

Final Evaluation – Safer Cities for Girls, Solomon Islands

Summary

Safer Cities for Girls (SC4G) is a global program model that aims to build safe, accountable and inclusive cities with and for adolescent girls in all their diversity. Plan International Australia (PIA) and Plan International Solomon Islands (PISI) adapted the global SC4G model for implementation in Honiara, Solomon Islands, starting in 2016. The project is funded by the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP), as well as donations from the Australian public and corporate donors. In recent years (FY21 onwards), the project has been largely implemented through local partners – Honiara City Council (HCC) and Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) Solomon Islands, reaching 16 communities, including 873 females and 752 males.

This evaluation focuses on the last three years of the project's operation, and aims to identify the key achievements of the SC4G project in the Solomon Islands (including supporting factors and challenges) and important lessons to inform future programming and influencing work with young people in the Solomon Islands. The evaluation methodology was qualitative, consisting largely of focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs) with key project stakeholders, including young people, parents/caregivers, partner staff and PISI staff.

The evaluation found that the overarching goal and intent of the project was relevant to the needs and priorities of young people and aligned with the priorities of partner organisations. The most significant progress towards outcomes related to changes in young people's attitudes and behaviour in support of gender equality and the formation of informal youth groups that did not exist previously. There was less evidence of targeted strategies and positive change in support of social inclusion, including young people living with disabilities (PLWD) and young LGBTQI+ people.

There was also limited evidence of progress towards outcomes related to the enabling environment required to support safe and inclusive cities for girls. This reflects the strengths and weaknesses of the project's strategies and partnerships approach. Lack of targeted strategies to engage with key stakeholders at the household/family, community and systems-levels limited the engagement of parents/caregivers, community leaders, civil society organisations (CSOs), government and transport providers. In addition, challenges in securing sufficient involvement from partner management, along with shortcomings in the level of support provided to partner organisations and insufficient efforts to involve them in strategic decision-making, limited the project's access to influential stakeholders and ability to appropriately adapt key strategies. Although important foundational changes were achieved, all of these factors could impede the sustainability of the project's achievements.

A number of lessons have emerged that will be useful for future programming with young people in the Solomon Islands. These relate to the importance of ensuring young people's real concerns and priorities are considered; more comprehensive work to address GEDSI; adequately planning and resourcing for advocacy and influencing powerful stakeholders; improved partnership practices; and ensuring the appropriateness of accessibility of core project activities targeting young people.

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1. Introduction

1.1 The Safer Cities for Girls project

Safer Cities for Girls (SC4G) is a global program developed in partnership between Plan International, Women in Cities International, and UN-HABITAT¹. The overarching goal is to build safe, accountable and inclusive cities with and for adolescent girls in all their diversity. The program aims to increase girls' safety and access to public spaces; safe mobility in the city; and increase their active and meaningful participation in urban development and governance. Preventing and addressing gender-based violence, including sexual harassment, in public spaces and transport sectors is also a key focus.

Safer Cities for Girls is designed as a gender transformative and inclusive programme, and aims to change not only how safe girls actually are in cities, but also how they perceive their own safety. With an approach to safety that goes beyond addressing "symptoms" (e.g. lack of lighting) to explicitly tackling the root causes of violence against adolescent girls in cities. This involves changing unequal power relations, discriminatory social norms, attitudes and behaviours, social assets and safety nets as well as systems, policies and practices. Youth and stakeholders are brought together in a co-leadership and intergenerational partnership to devolve power and disrupt traditional hierarchies.

By providing critical spaces for young people to build social consciousness, SC4G helps to evolve young people's role and position in society by:

- Strengthening girls' and boys' agency through girl-centred programming, progressive skill building, and movement building using tools like safety walks, FGDs and community mapping;
- Fostering an enabling ecosystem for gender equality through knowledge generation and socialisation, prioritising girls' concerns and rating progress;
- Creating multi-level, multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral partnerships for an integrated approach to girls' safety in cities by continually measuring results and community-led monitoring for improvements;
- Strengthening the frameworks that act as enablers of gender equality and girls' safety through joint actions, intergenerational dialogues, local influencing and reclaiming of public spaces.

Similar to other cities across the world, girls' safety in Honiara, Solomon Islands is impacted by many factors including the built environment, access to safe transport and services, laws, harmful social and cultural norms that enable the existence of unequal power dynamics, gender-based discrimination, and violence against women and girls. These issues were identified and explored in-depth in a baseline study for the project, conducted in 2020 to understand girls' safety in Honiara and inform the contextualisation of the global program model for Solomon Islands².

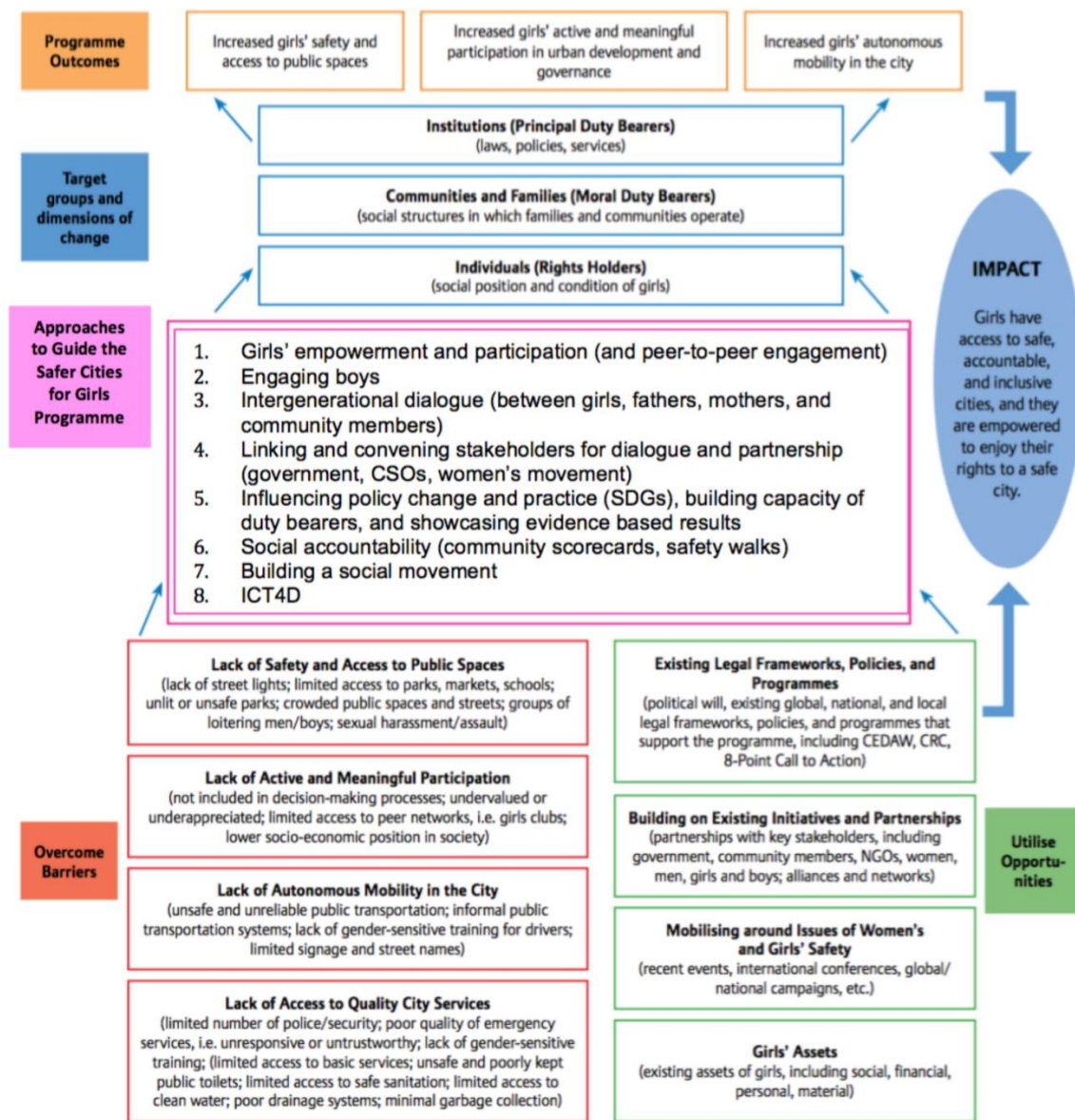
As per the global program theory of change (see Figure 1 below), the SC4G in Honiara project is designed to work on multiple levels: with governments and institutions to influence policymakers to make laws and services receptive and inclusive of girls' safety and needs; and with families, communities, and youth to challenge harmful social norms, and promote gender equality, girls' rights, safety and inclusion. Adolescent girls participate as active agents of change – building their individual capacity and collective agency to engage with decision-makers and communities through inter-generational dialogue, in order to raise awareness on issues relating to girls' safety and inclusion in cities, and to develop practical solutions to making cities more gender-equitable, safe and inclusive.

¹ <https://planinternational.sharepoint.com/sites/Programme/SitePages/ProgrammeModel-Safer-Cities1.aspx>

² <https://www.plan.org.au/publications/not-really-safe-for-us-girls/>

Adolescent boys are trained to promote positive masculinities, gender equality and support girls' rights to safety and participation.

Figure 1: Global SC4G ToC



Plan International's flagship Champions of Change (CoC) program was also incorporated into the project to support gender equality and social norm change. This involves a comprehensive curriculum aimed at boys and girls aged 14-18 (although in the Solomon Islands context it was aimed at youth aged 13-24). In line with the aims of the SC4G program, CoC is designed to promote change in girls' and boys' knowledge, attitudes and practices by engaging individual youth, families/communities and institutions. It focuses on girls' empowerment, boys' engagement, peer-to-peer mobilisation and intergenerational dialogues³.

SC4G in Honiara was initiated in financial year 2016-2017 (FY17) and gained momentum over time to become a key project in Plan International Australia's (PIA) and Plan International Solomon Islands' (PISI) portfolio. The project has been continuously supported using funds from the Australian

³ <https://planinternational.sharepoint.com/sites/Programme/SitePages/ProgrammeModel-Champions-of-Change.aspx>

Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP), as well as generous donations from the Australian public and corporate donors.

Much of the direct project implementation happened through local partnerships with Honiara City Council (HCC) and Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) Solomon Islands. Two dedicated Project Officer (PO) roles were funded through the project and contracts sat with each of the partners – one at HCC and one at YWCA. Target communities were divided equally between HCC and YWCA (around eight communities each) so the POs could develop strong and trusting relationships with communities and provide consistent support to youth and other project stakeholders.

Partners were also responsible for the recruitment and management of volunteer Sessional Facilitators (SFs) and Community Focal Points (CFPs). SFs were primarily responsible for delivering the CoC curriculum to youth groups, and CFPs acted as a point of contact to share information with youth and mobilised participants for upcoming activities. Partner POs led the delivery of stakeholder engagement activities such as forums, events, community awareness and intergenerational dialoguing sessions, safety walks and community mapping, as well as hook activities⁴, peer-to-peer dialoguing and CoC graduations. PISI project staff oversaw all project planning, budgeting, implementation, reporting and compliance, as well as stakeholder engagement and International Day of the Girl (IDG) events. With a significant portion of implementation and volunteer management sitting with partner POs, this enabled PISI SC4G staff to also focus on technical and strategic elements of the project.

1.2 The evaluation

The objectives of this evaluation were to identify:

- The key achievements of the SC4G project in the Solomon Islands;
- The factors that supported the project's achievements and the challenges faced;
- Important learnings to inform future programming and influencing work with young people in the Solomon Islands.

The key evaluation questions (KEQs) are outlined in the detailed evaluation matrix in Annex 1. In summary, the evaluation focused on:

- The relevance of the project to the needs and priorities of key project stakeholders;
- The effectiveness of the project, in terms of achieving outcomes (or progress towards outcomes);
- The sustainability of the project's achievements and approaches.

The evaluation focused on the past three years of SC4G project implementation, and the experiences of young people and partners who participated in the project. Key limitations of the evaluation are:

- Lack of data around the perceptions and experiences of previous project staff from PISI and partner organisations;
- Lack of representation of younger age groups in primary data collection;
- Lack of detailed project documentation from the design phase of the project, as well as monitoring data.

⁴ Group activities such as sport, drama classes or self-defence lessons intended to be end of module rewards, as well as enjoyable outlets to counteract the intensity of CoC content.

Data collection was undertaken by staff from PIA and PISI. A safeguarding risk assessment was conducted prior to the commencement of data collection activities and consent/assent processes were consistent with Plan International policy and relevant Plan International templates were used for consent/assent forms. Data was only shared with the PIA staff who wrote the evaluation report and securely stored in a private Microsoft Teams group.

The methodology applied qualitative data collection methods – focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs). Primary data collection was supplemented by secondary data, both quantitative (eg. project reach and outputs) and qualitative (eg. narrative project reports and case studies).

Four KIIs were conducted with relevant PISI and partner staff. This included the former PISI SC4G Coordinator (due to the role being vacant at the time), the current Advocacy and Communications Officer, and both partner POs from HCC and YWCA. Partner management staff and relevant government, public transport or police force stakeholders were not interviewed, because their involvement in the project had been limited, especially in more recent times.

Eight FGDs were held with youth participants, SFs/CFPs and parents/caregivers. Groups were segmented by age and sex to ensure participants felt as comfortable as possible to voice their thoughts and opinions and share feedback on the project.

Table 1: Data collection methods

| Data collection method | Stakeholder group |
|-------------------------------|---|
| FGD 1 | Female youth aged 19 - 24 |
| FGD 2 | Female youth aged 13 – 15 |
| FGD 3 | Male youth aged 18 – 24 |
| FGD 4 | Female youth aged 16 – 18 |
| FGD 5 | Sessional Facilitators and Community Focal Points |
| FGD 6 | Male youth aged 13 – 17 |
| FGD 7 | Female parents/caregivers |
| FGD 8 | Male parents/caregivers |
| KII | PISI A&C Officer |
| KII | PISI PC (former) |
| KII | PO from HCC |
| KII | PO from YWCA |

KIIs and FGDs were conducted in-person by PIA and PISI program staff in Honiara between 12th – 28th April 2023. Two FGDs were held per weekday with one session in the morning for older youth and parents/caregivers, and another in the afternoon for youth in younger age groups to allow students to participate after school hours. The aim was to have at least 16 participants in each FGD to ensure broad representation across target communities – although in the end numbers in each FGD varied. During FGDs, a PISI staff member was on hand to support with Pijin translation for both questions and responses. Participants were also given the option to respond in a way they felt most comfortable. This included verbal or written responses in either English or Pijin. A total of 68 people participated in activities for this evaluation.

Table 2: Sample

| Adult | | Adult with Disability | | Child | | Child with Disability | |
|--|-----------|--|-----------|---|----------|--|----------|
| Men | 27 | Men | 0 | Boy | 3 | Boy | 0 |
| Women | 32 | Women | 1 | Girl | 5 | Girl | 0 |
| Sex indeterminate, intersex or unspecified | 0 | Sex indeterminate, intersex or unspecified | 0 | Sex indeterminate, intersex or unspecified | 0 | Sex indeterminate, intersex or unspecified | 0 |
| <i>Adult TOTAL</i> | <i>59</i> | <i>Adult with Disability TOTAL</i> | <i>1</i> | <i>Child TOTAL</i> | <i>8</i> | <i>Child with Disability TOTAL</i> | <i>0</i> |
| Total by sex and disability | | | | | | | |
| <i>Male TOTAL</i> | <i>30</i> | <i>Female TOTAL</i> | <i>38</i> | <i>Sex indeterminate, intersex or unspecified TOTAL</i> | <i>0</i> | <i>People with Disability</i> | <i>1</i> |
| TOTAL | | | | 68 | | | |

2. Findings

2.1 Relevance

The key project objectives of the global SC4G program model are:

- Increase girls' safety and access to public spaces;
- Increase girls' active and meaningful participation in urban development and governance;
- Increase girls' autonomous mobility in the city.

These were further elaborated and refined for the SC4G project in the Solomon Islands. The goal and outcomes are outlined in Table 3 below. This section explores the extent to which these objectives and outcomes align with the priorities and needs of key project stakeholders.

Table 3: Goal and outcomes of SC4G Solomon Islands

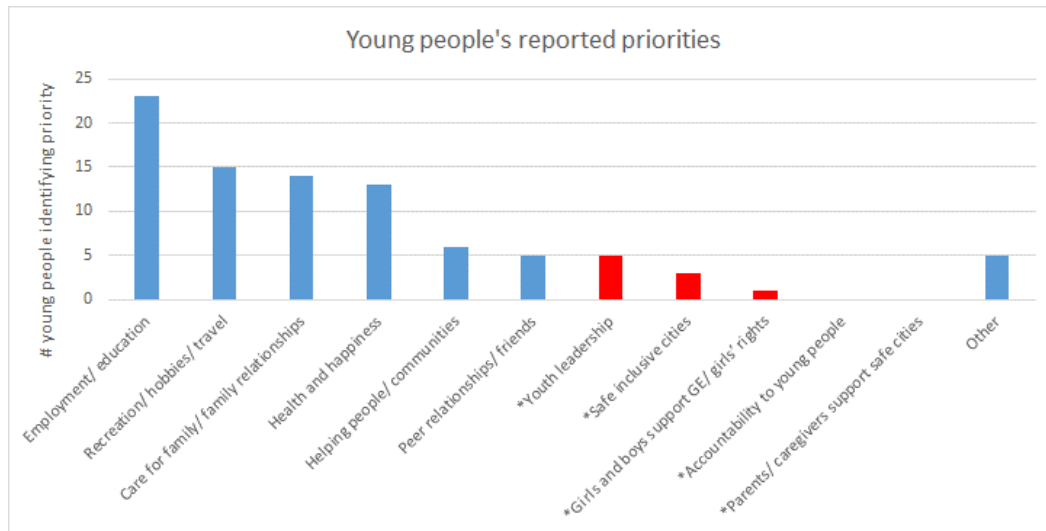
| |
|--|
| Goal: Cities are safe and inclusive for as well as accountable to, girls in all their diversity |
| Immediate outcome 1.1: Adolescent girls' and boys' attitudes and practices are consistent with gender equality and girls' rights. |
| Immediate outcome 1.2: Youth groups with gender transformative practices collaborate effectively with civil society organisations (CSOs) to make Honiara safer and inclusive together. |
| Immediate outcome 2: Parents/caregivers support and take action to improve the safety of adolescent girls in public spaces and on transport. |
| Immediate outcome 3.1: Local or city government authorities engage and take action to improve the safety of adolescent girls in public spaces and on public transport. This includes training police officers on gender awareness and safer cities. |
| Immediate outcome 3.2: Public transport authorities, managers and staff support the safety of adolescent girls on public transport. This includes improved regulations and codes of conduct to prevent and respond to sexual harassment incidents. |

2.1.1 Alignment with young people’s needs/ priorities

a) Young people’s aspirations

When asked about their priorities in life during a “visioning” exercise prior to FGDs, the key outcomes of the SC4G program were not as explicit as other priorities. The most commonly cited priorities related to education and employment, followed by recreation and hobbies (eg. sport, travel); their families and relationships with family members; and their health and overall happiness. SFs and CFPs also highlighted unemployment and lack of participation in education as the most important factors affecting young people in their communities, along with drugs and alcohol abuse.

Figure 2: Young people's reported priorities



* indicates priorities that are directly related to SC4G outcome areas

In terms of themes specific to the SC4G project outcomes, only young women in the older age group (19-24) mentioned these, specifically around safe cities and gender equality. For young women in this age group, themes around safe and inclusive cities were the third most frequently mentioned priority (along with care for family/family relationships and peer relationships/friends).

“Safer streets” (Participant 1 – woman aged 19-24)

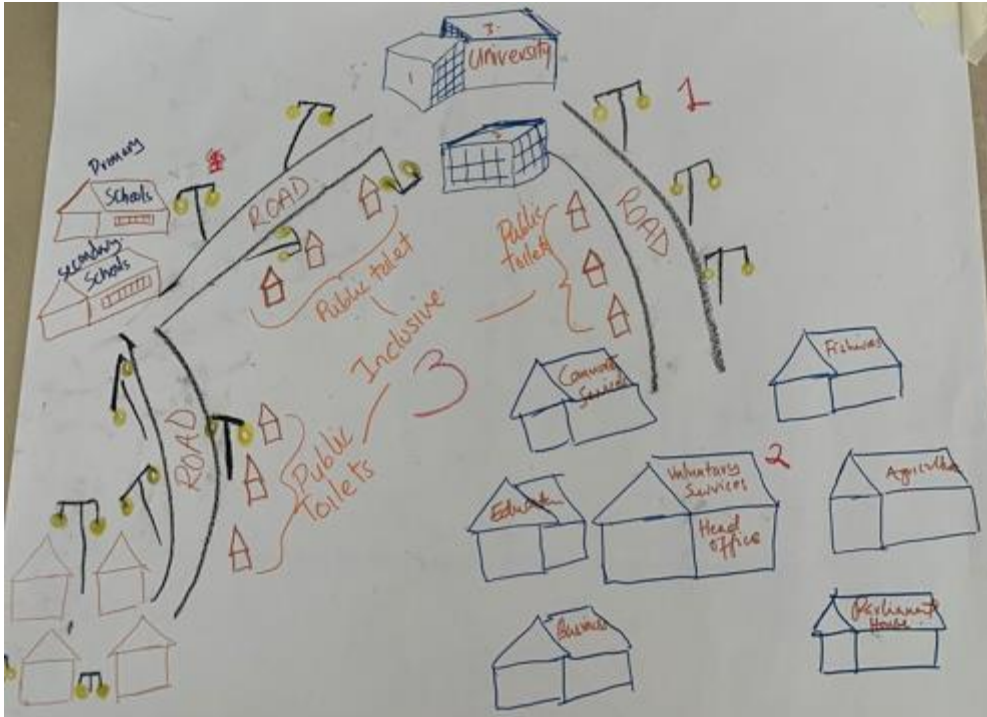
“Feelings of safety: no harassment when travelling in public transports (sic) like buses and taxis” (Participant 7 – woman aged 19-24)

“Gender equality – shared responsibilities (home, community, society, individuals)

Equal opportunities (education, work, university, vocational schools)

Decision-making (informal and formal) – equal participation in decision-making, voting of youths male/female for national parliament” (Participant 2 – woman aged 19-24)

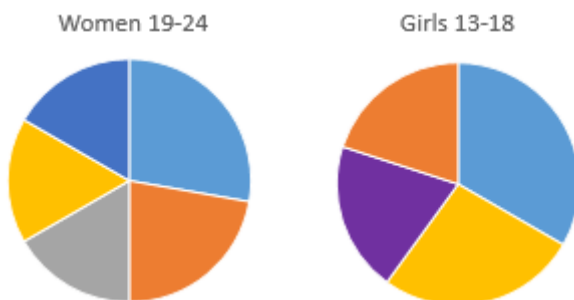
Vision of community, highlighting aspects relevant to SC4Gs, including street lights and safe and inclusive facilities (Participant 2 – woman aged 19-24):

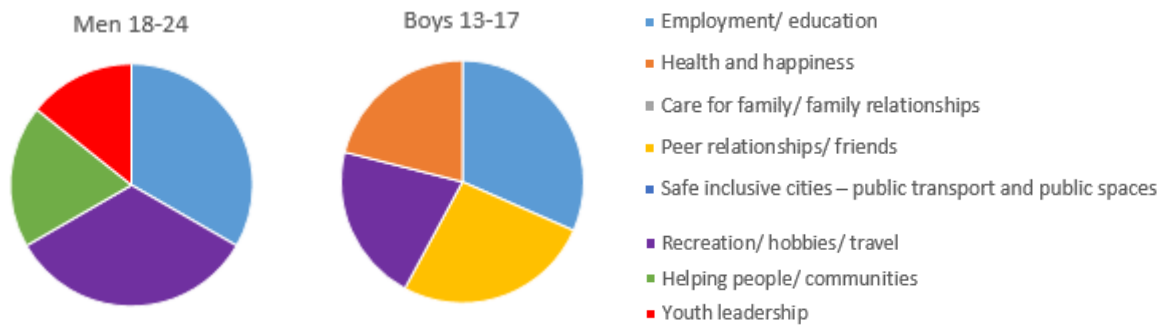


While the specific outcomes of the SC4G project were not prominent during the visioning exercise, it is important to recognise that the core SC4G outcome areas around gender equality and safety at home and in public spaces are necessary to create an enabling environment for young people to address the priorities they identified around health and happiness, education and employment, families and relationships. Youth leadership, another cross-cutting theme in the SC4G project model, was also identified as a priority by two young women and three young men. During the visioning exercise, one young woman said she wanted to “become a leader” in the future and another young woman supported the idea of young women’s and young men’s representation in the national parliament. The young men expressed desire to become advocates for key issues affecting their peers and communities.

In terms of differences in priorities based on gender and age, education and employment were the most commonly cited priorities across all gender and age groups. But men were just as likely to identify recreation/travel/hobbies as a priority, while the second most cited priority for women was health and happiness, and for both girls and boys it was caring for family/family relationships.

Figure 3: Young people’s priorities by age and gender





When asked about the importance of urban safety specifically and the degree to which they experience safety issues navigating their communities, all age and gender groups agreed that safety was an issue, particularly in urban areas, which confirms the relevance of the project’s overarching goal. Fear of harassment and sexual violence was raised by girls and young women, along with examples of changed behaviour to avoid dangerous situations and manage safety risks. Women and girls reported avoiding certain areas of their communities (particularly dark/poorly lit areas) and going out at night due to safety concerns. They also highlighted public transport as a specific source of concern due to the risk of harassment, including from transport service employees; and that drug and alcohol consumption, particularly by boys/young men, heightened their safety concerns when navigating their communities. Insufficient street lighting was also raised as an issue in the young women’s FGD. Young men and boys also believed safety was an issue, particularly in urban areas, but did not report concerns related to their own personal safety or changes in their own behaviour to stay safe. Young men’s and boys’ discussions focused more on factors that they perceive as reducing safety in communities generally, such as drug and alcohol use, lack of lighting, unemployment, school dropout rates, and lack of social and recreational opportunities for young people.

b) Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI)

The different perceptions of urban safety, its impacts and influencing factors among young women/girls and young men/boys highlights the gendered dimensions of urban safety and the relevance of SC4G’s focus on adolescent girls’ safety and gender equality more broadly. SC4G project staff reiterated the importance of the project’s focus on gender equality:

“The young girls, most of them are not aware of gender equality, what is gender equality, about their rights, and how they could reach out for support. The CoC activity helps them to understand about themselves, both their knowledge and their rights. So I would strongly recommend that the CoC is a very good model,” Former PIA PC.

“It focuses on young girls and young women, so this particular project is very much needed for communities because for a lot of communities, they face a lot of issues such as girls feeling harassed within those communities,” PIA A&C Officer.

There is less evidence to indicate that the SC4G project employed targeted strategies to address the specific needs and priorities of LGBTQI+ young people, however, and PLWD.

When asked about the needs of young people experiencing different forms of vulnerability and the relevance of the project to these young people’s needs and priorities, most of the discussion focused on PLWD. Project staff noted that the project did not target the specific needs of PLWD and highlighted insufficient planning and lack of collaboration with local disabled peoples’ organisations (DPOs) –

despite opportunities to do so – as factors that diminished the relevance of the project activities for PLWD. The difficulties that PLWD face in participating in community life more broadly and the SC4G project specifically were raised by FGD participants (especially girls aged 16-18 and young men), and suggestions were made to improve how the project could address their needs, including targeted outreach to PLWD and their parents/caregivers, and selection of appropriate venues and transportation. The intended outcomes of the SC4G project do not specifically mention the needs and priorities of PLWD and there is no evidence that the project included targeted strategies to address their specific needs. Nevertheless, one FGD participant, a young woman who identified as a PLWD (hearing impaired), said that the program had “made me feel empowered” and “realise the potential we can gain from it, be it a person with disability or an able person”.

There was far less discussion around young people with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, compared to PLWD, despite being asked about the experiences of LGBTQI+ young people in their communities. Among FGDs with young people in particular, discussion consistently focused more on PLWD. Partner and PISI staff noted that generally, LGBTQI+ people are not comfortable being open about their sexuality or gender identity because it is not accepted by society. Project staff highlighted the challenges in engaging LGBTQI+ young people and how this affected the project’s approach to targeting their specific needs and priorities:

“For gender diverse young people, it is taboo and it’s not really talked about. We don’t ask them and it’s a no no. To identify them, it’s really hard because it’s taboo so I wouldn’t know unless they open up and share. But I haven’t received any,” (KII – PIA A&C Officer).

Same sex sexual relationships are illegal under Solomon Islands law and the topics of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities are considered taboo in local culture. Although limited data emerged from the evaluation, the cultural context and observations from evaluation participants suggests that increased focus on the specific needs of LGBTQI+ young people would have been relevant to the project’s overarching goal and operating context.

c) Appropriateness of CoC

Sexual and reproductive health (SRH) was considered a sensitive topic in the SF/CFP FGD and there were mixed views among participants around the inclusion of topics related to sexuality in CoC. Several participants noted that the age of participants must be a factor to consider in delivering modules related to SRH (and recommended omitting the topic for younger age groups). One participant pointed out that it is important to include SRH as a topic, to counteract the effects of young people’s exposure to “bad things” such as pornography on the internet. More general concerns were raised by SFs as well, about the appropriateness of the CoC curriculum content and delivery, including the need to contextualise and shorten the curriculum and consider appropriate timing for session delivery:

“The curriculum is very good, however it doesn’t fit the Solomon Islands context. We have culture and custom; it’s better to contextualise it to our standards. Change some concepts, summarise to fit our context.” (SF FGD participant)

“The CoC curriculum is good, but needs to be contextualised. Participants come with different backgrounds, morals, teachings, etc. so presentations should be well prepared, short and sharp.” (SF FGD participant)

“The curriculum is very long. Topics are good but the time range is too long for the participants.... they get bored and they pull out of the program..... And because activities finish around 5PM, parents don’t want their kids to come back so late.” SF FGD participant

2.1.2 Alignment with partner organisations’ priorities

Both project partner organisations believed that the SC4G project aligned with their own strategies and priorities. The YWCA representative said that they had the same goals as the project and that it is in line with their mission and purpose to work with young women and support young women’s empowerment. The HCC representative said that the SC4G project aligns with their urban policy focusing on gender and youth, but also questioned the project’s focus on women and girls, stating “not just girls are vulnerable, some boys are also vulnerable.... So the bottom line is creating a safer space for all young people, and including boys and people with special needs”. The HCC representative added that the project has supported the policy on a very practical level:

“I think the Safer Cities project has helped a lot, it really has gotten us down into the communities, connecting us to youth, churches, leaders. The urban policy is just a policy, so the Safer Cities project is really helping us go down into the field and to the actual context and see what’s actually going down there.” HCC representative

2.2 Effectiveness & partnerships

2.2.1 Outcomes and influencing factors

a) Progress towards outcomes

Based on evaluation and project monitoring data, SC4G has had some positive impacts for participants and their communities. A number of supportive factors provided opportunity for positive change in some areas but there were also barriers identified that prevented progress in others. These are summarised in Table 4 and further detailed below. Disaggregated data for total reach over the past three years can be found in Annex 2. In general, stronger results were evident in positive behavioural and attitudinal changes compared to tangible improvements to policy, infrastructure and public services.

Table 4: Summary of project effectiveness

| Outcome | Project Achievements |
|--|---|
| <p><i>1.1. Adolescent girls’ and boys’ attitudes and practices are consistent with gender equality and girls’ rights.</i></p> <p><i>Examples of activities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Champions of Change (CoC) - Hook activities - Community mapping - Safety walks - Public art exhibition - Advocacy training - Life skills training | <p>Evidence suggests that activities under this project outcome had the greatest impact, particularly in terms of individual behaviour change. FGD participants directly linked CoC to increased awareness of gender equality and safety issues for girls. Girls reported increased self-confidence and understanding of themselves and their rights. Boys reported more respectful attitudes and behaviour towards their female peers, and an understanding of the rights of women and girls. Better relationships between male and female peers, as well as improved familial relationships were also reported. Some youth have used their experience and achievements in CoC to enrol in tertiary study, return to school or apply for work.</p> |

| | |
|--|---|
| <p><i>1.2. Youth groups with gender transformative practices collaborate effectively with civil society organisations (CSOs) to make Honiara safer and inclusive.</i></p> <p><u>Examples of activities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Youth-led awareness raising events for IDG, 16 Days, IWD, IYD, etc) - Youth-led environmental and climate awareness activities | <p>CSO representatives were present at awareness raising events such as IDG but more as individual speakers or spectators. There was little evidence to show that through project activities, youth groups were pragmatically connected to and collaborated with broader civil society on an ongoing basis as part of social movement-building aims. However, there were isolated examples of small groups of project participants initiating actions or engaging in opportunities to enact small-scale changes within their own community. One key project achievement is the formation of informal youth groups that previously did not exist in these communities. Two or three CoC youth groups have taken steps to become formal youth associations.</p> |
| <p><i>2. Parents/caregivers support and take action to improve the safety of adolescent girls in public spaces and on transport.</i></p> <p><u>Examples of activities:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Intergenerational dialoguing | <p>FGD youth participants provided anecdotal evidence of supportive parents/caregivers encouraging their children to attend project activities. In turn, parents/caregivers and community stakeholders did notice positive changes in young peoples' behaviour at home and in the community, and saw youth in a more positive light. However, sentiment expressed in parent/caregiver FGDs provided little evidence to suggest the project led them to take practical action to improve urban safety. Parents/caregivers agreed that everyone had a role to play in girls' safety, but generally agreed that, until broader societal change occurred, girls are still primarily responsible for their own safety. For some this evaluation activity was the first time they had directly engaged with the project, indicating that parents/caregivers and other community stakeholders needed greater engagement.</p> |
| <p><i>3.1. Local or city government authorities engage and take action to improve the safety of adolescent girls in public spaces and on public transport. This includes training police officers on gender awareness and safer cities.</i></p> <p><u>Examples of activities:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formal meetings between government stakeholders and girls - Gender Awareness training for government stakeholders and police - Designing urban governance with HCC and youth | <p>Due to lack of sustained engagement of government stakeholders in the project, limited progress is evident against this outcome. One small achievement identified was that in some target communities, local community committees have started to create space for youth in decision-making processes. Whether this has resulted in sustained and active youth participation is unclear.</p> |

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|---|---|
| <p>3.2. <i>Public transport authorities, managers and staff support the safety of adolescent girls on public transport. This includes improved regulations and codes of conducts to prevent and respond to sexual harassment incidents.</i></p> <p><u>Examples of activities:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formal meetings between public transport authorities and girls - Gender Awareness training for public transport workers - Develop sustainable engagement strategy | <p>Aside from minor examples of public transport representatives participating in targeted activities under this outcome, there is little evidence to show that the project had much of an impact or resulted in significant changes to improve girls' safety on public transport. Critically, the project's approach to the public transport sector did not adequately take into account that a large proportion of public transport services in Honiara are supplied by privately-owned vehicles, which for the most part go unregulated and are therefore difficult to coordinate and collaborate with as a group.</p> |
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Outcome 1.1. Adolescent girls' and boys' attitudes and practices are consistent with gender equality and girls' rights

As highlighted in the table above, the strongest evidence of progress made was in relation to outcome 1.1. Clear signs of positive behavioural and attitudinal changes among youth participants feature strongly in project monitoring and evaluation data. FGD youth participants shared personal testimonies of the changes they have seen in themselves and their peers, and gave direct recognition to the CoC curriculum for helping them to realise their rights and the importance of gender equality. Girls and young women reported an increase in their self-confidence, assertiveness and understanding of their right to an equal place and equal treatment in society. Boys and young men reported more respectful attitudes and behaviour towards their female peers, and understood the importance of women and girls' right to safety, freedom from violence and equal opportunity. More supportive, respectful and collaborative relationships between male and female peers were also reported. During FGDs with male participants, some boys talked about how they helped out at home more, encouraging parents to spread household chores equally among brothers and sisters. Girls and young women felt more trust, support and care from their male peers.

"Boys, they support girls. When looking at the term such as gender equality, the boys realise girls' needs. So boys they understand, and for example, when it comes to violence, when they see violence along the road, they try to stop it," FGD participant – girl aged 16-18.

"Before knowing about this project, there was no trust between boys and girls. Girls felt that they didn't have power and were treated differently to boys... Boys are more aware of girls' safety and the role that they can play to keep us safe," FGD participant – woman aged 19-24.

Another positive and unexpected result stemming from the activities under this project outcome was that youth reported using their learnings, experience and achievements from CoC and participation in other project activities to "demonstrate good character" and support their enrolment in tertiary study (including leadership or vocational courses at the Australia Pacific Training Coalition [APTIC] institute), return to school or apply for work. Notable examples included a young woman with a hearing impairment now working at People with Disabilities Solomon Islands (PWDSI), and as indicated by the YWCA PO other young people being recruited to policing and correctional services.

Outcome 1.2. Youth groups with gender transformative practices collaborate effectively with civil society organisations (CSOs) to make Honiara safer and inclusive.

One of the most significant changes resulting from the project has been the establishment of an informal network of youth groups and using them as the key mechanism to reach young people and deliver activities. There are between 20-30 youth groups in total across all target communities each with a membership of 20-25 young people. Out of these groups, two to three have recently made steps to become formal youth associations by initiating the registration process as a way to become more self-reliant and sustainable after project end, and access further opportunities and resources.

Evidence of collaboration between youth groups and CSOs was less evident. CSOs had minimal direct involvement in youth-led awareness activities aside from representatives being present at events such as IDG as either speakers or spectators. Project monitoring and evaluation data did not contain clear examples of youth groups being pragmatically connected with civil society to collaborate on an ongoing basis as part of broader social movement-building efforts. However, there were isolated instances where small groups of project participants initiated action or engaged in opportunities to enact small-scale changes within their own communities:

- Two fundraisers to raise money for solar-powered street lights. Youth were motivated to do this because progress to influence Solomon Power to donate and install lights through the project team's engagement had stalled, so young people from two different communities took action themselves. At the time of data collection for this evaluation the fundraisers had only recently happened so no lights had been procured at that point.
- Off the back of community clean up campaigns conducted as part of the project, youth from Rove organised 15 metal drums to be delivered for use as public bins. They encouraged all community members to dispose of their rubbish in the drums and, leading by example, mobilise every Saturday to conduct their own clean ups outside of the ones organised by the project. Their efforts have been acknowledged by parents/caregivers and community leaders, and piqued the interest of people from other villages.

“When people come to the community and see it's clean, they ask how come and we explain about how we've been told to put things in the bin,” (FGD participant – man aged 18-24).

Outcome 2. Parents/caregivers support and take action to improve the safety of adolescent girls in public spaces and on transport.

For outcome 2 there were mixed results but signs of some positive attitudinal and behavioural change that is the catalyst needed for affirmative action on gender equality and girls' safety. FGD youth participants provided anecdotal evidence of supportive parents/caregivers who encouraged their children to attend project activities. At the same time, parents/caregivers and community stakeholders praised the positive changes they saw in some young peoples' behaviour at home and in the community. During FGDs with parents/caregivers a number of remarks were shared about the changes they saw in their children. According to participants, daughters were a lot more confident in themselves and their abilities; sons were less rebellious, took less risks and respected their parents more, which was appreciated by the whole household.

“My son's attendance has seen changes in his behaviour and it makes the family very happy. Before my son didn't really listen to his parents, but now he does and this has helped his relationship with his father and I,” (FGD participant – female parent/caregiver).

However, little evidence was provided to suggest that the project motivated them to take action to improve urban safety for young people. Parents/caregivers acknowledged the issues that youth face, especially girls, and agreed that everyone has a role to play in their safety. But the sentiment expressed during FGDs showed that until there are broader social and environmental changes to improve urban safety, the onus continued to be on girls to keep themselves safe. For some, this evaluation activity was the first time they had directly engaged with the project, indicating that the targeted engagement of parents/caregivers and other community stakeholders needed improvement.

Outcome 3.1. Local or city government authorities engage and take action to improve the safety of adolescent girls in public spaces and on public transport. This includes training police officers on gender awareness and safer cities.

Due to the lack of sustained engagement of government stakeholders with the project, there is little evidence to suggest that significant progress was made under outcome 3.1. Government and police representatives were present at key awareness events and did attend interface meetings or safety walks to listen to adolescent girls talk about issues regarding their safety. Data collected during community mapping were also presented as evidence to support discussions with government and police representatives. Such activities were planned to be held on a quarterly basis but PISI project staff and partner POs noted that they didn't always eventuate because stakeholders were not available or pulled out at the last minute. Interface meetings were the primary opportunity for youth to directly interact with ministry representatives and police, however it was not possible for them to occur frequently enough to become an effective source of advocacy and influence.

With limited environmental or policy change to improve urban safety and encourage government and policing practices to be gender aware, data collected during activities like community mapping ended up being used by youth, especially girls, to know which areas of their community to avoid. Although a useful source of information, this was not the desired intention for such data. The project aimed to improve the condition and position of girls so that they could freely move about their city without having to use avoidance tactics to remain safe. But ultimately little evidence was found to show progress in this regard. One achievement identified was that in some target communities, local community committees have started to create space for youth in decision-making processes. However, whether this has resulted in sustained and active youth participation in a non-tokenistic manner is unclear.

Outcome 3.2. Public transport authorities, managers and staff support the safety of adolescent girls on public transport. This includes improved regulations and codes of conducts to prevent and respond to sexual harassment incidents.

Aside from minor examples of public transport representatives participating in targeted activities under outcome 3.2, there is little evidence to show that the project secured support from public transport services or resulted in improvements to girls' safety while using public transport.

"As we can see, there's not much improvement, there's a few minor improvements/changes, but overall girls' safety within public transportation has not really changed. Girls are still vulnerable," (FGD participant – SF/CFP)

The project's approach to the public transport sector did not appropriately take into account that a large proportion of public transport services in Honiara are supplied by privately-owned vehicles, which for the most part are not properly regulated. Employing a broad sectoral approach to a public

service that relies heavily on individuals and small privately-owned businesses meant that it was difficult to coordinate and collaborate with enough transport providers to have widespread impact. Examples of changes female youth participating in FGDs would have liked to have seen were bans on tinted windows and female-only buses with female drivers.

b) Supportive factors

A number of supportive factors were identified that helped to progress project outcomes by ensuring participants remained informed and engaged. Youth reported that they often saw SFs and CFPs as positive role models and people to seek guidance from. Over time, SFs were recognised for playing an influential role in their community beyond the project itself.

“Sessional facilitators now play an important role in the community providing support to young people and their communities outside of project activities,” (FGD participant – woman aged 19-24).

Young women FGD participants reported how having young leaders as people to look up to helped to motivate youth participants to stay engaged in project activities and make better life decisions. They also provided a source of support to talk through issues youth were not comfortable discussing with parents/caregivers. The same sentiment was shared by other FGD groups. Parents/caregivers also acknowledged the positive example set by SFs and CFPs, demonstrating to community stakeholders that SC4G could have a positive impact on the lives of young people and be beneficial for the wider community.

Although not part of formal project plans, the positive behaviour change messaging from activities such as CoC and life skills had an indirect impact on young people outside of the project. Informal peer-to-peer and household-level knowledge sharing was reported among youth at home, social gatherings and school. Examples shared by FGD participants included older brothers teaching siblings about gender equality and respect for women and girls, and diffusing arguments between parents before they escalated to violence.

The incorporation of hook activities and incentives in the CoC curriculum also helped to motivate and maintain the engagement of youth group members. Fun group activities such as sport, drama classes or self-defence lessons provided a social and leisurely outlet to counteract the intensity of CoC content and an end of module reward. SFs and CFPs also noted that tangible incentives such as food, stationery, bus fares, merchandise, certificates and graduation ceremonies also gave project participants something to look forward to and aim towards. Partner POs emphasised the importance of providing food as there are some young people who may not eat otherwise.

Partners, project participants and other stakeholders saw significant value in the CoC curriculum, as it provided a source of personal development that formal schooling did not.

“The school curriculum is designed just for the brain but not for morals,” (KII – partner PO)

“In CoC we learn life skills that school students don’t,” (FGD participant – boy/ man aged 13-27).

CoC provided an opportunity for youth to access knowledge and information that helped with their social growth rather than academic development; setting them up for adulthood with the knowledge and skills needed to form respectful relationships and positive interactions with the wider world. Parents/caregivers also appreciated this aspect of the project, as they saw positive changes in their children that contributed to household harmony. Intergenerational dialogues and community-based

activities, such as clean ups and public art exhibitions, further increased visibility and buy-in from them, which meant that some parents/caregivers would strongly encourage their children to attend activities.

“As parents, we’re very busy and rely on school teachers for academics and this project for life skills. So its really a good initiative,” (FGD participant – female parent/caregiver)

c) Barriers

The barriers identified can be divided into two categories: context-specific and project-specific. Context-specific relate to external factors and risks largely outside the control of the project, whereas project-specific relate to issues with implementation, engagement or project approach. Both impacted participation levels of youth and other project stakeholders, as well as the ability of the project to fully achieve intended results.

Context-specific

A high prevalence of drug-use (including betel nut), alcohol abuse and petty crime among young people was frequently mentioned during FGDs and KIIs as a significant barrier to youth engagement. Although the project did not directly address these issues, through CoC the project did try to encourage more positive attitudes and behaviours leading to better decision-making by young people. However, there is little evidence to indicate this had any impact on the choices that project participants made, particularly for those already engaging in these harmful practices. Partner POs, SFs and CFPs shared experiences of the challenges they faced trying to encourage youth with substance abuse issues to attend CoC activities and in a sober state. However, in such instances medical and/or psychological interventions are required and this went beyond the scope of the project.

Economic pressures and competing priorities with the expectation to help out at home also impacted participation levels for some youth. Due to increasing costs of living, youth were expected to prioritise helping out at home while their parents worked or engage in income generating pursuits rather than attending project activities that did not meet the immediate needs of the household. It is relevant to note that the project’s life skills activities were designed to provide youth with the soft skills required for employment and some technical livelihood training as a potential means for income generation; however, these activities were not accompanied by any type of entrepreneurial, financial literacy or business development training. This would limit the project’s effectiveness in alleviating the economic pressures young people and their families face.

Communities targeted by the SC4G project also lacked appropriate venues to hold regular youth group activities such as weekly CoC sessions. Suitable venues with appropriate facilities tend to be closer to central Honiara and in high demand. Disability-accessible venues and forms of transport are also in short supply, making it difficult for PLWD, especially physical impairments, to easily and actively participate. Furthermore, with the Solomon Islands situated in a tropical climate, it was not uncommon for project activities to be cancelled due to seasonal weather events, such as torrential rain and storms. Bad weather posed a safety risk for participants, with subsequent flash flooding disrupting public transport and making it difficult to travel to/from activities on foot.

The sociocultural and religious context in the Solomon Islands also means that certain topics are considered taboo and therefore challenging to address through project activities. One example provided during FGDs with SFs/CFPs, youth and parents/caregivers related to particular sections of

the CoC curriculum, focusing on sex, sexuality and abortion⁵. The feedback shared emphasised the sensitivities of such topics. Some SFs, who are responsible for content delivery to youth groups, expressed a lack of confidence and comfort in talking to peers about sex and sexuality. Young people themselves also noted how uncomfortable and awkward it was at times to attend these specific sessions.

“With the sexual topics, it’s a very sensitive topic. During dialoguing sessions, brothers or sisters are in those sessions so then when sensitive topics come up, it’s really uncomfortable for siblings,” (FGD participant – SF/CFP)

Some parents/caregivers were concerned about young people learning these topics, especially for younger ages (13-15), and highlighted that some parents/caregivers did not allow their children to participate in these specific sessions. The sensitive nature of discussions related to sex, sexuality and family planning methods is also influenced by local laws, with same sex sexual relationships still criminalised under the *Penal Code 1996 (ss 160-162)*⁶ and abortion illegal in most circumstances apart from when it is to save the life of a pregnant person⁷.

One final contextual barrier identified was the lack of regulation for privately owned vehicles providing public transport. In Honiara there are registered taxi services; however, for most project participants, this is considered an expensive form of transport and therefore not often used. The issue of largely unregulated and privately run services lies with buses, which are a more affordable form of transport for young people in target communities. Weak regulation means privately owned services may not meet safety and operating standards for vehicles and passengers. Drivers and conductors are also not beholden to a set of appropriate behavioural principles or code of conduct. Working independently, it is difficult to engage private individuals as a group to enact tangible and sustainable change to make public transport safer for girls in Honiara.

Project-specific

Project activities have remained largely unchanged since FY21, when key activities based on the Safer Cities global program were rolled out, including CoC. This repetitiveness impacted on the motivation and interest levels of participants and stakeholders, particularly POs and SFs who were responsible for delivering activities. Evaluation informants expressed a desire to be more involved in annual planning and redesign processes to ensure project activities remained engaging, effective and relevant.

The density and complexity of the CoC curriculum and its content was also a barrier in terms of delivery and learning. SFs said they did not always fully understand the topics and concepts covered and therefore found it difficult to deliver. With youth groups incorporating a broad range of ages, education and literacy levels, some participants also had trouble comprehending CoC topics, according to SFs. This was especially the case for young people attending these activities who were not in school. The amount of time it took to deliver all modules also resulted in waning interest from youth group members. One SF in Rove, for example, started off with a group of 20-25 youth but by the end of the program only four graduated.

Once a full cycle of the CoC curriculum was completed towards the end of FY21, a feedback and reflection workshop was held with SFs to gather their insights and experiences of delivering each module. Following this session a contextualised facilitation guide⁸ was developed by PIA and PISI to

⁵ Girls’ modules four (Being informed about sexual and reproductive health) and five (Enjoying your sexual right and reproductive right), and boys’ module three (Being responsible regarding sexuality)

⁶ https://pacific.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/solisl_policy_and_legislative_review_281022_web.pdf

⁷ <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/260001/Abortion-slb-2017.pdf?sequence=7&isAllowed=y>

⁸ [CoC - Safer Cities for Girls Program Honiara Digital.pdf](#)

be used alongside the general CoC manual. This resource contained tips, suggestions and a detailed glossary with examples and Pijin translations of key terms to help SFs overcome some of the challenges with delivering CoC to youth in Honiara. However, based on feedback provided by evaluation participants, further contextualisation is needed to improve engagement and learning outcomes. The following suggestions were provided by partner POs, SFs and CFPs:

- Translate CoC manual and materials into Pijin;
- Shorten modules – not necessarily removing topics but providing clearer summaries to use;
- Develop visual aids to help young people with low literacy better understand terminology and concepts; and
- Incorporate relevant aspects of Solomon Islander history and culture to make content more relatable.

Project scope and resourcing also restricted the number of young people who could participate in the project. Participation was based on self-nomination by young people following project introductory sessions in communities with youth and their parents/caregivers. But limitations to project scope and budget meant that only 20 youth in each target community could be reached each year and as a result, everyone who wanted to participate was not able to. This issue was also experienced by existing youth group members who wanted to attend complementary activities such as life skills training. Budget for such activities tended to enable a portion (usually around 150-200) of the total direct participants to attend, so opportunities were not available to everyone. As word spread about SC4G among communities, this also created a demand that could not be met for the project to start operating in other areas, both within and outside of Honiara (i.e. other provinces). Partner POs also emphasised that more budget was generally needed due to inflation. Recent project budgets did not increase to keep up with increasing operational and procurement costs, and this had a detrimental impact on project delivery.

The timing of activities, primarily on a weekday afternoon, was also reported as a barrier to participation. For students, it was difficult to come straight after school and make it in time for weekly CoC sessions. Even if they did, their energy levels and attention spans were often already low after a long day. The low numbers of school-aged youth participating in evaluation FGDs were reflective of these challenges. A small number of FGD participants shared anecdotal evidence of youth deciding to skip school or CFPs pulling club members out of class to attend project activities. The idea behind scheduling activities in the afternoon (start time was usually between 3-4pm) was to ensure as many young people as possible had the opportunity to attend and not interfere with schooling. However, sessions had the tendency to run over time, sometimes past 5pm, which represented a risk to attendees, especially girls, as they made their way home. For this reason, some parents/caregivers did not allow their children to participate.

Organising and mobilising youth to attend upcoming project activities relied on word of mouth communication via SFs and CFPs. However, some youth FGD participants shared that SFs and CFPs did not always remember to tell participants or at least give decent notice, so on occasion they would miss out on attending.

Finally, a lack of project visibility and meaningful engagement with key stakeholders was also a significant barrier to achieving the broader community-, policy- and systems-based outcomes (i.e. outcomes 1.2, 2, 3.1 and 3.2). Much of the infrastructural and policy changes SC4G aimed to advocate for never eventuated because government, police and public transport authorities were not consistently involved in the project. The same could be said for parents/caregivers.

d) GEDSI

The project's effectiveness in progressing gender equality from a girls' rights perspective is described in section 2.2.1a. In terms of gender equality and inclusion more broadly, the CoC curriculum has an intersectional approach and was a key source of awareness in relation to disability and social inclusion (such as LGBTQI+ people) for the project. Evidence of the project's work towards positive change in this area was mixed. Based on data from FY21 onwards, PLWD represented only around two percent of direct participants and there is no data around the extent or quality of their participation. There were no clear examples of the project actively seeking the participation of PLWD and other vulnerable groups.

PISI and partner project staff, as well as SFs and CFPs, recognised the importance of including socially excluded young people in SC4G activities but felt they did not have the required skills to practically do so. However, there were indications from SFs and young people that CoC had helped project participants to gain a basic understanding of inclusion, to the extent that they could empathise with and see certain situations from the perspectives of vulnerable groups – mostly PLWD and to a lesser extent, LGBTQI+ people. For example, one SF acknowledged the challenges that transgender people face being accepted in Solomon Islands culture and supported the idea of anti-discrimination laws. In the young women's FGD, participants supported a peer with a hearing impairment to have input into the discussions; and in the young men's FGD, several participants noted the challenges PLWD face and the importance of respect and inclusion.

"The right way for this is to respect [PLWD], we should all have the mindset to respect the way that they are" (FGD participant – man aged 18 - 24)

"It should be up to us to.... make [PLWD] feel included." (FGD participant – man aged 18 - 24)

"Someone in my family uses a wheelchair, when there's flooding, you have to carry them to the other side. It's very hard for them to travel. We should support them more, and in this case, many people are busy but there should be more support for them. We need to change mindsets," (FGD participant – man aged 18 - 24)

Ongoing barriers to disability inclusion identified by evaluation participants included a lack of accessible buildings and transport, lack of budget to cover the costs associated with improving accessibility (such as sign language interpreters), the need for CoC visual learning aids for participants with vision or learning impairments (this would also support learning outcomes for youth with low literacy). Lack of time management to ensure measures are in place to support disability inclusion prior to the delivery of activities was also a factor reported by POs, SFs and CFPs. They provided a number of practical solutions to help improve disability inclusion. These included dedicated training to equip them with the knowledge and skills required for effective disability inclusion, more budget to support inclusion initiatives and approaching PWDSI and/or Red Cross school for specialist support. It is important to note that steps were taken to improve disability inclusion and involve PWDSI and Red Cross in the project in FY22. PIA and PISI project staff conducted a review of the annual workplan to brainstorm ideas for how activities could be made more inclusive for PLWD. The SC4G Coordinator also consulted with PWDSI and Red Cross to look at local options for disability inclusion training for PISI/partner staff, SFs and CFPs. However, due to PISI staff turnover, the ideas and suggested actions were not followed through.

In terms of the inclusion of other vulnerable groups, there was less evidence to show that the project considered and supported their specific needs. Young mothers was a distinct demographic identified with little representation in project documentation and participant data. For this particular group,

much of their time is focused on caring duties and, for single mothers, finding sources of income. Partner POs emphasised the need to create space for young mothers, especially in relation to interventions to improve income generation. Their participation would also rely on safe and reliable forms of childcare while they attend project activities.

As same sex sexual relationships are illegal under Solomon Islands law and considered taboo in local culture, LGBTQI+ people continue to face high levels of discrimination and stigmatisation so do not feel comfortable being open about their sexuality or gender identity.

“LGBT people don’t want to be open, they’re afraid of coming out,” Partner PO.

This is likely to have impacted the open participation of LGBTQI+ young people. In addition, some FGD participants demonstrated prejudice or lack of understanding of LGBTQI+ concepts. Other youth participants did demonstrate a basic understanding of topics relating to LGBTQI+ issues, acknowledged that sexual and gender diverse peoples face discrimination, and that they have a role to play to change mindsets to ensure LGBTQI+ people are treated fairly in Solomon Islander society. Although some progress in terms of awareness has been made, it is clear that more work needs to be done to strengthen disability and social inclusion, and ensure active and safe participation of vulnerable groups.

2.2.2 Partnerships approach

a) Roles and responsibilities

Since July 2016, the Safer Cities for Girls project has consistently engaged HCC and YWCA as key local stakeholders. From FY21 onwards, both evolved into implementing partners, providing valuable support throughout the rest of the project’s lifecycle.

Honiara City Council (HCC)

HCC is the local government body responsible for city development, public health and addressing social issues. Honiara Town Board was established in the late 1940s. The Town Council consists of thirteen divisions of the council and all have specific functions, often collaborating with each other to provide holistic services to Honiara. The Youth, Sports and Women’s Affairs Division manages a range of services, including sporting activities and venues provided by the Council, a multi-purpose gym, youth empowerment programs and support for youth groups, and women’s empowerment programs and trainings.

Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) Solomon Islands

YWCA is a non-government organisation that is affiliated with the World YWCA Movement. The World YWCA is a global network of women and girls working for justice, peace, health, human dignity and care for the environment. YWCA of Solomon Islands’ work is guided by its Strategic Plan (2015-2019). The main objectives are:

- To provide programs and activities that will empower younger and older women to be informed, knowledgeable, credible, skilled and self-reliant;
- To provide safe environments for young and older women;

- To maintain a strong organisation that is effective, self-reliant and promoting good governance, management, accountability and its Christian principles in all aspects of its work;
- To ensure effective and open communication among partners, members, staff, and volunteers of YWCA Solomon Islands;
- To strengthen the organisation's institutional capacity to effectively deliver its programs and services.

Funding

In the early years of the project, HCC and YWCA were engaged through a non-financial Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) arrangement, meaning that all funding was managed by Plan International Australia in Solomon Islands. Following the Pacific transition⁹, however, partnerships with both parties formalised with the signing of partnership agreements (PAs). From FY21 onwards, Plan International committed a total of **\$624,318 AUD** directly to both organisations. This represents 33% of total funds for the whole project duration (FY17-FY24).

Partner budgets covered labour (including PO salaries and volunteer SF and CFP fees), transport, and office support costs, as well as project activity implementation. As per the financial arrangements stipulated in the PAs, PISI was responsible for the transfer of funds to HCC and YWCA on a quarterly basis, and for both partner POs to manage and expend each three month period.

Roles and responsibilities

HCC and YWCA's roles and responsibilities were clearly set out in their annual PAs signed with PISI and included the following:

- Human resource management including recruitment and contracting of partner-based POs to develop and oversee project planning, monitoring and implementation in collaboration with PISI;
- Identify and manage SFs and CFPs whose primary purpose was to mobilise youth participants and deliver the CoC curriculum and associated activities to youth clubs;
- Support logistical and operational requirements of project implementation;
- Be responsible for financial control and management of expenditure;
- Provide project and financial updates to feed into PISI quarterly and annual reporting;
- Monitor and manage risks associated with project activity delivery (safeguarding, PSEAH, fraud, health and safety, etc);
- Engage with the Solomon Islands Government and key project stakeholders to seek to amend discriminatory laws, policies and/or practices against girls/women while working to create new by-laws and policies to address safety in the city for girls/boys and every Honiara resident.

⁹ Refers to the process of transferring Plan International's offices in PNG, Solomon Islands and Fiji from ANO's management systems to Plan International Inc.'s Asia-Pacific Regional Hub (APAC). As of September 2020, Plan International Pacific hub and country offices now sit within the Plan International Inc. structure and APAC oversee their operational, resourcing and financial functions.

b) Participation

Early project documentation indicates that initial scoping and consultations at the beginning of the project did involve the participation and input of HCC and YWCA. However, both parties were engaged more as key stakeholders or non-contractual partners. It was not until HCC's and YWCA's buy-in was attained and implementation really gained momentum that their participation and contributions to the project increased. Since becoming key implementation partners in FY21, HCC and YWCA have been responsible for a significant portion of activity delivery under the project.

In their respective target communities, both HCC and YWCA oversaw the implementation of key SC4G activities:

- CoC – curriculum delivered to boys and girls clubs to increase their knowledge on gender equality and social inclusion;
- Community Mapping – adolescent girls map (draw) the spaces and routes in their city and describe them as safe or unsafe, plus listing the reasons for rating them safe/unsafe;
- Safety Walks – adolescent girls walk through the areas identified during the Community Mapping to help identify specific factors that make them feel safe and unsafe;
- Advocacy to Duty Bearers – based on the results of the Community Mapping and Safety Walks, adolescent girls engaged with duty bearers to create awareness and influence decision-making regarding key issues that affect gender equality and safety in Honiara. This occurred through interface meetings/forums, public art exhibitions and events for key awareness days;
- Intergenerational Awareness – engaging families, caregivers and community members of young people to understand what they learn in the project, and generate broader support for gender equality and the project's advocacy activities.

The method of delivery for these outputs was a mixture of PO-led and/or SF-led facilitation with support from CFPs. POs also led the planning and logistics of each activity with input from SFs and CFPs; and acted as a key point of contact for SFs and CFPs, providing guidance and advice to overcome implementation challenges as well as distribution of volunteers' stipends.

Based on feedback provided during KIIs and evidenced in quarterly narrative reporting, both partners played a central and important role in project implementation, especially during long periods of PISI staff vacancies and ongoing recruitment challenges with filling the PISI SC4G Project Coordinator/Manager role. Both partner POs understood and appreciated the key role they played in project implementation, but expressed a desire to have more input into annual planning, budgeting and workplan development processes.

“Most of the time, we are just implementing the workplan. There's no room for us to insert our opinions or our activities. All along since the project started, we are just implementing the workplan. There was no training or the opportunity to contextualise the workplan. We are doing what we are mandated to do,” (KII – partner PO)

POs also emphasised the importance and value of including SFs and CFPs in these annual processes, as they are directly responsible for delivering a significant portion of activities and could provide useful feedback to ensure project activities remain engaging and contextually relevant. It was apparent that their inclusion and input had not been part of standard practice in previous years, and the strengthening of mechanisms to enable implementers to share feedback on a more regular basis was needed.

Other aspects of the project cycle that partners wanted to be more included in were the baseline and design processes. It is important to acknowledge that none of the partner staff interviewed for the evaluation had been involved in the SC4G project from the very beginning and therefore not in their current roles at the time the baseline, consultations and design took place. Due to lack of detailed historical documentation, it is difficult to determine the extent of partner and stakeholder involvement in scoping and design work. However, KII participants highlighted the fact that the baseline and inception workshops were conducted almost seven years ago and since then had not been revisited to reflect the changing physical, social and economic landscape of Honiara. For example, the original design and consultations do not take into account emerging issues relating to the increase in social media use among youth and the post-pandemic context. Had a mid-term review and design refresh taken place to incorporate emerging issues, this would have provided the opportunity for POs, SFs and CFPs to have more input. From a partner perspective, this could have improved the relevancy of project outputs and reduced feelings of repetitiveness when delivering the same set of activities every year.

c) Contribution

The most significant contribution partners made to the project was taking on the role of key implementers. As previously mentioned, both HCC and YWCA were responsible for the delivery of a significant portion of project activities since coming on board as formal implementing partners in FY21. A review of annual budgets and workplans show that on average, HCC and YWCA implemented more than three quarters of project activities each year (from FY21 to FY24).

Partners taking the lead in project implementation was particularly crucial during the long periods of time in FY22 and FY23 when the PISI SC4G Project Coordinator/Manager role remained vacant. Reliance on the continued efforts of partner POs and associated SFs and CFPs to deliver activities was vital in preventing further disruptions to project progress, particularly off the back of COVID-19 lockdowns and infection prevention measures, which limited the ability of the project team to implement activities as planned. Given the central role that both HCC and YWCA played in project implementation, it is reasonable to attribute many of the successes resulting from project activities to the efforts of both partners.

Another significant contribution to the project was the partners' recruitment and management of around 60 SFs and CFPs (30 per partner). The engagement of young people as either an SF or CFP was a key strategy for activity delivery and youth mobilisation in each target community, especially delivering CoC to youth groups. Early project documentation also states that the management of SFs and CFPs by POs was a way to free up PISI Project Coordinator/Manager time to focus on more strategic and technical aspects of the project.

The positive and influential role that partner POs played in ongoing volunteer engagement is evident in the fact that some SFs and CFPs had been in their roles for 12 months or more. Partner POs were directly responsible for recruitment and management of SFs and CFPs, and acted as a key point of contact for mentorship, guidance and advice. The trusting and respectful relationships fostered between HCC and YWCA POs and SFs/CFPs ensured youth groups remained active in each target area and young people had a constant stream of activities to participate in. The management and ongoing motivation of this cohort of young people required a significant amount of time and effort on the part of HCC and YWCA POs. Had this responsibility sat with PISI, given staff vacancies and recruitment challenges, it is highly likely that the project would have seen a decrease in volunteer engagement and

further implementation disruptions because there would not have been the ongoing support of a trusted individual to continually guide, mentor and advise the SFs and CFPs.

HCC and YWCA also provided facilities, such as venues, to use for activity delivery, including PISI-led project activities. Initially based on an informal arrangement but now enshrined in the annual partnership agreement, both partner offices located in central Honiara offered the use of their spaces free of charge, only requiring a small contribution to electricity and Wi-Fi use. With disability accessible venues in short supply in Honiara, HCC's venue with ramp access helped to remove some of the physical factors that can hinder the active participation of PLWD. Waiving the venue hire fee for YWCA and HCC facilities also contributed to small budget savings that could be reinvested into supporting other aspects of the partnerships and project implementation.

Strengths & benefits

As key implementing partners, HCC and YWCA demonstrated a number of strengths that were beneficial to project progress and implementation and PISI staff viewed the partnerships positively overall. Two primary strengths identified by KII participants were the ongoing dedication and commitment of POs to the project and its objectives, and partners' strong connection to local communities and culture.

Despite challenges, the hard work, dedication and enduring commitment of HCC and YWCA POs was acknowledged and appreciated by PISI staff, SFs, CFPs and project participants.

"What the partners provide in the activities is a lot. They do a lot of work. A lot of planning to achieve the activities being done. What they do is very good," (PISI project staff member)

While both partner POs highlighted the difficulties and lack of motivation they experienced during the periods of limited support from PISI (due to recruitment challenges for the PISI Project Coordinator/Manager role), their strong belief in the project and its objectives inspired them to continue to support Plan International and SC4G.

"The idea of creating a safer space for our girls, for me that would be the thing that I value most. I want to one day see that Honiara and Solomon Islands see girls with a different perspective," (KII – partner PO).

Furthermore, the engagement of POs, SFs and CFPs who had strong personal links to target communities and an in-depth understanding of local culture also helped to foster trusting relationships with stakeholders and a sense of duty to improve the lives of youth participants. Anecdotal evidence shared during KIIs and FGDs demonstrated the close connection and influential roles that POs played as mentors and positive role models for individual youth, particularly SFs and CFPs who worked directly with the partners to deliver project activities. Examples provided by the YWCA PO included their support provided to youth during the application and interviewing process for APTC courses or careers such as police and correctional services.

"I have provided 112 references to youth to apply for these opportunities," (YWCA PO).

The engagement of two local entities as implementing partners with clear connections to community and culture also facilitated an entry point for PISI to reach target areas. HCC as local government and YWCA as a global Christian organisation with a long-standing presence in the Solomon Islands both had existing public profiles and engaged in development initiatives prior to their involvement in SC4G. Therefore, it is likely that their association with the project assisted Plan International, an INGO

relatively new and unknown in the sector in Honiara, to access communities and learn from partners who have extensive experience working in the development space and local urban context.

From the partners' perspectives, the positive, respectful and trusting relationship developed with PISI was acknowledged and appreciated.

“The positive is the partnership relationship, I think we have a good relationship with Plan International, and if there’s any challenges that we face or experience in our organisation, we always refer to Plan for advice and supporting us. So we have a strong connection and Plan always support us in our challenges. That’s one thing I really admire here in Plan International, and we work closely,” (KII – partner PO).

The YWCA PO also reported that the partnership under SC4G led to business development opportunities, recalling that other local organisations familiar with the project approached YWCA for potential partnerships, on the basis of YWCA’s work with SC4G. The HCC representative also highlighted that the SC4G project had led to beneficial changes for themselves as individuals and in HCC’s work, reporting that through SC4G, the council’s youth division was able to connect with young people and their communities in way they had not done before – beyond just basic service provision to meaningful and empowering engagement of youth. Importantly, however, lack of involvement of management staff at HCC casts doubt over the extent to which this kind of approach to youth and community engagement filtered through to other aspects of HCC’s operations and initiatives.

Challenges

A number of partnership challenges hindered project implementation and the extent to which key results relating to stakeholder engagement and influencing could be achieved. Feedback provided during the KIIs indicated a lack of support and engagement from management-level staff/teams in partner organisations. Although PO roles were integrated into HCC and YWCA structures and their contracts sat with the respective partner, both POs said they received little support and input from their management and often sought assistance from PISI to resolve project issues. Reasons cited for disengaged partner management staff included competing priorities and a lack of understanding of how SC4G objectives support and complement the existing aims of HCC and YWCA. Project narrative reports indicate that, although quarterly partnership meetings were planned so that PISI and partner management could discuss the project, they did not always take place. It is unclear as to whether this pattern of disengagement existed prior to COVID-19 or if disruptions to project implementation and relationship building due to the pandemic may have contributed to low levels of involvement from HCC and YWCA leadership.

“The project needs more supports from the partners in terms of the influencing part. We want to see the city inclusive, safe, but then we really need to pull the Honiara City Council in. The partners really need to play their role in order to achieve our shared goals. Need to ensure everyone understands the partnership agreement,” (KII – former PISI PC)

Lack of support from partner management staff also represented a missed opportunity when it came to stakeholder engagement and the project’s ability to influence duty-bearers to enact broader structural change. One of the perceived strategic advantages of developing longstanding partnerships with local entities was to leverage the influence of their leadership teams in order to reach key decision-makers and create space for youth to advocate for change in their city. This was especially the case for HCC as a local government body and duty-bearer. However, due to the difficulties faced by POs and PISI staff in working with disengaged HCC and YWCA leadership, regular, meaningful

participation of influential stakeholders such as local councillors, government representatives from relevant ministries, police and public transport authorities was limited.

Internal operational issues within HCC and YWCA were also highlighted by KII participants and in project reports as an ongoing challenge to timely and effective implementation and progress. Both partner POs experienced similar difficulties accessing project funds to implement activities as per timeframes set out within annual workplans. The primary reason being that when POs needed HCC or YWCA management sign off on cheques, they were not always available and the responsibility had not been delegated to someone else to ensure business continuity in their absence. It was not clear as to whether the issue stemmed from lack of effective delegation procedures being in place or if it was just the case that partner delegation policies were not being followed. However, partner POs indicated that capacity building from Plan International to strengthen organisational processes, policies and procedures would be beneficial for HCC and YWCA. The delays to implementation due to funding bottlenecks was also compounded by the late payment of tranches due to issues with PISI/Plan International Pacific's own financial systems and processes.

For YWCA, ineffective management of utility bills has resulted in the organisation's electricity and internet accounts going into arrears over time; and due to lack of current resources the total amount owing cannot be paid in one lump sum. Funds for "office support costs" have been allocated in SC4G project budgets each year and extra contributions were paid when PISI used YWCA's venue facilities. However, it has not been enough to rectify the situation. As a result, it is not uncommon for power to be cut at the YWCA office and the PO has had to resort to paying for mobile data out of her own pocket to have continued Wi-Fi access.

d) Partnership management

In terms of formalisation of partnership arrangements, prior to FY21, HCC and YWCA were engaged through an MoU. Little project documentation exists to indicate the strengths, weaknesses and/or appropriateness of this type of arrangement. Annual partnership agreements have been in place in more recent years following Plan International Pacific's transition to APAC. Partner POs expressed a lack of understanding of certain sections and technical terminology used in the PA template, and felt a clearer understanding of roles, responsibilities and expectations in the agreement would help to strengthen the partnership and maximise benefits for both parties (PISI and HCC/YWCA). Funding arrangements under the partnership were appropriate in theory but were let down by internal financial management and delegation issues.

Late payment of tranches by PISI and sign offs by HCC/YWCA resulted in POs not receiving their salaries on time, implementation delays and workplans needing to be constantly revised. Budget for individual and organisational capacity development was allocated each year, and financial management training conducted by PISI Finance was delivered to both partners. However, this was delivered recently and there is no evidence yet to suggest improvements with HCC/YWCA's financial processes.

Partner capacity building tended to be ad-hoc in nature and this could be attributed to staff turnover experienced at PISI. This aspect of the partnership needed to be prioritised more, possibly through the development of a dedicated capacity building plan to incorporate into the PA to ensure greater accountability and follow through. Suggestions for future capacity building shared by KII participants ranged from technical trainings to strengthening organisational policies, processes and procedures. This included project management, MEL, disability inclusion, HR and people management, safeguarding, policy development and gender awareness. More regular reflections and meetings with

partners was also suggested to strengthen feedback sharing, collaboration and input from partner management.

Finally, the way volunteer SFs and CFPs were engaged as part of this project was flagged as a potential legal and reputational risk for partners (and indirectly PISI). According to partner POs, local labour laws in Solomon Islands stipulate that a person cannot be engaged as a volunteer for longer than six months without being offered a casual employment contract with employee benefits (e.g. annual leave, housing and travel allowance). This issue needs to be investigated by a legal expert with knowledge of Solomon Islands labour laws. But it could have repercussions for long-term volunteer engagement and budgeting for current and future programming involving youth facilitators.

e) Broader stakeholder engagement

Activities involving broader project stakeholders included intergenerational dialogue sessions with parents/caregivers and community leaders, community mapping and safety walks, public art exhibitions, international awareness day events such as IDG, and interface meetings between girls and government, police, and/or public transport representatives. Adequately engaging these key stakeholders has involved a range of challenges.

All participants emphasised that low visibility of SC4G among key stakeholder groups fed into a lack of interest or desire to prioritise active participation in the project. Having limited knowledge of Plan International and understanding of the project resulted in little motivation to be involved. This was evident during FGDs with parents and caregivers, some of whom expressed that the session was the first time they had attended an activity relating to SC4G. Confusion with other Plan International projects with higher visibility such as the online safety project, co-funded with ChildFund Australia, was also apparent during group discussions as it was not uncommon for youth to be part of both initiatives.

Busy schedules and competing priorities also made it difficult to engage government stakeholders and authorities in key activities designed to create space for young people to speak with representatives about youth issues. Partner POs flagged a number of instances where government officials were invited to events such as a safety walk or interface meeting, and either they could not find time in their schedule to attend or confirmed attendance but cancelled at the last minute. Ensuring the active and regular participation of government, police and public transport authorities was an ongoing challenge for both partners and PISI.

Partner POs also reflected on the fact that access to the upper echelons of government where the actual decision-makers sit was particularly challenging. When government representatives were present they were often lower level officials with limited decision-making or influencing powers. Therefore, it was difficult to ascertain whether the information being shared on girls' safety was reaching the upper levels of leadership. Better alignment of key advocacy and influencing activities with the lead up to budgeting, priority setting and policy revision processes was also a practical suggestion provided by partners to increase the likelihood of tangible outcomes from government stakeholders. POs highlighted the difficulty of trying to influence duty bearers after their funding priorities had already been set.

There was little evidence to suggest that there was strong engagement from the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force nor a positive impact on their practices and levels of gender awareness. Public transport authorities did have some level of engagement in forums and interface meetings. However, the use of poorly regulated, privately owned buses is a common form of transport for people in

Honiara. Trying to influence the individual practices, attitudes and behaviours of countless independent service providers through the formal transport sector authorities was an ongoing challenge for the project.

KII participants reported positive interactions with community stakeholders and said that most people in target communities such as leaders and parents/caregivers were open and receptive to the aims of the project and young people being involved. So much so that there was a demand for more youth and other communities to be involved in SC4G. POs reported that concerns were expressed from some people of older generations around the gender equality aims of the project, seeing it as an attempt to change aspects of traditional culture and customs, but this did not impede project implementation. The project and partners had minimal interaction with churches and schools as part of SC4G activities. But feedback from KII participants was supportive of closer collaboration, especially with schools as a means to reach students with CoC.

2.3 Sustainability

Sustainability refers to the likelihood that the positive changes achieved by the project and progress towards longer term goals will continue beyond the project. The evaluation process did not find any evidence of clear planning for sustainability, although project documentation around the design phase was limited and the project’s intention (evident in the intended outcomes) to work with or target a range of stakeholders in different sectors and contexts (young people, parents/caregivers, local and city government, transport providers, etc) suggests an intentional integrated approach aimed at sustaining change.

While a number of factors affect the sustainability of outcomes, for the purposes of this evaluation, the assessment of the sustainability of the outcomes (or progress) achieved is based on the criteria outlined in Table 5 below. The table also summarises the project’s performance against the criteria.

Table 5: Sustainability assessment summary

| Criteria | Description | Assessment |
|--|---|--|
| Building capacity and commitment of key stakeholders | Extent to which the project improved key project stakeholders’ knowledge, skills, confidence and access to resources to sustain the project’s work and changes achieved so far. Extent to which the project addressed underlying attitudes and norms that influence project outcomes | There were reports that the project positively influenced the attitudes and behaviours of young people, but the evidence suggests that similar changes are unlikely in other project stakeholders. In addition, lack of formalisation of youth groups and capacity-building and other support for the groups, is likely to impede young people’s ability to mobilise and collectively access resources, as well as plan and deliver advocacy initiatives. |
| Working with the right stakeholders | Extent to which the project engaged with stakeholders with the most interest and influence in the project’s target outcomes. | Partner selection was appropriate – HCC and YWCA worked on relevant issues and there was alignment in missions and goals. But the level and type of engagement with government stakeholders and family and community stakeholders was insufficient to secure the support required to achieve and sustain key project outcomes and strategies. |

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| Integration with the policy and/or practice of duty bearers and other influential stakeholders | Extent to which the project’s activities or target outcomes have been integrated into the work of government departments, service providers or other key stakeholders. | There is no evidence of policy or practice change in support of gender equality or urban safety. This reflects the lack of targeted advocacy and limited participation of government and other influential stakeholders in the project. |
|--|--|---|

The most effective area of the project’s work related to influencing adolescent girls’ and boys’ attitudes and behaviour in support of gender equality and girls’ rights, with evidence of positive change in the project monitoring data and personal testimonies shared during evaluation FGDs (see section 2.2.1a for more information). Evidence of changes in behaviour (rather than just participation or improved knowledge or understanding of key issues) indicates potential for sustained improvements in support of gender equality, at least in terms of the relationships and interactions between peers who participated in CoC and perhaps within their households. But it is worth noting that young people’s participation in the project was consistently linked by project stakeholders to incentives and “hook activities” – the sustainability of this approach needs to be considered in any efforts to continue or expand young people’s engagement in the future. In addition, without a supportive enabling environment, the sustainability and broader impact of the positive changes reported in young people, and other progress achieved by the project, is uncertain. An important aspect of the enabling environment is the commitment and capacity of partner organisations and policy-makers to support change, as well as family and community attitudes and support. In these areas, there is less evidence of the project’s effectiveness.

Parents/caregivers who participated in the evaluation FGDs, while observing positive changes in their children’s attitudes and behaviour, reported limited awareness of and participation in the project. When asked about sustaining the positive changes they had observed, few participants offered opinions but some saw it as a responsibility of individual young people and their families. Nevertheless, there was broad support for their children’s ongoing participation in project activities (with some concerns expressed about the appropriateness of CoC content). One parent/caregiver suggested formalising youth groups and improving linkages to local leadership structures, in order to ensure their continuation and effectiveness in the future.

Lack of planned, sustained engagement with government stakeholders resulted in limited evidence of commitment from government to support the project’s objectives (see outcomes 3.1 and 3.2 in section 2.2.1a). Engagement with government stakeholders was largely limited to securing government officials’ participation in specific events, rather than deep and targeted advocacy to support urban safety. This is reflected in the lack of policy and practice change evident among relevant government and institutional bodies, which is likely to limit the project’s effectiveness and lasting impact at the broader community, policy, policing and transport system levels. The sustainability of the project’s activities and outcomes may have been enhanced by more targeted engagement of HCC management and HCC teams beyond the youth division, as well as the Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs, Ministry of Urban Planning, Ministry of Infrastructure, Ministry of Home Affairs, the Young Women’s Parliamentary group and the Royal Solomon Islands Police.

Selection of partners was appropriate in terms of their focus on gender equality and young women’s empowerment (YWCA) and urban systems and safety (HCC); and partners valued many aspects of the project, including the support they received and the project’s goal and intended outcomes (see section 2.2). However, there were key aspects of capacity development that the project could have delivered more effectively and that partners considered important for improving and maintaining their work. Capacity building for both organisations and individuals were described by partners as sporadic. Few

examples of trainings or technical support were cited; the more recent were financial management and safeguarding facilitated by PISI and PIP. Both partner POs expressed appreciation and acknowledged the importance of both trainings for their work on the project. But broader participation of HCC and YWCA representatives was limited so there is little evidence to suggest this had an impact beyond those directly involved in SC4G.

Partners shared suggestions for future capacity building ranging from technical trainings to strengthening organisational policies, processes and procedures. Importantly, though, the POs in the partner organisations reported that the project had positive personal and professional development benefits. The YWCA PO noted that she had been a SF for the project, before working her way up to the PO role and added that her involvement in SC4G served as motivation to enrol in a tertiary course on Community Development. The HCC PO said the project improved his capacity to “see things differently”.

“These trainings help me to be impacting not just for Safer Cities, but also impacting my mind, relating to young people, and other programming.” (KII – HCC PO)

Partners also noted the importance of formalising and strengthening youth groups in order to ensure the project’s work and outcomes are sustained, and this idea was supported by PISI staff. Effective collaboration between youth groups and CSOs was an intended outcome of the project (outcome 1.2); however, there was limited evidence that this happened and although the project supported the formation of informal youth groups that previously did not exist, there were no reports that these groups had become formal associations as a result of completing the registration process. The YWCA PO said that two or three youth groups had initiated registration to sustain the work started through CoC, particularly in relation to advocacy at the community level. PISI’s A&C Officer confirmed and supported this and had offered to advise the group/s on advocacy methods including using social media, blogs and other communication methods for their advocacy. The former PISI PC also identified the National Youth Congress as a potentially important stakeholder in working through youth groups, noting that they had structures at the province and ward levels working with youth groups. The HCC representative agreed that without formalising and supporting (through further capacity-building and financial resources) youth groups, their ongoing work would be jeopardised.

HCC and PISI staff also raised the importance of working with new stakeholders in order to ensure the project’s work continues and outcomes are achieved/sustained. The HCC representative suggested that churches and schools could support the project’s work in the future, noting that church and school activities will continue after the project ends and can facilitate access to young people. PISI staff agreed that schools are important stakeholders, noting that CoC would provide an important supplement to the current school curriculum by incorporating a personal development component on top of the traditional academic subjects.

3. Conclusion

The SC4G project addressed important issues for young Solomon Islanders and achieved important changes. Young people highlighted a range of priorities during the evaluation, particularly around education, employment and relationships; and while the specific objectives of the SC4G project are not immediately evident in these priorities, the core SC4G outcome areas around gender equality and safety at home and in public spaces are necessary to create an enabling environment for young people to address the priorities they identified. Furthermore, young people agreed that urban safety was an

important issue, especially for women and girls; and the project's core work aligned with the goals and priorities of the partner organisations.

The project was most effective in influencing the attitudes and behaviour of young people in support of gender equality and urban safety for girls, with young people who participated in the evaluation linking these changes directly to the project. Notable progress was also made in convening informal youth groups. These are important foundational changes necessary to support the project's overarching goal of ensuring cities are safe for, inclusive of and accountable to girls in all their diversity. However, the project struggled to gain traction in other outcome areas. While project stakeholders acknowledged the importance of the project's objectives, the project lacked consistent, targeted engagement with influential actors in young people's families and communities, as well as the policies and systems that influence their lives. This meant that there was limited evidence of practical support or significant change among young people's parents/caregivers, government, police and transport provider policies/practices or collaboration between youth groups and CSOs.

Relationships between PISI and partners were positive and the partnerships with HCC and YWCA were vital for implementing the project, particularly when PISI experienced recruitment challenges. The potential of the partnerships could have been more fully realised with greater investment in capacity development for partner organisations and improved engagement from the management structures of partner organisations. These limitations, along with lack of progress in formalising youth groups and influencing the enabling environment that shapes girls' and young people's experiences – including the policy and practice of key government departments, police and transport service providers – may impede continued progress towards a safe and inclusive city in Honiara.

4. Key learnings

This evaluation has identified a number of key learnings that should be considered for stakeholder engagement and future programming focused on young people in the Solomon Islands. The learnings listed below are mainly broad and applicable not only to the SC4G project model, but any programming that focuses on the needs and priorities of young people. There are some lessons specific to the CoC curriculum as well.

Programming considerations

- Over time SC4G has built up a strong and engaged network of informal **youth groups**. It is important for these groups to register as formal associations, so they can be more self-reliant and access further opportunities and resources for sustainability.
- **Substance abuse and crime** continue to be prominent issues among youth in Honiara, exacerbating issues relating to education and employment (which were the most frequently cited priorities by young people in the evaluation) and project participation. It is important to take these issues into account when designing and implementing youth-focused urban programming and to ensure that PISI and partner staff are equipped with knowledge of relevant referral services.
- Youth **unemployment** remains a significant barrier to young people's full and productive participation in society, and their ability to overcome cost of living challenges. **Livelihoods and employment pathways** are important for programming to remain relevant and meet the needs of young people. It is also essential that any 'life skills' or technical livelihood activities should be accompanied by some form of training or support focusing on entrepreneurship,

financial literacy, and business development, to equip participants with the knowledge and skills to develop sustainable income-generating initiatives/small-scale business ventures.

- It is important for project **funding** to adequately account for high operating and procurement costs in the Solomon Islands, while also supporting high quality activities, learning outcomes and GEDSI resourcing.
- The participation and engagement rates of **school-aged youth** was a challenge due to the **timing of activities** (late afternoon on weekdays). Unless the needs of students are considered in the timing and planning of activities, projects will struggle to reach large numbers of school-age young people. For girls and women especially, ensuring they can return home safely before dark is an important consideration.

GEDSI

- Stigma and discrimination continue to prevent LGBTQI+ people's open participation in project activities and community life, and many of the challenges (e.g. around attitudes and accessibility) that impede PLWD's participation also remain unaddressed. **More resourcing** is required for targeted disability and social inclusion approaches, to ensure PISI, partners and project associates are equipped to support GEDSI initiatives and address the multi-faceted challenges faced by marginalised young people.
- It is important to consider the needs of vulnerable groups such as **young mothers** in order for them to actively participate in and benefit from project activities, especially when it comes to livelihoods interventions. Mechanisms to support young mother's participation could include things like safe and reliable forms of childcare.
- While there was evidence of positive changes in support of gender equality, most of the changes related to young people's knowledge and attitudes. There was less evidence of **broader social norm change or systems change**. This reflects the project's limited effectiveness in working with families, communities, service providers and government stakeholders; and it reinforces the importance of targeted work with a range of stakeholders in different sectors and contexts that influence young people's lives.

Stakeholder engagement

- Approaches to **public service engagement** need to acknowledge the structural, regulatory and operating nuances within different service contexts, in order to effectively coordinate and collaborate with stakeholders. For example, in the SC4G project, the nature of public transport services in Honiara (privately owned, independently operated with poor regulation enforcement) meant that the broad sectoral approach to engagement was ineffective in enacting change across the transport provider network.
- A **targeted, well-designed and resourced advocacy strategy** is important for reaching government representatives and other influential stakeholders, and achieving policy and practice change. Ensuring advocacy strategies are designed and implemented with young people and project partners is important to secure buy-in from key project participants; ensure the relevance and appropriateness of advocacy objectives and strategies; and to leverage the networks, power and influence of project partners.
- It is important to align advocacy initiatives with **government funding and policy revision cycles**, otherwise attempts to lobby and influence government stakeholders are likely to be unsuccessful. Once political priorities and agendas have been set and funding allocated, ministerial representatives tend to be less open to consultation and advocacy efforts for change. More intentional timing of advocacy and influencing activities is important to overcome this challenge.

- **Schools and churches** are important sources of influence in the lives of young people in the Solomon Islands, and therefore should be seen as key stakeholders in youth-focused programming and engaged in project activities.

Partnerships

- Partners and young people need to be **involved in key aspects of the project design, management, planning and decision-making** in order for them to feel ownership over the project. SC4G partners and youth participants expressed the desire for more input.
- **Dedicated capacity development plans**, incorporated into PAs and project budgets, would help to overcome some implementation and operational challenges. The evaluation revealed a number of areas where capacity-development activities could focus, for individual POs and their organisations, including MEL and knowledge management, GEDSI, project and financial management, human resources and people management, and policy development (e.g. safeguarding and PSEAH).
- The potential of **partner organisations to influence duty bearers** and other influential stakeholders, including community leaders and government representatives, should be recognised and reflected in project strategies. Project strategies should support effective engagement with partner organisations to ensure partners' priorities and needs are addressed while project outcomes are achieved.
- The way in which **volunteers** are engaged, especially in the long-term, needs to be reviewed to ensure the engagement of SFs/CFPs adheres to local labour law; otherwise this could pose a legal and reputational risk to both partners and Plan International in the Solomon Islands, and have potential repercussions for project budgets and volunteer engagement in future.

CoC

- **Qualified professionals** would be better placed to deliver CoC sessions on the topics within the curriculum that are deemed sensitive and/or technical, in order to achieve the best learning outcomes for youth group members and to overcome the challenges faced by SFs who cannot confidently or comfortably facilitate these particular sessions. For example, an adolescent-friendly SRH nurse or healthcare worker would be more appropriate for delivering module content relating to sex, sexuality, family planning and relationships.
- The CoC curriculum requires further contextualisation, in order to ensure its appropriateness, accessibility and effectiveness for both facilitators and participants. It is important that the whole manual is translated into Pijin and **further simplified and contextualised**, incorporating visual aids and relevant aspects of local culture. Some of this work has already been done, as demonstrated in the CoC Facilitation Guide which is a useful tool to use as the basis of further contextualisation.
- Schools in Honiara have expressed interest in the CoC programme and **rolling out CoC in schools** may address some of the shortcomings of the current approach to CoC, including difficulties in reaching school-aged youth and the risk of interfering in project participants' schooling. Furthermore, CoC could fill the current gap in the formal education curriculum in relation to personal development.

Annex 1: Evaluation Matrix

| KEQ | Information required | Data collection tool/ data source |
|---|---|--|
| Relevance | | |
| 1. To what extent do project objectives align with the needs and priorities of youth, especially adolescent girls and young women who directly engage with the project? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-described needs, priorities, aspirations of young people (disaggregated) • Staff, partners' perceptions of young people's needs • Project objectives, outcomes and activities • Parents'/ caregivers' perceptions of young people's needs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FGDs with YFs • FGDs with CoC participants • Project ToC/ design document • FGDs with parents/ caregivers • KII with staff |
| 2. Are the activities of the project relevant to and consistent with the intended outcomes? (See the Results Framework for the SC4G Programme for a list of intended outcomes). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Findings for KEQ5 • Evidence of SC4G's effectiveness in other settings • Findings for KEQ1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See "Effectiveness" • Review of other country SC4G project documents • See KEQ 1 |
| 3. How relevant to and inclusive of is the project to children and youth, especially girls, with diverse needs and identities? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence that the design considers the specific needs of girls and young people with diverse needs and identities • Young people's perceptions of how the project addressed (or failed to address) the specific needs and priorities of girls and young people with diverse needs and identities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project ToC/ design document • Project monitoring reports • FGD with YFs • FGDs with CoC participants |
| 4. To what extent do project objectives and activities align with the needs and priorities of project stakeholders (including policies and strategies of | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priorities of partners and project stakeholders • Project objectives, outcomes and activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key policy/ strategy documents from partners • KIIs with partners • Project ToC/ design document |

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| government authorities and transport providers)? | | |
| Effectiveness | | |
| 5. To what extent have project activities achieved the project's objectives and outcomes over the duration of implementation? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reported changes/ outcomes from young people (disaggregated), partners and project stakeholders, parents/ caregivers • Evidence of links between activities delivered and changes/ outcomes reported by young people, partners and project stakeholders | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FGD with YFs • FGDs with CoC participants • KIIs with partners • Project ToC/ design document • FGD with parents/ caregivers • KII with staff |
| 6. What are the key factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the objectives and outcomes? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contextual factors that affected project implementation • Plan staff's and project partners' perceptions of strengths and weaknesses of project management and implementation approaches • Beliefs, behaviours, level of support from parents/ caregivers • Findings of "Relevance" KEQs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KIIs with project staff • KIIs with partners • FGD with YFs • FGD with CoC participants • FGD with parents/ caregivers |
| 7. How effectively has the project worked with and influenced stakeholders to achieve objectives and outcomes? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of/ reported changes in project stakeholders' attitudes, policies, practices • Evidence of links between activities delivered and changes in project stakeholders' attitudes, policies and practices | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KIIs with project staff • KIIs with partners |

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| <p>8. Did the project address the specific needs of young men, young women, and vulnerable groups? How was their participation supported by the project?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-described needs, priorities, aspirations of young people (disaggregated) • Disaggregated participation numbers • Young people’s perceptions of level of alignment between project activities/ outcomes and their needs/ priorities (inc. needs of vulnerable groups) • Project objectives, outcomes and activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FGDs with YFs • FGDs with CoC participants • Project monitoring data • Project ToC/ design document |
| <p>Partnerships</p> | | |
| <p>9. How have different partners participated in the project and contributed to outcomes? What have been the strengths and challenges of the partnerships?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities/ contributions of partners to project • Plan staff’s and partners’ perception of partnerships (strengths, challenges, how challenges were managed/ whether they were managed effectively) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KIIs with partners • KIIs with Plan staff |
| <p>10. To what extent have partners been involved in project planning, implementation and monitoring?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of partners’ participation in design phase • Activities/ contributions of partners to project | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KIIs with partners • KIIs with Plan staff |
| <p>11. How appropriate are the partnership agreements and management arrangements for the project (including financial management)?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan staff’s and partners’ perception of partnerships (strengths, challenges, how challenges were managed/ whether they were managed effectively) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KIIs with partners • KIIs with Plan staff |
| <p>12. What has PISI contributed to partners over the life of the project in the form of capacity building or helping partners realise their own organisational ambitions? What changes can be made to better support partners’ future ambitions?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity and organisational development activities delivered with partners • Partners’ perceptions/ reports of progress towards organisational ambitions and capacity development as a result of the project | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KIIs with partners • KIIs with Plan staff |

| Sustainability | | |
|---|--|---|
| 13. What evidence is there of buy-in or ownership of delivering activities and project objectives by stakeholders (communities, young people, families, partners etc.)? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any actions undertaken by young people (linked to the project's objectives) outside of the project Changes in young people's families and communities linked to the project's activities or objectives Any policy/ practice change, investment of resources or budget allocation or other action undertaken by partners and project stakeholders, in support of the project's objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FGD with YFs FGDs with CoC participants KIIs with partners FGD with parents/ caregivers |
| 14. What are the gaps and challenges that may affect the sustainability of the project? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Findings of KEQ13 Extent to which young people, project partners and stakeholders demonstrate improved capacities and commitment (knowledge, skills, resources and supportive attitudes) to sustain activities/ outcomes Plan staff's perceptions of gaps and challenges | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FGD with YFs FGDs with CoC participants KIIs with partners KII with Plan staff FGD with parents/ caregivers |
| 15. To what extent does the project ensure gender, disability and social inclusion are mainstreamed or institutionalised in the project achievements? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of outcomes and strategies directly targeting the specific needs of young people based on gender, disability and other aspects of vulnerability, particularly in gov stakeholder policy/ practice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project ToC/ design document KIIs with partners |

Annex 2: Total reach (FY21-FY23)

| Financial Year (FY) | FY21 | FY22 | FY23 | | FY21 | FY22 | FY23 | | FY21 | FY22 | FY23 | | FY21 | FY22 | FY23 |
|--|------|------|------|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|---|------|------|------|--|------------------|------|------|
| Adult | | | | Adult with Disability | | | | Child | | | | Child with Disability | | | |
| Men | 64 | 31 | 260 | Men | 0 | 0 | 1 | Boy | 123 | 161 | 111 | Boy | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Women | 53 | 44 | 269 | Women | 0 | 0 | 3 | Girl | 262 | 126 | 109 | Girl | 6 | 0 | 1 |
| Sex indeterminate, intersex or unspecified | 0 | 0 | 0 | Sex indeterminate, intersex or unspecified | 0 | 0 | 0 | Sex indeterminate, intersex or unspecified | 0 | 0 | 0 | Sex indeterminate, intersex or unspecified | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| <i>Adult TOTAL by year</i> | 117 | 75 | 529 | <i>Adult with Disability TOTAL by year</i> | 0 | 0 | 4 | <i>Child TOTAL by year</i> | 385 | 287 | 220 | <i>Child with Disability TOTAL by year</i> | 7 | 0 | 1 |
| <i>Overall Adult TOTAL</i> | 721 | | | <i>Overall Adult with disability TOTAL</i> | 4 | | | <i>Overall Child TOTAL</i> | 892 | | | <i>Overall Child with disability TOTAL</i> | 8 | | |
| Overall total by sex and disability | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Male TOTAL</i> | 752 | | | <i>Female TOTAL</i> | 873 | | | <i>Sex indeterminate, intersex or unspecified TOTAL</i> | 0 | | | <i>People with Disability</i> | 12 | | |
| Overall TOTAL reach by year | | | | | FY21 | FY22 | FY23 | Overall TOTAL | | | | | FY21-FY23 | | |
| | | | | | 509 | 362 | 754 | | | | | | 1625 | | |