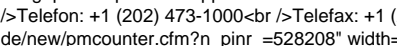


World Bank report shows a serious deficit in skills required for the workplace is preventing Solomon Islanders from accessing economic opportunities

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With seven out of ten Solomon Islanders under the age of 29 and the working-age population set to increase by 30 per cent in the next decade, expanding employment and livelihood opportunities for Solomon Islanders is critically important, according to a new World Bank report, Skills for Solomon Islands: Opening New Opportunities. The report which is launching this week in Honiara explores the demand for skills in current job opportunities in Solomon Islands and finds a mismatch with skills supplied in the labour force. The report proposes practical actions to orient the supply of training to the economic opportunities available at home and overseas. It says with new and emerging economic opportunities available for Solomon Islanders, in natural resources, tourism, small enterprise, and labour migration, increasing employment and livelihood opportunities is particularly important for women, youth and rural Solomon Islanders. Local firms report they could add over 50 percent more jobs, given the availability of employees with the right skills, yet by one measure only about 20 percent of 15-24 year old Solomon Islanders are employed, and over 40 percent of youth are inactive. The report reveals that constraints to growth begin with basic skills. Literacy and Educational Experience surveyed in Solomon Islands in 2007 and 2010 indicated that rates of functional literacy are as low as 17% in major provinces, creating a need for second chance education for those who have missed out on basic education in early years. Current initiatives supported by Solomon Islands Government, civil society and employers will help address the skills gap - such as efforts to improve the quality of basic education and the development of a National Qualifications Framework, says Anne Tully, the new World Bank Country Representative to Solomon Islands. She noted that, "Girls and womens participation in education, training and employment opportunities in Solomon Islands is limited by socio-economic factors, with a notable gender gap in rates for primary school intake, transition, completion, literacy, and employment. The report shows that more actions are needed across a range of areas, from expanding early childhood education to literacy training, to services supporting the transition from school to employment, and coordination of labour market data within government and with employers. Training preparation for labour migration would help assess overseas employment opportunities which are important to the future of many Solomon Islanders. The report supports the Governments National Human Resource Development and Training Plan, coordinated by the Ministry of Development Planning and Aid Coordination (MDPAC). Implementing the Plan will help orient the supply of skills in Solomon Islands to demands from employers and enterprise. The report identifies key actions to include: development of the National Qualifications Framework, improved linkages between training providers and employers including at provincial level, increasing second chance education to gain literacy and livelihoods skills, non-formal training pathways relevant to informal and village livelihoods, and, incentives for workplace training and reduced barriers for women in training and enterprise. The report finds that jobseekers need skills, the right motivation and expectations, and work-ready behaviours such as problem-solving, communication and attitudes to meet employer needs. As formal employment is limited, more financial literacy and entrepreneurial skills training could expand the informal and self-employment livelihoods opportunities needed by the majority of Solomon Islanders. Author of the report, World Bank Human Development Specialist Stephen Close, is visiting Honiara this week to meet with government agencies, civil society, employers and development partners to discuss the reports key analysis and messages, to examine which recommendations are most useful for current policy and action in Solomon Islands. Discussions will focus on the following key questions: What is the skills mismatch in Solomon Islands? Does it matter, and is it a constraint to growth and development? What are practical actions Solomon Islanders can take to close the gap and open new opportunities for all Solomon Islanders? The World Bank 1818 H Street, NW DC 20433 Washington Telefon: +1 (202) 473-1000 Telefax: +1 (202) 477-6391 URL: <http://www.worldbank.org/> 

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