

# 2020-2025 FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN





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# ACRONYMS

<b>A2J</b>	Access to Justice
<b>AVI</b>	Australian Volunteers International (Australian volunteers programme)
<b>CFWA</b>	Child and Family Welfare Act 2017
<b>CLE</b>	Continuous Legal Education
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organisation
<b>CSSI</b>	Corrections Service of Solomon Islands
<b>DFAT</b>	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia)
<b>FCO</b>	Financial Control Officer (MJLA)
<b>FPAC</b>	Family Protection Advisory Council
<b>FPU</b>	Family Protection Unit (PSO)
<b>FSC</b>	Family Support Centre
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-Based Violence

<b>GESI</b>	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
<b>IEC</b>	Information, Education and Communication
<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communication Technology
<b>JIMS</b>	Justice Information Management System
<b>JSCC</b>	Justice Sector Consultative Committee
<b>JSSF</b>	Justice Sector Strategic Framework
<b>JSTOG</b>	Justice Sector Technical Operations Group
<b>LALSU</b>	Land Advisory and Legal Support Unit
<b>LRC</b>	Law Reform Commission
<b>MJLA</b>	Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs



<b>MPS</b>	Ministry of Public Service
<b>MWYCFA</b>	Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs
<b>NDS</b>	National Development Strategy
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>NIIP</b>	National Infrastructure Investment Plan
<b>ODPP</b>	Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions
<b>PPD</b>	Police Prosecutions Department
<b>PSO</b>	Public Solicitor's Office
<b>RSIPF</b>	Royal Solomon Islands Police Force
<b>SIBA</b>	Solomon Islands Bar Association
<b>SIG</b>	Solomon Islands Government
<b>SIJP</b>	Solomon Island Justice Programme

<b>SINU</b>	Solomon Islands National University
<b>SC</b>	Save the Children
<b>TWG</b>	Technical Working Group
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>USP</b>	University of South Pacific
<b>USSD</b>	Unstructured Supplementary Service Data
<b>VBM</b>	Vois Blo Mere
<b>VSA</b>	Volunteer Service Abroad (New Zealand)

# FOREWORD

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On behalf of all the staff of the Public Solicitor's Office I acknowledge the work that has produced the five-year strategy for the Public Solicitor's Office, 2020 to 2025. The document has drawn together the contributions of staff alongside the comments from wide consultation with various stakeholders and interested parties in the justice sector. In a practical way it provides direction for the PSO as one of the agencies that has contributed to the Justice Sector Strategic Framework 2020–2030.

The process has involved a frank confrontation of the work of the PSO, both of its strengths and of those areas that can be strengthened. In implementing the Vision and the Mission of the PSO the plan addresses the need to provide clear legal awareness/education throughout Solomon Islands and to use the resources available to the PSO to provide a means to protect the legal rights of all people in Solomon Islands regardless of location, gender, age or ability and to provide appropriate advice and representation.

The growth of the work of the PSO in provincial Solomon Islands is fundamental to this mission. Without facilitating the rights of the people of Solomon Islands those rights cease to have effective meaning.

I wish to acknowledge the staff of the PSO who are charged with bringing the plan to life over the coming years and who have contributed not only to this plan but also to bringing the PSO to its present position serving the disadvantaged people of Solomon Islands. I particularly wish to acknowledge the generous work of the enthusiastic Access to Justice team at the UNDP and the financial support for the programme from the Government of Australia which has made this possible.

**Howard Lawry**

Public Solicitor June 2019 – June 2020

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Howard Lawry".



# FOREWORD



The Office of the Public Solicitor is established under section 92 of the National Constitution. Its primary functions include providing legal aid and assistance to the disadvantaged people of Solomon Islands. The PSO Strategic Plan 2020-2025 is a roadmap to enable PSO perform its constitutional mandate in a more efficient, accessible and inclusive manner. The next five years will be exciting with the roll-out of the plan as PSO strives to ensure that our people, especially those in rural and remote communities across the country, have access to the justice system. Our islands, separated by seas, have always been a challenge when it comes to accessing the justice system with courts and lawyers mainly based in Honiara. This strategic plan hopes to address exactly that challenge in a more practical way.

In recent years, PSO has its presence building up in provincial centers with offices in Gizo, Auki, Kira Kira and Lata. In the long term, PSO hopes to open up offices in other provincial centers including Guadalcanal. These provincial offices will also be instrumental in facilitating the implementation of the strategic plan in the next five years.

Bringing this plan into fruition is the result of collaborative efforts over many months of many people and agencies. Important stakeholders including MJLA, the judiciary, police, corrections and civil society organisations must be acknowledged for their contributions to the development of the plan. PSO staff including those based in the provinces had also made enormous contributions. I would also like to acknowledge Mr. Howard Lawry, for his guidance, leadership and tireless effort in leading the PSO in the development of this plan. He has also been instrumental in the expansion of the PSO to the provinces and the strengthened capacity of our lawyers. Finally, I wish to extend thanks to the UNDP and the Australian Government for their support to the PSO through the Access to Justice Project.

Together we have achieved many milestones and we look forward to implementing the initiatives from this strategic plan over the next five years together.

**George Gray**

Public Solicitor October 2020

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'G. Gray', written over a light blue grid background.

## OUR VISION

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To provide a wide range of accessible quality legal services to disadvantaged people of Solomon Islands for the benefit of all the peoples of Solomon Islands.





## OUR MISSION

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To defend the rights of the disadvantaged peoples of Solomon Islands by providing professional and accessible legal services in an open, efficient and accountable way.







# INTRODUCTION

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Solomon Islands' justice sector is working towards in-depth and holistic reforms which are embedded within the framework of the National Development Strategy 2016-2035 and aim at "building a unified nation with stable and effective governance and public order" (Goal 5). These reforms seek to reinforce access to justice in line with Solomon Islands' commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular Goal 16 in relation to strong institutions, Goal 5 which seeks to improve gender equality and SDG 10 on reduced inequalities. The Justice Sector Strategic Framework 2020-2030 (JSSF)<sup>1</sup> provides the overarching vision of the justice sector reform for all government agencies within the Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs (MJLA) and the National Judiciary. It is complemented by the three-year Strategy for Advancing Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in Solomon Islands Justice Sector, 'Step by Step: Building Inclusive Justice in Solomon Islands' (GESI Strategy)<sup>2</sup>. Both strategies provided vital guidance for all the staff at the Public Solicitor's Office (PSO) as the review process was undertaken and guided a reflection in the development of this new Strategic Plan.

As a constitutional body whose role is "to provide legal aid, advice and assistance to persons in need", the PSO is a key player in enabling Solomon Islanders to access justice. Several reports and studies carried out by the sector and partners have contributed to build an understanding of the systemic issues that need to be addressed in terms of access to justice and legal aid for the population of Solomon Islands, and especially for the most vulnerable groups such as women, children, and people with disabilities. The PSO has endeavoured to take on board these learnings and address areas for reform within this Strategic Plan.

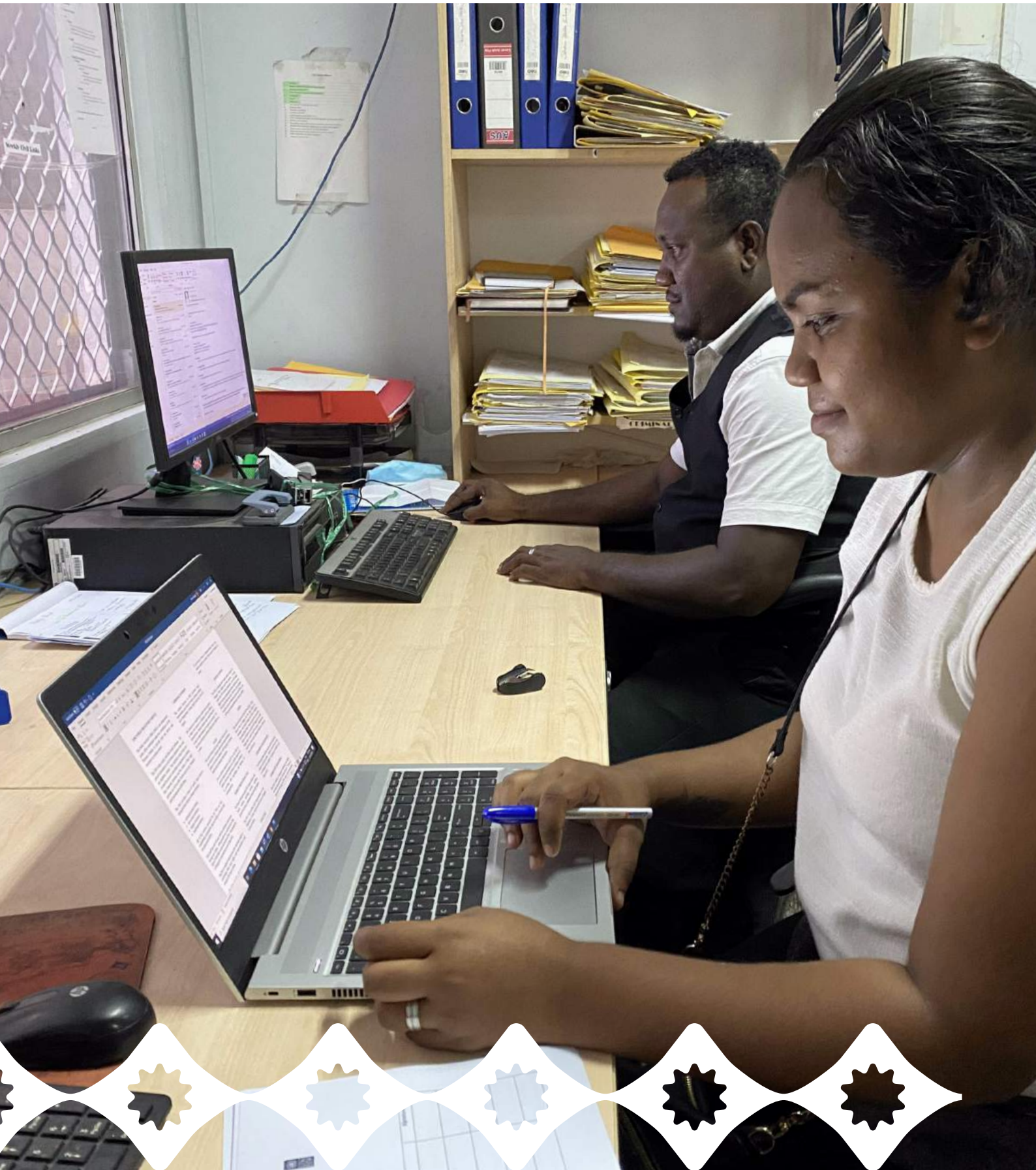
The Strategic Plan was conceptualised and developed by the staff of the PSO and MJLA, including officers doing crucial and challenging work in the provinces. The PSO staff recognise the needs to have an agency based, agency owned road map for the future. This strategy brings together views and ideas resulting from a broad individual consultation of key justice sector stakeholders, as well as a 2-day workshop held in Guadalcanal on 31st July and 1st August 2020 where the PSO and MJLA staff contributed to the development of the document while having cognisance of the JSSF, the GESI Strategy and the principles set out in the United Nations Principles and Guidelines on Access to Legal Aid in Criminal Justice Systems.

As this Strategic Plan was being developed, the PSO recognised new operational challenges as a result of the global outbreak of Covid-19 and accordingly developed and implemented coping measures as part of its core programming.

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<sup>1</sup> 2020-2030 is under validation at time of writing.

<sup>2</sup> GESI Strategy is under validation at time of writing.







# 1

## ROLE AND MANDATE OF THE PSO

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### ■ 1.1. Constitutional role

Section 92 of the Solomon Islands 1978 Constitution defines the role and functions of the PSO.

In particular, section 92 (4) provides:

The Constitutional functions of the PSO are to provide legal aid, advice and assistance to persons in need in such circumstances and subject to such conditions as may be prescribed by Parliament, and in particular:

- a. to provide legal aid, advice and assistance to any person in need who has been charged with a criminal offence; and
- b. to provide legal aid, advice and assistance to any person when directed to do so by the High Court.

The Public Solicitor of Solomon Islands is appointed by the Governor General upon advice from the Judicial and Legal Service Commission. The independence of the office is guaranteed by Section 92(7) of the Constitution which provides that “the Public Solicitor shall not be subject to the direction or control of any other person or authority” in the exercise of the functions conferred on him or her.

## 1.2. Legal prerogatives and functions

The function and role of the PSO are further defined by the Public Solicitor's Act 1987 which defines legal aid as:

- a. Representation of persons in proceedings, including all such assistance as are usually given in the steps preliminary or incidental to the proceedings or in arriving at, or giving effect to, a compromise to avoid or bring an end to the proceedings; and
- b. Including the providing of legal advice and assistance to persons in need of such advice and assistance.

The Legal Practitioners' Act 1987 as well as the Legal Practitioners' (Admission) Rules also regulate the profession of legal practitioners.

The functions of the PSO are detailed below.



### **Legal aid to members of the public**

Provide legal aid, assistance and representation to people in need on civil, criminal, land, family and other legal matters before the Magistrate's Court, High Court and Trade Disputes Panel.

Provide legal aid through court circuits to Provincial Court Centres.

Conduct appeals to the Court of Appeal of Solomon Islands.



### **Promotion and protection of rights**

Conduct cases ensuring the protection of the freedom of the rights of individuals as guaranteed by the Constitution and applicable international law as and when required before the High Court and Court of Appeal.

Provide community education through awareness raising to inform and educate the public about their rights and responsibilities as citizens.



### **Contribute to updating of the laws of the Solomon Islands**

Develop law and participate in law reform through appeals and challenges of administrative decisions by way of Judicial Review and other litigation and representation and through submissions and appearances and lobbying for change.



### **Maintain and develop professional standards and capacity**

Build capacity of Solomon Islands lawyers to perform work plan activities.

Build capacity of Solomon Islands lawyers to perform work plan activities.

Contribute to developing legal standards of interventions in specific areas of the law, such as gender-based and family violence matters, civil matters, land-related disputes, etc.



### 1.3. PSO values

Together with the oath taken by legal practitioners, the values of the PSO guide the ethics of the work in the field of legal aid and assistance. The core values of the PSO are described in the table below.



#### **Integrity**

We perform our functions ethically and with dignity and honesty.



#### **Independence**

We act in the interests of justice and in the defence of the rights of our clients without fear or favour.



#### **Responsive and Proactive**

We understand the needs of our client community.



#### **Professionalism**

We are committed professionals and we are aware of the responsibilities, duties and standards of our profession.



#### **Respect**

We perform our functions ethically and with dignity and honesty.



#### **Excellence**

We are diligent, committed, reliable and innovative in everything we do.



# KEY PRIORITY AREAS

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PSO services are accessible and inclusive for all



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Governance, infrastructure and organisational capacities



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A coordinated justice sector capable of delivering quality services working collaboratively with the strategic partners







## 1.4. Strategic framework to guide the operations of the PSO

The **National Development Strategy 2016-2035** of the Solomon Islands (NDS) sets the goals and objectives to achieve in terms of governance and the rule of law. Objective 5 of the NDS seeks to secure stable and effective governance and public order for a unified nation.

The **Justice Sector Strategic Framework 2020-2030** (yet to be endorsed) sets the strategic orientations for the entire justice sector. More specifically it defines within key priority area 2, Justice Sector Services are Accessible and Inclusive for All, the outcome to improve the “rule of law and access by the people of Solomon Islands to all services of an independent justice sector, where the justice sector has planned and allocated financial resources to cover the full extent of its services”.

This outcome speaks to the role of the PSO whose objective it is to “work effectively and to expand its activities into all provinces providing legal representation, assistance and information to a greater segment of the population for circuit and non-circuit cases utilising also the community-based paralegals across the country. The provincial PSO offices to establish a line of management”.

The **Strategy for Advancing Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in Solomon Islands Justice Sector** (GESI Strategy) sets out clear and practical steps for removing or reducing the barriers that different groups face when accessing the justice system. More specifically, it identifies 6 key-priority areas for action which can be embedded into the PSO strategy:



Additionally, the GESI strategy sets specific steps for each justice agency to achieve these priority areas that have been included in the PSO strategy. Namely, the steps related to the PSO in relation to improving the justice system's handling of sexual and domestic violence, improving access to justice for people with disabilities, ensuring that our justice premises are fit for purpose, and progressing gender balance across the justice sector.



# OUR OFFICES

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# 2

## FUNCTIONAL REVIEW OF THE PSO

### 2.1. Current situation of the PSO

The current situation of the PSO demonstrates that much of the guidance set out in leading best practice instruments such as the United Nations Principles and Guidelines on Access to Legal Aid in Criminal Justice Systems, and other international good practices, have been incorporated in the work of the PSO.

The legal aid and awareness services have been extended beyond criminal law. The PSO provides quality services with the Family Protection Unit, the Civil Law Unit and the Land Advisory and Legal Support Unit (LALSU). These services are provided in Honiara and in some of the provinces throughout the country. Legal officers based in Honiara and the provinces organise legal clinics to provide advice and legal aid services to the population of Solomon Islands. Legal officers also provide community awareness events and, collaborate with other government and non-government organisations (NGOs), disseminate legal aid information through public gatherings as well as disseminate information brochures and leaflets on various topics related to legal aid (accessing legal aid, role of the PSO, juvenile justice, etc.). These are available in English and in Pijin.

New officers who are recruited to the PSO are trained using the 2019 Induction Manual as well as the 2012 Duty Solicitor's Handbook among other training tools. The new recruits also benefit from supervision and mentoring from senior lawyers. The work of the staff is defined by the Strategic Plan (or previously the corporate plan 2015-2018) of the PSO, and its objectives and strategies are incorporated into the annual and individual work plans. The performance of the legal officers is monitored through the Public Service appraisal mechanism, conducted on annual basis.

Despite well-recognised expertise with the Office, the ability of the PSO to achieve its mandate is largely dependent on its resources (see below). An efficient financial control system is in place and the PSO also benefits from strong support from technical and financial partners such as the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), through its Solomon Islands Justice Programme (SIJP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) through the Solomon Islands Access to Justice (A2J) Project and volunteer agencies including Australian Volunteers International (AVI) and Volunteer Service Abroad (VSA).

Regular independent evaluations of the justice sector are conducted, and more recent studies have painted a detailed picture of the situation of access to justice in Solomon Islands (see section 2.3 below). These studies draw a connection to the objectives set out notably in SDG 16 to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels ; in SDG 5 achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls notably ; and in SDG 10 promote universal social, economic and political inclusion.

Several coordination and consultation platforms exist in which the PSO participates. The Justice Sector Consultative Committee (JSSC) constitutes the overarching forum for the justice sector, but the PSO is also a participant in Court User Forums, and consults on an ad hoc basis for other MJLA led coordination and consultation initiatives, for example, to participate in reviews undertaken by the Law Reform Commission (LRC).



## 2.2. Office data and statistics

The data and statistics of the office relate to the number of cases dealt by the different units in the different provincial offices where PSO has a presence. The data of 2019 and 2020 shows interesting trends in the data location sites, which are currently limited to PSO offices in Honiara, Auki and Gizo.

In Honiara, criminal cases represent most of the caseload of the PSO at 40-45% of all cases. Civil and family cases brought to the family protection unit represent another 40% of cases. The rest is represented by general legal advice, approximately 20% of cases. The first semester of 2020 has shown a slight decrease in the number of civil cases and an increase in the provision of legal advice.

In Auki, civil cases represent the largest number of cases, accounting for between 70-90% of the cases. Criminal cases are second with between 10-35% of the cases depending on the reporting period. Family protection unit cases and legal advice account for less than 5% of the caseload of this office.

In Gizo, most of the cases are criminal in nature at 75%. It is rare for civil and family cases to represent more than 5% of the caseload respectively. The opening of a new legal clinic has seen the proportion of legal advice increasing to 10-15% since the third quarter of 2019.

These figures reflect less issues faced by the populations of Solomon Islands than the actual ability of the PSO to provide appropriate services where necessary. The implementation of this strategic plan, coupled with appropriate data collection in the provinces where PSO will introduce the Justice Information Management System (JIMS), should translate in a significant increase in the number of cases monitored as well as some changes in the trends observed.



## 2.3. Results of access to justice studies

Several studies have been commissioned by MJLA in recent years to improve the understanding of access to justice in Solomon Islands, notably under the leadership of the Access to Justice Technical Working Group within MJLA, with the support of the Australian Government and UNDP<sup>1</sup>.

Overall, despite a generally positive perception of formal justice services in the communities by Solomon Islanders who were surveyed, the studies highlight some systemic obstacles related to making access to justice a reality for all, and this speaks also to the role of the PSO. As one of the key agencies which is designed to link the public to justice services, the PSO faces several challenges.

On the one hand, the role and function of the PSO could benefit from better recognition in Solomon Islands. The studies have shown that the population surveyed resort predominantly to contact local resources that already exist in communities – such as police (used as legal advisers), and village chiefs, family or church leaders in order to address their various justice-related issues. This is related to several factors such as the availability and presence of these actors in the different communities, or how to access the services of the PSO whose role is not necessarily understood by community members.

On the other hand, the PSO is currently unable to face the entire demand across the country in terms of legal aid and assistance, based on a number of factors including resource shortage. Over the last decades, legal aid officers are often only present on the ground in the provinces (other than Guadalcanal) during court circuits. Only recently offices have been established in Auki (Malaita), Kirakira (Makira-Ulawa), Lata (Temotu) and Gizo (Western). An office is to be opened in Buala (Isabel) in the near future. However, the lack of senior staff in all other provinces is still an ongoing issue, and for most rural and remote locations, most communities do not have access to the services of the PSO, and are often, as a result less in touch (or not at all) about the formal justice sector, the PSO and its services.

Therefore, this Strategic Plan recalls the importance to promote the role and function of PSO to all communities across Solomon Islands – namely awareness on legal issues and providing access to legal aid – in a coordinated manner, ensuring that the budget of the office meets the requirements of its mandate, in order for the communities of Solomon Islands to be able to access the service so when they are informed.

## 2.4. Governance and structure

The PSO is managed by the Public Solicitor together with the Office Management Team. The Public Solicitor has ultimate responsibility and authority over the Office. They are responsible for managing the team and ensuring that PSO achieves its objectives. This independence is guaranteed by Section 92 of the Constitution.

The Office Management Team consists of the Public Solicitor, Deputy Public Solicitor, Practice Manager, Office Manager and from time to time the managers/ leaders of the work teams and units. The team's function is to:

- monitor the PSO strategies and activities to ensure legal assistance is provided to disadvantaged people in the most effective, efficient and economical way; and
- review and approve policies and standards and ensure these are implemented so as to meet the Constitutional and statutory obligations; and
- consider and make decisions on significant issues affecting the organisation and communicate important information to staff.

The office is structured around an Administration Team which supports the finance, administration, human resources, logistics and security of the office, as well as four main technical units:

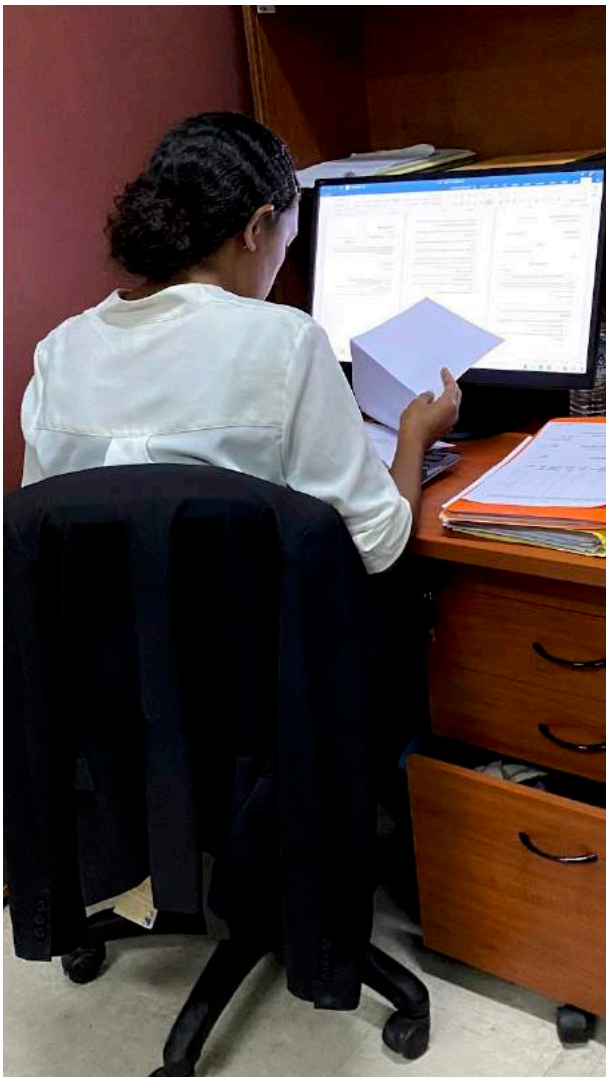
- The Criminal Unit: provides legal representation and advice to individuals who are prosecuted in the Magistrates Court and the High Court.
- The Family Protection Unit (FPU): provides legal advice and court representation at the

<sup>1</sup> The 2019 Solomon Islands Access to Justice Study, the Access to Justice Survey, the 2018 Mapping of Justice Sector Service Provision in Solomon Islands, Seeking Redress: Challenges and Recommendations to Increase Women's Access to Justice in Solomon Islands, etc.

Magistrates Court, the High Court and the Court of Appeal in family matters including divorce, adoption, protection orders, maintenance and custody matters.

- The Civil Unit: represents and provides advice on a range of matters including employment and workers' compensation, personal injury, money claims, restraining orders, property claims and defamation.
- The Land Advisory and Legal Support Unit (LALSU) provides information to customary landowners on their rights over the use of their land and resources, and intervene in mining, logging and environmental issues.

All units are involved in court circuits and provide awareness sessions and produce information in the form of pamphlets and other materials. In the provinces, the teams have one or two lawyers, an office secretary, paralegals and community legal advocates who are based in their communities.



## 2.5. Budget and funding

The funding of the PSO comes from two different sources. The Solomon Islands Government (SIG) development budget which is administered by MJLA budget and covers travel during court circuits, fuel, ICT, accommodation for court circuits, as well as the human resources payroll (staff wages and housing and other allowances), which is administered the Ministry of Public Service (MPS).

The recent UNDP Access to Justice Study 2019 summarises the situation of the PSO budget and funding: "as a citizen-facing institution with a mandate that spans civil, criminal, victims, defence, and legal information. The PSO is understaffed, under-resourced and overburdened".

Currently, the budget and funding model is not sustainable because the resources allocated to the PSO do not allow the office to adequately fulfil its mandate. Several human resources and logistics needs remain unaddressed, such as the need to have additional vehicles, boat transport, allowances for court circuits, ICT maintenance, etc.

The situation in 2020 is particularly concerning since the Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in substantial reductions in the SIG development budget which has further impacted agencies including the PSO and has placed pressure on the PSO's capacity to participate in Court Circuits. However, some emergency funding was granted upon approval from the Cabinet which should enable the participation in Court Circuits until the end of 2020.

The sustainability and independence of the PSO corporate model is one of the core challenges of the office, and several options will be explored during this next phase to overcome these issues (see below Section 3.2).

## 2.6. Staffing

Over the past 20 years human resources have gradually increased in the PSO. Indeed, since 2010, the number of employees has increased from 10 to 49 positions, including 36 lawyers, 13 support staff. Over these past decades, the PSO has established offices in Auki, Gizo, Kirakira and Lata. In 2020, with the support of the UNDP A2J Project, 12 paralegals and thirteen community legal advocates have been trained to support the PSO office in carrying out its mandate.

However, this is insufficient to cover the needs and demands for PSO services across the country and additional positions are required to meet demand in the provinces. A number of PSO positions are currently vacant however, the perception of an unattractive employment package has constituted a deterrent for potential applicants.

In the last few years, the representation of females within the PSO has been increasing. The PSO will continue promoting gender balance in each section of the office, including at higher levels within the agency. More generally, the PSO is also examining ways to include diversity criteria into current recruitment practices, to ensure people with disabilities and other marginalised populations have access to recruitment opportunities.

In the medium to long term, the Office is looking to increase its staffing capacity in the provinces, with each province having a minimum of two lawyers, as well as paralegals, administrative support and community legal advocates (See below “future direction”).











# 3

## STRATEGIC PLAN

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The PSO Strategic Plan 2020-2025 replaces the PSO Corporate Plan 2015-2018, and follows the principles of results-based management. The following key priority areas, objectives, key actions and outputs have been developed by the PSO for the PSO. It is the result of broad consultations with key justice sector stakeholders, a two-day workshop held in Guadalcanal with staff of the PSO and MJLA on 31st July and 1st August 2020, as well as the integration of the JSSF, the GESI Strategy, and the principles of the United Nations Principles and Guidelines on Access to Legal Aid in Criminal Justice Systems.

### VISION

To provide a wide range of accessible quality legal services to the disadvantaged people of the Solomon Islands for the benefit of all the peoples of the Solomon Islands.

### MISSION

To defend the rights of the disadvantaged peoples of the Solomon Islands by providing professional and accessible legal services in an open, efficient and accountable way.

Priority areas / Objectives / Key actions	
KEY PRIORITY AREA 1 PSO services	
<b>OBJECTIVE 1.1</b> Improve corporate services by efficient management and delivery of legal services	<b>Key Action 1.1.1 Updating existing technical resources supporting the work of legal aid officers</b>
	Update the Induction Manual to reflect latest changes in the work of the office (including JIMS, Code of Conduct for Solomon Island Public Service, etc.).
	Update the Duty Solicitor's Manual reflecting latest legislation (Penal Code amendments, Child and Family Welfare Act (CFWA), Family Protection Act and the Young Offenders Bill once passed, etc.) and the guidance of the GESI Strategy and other applicable policies is updated.
	Update the paralegal manual, outreach manual and CLA manual.
	Develop a new Code of Conduct for PSO staff specific to the ethics of the profession of legal aid officers.
	<b>Key Action 1.1.2 Revision and implementation of client means and merit test to access legal aid</b>
	Update the client means and merit test to access legal aid. Exceptions to the standard regime have been clarified. The possibility of charging minimum fees for clients not fulfilling the means and merit test has been explored.
	Ensure all the clients supported by the PSO have filled the means and merit test form, and a decision was made.
	<b>Key Action 1.1.3. Prioritize cases of gender-based or domestic violence, children or PWDs</b>
	Develop a fast-track scheme for cases involving gender-based or domestic violence, children or PWD together with a brief out scheme needs and solutions analysis.
	Provide training to enable best practice advice and representation to vulnerable people, including women and girls, young people, and PWD.
	Maintain and strengthen PSO's participation in SafeNet.
	Improve coordination with the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP) and the Courts to ensure timely management of cases involving vulnerable people.
	Run on a trial basis the legal clinic for PWDs and develop its SOPs in partnership with PWDSI.
	Increase paralegal support to the FPU.
	<b>Key Action 1.1.4 Improve case-management performance</b>
	Advocate for more use of bail in criminal cases.
	Ensure all the clients benefit from a visit from their lawyers.
	Ensure alleged offenders meet their lawyers once every two months and every time they appear before the court during the pre-trial period.
	Criminal lawyers visit custodial institutions in the province at least once a fortnight.
	Conduct alternate dispute resolution training of legal practitioners to encourage out of court settlements in relevant contexts through mediation.
	<b>Key Action 1.1.5. Define individual targets and timelines for legal aid officers for overcoming case backlogs.</b>
	Regular follow-up of the backlog of cases by Principal legal officers on a monthly basis.
	Overly delayed cases are prioritised, in particular those where accused in custody, and those involving vulnerable clients, in coordination with DPP and courts.

Timeframe for completion	Measurement
s are accessible and inclusive for all	
2024-2025	The new Induction Manual is available.
2021-2023	The Duty Solicitor's Manual is available.
2020-2021	A new Paralegal Manual, Outreach Manual and CLA Manual is available.
2022-2023	A new PSO Code of Conduct is available.
2023-2025	Revised means and merit test is available.
2023-2025	Records show that 100% of clients have filled the means and merits test.
By June 2021	The brief out is available
2021	The FPU team has received the training
2021	The coordination mechanism is strengthened.
2020-2025	Cases are dealt with more efficiently.
2021	Cases are dealt with more efficiently.
2020	Cases are dealt with more efficiently.
Ongoing	Increase in the proportion of cases benefiting from bail.
Ongoing	File records show 100% of clients benefit from a visit.
Ongoing	File records show criminal lawyers have visited custodial institutions in each province at least once a fortnight.
Ongoing	Training of legal practitioners has been conducted.
2021-2022	Training of legal practitioners has been conducted.
Ongoing	File records show a decrease in the backlog of cases.
Ongoing	File records show no case of overly delayed case.

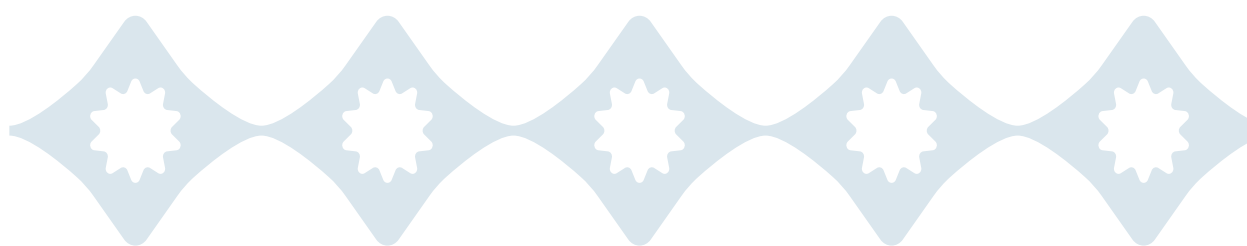
Priority areas / Objectives / Key actions	
	<b>Key Action 1.1.6 Prepare business continuity plan to face the Covid-19 pandemic and the socio-economic impacts arising therefrom</b>
	Preparation of Covid-19 preparedness and response plan in partnership with MJLA and key sector partners including video conferencing facilities for remote hearings .
	Prepare the PSO offices to comply with health and sanitation requirements (social distancing and sanitization protocols, etc.).
	Provide personal protective equipment (PPE) to the staff in Honiara and in the provinces (masks, sanitizing gel and wipes, soil markers, signs, etc.).
	Redefine the Court-Circuit schedule with other justice agencies (DPP; Courts, etc.)
	Promote the use of alternatives to detention (ATD) and community-based dispute resolution mechanisms (CBDRM) in case of Covid-19 outbreak.
	Identify and advocate for cases of prisoners who could benefit from early release.
<b>OBJECTIVE 1.2</b> Provide quality awareness to empower communities for participation in Solomon Islands	<b>Key Action 1.2.1. Develop a Community Engagement Plan identifying specific target groups and awareness needs</b>
	Develop a Community Engagement (or communication) plan for PSO to strengthen its visibility across the country, and in particular rural and remote areas, including radio programme awareness, outreach awareness in communities, website development, Information, Education and Communication (IEC) material development and dissemination.
	Conduct an awareness radio programme season.
	Establish a partnership with main telecom providers to disseminate information regarding legal awareness sessions, programmes and services on mobile phones country wide.
	Introduce the position of a communications officer to be a central focal point for outreach, generating media content for social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc) and website, and organising radio show.
	<b>Key Action 1.2.2. Develop a comprehensive Outreach Toolkit covering all the areas of legal aid and legal awareness.</b>
	Develop a comprehensive Outreach Toolkit covering all the areas of legal aid and legal awareness.
	Conduct awareness sessions of community leaders and Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF) stations to channel cases from communities to PSO offices in association with other organisations working in the communities.
	<b>Key Action 1.2.3. Strengthen the toll free hotline</b>
	Develop continuous service for the toll free hotline with Telekom to include pathways for women and PWDs.
	Develop a Case Management System and Referral Guideline to provide advice and ensure cases are followed-up with high level or reliability exists (can be part of Duty Solicitor's Manual).
	Establish a partnership with Telekom to develop a Unstructured Supplementary Service Data (USSD) information text service on PSO support.
	<b>Key Action 1.2.4. Update the website of PSO with legal aid and legal information (and ensure compatibility with mobile phones)</b>
	Create an independent PSO website linked to the MJLA portal.
	PSO website to be used as a service platform and to include some detailed information on legal aid and access to justice is available.
	Create specific provincial office PSO Facebook pages and provide regular information about on PSO activities in the relevant province.
	<b>Key Action 1.2.5. Update and disseminate IEC material to cover latest issues (CFWA, PWD, Juvenile Justice, etc.)</b>
	Update of the PSO pamphlets to cover the most common issues in line with the latest legislative framework (e.g. CFWA, PWD, juvenile justice, etc.).
	Development of some posters advertising PSO services and hotline are available.
	Dissemination of the posters in all the provinces of the country, in public services (RSIPF, health centres, schools, churches) and civil society organisations (CSOs), shelters, NGO, etc.



Timeframe for completion	Measurement
By end September 2020	Preparedness and response plan are available.
By end September 2020	Guidance note on Covid-19 has been implemented in all the PSO offices.
By end September 2020	PPE is available in all the PSO offices.
2020-2021 (or 10 days after the outbreak)	Updated Court-Circuit schedule is available
During the outbreak	The use of ATD and CBDRM increases during the outbreak.
During the outbreak	Some prisoners are released early in case of outbreak.
By June 2021	The Community Engagement Plan exists and is funded.
2020-2025	Radio programme broadcasted. The PSO can deliver SMS information to any mobile countrywide.
2021	The mapping is available.
2021	A communication officer is recruited.
By March 2021	The Outreach Toolkit exists.
2021-2025	48 Community awareness sessions have been carried out.
2021-2025	The toll free hotline is working 5 days a week from 8am to 5pm, 52 weeks a year.
By 2022	Case Management System and Referral Guideline developed. 90% of cases have been dealt with (according to the guidelines).
2021-2023	A USSD text service is in place.
By mid-2022	Updated MJLA website is online.
2021-2025	A set of pamphlets and information is available on PSO website.
2021	At least 3 feeds per month on each provincial Facebook page.
By end 2021	The pamphlets are available in all the provinces of Solomon Islands.
2021-2025	150 Posters are printed.
2021-2025	The posters have been disseminated in all the provinces.

Priority areas / Objectives / Key actions	
KEY PRIORITY AREA 2 Governance, Infra	
<b>OBJECTIVE 2.1</b> Increase and improve material resources to support or enable legal service delivery	<b>Key Action 2.1.1. Define a Corporate Financial Plan reflecting the needs of the office and exploring existing and innovative funding scenarios and bidding process.</b>
	Development of a Corporate Financial Plan to: Cover the needs for infrastructure development (land, construction, rental, etc.) in Honiara and the provinces. Human resources in Honiara and the provinces, including legal aid officers. Court circuit missions. Legal awareness activities (pamphlets, provincial visits). Transportation: 2nd Car and 3rd Vehicle (1 for admin and 1 for courts/clients) and boats for provincial travel. ICT equipment for renewal and newly recruited staff. An access to electronic resources is made available. PSO staff training. etc.
	Advocacy for adequate funding of the PSO budget.
	Advocacy for technical support to implement the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan.
	<b>Key Action 2.1.2 Ensure highest standards for procurement and asset management</b>
	Implement procurement and asset management guidelines of SIG for all assets of the PSO.
<b>OBJECTIVE 2.2</b> Improve physical access to legal aid services	<b>Key Action 2.2.1. Opening of new offices in Buala, Taro, Marau and Tulagi</b>
	Opening of PSO offices in Buala and Taro.
	Identification of a land or provincial government facilities to establish PSO offices in Marau and Tulagi, minimally.
	Provide offices with necessary equipment (furniture, telecommunications and Internet connection, ICT equipment).
	<b>Key Action 2.2.2. Improving infrastructure of existing offices</b>
	Conduct a mapping and needs assessment of PSO offices in Honiara, Kirakira, Auki, Gizo and Lata.
	Move Honiara office to an accessible office that can accommodate all the staff (e.g. Justice Centre).
	In Kirakira, complete rented premises, then have new premises constructed.
	In Auki, enclose the passageway to create room for extra staff.
	In Gizo, repair/replace water tank and associated plumbing, build replacement leaf hut, and upgrade the Internet access.
	In Lata, construct new premises in leaf hut, identify funds for the construction of new office.
	Conduct a countrywide accessibility audit to identify needs for improvement in accessing legal aid and advice for people with disability.
	Equip all the offices to function normally (furniture, telecommunications and Internet connection, ICT equipment).
	Undertake a needs and solutions consultative analysis with a view to opening a coordinated office with SeifPles in another location in Guadalcanal.

Timeframe for completion	Measurement
<b>structure and Organizational Capacities</b>	
By mid-2021	The Corporate Financial Plan exists.
2020-2025	The budget enables all the legal aid and awareness activities to be carried out, and to have permanent PSO presence in the provinces.
	Technical support provided towards implementation of the Strategic Plan.
2020-2025	SIG Procurement and asset management guidelines are followed.
By end-2022	Buala and Taro have operating offices.
2021-2023	In Marau and Tulagi, minimally.
2021-2025	All newly opened offices have operating equipment.
By mid-2021	Needs assessment has been conducted in Honiara, Kirakira, Auki, Gizo and Hata
By end-2023	PSO office in Honiara accommodates all the staff and is accessible.
By mid-2021	New premises are constructed.
By mid-2021	Extra room is completed.
By end 2020	Renovation is completed.
By end 2023	New office is constructed
By end-2021	Accessibility audit has been conducted.
2021-2025	All the offices have operating equipment.
By end-2022	The new office is opened.





Priority areas / Objectives / Key actions	
<b>OBJECTIVE 2.3</b> Improve PSO staff management and development to enhance service delivery	<b>Key Action 2.3.1. Administration of PSO human resources</b>
	Development of a Human Resource Development Plan which adequately meets the requirements of the justice sector and is in line with current policies, including the Public Service and the Step-by-step Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Strategy 2020-2023.
	Update the management structure of the PSO to integrate paralegals and CLAs and additional support staff for provincial offices with particular emphasis on support to FPU and LALSU.
	Review and update of the job descriptions, annual work plan and individual work plans to integrate paralegal and CLAs.
	Recruit and train (induction and mentoring) staff where necessary (including on JIMS).
	Ensure gender-balance in recruitment in all positions (including at senior levels) with high ratio of female working for the PSO, if necessary, by encouraging application of women.
	Explore the possibility to recruit staff with disability, if necessary, by encouraging the application of PWDs.
	Integrate occupational Health policy into human resources development plan to include regular health checks and first aid training in PSO for staff.
	Advocacy through staff association for better terms and conditions to retain senior staff.
	Develop a more progressive structure for career advancement (grades and steps) to reflect the seniority and experience of staff in their remuneration.
	Review allowances for Court circuit (in coordination with MJLA Financial Control Officer (FCO)).
	<b>Key Action 2.3.2. Administration of PSO human resources</b>
	Identify training areas at individual and unit levels and definition of a Capacity Building Strategy (as part of the Human Resource Development Plan) for the office covering training and mentoring of legal officers, paralegals and community legal advocates in Honiara and the provinces.
	PSO provides continuous legal education for lawyers under the Legal Practitioners' Bill.
	Update the library (and electronic resources) to cover the needs in terms of legal knowledge and best practices in legal aid and common law technical areas (criminal law, juvenile justice, gender-based violence, land disputes, etc.).
<b>OBJECTIVE 2.4</b> Improve file management, reporting and data collection	<b>Key Action 2.4.1. Improve data recording, collection and translation to support reporting</b>
	Ongoing training of all legal employees (including "superuser") on JIMS.
	Dispatch JIMS is accessible in all the Provincial offices.
	Participation at technical meetings and provide inputs on JIMS.
	Develop a data reporting system disaggregated by gender, legal issue, duration of proceedings, if applicable disability and others.
	Attend annual planning, budgetary planning and reporting in timely and comprehensive manner with consideration given to retaining an officer solely for this role.
	Introduction of a time recording system onto JIMS to improve productivity and assists with office management.
	<b>Key Action 2.4.2. Develop an electronic file-management system for PSO</b>
	Carry out a study on how to organise a transition towards an electronic file-management system.
	Develop an electronic file-management system and dispatch in all the provincial offices.
	Creating an IT officer position to assist with tech challenges for the JIMS training, digital transformation shift, and development of support staff to increase capacity of tech skills in the office.

Timeframe for completion	Measurement
By end 2021	The Human Resource Development Plan is available.
By end 2020	The new PSO structure is available.
By end 2020	Job descriptions, annual workplan and individual work plans have been updated.
2020-2025	All budgeted positions are filled.
By end 2022	Females represent 50% of PSO staff.
By end 2021	Recruitment of PWD is integrated in human resources Development Plan.
By end 2021	Occupational health policy is part of human resources development plan.
2021-2025	Staff have at least one health check per year. Establish and strengthen PSO staff association.
By end 2021	The remuneration of PSO staff is improved.
By end 2021	A new salary scale integrates grades and steps to reflect experience of junior and senior staff.
By end 2021	The Capacity Building Strategy is available.
2020-2025	Role of the PSO defined in the Legal Practitioner's Bill. CLE activities are happening.
2023-2025	A partnership with law universities is in place. Additions to the PSO library.
<b>g and budget bids</b>	
By mid-2021	All legal employees are trained on JIMS.
By mid-2021	JIMS is accessible in all the provinces.
2020-2025	PSO takes part in JIMS technical meetings.
2022-2025	Data reporting system is improved.
2020-2025	Annual reporting available on time and in comprehensive manner.
2021	Time recording system is available in JIMS.
2022-2023	The study is available
2023-2024	PSO has a working electronic file-management system in all the provinces.
2021-2023	An IT officer is recruited.

Priority areas / Objectives / Key actions	
KEY PRIORITY AREA 3 A coordinated justice sector capable of delivering	
<b>OBJECTIVE 3.1</b> Coordination with ongoing justice sector platforms and ad hoc technical working groups	<b>Key Action 3.1.1 PSO takes an active role in justice sector coordination platforms</b>
	Participate in strategy and policy coordination platforms: JSSC and Justice Sector Technical Operations Group (JSTOG).
	Participate in quarterly Heads of Agency Technical Working Group.
	Participate in technical/case management coordination platforms (e.g. SafeNet, Family Protection Advisory Council (FPAC))
	Participate in ad hoc consultations on legal issues (e.g. Law Reform Commission).
	Development of a Solomon Islands Women in Law Association.
	<b>Key Action 3.1.2 PSO maintains dialogue with key-stakeholders working in the justice sector</b>
	Continuous dialogue with Solomon Islands Government regarding justice sector investment and consideration to costs benefit analysis of justice sector investment.
	Continuous dialogue with justice sector agencies (Correctional Service of Solomon Islands (CSSI), RSIPF, the National Judiciary, the ODPP the Ombudsman, SIBA) donors and international partners (DFAT, World Bank, RRRT, UNDP, UNICEF, Save the Children, World Vision etc.) with the view to collaborate on improving legal aid services including multi stakeholder capacity building and development of new initiatives to enhance access to justice for the people of Solomon Islands, such as the First Hour Procedure.
	Continuous dialogue with local NGOs and faith-based organisations with the view to improve service delivery (SeifPles, Family Support Centre (FSC), Vois Blo Mere (VBM), etc.).
	Approach law students at University of South Pacific (USP) to discuss potential involvement in legal awareness.
	Strengthening of partnerships with Bond University, and other regional universities, to further develop the law student immersion programmes and foster pacific relationships.
	<b>Key Action 3.1.3 PSO develops and strengthens the Youth Justice Network (co-chair)</b>
<b>OBJECTIVE 3.2</b> Advocacy for an improved access to independent and more accessible legal aid system	Chair and guide the Youth Justice Network (YJN).
	Support the drafting of technical guidelines (SOPs, etc.) to guide on key issues related to child-friendly justice (e.g. diversion, rehabilitation, alternatives, etc.).
	Support the organisation of a mapping of service providers working in the field of youth justice.
	<b>Key Action 3.2.1. Explore with relevant stakeholders the possibility to increase the independence of the PSO through independent budget or creating a Legal Aid Commission</b>
	Hold a consultation with relevant stakeholders such as UNDP, DFAT, SIG, SIBA.
	Undertake at least 3 dialogues and consultations taking into consideration the views of people and exploring how to make the objective a reality.
	Provide data on the services and caseload of the PSO.
	A special study on Fiji and PNG Commissions is organised and leads to a report on whether it is appropriate in the context of Solomon Islands to become an independent Legal Aid Commission.
	A pamphlet outlining for the needs to have an independent Legal Aid Commission is developed.
	Commence a collaboration with the LRC to review the Public Solicitor Act in the context of establishing a Legal Aid Commission
	<b>Key Action 3.2.2. Explore the possibility to involve private lawyers into legal aid (pro bono or funded by public money)</b>
	Consultation with relevant stakeholders such as SIBA, UNDP, DFAT, SIG is held.
	Draft a concept note including legal propositions and positive outcomes, challenges and main steps to organise the transition.



Timeframe for completion	Measurement
ng quality services working collaboratively with the strategic partners	
2020-2025	Attendance at meetings.
2020-2025	Attendance at meetings.
2020-2025	Attendance at meetings.
2020-2025	Participation at consultations.
2021-2025	A Solomon Islands Women in Law Association exists and holds events biannually.
2020-2025	Continuous dialogue with SIG on benefits of justice sector investment
2020-2025	Production of cost benefit analysis report.
2020-2025	Development of new initiatives with justice sector wide involvement and implementation.
2022-2025	Engage VSP law students for legal awareness.
2020-2025	The immersion programme is extended to Gizo.
2021-2022	The youth justice officer participates in quarterly meetings of the YJN.
2021-2022	Technical guidelines on how to handle children in conflict with the law are available.
2021-2022	A mapping is available and updated annually.
2021	Minutes of the meetings.
2022-2023	Consultations are held. Report of the consultations.
2022	Annual report is made available.
2022	Report on the visits to PNG and Fiji.
2023-2024	A pamphlet summarizing the project is made public.
2022-2025	A draft review of Public Solicitor Act is available.
2020-2025	Meeting minutes.
2020-2025	A concept note is made available.





# 4

## FUTURE STRATEGIC DIRECTION

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The Strategic Plan 2020-2025 will focus on three key orientations: expanding access to quality legal aid to the provinces, improving the funding and sustainability of the corporate model of the PSO, and enhancing service delivery to the most vulnerable groups.



## 4.1. Access to quality legal aid to the provinces

One of the future directions of the PSO will be allocation of additional time and resources to clients. However, the need to have two legal practitioners in each province is a minimum requirement to address the workload and indeed in many criminal cases, both the victim and the offender need the legal assistance of the PSO.

The pilot project deploying paralegals and community legal advocates will be assessed and the possibility to adapt and expand the model to all the provinces of Solomon Islands will be explored. This should address some of the needs of the office in terms of the capacity to conduct awareness and

The table below provides a projection of the PSO needs by 2025, including paralegals and community legal advocates, one communication officer and one IT officer.

Province / capital city	Population (Estimate 2020)	Public Solicitor's Office							
		Administrative staff (incl. Security)		Legal practitioner		Paralegals		Community Legal Advocates	
		2020	2025	2020	2025	2020	2025	2020	2025
Central / Tulagi	33 000	-	1	-	2	-	1	-	1
Choiseul / Taro	37 000	-	1	-	2	-	1	-	1
Guadalcanal / Honiara	246 500	11	11	28	33	6	5	-	2
Isabel / Buala	35 500	-	1	-	2	-	1	-	1
Makira-Ulawa / Kirakira	55 000	-	1	2	2	1	1	-	1
Malaita / Auki	161 000	1	2	2	2	2	3	4	4
Rennell & Bellona / Tinggoa	4 300	-	-	-	2	-	1	-	1
Temotu / Lata	25 500	-	1	2	2	1	1	4	4
Western / Gizo	99 000	1	2	2	2	2	2	5	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>696 800</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>19</b>

## 4.2. Funding and sustainability

The PSO validated budget represents only a portion of what is necessary to fulfill its mandate adequately. An example of this appears when it comes to participating in Court Circuits, or to secure the logistic resources to run the office adequately (IT, vehicles, etc.). Additionally, because the PSO budget is a chapter of MJLA, the decisions regarding the budgets are arbitrated by the Ministry's financial department, where it should be somehow autonomous. In the future, the PSO will therefore endeavour to explore options to develop a more independent and sustainable model.

Section 92(6) of the Solomon Constitution provides that, "Parliament may make provision for the Public Solicitor to make a reasonable charge for services provided by him to persons in need whom he considers are able to make a contribution towards the cost of those services".

Additionally, Section 10 of the Public Solicitor Act 1987 provides that "where a person is provided legal aid [...] and is successful, either in whole or in part, in the proceedings brought by him with the assistance of such legal aid, a contribution shall be payable by him to the Public Solicitor in an amount equivalent to such percentage as may be prescribed of the total sum of moneys recovered or preserved for the aided person in the proceedings [...]". Other provisions of the Public Solicitor Act 1987 detail the prescriptions and limits ruling this contribution mechanism.

Among the options that will be explored, the PSO will investigate the relevance of creating an entirely independent budget for the office, following examples of other regional Legal Aid Commissions and public legal aid agencies. The PSO will also revise its means and merit test to look at the possibility to charge a some of the clients who do not meet the means and merit test or charge a proportion of clients' damages in civil matters. Additionally, discussions with the SIBA on the opportunity to make pro bono legal aid mandatory for private lawyers will continue.

## 4.3. Attention to vulnerable and specific groups

Acknowledging the difficulty for women, youth and people with disabilities to access justice as well the needs to have enhanced balance between men and women across the justice sector, the PSO Strategic Plan 2020-2025 will endeavour to follow the recommendations and guidance of the three year GESI strategy.

The PSO staff will endeavour to recognise the equal role of men and women in Solomon Islands society. Its Family Protection Unit will put additional efforts to ensure that victims of domestic or gender-based violence are defended and can access effective remedy in a timely manner. The PSO will continue to provide awareness and information to women and girls on their rights and on how to access justice through its community awareness sessions and information material. The PSO will also continue promoting internally, a balance of men and women at each level of the staff hierarchy. It will ensure that internal provisions exist to deal with allegations of gender-based or other forms of violence and sexual harassment.

The PSO will also reinforce the capacities of its own staff in understanding and adequately dealing with the specific needs and issues faced by people with disabilities. This will translate in the commission of an independent accessibility audit to provide guidance on how to improve the role and accessibility of the PSO for this community. A specific legal clinic for people with disabilities will be reestablished in Guadalcanal with the support of the UNDP A2J Project. The PSO will also endeavor to recruit lawyers or support staff with disabilities to fulfill work that is compatible with the office requirements.

Finally, the PSO will strive to improve the protection of children and young people, mainly through the prioritisation of legal support to children and young people, but also through the participation of the PSO as co-chair to the development of a Youth Justice Network. The PSO will also take part in the technical consultations on and in the dissemination of the principles of the yet-to-be-adopted Youth Justice Bill.

## ANNEX 1

# SWOTAR ANALYSIS OF ACCESSIBILITY, CREDIBILITY, AFFORDABILITY, SUSTAINABILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OF LEGAL AID IN SOLOMON ISLANDS

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats, Aspirations and Results (SWOTAR) analysis was completed during the planning workshop held on the 31st July and 1st August 2020 with PSO officers and key MJLA staff.





# ACCESSIBILITY

Strengths	Wide reach of legal services for the most disadvantaged people	Financial difficulty and logistics constraints to reach citizens in remote villages	Weaknesses
		Limited inter-agency coordination	
	Resilient staff are adaptable to changes	Challenges to coordination between central Honiara office and provincial centres' offices	
		Minimal office spaces for staff to cater for high service demand	
Opportunities	Opening of additional PSO offices and different services in new and current locations	Declining office maintenance resulting in inappropriate standards with limited accommodations made for vulnerable groups	Threats
Aspirations	Operating effective and efficient PSO offices in all the provinces with wider legal representation and logistics provision of boat and car transportation	Increased awareness of PSO services and delivery of access to justice	Results
	Improved networks and coordination with stakeholders		
	Quality office space and reasonable accommodations made for clients	PSO offices in all provinces	
	New position created for a communications officer to manage traditional and new media presence for greater service provision		

# CREDIBILITY

<b>Strengths</b>	Cooperation and teamwork amongst officers	Job descriptions over not aligned to tasks	<b>Weaknesses</b>
	Professionalism and skills in criminal and civil practice and advocacy		
<b>Opportunities</b>	Building networks with justice sector stakeholders and development partners including volunteer organisations such as AVI and VSA	Gender inequality in staff composition	<b>Threats</b>
<b>Aspirations</b>	Further studies and contributions to the importance of legal aid and role in strengthening liberal democracy	PSO transition to becoming a legal aid commission	<b>Results</b>

# AFFORDABILITY

<b>Strengths</b>	Strong desire to help people in Solomon Islands, particularly vulnerable groups	Unenforced means and merits test on clients	<b>Weaknesses</b>
	Provision of high quality and free legal advice and assistance		
<b>Opportunities</b>	Chance to lead the justice sector in particular areas such as domestic violence (SafeNet), alternate dispute resolution (mediation)	Delays of court processes and decisions affecting PSO representation and public perception	<b>Threats</b>
		Public criticism of PSO by hostile clients and officers	
<b>Aspirations</b>	Research lawyers and court lawyers work to be separated (e.g. research, litigation officers and community work)	High client satisfaction through good results and experience	<b>Results</b>
	Establishment of mediation services		

# SUSTAINABILITY

Strengths	Established links at grassroots levels with communities	Lack of staff to cater for current service demand	Weaknesses
		Remuneration structure and minimal mentorship impacts long term career commitment in the PSO	
		Absence of strategic plan and prioritisation of organisation development	
Opportunities	Incorporation of paralegals and community legal advocates to strengthen office efficiency and connections to communities	Burnout of staff due to high workload	Threats
		Stagnation of salary review and development resulting in higher staff turnover	
		Unforeseen circumstances affecting service delivery (Covid-19)	
Aspirations	Development of a business continuity plan to navigate through unforeseen circumstances	Reduced case backlogs	Results
	Quality resources for improved coordination and staff performance	Increased organisational capacity through motivated staff	
	Improved access to technology through a case management system		

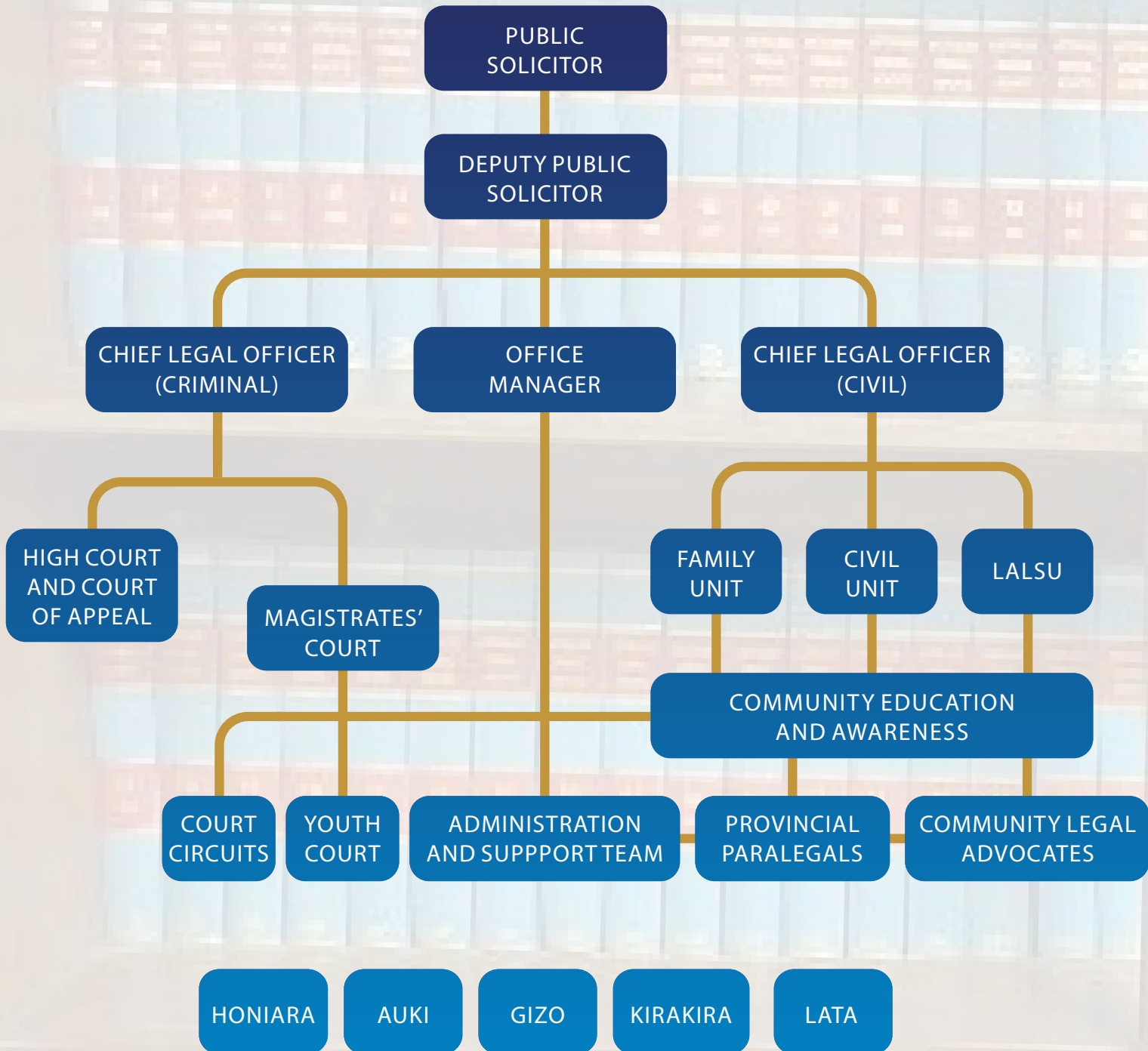


# ACCOUNTABILITY

<b>Strengths</b>	Acquisition of work experience in legal areas – building confidence of officers	Poor file management and limited data collection to oversee monitoring and evaluations	<b>Weaknesses</b>
	Commitment to making positive impacts in Solomon Islands society through respect of rule of law and provision of access to justice, as enshrined in Public Solicitor Act		
<b>Opportunities</b>	Staff development opportunities through travel and training, continuous legal education, ethics, twinning programmes and internships	Slow internal processes and responses	<b>Threats</b>
<b>Aspirations</b>	Perceived and actual independence from government, with separate funding and budget allocation	Provision of effective, efficient, robust and quality justice for Solomon Islands.	<b>Results</b>
	Generation of consistent and accurate data on service delivery and office productivity		

## ANNEX 2

### ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE







# PUBLIC SOLICITOR'S OFFICE

## Honiara Office

Placemakers Building,  
P.O. Box 553  
Honiara, Solomon  
Islands.

☎ 22348/28404  
/28405/28406

## Auki Office

(within the precincts of  
the Auki Magistrate's  
Court)  
PO BOX Auki 44

☎ 40008/40006

## Gizo Office

(next to the Gizo  
Magistrate's Court)  
PO BOX Gizo 84

☎ 60682

## Lata Office

☎ 53004

## Kirakira Office

☎ 50153

 [rebrand.ly/PSO-Solomon](https://rebrand.ly/PSO-Solomon)