solomon islands government

provincial population profile
malaita province

-discovering the relevance-

secretariat of the pacific community
demography-population programme

malaita

malaita

united nations population fund (unfpa)
secretariat of the pacific community
SPC PopGIS

Original text: English

Secretariat of the Pacific Community Cataloguing-in-publication data

Solomon Islands Government provincial population profile,
Malaita Province: discovering the relevance / Secretariat of the
Pacific Community Demography-Population Programme
1. Malaita Province (Solomon Islands) — Population — Maps. 2. Education —
Malaita Province (Solomon Islands) — Maps. 3. Labour supply — Malaita
Province (Solomon Islands) — Maps. 4. Households — Malaita Province
(Solomon Islands) — Maps.
I. Secretariat of the Pacific Community Demography-Population Programme.
II. United Nations Population Fund. III. Title. IV. Secretariat of the Pacific Community

319.5937 AACR2
ISBN: 978-982-00-0259-3

Secretariat of the Pacific Community
BP D5, 98848 Noumea Cedex, New Caledonia
Tel. +687 26.20.00, Fax +687 26.38.18
Email spc@spc.int
Website www.spc.int

Published with financial assistance from AusAID and UNFPA

Prepared for publication and printed at the
Secretariat of the Pacific Community headquarters

Contents

Preface v
Acknowledgements v
Data representation vi
Glossary of population measures vii
Overview viii

1. Introduction 1
Why population matters 1
Discovering the relevance of indicators 1
Indicators and development objectives 2
Describing important population and development indicators – the role of Millennium 2
Development Goals in guiding national and sectoral policy development and planning

2. Population characteristics 3
Population size and growth 3
Population distribution 4
Sex ratio 10
Why does the sex ratio matter? 10
Age and sex structure 12
'Young' population 12
Median age – young age structure and population growth 12
Child-dependency ratio 14

3. Social characteristics 16
Basic education – key to improvment in the quality of life 16
MDG – universal primary education for all and sex disparity in education 16
Sex differentials and gender issues (MDG) 16
Primary school enrolment (MDG) and sex disparity in enrolment 17
Literacy (MDG) 20
Sex disparity in literacy rates 23
Health issues 24
Access to health services 25
Environmental health (water and sanitation) 26
Infant mortality rate and MDG 29

4. Economic characteristics 30
Labour force 30
Labour force participation rate 30
Economic activities 32
Women's access to paid employment in the non-agricultural sector (MDG) 34
Unpaid work 34
Unpaid work – the subsistence economy 35
Household economic activities 36
Betel nut sales 36
Copra sales 37
Fish sales 39

5. Household size 40

List of figures

Figure 1: Total population distribution by ward Malaita Province, 1999 5
Figure 2: Population density by constituency, Malaita Province, 1999 6
Figure 3: Total Population by Village, Malaita, 1999 7
Figure 4: Average annual population growth rate by province in Solomon Islands, 1999 8
Figure 5: Sex ratio by ward in Malaita Province, 1999 10
Figure 6: Youth (15–24 years) sex ratio by ward in Malaita Province, 1999 11
Figure 7: Population pyramid of Malaita Province, 1999 12
Figure 8: Dependency ratio by constituency in Malaita Province, 1999 13
Figure 9: Child dependency ratio by ward in Malaita Province, 1999 14
Figure 10: Young Population by ward in Malaita Province, 1999 15
Figure 11: Primary school enrolment (population 7–12 years) by constituency and sex in Malaita Province, 1999 17
Figure 12: Basic education (population 25 years and over) by ward in Malaita Province, 1999 18
Figure 13: Percentage of population 25 years old and over with above Form 3 education by constituency in Malaita Province, 19 19
Figure 14: Literacy rates of population 7+ years by ward in Solomon Islands, 1999 20
Figure 15: Literacy rates of population 7+ years by ward in Malaita Province, 1999 21
Figure 16: Literacy rates of population 15–24 years by constituency Solomon Islands, 1999 22
Figure 16a: Literacy rates of population 15–24 years in Solomon Islands and Malaita province by sex, 1999 22
Figure 17: Literacy rates of population 15–24 years by ward in Malaita Province, 1999 23
Figure 18: Health Services in Malaita Province 25
Figure 19: Proportion of households with access to piped water by constituency in Malaita Province, 1999 26
Figure 20: Proportion of households with access to modern toilet facilities and improved drinking water by constituency in Malaita Province, 1999 27
Figure 21: Proportion of households with permanent type dwelling by constituency in Malaita Province, 1999 28
Figure 22: Infant mortality rates in Solomon Islands by province and sex, 1999 29
Figure 23: Labour force participation rates by constituency in Solomon Islands, 1999 31
Figure 24: Labour force participation rates by constituency in Malaita Province, 1999 32
Figure 25: Activity status of males as percentage of all males aged 15 and over, by province Solomon Islands, 1999 33
Figure 26: Activity status of females as a percentage of all females aged 15 and over, by province Solomon Islands, 1999 33
Figure 27: Reasons for not engaging in paid work: Males 15 and over in Solomon Islands, 1999 34
Figure 28: Reasons for not engaging in paid work: Females 15 and over in Solomon Islands, 1999 34
Figure 29: Main unpaid work activity of Males 15 and over in Solomon Islands, 1999 35
Figure 30: Main unpaid work activity of Females 15 and over in Solomon Islands, 1999 35
Figure 31: Proportion of households selling betel nuts by constituency in Malaita Province, 1999 36
Figure 32: Percentage of households producing coconuts for sale by province, 1999 37
Figure 33: Proportion of households involved in the sale of coconuts by constituency in Malaita Province, 1999 38
Figure 34: Proportion of households involved in the sale of fish by constituency, Malaita Province, 1999 39
Figure 35: Average household size in Solomon Islands, 1999 40

Acknowledgements

Sincere thanks to those who participated in the national workshop on the application of the population geographical information system (PopGIS) to policy analysis and development in Solomon Islands.

Participants in the workshop included data/information producers and users involved in the areas of policy development, planning and policy advice from the following agencies – National Statistics Office, National Planning and Aid Coordination, and key sectoral agencies in Health, Education, Agriculture, Fishing, Forestry and Police. Representatives of community-based or civil organisations such as the Church of Melanesia also attended. All are gratefully acknowledged for their contributions. Sincere thanks also to AusAID, UNFPA and DFID for their financial support, and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community for its assistance and expertise.

Preface

The national workshop on which this report is based was aimed at promoting evidence-based decision making by applying GIS-based population information from the most recent Solomon Islands population census (and data from other sources) to policy and planning issues. It focused on extracting and interpreting the policy significance of population patterns and trends at both the national and sub-national level using state-of-the-art population GIS.

The main output of the workshop was a population and socio-economic profile for each province based on policy frameworks such as the International Conference on Population and Development and the Millennium Development Goals, and national policies such as the National Economic Recovery, Reform and Development Plan (NERRDP) 2003–2006 and the Revised National Population Policy.

In developing this provincial profile, the Department of National Planning and Aid Coordination took the lead in coordinating national-level efforts in collaboration with appropriate sectoral/provincial agencies. The department was assisted in these efforts by staff from the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC). Through its Statistics and Demography Programme, SPC provided continuous technical assistance for all phases of the GIS development and the production of this provincial profile for Malaita.

I acknowledge the DFID, for its financial support for the initial development of PopGIS, and AusAID for its current support for further development of the system. This provincial profile was compiled under the UNFPA's 'Regional Project on Integration of Population and Gender Issues into Development Policy and Planning'. The UNFPA's financial support for the compilation and printing of the report is also gratefully acknowledged.

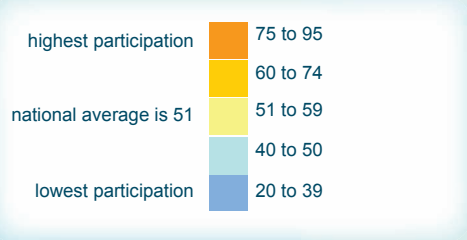
Mrs Jane Waetara
Permanent Secretary
Department of National Planning and Aid Coordination

DATA REPRESENTATION

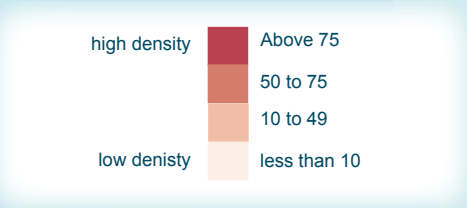
Colour schemes

Four colour schemes have been consistently applied in the profile, to facilitate understanding and make it easy for users to compare different levels of geography (Ward or Constituency versus Province), or look at different indicators for the same area, for example. Whenever data are mapped around a national average, the colour scheme representing different value categories is set up in such a way that warm colours, ranging from yellow to orange to red, describe values higher than the national average, while colder colours, in shades of blue ranging from light to dark, represent values below the national average. This is a powerful way to illustrate sub-national or sub-provincial variations regarding specific development indicators.

For example:



Three other colour schemes are used to provide information on indicators without reference to a national average. In the first two, different shades of maroon or orange are used to represent in-migration, population densities and counts.
For example:

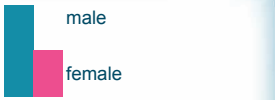


In the third, light greens/oranges are used to describe data such as annual growth rates.

For example:

Where data have also been disaggregated by sex, the values are represented in small bar charts corresponding to each of the wards or constituencies. Blue represents males, and pink represents females.

For example:

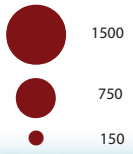


Some of the maps also contain pie charts, which have been used to show data where multiple variables are being mapped. The full pie adds up to 100%, and each segment represents the proportional representation of a particular feature.

For example:

To represent the location, geographical spread and size of village populations in Malaita a proportional symbol map was used. The proportions of each symbol are scaled depending on the size of the village population.

For example:



Glossary of population measures

The most commonly used measures in demographic and social statistics – absolute and relative numbers – have been used in this profile:

Absolute

Count – The absolute number of a population or any demographic event occurring in a specified area in a specified time period. For example, 12,680 live births occurred in Solomon Islands in the 12 months before the 1999 census. The raw quantities of demographic events are the basis of all other statistical refinements and analyses.

Relative

Rate – The frequency of demographic events (such as births and deaths) in a population during a specified time period (usually a year), divided by the population "at risk" of the event occurring during that time period. For example, in 1999 in Solomon Islands, there were 36 live births per 1,000 population.

The frequency of a demographic event, such as birth, death or marriage, is measured by what is called a vital rate. Vital events change the size, structure and distribution of a population over time. The extent of change needs to be measured in relation to a specific period of time. For demographic events, this period is one year. In other words, a pure vital rate, such as the crude birth rate (CBR), indicates how many births occurred per unit of a certain population in any given year. Rates enable us to make comparisons of the occurrence of a particular event over space and in time.

Ratio – The relation of one population subgroup to the total population or to another subgroup; that is, one subgroup divided by another. For example, the sex ratio in Solomon Islands in 1999 was 107 males per 100 females.

Proportion – The relation of a population subgroup to the entire population; that is, a population subgroup divided by the entire population. For example, the proportion of Solomon Islands' population classified as urban in 1999 was 0.16 or 16 per cent.

Lilisiana Village (near Auki) photo: Alan McNeil

OVERVIEW MAP

1. Introduction

The information contained in this profile is the work of participants in the UNFPA/SPC workshop on the application of the population geographical information system (PopGIS) to policy analysis and development. The workshop was aimed at promoting evidence-based decision making by applying GIS-based population information from the most recent Solomon Islands population census (and data from other sources) to policy and planning issues. It focused on extracting, explaining and interpreting the policy significance of population patterns and trends at both the national and sub-national level using the state-of-the-art population GIS. Although the population information in this profile is from the 1999 census, it is still the latest census information. The next census in Solomon Islands will be in 2009 and the results will be available after 12 months.

The purpose of this 'provincial population profile' is to familiarise readers with the importance of linking population measures and indicators to policy and planning decisions and to help readers understand the policy and planning implications of key population and development indicators. It should thus lead to increased utilisation of these indicators. In addition, it is intended to be used to support advocacy on population and development by interested organisations and individuals targeting leaders, policy makers, administrators and communities below the national level.

Some key population and development indicators

	INDICATORS	
DESCRIPTION	Solomon Islands	Malaita Province
Annual Population Growth Rate (%)1986-1999	2.7	3.3
Median Age (years) 1999	18.8	17.7
Population Under age 19 years (%)1999	53	55
Child Dependency Ratio 15-64 (%)1999	77	89
Population 25+ years with basic education (%) 1999	36	23
Population 25+ years with above form 3 education (%) 1999	14	7
Labour Force Participation Rates (%)		
Total	54	51
Male	67	63
Female	41	41
Access to Toilet Facility - 1999 Households (%)	23	13
Access to Piped Water - 1999 Households (%)	60	57

Why population matters

The following points illustrate the importance of population indicators, and show how key population and development and other socio-demographic measures can drive social and economic development policy development and planning, including activity and progress monitoring:

- Population characteristics and activities are the primary determinants of development. People-driven activities impact on the availability, utilisation and sustainability of resources for current and future generations; their activities can lead to economic prosperity or to environmental, social and economic problems. Hence, planning for sustainable development needs to be more people-centred and people-focused, rather than merely looking at the economic 'bottom line'.
- Without reliable and timely population statistics, including regularly updated population projections or estimates, statisticians and planners cannot calculate population-based development indicators, such as those contained in the MDG framework.
- Population indicators can drive locally meaningful development policy, and thus help facilitate informed decision-making.

Discovering the relevance of indicators

The concept of 'indicators', and how they differ from rates and ratios, is discussed below. This discussion will help the reader interpret the indicators presented in this profile.

An indicator is basically a 'pointer'. It can be an objective measurement, such as a number, a specific rate or a ratio; it can, however, also refer to an opinion, or to a perception that points to a specific condition or situation, and can be used to measure changes in that condition or situation over time. In other words, indicators provide a close look at the results of initiatives and actions or interventions. For this reason, they are the most important tools for monitoring and evaluating development work (UNESCO, 1977). *In Social Indicators* (1966), R. A. Bauer described social indicators as statistical series and all other forms of evidence… that enable us to assess where we stand and where we are going with respect to values and goals, and to evaluate specific programs and determine their impact'.

This definition is useful because it recognises the normative nature of indicators, in that a change in a particular direction can be interpreted as 'good' or 'bad', 'welcome' or 'unwelcome', 'desirable' or 'undesirable'. For example, a rising birth rate will most likely be greeted as welcome news in Japan, Italy and Germany, whereas it may generate considerably less excitement in countries with persistent high fertility, such as many countries in the Pacific. It also recognises that indicators can come from 'all forms of evidence', both quantitative and qualitative, and that indicators must measure changes over time. Because of their normative nature, care must be taken in defining the norm or benchmark implicit in any indicator against which change is measured. For example, is the rate of migration of women being compared to the situation of men in a particular country, or to women in other countries?

Gender-sensitive indicators have the special function of pointing out gender-related changes in society over time. Their usefulness lies in their ability to point to changes in the status and roles of women and men over time, and therefore to measure whether gender equity is being achieved. Because use of indicators and other relevant evaluation techniques will lead to a better understanding of how results can be achieved, using gender-sensitive indicators will also feed into more effective planning and programme delivery.

As tools for measuring social change, indicators are subject to various forces. Before using indicators, it is important to recognise that they all have their own limitations, strengths and biases, either introduced at the point of data collection or during processing. This is important because certain types of indicators are applicable to certain situations, while others are defined differently over a period of time. In addition, indicators may not always cover the same situation, perhaps due to underlying definitions or some other limitations, so great care must be taken in interpreting them.

Indicators and development objectives

Since indicators are tools for monitoring and evaluating results, they are usually tied to clear and concise objectives with which a development initiative begins. And this is one of the main reasons for the collection, analysis and presentation of data in reports such as the Malaita Profile.

When using indicators, objectives must be clearly articulated. Objectives should be determined in relation to situation analysis or baseline studies, against which results can be measured. A situation analysis or baseline study (which should include data disaggregated by sex, socio-economic grouping and ethnicity) will reveal the population situation in the country or local area before government intervention. The situation analysis is usually used as the basis for comparison when using indicators through the planning/implementation cycle.

In this profile, an attempt has been made to present indicators that are common and relevant to government policies in Solomon Islands, and that link to global initiatives such as the Millennium Development Goals.

Describing important population and development indicators – the role of Millennium Development Goals in guiding national and sectoral policy development and planning

Building on global conferences and agreements during the 1990s, the 2000 Millennium Declaration marked a strong commitment to the right to development, peace and security, gender equality, eradication of the many dimensions of poverty and sustainable human development. Entrenched in that Declaration, adopted by 147 heads of state and 189 states, were what have become known as the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These goals include 18 time-bound targets to be achieved by the year 2015, with appropriate indicators selected to monitor progress.

Translating the global MDG targets to the national level requires a sound operational framework encompassing all sectors and groups in society. This framework should set out a country-owned cross-cutting agenda aimed at sustained, shared growth and public action directed towards achieving the MDGs. National ownership is paramount, and countries have been encouraged to set their own numerical and time-bound targets for meeting the goals and to articulate the policies and programmes needed to attain them.

The MDGs, which include many population-based development indicators, serve as a useful framework for national and sectoral policy development and planning and for monitoring of development activities and achievement of development progress. Though the MDG framework provides a useful guide, it is not meant to direct national development efforts or replace Solomon Islands' own policy development and planning frameworks, such as its National Economic Recovery, Reform and Development Plan (NERRDP) 2003–2006: Strategic and Action Framework, and various sectoral policy statements and plans.

The population information contained in the Malaita Profile is linked to the above frameworks and is intended to provide national policy-makers and planners with a factual basis for informed decision-making, leading to the development of evidence-based policy, and the setting of clear priorities. Of particular significance is assessing where, available, the relevance of the MDG target indicators to the indicators presented in this profile.

Adagege, Malaita photo: Alan McNeil

2. Population characteristics

Everyone is a member of a population, and population factors have an impact on many facets of life: from where we live to the prices we pay for goods and services. The need for health care preoccupies the political leaders of industrialised countries whose populations are 'aging,' while the need for classrooms, employment opportunities and housing preoccupies the leaders of countries that are still growing rapidly. Population conditions influence history. Similarly, historical events can significantly affect populations. Wars can decimate a generation of men, as happens in many countries around the world. The discovery of new medicines often leads to increases in life expectancy, and different causes of death become more prominent. Alternatively, population change may sound a warning of other important changes. Environmental contamination may be detected first by increased reports of illness and rising mortality rates in certain geographic areas. In all these ways and more, population is news everywhere in the world today. [Population Reference Bureau]

Therefore, understanding the dynamics of population processes, and population growth, distribution, and characteristics is critical for service delivery and the development of policies and programmes that

- can accommodate a growing number of primary school children in higher education,
- increase economic activities that provide employment for an increasing number of school-leavers,
- provide for and sustain adequate health service facilities, and
- ensure that housing, water supplies, roads and transport infrastructure can meet the demands of a growing population.

In short, to plan for the provision of various services, governments need to know the size of population that will have to be catered for in future years and how fast that population is growing.

Population size and growth

Whether a population grows or declines, the changes can be traced to the net effects of the three demographic processes of fertility, mortality, and migration. Fertility adds members to the population while mortality removes them. Thus, the annual number of deaths in a population can be subtracted from the annual number of births to find the net number of people added through natural increase. The natural increase is added to the net migration numbers to yield overall population growth (Box 1 – balancing equation). Populations increase through migration and natural increase in most places but may also decline as a result of net migration. Natural/civil catastrophes may also lead to the displacement of large numbers of people, as was the case in Solomon Islands at the time of the 1999 census.

Box 1 – Balancing equation:

Population growth = CBR minus CDR plus Net migration rate

Therefore the net migration rate can be estimated:

Net migration rate = Population growth minus CBR plus CDR

Note: CBR = crude birth rate
CDR = crude death rate

The population enumerated at the latest censuses in 1976, 1986 and 1999 was respectively 196,823, 285,176 and 409,042. This indicates a high population growth of 3.5% in 1976–1986, which declined to a still high level of 2.7% in the period 1986–1999. The ethnic conflict that started in late 1998 resulted in the displacement of many people. As Solomon Islands experiences very low international migration, these growth trends result mostly from natural increases. With about 2.7% annual growth, a population would double in 26 years. Even though the 1999 census showed a decline in the growth rate from the previous censuses, this rate still puts Solomon Islands among the fastest growing countries in the Pacific and indeed the world.

The 1999 census analysis reported the estimated CBR and CDR at 36 and 9 respectively. According to the balancing equation in Box 1, the net migration rate at the national level can be calculated as follows:

Net migration rate = 27 – 36 + 9 = 0.0 (%).

A net migration rate of 0.0 (%) is self explanatory. This, however, does not mean that there was no population movement, as the 1999 census data on international migration show. As mentioned before, the net migration rate is composed of arrivals and departures, and in this case the number of arrivals and departures was roughly the same, resulting in zero net international migration.

Malaita Province, with an annual growth rate of 3.3% (Figure 1 page 11), has the second fastest growing population in the country after Honiara Urban (3.7%). These high growth rates in both Honiara and Malaita can be attributed to high net internal migration and high fertility. In absolute terms, this high growth has added over 4000 more people each year to the total population of Malaita Province since the 1999 Population Census.

The 1999 census analysis showed that the relatively high annual population growth rate per annum at the national level was brought about by a high natural increase, while a combination of natural increase and high net internal migration resulted in high growth in Honiara, Malaita and other provinces. The natural growth is the result of the continued high fertility rate (high birth rate) prevailing in many provinces of Solomon Islands. The slow growth of the Solomon Islands economy overall and of provincial economies reduces capacity to cope with a rapidly growing population, thus placing pressure on the public and private sector to respond to increasing demands for housing, energy, water, education, health facilities and employment opportunities.

Therefore, all levels of government in Solomon Islands consider population growth to be an issue of major concern. The national government is revising its population policy to address the current rate of population growth. Strategies focusing on the determinants of this high growth are being considered, especially in relation to fertility reduction through family planning, advocacy, internal migration and urbanisation.

Population distribution

Malaita Province has over 100,000 inhabitants. Where do they live? The population census answers this question by keeping tabs on the distribution of population by wards and villages. The geographic distribution of the population is determined by fertility, mortality and migration.

The population is unevenly distributed among the province's wards and, because some wards are growing much faster than others, its geographic distribution is becoming more unbalanced (Figure 1). Malaita Province has the highest concentration of population out of the nine provinces of Solomon Islands. Almost one-third (30%) of the country's population is concentrated in Malaita Province alone. It is unlikely that this imbalance will change as these wards continue to experience high population growth as a result of high fertility and high internal migration.

Auki, Malaita photo: Alan McNeil

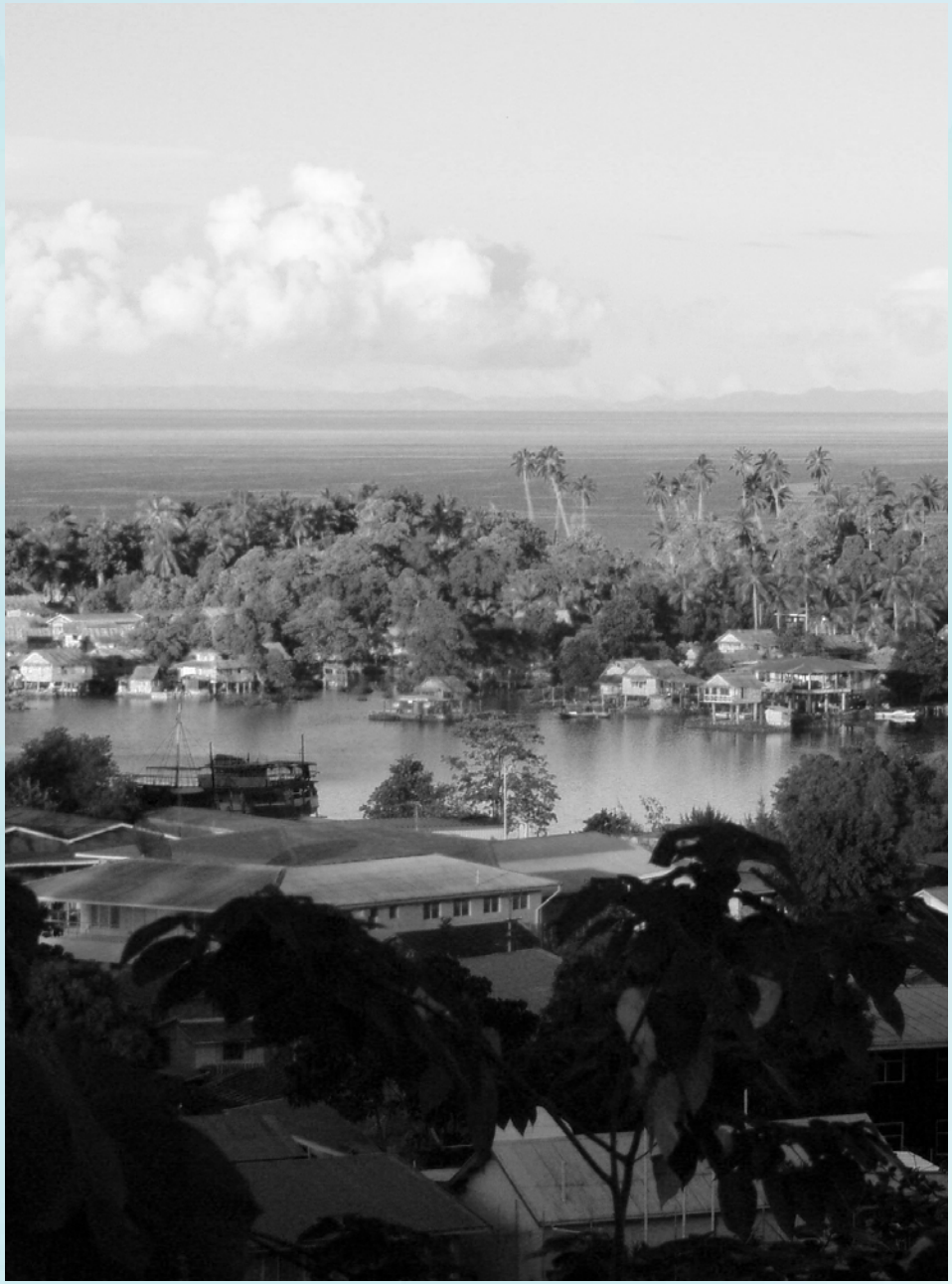


Figure 1: Total population distribution by ward, Malaita Province, 1999

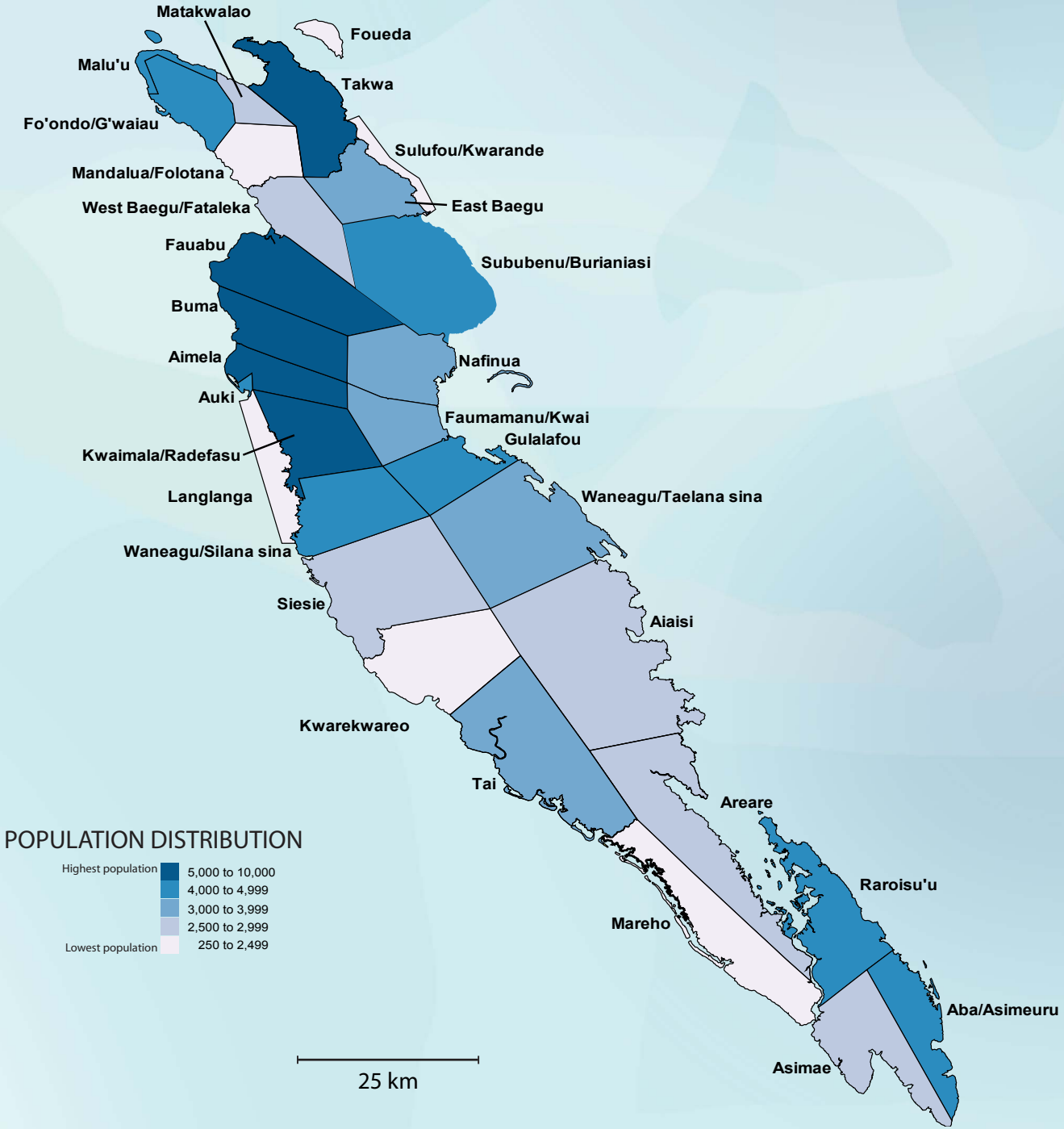


Figure 2: Population density by constituency, Malaita Province, 1999

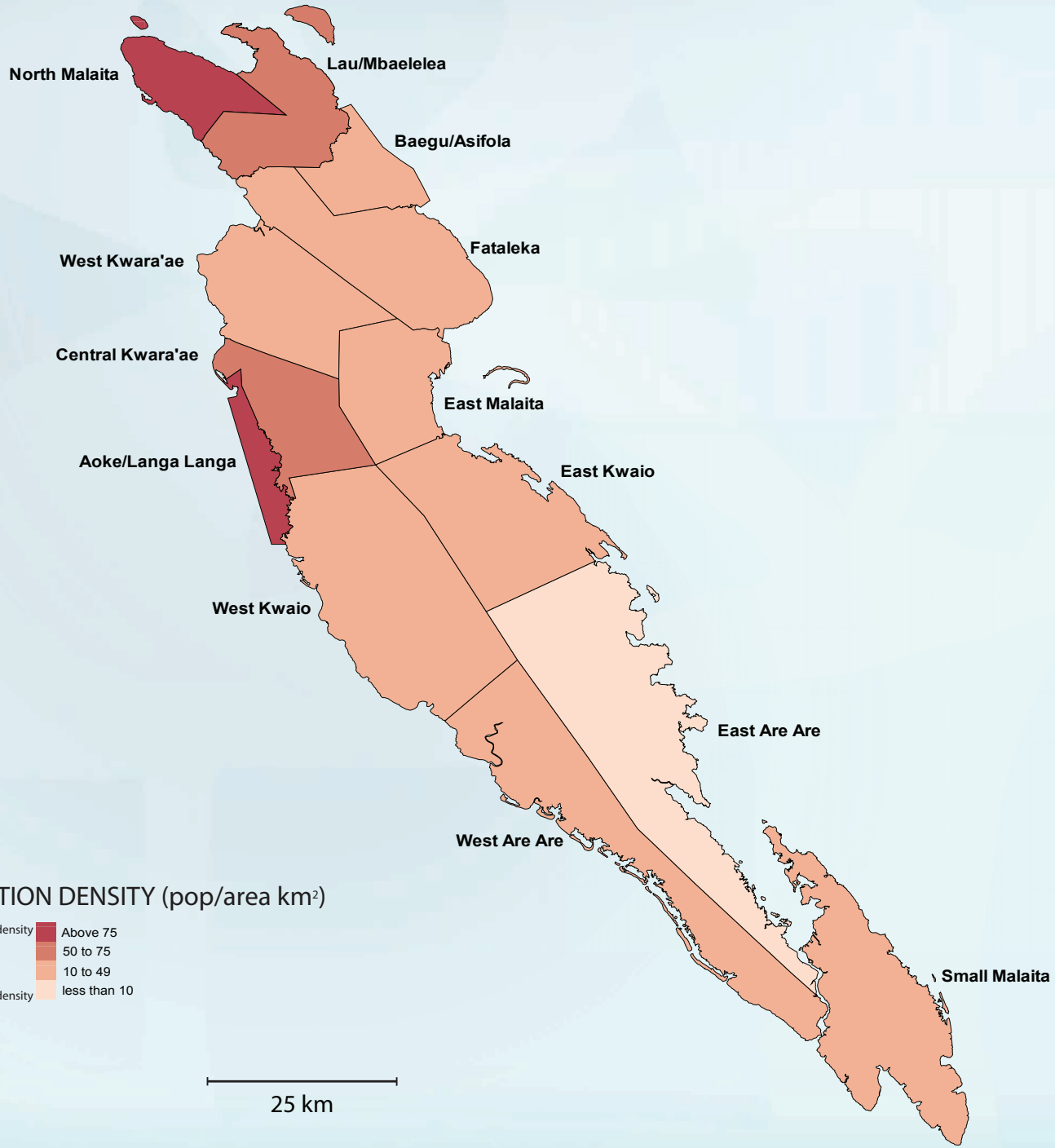


Figure 3: Total Population by Village, Malaita, 1999

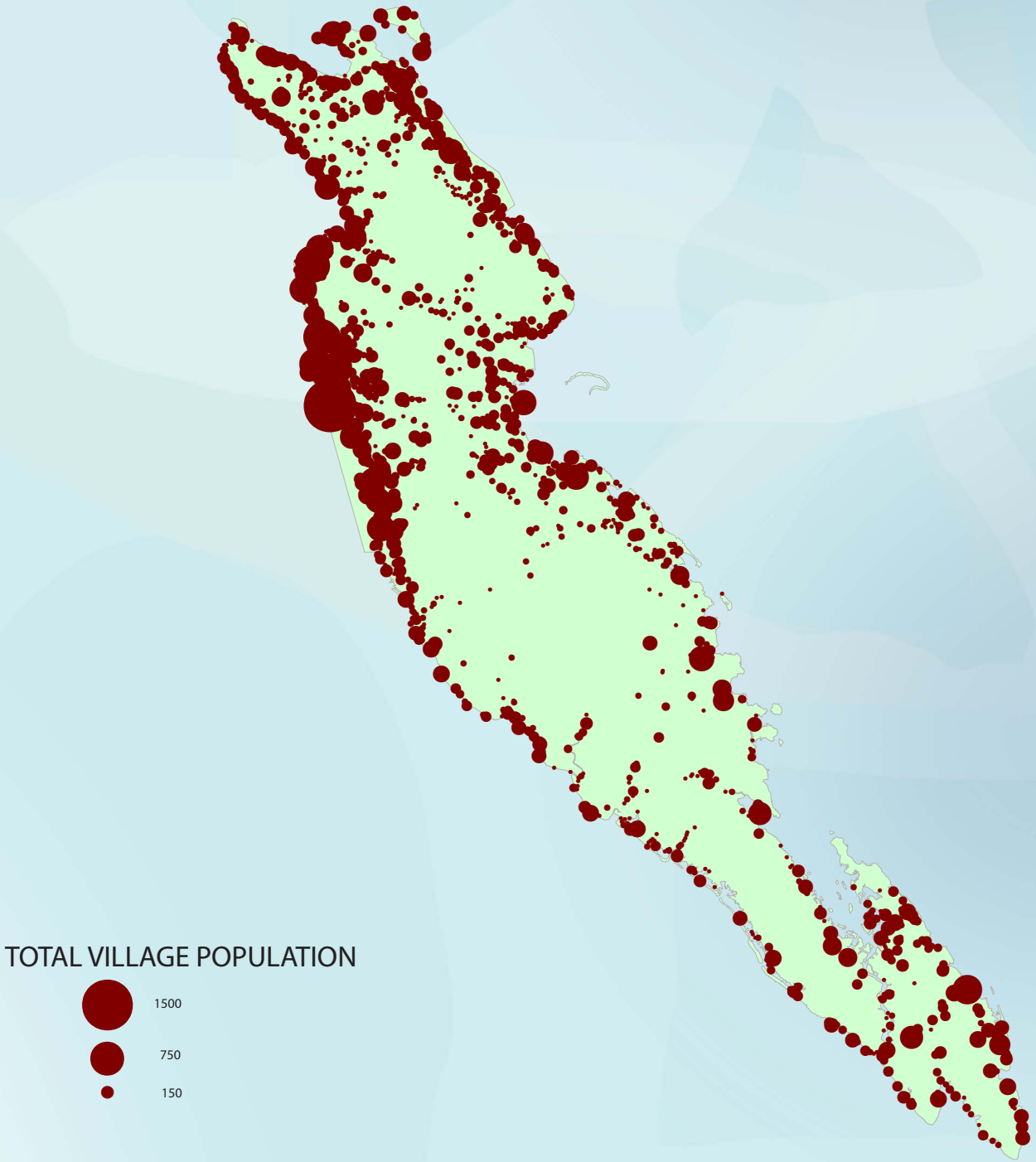
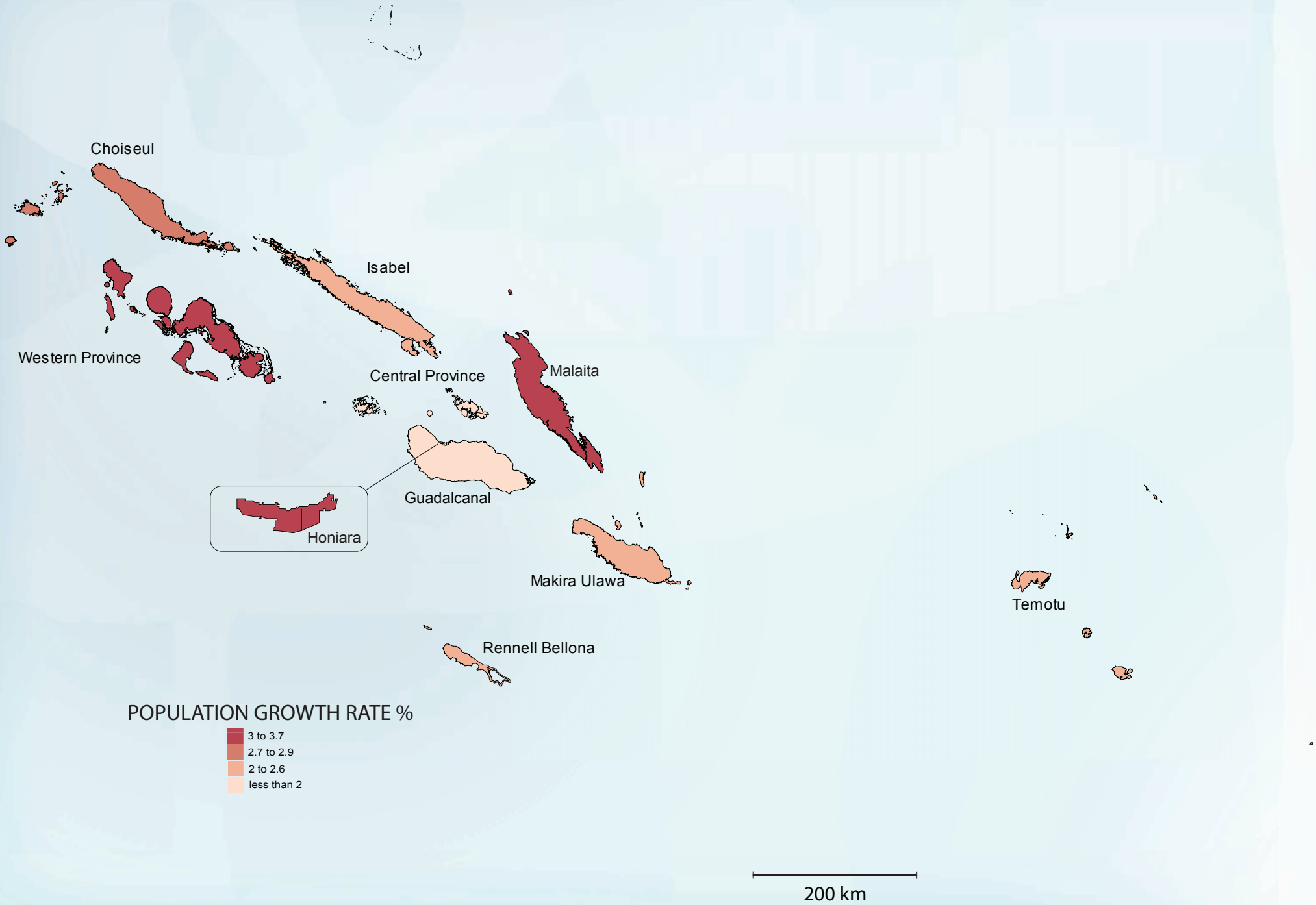
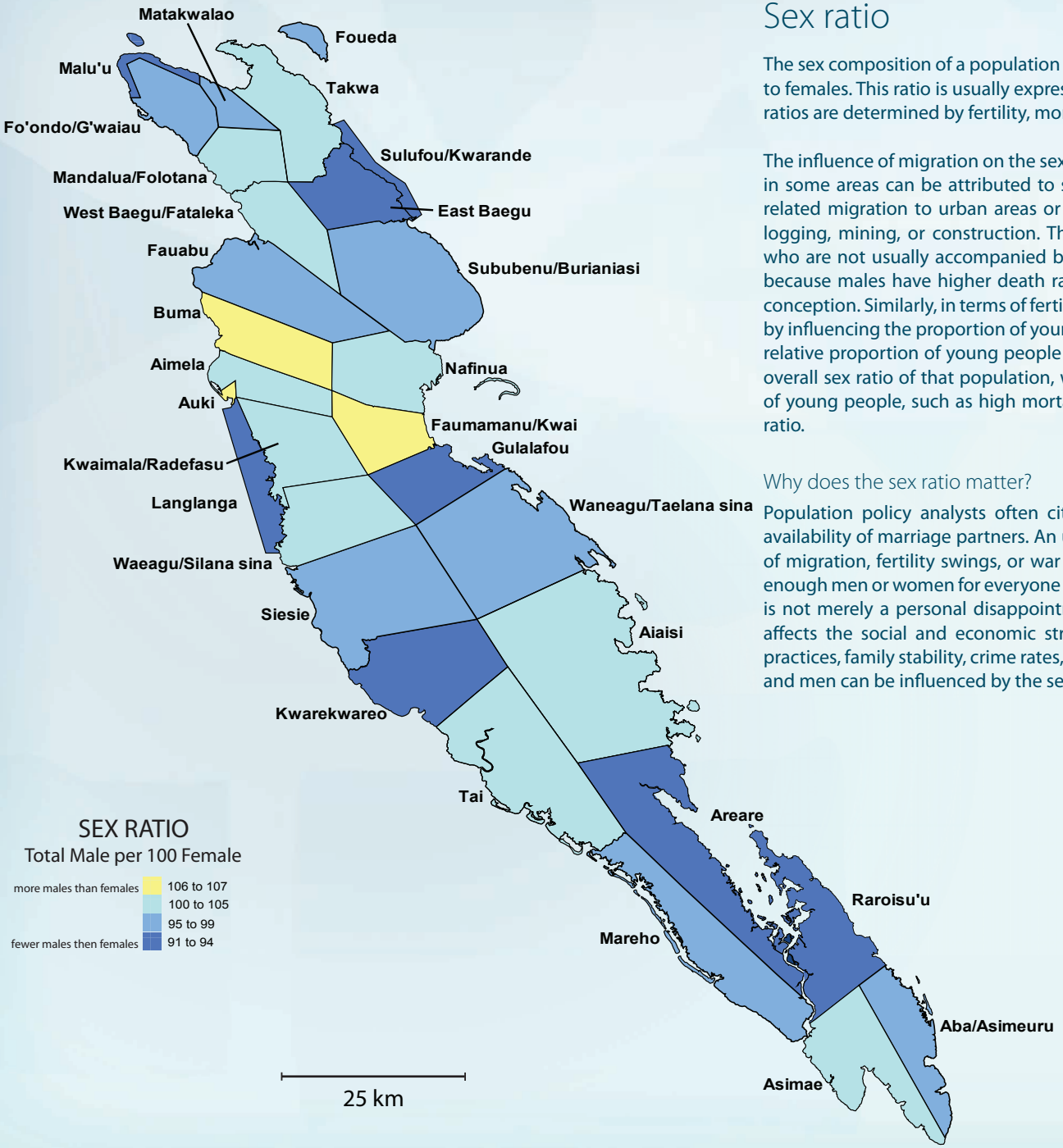


Figure 4: Average annual population growth rate by province in Solomon Islands, 1999



Wharf at Atoifi, Malaita, photo: Alan McNeil

Figure 5: Sex ratio by ward in Malaita Province, 1999



Sex ratio

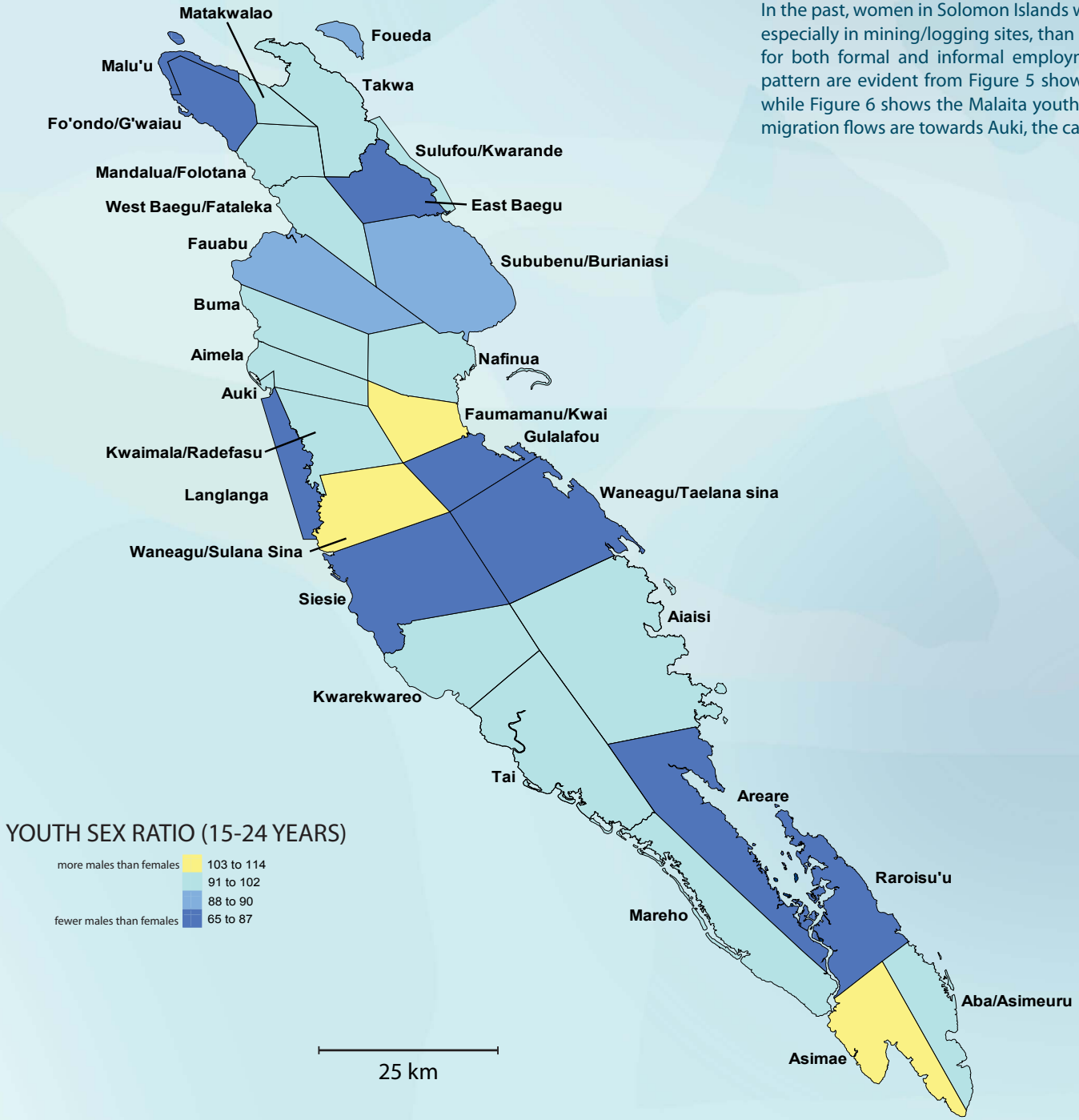
The sex composition of a population can be summarised by the sex ratio – the ratio of males to females. This ratio is usually expressed as the number of males for every 100 females. Sex ratios are determined by fertility, mortality and migration.

The influence of migration on the sex ratio is easy to assess. The unbalanced sex ratio shown in some areas can be attributed to sex-differential migration, especially labour/education related migration to urban areas or to areas where there are economic activities such as logging, mining, or construction. The majority of these labour migrants have been men who are not usually accompanied by their families. Mortality also influences the sex ratio because males have higher death rates than females at nearly every age, beginning with conception. Similarly, in terms of fertility, the sex ratio at birth affects the population sex ratio by influencing the proportion of young people in a population. Any event that increases the relative proportion of young people in a population, as does a high fertility rate, raises the overall sex ratio of that population, while any event that decreases the relative proportion of young people, such as high mortality or low fertility, can similarly lower the overall sex ratio.

Why does the sex ratio matter?

Population policy analysts often cite the fact that an unbalanced sex ratio affects the availability of marriage partners. An unbalanced sex ratio in the young adult years because of migration, fertility swings, or war casualties, for example, means that there may not be enough men or women for everyone to find a spouse. Scarcity of potential marriage partners is not merely a personal disappointment for individuals who want to get married, it also affects the social and economic structure of a population. Marriage rates, childbearing practices, family stability, crime rates, and even the comparative status and power of women and men can be influenced by the sex ratio.

Figure 6: Youth (15–24 years) sex ratio by ward in Malaita Province, 1999



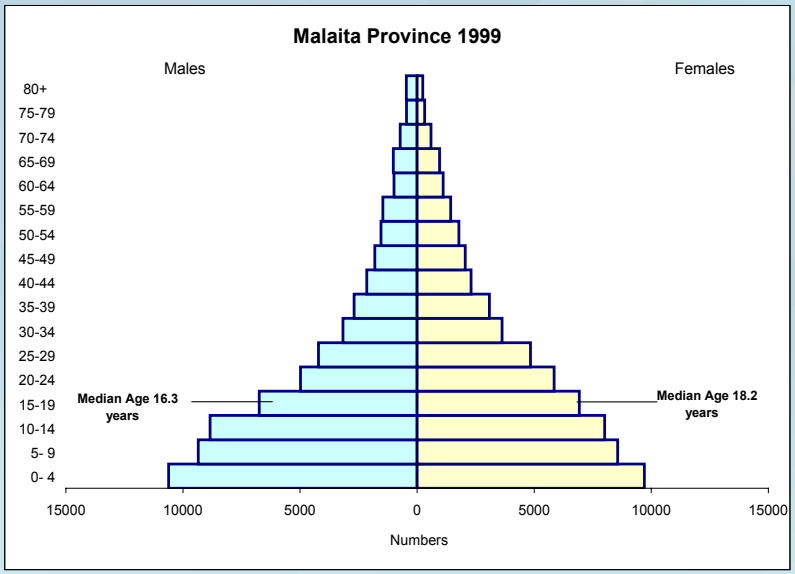
In the past, women in Solomon Islands were less likely to work outside their home province, especially in mining/logging sites, than women today who are migrating to these locations for both formal and informal employment. The effects of this unbalanced immigration pattern are evident from Figure 5 showing the sex ratios for Malaita population by ward, while Figure 6 shows the Malaita youth population (15–24 years) by ward. In both figures, migration flows are towards Auki, the capital of Malaita Province.

Age and sex structure

Age and sex are the most basic characteristics of a population. Every population has a different age and sex composition – the number and proportion of males and females in each age group – and this structure can have a considerable impact on the population's social and economic situation, both present and future.

A population's age and sex composition is most easily portrayed graphically through population pyramids (below). Population pyramids provide quick and insightful information about a country or a province's population structure and underlying demographic processes and developments. The population of Malaita is young and rapidly growing and has the same age and sex structure as the country's population. A rapidly growing population will be expensive to maintain in terms of provision of goods and services by governments to households and families. The population pyramid of Malaita Province closely resembles that of Solomon Islands in 1999 – the age and sex composition is presented in the pyramid in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Population pyramid of Malaita Province, 1999



'Young' population

The population of Malaita Province, like the national population, has a large proportion of people in younger age groups. The very high fertility in the recent past is reflected in the high proportion of people in young age groups. For example, over 50% of the population of Malaita is below the age of 24 years, indicating a high youth dependency burden.

This very large dependent population imposes high costs in terms of the need to create paid business and employment opportunities, provide education services, and cater for different medical needs, consumer preferences and even crime patterns. In addition, a population's age structure has a great deal to do with how that population lives. For example, are resources equally distributed by geography and location? Are all the education services for young people equitably distributed, or are gender issues impeding equal participation in various areas of everyday living? These are some of the questions arising from the age and structure of a population.

Median age – young age structure and population growth

The median age is the age at which the population is divided in equal halves. The median age of the population of Malaita Province is 17.3 years, with 18.2 years for females compared to 16.3 years for males. Clearly, half the population of Malaita Province is below the median age of 17 years, which has a significant bearing on future demand for goods and services.

This large proportion of young people in Malaita Province virtually guarantees that the population will continue to grow, even during periods of declining fertility and after fertility drops to 'replacement level'. The effects of a high birth rate on age structure and future population size must be monitored by government authorities. For example, a high birth rate leads to high population growth, especially of the child population, thus increasing the cost of service delivery. Similarly, the effect of high population growth on equitable allocation of resources, including land, needs to be regularly monitored and assessed.

Figure 8: Dependency ratio by constituency in Malaita Province, 1999

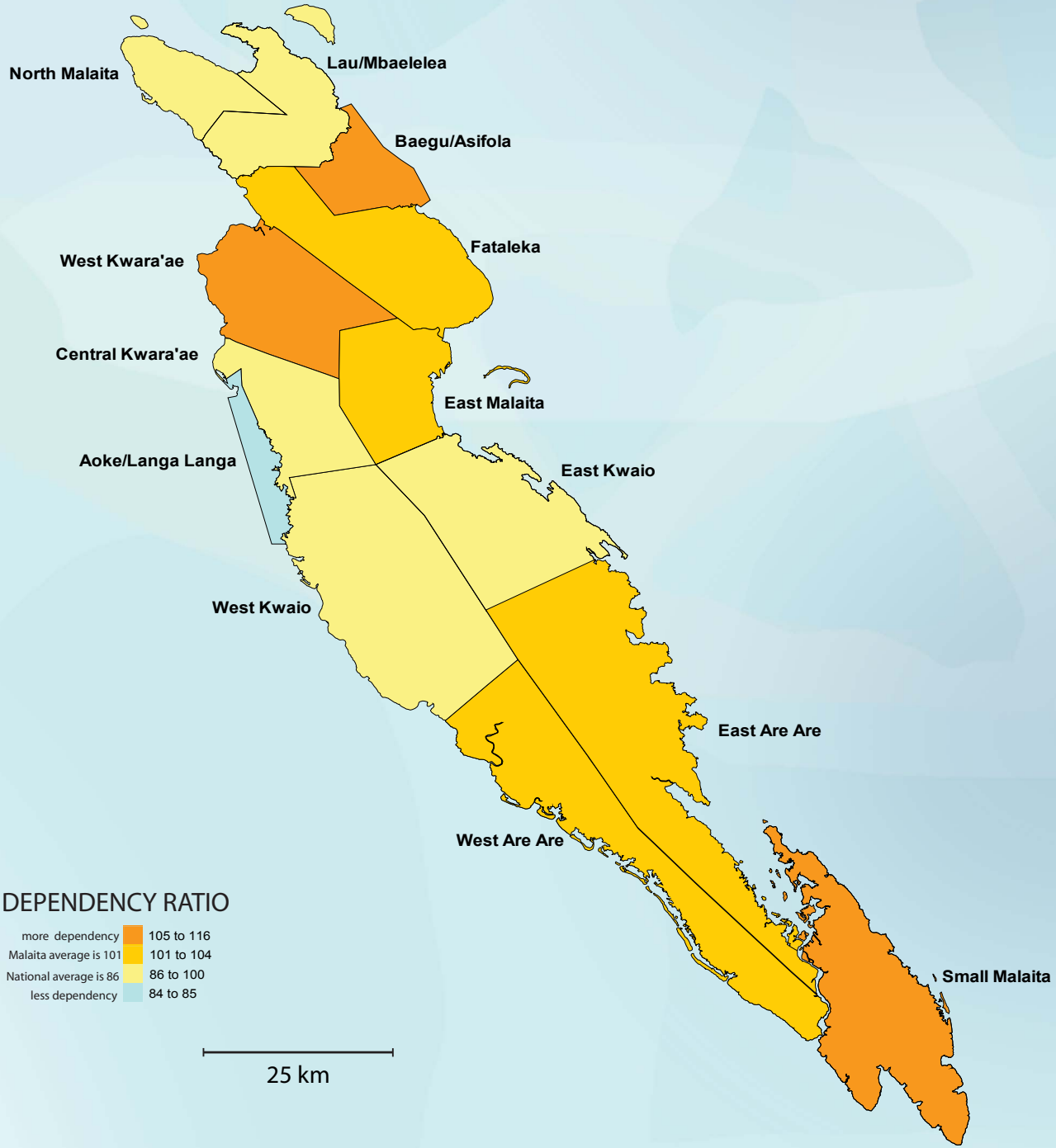
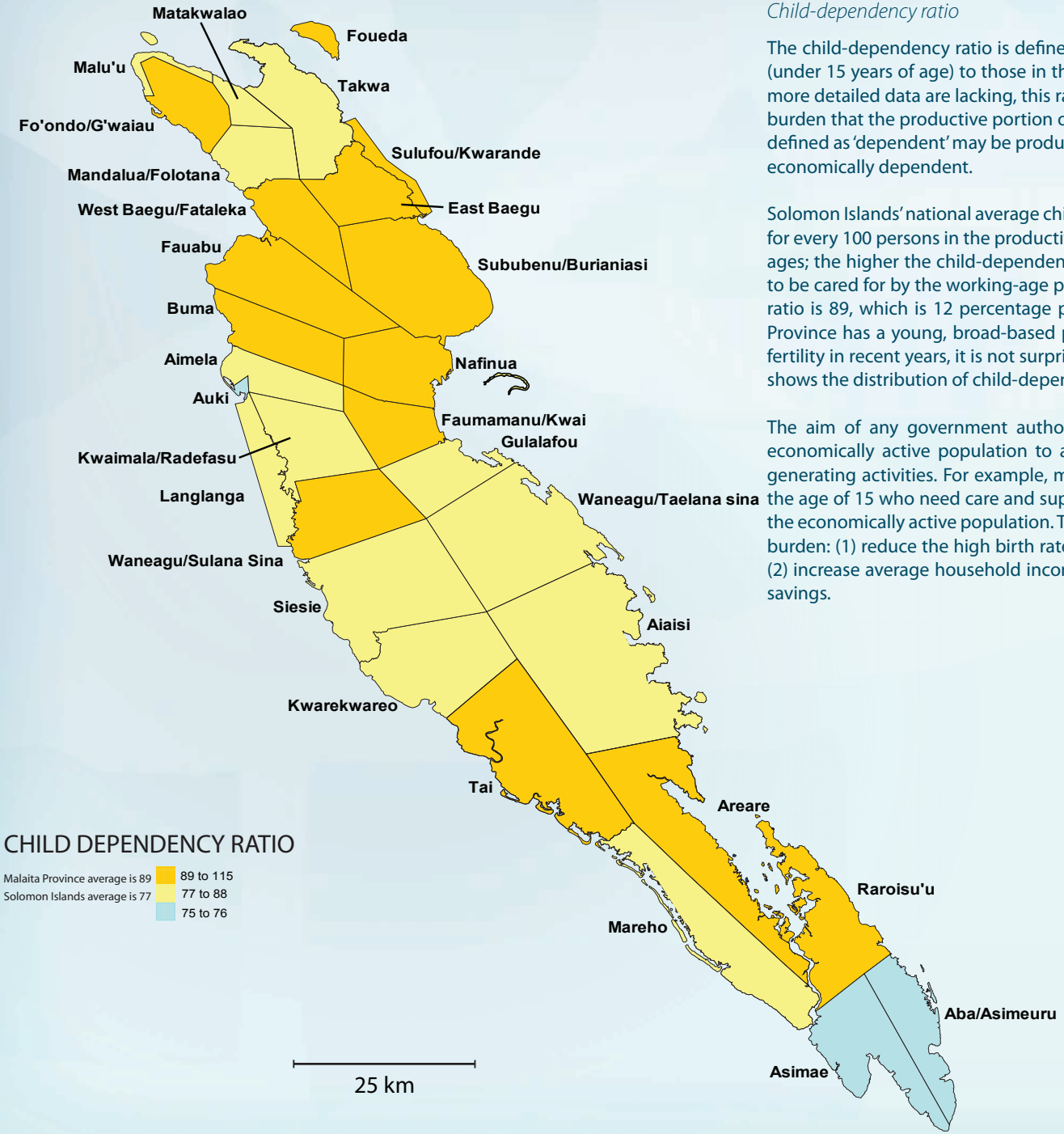


Figure 9: Child dependency ratio by ward in Malaita Province, 1999



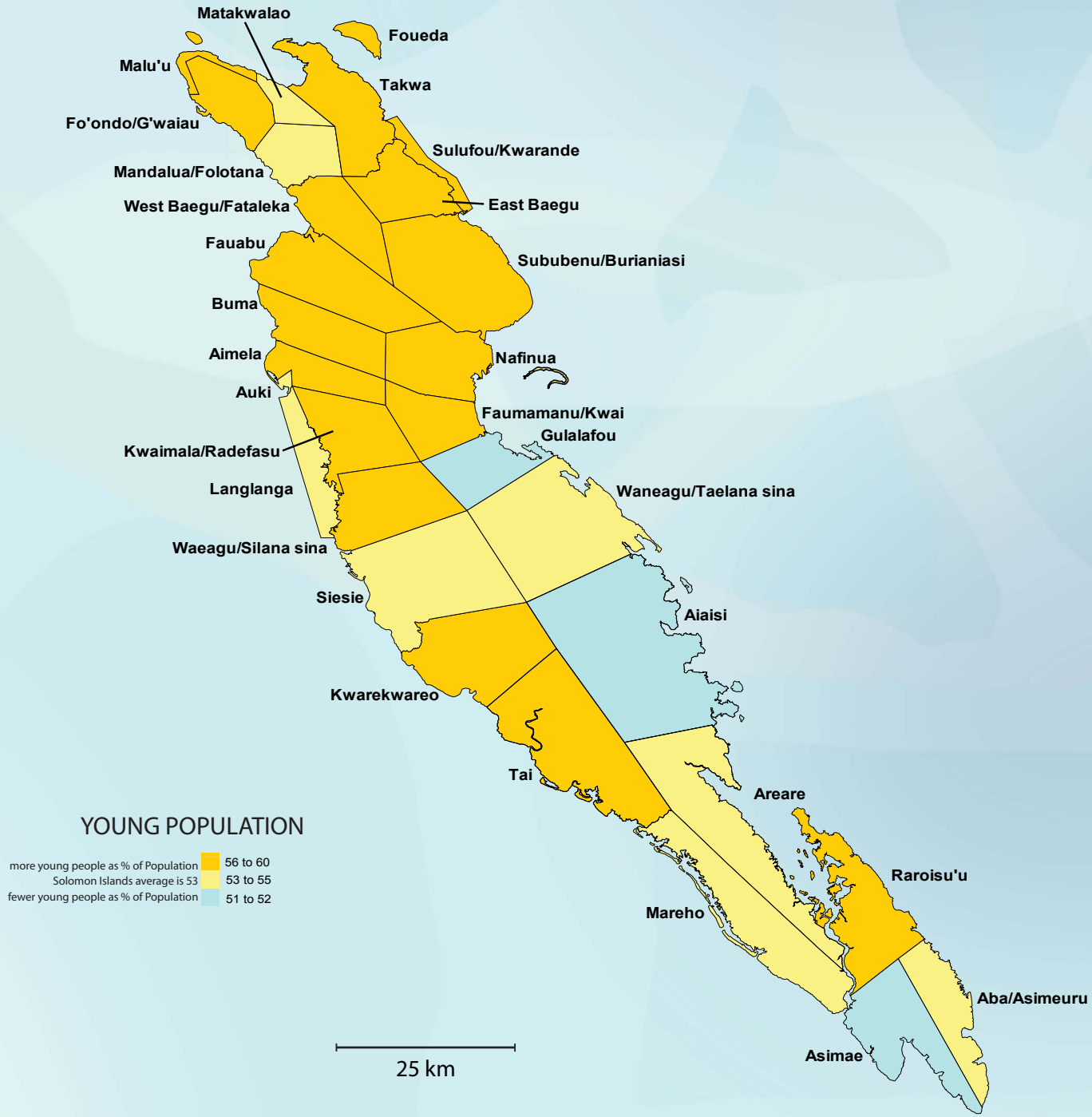
Child-dependency ratio

The child-dependency ratio is defined as the ratio of persons in the 'child dependent' ages (under 15 years of age) to those in the 'economically productive' ages (15–59 years). Where more detailed data are lacking, this ratio is often used as an indicator of the child economic burden that the productive portion of a population must carry, even though some children defined as 'dependent' may be producers, and some persons in the 'productive' ages may be economically dependent.

Solomon Islands' national average child-dependency ratio in 1999 was 77, which means that for every 100 persons in the productive ages, there were 77 children in the child-dependent ages; the higher the child-dependency ratio, the higher the number of children who need to be cared for by the working-age population. For Malaita Province, the child-dependency ratio is 89, which is 12 percentage points above the national average. Given that Malaita Province has a young, broad-based population age structure (Figure 7) as a result of high fertility in recent years, it is not surprising to note the high child-dependency ratio. Figure 9 shows the distribution of child-dependency ratios by ward in Malaita Province.

The aim of any government authority is to minimise the 'dependency burden' on the economically active population to achieve increased savings and investment in income generating activities. For example, many of the dependent population are children below the age of 15 who need care and support, which places an economic and social burden on the economically active population. There are two possible ways to minimise the dependent burden: (1) reduce the high birth rate thus reducing the number of dependent children; or (2) increase average household incomes, leading to improved family support and possible savings.

Figure 10: Young Population by ward in Malaita Province, 1999



3. Social characteristics

Social development processes aim to empower people to achieve economic and social improvements in their lives. Therefore, understanding the social development situation of a population is important to developing appropriate and necessary services to facilitate and advance the social development process. The socioeconomic activities of people are closely interrelated with population change, patterns, and distributions. For example, economic activities and employment are shaped not only by the size of the working-age population and the education and skill level of the economically active population, but also by the economic resources available to a country and the political and socio-cultural environment in which such activities are undertaken. This means that understanding and integrating population and other information into economic/social and related development strategies is vital to achieve the desired development outcome and an improved quality of life for all people.

Ethnic, cultural and social differences between people often explain differences in levels of fertility and mortality, social status, the distribution of wealth, and the accessibility of economic resources. The social profile of a population provides planners and policy makers with information on its special character compared to other parts of the same population.

Basic education – key to improvement in the quality of life

Education is important for fulfilling social, economic and other development goals and related strategies that Solomon Islands is committed to, such as the Solomon Islands NERRDP and sectoral plans and strategies, the Pacific Plan, the Millennium Development Goals, and many other regional and global policies. Education empowers people to take charge of their lives and make informed choices. It gives a voice to the disadvantaged and is fundamental to the creation of democratic societies. It fosters equity and social cohesion by providing people with access to productive assets such as land, capital, and knowledge, and by increasing labour mobility and earnings potential. For example, an additional year of schooling has the potential to raise the income of those who attain this level. Education promotes sustained, job-creating economic growth. No country has ever achieved continuous and rapid economic growth without reaching a very high rate of adult literacy.

MDG – universal primary education for all and elimination of sex disparity in education

Achievement of universal primary education for all has been identified as a priority at both national and international levels. In the Millennium Declaration, the overriding goal is for all countries to ensure that by 2015, children everywhere will be able, at the minimum, to complete a full course of primary schooling of high quality. Three indicators are used to measure progress towards this goal: the net enrolment ratio for primary education, the proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach grade 5 (survival rate to grade 5) and the literacy rate of 15–24 year olds. For Solomon Islands and Malaita Province, Figures 11–17 provide an indication of the extent of the achievement of this MDG target.

Sex differentials and gender issues (MDG)

MDG 3 promotes gender equality and empowerment of women, and Target 4 relates to the elimination of gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and to all levels of education by no later than 2015. Some of these disparities are discussed elsewhere in this Malaita Profile.

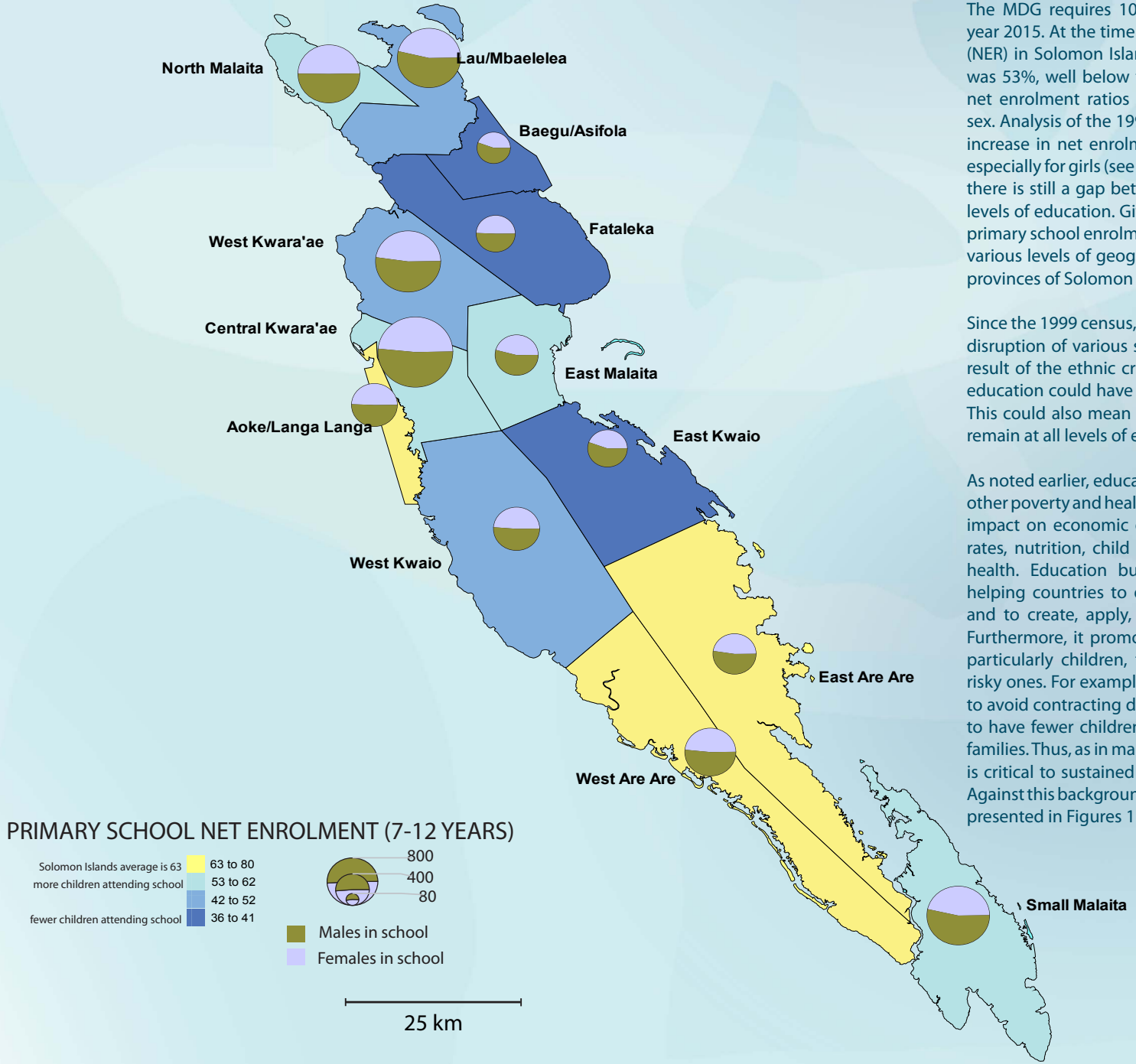
The promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women are recognised as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable. Three areas are considered under this goal: (1) gender disparity in education; (2) women's access to employment opportunities in the non-agricultural sector; and (3) women's access to political decision-making. These three areas cannot, however, give a comprehensive picture of the extent to which gender equality is being realised. Gender equality is both a goal in itself and a means to ensure the achievement of other MDGs. Promotion of gender equality should thus be an integral part of the efforts to achieve these goals, and progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women should be assessed in relation to each of them.

Sex equality in terms of access to all levels of education has been identified as a priority at both national and international levels. Gender concerns are perceived as the main factors for sex differentials or disparities in various education indicators, particularly where these indicators favour boys/men. Within the MDG framework, the indicators used to measure progress towards equality in education between boys and girls are the ratio of female to male enrolment by level of education and the ratio of literate females to males aged 15–24 years. Whereas parity is nearly achieved in primary education with the ratio of net enrolment rates of females to males (7–12 years) almost equal (Figures 11 and 12), it is lower in secondary education. The imbalance increases after Form 3, with 55 girls for 100 boys in Form 6. Moreover, there was not much improvement in sex equity in secondary education between 2003 and 2005 (according to 2006 statistics from the Solomon Islands Education Ministry).

Extending school enrolment delays fertility and empowers women, preparing them for participation in paid employment and decision making in their families and communities. It is acknowledged that education and employment of women are among the key determinants of socioeconomic development and poverty reduction. Given the low monetization of rural and peri-urban economies, free primary and secondary education services are necessary to give all children equal access to good education.

As discussed above in relation to primary and secondary enrolment, there has been good progress towards achieving MDG primary education targets by 2015. However, population growth and the resulting increase in school-age children are placing demands on existing resources. Thus, it will be challenging to achieve the MDGs unless concerted efforts are made to further decrease the pace of population growth. High population growth will continue to exert considerable pressure on education and on other key socioeconomic sectors of the economy.

Figure 11: Primary school enrolment (population 7-12 years) by constituency and sex in Malaita Province, 1999



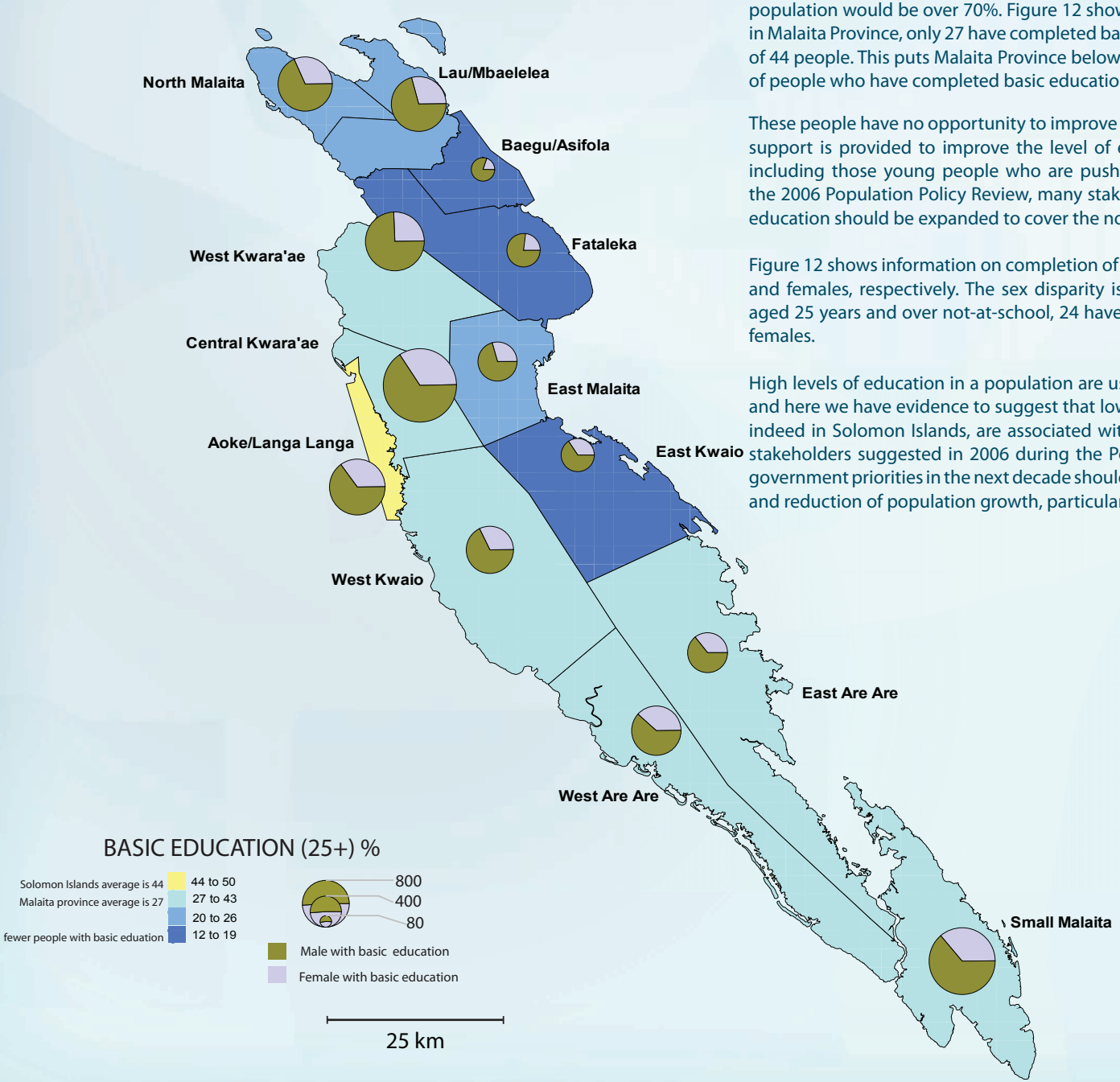
Primary school enrolment (MDG) and sex disparity in enrolment

The MDG requires 100% net primary enrolment for all by the year 2015. At the time of the 1999 census, the net enrolment rate (NER) in Solomon Islands was 63%, while for Malaita Province it was 53%, well below the national average. Figure 11 shows the net enrolment ratios for Malaita Province by constituency and sex. Analysis of the 1999 census showed that there was a general increase in net enrolment in the intercensal period 1986–1999, especially for girls (see the 1999 Census Analysis Report). However, there is still a gap between boys and girls, particularly at higher levels of education. Given the low levels of NER and disparities in primary school enrolments, progress in achieving this MDG across various levels of geography not only in Malaita but also in other provinces of Solomon Islands is expected to be slow.

Since the 1999 census, the situation may have changed due to the disruption of various services, including education services, as a result of the ethnic crisis. The total number of pupils in primary education could have decreased as a result of closure of schools. This could also mean that the sex/gender gap in enrolment will remain at all levels of education.

As noted earlier, education of the population is a key to achieving other poverty and health-related goals, given education's powerful impact on economic growth, income-earning potential, fertility rates, nutrition, child and maternal mortality, and reproductive health. Education builds globally competitive economies by helping countries to develop a skilled, productive labour force and to create, apply, and spread new ideas and technologies. Furthermore, it promotes good health by encouraging families, particularly children, to practise healthy behaviours and avoid risky ones. For example, it gives youth the knowledge and values to avoid contracting diseases such as HIV, and empowers women to have fewer children and better care for themselves and their families. Thus, as in many countries of the Pacific region, education is critical to sustained socioeconomic growth and development. Against this background, an assessment is made of the information presented in Figures 11 and 12 for Malaita Province.

Figure 12: Basic education (population 25 years and over) by constituency in Malaita Province, 1999



Basic education is defined as completion of primary education plus completion of Form 3 in secondary school. An acceptable level of completion of basic education for this category of population would be over 70%. Figure 12 shows that of 100 people aged 25 years and over in Malaita Province, only 27 have completed basic education compared to a national average of 44 people. This puts Malaita Province below the national average in terms of the number of people who have completed basic education.

These people have no opportunity to improve their current level of education and very little support is provided to improve the level of education for the 'not-at-school' population, including those young people who are pushed out of the formal school system. During the 2006 Population Policy Review, many stakeholders supported the view that vocational education should be expanded to cover the not-at-school population in rural areas.

Figure 12 shows information on completion of basic education in Malaita Province for males and females, respectively. The sex disparity is obvious. For example, for every 100 males aged 25 years and over not-at-school, 24 have completed basic education compared to 16 females.

High levels of education in a population are usually associated with lower levels of fertility, and here we have evidence to suggest that low levels of education in Malaita Province, and indeed in Solomon Islands, are associated with consistent high levels of fertility. As many stakeholders suggested in 2006 during the Population Policy Review in Solomon Islands, government priorities in the next decade should include the improvement of adult education and reduction of population growth, particularly through reducing levels of fertility.

Figure 13: Percent age of population 25 years old and over with above Form 3 education by constituency in Malaita Province, 1999

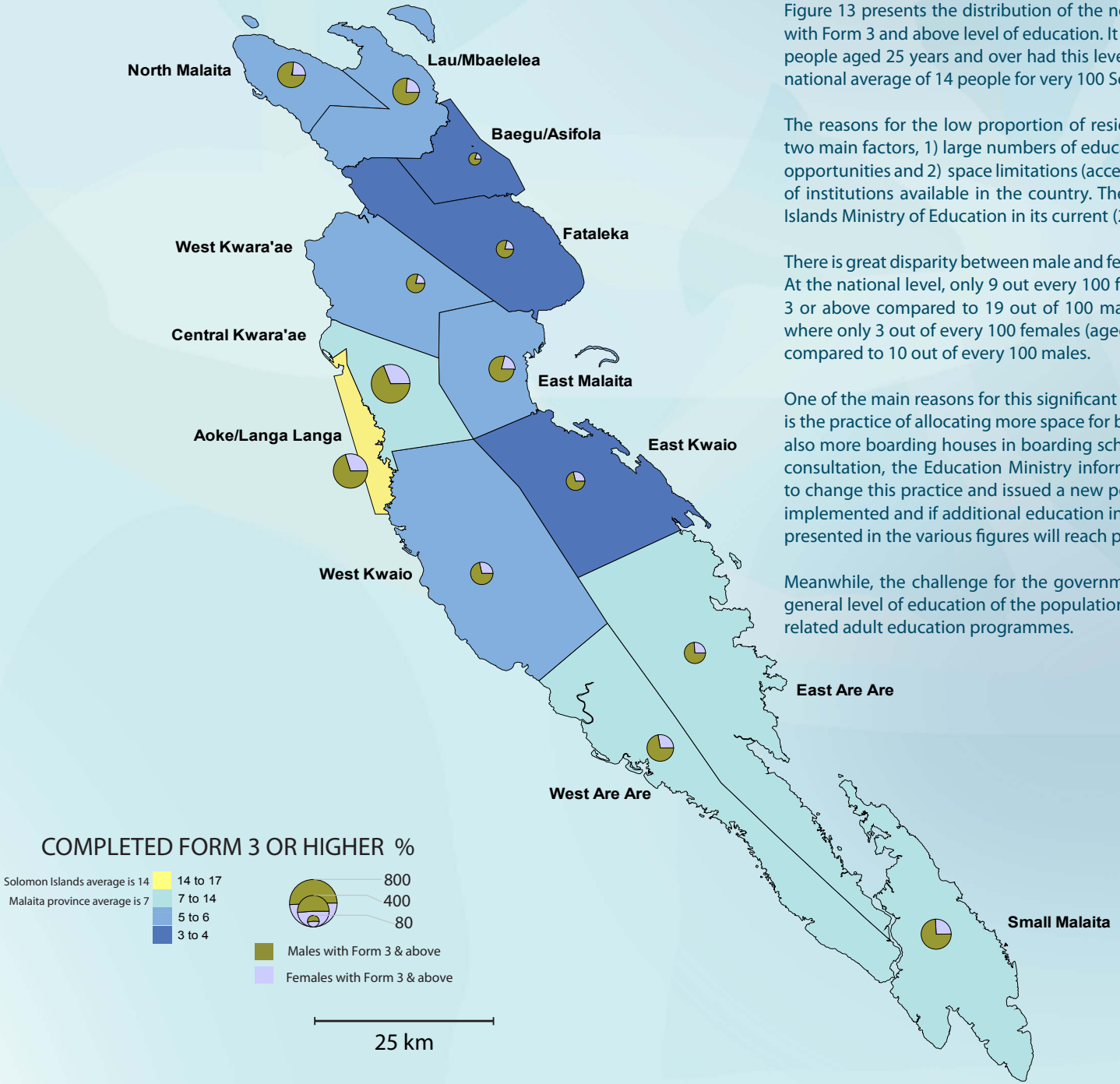


Figure 13 presents the distribution of the not-at-school population aged 25 years and older with Form 3 and above level of education. It is interesting to note that only 7 out of every 100 people aged 25 years and over had this level of education. This is about 50% lower than the national average of 14 people for very 100 Solomon Islanders aged 25 and over not at school.

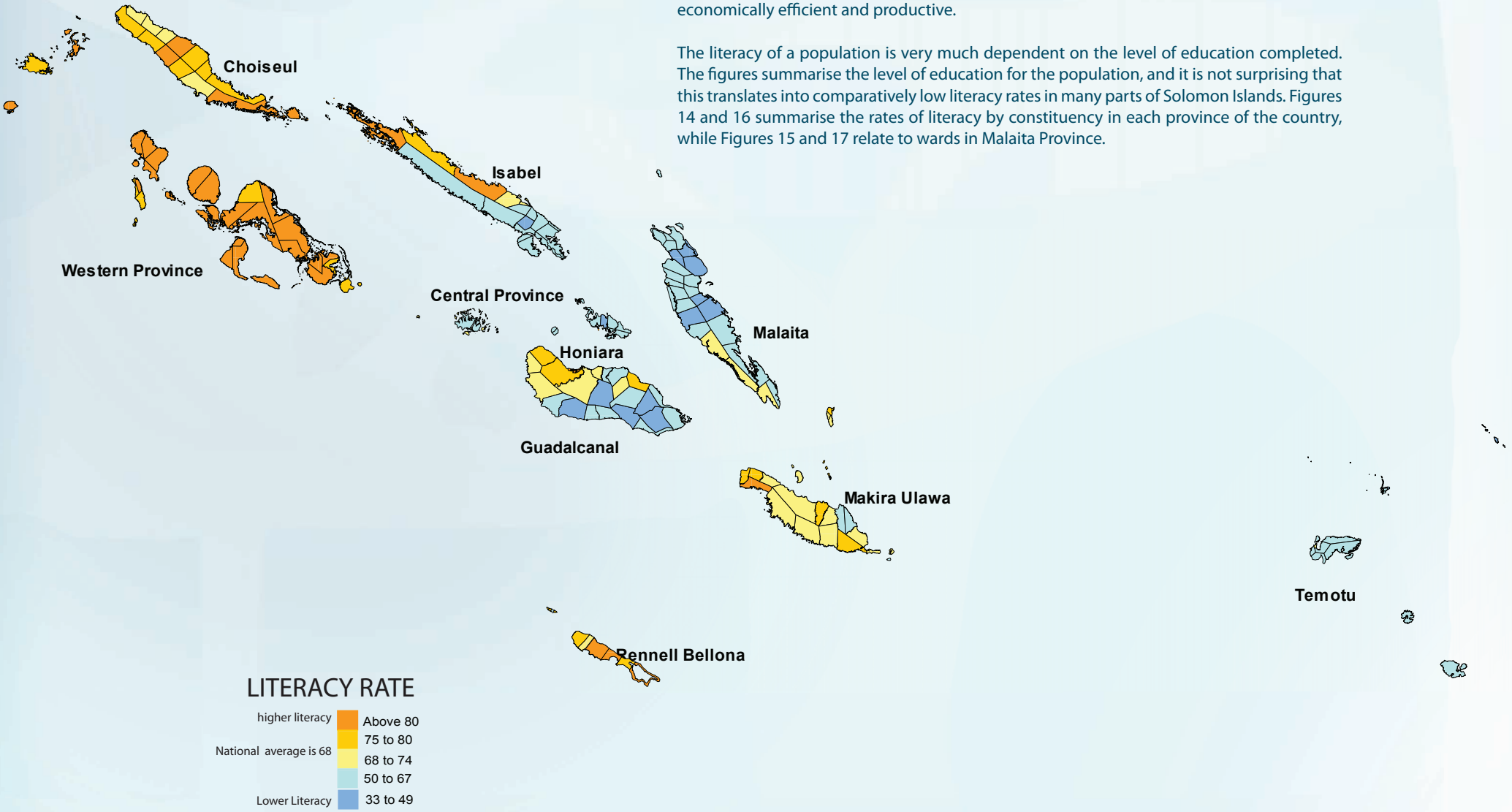
The reasons for the low proportion of residents with above form 3 education is linked to two main factors, 1) large numbers of educated Malaitans having left the Province for work opportunities and 2) space limitations (access) at education institutions and also the number of institutions available in the country. These are areas being addressed by the Solomon Islands Ministry of Education in its current (2006) education plan.

There is great disparity between male and female achievement at higher stages of education. At the national level, only 9 out every 100 females aged 25 and over have completed Form 3 or above compared to 19 out of 100 males. The situation is worse for Malaita Province where only 3 out of every 100 females (aged 25 and over) have completed Form 3 or above compared to 10 out of every 100 males.

One of the main reasons for this significant disparity in male and female levels of education is the practice of allocating more space for boys at both primary and secondary schools, and also more boarding houses in boarding schools. During the 2006 Population Policy Review consultation, the Education Ministry informed the review team that the government has to change this practice and issued a new policy of equality for both boys and girls. If this is implemented and if additional education institutions are built, sex disparity in education as presented in the various figures will reach parity over time.

Meanwhile, the challenge for the government of Solomon Islands will be to improve the general level of education of the population currently not at school through vocational and related adult education programmes.

Figure 14: Literacy rates of population 7+ years by ward in Solomon Islands, 1999



Literacy (MDG)

The literacy rate of a population is one of the most important indicators of development. Literacy, defined as the ability to read and write with understanding, enables people to access information that is present in modern society and to communicate better with each other. It therefore contributes to a better understanding of other people and one's own environment, and to a range of other benefits such as improved health, more opportunities for employment, ability to understand formal documents, etc. Equally, society at large benefits from high literacy, since populations can be expected to be healthier, and more economically efficient and productive.

The literacy of a population is very much dependent on the level of education completed. The figures summarise the level of education for the population, and it is not surprising that this translates into comparatively low literacy rates in many parts of Solomon Islands. Figures 14 and 16 summarise the rates of literacy by constituency in each province of the country, while Figures 15 and 17 relate to wards in Malaita Province.

Figure 15: Literacy rates of population 7+ years by ward in Malaita Province, 1999

The map on the previous page (Figure 14) shows the distribution of literacy rates for people 7 years and over in Solomon Islands by ward. On average, 68 people out of every 100 (7 years and over) said they could read and write with understanding in the English language, compared to the national average for 15–24 year olds of 84% (Figure 16). The provinces of Western, Choiseul, Isabel and Rennell-Bellona have generally higher literacy rates than provinces on the eastern side. Malaita Province has the lowest average rate of 55% (Figure 15) for people aged 7 years and over, and 73% (Figure 17) for people aged 15–24 years.

Obviously, literacy improvement programmes should be targeted towards provincial areas with low levels of literacy such as Temotu, the northern part of Malaita and the southern part of Guadalcanal.

In terms of literacy rates by sex in Malaita Province, 62 males out of every 100 could read and write with understanding in the English language compared to 48 females. The literacy level of younger people (7–24 years) improves the provincial average. Otherwise, the literacy rates of those aged 25 years and over would be lower than the rates presented.

Figure 16: Literacy rates of population 15–24 years by constituency, Solomon Islands, 1999

Figure 16 shows the youth literacy rate for persons aged 15–24 years in Solomon Islands and Malaita Province. The rate indicates the effectiveness of the country's basic education system. It measures the population's ability to read, write, and communicate and thus reflects to some extent the ability to continue learning using the written word. It is also often seen as a proxy measure of social progress and economic achievement. Given the current level, considerable effort on this MDG indicator will be needed to reach 100% literacy for the 15–24 year old population. Obviously, youth literacy levels in Malaita Province are at present well below the national average.

Figure 16 shows that literacy rates for the youth population (15–24 years) in various constituencies in the western provinces of Solomon Islands are well above the national average of 84% compared to the eastern provinces of Malaita and Guadalcanal.

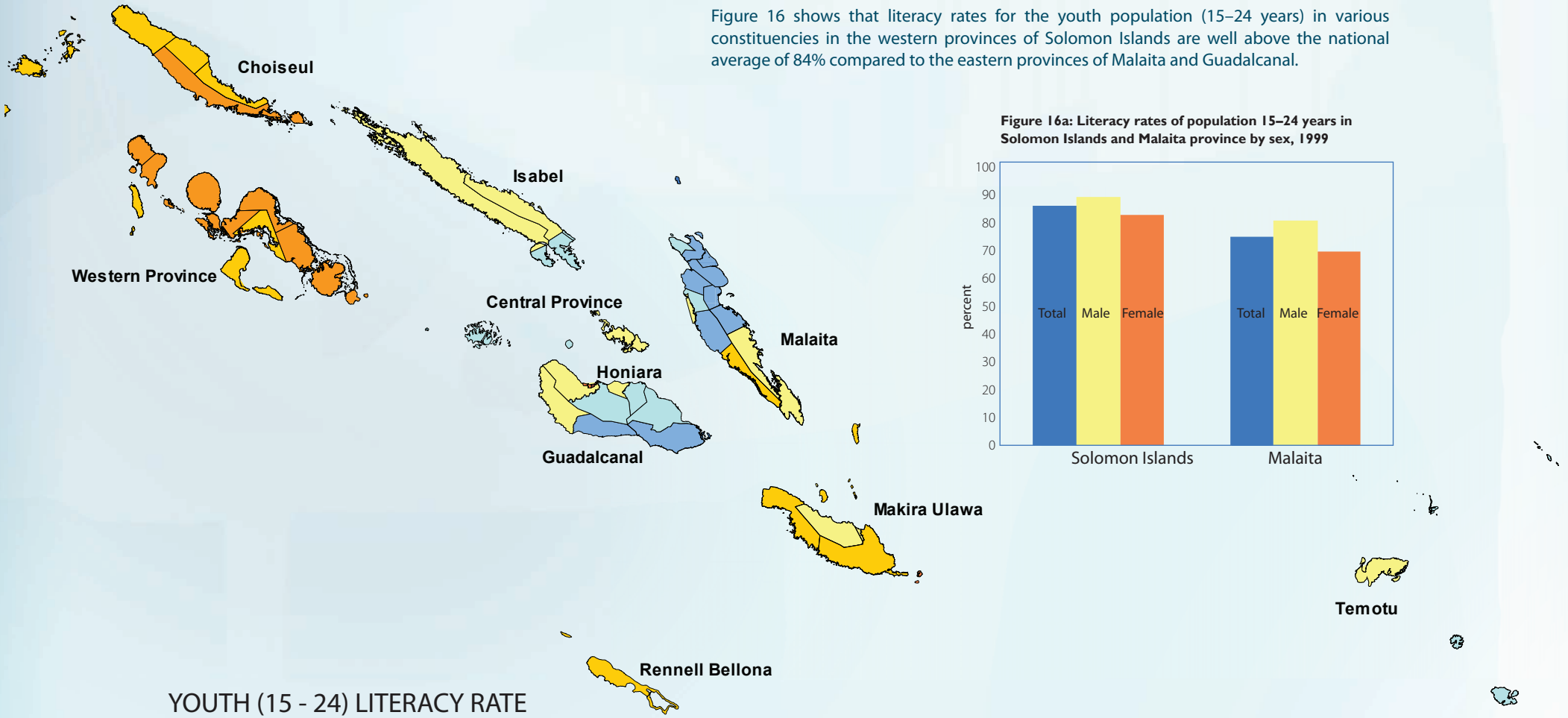


Figure 16a: Literacy rates of population 15–24 years in Solomon Islands and Malaita province by sex, 1999

Figure 17: Literacy rates of population 15–24 years by ward, Malaita Province, 1999

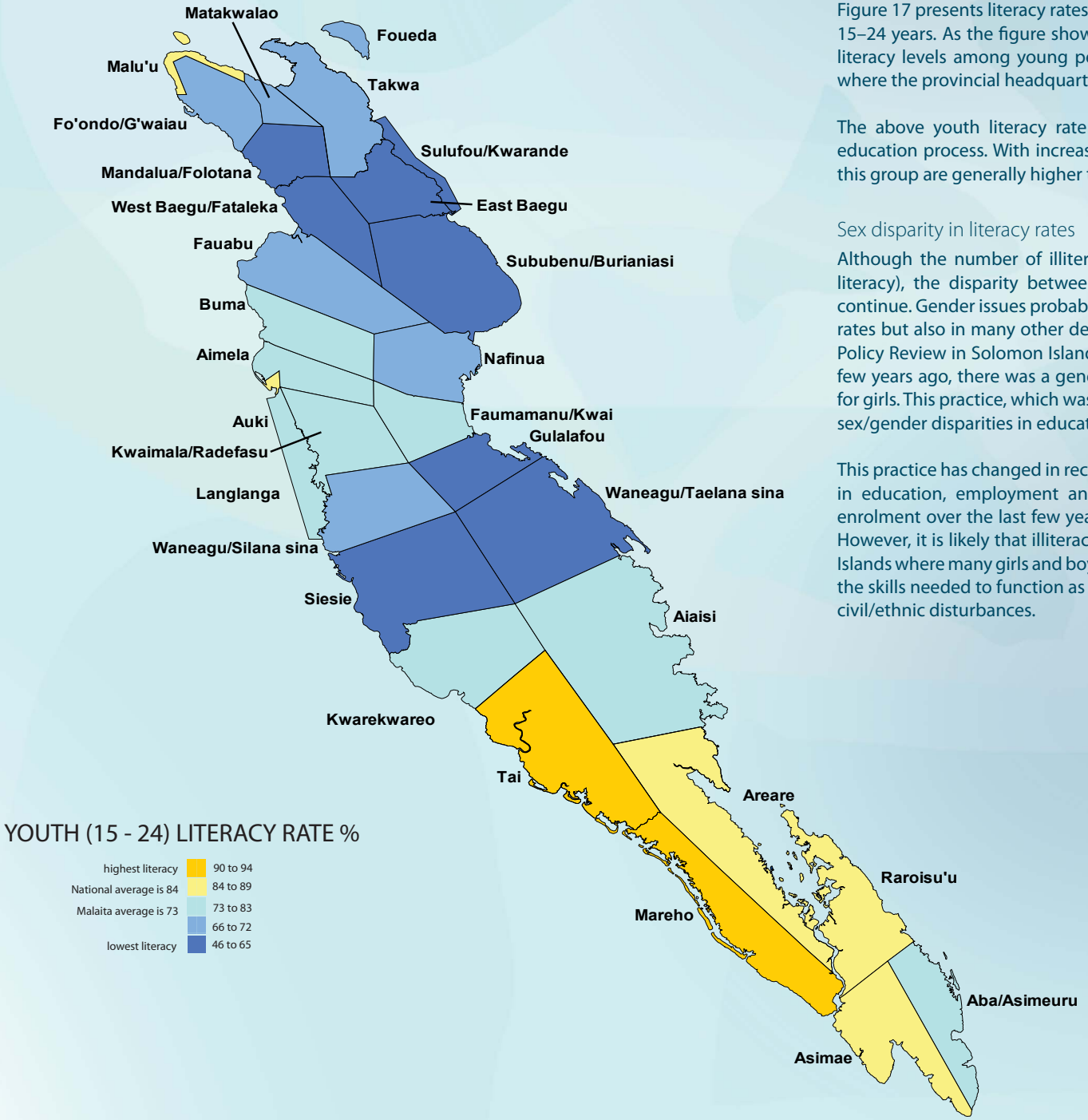


Figure 17 presents literacy rates by ward for Malaita Province for the youth population aged 15–24 years. As the figure shows, the rates vary from a low of 52% to a high of 92%. High literacy levels among young people are observed mainly at the southern end of Malaita where the provincial headquarters is located.

The above youth literacy rate (15–24 years old) reflects recent outcomes of the basic education process. With increasing access to schooling over recent years, literacy rates for this group are generally higher than for older age groups.

Sex disparity in literacy rates

Although the number of illiterate youth continues to decrease (as a result of increased literacy), the disparity between males and females (see the above figures) is likely to continue. Gender issues probably account for this disparity, which is seen not only in literacy rates but also in many other development indicators. During the 2006 national Population Policy Review in Solomon Islands, many stakeholders in education commented that until a few years ago, there was a general practice of allocating more school places for boys than for girls. This practice, which was commonly accepted by the community, has contributed to sex/gender disparities in education, scholarships, employment, etc.

This practice has changed in recent years due to advocacy for increased female participation in education, employment and production. The result of this improvement in school enrolment over the last few years will be known as new data/indicators become available. However, it is likely that illiteracy rates will continue to be high in several areas of Solomon Islands where many girls and boys remain out of school or drop out too early to have acquired the skills needed to function as literate individuals. This is especially the case since the 1999 civil/ethnic disturbances.

House built on artificial islands at Makwanu, Malaita photo: Alan McNeil

Health issues

Good health is an important social condition in a population and a key condition for achieving higher levels of education, productivity and sustainable development. As such, health is an important population and development policy issue, as was acknowledged by many stakeholders during the 2006 Population Policy Review consultation.

However, good health is not equally available to all people. Mortality is low on average among certain population groups, while it is high in others, e.g. urban/rural, young/old. Similarly, an average 15-year-old boy has a higher chance of surviving to an older age (e.g. 60 years) in a developed country than in a developing country. This differential is largely due to factors such as access to services and the spread of communicable diseases, e.g. HIV.

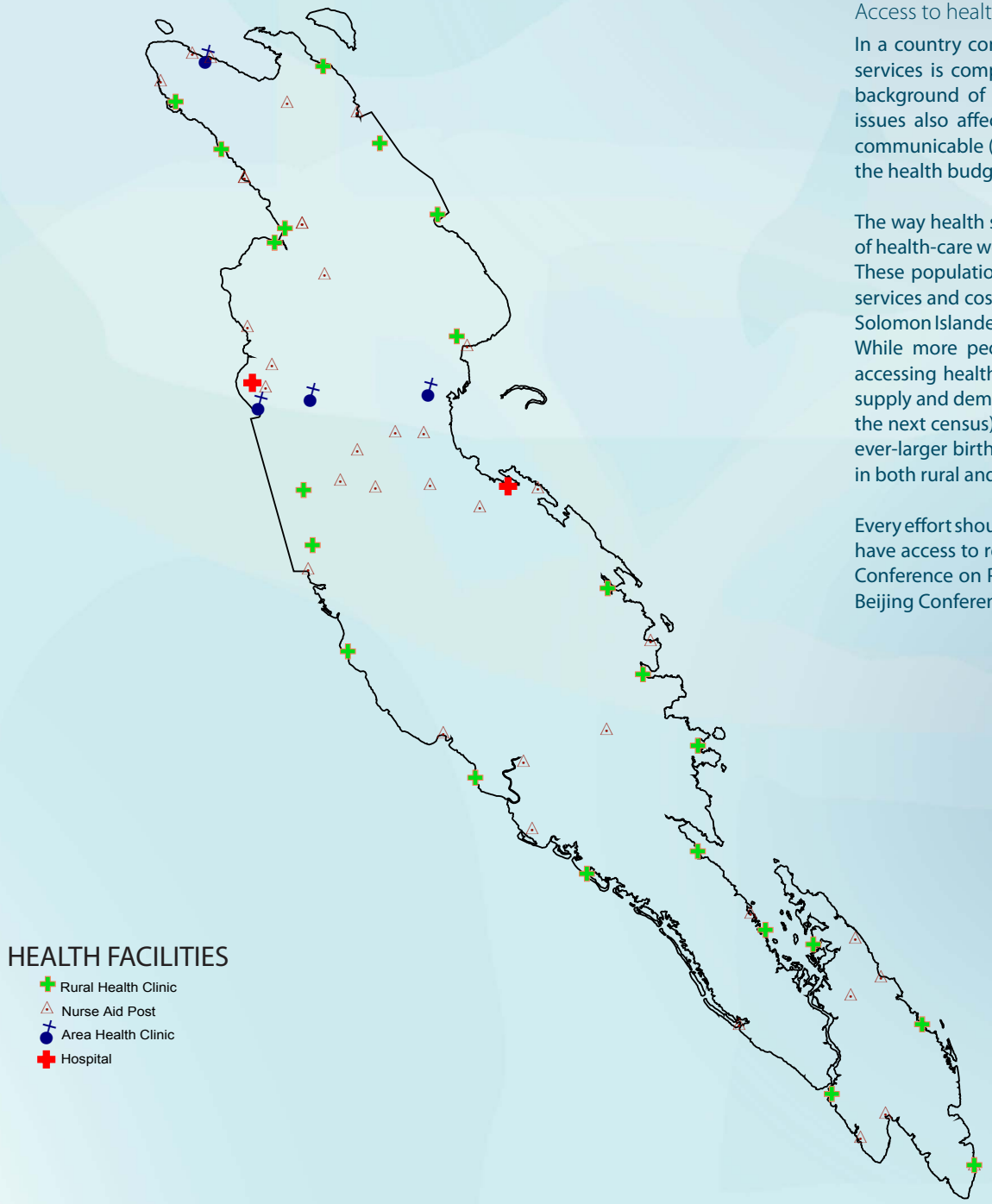
People today can make a much broader range of health choices than previously. They also live in a vastly different environment that makes it harder to choose appropriately and to avoid behaviour that puts their health at risk. Awareness of the consequences of health-related decisions, and of ways to avoid ill health, is very low among many population groups, especially rural people and young people, particularly girls. In addition, only a small percentage of those who are aware actually adopt safe behaviour. Many people are thus likely to make uninformed health-related decisions that put them at risk. Risky behaviour, especially during youth, can deplete productive human capital many years into the future. These risky behaviours include substance abuse – drugs, homebrew, alcohol, cigarettes/tobacco – and unsafe sex, which contribute to various health complications leading to early death. Because the costs of treating these diseases are high, many people cannot afford treatment, which in any case is often ineffective.

One way to prevent health problems and early deaths and to avoid steep increases in future health care expenditure is to modify the health behaviour of the population, especially of young people, when habits are still being learned. Policies to promote better health for all are perceived to rest on two legs: (1) give people the knowledge to help them make informed choices about their behaviour, and empower them to negotiate safe behaviour with peers and partners, and (2) create an environment conducive to practising healthy behaviour, e.g. by making risky behaviour costly and limiting opportunities for it.

Given the high cost of treating chronic diseases such as diabetes and other 'lifestyle' or non-communicable diseases, the state is unable to cover all health costs. Primary health services should be free, but people must be encouraged to be responsible for taking care of their health, knowing that they may have to pay for the treatment of diseases that could potentially have been avoided.

Prevention is the cheapest and only sustainable way to deal with lifestyle diseases and to enable the provision of free access to primary health care for all. The health concerns facing Solomon Islands people differ greatly from place to place among different population groups and some of these concerns need urgent attention.

Figure 18: Health Services in Malaita Province



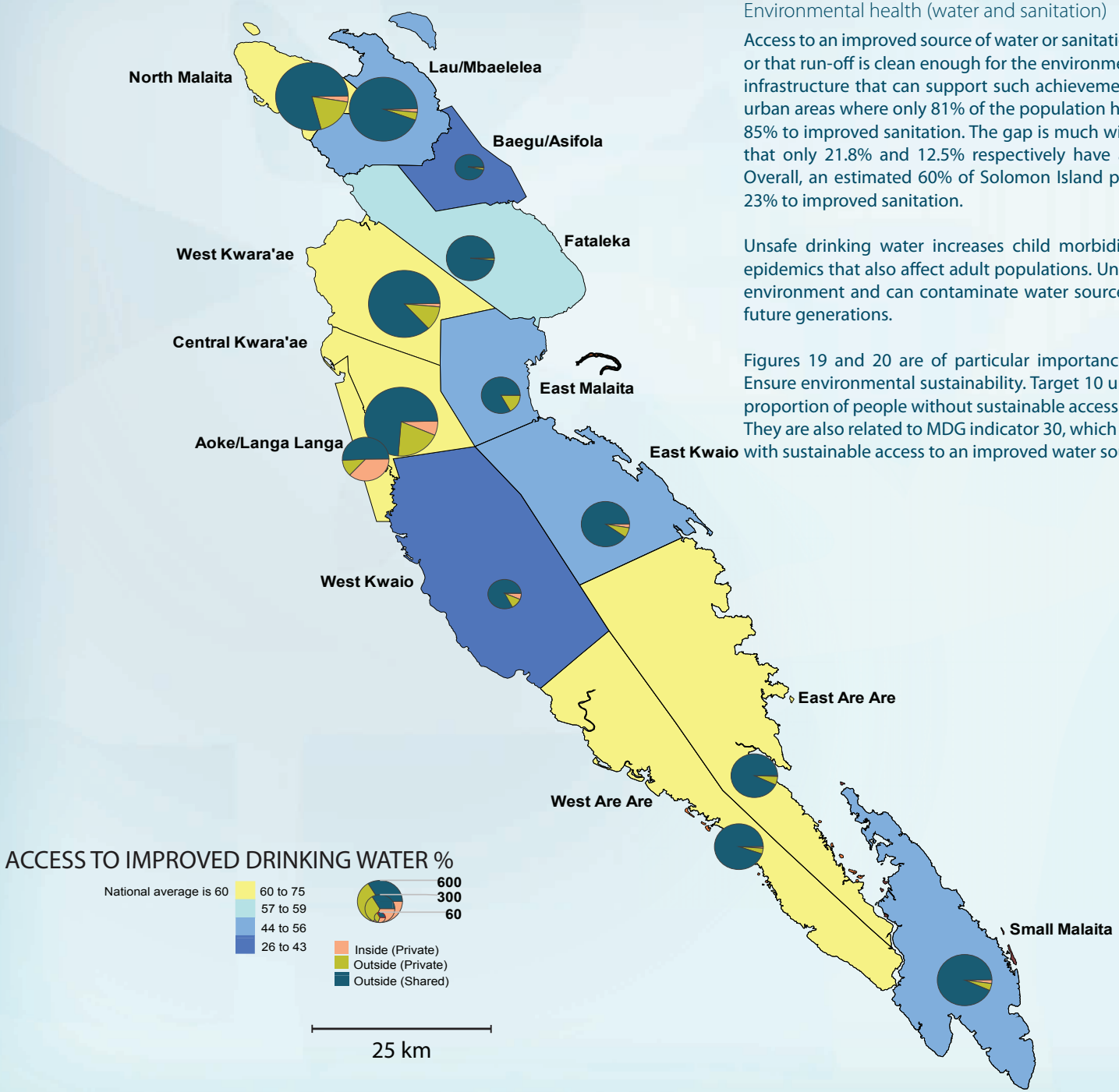
Access to health services

In a country consisting of several large, sparsely populated islands, the delivery of health services is complicated by remoteness and the difficulty and cost of transport against a background of increasing demand and stable or declining supply. Poverty and gender issues also affect access to health services. In addition, increasing vulnerability to both communicable (notably STIs, including HIV) and non-communicable diseases may pressure the health budget beyond a sustainable level.

The way health services are operated and provided, and the qualifications and commitment of health-care workers are also issues in encouraging rural populations to use health services. These populations often prefer traditional healers due to the poor quality of conventional services and cost and transport considerations. A change in the health-seeking behaviour of Solomon Islanders is necessary to reduce morbidity and mortality and increase life expectancy. While more people are seeking better treatment, population growth and difficulties in accessing health services in most areas are the main reasons for the difficulty in adjusting supply and demand. The slow decline in fertility (to be confirmed by the 2006/2007 DHS and the next census) associated with increasing cohorts of women of childbearing age results in ever-larger birth cohorts, continuing population growth and increased pressure on services in both rural and urban areas. Rural-urban migration is also adding to natural growth.

Every effort should be made to ensure that all Solomon Islands women in rural and urban areas have access to reproductive health care and rights by 2015, as outlined in the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) 1994 goal, which was reiterated at the Beijing Conference in 1995 and at ICPD + 5.

Figure 19: Proportion of households with access to piped water by constituency in Malaita Province, 1999



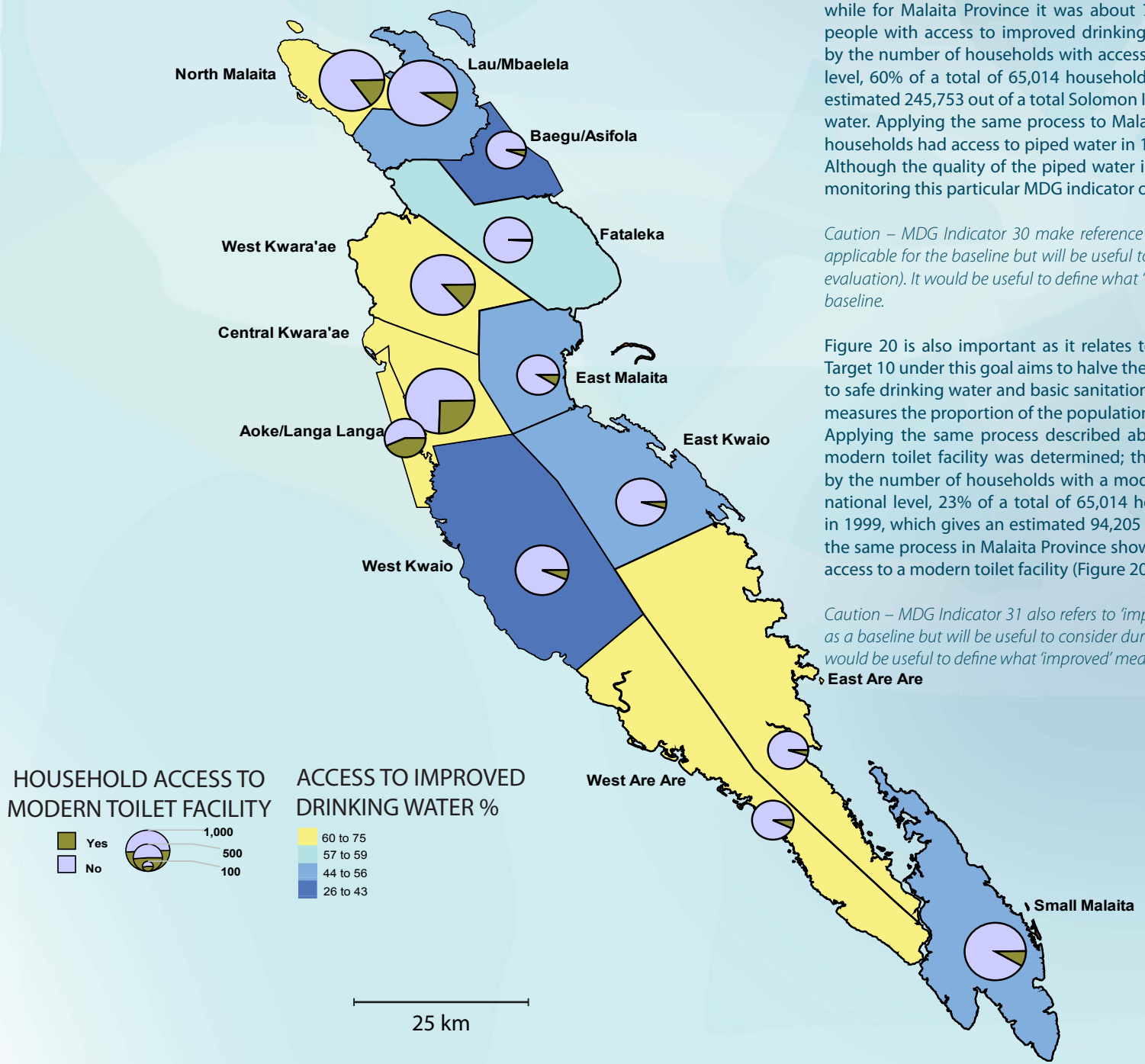
Environmental health (water and sanitation)

Access to an improved source of water or sanitation does not mean that water is safe to drink or that run-off is clean enough for the environment, but it does translate to the existence of infrastructure that can support such achievements. The situation still needs to improve in urban areas where only 81% of the population has access to an improved water source and 85% to improved sanitation. The gap is much wider in rural areas where estimates indicate that only 21.8% and 12.5% respectively have access to improved water and sanitation. Overall, an estimated 60% of Solomon Island people have access to improved water and 23% to improved sanitation.

Unsafe drinking water increases child morbidity and mortality rates and is a cause of epidemics that also affect adult populations. Unsafe waste disposal and run-off pollute the environment and can contaminate water sources for long periods, affecting the health of future generations.

Figures 19 and 20 are of particular importance as they are directly linked to MDG 7 – Ensure environmental sustainability. Target 10 under this MDG goal is aimed at halving the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation. They are also related to MDG indicator 30, which measures the proportion of the population with sustainable access to an improved water source.

Figure 20: Proportion of households with access to modern toilet facilities and improved drinking water by constituency in Malaita Province, 1999



The 1999 census estimated the average household size in Solomon Islands at 6 (6.3) persons, while for Malaita Province it was about 7 persons (6.6). To determine the proportion of people with access to improved drinking water, we multiply the average household size by the number of households with access to piped water (Figure 19). Thus, at the national level, 60% of a total of 65,014 households had access to piped water in 1999; that is, an estimated 245,753 out of a total Solomon Islands population of 409,042 had access to piped water. Applying the same process to Malaita Province shows that 57% of a total of 18,606 households had access to piped water in 1999 (Figure 19), or 69,996 out of 122,620 people. Although the quality of the piped water is not known, these estimates provide a basis for monitoring this particular MDG indicator over time.

Caution – MDG Indicator 30 make reference to "improved water source which is not particularly applicable for the baseline but will be useful to consider during the next update (in monitoring and evaluation). It would be useful to define what "improved" means in the context of assesment against baseline.

Figure 20 is also important as it relates to MDG 7 – Ensure Environmental Sustainability. Target 10 under this goal aims to halve the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation. This figure is linked to MDG indicator 31, which measures the proportion of the population with sustainable access to improved sanitation. Applying the same process described above, the proportion of people with access to a modern toilet facility was determined; that is, we multiplied the average household size by the number of households with a modern toilet facility. The results showed that at the national level, 23% of a total of 65,014 households had access to a modern toilet facility in 1999, which gives an estimated 94,205 out of 409,042 people in Solomon Islands. Using the same process in Malaita Province showed that 13% of a total of 18,606 households had access to a modern toilet facility (Figure 20), or 15,964 out of 122,620 people.

Caution – MDG Indicator 31 also refers to 'improved' sanitation which is not particularly applicable as a baseline but will be useful to consider during the next update (in monitoring and evaluation). It would be useful to define what 'improved' means in the context of assessment against the baseline.

Figure 21: Proportion of households with permanent type dwellings by constituency in Malaita Province, 1999

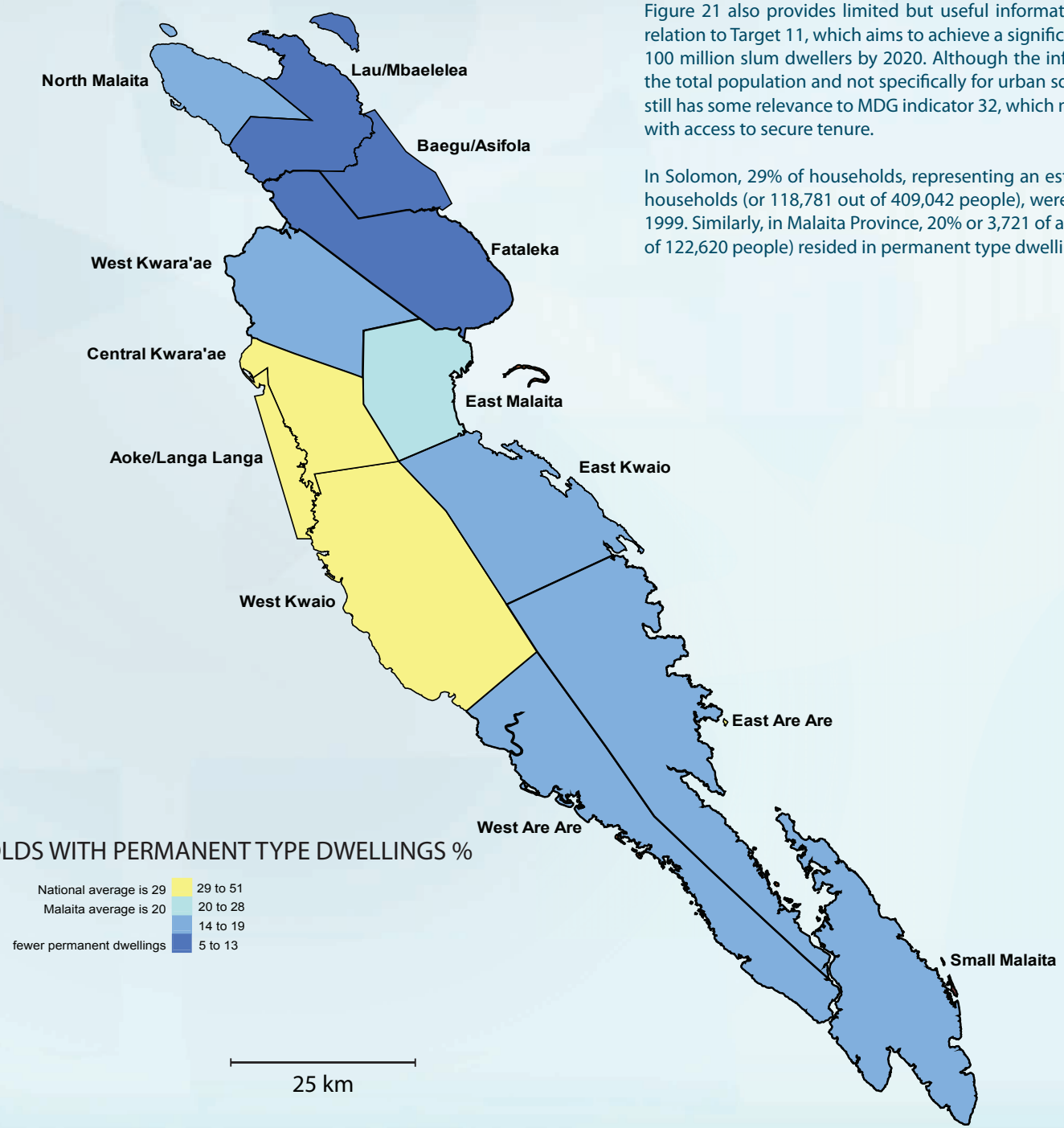


Figure 21 also provides limited but useful information concerning MDG 7, particularly in relation to Target 11, which aims to achieve a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020. Although the information presented in Figure 21 is for the total population and not specifically for urban squatter settlements (so-called slums), it still has some relevance to MDG indicator 32, which measures the proportion of households with access to secure tenure.

In Solomon, 29% of households, representing an estimated 18,854 out of a total of 65,014 households (or 118,781 out of 409,042 people), were living in permanent type dwellings in 1999. Similarly, in Malaita Province, 20% or 3,721 of a total of 18,606 households (24,560 out of 122,620 people) resided in permanent type dwellings (Figure 21).

Figure 22: Infant mortality rates in Solomon Islands by province and sex, 1999

Infant mortality rate and MDG

The infant mortality rate (IMR) is directly linked to MDG 4 – Reduce child mortality. The target is to reduce under-five mortality by two-thirds between 1990 and 2015. The 1999 census estimates of IMR are presented in Figure 22, which shows the disparity by sex and provinces compared to the national average. The IMR is below the national average for six provinces (two provinces are combined) and above for three. The IMR for Malaita Province for both sexes is above the national average.

The IMR for girls is lower than for boys at all levels, which is quite common in many countries for various reasons. To reach the target of a two-thirds reduction by the year 2015, many of the IMRs listed in Figure 22 will have to be reduced to around 22 deaths per 1000 births. It is expected that the IMR estimates derived from the 2006 Demographic and Health Survey will provide a basis for assessing and monitoring the movement of this indicator towards the 2015 target.

Young boys paddling at Sulufo. **Photo: Alan McNeil**

4 Economic characteristics

Understanding the economic characteristics of the population is an important part of working out how to help increase economic participation. Knowing the nature, extent and location of economic participation will help the government allocate resources and develop effective programmes to assist in increasing economic activity and participation. These actions can then be integrated into economic and related development strategies to achieve greater economic participation, leading to increased income and improved quality of life for people. In other words, the everyday activities of people are closely interrelated with population change and patterns. Economic activity, participation, and employment are shaped not only by the size of the working-age population and the educational and skill level of the labour force, but also by the economic resources available.

Labour force

Understanding the composition of the labour force of a population is important as it describes 'the total number of persons available for the production of economic goods and services, corresponding to the concept of income in national income statistics, and includes persons looking for work'. It usually includes all people aged 15 years and older who, during the census reference week, did any of the following:

- were employed (working for a wage or salary), or were an employer themselves, or running a business;
- worked predominantly in agriculture or fishing activities, either of a commercial ('for money') or subsistence ('to provide for the family') nature;
- did a combination of these activities; or
- did not work, but were actively looking for work.

People who do not fall into any of these categories are referred to as people 'not in the labour force' (not economically active population). This group includes:

- full-time students;
- housewives (or home-makers);
- the elderly (and/or retired people);
- people not working due to a disability; and
- people in institutions (e.g. prison).

Labour force participation rate

The number of persons in the labour force at a given age and sex over the corresponding total number of persons of the same characteristics provides a measure of the level of participation in the production of goods and services. These are the people who provide economic support to the dependent category of the population. That is, the labour force participation rate is a measure of the proportion of working-age people in a population that is economically active; it provides an indication of the relative size of the supply of labour available for the production of goods and services. The breakdown of the labour force by sex and age group gives a profile of the distribution of the economically active population within a country.

The indicator for the labour force participation rate plays a central role in the study of factors that determine the size and composition of a population's human resources and in making projections about the future supply of labour. The information is also used to formulate employment policies, determine training needs and calculate the expected working lives of male and female populations and the rates of accession to, and retirement from, economic activity, which is crucial information for the financial planning of social security systems.

The indicator is also used to understand the labour market behaviour of different categories of the population. The level and pattern of labour force participation depend on employment opportunities and the demand for income, which may differ from one category to another. For example, studies have shown that the labour force participation rates of women vary systematically, at any given age, with their marital status and level of education. There are also important differences in the participation rates of urban and rural populations, and among different socioeconomic groups.

Malnutrition, disability and chronic sickness can affect the capacity to work and are therefore also considered as major determinants of labour force participation, particularly in low-income environments. Another aspect closely studied by demographers is the relationship between fertility and female labour force participation. This relationship is used to predict the evolution of fertility rates, from the current pattern of female participation in economic activity.

Labour force participation is generally lower for females than for males in each age category. For example, in Solomon Islands in 1999, the labour force participation rate for males was 67% compared to 41% for females. At the prime working age, female rates were not only lower than the corresponding male values, but often exhibited a somewhat different pattern over time. During this period of their life-cycle, women tend to leave the labour force to give birth and raise children, returning to economically active life when the children are older. This is particularly true in many developing countries. However, in developed economies, the profile of female participation is becoming increasingly similar to that of men and rates are also approaching male levels.

The way in which the labour force is measured can have an effect on the extent to which men and women are included in the counts. Unless specific probes are built into the data collection instrument, certain groups of workers may be underestimated, particularly the number of employed persons who (a) work for only a few hours in the reference period, especially if they do not do so regularly, (b) are in unpaid employment, or (c) work near or in their home, thus mixing work and personal activities during the day. Since more women than men are found in these situations, it is to be expected that the number of women in employment will tend to be underestimated to a larger extent than the number of men.

Great care also is required when measuring unemployment, as standard definitions sometimes underestimate unemployment in the Pacific.

Figure 23: Labour force participation rates by constituency in Solomon Islands, 1999

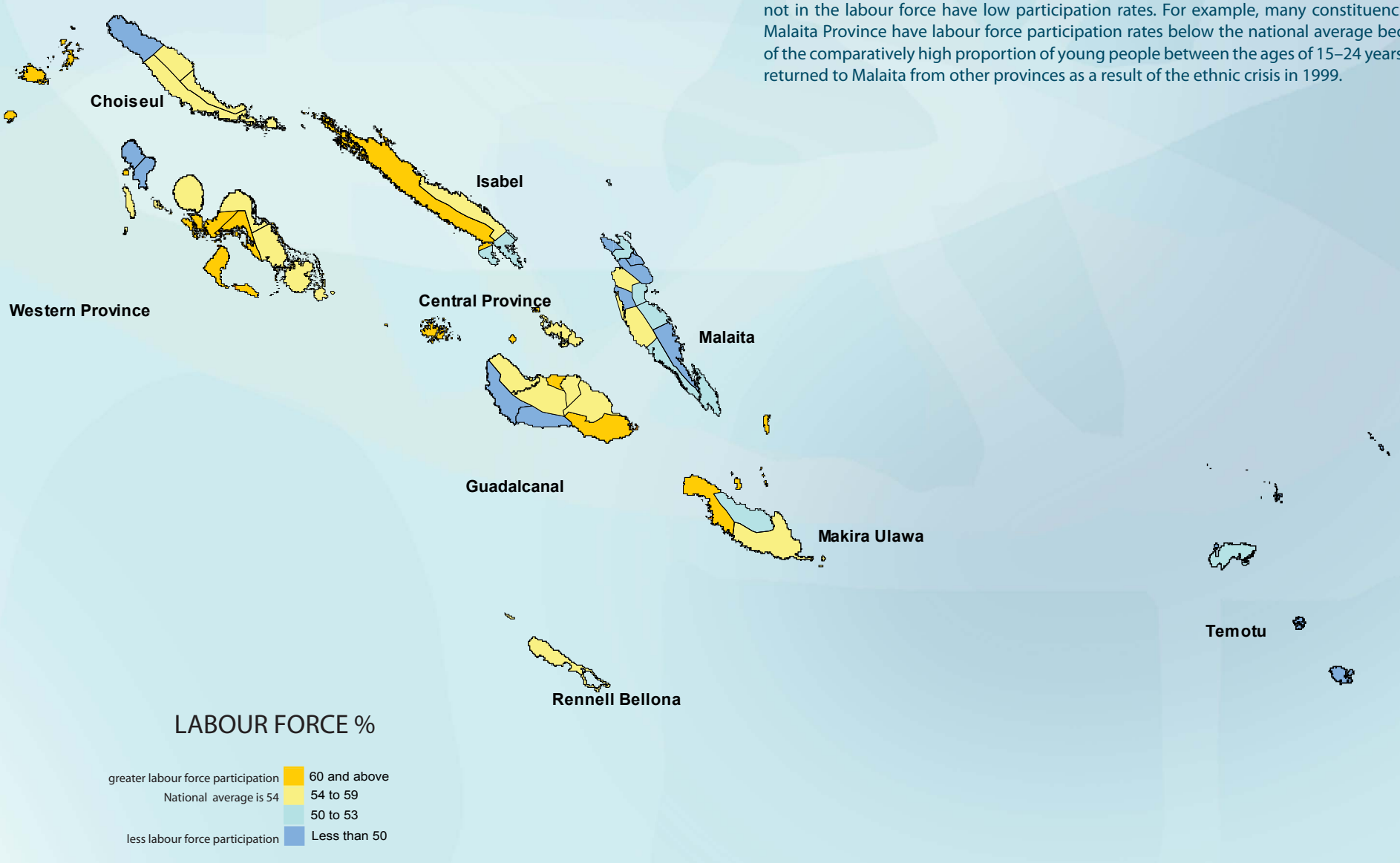


Figure 23 presents a distribution of labour force participation rates by constituency in each province in Solomon Islands in 1999. The highest participation rates (above the national average of 54%) are in constituencies in the Guadalcanal, Isabel, Western and Central Islands provinces. Constituencies with a high proportion of youth or high proportion of women not in the labour force have low participation rates. For example, many constituencies in Malaita Province have labour force participation rates below the national average because of the comparatively high proportion of young people between the ages of 15–24 years who returned to Malaita from other provinces as a result of the ethnic crisis in 1999.

Figure 24: Labour force participation rates by constituency in Malaita Province, 1999

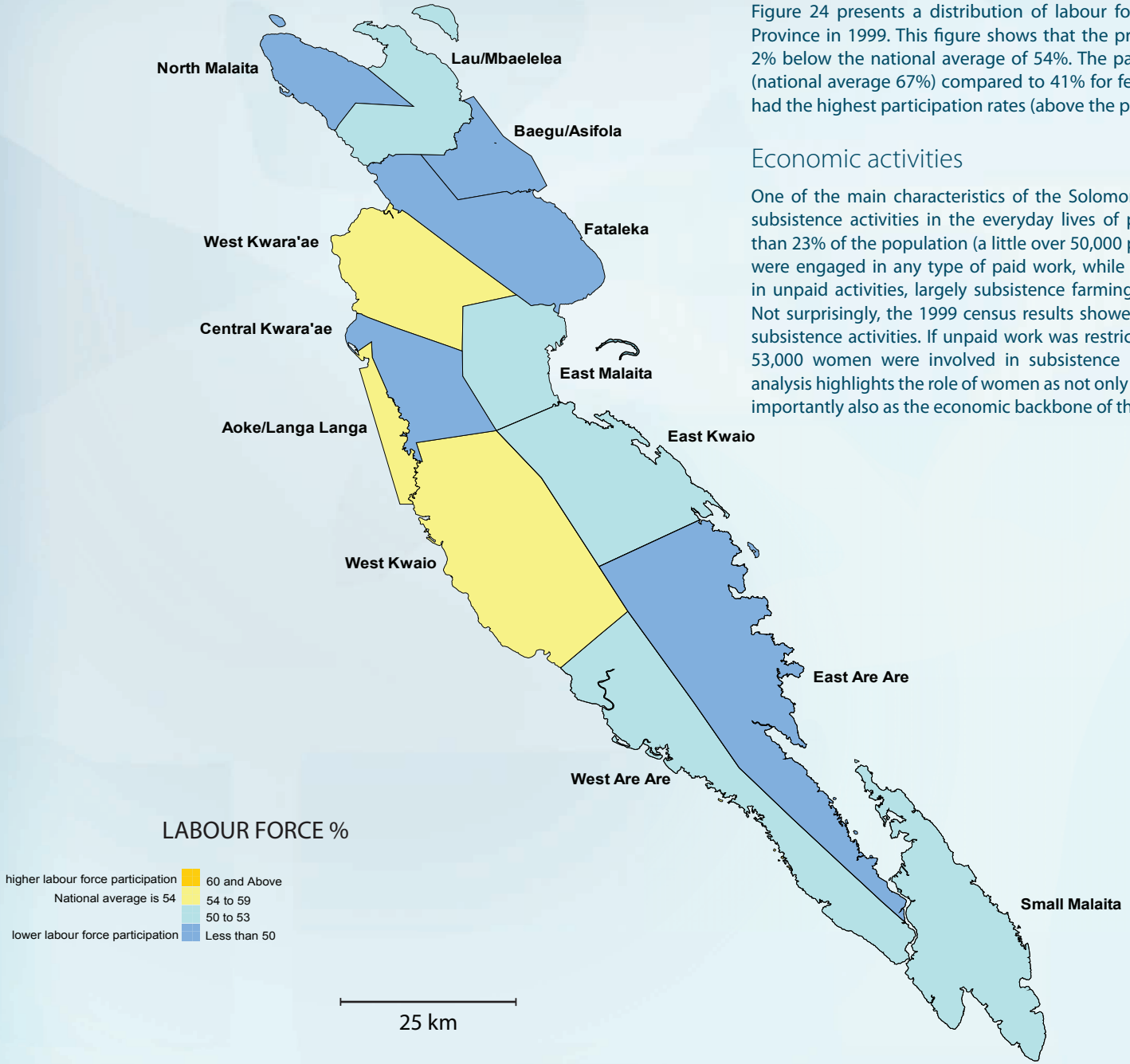


Figure 24 presents a distribution of labour force participation rates by ward in Malaita Province in 1999. This figure shows that the provincial average was 52%, which was only 2% below the national average of 54%. The participation rate for Malaita males was 63% (national average 67%) compared to 41% for females (national average 41%). Three wards had the highest participation rates (above the provincial average of 52%).

Economic activities

One of the main characteristics of the Solomon Islands economy is the predominance of subsistence activities in the everyday lives of people. According to the 1999 census, less than 23% of the population (a little over 50,000 people) of working ages (15 years and older) were engaged in any type of paid work, while about 45% (112,000 people) were involved in unpaid activities, largely subsistence farming, fishing and household-related craft work. Not surprisingly, the 1999 census results showed that more women than men took part in subsistence activities. If unpaid work was restricted to subsistence production only, around 53,000 women were involved in subsistence production against only 49,000 men. This analysis highlights the role of women as not only principal housekeepers and child raisers, but importantly also as the economic backbone of the family and society.

Figure 25: Activity status of males as a percentage of all males aged 15 and over, by province in Solomon Islands, 1999

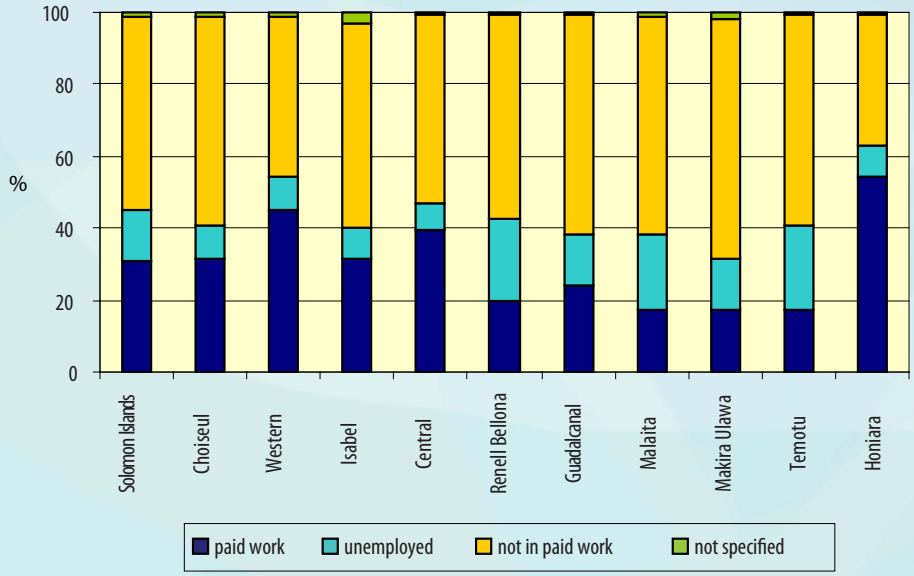
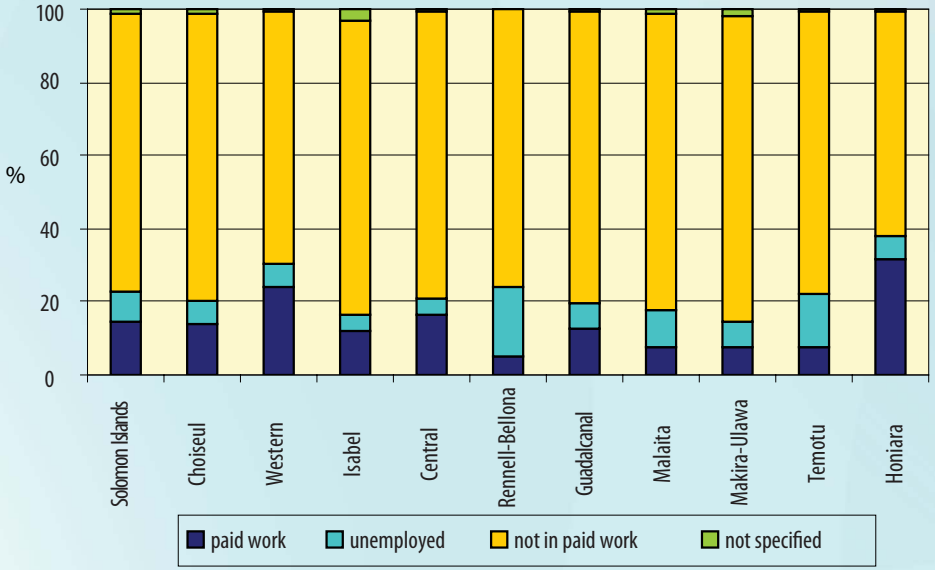


Figure 26: Activity status of females as a percentage of all females aged 15 and over, by province, Solomon Islands, 1999



The figures in this profile focus mainly on unpaid work (mainly subsistence activities) because this was the predominant economic activity of the majority of the population in Solomon Islands at the time of the 1999 census and continues to dominate the everyday activities of the population across the nation. A breakdown of unpaid activities shows that farming is the most important type of work, but more so for women than for men: 88% (Figure 30 reproduced from the 1999 census analysis report) of women indicated that this was the unpaid activity they spent most time on, whereas only 68% of men said this. For men, fishing and craft work were also important activities.

Household information emphasised the importance of subsistence production of staple foods, fruits and fish for the large majority of households in the country. The census information on household production of crops, livestock and marine products also showed that subsistence production was often combined with market production, indicating that regularly surplus subsistence production was frequently marketed, or that cash production involved additional effort as part of general subsistence production. This finding applied throughout the country.

Since the 1999 census, the economic characteristics of households and individuals, together with population distribution and displacement, were the factors most affected by the disturbances that occurred in the wake of the ethnic conflict. Many businesses and enterprises were scaled down or closed altogether, and the same applied to public institutions such as schools, hospitals and government departments. This had enormous implications in terms of income generating activities, and also in terms of pressure on local means of subsistence outside the formal sector, in particular the availability of arable land for subsistence agriculture.

The census results showed considerable variation in work status between provinces, as Figures 25 and 26 illustrate. As expected, as the centre of much wage employment, Honiara had the highest proportion of people who were working for wages. Analysis of the results for individual provinces showed that Western had the highest proportion of paid workers, which reflected the availability of employment in fishing and logging, but also perhaps the relatively high rate of participation in the cash economy at the time of the 1999 census. It is interesting to note the provincial variation in unemployment rates: provinces such as Rennell-Bellona, Temotu and Malaita, with relatively few wage employment opportunities, had the highest unemployment rates. Differences between provinces in female participation in paid work are also presented in the above figures – female participation was as low as 5% in Rennell-Bellona but reached 32% in Honiara.

Figure 27: Reasons for not engaging in paid work: Males 15 and over in Solomon Islands, 1999

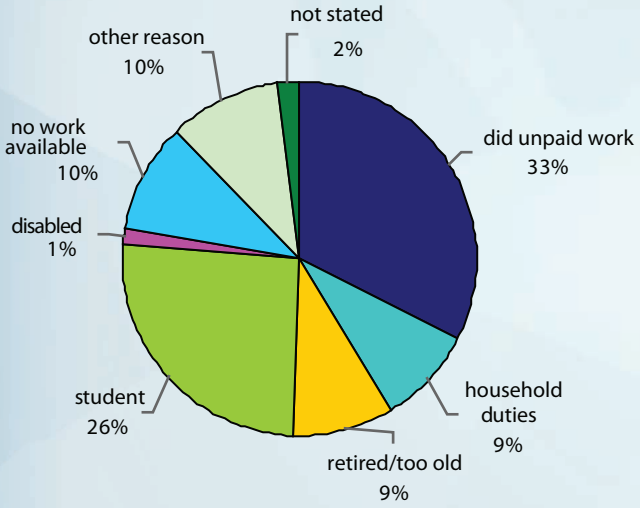
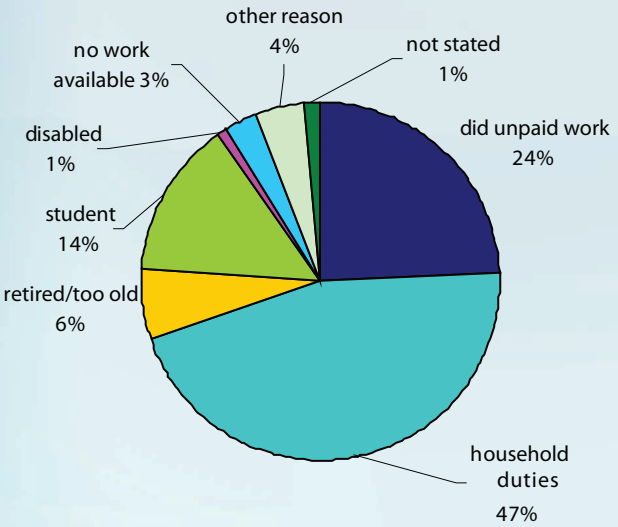


Figure 28: Reasons for not engaging in paid work: Females 15 and over in Solomon Islands, 1999



Women's access to paid employment in the non-agricultural sector (MDG)

A high proportion of wage and salaried workers in an economy is an indication of a highly developed labour market, with most jobs in the formal sector. In many countries, paid employment often provides workers with financial security and in some cases with non-wage benefits (social security coverage, paid and parental leave, retirement and unemployment benefits). The 1999 census analysis showed some increase in women's share in paid employment in the non-agricultural sector over the last intercensal period 1986–1999. The extent to which this trend will be sustainable will depend on economic growth and on whether these employment opportunities are made available equally to women and men. The current situation may differ from the picture presented by the 1999 census results because the growth of the Solomon Islands economy was affected by the ethnic crisis.

An assessment of the real extent to which women and men benefit equally from access to paid employment would require further analysis and additional information on the quality, conditions and characteristics of work. Other variables would need to be considered, including level of education, level of remuneration and wage differentials, and the extent to which employees benefit from labour legislation and social benefits, etc. There should also be a distinction between full-time and part-time jobs, as well as casual, home-based work and domestic service type of work.

Unpaid work

Considering the fact that nearly two-thirds of the adult population and more than three-quarters of women did not do paid work, it was important to determine the nature of activities undertaken by this group in the 1999 census analysis. Figure 28 shows that for nearly half of all women aged 15 and over, 'domestic duties' were the main reason given for not engaging in paid work (see details in census analysis report). The 1999 census defined unpaid work as any type of work for which the worker received no pay, either in money or in 'unpaid work'. As can be seen from Figure 28, domestic (household) related activities like cooking, cleaning and childcare; were significant (47%), and it is highly likely that many of these women undertook unpaid work as well, even though this was not stated as the main reason for being in paid employment.

The main reason given by men for not being engaged in paid work or employment is being actively engaged in various economic activities of an unpaid nature, largely subsistence gardening and fishing. For women this was also a significant reason, being reported by about one-quarter as the primary reason. The unpaid activities of women and men are discussed further in the next section.

According to the 1999 census analysis, for people under 25 years of age (youth population), the main reason for not working for pay was that they were students. In Figures 27 and 28, it is notable that proportionally nearly twice as many men as women were in the student category, reflecting the higher participation of men in secondary and tertiary levels of education.

Figure 29: Main unpaid work activity: Males 15 and over in Solomon Islands, 1999

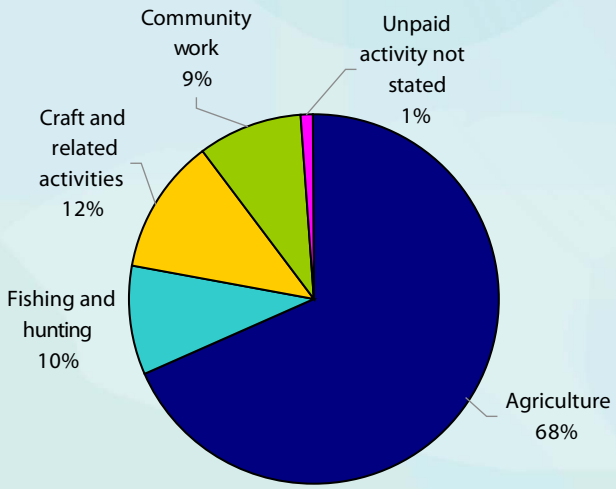
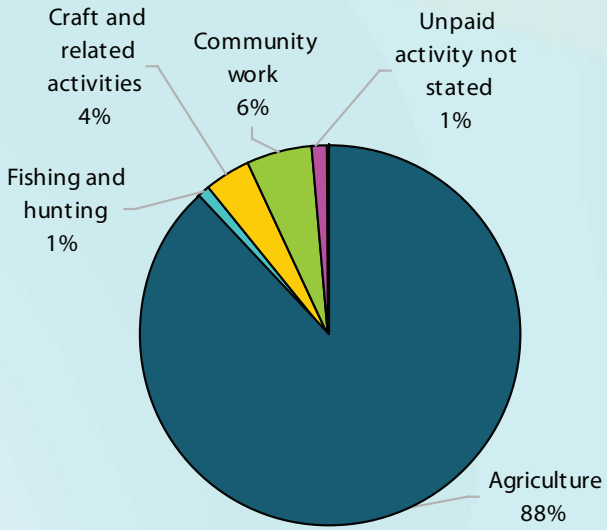


Figure 30: Main unpaid work activity: Females 15 and over in Solomon Islands, 1999



As discussed above, the economic impact of the ethnic conflict and similar unrest after the 1999 census would have worsened the living conditions of the population, particularly of people in many rural communities. Given the results of the data analysis and their implications for the socioeconomic status of the population, it is important to support efforts to revive the income-generating activities of people in rural communities, where over 80% of the population of Solomon Islands is concentrated.

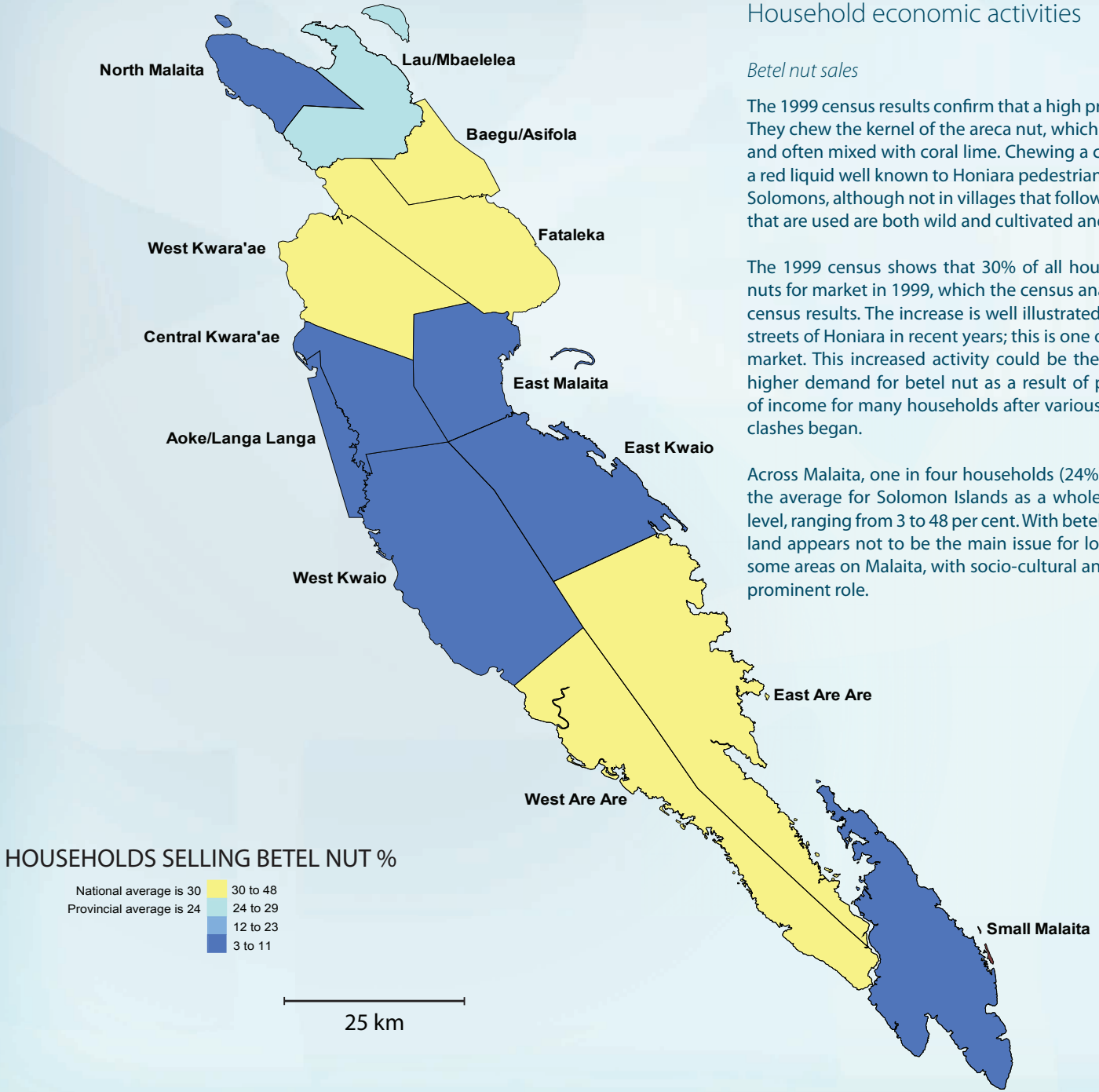
Unpaid work – the subsistence economy

Figures 29 and 30 show the main unpaid work activities of men and women. At the time of the 1999 census, individuals were asked to identify the activities that they had spent the most time on during the previous week. In reality, of course, most individuals, especially in the rural villages, would have done a variety of unpaid tasks, including most of those shown in Figures 29 and 30 . However, this question attempted to identify the most significant work activity, so that when generalising about the national labour force, it might be possible to incorporate important subsistence 'occupations' alongside those normally enumerated in the cash and wage sectors. For both men and women, by far the most important agricultural activity was gardening and growing crops and fruit. Within craft and related activities, house construction was very important for men, and productive household work was most important for women.

Analysis of the 1999 census data also showed an interesting but not surprising relationship between unpaid work activity and paid activity, particularly in agriculture, which was by far the most important unpaid work activity. The census results showed that both men and women are likely to spend more time in unpaid than paid agricultural activities.

Support for household agricultural activities is important to increase the active participation of the rural-based population in food production and income generating activities. Community-based organisations, such as the successful Kastom Garden, should be supported to expand and improve services to rural communities.

Figure 31: Proportion of households selling betel nuts by constituency in Malaita Province, 1999



Household economic activities

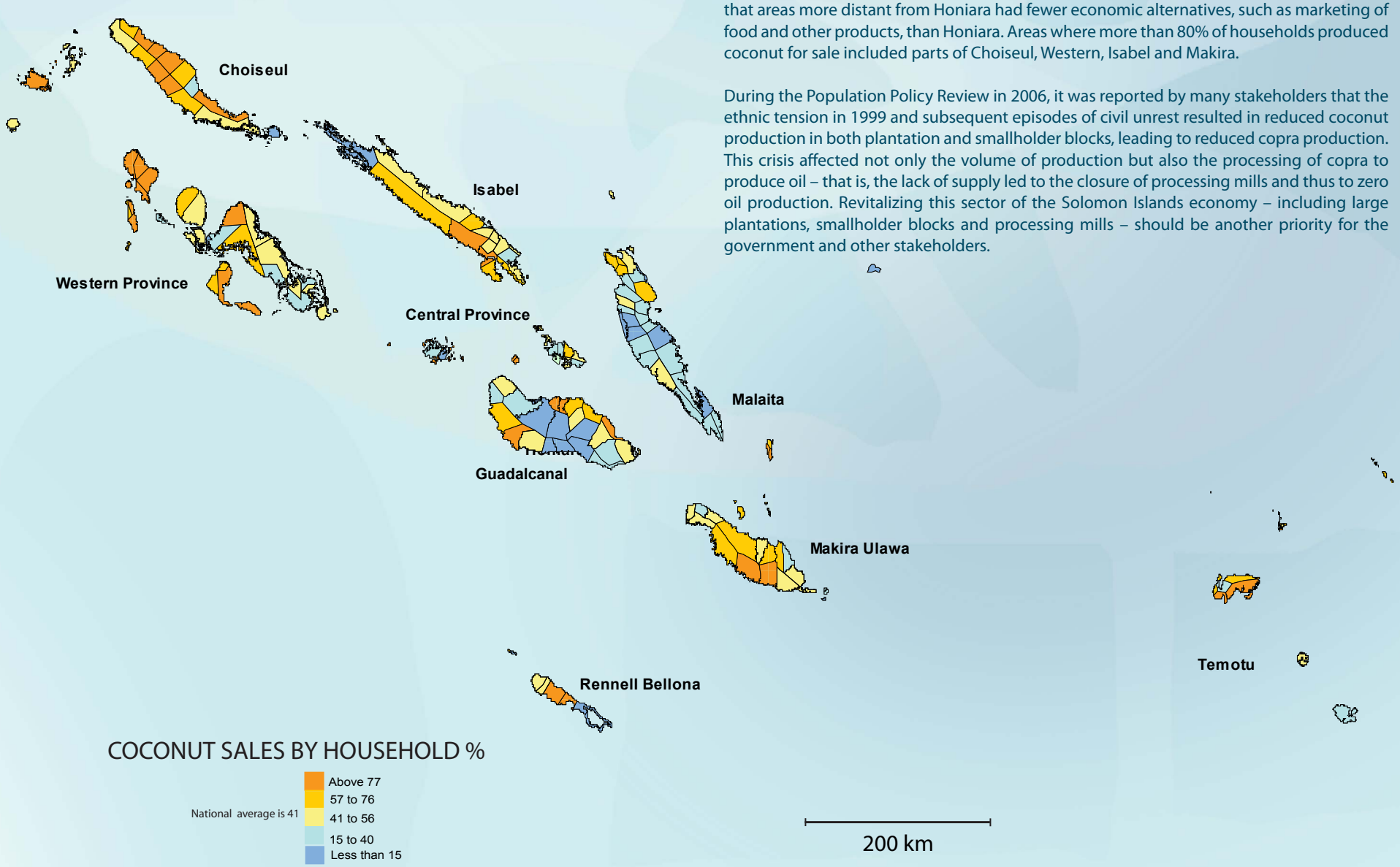
Betel nut sales

The 1999 census results confirm that a high proportion of Solomon Islanders chew betel nut. They chew the kernel of the areca nut, which is wrapped in a leaf from the piper betel plant and often mixed with coral lime. Chewing a combination of these three elements produces a red liquid well known to Honiara pedestrians. Betel nut is chewed in almost all areas of the Solomons, although not in villages that follow certain religious doctrines. The betel nut trees that are used are both wild and cultivated and can be seen in most villages.

The 1999 census shows that 30% of all households in the country were producing betel nuts for market in 1999, which the census analysis noted was a 17% increase from the 1986 census results. The increase is well illustrated by the proliferation of betel nut sellers in the streets of Honiara in recent years; this is one of the few products not confined to the central market. This increased activity could be the result of a combination of factors, including higher demand for betel nut as a result of population growth and the need for a source of income for many households after various episodes of civil unrest since the 1998 ethnic clashes began.

Across Malaita, one in four households (24%) is involved in betel nut sales, which is below the average for Solomon Islands as a whole (30%). Interesting contrasts emerge at Ward level, ranging from 3 to 48 per cent. With betel nut grown universally across Solomon Islands, land appears not to be the main issue for low household involvement in betel nut sale in some areas on Malaita, with socio-cultural and religous customs and beliefs playing a more prominent role.

Figure 32: Percentage of households producing coconuts for sale by province, 1999



Copra sales

The production of copra is the most widespread economic activity in Solomon Islands. Figure 32 shows the production of coconuts for sale in 1999, which included sales for coconut oil and food consumption. The production of copra is the predominant activity in most areas of the country. According to the 1999 census, outside Honiara it is obvious that coconut production was important in the provinces furthest from the capital, and least important in the more central provinces, particularly Malaita and Guadalcanal. The census analysis noted that these differences reflected the pressure on land tenure in Malaita, but could also indicate that areas more distant from Honiara had fewer economic alternatives, such as marketing of food and other products, than Honiara. Areas where more than 80% of households produced coconut for sale included parts of Choiseul, Western, Isabel and Makira.

During the Population Policy Review in 2006, it was reported by many stakeholders that the ethnic tension in 1999 and subsequent episodes of civil unrest resulted in reduced coconut production in both plantation and smallholder blocks, leading to reduced copra production. This crisis affected not only the volume of production but also the processing of copra to produce oil – that is, the lack of supply led to the closure of processing mills and thus to zero oil production. Revitalizing this sector of the Solomon Islands economy – including large plantations, smallholder blocks and processing mills – should be another priority for the government and other stakeholders.

Figure 33: Proportion of households involved in the sale of coconuts by constituency in Malaita Province, 1999

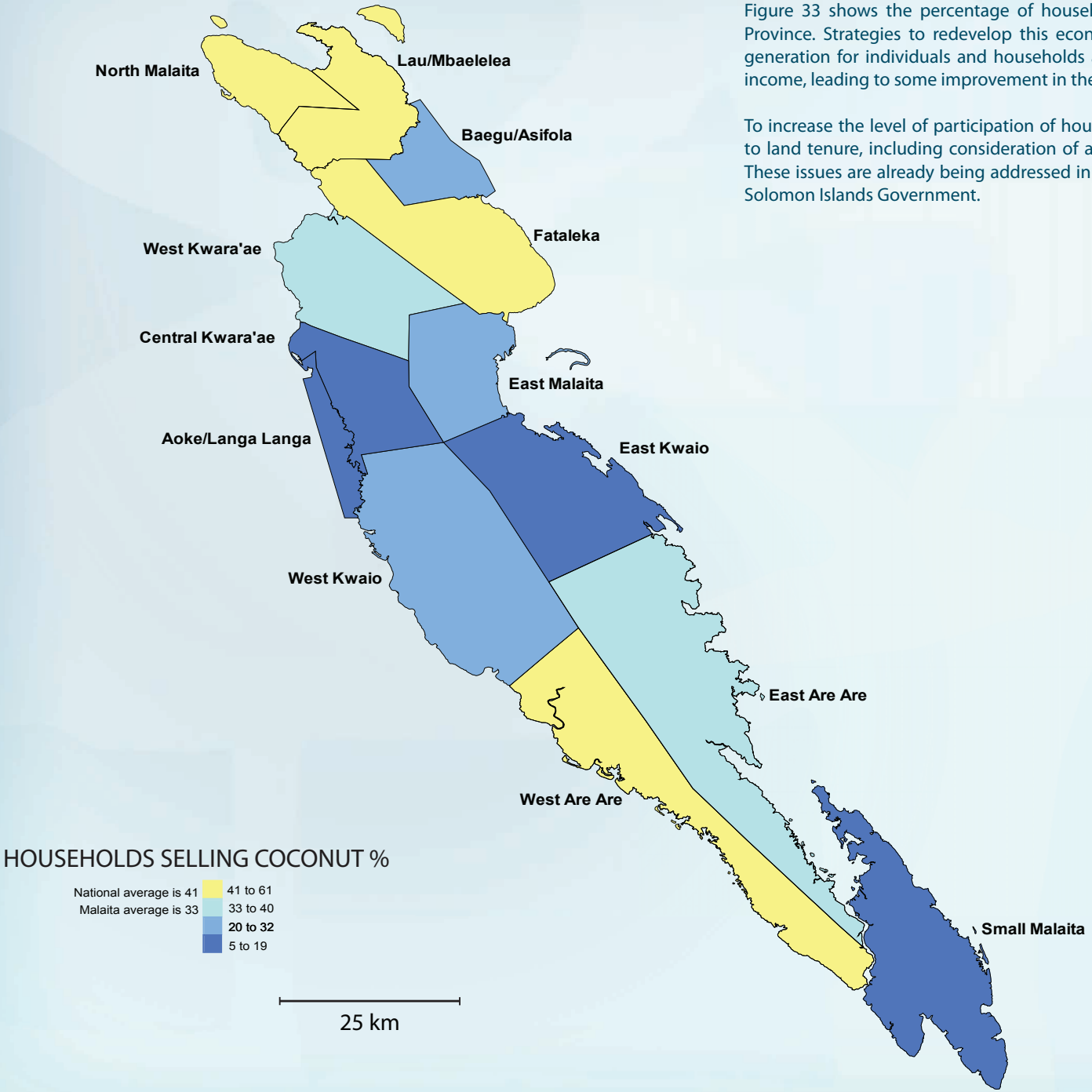
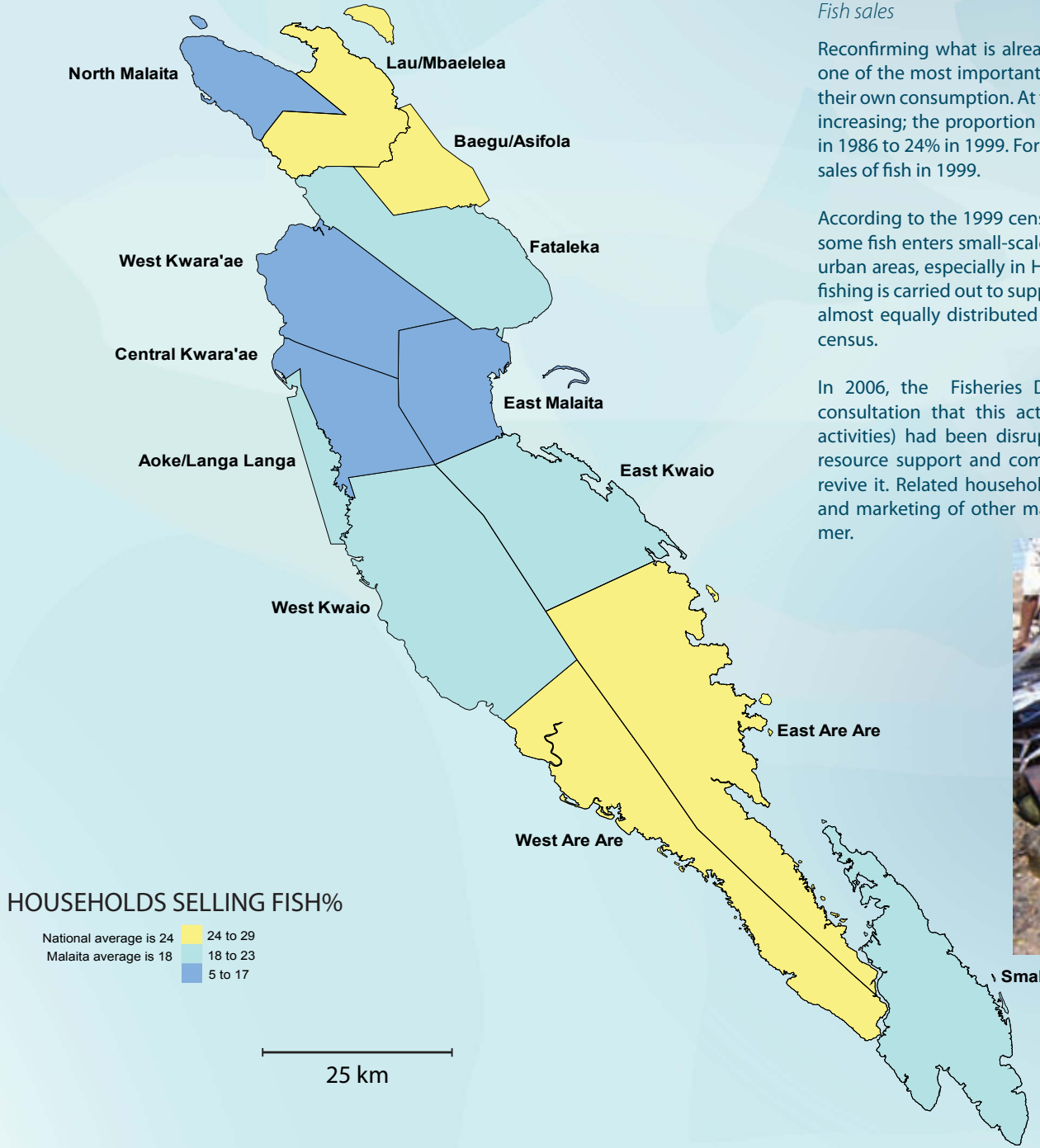


Figure 33 shows the percentage of households producing coconuts for sale in Malaita Province. Strategies to redevelop this economic production sector will assist in income generation for individuals and households and will contribute to national and provincial income, leading to some improvement in the quality of people's lives.

To increase the level of participation of households in coconut production, issues relating to land tenure, including consideration of agricultural smallholder leases, need attention. These issues are already being addressed in the relevant sectoral policies and plans of the Solomon Islands Government.

Figure 34: Proportion of households involved in the sale of fish by constituency, Malaita Province, 1999



Fish sales

Reconfirming what is already known in Solomon Islands, 'fishing for own consumption' is one of the most important activities of households, with 62% of all households fishing for their own consumption. At the same time, fishing as a source of cash income has been slowly increasing; the proportion of households earning money from fishing increased from 17% in 1986 to 24% in 1999. For Malaita Province, 18% of all households earned income through sales of fish in 1999.

According to the 1999 census analysis, there are three main types of fishing for money: (1) some fish enters small-scale trading systems at the village level; (2) fish is traded directly in urban areas, especially in Honiara, or shipped from fisheries collection centres; and (3) bait fishing is carried out to supply the tuna fishing industry. These different types of fishing were almost equally distributed in all parts of the country in the years leading up to the 1999 census.

In 2006, the Fisheries Department confirmed during the Population Policy Review consultation that this activity (like many other community-based income generating activities) had been disrupted during the ethnic crisis and would require considerable resource support and commitment from the government and development partners to revive it. Related household-based activities that were also disrupted included collection and marketing of other marine products, including shellfish, crab, lobster and beche-de-mer.

Photo: Alan McNeil

5. Household size

Households and families are the basic units in which most people live. Trends in the number, type, and composition of households are important to sociologists, planners and policymakers because, for example, urban services are provided to households, not to individuals. Other living situations include homelessness; group arrangements in non-private dwellings such as college dormitories, nursing quarters, and police/military quarters; hotels; boats; and institutions such as prisons.

Knowledge about household characteristics is important for development policy and planning. For example, it is needed to help establish levels and trends in various living arrangements; family formation; housing schemes and tenure types; demand for various types of housing and quantity and quality of dwellings and accommodation; and requirements for family support services. Data on housing are needed to assess related requirements for land allocation, energy and water supply, waste disposal and sewerage connections, telephones and general infrastructure.

Figure 35 provides information on the average size of households, and hence some indication of how crowded some dwellings are. Three provinces, including Malaita Province, have household sizes that are above the national average.

The size and composition of a household depend on socioeconomic and cultural factors. These are shaped mainly by family structure (nuclear or extended), and also by the age at which young people leave their parents' house to form their own households and whether they do this alone or with family (single household, couples with/without children). The housing market (availability and cost of suitable housing) and the availability of land to build on also have a big impact on the composition of households. In addition, governments need to consider support for rental housing and shelter for homeless people, especially in urban areas.

Figure 35: Average household size in Solomon Islands, 1999