



## **PROFILE OF INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT : SOLOMON ISLANDS**

Compilation of the information available in the Global IDP  
Database of the Norwegian Refugee Council

(as of 18 March, 2004, revised in November 2004)

Also available at <http://www.idpproject.org>

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## PROFILE SUMMARY

### **Restoration of law and order by regional intervention force allows for the return of the displaced**

*In spite of a peace agreement in 2000, ending the civil war which forcibly displaced nearly ten per cent of the population of the Solomon Islands, a general climate of instability and insecurity has continued to prevail in many areas of the country, particularly on Guadalcanal, the country's main island. Although the majority of the over 30,000 people displaced by the fighting have now returned home, the ethnic conflict, which erupted in 1998 between the Malaitans and the Guadalcanalese has left an uneasy legacy. This has been compounded by a sharp economic decline, high unemployment and a lack of basic services for the majority of the population. In a new outbreak of violence in the summer of 2003, over 1,500 people were displaced on Guadalcanal by a violent campaign of intimidation led by militants commanded by warlord Harold Keke. The intervention of an Australian-led regional force (RAMSI) in July 2003 to restore law and order in the country improved the humanitarian conditions of the displaced and rapidly allowed for the return of all IDPs. It is hoped that the presence of the intervention forces will now pave the way for to the country's economic and social rehabilitation. Central to this process will be the establishment of long-term development plan which addresses the underlying causes of the conflict.*

### **Background**

Although often characterised as “ethnic” or “tribal”, the conflict in the Solomon Islands is the result of power struggles for control of the state, acute land disputes, and the incapacity of a corrupted State to provide basic services for the mostly rural population. Following the end of World War II, Malaitans originating from neighbouring Malaita Island migrated in large numbers to Honiara, the capital city, where most employment opportunities were to be found. They have since come to dominate Honiara as a political and economic force, resulting in strong resentment by local Guadalcanalese.

Following an outbreak of inter-ethnic violence between Malaitan and Guadalcanal communities on the main island of Guadalcanal in 1998-1999, between 30,000 and 35,000 persons were forced from their homes. During this time, an estimated 24,000 Malaitans fled to Honiara, while some 11,000 Guadalcanalese fled from the capital and the coast to the interior of the island (Schoorl and Friesen, 2002). By the end of 1999, the majority of displaced Malaitans had opted to return to their home island of Malaita. Of those who chose to settle in Honiara, some joined the Malaita Eagle Force (MEF), a militant group formed to counter attacks by the Guadalcanalese Isatabu Freedom Movement (IFM) against the Malaitan population (John Roughan, October 2000, p 7).

The conflict worsened in June 2000 resulting in the overthrow of the government by the MEF, reportedly assisted by paramilitary police officers. An increase in fighting immediately followed, displacing an additional 3,000 persons in rural Guadalcanal by the end of the year.

The Townsville Peace Agreement, signed in October 2000 under the auspices of Australia, has put an end to the full-scale civil war, but the agreement has proven ineffective in ensuring a complete demilitarisation of the country and a secure environment for the population. Many of its provisions including the handing in of weapons and the compensation to the displaced for lost or damaged property were never fully implemented and an amnesty granted to militants on both sides contributed to creating a climate of impunity.

Although the judiciary is independent, it has since been hampered by police ineffectiveness, lack of resources, and threats against judges and prosecutors. Since 2000, the police force has become factionalized

and has not functioned as an effective institution (US DOS 25 February 2004). During 2001, some 2,000 former militants and paramilitary police officers were incorporated into the police force as “Special Constables”. The high number of Special Constables put a strain on the finances of the state at a time when civil servants like teachers and doctors did not get any salaries. In addition, instead of helping to solve law and order problems many Special Constables became involved in criminal activities, including extortion, robbery, vehicle theft, intimidation, and fraud (US DOS 4 March 2002).

In late 2001, a new government was elected, but high levels of corruption, particularly centred on the distribution of Taiwanese funded compensation to displaced Malaitans and a deteriorating law and order situation meant that peace remained fragile (CHR 5 May 2003, p. 18). While as of the end of 2002, the estimated 30,000 people displaced by the civil war had returned home (USCR June 2003), many had not been compensated for the loss of property and homes because of the state’s financial constraints and the misuse of compensation funds. Furthermore, austerity measures imposed by the International Monetary Fund and donor countries at the end of 2002 led the government to retrench about 30 per cent of the public sector workforce and to halt the compensation payment made to people affected by the civil war (Peter Byrne 21 November 2002).

Lawlessness continued to prevail in many areas of the country, namely on the Weathercoast, a no-go zone on the southern coast of Guadalcanal and home to Guadalcanalese militant groups who had refused to accept the peace agreement. While some 2,000 weapons have been collected and destroyed two years after the conflict, hundreds of high-powered guns remained in the hands of former militants contributing to a climate of social unrest and insecurity (Alpers and Twyford March 2003, p. 100).

### **Over 1,500 people displaced by violence in 2003**

During 2003, there was a sharp increase in crime rates and ethnic clashes. In Honiara, former militants, many of whom had been absorbed into the “Special Constables” unit, were responsible for a wave of violence directed against the government and citizens. In the countryside, Harold Keke – a Guadalcanalese militant leader who had refused to sign the peace agreement – and his followers were responsible for many killings, abductions and burning of villages.

In the summer of 2003, some 1,500 people fled the Weathercoast escaping acts of terror and violence committed by the militants and sought refuge in and around the capital Honiara. Many IDPs had to walk for a week across the island to reach the capital, sleeping in the jungle without shelter, food and health assistance. Other displaced people reportedly took refuge in the area surrounding the Weathercoast (WV 7 August 2003).

Most IDPs were forced to live under plastic sheetings at Tintinge, outside Honiara, lacking basic services, such as potable water, proper sanitation, or access to health care. With high temperatures and humidity, some children had contracted malaria (WV 12 August 2003). Psychological problems were also reported among IDPs, especially children, forced to witness abductions, rapes and the beating of relatives by Harold Keke’s militants.

### **Return and resettlement: returnees need assistance**

A 2,000 strong Australia-led Regional Assistance Force to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) was deployed at the end of July 2003 with the official mandate “to reinforce and uphold the legitimate institutions and authorities in Solomon Islands, and ensure respect for the Constitution and implementation of the laws” (Government of Australia 25 August 2003). In a matter of months the law and order situation greatly improved. Many militant leaders suspected of human rights abuses and criminal acts were imprisoned and their followers disarmed.



By mid-March 2004, all the people displaced during the previous year had been able to return home under the protection of foreign military force (People First Network 18 March 2004).

Seven organized return and resettlement movements took place between December and mid-March with the support from UNDP and AusAID. The returning IDPs were provided with a resettlement assistance package comprising transportation; a family assistance package (farming inputs/tools, fishing gear and plastic sheeting); and food (UNDP 2 March 2004). Security for returning villagers has been provided by the deployment of RAMSI military personnel in areas of return. A multi-national Participating Police Force (PPF) will now ensure continued security in the area (People First Network 18 March 2004).

Preliminary findings of a monitoring mission on the conditions in areas of resettlement conducted in early March 2004 suggest that much assistance will be needed to guarantee a return in safety and dignity. Most of the returnees have found their homes and community infrastructure destroyed and they have to live in makeshift shelter covered by tarpaulin. Sanitary conditions are poor or non-existent. Health clinics are very few and lack basic medicine. Although many of those who returned in December 2003 have exhausted their three-month food rations, coping mechanisms on food security appeared to be fairly effective. Many families have engaged in small gardening, although the crops will only be due for harvesting in May-June 2004.

Assistance projects are most needed in the field of reconciliation and peace-building activities, shelter, food security and rehabilitation of community infrastructure. The mission also pointed out that inter-agency communication needed to be improved and coordination strengthened. Moreover, there seemed to be a shortage of expertise and awareness on IDP protection issues among field level staff (UNDP 12 March 2004).

### **National and international assistance**

In response to the recent displacement crisis, in June 2003, the government established an IDP Coordination Committee with the mandate to provide coordination of humanitarian aid. Chaired by the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO), the IDP Committee consisted of the Guadalcanal Provincial Government, National Peace Council, World Vision, Red Cross, Oxfam, the Solomon Islands Christian Association (SICA) and the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA). The Red Cross, the Guadalcanal government and the NDMO have conducted assessments and reported regularly to the IDP Committee (World Vision 7 August 2003). Following the intervention of RAMSI and the improvement of the situation in the areas of displacement, the IDP Committee was transformed into an IDP Resettlement Committee (IDPRC) and tasked with coordinating efforts in the development and implementation of an IDP resettlement strategy (UNDP 2 March 2004).

In addition to the assistance provided by aid agencies the displaced could also count on the social safety net of the “wantok” system, a traditional support system based on reciprocity within the extended family. Businesses, churches and individuals were also mobilized to collect funds, food and non-food items to assist the displaced (Pacific Islands Report 21 July 2003)

The National Peace Council (NPC) established in October 2002 and supported by the Australian government and UNDP, has been involved in peace-building and reconciliation activities. This includes a “Weapons Free Village” campaign, encouraging and facilitating weapons surrender and consultation with national and provincial governments and women's and youth groups (Government of Australia 1 August 2003).

Under the UN Resident Coordinator's Office, UNDP has coordinated humanitarian assistance during the emergency phase and has engaged in post-conflict peace-building and rehabilitation processes. In 2001, the Community Reconciliation and Reintegration Programme (CRRP) was designed by UNDP with assistance from AusAID. The programme included assistance to conflict-affected groups in their resettlement and

socio-economic reintegration into society. Australia's contribution to the Programme is expected to reach \$21 million by the end of 2004 (AusAID 1 August 2003). From July 2002 until the end of 2003, UNDP has implemented a project supporting the demobilization of Special Constables. Within a year, close to half of the Special Constables were demobilised and provided with assistance to set up alternative income-generating activities (UNDP 24 February 2003).

The key foreign actors involved in the assistance to the Solomon Islands are Australia and New Zealand. Both countries were the main contributors to the regional force and have also committed to extend their assistance to aid projects designed to rebuild and rehabilitate the country. A number of international NGOs are also present in the country and are involved in various humanitarian and development projects. The Regional Assistance Force will engage in three core activities: economic reform, the machinery of government, and accountability and law and justice (Government of Australia 16 February 2004). Other countries and institutions contributing to the assistance include Taiwan, Japan, the United Nations, the European Union, the International Monetary Fund and the Asian Development Bank.

Insofar as RAMSI's mandate was to restore law and order, the intervention can be viewed as a success. Militias have been disarmed, their leaders imprisoned and all of those displaced in 2003 have been able to return home. However, economic reforms pushed for by donor countries and the cutting-down of public spending run the risk of creating further frustration among a population highly dependent on public sector employment. Aid should be focused on alleviating poverty, promote sustainable development and restore the country's education and health infrastructure.

18 March 2004

# CAUSES AND BACKGROUND OF DISPLACEMENT

## Background

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### General characteristics of the Solomon Islands

- Country consists of 6 large islands (Choiseul, Isabel, Malaita, New Georgia, Guadalcanal and Makira), 20 medium size islands and thousands of small islands.

"Solomon Islands is an archipelago of 922 islands about 1,860 kilometres north east of Australia and located between 5 and 12 degrees south latitude and 155 and 170 degrees east longitude. The group consists of six large islands (Choiseul, Isabel, Malaita, New Georgia, Guadalcanal and Makira), twenty medium sized ones, and hundreds of smaller islets and reefs that stretch in a double chain for over 1,800 kilometres from the Shortland Islands in the west to Tikopia and Anuta in the east, and nearly 900 kilometres from Ontong Java atoll in the north to Rennell Island in the south. Of all these islands, only 347 are presently inhabited. The total land area is 28,369 square-kilometres, which makes Solomon Islands the second largest insular nation of the south Pacific, after Papua New Guinea (Stanley, 1993).

The climate is usually hot and humid all year-around and the heaviest rainfall season is between December and March. This is also the tropical cyclone season. The worst in recent years was cyclone Namu in 1986 which devastated some of the islands, particularly Guadalcanal, Malaita, Makira, Rennell and Bellona.

In comparison to the Polynesian islands to the east and Micronesia to the north, Solomon Islands is endowed with relatively rich natural resources such as timber, minerals and fisheries. Most of the islands are covered with thick tropical rain forest which provides timber, one of the country's most important natural resources. In 1996 it made up about 50 per cent of Solomon Islands total exports (Central Bank of Solomon Islands, 1996). There is, however, a continuing topical and controversial debate in recent years surrounding the rates of exploitation, sustainability, logging practices and transfer pricing (Fraser, 1997; Roughan, 1997; Dauvergne, 1996; Baird, 1996; Price Waterhouse, 1995; Montgomery, 1995; Duncan, 1994; Grynberg, 1994).

Another important natural resource is minerals. Gold will become economically important since the Australian-based Ross Mining Company began mining at Gold Ridge on Guadalcanal in June 1997. Gold Ridge is estimated to hold about US\$1 billion worth of gold (Solomon Star, 7 February, 1996). It has, therefore, been viewed as a project that will salvage Solomon Islands' currently deteriorating economy. There are other gold deposits at Poha in west Guadalcanal and Vangunu Island in the Western Province which are still undergoing prospecting to determine their economic viability. Also, there were intentions to mine phosphate and bauxite on Rennell and Bellona island. However, this never eventuated because the deposits were not big enough to be economically viable, and there was resistance to mining from the land owning groups on the islands.

Large scale commercial agriculture, on the other hand, is not a major development alternative because of the rugged mountainous feature of the islands. The only large scale commercial agriculture is limited to the Guadalcanal plains where the British company, Commonwealth Development Cooperation (CDC), owns huge oil palm, and cocoa plantations. In 1995 palm oil and kernel made up about 12.6 per cent of the country's total exports (Central Bank of Solomon Islands, 1995). Apart from on the Guadalcanal plain, there are very few other parts of the country where commercial agriculture could be carried out on a relatively large scale.

Another important resource-based industry that has a lot of potential for development is fisheries. Solomon Islands has an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) which covers an area of some 1.34 million square kilometres of ocean and holds some of the world's richest tuna fishing grounds. This provides an invaluable opportunity for the development of the fisheries industry which so far, has been dominated mostly by Solomon Taiyo Ltd (STL), a joint venture operation between the government of Solomon Islands and the Taiyo Gyogyo of Japan, one of the world's largest multinational fishing companies. (See the section on the private sector for a discussion of Solomon Taiyo Ltd and fisheries in general). The fisheries industry still has tremendous potential for development.

(...) about 85 percent of land in Solomon Islands is under customary ownership." (Tarcisius Tara Kabutaulaka, September 1998, pp. 11-12)

### **A great cultural diversity**

- Great cultural diversity with 87 languages for 400,000 people, 94 percent Melanesians, 4 percent Polynesians, 2 percent Micronesian, Chinese, Europeans and others.
- Pidgin developed as a lingua franca and, although English is the official language of education, commerce, the media and government administration.
- Divisions along linguistic, regional and ethnic lines are real and influence public opinion and decisions about development.
- Among the main problems facing the country : rapid population growth, increasing urbanisation, unemployment, crime and social disintegration.
- About 47 per cent of the population are in the age group of 0 -14 while 48 per cent are in the age group of 15-59, and 5 per cent 60 years old and over

"An important feature of Solomon Islands, as with Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu, is the tremendous range of cultural diversity. This is exemplified by the fact that there are 87 distinct languages and numerous dialects shared by a population of about 400,000 people. This population is further divided by ethnicity - about 94 per cent are Melanesians, 4 per cent are Polynesians, with the other 2 per cent Micronesian, Chinese, European and other. Because of the diversity of languages, Pidgin ( Pijin as it is known in the Solomons), developed as a lingua franca and, although English is the official language of education, commerce, the media and government administration, Pidgin. is spoken by the majority of the population of Solomon Islands for everyday communications. Pijin is similar to Papua New Guinea Tok Pisin and Vanuatu Bislama.

This cultural and ethnic diversity has salient implications for nation-building and the authority of the state and its capacity to implement national policies. It is important to note that despite strong rhetorical statements such as "unity in diversity", the divisions along linguistic, regional and ethnic lines are real and influence public opinion and decisions about development. On the other hand, it is important to be aware of an increasing national consciousness, especially amongst the educated, urban dwellers where social groupings often cut across linguistic, ethnic and regional boundaries, and the emergence of a national culture is evident (Jourdan, 1995).

Today, the 400,000 Solomon Islanders of diverse cultural backgrounds share some common national problems. These include rapid population growth, increasing urbanisation, unemployment, crime and social disintegration. The rapid population growth rate is important for Solomon Islands because of its limited land size and slow economic growth. At 3.5 per cent per year, the country has one of the most rapidly growing populations of the world. At this rate, it will double in two decades. This problem has been further exacerbated by the fact that 52 per cent of the population are either below the age of 15 or above 60. About 47 per cent of the population are in the age group of 0 -14 while 48 per cent are in the age group of 15-59,

and 5 per cent 60 years old and over. The rapid growth rate and young age structure of the population means that there is an increasing probability of high unemployment, insufficient schools, prostitution, rising crime and other related social problems. These problems are especially profound in the rapidly growing urban centres such as Honiara which has an annual population growth rate of around 6 per cent. A large percentage of prostitutes in Honiara, for example, are between the age of 13 and 25 (Tara, 1996)." (Tarcisius Tara Kabutaulaka September 1998, pp.15-16)

"The islands were settled in the Austronesian wave of migration out of South-east Asia across the Pacific, probably around 4,000 years ago, although the presence of some pre-Austronesian or Papuan languages in parts of the group (as in Papua New Guinea to the West) implies some considerably earlier settlement.

The Solomon Islands has sizeable Polynesian and Micronesian (I-Kiribati or Gilbertese) minorities, and smaller Chinese and European groups. The majority Melanesian community is divided amongst several islands, and inter-island migration combined with lack of migrant land rights has resulted in serious difficulties for settler communities particularly on Guadalcanal and in the Western Province.

" (UNHCHR 5 May 2003, p. 17)

### **Most of the land is in customary-ownership**

- 87 percent of the land is in customary ownership, 9 percent is government-owned and 2 percent is leased to foreigners.
- Land is much more than a mere economic commodity, it cannot be bought and sold like other marketable commodities.
- Not only is it a source of food, but it also has historical, political, and religious significance. It is usually owned by the clan or line, and not just by an individual.
- The concept of individual ownership with the right to sell land was introduced and in the early days of the British administration and has been the cause of some presentday conflicts over land.

In Solomon Islands, the prominence of cultural traditions in national affairs is most conspicuous in the relationship between development and traditional land tenure. Large-scale resource development is often made difficult by a land tenure system in which about 87 percent of the land is in customary-ownership, leaving only about nine per cent government owned and the rest by individual Solomon Islanders. Only two per cent of the land is leased to foreigners. The small percentage of government-owned land means that the state has limited access to land for the purposes of national development. It also means that state power over land-based development initiatives can be (and has in the past been) seriously undermined. The role of landowners has been discussed earlier in this report. However, the politics of land ownership (the interactions within land owning groups) is important to consider, and this can best be understood by looking at the traditional land tenure system.

To appreciate why a large percentage of land remains in customary- ownership, one needs to have an understanding of the traditional value of land to Solomon Islanders. For them, land is much more than a mere economic commodity, it cannot be bought and sold like other marketable commodities. Traditionally land is of great significance and indeed the most valuable resource. Not only is it a source of food, but it also has historical, political, and religious significance. The land holds burial grounds, sacrificial sites, and monuments that are important to a society's history and culture. It is not only a resource for the living, but also a vehicle for providing a link with dead ancestors. In this sense land has a religious significance which makes it the most valuable heritage of the whole community and one that is not often lightly parted with. It is usually owned by the clan or line, and not just by an individual. Traditionally land also has a political

importance that is embedded in the role that it plays in binding together the land-owning clan or line (Zoloveke, 1979). It is a source of political and economic power for those who can successfully lay claim over large areas of land. One can do so by having knowledge of oral traditions which legitimate ownership of different portions of the land or successfully manipulating such oral traditions to legitimise one's own claim over land. For Solomon Islanders, land is the centre of life. People have use-rights over portions of land because of their membership in a clan or line; traditionally there was no individual ownership of land. (Zoloveke, 1979). The traditional land tenure system is based on the close relationship between land and people and is similar in effect to land tenure systems found throughout Melanesia and the Pacific Islands (Ballard, 1996; Ward, 1996; Crocombe, 1987).

However, since European contact and the colonisation of the islands, land tenure has changed. The concept of individual ownership with the right to sell land was introduced and in the early days of the British administration a large percentage of the best and most accessible land was alienated. In the 1960s the colonial government introduced a 'land settlement' program which involved the survey and registration of customary land, documenting ownership, use rights and boundaries. This program was later severely criticised for being ineffective and too centralised. By 1984, only thirteen percent of the land area of Solomon Islands had been registered, the boundaries surveyed and tenure regulated by statute. The rest remained in customary ownership and used according to custom (Larmour, 1984; Bennett, 1995).

The arrangements made during the colonial era have been the cause of some presentday conflicts over land. In Pavuvu in the Russell Islands in the Central Province, in 1905 the British colonial government leased Pavuvu Island to Levers Pacific Plantations. The original owners of the island, the Lavukal people of the Russell Islands, for many years demanded that the island be returned to them. However, their demands were ignored (Rose, 1995). On 10 March, 1995, the executive of Central Province granted Marving Brothers, a Malaysian registered logging company, a business license that allowed the central government to issue a logging permit for Pavuvu Island. The island's forest was worth about US\$120 million (Roughan, 1997). The Lavukal people, assisted by non-government organisation (NGOs) such as the Solomon Islands Development Trust (SIDT), Soltrust, Greenpeace, and Development Services Exchange (DSE) resisted the logging of Pavuvu. Company machines were sabotaged and workers were threatened. However, the central government sent in police officers to protect the company, as the government claimed the company was logging on government land (Roughan, 1997; Tuhanuku, 1995). Today, Pavuvu Island remains the centre of intense confrontation between landowners, the central government, Central Province and Marving Brothers. In November, 1995, Martin Apa, a Russell Islander anti-logging campaigner, was murdered but to date the police investigation has failed to find his killers. Many suspect that the murder was connected to the Pavuvu Island logging issue.

(...)

Cultural traditions undoubtedly have a tremendous impact on national affairs. However, to further understand national development in Solomon Islands, it is necessary to look at, not only the traditional systems and structures, but also the formal public sector system - that structure we often refer to as the state. This will give us a better understanding of how national policies are made and the factors that influence the way these policies are implemented." (Tarcisius Tara Kabutaulaka September 1998, pp. 30-32)

**See also: [Land... is the issue](#), John Roughan, September 2003**

### **From colonial rule to independence (1978)**

- Traditionally Solomon Islanders believe they originated from within the islands, which has important implications to issues of identity and claims of ownership over land and other resources.

- In 1893, Britain declared a protectorate over some of the islands in the group (New Georgia, Guadalcanal, Makira and Malaita)
- In 1900, Germany ceded to Britain the Shortlands, Choiseul, Isabel and Ontong Java.
- In 1942 the Japanese landed on Guadalcanal and were driven out of Guadalcanal by the Americans following one of the bloodiest battles of WWII.
- A large percentage of Solomon Islands early roads and airstrips date from the war.
- Post WWII saw the emergence of proto-nationalist movements and of a national consciousness leading to independence in 1978.

"Indigenous Solomon Islanders have their own versions of how they came to these islands. The details of origin stories (oral traditions) differ between tribes, islands and regions. However, a characteristic found in nearly all origin stories throughout the group is the belief that they originated from within rather than from some place outside the Pacific, in contrast to the linguistic and archaeological record and as assessed by historians, archaeologists and other social scientists. There is usually no reference to the first inhabitants' traveling in from some far off land. In a version of the origin story of Guadalcanal, for example, the island of Isatabu (as Guadalcanal was then known) was created by gods and the people originated from the god Irogali (O'Connor, 1973; Davenport and Coker, 1967). It is only in the origin stories of the Polynesian outliers of Rennell, Bellona and Tikopia that one finds references to canoes coming in from some far off land. The fact that traditionally Solomon Islanders believe they originated from within the islands is important to note because it has salient implications to issues of identity and claims of ownership over land and other resources. Oral traditions are often used to gain and legitimise claims of ownership over resources and positions of power and authority. Those who have access to and control oral traditions can become powerful in society. In fact, a criterion for being recognised as a Big-Man is to have wide knowledge of oral traditions (Strathern and Goddier, 1991; Sahlin, 1970).

(...)

It was not until 1893 that Britain declared a protectorate over some of the islands in the group (New Georgia, Guadalcanal, Makira and Malaita). This was in response to German annexation of New Guinea and the North Solomons, and to pleas from missionaries to control the labour trade. It was hoped that this would limit the German advances, and also protect resident Europeans. In 1896 C. M. Woodford was appointed first Resident Commissioner and soon after set up Headquarters at Tulagi in Ngella. The Santa Cruz group, Rennell and Bellona became part of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate in 1898 and 1899. In 1900 Germany ceded to Britain the Shortlands, Choiseul, Isabel and Ontong Java in exchange for a free hand to annex Samoa in the eastern Pacific (Bennett, 1987). Colonialism and Christianity were later followed by an influx of MNCs and European and Asian business interests.

Another important landmark in Solomon Islands history is the Second World War. On 7 July, 1942 the Japanese landed on Guadalcanal and quickly started construction of an airstrip which could be used to strike at Australia and the American base on Espiritu Santo in the (then) New Hebrides. However, in August of that year 10,000 United States Marines went ashore at Red Beach on Guadalcanal and quickly captured the partly completed airstrip. The months that followed witnessed one of the bloodiest battles of the Pacific war. For Solomon Islanders, it was not just the war but the aftermath that was significant. World War II left deep scars on the Solomons and set a new era in the country's development. Tulagi was destroyed by Japanese

bombardment and so a new capital was established at Honiara out of what was left of the war infrastructure. In fact, a large percentage of Solomon Islands early roads and airstrips date from the war.

More importantly, the post-World War II period was characterised by the rise of proto-nationalist movements such as the Ma'asina Ruru Movement,<sup>2</sup> dubbed "Marching Rule" (Laracy, 1983). Although the Ma'asina Ruru Movement had cargo cult characteristics<sup>2</sup> and was, therefore, often referred to as a millenarian movement, its contribution to the development of early nationalist sentiments in Solomon Islands cannot be disregarded. Ma'asina Ruru Movement and other similar movements, such as the Moro

Movement of Guadalcanal (Kabutaulaka, 1990; O'Connor, 1973; Davenport and Coker, 1967), contributed significantly to the early development of a national consciousness and a push towards independence.

The Second World War also had a profound impact on Solomon Islander perceptions of themselves and the colonial administration. It was after the war that Solomon Islanders started to question and resist colonial rule. Post-war resistance of colonial rule engendered nationalist movements that eventually led to independence, thus beginning the quest for national consciousness in Solomon Islands - a quest that in large part is still being pursued. Constitutional independence on 7 July, 1978 was only part of the journey towards national consciousness." (Tarcisius Tara Kabutaulaka September 1998, pp. 12-15)

## **The IFM and the MEF (2000)**

### **Isatabu Freedom Movement (IFM)**

Collective name for armed political groups also known as "Guadalcanal militants", emerging between March and October 1998 and made up of approximately 500-2,000 indigenous Guadalcanalese villagers, including many child soldiers, mainly from the south coast and areas to the northwest and northeast of Honiara. Apparently without a single leader, several commanders representing eastern and western Guadalcanal groups cooperate in armed operations which in 1998 and 1999 focussed on driving out Malaitan settlers from rural Guadalcanal. In 1999, the IFM was also known as Guadalcanal Liberation Front, Guadalcanal Revolutionary Army (GRA), and Isatabu Freedom Fighters (IFF). Despite recent military setbacks, the IFM controls rural Guadalcanal around Honiara outskirts, extorting support from villagers.

(...)

### **Malaita Eagle Force (MEF)**

Armed political group named after popular Malaitan football club, emerging in January 2000 and made up of an estimated 150-300 Malaitans of various tribal groups, believed to be recruited mainly from settler families on Guadalcanal displaced by the IFM and from disgruntled former and serving police officers (who the former government believes facilitated MEF raids on police armouries). No single leader is known, but two lawyers - including spokesman Andrew Nori - an influential politician and a local businessman have been linked to the leadership. Members are said to be grouped in units (such as a "Tiger Unit") according to their tribal links to central and northern Malaita which also determines command loyalties. An August 1999 peace accord signed by the government refers to Malaitan armed political groups operating in and around Honiara under various names (Panatina Agreement, clause 6 (h)); they may have been merged into the MEF. Since the 5 June 2000 coup, more than 100 Police Field Force and Rapid Response Unit officers reportedly joined the MEF to form what the MEF calls the "Joint Paramilitary Police-MEF Operation" - a name apparently designed to obscure its illegal status as an armed political group." (AI 7 September 2000, pp. 2-3)

## **A weak government and a factionalized police force (March 2002)**

- Executive authority is vested in the Prime Minister, Allan Kemakeza, and his Cabinet.
- New parliament and Prime Minister was elected in December 2001 during elections considered free and fair.
- Judiciary is independent but hampered by police ineffectiveness and lack of resources.
- Since the June 2000 takeover of Honiara by Malaitan militants, the police force has become factionalized.
- Paramilitary Police Field Force (PFF) has been primarily directed by militant Malaitans rather than the Police Commissioner.



- Members of the PFF have engaged in criminal activities, including extortion, robbery, vehicle theft, intimidation, and fraud.

"The Solomon Islands has a modified parliamentary system of government consisting of a single-chamber legislative assembly of 50 members. Executive authority is vested in the Prime Minister and his Cabinet. The Prime Minister, elected by a majority vote of Parliament, selects his own Cabinet. A new Parliament was elected in December with Allan Kemakeza as Prime Minister; elections were considered free and fair. In 1998 tensions between two of the main ethnic groups in the country--the Malaitans and the Guadalcanalese--resulted in violence. Throughout 1999 Guadalcanalese militants forced thousands of Malaitans residing on Guadalcanal from their homes. Beginning in January 2000, Malaitan militants stole large quantities of weapons from the police and actively began to combat the Guadalcanalese. The conflict continued to escalate, and in June 2000, armed Malaitan militants, reportedly assisted by paramilitary police officers acting without authorization, took over Honiara, the capital. Following their takeover of the capital, the Malaitan militants forced the then-Prime Minister, Bartholomew Ulufa'alu, to resign, and Parliament chose a new Prime Minister, Manasseh Sogavare, under duress. A new government, known as the Coalition for National Unity, Reconciliation, and Peace, was formed. The Government has sought to restore peace, but its success has been limited due to its weakness--both political and institutional--and the perception that its leaders are beholden to one of the conflicting parties. The judiciary is independent, but was hampered by police ineffectiveness, lack of resources, and threats against judges and prosecutors.

A police force of approximately 1,000 persons under civilian control is responsible for law enforcement, internal security, and border security. However, since the June 2000 takeover of Honiara by Malaitan militants, the police force has become factionalized and has not functioned as an effective institution. One faction, the paramilitary Police Field Force (PFF), primarily has been directed by militant Malaitans rather than the Police Commissioner. As many as 2,000 untrained former militants have been taken into the police force as "special constables;" the special constables operate under a loose command structure. Members of the PFF and the special constable group have engaged in criminal activities, including extortion, robbery, vehicle theft, intimidation, and fraud; these abuses were not sanctioned by police leadership." (US DOS 4 March 2002)

### **Enrollment of former militants into the "Special Constables" unit creates new problems (March 2003)**

- By second half of 2001, over 2,000 ex-militants were incorporated as "Special Constables" and issued firearms.
- Although reduced to 1,400 by early 2002, the special constables created a huge drain on the fragile finances and were a often security threat throughout 2002 and early 2003.

"The recruitment by the Solomon Islands government of hundreds of former militants into the police as 'Special Constables' has created a whole new raft of problems for the ailing force. Prior to the coup, only about 200 of these mostly unarmed, village-based police had existed. During peace negotiations, it had been agreed that one hundred militants from each side would be absorbed into their ranks; subsequently, ex-militant Special Constables were issued firearms from the Rove police armoury. Ultimately, the numbers absorbed were much larger, and by the second half of 2001 they had blown out to over 2,000 (UN Resident Co-ordinator, 2002, p. 40).

By early 2002, the government had been able to reduce the number of Special Constables to under 1,400 by removing those with criminal records or with full time employment elsewhere. But those who stayed created a huge drain on the economy, on occasion demanding payment directly from the Treasury under armed threat. A flawed attempt at demobilization had backfired badly, leaving the police force in worse shape than ever.

In mid-2002, donor agencies were discussing plans for a new programme to demobilize the Special Constables, co-ordinated by the UNDP in close collaboration with the Solomon Islands government (UNDP, 2002a). As late as October 2002, however, Special Constables were still causing mayhem in Honiara. Their constant intimidation of government officers over salary demands caused the Finance Ministry to close the doors of its Treasury Division for the sixth time that year.

On the evening of 10 February 2003, Sir Frederick Soaki, a highly respected member of the National Peace Council, was gunned down by a masked assassin as he dined at a restaurant in Auki, on the island of Malaita. Sir Frederick's murder was immediately linked to his work with a UN delegation to demobilize the Special Constables (Skehan, 2003; The Economist, 2003)." (Philip Alpers & Conor Twyford March 2003, p. 96)

**See also :**

**[Support to DDR and small arms collection in the Solomon Islands, UNDP, 24 February 2003](#)**

**[UNDP support the demobilization of ex-militants and peace initiatives \(August 2003\)](#)**

### **Political crisis, corruption and a collapsing economy paralyze the government (June 2003)**

- Escape of chief suspect (ex-policeman) in murder of the supervisor of the demobilisation of Special Constables illustrates the nature of the problems in the Solomon Islands
- Key members of government are closely linked to ex-militants and depend on them for their political survival. Government lacks a loyal and effective enforcement capability.
- No effective Cabinet process; real power and decision making occurs outside the formal political arena.
- The parliament largely serves as an avenue for access to dwindling resources by political players.
- Very few legitimate compensation cases (to displaced persons) have been settled, but large sums have been disbursed to political leaders, former militant leaders and their associates.
- Government has very little legitimacy and is seen as being subordinate to the interests of the Malaitan gangs.
- The economy has collapsed. GDP fell by 14% in 2000 and 10% in 2001. Exports have fallen 60% between 1996 and 2001.

"Members of the police force continue to use intimidation against the government, and several are suspected of the murder earlier this year of Sir Fred Soaki, a highly respected former Police Commissioner who was monitoring the demobilisation of the Special Constables and its impact on the peace process. As an illustration of the nature of the problems in Solomon Islands, the chief suspect, a former policeman, was apprehended and brought to Honiara for trial. He recently escaped, probably with assistance, from prison, and has allegedly since shot two more people.

The government itself is paralysed. Key members of the government have close links with former militants, depending on them for their political and economic survival. Others are deterred from decisive action to restore law and order by threats from ex-militants, including from within the police force. And they lack a loyal and effective enforcement capability. The government's revenue base has disintegrated as the economy has stagnated—falling by 35% in 2001. The payroll bill alone now greatly exceeds revenues.

There is no effective Cabinet process; real power and decision making occurs outside the formal political arena. A shadow state has emerged in Solomon Islands—a patronage system centred on the ruling cabal's

control over resources. The state has been gutted from the inside, and parliament largely serves as an avenue for access to dwindling resources by political players.

The culture of corruption has deepened since the coup. Substantial sums of money have been paid to government figures for remission of export duties on timber, for example. Meanwhile the government has virtually ceased the provision of basic services throughout Solomon Islands.

The attempt under the TPA to provide compensation to those affected by the violence and dislocation since the crisis began has proved to be another major problem. Very few legitimate compensation cases have been settled, but large sums have been disbursed to political leaders, former militant leaders and their associates, corrupting what remains of the peace process. Much of the money has come from grants made by Taiwan in return for Solomon Islands' diplomatic recognition of it.

All this has meant that the national government has little credibility or authority. It is widely—and largely correctly—seen as being subordinate to the interests of the Malaitan gangs. It is also seen as having become progressively criminalised itself. Early last year, hundreds of Solomon Islanders marched through Honiara on a Walkabout for Peace.

Furthermore, the economy has collapsed. GDP fell by 14% in 2000 and 10% in 2001. Exports have fallen 60% between 1996 and 2001. GDP per capita has halved in real terms since independence in 1978." (ASPI June 2003, pp. 24-25)

### **Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) restores law and order (July 2003-July 2004)**

- A 2,000 strong Australia-led regional intervention force arrived in late July 2003 in the Solomon Islands with the mandate to restore law and order.
- The operation has been endorsed by the 16-nation Pacific Forum and currently includes police and military contributions from Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and Tonga.
- 3 weeks later, the notorious warlord Harold Keke surrendered to RAMSI.
- By end October, it was decided to reduce the military component of RAMSI. Over 3,700 weapons have been surrendered and 15 police posts have been established throughout the country.

"From 24 July 2003, more than 2,200 military and police, and 80 civilian personnel, supported by warships, aircraft and large-scale military logistics support, were deployed on the Solomon Islands. The role of the military was to provide security, transport and medical support to the normally unarmed police officers involved. The police contingent – called the Participating Police Force (PPF) - were to assist with maintaining law and order throughout the country, and pass on skills to Solomon Islands police. The initial priority of the PPF was to secure key installations in Honiara, to disarm the main remaining militant groups around rebel leaders Harold Keke and Jimmy 'Rasta' Lusibaea and arrest those believed responsible for crimes – either conflict-related or ordinary crimes. The Solomon Islands Parliament passed special legislation to allow for the legal operation of foreign troops and police, and RAMSI officers were given an extensive mandate to end hostilities, arrest and detain suspected perpetrators of any crimes under Solomon Islands criminal law, if necessary with the use of lethal force. (20)

Military and police strategists took the potential for armed resistance from opposing police or militants very seriously, and RAMSI officers had robust rules of engagement, reflecting the experience of the UN Security Council's multinational intervention force in East Timor. Working with the Royal Solomon Islands Police, RAMSI police in July 2004 claimed to have arrested more than 3,500 people, among them more than 50 militants, 70 former police officers and some former Special Constables. As of mid-2004, the majority of the surviving militant signatories to the TPA were in custody awaiting trial. Over 400 police

officers (about one third of the active police service) were dismissed, stood down or retired. Another 71 officers, including former deputy police commissioners, were arrested, mostly for serious human rights violations, some after investigations by the police Professional Standards team. They face 375 charges of murder, assault, robbery, intimidation, official corruption and other crimes including sexual assault.

On 13 August 2003, Harold Keke gave himself up to RAMSI civilian coordinator Nick Warner and then Deputy Commissioner of Police, Ben McDevitt. In a hand-over ceremony at Mbiti on the Weathercoast, some 40 of Keke's GLF fighters laid down their weapons and returned to their communities. The disarming of the GLF removed a long-standing justification by senior MEF commanders to retain their arms. On 16 October 2003, Jimmy 'Rasta' Lusibaea and his men surrendered their guns and stockpiles of ammunition to RAMSI in a public ceremony on Malaita. He was later arrested and, like Harold Keke, is currently facing trial for various crimes including murder.

Most MEF leaders who signed the 2000 Townsville Peace Accord and who had since effectively controlled the government have surrendered or were arrested. In various locations around Guadalcanal and Malaita island, thousands of Solomon Islanders watched as weapons were destroyed in public disarmament events. Some demolished firearms were dumped in the sea while the parts of others were placed into the concrete foundations of a new memorial to all Solomon Islands police officers who died on duty." (AI 8 November 2004, pp. 10-11)

See also: [RAMSI's mandate](#), Government of Australia, 25 August 2003

## **Causes of displacement**

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### **Land disputes and unequal development lead to ethnic tensions**

- Development initiated under the colonial administration was mainly centered around a few areas along the coast and large number of people were moved according to the labour needs, sometimes against their will.
- The majority of people employed as labourers, both inside Solomon Islands and abroad, were from the island of Malaita.
- Land ownership, cultural identity, and position within one's community, tribal group and island remained very important for people's livelihood and social well being throughout the colonial period.
- Internal migration was encouraged, mainly to Honiara and provincial centers, leading to rapid population increase, establishment of squatter's settlements and eventually to ethnic tensions revolving around land issues.
- Residents of Guadalcanal origin in areas affected by the ethnic conflict erupting in June 1999 were forced to flee to the interior; residents from other provinces were forced to return to their home provinces.

"Before the Solomon Islands were discovered by the outside world the free movement of people occurred within each island amongst people who had blood and land ties. Movement also took place outside such ties through marriages arranged by chiefs and elders and as a direct result of inter-tribal and inter-island wars, when young children were taken as spoils of war by chiefs. In other cases people were given away as part of compensation, to make lasting peace and build relationships between neighbouring islands, in particular to protect the donor group from head hunting activities. Those involved in such movements were

treated with respect, taken into the host family and group as their own, and had equal rights with true members of the family and group. They often held the most prestigious positions and had important property rights. During this precolonial period the people now known as Solomon Islanders did not see themselves as one people, as belonging to one country.

Following the establishment of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate at the end of the nineteenth century, the colonisers grouped the various islands into one country and initiated social and economic development, but it was mainly confined to a few centres along the coast. During the colonial period large numbers of people were moved by those who traded in labour: within islands, from island to island, and in some cases outside the country, often against their will, to places like Samoa, Fiji, and Australia. Such population movements, beyond blood and land ties and tribal connections, were implemented by expatriate plantation owners and missions seeking plantation labourers, educators and health workers. Before and after independence the majority of people employed as labourers, both inside Solomon Islands and abroad, were from the island of Malaita.

Plantation labourers on islands other than their own received no education about the cultural norms and traditions of the islands where they worked. They lived in these locations practising and maintaining their own cultures and identities and kept very much to themselves. Before this era, Solomon Islanders had lived in their own communities and on land with which they identified. Throughout the colonial period, land ownership, cultural identity, and position within one's community, tribal group and island remained very important for people's livelihood and social well being.

Before and after independence in 1978, economic and social development was limited to the capital Honiara, on the island of Guadalcanal, and a few other, mostly coastal centres. By giving all citizens of Solomon Islands the right to move freely within the national boundaries, the new national constitution encouraged internal migration. For economic and social reasons many people migrated, especially from Malaita but also from other provinces. They went mainly to the capital and other provincial centres. The colonial and national governments also resettled victims of natural disasters, (especially the victims of the 1977 earthquake), on alienated land around Honiara. People moved outside land, blood and tribal ties, within islands, between islands and between provinces. All these factors contributed to rapid population increase in the capital and to the expansion of squatter settlements in Guadalcanal Province and to a lesser extent in other provinces.

The growth of squatter settlements in and around Honiara led to conflicts with the local Guadalcanal people. Indigenous villagers resented the acquisition of land by migrants, in particular Malaitans, whether it had occurred legally or illegally. Nor did they like the domination by migrants of businesses in and around the capital. These factors eventually led to the current ethnic tension in Guadalcanal Province, which resulted in a massive displacement and exodus of people back to their villages of origin. Residents of Guadalcanal origin in areas affected by the conflict were forced to flee to the interior; residents from other provinces were forced to return to their home provinces. For Malaita Province, the total number of returned settlers, during the peak of the tension, was estimated to be over 23,000 people, or about 4,100 families." (Ruth Liloqula & Alice Aruhe'eta Pollard, September 2000 p. 2)

"In January 2000, former member of parliament Andrew Nori announced himself as the spokesperson of the Malaita Eagle Force (MEF). Using police weapons, uniforms and equipment (partly seized in a 17 January 2000 MEF raid on the police armoury at Auki, capital of Malaita), the MEF declared it was using military force in order to increase political pressure on the government to pay compensation for Malaitan loss of lives and property from earlier IFM attacks. Split along ethnic lines, the Malaitan-dominated police failed to stop skirmishes and revenge killings between the two groups. In February 2000, Governor General Sir John Ini Lapli formally outlawed both organizations. The MEF subsequently refused to attend peace talks until the ban was suspended in May 2000. At the same time, Andrew Nori predicted that "a major confrontation between the two militant organisations" was a "possibility, in fact a probability".

On 5 June 2000, the MEF, supported by paramilitary police officers acting without authorization, seized control of Honiara, forced then Prime Minister Bartholomew Ulufa'alu to resign, pressured parliament to elect a successor, and used captured police weapons and equipment to step up its military operations against the IFM and Guadalcanal civilians. MEF spokesperson Andrew Nori declared that the takeover was prompted by the government's failure to resolve the conflict, a loss of police control over security in the capital and a desire to replace Prime Minister Ulufa'alu. In the weeks preceding the coup, Malaitan-dominated Honiara police had already allowed MEF members to move about armed and unhindered. Visiting senior Commonwealth and European Union delegates tried without success to negotiate a quick return to constitutional government. On 30 June 2000, Nori publicly threatened "all-out war" if parliament failed to elect a new Prime Minister, and hours later opposition leader Manasseh Sogavare from Choiseul Province was elected to succeed Ulufa'alu, and a new government, known as the Coalition for National Unity, Reconciliation and Peace, was formed." (AI, 7 September 2000, pp. 4-5)

**For a more detailed analysis of the underlying causes of the ethnic tension, please see: "[Understanding Conflict in Solomon Islands: A Practical Means to Peacemaking](#)", Ruth Lilioqula and Alice Aruhe'eta Pollard, in *State, Society and Governance in Melanesia*, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, The Australian National University, September 2000**

### **Ethnic tension escalates into armed conflict (1999-2000)**

- Increase in ethnic tensions between local Guadalcanalese and Malaita migrants as of second half of 1998.
- Land and land ownership are the fundamentals underlying the crisis which have been expressed as issues of ethnic identity and enmity.
- Additional factors include: rapidly expanding population, unequal development between provinces, large scale exploitation of natural resources by powerful external entities without sufficient commensurate return in investment in local infrastructure.
- Grievances about land acquisition and occupation by outsiders crystallised in February 1999 into demands submitted to the Guadalcanal Provincial Government.
- In 1999 action by the IFM led to the departure of thousand of workers, particularly Malaitans, from plantations on Guadalcanal.
- In June 2000, the MEF supported by police and paramilitary field force officers loyal to Malaita raided police armories, seized control of Honiara and forced the resignation of the Prime Minister,
- A peace summit held in Townsville in October, 2000 has resulted in a comprehensive peace agreement between the major factions.

"Since the second half of 1998 there has been an alarming increase in tensions in Solomon Islands between Malaitan and Guadalcanal people which has escalated into armed conflict and civil war. The roots of the crisis are complex and involve multi-layered geographical, historical and demographic forces. Land and land ownership are the fundamentals underlying the crisis which have been expressed as issues of ethnic identity and enmity. These issues have been compounded by a rapidly expanding population which has increased the pressures on land and social structures. Unequal development between provinces, difficulties in managing the national economy, and large scale exploitation of natural resources by powerful external entities without sufficient commensurate return in investment in local infrastructure, have also helped to create the crisis and fuelled profound dissatisfaction by indigenous landowners in many parts of the country.

The crisis involves long-standing grievances of indigenous Guadalcanal people about land acquisition and occupation by outsiders, particularly Malaitans, in Guadalcanal and around the capital Honiara. These

grievances crystallised in February 1999 into demands submitted to the Guadalcanal Provincial Government which included a demand for rent for Honiara to be paid to traditional land owners, compensation for Guales killed in the past, plus restrictions on citizens from other provinces owning land on Guadalcanal. In 1999 action by the IFM led to the departure of thousand of workers, particularly Malaitans, from plantations on Guadalcanal.

Fighting between the Isatabu Freedom Movement and the Malaita Eagle Force has led to the breakdown of law and order in Honiara and surrounding areas of Guadalcanal. A State of Emergency was declared in June 1999 and although lifted on 15 October 1999, there has been continuing violence and abuse of human rights resulting in the deaths of at least 60 people and the displacement of many thousands of people from Honiara and Guadalcanal to all parts of the country.

Many people, not only Malaitans, have lost property and investments in Guadalcanal and Honiara. In June 2000, the MEF supported by police and paramilitary field force officers loyal to Malaita raided police armories, seized control of Honiara and forced the resignation of Prime Minister Bart Ulufa'alu. A new Prime Minister, Manasseh Sogavare, was elected and a new government, the Coalition for National Unity, Reconciliation and Peace containing many members of the opposition, was formed. Through the use of multi million dollar compensation payments to both militants and their respective provincial governments, a cease-fire agreement was signed on 3-August 2000 and a Cease Fire Monitoring Group established. The cease-fire has been fragile, marked by occasional murders and further damage to property inside and outside Honiara. A peace summit held in Townsville in October, 2000 has resulted in a comprehensive peace agreement between the major factions, including international monitoring and disarmament. It remains too early to tell if this will be a lasting and comprehensive peace, but regardless the impacts of recent events on local communities need to be addressed and support provided for peace and reconciliation to take root at all levels." (ACT 3 April 2001, p. 2)

### **35,000 people forced to flee their homes on Guadalcanal following a major upheaval in 1999**

- Ethnic tensions started in November 1998 and escalated in June 1999 with ethnic cleansing causing large-scale displacement on Guadalcanal.
- Most of the displaced were Malaitans who eventually were evacuated to Malaita Island. Local Guadalcanalese were also affected by displacement but moved primarily within the Island. Some of those displaced within the province returned after July 1999.

"From November 1998, tension based on ethnic differences started to build up in various areas of Guadalcanal, resulting in people being displaced from their villages. The Isatabu Freedom Movement (IFM, originally known as Guadalcanal Revolutionary Army) gained control of Guadalcanal, and a major upheaval in June 1999 caused a large-scale displacement, effectively ethnically cleansing the island except for the Malaitan pocket on the eastern tip. As the situation in Honiara also became unstable, a major movement of people emerged there too.

Although most of those displaced from Guadalcanal were Malaitans, people from Guadalcanal were equally affected because of local retaliations, the generally insecure situation and the pressure from the various parties involved in the conflict. However, their displacement largely occurred within the province.

After July 1999 the tension eased to a certain extent and some of the people who had been displaced within Guadalcanal or had fled from Honiara returned to their original places of residence. It was during this period that the census took place.

(...)

A total of 35.3 thousand people reported in the census that they had moved from their place of residence in Guadalcanal or Honiara because of the tension, almost 9 percent of the population of the Solomon Islands.

Given the geographical concentration of the tension, the effect on Guadalcanal province was strongest, in terms of population movement: 24.6 thousand peoples were displaced. That is, an estimated 34 percent of the pre-displacement population." (Schoorl & Friesen, 2002)

"The ethnic tension in Guadalcanal Province resulted (...) in a massive exodus back to their places of origin of people from other provinces who had been living in areas controlled by Guadalcanal Province. The majority of these people were from Malaita Province and their displacement had a huge impact not only on the displaced families, but on the communities of both Provinces." (Ruth Liloqua & Alice Aruhe'eta Pollard, September 2000)

"During 1999, the majority of people displaced in Guadalcanal were originally from other islands, mainly from neighbouring Malaita. Preliminary statistics from a December 1999 census recorded an overall population figure on Malaita (121,000) which tends to support some of the estimates on displaced people compiled by churches, the Red Cross and United Nations between June and August 1999. United Nations reports noted considerable difficulties in assessing the extent of displacement, but estimated that some 15-20,000 Malaitan people living on Guadalcanal were evacuated during 1999, "or about 20 per cent of the population of Guadalcanal".

The majority of these were eventually evacuated from Guadalcanal to Malaita island - most of them after temporarily being processed and housed in Red Cross evacuation centres in Honiara. " (AI, 7 September 2000, p. 17)

### **Coup d'Etat in June 2000 causes further displacement**

- From January 2000 onwards, ethnic tension escalated with the emergence of the MEF who eventually took over Honiara in June, causing further displacement of population, mainly from Honiara.
- After June 2000, an estimated 3,000-7,000 people fled their homes in rural Guadalcanal

"In January 2000 the ethnic tension flared up again, with a new factor: the emergence of the Malaita Eagle Force (MEF). Raids and retaliations on Guadalcanal and in Honiara set new flows of displaced persons in motion. However, it was not until the armed take-over of the capital by the MEF early in June that displacement reached new heights. In contrast to the major upheaval one year previously, this may have involved the population of Honiara more than that of Guadalcanal." (Schoorl & Friesen, 2002)

"Since June 2000, threats, abductions, torture and killings of civilians and prisoners, frequent looting and burning down of homes, as well as shootouts between IFM and MEF forces, have caused at least 3,000 people to flee their homes in rural Guadalcanal. Many had already spent months in remote shelters in the hills of Guadalcanal or on offshore islands after various police and militant raids in 1999. On 18 July 2000, a public warning by Malaita Eagle Force spokesperson Andrew Nori, reported on national radio, advised all civilians resident in large areas up to 20 kilometres from the capital to evacuate ahead of new military operations. In late July 2000, national radio reported that police confirmed the burning down of 20 homes at Independence Valley in Honiara which followed earlier attacks on homes at Matanikau and Tasahe (Honiara)." (AI, 7 September 2000)

"Between 7,000 and 10,000 people fled their homes in rural Guadalcanal during the year, following threats, abductions, looting and burning of their property by armed political groups. Humanitarian aid for those displaced by the conflict was intermittent. MEF blockades prevented essential supplies reaching Guadalcanese islanders." (AI, 2001)



"Following the attempted coup of 5 June 2000, civil unrest became a national problem that threatened the cords that bind the country. It affected the ability of the government and the private sector to provide the basic services that sustain community living and human development. The coup attempt also saw people from other provinces who had lived and worked in the capital forced to return to their places of origin. People from Rennell and Bellona, Western, and Temotu Provinces had to flee the capital, their jobs and properties as they became targets of the civil unrest. Civilians who spoke out against criminal activities committed within the city were beaten up and had their property stolen in front of their children. Business houses and individuals were continually harassed. Many businesses closed and stopped making new orders for the basic goods needed by residents and people all over the Solomons. They were no longer able to cope with the demands for cash and the harassment of their workers and families by criminal elements.

Within Guadalcanal Province many local people as well as people from other provinces were left with no homes and in many cases no clothes as their houses and properties were burned, looted and destroyed. Foreign governments evacuated their citizens because their security could no longer be guaranteed.

In so doing, they effectively suspended or cancelled assistance to the country, especially that which directly benefited women, children and the disadvantaged. These drastic and justified actions taken by foreign governments to ensure the safety of their citizens meant that sanctions were indirectly imposed on the country. Within a week, the economy collapsed. The civil unrest thus affected the business sector, the organisations of civil society and the public sector, throughout the entire country." (Ruth Liloqula & Alice Aruhe'eta Pollard, September 2000, p. 7)

### **Campaign of intimidation on the Weathercoast force people to leave their villages (July 2003)**

- Hundreds of people have fled their homes after militants torched their villages on the Solomon Islands.
- Some 1,200 people were forced by the militants to stand as human shields to prevent police landing on nearby beaches
- Some 1,245 people were displaced from the weathercoast (southern coast of Guadalcanal island) due to an escalation of conflict and campaign of intimidation by rebel leader Harol Keke, a former Guadalcanalese militant leader. The displaced sought refuge in and around Honiara, the capital.
- Villages on the weathercoast have been torched, and refugees say he has taken to kidnapping women and children to use as human shields.
- The displaced were forced to travel across Guadalcanal's mountainous interior through dense, barely charted forests in a journey that has taken up to two weeks.

"Hundreds of people have fled their homes after militants torched their villages on the Solomon Islands.

Supporters of the self-styled warlord Harold Keke forced up to 1,200 people to stand as human shields to prevent police landing on nearby beaches, police say.

'They kept villagers at gunpoint on the beaches,' police Assistant Commissioner Wilfred Akao told the Associated Press news agency on Friday.

Two villages were burned down in the remote Marasa district on the main island of Guadalcanal.

About 200 people are reported to be sheltering near Honiara, the Solomon Islands' capital, and aid agencies say they expect many more over the weekend.

Keke is understood to have attacked the villages because he believed some inhabitants were informing police of his activities.

His supporters have been accused of killing at least 50 people recently.

(...)

At least 1,000 people had been displaced by the recent violence, Red Cross coordinator Rex Para told AP." (BBC 21 June 2003)

"Strung out along three ridges in the hills behind the Solomon Islands' capital, Honiara, Tinging's tents and palm-frond shelters are home to hundreds of refugees from the Pacific's most brutal and enduring conflict.

Water is provided by a nearby stream and sanitation is non-existent. Medical aid has been held up because of a strike by hospital workers who have not been paid for months, but life is still better than what they have left behind.

More than a thousand people have arrived here in the past fortnight from the Weathercoast on the Solomons' main island of Guadalcanal, an area turned into a no-go zone since the beginning of the country's ethnic conflict in 1998.

Over the past 12 months, that conflict has escalated into a campaign of intimidation by the rebel leader, Harold Keke, who is accused of dozens of murders, rapes and beheadings.

Whole villages have been torched, and refugees say he has taken to kidnapping women and children to use as human shields.

But the strife could be nearing its end, with the announcement yesterday that Keke had signed a ceasefire and handed over four hostages. Whether the famously unpredictable warlord will keep to his agreement is anybody's guess.

The Red Cross estimates that 1,245 refugees from the Weathercoast are now in the area around Honiara, most camped out on narrow patches of land just beyond the suburbs.

Whole families have been uprooted and forced to travel across Guadalcanal's mountainous interior through dense, barely charted forests in a journey that has taken up to two weeks.

'It was very difficult to come across,' says Apollos Piri, from Poissuhu village. 'We have had problems bringing our children, and there was no food in the jungle. Old people have had problems walking with stiff legs.'

For the past year Keke's Guadalcanal Liberation Front (GLF) has run a campaign of terror in the isolated villages of the Weathercoast.

Three men from Poissuhu were murdered on the night of May 27 during a raid in which more than 70 women and children were also kidnapped.

'They were asleep at night,' Piri said. 'The men came inside their home then they murdered them, cut off their heads and burned their home.' John Tova, from the mountain village of Uruhai, was killed in his sleep by men who cut off his head, arms and legs.

Ivy Vatarahi, from the coastal village of Marasa, described through translators how she was held hostage by Keke's men for three days and two nights before she was suddenly released.

'It was in the morning about seven o'clock,' she said.

'They brought the whole community down to the sea coast. Most of the girls they tied up, and the priests'.

'They asked them that they should not follow the government, then they raped two young girls and killed them. All the time we were tied up, they kept telling us that we were going to die.'

Concy Kekeza was asleep when Keke's men seized her family an hour before dawn last month. After being kidnapped and beaten, she was freed temporarily to deliver a letter to the government. She was told that her husband would be killed if she did not return.

"I came here because I didn't want to go back," she said. "But they still have my husband. I think perhaps he is dead now, but I was so worried. I am sorry for what they are doing to him."

The GLF is still fighting the last vestiges of the Solomons' five-year ethnic conflict. Keke was initially regarded as a hero by many Guadalcanalese, who resent those from the neighbouring island of Malaita who dominate the government and the national capital.

After Malaitan militants forced the prime minister to resign at gunpoint during the coup of June 2000, Keke was one of the few who refused to sign up to the Townsville peace agreement which brought the conflict to an end.

However, in recent months his brutality has grown, and he is increasingly thought to have gone insane. A former Catholic choirboy, he now operates a personality cult in which followers are expected to build altars in his honour and spend days considering his greatness.

Even so, no hands are clean in this murky civil war.

Many Guadalcanalese on the Weathercoast initially supported Keke, especially after the Honiara government took to strafing villages loyal to him from gunships moored off the coast.

Rival militias employed by the government to hunt him down have been accused of atrocities of their own, and the special constables who are the face of official law and order on the Weathercoast are trusted by nobody.

Keke's instability raises questions about whether the current ceasefire will hold, although the release of hostages has been taken as a sign of goodwill.

The ceasefire statement yesterday made no mention of a 2,000-strong peacekeeping force which is expected to arrive in the Solomon Islands later this month, but diplomatic sources in Honiara have said that capturing him has never been a priority for the Australian-led force." (Guardian 8 July 2003)

### **Almost all IDPs who fled unrest on Guadalcanal's Weathercoast in the summer 2003 have returned (March 2004)**

- Following the arrival of RAMSI and the restoration of law and order, the humanitarian situation of displaced from the Weathercoast improved.
- An atmosphere conducive to return and resettlement of the displaced has been created.
- By mid-March 2004, all IDPs displaced from the weathercoast had returned

"Weathercoast was one of the axes severely hit by the ethnic conflict. In summer of 2003, more than 1000 people fled their communities on W/C escaping the reign of terror perpetrated by Harold Keke. Mr. Keke, now in custody was a leading militant of the Guadalcanal Liberation Army GLA.

These displaced persons sought refuge in and around Honiara, the country' capital. Squatters, pressure on the limited available resources, increase in risk profile were some of the negative consequences. Some displaced persons easily coped, thanks to the "wantok" system.

Since the arrival of the Australia led Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands RAMSI in July 2003, the law and order situation have greatly improved. The last caseload of some 240 stood down Special Constables are being demobilized. Also, reintegration and Weapons Free Villages Campaign are ongoing. The SIG has also launched a strategic and action framework for recovery (National Economic Recovery, Reform and Development Plan 2003 – 2006).

The improvement in security, law and order situation positively impacted on humanitarian situation. These and other factors have created a conducive atmosphere for resettlement" (UNDP 2 March 2004, p.1)

"All of the Internally Displaced Peoples, I-D-Ps who fled the Weather Coast to Honiara at the height of the ethnic tension have returned to their homes and villages.

This is as a result of the recent success of operations in the Weather Coast region by RAMSI, working together with the RSIP, the National Peace Council, the National Disaster Management Office and other local Solomon Islands groups." (People First Network 18 March 2004)

"The overall assessment of the monitoring mission is that the IDPs have been able to return safely and resume normal activities. Returnee communities and their former adversaries are peacefully co-existing. Despite mistrust and limited interaction between the communities the current situation is already a positive outcome and cause for optimism for longer term successful reintegration." (NDMO March 2004, p. 1)

## **Peace efforts**

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### **The Townsville Peace Agreement puts an end to the fighting but doesn't solve problems (1999-2002)**

- In June 1999, the Commonwealth sent a Special Envoy to help broker peace while at the same time the government declared a 4 months State of Emergency.
- Prime minister acknowledged that unresolved land disputes and compensation demands made by indigenous Guadalcanal landowners were issues central to the conflict.
- IFM declared itself not to be bound by the first peace agreements in which the government promised to address the concerns of the rural Guadalcanal population.
- The Townsville peace agreement was signed in October 2000 and provides for the restoration of peace and ethnic harmony in Solomon Islands, settling of political and social questions, and monitoring of reconciliation.

"In June 1999, in response to a rapidly deteriorating security situation, the then Government of Solomon Islands invited the Commonwealth to send a Special Envoy to help broker a peace deal. Former Fijian Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka made repeated visits to Solomon Islands to consult and negotiate with all

sides. At the same time, the national government declared a four-month State of Emergency, under which the police were given special powers permitting the use of violence in the course of their duties if acting "in good faith".

In the first of a series of peace agreements brokered by Commonwealth Special Envoy Rabuka, the then government of Prime Minister Ulufa'alu - for the first time in the conflict - publicly acknowledged in June 1999 that the root causes of the conflict included long-standing compensation demands by indigenous Guadalcanal landowners for the development of the national capital on their island, and for unresolved questions of land ownership and squatting by migrant Malaitans "who form the largest group of workers employed by the government and private sectors in Honiara". The peace agreements committed the government to address the concerns of the rural Guadalcanal population, restrain police operations against the IFM's predecessors, and also called on all members of armed political groups to disband, hand in their weapons and return to their home villages. In discussions with Amnesty International in September 1999, IFM representatives stated that they were not party to the accords, and thus did not feel bound by them. Their members were largely unaware of the accords' provisions. Consequently, the violence continued despite the presence from October 1999 of a small number of international police peace monitors under Commonwealth auspices. In addition, Malaitan vigilante groups in Honiara became increasingly active in the face of perceived government inaction over their grievances. " (AI 7 September 2000, pp. 4-5)

"After the coup on June 5 [2000] , normality has returned to Solomon Islands. An agreement reached two months ago by the parties in conflict helped to restore calm and confidence among the local people. Fides is informed by local Church sources that the "agreement is accepted and respected". Visible effects are restored freedom of movement for people, road blocks dismantled, paramilitary resettled at home and business and tourist activities gradually resuming.

The Townsville Peace Agreement was signed by the Malaita Eagle Force MEF and the Isatabu Freedom Movement IFM, by the Solomon government, the Malaita provincial government, and the Guadalcanal provincial government. The act, for restoration of peace and ethnic harmony in Solomon Islands, comprised the restoration of order in the field of national security, settling of political and social questions, and monitoring of reconciliation.

The first crucial question: the text guarantees immunity for those who surrender weapons or property. The accord included immediate de-militarization, identification of remains of missing persons, claims for lost and damaged property. For long term interventions, a purposely formed Peace and Reconciliation Committee will co-ordinate efforts to achieve full community-based reconciliation and forgiveness throughout Solomon Islands. Significant the final declaration for peace and harmony at the end of the document in which the parties "renounce violence and the use of armed force" and undertake to "settle their differences through consultation and peaceful negotiation", and confirm their respect for human rights and the rule of law.

Following the wave of disorder in the Fiji Islands, on June 5, in Solomon there was an ethnic based coup, by the Malaita Eagle Force which deposed the Prime Minister Ulufa'alu, forcing parliament to form a new government. Violent fighting with the Isatabu Freedom Movement from Guadalcanal, caused more than 100 victims and 30,000 displaced persons. The new Prime Minister Mannaseh Sogavare sought to restore peace promising an amnesty for paramilitary to encourage a peace-fire agreement, signed on August 2, 2000. Groups and organisations of the civil society opposed the amnesty, denouncing serious violation of human rights of civilians on the part of the Malaita Eagle Force. Peace talks began in early September and succeeded with the Townsville Agreement signed in Australia on October 15, 2000." (Fides 15 December 2000)

"Between June 1999 and 7 February 2001, at least nine peace and cease fire agreements were signed between the Solomon Islands Government, the provincial governments of Guadalcanal and Malaita,

leaders of the IFM (except for Harold Keke) and (from 2000) the MEF. The most significant of these were the Honiara Peace Accord of 28 June 1999 (assisted by Commonwealth Special Envoys Sitiveni Rabuka and Ade Adefuye), and the Townsville Peace Agreement of 15 October 2000 (facilitated by Australia and New Zealand). After former Governor General Sir John Ini Lapli formally outlawed militant groups, the MEF refused to attend peace talks initiated by the Commonwealth Secretariat, until the ban was suspended in May 2000.

Unlike some similar developments in Bougainville, negotiations and signing ceremonies did not treat junior militant commanders, community, church and women representatives as key stake-holders. None of the agreements were complied with, and police officers and militants alike continued to commit serious human rights abuses. Public statements calling for peace by groups like Women for Peace or the National Council of Women seemed to be ignored. With a view to help implement initial peace agreements, Australia and New Zealand supported a request by the Solomon Islands Government for a Multinational Peace Monitoring Group under Commonwealth auspices – deployed in Guadalcanal since October 1999. However, like the UN, Australia and New Zealand rejected appeals by Prime Minister Ulufa'alu in 1999 and 2000 to send armed security forces or police in order to enforce the peace agreements, disarm militant groups and prevent an MEF takeover.

On 30 June 2000, following weeks of intensive fighting, the MEF threatened members of parliament supporting Ulufa'alu to prevent them from attending a vote in parliament. In their absence, parliament elected Manasseh Sogavare as new Prime Minister. He formed a government which pledged to address Malaitan concerns and to renew the peace process. Following preliminary peace talks on board a New Zealand warship anchored off the coast, Australia hosted peace negotiations at an air force base in Townsville, Queensland, in October 2000. Despite strong public protests, representatives of civil society such as women's groups, and from provinces other than Guadalcanal and Malaita were excluded from negotiations by militant negotiators. The TPA effectively ended organized military-style fighting around Honiara but did not bring peace. A national Peace Monitoring Council was established under the TPA, but it lacked powers to enforce TPA provisions.

Most TPA provisions, such as weapons surrender, were never implemented, leaving thousands of guns and explosives to be traded among militants, police and paramilitaries acting in their private capacity, and opportunistic criminals. The resulting accelerated breakdown of law and order put women and girls at an increased risk of violence by returned fighters who were neither required to disarm nor account for human rights abuses. A limited number of weapons were collected under gun amnesties, but many militants and police refused to give up guns although being called upon by the government to do so. The MEF supported governments of prime ministers Manasseh Sogavare (2000-2001) and Alan Kemakeza (2001- ) received international assistance towards the implementation of weapons collection programmes under widely published gun amnesties, but undermined the process by allowing influential militants to escape arrest when they kept their guns. On the one hand, the government welcomed the assistance from Australia and New Zealand towards the creation of an indigenous Peace Monitoring Council and the deployment of an unarmed International Peace Monitoring Group (IPMT) to oversee gun collections and the safe storage of firearms. On the other hand, Prime Minister Kemakeza admitted in August 2003, in a statement to local media, that he had agreed that MEF militants could keep their weapons in defiance of his government's gun amnesty in May 2002, while attempts were planned to persuade Harold Keke's GLF to surrender its firearms: "I agreed with them that while negotiations were going on with Harold Keke they should hold onto their weapons."

No formal negotiations took place, and from September 2002, police officers joined IFM forces in a major operation against the GLF. This escalation of fighting quickly prompted calls for an end to fighting by local community leaders and the National Council of Women. The council argued that the operation severely affected women and children.

In October 2002, the government established the National Peace Council (NPC) as a successor agency to the Peace Monitoring Council. Financially supported by Australia, the NPC is a national body of 11

community leaders who facilitate the peace process through 87 local monitors, including many women. It played a key role in campaigns during 2003 to reduce the number of illegally-held weapons in circulation in village communities, and has assisted RAMSI with mediation, public awareness campaigns and community-based conflict prevention interventions. However, the NPC's future beyond the expiry of its funding in 2004 remains uncertain.

**Access to the complete "[Townsville Peace Agreement](#)" 15 October 2000**

**See also: Michael Costello, [Final report on weapons collection](#), May 2001**

### **Since Townsville (June 2003)**

- The Townsville Peace Agreement (TPA) signed in October 2000 and expired two years later. Of all the provisions made by the TPA, only the ceasefire had been maintained.
- In effect the civil war was replaced by endemic, low-level violence and intimidation by former militants in Honiara and parts of rural Guadalcanal and Malaita, as well as periodic problems in Western Province.
- The issues put forward by the militant groups in 1999-2000 have gradually shaded into a broader pattern of outright criminality facilitated by the availability of firearms and the absence of an effective police force.
- Outside Honiara itself, the worst affected area is the southern coast of Guadalcanal, called the Weather Coast, generally a no-go area for the government.
- In and around Honiara the police themselves have been a major part of the problem. Many officers throughout the RSIP retain close links with the MEF and are closely implicated in intimidation, extortion and corrupt activities, using former militants who retain their high-powered weapons.

"The Townsville Peace Agreement (TPA) was signed on 15 October 2000. It was a significant step back from all out anarchy, but only a partial success. Under the TPA, an early ceasefire was to become permanent, and an Australian led and funded International Peace Monitoring Team was to receive and impound weapons surrendered under a disarmament program. An orderly process was to be set in train to provide compensation for those affected by the crisis, and an inclusive, indigenous Peace Monitoring Council was established to 'monitor and enforce' the agreement.

But by the time the TPA expired in October 2002, only the ceasefire had been maintained, and that imperfectly. The weapons surrender was only very partially successful. Little has been done to repair the damage to the fabric of Solomon Islands society and government. Indeed the long-term consequences of the events of 1999 and 2000 have if anything become more entrenched and corrosive as time passes, and extortion in the guise of compensation claims has become Solomon Islands' growth industry.

The primary problem besetting Solomon Islands is the absence of law and order. The incipient civil war was averted, only to be replaced by endemic, low-level violence and intimidation by former militants in Honiara and parts of rural Guadalcanal and Malaita, as well as periodic problems in Western Province. The disarmament planned under the TPA has only been partially realised and mostly on the Guadalcanal side. High-powered weapons are still common around Honiara (although now rarely seen on the streets) and in some rural areas. They are both a symptom and a cause of the growing gang culture among youths which seems to be taking deep root in some parts of the country. The militias are no longer fighting one another, but there is frequent intimidation by those who still possess weapons. The dubious motives of 1999 and 2000 have gradually shaded into a broader pattern of outright criminality facilitated by the availability of firearms and the absence of an effective police force.

Outside Honiara itself, the worst affected area is the southern coast of Guadalcanal, called the Weather Coast. One of the leaders of the IFM, Harold Keke, is an outlaw on the Weather Coast and has established what appears to be a sinister cult among his small group of followers. Police and others sent to deal with him (including a government minister) have been killed, and only Guadalcanal police are able to serve on this part of the Weather Coast which is generally a no-go area for the government.

In and around Honiara the police themselves have been a major part of the problem. Many officers throughout the RSIP retain close links with the MEF and are closely implicated in intimidation, extortion and corrupt activities, using former militants who retain their high-powered weapons. Many MEF members were drafted into the police force as Special Constables by leaders of the coup within the police force. This has only increased their strength, and has had serious consequences for both the security environment and good governance. It has also severely undermined the remaining integrity of the force, contributed directly to law and order problems, and cost large amounts of money that has been diverted from the provision of legitimate government services." (ASPI June 2003, pp. 23-24)

**See also:**

**[Review of the implementation of the Townsville Peace Agreement, Peca Monitoring Council, 6 May 2002](#)**



# POPULATION PROFILE AND FIGURES

## General

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### All IDPs have returned to the Weathercoast (March 2004)

- As of mid-March 2004, all 1,400 IDPs had returned home to the weathercoast
- According to the National Disaster Management Office, financial difficulties explain that 350 IDPs remain displaced but that New Zealand would provide financial assistance to finalize their return.

"All of the Internally Displaced Peoples, I-D-Ps who fled the Weather Coast to Honiara at the height of the ethnic tension have returned to their homes and villages.

This is as a result of the recent success of operations in the Weather Coast region by RAMSI, working together with the RSIP, the National Peace Council, the National Disaster Management Office and other local Solomon Islands groups." (People First Network 18 March 2004)

"A total of 1255 IDPs have been safely returned (voluntary) to their communities of origin on Weathercoast, Guadalcanal. About 30 micro-islands have received returnees between December 2003 and January 2004, with Poisuhu and Mataruka receiving more than 100 returnees each.

An emergent residual caseload of 353 IDPs from Weathercoast residing in and around Honiara have registered with the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) for voluntary return & resettlement. With funding from the New Zealand government, this group will be returned & resettled to their communities in the first week of March 2004, if weather conditions are favourable." (2 March 2004, p. 1)

"Deputy Director of the National Disaster Management Office, Martin Karani told media that 350 of the nearly 2,000 internally displaced people from the Weathercoast of Guadalcanal are still in Honiara. He explained that financial difficulties makes it hard to return the remaining three hundred.

Karani however adds that with some funding from New Zealand, the remaining people will be returned home when plans are finalised.

The nearly 2,000 people mainly from the Weathercoast of Guadalcanal migrated to Honiara at the height of militant Harold Keke's reign in the area last year. " (People First Network 20 February 2004)

### 3,500 still displaced by the ethnic unrest at the end of 2002

#### Total number of displaced persons

"An estimated 3,500 persons were internally displaced in the Solomon Islands at the end of 2002. Most were newly displaced on the Weather Coast of Guadalcanal island in the course of government attempts to

apprehend a rebel leader. An estimated 30,000 persons internally displaced by ethnic violence in 1998 and a coup in 2000 had returned home by the close of 2002." (USCR June 2003)

"The most reliable estimates of displaced people are around 50 – 60,000 (World Vision and the ACFOA Delegation Report). The SICA Federation of Women has just completed a nationwide survey in which 10,535 homeless or displaced families were identified, which concurs closely with this estimate, given an average of around 5 people per family in the Solomon Islands.

### **Number of Displaced Families by Province/Church**

	<b>SSEC</b>	<b>UC</b>	<b>Catholic</b>	<b>CoM</b>	<b>SDA</b>	<b>Total</b>
Malaita	2,492	-	900	516	800	<b>4,708</b>
Guadalcanal	200	350	1,989	200	1,400	<b>4,139</b>
Santa Anna	4	-	-	-	-	<b>4</b>
Makira	12	-	10	-	15	<b>37</b>
Western	-	198	200	-	400	<b>798</b>
Choiseul	-	130	-	-	150	<b>280</b>
Temaotu	-	-	-	125	14	<b>139</b>
Rennel	-	-	-	-	50	<b>50</b>
Isabel	-	-	-	75	12	<b>87</b>
	<b>2,708</b>	<b>678</b>	<b>3,099</b>	<b>916</b>	<b>2,841</b>	<b>10,242</b>

All beneficiaries are located in rural communities, but most of them are former residents of Honiara.

These figures are by family and can be assumed to represent approximately:

Women: 10,000  
 Men: 10,000  
 Children: 50,000

(ACT, 3 April 2001, pp. 3-5)

"An estimated 30,000 persons were internally displaced in the Solomon Islands at the end of 2000. Most became displaced following the outbreak of conflict on the main island of Guadalcanal in 1998, with an estimated 3,000 displaced since a June 2000 political coup." (USCR, June 2001)

### **Displacement caused by the June 1999 upheaval**

"A total of 35.3 thousand people reported in the census that they had moved from their place of residence in Guadalcanal or Honiara because of the tension, almost 9 percent of the population of the Solomon Islands. Given the geographical concentration of the tension, the effect on Guadalcanal province was strongest, in terms of population movement: 24.6 thousand peoples were displaced. That is, an estimated 34 percent of the pre-displacement population. (The pre-displacement population is estimated by adding the displaced population enumerated in other provinces to the population enumerated in the province). Prior to the census, 10.7 thousand people were displaced from Honiara, or 19 percent of its population (table 5.5).

Thus, in 1999 most of the displacement, 70 percent, was from rural Guadalcanal. At that time, Honiara's share in the displacement was only 30 percent, especially from the large wards of Kola'a and Panatina (16 percent each).

*Table 5.5 Population displaced from Guadalcanal and Honiara, by province of displacement and province of enumeration*

Prov. of enumeration	Guadalcanal+Honiara		Guadalcanal		Honiara	
	Displaced	% of pop.	displaced	% of pop.	displaced	% of pop.
Solomon Islands	<b>35,309</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>24,597</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>10,712</b>	<b>2.6</b>
Choiseul	316	1.6	133	0.7	183	0.9
Western	1,140	1.8	418	0.7	722	1.2
Isabel	331	1.6	197	1.0	134	0.7
Central	486	2.3	341	1.6	145	0.7
Rennell-Bellona	32	1.4	9	0.4	23	1.0
Guadalcanal	12,806	21.3	12,381	20.5	425	0.7
Malaita	12,676	10.3	7,788	6.4	4,888	4.0
Makira-Ulawa	584	1.9	283	0.9	301	1.0
Temotu	599	3.2	360	1.9	239	1.3
Honiara t.c.	6,339	12.9	2,687	5.5	3,652	7.4

[Note]: "As most of the displacement into Malaita from rural Guadalcanal occurred before mid-December 1999, the census is likely to have captured most of that movement. On the other hand, a large part of displacement from Honiara occurred in 2000, and this is not registered by the census." (J.J. School and W. Friesen December 2001)

"Close to 40,000 people from Guadalcanal rural areas and from the capital-Honiara were either temporarily or permanently displaced. For Malaita Province alone the total number of returned settlers during June/July 1999 was estimated to over 20,000 people or about 4,000 families.

Note: Due to the nature of the movement and lack of consistent registry, the exact number of displaced people is not known. The Red Cross Society of Solomon Islands recorded more than 20,000 displaced people in Malaita province alone during the height of the 1999 tension, but it is believed there was some double counting and in some cases temporarily displaced people were from within Honiara. The database by SIDAAP project indicates about 6,500 displaced people for 5 most affected constituencies, out of 13 in Malaita. The 1999 population census figure for most affected rural areas of Guadalcanal is about 17,000. Most of this people (used to reside along the coast of Eastern and Western Honiara) were forced to flee to the interior abandoning their houses and gardens. Almost all people of Guadalcanal origin have moved out of Honiara for security reasons. Likewise, many residents of Honiara have left to other provinces, most of them awaiting normalcy to return.

(...)

Information on the total number of displaced families is sketchy. The Red Cross record for displaced people in Malaita province points to 20,000. The estimate for the total number of displaced people in Guadalcanal province varied from 12,000 to 18,000. There are significant numbers of displaced people

from other provinces too (probably about 10,000), but the total number is not known. " (Donald Kudu October 2000, Annex E-3, pp. 1-3)

**Displacement caused by the June 2000 coup**

"Between 7,000 and 10,000 people fled their homes in rural Guadalcanal during the year, following threats, abductions, looting and burning of their property by armed political groups. Humanitarian aid for those displaced by the conflict was intermittent. MEF blockades prevented essential supplies reaching Guadalcanese islanders. MEF and IFM members were reported to have beaten, threatened and harassed International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) staff, medical professionals and clerical and lay workers trying to carry out humanitarian work or perform their religious duties among displaced people. The leader of the ICRC delegation sustained head injuries when he was attacked by an ethnic Malaitan gunman." (AI, 2001)

# PATTERNS OF DISPLACEMENT

## General

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### **Close to 1,500 people displaced from Weathercoast, Guadalcanal to the capital by exactions committed by militant leader (March 2004)**

- In early June 2003 small number of people were displaced from the weathercoast because of acts of terror perpetrated by rebel leader Harold Keke sought refuge in and around Honiara.
- By the end of July an estimated 1,214 IDPs were located in several locations in Guadalcanal Province including Titinge, Tasahe, Aruligo, Manakako and Malango.
- The displaced have walked for a week across the island while sleeping in the jungle without shelter and food during their plight.

"Weathercoast was one of the axes severely hit by the ethnic conflict. In summer of 2003, more than 1000 people fled their communities on W/C escaping the reign of terror perpetrated by Harold Keke. Mr. Keke, now in custody was a leading militant of the Guadalcanal Liberation Army GLA.

These displaced persons sought refuge in and around Honiara, the country' capital. Squatters, pressure on the limited available resources, increase in risk profile were some of the negative consequences. Some displaced persons easily coped, thanks to the "wantok" system." (UNDP 2 March 2004, p. 1)

"An estimated 1,214 internally displaced people (IDP) are now residing in a number of locations in Guadalcanal Province including Titinge, Tasahe, Aruligo, Manakako and Malango.

The Red Cross has registered 263 families and more are expected to arrive over the next months (estimated 5 members per family). In Titinge relocation center, there appears to be over 200 school age children who are now unable to attend school.

Many families had walked for a week across the island, accompanied by their small children. The IDPs slept in the jungle without shelter and food during their plight. Additional displaced persons are residing in other villages outside Honiara.

The IDPs are from Tamau, Biti, Ngalito, Masidonia, Vasavaolavola, Chiba, Poisuhu, Verataboa, Mataruka and Vantungola, and Urahai villages.

In early June 2003, small numbers of displaced persons began to arrive in Honiara, the capital of the Solomon Islands, traumatized and frightened. They had fled the Weathercoast areas as the GLF (Guadalcanal Liberation Front) had moved into their villages, burning and looting and taking hostages.

By 10th June 2003, sixty eight families (277 persons) had arrived in Honiara. They had fled from the Babanakira Plain region after an attack on their village.

Children have described to World Vision staff how they witnessed the GLF murdering young boys in their community. In addition, another 300 persons are said to be fleeing from the Babanakira Plain and 600 displaced persons have gathered in Charanamate on the Weathercoast. Unfortunately, the poor security

situation prevents access to the area to verify numbers and to provide relief assistance." (World Vision 7 August 2003)

### **Political instability and economic problems force people from their homes in Western Province (April 2002)**

- Continued political instability and economic problems force people in western Province to cross the border to Papua New Guinea.

"Solomon Islanders are crossing over into Bougainville as refugees or seeking to trade for desperately needed goods, a Papua New Guinea parliamentarian said. Central Bougainville MP Sam Akoitai called for the Papua New Guinea Government to quickly address the issue.

The increase in border crossings is a result of the continuing political instability and economic problems Solomons Islands faces, he said. He said that Solomon Islanders had crossed over at Siwai, the beaches of Buin and even Kieta to either trade for trade-store goods, sell fish or seek refuge with relatives in those areas. He said indications are that the problems facing the Honiara government have impacted negatively on the country's Western Province, bordering Bougainville. Mr Akoitai said he was not attempting to stop or prosecute the islanders. He was mindful of the way the Solomons assisted Bougainvilleans with refuge, food and medication during the heart of the Bougainville crisis.

Mostly Western Province Islanders are crossing into South Bougainville. Some have even been reported as far in to Bougainville as Kieta, Central Bougainville. 'I am calling on the Government to set up a processing centre for temporary border-crossers so they can travel safely and legally,' he said. Mr Akoitai suggested an arrangement such as that put in place for the Wutung people. They hold permits that allow them free access to visit relatives in West Papua, which is ruled as a province of Indonesia. Mr Akoitai said he has met with Foreign Affairs Secretary Evoa Lalatute over the Solomon Islands border crossings. He said Mr Lalatute had indicated his department had to indefinitely postpone the Papua New Guinea/Solomon islands Border Talks, which would have addressed the current problems. 'My concern is that the issue is beginning just now,' Mr Akoitai said. 'We need to address the issue as soon as possible.'

He said what needed to be done was to immediately set up a processing centre to ensure safer and legal travel arrangements. He said many of the Western Province Islanders were relatives of Bougainvilleans so it should not be a difficult issue to deal with. 'It's going to become worse the longer we turn a blind eye on it,' Mr Akoitai said." (Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation/PIA Nius Online 17 April 2002)

### **Extent and direction of displacement prior to June 2000**

- 35,300 people were displaced from Guadalcanal and Honiara by the ethnic unrest in June 1999.
- Most of the displacement, 70 percent (or 24,600 people), was from rural Guadalcanal and 30 percent (or 10,700 people) were displaced from Honiara.
- Most of the Guadalcanal displaced were uprooted from East Tasimboko ward (4,900 people) representing 20 percent of the Guadalcanal displaced; 4,100 people (or 17 percent) were displaced from Malango ward; 3,200 from Tandai ward (or 13 percent).
- East Tasimboko, West and East Ghaobata and Malango saw 66, 65, 58 and 58 percent respectively of their populations displaced.
- Over one third of all the displaced from Guadalcanal and Honiara together were enumerated in Malaita (36 percent, or 12.7 thousand persons). Another 36 percent were enumerated in Guadalcanal and 18 percent in Honiara.

- Most of the displaced who went to Malaita settled in the north of the island, most notably in Nafinua, Takwa, East Baegu, Mandalua/Folot and Langalanga in northern Malaita, and the island of Sikaiana .

#### "Extent and direction of displacement

A total of 35.3 thousand people reported in the census that they had moved from their place of residence in Guadalcanal or Honiara because of the tension, almost 9 percent of the population of the Solomon Islands. Given the geographical concentration of the tension, the effect on Guadalcanal province was strongest, in terms of population movement: 24.6 thousand peoples were displaced. That is, an estimated 34 percent of the pre-displacement population. (The pre-displacement population is estimated by adding the displaced population enumerated in other provinces to the population enumerated in the province). Prior to the census, 10.7 thousand people were displaced from Honiara, or 19 percent of its population (table 5.5).

**Table 5.5 Population displaced from Guadalcanal and Honiara, by province of displacement and province of enumeration**

<i>Prov. of enumeration</i>	<i>Guadalcanal+Honiara</i>		<i>Guadalcanal</i>		<i>Honiara</i>	
	<i>Displaced</i>	<i>% of pop.</i>	<i>displaced</i>	<i>% of pop.</i>	<i>displaced</i>	<i>% of pop.</i>
Solomon Islands	<b>35,309</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>24,597</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>10,712</b>	<b>2.6</b>
Choiseul	316	1.6	133	0.7	183	0.9
Western	1,140	1.8	418	0.7	722	1.2
Isabel	331	1.6	197	1.0	134	0.7
Central	486	2.3	341	1.6	145	0.7
Rennell-Bellona	32	1.4	9	0.4	23	1.0
Guadalcanal	12,806	21.3	12,381	20.5	425	0.7
Malaita	12,676	10.3	7,788	6.4	4,888	4.0
Makira-Ulawa	584	1.9	283	0.9	301	1.0
Temotu	599	3.2	360	1.9	239	1.3
Honiara t.c.	6,339	12.9	2,687	5.5	3,652	7.4

Thus, in 1999 most of the displacement, 70 percent, was from rural Guadalcanal. At that time, Honiara's share in the displacement was only 30 percent, especially from the large wards of Kola'a and Panatina (16 percent each).

Overall, displacements (irrespective of the destination) were most massive from East Tasimboko from which 4.9 thousand people fled (20 percent of all displacement from Guadalcanal province) (table 5.6).

**Table 5.6 Number of people displaced from wards in Guadalcanal and Honiara and their share in the total number of displacements**

Ward of residence before displacement	Number displaced	Percent displaced	Ward of residence before displacement	Number displaced	Percent displaced
<b>Guadalcanal and Honiara</b>	<b>35,309</b>	<b>100.0</b>			
<i>Guadalcanal province</i>	<i>24,597</i>	<i>69.7</i>	<i>Honiara town council</i>	<i>10,712</i>	<i>30.3</i>
East Tasimboko	4,924	20.0	Kola'a	1,705	15.9
Malango	4,098	16.7	Panatina	1,705	15.9
Tandai	3,241	13.2	Naha	1,351	12.6
West Ghaobata	2,808	11.4	Vura	1,227	11.5
Saghalu	1,881	7.6	Nggossi	1,063	9.9
East Ghaobata	1,594	6.5	Mataniko	952	8.9
Vulolo	1,148	4.7	Vavaea	845	7.9
Birao	851	3.5	Rove/Lengakiki	582	5.4
Moli	633	2.6	Kukum	492	4.6
Talise	540	2.2	Mbumburu	371	3.5
Aola	402	1.6	Vuhokesa	180	1.7
Tangarare	352	1.4	Cruz	106	1.0
Vatukulau	349	1.4	Ward not stated	133	1.2
Duidui	345	1.4			
Savulei	332	1.3			
Paripao	301	1.2			
Longgu	150	0.6			
Wanderer Bay	147	0.6			
Avuavu	115	0.5			
Tetekanji	108	0.4			
Kolokarako	62	0.3			
Valasi	60	0.2			

This ward, together with West and East Ghaobata, housed the workers of the SIPL plantation, many of whom were from Malaita, with a smaller group originating from Temotu. Second in displacement comes Malango (4.1 thousand displaced, 17 percent of Guadalcanal displacements), followed by Tandai (3.2 thousand), West and East Ghaobata (2.8 and 1.6 thousand respectively), Saghalu (1.9 thousand) and Vulolo (1.1 thousand). Together, these seven wards account for 80 percent of all displacements from or within Guadalcanal (19.7 thousand people).

In relation to their estimated pre-displacement population sizes, these same seven wards were most heavily affected. East Tasimboko, West and East Ghaobata and Malango saw a staggering 66, 65, 58 and 58 percent respectively of their populations displaced. The other three, Tandai (44 percent) and Saghalu (39 percent) in western Guadalcanal, and Vulolo in centre-north (39 percent) were somewhat less affected, although there too considerable population displacement occurred. In Honiara at that time only one ward was that strongly affected: Naha, which had 61 percent of its population displaced.

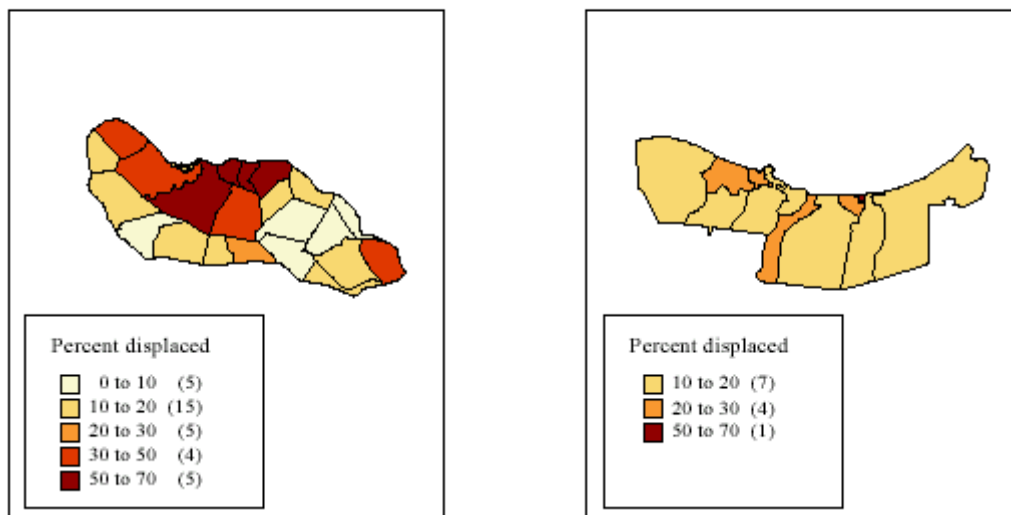
But many inhabitants were also displaced from Mataniko (Tuvaruhu village), Rove-Lengakiki, Cruz and Kukum (see figure 5.10).

Where did all these people go? That in itself cannot be derived from the census data directly, as no question was asked on this. What we do know is where they were on census night. Therefore, this tells us the direction of displacement only to the extent that people were still displaced at the time, and had not yet returned. It is estimated that some people at least had returned, especially those that had not fled far, within Guadalcanal, although it is thought that the majority of the Malaitans, who returned to their province of origin, were still in Malaita on census night. The data support this, as over one third of all the displaced from Guadalcanal and Honiara together were enumerated in Malaita (36 percent, or 12.7 thousand persons). More than half were enumerated in Guadalcanal (36 percent, or 12.8 thousand people), or in Honiara (18 percent, 6.3 thousand people) itself.

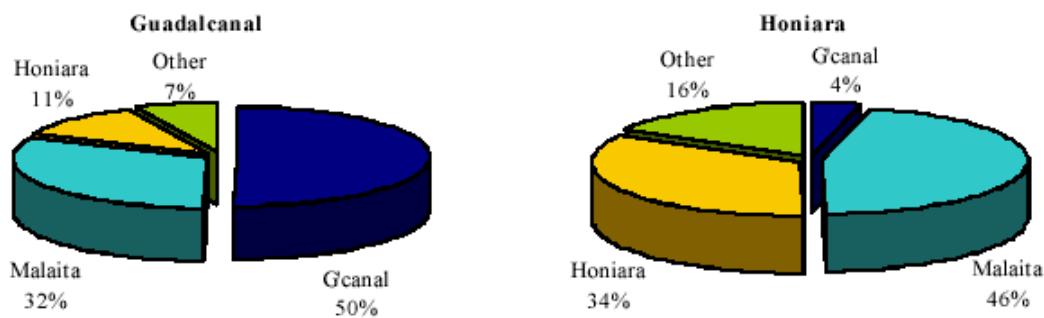


Although close to half of the displaced from Honiara were enumerated in Malaita on census night (46 percent, 4.9 thousand persons), in fact 34 percent (3.7 thousand) were also enumerated in Honiara. Relatively few went to other provinces: only 4 percent (425 people) went from Honiara to Guadalcanal, less than the 8 percent (722 persons) who took refuge in Western province. Furthermore, most of the displaced from Honiara who were again enumerated in Honiara (84 percent), were enumerated in the same ward, suggesting that they might have returned before census night (figure 5.11). People who lived in Honiara's eastern wards of Vura and Panatina and in centrally located Vavaea in particular before displacement were enumerated there too. But Vura and Panatina also lost most people through displacement, followed by Kola'a and Nggossi. The small ward of Naha, on the other hand, saw only 16 percent of the displaced back before census night.

*Figure 5.10 Percent of population displaced from Guadalcanal and Honiara*



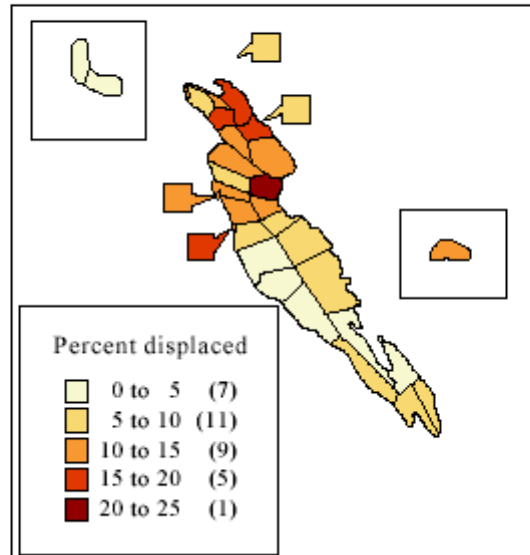
*Figure 5.11 Province of enumeration of the population displaced from Guadalcanal (left-hand panel) and Honiara (right-hand panel)*



By comparison, just over half of people who had originally fled from Guadalcanal were enumerated there (12.4 thousand persons), one third (7.8 thousand) were in Malaita on census night and 11 percent in Honiara (2.7 thousand). Of those displaced from Guadalcanal but also enumerated there, as in Honiara, a high percentage (83 percent) were enumerated in the same ward they reported living in prior to displacement. Assuming these were mostly returnees, the lowest return (or alternatively, within-ward displacement) seems to have been to the wards of Duidui on the weather coast (40 percent) and Saghalu in western Guadalcanal (50 percent). On the other hand, the wards of Vatukulau, Talise and Moli on the

weather coast, Tetekanji and Birao in the south-east as well as East Tasimboko and Malango in the centre-north had high rates of return or within-ward displacement, of over 90 percent. The wards reporting the highest numbers of intra-Guadalcanal displacements are East Tasimboko (2.4 thousand), Tandai (2.3 thousand), Malango (1.6 thousand), West Ghaobata (1.2 thousand) and Vulolo (1.0 thousand).

*Figure 5.12 Percent displaced among the population of Malaita province, by ward*



With so much of the displacement being in the direction of Malaita, by census night one in ten of this province's population reported displacement status. Wards in northern Malaita carry a comparatively heavy burden, relative to the population size (figure 5.12). In Nafinua ward more than one in five people said they were displaced (22 percent), and a number of other wards reported between 15 and 20 percent displaced among the population: Takwa, East Baegu, Mandalua/Folot and Langalanga in northern Malaita, and the island of Sikaiana." (Schoorl & Friesen, 2002)

Note: "As most of the displacement into Malaita from rural Guadalcanal occurred before mid-December 1999, the census is likely to have captured most of that movement. On the other hand, a large part of displacement from Honiara occurred in 2000, and this is not registered by the census." (Schoorl & Friesen, 2002)

# PHYSICAL SECURITY & FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

## General

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### **Serious deterioration in the human rights situation since 1998 (February 2004)**

- Since 1998 and the armed conflict between Malaitan and Guadalcanalese militants there has been a serious deterioration in the human rights situation, with numerous abuses committed by the police and by militant groups on both sides.
- During the first half of 2003, the security situation worsened in the capital as well as in the countryside's weathercoast.

"The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, there were serious problems in some areas. Basic individual rights are provided for in the Constitution, but the armed conflict between Malaitan and Guadalcanalese militants led to a serious deterioration in the human rights situation, with numerous abuses committed by the police and by militant groups on both sides since 1998. All weapons were supposed to be surrendered during an amnesty period that ended in May 2002; however, hundreds of weapons were not surrendered, and a stable peace was not secured. During the first half of the year, the security situation worsened. In the capital, former militants, many of whom had been made "special constables," were responsible for a crime wave directed at both citizens and the Government. A militant leader operated with impunity in the countryside, and he and his supporters' violent acts included killings, rape, abduction, and looting and destruction of rural communities. The Government did not encourage any judicial or independent investigation of human rights abuses that occurred during the conflict, which contributed to a climate of impunity. The judicial system functioned poorly during the first half of the year due to the ongoing violence and a lack of resources." (US DOS 25 February 2004, p. 1)

## Physical security

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### **Many displaced Malaitan women were left on their own without protection (2004)**

- The return of close to 20,000 Malaitan settlers to Malaita island in 1999 placed an immense pressure on Malaita's limited infrastructure, health services and schools.
- Many Malaitan men soon went back to Honiara leaving their women on their own without protection. Many suffered at the hands of militant groups remaining on Malaita and extorting money or other support from neighbouring villages.

"At the height of internal displacements in mid-1999, around 24,000 of the 35,300 people who abandoned their homes were Malaitan settlers on Guadalcanal. They mostly fled to Honiara which became their temporary refuge. Some found shelter with relatives, others in Red Cross camps and buildings normally used for police training. The majority later migrated to Malaita from where they had originally emigrated. On Malaita, newly-arrived displaced families found refuge with relatives or sought permission to build new homes and gardens. Their arrival placed immense pressure on Malaita's food supplies, health services and schools, increasing the population in the most affected areas within a few months by about a quarter (or more than 10 per cent across all of Malaita).

(...)

After June 1999, many of the men who had evacuated their families to Malaita soon left the island again to join Malaitan militant groups in Honiara, or to file compensation claims for lost homes and property with the Ministry of Home Affairs. The men's departure divided families and left displaced Malaitan women to struggle on their own, without the protection of male relatives, in an island barely able to cope with the sudden population increase in the absence of jobs and land for subsistence farming and housing.

Militant groups remaining on Malaita extorted money or other support from neighbouring villages, which were punished if they failed to meet expectations of corrupt leaders. For example, in December 2002, the villages of Mana'abu and Gou'ulu in North Malaita were targeted by suspected MEF militants because Timo Isu, a failed election candidate was angered by the lack of votes he received from these villages. Many of the village men were away that day, so the militants' revenge focused on the women and their kitchens:

(...)

Destroying a woman's kitchen and cooking utensils is depriving her of her economic support base – both to feed her family and to prepare goods for the market to trade for cash, to pay school fees or buy salt or fuel for kerosene lamps. With many Malaitan men absent for extended periods in Auki or Honiara, dependent women, particularly mothers, were in a desperate situation. Many had already been traumatized by the destruction of their original homes in Guadalcanal by the GLF in 1999.

In addition, the situation of displaced families in North Malaita has created social problems felt particularly by women and girls until today. Malaitan village girls complained of sexual harassment by newly-arrived youths from Honiara who were not used to fitting into traditional village societies. In North Malaita, people have complained about an increase in crime, after an initially quiet period following RAMSI's arrival at Malu'u, about the introduction of a new urban ("townie") lifestyle, and the use of marijuana and home-made alcohol (kwaso, or home-brew) as a result of the conflict.

(...)

Some Malaitan women told Amnesty International they were deprived of their limited livelihood when an increasing number of absentee husbands failed to support their families and "took an O-2" (girlfriend). If challenged, husbands would beat, threaten or evict wives and sometimes children from their homes in order to move in with their new partners. These wives had been forced to live with relatives, unless they were lucky to find income opportunities to support themselves. There is no women's refuge institution on Malaita. " (AI 8 November 2004, p. 17-19)

### **Climate of fear continues to predominate among returnees (March 2004)**

- There continues to be a climate of fear among returnees, mainly because of the distinctive GLF identity neighbouring villages carry and the lack of interaction between GLF and IDP villages.
- No acts of violence have been reported since the return of the displaced, however, rumours and suspicion continue to feed feelings of fear.

"All the IDP villages visited reported a general fear of violence from GLF. Only two respondents reported that they felt safe. This sense of fear appears to be based on the fact that the conflict was still relatively recent (less than one year before), that the GLF villages still held to their distinctive identity and that there had been virtually no interaction between the communities. The sense of fear appeared not to be related to their treatment by GLF villages since their return apart from the lack of interaction.

Returnee responses ranged from a general concern that the situation could revert to a state of conflict initiated by the GLF to more specific fears. Some voiced concerns about immediate potential violence from a small group of individuals (less than 10) who are being sought by the PPF for violent crimes committed during the conflict and who were still in hiding. Some referred to rumours that there was a GLF plot to drive out the IDPs again. One such rumour of an imminent attack caused panic amongst the Marasa community who hid their belongings and fled to the forest. Another rumour was a report attributed to the

PPF who had supposedly discovered a newly constructed GLF bunker. The associated line of thought was that this was evidence of a resumption of hostilities and that therefore the GLF was still armed. The PPF denied that they had made such a discovery and advised me that they routinely spend much of their time dispelling such rumours. Returnees interviewed tended to give more weight to these rumours than to affirmations by GLF leaders that they would not disturb them and their observations that they had been able to resume normal activities unhindered and were able to move freely.

Since the IDPs' return there had been no acts of violence against the IDPs and the GLF villages had allowed the IDPs to resume normal lives without harassment or intimidation. The only exception to this that was reported was an isolated incident of a youth from the GLF village of Calvary who verbally abused IDPs working in their garden plots very soon after their return. The youth was restrained while by the IDPs and the Calvary village chief called to sort out the matter. This he apparently did with no repeat incidents." (NDMO, March 2004, pp. 2-3)

### **Women and girls on Guadalcanal suffered a high rate of sexual violence (November 2004)**

- A health survey conducted in 2002 found that the majority of the people interviewed knew of someone who had been raped, and almost half had witnessed a gang rape.
- Data collected by AI in Guadalcanal showed that women and girls suffered a high rate of sexual violence at the hands of opposing armed groups and police officers.

"During the conflict in 2002, an academic health survey interviewed 300 Solomon Islanders (men and women) about sexually transmitted diseases and related issues. The survey found that the majority of them knew of someone who had been raped. Just under half had witnessed a gang rape, and more than half (including females) said they "had participated in long line rape [gang rape]". Given the security situation and local sensitivities on the issue, the survey's detailed data were not published.

In one village visited by Amnesty International in April 2004, the men were initially reluctant to talk about sexual violence against women during the conflict, but eventually disclosed that seven of their daughters had been repeatedly raped by members of a militant group who had made the village one of their bases for several months. Three of the girls raped were thirteen, the others fourteen years' old at the time. One of the fathers asked the militants to stop the abuse, but in response was shot at six times and narrowly escaped being killed.

'Some of these militants are still free [have not been arrested by RAMSI], maybe because people [are more likely to] report murder and torture than rape.' Data collected by Amnesty International in Guadalcanal reveals that women and girls suffered a high rate of sexual violence, often repeatedly, at the hands of opposing armed groups and police officers. " (AI, 8 November 2004, p. 26)

### **IDPs attempting to return to the Weathercoast have reportedly been harassed and assaulted (October 2003)**

- A National Peace Council peace monitor reports that displaced people attempting to return to their homes on the weathercoast have been threatened, harassed and assaulted by members of the Guadalcanal Liberation Front (GLF).
- In addition the peace monitors have had their freedom of movement restricted.
- The incidents were downplayed by RAMSI's chief claiming that the area was safe for return of the displaced.

"Meanwhile, a peace monitor claims refugees displaced from their villages on the Weathercoast of Guadalcanal due to the former reign of terror of notorious militant leader Harold Keke have been threatened, harassed and assaulted when attempting to return to their homes.

National Peace Council monitor Margaret Vogho reported during a radio programme Weathercoast refugees trying to return to deserted villages in the Mbanmbanakira area were met with resistance from members of the supposedly disbanded Guadalcanal Liberation Front (GLF).

Returnees claim to have been beaten, threatened, harassed and sworn at.

Vogho also claimed National Peace Council monitors have had their freedom of movement restricted in the region, a former Keke stronghold.

She said such reports have caused fear among refugees wanting to return and appealed to the Australian military's Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) task-force to arrest people involved in the reported incidents.

Deputy Police Commissioner Ben McDevitt, however, disputed the reports, saying GLF followers claimed they had been threatened by returning villagers. McDevitt said police had intercepted the parties involved in the reported incidents and the problem had been amicably resolved.

Vogho also recommended Royal Solomon Islands Police officers should be posted alongside RAMSI officers to improve communication among rural communities.

Intervention chief Nick Warner has said RAMSI holds no responsibility, role or mandate to move the refugees back home.

Warner repeated previous comments that although there may be some animosity, tension and minor incidents reported in the area, generally the situation is safe enough for people to return to their villages." (AFP 27 October 2003)

**See also: "[Solomon Islands: Weather Coast Still Tense](#)", Pacific Islands Report, 28 October 2003**

# SUBSISTENCE NEEDS

## General

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### **Available information suggest dire assistance needs on the Weathercoast (March 2004)**

- Monitoring mission revealed high level of destruction of community infrastructure and shelters, with most returnees living in make shift shelter covered by tarpaulin, with some sleeping under leaking roofs.
- Sanitary conditions were poor as is access to health services.
- Inability of the population to engage in productive activities since June/July 2003 and poor road conditions are major constraints.
- The 3 months food ration for those returned between December 2003 and January 2004 was almost exhausted.
- Information on the conditions on the weathercoast is scarce, but available information suggest that there is a dire need for food.
- It is likely that the return of the remaining 350 IDPs will coincide with the assessment mission in early March.

"The effects of the conflict were quite visible – destruction of community infrastructure and individual shelter, apparent social polarization and strained relationships. Reconciliation activities are crucial, with particular need for initiatives supporting inter-community dialogue. The dynamics and divide into GLF and non-GLF were much visible and talked about. Putting the general conflict situation into context, the weathercoast case was like “sub-set” or “inner-tier” existing within a complex whole.

Most returnees live in make shift shelter covered by tarpaulin, with some sleeping under leaking roofs. Most of the settlements were small with an average of 10 houses per community and they lie very close to each other, with valley or stream/river dividing them. The bulk of the population is made up of women and children, mostly under-tens.

(...)

Poor sanitary conditions were quite evident –bush is used as toilets and indiscriminate disposal of waste. Also, there is only one functional health post, which seems to have run out of drugs. The only surviving school in Mbabanakira was overpopulated and understaffed

The conditions of the roads and the inability of the population to engage in productive activities since June/July 2003 were also frequently mentioned as major constraints. Honiara seems to be the only ready market for the weathercoast population. Travel is by boat (OBM) and has to be negotiated with the few private boat owners for an average fare of SBD100.

Except for returnees who arrived during the mission, the three months food ration for those returned between December 2003 and January 2004 is almost exhausted. Farming is subsistence and income-generating activities are almost inexistence. High degree of wastage in Cash crops like cocoa and coconut due to lack of ready local market and poor road/transport conditions, among others. There were no reports of problem of access to land. Almost all returnee families had engaged in small gardening, planting mainly potato. Most of the gardens were behind normal planting schedule. As a result, the crops will be due for

harvesting only in May/June 2004. They reported that the delay was partly as a result of the three weeks spent in transit.

(...)

The general situation is bad but not desperate. Coping mechanisms on food security seem to be effective. There were however cases of anemia. On the 7 March 2004, for instance the mission delayed its scheduled for that day, trying to assist the Mbamabnakira-based nurse in sending an anemic pregnant woman to Honiara. The mission established an emergency contact with Isabella Ship, which arrived that morning with the residual caseload of IDPs to take the poor woman to Honiara. Situation on shelter also deserve serious attention to survive the present rains." (UNDP 12 March 2004)

"A complete picture of the situation in communities of return is yet to emerge. There has been no in-depth or comprehensive assessment of prevailing conditions. Reports are quite sketchy and mono focal. However, informal reports suggest that there is dire need for food on the W/C. The National Peace Council chairman, following his recent visit to the W/C, substantiated this.

The G-Province coordinators also reported of high infrastructure need, pointing out some 20-community priority structures (schools and clinics).

The first coordinated and joint monitoring/assessment mission planned for the 25 February 2004 has been postponed indefinitely due to lack of funds and poor weather conditions. If weather conditions become favourable and funds are available, the 19-days comprehensive monitoring/assessment will likely coincide with the voluntary return of the residual caseload of 353. This is scheduled for early March 2004." (UNDP 2 March 2004, p. 2)

**See also:** [Australia provides food aid to some 8,000 conflict-affected people on the Weathercoast \(September 2003\)](#)

### **IDPs returning to the Weathercoast need help to rebuild their homes and restart a livelihood (January 2004)**

- Chairman of the National Peace Council, Paul Tovua, returned from a trip to the weathercoast where he assessed the situation.
- Some of the displaced are still living under tents, their houses having been destroyed. They still rely heavily on the food that our donors bought them through the National Disaster Management Office.
- AUSAID, through the Community Restoration Fund, is funding the setup of temporary health facilities to service these people in very near future.
- The national government and the provincial government have the responsibility to see and provision of teachers, provision of health worker to the area.

"In Solomon Islands, the last of the registered internally displaced people have left the capital, and returned to their homes on Guadalcanal's rugged Weathercoast. Thousands had taken refuge near Honiara after they'd been chased out of their homes and villages during the height of militant leader Harold Keke's reign of terror. Chairman of the National Peace Council, Paul Tovua has just returned from a trip to the Weathercoast where he says the people are regaining their sense of pride.

TOVUA: "A visit to the Weathercoast was very good timing in that it gives me opportunity and as well as RAMSI the opportunity to see and assess the situation in the Weathercoast at the moment since the repatriation of the IDPs from Honiara or near Honiara back to their own villages.



"It is gratifying and sheer courage on the part of the IDPs to determine that they have to go back. But all in all I think life in the Weathercoast is coming back slowly but I'm pleased to say that it is taking a good shape, one which we will go and do more in the Weathercoast.

"And I think it is very important, the provincial government must show some interest, if not at least make a visit and also help and encourage the mass of the people who are desperately determined to make things back to normal. Although living in tents, they're now going about trying to build a permanent house or semi-permanent house, but trying to make gardens."

COUTTS: Mr Tovua I just wonder whether you could describe in more detail what you actually saw? You've mentioned just then that people are still living in tents, which is probably not ideal given this is the monsoon season.

But what are the day-to-day living conditions for the people on the Weathercoast now, because we know a number of the villages were burnt to the ground? So what's happening there for them now?

TOVUA: "It is better living in tents in that particular area than to live in Honiara, which is just nothing at all.

"At least where they are it is their original home. Part of their original. They have their trees, they have their land and fruit trees and they can get to, they have the waters there, they have the sea and they're very much it's part of them. And I think in that respect it is quite fine to see them and in starting, I mean they understand that."

COUTTS: What would be the standard of food, education, and health on the Weathercoast today ?

TOVUA: "Of course they still rely heavily on the food that our donors bought them through the National Disaster Management Office.

"And that is on food that is given to them bought from shops in Honiara. We are getting the community restoration fund, that is AUSAID, to setup temporary health facilities to service these people in very near future.

And also CPRS [Community Project Restoration Fund] already identified that rehabilitation of schools in the surrounding villages, that is people can send their kids. In fact first help is to relocate the kindergarten school, which was put up for them when they were near Honiara.

COUTTS: Edward Kelea, a local from the Weathercoast was reported by SIBC as saying that he wanted to call on all the national and provincial leaders of Guadalcanal to support the people in the area who again trying to live their normal lives.

Do you think the locals think or have a feeling that while things are progressing it's perhaps progressing a little too slowly?

TOVUA: "Well indeed they're entitled to think that way, but they understand that there are a lot of things that can be done. At the same time there are some things that cannot be done by donors. And I think this is where very much the call by Mr Kelea in that some of these issues must be an issue clearly to be addressed by the national government and the provincial government.

"I think his call is good, I also call and spoke to the member of the area, both the national and the provincial, and I also spoke with the premier of Guadalcanal province urging them that they have to make an effort to visit the Weathercoast of Guadalcanal.

COUTTS: Mr Tovua you mentioned there that there are things that the donors can't do that has to be done locally. Can you give us an example or a couple of examples of what that might be?

TOVUA: "Well donors clearly cannot pay compensation; donors cannot pay demands to compensate for houses or lives. This is one thing the NPC is trying to tell the people that this cannot be done. Donors cannot pay education fee. Those things ..., it's not in the policy of donors.

"This is an area where the responsibility must be the national government and the provincial government to see and provision of teachers, provision of health workers; it is the national government and the provincial government of Guadalcanal."

COUTTS: Following your visit last week to the Weathercoast what is your assessment of the things that need to be done next on the Weathercoast to make the people more comfortable?

TOVUA: "Well people now I've been talking with them even as late as today by radio net we have there right across along the Weathercoast. They are now waiting for me and RAMSI also is urging me to go back there and spend time to do mediation with the Chiefs from the area - the whole part along from Marau to Talisay.

So that we can, it will be clearer what are people talking about, the communities, between communities, different communities that we have to mediate and come to whatever resolution that has to be done in terms of reconciliation. These are outstanding issues that we have not addressed enough this year and this is an issue that we have to address quickly and appropriately this year. And that's why I will be spending a number of days, weeks and I hope one month in the Weathercoast." (Radio Australia's Pacific Beat/PIDP/CPIS 20 January 2004)

**See also: [Food aid for IDPs will be needed until May 2004 \(August 2003\)](#)**

### **The wantok system of traditional reciprocity acted as a safety net for IDPs during the crisis (October 2000)**

- The wantok system is a traditional system of share and care based on the notion of reciprocity within the extended family.
- During the ethnic upheaval it served as a safety net and alleviated the impact of the displacement of 23,000 people to Malaita and other provinces and within Guadalcanal.
- IDP member of the extended family were welcomed to occupy homes and share resources including food items.
- Despite this safety net, food, shelter and health were inadequate.

"The *wantok system* is a traditional system of share and care based on the notion of reciprocity within the extended family. As such it acts as a safety net in times of natural and man-made disasters like the social unrest on Guadalcanal.

The real value of the *wantok system* as a social security was tested in the social unrest on Guadalcanal. This system was forced to absorb about 23 000 people during the height of the social unrest and in my view has played a vital role in alleviating the impact of the mass migration of people from Guadalcanal to Malaita and the other seven provinces. The internal dislocation of Guadalcanal people with the Guadalcanal itself was also catered for by the *wantok system*. Under the *wantok system* members of the extended family were welcomed to occupy homes and share resources including food items until they are able to fend for themselves. This assistance helped maintain many of the displaced families temporarily. Through the *wantok system* even working *wantoks* and relatives responded positively to the plight of their

IDP relatives. The extended family system readily made available land for building houses and gardening as very Solomon Islander has the right to use land within the tribal land.

In a survey conducted on Malaita by the Department of Development Planning in 1999, 91% of those surveyed professed to have land for building houses and 84.3% professed to have land for gardening (DDP 1999: 45). This shows the significance of the *wantok system* as a system one can fall back on in times of disasters. Despite this safety net food, shelter and health were inadequate, as the extended families were not expecting such a mass return of their relatives. In the same survey about 66.2% of the internally displaced people saw food as a problem. (ibid :47). This means that the wantok safety net alone was not able to meet and sustain the demands of the 30 000 internally displaced people." (Georges Saemane October 2000, p.3)

## Food

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### Food security is the primary concern of the returnees (March 2004)

- Almost all returned IDPs rated immediate food security as their primary short term concern
- The resettlement assistance program provided the displaced with 3 months supply of supplementary food rations and had assumed that the returnees would be able to obtain much of their food requirements from other local community members or from fishing, hunting activities.
- The IDPs asked for more food assistance but were given none as the assistance program assessed that there were local sources of food available.

"All the IDP communities (with the exception of Marasa) rated immediate food security as their primary short term concern. The IDPs returned with 3 months supply of supplementary food rations consisting of rice, powdered milk (targeted) and iodized salt. This was clearly advised to the IDPs prior to their return. The resettlement assistance program had assumed that the returnees would be able to obtain much of their food requirements from other local community members (through the "wontok" system), fishing/hunting and from local forest products. The IDP communities visited reported that their supplemental food rations had already been or were very soon to be depleted. All returnees were engaged in their usual subsistence farming on their garden plots at the time of monitoring. While some had reported being denied access to their former plots by GLF villages (see above), all had access to garden plots commensurate with their former plots and had not experienced any disruptions to their gardening activities nor their crops. The crops grown consisted almost entirely of root crops (cassava, sweet potato, kumara) with some families growing corn. The returnees advised that their crops would be ready for harvest from June. The garden plots of families which had returned with the earlier movements were more advanced. Most had reported delays in commencing their gardening after return due to the need to give priority attention to repairing or constructing their homes (consuming 1-2 of their time). Those in the first two movements also reported that they were requested by the PPF stationed at Mbanakira to remain at Mbanakira for two weeks before they could return to their villages in order for the security situation to be fully assessed. (Mbanakira PPF was unable to comment on this as no PPF staff present during first two movements remained stationed at Mbanakira.)

Regarding the program's assumptions for alternative food sources while their gardens are pending maturity, some of the returnees were receiving assistance from relatives in other villages. Vatungola had even received some assistance from the GLF members of their village which relocated after their return and some other individuals reported receiving some food from their relatives in other villages. Based on the information volunteered, however, it appeared that assistance from other community members was not widespread.

During the meetings with the returnee communities, they emphasised the need for additional food support. The monitoring team, on the other hand, reinforced the message that, in line with what they were advised prior to their return, there would be no additional food support. In these circumstances it was difficult to obtain reliable information from the returnees as to what additional food sources they could rely on though some information was given. They did advise that they had no difficulties accessing leafy vegetables and were able to catch fish. Their main concern was with “staples” such as tubers (growing in their gardens) or rice (provided by the assistance program). Local sources of food that the monitoring team could observe included:

Fresh water fish;

Fresh water shell molluscs;

“Jungle greens” –two species of edible fern and two other plant species all in abundance;

Coconuts in abundance

Some returnees advised that they were able to catch wild pigs but that their ability to catch them was limited due to not having hunting dogs. They had caught them using traps after discovering their regular tracks.

Bamboo shoots (though returnees reported not to know that these were edible)

Wild cassava (while the old tubers would be hard they could be grated and used for “cassava cakes”)

Wild Yams –not in season until June/July

In addition to the above the returnee villages have cash crops of coconut and cocoa. While copra requires drying facilities which are not readily available at present, the returnees can sell the cocoa green to local buyers. The cash from this could be used to purchase food from a local makeshift market at Mbanakira.

Despite the requests for additional food assistance and while not being a food security expert I would tend to conclude that the situation is within the returnees’ ability to cope. Expert advice should be sought to determine whether the above diet would sufficiently meet their nutritional requirements until harvest of their root crops in July. In addition the Provincial Health Service could be requested to enhance its monitoring of the incidence of malnutrition during this period and to build nutrition education in to the existing local health worker outreach program." (NDMO, March 2004, pp. 5-6)

### **Food aid for IDPs will be needed until May 2004 (August 2003)**

- Actions by the have included disturbances to supply of goods and services to remote villages in the Weathercoast.
- World Vision estimate that the IDPs will have to remain in Honiara or resettled in other locations for at least 3-6 months.
- Once the displaced persons are able to return, it will take another 4 months before their gardens will yield a sustainable food crop. Thus conservatively, it is estimated that food aid and other assistance (resettlement: seeds and tools) will be required for at least another 9 months.

"While communities throughout the rural areas of Guadalcanal have been impacted in some way by movements of the GLF or by the movements of displaced persons, the current crisis is the most severe since 2000. The effects of the GLF operations have included disturbances to supply of goods and services to remote villages in the Weathercoast. The movements of opposition militias have caused many to live in fear and flee. Until these militia (or gangs) are brought to account, the IDPs will not be able to return to their villages and gardens. It is therefore estimated that the IDPs will have to remain in Honiara or resettled in other locations for at least 3-6 months (assuming the GLF activities can be extinguished by the current intervention of security forces from nearby fellow Pacific Island nations led by Australia and New Zealand. Once the displaced persons are able to return to their homes, it will take another four months before their gardens will yield a sustainable food crop. Thus conservatively, it is estimated that food aid and other

assistance (resettlement: seeds and tools) will be required for at least another 9 months." (Wordl Vision 7 August 2003)

### **IDPs are reportedly straining village resources (June 2003)**

- Influx of IDPs into Tangarare, a coastal village on Guadalcanal, is reportedly putting a strain on the village resources.

"A former Isatabu Freedom Movement (IMF) commander for Tangarare, a coastal village on Guadalcanal, is calling on the Solomon Islands Government to stop the influx of refugees from the Weathercoast into Tangarare.

Francis Kennedy said the recent flow of refugees is causing great concern to people in the area.

He said resources in the area cannot meet the influx and therefore Prime Minister Kemakeza should look at relocating the refugees to another place.

Joe Kaka, a concerned citizen of Tangarare, has also warned that the police operation to capture Keke is diverting attention from the original demands of the Guadalcanal people.

Kaka has urged the seven Guadalcanal members of parliament to convene an urgent meeting to discuss possible solutions." (Pacific Islands Report 10 June 2003)

## **Health**

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### **Returnees have reportedly no problem in accessing health services (March 2004)**

"Local services available in the area monitored included the elementary and secondary school at Mbanakira, the health clinic at Mbanakira and the health worker visiting station at Biti (in lieu of the health clinic there destroyed during the conflict). None of the returnee villages monitored experienced problems accessing these services due to the local security situation or by way of discrimination due to their returnee status or former affiliation. The problem of access to local services reported was a result of distance from the services and increased pressure on local services following the destruction of the health clinic at Biti and the school at Kolekomau. Pressure on the existing services increased sharply with the return of the IDPs." (NDMO, March 2004, pp. 7-8)

### **Children make up half of the displaced, suffer from psychological problems (July 2003)**

- Violence not only inflicts physical damage, it also has a psychological impact.
- Local landowners at Titinge village have given the new arrivals three months grace. They can stay in their makeshift accommodation until the Government finds them somewhere else for them to settle.
- While the physical well-being of the internally displaced people of the Weathercoast is being dealt with, there are worries about the longer term impact of the trauma, especially on children who make up more than half of those living outside Titinge.

"ELEANOR HALL: Violence has been a part of life for many Solomon Islanders for years, with law and order having been a problem in some parts of the country long before the latest civil war. And that violence not only inflicts physical damage, it also has a psychological impact, as our Correspondent Shane McLeod reports.

SHANE MCLEOD: At Titinge village, outside Honiara, the Red Cross is making a much-welcomed delivery.

SOLOMON ISLANDS CITIZEN: This fellow Keke, last for another two weeks more, yeah?

SHANE MCLEOD: Food, shelter and everyday necessities are being delivered to around 1,500 people, who've fled Guadalcanal's Weathercoast, and the reign of rebel militant, Harold Keke.

Obed Gii is one of those who left.

OBED GII: Us, we know that these things has been happen, there is know for us that if we went back to our place we were all killed and be destroyed by Keke's group.

So what we believe and that we actually want at this present times, we need the intervention force and the government to help us and we believe that the intervention force will solve our problems.

SHANE MCLEOD: Local landowners have given the new arrivals three months grace. They can stay in their makeshift accommodation until the Government finds them somewhere else for them to settle.

But until the Weathercoast's law and order situation is improved, there's little chance those here will be leaving and Martin Karani, from the National Disaster Management Office, believes more will arrive before the situation improves.

MARTIN KARANI: There is going to be an influx of people. Right now we've received reports that more than 1,000 people are leaving behind the no-go zone, and once the force comes in and get rid of the people from the strongholds of this, of Harold Keke, then we would expect an influx of (inaudible).

SHANE MCLEOD: While the physical well-being of the internally displaced people of the Weathercoast is being dealt with, there are worries about the longer term impact of the trauma.

More than half of those living outside Titinge are children.

Rex Tara is from the Solomon Islands Red Cross.

REX TARA: One of things we identified, and you can experience and see from their response to you, is the trauma that they have been experienced from the incident or whatever, have been, they came across or something like that.

So these were like, we put it one of the priority areas that needs to be undertaken by our stakeholders who have the capacity to do that, before they can be settled, to forget about everything else." (ABC 21 July 2003)

### **Lack of funds and doctors restrict provision of basic health services (March 2003)**

- Health services in the Solomon Islands continue to suffer from the 1998-2000 conflict.
- Medical staff that left Guadalcanal in fear and frustration has been slow to return, and lack of finances cripple existing services.

- At the beginning of 2002, there was provision for a total of 76 doctors (one for every 5,382 people), but only 30 Solomon Islanders and 19 expatriate doctors were occupying posts.
- Between 2001 and 2002, health workers across the country periodically went on strike in protest over non-payment of salaries.

"In addition to deaths directly resulting from armed violence, many other people are believed to have died during the height of the conflict due to lack of access to basic health services. All major health programmes throughout the country were affected, and many donor-funded health programmes had to be postponed, so that the most urgent needs could be addressed (Velayudhan, 2002, p. 1). In one instance, a prolonged MEF blockade prevented the Red Cross from taking emergency supplies to rural clinics, leaving a population of 60,000 people in rural Guadalcanal largely cut off from access to essential medical assistance. Many other remote clinics experienced serious shortages of essential medicines, due to influxes of injured patients or disruptions in supply (Amnesty International, 2000b).

Health services in the Solomon Islands continue to suffer ongoing problems. Medical staff who left Guadalcanal in fear and frustration have been slow to return, and lack of finances cripple existing services. At the beginning of 2002, there was provision for a total of 76 doctors (one for every 5,382 people), but only 30 Solomon Islanders and 19 expatriate doctors were occupying posts (UN Resident Co-ordinator, 2002, p. xiii). In May 2002, the Malaitan Provincial Health Management considered a temporary suspension of basic health care services due to lack of funds, and throughout 2001 and 2002, health workers across the country periodically went on strike in protest over non-payment of salaries (PACNEWS 2, 2002b)." (Philip Alpers & Conor Twyford March 2003, pp. 41-42)

### **Guadalcanal health system severely affected by the social unrest (August 2001)**

- Inadequate health facilities in Guadalcanal Province.
- As people were largely dependent on clinics established by timber and mining companies, their closure have left them without access to health services.
- Ratio of people per clinic is about 2,500, which is well above the recommended ratio of 1 clinic per 500 to 1,000 people.
- The major problems are malaria, maternal health (deaths, anemia, complications), and pneumonia/acute respiratory infections.
- Preventive health activities and access to health services have been severely disrupted by the ethnic tension.

"A general analysis suggests that Guadalcanal Province does not have adequate health facilities for its population. People on the northern and central regions were reliant mostly on clinics established and run by Solomon Islands Plantation Limited, Pacific Timbers, RIPEL and Gold Ridge Mine. The closure of these companies during the ethnic tension has drastically affected people's access to essential health services.

The population of Guadalcanal is currently paying a relatively high cost, in terms of productivity and human life, to diseases and ailments that are largely preventable. This is because the people's knowledge and attitudes have not yet accepted ideas about septic disposal, nutrition, safe water supply, family spacing, and environmental management. In the past the emphasis has been on direct health care rather than on the prevention of diseases by increasing peoples awareness of good practices. Moreover, the increasing population will stress the health services network in the near future. Currently the ratio of people per clinic is about 2,500, which is well above the recommended ratio of 1 clinic per 500 to 1,000 people.

The leading causes of death and morbidity in Guadalcanal are similar to those for Solomon Islands as a whole and remain fairly constant. The major problems are malaria, maternal health (deaths, anemia,

complications), and pneumonia/acute respiratory infections. The majority of presentations at health facilities in Guadalcanal in 1999 were for fever/malaria, ARI/pneumonia and skin diseases.

The two years of ethnic tension on Guadalcanal has had adverse effects on the health system and service. Over this period, some preventive activities such as malaria control, environmental health and satellite clinics providing antenatal care, immunisation etc. have been substantially reduced. Touring medical services have been irregular and have been totally suspended since the latter part of 2000. Access to diagnostic and treatment services has been restricted by the loss of health transport, outboard motor canoes and vehicles, and restricted access to other transport providers.

There is anecdotal evidence that rural services have been less able and patients less willing to use the NRH for cases of serious illness or obstetric complications. Even travel to rural health clinics has been restricted due to fear of hostilities." (SI Ministry of Provincial Government & Rural Development, August 2001, p.32)

## **Water & sanitation**

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### **IDPs accommodated in camps near Honiara lack potable water and proper sanitation (August 2003)**

- World Vision reports that IDPs fleeing the weathercoast and accommodated near Honiara under plastic sheetings for two months suffer from dismal conditions made worse by high temperatures and humidity.
- IDPs lack potable water as well as proper sanitation.
- In response to these conditions, WV has provided materials for a temporary school at the new site and will install a water and sanitation system for all refugees as part of a multi-agency assistance package.
- Displaced children were traumatised and the agency was investigating the possibility of recruiting a psycho-therapist.

"Aid agencies will assist refugees, who fled a reign of terror imposed by Harold Keke's Guadalcanal Liberation Army to relocate, after it proved impossible to provide them with adequate water supplies.

For two months about 600 refugees have lived under plastic sheeting at Titinge, outside Honiara, after fleeing the remote Weathercoast.

World Vision New Zealand aid worker Paul Martell, speaking from Honiara, said refugees were suffering dismal conditions made worse by high temperatures and humidity.

Besides a shortage of water, refugees lacked proper sanitation and there were no school facilities for children. Mosquitoes were a problem and several children had contracted malaria.

Mr Martell said in the next eight to ten days refugees would move about five kilometres to West Titinge. World Vision has provided materials for a temporary school at the new site and will install a water and sanitation system for all refugees as part of a multi-agency assistance package.

Mr Martell said refugees appeared remarkably positive despite their current wretched conditions and being forced to witness the abduction, rape and beating of relatives and former neighbours by Keke supporters.

'They're looking to the future rather than looking back in bitterness,' he said.



But he added refugee children were traumatised and the agency was investigating the possibility of recruiting a psycho-therapist, preferably one who could speak pidgin.

'There's a lot of listlessness. A lot of these children have seen relatives killed. Psychological problems will be a big issue,' he said.

Mr Martell said all the local people he had spoken to greatly appreciated the arrival of New Zealand troops and police to restore order to the troubled islands and there was a noticeable easing of tensions on the streets of Honiara. Armed thugs had gone underground.

But he said locals warned him a gun amnesty had so far netted only home-made and WWII vintage weapons. More sophisticated, high-powered guns remained in dangerous hands." (World Vision 12 August 2003)

See also: "[Camps offer little solace](#)", *The Age*, 3 July 2003

### **32% of villages in Malaita province not equipped with adequate water and sanitation supply (October 2000)**

- 32 percent of the water supply systems on Malaita Island were considered as inadequate.

"There is also a need for improving the sanitation and water supplies, for major destination areas of displaced people. During a case study in Malaita province, it has been noted that although the majority of villages (over 59 percent) had water supply systems within their villages, nearly 32 percent were considered not adequate, and the arrival of the new settlers placed additional demand on the already inadequate water supply systems." (Donald Kudu October 2000, Annex E-3, pp. 15-16)

## **Shelter & non-food items**

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### **Most returnees have adequate shelter (March 2004)**

- All returnee communities visited by the monitoring mission in March 2004 had adequate shelter.

"All returnee communities visited had adequate shelter to meet their immediate to medium term needs. As mentioned above the only communities visited which needed to completely rebuild their homes were those villages of the Urahai Valley and Marasa. These returnees had used tarpaulins they brought back with them to construct houses of similar style to those of the Titinge displacement site in Honiara. The traditional local house is constructed of wooden frame (either sawn or round) and sago palm roofing and walls. Those whose financial situation permits have corrugated tin roofing, and sawn timber walls. Having a house constructed of tarpaulin is considered inferior to the traditional home. The main constraints they face in rebuilding their homes to a traditional style are insufficient locally available sago palm and access to chain saw for the production of timber from local forest timber trees.

I consider the implications of the current housing situation of those villages living in tarpaulin houses to be two-fold. First, returnees should be able to assume the outward appearance of living conditions which are not markedly dissimilar to other non-returnees and not remain in a state where their returnee status is obvious. This goes to the heart of the issue of notions of resuming a normal life. Should these returnees

continue to live in tarpaulin huts then the situation creates a caveat as to what extent their overall return can be considered as dignified. Second, the loss of their homes is a constant visual reminder of the destruction to personal property that occurred during the height of the conflict. It may therefore pose a psychological hindrance to genuine reconciliation to both parties if these visual "scars" can not be done away with.

In spite of the above, there are various matters that should be considered as to whether or not interventions should be made and the timing of such. The communities have already completed the first stage of the customary reconciliation process, which is the "reconciliation of understanding" (basically allowing the aggrieved parties to peacefully co-exist). The second stage of the reconciliation process deals with the issues of compensation and is due to take place in August. The NPC is currently facilitating negotiations between the various village leaders to determine the amount of compensation which will be paid. It is possible that the affected villages have not yet repaired their homes to their former standard in order for the matter to be fully dealt with during the second stage of the reconciliation. It is also possible that these villages may at least be partly compensated during this process by the concerned village(s). In this context any intervention (or discussion of such) prior to the second reconciliation stage taking place would be premature and have the potential to add complications to the traditional remedy process. Moreover, no interventions should be undertaken if the matter is within the concerned community's means to resolve. At present the returnees are more preoccupied with their immediate food security and are devoting their resources towards this end. Therefore, the matter should be re-examined towards the end of the year (October to December).

If re-examination of the returnee's housing situation demonstrates that constructing more suitable houses is not within their means introduction of new appropriate construction techniques using bamboo in place of sago may be an appropriate intervention. This could be done through the implementation of a small-scale project that establishes a demonstration model houses by artisans familiar with bamboo construction techniques who also share their skills with villagers who show an interest in applying the new skills. There are areas of the Philippines (e.g. Palawan) which apply bamboo construction techniques to a high standard including for roofing. Bamboo is locally available in the Weathercoast both around the villages and in the forest. It is commonly used for wall construction but not for roofing (which employs a different technique). The advantage of this approach is that it would be well suited to an NGO project and would empower the beneficiaries to resolve their own problem with limited external input and the benefits would be sustainable and available for all local communities.

Eventual development assistance on the Weathercoast which raises the income capacity of local communities would enable the returnee households to purchase sago palm and other construction materials. The villages in the areas monitored all cultivate cash crops such as cocoa and copra. Drying facilities and/or a road linking the communities with the port at Komate would have an immediate positive impact on local incomes." (NDMO, March 2004, pp. 6-7)

## ACCESS TO EDUCATION

### General

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#### **Political and financial disruption have resulted in a continuing decline in resources available for education (March 2003)**

- Less than 40 per cent of children complete primary school, and functional adult literacy is as low as 22 per cent, with lesser rates for women
- 4 years of political and financial disruption have resulted in a continuing decline in the financial resources available for education. As late as October 2002, teachers were still being paid one or two fortnights in arrears.

"Low levels of education services, with additional disruption caused by five years of conflict, are a major problem in the Solomon Islands today. Less than 40 per cent of children complete primary school, and functional adult literacy is as low as 22 per cent, with lesser rates for women. The economic crisis and diversion of revenues from core funding has meant that school teachers and nurses are only paid irregularly, and often no funding is available for basic materials like chalk, text books and desks.

The Church of Melanesia's Bishop of Malaita, Bishop Terry Brown, has suggested that donors should fund free education for primary and junior students until the economy revives '...otherwise the pool of illiterate, dissatisfied, disappointed youth will simply grow.' " (Oxfam Australia August 2003, p. 15)

"Solomon Island children's access to education during the conflict was severely constrained, particularly in Malaita and Guadalcanal. In Malaita, the mass influx of children from Honiara stretched an already struggling education system beyond capacity. Many of the extra children simply could not be accommodated. A survey carried out in September 1999 showed that 41 per cent of children on Malaita were not in school. Meanwhile, primary and secondary enrolments in Guadalcanal and Honiara declined as students, subject to harassment and intimidation, stopped attending (Kudu, 2000, p. 1). A December 2000 Young Women's Christian Association survey found that in central Guadalcanal alone, around 6,000 students had fled into the bush and were not yet able to return to school (cited in Böge, 2001, p. 40).

Four years of political and financial disruption have resulted in a continuing decline in the financial resources available for education. As late as October 2002, teachers were still being paid one or two fortnights in arrears." (Philip Alpers & Conor Twyford March 2003, p. 42)

#### **Displacement to Malaita placed a strain on overcrowded schools**

- Many students and teachers flooded into Malaita following the social unrest on Guadalcanal in 1999, placing an important pressure on already limited educational facilities on Malaita

"During the ethnic tension, many students flooded into Malaita from Guadalcanal and the Western Province. The displaced include many teachers who were given teaching positions in Malaita. Most of the schools, especially on Guadalcanal and Malaita, were closed. Teachers were intimidated, teachers' salaries were unpaid so teachers failed to attend to classes, and children missed school.

Extracts from interviews with Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development (November, 2003):

"The Malaita schools were overcrowded. It was a case of 40 – 45 children to one teacher. The quality of education was affected. Some rural schools were particularly badly affected. The Malaita province made an attempt to combine schools to further resources, especially teachers. Teachers went on strike and others did not go to work because the Education Authority did not pay their wages. No one could reprimand anyone. The Education Division of the Province could not do much either because the staff in there too were facing problems of no salaries. It was a very difficult and chaotic situation. Children did not have classes and were very badly affected by this situation.

Resources were insufficient. Text books have always been a problem within the schools. Due to poor storage, the remaining text books deteriorated further, books were also stolen. School facilities remained with no improvements and thus experienced further wear and tear. School fees were expected to be paid. Some schools heard that Parliament was going easy on school fees so they relaxed the payment of school fees as well. Schools were less able to rely on fees to assist in keeping the schools functioning." "(PIFS June 2004, p. 22)

# ISSUES OF SELF-RELIANCE AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

## General

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### Unemployment of displaced youth threatens stability (2002)

- Displaced families are awaiting compensation for lost properties to restart livelihoods.
- However, the government only provides limited compensation.
- As a result also, young people are further displaced when unsuccessfully looking for jobs to try and support their families to re-settle.
- Unsuccessful job seeking further leads to frustration in young people who, instead end up engaging in indecent and criminal activities

"The social unrest that resulted in a lot of displaced families only further increases the demand for cash income as they struggle to re-settle elsewhere. Not only houses have to be built but also immediate subsistence food production is impossible as food crops take time to harvest. Cash is therefore, needed to purchase food items from shops. The massive displacement of females included 20,000 in Malaita, 12,000-18,000 in Guadalcanal and 10,000 in other provinces. To date, such families are awaiting compensation of lost properties from the Government to re-start livelihoods. However, the government can only meet small portions of the values of damaged properties and therefore, the high demand for more cash is set to continue in order that displaced families re-establish livelihoods once enjoyed prior to the ethnic unrest. As a result also, young people are further displaced when unsuccessfully looking for jobs to try and support their families to re-settle. Unsuccessful job seeking further leads to frustration in young people who, instead end up engaging in indecent and criminal activities to live and support families.

With the current lawlessness situation in the country, prospects for decent employment are limited as economic activities and investments come to almost a halt. (ILO p. 22)

See also:

[Youth employment in the Solomon Islands](#), AusAID, September 2003

["Addressing the youth bulge is critical to lasting peace in the Solomons"](#), Russ Grayson, 3 February 2004

# ISSUES OF FAMILY UNITY, IDENTITY AND CULTURE

## General

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### **The main difference between GLF and returned communities seems to be of a religious nature (March 2004)**

- Since Harold Keke's arrest, members of GLF villages have no longer engaged in further acts of violence.
- For most weathercoast villagers, GLF or non-GLF, the main concern now is how to be integrated into future development interventions.
- What seems to separate GLF from non-GLF villages is the adherence to distinctive religious practices. The report of the monitoring mission notes that being "GLF" could stem from a distinctive sense of belonging based on religious practices or moral standards (they don't drink) rather than on support for a political programme.

"Those villages which were pro-GLF during the height of the tension still continue to hold to the identity of "GLF". Observers tended to view the arrest of Keke, the surrender of guns and discontinuance of physical conflict on the part of the GLF as equating to the end or at least the demise of the GLF. Understandably the GLF was seen as an armed force pursuing political objectives (even if this was the retention of power by this group on the Weathercoast). Subsequent efforts to promote peace and reconciliation have often used labels such as "former-GLF" villages in an effort to move forward. Having said that it is still very unclear to those outside the GLF villages what it means to be GLF. They are no longer armed and have not engaged in further acts of violence or significant intimidation. No one I spoke to was clear as to what distinctive political objectives they now have. When I met with the people of Calvary their main issue of concern was development for the Weathercoast and that they not be excluded from any development interventions. What does clearly set them apart from others is their adherence to distinctive religious practices. They do not smoke, drink alcohol or chew betel nut (a favourite Solomons past time). They set aside two days per week to fast and pray as a GLF congregation. (It was reported by IDPs and the locally based PPF that the release of Keke is one of the main subjects of the fasting and praying.) At this time GLF villages from Calvary in the Urahai Valley to Dui Dui on the coast make the effort to travel great distances to meet together. While the majority are South Seas Evangelical, they also include Roman Catholic and Anglican. Villagers from Ngalito (IDPs) reported that two senior community members from a neighbouring GLF village had paid them a visit to encourage them to follow the religious practices of the GLF. When they declined the two men were reported to be upset and left. From my observations and without having the benefit of insights from the GLF villagers themselves it seems more accurate to describe the current GLF on the Weathercoast as an "-ism" or perhaps a cult. The main implications for the longer term prospects for re-integration of the communities is that the GLF villages hold to a certain sense of "righteousness" which notion is different to that of the IDPs and that their main sense of identity seems to be as GLF rather than members of the larger local community which includes IDPs." (NDMO, March 2004, p. 3)

## PROPERTY ISSUES

### General

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#### **Damage to property and housing vary from one village to another on the weathercoast (March 2004)**

- IDPs from the villages north of the Tina river experienced the least damage to their property. Villagers also managed to retain much of their tools. Their gardens were not destroyed by the GLF.
- Virtually all homes of IDPs in the Urahai Valley were burned by the GLF and their property either destroyed or stolen. Their gardens were either destroyed or taken over by GLF villagers. Land they used for their new gardens was reported to have a much poorer soil quality.
- Many homes of Marasa community members were destroyed and their property looted. Refusing assistance in the rehabilitation of their community, they were insistent that such should come in the form of compensation from the GLF villages which had inflicted the damage on their community.

#### "VILLAGES NORTH OF THE TINA RIVER NEAR MBANAKIRA

The villages immediately to the north of Mbanakira across the Tina River (Mataruka, Vatungola, Charanamate, Chimba, Veratabao, and Poisuhu) experienced the least damage to property. For the most part their houses were still intact. The damage to their homes was more like vandalism than destruction. The most common attack on homes was posts on the verandas on many homes being chopped. Some homes had the walls kicked out. Only a small number of homes were destroyed with only a few being burned. These IDPs retained much of their property (tools, etc) which they either hid in the forest or stored in a local church before the arrival of the GLF. In their case the GLF respected the sanctity of the church and did not loot the property stored therein. The IDP gardens of Mataruka, Vatungola and Charamate were not destroyed by the GLF and they had free access to their old gardens (though some of the crops were either taken by the GLF or eaten by pigs). There were still root crops in the gardens though it was reported that the root crops remaining were well past the normal harvesting age upon their return. Many of the former gardens of those of Chimba, Poisuhu and Veratabao were on the south side of the Tina River and were taken over by GLF villagers of Calvary and they had to build new gardens on the north side of the river. For all these villages the land that they used for their new gardens after their return were in low laying, flat areas along the Tina River which has very fertile, friable soil –well suited to growing root crops. They also had easier access to the health clinic and schools at Mbanakira with shorter distance and gentler terrain to traverse than the further outlying villages of the Urahai Valley.

#### URAHAI VALLEY VILLAGES

The villages in the Urahai Valley (Tanguliva, Kolokemau, Vasavolavola, Koloniniha, and Kolokavulo) are facing much greater challenges reintegrating. Virtually all of their homes were burned by the GLF and their property either destroyed or stolen. For the most part their gardens were either destroyed or taken over by GLF villagers of Veravalu. The land they used for their new gardens was reported to have a much poorer soil quality than those of the villages along the Tina River meaning that their gardens would take longer to produce.

These villages also have more difficulty accessing services. Both school and clinic are at Mbanakira which is an approximate 1 ½ hour walk over difficult terrain. School-aged children of the Urahai Valley previously attended a newly constructed local school at Kolokomau. This school was burned down during

the height of the conflict. Similarly, prior to the conflict, these villages had attended a closer clinic at Biti which was likewise burned down during the conflict.

#### MARASA COMMUNITY

The Marasa community consists in approximately 400 persons in a cluster of neighbouring villages. Despite being neutral during the conflict around 100 of these were displaced to Honiara (Rove, Tanuli, Wet River and Combiyatu) and the remainder were displaced on the Weathercoast. These homes were destroyed and their property looted. The entire community returned spontaneously with the only assistance received being from the blanket food distribution on the Weathercoast in 2003 and the Red Cross Family Kits. Those from Honiara returned November to December 2003. After return they rebuilt their homes from remaining corrugated iron and lived off their old gardens. The only contact they had with the neighbouring GLF village of Veuru was in the form of chiefs from their respective villages meeting. They advised that they did not need any assistance in the rehabilitation of their community. They were insistent that such should come in the form of compensation from the GLF villages which had inflicted the damage on their community." (NDMO, March 2004, pp. 2-3)



# PATTERNS OF RETURN AND RESETTLEMENT

## General

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### **Monitoring mission concludes all IDPs have returned safely (March 2004)**

"The overall assessment of the monitoring mission is that the IDPs have been able to return safely and resume normal activities. Returnee communities and their former adversaries are peacefully co-existing. Despite mistrust and limited interaction between the communities the current situation is already a positive outcome and cause for optimism for longer term successful reintegration. The returnees' priority concern tended to be on immediate food security while waiting to harvest their gardens in June to July. However, as the gardens would normally supply only part of their food source which includes other readily available food items, it would seem that the situation is within their ability to cope. Returnees whose homes were destroyed during the conflict have been able to utilize tarpaulins and other local materials to erect houses to meet their shelter needs. A longer term solution for the rehabilitation of houses is constrained by the limited availability of sago palm. The situation of these villages should be re-examined towards the end of the year to determine if they are making progress to remedy their situation through their own means. IDPs have access to local services similar to other local residents, however, their return has placed greater pressure on the inadequate health and education services. (NDMO, March 2004, p.1)

### **RAMSI leaves the Weathercoast after ensuring the safety of returned IDPs (March 2004)**

- RAMSI has withdrawn its permanent military presence on the Weather Coast in Mid-March.
- Participating Police Force (PPF) will assumed a greater role to ensure continued security in the area.
- A platoon of around 30 RAMSI soldiers will be re-deployed to the Weathercoast of Guadalcanal to provide security for the returning displaced villagers.
- Solomon Islands Police Commissioner, William Morrell encouraged people of Guadalcanal's remote Weathercoast area to return home, claiming conditions had improved.

"Law and order has now returned to the Weather Coast and the Participating Police Force (PPF) has assumed a greater role to ensure continued security in the area.

The PPF has said it will not tolerate criminal activities and will remain on the Weather Coast to support and protect all Solomon Islanders, including those IDPs who recently returned, responding to any situation that may arise.

Deputy Police Commissioner Ben McDevitt said he was also pleased to note that up to nine handpicked officers from the RSIP will be working closely with the PPF as part of an integrated presence to maintain law and order on the Weather Coast.

(...)

As a result of the vastly improved security situation in the area, RAMSI has withdrawn its permanent military presence on the Weather Coast in recent days, with the PPF assuming a greater role in maintaining security and law and order." (People First Network 18 March 2004)

"The return of Weathercoast refugees see re-deployment of military personnel to the area.

The Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands, RAMSI Special Coordinator, Nick Warner revealed to media that a platoon of around 30 soldiers will be re-deployed to the Weathercoast of Guadalcanal to provide security for the returning displaced villagers.

It is understood that some 200 displaced people fled at the height of lawlessness during a reign of terror by former rebel leader, Harold Keke's followers.

52 families are said to have dismantled their temporary shelters on the outskirts of Honiara, and travelled by boat to Marasa on the Weathercoast, being assured of the security situation with the deployment of RAMSI military personnel.

RAMSI Special Coordinator, Warner informed media that the military personnel will patrol areas where the displaced people are returning, adding it is important the displaced people feel they are returning to secure villages" (People First Network 8 December 2003)

**See also: [Solomon Islands: Weathercoast Gets Special Attention](#)", [Pacific Islands Report](#), 4 December 2003**

"The Solomon Islands Police Commissioner, William Morrell encourages people of Guadalcanal's remote Weathercoast area to return home.

It is understood that more than 1500 people of the Weathercoast area fled violence in the area to the capital, Honiara months after an escalation in violence alleged to have been that of the former rebel leader Harold Keke.

The Regional Assistance Mission has been providing emergency food supplies to those who had remained on the Weathercoast, as of last month.

Morrell encourages those remaining in Honiara to return home and rebuild their lives.

He cites that with the reopening of schools in the areas signifies positive signs of life back in the remote Weathercoast, acknowledging, "because of all the difficulties in the last few years, it's going to take time to help heal some of the rifts as well." (People First Network 6 October 2003)

## **Return**

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### **1,400 IDPs assisted to return to the Weathercoast (March 2004)**

- 1,400 IDPs have been assisted by UNDP; AusAID and SIG to return to the weathercoast in a series of 7 movements that took place between 4 December 2003 and 18 March 2004.
- IDPs were provided with assistance comprising transportation, a family assistance package and supplementary food ration.
- NDMO in collaboration with the Guadalcanal Province Disaster Committee GPDC is implementing the return/resettlement.

"All of the Internally Displaced Peoples, I-D-Ps who fled the Weather Coast to Honiara at the height of the ethnic tension have returned to their homes and villages.

This is as a result of the recent success of operations in the Weather Coast region by RAMSI, working together with the RSIP, the National Peace Council, the National Disaster Management Office and other local Solomon Islands groups.

(...)

National Disaster Management Office Director Loti Yates praised the successful return to the Weather Coast of the approximately 1,400 IDPs over recent months.

'We are very pleased with the way it all turned out,' Yates said.

Yates said although some people were initially unsure about returning to the Weather Coast after having fled to Honiara, with the continued support of RAMSI and international donors, the return of all IDPs was finalised last week and people were now re-establishing their lives." (People First Network 18 March 2004)

"With support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), AusAID, SIG, total of 1255 IDPs have been successfully resettled to their communities of origin. The two-phased return & resettlement (in series of 6 movements) took place from 4 December 2003 to 14 January 2004.

The resettlement assistance package comprised the following:

Transportation (both land and sea---IDPs and their personal effects taken to port of embarkation for boarding on chartered marine vessels)

Family assistance package (FAP) consisted of farming inputs/tools and fishing gear and plastic sheeting/tarpaulin

Supplemental food (rice, milk, iodized salt—distributed on pro rata basis)

Mediation and reconciliation (facilitated by NPC, before and after return). Follow-up on-going

Officers of the Participatory Police Force PPF and RAMSI military personnel provided security support. In instances where returnees had to make a secondary trip to reach their communities, they were accompanied and assisted by these personnel.

Logistical and other support were also provided by voluntary organizations, including the Solomon Islands Red Cross SIRC.

The National Disaster Management Office NDMO in collaboration with the Guadalcanal Province Disaster Committee GPDC is implementing the return/resettlement." (UNDP 2 March 2004, pp. 1-2)

"The return of Weathercoast refugees see re-deployment of military personnel to the area.

The Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands, RAMSI Special Coordinator, Nick Warner revealed to media that a platoon of around 30 soldiers will be re-deployed to the Weathercoast of Guadalcanal to provide security for the returning displaced villagers.

It is understood that some 200 displaced people fled at the height of lawlessness during a reign of terror by former rebel leader, Harold Keke's followers.

52 families are said to have dismantled their temporary shelters on the outskirts of Honiara, and travelled by boat to Marasa on the Weathercoast, being assured of the security situation with the deployment of RAMSI military personnel." (People First Network 8 December 2003)

## **Obstacles to return and resettlement**

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### **Displaced villagers not properly compensated or assisted to resettle (November 2004)**

- RAMSI reports that 14,000 displaced Guadalcanal people had returned to their homes by July 2004. Amnesty states that the real number could be much higher. It is however unclear when exactly these people were displaced.
- Many IDPs fled their homes more than once often for short periods.
- AI visiting Ngalito village in April 2004 observed that all families were still sheltering in improvised huts and that food was scarce.
- Many of those who fled sought refuge in Honiara in camps or with relatives. They filed compensation claims with the government but reportedly with little success.

"According to RAMSI Special Coordinator Nick Warner, 14,000 displaced indigenous Guadalcanal people had returned to their villages on the Weathercoast by July 2004 where they were living together with those they had been in conflict with.(45) The total number is likely to be much higher. Guadalcanalese also fled from other areas, and many fled for shorter periods (often months) to hide in the hills behind their villages, or in shelters in their vegetable gardens – away from Red Cross or other officials conducting assessments.(46) Amnesty International's monitoring of the conflict shows that several thousand Guadalcanal displaced people, most of them women, children and elderly people, fled their homes more than once. A small number of displaced village communities were able to salvage some building materials from deserted or destroyed homes, and resettle in places away from the fighting.

For example, the families of Ngalito village on the Weathercoast were first displaced when a joint police-IFM operation against the GLF raided their village in October 2002. Such raids were often conducted in order to limit the capacity of the GLF to use villages as a support base or hiding place, or, according to some villagers, because members of the police-IFM operation sought to punish them for allegedly supporting the GLF.

During the night following the raid, Ngalito villagers evacuated the elderly and children further inland to the Uranghai valley, returned to Ngalito under cover of darkness and carried all moveable materials and equipment to Uranghai. Landowners then allowed them to resettle in the Uranghai valley where they hoped to start a new life:

"We built new homes there, cleared bushland and made new gardens. It was not safe to live in Ngalito any more so we stay at Uranghai. One day before the first harvest, at three in the morning on 27 May 2003, the GLF came and torched our homes, chased everyone out. This time we lost everything. We all ran away into the bush with whatever we had on our bodies. In my family, no-one was injured, but four young men of another family were killed. We fled to Honiara – most families trekked for two to three days across the mountains, some were evacuated by boat. We stayed in Honiara for seven months, mostly in camps and some with relatives. We filed compensation claims with the government. They gave us part-payment vouchers which turned out to be worthless at the bank. In December 2003, we went back home." (47)

When Amnesty International visited Ngalito village in April 2004, all families were still sheltering in improvised huts made from scrap materials and covered by the torn tent sheets they had salvaged from their former Red Cross camp near Honiara. Food was scarce because emergency supplies distributed at the time of return had been stretched while rehabilitated gardens were not yet ready for harvest.

"We walked for four nights and four days across the mountains to Titinge [near Honiara, site of a Red Cross displaced persons' camp]. Many had nothing to eat for two days. A two-week-old baby girl and two men died in the mountains from lack of medical care. One man had asthma, the other was disabled. [...] After we returned from Titinge, it took us several weeks to carry all the luggage and supplies from Marasa Bay to our village and repair the destroyed water supply before we could rebuild our homes."(48)

Amnesty International's research in resettled villages along the Guadalcanal Weathercoast also revealed that not all families who fled during the conflict had returned nearly a year after the arrival of RAMSI in the area ended hostilities. For example, of the 40 families living in Chimba near the Tina River, only 29 returned. At nearby Veratabau, only 15 families had returned, and only 28 families each at Poisughu and Mataruka.(49) While the reasons for this are not entirely clear, Amnesty International noted that different families in these villages had at various times during the conflict found themselves on different sides of the joint police-militant operation against the GLF. People interviewed by the organization expressed concern about living in a village which had been divided by the conflict.

Weathercoast villagers also expressed concern that their attempts in Honiara to seek government resettlement assistance or compensation for lost property were being frustrated by the lack of political representatives at the provincial and national parliamentary level. Both their Member of Parliament, Father Augustine Geve, and their representative in the Guadalcanal Provincial Assembly, Alas Tibamate, had been killed during the last year of conflict." (AI 8 November 2004, pp. 20-22)

### **Mistrust continues between GLF villages and returning IDPs (March 2004)**

- Although there have been no further acts of violence since the return of the displaced, there is reportedly very little interaction between the IDP and GLF communities and continued mistrust.

"Since the IDPs' return there had been no acts of violence against the IDPs and the GLF villages had allowed the IDPs to resume normal lives without harassment or intimidation. The only exception to this that was reported was an isolated incident of a youth from the GLF village of Calvary who verbally abused IDPs working in their garden plots very soon after their return. The youth was restrained while by the IDPs and the Calvary village chief called to sort out the matter. This he apparently did with no repeat incidents.

There was very little interaction between the IDP and GLF communities. Where members of one village needed to pass by the village of the other it was commonly reported that they exchange pleasantries in passing. This appears to be the only form of interaction between regular villagers. There were no reports of refusal of passage.

Initiatives being undertaken by the NPC and PPF were contributing to improved interaction between the village leaders. The PPF had arranged the first two of what were to be regular monthly meetings of village chiefs. The NPC had also commenced facilitating bilateral discussions between village leaders to negotiate the level of compensation to be paid at the second stage of reconciliation. While not a specific survey question, many of the returnees interviewed volunteered that they believed the reconciliation process would make a significant contribution to a return to normality and improve the security situation.

It is understandable that in the context of past communal conflict, continuation of the GLF identity and limited interaction that suspicions and mistrust will continue for some time to come. In my own assessment it is still much too early to expect any dramatic changes in attitudes of former foes that would resemble a

return to the normality of pre-conflict times. The fact that the IDPs have been able to return and resume normal activities safely and without any harassment and that the two communities are able to peacefully coexist is already a very positive outcome and cause for optimism for successful longer term social reintegration." (NDMO, March 2004, pp. 2-3)

# HUMANITARIAN ACCESS

## General

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### **Poor road conditions limit access to communities on the weathercoast (March 2004)**

- A major factor limiting access to most communities is the poor road conditions.
- No report of security threats to humanitarian workers

"The major factor limiting access to most communities is the poor road conditions. Majority of the communities lie inland and are remote from the coastal lines where the boats stop. Sometimes, unfavourable weather conditions also limit access.

There was no report of security threats to humanitarian workers, although the NPC monitors reported that they received some threats during the initial phase of the Weapons Free Village Campaign. Informally, all villages have weapons free status, pending formal certification and erecting of weapons free sign post at village entrance. There is military (RAMSI) and police (PPF) presence in strategic locations with patrols to other communities in the axis. The PPF was said to be on a long-term deployment while the military will likely be pulling out in June/July.

Community Peace & Restoration Fund CPRF and World Vision are intervening (planned) in schools reconstruction and literacy programmes respectively." (UNDP 12 March 2004)

### **Limited access to the conflict-affected Weathercoast (June 2003)**

- In June 2003, Solomon Islands Red Cross was unable to access the weathercoast to assess the needs of the people displaced by violence.

"The Solomon Islands Red Cross says a total of 357 people are now being housed in temporary shelters in the capital, Honiara after fleeing the Guadalcanal Weather Coast.

A thousand people are reported to be homeless after rebel leader, Harold Keke, extended his grasp over areas under his control on the Weather coast.

The Secretary General of the local Red Cross, Agnes Wale, says her organisation cannot get access to the Weather coast, so is unable to assess what people there need.

But she says many are expected to follow earlier groups, which escaped Keke by walking across the island to Honiara.

Ms Wale says so far more than one hundred families have come to the capital where they are being cared for by the Red Cross, the provincial government and the national disaster council.

'They have been given an area outside of Honiara and we have provided family kits containing utensils, blankets, as well as seeds, plus temporary shelter, and they are now being housed in those temporary shelters.' " (Pacific Islands Report 19 June 2003)

# NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL RESPONSES

## National response

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### **National Disaster Management Office and Guadalcanal Province Disaster Committee respond to the displacement crisis (March 2004)**

- NDMO leads and coordinates the assistance to the displaced by chairing the IDP Coordination Committee established in June 2003.
- Members include Guadalcanal Province (local Government), National Peace Council (NPC), World Vision, Red Cross, Oxfam, SICA and ADRA.
- NDMO and GPDC take the lead in the resettlement process by monitoring activities, complemented by the on-going follow-up activities by NPC.
- RAMSI's development component is also a partner in the assistance to the displaced.

"The National Disaster Management Office NDMO in collaboration with the Guadalcanal Province Disaster Committee GPDC is implementing the return/resettlement.

#### **Coordination and monitoring**

The National Disaster Management Office NDMO seems to be playing this role in the name of an IDP Resettlement Committee IDPRC, which was authorized by Cabinet in June 2003. This committee (which does not exist in practice), drawing its membership from eleven organizations was to be chaired by NDMO , with the mandate of coordinating the efforts of stakeholders in the development and implementation of an IDP resettlement strategy.

NDMO and GPDC also take the lead in monitoring, complemented by the on-going follow-up activities by NPC." (UNDP 2 March 2004, p. 2)

"The IDP Coordination Committee was established immediately in June to provide coordination of humanitarian aid. It includes, NDMO, Guadalcanal Province (local Government), National Peace Council, World Vision, Red Cross, Oxfam, SICA and ADRA and this group is functioning as an operations group.

The National Disaster Council (NDMO) received Cabinet endorsement to establish an office on behalf of the IDP Coordinating Committee to provide effective coordination for displaced persons from the Weathercoast region of Guadalcanal Province.

The Guadalcanal Provincial Government in conjunction with the National Disaster Council (NDMO) and the local Red Cross are coordinating an emergency appeal and have requested assistance by World Vision and key donors especially for more tents for some of the IDPs now resettled in Titinge and Tasahe.

(...)

The Red Cross, Guadalcanal Government and National Disaster Management Office representatives have undertaken assessments and are providing regular updates to the IDP Coordinating Committee in conjunction with the NDMO. " (World Vision 7 August 2003)

"Efforts from various groups to restore law and order are enabling the people of the Weathercoast of Guadalcanal to return to a normal life.



RAMSI Development Coordinator Alan Moody says they are working in partnership the National Peace Council and the National Disaster Management Office and other agencies and donors to help the people of Weathercoast.

The agencies and donors include Oxfam Australia, World Vision and Guadalcanal Provincial Authorities who are cooperating to help plan for the long-term rehabilitation and recovery of conflict-affected areas on the Weathercoast.

Moody says it is part of the effort to eventually repatriate and resettle internally displaced people in their home communities." (Pacific Islands Report 29 September 2003)

### **Truth and Reconciliation Committee**

"While RAMSI states that peace building is not one of its major aims, its arrival has restored peace in the country. The NPC is working closely with RAMSI in promoting a safe and secure environment. This is an extension of RAMSI's previous focus on weapons collection.

NPC Monitors are to be trained in early 2004 in conflict resolution and basic counselling skills to assist those traumatised by the conflict. The NPC will also organise nationwide peace initiatives such as unity summits, music concerts and sporting activities.

Concerns however exist among Solomon Islanders that the root causes of the conflict are not being addressed by either the Government or RAMSI. Practices that contributed to the rise of the conflict in Solomon Islands are beginning to reappear. For example, there is fresh resentment from Guadalcanal landowners that Honiara picnickers have started helping themselves to resources from Guadalcanal land and beginning to make new gardens without seeking permission from the landowners.

The need for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was raised by the Civil Society Network (CSN). A TRC will assist relatives of the hundreds of people who were killed or disappeared during the conflict. CSN has submitted a proposal for its establishment to the Government. This will enable the truth to be told by victims. It would individualise guilt for crimes committed, provide the opportunity for forgiveness and meaningful reconciliation and healing. Many feel that this is critical for ensuring lasting peace. The proposed TRC could also address the causes of the conflict, including land issues. A Human Rights Commission (HRC) is also proposed in a new Solomon Islands Constitution. The HRC will have responsibility for addressing human rights matters." (PIFS June 2004, p. 9)

### **Solomon Islands Red Cross provides assistance to people affected by violence on the weathercoast (February 2004)**

- SIRC has provided assistance both to the displaced from the weathercoast in Honiara, as well those displaced in remote areas of the weathercoast. Assistance has also been provided to people affected by the violence but not displaced.

"Solomon Islands Red Cross Staff and team of volunteer have been traveling backward and forward visiting the Weather coast of Guadalcanal.

From our record the SIRC has visited the weather coast affected area 6 times in the past. These visits exclude the ICRC family visits.

During the first migration of displaced people from the weather coast. SIRC has been very instrumental in providing welfare and support services to the displaced people of the weather coast.

SIRC has providing and distributing family kits to:

119 families August 2002

566 families November / 2002

160 families / November / 2003.

**845 Total number families with a population 2, 000 people (men, women children**

**Family kits include.**

Cooking pots, Blankets, Cloths, Soap, Fishing line and hooks, spoon, cups, nails, lavalava,

**Returning Family Kits**

The returning family kits exercise was also for the Internal Displaced People (IDP)

An exercise to allow the returning families to settle back in their communities.

November 03/, 160 family Kits

November 03/, 257

November 03/, 209

**626 Total**

Total of 600 Families a population of 2,050 people , both, men women, children.

The returning Family kits include the following.

**1 Family Size Cook Pots, 2 Towel, 3 blankets, 12 Kilo of Nails, 4/4", 4/3", 4/2"**

**1 harmer, 5 soap, 2 Laundry Soap, 3 sleeping mats, 1 Cooking dish, 1 water container.**

**Material Supplies**

1796 Sleeping Mats

495 Water Containers (10 liters)

1863 Blankets

4013 pieces of Bath Soap.

1422 pieces of Laundry Soap

806 pc of Basin

495 Harmers

6061 Kg of Nails

616 Family size cooking pots

605 pcs Cups

605 pcs plates

605 spoons

121 Hoes

605pks of seeds

242 coils of fishing lines

1210 fishing hooks

2160 pieces men clothing

2600 pieces of Women clothing

3040 children's wear

The visits are coordinated from our Head/Qrt with effective communication from our H/Q and the field team. With back up support from the ICRC, Honiara office and AUSAID funding through the Australian Red Cross..

The visits to the weather Coasts are being independently and have been welcomed by the community in the weather coast.

**All in All the SIRC Field team has been able to visit and do distribution freely in the affected area beginning from Marasa to Haleatu and even in the inland villages of Poisihu." (SIRC 23 February 2004)**

"A field team from the Solomon Islands Red Cross (SIRC) has just returned from the Weather Coast after distributing 100 family kits to displaced families in this isolated coastal region of southern Guadalcanal. The team of seven included two first-aiders, who treated over fifty people.

After a six-hour journey in two boats, the team arrived in the village of Veuru, where they distributed the kits to families who had fled their homes because of the unrest in the area. The kits were provided with the assistance of the ICRC, and contain kitchen utensils, fishing equipment, garden tools, seeds and hygiene articles. They were taken from the emergency stocks that the SIRC maintains for just this type of eventuality. As well as distributing the family kits, the team assessed the needs of three villages in the area.

This is the first mission that any relief organization has made to the Weather Coast since November 2002, when the SIRC last delivered emergency supplies to displaced persons in the area.

The SIRC has made similar distributions to 304 displaced families who have sought safety in and around the capital, Honiara, and further assistance is planned for the future as part of the SIRC/ICRC's assistance programme for displaced persons in the Solomon Islands." (ICRC 18 August 2003)

### **Solomon Islands individuals and businesses mobilized to help the displaced (July 2003)**

- A radio fundraising programme has collected some \$20,000 for people displaced from the weathercoast.
- Non-food items and food have also been collected.

"More than 20-thousand dollars in cash and pledges was yesterday raised in fundraising through the national radio, SIBC, for the people of Marasa village in the Weathercoast of Guadalcanal who have fled to Honiara from the atrocities committed by rebel leader Harold Keke and his followers.

Along with cash donation, Honiara residents and some businesses also presented food, clothing, eating utensils, household goods, nails and other items useful to the refugees.

Chairman of the Marasa Relief Committee, Augustine Manakako, said he and his people were touched by the help they received, saying that it showed that people care.

The people of Marasa who had their homes burnt and gardens destroyed last month are now residing on either make-shift camps on the outskirts of Honiara, with relatives in Honiara or elsewhere on Guadalcanal.

The nation-wide radio was aimed at business houses, churches and individual members of the public asking them to donate in money or kind to the most needy people of Marasa." (Pacific Islands Report 21 July 2003)

### **Tighter control of internal migration (March 2002)**

- Under the revised government system, states will be better equipped to control internal or inter-state migration, with restrictions barring settlement in other states without following their legal requirements.
- The immigrant must also abide by the traditional norms and practices of the localities of that area

"Solomon Islands states will be able to impose some measures to control internal or inter-state migration and settlement under the proposed state government system.

The State Government Task Force 2001 Report says under the proposal states will include in their constitutions restrictions barring settlement in other states without following their legal requirements. The report is part of efforts to address the problems which led to the two years of ethnic conflict on Guadalcanal.

The deadly conflict followed tension caused by the number of people from Malaita Province settling on Guadalcanal, and the reaction of Guadalcanal militants to this. Guadalcanal is home to the national capital, Honiara.

The report proposes if someone intends to migrate and settle in another state, the person must comply with the laws and regulations imposed by the other state.

The immigrant must also abide by the traditional norms and practices of the localities of that area, the report says.

The report, however, acknowledges that Solomon Islands is a party to several international treaties.

Freedom of movement of the individual is a right and that is protected in such treaties. Therefore the report does not propose any change to that.

The report says individuals - Solomon Islanders and foreigners - will continue to have the freedom to move around freely within Solomon Islands.

They will also continue to have the freedom to work anywhere in other states, it says." (SIBC/PINA Nius Online, 24 March 2002)

## **International response**

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### **Australia provided food aid to some 8,000 conflict-affected people on the Weathercoast (June 2004)**

- RAMSI has negotiated support from CPRF to continue assistance for displaced persons and ex-combatants beyond the food assistance that ended in October 2003
- RAMSI, through AusAID, has shipped 100 tonnes of basic food to 88 conflict-affected villages on the Weathercoast.
- The food delivery followed a humanitarian needs assessment conducted by AusAID's Community Peace and Restoration Fund, the Solomon Islands National Peace Council, and the Solomon Islands National Disaster Management Office (NDMO).

"AusAID's Community Peace and Rehabilitation Fund (CPRF) have responded to the needs of internally displaced people around Honiara who fled the Weathercoast. It provided food relief to over 7,700 people in affected areas (at a cost of AUD100,000). Distribution was completed on 5 October, 2003.

RAMSI has negotiated support from CPRF to continue assistance for displaced persons and ex-combatants. In Guadalcanal province, three projects are specifically designed to assist resettlement – the establishment of Titinge primary schools, and provision of relief supplies in Honiara and disaster relief in Weathercoast.

The current contention, however, is whether or not the displaced are willing to return to the Weathercoast at this time for fear of further harassment from Harold Keke's followers. The National Peace Council and

RAMSI are currently negotiating the return of the displaced group to their homes. Assistance has included provision of trauma counselling, and the supply basic food supplies and tarpaulins and improving road access. CPRF also supports the development of health centres and roads in some provinces. RAMSI returned two groups to Guadalcanal. The last group returned with 30 RAMSI troops for protection." (PIFS June 2004, pp. 36-37)

"Australia has begun providing food aid to more than 8,000 people in the conflict-affected communities of the Solomon Islands, the Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Mrs Chris Gallus, announced today. 'The Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI), through Australia's aid program, is shipping 100 tonnes of basic food to 88 small villages on the Weathercoast,' Mrs Gallus said.

'The MV Baruku is delivering supplies including rice, flour, sugar and salt to areas between Marasa and Sauri in south Guadalcanal.'

'Vegetable seeds are also being provided to help people replant their food gardens,' Mrs Gallus said.

'RAMSI's efforts to restore law and order are enabling the people of the Weathercoast to return to a normal life, and will assist the eventual repatriation of internally displaced people from the Weathercoast to their home communities.'

'The food delivery follows a recent humanitarian needs assessment conducted by AusAID's Community Peace and Restoration Fund, the Solomon Islands National Peace Council, and the Solomon Islands National Disaster Management Office (NDMO).'

'Australia will continue to work in close partnership with the NDMO and the Government of Solomon Islands to help plan for the longer-term recovery of conflict-affected areas on the Weathercoast', Mrs Gallus said.

Distribution of the food aid is expected to take up to a week." (AusAID 30 September 2003)

### **Joint EU-ACP fact-finding mission to take place in 2004 to investigate human rights abuses (February 2004)**

- A Joint Bureau of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States and the European Union Joint Parliamentary Assembly will send an ACP-EU Fact-Finding Mission to Solomon Islands in 2004 to assess the human rights situation

"The Joint Bureau of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States and the European Union Joint Parliamentary Assembly will send an ACP-EU Fact-Finding Mission to Solomon Islands this year. This mission was agreed to Thursday in response to a request made by Chairman of the Parliamentary Foreign Relations Committee, Joses Sanga, on behalf of the Government.

The ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly had previously leveled allegations of gross human rights violations in Solomon Islands and in light of the allegations, Mr. Sanga told the ACP-EU Joint Bureau that it is time to send a mission and see firsthand how far the country has turned the corner since the dark days of the recent ethnic turmoil.

Sanga is in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia attending the 7th Session of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, accompanied by Chairman of Government Caucus and MP for Temotu Jeffrey Teava, and Solomon Islands Ambassador to the European Union Robert Sisilo. Meanwhile, the request by Solomon Islands to host the

meeting of the Joint Bureau during the second half of 2005 will be discussed at the next meeting of the Bureau to be held in Brussels in October." (Pacific Islands Report 20 February 2004)

See also:

[Country strategy paper and national indicative programme for the period 2002-2007, European Union, 19 March 2002](#)

### **AusAID's Community Peace and Restoration Fund supports the peace process, rehabilitation and reconstruction (August 2003)**

- Originally planned to last from 2000 to end 2003, the CPRF has been extended for another year.
- The CRPF was established in 2000 to provide support for small-scale, quick impact, community based projects to help with the reintegration, resettlement and rehabilitation of people affected by the conflict.
- Over 500 projects in all provinces of the Solomon Islands spreading over a variety of sectors including health, education, community facilities, training, roads, women, youth, and agriculture have now been supported by the Fund.

"(...) the Community Peace and Restoration Fund in Solomon Islands will be extended for another year as part of Australia's strengthened aid program to the country.

Additional funding of \$6 million means Australia's contribution to the fund will reach \$21 million by December 2004.

The Community Peace and Restoration Fund was established after the violence of 2000 to provide support for small-scale, quick impact, community based projects to help with the reintegration, resettlement and rehabilitation of people affected by the conflict.

It provides a critical peace dividend direct to communities. Over 500 projects in all provinces of the Solomon Islands have now been supported by the Fund. CPRF reaches out to all parts of the country, even some of the most remote communities such as Lavaka on Vanikolo Island in Temotu Province where a kindergarten pre-school has been built.

CPRF projects are spread over a variety of sectors including health, education, community facilities, training, roads, women, youth, and agriculture.

Projects are undertaken in partnership with communities who contribute themselves to each project. Community contributions include assistance with project planning, labour in construction phases of water and sanitation projects, or making a school's desks and chairs. Activities include building new classrooms, roads improvement and maintenance, health clinics, or training workshops on issues ranging from youth health issues to law and justice and income generation initiatives. Projects working with youth and women are a priority.

I would like to recognise the important work of the CPRF's Provincial Coordinators. Twenty-seven Solomon Islanders around the country work with local communities to implement CPRF activities. I am pleased with the way they work directly with communities to help identify programs and projects and then support implementation and ongoing monitoring.

The Fund plays a crucial role in progressing the peace process and providing a catalyst for economic and social development at the village level throughout all the provinces of Solomon Islands." (AusAID 1 August 2003)

### **Australia provides \$100,000 in emergency assistance to help the displaced (July 2003)**

- Australia's \$100,000 in emergency assistance will target the more than 1,000 IDPs living in Titinge village on the outskirts of Honiara.
- Others are being cared for in the villages of Aruliho, Marovovo, Boneghe and Malango.
- Funds provided to the Solomon Islands National Council of Women will help provide trauma counseling

"More than 1,000 Solomon Islanders will be helped by up to \$100,000 in emergency assistance from Australia, the Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs Mrs Chris Gallus said today.

The recent activities of Harold Keke and his followers on the Weathercoast region of Guadalcanal have left an estimated 1250 people displaced.

Food, shelter, cooking utensils and clothing are being provided following a needs assessment by the Australian High Commission in Honiara and the Solomon Islands National Disaster Management Office,' Mrs Gallus said.

The majority of those displaced are now living in Titinge village on the outskirts of Honiara. Others are being cared for in the villages of Aruliho, Marovovo, Boneghe and Malango.

'While local people are doing what they can to assist those displaced, Australian assistance will greatly help alleviate the burden,' Mrs Gallus said.

School children at Titinge will also benefit from Australian funding to build a school, which will now be expanded to accommodate displaced children.

Trauma counselling is also being provided by Australia through the Solomon Islands National Council of Women,' Mrs Gallus said.

Australia will continue to work with the Solomon Islands Red Cross and the National Disaster Management Office to improve the ability of both to respond to emergencies and natural disasters." (AusAID 7 July 2003)

### **ICRC re-establishes presence in the country and provides non-food items for IDPs (July 2003)**

- In July 2003, ICRC re-established a presence in Honiara.
- With regards to the IDPs, ICRC provided the Solomon Islands Red Cross with tents, tarpaulins, bedding, and cooking utensils for distribution to over 1,000 displaced persons.

"In accordance with its mandate to protect and assist victims of armed conflict and internal strife, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is re-establishing a permanent presence in Honiara, capital of the Solomon Islands.

The organization will thus be better placed to assess the humanitarian situation, respond to needs, and coordinate its activities with the Solomon Islands Red Cross. It will also be able to act as a neutral intermediary and to engage in dialogue with all parties concerned, in particular as regards respect for the red cross emblem.

Following the recent violence, the ICRC provided the Solomon Islands Red Cross with tents, tarpaulins, bedding, and cooking utensils for distribution to over 1,000 displaced persons. During the internal armed conflict that ravaged the Solomons in 1999 and 2000, the ICRC provided the National Society with similar support from its office in Honiara, in addition to delivering medical supplies, helping displaced persons return home, visiting places of detention, and reuniting families through its tracing services." (ICRC 24 July 2003)

### **Australia leads the international community's response to the Solomon Island crisis (June 2003)**

- In 1999, Australia and New Zealand pushed the Commonwealth to send a mediator to organize the deployment of a regional police force to help restore peace and order.
- In October 2000, Australia organized and supported the Townsville Peace Agreement (TPA) as well as the International Peace Monitoring Team mandated to oversee the TPA
- Australia's aid program has also included: Law and Justice Institutional Strengthening Program, Advisory support to the Finance Ministry on economic reform, public sector reform and debt management, Management of the Health Sector Trust Account, and Community and peace support.
- In response to the recent crisis, Australian aid has trebled in recent years to \$35 million in 2002–03, bringing the total aid to \$80 million over the last two years.
- New Zealand also has an aid program for Solomon Islands.
- Britain has provided a Police Commissioner, William Morrell, who is working to provide the leadership, discipline and sense of direction to the police force.
- The European Union (EU) is providing funding to the education sector.
- At a meeting in June 2002, international donors to Solomon Islands agreed that assistance should be conditional on the Solomon Islands Government addressing the problems of law and order and economic decline.

"In 1999 the Commonwealth, strongly encouraged by Australia and New Zealand, sent Sitiveni Rabuka to mediate, and organised and supported the small deployment of police from other South Pacific countries to help restore law and order. When these steps failed to avert the crisis of June 2000, Australia stepped in to organise and support the Townsville Peace Conference. Along with others, we funded and supported the International Peace Monitoring Team which was intended to oversee key aspects of the TPA. Australia has spent an estimated \$22 million on supporting the peace process since the TPA was signed. The Pacific Island Forum (PIF) also made a distinct contribution to the regional response.

Australia has also been active in other ways in supporting locally generated movements for peace and addressing the wider consequences of the crisis in Solomon Islands. Our significant aid program includes:

A Law and Justice Institutional Strengthening Program, which involves capacity building in the judiciary, prisons and police. Support to Solomon Islands police includes measures to improve management, administrative systems, human resources development and operations, and the training of new police recruits

Advisory support to the Finance Ministry on economic reform, public sector reform and debt management. Coordination of a multi-donor economic governance project to create a strategic framework



Management of the Health Sector Trust Account, which funds the health sector in Solomon Islands for the provision of basic health services. Australian support to the health sector since May 2001 has been nearly \$18 million

Community and peace support. This consists of funds and training to support community-level rehabilitation, resettlement and ex-combatant reintegration, and includes support for the Solomon Islands National Peace Council

Assistance in forestry and lands activities

Scholarships for Solomon Islanders for study in Australian and other higher education institutions throughout the region.

All of this costs real money. In response to the recent crisis, Australian aid has trebled in recent years to \$35 million in 2002–03. Including the money spent to support the peace process directly, we have spent about \$80 million in the past two years.

The Australian Federal Police (AFP) also has a presence in Solomon Islands, both in an advisory and a liaison capacity: there is one AFP liaison officer and one criminal investigations officer, both in Honiara. They are part of Australia's Law Enforcement Cooperation Program (LECP) in the Pacific region, which is designed to address transnational crime in the Pacific.

New Zealand also has an aid program for Solomon Islands. In addition, it has deployed ten police officers who have a mentoring—not in-line—role with their Solomon Islands counterparts. And Britain has provided (and the European Union is funding) a Police Commissioner, William Morrell, who is working to provide the leadership, discipline and sense of direction that the police force desperately needs.

The European Union (EU) is providing funding to the education sector, including US\$15 million to pay unpaid fees of Solomon Islands students at various institutions, such as the University of South Pacific in Fiji. The UN Development Program (UNDP) has also established a sub-office in Honiara. Its focus is improving governance and assisting ex-militants returning to civilian life, as well as a program (funded by Australia) to demobilise the special constables.

But support from other donors has dwindled because of the crisis. At a meeting in June 2002, international donors to Solomon Islands agreed that assistance should be conditional on the Solomon Islands Government addressing the problems of law and order and economic decline. And real reform has been negligible, despite the flow of appropriate, donor-inspired rhetoric. As a result many aid funds have dried up." (ASPI June 2003, pp. 25-26)

### **Pacific Islands Forum addresses Solomon Islands' law and order problem (June 2003)**

- The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Pacific Islands Forum met in Sydney, Australia on 30 June 2003 to discuss a regional response to assist Solomon Islands.
- Ministers agreed that the extent of the problems facing Solomon Islands now called for a concerted regional response.
- In April 2003, Solomon Islands Prime Minister, Sir Allan Kemakeza, had formally approached Australia outlining the challenges facing his country and seeking urgent assistance.
- Ministers endorsed the provision of a package of strengthened assistance to Solomon Islands, including a policing operation to restore law and order, supported, as required, by armed peace-keepers, and a program of assistance.

"The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Pacific Islands Forum met in Sydney, Australia on 30 June 2003 to discuss a regional response to assist Solomon Islands according to the principles set out in the Biketawa Declaration. The meeting was chaired by the Hon Kaliopate Tavola, Minister for Foreign Affairs and

External Trade of Fiji and was attended by the President of Nauru, the Prime Ministers of Cook Islands, Samoa, Tonga, the Premier of Niue and Ministers from Australia, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. Fiji was represented by its Permanent Secretary of Foreign Affairs and External Trade, and Republic of the Marshall Islands by its Ambassador to Fiji.

2. Ministers noted the earlier consideration by the Forum of the challenges facing Solomon Islands, particularly the work of the 2002 Forum Eminent Persons. Group and the close personal involvement by the Secretary-General in Secretariat programs to assist Solomon Islands.

3. Ministers received a formal presentation from the Hon Laurie Chan, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Solomon Islands, on the current situation in Solomon Islands and the need for external assistance to address law and order problems in Solomon Islands. The meeting also received a report from the Australian and New Zealand Foreign Ministers on the findings of the scoping mission undertaken by officials from both countries to Solomon Islands in June 2003, and on the assistance both countries were seeking to provide at the request of Solomon Islands.

4. Ministers agreed that the problems facing Solomon Islands were very serious. The deterioration of law and order had undermined the stability of the country. It had contributed significantly to the economic decline of Solomon Islands in recent years and had greatly weakened many of the countrys important institutions.

5. Ministers agreed that the extent of the problems facing Solomon Islands now called for a concerted regional response, as envisaged in the Biketawa Declaration. In this respect, Ministers noted that the Solomon Islands Prime Minister, Sir Allan Kemakeza, had formally approached Australia in April 2003 outlining the challenges facing his country and seeking urgent assistance, and that he had discussed these issues with the Australian Prime Minister.

6. Ministers indicated overwhelming support for the provision of assistance to Solomon Islands and noted that the majority of Forum members had indicated a willingness to assist the Solomon Islands Government. In particular, they noted that Australia had indicated that if formally requested by Solomon Islands it would be disposed to respond positively to such a request in concert with New Zealand and other Forum members.

7. Ministers welcomed the assistance package proposed by Australia. In particular, they noted its comprehensive nature, encompassing law and order, the justice and prison systems, rebuilding Solomon Islands institutions and establishing conditions under which Solomon Islands can achieve social and economic recovery. Ministers agreed that Forum members willing to contribute to such a package would coordinate their assistance through a taskforce.

8. Ministers agreed that the envisaged restoration of law and order in Solomon Islands would be essentially a policing operation, and that police from Forum members would provide the capabilities needed by the Solomon Islands Government to implement Solomon Islands laws according to the Solomon Islands Constitution. Police would be supported, as required, by armed peace-keepers.

9. Ministers agreed that an essential condition for the provision of a program of strengthened assistance by Forum members would be a clear, formal request from the Solomon Islands Government, and the passage of legislation through the Solomon Islands Parliament allowing police and, as necessary, armed peace-keepers from Forum members to support the Royal Solomon Islands Police in the performance of its duties.

10. Ministers endorsed the provision of a package of strengthened assistance to Solomon Islands, including a policing operation to restore law and order, supported, as required, by armed peace-keepers, and a program of assistance to strengthen the justice system and restore the economy and basic services. They agreed also to recommend that Forum Leaders endorse the package." (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat 30 June 2003)

## **Selected UN activities**

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### **UNDP and ILO implement the Community Infrastructure Rehabilitation Project (August 2003)**

- The Community Infrastructure Rehabilitation Project (CIRP) aims at peace building and foster re-integration of ex-combatants into civilian life through short term immediate employment creation for the conflict affected population in the 3 Provinces namely Guadalcanal, Western and Malaita.
- UNDP is the Executing Agency for the project and is being implemented by the International Labour Organisation (ILO).
- CIRP has been designed to provide direct employment to some 2180 people.
- In November 2002, Japan and the UN decided to extend financial assistance to the "Employment Generation and Economic Recovery through the Rehabilitation and Maintenance of Infrastructure Using Labour-Based, Equipment-Supported Technology" implemented by UNDP.
- The project aims at providing income generating opportunities for ex-combatants and internally displaced persons (IDPs) who had lost jobs as a result of the conflict and to reintegrate them into the society.

"The ethnic conflict and its aftermath exacerbated the policy and structural problems already faced by the Solomon Islands and set back the gains achieved in the economic and social development during the last 25 years. It disrupted the major productive activities and services in all sectors of the economy and resulted in destroyed social and economic infrastructure. The impact of the ethnic crisis on the national economy, social unity, Government services, and on ordinary people's lives are well known and they continue to be felt and seen even today. The conflict meant loss of jobs for thousands of people, thousands were displaced, transport and communication infrastructure destroyed and people felt insecure about their lives and loss of livelihood.

The Employment Through Infrastructure Project (EMPINFRA) now renamed as Community Infrastructure Rehabilitation Project (CIRP) aims at peace building and foster re-integration of ex-combatants into civilian life through short term immediate employment creation for the conflict affected population in the 3 Provinces namely Guadalcanal, Western and Malaita of the Solomon Islands. The Japanese Government grant of US\$ 1,007,943 made available to the UNDP through the Trust Fund for Human Security based at the UN Headquarters in New York funds the project. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is the Executing Agency for the project and is being implemented by the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

In the short-term, the proposed infrastructure rehabilitation works will provide immediate but temporary employment to a large number of unskilled people. In addition, the resultant rehabilitation of physical facilities, e.g. roads, tracks, bridges will greatly improve access to village markets and hence provide a much needed boost to agricultural and fisheries production. It will also improve access to health, education and social welfare services for the rural population. The CIRP will not only alleviate the high levels of unemployment but will contribute in peace building and reintegration of ex-combatants into civilian life. It is widely recognised that lack of employment opportunities for ex-combatants and conflict affected population constitute a grave threat to peace building.

The CIRP has been designed to provide direct employment to some 2180 people through:

The rehabilitation and maintenance of some 70 km of primary roads;

The rehabilitation of some 16 bridges (both wooden and steel);  
The upgrading of basic community recreation and sanitation infrastructure within the resettlement areas;  
and.  
Capacity building in the relevant Government Institution to effectively plan, design and execute employment intensive public works on sustainable basis." (UNDP & ILO August 2003, pp. 5-6)

"On November 28 (Thursday), the Government of Japan and the United Nations (UN) decided to extend the total of 1,038,181.29- dollar assistance through the Trust Fund for Human Security to the project "Employment Generation and Economic Recovery through the Rehabilitation and Maintenance of Infrastructure Using Labour-Based, Equipment-Supported Technology" to be implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The goal of this project, which is implemented in the Guadalcanal, Western and Malaita Provinces in Solomon Islands, is to provide income generating opportunities for ex-combatants and internally displaced persons (IDPs) who had lost jobs as a result of the conflict and to reintegrate them into the society. Ex-combatants and IDPs will be employed for the work of rehabilitation and maintenance of roads, bridges and community facilities destroyed by the conflict.

This project is expected to rehabilitate infrastructure in communities and to alleviate unemployment among ex-combatants and IDPs and help them reintegrate into the society." (Government of Japan 28 November 2002)

### **UNDP support the demobilization of ex-militants and national peace initiatives (August 2003)**

- UNDP's Demobilization and Reintegration of Special Constables seeks to address the financial and social problems generated by a sharp increase in the number of ex-militants incorporated as Special Constables in the wake of the Townsville Peace Agreement.
- The SIG is trying to address the problem and an estimated 900 SCs will be demobilised with support from UNDP. This project provides an appropriate resettlement and reintegration package to each of the SCs.
- UNDP also supports the National Peace Council (NPC) which is leading a "Weapons Free Village" campaign in Guadalcanal and Malaita, encouraging communities to build public pressure in support of weapons free status.

[In addition to supporting emergency assistance to people displaced by conflict on the weathercoast] UNDP has supported the following projects in the Solomon Islands:

#### **Demobilisation and Reintegration of Special Constables**

In the wake of the peace settlement, the number of so-called Special Constables (SCs) (police reservists) increased sharply. One of the chief stated reasons for this was to keep ex-militants busy.

However, the uncontrolled growth placed the Solomon Islands Government (SIG) in a very difficult position. The large number of SCs was a drain on very scarce public finance. Meanwhile, the net contribution of the newly absorbed SCs to public security was in doubt. Some of the SCs do indeed provide support to the regular police force in its efforts to maintain law and order. However, many of them are not controlled through the regular democratic structures, and their activities are not guided by the general interest, maintenance of law and order, and protection of the civilian population.

Moreover, a large number do not maintain the skills for regular policing duties. The SIG is trying to address the problem and an estimated 900 SCs will be demobilised. This project provides an appropriate resettlement and reintegration package to each of the SCs. The content of the package was established before the start of the demobilisation process, based on the study of various reintegration alternatives identified for the SCs.

Project steps include:

Gather the required information for planning of the demobilisation of SCs; Establish a feasible and detailed plan for the demobilisation of the SCs; Establish a system of counselling and referral for SCs, ex-militants and other war-affected groups;

Establish and publicise an overview of the programmes of reintegration support that the SCs and other war-affected people can realistically draw on;

Assist in the demobilisation exercise and provide initial support for resettlement ;

Provide effective reintegration support to individual SCs through microgrants for training, employment creation and microenterprise development, and monitor their reintegration step-by-step; and

Collect and destroy small arms in the hands of SCs, by giving priority access to reintegration benefits for SCs who voluntarily turn in their weapons.

### **Weapons Free Village Project**

To complement the effort by the National Government and donor community in building a sustainable peace process through improvements in law and order and national reconciliation, the National Peace Council (NPC) is leading a “Weapons Free Village” campaign in Guadalcanal and Malaita – the two most conflict-affected provinces in the Solomon Islands. The two-year UNDP funded project will encourage communities (an estimated 1,200 villages in 18 Wards), to build public pressure in support of weapons free status.

This will be done by focusing on winning the “hearts and minds” of citizens in support of the removal of weapons from their communities. Changing community attitudes is fundamental to the campaign and will reinforce other notable efforts by the government and police (with their legal mandate) to collect and dispose of weapons. The communities that have had the courage to give up their arms will be rewarded, and their example will be used as a means to encourage other communities to do the same.

The campaign is specifically structured to generate a sense of community ownership about Weapons Free Status, and it recognises the particular importance within Solomon Islands society of symbolic public ceremonies and public testimonials to generate social solidarity and promote change. When all the villages in a ward are certified as weapons- free, the ward is then eligible to receive a substantial kit of sporting equipment." (UNDP 23 February 2003)

## **Selected NGO activities**

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### **World Vision response to the IDP needs (August 2003)**

- World Vision assisted the displaced located in Tinting by alleviating the water and sanitation situation.
- World Vision also planned to conduct assessments of the situation on the weathercoast but were waiting for an improvement of the security situation

"World Vision Solomon Islands has responded immediately to alleviate the water and sanitation situation in Tinting and is on stand-by for the distribution of emergency kits and water and sanitation provision for Tasahe Care Center.

(...)

World Vision conducted a technical assessment of the water and sanitation systems in the area in June 2003 and it rescheduled planned activities under the existing Guadalcanal Area Development Project in the area, in order to provide immediate assistance in the sector of water and sanitation in response to the IDP influx in the village of Titinge. Funds were also secured from World Vision Australia to improve the conditions of IDPs as per Sphere Minimum Standards in Disaster Response. The water system was improved at Titinge in conjunction with the Solomon Islands Water Authority (SEWA), who are responsible for the supply line. At the time of this report, fifteen toilets had been constructed with five more on the way. Twenty are expected to be completed by the end of July.

An assessment of the IDP situation at Ariligo to determine the impact on host families will be undertaken as soon as possible, pending acceptable security clearance for area. Further field trips to the Weathercoast area will depend on an improvement in the security situation." (World Vision 7 August 2003)

### **New Zealand Church donates second-hand clothing to the displaced (December 2003)**

- Church in New Zealand collected 1 ton of second-hand clothes expected to benefit the 2,000 displaced outside of Honiara.

"There is real joy and excitement at the Plimmerton Presbyterian parish following its successful efforts to collect 1,000 kilograms of second-hand clothing for refugees in the Solomon Islands. A huge sense of achievement is shared by the parish members who collected and packed an assortment of clothing for refugees and other needy people in the conflict torn Pacific Island country.

The clothing will soon be flown to the Solomon Islands by the New Zealand Airforce following a request by the parish.

The assistance will benefit about 2,000 displaced people living in a refugee camp outside of Honiara. These people left their homes in the Weathercoast of Guadalcanal due to ethnic conflict in the area. Also to benefit are needy people in the Solomon Islands' South Seas Evangelical Church which is actively involved in seeking help for the poor.

(..)

The parish turned to the Wheelie Bin Company who supplied the bins in which to pack the clothes. The bins were supplied for free while the packing was done by Plimmerton parish members.

"The wheelie bins made excellent containers for packing the clothes. They will also be useful for the refugees as water tanks once the clothes have been distributed." Gary said.

The parish also approached the New Zealand Air Force to ask for assistance with the transportation of the consignment. Previously the parish had sent clothing by sea at 200 kilograms at a time and it had taken many weeks to arrive." (Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand December 2003)

### **Caritas Australia provides emergency assistance and longer term projects (August 2003)**

- Caritas Australia visited the Solomon Islands in August to discuss with church and political leaders on issues relating to RAMSI's intervention. Special focus was put on avoiding any amnesty to criminals and responsible of human rights abuses.
- Caritas also discussed with Caritas Solomon Islands issues pertaining to assistance in the area of trauma counseling and rebuilding damaged infrastructures.

- Caritas Australia works with its partner Caritas Solomon Islands to provide a wide variety of programs focusing on the specific needs in each diocese, from emergency assistance to longer term projects which address development needs.

"Staff from Caritas Australia arrived in the Solomon Islands this week (Friday, August 1) to discuss the implications of the regional intervention with the country's political and church leaders.

Mr Jack de Groot, National Director of Caritas Australia, said Caritas Australia supports the regional intervention in the Solomon Islands.

However, he said that despite progress made through contact with rogue groups, it is very important that a blanket amnesty is not introduced which allows those who perpetrated crimes before the intervention to go unpunished.

'Justice is a precondition for permanent reconciliation and peace. Amnesties do not provide that justice,' Mr de Groot said.

'Great harm has been done to the people of the Solomon Islands because of the violence and intimidation carried out by certain groups. It will be difficult for the people to go forward if the perpetrators of serious crimes are not brought to justice,' Mr de Groot said.

He said this is one of the issues that will be discussed by Caritas Australia staff.

They will also be talking with Caritas Solomon Islands about practical assistance with trauma counseling and rebuilding infrastructure which has been damaged during the violence of the last three years, Mr de Groot said.

"We will be asking our partners whether they need participation in brokering peace initiatives, and whether they need more help from us while the Australian-led police and military are on the islands. These steps will support work currently being done in the Solomon Islands through Caritas Australia funding of Caritas Solomon Islands. " (Caritas Australia 1 August 2003)

"Caritas Australia has made a series of recommendations to the Australian Government in response to its policy on the Solomon Islands. These recommendations are based on feedback from people in the Solomon Islands as well as the agency's extensive experience in the region. The policy reflects Caritas Australia's commitment to working with communities to help them find sustainable solutions to deeply ingrained social, political and economic issues. Refer to our [Solomon Islands Policy Brief](#) for more details.

### **In the community**

Caritas Australia works with its partner Caritas Solomon Islands to provide a wide variety of programs focusing on the specific needs in each diocese, from emergency assistance to longer term projects which address development needs.

Caritas places a strong emphasis on peace-building within the community as well as income-generation projects which target poverty – one of the prime motivating factors in the state of civil unrest.

Caritas is focusing on long-term development in the region by providing training and assistance in the implementation of sustainable agriculture and community-based income projects. This empowers the community to take an active and environmentally sound approach to development in their own communities." (Caritas Australia 2003)

## **Donor response**

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### **EU to support Solomon Islands' development over the next five years (February 2004)**

- EU plans to provide more than \$US100 million in aid to the Solomon Islands over the next 5 years.
- Money will go the education, marine infrastructure, inter-island transport, fisheries and small-scale rural development.

"The European Union says it is to pump more than \$US100 million in aid into Solomon Islands over the next five years. EU Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, Poul Nielson released details of the funding as he wrapped up a three-day visit to the country. The money is to go to education, marine infrastructure, inter-island transport, fisheries and small-scale rural development.

Nielson says the funding is essentially "old money" from before the crisis of recent years when the EU was unwilling to release funding because the breakdown in society meant there was little chance that it would be used properly. "That decision was what saved the money for a meaningful use when a meaningful use of that money became again possible, and that's where we are now," Nielson said.

During his visit to Solomon Islands, Mr Nielson officially opened the new US\$1.5 million Ministry of Finance building in Honiara. The 1,200 square metre office cost \$US1.5 million to build. In a speech at the opening ceremony, Finance Minister Francis Zama paid tribute to Kevin O'Brien, the New Zealand site foreman who was stabbed to death during the construction of the EU-funded building." (Pacific Islands Report 9 February 2004)

### **Asian Development Bank to conduct a poverty reduction strategy (November 2003)**

- ADB will develop a Poverty reduction strategy (PRS) for the Solomon Islands over the next one to three years.
- PRS will be incorporated into ADB's Country Strategy and Program (CSP) and will guide future ADB assistance to the country.

"The representatives of the Solomon Islands Government (SIG) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) have discussed the necessity and procedures for the development of a poverty reduction strategy (PRS) for the Solomon Islands over the next one to three years. SIG and ADB will work together as partners to prepare a PRS for Solomon Islands, by drawing on the SIG's National Economic Recovery, Reform and Development Plan (NERRDP), 2003-2006, and other development plans and strategies, to be supplemented by community based poverty consultation workshops. The PRS will be incorporated into ADB's Country Strategy and Program (CSP) and will guide future ADB assistance to the country.

(...)

#### **B. VISION**

9. SIG desires rapid economic growth and wishes to provide its people with basic education, health and other basic services in an effective and efficient manner, thus ensuring an enhanced quality of life for all Solomon Islanders on a sustainable basis.

10. SIG aims to achieve better governance for effective policies, institutions and markets.



11. SIG wants to address the special needs of the least well-off, the more vulnerable, marginalized and disadvantaged groups in its society.

### C. GOALS

12. The goals of this Partnership are to (i) ensure that the SIG's NERRDP (and future development strategies and plans) effectively addresses poverty reduction, (ii) fully integrate the PRS with the SIG's NERRDP (and future development strategies and plans), (iii) incorporate the PRS as a core component of ADB's CSP for the Solomon Islands, and (iv) monitor implementation progress.

13. SIG's NERRDP, together with national commitments towards achieving the MDGs and compliance with associated treaties, will guide the identification of an appropriate set of critical country-specific short to medium-term poverty reduction indicators. Monitoring these agreed indicators will help to determine progress towards the achievement of each PRS and the relevant MDGs." (ADB 20 November 2003)

### **Donor countries meet in Australia to discuss the rehabilitation of the Solomon Islands (November 2003)**

- In November 2003, aid donors totaling 14 countries and institutions met in Australia to discuss Solomon Islands' rehabilitation.

"Aid donors met in Australia on Monday to discuss how to help rebuild the economy and infrastructure of the Solomon Islands, ruined by years of civil war and militia violence.

Some 14 nations and institutions met in Sydney to hear a report from Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer on the progress made after the first 100 days of the Australian-led intervention force which arrived in the Pacific nation in July.

'We have to help the Solomon Islands rebuild their institutions, their economy and indeed rebuild their nation as a whole,' Downer said.

As well as Australia and the Solomon Islands, other participants included the United States, Japan, France, Britain, New Zealand, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and the United Nations Development Program." (AFP 3 November 2003)

### **Japan provide financial assistance for tents and food to benefit the displaced (August 2003)**

- A grant contract of some 560-thousand dollars was signed by the Embassy of Japan to assist victims of the Weathercoast conflict.
- \$US378,000 will be allocated for food, while \$US178,000 will be used to provide tents

"The Embassy of Japan in Honiara help victims of the Weathercoast conflict.

A grant contract of some 560-thousand dollars, under the Embassy of Japan's Grant Assistance for Grassroots Project was signed in Honiara yesterday to assist victims of the Weathercoast conflict.

The grant contract was signed between the Japanese Charge d'Affaires to Solomon Islands, Kiyoshi Takahama and the Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Home Affairs, and Chairperson of the National Disaster Council, Ethel Sigimanu.

Mr. Takahama confirmed that out of the grant, 378-thousand dollars would go be for food rations, which is said to be enough to last those at the relocation centres for two months.

178-thousand has been allocated for at least 100 tents for the victims.

Speaking in response to the assistance, Mrs. Sigimanu thanked the government and people of Japan for the generous donation.

She said the donation couldn't have come at a better time, with the National Disaster Management Office preparing to procure and distribute the 7th food relief distributions." (People First Network 29 August 2003)

### **Australia extends financial support to the National Peace Council (August 2003)**

- National Peace Council will receive \$1 million from Australia to pursue its peace, reconciliation and nation building activities.
- The NPC undertakes a range of peace-building and reconciliation activities in Solomon Islands, including the operation of a Weapons Free Village campaign, encouraging and facilitating weapons surrender and consultation with national and provincial governments, women's and youth groups.

"(...) I am pleased to announce that Australia will provide \$1 million to extend our support to the Solomon Islands National Peace Council - an indigenous organisation in Solomon Islands playing a critical role in peace, reconciliation and nation building.

Ongoing support from Australia and other donor nations will enable the National Peace Council to continue its work in peace and nation-building. It does this through working with communities, government and other stakeholders in Solomon Islands.

The NPC undertakes a range of peace-building and reconciliation activities in Solomon Islands, including the operation of a Weapons Free Village campaign, encouraging and facilitating weapons surrender and consultation with national and provincial governments, women's and youth groups.

The NPC also hosted the recent Solomon Islands National Unity Summit in Honiara (2-4 July) that brought together people from all over the Solomon Islands to discuss issues related to the peace, law and order and national unity. The National Unity Summit was part of the NPC's increasing role in promoting nation building and an important way of ensuring public participation in the peace process.

Australia is proud to be able to support such a successful and respected Solomon Islands organisation. The NPC is an important partner in the implementation of Australia's comprehensive package of strengthened assistance to Solomon Islands." (Government of Australia 1 August 2003)

### **World Bank and Asian Development Bank ask government to pay debt arrears before committing new help (April 2002)**

- World Bank and Asian Development Bank threaten to cut funding for current or new activities unless government clears financial arrears totaling 4.3 million dollars.

"The World Bank and the Asian Development Bank say they will not continue any current or new activities with the Solomon Islands Government - unless the Government pays them its arrears. This was explained by a joint mission of the two financial institutions when they held discussions with the Government in Honiara.

In a joint mission report, which SIBC has obtained a copy of, they said clearing of the arrears would also be an important signal to Solomon Islands' other development partners. The report added that the government's relationship with both financial institutions will improve if it sets up a debt management strategy that prevents arrears from re-occurring.

Former Minister of Finance Michael Maina reaffirmed to the joint mission, the Government's commitment to clearing the arrears. SIBC understands that up until the end of last year, the Government's arrears with the Asia Development Bank reached \$3.3 million and with the World Bank \$1.1 million. The joint mission praised former Finance Minister Maina and his team for their strong commitment to economic reform. They said that the progress made so far reflects Mr Maina's leadership of the finance team. The joint mission said the economic reforms need the support of the entire government, including Prime Minister Sir Allan Kemakeza and other senior ministers.

Mr Maina was sacked last week by Sir Allan following controversy over his 25 percent devaluation of the Solomon Islands dollar. The devaluation was praised by the Central Bank and Economic Association of Solomon Islands, who said it was vital to save the country's remaining external reserves.

The Solomon Islands economy has been crippled following two years of ethnic conflict and continuing law and order and governance problems despite a peace agreement.

\* Foreign Affairs Minister Alex Bartlett has apologised for his part in the ethnic conflict. Speaking in Parliament, Mr Bartlett apologised on behalf of himself, and former Malaita Eagle Force militia and elements of the paramilitary police field force. Last month former spokesperson for the Malaita Eagle Force, Andrew Nori, held reconciliation ceremonies with some former members of the Solomon Islands Alliance for Change government they ousted in the June 2000 coup." ( SIBC/PINA Nius Online 5 April 2002)

## **Gaps**

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### **Shortage of expertise on IDP protection issues among field level staff (March 2004)**

- Lack of common understanding between GPDC and NPC monitors as to who should do what in the monitoring.
- Shortage of inter-agency expertise and awareness of IDP protection issues among field staff involved in the resettlement operation.

"Monitoring of conditions of return (including protection and human rights issues, access to food, land, shelter, justice, education and health care) was limited to 'spot- checks' with little follow-up. NDMO expected GPDC & NPC monitors to carry out this responsibility but there was no common understanding between GPDC & NPC monitors as to who should do what. The monitors did follow-up on reconciliation, but it appeared the GPDC (who had no field-based staff) expected more from the NPC monitors.

Although field level coordination on security and reconciliation seemed encouraging, there was apparently limited inter-agency communication and more underdeveloped at policy level. Some questions on legal

basis and capacity of NDMO to implement and/or coordinate conflict –related activities are still asked and perceptions vary on this.

There was shortage of inter-agency expertise and awareness of IDP protection issues. The field level staff involved with resettlement operation had little or no background in protection and conflict issues. Their knowledge and experiences were limited to natural disaster response." (UNDP 12 March 2004)

### **People displaced by the 1998-2000 conflict not yet properly compensated (February 2003)**

- In early 2003, former prime minister and now MP for East Choiseul, Mr Sogavare, said the government must not forget to give consideration to the displaced people who lost all they had in the ethnic conflict and have not yet to be properly compensated.
- At a meeting of key donors, including IMF, World Bank, Asian Development Bank in the capital Honiara on June 19, 2002 Solomons prime minister was 'encouraged' to reduce government spending and jobs.
- In October 2002, the government halted the compensation payments, made to people affected by the past four years of civil unrest and started to implement austerity measures.

"The first of a series of workshops for Solomon Islands Police special constables being demobilised is being held in Honiara this week.

Those being demobilised include former militants who became special constables as part of peace agreements ending more than two years of ethnic conflict.

About 800 out of 1000 special constables will be terminated under the project.

During the workshops, the departing special constables will be given application forms for grants for micro projects to start new businesses or to improve existing ones.

The exercise will start in centres in Honiara, other parts of Guadalcanal and on Malaita.

Meanwhile, former Prime Minister and MP for East Choiseul Manasseh Sogavare has warned that the demobilisation must consolidate the peace process and not merely be a cost saving exercise.

He said that while some former militants were taken into the special constabulary, the government also has a duty to properly rehabilitate and reintegrate those who were not.

Mr Sogavare said another group the government must consider are displaced people who lost all they had in the ethnic conflict and are yet to be properly compensated.

He warned the government not to underestimate the potential of these outstanding issues to frustrate the peace process." (Pacific Islands Report 4 February 2003)

"Prime Minister Allen Kemakeza was backed into a corner at a key meeting of representatives of the IMF, World Bank, Asian Development Bank and major donor countries in the capital Honiara on June 19. At the gathering, the first of its kind since early 2001, the government presented its National Economic Recovery Plan and called for a large injection of funds to resolve the deepening financial crisis. The donors, however, led by Canberra, refused to provide any funds unless Kemakeza moved to reduce government spending and jobs.

The government effectively ceded control of its finances with the appointment the same month of an Australian, Lloyd Powell, to the post of Permanent Secretary of Finance. Powell is the executive director of the New Zealand-based company Solomon Leonard, which has a proven track record in overseeing austerity programs in the South Pacific. The company has worked in the Cook Islands, Vanuatu and Tonga, as well as Jamaica.

The IMF agenda has provoked sharp opposition. In early August, Kemakeza faced a revolt in his shaky administration and was forced to reshuffle his ministry in a bid to regain control over key portfolios. He threatened to dump his major coalition partner—an association of independent MPs. The prime minister faced a similar rebellion in March when he attempted to introduce a budget that included a 25 percent devaluation of the currency. At that point he was compelled to sack the finance minister and reverse the devaluation.

Effectively acting on behalf of the IMF, Powell has intervened to insist that the cutbacks proceed. Addressing a meeting of business groups in Honiara in early September, he revealed that the government had overspent its payroll budget by 40 percent, or \$US4.1 million, for the year up to July. According to Powell, “the only answer to this is for the government to reduce its payroll and stop compensation payments”.

The compensation payments, made to people affected by the past four years of civil unrest, were part of the Australian-sponsored Townsville Peace Agreement, signed in 2000 as a means of ending the island-based militias and disarming the combatants. While Australia and New Zealand pushed for the deal, neither country provided the finance necessary to fund the ambitious redevelopment plans that were aimed at overcoming the deepening social crisis at the root of the fighting. The agreement expired in mid-October.

Kemakeza responded to Powell’s pressure by announcing a radical restructure of his administration on October 3, cutting the number of ministries from 20 to 10. The following week, National Unity, Reconciliation and Peace Minister Nathaniel Waena officially halted all compensation payouts.

The impact of the IMF’s austerity measures will be severe. Basic services are already in a state of disarray. Schools and hospitals are either closed or providing only minimal services. There are frequent power blackouts in Honiara because the government cannot afford to pay the fuel bill to run the electricity generators. Even those government employees who still have a job, experience lengthy delays in the payment of wages." (Peter Byrne 21 November 2002)

### **Misuse of compensation funds leaves thousands of IDPs waiting for compensation (2002)**

- Pacific Islands Forum assessment mission to the Solomon Islands in 2002 showed that compensation” payments were “available only to those with guns” or criminals.
- When coming to power, the Sogavare Government secured funds from overseas and embarked on compensation payments as provided for by the Townsville Peace Agreement.
- Claims for compensation were lodged through a Committee established by the Ministry of National Unity, Reconciliation and Peace.
- Inconsistencies in claims, corruption and inefficient administration and excessive payments left thousands of displaced people still waiting for compensation payments.

"In August [2002], the regional Pacific Forum organization, under its new crisis response mechanism, sent an Eminent Persons’ mission from Australia, Fiji and Samoa to the Solomon Islands. The mission reported to a Forum summit about the seriousness of the overall situation and about complaints that government

compensation” payments were “available only to those with guns” or criminals. The summit extended the mission’s monitoring mandate to 2003.” (AI 2003)

"Compensation was a significant issue in all six case studies. People demanded the State to pay compensation for lost properties, employment benefits, and lives lost in the crisis, harassment and many other things. Money was the ingredient behind all these demands. People felt that monetary compensation was the price for justice and peace. Therefore, when the Sogavare Government came into power they started paying out money to meet the demands of people affected in the two years crisis in order to fulfil the expectation for justice before peace.

(...)

It was obvious that the misunderstanding policy of the Ulufalu’u government of ‘peace before justice’ and the displaced people’s demand for ‘justice before peace’ was one of the main underlying catalyst that gave the impetus for the 5th June coup. Hence, when the militants signed the Townsville Peace Agreement there was provision for the Government to find overseas assistance to meet the compensation demands of the people. Thus, the Sogavare Government after securing funds from overseas embarked on compensation payments because that was thought to be the avenue for restoring justice.

However, the figures showed that the dollar was not the means to attain justice. Most of the claims were lodged outside of the appropriate legal process. This was evident from the figures because the entire claim was lodged through a Committee established by the Ministry of National Unity, Reconciliation and Peace. Through this process compensation demands were assessed and later the funds were dispensed.

Regrettably, this was an unconventional approach. The Courts and other appropriate State institutions according to a lawful process could have exclusively dealt with most of the claims in the above table. The claims related to areas of law such as the Commission of Inquiry Act,<sup>28</sup> Death and Fire Inquiries Act<sup>29</sup> or the Workman’s Compensation Act.<sup>30</sup> Claims for things such as injuries, harassment, and damage to property or loss of earnings are common law claims. They are claims that the courts over a certain period have developed legal principles to address so that justice can be arrived at.

Unfortunately, legal professionals did not immediately take the necessary steps to advise their clients or even the Government that the payment of compensation claims was not channeled through the appropriate State powers and institutions. Ironically, it was after millions of dollars was paid as compensation money that the Sogavare government was criticised. It was contended that the Townsville Peace Agreement was not about truth and justice but for the cessation of war. Therefore, the compensation payments made by the Sogavare government were outside of the peace agreement.

Despite such explanation, the truth of the matter was that the State used an unconventional approach to address the whole situation given that peace and justice was very closely linked. It was not ideal to try to put one before the other or vice versa. This was because peace was not about shooting and killing each other or giving out of money. Rather, it should be an open acknowledgement and addressing of injustices through the relevant State powers and institutions. It was apparent that how State powers and institutions function was mixed. As a result, ineffective and inefficient administration, corruption and inconsistent decision-making were unavoidable.

Hence, proper evaluation and damage assessments were not possible. As a result, there were inconsistencies in claims because some of them were excessive and false. Since both the people and the State ignored the conventional approach to dealing with most claims compensation payment was done uncontrollably. For example, Harold Keke (IFM leader) was paid a substantial amount of compensation money for the return of a Solair plane, despite the fact that he blew it up. Some individuals managed to receive compensation money from the State much earlier than others because of the unconventional approach. Consequently, today there are thousands of displaced people still waiting for compensation payments. Why is this happening after millions of dollars has already been paid as compensation? Obviously, had the proper State powers and institutions been used to deal with the compensation claims there would be more State control over how the millions of dollars were paid. Today, the system of

democracy is not functioning efficiently and effectively, corruption has become part of the system and decision is not made wisely.

This explained why compensation claims were excessive, inconsistent and unfair. Millions of dollars have already been paid out to people but justice seems still far from reach. This makes one wonder whether it was right for compensation to be paid during a time of uncertainty or unsettled conflict. Should the government suspend compensation payments even if a precedent has already been set? Would that be fair and just for those who still have not received compensation?" (J.D. Foukona 2002, pp. 13-15)

### **Increased insecurity and unlawfulness cause key donors to reappraise their aid programs (March 2002)**

- Killing of a New Zealand diplomat has hardened international opinion towards the Solomon Island and led key donors to review their aid programmes.
- Honiara is controlled by a paramilitary Police Field Force (PFF) dominated by Malaitans and no independent judiciary is functioning.
- Insecurity and threats by former militants on Malaita Island have forced the Australian peacekeepers out of third post in one month.

"Where does one turn when the police can no longer be trusted to keep order on the streets, the judiciary has become corrupted and politicians have lost the will to act? Most countries in such a dire predicament would look to friends abroad to ease them back from the abyss with development packages that could help quench the fires of discontent. But this option is no longer available to the Solomon Islands government, which is finding allies hard to come by as it watches a proud island community disintegrate into anarchy, unsure even if it still has a popular mandate to rule.

The stabbing death of New Zealand envoy Bridget Nichols at her home, possibly with the coercion of a security detail, has understandably hardened global opinion toward the Solomons. Key donors Australia and New Zealand are both reappraising their aid programs, as are international development agencies led by the World Bank and its regional arm the Asian Development Bank. While the money flow is unlikely to be turned off, it will probably be tied more closely to performance, especially a stronger political commitment to reform the redundant police force and restore the integrity of the courts system.

On the face of it, the social upheaval that has effectively paralyzed the Solomons since inter-island rivalries erupted in 2000 can be traced to an institutional collapse. As many as 40 percent of the tiny police force of 1,000 officers are believed to have sided with Malaitan militants in their struggle with Guadalcanal islanders, and a further 15-20 percent with Guadalcanal.

When the Malaitans took over the capital, Honiara, in June 2000, they were actively assisted by the paramilitary Police Field Force (PFF), which has since become a de facto arm of the insurgents. Armed with looted military weapons, elements of the PFF and an ill-disciplined civilian force of "special constables" have set up a criminal network that terrorizes the city of 40,000 while politicians look on.

Judges, not surprisingly, are either unable or unwilling to function in this atmosphere of intimidation. Few policemen are ever called to account for the violence, and only one has been convicted.

Prime Minister Allan Kemakeza, whose own record has been spotty, promised to clean up both institutions when he was elected in December, but - like his two predecessors - has taken the path of least resistance.

(...)

The judicial system could be revived with a moderate amount of outside help. Internal reports have said that it mostly suffers from inadequate resources, especially funding. Yet none of this will work unless

politicians can be convinced of the gravity of the situation, and of the need to instill some sense of national unity in the scattered population. " (Asia Times Online 28 March 2002)

"The Australian-led International Peace Monitoring Team in the Solomon Islands has now evacuated its third post in the past month, following security threats. The team pulled its monitors out of Malu'u in North Malaita on Thursday, after they were threatened by former militants.

(...)

The evacuation of the international peace monitors from the third post in only one month marks a turn in the tide of peace making in the country. Only three weeks ago, the monitors pulled out of the Marau area on the eastern tip of Guadalcanal and from Tetere on the Guadalcanal Plains.

The sudden withdrawal leaves a gaping hole in the monitoring process, which the local Peace Monitoring Council is not financially or logistically ready to fill. The international team was to have pulled out of the Solomon Islands in phases, with the final withdrawal planned for October.

The government now is left looking for another option to keep the peace and restore law and order, with the subtle but obvious increase in illegal activities. Solomon Islanders are now left wondering if the Australian peace initiative in the country has collapsed and what will now happen in the next few months." (Radio Australia 8 March 2002)

### **Government not able to financially compensate IDPs (May 2001)**

- Government ask IDPs to be patient due to the current difficult financial situation.
- Money will be made available through Taiwan's 125 million dollar loan

"The Solomon Islands government has appealed to people who have lodged claims for property lost during two years of Guadalcanal-Malaita ethnic conflict to be patient with the government's present financial situation

And Edward Huni'ehu, special advisor to the Prime Minister, has dismissed rumors that funds have already been disbursed to the government by the Republic of China (Taiwan) to meet the claims. Mr. Huni'ehu clarified the situation following speculation that the money will be paid to those making lost property claims as early as Wednesday. He said this is inaccurate, but that the government is working very hard to secure the transfer of funds as soon as possible.

The Republic of China (Taiwan) has agreed to loan about \$125 million to help the government through its current difficult financial situation, with major industries shut down by the conflict. Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare apologized to representatives of the committee representing displaced victims of the recent ethnic tension for the delay in the payment of lost property claims. He did so at a meeting with representatives of the committee. They requested that the situation be clarified, as those affected are getting uneasy about the conflicting statements issued by government and other unofficial sources. He explained that the government is committed to its recent arrangements with the Republic of China (Taiwan). A loan of over \$125-million is now ready for disbursement, subject to certain technical requirements demanded by the financier, he said.

Representatives of the displaced victims committee have demanded that they meet directly with the government about the issue to avoid further misunderstanding." (Pacific Islands Report, 13 May 2001)



## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

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ADB	Asian Development Bank
AusAID	Australian Aid for International Development
CIRP	Community Infrastructure Rehabilitation Project
DFID	Department of Foreign and International Development
EGM	Expert Group Meeting
EU	European Union
GRA	Guadalcanal Revolutionary Army
IDPRC	Internally Displaced Persons Resettlement Committee
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IFM	Isatabu Freedom Movement
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MEF	Malaita Eagle Force
MHA	Ministry of Home Affairs
MNPHRD	Ministry of National Planning and Human Resource Development
MNURP	Ministry of National Unity, Reconciliation and Peace
NDMO	National Disaster Management Council
NPC	National Peace Council
NRRC	National Relief and Rehabilitation Committee
PRS	Poverty Reduction Strategy
RAMSI	Regional Assistance Force to the Solomon Islands
SICA	Solomon Islands Christian Association
SICHE	Solomon Islands College of Higher Education
SIG	Solomon Islands Government
SIRC	Solomon Islands Red Cross
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
WB	World Bank
WV	World Vision

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