

26. The Next Generation

The annual population growth rate is now in excess of 2.3 percent. In 2012, children and youths (birth to 19 years) were 50.5 percent of the population. Malaita Island has the highest child/youth population (53.4 percent) and Honiara has the lowest (43 percent). The child population is skewed towards the very young (birth to 4 years), with the 15 to 19 years segment of the group smaller. One basic challenge for parents of the birth to 4 years group is their survival, as rural life and urban poverty cause hardship due to limited finances and social services. The large youth percentage of the population places a great deal of pressure on the government to meet health, education and general welfare needs.

The average level of formal education is upper primary, and, as noted in Chapter 18 on Education, a large number of children (19 percent) do not receive any schooling. Most young people (ages 16 to 29) in Solomon Islands are not currently catered for by formal education institutions. Youth unemployment is high, and particularly in urban areas there is a sense of hopelessness as young people with low educational standards have little chance of finding employment. In rural areas, youths are more likely to be absorbed into subsistence and cash crop agriculture and coastal fishing.

There is often a sense of aimlessness brought about by lack of opportunity in an environment that includes unemployment, poverty, marijuana and alcohol abuse, teen age pregnancy, illiteracy and lack of youth-oriented activities. This is ameliorated by support from extended families, sharing of resources, and the strength of the influence of Christianity. Nevertheless, it is a volatile social issue and must be foremost in government planning.



26.1. About 10 percent of Solomon Islanders have blond hair. It is particularly striking in young children. Scientific studies have identified this as a genetic characteristic. This Kwara`ae girl is from Arabala Village, Langalanga Lagoon, Malaita, 1997. (Mike McCoy Collection)

Portraits of Children



26.2-3. Malaitan boys, 2005 and 2006. (Clive Moore Collection)



26.4-5. Malaitan boy, 2007. (Clive Moore Collection) Honiara boy flying his kite, 2016. (Vincent Verheyen Collection, in Clive Moore Collection)



26.7. Tawatana village, Makira, 2010s. (Christopher Chevalier Collection)



26.8. The striking blond hair for which Solomon Islanders are famous. (Graham Baines Collection)



26.9. Children at Malu`u Primary School, north Malaita, 2005. (Mike McCoy Collection)



26.10. Children from east Fataleka, Malaita, 2005. (Clive Moore Collection)



26.11. Children from east Fataleka, Malaita, 2005. (Clive Moore Collection)



26.12–13. Children from east Fataleka, Malaita, 2005. (Clive Moore Collection)



26.14–15. Rennell Island children, 2002. (Clive Moore Collection)



26.16. Rennell Island youth, 2002. (Clive Moore Collection)



26.17. Human skin pigmentation alters with the effect of ultraviolet radiation. Solomon Islands is in a band of maximum exposure. Skin colour varies considerably, from light-skinned Polynesians from the outlying islands and some residents of the larger islands, to the dark skins of those from the northern islands of the nation. This girl is from Maleai village, Magusaiai Island, Shortland Islands, Western Province, 1998. (Mike McCoy Collection)



26.18–19. Girl from Wanderer Bay, Guadalcanal, 2005, and a girl at Kwaimanafu village, Kwara'ae, Malaita, 2009. (Mike McCoy Collection)



26.20. Children from Sango Village, east Fataleka, Malaita, 2004. (Clive Moore Collection)



26.21. Youth Festival at Town Ground, Honiara, 2005. (Clive Moore Collection)



26.22. Youths in Honiara attending the 2005 Youth Festival at Town Ground, Honiara, 2006. (Clive Moore Collection)