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#### ABSTRACT

*The dynamics of an urban municipal is complex. Yet understanding the vitality of a municipal's role, is a perquisite for a thriving urban function. It is prevalent, municipal authorities have been dragged through a maze of challenges in deploying their role!*

# Dynamics of Urban Municipals

## Evolutions of Urbanization

The evolution of Urbanization is said to have begun during the Uruk Period (4300 – 3100 BCE<sup>i</sup>), in ancient Mesopotamia. The reason for this early urbanization is yet unknown.

However, urbanization in the later civilization is due to a mass movement of the rural populace to towns and cities<sup>ii</sup>; subsequently by push and pull factors - pertinent to the waves of regional and global development, or circumstances to which these migrations occurred.

And today across the globe, the leading push and pull factors of urbanization still

remains; - (i) education, (ii) jobs and (iii) lifestyle.

Towards the end of the millennial and into this Generation Z era, figures have indicated that almost 50 percent of the world's population, are now living in urban areas.

Urban population worldwide is expected to grow significantly (1.5 times higher) in the coming years; and at least a projected 6 billion of the world's population, will be living in urban areas by 2045<sup>iii</sup>.

There has been a call by international bodies for city leaders<sup>iv</sup> and authorities to plan for growth. They were cautioned also to ensure that the provision of basic

services, infrastructure and housing<sup>v</sup> are affordable for urban inhabitants.

## Urbanization in Solomon Islands

Honiara became the official capital of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate in 1952<sup>vi</sup>. The former establishment on Tulagi Islands suffered the impacts of the Second World War in 1942, hence the relocation<sup>vii</sup>.

This is the beginning of a modern society and urbanization for Solomon Islands.

Solomon Islands' urbanization growth rate was initially estimated at a 4.7 percent<sup>viii</sup>. Urban population growth on the other hand, has been substantial over the last 50 years at a rate of 8.9 percent.

However recently, urban population growth for Solomon Islands has seen to a remarkable spike of 24.2 percent in 2019<sup>ix</sup>.

Current urban population for Honiara alone, is perching at 90,441<sup>x</sup>. This figure is exclusive of urban centres within the other 9 Provinces.

For small islands states such as Solomon Islands with only a population of 694,617<sup>xi</sup>, a 24.2 percent urban population growth rate is already an alarming demographic statistic!

## Impacts of Urban Drift on SI Urbanization

Four decades ago, elements of a functioning municipal were visible, in and around the Honiara Town. Demarcated residential areas were accorded 100 percent municipal services. Recreational

facilities and public amenities can be accessed. Green belts restrictions were observed and regulations relating to the erection of buildings within the CBD (Central Business District) were adhered to.

To date from only a couple of decades ago, it is prevalent that Honiara has been expanding on a sprawl development trend, prompted by illegal urban squatter<sup>xii</sup>.

This is due to an influx and uncensored urban drift. These internal migrations from rural areas, were based on the purpose of looking for better opportunities with education<sup>xiii</sup>, health services and employment<sup>xiv</sup>.

Studies have revealed that the Honiara City Authority has been dealing with issues of an ever increasing urban drift and high unemployment rate amongst urban youths. HCC has to deal also with the obscured livelihood experienced in squatters in and around Honiara<sup>xv</sup>. And people living in semi-urban localities in and around Honiara have endured numerous subsequent plights.

Furthermore, the spill-over impacts of a high urban populace has placed constrains not only on urban basic services provided by the municipal authority, but also on its governance and institutional links, security and environmental safety. And lastly it is obvious that such

encroachments has often led to occasional conflicts between cultural groups<sup>xvi</sup>.

Such that it is of a higher priority that relevant authorities do proactively activate all fore front planning; -to absorb the anticipated urban population growth and the demand it will pose on existing infrastructures, facilitates and services.

It is equally important that authorities should now contemplate expansions in the various urban localities across the country.

### Honiara Municipal Functions

The Solomon Islands Government System is Unitary, hence authority is maintained by the Central Government; thereto local governments are subjected to its political aspirations and decisions<sup>xvii</sup>.

Most of the local municipal's functions are subjected to a higher jurisdiction and this claims limited powers in relations to their management of land within the urban perimeters; the air and sea ports, reactional parks and other cultural heritage sites.

The establishment of the Honiara City is provided for under Sections 114 of the Solomon Islands Constitution.

The Honiara City and Municipal's functions are spelt out in the Honiara City Act of 1999. The said Act is a prerogative of the Minister of Home Affairs.

Therefore the Honiara City Municipal is answerable to the Minister of the Ministry of Home Affairs; - likewise the nine Provincial Governments are answerable to the Minister of the Ministry of Provincial Government and Institutional Strengthening.

In that respect, though the Honiara City Authority may be ambitious to deliver on its municipal roles and ordinances; - the deployment of its role has certainly been dragged through a maze of challenges, prohibiting it from actually deploying various municipal functions without hassles.

Besides limited powers, the dynamics of the Honiara municipal operation does not fall far from grappling with challenges that comes with it - like elsewhere.

Some of the common challenges faced by Municipals around the globally includes: (i) its legal frameworks, (ii) the lack of adequate tools, (iii) techniques and guidelines, (iv) human resources constraints, (v) funding constraints, (vi) weakness in the internal system and processes, (vii) weakness in the external system and (viii) community engagement<sup>xviii</sup>.

These challenges places disparity in the perspectives the wider public has, as to the "pluralistic authority system" that is running our capital city. Hence urban dwellers tend to accord lesser respect towards the municipal authority.

Such poses the question of “*where should the line be drawn*” when it comes to appropriately empowering the Honiara Municipal?

## Planning for Urbanization

The Greater Honiara Urban Strategic and Action Plan<sup>xix</sup> - developed by the Ministry of Lands, Survey and Housing, is a forward looking initiative for Solomon Islands.

This newly expanded city boundary has a land mass coverage of 133 square kilometer, commencing from Tenaru River (Malango Ward) in the East to Poha River (Tandai) in the West<sup>xx</sup>. Southwardly, the city boundary extends inland, up to Mt. Austen and areas adjacent to it.

The GHUDS hopes to gauge a development and revitalizing scenario for the Honiara City. Given its geographical topography, Honiara has evidently succumbed to a linear urban development pattern.

Under the overarching goals for a Peaceful, Resilient, Inclusive, Sustainable, Master Planned Honiara, with effective an governance;- the GHUDS strategically aims at (a) establishing peaceful communities, (b) improving resilience to natural hazards and climate change, (c) ensuring inclusive development, (d) support sustainable economic growth, (e) establishing a Master Plan for Urban development and ensuring (f) an effective urban growth management.

A non-visual development plan of this initiative enlisted 14 clusters of sectoral development, including;

- Planned housing areas
- Key roads and utility corridors
- Henderson Airport improvements
- New Major public facilities
- Sports facilities for the Pacific Games 2023
- Upgrading and Regeneration of the Central Areas
- Waterfront Parks and Esplanade
- Point Cruz Port Relocation
- Central Tourism Areas
- Industrialized Zones
- Themed Heritage Tourism Planning
- Bloody Ridge National Heritage
- Natural Reserves and Parks
- River Corridor
- Linear Parks

## Managing Urban Expansion

Section 14 (1) of the Constitution<sup>xxi</sup>, allows for the freedom of movement, without prohibiting citizen’s movement from their provinces and cultures of origin.

It is a compelling proof that the centralization<sup>xxii</sup> of essential public services, employment opportunities, infrastructural development and economic activities will remain the “pull and push factors” for urban drift to Honiara City.

Honiara City, like any other municipals will always be a “melting pot for the national government”.

It is obvious, the cost of living in Honiara is quite high<sup>xxiii</sup> ; and the earlier concept of engaging as a casual labor for survival in Urban Honiara, has apparently being replaced with “hustling” to survive!

With an inevitable expansions, a Municipal must be <sup>xxiv</sup>strengthen and resourced adequately. Its Urban Community relations is a necessity for raising the profile of its municipal by-laws (ordinances) and order enforcement<sup>xxv</sup>.

### Achieving Sustainable cities and communities

The expansion of Honiara City itself has setbacks in the last four decades. Consequent impediments were brought about by natural disasters<sup>xxvi</sup>, ethnic tensions and clashes<sup>xxvii</sup>, unlawful riots and burning of buildings in parts of the CBD<sup>xxviii</sup> due to elements of criminal activities and divergent social perceptive on politics.

Yet for a good number of years to come, Honiara will remain the main economic hub for Solomon Islands. And the indispensable factors for a robust economy growth, will continually require physical capital

infrastructures. It will also require a population for its Labour capacity and the engagement of human capital (expertise, qualifications and skills), technology and edifying regulations or laws.

Achieving Goals 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities of the Sustainable Development Goals (17 SDGs), is obligatory for Solomon Islands, as a Member State of the United Nations. In that, it is crucial to ask “How can Honiara City and human settlements therein be made safe, resilient, inclusive and sustainable for its urban inhabitants?”

It is only prudent that the government of the day’s economic and social policies directions, do strategically map out a dichotomy to the current factors for a sprawling urban growth. More so, develop and design policies that is synchronized with municipal roles, subjective to marginalizing the widening gaps of poverty, prevalent within our urban and semi-urban areas.

Hence the question remains, what aspects of the relevant legislations and governing framework requires considerable reviewing, and such that could bear forth some degree of solutions?

## Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.ancient.eu/urbanization/#:~:text=Urbanization%20is%20the%20process%20by,have%20not%20yet%20agreed%20on.>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.open.edu/openlearncreate/mod/oucontent/view.php?id=79940&printable=1>

<sup>iii</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/urbandevelopment/overview>

<sup>iv</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/urbandevelopment>

<sup>v</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/urbandevelopment>

<sup>vi</sup>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Honiara#:~:text=Honiara%20officially%20became%20the%20capital,from%20early%20January%20in%201952.>

<sup>vii</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/place/Tulagi>

<sup>viii</sup> [https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/documents/2019-05/1\\_solomon\\_islands\\_national\\_urban\\_profile.pdf](https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/documents/2019-05/1_solomon_islands_national_urban_profile.pdf)

<sup>ix</sup> <https://knoema.com/atlas/Solomon-Islands/Urban-population#:~:text=In%202019%2C%20urban%20population%20for,decreased%20to%201.94%25%20in%202019.>

<sup>x</sup> <https://www.statistics.gov.sb/statistics/social-statistics/population>

<sup>xi</sup> <https://www.statistics.gov.sb/statistics/social-statistics/population>

<sup>xii</sup> <https://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/WO0607/S00283.htm>

<sup>xiii</sup> Interview, Lyra, House Wife, Honiara Resident, 2020

<sup>xiv</sup> Interview, Osifelo Eddie, Local Journalist, 2020

<sup>xv</sup> Maebuta, Hellen E, Livelihood Strategies of people in Solomon Islands Squatter Settlements, 2007

<sup>xvi</sup> <https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/300433/tensions-rising-over-solomons-squatter-settlements>

<sup>xvii</sup>

[https://www.google.com/search?q=define+unitary+system&rlz=1C1GCEU\\_enSB821SB821&oq=define+unitary+&aqs=chrome.2.69i57j0l7.7087j1j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8](https://www.google.com/search?q=define+unitary+system&rlz=1C1GCEU_enSB821SB821&oq=define+unitary+&aqs=chrome.2.69i57j0l7.7087j1j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8)

Disclaimer: We would like to hear from you. Do not hesitate to give us feedbacks that would sure improve on our part in serving you.

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[https://www.google.com/search?q=challenges+faced+by+municiples+around+the+world&rlz=1C1GCEU\\_enSB821SB821&oq=challenges+faced+by+municiples+around+the+world&aqs=chrome..69i57j33.21598j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8](https://www.google.com/search?q=challenges+faced+by+municiples+around+the+world&rlz=1C1GCEU_enSB821SB821&oq=challenges+faced+by+municiples+around+the+world&aqs=chrome..69i57j33.21598j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8)

xix <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/project-documents/49460/49460-001-dpta-en.pdf>

xx <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/project-documents/49460/49460-001-dpta-en.pdf>

xxi Constitution of the Solomon Islands, 1978

xxii Interview, Osifelo Eddie, Local Journalist, 2020

xxiii Interview Kaki Judith, NGO Officer, 2020

xxiv Interview, Lynes, Self Employed, 2020

xxv Interview Kaki Judith, NGO Officer, 2020

xxvi [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyclone\\_Namu](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyclone_Namu)

xxvii <https://www.ramsi.org/resources/>

xxviii <https://nautilus.org/publications/books/australian-forces-abroad/solomon-islands/rioting-in-honiara-april-2006/>