

# Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in the Solomon Islands: A Report Focusing on the Presence of the Logging Industry in a Remote Region

A Report Prepared by Tania Herbert of the  
Christian Care Centre, Church of Melanesia,  
Solomon Islands





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## CONTENTS

CONTENTS .....	2
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	3
ACRONYMS .....	4
TERMINOLOGY.....	4
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	5
PART 1: INTRODUCTION .....	7
1.1 Background and Purpose of the Project.....	7
1.2 Project Objectives and Scope .....	8
1.3 Profile of the Arosi Region.....	9
PART 2: METHODOLOGY .....	10
2.1 Definitions .....	10
2.2 Project Team.....	10
2.3 The Project.....	11
2.4 Development of Project Materials.....	14
2.5 Preparation and Training of the Project Team.....	15
2.6 Preparation Visit Prior to Conducting Awareness Raising and Research.....	15
2.7 Design Limitations and Ethical Considerations.....	16
PART 3: INFORMATION COLLECTED DURING THE PROJECT.....	18
3.1 Community and Children’s Awareness Raising.....	18
3.2 Community Leader’s Meeting.....	19
3.3 Individual Interviews .....	19
PART 4: FINDINGS RELATED TO COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN AND CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE .....	21
4.1 Child Prostitution .....	22
4.2 ‘Sale’ of Children and Early Marriage .....	24
4.3 Child Sexual Abuse and Possible CSEC Cases.....	25
4.4 Child Pornography.....	26
4.5 Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes.....	27
4.6 Related Issues from Interviews .....	27
4.7 Visit to the Local Clinic .....	28
PART 5: CONTRIBUTING FACTORS AND ISSUES RELATED TO CSEC.....	30
5.1 Contributing Factors Related to CSEC in the Region .....	30
5.2 Issues of Particular Concern .....	33
PART 6: FOLLOW UP AND LESSONS LEARNT .....	36
6.1 Follow Up and Post Project Activities .....	36
6.2 Lessons Learnt.....	37
6.3 Changes for Future Projects.....	38
PART 7: RECOMMENDATIONS AND FINAL COMMENTS .....	39
7.1 Broad Recommendations .....	39
7.2 Recommendations for Further Projects and Research.....	39
7.3 Recommendations for Mobilisation of Services .....	41
7.4 Recommendations for Increased Involvement of Government Services at a Local Level (Police, Social Welfare and Health Services) .....	42
7.5 Recommendations for Involvement of Logging Companies and Reducing Access of Children to Logging Camps.....	43
7.6 Final Comments .....	44
REFERENCES.....	45

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## ACRONYMS

CA	Child Abuse
CCC	Christian Care Centre
COM	Church of Melanesia
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSA	Child Sexual Abuse
CSC	Community of the Sisters of the Church
CSEC	Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children
CSM	Community of the Sisters of Melanesia
DV	Domestic Violence
ECPAT	End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes
FSC	Family Support Centre
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICP	Inclusive Communities Program
RRRT	Regional Rights Resource Team
SDA	Seventh Day Adventist
SI	Solomon Islands
SIG	Solomon Islands Government
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

## TERMINOLOGY

Big man/woman	A person with a high status in the village
House girl	A housekeeper, or person who works doing domestic tasks such as washing clothes or cooking. House girls are often teenagers or unmarried young women
Kastom	Customary or traditional practices
Kwaso	Common home brew made from yeast and sugar
Local	A Solomon Islander
O2	A second partner, usually taken by a married person. Further partners are referred to as O3, O4 etc.
Red money/ Kastom money	Strings of locally made beads commonly exchanged as 'compensation' for a wrongdoing, or as a bride price
Solair	Acting as a go-between, delivering messages (Solomon Airlines is the national airline)
Tabu (taboo)	Something which is forbidden, or against kastom
Young boy (iang boi)	An unmarried male
Young girl (iang gele)	An unmarried female

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following report outlines a project undertaken by the Christian Care Centre of the Church of Melanesia in the Arosi Region of the Makira Province, Solomon Islands. The report addresses the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC), or sexual abuse in exchange for money or goods, in a remote region of the Solomon Islands, and focuses on the presence of the logging industry and the role this industry plays in abusing and exploiting children.

The project was primarily run by Sisters of the Church of Melanesia, who ran community awareness raising on child abuse and commercial sexual exploitation of children for communities and their children. The project also aimed to gain an indication of the nature and extent of commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) in the region through group discussions with communities, community leaders and individual interviews, and, from these, provide a set of recommendations.

The project was run in six villages across the region, with 12 villages in attendance. Sessions were run in Pijin and the local language. Over 1,000 people came to the community awareness raising, and 370 children attended the children's sessions. There were also six meetings with local community leaders. Villages and leaders identified a range of child sexual exploitation and abuse problems in the villages. Individual interviews were conducted with forty-one people (12 of whom were the victims themselves). Sixty stories of abuse were collected from these interviews. Forty-one stories were of CSEC, with a further 14 stories of child sexual abuse or possible CSEC. **There were at least 73 children who were victims.**

**Child prostitution was the most prominent type of exploitation, with 25 stories collected, affecting 36 children.** Children ranged from age 11 through to 19, with most children being aged 13 to 15 years. Most of the perpetrators were foreign loggers.

**There were 12 stories of children entering into early marriage or being 'sold' into marriage by parents.** All but two cases were marriages to foreign loggers, and six stories were about girls below the legal age of 15. In addition, there were two cases where a child was at risk of being trafficked, or sold to be taken to another country.

**There were also a range of sexual abuse cases, with crimes being committed by both foreign and Solomon Islander men.** Pregnancy of children was an issue, with nine stories of underage girls becoming pregnant. Also of concern were children and young boys being used as "Solair", arranging girls or carrying messages in exchange for money or alcohol. There were eight stories of this happening.

**Pornography and children was a major issue in the villages where the project was run.** There were two cases where pornography was of Solomon Islander children. There were also a further five cases of children being shown pornographic movies or pictures, both within the camps and within the villages.

## CSEC in a Remote Region of the Solomon Islands

There is little doubt that the presence of the logging company is a contributor to these abuse and exploitation cases with children. However, there are a range of other factors which are discussed in this report and which are likely to be contributors. These include: issues around marriage; changes to kastom; a lack of awareness about child abuse, exploitation and safety and; the need for different approaches to the monitoring of children.

This study clearly shows that commercial sexual exploitation of children is a serious and substantial problem in at least some areas where logging is present in the Solomon Islands. This issue requires urgent attention and action. As well as the impact on children, families and communities, the current lack of monitoring of camps means that people in the camps are not accountable for their illegal actions and are easily able to access children for the purpose of sexually abusing and exploiting them.

The report also provides a set of recommendations. These recommendations must be urgently addressed, should be government led, and there should be a commitment from the Ministry Women, Children and Youth to oversee the recommendations of this report. Recommendations cover: further projects and research; mobilisation of services; increased involvement of government services at the local level and; involvement of logging companies and reduced access of children to logging camps. Recommendations have been made based on experiences in the Arosi Region, however it is likely that these recommendations are relevant to all logging areas, particularly those in remote regions.

## PART 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background and Purpose of the Project

The Christian Care Centre (CCC) is the only refuge for women and children who are victims of violence or abuse in the Solomon Islands. The Centre is supported by the Church of Melanesia (COM) and was officially opened on March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2005, although the Centre had been in operation since 2002. The Centre was the vision of the late Sister Lillian Maeva, who recognised that women would often arrive at the house of the Sisters of the Church (Patteson House in Honiara) after domestic violence (DV) or sexual assault, asking for counselling and protection. During the years of civil unrest, the number of these vulnerable women and children increased beyond the capacity of Patteson House to accommodate them. The Church realised that specialist services were needed to assist those who had been victims of violence, and that they needed to be available to all victims, regardless of creed.

Consequently, the Centre was built, being located approximately 30 kilometres outside Honiara. The Centre is staffed by both orders of COM Sisters; the Community of the Sisters of the Church (CSC), and the Community of the Sisters of Melanesia (CSM).

The objectives of the Centre are:

- a) To provide pastoral care for women and children, from all Churches and faiths, who have been victims of violence or physical or sexual abuse; and
- b) To provide educational programmes for the general public towards the prevention of such violence and abuse.

Since its opening, the Centre has provided short term housing for over 300 women and children who have been victims of violence, and numbers are increasing as the Centre becomes better known.

To address the second objective, CCC staff have engaged in a number of projects across all Provinces of the Solomon Islands. Workshops have been conducted with women's, youth and church groups and within villages. Workshops have covered a range of areas including DV, child abuse (CA) and child sexual abuse (CSA), teenage pregnancy, prostitution and exploitation. The commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) project that this report focuses on was conducted in line with this second objective of the Centre.

In 2004, the CCC undertook a study with technical assistance from The Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT) for the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) entitled "Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Child Sexual Abuse in the Solomon Islands: A Situational Analysis". It is subsequently called in this report 'The 2004 study'. The purpose of the 2004 study was to explore the prevalence and nature of CSEC and child sexual abuse in the Solomon Islands and inform programmatic responses.

The study was part of the 2006 report "Child Sexual Abuse and Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in the Pacific: A Regional Report" prepared by the Pacific Regional Rights Resource Team for UNICEF, UNESCAP and ECPAT, which included studies from five countries across the Pacific.

As part of the 2004 study, CCC held two focus groups in the Makira Province. Early in 2006, community leaders from Makira contacted the Centre Coordinator and reported that leaders, including teachers and members of the clergy, had noticed that a number of problems had arisen in communities after the arrival of logging companies in the area. These leaders expressed concern about children spending time at the camps, and particularly about some teenage girls who had become pregnant to loggers, or who were known to be receiving money or goods in return for sex with people working in the logging camp. These leaders requested that the CCC return to Makira to provide public education and to give advice to the community about how to respond to these problems.

The 2004 study reported that one of the most frequent requests from study participants was for more information, particularly around sexual abuse and exploitation of children. Thus, the purpose of the current project was to follow on from the 2004 study by investigating the issue of CSEC in more details in one remote region, and also to provide a pilot project of community awareness raising as a means of addressing CSEC. The project was also to be provided by people with training in counselling and listening skills, so that villagers would have the opportunity to discuss concerns with trained helpers.

The CCC Board decided that four staff members could go to the Makira Province for two weeks (14 days).<sup>1</sup> Due to the limited time frame, the project team decided to run six community awareness raising workshops within the two weeks across one of the heaviest logging areas in the Arosi region of the Makira Province.

### 1.2 Project Objectives and Scope

The objectives of the project were as follows:

1. Provide community awareness raising on child abuse and CSEC, particularly in relation to the problems noted by community leaders, both for the broader community and more specifically for children;
2. Attempt to gain an indication of the nature and extent of CSEC in the selected region through group discussions with communities, community leaders and individual interviews; and
3. Provide a set of recommendations for addressing CSEC in the target area and future activities related to CSEC from overseas industries working in remote areas;
4. Provide training for Sisters of the CCC to enable them to conduct the project.

This was a small project with the scope being limited to the above objectives. The overall picture of CSEC in the Solomon Islands is far from a clear one with the issue only now coming to the attention of the country and the international community. There is a great need for further extensive research, programming and action around CSEC in the Solomon Islands and the Pacific Region. This, however, is beyond the scope of this project.<sup>2</sup> Rather, the community awareness raising was run as a response to a request for help from a small number of

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<sup>1</sup> A fifth team member from another NGO was to have accompanied the team, but had to withdraw just before visiting the villages.

<sup>2</sup> For a more extensive background on CSEC both generally and specific to the country and the region, the reader is referred to the 2006 Regional Report.

communities, and the research component was conducted as a preliminary exploration of CSEC and related issues in a remote area.

### 1.3 Profile of the Arosi Region

#### *1.3.1 Demographics*

The Makira-Ulawa Province is located at the South-Eastern end of the Solomon Islands, with only the Temotu Province further East. The Province is 3,188 sq km, with 3,043 sq km of this being known as Makira, or San Cristobel, the main island of the Province. The 2005 SIG Solomon Islands Government (SIG) Household Income and Expenditure Survey estimated a population of 50,026 for the Province, as compared to the 1999 SIG Census which recorded a population of 31,006.<sup>3</sup> This indicated a very high estimated grown rate of 8% in the Province between 1999 and 2005.<sup>4</sup>

The Arosi region incorporates the Western end of San Cristobel, from the North to South coast. The current project was run along a stretch of the coast where logging was prominent, covering approximately one fifth of the coast of Arosi. The 1999 census recorded a population in the Arosi Region of 7,023, with 3,943 people aged between 0 and 19 years<sup>5</sup>. Of particular relevance to this project were children within the age range of 10 and 19 years, of whom 1,821 were recorded in the region in 1999 (852 female and 969 male).

#### *1.3.2 Economic Context*

At the time of this project the team were aware of three logging camps in the region. All were run by Malaysian companies, and staffed by both Solomon Islander and Malaysian workers.

Commercial logging in the Solomon Islands first began in the 1920's (Bennett, 2000), with large-scale commercial logging starting in the early 1960's (Kabutaulaka, 2000). The extent of logging has increased in the Solomon Islands amidst ongoing environmental and political controversy and with limited regulation (Moore, 2006; Kabutaulaka, 2000). Debate has primarily focused on the unsustainability of logging practices, the economic dependence of the country on log exports and corruption allegations (Kabutaulaka, 2000). However, despite the attention given to these issues the social impacts of logging, including the issue of CSEC, have largely escaped scrutiny.

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<sup>3</sup> Solomon Islands Government (2006) Household Income and Expenditure Survey, p20

<sup>4</sup> Solomon Islands Government (2006) Household Income and Expenditure Survey, p20

<sup>5</sup> More recent data about this specific area was not available at the time of this report.

## PART 2: METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Definitions

For the purpose of this report, and in line with the definition from the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)<sup>6</sup>, a child is defined as a person under the age of 18. However, in the Solomon Islands, age is often difficult to determine. Children are rarely registered at birth, and many individuals are unaware of their age or the age of their children. Further, in Solomon Island Pijin, a *iang gele* (young girl) or *iang boi* (young boy) is a female or male who is unmarried, rather than one who is of a certain age. Consequently, in stories collected for this report, ages were often estimated. Due to the unreliability of reported ages, all stories referring to teenagers were included.

Commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) refers to a type of sexual abuse. With CSEC, the children are taken advantage of for sex, but there is also the commercial element, where the sex is exchanged for money or goods. In line with the 2004 CCC report (p. 9), CSEC was defined as follows:

*“Sexual exploitation of a child by another person in return for remuneration, in cash or kind, paid to the child or paid to a third person or persons. It includes child prostitution, child pornography, trafficking in children for sexual purposes, child sex tourism and ‘sale’ of children through improper marriage.”*

### 2.2 Project Team

The team comprised four members, as follows:

- One person (female) from Australia who was working as a volunteer advisor for the Centre. This person had a doctorate in clinical psychology and was an experienced researcher and trainer (European background);
- The Centre Coordinator (a professed Sister) who was an experienced counsellor and trainer;
- Two Sisters from the CCC (one from CSC and one from CSM). Both of the CCC Sisters had previous experience in Church Mission work in the Provinces, and had received training at the Centre in relation to DV, counselling, working with victims of abuse and relevant Solomon Islands Law.

Both the Centre Coordinator and the Centre Advisor had extensive experience in public education and conducting workshops. Both of the CCC Sisters also had previous experience in Church Mission work in the Provinces and, in addition to training in social issues during their time as novice Sisters, had received training at the Centre in relation to DV, counselling and working with victims.

All team members were fluent in Pijin, and the Centre Coordinator was also fluent in the Arosi local language. There were also a range of skill areas and experience among the project team. In addition to all team members being familiar with the topics for presentation, between them the team were knowledgeable on several related areas, including culture and kastom, religion, child development, and health issues. The range of cultures and languages among the team meant that

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<sup>6</sup> United Nations General Assembly, 1989

community members would be able to have choices about what type of person they wished to speak to in interviews.

All of the villages expected to attend the awareness raising were Anglican (Church of Melanesia) villages, with the exception of one, which was Seventh Day Adventist (SDA). Using Sisters meant the project was recognised as an important Church activity, allowing the opportunity to reach larger numbers of people. Sisters are also seen as part of the culture and of the community, rather than as 'outsiders' coming in. Highly respected, they are in a unique position to provide education and awareness raising for the community, as well as having a heightened ability to discuss and to ask about highly sensitive information.

### 2.3 The Project

The project delivered in the villages comprised four parts:

1. Community awareness raising open to all members of the community;
2. A children's awareness raising session;
3. A meeting with community leaders from the host village and surrounding villages;
4. Individual interviews with key informants.

The first two parts were related to raising awareness within communities, and parts three and four related to collecting information about the nature and extent of CSEC in the region.

#### *2.3.1 Awareness Raising*

Community awareness raising was to be presented to any member of the village or surrounding villages who wished to attend. Community leaders and Church leaders would be asked to make neighbouring villages aware of the program and extend the invitation to attend the sessions.

The community awareness raising was to be presented in two parts, as can be seen in Table 2.1. The first part was to be presented on the evening of arrival in the village. The second part was to be continued the following day. The following table includes the topics presented, the content of each topic, and the reason for inclusion in the awareness raising. Each section of the awareness raising was to be followed by a question and answer period. There were also some components of the awareness raising where people would be broken into groups for discussion of issues and then present back to the group. A village-wide approach was chosen due to the limited time period, but people were to be broken into age and gender groups for activities so that they would be able to discuss the topics presented with their peers, and without having to feel they were unable to speak out because of their age or gender.

The children's awareness raising session was to be an interactive session which aimed to give children (and any parents or other observers who attended) some basic information about "saying no", "good touching and bad touching", keeping safe and the rights of children. Information was to be presented through interactive songs, puppet shows, games and drawing activities.

## CSEC in a Remote Region of the Solomon Islands

*Table 2.1. Community Awareness Raising Topics, Content and Reason for Inclusion*

<i>Part one- evening</i>		
<b>Topic</b>	<b>Content</b>	<b>Reason for inclusion</b>
Introduction from community leader (usually Church leader)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Introduction and welcome to the team</li> <li>○ Explanation that sensitive issues would be discussed</li> <li>○ Request for villagers to listen and share openly, and statement that the team was not here to make accusations or report to authorities</li> <li>○ Opening prayer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Due to the cultural sensitivities of talking about tabu or forbidden topics such as child abuse and sexual content.</li> <li>○ Showing the villagers that the team were welcomed by the village elders and had been given permission to discuss tabu topics</li> <li>○ Giving villagers permission to also talk about these topics</li> </ul>
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Introduction of team members</li> <li>○ Puppet show introducing the topics for presentation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Encourage interest from villagers to attend and remain at the awareness raising</li> <li>○ Assist with introducing tabu topics in a less confrontational manner</li> </ul>
Presentation: Spiritual and religious context of caring for children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Reference to Bible passages which refer to the importance of children</li> <li>○ Using Christian practices in the home in relation to caring for children</li> <li>○ The importance of children in the community and Church</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Meet the expectations of villagers that Sisters would include spiritual learning</li> <li>○ Use of Christian culture to increase attendance and participation (Religious activities usually have a higher attendance than non-religious activities)</li> <li>○ Use of the Christian culture to assist in behaviour change</li> </ul>
Presentation: Child Abuse (CA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What is CA</li> <li>○ What are the types of CA</li> <li>○ The impact of CA on children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Raise awareness about CA, using examples of behaviours often used in SI culture which people could relate to</li> <li>○ Give an overview of CA as an introduction to CSEC</li> </ul>

<i>Part two: daytime</i>		
<b>Topic</b>	<b>Content</b>	<b>Reason for inclusion</b>
Presentation: Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What is CSEC and types of CSEC</li> <li>○ Effects and impact of CSEC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Raise awareness about CSEC, using examples which are relevant in the SI context and that people could relate to</li> </ul>
Presentation: Basic parenting skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Healthy development of children (basic needs, and appropriateness of work activities to developmental age)</li> <li>○ The difference between discipline and abuse</li> <li>○ Some basic methods of disciplining children of different age groups (time out, withdrawing favourite activities or items, inclusion of children in decisions about consequences)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Increasing understanding of the developmental needs of children</li> <li>○ Teaching appropriate ways of meeting cultural expectations that children will work in the family and the community</li> <li>○ Emphasising the importance of discipline and that disciplining children appropriately is not abuse</li> <li>○ Teaching alternate strategies</li> </ul>

## CSEC in a Remote Region of the Solomon Islands

*Table 2.1. (continued)*

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Content</b>	<b>Reason for inclusion</b>
Group activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Break into four groups of; young men, young women, older men and older women (any children present were to be taken away for games)</li> <li>○ Group discussion about CA and CSEC in the village</li> <li>○ Presentation from each group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Gather information about the types of abuse occurring</li> <li>○ Consolidate learning by asking people to apply the information from the presentations</li> <li>○ Give opportunities for the different age groups and genders to contribute information and opinions</li> </ul>
Presentation: Child Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What is child protection</li> <li>○ Awareness of changes in society (incl. industry, entertainment, STI's) and how these can affect safety of children</li> <li>○ How children can be protected in the villages (child safety, supervision, communication, appropriate places for children)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Raise awareness about child protection and the need for adults to protect children</li> <li>○ Give practical strategies for protection of children in the village context</li> </ul>
Presentation: Overseas visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Outlining some laws which are the same across different countries regarding child abuse</li> <li>○ Outline some culturally inappropriate behaviours in European and Asian countries</li> <li>○ Expectations that villages should have of visitors, particularly in regard to respecting laws and culture</li> <li>○ Reducing risk of abuse from overseas visitors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Increase understanding of what is culturally appropriate in other cultures, so villagers can recognise inappropriate behaviours</li> <li>○ Give practical strategies to reduce risk of abuse from overseas visitors</li> <li>○ Encourage villagers to make sure visitors to the area respect the culture and the law of the Solomon Islands</li> </ul>
Presentation: Happy home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Community brainstorm- what makes a happy home?</li> <li>○ DV - what this is, and how it effects families and children</li> <li>○ Families working together</li> <li>○ Modelling of behaviours by children</li> <li>○ The importance of Christian family life</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Assist villagers to differentiate between homes which are supportive of children, and those which are not</li> <li>○ Provide education about DV and the effects of this on children</li> <li>○ Emphasise the importance of the behaviour of all family members and how this affects children</li> <li>○ Use of the Christian culture to assist in behaviour change</li> </ul>
Presentation and group activity: Setting a plan of action for change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What is an action plan for change</li> <li>○ How villages can go about setting up their own action plan for change</li> <li>○ Work through examples together</li> <li>○ Break into four groups of; young men, young women, older men and older women (any children present were taken away for games)</li> <li>○ Group discussion about main issues in the village related to children, setting goals and taking action</li> <li>○ Presentation from each group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Emphasise the importance of including viewpoints from different age and gender groups</li> <li>○ Give a basic tool which villages can use for instigating change</li> <li>○ Give opportunities for the different age groups and genders to contribute information and opinions</li> </ul>

## CSEC in a Remote Region of the Solomon Islands

### *2.3.2 Information Collection*

Information about the nature and prevalence of CSEC was to be collected through two means. Firstly, a meeting with community leaders was to be conducted in each host village, with leaders from that village and from nearby villages (six meetings in total). These meetings were to allow for discussion about the types of CSEC and what had been witnessed in the villages. This would also allow for an indication of the level of awareness of problems by the community leaders.

Secondly, semi structured qualitative interviews would be conducted in each of the host villages with a range of men, women, children and leaders. These interviews would be conducted by members of the project team.

Participants were to be recruited through a range of methods. During the awareness raising sessions, team members would request that anyone with information about cases of CSEC approach a member of the team. This same request would be repeated during the meeting with community leaders. Team members and interested community leaders would also seek out people who were likely to have information about activities in the logging camps, such as children in the target age group, people working in the camps as housekeepers and those who worked with children or young people.

It was planned that the project team would be flexible with interview times and places, based on the preferences of interviewees. The team would make it clear that people could be interviewed at whichever time and whichever place they would feel most comfortable. They would also be informed that they could be interviewed by any member of the team, and would be informed that there was a team member who could speak the Arosi language.

In each case, participants were to be asked if they were willing for their story to be written down and included in the report. Participants would be informed that any information they provided would be confidential, and no names would be included in the written stories. Stories were to be recorded verbatim, with interviewers asking questions to clarify when necessary.

At the completion of each village visit, the team would come together and crosscheck interviews to ensure that no cases were included more than once. Any stories which appeared to be related to the same child (ie, similar age and same place and perpetrator) would be excluded.

If any participants became distressed during the interviews, they would be asked whether they would like to continue. At that time or at the conclusion of the interview, counselling would be provided if required or requested, and participants would also be made aware that they were welcome to again approach the team for assistance or counselling at any time whilst they were in the region. The team member who conducted the interview would also assist the participant to identify a support person/s they could speak to if they felt they needed someone to talk to after the team left.

### 2.4 Development of Project Materials

Materials were developed for the community awareness raising and for data collection. The project team developed the materials for community awareness

raising and the children's session, with some outside assistance with materials and training from Save the Children and UNICEF.

The project team developed the format of the community leader's meeting and the structure of the individual interview. All materials provided and presentations to be made were in Pijin. However, if necessary the Centre Coordinator would be able to repeat or translate material into the Arosi language.

### 2.5 Preparation and Training of the Project Team

Through the second half of 2006, the Sisters of CCC had received several training sessions in areas of relevance to the current project. These included DV, listening skills, basic counselling skills, self-esteem, and recording abuse information. A number of additional training sessions were conducted specifically to increase the skills of the team for this project, as presented in Table 2.2.

The project team also held several planning workshops, during which time the materials were developed, topics were planned and rehearsed, and the project design was formulated.

*Table 2.2. Training Relevant to the Current Project*

<i>Training Provided</i>	<i>Trainer</i>
Introduction to UNICEF and the CRC	UNICEF Staff member
Expectations and responsibilities of the project team (including self-care, self monitoring and safety)	Centre Advisor
Child Rights	Save the Children staff member
Child Abuse	Save the Children staff member
CSEC	Save the Children staff member
Group facilitation	Centre Advisor, using material (with permission) developed by the Inclusive Communities Program (ICP) of the COM
Single session counselling	Centre Advisor
Working with trauma	Centre Advisor
Good touching and bad touching (for children)	Centre Coordinator
Interviewing and data collection	Centre Advisor

### 2.6 Preparation Visit Prior to Conducting Awareness Raising and Research

One month before the project, the Centre Coordinator visited the six selected host villages for a total period of one week. During this visit, the activities conducted were as follows:

- Meeting with Mission Secretary and Diocesan Staff;
- Meeting with village Chief and village Chairman to obtain permission for conducting the project and to explain the purpose and content of the project. Specifically, permission was sought to talk publicly about some issues which are often considered tabu. The Chief was also asked to make the village and surrounding villages aware that the project would be coming and encourage them to engage in the activities;
- Checked the dates of visiting the villages;
- Arranged transport and accommodation.

## 2.7 Design Limitations and Ethical Considerations

The research design was formulated based on the experience and knowledge of the project team, who had knowledge of the culture, of the area, and of how to work well within such a context, including how to use to their advantage the strong religious values and practices which were already present in the region. The CCC had previously conducted research into CSEC for the 2004 study, including in Makira, and could use the knowledge gained from this to project to inform the project design. The methodology was also informed by the pre-visit by the Centre Coordinator, who found that community leaders were supportive of the proposed project design.

Overall, the main aim of the project was to provide awareness raising to communities and children. However, collection of information about 'tabu' topics, such as sexual activity, can be extremely difficult in the Solomon Islands, particularly in communities which are in remote areas and which have strong kastom and religious values and practices. The project team was in the unique position of not only being able to work within these practices, but also having been given express permission from community leaders to talk openly about such topics.

As such, the project team decided to use this position to not only educate, but also to gather information, as so little is known about this under-researched topic. While there were some limitations in the methodological design, the project was designed as such to increase the chance of gathering rich data. Given the lack of previous research, this was considered the best way to gain an indication of what types of CSEC were occurring, and the circumstances in which they were able to occur.

### *2.7.1 Limitations of the Study Design*

All of the information collected was anecdotal, rather than observed. Many of the interviews were not with the actual victim, but rather with those who had observed the abuse or had spoken to the victim. Consequently misinterpretations or inaccuracies within the stories were possible.

Stories were collected as qualitative data, and were thus lacking the reliability and validity which may be expected of a quantitative study. The study also does not specifically look at the impact which the abuse has had on children, families and communities, though it was considered likely that some such information would come out within interviews.

The information was collected across a small area, which meant that results could not be generalisable to the Solomon Islands population.

### *2.7.2 Ethical Considerations*

There were a number of villages in the area which requested visits from the team once they became aware of the project. However, the team had planned for only six village visits, and had decided that they would have to stick with this and decline other requests, rather than rush through activities in the selected villages and not complete activities. This would, however, mean that some communities would not be able to receive much needed help.

Also ethically to be considered was the geographical region to be used for the study. Had a less isolated, better-resourced area been chosen then the team would have been able to aim for a more systemic approach where the community could be linked into other agencies that could assist them, and assistance could be given with referrals to health care or police if necessary. The team were aware that by choosing a remote region, it would be difficult to link villages into any services, as the nearest town was several hours away and even then had limited services. At the same time though, previous work in the Solomons has often avoided the more isolated areas for reasons such as these, and a decision was made to investigate the issue of CSEC in a remote area.

Also to be considered was what would happen if children were found who were currently in high-risk situations where they were being abused or were likely to be abused. From previous experience of working in the area, the team were aware that if children were found who were being significantly abused, it would be difficult to arrange for other services to intervene. It was decided that if such cases were found, the project team would work with the child and family to try to reduce risk of harm. If the risk of ongoing and significant abuse was unacceptably high, and the team assessed that no other solution was possible, then it was felt that there was an ethical responsibility to remove the child to a safer location.

### PART 3: INFORMATION COLLECTED DURING THE PROJECT

Part three outlines the information collected from the project in regards to participation, as well as the more non-specific information gathered in the community awareness raising and from community leaders meetings.

#### 3.1 Community and Children's Awareness Raising

The project was run in six villages across the Arosi region. In total 12 villages were in attendance at the community awareness raising. Table 3.1 shows the attendance at each of the sessions conducted.

*Table 3.1. Awareness Raising Attendance numbers (based on head count)*

<b>Workshop Number</b>	<b>Number of Villages in Attendance</b>	<b>Attendance numbers at Community awareness raising session 1</b>	<b>Attendance numbers at Community awareness raising session 2</b>	<b>Attendance numbers at Children's Session</b>
1	2	200*	190	95
2	3	170*	220*	71
3	2	130*	172	67
4	3	130*	230	47
5	1	92*	105	54
6	1	101*	96	36
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>823*</b>	<b>1013</b>	<b>370</b>

Note: \*headcounts were taken at night time with minimal lighting and are thus likely to be underestimates

Initially, the community awareness raising was designed to cover child abuse and commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) only. However, in the first workshop there were a large number of questions and lengthy discussion about parenting skills. Consequently, the psychologist designed a short presentation on parenting, and as questions were again raised in the second workshop, this presentation became part of all community awareness raising sessions. A similar situation occurred with the action plan activity. During the first workshop participants asked how the community could use the information that had been presented to make changes. Consequently the action plan was added as a topic (See Table 2.1).

Within the community awareness raising, data was also collected from the group work activities, where people had been divided into groups of older men, older women, and younger men and younger women (with young men and women generally defined in the villagers as unmarried men and women). This meant that data was collected from 24 groups (4 groups in each of the 6 villages). All of the group work was conducted in the second session, meaning that there were approximately 1015 participants. The first group activity asked questions about the occurrence and type of abuse in the villages, and the second was the action planning activity.

### 3.2 Community Leader's Meeting

Six meetings were conducted with community leaders- one in each of the host villages. There were between 12 and 20 people in each of these meetings, with groups consisting of the village Chairman and/or village Chief (with the exception of one village, where the Chief and Chairman were away, in negotiations with a logging company about starting a new logging project in the area), members of the clergy, primary and secondary teachers, Village Elders, members of Village Councils and others considered to be of a high status in the community (including ex politicians and ex law enforcement, and those with a high level of education). The leaders spoke of a number of different problems that have arisen from the presence of the logging industry in the area. Most of these were related to CSEC, as will be discussed in the following section, but other problems reported included environmental issues such as damage to water supply, cutting down of food trees and chemical use (3 of 6 meetings), loggers taking already married women as partners (3 of 6 meetings), being a 'bad influence' to children (2 of 6 meetings), and in one case causing land disputes.

All of the villages said that children went regularly to the logging camps, though all agreed that it was an inappropriate place for children to visit. The Leaders said that children visited the camps for a variety of reasons, mostly for movies (4 of 6), or to look at machinery or logging ships (3 of 6). One meeting also said it was because they were given sweets and other small gifts, and another said that it was to sell market goods to loggers. During four meetings, it was said that all or most children in the villages visited camps regularly. For the remaining two meetings, community leaders had tried to reduce children visiting by imposing bans- one village banning children at night time, and other banning visits at all times. However, this served only to reduce the number of children visiting, rather than stopping it.

### 3.3 Individual Interviews

Forty-one semi-structured interviews were conducted across the two weeks. Interviews were conducted in a range of places, with some interviewees wanting to speak to team members in public places with others around, and some wishing to speak in a private place. In each village, a private place was reserved for interviews, usually a room in the house where the project team was staying. There was no specific time nominated for interviews, with participants approaching team members at a range of times during the day and night. Length of interviews varied greatly, ranging from a few minutes to one hour.

A range of different people completed interviews, as shown in Table 3.2. In three cases, the interviews were conducted with two people together. Twelve of the interviews were conducted with the victims themselves, 12 were with people who had witnessed abuse and 6 were with people who had been directly involved in an exchange or attempted exchange of cash or goods for the purpose of sexually exploiting a child. The remaining 11 were people who knew the victim and had heard the story from them or their family.

*Table 3.2. Participants in individuals interviews*

<b>Person interviewed</b>	<b>Number of interviews</b>
Young man	9
Female child (10 to 18)	8
Young woman	5
Housekeeper (or ex) in the logging camp (female)	5
Older woman	5
Male child (10 to 12)	3
Community leader (male)	3
Community leader (female)	2
Older man	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>41</b>

Within the interviews, 63 stories of child abuse and CSEC were collected. Stories were crosschecked to ensure that no cases were included more than once. Three of the stories were found to be repeats of the same cases. These three stories were removed from the analysis, leaving 60 stories. Six interviews involved six different children, each of which had been abused by two different men on separate occasions.<sup>7</sup> These stories were left in as separate cases in the analysis.

The 60 stories were from a variety of places in the Arosi region, Makira, as some people had travelled from a different village to attend workshops. Abuse was reported in 12 different villages.

Eight of the 60 stories related to abuse of boys, and only one of these stories involved CSEC.

While the main aim of the interviews was to collect data in relation to CSEC, there were also several interviewees who wanted to inform the team about other cases of child abuse which they had knowledge of. There were also several stories involving child sexual abuse, where the interviewee was uncertain if there had been an exchange of money or goods. Of the 60 stories collected, all but eleven were of sexual abuse involving physical contact, attempted sexual abuse, or probable sexual abuse. Of the remaining ten, five were related to children viewing pornography, five were related to children being given alcohol<sup>8</sup>, and one was related to a child witnessing sexual behaviour.

<sup>7</sup> Six children were each victims of two crimes. One was engaged in prostitution with two different men, one was shown pornography and there was also an attempt to engage her in prostitution, one was involved in prostitution and was at risk of being a victim of trafficking, one was in an early marriage and was then a victim of sexual abuse, and two were forced into early marriage and after escaping were again involved in early marriages (although neither for forced and there was no mentioned exchange of cash or goods the second time).

<sup>8</sup> Overall, there were five stories which involved children being given alcohol. In four cases it was not known if the alcohol was given in exchange for anything. Three boys were given alcohol by foreign loggers (two boys were aged 17, and one was aged 9). There was one story where a group of boys (aged 9 and 10) were given alcohol by loggers, and one story where young men in the village gave large amounts of alcohol to boys aged 12 to 15. These were the only stories collected which did not involve sexual abuse or CSEC, with the exception of one story where the boy was given alcohol in exchange for acting as a facilitator of CSEC.

## PART 4: FINDINGS RELATED TO COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN AND CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Findings are reported within the different types of commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC), which are child prostitution, 'sale' of children and early marriage, children involved in the production of pornography and child trafficking for sexual purposes. All types of CSEC were reported as having occurred or having been attempted in the area where the study was conducted, with the exception of child sex tourism. There were no reports of tourists visiting the region, and only occasional non-logging expatriates visited the region.

Also discussed within these findings are other types of non-commercial child sexual abuse (CSA) which were reported during the study. These included the viewing of pornography by children, children acting as facilitators of CSEC by arranging girls or passing messages in exchange for cash and goods, and sexual abuse of children including the issue of pregnancy resulting from abuse.

Within the individual interviews, there were 41 stories of CSEC or attempted CSEC and 14 stories of child sexual abuse (CSA) or possible CSEC, affecting a total of 73 children (as well as nine reports of 'many' children). Breakdown and total figures are shown in Table 4.1.

*Table 4.1. CSA and CSEC Cases Reported in Individual Interviews*

<b>CSEC or CSA Type</b>	<b>Number of Stories</b>	<b>Number of Children Affected</b>
Prostitution (CSEC)	25	36 + 6 cases of 'many' children
Early Marriage (CSEC)	12	18
CSA or possible CSEC	9	15
Viewing Pornography (CSA)	5	7 + 2 cases of 'many' children
At Risk of Trafficking (CSEC)	2	2
Involved in Production of Pornography (CSEC)	2	1 + 1 case of 'many' children
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>79* + 9 cases of 'many' children</b>

Note: \*Six children were each victims of two crimes and have each been counted twice in this table. Thus the total number of children affected totals 73.

All of the villages recognised that child abuse and CSEC were problems for them. Within one of the group work activities (with over 1,000 participants in total), groups were asked to outline what they saw as the worst problems related to children in their village. Table 4.2 shows which problems were identified by each group.

Table 4.2. CA and CSEC Issues Reported in Group work

	Older men (n = 6)	Older women (n = 6)	Younger men (n = 6)	Younger women (n = 6)	Total (n = 24)
Pornography (viewing)	3	3	5	4	15
Child Prostitution	1	4	4	5	14
Child Abuse (physical, emotional, neglect)	3	4	3	4	14
Early Marriage	2	3	3	2	10
Facilitators of CSEC (Solair)	-	1	4	5	10
Child Sexual Abuse (including incest)	2	3	1	2	8
Inappropriate Films (sexual or violent content)	1	4	1	2	8
Teenage Pregnancy	2	1	2	1	6
Child Trafficking	1	-	-	-	1

#### 4.1 Child Prostitution

Child prostitution refers to using a child for sexual activity in exchange for cash, goods or services. Child prostitution was reported in every village visited. In the community awareness raising group work, 14 of the 24 groups reported this as something occurring in their village- though notably only one group of older men reported this. In the meeting with community leaders, four of the six villages were aware of this happening, reporting 13 cases between them. While two meetings reported no knowledge of child prostitution, stories were still collected during interviews which were about cases of child prostitution.

Of the 60 stories collected in interviews relating to child abuse and CSEC, 25 were related to prostitution, where goods or money were given to the victim in exchange for sex, or an attempt was made to engage children in this exchange. Twenty-one of these were of children being directly involved in prostitution. Another two were attempts by men to engage children in prostitution, and two cases were probable prostitution, where girls were given money and went into the bedrooms of men (both of these cases were reported by young children).

##### Box 1:

*Story from a 10 year old boy*

*When the (logging) ship came I went to look. Lots of children went to look. We went out in canoes for (selling) market (goods). They were all Asian men. We sold them coconuts. We did not go on board. We were not allowed. Some girls were allowed. They were not children, but they were not mature women (they were teenagers). The Asian men gave them \$10 each to come on board. There were about 10 of them. I don't know what they did on board. No boys were allowed. The girls did not come for market- they did not bring anything to sell.*

The 25 stories of prostitution involved 36 children in total (with one case being a 14 year old girl who was exploited by two different men on different occasions). There were also six interviewees who could not give numbers, but reported there were 'many' cases they knew of or had observed.

**Box 2**

*Story from a local mother*

*The problem is loggers attracting girls. One Malaysian wanted my daughter for his house girl. He came to our house- he was watching her, coveting her. He said to me “I would like your girl to work for me”. He said “especially for me now. I will pay her \$500 for one night”. He is a married man, but he said he would like to marry her. My daughter refused. She has just finished school (is well educated), so she knows about this sort of man. Some of her friends tried to convince her (to sleep with him) because he has money.*

*Story from a housekeeper working in a camp*

*Since logging came into this area all the men who own that logging company take girls who are teenagers just for having sex. Afterwards, they give them \$10 or \$20 only. The girls say that the men tell them that if they don't enjoy it (the sex), then the girls will have to refund the money and give it back to the men. They (the girls) don't want to have sex, but have no way to make money so they have sex with them. Another problem is when the men come and ask the parents of the girls and the parents let them go, you know just for the lack of money, so they sell their children to the Malaysian people (for sex). There are many problems which arise today, especially here. So we need somebody to come and talk to the parents of the children and talk about the rights of children. Because the logging is in the village, the children aren't safe.*

Ages of victims were often difficult to establish. Due to most children in the Solomon Islands not being registered at birth, many are unaware of their own age or the age of other children. Thus, a number of the ages presented were guesses, approximations, or age ranges, as shown in table 4.2. Some of the cases presented included victims who were aged 18 or 19, and can thus not be considered children. However, given the unreliability of age reported in the Solomon Islands, these cases have still been included.

*Table 4.3. Age and Number of Victims of Child Prostitution*

<b>Age (or age range)</b>	<b>Number of stories (n = 25)</b>	<b>Number of children affected (n = 36)</b>
11	1	1
12	1	1
13	7	5 + 2 cases of 'many' children
14	3	2*
15	2	2
16	1	1
17	2	2
18	1	1
19	1	1
9 to 17	1	1 case of 'many' children
11 to 18	1	1 case of 'many' children
12 to 14	1	1 case of 'many' children
13 to 18	3	17 + 1 case of 'many' children

Note: \*one child was abused by two different men

As shown in the above table, some of the children abused were very young, with most cases involving children under the age of 15. Table 4.4. indicates that nearly all reports involved abuse by men who were in the village because of the logging industry.

*Table 4.4. Perpetrators of Child Prostitution*

<b>Perpetrator</b>	<b>Number of stories (n = 25)</b>	<b>Number of children affected by this group (n = 36)</b>
Foreign logger	19	22* + 3 reports of 'many' children
Foreign and SI logger	2	2 reports of 'many' children
Solomon Island logger	2	1* + 1 report of 'many' children
Foreign person working on the logging ship	1	10
Solomon Island Villager	1	1

Note: \*one child was abused in separate incidences by a foreign logger and a Solomon logger and is thus included twice in this table.

Only one case of reported prostitution involved a male victim, who was abused by a foreign logger.

*Box 3*

*Story from a young man*

*If you ask any big man about sex with boys, they will say no (it doesn't happen) because it is so tabu. But it happens. Here, one 15 year old boy- a man bought him everything, he was pleased to have everything and thought the man was so kind, and sometimes he'd have to go to his house with him.*

*Then he (the man) started calling for him all the time- the boy was frightened and wanted to run away because he'd call for him all the time.*

**4.2 'Sale' of Children and Early Marriage**

One type of CSEC is the marriage of children where they are 'sold' by the parents (or any third party) for marriage (and then used for sexual purposes) in exchange for cash, good or services<sup>9</sup>. This includes both marriage of a child below the legal age of 15 in the Solomon Islands (sometimes called early marriage) and marriage of children who are between the ages of 15 and 18.

In the Community Leader's meetings, it was generally unknown if children had been 'sold' for marriage. However, across the six meetings the leaders knew of six cases of children under 15 marrying foreign loggers, and 15 cases of older teenagers (up to age 20) marrying foreign loggers. In addition, early marriage was noted as occurring by 10 of the 24 groups during the community awareness raising group work.

In the interviews, there were six stories about marriage below the legal age, affecting 12 girls. All but one of the cases were marriages between Solomon Islander girls and foreign men working at the logging camps. All of the girls involved were aged between 13 and 14, and all stories included money as the reason for marriage. In three cases it was specifically mentioned that the mother or the parents of the child received money for the marriage. In two cases, girls

<sup>9</sup> 2006 Regional Report

were forced to marry by their parents. In both cases, the girls later ran away to escape the marriage- one to live with an older Solomon Islander man, and the other to marry a Solomon Islander man, making her again a victim of early marriage.

*Box 4*

*Story from Solomon Islander ex-logger*

*Last year I worked at the camp. There were seven Malaysian men there, and every one was married to a young girl- 13 or 14. They are not interested in the older girls- once they are 18. I don't know what the arrangement was - if they got money. But they must.*

There were also a further four cases where two 16 and two 17 year old girls married foreign men working at logging camps involving the exchange of money or goods, with parents mentioned as recipients in two cases. One case involved the girl being forced to marry, and again the girl ran away and married a Solomon Islander man to escape.<sup>10</sup>

One of these stories of marriage to a foreign man differed from the others. In this case, a 16 year old was married to a foreign man, despite discouragement from her parents, and no mention of an exchange of money or goods. The two had remained together after having a child.

#### 4.3 Child Sexual Abuse and Possible CSEC Cases

There were also eight stories that involved sexual abuse, or attempted sexual abuse of children. Some of these cases may have also been CSEC cases, but there was no knowledge of an exchange of money or goods. These cases all differed greatly, and emphasise the range of abuse types which were occurring in the area, as well as demonstrating that it is not solely foreigners or logging industry employees who are perpetrators of abuse. The reported cases are listed below:

- One marriage of a 12 year old girl to a Solomon Island man without her consent, where she was subjected to physical and sexual abuse before her parents took her back to the family home
- A 14 year old girl who became pregnant to a married man who was a prominent community leader
- A local man who had had sex with a grade four girl (about 12 years old)
- A 14 year old who became pregnant to a local man (she had already engaged in prostitution with foreign loggers)
- A house girl reporting a group of three 17 years olds who were having sex with loggers, where she was unaware of any exchange of money or goods
- Loggers kissing and touching the breasts of 12 year old girls when they rode in the logging truck
- A 13 year old girl who lived with an older Solomon Islander man to escape a marriage to a foreign logger (also included in the previous section)
- A group of three nine year old girls visiting the bedrooms of foreign men aboard a logging ship (they were not given anything in exchange)
- A 14 year old girl being asked for sex by a logger with no offer of money or goods (which she refused)

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<sup>10</sup> Two children were married twice, making 12 cases of early marriage. However, the two girls both married the second time to escape their first marriage, and there was no mention of an exchange of cash or goods or involvement of a third party.

*Box 5*

*Story from a nine year old girl*

*We went to see the ship when it came (to collect logs). We went out in canoes for (taking) market (produce to the men). We went on board- they asked us to come on board. There were only three girls asked to come on board. No boys were asked to come on board. All of us are nine. It was nice. We went inside. They took us into their bedrooms. They did not give us money or anything else.*

*\*This child would not say what happened when they went into the bedrooms. She giggled and hid her face when asked.*

#### 4.4 Child Pornography

There was one case reported where a child from the village was known to have been used for producing pornography. This story involved a young man recognising his female cousin in a pornographic picture. However, he was uncertain whether the picture had been taken in the village or in another place (the girl was in Honiara at the time of the interview). He was also unsure of the age of his cousin, though he guessed around 16. In another story, a 14 year old girl had been shown pornographic pictures of young Solomon Island girls while with some of her friends. She guessed that the girls may have been around 12 years old. She did not have any knowledge of where the pictures had come from. In both cases, young Solomon Islander men had shown them the photos.

*Box 6*

*Story from a 17 year old girl*

*I have seen pornographic photos- have seen this outside of a house in our Village. I saw these photos in 2004 when I was 14 years of age. There are three other girls who were with me, all the same age. These pornographic photos were taken of locals (girls). I don't know if they took the photos or got them from someone else. They were photos of very young Solomon Island girls- maybe aged 12?*

There were also four other stories presented about children having viewed pornography. One housekeeper reported that only boys were allowed to go into logger's houses to watch pornographic movies, and some of those boys were as young as eight years of age. One young man reported a number of men and boys as young as 10 being exposed to pornography by watching a movie through the window of a foreign logger's house, without this logger's knowledge. One 12 year old girl reported having watched a pornographic movie on two occasions with a foreign man in the camp, and was later asked for sex by the same man a number of times (which she refused). One 18 year old girl also spoke of a Solomon Islander boy showing her and a friend a pornographic magazine at school.

These stories were supported within the meetings with community leaders, where in four of the six meetings it was stated that leaders had knowledge of children viewing pornographic films or pictures whilst visiting logging camps. No community leaders were aware of children being used to produce pornography. Similarly in the awareness raising group work, the majority of the groups (15 of 24) recognised pornography viewing as an issue in their village.

#### 4.5 Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes

Trafficking of children refers to the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child, in this context for the purpose of sexual exploitation. No cases were reported of children being taken from the village by overseas visitors, for any purpose. However, two cases were found where it appeared there were intentions to take children overseas in exchange for money to the parents. One involved a nine year old girl, where the supervisor of the camp had offered money to take the girl back to his home country in Asia when he leaves the Solomon Islands. It is unknown whether the child was wanted for sexual purposes. The other case involved a girl estimated to be 13 years old. This girl had already been involved in prostitution with a foreign logger, who wished to take her overseas with him when he left.

*Box 7*

*Story from a housekeeper working in a camp*

*One man from Malaysia took one small girl to the camp. He slept with her there. Her parents were included in this. This man from Malaysia abused her and gave her money, videos, clothes. This happened because her mother and father like the money. This man would like to take this girl overseas with him (to live) when it is time for his holidays. This girl is between 11 and 15 years of age- maybe 13?*

#### 4.6 Related Issues from Interviews

##### *4.6.1 Child Pregnancy*

It is also worth noting the incidence of pregnancy within the data collected. There were nine stories of girls becoming pregnant, five of which involved early marriage<sup>11</sup>. The ages of the girls who became pregnant ranged between 12 and 17 with babies dying in two cases. Six of the 24 groups in the community awareness raising group work also discussed teen pregnancy as an issue in their village.

*Box 8*

*Story from a teenager*

*She is my sister. She works for a Malaysian man doing his washing- there is big money for this. Then she stays and watches movies in the man's house while he is at work. I don't know what sort of movies. I think he has abused her- slept with her. She has mental problems now.*

*She doesn't work there now- she ran away to Ysabel afterwards, and mum is going to go and fetch her- she is going on Sunday. She was pregnant- the baby died, and she had to have an operation during the birth, as she was too small (to deliver the baby). After hospital, she was still sick, and had to go back to the hospital. She was only 13. She nearly died.*

##### *4.6.2 Facilitators of CSEC (Solair)*

The term 'Solair' (the name of the National Airline in the Solomon Islands) is used as a description of young people or children who act as go-betweens, carrying messages from loggers to young girls. 'Solair' are used to arrange visits for sexual purposes, or to establish contact between a logger and a young girl he is

<sup>11</sup> Five child pregnancies involved early marriage (3 of which were under the legal age), two were following prostitution and two were following CSA

## CSEC in a Remote Region of the Solomon Islands

'coveting'. Eight of the collected stories included stories of others facilitating child prostitution, usually teenaged boys or young men. This was also recognised as an issue in the community awareness raising group work, with 10 of the 24 groups discussing this as a type of child abuse.

Children used as facilitators were usually given cash payments, though in one case a boy was given alcohol as a payment.

### *Box 9*

*Story from a housekeeper working in a camp*

*This year I have started to notice that all the boys start to come to the logging camp for arranging girls for the people who own the logging (company). They (the boys) arrange a girl from the village then come and tell all the Malaysian people to come and meet the girls. So then the people (Malaysians) give money to the boys who are the messengers for them and afterwards the girl will have sex with the men. They also give the girls money. The girls are between 11 and 18. There are many girls.*

### 4.7 Visit to the Local Clinic

In addition to the awareness raising and research, the team also visited the clinic that services much of the Arosi area. The aim of this visit was to ascertain what medical services were available to people in the area, what people utilised medical services for, and whether the clinic staff were aware of child abuse or CSEC cases in the region.

The condition of the clinic, and of the services provided, was found to be of exceptionally poor standard. The clinic comprised an office, two consultation rooms, two wards and a birthing room. The wards each consisted of three wooden slat beds, with no mattresses or covering. There was no electricity at the clinic, and no toilets, with patients having to walk to a toilet beach several hundred meters away.

An interview with the only staff member- a nurse- showed that records of clients had been recorded in an exercise book, which had been lost or taken, leaving no overall records for 2006 or 2007. No new record book had been started. This nurse also staffed the next closest clinic, as the previous nurse had left. However she was only able to travel to the second clinic around once a month. She also provided a satellite clinic to the other end of the region. This nurse stated that a consulting doctor was supposed to visit the clinics, but there had been no visits since 2005. The boat engine required to transport patients to the nearest hospital in Kira Kira had been taken to Honiara by a community leader, where it had been 'lost'.

The nurse reported that around 10 to 20 clients a day attended the clinic, with about four of them being children. She reported that almost all cases were for pneumonia and malaria (despite there being no one to operate the microscope for malaria testing at that time). The nurse said she had no recollection of anyone coming to the clinic after sexual assault, and could only recall one child abuse case in the mid 1980's.

The clinic had no testing facilities for STI's, with an examination of genitalia and discharge being the only means of assessment. The nurse estimated that there were four or five cases of adults with STI's in 2006, and no child cases. Records

## CSEC in a Remote Region of the Solomon Islands

on pregnancy and birth had been taken for ten months of 2006. There were seventeen deliveries at the clinic, one of which was a teenager.

Medication in the clinic was limited to mild painkillers, malaria treatment, one type of antibiotic, Vitamin K for newborns, and a three dose Hepatitis B vaccination for newborns. However, delivery of supplies was irregular and dependent on the ship or a boat being willing to make the delivery.

Thus, the clinic servicing the Arosi region was shown to have highly limited ability to respond to urgent or serious cases, and could provide only basic nursing care. Most people whom the team spoke to about health services stated that it wasn't "worth it" to visit the clinic, relying instead on the knowledge of others in the village and kastom medicine (the use of natural remedies and/or prayers and rituals to treat illness). As such, the clinic in its current state is in no position to assist with the identification or management of child abuse or CSEC cases.

**PART 5: CONTRIBUTING FACTORS AND ISSUES  
RELATED TO CSEC**

As demonstrated within the findings, there is evidence that at the time of the study commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) was not only occurring in the region, but that it was occurring at a high rate. Child prostitution was of particular concern, with at least 36 children affected across 12 villages. Also of concern were the more recent developments of pornographic pictures involving Solomon Islander children, and evidence suggesting that two children may have been at risk of being victims of trafficking for sexual purposes. The following section explores some of the possible contributing factors which were relevant for this region, as well as further exploring some of the issues which were considered to be of particular concern.

**5.1 Contributing Factors Related to CSEC in the Region**

*5.1.1 Logging*

In the group work during the community awareness raising participants were asked when problems with child abuse and CSEC began in their community. The overall findings from this group work and from discussions with the project team were that child abuse has been a longstanding problem in the community, while CSEC represents a more recent development which was largely attributed to the presence of the logging industry. The following table shows the views of the different groups.

*Table 5.1. Time CA and CSEC were thought to have started in the Village by group*

	<b>Problems started a long time ago</b>	<b>Problems started in recent years</b>	<b>Problems already existed, but have increased recently</b>
Older men (n=6)	1	2	3
Older women (n=6)	1	2	3
Younger men (n=6)	2	4	-
Younger women (n=6)	-	2	4
<b>TOTAL (n = 24)</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>

Across the 24 groups, 11 groups specifically mentioned that CSEC started or increased with the presence of logging in the area.

From the reported cases, there is little doubt that the presence of logging in the area has been a significant contributor to the rates of CSEC. However, the existence of the camps cannot solely be blamed for the occurrence of CSEC. While the following section is by no means exhaustive, some of the other factors which may lead to or contribute to CSEC occurring are explored in the following section.

### 5.1.2 Money

The issue of money is highly significant to the presence of CSEC. Money was cited as the reason for CSEC in most cases. However, the 2004 study discussed school fees and transport as two of the main financial contributors. In this project, there were no cases where school fees or transport were mentioned. Rather, it appeared that in most cases, money was used for what would be considered in the villages as non-necessities, such as processed foods, housing made from permanent materials (rather than the more common leaf houses), travel to visit Honiara for enjoyment and clothing or beauty products.

The overseas loggers presented an 'opportunity' for young people to access money and goods which would normally be out of their means. This is also reflected in the number of reports of children visiting the camps to view movies, look at machinery or look at logging vessels- things they would not otherwise be able to see. As such, the children see logging camps as exciting places, and can be easily persuaded to board the ships or enter houses and bedrooms, thus greatly increasing the risk of abuse.

#### *Box 10*

*Story from a community leader (female)*

*One girl was married last year to a Malaysian logger, when she was 16 years old. Now she has a child. She married the man for money, because she liked the riches he has- likes an iron (roofed) house, video, and they can give it to them. There was a big argument in her family, because the parents let her (get married). The uncles did not agree, but the parents like it, because they like something good- an iron (roofed) house. The man gave them money- they are now building a house.*

### 5.1.3 Marriage

It is usually expected that young people in the Solomon Islands will marry. Marriages are often strategic, such as joining families together, or improving outcomes for young girls by marriage with a partner with greater assets than their own family. According to kastom, a bride price is usually paid to the family of the girl in the form of cash, red money or kastom money, or other goods.

In many cases, the term 'marriage' is used to describe two people living together, rather than a marriage according to law. As such, if a man pays the required bride price to the family and is residing with the girl, they will often be considered 'married'. In the interviews, the project team sometimes asked if young girls had actually had their marriages inside a Church, or registered their marriage. In all cases, the answer was no.

#### *Box 11*

*Story from a young man (who worked as a 'Solair')*

*One man showed me a photo of his family in Malaysia- he has four boys. He is a married man. One of the girls (aged 13) is now married (to him). It's not inside the Church. I think it's a false (fake) marriage. When he goes home, he will leave her here.*

As such, while families and the girls involved believed they were married, their 'marriage' was only a temporary status, while the 'husband' was logging in the area. It is not clear if the loggers who 'married' young girls were exploiting this tendency to not go through legal channels, or if this was a miscommunication

where Solomon Islanders believed that co-residence implied marriage while the loggers did not consider themselves married.

#### *5.1.4 Changes to 'Kastom'*

In all community awareness raising meetings, the issue of loss of kastom was thought to contribute to CSEC. Some thought sexual behaviours had changed due to changes to traditional practices, such as girls wearing trousers (thought to be sexually provocative), plaiting their hair or walking around unaccompanied by their mother. Co-education was cited on a couple of occasions as being a contributor to greater sexual freedom for young people. However, this was somewhat contradictory, because several girls and mothers said that the girls who were well educated were more likely to refuse offers of sex.

Respect for elders was also brought up in each group, where it was thought that the weakening of kastom meant that children and young people were less likely to heed advice or to obey elders. Outside influences were also mentioned in relation to loss of kastom, where things such as the availability of alcohol and drugs, pornographic materials and influence from Honiara (with greater crime rates and a more "Western" style of living) were considered to be damaging to traditional ways of life.

#### *5.1.5 Lack of Awareness*

During the workshops, the project team noted that villagers were often surprised to hear about CSEC, and to hear that this was a crime.

##### *Box 12*

*Story from an ex housekeeper who worked in a camp*

*These loggers take very young girls to the logging camp for sex, pay them money. They do not want girls who are 18 years old and upwards, but (they want) very young girls. People do not really understand that to have sex for money is child prostitution. We (the house girls) have seen lots of these Malaysians who wanted girls for sex. They even asked me to look for girls for them but I didn't follow their wish.*

One interviewed boy who had been finding young girls for loggers was quite distressed to learn he had been party to a crime, and a group of teenagers interviewed only realised that they were engaging in child prostitution after the awareness raising. Previously, they had considered the older men who paid them as their 'boyfriends'.

##### *Box 13*

*Story from a 14 year old girl*

*That night I was led by a cousin (age 13) to meet him. He asked me to be his girlfriend and I said OK. Then he asked again for sexual intercourse. I said no because I'm frightened. I have not done anything like that before. He asked me to meet him another time then I went away from him. The second time I met him, he asked me for sex. He persuaded me and offered \$20 for sex. It took a long time to decide. Finally I was convinced and surrendered myself. After having sex I went back to my house. Another night she (cousin) came to my house when everybody was asleep and took me out to meet him again. When we got there two men were waiting. She went with one, and I went with the other- my boyfriend. That's the second time I had sexual intercourse with him. I had sex about seven times up until now. Every time we had sexual intercourse he was using condoms. Sometimes he gave me some money and sometimes not.*

### *5.1.6 Need for Different Approaches to Monitoring of Children*

Children in the villages are often not monitored by their parents. Often from an early age children are largely self-reliant, or are monitored by older children or the community more generally. While this is a common cultural practice, with the introduction of outsiders into the village this approach may require change, as this lack of supervision from adults is likely to increase the risk of CSEC. In two of the community leader's meetings, leaders admitted that they did not know what children did in the camps. There were also times when one of the forms of CSEC was reported in individual interviews, but leaders were unaware of its existence in the village.

In addition to being part of the culture in the villages, the lack of monitoring of children may also be due to some parents needing more parenting skills. In each community awareness raising session there were questions and complaints about not being able to stop children from doing what they wanted. Three of the meetings with community leaders also included statements that they were unable to stop children from visiting the camps.

## 5.2 Issues of Particular Concern

The 2006 Regional Report provides a more comprehensive study of relevant issues for children in the Pacific. However, there were some issues raised from this study which were considered by the project team to be of particular concern in relation to CSEC in the Arosi region. These issues are likely to be transferable to other isolated rural areas of the Solomon Islands where children are vulnerable to CSEC due to the presence of industry from overseas.

### *5.2.1 Impact of Abuse on Children and Communities*

CSEC and sexual abuse have a number of impacts on the physical and psychological health of the child. In addition, as noted in the Regional Report (2006), children who have previously been victims of abuse are also more likely to be abused again, thus leaving a number of children vulnerable to further abuse after the logging camps complete their work in the area.

In addition to those who have been abused themselves, there are flow-on effects to many, if not all members of the community. Other children are able to view the desired money and goods which have been received by children for their sexual behaviour. This was suggested in several interviews, where participants had been encouraged to engage in sexual activity by friends in order to receive money or goods.

Parents and families of affected children also have to live with the effects of CSEC on the family. The shame attached to having a young child who was married or pregnant was mentioned in a number of interviews. There was also a general sense of hopelessness in some of the community awareness raising sessions, where adults felt they had little control to change the behaviours of children.

### *5.2.2 Impact on the Health of Children*

One more specific impact is the impact on the physical health of children who have been victims of CSEC. Included in this are the issues of STI's and particularly HIV. At the completion of 2004, there were only five recorded cases of HIV infection in the Solomon Islands (World Health Organization, 2006).

However, the low economic status of the country and the close proximity to PNG, with a high prevalence of HIV<sup>12</sup> (UNAIDS, 2006) means that the risk of HIV rates increasing is high. Included in this risk is the risk of spread of infection from foreign industry. The current rate of HIV in the Solomon Islands is in stark contrast to countries where logging industry employees are from such as Malaysia, where there were an estimated 69,000 HIV cases in 2002 (UNAIDS, 2006).

While the interviewers did not specifically ask about condom use, the number of pregnancies found suggested that use is low. This is consistent with a World Health Organization supported study (2006), which found that of 76 youths in the Solomons who had had sex with commercial partners, only seven regularly used condoms with these partners. Pregnancy is another health related issue of high relevance, where children as young as 12 years of age became pregnant after incidents of CSEC with loggers. In addition to the risk of HIV and other STI's, there are also significant risks to the physical and psychological health of children who become pregnant or give birth.

As part of the health concerns for children, there is the issue of inadequate medical care in the area. The clinic in the local area is not equipped to deal with the health issues which may arise from CSEC, and is also not utilised by the community in such cases. The clinic was not aware of any patients who were victims of sexual abuse or child abuse, despite evidence from the community that these problems were occurring. However, even if such problems were reported, the clinic is not equipped to deal with such issues, including adequate testing for STI's, protecting young people against pregnancy and STI's, and transporting patients to the hospital or police for medical care or collection of forensic evidence in abuse cases.

### *5.2.3 Ease With Which Loggers Can Access Children*

Although discussions were not held with loggers, the data collected suggested that overall CSEC cases were not opportunistic, with loggers seeking out children to abuse. However, this was generally made very easy by the behaviour of those in the villages. Children continually played in the camps, and were often not discouraged from doing this. Adults in the village were often unaware of what the children were doing while at the camps, and did not monitor them while they were there.

#### *Box 14*

##### *Story from a nine year old girl*

*I was taken by my father to (visit) the camp (he works there)... At the camp, I have seen Malaysian men touching their house girl's breasts. They used to do that to their house girls. While they were eating, they would have one hand on their spoon (eating), and one hand on a girl's breast... I have seen lots of children come to the camp in the morning and not leave until the evening. I didn't count them, but there were lots. I don't want to go to the camp now. My dad's boss gives me money, gum and lollies. He tells me to hurry up and grow up big because I look really pretty.*

<sup>12</sup> Prevalence of HIV in PNG is 1.8% of the population, meaning that around 57,000 people over age 15 were living with the virus in 2005 (UNAIDS, 2006)

The engagement of children as 'house girls' also increased the opportunity for CSEC, where loggers could claim they were taking girls to work for them, when they were actually employing girls for sex.

The presence of 'Solair', or facilitators of CSEC, is a major issue. In this case, other children, particularly boys, were given money to approach or find girls. As such, these children were also victims of abuse by being coerced into engaging in illegal activity. In addition, there are concerns around what gender issues could arise from young boys encouraging girls they know well to engage in sex for money and being rewarded for this behaviour, as well as the role modelling of children being viewed as the preferred sex partners for older men.

The vulnerability of the children was also likely to be increased by the incidence of child abuse and/or child neglect in the villages. In all of the community awareness raising sessions and the meetings with community leaders, it was agreed that that physical abuse, emotional abuse and neglect of children were common, and occurred in many or most of the families in each village. Consequently, the neglect or abuse of children may have increased the appeal of spending time in the camps and for receiving gifts or payments from loggers.

#### *5.2.4 Lack of Accountability*

In line with the ease with which loggers can access children is the lack of accountability for their actions. The nearest police station to the Arosi region is in Kira Kira- several hours away by boat. The villagers had no awareness of any monitoring of activities in the camps by police, government<sup>13</sup> or any other agency. As such, there were no negative consequences for loggers engaging in illegal activities. This is particularly for the cases of CSEC, but also includes other illegal activities in the camps and on the logging ships, including serving alcohol to children and showing pornography (all forms of which are illegal in the Solomon Islands) to both adults and children. This lack of monitoring of activities is also relevant environmentally, with potential to impact on both the environment itself and on the villagers through use of chemicals, polluting water sources and destroying food sources.

While villagers would complain about the actions of the loggers, there were few cases found where any action was taken. This may have been in part due to the investment by village chiefs and landowners, as the only beneficiaries from logging in the village.

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<sup>13</sup> There is also currently no one from the Social Welfare Division in the region. It is understood that a Social Welfare Officer for Makira is currently being recruited and will be based in Kira Kira.

## PART 6: FOLLOW UP AND LESSONS LEARNT

### 6.1 Follow Up and Post Project Activities

One adolescent was taken back to Honiara with the project team, as her risk of continued severe abuse was considered to be unacceptably high. The girl had already been continually abused over a period of several months by a local man who had removed her from the family home. At the time, other members of the family and village were aware of the situation, but were unwilling to take action. As no one in the village or any outside agency had intervened at that stage it was considered unlikely that her situation would change if she was not removed, and the team were unable to stay in the region to follow up and ensure her safety. Consequently, having spoken with the girl and her family, the team decided to take her to a safer environment. The adolescent is currently in a safe location, is being monitored by the CCC and is taking legal action against her abuser.

There were two other cases where the project team had to consider whether or not to remove children, but in both cases the Centre Coordinator worked with the family to come to a resolution where the child would no longer be in contact with the abuser and was returned to the family. Community leaders were made aware of the situation so they could continue to monitor. These were particularly difficult decisions for the project team to make, but the team were aware that the risk of abuse is higher for those children who have already been abused, and they considered that taking the child away from their community, their first language, their immediate family and schooling would only serve to increase their vulnerability.

One week after the return from Makira, a debrief was run with the project team, going through the project and the positive and negative aspects of the project. A number of possible improvements and difficulties were identified by staff, which are also reflected in the recommendations.

Following the project, feedback was received from several of the participating villages, both during the time spent in the village, and also by visitors from those villages to Honiara. Feedback overall was very positive. In each host village, a closing speech was made, and in each case, the speaker expressed appreciation for the project, and acknowledged that child abuse and CSEC were problems in the village. Parents particularly expressed gratitude for learning some simple parenting techniques for disciplining children.

One village had put up signage outside the area of the logging camp, directing that no girls were to go inside the camp area without permission (from the village). Another village passed on a message that the community leaders had sat down together and developed a full action plan about how they could begin to make changes in regards to child abuse and CSEC in their village. Still another village stated that since working with the project team, a group of teenage girls were no longer going down to the camp to engage in prostitution.

## 6.2 Lessons Learnt

Overall, the project team had spent a considerable amount of time in the design and planning of the project. This design and planning was well informed by previous visits to the region and knowledge of what to expect. As such, the project generally ran as expected, and there were few unexpected issues.

One possible limitation was that as the project team was Church-based may have impacted upon disclosure, as some people in the community may not have been willing to reveal their own involvement in illegal activities. However, this was not true for all cases, as ex-loggers, children engaging in CSEC and those acting as 'Solair' were all included as participants. Further, the use of Sisters allowed for discussion of difficult topics and may have contributed to the high attendance levels. Interviewees utilised the choice of interviewers, with specific requests for interviews based on the different ages, cultures, religious status and language skills of interviewers.

While the project team identified a number of CSEC cases, it is unlikely that all cases were identified. Given that child abuse, and in particular sexual abuse, are tabu topics, it is likely that the data collected is an underestimate of the extent of the problem. This is especially likely for topics that are particularly sensitive, such as sex with very young children, and sex with boys.

Based on this, the current research study can not claim to know whether the findings of this study reflect the total rate of CSEC in the area, and the numbers found in this study cannot be generalised to all logging areas in the Solomons. Instead, it provides more of a snapshot of the types of issues which are happening in an isolated area with unmonitored logging camps.

However, after acknowledging the limitations inherent in this project design, there were still some lessons which were learnt by the team, and which may assist in design and conducting of future projects or programs.

One lesson which was not so much learnt as re-emphasised was the sheer desperate need for assistance which the communities had, a finding which was also reflected from the 2004 study.

### *6.2.1 Issues and Difficulties*

As a well thought-out project, there were few unexpected issues. The necessity to remove a child was something which the team had been hoping would not be required, but which had already been planned for.

Being short-staffed was one difficulty which the team had to manage. One team member had to withdraw just before visiting the villages, making it difficult to run the project with four people, given that the project had originally been divided among five. This became particularly relevant at the last two villages, where one team member contracted malaria, and was both unable to participate and required care.

The project was run on a very tight timeline, both for training and for running the project. The project team also had to fulfil their normal duties at the Centre for the duration of preparation training, making this a very demanding time for them. Despite this, the project team all agreed that two days in each village was too

short an amount of time. The community awareness raising was originally scheduled for three to four hours in total, however the shortest was six hours, and the longest was 11, simply due to the volume of questions asked and comments added by community members and the desire for groups to spend a lot of time thinking about issues during the group work. Consequently, evening sessions often did not finish until after 10pm, and 'morning' sessions did not finish until well into the afternoon. The project team did not notice any people leaving early during the evening session, but some would return home before the completion of the second session, particularly women with infants. This meant that women with infants may have been underrepresented in group work.

### 6.3 Changes for Future Projects

#### *6.3.1 Financial Support*

The project applied only for the money required for travel, living expenses while away and communications. While this was adequate for covering costs, it did put extra pressure on Centre facilities and staff, as time had to be juggled between commitments, and office space and equipment were in use during the preparation and report-writing stages. Other costs, such as staffing, report writing and some office expenses were covered by the Centre, as Centre staff were eager to give any assistance they could to assist the community of the Arosi region after their request for help. However, future work in this area by the Centre would require more substantial funding.

#### *6.3.2 Staffing*

Having an all-female team may have meant that some male interviewees were not willing to share their stories, or were not as comfortable or as expressive as they may otherwise have been, due to the sensitive nature of the topics. The addition of one or two males, possibly from the Melanesian Brotherhood, could be a valuable addition to future projects.

While the Sisters have an excellent capacity to work in the communities and to conduct the work within the villages, there are no members of the community who have experience in project management, including writing of proposals and reports and developing training materials. Consequently, any future projects run by the Centre would need to be supported by project management. With the current project, a volunteer experienced in project management provided this. However, this volunteer will finish in August, and there is currently no replacement. For the Centre to provide a more comprehensive project, a project manager would have to be employed, or the Centre could work in collaboration with another agency to provide this. The Inclusive Communities Program (ICP) with the COM could possibly take on the role, or other agencies such as UNICEF or Save the Children may also have the capacity.

Alternately, the CCC could also provide assistance to another organisation to run the same project, such as by providing a staff member, some training, project advice or materials.

#### *6.3.3 Time Spent*

Based on the time issues outlined above, the team considered that a more effective way of presenting the community awareness raising would have been across five days, with all material either in the early morning or the evening.

## PART 7: RECOMMENDATIONS AND FINAL COMMENTS

### 7.1 Broad Recommendations

As noted in the 2004 study from the CCC, it is evident that commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) and child abuse are not uncommon in the Solomon Islands, that awareness of these issues is low, and that only limited action has been taken at the village level to combat this serious problem.

The 2004 CCC Report and the 2006 Regional Report provide a series of recommendations which address the broader issue of CSEC and child sexual abuse across the Solomon Islands and the Pacific Region, with the main thrust being policy and legislation. Therefore, it is recommended:

- That the recommendations of the 2004 CCC Report and the 2006 Regional Report should continue to be addressed to reduce problems of CSEC at a National and Regional level.<sup>14</sup>

CSEC is a new issue in the Solomon Islands. This is a contrast to many other countries in the Asia Pacific Region where the problem is widespread and severe. As such, it is possible that this critical issue can be eliminated while in its early stages. The Solomon Islands Government must take strong and decisive action on this issue, and should be leading change. It is therefore recommended:

- That the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth oversees the recommendations of this report.

In addition to these broad recommendations, the following sections outline some more specific recommendations which relate to: further projects and research; mobilisation of services; increased involvement of government services at the local level and; involvement of logging companies and reduced access of children to logging camps. Recommendations have been made based on experiences in the Arosi Region, however it is likely that these recommendations are relevant to all logging areas, particularly those in remote regions.

### 7.2 Recommendations for Further Projects and Research

People in affected communities showed an interest in learning more about child abuse and exploitation and strategies to make changes. Awareness raising is something that needs to be conducted in all areas where logging occurs. This is particularly important for isolated communities, who may have less awareness of the impact of CSEC on children, and less opportunity to access information and make changes.

Similar projects in areas where logging has been approved would act as a preventative measure by raising awareness. As noted throughout the report, there was a general lack of knowledge and often a lack of awareness that children were actually victims of CSEC. Giving knowledge and strategies to villages before the arrival of logging companies could prevent the occurrence of many cases of CSEC.

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<sup>14</sup> Some recommendations from these reports have already been acted upon or plans are in place. Solomon Islands UNICEF can provide the most up-to-date information about the status of these recommendations.

## CSEC in a Remote Region of the Solomon Islands

The feedback and interest from the communities in this project suggest that the current project was a useful way in which to raise awareness within villages. However, an evaluation of the effectiveness of the community awareness raising conducted as part of this project is needed in order to determine whether this was an effective way to educate people and whether this led to any behaviour changes in the villages. As previously discussed, some alterations could be useful, including:

- one week in each location
- one or two Brothers from the Church included in the team, and one team member to have more comprehensive legal knowledge
- all community awareness raising components in shorter sessions
- additional workshop activities specifically with the group which was most often victims, being females between 10 and 20 years of age
- follow up visits

In each village visited, the team was asked when they would be returning to assist further. Time and money constraints meant that there was no follow up visit to villages, and no assistance in engaging other agencies. Once contact is made with affected communities, there needs to be an ongoing commitment to monitor and advise communities.

As child abuse victims are more likely to be abused again, this area should be addressed as a means to prevent CSEC in logging areas. Parenting skills training could also assist parents in controlling the behaviours and movements of their children, as well as improving communication within the family, so that children are more likely to report problems to their parents.

A further area for development is that of empowerment of children, particularly girls in the age range where abuse was most often occurring, being girls aged 10 to 18. Areas for such a project could include life skills training, body awareness, communication, self-esteem and assertiveness training (saying no).

There is a dire need for further research in this area. Further research should be conducted into behaviours in logging camps and surrounding villages, particularly in relation to CSEC. This will allow for an overall picture of the Solomon Islands, rather than one region only. Research should aim to establish what the incidence and nature of CSEC is in these areas and investigate further the contributing and causal factors. This research also did not investigate sexual behaviours, safe sex and sexually transmitted diseases (STI's), particularly HIV. It is unknown from this study how many of the victims were using safe sex practices, and whether the occurrence of CSEC was causing incidences of STI's and in particular HIV. It is also unknown if those children who were engaging in prostitution were then engaging in sexual behaviour with men in the village. These issues do not only apply to children, but also to prostitution and relationships which may be occurring between loggers and people of legal age. As an emerging health concern in the Solomon Islands, any avenues through which HIV may be spread in the Solomon Islands must be thoroughly investigated.

Recommendations for further project and research are as follows:

- Awareness raising about CSEC conducted in all areas of the Solomon Islands where logging is present, with a priority for isolated communities
- Preventative workshops in areas where logging has been approved
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of the community awareness raising conducted in this project, and if considered effective adoption of the project presented in this paper as a useful model (with some alterations based on lessons learnt, and dependent on evaluation findings)
- Ongoing support for affected communities
- Development of projects which focus on reducing vulnerability of children by reducing child abuse, increasing parenting skills, and empowering children, particularly girls aged 10 to 18
- Further research conducted in logging camps and areas across the Solomon Islands, including the incidence, nature and causes of CSEC, sexual behaviours and STI's including HIV

### 7.3 Recommendations for Mobilisation of Services

A provincial level working group needs to be formed to mobilise agencies that can assist affected logging communities. Ones identified by the project team for the Arosi Region were Save the Children, clergy (including houses of Sisters and Brothers of the Church of Melanesia), local health services, and schools. Such a group should be represented by Solomon Islanders where possible, due to the cultural sensitivities of the topic, and be led by the grassroots services and Churches in areas where abuse is occurring.

Ideally, representatives from any relevant services should also come together and develop a review of services and a service plan for the region, including the identification of any required services they are unable to provide between them.

As local services, such organisations would most likely need support to provide services. Such support could include financial support, training support, assistance with communication between agencies and communities and other types of capacity building of staff or services. A National group could also be formed, which could assist the Provincial group based on their needs at a grassroots level, as well as advocating for change such as to policy and support to fill service gaps.

Communities should be made aware of services, including how to contact them, and what services they can provide, allowing communities to ask for further assistance.

Recommendations are as follows:

- Establish CSEC working groups both in the Makira Province and at a National level, review services and develop a service plan
- Support of other agencies in the local area to provide services
- Locate other relevant services in the area and develop a service plan for the region
- Provide information to communities about available services

7.4 Recommendations for Increased Involvement of Government Services at a Local Level (Police, Social Welfare and Health Services)

Commitment from local police is essential to end illegal activities in the logging camps. Such action should include consultation with people in the villages to collect any reports of illegal activities, and both regular and unannounced visits to logging camps. Camps should be searched for evidence, including; checking the age of girls who are living with, married to or have children to loggers; questioning of housekeepers and; searches for possession of any illegal materials, particularly pornographic materials. Knowledge that police are involved in the monitoring of activities in the camp may also act as a deterrent to would-be abusers. Perhaps the most effective way to do this would be to have such activities funded by logging industry profits. A special purpose unit could be established for such purposes.

Those who have committed crimes should be reported to police, so that they cannot continue to abuse children. During the community awareness raising people asked what could be done about cases which had already occurred, and there were also several requests that the team take action in cases. Information from interviews, particularly those of ex-loggers, suggests that some of the perpetrators of CSEC were repeat offenders, and had been involved with CSEC in previous locations. It is important for the protection of children across the Solomons that villagers are encouraged to report known cases to the police. This may require support for the villagers who report any crimes. Local agencies such as Churches may be able to provide such support.

The Social Work Division of the Ministry of Health should increase their involvement in the Makira Province. Monitoring of camps should also be included in this role. While one Social Welfare Officer is being recruited, the size and inaccessibility of some areas of the Province would make this a large undertaking for one employee. Possible considerations could be increasing this recruitment to include more team members, or to consider use of volunteers. A Community Welfare Volunteer Scheme instigated by the Social Work Division is currently operating in the tsunami affected regions of Western and Choiseul Provinces. The scheme involved giving training and support to community nominated volunteers to identify issues within their communities and work at finding community based solutions. If evaluation has shown this to be an effective strategy, then such a scheme could also be tailored to logging areas of Makira and possibly other Provinces.

The available health services in the Arosi region were of an exceptionally poor standard. The service was lacking in terms of facilities, staffing and ability to deal with any more than the most basic health concerns. As the only health provider in the region, it is vital that it is equipped to deal with issues affecting the health and safety of children who are at risk. A comprehensive review of the service should be conducted, and improvements made. This needs to include determining what the role of the local health services should be in providing services for victims of abuse and exploitation.

Recommendations are:

- Monitoring of loggers by police or other governmental departments, including consultations with local community and visiting logging camps. Both regular and surprise inspections should be conducted on camps to detect any illegal activities, including incidents of CSEC and possession of pornography or any other illegal materials
- Reporting of known cases to police, and legal action taken against perpetrators
- An increased involvement of the Social Work Division in the Region
- Health services in the area reviewed and improved

#### 7.5 Recommendations for Involvement of Logging Companies and Reducing Access of Children to Logging Camps

As there was no consultation with logging companies as part of this study, it is unknown if these companies are aware of the conduct of some staff. It is important that companies are consulted and are made aware of the findings of this report.

The logging camps were shown to be inappropriate for children to visit. In all villages visited, cases of CSEC were found in the nearby logging camp, and children were being given money or goods to act as facilitators for CSEC. In addition to the risk of abuse, the logging camps were unsupervised by other adults, and presented a clear safety risk by having heavy machinery and chemicals in plain view. Many of the abuse cases occurred under the guise of children working as house girls or selling market goods to loggers. Communities should be educated as to the possible risks of children spending time in the logging camps and logging ships and children should be banned from visiting or working in the camps or logging chips. If possible, such consultations should also include the logging company.

Logging companies themselves need to be included in the processes of reducing and preventing cases of CSEC in the camps. There is no knowledge by the project team of any policies which relate to the social conduct of loggers while in the Solomon Islands. A developed policy in consultation with the logging companies would allow an understanding of what conduct is expected and is allowable, both for the employees and for the villages in the vicinity.

Further action in regards to logging-related issues should be supported by legislation and policy. In addition to taking action against individuals who commit crimes, there should also be policy which places the onus on logging companies. Companies need to take the responsibility of ensuring that their employees are abiding by the law, and breaches of the law should result in penalties to those companies involved. In order for logging companies to keep their licences, they must ensure all employees- foreign and Solomon Islanders- abide by the law. If any loggers are prosecuted for child sex crimes, the licence of the logging company should be revoked and the company disallowed from working in the Solomon Islands.

Signage in logging camps, villages and entry points to the regions where logging occurs should also be put in place. Such signage should include child rights, relevant laws and penalties, and information about reporting cases. This would be

## CSEC in a Remote Region of the Solomon Islands

a first step in demonstrating to loggers that they do not have “free reign” in remote areas and that they must abide by Solomon Islands Law.

It is vital that children are protected against abuse in the logging camps, and that both logging companies are involved in this protection. It is therefore recommended that:

- Logging companies are made aware of the findings of this report
- Communities are consulted with the aim of banning all children from logging camps and logging ships, including any work activities
- Policy is developed in consultation with logging companies regarding conduct of loggers while in the Solomon Islands
- Cancellation of licences for companies whose employees do not adhere to policies and Solomon Islands Law
- Compulsory signage is displayed in all logging camps, villages with access to camps and entry points such as wharfs (permanent and temporary) and local airports, outlining relevant law and penalties, child rights and how to report cases

### 7.6 Final Comments

This project and report represent the findings of a limited study across a small area of the Solomon Islands. The focus of the project was CSEC and the presence of the logging industry in a remote region of the Solomon Islands. However, it is clear from this small study that child abuse and CSEC do not only occur in, or due to the presence of logging companies.

During the time in the villages, Solomon Islanders who had previously worked in logging camps in other Provinces in the Solomon Islands shared their experiences with the project team, and it was stated that the same problems of prostitution and early marriage were occurring there. Local people, both within and outside of the logging industry were also identified as perpetrators of child abuse and CSEC. As such, this is not an issue specific to one group of people, or to a small cluster of logging camps.

Each Province is unique in its kastom and practises, and as such each Province would have their own set of stories, issues and concerns. Behaviours and attitudes in different logging areas and camps are likely to be similarly diverse. As such, it would be impossible at this time to speculate as to whether the Arosi region represents a more or less severe case study, or whether the findings here are typical to areas with foreign industry.

What is known, however, is that CSEC is occurring in the Solomon Islands, and that it is linked in at least some instances to the presence of foreign industry. Children, families and communities are being negatively affected. Further research, projects and programs are needed, strong action is needed and communities are in dire need of help and support.

This report alerts people in the Solomon Islands and the international community to what can and does happen when foreign industry is left unmonitored in remote areas. It is hoped that both national and international, government and non-government, faith based and non-faith based organisations will take action towards the protection of the children and the future of the Solomon Islands.

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