
CHOISEUL PROVINCE DEVELOPMENT PROFILE

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RURAL DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

Ministry of Provincial Government and Rural Development

PREFACE

This profile is a component of the National Integrated Rural Development Programme (NIRDP) that is currently being formulated under the guidance of the Ministry of Provincial Government and Rural Development. The Profile's objective is to provide information that can be used:

- To help improve coordination between development activities in the Province;
- To identify how these activities can best meet the needs of the population; and
- To identify rural development strategies and programme that will alleviate poverty and development disparity between Honiara and the provinces.

The National Integrated Rural Development Program (NIRDP) aims to put into action the Government's policy on balanced and equitable development. It is important for all stakeholders in the development process to work together in promoting the improvement of the quality of life in the communities.

This profile is intended to serve as a resource for all stakeholders in the development process and reflects the Government's policy to focus increasing attention on the development of rural communities. The profile provides an outline of Choiseul Province, its people and their culture, land and environment, and natural resources. It also looks at economic developments to date and discusses some of the possibilities for future development.

The profile process enables the Province to assess its development situation, identify its resource base and potential, determine its comparative socio-economic advantage in relation to other provinces, and formulate its own development strategies. These strategies must be seen within the national goal of enhancing the unity of Solomon Islands as a country.

Data collection for the profile has not been an easy process because of the non-availability of essential information. This problem is mostly attributed to the social crises that affected the country in 1999 and 2000. The crisis has severely affected the country and has had a huge negative impact on the economy and on the effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery in the provinces.

A consultation workshop for the Choiseul Province Executive and Heads of Divisions, and civil society representatives was held in 2 May 2001. Unfortunately, the limited timeframe and financial constraints did not allow for consultation and data collection at the community level.

This document is the combined efforts of various people and organisations. The Ministry is grateful and indebted to all those that contributed. In particular the Solomon Islands Development Administration and Participatory Planning Programme (SIDAPP) funded by UNDP is acknowledged for providing the financial assistance needed to develop this profile.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since it became a separate province Choiseul has experienced a very low economic growth rate as a result of a combination of factors. A problem has been the lack of organised baseline data for decision making process. As a result decisions are sometimes not conducive to economic growth in the rural sector. Summarised below are some of the projects findings through the profile formulation process.

Social Systems

- Choiseul still retains its strong distinctive cultural values and practices including some traditional arts such as the making Clay Pots.
- The province retains a patrilineal family system that recognises male descendants as the head of the family unit.
- There is a strong voluntary community contribution and strong association support that holds the rural communities together .
- Melanesians and Micronesians are the two distinctive cultures in the province.

Population, Land and Environment

- Choiseul is a long narrow island located in the northern most part of the Solomons.
- Its geographical features include tropical rainforests on rugged terrain, deep gorges, rivers, and its coastal region and shoreline are covered with long narrow beaches with shallow reefs.
- Coastal settlements are predominant with low population density.
- Choiseul has a total population of 20,008 (1999) accounting for 7.5 percent of the country's total population. It has a high growth rate of 3.0 percent per annum, higher than the national average growth rate of 2.8 percent.
- The total land area of Choiseul is 3,294 square kilometres with 95.5 percent of the land under tribal ownership.
- Approximately 92 percent of the agriculture opportunity land is unused.
- Land ownership is based on a complex tribal land ownership system.

Infrastructure

- There is very limited infrastructure development in Choiseul.
- The road system is lacking except for a 25 km. road connecting the Babatana and part of Viviru ward in the South Constituency. There are some logging roads.

- Two airstrips are currently operational and the third in the East constituency closed down because of a land dispute.
- Six shipping companies serve the province and are providing vital services to the province.

Social services

- There is a total of 49 primary schools, 6 secondary schools and 2 Rural Training Centres in Choiseul.
- The teacher to pupil ratio is 1:24 but most teachers are untrained.
- The literacy rate in Choiseul (5-85+ years) is 73.3 percent, higher than the national average of 64.4 percent.
- There are 3 Area Health Centres, 9 clinics 12 aide posts and one mini-hospital. A local doctor who has built the facility from aid assistance has just handed over a new mini-hospital to the province.

Economic Activity

- More than 80 percent of households in Choiseul are active in coconut production and more than 90 percent in subsistence gardening or farming and about 83 percent were active in fishing.
- The province produced 12.8 percent of the country's total copra output in 2000. All of the copra out put from the province comes from smallholder producers, as there are no commercial coconut plantations in the province.
- Spice farming is a potential alternate crop due to the fertile soil
- Forestry is the only major commercial activity in the province. There are two logging companies currently operating and 15 licensed small mills. The province is currently the third largest log producer in the country.
- The province has rich fishing resources that are currently unexploited on a major commercial basis There are 3 fishing centres established to buy and market fish.
- There are a total of 591 small village based enterprises, with. small trade stores accounting for 63 percent of these. There no major commercial businesses operating in the province at the moment.
- The Choiseul Investment Authority has been trying to venture into major business operations but so far had been unsuccessful due lack of financial capital.
- The province relies heavily on national government grants to fund its recurrent budget. The provincial capacity to generate sufficient revenue is limited due mostly to the limited developments taking place in the province.

Economic Development Constraints

Some of the main constraints contributing to the province's slow economic development are as follows:

- Lack of critical development infrastructure such as international port facilities, a good road system, and power supply system.
- Lack of funds for relocation of the Provincial Capital to the mainland resulting in the slowing down of new development and expansion of infrastructure.
- Land issue continues to hinder development in the rural sector.
- Lack of established market systems in the province or linkages to export markets.
- Shortage of qualified managerial and entrepreneurial experience and skills.
- National government economic development policies do not always reflect the rural sector needs.
- Limited involvement of tribal resource owners in development planning.

1 HISTORY, CULTURE & RELIGION

1.1 History

Choiseul Province is one of the main islands of the sovereign state of Solomon Islands and is located at the north end of the chain of islands at 6.35 degrees south to 156.23 degrees east, and 7.32 degrees south to 157.53 degrees east. Choiseul Island was traditionally called *Lauru*.

During Mendana's 1568 expedition they sighted a large island northwest of Santa Isabel and called it San Marcos. They did not land on the island, but it appears that this was Choiseul Island. Louis de Bouganville, 200 years later in 1768, named the island after Choiseul, the French Foreign Minister of the time.

In the 19th century, headhunting and slave-raiding parties from the New Georgia group regularly attacked the island. Inter-tribal wars among tribes were also common during this period. Inter-tribal wars are fought for power to colonise lands and wealth or to secure and protect tribal communities from adversaries or opposing tribes. The last major inter-tribal warfare was fought between the Vurulata tribe from the south and Senga from the east during the period 1900-1921. The peace settlement of this tribal war, negotiated at Sasamugga by the Methodist missionaries and ratified by both warring parties on 8 August 1921 is still celebrated annually as "*Kulabule*" by the people of Choiseul.

The early ancestral settlers of Choiseul, like most other Solomon Islanders, migrated from Mongolia or the east coast of the African continent through South East Asia some 3,000 years ago. Most of the people in Choiseul Island are Melanesians. However, inhabitants of Wagina Island in the Southern tip are Micronesians, Gilbertese people who were moved by the colonial government in 1963 and 1964 from the overcrowded Phoenix Islands in the eastern part of the Gilbert Islands, what is now Kiribati.

Joint negotiations between Britain and Germany granted Choiseul to Germany in 1886, but then ceded it back to Britain in 1899. The first missionaries to land on the shores of Choiseul were the Catholic priests of the French Marist Order in 1901 but they had to turn back because of widespread resistance by the natives from the Sirovanga area, northwest Choiseul. The second group of missionaries to arrive were Methodist missionaries led by Rev Goldie and Rooney in 1902. On May 1905, another party led by Rev Goldie and Rooney established a Methodist mission at Sasamungga village, South Choiseul. The last group of missionaries to arrive in Choiseul were from the Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) in 1922. Here the church expanded its work to Ruruvai in the Katupika area (South Choiseul) and later extended to Nuata,mbu (East Choiseul).

1.2 Cultural practices

Choiseul or Lauru as it is traditionally known is a multi-cultural society made up of the indigenous Melanesians and Micronesian settlers from what is now known as Kiribati. Choiseul has rich cultural values and beliefs. A lot of these, e.g. Panpipe music, cultural dances and custom dances to name a few, have been lost due to Christianity and outside

affluence. Today, there are now concerns that the wisdom and worthy customs of our ancestors will fade away if nothing is done. The influences of modern education, western life styles, the cash economy, fast growing technology, and commercialisation have taken roots within the communities.

A few potters are still active around Chirovanga. This is the last place in the Solomon Islands where this traditional craft survives. This is an area that can be developed to revive the art, create tourism, and generate income for the community. In Wagina, traditional *Todi* (*Tekarewe*) drink production is still alive. Todi drink is produced from coconut and can be boiled to produce *Tekamaima,i* or brewed to produce local beer called the *Tekamangin*.

Today, traditional *Kesa* money is still found in most parts of Choiseul. Historically, it was used for bride price, compensation payments, land settlements, peacemaking and forming alliances. The traditional art of making *Kesa* from giant clamshells is traced to Nuatabu area in East Choiseul and it is believed that the traditional knowledge of the art is now mostly lost.

Choiseul has a ‘Patrilineal System’, which recognises male descendants from their father’s side. Normally one of the brothers in the family is chosen or appointed by the elders of a clan or tribe to be the head – (Kujuku or Boti) of the clan, the extended family unit, or a tribe and its sub-tribe (Jojolo). The Micronesian community in Wagina also practice a similar patrilineal system that does not attach to land tenure system but more to making decisions and governance in the community.

1.3 Language

There are eight native languages and dialects spoken in Choiseul. Pidgin and English are also used to communicate mostly in the working environment. Table 1 identifies these languages, their alternative name and predominant region. The Babatana is the most common language with 5,610 people speaking while only 79 people speak the Ririo language.

Table 1: Common Languages by predominate region

Name	Alternate name	Region
Avaso	Lomaubi	South East Choiseul
Babatana	Mbambatana	South Central Choiseul
Katazi	-	North Central Choiseul
Kiribati	-	Wagina
Ririo	-	Susuka Ward, East Choiseul
Senga	Sisinga	East Choiseul
Vaghua	Tavola, Tavula	Northwest Choiseul
Varisi	Ghone, Varese	Northwest

1.4 Role of Civil Society

Traditionally Choiseul does not have a chiefly system. Each tribe (*Sinaqi*) or clan (*Jojolo*) has a head (*kujuku*) that takes up the leadership responsibility. A person, normally a member of the tribe or clan, attains this position through achievements and not by inheritance. This is most often achieved through bravery, or attainment of traditional skills or knowledge that provides adequate protection for the tribe. A person is given a title – *Bose Palata* or warrior when he has attained this position.

The chiefly system that is being practiced today is an adopted system whereby each village has an adopted chief, sometimes referred to as the Chairman Leader. He is head of the committee of elders called, “*Turituri Kaji*”. The Committee of elders – “*Turituri Kaji*” is the highest decision making body and is fundamental to the operation and efficiency of the welfare of the village communities.

The Micronesian culture does not have a chiefly system but practice the *Elder System* that makes and enforces decisions. In Wagina the *Maniaba* is the house of elders and was not just a meetinghouse that it may appear as today. Leaders of various organisations within the church structure and sectoral committees such as village education, health etc are represented in the “*Turituri Kaji*” or *Maniaba* giving it wide influence in the overall development of the communities. The interlink between the Church and traditional systems has created a sense of harmony and co-operation in the decision making process in the community. However, in recent times this has been challenged by outside affluence, education and the strong impact of cash labour instead of community co-operation.

Churches

Churches have played a major role in the overall development of Choiseul. Churches have been instrumental in mediating and settling disputes that frequently arise from land or other cultural infringements between tribes, clans or family members of communities. They have also been strong development partners with the Provincial Government in the area of education, health, social and youth development in the rural communities. A number of schools and clinics are owned and run by the churches in partnership with the government. One example of their active participation in development is the Kolombangara Rural Training Centre (KRTC), which was established by the United Church. This centre focuses on providing training courses in agriculture, carpentry, and spiritual and youth development. The centre has trained a number of youths from around Choiseul who have been pushed-out from their primary education.

The United Church with 56.2 percent of the population is the dominant church in Choiseul. The Roman Catholic Church with 21.9 percent and the Seventh Day Adventist Church with 16.0 percent of the population are the other 2 major churches while there are also a number of churches with small denominations.

Non-Government Organisations

There are only a few Non-Government Organisations (NGO's) active in Choiseul such as the Solomon Islands Development Trust (SIDT), APACE, and Solomon Islands Red Cross

Society. These NGO's have field officers based in the villages whose role is to help implement community based programmes.

The "*Lauru Land Conference of Tribal Community*" (LLCTC) is the only legally registered NGO, with an established office in the province. This local NGO was first established to protect the cultural values, traditional land rights, tribal genealogy, and maintain good ancestral wisdom of Lauru people via annual conferences, and traditional tribal land and genealogy recording. The LLCTC has recorded a total of three hundred tribal lands and genealogies, representing almost the whole of Choiseul. This process has significantly reduced the number of land disputes between tribes or clans in Choiseul. The LLCTC is active in promoting rural development in the communities and has assisted to identify potential development programmes and projects and thus has become a recognised partner in the overall development of Choiseul.

An initiative is now being taken by some tribal resource owners under the *Tribal Community Development Reform Programme* to establish an association for all tribal resource owners of Choiseul to be called the *Lauru Indigenous Natural Resource Owners Association*. Its objective is to provide a voice for tribal member groups in the protection, and to foster a strong partnership with the Provincial and National Governments, in the development of tribal resources. It is believed that this process can allow tribal resource owners to open-up their resources for development but at the same time have a legal mechanism to protect their future from being exploited.

Political system

Choiseul was part of the Western Province until late 1991 when it established itself as a separate province. It is divided into three parliamentary constituencies, South, Northwest and East. This means Choiseul has three parliamentary seats in the National Parliament, represented by members who are elected every four years. At the provincial political level the province is further sub-divided into fourteen provincial wards. Each provincial ward has an elected provincial member who represents their people in the provincial assembly. The average number of people per national politician in 1999 was 6,669, and there were 1,429 people per provincial politician.

There is also a Provincial Executive, which consists of the Premier, Deputy Premier and a number of provincial Ministers, which should not exceed one half of the total number of members of the Provincial Assembly. The Premier is the political head of the province. The Provincial Assembly elects a Speaker to be the presiding officer and a Deputy Speaker to act in the absence of the Speaker. The Speaker with the consent of the Assembly, appoints a clerk and other persons that may be required to act as Officers and servants of the Assembly.

2 POPULATION, LAND & ENVIRONMENT

2.1 Environment

Choiseul Island is a long, narrow, densely wooded island whose interior is cut by steep, rugged ridges and deep gorges. Its highest mountain is Mt. Maetambe, a volcanic cone whose rim rises to 1,060 metres. Much of the shoreline consists of long beaches some of them bordered by large shallow freshwater marshes. Mangroves are found mainly on the Northwest areas around Choiseul Bay and the southern part in the Katupika and Wagina wards. In and around the island there are a number of untouched unique and natural forests, deep water harbours, bays, inlets and islets which are magnificent sites for tourism development and economic infrastructure such as port facilities. There are two main large rivers, the Kolobangara River in the south and Vacho River in the northwest part of the Island.

Choiseul Bay receives on average 3,559 mm (140 inches) of rain a year. Temperatures range between 23 degrees and 31 degrees Celsius. Morning humidity levels hover around 88 percent while afternoon humidity averages 79percent. The Island has good volcanic soils although they are vulnerable to erosion.

An intensive environment and conservation expansion programme is currently been implemented by the Environment and Conservation Department in the Katupika and Wagina wards in partnership with the rural communities. This programme extends to Arnovon Conservation Island and the northeastern tip of Isabel Province, and is funded by SPREP. A Wild Life Protection and Conservation programme is being implemented by the WWF covering an area from Viviru ward to mount Maetabe, in the interior of Choiseul.

The province has identified and proposed two sites to be protected sites based on the Maruia Society's recommendations. The proposed Mount Maetambe protected forest area encompasses land on the Southwestern coastlines of Choiseul between Sepah and Vurulata rivers. Maetambe is the highest mountain in Choiseul. The proposed reserve protects the best-preserved examples of forest growing on karst limestone in the Solomon Islands. The limestone base ranges from sea level to 800 metres above sea level. Surveys have also revealed seven species of frogs, with one endemic species, and two rare butterflies all dependant on the forest cover. A recent survey discovered the presence of three giant rats on Choiseul, two of which were new records for the Solomon Islands. The giant Pncelet's rat (*Solomys pnceleti*) had not been seen by outsiders for 60 years. It is the Solomon's largest mammal.

The South Choiseul protected area encompasses the southeastern end of Choiseul from Oaka harbour eastward to include Robroy Island and associated islets. Robroy Island lies very close to the southern end of mainland Choiseul, creating a very narrow sea passage, which is lined deeply with mangrove forests almost encircling the island. The soil that forms over ultrabasic rock is poisoned with very heavy metals so that only a very distinctive kind of forest is able to cope with the difficult conditions. The heavy metal presence means that the land is unsuitable for gardens. The area of mangroves, rivers and sheltered lagoons around Robroy passage provides excellent habitat for salt-water

crocodiles that are fast disappearing in Choiseul. Kumboro Point, on the eastern coast of the proposed area, has significant nesting beaches for turtles.

2.2 Natural Disasters

Choiseul is relatively less affected by natural disasters compared to other provinces in the country. It recorded only four cyclones in the past 50 years (refer table 2 below). The province was hit by cyclones Annie in 1967, Gisele in 1968, Isa in 1970 and Ida in 1972. There are no records of deaths from disasters in Choiseul for the 50-year period.

Cyclone Annie caused damages to Ruruvai SDA Mission Station and Wagina. Several of the permanent buildings at Ruruvai were destroyed and in Wagina every house was flattened by strong winds and flood. A near death situation occurred when the Catholic mission launch, the Ave Maria anchored at Sirovanga, drifted out to sea between Bougainville and New Britain with the bosun on board. Fortunately it was found two weeks later with the bosun still alive and well.

Table 2: Disaster Events for Choiseul Province

	1950-1960	1961-1971	1972-1982	1983-1993	1994-2000	Total
Cyclone	0	3	1	0	0	4
Earthquake	0	1	3	0	0	4
Tsunami	1	1	3	0	0	5
Landslide	0	0	0	0	0	0
Flood	0	0	0	0	0	0
Drought	0	0	0	0	1	1
Volcano	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	1	5	7	0	1	14

Sources: Natural Disasters Database Vol 1-4, Meteorology Services and Seismology Section.

Choiseul is located in a cyclonic region and next to one of the most active seismic areas, Shortland group and Bougainville. Coastal flooding has also been experienced quite regularly and is not always associated with cyclone activity. Choiseul is regarded as highly vulnerable to coastal and river flooding and tsunamis. Its vulnerability is medium with regards to earthquakes and landslides and has low vulnerability to cyclones, droughts and volcanic eruption.

Choiseul has a legally established Provincial Disaster Committee, comprising of the Provincial Secretary as the chairman and the members are the Provincial Police Commander, Director of Health and Medical Services, Director of Works and Utilities, Officer in-charge for Communications, Marine and a representative of the Church and Communities. The Choiseul Provincial Disaster Committee is established under the National Disaster Council Act 1989 and the National Disaster Plan 1987.

2.3 The Settlement Pattern

During the early head hunting period, before the advent of the first missionaries, a good majority of people in Choiseul lived in small clusters of tribal villages built on tribal lands. These clusters were generally inland with only a few places where temporary makeshift villages could be found along the coast. This settlement pattern reflects the fierce inter-tribal warfare and slavery prevalent during the headhunting era. Also the locality of each tribal village reflects their ownership of the land they live on. The people are confined to their tribal lands and don't venture out for fear of being killed or taken as slaves by enemy warriors. Strangers were not welcomed into their territory for fear of black magic or sorcery, except for those who were from another tribe aligned to their own.

Temporary makeshift villages that are found in some coastal areas during early times indicate a territorial claim over the coastal lands and customary reefs. They also provide for temporary accommodation for tribal fishermen who often risked being killed by enemy tribesmen or raiding parties from New Georgia.

The arrival of the early missionaries resulted in the disintegration of the tribal villages or communities as villagers returned to the coast and converted to Christianity. The old village sites and pagan "tabu" areas on tribal lands in the interior of the island remain numerous. Today most of Choiseul villages are built around the coast and surrounding smaller islands, except for a couple of villages that are located further inland.

2.4 Population

The 1999 population census recorded 20,008 people in the Choiseul Province, which represents 4.9 percent of the population of the Solomon Islands. The average annual population growth rate in the province from 1986 to 1999 is 3.0 percent, slightly higher than the country average of 2.8 percent. There were 3,142 households in 1999, giving an average household size of 6.4, which is slightly higher than the country average of 6.3 persons per household. The average household size has declined significantly from the 7.2 persons per household in 1986.

Table 3 below provides a summary of population by broad age group and by gender. The table shows that Choiseul Province, as with other provinces, has a very young population with 43.9 percent of the population less than 15 years of age. The impact of this is that the province has a very high dependency ratio, measured as the proportion of young and old to the total population, of 47.5 percent. Thus 47.5 percent of the population is dependent on the remaining population for its economic needs. The data also shows that only a small proportion of the population lives beyond 65 years.

From the 1999 census, the sex ratio (male to females) is 104.8, slightly lower than the national sex ratio of 106.9 males for every 100 females. A couple of noticeable variations to the ratio occur by age group. In the 20-39 age groups, there are more females than males. A probable explanation could be that more males drift to urban centres for employment or schooling. In the 60-79 age groups, females outlive males, but do not at ages 80 and beyond. An explanation could be that women do a lot of physical labour in the fields, carry

out most domestic chores and perform most child upbringing duties. In Western societies, females consistently outlive males but this may not be the case in developing countries.

Table 3: Population by broad age group by sex

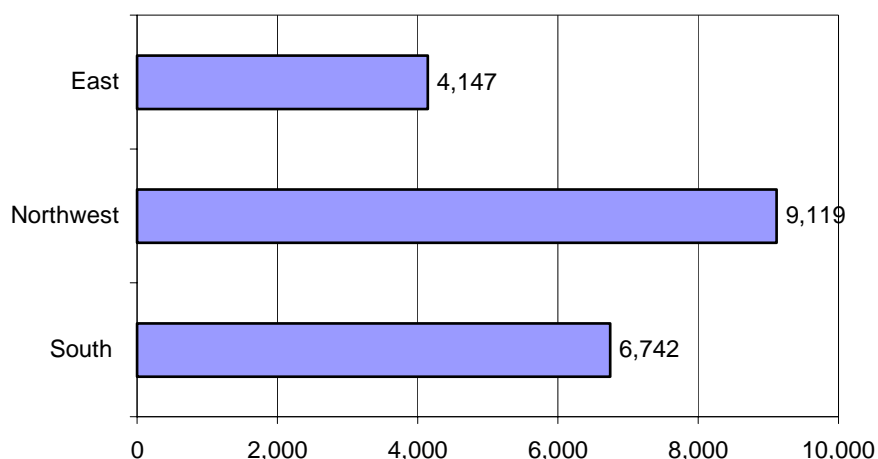
Age group	Male	Female	Total	Percentage
0 – 14	4,582	4,196	8,778	43.9%
15 – 34	3,336	3,324	6,660	33.3%
35 – 64	1,964	1,881	3,845	19.2%
65+	354	371	725	3.6%
Total province	10,236	9,771	20,008	100.0%

Source: 1999 Census, Census Office, Honiara

The population density of Choiseul from the 1999 census is 5 persons per square kilometre. This is one of the lowest in the country, with the national average of 14.8 persons per square kilometre.

Choiseul Province is broken down into 3 constituencies (refer figure 1 below). The most populated constituency is the Northwest with a population of 9,119, representing 45.6 percent of the provincial population. South is the second largest constituency with 6,742 people (33.7 percent), and East is the smallest with 4,147 people, or 20.7 percent of the population of Choiseul.

Figure 1: Population by constituency



Source: 1999 National Population Census

Each of the three constituencies is divided into wards. Northeast and South constituency have five wards each while the East has four wards. The population distribution by ward and by sex is shown in Table 4 below.

The Batava ward in Northwest Choiseul is by far the most populated with 3,576 people (17.9 percent), followed by Tavula ward with 1,945 people (9.7 percent). The least populated ward is Kirugela with a population of 809 (4.0 percent). Choiseul has a very small urban population with 440 people residing in the provincial capital -Taro Island in the Batava ward. This represents 2 percent of the population. About half of these are students of Tarekukure Provincial Secondary School located within the provincial capital.

Table 4: Choiseul Population by ward and by sex

Ward	Male	Female	Total	Percent
Wagina	757	693	1,450	7.2%
Katupika	650	608	1,258	6.3%
Vasiduki	613	597	1,210	6.0%
Viviru	636	638	1,274	6.4%
Babatana	791	759	1,550	7.7%
Tepazaka	708	630	1,338	6.7%
Batava	1,893	1,683	3,576	17.9%
Tavula	982	963	1,945	9.7%
Polo	685	663	1,348	6.7%
Bangara	436	476	912	4.6%
Susuka	473	480	953	4.8%
Senga	754	770	1,524	7.6%
Kerepangara	459	402	861	4.3%
Kirugela	399	410	809	4.0%
Total	10,236	9,772	20,008	100.0%

Source: 1999 National Population Census

The number of people migrating in and out of Choiseul is negligible. The only significant large migration into Choiseul was in 1963 when Micronesians of the overly populated country of Gilbert Islands now Kiribati were resettled at Wagina by the Colonial government. People migrate out for education, employment, or marriage reasons and generally return to their home island. As a cultural norm only women were allowed to migrate out for marriage with men having to remain as custodian of their traditional heritage. But this is no longer true today, as men also have migrated out to their spouse's home island.

2.5 Land Tenure System

The total land area of mainland Choiseul is 3,208 sq. km, with Wagina and adjacent islands making up an additional 86 sq km. Choiseul accounts for 13.5 percent of the country's total land area. Customary land covers an area of 3,146 sq. km. or 95.5 percent of the total land area of the province. Alienated land comprises the remaining 4.5 percent (148 sq. km).

Choiseul is very much a subsistence economy and has seen very little commercial agriculture development except for logging operations. The main use of land is subsistence farming for sweet potatoes, bananas, cassava, taro and vegetables for daily consumption and sustenance of the family unit. Any excess is sold as a means of earning cash income in the local markets.

Coconut plantations are mainly along the coasts pushing subsistence gardens further away inland. Plantations have long provided cash for local people but due to current world price declines, irregularity of copra collection, and delayed-payments of copra by CEMA as a result of acute cash flow problems, coconut plantations have not been well kept.

Because of the problems facing the coconut industry and the lucrative prices of sawn timber in the local markets outlets in Honiara, many people have turned to their forestry resources for cash income. A large number of chainsaw operators are harvesting timber from the forest at an alarmingly unsustainable rate. Therefore a policy on sustainable timber harvesting is necessary.

In Choiseul there are five Agriculture Opportunity Areas (AOA), covering 153 sq. km. (15,300 Ha). About 92 percent of this land is currently unused or undeveloped. Table 8 below shows areas identified as potential AOA's. In the northwest there is 24 km² at Poroporo, 40 km² at Pemba and 29 km² and Pacho. Wagina has 32 km² and Ghaghara 28 km².

Land Ownership

Land ownership in Choiseul is based on the patrilineal system. The first-born son of the chiefly line of the tribe (Sinaqi) is the custodian of primary rights for the tribal land on behalf of the whole tribe. People of the tribe in general have access to use the land and sea resources. A clan (*Jojolo*) within the tribe usually has exclusive rights over use of a portion of land with the tribe having access to the rest of the tribal land. Consent must be sought from the landowning group before any development can take place. Harvesting of bush materials for buildings and collecting fruits and nuts on the land, requires a similar approach but in many occasions tribal members do not need to seek permission to access the basic resources of the tribal land. Tribal land laws of Choiseul have different terms and definitions of landownership or transfer of landownership, subject to customary arrangement and purposes. The following are a few examples;

- Land that is originally owned by a tribe or Sinaqi is called *Lua Zinakutama* (Perpetual Ownership);
- Land given as payment/compensation for war deaths and highly of warriors to kill someone as revenge. When those engaging the warriors do not have enough *Kesa* to settle payments, land is given instead and this is called *Lua Panaka*;
- Land given for settlement of disputes and for normalising relationships is called *Lua Sake*; and

- *Lua Bani* refers to land given by the girl's father to her husband as a counter offer to a much higher bride price, usually more than the standard three kesa paid by the boy's tribe or father. This often happens when the girl's father does not want his daughter to leave the family or the tribe.

The security of land is strongly linked to the tribe. There is no such thing as "Customary Land" in the indigenous context in Choiseul because "customs" can be changed, amended or reviewed. But the tribe (Sinaqi), sub-tribes (jojolo) cannot be changed. The tribe's life-land-health is interrelated, inter-dependent, inter-sustained, and inter-secured for the tribe and the inter-tribal wholeness of life.

3 PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

3.1 Transportation

The normal mode of travelling on land in Choiseul is to walk. Most people use foot tracks or footpaths to travel from place to place. Villages with access to roads have the option of using a vehicle to go to places but this is infrequent. For most of the populace, a dugout paddling canoe is used for transportation. Quite popular today are powered fibreglass canoes, commonly using 15 h.p. engines but this is a very expensive mode of transport. A number of people own outboard motors with higher power up to 75 horsepower. These high-powered boats are also used in inter province travel.

Road Transport

Choiseul does not have a road system that links communities to the main economic and administrative centres. This is a major problem, as people do not have easy access to marketing outlets and social services in the province. The only effective access in the province is the networks of footpaths that link villages along the coast or bush tracks that link southeast and northwest communities.

There is a gravel road from Kolobangara to Sepa village, South Choiseul; spanning about 25 km. Eagon Company has constructed roads in Northwest Choiseul, one from Moli to Chirovanga, and another road is at Vagara, Tepezaka. These are logging roads where maintenance and sufficient use by the people will be important otherwise they will become overgrown and deteriorate. There is visible evidence of this happening already.

In its Five-year Development Plan the province has proposed to develop a road system to link communities in the province at an estimate cost of \$15.5 million. It also plans to upgrade the existing Kolobangara/Ghoe road and extend it to Papara at an estimated cost of \$1.9 million. Work is now in progress to complete this project.

Air Transport

There are two airfields in Choiseul Province. One is at the provincial capital Taro at in the northwestern part of the island, with Solomon Airlines making three flights a week to Choiseul Bay. The other airfield, Kagau, is at the eastern part of Choiseul and receives a single Solomon Airlines flight each week. A third airfield is at Tangibangara in the East Choiseul constituency but this is no longer used due to a land dispute.

Under its Five-year Development Plan 1998-2003, the province is planning to develop a new airfield and to upgrade the 3 existing ones at a total cost of \$3.5 million, which it hopes to fund under external funding assistance. Funds are now being made available through the Ministry of National Planning and Development for a fourth airstrip to be built at Sasamunga village – South Choiseul. If this happens, all three constituencies will have air links and this will further improve transportation services to the communities.

Sea Transport

There are six main shipping companies serving the Province. MV Lauru 1 owned by Lauru Shipping, a business arm of the province, operates a monthly cargo and passenger trip to Choiseul. Transwest Shipping a business arm of Western Province runs the MV Tomoko, a passenger ship to Choiseul Bay each month. SWIFT Shipping, operated by the United Church, has a landing craft that takes cargo monthly. The Commodities Export Marketing Authority (CEMA) has a fleet of ships that collect copra from buying centres throughout the Solomons. It usually does monthly trips to Choiseul to collect copra from the centres. During these trips, businesses and private freighters can send also cargoes. ALCOL is a landing craft that makes trips to Lauru when chartered. SILAWA Shipping, owned by an indigenous Choiseulese based at Gizo in the Western Provinces, has two ships that interchange fortnightly to Choiseul, both taking cargo and passengers.

There are four regularly used wharves located in South and Northwest Choiseul, the more frequently reached part of the province. There is no international port.

Under its five-year development plan 1998-2003, the province is planning to purchase a second boat to be used as a passenger boat to allow the Lauru 1 to operate only as a cargo vessel. The project estimated to cost \$2million dollars is to be purchased from a loan from the NPF. The project has been delayed due to the ethnic crisis and the government not agreeing to guarantee the loan. It also plans to build six new wharves at an initial estimated cost of \$300,000 and upgrade the existing wharves at an estimated cost of \$100,000.

3.2 Communication

There are Solomon Telekom facilities at Choiseul Bay and Sasamunga offering telephone and fax services. Taro Telekom is gearing towards installing a new exchange system, the first in the Solomons, from REDCOM, United States. It is simple and reliable and can handle 255 facilities and can operate 30 calls at one time. A foreseeable setback on this new development is the very high cost of calls at \$7.00 a minute, which the average villager cannot afford. Also the cost of travelling to access this facility is very high making it inaccessible to some villagers. Currently, services are provided from Telekom House but with this new initiative phones will be connected to houses and offices. Concentration of service will be on Taro and expand to the Choiseul Bay area when required.

Telekom has plans to expand to Pangoe, Northeast Choiseul and tap into solar power for village technology systems – the NIRA system. The only downside will be the expensive \$15/minute envisaged costs. There are also plans to establish an email system network at Sasamunga as a pilot project in September 2001. This initiative is part of a major rural e-mail network in the country under the Rural Development Volunteers Association's People First Network Project (PFnet).

There is a fully established radio network communication system around the island. The Health Clinics in the province are equipped with a VHF/HF radio and have a daily medical satellite schedule to communicate with the Provincial Health Authorities at Taro or Sasamunga Mini-Hospitals to discuss health issues regarding sick patients or place drug orders etc. The different Churches have their own communication networks as well. There

are also private radio's for those who can afford the cost as this type of equipment is very expensive to acquire. CEMA also has a radio network located at all its buying points. Radio is the most effective mode of communication for rural villages. In the long-term it is also the most cost effective way of communication despite the initial high cost of acquiring the equipment.

There is a Post Office at Choiseul Bay and 17 Postal Agencies located at villages around the island. The agencies are operated either by Churches or businesses on behalf of the Postal Corporation.

3.3 Energy

Small diesel generators are operated by various organisations around the island but the provincial capital is without power. There are no mini hydropower facilities in the province. The Choiseul Provincial Government is interested in environmentally friendly energy sources such as solar and hydropower. With the planned relocation of the provincial capital to the mainland, hydropower is planned for a big waterfall in the area.

Choiseul Bay Secondary School operates a diesel generator. At Tarekukure, which is near the school and the island capital, CEMA and Eagon operate generators at Moli and Vagara logging camps. There are a total of 10 portable generators privately owned in Sasamunga alone. The Sasamunga Area Health Centre has a generator for use during emergency medical operations.

There are 4 solar power facilities at Sasamunga. One is at the Community School funded by the Japanese Government's Grassroots Development Assistance programme, another is at the Area Health Centre and was originally funded by a Germany Non-Government Organisation. The other 2 solar systems are owned privately.

In East Choiseul there are a total of 15 solar lighting systems and 12 privately owned generators. However, the majority of villagers use kerosene lamps and wood as energy sources due to the high cost of installing and acquiring other power systems, and the maintenance costs.

There is an increasing demand for electricity in the province not only in the urban centre but rural communities also. Taking into account cost implications, solar power systems may be considered and investigated for introduction into the communities. However, small hydroelectric schemes should also be investigated, as there are several suitable streams and rivers in abundance through out Choiseul.

4 ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

4.1 Labour Force & Employment

According to the 1999 National Population Census results, Choiseul's working age population (14 years and over) totals 11,742. This represents 58.7 percent of the province's total population. This working age group are classified in the census into the following categories.

- Unemployed and seeking paid work;
- Paid work – Those who are in formal employment and receive salaries or wages in cash or in-kind;
- Not working (unpaid work) – Those not working in paid activities but are active in unpaid work including subsistence farming, fishing and hunting, or community work or productive housework; and
- Not working – Those not active in either paid work or unpaid work. May include students still in school, retired, old age, disabled or are sick.

Of this working age group only 22.7 percent are active in paid work, either earning cash income through formal employment or are being paid in-kind (refer table 5 below). There is a major gender disparity in terms of paid employment, with females only representing 30.4 percent of paid employees.

Those who are unemployed but are seeking paid work make up 7.8 percent of the working age population, while those doing only unpaid work (generally subsistence) make up 32.5 percent of the working age population. The largest portion of the working age population represents those who are still at school, retired, or did not state their activity status (37.0 percent).

Table 5: Employment structure by sex (14 years & over)

Age group	Male	Female	Total	%
Unemployed (seeking work)	538	379	917	7.8%
Employed in paid work	1,858	810	2,668	22.7%
Not working (subsistence)	1,539	2,274	3,813	32.5%
Not working (school, retired, etc)	1,881	2,271	4,152	35.4%
Not stated	104	88	192	1.6%
Total	5,921	5,822	11,742	100.0%

Source: 1999 Census, Census Office, Honiara

Table 6 below outlines the industry of occupation for those in paid work. The table shows that the largest industry in the province is agriculture with 31.6 percent of employees, with a further 18.6 percent of employed persons working in the forestry industry. Thus 50.2 percent of workers are engaged in primary industries. The manufacturing sector accounts for a further 11.2 percent of paid employees and trade 10.6 percent.

Table 6: Number of Employees by major industry group by gender

Industry	Male	Female	Total	%
Agriculture	351	397	748	31.6%
Forestry & logging	418	21	439	18.6%
Fishing	0	0	0	0.0%
Mining	0	0	0	0.0%
Manufacturing	207	57	264	11.2%
Electricity & water supply	3	0	3	0.1%
Construction	99	4	103	4.4%
Wholesale/Retail trade	133	117	250	10.6%
Restaurants & hotels	0	3	3	0.1%
Transport & communications	79	2	81	3.4%
Finance & insurance	1	0	1	0.0%
Real estate, business services	6	0	6	0.3%
Government administration	56	13	69	2.9%
Education	113	94	207	8.7%
Health	50	45	95	4.0%
Other services	68	13	81	3.4%
Private households	0	16	16	0.7%
Total	1,584	782	2,366	100.0%

Source: 1999 Census, Census Office, Honiara

The government sector has 371 employees, with 2.9 percent of total paid employees working in government administration, 8.7 percent working in education, and 4.0 percent working in the health sector. Note that some of the education and health employees are employed by church organisations operating schools and clinics. The agriculture sector and private domestic help for households have more female employees than males.

4.2 Subsistence economy

In the subsistence agriculture sector villagers produce from their garden for own consumption, as well as go fishing and hunting. These subsistence farmers also depend on a certain amount of

cash income for essentials like school fees, soap and toiletries, kerosene and some processed food. Refer table 7 below for a summary of householders' subsistence activity in 1999.

The table suggests that there is considerable diversity in terms of the subsistence crops being grown on Choiseul. The table shows that over 80 percent of households grow yam, pana, cassava, taro, banana, pineapple, sweet potato, and other fruit trees, as well as harvest coconuts for their own consumption. The 19.3 percent of households who grow rice for their own consumption is higher than most other provinces.

Table 7: Subsistence activity by households

Activity	Number	% Of HH
Crops		
Coconut	2,525	80.4%
Chillies	243	7.7%
Betel nut	1,787	56.9%
Rice	605	19.3%
Yam	2,757	87.7%
Pana	2,514	80.0%
Cassava	2,900	92.3%
Taro	2,834	90.2%
Banana	2,959	94.2%
Pineapple	2,570	81.8%
Sweet potato	2,948	93.8%
Ngali nut	1,985	63.2%
Other fruit tree	2,630	83.7%
Livestock		
Pigs	882	28.1%
Other livestock	1,334	42.5%
Marine products		
Fish	2,632	83.8%
Shellfish	1,403	44.7%
Crab/lobster	1,307	41.6%
Turtle	753	24.0%
Beche de mer	144	4.6%

Source: 1999 Census, Census Office, Honiara

There is not such widespread use of livestock for home consumption with only 28.1 percent of households having pigs, while a further 45.2 percent of households have other livestock such as cattle, chickens, etc.

Fishing for own consumption is very important on Choiseul with 83.8 percent of households undertaking this activity. A further 44.7 percent and 41.6 percent of households harvest shellfish and crabs/lobsters respectively for home consumption while 24.0 percent catch turtles. A very small proportion of households (4.6 percent) harvest beche de mer for own consumption.

4.3 Agriculture

The agriculture sector consists of small holders with no major plantations operating in the province. They are plantation estates and smallholder farmers. Table 8 below gives a summary of household market activity as reported in the 1999 population census.

Table 8: Market production by households

Activity	Number	% Of HH
Coconut	1,990	63.3%
Chillies	73	2.3%
Betel nut	1,087	34.6%
Rice	194	6.2%
Cocoa	213	6.8%

Source: 1999 Census, Census Office, Honiara

Copra

Choiseul is one of the main Copra producing provinces in the country and produces an average of over 3,000 metric tonnes annually. As can be seen from the table above 63.3 percent of households are actively producing and selling copra. There are no copra plantations on Choiseul. The national potential annual output is 30,000 metric tonnes. However, the annual production for 2000 was only 19,004 metric tonnes. Choiseul produced 2,426 metric tonnes of this national output valued at \$2,231,058 million despite the very low price and the delayed-payment by CEMA (refer table 9 below). This accounts for 12.8 percent of the 2000 national copra production.

Table 9: Copra Production

	Metric tonne	Value (million)
1996	2,390	1.4
1997	2,757	1.6
1998	2,572	1.7
1999	2,356	1.8
2000	2,425	2.2

Source: CEMA Copra Statistics Report

CEMA has a monopoly on the purchase of copra products from local farmers. In Choiseul CEMA has an established network that supports copra production by rural farmers. There is one buying centre at Choiseul Bay and 7 other buying points in the Province. The copra-buying centre at Choiseul Bay has higher purchasers than the buying points (refer table 10 below). It is not surprising because the highest copra producing ward, the Batava ward, is where the centre is located. The other high copra producing wards are Bangara and Tepazaka as shown by the high volume of copra product output from Bobokuana and Zinoa buying points. Both these buying points only begun operations from in 1998 but have shown potential to produce more. Production depends on a number of factors including the state of the plantations, transport to buying centre, and price.

Table 10: Copra buying centre purchases

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Choiseul Bay	1,954	1,555	785	530	559
Pangoe	79	373	180	72	131
Posarae	165	242	204	225	167
Katurasele	192	244	314	191	80
Sasamungga	0	344	234	310	327
Ziorokana	0	0	165	228	167
Zinoa	0	0	233	364	487
Bobokuana	0	0	457	436	506

Source: CEMA Copra Production Annual Reports 1996-2000

The future outlook of copra in the province is promising. However, scarcity of land near the coast is an issue that prevents new planting but replanting of hybrids to replace unproductive coconut stands should be encouraged as a way to maintain the copra industry. Downstream processing is important for the future including diversifying into other coconut products such as refined oil, cooking oil, livestock feeds, soap, perfume etc. There is also a need to investigate waste coconut products such as shells and husks, which can be processed into potential products such as charcoal from the shells and combed husk fibre from husks.

Testing in the Solomon Islands has shown that local yield per hectare is 25 percent greater than in Sri Lanka or the Philippines and over 40 percent greater than India, the world's largest producer of coconut products. This is significant in the industry, as it means the Solomon Islands including Choiseul have some of the most productive stands of coconut plantation in the world.

Cocoa

Cocoa is not a major income earner in the province as only a few local farmers are involved in cocoa farming. Its current world market value is significantly higher than copra. Although cocoa is a potential income earner in rural areas several past attempts by farmers

have not been sustainable or profitable. According to technical advice from CEMA, Choiseul is unfortunate as it has poor soil fertility for cocoa farming. Therefore cocoa farms do not survive long and are often quickly destroyed by pests.

There needs to be a thorough investigation to ascertain the main reasons why the industry is declining and develop new strategies to revive the industry. There is a need for extension support through the Ministry of Agriculture to be linked with research in order to determine the problems facing this industry. Cocoa production was 2.1 tonnes in 1996 and has risen to 4.9 tonnes in 1999. This represents less than 1 percent of the country production. The major production regions are the Batava and Tavula wards of the Northwest Constituency. There is a growth trend as can be seen in the Batava ward showing a 61.5 percent increase in production in 1999.

There is a lack of a strong cocoa rehabilitation programme for local cocoa farmers. For the entire province only about 30 farmers were active in rehabilitation activities in 1998 involving a total area of only 41.2 hectares of cocoa tree. In 1999 there were no rehabilitation activities. There is a declining trend in cocoa expansion activities in the Northwest constituency where there were some new areas planted with cocoa trees between the 1998-2000. There were no new expansion activities in the south and east constituencies for this period.

There are only three processing units currently in operation. All three are in the Northwest Constituency at Manley Kodovoe in Batava ward, Michael Vakana in Tavula ward, and Belasio Paesibatu in Tavula ward. Farmers in the Northwest constituency have more interest in cocoa than those in the other two constituencies because of the influence from their Bouganville friends, who encouraged them to grow cacao during the crises.

The problems facing the industry are no market for wet beans, the agriculture policy of only farmers with 2 hectares of bearing trees can have a processing unit, only the Choiseul Bay buying centre has a qualified cocoa grader, and hence other buying points and ports of call cannot buy dried cocoa beans at their locations. Also the good fertile land for cocoa growing are inland, but there are no roads to access these Agricultural Opportunity Areas and transport to buying points is only by canoe.

Spices

According to the Agriculture Division, growing spice or chilli has high potential in the province due to its fertile soil. Records show however that there are no spice farmers in Choiseul. Because of the potential, the Province through its Agriculture division has set up a Provincial Demonstration Farm, which is now nearing completion. It will serve as training centre for farmers and distribution centre for the produce.

Chilli seeds of the proven and required variety have been collected from the National Training Institute (NATI) from Fote, Malaita. The Agriculture Division will grow a plot of chilli this year to produce seeds for distribution to interested farmers. Whilst waiting for the seedlings to grow, a course on chilli farming will be conducted for interested farmers. Later in the year, a chilli-processing course will be offered to those who attended the initial course. Solomon Taiyo Fishing Company is a potential market for chilli produces.

Rice

Rice farming is a potential economic earner to farmers, provided appropriate technology is sufficiently made available. At this stage there is interest by local farmers at a subsistence level for the introduction of rice farming in the province. Rice is currently grown for consumption and acts as an import substitute, which results in savings for other essential items in the communities.

East Choiseul is leading in rice farming with 62 paddocks producing 26,530 tons of rice annually. The South and Northwest Constituencies are also growing rice but are not as aggressive as in the East Constituencies. There are a total of 208 smallholder rice farms in Choiseul. Most of these rice farms have closed down because farmers said that growing rice is very labour-intensive. There is a possibility that the number of rice farms and the area planted may further decrease as there are signs of people are turning to less labour-intensive income earning activities.

Taiwan funded three rice mills in the Northwest Constituency and 4 in Malangono in the South Constituency. In the East Constituency, the European Union funded 5 rice mills in Pangoe. The value of the technical assistance provided by the Government of Taiwan to Choiseul Province for 2001 is approximately USD\$95,000.

The major problems affecting rice farming are the project has only been partly funded. The tools, materials, fertilisers and insecticides provided are usually not enough for each farmer. The difficulty of access to a rice mill, transport by outboard motor canoe is quite expensive, cultivation is labour intensive and there are limited market outlets.

Livestock

Only four cattle projects exist in Choiseul with a total head of 56. They are run by the Luti Association and the villages of Narione, Tabarato, and Kaqao. The major problems affecting the industry include lack of proper market infrastructure, lack of transport for shipping cattle, lack of adequate land area to raise cattle, and lack of training. Land disputes limit the area for cattle raising. Despite these problems, the province has high potential for cattle farming, due to the closeness of by Bouganville market. Resolution of current land disputes should free some land for the industry.

4.4 Forestry

Geographically, commercial forests of Choiseul are spread along the length of the island. In contrast to other provinces, forests of Choiseul do not show signs of disturbance by cyclones. Moreover, the population is located near the coasts and the density is low so there are fewer disturbances by man.

According to the 1994 Forestry Inventory Report, there are 19.35 trees per hectare of commercial timber species of 60 cm diameter and above (compared 12.85 cm and 15.0 trees per hectare in Guadalcanal and Malaita respectively) and 66.6 trees per hectare of 30 to 60 cm. The area of forest that carries timber in commercial quantities in Choiseul is 193,428 hectares. However after taking in to account the areas of semi-commercial forests

and areas over 15 degrees slope, the estimated total area of what would be suitable for large scale commercial logging operation is 115,254 hectares. Of this total potential logging area a further 25% is reduced to take into consideration areas required for conservation purposes, such as stream side protection zones, designated protected forestry sites, and custom tabu sites.

Commercial logging on Choiseul started in 1990 when Eagon Forest Development Co (SI) Ltd began operations in Tepazaka ward at Moli village. The company has harvested an area of approximately 6,000 hectares from 1990 to 1993 with an estimated value of SBD\$137 million.

Today two large-scale logging companies operate in the province. The Eagon Co. in Northwest Choiseul and Solomon Islands Resources Company Limited in East Choiseul. Apart from the two major logging companies there are a number of small sawmill operators who are operating under Timber Milling Licences. The majority of these operators are operating with chainsaws and sell their timber products to buyers in Honiara. East Choiseul earned an estimated \$777,000 from sawn timber in 2000.

Fifteen licensed small operators contribute an estimated 2,400 cubic meters in 1999. These operators are in the following Ward locations: Babatana, 1; Katupika, 2; Wagina, 1; Batava, 2; Susuka, 1; Senga, 4; Kerepangara, 1; and Kiruqela, 3. These smallholder operators plus the some unlicensed ones produced an average of 95 cubic metres of sawn timber per trip by the MV Lauru 1. The MV Lauru 1 makes an average of 18 trips per year which means that the estimated annual output of these smallholder timber operators is 1710 cubic metres per annum. This is approximately SBD\$2,736,000 million per year in the local market. This does not include sawn timber freighted on L.C Swift and other boat operators. The table 11 below shows timber production and value in the province from 1996 to 2000.

Table 11: Choiseul logging exports

	Cubic meters	Value (USD)
1996	87,541	\$12,525,311
1997	89,492	\$11,077,997
1998	89,122	\$6,506,146
1999	41,515	\$3,432,448
2000	61,415	\$4,663,017
Total	369,085	\$38,204,919

Source: Forestry Department

For the period 1996 to 2000 the country's total logging export earnings was USD\$286,825,119. Choiseul's contribution to this sector totaled USD\$38,204,919 million accounting for 13.3% of the total logging exports. Unfortunately, the above information indicates a declining export unit price for logs for the period. The low volume produced in

year 2000 reflects the Eagon Resource Company’s closing down of its operation due to disruptions by dissatisfied landowners.

From the above figures 25 percent was paid as log export duties to the National Government and a 5 percent to 10percent was paid to tribal resource owners.

In 1996 Choiseul was the second largest log producer in the country accounting for about 13.1 percent of total log exports value. Western province continued to be the largest log producer accounting for 51.5 percent. In 2000 Choiseul produced 11 percent of the country’s total logging export, dropping to the third largest producer in this sector.

4.5 Fisheries

The Solomon Islands’ EEZ, includes a sea area of 1.3 million km² which is rich in migratory tuna species, particularly skipjack. The fish stock is estimated to range from 135,000 to 160,000 tonnes. Choiseul Province has equal rights and opportunity to tap into and participate in this lucrative industry. To date there are no commercial fishing companies operating in the province. However there are growing concerns from local resource owners as well as provincial authorities of fishing activities of foreign owned companies operating in the sea areas of Choiseul. There is a need for some regulatory policies to control such activities as it is depriving the rights of indigenous Choiseulese of benefits from their resources.

The inshore fisheries resources, predominantly reef fish, also provides opportunity for commercial fishing ventures with local resource owner (refer table 12 below).

Table 12: Household marine marketed activity

Activity	Number	% of HH
Fish	1,192	37.9%
Shellfish	273	8.7%
Crab/lobster	182	5.8%
Turtle	124	3.9%
Beche de mer	455	14.5%

Source: 1999 Census, Census Office, Honiara

Apart from the fish resources, Choiseul also has abundant other marine resources such as shells, bech-de-mer, crayfish and other marine species and these provide cash opportunities for local fishermen in the province. In some areas such as Wagina stocks have depleted owing to unsustainable harvesting.

There are 3 fishing centres in Choiseul at Wagina, SIRE and Choiseul Bay. Wagina Fisheries Centre recorded the highest sales for fish product with SDB113,449 in 1999. Apart from these Fisheries Centres, there are smallholder fishermen or buyers of marine

products that have been involved in harvesting and marketing of marine products from the sea resources.

Some constraints in the industry are management problems and lack of a strategic approach to establish effective marketing systems lack of storage facilities on ships servicing the province and lack of ice and storage facilities in the communities.

Under its Five-year Provincial Development Plan the province plans to upgrade the existing Fishery Centres to include a cool room and storage room at a total cost of \$1.5 million and to develop an Aquaculture Project with a Malaysian Company at an initial cost of \$1 million.

4.6 Mining

There are no mining companies operating or prospecting in the province. However, there are some areas that have been identified as having mineral potential that need further exploration to determine their economic viability.

Two calc-alkaline andesitic volcanic peaks of Mt Kumboro and Mt Maetambe contains Epithermal gold. It has been documented and geologically speaking can host epithermal-gold and possibly associated copper deposits. To date these two areas are be potential targets for epithermal gold exploration in Choiseul. Exploration Acabit Ltd in 1999, had acquired exploration licence over these areas.

The Conzinc Riotinto of Australia Exploration Pty Ltd. (CRA) mounted an airborne scintillometer survey over Wagina in 1968 leading to the discovery of terra-rossa-type bauxite. Some 30 million tons of bauxite have been proven on Wagina over an area of approximately 10 km sq. that has an average alumina grade of 47.1 percent.

There had been some tripartite negotiations on mining the deposits in 1977 between the Pacific Aluminium Pty Ltd and the Solomon Islands Government that did not materialise. This is a potential major mining project for Choiseul if it proves to be economically viable.

Siruka area has been observed to host nickel lateritic deposits. Despite intensive work carried out the companies who have done exploration work in the 1960's have relinquished their exploration licences as the nickel price was low and the deposit was uneconomic that time.

Limestone occurs in vast areas of the North West of Choiseul. Some studies have been carried out to evaluate the potential of Cement Factory on Choiseul. The outcrop at Nukiki covers an area of 52 sq.km and forms an upland block rising 440m above sea level. There are other known sites such as Mount Vuasa, Pemba and Wagina that have similar limestone deposits.

The province has already proposed in its five-year development plan to investigate in to the economic potentials of a Cement Factory. It is not known as to how far this intention has progressed to.

4.7 Industry

The Luru Coconut Production Limited (LCPL) Mill is a joint venture between Choiseul Province and CEMA. It was commissioned in November 1999 and its establishment cost was SBD\$469,974. The copra-crushing mill has been extracting oil since 1999 and is located at Tarekukure, Choiseul Bay. The mill employs a manager, an engineer and 10 workers. It buys copra from the CEMA Buying Point and plans to sell all its output to RIPEL. During its first seven months of operation it has produced 71.8 tonnes of coconut oil and 92.1 tonnes of copra cake, all of which have been sold to RIPEL.

The main constraints facing the industry are lack of working capital, efficiency of factory and low output volume of product. This reflects a lack of expert skills and current management of the company.

4.8 Services

The major businesses in Choiseul are logging and sawn timber, general merchandising, retail and wholesale, petrol, oil and lubricants, accommodation services and shipping services (refer table 13 below).

Table 13: Businesses by license category

Activity	Number
Trade store	373
Fuel depot	168
Copra buying	12
Boat transport	11
Coca buying	4
Eskies (fish sales)	4
Video rental	3
Other	16
Total	591

The Province owns a rest house with six rooms located at Choiseul Bay. Billy's Rest house has four bedrooms whilst Kagau Island Resort, located at the most eastern end of the Island. The rate averages SBD35 per night for an adult. There is no licensed restaurant.

Tourism in the Province is minimal but there is potential. Eco-tourism should be promoted to ensure that Choiseuls' cultural heritage is protected whilst it is being exposed to the outside world for income. Scuba Diving, Snorkelling, Bush Walks, Bird Watching, Crocodile watching are potential attractions.

The Five-year Provincial Development Plan 1998-2003 supported “nature tourism” as the type of tourism the province favours the most. This policy values the need for promoting tourism as a potential income earner in the rural areas but at the same time recognises the need to develop tourism in a sustainable manner to protect its cultural heritage. The province identified three potential areas, Kaghao, Taro and Pangoe as its priority tourism areas to develop with an initial budget of \$600,000. Kaghao and Taro have some basic tourism infrastructure already in place.

4.9 Financial institutions

Banking services in the province are very poor, with no commercial bank branches. The Development Bank of Solomon Islands does have a branch in the province and the National Bank of Solomon Islands has an agency on Taro Island. It is mainly dealing with passbook and cheque account services. The poor banking services in the province is costing a lot for the people in transport costs, especially those who are on paid employment such as teachers and nurses posted in the remote villages around the province, and small business operators.

Choiseul Province has a total of four registered credit unions, two in South Choiseul, one each in Northwest and East Choiseul. The following table summarises the details of the Credit Unions.

Table 14: Registered Credit Unions in Choiseul

Name	Date registered	Reg. code	Total members	Activity Status		
				Cash	Loan	Shares
Loquroku	30.11.97	47	79	\$662	\$2,414	\$3,200
Panarui CU Ltd	30.11.97	53	57	\$637	\$457	\$1,057
Voza	28.2.97	125	57	\$2,131	\$0	\$1,628
Matapada	31.7.97	163	56	\$1,915	\$0	\$1,915

Source: SI Credit Union League

5 SOCIAL SERVICES

5.1 Education

There are three levels of education available in Choiseul, Early Child Hood, Primary, and Secondary education. Vocational education caters for school push-outs who dropped out of the primary or secondary levels. Choiseul has one Provincial Secondary School, five Community High Schools, two Rural Training Centres and forty-seven primary schools. Table 15 below shows school types and organisation that runs them.

Table 15: Number of Schools by type and controlling Authority.

School Type	Controlling Authority			Total
	Province	Church	Community	
Provincial Secondary	1	0	0	1
CHS	5	0	0	5
RTC	0	1	1	2
Primary	39	10	0	49
Total	43	11	1	57

Source: Provincial Education Authority

The total school age population (5-14 yrs) for Choiseul is 5,494 (refer table 16 below). This represents 27.5 percent of the Province's total population.

Table 16: School Attendance – 1999

Age	Population 5-14 years old			Attendance percentage		
	Total	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
5	605	317	288	22.1	22.2	22.1
6	609	303	306	33.0	36.3	34.6
7	567	313	254	44.7	49.6	46.9
8	520	272	248	68.0	68.5	68.3
9	574	308	266	78.2	76.3	77.4
10	550	274	276	77.4	85.1	81.3
11	509	275	234	83.6	84.2	83.9
12	532	284	248	85.2	83.1	84.2
13	516	265	251	86.4	82.5	84.5
14	512	266	246	78.9	87.4	83.0
Total	5,494	2,877	2,617	64.6	66.3	65.4

Source: 1999 National Population Census

Total males attending school is 1,859 and females 1,734. This gives a school attendance rate in Choiseul of about 65.4 percent compared to the national rate of 39.7 percent as given in the 1999 national census results. Females attendance rate is 66.3 percent compared to 64.6 percent for males.

The Solomon Islands literacy rate is 64.4 percent and the national literacy rate for the 10-14 year age group is 64.8 percent. Choiseul has a literacy rate of 73.3 percent with 73.3 percent for males and 73.5 percent females. The rate among the 10-14 school age population was less than 70 percent, with a greater percentage of girls than boys being literate. Table 17 below provides an analysis of the literacy rates for specific age groups. The literacy rate for Choiseul in the 10-14 years age group is 64.9 percent, slightly higher than the national rate. The rate for males is 63.0 percent and for females is 67.1 percent.

Table 17: Literacy rates by age groups

Age	Population 5 years and older			Literacy rate (percent)		
	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females
5-9	2,875	1,513	1,362	9.1	10.0	8.0
10-14	2,619	1,364	1,255	64.9	63.0	67.1
15-19	2,080	1,119	961	92.3	91.3	93.4
20-24	1,664	800	864	95.0	93.8	96.1
25-29	1,641	791	850	95.1	94.7	95.5
Total 5+ years	16,724	8,531	8,193	73.3	73.3	73.5

Source: 1999 National Population Census

In 2000, a total of 384 students enrolled at Choiseul Bay Provincial Secondary School. The school runs two classes in all forms from 1-5. Community high schools had an enrolment of 1,042 in 2000, a significantly growing trend from 280 students in 1997. Enrolments in primary schools during the same year reached 3,359. The vocational schools were barely running in 1999 and 2000, but their enrolment in 1997 was 119, which dropped to 86 in 1998.

Table 18: School enrolment by school type – 2000

School Type	Enrolment	Teachers	Teacher/pupil Ratio
PSS	384	17	1:22
CHS	1,042	23	1:45
Primary	3,359	154	1:21
RTC	N/A	N/A	-
Total	4,785	194	1:24

Table 19 below shows the number of push-outs in primary and secondary schools in the provinces for 1997 – 2000. The push-outs for the Provincial Secondary School are higher than the Community High Schools because it has both Form 3 and 5 push-outs, unlike the CHS with only Form 3 push-outs. The figures may however, be lower because the statistics do not track the students' placement at the Solomon Island College of Higher Education, USP Centre, and other institutions. The rapid establishment of Community High Schools during the last five years has been cited as the reason for the decline in the dropout rates at primary school level.

Table 19: School Push-outs by school types

	PSS	CHS	Primary	Total
1997	42	14	-	56
1998	55	50	302	407
1999	66	44	208	318
2000	77	29	270	376
Total/Period	240	137	780	1,157

Source: Provincial Education Authority

5.2 Health

The Provincial Health headquarters is on Taro Island. The Director of Health Services is the head of the health administration as well as being a doctor by profession. Choiseul has no fully established hospital and this is a major concern in the province. However, there is a Mini-Hospital at Sasamunga that serves the province. It has one doctor supported by a German Church Organisation who manages the mini-hospital. A privately built mini-hospital at Ngarione Village has just been handed over to the Province by an indigenous doctor. This will further improve health services in the province.

Choiseul Province has two mini-hospitals, two Area Health Centres, nine clinics and twelve aide posts. The Taro Mini-Hospital is owned and operated by the government, whilst the Sasamunga Mini-Hospital is owned and operated by the community. The government assists the private hospital with funding and additional staff. The major health services provided are outpatient, childcare including immunization, family planning, deliveries, and primary health care. The Sasamunga Mini-Hospital also has a small operating theatre, mini-pharmacy, laboratory and dental facilities. The full operation of Ngarione Mini-Hospital will further improve access to essential health services in the province and save the cost of travel especially for people in the Tepazaka ward.

The main health problems occurring in the province are acute respiratory infections, malaria, and diarrhoea.

There are two qualified doctors in the Province. One is the Director of Health based in the Health headquarters at Taro, and is head of the Sasamunga Mini-Hospital. This means that there is one doctor per 10,004 people.

The Malaria Programme in Choiseul was established in 1991. The programme has not been able to fully control the malaria situation due to logistical problems such as staff housing, transport, and shortage of manpower. Despite this the UNDP/WHO project that started in 1997 and ended in mid 1999 has significantly reduced the incidence of malaria.

Each constituency has three malaria laboratories, giving a total of nine for the province. There is one malaria station for each constituency. Most of the malaria microscopists in the province have dual qualifications; they are generally nurse aids that have been trained to be microscopists. This practice is unique to Choiseul.

Choiseul is one of the provinces that had experienced malaria reduction from the high levels of the eighties and early nineties. There were a total of 4,817 positive malaria cases recorded in 1999. This accounts for 24 percent of the province's population. However the records reveal that the slide positive rate of Choiseul dropped from 27 percent in 1998 to 19 percent in 1999. The total number of malaria cases reduced from 7,127 in 1998 to 4,817 in 1999, a 32.4 percent decline. Malaria mortality or the number of deaths associated with malaria in 1999 was nine.

Distribution of mosquito nets is an effective strategy for the personal protection from malaria. A total of 1,522 new bed nets were distributed in 1999. The Malaria Control Programme visited a total of 8,381 people in 1999. Out of the total number of people visited, 7,941 people were using re-treated bed nets. This represents 95 percent of the people visited and 40 percent of the total population of Choiseul. Community education was an integral part of activities such as bed-net re-treatment and distribution tours. A total of 14 communities with a total population of 1,671 people were covered in 1999.

5.3 Rural water supply & sanitation

The Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project reported that new water systems have been installed in 2001 in Tabarato, Sisiki, Ghoe, Voza, Sipokana, and Sirovangga. The project is assisting the maintenance of the water system in Pimadara, Koloe, Voruvoru, Vudutaru, Qalovai, and Lukuvaru. The project also reported that sanitation projects have been set up in Wagina, Vavudu, Kiriqela, and Kerepaqara.

The problems cited by the project are the delay in supply of materials from headquarters to provincial centres or project sites, the inability of communities to meet the required 25 percent cash contribution, apart from local materials and free labour. Other issues include the lack of stock for fittings, pipes, etc. at provincial centres, the transportation problem for the substations, and the lack of housing for staff at Taro and substations.

5.4 Women, Youth, Sport & Disabled

The Choiseul Provincial Government has recognised the role of women in development by setting up a Women's Development Office. Through this office, the Provincial Government promotes greater involvement of women in education, training and employment. The office was established at the end of 1999 and is involved in data collection on issues affecting women and in coordinating training activities, which include skills improvement courses.

Examples of recent activities are courses on sewing machine maintenance and food processing. Women's organisations such as the United Church Women's Fellowship, Dorcas Society and National Council of Women are registered with the office. The Office plans to secure land for a provincial training and resource centre.

Church groups through their youth organisations mainly carry out youth development in the province. In the province there are a total of 35 Pathfinder Groups (SDA Youth), 86 Youth groups (United Church Youths), one Girl Guide and 2 Boys Brigade groups.

The main sports activities in the Choiseul are soccer, netball, volleyball and boxing. Soccer is more organised than other sports. Each year there is a Choiseul Provincial Cup Tournament, which each ward sends a representative soccer team to compete for the Cup. Potential players are annually identified by officials to represent the province in the national soccer tournament for the prestigious Solomon Cup. There are no proper organised tournaments for netball. However, throughout the year there are special occasions when netball and soccer teams compete in seven-a-side tournaments organised by various communities to raise funds for new church buildings, school classrooms or teacher's houses, health projects etc. These kinds of sports activities are very popular in Choiseul.

Volleyball is a popular game in Wagina where the Micronesian Community (Gilbertese) lives. Annually they represent Choiseul at the National Volleyball Championships and for some years Choiseul has been the national champion in this sport.

Boxing is an old sport for many present men of Choiseul, however there are no organised provincial boxing tournaments. Choiseul and Shortland sportsmen have been the dominating force in boxing in the history of Solomon Islands. Mr. Jay Makana of Choiseul won the first Boxing Gold Medal for the Solomon Islands in an international tournament, at the 1981 South Pacific Mini-Games. With the establishment of the Choiseul Boxing Association this year it is hoped that there will be organised boxing tournaments at the provincial level.

According to the 1999 National Population Census there are a total of 559 people with some kind of disability accounting for approximately 2.8 percent of the Choiseul population. Figure 9 gives an indication of the disabled population by sex and by type of disability. Male disability is slightly higher with a total of 288, compared to females with 271 disabled. Sight disability is the most common with 170 cases, followed by multiple disabilities (105), moving (100) and hearing (83) disabilities.

6 PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

6.1 Revenue

Choiseul has a very narrow revenue base because there is little economic development-taking place in the province. The local revenue sources regulated by the province are mainly business licence fees, head taxes (basic rates), rent and accommodation, and other fees. Table 20 provides a summary of budgeted revenue and actual collections in the last 3 years.

Table 20: Local revenue collections

	Budget	Actual	Difference	Collection rate
1998	929,320	281,663	-647,657	30.3%
1999	929,320	429,619	-499,701	46.2%
2000	929,320	171,835	-757,485	18.5%

Source: Provincial Education Authority

The local revenue collected for the three-year period shows a disturbing trend of under collection of revenue. This could be attributed to a weak revenue administration and enforcement system but in light of the budgeted numbers being the same each year it is more likely the result of unrealistic budgeting. A major problem with revenue collection in the province is the business owners and ratepayers general unwillingness to pay, due to a lack of awareness on how the money collected is spent for the people's benefit. The fall in local revenues in 2000 was due to the suspension in operations of the Eagon Logging Co. Most of the local revenues collected come from business licenses and other charges paid by Eagon.

There is limited capacity for the Provincial Government to increase its local revenue with the current structure of the economy. The majority of the population in the Province rely on subsistence agriculture and fishing supplemented by limited cash based activity to provide for school fees, kerosene, and some basic foods such as rice. As a result there is low absorptive capacity for the Provincial Government to increase or introduce new taxes.

Choiseul Province, like the other Provinces, depends heavily on the national government for finances to fund services in the Province (refer table 21 below). As well as these direct grants, a significant amount of salaries and wages are paid directly by the National Government, e.g. teachers, health workers, police. A conservative estimate for this revenue was \$4,677,748 in 2000. This is the largest component of the provincial revenue, being more than twice as large as the direct grant.

Table 21: Recurrent grants by type

	1998	1999	2000
Recurrent Service	1,055,210	897,419	937,139
Education	412,855	366,804	424,350
Health Grant	599,489	501,442	623,420
Total	2,067,554	1,765,665	1,984,909

Source: Ministry of Provincial Government & Rural Development

6.2 Recurrent expenditure

Table 22 provides actual recurrent expenditures for 1998-2000. As can be seen by the table the largest component is wages and this is without including the \$4.7 million paid directly by the national government each year.

Table 22: Recurrent expenditure

	1998	1999	2000
Wages	576,485	516,224	359,995
Office Expenses	17,859	74,741	24,781
Travel & Transport	146,745	122,620	65,742
Telephones	39,863	20,815	18,017
POL	92,464	60,877	69,633
Office Equipment	19,655	18,466	0
Ward Grant	212,636	195,233	210,000
Dollar to Dollar	52,732	34,695	2,500
Choiseul Bay PSS	197,945	234,840	0
Teachers Travel	33,540	36,600	22,726
Sports	27,866	64,337	43,466
2 nd Appointed Day	61,356	81,066	8,000
Total	1,479,147	1,402,613	1,184,855

Source: Provincial Treasury-Taro

There appears to be a lack of effective fiscal responsibility legislation to ensure transparency, accountability, and fiscal discipline at the provincial level. In line with the lack of legislation, there does not appear to be any reporting systems in place, or they are not being used, to ensure accountability to villages/constituencies for expenditures at the provincial government level.

It is important for provincial governments to articulate clear fiscal policies and strategies for their provinces, in areas such as; provincial government share of the local economy;

proposed provincial expenditure by function; and proposed expenditure within functions (governance, policy advice, social services, private sector development). These policies and strategies are the accountability tools that the villages/constituencies will use to measure the performance of the Provincial Government.

6.3 Development budget

The development budget of the Province is almost entirely supported by aid donors through the national government. Table 23 below shows the development budget for the last 3 years, including the source of funds. It should be noted that this is budget data and not in all cases have the projects gone ahead or the money been spent. This development budget does not cover all sectors but focuses on physical infrastructure. It excludes national projects in areas such as health and education, where the provincial breakdown of budget totals is not readily available.

Table 23: Development projects

Approved Projects	1998	1999	2000	Donor
Shipping Service	1,500,000	-	-	PNG
Road Rehabilitation	-	-	1,700,000	STABEX, World Bank
Copra Crushing Mill	100,000	-	-	CEMA/Choiseul Province
Provincial Staff Housing	92,634	144,233	-	SIG
Total	1,692,634	144,233	1,700,000	

The Shipping Service project is complete and the Luru Shipping Company now in full operation. Road Rehabilitation is still ongoing at Kolobangara to Sepa Road in the South constituency. The Copra Crushing Mill project has also been completed and the Luru Coconuts Products Ltd (LCPL) was commissioned in November 1999.

Choiseul Province also has a five-year provincial development plan 1998-2003. This document provides some understanding of the key development areas that have been identified by the Provincial Government to be implemented during this period.

6.4 Staffing

The Central Government is the main supplier of manpower for the province under the approved manpower establishment each year. Each province is required to make a submission to the Central Government through the appropriate government ministry, and the Ministry of Provincial Government and Rural Development. Officers seconded by the government to the province fall under the general public service conditions of service as provided by the Public Service General Orders and their codes of conduct is governed by the Public Service Regulations Act.

The Provincial Secretary is the Chief Executive Officer deployed by the central government to head the administrative set-up in the province. His key role is to provide for

the administration support and technical advice to the Premier and the Provincial Executive. He is supported by a Deputy Provincial Secretary, a Provincial Treasurer and a Deputy Treasurer, and Senior Technical Officers heading the technical divisions in the province.

The ongoing economic problems faced by the central government continue to affect the province's manpower pool. Most positions approved under the manpower establishment are not filled due to financial difficulties faced by the Government.

Government supplies mostly senior and technical staff whilst the province recruits the junior staff directly from the provincial budget. This means that there are two categories of staffing in the province. Table 24 below shows the staffing situation of the province for the year 2001.

Table 24: Staffing establishment - 2001

Department	Filled	Vacant	Total
Administration	4	0	4
Agriculture	13	0	13
Fisheries	2	0	2
Health	80	0	80
Environmental Health	8	0	8
Works	1	0	1
Education	2	1	3
Planning	0	1	1
Physical planning	2	0	2
Police	7	0	7
Meteorology	2	0	2
Forestry	3	0	3
Total Overall	124	2	126

The table shows the total approved staff establishment including both National Government seconded positions and Provincial Government direct employees, including vacant posts in the province. However, the exact number of direct employees cannot be determined due to lack of data with only the Health sector providing full details of the total number of staff both seconded and direct employees who are physically at post.

According to the year 2001 Manpower Establishment the province has a total of ten seconded staff approved compared to thirteen for year 2000 as result of redeployment of the Physical Planning Section and abolishment of posts through redundancy exercises. These seconded staff are for the Administration, Finance, Planning and Physical Planning, Education Works and Fisheries. The seconded staff for Agriculture, Health, Environmental

Health, Physical Planning, Police, Forestry and Meteorology Services are directly controlled by their respective technical ministries of the central government. They make up a total of 76 Seconded staffs.

6.5 Service delivery

There are three substations in the province, Malangono in South Choiseul, Pangoe in East Choiseul and Paqobiru in Northwest Choiseul. Taro in Northwest Choiseul is the provincial capital. The substation at Malangono only has an Assistant Administrative Officer (AAO), Agricultural Field Officer and Malaria technician. The other two substations do not have all these officers in one place.

The province established the Choiseul Investment Authority (CHIA) in 1995 to be its investment and business arm under the provisions of the Choiseul Province Investment Authority Ordinance 1995. Its main functions are stipulated in section 4 of the ordinance. Its operations have been limited due to its lack of financial capital and entrepreneurial expertise.

Since its set-up CHIA has invested in the “Lauru Shipping Company Ltd” now running a fortnightly shipping service to the province. Its second major business venture is the “Lauru Coconut Products Limited”, a joint venture with CEMA, which is not performing well at the moment. CHIA has plans for 1999-2003 to venture into the tourism industry, improve current shipping services, and undertake fishery development with an estimated investment valued at \$4.5 million. Its plans to borrow the money to undertake this investment have not been successful.