

## Public Hearing held at the United Church, Honiara – Day III - Session I

Date: 25 November 2010

The Chairman welcomed the victim and briefed her on the protocol of the Hearing.

The Victim took her oaths.

Interviewer: Good morning Mrs. Mary Kesaia.

Victim: Good morning Commissioners, Counselors and Solomon Islands

I am now going to tell you my story.

On 14 May, 1999, I left Nguvia and I caught a truck to go to our village at Talaura. I got gardens there and that was our home, my husband worked at Nguvia as a teacher. I stayed there until in the evening and then we had our meal. We were already in our respective beds ready to sleep; I went to sleep in my son's house in another village. All of sudden my uncle rushed to my son's house and knocked on the door calling my sister, saying, Anna run away. Our brother has been attacked by the GRA militants. When I heard this I got up from bed carrying my baby. We went outside, but it was raining heavily. We knew it was our uncle who came to the house but soon after he also disappeared in the night fighting for his life. All of my family members who were in the house stood at the verandah of the house, we could not go outside due to the heavy rain. From where we were standing, I could hear someone crying along the road. I could tell that it was brother who was crying. He was saying, "mummy I am dying". I told my sister to hold my baby, but not long after that I could see my brother being held by the hair and dragged along the road. It was raining very heavily and the whole village and the road were very muddy. I jumped out from the verandah and ran towards my brother who was being held by the GRA militants. I asked them why they are doing that to my brother. All of a sudden I was slapped on the left side of face by one of the militants. When they did that to me I could see lots of stars but I still held on to my brother. I asked them again why they were doing this to my brother. He had not done anything wrong. They told me to shut up, but they kept on dragging my brother. He was dragged to my uncle's house and when we got there, my sister was already there. We tried to assist our brother but I kept on asking the militants why they are doing that to my brother. They told me to shut up, they said to me that they had nothing do to me but my brother.

By then my uncle ran all the way from his house to come to the militants. He came and handed the militants one red money and asked them not to kill the boy. The boy was his nephew. The militants said to my brother, keep your red money to pay bride price for your son. My brother was suffering from deep cuts sustained from beating with the butt of guns. While this was going on, one of the militants ran up to the house and kicked the hurricane lamp so that we could not recognize them. My uncle's wife came down and talked to some of the militants, they said they did not know what was going on because they came down from the bush. They shouted and said, look, they then dragged my brother along the road. My aunty and others went back to the house but my sister and I had to follow my brother. He was still dragged along the road and crying. I told him not to cry but be brave. They kept on dragging my brother to another location, by then my sister and I could not go with our brother but stood holding each other. One of the militants came and slapped me on the face and I fell down on the ground. The militants kept on pulling and dragging my brother along the road and I

shouted at them if you kill him , do not hide him or throw him away but take him to my mother's house. They took my brother to my mother's house. My sister and I then followed them until we got to my mother's house. I tried the door but it was locked but then I called out my brother's name. We could hear him groaning, his legs and hands were tied up. We tried to open the door but it was tightly locked so we got a piece of iron and hit the door hard and then we managed to open it. The door was swung open and hit my brother because he was lying just behind the door. I held his legs and asked whether he was alright but he could not speak, I then touched him from his legs up to his head, but his mouth was tied up and he could not speak. I asked him if he was alright but he said he could not see because his eyes were very badly injured. I asked him if there was any knife around but he managed to say, the knife was behind the door, so I got the knife and cut off the ropes from his hands and legs and the calico from his mouth. He told us to check for my brother in-law and his brother, of course they were in the other room also tied up. My brother in-law's brother was hit on his back with the butt of the rifle and his back was also injured, he could not walk properly; and had to be assisted, my brother too had to be assisted because he could not see. My brother in-law too had to be assisted because he was also wounded. My sister and I had to assist the three of them back to my uncle's village. When we got to my uncle's house, my aunty boiled some water washed my brother's body. We did not sleep but had to wait until morning, because we were frightened of the GRA militants. My mum too disappeared during the night, we did not know where she went. Early in the morning my sister had to run to another village to get transport to take my brother to the hospital. On 15 May, 1999 we rushed my brother to the hospital but I had to drop at Nguvia because my children were there.

I came and told my children that we were attacked by the militants and that my brother was rushed to the hospital and I had to follow him to the hospital.

I thought everything was going to end there. I went to the hospital to see my brother. He was admitted and had to be stitched due to severe cuts on his body. My brother in-law and his brother were also treated with injuries.

Back at Talaura my mother's house was also burnt down and all her belongings were destroyed. We were then settled down for a while but some people had already run away, and my whole family too had to run away for our safety.

One of the problems we went through was when we were evacuated to Multi-purpose Hall, the Malaitans who were also victims did not want us to be there. My mother, sister and I were frightened, because the Malaitans were not friendly with us at that time. We could not face the Malaitans because of the way they looked at us and treated us. One of the men from Malaita talked out to the rest of the Malaitans who were at the Hall at that time that, these are just people like us, they are part Malaita and Guadalcanal, if you want to hurt them, then hurt me first before hurting them. We felt better when we heard this. When we left our place we did not have any extra clothes with us except the clothes we were wearing. We did not have any cooking pots, plates or spoons etc.. After a few days, the Red Cross came and supplied us with clothes, pots and spoons. Even though they supplied these to us they were not enough for us to go around. In the end I did not know where to go, even I am part Malaita I was born and brought up on Guadalcanal and do not regard myself as a Malaitan. My mother is from Guadalcanal and I do not want to go to Malaita, I went there and spent only one week and came back leaving the children. After a while I went back to Malaita and collected my children and we returned to Honiara. We came back and remained at Multi-purpose Hall

because we had nowhere else to go. After leaving the Multi-purpose Hall we went to Mbaranaba to leave there in a Home Finance House until today.

I would like to appeal to the Government, what has happened to our Lost Properties that we lodged. Up until today we are still waiting for the Government to pay us our claims of the Lost Properties. It has taken so long and when are we going to get paid.

When the TRC Officials came and briefed us about their Program I was prepared to come and tell my story.

Interviewer: Commissioner Caroline thanked Mary for her story.

Victim: Mrs. Abigail Abaisato

Interviewer: Welcomed Mrs. Abigail Abaisato, she is from Malu'u, North Malaita

Victim: She thanked the Commissioners, Counselors and the Solomon Islands as a whole to listen to her story.

I lived with my husband at CDC I, because he worked for SIPL.

On Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> June 1999, my husband and a man from Makira went to work at Mbarande with a digger. Before my husband went, he asked us to make cassava pudding and that he was to bring leaves for the pudding. I asked him what time will he be expected back, he replied that he would be back by 12:00 noon. He said that there was not much to complete and it would not take them too long to complete the job. We waited until 12:00 pm but he had not turned up. We then waited until 3:00 pm and still he did not turn up. I told the children that our dad has not turned up. By 4:30 pm all of the workers who were working at Mbarande had to come back early because of the presence of the GRA militants. I sent two of my children to go and wait for their dad on the road, but when the trucks came back and dropped off all the workers, they did not see their father. The children came and told me that they did not see their father, but I said to them, I think he must have driven some people down to town. The two children then ran to the fleet of trucks that were parked under the tanks but there was no sign of their father. I just told my children that it could be your father and the man from Makira have been taken away by the GRA militants. We waited and waited but there was no sign of our dad turning up, the pudding was there, so I started to make the motu for the pudding and gathered few leaves behind the house. By night fall we were still waiting, we cooked some food and I asked the children to eat, I did not feel like eating. By Sunday morning, we were still at CDC I and some of our wantoks came and stayed with us. That Sunday one of my onetalks brought his family to stay with us and then he went back to their house because there was no one there. His family stayed with us until Monday morning. By that time most of the people were living at Ngalibiu area, started to leave the place and find their way to town. Being only a woman I did not know what to do with my three children. On Monday we waited but there was no sign of our dad, but by nine o'clock that evening we received a piece of note from the Makira man that he was tied on the legs and hands and tied to a stick at the entrance of the GRA camp. I then asked about my husband, did anybody know what had happened to him. Some of those people replied that they did not know anything about the Malaita man. Most of the people had already left to town except me and few others. I just sat down and cried not knowing of what to do with my three children. By Monday night the father of the family who came and stayed with us came and took them to

town. He told us that we should go with them to town, but I refused. We then heard the news that the GRA militants are on their way and they are approaching the Society building. When I heard that, I decided to leave the place without my husband. They told us to take just some clothes but the rest of your belongings to remain in your respective houses. One of my wantoks told us to go and stay with them at Koa Hill. When we were there, we heard that the man from Makira had come back safely, unfortunately our dad did not come back with him. So, members of GRA, where did you leave him, where did you throw him? Please tell us where you left him, you just threw him away like a rat, he is not a rat, he was the father of my three children. We respected him, please tell us so that we can go and collect his remains....crying....crying. GRA militants please show us where you hid our father, we want to see where his remains are. If we see his remains then we should be at least happy, please show us where you buried him.

Interviewer: Thank you Abigail for your story.

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The other victim: Mrs. Elsie Talei, she is part Malaita and part Guadalcanal.

She took her oaths.

In 1998, there were rumors that the Guadalcanal people were going to fight the Malaita people. My immediate family then sat down together and discussed what we should do in case there was a war between the two islands. My brother advised that we should not worry because we are part Guadalcanal and in our culture the women own the land. On 14 May 1999, in the evening and after meal, we were just sitting around in kitchen telling stories when six GRA militants entered. As soon as they entered they asked for the two Malaita men who were living in the village. This time they asked the same question and my husband said, I am one of them. At the same time one of the militants kicked him from the back and he fell down to the ground. I then pulled our two year old baby from him and my brother told the militants not to harm him because he would not stand up for him. At the same time one of the militants took a big aluminum dish and hit it on my brother's head, he fell down to the ground. I looked around for my six year old son and my mum but they were all gone, they ran away to the bush. The militants then took my brother and marched him along the road. I took my daughter and went after my brother and the militants. While along the road the militants ordered my brother to swear at his mother and his sisters. My brother replied them and said, I cannot do that. The second time they said the same thing to him, by then, for his own safety he swore at his mother and sisters.

We got to another village and saw my sister there, I asked my sister to take care of my daughter while I follow my brother and the militants. At that I was 8 months pregnant and despite that I followed my brother. When we got to my uncle's house, they told my uncle that they were going to kill his nephew. My uncle's wife, a woman from Duff came out from the house and told the militants not to kill the young man. My uncle's wife took one Tafuliae and gave it to the militants but they refused and threw the Tafuliae back to the woman. My brother then stood up and put his hands on my should and said that the militants were going to kill me. They pushed the butt of the gun into his mouth and hit him on his back with the gun and swore at him. We left my uncle's house and went along the road, the militants were still with us. He told us to let go off him so that the militants could take away and kill somewhere, but we refused. I shouted to the militants that we kill him, take him back to his house but do not

bury him where we cannot see him. Anyway we did not stop following our brother until we got to our village and we stood under a tree to watch what was going to happen. They took my husband and his brother, pushed them into the house and then tied them up. They then took my brother and sat him on the verandah of the house and the militants took out all his musical instruments. My brother was a Youth Coordinator. The three of us eye witnessed when they removed my brother's musical instruments. The militants took my brother back to his house, tied both hands and legs and mouth and threw him into his own house and locked the door. After locking the house, one of the militants poured petrol around the house. Somehow of the militants advised them not to burn the house but to take all his instruments away. At the time my brother was full of blood. When the militants left the house and went away some hundred meters, my sister pushed the door open, she looked for a knife, fortunately she found a knife and cut the ropes on his legs and hands and also his mouth. After our brother was freed, my sister did the same to my brother in-law and my husband. My brother could not walk due to the injuries caused to his back by the militants. We decided to take my husband and his brother down to a cocoa plantation to hide them there until the next morning. By early morning my sister had to go to another village to ask my cousin for her car to transport my brother in-law to the hospital. They took my brother in-law to the hospital while the others went to Tetera Police Station and reported what had happened. A team of police officers went to investigate what had happened during the night. After returning from Tetera and before reaching our village we could see smoke from far and we knew that our houses were burnt to the ground. When we actually got to the village all our houses were burnt down including all the contents therein. A team of police officers came in a 3 ton truck and took us to Tetera Police Station. We stayed at Tetera up until June 1999 when I came to the hospital to have my baby and he was named Ethnic Tension. After leaving the hospital I took my baby and went to live with some relatives at Lengakiki for three days. The rest of my family went and lived with some people at Kolaridge. After three days at Lengakiki and Kolaridge, I met up with the rest of my family and we came down to the Multi-purpose Hall. When we got there, the Malaitans who were already there did not welcome us and made bad comments about us and even wanted to hurt us. One of the elder men warned them that we too were victims of the Ethnic Tension from East Guadalcanal just like the rest of them. While we were there, we did not feel safe, all through the time we lived in fear. We were offered food from the Red Cross but for some of us we did not feel like eating because we were frightened of being attacked by the Malaitans. My family spoke in Guadalcanal language but some of the Malaitans did not agree with us when we spoke in Guadalcanal language. We stayed there for some time and after we moved to Mbaranaba.

After the arrival of RAMSI and on 13<sup>th</sup> August, 2003, RAMSI Officers and SI Police Officers came to Mbaranaba and searched for guns. They came and started to destroy most of the things supplied to us by the SI Red Cross. We did not know their motives of doing this, but they must have suspected that my brother was in possession of guns. My brother too was a signatory to the Townsville Peace Agreement and some of the things he got from Townsville during the signing of the Peace Agreement were also taken away and destroyed by RAMSI and SI Police Officers. During the first search, we discovered that some cash kept in our suit case was also missing.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 2005, my mum, brother, my handicapped sister and myself were sitting in our kitchen, when two RAMSI officers accompanied by one CID SI Police Officer came to our house at Mbaranaba. The purpose of their coming was to arrest my brother. I questioned them, why are you arresting my brother? They replied that they wanted to question him on certain things, I asked them, what sort of things. I told them that you have not taken any

action on what had been reported to you and yet you want to take more stories from my brother? By then the two RAMSI officers took out their guns and pointed them at us. Our mum then told us to be patient but my brother warned her not to say a word. When they took my brother away I also followed them to RAMSI office at Point Cruz.

My brother was taken to the Magistrates Court and I also followed him there. After the Court case, they came out and my brother told me to go back and tell my mother and other relatives that I was going to be put in prison.

Now I appeal to the Government through TRC to investigate those incidents that happened to us and do something about them. I urge you to have a good look at them and take action and do not let it go by.

Some of the police officers during the tension also harassed us but they are still in the Police Force. Why can't the Government or the Police Department do something about them. They should not be there anymore because of their involvement in the Ethnic Tension. I once again appeal to the Government to look at this and take note of it.

We are still being displaced but our claims and our requests put forward to the Government have not been addressed as yet. Most of the things reported had been turned down. In fact our cases had been reported but as I mentioned they are yet to be addressed. We were first ones to be affected by the Ethnic Tension and yet the Government has not done anything to our claims on the Lost properties. The Government should recognize us, what are the members of Parliament doing, they have not addressed our claims. Most affected families were assisted through Red Cross and nothing from the Government. So I now appeal to you, the Government to do something about our claims. I should not be here to voice my concerns but I have to because I cannot keep it within me any longer.

I think my story ends here.

Thank you TRC Commissioners, Counselors and Solomon Islands as you listen to our stories.

Interviewer: Thanked Elsie Talei for her story.

End of first Session on Day III – 25 November 2010.

Public Hearing Day III – Session II – 25 November 2010

Victim No: 4 – Salome Saefoa

The Chairman welcomed the Victim.

The Chairman explained the protocol of the Public Hearing.

Before the Ethnic Tension, she was living at Gilbert Camp with her family. She had properties but preferred to go back to Malaita.

She then took her Oaths.

Interviewer: Welcomed the Victim, Mrs. Salome Saefoa

Victim: Thank you Chairman, Commissioners, Counselors and People of Solomon Islands.

My name is Salomea Saefoa and I come from Nafinafi Village, West Kwaio, Malaita Province.

In 1998 my family was already in Honiara, my husband and I were employed and worked in town. We lived in the outskirts of town at Gilbert Camp. During 1998, rumours had it that there was going to be an Ethnic Tension between Malaita and Guadalcanal. We could not believe that because we were living a normal life and did not expect such tension to happen. In 1999 the Ethnic Tension was getting worse and the life in Town was getting harder. Even to leave the children on their own was not safe, or even going to the wharf to catch a boat to go home was not safe as well. Life at that time was unsecured, something could happen when you did not expect it. During that same year we found life was hard and we tried to make a decision whether to go home to Malaita or to remain in town and face the hard life. We found it hard to decide because we had properties in town, our jobs and the education of our children. As time went on and in June 1999, we found that things became real. While we were trying to come up with our decision, a best friend from Guadalcanal came and advised that things were going to get worse and it's better that we go back home to Malaita. He and his family decided to go back home to the village somewhere on Guadalcanal. We came to a final decision that we should go back home to Malaita. We did not encounter any harassment or being attacked but we made up our mind to go back home and should not be involved in anything to do with the Ethnic Tension. I did not want my husband to involve in any criminal activities and even life was tough, we decided to go back home. We left everything and went home, jobs, properties and education. When we got home we found it real hard because we did not have any house, we did not have any food gardens and looked as though we fell from the sky. We went home empty handed and we found life was real tough, whereas in town, there was enough to survive on because my husband and I both worked and we managed to live within our means even with our children and their education.

Before I resume my seat, I would like to thank you TRC for its program and I appeal to the Government to recognize us. There are lots of women who suffered more than I did and could not come out to voice their stories. I would like to appeal to the members of Parliament to come down and be at our level, wear the hats that we wear, wear the shoes that wear so that you are faced with the real life. That is what I want to stress to the Government.

Chairman, I would like to suggest that if there is a Program like this arranged in the future, please bring it down to the Provincial level so that women who suffered during the tension era should come up and tell their feelings too. Most of the women in the rural areas are left out, but for those of us who are here today, we are most privileged to attend this Public Hearing. Most women who had been affected are left out because they do not know where to go to voice their views. I would like to appeal to the TRC please assist the women in the rural areas, to some of us we are still not sure the real cause of the Ethnic Tension. We, the women and children of this country were being victimized because of the Ethnic Tension. We had enough and how long will this suffering go on. Even at this time, the people of Solomon Islands, especially women and children still feel unsettled. Currently we as women and children are hopeless; we do not know who to go to and who to go to.

Before I sit down, I would thank the Chairman, Deputy Chairperson, Commissioners, Counselors TRC Staff, Victims, Youth and Women, Solomon Islanders, thank you too masi.

Interviewer: Thanked Salome for her story and assured her that TRC would do whatever it can under its mandate.

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5<sup>th</sup>Victim: Sharon Pesi – She comes from Purakiki Village, Marau Sound. Her husband was shot dead by militants at her presence at Marau.

Protocol was explained to her.

She then took hear Oaths.

Interviewer: She was welcomed to the Public Hearing.

Interviewee: She thanked the Chairman, Deputy Chairperson, Commissioners, Counselors and People of Solomon for listening through SIBC.

Sharon begins her Story.

I would like to introduce myself, my name is Sharon Pesi, my village is Purakiki, Marau, East Guadalcanal.

In 1998, there were stories that Malaita and Guadalcanal were going to fight each other. When we heard this, we did not bother to do anything but to go about our daily errands.

So in the year 2000, the militants went around Guadalcanal to advise everyone both males and females to wear Kabilato and Grass skirts. We talked about this and said that we told them since we were brought up we did not use this sort of wear like that. The Leaders of our Community told them that women do not accept that sort of wear. Then some of the men went to the bush and took out the bark of a special tree called Koga. They brought them home and started to dry them and make them into a Kabilato. The women stood on their rights that they were not going to wear grass skirts.

We saw militants travelling by outboard motors and even travelling on foot. We heard a lot of shootings being carried out, so we told our husbands that we do not want to stay in the village seeing a lot of activities were going on. The men went and built small houses in bush, so the women and children moved from the villages by the sea and moved into the bush. On 21<sup>st</sup> July, 2000, early in the morning I came from the bush to the village to call my husband to come with me so that he could his breakfast. While we were there, one of the boys came and told us that the Marau Eagle Force would come and look for their boys who were living with the mainland villagers. My husband told me that I should go back to the house and he would follow after. So I got up and went back to the bush house, and not long after my husband came. While he was having his food, we could hear shooting, the Marau Eagle Force are now checking on their people. We did not expect that they would do anything to us, because the sounds of guns could be heard from a far away distance and so we thought they had left the place. My husband said that we should go down to our original village and check our house, so we both went down. I told him that I had fear within me that some people were still around and we should not go down to the coast.

When we came down and were just behind our village, one of the militants fired the first shot at my husband. He tried to run in front of me but he was already wounded and only few metres from I was he fell down and when I looked back my niece also fell to the ground. My husband was shot on the leg, I got panic and I fell down close to my husband and closed my eyes with my hands not knowing what to do. I could hear them "saying" Pusi, they went through the village, shooting and shouting. When I looked behind me I could see men with army uniforms and wearing masks and I could not recognize any of them. When they went through the village, I told my niece that we should go but then I heard my husband groaning, I thought twice whether I should stay with him or go back to the house and check our thirteen year old daughter. When I got to the village most of the people already ran away to the bush. We did not follow the usual road but had to find our way through the bush. We came across some people but did not talk to them, and as we ran along we came across my nephew, I told him that his uncle was being shot and he is dying. I explained to him how he should go to find his uncle. He found the body of his uncle and we alerted others and then they carried his body with us to the bush and the next day, we took him to the next village and buried him there. After burying him, we travelled to the next village and spent the night there and the next day we went to next village and then we stayed there.

In 2003 after the arrival RAMSI people started to come back to their respective villages and started to build their houses again. I should say the life now is not as not as good as before the Tension. Before I resume my seat I would like to pose this question. What is the Government going to do about our claims on Lost Properties, it is now ten years over, we have suffered enough and we have waited for too long.

On the death of my husband, I appeal to whoever did that to my husband, please come forward, I am prepared to forgive you so that we forget the past and look forward to the future.

Thank you.

Interviewer: Thank you Sharon for your story.

The next Victim is Mrs. Fiona Ratenisiwa of Are Are.

Her husband was a man from Guadalcanal and was working for a Logging Company when he was taken by MEF on 14/6/2000 from his wife's village in Are Are.

The Victim took her oaths.

Interviewer: Welcomed Mrs. Fiona, you may begin your story.

Victim: Thank you Chairman, Deputy Chairperson, Commissioners, Counselors and people of Solomon Islands.

On the eve of 14/6/2000, I was at our home, in Are Are. My husband came home that day and told me that he would be working late and needed some food for him to take back to the Camp. I then started to prepare some food for him in the kitchen when three militants came up to me and asked about my husband. They came to us and said to my husband, you are one of those Guadalcanal men who joined the GRA. He told them he did not join that Militant Group. They insisted that he was one of them and told the wife they were going to take him

away. My husband and I stood outside the kitchen. They wanted to take him away but I told them that he should go and dress up properly before you can take him away. He was only wearing a towel at that time. We went up to the house with our 11 year old daughter and our 8 year old son. He got changed and said to me, Mum, I do not what will happen to me, so while we were in the room, one of the militants with a knife came up and said, why are taking so long, come out at once. We then came outside and our dad talked with our daughter but the boy ran away because he was frightened of the militants. They asked for \$300 and said that we will take your husband away for questioning but will bring him back. At that time I did not have \$300 with me so I went and asked my elder brother Ishmael Hoahania so his wife gave me \$300 and I went back to them. I told the militants that we would give them any amount of money and leave my husband alone, but they said that they only needed \$300. When they took my husband away I was five months pregnant. By then the militants took my husband and I wanted to follow him but he said no, I should stay and look after his children. My 11 year old daughter and me stood and watched while our dad was being led away. Before he was led away he wanted to see his son, but I went to look for him but he went and hid under a coffee table in his uncle's bed room, he was too frightened to come out. I went back to his dad and told him that he was too frightened to come out and his father said Ok and the last time we saw our dad. My husband was escorted up to the Land cruiser and was taken to Auki. I went back to the house and my children and I thought of our dad and began crying but we could not say anything, he was already taken by MEF members. After a week we heard that he was taken to Honiara on board the MV Ramosi III. We waited and waited to see our dad's return but in vain. Then after three weeks, we heard that he disappeared without any trace.

I appeal to those who took away our dad and killed him for no reason at all please come forward and tell us where you had buried him so we can go and collect his remains for proper burial.

That is the end of my story.

Interviewer: Thank you for your story, Fiona.

The next Victim is Gloria Maesiu, she was from Kwara'ae but was married to a Guadalcanal man and was living at Belaga, Malango.

She took her oaths.

Interviewer: Good morning, Gloria and welcome to this Public Hearing and you may start your story.

Interviewee: I would like to thank the Chairman, Deputy Chairlady, Commissioners and Counselors and people of Solomon Islands.

During the Ethnic Tension, I was living with my family at Belaga Village, Malango, Central Guadalcanal. During that time, we were told that Malaitans should go back to their island because the Guadalcanal people would fight them.

At that time the Malaitans settling around that area started to move out of their respective places. The tension started, and then I saw Malaita people being transported down to town. I asked my husband, what about me?, he said to me that I am married to a Guadalcanal man and there is nothing to worry about. After some time, we moved up to the Gold Ridge

Relocation site. Then one evening a boy from our village came up and told us that the militants had shot dead somebody. In fact that somebody had not been identified. This was a Malaitan man but his name was still to be released. The boy said that I had to go because I am Malaitan women. We stayed there, but there was fierce shooting between the two Groups so we decided to move to another place. We stayed there for sometime but due to the heavy shooting again we had to move to another village. In fact some people were killed but it was not like a normal death where relatives had to mourn for them, in this case, when someone was killed, they were just buried in shallow graves, there was no time for proper burial.

We then moved back to Foxwood, but it was still the same, there was still fierce shooting. I was restless during the night and could not go to sleep, I was frightened too. By early the next morning I woke my children because there was fierce fighting and there was lights everywhere on tree tops, etc. I thought that Jesus was returning at that time to take his people home. When I looked outside I could see men in army uniforms, I got up and grabbed my two children and ran outside but the other one was missing. I had to go and look for him, I found him and then we had to cross a stream to go to another village. None of us could swim but we managed to find a shallow place to cross. I had to assist my children crossing the stream because as I said none of us could swim including myself. We were so frightened but we kept on going until we came to another village, I do not know the name of the village, but there was nobody around, everyone had escaped to the bush, so my children had to hide in a Church. I could hear the shooting taking place at the village where we just left. There was still shooting, I got my three daughters and ran to hide under the dead oil palm branches. We could see lots of people travelling up and down, but when they got to where the militants were shooting, they had to turn back to Gold Ridge. I stopped one of the trucks and three of the men in the truck came and took my daughters to go on the truck. When we got to Ngalibiu, we were surprised that we were not hurt. We remained at CDC area for sometime even when there were shoot outs. We decided to go back to Gold Ridge, so we went there and stayed but still leave in fear. There was not enough food, because there was no time to look for food but too busy to run away and find save places to hide.

By then I felt brave so I wanted to come down to town to look for some food so I asked my husband at that time and he said its up to you. When I got to the Banker the Militants were not happy with me but one of them said, your life rests with yourself. As I walked across I was felt unsecured so I came to a Tasiu and I told him that I wanted to go down to town to get food for my children. I kept on walking down and when I looked around two members of MEF pointed their guns at me. However, I managed to get to town and get some food for my children and then I came back. My family went back to Gold Ridge and stayed there during the Ethnic Tension days. When there was Proclamation for Peace I came down to Town and joined the Peace March.

What I would like to say here is, the Ethnic Tension caused deaths and destruction. Sadly my husband left me and my children and I had to return to Malaita to be with my people.

As we can see, who is to be blamed, these days Malaitans can fight against Malaitans and Guadalcanal fight against Guadalcanal. I appeal to the Leaders of this country to come out and do something to assist the people who suffered a lot during the tension. As for the Ethnic Tension, please do not let it happen again.

Interviewer: Thank you Gloria, you were a brave woman.

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Mrs. Grace Bana. She is from Fataleka, Malaita Province

The Victim took her oaths.

Interviewer: Welcomed Mrs. Grace Bana, you may begin your story.

Victim: Thank you Chairman, Deputy Chairperson, Commissioners, Counselors and people of Solomon Islands.

My family bought a piece of land from the landowners at Mberande. We regarded this place as our home since the place was bought. During the Ethnic Tension we were there.

In 1998 we heard stories that the Guadalcanal militants were going to chase the Malaitans who settled illegally in around Guadalcanal. We heard that the militants started to chase some of the people out. During could not much but our lives were in danger. We could not eat or sleep properly and during the nights we left our house and hid in the bush for fear of being attacked. One day, it was a Wednesday, we were all in the house, and someone from Malaita came to the house and told us that the GRA militants were on their way to kill you. When he said this, we sent one of our boys to go down to Tetera Police Station and ring Kingdom Hall, Jehovah Witness for a truck to come and pick us up. The rest of our family gathered together under the house waiting for the truck to arrive. While we were still there, these militants were heading towards us, but one of the elders went up to the house and collected his box and his basket so that we could run away. When he came out from the house and saw these militants he was shocked, fell down and died instantly. We did not know what to do so we covered him up and stayed with him. We made the decision to stay with the dead old man even if we were all killed.

The Landowner whom we bought the land from came and said, you stay put I will tell the militants not to harm you. So he ran to the militants and told them not to kill us because of the elder men had already collapsed and died because he was too frightened. We waited and the truck arrived and we managed to put the dead man in the truck. The driver did not allow us to take any of our belongings because there would be no space in the truck, so we left our houses, belongings, domestic animals plus other things and came to town. We came and stayed at Kingdom Hall but before we did, we had to bury the old man at Kolaridge Cemetery. After a few days, my family were sent home to Malaita. Due to the effect of the Ethnic Tension, my children's education was disrupted. They did not go to school as they should. When we got to Malaita, I experienced the same thing as on Guadalcanal. My people did not welcome me and my family I suffered as I did on Guadalcanal. My husband left me and my five children, so I had to struggle to look after their welfare. The house which was built at home was not even complete and the sad thing was my husband left us for someone else. Two my of children only got to Form II and there was no money for their school fees they had to quit and came back home. One of them is in Form III, I am not sure whether he would make it to four next year. I just told my children; because we are on our own I do not know what the future may hold for us.

To many of us children are our future, it is the same with me in respect of my children, because if they are well educated, then they will assist me in the future when they hold good jobs either with the Government or the private sector.

Victim: That is the end of my story.

I would like to thank the Chairman, Commissioners, Counselors and TRC staff for this Program where some of us could freely share our experiences during the Ethnic Tension.

Interviewer: She thanked the victim for her story.

The next victim was Rachel Mitini. She was at CDC II during the Ethnic Tension.

The Chairman went through the protocol of the Public Hearing.

Mrs. Mitini took oaths.

Interviewer: She was welcomed by the Chairman to the Public Hearing.

Victim: One during the Ethnic Tension, we were at house at CDC area. We heard that the militants were coming our way. We left our house and ran away to the bush. We had crossed Balasuna river. When we left no one knew about us, so we went across the river and came to my brother's settlement. We stayed for some time with my brother and then we were told to move out from that place. We all ran away but did not take anything with us, all our houses were burnt down by the GRA militants. We had about a thousand dollars in our house that time but could not save it because if wanted to go back the militants would kill us. We came down to Ngalibiu and stayed there, early in the morning, we came down by bus and we stayed in my sister in law's house. We left my sister in-law's house and went to live with the rest of SIPL workers at SICHE, Panatina Campus. SIPL then chartered boats to take its workers to the Provinces. I went with my husband to Malaita but sadly I lost all my belongings, I did not even take anything with me. During the tension I also had my baby at the National Referral Hospital, but I did not have any thing for my baby but luckily the Dorcas women assisted me with clothes and other things.

That is the end of my story.

Interviewer: He thanked Mrs. Mitini for her story.

#### FINAL DAY OF PUBLIC HEARING HELD AT UNITED CHURCH –DAY 4 – SESSION ONE – 26 NOVEMBER 2010

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the final day of the Public Hearing.

He further stated that the Ground Rules remain the same.

The first victim of the day was Mrs. Catherine Bugotu. She comes from Talaura Village, East Guadalcanal. In December 1999, she wanted to come to Honiara for Christmas Shopping.

Mrs. Catherine Bugotu took her oaths.

The Chairman once again briefed all concerned on the protocol of the Public Hearing.

Interviewer: Good morning, Catherine Bugotu, thank you for coming. You may begin your story.

Victim: Good morning Solomon Islands and Chairman, Commissioners, Counselors and TRC Staff.

On December 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1999 I left my village to come to town, I walked all the way down to CDC I where I was picked by a senior member of staff of the then SIPL. When we got to town he dropped me off at the old G Province area. I went into the Provincial area and called in at the Police Office. After a while I went to do my Christmas Shopping. When I got back to the Provincial area, the SIPL truck already left, so I was still sitting around there and one of the Police officers came to me and told that they were going to drop me off at home. At 4:30 pm I got into one of the Police van and they drove me to SIPL II. As soon as we were dropped off the Police officer came forward and hit my sister with his gun and then came and hit me on the shoulder with the same gun and accused that we should not go town. We then travelled to Binu Camp and one of the militants told the others to tie us up and commented that we should not have gone to town. The militants made us sit and started harassing us and swearing at us. They did take a spade and put in front us and told us to go and dig our own graves. You are going to die today, we did not say a word because we were frightened. We were asked to stand up and they swore at us again. It was about 8:00 pm in the evening and told us to go and dig our own graves. By 10:00 pm my nephew came up and the militants said “ look at those pig headed women, they are spying, they went to town”. My nephew told the militants to untie us and said that we were respectable women and should not be treated that way. I told that I was going to take them to my father to be cared for and they should not be treated that way at all. They untied and my nephew took us to his father his house, they were given but we did not eat because of what we had gone through. The boy told us to go to sleep, so we went in the room but we could not go to sleep. The Commander of GRA who was based at Koleasi came down and he went to the house we were sleeping. He asked for us to come out of the house during the night, I came out first but my sister was still frightened. The Commander told us that he was taking to the bush, i.e. to Koleasi, I then said to my sister, that is the end of us, we are going to die. We got in the Hilux and went straight to his house. He advised us not to be afraid, he said, “I am going to look after you and do not worry”. Those boys should not have treated that way. You are women and they should not treat you like that. The women in the house boiled some hot water to put on my sister’s wound. I did not tell them about my shoulder because I was frightened so I just sat quickly. We stayed at Koleasi on 22<sup>nd</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup> December. Our relatives were trying to track us down, so they sent a village chief and a police man to come and get us from Koleasi. When they got there, the Commander did not allow us to go in their truck. He told them that he was going to drop us off, so we boarded the Commander’s Hilux and came down. The militants still demanded us to pay compensation so I gave them \$2,000.00. Sometime later, I was taken to court, where five chiefs questioned me, as to why I went to town and why you wrote a letter to your brother. I told them, can you have a good look at the letter; it was not me who wrote that letter. I do not know how to read and write, you expect me to do that? The Weather Coast Commander then intervened and said, “forget about that paper, we are fighting the Malaitans and not just playing around. The Weather Coast Commander then told me to stand up and go, so the court was dismissed. When I got back to my house, I heard that my brother was arrested at Ruavatu and beaten up and later taken to Hospital. This happened on the same date, 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1999. I was fortunate that the Weather Coast Commander and Chief were present during the village court

hearing and I was able to be released otherwise I should also pay some compensation because I came down to town.

My concern here is that, the Police took me to SIPL II but they later beat me and my sister. My appeal here is for the Government to investigate the policemen who did criminal activities. They too did criminal acts which the Government or the Police Force did not know about. It is time that the Government or Police Force should look at this issue and address it. It was not the militants who carried out criminal acts but the police officers. So please have a look at the system and try to correct it because it's not only criminals who did this but also police officers.

Victim: That is the end of my story.

Interviewer: Thank you Catherine for your story and the Commission will take note of your concern.

The other speaker of the day was Ms Margaret Maelanga. Women for Peace , West Side.

Ms Margaret Maelanga took her oaths.

The Chairman once again briefed all concerned on the protocol of the Public Hearing.

Interviewer: Good morning, Ms Margaret Maelanga thank you for coming. You may begin your story.

Interviewee: I would like to say thank you to you Chairman, Deputy Chairperson, Commissioners and Counselors and People of Solomon Islands.

In 1999, my family live at White River and we are still there to this day. We heard that the Malaita and Guadalcanal were going to fight each other because of tension between the two groups. We heard that most people from Malaita were going to board ships and go back to Malaita. My family discussed what steps to take so we agreed that we should go back to Malaita. We wanted to down to the wharf so that we could check if there were ships going to Malaita. On Friday my daughter went to wharf, unfortunately the Ramosi I was already full and we could not make it during that trip. We checked if there was any available space but the officers told us, sorry, there are no empty spaces. We came to the Bus Stop and waited for the White River bus, and then we heard that the fighting has now reached Rove, so we went in a Chinese shop and the owner locked us up. After sometime we got out and we learned that nothing really happened. So my daughter and I went back to White River. On Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> we boarded a ship and went to Malaita. When we got to Malaita, we lived with my sister, we did not have any house, we had no gardens, no money so we had to struggle to cope with life at that time. We decided to come to back to Honiara because we own a house at White River. We then tried to settle down at White River and each day I had to listen to the Radio because through radio we could hear what was happening.

I heard a message from the Radio announcing that all women should attend a meeting at YWCA. During that meeting we discussed and decided that a women group should be formed and it should be called Solomon Islands Women for Peace. The women came and discussed and decided that they should go out and preach peace to the militants. Usually in any country where there is ethnic conflict women always take leading role to bring about peace. We made

arrangements to visit the MEF Bankers both east and west of Honiara but could not go further than the MEF Bankers. We took food and some other necessary things with us and told them that we are group made up of women from everywhere in Solomon Islands. We come here to urge you to lay down your guns and let the Government address whatever your demands are. We kept on doing this and one day we made an appointment to see go and PM Sogavare.

We went and approached him if he could seek assistance from abroad to come and help the Solomon Islands because everyone in the country is suffering due to the effect of the Ethnic Tension. The Prime Minister said that he heard our cry and would take note of it. All of a sudden the Sogavare led Government collapsed and the new Sir Allen Kemakeza Government came into power. During the reign of Sir Allen Kemakeza's Government, RAMSI was arranged to come to Solomon Islands. So we were happy when RAMSI arrived in 2003. When RAMSI came in they brought with them lots of guns and were in army uniforms which made the local children felt frightened.

These were the things that Women for Peace were doing during the period of the Ethnic Tension. At one time we wanted to visit the Isatabu Freedom Movement but we had to make prior arrangements before getting to them. So our Leader arranged with their Commander and then we made our way to their Banker. When we got to Alligator Creek Bridge, there were barricades from MEF on Westside of the Bridge and IMF on the Eastside of the Bridge. We got to the MEF Banker and asked them if we could get to the IFM Militants, they allowed us to pass through and then we gave the MEF Militants some food. We took a big cake with us and when we got to Alligator Creek, we cut the cake in half and shared it between the two warring parties. When we got to the other side, we thought we were going to die, but I said to the others, "put our trust in God" because through Him all things are possible. The militants were hungry too that time, but before we distributed food to them, one of the women from Guadalcanal prayed in her language and shared with God's word in her language as well. After the service most of the militants came out from their hiding wearing Kabilato. After we they had their meal they said "Thank you to the SI Women for Peace" and assured that their intention was not to undermine the women of Solomon Islands. Due to the fact that the Government did not address some of our Demands that was why the Ethnic Tension ignited. Our leader thanked them for accepting us to come and visit them. When we returned to town then we arranged another meeting at YWCA to discuss the possibility of buying and supplying food to the disadvantaged women and children. What we decided was to prepare baskets of store goods and take them to the women and then in return they gave us garden goods. This would supplement the women and children with basic goods from the town, such as tinned food, salt, sugar, kerosene, soap and other items. When we did this, it showed that the warring parties started to cool down. We kept on preaching peace until 2004 when peace prevailed in Solomon Islands but we keep on praying at Holy Cross and sometimes at YWCA up until now.

Interviewee: That is the end of my story.

Interviewer: Thank you Margaret Maelanga for your story.

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The Chairman then welcomed Mrs. Claudetta Liliau. She is a Catholic Women Coordinator and she comes from Tanaghai Parish. She is a resident of Kakabona.

Mrs. Claudetta Liliau took oaths.

The Commissioner Ratu Joni welcomed Mrs. Liliau and she began her story.

Mrs. Liliau thanked the Chairman, Commissioners, Counselors and TRC Staff and the People of Solomon Islands.

Coordinator: I would like to introduce myself. My name is Claudetta Liliau and I come from Lubu Village, which is within the Kakabona area. My story is about my Leadership role within the Tanaghai Parish.

My leadership role with the Tanaghai Parish started in 1984. It was during that year I took up the role of Chairwoman in the Parish. Within the Tanaghai Parish, and in the respective churches we also have some women leaders. Through these women leaders that I work closely with them. During those years, I worked with women with lots of activities through church programs especially on physical and spiritual areas.

My work also involve with the Women Desk Officer at Holy Cross. By 1999, we knew that there was going to be an Ethnic Tension between Malaita and Guadalcanal. I could not believe this when the rumours spread through out our village and even Guadalcanal. Through my work with the Women, we came together and discussed about the Ethnic Tension as to how we could assist. During the same year shooting took place at Kakabona and people started to run away to the bush, especially the front line community at Kakabona already fled to the bush. Even our people ran away to the bush, I continued with my role as a Women Coordinator for the Tanaghai Parish. I called for women within the Parish to come and discuss ways and means to get to those women who had already fled to the bush. In 1999 at the height of the Ethnic Tension, everything stopped, workers could get to work, and children could not attend schools. Seeing Kakabona is almost at the centre of the Ethnic Tension zone we could hear guns day and night. Despite all of these in 1999, the women of Kakabona could still come to the Market and town to buy basic goods for our family. I thanked the Women Desk Officer at Holy Cross who did prior arrangements for our movements. In the year 2000 the Ethnic Tension was getting worse and access to town was getting quite hard. By this time, we had to make new approaches with the GRA and MEF Commanders at the both Bankers. Because GRA was at the other end of the Kakabona we go to them first and ask for permission. We were allowed to get through their Banker but we were advised to go in group and come and in group. The militants asked whether we were frightened of guns but we said to them, yes of course, but we have to go. We then came to the next Banker, the MEF one, we asked them and they gave us the Ok to go through but you must do not buy any petrol. We really found hard times during the year 2000. Fortunately we were lucky to have worked closely with the Holy Cross Women Desk Officer who helped us a lot, and we owed her a lot. Sometimes women found it hard to get through the Bankers and the Women Desk Officer at Holy Cross had to intervene and women got through. Sometimes when things became very hard and those women could not go through they had to spend the night at Holy Cross and the Desk Officer had to arrange transport for them to get through the Bankers the next day, and through God's power it was done. Sometimes the Desk Officer had to arrange transport for the women to go to Koqulai and then they went through the jungle until they got to Veraboli. Sometimes the Desk Officer arranged transport for the women to go and drop them off at White River Banker and they walked across. It was through our faith that things worked out for the affected women of Kakabona area. During the year of 2000 I performed my work as a leader along with other women that we continued to pray for God's guidance. With the

women in our community we managed to continue with our praying and other local churches also did the same. During those hard times when we came to town, our children would be wondering of what would happen to us. So we had to tell them that God would be on our side and he would protect us and infact we really saw God's guidance through those hard times. In the same year 2000, we came across two times for prayers with the members of the Malaita Eagle Force and two times we came across for barter system. During that time Fr. Arkwright was also really helpful to us Catholic Women. He encouraged us to talk with other women groups to make peace and that was why we did not have any fear in us. Our belief that there would be peace after all. Fr. Arkwright called me to come to him and asked me to contact the women in the Tanaghai Parish so that we could go up the hill at Tanaghai. I told Father, we could not do that, because MEF militants are up the hill and they shoot down the field every day. He then insisted that we must go, so we went up. We went up and when we looked on both sides there were lots of MEF militants. We were received in good faith and we had prayer meeting with the members of the Malaita Eagle Force. After we had prayers with MEF militants we came down to the Parish. Father Arkwright went to Tamboko and it is within and last place of the Tanaghai Parish. He gathered the women from Tamboko and asked them to be prepared. The women then prepared themselves and went to a Prayer Mountain. They were there for three days praying and fasting. After three days, they came back to Tamboko and prepared themselves again to come to Tanaghai Parish. They left Tamboko at 12:00 midnight and walked all the way to Kakabona, the women of Kakabona joined with the Tamboko women and we made our way to Tanaghai Parish. This was on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2000, we came together at Tanaghai and prayed and then we went up to the Tanaghai hill. Fr. Arkwright said even if you are pregnant you got to come to the hill to pray with the militants. When we came up there were shootings but we just went up. When we got the Banker then one of the Commanders asked the militants to put their guns down, so the militants did and we prayed and shared God's word together. After the prayer, the Commander thanked us and then we shook hands and we were all very emotional and cried. One of their Commanders said "thank you very much to you all mums for the sharing". One of the things the Commander said was to prayer for the GRA militants, but we said to them we already did on our way to you and of course we will always pray for both groups. The MEF militants assured that we could come to town to do our shopping and even going to the market. We went back to our respective places. Then on 22<sup>nd</sup> June, 2000, we came back to Tanaghai and Fr. Arkwright asked me to accompany him to the Malaita Eagle Force . I told Father, that I was still in fear and I don't want to die from my children, but Father said we had to go, so Fr. Arkwright, myself and my cousin sister left for the MEF Banker. When we got to the White River Banker we were questioned by the MEF militants and then we told them that we were on our way to the White River SSEC Church. When we got there we asked the SSEC Pastor if we could conduct a prayer meeting there, and then he gave us his Ok. We went back to Tanaghai and got ready to come back to the SSEC Church at White River for a prayer meeting. We conducted a prayer meeting with the MEF militants with some of the women at White River. When these women say us they too were emotional and started crying, so we all cried. After the prayer meeting we went back to Kakabona and some of the women had to walk to Tamboko. At that time there were no trucks along the road because MEF militants did not allow any petrol to pass through these Bankers. It was just hard to say anything but as I could say we really proved God's presence during those difficult times. It was through God's power that we could get through during those times. I would like to commend highly to the Holy Cross Desk Officer who tirelessly worked during day and night to welcome anyone called in their during those times.

On 15<sup>th</sup> July, 2000, there were two major shot outs that took place at Kakabona. By then everyone at Kakabona left the place and ran away to the bush. I left for village at Tamboko, and even I was there, I still carried out my work as a Catholic Women Coordinator. I gathered the women of Tamboko and prayed together and talked about how we were going to carry out our next mission. Due to the heavy shooting at Kakabona, we decided to rest a while because we were frightened of those high powered weapons used by the members of Malaita Eagle Force.

When we stopped to come to town we then went to Aruligo to conduct our market. The people of Aruligo came down and the people along the road as far as Tamboko went down and we do the marketing there.

On 9<sup>th</sup> August, 2000 I was still at Tamboko when my brother told me that my house at Kakabona was burnt down including all the houses at Kakabona. Another brother also came and told me that I should forget about everything because the house was burnt down with all its contents. I told him, never mind, let God have his way. Even though I was at Tamboko I still managed to come to Kakabona. Towards the end of 2000, the MEF militants told us that our husbands and our young boys could come to town. We went back and told our men what the MEF militants said and then I started to notice that peace was slowly taking place. By then our men too started to come to town, and the women started to bring their market products to the Central Market and barter system between women from other Provinces continued until December right through to first part of 2001.

In 2003, our Catholic Women Desk Officer, arranged that we should visit our sisters our Catholic Sisters from Malaita. She arranged a meeting with all our Coordinators from all Parishes to discuss the visit. She made arrangements on transport and food and informed women on the receiving end. On September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2003, the Catholic Women of Honiara and other Parishes left Honiara for North Malaita. When we got to Malaitia, we were surprised that everyone was waiting to welcome us. There were canoes waiting to take us to the shore and people were ready to accept us on arrival. When we saw this, we did not know what to do, but we were very emotional and started crying. There were fourteen boats that came to take us to take ashore. When we got to the shore, our sisters from Malaita come and greeted us and then we began to cry. We did not know what to do, but shook hands and cried. We spent one week on Malaita and during that time the Catholic Women of Malaita with our Holy Cross Desk Officer made arrangements that we should reconcile. A big Reconciliation Program between the Catholic Women of Malaita and Catholic Women of Guadalcanal took place. For us the Guadalcanal women, there were only eighty of us but I could not say the number of the Malaita women. There were lots of people including, men, women and children who gathered at Takwa School in the Takwa Parish to witness the occasion. Even the men when they shook hands with us they also cried with us. At the end of the Program at Takwa we came back to Honiara and then dispersed to their respective homes.

In 2005, the Westside Women for Peace was formed. During that year, the Westside Women for Peace came together and decided to build the White River Market for women on the Westside to sell their products. At that time I was still not a member of that Group. The Market was operating very well and it helped a lot of women from the Westside and somehow thing went wrong. The Market broke down and the Women of that Group also dispersed. It was later learnt that the land was allocated to someone else. I have been elected to be the chairperson for Westside Women for Peace. I was asked to try and resolve the piece of land

which was first allocated to the Westside Women for Peace. If not I will try and get another piece of land somewhere else for them.

That is the end of my story there but I would like to put across the following to the Government.

1. A call for the Government to recognize the Westside Women for Peace.
2. The Government to look at a suitable site on the Westside to set up a Memorial Place to commemorate or remember where Women first shed their tears.
3. The Government must quickly address our issue on our Lost Properties, my house was burnt and I do not have the means to rebuild it again.
4. All mothers to work together with our family, community and then Solomon Islands will be a better Nation.

Interviewer: Thank you very much Claudetta for your story.

The Chairman welcomed Mrs. Anna Rohia. She is from Tikopia and married to a Malaita man. She was teaching at Lungga School when the Ethnic Tension broke out.

Mrs. Anna Rohia took her oaths.

Interviewer: Welcome Anna, you may begin your story.

Interviewee: Thank you Chairman, Fr. Sam Ata, Deputy Chairlady, Commissioners and Counselors and People of Solomon Islands.

I would like to take this opportunity to share my experiences during the Ethnic Tension.

I lived at Lungga and my husband happened to be the head of Lungga Primary School.

At the beginning of 1999, lots of people were chased out of SIPL and other areas of east Guadalcanal, they had nowhere to go so RIPEL Management was kind enough and allocated some houses for these displaced people. It seemed that the influx of people from SIPL was too much for the RIPEL Management to handle so my late husband allocated the classrooms and even the church for the people to occupy.

When I saw these people kept on coming I felt sorry for them, then I said to myself, I saw similar incidences in movies but now the really thing is happening in Solomon Islands. When some of the relatives heard that these people were displaced they went up and took them to town to live with them. I thought to myself, this is real life, the life I have not gone through before and I felt very emotional for them.

When the MEF militants set up their Banker at Alligator Creek and it was the first time that our children heard the continuous sound of gun firing, they were so frightened that they started to run all over the places. They started to run up the road leading to Alligator Creek when they were turned back by Police Officers.

The children were advised not go as far as Henderson but to stay put at the school. My experiences and fear did not allow me to eat, I did not know what to do. I could not go to sleep peacefully, any gunshots would make me sit and wonder what would happen next.

Being a mother it is very hard to cope with life during those times. Mothers do have concern for their children; other mothers would support me on this. Accessibility to the market was not easy too; sometimes there would be road blocks so we had to come back and finding our own way to our destinations. Next one is my participation on the SI Women for Peace. There would be meetings held in Town but I sometimes did not attend due to transport difficulties, but still I could make it. Some times when I attended meetings, the meeting venue would be crowded because there were too many of us. We feel as though the love of mothers goes out to everyone, to those who were involved the fighting. We collected some food, betel nuts and cigarettes and we went and distributed to the militants on both sides, ie. Malaita and Guadalcanal. When mothers or women distributed these to them, they felt very emotional that they began to cry. That meant a lot to them because they knew that the love of mothers reached them. Sometimes when they were approached they could be harsh or aggressive but after a while they understood the situation they came and hugged you. I do not want talk anymore because I do not want to prolong my story but I would like to say here is; "let us value the Love of a Mother". Let mothers reach out to most other sisters in the most affected areas in the country, with our prayers and with our love.

I think that is all, thank you so much,

Interviewer: Thank you Anna Ronhia for your contribution.

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The Chairman welcomed Ms Betty Lima. She is from Guadalcanal and lives at New Koleula, North Guadalcanal.

Ms Betty Lima took her oaths.

Interviewer: Welcome Betty, you may begin your story.

Interviewee: Thank you Chairman, Fr. Sam Ata, Deputy Chairlady, Commissioners, Counselors and People of Solomon Islands.

I would like to put forward my recommendations to the Government. Before putting my recommendation effective of women, I would like to salute few people and organization where they participated very actively during the Ethnic Tension. One of which I cannot forget is SICAFW which was a Woman Organization during that time, actually SICAFW was one of the mutual organization which participated actively during that time. I would like to actually salute all Desk Officers, the five desk officers where we worked very hard during that time. If it was not for them, no women would come closer to the frontline. It was through SICAFW created the Women for Peace. I would like to salute their work during that time and for some time they remained silent after peace came back to the Solomon Islands, those women had been slaves behind the scene and seen as nobody in which, this is my very strong recommendation that Government should at least acknowledge or make some recommendations for training or whatever that would benefit them as somebody in front of the line. As I already introduced myself and I was part of the team and I represented Asian Pacific in 2002 in Dublin just to tell the story of Solomon Islands Women, how they felt during the Ethnic Tension. Although through the support and assistance from Amnesty International; I was there representing Solomon Islands. Also in 2003, I was in Australia, representing Solomon Islands; purposely to tell the stories about women in Solomon Islands

about how we felt. That was where I met the Chairman and we had a fundraising and I took back what we raised through SICAFW too. The areas where I represented our country because of the conflict, and also my message in Dublin and when I stayed in London, I also negotiated for a Lawyer because of the breakdown of Law and Order in Solomon Islands. I also participated in the negotiation for the recruitment of Mr. Ken Avere in Solomon Islands. I should not have said that but I was behind the scene through Amnesty International. Besides those I have said I also did other things which I cannot mention now. This is what I would like to say. Being Peace and Gender Advocator in Solomon Islands, I would like to begin talk with the UN Resolution 1325; "Peace and Security". The involvement of Women in the Peace Negotiation in Solomon Islands; which we heard from other women, this was negotiated by the Women themselves. It was not started from the Government or anywhere. As Solomon Islands is a sovereign nation is also part to the UN Resolution 1325; "Women have to be self represented in participation in whatever". My second recommendation is; the Convention on Elimination of Racial Discrimination; in which the Solomon Islands Government rectified it. That I would like to say; when the Government ordered the Patrol Boat as the property of the Government, as a Nation and went against the civilians, these were the Government's own people. I would like the Government to look at this carefully, and its one of the recommendations that I noted in my write up. Also when RAMSI came in Solomon Islands in 2003, they destroyed all the guns. What about the machine gun in the Patrol Boat, that 75 Caliber, they did destroy that too? That is my question! Also that Patrol Boat gun destroyed the Guadalcanal people and also destroyed other properties as we have heard. What is the SIG going to do about this, is it going to keep it or destroy it as other guns? That is my question! The other recommendation I would like to put across is; all the militants who joined the Illegal Operation during the Ethnic Tension should reconcile; I strongly recommend that they should reconcile with the victims who were really affected with their immediately families. Those concerned should not be promoted to the level which they are in now. These officers should be investigated thoroughly and be penalized so that they should feel the same way the victims went through during the Ethnic Tension. Let me put across some of the points; RSIP was involved in Gold Ridge, they were paid \$20,000 each for some unknown reasons. Some of the RSIP members were involved in criminal cases in which a rape case reported in the Weather Coast; as well as looting; in which family favour Amnesty International, the women are reporting those cases under the RSIP auspicious who were there at time in the name RSIP Joint Operations. I would like to put this recommendation across to the Commissioner of Police that on Ranks and files of the Police, please carry out a proper investigation so those Police officers who were involved in the Ethnic Tension should be terminated because the Public will no longer have confidence in them. I recommend that police officers who were involved in the Joint Operations should be terminated immediately. The other recommendation I would like to put across is; a mechanism needs to be in place to identify victims of the Ethnic Tension. What I see here, is a neutral body needs to look after the Reconciliation. This is to make it neutral; because when it is under the Ministry, its being politicized by politicians, eg. on the Weather Coast, in the Constituency where I come from, a Reconciliation took place in three wards, ie. Talise, Vatukulau and Duidui. Provincial election will be next week, what do you think of this; is it neutral, did really touch and heal the hearts of those victims?; these are some the questions I would like to ask. To me this was not neutral; it was politicized. I would like to put another recommendation to TRC; engage more counselors to assist Martha Horiwapu and Francis Kairi; specially other counselors should be from Guadalcanal and Malaita; so that what sensitive issues can be raised through the respective Provinces. This issue was raised during my discussions with the victims and would like the Commission to take note of this; we need more than just two counselors. Training should be undertaken if some counselors are recruited, I am not talking the two current ones,

they are already well trained. If we think that counseling is important, please train some more so that they are well equipped. We also heard victims highlighting their views, opinions on what had happened to them during the Ethnic Tension. What I can see now that Donors focus more on Honiara than the other urban areas; training should be conducted in the urban areas and then to rural areas, because the victims are there. The other recommendation is; the flexibility of finding criteria needs to be established to the Donors so that victims can access funding from them. The donors criteria is too restrictive and the level of education of our people is low and there is should be flexibility to accommodate this. Also another recommendation is; the Guadalcanal Provincial Government to assist the Westside Women for Peace to negotiate to take back their plot of land for the market. Also to negotiate for a market place at Henderson for the Women for Peace on the Eastside; on these issues I would like the Guadalcanal Provincial Government to address them. Also a site to be allocated so that Women for Peace could a set a memorial place for the women to remember when they first shed tears and when peace was pronounced after the Ethnic Tension. This was a request from the Women for Peace and women of Solomon Islands as a whole.

The 8<sup>th</sup> point on MDG, the funds allocated for women, please I would like to appeal to the Parliamentarians that between now must be given to the women because it touched the 8<sup>th</sup> point on the MDG. None of these women could access financial assistance. I know the money is there, because I was also involved in the discussion and negotiation about this MDG. At least one woman should benefit from this funding. Another recommendation I would like to put across is; through the Government and from the Government through to the Ministry of Education to give allowances to the youths and women victims; because especially for youths, because during the Ethnic Tension they lost their education and their future had been affected. The Ministry of Education should give allowances so that the youths could access education because they were left out during the tension. If you look on the impact on young women; I must also say that I was one of the volunteers on the Constitution task; where I saw a lot of our young women or even married women in nightclubs; and to put food on the table they had to become prostitutes. Some of the women we met had been encouraged by their husbands to go to nightclubs in order to provide food on the table; they had no choice but to do that. I would put this across to Government as how to address this type of issue because this is an impact of the ethnic conflict. The impact on the Ethnic Tension has not been addressed by the Government and whatever Reconciliation is to be carried out it will never last long. One of the reasons why the reconciliation will last long because the Bonfide Demands of the Guadalcanal have not been fully addressed. Whatever the technical Ministry started to address; the people of Guadalcanal need to know the level of the demands had got to so far; for example; like the Ministry of Lands and Housing; the Law Reform Commission; whatever technical Ministry you come under the Rehabilitation, I would like you to make awareness to reflect the level you have reached. Even my colleagues from the Ministry of Reconciliation and Peace you need to do more so that the people of Guadalcanal need to know how far you've got to. This is to prevent them from speculating that nothing has been done so far. I would like now to salute the women of Malaita, Guadalcanal and Solomon Islands; you were a hero during the Ethnic Tension. You were not frightened of guns during the Ethnic Tension and yet you took another step forward to negotiate for peace.

I would like to say "Thank you to masi to these women" you had never been paid but you achieved your aims and objectives.

That is all, I would like to put across to the National and also TRC .

Thank you Mr. Chairman; Deputy Chairlady, Commissioners and counselors and people of Solomon Islands women especially if you are listening to my presentation and you have something to say but you do not have the chance to voice it.

Thank you very much.

Interviewer: She thanked Betty for her presentation and TRC will take note of her recommendations.

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The Chairman welcomed Mrs. Ernie Ivupitu. She is from the Western Province and lives at her home village.

Mrs. Ernie Ivupitu took her oaths.

Interviewer: Welcome Mrs. Ernie Ivupitu, you may begin your story.

Interviewee: Thank you Chairman, Fr. Sam Ata, Deputy Chairlady, Commissioners, Counselors, Victims from Malaita and Guadalcanal, Youths, Women and others who are present at this time. Good morning people of Solomon Islands; good morning everybody on the street; on the islands or wherever you are listening from.

This is the time for women to tell the Nation, how rural women feel during the Ethnic Tension. By listening to the stories from some of the women yesterday, we know of us were touched. By staying with those women, as I am from the West and I stay amongst the women victims from Guadalcanal and Malaita, we did not feel that we are different from other women we feel as we are from the Solomon Islands. When we shared our stories we all shed tears. Sometimes when we share stories, we have been touched and this made us feel like not eating; even there is lots of food available. Thank you TRC for providing for us and thank you for this opportunity to tell the nation; the views of the women out in the rural areas.

I was here during the Ethnic Tension, I was working for Telekom as a Technician; but because of the Ethnic Tension I lost my job and everything and went home. My children had to be pulled out from school which affected their level of education. Somehow I managed to put them in a reasonable school to continue to their education. We would like to thank the Churches to provide schools for our children for those of us who came home. As a mother I could feel that other women who do not have the chance to come I sympathize with them. Even we live out in the rural areas we too are affected by the spillover of the Ethnic Tension. We found it hard too in the rural areas; there were shortages of basic things like sugar etc. because sea transportation was also affected; and it was just like the world had stopped at one point.

I will now come to my recommendations; I heard women saying that they were homeless; there was no security; there was no identity; our own people did not recognize us, as we heard from some of our speakers yesterday. If your mum's side do not recognize you; why not your dad's side receive you; but in this case both sides rejected you. This is a very sad affair and I think it is a new thing that happened during the tension. There was no food; women felt left out; even back in the rural areas; Government services do not reach us. There were only limited services provided; a lot of these services were concentrated only on urban areas;

especially in Honiara. The Honiara residents benefit a lot from services provided by the Government while back in the Provinces as far as in the Shortlands; Temotu and may be Tikopia; the Government services is only limited. May be it's there but it is not enough. I attended a workshop which addressed Violence, lots of women got pregnant but could not get to the clinic; it might be only one clinic and women could not get there because its too far from their village. It turned out that some of these mothers probably had their babies in the canoe or on the road, so you could see now that this was difficult for the women of the rural areas.

Security: Police Station: There is only one at Seghe. How on earth this Police Station would serve the whole of the Marovo Lagoon where it is regarded as the biggest Lagoon in the world which Solomon Islands take pride of it. You think one Police Station should fit? I do not think so! What about North New Georgia, not a even a Police Station in there, not even a Police post. Even the Munda or Noro :Police Stations are still insufficient to service the whole of the Roviana Lagoon. There were lots of cases reported but were not taken up; I do not know how; because I am not a police officer. I think its time the Government should dig deep to see the nature of the cases those women reported in the past. As some of those women said there were cases reported but there was no response from the Police. As you know women are vulnerable; and high ranky women should come down and be leveled with the women in the villages. I think you should come down and wear the shoes of the rural women; to feel the pain; to feel the struggles of women down in the Provinces. If we talk about poverty in the MDD; it is rated as No. 1. It is now on our shore; it is happening through out Solomon Islands; women are struggling what are we going to eat tomorrow? They have their market products; where are they going to sell them? There are no market outlets to sell their vegetables or potatoes or whatever. What I would like to put across; first recommendation; Government needs to improve the living standards of the women down there in the rural areas. If water is close, shelter is provided and food is there; then it will be easier for the mother to prepare food for the whole family. You educate men, you educate one person, you educate a woman, you educate a nation. I don't mean to discriminate my male colleagues but as a mother I feel as though I am a teacher and a nurse at the same time. My friends from Malaita and Guadalcanal, I feel the pain that you went through. One has to come home to experience the same feeling; if you are in town you won't feel it. You need to come home, do not want for another four years to come for your campaign. We need to see you, we need to know you and talk to you, and its good to go hungry sometime. Another recommendation I would like to make is; the Government and the Churches to work together with TRC. You need to work hand in hand; training Counselors, and they should go out in the Provinces; I know the two counselors do a lot work, thank you Counselors. You do your job not for yourself, not for your Province but you do it for the Nation. We need training for resource women, so together we build a better family, a better community and a better Solomon Islands.

Thank you too masi!

Interviewer: Thank you Ernie Ivupitu for your contribution.

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The Chairman welcomed Mrs. Joyce Murray. She is from Makira Province and lives at Kira Kira.

Mrs. Joyce Murray took her oaths.

Interviewer: Welcome Mrs. Joyce Murray, you may begin your story.

Interviewee: Thank you Chairman, Deputy Chairperson, Commissioners, Counselors, members of the Staff of TRC .

I am honoured, very honoured to be invited to this very important program, being a rural women in the village of Makira, this program is being highly commended and for me to come and participate its an honour for me. I am very happy, at first I thought that it was a sort of holiday for me. Infact I thought it was just a day off from my ordinary village life style, while waiting for grannies to come home. Commissioners, TRC staff, it touches my heart to spend time with the women in the United Church Resthouse, morning till late at night, listening to their stories, listening to their experiences, sharing tears with them. I was happy to join in with them representing the women of Makira to share our one shoulder with very sorrowful women. Because of all these I think I was blessed, they asked where I came from and I told that I was from Makira. In Makira we did not know too much about the Ethnic Tension which took place on Guadalcanal. I only heard about MEF and GRA, I did not know that those women and children were really affected. During the Tension I came across, and children were displaced in schools in town, apart from few friends whom I knew, I received telephone calls from unknown people or families begging and crying so that I could find spaces for their children in schools in Makira. I still have not met the parents of those children whom I assisted in finding spaces for them. I took them on board without knowing their parents. When these children completed their education and during the graduation day, I was there as a mother, then after receiving their certificates, they walked down to me and thanked me and we shed tears. Prior arrangements had been made by their parents to travel to Honiara. They just had to accept it, I just told that them I am happy to be part of my family. So each time they hugged me they just told me, you are our mother because you are always there for us while the real mother is somewhere else relaxing, but as I said I happy to fill in theirmothers places. So that is my experience I saw and shared it with the children. Today they are grown up and whenever I am in Honiara and I see them they greet me as their real mother and they even wished me Happy Mothers Day. Before I can make some recommendations for the TRC to take on board, I would like to appeal to the Women in Honiara; we go out and advocate to the women who suffered; they are just another human, why can't we take a day off from work and share with these women; victims of the Ethnic Tension. I would like to say if I have thousands of dollars; I would not be satisfied but when I shared my tears with other women; it blesses my heart. Today when I am present here I feel very sad because none of the women in town come up and say hallow to us or even visit us. Today is the last day of the program; no one comes and visits us or just to say how are you all doing. No, there is no sign of young girls or women visiting us just to share our feelings etc.. To Martha, I thank for your patience and for sharing with the victimized mothers and for the overall understanding extended to these women. Thank you for the families of the Commissioners who come and listen to the Hearing. Ratu Joni, thank you for coming down to be part of us. I was listening to the Youths and almost everyone mentioned about the Legal System in the Solomon Islands. The people who work in the Ministry of Police and Justice, they must be professional officers, not those who do not perform duties in a professional manner. They must be professional officers so that they implement the law in the Solomon Islands. Secondly the women in the Solomon Islands have been struggling; we think women should be involved in decision making. I salute those women who have made way up and are holding top positions in the Government and private sector. I salute you women for your achievement. We women in the grassroot we are

very proud of you, but one thing, we need someone up there in the decision making, we need women to be a legislators. A woman who speaks the heart of a woman. If PNG could make reservations for Women in their Government System, why not Solomon Islands; we should do likewise. Some of our women tried to be in Parliament but could not get in. Why not reserve seats for them. If Australian and New Zealand elected Women Prime Ministers why not Solomon Island Women? I have been hearing for the last four years or so; that we wanted women to be in Parliament, and had to reserve seats for them, but still there is no legislation in place for this. If we can take the straight initiative I think we could make it, because no matter how hard we tried we did not get through. I as far as I could remember the only Woman Parliamentarian was Mrs. Hilda Kari and nobody else. I believe that we can make reserve seats for women, for those women who tried before and did get through; I encourage you not to give up but to try again during the next election. To me we need women to be involved in the legislature. I supported the other two women's comments that if Parliamentarians would like to make another term, then come down and be leveled with us in the villages. The power is in the hands of the villages, we are the ones who will vote for you. So let us start thinking about the 2014 elections; as the last speaker said, come down and be like us in the villages. I think by 2014 I believe that women could do it, they should have a representative in Parliament. In my third recommendation is; for the Ministry of Women, Youth and Children should include in the program to the rural areas, awareness on what Women can do when elected into Parliament. If the Ministry could draw up some sort of information concerning how women could get to Parliament, I am sure most women would vote for women candidates so that you could achieve your aims; that is what I believe. If the decision makers could look at my recommendations, Mr. Chairman, I would be very happy. If the decision makers cannot look at it, good and fine, she is another Makira women, but one has to understand that half of the population of Solomon Islands are women and children.

To the Parliamentarians, you are our masters, the women, we are the Mothers of this Nation, the youths, the husbands we the women do take care of them. So I would like to say make available resources for us, like funds, so that when funds are available then start implementing the targeted projects starting in Honiara then on to the urban areas. Some times when youths or women's group enquire for financial assistance, the answer will always be, the funds have been exhausted. No; the Government should allocate enough funds for the Youths, and Women of this country. Another issue I would like to raise is on Education; it is the backbone of any country as well as for Solomon Islands, it produces manpower. How would it be first to be bolded with these policies, how to draw up policies and how this country could manage all sectors of life in our country, a person has to be educated. All schools should be well equipped; scholarships should be equally distributed to all Provinces. I do not want nepotism system, award scholarships to a son or daughter who deserve it. I don't support decisions of awarding scholarships to your friend's child or your own child or a big man's child. Our children should well equipped so that when they complete their education, they become leaders of tomorrow. Even some of friends, commented that their children have completed but had good marks but could not get scholarships because we did not know anybody at the Scholarships Unit. We lost our dad sometime back, it's a sad thing when one hears this sort of statements. All our children should be fairly treated in getting scholarships for further education. After these students are qualified and come home they take up jobs in their own Provinces. As I a Makira woman, our Province is the last one compared to other Provinces in Solomon Islands, we don't have any manpower. We wanted to have State Government, who is going to be our spokesman. This is one of the things I wanted to share with everyone. I now come to the last one, I now appeal to all our MPs whatever fundings they have, these people should have the right to give it to anyone, a voter or a supporter or what, make it fair, the

mothers need this financial assistance. If you give the money to the men, they would finish them before arriving at their respective villages. Sometimes if there is any sewing project, they would only get one sewing machine, or one roll of calico. If there was a water supply project to make the livelihood in the village improved, the blame would go to another person that he was the one who received the money. In all the women are more reliable than men and in my opinion, in any project initiated by women, they deserve to be assisted financially. Another matter I would like to raise is, sometime back when I was in Kira Kira, I heard about the Forgiveness Bill, this makes me worried, if this Bill comes up its legal implications must be fair.

Interviewee: Thank you very much Chairman and Commissioners for giving me this opportunity to give contributions.

Interviewer: Thank you Joyce for your valuable contributions.

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The Chairman welcomed Mrs. Mevalyn Mavakana. She is from the Choiseul Province and she is a woman leader in her community.

Mrs. Mavakana took her oaths.

Interviewer: Welcome Mrs. Mavakana, you may begin your story.

Interviewee: Thank you Chairman, Fr. Sam Ata, Deputy Chairlady, Commissioners, Counselors, Victims from Malaita and Guadalcanal, Youths, Women and others who are present at this time. Good morning people of Solomon Islands; good morning everybody on the street; on the islands or wherever you are listening from.

It is an honour for me to join this TRC Program as I am from the Grassroot level. My name is Maevalyn Mavakana and I am from Choiseul Province. Currently I am the President of the Choiseul Council of Women. I am glad to be part of this Program and so I have heard what the victims had said so far. In Choiseul too we went through the same experiences, we had the spillover effect of the Bougainville Crisis and the Tsunami. We felt the same sentiments as women from Malaita and Guadalcanal had.

I would like to contribute on the some of the things that affected women in Choiseul and might other parts of Solomon Islands. There are lot of things we still respect in our Province. In Choiseul men are still the head of the family, even though the women have the rights in other ways, the men start to understand the women's situation. On the Religion side we still maintain our stand as Christians. On the health issues, that is one of the things that affected us, especially on STI cases, poverty too is present within our Province, because we had lots of logging companies operating in our Island, but not many of the people benefit from these logging operations. The rest of the people got nothing out of these logging companies operating in our land. We also experienced unfair distributions of resources too, livelihood might be from the MPs or Projects do not reach us, especially to women and children, women in decision making and leadership, most decision are made by men both in Provincial and National level. We experienced family breakups, climate change, teenage pregnancies and violence against women. These issues are still on the rise in our villages and within the Province and may be throughout the Nation.

I will now make some recommendations:

- Good health facilities
- Good education for both males and females and must achieve good outcome will remain a priority to our nation. This will help to reduce maternal mortality and impact on STI. These are our priorities
- Improve the economy status of women through their own resources in town and in the Provinces

When I travelled around Lauru I came across lots of women coming to Honiara to purchase their own cargo for their small businesses at home. The Captain of the ship made a statement that those women are the ones who general income for the ship. These women could understand how to operate small business so that they have money to keep their small businesses going. So I appeal to the Government to recognize women and assist the women of Solomon Islands in their small business. Another issue is the equal participation of men and women in decision making; women are well represented in public offices in Solomon Islands, only one woman had been elected into Parliament since Independence in 1978. So this is another issue that women need to be recognized in decision making. I can give a classic example; in the family or kitchen, it takes two to make decision. It takes a man and a woman to make a decision on what to have at dinner and this happens. I do not see the reason why women should not share decision in Parliament or at the Provincial level. I would like to make an example; if a plane tries to take off with one wing; it cannot make it. If it takes off with two wings it will reach its destination. I would like to support now that women should participate both in National and Provincial levels.

Violence against Women still remains the biggest problem in our country. My last recommendation; seeing that we a Christian country, all Christian women around the Solomon Islands; to strengthen the gospel of Love and Forgiveness in our country. Money is not the answer; it is the condition of the heart that can change our country and to remain in unity.

Interviewee: Thank you very much.

Interviewer: Thank Mrs. Mavakana for your contributions.

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The Chairman welcomed Mrs. Georgina Sogotee. She is from the Western Province and married to a Malaita man. She lives in Honiara and a Catholic Women Leader.

Mrs. Georgina took her oaths.

Interviewer: Welcome Mrs. Georgina Sogotee you may begin your story.

Interviewee: Thank you Chairman, Fr. Sam Ata, Deputy Chairlady, Commissioners, Counselors, Victims from Malaita and Guadalcanal, Youths, Women and others who are present at this time. Good morning people of Solomon Islands.

I am honoured and privileged to come and talk on behalf of Women and I think I am one of those few selected ones to talk on behalf of Women in Solomon Islands.

The main thing I am going to talk on is especially an organization which was established during the Ethnic Tension and that organization is the Women of Peace. As we know this organization was established and progressed in our country; infact it was established in Solomon Islands and did not branch out from another country.

First of all I would like to introduce myself. My name is Georgina Sogotee. I was former teacher by profession and unionist in the teaching field. I am currently doing pastoral counseling in our Catholic Church at Holy Cross. I also would like to thank the Archbishop Adrian Smith and all the Clergy in our Church, especially on the training conducted to us to be counselors to deal with stress and trauma. I am glad that this work that we carry out help a lot of people. I would like to share my experiences on the work we have done so far but I will tell you later on. As part of my work too is to help especially young people and families who were traumatized. I would like to thank all counselors within the TRC for all the hard work; for without your support and assistance work cannot progress as expected. This type of work when it is conducted it must touch the heart of all human beings. I would like to say thank you to other Churches and SICA and SIFGA because the representatives from these organizations supported me very much especially when we have meetings together, I would be only the woman amongst lots of men especially on decision making on that level. I would like to thank them especially on issue of women.

I would like to continue on with my story. I would like to start; based on the Social Unrest and how the Women for Peace was involved. As we have heard during the Social Unrest, we heard how the victims told their stories on what actually happen to them. This morning you also heard some of the women who participated during the Social Unrest. I also participated and sometimes I went to Mt. Austin where at times I found it hard to find my way back to town. I sometimes stayed with the people at the village and we conducted prayer meetings with the MEF at their Banker. We advised them that they had to think very carefully before taking further steps in their actions. During those days things were not easily for men, women and children especially the old people. During my stay at the village at that time, and each evening we would be asked to get together at Okola village, while others kept watch during the night. At one time, I got the courage and told my husband that I was getting tired of all what was going on. So I said its better to stay at our respective houses and if the militants want to kill us let it be. Since that we all remained in our houses where we continued to pray; so that we could get the courage and strength to stay in that situation. Through our prayers we got the courage to continue and I was the one who rang the bell at 4:00 pm each day. It was then we got all the courage to move about in that area. At that time I had to find time to come to town to find out from the Holy Cross Church Administration on what would be organized and to carry out. In 1998 and 1999 I was not in the country but in 2000 – 2003 was when I was able to join up and became one of Holy Cross Coordinators. After the Social Unrest the movement of people was too much and I used to come down to the Holy Cross Church Hall to share stories with people there; how the Social Unrest started and how it was started and how they were chased out.

One of the stories they told me was the issue on land; they told me that even though some of the victims bought land and was in accordance to the custom of Guadalcanal; yet they were still chased out. So I went on to encourage them; but according to some of them all they wanted was to get out of Honiara and go back to their respective Provinces.

The Women for Peace had organized their meetings and arranged their own programs. The Women for Peace had organized their own meetings and programs, they had meetings at

YWCA; SSEC Church Hall; St. Barnabas Cathedral Hall and even at the United Church Hall. The Women for Peace did not belong to one church only but it was an inter-denomination organization. During the period 2000-2003 the Women for Peace had meetings and discussed what could be done to assist the victims of the Social Unrest; and one of their decisions was to introduce barter system. So the representative of the Catholic Women would have meetings and come and advise us on what to do next. She would advise us to prepare something to take to the victims and if the women themselves could not go and then she could on their behalf. The Holy Cross Women bought goods from the shops and gave them to the Desk Officer and then she took them to the victims with other women. In 2003-2004 women gathered together especially women from the Government; they gathered together and decided to form a Forum, and in 2004 we had that Forum. Before that Forum, fifty women were selected and that fifty women represented the fifty Constituencies so that they could be sent out to conduct interviews with those women in the affected areas. After the interviews they could come back with their stories so that we could use these information as data during that Forum. In 2004 we had this Forum at the Forum Fisheries Conference Hall. It was based on the sentiments organized by the Women for Peace. Women from Malaita and Guadalcanal, came out and shared their stories. The sharing of stories to look forward to the future was one of the important things discussed at that time. It was true we had events of the past, but let us look forward what the future may bring us. This particular Forum went on for about a week. There were lots of interesting stories that came about during this Forum. A report was compiled after that Forum and a copy should be given to the Government; and the Government should extract some of the data concerning women at that time.

I became involved with the Women for Peace in 2004; and during that year we had a different organization for Women for Peace. We wanted to develop that organization that would create something especially to help women. We then had the continuation of prayer session on Wednesdays and after the prayer session, would sit down and have meetings on women issues to help other women. During our visits to other specified areas we had to wear scarfs; by wearing these scarfs to show that we are Women for Peace and the colour of the scarfs reflects the National Flag. We also made visits to families who had problems within Honiara and outside of Honiara town. Each Province had a representative during the Forum so that when they went back to their respective Provinces they should also form a Women for Peace Group. If and when the women are to form these groups in their respective Provinces, each group should be attached to the Churches; if and when a group is formed it is wise to have it attached to their respective churches so that the group could have more strength in its activities and each time they go to visit all the people, men, women and children should be touched when they are visited. We also have an early plan to outline our main focuses. In 2004 – 2005 our main focus was to gather information so that we could include these information in projects which the women would look at and discuss. In 2006 we focused mainly on family issues, we had to do this because most of our women were affected on the family issues. We focused this from 2006-2010 and during that time we introduced Small Financing Micro Projects. For those women who were involved in the small Micro financing most of them are successful business women now. Since the establishment of the Women for Peace and despite of what had been done so far, the Government or even the NGOs did not recognize our work to assistance us financially. The work we did so far was mainly from our own efforts, by fundraising and registration and in this way we made enough money to assist another woman.

The Women for Peace for Westside were really active between 2004 - 2005. This Group was involved in market produce, they acquired a piece of land at White River and they established

a market house to assist women from West Guadalcanal so that they did not have to come all the way to the Central Market. Somehow something happened during a Government reshuffling when the Minister of Lands and Housing allocated that particular plot of land to another person and the market was closed. During the operation of that market the Women for Peace were able to assist the White River Clinic and the Vatukola Clinic; also the Women assisted to train a Malaria Technician for the White River Clinic. Despite of this the Women for Peace further developed and we elected a new executive comprising of a Chairlady, a Deputy Chairlady, a Secretary and Treasurer and I am a Coordinator of the Organization. Our plan at that was to help women to have self-help projects. So these are some of the initiatives undertaken by the Women for Peace to assist women to generate income for their families. We assisted the women with shell money making project, sewing, flower arrangements, coconut oil selling project, bakery, making local stoves, poultry farming and baking demonstrations. We also try and include women to attend conferences or seminar on women issues where possible in Honiara. Just recently in October, 2010 we assisted some women to get projects from the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development to start off their poultry. We assist them to develop themselves to assist their families to generate some income for themselves. We got representatives throughout Solomon Islands, we have a representative in Central Province, Malaita Province, where we assisted women on a project "Women and Sanitation". I think that this one of the areas we want to explore further. Although the Ministry of Health and Medical Services tried to assist in the past but somehow did not develop further. We wanted to do now is to bring the women from the rural areas, introduce them to the Ministry and the Ministry to support them. In some areas on Malaita this was how it was done and on Guadalcanal we also assisted women to present themselves to the Ministry of Forestry and Research so that the Ministry know them and include them in their decision making. We also have groups in Temotu, Isabel, Makira, in Western Province, in Shortlands, Fomoa Women for Peace we also assisted them, especially on HIV/AIDS awareness when it is a big issue in the world today. We know that Shortlands is close to the PNG Border and the country is contaminated with HIV/AIDS so in 2007 Fomoa Women for Peace conducted a workshop funded by Oxfam International. We also have a representative in Renbel Province. Despite of our efforts shown and our efforts to assist women, what we need now is an office space and office equipment like a computer set to ease our work to reach out to women.

The Women for Peace is based in the Bible; if you look in John 14 v 27; Jesus said "Peace is what I leave with you; it is my own peace that I give you. I will not give it as the world does".

Thank you.

Interviewer: Thank you Mrs. Sogotee for your contributions.

The Chairman announced; that, the Public Hearing is now officially closed on 26 November 2010 at 2:00 pm.

The MC the Commissioners, Counselors, Victims, Coordinators for their assistance in one way or another and also thanked others who attended the Public Hearing and those were listening throughout the country.

Mrs. Margaret Maelanga closed the Public Hearing with a word of prayer at 2:00 pm. *HHIVHI*

The Commissioner welcome the Victims for the after session.

Victim: Priscilla Kate

Priscilla Kate took oaths.

She thanked the Chairman, Deputy Chairperson, Commissioners, Counselors and TRC Staff for organizing the Public Hearing.

Interviewer: The victim was welcomed and then she began her story

In 1998, I worked in town as a teacher. I heard rumours that Malaita and Guadalcanal people were going to attack each other. When I heard this, I did not feel free to move about, especially coming into town. I then told my brothers that to be safe we had to move to the Weather Coast. I took my children and went over to the Weather Coast to stay there. While we were there, we heard that there would be something serious going to happen. So at the height of the Ethnic Tension, the Government then sent the Joint Operation comprising of the Members of Police Force and MEF. By late afternoon that day, we could hear the engine of the Patrol Boat. We knew there was an operation to hunt down Harold Keke and his men. We were advised by the Chiefs that we should not just run all over the places. We got to stay together and do not panic. By seven o'clock in the evening the rest of the people of the village escaped into the bush. We ran into the bush without any lights or torch. We went up right into the mountains without food and other necessities. The children were restless and cried all night because there was no proper place for us to sleep. We stayed in the open and until the next morning. There was an announcement from the Patrol Boat saying that there will be a clearance at 6:00 am in the morning. The Patrol Boat then started shooting, luckily the rest of us already left for the bush. We did not know what to do but to pray for God's assistance and guidance. That same day three Police Officers came to where we were staying, when they got there, they told me that I should go down to the seaside. I had no choice but to follow if I did not I would be shot. All through the ordeal my two children were with me all the time. I followed the Police Officers down to the sea coast. We walked for about six miles and when we got to their base they did not say anything to us but sent us back. The next day they came back and told us to back to their base again. They selected another two women to accompany me down to the sea coast. The Officers led us to a house and told us to stay there because someone was coming to interview us. At about 3:00 am in the morning, the Police Officers asked me to go up to another house. There were lots of Field Force Officers surrounding the area. I was led into a room and these officers were all equipped with guns each. In the same room there was another man, he was tortured and was crying. I sat down and they started asking questions, some of them I termed as silly questions and I did not answer them. I told them how dare you took us at this time of the night and bombarded us with silly questions which we did not have any answers to them. The Field Force Officers took me back to the house where we were asked to stay. The next morning, another three Field Officers came up to the same house and gun pointed at the three of us and asked us to come out from the house. This time they asked us to move to the seaside. The three of us with our children, all went to the seaside. At that time too I was expecting another baby I was five months pregnant. They marched us down towards the seaside, one officer at the front, the other in the middle and the other one was at the back. At that time we had all thoughts in our minds we might be all killed. During those times ordinary people could not speak out their minds because the next thing they would expect was to be shot. We travelled along and the Officers told us to rest for a few seconds. The other person who was being held by the Police Officers was also with us. They ordered us to sing and shout as we travelled along. They asked that person who was with us to get a poisonous tree and rub it against his body, the poor man did it to avoid being

shot at. The Police officers told us that they would take us right to Patrol Boat to be kept in custody. The children started to cry when they heard this, I told them not to cry but kept on going. I asked the injured man to walk behind me because the Police Officer was poking me with his gun and even shooting in the air. When we got to the seaside we went to another village. By this time we got tired of their game and then I asked for their overall boss. They told us that we were going to sleep in that house but I told them in our custom it is forbidden for men and women to sleep in an open space like this. We should be kept separate from the men, so their supervisor seemed to understand and kept the women in a separate house. The Police Officers did not allow us to have lightings of any sort, but the children preferred lights but we were not allowed to use any lights. After a day, we questioned the Police Officers why they were asking us to move to and fro without any good reasons. We were led down to Mbiti where the Joint Operations were based. The Police Officers asked whether we had any one talks in town. I told them I did not have any one talks in town because if they were there they would be killed by the MEF.

Some of the women with their children came with the members of Police Officers and MEF in the Patrol Boat to Honiara. I remain in the Weather Coast with my children until we were ready to come to another village when we saw the Police Officers setting fire on our house. So I told them that we should follow another road. We went and stood on a hilltop and watched our house set a light. So I said to my children, it's a sad affair all our belongings are lost in the fire and we have no means of retrieving anything.

So Mr. Chairman, what I would like to say now, is we have suffered as victims of the Ethnic Tension, we need your assistance, it is more than ten years, we were asked to fill in forms almost six times, but still we have received nothing. May be those forms were thrown in the rubbish bins.

It was on the order of the Government that the Patrol Boat went to Weather Coast to shoot innocent men, women and children. The women and children of Malaita and Guadalcanal suffered and would request that the Government do something about our lost properties. It's my request as a woman who suffered during the Ethnic Tension that the Government should address our claims of lost properties.

What time will the Government address our demands, the demands of the women and children? How long are we going to wait, some of the people are already dead? It's more than ten years, and people are still waiting.

I would like to express my concern in language to the Provincial Government of Guadalcanal. You know very well, the women and children have suffered so long, what time does the Province and the Government address our lost properties? Are you going to enjoy your own lives and neglect us. You better come back to the rural areas and see how the women and children struggle to make ends meet. This our request, Mr. Chairman, please look at the issue of our lost properties. For those women of Guadalcanal who were unfortunate and could not come to the hearing, my heart also goes to you.

Thank you very much one and all.

Interviewer: She thanked Mrs. Priscilla Kate for her story, we will make sure the Government and other authorities are informed of your concerns.

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The Chairman welcomed the other victim, Mrs. Everlyn Hila. She was held at gun by the GRA militants, suspecting that she was a spear for MEF. She was from Aruligo.

Mrs. Everlyn Hila took her oaths.

She thanked the Chairman, Deputy Chairperson , Commissioners, Counselors and TRC Staff for organizing the Public Hearing.

My name is Everlyn Tugua Hila, my place of residence is at Aruligo. My husband died in 1986 and I had to bring up my six children on my own. One day before the Ethnic Tension I came to the Market and after that I went back home and prepared my children's evening meal. After my children had their meal and were ready to go to sleep, the GRA militants went over to my house and demanded me to come out and they said to me that I was a spy for MEF but I told them that was not true. I do not do that, I am loyal to my Province and my people. They pointed the gun at me and told me that if I did not come out from my house they would shoot me. I told them that I should go in and lock my children's doors and then I would come to them. I came down to the valley and up to the other side of the village, they tied my hands and asked me to stand up from 8:00 pm – 10:30 pm. I started praying in my heart that God Almighty should protect me and my children because if I die no one would look after my children. The people of our village saw what was going on but could not do anything because if they started to assist me they would be shot as well. I did not know what to do, somebody came around and told me that I was going to be released. By 10:30 pm the militants released me and I went back to the house. When I opened the house I was very surprised that my children were all safe, I thank God for this. I did not know what would happen to my children.

During the day we saw a ship, going to the shore at Aruligo, we thought that this ship was bringing relief supply but infact it was a destructive ship loaded with bulldozers and mounted machine guns meant to destroy that area especially Aruligo. The barge Alcho landed and the bulldozers and other heavy equipment were released and were driven along the road towards the Iclarm area. The MEF started to shoot and burnt the Iclarm compound plus nearby buildings. One of the settlers of Aruligo was taken away and shot dead later. We later realized this was not a rescue ship so all the people in the village ran to take shelter in the bush. During the Kakabona Operation one of the boys was also shot, we started to mourn for him but due to the landing of the barge we ran away and left his body in our church. When we ran away to the bush lots of things took place, like women giving birth to babies so I had to assist them. Despite all the hardships I went through I managed to overcome them that time through God's guidance.

That is the end of my story.

Thank you Chairman, Deputy Chairperson, Commissioners, Counselors and Staff of TRC and People of Solomon Islands who are listening to the TRC Public Hearing.

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The Chairman welcomed Mrs. Hilly. She was the victim of Harold Keke and his men. Her father was abducted and beheaded by Harold Keke's Group on the Weather Coast. Mrs. Hilly now resides at Aruligo with her family.

Mrs. Mary Hilly took her oaths.

She thanked the Chairman, Deputy Chairperson, Commissioners, Counselors and TRC Staff for organizing the Public Hearing and the People of Solomon Islands.

Interviewer: Mary Hilly was welcomed by the Commissioner and she began her story.

Victims: I am going to rely to you what happened to me and my family in 2003 during one early morning. On Tuesday morning, about 4:00 am, I woke up and went to the kitchen with our house girl to cook breakfast for the family. While we were still cooking I could hear noises coming from the house. I could hear my mum calling my name to go to her, during that time it was still dark. On my way to the house where my mum was, the militants grabbed my hands and tied them behind my back. I was led to our house and at the same time I could see lots of people moving around our house, because it was getting clearer, I could see my parents being tied up near the house. As far as I could see those militants who were there started to destroy most of the fruit trees plus other trees around our house. It was like the force of a cyclone that took place. I was brought to my Dad and mum and we were tied together and the three of us were left standing up. One of the Commanders said that they were going to take us to a village where they supported us. My father at the time was a Provincial member for Duidui Ward. They questioned my Dad, like, "how is the Government, what do they talk about". What is the latest development on our Demands? My Dad managed to answer their questions, while he was trying to answer their questions, they kept on bashing him, kicking him and he fell down several times. They were doing all these to him, while my mum and myself were watching. They asked him about the rest of the people of the village. My Dad told them that, this village was his, and there are other villages nearby, you can go and bring them to here because I am their leader. They then went and took my grandmother, my aunty, my uncle and my small brothers and brought them to where we were. They told us that they would take us to another village. My Dad said to them, that was ok, but while we were still standing there, the militants went into the house and destroyed all our belongings and burnt the house down. The only thing we had at that time were the clothes we were wearing. In our community we had another six villages besides my father's village. Some of the people in the other villages were also taken to my father's village where we kept together, others managed to run away in the bush. They took us to another village where they said that we supported the Government, by then it was daylight. When the militants led us away, my father found it hard to walk because of the way they tied him, he struggled very hard and even fell down, he was then kicked on the back, but he kept on going. We came to a cocoa plantation and then they asked him to stand up against a cocoa tree which was full of ants. The ants started to bite him but he could not do anything because he was tightly tied up. When we got to the next village, we were asked to rest for while. While we were there, I saw two young boys were being led towards us. They were badly bitten and their faces were beyond recognition and one of them did not have any clothes except a pair of pants. Not long after that another group came up with some people, an old man, two old women, two young girls and one young boy; these people were also tied up. The militants asked my mum and me to sit at the verandah while my dad was still down below, my mum and I just watched how my dad was being tortured, while the boys were asked to dance and performed other unexpected actions. It was unbearable to watch those types of horrible scenes; the militants asked me, are you feeling sorry for your dad? I did not reply but to me how come they asked me that question, that is my dad, I felt sorry for him but could not say anything. We stayed there and they kept on talking to my dad, they even put the barrel of gun in his mouth. They even took the money in his basket, tore them into pieces and put the pieces in his mouth. The militants

told my dad and the other two boys that they were going to take them to their boss. You and your mum will have to take this letter to the Police Officers, but I said to my dad that I did not want to go, but my dad said that I must go. I said no I would like to stay so that I monitor your next move. Before we left for the Police my dad requested that he would like to talk to us. The militants would like to know what my dad was going to say to us. So we came to him and he said, if you go, don't go to another place, you have to wait for me on Friday, if I do not turn up by Friday then you should know now I am killed. So my mum and I left for the Police Post, we had to follow rivers and jungle. When we got to the Police place, I could see them just watching the road in case the enemy would come. What are doing, you came especially to hunt down your enemy, how come they came and destroyed us and our place. I told them that my dad was captured by the militants and I still did not his fate. We got to Mbiti on Tuesday, we stayed there on Wednesday, but we ran away to hide in the bush. We could not go to the village because all of our people had gone to the bush, due to villages were being burnt down by Harold Keke's men. Early on Wednesday, I saw some of the people from our village coming out from the bush to the open. Unfortunately, some of the small children were caught in the layer cane thorns and could not be released so their mothers had to come and asked some of the strong boys to go and get them out. We just wondered if anyone could go to Honiara to tell the Government to come and rescue us. My mum and I were escorted to Marasa to catch a boat to Honiara. We caught a boat and came to Honiara. We stayed in Town and by Monday I say some of the people from our village walked across the island to Titinge. During that time, we suffered a lot. I would like to appeal to the Government on three things..

Compensation on the life of my dad with the Provincial Government.

What time the Government or Provincial Government pay the life of my dad, so that my family could get financial assistance? My family has not forgotten my father's death and would like please the Provincial Government or the Government for that matter should do something about his life. My Dad at that time was conducting a course for leaders of the Weather Coast when he died.

I understand that the Government had paid compensation for some of the people who died during the Ethnic Tension, why not my dad. It has been seven years now, he was a Provincial member and the Province especially should address this matter rather than prolonging the issue so that my family should know where we stand.

Since my dad died nobody had come to visit us or update us on the case of my father's compensation.

The people of village have the same feeling as myself so the Government should respond to our plea because we suffered during that time up to now.

Thank you Chairman, Deputy Chairlady, Commissioners, Counselors, Staff of TRC and people of Solomon for this Program.

Interviewer: He thanked Mrs. Hilly for her story.

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The Chairman welcomed the other victim, Mrs. Anna Kikini. She was part and Guadalcanal.

Mrs. Anna Kikini took her oaths. .

Interviewer: Mrs. Anna Kikini you may begin your story.

She thanked the Chairman, Deputy Chairperson, Commissioners, Counselors and TRC Staff for organizing the Public Hearing.

My name is Anna Kikini, my mother is from Guadalcanal and my father is from North Malaita. I was born and brought up on Guadalcanal until the Ethnic Tension started. I am not interested to live in Malaita because I was not born there, I am more interested to live on Guadalcanal than on Malaita.

On 14 May, 1999 between 8:00 pm and 9:00 pm I was ready to go to bed when I heard someone shouting, Anna get out from the house. Anna get out from the house, the GRA militants are attacking your brother. The voice I heard was my uncle's. As soon as I heard my uncle's voice I got hold of my son and we ran out of the house. When we got out from the house I could see my brother being dragged along the road. The militants pointed their guns at him, I could not do anything because I was too frightened. I could not say much because I just got a very big operation and this made me shut up otherwise if I said something I would have been killed. All the militants who were there at that time all had guns. They took my brother to my uncle's house. The other members of my family were all at my uncle's house. My uncle asked the militants if he could give some red money in compensation for my brother, but they did not accept that. I went to my uncle's house and got my sister's children and my own children. I could not do anything further because my operation was not completely healed as yet. At that time, the militants did not give a dump to anybody, they did whatever they could. The militants took away my brother and my two sisters followed him, I had to remain in the house due to my operation.

Early on Saturday morning 15 May, 1999, I had to run to the next village to ask for my cousin's car to take my brother to the Hospital. My brother plus another man from Malaita were transported to the Hospital. I came with them to the Hospital and then went back to the village and stayed there. Sometimes later, the Police Officers at Teterere came and picked some people in a truck to go and live at Teterere. I did not go I remained in the village. While I was there in my uncle's house, I could see that my house was burnt down with all its contents. After the house was burnt down, the militants came and said to me, "see your house has been burnt" I did not say anything. On the third day, one of the boys who joined the GRA came and said to me, "you better go now, if you are still here tonight, the militants will rape you. When I heard the word rape, I was afraid but we could not do anything because it was broad daylight. When the night fell my uncle tried his best to hide us, he took us to another village and hid us in one of our relative's house. We could not hide anymore because I had flu and coughed a lot. He took us to a Policeman and asked him if he could hide us but he refused. He said, "I am on standby, if any Policemen came around I will sweep them with the Sixty rounds. I saw that gun with my own eyes. My uncle then took us back and hid us in an empty house. We only wished if day break was closer so that we could go to another place. After that the Police man and his brother who was an ex-police man came and harassed us. I would like to ask the Government, what do you think about this type of attitude. I know that this particular policeman has been promoted to a CID Officer now. He is still working in the RSIP Force, why does the Government not recognize that this particular policeman harassed us and wanted to hurt us? To us he should be the one protecting us and yet he and his brother wanted to kill us. This case was reported to the Teterere Police Station but we did not receive any positive

feedback regarding the harsh treatment we received from this Policeman and his brother. The story may be small but what they did to us was more than word could express. We suffered a lot during the tension. The creator did not want us to die as yet, otherwise we should have died in the hands of our own policeman. These people had killed a lot of victims and the Government should investigate them properly. Some of the people from my home had killed others but no one faced any punishment at Rove. No one faced the law for what they did. Only the Malaitans and others from the Weather Coast are facing punishment, what about the Tasiboko side. This time they are enjoying life, nothing has happened to them. Some of the ex-militants had been recruited in the Police Force, they are from my home village. Does the Government know that these were former militants? What is the work of the police, is to save people or to destroy them. Some of these Malaitans who had been put in prison did not commit any crime or murder, those who really commit real crimes are still not caught. They have not been put to trial at the Magistrates or the High Court, what is the Government's opinion on this?

One more thing, when we were evacuated to the Multi-purpose Hall, the Malaitans who were also there, did not like us. They did not want us to speak the Guadalcanal language. Each time we had to tell our children to shut up and not speak the Guale language. During our stay at the Multi-purpose Hall we were living in fear because the Malaitans did not want us to be there but we had no choice. While we were there, the Red Cross came to our rescue, they supplied us with clothes, pots, plates and eating utensils plus other things. After a month or so we left the Multi-purpose Hall and we went and lived at Mbaranaba. The place where we are settling now belongs to the Home Finance, we have been asked to move out from that area but my brother has made negotiations with Home Finance to purchase that piece of land. We are yet to find money to buy it from the Home Finance. The rest of us do not work, we find it hard to survive in town, whereas at home we depend on our gardens, we do not spend a lot of money like we do in town. While we were at Mbaranaba RAMSI went and destroyed us too. They went to the house where we were and took our boxes, cut them open and looked for guns. They even pointed pistols at my brother and sister. They then took away my brother. What did RAMSI come for? When they first arrived their Mission Statement was "Helpem Frens". Where is "Helpem Frens", Helpem Frens, or you deny some people to go through the court of law and be punished?

I appeal to the Government to investigate some of the people who were involved in the Ethnic Tension. They too must be brought to justice and face the rule of law. I am very sad, because when you hear the story, it might be small but the actions the militants took was too great and the way we suffered was also too much to bear up until this time. I could not forget when we went through suffering, like not drinking water, or eating for some. These are too much for us to forget, and maybe we will not forget these until we die. I will not forgive what my mother's people did to us, I hate them, whenever I see them, I just walk away from them. I thought that different people would reject us but instead it was my mum's people, especially the policeman, the Government should look at this and investigate it properly. Anna appealed to the Women of Guadalcanal and Malaita in her parents languages.

I appealed to the women in both languages so that if any women who were the victims of the Ethnic Tension should come forward to the TRC to tell her story.

That is the end of my story.

Interviewer: Thank you Anna for your story.

