



The Equal Rights Trust is an independent international organisation whose purpose is to combat discrimination and promote equality as a fundamental human right and a basic principle of social justice.

The Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) is an international organisation that provides technical assistance, policy advice, training and research services to 22 Pacific Island countries. The SPC Solomon Islands country office coordinates the Secretariat's work in Solomon Islands. The Regional Rights Resource Team is the Human Rights Programme of the SPC.

It is a little over a decade since Solomon Islands emerged from a period of ethnic conflict known as “the Tensions”, which resulted in 200 deaths and the displacement of thousands. While peace has returned to the islands, many of the underlying inequalities which precipitated the conflict remain. This report concludes that if these inequalities are to be addressed, Solomon Islanders must stand up and fight traditions which emphasise and exacerbate difference.

The report finds that people’s tendency to identify by their *wantok* – a community defined by shared language and culture – or island of origin can encourage discrimination and foster division. Patriarchal and sexist attitudes pervade law and society, with the result that women experience severe discrimination and inequality in all areas of life and violence against women is widespread and widely accepted. These same attitudes permit the continued criminalisation of same-sex sexual activity, while other traditional beliefs lead to persons with disabilities being seen as either “cursed” or as objects of charity.

An ongoing process of constitutional reform – now entering its thirteenth year – offers an opportunity to address many of these problems. This opportunity must be seized: all those affected by discrimination must stand up and fight for a new framework which guarantees equal participation for all.



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