



# Integrated Country Strategy

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**Papua New Guinea, Solomon Island, Vanuatu**

**FOR PUBLIC RELEASE**

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## 1. Chief of Mission Priorities

To achieve the Biden-Harris Administration's strategic foreign policy vision, the Mission's overarching goal for Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, and Solomon Islands is:

Advance a free and open Indo-Pacific through our strengthened U.S.-Pacific partnerships for sustainable, prosperous, inclusive, secure, and democratically empowered societies.

In pursuing this goal, the Mission will support new sustainable infrastructure and energy initiatives, create more opportunities for U.S. business, protect U.S. citizens, and enhance regional security, including freedom of the seas and skies. We seek to build community resilience to natural and man-made disasters through increased Disaster Risk Mitigation (DRM) programming. We will continue to support all three nations in their COVID response and vaccine deployment activities, and with building back better from the economic impact of the global pandemic. Strong, visible American action and more effective government institutions will mitigate the growing influence of China (PRC), encourage positive democratic development, and help countries tackle infectious diseases. Our expanding on-the-ground presence will allow us to advocate for U.S. policies and positions and to reassure governments that we will continue to uphold the rules-based order in the region. Consistent and adroit public diplomacy articulates U.S. interests and informs local citizens of our desire to remain reliable friends while promoting a free and open Indo-Pacific region.

Papua New Guinea (PNG), Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu account for 70% of the Pacific Island countries (PIC) population and over 60% of their GDP. PNG is home to the region's largest American investment, ExxonMobil's \$19 billion PNG liquified Natural Gas project (PONGLNG) and sits astride vital sea lanes. It is the only Pacific Island country that is part of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, and it is the only PIC participant in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum (ARF). PNG grows in confidence as a leader in the Pacific region and a bridge between Asia and the Pacific. Through our partnership with the Foreign Commercial Service (FCS) and increased trade capacity support from the United States

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Agency for International Development (USAID), and the newly established Coral Sea American Chamber of Commerce, we will work to level the playing field for American companies and American products and encourage other countries with open, market-based economies to consider doing business in our three countries.

The United States and PNG share important historical and commercial links, people-to-people ties, and defense partnerships. However, PNG's democracy is characterized by weak political parties and a nascent civil society. The country lacks the institutional strength and professional civil service needed to combat pervasive state corruption. The Mission will enact positive change in PNG by engaging with and supporting those people and institutions who endeavor to improve governance in the country. In 2019, the Autonomous Region of Bougainville (ARB) held a referendum on independence from PNG, providing an opportunity for the Mission to support peaceful and democratic outcomes.

With our expanded Defense Attaché Office and Office of Defense Cooperation in Port Moresby, we are poised to deepen our security cooperation with the country to ensure that the United States, our allies, and other like-minded countries remain the security partners of choice for PNG. Expansion of IMET and a growing U.S. military presence supported by INDOPACOM and the Department of Defense will be useful tools in this regard.

Beyond COVID response, health programming in PNG is having an outsized impact, delivering replicable models for health system strengthening, and our expanding biodiversity and natural resource governance projects serve as an example of the United States Government's (USG) ongoing commitment to promoting sustainable development. Our programming under the Women's Global Development and Prosperity Initiative is focused on gender equality and will improve living conditions for women in all three countries.

The November 2021 riots and civil unrest in Honiara, Solomon Islands, marked an unwelcome return to a level of violence not seen in the country since the early 2000s. The advent of COVID-19 in January 2022 into Solomon Islands, a country that remained largely untouched by health impacts of the virus, further undermined already fragile political and economic institutions. Temporary U.S. diplomatic staff on the ground facilitated information sharing and directly

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supported relief efforts during this difficult period. This work demonstrated the importance of a permanent U.S. presence in Solomon Islands, particularly as the Department of State is exploring the closure of the Consular Agency – the only official permanent presence in the country. In order to increase our level of influence, access, and assistance, and counter malign influence the Mission is implementing multi-million-dollar development programming through the Millennium Challenge Corporation Threshold program and USAID, in addition to re-establish the Peace Corps program, and restart WWII unexploded ordinance (UXO) mitigation efforts.

In Vanuatu, the thirty-two-year Peace Corps presence has shaped the United States' image. The absence of a full-time diplomatic presence, however, constrains our ability to maintain U.S. influence and achieve desired outcomes. Our team will continue to engage with the people of Vanuatu through social media, phone and electronic communication, and frequent visits once the borders reopen. In line with U.S. priorities in the Indo-Pacific region, we must also consider both traditional and innovative ways of maintaining strong commercial, security, and development links, and identify ways to further engage with our partners, expand our presence, and execute on our commitments.

## 2. Mission Strategic Framework

**Mission Goal 1:** A Sustainable, Inclusive, Free and Open Economy that Promotes Growth and Mutual Prosperity

- **Mission Objective 1.1:** Build resilience to climate change and promote values-based, high standard, and transparent infrastructure through the Build Back Better World (B3W) Partnership.
- **Mission Objective 1.2:** Leverage U.S. diplomatic engagement, development programs, and private sector partnership to strengthen the economic architecture for open, fair, inclusive, and rules-based markets.
- **Mission Objective 1.3:** Foster economic opportunities and increase access to credit for women.

**Mission Goal 2:** An Inclusive and Rules-Based Order that Advances Effective Democratic Governance and Strengthens Civil Society

- **Mission Objective 2.1:** Promote and strengthen governance institutions and practices that are inclusive, transparent, accountable, responsive to citizens' needs, and respectful of human rights.
- **Mission Objective 2.2:** Support civil society to play an effective role in advocacy for democratic norms, human rights, social cohesion, and disrupting corruption.
- **Mission Objective 2.3:** Increase the media's ability to report accurately and access factual and reliable information.

**Mission Goal 3:** Safe Access to the Seas, Skies and Land that Promotes a Secure Environment for the Advancement of Commerce and Shared Values within the Region

- **Mission Objective 3.1:** Deepen partner government security capabilities and broaden cooperation between the United States and PNG, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu.
- **Mission Objective 3.2:** Provide a secure environment and unfettered access for U.S. Citizens, Military, Diplomats, and businesses within PNG, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu.

**Mission Goal 4: Sustained Investment in Human Capital that Empowers  
Individuals and Communities**

- **Mission Objective 4.1:** Strengthen health systems to achieve more sustainable health outcomes and to detect and respond to future global pandemics.
- **Mission Objective 4.2:** Expand human capacity building through increased education and exchange programs, and institutional partnerships.

**Management Objective 1:** Improve operational effectiveness; foster diversity, equity, and inclusion; and strengthen service delivery and human resource capacity.

**Management Objective 2:** Expand USG presence in the Area of Responsibility (AOR).

### 3. Mission Goals and Objectives

#### **Mission Goal 1 | A Sustainable, Inclusive, Free and Open Economy that Promotes Growth and Mutual Prosperity**

**Description |** In PNG, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu, the private sector is undervalued as a partner in driving development. Private sector-led economic growth is a stronger, more reliable engine for development than competing models in that it delivers market-driven decision-making, encourages transparency, and is more likely to result in financially sustainable projects.

Policies that underlie a sustainable, inclusive, free and open economy promote good governance and improve the investment climate. They enhance private sector participation, encourage entrepreneurship and innovation, and attract U.S. and other international investors. They deliver incentives for strengthening commerce-based people to people ties and sharpening workforce capabilities, contributing to Pillar 4 of the National Security Strategy. Promoting U.S. investment, goods and services in all three countries contributes directly to Pillar 2 of the National Security and Indo-Pacific Strategies of stimulating American prosperity. Entrepreneurship in a free and open economy encourages the social and economic inclusion of women, youth, migrants and other marginalized communities. Mission Goal 1 is directly aligned with Goal 3 of the EAP and USAID/ASIA Joint Regional Plan, which recognize that promoting healthy and resilient communities where women are empowered to play a more equal role will increase regional stability and increase opportunities for U.S. companies.

**Objective 1.1 |** Build resilience to climate change and promote values-based, high standard, and transparent infrastructure through the Build Back Better World (B3W) Partnership.

- **Objective 1.1 Justification |** PNG, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu recognize climate change as the greatest threat to its security. The countries' geographic location, isolation, and small size make them extremely vulnerable to the impacts of climate change (ex. sea level rise, bleaching of corals, loss of wetlands, flooding, erosion, and endangerment of mangroves, among others) and natural disasters (ex. typhoons,

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drought, earthquakes, tsunamis, and volcanic eruptions) that frequently hit them. These events undermine development gains, forcing the region into a vicious cycle of response and recovery.

- **Objective 1.1 Linkages** | This objective aligns to the February 2022 Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS) under objective three: Drive Economic Prosperity and objective five: Build Regional Resilience to Transnational Threats. Under IPS objective five, specifically, this objective is in line with “the United States will work with partners to reduce their vulnerability to the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation and will support critical-infrastructure resilience and address energy security.” Under IPS objective three, specifically, this objective is in line with “we will also redouble our commitment to helping Indo-Pacific partners close the region’s infrastructure gap. Through our Build Back Better World initiative with G7 partners, we will equip the emerging economies of the region with the high-standards infrastructure that will enable them to grow and prosper, while creating good jobs on both sides of the Pacific.”

This objective advances EAP’s Joint Regional Strategy (JRS) Strategic Goals 1: Allies and Partners to expand and strengthen alliances and partnerships with countries and institutions to advance a more resilient, prosperous, and secure Indo-Pacific region as well as Strategic Goal 5: Economic: Advance more inclusive and sustainable growth and promote free, fair, and open trade and transparent investment that improves lives of Americans and people around the world. This objective also advances EAP’S JRS Objective 1.2: Strengthen and leverage strategic partnerships (bilateral and multilateral) with Indo-Pacific countries to advance engagement on shared objectives in the region.

- **Objective 1.1 Risks** | The negative consequences of climate change in Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu are tremendous -- loss of life, economic deterioration, damage to infrastructure, threats to food security, and reduced access to freshwater are just a few examples. The threats posed by climate change undermine development gains and impose a vicious cycle of response and recovery.

Natural resource management, biodiversity conservation, and disaster risk reduction are the keys to enhancing environmental resilience. With adaptation to climate change at its core, the Mission will build the capacity of relevant sectors to integrate climate change considerations in development planning to improve the sustainability of investments.

The adverse impacts of climate change and natural disasters pose additional health burdens. Disasters often disrupt the delivery of healthcare services and heighten the risks of disease and death among vulnerable groups. These additional health risks increase pressure on vulnerable health systems that already struggle to address the many health challenges in the region.

PNG, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu also face a unique set of infrastructure and energy challenges, which further hinder environmental resilience. Access to electricity is relatively low, particularly in communities located in geographically difficult and remote areas. Energy infrastructure remains vulnerable to natural disasters and is poorly maintained across electricity generation, transmission, and distribution systems. Limited digital connectivity and transport options handicaps improved livelihoods and economic opportunities.

Concerns of malign influence run high in the three countries in a variety of issues including infrastructure and climate change. The U.S. will build government capacity in infrastructure planning, procurement, and maintenance, helping ensure climate change considerations are integrated throughout the life cycle of infrastructure projects. By promoting physical and digital connectivity, these lines of action potentially contribute towards the end goal of the ICS, a Pacific open and free, by encouraging their peoples to make use of the services provided by infrastructure, to participate in the marketplace of ideas, and to discover the opportunities of the digital marketplace.

**Objective 1.2** | Leverage U.S. diplomatic engagement, development programs, and private sector partnership to strengthen the economic architecture for open, fair, inclusive, and rules-based markets.

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- **Justification** | The economic base in PNG, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu, remains fragile despite efforts to improve the business environment and promote private sector investment in the non-resource sectors. In addition to the economic shocks from natural disasters, the structural features of their economies make it particularly vulnerable to other global market stressors. The economy is highly concentrated, with a limited private sector and a large dependence on commodity exports, particularly natural resource commodities.

PNG is already home to the successful \$19 billion ExxonMobil-led PNG LNG project. Private sector engagement will also be crucial to mobilizing financing in terms of increasing access to finance for vulnerable populations and promoting greater investments in critical infrastructure, services, and human capital. The goal of the 2017-2032 PNG National Trade Policy is to maximize trade and investment by increasing exports, reducing imports on substitute goods, and increasing Foreign Direct Investment that generates wealth and contributes to growing the economy. While there is additional potential for natural resource development in the country, private sector investors are hesitant to enter a market perceived as lacking in transparency and a rules-based system. The business environment is generally characterized by high costs, time-consuming processes, and overly burdensome regulations, thereby imposing significant costs on businesses. Local enterprises also lack the expertise and resources to improve productivity and expand their operations.

To ensure that U.S. companies are positioned to be successful in all three countries, the Mission will advocate for fair and equitable trading practices, a regulatory environment that does not disadvantage U.S. companies, and strengthened host government capacity to address security, human rights and corruption issues that might affect U.S. investment.

- **Linkages** | This objective aligns to the February 2022 IPS under objectives one: Advance a free and open Indo-Pacific and three: Drive Indo-Pacific Prosperity. Specifically, this objective is in line with “our efforts are built on a strong foundation of close economic integration” to foster trade and investment and a level playing field. This objective is

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the same as EAP's JRS Strategic Goal 5: Objective 5.1: Leverage U.S. diplomatic, development, and private sector tools and engagement to strengthen the regional economic architecture for open, fair, and rules-based markets. The objective reinforces USAID/Pacific Draft Development Cooperation Framework Intermediate Results Development Objective 2.

- **Risks** | The U.S. is working to defend our interests as well as to deter increasing aggression and to counter coercive activities in our three countries. Without such measures, the three economies could turn to development partners that rely on poor quality investments which promote dependency and cronyism.

**Objective 1.3** | Foster economic opportunities and increase access to credit for women.

- **Justification** | In PNG, over 85% of the labor force is employed in the informal sector, primarily in subsistence agriculture. MSMEs in PNG often prefer to remain informal due to a lack of information on registration processes, the absence of nearby government offices, and the high costs of registration. In addition, access to financial services is a key constraint for MSMEs given the limited competition among finance providers and particularly outside the capital of Port Moresby, non-bank financial institutions often lack the necessary capacity to provide the needed financing to MSMEs.
- **Linkages** | This objective aligns to the February 2022 IPS under objective three: Drive Indo-Pacific Prosperity and the State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan Performance Goal Statement 2.2.2: Gender Equality and Women's Economic Empowerment. The U.S. is working to advance more equitable, sustainable, and inclusive economic growth where benefits are shared broadly, including with marginalized and underrepresented groups – especially to women. Women play a critical role in poverty reduction and economic growth. Studies conducted around the world show that in every instance, when women generate income, they devote more of their household budget to education, health, and nutrition than men. More empowered women lead to healthier and more educated male and female children, strengthening society and securing a more prosperous future for families and the country. The aim of U.S. supported increased access to financial

literacy and access to credit is also to bridge MSMEs from the informal to the formal sector.

- **Risks** | Women are under-represented and economically excluded. As of 2019, only 8% of MSMEs in PNG are owned by women. Women in PNG - as well as in the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu - also experience high rates of discrimination and gender-based violence. In PNG's Medium-Term Development Plan for 2018-2022, MSMEs, women's economic empowerment, and financial inclusion are identified as target areas in need of support. In many cases, while women may be able to get credit, it's often handed over to the husband or perpetuates domestic violence. Many times, they have a joint bank account, often in the husband's name. At the community-level, while often development programs focus on women's economic empowerment and their incomes increase - a negative implication is a rise in domestic violence. As such, it's important to take a holistic - whole-of-family approach to development.

**Mission Goal 2** | An Inclusive and Rules-Based order that Advances Effective Democratic Governance and Strengthens Civil Society (Strengthen democracy; promote equity, accessibility, human rights; and advance transparent, accountable governance/combat corruption)

**Description** | The crux of the ICS is to support a free and open Indo-Pacific, where all nations can live in prosperity, security, and liberty. This will only be possible through the promotion of rules-based systems within these nations, where democratic institutions effectively respond to the needs of an empowered civil society. This mission goal also supports Goal 5 of the EAP and USAID/ASIA Joint Regional Strategy.

**Objective 2.1** | Promote and strengthen governance institutions and practices that are inclusive, transparent, accountable, responsive to citizens' needs, and respectful of human rights.

- **Justification** | We will help PNG, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu become stable U.S. partners and full participants in the international community. The countries have young democracies, weak institutions, a shaky commitment to respect for human rights and little citizen input into decision making. Irregularities in the electoral system have undermined government credibility and led to increasing citizen frustration. Through international initiatives like the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) and Open Government Partnership (OPG), businesses have a platform to partner with government and civil society to promote accountability and transparency. The result of the November 2019 Bougainville referendum offers another opportunity for the Mission to engage on an issue of grave importance to regional stability. Should this objective not be achieved, public confidence in government could be undermined, and vulnerability to corruption will grow.

Gender inequality and gender-based violence (GBV) are rife in all three countries. Approximately 70% of women in PNG stated that they had experienced rape or sexual assault in their lifetime, according to the 2015 World Health Organization assessment. Numbers are similarly dire in Vanuatu and Solomon Islands. Due to stigma, fear of retribution, and limited trust in authorities, most women do not report sexual or domestic violence. Of the five countries in the world with no women elected to public office, two (PNG and Vanuatu) are covered by Embassy Port Moresby. Supporting women candidates, undertaking public awareness campaigns to encourage voters to support women, and urging the government to enact measures to increase women's political participation are all strategies Post will pursue to try to reverse this distressing trend. PNG is part of the U.S. whole-of-government effort to implement the U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stabilization, a 10-year effort to proactively tackle the root causes of violence in fragile states. In 2022, the Mission will develop a strategic framework jointly with the interagency and local partners. The framework will articulate specific prevention and/or stabilization objectives relevant to PNG within the 10-year period. Several key activities under this Mission Objective will be examined in developing PNG's strategic framework.

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- **Linkages** | Indo-Pacific Strategy Objective 1: Advance a Free and Open Indo-Pacific; ECA - Bureau Strategic Framework, Goal 1. Promote American leadership through people-to-people exchanges that advance American foreign policy objectives and deepen the mutual understanding that underpins U.S. relationships with foreign countries, objective 1.1: Foster greater understanding of the United States and its foreign policy through flexible, targeted, and responsive exchange programs.
- **Risks** | Failure to promote and strengthen these institutions and practices will result in an increased space for regional competitors to maneuver and manipulate the political and economic landscape to their advantage. Risks associated with not achieving this objective also include heightened difficulty in confronting crime, human rights violations, abuses rooted in gender discrimination, and a public policy agenda that gives short shrift to issues affecting women and families.

**Objective 2.2** | Support civil society to play an effective role in advocacy for democratic norms, human rights, social cohesion, and disrupting corruption.

- **Justification** | Political parties and public institutions have a narrow understanding of citizen priorities and offer only minimal opportunities for public input into the policy process. Respect for human rights, dignity for all and tolerance for diverse viewpoints is lacking. Faith-based groups are strong in-service delivery, but other special interest groups need access to funding and encouragement to play a larger advocacy role in society and government.
- **Linkages** | Indo-Pacific Strategy Objective 1: Advance a Free and Open Indo-Pacific; ECA - Bureau Strategic Framework Goal 1. Promote American leadership through people-to-people exchanges that advance American foreign policy objectives and deepen the mutual understanding that underpins U.S. relationships with foreign countries, objective 1.1: Foster greater understanding of the United States and its foreign policy through flexible, targeted, and responsive exchange programs.
- **Risks** | Risks associated with not achieving this Mission Objective include growing restiveness among sidelined communities and a distorted and unresponsive public

policy debate. A diversified set of partners will mitigate the risk of single points of failure and allow for problem sets to be addressed from multiple angles.

**Mission Objective 2.3** | Increase the media's ability to report accurately and access factual and reliable information.

- **Justification** | Embassy Port Moresby has found that the media plays an important role in advancing vital U.S. strategic interests in democracy, thwarting transitional crime, highlighting security concerns, prompting health, and supporting American business. A fiscally independent and trained media supports government transparency, freedom of expression, and checks against abuse of power. We aim to build an enduring relationship with local media outlets and increase their capacity. In turn, this will provide the United States continued access to mass media, develop increased trust and confidence between the embassy and the media, and amplify U.S. long-term interests to the public. Promotion of democracy in particular is a core U.S. interest and supports a peaceful and orderly transition of authority and freedom of expression.

We must provide assistance to media organizations to increase professionalism, support accountability of the government, and give access to credible sources of information, thus making them better able to provide accurate and timely information about health, public safety and human rights, criminal activity, and elections.

- **Linkages** | Indo-Pacific Strategy Objective 1: Advance a Free and Open Indo-Pacific; GPA Bureau Strategic Framework Goal 1: Solidify GPA's role as the U.S. Government's preeminent communicator on foreign policy issues.
- **Risks** | Risks associated with not achieving this mission objective include the exploitation of the financial fragility of local media outlets, leading to possible exploitation by foreign governments and internal forces. Government interference in the media, as well as a lack of access to reliable and trustworthy information, threaten democratic norms. Especially during an election year, a vibrant civil society buttressed by strong, independent media will enhance the effectiveness of government while



holding government accountable and dampening the impact of non-democratic influences and disinformation campaigns.

### **Mission Goal 3 | Safe Access to the Seas, Skies and Land that Promotes a Secure Environment for the Advancement of Commerce and Shared Values within the Region**

**Description |** Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in his speech delivered to the State Department in March 2021, “China is the only country with economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to seriously challenge the stable and open international system – all the rules, values, and relationships that make the world work the way we want it to.” According to a Pentagon statement during a recent SECSTATE and SECDEF trip, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin highlighted “the importance of international defense relationships and reinforce the United States’ commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific region – founded on respect for international rules, law and norms.” Mission Goal 3 aligns with U.S. goals, as stated by the SECSTATE in March 2021, “...to strengthening our alliances and to highlight cooperation that promotes peace, security and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region around the world.” Relevant challenges in Embassy Port Moresby’s area of responsibility include information sharing, countering trans-national crime, protecting the maritime domain, responding to emerging threats, and maintaining interoperable capabilities with our allies. Relevant challenges in Embassy Port Moresby’s area of operations include information sharing, countering trans-national crime, protecting the maritime domain, responding to emerging threats, and maintaining interoperable capabilities with our allies.

**Objective 3.1 |** Deepen partner government security capabilities and broaden cooperation between the United States and PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

- **Justification |** U.S. engagement with security partners in PNG, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu declined steadily after the Second World War. The over-reliance on allies to attain shared strategic goals further distanced the United States from direct development of security partnerships in the region. With emerging threats in the Pacific

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to freedom of movement coupled with the growing influence of the People's Republic of China (PRC), the United States must revisit and expand security-related initiatives. Working with likeminded security partners such as Australia, New Zealand, and Japan, the Mission intends to counter the growing threat to freedom of movement and Western values within our AOR.

All three countries are island nations, straddling key shipping routes, managing lucrative fisheries, and protecting deep sea resources of wide swathes of the Pacific Ocean. All three prioritize maritime domain protection. Through training, capacity building, and arrangements like Shiprider Agreements, the U.S. will empower the three countries to counter threats, whether economic or criminal in nature, within their territorial waters. All three countries have operational gaps regarding security; only PNG has a military. Failure to complete this objective would push these countries towards alternative security partners and increase their vulnerability to transnational criminals targeting key economic sectors (minerals, gas, timber, and fish) central to the national economies, or to trafficking in persons, arms smuggling, narcotics and other illegal trades.

Law enforcement efforts within the Embassy's AOR must be coordinated by the Country Team, led by the RSO. Solomon Islands and Vanuatu do not have standing militaries and use civilian police forces to fill traditional military national defense duties. The Country Team and U.S. Department of Defense assets supporting those two forces must work in close coordination to accomplish ICS objectives.

- **Linkages** | 2018 NDS Summary, 2017 NSS , Indo-Pacific Strategy
- **Risks** | Failure to provide law enforcement and security cooperation assistance will leave partner nations vulnerable to malign influence. Failure to achieve bilateral security cooperation agreements will jeopardize U.S. national security objectives in the region. Without assistance, partner nation defense forces risk loss in capabilities to support human rights objectives, rule of law objectives, and will be unable to secure sovereign maritime and land borders. Failure to address World War II legacy unexploded ordnance may degrade U.S. standing in PNG, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu.

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**Objective 3.2** | Provide a secure environment and unfettered access for U.S. citizens, military, diplomats, and businesses within PNG, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu.

- **Justification** | A secure environment is fundamental to the Embassy's ability to serve Americans residing in remote parts of the countries and to project U.S. presence beyond the capital, particularly in areas where the government struggles to hold separatist impulses at bay. A secure environment is also a prerequisite to the bilateral commercial, cultural, and social intercourse between Americans and Melanesians, key components of the Indo-Pacific Strategy's vision of a free and open Pacific. PNG, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu share Western values, implanted by generations of missionaries and educators that were sent to remote corners of the region to evangelize, teach, and heal. This ongoing engagement is key to the dialogue between Americans and Melanesians that buttresses, deepens and adapts these values to new developments.
- **Linkages** | 2018 NDS Summary, 2017 NSS, Indo-Pacific Strategy.
- **Risks** | Failure to achieve bilateral security cooperation agreements will jeopardize U.S. national security objectives in the region.

**Mission Goal 4** | Sustained investment in Human Capital empowers individuals and communities

**Description** | The Indo-Pacific accounts for over half the world's population and 58 percent of the world's youth. It is important to provide people with skills and resources to participate in the global economy and create conditions for self-reliance. U.S. investment in human capital builds local knowledge of critical issues including infrastructure investment, energy policy, entrepreneurship, and civil society development. The USG works alongside the private sector to improve the lives and well-being of people across the Indo-Pacific. Thousands of U.S. companies operating in the Indo-Pacific uphold a commitment to corporate responsibility and bring their spirit of innovation and entrepreneurialism to the region.

**Objective 4.1** | Strengthen public health capacity to achieve more sustainable health outcomes.

- **Justification** | The Mission is dedicated to strengthening public health capacity in the nations of PNG, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu so they may become more productive and economically stable. These nations consistently have poor health indicators and health systems that are inadequate to meet the needs of the population. In PNG, in particular, the leading causes of mortality are perinatal conditions, pneumonia, malaria, TB, meningitis, heart diseases, diarrhea and diseases of the digestive system. PNG has the largest number of people living with HIV (48,000) in the Pacific; between 2010 and 2017, the number of people living with HIV in PNG increased by 26 percent. PNG's HIV burden is concentrated in the Highlands Region and in the National Capital District (NCD) with high prevalence amongst female sex workers (14.9 percent), men who have sex with men and transgender people (8.6 percent). PNG also has the highest TB prevalence in the Western Pacific Region (and 10th highest globally), with an estimated incidence in 2020 of 441 per 100,000, according to the World Health Organization. Multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB) is also a growing burden; there are 27,000 new cases of TB in PNG recorded each year, with 3.4 percent multidrug-resistant. Lymphatic filariasis and other neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) are highly endemic in PNG. PNG has the lowest vaccination rates in the world for infants with only 37 percent vaccinated against measles; 35 percent against diphtheria, whooping cough, and tetanus; and 35 percent against hepatitis B. There has been a 15 percent increase in cases of malaria over the past three years, with 8.8 percent of children under five infected annually. COVID-19 has run rampant in PNG despite official tallies which are estimated to be at least 10 times lower than actual cases and associated deaths. Risks associated with not achieving this objective include disease-related disruptions to travel and trade, diversion of scarce natural resources to mitigate the impact of human illnesses, significant burden on PNG's flailing health system, and a heightened human toll among vulnerable populations.
- **Linkages** | This objective aligns with the February 2022 IPS Objective five: Build Resilience to 21st Century Transnational Threats. We will partner with the region to help end the COVID-19 pandemic and build resilience against common public health threats.

We will work closely with partners to strengthen their health systems to withstand future shocks. The Objective also aligns with the USAID and State draft Strategic Plan Objective 3.5: Improve Inclusive Essential Services, especially for health. This objective is also aligned under EAP's JRS Strategic Goal 2: Objective 2.1: Build sustainable and resilient health systems to detect and respond to emerging challenges, including current and future pandemics.

- **Risks** | The COVID-19 pandemic revealed the limited capacity of the island countries to cope to external shocks. PNG, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu have some of the lowest health statistics in the world and weak health systems that are increasingly becoming overwhelmed by the additional health burdens caused by frequent natural disasters. Low quality, inaccessible health systems, and unreliable data yield poor health outcomes, leave populations prey to chronic and acute illnesses, and pave the way for epidemics. PNG has one of the lowest COVID-19 vaccination rates in the world. Ongoing vaccine apathy across Papua New Guineans and the government's plan to incorporate COVID-19 into PNG's routine immunization program isolates the country from the rest of the world – and undermines progress on all of Post's ICS goals.

**Objective 4.2** | Expand human capacity building through increased education and exchange programs, and institutional partnerships.

- **Justification** | PNG's tertiary schools are routinely ranked among the lowest worldwide, while in Solomon Islands and Vanuatu education is not compulsory and difficult to access for remote villages. Papua New Guineans, Solomon Islanders, and ni-Vanuatu are keenly interested in opportunities to study in the United States. Lack of basic infrastructure, high travel costs, and the relative remoteness of all three countries conspire to prohibit travel and exchange opportunities in all three countries. As a result, the workforce generally lacks the knowledge and skills necessary to compete on the global stage and is at potential risk of predatory development and exploitation by larger players in the region.

- **Linkages** | ECA - Bureau Strategic Framework Goal 1. Promote American leadership through people-to-people exchanges that advance American foreign policy objectives and deepen the mutual understanding that underpins U.S. relationships with foreign countries, objective 1.1: Foster greater understanding of the United States and its foreign policy through flexible, targeted, and responsive exchange programs.
- **Risks** | Not establishing these programs – and failure to create enduring institutional ties - leaves the opportunity for regional competitors to engage more closely with Papua New Guineans, Solomon Islanders, and ni-Vanuatu.

## 4. Management Objectives

**Management Objective 1** | Improve operational effectiveness; foster diversity, equity, and inclusion; and strengthen service delivery and human resource capacity.

- **Justification** | Port Moresby has historically been challenged with high turnover in local staff, inconsistencies in conforming to Department guidelines in management processes, and an inability to achieve uniform service standards in our customer service performance metrics, as measured by ICASS scores. By moving to merit-based compensation and increasing proficiencies in the Department's Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and performance metrics, we can build greater capacity and resiliency in our local ranks. We can also increase the effectiveness of our supervisory staff by recruiting more experienced mid-level officers and pursuing more Third Country National (TCN) positions. Lastly, by continuing to improve and reshape our processes to be more compliant to Department and ICASS standards and streamlining them with new IT capabilities, we will provide a more reliable, consistent, and transparent support structure to assist the Mission in attaining its goals and objectives. Leveraging metrics and educating our internal service providers and customers on their responsibilities in our ICASS processes will greatly improve Management's responsiveness to Mission requirements.
- **Linkages** | This goal reflects various priorities outlined in the Joint Regional Strategy, the State and USAID Joint Strategic Plan and M family Functional Bureau Strategies including the bureaus of Human Resources, Information Resource Management, Overseas Building Operations, and Administration, as well as some linkages to the U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability.
- **Risks** | An ineffective workforce puts at risk the Embassy's ability to execute on all ICS goals. Should this objective not be achieved, the Mission risks diverting precious resources into re-creating staff capabilities at the expense of investment in

modernization, organizational resiliency, increased retention rates, and customer satisfaction.

## **Management Objective 2 | Expand USG presence in AOR.**

- **Justification** | OBO continues to make progress on the construction of the NEC with full occupancy slated for 2022. The move from our current location into the NEC will be Management's most important endeavor in 2022. The NEC will provide state-of-the-art facilities that will allow the Mission to function at its full potential, without the distractions and limitations that exist in our current undersized and outdated facility. The NEC will engender a greater sense of pride in our community, increase the security of our workforce and property and improve the efficacy and efficiency of our operations. The Embassy maintains two government owned residential properties: the Chief of Mission Residence (CMR), and the Deputy Chief of Mission Residence (DCR). Both properties are dated (circa 1980s) and require substantial renovations to bring them up to modern standards. Post will continue to work with OBO to find a replacement for the CMR and pursue options for improving the residential housing pool.
- **Linkages** | This goal reflects various priorities outlined in the Joint Regional Strategy, the State and USAID Joint Strategic Plan and M family Functional Bureau Strategies including the bureaus of Human Resources, Information Resource Management, Overseas Building Operations, and Administration, as well as some linkages to the U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability.
- **Risks** | Should this objective not be achieved, post's ability to support a growing range of interested agencies, attract talent, and deepen our relationship with the three countries will be compromised. On a broader level, an inability to establish a permanent presence in Solomon Islands risks the USG's ability to compete effectively for economic, governance, security, and other strategic interests against the PRC's increasingly aggressive influence campaign in the Pacific.