

Provision of Technical Assistance Personnel in the Solomon Islands

What can we learn from the RAMSI experience?

Heather Baser



Federal Ministry
for Economic Cooperation
and Development

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Acronyms

ADAB	Australian Development Assistance Bureau
AFP	Australian Federal Police
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
CBWG	Capacity Building Working Group
CD	Capacity Development
Danida	Danish International Development Assistance
ERU	Economic Reform Unit
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GRM	GRM International Pty Ltd.
GTZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit
HRM	Human Resources Management
IDC	Interdepartmental Committee
IDG	International Deployment Group
IDO	International Development Organisation
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoG	Machinery of government
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PAAT	Performance Assessment Advisory Team
PAWG	Performance Assessment Working Group
PIF	Performance Improvement Framework
PNG	Papua New Guinea
PPP	purchasing power parity
RAMSI	Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands
RGSF	RAMSI Governance Support Facility
RDVA	Rural Development Volunteers Association
SI	Solomon Islands
SIG	Solomon Islands Government
TA	Technical Assistance
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WoG	whole of government

Executive Summary

Precis

This is one of three country reviews, including Vietnam and Mozambique, done for the study “*Provision of technical assistance personnel: What can we learn from promising experiences?*” After 5 years of violence, the Solomon Islands Government (SIG) requested outside assistance to bring peace to the country. Australia agreed to work with the Pacific Islands Forum and 15 other states in the region to field the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI), whose aim is twofold: stabilization, and strengthening the state, particularly through reforming the core institutions of government. The report explores the features of capacity in fragile states, the use of whole-of-government responses to delivering assistance, and the implications of the continuing dominance of technical assistance. It concludes with some evaluative comments on how RAMSI might stimulate more government engagement in order to encourage greater sustainability of its activities.

Development context

Solomon Islands is a fragile, small island state consisting of 992 islands with over 70 distinct languages and one common language – *pijin*. The country gained its independence peacefully from Britain in 1978 but is the poorest country in the Pacific with a per capita income of US \$340 or \$1814 in terms of purchasing power parity. It is also one of the most rural and static societies in the world with more than 75% of the population engaged in subsistence farming and fishing.

A notable feature of Solomon Islands is *wontok*, someone who speaks the same language as you and with whom you share a set of social obligations. Land ownership is reserved for Solomon Islanders and held on a *wontok* – family or village – basis. In 1998, tensions over land ownership and use between the residents of the island of Guadalcanal and migrants from the island of Malaita resulted in organised violence between rival militias and the forced removal of 20,000 Malaitans from rural Guadalcanal. Over the next five years, ethnic violence mutated into criminality, including murder, arson, rape, kidnapping, looting assault, torture, and extrajudicial executions. Militants intimidated senior government officials, some ministers and members of Parliament were involved in corruption and illegal practices, and many police and prison wardens were perpetrators of violence. By 2003, the government was insolvent and its services were almost non-existent. Most commerce came to a halt and the provinces, which had never given much allegiance to the distant and often fractious central government, were demanding more autonomy.

After several requests for assistance from the Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, Australia agreed to work with the Pacific Islands Forum and 15 other states in the region to field the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI). The first deployment of RAMSI personnel arrived in Solomon Islands July 24, 2003.

An overview of RAMSI

RAMSI is largely a technical assistance (TA) operation with about 235 police and 130 advisors and in-line personnel involved in three main activities: 1) improving economic governance and growth, 2) strengthening law and justice, and 3) reinforcing the machinery of government. Most of these TA personnel have a double mandate - to carry out some specific tasks and to strengthen Solomon Island capacity. There are three approaches to building capacity evident across these activities: 1) *doing* – getting the job done, 2) *direct* whereby outsiders control and design while trying to engage country partners, and 3) *indirect* whereby outsiders work with country partners to identify their interests. Despite some significant short-term successes, sustainability of some of the activities undertaken is fragile.

RAMSI is both a security and a state building exercise with the latter focusing on the

effectiveness and capacity of the public service and especially of the central agencies of government, all of which operate along the British model. It is being implemented through a *whole-of-government* (WoG) approach with personnel or deployees from Australian, New Zealand and Fijian government departments occupying both in-line (often key senior positions) and advisory roles and contractors in advisory roles. They and the other TA personnel receive logistical and management support from Facilities or special offices set up to relieve AusAID of this administrative burden. AusAID staff then has time to be involved in the strategic design of activities.

RAMSI has been quite direct in its focus on state-building and the functions which it is undertaking put it at the nexus of security and development. These two activities tend to pull in different directions – the first towards short-term activities and the latter towards the longer term. There are few demonstrated international successes of such security cum development interventions and thus no clear models. For TA personnel, both advisory and in-line, there has been a tension between short and long-term goals.

The Solomon Islands Government and TA

The Solomon Islands Government (SIG) seems to have a paradoxical attitude towards TA personnel, on the one hand viewing TA as historically largely ineffective, and on the other indicating a significant need for TA into the long term. The number of technical assistance personnel in Solomon Islands is high by international standards by comparison with the total population and even more so by reference to the 50,000 people in Honiara where the vast majority is resident. Because of staff shortages on the SIG side, some of the RAMSI personnel have more contacts with other expatriates than they have with Solomon Island public servants.

Absorptive capacity of Solomon Islands is stretched and the ability to keep track of on-going activities limited. Conditions including the instability of the political situation encourage low levels of engagement, and the SIG largely remains a taker not a shaper of TA. There needs to be a better balance between the absorptive capacity of the country and the urgency of reforms.

Monitoring and evaluation

Measurement of effective capacity development is a particular challenge and one where many international actors are struggling to find a viable approach. Most performance frameworks fall back on tangible outcomes because of the difficulty of looking at the intangible issues, such as increased legitimacy of government institutions in the eyes of citizens, or improved self-confidence among employees to make decisions. In societies where the state has had limited legitimacy and individuals might be unwilling to take the risk of making decisions, such non-tangible issues are critically important to the effectiveness of TA and the sustainability of interventions.

RAMSI has taken or is taking several important steps to try to better assess its progress on capacity issues. Since the field work was done, for example, a new indicator has been agreed and adopted with the help of the newly appointed capacity building specialist engaged for performance assessment: *Level of agreement or gap between Solomon Islanders' and RAMSI personnel's perceptions around the success or otherwise of capacity building efforts* (including agreement on the evidence for this and on the data collection tools). Through the adoption of this indicator, RAMSI is trying to encourage a focus on the processes of change and the intangible aspects of capacity. It will also be critical for success that the SIG and RAMSI come to a common understanding of capacity development and that the SIG be actively involved in implementation of any monitoring programme developed.

Strengthening organisations will require developing soft capabilities such as leadership and the ability to mobilise people to action, good relationships with key stakeholders, and resilience. These present challenges to measurement which suggest that different approaches may be required.

Most difficult of all is assessing the resilience of an organisation - its ability to survive through difficult periods. State building depends, however, on the creation of strong organisations and institutions which have the support of citizens. Without them, the state lacks legitimacy, an enduring problem for Solomon Islands since independence and arguably even before.

Some challenges for RAMSI

Many RAMSI activities have followed a direct approach and the engagement of the SIG has often been low. Since RAMSI is serious about addressing sustainability, it will need to think about shifting from approaches that have been task oriented to ones that build more on the interests and motivations of Solomon Islanders. The progressive engagement methodologies used in some activities, especially those under the Machinery of Government pillar, show potential in this regard. This shift will require a different skill set, and different approaches may need to operate in conjunction for some time. RAMSI might also need to consider the potential for alternatives to TA personnel to strengthen institutions.

Large amounts of aid including TA, delivered to countries with weak organizations and institutions can create some of the problems that lead to ineffectiveness. Organisations and institutions can become less resilient, less able to adapt to changes in the environment around them and less capable of finding their own solutions to problems. They risk losing capacity rather than gaining it. A critical role outsiders can play in strengthening organisations and helping them to develop resilience and self-sufficiency is to give them adequate operating space to avoid politicisation and to allow experimentation and learning.

Some national government departments contributing to RAMSI are facing challenges in finding enough appropriate personnel to fill all available positions. This suggests that the programme would benefit from more systematic exploration of wider sources for personnel appropriate for management and/or policy positions.

Conclusions and Strategic Implications

The case study ends by suggesting that for RAMSI to move from the stabilization and consolidation phases to capacity building and sustainability will require it to adopt a different strategy – a strategy focused on indirect approaches rather than doing or direct. Such a strategy would ideally be agreed between the 15 Pacific states supporting RAMSI and the SIG. Once its broad lines are defined, the nature of the TA required would become clearer, for example, an indirect approach would require a different skill set than a more task oriented or doing approach (more facilitation, interpersonal skills, etc.).

Some issues to keep in mind in thinking about such a strategy for future activities include:

- The need for obvious wins to maintain the legitimacy of the program. The speed with which RAMSI restored peace in 2003 helped to establish its initial credibility. The intervention was well planned with adequate resources effectively to carry out the task at hand. But future wins would need to involve Solomon Islanders more than in the past. This may require identifying areas where TA personnel can step back and Solomon Islanders can take more responsibility. It would also be important that this new vision be understood and practiced across RAMSI.
- The importance of a balance between the absorptive capacity of the country and the urgency of reforms – Some of the people interviewed for this report felt that the range and depth of reforms underway in Solomon Islands had gone beyond the point where they could be absorbed – a kind of aid overload resulting in disengagement of the government. The

answer may have to be a slower pace for most activities than outside funders might have once hoped.

- An understanding that broader, less predictable activities such as policy change require political support that may not be available in post conflict situations - Concrete, definable activities may be more feasible in environments where the context is unclear or highly politicized.
- The need for programs to be able to respond flexibly to the changing circumstances typical of most post-conflict situations - The fact that AusAID has placed some of its own staff in positions within RAMSI increases the prospects for strategic dialogue about changing conditions. AusAID Facilities with their focus on process provide a mechanism to change course more easily than fixed contracts structured around pre-defined results.
- The need to avoid perverse incentives through M&E and other systems – Incentives need to encourage TA personnel to take indirect approaches and to ensure that Solomon Islanders have the maximum opportunities to learn through doing. The M&E system can encourage this by a focus on the processes of change and intangible aspects such as organisational legitimacy, leadership and empowerment.
- The importance of partner country involvement in assessment processes – The involvement in such processes creates commitment and encourages sustainability, as do the mutual accountability mechanisms advocated by the Paris Declaration of the OECD Development Assistance Committee and signed by a wide range of both developing countries and development organisations.
- The potential for alternative ways to strengthen institutions than through TA personnel - TA around the world is a magnet for criticism but particularly so when there are large numbers of expatriates and there is a high degree of politicisation. Under these circumstances, it may be wise to look at reducing the number of TA personnel.

Of the many states in trouble in the world, Solomon Islands is one of the few where other countries have been prepared to respond to provide assistance. RAMSI came in with a strong mandate, one which most outside interveners would have wanted in similar circumstances. But if RAMSI wants its activities to be sustainable, it must now begin to create genuine space for Solomon Islanders initiative and accountability. This is indeed what the 2005 report by the Pacific Islands Forum of Eminent Persons Group suggested.

The suggestions above should be seen as the results of a normal process of reflection, learning and adapting. Expecting RAMSI to get everything right the first time with all aspects of its complex activities would be unrealistic, particularly in the uncharted minefield of the development/security nexus. RAMSI should be seen as an exercise in progress with the opportunity to apply the lessons from experience to move forward. At the same time, some of the people we interviewed suggested that RAMSI needs to change some of its approaches quickly to avoid its activities and even its presence exacerbating an already volatile situation. This will require breaking the mould of activities set and taking some new approaches. There are encouraging signs that RAMSI is willing to do this.

1 Introduction

This case study is one of three that feed into a larger study entitled *The Provision of Technical Assistance Personnel: What can we learn from promising experiences?* The overall objectives of this larger study are to

“gain a better understanding of the future demand for technical assistance, to relate that to past experience and to recommend how TA personnel can best be mobilized, used and managed in the future to strengthen national capacity.”

The study looks at four questions:

- What are the current and likely future demands for TA?
- What modes of TA have worked best and why?
- What are the various options for managing TA in different contexts?
- What are the implications for development organizations and partners?

The three cases are designed to look at the role of technical assistance (TA) personnel in countries with quite different conditions:

- Vietnam – a very stable state with high government capacity and engagement, clear views on the role of technical assistance, and a moderate number of donors involved in its provision
- Mozambique – a moderately stable state with relatively low capacity and varying levels of engagement across different departments of government, unclear policy on technical assistance and a large number of donors providing support
- Solomon Islands – a state which is recovering from several years of internal conflict, has low levels of government capacity and correspondingly little government engagement and where there is a relatively modest number of donors engaged.

The purpose is to develop a better understanding of what kinds of technical assistance are most appropriate in which country situations and how they can be managed most effectively to support capacity development¹.

These issues will be explored in this case through the lens of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) mounted by 15 Pacific nations with leadership mainly from Australia. RAMSI has three long-term strategic objectives:

- To contribute to a safer and more secure Solomon Islands.
- To encourage sustainable broad-based growth and contribute to a more prosperous Solomon Islands, and
- To contribute to a better functioning government.

As Annex 1 indicates, this report is based on interviews with over 90 people including officials from the Government of Solomon Islands, RAMSI and AusAID as well as an extensive selection of technical assistance personnel. In addition, the report draws on a large number of reports and documents not only from RAMSI and AusAID but from a variety of other groups including the Lowy Institute, the State, Society and Governance in Melanesia project of the Australian National University, the OECD, and some Australian government officers in the graduate public administration program at the Australian and New Zealand School of Government who have conducted focused analysis on RAMSI. Finally, it reflects the analysis done by the European Centre for Development Policy Management in the Netherlands on both technical assistance and capacity development.

It may also be useful to note what these cases are not expected to do.

¹ In our view, *capacity building* connotes an engineering or construction mindset which we do not find helpful for analyzing capacity issues. In this report, we will use *capacity building* only when the source consulted uses that term.

- They are not a full scale review of the sector or programs addressed, for example, in the Solomons case, the report will not review RAMSI as a whole. The case study confines itself to the design, implementation and effectiveness of the technical assistance personnel within RAMSI.
- They are not evaluations in the sense of a systematic determination of merit, worth, or significance but rather analyses of what has worked or has not worked and why, with the purpose of deriving some guidance for future activities.
- They are also not thorough reviews of the cultural, political or social situation in the countries concerned, such as Solomon Islands. The focus is instead on the aid modality of technical assistance personnel and how its use in Solomon Islands compares with approaches taken in other countries.

The report will provide background on RAMSI and its activities and will try to answer the following questions which are roughly reflected in the table of contents:

- To what extent can a government like that of Solomon Islands shape and carry out its involvement in a program like RAMSI?
- Given the role of the SIG and its own security, political and developmental goals, how does the Government of Australia shape its role in RAMSI?
- Which strategies and means of implementation of RAMSI seem to be working most effectively and for what purpose?
- What strategies might be considered in the future and what would their implications be for the organizations involved both in Solomon Islands and in the countries funding RAMSI?

This report focuses more on the strategic issues of technical assistance within RAMSI than on the details of programs and their implementation, although these will be addressed when necessary as background to the broader issues.

2 Developmental context

2.1 A short history of Solomon Islands up to 2003

After a peaceful process of assuming authority from the British colonial government, Solomon Islands became independent in 1978. During the colonial period, there had been little training of Solomon Islanders and at independence there were only 5 university graduates². Infrastructure such as schools and roads was limited, although the police and the judiciary were strong.

After independence, the quality of government services in areas such as health, education and transport declined and many Islanders outside of the capital city began to question the value added of the centralized government. This questioning was exacerbated by major disparities in standards of living between the one major city, Honiara, and rural areas³. The result was that the state was never able to forge a meaningful connection with most Solomon Islanders, particularly those outside the capital, and the legitimacy of the state was never firmly established. This was compounded by weak political parties and highly unstable parliamentary coalitions resulting in frequent votes of no confidence and many changes in both leadership and cabinet. In addition, traditions of leadership require that *big men* look after their kin, a situation that has led to high levels of corruption and rent seeking.

Regionalism is very strong⁴ and movement of people from one part of the archipelago to another has been limited. During the colonial era, secondment of public servants to the four

² *Late Night Live in the Solomon Islands: What went wrong?* May 13, 2004.

<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/talks/lnl/specials/solomons/progone.htm>

³ Solomon Islands has been called a nation of villages.

⁴ One Solomon Islander said that there is "more that divides islands than brings them together".

Districts acted as a mechanism for unifying and nation building. Regardless of which island the public officer came from he or she would be well accepted by the populace of the recipient District. This resulted in inter-marriages which helped in healing the animosities created during the head-hunting era prior to the end of the nineteenth century. This, however, gradually changed after independence, especially as the four original districts became the present nine provinces.

The exception to little migration was a significant flow from the island of Malaita to Guadalcanal where Honiara is located. By the late 1990s, this migration had resulted in tensions over land ownership and usage, resulting in organized violence between rival militias and the forced removal of 20,000 Malaitans from their homes in rural areas of Guadalcanal into Honiara. By 2000, the country was on the verge of civil war. The Townsville Peace Agreement in October of that year nominally reconciled the warring parties and an International Peace Monitoring Group was successful in disarming some of the militants.

State capacity to maintain peace remained limited and ethnic violence mutated into criminality, including 150 to 200 murders, arson, rape, kidnapping, looting, assault, torture, and extrajudicial executions. Militants intimidated senior government officials, some ministers and members of Parliament were involved in corruption and illegal practices, and many special constables, senior police officers and prison wardens were perpetrators of violence. Government services were almost non-existent as government revenues had dropped dramatically and the government was insolvent. This and rising levels of violence led the Cabinet to send all but skeletal levels of staff in government departments back to their villages. Most commerce came to a halt and the provinces were demanding more autonomy. This period of unrest from about 1998 to 2003, known as the *tensions* or the *ethnic tensions*, had, by early 2003, brought the state to near collapse⁵.

The Prime Minister of Solomon Islands requested assistance in restoring law and order on several occasions but it was only in April of 2003 that Australia agreed. By June, the framework for the assistance was developed in the spirit of the Biketawa Declaration⁶ with representatives from 15 Pacific nations. As such, the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) falls under the mandate of the Pacific Islands Forum and must report to it regularly as well as be subject to its review. The first deployment of RAMSI personnel arrived in Honiara July 24, 2003

2.2 The development situation today in Solomon Islands⁷

Solomon Islands is a fragile, small island state: an archipelago of 992 islands spread across about 1500 kilometers with over 70 distinct languages and one common language – pijin. The poorest country in the Pacific, it has a per capita income of US\$340 or US\$1814 in term of purchasing power parity (PPP), a figure that is down significantly over the 1996 PPP high of \$2713. The country ranks 128th on the Human Development Index and has a debt of \$1.462 billion which, if fully serviced, would represent 25-30% of the total government budget.

Solomon Islands has one of the most rural and static economies in the world: the urbanization rate is only 16%, a relatively small change from the 1975 figure of 9%. More than 75% of the labour force is engaged in subsistence farming and fishing. The growth rate is 2.6%⁸ and half of

⁵ Sinclair Dinnen has pointed out that state failure is a problematic concept in the Pacific, as it implies that at one time the state functioned effectively, which is at best debatable in the Solomon Islands context. Fullilove, p 4 citing Sinclair Dinnen of the Australian National University.

⁶ The Biketawa Declaration is a security framework for the Pacific. See either section 2.5 below or <http://www.forumsec.org/pages.cfm/security/>

⁷ Based on Wikipedia and the *Human Development Report 2005* except for figures on the forestry sector which came from Clay Kerswell, RAMSI.

⁸ The World Fact Book, Solomon Islands. <https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/print/bp.html>

the population is⁹ under 20. Unemployment among youth aged between 15 and 24 was 46% in 1999¹⁰. Life expectancy is 62 and the literacy rate is 76.6%.

A notable cultural feature of all of Melanesia including Solomon Islands is *wontok*, literally translated as "one language". A *wontok* is someone who speaks the same language as you and with whom you share a set of social obligations. *Wontok* is the basis for most social and economic relations in Solomon Islands. Land ownership, for example, is reserved for Solomon Islanders and held on a *wontok* – tribal, family or village - basis. The reluctance of traditional authorities to provide land for non-traditional economic undertakings has resulted in disputes over land ownership, one of the main causes of the tensions.

Timber has long been the country's main export and generates 45% of the government's revenues in excise taxes. The forests are, however, overexploited and expected to run out in 3 to 5 years. Other cash crops include copra and palm oil and there is gold mining on Guadalcanal. The country also has substantial though undeveloped mineral reserves of lead, zinc and nickel. Most manufactured goods and petroleum products are imported.

Solomon Islands is a highly religious country with 96% of the population Christian. The main denominations are Church of Melanesia 33%, Roman Catholic 19%, South Seas Evangelical 17%, Seventh-Day Adventist 11%, and the Uniting Church 10%.

Solomon Islands does not have a development strategy per se. The Grand Coalition for Change Government elected in April 2006 produced a policy document to reflect the thrust of the parties forming the coalition. All ministers were expected to translate these statements into ministerial/departmental strategic plans and programs of action. The subsequent Policy Translation and Implementation Document outlines a large number of priorities for action but without prioritisation, sequencing or financing. Most of these priorities will become project submissions for donor funding.

Box 1: The Public Service of Solomon Islands

The period of the tensions had a dramatic effect on the capacity of the public service of Solomon Islands. Prior to the tensions, the number of public servants stood at about 7500. The numbers actually working dropped precipitously after the Cabinet decision to let non-essential employees stay home (without pay) or return to their villages. The Auditor General's Office, for example, went from 29 employees before the tensions to 3 by 2003. The establishment is now up to 12, 414¹¹ but the overall vacancy rate is estimated to still be about 20%¹² and in some departments it is much higher. According to the interviews held, 49% of positions in the Ministry of Provincial Governments were vacant in late 2006, there were 48 vacancies in the Department of Justice and half of the positions in the Department of National Planning and Aid Coordination were vacant.

Government has some difficulty attracting qualified staff. Its salaries are lower than the private sector and recruitment procedures are time consuming and complex. Government cannot compete with donors.

There are 21 ministries, some of which have as few as 6 employees

At the local level, there are 10 administrative areas, of which 9 are provinces administered by elected provincial assemblies and the 10th is the town of Honiara, administered by the Honiara City Council.

⁹ West, 2001. <http://www.barnard.columbia.edu/newnews/wake--west.html>

¹⁰ RAMSI Medium Term Strategy, 2006, p 4.

¹¹ Figure provided by MoG.

¹² Ibid.

2.3 Level of aid dependency

Since independence, Solomon Islands has been highly aid dependent. In 2003, aid represented 23.8% of GDP, a figure little changed from 1990 when it was 21.7%. However, the massive expenditures of RAMSI since 2003 have pushed this up to 51% in 2006¹³, making it one of the top 4 or 5 most aid dependent countries in the world. Over the years since 1978, donors have, among other activities, built the bulk of the infrastructure, provided significant assistance to the education system and supported a variety of agriculture programs. Many of the Solomon Islanders interviewed for this study had received donor-funded scholarships for full-time study abroad or for distance learning.

The bulk of this assistance has come from Australia which has contributed about Aus \$10 billion since independence¹⁴. The total cost of RAMSI itself is over \$Aus 200 million per year, not all of which is Official Development Assistance, but almost all of which is provided by Australia. In addition, there is an on-going Australian bilateral program with Solomon Islands. As a result of RAMSI, ODA to Solomon Islands spiralled from Aus \$33.5 million in 2002/3 to \$247 million in 2005/6¹⁵.

The World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the European Union, New Zealand Aid, Japan and Taiwan are also active, although many programs were geared down or suspended during the *tensions*.

The chart below taken from the 2007 development budget, page 33, shows expected funding from various donors.

Table 1: Expected funding from various donors (2007 development budget)

	TOTAL SI dollars	Estimated Funding 2007 ¹⁶		
		CASH		TA / Non-Cash
		Operating Cost	Equipment	
Australia	1,342,305,166 ¹⁷	145,398,922	44,480,758	1,152,425,486
European Union (EU)	211,396,011	107,928,987	61,695,177	41,771,847
New Zealand	147,174,293	81,383,946	6,499,507	59,290,840
Japan	116,464,779	13,078,039	95,924,600	7,462,140
Republic of China / Taiwan	108,874,772	99,874,772	9,000,000	0
Solomon Island Government	88,459,686	69,197,471	19,262,215	0
Asian Development Bank (ADB)	53,119,195	39,015,502	0	14,103,693
Other	55,120,500	33,557,356	7,010,992	14,552,153
TOTAL DEVELOPMENT FUNDING	2,122,914,402	589,434,994	243,873,249	1,289,606,159
TOTAL DONOR FUNDING	2,034,454,717	520,237,523	224,611,034	1,289,606,159

\$1 SI = 0.17272 Australian Dollar, \$1 SI = 0.10532 Euro (April 27, 2007)

The number of technical assistance personnel is high by comparison with the total population

¹³ The 1990 and 2003 figures come from the Human Development Report of 2005 but the latter figure was cited by Mark McGillivray of UNU-WIDER during a presentation in AusAID December 6, 2006.

¹⁴ Miller, 2006.

¹⁵ AusAID Transitional Country Strategy, p. v.

¹⁶ These figures include bilateral and multilateral development funding, both delivered through Ministries and directly to recipients. They do not include NGO funding. The SIG total includes the \$11 million Aviation Special Fund, which whilst not part of the Consolidated Fund has been included to better reflect total Government development funding. The New Zealand total includes \$40 million direct budget support to education.

¹⁷ This includes the contribution of the Australian Federal Police.

and even more so by reference to the 50,000 people in Honiara where the vast majority is resident. The details are shown in the chart below. For a description of what the various positions mean, see section 3.1.2.

Table 2: Number and type of personnel by donor group (October 2006)

DONOR	PERSONNEL				
	In- Line	Super-numerary ¹⁸	Adviser or Similar	Volunteer	TOTAL
Asian Development Bank	0	0	5	0	5
Australia – non-RAMSI	4	0	34	6	44
Japan – JICA & Volunteer Agencies	0	0	2	9	11
New Zealand – non- RAMSI	2	1	11	7	21
RAMSI – Civilian	13	29	88	0	130
RAMSI – Police	0	1	233	0	234
Taiwan	0	0	6	0	6
World Bank	0	0	4	0	4
European Union	0	5	8	0	13
Other	1	0	4	0	3
TOTAL	20	36	395	22	473

2.4 The perspectives of the Solomon Islands Government on TA

The Solomon Islands Government (SIG) seems to have a paradoxical attitude towards TA personnel. On the one hand, many of the senior Solomon Islanders interviewed expressed their belief that TA had not been well used in Solomon Islands, that many projects in the past had been ill suited to the context, and that their sustainability was questionable.

One senior Solomon Islander said that there has been “no development visible since independence, no capacity developed, no expertise improved.”

Some of them felt a degree of resentment about how they had been treated by comparison with TA personnel.

One permanent secretary recalled his time as a young officer, saying “My first impression of TA was of 4 expatriates all with their own computers housed in private offices while we three nationals shared an office without a computer.”

The new government has also criticized technical assistance in general and has called for localization of positions. As a first step to developing a plan, the Public Service Department has just completed, with assistance from RAMSI, an inventory of TA personnel from all development organizations in the country and from which the chart above is drawn.. The government’s Policy Framework Document of May 2006¹⁹ also calls for a civil list of public servants indicating their qualifications and postings and a register of all qualified Solomon Islanders in the country.

On the other hand, most of the permanent secretaries interviewed foresaw a significant need for TA for many years to come to compensate for personnel shortages in government.

“Most nationals don’t have the broader knowledge of how to improve the system”, said one permanent secretary.

But the uncertainties of the political situation and the resulting frequent changes of government

¹⁸ Supplementary to the normal government establishment. See section 4.1.2 for more details.

¹⁹ Grand Coalition for Change, 2006, p 37-38.

and policy tend to discourage senior officials from making strong commitments to activities which might well become politically unpopular in short weeks or months. In a public service where state officials are held personally responsible for the actions of the employees of their departments²⁰, risk aversion is also an issue. One permanent secretary said, for example, that he would be blamed if the TA personnel in his department did not produce acceptable results. Furthermore, staff shortages in many ministries also mean that the absorptive capacity of the country is stretched and the ability to keep track of on-going activities limited.

The pressure to achieve results within a given time frame creates a need for TA.

One permanent secretary complained that “there is an expectation of working within certain timeframes but the culture within the public service is not conducive to these schedules.” To meet the schedules, the SIG relies on TA which “makes it difficult to transfer knowledge of the procedures into the system”.

All of these factors encourage a lack of engagement and what appears to be passivity: the SIG tends not to object to what is proposed by donors. It is usually a taker rather than a shaper of aid programs. It is thus not surprising that the SIG is not a very active participant in many RAMSI activities.

In spite of this situation, there are a few leaders in the Solomon Islands public service who not only want change but seem to be prepared to put their personal reputations on the line to participate more actively in planning aid in general and technical assistance more specifically.

3 The Australian context

3.1 *Changing approaches to fragile states*

3.1.1 Cooperative intervention

Australia has had an aid program since the involvement in 1946 of a number of the Commonwealth of Australia agencies in Papua New Guinea. The activities of these agencies were later centralized under the Australian Development Assistance Bureau (ADAB) of the Department of Foreign Affairs. In 1995, this bureau became the Australian Agency for International Development or AusAID, an administratively autonomous agency within the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

The overarching objective of the Australian aid program is to assist developing countries to reduce poverty and achieve sustainable development. According to the Australian Government White Paper on the Overseas Aid program, the priority themes over the next decade will be:

- Accelerating economic growth,
- Fostering functioning and effective states
- Investing in people, and
- Promoting regional stability and cooperation.

Details about how Australia manages its aid program and particularly its technical assistance personnel can be found in another paper which is part of this overall study, *The provision of technical assistance personnel – reviewing policies from Denmark, Australia and Germany*²¹.

²⁰ Turnbull 2002, p 194. While accountability is critical, if pushed too far, it stifles creativity. The balance is an issue for many organisations and was front page news in Ottawa, Canada on March 24. With respect to?

²¹ Hauck, 2006.

The themes listed above reflect the reality that Australia's peace and security are linked to those of its neighbours. Indeed, Chand contends that there has been a recent shift in emphasis to security and that this is the motivating factor for increased Australian assistance to its island neighbours²².

Some of Australia's Melanesian neighbours have been referred to as constituting an *arc of instability*²³ in the Pacific region, which has in recent years seen several major civil disturbances, considerable criminality and, in one country, Fiji, recurrent coups. As a result of a series of failures of governance in the area, the Australian Government decided in 2003 to adopt a new model of assistance for the region with more emphasis on improving governance. The Australian Foreign Minister, Alexander Downer, has called this model *cooperative intervention*²⁴. Its purpose is to strengthen state institutions and shape national governance²⁵ in partner countries through a *robust*²⁶ approach which includes police to restore law and order, public servants to stabilize financial management and, often, other experts to strengthen the core functions of government. The rationale for it can be found in the new institutional economics literature which stresses the need for good governance and basic institutions to allow investments to accelerate growth and hence supports "outside interventions to instil the preconditions for development when and where they are lacking."²⁷ RAMSI is the largest and best known example of such cooperative intervention.

3.1.2 The balance between state building and security stabilisation

RAMSI is both a security and a state building exercise²⁸ with the latter focusing on the effectiveness and capacity of the public service and especially of the central agencies of government. According to James Batley, the second Special Coordinator of RAMSI, the intervention is "based on the view that, whatever the size of a country, there is an irreducible minimum of functions that a state should provide, and some irreducible minimum standards that governments should observe"²⁹. The model is the British system with a Westminster-style parliament, core departments such as Treasury and Finance, and accountability mechanisms such as an auditor general and an ombudsman. There has been little emphasis on traditional institutions.

RAMSI has presented the security stabilization elements of the mission as conditional upon acceptance of various governance objectives in an all-or-nothing package. There is a distinct policy reform agenda with three pillars and their evolving sub-activities designed to address

²² Chand, 2005, p 1.

²³ Melanesia includes New Guinea (both Papua New Guinea and the Indonesian province of Papua), Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and a number of smaller islands. The 'arc' is now sweepingly described as stretching from East Timor through to the South West Pacific states. Originally a reference to Indonesia, the term has gained currency among Australian defence and foreign affairs specialists describing Pacific states, but it is important to recognize that as a catch-all phrase it can disguise a range of problems. Its membership contains very different states, with different contexts. See – O'Connor, "Australia and the Arc of Instability", Quadrant Magazine, The Pacific, November 2006 - Volume L Number 11; transcript of ABC Radio National, Correspondents Report - Sunday, 20 August, 2006, "The Pacific 'arc of instability'", Reporter: Graeme Dobell (<http://www.abc.net.au/correspondents/content/2006/s1719019.htm>) A good anthology collection of scholarly papers is May, R J (ed.) (2003) "Arc of Instability? Melanesia in the early 2000s", Canterbury NZ: Macmillan Brown, Centre for Pacific Studies, University of Canterbury, and State, Society and Governance Project, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University.

²⁴ Fry and Kabutaulaka, p xii although under international law RAMSI and similar programmes would not be considered interventions (see page 12). The terminology cooperative refers to the request of the Solomon Islands government for outside assistance.

²⁵ Ibid, p 1.

²⁶ A descriptive used frequently by Foreign Minister Downer when referring to RAMSI and other whole-of-government approaches

²⁷ Chand, p 8. This same philosophy is reflected in *Pacific 2020* which suggests that "The driving factor behind Mauritius's success appears to have been the quality of its domestic institutions." Page 23.

²⁸ Fullilove distinguishes between state-building and nation building which refers "implicitly to intangibles that are largely beyond the power of international interventions, such as the forging of a common national consciousness; and 'peace-building' ", p 5.

²⁹ Batley, 2005.

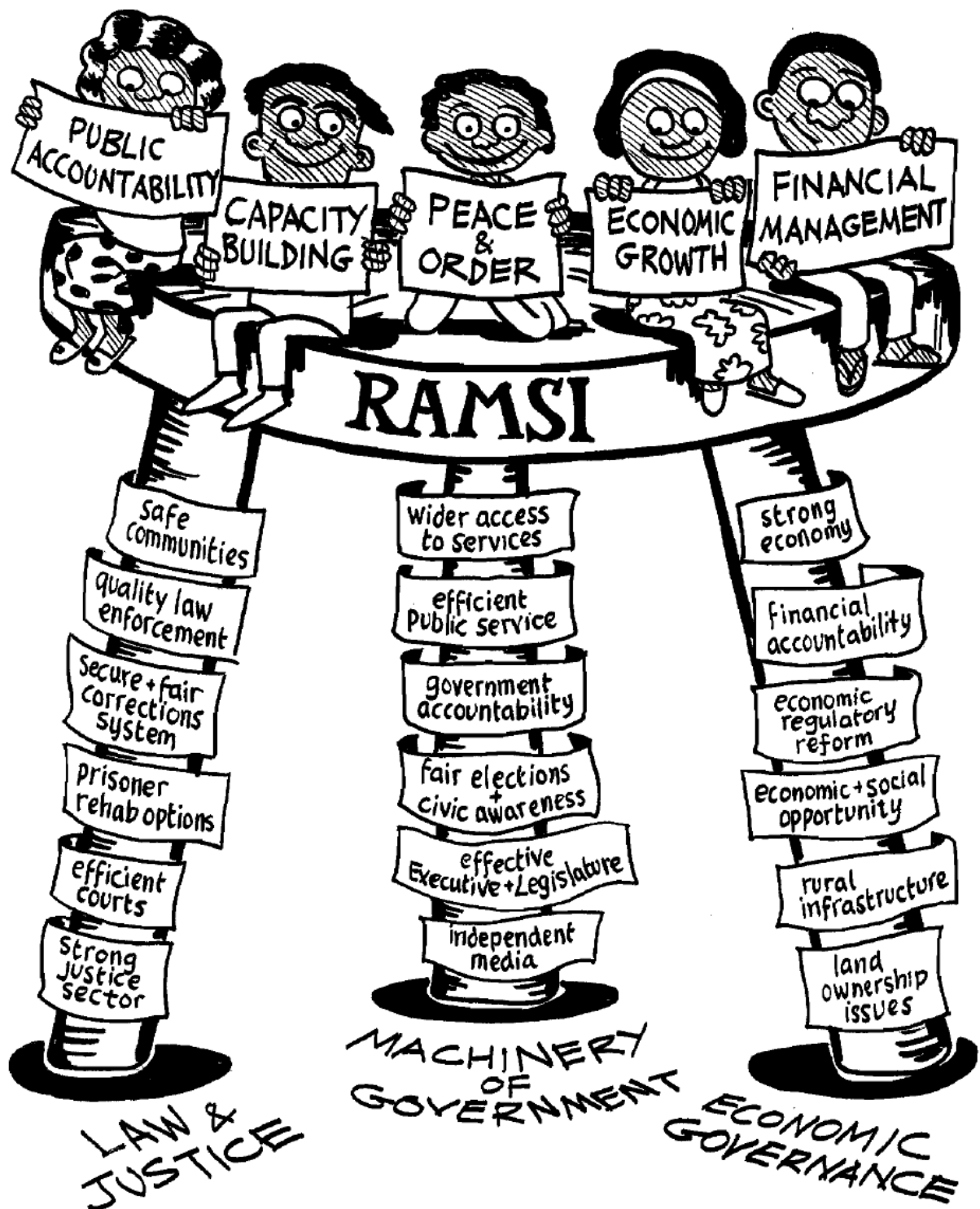
security and governance in an integrated way, as follows and as illustrated in the cartoon on page 10:

- economic governance and growth:
 - strengthening public finances, and promoting economic reforms
 - encouraging business and economic growth, and
 - support for provincial communities and rural livelihoods.
- law and justice:
 - policing,
 - the justice system, and
 - corrections.
- machinery of government:
 - effective cabinet and parliamentary processes,
 - reforming the public service,
 - accountability mechanisms and institutions,
 - electoral and civic education, and
 - improving provincial governance.

The main mechanism for involvement in these activities is technical assistance personnel. About 130 technical assistance personnel and 234 police make up about 70 to 75% of the assistance provided under RAMSI. Almost all of them work within the SIG and, depending on their positions, carry out management functions, provide services or act as advisors. The various kinds of positions filled are described in the box below. In any one pillar, there may be personnel from all four categories and they are expected to work towards the goals laid out for that pillar. There are many interconnections among the TA personnel in any one pillar and, according to some of the interviews held, some of these staff have more contacts with other expatriates than they have with Solomon Island public servants. There does not, however, seem to be enough effective cross-pillar contact, especially to exchange experience on what works and what doesn't. This report will come back to this issue in sections 6.3 and 7.3 in the context of the Performance Assessment Working Group (PAWG).

The regional nature of RAMSI is what sets it apart from a unilateral mission³⁰ and TA personnel come from 15 Pacific Island states. The Pacific Islands Forum is very anxious that this character be maintained even though Australia, because of its large population and significant resources contributes about 90% of RAMSI personnel, including most of the senior staff. New Zealand and Fiji have the next largest contingents and there are a handful of personnel from the other Pacific Islands.

³⁰ Wielders, p 231.



Provided by AusAID

Box 2: Types of positions filled by RAMSI personnel

RAMSI technical assistance personnel occupy 4 different kinds of positions, as defined by the Solomon Islands Department of the Public Service:

- **in-line** – An in-line official occupies an established position in the public service of the partner government and is engaged in carrying out its sovereign responsibilities. He/she reports to the relevant manager in the organizational structure, exercises formal public service delegations (subject to formal laws/regulations) and manages and directs staff who report to that position. He/she also attends relevant working groups, committees, etc. in accordance with the demands of the position³¹. In-line positions are a signature feature of Australia's whole-of-government engagement with RAMSI. There are about 13 in-line positions under RAMSI which are largely senior, and mainly filled by deployees/employees detached from the Australian, New Zealand or Fijian public services. These posts include the Undersecretary of Finance and the Accountant-General, both of which the SIG was seeking to localize at the time the field research was done for this report. The incumbents of these positions are expected to be both implementers and capacity builders with the objective of developing longer-term and enduring institutional partnerships between their home countries and the partner government.
- **Supernumerary** – These are essentially in-line positions created as temporary additions to the SIG public service establishment to deal with time-bound workload increases, such as the trials of people arrested for alleged crimes during the period of the tensions. There are 29 of these positions under RAMSI, of which 1 is in the Department of Finance and Treasury and 28 are in the Law and Justice pillar, mostly lawyers and judges. When the trials are completed, some or all of these positions will be eliminated.
- **Constitutional** – These are also in-line positions which are designated as essential in the Solomon Islands constitution. They have fixed terms and are answerable solely to the Government of the Solomon Islands. They include 3 High Court judges.
- **Advisory** – Advisors are supplementary to the public sector establishment and, as such, have no formal delegation, staff management or decision-making authority. They may attend working groups, committees and other meetings at the request of their national colleagues but are expected to be more hands off than in-line officials. They have a capacity development role – to work primarily with counterparts to strengthen their skills and improve their knowledge in areas of need. In reality, many advisors have taken on line functions because of shortages of national staff and the difference between the work of advisors and that of in-line staff is not always clear. This creates a tension between short- and long-term goals, a tension which is increasingly common in technical assistance assignments and which the report covers in more detail in later chapters. There are 88 advisors.

RAMSI has been quite direct in its focus on state building. This must be put in the context of the situation in 2003 in Solomon Islands where government services, never strong, had virtually ceased to exist (see box below). The period of the tensions had also caused serious damage to community and personal relationships in a society where relationships and the *wontok* are of prime importance to citizens and where personal and professional relations run together. As a result of the expulsions of Malaitans mentioned above, there were large squatter settlements outside Honiara which are still unstable and even volatile. The SIG, demoralized and with inadequate resources to resolve the conflict, looked to outsiders for help. It was not a situation where the SIG could be expected to take charge or to provide much input to shaping programs and the relationship between it and RAMSI was, by its nature, unequal.

The functions which RAMSI is undertaking put it at the nexus of security and development. These two activities tend to pull in different directions – the first towards short-term activities and the latter towards the longer term. In fragile states, the volatility of the situation, caused by some of the factors listed in the chart below, privileges the short-term and it is difficult to find the space amidst often urgent activities to look for the longer-term solutions which will help to avoid a repetition of history.

³¹ AusAID, September 2005, p 1.

Table 3: Comparison of Capacity Issues in Fragile and Non-fragile States³²

Similarities	Differences
• Need to consider sustainability and reinforcement of endogenous capacity. • Long timeframe. • Change agents and champions, political will and ownership. • Importance of adaptation of intervention templates. • Systems perspective to capture complexity and interconnections.	• Pressure to restore services and security quickly. • Short timeframe. • Limited capacity to build on. • Often not simply rebuilding, but creating new capacities. • Little “margin of error” (e.g., lack of: trust and social capital, institutional resilience, etc.). • Hyper-politicized environment.

In addition, because this nexus between security and development is a relatively new area, as the box below indicates, there are few demonstrated successes and no clear models.

Box 3: The security-development nexus

Since the 1990s but particularly since the events of September 11, 2001, there has been a significant shift in attitudes about fragile states in many developed countries. From being seen as having little broad strategic significance, fragile states such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo or Somalia are recognized as contributors to regional or even international destabilization. The cost of spillovers such as refugee flows, arms smuggling and the breakdown of trade is estimated to reduce growth by 0.4% per year in neighbouring countries.

Attempts to deal with such precarious states have proven both complex and problematic. Traditional diplomacy has its limitations as do predominantly military responses such as in Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina. On the other hand, development is not possible when states are so incapacitated that they cannot deliver services to their citizens, and poverty and lack of security reinforce each other.

Externally-financed programs in fragile states are often framed around three governance functions:

- The provision of **security** to uphold the social contract between state and people, protect people and property and deal with crime and illegal activity;
- Delivery of **basic public goods and services** such as health, education and infrastructure as well as economic opportunity through rules-based policy making, regulation and fiscal arrangements; and
- **Political legitimacy** through governance systems based on democratic political principles that guide decision making and public policy and generate legitimacy³³.

Putting all of these together is a daunting task and, as Wainwright notes, “State-building operations around the world have either found it hard to restore security or have had trouble making headway with broader reconstruction efforts once security has been restored.”³⁴

³² Brinkerhoff, p 15.

³³ Brinkerhoff, p. 8.

³⁴ Wainwright, p. 5.

3.1.3 Whole-of-government

One of the signature features of RAMSI is that it is a *whole-of-government* (WoG) operation for three of the major regional contributors. It includes personnel from multiple Australian, New Zealand and, to a lesser extent, Fijian government departments. This broadening of involvement is based on the perception that “a single aid-focused agency was not a sufficient response to the mounting governance problems that were occurring in the region and the instability that these were creating”³⁵. Instead, different agencies are expected to work across their areas of specialization to provide an integrated government response and the coherence that has often been lacking in responses to fragile states. These goals are reflected in the guidelines provided by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)³⁶ which stress the need for an overall framework for managing WoG engagement and political commitment to it at the highest levels.

The mandate of RAMSI has thus created demands that stretch beyond those which the Australian, New Zealand and Fijian public services have normally been asked to meet. Departments like the Australian Treasury and the Department of Finance had previously had more narrowly defined international mandates which did not include aid program delivery or the supply of staff for developing country assignments. To participate in RAMSI, they have had to make internal adjustments such as developing personnel policies for overseas assignments, providing pre-departure services for deployees, and reintegrating staff after their assignments.

Whereas cooperative intervention addresses the relationships between the intervening governments and the receiving governments, whole-of-government looks at the relationships among the domestic departments supplying the TA personnel³⁷. The *joined up approach* of whole of government puts much emphasis on how the resources supplied by each department interact with others. This requires considerable interdepartmental coordination. The needs in the field also put pressure on the supplying public services to revise their policies and procedures, such as workforce planning, in order to meet requirements.

WoG brings some redefinition of roles, as the Australian contribution to RAMSI illustrates. Previously, AusAID had assumed the chief role in program design and strategy formulation when working with other government departments but it did not have the mandate or resources to undertake more comprehensive engagement with fragile states. At the same time, both the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and the Australian Federal Police (AFP) had relatively high profile and substantial bilateral development programs with both Asian and Pacific partners from as early as the 1980s but these had not been part of a cohesive Australian Government effort such as RAMSI has tried to provide. Under WoG, the traditional aid agency is only one player on a team addressing state failure and its destabilizing externalities and not necessarily the one with the lead role in program design and strategy formulation. Indeed, in Australia, the designated lead agency for RAMSI is the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. RAMSI works alongside the Australian High Commission in Honiara, which is responsible for diplomatic relations with the Solomon Islands and Australia’s ongoing bilateral program of assistance.

Although the majority of the TA personnel involved in RAMSI are contractors, it is usually either Australian, New Zealand or Fijian public servants on assignment from whole of government departments who fill key in-line management and policy positions within the SIG. Coordination of Australia’s contributions to RAMSI, including deployees, is provided through various committees such as the Strategic Policy Coordination Group (SPCG) which develops

³⁵ Oakley et al, p 3.

³⁶ OECD (2006), p. 9.

³⁷ At the same time, there is also some expectation that WoG will encourage partnerships between Solomon Island and Australian, New Zealand or Fijian departments with similar goals, and with time, albeit to a lesser extent, other regional institutions and governments.

Australian government policy on international engagements and comprises Deputy Secretaries from the relevant departments. Other lower-level interdepartmental committees (IDCs) and working groups address policy and operational issues.

The Australian Cabinet has made whole-of-government a priority for its public service.

3.2 *Focus on TA personnel*

In some ways, RAMSI is a new approach for Australia: robust intervention in governance issues combined with a whole-of-government approach. In other ways, its reliance on technical assistance personnel harkens back to times when expatriates filled line positions over extended periods of time. It is useful to look at why there is such emphasis on the use of TA personnel. Some of the reasons coming out of the interviews and the literature include:

- Because of the weak skills base of the Pacific region, Australia's overseas aid program had traditionally been heavily oriented towards technical assistance personnel. Since there were a large number of vacancies in the SIG, the provision of personnel seemed to be a logical response and Australian public servants were comfortable with it and with an emphasis on western-style organizations.
- The provision of technical assistance personnel was a safe response in a state where financial management was extremely weak. It was easier to track where the funds were going.
- The Governance issues were pervasive in Solomon Islands and there appeared to be an opportunity to make progress on key policy issues through the provision of TA personnel in critical policy formulation, management and advisory positions.
- Sending in TA personnel and especially those from whole of government allowed RAMSI to achieve immediate results in meeting its policy objectives of security, financial stabilization and governance reform³⁸. This was especially important in the Australian context which puts a heavy emphasis in its monitoring systems on tangible outcomes.

But RAMSI is not just TA as the box below illustrates.

Box 4: RAMSI and infrastructure

The development of infrastructure, especially in the provinces, is high priority for SIG and the Economic Governance and (recently) Growth pillar of RAMSI, has evolved to support a number of programs, to a total value of Aus \$24 million over 2006-2009. These include:

- Road rehabilitation across the provinces,
- Collaboration with the Asian Development Bank in upgrading roads in Guadalcanal and Malaita, and
- Community sector programming which includes more road construction.

How is funding managed?

At the macro level, AusAID, the World Bank and the European Commission are finalizing an agriculture and rural development strategy (ARDS) which will be followed up with a rural development program (RDP) with 4 components including:

- Community development,
- Provincial government strengthening,
- A rural innovations grant facility, and
- Strengthening agriculture.

The estimated resource envelope for these activities is about SI \$1billion or US \$165 million. Since 66% of funding for rural development in 2006 came from donors, the outlook for funding depends heavily on the prospects for donor support³⁹.

³⁸ Fullilove, p 15.

³⁹ Information provided by Paul Wright, Aid Adviser, RAMSI Office of the Special Coordinator.

4 The design of RAMSI as a program

4.1 *The Changing role of AusAID*

AusAID is going through a major shift in both the focus of its aid program and the management of it. Over the past decade, it has moved towards supporting institutional and organizational reform initiatives and sector support programs. More recently, it has also begun to revise its past practice of delegating most project/program planning and implementation to managing contractors in favour of a stronger role for AusAID staff in the preparation, design and strategic management of activities⁴⁰. The purpose is to allow AusAID to enhance its involvement in strategic dialogue with partner countries, including by having its staff or representatives embedded in the partner's government departments as TA personnel.

These people are usually in middle and senior planning and management positions where they provide strategic direction and help to guide the design of activities. They work on a day-to-day basis with partner country colleagues and are involved in both routine and more strategic issues. This approach has two advantages. First, it provides the aid agency personnel with the opportunity to understand better operational realities and the influence of culture and politics on them. Second, it opens up channels of information and contacts between the aid agency and the partner. In principle, both should contribute to better programming in the future.

The AusAID approach is in contrast to the norm within the international development community. There are a few agencies such as GTZ and the Belgian Technical Cooperation which still hire significant numbers of TA personnel directly but most contract out almost all implementation and much of the planning. Aid agency staff have increasingly become contract managers with constrained opportunities for informal interaction with partner country representatives or for understanding the culture and its implications. The knowledge of development realities has been largely externalized from the aid agency to the contractors. This has implications when new activities are being designed because aid agency staff do not always have an adequate feel for the realities of the field. Program design suffers.

However, in order to ensure that AusAID staff who are performing a direct activity management role have the space to focus on strategic and relationship issues, managing contractors are still used to provide logistical and administrative support in mobilizing whatever is needed to implement activities, whether that is TA, procurement or organizing study tours for partner personnel. Generally these go by the name of *Facilities* and it is this modality that is utilized in RAMSI.

4.2 *The Role of Facilities*

At their simplest, Facilities are mechanisms to provide logistical and other services to support the implementation of projects and programs but there are wide variations in the activities they undertake. Financed through aid program funds and managed by private contractors, they are set up on the basis of either a general analysis of a problem or to address specific problems across a range of areas. The purpose and goal are clearly defined but often without targets and the indicators and targets are set only as each activity is approved and planned. They are thus a mechanism to support rolling program design, ideally through AusAID staff working collaboratively with partner governments on their priorities. Each one has a clearly defined management strategy for decision making and process milestones based on inputs and processes are frequent. This contrasts with project and program approaches which have clear program definition and a focus on outputs.

⁴⁰ AusAID, Quality Improvement Section, 2004, p v.

Facilities allow outsourcing of much of the complexity associated with aid delivery and management and, as an internal AusAID review of one Facility operating under RAMSI notes, are a means of “saving the resources that would otherwise be dedicated to administering large complex rolling design activities contracts⁴¹”. The intent is to outsource administrative and logistics functions but keep hold of technical, strategic direction. The review also suggests that outsourcing of this nature allows flexibility to adjust the resources as necessary as the profile of the program emerges over time.

In Solomon Islands, there are three Facilities which provide the basic recruitment, mobilization, logistics and management support. But in some cases (explicitly the RGSF and justice sector) Facilities functionally contribute to design, setting of technical goals and oversight of activities. These are:

- the Corrections Facility to support the RAMSI activities in the corrections system,
- the Justice Facility to support activities in the justice sector, and
- the RAMSI Governance Support Facility (RGSF) which primarily services the Machinery of Government program, but delivers a secondary support role to the Economic Governance pillar as well as other activities loosely grouped and funded through the RAMSI Strengthened Assistance Program managed out of the Office of the Special Coordinator. In this secondary role, the Facility assists with the logistics and in-country welfare associated with contractors and WoG personnel deployed in Solomon Islands. It can also play a role in the recruitment and mobilization of TA. .

One Australian company is contracted as the managing contractor to run all three Facilities, although it was separately selected in each case as a result of competitive tender processes managed by AusAID on behalf of RAMSI. Each Facility has a senior manager assisted by one or more senior staff and several people managing logistics and finances. In all cases, AusAID is responsible for strategic direction reflecting RAMSI policies and tasks the Facilities on RAMSI's behalf through service orders which cover either performance tasks or logistics. The in-country Policy Advisory Office of the MoG program and a similar unit in Law and Justice are the primary clients and users of their respective Facilities, including being the main interface with the management personnel of the managing contractor. The technical aspects of the RAMSI work delivered through the Facility are subject to program level M&E which in turn feeds into the overall RAMSI Framework.

The Facilities in Solomon Islands perform the following common roles:

- Management oversight – includes quality assurance and workplan quality. This varies depending on which of the two categories of people under contract are involved:
 - advisors - the Facilities take all contractual responsibility and risk including performance, health, security, and legal issues, with the notable exception of Australian and New Zealand government deployed personnel for whom the Facilities only provide in-country logistics and welfare, or
 - incumbents of in-line positions such as in the courts⁴² and the prisons – these people have a dual reporting relationship: to the Solomon Islands system on day-to-day operations and to the Facilities on specific issues of interest to AusAID such as capacity development activities⁴³.
- Performance or technical management oversight – determining whether or not the advisor is performing as expected. Assessment of the performance of in-line personnel is generally carried out in cooperation with the SIG, but this is less often the case for advisors. Again, in the case of WoG deployees, the Facility (in this case RGSF) does not perform any technical quality and performance oversight.

⁴¹ Anderson 2006, p 1.

⁴² This is reinforced in the case of judges and magistrates by a judicial independence clause in their contract.

⁴³ This relationship is complex and the reporting line is sometimes blurred.

- Logistics – Support to all GRM contractors including a few in positions defined by the constitution who report entirely to the SIG, for example, the Superintendent of Prisons, but also to some under period offers (direct contracts with AusAID).
- Technical input and facilitation – The Justice Facility is quite heavily involved with RAMSI management in programming and planning issues but this is not the case for Corrections or RGSF. RGSF does, however, work with senior public servants on some strategic issues, by preparing briefing notes and facilitating contacts. It also helps advisors to understand how to work within the system, including trying to avoid personalizing issues which is quite common in Solomons. It takes much of the administrative load off the shoulders of the RAMSI managers in the Machinery of Government pillar.

Australian, New Zealand and Fiji Government deployees receive all their in-country logistics and welfare support through the RGSF, a component of which is expressly designed to provide such services in the field. An AusAID Operational Support Unit in Canberra provides services to deployees on the Australian end and maintains liaison and operational policy coordination with deployees' originating agencies. This unit's purpose is not limited to RAMSI - it also works with agencies contributing to Australian WoG deployments in PNG, Indonesia, and Nauru.

In consultation with its own field personnel, and RAMSI programs, the managing contractor's Brisbane headquarters does much of the background work for recruitments – ensuring that adequate terms of reference are available, advertising, setting up interviews which are often conducted by relevant RAMSI and, increasingly, SIG personnel, and contracting.

Despite the limited number of staff available on the SIG side, the RAMSI program personnel, and Facilities managers where appropriate (e.g. Corrections), are trying to involve them in on-going activities such as program design and recruitment. In addition, the Corrections Facility is using SIG budget processes to channel RAMSI funding to activities. This makes costs more transparent and is a step towards getting them incorporated into the SIG budget.

Annex 2 describes in more detail how Facilities approach recruitment processes, selection, briefing and induction, and reintegration.

4.3 Approaches to capacity development

Given the focus on building organizational and institutional capacity, it is useful to look at the ways that RAMSI approaches capacity development, often through the assignment of TA personnel. The research team suggests four categories that can be referred to usefully, although the approaches may not always be as clearly defined as this list suggests:

- Doing - taking charge of activities and hoping that capacity will be generated through a process of osmosis. The focus is on results and country systems are bypassed in order to achieve them.
- Direct approach – controlling, engineering and designing the process of capacity development while trying to engage country partners through consultation, participation, on-the-job training and other measures. The assumption is that, at some point, the developed capacity can be handed over to the partners either psychologically or physically.
- Indirect methods –Working with country processes by finding and starting with the initial motivation of actors. TAs then facilitate and support partner country participants who remain in charge of the process and who engage in learning, adaptation and self-organization.
- Hands off approach – Donors limit their intervention to paying for proven, measurable or demonstrated progress on the part of the country institution⁴⁴. Payments are not conditional on the implementation of particular policies or other outputs nor are they tied to particular

⁴⁴ Morgan, 2006. p 8.

purchases. Independent audited statements are the usual method for assuring that the monies provided have been spent as agreed.

This typology can be roughly applied to the pillars of RAMSI as follows, bearing in mind that there is overlap among the different approaches as well as variation and nuances in their application:

- Economic Governance** - Because of comprehensive undermining of the budget during the tensions, RAMSI identified budget stabilization as an early priority. The scope of activities for the first phase was defined by a team from AusAID and Treasury as well as experienced consultants, with the first contingent of 17 advisors arriving in August 2003. At the request of SIG, many staff came from line positions in Australia's Treasury and Department of Finance⁴⁵. The activities under this pillar have expanded to include strengthening financial management systems, encouraging broad-based economic growth and generating prosperity. Because of the seriousness of the economic situation, the program was quite direct in the definition of posts or in the choice of personnel and accordingly less than desirable with respect to mutual accountability for results and sustainability⁴⁶, though this has begun to change. In terms of the typology of approaches to developing capacity in section 2.6, it has probably predominantly fallen into *taking charge* or *doing*, more recent efforts to mutually define goals and modes notwithstanding.
- Law and Justice** - Activities under this pillar began with the arrival of the police in July 2003 but have grown to include support to reform of the prison system including extensive construction of new Facilities and assistance in strengthening the courts including ensuring that those charged as a result of the tensions are given fair trials. Activities are planned cooperatively with the SIG and probably fall largely in the category of *direct approaches* to capacity development. The SIG participated to some degree, for instance, in the development of the Strategic Framework for the sector and the former Police and National Security Minister showed particular interest in it⁴⁷. The SIG is also involved in all stages of the planning, implementation and evaluation of technical assistance activities.
- Machinery of Government** - This pillar, which aims to repair and reform Machinery of Government to ensure effective, transparent and accountable governance, came into the RAMSI fold in December 2004, significantly later than the others. Although at the beginning facets of its approach was arguably *direct*, the pillar is increasingly using what the Program Director has described as an *organic approach* to planning activities or *progressive engagement* whereby the MoG personnel⁴⁸ carry on a dialogue about key ideas of governance with the SIG and work on issues that have resonance to Solomon Islanders. This is a searching rather than planning model with no defined path and based on understanding the chemistry of the organizations involved. The approach is based on the assumption that the path to reaching goals and targets is constantly changing and emerging out of the on-going work itself⁴⁹. The broad activities of this pillar would largely fall under the *indirect approach* to capacity development although there are still some remnants of the direct model remaining.

The following chart resumes this discussion and brings in related information from previous sections of this report.

⁴⁵ AusAID, 2004. FMCBP, p 2.

⁴⁶ A review of the Economic Reform Unit recommends that "the ERU's image as a Canberra-controlled implant be progressively replaced by that of a fully integrated part of SIG's machinery of fiscal, monetary and real sector policy-making." Gilling and Hughes, 2005, p 1.

⁴⁷ AusAID, undated. L&J Strategic Framework, p 2.

⁴⁸ Staff in the MoG office are AusAID staff, either permanent and on secondment to a position or contracted specifically for the role.

⁴⁹ RAMSI MoG, 2006, p 3

Table 4: Approaches to capacity development

Pillar	Economic Governance	Law and Justice	Machinery of Government
Approaches at the level of the pillar	<i>Largely doing</i>	<i>Largely direct approach</i>	<i>Largely indirect approach</i>
Examples of activities by TA personnel	- Direct control over policy development - Line management of personnel - Line functions such as budget preparation and improving systems for revenue collection and debt management	- Management, e.g., of the prison service - Service provision such as prosecutors, judges and public defenders - Advising, e.g., on complex legal issues - Training and mentoring	- Policy dialogue on public sector reform - Developing and strengthening systems such as IT and archiving - Line functions such as preparation of audits - Advising on marketing strategies and management issues, e.g., at Broadcasting Service
Sources of TA	Largely Australian government departments, some consultants	State and local governments, private consultants	Largely consultants, often with government experience

The selection of approach was a function of the state of the sector at the time of the initial mobilization of RAMSI and of the urgency of the response needed to re-establish stability. However, international experience has shown that the choice of capacity development approaches - *doing*, *direct approach*, *indirect approach* or *hands-off* – has a significant effect on the level of engagement in an activity by the partner country. High levels of intervention such as through *doing* tend to squeeze out partner country nationals and make them feel marginalized. On the other hand, the more a country partner is involved, the more likely it is to make a commitment to the longer-term. The commitment that comes with engagement is essential to the sustainability of an activity and in this sense is a means to ensuring the effectiveness of TA. At the same time, engagement strengthens self confidence and thus the willingness to take action on critical issues.

The initial tendency to high levels of intervention in RAMSI largely reflected the desire to move quickly and to produce early, broadly felt and visible results, necessary conditions for building the legitimacy of the operation. As Brinkerhoff points out, in states which are fragmented by conflict or where conditions are deteriorating, there is a narrow margin for error because people's trust and tolerance levels tend to be lower and their levels of suspicion heightened. "CD efforts that fail to yield quick results or that deliver benefits to one societal group and not another risk being perceived as intentionally unfair or demonstrating favouritism⁵⁰." In the case of RAMSI, there was pressure to quickly stem the violence and intimidation which had become a feature of life in some parts of Solomon Islands and to stop the diversion of funds, sometimes by SIG officials, which was bleeding the country dry. The SIG was in a state of near collapse and the security forces badly infiltrated with militants. Australia felt it had no choice but to take the lead in designing the intervention and, indeed, as mentioned in section 3.4, the SIG expected the outsiders to help do this.

On the other hand, there is often a trade-off between short-term results as described above and strengthening the capacity for the long term through the learning that comes with engagement and involvement. Sustainability may be elusive unless the emphasis on the long-term is increased. In addition, despite the conditions under which RAMSI began, it is easy for a program like this to wear out its welcome. As stability comes and people's memories of past conflicts fade, questions begin about why the outsiders are still there. They become the

⁵⁰ Brinkerhoff, p. 17.

scapegoats for other problems. In the current highly politicized environment of the Solomon Islands, it is not surprising that this seems to be happening to some extent already. RAMSI does recognize the trade-off and is trying to re-orient relationships and modes of advisory support, such as through the Capacity Building Working Group and the participation of the SIG in the Performance Assessment Working Group. Achieving sustainability may, however, require stronger measures than these, including a faster transition to *indirect approaches*.

4.4 The choice of positions to be filled

As noted above, there are four official categories of positions filled under RAMSI: in-line, supernumerary, constitutional and advisory. In effect, the three first are all in-line and can be divided roughly into three categories:

- Senior decision-makers, especially those involved in financial management, including the Deputy Commissioner of Inland Revenue and the Accountant General;
- Middle level decision-makers such as principal magistrates; and
- Personnel involved in delivering professional services such as lawyers and public prosecutors, as well as broadcast and print media advisors.

The first group – the senior decision makers – largely consists of Australian and New Zealand deployees. This engagement of officials from one country to work in the sovereign responsibilities of the SIG is a defining feature of RAMSI⁵¹. The interviews held revealed some discomfort with filling in-line positions, especially the senior ones. The history of technical assistance outlined in the box below helps to explain why.

Box 5: The evolution of technical assistance from the private to the public sector

Technical assistance over the centuries has been a form of voluntary exchange, usually in the private sector. Clients or customers were in charge, for example, Peter the Great hired Western European craftsmen and artisans to help build St. Petersburg. There was a direct relationship between the payer and the supplier.

When the international development community adopted TA personnel as one of their key mechanisms for aid delivery, the relationship changed from 2-way to 3-way (the donor, the user and the supplier) and the reporting relationships became much less clear. In addition, to maintain domestic support, the international suppliers of TA often felt they had to promise unrealistic levels of performance and development results, usually by emphasizing the planning and control of projects which could be “designed” and “delivered”. This led to a neglect of organizational and institutional issues in favour of a focus on more tangible results. It also led to considerable dissatisfaction because TA personnel were not delivering everything that was, sometimes unrealistically, expected of them.

Criticisms began as early as the 1960s but major reports detailing the ineffectiveness of TA and especially of TA personnel only started to appear in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Some of the major issues included:

- Reporting relationships mainly to the country paying the bills rather than to the authorities in the partner country;
- Supply led: donors often made TA a condition for receiving other assistance;
- Filling long-term positions with personnel who make few efforts to work themselves out of their jobs (gap filling);
- Foreign experts in positions when qualified nationals are available; and
- Failing to develop local capacities because of a focus on getting the job done.

⁵¹ Oakley et al, p 11.

One of the most contentious issues was and still is gap filling and, in response, many donors have abandoned it in favour of advisory positions with an emphasis on developing the capacity of nationals. On the other hand, many countries have difficulties filling specialized positions essential to maintaining basic government services. Small states like Solomon Islands face particular challenges in providing the conditions, financial and otherwise, to compete on the international market for qualified personnel. On the other hand, the example of Botswana shows that in-line TA personnel can make a significant contribution to a developing country if their assignments are well managed. Botswana's success is a result of a policy that:

- all development cooperation is included in the national development plan and budgets;
- there are no donor-driven, free-standing TA projects;
- the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning is the focal point for contact with international development organizations (IDOs); and
- the government is able to reject offers of technical assistance⁵².

The opinions on in-line vs advisory positions in Solomon Islands are as diverse as those described above. The Auditor General, a Solomon Islander, saw putting expatriates in in-line positions (as opposed to advisory) as a means of creating *belongingness* on both the part of the expatriates who would be integral parts of the organization and serve it and of the organization which would have management responsibility for the TA. Some permanent secretaries also prefer in-line positions because it provides them with more control over what TA personnel are doing. This is in contrast to the actual situation of some of the advisory TA personnel interviewed who had few links with the SIG and admitted feeling more affiliation to their home departments (in the case of Australian and New Zealand public servants) or to their Managing Contractor than to the permanent secretary of the department where they are assigned. This lack of affiliation resulted in some of them not feeling the need to even inform their national colleagues of their movements, such as holidays⁵³.

On the other hand, some permanent secretaries expressed concern about the degree of leadership and even power exercised by senior in-line expatriates, suggesting that nationals had sometimes been pushed aside and their commitment to the activities in question thereby reduced. A corollary is that the skills possessed by nationals fall into disuse and there is a loss of capacity.

The chart below, which is distilled from interviews and the literature in the reference section, presents some of the strengths and challenges of both in-line and advisory positions. It suggests that there are no hard and fast rules on filling one kind of position over another – the choice should depend on the conditions. What may be most important is the wishes of the partners and the extent to which their commitment to the success of the TA positions filled may be affected by respecting their preferences for one modality over the other. In this regard, it is useful to bear in mind the Paris Declaration which calls on donors to “respect partner country leadership and help strengthen their capacity to exercise it”⁵⁴.

⁵² Land, 2002.

⁵³ From interviews

⁵⁴ OECD. 2005. Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness: Ownership, Harmonisation, Alignment, Results and Mutual Accountability. <http://www.aidharmonization.org>. Page 3.

Table 5: Comparing in-line and advisory positions

Advantages	
In-line	Advisory
Greater chance of national commitment to success of assignment because of greater integration into the system	Possibility of focusing on capacity development in a concentrated way not usually feasible in in-line positions
Reporting to national manager engenders sense of responsibility on that person's part	Possibility of creating positions with broader remit than one unit or department
Formal leadership in hands of the government (in keeping with Paris Declaration)	Allows action on key issues where capacity inadequate to formulate request
Ensures that critical on-going functions are continued	Opportunity to support change agents or broader agenda for reform without being tied to specific establishment positions
Necessary supporting conditions	
An in-line position requiring decision-making and on-going management responsibilities formally exists within the official structure	Support for position by national champions for change
Government has made conscious decision that it wants an expatriate in the position	TA has clear concept of capacity development and role he/she can play
Government decides on TORs and criteria for selection and is actively involved in selection	Champions of change actively involved in identification of tasks and criteria for selection
No qualified national exists or even one partially qualified who could carry out the tasks involved with support from an expatriate	No qualified national available to take up role
Incumbent has a management style which provides opportunities for subordinates to learn through doing, including making mistakes, and which emphasizes relationship building	Need for strong networking and facilitation skills
Partner country supervisor is involved in choice of candidate on terms that he/she is comfortable with ⁵⁵	National champions for change involved in choice of candidate on terms they are comfortable with

Addressing some of the potential risks or pitfalls during the planning process would help to avoid later problems. Some of these are outlined below. Another useful practice would be to involve both the partner country and the donor(s) in the identification, recruitment, deployment and monitoring of TA personnel. The SIG-RAMSI Capacity Development Working Group agreed on such an approach - *Joint Selection Recruitment Process for RAMSI Personnel* - at its November 2006 meeting, although the interviews held suggest that it is not as yet applied evenly across all pillars. (See 5 for the full document.)

⁵⁵ One Permanent Secretary said that formal interviews with pre-set questions are not effective ways for him to judge the suitability of candidates. He needs to have time in an informal environment to get to know people.

Table 6: Comparing in-line and advisory positions

Risks	
In-line	Advisory
Less time to spend on CD because of demands of day-to-day on-the-job activities	Government may put more priority on day-to-day activities unless there is joint agreement on an M&E framework which stresses capacity development
Pressure for results could push incumbent to encourage or even impose policy solutions to which the government has no commitment	Nature of the process of CD makes results more difficult to track using traditional methods
Pressure for results could push incumbent to take over and marginalize nationals	Incumbent unable to build relationships and create legitimacy for activities
Deployees who are culturally insensitive or who squeeze out national colleagues	Personnel who are culturally insensitive
Supervisor not interested or not able to provide guidance	Champions of change move on or lose interest
Government departments may be tempted to use aid programs as a development opportunity for staff	Contractors may be tempted to try to prolong their assignments because they have no other employment opportunities
High level of entitlements for public servants create tensions with other expatriates and with nationals ⁵⁶	Possible tensions between TA personnel and nationals over disparities in remuneration
If public servants have no previous management experience, they may be uncertain how to exercise some aspects of position	Government may feel that it has little if any control over advisors
Can be tensions with other donors and international agencies if the expatriate is perceived as speaking on behalf of a sovereign government.	May be questions about who has authorized the TA to carry out tasks

Given the conditions defined above and the associated risks, the following chart suggests the situations where each approach – in-line and advisory positions – might be most appropriate. This is based on interviews, literature on TA personnel and the professional experience of the author of this report.

Table 7: Comparing in-line and advisory positions

Situations each might be where most appropriate	
In-line	Advisory
Where the initiative for change comes from the government: government must agree with direction of policy change	Position is designed to seek out opportunities for change
Critical vacancy exists with technical requirements not available in the country	Government and agency have a vision and development agenda and want support for implementation
Has been a history of poor national managers, with positions highly politicized and/or subject to corruption and government needs time and space to rebuild from within	A national country change agent identifies windows of opportunity for change
Expatriate provides international legitimacy ⁵⁷	An expatriate can help pull together support for change to complement national pockets of energy
Expatriate can resist pressures (such as for unacceptable use of funds) in a way that a	Donors are able to respond quickly to take advantage of windows of opportunity

⁵⁶ The Eminent Persons Group even suggested that RAMSI personnel not be employed under public service provisions because this emphasizes the disparities with local public servants. Pacific Islands Forum, 2005, p 13.

⁵⁷ Legitimacy with organizations like the IMF derives in part from adequate control over finances. This had declined during the tensions when the treasury was plundered and the national debt grew out of control. Filling the position of Accountant General with an expatriate helped to restore financial credibility to Solomon Islands.

national could not	
Supports core functions of government which is necessary to restore operations after crisis or prolonged period of deterioration	A clear need exists for a capacity development plan or activities that nationals cannot carry out
Need for strong principles of allegiance, confidentiality and probity as embedded in public servants	Opportunity exists for a program to strengthen the capacity of the public service, such as the value system

4.5 *The challenges of using deployees*⁵⁸

One of the key modes of RAMSI as a whole-of-government approach is that deployees occupy a few key policy and management roles. This approach was designed to ensure that the contributing governments involved, and particularly the Australian government, were able to shape the agenda of governance reform in Solomon Islands foreseen under RAMSI. The Australian Prime Minister sees RAMSI as a template that can be applied elsewhere in the Pacific and wants to be sure that the government has the required expertise for such interventions⁵⁹. This is one of the reasons why whole-of-government has emerged, according to Dr. Peter Shergold, the Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, as “the single most challenging issue ” for Australian public administration⁶⁰. Some of the issues include the following:

- Whole-of-government has come onto the agenda in the context of major human resource challenges already facing the Australian Public Service⁶¹. In some departments such as AusAID, there have been extensive departures of middle-level managers taking advantage of the superannuation policy allowing retirement as early as 55⁶². In addition, according to the Hays Quarterly Forecast, general increased demand for government services as well as specific projects are “putting pressure on the supply of policy professionals and economists at the \$80,000 to \$110,000 level”⁶³. Although the quality of staff provided to date has been generally very good, most agencies have at times had difficulties finding appropriate candidates for RAMSI positions⁶⁴ and some positions such as the Under Secretary Finance and Accountant-General, provided through the Financial Management Strengthening Program, previously recruited from the Commonwealth level have more recently been recruited from at the state level and then employed and deployed as Commonwealth⁶⁵.
- Central agencies especially have had little or no career structure based around international deployments because until recently such assignments have been a minor part of their business. As a result, there is in some of them an unspoken assumption that an overseas assignment is “taking time out” and is not core career work⁶⁶, feelings that were reinforced by the interviews held with TA personnel in Solomon Islands. See the box below for a government organization that has made major changes in order to better fulfill its expanding international role.

⁵⁸ It was beyond the scope of the research team’s remit and resources to enquire into this issue in depth and to contact WoG agencies individually. This section thus relies heavily on one single paper plus the interviews held in the field.

⁵⁹ Oakley et al, p 4.

⁶⁰ Oakley et al citing Shergold, p 4.

⁶¹ Oakley et al, p 1.

⁶² Hauck, p 22.

⁶³ Hays, <http://www.hays.com.au/forecast/executive-publicsector.aspx>

⁶⁴ Oakley et al, p 18.

⁶⁵ Oakley et al, p 15.

⁶⁶ Oakley et al, p 19.

Box 6: The Australian Federal Police

The Australian Federal Police (AFP) has had relatively high profile and substantial bilateral development programs with both Asian and Pacific partners since as early as the 1980s. As a result of its involvement in RAMSI and other such missions, the AFP saw the need to improve its capability to manage international assignments. It created an International Deployment Group (IDG) which now has around 500 officers serving abroad including the Solomons contingent of about 234 and commands one third of the AFP's total budget. The IDG has set up an extensive training program, including a replica of a Melanesian village which it uses for orientation purposes. It is also reflecting on how it can improve its cultural sensitivity and interact more effectively with Pacific Islanders in general. It may well be that the AFP that has gone through the greatest internal changes of all government agencies involved in RAMSI.

- In terms of the Australian contribution to RAMSI, the program operates as a collection of individual agencies behind a broad goal, with little thinking about the long-term implications of deployments on workforce planning across government⁶⁷. Only once have HRM issues been discussed at a strategic level and this was early in RAMSI and focused on terms and conditions⁶⁸. The interviews held suggest that the variety of approaches to determining salaries and terms and conditions of assignments is, for example, a highly divisive issue among TA personnel. To address this and related personnel problems, Oakley et al suggest the need for an overarching whole-of-government approach to managing the resource implications for the program⁶⁹.
- Most Australian departments feel that they have good working relationships with other agencies involved in RAMSI, especially on policy issues which are the remit of the Interdepartmental Committee (IDC) process, but they would like to “see greater ‘interoperability’ in managing deployments and a greater identification by staff with RAMSI as a whole”⁷⁰. AusAID has established an operational support unit to assist other Commonwealth of Australia agencies with their deployments as well as a formal process of debriefing deployees from all departments to improve knowledge about how to work more effectively in fragile states. The interviews held suggested that even more needs to be done.
- RAMSI is not purely a development program but the sustainability of it is likely to depend on Solomon Islanders perceiving sufficient development benefits of which they are prepared to take charge. Although development is high on the hierarchy of issues for RAMSI, the *conception* of what development is *and* what will be *sustainable* and able to avert the need for similar future interventions is subject to differing perspectives and levels of comprehension. This is a classic dilemma for aid program/policy in the whole of government context where there are competing formulations of national interest. As a line agency without the status of a full department or a designated Minister with policy functions, AusAID has not historically had as much influence as the central agencies of Treasury and Finance and has often had to choose carefully its opportunities for putting forward its approaches to capacity development and sustainability.

Given the limitations and challenges for Commonwealth government departments in finding appropriate personnel, RAMSI may have to ask itself whether other sources need to be explored more systematically for personnel appropriate for management and/or policy positions. Already, there is recognition that state and local governments may be equal or indeed sometimes better sources of personnel with experience in program delivery than those from the Commonwealth of Australia government which is not responsible for delivering many of the services that the SIG provides. Although the potential of these sources has been identified, RAMSI has not yet managed to harness them effectively.

On the other hand, in the last five years, there has been a doubling in the number of public

⁶⁷ Oakley et al, p 19.

⁶⁸ Oakley et al, p 26.

⁶⁹ Oakley et al, p 1.

⁷⁰ Oakley et al, p 24.

servants retiring by comparison with the previous five years⁷¹, the majority of whom are now in the 55 to 59 year old category. These people, still young enough to work for many years, represent a pool for programs like RAMSI with knowledge of government approaches, a culture of loyalty to the system and contacts in their former departments on whom they can draw⁷². Retired public servants would also be more likely to be available for longer terms than employees concerned about their careers.

The chart below, which is based on the interviews held, outlines some of the advantages and disadvantages of using deployees. The disadvantages should not be seen as necessarily precluding the use of whole of government employees but rather as challenges for planning programs or improving the supporting systems. This might mean, for example, exploring how to give recognition to international experience in the promotional processes for public servants in order to encourage more interest in assignments or finding ways to allow interested deployees to extend the length of their assignments so as to reduce the turnover of staff, an issue addressed in section 7. 5.

Table 8: Advantages and Disadvantages of using Deployees to fill TA Positions

Advantages of deployees	Disadvantages of deployees
Have good understanding of how government works and have relevant up-to-date experience as a practicing public servant which is often valued by partners, e.g., preparing budgets and managing debt	Are normally not development specialists and may not have an understanding of capacity issues or of sustainability
Can draw on expertise and support from home departments, strengthening linkages between the developed and the partner countries ⁷³	May be under such pressure to show home departments results that they neglect the capacity development side of their mandates
Are imbued with a well regarded government code of conduct	May try to recreate the policies, systems and procedures of their home agencies even if not suitable
Their experience as practicing public servants is seen as more in keeping with the approaches needed by the partner country	80% have no previous international experience
Are not looking for a job and not aspiring to continuation of employment, understand concept of making a contribution and leaving	May be less experienced than consultants and may see development role as temporary/short term on their total career horizon
Understand principle of good enough governance	Usually only available for shorter-term assignments, giving rise to issues of continuity, turnover and reduced opportunities to build deeper levels of trust and relationship
Can be given looser TORs than contractors which allows greater flexibility to adapt to changing environments	Risk of resistance to local management structures and policies because of continued allegiance to home department
Have specific technical focus, especially in areas such as finance	Risk of unsuitable candidates because some departments may not be able to attract enough applicants in a context of increasing demands

Adequate selection and briefing also help to avoid some of the disadvantages addressed above. Annex 2 looks at some of the selection processes being used by the Facilities in Solomon Islands to enhance the quality of personnel selected and to ensure them appropriate support before, during and after their assignments. Annex 3 includes the program for a typical AusAID briefing program for staff being assigned to the Solomon Islands. Annex 4 is the program for an AusAID course offered since early 2007 called *Making a Difference, Tools and*

⁷¹ See chart in Annex 6 from the Australian Public Service Commissioner: APS Statistical Bulletin 2005-6.

⁷² Several Solomon Island permanent secretaries spoke strongly in favour of having public servants in in-line positions with the issue of their loyalty to government being a key factor. This may be a reflection of the on-going problems that Solomon Islands faces with corruption.

⁷³ An example under RAMSI is the linkage between the SIG Inland Revenue Department and New Zealand Inland Revenue.

Approaches to Capacity Building. It is for any adviser or counterpart who wants to get better at creating counterpart–adviser working relationships that lead to more effective and sustainable capacity building.

According to the interviews held for this study, not all TA personnel have benefited from such professional support and more consistent processes across agencies and some generic selection criteria focusing on the ability “to cope and to perform effectively in challenging political and security environments”⁷⁴ would be helpful. Even more important may be an understanding of capacity issues, what has worked in other countries and what is possible in an environment like Solomon Islands.

If deployees are well integrated on their return, they are more likely to stay in government. If large numbers of staff quit within a short period after their return from international assignments, home departments may become hesitant to release personnel and to show enthusiasm for RAMSI and other similar programs. Our interviews provided anecdotal evidence that departures have been significant in some departments such as Customs, a field in demand by international organizations such as the World Bank. The Hayes Forecast confirms that “Demand (in government) is also affected by the movement of professionals overseas, attracted to higher remuneration and better resourced projects”⁷⁵. The interviews held suggest that some deployees are not returning to their home departments and are taking up assignments with AusAID or other international organizations.

5 Monitoring and Evaluation

5.1 RAMSI’s performance framework

RAMSI is under intense scrutiny by contributing governments, especially Australia as a lead contributor, the SIG, and the Pacific Islands Forum through which it derives its mandate. Other donors and development partners to the Solomon Islands in the Pacific region also watch the fortunes of the intervention closely, and, as this study attests, it has generated interest internationally for its potential lessons.

From its early days, RAMSI saw the need to develop an effective performance management system to respond to the needs of, and discharge its accountabilities to, all its stakeholders and, with AusAID’s⁷⁶ assistance, has gradually built up a system of monitoring and evaluation. RAMSI’s initial system of tracking results has evolved over the almost four years of its existence and coalesced in 2005 around the Performance Framework. The intent of the Framework is to arrest a tendency to proliferate internal and external reporting systems by providing one coherent system. At the time of writing this report, this Framework is being revised to conform with the RAMSI Medium-Term Strategy for the period to 2012⁷⁷

The Framework aims to assist RAMSI to monitor performance against its mandate in Solomon Islands. It has two main purposes:

- to serve as a management tool for those responsible for the coordination and conceptualization of the RAMSI effort by capturing lessons and encouraging continuous improvement in RAMSI programs and

⁷⁴ Oakley et al, p 35.

⁷⁵ Hays, <http://www.hays.com.au/forecast/executive-publicsector.aspx>

⁷⁶ AusAID has taken on this role because of its experience in this area. The agency has, for example, set up an Office of Development Effectiveness which is taking a particular interest in how to improve TA in fragile states and which is concerned to show the effectiveness that the Government has demanded as a condition for doubling the aid budget to around \$4 billion by 2010.

⁷⁷ RAMSI Performance Framework, August 2005; RAMSI Annual Performance Report 2006; RAMSI Interim progress report (Feb 2007); draft RAMSI Medium-term Strategy 2007-2012.

- to provide a basis for accountability in consultations and general working relationships between RAMSI and SIG and in reporting to the PIF and through it to participating countries and development partners.

Performance data is generated and assessed through four mechanisms:

- Quantitative data and targeted qualitative analysis generated by program-level monitoring systems, feeding into the overall RAMSI-wide monitoring system for tracking higher level outcomes.
- Specific analytical reviews on key areas of reform and RAMSI coordination,
- On-going RAMSI-wide assessment of the effectiveness of capacity building work, and
- Analysis of existing secondary survey data and a stratified sample survey of Solomon Islands citizens' perceptions and experiences of change (the Peoples Survey)⁷⁸.

The Framework was used as the basis for the Annual Performance Report 2005/6 produced in July 2006, which reviewed and drew on the four data sources, including: the results of a multi-phase capacity building stocktake, two analytical reviews of the Law and Justice and Economic Governance programs, and a limited-scale pilot of the People's Survey.

As part of the performance system, an external RAMSI Performance Assessment Advisory Team (PAAT), comprising expert technical advisors, carries out two major tasks:

- Taking primary responsibility for the production of both interim Six Monthly Monitoring Reports and Annual Performance Reports which are respectively based on six-monthly and annual review missions; and
- Providing additional technical advice to RAMSI management and programs on the status of the performance system and potential improvements, including a focus on strengthening the development of program-level monitoring systems. This now includes an explicit provision for integrating capacity development planning and measurement into the performance system.⁷⁹

There is also a predominantly Honiara-based Performance Assessment Working Group (PAWG) led from the Office of the Special Coordinator and comprising working level representatives from major RAMSI programs and recently, SIG counterparts. It is charged with overseeing the implementation of the Performance Framework and advising RAMSI management and the SIG on the performance agenda.

5.2 M&E activities and their purpose within RAMSI

The main purpose of the system described above is accountability to contributing governments and, particularly the Australian government as leader and principal funder, as well as the Pacific Islands Forum. It is also intended to become a joint basis of management and accountability between SIG and RAMSI. There were several other kinds of monitoring and evaluation, which are either parts of this broader system or where there has been a need identified. They include:

- For learning –Rather than using a strategic planning approach whereby much of the strategic thinking and design work is done upfront by specialist designers, the MoG pillar uses a *strategic management approach* which establishes the end point or overall goal. It then develops a tentative sketch of aspects of the design to produce a *good enough design*. This becomes the basis for exploring what is possible which is done by collecting information to feed into analysis, assessments and decisions on ways forward. The MoG monitoring system looks at two levels – program and adviser/project – and puts heavy

⁷⁸ RAMSI Performance Framework, 2005, p 4.

⁷⁹ RAMSI Performance Framework, 2005, p 4.

emphasis on learning lessons and improving programs⁸⁰. It is the program-level M&E which forms one of the components of the overall RAMSI Framework and has been designed to engage with and inform that system. Other pillars' program-level systems will similarly conform to the RAMSI Framework. Taken as a whole, most RAMSI-wide overarching goals will be achieved through a combination of the program-level efforts of the pillars.

Box 7: Performance Reflection Workshops

The Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for MoG foresees reflection workshops every four months involving MoG program advisers and staff and the SIG with the purpose of discussing progress and reflecting on activities and results. This process of reflection is to include 8 steps:

- Capturing the information on performance question such as "How have we performed in relation to the three or four key outcomes identified in the work plan?"
- Comparing the answers to the first questions with past observations,
- Assessing the reasons for the performance identified including positive and negative factors,
- Analyzing lessons,
- Deciding on actions to be taken as a result of the analysis,
- Making improvements to the performance monitoring system based on the discussions held, for example, "Were there things that the old system did not cover?"
- Assigning tasks and deciding who does what when
- Drawing final conclusions

Based on pages 21-24 of the MoG Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, 2006.

- To feed into management decisions – Some of the TA personnel interviewed for this study indicated that they need M&E systems to help them collect information on which to base management decisions. The Superintendent of Prisons, an Australian, for example, needs to be able to assess the competencies of the Solomon Islands wardens to determine when they are ready to take over from TA personnel. In a similar vein, a former Solomon Islands permanent secretary spoke of the need for evidence of performance to explain to staff the rationale for promotions and disciplinary action.
- To strengthen capacity – Involvement in processes such as the MoG Performance Reflection Workshops described above can help to strengthen the analytical skills of operational and policy staff. SIG public servants are increasingly involved in the periodic assessments of the performance of individual TA personnel.
- To strengthen accountability to citizens –RAMSI makes considerable effort to inform the Solomon Islands public about its activities. Prior to the time of this study, SIG had not been actively involved in this public outreach program but recent discussions have resulted in an agreement to have joint SIG-RAMSI activities in the future. SIG and RAMSI have also worked closely together following the recent tsunami in Solomon Islands to assess impacts and direct relief efforts.

Because of its weak capacity in general and more specifically in the area of M&E, the SIG does not seem to be able to follow many of these activities. It is thus encouraging that the Permanent Secretary of the Public Service Department has indicated interest in providing a Solomon Islander to work with a senior RAMSI official with specific skills in performance assessment and capacity building⁸¹. This would seem to be a promising opening to better engage the SIG, although maintaining this interest will probably entail developing systems to respond to specific SIG concerns.

⁸⁰ RAMSI, MoG, 2006, p 8-9.

⁸¹ Towards a Framework for integrated Capacity Building, p 6.

5.3 The challenges of the M&E of capacity

M&E of capacity is a particular challenge and one where the team responsible for the Performance Framework is struggling, as are most organizations, to find a viable approach. Most performance frameworks fall back on tangible outcomes because of the difficulty of looking at the intangible issues. Thus, the RAMSI Framework uses activity level indicators such as fully funded annual budgets and the economic efficiency of taxation, although the program level does talk about improved SIG capacity to deliver high quality macro-economic outcomes and policy advice⁸². There is little in the indicators about less tangible issues like increased legitimacy of government institutions in the eyes of citizens, although the People's Survey is attempting to elucidate this, or improved self-confidence among employees to make decisions.⁸³ The incentive is thus for TA personnel, particularly those interested in career advancement, to focus on the tangible rather than the intangible. But in a society where the state has limited legitimacy and individuals are unwilling to take the risk of making decisions, these non-tangible issues are critically important.

This search for appropriate indicators is complicated by the twin objectives of RAMSI - of getting the job done and of developing capacity. This creates a tension. On the one hand, technical assistance personnel are expected to assist in the implementation of reforms so that nationals can learn from their experiences rather than to drive them. On the other, local capacity is so limited that if TA personnel stuck to that formula, very little would be achieved. This might jeopardize RAMSI's future from the Australian perspective which is heavily focused on results, largely defined in tangible terms, and make these a prerequisite for funding for further activities. This issue will be discussed further in chapter 8, *Conclusions and Strategic Implications*.

This said, RAMSI has taken or is taking several important steps to try to better assess its progress on capacity issues, including:

- A three-phase stocktaking exercise on capacity issues and activities relevant to each of the three pillars – Economic Governance in August 2005, Law and Justice in March 2006 and Machinery of Government in July 2006. These look at individual, institutional and organizational capacity with the first two being based on interviews with SIG and RAMSI stakeholders and a review of documents, and the latter on a desk review and consultation with RAMSI personnel. The stocktakes were intended to provide baseline information for the Performance Framework with subsequent capacity development assessments being part of the on-going performance monitoring and evaluation system. The *Key Messages* from the Stocktakes suggest that the majority of RAMSI personnel at the time of the reviews had been fielded with an explicit focus on addressing short-term priorities such as post-conflict stabilization, not long-term priorities such as capacity development. This same document also suggests that few on the SIG side truly recognized that capacity building needs to be a reciprocal responsibility⁸⁴.
- The appointment of a capacity development specialist to the PAAT (described in section 5.2.). This role commenced in early 2007.
- Since the field work was done, a new indicator has been agreed and adopted with the help of the newly appointed capacity building specialist: *Level of agreement or gap between Solomon Islanders' and RAMSI personnel's perceptions around the success or otherwise of capacity building efforts* (including agreement on the evidence for this and on the data collection tools). Through the adoption of this indicator, RAMSI is trying to encourage a focus on the processes of change and the intangible aspects of capacity.
- Use of the SIG-RAMSI Capacity Building Working Group as a forum for discussion of capacity issues and for judgment on progress in this area, and the intention to widen the

⁸² RAMSI Performance Framework, p. 30.

⁸³ RAMSI is moving towards attempting to measure intangible issues but it is a slow process and requires SIG engagement, which the programme is gradually getting.

⁸⁴ Key Messages, 2006. p 1.

PAWG's focus and composition to facilitate the capacity development agenda as a significant part of the overall performance agenda.

- Revisions now underway to the Performance Framework and the performance system more generally to take into account capacity issues.

The Performance Framework has to date focused heavily on tangible indicators such as the preparation of workplans and budgets, the number of users on the computer system and numbers trained. This reflects the fact that much of the work done in RAMSI is on the formal mechanics of building government organizations - strategic planning, computer systems, and training. Measuring or assessing the informal, intangible outcomes such as increasing the legitimacy of state organizations and strengthening their leadership is challenging. The more intangible the processes or outputs, the more difficult they are to measure. Thus, in the diagram below, it is easier to assess or measure the quality of the construction of a road than of an audit but most difficult of all is assessing the resilience of an organization - its ability to survive through difficult periods. State building depends, however, on the creation of strong organizations and institutions which have the support of citizens. Without them, the state lacks legitimacy, an enduring problem for Solomon Islands since independence and arguably even before.

PROCESS	<i>Intangible</i>	Audit of a government programme	Resilience of an Organisation
	<i>Tangible</i>	Road Construction	Law and Order
		<i>Tangible</i>	<i>Intangible</i>
		OUTPUTS	

6 Outcomes and effectiveness of TA

The question of whether TA personnel have been effective or not is relative. It depends on the purpose, the context and who is evaluating. The assessment of TA can also depend on when the snapshot is taken because conditions change over time. This section will look at the effectiveness of personnel under RAMSI engaged in different kinds of activities: in establishing law and order and stabilizing the financial situation, in promoting the development of capacity, in encouraging SIG involvement and in promoting sustainability. In doing so, the section recognizes that RAMSI is not simply a development intervention and that the restoration of law and order and the stabilization of finances in a country like Solomon Islands make efforts at capacity development easier.

6.1 Establishing law and order and stabilizing the financial situation

RAMSI has received much favourable recognition internationally. Its strongest suit has been in the restoration of law and order⁸⁵ but it has also assisted the SIG to stop the haemorrhaging of public finances, stabilized the budget, strengthened financial management and dramatically

⁸⁵ Fullilove, p 9.

increased government revenues⁸⁶. Many former militants and former politicians, including two former prime ministers, have either been tried for various offences including murder and corruption, or are awaiting trial. The first trials attracted much attention but some of the people interviewed felt that interest in at least the routine trials had fallen off as court judgments increasingly came to be accepted as fair. RAMSI assistance has thus helped to reinforce public confidence in the court system and has acted an important catalyst for change in the attitudes of the citizenry.

This increase in confidence applies in other sectors as well.

One senior Solomon Islander said, “RAMSI has brought confidence for investment in new schools and wharfs.”

Fullilove⁸⁷ enumerates 8 defining characteristics of RAMSI which he sees as having contributed to its success, particularly in the areas of law and order and financial stabilization, including:

- Preventive - The state was weak and vulnerable but it had not yet failed.
- Permissive – The Prime Minister and the Governor General of the Solomon Islands requested the intervention and the Parliament passed the enabling legislation unanimously.
- Regional in nature – RAMSI was initiated under the auspices of the Pacific Islands Forum and it took place within the framework of the Biketawa Declaration of 2000 which lays out principles for good governance and also recognizes “the need, in times of crisis or in response to members’ request for assistance, for action to be taken on the basis of all members of the (Pacific Islands) Forum”⁸⁸.
- Nationally led – The Australian government has done most of the planning for the mission and most of the personnel have been Australian. The Australian government has also supplied the vast majority of the budget. The result has been a faster deployment than for UN missions.
- Supported by the United Nations – Although the Solomon Islands situation was never brought before the Security Council, both the Secretary General and the Council President made statements of support.
- Non-sovereign – Although RAMSI has substantial practical influence, it works with and inside the Solomon Islands Government which retains executive, legislative and judicial authority. It is there to maintain an existing regime, not to change it and is, as such, not a transitional administration such as the UN Transitional Administration in Cambodia. The legal authority is the Facilitation of International Assistance (FIA) Act passed by the Solomon Islands Parliament which constitutes RAMSI as an assistance package rather than an intervention. The implication of this kind of authorization is that RAMSI is dependent on the support of the SIG and could not continue in its current form if the FIA Act were repealed.
- Police led – The initial mission was police led with substantial military backup. In the face of such force, the militias quickly made a decision to cooperate.
- Light touch – Compared to some other international administrations, RAMSI takes a low profile⁸⁹.

The high priority put on RAMSI by the Australian government and the clear leadership from its highest levels, including the Prime Minister, has also contributed to ensuring the availability of resources, both human and financial.

⁸⁶ Government revenues have more than tripled from 250 million to 850 million.

⁸⁷ All 8 points are taken from Fullilove, p 12-17.

⁸⁸ Biketawa Declaration, p 1.

⁸⁹ Though RAMSI staff are under instructions to be modest and keep a low profile, the large numbers of expatriates involved still make a large footprint in a small country and particularly in Honiara where the vast majority is located.

6.2 The overall RAMSI approach to capacity development

RAMSI was initially conceived of in three phases – 1) the initial stabilization, 2) the consolidation of the rule of law and the beginning of public sector reform and of measures to kick start the economy and finally, 3) increased emphasis on capacity development in order to ensure sustainability. These phases have not had clean borders and there was frequent overlap. In some cases it has been necessary to return to activities that RAMSI management had hoped were completed, such as stabilization after the riots of April 2006. This is typical of situations such as that in the Solomon Islands and stakeholders need to plan for such eventualities and be able to recognize when it is necessary to reinforce earlier efforts.

Until the Stocktakes of capacity development, there had been little RAMSI-wide direction on how to approach capacity development. Following their completion and the partial incorporation of their recommendations into the Annual Performance Report, a further mission was conducted to advise RAMSI on strategic management of the capacity development agenda and to stimulate more response to the recommendations. The result was the *Framework for Capacity Building through RAMSI* which is described in the box below. The interviews suggested that there is still no one approach which applies to all pillars and that progress in capacity development is uneven. The interviews held also suggested that there was not a great deal of sharing of experience or learning across them.

That said, there are a number of activities underway which should help. The appointment of the capacity development advisor to the PAAT should help to ensure a more standardized approach and has already resulted in some preliminary recommendations⁹⁰ to RAMSI followed by revisions to the Performance Framework. The establishment of the PAWG with its representatives from all the pillars will help to increase cross-pillar communication and sharing of experiences.

Some of the most important findings of the various Stocktakes were⁹¹:

- Partnerships must be reciprocal: SIG would like RAMSI to work in partnership rather than in parallel.
- Need for a mutual understanding and a common agenda: All stakeholders must share a common understanding of capacity development and how it can be best pursued.
- Need to be realistic and flexible about what is to be achieved and how: The SIG and RAMSI need explicitly to allow and embrace flexibility, trial and error.
- The importance of a performance focus: Ensuring accountability will require coordination and monitoring so that capacity development efforts are well planned, able to draw on best practice models, measured to the extent that they can be, and reported.
- The need to enhance coherence and coordination: The SIG and RAMSI should promote policy cohesion, coordination across RAMSI activities, donor harmonization, integration of currently discrete but complementary activities and information sharing. Stakeholders need to understand the capacity development framework within which they are working – how their activities fit into the big picture - and be able to draw on lessons or successful models from other programs.

⁹⁰ RAMSI PAAT, Preliminary Directions for Capacity Building within the RAMSI Performance Assessment Framework, Draft Report to RAMSI, 13 March 2007.

⁹¹ Ibid, pages 2-6.

Box 8: Currently Agreed Framework for Capacity Building through RAMSI ⁹²

Definition – Capacity building is the process by which people, organisations and society as a whole develop competencies and capabilities that will lead to sustained and self-generating performance improvement.

Core principles for success –

1. Local *ownership* is of paramount importance. Without it, even the highest quality external support will not achieve sustainable results.
2. There needs to be *reciprocal responsibility* for capacity development at all levels.
3. *Existing systems* should be used and built on wherever possible, rather than creating new ones.
4. Capacity development takes time. Sustainable results will depend on *long-term engagement* and support tailored to local absorptive capacity.
5. Agreed outcomes must be both *realistic and measurable*.
6. *Incentives* are important for performance improvement. Care is needed to develop incentives that are locally defined and culturally relevant.
7. *Holistic approaches* are vital to success. Effective capacity development involves simultaneously addressing systems, structures, strategies, staffing, skills, values and management styles within an integrated strategic framework for sustainable organisational and institutional strengthening.

Country level indicator – Public sector capability and capacity.

RAMSI-wide indicator – Increased individual and institutional capacity within the SIG.

The Stocktake had some specific comments related to the pillars, for example, that the Machinery of Government pillar has a well-defined approach to fostering partnership through demand-driven and locally owned initiatives and that its responsive approach has good potential for supporting the development of capacity at individual, organizational and institutional levels. (It should be noted, however, that the MoG phase of the Stocktake did not speak directly to SIG counterparts or senior responsible officials to test whether the planned, intended method, matched the reality of the intervention and activity of TA⁹³. Nonetheless some of the comments made during the interviews corroborated the findings of the Stocktake.)

A senior Solomon Islander said of MoG: “With these programs, there is hope for the future; RAMSI is showing us better ways of doing things” including “helping to show parliamentarians their roles.”

The Stocktake on Law and Justice identified remarkable progress on stabilization although the situation is still very fragile. There has also been a marked improvement in the level of confidence of many SIG personnel as a result of the pillar’s activities. The report on the Economic pillar recommended a shift from a focus on short-term development results to longer-term objectives with more cross-agency coherence, as well as more emphasis on building partnerships rather than working in parallel with SIG colleagues⁹⁴.

The Stocktakes reflect the difficult challenges faced by TA personnel in countries like Solomon Islands where there is little capacity but many and often urgent tasks to be undertaken. The long-term goals can easily be lost in the urgencies of the present. Capacity development often takes second place to doing the tasks that will stave off crisis, such as managing the budget. However, if donors want to ensure that activities undertaken are sustainable, they need to think about how to tap into the interests of the partner countries and encourage their commitment to take over. This will require moving as much as possible to *indirect approaches* rather than *doing or using direct approaches*.

⁹² Taken from Key Messages from the 2005-6 Stocktake of Capacity Building, p 3.

⁹³ Consultations with the SIG had been planned but instability in Solomon Islands prevented them.

⁹⁴ AusAID, Stocktake, 2005, p iv.

6.3 The approaches taken by TA Personnel to Capacity Development

Regardless of their status as line or advisory staff, most of the TA personnel interviewed carried out both on-going line functions and capacity development activities. The ones officially in line positions usually had some management functions as well. They all struggled with their roles and particularly with how to strengthen local capacity. Many of the TA personnel interviewed were quite animated by what they were doing under the rubric of capacity development and spoke of the changes that had resulted. (See Annex 7 for some of the activities which were mentioned in interviews.) One example was performance assessments which the Police Prosecution Unit used to build the self confidence of Solomon Islands police and encourage them to take on more responsibility and stronger leadership roles.

Despite this enthusiasm, there was no common understanding of capacity development across the TA personnel interviewed nor did individuals or groups seem to have a theory of action – a strategy that relates the design of actions to the results intended. There was little interaction among groups to share their experiences of what works and what doesn't though, as mentioned in section 7.2, the CBWG should now provide this exchange at senior levels, and potentially the PAWG at working level, though at time of the field research there was no existing, mechanism for facilitating contacts at the working level.

Most of the activities undertaken by TA personnel involved individuals or small groups of Solomon Islanders within the immediate work unit, with much training, on-the-job coaching and standards setting⁹⁵, but their links with broader systemic change and organizational and institutional sustainability were unclear. It was also unclear how their activities related to the capacity goals of the pillars to which the TA personnel belonged. The SIG officials interviewed also did not seem to have a clear vision of capacity development nor did they identify the activities they consider priorities in this regard. Nonetheless, one senior Solomon Islander did express the view that a broader focus on strengthening a whole ministry was better than a focus on one unit.

Developing a common understanding of capacity development across a program like RAMSI and with the partner government, including distinguishing among the four approaches to capacity development, is critical to an effective approach. RAMSI has begun this process with the appointment of a capacity building expert to the PAAT. This entails assessing the status of prior analysis and recommendations for capacity development activities already underway, as well as assisting RAMSI to update that baseline to include present or planned activities. This will assist to develop within RAMSI a basis for consensus around what works and what does not in Solomon Islands. It will then be used for discussions with the SIG to develop a more general agreement about how capacity development should be approached for RAMSI as a whole. Once agreed, this agreement will provide a basis for TA personnel to build their individual theories of action and to relate them to broader program goals.

Until this kind of integrated approach is possible, there are a few questions which could be used to help TA personnel think about how to develop approaches likely to lead to sustainability:

- Are systems simple, appropriate, sustainable?
- Is there space for SI leadership?
- Have attitudes changed?
- Are SI systems the basis for what RAMSI TA are doing?
- How do you know the pace of change is appropriate?⁹⁶

⁹⁵ See Annex 7 for a more complete list of activities mentioned during the interviews.

⁹⁶ These were provided by an AusAID employee based on his discussions with the Senior Capacity Building Advisor.

6.4 The approaches taken to developing the capacity of counterparts

Most TA personnel in RAMSI saw their main capacity development inputs as being at the level of individuals within their work unit, their *counterpart*. For them, the counterpart was a potential national replacement who needs to acquire skills to take on their functions. This is in keeping with the description of the expert-counterpart system by Elliot Berg in his book *Rethinking Technical Cooperation*⁹⁷ which assumes four conditions:

- each expert must have a counterpart assigned to him/her;
- the counterpart should work full time,
- the expert should not primarily fill a post in the recipient country but focus on his/her role as an adviser; and
- at the end of the training the counterpart should be able to carry out his/her duties independently so that he/she can take over the job when the expert leaves.

The reality is often quite different. According to Berg, the “expert usually concentrates on getting the work done rather than on training, is often good at his job but bad as a trainer, upstages the counterpart in influence, and sometimes blocks the counterpart’s career progress by staying too long” (p.101). The expert-counterpart arrangement works on the unspoken assumption that the resident expert and the counterpart are professional equals, distinguished mainly by degrees of experience. In reality, this is seldom the case and the more efficient advisor largely carries out the tasks of the counterpart. However, because the local counterpart understands the organizational and cultural environment of the work place better, the expert’s effectiveness and credibility are undermined and consequently his or her effectiveness as a trainer. With all of these problems, it is not surprising that most development agencies abandoned some years ago the counterpart model in favour of a more holistic approach to strengthening organizations including more twinning, and coaching with short-term visits.

How does this experience compare with what is happening in RAMSI? Although the assumption in RAMSI is that there should be at least one counterpart for each in-line or advisory position, in fact, there are very few of these people.

One of the biggest lies is that counterparts will be provided and activities will be integrated into the budget”, admitted one permanent secretary.

At best, an expatriate mentors a group and, at worst, he or she works in an area where there were few Solomon Islanders and relates mainly to other expatriates. There is also pressure on many of the TA personnel to carry out day-to-day operational tasks and developing the capacities of the counterpart, if he or she exists, is often of second priority. In the past, RAMSI TA personnel, as with most TA programs elsewhere in the world, have been hired more for their technical skills than for their experience or aptitudes as trainers and the mentoring/coaching function may also not come easily to them. Where it has, and there are certainly cases where advisors have possessed this skillset, their activity, and impact, has nevertheless often remained at the individual level and not necessarily linked up into a greater systemic approach to capacity development.

All of this would suggest that RAMSI may want to rethink its approach to counterparts. What are the alternatives? Creating pools of young people within key government bodies might be one. The UNDP is already managing a parliamentary strengthening program which provides the opportunity for a group of young graduates to work in a high-performing environment where they can be mentored. The idea is to build synergy and commitment in the group to drive the organization forward. Another possibility is to create a cadre of medium to senior-level positions that could be seconded to work with donor projects so as to reduce the number of expatriates required. Yet another possibility is to follow the advice of Lisa Chauvet and Paul

⁹⁷ Berg, 1993, pages 101-106.

Collier to increase aid to post-primary education which in the longer term will help to build conditions for reform⁹⁸.

6.5 Localization

The present government has called for localization of both in-line and advisory TA positions, with particular emphasis on several senior positions in the Department of Finance. The issue has become highly politicized with politicians becoming increasingly critical of TA and especially of TA under RAMSI which they claim is undermining national sovereignty. While it is true that there are a large number of TAs in the country, the experience of Tanzania described in the box below shows that effecting localization properly is not a fast or easy process. The Solomon Islands already tried it unsuccessfully in the 1980s.

Box 9: Localization in Tanganyika (now Tanzania)

In the 1960s, the Ford Foundation had a program of public administration advisory services. At that time, the public service in Tanganyika had been described as consisting of "African ministers and African messengers with a thick sandwich of Europeans and Asians in between". The Foundation worked with the government to develop a plan for the replacement of expatriates in an orderly fashion and the policies to guide this transition, including:

- A target date of 1980 for essential self-sufficiency at all skill levels of the economy;
- Secondary and higher education to be given first priority in the government's educational investments;
- Higher education investments to be geared to manpower requirements;
- Government bursaries (scholarships) to be allocated on the basis of the manpower requirements of the economy;
- Foreign bursaries to be directed only to supplying skills for which training was unavailable in East Africa;
- Students receiving bursaries to be required to work one year for the government for each year of post-Form Four education;
- Methods to be sought to increase the usefulness of existing skills;
- Expatriates to be recruited to bridge serious gaps.

The Tanzanian manpower program achieved a considerable international reputation and was considered to be the most advanced on the African continent.

Courtney Nelson, 1977 <http://www.developmentstrategies.org/Archives/1977ReviewEastAfrica/rea1.htm>

6.6 Turnover of personnel

Both Solomon Islanders and expatriates expressed concern about the frequent changes of TA personnel within RAMSI. There are a wide variety of initial lengths of assignments depending on the nature of the contracts under which TA personnel were working but most TA personnel stayed for periods under 24 months and often substantially less. There seems to be a constant churn of people coming and going. Some of the people interviewed expressed the view that relatively short-term assignments tended to create such pressure for results that the expatriate concentrates on getting the job done as opposed to developing the capacity of his or her colleagues. Shorter assignments also do not allow enough time to get to know the culture or the job or to develop meaningful relationships. The Phase 1 Stocktake report also noted "A lack of continuity in the methodologies used by advisors and gaps between deployment periods has led to ambiguity and inconsistent capacity development opportunities with the work

⁹⁸ Chauvet and Collier, p. 16.

environment”⁹⁹ although this is not fully a function of short assignments.

Most felt that 24 months should be the minimum for most positions with a long-term focus and that good people should be encouraged to extend to 36 months or beyond. These periods are in line with the practice of most other development organizations.

6.7 Engagement

As the sections above have shown, the SIG has tended to see itself in the role of a recipient of services rather than a driver of them and many of the early RAMSI activities were largely externally driven with low levels of engagement by Solomon Islanders. RAMSI management has tried to encourage SIG involvement, such as through the establishment of the Capacity Development Working Group but some of the systemic constraints identified in section 4.4 have made this difficult. RAMSI would benefit from a better understanding of what positive motivators do exist for change and how to tap into them. Tapping into them is part of the answer to encouraging the commitment of SIG to carry through with RAMSI activities – to make them last.

Developing engagement in a state like Solomon Islands may also require stimulation of demand. There a number of approaches which might help to do this, some of which RAMSI is already using to some extent. These include:

- *Using indirect approaches* which build on the motivation of key actors. This requires taking time to explore opportunities, discuss ideas, find areas of interest and gradually develop joint activities. The experience of the international development community suggests that it is difficult to get the long-term commitment of partners to systems and policies which they have not been able to shape.
- Adopting small, experimental approaches that allow learning and adjustments to accommodate the lessons of experience as well as the changing internal and external conditions. Starting small is particularly useful in areas where the challenges are not clearly defined and where there are major political variables – both of which are often factors in post-conflict situations. Since there is less at stake, it is more feasible to ease up on controls which, in turn, builds engagement. The box below gives an example of an organization, RVDA, which has taken a progressive approach and is gradually scaling up its activities.
- Building on similarities in philosophy between the partner country and the donor, for example, getting involved where there is a synchronicity of approaches rather than distinct difference in approaches.
- Developing programs which take into account national activities of the partner country and its absorptive capacities. This is an issue of matching scale to the conditions of the partner country. Big projects with a lot of TA personnel can overwhelm little countries and create a daunting menu of interventions.
- Gradually involving the partner country in more program decision-making. This would imply ceding a degree of control over management and coordination. One area which might lend itself to this is the development of a system of monitoring for learning which could lead to a common management and accountability tool. This could, in turn, be used as the basis for consultations among stakeholders.
- Helping to bridge the cultural gap by emphasizing intercultural issues and helping both TA and program management personnel to understand the norms of the society.
- Bringing in more people who can bridge the two cultures – that of the partner country and the donor – and who can explain and connect the two worlds could be helpful. This would be a form of TA from the developing country to the donor. Using traditional approaches to

⁹⁹ Stocktake, 2002, p 8.

decision-making such as the leaf hut¹⁰⁰ would be more likely to engage Solomon Islanders than formal consultative mechanisms such as the Capacity Development Working Group.

- Encouraging TA personnel to get involved - Interaction among individuals representing the different cultures helps to bridge the cultural gap. Ideally, this should go beyond professional activities to include involvement in, for example, community or church affairs. These opportunities could be stressed in pre-departure briefings.

As one Solomon Islander said, “You don’t get to know someone until you have shared a meal with him”.

Box 10: Rural Development Volunteers Association (RDVA)

The RDVA began at the height of the tensions when the schools closed with idea of engaging students to talk about peace and development. Various projects grew out of that reflection, including the Youth First Computer Centre to provide computer training to youth in Honiara, a school rehabilitation program to build rural classrooms, and the People First Network which provides internet access to rural areas. Several interviewees cited RDVA activities as highly successful. Some of the reasons for that success include:

- Activities are based on the real needs of the community which is involved from the beginning in the identification of the activities,
- The TA involved provides hands-on training,
- There is a joint task force involving the various stakeholders to identify needs and monitor progress, and
- There is donor cooperation and the donors involved call on one another for assistance.

Based largely on discussions with Alan Agassi, Executive Chairman of RDVA

6.8 Sustainability

Since RAMSI is serious about addressing sustainability, it will have to come face to face with some significant challenges about how it uses TA personnel, challenges faced and being faced by other parties in similar interventions. Some of these relate to the purposes of RAMSI and its intervening logic. Let us look at four issues.

- The focus on policy change - There is increasing pessimism among researchers about the long-term benefits of requiring developing countries and especially fragile states, often through conditionality, to make policy changes to which they have little commitment. Lisa Chauvet and Paul Collier looked, for example, at the impact of technical assistance and other kinds of aid on improving policies and institutions in *low income countries under stress* (LICUS) and found that this technical assistance had no discernable effect until a turnaround in the country had clearly begun¹⁰¹. In their view, TA cannot be a precondition for reform; it can only be effective when the government is ready for change. Nicholas Leader and Peter Colonso¹⁰² build on the work done by Chauvet and Collier to conclude that: “contrary to current practice and convention, donors should not expect to influence change in policies and institutions” and that TA “is only productive when governments want it and need it: this supports the notion that, even in fragile states, (TA) should, where possible, be identified, if not managed, by recipient countries”.

¹⁰⁰ The leaf hut is leaf-roofed structure with largely open sides where community groups traditionally get together for informal discussions which often lead to decision-making. Some government departments have such huts and RAMSI has one at Leilei.

¹⁰¹ Chauvet and Collier, 2004, p 8.

¹⁰² Leader and Colonso, 2005, p 28.

RAMSI puts considerable emphasis on policy reforms, particularly in the economic governance pillar, with the initiative usually coming from deployees working as TA personnel who draw on their Australian or New Zealand government experience. The findings of studies such as those quoted above would suggest that sustainability of reforms is more likely if the initiative for change comes from the SIG and if the policies adopted are developed taking into account the conditions of the country concerned. This would imply a role for TA personnel of working with the SIG to identify needs and windows of opportunity for change and to help stimulate discussions on what has worked and hasn't and under what conditions, both inside and outside the Solomons. This is more or less the approach taken by the MoG.

The research also implies that the best time for RAMSI to make policy interventions would still some years away. Chauvet and Collier suggest that assistance on policy issues is usually not effective until about seven years after the resolution of a conflict.

- The focus on organizations based on a western model - As noted at the beginning of section 4.1.2, RAMSI's state building activities are based on the principle that a country needs a minimum number of functions at a certain level of quality. RAMSI supports these functions through organizations which are based on a western model. Many of these struggle for legitimacy in the eyes of the citizens with the result that, as Fry and Kabutaulaka point out, "The political legitimacy of the post-colonial state has been at the centre of the crisis in governance experienced by the Pacific states."¹⁰³ These authors and others like Turnbull¹⁰⁴ are concerned with how international actors can assist in creating political communities which will be seen as legitimate by those participating in them. These may not be in the western model and, indeed, Batt and Lynch warn that "imported and/or 'top-down' models of political and economic 'modernization' may end up by weakening states rather than strengthening them"¹⁰⁵. RAMSI is already doing some work with alternatives to western models, such as the investigation by the Law and Justice pillar of traditional sentencing models. According to a number of people interviewed, there has, however, been a tendency in the Economic Governance pillar to use models that are taken from the Australian context with little adaptation.
- The approach to institutional development – Some of RAMSI's approaches to organizational development rely heavily on machine building – putting together parts such as work planning, training and computer systems¹⁰⁶. But the problems in many Solomon Islands organizations papers seem to be more deeply rooted than that: they often result from de-motivation and low self confidence of employees, little legitimacy with stakeholders and poorly defined goals and vision. The box below suggests that it is nonetheless possible for resilient organizations to develop and thrive in the Solomon Islands and that there may be lessons to be learned from their experience and those of others.

¹⁰³ Fry and Kabutaulaka, p 2.

¹⁰⁴ Turnbull, Solomon Islands: Blending Traditional Power and Modern Structures in the State, 2002.

¹⁰⁵ Batt and Lynch, p 4.

¹⁰⁶ This does not apply to MoG.

Box 11: Characteristics of resilient organizations in Solomon Islands

The interviews held identified several characteristics common to organizations which have managed to survive in Solomon Islands, as follows:

- Strong commitment from stakeholders as a result of long engagement, often over difficult conditions, such as those faced by the Central Bank during the tensions;
- Well defined goals and purposes which are known to their stakeholders;
- Values and activities which are important to stakeholders, such as the emphasis on family in the churches;
- Strong and engaged leadership that provides a coherent vision, sets an example and motivates staff. This has been an important factor in both the courts and in the Central Bank; and
- Activities funded by outsiders build on what is there – the intervention is scaled to the reality not to the dream. The Central Bank, for example, controlled carefully the Terms of reference for TA.

Strengthening organizations will require going beyond technocratic solutions such as changing the financial system and ensuring that appropriate legislation is passed. It will require developing soft capabilities such as leadership and the ability to mobilize people to action, good relationships with key stakeholders, and resilience. Technical assistance personnel often do not play a big role in this process as the experience of the Central Bank in the box below shows.

Box 12: What makes the Central Bank a resilient organization?

Most Central Banks have a special status in their societies because of the critical role they play in the economic system. This is certainly a factor in the resilience of the Central Bank of Solomon Islands but there were other reasons for it as well. The management of the Bank, for example, made a conscious decision to remaining focused on core activities and to do them well. It brought in TA personnel only in roles determined by the Bank or for specific tasks to meet international standards. The timeframes were fixed.

On the other hand, there was also a conscious decision to invest in staff. Standards for recruitment and performance were high and the management encouraged staff to learn and adapt, such as through job rotation, and to develop pride in their work and, with it, their sense of responsibility. Staff were also encouraged to upgrade their qualifications, partly through scholarships: until recently, fifty per cent of the operational budget went to training, when AusAID began to offer more scholarships.

Good leadership contributed to the success of the Central Bank. Ric Hou, the current director, is in his third term as Governor of the Central and was named 2004 'Pacific Man of the Year' for his prominent role in steering the Solomon Islands economy through the tensions and for standing up to corrupt politicians¹⁰⁷. Before Hou, Tony Hughes provided strong leadership with clear goals over a period of 10 years.

The work done by ECDPM on capacity development suggests that one of the most critical roles that outsiders including donors can play in strengthening organizations and helping them to develop these characteristics is to give them adequate operating space to avoid politicization and to allow experimentation and learning.

- The choice of core government organizations – Although in terms of governance the choice to support core government organizations makes sense, this concentration has done little to address the inequalities among different parts of Solomon Islands. The experience of East Timor suggests that unless steps are taken to ensure that all geographic areas feel included and benefit from outside assistance, peace can be ephemeral¹⁰⁸. Brinkerhoff's comment cited in section 5.3 about the low tolerance levels of fragmented societies and their tendency to feel slighted also warns of volatility. After the 2006 elections, the population expected to see concrete, visible improvements in infrastructure and living standards¹⁰⁹.

¹⁰⁷ Accolade from *Islands Business Magazine*.

¹⁰⁸ Woodrow Wilson, p 6.

¹⁰⁹ EC, 2006. p 2.

There are popular expectations that RAMSI will contribute to these and a real danger that failure to do could result in loss of support from the citizens of Solomon Islands.

One senior Solomon Islander said that RAMSI had built expectations through comments made and that if they are not met, Solomon Islanders will remember them for life. "What you say sticks further than what you write."

This leads to the question of whether or not RAMSI is the right vehicle for providing the kind of support needed to reduce regional disparities and hence enhance the prospects for a durable peace. Although RAMSI is involved in or developing a number of infrastructure programs to stimulate economic growth in the provinces (see the box in section 4.2), its comparative advantage is in creating an improved enabling environment for generalized economic and social development through state building. Organizations like AusAID and other development organizations have more experience in strengthening services such as transportation, education and health which could contribute to reducing income disparities between the provinces and Honiara. There may, however, be other activities which RAMSI could undertake to strengthen the enabling environment. In the past, shoring up core institutions based on the British system sidestepped the difficult questions of the political legitimacy of the post-colonial state and the suitability of this model for Pacific Island states¹¹⁰. It also avoided the question of the capacity of countries like Australia and New Zealand to deal with the alternative - traditional institutions which they did not fully understand. Building an enduring peace may, however, require more engagement with traditional organizations and RAMSI may have to face this challenge.

7 Conclusions and Strategic Implications

The analysis above suggests that to move from the stabilization and consolidation phases to capacity building and sustainability will require RAMSI to adopt a different strategy – a strategy focused on indirect approaches rather than doing or direct. Such a strategy would ideally be agreed between the 15 Pacific states supporting RAMSI and the SIG. Once its broad lines are defined, the nature of the TA required would become clearer, for example, an indirect approach would require a different skill set than a more task oriented or doing approach (more facilitation, interpersonal skills, etc.).

This case and the literature suggest some issues to keep in mind in thinking about a strategy for future activities, including:

- The need for obvious wins to maintain the legitimacy of the program. The speed with which RAMSI restored peace in 2003 helped to establish its initial credibility. The intervention was well planned with adequate resources effectively to carry out the task at hand. But future wins would need to involve Solomon Islanders more than in the past. This may require identifying areas where TA personnel can step back and Solomon Islanders can take more responsibility¹¹¹, for example, delegating to para-professionals such as paralegals to reduce pressure for university-trained staff. It would also be important that this new vision be understood and practiced across RAMSI.
- The importance of a balance between the absorptive capacity of the country and the urgency of reforms – Some of the people interviewed for this report felt that the range and depth of reforms underway in Solomon Islands had gone beyond the point where they could be absorbed – a kind of aid overload resulting in disengagement of the government or what

¹¹⁰ Francis Fukuyama argues that the international community does not know how to transfer liberal-democratic institutions successfully. P 104, 121.

¹¹¹ One suggestion made was to localize the position of supporting the registrar of the High Court, which had been filled by a national in the past.

Hawkes refers to as reform resistance¹¹². The answer may have to be a slower pace for most activities than outside funders might have once hoped.

- An understanding that broader, less predictable activities such as policy change require political support that may not be available in post conflict situations - Concrete, definable activities may be more feasible in environments where the context is unclear or highly politicized. It is easier, for example, to develop a clear definition of tasks for TA personnel where standards are known, such as in hospitals or where the tasks are production oriented such as in road construction than where objectives are less clear such as in policy reform.
- The need for programs to be able to respond flexibly to the changing circumstances typical of most post-conflict situations - AusAID Facilities with their focus on process provide a mechanism to change course more easily than fixed contracts structured around pre-defined results.
- The need to avoid perverse incentives through M&E and other systems – Incentives need to encourage TA personnel to take indirect approaches and to ensure that Solomon Islanders have the maximum opportunities to learn through doing. The M&E system can encourage this by a focus on the processes of change and intangible aspects such as organisational legitimacy, leadership and empowerment.
- The importance of partner country involvement in assessment processes – The involvement in such processes creates commitment and encourages sustainability, as do the mutual accountability mechanisms advocated by the Paris Declaration.
- The potential for alternative ways to strengthen institutions than through TA personnel - TA around the world is a magnet for criticism but particularly so when there are large numbers of expatriates and there is a high degree of politicisation. Under these circumstances, it may be wise to look at reducing the number of TA personnel. Alternatives could include structured visits to similar organisations in countries in the region, exchanges of personnel between countries to provide on-the-job experience, and computer link-ups to encourage staff and especially younger people to get involved in on-line discussions on key issues with their peers in other countries.

Solomon Islands is one of the most aid dependent countries in the world, with 51% of its GDP coming from aid receipts. In developing a strategy for the future, it is useful to consider some of the possible effects of aid dependency, including:

- On institutions - In her paper *Aid Dependence and Governance*, Deborah Brautigam notes that

“Large amounts of aid, delivered to countries with weak institutions *create* (author’s italics) some of the institutional problems that lead to ineffectiveness. In aid dependent countries, donor agencies and foreign experts often take over many of the critical functions of governance; substituting their own goals for an absent leadership vision, using foreign experts and project management units in place of weak or decaying public institutions, and providing finance for investments whose operation and maintenance is neither planned for nor affordable¹¹³. “

Institutions become less resilient, less able to adapt to changes in the environment around them and less capable of finding their own solutions to problems. They lose capacity rather than gain it.

- At the macro economic level. In his December 2006 presentation to AusAID on aid effectiveness, Mark McGillivray of the United Nations University in Helsinki showed that efficient aid is in the range of 20% of GDP for stable states and probably only 13% for highly fragile states because of their weaker institutions and hence smaller absorptive capacities. Above that amount, the benefits of aid decline and GDP begins to drop. His analysis shows that at aid levels twice the ideal, the contribution to GDP is likely to be about

¹¹² Hawke, p. 7.

¹¹³ Brautigam, 2001. p 1.

minus 5%, although this effect is less dramatic in states receiving high levels of TA personnel who do not spend all their earnings in those countries.

- On incentives for both donors and governments to change the rules of their engagement - Interdependencies are created with vested interests and admitting that things are not working becomes more and more difficult politically.

Implementing a strategy focusing on capacity development would require that the outside interveners – the WoG departments and agencies – have capacity themselves - intercultural skills, analytical capabilities, sectoral knowledge, and field experience. AusAID is making a serious investment in this kind of capacity development by assigning more of its staff to the planning and implementation of programs in the field. These staff often return to Canberra to manage programs. WoG departments may need to consider to what extent they are prepared to encourage this kind of career progression.

Outside interveners also need to think about capacity and the role that TA can play in supporting its development. AusAID has taken an important step in this direction with its Capacity Development Panel and RAMSI has hired a capacity development specialist as part of the PAAT to create a shared set of approaches across the program. Some WoG departments might want to establish complementary kinds of activities, or better coordinate to take advantage of those that exist..

Of the many states in trouble in the world, Solomon Islands is one of the few where other countries have been prepared to respond to provide assistance. RAMSI came in with a strong mandate, one which most outside interveners would have wanted in similar circumstances. But if RAMSI wants its activities to be sustainable, it must now begin to create genuine space for Solomon Islanders initiative and accountability. This is indeed what the 2005 report by the Forum of Eminent Persons Group suggested.

The suggestions above should be seen as the results of a normal process of reflection, learning and adapting. Expecting RAMSI to get everything right the first time with all aspects of its complex activities would be unrealistic, particularly in the uncharted minefield of the development/security nexus. RAMSI should be seen as an exercise in progress with the opportunity to apply the lessons from the experiment to move forward. At the same time, some of the people we interviewed – often the ones who know the islands the best - suggested that RAMSI needs to change some of its approaches quickly to avoid its activities and even its presence exacerbating an already volatile situation. This will require breaking the mould of activities set and taking some new approaches. There are encouraging signs that RAMSI is willing to do this.

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Annex 1: People interviewed

Name			Function	Department	Organisation
Mr.	Alan	Agassi	Executive Chairman		Rural Development Volunteers Association
Ms.	Sue	Ahearn	Newsroom Adviser	Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation	RAMSI Machinery of Government Program
Ms	Mary	Alasia	Office Manager	Office of the Deputy Prosecutor	Government of the Solomon Islands
Mr.	Matthew	Allen	PhD student	State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Project	Australian National University
Ms.	Alison	Allcock	Pacific Tourism Advisor		RAMSI Economic Governance program
Ms.	Charmaine	Anderson	Executive Adviser	Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation	RAMSI Machinery of Government Program
Mr.	Edmond	Andresen	Chairman	Public Service Commission	Government of the Solomon Islands
Mr.	Dykes	Angiki	General Manager		Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation
Mr.	Barry	Apsey	Superintendent of Prisons	Prison Service Advisers	RAMSI Law and Justice Program
Mr.	Bruce	Arnold	ERU Advisor	Economic Reform Unit	RAMSI Economic Governance program
Mr.	Ishmael M.	Avui	Permanent Secretary	Department of Public Service	Solomon Islands Government
Ms	Suzanne	Bent	First Secretary, Development	AusAID	Australian High Commission
Ms.	Penny	Bond	Capacity Building Adviser & Outreach Coordinator	Financial Management Strengthening Program Department of Finance & Treasury	RAMSI Economic Governance Program
Ms.	Selina	Boso	Director	Rural Development Division (RDD)	Ministry of Provincial Governments & Rural Development Solomon Islands Government
Mr.	John	Bosso			Central Bank of the Solomon Islands

Name			Function	Department	Organisation
Mr.	David	Burt	ICTCDP Team Leader	ICT Capacity Development Program	RAMSI Machinery of Government Program
Mr.	Gary	Calcott	Manager, Investigations	Financial Management Strengthening Program - Department of Finance and Treasury	RAMSI Economic Governance Program
Mr.	Michael	Cash	Prosecutions Advisor	Police Prosecution	RAMSI Law and Justice Program
Mr.	Tony J.	Chalhoub	Training Adviser	Prison Service Advisers	RAMSI Law and Justice Program
Ms	Alison	Chartres	Director	Fragile States Unit	AusAID
Mr.	Gerald	Cheong	Program Officer	Solomon Islands program	AusAID
Ms	Victoria	Coakley		RAMSI Law and Justice Programme	AusAID
Mr.	Chris	Cooper		AFP/PPF	RAMSI
Ms.	Angela	Corcoran	Development Adviser	Machinery of Government Program	RAMSI Machinery of Government Program
Mr.	Peter	Coventry	AusAID Adviser	Department of National Planning and Aid Coordination	RAMSI Economic Governance Program
Mr.	Paul	Craig	Project Manager, European Development Fund and Stabex, Programme Management Unit	Department of National Planning and Aid Coordination	European Union
Mr.	Luma	Darcy	Permanent Secretary	Department of Finance and Treasury	Government of the Solomon Islands
Mr.	Peter	Deacon	AusAID Capacity Building Expert Panel member		
Mr.	Garth	den Heyer	Coordinator	PPF Strategic Planning Unit	Participating Police Force
Dr.	Sinclair	Dinnen	Senior Fellow	State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Project	Australian National University
Mr	Tarion	Eke	Director	Finance	RAMSI Law and Justice Program
Mr.	Craig	Ewers	Team Leader	GRM Program Office - Justice Component	RAMSI Law and Justice Program

Name			Function	Department	Organisation
Mr.	Blair	Exell	Development Coordinator	Office of the Special Coordinator	RAMSI
Ms	Betty	Fakari		Rural Development Division (RDD)	Ministry of Provincial Governments & Rural Development
Mr.	Shadrach	Fanega	Permanent Secretary	Department of National Planning and Aid Coordination	Government of the Solomon Islands
Mr.	Floyd Augustine	Fatai	Auditor General	Auditor General's Office	Government of the Solomon Islands
Mr.	Greg	Fry	Director of Studies Graduate Studies in International Affairs	Department of International Relations Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies	The Australian National University
Mr.	Tim	George	Special Coordinator		RAMSI
Mr.	James	Gilling	Principal Adviser	Office of Development Effectiveness	AusAID
Mr.	Paul	Griffiths	Program Director	RAMSI Program Unit - Ministry of Police, National Security, Justice & Legal Affairs	Ministry of Police, National Security, Justice & Legal Affairs
Ms.	Mary	Haridi	Program Support Officer	Office of the Special Coordinator (LEILEI)	RAMSI
Dr.	Stephen	Howes	Principal Economist		AusAID
Mr.	David	Hegarty	Convener	State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Project	Australian National University
Mr.	Michael	Hewetson	Deputy Commissioner Operations	Inland Revenue Division	RAMSI Economic Governance Programme
Mr.	David	Holder	Adviser	Professional Standards Unit	Solomon Islands Prison Service
Mr.	Rick N.	Houenipwela	Governor		Central Bank of Solomon Islands
Dr.	Tony J.	Hughes	Consultant, former Governor of the Central Bank of Solomon Islands		

Name			Function	Department	Organisation
Ms.	Sue	Ingram	Program Director	RAMSI Machinery of Government Program	RAMSI
Mr.	Bruce	Kelly	CEO Adviser High Court	Justice Agencies - High Court	RAMSI Law and Justice Program
Mr.	Clay	Kerswell	Manager	Customs Modernisation Project	RAMSI Economic Governance Program
Mr.	Henry	Khaisum	Capacity Building Coordinator	Justice Agencies	RAMSI Law and Justice Program
Mr.	Heinz	Konga	Deputy Commissioner Operations	Solomon Islands Prison Service	RAMSI Law and Justice Program
Mr.	Tony	Krone	Principal Legal Policy Advisor	Ministry of Police and Justice	RAMSI Law and Justice Program
Mr.	Krunoslav	Kukoc	Head of Unit	Economic Reform Unit	RAMSI Economic Governance Program
Mr.	Malcolm	Leggett	Manager, Performance and Planning	Solomon Islands Program	AusAID
Ms.	Stephanie	Lehoczy	Development Program Specialist	Office of the Special Coordinator	RAMSI
Mr.	George	Leve	Courier / IT Support	Office of the Special Coordinator	RAMSI
Mr.	Steve	Likaveke	Social & Community Planning Adviser		Solomon Islands Institutional Strengthening of Land Administration Project
Ms.	Patricia	Lyon	Senior Capacity Development Advisor		AusAID
Ms	Deborah	Mazoudier	Senior Manager, RAMSI Law and Justice Program		GRM, Brisbane
Mr	Paul	Maefiti	Director	Training Unit	RAMSI Law and Justice Program
Ms.	Caralene	Moloney	Program Manager - Corrections	GRM Programme Office - Corrections Component	RAMSI Law and Justice Program
Mr.	Luke	Mua	Under Secretary - Reform (Ag)	Department of Public Service	Government of the Solomon Islands
Mr.	Erik	Muir	Deputy Auditor General	Office of the Auditor General	RAMSI Machinery of Government Program
Ms	Jodie	Nykiel	Program Manager		GRM International Pty Ltd

Name			Function	Department	Organisation
Mr.	Norman L.	Olsen	RAMSI Performance Assessment Advisory Team Leader	CAMRIS International	
Ms.	Jenny	Piri	Finance and Admin Officer	Office of the Special Coordinator	RAMSI
Mr.	Andrew	Pope	Director	Solomon Islands Program	AusAID
Mr.	Tony	Prescott	Manager RAMSI Machinery of Government/ Pacific Islands Anti-Corruption Coordinator	Solomon Islands Program	AusAID
Mr.	Robb	Preston	Budget Advisor	Financial Management Strengthening Program	Economic Governance Program
Mr.	Denton	Rarawa			Central Bank of the Solomon Islands
Mr.	Anthony	Regan		State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Project	Australian National University
Mr.	James	Remobatu	Permanent Secretary	Department of Justice and Legal Affairs	Government of the Solomon Islands
Ms.	Judith	Robinson	Assistant Director-General	Pacific Branch	AusAID
Dr.	John	Roughan	Secretary to the Prime Minister	Prime Minister's Office	Government of the Solomon Islands
Mr.	Tony	Scriva	Auditor Advisor	Office of the Auditor General	RAMSI Machinery of Government Program
Mr.	Jim	Seuika	Deputy Public Prosecutor	Office of the Deputy Public Prosecutor	Government of the Solomon Islands
Mr.	Andrew	Shepherd	Program Officer	Economic Policy, Solomon Islands Program	AusAID
Ms.	Jenny	Sinclair	Assistant Accountant General, Financial Management and Reporting or National Accounts advisor	Financial Management Strengthening Program	RAMSI Economic Governance Program

Name			Function	Department	Organisation
Dr.	David	Snowball	Team Leader	RAMSI Governance Support Facility, RAMSI Machinery of Government Program	RAMSI
Ms.	Rebecca	Spratt	NZAID Manager First Secretary	New Zealand High Commission	New Zealand's International Aid & Development Agency (nzaid)
Mr.	Michael	Squirrell	ICTCDP advisor	ICTCDP	RAMSI Machinery of Government Program
Mr.	Barnabas	Upwe	First Class Magistrate	Central Magistrate Court	Government of the Solomon Islands
Mr.	Peter	Versegi	Assistant Director General	Office of Development Effectiveness	AusAID
Ms.	Jane	Wa'etara	Permanent Secretary of Aid Coordination/ Deputy National Authorising Officer	Department of National Planning & Aid Coordination	Solomon Islands Government
Mr.	Joseph	Waleanisia	Assistant Solomon Islands Program Coordinator	RAMSI Governance Support Facility, RAMSI Machinery of Government Program	GRM International Pty Ltd
Ms.	Kylie	Walsh	Public Defender	Public Solicitor's Office	RAMSI Law and Justice Program
Ms.	Daniella	Wickman	Archiving Advisor	RAMSI Machinery of Government programme	National Archives of Australia
Ms.	Iris	Wielders	Short Term Policy Adviser	Department of National Unity Reconciliation & Peace	RAMSI
Mr.	John	Winter	Senior Performance Assessment Advisor	PNG & Pacific Branches	AusAID
Mr.	Paul	Wright	Development Program Specialist, Rural Livelihoods and Infrastructure	Office of the Special Coordinator	RAMSI
Mr.	Neil	Young	Country Program Manager, Nauru	Fiji, Vanuatu & Nauru Section	AusAID

Annex 2: Recruitment

Identification of Candidates

When it is a question of filling positions with contracted personnel, the Facilities recruit mainly through open recruiting rounds which normally generate considerable interest. The Corrections Facility, for example, selects 90% of staff through these rounds with the additional 10% coming from government, generally at the state level. Identifying appropriate deployees, on the other hand, requires cultivating relationships with specialized departments. This seems to fall to the managers of the pillars and is challenging because of general staff constraints in the public service.

Criteria for selection vary but increasingly emphasize appropriate personal qualities as well as technical competence. In the Law and Justice pillar, for example, there are three main criteria for selection: technical skills, skills in capacity development, and contribution to the team. Oakley et al suggest that a RAMSI-wide set of criteria could be considered or a process of cross-agency selection panels to encourage consistency of approach¹¹⁴.

Selection

The system for selection has evolved substantially over the history of RAMSI. Collaborative recruitment methodologies were initially sponsored by Corrections but other WoG partners have slowly been picking them up, albeit only after AusAID encouragement. The Law and Justice Facilities now use interviews in virtually 100% of recruitments. Increasingly representatives of SIG are involved in these, including in helping prepare the questions.

In RGSP, interviews are used in only 60% of the cases, probably because many of the candidates come out of government where there are already established recruitment and deployment procedures. (The same applies to the AFP.) In some cases, RGSP sends a set of written applications to the SIG for review. Representatives of the SIG had not in the past been involved in interviews but this is now beginning, especially for positions in MoG.

The Law and Justice Facilities use psychological testing to look at qualities such as sociability and cultural sensitivity. The profiles for such testing are developed by people who have been well regarded in their field assignments. The results of the tests are used as a basis for developing the questions for interviews and are, as such, a contribution to the decision-making process without being the sole factor.

SIG approves all selections of technical assistance personnel in the Law and Justice pillar. Because of government procedures, this is not the case for some other activities. The Working Group on Capacity Building brings together permanent secretaries from key ministries with several senior RAMSI managers to discuss capacity issues within the mission. In a meeting in November 2006, the group agreed on a matrix indicating the roles for SIG and RAMSI in defining technical assistance assignments and recruitment of personnel. The approved document is attached as Annex 3. If applied across the board, this would bring greater involvement of SIG in some activities, particularly in the pillars which have been quite supply led. This may take some time.

Training and induction

Training and induction seem to vary across the pillars. We spoke with people who had had no cultural orientation and to others who said that they had had an excellent briefing. Some

¹¹⁴ Oakley et al, p 29.

organizations spent an hour on orientation. Others take culture very seriously, such as VSO which sends its volunteers into villages for up to seven weeks. The AFP has built a Solomon Islands village in Canberra which they use for orientation and where officers come for 2 to 3 weeks with only one pair of pants and one shirt and no buttons. The Solomon Islands Police Force gives briefings to new recruits. See 2 for a typical briefing for TA personnel being assigned to RAMSI.

There was strong support in interviews for language training but it does not appear as if many people have been able to master pijin.

Annex 3: Typical AusAID Briefing for RAMSI

Monday 6 November 2006

AusAID Ground Floor Training Room (next to AusAID House rear entrance)

Briefing	Duration	Presenter
Welcome	9:10 – 9:15	Operational Support Unit/Solomon Islands Desk, AusAID
Development assistance in a post-conflict environment	9:15 – 10:00	Steve Darvill, Humanitarian and Emergency Section, AusAID
Morning Tea 10:00-10:15		
The Political System in Solomon Islands-A historical perspective	10:15-12:00	David Hegarty, State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Project, ANU
The State of Development in Solomon Islands	12:00 -1:00	Ian Scales State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Project, ANU
LUNCH 1:00-2:00		
Economic Governance	2:00-3:00	Andrew Cumpston and Andrew Shepherd, Solomon Islands desk AusAID

TUESDAY 7 November

Ground floor meeting room AusAID House (opposite reception)

Personal security and awareness in Solomon Islands	12:00- 1:00	Richard Holgate, Security Adviser
Conditions of Service	1:00 -2:00	Catherine Herron, Operational Support Unit, AusAID
Early close of day Melbourne Cup		

WEDNESDAY 8 November

Ground Floor Meeting Room AusAID House (opposite reception)

Briefing	Duration	Presenter
Managing stress while living and working overseas	12:00– 1:00	Rod McBride Counsellor AusAID
Medical information	1:00 - 2:00	Dr Trish Batchelor, Travel Medicine and Vaccination Centre (TMVC)
Solomon Islands Tok Pisin, Introduction	2:30-5:30	Ian Scales, ANU

THURSDAY 9 November**Second Floor 2R1 AusAID House (sign in at reception)**

Briefing	Duration	Presenter
Overview Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI)	9:30-10:30	Andrew Pope, Malcolm Leggett Solomon Islands Section, AusAID Anita Butler, Solomon Islands Branch, DFAT
Bilateral Program	10:30–11:00	Deborah Fulton, AusAID
Afternoon Tea 11:00 – 11:30		
Machinery of Government	11:30-12:00	Gerard Cheong, AusAID
Law and Justice	12:00-12:30	Josh Bird, AusAID
Lunch 12:30-1:30		
Venue: GRI AusAID House		
Anti –corruption	1:30-2:00	Tony Prescott, AusAID
Break		
Services provided by the managing contractor. GRM	2:15-4:00 Teleconference	Larisa Rudokova & Gary Frost Brisbane & Honiara

No briefing 10 November**Monday 13 November****AusAID Ground Floor Meeting Room (opposite reception)**

<i>Briefing</i>	<i>Duration</i>	<i>Presenter</i>
Capacity Building	9:00 – 4:30	Jan Morgan, Consultant

Tuesday 14 November 2006**Sutton Road Driver Training Complex****4WD Training**

Sutton Road Driver Training Complex, Sutton Road just off Pialligo Avenue.

Attendance no later than 8:30am

Toby Wright 6297 7187

No briefing Wednesday 15-Friday 17 November**Monday 20 November****Ground Floor Meeting Room AusAID house (opposite reception)**

<i>Briefing</i>	<i>Duration</i>	<i>Presenter</i>
• Cross-Cultural issues		

and Capacity Building • Culture, Politics, Administration & Gender	9:15 -1:00	Ian Scales, ANU
Venue: Department of Treasury Room A4.27		
Briefing	Duration	Presenter
Capacity Building experiences in Solomon Islands	2:30-3:30	Andrew Thomas former RAMSI Official, Department of Treasury
Close of day		

Tuesday 21- Wednesday 22 November

14 Thesiger Court, Deakin

Senior First Aid Training St John Ambulance

14 Thesiger Court, Deakin ACT 2600, Tel 6282 2399

Attendance no later than 8am. Course finishes at 5:30pm.

Thursday 23 November

Second Floor 2R1 AusAID House (sign in at reception)

Briefing	Duration	Presenter
Capacity Building Experiences	12:00-1:30	Emily Hurley and Ian Davies, AusAID, Simon Atkinson, DOTARS Former RAMSI officials
Closing Remarks		Ian Davies, AusAID
Solomon Islands Tok Pisin, contd	1:30-5:30	Ian Scales, ANU

Annex 4: Making a Difference: Practical Tools & Approaches to Capacity Building: Programme

Times	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
8.30 – 10.15 1 ¾ hours	INTRODUCTION TO WORKSHOP & CAPACITY BUILDING – 1 To learn from shared experience: what is capacity building for individuals, groups & organisations? Key 'secrets of success' for capacity building. Overview of program.	LEARNING TO LEARN – 1 To introduce key practical concepts about learning. To help participants be more aware of how they really learn and what helps and hinders learning for themselves & others.	COUNTERPART-ADVISER RELATIONSHIPS – 2 To introduce tools for setting up & maintaining effective counterpart – adviser relationship: reaching and maintaining agreement about Work, Development & Relationship.	REVIEW OF LEARNING SINCE 1ST WORKSHOP Review key learning from last Workshop & what's happened in between. Identify own learning goals and practise coaching skills Overview of this workshop.	CAPACITY BUILDING TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES – 2 Review the previous day's learning To identify, share and explain various tools and techniques for the design and implementation stages of capacity building.
10.15–10.30	Break				
10.30 – 12.15 1 ¾ hours	INTRODUCTION TO CAPACITY BUILDING – 2 To explore key images of capacity building. To introduce the focus of this workshop: Working with individuals & to identify our key capacity building challenges.	INTRODUCTION TO LISTENING To explore a new approach to listening and its importance in using CB tools effectively - becoming aware of and managing our personal & cultural filters.	LEARNING TO LEARN – 2 To strengthen self-directed learning skills & awareness of different learning preferences. To deepen coaching / conversation skills through more coaching practice.	PROCESS CONSULTING AND CHANGE MANAGEMENT To introduce and share models of the consulting process and change management. To identify explicit and implicit guiding principles and assumptions.	APPLYING THE LEARNING – 2 To enable participants to apply the models, principles, tools and techniques to real issues – design and implementation.
12.15 – 1.00	Lunch				
1.00 – 3.00 2 hours	WORKING WITH INDIVIDUALS: DIFFERENT TOOLS & WHEN TO USE THEM To identify different tools for capacity building with individuals & explore a model for deciding what tools to use when.	COACHING DEMONSTRATION To experience the potential of coaching as a CB tool. INTRODUCTION TO SPEAKING To become more observant and purposeful about the key kinds of speaking in CB conversations – especially powerful questions.	ACTION PLANNING Participants coach each other to develop learning & work action plans to implement learning in their respective roles, and to practise coaching skills.	CAPACITY BUILDING TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES – 1 To identify, share and explain various tools and techniques of the assessment and diagnosis stages of capacity building for groups and organisations.	CAPACITY BUILDING ASSESSMENT To introduce participants to methods of assessing capacity, including the staged capacity building model to assess, plan and monitor capacity building.
3.00 – 3.15	Break				
3.15 – 4.30 1 ¼ hours	COUNTERPART-ADVISER RELATIONSHIPS – 1 To consider what an ideal adviser and ideal counterpart looks like in terms of technical ability, approach and personal attributes.	COACHING PRACTICE - 1 To introduce participants to using the GROW model through practising coaching, observing coaching & being coached.	NEXT STEPS & WORKSHOP CLOSE Participants report on their action plans for implementing learning, review this workshop, and give input for Workshop 2 planning.	APPLYING THE LEARNING – 1 To enable participants to apply the models, principles, tools and techniques to real issues – assessment and diagnosis.	NEXT STEPS & WORKSHOP CLOSE Participants report on their action plans for implementing learning and review this workshop.

Annex 5: Solomon Island Government and RAMSI Joint Selection Recruitment Process

November 2006

This document describes the processes for the selection of all RAMSI personnel.

Type of support	In-line	Constitutional*	Supernumery	Advisory
Process				
1. SIG-RAMSI agree on the requirements, funding, broad overview and Terms of Reference for the position, confirmed in correspondence	Yes	SIG identify requirements	Yes	Yes
2. SIG-RAMSI sign off on Terms of Reference	Yes	Constitutional position / Public Service Commission only	Yes	Yes
3. SIG-RAMSI agree on selection process – international/ Pacific/ local	Yes	SIG only	Yes	Yes
4. SIG-RAMSI participate in joint short listing and selection panel	Yes	SIG only	Yes	Case by case basis
5. SIG-RAMSI approve final selection, confirmed by a joint minute	Yes	SIG only	Yes	Yes
6. SIG-RAMSI agree on performance management framework or indicators	Yes	SIG only	Yes	Yes

* Constitutional office holders

Annex 6: Retirements from the Australian Public Service

Age group	Year ended June														
		1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Total per annum															
55-59	620	811	882	1042	697	341	285	332	358	401	447	527	619	685	823
60	153	208	160	181	126	61	53	56	55	59	93	72	93	113	131
61	106	148	111	141	88	43	38	52	44	68	53	56	69	79	88
62	109	128	82	108	78	31	24	30	36	41	53	59	65	70	104
63	89	128	85	99	60	26	22	23	26	29	31	32	51	67	82
64 and over	451	417	317	302	211	180	129	150	102	81	133	99	135	183	191
Total	1528	1840	1637	1873	1260	682	551	643	621	679	810	845	1032	1197	1419

From Australian Public Service Commissioner: APS Statistical Bulletin 2005-6.

<http://www.apsc.gov.au/stateoftheservice/0506/statistics/table40.htm>

Annex 7: Activities carried out by TA personnel under the rubric of capacity development

- Developing systems such as in information technology,
- Individual workplan preparation (probably the most frequently mentioned approach),
- Formal training including in-house programs in specialized areas such as the prison service; long-term scholarships for training abroad; distance learning, often combined with short periods abroad; and competency-based training in Solomon Islands, with the possibility of getting this accredited;
- Informal training including job rotation; mentoring and coaching to allow people to learn on the job and to take advantage of the opportunities available within the office¹¹⁵; and stimulating people to learn what appeals to them, based on the philosophy that in the field of information technology any learning is useful;
- Workshops, seminars and other kinds of group work;
- Standards setting through performance evaluation at the individual level which provides positive feedback but also pointers for improvement; and the staircase of professionalism in the prison service:
- Management techniques such as motivating and convincing and on-the-spot support when problems arise in the workplace combined with stimulating discussion on day to day operations;
- Exposure to approaches of other countries through study visits, active internet communications, etc.;
- Various forms of linkages such as twinning between Australian or New Zealand and SIG departments with similar mandates; and
- Support equipment.

¹¹⁵ One permanent secretary used to tell his staff that “University is under your roof through TA. Use it.”

The European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) aims to improve international cooperation between Europe and countries in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific.

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This is one of three country reviews, including Vietnam and Mozambique, done for the study *"Provision of technical assistance personnel: What can we learn from promising experiences?"*. After 5 years of violence, the Solomon Islands Government (SIG) requested outside assistance to bring peace to the country. Australia agreed to work with the Pacific Islands Forum and 15 other states in the region to field the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI), whose aim is twofold: stabilisation, and strengthening the state, particularly through reforming the core institutions of government. The report explores the features of capacity in fragile states, the use of whole-of-government responses to delivering assistance, and the implications of the continuing dominance of technical assistance. It concludes with some evaluative comments on how RAMSI might stimulate more government engagement in order to encourage greater sustainability of its activities.

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The European Centre for Development Policy Management
Onze Lieve Vrouweplein 21
6221 HE Maastricht, The Netherlands
Tel +31 (0)43 350 29 00
Fax +31 (0)43 350 29 02
E-mail info@ecdpm.org

The results of the study can be consulted at www.ecdpm.org.
For further information, please contact Mrs. Anje Jooya-Kruiter (ahk@ecdpm.org).