



## PRESS RELEASE

### **European Union supports civil society and vulnerable communities in Solomon Islands**

**1 March 2022.** Solomon Islands have recently benefitted from SBD 14.4 million (EUR 1.6 million) from the European Union (EU) in order to implement three new grant projects to foster engagement and capacity building of CSOs, promoting human rights, supporting vulnerable communities and promoting inclusive development.

The grants have been awarded to World Vision Australia, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the International Women's Development Agency (IWDA) who will work in partnership with local CSOs to strengthen vulnerable communities in Solomon Islands.

In Solomon Islands, the national economy has been severely impacted as the COVID-19 pandemic has triggered closure of the borders which has led to a subsequent disappearance of tourism, serious disruptions to international trade and a reduction in remittances, events that exacerbated an already dire socio-economic situation. Moreover, the pandemic has put a strain on the medical and social system leaving the poor and the most vulnerable exposed.

While congratulating the recipients of the grants, the Head of Development Cooperation at the Delegation of the European Union for the Pacific, Mr. Michal Krejza, said, "In times of distress, the European Union stands in solidarity with the most vulnerable populations and is therefore committed to continuing its support to human rights, democracy and civil society in Solomon Islands. Through these new projects, we look forward to further strengthening our collaboration with international partners and local CSOs that can help address the needs of local communities and advance human rights of individuals who are at the brink of social exclusion".

The first grant recipient, World Vision Australia, together with the Anglican Church of Melanesia and World Vision Solomon Islands will work on providing support to ten target communities in the Small Ngella region of the Central Islands Province to recover from, and adapt to, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The National Director of World Vision Solomon Islands, Mr. Jimmy Nadapdap said, "The partnership between the EU, Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources, Mother's Union and World Vision will benefit more than 3,700 people in Central Islands' Province, whose livelihoods have been devastated by COVID-19. The project will support fishers and their families to improve financial literacy, greater access to markets and access to financial services."

The second grant recipient, IOM and Solomon Islands National Council for Women will promote women's rights and will seek to ensure that women and girls are prevented from becoming victims of trafficking in persons (TIP) and/or gender-based violence (GBV), while also providing protective services to survivors.

“This project will strengthen the capacity of civil society and government to more effectively counter TIP and GBV in the Solomon Islands. Importantly, it will also empower women and girls from local communities in Makira, Malaita and Guadalcanal Provinces through increased awareness of their rights, and the ability to seek services and recourse to justice when those rights are violated,” said Pär Liljert, IOM Chief of Mission in Australia and Coordinator and Advisor for the Pacific.

The final recipient, the International Women's Development Agency (IWDA) and People with Disability Solomon Islands (PWDSI) will focus on promoting measures and reforms that can ensure recognition, respect, equality and justice for people with disabilities in Solomon Islands.

“People with disabilities are some of the most marginalised and vulnerable people in Solomon Islands. The funding provided by the EU, and partnership with PWDSI will invest in both individual and structural change, in the formal and informal spheres, which is required for sustainable and meaningful change for the rights of people with disabilities,” reflected Bettina Baldeschi, IWDA CEO.

Overall, these grants are meant to provide longer-term support to both civil society organisations and local communities in responding to crises, building their resilience and improving their inclusion in decision-making and reform processes that directly affect them. They stand proof to the European Union’s continued commitment to civil society and human rights in the Solomon Islands and, more broadly, in the Pacific.