

**Written contribution for adoption of the list of issues prior to reporting  
(LOIPR) of Solomon Islands  
in the 87<sup>th</sup> Pre-sessional Working Group  
of the United Nations Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination  
Against Women (CEDAW)**

**17 April 2023**

***A joint submission by***



**Franciscans International**



**Dominicans for Justice and Peace (DJP)**



**Society of Saint Francis (SSF)**



**Community of the Sisters of the Church (CSC), Solomon Islands – Pacific Province**

## Introduction

1. This submission is prepared by Franciscans International (FI)<sup>1</sup> with the support of Dominicans for Justice and Peace (DJP)<sup>2</sup>, Society of Saint Francis (SSF)<sup>3</sup> and Community of the Sisters of the Church (CSC)<sup>4</sup> of the Solomon Islands – Pacific Province. FI is a faith-based international non-governmental organization with General Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. It was founded in 1989 to bring to the UN the concerns of the most marginalized and disadvantaged. Using a rights-based approach, FI advocates at the UN for the protection of human dignity and environmental justice. DJP represents the Dominican Order (Order of Preacher) at the UN. It is a nonprofit NGO, with UN ESOCOC Status since 2002. It is dedicated to the promotion of justice and peace in the world and to the promotion and protection of human rights for all, which is an integral element of the Dominican Order's mission to preach the truth. The Dominican Network in Solomon Islands is its national partner in Solomon Islands. SSF is a Franciscan religious order within the Anglican Communion. Its presence began in Solomon Islands in 1970. The environment and human rights issues have been main concerns of SSF's work in Solomon Islands. CSC is a worldwide Anglican religious order of women, who live the vowed life of poverty, chastity and obedience. CSC's Solomon Islands - Pacific Province works on pastoral counselling and social justice issues by providing care for victims of domestic violence and other forms of abuse, especially women and children.
2. The focus of the present submission is the implementation of the CEDAW by the Government of Solomon Islands, in particular on the impacts of logging activities on the human rights of women and girls. Prior to this report, our coalition received information from partners in different places in Solomon Islands and in 2022 we organized Focus Group Discussions (FGD) in five communities affected by logging activities in Guadalcanal Island in Solomon Islands.

## Legal framework

3. The Government of Solomon Islands ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 2002 without making any reservations. Solomon Islands has neither signed nor ratified the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo Protocol).
4. Solomon Islands adopted the Immigration Act 2012, which contains provisions criminalizing sex and labour trafficking. The Family Protection Act 2014<sup>5</sup> was adopted by the Parliament of Solomon Islands on 27 August 2014. The Act aims, in part, to implement certain principles underlying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It also established a legal framework to address domestic violence as a criminal

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<sup>1</sup> Information about Franciscans International is available at <https://franciscansinternational.org/home/>

<sup>2</sup> Information about Dominicans for Justice and Peace is available at <https://un.op.org/>

<sup>3</sup> Information about Society of Saint Francis is available at <https://www.franciscans.org.uk/>

<sup>4</sup> Information about Community of the Sisters of the Church is available at <https://www.sistersofthechurch.org/>

<sup>5</sup> Government of Solomon Islands, Family Protection Act 2014, available at <https://solomons.gov.sb/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Family-Protection-Act-2014.pdf>

offense. The Political Parties Integrity Act 2014 (No 9 of 2014) was adopted on 27 May 2014 with a provision that a political party shall reserve for women at least ten percent of the total number of candidates it selects and endorses to contest in an election.<sup>6</sup>

5. The Government of Solomon Islands established the Ministry of Women, Youth, Children & Family Affairs (MWYCFA) whose mandate is to uphold, promote, protect and fulfill the rights of women, youths, children, and families. This mandate is “achieved through effective partnerships, inclusiveness, fairness and creating equal opportunities to advance the wellbeing of the Solomon Islands people.”<sup>7</sup>
6. The key policies with regards to women which have been recently adopted by the Government of Solomon Islands include the National Policy to Eliminate Violence Against Women and Girls 2016-2020;<sup>8</sup> National Gender Equality and Women’s Development Policy 2016-2020;<sup>9</sup> Women Peace and Security National Action Plan 2017-2020;<sup>10</sup> and National Strategy for the Economic Empowerment of Women and Girls 2020-2023.<sup>11</sup>

### **Negative impacts of logging on women**

7. Solomon Islands has a total land area of about 2.8 million hectares. About 87% of the land is under customary land tenure, with the Constitution guaranteeing customary control over the land and forests. Most customary land titles are unregistered, meaning that there has been no formal survey or registration of boundaries or other characteristics. In 2015, the FAO Global Forest Resource Assessment estimated Solomon Island’s total forest cover to be around 78%, the highest percentage in the Pacific region. Other assessments have found that this figure is more likely to be around 76% due to extensive logging in recent years.<sup>12</sup>
8. The economy of the Solomon Islands is heavily dependent on its logging industry, which has been acknowledged by the Government as currently being practiced at an unsustainable rate and will have a “hindering effect on the country’s sustainable future.”<sup>13</sup> The adverse human rights and environmental impacts of logging, however, are already being felt by residents. For example, water quality for home use has deteriorated, as has water quality in coastal areas, which has impacted the fishing industry. In February 2022, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights reasserted not only the importance of protecting the right to a safe, clean, healthy and

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<sup>6</sup> Government of Solomon Islands, *The Political Parties Integrity Act 2014*, Article 48, available at <https://aceproject.org/ero-en/regions/pacific/SB/solomon-islands-political-parties-integrity-act>

<sup>7</sup> Government of Solomon Islands, the Ministry of Women, Youth, Children & Family Affairs (MWYCFA), available at <https://solomons.gov.sb/ministry-of-women-youth-children-family-affairs/>

<sup>8</sup> Government of Solomon Islands, *National Policy to Eliminate Violence against Women 2016-2020*, available at <https://solomons.gov.sb/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/National-Policy-to-Eliminate-Violence-Against-Women-and-Girls-2016-2020.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Government of Solomon Islands, *National Gender Equality and Women’s Development Policy 2016-2020*, available at <https://solomons.gov.sb/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/National-Gender-Equality-and-Womens-Development-Policy-2016-2020.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Government of Solomon Islands, *Women Peace and Security National Action Plan 2017-2020*, available at <https://solomons.gov.sb/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Women-Peace-and-Security-National-Action-Plan-2017-2020.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Government of Solomon Islands, *A National Strategy for the Economic Empowerment of Women and Girls*, available at <http://www.mwycfa.gov.sb/resources-2/strategic-plans-policies/gender-equality-women-s-development/57-nseewg-2020-2023/file.html>

<sup>12</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, *Solomon Islands Forestry Outlook Study*, 2009, available at <http://www.fao.org/3/am626e/am626e00.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Government of Solomon Islands, *Solomon Islands Voluntary National Review, June 2020*, p.54, available at [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26795VNR\\_2020\\_Solomon\\_Report.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26795VNR_2020_Solomon_Report.pdf)

sustainable environment, but also the need for the State to ensure that logging activities “do not adversely affect the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights of local communities,” and for the provision of “effective remedies against such abuses.”<sup>14</sup> These and other impacts are in part due to a lack of respect for the meaningful participation and consent of local communities regarding logging plans and operations, as well as a lack of monitoring and enforcement of laws by government authorities.

9. Although the negative impacts of logging on the enjoyment of human rights are felt by both men and women in Solomon Islands, women and girls are disproportionately affected, while receiving the least benefits. Women are marginalized at all stages of the decision-making process, from the Timber Rights Hearings to Environmental-Social Impacts Assessments, as well as benefit-sharing negotiations between landowners and companies.<sup>15</sup>
10. Logging activities have other broad impacts on women’s lives and reinforce gender inequity in rural areas. A report by the World Bank found that women are disproportionately affected by logging and mining activities, in particular where women have a limited role in negotiations on land. Land deals “rarely reflect women’s land use, including for livelihoods and for child nutrition,” and land disputes lead to increased conflict and other negative impacts borne disproportionately by women.<sup>16</sup>

#### **Violence against women including sexual abuse (Articles 2, 3 and 4)**

11. In Solomon Islands, gender-based violence is a persistent issue. Despite the adoption of the Family Protection Act 2014, which established a legal framework to address domestic violence as a criminal offense, as well other laws, policies and commitments, the prevalence of violence against women and girls is still high in the country. The country has one of the highest rates of family and sexual violence in the world, where 64% of women aged 15–49 have reported physical and/or sexual abuse by a partner.<sup>17</sup> According to a 2019 UNDP survey of 2,633 adults across Solomon Islands, “55% of respondents reported that it was common for men to use violence to resolve issues with women, while 5% stated that they believed such use of violence was justified.”<sup>18</sup>
12. In our FGD, we were informed of allegations of sexual exploitation occurring in areas of logging concessions, as a result of encounters between men working in the logging areas and local women and girls. In addition, the presence of logging activities has created a situation where the sudden increase of salaries of local men involved in the logging industry resulted in the increased consumption of alcohol, which fuels patriarchal acts of violence against women, including domestic violence.

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<sup>14</sup> UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Letter, including Annex, from UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet to Solomon Islands*, 21 February 2022, available at <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/Solomon%20Islands.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> CIFOR Info Brief No. 338, September 2021, *A call to protect women’s rights in Solomon Islands forestry legislation, policy and practice*, p.6, available at [https://www.cifor.org/publications/pdf\\_files/infobrief/8205-infobrief.pdf](https://www.cifor.org/publications/pdf_files/infobrief/8205-infobrief.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> World Bank, *Solomon Islands: Systematic Country Diagnostic Priorities for Supporting Poverty Reduction & Promoting Shared Prosperity*, 1 June 2017

p.56, <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/416501528199593828/pdf/Solomon-Islands-SCD.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> Secretariat of the Pacific Community for Ministry of Women, Youth & Children’s Affairs, *Solomon Islands Family Health and Safety Study: A study on violence against women and children*, 2009, available at <https://pacific.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/SolomonIslandsFamilyHealthandSafetyStudy.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> UN Women, “Gender Equality Brief for Solomon Islands”, March 2022, available at

[https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-12/UN\\_WOMEN\\_SOLOMON\\_ISLANDS.pdf](https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-12/UN_WOMEN_SOLOMON_ISLANDS.pdf)

13. Several women informed us that girls as young as 13 or 14 years old are married off to much older men in the logging camp sites in exchange for financial promises to their families, such as repairing the roofs of their houses. As many of these girls are underage, these relationships may constitute sexual abuse. Many girls impregnated by the loggers are later left as single mothers and do not receive any paternity support, especially once the loggers leave the area. Many girls are also given away as “house girls”; this is an ambiguous term as the actual services given to the loggers is unclear and the girls are more vulnerable to sexual abuse or to working long hours without pay.
14. A report on the gendered effects of corporate logging in Malaita Island found that women in the region experienced sexual exploitation. The UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women reported that the increased number of men working for logging companies in Solomon Islands had created a “market” for sexual services and had also resulted in cases of sexual exploitation and abuse. The UN Special Rapporteur stated that the problem is also prompted by poverty and “is rendered possible due to a lack of awareness regarding commercial and sexual exploitation among the communities and the lack of monitoring of these camp sites by labor and environmental authorities.”
15. We also received information from the communities in Kolombangara Island, where several local girls were allegedly “sold” by their parents as sexual workers to logging workers, resulting in several pregnancies. As noted in one report, “Logging operations are thus associated with the increase of unwanted (teenage) pregnancies, single mothers and children growing up fatherless, as expatriate logging staff commonly stay in Solomon Islands temporarily.”<sup>19</sup> During the FGD, one mother shared her concern over her daughter’s well-being, “there is security on the log pond, but they don’t pay attention to the girls who are roaming around or walking to the logging camp. They are paid to protect the machines, so that is what they do, but nobody protects our girls.”
16. Women and girls who are victims of gender-based violence in Solomon Islands still face challenges in pursuing justice. Efforts are needed to enable women to access the formal justice system and to support survivors of violence. This is especially the case in rural areas where logging operations take place; since there are less trained care providers (social workers), police are less likely to be trained to handle abuse cases, and there are few formal justice options.<sup>20</sup>

*Suggested questions for the State:*

- *Please provide information on policies and measures taken to prevent sexual abuse and domestic violence, and in particular, when such instances occur in the areas of logging concessions.*
- *Please provide information and data on complaints, investigations, and outcomes of sexual abuse and domestic violence.*
- *Please provide information and data on any remedies and/or reparation given to women victims of sexual abuse and domestic violence.*

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<sup>19</sup> CIFOR Info Brief No. 338, September 2021, *A call to protect women’s rights in Solomon Islands forestry legislation, policy and practice*, p.5, available at [https://www.cifor.org/publications/pdf\\_files/infobrief/8205-infobrief.pdf](https://www.cifor.org/publications/pdf_files/infobrief/8205-infobrief.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> Asian Development Bank (ADB), *Solomon Island Gender Assessment*, 2015, p. xvi, available at <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/institutional-document/176812/sol-country-gender-assessment.pdf>

## Trafficking and prostitution (Article 6)

17. The Penal Code and Immigration Act 2012 of Solomon Islands criminalize sex and labour trafficking. Article 143 of the Solomon Islands Penal Code criminalizes child sex trafficking under its “child commercial sexual exploitation” provision and prescribes penalties of up to 15 or 20 years of imprisonment, based on the child’s age. Article 145 of the penal code criminalized sex trafficking and labour trafficking when the offense occurs within the country. Amendments to the Penal Code (Amendment)(Sexual Offences) Act 2016 address trafficking in persons and sexual exploitation.<sup>21</sup>
18. The Immigration Act 2012 (No 32 of 2012) was enacted as the first legislation in the Solomon Islands to directly address offences related to human trafficking and smuggling. The Act prohibits transnational forms of trafficking and mandates multiagency team inspections of logging and fisheries sites to detect the presence of trafficking. The Government has also adopted the National Action Plan against Human Trafficking and People Smuggling (2020-2025), the Anti-Human Trafficking Advisory Committee. The Government also established agencies to lead the country’s anti-trafficking efforts.<sup>22</sup>
19. According to a survey conducted by the International Organisation of Migration (IOM), in most cases, “a victim of trafficking is a person who has been deceived, coerced or forced to move from his/her family, community or country by another person for the purpose of exploitation, in particular for young women and girls in the areas of logging concessions.”<sup>23</sup> The survey highlighted the importance of raising awareness and education since it found that most of the population was not aware of laws relating to sexual exploitation and trafficking.
20. There is a concern on the effective implementation of the existing laws and policies to prevent and punish trafficking in women and girls, including in the logging sector. As noted in one report, Solomon Islands’ forestry officials stated that “a lack of industry regulation or laws outlining child protection and social safeguards prevented them from detecting and investigating potential abuses, including trafficking, related to logging operations’ impact on local communities.”<sup>24</sup> In 2021, there were only two perpetrators involved in trafficking who were brought before the courts in Solomon Islands, and only one that had been convicted; he served his term and has since returned to his country of origin.<sup>25</sup>

### *Suggested questions for the State:*

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<sup>21</sup> Third National Report of the Government of Solomon Islands to the United Nations Universal Periodic Review (UPR), A/HRC/WG.6/38/SLB/1 para 69.

<sup>22</sup> The United States Department of State, *2022 Trafficking in Persons Report: Solomon Islands*, available at <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report/solomon-islands/>

<sup>23</sup> International Organization on Migration (IOM), Solomon Islands Government Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs, IOM Development Fund, *Community Health and Mobility in the Pacific: Solomon Islands Case Study*, 2019, available at <https://publications.iom.int/books/community-health-and-mobility-pacific-solomon-islands-case-study>

<sup>24</sup> United States Department of States, *2022 Trafficking in Persons Report: Solomon Islands*, available at <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report/solomon-islands/>

<sup>25</sup> A/HRC/WG.6/38/SLB/1 paras 31 and 69.



- *Please provide information on steps taken toward the ratification of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.*
- *Please provide information on measures or mechanisms for investigation, prosecution and punishment of trafficking offenders.*
- *Please provide information on policies to prevent trafficking in persons, to raise awareness among the population, as well as to provide assistance and legal support for victims.*

## **Participation in political and public life (Article 7)**

21. Solomon Islands is a constitutional multiparty parliamentary democracy, with a unicameral Parliament composed of 50 Members of Parliament (MPs), elected every four years. Men and women have equal rights to stand as a candidate and to vote. Article 48 of the Political Parties Integrity Act 2014 stipulates that in order for a political party to contest in an election, at least 10% of the party's candidates must be women.
22. The National Development Strategy of 2016-2025 aims to improve the social and economic lives of all Solomon Islanders, as well as to improve gender equality through actions such as community engagement programmes and establishing targets for the representation of women in Parliament, ministries, State women enterprises and in local government.<sup>26</sup>
23. The percentage of women candidates increased in the 2019 elections. Women made up 4.9% (25), 5.8% (26), and 7.8% (26), of the candidate pool for the elections in 2010, 2014, and 2019, respectively. Thus, as of April 2022, there are 4 women (8%) out of 50 MPs in the Solomon Islands.<sup>27</sup> Within the government administration, in 2021, there were only two women out of 21 government ministers.<sup>28</sup> Meanwhile, four (4) out of 24 Permanent Secretaries of the 24 government ministries are women (17%), while for the position of Deputy Secretaries, 14% were women and 86% were men. At the Director level, 18% were women and 82% were men.<sup>29</sup>
24. Women are underrepresented in many areas of business leadership. A study published in 2021 among 30 organizations, comprising 20 private sector organizations, 9 State-owned enterprises, and an industry association found that only 11% of those in board director positions were women in Solomon Islands.<sup>30</sup> No women held the position of board chair within the sample, and only two boards had a woman deputy chair. Women were most highly represented on the boards of organizations in the media and communications sector (21%), followed by the utilities sector (18%) and

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<sup>26</sup> Government of Solomon Islands, *National Development Strategy 2016-2024*, available at <https://solomons.gov.sb/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/National-Development-Strategy-2016.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> A/HRC/WG.6/38/SLB/1 para 29.

<sup>28</sup> *Idem*, para 38.

<sup>29</sup> UN Women, in Brief, *Gender Equality Brief for Solomon Islands*, p. 3 available at [https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-12/UN\\_WOMEN\\_SOLOMON\\_ISLANDS.pdf](https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-12/UN_WOMEN_SOLOMON_ISLANDS.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> The Pacific Private Sector Development Initiative (PSDI), *Leadership Matters, Benchmarking Women in Business Leadership in the Pacific*, September 2021, available at <https://www.pacificpsdi.org/assets/Uploads/PSDI-LeadershipMatters-Web3.pdf>

the agriculture and fisheries sector (18%); 11% of the directors on the boards of state-owned enterprises were women.<sup>31</sup>

### *Participation of women in decision making process on the logging related matters*

25. Men and women are equal before the law in Solomon Islands. The Government of Solomon Islands sought to address increased gender inequalities by adopting the National Gender Equality and Women's Development Policy 2016–2020. The Policy recognizes that women and men are equal partners in development, and it places gender equality at the heart of economic and social progress.<sup>32</sup>
26. With regards to land, men and women have equal opportunity to acquire land under State law. However, the majority of land in the country is held in accordance with customary land or *kastom*, where the “decisions regarding land matters are made through a consultative group comprised of male chiefs and elders.”<sup>33</sup> The patriarchal nature of Solomon Islands culture is underpinned by social norms and customary values that establish a hierarchy in which women often play a subservient role. Entrenched male dominance of state, faith-based and traditional institutions result in a situation where men often make decisions on behalf of women.
27. Despite leadership in the family, household, community, church and civil society organisations, women do not have a significant role in land or resource-related decision making such as logging or mining, even in matrilineal parts of Solomon Islands.<sup>34</sup> Men are almost always the heads of both matrilineal and patrilineal clans and are usually the signatories to land agreements and beneficiaries of royalty payments. They may choose not to share the money received with women or younger men within their families and communities.<sup>35</sup>
28. Women are typically not present at Timber Rights Hearings, where the decision to allow or reject a proposed logging operation is made, nor are they involved in logging negotiations, agreement making or operation management.<sup>36</sup> One woman in our FGD raised her concern on the lack of consultation of women during various stages of logging activities, pointing out how “with the culture of silence, women are not able to speak up in public or in front of men even though they know full well that it is their right in the matrilineal society.”

### *Suggested questions for the State:*

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<sup>31</sup> The Pacific Private Sector Development Initiative, *Leadership Matters, Benchmarking Women in Business Leadership in the Pacific*, September 2021, available at <https://www.pacificpsdi.org/assets/Uploads/PSDI-LeadershipMatters-Web3.pdf>

<sup>32</sup> Government of Solomon Islands, *The National Gender Equality and Women's Development Policy 2016–2020* (the Policy) at <https://solomons.gov.sb/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/National-Gender-Equality-and-Womens-Development-Policy-2016-2020.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> UN Women, in Brief, *Gender Equality Brief for Solomon Islands*, March 2022, available at [https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-12/UN\\_WOMEN\\_SOLOMON\\_ISLANDS.pdf](https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-12/UN_WOMEN_SOLOMON_ISLANDS.pdf)

<sup>34</sup> Tavola, H., Billy A., and Kama, J. *Advancing Australia's work on leadership and decision-making "The Next Level" scoping study on women in leadership*, 2016, Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, p.12

<sup>35</sup> Asian Development Bank (ADB), *Solomon Island Gender Assessment*, 2015, p. 55, available at <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/institutional-document/176812/sol-country-gender-assessment.pdf>

<sup>36</sup> CIFOR Info Brief, No. 338, *A call to protect women's rights in Solomon Islands forestry legislation, policy and practice.* September 2021, p.4 available at [https://www.cifor.org/publications/pdf\\_files/infobrief/8205-infobrief.pdf](https://www.cifor.org/publications/pdf_files/infobrief/8205-infobrief.pdf)



- *Please provide information on measures taken to increase the presence of women in Parliament, Ministries, and positions within the executive branch of the government as well as other decision-making positions in public offices.*
- *Please provide measure to facilitate the representation of women in the decision-making positions in the public enterprises.*
- *Please provide information on measures taken to ensure that women participate in decision-making processes on issues related to logging activities, including whether women are consulted in any due diligence processes mandated by the State*

**Healthcare and family planning (Article 12); Economic and social benefit (Article 13); and Rural Women (Article 14)**

29. In Solomon Islands, women and girls play a key role in providing food for their households, including in rural areas where logging activities take place. Environmental degradation due to intensive logging affects their access to food. Among other impacts, logging not only depletes sea and forest food resources, but also introduces alien species that wreak havoc on crops. In our FGD, participants who live around logging operations expressed their concern regarding threats to biodiversity by new species, such as giant African snails, rhino beetles, red ants and Asian bees, which are likely to have been brought incidentally by the logging machines coming from outside Solomon Islands.
30. One landowner in the FGD reported that the hillsides in some forests in Guadalcanal Island were destroyed by the extraction of one or two large trees, bringing down many smaller trees as they were cut. Loggers also cut many smaller trees to provide a slipway on which to drag the trees down to the river. This slipway was then treated with gallons of diesel oil to make it slippery and to facilitate getting trees down to the water or logging track. This resulted in pollution and loss of soil fertility within two or three years, severely affecting people, and the environment. The consequences of the destruction of forests and land are considered very severe by the community: soil is now eroding and further exposed to sun and rain; water sources are drying up; rainfall is not dispersed efficiently causing flash floods and landslides in some areas and drought conditions in others.
31. Current logging practices have led to soil erosion that has increased sediment in coastal areas and waterways,<sup>37</sup> and more broadly has led to poor water quality. The Government is conscious of the negative impacts of logging activities on human rights and the environment. In the 2020 Voluntary National Review of Solomon Islands, the Government reported that unsustainable logging, and the resulting depletion of forests, may “alter local watersheds and increase the risk of flooding for local communities. The lack of windbreak once provided by forests also exposes cleared land and villages to stronger winds, endangering agriculture and putting settled areas at greater risk during storms.”<sup>38</sup> The Solomon Islands National Forest Policy calls for a

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<sup>37</sup> World Bank, *Solomon Islands Systematic Country Diagnostic Priorities for Supporting Poverty Reduction & Promoting Shared*, 1 June 2017, p.54-55, available at

<http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/416501528199593828/pdf/Solomon-Islands-SCD.pdf>

<sup>38</sup> Government of Solomon Islands, *Solomon Islands Voluntary National Review*, June 2020, p.63-64, [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26795VNR\\_2020\\_Solomon\\_Report.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26795VNR_2020_Solomon_Report.pdf)

review of forest and environmental regulations and legislation, with stricter enforcement of penalties and prosecution where relevant.<sup>39</sup>

32. Solomon Islands is vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change. The country has been experiencing the effects of climate change through trends of increasing temperature, decreasing precipitation, changing patterns of weather and extreme events, and accelerated coastal erosion due to rising sea levels.<sup>40</sup> According to the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment, women and children in Solomon Islands are particularly vulnerable to extreme weather events, as shown in the flood in 2014, where 96 per cent of deaths were women and children.<sup>41</sup>

*Suggested question for the State:*

- *Please provide information on measures taken to address the negative impacts of logging on the right to adequate standard of living, the right to health, the right to food, the right to water, and the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment for women and girls, including those in rural areas.*
- *Please provide information on measures taken to ensure that women and girls are meaningfully engaged in the development and implementation of climate change and disaster risk reduction policies.*

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<sup>39</sup> Government of Solomon Islands, *National Forest Policy 2020*, Goal 15 available at <https://www.mofr.gov.sb/documents/LegislationAndRegulation/SI%20National%20Forest%20Policy%202020.pdf>

<sup>40</sup> Solomon Islands State of Environmental Report 2019, available at <https://www.sprep.org/sites/default/files/documents/publications/soe-solomon-islands-2019.pdf>

<sup>41</sup> Report of the Special Rapporteur on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment, *Women, girls and the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment*, 2023, A/HRC/52/33, para 51.