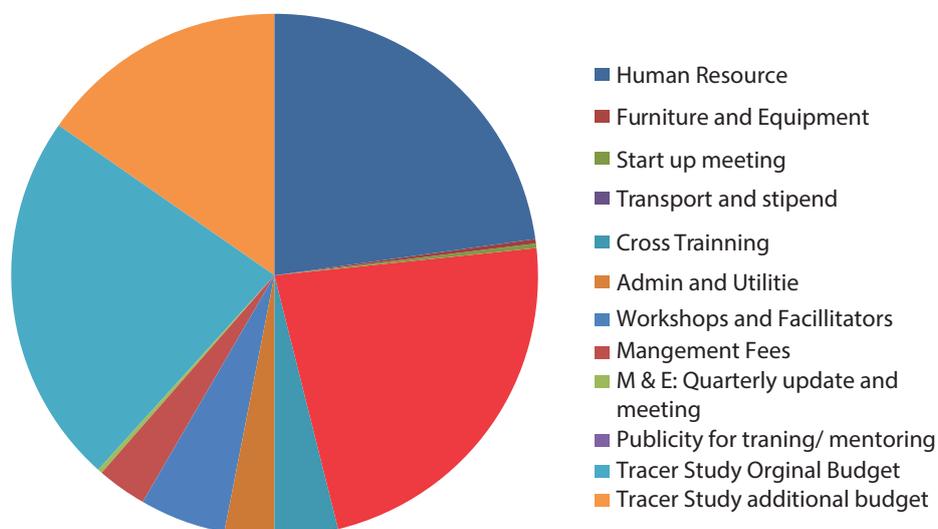


In 2015 it is anticipated that a total of appropriately 80 youth will complete internships and YEP placements

TABLE NINE: COSTS OF THE Y@W PROGRAM IN CHOISEUL IN 2015

Budget Detail	Actual SBD	% Share
Human Resources	173,700	17.12%
Furniture and Equipment	5,924	0.58%
Start Up Meetings	4,000	0.39%
Transport and Stipends	213,600	21.06%
Cross Training	73,200	7.22%
Admin and Utilities	39,900	3.93%
Workshops and Facilitators	105,176	10.4%
Management Fees	43,330	4.27%
M & E: Quarterly update and meeting	3,000	0.30%
Publicity for training/ mentoring	500	0.05%
Tracer Study Original Budget	204,545	20.16%
Tracer study additional budget	147,560	14.55%
Total	1,014,435	100.00%

FIGURE ELEVEN: COSTS OF THE Y@W PROGRAM IN CHOISEUL, JANUARY - JUNE 2015



5.4.5 Could Y@W increase the stipend for interns?

To increase the financial and economic benefits of the internships an increase in the stipend could be considered. The problem is that the stipend is by far the greater proportion of the costs for the Honiara program. Under the current budget and without a substantial revamp of the costs and participant numbers this would be difficult. However, given the information provided in this Report about the difficulties being faced by program staff who are struggling to find internships for an ever increasing number of Y@W applicants; the need to ensure that all program components are sufficiently underpinned by adequate staffing and resources; and concerns raised by some participants about the quality of the internship experience and the length of the work experience placement - all within the broader context of a need to clarify the program purpose and scope - the idea of reducing participant numbers may have some relevance and should be considered. Reducing the numbers of interns to a more manageable level while the program is in a period of stabilisation and simultaneously increasing the intern stipend could be a more viable option.

Another option may be to ask employers to make a small contribution to the stipend. This may also have the advantage incentivizing employers to 'make an investment' in the interns rather than using them simply as a free source of labour. This is particularly important for employers that may be guilty of 'cycling' the number interns and not taking any on as full time employees. However asking employer for a small contribution to intern wages may discourage some from taking any more interns.

But given that the intern allowance is 200 SBD every two weeks even a minor increase will be significant in relative terms for them. To ensure the 'buy in' of employers a very minimal contribution could be trailed.

5.5 Value for Money

Given the current data limitations and unclear purpose of this program it is extremely difficult to make a judgment about the 'value for money' at this time. This depends largely on what the program is trying to achieve. As mentioned elsewhere in this Report, due to the limitations associated with the data that is currently being collected and reported, there is no hard evidence about what longer-term employment and economic benefits are being achieved. This makes any value for money assessment incomplete. Once a) work is undertaken to clarify the program design; b) the program has been implemented for a longer timeframe; c) better data on the long run economic and employment outcomes has been collected, an evaluation on the 'value for money' of the program would be more useful.

Key Points

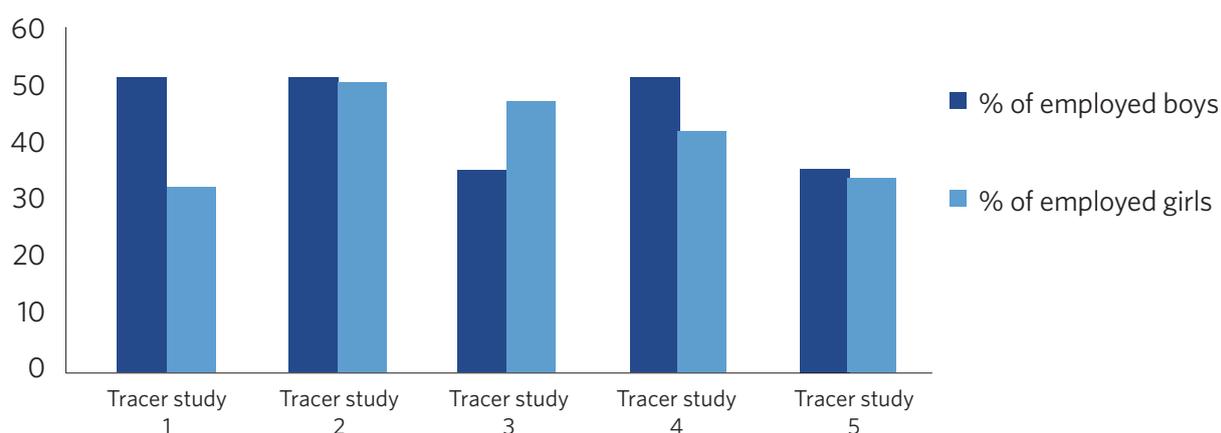
- The majority of the costs for the Honiara program are the stipends. Under the current budget and without a substantial revamp of program costs or the participant numbers it would be difficult to adjust the stipend amount.
- One option is to ask employers to make a small contribution to the stipend. This may also have the advantage incentivizing employers to 'make an investment' in the interns
- Costs per youth in Choiseul are higher than Honiara, but this is to be expected.
- As this stage in the program's development and given data limitations and unclear objectives a 'value for money' assessment is difficult.

5.6 Social Impact Assessment

5.6.1 Gender

Figure 13 compares gender by employment and unemployment. For the most part the employment rate for males is higher than for females. There is a reasonable variation between the employment gap between males and females but it is shrinking over time.

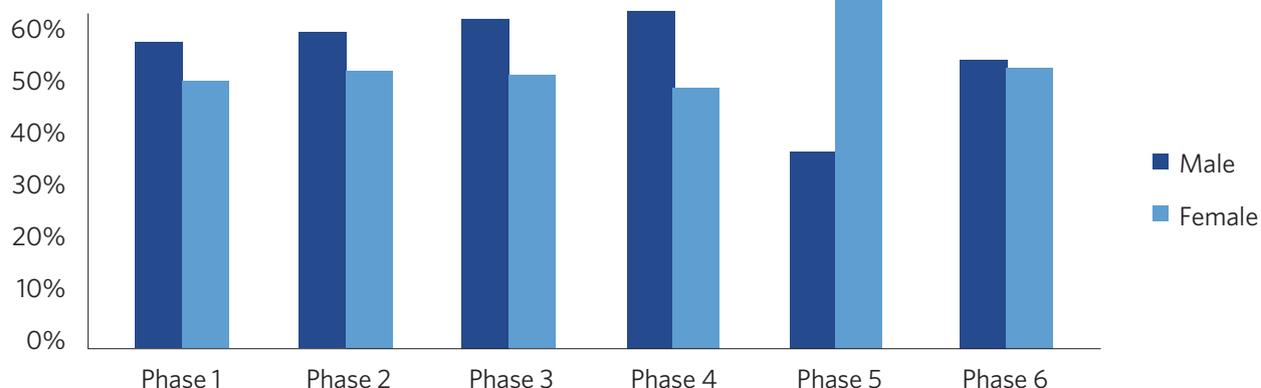
FIGURE TWELVE: EMPLOYMENT BY GENDER



If we look at all participants from the different phases we can there have been slightly more males in the program overall but in Phase Six there were more females than males. In Phase Seven the gender balance is almost exactly even. An explanation on why the program seems to have generally more male than female participants would need more investigation. But there are questions about whether less females complete the community service and the training aspect of the program because they have caring responsibilities.

This was highlighted by some of the youth in focus groups but more investigation of this aspect would be needed. Pleasingly it looks as if the proportions going through the program by gender is improving over time. This may offer an explanation as to why the employment prospects by gender have also improved. N.B. It should be noted that this data relates to the Honiara program. Sufficient program data from Choiseul province to facilitate a similar analysis was not available at the time of this Review.

FIGURE THIRTEEN: Y@W PARTICIPANTS BY GENDER, HONIARA



5.6.2 Disability

'Y@W improved me and supported me. I needed to improve myself. I started to feel confident after working at reception. I struggled at first because English is not my first language but this training has helped me for life'.

(Y@W Plus participant)

'I have legs, eyes and body but I still need more knowledge to work'.

(Y@W Plus participant)

'I do not have primary or secondary education but now it feels like I have been to school'.

(Y@W Plus participant).

Youth focus groups provided evidence to show that the training programs for the Y@W Plus participants had been significant. Young people with disabilities spoke of their great appreciation for being involved in such a program and of how this opportunity had provided them with important chance to learn new information and skills and had led to them feeling valued. Such benefits were particularly significant for this cohort, some of whom had not been able to access the same learning opportunities as other youth.

Concern was raised about the problems faced by some participants who needed to take a taxi to their internship placement because of their disability, since this was a significant cost when relative to their stipend. However SPC has assured the Evaluators that in the past the program paid for fares for any young person with a disability who could not take public transport. These days the program provides a driver and vehicle to transport them to work.

As discussed elsewhere in this Report, in future it is important that Y@W Plus participants are mainstreamed and that opportunities for them to engage with other youth are maximised.

5.6.3 Socio economic group

The majority of Y@W participants in Honiara appear to be from low socio economic groups since many reported long lengths of unemployment or 'stay at home' before joining the program. This may be indicative of low-income groups but without accurate data on household and disposable income it is difficult to discern. However it is clear that the vast majority of the youth who were interviewed wanted some form of employment and many were finding it very difficult to gain formal employment.

However, in Choiseul province, many of the interns who were interviewed in this Review had completed school and some had undertaken tertiary studies. Most aspired to continue formal education once their internship was over. At least some of the current interns came from families with considerable wealth when compared to the vast majority of rural youth whose parents are involved in subsistence agriculture. In the absence of any data collected over time about social economic status it is difficult to make any meaningful assessment of this aspect.

5.6.4 Age

In the Solomon Islands there is an increasing youth bulge. It is predicted that the share of young people aged 15-29 years in the population will remain the same in 2020 as it is in 2009 at 45 per cent. However, as the youth age groups are increasing in size, the actual number of young people will be much larger. The projected number of young people aged 15-29 years in 2015 is 158,000 and by 2020 it will be 180,000. (Review and Analysis of the Demand for Skills in the Solomon Islands Labour Market Richard Curtain 2013).

Figures 15 and 16 provide a break down the age of Y@W participants. In Phase One the majority of participants were between 20-24 and all were under the age of 35. The age breakdown in Phase Two is similar. This trend continued in all the other Phases

FIGURE FOURTEEN: PHASE ONE PARTICIPANTS BY AGE

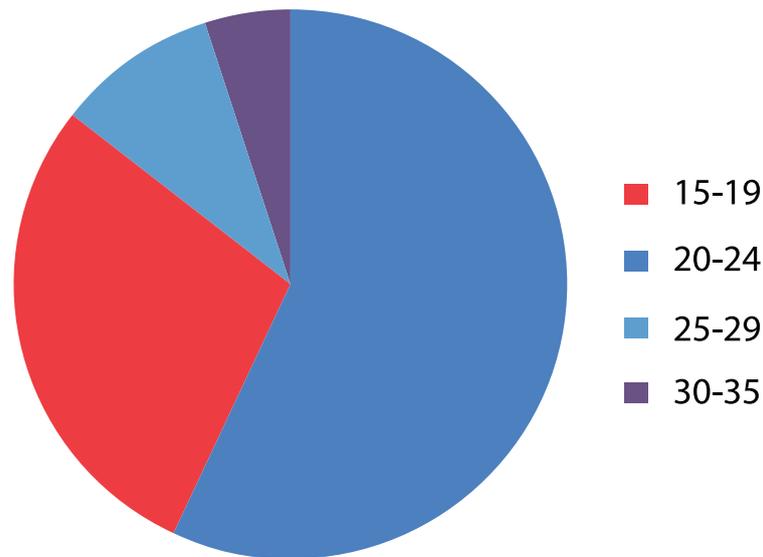
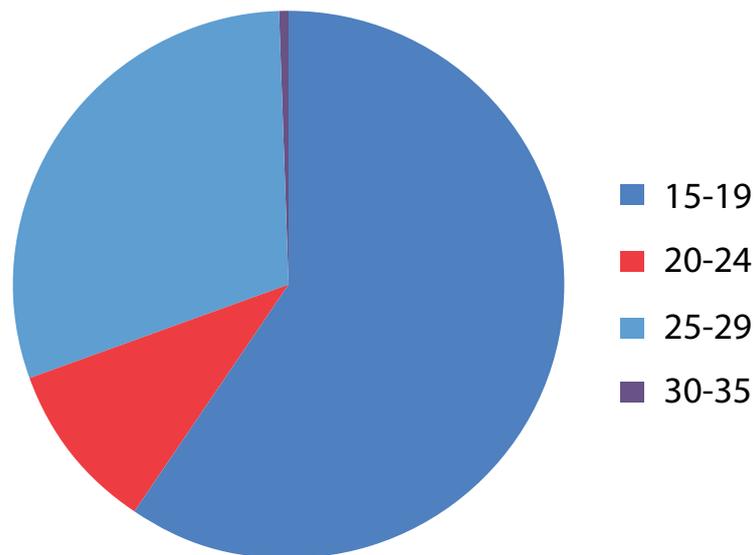


FIGURE FIFTEEN: PHASE TWO PARTICIPANTS BY AGE



5.6.5 Rural Areas

At the time of this Review, the program is centered in Honiara with a small program internship program also being implemented in Taro and approximately 60 YEP placements per year rural and remote villages in Choiseul province. The Evaluators also heard reports of some other youth travelling to Honiara from other provinces and from some rural areas in Guadalcanal to join the program. Some of these rural youth are living with relatives in Honiara. It appears that some others may be travelling two to three hours a day in order to take up an internship. Such claims require further investigation. Section 4.4 of this Report provides further discussion related to program implementation and benefits in Choiseul, as well as with respect to the planned program establishment in Malaita province next year.

5.7 Comparison with Other Unemployment Schemes

5.7.1 Labour mobility schemes

Recognized Seasonal Employers (RSE) Program in New Zealand and Seasonal Workers Program (SWP) in Australia

Labour mobility programs have significant potential for employment prospects for Solomon Islands in future years. They have been identified by SIG as a key priority as highlighted in the Trade Policy Framework³³, the first trade policy for the country.

The RSE provides for the temporary entry of up to 9,000 workers for the whole Pacific. In the 2007/2008, 83% in the 2008/2009 season 73% of these seasonal workers came from five Forum Island Countries, predominantly Vanuatu, Tonga and Samoa. An AusAID and World Bank funded study³⁴ on the New Zealand RSE concluded "this seasonal migration program is one of the most effective development interventions for which rigorous evaluations are available." The number of workers from Solomon Islands has been increasing slowly to 423 workers in the 2012/13 season.

Higher wages and the expected gains for households through remittances are supported with significant empirical evidence. Gibson and McKenzie (2011)³⁵ estimate for participating Tongan households the gain per participating household to be approximately a\$2,600, which is a 39% increase in per capita annual income. Similar data is not yet available for Solomon Islands. With a lower GDP per capita in Solomon Islands than Tonga, participation in the scheme might lead to an even greater increase in the per-capita annual income of a participating household.

Gibson and McKenzie looked in detail at Tonga's experience in the SWP and conclude 'the workers that have participated in the programme have benefited by reasonably large amounts, increasing annual incomes for their households by almost 40 percent.' They go on to conclude that workers were satisfied with their experiences and would recommend the programme to other workers in their villages.

The strong empirical evidence from various sources on the New Zealand RSE programme shows broader positive impacts on household durable asset acquisition, subjective standard of living, and, in Tonga, secondary schooling attendance.

Both the RSE and SWP are demand driven schemes. Over time, the scarcity of unskilled labour will continue to increase and more opportunities will arise for labour sending countries in the region, including Solomon Islands, to send unskilled workers abroad. The sector where the most potential exists will be in care giving as the populations of Australia and New Zealand get older.

The equivalent Australian scheme to RSE has been until recently somewhat smaller and less successful. In December 2011, the Australian Government announced a "Seasonal Worker Program" for farm workers from the Pacific and East Timor, as well as a small-scale, three-year trial with accommodation providers in the tourism industry. So far the scheme has been dominated by Tongans who accounted for 81% of the participants in FY 2012-2013. There were 42 Solomon Island workers in FY 2012-2013 and only 8 up until January in FY 2013-2014.

The SWP has had serious issues in engaging a 'work ready' pool of workers because of the institutional capacity of the Labour Mobility Unit housed in the Department of Foreign Affairs and External Trade. It has been difficult for LMU to sort through all workers and complete good work place training. There have been quite a few incidents concerning SWP workers from Solomon Islands, affecting the country's reputation in the scheme.

³³Solomon Islands Trade Policy Framework, 'Building Productive Capacity for Trade and Quality of Life', Solomon Island Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade, 2015

³⁴Gibson J and McKenzie D ' The Development Impact of a best practice Seasonal Worker Policy', World Bank, 2015 p242

³⁵Gibson, J and McKenzie, D. (2011). "Australia's Pacific Seasonal Workers Pilot Scheme: Development Impacts in the First Two Years". Asian Pacific Viewpoint 52(3): 361-370

While the number of Solomon Islands workers on the SWP is currently quite small so far, the program has significant potential in terms of the number of jobs that could be available in the future. The SWP also provides excellent short run economic outcomes because the wages are so high in relative terms - since the workers are paid in Australian dollars.

Key Points

- The SWP and RSE have excellent economic outcomes for participants. Due to higher wages in Australia and New Zealand these benefits are greater than the Y@W program.
- If Y@W is a youth employment program then it needs to link to broader labour market policies and strategy, and coordinate with other labour market interventions such as the SWP and RSE. Reducing youth unemployment has two main elements. One is to improve the work place skills of youth (labour supply). Y@W already addresses this aspect. The second is to increase the number of workers demanded by employers (labour demand) through job creation schemes. Both SWP and RSE are labour demand / job creation programs. A joint labour supply and labour demand strategy is normal in a comprehensive labour market initiative. Creating greater links between Y@W and RSE and SWP could be important going forward. There seems to be significant potential for liaison with respect to SWP in particular, since the program has had trouble sourcing a 'work ready' pool of workers and the Labour Mobility Unit lacks the institutional capacity and resources to screen and train prospective workers.
- There have already been some discussions between DFAT, the Solomon Islands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade and Y@W on this issue. The authors of this report recommend continued efforts be made to identify further partnerships going forward.
- If reducing youth unemployment is the overall goal of Y@W, then further partnerships addressing job creation are also essential in the long run.
- The SPCSI CPM has advised that there is strong support for Y@W to train young people and be a conduit for successful phase youth to be streamlined into RSE.

5.7.2 Rapid Employment Project (REP) World Bank

The Rapid Employment Project is another labour demand driven employment scheme that provides short-term employment in Solomon Islands. The development objective of the Rapid Employment Project is to assist targeted vulnerable urban populations to: (i) increase incomes through the provision of short term employment; and (ii) improve knowledge, experience, and basic employment skills. Much of the work has been in urban works, such as road building, and a services component implemented by Honiara city council, complemented by an environmental awareness campaign³⁶. So far the program has engaged 8,200 beneficiaries for an average of 49 days. Participants form community groups to assist with street cleaning and urban regeneration activities. In addition, the program has completed 16 pedestrian infrastructure projects, with two more under construction.

There is already significant coordination and communication between Y@W and the World Bank REP project. Up to four meetings a year is attended with World Bank managers and the two programs have undertaken combined pre employment training. These efforts should be continued. However there is some concern that although REP provides opportunities for youth to participate in training in road building and street sweeping and to gain a short-term income it does not open up career pathways for them. Ongoing assessment of how the two programs might link and contribute to a broader coordinated labour market response is required.

5.8 Final Considerations

Whilst there are limitations in presenting a fully comprehensive cost benefit analysis, the following key themes have emerged from this Evaluation:

Major benefits of Y@W include improved work skills and creating a 'work ready' pool

Significant evidence has been gathered through this Evaluation to show that participants have gained increased work place skills, training and work experience that is likely to bring them closer to the labour market. The Program is also helping to improve youth attitudes and behavior; their contribution within their communities; opening up their minds to new ideas and possibilities for their own future; and motivating a number to pursue further study.

Better data collection is required about employment and long run economic outcomes

Further data collection and analysis in the Tracer studies on interns who go on to permanent employment after the Y@W program would be useful. Assessing the long run economic benefits for these individuals and whether they later drop out of the labour market, are crucial areas for further investigation. Similarly from an economic evaluation perspective more data

³⁶Project Paper on a Proposal Additional Grant from the State and Peacebuilding Fund of US 1.55 million to the Solomon Islands for a Rapid Employment Project' World Bank, April 23, 2014

collection is needed on the 'counterfactual', i.e. to facilitate comparison with youth who have not gone through the program. Without this data it is hard to assess whether the economic and employment outcomes are better for youth who have gone through the Y@W program compared to youth who have not. Indicative findings that have emerged when we compared Tracer study employment rates and World Bank estimates for employment rates of youth (aged 15-24) gives an initial indication that youth who are completing Y@W are no more likely to be employed than youth in the general population. More investigation on the employment outcomes of the Y@W interns is needed.

Further investigation into the issue of substitution should be undertaken to fully assess the economic benefits further investigation is needed on the issue of 'substitution' since some employers have reported they have substituted higher paid and more permanent employees with Y@W interns. This could unintentionally undermine any potential employment gains of the program.

Further links are needed with other job creation and employment schemes

While it is unrealistic to expect Y@W to solve all labour market issues in Solomon Islands it is important that the program is implemented as part of a fully-fledged labour market strategy (a labour market needs assessment to identify what type of interventions are most needed is required), so the program can be more effective. Y@W's current focus is on the labour supply side (skills and work readiness). Linking with programs that focus on labour demand and job creation such as the World Bank's Rapid Employment Project, the Seasonal Workers Program and the Recognized Seasonal Employers Program would lead to a more coordinated labour market response.

Y@W should continue its efforts not to act in a silo. There may be potential for a direct link with the Labour Mobility Unit in the Department of Foreign Affairs and External Trade. The SWP has suffered from not having an easily accessible 'work ready' pool of workers and LMU has low institutional capacity to carry out the necessary checks and training of potential workers. A direct link with LMU, providing a pool of 'work ready' labour may have significant potential in future years.

There has already been some investigation and meetings on these issues between Y@W and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade (MFAET). At the time of this Evaluation the RSE uses a private sector agent model for recruitment. But the SWP has had problems in recruiting good quality workers from Solomon Islands. This has effected the country's reputation in this scheme. Given the significant potential for a more coordinated labour market response the authors recommend that MFAET, the private sector recruitment agents and Y@W meet to discuss this issue and the potential for developing a partnership. Y@W could provide a readymade platform for recruiting good quality productive workers for this scheme.

Increase in intern stipend would improve financial and economic benefits

Evidence from participant focus groups suggests that the current level of the stipend in some cases does barely covers in work costs such as transport to work. To improve the financial and economic benefits of the program an increase in the stipend could be considered. Due to the current financial limitations of the program this may be hard to finance. One possibility is to ask employers to make a small contribution. This could encourage employers to 'invest' in the Y@W interns.

Clarify the long-term program objectives

It is difficult to assess the benefits and long-term impacts of the program when the objectives are unclear. It is not unusual for a program to develop organically but now is an appropriate time to re-examine the overarching purpose of Y@W. Is Y@W a youth development program, a vocational training program to equip youth with workplace skills and experience, or a youth employment scheme? A Cost Benefit Analysis would be even more useful in future years once the program design and logic has been agreed and sufficient time has elapsed for program outcomes to occur.

6 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Program Effectiveness

Recent history shows us that Solomon Islands society suffers when there are high levels of idle youth and high youth unemployment. Clearly there is a correlation between youth unemployment and wider social problems such as crime and anti social behavior. This Evaluation has shown that the Y@W program is making a difference to the lives of hundreds of young people. It is giving them hope, confidence, dignity and a purpose. This in turn is contributing to improved self-esteem and behavior change. Importantly, youth are beginning to discover how they might make a meaningful contribution to the future of their country. This has wider social benefits for Solomon Islands society.

Y@W has many strengths including strong program management support from SPC; established links with many Government Ministries; commitment from development partners; an enthusiastic youth team; and good connections within the private and NGO sectors. The program fits well with the Government's youth policy framework that includes a focus on improving youth education and employment opportunities and the engaging youth in sustainable development. A key factor that has led to the success of the initiative so far is that Y@W responds to the aspirations of youth for workplace training and experience. The needs of rural youth who want to expand their knowledge and practice in income generation are also being addressed.

The issues that Y@W is attempting to deal with are significant. The difficulties of implementing an effective program within this context should not be underestimated. Given these circumstances the very fact that Y@W is operational and that it is achieving multiple benefits for individuals and communities is an indication of the program's importance to date and why it has earned such a good reputation.

Considerable groundwork has now been laid to try to address significant youth employment and engagement concerns that are critical to the future of Solomon Islands. This evaluation has facilitated a comprehensive review of Y@W implementation to date with a view to building on this experience to further enhance the program's longer-term impacts. Opportunities for program strengthening have been identified. These are listed below. Y@W is now well placed to continue to build a good practice model that will make a valuable contribution to the lives of Solomon Island youth and to the future of this nation.

6.2 Opportunities for Further Program Strengthening

The following issues have been identified as key areas for program enhancement.

6.2.1 Program design

To date Y@W has developed organically with new components added over time. There is a lack of clarity about the program's overarching purpose. Is the goal to establish a youth employment scheme with a labour market focus; provide young Solomon Islands with much needed vocational training in workplace skills and experience; or to impact more broadly on youth development? It is now time to revisit the program's Theory of Change, clarify its primary goal and desired impact and document its Program Logic going forward. This process will help to identify the core program components that should now be pursued.

6.2.2 Strategic oversight of the program

There is enormous value in setting up a Strategic Advisory Group to support SPC to direct the ongoing program. This should include people with demonstrated experience and strong commitment to youth development; high-level delegates from relevant SIG ministries who have sufficient time and a passion for this cause; and external partners. Consideration could also be given to involving people from the NGO and private sectors; representatives from tertiary institutes and vocational training organisations; and those with labour market expertise. The youth perspective should also be sought. The development of such a Group has multiple benefits. It will:

- Help to clarify program vision and overarching purpose within its broader context.
- Contribute to high-level decision-making to ensure that the program 'stays on track' to achieve its desired outcomes and longer-term impact.
- Strengthen the potential for long-term sustainability and national ownership.

6.2.3 Program management

Responsibility for program management sits with SPC. Day to day program implementation has been the responsibility of a Program Coordinator with guidance from the SPCSI Country Program Manager. The gap left by the recent departure of the original Program Coordinator will shortly be filled. It is crucial that the person taking on this critical role has the confidence

of SPC and other key stakeholders to manage program operations. A new staffing structure has been put in place and a period of consolidation is now required. A priority focus for the new Program Coordinator will be to motivate the Team and help them to identify and achieve realistic targets. Staff would benefit greatly from more formalised skills development and mentoring. Training in program management and youth and community development would be especially beneficial.

6.2.4 Training and mentorship

Good quality training and mentoring components are critical to the success of any youth entrepreneurship program. There is considerable scope to improve these essential elements of Y@W. The content and delivery of the cross training workshops require particular attention. These are conducted mostly by unpaid volunteer trainers, many of whom lack sufficient skill to inform and actively engage youth. Youth who receive training in business development would benefit greatly from more formalised back up support and refresher training to help them to implement their business plans. Youth reported that they were expected to make a significant commitment (both in financial and social terms) to participate in the community service and training components. It would be only fair for this effort to be reciprocated in terms of the quality of the training provided.

Youth training is a specialised field and experienced youth trainers come at a cost. Training youth with a disability should be mainstreamed however, in some instances additional resources may be required. Problems in securing suitable training venues and accommodation for YEPs attending live-in courses must also be addressed. SPC recognises the urgency of resolving these issues. It intends to strengthen cross training and extend computer training in 2016. In response to concerns raised in this Review SPC has decided that in future youth travel cost to attend training will be reimbursed.

From the start SPC recognised the need to back up youth training with mentorship. However program staff have consistently struggled to recruit suitable mentors who are willing to make an ongoing commitment. Some group mentorship has been provided, but renewed efforts are needed to identify new strategies to resolve this gap. Two ideas canvassed in this Review are a) enabling some youth to take up extended placements by way of an 'apprenticeship' with development partners; and b) incorporating appropriately skilled international volunteers with business development experience to mentor youth entrepreneurs. Peer to peer mentoring should also be considered. As well as efforts should be made to provide all youth with enhanced follow-up services and access to further work related training resources.

6.2.5 Increased links with other job creation employment schemes

Y@W should continue its efforts to avoid acting in a silo. While it is unrealistic to expect the program to solve all labour market issues in Solomon Islands it is important that the program is part of a fully-fledged labour market strategy. This will enhance its effectiveness. The program's current focus is on the labour supply side (skills and work readiness). Linking with programs that focus on labour demand and job creation such as the World Bank's Rapid Employment Project and the Seasonal Workers Program and the Recognized Seasonal Employers Program would create a more coordinated labour market response. There may be potential for Y@W to link more directly with the Labour Mobility Unit in the Department of Foreign Affairs and External Trade. The SWP has suffered from not having an easily accessible 'work ready' pool of workers and LMU has low institutional capacity to carry out the necessary checks and training of potential workers. A direct link to LMU, with Y@W providing a pool of 'work ready' labour, may have significant potential in future years. While there is already a private sector recruitment agent model for RSE this should not preclude greater linkages between the programs. The private sector recruitment agents would benefit from having a more accessible and capable pool of labour. There have been some discussions already between Y@W and LMU about a possible partnership. These issues should be further reconsidered given the potential benefits.

6.3 Sustainability

Substantial financial support has been secured to implement Y@W for the next four years. Funds have been committed for varying periods by several external partners (in particular UK and Australia) and some financial and in-kind support is anticipated from a number of government ministries. The work being undertaken through Y@W and its YEP stream is highly relevant to several SIG ministries: the Ministry of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs; the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Employment; the Ministry of Education and Human Resources; the Ministry of Culture and Tourism; the Ministry of National Reconciliation, Unity and Peace; and the Ministry of National Development, Planning and Aid Coordination.

It is critical that over the next four years concerted efforts are made to ensure program sustainability. Strategies to achieve this need to be built into program implementation and progress monitored. For sustainability to be achieved the initiative needs to be appropriate, owned by Solomon Island stakeholders and supported by local resources. Key factors affecting sustainability need careful consideration, including: links to government priorities, local management structures and demand; active participation of SIG and other key stakeholders; and appropriate capacity development to strengthen local program management and staff. National ownership should be a high priority.

For sustainability to be achieved strong working partnerships need to be built with relevant parties. Of particular importance is the need to actively engage with the above Ministries in discussions about the programs' strategic direction. Sustainability cannot be achieved without their support. The potential for Y@W to make a significant contribution to address the priorities of the National Youth Policy that is overseen by MWYCA have been raised by many stakeholders in this Review. The program can also make a valuable contribution towards helping the Government to achieve its vocational training objectives 'to improve the skills base of the country's work force and provide alternative pathways for young people'³⁷

Within Solomon Islands there is limited capacity to generate the required budgetary resources to address youth training for employment. It is expected that continued financial support from development partners would be needed for some time. Support from both the European Union³⁸ and DFAT³⁹ aims to strengthen the Technical Vocational and Education Training (TVET) sector. Since 2010 the EU has supported SIG in its efforts to create more training and employment opportunities for those have not completed or have not completed secondary education. Through its Education Sector Support program DFAT supports 'skills training so that young Solomon Islanders will be better placed to get jobs'⁴⁰. Y@W is already making a contribution within this space. There is scope for more formal inputs to be made in this regard.

This evaluation has begun to canvass ideas about future program governance. This matter requires more in-depth cross sector consultation. The future of Y@W needs to be considered within the broader context of youth policy directives, labour market concerns and initiatives and vocational education programs.

There is good potential for Y@W to become a national program led by high profile Solomon Islanders with a strong passion and commitment for youth development. Within this context more active involvement of high-level representatives from the above ministries, the NGO community, tertiary institutes, the vocational training sector and private enterprise should be sought. Young people should be invited to participate. Involving such people in the proposed Strategic Advisory Group is an important step towards building an effective and sustainable program.

6.4 Program monitoring

From the start monitoring activities have been integrated into the program. This includes data collected by program staff and six monthly Tracer Studies conducted by Pasifiki. However not all of this data is useful and some data that would be helpful is not being collected. It appears that some data is incomplete or inaccurate.

Tracer Studies provide a useful 'snapshot' of phase activities and achievements but findings between phases are difficult to compare. Each Tracer study includes a different proportion of interns from different phases. Given that the phase that an intern is in has a significant effect on program outcomes it would be better to compare interns by phase and by how long they have been outside the program rather than to lump them all together. More sophisticated analysis would also provide a comparison against a cohort of youth who have not been through the program e.g. the unemployment rate for those outside the program.

Further data on interns who go on to permanent employment after the Y@W program is needed. Important areas for further review are the long run economic benefits for individuals and whether or not youth drop back out of the labour market. Indicative data obtained from a comparison of the Tracer study employment rates with World Bank estimates for employment rates of youth (aged 15-24) suggests that youth completing Y@W are no more likely to be employed than youth in the general population. Further investigation on employment outcomes for interns is required.

More in-depth enquiry should also be undertaken on the issue of 'substitution'. Some employers have reported that they have substituted higher paid and more permanent employees with Y@W interns. This could unintentionally undermine any potential employment gains from the program. More investigation on the potential substitution effect is needed.

The program has expanded and changed significantly since it began and it is now an opportune time to revisit and streamline monitoring activities and instruments. Documentation of the program logic will form a solid foundation on which to shape a comprehensive M&E Framework and suitable data collection instruments. An evaluation specialist should be engaged to coordinate this task. A labour economist should conduct wider analysis on the substitution effects and whether the program is achieving the long run employment outcomes. It is important that such work be undertaken in close liaison with both the Program Coordinator and the General Manager of Pasifiki to ensure that it is robust.

³⁷Strategic Education Framework, 2007-15 (2007). Ministry of Education & Human Resources. Solomon Islands Government

³⁸Through the Integration of Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET) into the Formal and Non-Formal Education System in Solomon Islands reported in The European Union and Solomon Islands Partnership Report (2012).

³⁹<http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Documents/education-concept-note.pdf>

⁴⁰<http://dfat.gov.au/geo/solomon-islands/development-assistance/Pages/objective-3-enhancing-human-development-.aspx>

Once the precise data collection requirements are determined it is desirable that ongoing program monitoring be undertaken by program staff, in conjunction with the periodic Tracer Study reviews conducted by Pasifiki. It is likely that some staff training will be required in this regard. Pasifiki staff are sufficiently skilled to conduct the Tracer Studies going forward and could play a role in staff training. Periodic input from an evaluation specialist to review the quality and comprehensiveness of the data and reports would be beneficial. Efforts should be made to train and engage youth interns themselves in some aspects of the data collection and analysis process. More comprehensive program level evaluation should be conducted further down the track.

6.5 Recommendations

Following is a list of suggested actions that should be undertaken to further enhance the effectiveness of Y@W program implementation and the achievement of longer-term development outcomes.

Strategic level actions

A. Revisit the program's Theory of Change within the broader context of youth education, vocational training and employment, and the labour market situation in Solomon Islands. Clarify the program's primary purpose and document its Program Logic identifying the core program components that should be pursued to achieve the program goal. This will include strategic discussion about whether the goal is to establish a youth employment scheme with a labour market focus or to impact more broadly on youth development. Whether the program should be proactively targeted towards engaging more disadvantaged and vulnerable youth or young people more broadly should be determined.

In line with developing this more strategic approach, the program should retain an ability to provide a flexible response towards achieving the program goal. The challenge of 'testing out' new program strategies that have a potential to contribute towards the development of an innovative program model, while at the same time ensuring that each new activity is appropriately resourced and implemented effectively, will need to be carefully managed.

An experienced program design expert with experience in youth (and community) development to work alongside key stakeholders should be engaged to undertake this task, with input from a development labour market economist. This would help to ensure the development of a robust program model. (See also 6.2.1).

B. Establish a Strategic Advisory Group to determine the overarching purpose of this program and its Theory of Change (as outlined above) and to direct the program going forward. This Group should include high-level delegates from relevant SIG ministries who have sufficient time and a passion for this cause; people with demonstrated experience and strong commitment to youth development; and external partners. Input from youth advocates from the NGO and private sectors, tertiary institutes and vocational training providers and those with labour market expertise should be sought. Youth participation in this Group should be a priority. (See also 6.2.2).

Representatives from the following Ministries should be invited to participate: The Ministry of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs; The Ministry of National Unity, Reconciliation and Peace; the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Employment; the Ministry of Education and Human Resources; the Ministry of Culture and Tourism; and the Ministry of National Development, Planning and Aid Coordination. Given that the central focus of this program is on youth, consideration could be given to nominating MWYCA as the lead ministry.

Program level actions

C. Increase efforts to build a strong and capable staff team to implement Y@W in both in Honiara and provincial areas. In particular, strengthen the program management capacity of staff in leadership roles. Provide training for key leaders in youth and community development as well. This training input should be supplemented with ongoing, high standard mentorship for Group Leaders. (See also 6.2.3).

D. Strengthen and better resource the youth training and mentorship components for both Y@W interns and YEP participants. Provide all youth with enhanced follow-up services and access to further work related training resources. Ongoing mentorship support from people who have established a successful business would be especially beneficial for youth entrepreneurs who have undertaken the initial business training and seek to setup their own enterprise. (See also 6.2.4).

E. Identify strategies to enhance the participant's experience of program quality, benefits and outcomes. This includes reducing the number of participants (in the internship component in particular) in each phase and increase the length of internships and YEP placements (but not necessarily standardise them). Strengthen monitoring both during and after Y@W and YEP placements, ensuring that the participant perspective is heard. Consider raising the youth internship allowance thereby increasing the financial and economic benefits for interns. Currently the allowance barely covers transport costs. Consider asking employers to make a small financial contribution towards the internship stipend. (See also 4.2.2, p.18; 4.2.3 and 5.3.3).

- F. Engage a Gender specialist** to work with the Gender and Inclusion Group Leader to conduct a gender audit of Y@W and to develop a 12-month action plan to address significant barriers to the full participation of women in the program. Consideration could also be given to undertaking similar dedicated investigations and planning with respect to increasing the involvement of other disadvantaged youth cohorts, eg. young people with a disability, juveniles. See also p. 19, p. 28 and Section 5.6).
- G. Ensure that sufficient time is given to plan program establishment in Malaita.** This includes following up the initial investigation that was undertaken during the scoping visit that took place in October. This will require more in-depth discussions with provincial authorities and NGOs that have experience in youth income generating activities; and training new Malaita based staff alongside their Honiara colleagues during the first quarter of 2016. (See also 4.4.2).
- H. Identify strategies to build program sustainability** during the strategic level discussions outlined above and incorporate these in ongoing program implementation. Regularly monitor the progress being made towards building national ownership. This includes strengthening the active engagement of SIG and representatives from other relevant local sectors; integration of program activities with national priorities and management structures; and appropriate capacity development support to strengthen Y@W management and staff. (See also 6.3).

Monitoring and Evaluation

- I. Align the program's M&E Framework with the agreed program logic.** Adjust the initial data collection methods and instruments in line with this Framework to ensure that regular and periodic monitoring activities produce the most useful information to inform the further development of the program. An Evaluation specialist in liaison with the Program Coordinator and the General Manager of Pasifiki should facilitate this. Input from a development economist with experience of labour market interventions and youth entrepreneurship initiatives would be helpful. Training of program staff in data collection, management and analysis should be conducted and opportunities to involve selected interns in some data collection and analysis activities should be explored. (See also 6.4).

Specific actions to build a good practice youth employment model

- J. Increase Linkages with other employment programs.** Link Y@W to broader labour market policies and strategies, and coordinate with other labour market interventions such as the Seasonal Workers Program and the Recognized Seasonal Employers scheme. Reducing youth unemployment has two main elements. One is to improve the work place skills (labour supply) and the second is to increase the number of young workers demanded by employers (labour demand) through job creation schemes. Y@W already addresses the labour supply aspect. If the program's goal is to reduce youth unemployment then further activities and partnerships concerned with job creation are essential in the long run. Linking with the Labour Mobility Unit in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade to supply a 'work ready' pool of youth offers significant potential going forward. While there is already a private sector recruitment agent model for the RSE this should not preclude greater linkages between the programs. The private sector recruitment agents would benefit from having a 'work ready' pool of labour.
- K. Conduct more investigation on the potential substitution effects and long run saturation of the labour market.** Further evaluation and labour market analysis is needed on substitution of permanent work placements with unpaid Y@W interns. Some employers have reported that if Y@W did not exist they would have taken on more permanent workers at higher wages. More in-depth investigation is also required concerning the potential long run saturation of the labour market. Formal sector employment in Solomon Islands is small and the number of internships will have an upper limit. This matter will impact on program outcomes and long-term sustainability.
- L. Positive employment outcomes are unclear and need more investigation.** As it stands key program objectives of Y@W are increased employment for youth leading to improved livelihoods. Currently the employment rate snapshots of Y@W interns from the Tracer Studies are lower than or virtually the same as the employment rates for the Solomon Islands' population as a whole (aged 15-24⁴¹). Surprisingly this would suggest that Y@W is having little or no effect on the employment prospects of interns. More investigation of this should be undertaken by a labour economist to determine whether the program is actually achieving benefits relating to employment.
- N.B. The above recommendations may need to be re-sequenced (and possibly revised) in light of the redevelopment of the Theory of Change and program logic.

⁴¹Close S. (2012). Ibid.

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ANNEXES

ANNEX 1 Pacific Leadership Program Phase 3 (PLP3)

Terms of Reference

Position Title:	Program Evaluator(s)
Assignment Title:	Evaluation of SPC's Youth@Work program (Solomon Islands)
Reports to:	PLP3 Team Leader, through La Trobe IHSSC
Location:	Honiara, Solomon Islands, and home base
Duration:	Up to 40 person days. To be completed by 30 November 2015
ARF Reference:	B1 – B3 (dependant upon skills and experience of nominated personnel)

About the Pacific Leadership Program Phase 3 (PLP3)

PLP3 is a regional governance initiative of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) that recognises the pivotal role of leadership in development. PLP3 builds, applies and shares knowledge on developmental leadership, i.e. leadership involving collective action towards locally owned, inclusive policy and institutional change for the public good. PLP3 recognises that developmental leadership is a complex, unpredictable process requiring flexible and adaptive support. The Program works with influential individuals, organisations and coalitions to learn from and support them in the exercise of developmental leadership.

PLP3 is structured around four interrelated objectives or results streams, as follows:

- 1. High quality and ongoing knowledge of developmental leadership across the Pacific:* with selected local, international and regional knowledge partners, the Program will develop a comprehensive, robust body of knowledge on developmental leadership. A range of methodologies and approaches will be used, including political economy and other contextual analysis, action research, and case studies.
- 2. Collective action by Pacific Island leaders in pursuit of policy and institutional changes and reforms to promote stability, effective governance and economic growth at the regional, national and sub-national level:* under this results stream, the Program will continue to identify and facilitate coalitions of Pacific stakeholders to achieve a change around an identified policy or development issue. Tailored support may include mentoring, training, research and analysis, and funding for small scale pilot initiatives.
- 3. Identifiable policy and institutional changes across the Pacific for the public good:* this is the end result or outcome of interventions and support provided under results stream 2 above. While this is an important long term result for the Program, it is recognised that analysing and sharing knowledge around 'unsuccessful' coalitions (i.e. those that do not lead to identifiable policy and institutional changes) is equally significant.
- 4. High quality and influential communication within DFAT, across the Pacific and internationally on the nature of developmental leadership in addressing development issues and challenges in the Pacific:* drawing on knowledge developed across all results streams, the Program will produce targeted communication products for a range of audiences that will inform stakeholders, influence policy making and practice, stimulate debate and discussion, and contribute to the international discourse on developmental leadership.

The Program works regionally, and at national and sub-national levels in Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu. The Secretariat office is based in Suva, Fiji, supported by Country Representatives in each of the Program's four focus countries. The subject of this assignment – SPC's Youth@Work program – is one activity supported under the PLP Solomon Islands Country Program.

Background to the Assignment

The Youth@Work program was devised by the Solomon Islands Country Office of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) in conjunction with the then Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of National Unity, Reconciliation and Peace and PLP Advisory Panel member, Mrs Joy Kere. It was a practical response to the growing issue of youth unemployment in Solomon Islands, a key national development priority for the Solomon Islands government. By providing internships combined with mentoring support, front loaded skills and values training and weekly cross training on issues of the day, Youth@Work fills

a critical gap in placing young people (many of whom had been pushed out of formal schooling) into a career pathway that leads to paid work or starting their own business.

Australia, through PLP was the primary funder of Youth@Work from the initial pilot in mid-2012 until December 2013, when program funding was transitioned to the DFAT Solomon Islands bilateral program. After this time, PLP has continued to engage with Youth@Work through funding of a Tracer Study of participants which aims to track their progress through and after the program, and other forms of targeted ongoing support.

Since its inception in 2012, Youth@Work has expanded significantly, and to date more than 2000 young people have participated in the internship program with several more given business opportunities through the free Youth Market, held monthly. Over this time the program has evolved significantly – with each successive phase of the program revised or adapted to respond to lessons and challenges encountered in previous phases. This adaptive process has led to a range of innovations, including the Young Entrepreneurs Program (YEP), Youth Market, and the NCD Warriors initiatives. These have provided alternatives to formal job placements for increasing numbers of young people keen to participate in the program, and respond to the challenges of sourcing sufficient placements for participants in the formal internship stream.

Youth@Work has expanded beyond the initial Honiara focus and is now operating in Choiseul Province. A proposal to expand the program to Malaita Province in 2016 is currently being considered by donors. Another development has been the addition of a disability inclusion sub-activity, which is funded by Australia through Plan International Australia, called Youth@Work PLUS.

Purpose

The purpose of this assignment is to conduct an evaluation and review of Youth@Work focusing on documenting what is unique about the initiative and the context it emerged from. The evaluation will also analyse the effectiveness and efficiency of the Youth@Work model and program, lessons learned from implementation, and key risks and opportunities for the Program going forward.

Findings of the evaluation and key recommendations will be provided to the new Youth@Work Programme Steering Committee, a high level donor coordination and oversight group, which is intended to have its first meeting in mid October 2015, and a subsequent second meeting in December 2015, after which it will meet on a six-monthly basis.

Key Activities

Youth@Work has now been operating for over three years. In this time it has expanded significantly, attracting extra funding from more donors and is considering further expansion. The program team and implementing partners have agreed that an evaluation and review of the program to date – as well as some recommendations on future support – is timely.

The evaluation will involve extensive consultation in Solomon Islands with the Youth@Work team, participants (current and former), program donors / implementing partners (including the Solomon Islands Government and the private sector) and other relevant parties; and analysis of existing Tracer Study and other available reports and data about the program.

Specifically, the evaluation will:

- Examine the origins of the program and its evolution/ adaptation over time. Were these circumstances partly serendipitous, and therefore not easily replicated?
- Analyse the successes, 'failures' and lessons learned from Youth@Work to date, and determine the extent to which Youth@Work has program responded to the needs and expectations of participants and other stakeholders. This should include an examination of the impacts (intended and unintended) of Youth@Work on broader attitudes towards/ perceptions of youth employment and young people in Solomon Islands.
- Analyse the costs and benefits, including social and economic, and value for money of the program, with particular analysis of the financial costs in relation to the achievements (outcomes, impacts). A comparison against alternative delivery models for addressing youth unemployment should be provided.
- Assess and make recommendations on the replicability and scalability of the Youth@Work model – to other provinces and elsewhere in the Pacific. How much has adaptation to context and circumstances (which may not be present in other places) been a pre-condition for the success of Youth@Work?
- Provide recommendations on how Youth@Work can be sustained, supported and /or expanded in the longer term. What are the limits of how many jobs can realistically be filled or created given the overall state of the economy? What other avenues for youth employment/ livelihoods could should be considered by the program?

- Suggest if and how Youth@Work (through changes to its approach, content, structure, institutional or other arrangements) can be improved and strengthened to achieve greater impact, including examining other models from around the world that may provide useful lessons on how to innovate in the area of youth unemployment.
- Provide advice to Youth@Work and implementing partners on ways to improve ongoing Tracer Study and other monitoring activities.

Key Activities, Deliverables and Timeframes

Ideally the evaluation will be completed by 30 November, 2015. This timing will ensure that the findings and recommendations can be used to directly inform the proposed Program expansion to Malaita and that findings can be presented to a meeting of the new donor Programme Steering Committee to be held in December 2015.

The outputs or deliverables for the assignment are outlined in the table below.

It is expected that a maximum input of up to 40 person days will be required to complete this assignment. These inputs may be undertaken by a single consultant, or alternatively by two consultants with complementary expertise (with one taking a lead coordination role and accountability for delivering all outputs).

#	Output / Deliverable	Description	Indicative timeframe
1	Research Work Plan Up to 6 pages approx.	The Research Work Plan will detail the key activities to be undertaken in order to successfully deliver the Youth at Work Program Evaluation within the prescribed timeframes. This will include: confirmation of the approach and methodology to be employed on the Assignment; initial briefings with PLP team and other stakeholders; an initial list of persons to be consulted (including current and previous interns and other young people); allocation of responsibilities between the lead researcher(s) (if applicable); timings of in-country (including provincial) visits / consultations; and proposed structure for the Evaluation Report and recommendations (see 3a & 3b below).	October 2015 4 days
2	In-Country Consultations	To be undertaken in Honiara and Choiseul in Solomon Islands in October / November 2015, as confirmed in the Research Work Plan (above). Additional consultations with stakeholders outside these locations will be conducted via telephone, skype or email as appropriate.	October – November 2015 18 days
3a	Draft Evaluation Report, with recommendations	As confirmed and agreed in the Research Work Plan (above).	November 2015 10 days
3b	Final Evaluation Report, with recommendations	As above, incorporating feedback on Draft report incorporated.	November 2015 3 days
4	Policy Brief (PLP Knowledge Product)	For communicating key findings, lessons, recommendations to partners and other interested stakeholders. Approximately 4 pages in length with infographics.	November 2015 2 days
5	Case Study / Discussion Paper (PLP Knowledge Product)	Presenting the history of Youth at Work and PLP's engagement with the program. Written from an angle of supporting innovative and adaptive approaches to address complex development problems (such as youth employment in Solomon Islands, which is linked to issues of social and political instability). Approximately 8 pages in length.	November 2015 3 days
Total person days (max)			40

Selection Criteria

As outlined above, this evaluation may be undertaken by a single consultant, or by two consultants with complementary expertise (with one taking a lead coordination role and accountability for delivering all outputs). It is expected that the nominated personnel will (individually or as a team) possess the following skills and experience.

- University degree and/or relevant qualification in development, economics or other relevant discipline.
- 5 - 10 years' experience conducting multi-stakeholder program evaluations and reviews, using participatory research methods and approaches.
- High level written and verbal communication skills (in English) and experience producing high quality documentation for a development-focused audience.
- Familiarity with current theories, practice and lessons learned relating to youth employment and youth development in the Pacific, or the ability to gain this knowledge.
- Experience facilitating stakeholder workshops, focus groups and meetings in cross-cultural environments.
- Sensitivity to the social and cultural context of the program, in particular as it relates to women and children.
- Outstanding analytical and costing skills and computer literacy.
- Specific skills and expertise in cost-benefit analysis, social cost benefit, social return on investment, value for money and economic modeling.
- Ability to communicate in Pidgin, or experience working through a local translator.

ANNEX 2 LIST OF STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTED

N.B. This document is provided in a separate attachment to this Report

ANNEX 3 Summary Feedback from Participant Focus Groups in

Taro, Choiseul Province

What were youth doing before they joined Y@W?

Hanging about in the streets, smoking, drinking - a few

Just finished school - several

Working in a family business - driving a boat; developing a model garden

Living at home and doing things with the family, gardening - a few

Why did youth join Y@W?

'A stepping stone to get somewhere in life' - to further study and a permanent job.

To help find a job

At home there is nothing to do, Y@W keeps me occupied

Wanted to gain more knowledge, experience and learn new skills

What are youth doing as an intern

Learning computers and typing

Working in a School or Early childhood facility x 2

Working in a hospital, using a microscope

Weighing babies, recording data and talking with Mothers

Doing admin and customer service, learning about women's issues.

Logging assessments, helping resolve land disputes, entering data x 2

Health awareness raising, disease prevention

Office admin, assist with hospitality training, customer service, assess tourism sites.

What do youth hope to do next year?

Most said they planned to do some further study.

What would they tell a friend who is interested in joining Y@W?

'You will learn new skills, get some work experience and open up your mind'... 'this can help you with any job in future'.

'Youth with problems will learn how to live a safer life'

'You will meet new friends'

Examples of what youth say are the 'good things' about Y@W

'Y@W really helps young people, school dropouts and school graduates without jobs. It gives them an opportunity to have practical jobs and can enable them to have more studies and can get a permanent job to help them in future. We learn to give back to our community and province during community service on Fridays'.

'Helps to limit the amount of criminal activity'.

'I learn how to be on time... be at the right time, right place, doing the right thing'.

'I learn how to communicate with clients when the staff are away'.

ANNEX 4 Example of Community Service Activities for YEPs in Choiseul

Day	Activities	Result	Comments
Mon	Helping Hand	10 People	The YEPs helped old people and Single mothers by carrying firewood, collecting water as well as making garden for those old people who are desperately in need. They even help old people making copra for their (old people) family
Tues	Agro-forestry	50 seed trees (army specie) were planted	Although the YEPs had showed their interest to plant trees, they are also depending on their community to give them an area to do their planting. However, two YEPs did manage to plant their trees in their own area and they (trees) are growing.
Wed	CBRM	Have a clean beaches (conservation site of clam shells, trochus and other main protective species)	Clean their conservation site, by picking dead shells and clam shells to allow space for the others to grow and survive.
Thurs	Health & Environment	Clean environment for School, clinic and churches and the villages as a whole	The YEPs did clean the school, clinic and church compounds. The cleaning activity includes grass cutting around the churches, school and clinic compounds, carrying of sand for churches.
Fri	Health & Nutrition	Weekly awareness to Poroporo Primary School.	The YEPs give awareness to the Primary school according to their classes from kindergarten and standards 1 to standard 6, to the church youth group, women's group and the community as a whole.

ANNEX 5 List of Employers for Y@W interns in Honiara

PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT

Adkonect
Archives
BJS
Bulcan Integrated Wood Industries
Bulks shop
Bulkshop (warehouse)
Chung Wah Café
Chung Wah Tuckshop
Daltron
Deloitte
DJ Graphics
Emerald Lawyers
Every home for Christ
Frangipani Ice
GTL
ICTSU
Lunga ECE
Marara Community High
Medical records
Mercy School
Min of Agriculture
Min of Com - Immigration
Min of Comm- Compay House
Min of Fisheries
Min of Lands
Min of Peace
Min of Tourism
MWYCFA
NSO
Pizza Petes
PMO
Political Parties Commission
Post office
Prestige Apartments
Professional Copy services
Provincial Press
Seif Ples
SIEA
SINM
SISBEC
SPC
SPE Analytical
Taiwanese Technical Farm
Tanuli Royal Plains Motel
Tradco
Unified Voice
Woodford International
Y@W Plus

