

# Research of Aspirations and Perceptions

**Combating commercial exploitation of children and violence  
against women in remote regions of the Western Pacific  
impacted by large scale commercial logging**

Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu 2010



# Acknowledgements

On behalf of my Live & Learn colleagues and myself, I would like to warmly thank the many people who took part in this research. Most importantly we would like to thank the many land owners and villagers who contributed to the research. They often came long distances to attend meetings with us, and they shared their experiences frankly and fearlessly. The Live & Learn teams had anticipated that villagers and land owners, particularly women, might be reluctant to talk about issues relating to logging because of fear of reprisals from logging companies. We found, however, that in all three countries people were keen to talk about their experience and to share their perceptions. It is clear that they want change for the better in their communities, and are prepared to work actively to achieve it.

We are most grateful too to members of church communities, both lay people, church officials, and priests and nuns. Many of the priests, nuns and church officials work in very remote communities where they are the sole providers of social and health services. The networks we were able to access through church women's organizations and through active lay people were invaluable. They all shared their wealth of information generously and their commitment to human rights and to bettering the lives of people in remote areas was very evident.

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*Pauline Robinson*



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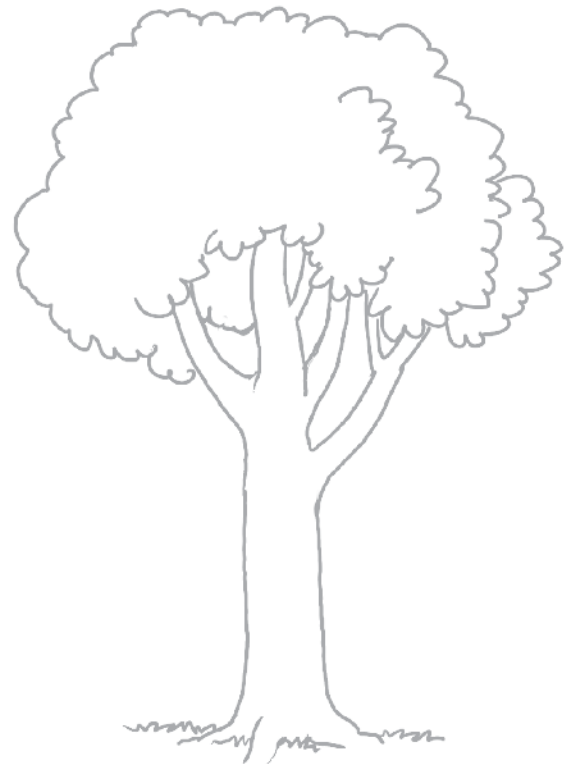
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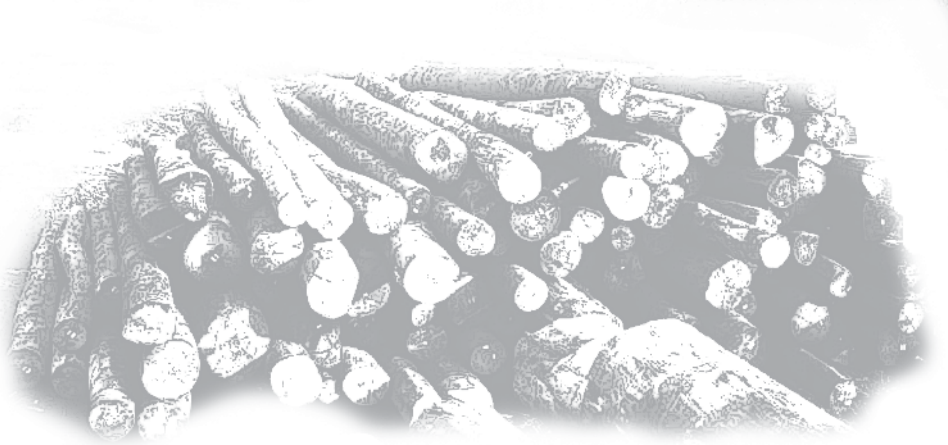
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## Abbreviations

CIMC	Consultative Implementation and Monitoring Committee
NGO	Non-government Organization
PNG	Papua New Guinea
RAMSI	Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands
RAP	Research of Aspirations and Perceptions
RRRT	Regional Rights Resource Team
SIIPHRA	Solomon Islands Indigenous Peoples Human Rights Association
SINPA	Solomon Islands NGO Partnership Agreement
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women

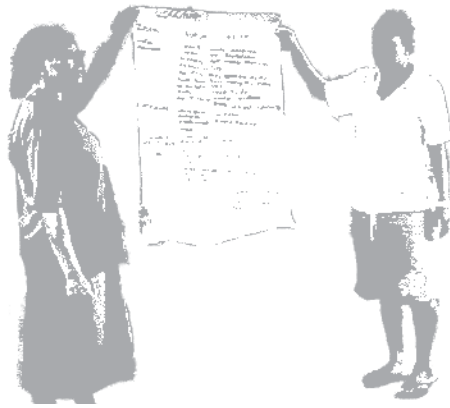




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# 1

## Executive Summary

Combating Commercial Exploitation of Children and Violence Against Women in Remote areas of the Western Pacific is a project funded for three years by the European Union. The project focuses on the impact of large scale commercial logging on human rights in remote areas of Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

The RAP research found that in all three countries logging has impacted negatively on the lives of ordinary villagers. It found that the effects range from immediate acute effects in areas where logging is currently occurring, to chronic long term effects where logging has ceased but its legacy still impacts on the lives and human rights of villagers. In Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands the impact is both immediate and long term. In Vanuatu, where large scale logging has ceased, communities are still suffering from the long term effects of logging.

While some land owners have received financial benefits from logging, their returns have been small when compared with the profits made by the logging companies. In all three countries, logging companies have failed to provide promised roads, bridges, wharfs, schools and clinics. Rather than bringing development, logging has brought environmental devastation and human rights abuse, particularly of women and children. Logging has resulted in increased stress in communities already facing pressures from population increase, friction over land issues, and pressure on food security due to climate change. The impact of logging on human rights is most severe for women and children in all three countries.

The Report found that journalists in the three countries have not had an opportunity for training on human rights. Across the three countries they were enthusiastic about participating in such training and in developing their investigative journalism skills. The Forest Education and Media Center run by Live & Learn in Solomon Islands has extensive experience in this area and is well placed to lead the implementation of the media training.

There are a number of other NGOs and church organizations working in the human rights area. The RAP research found that there would be considerable benefit in working closely with these organizations. In many cases churches will provide entry points in villages for human rights work.

The report also noted the benefit that will be gained from regional cooperation across the three Live & Learn offices involved in the project.

A summary of recommendations is provided on page 41.

Rather than bringing development, logging has brought environmental devastation and human rights abuse, particularly of women and children.







# 2

## Introduction

Combating Commercial Exploitation of Children and Violence Against Women in Remote areas of the Western Pacific is a project funded for three years by the European Union. The project focuses on the impact of large scale commercial logging on life in remote areas of Papua New Guinea (PNG), Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

This Research of Aspirations and Perceptions (RAP) is the first stage of the project. The RAP process is a well established methodology used by Live & Learn as a project initiation process. The RAP is designed to ensure that the project is grounded in 'where people are' and reflects the values, capacity and perceptions of the communities in which the project will be located. It provides a basis for planning the development of training resources and for making decisions about how best to mobilize communities.

The focus of this RAP report is on the human rights impact of logging in Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. In all three countries logging has impacted negatively on the lives of ordinary villagers. While some land owners have received financial benefits from logging, their returns have been small when compared with the profits made by the logging companies. In all three countries, logging companies have failed to provide promised roads, bridges, wharfs, schools and clinics. Rather than bringing development, logging has brought environmental devastation and human rights abuse, particularly of women and children. Logging has resulted in increased stress in communities already facing pressures from population increase, friction over land issues and pressure on food security due to climate change. The situation in each of the three countries is somewhat different, and specific information on the country context is provided in the background section of the country findings.

The focus of this RAP report is on the human rights impact of logging in Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. In all three countries logging has impacted negatively on the lives of ordinary villagers.

The report also includes regional findings. This project has been conceived as a regional project rather than simply as a project operating in three countries. The capacity of Live & Learn to capture the potential offered by a regional approach has been greatly strengthened by the recent appointment of a Pacific Regional Manager. The project will link project officers working in each of the three countries so that sharing of information, successes and challenges becomes part of the fabric of the project. Each of the offices brings different strengths and challenges. The project will capitalize on these strengths to ensure that maximum value is obtained from donor funding.

## Regional Findings

### **1. The impacts of logging on human rights in communities ranges from immediate acute effects where logging is currently occurring, through to chronic long term effects where logging has ceased, but its legacy still impacts on the lives of villagers and on their human rights. It is important to work with communities across this spectrum and to recognize that community needs in relation to supporting human rights will be different depending on where communities are in this spectrum.**

In communities where logging is currently being undertaken, the effects on human rights are immediate and acute. In both Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands many communities are currently being logged with devastating consequences. Earlier reports on the impacts of logging on human rights in both these countries document this impact. (Gay, 2009 ;Center for Environmental Law and Community Rights and Australian Conservation Foundation, 2006 ;Herbert, 2007 ;Help Resources, 2005). Our research, while modest in scale, confirms the findings of these reports and indicates that these problems are still occurring. It is important to note that the RAP research was not conducted in situ in logging impacted villages. We did speak to land owners from logging impacted villages, and to groups such as church workers who do deal directly with the villagers. The issues which all research participants raised were so consistent and so similar to the findings of other research that the researchers credited them with a high degree of veracity. These

impacts are detailed in the individual country findings however, in summary, they are:

- Severe environmental effects on land, water and lagoons
- Severe human rights impacts on women and children including sexual exploitation
- Poor conditions for workers in logging camps including unsafe conditions, low wages and underage labour
- Friction within communities over the distribution of financial benefits of logging
- Consistent failure of logging operators to honour promises such as building of schools, roads and wharfs.

Unfortunately once the loggers leave a village, the effects of logging do not stop. The environmental impact leaves long term problems. The breakdown of village structures and the increase in tension within the village is long term. Years later, the human rights impacts of logging are still being felt.

As one of the Live & Learn SINPA coordinators in Solomon Islands said

*'Don't write us off because the logging has stopped. We are still suffering years later. We still need help to get our rights.'*

It is important in a project of this kind to work with villages suffering the long term chronic effects of logging as well as those which are currently being logged. If these long term effects are not dealt with, the cycle of disadvantage is continued and deepened. Work is needed to help the villages rebuild a positive culture in which human rights are respected and in which inclusive decision making becomes a norm.

In developing plans for how to work with villages, the project teams will need to consider where in this spectrum from acute to chronic impacts of logging the villages are situated. In those villages where logging is currently occurring, work will need to focus on assisting people to understand their rights and to obtain help in enforcing those rights. In those suffering the long term effects of logging, as well as assisting villagers to understand their rights, the focus will need to be on assisting to rebuild village culture in a way that is inclusive and which respects human rights.

In Solomon Islands and PNG the project teams will be working mainly with villages where logging is active

as well as some where logging has finished but the impact is still very evident. In Vanuatu large scale logging has ceased, although mobile saw mills are still undertaking small scale logging. Here the project will work with areas where reforestation is taking place, and will need to assist the villages in developing inclusive decision making which respects human rights.

## Recommendation

### **2. Live & Learn should work in both areas where logging is currently occurring and areas where past logging is still impacting on human rights.**

In those villages where logging is currently occurring, work will need to focus on assisting people to understand their rights and to obtain help in enforcing those rights. In those suffering the long term effects of logging, as well as assisting villagers to understand their rights, the focus will need to be on assisting to rebuild village culture in a way that is inclusive and which respects human rights.

### **3. The impacts of logging are most severe for women and children**

There is no doubt that the most severe impact of logging is on women and children. All the villagers we spoke to, as well as colleagues in NGOs, church groups and provincial government offices agreed this point.

There are several reasons for this. Firstly, the role of women as primary providers of food and medicine through foraging, fishing and food gardening, means that the environmental impacts of logging severely impact on their lives. The scarcity of food is felt by everyone in the villages, however it is the women who must walk further to gardens, sources of safe water, and fishing grounds. They must also carry heavy loads further. In addition, the extra distance impacts on their personal safety. Further from the village, they are more vulnerable and more likely to be subject to rape or other harassment.

A second reason for the extra hardship of women lies in Melanesian culture. The position of women has not traditionally been one of equality. In patriarchal communities, women have had few rights in village decision making. As the village structures have been subject to stress through logging, the situation for women has worsened. Levels of violence against women have increased. Even in matriarchal communities, women reported that their traditional role as custodian of land has been eroded. Women, because of gender disparities in educational levels, gender biases in the labour market, and greater male urban migration, are less able to negotiate with outsiders, particularly representatives of foreign logging companies. As the land is commodified, the traditional rights of women as land owners, in matriarchal societies are eroded.



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Thirdly, both women and children are vulnerable to sexual exploitation. This has been documented in both the Solomon Islands (Herbert, 2007) and Papua New Guinea (Help Resources, 2005 ;Center for Environmental Law and Community Rights and Australian Conservation Foundation, 2006). Our research, while limited, certainly provided anecdotal confirmation of this picture.

There were many stories told to us about selling of young women to 'Asian loggers' as well as stories of young women voluntarily entering into relationships with the loggers. The stories follow a pattern. The young women, either voluntarily or through family coercion enter into the relationships with Asian loggers. They have unprotected sex and end up pregnant. They stay with the logger for the duration of his contract. Almost always, the logger leaves and the woman and child or children are abandoned. In some cases, the logger makes a token payment to the woman, but that is the extent of his acceptance of responsibility for the woman and his children. The women are often marginalized by the community. They may seek out a similar relationship with another logger, or they may leave the community. The children are often left with relatives. These relatives are usually struggling to feed their own families and the extra mouth to feed places further stress on the relatives. Many of these women end up drifting to the city and becoming sex workers.

Almost everyone we spoke to in PNG and in Solomon Islands during the course of the RAP research talked about the so called 'Asian babies'. Considerable anxiety was expressed about the impact of these children on village culture. It was impossible in this small scale research to attempt to gauge the numbers of these children however in both countries they are clearly seen as a threat to the life and culture of villages.

In patriarchal villages, they cannot inherit land because land comes through the line of the father. This automatically disadvantages these children. Even in matriarchal villages where land is inherited through women, their rights to land are very uncertain. Because their mothers often leave their village, their rights of inheritance may not be recognized by the rest of the village. We heard mixed stories about these children. One catholic priest in PNG said that they are well looked after and that they are often very clever children. He said that some of them are doing very well. The majority of people we spoke to however said that they are not treated well. They said that the 'Asian children' are treated badly by other village children. They are called names and ostracized. Often the relatives they are left with see them as a burden and do not treat them well.

These so called 'Asian babies' are innocent victims of logging. There seems little doubt that in some cases they are subject to discrimination and even to cruel and humiliating treatment. This is an aspect of human rights infringement which is not completely comfortable for local villagers in PNG and Solomon Islands to confront. Nevertheless the rights of these children must be taken into account in the work of this project. In working with villagers, the project teams will need to seek ways to assist in integrating these children as full citizens within their communities.



## Recommendation

4. **The project should place special emphasis on the human rights of women and children, but this should be done in a 'whole community' context.**

This work will need to be carried out in a way that is sensitive to the needs of women and children but which does not further jeopardize their position. Work will need to be done in a number of ways

- By seeking the support of men, particularly those in positions of influence in the community to improve the situation of women and children
- By working with communities as a whole to improve inclusive decision making and to reduce tension across the whole community
- By educating men, women and children about human rights
- By working with individual women and children to seek legal remedies to assist in enforcing their human rights.

## Recommendation

5. **The project should seek opportunities to assist in the full integration of mixed race children, the so called 'Asian babies', into their communities.**

It will need to assist villagers to see that these children are innocent victims of logging, and should be accorded their full human rights as members of the community.

6. **Logging is only one of a number of developments which are impacting on the life and human rights of villagers. It is not possible or desirable to artificially separate logging from other aspects of change happening in villages. Logging, either past or present, is the common factor in our choice of villages with which to work, however our work must respect the complexity and multi-faceted nature of people's lives.**

The Melanesian countries of the Pacific are undergoing rapid change. Within the three countries where



this project is located, there are quite a number of factors which are putting stress on both individuals and communities. Logging intersects with these other pressures resulting in poorer functioning of communities, increased tension within communities and an erosion of basic human rights. Some of these other inter-linked pressures which were noted in the course of the research for the RAP are

Population pressures – population in all three countries is growing rapidly and in all three countries a large percentage of the population is under 25.

Both the population increase and the population profile means that land is becoming scarcer. Employment opportunities are also limited and are focused around the urban centers resulting in urban drift and squatter populations around urban centers.

There is also internal population migration as a result of industries such as palm oil, mining and to a lesser extent logging. These populations also put pressure on land, and are often seen to threaten local culture. This leads to increasing community tensions.

**Land issues** – in all three countries, much of the tension within communities focuses around land. There is tension between land owners and land users, resentment about speculation in land, tensions arising



from land inheritance issues as a result of increasing population, problems with squatting on land, and changes to the nature of land ownership. Most land in all three countries is customary land and there is a profound connection between communities and their lands. The western concept of land ownership with clearly defined boundaries and unambiguous, legally defined ownership has not been the norm in the Pacific. An underlying cause of tension in all three countries lies in the changing relationship between people and land. As land becomes a commodity to be traded for money, or to be used as the basis for royalty payments, clear title is required. There is not always a community consensus regarding boundaries or even ownership of land. The resulting tension is placing increasing stress on community life.

**Other forms of land use including mining and palm oil plantations** - logging is not the only industry that is impacting negatively on villages. In PNG and Solomon Islands in particular, mining and palm oil are other land uses which may have negative outcomes for villagers. In some cases, for example in New Ireland in PNG, both mining and logging are impacting on the same areas. In Vanuatu there are proposals to establish palm oil plantations, and to mine for gold.

**Climate change and food security issues** – exacerbating the land issues are problems caused by the changing climate of the Pacific. Climate predictions for this region of the Pacific indicate an increase in extreme weather events and overall an increase in

rainfall (Bettencourt et al., 2006). Both these climate change effects, which are already happening, are putting increased pressure on communities. Food security is reduced and there is an increasing reliance on white rice as a substitute for indigenous root crops with negative nutritional consequences. Logging, with its devastating and long term environmental impacts, further worsens this situation.

**Increasing participation in the cash economy** – non-urban communities across all three countries have traditionally relied on subsistence agriculture. Increasingly, however, cash is playing a bigger part in the life of communities. Villagers need cash to pay for school fees, transport and consumables such as kerosene. This creates community stress in a number of ways. It creates division and resentment between those who have cash and those who do not. Sudden wealth from land sales or from royalties can result in family stresses including broken marriages. Low literacy levels in some communities combined with lack of financial experience can result in squandering of money for little real benefit.

Given all these stress factors intersecting with logging, and the complexity of the problems facing communities, it is critical to the success of the project that sustained work be done with communities. Going into communities to deliver training on human rights and then not providing follow up support would raise expectations without delivering lasting benefits.

# Recommendation

- 7. The project should take a holistic approach to human rights in communities. In working to improve human rights, the project must recognize that logging is only one factor that is impacting on the lives and human rights of villagers.

It will be important not to artificially separate out logging and try to work only on this issue.

- 8. Journalists are enthusiastic about opportunities for human rights training and keen to take up opportunities for investigative reporting on logging issues.

There were some differences in the press across the three countries, nevertheless there was considerable enthusiasm among journalist across the board for human rights training and opportunities to undertake internships on logging related issues. Across the three countries, journalists commented on the difficulties in pursuing stories outside the major urban centers because of cost pressures and logistical issues. They also commented across the three countries on the pressure to cover a wide range of issues, and the difficulty in developing specialized knowledge in any particular area.

The research indicates that the media training should cover investigative reporting skills, human rights, and issues relating to logging in each of the countries as



The work already done in the Solomon Islands in the Forest Media and Education Center should be capitalized on.

well as more broadly across the Pacific. Because of its strength and experience in the media area, the training should be developed by the Live & Learn Forest Education and Media Center in the Solomon Islands with input from all Live & Learn country offices and the Media Councils of all three countries.

Internships should consist of short focused opportunities for journalists to report on logging issues particularly in the rural areas. Live & Learn should provide travel expense and per diems to cover journalists, however they would take on the assignments as part of their normal workload with their employer. Journalists should travel with Live & Learn staff in the field. A guide for journalists undertaking the internships will need to be developed which sets out the support which will be provided by Live & Learn, and the expectations regarding the production of stories as a result of the internships. In establishing the internships, detailed discussion will need to be pursued with management of media outlets in each country to clarify the expectations of the employers.

## Recommendation

- 9. In developing the regional press strategy, the work already done in the Solomon Islands in the Forest Media and Education Center should be capitalized on. The Center should spear head the work on the press strategy and play a key role in the development and mobilization of the press training.**



The training resources should include information on logging issues in each of the target countries, on human rights and on investigative journalism. The internships should be concentrated in Papua New Guinea and in Solomon Islands where the most acute impacts of logging are being felt. Guidelines for the internships should be developed as part of the resource development process. All interns should agree in writing to abide by the Live & Learn Code of Conduct and relevant sections of the Good Practice Manual before undertaking any field work.

- 10. Opportunities exist to work collaboratively with other NGOs to obtain maximum impact from donor funding.**

Several other NGO are working in similar areas to this project and benefit will be gained by sharing information, contacts and even in some cases by jointly planning training and follow up programs. Co-operation of this kind will ensure that effort is not duplicated and that the maximum use is made of available resources.

Transparency International is working in all three countries on its Forest Integrity Governance Program. This program, while having a greater emphasis on



fighting corruption, shares many common concerns and approaches with this Live & Learn project. In all three countries, the local branches of Transparency International have expressed a keen interest in working closely with Live & Learn.

Men's Advocacy programs are running in all three countries. These programs train men who are committed to reducing violence against women. Involvement of men in the fight for women's rights is a powerful strategy. Men who have done the Male Advocacy training should be encouraged to also work as human rights defenders. The Pacific Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT) is actively involved in supporting the struggle for human rights in the Pacific and has conducted para-legal training in all three countries. Live & Learn will be working closely with RRRT as our legal partner in this project. Church groups in all three countries are also active in the human rights struggle. Churches will be critical entry points for this project and close working relationships will be essential.

The success of the project will also depend on project teams developing good working relationships with social welfare support groups. Live & Learn is not a social welfare organization and where project teams become aware of human rights abuses they will need to engage with both government and NGO social welfare organizations to provide support for victims.

## Recommendation

- 11. The project team should work closely with other NGOs and church groups to maximize the impact of the project and to avoid any possible duplication.**
- 12. Strong regional collaboration across the Live & Learn offices involved in the project will strengthen project outcomes.**

Live & Learn has recently moved to strengthen its regional management structure in the Pacific with the appointment of a Pacific Regional Manager. This development is particularly timely with a number of regional projects, including this one, being launched. The intention of this new structure is to give greater support to Live & Learn country managers in the

Pacific and to strengthen collaboration across the Pacific offices.

The three Live & Learn offices involved in the project bring different strengths to the project. The outcomes from the project can be greatly enhanced by a genuinely regional approach. A good example of this is in the area of the media. Live & Learn in Solomon Islands has a well established Forest Education and Media Center staffed by a highly experienced full time journalist. As a result this, extensive work has already been done in compiling information on logging in Solomon Islands and across the Pacific. They have an excellent working relationship with the Media Council in Solomon Islands and through them to the Media Councils in the other two countries. They have a strong network of journalists and have already developed and tested some training materials. The Solomon Islands office is in an excellent position to lead the press strategy across the project. It will be possible to capitalize on this strength and experience to quickly mobilize a training program for journalists and to establish internships.

## Recommendation

- 13. Every opportunity should be sought to make the project genuinely regional in nature. Close communication and information sharing should be established across the project teams and strengths in individual offices should be utilized.**





# 3

## Country Findings

### Solomon Islands

#### Background

Solomon Islands is a scattered archipelago of nearly one thousand mountainous islands and coral atolls covering a land mass of approximately 28,000 sq miles. The geography of the country poses significant challenges in itself. Travel between islands is expensive and time consuming and services such as inter-island ferries can be infrequent particularly for the more remote islands.

Solomon Islands is on the UNDP list of least developed nations and has a life expectancy of 65.8, an adult literacy rate of 76% and a per head GDP of \$US1,725. It is ranked 135 out of 182 on the Human Development Index (United Nations Development Program, 2007).

The population is predominantly rural with around 80% relying on subsistence agriculture and small scale income generating activities such as fresh produce marketing and growing cash crops for export (AusAID, 2006). There is a sharp divide in income and access to services between rural and urban populations. A survey by the Government Statistics Office in 2006 showed that while the capital, Honiara, has only around 11% of the population, average household incomes in the capital are three times those of rural households.

Solomon Islands has suffered considerable political instability. The Tensions, a period of internal conflict which lasted from 1998 to 2003, was characterized by general lawlessness, extortion and open corruption. While fighting during The Tensions was conducted on ethnic lines, it could be argued that the causes lay in land issues, population pressures, urban drift and poverty. These issues are still evident in Solomon Islands today. While the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) has stabilized the law and order situation and is doing considerable work in capacity building, the future remains uncertain. At the time

An estimated one in six people is formally employed in the forest sector. Over recent years the country has been even more dependent on log exports as other major sources of export income were devastated during the Tensions.

Commercial logging is one of the most important sources of exports and government revenues for the Solomon Islands, and has been relied on by past governments as a major source of growth.

of writing, a national election was about to be held and the outcomes of this will have a large influence on the future stability of the country.

Commercial logging is one of the most important sources of exports and government revenues for the Solomon Islands, and has been relied on by past governments as a major source of growth. Logging comprises the single biggest industry in the country. An estimated one in six people is formally employed in the forest sector. Over recent years the country has been even more dependent on log exports as other major sources of export income were devastated during the Tensions. Current logging levels are unsustainable. The contribution of logging to the economy is predicted to begin falling by 2012, and by 2013 its contribution to the economy will be negligible. This will result in a loss of rural employment, foreign exchange earnings, and government revenues (Gay, 2009).

Logging has had a devastating effect on rural communities with severe impacts on the environment and on the social fabric of the communities. Among all those involved in the industry, resource owners receive the least benefit. Loggers usually receive 60% of revenue while land owners receive 40%. From this 40%, duty of 25% must be paid leaving only 15%. Middlemen are often involved in brokering logging arrangements and they take a further 10% leaving only 5% for landowners. Although logging did offer some prospects for economic and social development in rural areas, in fact it has only worsened the condition of rural people and increased the inequality between them and the urban population.

The impact of logging on human rights in the Solomon Islands has been severe. In a pioneering study, Herbert (2007) graphically showed the commercial sexual exploitation of children in remote communities. The research done by Asker (2009) confirms these effects on women and children. Asker's research also

shows the devastating environmental consequences of logging and the impact this has had on the life of the community and their human rights. The Live & Learn Forest Education and Media Center has also gathered many stories about the impact of logging on human rights as well as extensive evidence of the stress that logging is causing in communities. Charles Stennett, the journalist who runs the Live & Learn Forest Education and Media Center, has regularly reported on human rights abuses on his Sunday radio program broadcast on the Solomon Islands National Broadcast Commission. More recently the Center has had a half page report in the Sunday edition of the Solomon Star which has covered logging issues including environmental concerns and human rights issues.

in the course of the research we met with a wide range of people from NGOs, church groups and the press. Stories told to the researchers during these meetings confirmed that these human rights abuses are still occurring.





# Findings

## 1. Logging has a severe impact on human rights in Solomon Islands in both communities where logging is currently occurring and in communities where logging has occurred in the past.

These impacts include:

**Reduced food security and reduced access to clean water** – logging has reduced the availability of suitable land for gardens, and traditional hunting grounds are reduced or no longer exist. The pollution and sedimentation caused by run-off from logged areas impacts on fishing. The run off also causes soil erosion. The use of chemicals for preserving logs, and spills of oil used for machinery, are impacting on the supply of clean water. Community members from Tamboko, where logging has occurred in the recent past, gave many examples of this. Asked to list the changes in their gardens after logging they listed

- Not much fertile land available
- More introduced pests and diseases
- Less food varieties available
- Eat more introduced and processed food
- Changes in relation to water they identified were
- More pollution on streams, rivers and sea
- Rivers and streams often dried up
- No proper sanitation
- Extinction of most water and sea resources
- Trees cut and logged
- Plants species extinct
- Frequent heavy flooding
- Soil erosion

This issue also came through strongly in the Live & Learn SINPA RAP. For example a woman from Central Bauro says,

*“Logging companies get big benefits while we get very little and our environment, rivers and seas are damaged. The loggers they go home some day and we are left here with nothing”*

(Asker, 2009)

**Loss of economic resources** - forests have traditionally provided goods for trade as well as for local use including food, medicine, materials for building canoes and construction materials. These resources were available to the whole community however the money from royalties is available only to certain land owners and is often used to buy consumer goods rather than life essentials.

One of the Live & Learn SINPA Project coordinators expressed this vividly when she said,

*“We no longer own our lands. We have lost the right to use natural resources. Our life is not longer sustainable”*

Another of the Live & Learn SINPA coordinators said,

*“We have lost the rights to public land. We have lost wild yams and bush food. We cannot hunt anymore.”*

**Increased stress within communities** - logging has led to an increase in tensions within communities. There are tensions between those who have money from logging and those who do not. Where there is money there is friction over how it is spent. The additional cash income is sometimes used to take on a second wife, or O2 as they are often called, with resulting stress within the family.

In the *Brief History of Logging in the Solomon Islands* prepared for the Forest Education and Media Center, Stennett (undated) summarizes this impact.

*“Much of the discontent within land owning groups often centers on the distribution of income, especially where the big-man or those with formal education benefit more than women and the rest of the community. Further, those who control the ‘local companies’ and the incomes accrued from royalties often become powerful individuals, creating new power dynamics within the communities.”*

He goes on to explain

*“The power of the new big-men is derived from the existence of logging operations and their accumulation of wealth from it. It is therefore often not in their interests to see the logging companies go, or the wealth from logging distributed*

*equitable among members of the land owning group."*

The Forest Education and Media Center has video-taped many interviews with villagers. Several of the interviews focus around the fact that money is now the basis for transactions in the village. In the past families and villagers co-operated together because they relied on each other but now that money has come in, money is the basis for co-operation.

Asker (2009) also comments on the increased level of conflict in communities

*"Much of the conflict derives from the inability to build dialogue on how to manage land, who has land tenure, and the distribution of natural resources cash benefits from commercial logging activities"*

## **2. The impact on the human rights of women and children is most severe.**

Everyone we spoke to during the RAP process commented on the severe impact that logging has had on the lives of women and children. Journalists, for example said that they are frequently approached by members of the public with stories about logging. People have often reported child abuse and sexual abuse of women to them. One journalist said,

*"Children are sold to the Asians. They pay the parents, then the child lives with the worker until he leaves. These girls are often 12 or 13 years old, sometimes as young as 11'.*

This same story was echoed by NGOs who reported young girls who are pregnant and left by loggers. These girls have often been forced into so called 'marriages' with loggers. Once the loggers leave the girls are often marginalized by the community.

The impact of environmental degradation is also felt most severely by women. Women in the Solomon Islands are responsible for food production, for food gardens, foraging for food and medicine, and for fishing. Women now need to walk further to food gardens and fishing spots, and to find bush food and traditional medicine plants. As well as imposing an added burden in already hard lives, this also exposes women to danger. Further from the community they are vulnerable to attack and harassment.

Violence against women and children is entrenched in Solomon Islands' society. The recent Solomon Islands Family Health and Safety Study (Secretariat of the Pacific Community, 2009) has documented the extent of this violence. Their findings include:

- Nearly 2 in 3 women between the ages 15 and 49 have experienced gender based violence
- Women in the Solomon Islands experience severe forms of domestic violence including punching, kicking or having a weapon used against them
- During the period of ethnic tension, rape (and threat of rape) was used as a tactic against women by combatants
- The status of women is generally low and they face inequalities and hardship in many aspects of life. In some cases the status of women has declined and women are becoming the subject of denial and suppression, for example women as landowners or women with disability.

Violence related to logging is only one of many forms of abuse suffered by women and children. As communities are stressed, including through the impact of logging, the most vulnerable community members, particularly women and children feel the impact most severely.

## **3. The Live & Learn SINPA project coordinators are well placed to assist with entry into the selected communities.**

The coordinators are located in the regional areas and have networks which extend well beyond the villages with which they are working in the Live & Learn SINPA Towards Inclusive and Sustainable Natural Resource Management Project. The coordinators have responded enthusiastically to this human rights initiative. They are keen to understand more about human rights and to support this project. It is essential to remember that these coordinators already have busy jobs with high expectations of success. It will be important not to expect them to work directly on this project. They will however be an invaluable source of advice and local contacts for the human rights project team. Churches are likely to provide entry points within communities. The project should also capitalize on previous training in human rights done by RRRT and the Solomon Islands Indigenous Peoples Human Rights Association (SIIPHRA).



## Recommendation

### 4. The Live & Learn SINPA coordinators should act as key contacts for this human rights project.

There will be coordinators working in areas where this project is located. Although they are not in a position to work directly on this project, they are well placed to assist with identifying entry points in the communities and to provide advice on local issues. Where possible, the coordinators should be given the opportunity to participate in human rights training.

It is likely that churches will be a key entry point in most communities however this will vary somewhat across the project.

### 5. The effectiveness of the project will be enhanced by working with other agencies.

Given the extent of problems generated by the logging, it is vital that NGOs and church groups active in the human rights areas work together. Transparency International has a regional project called the Forest Integrity Governance Project which is operating in Solomon Islands. The first stage of the project is already underway and their Diagnostic Report will be produced later this year. Detailed plans for the next stage are not yet finalized however it is anticipated that it will include human rights and governance training. Transparency International is keen to cooperate with Live & Learn and there are likely to be opportunities to jointly plan some activities. Transparency International is also planning to open an Advocacy Legal and Advisory Center staffed by a full time lawyer. This center will deal with a broad spectrum of corruption issues and will be a useful resource in the logging

Given the extent of problems generated by the logging, it is vital that NGOs and church groups active in the human rights areas work together.



area where corruption is widespread. In the human rights area, there are two key organizations that Live & Learn can work with. First, RRRT will be working closely with Live & Learn across the region. Within Solomon Islands, RRRT have trained paralegals as well as working on the Solomon Islands Family Health and Safety Study and on legislative reviews. Where para-legals are living in the communities that the project is focusing on, they will provide a very useful resource and are logical human rights defenders to utilize in this project. The Solomon Islands Indigenous Peoples Rights Association (SIIPRA) is a voluntary organization which has provided some basic human rights and governance training to land owners. Over 1,000 land owners have attended their training. Again, where there are people who have attended this training in the target villages, they will be logical people to become human rights defenders.

Live & Learn is not a welfare organization. Where human rights abuses are identified by Live & Learn staff, it is vital that the people involved can be referred to appropriate sources of support in government and in the NGO and church community. Staff will need to work closely with agencies such as Save the Children, Christian Care Center, Family Violence Center, and the Ministry of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs.

## Recommendation

- 6. The project should work closely with those NGOs working on human rights issues in particular Transparency International, RRRT, and SIIPHRA. Where there are individuals in communities who have had previous human rights training, the project should seek to involve these people. It should also work closely with the established churches and welfare agencies.**



**7. The Live & Learn Forest Education and Media Center has been very effective in getting media coverage of logging issues and in developing networks with journalists, media proprietors and the Media Council. It is important that the momentum from this project be capitalized on. The Centre should act as a leader in the media area across the three countries involved in the project**

The Live & Learn Forest Education and Media Center was funded by the European Union and has been running for almost two years. The Center is staffed by a full time journalist who has extensive experience in the media in Solomon Islands and who is well known both within the media community and by the general public. The Center has developed an impressive collection of resources relating to forest issues in Solomon Islands and internationally. They broadcast a regular Sunday program on Solomon Islands National Broadcasting Commission, put out frequent press releases and are currently running a series of articles in the Sunday Solomon Star. They are presently producing a DVD on forest issues. They have also run training for journalists on investigative journalism skills. The Center has achieved a high degree of recognition among journalist who regularly contact staff for information and updates on logging issues.

It is important that this momentum is not lost. The Forest Education and Media Center can provide the springboard for the media strategy across the three countries involved in the project. Using the Center it will be possible to quickly mobilize training for journalists across the three countries and to establish the internship program. The Center could also play a key role in the development of the web-based human rights monitoring system at a later stage in the project.

## Recommendation

**8. The Forest Education and Media Center should act as a regional focal point for the media strategy and they should play a key role in the development of the training program and internships for journalists.**





# 4

## Country Findings

### Papua New Guinea

#### Background

PNG comprises the eastern half of the island of New Guinea together with the islands of New Britain, New Ireland, Bougainville and hundreds of small islands. It has a land area of 452,860 sq km. The terrain is rugged and mountainous with a central spine of mountains running through the main island. PNG has the largest remaining rainforest areas in the Asia-Pacific region. It holds more than 5% of the world's biodiversity.

PNG has a population estimated to be 6.6 million in 2009. According to the 2000 Census, the population is growing at a rate of 2.7%. About 40% of the population is under the age of 15 years. About 87% of the population live in rural areas and are dependent on subsistence agriculture supplemented by cash cropping.

PNG has a life expectancy of 60.7, an adult literacy rate of 57.5% and a GDP per head of population of \$US 2084. It is ranked 148th on the UNDP Human Development Index (UNDP, 2009). Provision of health, education and social services is limited particularly in rural areas. Delivery of services is expensive and logistically challenging. Malaria is still widespread and AIDS poses an increasing problem. An estimated 2.56% of adults in PNG carry the HIV/AIDS virus. It seems unlikely that PNG will achieve any of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 (AusAID, 2010).

PNG's forests are one of its richest resources. They cover 33 million hectares of its rugged landscape. The forests play an essential role in the lives, culture, livelihoods and economy of the country. A recent study by the University of Papua New Guinea (Shearman et al., 2008) records the extensive and rapid deforestation and forest degradation which is happening across Papua New Guinea. Their study shows that the change in the extent and condition of PNG's forests is happening more quickly than previously thought. The two major drivers of this change are commercial logging and agriculture. Traditional slash and burn agriculture is now having a severe effect on forest because of the rapid increase in population. By

An estimated one in six people is formally employed in the forest sector. Over recent years the country has been even more dependent on log exports as other major sources of export income were devastated during the Tensions.



2020 the population is expected to reach just under 9 million people. Large scale logging was found in the report to be the other major cause of forest loss. It found that forests are being logged repeatedly and wastefully with little regard for forest ecology, ecosystem functions or sivicultural practices which reduce impact and enhance regeneration. The report estimates that if current trends continue, then by 2021, 83% of the commercially accessible forest area will have been cleared. It found that there is virtually no restoration of damaged land or rehabilitation or replanting of forests. In the view of the authors, the commercial timber industry is closer to 'timber mining' than to a sustainable industry. It identifies the islands of New Britain and New Ireland as suffering severe long term effects of logging. Because of their accessibility to loggers, these islands were the first areas to be commercially logged and logging stocks are now almost exhausted.

Logging has also had a severe impact on human rights in PNG. The 1996 study undertaken by the The Australian Conservation Foundation and The Center for

Environmental Law and Community Rights (CELCOR) paints a stark picture of the effects of logging:

*"It is an industry that is synonymous with political corruption, police racketeering, and the brutal repression of workers, women and those who question its ways. Its operations routinely destroy the food sources, water supplies and cultural properties of those same communities. It provides a breeding ground for arms smuggling, corruption and violence across the country. In return the industry generates no lasting benefit to the forest communities, considerable long term cost and a modest 5% contribution to the national budget"*

The study identified the following abuses of human rights

- Cases of arbitrary detention and physical brutality against land owners by police
- Intimidation and abuse of women
- The contamination of food and water sources by large scale logging
- Unjust working conditions
- The destruction of significant cultural sites (Center for Environmental Law and Community Rights and Australian Conservation Foundation, 2006)

Both violence against women and sexual exploitation of children are serious and widespread problems in Papua New Guinea. (Help Resources, 2005 ;Eves, 2006 ;Amnesty International, 2006 ;Center for Environmental Law and Community Rights and Australian Conservation Foundation, 2006). It is not only women and children in logging areas who are the victims of abuse. The status of women is low in PNG, and women across the country are subject to abuse. Children are also vulnerable and abused in many communities. Logging, however, adds



additional stress to communities already struggling with issues such as population increase, low literacy levels, climate change and land disputes. Inevitably, in stressed communities, it is those most vulnerable and with the lowest status who suffer the worst impact. This is women and children.

There are widespread allegations of political corruption as well as bribery of government workers by logging companies. Allegations of corruption at the highest level have been made. In 2008, it was alleged that millions of dollars were paid to politicians by logging companies. Many of the allegations relate to Rimbunan Hijau, a Malaysian based logging company, which holds the largest number of logging licences in PNG. These allegations are documented by Greenpeace in its report *The Untouchables* (Greenpeace, 2006). Allegations are also made relating to bribing of police, forest officers, and customs officials. While the Greenpeace research did not include New Britain or New Ireland, our investigations indicated that there is a widespread belief in these areas that corruption occurs both at the national level, provincial level, and at the community level.

## Findings

### 1. Severe environmental damage

In both West New Britain and New Ireland where the research was carried out, logging is impacting severely on the environment. Land owners, women's groups, church groups, and provincial officials all agreed that logging is having a severe effect on the environment. As one member of a women's group said

*"They come in, spoil things, then go"*

Environmental effects that were mentioned were

- poisoned reefs
- streams losing fish
- water not drinkable
- chemicals used to preserve logs contaminating soil and water
- bush materials not available to make houses
- hunting grounds destroyed
- spillages of oil and fuel
- downstream effects on rivers and streams from logging in the headwaters

- clear felling of areas of forest with devastating result for flora and fauna

### 2. Decreased food security and reduced availability of clean water

Damage to the environment is impacting on the ability of villagers to support themselves through traditional subsistence agriculture. Food gardens, traditional hunting grounds and forage areas for traditional medicine have all been affected. Women now have to walk further to gardens and fishing grounds. They have to carry heavy burdens such as wood and water further. Women particularly reported that they now rely more on processed food and as a result families are not as healthy as in the past. One priest reported that in some remote villages he has visited, he has seen severely malnourished children.

### 3. Breakdown of social structures in villages

All groups and individuals we spoke to reported increased levels of tension and even violence in villages where logging is occurring. They reported that villages are split with some people in favour of logging and others against it. These disputes can be bitter and can split families. This split often reflects the fact that not all the villagers get logging royalties. Resentment was also expressed about the distribution of the royalties with not everyone believing they got their fair share. Land owners form companies (LOCs) to deal with the logging companies and there were many negative comments about the office bearers of these LOCs. A typical comment from one of the church workers was

*"The chairman and directors, they become big-men and they fill their own pockets."*

Where land owners do get royalties, it often causes problems within the family. Several of the women reported land owners who have received royalties divorcing their wives and "getting new ones" or getting involved in extra-marital affairs. They also reported increased levels of alcohol abuse particularly the use of home-bru (a locally produced and quite dangerous form of alcohol).

One land owner referring to the changes in his village since the loggers have come said

*"They have brainwashed us and taken away our culture, our way of life."*

The human rights impacts are most severe for women and children

Women in PNG do not generally enjoy equal rights. As one of the church workers said

*'Women are always placed second'*

Previous research such as that done by Amnesty International (2006) indicate that

*"Violence against women in the home and the community is pervasive and in some regions affects most women's lives. "*

Logging has added to the burden already felt by women in PNG. Stress within communities has made their lives harder and more dangerous. Logging has contributed to an increase in drug and alcohol use in villages and this has increased violence against women. According to women's groups and land owners, logging has resulted in prostitution, particularly among young women. One woman explained

*"young girls have to submit in order to receive favours."*

Another said

*"This is violence against young girls. Married men use money to win favours from young girls"*

It has also resulted in forced 'marriages' of young women to loggers. Land owners also reported that rapes have happened in their villages. Asked what happens in such a case they explained that the police will not act, so the family goes to the logging company. A small sum is then paid in compensation to the family.

*"It is a small sum and that is the end of the matter" Landowner.*

Many of the so called marriages between loggers and local people result in pregnancy. When the loggers leave, the woman and children are usually left behind. Again a sum of compensation may be paid to the family.

Considerable anxiety was expressed, especially by women's groups, about these mixed race babies. One woman said

*"There are so many Asian children they will soon outnumber indigenous children"*

Another said

*"What will happen to our culture? Our culture will vanish if we have babies with foreigners."*

These mixed race children have a difficult future ahead. They are not likely to have rights to land as these rights come through the father. They are likely to be marginalized within communities despite the fact that they are the innocent victims of human rights abuses.

One villager explained

*"Half cast children from the logging sites are not valued by the community as owners of land. They are rather downgraded."*

One of the church officials explained it this way

*"They are not protected because they did not have a father. Also they are open to all types of criticism from the public and also they don't have any financial support to assist them in the long run."*

Although this is not a comfortable issue for villagers, the human rights of these children should also be respected.

Land owners reported that there is some employment of children in logging camps. According to the land owners young boys of around 12 or 13 often want to work with their parents.

*"They prefer this to school. They don't understand the future, they just want some money now" Land owner.*

#### **4. Corruption and other illegal activity by logging companies was widely reported**

Corruption appears to be endemic in the areas where the research was carried out. At the highest level, people appeared to have no faith in the national government and believed it to be corrupt.

We frequently heard comments such as these

*"The government doesn't want to know" Land owner*

*"RH (referring to Rimbunan Hijau) owns the government." NGO worker*

*"The government is benefiting from logging." Land owner*

At the local level we heard frequent stories about local officials being paid by logging companies.

*"The police only listen to the Asians" Priest*

*"There is something going on under the table. They break all the laws." Land owner.*

*"People fear the police. They fear that if they go against the company they will be arrested." Land owner*

*"People who speak out on human rights are bribed to be quiet." Woman's group member*

*"The Asians have a tie up with the Police" Woman's group member*

*"Forestry officers get bribed so they don't follow up on anything" Land owner*

Logging ships collect the felled logs directly from coastal depots. In West New Britain they are supposed to go into Kimbe to be checked both before they collect logs and once they have their full load. This allows tax to be calculated and also allows customs to check that no illegal substances such as drugs or wildlife are on board. The boat should not be carrying rare species of trees which are not permitted to be felled. Checks are also made on the number of guns on board both on arrival and departure. Both villagers and local journalists reported to us that this checking often does not happen. Logging ships illegally evade tax by not calling into Kimbe. They also trade guns with the villagers. One church official reported that he had seen a villager trade a gun for a cockatoo, a rare and valuable species in some parts of the world. He said that he had heard that villagers trade guns for locally grown marijuana and for cultural artifacts.

Land owners also reported on what they believe to be the use of a company store to cheat money from land owners who receive royalties. The person who gets royalties is offered credit in the company store. No receipts are kept for purchases. The villagers are often not financially literate and do not keep any record, or even a tally of what they have spent. When they go to get their money, they are told all or most of it has already been spent at the store.



He said that he had heard that villagers trade guns for locally grown marijuana and for cultural artifacts.



*“When they go to get rice, they are eating lumps of money.” Land owner*

There is considerable resentment at the failure of the logging companies to honour promises which they make when getting land owners to agree to logging. They frequently promise roads, bridges, schools and wharfs. Our informants reported that these promises are never honoured. The roads that are built are just bush tracks which do not comply with the Logging Code of Practice and are frequently a major cause of erosion. The bridges are crude log bridges. Both the roads and bridges are built to last only for the time that the logging is happening.

#### **5. Church groups are well placed to support human rights defenders and are strongly supportive of the project**

Church groups in PNG play a vital role in delivering health, education and social services as well as spiritual comfort. In many remote areas they are relied on as the sole providers of these services. The Anglican Church and the Catholic Church in New Britain, and the Catholic Church and United Church in New Ireland are well placed to act as entry points for human rights work. Senior church officials we spoke to in both areas believe that a human rights project of this kind has great potential for good. They are keen to use their networks to assist the project and

to provide support where they can. We also received considerable support from provincial government officials in both areas. Their support will be of great assistance to the project.

## Recommendation

### **6. The project should work with established churches as they are ideal entry points within most of the communities.**

In many areas the churches are the only points for service delivery. In addition they are one of the few organizations which are not regarded as corrupt. It will be important to work closely with women’s organizations within the churches as they provide one of the few entry points for women who may potentially work as human rights defenders. The project should also work actively with Provincial Government, particularly in New Ireland where they have an NGO coordinator.

### **7. Isolation, difficult terrain, poor communications and poor transport in project areas will pose considerable challenges for the project team**

The project team faces considerable challenges in relation to the logistics of the project. Logging is occurring in remote area where access is poor and communications are difficult. Many villages have no road access and will need to be accessed by boat and then by truck or on foot. Even travel between the larger centers is difficult. To give an example of this, one member of the research team undertook the research in New Ireland. He first flew to Kavieng via Port Moresby. Unfortunately the plane was delayed and he missed the connection and had to spend a night in Moresby. After working in Kavieng, he made his way to Namatanai by bus. He had planned to send out a radio ‘toksave’ message to let villagers in the area know where the meetings would be held however the transmitter did not reach the villages. After finishing meetings in Namatanai, he crossed the island by truck. He then caught a boat to Kokopo. Unfortunately the boat broke down and all on board had to be rescued by another small boat in their convoy. The boat that picked them up was then very overloaded and a decision was made to transfer them to a third boat. They finally

reached Kokopo safely after three hours. From Kokopo he made his way by truck to Rabaul. He then flew from Rabaul to Kimbe. Given these logistical complications, the project will need careful planning to make the most effective use of resources.

## Recommendation

### **8. Because of the challenging nature of the terrain and the difficult logistical problems, considerations should be given to confining the project work to New Britain and New Ireland.**

These two islands are among the most extensively and exhaustively logged areas of PNG. Villagers have been subjected to abuse of human rights over an extended period of time and there are many communities needing assistance. Accessing communities on these two islands is extremely challenging. More effective use may be made of donor funds by confining work to the two islands rather than extending the work into West Sepik.

### **9. Close collaboration with other NGOs and church groups working in the human rights area will enhance the success of the project**

The scale of human rights abuse, and the considerable obstacles to making progress on these issues, means that it will be vital to work closely with other NGOs and church groups who are working in the human rights area.

Transparency International is working on the Forest Integrity Governance Project which also has a focus on human rights and logging. Initial contact has been made with Transparency International however it will be important to follow this up and to establish a close working relationship. The Consultative Implementation and Monitoring Council (CIMC) is also involved in the human rights area. Live & Learn has now joined this important organization and will be notified of all their networking events and training. They are particularly active in the campaign to stop violence against women. They are running male advocacy training and have a good network of trained men in both Kavieng and Kimbe. They are working on human rights in relation to mining. It will be important to keep in close contact with them on these issues, particularly as the

Lihir gold mine in New Ireland is operating in areas also impacted by logging.

Live & Learn PNG is based outside the capital city. It will be important to keep in close touch with those social services operating in the New Ireland and New Britain areas, in particular the established churches as they are critical in delivering services in remote areas.

### **10. There is interest from regional press in training in the human rights area and in the concept of human rights internships**

Researchers met with the National Broadcasting Commission in both Kimbe and Kavieng. Both journalists and management were enthusiastic about human rights training and internships. They identified two problems constraining their ability to report on logging issues. First is the need to work across a broad spectrum of issues and the resulting difficulty in developing specialist expertise in any areas. Second is the lack of resources to fund travel to logging sites.

Unfortunately the time constraints meant that the research team was unable to meet with the Media Council, or individual journalists in Port Moresby.

This will need to be followed up by the project team as working with the national media will be critical to the success of the media strategy in PNG. The Live & Learn PNG office is now employing a journalist and they are making good progress in establishing relationships with the press.

## Recommendation

### **11. Live & Learn PNG should work closely with Solomon Islands Live & Learn Forest Education and Media Center to mobilize their media training and to establish internships in PNG.**

The media strategy across the region is being coordinated from Solomon Islands Live & Learn however the PNG office is rapidly developing a capacity to make a significant contribution in the media area. Both offices will benefit from close collaboration as internships and media training are mobilized.







# 5

## Country Findings

### Vanuatu

#### Background

Vanuatu is an island nation comprising 80 islands arranged in a Y shaped chain. The country stretches approximately 1,000 kilometres from north to south. There are two main urban centers, Port Vila which is the capital on the island of Efate and Luganville on the island of Espiritu Santo (usually referred to as Santo).

Vanuatu has a population of approximately 243,000. It is still a predominately rural country with 70% of the population living outside the urban areas. Around 60% of the population is under 25 years of age.

Ni-Vanuatu, the indigenous people of Vanuatu, comprise 98.5% of the population. It is a culturally and linguistically diverse nation with over 100 indigenous languages spoken across the country. Bislama, a Melanesian Pidgin, is widely spoken across the country.

Of the three countries involved in this project, Vanuatu is the only one not to be on the UNDP Least Developed Countries list (UNDP, 2009). It is ranked 126 on the Human Development Index and has a life expectancy of 69.9, an adult literacy rate of 78.1% and a per head GDP of \$US3,666 (UNDP, 2009). It is the only Pacific country to receive funding under the United States Millennium Challenge Corporation program which requires responsible governance and a commitment to economic growth as pre-requisites for funding.

Vanuatu has made rapid economic progress in the last decade. Growth has been driven by foreign investment in tourism and land development, attracted by a liberal tax regime, relative political stability, good economic macro-management and successful institutional reforms. Despite this progress, poverty is still a real issue in Vanuatu. Formal employment is under 15% and is concentrated in the urban and peri-urban areas. Infrastructure is poor on all the islands except for Efate and Santo. The majority of the people practice subsistence agriculture and have poor access to markets and services. Most Ni-Vanuatu have little opportunity

It is still a predominately rural country with 70% of the population living outside the urban areas.

to participate directly in the formal economy. This unbalanced growth is a source of social instability and a major challenge for the government of Vanuatu is to ensure that the Ni-Vanuatu are able to enjoy the benefits of economic development (Cox et al., 2007).

Historically, the position of women in Vanuatu has not been one of equality with men. The difficult passage of the Family Protection Act 2008 which outlaws domestic violence is clear evidence of this. The passage of the Bill was delayed for 11 years due to opposition from politicians and chiefs. When it was finally passed, the Vanuatu Christian Council appealed unsuccessfully against the Bill (AusAID, 2009).

Concern was expressed by many groups that the Bill was not in accord with *kastom*, and that it would impact negatively on family life in Vanuatu. Bride price is an established part of *kastom* in Vanuatu and interestingly it is referred to directly in the legislation

*"It is not a defence to an offence under subsection (1) that the defendant has paid an amount of money or given other valuable consideration in relation to his or her custom marriage to the complainant" Family Protection Act 2008.*

Vanuatu is a relatively small country and its natural forest resources are small compared with Solomon Islands and PNG. Forests have always played a key role in the life of rural people and have been used as sources of wood for cooking and building materials, as forage areas for native food such as indigenous nuts, hunting areas and areas where traditional medicines can be sourced.

Sandalwood is native to Vanuatu and the first experience of logging in the country was during the nineteenth century and early twentieth century and centered on the sandalwood trade. The mountainous terrain of most of the islands and the relatively small volume of the forests meant that commercial logging was not attempted again for many years. During the 1990s however a number of Asian logging companies began operations on Efate, Santo, Erromango, Malakula and Pentecost. The result is that commercial stands of forest were effectively logged out. Operations ceased in the late 1990s once the returns were no longer commercially viable leaving environmental and social problems in their wake. Commercial logging is still carried out but it is run by local operators. It is small scale and uses portable sawmills.

The Government of Vanuatu with assistance from GTZ is currently undertaking a review of forest policy in light of climate change and the need for sustainable management of natural resources. Previously The Government of Vanuatu committed to an extensive program of reforestation with a target of 20,000 hectares of forest plantations over the next twenty five years (Vanuatu Department of Forestry, 2001). There has not however been significant progress on plantation forestry to date. There are reports that a US company, ECO2, has received initial approval to develop a large scale paulonia plantation of 20,000 acres on Malakula (Radio New Zealand International, March 3, 2010). Final approval for this project will depend on an environmental impact assessment.

## Findings

- 1. Although the impact of logging has not been as severe as in PNG and Solomon Islands, nevertheless logging has impacted negatively on Vanuatu and the consequences are still being felt.**

Although only limited field work was undertaken during the RAP, it is evident on the island of Santo that long term negative effects of logging are still being felt. There is severe erosion in the major catchment on the island, and there is sedimentation on the reefs. The island of Santo has effectively been stripped of large stands of timber and as a result the villagers have lost access to materials for construction, to traditional medicines and to hunting and foraging areas. In our interviews with journalist they also confirmed the negative effects of logging on Santo and on Pentecost.

- 2. An opportunity exists to take a more pro-active approach to human rights in the Vanuatu context. Because large scale logging is no longer taking place, the project can focus on areas where reforestation is occurring and can ensure that human rights are built into the decision making processes around land use.**

There are two related land use issues on which the project could usefully focus. The first of these is the need to establish sustainable agro-forestry as a viable approach for villagers in the target areas. Work is

being done by the Forestry Department on possible species which could be used to provide a long term income for villagers. Sandalwood, white wood and native nut trees are being considered. These species have different cropping cycles and can also be inter-planted with food crops to provide both income and food security. In working on this approach, the project should promote inclusive decision making and should focus on ensuring that the rights and roles of women are respected.

The second issue is the possible alternative uses of land which are being considered by some communities. Palm oil is being actively considered as an option for large scale development in Santo. On Malakula, a proposal for a large scale plantation forest of paulonia is being considered. In both these cases, pro-active work is needed to ensure that human rights abuses do not occur. On Pentecost mining exploration is taking place. In making decisions about these types of land use, villagers need to be well informed of their rights and decisions need to be taken in the best interests of all members of the communities.

The Department of Women's Affairs has established human rights teams in the provinces and it will be important for the project to work closely with these officers. The project should also work closely with the Forestry officers in the provinces. The assistance of these two departments will be critical in identifying those communities that can benefit most from the project.



## Recommendation

- 3. The project should be located in areas where reforestation is taking place and should focus on inclusive decision making and human rights in the context of sustainable land use.**

**Consideration should be given to changing the proposed project locations to reflect the areas where reforestation is taking place. Suggested locations are on Santo, Malakula and Pentecost.**

**Although current logging is small scale, it still has the potential to be environmentally damaging. Villagers could play a useful role in monitoring compliance with the Logging Code of Practice.**

The Forestry Department acknowledges that considerable damage that can be caused by these logging operators but it does not have the resources to monitor small scale logging in remote areas, however they. Villagers could act pro-actively to protect their environment if they are trained to monitor the operations of



loggers in relation to the Logging Code of Practice. This would need to be done in cooperation with the Forestry Department and procedures for recording and reporting breaches of the Code to the Department would need to be developed.

## Recommendation

- 4. Training developed for villagers should include a segment on monitoring compliance with the Logging Code of Practice. The project team should work with the Forestry Department in developing this segment of the training.**

**There are other agencies working in the area of human rights and the project team should work closely with them.**

There are several organizations which are also working in the human rights area and the project will benefit from working closely with them. Transparency International in Vanuatu will be mobilizing their Forest Integrity Governance Project early in 2011. This project is concerned with human rights in logging impacted areas and has a particular focus on corruption. Transparency International is very keen to work closely with Live & Learn to ensure maximum coverage of human rights training across the islands and to ensure that there is no duplication of effort.

Other organizations working in the human rights areas are UNIFEM, Won Smol Bag, RRRT, The Women's Center, Department of Women's Affairs and Justice Bilong Yumi. All these programs have slight differences in emphasis, however Vanuatu is a small country and it is important to share information and resources with these agencies.



## Recommendation

- 5. The project should work closely with Transparency International and should share information and resources with other agencies working in the human rights area.**

### **Journalists are interested in human rights training**

The journalist we spoke to were very keen to get training in human rights. They have not had many opportunities for training. They are usually expected to work across all news areas and have little opportunity to develop specialized knowledge in any single area.

The two newspaper journalist we spoke to are very experienced and do get opportunities for investigative work, however they said it is more difficult for younger journalists to get this type of opportunity.

The Forest Education and Media Center in Live & Learn Solomon Islands is coordinating the media training across all three countries. As Live & Learn in Vanuatu does not have extensive experience with the press, they will be able to draw on the support and expertise of their colleagues from the Solomon Islands to establish contact with the Vanuatu Media Council and to mobilize media training.

As large scale logging is no longer taking place in Vanuatu, internships for journalist would not fulfill their intended purpose. Consideration should be given to sifting the resources for internships to Solomon Islands and PNG where logging is having an acute impact on human rights.

## Recommendation

- 6. Live & Learn Vanuatu should utilize support from the Solomon Islands Live & Learn Forest Education and Media Center in mobilizing training for journalists.**

**Consideration should be given to shifting the resources for internships to Solomon Islands and PNG where logging is having an acute impact on human rights.**





# 6

## Summary of Recommendations

### Regional Recommendations

1. Live & Learn should work in both areas where logging is currently occurring and areas where past logging is still impacting on human rights.
2. The project should place special emphasis on the human rights of women and children, but this should be done in a 'whole community' context. The project should seek opportunities to assist in the full integration of mixed race children, the so called 'Asian babies', into their communities.
3. The project should take a holistic approach to human rights in communities. In working to improve human rights, the project must recognize that logging is only one factor that is impacting on the lives and human rights of villagers. It will be important not to artificially separate out logging and try to work only on this issue.
4. In developing the regional press strategy, the work already done in the Solomon Islands in the Forest Media and Education Center should be capitalized on. The Center should spear head the work on the press strategy and play a key role in the development and mobilization of the press training.
5. The project team should work closely with other NGOs and church groups to maximize the impact of the project and to avoid any possible duplication.
6. Every opportunity should be sought to make the project genuinely regional in nature. Close communication and information sharing should be established across the project teams and strengths in individual offices should be utilized.

## Solomon Islands Recommendations

1. The Live & Learn SINPA coordinators should act as key contacts for this human rights project.
2. The project should work closely with those NGOs working on human rights issues in particular Transparency International, RRRT, and SIIPHRA. Where there are individuals in communities who have had previous human rights training, the project should seek to involve these people. It should also work closely with the established churches.
3. The Forest Education and Media Center should act as a regional focal point for the media strategy and they should play a key role in the development of the training program and internships for journalists.

## PNG Recommendations

1. The project should work with established churches as they will provide entry points within most of the communities.
2. Because of the challenging nature of the terrain and the difficult logistical problems, considerations should be given to confining the project work to New Britain and New Ireland.
3. Live & Learn PNG should work closely with Solomon Islands to mobilize their media training and to establish internships in PNG.





## Vanuatu Recommendations

1. The project should be located in areas where reforestation is taking place and should focus on inclusive decision making and human rights in the context of sustainable land use.
2. Consideration should be given to changing the proposed project locations to reflect the areas where reforestation is taking place. Suggested locations are on Santo, Malakula and Pentecost.
3. Training developed for villagers should include a segment on monitoring compliance with the Logging Code of Practice. The project team should work with the Forestry Department in developing this segment of the training.
4. The project should work closely with Transparency International and should share information and resources with other agencies working in the human rights area.
5. Live & Learn Vanuatu should utilize support from the Solomon Islands Live & Learn Forest Education and Media Center in mobilizing training for journalists.
6. Consideration should be given to shifting the resources for internships to Solomon Islands and PNG where logging is having an acute impact on human rights.







# 7

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# 8

## Appendix A: Methodology

### Introduction

This RAP research was carried out over a period of approximately two months from the beginning of June to the end of July 2010. An initial literature survey was carried out by the Research Advisor. The Research Advisor then undertook a five week data collection trip across the three countries involved in the research. Members of the research teams in Vanuatu and PNG then undertook further field work. Initial data analysis was done in each country with the research teams. The report writing was done by the Research Advisor with input and critical review by Managers of the three country offices, members of the research teams, the Live & Learn Pacific Regional Manager and the Live & Learn International Manager.

In the brief for the RAP, the Research Advisor was asked as part of the RAP process to develop staff capacity in research methodology. Live & Learn usually undertakes a RAP at the beginning of projects. It was felt to be important that staff in all three offices develop an ability to independently carry out a RAP. Some staff members in all three offices have previously taken part in RAP research however they have not been involved in all stages of the process. During this RAP, staff members in each country were involved in developing research question, in planning the RAP process, and in gathering data and analyzing data. Unfortunately time did not permit a joint writing process. This process had strengths and weaknesses. Time available for the RAP was short and compromises had to be made to accommodate both the RAP process and staff development. The strength of the process was that staff members were able to bring their varied experience, contacts and skills into the process. This RAP training is only one stage in research capacity building and will be followed up by staff involvement in other RAP activities.

## Limitations of the research

The RAP process has its origins in the work of Robert Chambers and his Rapid Rural Appraisal and Participatory Rural Appraisal. These participatory research processes were designed to allow insights to be developed within a relatively short time and have been criticized for not being sufficiently thorough. The RAP similarly allows only a short time for research. By its nature the RAP involves compromises. Inevitably some important people are not included because they are not available in the short window of time allowed. It is not possible, as it would be in larger scale research, to follow up leads or to go back to research sites to check impressions or facts.

The RAP sits within a constructivist epistemology and makes no claim to present 'truth'. Nevertheless, the research is constructed to allow for multiple perspectives, multiple data sources and a careful process of recording and analysis. It presents perceptions and cannot claim that facts presented are independently verified. The research did not take place in villages where logging is occurring and the team could not independently verify the claims of villagers. This research does however make a connection with other research work in the area. In the case of this RAP, the similarity between the types of human rights abuses described by participants and those described in other research lend considerable credibility to our findings.

The broad research questions which guided the RAP were

1. What impact is logging having on communities in our target areas?
2. What particular impact is it having on the human rights of women and children?
3. Which organizations can act as entry points for human rights defenders?
4. What other NGOs and church organizations are working in the human rights field and how can we best work with them?
5. What level of understanding do the media have of human rights and how best might we approach training in this area for the media?

In general we conducted semi-structured interviews. Although we prepared some questions, we allowed our research subjects to raise issues and follow their own line of thought in relation to broad area we wished to cover. We conducted prepared activities with women's groups in PNG and with villagers in Tamboko in Solomon Islands.

## PNG RAP

The Live & Learn office in PNG is based in Kimbe in West New Britain. The RAP was conducted in Kimbe with a short visit to Port Moresby and a visit to New Britain. In Kimbe, meetings were held with women's groups from both the Anglican and Catholic Churches. Participants came from Kimbe and from surrounding villages including some where logging is currently taking place. We also met with nuns, priests and church officials from the Catholic and Anglican Churches and the Provincial Government Administrator in Kimbe. We also held a meeting with land





owners who came from the logging districts of Buluma and Gloucester on the north coast, and Gasmata and Kendrian on the South coast. We also met with the manager and staff of the Kimbe PNG National Broadcasting Commission radio station.

In New Ireland, meetings were held in Kavieng and Namatani. Provincial Government was very supportive and their NGO coordinator assisted with arranging meetings. Meetings were held with land owners, church groups, church women's groups and provincial government staff. In Kavieng the researcher met with staff of the local PNG Broadcast Commission radio station.

Our time in Port Moresby was very limited and we were only able to meet with the YWCA and CMIC and with an investigator who had worked on logging investigations. Phone contact had previously been made with a number of other organizations including Transparency International. The project team will need to spend further time in Moresby to extend their contacts in the NGO community. Time did not allow us to spend time with the press in Moresby and again this will need to be followed up by project staff.

## Solomon Islands RAP

In the Solomon Islands, recent research has been carried out for the Live & Learn SINPA Towards inclusive and sustainable natural resource management RAP. Although this research was not focused specifically on the human rights impact of logging, it did cover this topic in some detail. It also provided evidence of the environmental impact of logging and its consequences for the lives of women. This research covered 32 rural communities and provides a wealth of detail on

the stresses in these communities including logging. Given that this research was recent, covered much of the same ground, and was very comprehensive, a decision was made to use this research to cover the community component of this human rights RAP. This allowed the team to focus on meeting with NGO's and government officials and the media. The team met with Save the Children, Transparency International, Secretariat of the Pacific Community, Solomon Islands Development Trust, Development Services Exchange, Solomon Islands Indigenous Peoples Human Rights Association and the Ministry of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs, Christian Care Association and the Anglican Church.

As the RAP was also designed to build staff capacity, one community meeting was organized in Tamboko, a logging area near to Honiara. A range of activities were carried out including developing a time line, documenting before and after logging in relation to a number of aspects of village life, key informant interviews, and a general discussion on the impact of logging. Although this was intended primarily as a capacity building exercise, it nevertheless provided valuable information.

The Live & Learn Forest Education and Media Center provided an excellent focal point for our work with the media in the Solomon Islands. They were able to gather together a good cross section of journalists from print media, radio, TV and NGOs to meet the research team. The Center is staffed by a full time journalist, Charles Stennett, who has gathered a great resource of information on logging in Solomon Islands. He provided video-taped interviews, press releases and a wealth of background material to assist the research team. We also met with the Chairman of the Solomon Islands Media Council who works closely with the Forest Education and Media Center. He has excellent relationships with counterpart Media Councils in PNG and Vanuatu and offered his support in working with the press across the region.

## Vanuatu RAP

In Vanuatu, the RAP was conducted in Port Vila with follow up field work planned in Santo, Malakula and Pentecost. Unfortunately in the time available it was only possible to carry out limited follow up in Santo and Malakula.

In Port Vila meetings were held with NGOs, government officials and with members of the media. NGOs consulted were Save the Children, UNICEF, UNIFEM, VANGO (umbrella body for NGOs in Vanuatu), Wan Smol Bag, Transparency International, RRRT, and Justice Bilong Yumi. Meetings were held with officers from the Department of Lands, the Forestry Department and the Department of the Environment. We also met with journalists from the two daily English language papers and the National Broadcasting Commission.

Follow up field work was planned in Santo, Malakula and Pentecost. Unfortunately, it proved not to be possible to do the scale of work planned, however meetings were held in Santo and Malakula with both the Forestry Department and the Provincial Council. Further work will need to be done, particularly with local communities, to confirm project sites.







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