

YOUTH PUBLIC HEARING - UNITED CHURCH - FIRST DAY, FIRST SESSION

– 22 NOVEMBER 2010

The Youth Public Hearing was opened with prayer by Pastor Rev. Eric Takila of the SSEC Church. He presented sermon based on the Book of Psalm 32.

Mr. Reuben Lilo, Deputy Secretary of TRC welcomed everyone to the Youth Public Hearing; he also welcomed Solomon Islands citizens who were listening through the Radio, SIBC.

He welcomed the Chairman, Deputy Chairperson, and the other Commissioners. The Commissioners will be here throughout the week. Mr. Lilo on behalf of the TRC also warmly welcomed the Hon. Hipolite Tarimae, Minister of National Unity, Reconciliation and Peace, the US of the Ministry of National Unity, Reconciliation and Peace, Mrs. Betty Fakarii and Director of Reconciliation and Rehabilitation, Mr. Sam Tagana. He also welcomed other Church leaders who were present at the opening of the Public Hearing, also other Traditional leaders, our Women, our Youths and others and he would like to welcome people who are listening on the street of Honiara to come and listen to the Hearing. He also welcomed the Media people who were present. He thanked the Superintendent of the United Church, Honiara Circuit for allowing the United Church to be used for the Public Hearing and also thanked the Counselors for their hard work. He welcomed the Youths and Women Victims who were present at the Hearing. He appealed to the people of Solomon Islands to pray for the victims so that they could pour their hearts to share their feelings of what they went through during the Ethnic Tension. May God bless us all in our deliberations for the Second Public Hearing.

The Hon. Minister presented his Speech to the Hearing.

The Chairman acknowledged the Hon. Minister's speech. By saying!!

“Minister of the Ministry of National Unity, Reconciliation and Peace, Church Dignitaries, Government Officials, Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. It is my pleasure to welcome you to National Thematic Public Hearing. On our behalf TRC I wish to greet and express a very warm welcome to the Youths and Women and Experts and Leaders who are here with us to testify before this Society this week. The Thematic Hearing features one of the most important activities of Truth Seeking as mandated by the Truth Reconciliation Commission Act of 2008. Among the major damages caused the population affected by the Tension 1998 – 2003 one of the most serious is the moral injustice against innocent civilians of this Nation. Such removal of dignity caused by perpetrators of Human Right Violations are all unacceptable abuses. At this juncture may we pause for silence to remember those who died. May their souls rest in peace and rise at the last day. Today we are given the opportunity to come to terms with this bitter past by seeking the Truth. I wish to thank the Youths and Women for your willingness to come and share your stories. I am aware it is not easy to tell your story much less to an audience both nationally and internationally for your humble by courage. For the Hearing for some a process of grief while for others will be a process of relief. It is a long process, a process in which a nation engages in a healing process not only for reconciliation and forgiveness but also to ensure truth and justice prevails. The hearings provide a moment to listen to the stories from victims and to reflect on the past and acknowledge it with compassion and respect. Besides the Hearing hope to grace and empower the voice of the victims by legitimizing them within the public sphere that has been

traditionally unclear to their concerns. The occasion also aimed to initiate reconciliation at two levels:

First Reconciliation of the Individuals, victim with oneself as a human being and full enjoyment of one's right to live and Second Reconciliation is understood as to the removal of all forms of discrimination that excluded and permanently victimized certain sectors of our society and further suppressed us to recognize us to celebrate our diversity. To try and understand the details of what happened in 1998 – 2003 is complexed hence is not easy. In many ways it calls for sacrifice and commitments and leadership. The Youths and Women who will share their stories before this nation this week, demonstrates commitment and leadership. Others will include ex-combatants will also be given the opportunity to tell their stories because they too need healing. The Commission since its inauguration in 2009 has been engaged in the difficult past that we linger on in memory of society for generation to come. Why because the intended brutal killings of innocent civilians, the youths were just not crime against our dearly son, daughter, mother of a family or community but also against society's law of fairness, the universal principal of justice and God's truth that all humans have the right to live. Youths killed or violently abused have been removed in the prime of their lives or their rights to enjoy live have been permanently destroyed, because of all these we cannot ignore and pretend to forget the past and must deal with it properly. Truth and justice are necessary to national healing and reconciliation. There can be no justice without truth and no reconciliation without forgiveness. While it is important to accept God's forgiveness and healing is important but so our own words if they are given and receive with a forgiving heart. Distinguished guests and ladies and gentlemen it is my honour to declare the Hearings officially open on this 22nd day November 2010."

The Chairman welcomed the first Youth, Mr. James Mae (Jr) to the Public Hearing for the Youth.

The Youth took his Oaths before the Commissioners.

Commissioner welcomes Joseph Mae (Jr) and asked him to tell his story on what happened to him during Ethnic Tension.

Joseph Mae (Jr): My story is based on what happened to me during Ethnic Tension at Kogulae village. At this time we were not expecting that MEF would come and did this to us in the village. One day members of the MEF came in and started burning down all our houses and we ran away into the bush. This was where I got the first shot. I had to be taken to Visale Clinic for medical attention. My father and I stayed at Visale Clinic for four days. Members of the MEF came one morning and went into the Clinic, I tried my very best to escape from the Clinic. So my Dad and I went and hid behind the Clinic. MEF members came and took my dad and went back to the Clinic. I tried my best to escape so I went and hid behind the area where the Visale School is situated now. I did not know what actually happened to my Dad. I managed to get to the bush and I told the people who were also hiding about my Dad. I told some boys who were in the vicinity if they could go and check for my Dad, whether he was still alive or already killed by the MEF Members. I went up to the bush with the help of some of the Visale people. They carried out a lot of shooting out there and two boys were shot and killed that time. All the people at the Visale areas ran away and hid in the bush. After the shooting was calmed down, I was again carried down close to the village. My Dad was released and I was very happy that he was not killed. He just told me that they did not do anything to him but just let him go. I told him that there were lots of happenings taking place

at Visale and its better for us to go back. The next morning we arranged for a truck to come and pick us up to come back but we were dropped at Vura village. All the houses along the seaside at Visale were burnt down by MEF.

All the problems related to the Ethnic Tension affected lots of innocent people in the Solomon Islands. Education of children was affected, employees of Government and Private sectors were also affected, they did not continue as they should have been. At that time we found it very difficult to cope with our daily living. There was not enough food in the gardens, because we did not have time to replant our gardens due fear of being attacked by MEF. So this resulted in not having enough food to eat during those times. After living the Clinic and I came back to Vura Village, I had to dress my own wounds sustained during the shootout at Kogulae. I was then moved to Tamboko to be under the care of the nurses there.

That is the end of my story.

After the Ethnic Tension, I filled in a Form to claim compensation for injuries sustained during the Ethnic Tension. So far I still have not received any compensation on that, but I heard that others who had filled up the same form received their claims in respect of their injuries. I do not really know what happened with my claim for injuries.

I would like to appeal to the people of Solomon Islands to remain united to become one people and one nation, to stand united with God in our daily lives and in what work we undertake in Solomon Islands.

I would like to say thank you to the Chairman and his Commissioners and also those who are listening through SIBC and to each and every one of you who is present at this Public Hearing.

Commissioner: Thanked the victim for his story.

Victim: Tracy.

Tracy took her Oaths before the Commissioners.

Commissioner: Welcome Tracy you may your story.

Victim: She thanked the Commissioner.

Good morning Solomon, Chairperson for TRC, Fr. Sam Ata, Deputy Chairlady, Commissioners, Counselors, Fellow Victims, Public and everyone who is listening to us this very moment.

My name is Trace and I am part Malaita and part Guadalcanal, and I am still a student.

In 1980, my parents settled at Langalanga Lagoon, Malaita Province. One of the ships from Guadalcanal came straight to my parents' home at Langalanga Lagoon to ask my parents to go back to Guadalcanal. My father's grandmother was from Guadalcanal and by birth she had the land right. So my grandmother's people would like us to go back and settle on my father's

grandmother's land. So in 1980 my family at Langalanga agreed to return to that land belonging to their grandmother to settle there. So they left Langalanga Lagoon and came to settle on Guadalcanal. They did not come to Guadalcanal as strangers or they did not even have to pay for that land. They came to Guadalcanal through blood because on Guadalcanal, it's the women who are more respected than the men and they have the land rights. Before they got to the shore at Tangarare they performed a customary ceremony called Chupu. After performing this ceremony then my parents could step on the shores of Tangarare this was to show that the land belonging to my dad's grandmother was well looked after until my parents' arrival to reunite with them.

We stayed peacefully until 1998. During this time we started to hear rumours that something was going to happen. Some of my brothers and sisters attended Tangarare School also heard the same story and even myself heard that when I was in standard II in 1988. Even small arguments between my brothers and sisters and the children from Tangarare area would say to them that they should go back to Langalanga they are not from Tangarare. When we mentioned these rumors to our parents, they told us that we were blood related to that area and should not worry. When these rumors were brought to the attention of the chiefs they also told us that we should not worry because we were not strangers. We lived a normal life up until 1999 then the rumors began to become a reality. We started sighting men wearing Kabilato and going around our villages. We were also advised to wear Kabilato but we could not do that because we were not brought up like that so we refused to wear them. One day in 1999, my elder sister and her girl friend went for a swim at Tangarare River near the School. While they were in the river, one of the militants came and called my sister's friend. The militant asked my sister's friend if she could do a favour for him, then my sister's friend asked the militant what the favour was all about. The militant asked my sister's friend to go and mark all the Malaita girls' bed and leave the door unlocked. My sister heard what the militant was saying to my sister's friend, but when they got back they did not carry out what the other girl was supposed to do. They held a local court case on this but the two girls won this case. After two weeks on Easter Sunday on 19th April 1999, between 9:00 – 10:00 pm in the evening when we invited our uncle to come and have an evening story. During this time we made rolls of tobacco to sell in our canteen. This canteen also sustained our living at that time. While we were sitting down, one of those men from that area came; he came to tell us that our place was going to be raided by the militants the same night. Not long after he arrived my mother could see some people moving from the reflection of another light. My mum told my dad to shut the door so that if anyone would like to come and buy beer he could stand outside. While dad was trying to shut the door the first militant came and hit the door. All of us were just sitting down and watching what was going to happen. When my dad said this, the militant answered him and said who wants to be your brother. When he said this, the second man jumped in the house. When he jumped in he was already armed and wearing Kabilato. As soon as he jumped he destroyed the three lamps that were hanging outside our verandah leaving only one light. One of the militants shouted and said "don't move" my parents and my uncle were now threatened at gun points. At that time we did not have any choice of where to go or what to do. That man from the village was still around the house so he pushed my elder sister through the window and he did the same to me. We ran to our cousin's house and woke up our niece and told her that we should run away because the militants are here. When we were ready to come out from the door to run away the militants arrived too, so that village man managed to help us to run away and hide in the bush during the night. While we were on our way to the bush we could hear gun shots back at the village. During that night we slept in the bush under the rain because there was no proper shelter. While we were in the bush I could hear gun shots, that time I was frightened and also thought of my parents because I could think of how

they pointed the guns at them. I thought I was going to lose them, I thought that would be the end of their lives because there was no choice. We came back together but the militants demanded things from my parents. They went into our house and took any valuable things from them. They demanded the takings which they raised during that weekend. My dad and mum gave all the money leaving us not even a cent. The militants went and raided my uncle's house. The main aim of doing this to my uncle's house was to take the two way radio in his house. When the militant was kicking the table where Radio wireless was seated, one miraculous incident took place, which saved our lives. A picture of Mary was hanging on the wall and when the militant kept on kicking the table, the picture fell and on top of the radio wireless and the militant could not see it. He did not even know that the radio wireless was right in front of him. Instead turned around and pulled down the aerial of the AM Radio. That man from the village assisted us to run away to the bush and stayed during the night. My parents were last to leave the house, they came and joined us and remained in the bush for the rest of the night. We tried to use the radio wireless to contact others but we could not because the militants were all around the area. Some of the boys from the Tangarare area managed to put up the aerial of the radio wireless but when we made contacts with the responsible authorities in Honiara, they could not catch up. The boys from the area kept on trying to contact Honiara and each time they tried the militants would come around and they would tell us to run away to the bush. What the militants said was they did not want to see any Malaita people around if they came back the next day and we were still around there they would kill us. While we were in the bush, the Paramount Chief heard about what had happened and sent some of the boys to come and get us. So we went to his house and he kept us there. My mum and the rest of my brothers and sisters were kept in the room while my and dad and others were outside with the Chief. He closed the door of the house and sat with his knife outside. He said that if the militants came they should kill him first with his own knife before killing the rest of us.

By Monday morning, we back to our house and packed up all our properties and carried them to the seaside. We waited but the Patrol Boat did not come that day so we left our belongings on the beach. All through the ordeal we did not eat anything. Early Tuesday morning the Patrol Boat came to rescue us. As we were ready to board the Patrol Boat we were surprised that the Malaitan students at Tangarare Secondary were also on their way to the Patrol Boat. They were threatened and beaten by the militants. Some of them had swollen eyes and blood was still running down on the faces of some of them. They were asked to board the Patrol Boat first seeing that they were badly wounded. The Police Field Force Officers had to look for one of the Malaita boys who was abducted and taken away by the militants. He was severely beaten, stripped off his clothes and left to die but he managed to jump into a creek which was full of crocodiles. He was found and taken to Tangarare School. My dad said that the rest of the Malaita students should leave the school and board the Patrol Boat to come to Honiara. The sisters did not allow these students to leave but my dad said that it should be better for them to go back to Honiara when the situation was still under control. We were taken to Honiara and we were accommodated at the Holy Cross Hall for about three months. During our stay at the Holy Cross Hall, we were assisted by the Red Cross.

After that period of three months, the late Hon. Bart Ulufa'alu made arrangements to repatriate us back to Malaita. When we got to Malaita we thought we arrived in our home land, but when we got there, we were like strangers, we did not have any house or even gardens. One question I would like to pause is that, why other Malaitans tried to threaten other Malaitans. I thought the ethnic crisis was between Malaita and Guadalcanal but infact Malaitans too tried to fight back Malaitans. We managed to fit in with our people again but

not as we should be. My parents started to make gardens where they used to before going over to Tangarare. When they did that they were questioned by our Malaita relatives that the land did not belong to them but infact that was where they used to make their gardens. We were treated the same as the Guadalcanal people at Tangarare treated us.

We attended school in Auki but still we lived in fear because the trauma we went through was still in our mind. When we settled down my parents started to set up a bottle shop at the village just to sustain our family, but this did not work out, so he went to Auki and set it up there. When this was set up, the militants went threatened him there. There were rumours that a new Militia group was formed. This group was called the Seagull and it was formed by the Langalanga people and they thought my dad was one of the members of the Seagull. When they did this to him, he had no choice but to come back home. Our education was really affected; the expectation of the first born children to continue with their education to a higher level to get qualified and assisted the smaller ones was affected. My parents did not have the financial support to help us. My uncles tried to support each other but this too did not work out for us. In some cases, the parents only assisted the elder children to go to school and the smaller ones remained at home. Some of them did not attend school for two years. When my dad tried to set up something to sustain our family still we were threatened by militants. Some of my uncle's children tried to complete their education after two years but due to lack of financial assistance they could not continue. They had to stop and do other things to earn enough money to meet their school expenses but in the end this did not work out.

For us who went through a lot of trauma could not concentrate with our learning because we had a lot of disturbances during Ethnic Tension. When I attended Tenaru Secondary School, I only had \$50 but as a girl this was not sufficient for my needs. What could I do, I did not have any financial support from the family because we did not have any means of sustainability. Even though I was like this I just had to accept the fact of life. Sometimes at school I went hungry but there was no body I could depend on because the rest of my brothers and sisters did not have any good education so as to enable to them to earn money.

When we appealed to the Members of Parliament to assist us, they would promise but in the end there was no financial assistance forthcoming from them. When we checked at the School there was nothing, but infact there was an entitlement under their benefits for School fees etc.. In most cases the parents would have to raise money to meet the school fees. We struggled hard to earn our living but could achieve it in the end. As a youth we find it hard because we there is no financial help even to attend church activities we cannot do that because we have to have something to assist us with. Instead some of the youths just roam around drinking kwaso and smoking Marijuana and there is no law and order in the community. The youths just go their own way and they would not listen to anybody.

It is very hard for us the youths who went through the Ethnic Tension to cope up with the life today. As a youth of today, I would like to appeal to my brothers and sisters in Guadalcanal; "Her appeal is in Guadalcanal dialect"; "You, my relatives of Guadalcanal, those of you who joined the militia group, you thought it was ok so you enjoyed the fight and you did not think about those who innocent people died during the Ethnic Tension. I would like to let you know that we have forgotten what you had done to us, I would like you to come forward and lets reconcile with each other and with the relatives and those people at home". She also appealed in the Malaita dialect to the militia group (MEF) on Malaita as she had said above in the Guadalcanal dialect.

I would also appeal to the Government through TRC, we had lodged claims of Lost Properties but so far we have not received any positive responses. The Government paid out most of the false claims whereas those families who really lost their properties during Ethnic Tension did not receive any compensation.

Once again I would like to appeal to the Government to address the needs of the youths because they are leaders of tomorrow. Help them in whatever way so that they grow up to be good citizens of this nation. It is a big challenge to us all to mould the youths of today to be leaders of tomorrow.

I would like to appeal to the leaders of this country you have all responsibility, some of the leaders visited the communities and made promises to them but most of them did not honour their promises. Please leaders you must have a good attitude, you must believe on what you plan to assist with the people of this country, you must commit yourself to do the things that you promised to the people of this country.

Finally I would like to thank the Chairman, Deputy Chairperson, Commissioners, Counselors and all Solomon Islanders for this Program. As a youth I should think this is a good program where youths could share or raise their concerns which affected them during the Ethnic Tension. This program assists us to raise what had happened to us during the Ethnic Tension so that everyone could hear the effects of what happened to the youths. Through this program real peace will not be revealed without justice unless justice is revealed before peace is achieved. I would once again thank you for this program. Once again I would like to say thank you to all Solomon Islanders who are listening to this program and share with us what we had gone through.

Thank once more.

Thank you for your story.

The next Victim is Cynthia Samani.

Chairman: She was at CDC when the Ethnic Tension happened. She returned to Malaita with her parents without any properties.

Cynthia took her oaths before the Commissioners and the Audience.

Commissioner: Welcome Cynthia you may begin your story.

She thanked the Chairman, Deputy Chairperson, Commissioners, Counselors and people of Solomon Islands where were listening out.

My name is Cynthia Samani and I am from Radefasu, Central Kwara'ae, Malaita Province. I am very happy to have this opportunity to share my story as a youth victim.

In 1995 my dad bought a piece of land at Okea. My dad developed that piece of land and stayed there since 1995. In 1998 we started to hear stories that there was an uprising which started on the other side, North West Guadalcanal. In 1998 I was in Form III. We heard that

the militants chased the Malaitans out from where they were. My parents thought that we should move out from our place, but the landowner whom my dad bought the land from said that we should not leave. That fight was only for the people residing on the North West of Guadalcanal. I was in Form III and our school attendance started to be affected. The story was that the militants were going to chase the illegal settlers back to Malaita. We stayed up until 1999 when the Ethnic Tension was getting worse. Our house was situated only metres away from the main road and we could hear guns being fired along the road. We started to get frightened and also we were advised by the landowners and friends that we should not roam around too much and when we go to town we should come straight back to the house. By then we started seeing full truck loads of people leaving CDC III to come down to town due to the threats of the GRA militants. When we saw this we started to get worried because this was a new move to us. I could remember one evening when my mother was doing her cooking in her kitchen and the rest of us were in the house, we heard gun fire just beside the road. When my mum heard this she left her pot and ran back to the house. This made me very frightened indeed. SI Telekom started to evacuate its workers residing around the CDC area to come to town. The militants told us the last truck to go across the banker was the SI Telekom truck and no more. We were taken from our area and were left at the SI Telekom Recreation area at Ranadi. This was a students' hostel but we were accommodated there. After dropping off some of the families my brother and I went back with the Guadalcanal man who was the driver of our bus. On our way back, and when we got to Tenaru Bridge one of the militants came out to the road and stopped the bus. The militants asked the driver who owned the bus, but he said that the bus belonged to him and his family. The driver asked us to hide in the bus, the driver himself was one of the chief's sons. After talking with the militants we took off to our area. The driver went to my dad and told him that it's better that everyone should leave the place before anything else could happen to your family. My dad had to go and look for the boys because they went to buy betel nut at the Ngalibiu market. My dad picked the boys from the market and came back so all of us boarded the bus and came down to town. I knew my father was not a fast driver but that time he was really driving at a very high speed. When we got to Alligator Creek then we felt safe because we were within the town area. When we got to the Telekom Recreational area my dad told us that we just have to forget about our properties back at Okea, these included our house, domestic animals and other belongings what did matter was our lives. SI Telekom did not allocate any house in town to my dad so he was thinking of to resign and go home. I was in Form IV during that time and if he was to resign this would affect his children education. So my dad had made up his mind to resign and we had to go back home. When we got home with only less belongings and to make matter worse we did not have any house and had to live with relatives. My dad sent me back to Honiara to continue with my education but this time I had to live with relatives which I did not get used to. I did not get much financial assistance from my parents as stated earlier my dad was already out of job. I did not have time to do my studies and my education was affected because I was aiming high and I expected myself to achieve better results at the end of my schooling.

At that time I did not care because I could not help myself in terms of doing my studies, all I had in my mind was to get a Certificate. During the June holidays I went home and at the end of the holidays I did not come back to complete the last Semester of the year, but I came back to sit my last exams. We went through a very hard time because we had to share house with my uncle.

I had to go through a different stage of my life, what I used to enjoy when my dad was still in employment were no longer there. The rest of my brothers and sisters could not attend school

because there was no money for school fees. We had to start a new life at home and it was just like a new beginning to us.

I would like to appeal to the Governments of Malaita and Guadalcanal that it is time that the two of you to pull up your socks to try and settle your differences. Let us forget and bury the past and look forward to a new beginning and a new future.

I would like to appeal to the Government through TRC that my dad had lodged his Lost Property Claims but still awaiting for his payment. Why did the Government pay the Lost Property Claims of those who did not deserve to be compensated? The Government did not give priority to those who deserved to be paid.

I would like also to encourage the youths to go through the counseling and healing process, this would be a great help to each individual who was affected during the ethnic tension.

I would like to conclude by saying, thank you Chairman, Deputy Chairperson, Commissioners and counselors and the Solomon Islands as a whole for this Public Hearing.

Commissioner Joni thanked Miss Samani for sharing her experiences.

The next victim was Christina Harisimae.

Miss Christina Harisimae was welcomed by the Deputy Chairlady to the Public Hearing and she could begin her story.

She took her Oaths before the Commissioners.

Chairman, Deputy Chairperson, Commissioners, counselors and Solomon Islanders listening out. I would like to say thank you for giving me this chance to come and express my feelings which I experienced during the Ethnic Tension.

Commissioners: Welcome Christina you may begin your story.

Victim: My name is Christina Harisimae and I am from West Are Are, one of the regions of Malaita Province.

On Sunday, March 1999 in the afternoon, one of my classmates from Malaita went up to canteen close to Ruavatu Secondary School. He was on his way to buy some stationery. While he was still on the way one of the villagers ran towards him. His main was to pass the news to this boy to go and advise the School Principal and the students to remain in the School Campus and not to go out of the school compound. When the villager saw this student he could tell that he was from Malaita because he had tattoos on his face. He told him not to go beyond the bridge the GRA militants were there. You go back right now and inform the Principal and students about this, especially the Malaita students. This student went back and informed the Principal what the villager told him. The Principal, a Guadalcanal person called all the students together to assemble in the School dining hall. He advised the Malaita students to remain in the dining hall and not to go outside of the school compound. So all the Malaitan students did not go anywhere but to remain in the dining hall. The Principal then

made arrangements of how to transport the Malaita students to town. While he was still talking, we could see the armed militants coming through the gate of the school. They marched towards the dining hall of the school, we could see that some of them were wearing Kabilato and also in possession of homemade guns. By then we were surrounded by the militants and they said the Malaita students should leave the school immediately. The Malaita female students were so frightened and we crawled under the table because the militants were firing shots in the air. We did not go back to the dormitories but had to sleep in the classrooms and in the dining hall just like animals.

Mr. Chairman, I do not want the same thing to be repeated again. I do not want the same thing to happen to the youths of today. My education too was affected at that time and as a result I did not continue with my education to achieve my goals. I was asked by my parents to repeat the same form which I went through at Ruavatu. I did not accept this because of my age, year by year I grow old so I did not feel comfortable to repeat the same form again.

Now I would like to appeal to the youths and young leaders, please feel free to attend workshops which may be arranged by NGOs or Government, just like this Program which TRC has arranged. It gives the opportunity to voice out our concerns and what had affected us during the Ethnic Tension so that the Government could take note of them. I would also like to appeal to the Ministry which looks after TRC to support this Organization in their Mandate to bring about the process of peace and healing. Through TRC counselors, we were able to go through counseling and we as youths managed to get over the trauma that some of us went through during the Ethnic Tension. So once again I appeal to the Government to support TRC so that it fulfills its obligation to bring about lasting peace in Solomon Islands. Peace cannot exist if we only forgive, it can only exist with a clean heart but not with a dirty heart. Once again Chairman, Commissioners and especially the Counselors for dealing with the youth victims during the Ethnic Tension to voice out their concerns and for the Government to support the Ministry which TRC comes under and lastly I appeal to Solomon Islands, if there are programs of this nature again in the future, please try to attend them.

Thank you very much.

Commissioner; Thanked Christina for her story which will be included in the TRC Report.

The Chairman introduced the fifth victim, Presley Vii (Jr).

He took his Oaths before the Commissioners and the audience.

The Deputy Chairperson welcomed the victim and asked him to tell his story.

Victim: Chairman, Deputy Chairperson, Commissioners, Counselors, Victims, Women and Youths.

My name is Presley Vii (Jr), I am from South Guadalcanal and my home village is at Horabau. I would like to start off my story at Horabau our new settlement at Aruligo.

In 1999 I attended St. Johns School at the age of 14 years. During my school days I hear stories and rumours that Guadalcanal would fight against Malaita. I did not worry about this

but to continue with my education until I completed Class VI. Our elders told that we should go back to the Weather Coast. So I decided to go back to the Weather Coast. When I went over to the Weather Coast the Militia Group started to form up and one of their moves was for the men to wear Kabilato and the women to wear grass skirts. For some of us we did not get use to wearing that sort of wear but we did not follow what they said, we were liable to pay compensation. To be on the safe side I had to wear Kabilato. We were also advised not to laugh at those who wore Kabilato and Grass skirts. If anybody did they would pay a fine of red money. That was one of the unusual things I came across during that period of time. The other thing too was that they would send to feed the militants who camped in the bush. Sometimes they would send us late in the evening. The journey would take about two hours and by the time we got to the place it would be late so we had to sleep in the bush and would return the next morning. During the uprising the young boys on the Weather Coast were doing this, just following instructions to do things for the militants. The militants asked us to wear Kabilato and go down to the seaside with our bow and arrows and shoot in case there is an enemy.

When I went over to the Weather Coast I also attended Babanakira School but did not concentrate with my education because of my involvement in the Ethnic Tension as a soldier boy so I just came back and stayed at home.

In 2003 I wanted to continue with my education so enquired at Tangarare to do Form One but I was advised that the intake for that year was already full so I decided to do Form II. I could not get through because something was wrong at the beginning so I came back and stayed at home. A year later Ruavatu was reopened again so I went and continued my education there. Infact I completed my fifth form. Then my dad's cousin went down to work in the Western Province so I went with him and he arranged for me to continue with my Sixth Form there and I did complete it. When I came back home and I wanted to do Form 7 but my mum could not support me financially so I agreed and just stayed home up until this time. My dad died long before the uprising so my mum had no financial means to support me and my other brothers.

I would like to appeal to the Guadalcanal Parliamentarians, that during your campaigns you always mentioned school fees, but when the voters approach you to assist them with their children's school fees, the response will be negative. You as leaders do not make false promises; you would be regarded as a liar because you did not speak the truth. I would like to encourage our youths at home to be involved in community activities to make use of their time to do useful things.

One of the things I would like to highlight here is the work of the two Counselors, what they have done so far in regards to their counseling work is commendable. I would like to suggest that if they can train us to carry out this work especially to the youths who had been affected by the Ethnic Tension.

That is my short story. Thank you very much.

Commissioner: Thank you very much for your story.

2nd Session of Day I – 22 November 2010.

The Chairman briefed the audience on the event that happened to Janet Koria Hanata.

The Victim took her Oaths.

Commissioner: welcome Janet and you may begin your story.

The Chairman briefed the normal protocol of the Public Hearing.

The victim took her Oaths before the Commissioners and the audience.

Commissioner: Maria you may begin your story.

My name is Maria Papari. I come from Mbarande, North East Guadalcanal.

In 1998 I was at Kulu Primary School where I lived my Aunty. One day when I went to school and after I came back with my Aunty. When we got to the main road we saw a Police truck. They told us they were looking for the militants who chased the Malaitans out. We went home and then during the night the members of the Police Force came and fired gun shots at our village. We were frightened so we went and hid in the bush. We did not bring any mats to sleep on so we used bush leaves instead. We lived for about three months; we were frightened because we did not come across anything like that before. My education was affected during that time. I was a bright student but my education affected because of the gun shots and threat we received from the militants.

In 1999 a group of men from our village came and demanded compensation from my dad. He was told that if he did not give any compensation he was to be killed so my sister gave them what they demanded and left my dad.

In 2000 we came back to the village but did not come to town because the Ethnic Tension was still tensed. We could not come to because we did not have any money at that time. There was no way to make money. I went back to school again but due to first shooting incidents I was still traumatized and did not do well at school. I could not write the proper answers so this made my academic results low and I had to repeat more than once. I did not do well at school and I have to repeat twice, I felt ashamed about this. So because of my education was being affected, I did not continue but just to stay at home and help out in the community and maybe later on continue with my education.

Thank you Chairman, Commissioners, victims and people of Solomon Islands.

The Chairman briefed the audience on the victim's case.

Victim: George Hilly took his Oaths.

Commissioner: You may begin your story.

Thank you very much Chairman, Commissioners, Counselors, victims and people of Solomon Islands.

Thank you for the opportunity this afternoon to share some of my experiences during the Ethnic Tension.

In 1998 I used to reside in Honiara and I was employed by BJS Agencies Ltd. My wife was part Choiseul and Malaita. So stayed with wife's family in one of the settlements at the back of Honiara.

It happened that in 1998 a shoot out took place at Bungana and one of the members of GRA was shot and killed by Police Officers. By then the Ethnic Tension got tensed in Honiara and also at the surrounding areas. In fear of my safety I decided I should not stay at the Malaitan Settlement but to go back to my village at Aruligo, North West Guadalcanal. By then the GRA had formed up and mobilized themselves all around the island of Guadalcanal. In late 1999 the militants made a road block at Kakabona. Members of the Police Field Force asked them to open the road block but they refused. The GRA militants' intention was to enter Honiara, then the Police Field Force gave out messages through their louder speaker that they should clear that road block otherwise they would shoot them. They did not listen but forced their way towards town. As a result of this, a major shoot out took place at Kakabona. That time three boys got shot and wounded but we managed to drag them out and escaped with them to Visale clinic to get medical treatment. That was the first encounter I came through. The second one was in 1999; I also witnessed another shoot out at Aruligo. One morning when the women and children came to the market to sell their produce buy other things, a ship loaded with members of MEF and PFF went shot at this people. The third experience was I went through a hard labour in year 2000; I went home to Aruligo with another Malaita man who used to live there. He wanted to take back his pot plants which he left behind when they were chased out, because of this I was labeled as a spy for MEF. I was abducted, detained and tied up for three days. After that detention I was given hard labour, this was done so that I could tell the truth whether I was a spy for MEF. After proving I was innocent I was released.

Before I conclude I would like to make some recommendations based on my personal thoughts:

- One is for the Parliament to stop the Forgiveness Bill which was supposed to be debated in Parliament and I am not sure whether it was already passed or not. If the Government is to introduce this type of Bill, then it should make a wider consultation with the youths and the women. Why I say this because these people are going to be affected by the decision made by the top level leaders in the Government and in particular the Parliament. Any form of Bill which affects the lives of people, the Government should consult the rural population of Solomon Islands to get their views before building any laws which will not affect the people.

With that before I conclude I would like to congratulate the Donor Partners, SI Government, Truth and Reconciliation Commission Staff to facilitate this very important Program in which I believe this type of gathering will surely bring back peace and justice in this country.

Thank you very much.

Commissioner: Thank George Hilly for your story and will take note of what you said.

The Chairman briefed the audience on the victim's case.

Victim: Hazyline took her Oaths.

Commissioner: You may begin your story.

My name is Hazyline Gelema, I come from Choiseul Province.

Thank you very much Chairman, Commissioners, Counselors, victims and people of Solomon Islands.

In 1998 my dad worked at Tenavatu Farm. I went to school at Choiseul Bay and in June of that year I came back for holidays with my parents. One morning we were in the house and one of the militants came to my mum and asked for my dad. She told him that he went down to Alligator Creek with some cattle to graze. The militant said to my mum, when your husband comes back you tell him to allow me to harvest those cocoa, if he does not allow me I will chop his neck off with this long knife. My mum and I could not do anything but just sat in the house with fright wishing for my dad to return. By late evening that day my dad returned from work and we told him what happened while he was away.

During that period we could see the militants going up and down in the area holding guns and weapons. This made us frightened but my dad told us to stay put because God is with us and for sure we will be safe. By July I had to go back to Choiseul to resume my classes and my mum too came with me to Choiseul. When I got to school I did not concentrate with my education because my mum and I thought of my dad who was still at Honiara. We did not know what would happen to him because he was living outside of Honiara and that was where the GRA's stronghold was. Our neighbours had already gone back to their various Provinces leaving only my dad at the work place. I told my mum if we could come and live with my dad so that whatever happened we just have to face the consequences. My mum did not agree for us to go back to Honiara but ask for my dad to come home. He refused to come home because he thought of the Government property which was left under his care. My dad agreed so he came home and we settled back at home.

That is the end of my story.

My question is; what is the Government going to do with its employees who were entitled for benefits but still have to receive them. How is the Government going to deal with this as to make it fair for those who deserve to get such benefits? My dad is still waiting for his entitlements which he worked hard for more than 26 years.

Thank you Commissioners, Counselors and everyone in Solomon Islands. I should say we are all victims of the Ethnic Tension. Thank you very much.

Commissioner: Thank you very much for your story Miss Gelema.

That was the end of the First Session of the First Day of the Public Hearing.

The Second would resume on Tuesday 23rd November, 2010 at 9:00 am.

YOUTH PUBLIC HEARING DAY 2 – SESSION I 23rd NOVEMBER 2010 – UNITED CHURCH

The Chairman welcomed the audience and also to the people of Solomon who were listening to the Public Hearing.

The first victims to give testimonies were Father and Son.

They were introduced by the Chairman. They were Tony and Rolly Cheka. Rolly was only four years old when the militants attacked them at village at Goigoi.

The father and son took their Oaths.

Son: My name is Rolly Cheka, I am part Guadalcanal and Shortlands. I was only four years when my father was harassed and beaten by the GRA.

When they did that to my father, my mother and my sister were very frightened and they took me and we ran away to the bush. We managed to find our way and came to another village. This took place one evening at our village on the Weather Coast.

Father: My name is Tony Checka. My father was from Malaita and my mother from Guadalcanal. I am married to a Shortland woman. I was a police officer but left the Police Force. During that time we just got back from Honiara from a Marriage Counseling Session.

One evening I was trying to light our kerosene lamp when the GRA militants arrived. They ordered me to put away whatever I was doing and go down to the beach. They suspected that I was a spy to the MEF because I just got back from Honiara and I was part Malaita. When we got to the beach they punched me and kicked me and pointed their guns at me. I was really in great pain, the worse pain I ever experienced in my whole life. I was tied to a coconut tree and I thought I was going to die at any time I had been in that position for two hours and the Leader was trying to smash the gun on my head. I managed to get myself free after the militants went away. I ran away as fast as I could and I jumped into the river. I felt unconscious and stayed in the river for a while. I swam across the river and came to dry land I realized I was full of blood. It was dark so I did not really know where I was. I could see somewhere in the distance a flame of fire was burning and I knew straight away it was my house. I struggled with blood streaming down my face and managed to make my way to my house. It was a sad affair that my house was burnt down including all our properties. I thought my family also got burnt in the house but as I thoroughly searched through there was no sign of them so I knew they must have run away to another village. I went and looked for them and after eight hours searching I came to another village and they were there. During this time the GRA militants were chasing the Malaita settlers at Tangarare even if you were blood related to that area.

As my wife was from Shortlands and she was not familiar with the area but somehow she managed to find her way through to another village with our two children.

We made our way all the way to Tangarare and the next day we boarded the Patrol Boat to Honiara. We did not bring anything with us because all our properties were burnt down in our house. When we got to Honiara, all the displaced people from Tangarare were put at the Holy Cross Hall and my family was also included in there. The Red Cross came and assisted us with the other necessary items. I was then admitted at the National Referral Hospital for the wounds sustained during the abduction by the GRA militants.

I found it very hard to cope with life because I was part Malaita and Guadalcanal so my wife asked me if we could go back to the Shortlands to settle there. While we were at Shortlands my parents asked us to come back to Guadalcanal. My family came but I stayed in Shortlands for while until the arrival of RAMSI.

The father and son thanked the Chairman, Deputy Chairperson, Commissioners, Counselors and people of Solomon Island for the Program.

Commissioner: Thank you Tony and Rolly for your story.

The Chairman introduced the other victim to the Commissioners and audience.

Victim: Took his Oaths before the Commissioners and the audience.

Commissioner: You may begin your story.

My name is Hezi Tebabaki, I am part Kiribati and Shorlands.

Thank you Chairman, Deputy Chairperson, Counselors, Victims and people of Solomon Islands.

In 1998 I attended Bishop Eppale Primary School. There were rumours that there was going to be an uprising between Guadalcanal and Malaita. We attended school but we did not concentrate with our classes because the Ethnic Tension was getting tensed. Sometimes we missed classes because of fear. Teachers from Guadalcanal and Malaita started to leave classes or the school to go back to their respective homes, especially the Guadalcanal teachers. The Government was then getting slack, the Police Force started to break down, there was no law and order in place.

At that time the Ethnic Tension was at its height and the National Parliament Member for Shortlands chartered the MV Isabella to take the people of Shortlands back to their Province.

In today society when urbanization takes place, people move about to get better education and employment. So that is why the rest of the people come to Honiara to work and when such thing as the Ethnic Tension took place we were all affected. Children's education was affected, all other services were affected.

I would like to appeal to the Government to address the needs of the youths of Solomon Islands today. They are the leaders of tomorrow, because when the current leaders or whoever get old, the youths of today will be the leaders of tomorrow. Provide them with good education and other amenities.

That's the end of my story.

Thank you Chairman, Commissioners, Counselors, victims and people of Solomon Islands.

Commissioner: Thank you for your story.

The Public Hearing was adjourned until 11:00 am.

The Chairman welcomed every to the 2nd Session of the Public Hearing.

The Second half of the Session was for Youth Experts – 1998 – 2003.

They are to share what they had experienced during the Ethnic Tension from 1998 to 2003.

They are experts in their own rights. They would like to talk about their experiences and how the issues of Youths should be addressed. It is a very important Group.

The First Youth Leader was from Malaita. He is Andrew Koloa. Andrew is a Youth Leader from the Anglican Church and who resides in Honiara. Originally he is from Malaita Province.

The Chairman welcomed Andrew and thanked him for his attendance to the Youth Public Hearing.

- Mr. Andrew Kaloa took his Oaths.

Commissioner: Welcome Mr. Kaloa, you may begin.

Mr. Kaloa: Thank you Chairman, Commissioners, Youth Leaders, victims and people of Solomon Islands.

During the Ethnic Tension, I was here in Honiara and I was a student at Selwyn College, and what went on in our country at time I will focus on that.

In the history of Solomon Islands and if you read some historian wrote about during the period of pacification, actually Missionaries were involved in it, in fact they got rid of head hunting. They formed a cult an area where peace came if you could observe clearly up to where the Ethnic Tension that was in 1998, history then reversed back where people started to kill each other but in a commercial war. This time guns were used, this was different from before where people used only spears. Ethnic Tension as I observed it, it happened in a commercial world where people depended very much on food stuff from the store or overseas where they were imported into the country. It affected the structures in our society today. In all societies in the world they have three fundamental structures where they are laid as; politics, cultures and economics. If we talk about politics, it is something to do with decision making in the decision and we talk about economics, we talk the distribution of wealth or livelihood in our society and then we talk about culture, living practices, also religion involve in that. These three pillars in the society uphold the society and then the former distribution during the Ethnic crisis, what happened was, these three pillars were totally destroyed. Firstly the political structure in the society, decision did not follow the normal structure in the our society, the normal practice our society is the decision comes from leaders, dad or elders in the society, but a young person can think of anything and do it. A young person can make his own decision by his own choice. I think decision making at that time from 1998 to the end of the Ethnic Tension any young person could make his own decision because he had the power because he had a gun, he had a weapon to fight with or use so the decision was not in order.

Then when we talk about the economics in our society that is the distributions of wealth as well, that was a problem at that time, where bribery was a major issue, people were hungry because the distribution of wealth was not evenly done because of the height of the Ethnic Tension. In other words there was an economic down turn in the society and in the country that occurred during that time. That was my observation during that time. Then we come to the cultural structure in our society. There were lots of violation in our cultural values, our values in the churches, also the moral values in our society, these did not exist during that time. The young people at that time followed their own ways, from my experience when I was at Selwyn College during the height of the Ethnic Tension, the students had to be evacuated because the situation was getting out of hand. The Principal at that time now the current Archbishop had given instructions to evacuate the whole school to be relocated at St. Nicholas. This affected the young people at that time, one of the funny things was during that time almost of the male students wanted to become militants. They dressed up in camouflage uniforms, not interested to wear the school uniforms anymore. To me this portrayed a kind of mentality where young people wanted to gain power, they wanted to become somebody. They did not abide with school regulations, they wanted to go their own way and to follow school regulations was getting difficult. I observed it during that all the young people wanted to become militants. In actual fact they were not militants but because of that thing interpreted in their minds they accepted that kind of life style. That was my observation at that time and in the nation as a whole those effects are still in the mind of people today. The life style of young people is quite different from the past. There are lots of criminal activities committed by young people, this is the end result of the Ethnic Tension which occurred in 1998 to 2003. So my talk was based only on the three structures which I mentioned earlier which were totally destroyed.

I would like to appeal to all good leaders in the nation, in the Church, in the Government if we can mend the three structures which were destroyed during the Ethnic Tension, in terms of economics, in terms of culture and in terms of politics in our decision making. I would like also to appeal to the Government to make good decisions. How are we going to mend that political structure which was destroyed. If the existing political structure in our country is not in order then we have to re-look at it. There must be a code of assessment of that political structure in the Government, if that was the really cause of the Ethnic Tension and also in terms of economics. If the distribution of wealth is not in order, like some people are poor than and others are rich, what are we going to about this structure in our society. Is there any other way the country is going to look at to solve this economic structure that was destroyed. The other one is the cultural structure which involve practices, which involve our churches. My question is, how are we going to revive these values back into our society. I also appeal to the leaders to take not of the three areas which I highlighted so that we start work on them to mend the linkage in those three structures.

That is my contribution based on the three structures which I believe it makes sense will make some constructive contributions in the discussion. I would also like to appeal to Church leaders, if we call ourselves 99% Christian nation or 98% Christian nation, my question is what had happened so far in the Ethnic Tension, is it a sign of spiritual declining in the church that was it happened like that? or is it a sign of a political game. I would like to appeal to you as Church leaders look into the Christian values and principals in the churches.

With that, I would like to thank the Chairman, Commissioners, Staff of TRC, Counselors and others who attend this Program, I would like thank you all for listening.

Commissioner: Thank you Mr. Kaloa for sharing this morning. TRC takes note of this, as you know that the young people make up the majority of the population of Solomon Islands. The tension destroyed the education and the future prospects of most young people in Solomon Islands. TRC will take your recommendations up to the Government and TRC will listen carefully to people like you. A mechanism has to be found for involving young people more in the decision making process. Thank you.

Chairman: The next Youth Expert is Dalcly Belapitu. She represents the Youth of Honiara Circuit of the United Church.

Commissioner: Welcome Dalcly you may begin your presentation.

Dalcly Belapitu: On behalf of Youth Expertee I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Chairman, Commissioners and everyone who is here to express my feelings and what I saw during the Ethnic Tension and its aftermath.

If you look at the effects of the Ethnic Tension, it's the youth who are most victimized. We know the Government sometimes talk about youths issue but what way do they assist you? When we talk about youths, I look youths in three types.

- School leavers
- Church Youths
- Street Youths.

The Government concentrates to assist more on the youths who join up with Sports Club but do not pay attention to the Church and Street youths.

The Ethnic Tension affected the youths in the sense that affected their education. So when we talk about economic downfall, what is the result of economic downfall, it is mainly on unemployment, students came from out from school, there was no education because of the Ethnic Tension. There was no financial assistance forthcoming so they had to go out from school. The other factor is the value of our culture in our society. During the Ethnic Tension there were lots of criminal activities that took place this brought our values in our community and society down. This also caused most of our youths to go out from our respective churches. The elders of our Church shared their opinions with me that it is wise to call the youths who went astray to come. This is to keep them away from drinking kwaso and smoking marijuana. Youths should be counseled so that they can come back closer to God. When we tried to go out and reach out to them, they have fear in them and this fear isolate them away from coming closer God and they still remain in their old ways and habits. The Ethnic Tension also affected the youths to get their God given talents. Instead they misused these talents like committing criminal activities which made forget their goals. As we know when we attend schools we have our goals and we aim for the future. When the Ethnic Tension took place they lost their self-esteem. They saw that they could not achieve their aims and goals because they were destructed with their education. They were left down, the Government did not support them. When the Government does not support them then their morale goes down, but one must know that Youths are the leaders for tomorrow. In such circumstances youths should be encouraged to come up in the society so that to keep them away from bad influences.

Youths need to go out to do community activities, but there is no financial support from the Government to make their work easy. Youths tried their best to assist other youths through their own financial means. For the unemployed youths, nobody seems to address this issue, even the Government talks about unemployment it does not help in any way at all to address the issue.

I now appeal to the Government of Solomon Islands to address these issues, as Christians we should possess good values in our country.

I must stress here that the leaders are our role model, especially our Members of Parliament. We are watching them, if they do good deeds for the people, then they set good examples to their people especially the youths of today.

I appeal to the Government and the responsibility authorities to address the issue of reducing unemployment and bring them up to attend church programs. This I believe will bring back the unemployed youths to engage in church activities.

I think that is all. Thank you very much.

Commissioner: Thank you very much Dalcy for your presentation.

Chairman: The next Youth Expert is Kevin Molex. He is the Youth Leader for Holy Cross. He is from Kwaio, Malaita Province.

Commissioner: Welcome Kevin, you may begin your presentation.

Youth Expert: Chairman, Deputy Chairperson, Commissioners, TRC Staff and people of Solomon Islands.

My name is Kevin Molex, originally from Malaita but I work in Honiara under the Church Ministry called "Apostolic of Christ under the Catholic Church". Before I put my needs and concerns to the Government I would like to talk about my experiences before the Ethnic Tension and after the Ethnic Tension.

During the Ethnic Tension, I did not go back home but continued to do my work as a Youth Missionary. As a youth missionary I work with young people before this Tension took place. I did my work around Guadalcanal, Malaita, Makira and also other Provinces. My work involves mainly on young people to develop their talents and to know who they are and to know and respect their elders in their community and also for the Church. My work also involves building up their spiritual growth to know the role of the church and also their roles in the community. This is my field and I have been doing this since 1997 before the Ethnic Tension.

When the Ethnic Tension took place, I did not give up my work but went out to the militants from both Groups. I carried out my work around this island and went as far as Harold Keke's place, in here I was confronted with guns. They asked me for the reason of my going but I told them that I came with God's mission to bring his people closer to him. When I said this, I was allowed to go through.

In the Year 2000, our Youth Group was represented at Selwyn College for Youth Convention where we were fortunate to meet with Harold Keke. We talked with him and share with him, even the Government was trying to get him to draw a peace deal but he did not accept that. He only accepted the request of Youths to go and see him, that's what I experienced during the Ethnic Tension.

As I have mentioned in the first place, my work is to bring young people to come back. To take them out from influences that they are involved in so that they become good citizens of Solomon Islands. That is what I would like to do to the young people of Solomon Islands. I know I am a really citizen of Solomon Islands, I have a heart for the people of Solomon Islands and also for my country with due respect.

My experiences after the Ethnic Tension when I went back to visit them, most of were affected with fear. Most of felt that they were homeless and aimless because of the effects of the Ethnic Tension. Even though they were like that, we managed to take them back and placed them where they were before as they were real young people of this country, really young men and women of this country and they are future leaders of this community. This was what we did to them so they realized how important they are and in their community and as Solomon Islander.

Now I would like the Government to address this, most of the time, we regard them as Youths of today are leaders of tomorrow. This saying makes the youths lift up their morale and yet you do not address and respect that saying. You do not recognize their well being and you do not understand how important they are.

The second thing is; when you talk about youths it covers every young people, but when you categorize it, within the Church they have youth groups, from schools they have youth groups, and also the unemployed youths. I think the population of youths who are involved in criminal activities, like Kwaso and Marijuana plus activities where the elders do not welcome are committed by unemployed youths. When we talk about the Youths from the Church they are the ones who know more about the needs of the unemployed youths. They counsel them and talk to them so that they forget about their bad habits like drinking and smoking Marijuana and even involve in robbery and stealing. For example, if you look at the General Market, there are lots of pick pocketing taking place, these are committed by unemployed youths, it is not the adult people who do this. This is where the Church Youths involve in counseling them and directing them to come out from their bad habits. Why I refer to the unemployed youths because I look after them, I don't look after them by means of supporting them financially, or providing them with employment but assist them in a way so that they forget the character or attitude they are involved in. When we say the youths of today are leaders of tomorrow. For the Government what do you think of this? You as leaders of this nation we have to look at them and have concern for them as important as leaders of this nation.

The third thing as we look at the submission across to the Government, sometimes when we put forward to request for financial assistance, especially for Sports Organization. When they are sent overseas to participate in sports or other activities they do not achieve anything. We forget to recognize the youths spiritual growth in the society. Surely Solomon Island is a Christian country but this is the important the Government should address, the spiritual side of youths' growth in our country, where submission came through the Ministry of Youth, Women and Children's Affairs, where is the assistance given by the Government to the

Church Youths to assist in their programs to go out to do evangelization and also to work with young people. There is nothing. Whenever we talk about sports especially for the South Pacific Mini Games, the Government spent millions of dollars to send to participate for the sake of developing their talents physically but spiritually the Government forget all about it. This is the main factor we should look at, because when youths are involved in the church activities they are taught to have respect for their leaders, their communities but they have financial back up from the Government to run their programs. Most of the time Government got donors to assist the country but unfortunately they do not develop the country. They might develop the country physically but not spiritually and sometimes when youths participated in sports funded by the Government and when they came they did not participate in youth programs and they would fall back to bad habits. So we need the Government to assist financially to the Church youths so that they go out and assist other youths in God's work. As we always say the "Youths of today are Leaders of Tomorrow". If you look at the three points I have just mentioned and you include them in your policy and structure, surely, this country will live in peace. One more thing I would like to highlight here is that when you talk about young people, they are powerful just like nature, the power of nature we go against it, it is the same with the young people they have the power of nature. When young people decide to do things, they can do it without anyone stopping them. This is what I am putting across so our leaders can take note of.

On behalf of the young people of Solomon Islands, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Chairman, Deputy Chairperson, Commissioners and TRC Staff for arranging this Program. Thank you.

Commissioner: Thank you for your contributions.

Chairman: That concludes the second part of the Public Hearing for the morning and will resume again at 1:00 pm.

Session II -Day 2 – 23rd November 2010

The Chairman welcomed everyone for the second Session of the Youth Experts Presentation.

Ms Patricia Tona took her Oaths.

Commissioner: Welcome Patricia Tona you may begin your presentation.

Ms :Patricia Tona: Thank you Chairman, Deputy Chairperson, Commissioners, Staff of TRC and Solomon Islands. I would like to take this opportunity to come and share some of the expectations with you as a leader.

Expectations Government should mandate for young people of Solomon Islands in the future. Solomon Islands has now recorded a total of 515,870 persons as of November 2009. This means there is an increase of 106, 828 persons which is 26% compared with a population size of 409, 042 reported in the Census of November of 1999. In the record young people has a higher percentage which means in the future it will grow rapidly. In every community or village and in urban areas you can find young people, whether they are engaged in schools, employment; running a formal or informal business or have not any job opportunities. Youths can always be identified in all places and villages or communities, urban areas, institutions or schools, homes, streets, night clubs and prison.

Expectations Government should provide for youths: these are the recommendations young people expect from Government to build a better Solomon Islands;

- Village or community sponsors, for example, Government to provide allocation for reforestation of trees that have been devastated by large scale logging by companies; this is a possible avenue for job opportunities to engage in community participation.
- Provide micro-projects, priorities to for rural communities which are often forgotten. With these young people will remain back at their respective communities and become engaged with community's participation.
- The need to recognize youths as very special and unique in their talents and capabilities. Create job opportunities; establish more vocational or rural training centres that will be affordable. To provide more skilled training; our country needs more skilled young people to balance our growth and development. Work in partnership with communities and churches, many young people are absent in communities and churches, they must reach in their situation and address their expectations. Provide short term training and workshop on skills and trade programs as follows:-

Small motor engines,

Joinery

Agriculture skills etc.

To summarize my presentation I would like to thank TRC for this Program and I believe the responsible authorities will seriously consider what has been expressed by young people this day.

May the good Lord will raise the youths of Solomon Islands one day as the Lord heard the Children of Israel in Egypt so as God will hear young people of Solomon Islands. Thank you.

Commissioner: Thank you very much Patricia for sharing your expectation and concerns.

The next Youth Expert is Samani John who comes from Malaita Province.

The Chairman introduced the Youth Expert from Malaita.

Samani John took his Oaths.

Commissioner: You may now begin your presentation.

Good afternoon Solomon Islands, Chairman, Deputy Chairperson, Commissioners, Solomon Islands leaders, TRC Staff and people of Solomon Islands.

I thank you for this opportunity to come here and to share the needs of the young people. Before I proceed on I would like to introduce myself.

My name is Samani John I am from Malaita Province. I'm a young youth leader representing the tip of Malaita. I am part Langalanga, North and South. As you know in our country and

you have heard from our previous speakers. The most affected people during the Ethnic Tension were the young people. We found it very hard with our lives. We were affected in many areas, as you already heard, it affected the education of the young people. Secondly it affected our social problem, financial support was also affected too and even most young people were stressed in their lives. They searched for what they could do. Today I appeal to the Government to do something to try and heal the wounds in order to make our future lives become better. I also appeal to the Government to draw up some sort of educational programs so that the young youths can learn to change their future lives to become better than now. I would also appeal to the Provincial Governments, especially the Malaita Provincial Government. What are your plans for these young people who are affected? I appeal to you to recognize us and what are your plans for the young people, because we are leaders for tomorrow, and if we the responsible authorities do not have any concern for us we will be worse off than now. Therefore I ask you to prioritize us in your future plans and programs so that it will help us to do something better for us and the country as a whole in the future. I would like also appeal to our Parliamentarians who represent us in the National Parliament. During your campaigns you promised lots of things to us and we accepted your promises and voted for you. When you got Parliament you forgot about us, we are the resources of Solomon Islands. I appeal to you to play your role in assisting the youths of today. I heard that sometimes the Government budget had been spent somewhere else which did not benefit the country. If you could allocate 1% to the young youths that would be better to assist us in our programs and through this we would assist those unemployed youths back at our villages and communities. This will give them something to be involved in to be keep them occupied so that they do not involve in criminal activities.

I would appeal to the young people to think wisely for our future because we are the ones we are going to face the future. We have to think wisely, forget what had happened during the Ethnic Tension and face what is in the future. We will be the victims if we don't address the future properly, we can depend on our leaders but we too have to contribute to do our part so that we build better lives in the future. I appeal to those of you who are in the process of learning, concentrate on what will benefit the country. We ask money from our leaders if they support us, utilize this wisely and it will come successful.

Once again, leaders of this country, we the youths depend on you to show good examples, commit yourselves on what you do and make sure go to church and must remain faithful to your people and then our country will be prosperous in the future. Lastly to build a bright future I ask you National Leaders, Provincial Government and young people to work together as from now to build a better future so that we can enjoy life to the fullest. Before I conclude I would like to put across a short Phrase; "A Papaw tree if it is planted on infertile land, we will not harvest it, but if we plant it on fertile land it will bear fruit over and over again when its replanted". Once again Chairman, Commissioners thank you for this wonderful opportunity to share ideas and crisis where our young people are in now. Thank you.

Commissioner: Thank you for your presentation.

The Chairman introduced Stalin Kwanainao. He is a youth leader from the SSEC Church and comes from Malaita.

Mr. Stalin Kwanainao took his Oaths.

Commissioner: Welcome Mr. Kwanainao you may begin.

Mr.Kwainao: Chairman of TRC, Commissioners, Staff of TRC distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen and to our Radio and TV Audience thank you very much for your time.

My name is Stalin Luitolo Kwainanao and originally from Malaita Province and I am humbled and honoured to be here this afternoon for this historical event and I am also honoured to represent the SSEC Church as a Youth Rep. and this after I will just highlight some of the needs of our Youths today and for tomorrow too. As a leader with a vision and what do I see Solomon Islands Youths in five years time or in ten years time. Identifying some problems and possible solutions. I will also do some recommendations. So before I do that I would like to take this opportunity to say apologize on behalf of the Youth Development of the South Seas Evangelical Church for our youths who have been involved in the past Ethnic Tension whether they be from Malaita or Guadalcanal side, any from our Church who were involved during that time, on behalf of the Youth Department of the Church. I would like to say sorry may God alone who put that according to his plan and his purpose.

What do you think Solomon Islands will be like in five years time? As I have been pondering of what to say this afternoon. You can see the current situation, we as young people are facing after the Ethnic Tension is a big challenge and it's a big hill we are going to climb. We see a high rise of unemployment, drug abuse, prostitution, broken homes and disfunctional families, all these things are going around in our families, in our communities, in our churches. It is a sign that there is a problem. What makes a major problem because the population of Solomon Island is 75% of the population is just youths. We will come to this later when we deal with Youth issues. As a Youth worker, youth development is our priority. How we are going to develop our youths, we know youths, the definition of youths, the condition of when you are young between the ages of 18 to 35 years because it is the appreciation of our freshness, our vigour and the spirit that we have. We can do anything whatever mountain there, what road there, we can jump and we can climb because that is the spirit of being young.

Development is the act of improving by expanding or enlarging or refining. This is what youth development is all about. It is a broad topic but I will just talk on a method that just has been used all around the world. It is called a cycle of courage. This is where I am going to measure up on how we are going to deal with this. If you look at the Cycle of Courage it has four areas that you can measure a young man or a young woman to that method. We are all human beings with a sense of belonging, also sense of mastery, sense of independence and generosity. Belonging; we all belong to a place, we all got a place, Solomon Islands is our home. Mastery is something you are good at, you are good singing, you are good at dancing, you are good at building etc.. When you look at the first aspect of a youth is belonging, after the Ethnic Tension or during the Ethnic Tension, one major problem is home, we were chased out from where we used to be. There is no place to settle, so when you do not have a sense of belonging to a place, you do not have a sense of belonging as a young man or as a young woman, we become rebellious at times, why do we do that, because we do not have a sense of belonging to a place. Youths just want to mess up with their lives; to them they think they do not have a place to stay. This is what you see with our youths after the Ethnic Tension. You see just youths walking about aimless, there is no sense of security, there is no sense of direction you should go to. We all have a purpose in life but as you can see today many youths just live a reckless life. This is what is happening which is a major problem in our societies today. As a youth worker, is there is a possible solution to this.

This will come to our churches, our Government and our communities. To tackle all these problems we need to work together. Stop pointing fingers at the Government, stop pointing fingers at Church Leaders, we need to look at ourselves and ask questions, what I can do for my community, what can I do for my young people, what can I do for my church. These are the individual questions every youth in Solomon Islands should ask themselves. When you look in the mirror in the morning, these are the questions you should yourself. What can I do for my community today. There are some ideas that came up when we were discussing this issue. The first one is resettlement; and this already took place. There are resettlements that happen in our communities, like people are settled in various areas. If resettlements have not taken place I recommend that the Government should be looking at the issue of resettling the displaced families including the young people. There is a classic example of one of the victims telling us yesterday that her family was chased out of Tangarare and when they went back to Langalanga, they were not welcomed there any more. She did not know where to fit in that type of circumstance. The responsibility of the Government and Church leaders to resettle those families. If we do not do this, who is going to do it. It is up to the Government, the church leaders and the community to do that. We should provide shelter to the homeless that are roaming around. We should lift them up with our youth groups. We should have an integration program for these youths so that we should bring them back to fit into the community life style. The Government or churches should provide tools for gardening, materials for house, provide seeds for planting, and provide a plot of land to do gardening. This is a practical way, for me I do not believe in big scale assistance. I am very practical in the way we should do things, something achievable in a short period of time.

One of the very important things that were addressed was the issue of Education. During the Ethnic Tension, the education system was affected; almost all of the schools were closed down. We can always do something after the Government of this nation or the church we can still do something. One recommendation is; can the Government of this nation or the Ministry of Education and Human Resources set up a special privilege for those whose education had been interrupted. It does not have to follow the School Calendar but a program should be basically for them to bring them back into the education system. I don't think there is nothing hard about that, we have been doing it and surely we can do it again. Another recommendation is, can the Government set up a scholarship for those young people being chased out from Guadalcanal. A Special selection criteria that should be awarded to only those young people who were being affected by the Ethnic Tension, give evidence and recommendations and you could be offered a special scholarship to avoid parents from paying school fees due to the effect of the Ethnic Tension, it is not what we chose, it was something that we were not ready for it.

Another thing was the sense of belonging is that we can see youths go in peers. These young people are interested in the same sport, in the same music, they like reggae music, heavy metal music, you can see the way they dress and the way they do things. Even in the sports they seem to do things together. This means that it limits the potential of these young people and also narrow their decision. Their decision making will mainly focus on the peer group's interest.

I would like to put forward a recommendation; that we introduce youth development programs, down to the community level. We should have youth workers to every community so that they assist with community activities. This happens in other countries. What so hard about this in Solomon Islands we can easily do that. Train them up to involve in those programs with the youth development workers, to live with them in their villages become

mentors for them. If this type of program is in place it will create employment opportunities for the youths. We should engage in Youth Exchange program, youths from other provinces go to visit other provinces. Youths from Malaita to go to Isabel and vice versa, just like schools they have these exchange programs with overseas students. This same thing we can do, it is not a very expensive package. By going we will come to understand other culture, we will appreciate other people, we learn from them and have some impact from their livelihoods etc.. This is how we should look at other brothers and sisters from other provinces and this is how we should understand each other. It is all about empowering young people. Another thing is about culture, culture is known by the language we speak and the food we eat. If we refer back to one of the speakers, she was got confused whether she was from Malaita or Guadalcanal because when they were chased out from Guadalcanal and went back to Malaita, they did not recognize them there, may be because they were brought up in Guadalcanal culture. This was what was experienced with other provinces after the Ethnic Tension. The recommendations now come to the Churches and the communities. They should be reintroduced into the communities and churches, the other point is on mastery, it is something that you good at. As we see after the Ethnic Tension, there is a lot of unemployment in Solomon Islands. It is now a problem and we cannot do anything about it. The only thing is to fight the unemployment. Our support should be emphasized more on the informal sector because most of the young people who stay unemployed at this time, they have to go back into the education system. After the Ethnic Tension, there was no financial assistance, everyone is broke, everything is gone.

In this regard we should support more informal sector and provide marketing opportunities, like the shell money making, the lalava dyeing, the basket weaving etc. The Government should put more emphasize on these to assist them on what they are good at. The other thing here in Solomon Islands is music, art and sports and for me myself I am a full time musician, to some it is really hard to make a living out of what you are good at. I have been touring around the Pacific and touring other countries outside, I could see musicians make a living of what they are good at but in Solomon Islands it is hard to do that. Our population is just small compared to other countries I think the Government can do something about the music industry. The other problem too is the talent is not protected, you composed your song everyone can copy it etc.. This is a major problem, and the recommendation here is: the Government needs to review the current legislation on the music industry on the copy right law, that is what I am emphasizing on. This is only the beginning, we Solomon Islanders, we are so talented in music and art compared to other countries in the South Pacific. I know the legislation is in place and only needs to be reviewed. For the youths its time that we need to voice out our concerns. We need to come out with new initiatives and stop pointing fingers at the Government, stop pointing fingers at our leaders. We are men and women and we can do something, now it's time we should come together and put things together, we do this, other respective authorities would be more than happy to assist the youths. We do something for ourselves, rather than pressurizing our leaders to something for us. When we keep nagging them, our leaders will end up committing something outside what the law allows. They have to go and find money somewhere, they involve in corruption and other criminal activities. We as the community we keep on pressurizing and poking them. We should be the one helping them, in our churches, in our communities and in our youth programs. By doing this we will help our leaders to focus more for on planning better things for us.

Independence: Youths need to be independent, but now after the current situation, after the Ethnic Tension we are not independent as youths. To become a better Solomon Islands for tomorrow we better change our mentality on depending on aids from outside, depending on

hand outs, depending on charity and Government organization to support us. Young people of today need to be independent. What I mean is that we should be responsible for what we are. We need to work and work, lots of our young people are so lazy, just put on the iPod and mp3 and sleep all day. They can sit at the market place until night. We need is to do planning, preparing and working, we must be kept busy in these three areas. If you have nothing to do you must be busy preparing what you have planned. If you have already something to do, you must be working now. It is not fair that you say you do not have something to do. You are very talented and have lot things to do. You are talented in your own area in your own life as a young man and its time that we must work. It's time to emphasize to this generation that we must work, the population is growing, Solomon Islands is getting smaller, demands for living is on the rise. It's time to work; if we are lazy the future of Solomon Islands will be affected. To raise up the economy of this country, to raise up the living standard of this country, young people of today, leaders of tomorrow, young people we need to work, start to work now. In whatever small things you do, do it with your heart, do it faithfully and God will reward with good things in life. Nothing is impossible for a willing mind; if you are willing to do something you will do it. The hardest part is doing it, but nothing is impossible to do. I appeal to the youths here, because too many times we make too many excuses. I do not want my fellow brothers and sisters to have their noses being pulled around and manipulated by things that do not have bases. The other recommendation is for the Government to create more employment opportunities. The Government to be flexible on the criteria on starting our own business. This time the problem to start our own business becomes difficult because of its selection criteria. So that even though you do not have any working capital to start with, but as long as you got the idea and the plan you can start your business. The other thing is we must be responsible, one example, I was at Panatina living with my aunty after the Ethnic Tension, and during that time the people who lost their properties were being paid with the lost properties money, and this father got the money about \$20,000 and went out the whole week end when he came he only gave \$5 to his wife. That was very irresponsible of that particular father. That was very wrong, be responsible to yourself, use your commonsense. You are given the money to compensate for your lost properties and yet you as father just used it recklessly or you as a mother just misuse the money. Stop blaming the Government for not supporting you. The responsibilities lie on us when we are given things by the Government, use them wisely. The Government too is trying to collect revenues to meet its expenses. I do not want us to make the same mistake again, let us learn from our mistakes. We must be responsible young people of this country, Solomon Islands.

Generosity: One of the biggest problems after the Ethnic Tension is one talk system. We do not learn to appreciate each other after the Ethnic Tension, Malaita people are on their own, Guadalcanal people are their own and so as every other Province. We would like developments to take place in our own areas and Provinces. I totally disagree with this mentality, this causes disunity. Today it is who you know, which is not fair. Jobs should be given to those who deserve it. Do not practice the want talk system. We do not appreciate each other's contributions; this came about after the Ethnic Tension. This also goes to the distribution of projects. Funded projects established in Malaita only Malaitans are allowed to work there. Malaitans are not allowed to work at Goldridge or GPPOL, only the Guadalcanal people can take up jobs there. For the future of this nation, we are not defined by the colour of our skin, the language we speak, which island we come from, or unique cultures or which church that we attend. We are defined as Solomon Islanders one nation under God. That would be through peace and reconciliation. I should see a brother from Guadalcanal as a Solomon Islander, I should see a brother from Western Province as a Solomon Islander. What I can see now there is no sense of appreciating each other. You may prove me wrong but this

is how I see it. I believe here we are not defined by our languages, by geographical locations, by cultures or by the church you attend or by the colour of our skin. After this program I would want to see the vision for the youths of this nation that we should see ourselves as Solomon Islanders. Let the National flag defines who you are, that is what we want to see and if we are going to move on. To break this type of mentality I think it's time we should link communities together. We do not need the Government to do this for us. Our communities and churches can do this, link communities together. For example, young people at Kaibia can go up to Malango and help them to brush their gardens and those people at Malango can come to Kaibia to assist us with our flower planting. We do this together to prove we appreciate each other. We will soon find out from each other that we face the same struggle in life to discourage isolation and favoritism. We come down to youth development work we should appreciate the youths achievements in our communities, in our churches, in the youth groups and in our families. Lots of times, youths come up with very good proposals in our churches, communities but we do not seem to appreciate their contribution. They should be given some sort of token of appreciation to say thank you to them. This is the cycle of courage mentioned earlier in my talk.

To conclude to the young people of this nation after the Ethnic Tension and looking ahead for the future in five years or in ten years time, in order for us to create a better Solomon Islands for tomorrow, we need each other ever than before. This starts from the ordinary housewives up to the members of the National Parliament. Whatever sector you are in, what churches you serve, whatever villages you are in, we need each other's support. Change from our way before, change from the mentality of I am from Malaita, Isabel, Western, Guadalcanal etc.. To make a better Solomon only you and I will make it better and in order to achieve it we need to work together.

In conclusion I appeal to my fellow youths and citizens of this nation that we are not who we are, we are defined how well we rise after this problem that we went through. So remember let's not show our weakness through revenge, hatred and violence because we are strong, if you want to go back to abovementioned it means that you are weak. We are stronger than what have been leveled at before, yesterday and today. I would to appeal to the people of this nation that we will show the world that we are strong. We put our differences behind us and build our nation to Peace and Reconciliation.

God bless and God bless Solomon Islands.

Commissioner: You have given TRC a lot to think about Mr. Kwanainao, thank you for your passion and commitment.

Chairman: That concludes the hearing for the Youth Experts and wish all Youths of Solomon Islands to be good citizens. The Hearing will adjourn until Thursday 25 November 2010.

The meeting was declared closed at 2:00 pm.

The MC thanked everyone for attending.