

MP'S AS HUMANITARIANS?

A case study of responses to the April 2014 floods in Solomon Islands

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DISASTER OVERVIEW

- April 2014 – flash flooding following days of heavy rain.
- 22 deaths
- At their peak, evacuation centres housed 10,000 people
- Over 75% of food crops in Guadalcanal province destroyed
- Rotavirus caused deaths of 18 children, infected over 1,000
- 40,000 of 52,000 affected were in rural areas



Credit: ABC News



Credit: BBC News



Credit: ABC News

MP'S AS PATRONS OF DISASTER?

- Overt Clientelism
 - Client/patron relationships are the *modus operandi* of governance in Solomon Islands
- Power to Decide
 - MPs have discretion to decide who receives relief supplies, what, and how much
- Patronage vs. Policy
 - Patronage is more influential than policy in governing Solomon Islands



Source: Google Maps

OVERT CLIENTELISM

- Strong notions of reciprocity
- State institutions are personalised
- Focus on material returns to electors
- In 2014, MPs controlled SBD\$334 million (AUD\$56 million) in discretionary funds through RCDF
- MPs dual function as legislators and implementers
- Assistance aligned with political interests

CONSTITUENCY AS VEHICLE FOR RELIEF

- **2007 Earthquake in Western Province and Choiseul**

- Auditor General report found:
 - Phase 1: SBD\$1.65 million (AUD\$276,000) transferred to 11 MPs unaccounted for
 - Phase 2: SBD\$15 million (AUD\$2.5 million) transferred to 11 MPs unaccounted for

- **2014 Floods**

- SBD\$300,000 channeled through each of 50 sitting MPs – totaling SBD\$15 million (AUD\$2.5 million)
- Auditor General conducted a report on 2014 CDF which has not yet been released

- **2015 Tropical Cyclone Raquel**

- Cabinet rejected NDMOs contingency warrant for SBD\$3 million, instead channeling SBD\$3.3 million through 33 MPs whose constituencies were impacted by the cyclone
- As a response, NDMO withdrew their assessment teams

POWER TO DECIDE

- Without needs assessment, how can politicians respond to specific and differentiated needs within constituency?
- Can MPs respond better than the NDMO?
- What comes of those who do not support the sitting MP?

PATRONAGE VS. POLICY

- Relatively weak State institutions which have limited reach
- Government as the Bank, MPs as ATMs
- MPs elected on their credentials as locals, not policymakers
- RCDF creating perception of Government role as 'handouts'
- Following disaster, people who are proactive risk missing out on distributions

SUMMARY

- MPs have stepped into a void of service delivery
- MPs assistance lacks consistency, coherence and coordination
- Concerns about accountability, effectiveness, and equity
- Sidelining of NDC may be corrosive – negative implications for leadership and coordination in future disasters.

