

Logging and Conflict in Birao Ward of Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands

Morgan Wairiu¹ and Gordon Nanau²

¹ Morgan Wairiu

Fellow, Islands Knowledge Institute, P. O Box 1232, Honiara, Solomon Islands

Email: mwairiu@islands-knowledge.org

² Gordon Nanau

Politics & International Affairs Programme, School of Government, Development & International Affairs, University of the South Pacific, Private Mail Bag, Suva, Fiji

Email: nanau_g@usp.ac.fj

Online version of this paper can be located at:

<http://www.islands-knowledge.org>

Abstract

Logging on Guadalcanal, the largest island province in Solomon Islands is slight compared to levels of exploitation in other provinces. But even there, logging activities are increasing because landowners can not resist the lures of royalties and promises of infrastructure development by logging companies; not to mention bribery. Logging primarily benefits logging companies because the government has not been successful in controlling logging activities due to systemic abuse by people in positions of authority. Moreover, there is a general laxity in the enforcement of existing laws and in most instances, the current laws and regulations are inadequate to monitor and control the negative effects of logging activities. This paper uses an example from Guadalcanal Province to illustrate deep-seated problems in the logging industry and associated community conflicts nation wide. It provides a thorough analysis of the causes of logging related conflicts and identifies the current gaps to resolving them. The paper goes further by identifying responsible people and institutions that could ensure the underlying causes are dealt with and recommend strategies for positive change.

I. THE CONTEXT

1.1 Background

Birao Ward is located in East Guadalcanal, about 70 miles from Honiara and is one of the 22 provincial wards on Guadalcanal. It has a population of around 2800 people. The area still has its natural rainforest intact apart from those pockets lost to shifting cultivation. People from Birao Ward were badly affected during the ethnic tension from 1998 to 2001. Many suffered and lost their properties and livelihood. Since signing of both the Townsville Peace Agreement (TPA) in October 2000 and Marau Peace Agreement (MPA) in February 2001, village life has slowly returned to normal. Chiefs, church leaders and communities have been working together towards reconciliation and peace.

Apart from the effects of the tension, people also face other hardships. Wild pigs continue to damage food gardens and people are experiencing low crop yields due to low soil fertility, particularly, along narrow flat coastal margins. Coastal marine resources are over harvested and little opportunities exist for cash income to support people's livelihood. The need for cash to meet basic household needs like soap, kerosene, clothing, school fees, and other imported consumables, forced people to exploit their resources at unsustainable level.

1.2 Impact of the Ethnic Tension

Two ethnic groups live within Birao Ward, speaking both Marau Are'are and Birao languages. Despite speaking two different languages, people have strong cultural and social interaction forged through intermarriages and other cultural ties. Marau Are'are speakers are believed to be descendants of tribes from South Malaita who have been living at Marau Sound, which is part of Birao Ward for well over 400 years. Marau Are'are speakers regard themselves as Guadalcanal people but they were targeted during the ethnic tensions. Their harassment and forced displacement resulted in an armed confrontation between Marau Are'are and Birao communities and the rest of Guadalcanal. Both sides suffered casualties, threats, harassments, displaced populations and some even lost their businesses and properties. The MPA ended the fighting and paved the way for reconciliation and peace. Unfortunately, progress made towards reconciliation and peace was disrupted by an application for consent for Timber Rights to undertake commercial logging in 2003 which we will now discuss.

1.3 Problems and Issues

In 2002, few individuals from four different tribes met and decided to grant Timber Rights (the right to extract commercial trees from the land) to log a large tract of forestland within Birao Ward. This was done without consulting all members of their respective tribes and other tribes who own land within the proposed concession area. Many communities and tribal members openly expressed opposition to the logging proposal. Nevertheless, the group went ahead and registered a business named Tarariua Forest Resources (TFR) and submitted an application to obtain Timber Rights. Their action led to direct confrontations between and within tribes and communities. People's opposition to the logging proposal included: the lack of consultation, likely unequal distribution of logging revenues amongst tribal members, and the potential destruction of forestland that directly support their

livelihood. Land and forests are owned by tribes and no individual within a tribe has the right to make decision on its use without tribal members' consent.

II. THE CASE

2.1 Timber Rights Application

The company (TFR) submitted an application to the Commissioner of Forest (COF) in 2002 for consent to acquire Timber Rights. The Marau Leaders Council (MLC) opposed the application through a letter¹ to COF. In the letter, MLC strongly asked the COF to halt the Timber Rights process in the interest of peace and security within Birao Ward. The MLC is a community based organization (CBO) with representatives from both Marau Are'are and Birao speakers. The MLC's submission expressed people's concern about further conflict and disruption to progress made in reconciliation and peace after the ethnic tension. It also highlighted that the proposed concession area to be logged is owned by many tribal groups and that no proper consultations with the respective tribal members prior to the lodging of the application. Moreover, the forestland supports the livelihoods of many Birao people. Other concerned tribes and individuals also wrote separately to the office of COF expressing similar reasons against the Timber Rights application and proposed logging operation.

The COF verbally responded to MLC's letter through one of his Forest Officers stating that the Timber Rights process will proceed despite opposition from many members of the Birao community. He argued that there are provisions within the Forest Resources and Timber Utilization Act of 1969 (piece of legislation currently used to obtain Timber Rights) to raise disagreements and disputes and people should wait for the appropriate time. He further stated that nobody, including the Prime Minister has the right to stop the Timber Rights process.

The MLC also sent a letter to the Premier of Guadalcanal Province, pleading with him not to issue a business licence to TFR for the sake of peace and security in Birao Ward and on Guadalcanal. A representative from MLC also raised the issues and concerns in person with COF, Premier of Guadalcanal Province and the RAMSI's Deputy Special Coordinator. The RAMSI's Deputy Special Coordinator asked the MLC representative to report the case to the police, whilst no response was received from Guadalcanal Provincial Government.

2.2 Timber Rights Hearing

On the advice of COF, the Guadalcanal Provincial Secretary publicly displayed "Form I"² at various locations in Birao Ward in January 2004. The Timber Right hearing was conducted

¹ Letter was hand delivered to COF office on 20th January 2004. The letter was copied to the Minister and Permanent Secretary for the Department of Forest, Environment and Conservation (DFEC), the Prime Minister, RAMSI Special Coordinator, Premier of Guadalcanal Province, Member of Parliament for East Guadalcanal Constituency, Guadalcanal Provincial Member for Birao Ward and Chairman of TFR.

² Form 1 is prescribed form under the Forest and Timber Utilisation Act 1969 and contains names of individuals granting the timber right. Along with Form 1 is the notice for the date of the Timber Rights Hearing. Other Forms II, III and IV where reference is made to in the text are also prescribed forms under the Forest and Timber Utilisation Act 1969.

on Friday 19th March 2004 by four members of Guadalcanal Provincial Executive and two Forestry Officers. The cost of the hearing was met by the logging company (Earth Movers Ltd) that TFR identified as sub-contractor. The logging company apparently funded the whole process including costs of travels and allowances for some TRF directors to facilitate the Timber Rights Hearing. Many people who opposed the proposed logging turned up for the hearing. What was supposed to be a Timber Rights hearing, turned out to be a short two hour announcement of names of individuals granting Timber Rights and some information on reforestation. The Guadalcanal Provincial Minister for Forestry announced at the hearing that nobody is allowed to raise disagreements or dispute at the meeting. Any person who is opposed to individuals granting the Timber Rights should wait until “Form II” is up for public display. Those present at the meeting raised no objections to the announcement as they were not familiar with the Timber Rights process.

Guadalcanal Provincial executive members who conducted the so called Timber Rights Hearing reported that there was no dispute, thus recommended that process towards public display of “Form II” should begin. Form II contains the names of people granting the Timber Rights and stipulates that any aggrieved party to the outcome of the Timber Rights hearing should appeal to the Customary Land Appeals Court (CLAC) within thirty days of public display of “Form II”. Form II was publicly displayed on 1st April 2004.

On 27th April 2004, three tribes whose land boundaries are within the concession area filed a high court case against the Guadalcanal Provincial Executive, TRF and its Directors for irregularities in the Timber Rights hearing through a local law firm in Honiara. They also submitted two appeal cases to the Guadalcanal CLAC in response to “Form II”. They appealed on the ground that they were not given the opportunity to raise their points of disagreement during the Timber Rights hearing conducted by Guadalcanal Provincial Executive on Friday 19th March 2004. The High Court case was filed after one of the members of the concerned tribes attended a training and awareness workshop on forest law and practice in Honiara organized by a local NGO, Environmental Concerns Action Network of Solomon Islands (ECANSI) in early April 2004. The workshop is one of the activities under a project on “Forest Advocacy, Law and Practice” that was implemented by ECANSI and funded by Oxfam Australia. The High Court application calls for rehearing of the Timber Rights due to irregularities during the first hearing. The case could not proceed because the TFR Directors have excluded the area under dispute from the concession.

2.3 Disputes and conflicts

At the outset, there was disagreement by tribal members and the Birao Community on the logging proposal. As the process to obtain the Timber Rights continue disputes and disagreement intensified into violence. There were numerous incidents of abuse and assaults on both sides. The TFR was adamant to proceed. A member of TFR (pretending to act on behalf of Pakearivu tribe) issued a threatening and insulting letter on 12th December 2003 to a person milling timber (to build his house) in the concession area. The letter ordered him to stop milling and threatened that his chainsaw will go up in flames or crashed to pieces if he is defiant. He was also insulted in the letter. The case was reported to the Guadalcanal Police Commander on 31st January 2004 but no action was taken. On 9th January 2004, the Chairman of TFR issued another letter to members of some tribes; disallowing them from

making food gardens, mill timbers or extract forest products from some parts of the concession area. The TFR Chairman was subsequently assaulted by some youths who opposed the logging proposal. Relatives of the TFR chairman, armed with sticks and knives retaliated but the situation was eased by the intervention of some village women who are related to both opposing groups.

Soccer matches turned into battle grounds as youths from both sides assaulted each other. Youths from Makina area (Birao speaking) also insulted their own tribal elders who granted the Timber Rights. Arguments over a proposed site for the log pond ensued between some Marau Are'are and Birao speakers culminating into direct physical confrontations. A number of TFR directors were assaulted and youths threatened to set fire on logging machineries if they are ever landed ashore. All these criminal activities occurred with no police intervention, despite the fact that two RSIP officers were stationed at Marau at that time. Most of these criminal activities have not been settled through traditional means or taken up by police. They remain even after the logging stopped.

2.4 Current situation

Despite disagreements, disputes, and community violence, there was no official intervention from national, provincial or local authorities. The TFR continued with the Timber Rights process. They excluded the disputed areas (portion of land where the 3 tribes appealed against the concession) and extended the concession area further south into parts of Moli Ward. These are customary lands that were not consented to by the COF in "Form I" application and not even determined during the Timber Rights hearing. Their action in excluding the disputed area was an attempt to suppress the appeal lodged at the CLAC and the High Court application. This action however amounts to violations of certain sections of the *Forest Resources and Timber Utilization Act of 1969*. Such breach was occasioned with the involvement of some Forest Officers within the DFEC. A survey team which consisted of Forest Officers conducted an inventory of the proposed concession area in September 2004 and "Forms III and IV" were completed after the inventory. The TFR was granted the Timber Rights in November 2004. Desperate for revenue, Guadalcanal Province also granted TFR a logging license, despite repeated calls and appeals to the province not to issue a logging license.

The TFR went ahead with the process and entered into a Technology Agreement³ with a Earth Movers Logging Company (subcontractor) on May 2nd 2005. The subcontractor met all transport costs and accommodation at a Motel in Honiara for all 15 individuals who granted Timber Rights and members of TFR. They were also paid on signing of the Technological Agreement. At the signing, it was agreed that the sub-contractor will begin operations at the end of June 2005. The problem with securing a site for the log pond delayed the plan start of the logging operation. The proposed log pond site disputed and the disputing party has issued a letter on 12th May 2005 to TRF and its sub-contractor Earth Movers Limited, laying down its terms and conditions. Failure to meet the conditions submitted in the letter will result in use of an alternative site. Members of three tribes who

³ Agreement signed between the licensee entity and a sub-contractor which is the actual logging company. Under this technology agreement, the full range of logging activities are undertaken by the sub-contractor.

appealed the case and the rest of Birao community opposing logging kept close watch on the TFR logging developments closely and some have resorted to physical means to stop the loggers entering their area. There was instability within other tribal groups in Birao Ward, for example one of the TFR negotiators was repeatedly assaulted by youths. The TFR managed to secure an alternative site for a log pond and operation begun in September 2005. Earth Movers was forced to withdraw its operations in November, two months after due to widespread damage to its properties and equipments and repeated compensation demands by villagers. The TFR and Earth Movers Limited only made one log export shipment which only includes those logs they cleared from the landing sites and the roads areas.

The very sensitive issue that threatens peace and security in Birao Ward was the granting of Timber Rights by individuals from both Marau Are'are and Birao speakers of concession area known as Marau Sound within Birao Ward. This area is well defined and recognized as Marau Sound since history. The conflict in Marau during the ethnic tension was over this area. It was reaffirmed in the MPA as Marau Sound area. However, the Timber Rights under the current logging undermined the agreement and recognition made in the MPA.

III. THE ANALYSIS

3.1 Causes of conflict and current gaps in resolving them

The conflict in this particular case emerged because of several reasons. These include:

1. Lack of consultation between tribal members and other neighboring tribes about the logging proposal.
2. Only few individuals will benefit (TFR Directors) and not all tribal members. This was already evident in the use of funds paid by the sub-contractor (logging company) to facilitate the Timber Rights process. Only few members of TFR directors used the money. This will likely be the practice once revenue from the logging royalty starts flowing in.
3. Many people are concerned about their livelihoods. The forestland area that supports their food gardens, hunting grounds, drinking water sources, and source of building materials will be disturbed and damaged by the logging operations.
4. Experience from elsewhere in the country where legacy of commercial logging is prevalent and communities suffer.

As illustrated in this case study, in contemporary Solomon Islands, only certain individuals in a tribe or landowning group are granted Timber Rights by government. These are granted either legally according to the procedures specified by the current *Forest and Timber Utilization Act of 1969* or as is often the case, illegally, due to government's failure to implement the legislation effectively. At times, these legal oversights were intentionally done by responsible government officials for personal monetary gains. These corrupt practices often end up in disputes and lengthy litigations, causing conflict and division among tribal members. In most cases, no proper consultation processes were followed. Rather, several individual members of landowning tribes secure Timber Rights under their names and proceeded with logging to the dissatisfaction of the rest of the members of their tribes. The individuals or landowners usually apply for Timber Rights and sub-contract their Timber Rights to foreign logging companies as they lack financial capital and logging machinery.

Some license holders argue that this is a way to raise funds as no credit facilities are available to local people and opportunities for cash income are extremely limited. For example, a logging license holder from Malaita Province argued that he went into logging because he wanted to fund raise to meet social obligations and start up capital for business. The former Premier of Choiseul Province and Member of Parliament for North East Choiseul once said “We aim to make money by selling trees and use the hard cash to meet our social needs. This is business deal. No handouts” (Solomon Star, 4 May 1990, quoted in Bennett, 2000). The problem with this practice is that only few individuals (those who hold the Timber Rights and Logging Licenses) in the tribes benefit at the expense of the rest of the tribal members and this is a root cause of ongoing community conflicts.

3.2 Responsible people and institutions that ensure the underlying causes are dealt with

In most Solomon Islands logging operations, the educated and outspoken members of the tribes usually apply for Timber Rights, taking advantage of the ignorance of the majority of their tribal members. Some current license holders are politicians, public servants, and professionals like lawyers, businessmen and chiefs. Instead of assisting and educating their tribal members about sustainable use of their resources and finding income generating opportunities, they exploit their own people and their resources for their selfish ends. Traditional governance systems in the village are not effective under such circumstances to act on behalf of the people. This is especially so when chiefs and their cronies are involved in such corrupt practices. Sometimes communities sought assistance and advice from state institutions like Ministry of Forestry and provincial governments who are directly involved in the Timber Rights Process. Again, such institutions are also compromised and more inclined towards logging than assisting people. Some officers in these institutions may also be corrupt, using their positions for personal gain as demonstrated by this case study. Both Ministry of Forestry and Guadalcanal Provincial Government facilitated the Timber Rights and Logging License for TFR despite numerous calls from MLC and Birao community to halt the process.

Most times tribal members were left with no other options other than to take the law into their own hands and become violently aggressive. Sometimes they use current laws to challenge the processes in court. The police officers are often ignorant of the Timber Rights process and act only on criminal cases. As such, most times they ended up arresting the very people who are trying to protect the forest against the real criminals - the loggers. In this case study, police were unable to do anything. Going to court is something rural people are scared of and even securing money to pay for expensive court fees, hire of private lawyers and meet logistical costs is a daunting task. Indeed, these are well beyond what most local communities could afford. Most loggers are therefore left to operate freely even if their operations are illegal. There could have been more court appeals against TFR by other landowning tribes but the lack of funds prevented them from doing so.

Communities and people are fighting a losing battle when it comes to protecting their resources and livelihoods. This case study demonstrated that despite seeking assistance from various state institutions like RAMSI, Solomon Islands Police and the Courts, Forestry Department through the office of the COF, Guadalcanal Provincial Government, TFR easily

obtained the Timber Rights and Logging License with the support of some government institutions and officials. The current legislative reform in forestry (Forest Bill 2004) will have some impact. The process of securing timber rights will be more transparent but progress to enact the bill is being blocked by some in government quarters under the pretext that it requires more consultation with the communities. For many of them, their interest is at stake if the Bill is enacted to become a law. To date no progress has been made with the Bill even to the cabinet level.

3.3 Community’s perspective or “voice” on what needs to change, what is lacking, and what they see their role is or can be

At present, communities do not have a voice or even if they do, nobody is interested to listen to that voice. Communities have very little knowledge about the Timber Rights process and pro-loggers often take advantage of this ignorance. In this case study, for instance, the Timber Rights hearing was well orchestrated by those involved, knowing very well that many in Birao, do not know about the Timber Rights hearing procedures. The Timber Rights hearing is an opportunity for other tribal members to question and dispute the legitimacy of those granting timber rights in the application. If they were successful, the process could have ended there without going through the costly litigation process. That opportunity was not given and people were denied their right to raise their points of argument. Those involved knew that they needed to push for “Form II” stage so that emerging dispute could then go as appeals in court. Awareness on the Timber Rights process is very important but is not happening.

3.4 Obstacles to Positive Change

The obstacles to positive change from current situations are that attitudes towards this extractive industry by both the Government and the local communities have not changed. There ought to be changes in attitudes. Institutions like the offices of the Ministry of Forestry and in particular COF , and provincial governments who are directly involved in the Timber Rights process are usually not impartial in their work but look for personal gains. Lack of up to date legislation to curb current corrupt practices is also a major obstacle to positive change. The current *Forest and Timber Utilization Act of 1969* do not cater for current situations and circumstances. The *Forest Bill 2004* was meant to address this gap but has been intentionally delayed by government. In a country like Solomon Islands where a sense of nationhood is lacking, it is difficult to mobilize civil society to collectively push for change in national issue like logging where large sum of money is involved.

IV. Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI)

4.1 RAMSI’s Current Approach and Involvement

RAMSI is aware of the conflict in this case study area since copies of MLC letters were sent to them and concerns were raised in face to face meetings. They however opted for a “hands off” approach to the case and the problems in the logging industry more generally. The following events demonstrated this “hands off” approach. On 20th January 2004, MLC submitted a letter to COF asking his office to halt the Timber Rights process in the interest of peace and security within Birao Ward and on Guadalcanal. A copy of the letter was sent

to RAMSI Special Coordinator. On the same date, MLC also submitted a letter to the Commissioner of Police requesting establishment of an effective police post at Marau Sound. The letter recommended that the police post be jointly manned by officers from Royal Solomon Islands Police (RSIP) and RAMSI's Participating Police Force (PPF). A copy of the letter was sent to RAMSI's Special Coordinator, Premier Guadalcanal Province and Guadalcanal Provincial Police Commander. It was submitted following the Commissioner of Police's visit to Birao on 14th January 2004, in which he publicly stated that Birao or Marau Sound in particular is not a priority area in RSIP and RAMSI's strategy action plan in policing. The statement was very disappointing to many people in the community especially women and children who continue to suffer from criminal activities in the area. The proposed logging reignited further conflict and rise in criminal activities. No response was received from the Commissioner of Police.

The Chairman of MLC further requested deployment of RAMSI-PPF officers to support the two RSIP officers manning the Marau Police Post during a meeting between Civil Society Network (CSN) and RAMSI on the 19th April 2004 in Honiara. In his reply, the Commander of RAMSI-PPF stated that PPF officers stationed at Avuavu police post are responsible for police work within Birao Ward. He further stated that their police posts are located at strategic locations to address law and order and cannot concentrate resources on Guadalcanal alone as they are also setting up police posts in other provinces. The Chairman of MLC however reminded RAMSI about the need to give consideration to the MPA as it is different in nature from the TPA. The tension in Birao Ward during the ethnic tension was not between Guadalcanal and Malaita people but between Guadalcanal people themselves. Also, problems arising from the proposed logging require RAMSI and RSIP attention since it has serious implications on reconciliation and peace processes after the ethnic tensions in Birao Ward and on Guadalcanal. In his reply, the RAMSI Special Coordinator said that his office often receives overwhelming numbers of requests for assistance from throughout the country. However, their resources are limited and are therefore unable to attend to all requests.

A MLC representative also raised the issues and concerns about the proposed logging in person with RAMSI's Deputy Special Coordinator on April 2004. He advised him to report the case to the Police. This was a dead end since RSIP officers at Marau ignored the criminal activities associated with the logging proposal in the area. The RAMSI's "hand off" approach to the destructive logging industry is not peculiar to this particular case but a common trend throughout the country. For instance, communities in Kolombangara previously requested RAMSI to check on an illegal operation by Delta Logging Company on their land. Some PPF personnel were sent to the site and after that one visit, they never return. Some communities on Isabel have expressed similar experiences with RAMSI (ECANSI Report, 2004).

4.2 Inconsistencies between RAMSI's Policy and Practice

This case study and other similar cases clearly demonstrated RAMSI's strategic policy in addressing law and order in the country. They appear to be selective by addressing only certain aspect of law and order, particularly the areas that meets their requirements and interests. Why is RAMSI keeping away from the logging industry that is causing community violence and instability? Community violence ignited the ethnic tension, particularly on

issues relating to land and inequitable distribution of benefits from natural resources exploitation. It was started by village youths and not those in urban centres. RAMSI needs to clearly define the aspects of law and order that they are mandated to address in their overall policy of engagement. If it is general lawlessness that emerged during and after the ethnic tensions, then they are probably achieving their objectives. If it is to address law and order for long term or sustainable peace and security, then they are failing in this area. A major source of community violence is logging and yet RAMSI is taking a “hands off” approach to it. Current practices in the forestry industry are a security risk to local communities and the nation at large.

RAMSI’s strategic position in addressing law and order is not transparent and significant policy preferences have been acted out. For example, their “hands off” approach to land and forestry was not explicitly stated and clarified for the public to know. Once, in this case study, RAMSI’s former Special Coordinator stated that due to limited resources they were not in a position to stretch further to address requests for assistance in logging issues. This is understandable, but it is important to address priority issues that are posing threats to peace and security in the country. The forestry sector is one priority area that requires immediate RAMSI attention. Logging is: (1) a corruption incubator, (2) brings suboptimal economic outcomes, and (3) is a security threat (border control issues and community violence issues). RAMSI’s “hands off” approaches demonstrated in this case study promotes current trends of continued reliance on socially, economically and environmentally destructive logging. It is understandable that RAMSI would like to see Solomon Islanders taking the lead in solving critical issues of land use and forestry. However, if RAMSI does not assist in addressing these, then it discourages anyone else from taking the lead in addressing these sensitive issues and thus the problems will persist. There may be evidences of corruption in the Timber Rights processes but if the decision is not to engage in forestry, those irregularities and corrupt practices will not be addressed.

During the last two decades, logging has been the most important economic activity in the country as it accounted for about 70% of country foreign exchange earnings (CBSI, 2004). The Australian Government had spent around AUD\$26 millions in the forestry sector since 1992 to build capacity, strengthen regulation and monitor to ensure maximum revenue capture and benefit to the country. Unfortunately the assistance fall short of achieving its objectives because of the problems and corruption associated with the industry (Solomon Islands Forest Management Project Presentation, 2004). It is timely that RAMSI also engage with the forestry sector in its strategic policy to address its associated problems.

Batley (2005) pointed out that RAMSI faces very high expectations from many sections of the Solomon Islands community. The expectations relate to what areas RAMSI should be active in and about what can be achieved in the areas RAMSI are working in. He stressed that RAMSI can't be all things because its mandate is limited. Moreover, RAMSI does not want to be doing everything because so many other actors, including major foreign donors such as the European Union and Japan are also active in the field. The community’s high expectations of RAMSI should be taken positively because it is these high expectations that provided the impetus to people’s overwhelming support for RAMSI. The level of public support facilitated RAMSI’s early success in restoring law and order. Solomon Islanders now expect RAMSI to assist in addressing other important issues like land and forest which are fundamental to long term peace and security in the country. RAMSI disarmed militants,

arrested and locked them up in prison, and stabilized government financial systems to support education and health services. These are tangible and physical changes that people witnessed, thus, their attention is more on RAMSI than other aid donors.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Solomon Islands Government (SIG) could adopt a major policy change to ban logging and encourage domestic milling. It is advisable to make policy changes now than to await the downfall of the industry in ten or more years time when the country's forest resource are depleted with corresponding falls in revenue. In addition, there is need to overhaul the Ministry of Forestry and put in place strict regulations and procedures to guide the industry. This requires immediate enactment of the *Forest Bill 2004* with strict enforcement.

Alternatively, SIG should establish other income generating opportunities aside from commercial logging. It may also be critical to provide credit facilities to tribes to allow them acquire machinery to do their own milling. At the same time, the government ought to identify and establish markets for milled timbers and encourage private sector or communities to provide the market and transport logistics. Moreover, SIG should promote downstream processing of timber products for value adding

While RAMSI's policy is directed on peace and security, it must assist to root out corruption in the logging industry because it causes community violence and threatens peace and security. With RAMI's "hands off" approach, they seem to accept the current nature of development which is continuously reliance on socially, economically and environmentally destructive logging. RAMSI must reverse its "hands-off" approach to logging and work with communities and SIG in the interest of peace and security.

The civil society organizations could be instrumental in raising awareness on Timber Rights process to enable communities make informed decision about logging. In addition civil society would be in positions to provide information to communities on selection and election of responsible leaders who have a heart for the country fellow citizens. A change in current leadership may be the way forward. Finally, civil society organizations, with the help of government, strengthen and formalize traditional community governance structures and systems to ensure individual tribe members do not act outside their tribal groups' common consent on issues impacting on livelihoods.

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Annex 1: ACRONYMS

CBO	Community Based Organization
CLAC	Customary Land Appeals Court
COF	Commissioner of Forest
CSN	Civil Society Network
MOF	Ministry Department of Forestry
ECANSI	Environmental Concerns Action Network of Solomon Islands
EU	European Union
MLC	Marau Leaders Council
MPA	Marau Peace Agreement
NGO	Non-Government Organization
PPF	Participating Police Force
RSIP	Royal Solomon Islands Police
RAMSI	Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands
SIG	Solomon Islands Government
TFRL	Tararua Forest Resources Limited
TPA	Townsville Peace Agreement

Annex II: LIST OF ORGANISATIONS/PEOPLE CONSULTED

Organization	Date	Location
Solomon Islands Development Trust (SIDT) Eco-Forestry Unit	19 April 2005	Honiara, Solomon Islands
Soltrust (former employees and directors)	19 April 2005	Honiara, Solomon Islands
Forestry Division, Department of Forest, Environment and Conservation	20 April 2005	Honiara, Solomon Islands
Birao Community	23 April 2005	Birao Ward, Guadalcanal Province
Marau Leaders Council	23 April 2005	Marau Sound (Birao Ward), Solomon Islands
Tararua Forest Resources Limited	24 April 2005	Honiara, Solomon Islands
Komuahia and Marapa Tribes	24 April 2005	Marau Sound (Birao Ward), Solomon Islands
Solomon Islands Forest Management Project: Phase II	6 May 2005	Honiara, Solomon Islands
Pakearivu Tribe Representatives	8 th May 2005	Honiara, Solomon Islands