



Universal Periodic Review Solomon Islands

ADVOCACY PAPER

THE IMPACT OF LOGGING ACTIVITIES ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN SOLOMON ISLANDS

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Introduction

Solomon Island's total forest cover is around 78%, the highest percentage in the Pacific region. However, extensive logging activities and serious impacts on human rights and the environment have been reported in recent years. Human rights issues in this context have not been so much driven by a lack of laws or policies, but more importantly by a lack of monitoring and enforcement.

General Recommendation

Protect human rights against abuses by logging companies; ensure effective remedies for victims; and bring perpetrators to justice.

1. FREE, PRIOR AND INFORMED CONSENT (FPIC)

The principle of the free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) has not been implemented systematically by the government with regard to the logging sector. Even when environmental issues are raised during Timber Rights Hearing with the Provincial government, partners have reported that the issues are not taken into consideration.

Recommendation:

Ensure that, through all stages of the logging process, the right to free, prior and informed consent of affected communities are fully respected and implemented, in accordance with international human rights standards.

2. RIGHT TO A SAFE, CLEAN, HEALTHY, AND SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT

Current logging practices lead to soil erosion, which increases sediment in coastal areas and waterways and leads to poor water quality. In Laovavasa, in Guadalcanal Island, logging activities have resulted in loss of soil fertility. The consequences of the destruction of forest and land are considered very severe by the community, as soils are now being exposed to sun and rain; water sources dry up; rainfall is not dispersed efficiently and flash floods happen, as well as droughts and landslides.

Recommendation:

Take appropriate legislative and administrative measures to ensure that the use of exploitation of natural resources do not infringe the rights of local communities to dispose freely of their lands, territory, and natural resources, in accordance with international standards.



3. RIGHT TO LIVELIHOOD AND TO ADEQUATE STANDARD OF LIVING

The diversion of the economy towards logging has impacted farming and traditional ways of life. As an archipelago country, fishery is a key source of livelihood for the population. However, the fish resources have declined because of sedimentation of rivers and reefs. This is a result of runoff from upstream cutting areas, and log-pond and wharf construction. Logging companies do not only adversely impact water quality but have also reportedly limited access to water and sanitation for their employees.



Recommendations:

- Take appropriate legislative and administrative measures to ensure that the use and exploitation of natural resources, in particular logging, do not adversely affect the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights.
- Ensure access to sufficient safe drinking water and adequate sanitation for the entire population, including those who are affected by, or even active in, logging activities.

4. WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Trafficking is closely linked to logging activities, with such abuses often occurring at logging camps. There have been several allegations of sexual violence related to the presence of logging companies and their foreign workers. Commercial sexual exploitation of children is a serious and substantial problem in some areas where logging is present. There is still a lack of awareness regarding commercial and sexual exploitation among the communities and a lack of monitoring of these camp sites by labour and environmental authorities.

Recommendations:

- Undertake awareness-raising programs on the environmental, social and human rights impacts of logging and on the rights and protections people shall enjoy, including programs targeting women and youths.
- Adopt a strategy to combat and eliminate violence against women and children, including sexual abuse and exploitation and domestic violence, with a focus on communities affected by logging activities.

5. ENVIRONMENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

In 2018, five environmental activists, known as Nende Five, were imprisoned for opposing the logging activities in the primary forest on Nende in Santo-Cruz Island in Temotu Province. While three of the activists were acquitted, one activist, is facing life imprisonment for arson and another was convicted of larceny and unlawful damage; their lawyer stated that their confessions were given under duress.

Recommendation:

Guarantee the effective protection of people at risk because they defend their rights or the rights of communities, the land or the environment in the context of logging projects and ensure that all violations committed against them are thoroughly and impartially investigated and that victims are provided with effective remedies.



6. IMPACT OF LOGGING ACTIVITIES ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Despite its commitment to mitigate climate change, the Government of Solomon Islands has not submitted its revised Nationally Determined Contribution to the UNFCCC. The forest in Solomon Islands has been contributing to the world's carbon sink.

contributing to the world's carbon sink. However, if the deforestation continues, the impact of logging activities will be very significant for the environment, not only for Solomon Islands but also the global efforts to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

Recommendation:

Adopt coherent and comprehensive mitigation and adaptation climate policy and actions based on human rights norms and principles.

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