

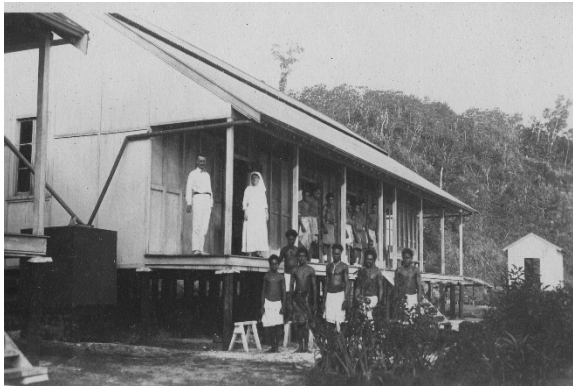
19. Health

Solomon Islanders lived in isolated communities with limited contact between islands and none with the world beyond. The people suffered from endemic diseases such as malaria and yaws, hookworm, tuberculosis, pneumonia and dysentery. Malaria, spread by *Anopheles* mosquitoes, was widespread and causes a heavy death rate among infants and children. Tuberculosis was also a serious cause of mortality, and pneumonia and dysentery were the largest killer of plantation labourers. Yaws was a common debilitating disease. On Malaita and Makira in the 1920s the infection rate was in the vicinity of 60 percent. Yaws and hookworm eradication campaigns began in the 1920s, although they were not fully successful until the 1950s and 1960s. Malaria and yaws adversely affect the fertility of women. There were also many pulmonary diseases and parasitic skin diseases. Those who survived into adulthood developed some immunity, and although a few people lived on into old age, many adults died in their thirties or forties. Poliomyelitis epidemics occurred in the late 1920s and the 1950s. Influenza epidemics were also common, usually introduced from overseas.

The first medical facilities were provided by Christian missions, with a few medical doctors based in the islands onwards from the 1890s and 1900s. The first government hospital opened on Tulagi in the 1913, with one travelling government medical officer serving the rest of the Protectorate. The government provided supplementary funding for mission hospitals, but overall modern medical care was extremely poor until the 1960s. Even today, the resources of the Central Referral Hospital in Honiara are basic and often strained. In recent years, health sector statistics have shown improvements. This is clear in human development indicators such as the country's infant and neonatal mortality rates, declines in the maternal mortality rate, the declining number of reports of malaria cases in the country, and increases in longevity. A key challenge is the fragmentation of health service delivery at provincial, district and rural community levels. Other challenges facing the health sector include the country's high population growth rate, domestic violence concerns, poor transport, communications and other infrastructures, and low governments capacity to finance, manage and deliver social services.



19.1. The first government hospital at Auki, Malaita, 1910s. (British Museum, Thomas Edge-Partington Collection)



19.2. Native Ward at Tulagi Hospital in the 1930s. (Australian National University Archives)

19.3. Tulagi Hospital in the 1930s. (Martin Clemens Collection, in Peter Flahavin Collection)



19.4. The Anglican Hospital of the Epiphany at Fuaaabu, Malaita, in the 1930s. (British Museum, David L. Francis Collection)



19.5. Qaibaita Hansen's Disease (leprosy) colony, the first in Solomon Islands, was established in 1929 as an outstation of the Hospital of the Epiphany at Fuaaabu, Malaita. In the 1930s it was moved closer, to a new site overlooking the hospital. Hansen's disease has now been eradicated. (British Museum, David L. Francis Collection)



19.6. Outpatients Department at Hospital of the Epiphany at Fuaaabu, Malaita, 1930s. (British Museum, David L. Francis Collection)



19.7. Dressing wounds in the Outpatients Department, Hospital of the Epiphany, Fuaaabu, Malaita, 1930s. .
(British Museum, David L. Francis Collection)



19.8. Nurses at Central Hospital, Honiara, 1960s. (Alan Lindley Collection, in Clive Moore Collection)
19.9. Theatre nurse, National Referral Hospital, Honiara, 2004. (Mike McCoy Collection)



19.10. By the 1960s, the BSIP government had begun to introduce health services in villages. Doctors travelled from the administrative centres out into the rural areas. This photograph was taken at Fiu, Malaita, in 1969. (BSIP Annual Report 1969)



19.11. Small health clinics run by the Honiara City Council are spread through the suburbs. This one is in White River, 2008. (Clive Moore Collection)



19.12. Central Referral Hospital, Honiara, 2016. This is the nation's major hospital. On the site of the US 9th Field Hospital (and is still sometimes called 'No. 9'), it was rebuilt by the Republic of China (Taiwan). (Daniel Evans Collection)



19.13. Rural health clinics run by nurses are the most important health facilities for most Solomon Islanders. This is the Seventh-day Adventist Clinic at Sango, east Fataleka, Malaita, 2007. (Clive Moore Collection)