

MGOS RESPONSE AND QUESTIONS FROM THE CSOs IN THE SOLOMON ISLAND TO THE VNR OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE SOLOMON ISLAND

Congratulations to the Solomon Island government on their effort to align policy and plans with the SDGs and embrace the international agenda, and also on including CSO from the early stages of the VNR process.

Whilst we applaud the VNR committee's use of the often critical Auditor General report in their review, we point out that poor governance and political interference in service provision are major issues holding back development.

We single out the Rural Constituency Development Fund (RCDF) which currently distributes 60% of the entire development budget directly to 50 Members of Parliament. The recent (and only) evaluation of this 20 year programme concluded that the fund was highly politicized, with inefficient programmes and large transaction and administration costs.

Delivering services and micro-projects directly to rural communities is an excellent idea when in the hands of the appropriate Ministry of Provincial Government and Institutional Strengthening (MPGIS) and the assisting Ministry of Agriculture, with the real input of local communities and civil society.

In education we likewise see a capture of the budget by the political elite. Scholarships consume 40% of the entire education budget. Spending is now just USD 82 per primary student, but over USD 18,000 per tertiary student.

The report mentions improve girls' access to education, but there is no mention of those living with disability. They have been forgotten.

We recommend that

RCDF funds should be diverted to line ministries for their programmes following proper provincial and community participation;

The Scholarship programme be massively scaled back and savings used for critical interventions – community learning and literacy, skills for living initiatives, and materials and school infrastructure to allow those with disabilities and the most marginalised to participate.

Questions

When is the government going to ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and approve and properly fund the dormant Inclusive Education Policy?