

Humanitarian Innovation Hackathon



4 QUALITY
EDUCATION



Education for the Future

The Issue

Lack of access to quality education in the Solomon Islands has been a long term and systemic issue.

Causes are, among others;

- Limited literacy among communities and engagement in education
- A shortage of secondary schools are barriers to education completion particularly for girls
- Lack of strong governance
- Lack of funding, corruption and mismanagement of funds
- Lack of adequate resources such as qualified teachers

COVID-19 has compounded these challenges, only making matters worse.

Without opportunities for education, employment or self-expression, it leaves a large youthful population vulnerable with the potential to be a catalyst for increased crime, violence and susceptibility to radical ideology.

Hackathon Challenge B

Humanitarian Mentor: Lauren Harris

How might we ensure the immediate access and continuity of education, in recovering from a crisis such as COVID-19 for:

- **5-15 years:** children and younger adolescents (primary and secondary school children)
- **15-24 years:** youth.

Lack of access to quality education in the Solomon Islands has been a long term and systemic issue. Covid-19 has only made matters worse.

Persona 1

Rosa is a 13-year-old girl that lives in the Solomon Islands with her three sisters and mother. Her father passed away when she was young from malaria, and her mother has had to scrape by through selling produce at a local market and cleaning and ironing for government families. She is the oldest of her siblings, and feels responsible for their well-being. Due to COVID-19 lockdowns and school closures, Rosa hasn't been able to attend school and instead of joining classes online, has been sent out to work in hard labour agricultural work at a nearby farm (child exploitation). However, when she is at school, she doesn't know who to talk to or how to address her concerns. She is worried that her peers and teacher won't understand her anxieties. She thinks that there is no point in doing anything, and she should keep all her thoughts to herself.

Her Mother has been talking to another village chief about the option of marriage to someone in his village who has recently lost his wife. He has four young children under the age of 14 to bring up and he wants a young wife to look after his children. There have been renewed reports of the involvement of some young female students in prostitution activities, linked to their families' inability to pay for school fees which was an issue on the rise prior to this current crisis.

Rosa starts to become more anxious, and cannot sleep at night. She loses her appetite and is teary a lot of the time. She has tried to access online resources, but this is limited due to her unreliable internet at home. In addition, the limited education funding that there was for her region has also been redirected to more immediate priorities such as improving healthcare infrastructure. Consequently, there is a lack of quality teachers and a lack of resourcing, in which Rosa isn't able to gain access to the materials and books she needs for her classes. She just wants to learn and play with her friends at school.

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Hackathon Challenge B

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Persona 2

Benjamin is a 16-year old teenager who pre Covid, was skipping several classes to hang with friends or undertake informal odd jobs, but still enjoyed going to art classes as he had an interest in drawing and building things. Since Covid-19 lockdowns and school closures he has seen no point in returning to school, and this has further disrupted his learning and access to vocational training or livelihood opportunities.

As a school drop-out, he is now unemployed and has a big family to support including five younger siblings, an unwell and alcoholic father, and his mothers' parents who live with them. He did try to access vocational training opportunities online but, living in a rural region, the internet is patchy and he doesn't have regular access to a computer.

Instead, he hangs around outside by the beach, smoking and not eating well, and running errands or doing odd jobs if/when he can find them in return for cash or items he can use to try and trade. Of the jobs he can find, he is working mostly late at night and in conditions where he is at high risk of being harmed (e.g. industrial work). He has struck up relationships with local drug dealers, and a few times he has been asked to drug traffic some amounts. He is also involved in petty crime, and with other youths has been pick-pocketing when the opportunity arises.

Benjamin feels more and more hopeless and depressed as time goes on. He has started drinking more and sometimes takes drugs which are offered to him by other kids in a similar situation he is hanging out with. He has started to get into fights with local gangs and has started to suffer some health issues such as shortness of breath and panic attacks.



The Warren Centre
& Professor Ron Johnston

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Resources

Australia's COVID-19 Development Response Plan for Solomon Islands.

<https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/covid-response-plan-solomon-islands.pdf>

Education Cannot Wait.

<https://www.educationcannotwait.org/downloads/reports-and-publications/>

Building Systemic Resilience in Schools Systems: The Way Forward.

<https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/building-systemic-resilience-school-systems-way-forward>

Situation Analysis of Children in the Solomon Islands, UNICEF. (2017).

<https://www.unicef.org/pacificislands/media/1221/file/Situation-Analysis-of-Children-Solomon-Islands.pdf>

Humanitarian-development nexus.

<https://www.unocha.org/themes/humanitarian-development-nexus>

The Sphere Handbook. Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response(2018).

<https://spherestandards.org/handbook-2018/>

Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies.

<https://inee.org/resources>



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Background

Lack of access to quality education in the Solomon Islands has been a long term and systemic issue. Causes are, among others, limited literacy among communities and engagement in education, a shortage of secondary schools are barriers to education completion particularly for girls, lack of strong governance, lack of funding, corruption or mismanagement of funds, and lack of adequate resources such as qualified teachers. Of the Solomon Islands' school age population of 314,067 (UNESCO, 2020), there are already significant numbers of students marginalised simply by not (ever) having been enrolled in school. In secondary school, this equates to 73% of all eligible girls and 68% of all eligible boys – which also evidences gender-bias in the dropout rates transitioning from primary to secondary education. There are a number of cross-cutting factors that can cause vulnerability and marginalisation in the Solomon Islands, to the detriment of learning and life chances. These include age, gender, disability, gifted and talented students, geography, child labour and poverty.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Solomon Island children's access to education has been further disrupted, compounding these challenges. All these challenges are likely to be exacerbated by the psychosocial effects of limited social contact with peers and confinement in the event of school closures or lockdowns. During the pandemic there have been significant challenges and lack of capacity to operationalize distance learning modalities, especially for those marginalized by geography/living in remote areas, where there is weak infrastructure and lack of access to necessary technologies and technical capacities. Disruptions to education from school closures and potential reductions to the education budget could push Solomon Islands off its positive education trajectory.

There are concerns that with disruptions to education (i.e., school closures, lockdowns, redirected funding), and the lack of physical learning, will result in increased protection risks (exploitation, child labour, forced marriage, domestic violence). In the longer term, if not addressed, could lead to higher rates of drop out, use of negative coping mechanisms and (exploitation, child labour, forced marriage, domestic violence), high unemployment rates, and increased violence and conflict. A lack of post-secondary education leaves the majority of young men and women stuck in vulnerable and informal employment, or without access to livelihoods and employment opportunities. COVID-19 adds to the urgency of meeting the needs of large numbers of unemployed youth. Without opportunities for education, employment or self-expression, a large youthful population can be a catalyst for increased crime, violence and susceptibility to radical ideology..

